

# Poetry & Music

## Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935)

### *The Torrent*

*I found a torrent falling in a glen  
Where the sun's light shone silvered and leaf-split;  
The boom, the foam, and the mad flash of it  
All made a magic symphony; but when  
I thought upon the coming of hard men  
To cut those patriarchal trees away,  
And turn to gold the silver of that spray,  
I shuddered. Yet a gladness now and then  
Did wake me to myself till I was glad  
In earnest, and was welcoming the time  
For screaming saws to sound above the chime  
Of idle waters, and for me to know  
The jealous visionings that I had had  
Were steps to the great place where trees and torrents go.*

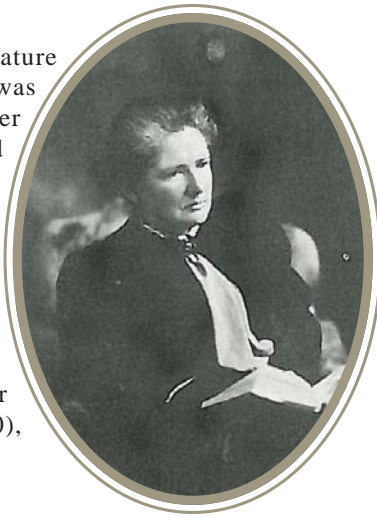


Described as “a poet’s poet” of consummate artistry, Edwin Arlington Robinson spent his first 28 years at the family residence on Lincoln Avenue in Gardiner. This city suggested many mythical characters to the Pulitzer Prize winning poet, including “Richard Cory” who first appeared in his volume *The Torrent and The Night Before*. He received Pulitzer Prizes for his books: *Collected Poems* (1921), *The Man Who Died Twice* (1924), and *Tristram* (1927).

Robinson wrote many poems of epic length, but he is best remembered for his “Tilbury Town” poems. When asked about Tilbury Town, he once said in a note to his friend and mentor, Laura Richards, that “Gardiner may be responsible, in a shadowy way, for Tilbury Town.”

## Laura E. Richards (1850-1943)

Gardiner’s grand lady of literature and civic leadership, she was born in Boston, the daughter of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe and Julia Ward Howe. In 1871, she married Henry Richards and moved to Yellow House in 1878, where she wrote ninety books, mostly for children, and several biographies, including one about her mother which received the first Pulitzer Prize in biography. Her most popular book was *Captain January* (1890), twice made into movies.



Four generations: Julia Ward Howe (center) is holding her great grandson, Henry Shaw. At right is her daughter, Laura Richards. On the left, is Julia Ward (Richards) Shaw, Laura’s daughter.

Julia Ward Howe was a leader in the women’s movement and the peace movement which led to the establishment of Mother’s Day. A classical scholar, poet, and social reformer, she was widely published. One of her best known pieces was the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.



This 1897 group photo included Laura Richards (in profile in center) and the young poet Robinson (in dark suit). In one decade, the two of them garnered four Pulitzer Prizes.

Additional Gardiner authors in the group were Professor John Hays Gardiner of Harvard (seated in center front) and Professor Robert Hallowell Richards of M.I.T. (top right in black bowtie).

Other well-regarded Gardiner authors of the time were Dr. Alanson Tucker Schuman, Judge Henry Sewall Webster, and Caroline Swan.

## Kate Vannah (1855-1926)

Her career as a pianist started at the age of nine and took her to Boston and New York. She published two books of poetry, *Verses* (1883) and *From Heart to Heart* (1897), and composed over two hundred pieces, including music for Dr. Heath’s “Flag Song” and the hymn for the International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago in 1926.



A graduate of Hahnemann College in Chicago, she returned to her native Gardiner to practice as a homeopathic physician. Although regarded as a successful doctor, her real niche in Gardiner’s history is that of poet and writer of the “Flag Song” (1899), later set to music by Kate Vannah. It became one of the most popular songs sung by school children across the nation.

## Dr. Gertrude Heath (1859-1935)

