

May 27th, 2018



CALL TO WORSHIP

Harpeth Baptist Church

The Old Testament, an overview

Song of Solomon

A True Love Story?

Text: The Book of Song of Solomon

Responsive Reading: Psalm 144

8:30 service

386 Without Him

698 My Country Tis of Thee

379 Faith of Our Fathers

690 Jesus Loves Me

11:00 Service

251 The Lily of the Valley

699 America the Beautiful

When We See Your Face

525 All That Thrills My Soul Is Jesus

This week's special music

[When We See Your Face](#)

Hymn History - America the Beautiful

In 1893, at the age of 33, Katherine Lee Bates, an English professor at Wellesley College, had taken a train trip to Colorado Springs, Colorado, to teach a short summer school session at Colorado College. Several of the sights on her trip inspired her, and they found their way into her poem, including the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the "White City" with its promise of the future contained within its gleaming white buildings; the wheat fields of America's heartland Kansas, through which her train was riding on July 16; and the majestic view of the Great Plains from high atop Pikes Peak.

On the pinnacle of that mountain, the words of the poem started to come to her, and she wrote them down upon returning to her hotel room at the original Antlers Hotel. The poem was initially published two years later in *The Congregationalist* to commemorate the Fourth of July.

In a brief essay that appeared ca. 1925, poet Katharine Lee Bates described her inspiration for writing "America the Beautiful," the poem that would evolve into one of the nation's best-loved patriotic songs, during a trip to Pike's Peak in 1893. Bates was a professor at Wellesley and had traveled west to teach a summer course in Colorado Springs. Bates and the other professors decided to "celebrate the close of the session by a merry expedition to the top of Pike's Peak." They made the ascent by prairie wagon. At the top, Bates later wrote, she was inspired by "the sea-like expanse of fertile country . . . under those ample skies," and "the opening lines of the hymn

floated into my mind." Those opening lines—"O beautiful for spacious skies, / For amber waves of grain, / For purple mountain majesties / Above the fruited plain!"—would eventually become the lyrics of one of the best-known songs in American history.

Bates finished writing "America the Beautiful" before leaving Colorado Springs but didn't think of publishing it until two years later. The poem was first printed in a weekly newspaper, *The Congregationalist*, on July 4, 1895. It quickly caught the public's fancy. Amended versions were published in 1904 and 1911.

Bates's patriotic words were soon set to music, most popularly to composer S. A. Ward's "Materna," the tune to which we sing it today. Celebrating "country loved" and the "patriot dream," the song resonated with Americans from all walks of life and became enormously popular. Within twenty years, Bates (after revising some of the lyrics in 1904) had "given hundreds, perhaps thousands, of free permissions" for "America the Beautiful" to appear "in church hymnals and Sunday School song books of nearly all the denominations; . . . in a large number of regularly published song books, poetry readers, civic readers, patriotic readers . . . in manuals of hymns and prayers, and anthologies of patriotic prose and poetry . . . and in countless periodicals."