

Katherine Kathleen “Kate” Healy & Thomas Manford Cummings
1866-1961 1853-1921

Chapter 14

Kate was very tall with large blue eyes, long eyelashes and, according to her daughter, Genevieve, she looked like a model. She wore her hair piled high on her head. When her hair was down, it touched her waist. She wore her hair in this style all her life.



KATE, at the age of twenty-one, was living at 410 13th Street in St. Paul, Minnesota.¹ She was a clerk for the C. E. Danneberg Company in St. Paul in 1888. At the age of twenty-three she was a clerk at Mannheimer’s Department Store boarding at 510 Cedar Street. Kate’s letter to her son, Gerald, of May 4, 1914, showed that Kate was a good writer with fine penmanship.²

ON July 1, 1890, Kate married Thomas Manford Cummings whom she had met in Faribault, Minnesota. They were married in St. Vincent’s Church in St. Paul.³ He was a tall man and stood at 6 ft. 3 in. according to their daughter, Genevieve. Genevieve also stated that her father bought many acres of land around Lake Minnetonka, near St. Paul, at one time.

THOMAS Manford Cummings was born in Clinton County, New York, in 1853.⁴ At one time he lived on a farm in Rice County, Minnesota. He was a well-traveled man and had seen part of the western United States, the Pacific coast and some of the southern states before he was thirty-seven years of age. He was living in St. Paul, Minnesota in April 1890, and was a patrolman for the St. Paul Police Department.⁵

THOMAS’ granddaughter, Naomi Cummings Hoffman, wrote to Hope F. Healy on June 10, 1986, that her father told her that at one time Thomas drove a team of drayage horses from Reno, Nevada, to Carson City, Nevada. Drayage horses carried very heavy loads.

¹ For residences, occupations, and employment see Appendix E.

² Kate’s letter shown to Hope F. Healy by Naomi Cummings Hoffman, granddaughter of Kate.

³ Certificate of marriage of Kate Healy and Thomas M. Cummings.

⁴ *History of the Police and Fire Departments of the Twin Cities*. St. Paul, Minnesota: America Land & Title Register Association, 1899. Thomas’ birthdate is 1858 in this history, but he was born in 1853 according to James McDonnell, a cousin of the Cummings family. Per a phone conversation with Naomi Cummings Hoffman, James Mc Donnell died in 1998.

⁵ *History of the Police and Fire Departments of the Twin Cities*.

History of the Hope and Healy Families

THOMAS and Kate lived at 600 Linden Avenue in St. Paul from 1895 through 1897. One evening, Thomas took Kate to hear a famous singer of the time, Madam Schuman Heink.

THEY moved to 605 Linden Avenue in 1898. Kate did not want to have her husband stay on the police force and persuaded him to leave and buy a farm in 1906 of 10 1/2 acres.⁶ The house was situated high on a hilltop on County Road E, about nine miles north of St. Paul. There was a meadow in back and a small barn for their one cow; it was an ideal place to raise young children. The house does not exist now and the region has changed.

THOMAS did not like farming, but as Kate had contracted tuberculosis by then, he thought the country air would help her.⁷ His health was not very good either. He stated this in a letter to his daughter, Helen, in the spring of 1914.⁸ At this time he was home on the farm planting corn.

THOMAS preferred working for the Healy Plumbing and Heating Corporation in St. Paul rather than farming and became a foreman with the firm.⁹ He would be gone for months at a time on their various contracts in the western part of the country. The Healy firm sent his wages to Kate and would also send a driver and wagon to bring Kate and the children to visit her brother, John, in Langdon, Minnesota. They also visited other cousins around the St. Paul area.

KATE and Thomas raised five children on the farm: Gerald, Hesper, Mary Hope, Genevieve and Helen. Thomas had a library of classical literature and would tell stories and read to his children and their neighbors at night under the stars. His family has stated that he was a great story teller. Thomas' daughter, Helen, was also was a wonderful story teller.¹⁰ Kate's niece, Charlotte Mary Healy Donais, used to visit them and told her son, John, about the stories.

