



**Name:** Kate Gleason

**Years:** November 25, 1865 – January 9, 1933

**Place:** Rochester, New York

### **Brief Biography**

Kate Gleason was born in November 25, 1865 in Rochester, New York. As a young girl, she could often be found working in a machine shop owned by her father. As she aged, she was given the responsibility of looking after the company's finances.

As a young lady, she kept her sights held high. She was a student at Cornell University. However, before she finished the year, she had returned to work for her father. In 1890, when he father's business was incorporated, Kate was promoted to the secretary-treasurer. In addition to looking after the business, she also served as a saleswoman, the first woman of the time to do such an activity. She would travel to various places to try to sell the machine tools created by the business. Because of the fact that she was a female, buyers were astounded by her knowledge. However, it was no surprise to her because she had worked so long with her father that she had gained a wealth of information. She was soon travelling to Europe to gather orders.

After the depression, Kate and her father's company had to switch to gear cutting machinery. Soon after, Kate left the business and moved on to become a receiver in bankruptcy for a different company. This was a tremendous event because she was the first women to have this position. She was able to turn that business around.

After some time had passed, Kate had become the acting president for the First National Bank of East Rochester. She had been the first women to hold this position and was selected because the president had to serve the country in the war.

Kate then focused her interest to home building where she was able to construct small communities, rebuilt a castle, built a library, and also built a movie theater.

### **Major Achievements**

Kate Gleason was the first woman to act as a travelling saleswoman. She was also the first woman to be president of a bank, the first woman member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and the first woman to be part of Verein Deutscher Ingenieure.

### **For More Information**

The Rochester Institute of Technology archives, "Kate Gleason's Careers," *Woman Citizen*, by Eve Chappell, "Kate Gleason's Adventures in a Man's Job," *American Magazine*, by Helen Christine Bennett, *Fourscore Years of Bevel Gearing*, *The Gleason Works, 1865-1950*, and *The Gleason Works, 1865-1965*.

**Resources:** American National Biography Online  
<http://www.rit.edu/alumni/ihf/inductee.php?inductee=6>