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The Road is Still Rough;
The Contribution of The Latimer
Sisters to Georgia's Temperance
and Suffrage Work, 1880-1921

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

1994

By

Carole A. Stevens

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INTRODUCTION

The lives of Rebecca Latimer Felton (1835-1930) and Mary Latimer McLendon (1837-1921) span Georgia history from frontier ante-bellum days to the modern industrialized New South. The sisters were outspoken social reformers who criticized Georgia governments between Reconstruction and World War I. since it was unusual for southern ladies to lead temperance, suffrage or other reform movements, they encountered as many opponents as supporters. In this study I will analyze the sisters' opinions and those of their adversaries in order to examine changing gender roles and racial relations in Georgia from 1880 to 1921. The opposing views of the Latimer sisters and their antagonists enlivened Georgia political debate during its most stagnant period; the reformers were energized by their opponents.

When Rebecca and Mary Latimer were born, the northern woman suffrage and temperance movements were loosely organized offshoots of the abolitionist crusade.¹ Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and northern women who attended the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 had to fight for the vote and battle the perception that women's rights were secondary to Abolitionism. Southern white women, on the other hand, were insulated from the northern struggle by their hatred for

¹ Anne Firor Scott, Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History, (Urbana, IL., 1991), pp. 54-57.

Abolitionism. Most southern women were also isolated from one another by the rural nature of southern ante-bellum life.

The few southern women who lived in cities or larger towns in ante-bellum times behaved comparably to northern women where social reforms were concerned. Savannah women, for instance, organized a charitable association that founded the Savannah Female Orphan Asylum. The women members First Presbyterian Church in Augusta founded a similar society in 1929 to discuss missionary work in foreign countries and care for widows and orphans. The pastor and other men were usually involved in the Augusta society and other such associations. Temperance societies, open to both sexes, were formed as a consequence of the Methodist and Presbyterian doctrines against drinking.²

Northern women reformers came south in the 1830s and 1840s to assess conditions in hospitals, jails and homes for the poor. Dorothea Dix of Boston visited the hospitals and prisons in Augusta, Macon, Milledgeville and Savannah on her inspection tour of western and southern cities in the summer and fall of 1846. Dix was a school teacher who developed ideas of improving the lives of the poor from teaching Sunday School classes at a woman's jail near Boston. She concluded

² Scott, Making the Invisible Woman Visible, (Urbana, IL., 1984), pp. 266, 277; LeeAnn Whites, "The Charitable and the Poor: The Emergence of domestic Politics in Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1880," Journal of Social History, Summer 1984, vol. 17, no. 3, p. 602.

that living conditions in Georgia's hospital were terrible, while those in the jails were good. She persuaded Governor Georgia W. Crawford to fund a library for the prisoners in Milledgeville. She lectured urban Georgians on her findings and proposals incarcerating jail inmates, the insane and the poor more humanely. She almost certainly inspired the members of the temperance associations to continue improving living conditions for prisoners, the poor and mentally ill.³

Ante-bellum southern white women had other opportunities to learn about northern reform movements. Many northern publications such as Harper's had large numbers of southern readers although the more radical journals like The Liberator were not allowed to circulate in this region.⁴ These women might also have learned of northern reform activities through newspapers published outside the South or from articles reprinted in southern newspapers. Some ante-bellum southerners observed northern temperance or abolition rallies while traveling in the north on business or pleasure. They might have read about or attended lectures by members of the Washingtonian Society whose members vividly described personal triumphs over alcohol or the fraternal Sons of Temperance

³ Helen E. Marshall, Dorothea Dix: Forgotten Samaritan, (Chapel Hill, 1937) pp. 60-61, 113.

⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, (Chapel Hill, 1988), chapters one, six and seven.

which were attracting converts by the thousands in the 1840s. The Sons of Temperance would found a Georgia chapter in Atlanta in the early 1850s that attracted Dr. William H. Felton, Rebecca Latimer's husband.⁵

Georgians who travelled in the north in the 1840s and 1850s might also have read of the growing agitation among women for a greater role in the temperance societies. Members of the Daughters of Temperance, like Susan B. Anthony, became outraged enough at being told to be quiet and learn from the male temperance lecturers to organize their own temperance conventions in the 1850s. Anthony and many other women temperance workers became activists for woman's rights because of such treatment. The women who demanded equal representation at temperance conventions joined those, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who were force to sit behind a curtain at the World Antislavery Convention in London in 1840. These drives for respect led women to convene the woman's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The campaign to make the United States Constitution's basic freedoms apply directly to women which eventually enlisted the Latimer sisters, had begun.⁶

⁵ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 44.

⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

Many well educated young northern men and women came south between the 1810s and the 1840s to be tutors on plantations or principals of academies. Graduates of Emma Willard's female academy in Troy, New York, founded academically oriented schools for girls in Sparta (1819), Rome (1837) and Augusta (c. 1840).⁷ Since these women corresponded with their classmates and Willard in New York, they might well have discussed northern social progress with their southern students. They also promoted further educational opportunities for women. The members of southern church congregations and fraternal orders, like the Masons, founded female academies in every Georgia town, that tended to be less intellectually rigorous than Willard's. The Methodists who established Wesleyan College in Macon in 1836 were influenced by the national growth of womens' educational opportunities.⁸

Rebecca and Mary Latimer were young enough to attend school during the time when female academies were becoming fixtures in Georgia cities. The sisters believed that the benefits of their early education influenced their entire adult lives. Felton recalled that such education gave planters' wives a glimpse of a world beyond their domestic

⁷ Scott, Invisible Woman, pp. 72-73.

⁸ Rebecca L. Felton, Country Life in Georgia in the Days of My Youth, (New York, 1980 reprint from the 1919 edition), pp. 10-20.

duties and intellectual outlets when women's educational opportunities were limited and foreign travel non-existent. Such women frequently left school at fourteen to get married and become the mothers of more than one child before they were twenty. While the Latimers waited until they were over seventeen to marry, they would love reading and learning for the rest of their lives.⁹

The sisters married shortly before the Civil War and, like so many other southern women, suffered hardships during General Sherman's Georgia campaigns. Immediately after the War, Rebecca Latimer Felton and her husband, Dr. William H. Felton, taught school in their home in Cartersville. Dr. Felton, an ante-bellum state legislator, re-entered politics as an Independent Democrat in the 1870s. Since Rebecca Felton became his secretary out of financial necessity, she shared in his social reform efforts. This study will consider his political career for comparison with Rebecca L. Felton's social activism. Mary Latimer's husband, Nicholas McLendon, was a successful ante-bellum Atlanta wholesale grocer and wine importer with a deep interest in civic improvement. He

⁹ Felton, Country Life, p. 61.

continued to work for a better Atlanta during Reconstruction. Mary McLendon joined and even surpassed his efforts.¹⁰

Mary Latimer McLendon and Rebecca Latimer Felton became leaders of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the 1880s. They united prohibitionism with woman suffrage by becoming leaders of the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA) and the General Federation of Woman's Clubs in the 1890s. The sisters corresponded with their many friends in the local and national temperance and suffrage crusades. Their unpublished correspondence, letters to the editors of Georgia newspapers, other writings and the records of relevant organizations well demonstrated the effects of social reform efforts on late nineteenth-century Georgia. At the same time, correspondence and journal articles by leading anti-suffragists will provide another perspective on the Latimer sisters and their work. Referring to these documents will enable me to make a contribution that will broaden the historiography of southern women.

This thesis will have nine chapter which will view the Latimer sisters, their associates and opponents chronologically as they developed their ideas from the 1880s through the triumphs of prohibition and woman suffrage in the

¹⁰ George L. Jones, "William H. Felton and the Independent Democratic Movement in Georgia: 1870-1890", (University of Georgia, PhD Dissertation, 1917); Pioneer Citizens History of Atlanta, (Atlanta, 1902) p. 378.

early 1920s. In these chapters, I will discuss the Latimer sister's and other women's thoughts on the Confederacy, woman's education, prohibition, race and woman suffrage. Chapters I and II will survey the ante-bellum lives of the Latimer sisters and their contemporaries.

The woman anti-suffragists were as political as the Latimers and other suffragists but insisted that a woman's place was in the home. Many anti-suffragists supported the "Lost Cause" in the belief that southern women had to defer publicly to men in order to preserve the tradition of ante-bellum plantation society, honor Confederate Veterans, and maintain white supremacy at all costs. They never seemed to understand that many Georgia women, like the Latimer sisters, were drawn to prohibition and suffrage out of concern for their families and communities from the belief that women had a special view of social problems.¹¹ The Latimer sisters' work for social causes in the late nineteenth century will be examined in chapters IV and V.

Georgia's white women asserted themselves for prohibition or woman suffrage during a time of extreme racial turmoil in this State and throughout the South. while white male legislators were disfranchising blacks and erecting the

¹¹ Robert L. Rodgers Collection, box 2, folder 13, no. GAR-27-10, Georgia Department of Archives and History; Eleanore Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Movement in the United States (Cambridge: 1973), pp. 300-306.

barriers of legal segregation, black women organized woman's clubs with the goals of prohibition, better schools or sanitation. The opponents of woman suffrage used racial fears to stifle social change and harass the suffragists with charges that their efforts would return black rule to Georgia. Rebecca Latimer Felton's writings on racial warfare in Georgia and her defense of the WCTU and GWSA have been considered racist by modern historians. In chapter VI, I will analyze her essays on race in order to lessen the harshness of such criticism.

Felton and Mary L. McLendon had become so identified with social reform by the early twentieth century that The Atlanta Journal eulogized McLendon on its front page and claimed:

It is safe to say that Georgia has not had in its whole history two women who were more widely known or who exercised a greater influence upon the thought and events of their time than these two sisters.¹²

Felton and McLendon represented a newer segment of the woman suffrage, not as old as the ante-bellum, abolitionist groups associated with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The GWSA members, led by McLendon, continued lobbying Georgia's Congressmen and Legislators between 1900 and 1920 as they had in the 1880s. Although the sisters corresponded with the leaders of the new radical feminist

¹² "Funeral Tuesday for Mrs. McLendon", The Atlanta Journal, 21 November 1921, front page.

organizations, Georgia woman suffragists never picketed or vandalized public buildings in the manner of the British suffragists or the American National Woman's Party (NWP).¹³ The GWSA members were not public supporters of the Labor Unions or the Socialist Party. They sought to evade the criticism of the nationally organized anti-suffragists (especially the Georgia chapter) who added extremism to their standard accusations of unfemininity and racial liberalism. Because of this relative moderation, the Latimer sisters' leadership, particularly of the GWSA, was challenged by younger suffragists who wanted to attract public attention. The activities of the sisters and their friends during the early 1900s through the passage of woman suffrage will be discussed in chapters VII and VIII.

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary L. McLendon chronicled the changes in books and newspaper articles in Georgia Woman's social reform work from independent, church-sponsored associations immediately after the Civil War to the suffrage militancy of some northern women during World War I. They led many WCTU women, who were not personally political, into

¹³ Jacqueline Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniels Ames and the Woman's Campaign Against Lynching. (New York, 1975), p. 306, n. 66; John E. Talmadge, Rebecca Latimer Felton: Nine Stormy Decades. (Athens: 1960), p. 116; LeeAnn Whites, "Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Wife's Farm: The Class and Racial Politics of Gender Reform", The Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol. 76, no. 2, Summer 1992, pp. 370-372.

suffrage work, the battles against the Convict lease System, and child labor. Since the Latimers and their friends did not fit the stereotype of reactionary and quiet southern women, they have been ignored by people who write about southern history although they have finally been honored as individuals in the Dictionary of Georgia Biography.¹⁴ The analysis of Georgia woman's history remains a neglected field. Ann Firor Scott thought:

Rebecca Felton's sister Mary Latimer McLendon, a pioneer suffragist [was of great significance]. These women's lives and their accomplishments are or should be a vital [narrative] part of the cultural heritage of a state which prides itself on preserving the significant parts of our past. Yet, hardly anyone knows of their existence. Why, indeed, must we wait for historians to give us back even these few? Why do we not have a volume of "Notable Georgia Women".¹⁵

Until recently, writers on the National Woman's Movement have either ignored or misunderstood the nature of women suffrage in the South. They sometimes fail to consider the regional differences in the "cult of domesticity" or mistake the relative lack of extreme Progressivism among southern women for lesser passion. The Latimer sisters' careers, for example, demonstrate the differences between northern and southern woman suffragists and the disputes within the

¹⁴ Dictionary of Georgia Biography, 2 vols., (Athens, 1983).

¹⁵ Scott, Invisible Woman, p. 321. Note efforts along these lines are under way.

southern suffrage movement over the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment. The sisters' work, especially that of Felton, needs to be placed in the context of the national woman's rights struggle after the Civil War. Their ideas represent a more moderate and popular view of suffrage than that of the national crusaders. Felton had a reputation as a crusader against Georgia's convict lease system and as a lecturer on mothers' rights after the 1880s. She and her sister made woman suffrage respectable for the married women WCTU members who found the more radical crusades of the northeastern woman suffrage leaders distasteful. Many of the chroniclers of the northern woman suffragists tend to concentrate on the politics and ideals of the national leaders. While these concepts prepared American society for future changes in the status of women, the study of the popular beliefs of the average woman voter broadens our understanding of the movement.¹⁶

¹⁶ Carl N. Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in American from the Revolution to the Present, (New York, 1980); Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: the Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, (New York, 1959); Aileen Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920, (New York, 1965) are among the general histories of the American suffrage movement that ignore or misunderstand the complex nature of the southern woman suffrage. Catherine Clinton, The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century, (New York, 1984) is an example of the growing recognition of regional differences in the woman suffrage movement.



Rebecca Latimer Felton (left) and her sister Mary Latimer McLendon in a photograph made about 1860. From John Talmadge's Rebecca Latimer Felton: Nine Stormy Decades, p. 12.



The home of William H. and Rebecca L. Felton as it looked about 1960. From Talmadge, Rebecca Latimer Felton, p.12.

also disputed their domination of the memories of antebellum everyday life through her recollections of her maternal grandmother, Mrs. Lucy Talbot Swift:

[the] mother of eleven children, all reaching maturity, except two that lived to eleven and twelve years, her industry, her management and her executive ability in caring for and carrying on her household affairs are still wonderful memories and have continually lingered with me as examples in the progress in my own extended life. It was a fine specimen of a Southern planter's family and home in ante-bellum times. Grandfather had a plantation, a grain mill and a saw mill, which kept him busy with his own duties as a provider, but it was grandmother's skill as a home-maker, with an eye single to her domestic duties and diligent attention to home economies, that impressed me most in that early time of my life when I trotted around after her as she went from the dwelling to the garden, and to the milk dairy, to the poultry house, to the loom house, to the big meat house, where rations were issued once a day, and to the flour and meal house where there was always a superabundance of supplies for white and colored.²

The family kept pigs for meat as well as chickens for meat, eggs and feathers to stuff the family's mattresses and quilts. Rebecca, like her siblings, helped Eleanore, her mother make mattresses later used to begin house-keeping when the children married. She and Eleanore also made quilts and coverlets that were used by the Latimers for years after their marriage.

Eleanore Swift married Charles Latimer in the early 1830's and lived in a large farm house on the highway between the frontier and Augusta. Charles Latimer and William Latimer

² Felton, Country Life, p. 29.

had been given a charter for a post office in 1832.³ The plantation, called "Belmont," was also a stage coach stop and had a blacksmith shop and a country store.⁴ It was a full tavern where people could spend the night while waiting for a coach. Rebecca was always proud of "the long sign-board swinging on high with 'Latimer's Tavern' thereon painted in bright gold letters with a sable background."

Rebecca, her sister and her brother loved to explore the shelves in the store that were stocked with consumer goods purchased in Augusta or Savannah. She recalled how her father read aloud from the weekly newspapers about William Henry Harrison's campaign in 1840 or John Tyler's in 1844 and discussed Whig politics with his neighbors. Most of his customers were hill country farmers, who were either illiterate or could not afford to subscribe to the Southern Recorder and may not have known about national politics.⁵

The Sisters' Education

The Latimers believed that their girls needed education just as much as their son did, an idea which probably set them apart from their neighbors. Charles Latimer, as foreman of

³ Franklin Garrett, Atlanta and Its Environs, (New York, 1952), p. 112.

⁴ Felton, Country Life, p. 57.

⁵ Felton, My Memoirs of Georgia Politics, (Atlanta, 1911), pp. 17-18.

the DeKalb Grand Jury in 1849, expressed unusually progressive thoughts on the value of education when he compelled the justices of the peace to keep better lists of children entitled free schooling. Latimer believed that it was the highest moral, social, political and religious duty to assist the poor in becoming educated. The middle class owed it to themselves, their county and society to care for the poor.⁶ He donated land and financed the construction of a "field" school at "Belmont." He also recruited his neighbors to raise money to pay a teacher, the Reverend Mr. F.M. Haygood, a Baptist minister and uncle of the future Methodist Bishop Atticus G. Haygood.⁷ The Latimer children soon discovered that they needed further education than the "Belmont" school could provide, especially after Haygood married one of his students and left DeKalb County. The schoolhouse burned down while Latimer was looking for a replacement.

The Latimers sold the stage coach inn and moved to Decatur so that Rebecca and Mary could attend the Decatur Female Academy while Charles went to the Boys' Academy. The Latimers found a thriving, prosperous town that in the middle 1840's was still the last settled community before the

⁶ Garrett, p. 284.

⁷ Felton, Country Life, p. 58-60.

frontier.⁸ Major Latimer went on serving as foreman of the Grand Jury.

Rebecca and Mary studied in Decatur with the Reverend Dr. John S. Wilson. Wilson had been called to the frontier community in 1825 to organize the Presbyterian Church. The members held services in the log school house behind the cemetery until the academy was built. The people of Decatur showed their early desire for a cultural life in the creation of the church and school.

Rebecca would later recall her early educational experiences with fondness, especially her Webster's blue backed speller. She was happiest when she was learning to read or write or teaching the youngest students to spell by reading them the work from the book and making the children repeat the lessons.⁹ She was very well prepared for study at the Academy with Dr. Wilson, for whom she later expressed her admiration:

He was a famous teacher because of his thoroughness. The five years of my school life that I spent under his supervision were the very best of all I received and I have reason to thank him because he kept me at spelling lessons year after year, and his grammar instruction was well nigh perfect in its exactness and constant application. That still embraces the secret of a good education. His good influence on that

⁸ Garrett, p. 233. Caroline M. Clark, The Story of Decatur 1822-1899 (Decatur, 1973), pp. 20-25, 70.

⁹ Felton, Country Life, p. 58.

community has been felt for more than half a century as an educator.

However, Dr. Wilson was so firmly opposed to dancing that he threatened to expel any girl who attended the annual ball which was held in the hotel during the Superior Court session. Rebecca was saddened by these rules because she was old enough to go to parties. Her parents convinced her not to attend and face expulsion. They allowed her to have a private party after the school term ended to make up for Dr. Wilson's decree.¹⁰

Rebecca and Mary had to attend school elsewhere after 1847 because their parents were worried that smallpox cases from Atlanta might be spread to Decatur by people travelling on the new railroad. Latimer had built a home for his family near the mill on the Yellow River.¹¹ The house probably had four rooms on the first floor and four rooms on the second one with a central hall and a shed room behind it.¹² The Plantation plan house, from the outside, was built of wooden siding with a central portico over the front door, a balcony opening of the second floor hall and a chimney on either side of the house. Rebecca and Mary walked to school every day

¹⁰ Felton, Country Life, p. 58, 60.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 70.

¹² DeKalb New Era, "Supplement, Illustrated Trade Edition", 14 November, 1912, p. 27, photograph, collection of the DeKalb Historical Society.

except for rainy ones when they rode horseback together. Rebecca never wrote about this school in detail or even mentioned the teacher by name. She recalled, however, that she studied Latin there and continued with her English studies and probably with the piano lessons that she had begun in Oxford.¹³

Rebecca left home to finish her education at the Madison Female Academy around 1849. Mary travelled to Covington to attend the Masonic Female Academy three years later. These schools almost certainly offered courses that were similar to those of the Clinton Female Academy in Jones County and Wesleyan College. The academies tended to combine the art, music, French and needlework courses of the finishing schools with some of the classes in rhetoric, belles lettres, ancient languages, and some sciences popular in the male academies.¹⁴ Male writers in the early 1840s condemned, in a biased manner, the county female academies for educating girls shallowly and routinely. These students were hurriedly trained to memorize selections from textbooks on subjects from chemistry to mathematics. The girls were not given a deep understanding of any discipline, including music. The Georgia Female College,

¹³ Felton, Country Life, p. 60, 70.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 70; "Her Two Ambitions Realized Mrs. McLendon Goes to Reward", Atlanta Constitution, front page, 21 November, 1921; Spencer B. King, Georgia Voices: a Documentary History to 1872 (Athens, 1966).

later Wesleyan, was founded in 1836 to provide girls with a more rigorous training in languages or the sciences, in opposition to the low opinions of some writers. Wesleyan's students shared with the academies that the Latimer sisters attended a dedication to public examination and strict student decorum.

Rebecca and Mary would not have studied all of these subjects equally, since curriculum varied, depending on the talents of the principal and his wife. They and the Methodists, Presbyterians or Masonic trustees selected the teachers.¹⁵ The sisters did not have much time for those "[rides] along leafy roads that crept through [the] giant forests [of southern DeKalb County] crossing clear [river] branches" that they loved as children.¹⁶ Rebecca graduated from the Methodist Georgia Female College with highest honors in 1852, while Mary graduated from the Southern Masonic Female Seminary near the top of her class in 1856.¹⁷

¹⁵ Florence F. Corley, Higher Education for Southern Women; Four Church-Related Women's Colleges in Georgia, Agnes Scott, Shorter, and Wesleyan, 1900-1920, (Atlanta, 1985), p. 27; Inez P. Cumming, "Madison: Middle Georgia Minerva", The Georgia Review, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 129.

¹⁶ Felton, Romantic Story of Georgia Women, (Atlanta, 1930), p. 14.

¹⁷ Country Life, p. 71; "Funeral for Mrs. McLendon," Constitution.

The sisters performed in the concerts and recitals that made these Academies the center of social life in Covington or Madison. Rebecca lived in Madison for three years in the home of the Reverend Mr. Lucius Wittich, a well-known Methodist preacher and teacher.¹⁸ She was warmly remembered by older people in Madison. Old Madisonians recalled that Rebecca was a vivacious girl when she studied under the Reverend Mr. J.G. Pierce, the first president of the Methodist Female College.

Dr. William H. Felton

Dr. William Harrell Felton, Rebecca's future husband, was an alleged professor at the Academy. A Methodist minister in great demand as a preacher in the late 1840's and 1850's, he spoke at so many commencements and recitals that it seemed as if he had been on the faculty.¹⁹ He preached at the commencement when Rebecca Ann Latimer made the valedictory address in 1852. She and her husband were so well remembered in Madison because they were certainly the most famous Georgians ever connected to the school.

Dr. William Felton was twenty-nine when he married the eighteen-year old Rebecca on 11 October, 1853. Born on a farm in Oglethorpe County, east of Athens, in 1823, he had moved with his parents to Athens in 1835. They wanted their only

¹⁸ Cumming, p. 129.

¹⁹ Cumming, p. 129; Lucy J. Cunyus, The History of Bartow County, formerly Cass, (Cartersville), p. 283.

child to receive more education than he could have obtained in the field schools. William Felton had graduated from Franklin College in 1842. He had studied medicine for two years with Dr. Richard A. Moore of Athens and graduated from the Medical College of Georgia at the top of his class in 1844. He married Anne Carlton of Athens or Augusta, in 1845.²⁰

Dr. William H. Felton, his first bride, and his parents moved to Cartersville in Cass County in 1847 where he initially practiced medicine. When he discovered that medicine was too stressful, he joined his father in farming and they eventually became two of the larger slave owners in a region not known for enormous plantations.²¹ Felton believed he received a call to preach and became a licensed Methodist minister, the founder of Felton's Methodist Chapel in Cartersville and several in other parts of the county. While he allegedly never received money for preaching, he probably was paid in produce or meat since he lived in a community where produce was often a means of payment.²²

He began speaking on political subjects in Watkinsville, south of Athens, at the end of the 1840's. His neighbors came to respect Dr. Felton so much that they elected him to the

²⁰ Cunyus, p. 283-6; Felton, Memoirs, p. 14.

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 1860 Cass County Slave Schedule.

²² Cunyus, p. 283; Felton, Memoirs, p. 14.

State Legislature in 1850 on the Whig ticket. He put the interests of his neighbors first at the session of 1851, and especially after the Whig Party disintegrated, concentrated on local politics. He served on the Penitentiary Committee and helped create the Committee to Investigate the Improvements at the Deaf and Dumb Institute at Cave Spring in Floyd County.²³

The Doctor was developing attitudes towards temperance, woman's education and other social problems that Rebecca and her sister would pursue into the twentieth century. He supported woman's education with his vote to charter a group of female academies, including the one Mary Latimer attended. The trustees of the Deaf and Dumb Institute received the money they needed to enlarge the school's buildings. Dr. Felton was in the minority in voting to spend more money to repair the State Insane Asylum. He began promoting his prohibitionist ideal with a minority vote in favor of both an increase in liquor license fees and a limitation of the number of licenses in Effingham County. He was granted a leave of absence before the House voted to charter the Sons of Temperance in Atlanta and other cities. He voted against the creation of more railroad companies whenever the early corporations sought land for rights of way or permission to sell stock.²⁴

²³ Georgia Hose Journal, (Milledgeville, 1851), p. 57, 86.

²⁴ House Journal, p. 129, 139, 214-6, 267-9.

The Doctor continued to be concerned about penitentiary affairs because he had been on the State House of Representatives Penitentiary Committee in 1851. He knew that prisoners usually worked for the state building railroad box cars, forging rails or cutting timber for fuel and cross ties and almost certainly did not approve of the convicts' duties. He was aware that petty criminals and the destitute insane could be leased individually to local farmers to spare the government the expense of caring for them.²⁵ Georgia did not need to maintain a large penitentiary or hospital in antebellum times because planters cared for their own family members and slaves were disciplined on the spot. Felton and the other members of the penitentiary committee confronted an increasingly difficult situation after 1850 with the growing number of runaway slaves, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. Alleged escaped slaves were chained together for transportation south and sale to sugar planters on the Gulf Coast. While the Doctor and his fellow committeemen were comfortable with these forms of captive labor, they would never have condoned the Reconstruction Era practice of leasing the entire penitentiary to a single corporation.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 57; Marshall, p. 113.

Dr. Felton began building the populist image that he would use so successfully in his Congressional races in the 1870's. This young minster-politician looked like one of the farmers that he represented. He was a tall, bony man with stiff black hair and deep brown eyes and usually wore nondescript black suits.²⁶ He was a popular speaker who had made friends outside of his district during his term in the legislature. He did not run for the legislature in 1852, but the Sons of Temperance in Atlanta elected him president of their 1855 Convention.²⁷

Dr. Felton was so opposed to the National Democratic Party that he voted against paying delegates to attend the Democratic Convention of 1852.²⁸ He probably opposed the Democrats' insistence on presidential authority and high tariffs. He could not join the American Party because of its emphasis on confining slavery to the south and its opposition to Catholic and Jewish immigration. Since there were few Jews or Catholics outside of large Georgia cities, the party had

²⁶ The Atlanta Herald, "Felton; the Famous Country Parson Has Run Over the 7th District; A Resume of the Red-Hot Fight in the 7th; What Felton Thinks of Doing and What His Friends Want Him to Do." c. October 1874, Felton Scrapbook I, Peel 17, Collection 81, University of Georgia.

²⁷ Felton, Memoirs, p. 23-24.

²⁸ House Journal, p. 86.

only slight appeal in Cass County.²⁹ Felton had earlier voted against a bill in the Georgia House of Representatives to prohibit the interstate transportation of slaves, so he never would have supported the American Party's free soil policy.³⁰ The Doctor was well prepared to face running for office during the violent elections of the Reconstruction of the 1870's, after his experiences as a member of the disintegrating Whig Party in 1851. Since he did not trust the post-war Democrats any more than he had trusted the antebellum party and would never run as a Republican, Rebecca would help him win election to Congress as an Independent during the years 1874 and 1880.

Between 1851 and 1853, Dr. Felton's personal life had been in as much turmoil as his political career. He may have requested a leave of absence from the Legislature in 1851 to care for his dying first wife or arrange her funeral. He then fell in love with Rebecca Latimer, whom he met when he preached at the Madison Female College graduation in the spring of 1852.³¹ He urgently needed a wife to run the farm house and care for his daughter, Annie, when he and Rebecca married in 1853. Rebecca gave him two boys and a girl,

²⁹ Memoirs, p. 54.

³⁰ House Journal, p. 191.

³¹ Cunyus, p. 283.

Eleanore, who died when she was a baby. Rebecca later described the first decade of their marriage:

For eight or ten years my life was so absorbed in my children that it was cloisterlike, months elapsing, sometimes, when my feet were never outside the front gate. I had my music and my books to enliven the monotony...

I read everything in reach - history, fiction and a smatter of medicine, with a little babe in my lap, and my key basket at my elbow, because I was also housekeeper for a large family, directing everyday's expenditure and outlining everyday's supplies. I was only one of many wives and Southern women who had oversight of domestic affairs on a large plantation, and I believe the experience of such Southern women in ante-bellum days compassed results in cultivated and refined hospitality that the world will never know again by reason of the lack of such extraordinary conditions and surroundings.³²

Mary and Nicholas McLendon

Mary Latimer did not leave any such personal memoirs of her schooldays or early married life. Apart from the glimpses that Rebecca offered about going to school with little sister Mary tagging along, George Adair, Sr.'s reminiscences of "Atlanta's Early Society" provided the only view of Mary's teenaged years. Adair recalled attending parties in Atlanta in the early 1850's "when Charles Latimer's two pretty, smart daughters first appeared in Atlanta"³³ He believed that the

³² Country Life, p. 118.

³³ Ibid, p. 68.

Latimer sisters had personalities that combined their parents' best characteristics. He remembered that:

Their father was one of the staunchest and strongest of men, very much in advance of the times as to theories and thought which accounts for their force of character and advanced ideas, while their mother was the gentlest and most religious of women, imparting to them their religious ardor and stand in the temperance movement.

In 1860, Mary Latimer and Nicholas McLendon were married. He had started his own wholesale grocery and wine importing business in 1854 and was becoming very successful by 1860. He was the descendant of a family that went back to Revolutionary time in Georgia. His father, Cassel McLendon, had been married to the former Ruth Ware for over nine years and Nicholas, born about 1831, was nine when they appeared in the 1840 Walton County Census. The senior McLendon owned land in western Walton County on the boundary line with Henry and Gwinnett Counties. Since he did not own many slaves, he may have been running a stage coach stop just as Charles Latimer did.³⁴

Nicholas McLendon moved to Atlanta in September of 1848, while still a teenager. He became an apprentice of Auguste Dulin, a rich South Carolinian who owned Atlanta's largest

³⁴ Pioneer Citizens' History of Atlanta, (Atlanta, 1902) p. 378; John Talmadge, Rebecca Latimer Felton; Nine Stormy Decades, (Athens, 1960), p. ____; U.S. Census for Walton County, 1840; Henry County, Georgia, Mother of Counties, (McDonough, Ga., 1968) pp. 9-10, 744.

cotton warehouse. McLendon's name, however, did not appear in the Fulton County Census until 1860, the year of his marriage. By then he had purchased land on Baker Street from DeKalb County pioneer Ammi B. Williams.³⁵ By 1864 McLendon's income had risen sharply. He and Mary had no need for the field hands that the Feltons used on their farm. the McLendons owned only house slaves and a janitor for Nicholas McLendon's business, Jones and McLendon Wholesale Groceries, Liquors and Cigars, located on Peachtree Street between Decatur and Houston Streets.

Because of his warehouse, McLendon had the opportunity to meet many of Atlanta's other merchants during the 1850s.³⁶ He noted the locations of the stores and the conditions of the streets as Atlanta grew from a row of stores on either side of the railroad tracks. He recalled the early roads and located the businesses, except for his own, for the Pioneer Citizens' History of Atlanta, 1833-1902, (1902). McLendon began this essay by describing Atlanta as "a small country village in the heart of an almost impenetrable wilderness, surrounded by huge forest trees and thick undergrowth."

³⁵ Pioneer Citizens' History, p. 378; U.S. Census for Fulton County, 1860; Fulton Deed Index.

³⁶ Pioneer Citizens' History of Atlanta, (Atlanta, 1902) pp. 218-224.

Nicholas undoubtedly had some influence on Mary L. McLendon's recollection of this village as being reviled for its roughness by Augusta, Savannah, Columbus, Milledgeville and Athens.³⁷ As she explained to the delegates at an 1890 WCTU Convention:

But the Gate City grew, and grew, and grew, in spite of untoward circumstances, until now, as the Railroad Queen and the Capital city of Georgia, she is 'a city set upon a hill;' and it is often said, 'As Atlanta goes, so goes the State,'. How great then is her responsibility? In the [eighteen] forties and fifties almost every other shanty was a doggery, or disreputable den of some kind, and murders and deeds of violence were of weekly occurrence-indeed. Atlanta's reputation was as bad as Birmingham, Ala., and the doggeries were responsible for most of the trouble, either directly or indirectly. They are called saloons now-a-days, but it is a distinction without a difference. Death and destruction always follow in their train, as surely as night follows day.³⁸

Mary L. McLendon would be guided by the combination of a desire to improve Atlanta and the Methodist hatred of liquor for the rest of her life. She believed that Atlanta women had to vote in order to abolish liquor sales and improve life in Atlanta.

Nicholas McLendon recorded everything from the great Whig presidential rally in 1848 to Atlanta's first hanging. He may have attended the rally because most of his customers did

³⁷ Ibid, p. 218; Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Minutes Eighth Annual Meeting, 1890, folder 2, box 23, no. 647, Emory University Library Special Collections.

³⁸ Mary L. McLendon, WCTU Minutes, p. 55.

rather than in support of the Whig high tariffs which would mean higher prices for his imported wines and cigars.³⁹ He described the torch light parades before and after the election of Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore. He recalled that these torchlight parades were the biggest rallies held in Atlanta in the 1840s or 1850s. The crowd had come to hear Alexander H. Stephens speak, but he was still recovering from stab wounds and could only appear on the platform.⁴⁰

The Civil War

When the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, the McLendons had been married for two years and were the owners of a large family home near Williams and Baker Streets. Since the McLendon's new home had a basement, they were among the people who caused the muddy and dusty streets.⁴¹ "Femina," one of Rebecca Felton's pen names, complained about the open carts that hauled away the dirt from the newly excavated cellars, yet in the process spread the dirt all over the streets. Since McLendon had complained about the streets in her 1890 WCTU speech and campaigned for city sanitation in the woman's

³⁹ Pioneer Citizens' History, p. 222.

⁴⁰ Pioneer Citizens' History, pp. 222-223; WCTU Minutes, p. 55.

⁴¹ "Her Two Ambitions Realized Mrs. McLendon Goes To Reward", Atlanta Constitution, front page, 21 November 1921.

clubs, she might have used her sister's pen name to plead for cleaners streets in 1860.⁴²

During the siege of Atlanta in 1864, Mary L. McLendon and her children hid from the falling shells in their basement. Mary refused to flee to Macon until the family was ordered to go because Nicholas's business success led to his appointment as Quartermaster of Atlanta. The McLendons continued to be well off financially between 1862 and 1863, the last war year of the Fulton County Tax Digest.⁴³

The McLendons never expressed their beliefs about the secession from the Union and the social necessity of slavery.⁴⁴ Rebecca Felton, in contrast, had great reservations about secession. She recalled being chilled with fear on hearing the distant cannon fire of the city of Rome celebrating Georgia's secession from the Union. She worried that their son, John Felton, would suffer and die with many others when the South plunged "headlong into the dark unknown." She believed that slavery was the major controversial issue between the North and the south. If it had been resolved peacefully, the Civil War might have been

⁴² "Femina", Atlanta Intelligences, 2 July 1860, p. 2, c. 1.

⁴³ "McLendon Goes To Reward", Constitution; Pioneer Citizens History, p. 378.

⁴⁴ Memoirs, p. 25.

unnecessary.⁴⁵ She could not be outspoken about such reservations because her husband, Dr. William H. Felton, was a secessionist. She suggested that he had once had doubts about the dissolution of the Union when she recalled that:

[he] often regretted the going away of [the Reverend Mr.] Stephen D. Olin [well-known for his anti-slavery views], after he had been associated with Franklin College. The slightest disaffection on the slavery question would have vacated every editorial chair within the limits of the state.⁴⁶

Rebecca Felton developed her life-long hostility towards the southern honor code of chivalry because of its association with slavery. She wondered how men who seemed so charitable could be so intolerant of talented preachers or educators who "dared to say that a slave woman had divine right to own her own liberty or direct the lives of her own children".⁴⁷ Later in life, she became furious with men who pretended to revere white women, but considered ten year old girls mature enough to consent to sex or marriage or hired young women to work long hours for low pay in cotton mills.

Nonetheless, once fighting started in Georgia, the Feltons put aside their differences with the pro-slavery ideologues to support Confederate soldiers. During the Battle of Chickamauga, 9-10 September 1863, they fed and clothed the

⁴⁵ Memoirs, p. 25, 42-43.

⁴⁶ Country Life, p. 80.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

soldiers who passed through Cartersville on the way to Chickamauga. After the battle, they drove to the battlefield in their wagon with food, water and medicine for the survivors. The Feltons brought the most severely wounded soldiers back to their home for further treatment. Several months later, as General William T. Sherman's army fought the Confederates in Resaca, the Feltons fled to Macon where the Doctor had first cousins.⁴⁸

During the Civil War, the Feltons and most Georgia families experienced the disruption of being refugees, the lack of food and medicine and the pain of seeing horribly wounded or critically ill people. After the Civil War, the Feltons became disgusted by the glorification of battlefield heroics. Even though Dr. Felton was a little old to be a regular Confederate Army Surgeon, he volunteered in Macon. He and other army surgeons were overwhelmed with sick or dying soldiers and an absence of medicines. At the Macon hospital, the Doctor almost certainly saw many men suffering from dysentery or from infected amputations. He almost certainly had to perform surgery without chloroform, the only anesthetic known during the Civil War. He had the hospital cleaned and the patients bathed to try to clear up the infections.

⁴⁸ Country Life, pp. 88-89; Mary A.H. Gay described nursing and evacuation to Macon in Life in Dixie During the War, (Decatur, 1979, reprint from 1895), Chapters XII, XVII and XIX.

Rebecca Felton nursed the wounded in Macon as she had in Cartersville. Later she recalled bitterly that men who did not protest as she and other nurses climbed into bloody boxcars to feed soldiers with no arms subsequently deprived her of the right to vote. Dr. Felton never dwelled on wartime experiences neither to promote public policy nor to win election to public office. In fact, supporters of the machine candidates in the 1870s and 1880s cited Dr. Felton's lack of a military record as evidence of his unfitness to serve in Congress or the State Legislature. The professional Confederate veterans preferred to recall the glories of battle rather than the horrors of the Army Hospitals.⁴⁹

The Feltons developed their populist and racial beliefs as a result of their difficulties in farming after the war ended. They returned to Cartersville without their sons, who had died in Macon during the War.⁵⁰ Although they found their farm unharmed, they had to borrow money in 1865 and 1866 to buy seed, fertilizer, livestock and farm machinery. Like their neighbors, the Feltons needed United States currency to replace their Confederate bank notes and to complete in the cash economy that replaced the ante-bellum credit system.

⁴⁹ Rebecca Felton wrote about their Civil War experiences in "The Country Home" for the Atlanta Journal Tri-Weekly Edition (1910-1920) and her Memoirs.

⁵⁰ Memoirs, p. 61.

while they probably had to plant cotton as a cash crop, they still raised corn and became involved in a dispute with a black share-cropper over the corn harvest. The Feltons, as landlords, were supposed to take their share of the ears of corn first and the share-cropper received the leftovers. When the Feltons accused the man of taking his share first, he brought them before a military court on charges of cheating him. The Feltons won by default, since their accuser left Bartow County without pursuing the case. One of the Felton's relatives threatened the hired hand with murder if he testified.⁵¹

The Feltons suffered the problems of borrowing money and hiring laborers with their neighbors, but they were more independent of the crop lien system. Felton practiced medicine. Since they were well educated, Dr. Felton taught the white neighbors' boys in one parlor while Rebecca Felton taught girls in the other parlor.⁵² By opening their home to local children, the Feltons were both increasing their income and building a constituency for Dr. Felton's eventual return to Georgia politics. Cartersville's schools of ante-bellum times closed during the War, so the Feltons' school was necessary. Rebecca Felton recalled using her "meager earnings

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Romantic Story, p. 19.

as a school teacher" to hire someone to weave dress material from wool sheared from sheep that Dr. Felton received as payment for his medical services.⁵³

While the Feltons struggled to start their farm in Bartow County, the McLendons returned to Atlanta where living conditions were not quite as severe. Unlike Rebecca Felton, Mary L. McLendon did not record the details of family life in the late 1860s or early 1870s. She almost certainly hired household help to replace their former slaves. The family moved to their second home at 139 Washington Street, several blocks south of the Trinity Methodist Church. They may have done so because their home on Williams Street had fallen into disrepair or burned during the War or the three McLendon children needed more space. This home and the Williams Street property were in Mary McLendon's name from 1870 on, with other McLendons paying the taxes as her agents.⁵⁴ The McLendon home at 139 Washington Street was an important site for Georgia woman's history because Mary L. McLendon used the parlor to launch temperance or woman suffrage campaigns.

The end of the Civil War brought changes to the McLendons lives as it did to the Feltons and every Georgia family. Mary and Nicholas McLendon had opportunities to participate in the

⁵³ Romantic Story, p. 19.

