



Academy of Authors
South Carolina

Born on October 24, 1824, Susan Petigru King was the youngest of James and Jane Petigru's four children. Despite her family's comfortable economic status in the elite society of Charleston, King's life was full of emotional hardship.

Following the death of Susan's brother, Jane isolated herself and became addicted to morphine. Susan was able to distance herself by attending Madame Talvande's French School for Young Ladies in Charleston, where she studied chemistry, literature, and art. She then attended Madame Binns's School and began sending letters home that showed signs of depression and dissatisfaction with the way society operated, particularly for women.

In 1837, James Petigru lost most of his fortune. His wife forced her daughters to search for partners, stressing to them the importance of wealth over love. In 1843, Susan married Henry Campbell King, but the couple was not compatible. While Susan was ambitious, her husband was not. They lived with his parents for several years, until Henry's father bought the family their own home. At the time, divorce was illegal in South Carolina, so after six years of marriage, Susan and her sister began traveling north to escape their unhappy home lives.

Their miserable marriages would later be showcased in King's writing. In 1853, she published *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*, a collection of stories that focused on women of the antebellum period and the romantic relationships they engaged in. In 1855, she published *Lily* and, four years later, *Sylvia's World: Crimes Which the Law Does Not Reach*. The latter collection includes "A Marriage of Persuasion," which portrays an unhappy marriage based on King's own experiences. In 1864, she published *Gerald Gray's Wife*, which implies marriage is an institution that constricts both parties.

Susan P. King passed away on December 11, 1875, in Charleston.

- Anna Patton

1994 Inductees to the South Carolina Academy of Authors



Susan Petigru King