THEIR home had a bedroom, a stove in the living room and a loft up above the living room where the children slept. Kate's niece, Charlotte Mary Healy Donais, enjoyed peering down from the loft into the stove pipe to see what was going on.¹¹ There was no insulation in the house at all. In spite of her lack of cleaning equipment, Kate was a very clean person and kept her little place immaculate. Kate's grandson, Urban Cummings, remembers hearing that most of the furniture they had was made by his grandfather, Thomas Cummings.¹²

⁶ According to the land deed, Tom Cummings purchased Blocks 6 and 7 of Maplewood Addition to North St. Paul on June 21, 1906, for \$175. Deed is in possession of Thomas' granddaughter, Naomi Cummings Hoffman.

⁷ Notes from John Donais, Kate's grand nephew.

⁸ All references to letters to and from family members were for the most part saved by Kate and Thomas' son, Gerald "Jim." Gerald's daughter, Naomi Cummings Hoffman, kindly let Hope F. Healy read the letters and take notes.

⁹ See Chapter 20 for a history of the Healy Plumbing and Heating Corporation.

¹⁰ Letter from Helen Cummings' nephew, Urban Cummings, to Hope F. Healy. Date of letter not recorded.

¹¹ John Donais.

¹¹ John Donais.

¹² Cassette tape made by Urban Cummings, March 31, 1986.

THE farm had three geese, chickens, a cow, vegetable garden with corn, tomatoes, squash, etc. and a few fruit trees. They obtained water from an outdoor pump that was situated right outside the kitchen door. Kate had a flat iron to iron clothing. She did not have a clothes boiler to wash the clothes, nor a washer, and possessed just a few cooking utensils.

COUSINS would often visit Kate's farm. They played by the creek, jumped in the hay, romped with the dog and ate Kate's delicious desserts, especially the doughnuts. Everyone tried his hand at milking the cow. The bull was their nemesis. They would taunt him until he started running toward them. Then they would run and hop the fence before the bull caught them. The numerous dogs and cats added to their fun. To actually pick out fresh eggs for breakfast from the chicken coop was indeed a treat. Quoting Kate's niece, Charlotte Donais, "It was like a story out of a book to visit Aunt Kate in North St. Paul."¹³

ALTHOUGH Kate did not have many kitchen or laundry facilities, she was a master cook who always had something in the oven for everyone. She baked five kinds of bread, one of which was a graham bread with molasses, brown sugar and loads of raisins and butter. Her doughnuts, cakes and pies were showpieces.

KATE'S recipe for her Christmas cake which she made every year for over thirty years, is below. How to mix the ingredients was not included in this recipe which her granddaughter, Naomi Cummings Hoffman, saved. However, a good cook can figure it out.

KATE'S CHRISTMAS CAKE RECIPE

2 cupfuls butter	8 eggs
2 ½ cupfuls sugar	½ lb. cherries
2 ½ cupfuls molasses	2 teaspoons of soda
8 cupfuls flour	½ teaspoon of cloves
2 cupfuls sour milk	½ teaspoon of mace
3 pounds of raisins	2 lemons - grated
3 pounds of currants	2 glasses of currant jelly
1 pound of figs	1 cupful of fruit juice
½ pound citron	1 teaspoon of cinnamon
	1 teaspoon of grated nutmeg

ALL Kate's brothers and their families helped her out financially and with clothing throughout her young life. She was beloved by her relatives, young and old. Her motto in life was "If you can't say anything good about a person, don't say anything at all."¹⁴ Kate might have been poor, but the love that poured out of her home for her family never ceased.

¹³ John Donais.

¹⁴ Naomi Cummings Hoffman.

KATE'S eyesight began to fail about 1913 when she was only forty-six. The doctor told Kate to drink beer! Her husband said she should drink milk and eat eggs.¹⁵

KATE mentioned in a letter to her son, Gerald, how she loved her sisters-in-law, Lucy, Josephine and Margaret. Lucy and Kate's brother, James, stayed with Kate for two days with their two children, Dorothy and James, and niece, Irene. They also spent the 4th of July in 1914 with Kate and her family. Lucy was expecting her third child, Charles, at the time. They stayed with Kate for a few days after the 4th.¹⁶

KATE'S daughter, Helen, in a letter to her brother, Gerald, on September 27, 1916, stated that Kate's sister-in-law, Josephine, and Kate's niece, Helen Healy, came out from St. Paul in October of 1916 to help dig the potatoes. John Anthony Sr. came out for Sunday dinner — after the potatoes were dug. Kate's brothers, Patrick, Dennis and Edward visited them in April of that year.

