



Rose Hartwick Thorpe

*Mishawaka, Indiana
(1850 - 1933)*

*by Travis Childs, South
Bend History Museum*

Rose Hartwick was born in Mishawaka, Indiana in 1850. Her father was a well-respected tailor in Mishawaka. But he made the mistake of co-signing a loan for another man whose business failed, taking Mr. Hartwick's fortune with it. When Rose was ten years old the family moved to Kansas, however an 1860 drought resulted in crop failure on the Kansas farm. The Hartwick family then moved to Litchfield, Michigan, where Mr. Hartwick resumed his tailoring.

The family lived out in the country, where there were no close neighbors and very few books or newspapers available. Concerts and lectures were rare occurrences. Rose, like so many children of that time, lived in a world created by their own intellect and imagination. She made up poems and recited them to her dolls. A book given to her as a gift on her 15th birthday was a collection of Lord Byron's poems. This opened up a whole new world for Rose, who memorized the poems and visualized the scenes.



Photo Courtesy: Travis Childs

In April 1867, Rose borrowed a copy of Peterson's Magazine that contained a story entitled, "Love and Loyalty." It was a true story set in a small town called Chertsey, about 20 miles from London. In the story a girl named Bessie saved her lover by clinging to the clapper of the town's curfew bell so it would not ring. By doing this she prevented her lover from being hanged at the sound of the curfew bell. Rose wrote a poem telling the story.

Rose entitled her new poem, "The Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight" was first published in a magazine called The Detroit Commercial Advisor. Soon the poem was picked up and began appearing in other magazines. Schoolchildren recited it in classrooms and great orators were reading the poem in front of large crowds. The poem eventually made it to England, where it was reported that Queen Victoria shed a tear as she read the poem.

Rose eventually married a Mr. Thorpe, who was an invalid, and Rose began supporting her new family by writing for publications including, Temperance Tales, Well-Spring, Words of Life and Golden Days. She received an honorary degree from Hillsdale College in 1883.

Rose Hartwick Thorpe eventually moved to California where she died in 1933.