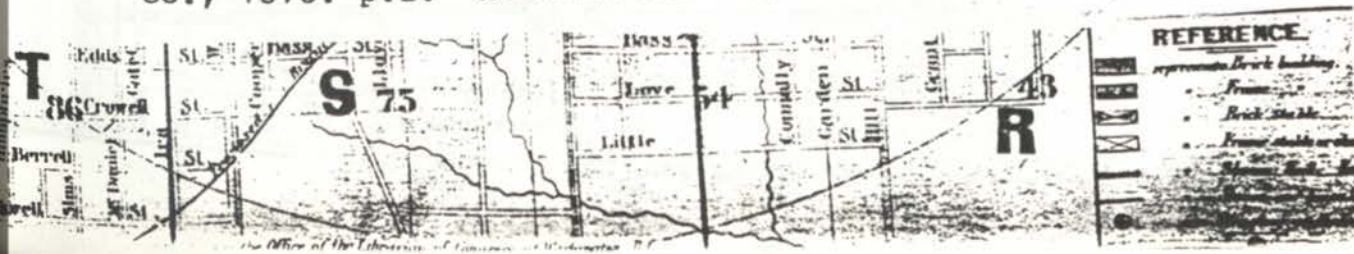
⁵⁴ Atlanta City Directories, 1868-1870; Fulton County Tax Digests, 1870-1880.

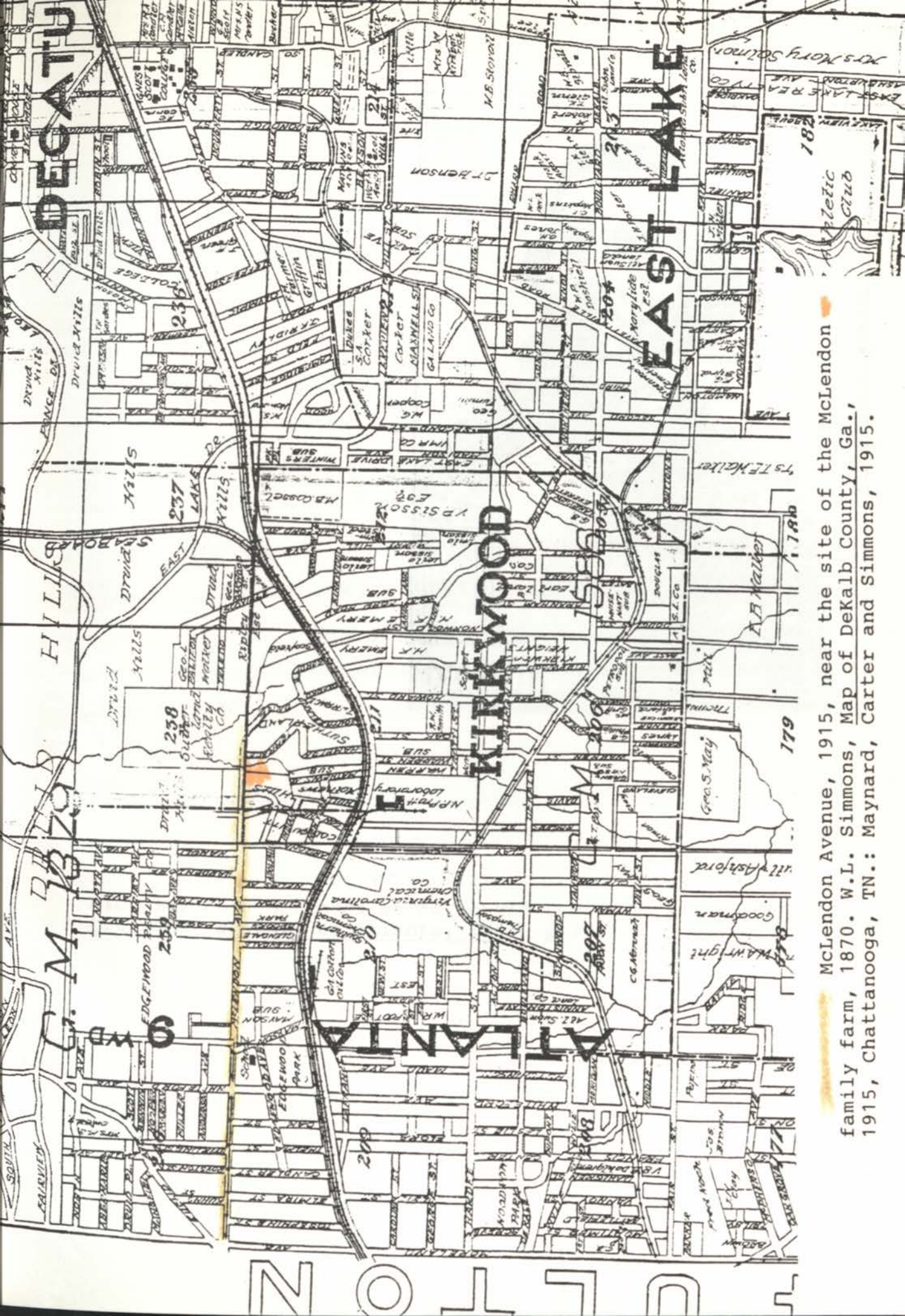


The Old Georgia Railroad and Bank Agency corner in Atlanta. Mary L. McLendon hated these dirt streets and saloons that survived Sherman. G.N. Bernard, City of Atlanta, No.2, from Photographic History of the Civil War, vol 3, p. 214.

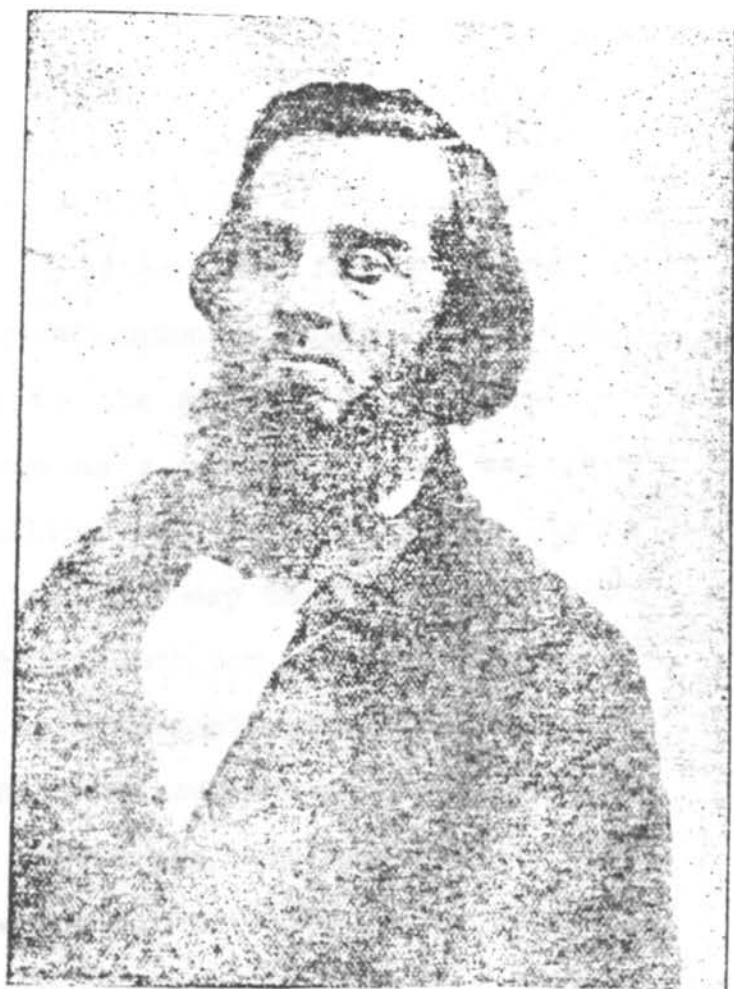


McLendon Home, 1860; The Old Georgia
 Railroad and Banking Agency Corner, 1865; McLendon
 Home, 1880; G.M. Hopkins, City Atlas of Atlanta, 1878, Balt-
 imore, MD.: Southern and Southwestern Surveying and Publishing
 Co., 1878. p.2. Atlanta History Center Library.





McLendon Avenue, 1915, near the site of the McLendon family farm, 1870. W.L. Simmons, Map of DeKalb County, Ga., 1915, Chattanooga, TN.: Maynard, Carter and Simmons, 1915.



Nicholas Ware McLendon as he looked about 1860. From The Pioneer Citizens' History of Atlanta, 1902, p.377.

affairs of a growing Atlanta, which they enjoyed, than they had in ante-bellum times. After the family moved to Washington Street, Nicholas McLendon's interest in civic affairs led to his election to the Atlanta City Council in 1871. Mary McLendon's growth as a prohibitionist may have influenced her husband in pulling out of the wholesale liquor business. As a City Councilman, he may have debated street paving or whether convicts should work for the city instead of private companies. He began selling real estate in Grant Park as the Metropolitan Street Railway reached out from downtown in that direction. McLendon became the superintendent of Joel Hurt's Atlanta Street Railway that traveled along Edgewood Avenue to Inman Park. Nicholas McLendon and his father, Cassel McLendon, may have started a trend among Atlanta Street Car Company executives, when they bought a large estate northwest of Decatur in 1870.⁵⁵ Cassel McLendon was living there before Joel Hurt purchased Inman Park or Zadoc D. Harrison acquired Fernbank,⁵⁶ north of the McLendon estate. Nicholas McLendon's role in the development of East Atlanta

⁵⁵ DeKalb County Census, 1870, Decatur District, 531.

⁵⁶ Sarah S. Edge, Joel Hurt and the Development of Atlanta, (Atlanta, 1955), map between pp. 110-111, McLendon Ave. begins at Howard Cir. on the Decatur City Line, joins Edgewood, Euclid Ave., to Fernbank and Moreland Ave. at Little Five Points. A.F. Moreland was a charter member of the Street Railway Company, Edge, p. 189.

was totally eclipsed by those of Joel Hurt in Inman Park, the Harrisons in Fernbank and others.⁵⁷

Long before they met their husbands, Mary and Rebecca Latimer were little girls in a typical upper Georgia family. Their parents sent them to female academies so they would learn to be graceful hostesses beyond the housekeeping tasks that they learned at home. When the sisters were in their late teens, on the eve of the Civil War, they married men who were the opposites of each other. Dr. William H. Felton was a physician and preacher who owned a large number of slaves for the Georgia hill country in the 1840s and 1850s. Nicholas McLendon, Mary's husband, was a successful Atlanta merchant and City booster, a representative of everything the farmers hated about Georgia society. Little that Mary L. McLendon or Rebecca L. Felton did before 1870 would prepare them for their roles as leading social reformers after 1880.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Felton, Country Life, p. 71; Pioneer Citizens' History, pp. 218-224, 378.



Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, an old fashioned southern lady, in 1865. From William P. Fidler, Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909 p.68.

CHAPTER II

Other Women Social Reformers to 1870

The Latimer sisters shared these early educational and social experiences with most of Georgia's reformers from middle class or planter families. Like the Latimer sisters, they were born between 1830 and the early 1850s, endured the Civil War as young women and matured during Reconstruction. During the years from 1880 to 1921, many of these women joined the Latimer sisters in campaigning for prohibition or woman suffrage while others opposed them. Rebecca L. Felton and Mary L. McLendon promoted expanding woman's educational opportunities as well, which drew in more women who did not believe in prohibition or, especially, woman suffrage. Like the sisters, the other outspoken prohibitionists and woman suffragists did not have strong connections with the antebellum planter elites or the Confederate Army, specifically the officer corps. Only few of these elite women, like Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, ignored their relations to antebellum or Confederate society to work for education, prohibition or woman suffrage.

Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, prohibitionist and suffragist, Jane Eliza Thomas Sibley, prohibitionist, and Maria Jourdan Westmoreland, educator, were born in the same five year period as the Latimer sisters. Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, however, another contemporary, became the South's leading nineteenth-century woman novelist, founder of Mobile's

Confederate Memorial Day and woman suffrage opponent.¹ All their families owned land and slaves, but the Clantons owned many hundreds of more acres than the Latimers did. Turner Clanton, Gertrude's father, not only owned several plantations in the Savannah River area but also a cotton warehouse and one of the largest mansions in Augusta as well. The Howards, Wilson's maternal family, were the richest of them all because they owned a Columbus cotton warehouse, a textile mill and plantations on the Georgia and Alabama sides of the Chattahoochee River.²

On the other hand, Warren Jourdan bought and sold land and slaves in several Georgia counties in the early 1830s. He settled in LaGrange, up the Chattahoochee from Columbus, in the middle 1840s shortly after Maria was born. He was the most politically successful of the fathers of the Latimer sisters' contemporary female activists. He was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in the early 1830s, becoming Speaker of the House and a Presidential elector by 1834. Jane Eliza Thomas's father, Grigsby E. Thomas, was also politically active as a state court judge, candidate for governor in the

¹ Gertrude Thomas, The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1849-1889, (Chapel Hill, 1990); Carolyn N. Curry, "The Life of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas: The Making of a Nineteenth Century Feminist", (Atlanta, 1987, PhD Dissertation); William P. Fidler, Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909, (University, AL., 1951).

² Fidler, p. 20.

1850s and nominee for the United States Senate.³ He was the only other male member of a female social activist's family to be an ante-bellum prohibitionist like Dr. William H. Felton. Like the Latimers, these families might have been more inclined to read newspapers or magazines from outside the South and might have been well aware of the national social reform movements and advances in woman's education. Like the Latimer sisters, the other women became social leaders partially from the example of their families.⁴

These families were more urbanized in a Northern, middle-class way because of their city residences, stores or factories than their planter neighbors. Their daughters, like the Latimers, received more formal education than the isolated planters' daughters were likely to receive. During the late 1840s and early 1850s, while Rebecca Latimer was attending the Madison Female Academy and Mary Latimer the Masonic Female Academy in Covington, Gertrude Clanton went to Wesleyan in Macon and Maria Jourdan to the LaGrange Female Academy. Augusta Evans was considered too sickly to attend school so she was educated by her mother in the large family library.

³ "William Jourdan", file card, Georgia Department of Archives and History; "Mrs. W.C. Sibley", The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, (Ann Arbor, MI: 1967, reprint from 1891), p. 364; Frances E. Willard, Woman and Temperance, or, the Work and Workers of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, (New York; 1972, reprint from 1883) p. 578.

⁴ "Sibley", National Cyclopaedia, p. 364; Willard, p. 578.

Evans began writing novels as a girl shortly before Gertrude Clanton started keeping her diary in 1849.⁵

The Latimer sisters shared the frontier experiences of their childhood with the prohibitionist Missouri Horton Stokes. Stokes was born in 1838 on a small farm near Salacoa Creek north of Cartersville in Gordon County. Her mother and her sister, Mary Gay, seem to have been more concerned with educating Missouri at home than were the families of other small farmers. After Joseph Stokes died, the family moved to Decatur in 1845 so that Missouri could attend John S. Wilson's Academy, Rebecca Latimer's alma mater. Stokes began teaching her young brother, other children and even the family's few slaves. She took up teaching professionally in 1858, at the age of thirty-one, to support her family.⁶

The Latimer sisters and Missouri Stokes were young women when Mildred Lewis Rutherford, the leading anti-suffragist, was born in 1851. Unlike the Latimers and Stokes, she grew up near the center of ante-bellum society in Athens.⁷ One of her maternal uncles, Howell Cobb, was elected United States

⁵ Fox-Geneovese, p. 46; Felton, Romantic Story, p. 14; Fidler, pp. 21, 37; Burr, p. 73.

⁶ Lula Barnes Ansley, History of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1883-1907, (Columbus, GA. 1914), pp. 256-258; Gay, p. 70.

⁷ Margaret Ann Womack, "Margaret Lewis Rutherford, Exponent of Southern Culture", (Athens, MA Thesis, 1946), pp. 11-12.

Congressman and Governor, and became a member of Millard Fillmore's cabinet. Howell Cobb was aided quietly by his wife, Mary Ann Cobb, who advised him privately during his career just as Rebecca Felton would assist Dr. Felton publicly after the Civil War. Mildred's other uncle, Thomas R. R. Cobb, was a State Representative, lawyer and a compiler of law books and legal defenses of slavery, an architect of the Confederate Constitution, and a Confederate General like his brother.⁸ He was as well-known an evangelist as Dr. Felton, but he was not a licensed preacher. He shared the Doctor's belief in temperance, even though he worried that abolishing liquor might lead to abolitionism and other invasions of individual rights. T.R.R. Cobb even promoted woman's education in a pamphlet called Educational Wants of Georgia, an Address Before the Society of the Alumni of Franklin College, at its Annual Meeting (1857).⁹ In this speech, he exhorted southern women to write stories for their children as a means of defending southern ways of life. He believed that only southern women had the right morals and education to train southern children. Education should equip women and their children to uphold the planter hierarchy. T.R.R. Cobb

⁸ William B. McCash, Thomas R.R. Cobb (1823-1962): The Making of a Southern Nationalist, (Macon, Ga., 1983), pp. 75, 107, 335.

⁹ George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism, (Urbana, IL., 1989), p. 41.

founded the Lucy Cobb Institute as a memorial to his own daughter and to cultivate the other daughters of Athens without encouraging them to challenge the beliefs of their families.¹⁰ He shared his beliefs with his sister and brother-in-law, William and Laura Cobb Rutherford. Since Rutherford was the mathematics professor at Franklin College, he understood the value of male education and was certainly more persuadable on woman's education than other men. Mildred's mother, Laura Cobb Rutherford, expressed her dislike for finishing schools in a letter to the Southern Recorder in 1854. She believed that such schools left young ladies undisciplined, uninformed in the arts or literature and unfitted for household management. She was not going to send her daughters to a northern finishing school where they might be insulted by abolitionists. The girls could even graduate from such schools believing in abolitionism or woman suffrage.¹¹

In the seven years before the Civil War erupted, the Latimer sisters and their contemporaries lived normal antebellum lives as national hostilities rose. Mildred Rutherford began her life-long association with the Lucy Cobb Institute

¹⁰ Linda K. Kerber, Women of The Republic, Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America, (Chapel Hill, 1980), pp. 199-200; 269-288.

¹¹ Womack, pp. 11-12; McCash, pp. 100-107.

by studying the subjects her family prescribed. Maria Jourdan and Gertrude Clanton, like the Latimer sisters, had married. Jourdan we Dr. Willis F. Westmoreland, a well-known young surgeon who was starting a medical college in Atlanta.¹² Jane Eliza Thomas married William C. Sibley who was the richest textile mill owner in Augusta and an ardent prohibitionist.¹³

Gertrude Clanton's fiance, James Jefferson Thomas, was the Princeton-educated son of a wealthy planter from the Augusta area. He had just graduated and returned to Augusta to attend the lectures at the Augusta Medical College, when Gertrude was introduced to him by Julia Thomas, Jeff's sister and Gertrude's friend from Wesleyan. He seemed to be an excellent choice for a husband, but Turner Clanton had doubts and even Gertrude became irritated by his indecision. He did not visit her or write her for periods of time even after they were engaged, pleading illness. Even their marriage had to be postponed for a month because of his illnesses. Gertrude finally married Jeff Thomas in December of 1852, but he continued to suffer from his problems throughout her marriage. His sicknesses and absences reflected his drinking and this

¹² William J. Northen, Men of Mark in Georgia, vol. II, pp. 210-212; Merle M. Bruce, Early Troup County Marriages, (Roswell, GA., 1982), p. 345.

¹³ "Sibley", National Cyclopaedia, p. 364.

personal problem led Gertrude to join Rebecca L. Felton, Mary L. McLendon and Jane T. Sibley in prohibition and eventually suffrage work.¹⁴

After the war broke out, housewives like these ladies often volunteered their services in confederate hospitals. Civil War nurses believed they were transferring their household duties from their own homes to the hospitals where they cared for other women's husbands or sons as their own. The women volunteers extended their skills of sewing, cooking, gathering medicinal herbs and caring for the sick to the world outside their homes rather than challenging the cult of domesticity.¹⁵

During the Civil War, while Rebecca Felton cared for soldiers in Cartersville and Chickamauga, Gertrude Thomas fed soldiers in Augusta. Other nurses at the Augusta Military Hospital expressed their mistrust of female self-assertion when they asked how a Union Army woman surgeon, who was captured wearing a man's uniform, could "forget her sex and so degrade herself?"¹⁶ These volunteer nurses could not understand a woman who wanted the respect and independence that the status of a doctor provided. They concluded that:

¹⁴ Thomas, pp. 5, 17, 119.

¹⁵ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 58.

¹⁶ Thomas, p. 229.

Southern women frankly acknowledge their dependence on Southern men and waiving 'woman's rights' and parliamentary usages, they claim the privilege of having their public announcements made by gentlemen.¹⁷

The Latimer sisters and Jane T. Sibley would have difficulty convincing such women that prohibition was an important enough issue to justify their participation in public affairs.

Gertrude Thomas first developed an interest in the wrongs done to women when she expressed her fears about adultery. She also expressed doubts about women asserting themselves to sponsor prohibition, even if it would save them from personal misery. She wrote in her diary on 18 August 1856 that men and women who committed adultery should be scorned. She was certainly worried in 1858 that Jeff Thomas was absent and distracted because he had a slave mistress. Gertrude confided to her diary on 8 February 1858:

But I mount my hobby when I commence on the subject of woman and her wrongs-I am no 'Woman's Rights Woman', in the northern sense of the term...¹⁸

By 2 November 1868, Gertrude Thomas had begun to sympathize with the newly enfranchised black voters. They might not understand what casting a ballot for the radical Republican ticket meant, but their educated children would be informed

¹⁷ LeeAnn Whites, "The Charitable and the Poor: The Emergence of Domestic Politics in Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1880", Journal of Social History, Summer, 1984, vol. 17, no. 4, p. 605.

¹⁸ Thomas, p. 160, 40-42; Fox-Geneovese, pp. 39-42.

voters. She imagined how she would feel if she became a voter through the efforts of northern women. She might not believe that she had done anything to deserve this privilege, but she would never want to be disfranchised. She considered these ideas too radical to be discussed with anyone outside her family. She concluded that Georgia women had a duty to protect their families, repair the State's economy and avoid politics out of fear of embarrassment.¹⁹

After the Civil War, out of necessity, Thomas joined Felton and Stokes in teaching school. One of the Thomases plantations had been burned by Sherman's troops during the "March to the Sea." Thomas felt the hard times in agriculture, especially her own loss so keenly that she wrote a letter to Ellen Sherman, the General's wife, but did not mail it. Gertrude Thomas accused the General and his wife of being abolitionists who put the rights of irresponsible blacks first and caused misery for the South. Gertrude had Jeff Thomas's failure at running a General Store to worry about as well. This left them thousands of dollars in debt to a New York wholesaler.²⁰

Jeff Thomas tried to improve himself by joining the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry, to learn how to manage the

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 197.

²⁰ Burr, pp. 253-254.

remaining plantations in the early 1870s. Since the Grange was open to men and women, Gertrude became a member and began speaking to the members on housekeeping issues. She may have learned of prohibition at the Grange meetings or from visiting her cousin, Jane Sibley. Gertrude began sending copies of her Grange home economics lectures to Augusta newspapers. Gertrude's social reform experiences in the Grange would lead her to join the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the 1880s and the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA) in the 1890s. She, like Mary Latimer McLendon and Rebecca L. Felton greatly expanded the range of woman's public activities by discussing first cooking and gardening in speeches and then prohibition as it affected the family, and, finally, suffrage.²¹

Even women, like Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, who did not believe that women should take part in public affairs, used the expanding public role of women to warn them not to engage in politics. Evans (after 1868, the wealthy Mrs. Leonard Wilson) became a leading nineteenth-century suffrage opponent and Confederate patriot. Wilson's family, the Evanses, had hidden Robert Toombs, a prominent unreconstructed Confederate leader from the Union Army after Lee surrendered. Her novels reflect her fond memories of planter life and her yearning for

²¹ Whites, p. 605.

the days when the Howards were the center of the planter elite in the Chattahoochee River Valley.²² In some of her novels, like St. Elmo, her most famous book, she spoke out against woman suffrage:

A double-faced idol, fashion and flirtation, engrossed the homage of the majority of females, while a few misguided ones, weary of the inanity of the mass of womanhood and desiring to effect a reform, mistook the sources of the evil, and rushing to the opposite extreme, demanded power, which as a privilege, they already possessed, but as a right could not extort.²³

Mildred L. Rutherford certainly subscribed to the concept that women were the frivolous slaves of fashion and would express opinions similar to Wilson's into the middle 1920s. She and Wilson were members of aristocratic families who suffered the most when slavery ended. Since her family was as influential as the Howards, she too believed that women held social power as a privilege and did not need to demand their rights. Rutherford used these ideals and housekeeping, which Wilson scorned, as a defense against the changes that emancipation and reconstruction brought to the traditional role of southern white women.²⁴

²² Fidler, p. 119.

²³ Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, St. Elmo, (New York, 1867), p. 104.

²⁴ Foster, Gains, M. Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the New South, 1865 to 1913, (New York, 1987), p. 31.

Rutherford felt obliged to honor the memory of her uncle, the martyred Confederate General Thomas R.R. Cobb and her father Howell Cobb, who spent his last years fighting the Federal Government. Rutherford organized Confederate memorial celebrations in Athens, as Wilson had in Mobile, and became active in Confederate patriotic association.²⁵

Maria Jourdan Westmoreland could easily have become a professional southern belle and, like Wilson, a Confederate memorialist. Her father, Warren Jourdan, was certainly an important member of the ante-bellum political hierarchy. Her husband, Dr. Willis F. Westmoreland, had been Jefferson Davis's personal physician during the Civil War. But she chose to ignore these connections and become an advocate for women's technical education. She could write novels, such as Heart Hungry and Clifford Troup, that were as flowery, ante-bellum and popular as St. Elmo. Her characters, however, struggled with secret romances or political corruption and honesty, never coming to happy endings. She wrote rather frivolous columns on fashions in New York City for the Atlanta Constitution and traveled to northern cities many times in the 1870s to read from her works and lecture on southern life.²⁶

²⁵ "Howell Cobb", Dictionary of Georgia Biography, vol. I, pp. 202-203.

²⁶ Some examples of Westmoreland's fashion columns and lecture engagements from the Atlanta Constitution are 6 January 1873, p. 2, c. 4-5; 8 February 1873, p. 3, c. 3-4; 6 February 1873, p. 6, c.

These biographical sketches suggest that the female opponents of woman suffrage and even the more popular prohibition were more likely to have been members of the antebellum planter aristocracy. They were related to Confederate officers or Legislators with male relatives who strongly encouraged "lady like" behavior. Many of the Latimer sisters' opponents shared educational experiences with the Latimer sisters in the 1840s and 1850s, and both groups embraced traditional family values. The planters' daughters and wives, however, clung to the notion that men could represent them in public affairs. They also believed that they had power enough to influence social change through volunteer efforts. Mildred Rutherford and others incorporated these ideas and General Cobb's notion of refined domestic education into the myth of the "Lost Cause." For Rutherford, the Historian-General of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, opposition to suffrage and the temperance movement became the southern way of life. These anti-suffragists, after Reconstruction, were convinced that blacks and Republicans would return to power if white women were allowed to vote.²⁷

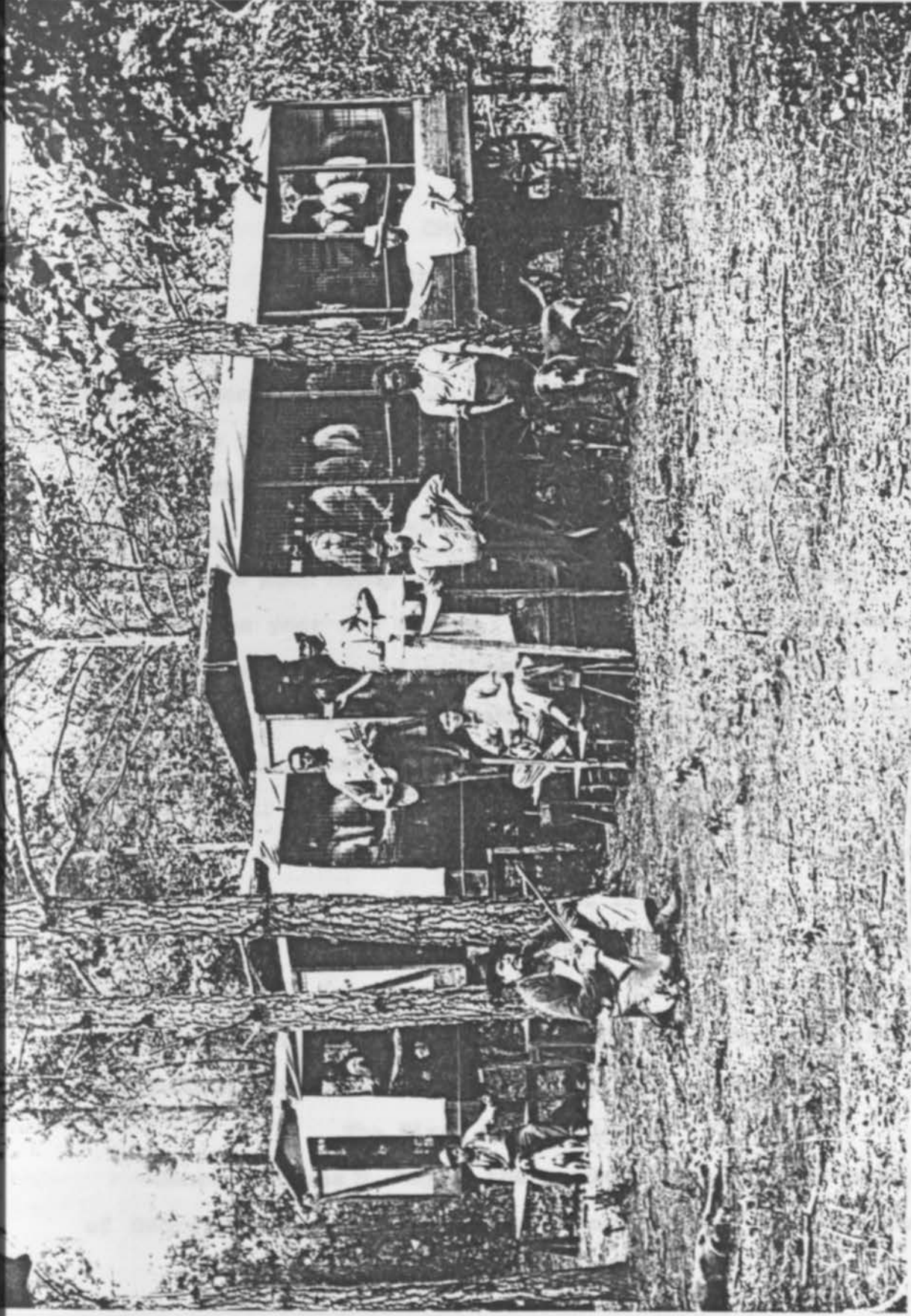
Rebecca L. Felton, Mary L. McLendon and Missouri Horton Stokes did not have personal memories of the planter elite to

12; 25 February 1873, p. 2, c. 3; 25 March 1873, p. 2, c. 3-4; 18 May 1873, p. 4, c. 4-5.

²⁷ Womack, pp. 23-29, 88-90. 215-220; Day, p. 272, 415.

mourn. Felton and McLendon never had male family members in the fighting forces of the Confederate Army or the bureaucracy to honor. (Missouri Horton Stokes, a farmer's daughter, was the sister of a soldier who was killed in battle at Franklin, Tennessee, and she raised money for a memorial, but, like other such women, she was brought up to be more practical than the planters' children. She, like the Latimers, realized that many women, either widows or orphans, did not have men to protect them following the Civil War. Women needed to be educated in practical matters as well as the arts if they were to survive on their own. Rebecca L. Felton believed that women should attend the University of Georgia and Emory with men to study for the professions and public affairs. Women could never be represented by men who were extremely courteous to white upper class women, yet exploited working class white women. Women had a duty to vote and serve in public office to ensure honest government, better schools and enforcement of prohibition. The clashes between the Latimer sisters, their associates and their opponents lasted for forty years and became a part of the political campaigns against the Bourbon regime.²⁸

²⁸ Felton, Country Life, pp. 215-220; Gay, p. 272, 415.



Lunchtime in a Convict Camp, around 1900. Courtesy, Library of Congress.

CHAPTER III

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Georgia
Politics, 1870-1879

Although Rebecca Latimer Felton lived the life of a typical Georgia woman until 1870, she had experiences during the 1870's that set her apart from her peers, including Mary Latimer McLendon. In 1874 she became the secretary for her husband who had decided to run for Congress. The couple still did not have much money and had two children, twenty year old Anne and ten year old Howard, to think about. Nonetheless, Felton's experiences politicized her. She developed her lifelong hatred of railroad magnates, convict lessees and the Democratic political machine as a result of working on her husband's four bruising and violent campaigns between 1874 and 1878. She became as obsessed as he with abolishing the convict lease system after their best friend, Colonel Robert A. Alston, was murdered for opposing the lease system. She would pursue the lessees throughout her life as forcefully as she promoted Prohibition or woman suffrage, frequently using prohibition campaigns to fight the lessees as well.

The First Convict Lease

General Thomas H. Ruger, the Republican Military Governor of Georgia, gave the Feltons a strong reason to hate the

Republican Party in May of 1868.¹ He signed a contract with the Georgia and Alabama Railroad of Rome, a segment of the Western and Atlantic system, for the labor of the first hundred prisoners. Rufus T. Bullock leased all the convicts to Grant, Alexander and Company, another group of railroad developers, in June of 1869. These corporations received a nearly free source of slave labor, the rights of way through Georgia's counties and the right to cut timber on the land along the tracks. Consequently, the Republicans and their Democratic successors spent no money to rebuild the war-ravaged prison at Milledgeville, and made money for themselves.²

Black Republican legislators as early as 1868 pointed out that the national Republican Party was not the freedmen's best friend. The State Republican Party was doing them the greatest evil because it had not considered any alternatives to leasing the convicts. Representatives Thomas Bear of Richmond County and the Reverend Mr. James M. Simms, a Baptist minister and Representative of Chatham County, joined the

¹ Charles E. Wynes, "The Politics of Reconstruction, Redemption, and Bourbonism, 1865-1890", in Kenneth Coleman, ed. A History of Georgia (Athens, 1982), p. 246.

² Ibid; A.J. McKelway, "The Convict Lease System of Georgia, The Outlook, 12 Sept. 1908, 90, N.D., p. 67. A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Origin and Development of the Convict Lease System", The Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol. ____, no. 2, June 1942, pp. 113-126.

leading black member, the Reverend Mr. Henry M. Turner, Representative of Bibb County, in proposing alternatives to the Convict Lease System. They wanted the State to regain control of the prisoners or strictly regulate a new group of lessees.³ Turner proposed that prisoners work eight hours a day during the week, a radical idea even among free workers elsewhere in the country. These black legislators shared Dr. Felton's belief that convicts should work. However, they accused the lessees of breaking their contract by whipping the prisoners who frequently received enormous sentences for petty crimes or were incarcerated long after their times was served.⁴

Black legislators and the Feltons described the horror of convict camp life in similar terms. Rebecca Felton used the same phrases even at the beginning of the twentieth century, despite her racist remarks on other subjects. (State Senator Aaron A. Bradley, a black Senator from the first district on the coast at Savannah, wrote, "A New System of Chain-Gang in Georgia and other attacks on Governor Bullock's policies

³ Atlanta Constitution, p. 1, c. 3, 29 July 1870; Edmund L. Drago, Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia, A Splendid Failure, (Baton Rouge, 1982), "Appendix: Black Legislators and Convention Delegates, 1867-1872"; Taylor, p. 115.

⁴ Constitution, p. 1, c. 3.

between 1868 and 1870.⁵ This handbill, which compared the Convict Lease System to slavery, announced a protest meeting for 1870 under a headline which charged that "Little girls and boys under ten years of age are sent to chain-gangs for [stealing] three potatoes or singing Shoo-fly, with great locks and chains around their necks; colored bogusly-convicted women and men are let out for ten cents per day [paid to the State for each convict] to do out-doors work..."⁶

The Democrats cheated the Black Republicans out of their legislative seats in the early 1870s through violence, vote fraud and punitive taxation. The Republicans provided the Democrats with the tax legislation by creating a poll tax that the farmers, especially blacks, could not afford. If men could not pay it on their own, their employers were supposed to take the amount out of their farm hands' wages. However, the hands could never convince their white Democratic planter employers to pay the tax or the Democratic county election officials that it had been paid.⁷ By 1868, these same officials were refusing to honor Governor Bullock's order cancelling the tax. Black legislators had to obtain a federal

⁵ A.A. Bradley, Georgia Matters-Bullock Answered, (Washington, D.C., 1870) is only available at Harvard; "A New System..." only at the Boston Public Library.

⁶ Langston Hughes, Milton Meltzer, C. Eric Lincoln, A Pictorial History of Black Americans, (N.Y., 1983), p. 223.

⁷ Ibid, p. 146.

court order to be re-elected and continue attacking the Convict Lease System. The Feltons also suffered under the poll tax because the Doctor's constituents, white small farmers and share-croppers, could not afford to pay the tax either and were disfranchised. This situation gave the Feltons and the Black Republicans another issue in common.⁸

After the Democrats regained control of Georgia's government in 1872, they thought nobody would challenge their operation of the Convict Lease System. For almost five years none of the Democrats' opponents exposed the brutality of convict camp life, the private fortunes that were made from the system, the lack of money in the State treasury or the lessees' participation in the railroad bond frauds. In the election of 1875, even the Feltons were more concerned with assailing the Republicans and Democrats over the railroad bond fraud. The Feltons were almost certainly surprised to become allies of a real abolitionist and carpetbagger, Tunis Gulic Campbell, the author of the next expose of life in the camps.

Campbell, a black Republican State Senator from McIntosh County, published his autobiography called the Sufferings of the Reverend [Mr.] Tunis G. Campbell and his Family in Georgia

⁸ Michael R. Hyman, The Anti-Redeemers: Hill-Country Political Dissenters, in the Lower South from Redemption to Populism (Baton Rouge, 1990 pp. 174-6.

in 1877.⁹ He was an AM Zion preacher, an Abolitionist and Temperance lecturer and a Union Army veteran from New York. Campbell was also a Justice of the Peace in McIntosh County where he passed legal judgment on petty criminals. The white city councilmen in Darien accused him of favoring blacks in these cases and exceeding his authority. Campbell became the target of fraud intimidation and violence just as the Feltons were. Campbell himself was finally threatened with arrest for falsely imprisoning a suspected thief. He managed to avoid being sent to a convict camp for three years by applying for continuances or demanding that the State produce evidence and witnesses against him which had disappeared.¹⁰ He was finally convicted on these charges in 1876 and leased to James M. Smith, the owner of Smithsonia, in Elbert County. Campbell described life in this camp thus:

They were clearing land, and ordered me to pile brush. It is impossible for me to described the way in which prisoners were worked. They were taken out as soon as they could see-both winter and summer and kept to work as long as it was light with one hour for dinner. They had breakfast before day light. If wood was to be cut, the strongest and most expert men with the ax were made leaders, and every other man had to keep stroke all

⁹ Tunis G. Campbell, Sufferings of the Reverend [Mr.] Tunis G. Campbell and his Family in Georgia, (Washington, D.C., 1988); special collections University of Georgia Library. Drago, "Appendix: Black Legislators..."

¹⁰ Campbell, pp. 5-12; Drago, pp. 82-84; "Appendix: Black Legislators...", Wynes, "Reconstruction...", History of Georgia, p. 213.

day long; and failing to do so, they were beaten most unmercifully with a leather strap, or a buggy track until they would keep up or die.¹¹

Campbell ended his chain-gang sentence almost a year later as the supervisor of the blacksmith shop and the storehouse. He was allowed to preach to the other convicts and lecture them on temperance. He, like later reformers, was disgusted with the number of racially mixed children born to inmate mothers and guards.¹²

Felton believed that exhausting herself writing speeches and letters for her husband's Congressional campaign was as much a duty towards the family as keeping house or managing slaves in ante-bellum times. During the campaign, she was running the household more or less alone, preparing for Annie R. Felton's marriage to John C. Gibbons and caring for Howard.¹³

The Feltons became populists long before the Populist rebellion of the 1890's because of their experiences in raising a family and running for office in the 1870's. They found Georgia politics to be more chaotic than anything Dr. Felton had faced in 1851. The Bourbon Democrats were stripping black voters and Republicans of power in local

¹¹ Campbell, pp. 25-27.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Cunyus, pp. 283, 285.

elections. The Democratic machine still had to compete with the Republicans for blacks' support. They formed courthouse rings and business monopolies with northern businessmen. Georgia's only Republican governor, Rufus Bullock, had been impeached and fled trial because the Democrats charged him with issuing fraudulent railroad bonds. Although he later returned and was acquitted, the Republican Party never recovered from the scandal.¹⁴ The Democrats viewed anybody, like Dr. Felton, who dared to run as an "Independent" as a secret ally of blacks and Republicans.

Dr. Felton opposed the "Bourbon" Democrats' attempts to continue issuing railroad bonds without the money to redeem them.

The Feltons did not comment publicly on the first legislative battle over the Convict Lease System because they were farming, teaching school and raising their children. In addition to Annie and Howard, Rebecca Felton bore two more sons, only to see one die as a baby. Between 1865 and 1874, she departed from her household routine only to address the local prohibition society.¹⁵ In the spring of 1874 she may

¹⁴ Report of the Committee of the Legislature to Investigate the Bonds of the State of Georgia Issued or Negotiated Since July 4, 1868, (Atlanta, 1873); in Special Collections at the main branch of the Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library.

¹⁵ Romantic Story, p. 119.

not have realized the changes which her role as secretary would make in her life. She recalled that

From June until the election in November I was in the thick of it. We had no daily paper in the district, and only two little weeklies. Working night and day, I wrote hundreds of letters and sent them all over [fourteen] counties. For two months before the close of the campaign, I kept a man and a horse at the door to go three miles and catch the mail trains.¹⁶

Mrs. Felton recalled that her husband focused his attention on railroad bond frauds. He was opposed to paying the holders of the bonds any amount of money to settle the problem. The doctor believed that they were northern, Republican business men who were greedy enough to deal with Bullock so they deserved to go bankrupt.¹⁷

Some of Dr. Felton's opponents seemed willing to circulate wild rumors to associate a friend of the Feltons with a railroad scandal.¹⁸ Dr. Felton did not agree with his friend, Colonel Robert A. Alston, who wanted to allow the bondholders to receive some of their money back. Alston was a descendant of a high southern aristocratic family and had been a Confederate cavalry officer. He started practicing law

¹⁶ Romantic Story, p. 25; Rable, p. 41, Antebellum Political Wives were frequently their Husband's Secretaries, but none Worked as long or as hard as Rebecca Latimer Felton.

