

Kate Waterman Hamilton (1841-1934)

Kate Waterman Hamilton was born on November 12, 1841, in Schenectady, New York. She was the only daughter of Farwell H. Hamilton and Ruth A. Cady Hamilton.

In the early 1850s, the family moved to Steubenville, Ohio, where Kate grew up and went to school. Steubenville was a small town by the Ohio River, near West Virginia. It was here that Kate likely first heard the "hill country" way of speaking, which she later used for characters in her stories.

In 1870, the family moved to Bloomington, Illinois, where Kate's father worked as a pattern maker and later as a carpenter at the Bloomington Stove Company. By this time, Kate was 28 years old. In the 1870 census, her name was listed as Kate W., and it was also the first time her job was listed as "Authoress" (female author). Kate never married and lived with her parents until they passed away in the 1890s. Afterward, she lived with her brother, Erskine, and his wife, Mamie, for the rest of her life.

Kate always loved writing. She enjoyed telling stories to her childhood friends, and she kept writing as an adult. A reporter who interviewed her in 1906 said she was shy and modest, but also noticed that she had a strong ability to observe the world around her, which helped her write entertaining stories. Her works were published in newspapers and magazines, starting in 1863. Later, she wrote stories with her brother, Erskine, and sometimes used the pen name "Fleeta."

Kate was especially passionate about church work. She wrote many stories and articles for Presbyterian Sunday Schools and spent 40 years working with children at the Second Presbyterian Church in Bloomington. She was the Superintendent of the Primary Department there. She was also a member of the local Longfellow Club.

Kate's writing was loved by both adults and young people. Her stories were always wholesome, with a moral lesson. One of her most successful books, *The Parson's Proxy* (1896), tells the story of a new minister who is treated poorly by a local man, but the man later repents. Another popular book, *Rachel's Share of the Road* (1882), is about a rich young woman named Rachel who supports workers in a strike, even though her father owns the company they are striking against.

Kate wrote more than 40 books, short stories, and poems. One biographer noted that, unlike other women writers who started by writing Sunday-school stories and then moved to commercial books, Kate continued to write stories for young readers for religious publishers well into the 20th century.

On November 26, 1934, Kate fell and broke her hip. She developed complications and passed away four days later on November 30 at the age of 93. Her funeral was held on December 1, and she was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois, next to her family.