

## **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 in January, 1829 in Albany, New York. Her family was from Holland originally but was forced to leave because of religious persecution.

After James and Katherine married, they moved to Springfield, Illinois where they lived for 1 ½ years. They moved to Bloomington in 1853 when the Chicago-Alton Railroad was being laid through the city. They lived in a house close to the rail yards at 613 N. Oak Street. James and Katherine never had any children.

James was one of the first engineers of the Chicago-Alton Railroad and was one of only three engineers when the company first began. James was an engineer with the C&A Railroad for 14 years and conductor for 6 years. As a highly skilled engineer, he was given trains that carried important passengers including General Ulysses S. Grant and the Prince of Wales, who was on a sightseeing and hunting trip throughout the United States. Cotting drove the Prince from Chicago to Dwight, IL and then on to St. Louis, Missouri.

Another notable passenger Cotting carried was Abraham Lincoln. Cotting was engineer for the trains that carried Lincoln to Chicago when Lincoln accepted the Republican nomination for the presidency; from Springfield to Chicago after Lincoln was elected President; and the train that carried Lincoln's body from Chicago to Springfield.

Katherine Cotting was also on Lincoln's funeral train from Bloomington to Springfield. It has been said that she had the special distinction of being the only lady from Bloomington on the train and also the only woman outside the funeral party on the train.

He later ran a stationary engine for a wholesale drug company house in Chicago for several years after retiring from work as a conductor and engineer. Shortly before his death in 1886, James suffered a stroke which caused paralysis. He died on October 5, 1886 at the age of 62. He was buried in Bloomington at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

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

By: Candace Summers, 2005