THOMAS, Kate's husband, died in 1921.¹⁷ After his death, Kate spent time in North St. Paul, St. Paul, and Long Beach, staying in Long Beach with her daughters, Helen and Genevieve. In 1928 Kate was living with her daughter, Helen, at 1369 Ohio Ave, Long Beach.¹⁸

AFTER Pearl Harbor was bombed at the start of World War II, Kate and Helen moved inland to nearby Anaheim, California. Helen bought a home in Anaheim which was near her sister Genevieve. Kate's sister, Nellie lived with Helen and Kate for a few years. Kate died in Anaheim in 1961 at the age of 94.

Children of Katherine Kathleen "Kate" Healy and Thomas Manford Cummings

GERALD JAMES "JIM" CUMMINGS,¹⁹ 1891-1977, at the age of eighteen was sent out to Glacier National Park by the Healy Plumbing Company as the Office Manager in charge of a crew. He spent much of his time in the west for the firm. He later became an estimator and engineer with the Healy Plumbing Company. In May of 1914, Gerald's sister, Helen, wrote to Gerald that she had had a letter from their father in which he stated that he was very proud of his son.

¹⁵ John Donais.

¹⁶ Letter to Gerald Cummings from his aunt, Lucy Healy. Date of letter not recorded.

¹⁷ Answer to letter of September 25, 1980, from Hope F. Healy to the Superintendent of Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul, Minnesota, giving date of death as June 6, 1921, and interment date of June 8, 1921, for Thomas M. Cummings.

¹⁸ *Long Beach City Directory*, Western Directory Company, 1928. Family History Center Microfilm 1841603.

¹⁹ Gerald was also known to some as Jim.



By 1917 Gerald had his own business: The Minnesota Mechanical Equipment Company in St. Cloud, Minnesota. He mentioned this in a letter to his sister, Helen, in November 1918.

Gerald was an unusual man who educated himself throughout his life. He only had an 8th grade education. His sister, Helen, in November 1918, wrote that she was sending him a list of algebra books at his request.

Gerald lost an eye when he was a young boy. He had been playing with a boy who hit a bullet with a hammer and it exploded and went into his eye. Later in life he had a glass eye to replace it. He took it out at night which enthralled his children as they

quietly slipped into his room to view it. Gerald was the recipient of many honorary engineering degrees later in life. His friends were professors at various colleges, priests, religious leaders, and engineers from around the world. He settled in Oakland, California, with his family. In 1925, his sister, Hesper, and her son, Tommy, were living with him and his family in Oakland. He made sure that his seven children received fine educations and encouraged their talents throughout his life.

HESPER AGNES CUMMINGS, 1894-1931, was ill most of her life with a bad heart. She was ambitious and very good to her mother, as all Kate's children were. She obtained a nursing degree at St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul. In 1914 when she was twenty years of age, she was a milliner²⁰ living at 130 Kent Street in St. Paul.²¹ Hesper was in Davenport, Iowa, working as a milliner at the Bon Ton Women's and Children's Store in January, 1923; a month later she was living in Peoria, Illinois.²²

Sometime in 1923 or 1924, Hesper married William Kerr and had one son, Thomas. Thomas had rickets, a disease that affects the young and is characterized by soft and deformed bones. Young Thomas' legs had to be soaked in warm water and rubbed daily. Hesper's Aunt Lucy and Uncle James Healy, took Thomas to their home for a time and Lucy worked on his legs for many months. Both Thomas and Hesper suffered from asthma.

²⁰ A milliner made hats.

²¹ It is believed that because of her bad heart, Hesper had to give up nursing and became a milliner.

²² Letters from Hesper Cummings to her brother, Gerald, January 10, 1923, and February, 1923.

Hesper's marriage to Kerr was unsuccessful. She remarried in 1929. In a letter to her brother, Gerald,²³ she wrote from Maple Lake, Minnesota, to say that she was very happy with her second husband, Ellsworth Gray, and that they travel and live in a different city by the week.²⁴ There were no children from the second marriage.