¹⁷ Memoirs, pp. 202, 232.

¹⁸ James H. Johnston, Western and Atlanta, c Railroad of the State of Georgia, (Atlanta, 1932), p. 57-8; Memoirs, pp. 249, 269.

in the late 1860s. He was hired by U.S. Army Colonel Robert Baugh to sue the United States Military Railroad authority for funds to repair the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Mrs. Felton preserved newspaper articles defending or attacking Alston's fee for rescuing the Western and Atlantic Railroad.

When Dr. Felton ran for Congress in 1874, he and his wife began leading Georgia farmers away from allegiance to the Bourbons and their deals with the northeastern Republicans.¹⁹ The Feltons joined the revolt of the middle western Liberal Democrats, Republicans and farmers against the corruption of the Grant Administration and other party machines of the 1870's. The Doctor challenged the railroad freight differential system as forcefully as he exposed the bond fraud. He was outraged over the extremely high rates that his neighbors had to pay to ship produce short distances while large companies could ship merchandise long distance for much less money. He verbally assaulted his opponents on these subjects using his straightforward preaching style complete with the "hallelujah lick and hand clap." He emphasized the worst of the railroad magnates misdeeds by raising his arms over his head and clapping his hands loudly. Dr. Felton's speaking method was so effective that Leander N. Trammell, his first Democratic adversary, was driven from the campaign.

¹⁹ C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913, (Baton Rouge, 1971), p. 50.

Rebecca kept scrapbooks of newspaper clippings on railroads and gathered the information that Dr. Felton used to accuse Trammell of taking part in the bond fraud.²⁰

Trammell's last minute replacement was William H. Dabney, an Atlanta lawyer with no political experience. He did not have any connections in the district or much ability as a political stump speaker. Dr. Felton, on the other hand, had many friends in the district and was a well-known speaker. The Doctor's many friends and family believed that his power would certainly be challenged in debate by General John B. Gordon or Joseph E. Brown, speaking for Dabney. But neither man answered Mrs. Felton's letters asking for their plans to debate Dr. Felton. He was left to debate the hapless Dabney or Pierce M.B. Young, who had been a Confederate General and was serving on the Georgia Congressional delegation in 1874. Dr. Felton did not even face debate with the Republican candidate, who had withdrawn early in the campaign, leading the Democrats to joke that Felton was more popular with Republicans.²¹

General Young discussed everything except his congressional record, especially his role in an 1874 salary grab. At the end of the session of that year, congressmen had

²⁰ Memoirs, pp. 202-232; Herald, "Felton: The Famous Country Parson...", Reel 17, Scrapbook 1 Felton Collection. (N.Y., 1982).

²¹ Memoirs, pp. 144-159.

voted themselves an enormous pay raise that they collected before adjournment. The Doctor and his supporters implied that sitting congressmen were thieves, as bad as the railroad magnates. Young tried to counter such attacks with an appeal to Confederate patriotism, castigating the execution of Mary Surratt. Surratt was a Washington, D.C. boarding house owner and mother of a conspirator in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.²² Dr. Felton mocked General Young's concern for Surratt by revealing that the General's friend, Union General Bingham of Ohio, was a member of the tribunal that condemned her on flimsy evidence.²³

Young, among other machine politicians, accused Dr. Felton of hiding behind his wife's skirts because Rebecca Felton continued to write letters and speeches in his behalf. She kept on greeting people and keeping scrapbooks during his three terms in Congress. She was derided by the Democrats for being unfeminine in providing such assistance to her husband. This accusation would follow her throughout her life as she crusaded for temperance or woman suffrage. Forty years later, she bitterly recalled that

...these outside politicians were hurling threats of defiance at Felton and a venal press was scattering an untold number of lies abroad and

²² Mark E. Neely, The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia, "Surratt, Mary Eugenia (or Elizabeth), (Jenkins)", pp. 298-9. (N.Y., 1982).

²³ Memoirs, p. 153.

every lick-spittle follower of the State administration and every influence that the Western and Atlantic Railroad [or the Dade County Coal Mines] could bring to bear on [their] employees was used to the limit [to steal the election for William H. Dabney].²⁴

Felton's supporters were reviled by local officials. Sometimes they were beaten or had their barns burned. Some sheriffs or county judges could always be trusted to lose or ruin many ballots voted for Dr. Felton. Since the ballots were printed on thin paper and passed out by the political parties, Dabney's supporters could mark three or four at a time or leave Felton's name out during printing. When the party workers in the county courthouses had opened ballot boxes and completed the time consuming hand-count of the votes for Felton or Dabney, they telegraphed their totals to the Secretary of State's office in Atlanta. The officials in Haralson and Dade Counties were weeks late with their returns, as usual. The election process for the seventh district in 1874 took weeks with Felton or Dabney being declared winners on alternate days. In spite of all the vote fraud and violence, Dr. William H. Felton was eventually certified by the Secretary of State as the United States Representative from the Seventh District.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid, p. 152.

²⁵ Memoirs, pp. 144-169.

Robert A. Alston

The martyrdom of Robert A. Alston, staunch critic of the Convict Lease System and friend of the Feltons, involved them emotionally in the struggle to abolish the system.

Rebecca Felton never described the circumstances surrounding her first meeting with Robert A. Alston. She and her husband may have met Alston in 1868, when he was the corresponding secretary for the Georgia Democratic Party and reorganizing the Seventh District Democratic Caucus. Alston might have sought Dr. Felton's opinion, as the former State Representative from Bartow County. The Feltons and Alston would be in positions to meet during the election of 1874. Both men were still Democrats and probably attended the Georgia Democratic Convention hoping for the party's support or at least acquiescence in their Congressional campaigns.²⁶ Alston seemed to be too involved with the Democratic Party to run as an Independent in the Fourth District, including Atlanta and DeKalb County, as Dr. Felton would do in the Seventh District. the earliest letter connecting the two men was written by the Reverend Mr. Charles Wallace Howard on 7 November 1874. Howard was a well-known Presbyterian

²⁶ "A Letter from F.P. Blair [to R.A. Alston]; A Radical Lie Nailed to the Wall", front page, c.4; "Large Democratic Meeting in DeKalb", Alston spoke in favor of the Seymour-Blair campaign, Constitution, p. 4, c. 4; "Proceedings of the Kingston [Ga] Convention", Alston was the DeKalb County delegate to the Seventh District Democratic Caucus.

evangelist, a neighbor and supporter of Dr. Felton. He was also an agricultural columnist for Alston's Atlanta Herald and had written an article defending the Doctor against attacks by Joe Brown. He sent Dr. Felton a copy of this essay which he was sending to Alston. He praised Dr. Felton for winning the election on his own and was certain that Alston would publish this essay and one that the Doctor would write himself.²⁷

Almost two years later, Colonel Robert A. Alston, Chairman of the State House of Representatives' Penitentiary Committee, published the results of his own investigation of the Convict Lease System. In the early 1870's, this DeKalb County representative purchased The Atlanta Herald and began using its columns to promote prohibition, education for the poor and education for female millhands, among other Independent causes. He published articles praising Dr. Felton's candidacy for Seventh District Congressmen in the elections of 1874 because the Doctor campaigned on these causes.²⁸ After the newspaper failed financially in 1876, Alston put his Independent ideals into action as the chairman of the state legislative penitentiary committee. He launched

²⁷ C.W. Howard to W.H. Felton, 7 November 1874, Felton Collection, reel 20, no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

²⁸ Gordon M. Midgette, "Introduction to the Alston Papers", DeKalb Historical Society Bulletin, Vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-5; Collection of Carole Stevens.

a sweeping investigation of the Convict Lease System that was undoubtedly inspired by what he had learned during a year that he served as Assistant Keeper of the Penitentiary.²⁹

Amos M. Rodgers of McIntosh County, one of the last black Republicans in the late nineteenth century legislature, and Leonidas F. Livingston, of Newton County, a future leader of the Populist Party, served on Alston's committee. These legislators felt they had a duty to examine the ten year old Convict Lease because the legislature was being asked to renew it on 1 April 1879 for another twenty years. They found that the lessees had violated all the provisions of agreement by not providing sanitary living conditions.³⁰

Alston compiled the horrible findings about life in the convict camps into a scathing report that named the worst of the lessees and their camps. He went on to describe conditions in the same graphic and disgusting detail that Bradley, Turner and Campbell had used in the early 1870s. Alston and his committee went farther than their predecessors in expressing the belief that imprisonment should protect society, punish criminals and rehabilitate them if possible. The committee members were certain that some could be reformed, if men were not chained to women and unmarried

²⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

³⁰ Robert A. Alston, "Report of the Committee on the Penitentiary", Alston Papers, p. 18.

female inmates did not give birth to children. They wondered how criminals could be reformed in such camps;

Where there is neither physician or chaplain except such as the lessees provide? The lease system at best is a bad one, and seems to have been forced upon the State by an inability to provide for the great increase in the number of criminals growing out of the changed relations of labor. Nevertheless, it is fastened upon us for the next twenty years, and we should endeavor to guard it by all the restrictions which wise and humane legislation suggest. ...The present law should be so amended as to have some officer appointed by the State to stand between the prisoner and the lessee. To turn the prisoner over to private parties, who have no interest in them except that which is avarice, is to subject them to treatment which is as various as the characters of those who have them in charge and in many cases amount to nothing less than capital punishment with slow torture added.³¹

The Feltons' hatred for the Democrats was deepened by Alston's devastating expose of the brutality of convict camp life. When the northern newspapers began publishing stories about Georgia's convict camps, the State became the focus of outraged social reformers from around the country, especially the northeast.³²

Prison reform became Rebecca Felton's major campaign-one she continued for the rest of her life. The Feltons, Mary L. McLendon among others, would fight the Democrats for prison reform into the twentieth century. In late December of 1878 and January of 1879, the Feltons and Alston continued the

³¹ Alston Papers, p. 18.

³² Felton, Memoirs, p. 490.

battle by defending Alston's report in Georgia newspapers against Democratic charges that he had exaggerated the vileness of the convicts' living conditions for his own political gain.

Rebecca L. Felton first attacked the Convict Lease System at the end of December of 1878 by affirming her belief in Alston's report. She was convinced that the Georgia Legislature could not vote to extend the lease for another twenty years in view of the horrible death rates in the camps and the number of children of inmate unmarried mothers. She scornfully wondered how United States Senator John B. Gordon dared to go to Boston to make a speech boosting Georgia business opportunities. She accused him of pretending to further the State's economic recovery while he was really making money for himself from "the Lease." She compared him to the poor farmers from her husband's Congressional District who lost their land paying taxes to the Georgia government while its officials to rich and the treasury ran a deficit.³³ She condemned General Gordon, U.S. Senator Joseph E. brown,

³³ Felton Scrapbook, December 1878 to February 1879, "Investigation of the N.E. [northeast] Railroad Bonds and Convicts in the Penitentiary", p. 79, c. December 1878, no publisher, reel 19, collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections; Wynes, p. 219.

who was a railroad lessee, and J.W. Renfroe, another lessee, and the State Treasurer of corruption and greed.³⁴

Robert A. Alston wrote many letters to newspapers expressing his disgust and his determination to end the Convict Lease System. In his letter to the Constitution that appeared on the front page on Christmas Day, he offered more instances of the lessees' brutality towards the convicts. The lessees and their cronies had the most to gain by making money quietly from the convicts' labor while seeming to redeem the State from Republican corruption.³⁵ IN his reply to J.G. Phinazee in the Walton County Monroe Advertiser, on 5 January 1879 Alston promised to call a formal committee hearing as soon as the legislature reconvened in January. If Georgians would not believe his report, then they had to trust the sworn testimony of witnesses at the Penitentiary Committee hearing or he would gladly be branded a slanderer.³⁶ Alston gave his last interview to Howard Carroll in Washington on 13 January 1879. Carroll's article, containing a long extract from the report, appeared in the New York Times. Northeasterners read sections of Alston's report, learned of Georgia convicts'

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Alston, The Atlanta Constitution, 25 December 1878, front page.

³⁶ Felton scrapbook, p. 68.

horrible living conditions and of the white Independents in Georgia who wanted social change.

In her Memoirs, Rebecca Felton pointed out that Alston was more difficult for the Bourbon Democrats to dismiss than blacks like A.A. Bradley, H.M. Turner or Tunis G. Campbell. He was an aristocratic war hero who had re-organized the Seventh District Democratic Party after the Civil War. The outraged convict lessees harassed the Alston family during the winter of 1878 and 1879. He went to Washington to persuade General Gordon to drop out of the Convict Lease Company and to stop upsetting the Alston family.³⁷ Rebecca Felton recalled these events just before his murder with sadness and disgust thirty-three years later:

Before we left Washington City Mr. Alston [came] several times to see us in our National Hotel parlor. The last time he came, he was in evident distress and under excitement. He said he had received a very unhappy letter from his wife that morning, and she was actually afraid somebody would kill him, because he had made the report of the committee denouncing the atrocities of the various convict camps in Georgia. He also said the whole lot were angry and the 'women had been repeating' to her various things, etc., and she had written him a very distressed letter indeed. He was anxious for [General] Gordon to get away from that convict lease; he had begged him to do it, etc. He asked to see the seventh district newspapers that were discussing the report he wrote 'with gloves off'. He would read awhile, then walk the floor

³⁷ Felton, Memoirs, p. 491.

and talk about his wife's discomfort at home and her premonition of danger to his life.³⁸

The circumstances of Alston's murder re-enforced the Felton's disgust and determination. Alston returned to Atlanta right after visiting the Feltons to comfort his wife. He had persuaded General Gordon to withdraw from the Convict Lease Companies, but he had more problems after Gordon agreed to sell his lease. Alston was in the middle of a conflict between the General, Edward Cox, a sub-lessee and two of the would-be buyers, C.B. Howard and E.T. Waters. Cox was furious when Gordon accepted Howard's bid after promising to sell the lease to Waters, whom Cox supported. Cox's position was an example of a major problem with the Convict Lease System because the major lessees divided the number of convicts among so many other businessmen that the Penitentiary Committee had no way of knowing where the prisoners were working or how they lived.³⁹

Cox seemed to blame Alston for convincing Gordon to sell the lease to Howard instead of Waters. He felt that his honor was impugned and stalked Alston through downtown Atlanta for most of the day on 11 March 1879, warning the usually unarmed Alston to get a gun. Governor Alfred H. Colquitt, Alston's

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Henry W. Grady, Atlanta Constitution, front page, 11 March 1879.

good friend, was either unable to unwilling to protect Alston from Cox. Many people who knew Alston and Cox wondered why Alston put up with Cox's swearing and threatening him. They believed that Alston should challenge Cox to a duel and shoot him, taking the traditional aristocratic view of southern male behavior. Alston never carried a gun and, like many late nineteenth century southern social reformers, had consciously ignored the traditions of the Old South. Alston was summoned to State Treasurer John W. Renfroe's office in the old State Capitol on Marietta Street. Alston thought he would be discussing the sale of Gordon's share in the Convict Lease and an agreement would finally be reached, but the gun wielding Cox followed Alston into the office. John Nelms, Principal Keeper of the Penitentiary and a friend of both men, tried to keep Cox and Alston apart. He had to duck to avoid being hit in the crossfire when both men began shooting at each other at the same time. Cox managed to step out of the way of most of Alston's shots, except for one that grazed his jaw. When Alston had emptied his gun Cox, bleeding from his mouth, shot Alston in the head. Alston was carried across Forsyth Street to his law office where he bled to death after several hours. Georgia's political leaders all attended the funeral and promised to help Mary Charlotte Alston and her four

children.⁴⁰ The Georgia Legislature passed the new twenty year lease several weeks after Alston's funeral, without debate. His martyrdom had no political effect. The same crowd, the Browns, W.D. Grant, Gordon, B.G. Lockhart and sublessees⁴¹ ran the same convict camps that Alston fought to reform in 1878. These lessees would pay the State a total of \$25,000 a year for twenty years. The Constitution assured its readers that the new lease would earn Georgia a million dollars clear and be more efficient than the penitentiary system which Alston had advocated.⁴²

The arrogant Democrats may have hoped that they would have a seven year period without much public discussion of the Convict Lease System, as they had in the early 1870s after the black Republicans were silenced. Senators Gordon and Brown could always rely on the official report of the Principal Keeper to gloss over the worst aspects of convict life. In 1881 William D. Grant, a partner in Convict Companies one and three, responded to the demand of Alston's former committee

⁴⁰ Alston Papers, pp. 21-24. Henry W. Grady, Constitution, front page.

⁴¹ "Shackled Humanity", Atlanta Constitution, front page, 1 April 1879.

⁴² Ibid.

that Grant's third camp be abolished.⁴³ Grant and the other lessees tried to present a picture of prison life showing hard physical labor but not brutality of foul living conditions, which would be contrary to the needs of business. Someone wrote "Mr., Mrs. and Master Felton" on a copy of this pamphlet now in Mrs. Felton's papers, possibly in attempt to convince the Feltons of improvements in the prisoners' treatment under the "reformed" Convict Lease System. The lessees did not want them to be investigating every financial transaction or report of convict camp atrocities.⁴⁴

Rebecca Felton carefully clipped articles in The Nation and the New York Wesleyan Christian Advocate, as well as the New York Times which used the Convict Lease System and Alston's murder to vilify Georgia Democrats. The Nations's editor, Edwin Lawrence Godkin, used aspects of Alston's family background and the dispute between Cox and Gordon as examples of southern barbarity and unfitness to rejoin the United States.⁴⁵ Perhaps she took comfort from letters to The Nation and the New York Times which argued that Alston

⁴³ W.D. Grant, Georgia's Penitentiary Company Number 3 and the Convicts, (no publisher, c. 1881); only at the University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁴⁴ New York Times, 13 March 1879, p. 4, c. 4, p. 5, c. 5; "H.C.", 11 October 1880, p. 1, c. 1.

⁴⁵ The Nation, "This Week", 13 March 1879, p. 174, v. 28. no. 715.

represented many southerners who understood the need for social reform.

Judge George Hillyer denied an injunction that would have kept prisoners from working at Brown's Convict Company Number One on the same day, 30 April 1879, that he opened Edward Cox's trial for murdering Robert A. Alston. Although Rebecca Felton clipped articles about this nationally notorious trial, she did not write commentaries on it while it was in progress. Instead, she recalled in her Memoirs begin furious at the Judge and Prosecutor Benjamin H. Hill, Jr. for excusing Governor Alfred H. Colquitt and United States Senator John B. Gordon from testifying. She believed that no Georgia murder trial was ever conducted in this manner before. She was convinced that the regular Democrats had rigged the trial in Cox's favor.⁴⁶

The jury listened to eight days of testimony about the events which led to Alston's death. The ten defense attorneys, including former DeKalb County Congressman Milton A. Candler and General Lucius Gartrell, claimed that Cox had killed Alston in self-defense during a duel. They asserted that Alston was part of a conspiracy to cheat Cox out of his

⁴⁶ Atlanta Constitution, 30 April to 9 May 1879, front page; New York Times, "Cox's Trial and Murder Conviction", 30 April 1879, p. 1, c. 5; 1 May p. 5, c. 5; 2 May 1879, p. 5, c. 5; 3 May 1879, p. 2, c. 5; 4 May 1879, p. 7, c. 1; 6 May 1879, p. 2, c. 2; 7 May 1879, p. 1, c. 4; 9 May 1879, p. 5, c. 3; Felton, Memoirs, p. 496.

share of the lease sale. Alston was implicated in the lease agreement because he was Gordon's lawyer and Cox's friend and creditor. Alston, they claimed, was a secret lessee who attacked Cox out of fear of being exposed.⁴⁷

The jury found Edward Cox guilty of murdering Robert A. Alston, but recommended mercy so Cox could not be sentenced to death. Ironically, Alston had written a statute limiting sentences to life imprisonment in murder cases where the jury recommended mercy. Cox's attorneys appealed the verdict because they felt that Judge Hillyer should not have informed the jury that Cox had been stalking Alston. After all the appeals failed, Cox was assigned to do office work at John B. Gordon's Dade County Coal Mines. The Democrats persuaded Alexander H. Stephens to release Edward Cox right after the 1882 elections. Perhaps Rebecca Felton was right in her suspicions about political wrongdoing.⁴⁸

The Feltons After Alston's Death

Dr. William H. Felton campaigned for election to Congress in 1880 as he had in 1878 and 1874. Rebecca Felton wanted her husband to resign from office and not run in 1880 because of Alston's murder and the convict lessees' power. Dr. Felton believed that he had to take a stand for principles as Alston

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ New York Times, 17 June 1879, p. 1, c.6; 21 June 1879, p. 5, c. 4.

had. Benjamin H. Hill tried to assure the Doctor that he would win in 1880 with Democratic support, if he promised never to run for Congress or the Legislature again. He refused angrily, ran as an Independent and lost.⁴⁹

Felton's opponents accused him, as usual, of being a secret ally of the Northern Radical Republicans. John B. Gordon wrote a letter, probably to the Constitution, denouncing Dr. Felton for being re-elected in 1878 by "repeating negro votes". (A.W. Reese, editor of the Macon Telegraph, accused him of soliciting money for the Doctor's 1878 congressional campaign from the Republicans.) Rebecca Felton denied most of these accusations in a letter of her own to the New York Times, but had to admit writing a Republican United States Senator. She was angry at Reese for accusing her of assisting her husband in fund raising, while he accepted large sums of money for the Telegraph from Joseph E. Brown and General Gordon. She also claimed that Gordon had profited from the vile convict lease system and fraud in the collapse of the Southern States Insurance Company.⁵⁰ She concluded:

I think I understand and appreciate the feelings of the good and honest men in both parties, and they will rebuke any party or clique that spares no sex

⁴⁹ Felton, Memoirs, pp. 497-8, 519.

⁵⁰ Felton, "More Georgia Chivalry", The New York Times, 26 February 1879, p. 2, c. 4.

or condition in their insane desire to keep themselves in office. the very fact that shiftY politicians attack everybody who interferes with their combination for public plunder has done more to injure the Democrats' organization in Georgia than everything else. To this end they add the resolve to attack women, because guilty cowardice refused to meet more responsible parties. Drive the money changers from the Democratic temple, and set up officers whose honor and reputation are dearer to them than convict tramps or the money of Jay Gould or [Collis P.] Huntington.⁵¹

Rebecca Felton's letter to The New York Times provoked a sharp response from John E. Bryant, the chairman of the Republican Party in Georgia. (Felton claimed that Bryant was a regular Democrat from Rome who secretly favored the Independent candidate for Congress in the 1878 Seventh District election.) After correcting Felton's use of his title, Bryant stated that he urged Republicans to vote Republican rather than for Dr. Felton because of Felton's anti-Republicanism. The Doctor had sponsored a bill charging the Republican Party of fraud in the 1876 Presidential election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel Tilden. Bryant believed that Dr. Felton had no right to ask Georgia Republicans for their votes in 1878 or 1880.⁵²

Dr. Felton ran his usual campaign of urging voters to abolish the Convict Lease System, and on such issues as ending

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² John E. Bryant, "Georgia Republicans and Dr. Felton", The New York Times, 1 March 1897, p. 2, c. 6.

child labor, establishing better public schools, creating an independent railroad commission and prohibition. The Doctor's socially progressive goals drew almost as much support from small farmers with his powerful oratory. Dr. Felton carried those Cobb County precincts where the most poor farmers lived, while the regular Democrats and Republicans split the richer parts of the county. The voting records for the other counties in the Seventh District, except for Bartow County and Cartersville, probably showed the same pattern as Cobb County. The Independents believed that the Feltons were making the State more democratic by challenging the party hierarchy. The Feltons welcomed all true Georgia Democrats, including blacks, into the Independent Democratic movement. The Doctor, putting aside hostilities from the late 1860s, believed that blacks had a duty to elect men who would protect their legal rights.⁵³

The Doctor faced first-time candidate Judson C. Clements in the fall of 1880 as he had in 1874. When Felton was defeated, the Feltons charged Senator Gordon, Governor Colquitt and Joseph E. Brown with vote fraud to push Clements through the electoral process. The Feltons had to return to Washington after the ugly and bruising primary campaign. Since the Doctor was simply serving out the end of his final

⁵³ Hyman, *The Anti-Redeemers*, pp. 174-176, 187.

term in office, the couple was ignored by other members of Georgia's Congressional delegation. Dr. Felton expressed his frustration with his situation. He supplied the reporter with statistics to prove his claim of ballot-box stuffing and voter intimidation.⁵⁴

Rebecca Felton was as outraged over the election results as her husband and was determined, after 1880, to seek revenge on the General. She kept on adding exposes on the Convict Lease System, railroad stock manipulations and the Nicaraguan Canal Company that involved General Gordon to her scrapbooks. Since she did not write in the dates of these articles, the newspapers that they appeared in or the real names of the authors, it is impossible to know if Felton wrote some of them herself.⁵⁵ "Plain Talk," however, described Alston's visit to Washington in late December of 1878 in the same words as Felton used in her Memoirs.

Colonel Bob Alston came to Washington directly after the publication of [his] report...and called to see the writer. He said he understood certain Georgia newspapers were pitching into Senator Gordon on this matter, and wished to see and read for himself... 'The convict lessees are exceedingly angry with me because of that report. They are making threats. A letter from my wife, received

⁵⁴ Felton, Memoirs, pp. 312-322; Hyman, p. 193.

⁵⁵ Felton Scrapbook, no. 32, reel 20, pp. 9-13, collection no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

to-day, tells me she has been threatened, and she begs me to quit fighting or they will kill me.'⁵⁶

The Feltons were too bitter over the events of the previous three years for the Doctor to run in the 1'882 elections, but the couple remained deeply involved in Georgia politics. Rebecca Felton recalled their efforts to convince Alexander H. Stephens to run for governor as an Independent. Stephens and the Feltons had been friends since they entered Congress together in 1874, if not before that. He had never been healthy, even causing the Feltons to worry, and had become so ill by 1882 that he resigned from the House of Representatives. He seemed to change his mind about not running for Governor, when he dictated a letter to Representative Emory Speer announcing his candidacy as an Independent.⁵⁷

Emory Speer was the young Independent Representative of the Ninth District in northwest Georgia and a friend of the Felton's. Speer sent copies of this letter to the Feltons, other leading Independents and newspapers on the east coast and in Chicago. Dr. Felton and the Independent leaders wrote a proclamation extolling Stephen's virtues, not being a convict lessee or railroad bond holder, as the people's candidate. This proclamation was also the Independent party

⁵⁶ Ibid. Felton, Memoirs, p. 491.

⁵⁷ Felton, Memoirs, pp. 366-369.

platform that stated all the Doctor's social reform goals. Unfortunately, the efforts of Dr. Felton and Speer turned out to be futile when Stephens wrote a letter declaring that he had never authorized Speer to send the letter. He ran for Governor as a regular Democrat, leaving the Independents to withdraw in embarrassment with no other candidate. After being elected without much opposing, he freed Ed Cox from his office duties at the Dade County Coal Mines. Rebecca Felton even saved some newspaper editorials pitying Cox for being tricked by General Gordon into murdering Alston and subleasing convicts that ruined him financially. Rebecca Felton recalled still being embittered and saddened at the time of Alexander Stephens' death a few months later.⁵⁸

Like Dr. Felton, Emory Speer was never elected to Congress again, but he was appointed to the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals by Chester A. Arthur in the late 1880s. Dr. Felton waited until the late 1880s before being elected to the State House of Representatives to continue fighting the Convict Lessees. Rebecca Felton began the 1870s as a wife, mother and Prohibitionist, who assisted her husband in becoming a United States Congressman. She gained an education in the horrors of Georgia politics through working for her

⁵⁸ Felton, Memoirs, pp. 372, 547; Scrapbook, no. 32, reel 20, "Poor Ed Cox!", p. 3; "The Cox Case", collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

husband. These experiences and the murder of Robert A. Alston arouse her personal desire for social reform. While she was Dr. Felton's secretary in Washington, she met the national leaders of the woman suffrage and Prohibition organizations and studied their literature. Rebecca Latimer Felton became Georgia's leading woman social reformer in the 1880s because she knew the state's social ills and found in the WCTU, a national association, to assist her agitation for change. Her sister, Mary Latimer McLendon, discovered these associations independently out of a similar desire to improve the lives of women in Georgia, especially in Atlanta.

Dr. William H. Felton in 1880. From Rebecca L. Felton, *My Memoirs of Georgia Politics*



Dr. William H. Felton in 1880. From Rebecca L. Felton, My Memoirs of Georgia Politics

CHAPTER IV

The Southern Great Post-War Awakening, the Latimers
and their Associates, 1868-1889

Rebecca Latimer Felton, Mary Latimer McLendon and the other women who survived the Civil War were too busy coping with the lack of money, the scarcity of food and the need to hire black laborers who had been their slaves a decade earlier to become politically active right away. Many like Missouri Horton Stokes had to go through the uncertainty and social upheaval as single women, a situation for which they socially were not prepared. They were more concerned with the daily needs of their families than with campaigning for more education or woman suffrage. The ante-bellum association between suffrage and Abolitionism still alienated such women from the suffrage movement although Southern women could join northerners in outrage over not being included with men as citizens in section two of the fourteenth amendment.

Fifty years later, Felton could still recall her anger at Georgia politicians, like Alexander H. Stephens, who wore to support the Federal Constitution before 1859, embraced the Confederate Constitution between 1862 and 1865, and finally accepted the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments after 1865. If the white politicians could enfranchise black men and

regain the right to vote themselves, they could grant it to women as equal citizens.¹

McLendon recalled bitter memories of the late 1960's in her plea to President Woodrow Wilson in 1913 to support woman suffrage. She hoped that the appeal to Congress would allow women to vote just as negro men had been allowed to do since 1869. She remembered the Civil War veterans who persisted and succeeded in their efforts to regain the franchise. She believed that southern white women were only half citizens, since they were denied the vote. If they were persistent, they would achieve suffrage. She called upon President Wilson to "speak the word as Lincoln had the chance to speak the word which set a race free."²

Northern women, who had fought to free blacks from slavery, believed that they would be allowed to vote when blacks were enfranchised. They were furious when they saw the provision of the fourteenth amendment that linked men, citizenship and voting. Like southern women, they believed that they had a right to vote since they were citizens, taxpayers and frequently better educated than many male voters. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized

¹ Felton, Country Life, p. 247, 248; Rable, p. 241.

² Mary L. McLendon, "The Political Rights of Women", The Atlanta Constitution, 30 November 1913, p. 3F, c. 5-6, 4 January 1914, p. —, c. 5-7, 5 February 1914, p. 1F, c. 1-2.

the National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) in Washington, D.C., in 1869.³ The members of the association lobbied Congress for a Declaratory Act to extend the provision in section two of the fourteenth amendment to women.

Meanwhile, Congress had passed the fifteenth amendment in 1870 which made it illegal for the federal government or state legislatures to deny citizen the right to vote because of race, color or their former status as slaves. Anthony, Stanton and other northeastern and mid-western women tried to vote under the fifteenth amendment or else sued the state election boards to be allowed to vote. Anthony was accepted as a voter in 1872, but she was arrested after voting and brought to trial for trespass. The suffragists were further outrage when her case was decided by a judge and not a jury.⁴

But other reformers who had been Abolitionists in the 1840s reacted differently to the amendments. Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell believed that winning the right to vote for black men was a major accomplishment in itself which ought to stand.⁵ Nevertheless, Henry Blackwell thought that adding suffrage for white women to the fourteenth and fifteenth

³ Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted-Harper, eds. The History of Woman Suffrage, vol iv, 1883-1900, (New York: reprint 1969), 2.

⁴ Anthony, p. 5.

⁵ Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of Woman Suffrage, 1880-1920, (New York, 1965), p. 3.

amendments would have made it palatable to the South. In an open letter to the legislators of the southern states, he used population figures to show that black citizens in the former Confederate states would be out voted by white citizens:

The effect upon the North would be to revolutionize political parties. "Justice satisfies everybody." The negro, thus protected against oppression by possessing the ballot, would cease to be the prominent object of northern philanthropic interest. Northern distrust, disarmed by Southern magnanimity, would give place to the liveliest sentiments of confidence and regard. The great political desideratum would be attained. The negro question would be forever removed from the political arena. National parties would again crystalize upon legitimate questions of national interest - questions of tariff, finance and foreign relations.

The Blackwells founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in Cleveland in 1869 to spread their ideas of cooperation between North and South. Their other goal was to achieve woman suffrage nationally through the passage of laws in the state legislatures. If women could vote in state elections, they would send pro-suffrage representatives to Congress. Then the suffragist members of Congress would pass laws allowing women to vote in national elections.⁶ The members of the AWSA were encouraged by the popularity of

⁶ The Blackwell Family, Carried Shapman Catt and the National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, Library of Congress, What the South Can Do, New York, January 15, 1867, Reel 51.

suffrage in the western territories, such as Wyoming, Utah and Colorado.⁷

Many southern women found the local option suffrage plans of the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) much more attractive than the federal suffrage ideals of the WCTU or the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). They enthusiastically received the AWSA's only southern convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in October of 1881. They even accepted Henry Blackwell's idea that southern white women could help white men negate black voting power.⁸ This convention led Mary B. Clay and Laura S. Clay to create the first local southern woman suffrage society, the Kentucky Woman Suffrage Association.⁹

The Feltons in Washington

In January of 1875 Rebecca L. Felton and Howard joined Dr. Felton in rented rooms at the National Hotel at Fourth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. The Feltons welcomed many people to their parlor, including Georgians and the national leaders of the woman suffrage movement. Mrs.

⁷ Kraditor, p. 3.

⁸ Anthony, vol. II, pp. 861-862; Blackwell Collection Library of Congress, reel 51.

⁹ Blackwell; Paul G. Fuller, Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement (Lexington, Ky., 1992), p. 24.

Felton, her husband's hostess and secretary, greeted and talked with every visitor to the parlor.¹⁰

Once Felton was assigned to the Commerce Committee, more people probably came to their rooms to discuss committee business. Since his wife helped him prepare his speeches, she had to study the legislation with him. She supported his outspoken stance against Collis P. Huntington's Texas Pacific Railroad construction project. He was as firm in opposing corruption and the railroad monopolies. Felton was vilified, as usual, for exposing the bribes that Huntington offered to obtain the rights of way for his railroad.¹¹

The Doctor successfully introduced medically oriented bills to make the National Quarantine Act effective and exempt quinine from import duties. He worked for free silver, equality of silver and gold coinage and special taxes on luxury consumer goods and interest income goals later to be associated with Populism. He pursued his goal of fiscal responsibility as a member of the House Ways and Means Committee that controlled the spending for the Congress of 1877-1878.

In commenting on this period of her life, Rebecca Felton noted that:

¹⁰ Memoirs, pp. 13-14, 78-116.

¹¹ Ibid.

[I] became well acquainted with Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony and the other pioneers in the suffrage movement, and in later years I knew their successors, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw and Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt. They were deeply interesting women, who left an impress on their times.¹²

Rebecca may have influenced her sister, Mary Latimer McLendon, toward woman suffrage. For whatever reasons, McLendon became a leader of the prohibition and suffrage crusades in Georgia. In the 1890s, Felton and McLendon were probably initially attracted more to the AWSA than the NWSA because of the Blackwells' belief in state suffrage before federal suffrage and their willingness to recruit men. The NWSA, in contrast, never had male leaders like Henry Blackwell yet the sisters believed that Georgia legislators would not trust women to vote because the men feared that social reform legislation would end child labor and the convict lease and might institute prohibition. Thus, the sisters concluded that the federal amendment advocated by the NWSA might be necessary since the Georgia legislators would never vote for woman suffrage.¹³ McLendon's rise to the leadership of both movements signified the dwindling importance in the 1890s of the issues that originally separated the associations.

¹² Felton, romantic Story, p. 30.

¹³ Felton, Country Life, p. 247. In fact, Georgia assembly did not vote for female suffrage until 1972.

Felton and McLendon also agreed with the Blackwells and the other AWSA members on the value of cordial relations with the Woman's Temperance Crusade. The Feltons had been members of an antebellum temperance society, and continued their activities into the Reconstruction Era. The Blackwells were convinced that the "Crusaders" religious and conservative tactics of moral suasion would fail to persuade legislators to pass prohibition laws. They believed that more women would see that successful temperance legislation required that women be able to vote. Henry Blackwell could not understand how the "crusaders" could found the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WTCU), a formal organization dedicated to winning Prohibition, without emphasizing suffrage.¹⁴

Although the suffrage associations disagreed on many issues, they would agree with most of the ideas that Ida Husted-Harper expressed in "Suffrage-A Right." Felton and McLendon came to share some of these opinions.

At first thought, it is incomprehensible that American men so keen in their sense of justice, so insistent in their demand for "fair play and a square deal," should so utterly ignore, should indeed persistently refuse the constitutional rights of women. It must be remembered, however, that a dominant class never extends a right or shares power so long as it is able to retain these exclusively for itself, and that they are won by

¹⁴ Anthony, vol. II, p. 757; Jack S. Blocker, "Separate Paths: Suffragists and the Women's Temperance Crusade, Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 466, Felton, p.c. 7; Memoirs, p. 61; Blackwell papers, "What the South Can Do."

the governed class only after a long and strenuous contest. The moment any class obtains the franchise, it opposes the extension to any other class. The Pilgrims and Puritans kept it closely within their own church membership. When property holders were reluctantly admitted, they in turn prevented for many years the admission of those without property. The Know-Nothing or American Party was formed to keep the franchise as long as possible from immigrants. White men held it from black, until forced to grant it through a long and costly war.¹⁵

The Opposition Arises

The northern opponents of extending the franchise to women began to speak up on the state level as soon as the woman suffrage associations were founded. The arguments of Mrs. Ellen E. Sherman, the wife of General William T. Sherman and leader of a petition campaign to keep Congress from considering woman suffrage paralleled many of the southern arguments opposing suffrage.¹⁶ Sherman and others who agreed with her took the position that they were the guardians of woman's role as homemaker. They felt that women were taking on a new and unnecessary burden by entering public life. If women won the right to vote, they would have to spend more time away from home on jury duty or other civic activity. Women were the center of their homes, the bearers and nurturers of children and nothing should obscure these primary

¹⁵ Ida Husted-Harper, "Suffrage-A Right" North American Review, no. 599, 21 September 1906, p. 497.

¹⁶ Flexner, p. 295-296.

responsibilities. Woman suffrage was also seen as a hindrance to charity work. Sherman was as deeply involved in Catholic charity work as any Protestant Prohibitionist or suffragist (even though she and women like her were accused of being socialites with servants, whose charity work was inconsequential.)

There is no record of a petition presented by Sherman but, the petition presented to the Senate by C.E. McKay in December of 1869 may represent her handiwork. It was the only anti-suffrage memorial in the Senate Documents for that period.¹⁷ On the other hand, the suffragists offered five petitions and found a Senator from Kansas to introduce a suffrage amendment in 1869 and one from Massachusetts to propose one in 1872. Both were read, reported adversely, and postponed indefinitely. Since the woman suffrage amendment never was discussed outside of the Senate committees, Dr. Felton never voted on it in the House in the late 1870's.¹⁸ Anthony, Cady, Stanton and other suffragists became even more convinced by the Senate's actions (or inaction) that Congressmen did not really represent women taxpayers or care

¹⁷ "Memorial of C.E. McKay Against the Rights of Suffrage being Granted to Women," Senate Miscellaneous Documents, 48, 41st Congress, 2nd session, ser. vol. 1408; Carl N. Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America From the Revolution to the Present (New York, 1980), pp. 349-355.

¹⁸ Congressional Globe, 41st Cong. 2nd sess., 6 December 1869, p. 633, 634, 5314; 42nd Cong., 3rd sess., p. 291, 774.

for immigrant women, as they did some other non-voting property owners such as resident aliens.

The Senate discussions took place when enormous numbers of Eastern European immigrants, Hispanics, Asians and in the South, blacks, caused white Protestant Americans to wonder who ought to vote and what it meant to be an American. Some legislators, especially in the South, still believed that voting was a privilege that could be granted or withheld according to state law as it was in antebellum times. These politicians wanted to restrict the franchise to those white men who could be trusted to support the traditional leaders or could be easily controlled by racist appeals.¹⁹

After Reconstruction the Feltons encountered particularly hostile opposition from state legislators and the Georgia delegation in Washington. Joseph E. Brown, the Civil War Governor of Georgia, was appointed United States Senator in 1880. He became one of woman suffrage's most determined adversaries in the Senate, just as he was a foe of the Feltons at home on the convict labor issue. Women were not friendly to his interests. He led the fight against woman suffrage in the Senate in 1884 and in 1887. He had apparently taken little interest in the bill until it came before his Select Committee on Woman Suffrage in 1882. Brown and Senator

¹⁹ Anthony, vol. IV, p. ____.

Francis M. Cockrell of Missouri wrote a report for the committee that was based solely on a series of anonymous articles called "Letters from a Chimney-Corner," allegedly written for the Chicago Tribune by an anti-suffrage woman.²⁰ The Senators repeated all the usual criticisms of woman suffrage. They had a superficial, sentimental, rather patronizing and idealized view of woman's place in the home. For example, Brown and Cockrell preached that:

...the Creator has assigned to woman very laborious and responsible duties, by no means less important, than those imposed upon the male sex, though entirely different in their character. In the family she is a queen. She alone is fitted for the discharge of the sacred trust of wife and the endearing relation of mother. While the man is contending with the sterner duties of life, the whole time of the noble, affectionate and true woman is required in her family circle, in her church relations and in the society where her lot is cast. When the husband returns home weary and worn in the discharge of the difficult and laborious tasks assigned him, he finds in the good wife solace and consolation which is nowhere else afforded.²¹

Members of the NWSA criticized the Senators' report severely when they held their annual convention in Washington, D.C., on 25 January 1887. Elizabeth Cady Stanton sent a letter to the group in which she condemned the suffrage debate

²⁰ Anthony, vol. IV, p. 93.

²¹ Congressional Record, 49th Congress, 2nd session, vol. 18, p. 980.

taking place in the Senate. She judged the Senators harshly in the following terms.

