

# The Story of Kate Shelley.



Kate was 15 on the night of July 6, 1881, when a big rainstorm hit near Honey Creek in the Des Moines River Valley in Iowa.

On that night, Kate was up late and heard a work locomotive tumble off the Honey Creek bridge into the water. Kate's father, who had died in 1878, had been a section man for the Chicago & Northwestern (C&NW), so Kate understood railroad operations.

Risking her life, Kate made her way across the broken parts of the bridge in the storm and the dark. The lantern she was carrying blew out, and she could do nothing for the train crew of the locomotive that now was at the mercy of the waters below. Instead, she hurried on to the Moingona depot because she knew the *Midnight Limited*, full of passengers, was on its way.

Kate arrived at the depot in time for the agent to flag down the train. Many lives were saved by the girl who had crawled across the broken bridge to reach the depot. Newspapers across the country

wrote about the brave girl and donations came in to pay off the family mortgage.

Kate, who never married, tried college and then teaching for a while, but neither suited her. In 1903, the C&NW made her the station agent in Moingona, where she worked until she died in 1912.

Because the rail line getting to Moingona was steep and had many curves, additional locomotives had to be put on trains when they came through the area to help push the trains out of the Des Moines River Valley.

A new Boone Viaduct, and main line, were built north of Moingona that bypass the hills and curves, enabling trains to operate more efficiently.

The new bridge was named for Kate Shelley to honor her heroic efforts on that stormy night on July 6, 1881.