

KATHARINE LEE BATES

(1859–1929)

America the Beautiful (1895)

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

KATHARINE LEE BATES (August 12, 1859–March 28, 1929) b. Falmouth, Massachusetts. Youngest of five children of Cornelia Frances Lee and William Bates, a Congregational minister who died a month after her birth. Family moved to Grantville (now Wellesley), Massachusetts, where Bates attended local schools. Graduated Wellesley College in 1880. Taught high school in Natick, Massachusetts, and at girls' preparatory schools near Wellesley. In 1885 returned to Wellesley as English instructor and remained there 40 years, becoming the guiding force of Wellesley's English department. In 1893 published *The English Religious Drama* and was invited to lecture on the subject at Colorado College; en route, visited World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago; at Colorado College, met Hamlin Garland and Woodrow Wilson. Early in her stay, after an outing to Pike's Peak in a prairie wagon, wrote "America the Beautiful." Poem published in *The Congregationalist* on July 4, 1895; set to melody based on "Materna" by Samuel Augustus Ward; revised versions appeared in 1904 and 1911. Verse collections included *The College Beautiful* (1887), *America the Beautiful* (1911), *The Retinue* (1918), *Yellow Clover* (1922), *The Pilgrim Ship* (1926), and *America the Dream* (1930). Also published fictional works *Rose and Thorn* (1888) and *Hermit Island* (1891); other prose including critical survey *American Literature* (1898) and travel books *Spanish Highways and By-Ways* (1900) and *From Gretna Green to Land's End* (1907); and poetry and plays for children including *Sunshine and Other Verses for Children* (1890), *Fairy Gold* (1916), and *Little Robin Stay-Behind* (1923).