But if Senators Cockrell and Brown hope to dispose of the question by remanding us to "the chimney corner" we trust that their constituents will send them to keep us company, that they may enliven our retirement and make us satisfied 'in the sphere where the Creator intended we should be' by daily intoning for us their inspired minority report.²²

Joseph E. Brown's stand against woman suffrage never attracted much attention in Georgia where male politicians did not yet take the matter seriously. The Constitution, an anti-suffrage newspaper, ignored the Select Committee on Woman Suffrage debates in March of 1884. The Daily Journal, however, published one editorial opposing Frances Willard, the President of the national WCTU, for her decision to embrace the issue of woman suffrage. She was trying to create a national prohibitionist party of enfranchised Temperance women. The editor agreed with Senator Brown that southern women did not want to vote, even for Prohibition. He used Brown's images to express the belief that woman's sacred role in the home was too precious to be dirtied by political action. Willard and people of the western territories were wrong to combine suffrage and prohibition. The Constitution's editor concluded by quoting the August Evening News as evidence of the unpopularity of suffrage in Georgia.

²² Anthony, vol. IV, p. 113.

At least this is the Souther view of the situation, and Southern women are not likely either to take the stump or call political conventions even in so good a cause as prohibition of liquor. If women of the North desire to take this advanced step, we cannot forbid them, but if Southern women are so inclined, we prefer to see them take the next train for Susan B. Anthony's station, and enroll themselves at once on the straightout platform of Woman's Rights.²³

Georgia's newspapers continued to print anti-suffrage articles in 1887 that reflected the highly placed opposition that the Feltons faced on so many reform measures. In that year the Atlanta Constitution did cover the debate on the woman suffrage issue in two front-page articles. The first reference to Brown's speech was a paragraph in a digest of Senate debates, in which he was praised for his eloquence and the popularity of his ideas. The reporter characterized the women who crowded into the Senate galleries to listen to the debate as amazons, but he concluded that they were "deeply pained at the heartless action of the Senate." The suffragists carried photographs of Senator Henry W. Blair of Massachusetts, the amendment's sponsor.

The Constitution printed a detailed account of the morning's debate that included woman suffrage under the headline "No Ballot for Women; The proposed Constitutional

²³ Atlanta Journal, 17 March 1884, p. 4, c. 2.

Amendment Defeated by the Senate."²⁴ The abstract of Brown's ideas was luke-warm compared to the praise they received in the first article. On the following day, the Journal published a more sarcastic one-paragraph comment called "Woman Suffrage." The editorialist began by referring to Senator Brown as venerable and shrewd. He then suggested that Brown had been urged to make the speech by his wife. Nevertheless, the writer closed with an anti-Brown quotation from the Woman's Journal of Boston, which castigated Brown's ideas as examples of the shallowness of anti-suffrage beliefs. The Woman's Journal writer concluded:

His speech contains, indeed, many things that are true and many that are to the point; but the statements which are true are not to the point, and those which are to the point are not true.²⁵

Churchmen as well as politicians strongly opposed women suffragists for biblical and social reasons. Georgia's famous Warren Akin Candler had been a Methodist Minister for fourteen years when he wrote the first of many attacks on woman suffrage and even on prohibitionists who favored it. He shared an upcountry family background with Senator Brown.

By 1887, when brown was near the end of this career, Candler was rising to prominence as an editor of the Nashville

²⁴ The Atlanta Journal, 6 February 1887, front page, columns 1-3.

²⁵ Atlanta Journal, 7 February 1887, p. 2, c. 1.

Christian Advocate.²⁶ In 1887, he published an editorial called "Is Woman Suffrage a Partisan Issue?" He was already an opponent of woman suffrage and proud to have the support of the other southern Christian Advocates. The sole exception was the Wesleyan Christian Advocate from New York, whose editor believed that the church had no business intervening in politics. Candler believed that woman suffrage was a danger to the nation as well as being biblically and morally wrong. Ministers had the right to convince their congregations that a political idea should be opposed. He reprinted a short paragraph from the Arkansas Methodist called "The Boomerang Ballot" as filler to reinforce his points. This paragraph stated that good women would not vote while the so-called "bad ones" would participate in politics fully. "We must preserve our altars and our home influences, or we are gone."²⁷ The day this editorial appeared, W.W. Duncan of Union, South Carolina, wrote Candler a letter congratulating him for opposing suffrage. Duncan believed that black women would vote while white women stayed home. He considered black women harder to manage than men once they decided on a goal. He believed that white woman suffragists did not know that black

²⁶ Joseph W. Parks, Joseph E. Brown of Georgia Baton Rouge, 1977; Mark K. Bauman, Warren Akin Candler (Muetchen, N.J., 1980).

²⁷ Nashville Christian Advocates, 5 March 1887, p. 2, c. 4, and p. 5, c. 3-4.

women would be eligible to vote. Duncan was one of the earliest southerners to put his objections to woman suffrage on racial grounds.²⁸

The Younger Generation

Rebecca Felton, Mary McLendon and other southern women wanted to vote in order to address the social evils of the New South and, at that point, they ignored the risk of black women voting. The sisters had new allies among the younger women, black as well as white. Opposed by many daughters of Confederate veterans, this younger generation of women were much better educated and more sophisticated than those of Felton's generation in spite of the hardships of the early Reconstruction era. Howard's parents, Annie Jane Lindsay Howard and Augustus Howard, were near the center of Columbus' ante-bellum planter society. The future woman suffragist was born on one of her family's plantations in 1864,. She scarcely knew her father, since Augustus Howard died in 1867. She only knew of the Howard family's ante-bellum life through stories and the novels of her first cousin, Augusta Jane Evans Wilson.

This generation of the Columbus Howard family was as cash-poor as the North Georgia farmers that the Feltons knew. Howard grew up while her mother was struggling to pay property

²⁸ W.W. Duncan to W.A. Candler, 6 March 1887, W.A. Candler Collection, no. 3, Emory University, box 1, folder 5.

taxes on Sherwood Hall, the Howard-Evans-Lindsay family home. Howard later recalled that she developed a sense of injustice over the status of women who were taxpayers but not voters. She was also acquired her belief in woman's rights through reading the same books in the family library that Wilson read. Helen Augusta attended school in Columbus until 1882 when she went to the Augusta Female Seminary in Staunton, Virginia, for two years.²⁹ She may have attended the school while Mary Julia Baldwin was still the president. Baldwin, a pioneer of woman's education, had guided the first Presbyterian woman's college from the late 1840's through the Civil War.

While Helen Augusta Howard was growing up in Columbus, Dorothy (Dolly) Blount was enjoying a slightly more luxurious childhood in post-war Macon. She was born in 1866 to an attorney and his wife, James Blount and Eugenia Nisbet Blount, on the family plantation near Macon. Her mother, Eugenia, a true Confederate lady, helped the other Macon ladies, possibly including Felton, roll bandages for the wounded in Dr. Felton's hospital, prepare a barbecue for the returning soldiers and, later on, decorated the graves of Confederate soldiers.

Dolly grew up in a house on Bond Street in Macon. Although she recalled their home as being unpretentious, it

²⁹ Etta B. Worsley, Columbus on the Chattahoochee, (Columbus, 1951), p. 249-252.

was very comfortable. James Blount, after recovering from wartime wounds, resumed his law practice and was even elected to Congress in 1874 as an opponent of Reconstruction.³⁰ In spite of the family's regained social and political position, the children were raised to feel dispossessed by the social turbulence of Reconstruction and the commercialism of the New South. The family was wealthy enough by the middle 1870's to send Dolly to private school in Washington, D.C. and Macon. She graduated from Wesleyan in 1883 and spent the rest of that year and early 1884 studying at Wellesley. Her parents chose Wellesley because that college had not yet accepted a black student in the early 1880's. Nevertheless, Dolly encountered a black woman classics student crossing the campus one day. Even though the woman did not live near Dolly, the Southerner resolved never to confront this situation again or view blacks as deserving of any educational or social advantages. She returned home in 1884 and made her debut at a family party in 1885. In the next decade Dolly Blount would marry and join the United Daughters of the Confederacy.³¹

She had opportunities through her studies and father's political career to meet women from other parts of the country. Unlike the mature Rebecca Latimer Felton who moved

³⁰ Dolly Blount Lamar, When All is Said and Done, (Athens, 1952), p. 12-20 and 24-38.

³¹ Lamar, p. 74-77, 101.

in Washington's Independent and suffragists circles, she was so strongly opposed to any deviation from the myths of the plantation south that these experiences almost no affect on her. All of Lamar's fears about the changing south and federal election or prohibition controls came out in her attacks on woman suffrage in the period around World War I. Lamar never seemed to have any more sympathy for the poor white farmers who moved from the arms to Macon, Atlanta and other cities than she did for women or blacks.

Education and Femininity

Other women, like Felton and Maria Jourdan Westmoreland, wanted to assist the newly arrived mill hands in Macon and Columbus and elsewhere adjust to city life, improve their living conditions and education. The latimer sisters had been brought up to see assisting others as a religious and civic duty. Felton learned about conditions needing reform through her husband's legislative career. She and other white workers were not in need of more assistance than independent church associations could provide. Black women were also motivated to form similar societies by the plight of the freed slaves who moved to Georgia's cities to look for work.

In response to the nationwide needs of society, these woman's clubs banded together in national associations. The first national associations of white women's organizations were the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1874) and the

Association for the advancement of Woman (AAW). The AAW was organized in 1873 with Julia Ward Howe as its president. It was much more intellectual than the WCTU and much less political than the suffrage organizations and was never totally dedicated to woman suffrage, even though Howe and many of its other members and executive committee were members of the AWSA. The Association held annual meeting in various northeastern or middle western cities. Women who were active in social reform or even suffrage work were invited to present papers on child welfare, employment or educational progress for women in various parts of the country.³² Maria Jourdan Westmoreland apparently was the only southerner ever invited to address the convention.³³

The Latimers' contemporary, Maria Jourdan Westmoreland of Atlanta may have been attracted to the AAW by its association with the more moderate AWSA. The planter's daughter and the author of the Battle Hymn of the Republic could bury their sectional differences enough to see common problems, but would have made common cause with Bishop Gilbert Haven of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a founder of Clark College, who

³² Deborah P. Clifford, Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A bibliography of Julia Ward Howe, (Boston: 1979)

³³ Degler, in chapters XIII and XIV, surveyed the development of the AAW, WCTU and women's education in the late nineteenth century. He did not include much information on Georgia women's contributions to any of these causes.

would become president of the AWSA in 1875. Initially, her relations with AAW were so friendly that she was invited to speak on the status of Georgia women at the Association's first Woman's Congress that met in New York on 15 and 16 October 1873.³⁴ Her actual speech was never published locally, but Georgia newspaper editors published highly critical stories about her appearance and remarks. One of Westmoreland's friends wrote to the Savannah Advertiser-Republican defending her. This person used the name "Fair Play," one of Mrs. Felton's favorite pen names. The writer pointed out that the Advertiser, in copying the story about Westmoreland, misquoted the Herald. The Advertiser item in the "Georgia News" column concluded:

Mrs. Westmoreland, of Atlanta, Georgia, spoke on the condition of Southern women: she said she knew them well enough to know that if the papers of this Congress had been read in the South, it would rouse them that they would not be quiet until they had the ballot.³⁵

"Fair Play" denied that Mrs. Westmoreland mentioned the fight for suffrage. The writer used a quote from the Herald to support the contention. Mrs. Westmoreland said, according to the Herald, "that lecturers [should] be sent throughout the South in order to awaken the women of that section to

³⁴ "The Woman's Congress", New York Times, 16 October 1873, p. 5, c. 1.

³⁵ "A Defense of Mrs. Westmoreland", Savannah Advertiser-Republican, 6 November 1873, p. 2, c. 2.

immediate action."³⁶ But, Westmoreland never named the issues that southern women were to act on, so they need not have included suffrage. The editor of the Advertiser allowed Westmoreland to publish a front page article defending herself on 19 November 1873. She described meeting Howe, Stanton and Mary Livermore, all suffragists, as did Felton. After they had asked her to speak, she stated her belief in practical education designed to make women independent. She won the respect of the audience with her conviction that northern and southern women should unite for progress.³⁷ She ended her article by taking exception to every account of her speech, including the Herald articles that were complimentary towards her if not to the Congress itself.³⁸

Apart from the accounts of Woman's Congress, the Constitution and the Herald accepted several articles from Westmoreland on education and woman suffrage between 1873 and 1875. Her ideas on these subjects, especially education, were similar to those of Felton. Mrs. Westmoreland's first article for the Herald was called "Work for Women, written in the Interest of an Educational and Industrial School for Women" on

³⁶ "Mrs. Westmoreland", p. 2, c. 2.

³⁷ Maria J. Westmoreland, "Heart Hungry, Mrs. Westmoreland Replies to Her Critics", Savanna Advertiser-Republican, p. 1, c. 3, 19 November 1873.

³⁸ "Mrs. Westmoreland, Her Lecture", Atlanta Herald, 30 November 1873, p. 3, c. 2.

7 November 1873. She wanted to raise money and model her woman's college after Peter Cooper's plans to endow "The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art." She believed, with Cooper, that young people had to learn to appreciate the works of nature, thoroughly understand the reasons for the existence of natural phenomena, and the place of human beings in nature. The only way for the Republic to survive, according to Westmoreland and Cooper, was through an educated electorate. In Cooper's plan, women could attend a school financed by income from the trust fund and rent from the buildings. Westmoreland and Cooper did not mention race in their plans, but it is highly unlikely that she planned an integrated school. Her most radical opinion was that she did not seem to believe that women's education had to be structured differently from men's education.³⁹

Maria Westmoreland and Rebecca Felton were not alone in desiring improved educational opportunities for women in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Even women who probably did not know of Westmoreland's or Felton's campaigns for woman's technical education sought intellectual stimulation. These ladies may not have approved of women organizing public campaigns and especially of the WCTU. Like Westmoreland and

³⁹ Maria J. Westmoreland, "Work for Women, Written in the Interest of an Educational and Industrial School for Women", The Atlanta Herald, 7 November 1873.

Felton, they graduated from ante-bellum female academies. Such women found the Chautauqua Society (an enormous educational and evangelical organization founded in 1874 in western New York State) immensely stimulating. Georgia's women could organize study groups and follow the syllabus in the monthly Chautauquan magazine, without publicly confessing a desire for a university education or social reform.

The ladies who founded the Nineteenth Century History Class in Atlanta in 1885 were probably less publicly activist than the WCTU members. These women began by following the Chautauqua Association's program in history and advanced to university extension programs in the 1890s on topics including slavery and the Civil War.⁴⁰ They joined thousands of other people, blacks included, across the country who improved their lives and were entertained through the study of subjects from current events and history to prohibition.

While Mary L. McLendon may have participated in these associations, she was only known to have joined the WCTU in 1880. She was certainly interested in woman's education and a member of the upper middle class social group that Westmoreland and the History Class ladies came from.

⁴⁰ Jane C. Croly, History of the Woman's Club Movement in America, (New York 1898), p. 363; Felton Country Life, p. 111; Atlanta Journal, 29 August 1897.

Mrs. Felton's goals for an industrial school for girls were more limited than Westmoreland's broader plans for women's education. She wrote a letter to the editor of the Augusta Chronicle of 16 February 1891 that summarized the real working conditions for southern women. Contrary to some of Westmoreland's ideas, Mrs. Felton believe that a school for young women should not attempt to copy men's education in any way. The students should live simply and practice strict economy. The president should be a woman with teaching experience who would be paid a modest salary to run an institution in opposition to the rather frivolous Lucy Cobb Institute or Emory College. Only white women would attend her proposed stat-funded school, since Felton believe that black women had extensive educational support from northern philanthropists. She wrote that she did not

...begrudge the help that fanatical patriotism and puritanical sectarianism has given them! But my heart aches for the poor white girl! Thousands were deprived of their natural protectors by the war. Many a man died in the Confederate army who never had a slave to fight for!...Two years ago, when I had opportunity I appealed to a farmer's meeting on this point. I left my sphere, perhaps, to beg them to remember these girls--and when I descended from the improvised rostrum a young woman met me, with tears streaming from her eyes. 'Bless your heart' she cried, 'my father died in the war. His poor bones lie over yonder on that hillside and this is the first work I have heard since that time which seemed to remember he ever had a daughter. I work in the field to earn the bread we eat. I crave learning as I never craved food, and I've been hungry many a time. I can do nothing to earn

a nickel but plow, hoe and pick cotton. God bless you for sympathy, if you can help me no more?'⁴¹

Felton and Westmoreland were several years ahead of the state in recognizing the need for women's industrial education. Westmoreland was the first to stir up the public. She began making progress reports to the Atlanta Herald's readers on 14 November 1875. In an essay, "Work for Women, Written in the Interest of an Educational and Industrial school for Women," she reprinted a long extract from Mary Livermore's speech called "Superfluous Women." Livermore vented her frustrations at being an independent-minded girl whose Baptist deacon father did not appreciate her. Like Felton, she developed a devotion to prohibition and woman's education in childhood. She was a native Bostonian who taught school and worked for social reform.⁴² She concluded her message with the plea:

Let us give to women such training physically, industrially, intellectually and spiritually, that we shall shame the word 'superfluous' out of the vocabulary, as descriptive of women. And this will help men, and elevate them quite as much as any special work which might be done for them, and thus collective humanity will be benefitted, and a higher civilization be promoted...⁴³

⁴¹ Felton, Country Life, p. 270-272.

⁴² Frances E. Willard, Woman and Temperance or, The Work and Workers of The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, (New York, 1972; reprint from 1883), p. 427 and 431.

⁴³ The Atlanta Herald, 14 November 1875, p. 1, c. 4.

All three women believed that females would be able to earn more money at better jobs if they had more skills. Woman should study phonography, photography, type-setting and telegraphy as well as the usual tailoring, cooking and fine arts. Westmoreland wanted women to study these subjects in day or night school. Working men would also be able to attend English and Photography among other subjects. She considered a free library where working people could use the books crucial to social progress in Georgia. In the 1870's and 1880's, the only lending library in Atlanta was the Young Men's Library Association that could only be used by subscription and election to membership. Westmoreland felt that the State should support the Woman's Industrial School as it funded Atlanta University and the University of Georgia.⁴⁴

She called her next article "Practical Training For Women: The Meeting at Dr. [Willis F.] Westmoreland's Yesterday - Preliminary Steps - An Auspicious Beginning." She reprinted some of the letters of support for her work and a brief summary of the trustees' meeting. The people who attended this conference were all well-known Atlanta businessmen and socially prominent women. The male board members included her husband, Dr. Westmoreland, Robert A. Alston (the Editor of the Atlanta Herald). The women were

⁴⁴ The Atlanta Herald, 8 December 1875, p. 1, c. 4-5.

Mrs. A.P. Hill, Mrs. W.B. Lowe (whose husband was a convict lessee), Miss Sarah Jones and Mrs. B.W. Wrenn.⁴⁵

Since the Atlanta Newspapers did not print further accounts of this school, Westmoreland may not have had the popular support that she believed she had. Felton made no references to the project in her 1891 Augusta Chronicle letter. Westmoreland dropped out of sight in the late 1870's, just as she was beginning her work for woman's technical education. Since she was not mentioned as a survivor in the obituaries of Dr. Willis F. Westmoreland (28 June 1890) ill health and death may have stopped her.

Felton, McLendon and Thomas would carry the campaign for⁴⁶ woman's technical education in the 1890's. They probably knew of the dispute over professional education for women in the Northeast and Middlewest. Dr. Edward H. Clarke worked to convince people that education endangered women's health. This claim was extended to include the fitness of women to vote or participate in public affairs as the equals of men. He wrote a book in 1873 called Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls.⁴⁷ Julia Ward Howe edited a

⁴⁵ The Atlanta Herald, 16 December 1875, p. 1, c. 3-2.

⁴⁶ Atlanta Constitution, 28 June 1890, p. 3, c. 1.

⁴⁷ Edward H. Clarke, Sex in Education; Or, A Fair Chance For The Girls, (New York, 1972; a reprint from 1873), preface and p. 11-12.

short collection of essays by the officers of the AAW and other Bostonians who opposed Dr. Clarke. Howe entitled their book Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr. E.H. Clarke's "Sex in Education" (1874). The debate continued.

Felton and Westmoreland were not arguing for the same type of academic graduate education for women as the northern women advocated, but the Southerners clearly believed in education for women that went beyond the finishing school programs of Mildred Lewis Rutherford's Lucy Cobb Institute. Felton believed that women should be admitted to the University of Georgia to prepare to study law or medicine.⁴⁸ Westmoreland argued that women could master technical subjects contrary to Dr. Clarke's thesis.

Clarke's opponents believed that girls who did nothing but housework or socializing after graduation from finishing schools suffered ill-health from boredom.⁴⁹ Ada Shepard Badger wrote in Howe's anthology:

Nowhere in our own country does the average woman present so feeble and diseased an aspect as in those parts of the West and South where education is of the smallest moment to her. Lacking the delicate beauty of the New England girl, she also leads a life of greater physical suffering, and a more hopeless incapacity for usefulness. Is unremitting study a cause of the weakness of the

⁴⁸ Felton, Country Life, p. 71-72, 122, 257.

⁴⁹ Howe, p. 20-25.

Georgia planter's wife or the Cincinnati merchant's daughter?⁵⁰

Caroline H. Dall (another contributor) continued the attack on southern women's health and education by re-affirming Badger's statement and claiming that southern women were not as healthy as those of the northern cultivated classes.⁵¹ These sentiments ignored the speeches that Maria Jourdan Westmoreland made at the AAW conventions in the early 1870's attempting to inform northern women of southern women's true living conditions. Felton was often unsympathetic towards education ideas of northern women, referring to their post-civil war work with black women's colleges as "...fanatical patriotism and puritanical sectarianism . . .".⁵²

Education, Prohibition and Woman Suffrage

In spite of racial and sectional disputes, members of the first large generation of educated women wanted to create an easier atmosphere for the academic achievements of young women in the 1870's and 1880's. They had to create a constituency of women who were willing to work for Prohibition and suffrage and against child labor. They wanted to prove that women

⁵⁰ Julia Ward Howe, Sex and Education, a Reply to Dr. E.H. Clarke's "Sex in Education", (New York, 1972, a reprint from 1874), p. 77.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 97.

⁵² Felton, Country Life, p. 271.

could be responsible and the equals of men in the work force, professions and public affairs. Future generations of girls should be educated more systematically to raise better children or work for social reform. Many early women social reformers, such as Felton, believed that their own educational opportunities had been limited.⁵³ Their learning frequently had been driven by their own desires and reading rather than their schooling.

Adult programs were supplemented and fed by new college organizations. Like the Latimer sisters, many women in other parts of the country believed that the WCTU and other social reform organizations would be supplemented by the social reform club in the woman's colleges. Prohibitionism and other reform programs spread through the missionary societies in the women's colleges. Although women at Wesleyan in Macon had been interested in missionary work since the founding of the college in the ante-bellum period, the first formal juvenile missionary association was not organized until 1881. The students at Shorter College in Rome founded their first association, the Martha Shorter Missionary Society, in 1883. These early missionary organizations led not only to the WCTU,

⁵³ Ibid, p. 71.

but to the beginning of the Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA) in the late 1880's.⁵⁴

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary Latimer McLendon became Prohibitionists because of their strong Methodist beliefs. Felton's husband was a Methodist minister and a Prohibitionist from ante-bellum times who helped his wife deepen her involvement with Prohibition. Rebecca Latimer Felton, a moderate local reformer, could find a sense of unity with the intellectual female Prohibition supporters from other areas of the country. Most advocates came to temperance through their Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian religious beliefs, for temperance had been a tenet of these sects since their growth during the great spiritual awakening of the 1790's and early 1800's. The temperance societies that church members organized flourished in the ante-bellum south as well as in the northeast and middlewest. They, like the unorganized woman suffragists, had always competed with the abolitionist societies for attention. The eastern abolitionists who had followed William Lloyd Garrison believed that true social reformers had to pursue all three goals at once and not negotiate with slave owners or liquor dealers. The Ohio abolitionists, like the later AWSA, favored moderation and negotiation with the opposition. These societies were usually

⁵⁴ Corley, p. 291, 302, 312.

led by men and supported, often timidly, by women who wondered if public social reform activities were feminine.⁵⁵

The Civil War set the temperance cause back severely: Southern temperance reformers were isolated by their disgust with abolitionism as well as by northern reformers' Reconstruction work with the newly freed slaves. The idea of being temperate in the use of alcohol was foreign to men in the camps of the Union and Confederate armies. The preaching of temperance-minded surgeons like Dr. William H. Felton or the nurses, such as Mrs. Mary Livermore, and doctors of the United States Sanitary Commission had little impact on the drinking in the camps.⁵⁶

After the war, women asserted themselves in the new temperance societies and became leaders almost by default. The emotional and physical stresses of the war had led to an increase in alcoholism and morphine addiction among the veterans that made northern and southern women take up the Woman's Temperance Crusade (WTC). The Crusade began spontaneously in southwestern New York and eastern Ohio in the winter of the panic year of 1873, when groups of women began praying in front of saloons. During the first six months of

⁵⁵ Jack S. Blocker, Jr., "Separate Paths: Suffragists and the Women's Temperance Crusade". Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Spring 1985, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 460-1.

⁵⁶ Willard, p. 418.

1874, these prayer demonstrations spread through the country, inspired by newspaper items. The women demonstrators were active in Washington, D.C., Kentucky and Tennessee but not Georgia. The Washington Crusaders were probably still praying in saloons, when Dr. Felton entered Congress at the beginning of 1875.⁵⁷

From the beginning, the Crusade movement was tied to woman suffrage by its critics despite the Crusaders attempts to distance themselves from the suffragists.⁵⁸ Whenever the suffragists brought up votes for women at local Crusader planning conferences, they were ruled out of order or drowned out by hymn singing. The suffragists, like the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), in turn disapproved of the Crusaders' disruptive tactics. The AWSA leaders argued that the Crusaders' activities were not only illegal, but meaningless until women could vote Prohibition into law. Some suffragists felt that the Crusaders could harm the struggle for the vote by presenting women as extremists, who were impossible to negotiate with.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Blocker, p. 461; scrapbook XIII, Reel 19, Collection 81, 9 March 1878. In a letter to an unnamed newspaper, Felton described the sorry conditions of the streets in Washington, D.C., H.W. Blair, U.S. Rep. of Mass., "Liquor at the Capitol", WCTU Signal, 11 March 1880, p. 3, collection of the Library of Congress.

⁵⁸ Blocker, p. 463.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 467, 469.

Atlanta's clergymen and newspaper editors, even those who probably leaned towards prohibitionism, were alienated by the WTC's tactics. The Reverend Mr. Clement A. Evans offered one of the first local condemnations of the WTC when he spoke at an Atlanta Temperance rally. He sympathized with women, who were abused by drunken men, but, the former Confederate General still believed that men should be the ones to fight the liquor dealers in the streets and saloons. Participants in the rally did not express a formal opinion on the WTC, but voiced appreciation to the WTC women for their dangerous labor.⁶⁰ Evans and others firmly believed that women's chief weapon against alcoholism was to make their homes so attractive that tavern life could never compete. Their chief goal was to convince the city council not to grant any more liquor licenses or at least to charge enormous amounts of money for them. This rally must have had some support from Georgia politicians because it was held in the Hall of the House of Representatives at the old State Capitol on Forsyth Street. The Feltons might have been at this major event since Felton was planning to run for Congress in November.⁶¹

The Feltons' and Gordon's supporters were already writing hostile open letters to each other in the Constitution, when

⁶⁰ The Atlanta Constitution, 20 March 1874, p. 3, c. 3-4.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the news of the Woman's Temperance Crusade spread to Georgia. Henry W. Grady and Evan P. Howell, the Constitution's editors, were willing to print the Feltons' letters and Grady even interviewed the Doctor for a front page article.⁶² But the Constitution's editorials and other articles usually favored the regular Democrats over the Independents or the WTC. Rebecca Felton was almost pitied in "Another Letter from Mrs. Felton" for degrading herself by entering political discussion even in defense of her husband.⁶³ The editorialist considered Rebecca Felton's polemical language extreme and proof that women were too emotional for public affairs. Dr. Felton was wrong to allow her to use her emotionalism to try to destroy the Georgia Democratic order and to defend him. The Constitution's second editorial on women in public life, "Ladies and Politics", was in the same issue as "Another Letter from Mrs. Felton".⁶⁴ This editorial was hostile to northern women who were outspoken Prohibitionists or suffragists and Rebecca Felton, concluding:

We who know Mrs. Felton know that she is not of a piece of those stalwart females who strut across the rostrum [or streetcorner] and magnify their unwomanliness. We know she is an amiable,

⁶² Henry W. Grady, "Felton's Foragers", The Atlanta Constitution, 25 March 1877, front page.

⁶³ "Another Letter from Mrs. Felton", Constitution, p. 4, c. 2, 26 February 1879.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

accomplished and a charming lady, whose devotion has confused her judgment. ...She has simply made a mistake. True, it is an unhappy one, but it was doubtless prompted by intense excitement.⁶⁵

The Constitution's ideal of reticent Georgia womanhood was General Gordon's wife, who had experienced the same Civil War hardships as Rebecca Felton. She would never consider responding to Rebecca Felton's verbal assault on the General in kind in the Constitution.⁶⁶

Besides writing to the newspapers defending Independentism and her husband's character, Rebecca Felton gave at least one lecture to the Cartersville Temperance Club on the evils of drinking brandy in 1866. She denounced great poets for associating brandy and wine with enjoyment, recited the distillation process and listed the biblical and medical reasons against drinking. She only revealed her passion for Prohibition in her last paragraph when she compared brandy to snake venom that was injected directly into the blood stream and eventually killed the drinker. She urged her audience to reject the medicinal use of brandy (A constant theme of her later Prohibition lectures).⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "Ladies and Politics", Constitution, 26 February 1879, p. 4, c. 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Felton, "Brandy", reel 19, collection no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

Rebecca Felton and her audience at the Cartersville Temperance Club were among the many Georgians who joined such clubs in the late 1860s. Felton, like many women, may have been discouraged by the Constitution's constant ridicule of the WTC and gloating reports of middle western city councilmen's attempts to control the Temperance women with disorderly conduct laws. Georgians attended rallies like the one at the Cartersville Temperance Club that Felton addressed. These were organized on a statewide basis by the order of the Good Templars, a male-oriented secret temperance society with a great deal of female influence. The Good Templars spread to Georgia in the late 1860s.⁶⁸ Their founder was James G. Thrower, a British stone mason who moved to Atlanta in 1867.⁶⁹

The Feltons were allies of the skilled craftsmen that the organization attracted to Prohibition and to the attack on the Convict Lease System and the railroad trust. The craftsmen and small businessmen were as hurt economically as the small farmers by the New South's reliance on convict or cheap unskilled factory labor or unfairness in railroad freight rates.

⁶⁸ The Atlanta Constitution, 22 March 1874, front page, c. 2; 31 March 1874, front page, c. 3.

⁶⁹ Henry A. Scomp, King Alcohol in the Realm of King Cotton. Or, A History of the Liquor Traffic and of the Temperance Movement in Georgia from 1733-1887. (Atlanta, 1888) pp. 586-7, 590-5.

The Good Templars recruited black craftsmen and small businessmen to organize lodges using the same rituals and insignia as the white lodges did. By 1873 the northern lodges, which dated back to the 1850s, demanded that the southern associations be desegregated. The editorialist for Robert A. Alston's Atlanta Herald commented on the problem that race caused for the Templars' convention in Augusta at the end of September. He believed that white lodge members could encourage blacks to organize Good Templar lodges and even address their meeting. He had no objection to blacks being Templars or the rituals which outraged other white Georgians like Joseph E. Brown.⁷⁰ The author felt that Brown was trying to reopen the wounds of the Civil War through his demands that the Georgia Good Templars secede from the national order. The Herald reminded its readers and Brown that the South had agreed to abandon such ideas at Appomattox. A charge of disloyalty to the South would also be levied against the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and woman suffrage in Georgia in the 1890s and 1900s.⁷¹

Henry A. Scomp, a Prohibitionist, Emory College professor, and historian of alcohol in Georgia admired the Crusaders and the WCTU founders much more than some other male

⁷⁰ The Atlanta Herald, 23 September 1873, p. 4, c. 2.

⁷¹ Ibid.

prohibitionists and certainly more than the Constitution.⁷² He was certain that the Good Templars knew of the founding of the WCTU in November of 1874 through their correspondence with Good Templar lodges in other American cities. The Templars may even have published information about the WCTU in their newspapers, the Watchman and the Templar's Advocate, which were politically independent and printed mostly religious and temperance news. Georgia women Templars read of the Crusaders' need to create a national organization to sustain the enormous growth of the Crusade by regular planning and communication between the national headquarters and state and local temperance associations. Scomp appreciated that:

[for] more than half a year after the movement began, no attempt at organization was made. The women would go in bands to the saloons, entreat the liquor vendors to cease their nefarious business, and sing and pray within or before the saloons. It was a terrible trial for the ladies who thus bravely took up the cross. It was a stony heart that could resist those prayers, and hundreds of saloonists closed their doors with a promise to sell no more. The contagion spread on the wing from house to house, from town to town, and from State to State. The new feature of work was seized upon with avidity and thousands of noble women enlisted under the Crusading banner.⁷³

The Crusaders who met at the Cleveland Temperance Convention in November of 1874 agreed to continue praying at saloons under national guidelines. These plans were written by

⁷² Scomp, p. 576, 675.

⁷³ Ibid.

Crusader Frances E. Willard based on her own beliefs, the goals of the Crusade and ideas from other leaders of the Woman's Temperance Crusade.

Willard was also a woman suffragist and a regular visitor to the NAWSA Convention in Washington, she corresponded with the Sibleys and Missouri Horton Stokes which may have been a reason for the rapid spread of the WCTU in Georgia.⁷⁴ Willard and the Feltons did not make the first formal contact between Georgia women and the WCTU. The officers of the Wenona Cold Water Temple, the Good Templars' women's organization, invited Eliza D. "Mother" Stewart to lecture on the WCTU and the Woman's Temperance Crusade at their April 1880 rally. She shared a background of school teaching and a Prohibitionist husband with Rebecca Felton and Jane Sibley, but Stewart had nursed Union soldiers as part of the Union Army's Sanitary Commission.

Before Stewart returned to Ohio, she helped the Wenona Cold Water Temple's women found the first WCTU Chapter in Georgia. The first meetings were held in the basement of the Trinity Methodist Church, near the McLendon's home. Mary McLendon was one of the women in the church that day, while Gertrude Thomas became a corresponding member from Augusta.

⁷⁴ Frances E. Willard, Woman and Temperance. Or the Work and Workers of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, (New York, 1971, reprint from 1883), p. 127.

Mrs. James G. Thrower, the wife of the Good Templars' President, became the first president of the chapter. Missouri Stokes, who would found WCTU chapters in many other cities, was appointed the first corresponding secretary. The first officers of the Atlanta Union, as they informally referred to their society, were devout Methodists or Presbyterians, Good Templars, Grangers or Independents. These ladies officially called their association "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Atlanta."⁷⁵

They wrote a constitution for the new association that differed from the Willard's model charter in Woman and Temperance only in minor respects. It was true to Willard's concept of using the WCTU "to educate public sentiment up to the level of total abstinence, to train the young, reform and save the inebriate and hasten the time [when] the dramshop shall be banished from the streets by law."⁷⁶ The WCTU members pledged themselves to suppress intemperance and never to use liquor for drinking or cooking or encourage others to do so. Unlike the national WCTU charter, men were allowed to become full honorary members by signing the pledge and paying a dollar a year in dues. Women only paid fifty cents in dues,

⁷⁵ Willard, p. 35, 633-635; handbill, c. 1884, Missouri Horton Stokes Collection, microfilm DeKalb Historical Society, original Duke University Library.

⁷⁶ Willard, p. 633.

which were collected at the weekly public Friday meetings or monthly at the larger rallies. Rebecca Felton and Mary L. McLendon were frequently invited to address these gatherings on the benefits of prohibition to mothers, the history of prohibition efforts in Atlanta before the WCTU, and the importance of school scientific temperance instruction.⁷⁷ The WCTU's school scientific temperance instruction required that children attend school and not work ten hours a day in factories where they might be tempted by alcohol. Felton argued that women and girls had to be well educated to promote Prohibition because they needed to understand the social and political reasons for the abolition of drinking and make persuasive speeches. The women formed committees, like those of the national WCTU, to recruit white children and adults and prisoners. Despite whites' likely reluctance to assist black WCTU chapters, many were created.⁷⁸

Rebecca Latimer Felton devoted herself to the WCTU after her husband lost the 1880 election. She used this platform to continue fighting for their Independent beliefs, even though she did not officially join the Union until 1886. Mary L. McLendon became a WCTU member to carry out her goal of

⁷⁷ Lula B. Ansley, History of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union, from its Organization, 1883 to 1907. (Columbus, Ga., 1914), p. 38; Willard, p. 80.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

improving Atlanta. The sisters and many other women pursued Willard's ideal, "Do everything", for the next twenty-five years. They were even willing to associate with former abolitionists and Union Army nurses to accomplish their social reform objectives. They fulfilled another of Willard's goals, to use the WCTU to break down gender, sectional, racial, and religious barriers.⁷⁹ Willard caused problems for the Latimers and many other Georgia women when she created a woman suffrage committee for the national WCTU. The Latimer sisters and many other women embraced woman suffrage because they believed, like the WCTU, that women could only obtain prohibition through voting. The battles between the pro and anti-suffrage camps in the 1890s nearly tore the Georgia WCTU apart and the issue of black suffrage added another dimension to the struggle.⁸⁰

Rebecca Felton believed strongly that prohibition could not be advanced or the Convict Lease System defeated until women had the right to vote. She felt proud of the WCTU's 1881 pledge to fight for national woman suffrage and prohibition when, thirty-four years later, she wrote, "Why I

⁷⁹ Stokes Collection, handbill, c. 1884; Willard, pp. 46, 633.

⁸⁰ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, vol. IV, p. 1071.

am a Suffragist".⁸¹ Felton and McLendon were two of many southern women who desired suffrage in the late 1880s.

Rebecca Latimer Felton, the chairwoman for legislative work and petitions in 1888 for the WCTU sent a petition to United States Senator Joseph E. Brown. The undersigned demanded that the Federal Government stop collecting revenues from liquor dealers. Brown wrote Felton on 15 October 1888, promising to bring the appeal before the Senate at the earliest possible date. Brown wrote this letter on the day that he presented the WCTU's first petition to the Senate. Felton sent him a second petition demanding the repeal of the internal revenue laws. Brown asked the Senate's permission to make a speech on revenues, but he never took part in the debate on revenues that occurred near the end of the fall term of Congress. This petition, like the one abolishing tax collection from liquor dealers⁸², was sent to the Finance committee where it disappeared.

Most Georgia women did not have the positive view of gradual local option woman suffrage from the AWSA convention or great loyalty to the WCTU. They were confused by Willard's creation of the suffrage department in the WCTU because they

⁸¹ Felton, Country Life, p. 247.

⁸² WCTU of Georgia 6th Annual Convention, 1888 (Atlanta, 1888), p. 4; J.E. Brown to R.L. Felton, 15 October 1888, reel 2, collection 81, University of Georgia; Congressional Record, 1887-9, p. 2, pp. 1250, 9450.

had only the negative comments of Joseph E. Brown, the Reverend Mr. Warren A. Candler or the Constitution. They might also have read the Constitution's favorite female columnist, Maria Jourdan Westmoreland, writing on "The Woman Question; Southern Views on the Subject." Westmoreland believed that the endless disputes between the woman's rights organizations made women appear indecisive. They would be better off if they serve their communities, found jobs or went to school as well as joining the WCTU. Once they were successful in business or education, they could demand to be treated as equals and receive the same salary as men. She never realized, as Felton did, that women had to participate in public affairs to achieve any of these goals.⁸³ Westmoreland wrote other essays for the Constitution in which she compared the woman suffrage movement to the idealistic yet dangerously revolutionary women of the French Revolution or the Paris Commune of 1871. She believed that suffrage and other civic duties would be as burdensome and undesirable for women as factory work. In spite of her misgivings, Westmoreland felt that women suffrage would become law sooner than anybody thought. Women had better become educated to use their new powers wisely.⁸⁴

⁸³ The Atlanta Constitution, 20 April 1873, p. 2, c. 5.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Westmoreland's doubts about the effects of woman suffrage were expressed by other women social reformers in Georgia. Missouri Horton Stokes, WCTU corresponding secretary and future opponent of Mary McLendon replied to a letter from the Reverend Mr. S.W. Rogers, the principal of a school at Eufala in Indian Territory, now eastern Oklahoma. Stokes doubted the wisdom of WCTU members working for woman suffrage and demanding the franchise. Stokes sympathized with his embarrassment at being attached for this position when he was only considering the best interests of the WCTU.⁸⁵ She understood that women suffering from the abuse caused by drunken men could lead women to want to vote for prohibition. She even believed that large numbers of black women would be in favor of prohibition, even though she thought that the voting record of black men on the issue was a dismal failure. She did not offer the usual religious, States' Rights or anti-feminist objections to woman suffrage. She did not believe that the Georgia Legislature or the United States Congress would ever vote to give women the vote.⁸⁶

Missouri Horton Stokes did not let her doubts about woman suffrage stop her from assisting Frances E. Willard in establishing WCTU locals in Savannah, Macon, Augusta and

⁸⁵ M.H. Stokes to S.W. Rogers, 26 September 1888, W.A. Candler Collection, no. 2, box 2.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Collection.

Columbus among other Georgia cities between 1881 and 1884.⁸⁷ These associations were especially popular in the college towns of Rome and Oxford. The local unions sent Stokes detailed accounts of the number of people in each area who had signed abstinence pledges, temperance pamphlets given away, and the number of public meetings held in area churches. The chapter presidents also had to announce public meetings in the newspapers and organize visits to hospitals and schools.⁸⁸ Inez Gibson of Alto was one of many women from around the State who wrote asking for subscription forms for the Union Signal or the New York Voice as well as pledge and petition blanks. The Georgia WCTU women participated in petition campaigns to have a prohibition bill passed by the Georgia Legislature and one to stop the Federal Government's profiting from the excise tax on liquor. Mary H. Hunt of the National WCTU wrote to thank Stokes for her work on these petition drives. Stokes saved a copy of the petition that she hand addressed stating that the undersigned asked the Legislature to abolish saloons in Georgia. By 1884 State Senator William J. Northen believed that he was fighting the strongest men in the Senate over Prohibition. He believed that chances of a

⁸⁷ Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union, (Atlanta, 1884), pp. 12-15 in the Main Atlanta Public Library.

