Kate Gleason Encyclopedia Article

Kate Gleason

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Kate Gleason

1865-1933

American engineer and businesswoman who became the first female president of a United States bank, as well as the first woman to join the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Kate Gleason was born in Rochester, New York. At the age of 12, she began working in her father's machine-tool factory. In 1884, she was admitted to Cornell University, where she studied mechanical arts. After graduation, she helped her father create a machine that beveled (or cut at an angle other than 90 degrees) gears quickly and cheaply. American industrialist Henry Ford (1863-1947) called the invention "the most remarkable work ever done by a woman." From 1890-1901 she served as secretary-treasurer of her father's company, helping make Gleason Works a leading producer of gear-cutting machinery. In 1913, Gleason went out on her own and four years later became the first woman president of Rochester's First National Bank. In 1918, she also became the first woman elected to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.