



E-Newsletter | August 2015

Songwriters

Did you know that two of the most familiar patriotic songs - The Battle Hymn of the Republic and America the Beautiful - were composed by women? In this month's newsletter we will learn about those poets and writers - Julia Ward Howe and Katharine Bates.

An abolitionist, an advocate of women's rights, prison rights and education for all, Julia Ward Howe rose above the confines of women in the 19th century and a troubled marriage, to write poetry and engage in society. Although her earlier poetry was published anonymously in a collection called *Passion Flowers*, the Boston population was able to discern that it was her writing based on the personal details revealed in the poetry. The publication of her poem, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* in 1861, which served as an inspiration to Union soldiers, led to her becoming an instant celebrity; she became one of the most famous women of the Nineteenth century.



Julia Ward Howe

In 1876, after her husband's death, Howe was free to pursue her passions of advocating for women's rights, prison rights, and education. For the next forty years she traveled around the world lecturing, serving as a diplomat and also working for world peace. Howe fought for women's right to vote and to extract women from the 'non-person' role in which they found themselves at that time.

elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She helped found the suffrage organization that became the American Woman Suffrage Association. Characterized as "Poet and patriot, lover of letters and learning... sincere friend of all that makes for the elevation and enrichment of women," Howe has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Originally written as a poem titled Pike's Peak, Katharine Lee Bates' work when published in 1895 was titled America. Paired with lyrics by Samuel Ward and published in 1910, the song America the Beautiful has become one of our most popular patriotic songs. Bates was an English professor at Wellesley College. Known as a scholar of English literature and especially William Shakespeare, she became chair of the Department.



Katharine Lee Bates

Bates spent part of a summer lecturing at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado which is at the foot of Pike's Peak. Inspired by the view from the top of Pike's Peak on a hike up that mountain, she penned the words to her poem. She said: "It was then and there, as I was looking out over the sea-like expanse of fertile country spreading away so far under those ample skies that the opening lines of the hymn floated into my mind." She revised the words several times for what today is a song that was considered as a candidate for our national anthem, but lost out to The Star Spangled Banner.

Women have contributed and continue to contribute to our culture in many ways. We are proud to continue telling their stories.

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Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America

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