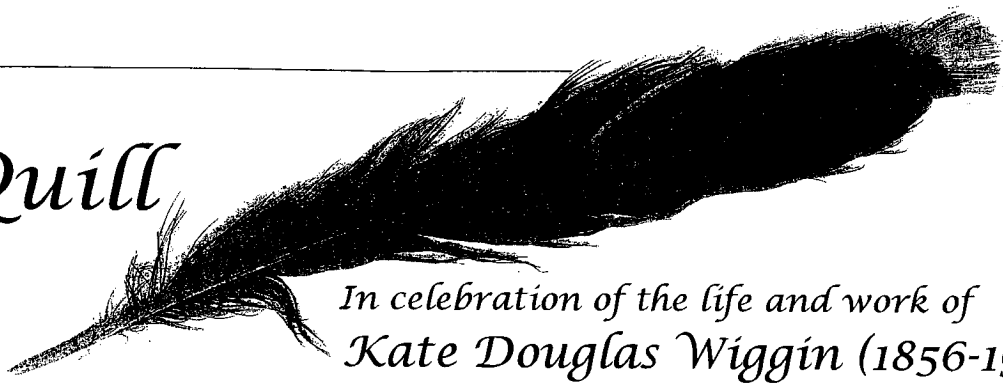


# The Quill



In celebration of the life and work of  
*Kate Douglas Wiggin (1856-1923)*  
150th Anniversary Year

Number 4

WINTER 2006

*Welcome!* to the fourth news-sheet in honour of American author Kate Douglas Wiggin in this her 150th Anniversary year. Whether you are an academic, a collector or 'just' a fan of Kate's many books, we aim to bring you items of interest from both sides of the Atlantic, as well as news from 'Quillcote', her home in Hollis, Maine. This is a free news-sheet available for the price of a mere sae but we intend founding an official Kate Douglas Wiggin Society to coincide with her birthday in September this year and expand into a proper subscription journal.

A number of special events in Britain and America are being planned to celebrate Kate's birthday and details of these will be available in a later issue. May we encourage her fans to put on some event of their own? You might alert your local library and ask them to do something or you could just organise a little local gathering and raise a glass to our Kate on 28th Sept. Do let us know what you are planning and if you're stuck, contact Rowena (UK) or Carla (US) because we may be able to provide ideas and a speaker.

**Rowena Edlin-White & Carla Baade Turner**

## *Timothy's Quest*

Santa brought me something special this year: an original poster for the silent movie of *Timothy's Quest*, released in Sept. 1922 by Dirigio Films, Inc.

*Timothy's Quest*, sub-titled "A Story for Anybody, Young or Old Who cares to Read It", was the work-in-progress Kate brought with her on her first visit to Britain in 1890; she finished it at the Falcon Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon and it was published the same year. It's a heart-warming tale of two orphans, ten year-old Timothy and toddler Gabrielle (Lady Gay) who escape with their dog Rags from the slums of Minerva Court and go on a "quest" to find a new home and a real mother of their own.



At Pleasant River, Timothy sets his sights on the home of Miss Avilda Cummins and Samantha Ann Ripley, two middle-aged spinsters. He knocks on the door and asks, "Do you need any babies here, if you please?" Both ladies are perfectly content with life without the encumbrance of children, but gradually the two waifs work their way into their hearts. Wiggin's portrayal of single women is always brilliant and insightful and Avilda and Samantha are classics of the type.

Kate dedicated the book "To Nora, dearest Sister, - Sternest Critic, Best Friend". Early editions are illustrated with black & white line drawings by O. Herford, an intriguing mixture of quasi-Mediaeval and realistic sketches. A popular edition to tie-in with the movie has a photographic frontispiece of Timothy & Gay with Miss Avilda. Wiggin seemed happy with the film version and posed for publicity photos with the child stars, Helen Rowland and James Depew.

*Timothy's Quest* had further-reaching effects than Wiggin was at first aware (see below) and Nora devotes a whole chapter to it in her memoir *Kate Douglas Wiggin as Her Sister Knew Her*.