⁸⁸ Stokes Collection.

Temperance Bill passing in the legislative session of 1884 and 1895 were poor. Their opponents, financed by the Liquor Trust, were "as potent as they [were] wicked."⁸⁹

Temperance Rallies

When Atlantans were voting for local option prohibition in 1885, Mary L. McLendon undoubtedly directed the chapter's members in their lobbying activities. These women held daily prayer meetings, led children of both races in singing temperance songs on street corners in downtown Atlanta, embroidered a satin banner to be given to the African-American prohibition association which returned the most votes and gave away temperance literature⁹⁰ which climaxed in a tent meeting.

The Doctor had been the main speaker at a tent rally that began the campaign for local option prohibition in Atlanta in November of 1885. Dr. Felton's sermon was interrupted by six hundred black prohibitionists who approached the tent asking for admittance. Dr. Felton stopped speaking so that the black prohibitionists could be seated and was interrupted several more times by the cheering crowd. The white businessmen who ran the downtown local option rallies were surprised that

⁸⁹ M.H. Hunt to M.H. Stokes, 6 February 1883; W.J. Northen to Stokes, 6 December 1884, Stokes Collection.

⁹⁰ Ruth Borodin, Woman and Temperance? The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900 (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 134.

blacks had organized their own prohibition lodges. Before November of 1885, blacks were considered anti-prohibitionists because their most prominent leader, William A. Pleadger, was an outspoken opponent of the Woman's Temperance Crusade.⁹¹

Dr. Felton may have preached at another giant rally to convince the Atlanta City Council to keep local option prohibition, since he was a State Representative, famous temperance lecturer and a founder (with Governor Alfred Colquitt) of the United Friends of Temperance (1873).

Many attendees signed prohibition petitions at this and other giant rallies, held by the WCTU and the Good Templars. On this occasion, the public, black people as well as whites, flocked to a warehouse at Forsyth and Hunter Streets to persuade the Atlanta City Council to keep local prohibition. They heard the Young Men's Prohibition Club hold a short religious service and sing prohibition songs with the quartet from Clark College. United States Senator Alfred H. Colquitt, one of the main speakers, derided the idea of using alcohol as a personal liberty. The Constitution's reporter did not even summarize in the long article Colquitt's speech or that of Judge Georgia Hillyer who introduced the speakers. Everyone had come to hear Henry Grady, who was escorted to the podium by Hooper Alexander among others while the band played

⁹¹ Scomp, pp. 809-810.

"Dixie." The Constitution reprinted Grady's entire speech calling for the city council to preserve the local option Prohibition. *These women college students were among the*

Grady had not been a prohibitionist in the early 1880s but realized that it was popular and good for Atlanta. He believed that local prohibition deserved a longer trial period than two years and better support from the voters than a simple majority. He discovered that the passage of prohibition in Atlanta meant fewer evictions for non-payment of rent. The municipal court judges tried fewer people for misdemeanors related to drunkenness. Once Grady realized how beneficial prohibition was for the city, he convinced Atlanta's businessmen, like George W. Adair, to become prohibitionists. Grady believed that such social disruptions were not noticed among the rich or middle class who could afford to drink heavily.⁹² Grady spoke for a longer time than he had intended because he was interrupted so often by the cheering crowd. The Reverend Mr. C.N. Grandison, a black preacher from North Carolina, closed the conference with a short address and the benediction.

The members of black prohibition societies had an organizational plan similar to the white WCTU Associations. The young women of Spelman College founded, in 1884, a Young

⁹² Constitution, p. 13.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the first Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA) right after the college was established.⁹³ These women college students were among the thousands who heard the Reverend Mr. Gaines, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner and the Reverend Mr. E.R. Carter expose "the crimes and evils of intemperance at the public meetings in churches, like Big Bethel." The ladies of this church founded a WCTU chapter as early as 1886.⁹⁴

Black Atlantans discovered that they could affect social conditions in the city by organizing societies, lobbying politicians and encouraging people to vote.⁹⁵ Although they and white social reformers shared the desire to show the rest of the nation that Georgia was worth readmitting to the United States, they had to convince white Georgians that they were good Americans. Black Atlantans could join Scomp and the Feltons in seeing Prohibition as helpful in ending the popular practice of vote fraud (getting laborers drunk the night before the election and making them vote numerous times on election day).

⁹³ Corley, p. 313.

⁹⁴ Scomp, p. 814.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 811.

The Feltons 1887 Legislative Career

By the late 1880s, women, like Rebecca Felton, used the WCTU's growing power to lobby the legislatures in their states on behalf of prohibition, compulsory school attendance or prison reform. The WCTU had evolved into the only mass woman's organization with chapters in every state and town whose members investigated schools, hospitals, prisons and other social institutions in the course of lecturing on temperance. Although women still could not vote, they became a noticeable lobbying force with the assistance of sympathetic legislators. The Georgia WCTU members found that their goals matched those of Dr. William H. Felton, Rebecca Felton's husband.

Dr. Felton had been out of Congress for six years when Rebecca Felton introduced a resolution at the WCTU convention in Macon calling for the reform of the Convict Lease System. She found a way to mount her own campaign to abolish the System through this WCTU resolution. Felton's resolution was endorsed by the Reverend Mr. J.H. Potter, editor of the Wesleyan Christian Advocate.⁹⁶ She wrote the resolution while assisting Dr. Felton in combatting the regular Democrats to win election to the Georgia Legislature as the Representative from Bartow County. He campaigned on improving

⁹⁶ Ansley, pp. 104-107; Felton, Memoirs, p. 580.

public education, creating juvenile reformatories, regulating railroads and instituting Prohibition, appealing to small farmers and blacks as he had in 1878 and 1880. Once elected, he introduced bills on these subjects and certainly assisted his wife in presenting the WCTU petition abolishing the Convict Lease system.

Rebecca Felton recounted the horrors of the System that Robert A. Alston had reported in 1879 and that she had written about for the Forum in 1886. She once again implied that the lessees were responsible for Alston's murder.⁹⁷ She assembled additional incidents of exploitation -- black women and children chained to adult men of either race, more infants fathered by convicts or guards. She wondered why a white female prisoner was whipped a hundred times for swearing, while male convicts cursed almost constantly. Felton compiled these incidents from her own investigations of the convict camps for the Georgia WCTU's Jail Work Committee, the oldest national and local WCTU department. Felton planned to include this petition, the Forum article and her unpublished notes in a book or an unpublished chapter of her Memoirs. She even described meeting a woman serving a life sentence, no race given, who had become the mistress of an unnamed lessee and

⁹⁷ Ibid; Felton, Country Life, p. 286.

the mother of his three children,⁹⁸ reflecting her continuing concerns for gender issues.

Rebecca Latimer Felton was able to galvanize Georgia's WCTU members into joining the fight against the Convict Lease System because they were dedicated to rescuing prisoners, especially women, from drunkenness and immorality. The Union members' belief in prohibition led them to associate with organizations, such as the new labor unions, that they never considered before the late 1880s.

Mary Latimer McLendon, the president of Georgia's first WCTU chapter on Atlanta's Southside, offered support to the Augusta local of the Knights of Labor which had just been decimated in a vicious and racially divisive strike against the Augusta textile mills. The Knights, like WCTU, were prohibitionist, biracial opponents of the Convict Lease System. McLendon's adherence to the National WCTU's favorable position on the Knights of Labor may have deepened the dissent within Georgia's WCTU because the President of the Georgia WCTU, Jane Thomas Sibley, was married to Augusta's biggest textile mill owner, J.H. Sibley.⁹⁹ The Sibley Mill was one of the many factories closed in an 1886 strike. Nevertheless,

⁹⁸ "Convict Lease", folders, reel 8, Felton Collection, no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁹⁹ Melton A. McLaurin, The Knights of Labor in the South, (Westport, CN., 1978), pp. 71-73, 176; Borodin, p. 175.

the Augusta mill owners did negotiate an agreement with the union in 1886 that seemed to lift some of the harsher rule governing the hiring of union members, establishment of a grievance committee and giving workers more freedom of behavior on the job. The Knights of Labor recovered from the strike and being shut out of the mills to hold their 1887 convention in Atlanta of which Mary L. McLendon approved.¹⁰⁰

The WCTU members needed the men in these labor organizations to pass prohibition, as Dr. Felton needed the Good Templars' craftsmen to defeat the Convict Lease System or the Railroad Trust. Since McLendon and other WCTU members did not publicize their labor union association, the connection was not widely known until after the WCTU founders died in the 1920s.¹⁰¹

The members of the Georgia WCTU, especially the Feltons, were vilified for their progressive ideals by the Liquor Trust men and the convict lessees. Felton included a clipping from the Atlanta Constitution in her Memoirs to illustrate the verbal abuse that they suffered during the legislative debates on the juvenile reformatory bill and the petition against the Convict Lease System:

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ WCTU Collection, series V, Convention Reports, 1888-1890, box 23, folder 1, 1890 Report, p. 22, collection 647, Emory University Library Special Collections.

...[I] happened to be sitting in the house gallery when Mr. Simmons made his venture. I heard what he said in relation to Rider Haggard's new book "She." From my seat in the gallery I had a good view of his face, I noted the delight that was expressed in the faces of the men that I knew favored the lease, and were opposing Dr. Felton's reformatory bill. Some of the principal lessees were said to be present and listening--hoping, no doubt to get their money's worth out of such oratory. Mr. Simmons did the subject justice from their point of view. He was hitting at "She"--the political "She" of Georgia with earnest licks. many faces were turned in expectation to my seat in the gallery. Nobody that listened was in doubt as to what he was aiming to do. He rubbed it in. Every allusion was veiled, but the veil was thin. I felt the hot blood surge in my veins. I would have given considerable money for the privilege of answering him then and there, and nothing was plainer than the employment of a willing legislator to do what no one of his political owners was willing to undertake.¹⁰²

Simmons referred to the man-hating, female witch spirit that dominated a British erotic novel from the late 1880s, She by H. Rider Haggard. Felton heard herself described as a woman who always had to be obeyed or she would destroy people and lead other women to ruin their families through agitation for woman's rights and prohibition. Simmons' attack on Rebecca Felton was printed in full by the Constitution in its column on the Legislature, and preserved by the victim in her scrapbooks. The newspaper also published another of Simmons' speeches comparing Felton to harriet Beecher Stow, the

¹⁰² Felton, p. 583.

abolitionist author of Uncle Tom's Cabin.¹⁰³ Simmons certainly wanted to create mistrust towards the Feltons among people who were still outraged over Stowe's Book and Abolitionism. Felton kept a long essay from The New York World to prove that Simmons' and the lessees' attempts to ruin the Feltons' reputations were not successful. The World compiled extracts from editorials in the Waynesboro True Citizen, Augusta Chronicle and the Macon Telegraph. The Chronicle published three anti-Lease System editorials in August of 1887 that referred to the System as inhumane and a blot on Georgia's civilization and the lessees were pictured as greedy liars. The World praised the Feltons for their honesty and courage in fighting such an evil System. Rebecca Felton's writing ability and reputation were especially admired. The World even traced the 1887 investigation back to its beginning in Robert A. Alston's report in 1878 and reprinted it in part.¹⁰⁴

Their opponents always linked the Feltons, the WCTU and the growing woman suffrage movement to the Radical Republicans who brought slave emancipation and black participation in public affairs to Georgia. Since these attempts to cast Georgia's women social reformers with the northern extremists

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 603; Talmadge, p. 98-102.

¹⁰⁴ Convict lease System folders, Felton Collection.

did not stop women from joining either cause, the anti-suffrage and anti-WCTU tirades increased and became more vicious in the 1890s.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

Once Georgia women had overcome the struggles and financial uncertainties of the immediate post-war period, the social reformers realized that well-educated, sober and responsible citizens were necessary for the true development of the New South. Rebecca Felton, Mary McLendon and others came to understand that they shared common goals with northern women in improving education, ending child labor and enacting Prohibition laws. They overcame the regional stereotypes of the skinny, unattractive New England woman and the fat, fertile, lazy or sickly and exhausted southern farmer's wife.

Felton met many of the northern leaders of the woman suffrage and possibly the Woman's Christian Temperance Union during her husband's terms in Congress between 1874 and 1880. Since they had been committed Prohibitionists during the 1850s, they renewed their devotion to the cause as the Woman's Temperance Crusade grew at a fast pace in the early 1870s. Felton broadened her interests to include woman suffrage and discovered a common heritage with non-southern women of struggles for education. She was aware of programs in other

¹⁰⁵ Felton, Country Life, p. 286.

parts of the country to promote social reform goals before women who did not have her experiences. Like Maria Jourdan Westmoreland, Felton publicized the programs through her letters to the editors of newspapers. She, like Mary Latimer McLendon and some of the northern reformers, saw the WCTU as a channel for working to humanize Georgia's late nineteenth century industrial expansion. They wanted to rescue people from poverty by teaching them social responsibility and political awareness. These women practiced their beliefs and increased the acceptance of woman's education.¹⁰⁶ By the early 1890s, Helen Augusta Howard and other women in their twenties could be thankful that academic education and literary activities for women had become respectable.

The Latimer sisters and others with broad social goals would often be at odds with those who believed in Prohibition to the exclusion of everything else. The southern members of the consciously egalitarian WCTU confronted hostile orthodox Democrats, churchmen, New South businessmen and some devotees of the Lost Cause in the 1890s. The temperance women found new allies to replace the Liberal Republicans of the 1870s and the Independent Democrats of the late 1870s and 1880s in the Populist Party. The two associations were political reveals nationally, but allies locally in fighting drunkenness, child

¹⁰⁶ Scott, p. 285.

labor and the Convict Lease System. One woman's professional education and woman suffrage there was a consensus and the sisters had many fewer allies. Felton surely represented her sister and many other Georgia women social reformers when she expressed her belief that she was doing something novel in entering public life on her own in the 1880s rather than merely acting as an emissary for her husband.



Mary L. McLendon. From Lula B. Ansley, The History of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1914.

CHAPTER V

The Latimer Sisters and the Woman's
Clubs in the 1890s

The Latimer sisters, like many other American women of the 1890s, increasingly realized that national, or at least regional, organizations held the greatest promise for achieving their social reform goals. By moving in this direction, they improved their organizational and political leadership talents. The Latimer sisters led Georgia women in the WCTU in the 1880s as they would lead more women in the woman's clubs and the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA) in the 1890s and 1900s.

Frances Willard revitalized the fractured prohibition movement after the Civil War through her missionary zeal, organizational talent and oratory. She inspired many southern women, who shared with her and the Latimer sisters a common background to recreate the ideals of the ante-bellum church-sponsored ladies' missionary socialites nationally in the General Federation of Woman's Clubs (8195). Black women felt the same urge to establish literary societies where women expanded their interests beyond self-improvement to civic improvement. Black women founded the National Association of Colored Woman's Clubs (1896) to co-ordinate club activities. Even women who disdained open involvement in public affairs, much less voting, founded the United Daughters of the

Confederacy (1895) to honor southern traditions.¹ Rebecca Felton, Mary McLendon and their associates in the WCTU had new allies in some of these organizations and many more opponents in the UDC. Except for woman suffrage, Georgia women had clubs for every social reform or self-improvement goal that women in other parts of the country did.²

The Georgia Woman Suffrage Association

Not until July 1890 did Helen Augusta Howard, a friend of Mary Latimer McLendon's found the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA) at her home in Columbus, GA. At first the new organization consisted only of Howard's mother and five sisters. Mary Latimer McLendon became one of the first GWSA members outside of the Howard family when she joined the association about November of 1890. She felt a deep devotion to the WCTU's suffrage ideal and she believed that women would have to vote before Prohibition could be passed in Georgia.³ She began giving away Howard's suffrage literature at WCTU weekly meetings. Conventions to unite the organizations would consume the better part of her later life. Since Howard had the essays she had published in woman's journals outside the South reprinted, McLendon had many pamphlets to distribute.

¹ Scott, Natural Allies, pp. 111-113.

² Ibid.

³ Claudia H. Howard-Maxwell, "Report of Georgia," Woman's Tribune, 21 February 1894, p. 47.

Howard longed for the day when an educated public would view woman suffrage as normal.

Helen Augusta Howard would have certainly wanted her essay on the GWSA's philosophy and summary of the association's activities between 1890 and 1893 distributed to promote the GWSA and convince people that women could be intelligent voters. The Howard sisters and their mother knew that their tiny association could have enormous problems in educating the public on the value of votes for women. They believed, with the Latimer sisters, that the public should be informed on suffrage to "force 'Southern Chivalry' to deal justly with Georgia women." Helen's sister, Claudia Howard-Maxwell bristled, as did Rebecca Felton, on hearing that if women had equal rights with men they would never marry. She always responded that the legal inequality of the sexes had nothing to do with deciding to marry.⁴ Helen Augusta Howard led her sisters in writing articles denouncing the Atlanta Constitution and the 1891 Atlanta Herald for being against a home for fallen women.⁵ She chided the editor of an unnamed Columbus newspaper for

[the] news of her political progress he purposely omits, vainly thinking that by such ellipsis to

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ H. Augusta Howard, "Progress of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Georgia", Woman's Progress in Literature, science, Art, Education and Politics, vol. 2, November 1893, p. 82.

keep Georgia readers from finding out that women away out in Wyoming, Kansas and twenty odd States--yes, even in Tennessee, next door to moss-back Georgia--are already voting, and have been voting in national, municipal or school elections, and have been voting in Wyoming for over twenty-years. The white progressive Georgians smile to think they must discontinue their home papers and subscribe [to] journals outside of the State in order to get the news. Four years ago the custom of the few Georgia women who wrote for Georgia papers was to hide behind a nom de plume or venture only initial signature. Now, when Miss Eliza Jones [or Rebecca Latimer Felton] writes for publication she seldom affixes "E.J." [or "Fair Play" as Felton did] to her manuscript; as a rule, she subscribes herself fearlessly, Eliza Jones.⁶

The preachers and newspaper editors who had denounced academically educated women as unfeminine in the 1870s and 1880s might even stop calling woman suffragists "unfeminine." The GWSA under Helen Augusta Howard's leadership, unlike McLendon's WCTU, did not lobby the Legislature directly for the passage of local option woman suffrage. Howard seemed to believe, like the Latimers, in the federal suffrage amendment because she wrote that voting and masculinity would have to disassociate by changes in the United States Constitution.⁷

The GWSA was among the earliest state suffrage organizations formed after the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and the National Woman Suffrage (NWSA) merged in January of 1890. Members of the smaller suffrage

⁶ Howard, p. 83.

⁷ Ibid.

association were plagued by the presence of such scandalous characters as the Claflin sisters (believers of free love, etc.) and accusations of radicalism (socialism, etc.).⁸ They decided that they needed to cooperate with the more moderate AWSA. The personal battles between Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and the Blackwells over tactics became less important as they got older and new women took control of the suffrage organizations. Some of these younger women seemed to realize that both the federal Constitutional Amendment and state suffrage bills were necessary to ensure that women had the right to vote. The Howards and the Latimers represented many southern women who finally joined the suffrage movement and thereby weakened the link between suffrage and ante-bellum abolitionism.

The NAWSA leaders had to create a platform that would allow them to pursue their goal of a federal woman suffrage amendment, knowing that lobbying and demonstrations would not be strong enough for young women who were impatient for the right to vote. The NAWSA platform, after 1890, had to appeal to the older former members of the AWSA who still believed in local option suffrage, Henry Blackwell's appeal to southerners as well as many women, like the Latimer sisters, who were in the middle.

⁸ Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, p. xi, preface.

While they always fought the attempts to associate with Radical Republicans or the old abolitionists, the sisters could not have been enthusiastic over the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)'s goal of enforcing the Fifteenth Amendment. Nevertheless, Georgia's prohibitionists and woman suffragists joined the NAWSA president, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in being furious at the Federal Courts for declaring that American women had no right to expect to vote.⁹ Stanton believed that this ruling hindered debate on the suffrage amendment and contributed to a race war in the South where blacks were discouraged from voting. Rebecca Felton certainly agreed with Stanton's second resolution to reform the divorce laws. Stanton and Felton believed that the state's divorce laws were so restrictive that women feared abuse if they became politically active. Stanton, like Felton, promoted equal rights in churches, putting her beliefs into the third resolution of the NAWSA platform.¹⁰ She demanded equal representation for women in the philosophical discussions, business activities and clerical celebrations of church life, arguing

...that thus our religion may no longer reflect only the masculine element of humanity, and that woman, the mother of the race, may be honored as

⁹ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, . vol IV, p. 164-5.

¹⁰ Anthony, p. 163.

she must be before we can have a happy home, a rational religion and an enduring government.¹¹

While Georgia women were organizing to change society by gaining the right to vote through the GWSA and the NAWSA, the male reformers established the Populist Party to continue assault on the Bourbons. Tom Watson aided the Populists, the prohibitionists and suffragists' occasional allies, in achieving their first victory in 1892 when he became a Populist. He had been elected to represent North Georgia's Tenth Congressional District in 1890. He greatly admired Dr. William H. Felton and Alexander H. Stephens, who had served North Georgia Congressional Districts in the 1870s.¹² When Watson publicly joined the Populist Party, he was seeking better economic conditions for his small farmer constituents as Dr. Felton had in the 1870s. Watson offered the bill that finally won the eleven year battle to win Rural Free [mail] Delivery for American small farmers of both races. He had no success, however, with his bill to create a Federal Subtreasury System to allow the farmers easier access to money, an important part of the Populist Party platform. HE also failed in an attempt to pass a bill to stop industrialists from using strike breakers to keep factory

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Russel Korobkin, "The Politics of Disfranchisement in Georgia", The Georgia Historical Quarterly, vol. 74, Spring 1990, p. 22.

workers from organizing unions. He shared Dr. Felton's zeal for railroad regulation which would help small farmers by ending freight differentials.¹³ He used his political power to continue, with the Feltons, to fight the Convict Lease System. Like the Feltons, Watson's father had been a prosperous ante-bellum hill country planter who lost everything due to the chaos at the end of the Civil War. His heavy drinking had also contributed to the disaster.¹⁴

The Populist Party that attracted Tom Watson and even Dr. Felton in 1892 had just been organized by the Farmer Alliances, Knights of Labor, woman suffragists and prohibitionists, meeting in a convention in Topeka, Kansas.¹⁵ The Georgia divisions, including the Colored Alliance, were the strongest of all the Southern Alliances that were organized by lecturers from the Texas association in 1890. Mary Elizabeth Lease was one of the speakers who mobilized Georgia farmers to join the Alliance in the early 1890s by fiercely urging them to "raise less corn and more hell." Like Rebecca Felton, Lease was scorned by the editors of such Georgia newspapers as the Constitution for being a woman who dared to meddle in politics. Lease definitely declared that

¹³ Ibid; Woodward, pp. 204-206.

¹⁴ Woodward, pp. 15-17.

¹⁵ Norman K. Risjord, America; A History of the United States, vol. 2, Since 1865, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1985) 102.

she was proud to be called a socialist or a communist if poor farmers attained some equality with the large planters and industrialists.¹⁶

Lease was glad that the Kansas Farmers' Alliance had joined the Tom Watson's Georgia Farmers' Alliance to defeat the northeastern Republicans and railroad tycoons. After the Georgia Alliance had earned a majority of the seats in the Legislature, they finally passed regulations partially controlling railroads, banks and the quality of fertilizer. They courted the members of the Colored Alliance by establishing a college for blacks.¹⁷ Watson and other Populists seemed to believe that small black farmers wanted, as white farmers did, good pay for their work, the ability to buy homes or farms and political independence and good schools for their children. Watson and his associates in the Georgia People's Party competed with the Democrats for the allegiance of black voters to win elections or in their vilification if their support was supposedly bought by the opposition.¹⁸ Despite the achievements listed above, every Georgian who voted for the Alliance's slate of candidates in 1890 had to be dismayed at the freshmen legislators' failures. The

¹⁶ Woodward, pp. 177-178.

¹⁷ Woodward, Origins of the New South; 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1971) pp. 236-237.

¹⁸ Korobkin, p. 27.

legislators' biggest failure came on the opening day of the session when they selected General John B. Gordon to replace Democratic United States Senator Joseph E. Brown. The Alliancemen did not uphold the Alliance platform by abolishing the hated crop lien system, the railroad freight differential, and the Convict Lease System. The Alliancemen had not only failed to follow the Populist ideals but also parted with the Independent ideal that the Feltons had pursued for twenty years.¹⁹

The Georgia People's Party worried the local orthodox Democrats just as much as the state Republican Party and the Independents had done in the 1870s and 1880s. T. Warren Akin of Cartersville wrote a typical anti-People's Party letter to the Atlanta Journal on 7 April 1892. HE was the son of a Confederate Congressman who probably knew the Feltons from living in Cartersville. He may even have had Rebecca Felton in mind when he associated the People's Party, the Knights of Labor, prohibitionists and woman suffragists with the return of black Republican rule to Georgia. Akin's comments reflected almost the traditional paternalistic attitude toward white women. Akin asked

Shall The Negro Judge Us?...Let no man chain himself and let no man be deceived. This is the issue which we must settle or the honor or shame of ourselves and our sons--for the preservation or

¹⁹ Woodward, Origins, p. 237.

destruction of the Saxon womanhood of our wives and our daughters. Shall Georgians divide and give into the hands of an alien race the balance of political power? Shall the white men of Georgia submit to the corrupt and irresponsible arbitrament of the negro?²⁰

The Feltons had read slanderous essays by Democrats such as Akin before and had been named in such letters in their twenty-year careers in Independents and social reformers. Nevertheless, Doctor William H. Felton embraced the People's Party platform in 1894 because it opposed the Convict Lease System and support strict railroad regulation separating railroad lobbyists and legislators, and advocated more funding of public schools (including textbook purchases.) The Populists did not single out racial harmony in the platform because they believed that a more even economy would improve life for small farmers of both races. The abolition of the Convict Lease System was the chief plank in the local Populist platform that had as much support in the black community as it did among whites. Dr. Felton decided to run for Congress in 1894, standing on this platform (for the last time) even though he was in his late sixties. The Doctor suspected that crooked means were used to block his election, just as they had in 1880. The Democrats still believed that the Populists meant that blacks would control Georgia government again, and

²⁰ T. Warren Akin, "A Word in Season", The Atlanta Journal, 7 April 1892, p. 3, c. 3-4.

they abused the election process as usual. Members of the Democratic Party of Rome even offered black voters a free election-eve barbecue with all the liquor they could drink.²¹

The winner of the election accused the Feltons of forging a letter in which he had boasted of buying off black voters in the 7th District. The Feltons were outraged by such accusations because they always took pride in running honest election campaigns and sued the Georgia Election Committee for fraud in the U.S. House of Representatives. Because of Dr. Felton's frailty, Mrs. Felton carried the brunt of the suit and became the first woman to testify before a Congressional Committee. They charged the county clerks in the counties of refusing to register Felton supporters, not allowing them to cast ballots or losing the Felton votes using statistics to support their claims.²² Since Rebecca L. Felton knew never to expect a fair hearing from the state legislature, she hired a Washington attorney and petitioned to have the case heard before the United States House of Representatives Elections Committee, number one. Union General W.W. Dudley officially represented the Feltons at the committee hearing in April of 1896. Mrs. Felton presented most of the case to the representatives herself. She became the first woman to appear

²¹ Korobkin, pp. 31, 37.

²² Felton, Country Life, p. 199.

before a congressional hearing in an election fraud case, as important an event in its way as the NAWSA convention. She demonstrated that women could compile statistics and organize them logically when most men believed that women were incapable of even understanding politics. The Feltons won \$2,000 which led their opponents to accuse them of looting the treasury.²³ The Feltons were certainly embittered by another bruising battle with the dishonest Democrats. Dr. Felton may have disagreed with the Populists over the need for an official third party challenger to the Democrats, but he still believed that "Tom Watson's fidelity [to social reform] shines like a star beside [Leonidas F.] Livingston's detestable demagoguery and trickery." Livingston's popularity had diminished since 1878 when he investigated the Convict Lease System as a State Representative on Robert A. Alston's Penitentiary Committee in 1887 when, as President of the Georgia Farmers' Alliance, he called for worker and farmer political independence at the National Knights of Labor Convention.²⁴

Georgia's National WCTU Convention, 1890

Rebecca Felton, Mary L. McLendon and other members of the Georgia WCTU began the decade of the 1890s with as much hope

²³ Felton, Country Life, pp. 198-204.

²⁴ Woodward, Watson, p. 12; McLauring, p. 176.

for real social progress as the Populists did. While the regular Democrats were assailing Populists or prohibitionists for daring to challenge their control, the National WCTU held its annual convention in Atlanta from 17 to 20 November 1890. The Atlanta Constitution printed lavish full page summaries of each day's activities without mentioning the National WCTU's suffrage work. Felton, McLendon and other prohibitionists wanted to end corruption in Georgia society by abolishing drinking and even tobacco smoking even if white women had to vote to accomplish the task. Local prohibitionists attended lectures on prohibition's tactics and methods at every church in Atlanta.²⁵ The main business meetings were held at the Baptist Tabernacle on Luckie Street where the 272 delegates voted unanimously to re-elect as president Frances Willard. They passed a resolution calling on Willard to rest for a year and requiring state WCTU leaders not to call on her for help. Willard was too sick to attend the convention but was in the prayers of the delegates. She approved of the conventioners' resolution favoring the re-election of Henry Blair of Massachusetts, a Prohibitionist who offered the first woman suffrage bill in the Senate.

Rebecca Felton was unable to attend the convention because she was a Lady Manager, planning the women's exhibits

²⁵ The Constitution, 18 November 1890.

at the World's Columbian Exposition that would be held in Chicago in 1892. Mary L. McLendon was not named in the summaries of the convention's events, but she certainly attended all the lectures and meetings as an officer of the Georgia WCTU. She would strongly agreed with Mrs. Maude Ballington Booth's report on the Salvation Army's work in feeding, clothing and housing the poor and factory workers. Booth stressed becoming female evangelists and helping the poor to lead better lives.²⁶ McLendon's Atlanta Southside WCTU had been giving food and clothing to the families of factory workers in the ten years since she founded the chapter. The local WCTU members' work among the poor and the mill hands in Atlanta's mill neighborhoods was not as strictly organized as that of the Salvation Army. The efforts by the women of McLendon's associations resembled those of the young women intellectuals who joined Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago to study and aid poor immigrant families, even though the Atlanta WCTU Missions were not as oriented towards sociology.²⁷ Women from these three organizations were united by their belief in prohibition.

The Georgia's WCTU convention delegate reported on the Atlanta Southside chapter's work in passing out Temperance

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 142.

literature to people and giving them white flowers in the spring to remind them of the terrible social and economic costs of drinking and also of similar efforts in other Georgia cities. The national superintendent for jail work certainly encouraged McLendon and the others to continue urging the separation of women and children prisoners in county jails and programs for their rehabilitation by female guards.²⁸ She believed that prisoners, including adult men, should have prohibition libraries at their disposal and that the death penalty was futile. The delegates voted to send a representative to the prison reform convention that was to be held in Philadelphia in August of 1891.

The WCTU convention's planners even discovered a way of recognizing the Prohibition work of the devotees of the "Lost Cause" and those of black Prohibitionists. Women in their eighties who had been members of the sanitary commission in Ohio during the Civil War reminisced about caring for wounded Confederates as well as Union soldiers and recollected comforting the dying of both sides. The Constitution reporter did not record any comments from southern women who had similar experiences in caring for the sick under impossible conditions. The WCTU members honored the Confederate and Union dead without arousing the hostile passions that the more

²⁸ The Atlanta Constitution, 18 November 1890, p. ____.

traditional worship of the Lost Cause sometimes did.²⁹ This tribute may have helped the conservative southern delegates accept the popular conference at the Big Bethel AME Church on Auburn Avenue. Mrs. H.A. Baker spoke to an audience of twelve hundred people, who were not racially identified in the Constitution's articles, on the virtues of Prohibition and the assistance that blacks could give to poor blacks using the WCTU's principles.³⁰

Georgia's women Prohibitionists had been able to ignore some of the issues of women voting or preaching during the 1880s. The representatives from the state WCTU's outside the South considered their Temperance lecturing as preaching, actively pursued the right to vote, and raised the issues publicly during the convention. The heightened public awareness of these divisive issues led to battles within the Georgia WCTU during the 1890s and even the early 1900s.³¹ The debate over the roles of women in public and church life became increasingly bitter in the late 1890s, almost leading to the destruction of the Georgia WCTU because Bishop Warren Akin Candler withdrew funding from the Candler family and the Methodist Church, South from the Union. Some of the women

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ansley, pp. 139-141.

members of the association, especially Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary L. McLendon, argued energetically with the Bishop over these matters.³²

Even women who did not believe in female preachers or female voting felt energized by the National WCTU convention in the fight against the Liquor Trust. They were not deterred by the Reverend Dr. J.B. Hawthorne's and Bishop Candler's outrage at reports of Frances Willard's extreme beliefs on suffrage and female ordination to the ministry although he had preached a Prohibitionist sermon to the conventioners at the Good Templars' Hall. Hawthorne joined the Bishop in viewing Willard's WCTU as the catalyst for a revolution that would destroy the American family. They had come to this antagonistic view of the WCTU after reading Willard's 1892 annual letter to the state WCTU executives.³³

Jane Eliza Sibley, the president of the Georgia WCTU, defended Willard for seeking to preserve family from the abuses of drunken men, but she could not find a Georgia newspaper editor who would print her response to Bishop Candler. She first sent this letter to the editor of The Christian Index, who refused it. The Constitution's editor promised to publish it, but only a brief summary ever appeared

³² Ibid. pp. 137-141.

³³ Ibid. pp. 203-209.

in that paper. Sibley finally turned to a small Atlanta journal called the Advance to have the official position of the Georgia WCTU on Frances Willard's desire to be an ordained Methodist minister published.³⁴

Although Rebecca Felton probably regretted missing the controversial WCTU convention, her attendance at the Columbian Exposition Board meeting brought her into national prominence. She and Mrs. C.H. Olmstead of Savannah went to Chicago for the Board's first meeting on 19 November 1890. Felton became so popular at this assembly because of her opening address that she was elected the temporary chairwoman. She defeated Isabella Beecher Hooker, one of the famous Beechers, who was so fascinated by Felton's speech that they corresponded for years.³⁵ Felton impressed Hooker and the other board members with her belief that;

[The Board of Lady Managers] is the first time in the history of the Republic that the female sex has been recognized as competent to attend to any sort of public business for the National Government. It is the very first recognition of woman's services as a citizen and a tax-payer by Congress. Therefore I feel the necessity as an individual of making haste, very slowly in all matters concerning our permanent organization. Let us set an example of patriotism, of generous good will to every member of the body and of faithful devotion to our duty. Let us take no step forward that we shall

³⁴ Ansley, pp. 139-141.

³⁵ Felton, Country Life, pp. 107-110.

regret later. Let us remember we are on trial before this great nation [of skeptics].³⁶

Rebecca Felton presided over the election of Bertha Honore Palmer as the permanent chairwoman of the Board and the appointment of Phoebe Couzins as the salaried General Secretary. Couzins, the daughter of a county sheriff and her father's deputy, was a radical woman suffragist who believed that the other board members had gotten their position through their husbands' business connections. As an attorney who was not allowed to practice law, Couzins was especially outraged that Palmer had been appointed chairwoman. Bertha Palmer was married to Thomas Palmer, the founder of the Palmer House Hotel and the President of the World's Fair Corporation.

Phoebe Couzins and Bertha Palmer should have cooperated in generating ideas of the design and construction of the Woman's Building at the fair grounds, of which Couzins would inform board members like Felton. Couzins was also supposed to communicate the ideas to the contractor who designed and built the Woman's Exhibit Hall. Instead, Couzins frequently argued publicly with the Palmers, making the women look incompetent to outsiders, especially journalists.³⁷ Felton received newspaper clippings, printed handbills and personal

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Felton Collection, no. 81, reel 2, 1890 - May 1891, University of Georgia Special Collections.

correspondence from both sides that represented the very type of unfavorable publicity that Felton had warned them about. She never seemed to take sides in this controversy, but she could not have been pleased by the delay and the waste of tax money that it caused.³⁸

After Couzins finally lost her job, board members had to find a new General Secretary and assistant for Palmer. The ladies had to continue creating juries to select exhibits of women's work and award medals to the exhibitors once the Fair started. Palmer chose Rebecca Felton to assist her in allotting space to the woman's associations and deciding on the robin's-egg blue silk wall-paper and the furnishings for the buildings. Felton received expenses for spending two months studying the new building's blueprints to assign space to the organizations. Once Felton finished her work as chairwoman of the assignments committee, she became the head of the agricultural committee and began writing a history of women in agriculture.³⁹

[She and her associates] made a diligent search for the percentage of woman's work among farm exhibits, but everything was submerged in men's work. Since the Indians occupied America, women have had active service in crude agriculture and have done their share up to date in domestic service, yet there was still no regard given to her activities. The Bible

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Country Life, pp. 112-113.

saying: 'A man and his wife are one', read correctly for the man was the only one.⁴⁰

Rebecca Felton intended her essay on the role that women had in farming, especially in the United States, to be included in the history of the sixty women's organizations that were represented by the exhibits at the Fair. This volume was to have included an edition of the correspondence of the Board of Lady Managers, but was apparently never published because the Board had incurred too many debts. Felton later recalled the dismay that led her to preserve the manuscript of her committee's work privately. She was disappointed that southern women had participated in only three of the sixty woman's associations. Two of these three societies, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and the Association for the Advancement of Women (AAW), were being absorbed by the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1890. Since Felton wanted to highlight the activities of southern women in these associations, she might have noted the formation of the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA) under Helen Augusta Howard in 1890 in her essays.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 111.

⁴¹ Country Life, pp. 112-113. This account gives a small part of the material that she originally intended to publish. The rest is missing.

Felton carried on a vigorous campaign to encourage more Georgia women to join associations like the WCTU and also defended her own beliefs, using letters to the editors of newspapers. She certainly had her report in mind as she turned to the problems that Georgia's women had with women's rights. She entered the battle between the WCTU and Protestant clergymen. She wrote a front-page letter to the editor of the Augusta Chronicle, prompted by the Presbyterian Synod's censure of Jane Eliza Sibley. The Presbyterians and the Georgia WCTU had both chosen to hold their annual conventions in Macon in early May of 1893. Sibley dared to preach and pray for Temperance in a Presbyterian church, arousing the clergymen's anger. The Moderator of the Presbyterian Synod denounced Sibley and women evangelists by using the passage from St. Paul's epistle commanding women to be silent in church. Felton countered this with St. Peter's recollection that St. Paul sometimes overstated certain points and noted St. Paul's own respect for the preaching of Phoebe and Priscilla. She believed that the decree censuring Sibley dishonored all the women missionaries who taught and preached to the unconverted by making women seem incompetent.⁴² She concluded:

⁴² Mrs. W.H. Felton, "Macon Presbytery; 'Silence for Women,'", Augusta Chronicle, 5 June 1893, m front page, c. 1-5.

It was unworthy of the Presbyterian Church to dig up a fossil and palm it off as a living issue simply to intimidate suffering mothers, wives and daughters into 'silence' when the land is groaning with crime, intemperance and debauchery, because of ministerial inability (or cowardice) to stem the tide of evil that is sweeping over us. It was cruel to be thus attacked by the ministry -- which has need to lean upon virtue, innocence and sobriety, if the church expects to present a "clean bill of health" or claim a consecrated religious membership.⁴³

Felton was equally critical of the Methodist and Baptist clergymen's attitudes towards women suffrage, female evangelism and Prohibition. She was, as usual, attuned to the monetary influences of northern "robber barons" on Georgia ministers. She brought all of these themes together in a three column letter to The Constitution. She believed that Dr. J.B. Hawthorne should have been finding scriptural background for fighting Georgia's enormous illiteracy rate, the highest in the nation in 1890, rather than praising the memory of Jay Gould in a sermon. Unless Georgians worked to lower the illiteracy rate, the State would never attract the responsible immigrants that it needed. She wondered when Georgia's educated people would stop supporting "ecclesiastical bigots."⁴⁴

Felton was angry at Warren Akin Candler over his outspoken opposition to the WCTU because of its pro-woman

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The Constitution, 13 January 1893, p. 3, c. 1-3.

suffrage stance, his constant solicitations of money for Emory College in Oxford, Georgia, among other causes, and his lobbying against the University of Georgia's appropriation in the legislature. Since Candler, like Hawthorne, was not a whole-hearted prohibitionist, she insinuated that he had to have profited from the disreputable business deals of the "robber barons" in the liquor business. Felton believed that the University of Georgia represented the hope of a more progressive Georgia because it was open to any white man regardless of religion or social class. She closed her letter with a warning that the WCTU members might reconsider their Emory pledges for 1893 if Dr. Candler did not retract his statements opposing the Georgia WCTU for the National WCTU's pro-suffrage position.⁴⁵ Felton was almost certainly thinking that women were not allowed to attend either university, but had to support them with their taxes and contributions when she wrote this letter to The Constitution.

