

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in November 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who studied at The Grange School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset.*

## **Ada Bessie Hucker 's Story**

Ada Bessie and her twin sister, Ida Louisa, were born on 9 June 1896 at Catcott, Somerset<sup>1</sup>, where they were also baptised on 5 July the same year<sup>2</sup>. Their elder brother, Sidney George Albert, had been born on 11 June 1893<sup>3</sup>.

The family are to be found on the 1901 England Census – 35 year old father George, who was a gardener born at Catcott; 29 year old mother Harriett, who was born at Selston, Nottinghamshire; Sidney aged 7; the twins aged 4 and George's widowed mother, Louisa Haggett, aged 61 and also born at Catcott<sup>4</sup>.

The 1911 England Census showed the family living at Catcott and 49 year old George still working as a 'Domestic Gardener'. He and 40 year old Hannah had been married for 19 years and had 3 children – Sidney aged 19 was also a gardener, Ida aged 14 was at school and George's widowed mother Louisa

Haggett was now 62 years old and working as a charwoman<sup>5</sup>. Obviously whoever completed the form had no idea what age the adults actually were!

Ada, aged 14, was missing from the family at the time of the 1911 Census and was to be found as a student at The School of Housewifery in Street, Somerset<sup>5</sup>. A Minute Book kept by the Committee of Managers of the School shows that at a meeting on 12 April 1910 the School of Housewifery Sub-Committee had decided to award a place which had become vacant at the school to Ada Bessie Hucker of Catcott. She is mentioned again later that year in a meeting on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1910 when her studentship is renewed, so presumably she was at the school until June 1911<sup>6</sup>.

The Somerset School of Cookery and Housewifery opened its doors on 15 July 1897 and was for girls from elementary schools in Somerset to stay free of cost “and be trained in the domestic arts and all that pertains to the making of good domestic servants or economical wives.”<sup>7</sup>

Finding Ada, Ida and the family in the 1921 Census was rather problematic because the family surname was now Grant, which was George’s mother’s maiden name. 58 year old George was now a farmer at Cranway Dairy Farm, Chard, rather than a gardener. His wife Hannah, aged 50, was recorded as a farmer’s assistant in the dairy and son Sidney, aged 28, was assisting his father in general farm work. There was Ada, aged 25, putting her time at the School of Housewifery to good use in managing the house<sup>8</sup>. There is no sign of Ida. George’s mother Louisa Grant Haggett had passed away in April 1915<sup>9</sup>.

By the time of the 1939 Register, George Grant was a widower, with his wife Hannah having passed away in late 1921<sup>9</sup>. Ada, his daughter, was still living with him and looking after the home. She had given her date of birth as 9 June 1896, while George had given his date of birth as 24 August 1862, making him 77 years of age. He was still recorded as a farmer and they were living at Cranway Farm, Chard, Somerset. Sidney was no longer living with the family as he married Muriel Annie M Hopkins earlier in 1939<sup>10</sup> and they were now living in Cranleigh, Forton Road, Chard. Sidney was recorded as a dairy farmer, so must have still be working at his father's farm. In fact, the two families were recorded next to one another on the register<sup>11</sup>.

Ada's twin sister, Ida, had taken a different path in life to Ada. On the 1921 England and Wales Census she was living as a boarder with the lady who ran the local grocery shop in Catcott. Ida was recorded as a schoolmistress, teaching at Cossington School, only 2 and a half miles from Catcott<sup>8</sup>.

Investigation in the local Somerset Papers found a report in the Shepton Mallet Journal of 20 November 1914 stating that Ida Grant from the Pupil Teacher Centre at Bridgwater, Somerset, had topped the Pupil Teacher Examination that year<sup>12</sup>.

Ida went on to become a Head Teacher as shown in the 1939 Register, where she was living in Plympton St Mary, Devon and was Head Teacher of the Public Elementary School<sup>11</sup>. In the summer of 1945, aged 49, she married Arthur Fear in Bristol<sup>10</sup>. Ida passed away at the age of 83 on 14 Jan 1980<sup>9</sup>. Ada Bessie Hucker never married and passed away in early 1973. Her death was registered at Taunton, Somerset<sup>9</sup>.

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## Sources

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