

Shipp, Catherine (Kate) Cameron ^[1]

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By Martha S. Stoops, 1994

18 Mar. 1859–16 Nov. 1932

Catherine (Kate) Cameron Shipp, teacher and administrator, was born in Hendersonville, the daughter of [William Marcus](#) ^[2] and Catherine Cameron Shipp. After attending the preparatory school in Lincolnton operated by Miss Mary Wood Alexander and [St. Mary's School](#) ^[3] in [Raleigh](#) ^[4], she pursued further studies at [Harvard](#) ^[5] and at Cambridge University, England.

For over forty years Kate Shipp was an educator in North Carolina. She taught in the public schools of [Charlotte](#) ^[6] and [Raleigh](#) ^[4], at [St. Mary's School](#) ^[3] (now St. Mary's College), and at the Charlotte Female Institute (now [Queens College](#) ^[7]), and she operated two private schools. During the late 1880s, she taught mathematics at the Charlotte Female Institute, where she also was associate principal. She returned to St. Mary's to teach from 1894 to 1897. It was her custom to chaperone small groups of students to Europe during the summer.

By 1898 Kate Shipp and her sister, Mrs. Anna Shipp McBee, had opened in Lincolnton a school to prepare boys and girls for college. This school, which they named the Mary Wood School to honor their former teacher, operated successfully for about four years. Miss Shipp closed it in order to study in England (1902–4). She returned to [St. Mary's](#) ^[3] with a teacher's diploma from [Cambridge](#) ^[8] and taught mathematics and English literature (1904–6).

In 1907 Miss Shipp established in Lincolnton her [Fassifern School](#) ^[9] "to prepare girls for the best colleges, or to be self-supporting, and to help them become lovers of the best in literature, music, and art." The catalogue plainly stated, "This is not a school for the idle and would-be fashionable young lady." Situated in a large house overlooking the South Fork River, the school was described as a Christian home giving individual attention and emphasizing religious and physical training and ladylike behavior as well as scholarship. Miss Shipp was assisted by Mrs. McBee and a strong faculty. By 1914 Fassifern was overcrowded despite an addition, and Miss Shipp accepted the offer of financial backing from a Hendersonville group that wanted the prestigious school in its community. Located in that salubrious climate on a spacious and well-equipped campus, the school prospered. By 1923 the student body numbered over one hundred from ten states. After the death of Mrs. McBee (25 Dec. 1924), Kate Shipp sold Fassifern School to the Reverend Joseph R. Sevier, D.D., and retired to Lincolnton.

The more than two hundred graduates of Fassifern organized the Kate Shipp Alumnae Association and held annual reunions with their former headmistress. Kate Shipp was an excellent teacher—demanding but fair and possessed of a sense of humor. A large and imposing woman, she inevitably was called "the Ship of State" by her pupils. Her qualities of leadership—a forceful personality, a highly trained intellect, discriminating judgment, and business ability—prompted a leading lawyer to remark that she would have made a great governor of her native state.

Kate Shipp died in Lincolnton and was buried in the family plot at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. She had been a devout and active Episcopalian.

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