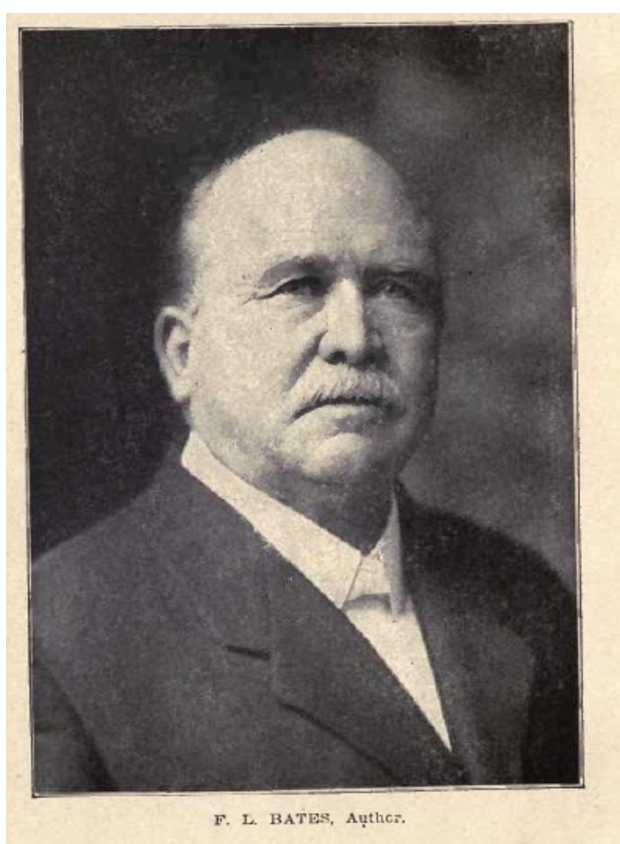


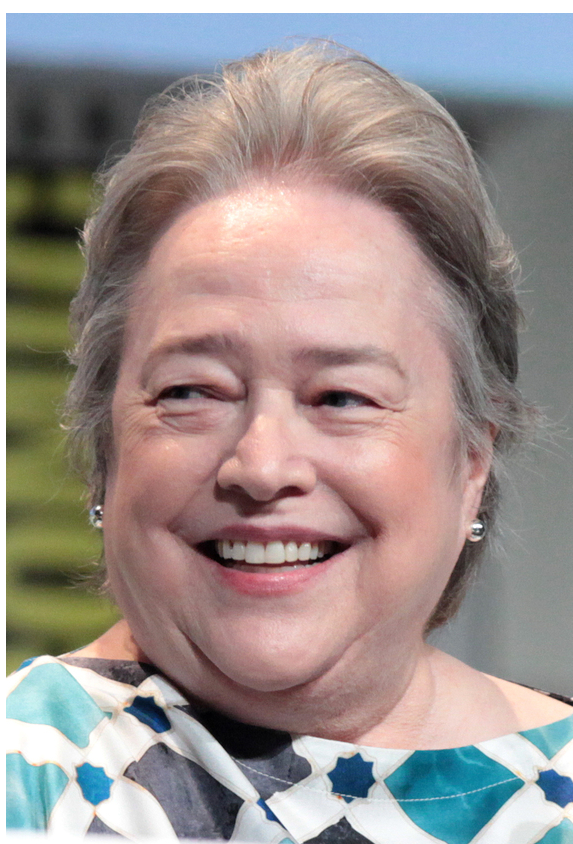


Family of Actress Kathy Bates has a Rich and Unusual Civil War History

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., May 4, 2020
blueandgrayeducation.org



Finis Bates | LOC



Kathy Bates | Gage Skidmore

Almost everyone has seen a TV show or movie in which Kathy Bates has starred: *The Waterboy*, *Titanic*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Misery*, *Harry's Law*, *American Horror Story*, and *The Big Bang Theory*, just name a few.

She grew up in Memphis, and her family has some fascinating Civil War characters.

Her grandfather was Finis Bates. In 1873, in Granbury, Texas, Finis met John St. Helen, and this encounter would later alter Bates' life. St. Helen claimed to really be John Wilkes Booth. He told Finis he escaped capture in 1865 and had traveled around Oklahoma, Colorado, and Texas as a salesman. Bates spent time with him but soon parted ways and would not see him alive again. St. Helen—using another alias—had killed himself, and in his papers he had requested that Finis Bates be asked to identify him following his death in 1903. With no one to claim the body, Finis took possession of it and stored it in his garage in Memphis. He would tour the mummified body at different side shows and events for the next 15 years. Finis honestly believed that St. Helen was Booth, the killer of President Lincoln. In 1904, the body was displayed at the St. Louis World's Fair, and Bates tried to sell his friend to Henry Ford for \$1,000. Ford refused.



John Wilkes Booth | LOC



John St. Helen | LOC

In 1920, Bates rented the body to William B. Evans—known as the "Carnival King of the Southwest." Bates died in 1923, so Evans took ownership of St. Helen/Booth and displayed him in a Pullman train car on his potato farm in Idaho. In the 1930s the body was seen at various circus shows and display tents. In 1938, LIFE magazine ran a story about the travels of the body of St. Helen and included photos. By the 1950s he was stored in a house in Philadelphia. He was last seen in the 1970s at a carnival in Illinois.

Kathy Bates' Civil War story does not end with her grandfather. Finis married Madge Doyle, and she was the daughter of 1st Lieutenant, Confederate States Army, Jack Doyle. Lt. Doyle fought with the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, which was formed by Nathan Bedford Forrest. In fact, Jack was part of Forrest's command that rode their horses into the Gayoso Hotel during a raid into Memphis to scare the Yankee occupiers. Doyle served as Shelby County sheriff after the War Between the States and died in 1907.

One more story: Finis had a brother named William Stout Bates. He served in the 13th Mississippi Infantry fighting under Robert E. Lee in Virginia. His Civil War-era house still stands in Houston, Chickasaw County, Mississippi.

So, actress Kathy Bates comes by her showmanship and bravado naturally, having family that displayed those qualities before she was born.



Jack Doyle | Find A Grave



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