**REW**

## *Dorcas Doings*

The Annual Dorcas Fair & Lawn Party was held 16 July 2005. The booths that the Dorcas ladies maintained were: Books, Crafts, Baked Goods, Candy, Attic Treasures and a Community Raffle. A Dorcas booth also sold the collectable (and very delectable!) "Dorcas Dishes" calendar and a

home-made quilt made by Minnesota member Renee Arbisi was raffled. A delicious luncheon included a refreshing salad and home-made strawberry shortcake. Space was also rented out to different organisations in town, and crafters. It was a huge success. Mark 22 July 2006 in your diaries for the next one!

The 142nd performance of *The Old Peabody Pew* took place on 4th December, with the same cast as last year. The weather wasn't too good but a nice audience still turned out to First Congregational Church of Buxton, Maine (Tory Hill Meetinghouse). The play was written by Kate as a fund-raiser for church maintenance and other Dorcas projects and as in past years, all who participated in the evening had a good time.

(Thanks to Katie of The Dorcas Society for this report)

Don't forget the Dorcas Website for more news:  
[www.dorcassocietymaine.org](http://www.dorcassocietymaine.org)

### *Somewhere to Visit...*

**Dublin** is a place Kate visited more than once. Her Journal for 1890 describes staying at **Buswell's Hotel** which she fictionalised in *Penelope's Irish Experiences* as O'Carolan's, with a view of Stephen's Green. Buswell's doesn't enjoy that view, but is not far away on Molesworth

Street. It is a wonderfully elegant 18th c. Georgian building with a grand lobby complete with oil paintings and open fire. Its immediate neighbour in 1906 was the "Distressed Ladies' Depot" which I'm sure Kate would have noticed! Not too pricey for a couple of nights' stay in an historic 4-star hotel. See their website at:

[dublin.city-centre-hotels.com/buswells-hotel/index.htm](http://dublin.city-centre-hotels.com/buswells-hotel/index.htm)

Freephone: 1800-869-4330 (USA) or  
0800-912-0021 (UK)

Nora recalls (*KDW as Her Sister Knew Her*) how in 1906 Kate was staying with Lord and Lady Aberdeen at the Vice-Regal Lodge in Dublin and one day Lady A. took her on a visit to Kingstown to the **Cottage Home for Little Children**. It appears that the home was inspired by *Timothy's Quest*. Wiggin was amazed to discover herself to be the "mystery guest" and was

asked to take the platform and speak to the assembled audience of children, workers and nobility.

The Cottage Home is still there - only don't look for Kingstown, it's now called Dun Laoghaire, just a few miles from Dublin, on Tivoli Road. You can't miss it - a large, rendered, building faced with red brick with black and white gables. Its original name is still on the front. The building is now used as offices and training facilities for The Cottage Home Child and Family Services and children are given support and residential care in two houses locally. They are currently fund-raising to improve facilities and you couldn't do better than give them support in honour of Kate's Anniversary year. Contact Rowena for more details.

### *And by the way...*

Santa also brought Rowena a "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" Calendar for 1917 in superb condition in its original box. The picture on the front is of Rebecca and her fellow students driving to graduation on a flower-bedecked cart. It has a page per week each with a quotation from the book and the whole is printed in pink and green by Sully & Kleinteich of 373 Fourth Ave. New York. Rebecca featured on at least one other calendar as, we believe, did other Wiggin characters. If you know of any, please tell us.

### *The Forerom Rug*

One of Kate's short stories, *The Forerom Rug*, has been republished in Britain in the *Woolgatherings* series. Diadema Bascom hooks a new rug for her best room from the precious remains of her childhood clothes, wedding dress and other remnants. Whilst she does so she tells her life story to her lodger, Miss Hollis. A moving story which Kate used to perform as a monologue. The description of the rug is so detailed, we were able to produce a pattern (it turned out to be a standard design spookily named, "Nottingham"! ) and the instructions to make it. So! Read the story and hook your own! Costs £3 inc. p&p in UK or \$8 in USA (may be sent as cash dollars at own risk) from Rowena - see address below.

### **Contact us!**

If you would like to receive the next free newsletter(s), please send up to 3 stamped addressed envelopes to:

**In USA:** Carla Turner, Quillcote, 20 Salmon Falls Rd, Hollis Center, Maine 04042.

**In UK:** Rowena Edlin-White, Willow House, 11 Frederick Ave, Carlton, Nottingham NG4 1HP, England.

(Do send your comments, letters, anecdotes and requests to either of the above!)

**This newsletter is distributed both in UK & USA.**

