

James M. Cotting (1825-1886) and Katherine M.J. Cotting (1829-1908)

James M. Cotting was born on March 18, 1825, in North Chatham, New York. He married Katherine M.J. Vanderpool on September 18, 1847, in New York. Katherine was born on January 8, 1829, in Albany, New York. Her family originally came from Holland, but they had to leave because they were being treated unfairly because of their religion.

After they got married, James and Katherine moved to Springfield, Illinois, where they lived for about a year and a half. In 1853, they moved to Bloomington, Illinois, when the Chicago-Alton Railroad was being built through the city. They lived in a house near the railroad tracks at 613 N. Oak Street. James and Katherine did not have any children.

James was one of the first engineers for the Chicago-Alton Railroad and was one of only three engineers when the railroad started. He worked as an engineer for 14 years and as a conductor for 6 years. Because he was so skilled, he was chosen to drive trains carrying important people, including General Ulysses S. Grant and the Prince of Wales, who was traveling across the United States for sightseeing and hunting. James drove the Prince from Chicago to Dwight, Illinois, and then to St. Louis, Missouri.

James also drove trains for President Abraham Lincoln. He drove the trains that carried Lincoln to Chicago when he accepted the Republican nomination for president, from Springfield to Chicago after he was elected, and the train that carried his body from Chicago to Springfield. Katherine was on Lincoln's funeral train from Bloomington to Springfield. She was said to be the only woman from Bloomington on the train and the only woman outside of the funeral party.

Later in life, after retiring from the railroad, James worked for a drug company in Chicago, running a stationary engine for several years. Just before he died in 1886, James suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed. He passed away on October 5, 1886, at the age of 62 and was buried in Bloomington at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

After James died, Katherine never remarried. At every meal, she kept a place for him at the table and spoke very highly of him for the rest of her life. Katherine died on January 9, 1908, at the age of 82, and she was buried next to James in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.