Dr. Candler responded to her in January, 1893. He never answered her charges or offered to provide an accounting of Emory's finances, but resorted to calling her an hysterical woman who made gratuitous charges. The Conference of the Methodist Church, South had approved the special collection for Emory College. The College never received donations from

⁴⁵ The Constitution, 13 January 1893, p. 2, c. 1-3

⁴⁵ Ibid.

northern philanthropists or profited from stock trading.⁴⁶ She wanted to punish him for his hatred of woman suffrage and his opposition to attempts to link the Georgia WCTU with the National WCTU. He believed that some of the money raised by the Georgia WCTU went to pay the National Union's expenses, including those of the franchise department. He would convince the other Conference delegates not to contribute to the Georgia WCTU or allow the members to use church buildings for their meetings. The Methodist Church, South had a right to deny recognition to any social reform organization, even ones drawn from church congregations. The church had to maintain its independence from social reform organizations. Candler concluded that the only real crime was to disagree with Felton on Prohibition or any other subject.⁴⁷

Dr. Candler's stand against Felton, the WCTU and woman suffrage brought him many approving letters, postcards and telegrams from admiring Methodists in 1893. The letter writers either expressed pity for Felton or vilified her. Charles C. Pattilo, from Scottdale, called Felton "unchristly," venomous and harmful to Christian education. The worst letter, written by C. Sorrens of Sparta, referred to Felton as an "hatchet-faced" female who launched a "bloody

⁴⁶ The Constitution, 15 January 1893, p. 2, c. 1-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

assault" on Candler. E.Y. Clarke, an editor of The Constitution, praised Candler's letter for its unanswerable truths and facts. J.D. Walker, of Sparta, used the letterhead of the R.A. Graves Bank to pledge more money for Emory to make up for the "Feltonian" defiance. Another Spartan, E.R. Cook, vowed to cancel the WCTU funding in the Methodist church's annual budget.⁴⁸

Candler received letters from women, like Alice McClure of Rome, who felt betrayed by Felton's woman's rights campaign and unconventional religious beliefs. Lula B. Ansley, the future historian of the Georgia WCTU, however, thought that the WCTU, Emory College and the Methodist church would emerge from the current struggle stronger. The women who wrote to Dr. Candler approving of his reply to Felton did not describe her in the harsh terms that the men did.⁴⁹

Felton received almost as many letters from people who supported her position on the WCTU and Emory College. Hooper Alexander thanked her for assisting him with an unsuccessful bill to limit the public debt. He praised Felton for telling the truth as usual. W.J. Read of Macon was more specifically opposed to Dr. Hawthorne. He agreed with Felton's belief that Hawthorne was a "robber baron" in disguise. Read knew quite

⁴⁸ Warren Akin Candler Collection, Emory University Collection, No. 2, Box 3, Folder 8.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

a few other people who shared this opinion. He enclosed an article from The Macon Telegraph of 9 January 1893 to show how the controversy between Felton and Candler was received in other parts of the state. Alexander M. Speer, the uncle of Felton's old friend Emory Speer, who was eighty-five by 1893 and living in Madison, said that he was sick of being overtaxed to enlarge the Emory College endowment and was sure that the money never reached the students anyway. He copied a long extract from the College's Annual Report to prove his claim. Of course, Dr. White, the President of the University of Georgia, was pleased at Felton's promotion of the University's cause. Mrs. J.H. Sims, who wrote on 9 January, believed that more Georgia women ought to be as intelligent and courageous as Felton.⁵⁰

Rebecca Felton's letters to newspaper editors reflected her deep emotional commitment to prohibition and woman's rights. She was too passionate in these beliefs to ever allow the criticism of Bishop Candler and other clergymen to silence her. Since she was such a popular writer and speaker, she helped to spread the debate on prohibition beyond the membership of the WCTU. She made people think about the value of local option Prohibition for a city or county as compared to statewide or national abolition of liquor consumption. She

⁵⁰ Felton Collection, University of Georgia, No. 81, Box 3, Folders 1 and 2.

helped to make prohibition into a major gubernatorial campaign issue for the 1890s and the early 1900s, creating a tidal wave of prohibition sentiment in the state. Felton and other women were frustrated because they observed that although women could not vote for prohibition, married WCTU members could always question their husbands voting records of other men in their communities, since Georgia did not have a secret ballot in the 1890s. Felton inspired her admirers, like Gertrude Thomas or Frances C. Swift, to become nationally involved with the WCTU or woman suffrage.⁵¹

Other courageous women, including Mary L. McLendon, paid Rebecca L. Felton her greatest tribute by continuing to organize WCTU chapters in towns across the state in spite of the struggle with Methodist and Baptist preachers over woman's rights. Missouri Horton Stokes founded WCTU chapters in many Georgia towns and received a letter from other organizers in her role as State Corresponding Secretary. She collected a few dues payments in the early 1890's as well as letters of regret from members who would be unable to attend sessions at the annual conventions. She collected monthly reports from the chapters in Demorest - a Georgia town that was planned by and for Prohibitionists, and Macon. Local presidents, like Lula Van Hise of Demorest, listed the number of meetings, the

⁵¹ Felton Collection, Scrapbooks 1884-1927, reel 21, collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

attendance at the meetings, the amount of temperance literature handed out in the streets and the number of missions to the poor. Stokes may have been taking orders for printed Temperance literature and remailing the pamphlets on subjects from children's books to health food cookbooks to the local unions. The ladies probably sold these booklets on the streets and at the public lectures during the conventions.⁵²

Some WCTU chapters were organized by the members of Methodist Church woman's clubs who had purchased copies of Frances Willard's book, Woman and Temperance.⁵³ The pastors of these churches assisted their female parishioners in founding WCTU chapters as they had in ante-bellum times.

The WCTU's state conventions in the 1890's followed the same program as the national conferences did. The local unions would elect one or two members to attend the meetings that were held in different Georgia cities each spring. The women usually held their conventions in cooperation with the minister of the local Methodist or Presbyterian churches, despite the battles over woman suffrage. They began each day of reports and lectures with a prayer and a hymn. The state chairwomen of each department gave reports on finances, flower missions, assistance to the poor or jail work. Missouri H.

⁵² Missouri Horton Stokes Collection, microfilm DeKalb Historical Society, originals in Duke University Library.

⁵³ Ansley, p. 135.

Stokes, the corresponding secretary, reported on the condition of the local unions, their memberships and activities.⁵⁴

Since 1889, Mary L. McLendon had been the state chairwoman of the Demorest Prize Medal contests which rewarded students who made the best Prohibition speeches with prizes. Students not only learned to speak and write effectively, but also (so the sponsors hoped) promoted Temperance to their parents and worked to secure Prohibitionism in the future.⁵⁵ The younger children read short Temperance speeches that were published by the National WCTU, while high school and college students wrote their own essays. McLendon was proud to report that,

...I have myself sent to different parts of the state sixty-one medals, and have received forty-one certificates of successful contests having been held. Only two gold medals have been won; the first in [Dawsonville], the second day of this month, May. The [DeGive] Opera House was comfortably filled, and we paid expenses with the small admission fee which we charged.⁵⁶

Rebecca Latimer Felton was always an important speaker at these conventions. Often she used her speeches to associate women suffrage with the passage of Prohibition laws:

Suppose I do as you say -- spend my leisure the clipping holes in muslin or fondling poodle dogs --

⁵⁴ Ibid, Ansley, p. 136.

⁵⁵ Annual Report of the Georgia WCTU, 1892, p. 85, Georgia WCTU Collection, No. 647, Emory University Special Collections.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

what will it avail my peace of mind, if my neighbor's child is gone to the bad, before I know it -- or to the chain-gang, as I waited. Oh! men, what will it avail you gain the whole world and lose your own child. This is the cry of motherhood in extremity. Think of the heredity curse of drinking -- the poison that has filled convict camps and lunatic asylums, and thousands of violent graves. We are stared in the face daily and hourly, with an injustice that seizes on our very vitals, and we are told 'hush up' [and not promote woman suffrage] -- it is the liquor dealers' business that must be protected, not the babe at the mother's breast or the tot at her knee!⁵⁷

Felton and McLendon had to defend themselves against charges that they were too dedicated to woman suffrage to be whole-hearted Prohibitionists. People who believed that the WCTU was a tool of those in the northeast and middle west to bring back federal election controls accused the sisters of extreme suffragism. McLendon and Felton fought the Georgia WCTU's resolution to disassociate the State Association from the National WCTU over the Franchise Department. Jennie Hart Sibley expressed her difference of opinion with the Latimer sisters on woman suffrage in an undated letter to Missouri Stokes. She was depressed by the sisters' doubts concerning the passage of a state Prohibition law without woman suffrage. Sibley, the sister-in-law of Jane Eliza Sibley who was the State WCTU President, apparently did not believe in woman suffrage and certainly did not want to see it linked to

⁵⁷ WCTU Annual Report, 1890, Georgia WCTU Collection, Emory University Special Collections, No. 647.

Prohibition. She asked for Stokes' assistance in having McLendon removed from the executive committee if not as president of the Atlanta Southside Union.⁵⁸

Since the Latimer sisters had been Prohibitionists for thirty years by the 1890s, they believed that women were the guardians of their homes who needed to vote in order to protect their families from alcohol. They argued that women voters would not only vote for prohibition and improvements in the schools, but against child labor and the convict lease system. The sisters campaigned tirelessly for legislation to protect women factory workers or woman's education. Nevertheless, the sisters defied classification as conservatives because they believed that women had a right to vote as mature individuals. Felton even claimed that her nursing duties during the Civil War ensured her right to vote as military service did for male veterans.

Some members of the Georgia WCTU were unwilling to publicly demand the right to vote to insure the passage of Prohibition or other social reform legislation.⁵⁹ Others were not as reticent about holding public demonstrations to promote Prohibition as they had been in the 1880s, even if they still were not suffragists. Lisa Mackinaw, of

⁵⁸ Stokes Collection.

⁵⁹ Degler, p. 320.

Milledgeville, reported on such a demonstration to Stokes. During the convention of 1892, nine ladies prayed in every saloon in town. They begged the owners to close early and attend the temperance rallies at the Methodist Church. The WCTU members believed Prohibition sermons would make the saloon keepers quit the business completely. Each man said he would consider it if the other saloon owners also closed, but not one of them carried through.⁶⁰

Georgians played an increasingly important role on the national temperance scene. Gertrude Clanton Thomas was appointed correspondent for the National WCTU's Union Signal at the 1890 State Convention.⁶¹ Missouri Stokes also served as a correspondent for the magazine as did Isabella Webb Parks. Parks was a charter member of the Atlanta WCTU, probably a friend of Mary L. McLendon and a student of Frances Willard's when Willard was a professor at Northwestern University.⁶² Stokes, Thomas and Parks joined hundreds of other women from the entire country in contributing articles on the state conventions and their proselytizing activities. For example, Missouri Stokes reported on Mary L. McLendon's speech defending the women in Missouri who raided saloons.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ansley, p. 135.

⁶² Ibid, p. 262.

McLendon extended her defense of these women to those who worked to obtain the right to vote to secure prohibition. She countered the criticisms of the Methodist Church hierarchy by associating contemporary assertive women with the Old Testament women warriors, Deborah and Jael.

A month later, Stokes praised Felton's speech on "Woman's Relation to Temperance Work" and McLendon's recollection of "Atlanta Before and After High License" in Stokes' account of the Georgia WCTU convention in 1890. Gertrude C. Thomas informed the WCTU members in the rest of the country about the Macon Union's ambitious program to find a permanent hall and establish a lunch room for working women.⁶³

Since Stokes had been so proud of Felton's address at the 1890 state convention, a copy may have been sent to the National WCTU's offices in Evanston, Illinois. Alice R. Briggs sent Felton a letter on 16 July 1891 thanking her for a newspaper clipping and promising that it would be sent to the Union Signal. Briggs also congratulated Felton on her success in addressing the Georgia WCTU convention. Briggs' letter may have been an added note to the information letter that Frances Willard sent out on 1 May 1890. Willard declared that she would not really take a year long rest as the convention delegates wanted her to do. She was feeling much

⁶³ WCTU, Union Signal, "News from the Field, Georgia", 24 April 1890, p. 10; June 1890; 12 March 1890, p. 12 by G.C. Thomas.

better, had good nursing care, and was restless enough to plan a tour of the state WCTU's for September of 1891.⁶⁴

The Woman's Club Convention

Felton and Willard gained new allies from among their social network of women's literary clubs. These clubs appealed to women who had been to female academies or women's colleges. These women, not as intensely religious as the WCTU members, nor as political as the suffrage organizations, were looking for intellectual stimulation. The members of these clubs discussed literary works, historical events or current social problems at the weekly or monthly meetings in members' homes. The local women's clubs were not as nationally oriented or as focused on annual national conventions as the Association for the Advancement of Women (AAW) seemed to be. The local clubs did not begin corresponding until the late 1880's and met in convention in 1886 for the first time.⁶⁵ The first national convention of woman's clubs was held in New York in 1886 on the twentieth anniversary of the New York Sorosis (Sisterhood) Club. Woman's club members from around

⁶⁴ Alice R. Briggs to R.L. Felton, 16 July 1891, Willard to R.L. Felton 1 May, 1891, Felton Collection No. 81, Box 2, 1883 to July 1891, University of Georgia.

⁶⁵ Clifford, Mine Eyes have Seen the Glory, p. 253; Scott, Natural Allies, p. 124.

the country, including several southern states, sent delegations to this anniversary convention.⁶⁶

Georgia sorosis, a white women's literary society, was much more important to the organization of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs. Gertrude C. Thomas, a friend of Mary L. McLendon, was among the five women who met at a home near Elberton in July of 1892 to found Georgia Sorosis. Thomas's prominence in the WCTU may have influenced the rapid increase in members during the club's first six months. The members decided to join the Federation two months after they held their first meeting. The club had enough new members by the fall to create committees for the study of education, civics, literature, home economics, art, philanthropy, music and current events. Current events, which could include Prohibition, woman suffrage, or education, were the Latimer sisters' favorite topics. Members of the Georgia Sorosis Club were leaders in establishing the state federation of woman's clubs and inviting the council women of the National Federation of Woman's Clubs to hold their convention in Atlanta in November of 1895.⁶⁷

This convention resembled the WCTU convention of November of 1890 because women came from the entire country to exchange

⁶⁶ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 126.

⁶⁷ Scott, Natural Allies, pp. 126, 130; Scott, Invisible Woman, pp. 217-218.

information on the creation and maintenance of committee work in woman's clubs. Ellen M. Henrotin had known Rebecca L. Felton when they served on the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Exposition and was the Federation's National President in 1895.⁶⁸ She opened the convention with the following speech:

Mrs. Potter Palmer once said, 'the government sent out a flashlight and discovered woman.' The Government has continued to send out flashlights, and has discovered the Southern woman. The General Federation of Women's Clubs comes to the South for the first time in acceptance of the cordial invitation of the president [and board members, including Rebecca Felton] of the Woman's Department of this beautiful [Cotton States] exposition. Its mission is peace. It stands for right thinking and better living. It is woman's protest against the material things of this world. It is an American movement. It is democratic. It is pledged to no specialties. It studies the problems of today to make a better tomorrow.⁶⁹

Mary E. Mumford, the recording secretary of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs, further explained that literary clubs provided more intellectual challenges for older women who were not college graduates. College women wanted to study current problems in more detail. If a woman planted trees, cleaned the sidewalk in front of her home or investigated the sanitary conditions at her child's school, she became a civic club of one. She could study governmental organization and

⁶⁸ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 130; Scott, Invisible Woman, pp. 217-218.

⁶⁹Croly, p. 159.

charitable associations and demand that the school board improve the curriculum and clean the physical surroundings at the school. Women who met to trade information on these and other topics formed real civic clubs. Mary L. McLendon and the WCTU members were also campaigning for better schools in the same period so their activities were complementary.⁷⁰

Mumford and other northern civic club leaders described the typical committees of such a club as centering on the relation of government, especially a city council, to the people, the sociology of charities, the uses of art and parks to beautify cities and education. The delegates also discussed woman suffrage and woman's political interests in committees. Rebecca Felton must have been a delegate to the Federation's Atlanta Convention because she made one of the Library committee's reports at the Georgia Federation of Woman's Club's first convention in October of 1896. Croly recalled that this committee under Mrs. E.B. Heard, chairwoman, had established free libraries in several sections of Georgia. Felton summarized the importance of the "relation of the library to the educational work of Georgia" in her address.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 160-161.

⁷¹ Croly, pp. 161, 361.

The Mothers' Congress

Felton continued to use family improvement as a basis for demanding woman's rights as she had in the 1880's in her speech to the Atlanta Woman's Club's annual meeting on 24 April 1901. She praised the woman's club members for making legal partnership in marriage a goal. She was proud that the United States Congress had finally legally separated wives from concubines, as a result of the abolition of Mormon polygamy. Once wives had equal rights with their husbands in marriage, the value of their paid labor, their access to education and their voting rights could be discussed.⁷²

The women who listened to Felton's speech at that 1901 Atlanta Woman's Club convention shared her belief on motherhood:

In modern parlance the mother is called the child's first teacher. She holds even a much nearer and more exalted relation to her child. When she can and does sometimes, photograph her own peculiar thoughts and appetites, written in such plain lines that she reads without hesitation, then I say she is more than instructor. If this woman shall have been so maltreated, tormented and bullied that her child reflects the mind and temper that possessed her, at a crises in its pre-natal existence, where will responsibility rest or wrong-doing be punished?⁷³

⁷² Felton, Country Life, p. 145.

⁷³ Felton, Country Life, p. 146.

They had to continue their assistance for mothers or the number of drunks and convicts would grow in future generations.

Felton became a national authority on the duties and needs of mothers and their families when she addressed the Mothers' Congress in Washington, D.C. in 1895. This association, the predecessor of the Parent-Teacher Associations, had been created in 1897 by Alice Birney to study children and their families.⁷⁴ Felton expressed the same ideas in this speech that she would later use when she addressed the Atlanta Woman's Club members in 1897:

To those who will say that men are amply able to [raise girls' age of consent or enforce legal equity in marriage], I can only reply they have had a hundred years to make any changes they chose, yet these enormities in legislation remain in force on our statute books. Mothers, we know, are held responsible in large measure for the character and conduct of their children. It would be foolish to remain silent any longer. I welcome free discussion of all these vital questions . . . Mothers have vested rights to inquiry and investigation. You have doubtless seen the motto: 'She is only half a mother who does not see her own child in every child - her own child's grief in every pain which makes another child weep.'⁷⁵

Alice Birney, an Atlantan who had studied child raising for her own children's sake, was so impressed with Felton's speech that she had it published in the Mother's Congress's

⁷⁴ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 155; Felton, pp. 264-5. Notable American Women, V. I, p. 148.

⁷⁵ Felton, Country Life, pp. 269-270.

proceedings. Birney and Felton wanted to give mothers more information on child rearing.⁷⁶ They believed that wives should become their children's guardians in cases of divorce, abandonment or the husband's death. Working wives should control their wages and not be legally and unwillingly responsible for their husbands unpaid debts. They should be recognized in court as their husbands primary heir, if the husband died.⁷⁷

While Rebecca Latimer Felton may not have been at the organizational meeting of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs in 1895, she quickly became one of the Federation's leaders in the late 1890s. She was featured in two articles that Henrotin wrote for The New York Journal, ("Club Efforts to Promote Art" and "Five Women Leaders of the South and West") on 5 December 1897. Felton's photograph appeared at the beginning of the first article with the caption "First Woman Elected to Office [as temporary chairwoman of the Woman's Board at the Chicago Fair] Under Authority of the Federal Government."⁷⁸ This article described the introduction of art into Chicago's public schools by woman's

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 265; Notable American Women, V. I, pp. 147-8.

⁷⁷ The Home League (N.Y., c. 1912); Chautauqua Circle Collection, Atlanta University, No. 11, Folder 6.

⁷⁸ Felton Collection, Scrapbooks 1884-1927, reel 21, collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

club members. Felton was praised as one of "Five Women Leaders of the South and West" for being a successful newspaper editor and lobbyist. Henrotin proudly reviewed Felton's long career as writer, political campaigner and lecturer on women's education. Felton was described as a magnetic woman who seemed much younger than she actually was:

Her voice is a delight, low but clear, and of a wonderful carrying power. It has, moreover, a certain vibrant sympathy which sets the listener tingling, even in spite of convictions utterly opposed to what is being uttered.⁷⁹

Felton was asked to give the Georgia Day address at the Tennessee Centennial celebration at the beginning of August of 1897.

The GWSA in Atlanta

While Gertrude C. Thomas and Rebecca L. Felton were involving themselves with the woman's clubs, Mary L. McLendon founded the second chapter of the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA). McLendon called the organizational meeting to order in the hall of the Marietta Street Methodist Episcopal Church on 21 March 1894. The association members grew to forty women and men after they began meeting regularly at the Unitarian Church on 28 March. McLendon almost certainly sponsored the GWSA's publication of broadsides and leaflets, as the WCTU did, to promote the woman suffrage cause

⁷⁹ "A Tribute to Mrs. Felton", The Macon Telegraph, 20 August 1897, *ibid*; Felton, Country Life, pp. 113-114.

in Georgia. The members solicited and compiled two pages of pro-suffrage comments from well-known politicians. "Prominent Georgia Men in Favor of Woman Suffrage" appeared in October of 1894.⁸⁰ G. Gunby Jordan, the State railroad Commissioner from Columbus, believed women taxpayers had a right to vote. They had to elect the tax commissioners who spent the state or county's money and decide on referendums. Colonel William C. Sibley was sure that literacy requirements that restricted white men voters would apply to women. He was trying to allow some women to vote, while keeping white men in control of the electorate. The handbill concluded with the statement that women could not be classed with children, the mentally ill or felons. Men grew up, could be cured of their illnesses or be pardoned for their crimes to gain the right to vote. Women could never overcome the legal disabilities of their gender. The writer of this broad side, possibly one of the Howard sisters or McLendon, believed that femininity was a worse crime in the Georgia Constitution than any wrong that man could commit. The GWSA was opened to anyone who believed in the above ideas and paid a dollar a year or twenty-five dollars for a lifetime membership. The writer concluded that:

holders to really craft prohibition, anti-child labor or equal divorce laws. If women voted, they could bargain for equal

⁸⁰ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. IV, p. 581.

A right withheld is a wrong inflicted. THEY WHO ARE SILENT TO A WRONG THEY KNOW TO EXIST ARE PARTIES TO THE WRONG.⁸¹

Walter B. Hill commented in the first pamphlet that there were no rational arguments against woman suffrage. He believed that the right to vote came to white women naturally as the result of owning property and paying taxes. He did not seem concerned that blacks could use the same idea to keep their voting rights, since some of them paid taxes. He wrote another pamphlet called "Hon. Walter B. Hill on Woman Suffrage; Women have no Right Not to Vote" in which he expanded on the paragraph he wrote for the first pamphlet. Hill promoted the idea in both broadsides that women must be allowed to vote because they paid taxes on their wages or property, the first argument used by NWSA leaders in the 1870s. He was an attorney who concluded that there were no legal barriers to enacting legislation allowing white, educated property owning women to vote, after researching the subject. Like the other "Prominent Georgia Men" who supported suffrage, Hill did not seem to understand that women voters would want to vote for women candidates. Rebecca Felton and Helen Augusta Howard were probably ready for women office holders to really enact prohibition, anti-child labor or equal divorce laws. If women voted, they could bargain for equal

⁸¹ Woman's Suffrage Collection, 21-0079a, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Folder ____.

wages for employment because they would feel equal to men. Women could elect representatives who would prohibit drinking, abolish child labor, make school attendance compulsory or raise the age of consent for girls. Women would conduct public affairs on a higher level and drive the wardheelers from government.⁸²

The members of the GWSA also published the bylaws and constitution of their organization in October of 1894. They had to publish these documents and create chapters outside of the family woman's civic club in Columbus to create a State Woman Suffrage Association. McLendon and the GWSA officers were trying to convert women who studied politics in the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs and thereby impress Susan B. Anthony or Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mary L. McLendon was still only the president of the Atlanta GWSA, while Helen Augusta Howard was still the state president. Howard and her sisters, who were the state GWSA secretaries, had represented Georgia at the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) convention in Washington, D.C., between 15 and 20 February, 1894. The Howard sisters wanted to convince Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and national suffrage leaders to hold the 1895 convention in Atlanta. The sisters seemed to have a difficult task because Georgia's politicians

⁸² Woman's Suffrage Collection, No. 21-0079a, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

were extremely opposed to woman suffrage which did not predispose NAWSA leaders towards holding their first conference outside of Washington in Atlanta. NAWSA had been so dedicated to petitioning Congress to grant women the right to vote that they had never met outside of Washington. The American Woman Suffrage Association, the other half of NAWSA, had not held a southern convention since Louisville, Kentucky in 1881.⁸³

Washington, D.C. The NAWSA Atlanta Convention

The sisters addressed the NAWSA convention 1894 delegates on different days to persuade the other delegates to accept their proposal. Miriam Howard DuBose called her speech "Some Georgia Curiosities." Among Georgia's greatest curiosities were:

Men who love women much too dearly to accord them justice; women who are deceived by such affection; the self-supporting woman, who crows all the places where there is any money to be made without encountering the masculine frown and declares she has all the rights she wants. Georgia's motto: Unwisdom, Injustice, Immoderation.⁸⁴

DuBose meant to mock the pretensions of the Georgia Democratic Party, but she inadvertently damaged the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs, which had recently chosen "wisdom, justice,

⁸³ Anthony, Vol. IV. p. 223.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 228.

moderation" as their motto and a seal similar to Georgia's with an "s" added.⁸⁵

Helen Augusta Howard pointed out the reasons why the attitudes that her criticized of had to be challenged. Helen Augusta believed that only by holding the NAWSA convention in Atlanta would southern newspapermen be convinced that women wanted to vote. The Association could hold conferences in Washington, D.C. or Cincinnati and never gain any notice in the South. The NAWSA members in the rest of the country needed Georgia women to be truly a part of the national association, as the Georgia WCTU was, even if southern legislators continued to oppose suffrage. She and Claudia Maxwell, another Howard sister, argued that the Association would gain publicity from this unlikely convention site. Helen Augusta Howard summed up the case on behalf of Atlanta:

In Atlanta, if the convention should go there, there can be no doubt that the Grand Opera House, which is one of the largest auditoriums in the United States, could be secured and it could be packed from ceiling to pit. While a great many of them would come to laugh, many of them would go away with NAWSA membership tickets in their pockets. I can assure you that Georgia Congressmen do not influence their constituents, they are influenced by their constituency, and if we ever hope to influence the Georgia delegation in Congress, we shall have to influence the people of that state. I believe that an effort would be made by Atlanta and the prominent business, as well as the Georgia Woman's Suffrage Association, to make the next convention a successful one. While

⁸⁵ Croly, p. 364.

Atlanta is not in sympathy with the movement, she is always ready to help Atlanta.⁸⁶

The Howard sisters' proposal was accepted by the NAWSA delegates and Susan B. Anthony. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, another NAWSA official, supported their idea because she had lectured Atlanta WCTU members on woman suffrage the year before. Shaw felt that the suffragists could not allow the South to ignore woman's rights any longer. The Howards prevailed over Laura S. Clay of Kentucky, who was older and better known, who wanted to hold the next convention in Cincinnati. The sisters' presentation so impressed the NAWSA leaders that Helen Augusta Howard became a member of the committee that addressed the United States House of Representatives on suffrage. She reaffirmed and illustrated her basic belief about women who opposed suffrage in her speech. She insisted, like Felton, that anti-suffrage women were not better homemakers or more respectful of their husbands' opinions than suffragists were. Howard brought the NAWSA convention to Atlanta to spread this idea among Georgians.⁸⁷

The Association leased DeGive's Opera House on Peachtree Street for the three day conference. Crowds of curiosity seekers and committed suffragists filled every seat in the

⁸⁶ A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Origin of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Georgia", The Georgia Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXVIII, June 1944, No. 2, p. 69.

⁸⁷ Taylor, pp. 70-71.

city's largest auditorium. Howard may have approached the owner of the Opera House, Laurent DeGive, about renting the theatre before she went to Washington.

Atlantans who attended the convention out of commitment or skepticism read the mocking columns in The Constitution by Maude Andrews, the society page editor, and the Reverend J.B. Hawthorne, the pastor of the First Baptist Church.⁸⁸ These writers clung to the old belief that Woman Suffrage upset the traditional relations between husbands and wives. Women should be contented with their roles as wives and mothers, while men protected them and represented them in public affairs. Andrews wrote:

I'm afraid I shall never get it out of my silly head that most women are meant to have husbands, homes and children, and all to stay in their homes two-thirds of the time and attend to the children and give the husbands three good meals a day.

Andrews was sure that she and other women would never understand politics or connect them to issues that affected women's lives. The item attacking woman suffrage was placed between a long article on a ball where the ladies wore paper gowns and a description of spring bridal fashions.⁸⁹

J.B. Hawthorne continued the attack on the suffragists in his sermon, "true and false courage." Women who were loyal

⁸⁸ Anthony, Vol. VI, p. 236.

⁸⁹ Constitution, 28 January 1895, c. 3-4, p. 6.

and deferential to their husbands were truly courageous. Woman suffragists displayed only bravado in defying the Bible and God's laws. He ridiculed strong-minded women who wore the trousers in the family and dominated their husbands. Men who could not control their wives were probably feeble-minded.

The editor of the Woman's Journal believed that Hawthorne made the convention more popular than it might have been otherwise because;

As the average equal-rights woman is firmly convinced that her husband is the very best man in the world, this remark stirred the women up to a degree of wrath which no amount of abuse leveled against themselves would have aroused. On the other hand, the Atlantan people, even those who were not in favor of suffrage, felt mortified by this unprovoked insult to their guest, and many of them took occasion in private to express their regret.⁹⁰

Howard was right once again, when she wrote that Atlanta was not for suffrage but would never allow bad publicity to ruin the city's image. The Constitution and The Journal vied with each other to present long detailed summaries of the convention events, once it had opened on 31 January 1895. Both newspapers published flattering biographies of the Reverend Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, Susan B. Anthony and other leaders of NAWSA, who had established their headquarters at the Aragon Hotel. These journals provided delegates and visitors with digests of the speeches and programs of daily

⁹⁰ Anthony, Vol. IV, p. 237.

events and receptions, but Colonel Henry Clay Fairman's Sunny South published favorable editorials on woman suffrage.⁹¹

Mary L. McLendon, President of the Atlanta Woman Suffrage Association, welcomed the two hundred convention delegates to Atlanta on the conference's opening day. She expressed her regrets that the women had to meet in a theatre that was also home to Chautauqua lectures, the Metropolitan Opera's spring tour, the road companies of various plays and vaudeville shows instead of the State Capitol. She believed that the delegates could have met in the State Legislative chamber if women had the vote. After all, women as well as men paid the taxes that covered part of the six year old building's construction costs;

...but men alone, white and black, have the privilege of meeting in legislative session to make laws to govern women. Men are also allowed to hold their Democratic, Republican, Prohibition and Populist Conventions in its halls. It is with difficulty that women can secure a hearing before a legislative committee to petition for laws to ameliorate their own condition, or to secure compulsory training [for Prohibition] in the public schools, that their children may be brought up in the way they should go, and become sober, virtuous citizens.⁹²

The day before the official opening Helen Augusta Howard greeted the early arriving NAWSA members on behalf of GWSA. She said she became a suffragist in 1889, but did not join the

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 2238.

⁹² Anthony, Vol. IV, p. 242.

Association until 1890. She "...did not at first regard the ballot as the open sesame to our rights, although I felt that there was a principle. My mind [was] telling me of the justice of equal rights." The Howard sisters were praised by the editor of the Woman's Journal for their tireless and unobtrusive efforts to organize the events surrounding the three-day conference. The sisters spent their own money to rent DeGives' Opera House and to make other arrangements for the convention.⁹³

Rebecca Felton was kept away from the Atlanta NAWSA Convention in 1895 by her husband's lawsuit, but Gertrude Thomas, her admirer, helped elect the NAWSA officers as a GWSA delegate. She listened to many leading suffragists from other parts of the nation speak on a variety of issues related to suffrage. Alberta Chapman Taylor offered a testimonial on living in Colorado where women could vote.⁹⁴ Taylor was a daughter of the Governor of Alabama who had married and moved west. Other representatives spoke of the problems of women farm workers who earned half of their husbands' wages which were paid to their husbands.⁹⁵ Other delegates discussed their anger at paying taxes but not being directly represented

⁹³ Atlanta Journal, 29 January 1895, p. 5-1-2.

⁹⁴ Anthony, Vol. IV, p. 237.

⁹⁵ Anthony, Vol. IV, pp. 240, 1102.

in the legislatures. The suffragists believed that Tennessee represented the depths to which taxation without the ballot could sink. A Shelby County woman who owned land independently discovered that her land-owning sister had to pay her husband's poll tax, so he could vote when the sisters could not.

The evening sessions of the convention were more widely attended by the public and featured speeches by well-known Georgia politicians who believed that white women who owned property should vote. J. Colton Lynes, who wrote a comment for "Prominent Georgia Men in Favor of Woman Suffrage," spoke on the progress women had made towards equal rights between 1845 and 1895. Henry B. Blackwell was still trying to convince southern legislators that white women needed to vote to control black voters.⁹⁶ He still concluded that,

In the development of our complex political society we have today two great bodies of illiterate citizens; in the north people of foreign birth; in the south, people of the African race and a considerable portion of the native white population. Against foreigners and negroes, as such, we would not discriminate. So far as male citizens are concerned, we cannot recall an existing political equality. But, in every state save one, there are more educated women than all the illiterate voters, white and black, native and foreign.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Anthony, Vol. IV, pp. 240-241.

⁹⁷ "Let the Women Vote: and Disfranchise the Illiterate Negro, says Lucy Stone's Husband", The Atlanta Journal, 4 February 1895.

Henry B. Blackwell had not convinced many Georgia legislators or newspaper editors that white southerners could allow white women to vote and cancel out the power of African-American male voters. NAWSA's national leaders, the Howard sisters and the Latimer sisters may have been content just to educate Georgia women about suffrage, the social reform goals that women could achieve with the ballot and disprove the myths of the unnaturalness of woman suffragists.

The Latimer sisters and the NAWSA leaders gained new allies in their struggle for woman suffrage and other social reform goals when women like Frances Smith Whiteside (the sister of Hoke Smith, the future "Progressive Georgia, United States Senator and Governor) joined the battle. Since McLendon recalled that Whiteside had been an early member of the GWSA, Whiteside probably attended the Convention as a new member. Whiteside was an educated widow with a daughter and a high school principal in 1895. She, like the Latimer sisters, lent respectability to NAWSA when it was considered too extreme for ordinary southern women. The social activism of Whiteside and other club women was one of the lasting effects of NAWSA's 1895 convention in Atlanta.⁹⁸

Mary L. McLendon and the members of the south Atlanta WCTU joined Whiteside in presenting petitions for a jail

⁹⁸ Dewey W. Grantham, Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South, (Baton Rouge, 1967) pp. 3-10.

matron. McLendon almost certainly believed that the petition drive to have a woman care for female prisoners was a part of the WCTU campaign against the Convict Lease System. The city councilmen sent the petitions to the police committee where they disappeared. The Ladies' Society of the First Methodist Church South hired a matron to do the job in 1897. A year later the city councilmen agreed to pay her twenty dollars a month, but rescinded the order a month later. The woman's clubs put so much pressure on the council members that the order was reinstated and the salary raised to forty dollars a month, but the police never hired anyone to fill the position.⁹⁹

Members of the GWSA and the WCTU had been agitating for jail matrons at least since 1893. Gertrude Clanton Thomas wrote to the Augusta Chronicle to propose that the Augusta City Council hire a matron:

In the Atlanta police station there are fourteen cells for white men, three for women. there are twenty-two cells for negro men and fourteen for women. Is it wonderful that where there are many bad men there may occasionally be found a drunken woman? Granted that there are [few] such cases. I claim the right to say, those women are taken to the police station drunk or sober, a female matron should be there to take care of them.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Anthony, Vol. IV, p. 587.

¹⁰⁰ Gertrude C. Thomas to the editor of the Augusta Chronicle, 13 March, p. 4, c. 3-4.

This campaign was a part of the WCTU and GWSA's plan to improve the lives of women and their families. The ladies wanted to separate female prisoners from the men in vocational training buildings. The Feltons also believed that children should not be incarcerated with adults, but rather placed in schools where they could be rehabilitated. Felton's, McLendon's and other's plans were related to their broader educational goals. Felton was convinced that all poor girls, not just juvenile offenders, needed to study industrial and technical subjects as well as academics. She wanted young women to compete with men for high-salaried professional and technical positions. She knew that women would have to be extremely well-educated and much more assertive than they were trained to be because men were as unwilling to accept them as professional equals as they were to enfranchise them.¹⁰¹

The Opposition:

The United Daughters of the Confederacy

The NAWSA convention in February and the woman's club conference in November of 1895 energized Georgia's women social reformers as the WCTU convention had in 1890. Even women like Dolly Blount Lamar and Mildred L. Rutherford, who were still so bitter about the end of the Civil War, felt comfortable in joining a national woman's organization of

¹⁰¹ Felton, Country Life, p. 270; Anthony, Vol. IV, p. 240.

their own, auxiliary chapters of the United Confederate Veterans chapters who worked to decorate the graves of the dead or care for crippled veterans in soldiers homes. By 1890, the ladies had agreed to call themselves Daughters of the Confederacy.¹⁰² This woman's association grew from local clubs to state coordinating boards much as the WCTU and the General Federation of Woman's had done. Mrs. Lucian H. Raines, who represented the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Confederate Veteran's Association of Savannah and other leaders of the state committees, wrote a regional constitution and planned a regional executive committee. The delegates to a regional convention in 1895, the year of southern woman's club conferences, accepted the constitution and plan which was similar to that of UCV.¹⁰³ The association took on its distinctive characteristics and became the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC).

Dolly Blount Lamar had been married to Walter Lamar, an attorney, for eleven months, when she attended her first UDC convention. She travelled to Baltimore in November of 1897 with Mildred L. Rutherford acting as her "chaperon" for the conference. Lamar was impressed by the grief expressed by the

¹⁰² Gaines M. Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy; Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, (New York, 1987), pp. 107-108.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 111; Foster, pp. 173-174.

large number of older war widows, still mourning after more than fifty years. She and Rutherford really believed in the UDC's ideal of feminine self-sacrifice and deference to men in exchange for protection. Women could, if necessary, teach in elementary school, nurse, be seamstresses or do house work and gardening, but not become skilled professionals in any trade.¹⁰⁴ The Confederate patriotic organization's ideal of traditional womanhood made it attractive to anti-suffragists across the south.

Lamar and Rutherford became historians-general of the UDC as well as leading anti-suffragists in Georgia after the turn of the century.¹⁰⁵ They were enthusiastic workers for the UDC's second goal of inspiring a love of Confederate history in students from elementary school to college. Since Rutherford was the President of the Lucy Cobb Institute, she had a captive audience of female students to indoctrinate with the Confederate view of the South. People's knowledge of Confederate history was expanded when Mary A.H. Gay published Life in Dixie During the War in 1894. Even though Gay had to use a northern publisher, Rutherford approved of southern women writing their own histories of the Civil War. Gay and her sister, Missouri Stokes, fulfilled the UDC ideals by

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 124, 125; Lamar When All is Said and Done, pp. 105, 110-111.

¹⁰⁵ Lamar, p. 111,; Foster, pp. 172-173.

raising money for the Confederate Monument in Decatur and for preservation of the battlefield at Franklin, Tennessee, where their brother, Thomas J. Stokes, Jr., was killed. The Daughters also preserved Confederate correspondence, records and artifacts.¹⁰⁶

Mildred L. Rutherford, Dolly Lamar and the other ardent believers in the traditional image of the "southern lady" developed skills in political and organizational management during the decades that surrounded the beginning of the twentieth century. While they bitterly opposed assertiveness in suffragists and social reformers like the Latimer sisters, they campaigned just as vigorously to preserve Confederate battlefields or place monuments to Confederate soldiers in town squares. Rutherford could be just as ruthlessly outspoken as Felton when it came to convincing school teachers, university trustees and librarians to buy only books that reflected the traditional southern way of life. Rutherford's and Lamar's association, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), became a rallying point for conservative women who were committed to its causes. The UDC shared a general interest in education and care for the poor with the woman's clubs and prohibition with the WCTU.¹⁰⁷

173. ¹⁰⁶ Gay, Life in Dixie During the War, pp. 415-417; Foster, p.

¹⁰⁷ Foster, p. 107.

Mildred and her sister, Bessie Rutherford Mell, had founded the Bessie Mell Industrial Institute in 1889, a private version of the Latimer Sisters' Georgia Normal and Industrial College. Yet, Rutherford became president of the very uppercrust, aristocratic Lucy Cobb Institute. She organized the Athens Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA) after attending an association convention in Richmond in 1901. She hosted the Y's opening reception at her home. She eventually merged the Bessie Mell Institute with the YWCA and continued to lead it until she died in 1928.¹⁰⁸ She allowed visitors to attend her lectures on Georgia's ante-bellum and Civil War women at the Lucy Cobb Institute's Sunday Vespers. She had even praised Rebecca L. Felton for her articles on women in the Civil War and ante-bellum times in the *Sunny South* and hoped for Felton's assistance in editing the Civil War papers of the UDC. Rutherford was almost certainly active in the Georgia UDC's campaign to found the Rabun Gap Industrial School for the children of mountain people in 1906, a cause also dear to Felton's heart.¹⁰⁹

Rutherford felt the desire to help poor Confederate veterans and their families so strongly that she used southern

¹⁰⁸ Womack, "Mildred Lewis Rutherford", University of Georgia Masters' Thesis, 1946, pp. 78-80.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; M.L. Rutherford to Felton, 22 March 1897, Reel 3, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, p. 173, 265.

history to convince these families to accept Prohibition and she also became a founder of the Athens Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA). Other members of the Confederate patriotic associations probably felt that national prohibition was another disguise for Republican control of southern society. The UDC's activities consisted of the same mixture of tea parties, balls and social activism as the associations of the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs did. Gertrude Thomas was almost certainly not alone among activists in feminist causes in becoming an important leader of the UDC, along with being a state recording secretary and treasurer of the WCTU and GWSA. Even Rebecca Felton reminisced about women's lives in the Confederacy.¹¹⁰

The Georgia Normal and Industrial College

The Daughters of the Confederacy contributed to educating the children of poor confederate veteran. They may have approved of the opening of the Georgia Normal and Industrial College for women in 1891. Felton, McLendon and other social reformers had fought for state funding for a woman's technical college for over twenty-five years before the legislators finally granted the institution \$75,000. McLendon proudly wrote of this achievement in the chapter on Georgia in The

¹¹⁰ Foster, pp. 172-173; Lamar, p. 111; Margaret Anne Womack, "Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Exponent of Southern History", pp. 78-79, 87; Burr, The Secret Eye, p. 17.

History of Woman Suffrage. The sisters continued to seek the legislative approval for a woman to become president of the college. The law that William Y. Atkinson wrote only permitted women to be appointed to the Board of Women Visitors.¹¹¹

Although Gainesville made the trustees an offer, the school was eventually located in the former state capital, Milledgeville. The state allowed the school to use the ruined Penitentiary Square, which lowered the appropriation to \$35,000. After being under construction for more than a year, the main buildings at the school finally opened in September of 1891.¹¹² Felton may have been especially proud that the college was redeeming a section of the prison system that she and her husband had fought so long and hard to improve.

