



IRENE HUNT

Irene Hunt was born in Pontiac, Illinois on May 18, 1907. Her parents, Franklin and Sarah Hunt, soon moved the family to Newton, Illinois. When her father died in 1914, Hunt went to live at her grandparents' farm, and it was there that she heard her grandfather's stories of his boyhood during the Civil War. The stories she heard from her grandfather became the basis of the story of Jethro in *Across Five Aprils*.

Hunt graduated from the University of Illinois in Urbana and went on to the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, where she earned her master's degree. In public school in Oak Park, Illinois, she taught English and French and then pursued advanced graduate work in psychology at the University of Colorado in Boulder. She later taught psychology at the University of South Dakota but returned to Illinois to teach elementary and junior high school. Hunt became the Director of Language Arts in the Cicero schools before retiring from teaching in 1969, and devoting her time to writing.

Irene was fifty-seven when she published her first novel. When *Across Five Aprils* was released in 1965, it received a great deal of acclaim. Selected as a Newberry Honor Book, the novel also received a Lewis Carroll Shelf Award and was Hunt's personal favorite among the books she wrote.

Her second novel, *Up a Road Slowly*, was awarded the Newberry Medal in 1967. This was also one of the books given to the White House by the American Bookseller Association in 1970. Hunt's next work was *Trail of Apple Blossoms* (1968). She then published *No Promises in the Wind* (1970), *The Lottery Rose* (1976), *William* (1977), *Claws of a Young Country* (1980), and finally *Everlasting Hills* (1985), which won the Parents' Choice Award in 1985.

Hunt once said, "Words have always held a fascination for me, causing me to be teased often as a child when I used them lavishly without having the slightest idea of their meaning. The wish to write pages full of words, to make them tell the stories that I dreamed about, haunted me from childhood on." She also said that during her years as teacher, she found that it was better to teach history through literature, and so she wrote books that would help her students better understand history.