Hesper was in Long Beach when she died in 1931 at the age of 36. Her mother, Kate, was made guardian of young Thomas Kerr. Thomas was raised, and later adopted, by Hesper's sister, Genevieve, and her husband Charles Sampson.

MARY HOPE CUMMINGS, 1895-1918, graduated from the Nurses Training School at the University of Minnesota. She served as an American Red Cross Nurse during World War I. In a letter to Gerald, Helen wrote that Mary Hope had paid for Helen's tuition while Helen was at the teacher's college. Mary Hope often sent her a little extra money and clothing.

Mary Hope died at the age of 23 years on October 22, 1918, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas.²⁵ She died from pneumonia after having the flu.²⁶ The influenza epidemic of 1918 was the worst the world had ever experienced.

On the following page is a copy of the letter from the American Red Cross expressing sorrow to Mary Hope's mother at the death of her daughter. The letter was written to Mrs. J.C. Cummings, White Branch Avenue, #81, Pane, Minnesota. It has not been determined why the letter was sent to Mrs. J.C. Cummings in Pane, Minnesota.



Mary Hope Cummings in her American Red Cross uniform, World War I.
Photo courtesy of Naomi Cummings Hoffman.

According to her sister, Helen, Mary Hope was engaged to marry an officer, who, unfortunately, was killed in World War I. When Mary Hope's trunk with her belongings was sent to her mother, it contained photos of the young man.²⁷

²³ Letter from Mrs. E. [Hesper] Gray to Gerald Cummings, May 20, 1929.

²⁴ It is not known what Ellsworth's occupation was.

²⁵ Lavinia L. Dock, *History of American Red Cross Nursing*, New York: Macmillan, 1922, p.1480, Appendix, p. 1480.

²⁶ Letter from Kate Cummings to her son, Gerald, October 22, 1918.

²⁷ Letter from Helen Cummings to her brother, Gerald, on December 30, 1918.

Chapter 14: Katherine Kathleen "Kate" Healy and Thomas C. Cummings

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON, D. C.
Dept. of Nursing
Jane A. Delano, Director

January 10, 1919

Mrs. J. C. Cummings,
White Branch, Ave., #81
Pane, Minn.

My dear Mrs. Cummings:

Permit me to express to you my sympathy on account of the death of your daughter, Miss Mary Hope Cummings, in the performance of her duties in the service of her country.

In times like these present when deeds of heroism on the battlefield or in camp are accorded official recognition with awards of honor, it is unfortunate that the equally heroic, though less conspicuous deeds of those combating disease in the service of the United States should so often go unrecognized.

Miss Cummings died a martyr to her calling and worthily upheld the noblest traditions of the United States. The memory of the sacrifice which she so readily made will inspire others to render devoted service to their fellowmen.

Again assuring you of my sincere sympathy, I am,

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) Jane A. Delano

HELEN CHARLOTTE CUMMINGS, 1897-1977, was a student at the Teachers College in Gladstone, Minnesota, from 1914 to 1919. In January 1919, Helen wrote to Gerald from Strandquist, Minnesota, a town of 70 persons, located about 30 miles from the Canadian border. She was teaching, studying business arithmetic and the Palmer method of penmanship. She again wrote to Gerald in March 1919 about the flu epidemic still going on. She also had the flu for a time. She mentioned that she wanted to buy a typewriter but could not afford one.

In October 1919, Helen was teaching in Faribault, Minnesota. She had to make her own fires in the school house in the winter months. She bought wood for \$3.00 out of her salary and paid \$1.50 for a teacher's magazine. She had very

poor eyesight but loved to read. She had a subscription to the *Literary Digest*, *The Woman's Home Companion*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Helen taught classes in the grade schools of Long Beach and Anaheim. She retired with a California Teacher's pension. Helen was a favorite teacher with all her pupils and they would write to her many years after she retired. Well-loved and full of fun, Helen was a natural teacher and beloved by the relatives and friends who knew her. Helen never married and suffered from diabetes in later life.

