

Dr. Kate Waller Barrett
(1857-1925)

Catherine Harwood Waller was the daughter of Withers Waller (1825-1900) and Anne Eliza Stribling (1832-1903) of *Clifton* in Wide Water (Widewater). Her parents operated one of the largest seine fisheries on the east coast and Kate was one of eight daughters who reached maturity. She married Robert South Barrett (1851-1896), an Episcopal minister at Aquia Church.

While assisting him with his work in Richmond, Virginia, Kentucky, and Atlanta, Georgia, Kate became aware of the social problems that would become her life's work. In 1892, she earned a medical degree from the Women's Medical College of Georgia and in 1894, an honorary Doctor of Science degree. She also studied nursing at the Florence Nightingale Training School in London, England. She was most concerned about unmarried mothers and in 1893 joined with Charles N. Crittenton to found the first Florence Crittenton Home for unwed mothers. She became General Superintendent of the National Florence Crittenton Mission and from 1909 until her death, was its president. She was also president of the American Legion Auxiliary (1922-1923); president of the National Council of Women (1911-1916); vice president of the Conference of Charities and Corrections of Virginia. She was active in the Parent-Teacher Associations, the National Congress of Mothers, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the National League of Social Services, vice president of the Virginia Equal Suffrage (1909-1920) and was a charter member of the League of Women Voters. In 1924 she was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Her speech received a standing ovation and she was asked to consider running for the Governor of Virginia. Kate was part of the American delegation at the Versailles Conference in 1919 at the end of World War I and was a delegate at the Zurich Peace Conference that same year. Between 1914 and 1919 she was Special Representative of the U. S. Government in Europe advising on women's issues for the Bureau of Immigration. Kate was a member of the Board of Trustees for the College of William and Mary. When she died in 1925, the flag over the Virginia State Capitol was flown half-staff, the first time a woman was so honored.



The Barrett Family



This picture hangs in the Kate Waller Barrett Library in Alexandria.