Newspapers in Atlanta and Milledgeville were almost cordial towards the idea of a college for women that offered instruction in technical subjects and took Home Economics seriously. For example, the Milledgeville Union Records described the extremely simple opening of the school. President J. Harris Chappell described the course work and instructed the first eighty-eight women on registration. The

¹¹¹ Foster, p. 173; Anthony, Vol. IV, pp. 587-588; Felton, Country Life, p. 271.

¹¹² James C. Bonner, Milledgeville, Georgia's Ante-Bellum Capital, (Athens, 1978, p. 246).

trustees' decision not to hold a public reception for the opening of the college was surprising because the citizens of Milledgeville seemed so enthusiastic about donating money to convert the antebellum Governor's Mansion into a dormitory. The Atlanta Journal's editor, F.W. Richardson, was even more in favor of a technical college for women. He could gladly report that the main building, then nearing completion, had cost \$50,000. The citizens of Milledgeville had contributed \$10,000 towards the furnishing and finishing of this structure. Richardson was a woman suffragist and Prohibitionist who believed that:

The provisions for the industrial education of women in various quarters is a recognition of the fact that woman is taking a larger part in affairs, and that she is destined to enter still more fully into active business pursuits.¹¹³

Rebecca Latimer Felton lectured Georgians on the importance of woman's technical education from the day the legislation creating the Normal and Industrial College passed the General Assembly. She and her supporters, like many nineteenth century educators, included nursing, teaching and engineering when they used the term technical education as well as carpentry, cooking or sewing. The College was the culmination of her thirty year dream of educating the young women manual laborers in the textile mills vocationally. She

¹¹³ Bonner, p. 246; "Technical Schools; the Address of Mr. F.H. Richardson", The Atlanta Journal, 15 May 1891, p. 5, c. 3-4.

believed that the girls who crowded into factories for jobs could become Georgia's greatest asset. Girls and women had a right to share in the economic rewards of working in the growing textile industry in the state. As she explained to an overflowing and admiring crowd in the new chapel of the College:

When the Savior entered the world he found women in a low estate, and it took more than eighteen hundred years, before it occurred to the wise and good men of the period that a girl, who was not so fortunate as to be born her own brother, needed and should have as good and thorough an education as her more lucky brother.¹¹⁴

She wrote a letter to the Constitution in the late 1880s in which she combined her belief in technical education for poor young white women with a plea to education for young black women:

Georgia is blamed throughout the union as the most illiterate of all the United States of America. We enjoy the reputation of having 500,000 people who can't read or write. This committee [of the Legislature], when it cut off our white girls, virtually confesses its willingness to have us remain in the eclipse of ignorance and black illiteracy forever. To read between the lines it would appear that having been elected by an ignorant people to their present positions, they are afraid to let in the light, lest they might be left at home the next time.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ "A Fine Address; Mrs. Felton's Powerful Appeal for Woman's Education", Scrapbooks 1884-1927, Felton Collection, reel 21, collection 81.

¹¹⁵ "A Vital Question, Is Aply Presented By An Able Georgia Woman. Shall Colored Girls Be Given Better Facilities for Education Than Our White Girls?-Give the Girls a Chance to Learn",

The Constitution's editor, Clark Howell, published a full page tour of the school by Maude Andrews, the future anti-suffragist. Andrews visited every classroom in the large, turreted, Romanesque style building and saw the young women learning to type, take shorthand dictation, cook, or sew professionally. The students also studied bookkeeping, telegraphy, education and academic subjects. She insisted on associating these girls' family backgrounds with the idealized planters' daughters of southern tradition, without offering any proof.

The UDC members developed the notion that planters' wives and daughters were charming, spoiled, lazy women who were pampered by their slaves. Felton always opposed this myth by using her recollections of her mother, grandmother and her own life as the young wife of a slave owning farmer. She believed that plantation mistresses had to know as much about weaving, spinning, milking or cooking as their slaves to supervise them. Felton believed that women who became skilled workers were just acknowledging some of their own talents. Andrews claimed that men would want to marry these young women, especially the trained cooks. They only used school and work as a break between life in their parents home and marriage. In fact, while quite a few of the young women who graduated

from the Georgia Normal and Industrial Institute in the 1890's married after teaching or working for several years, others did not.¹¹⁶

The Constitution's editor allowed Bill Arp (really Charles Smith) to publish an attack on the Georgia Normal and Industrial College ("The Girls; What is to become of Them" after they graduated with their certificates in Typography or Commercial Cooking?) Arp responded to letters to the editors of The New York World more than to the plans for the college, even though he had apparently received letters about woman's education himself.¹¹⁷ He was opposed to Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher's letter, where she supported technical education for women. She would expect her own daughters to learn trades and go to work if they did not marry early. She based her beliefs on the heavy physical labor of the household chores she did as a child without reward. She was criticized by an anonymous older man who, like Arp, longed for ante-bellum days. Women did housework out of love without expecting to be praised.

¹¹⁶ Maude Andrews, "Georgia Girls: A Visit to the Georgia Girls' Industrial School", Atlanta Constitution, 1 November 1891, p. 14, c. 1-3; Bonner, p. 246; Felton, Country Life, pp. 28-29, 270-272; Bulletin, Georgia State College for Women, (Milledgeville, 1926), pp. 6-10; Annie Winn Stephens, an 1895 graduate was employed by Agnes Scott College in Decatur by 1926, while her classmate Louise Wright worked at the Woman's Building, University of Texas at Austin. Their occupations were not listed.

¹¹⁷ Charles Smith, "The Girls: Bill Arp asks what is to become of Them", The Atlanta Constitution, pt. 2, p. 8, c. 3-4.

Arp claimed that this wife still cooked, sewed and visited the sick and wondered where men would be if women did not sacrifice themselves. He equated femininity with beauty, purity, piousness and submission as the Confederate patriotic associations did. He worried that young women typographers or telegraphers would become shorthaired, aggressive, suffragists who demanded the right to vote and equal pay for their work. Girls would be more marriageable if they would only learn everything from their mothers, except for reading and music or embroidery. Arp shared ideas with Dr. Edward H. Clarke discussed earlier. When Arp denounced woman suffragists, he used the same words that Augusta Evans Wilson employed to mock the suffragists in St. Elmo (1867).¹¹⁸

Georgia's young women were not deterred by warnings that they would ruin their health or their chances of getting married if they became skilled in craft work. Felton was pleased that the large school's enrollment reached 171 by the end of 1891 and 400 by 1899. Every student in the 1890's had to raise the tuition of one hundred dollars, which kept the very poor from attending. The low tuition was subsidized by rent from the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Young women were assigned to the school from all of Georgia's counties,

¹¹⁸ Ibid; Edward H. Clarke, Sex in Education; Or, A Fair Chance for the Girls, (New York, 1972), p. 14; Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, St. Elmo, (New York, 1867).

especially the cities. These girls must have graduated from high school or even junior high school, so they could not have been illiterates.¹¹⁹

Rebecca Felton and Claire DeGraffenried

The controversy between DeGraffenried and Felton stemmed from the philosophical differences between the two women concerning the way to approach the education of mill hands' children. Felton believed that educated, voting women could assist mill families to change their own environment, while DeGraffenried seemed to believe that the textile mill system had to be changed before workers' lives would improve.¹²⁰

Another major debate arose between Felton and Claire DeGraffenried over DeGraffenried's ideas about educating the children of mill hands and sharecroppers. DeGraffenried wrote an essay for The Century Magazine (a national publication) called "Georgia Crackers in the Cotton Mills." She believed that the generations of inbreeding, isolation and ignorance led to the lethargy and poverty of these people in the 1890s.¹²¹ She deplored the lack of sanitation in their shacks, whether in the country or mill villages:

¹¹⁹ Bonner, p. 116.

¹²⁰ LeeAnn Whites, "The DeGraffenried Controversy: Class, Race, and Gender in the New South," the Journal of Southern History, Vol LIV, No. 3, August 1988, pp. 449-479.

¹²¹ Bonner, p. 246.

Flung, as if by chance beside a red clay road that winds between shake fences, a settlement appears. Rows of loosely built, weather stained frame houses, all of the same ugly pattern and buttressed by clumsy chimneys, are set close to the highway. No porch, no doorstep even, admits [one] of these barrack-like [quarters]; only an unhewn log or a convenient stone...¹²²

These people furnished their homes with rusty pots, pans, a few chairs and a broken bed. They dressed as shabbily as they lived and bought cheap, gaudy clothing and trinkets when they had a little money.

According to DeGraffenried, parents who worked in the cotton mills took their children to work, where the infants lay neglected in boxes. The older children worked alongside their parents to help the family earn the pitiful salaries. Most of the child mill hands seemed as indifferent, or even contemptuous, of school as their mothers and fathers were when DeGraffenried spoke to them. She concluded that if the mill hands did not seem interested in education, recruiting them would not have an effect. They would never be persuaded to seek medical care or eat healthy food either.¹²³

DeGraffenried may have been expressing the frustrations of a decade of investigating working conditions of women and children in the cotton for the new United States Bureau of

¹²² Claire DeGraffenried, "Georgia Crackers in the Cotton Mills", The Century Magazine, Vol. XLI, No. 4, February 1891, p. 483.

¹²³ Ibid.

Labor. She contributed a much more practical essay on methods to help women and child mill hands lead better lives to the WCTU Union Signal called "The Needs of Self Supporting Women" in 1891. She promoted ideas in this article about home economy and Prohibition that were similar to Felton's reasons for founding the Georgia Normal and Industrial College. DeGraffenried submitted her reports or statistical analyses to the bureau without seeing any change in mill hands' living conditions. She may have been comparing the poorer girls to the young ladies she instructed in Latin at schools in Macon and Washington, D.C. for twenty years.¹²⁴ She had been born in Macon in 1849 and grew up there while her father was a Colonel on Governor Brown's staff. The Feltons were living in Macon at the end of the Civil War and may have known the DeGraffenried family.

Rebecca Felton was upset because DeGraffenried depicted mill hands so negatively in "Georgia Crackers." She had been asked by mill owners, including H.L. Witham who might be a cousin of Feltons, to use her enormous popularity among mill workers to interview the workers and present a more positive picture of life in textile mill towns.¹²⁵ She investigated the living conditions of the mill hand herself and wrote an

¹²⁴ Notable American Women, 1607-1950, Vol. I., pp. 452-4.

¹²⁵ Whites, p. 450.

article that Clark Howell of The Atlanta Constitution finally published in May of 1891. According to Felton, mill workers were not shiftless and stupid people who were content to dress shabbily. Felton spoke to mill hands who kept their homes as clean and well furnished as their low wages and long working hours would permit. They cared for themselves, dressed, dined as well as they could afford. Women who worked in the Atlanta mills would rather leave their babies at the Sheltering Arms Day Nursery Association, an Atlanta Federation of Woman's Clubs project, than take them to work. Older children worked alongside their parents out of necessity and not because the family was hostile towards education.¹²⁶ Many adult and teen-aged hands were literate and took advantage of lectures, including those on Prohibition, that mill owners sometimes provided, and they wanted further instruction. Felton accused the editors of the Century Magazine, but not DeGraffenried, of sensationalizing the bleak portrait of Georgia's mill hands.

Claire DeGraffenried could not understand how Rebecca Felton, could show such a lack of understanding of the lethargy of some people who worked in the textile mills. She believed that their common interests in educating mill workers' children would temper Felton's "Georgia Crackers." DeGraffenried urged Felton to join her in working to educate

southern mountain girls who attended school willingly. DeGraffenried tried to soften Felton's attitude towards her work by recalling their pasts when they were friends.

One of these incidents occurred on a snowy day, probably in Washington around 1875, when Felton had helped her tuck her skirts up to cross an icy, muddy street. DeGraffenried was insulted that Felton had accused her in The Constitution article of selling out to the Republican Party. She and her brother Paul worked for the Cleveland Administration. Felton had to understand that the children of a Confederate widow had to support themselves.¹²⁷

Rebecca Felton was probably correct in assuming that her dispute with Claire DeGraffenried over the millhands' eagerness for education was partially the result of the sensationalized reporting in the northeastern press. Felton and her sister dealt with mill families regularly and still saw them as individuals who could be convinced of the need for technical education. DeGraffenried, on the other hand, came to view textile workers' problems in abstraction from the distance of Washington and felt overwhelmed by the large numbers of suffering people. Felton and DeGraffenried both believed that the millhands' children, especially the girls, needed education. Felton's exchange of articles and letters

¹²⁷ Claire DeGraffenried to Felton, January 1891, R.L. Felton Collection, University of Georgia Special Collections, no. 81.

with DeGraffenried was also an example of Felton's relentless combat against the sectional stereotypes of southern working people that flourished in the northeast. The two women may have realized their common goals and renewed their twenty year old friendship. The controversy between Felton and DeGraffenried has been compounded by modern historians who have failed to understand that Felton could, admire southern life without accepting the mistreatment of women or African-Americans or the filthy excesses of the textile mills.¹²⁸

The WCTU's Internal Struggles

Rebecca Felton's disappointment over Clair DeGraffenried's magazine article was mild compared to her outrage over the turmoil that woman suffrage caused in the WCTU in the last five years of the nineteenth century.

The Latimer sisters, together with Jane Eliza Sibley and William C. Sibley, were drawn into the verbal war between Bishop Warren Akin Candler and Henry A. Scomp (Lundy H. Harris's predecessor as Professor of Greek at Emory College). Scomp wrote King Alcohol in the Realm of King Cotton and was a nationally known Prohibition authority. Maggie W. Scomp, his wife, was one of the founders of the Georgia WCTU and President of the Oxford chapter. Scomp became an elector for the national Prohibition Party candidate in 1892 and the

¹²⁸ Whites, p. 478.

campaign manager for the Reverend Mr. Sam Small, a rival of Tom Watson and Milton A. Candler. Bishop Candler had Scomp fired for incompetence and tried to prevent his finding a new position. Sibley and the WCTU leaders rushed to the defense of their favorite author.

Henry T. Scomp had published an article in the February issue of a Prohibitionist magazine, quoting Candler. Candler allegedly told Scomp that bawdy houses and saloons were preferable to woman suffrage, even if Prohibition was sacrificed, because the suffragists would convince bad women to vote while the good ones stayed home.¹²⁹

The New York Voice, apparently a radical Prohibitionist journal, published an anonymous item on the battle between the WCTU, Henry Scomp and Bishop Candler. the writer portrayed Scomp and the WCTU officers as embattled crusaders who faced a horde of reactionary opponents, including seeming allies like Bishop Candler. Scomp had been fired for his outspoken Prohibitionist beliefs and not incompetence. Candler was furious when he received this article in a letter from an admirer. He found a public supporter in the Methodist church when Atticus Green Haygood responded to the Voice column. Green claimed that the trustees fired Scomp because his

¹²⁹ Candler to W.W. Evans, 134 February 1894, Candler Collection, No. 2, Special Collections Emory University, Box 4, Folder 3.

contract had expired, omitting that the same three year contract had been renewed six times previously. Candler, on the other hand, was an honest, life-long prohibitionists. Haygood concluded that the anonymous Voice correspondent was insane or lying.¹³⁰

Scomp wondered how a good prohibitionist could be so nasty toward WCTU members just because they were woman suffragists. He had to deny charges that the leaders of the WCTU were Scalawags, who wanted to bring back black Republican rule. Scomp wondered how Dr. William H. Felton, William C. Sibley or Walter Hill could associate with any national prohibition association whose leaders favored such ideas. Bishop candler and the other members of the Methodist hierarchy had no right to dictate the political beliefs of their congregations.

Scomp found another defender when Jane Eliza Sibley, the President of the Georgia WCTU, wrote to the editor of the Constitution. Jane Sibley claimed that Dr. Candler and the Methodist Church South had become more hostile towards the WCTU since its leaders started supporting Scomp. She did not understand how Scomp could teach for eighteen years if he was really incompetent. She traced the animosity between her association and the Methodist Church to the Temperance

¹³⁰ A.G. Haygood, "The Simple Truth", The Atlanta Constitution, 11 July 1894.

Alliance Convention of 1891. She agreed with Scomp that Candler spoke of preferring bawdy houses and saloons to prohibition, if it included women suffrage. Scomp had observed that the members of the Georgia WCTU did not want to use their organization as a platform for woman suffrage agitation. In 1894, Candler demanded that the Georgia WCTU withdraw from the National WCTU or he would influence the Methodist Church, South to disown the Georgia WCTU.¹³¹

The Constitution's editor published Dr. Candler's denial of Sibley's charges in the next column with the general headline, "Two Points of View." He accused Sibley of knowing the anonymous author of the Voice item and the WCTU leaders of encouraging the writer to place such lies in that journal. She allegedly made a suffrage speech at a temperance convention in Boston that was so extreme that the audience of northern temperance women booed her address. Candler claims that Sibley and the WCTU executive committee were dishonest when the Bishop and Mrs. Candler were invited to a WCTU convention where woman suffrage was mentioned where they had been assured it would not be.¹³²

Rebecca L. Felton, Mary L. McLendon, Jane Eliza Sibley and other leading woman prohibition leaders protested when

¹³¹ W.A. Candler, "Two Points of View." Constitution, July 1894.

¹³² Ibid.

Bishop Candler carried out his threat to lead the Methodist Church, South to disown the Georgia WCTU. This round of battles began at the beginning of July of 1897 when the Reverend Mr. J.S. Roberts refused to allow the Atlanta Southside WCTU members to hold their July chapter meeting in Trinity Methodist Church on Washington Street.¹³³ Roberts believed that McLendon's South Atlanta WCTU, which would have hosted the convention, was too pro-suffrage to be associated with the Church. He defended this position by using the standard anti-suffrage reasons popular nationally since the 1870s and used by Senator Joseph E. Brown and Bishop Candler. Church women should never use the Church as a platform to support so obviously political a national organization as the WCTU. Rather women could change society by being good mothers.

Roberts' remarks outraged Felton, McLendon and many other women Temperance workers. The members of the Southside WCTU had to hold their July meeting in Mary L. McLendon's home at 139 Washington Street, across the street from Trinity Methodist Church. They discussed a proposed curfew law that would close saloons early to cut down on drinking.¹³⁴ The

¹³³ J.W. Roberts, "Now Dr. Roberts makes his Reply", Atlanta Constitution, 4 July 1897, p. 6, c. 3-4.

¹³⁴ "No Home for the WCTU...", Atlanta Constitution, 2 July 1897.

city council's police committee began debating the new law after Mary McLendon presented the WCTU's petition calling for a curfew. Even though she reported on these efforts, the other members really wanted to express their disgust with the Reverend Mr. Roberts and decide on a new meeting place. They became even angrier when they discovered that an offer of the Catholic Church was a joke. The ladies selected the members of a committee to investigate other meeting halls and voted to gather in each others' homes.¹³⁵ They may have authorized McLendon, as their President, and members who volunteered to respond to the Reverend Mr. Roberts.

McLendon wrote "A War Retort to Dr. Roberts" for The Constitution on 6 July 1897. She took Roberts to task for calling the WCTU members immoral in his Sunday sermon. She and her family had attended Trinity Church for nearly thirty years and did not want to be insulted. She assured him that the Southside WCTU's members had no secret connection to the National WCTU, although she, like many of the other members, was an open admirer of Frances Willard and all of her beliefs, including suffrage.¹³⁶ Although the Southside WCTU did not have a Suffrage Department, as the National organization did,

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Mary L. McLendon, "A Warm Retort to Dr. Roberts", Atlanta Constitution, 6 July 1897, p. 6.

most of the Southside members belonged to the Atlanta Woman Suffrage Association.

Roberts did not condemn the drinking, gambling or corruption of the state and local officials who were also parishioners. She accused Dr. Roberts and the Southern Methodist Conference of wanting to suppress the WCTU because the ladies continuously petitioned the conference to use grape juice instead of wine at Communion. Women were tired of pleading with associations of men to abolish drinking, vacate the convict lease contracts, and raise the age of consent for girls to twenty-one. Women would never reform society through moral influence and needed the ballot to force men to be just to them. She concluded that the southern Methodist conference might be afraid of women storming the pulpit. She pointed out that they were too late in worrying because there were already five hundred women methodist evangelists and two hundred ordained ministers in the late 1890s.¹³⁷

Mary Brent Read, a WCTU member and probable suffragist and writer of a letter to the Constitution, was repelled by Roberts' belief in woman's divinely appointed sphere of homemaking. She considered the nation of woman's sphere a symbol of the last vestige of medieval servitude and a system of bondage for women. Men had gradually ceased to dominate

¹³⁷ Ibid.

other men through serfdom or vassalage, even though it took centuries. Chattel slavery, once universally accepted had been completely abolished in the industrialized nations and even southern black men could make their own lives. Only women were expected to remain in the position they were born into or adopt their husbands social station. Women needed the ballot to assert their independence and become separate individuals, a radical pro-suffrage argument.¹³⁸

Rebecca Latimer Felton wrote an equally hostile letter to The Journal that appeared on the same day that Read's essay was published in The Constitution. She believed that the high Methodist, Episcopal clergy were too elitist, doctrinaire and blinded to the immorality around them.¹³⁹ The Church was meant to be more like a town hall where everyone, including woman suffragists, was welcomed. She had not known that Roberts was so opposed to suffrage and Temperance when W.S. Witham asked her to address Roberts' Sunday school on the anti-saloon bill, mothers and children. She believed that her speech countered the quiet, fashionable, graveyard that Roberts wanted the church to become.

By June of 1898, Jane T. Sibley and Mary L. McLendon had persuaded the Baptists to allow to Georgia WCTU convention to

¹³⁸ M.B. Read, "Mrs. Read Makes a Brilliant Reply to Dr. Roberts", Atlanta Constitution, 7 July 1897, p. 6, c. 1.

¹³⁹ Felton, Country Life, pp. 295-299.

meet in the new Baptist Tabernacle on Luckie Street. The convention attendees were dedicated to finding new ways to spread prohibitionism and recruit new members. They discussed the Temperance literature that they passed out, the school Prohibition speech contest, legislative lobbying and progress in jail work and school scientific Temperance instruction during the year. Woman suffrage dominated these deliberations, in spite of Jane Thomas Sibley's years of efforts to suppress it.¹⁴⁰ Some delegates believed that the National WCTU's suffragism would split the organization and drive women away from it. Georgians had to disassociate themselves from the radicals in the national Union to attract more conservative southern women who were afraid of woman suffrage. The Reverend Mr. Wadsworth, a Methodist minister, claimed that the WCTU women were more religious and patient than some ministers who pretended to be prohibitionists.¹⁴¹

Mary L. McLendon remarked that the Methodist ministers could never understand what Prohibition really meant to women because they were only men. The suffragists felt forced to separate the Southside's franchise department from the Georgia WCTU even though McLendon argued that "You will never command respect from the legislature and will continue to have your

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ansley, p. 178, "Women Defeat Suffrage [at the WCTU State Convention]" Atlanta Constitution, 17 July 1898.

petitions ignored by its members until you can to the polls and help elect your representatives."¹⁴²

Missouri Horton Stokes did not believe that woman suffrage should be discussed at the convention. She even felt that McLendon's statements about Methodist ministers pretending to be Prohibitionists were slanderous. She was still convinced that the Georgia Legislature would never vote for woman suffrage. The suffragists among the WCTU members were wasting energy that could be better spent convincing legislators to enforce the laws against drinking. She even quoted Susan B. Anthony who said that many Georgia women would have 'died of agitation of woman suffrage' on their grave stones before southern legislators passed such laws. The members of the city or district chapters, such as McLendon's Southside branch, could not open their own franchise departments unless the Georgia WCTU had a state wide department. Stokes thought that the churchmen would approve of prohibition as a Christian duty if women did not associate it with their own political ambitions. The delegates rejected Mary L. McLendon's suffrage resolution by a vote of thirty-one to seventeen. Missouri H. Stokes resigned as Corresponding

¹⁴² "Women Defeat Suffrage Plan," Constitution, 17 July 1898.

Secretary of the Georgia WCTU shortly after this convention.¹⁴³

Felton, as proof of her conservatism, pointed to the fact that she had never joined an official woman suffrage organization or made a suffrage speech up to 1897, but she did not denounce the National WCTU, Frances Willard or Mary L. McLendon. Felton was as intelligent as her sister, Willard or the other women who answered Roberts and all could understand politics and vote. She did not care if he respected them because she did not respect hypocritical Methodist ministers who cared more for their own good looks and money than their congregations.¹⁴⁴

Rebecca Latimer Felton made one of the major speeches at the first morning session of the convention, even though she was not a delegate.¹⁴⁵ She, like her sister, always believed that the Legislature would never pass real Prohibition laws or other social reform legislation unless politically active men and enfranchised white women demanded such laws. She used facts combined with such indignation that an opponent said that he had not received such a spanking since he was a child. Felton pledged her loyalty to the WCTU and Prohibition. She

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ansley, p. 178.

promised to assist her sister in creating more powerful lobbying organizations for Prohibition and other social reform goals.¹⁴⁶

Mary L. McLendon and the other Georgia Woman Suffrage Association members did not let the loss of the WCTU franchise department deter them from continuing their own organizing to create powerful social reform associations. These efforts reached a major goal on 28 November 1899 when the GWSA held its second annual convention in a meeting hall on Peachtree Street near Marietta Street. The women had the auditorium decorated with red, white and blue bunting with the yellow and white suffrage flag on one wall. The platform behind the lectern featured large photographs of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone Blackwell. Photographs of the GWSA's founders, probably Mary L. McLendon and the Howard sisters, dominated the center of the stage directly behind the lectern.¹⁴⁷

The members began this convention with a prayer and a hymn just as they always opened the WCTU assemblies. Then Gertrude C. Thomas read the roll of delegates and the committee secretaries reported on legislative lobbying, the number of pro-suffrage columns in local newspapers and the

¹⁴⁶ Ansley, p. 122; Constitution, 16 July 1898.

¹⁴⁷ "Woman Suffragists Meet in Annual Convention", Atlanta Journal, 28 November 1899, p. 8, c. 5-6.

number of new members. Frances Griffin read a letter from Susan B. Anthony to McLendon outlining plans for Anthony's tour of the south in the fall of 1900. During the convention, McLendon received another letter from Anthony. Griffin related Anthony's encouragement of the GWSA and her regrets at not being able to attend the convention. H. Augusta and Miriam Howard sent an encouraging telegram that their sister, Claudia H. Maxwell, read to the delegates.¹⁴⁸

Mary L. McLendon and Gertrude C. Thomas signed and almost certainly wrote a resolution to the Georgia Congressional Delegation that became the highlight of the first session. McLendon and Thomas believed that civilization was moving towards a greater equality between men and women. Woman voters were not a theory any more, but they had been an invaluable addition to the electorate of Wyoming, Colorado and Utah for many years. The GWSA women looked forward to the day when woman suffrage would be an asset to voters in Georgia and the rest of the nation.¹⁴⁹ They concluded their petition:

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Georgia Woman's Suffrage [Association], in its annual convention in Atlanta, November 28, 1899, respectfully petition your honorable body not to insert the word 'male' in the suffrage clause of the Constitutions of the governments of Hawaii,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid; Minutes of the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association Convention, 27-28 November 1899; pp. 1-9; only available in the Georgia department of Archives and History.

¹⁴⁹ Journal, 28 November 1899, p. 8, c. 5-8.

Cuba, [Puerto] Rico and the Philippines. We ask in the name of justice and equality for all citizens of our republic, founded as it is on the consent of the governed.¹⁵⁰

The suffragists held an evening meeting on the second day of their convention in the Hall of the House of Representatives at the State Capitol. Rebecca Lowe, the President of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs, was one of the prominent women who attended this evening meeting. This part of the conference not only attracted Lowe and other committed suffrage women, but curiosity seeking male legislators. They heard Mary L. McLendon introduce the speakers, beginning with Gertrude C. Thomas.

The speakers at the Second Annual GWSA Convention justified woman's right to vote using all the arguments of the NAWSA leaders. These defenses of woman suffrage included the conservatives' view that white women were protecting their homes by voting but also the more radical concept that women had a natural right to vote.

Thomas and the other speakers addressed aspects of the theme that woman suffrage was natural and beneficial to the south. Thomas, like McLendon, always defended her position as a good southern woman. She stressed the importance of her Prohibition and suffrage work to the delegates and guests. She reminded her audience that woman came from man's rib,

¹⁵⁰ Minutes, pp. 14-15.

making her his equal thus turning upside down the claims of clergymen's arguments from Genesis. Claudia Howard Maxwell was one of three women who explained the political and social reasons for woman suffrage's naturalness. Maxwell concluded by reversing another adage claiming that "the hand that casts the ballot [instead of "rocks the cradle"] is the hand that rules the world." Frances E. Griffin added, in her speech, that men had no right to question a woman's reason for wanting to vote. Women were citizens and human beings like men and deserved the franchise as a matter of common justice.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

In the early 1890s, the Latimer sisters became part of national campaigns for social reform. Like many other women across the country, they became active in the woman's clubs which eventually combined into national woman's associations by the middle 1890s.

Mary L. McLendon and Rebecca L. Felton saw hundreds of women become dedicated prohibitionists in the 1890's. After fighting for prohibition and suffrage as a means to attain it for over twenty years with only the WCTU members for allies in the 1870's and 1880's, McLendon joined forces with the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association in 1890 and joined her sister in the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs in 1895. Felton

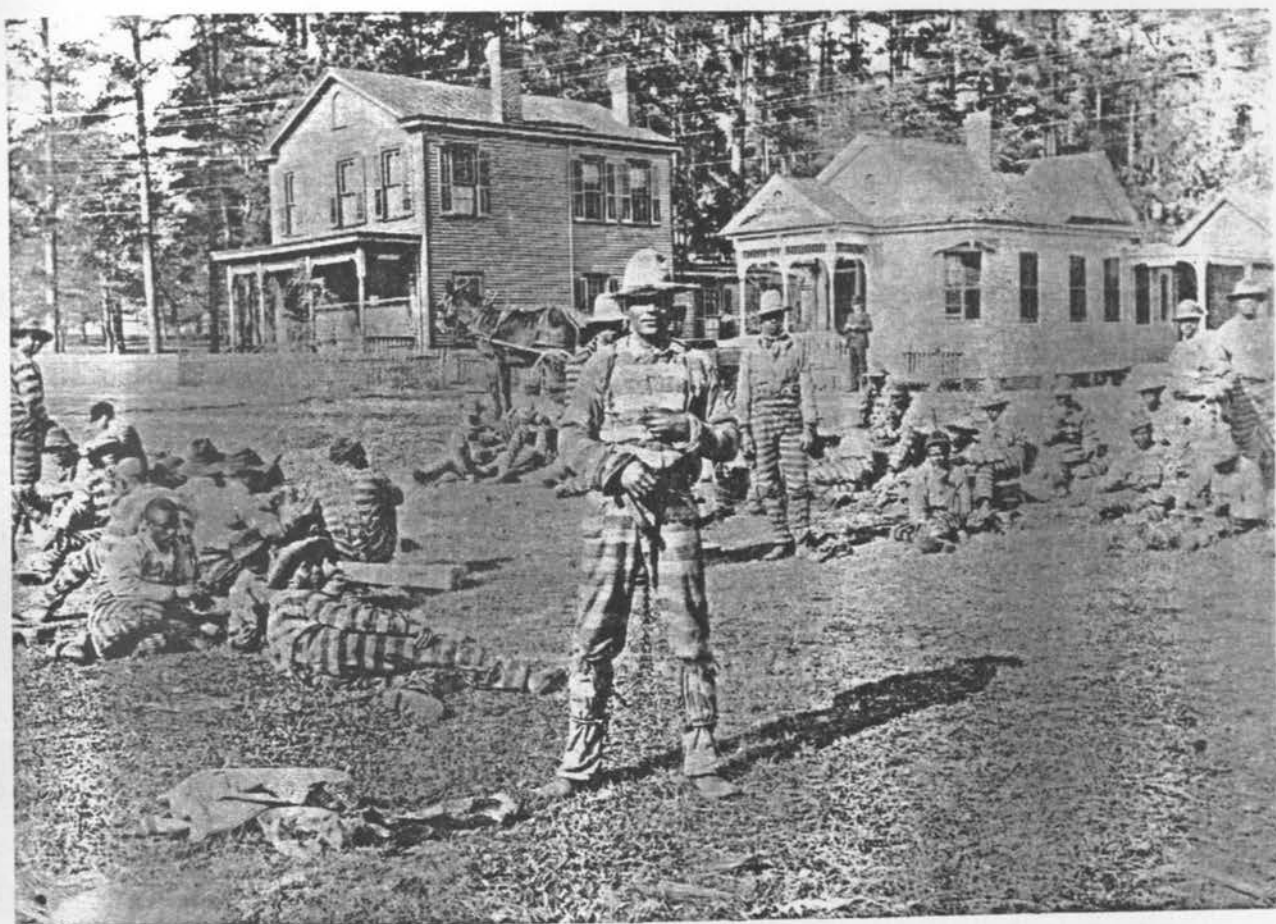
¹⁵¹ Ibid.

became Georgia's most outstanding temperance and suffrage lecturer in the 1890's without formally joining the GWSA. While the sisters were not advocating racial equality, they were aware that black women suffered mistreatment at the hand of their drunken men. Even white women who opposed most social reform began to organize clubs, notably the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1895 and were drawn into political-activity to achieve their commemorative and educational aims.¹⁵²

While the Latimer sisters were organizing woman's civic association, Dr. William H. Felton found a new source of political support in the Populist Rebellion. The Populists were Prohibitionists and opponents of the Convict Lease System. Yet the racial hostilities and depression in the late 1890's fragmented Populism, destroyed Dr. Felton's political career and almost split the WCTU.

Convicts on a road grading crew in the early 1900s in Richmond County, near Augusta. Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

¹⁵² Ibid.



Convicts on a road grading crew in the early 1900s in Richmond County, near Augusta, Georgia
Department of Archives and History.

CHAPTER VI

Rebecca Felton and Racial Warfare, 1896-1920

Some of the NWSA's leaders had argued since 1868 that educated white women were more fit to vote than ignorant former slaves or immigrant men. The Blackwells, who founded the AWSA, were still circulating the idea that white women voters could join white men in outvoting African-Americans. As the abolitionist generation of suffragists became too old to be active, more southern women came into prominence in the movement. Historians have seen these racist attitudes as a deliberate ploy to attract southern women. Although Rebecca Felton was not immune to the biases of her culture and the appeals to those prejudices, she maintained relations with the radical suffragists and African-American community to work towards important goals.

Georgia's simmering racial tensions of the 1870s and 1880s erupted into riots and lynchings between 1896 and 1921 as the nation endured depressions, war with Spain and World War I. The last national political party to attempt to find common goals between black and white farmers, the People's Party, disintegrated under the Democrats' racial pressure and through the defection of Populists to William Jennings Bryan. As blacks asserted themselves by fighting in the Spanish-American War and World War I, the white male legislators sought to control the electorate by disfranchising blacks and

opposing woman suffrage. The lodges of black fraternal orders and even the African-American woman's clubs became more tightly organized to promote black self-sufficiency. The hostilities between black and white Georgians created a violent and corrosive atmosphere.

Rebecca Latimer Felton, Georgia's most famous woman lecturer and social reformer, would certainly be asked for her opinions on racial problems such as lynching. She worked comments on these racial issues into most of her speeches on education, prohibition or woman suffrage between the late 1890s and early 1920s. Her strong belief in technical education for the African-American community as well as her passionate hatred for the Convict Lease System and lynching brought her many unlikely allies in the leadership of the black community. She received letters praising her opinions from Bishop Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Albion W. Holsey of the Tuskegee Institute.¹ In the early 1920s, Benjamin J. Davis, Sr., the editor of the Atlanta Independent, reprinted from the Constitution Felton's essays opposing lynching and expressing anger over the state legislature's actions on woman suffrage. Since Turner and Davis were not cordial towards white people, their praise for

¹ H.M. Turner to R.L. Felton, 21 February 1896, reel 3, A.W. Holsey to Felton, 1921, reel 5, Felton Collection, no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collection.

Felton was all the more remarkable. Felton even shared her disgust with the Convict Lease System with W.E.B. DuBois, whose work she may not even have know.

Since Felton had reservations about blacks' intelligence and industry, the racists could always select excerpts from her speeches to prove that blacks were incapable of learning. The Radical Republicans tried to claim her for their own because of her aggressive promotion of woman suffrage on prohibition. She always had to defend her right to be both a southerner and an independent thinker in such statements as;

I am southern born and southern raised, with all both stand for, and I verily believe our sectional disagreements were owing in large measure to our ignorance, not of books, but of people. If our ancestors required a [woman's] convocation of the sections once in every ten years, there would have been no civil war, in my opinion. . . . A face to face conference between discordant factions, seasoned with prayer and praise for God's preserving mercies, would have made a very different state of affairs. . . . This grand old Republic may yet be saved by its women. . .²

Felton was as concerned about the education of black people as poor whites. She corresponded with Isabella Beecher Hooker, an acquaintance from the Columbian Exposition, on African American education in 1891. Hooker had received several letters and articles from Felton on the race question.

² Felton to Isabella Beecher Hooker, 8 December 1890, Scrapbooks 1884-1927, reel 20, Felton Collection, no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

Hooker expressed her enjoyment at reading parts of these articles alone and aloud to friends. She believed that Felton was one of those women who had been "...prepared for leadership by long years of experience [and] personal sacrifice [to] find their place in the grand army which is to bring not war, but peace upon the earth".³

Hooker enclosed an essay from a philosophical journal in which the author attacked black education. Like many educated Americans, this essayist believed blacks were so inferior that they could not be taught to participate in American society. He believed that Americans were moving towards an unknown future where this country's racial diversity would hamper it in its competition with Germany or England. Hooker believed that liberated, enfranchised women could become mediators in this debate and free others.⁴

Hooker looked forward to talking with Felton in Washington during a convention, probably hosted by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. She hoped that Felton would stay in Washington and lobby Congress. The Congressmen, like the state legislators, were too busy with political feuds to listen to the suffragists' lobbying.

³ Hooker to Felton, 29 January 1891, Felton Collection, enclosing "The Hybridization of our Race With the Negroes in the United States," Religio-Philosophical Journal, 17 January 1891, p. 533.

⁴ Ibid.

Hooker and Felton had discovered that their common desire to educate the disadvantaged bridged the gap between the New England intellectual and the Georgia small farmer.

Rebecca Latimer Felton continued to write about black education in the later 1890's, when her ideas led her into the center of the verbal battles over race. Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, praised Felton for her belief in industrial education for blacks.⁵ Bishop Turner was a State Representative in the Georgia Legislature between 1868 and 1870. He became so disillusioned that he urged black Americans to return to Africa. He continued to share Felton's hatred of the Convict Lease System. He was an ardent prohibitionist who believed that abolishing drinking would stop many lynchings. He called for better jobs and higher wages for black workers as a means for decreasing stealing out of economic necessity. Blacks who committed crimes needed to be treated fairly by sheriffs and courts while white defendants needed to receive stronger sentences. Like Rebecca Felton, he believed that more stable churches, families and schools would allow people of both races to control crime and stop lynching. If black men were

⁴ *The Voice of Missions*, February-March 1896, front pages, Atlanta University, Special Collections.

⁵ *The Position of the National W.C.T.U. in Relation to the American Slave*, 25 April 1895, vol. 881, no. 17.

⁵ H.M. Turner to R.L. Felton, 21 February 1896, reel 3, collection 81, University of Georgia, Special Collections.

sober and religious they would not commit rape, just as sober and religious white men would commit drunken lynchings.⁶

Bishop Turner and Rebecca Felton had no personal contact with each and were united only by their common beliefs and his letter praising her advocacy of education for African-Americans. Bishop Turner was so deeply committed to prohibition that he published a summary of the activities of Georgia's black WCTU chapters on the front page or the second page of the Voice of Missions, the African Methodist Episcopal Church newspaper. The black temperance women assisted the poor, distributed prohibition literature and white flowers just as their white counterparts did. Turner was one of the AM Church Bishops who wrote a tribute to Frances Willard's abolitionist parents and her refusal to allow racism to contaminate the WCTU.⁷

Rebecca Latimer Felton appreciated black Prohibition workers as much as black leaders praised her for promoting black education. She preserved an editorial from the Morgan County Advertiser, 13 August 1896, congratulating black voters for rejecting Democratic offers of liquor as bribes (to cast

⁶ The Voice of Missions, February-March 1896, front pages, Atlanta University, Special Collections.

⁷ "The Position of the National W.C.T.U. in Relation to the Colored People", The Union Signal, 25 April 1895, vol. SSI, no. 17, p. 26. H.M. Turner to Felton, 21 Feb. 1896, University of Georgia, Femore Collection.

their ballots for prohibition.) Felton urged black women to join her fight against the liquor trust to protect black boys from the saloon, crime and the chain gang or lynching in a speech at Monroe in Morgan County. She reasserted the ideas that prohibition would cut down on the number of lynchings, if not end them completely. She was as firmly convinced as ever that men were careless with their votes, while women were more likely to vote for prohibition and other social reform measures.⁸

In 1896, Turner supported Felton in her verbal battles with the Reverend Mr. S.P. Richardson over the issues of race and education.