After Helen retired from teaching in the Anaheim Schools, she and her mother lived near Genevieve and her husband, Charles Sampson.

ALICE GENEVIEVE CUMMINGS, 1899-d____, attended St. Paul Teachers' College for two years and then attended the College of St. Benedict for Girls at Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1921 for one year.²⁸ Gerald, her brother, paid for every expense at the college and would pick her up on the weekends to attend a dance or a movie.

Both Genevieve and Helen obtained government jobs teaching school at an Indian Reservation near Itasca, Minnesota. The Indians were Chippewa and Sioux. There was a large school on the reservation with a nurse and doctor who came once a month. They stayed at the hotel across the street from the school. They only stayed one year although Genevieve states that the salary was an extremely high wage of \$125 a month and that they were offered a raise if they stayed, but they did not stay.²⁹

About 1930 Genevieve married Charles Sampson. In a letter from Hesper, written in St. Mary's Hospital where she was a patient at the time, she wrote that Genevieve and Charlie were waiting to be married, but Charlie was building their home and they had to wait.³⁰ Charles was a building contractor and was well known for the quality of his work.

Genevieve and Helen took good care of their mother. Genevieve also gave Helen a shot of insulin every day for her diabetes. Charles died in October 1968. It is not known when Genevieve died.

Audrey Healy Allen,³¹ (Kate's niece) and her husband, Frank Allen, who also lived in Anaheim, were very good to the three women. Audrey was a nurse and showed Genevieve how to give insulin shots to Helen. She also took care of Kate's leg sore. After Genevieve's death, Audrey and Frank sold Genevieve's home and took care of all the details.

²⁸ Answer to letter from Hope F. Healy from the College of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. Letter not dated.

²⁹ It is interesting to note that teachers were generally paid about \$50 a month at this time.

³⁰ Letter from Mrs. E. [Hesper] Gray to her brother, Gerald, September 30, 1930, Long Beach, California.

³¹ Sister of Hope F. Healy

Chapter 14: Katherine Kathleen "Kate" Healy and Thomas C. Cummings



Katherine Kathleen "Kate" Cummings holding her great grandson, John Cummings.

Photo courtesy of
Naomi Cummings Hoffman



Gerald James Cummings, 1891-1977, about 21 years old, at Glacier National Park in a Healy Plumbing office

Sources for Katherine Kathleen Healy and Thomas Manford Cummings

1870 Federal Census. Minnesota, Rice County, City of Faribault. p.313, #145, July 1, 1870. *Kate, age 4.*

1875 State Census. Minnesota, Rice County, City of Faribault, May 1, 1875. *Kate, age 9.*

1880 Federal Census. Minnesota, Rice County, City of Faribault. E.D. 148, Ward 4, p.437, #228, June 9, 1880. Family History Library Microfilm 0287560. *Katie, age 13.*

1900 Federal Census. Minnesota, Ramsey County, City of St. Paul., National Archives Roll 786, E.D. 143, Sheet 10B, 9th Ward, 9 June 1900. *Cummings Family was living at 605 Linden St. Thomas was born in May 1858 in New York. He was 42 and his occupation was police officer.*

1920 Federal Census. Minnesota, Ramsey County, New Canada. National Archives Roll 856, E.D. 2, Sheet 14B, January 29, 1920. *Thomas was 65, Kate was 54.*

Baptismal Certificate of Katherine Kathleen Healy. Immaculate Conception Church, Faribault, Rice County, Minnesota. Certificate reads: "Catherine Haley, Child of Patrick Haley and Mary Hope, born in Faribault, Minnesota, on the 29th day of July, 1866, was baptized on the 12th day of August, 1866...by the Rev. G. Keller, the Sponsors being Thomas McKelley and Jeane Haley. Dated September 29, 1998."

