



Caroline Gilman was born on October 8, 1794 in Boston, Massachusetts. At the age of three, her father died, and her mother moved her and her siblings from place to place, finally settling in Cambridge, MA. Though her grade school experience was fragmented, a strong interest in reading and writing still grew within her. When she was sixteen, Gilman became a member of the Episcopal Church at Cambridge and, at the age of eighteen, she bought a bible. In the margins of the bible she wrote poems and notes about her religious convictions.

In 1819, Gilman was married and moved to Charleston, SC, where her husband was hired as a minister of the Second Independent Church. In 1832, she established and edited the *Southern Rosebud*, a semi-weekly children's literary journal. The paper was Gilman's way of stressing the importance for children to follow a righteous path. In 1835, she changed the journal's name to the *Southern Rose* and targeted it toward adults.

In 1834, Gilman decided to collect a number of stories she wrote for the paper into a single publication, which was titled *Recollections of a Housekeeper*. This collection was filled with humorous anecdotes revolving around the changes that occur in a relationship after a woman gets married.

Recollections of a Southern Matron, Gilman's second collection of tips for the newly married housewife, was published in 1836. In 1839, she edited *The Letters of Eliza Wilkinson during the Invasion of Charleston*, which is one of the few memoirs from the period of the Revolutionary War.

In 1840, Gilman wrote *Ruth Raymond*. This novel follows the life of the title character from her birth in a village on the Hudson River to her blossoming womanhood. In 1841, artist Charles Fraser painted a portrait of Ruth Raymond entitled *Girl with Kitten*. The painting, inspired by an excerpt from Gilman's novel, portrays Ruth sitting, reading on the low branch of a tree. She is holding a book in one hand and a white kerchief in the other, with which she seems to be teasing a kitten.

By the end of the Civil War, Gilman's reputation suffered. Her advocacy for slavery placed her on the opposing side of the national debate on human equality. Caroline Gilman died on September 15, 1888 in Washington, D.C.

- Blake Bolen

1990 Inductee to the South Carolina Academy of Authors



Image Courtesy www.harvardartmuseum.org
Painted by John Wesley Jarvis

Caroline Gilman