Cemetery Card for Hesper A. Gray. Los Angeles, California: Calvary Cemetery & Mausoleum. Section J, Lot 319, Grave 14. *Hesper Agnes Cummings Kerr Gray died 1931.*

Cemetery Card for Charles Sampson. Los Angeles, California: Calvary Cemetery & Mausoleum. Section M, Lot 212, Grave 3. *Card states death or interment on October 28, 1968.*

Death Certificate of Katherine Cummings. Orange County, California: Department of Public Health. *Burial was January 27, 1961, Calvary Cemetery, Los Angeles. Information on death certificate was given by daughter Helen Cummings. Cause of death was cerebral arteriosclerosis. Date of birth on death certificate is incorrect—August 1, 1868. Kate had lived in Anaheim for 17 years, in California for 35 years. Place of death was 122 W. Sycamore, Anaheim.*

Dock, Lavinia L. *History of American Red Cross Nursing*. New York: Macmillan, 1922, p.1480. "American Red Cross Nurses Who Died in War Service or as a Result of Disability Contracted Therein: Mary H. Cummings, d. Oct. 22, 1918, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas." *Copy of relevant pages sent to Hope F. Healy, 17 June, 1998, from the American Red Cross Headquarters, Falls Church, Virginia.*

Email from Claire Hope Cummings [Patricia Cummings] to Hope F. Healy, November 25, 2000.

Chapter 14: Katherine Kathleen "Kate" Healy and Thomas C. Cummings

History of the Police and Fire Departments of the Twin Cities. St. Paul, Minnesota: America Land & Title Register Assn., 1899. *The date of birth for Thomas Cummings and some chronological details printed in this biography are inaccurate.*

Letter from the Superintendant of Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul, Minnesota, in response to letter of Hope F. Healy September 25, 1980. *Information states that Thomas Manford Cummings was buried June 8, 1921, age 68. Burial was in Section 74, Block 6, Lot 2, Grave 2. Mary Hope Cummings was buried in Section 74, Block 6, Lot 2, Grave 2.*

Letter from the College of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota, to Hope F. Healy. Letter not dated. *Verifies attendance at this college for Genevieve Cummings for the 1920-1921 school year.*

Letter to Mrs. J.C. Cummings, White Branch Avenue, #81, Pane, Minnesota, from the American Red Cross National Headquarters, Washington, D.C., January 10, 1919, expressing sympathy for death of Mary Hope Cummings.

Letter from Naomi Cummings Hoffman, June 10, 1986, to Hope F. Healy.

Letter from Urban Cummings, March 5, 2002, to Anne Healy Field.

Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1928. Western Directory Company. p.297.

Map of Calvary Cemetery, Los Angeles, California, showing location of Hesper A. Cummings Gray's grave. *Hesper was buried in Section J, Lot 319, Grave 14.*

Marriage Certificate of Kate Healy and Thomas M. Cummings. Ramsey County, Minnesota: Marriage Records, vol. 7, p.313. St. Vincent's Church [St. Paul, Minnesota]. Witnesses: John Martin & Annie Keating. Family History Library Microfilm 1314517.

Notes from John Donais, grand nephew of Catherine Cummings.

Personal visits with Genevieve Cummings Sampson, Anaheim, California.

Personal visits with Naomi Cummings Hoffman, granddaughter of Katherine Kathleen Healy Cummings.

Photograph of Gravestone for Charles E. Sampson and wife, Genevieve [Cummings]. Los Angeles, California, Calvary Cemetery.

Photograph of Gravestone for Katherine Cummings, 1867-1961, Hesper Cummings, 1894-1931, and Helen Cummings, 1897-1979. Los Angeles, California, Calvary Cemetery. *One gravestone for all three.*

Record of Birth of Alice Genevieve Cummings. St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota: Department of Health. Birth Registers, vol. 6, p.70, #142. Family History Library Microfilm 1309044. *Residence: 605 Linden St.*

History of the Hope and Healy Families

Record of Birth of Gerald James Cummings. St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota: Department of Health, Birth Registers, vol. 1, p.O-22. Family History Library Microfilm 1309044.

Record of Birth of Helen Charlotte Cummings. St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota: Department of Health. Birth Registers, vol. 4, p.60, #3. Family History Library Microfilm 1309044. *Residence: 600 Linden.*

Record of Death of Charles E. Sampson. California Death Index, Death date was October 24, 1968, Orange County, California. Registrar Number 55990, State File Number 125227. Family History Center Microfiche 6334516, #77, p.20,635.

St. Paul City Directory, 1891. St. Paul, Minnesota: R.L. Polk.