He had read Felton's reply to an essay written by the Reverend Mr. S.P. Richardson in The Georgia Wesleyan Christian Advocate. Felton and Turner took exception to Richardson's idea that blacks were the descendants of Ham and marked as slaves from biblical times to the nineteenth century. Richardson advanced the notion that the enslavement of blacks rescued them from paganism. The former slaves had been deprived of their masters' care by emancipation and drifted through the 1870's and 1880's unprepared for anything else. Even in 1896, Richardson could still believe that the only

⁸ Felton Collection, reel 20, Scrapbooks 1884-1927, "All Honor to the Negro"; Felton Collection, Temperance folder 3, "From a Woman's Standpoint . . ."

relationship between blacks and whites was that of masters and slaves.⁹ Blacks, even if they had become Christians, could not associate freely with whites in any social setting. Racial hostilities arose when blacks listened to Northern ministers or teachers, tried to become educated and competed with whites.¹⁰

Felton, the Methodist evangelist's wife, knew the Scriptures as well as Richardson did. She did not believe that any race was marked for eternal servitude. She felt that the New Testament's teachings went far beyond the Old Testament narratives. If blacks were meant only to be slaves of whites, what roles would Richardson assign to Asians or Native Americans or women?¹¹ Felton disagreed with Richardson's ideas on blacks and education

Brother Richardson thinks lynching is the outcome of the Negro's effort to become educated. I disagree with this entirely, and if the Negroes who die by the lynchers rope or bullets, could be examined in their text books, I am confident that he would find ignorance the rule and education the exception. Education does not prevent theft, because Canada is supposed to swarm with defaulting cashiers, bank presidents and men of aptness with figures, and who own white faces. Education does not prevent violence, because the Chief Justice of the State of Tennessee attempted murder before his

⁹ S.P. Richardson, "The Race Problem - Past and Present", [Macon] Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 5 February 1896, p. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mrs. W.H. Felton, "Richardson Reviewed" [Macon] Wesleyan Christian Advocate, 19 February 1896.

own court. Education does not exterminate beastly passions, or filthiness in the life of white men, because the daily papers are full of the bloody vengeance of outraged wives and husbands -- taken against their guilty partners in matrimony.¹²

When Felton spoke to the Agricultural Society's Convention on 12 August 1897, she repeated the themes of "Richardson Reviewed." Black men who robbed and raped were uneducated drunkards. The whites who lynched them were equally debauched and ignorant. She believed that the educated politicians who pretended to be friends of both only at election time committed the greatest wrong. Felton's remarks reflected twenty years of hostility towards the Democratic machine politicians who had used black voters as a means of cheating Dr. Felton. Less educated blacks were outraged at the combination of false friendship and scorn, turning to robbery and rape in revenge.¹³ She concluded this part of her address by warning the Democratic Party bosses to recognize their hypocrisy or they would have to lynch a thousand black men a week without stopping black criminals. She implied that the men who were lynched were guilty and deserved their fate.

Felton's speech linked the issue of face and woman's rights, which the popular press ignored. James A. Hollomon

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "'Lynch', Says Mrs. Felton", The Atlanta Journal, front page, 12 July 1897.

wrote a front page article for The Journal called "'Lynch', Says Mrs. Felton; She Makes a Sensational Speech Before the Agricultural Society at Tybee". The editors ordered the two statements on lynching set in bold-face type at the beginning of the column and a half story, while her pleas for the admission of women to the University of Georgia were placed at the end of the article. Only one of Felton's pleas for woman's education was set in bold-face type. The Boston Evening Transcript published a similar article, which may have been a copy of Hollomon's essay. The Transcript apparently took Felton's statement about lynching at face value and used them¹⁴ as the basis for an attack on social relations in Georgia. Neither paper gave any space to Felton's remedies for the race war. She believed that Prohibition would end drunkenness as a part of crime and vote fraud. She was always convinced that enfranchised, educated white women would lift Georgia politics out of the sewer. If women were going to participate in public affairs as the equals of men, they had to attend the University of Georgia to study the same subjects as the men.¹⁵

Since most people learned about national issues from newspapers in the late 1890s, some readers were led to

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

misinterpret Felton's position on lynching.

Felton was so outraged at the treatment of her speech in The Atlanta Journal and The Boston Evening Transcript that she wrote an angry letter to the editor of The Atlanta Constitution called "Mrs. Felton Not for Lynching; Her 'Ifs' Were Overlooked - Answers The Boston Transcript". In this essay Felton claimed that she would only be in favor of lynching, if the schools and churches could not educate people to believe that crime was wrong. The preachers had to appeal to men's higher natures to convince them that rape was a sin. If the schools and churches could not convince men to control their behavior around women, the courts had to convict them for their crimes and punish them swiftly.¹⁶ She never trusted most Georgia attorneys or judges.

Felton received personal letters from real right wingers who approved of the indiscriminate lynching of black men who had not been tried for crime in court. People were still writing her welcoming her to the conservative fold as late as November of 1898.¹⁷

¹⁶ Mrs. W.H. Felton, "Mrs. Felton Not For Lynching..." The Atlanta Constitution, 20 August 1897, p. 4, c. 4.

¹⁷ Hardiman to R.L. Felton, 2 August 1897; F.H. Williams to Felton, 18 November 1898, Box 4, Folder 3, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections. She was a northerner, married to a high school principal who had followed her husband to Florida and Tennessee.

Fannie H. Williams had been terrified of being raped by a black man in Florida and in East Tennessee, where there were few blacks. The people who approved of her apparent position on lynching were likely to have been States Rights believers who opposed the constitutional prohibition amendment as well as woman suffrage.¹⁸

Felton and The Wilmington, N.C. Riot

Felton received a newspaper clipping from one of her anonymous new conservative supporters headlined "Manly is Safe in New Jersey, the Frightened Negro Editor is with His Brother at Asbury Park; that Infamous Editorial; the Negro Publisher, whose Office in Wilmington [North Carolina] is a Wreck as a Result of the Recent Rioting in that City, Declares that his Editorial was in Reply to a Speech by Mrs. Felton, of Georgia, and that it has been Misquoted by the Press".¹⁹

Alex L. Manly had been the crusading Republican editor of The Wilmington Records for five years when he responded to Felton's speech to the Agricultural Society. He believed that her address would lead some whites to lynch more innocent black men out of false conviction that all blacks lacked morals. He was here defending the black community just as he had when he demanded sanitation or paved roads for black

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Manly Is Safe In New Jersey..." c. December 1898, Reel 4, Collection 81, University of Georgia.

neighborhoods. Black men were lynched because white men did not protect their women from rapists of either race. He even agreed with Felton that too much church money was sent to foreign missions while children went uneducated in Georgia. Manly especially outraged whites, however, with his claim that white women may have charged black men with rape after their love affairs soured or were discovered by family members. Poor white women often turned to light-skinned black men for satisfaction when their husbands neglected them. Manly criticized Felton for not considering the fate of black farm women who were often the prey of white men who were as sexually careless as blacks allegedly were. White men lynched the sons of slave women and the masters to cover their own crimes against black women. The enormous, ugly, brutal, dark brown man with no morals and an insatiable sexual appetite was mostly a stereotype used by the regular Democrats to terrify lower class white voters.²⁰

Manly had apparently never read Felton's dramatic descriptions of black trustees or white guards raping and impregnating black women on the chain gangs. Instead, he formed his impression of her work from the sensational selections that were published in the New York newspapers. He did not have access to Felton's answer to The Boston

²⁰ Ibid; Edmonds, pp. 147-148.

Transcript in which she claimed that she warned the churches, schools and courts to control black crime or be prepared for an epidemic of lynching.²¹ Felton never understood that distraught white women could be manipulated into identifying any black man as her attacker. White women would not realize the damage that mistaken accusations of rape could do until the 1920's. Felton viewed raped as the victimization of women by black men with unnatural sexual urges. Manly thought African-American men were seduced by bored and lonely farm women. Neither one saw rape as a violent crime based, like lynching, on the desire of white men to control women and African-Americans.

Felton's ideas were fairly advanced for a southern woman in the late 1890's, even though the passage of time has made them seem reactionary. She never comprehended that she, Dr. Felton and Alex Manly fought for better education and real economic development. Her conflict with Manly stemmed from the social turmoil brought on by the depression years from 1893 to 1896. The regular Democrats had convinced many whites, including Felton on occasion, that any change in the social system at the time would bring chaos and a return of

²¹ Felton, "The Chain Gang in Georgia", The Forum, 1886, injustice of white planters having white wives and black slave mistresses on the same estate, without acknowledging the mistress's children. Neither woman could openly oppose this arrangement, Country Life, p. 75.

corrupt black rule. In Georgia, unlike North Carolina, Republican rule was never as black as the Democrats claimed or more corrupt than the white Democratic rings which followed it. Felton at least partially understood that the orthodox party line on "Lost Cause" worship, the Democrats' alleged reverence for white women, their insistence of black inferiority, all these issues could be a cover for their dishonest business deals. In fact, while Manly and Felton struggled over the issues of rape and lynching, the Democrats tightened their control over government.²²

The Wilmington, North Carolina, race riot, called a massacre by some black leaders, began on 10 November 1898. The week after the Democrats had voted the Fusionists (a North Carolinian mixture of Republicans and Independents) out of office in the state elections, some of the Democrats decided to rid themselves of Alex L. Manly. Manly had been refusing to retract his reply to Rebecca Felton for most of that week, even though the white newspaper editors had reprinted the more sensational sections of the editorial. These journals had also been publishing rumors that blacks in Wilmington were relatively quiet, but the Democrats decided to march on the black neighborhoods anyway. They were going to lynch Manly and destroy his office. After black men defended Manly with

²² Thomas R. Cripps, "Introduction", Hanover, pp. v-vii; Edmonds, pp. 146-147.

rifles, the white Democrats went on a rampage, killing many people and destroying thousands of dollars worth of black-owned homes and businesses, besides Alex L. Manly's Record office. Some black store owners and professional men appealed to the Governor to send in the militia, even promising to persuade Manly to leave town themselves. They failed and many members of the black middle class, like Manly, were forced out of Wilmington by the Democrats. The Democrats, proud of their so-called rebellion, replaced the Fusionists government.²³ The Wilmington riot was similar to the divisive methods that the Democrats used on the Feltons and their Prohibitionist colleagues in Georgia. The course of events in the massacre would become common in Atlanta's racial conflicts in the early twentieth century.

Race and The Spanish-American War

The United States armed forces defeated the Spanish in Cuba during the year that passed between Rebecca Felton's speech to the Agricultural Association and Alex L. Manly's response. Manly was probably influenced by the pride that black southerners felt in the summer of 1898. Black militia units had been allowed to volunteer for the five month campaign against the Spanish army in Cuba.²⁴ At first

²³ Edmonds, pp. 158-175.

²⁴ Edmonds, p. 175, Note 28.

Governors, like E.Y. Atkinson of Georgia, hesitated, but finally approved their enlistment. Officials at the War Department in Washington became convinced that black soldiers might be better suited physically to the heat of the embarkation camps near Tampa, Florida, and fighting in tropical Cuba than white troopers.²⁵

Blacks in Atlanta's streets probably cheered as the regiments marched through old downtown Atlanta to the recruiting station on Alabama Street as black Chattanoogaans cheered them when they mounted up at the railroad station for the ride south to Chickamauga. After the black soldiers arrived in Tampa to embark for Cuba, a few of them were involved in a bloody, drunken, brawl with members of white Georgia militia units. The Atlanta Journal began reporting the lurid and probably exaggerated details of the riot in a front page extract from an anonymous letter, which included the rape of white women and occupation of a saloon.²⁶ Since black soldiers were not subservient enough for some white people, even the Fusionist Governors of North Carolina and Virginia were unsure about allowing black militia unit members

²⁵ Atlanta Constitution, 28 May 1898, p. 5, c. 5; George P. Marks, III, The Black Press Views American Imperialism (N.Y. 1971), pp. 59, 89, 94, 122, 178 and 192 offer a glimpse of the divisions between black Georgia editors on the War, including Bishop H.M. Turner, who outspokenly opposed black enlistment.

²⁶ Henry W. Grady, Jr., "Negroes Are Heros In Chickamauga", Atlanta Constitution, 1 May 1898, p. 5, c. 5.

to elect their own officers. If black men became reserve army officers, would white soldiers be forced to salute and obey officers of another race.²⁷ Black pride would be strengthened by the concept of black officers in militia units, while white fears of a return of black Republican rule were heightened.

In contrast, white Georgians were not so concerned about reports in The Constitution and The Journal about white troops on drunken rampages. W.A. McDougald wrote a long article on this subject for The Journal called "Georgians Camp Where Their Sires Fell".²⁸ He tried to present a glowing picture of the troopers camping and almost worshipping on holy Confederate ground, but he had to report on the crime wave that the soldiers caused in the countryside around Chickamauga. The white soldiers were involved in as many rapes and robberies as the black soldiers. Hundreds of soldiers were left in the training camps and Tampa when the Spanish Government surrendered.

Felton and the other WCTU leaders knew that the young recruits would be exposed to all the vices and diseases of army camp life leading to disaster. These women shared their

²⁷ The Atlanta Journal, 8 and 9 June 1898, front page, c. 1-2.

²⁸ W.A. McDougald, "Georgians Camp Where Sires Fell", 20 June 1898, p. 3, c. 1-2, The Atlanta Journal.

distaste for army camp life with church organizations and woman's club members.

Atlanta's ministers demanded that Army close the canteens that sold whiskey and beer to the men. The white Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA) members tried to counter these influences.²⁹ The Butler Street YMCA for blacks had been founded in 1896, two years before the Spanish-American War began. Felton was certainly thinking of these kinds of incidents when she wrote her Memoirs;

The most serious thing about war is the slaughter of boys. It is the boys of the country who must face the enemy. They lose education. They risk the vices of camp life, they encounter the diseases that swoop down on them [malaria and yellow fever in the Spanish America War], and generally bring home enough of the vices to wreck physical and moral health for all time. They are the 'seed corn' of any nation and the crop fails. The political leaders force a country into bloody strife and three-fourths of the army are young men and boys who had absolutely nothing to do with bringing it on, without any real knowledge of the evils presented or principals fought for.³⁰

Other white southerners who read the newspapers in the summer of 1898 put such misgivings about the War aside. They could revel in the exploits of Captain John S. Candler, Captain Hugh Gordon (General John B. Gordon's son), General

²⁹ The Atlanta Journal, 20 June 1898, front page.

³⁰ Felton, Country Life, p. 88. She only referred to the Spanish-American War when she wondered if the Spanish aristocrats who attended the Columbian Exposition would have been so friendly if they had known "the fate of Cuba, [Puerto] Rico and the Philippines".

Fitzhugh Lee who was the U.S. Counsel in Pre-War Havana (General Robert E. Lee's nephew) and fighting General Joe Wheeler the legendary Civil War cavalry commander and his son Joe Wheeler, Jr..³¹ White southerners even had a new hero in Richmond P. Hobson from Greenville, Alabama. He was a young engineering graduate of Annapolis who was ordered to sink the coal carrier Merrimac in the center of the ship channel at Santiago Da Cuba. He failed to keep most of the Spanish Navy in port and the Spaniards arrested him and his crew after they swam ashore.³²

The Constitution and The Journal turned Lieutenant Hobson into a hero by praising the courage of this young southerner and speculating on the conditions of his imprisonment in Morro Castle in the enemy capital, Havana. The newspapermen lost no chances to glorify every aspect of his life or portray him as a noble white man struggling against the inhuman incarceration of a darker skinned foe.

Rebecca Felton and the Holt Lynching

Atlanta newspapers carried stories of black or white regiments fighting in the Philippines for another three years which competed for the reader's attention with articles on

³¹ Atlanta Journal; G.P.A. O'Toole, The Spanish War; An American Epic - 1898 (N.Y., 1984), p. 24 on Lee and other pages; Joe Wheeler, Sr., p. 196 and others.

³² O'Toole, G.J.A. The Spanish War; An American Epic - 1898 (N.Y., 1984), pp. 223-5 and 235-7, on Hobson.

local lynchings and other atrocities. In April of 1899, The Atlanta Constitution and Journal published a series on the brutal murder of William Cranford, the equally savage lynching of his supposed black killer, Sam Holt, and Felton's commentary. Cranford was apparently the land lord of Holt (also written as Hose or Horse), the sharecropper, when they fought over the division of money after the cotton was sold.³³ Holt finally burst into the Cranford home and hit him in the back of the head with an axe. Then Holt allegedly raped Mrs. Cranford on the spot. The Constitution and The Journal recounted every detail of Cranford's murder, his wife's rape and the hunt for the killer in sensational terms. The sheriff and most of the white men in south Fulton County near Palmetto searched for Holt for weeks, threatening several black men who knew or even looked like him. He was finally caught crossing the Alabama border and dragged back to Palmetto in chains. He swore that he had killed Cranford because he deserved it but had never touched Mrs. Cranford. Holt was not only lynched but burned at the stake and his corpse mutilated by souvenir hunters. The lynch mob convinced itself that Cranford's murder and his wife's rape were part of a black conspiracy to brutalize whites in south Fulton County. They lynched the Reverend Mr. Elijah Strickland, a well-known

³³ Atlanta Journal, 11 May 1899, p. 5.

preacher in his sixties, because they believed he had led the conspiracy.³⁴

While Holt was being hunted, Rebecca Latimer Felton was asked by fellow activists for her opinion on protecting white farmers' wives and daughters. She sent a letter to Loulie McDougald Gordon, General John B. Gordon's sister-in-law and woman's club member, who was compiling a set of letters on the problem for The Constitution.³⁵ Felton responded to Gordon's written request on 20 April 1899 with a letter that reflected her beliefs about the importance of social institution as a deterrent to lynching. She knew that lynching grew out of whites' fears of black rebellion, social equality or even voting. Their fear was a part of the agony that the extreme inequality that slavery produced. The white people's terror of a general revolt that never occurred made social change in the south impossible. The terror even infected people who did not have any connection to the antebellum south. It was behind the southern race riots of 1898 and was spreading as African Americans migrated to the north and west.³⁶

³⁴ Atlanta Journal, 11 May 1899, p. 5.

³⁵ L.M. Gordon, "How Shall the Women and the Girls in Country Districts be Protected?" The Atlanta Constitution, 23 April 1899, p. 18.

³⁶ Felton, Country Life, p. 87.

The men who hunted Sam Holt went as far beyond the controls of church and government as Holt himself had. She understood that the white men of Palmetto were gripped by the fear that still raged in Georgia. Since she wrote three weeks before Holt was captured and tortured to death, she could not have known how brutal the lynch mob would be. She did not know that the mob would lynch an innocent older man out of the hysterical belief in a conspiracy despite the protests of other white Palmettans.³⁷

Felton began this letter, as she had others in the late 1890's, by denouncing people who sensationalized her work dwelling on her allegedly pro-lynching position.

Since [August of 1897] I have been made to feel the hatred of a sectional press in the north, and deluged with filthy letters from ignorant negroes, mostly in the north, carrying threats, abuse and vilification because I said churches were becoming ineffectual, courts were inefficient and corrupt politics was fanning to flame the forces that had made the crime of rape epidemic in this country--after the colored race had been so law-abiding and peaceful, even during the war.... In the last analysis, the supreme crisis, when churches fail, courts fail and manhood has departed from political methods in this country; when woman becomes the helpless victim, and her dearest possession is to be left to the mercy of "drunken, ravening beasts human beasts, then I said, "lynch a thousand a week or stop the outrage", and again I repeat it.

³⁷ Jacqueline Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jesse Daniel Ames and The Women's Campaign Against Lynching (N.Y., 1979), p. 306, n. 66; and Talmadge, p. 116; present a much more direct connection between Felton and the Holt lynching.

They still ignored her pleas for woman's education as the newspaper editors had in 1897. If educated women would be less likely to sit at home and become the terrified prey of men like Sam Holt. Such women could build the strong network of families, schools and churches that would help blacks and poor whites become parts of communities. These measures, together with Prohibition, would end most common crimes, and the use of lynchings as remedies for them. Felton might have strengthened her argument that most black criminals were uneducated had she referred to Sam Holt's illiteracy.³⁸

She understood that Fulton County's white people were so terrified that they never thought of bringing Holt to trial in court. Felton believed that the victim's wife should not have to testify against Holt in court. Cranford had suffered enough from the lurid accounts of the murder that the newspapers had published. Felton distrusted the courts because of the callous way she was treated when she testified in Dr. Felton's challenge to the Seventh District election results in 1894. She had seen rich men use the governor's executive clemency to avoid prison during the railroad bond scandals. Felton recalled seeing Edward Cox, Robert A.

³⁸ Felton, *Country Life*, p. 87.

³⁹ *The Independent*, vol. 11, 11 May 1898, pp. 1295-1297.

³⁸ Gordon, "How Shall the Women...?", Atlanta Constitution.

Alston's murderer, pardoned by Governor Alexander H. Stephens.³⁹

On 11 May 1899, Hamilton Holt, the progressive editor of The Independent magazine in New York, began publishing articles on the Holt lynching by northerners and southerners to make Georgians seem barbaric. One author stated that the Palmetto lynch mob should have been educated enough to know our laws and Constitution but still tortured Sam Holt in the name of justice for the Cranfords. These white men became as vicious as Holt once they lynched the Reverend Mr. Strickland and Albert Sewell, who believed that blacks should avenge Strickland. The Federal Government should let the South go, enforce the laws protecting innocent as well as guilty blacks or accept the consequences of allowing blacks to be wantonly slaughtered.⁴⁰

"Georgia's Record of Blood" by the Reverend Mr. W.P. Lovejoy, the Presiding Elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,⁴¹ appeared in The Independent in the same issue. The Reverend Mr. Lovejoy, a self-proclaimed prohibitionists, was outraged at Northerners' inability to understand that the white Palmetto men who burned Sam Holt at

³⁹ Felton, Country Life, p. 87.

⁴⁰ The Independent, vol. LI, 11 May 1899, pp. 1296-1297.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 1297-1300.

the stake were defending their families and not a savage mob. He, like the Reverend Mr. S.P. Richardson, Felton's opponent, believed that slaves learned discipline and saw stable, well-run homes. Since the Civil War, they had lost their work ethic and been lulled into a false sense of equality with white people through education. Black voters were so ignorant that they cared little for the election process beyond selling their votes. Lovejoy believed that disfranchisement of blacks disguised as educational qualifications should be started immediately, no matter how many poor white people would be sacrificed.⁴²

Rebecca L. Felton found a new female anti-suffragist in the fight over suffrage from the debate over lynching in Georgia. Corra White Harris, a well-known novelist and a Methodist Minister's wife, was inspired to write to The Independent. She believed that the white country women of North Georgia, excluding Felton, had not expressed themselves on their fears of black rapists.⁴³ She had been raised in Elbert County during the troubled Reconstruction days as were several other opponents of woman suffrage and prohibition. Her Confederate Veteran father was as well known locally for

⁴² W.P. Lovejoy, "Georgia's Record of Blood", The Independent, vol. LI, 11 May 1898, pp. 1297-1300.

⁴³ Corra W. Harris, "A Southern Woman's View", The Independent, 18 May 1899, p. 1354.

his drunkenness and moonshining as his poor farming ability. The Democratic Party counted on him to get his black sharecropper neighbors drunk, force them to vote many times to stuff the ballot boxes and insure Democratic control. Her mother, Mary Matthews White, held the family together and tried repeatedly to keep Tinsley R. White sober. She seemed to have been influenced by the WCTU in these efforts even if she was not a member.⁴⁴

Corra studied at home and attended the Elbert County Female Academy to prepare to teach school. After teaching for a few years in 1897, she married an older man, the Reverend Mr. Lundy H. Harris. He was a circuit riding Methodist Minister who later developed drinking problems similar to those of Tinsley R. White. She followed him on his first circuit of small country churches, but she was much happier when her husband preached in Decatur and especially after he became the professor of Greek at Emory College in Oxford, Georgia. She had not been interested in supervising the woman's missionary or aid societies in the early 1890s, when even conservative farmers' wives could be energized by the WCTU. Now she settled into faculty life, becoming friends with William A. Candler's wife, an anti-suffragist, and even joining her in the Ladies Missionary Society. Harris took on

⁴⁴ Talmadge, Corra Harris; Lady of Purpose (Athens, 1968), pp.

the duties of her mother making a home for her daughter and son and defending her husband from charges of laxness.⁴⁵

Harris expressed ideas about female deference similar to those earlier advocated by Augusta Jane Evans Wilson and Mildred L. Rutherford. Harris believed that;

"The most prominent women in their religious enthusiasms are oftenest public prostitutes. Only yesterday I passed one of these 'preaching' [Prohibition] to a crowd of men on a street corner and I assure you her ethics were high while her gestures [were] blasphemous."⁴⁶

According to Harris, southern white women had a duty to assist white men in maintaining complete separation of the races. She became extremely racist in her belief that blacks were incapable of appreciating the virtues of white society while reveling in its vices.⁴⁷

Hamilton Holt published in succession Harris's article and "The Negro and Crime", an article by W.E.B. Dubois. Dubois believed that some blacks turned to crime out of destitution and despair. They had been freed from slavery without money, education or employment. Most blacks remained as decent as whites were in spite of poverty and prejudice. He quoted white ministers, including one from Palmetto, who approved of blacks' progress in education and cooperation

⁴⁵ Talmadge, pp. 10-16.

⁴⁶ Harris, Independent, 18 May 1899, p. 1355.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Falcon Country Life, pp. 284-285.

between the races. Blacks and whites had to cooperate to end the Convict Lease System, the greatest promoter of black crime.⁴⁸

In fact, Dubois used language similar to Felton's of 1886, denouncing the chaining of men, women and children together and the number of babies born to convict mothers. White people could only expect an increase in blacks committing crimes until the system was abolished and the races had come to an understanding. Like Felton, he believed that children had to be separated from the adult system. Black defendants could not receive enormous sentences for petty theft, while whites who were guilty of capital crimes were lightly sentenced or paroled.⁴⁹

Some organizations of white men had denounced lynching by July of 1897. The members of the Georgia Bar Association debated and denounced lynching as a deterrent to crime at their annual convention on 2 July 1897. A respected white physician, who strangled his fiancée in a bout of depression was lynched in Macon. The young female victim's life story, her murder and the lynching of the man who loved her and finally murdered her became sensational melodrama on the front pages of Atlanta's newspapers for several weeks in July of

⁴⁸ W.E.B. Dubois, "The Negro and Crime", The Independent, 18 May 1899, pp. 1355-1357.

⁴⁹ Ibid; Felton, Country Life, pp. 284-289.

1897. Accounts of blacks being lynched were usually short and not concerned with the personality of the lynching victim. Since middle class white men were lynched so rarely, it may have heightened the lawyers' awareness of the horrors of lynching and led to their debate. Rebecca Latimer Felton was almost certainly influenced by these newspaper articles on lynchings when she spoke to the farmers at Tybee Island in August of 1897.⁵⁰

Black leaders announced plans for a fall convention where a campaign against lynching would be the main topic. In August, 1897, The Journal printed a sermon by the Reverend Mr. Hugh Henry Proctor, the influential black pastor of Atlanta's socially prestigious First Congregational Church, an unusual move for a white newspaper.⁵¹ Proctor was an ardent Prohibitionist like Rebecca Felton or Bishop Henry McNeil Turner. He called for an end to lynching. He believed that the abolition of liquor would strengthen families, cause people to become more active in their churches and schools. He wanted to see blacks treated decently in court cases and wanted them to be educated to hold well paid jobs to remove the economic motive for crime.

⁵⁰ Ibid; The Atlanta Journal, 2 July 1897, front page.

⁵¹ H.H. Proctor Sermon, Atlanta Journal, 2 August 1897, p. 3, c. 4-5.

The Sledd Controversy, 1902

While black Georgians were being physically assaulted and murdered in the streets by gangs of white hoodlums in the early 1900s, their inferiority was again affirmed in literary magazines by educated people. This debate reached one of its peaks in 1902 when Andrew Sledd, an Emory College Classics Professor, published "The Negro: Another View" in the July Atlantic Monthly. Sledd argued that blacks were certainly inferior to whites and the races should never be integrated, but that they were still human beings who could be educated and did not deserve torture and lynching. Sledd wrote this essay out of disgust over "the diabolical carnival of blood" that surrounded the burning and lynching of Sam Holt. Sledd allegedly witnessed some of the gruesome events by accident as a passenger on a train travelling between Atlanta and Convington.⁵² He had a morbid curiosity about the horrible scenes and a complete disbelief that the Fulton County sheriff and the state's governor could allow the savagery of "...the indescribable and sickening torture and writhing of a fellow human being."⁵³ Sledd wondered how men and, especially, boys

⁵² Ralph E. Reed, Jr. "Emory College and the Sledd Affair of 1902: A Case Study in Southern Honor and Racial Attitudes". Georgia Historical Quarterly, v. LXXII, no. 3, Fall, 1988.

⁵³ Reed, p. 411.

could be so eager to hunt for pieces of bone from Holt's corpse as souvenirs. He concluded his article:

If we call upon the people of the North to give over their mistaken ideas of the equality of the races in superficial and accidental ways, we are called upon by the louder voice of humanity to give over our own much more vicious idea of the inequality of the races in the fundamental rights of human creatures...But in mutual understanding, a frank (if sorrowful) recognition of all the facts,--of the limitations of the race on the one hand, and of inalienable rights on the other, with charity and good will between the North and South, and of both towards the black man,--let us give him fair and favorable conditions, and suffer him to work out, unhampered his destiny among us.⁵⁴

Rebecca Felton was, unfortunately, the leader among the many Georgians who harshly condemned Sledd for his truthful Atlantic Monthly article:

That statement is not true in Georgia. For a third of a century the white people, the taxpayers of this state, have raised an immense sum of every year to educate the negro, not dehumanize him. The state is educating negro teachers in a college near Savannah to teach their own race. The state employs about three thousand negro teachers annually to teach the youth of their own color in the common schools of the country.

Felton surrounded her usual belief in education for African-Americans with insults to sledd's reasons for writing the essay, his character and the northern press. She called Sledd a "sniveling inkslinger" who displayed a "vindictive hatred of his race and color". She accused Sledd of ignoring the

⁵⁴ Andrew Sledd, "The Negro: Another View", Atlantic Monthly, July, 1902, p. 78.

lynching and burning of rapists in the north and middle west. She had also insulted Bishop Candler, Sledd's father-in-law, during their endless battles over University of Georgia funding, prohibition and woman suffrage.⁵⁵ Felton had derived her reputation as a racist from her response to Sledd's essay that appeared in the Atlanta Constitution as much as from her August 1897 speech to the Agricultural Society on her defense of lynching in relation to the Holt case. She and Sledd believed that blacks could be educated and certainly did not deserve to be lynched, even though they would never be the equals of whites. They both considered lynching an evil committed by ignorant men on each other.⁵⁶

Felton had other reasons for denouncing Andrew Sledd in July of 1902. She thought that he underestimated the progress already made. She also used Sledd's essay to embarrass her old opponent Bishop Candler (Sledd was his on-in-law) and Emory College. She had long been convinced that the Bishop solicited far too much money from the financially troubled Methodist Church, South parishioners. She and Mary L. McLendon had never forgiven him for withdrawing Methodist Church and Candler family money from the WCTU over woman suffrage in the late 1890s. She may even have believed that

⁵⁵ Rebecca Felton, "The Negro, as Discussed by Mr. Andrew Sledd", Constitution, 3 August 1902.

⁵⁶ Reed, p. 471.

asserting her southern womanhood, which she rarely did, would protect the injured WCTU from attack by the Confederate patriots.⁵⁷

Felton received a letter from J.W. Renfroe, an old opponent on the Convict Lease System and railroad regulation, thanking her for denouncing Andrew Sledd.⁵⁸ Renfroe claimed that he, like many southerners, would not have known about Sledd's attempt to malign the South were it not for Felton's response in the Constitution. The students and faculty of Emory College should refuse to have anything to do with a professor who vilified southern life and they should demand that Sledd be fired. Sledd and other slanderers of Georgia's society should never be allowed to teach young men. Renfroe implied that Sledd was not a southerner, but the young classic professors was a Virginian who held an advanced degree from Harvard.⁵⁹ Renfroe pitied Dr. Candler for having such a son-in-law, apparently not realizing that Candler shared many of his son-in-law's opinions. Renfroe urged Felton to write more essays in defense of southern society. He would certainly have castigated Rebecca Felton as a defamer of southern

⁵⁷ Reed, pp. 471-475.

⁵⁸ J.W. Renfroe to Felton, 5 July 1902, reel 4, collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁵⁹ See "Warren Candler," Dictionary of Georgia Biography, II, p. 100.

culture if he had known that she had denounced Andrew Sled, yet continued writing letters exposing the horrors of the Convict Lease System.⁶⁰

The End of the Convict Lease System

When Edward Y. Atkinson was elected Governor in 1896, Rebecca Felton and other women social reformers finally found a powerful opponent of lynching and the Convict Lease System. HE launched futile speaking campaigns against lynching in 1897 when more black men were being lynched. He issued an executive order separating women and children from male prisoners to teach them trades. He established a prison commission to regulate the working conditions of prisoners under state control and to stop the worst of the torture.⁶¹

Rebecca Felton and many other people of both races continued their attacks on the Convict Lease System after 1900. William T. Jarrett, President of the Howard Prison Reform Association, sent her a clipping from "The Howard Association's Annual Report for October 1900 ont he Convict Lease System". Southerners of both races, including Booker T. Washington, praised the English Association for offering them a platform from which to attack convict leasing and lynching, the South's greatest evils since slavery. Decent southerners,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Edward Y. Atkinson," Dictionary of Georgia Biography, Vol I, pp. ____.

who were seldom represented in their state legislatures, could credit the Association with helping blacks to obtain justice and avoid arbitrary imprisonment. Jarrett offered to publish Felton's essay on these subjects because her work furthered the Association's goals.⁶² Felton was one of the correspondents of London's Howard Association which publicized the brutality of life in Georgia's prison camps in Europe. On 14 November 1900, she received a letter from William Talbot Jarrett, chairman of the Association. Jarrett responded to a letter she wrote in September to the late director, Francis Peek. Felton had apparently written to Peek as early as 1873 to exchange information on prisoners before she and Dr. Felton began the campaign against the Lease. Jarrett believed (probably incorrectly) that the Howard Association's members had improved the convicts' living conditions and decreased lynchings by making such brutality public in newspapers.⁶³

While Rebecca Felton never confirmed that Jarrett had included her essay in the Association's 1901 and 1902 Annual Report, she sent a copy of an undated Howard Association report on Georgia's Convict Lease System to The Semi-Weekly Atlanta Journal. The Journal reprinted the report as part of an exposé of the Howard Association as a slanderer of southern

⁶² W.T. Jarrett to Felton, 14 November 1900, reel 4, collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁶³ Ibid.

culture. The Association even credited the state prison camps in southern states (not mentioning Georgia) with improving the worst of the conditions. The county camps and those run by private corporations still housed convicts under the vilest conditions.⁶⁴ The information assembled by the Association Committee resembled the incidents reported by Felton in the WCTU's petition to the Georgia Legislature to abolish the Convict Lease System, Robert A. Alston's 1878 legislative committee report or any other exposé of the system. The Howard Association could still compile incidents of women being brutally beaten or raped and impregnated by guards or other prisoners.

The report quoted Bishop Henry McNeil Turner in his The Voice of Missions for December of 1898. Turner saw the sub-leasing of black convicts and lynching as indictments of white people since Reconstruction. He believed that the Spanish American War or the Turkish Massacres of Armenians were mild in comparison to whites' treatment of black Georgians. The Bishop felt that emigration was the only solution to the sufferings of African-Americans but the Howard Association cited the efforts of the Quakers and other white social reformers who worked with black progressives. According to the Howard Association, emigration would never be a viable

⁶⁴ "Bloody Shirt Stories Published in London", Felton Scrapbooks, reel 20.

answer to America's racial dilemma because some black Americans were too well established financially to be willing to go to Africa. Black Americans according to the Report, must help themselves in order to attract more assistance from white people.⁶⁵ Negotiations between educated, respectful whites and assertive blacks were the only solution to black problems.

The Atlanta Journal's editors resented exposés of the Convict Lease System, such as The Howard Association's Report. The Atlanta Georgian, its rival, by contrast, launched a campaign to let the Lease expire when it came up for renewal in 1908. The editor of The Georgian, always looking for attention-grabbing scandal, published a front page article of an editorial on the leases each day during the summer of 1908 to keep the issue alive. This campaign began early in July of 1908, before the Legislature's Penitentiary Committee began debating the Lease's renewal. The newspaper's reporters first investigated a corporation that was created solely to bid on convict contracts. The Convict Brokers had no intention of putting the men to work, but immediately sub-leased them to smaller firms. These companies paid the Convict Brokers an annual fee for using the prisoners, most of which was kept by

⁶⁵ Ibid.

the brokers.⁶⁶ The Georgia furiously demanded that the legislature refuse to deal with the Brokers and urged the public to join the crusade against the Convict Lease System. One editorial declared, on the newspaper's front page, that the State should not depend on the paltry returns from the convict brokers. The Legislature should create healthful working farms that supported themselves as Texas had done or abolish convict labor and raise taxes to replace the lease money.⁶⁷ The Penitentiary Committee headed by Thomas Swift Felder began hearings to hear a variety of the charges: the beating and torturing of convicts of both races; stories of contractors bribing legislators to get favorable leases; of not running the camps successfully as businesses and placing legislators' relatives in charge of some camps. The Committee accused Deputy Prison Warden Ed Cox, the Chattahoochee Brick Company and the Durham Coal and Coke Company and many other firms and individuals of these abuses.

Georgia's Legislators were coerced into abolishing the convict lease system by exposés in national magazines.⁶⁸ Hamilton Holt had published, in The Independent, an interview with a black former convict who had been leased to a large

⁶⁶ The Atlanta Georgia, 7 July 1908, front page, c. 1; "Convict Lease, State Road, State Schools, Pauperism, 1 July 1908.

⁶⁷ Ibid. (New York, 1908).

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 67.

plantation in Elbert County. The former prisoner said that he was better off being a free laborer in the blast furnaces at the Birmingham, Alabama, steel mills. To be on a Georgia convict plantation was to be a slave. Holt kept national Progressives' attention on Georgia's Convict Lease System when he reissued this essay in The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans as Told by Themselves.⁶⁹ The Georgia reprinted selections from another national magazine interview with a white teenager who was leased to the Chattahoochee Brick Company in the summer of 1908. The article prompted The Georgian to begin the investigation out of embarrassment. Alexander J. McKelway added a general history in "The Convict Lease System of Georgia" in The Outlook on 12 September 1908.⁷⁰ McKelway's piece began when the state government reduced the designation for certain crimes from felonies to misdemeanors to allow black criminals to be sent to the chain gang. McKelway even called Robert A. Alston "...a martyr to the cause of humanity..." for opposing the convict lease system. McKelway summed up the fight against the lease that Alston and the Feltons led in the belief that;

⁶⁹ Hamilton Holt, The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans..., (New York, 1908).

⁷⁰ McKelway, p. 67.

Every now and then there has arisen a wave of public indignation at the stories of cruelties to the helpless convicts.⁷¹

He used this concept to unite the 1878 crusade against the lease with the one in 1908 that ended the system.⁷²

Semi-slavery, as part of the Convict Lease System, was not the only injustice inflicted on African-Americans in late nineteenth century Georgia.

The race riots that Atlantans suffered during the first decades of the twentieth century were the worst examples of the racial violence that plagued Georgia from the late 1890s through the early 1920s. The first riot occurred in southwest Atlanta and West End in 1902, when a mob of armed white men roamed the streets assaulting black men. They were looking in particular for a former convict who, during his arrest, had murdered the white police man who had arrested him. The convict was sentenced to Fulton County's chain gang. The policeman's killer was burned to death in a vacant home, one of several such killings and burnings. John W. Nelms, Fulton County sheriff, put a stop to the violence before it spread to other city neighborhoods. Four years later, the next sheriff

⁷¹ Ibid; Convict Lease folders, Felton Collection, reel 8, no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections. Felton may have intended to publish a book or chapter from her Memoirs. She sent portions of it to Lula Barnes Ansley for the History of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

⁷² McKelway, p. 67.

of the county seemed to do nothing as Atlantans experience the worst racial violence ever.⁷³

The racial warfare in 1906 erupted on Decatur Street on a warm Saturday night, 22 September, right after the August Primary elections for Governor. This campaign had featured Hoke Smith's racist oratory calling for the disfranchisement of African-American voters. There were so many saloons, brothels and gambling parlors on Decatur street that social reformers of both races had campaigned to abolish the saloons and gambling dens. The black community's leaders publicized the more respectable middle class business people of Auburn avenue in The Independent to counter the image promoted by the white newspapers of the drunken, ignorant black man lounging on Decatur Street. Mary L. McLendon and the other members of the Southside WCTU always saw the area as a powder keg and worried that young men of both races who drank heavily and fought over gambling debts or prostitutes would cause a violent explosion.⁷⁴

Atlanta newspapers had run a series of sensational stories about rapes of white women by black men. Gangs of

⁷³ John Dittmer. Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920. (Urbana, 1977 pp. 124-5.

⁷⁴ B.J. Davis, "The 2,255 Negroes in Barrooms Every Saturday Night", The Independent, 22 September 1906, p. 4; "Thousand Atlantans Meet to Pledge Law and Order"; "The Men Who Made and Make Atlanta Speak-All is Peace and Business Resumes", The Independent, 29 September 1906, front page.

white men began beating blacks at random in the streets around Decatur Street and the railroad tracks. The mobs moved up Decatur Street towards Peachtree and Marietta Streets and the Henry Grady Monument, assaulting black people as they saw them. By that time, they not only had rocks, bottles and knives, but guns as well, despite the unenforced orders from the sheriff's office and the Atlanta Police Department to close and guard gun stores. They looted businesses owned by people of both races, killing any black employee they found. Gang members pulled black passengers off streetcars before the transit company or the city police bothered to halt traffic on the lines that served downtown. As gangs of roving whites looted and burned black businesses, churches and homes along Auburn Avenue, armed black property owners kept watch all night in other neighborhoods. Governor Joseph M. Terrell finally called out the National Guard at dawn on Sunday morning to turn the mobs back before they approached Atlanta University.⁷⁵

WCTU members were convinced that the riot would have stopped much sooner if legal prohibition had existed. Armour and her staff praised:

[Mayor James G. Woodward for] immediately [ordering] every saloon in the city closed, the authorities took hold vigorously of the situation and there was no more trouble. It was said that

⁷⁵ Ibid.

the whole thing was caused by drinking in the low dives on Decatur Street. The occurrence had a direct influence upon the public mind in favor of state wide Prohibition.⁷⁶

Even though living conditions in the convict camps urn by the state had been greatly improved during the Atkinson Administration, the prisoners in the badly managed corporate camps were still abused and made to live in filthy surroundings. It seemed ironic that the abolition of the convict lease system became popular just as the system as being regulated.⁷⁷ The prisoners who labored in the coal mines or the brick yard lived in just as filthy conditions as they did in 1878. The prisoners in these camps were poorly fed and badly housed, given more work than healthy people could do and beaten for complaining or collapsing from exhaustion.

Nevertheless, Representative John N. Holder of Floyd County dared to introduce a bill to extend the Convict Lease for another five years.⁷⁸ The Georgian promptly castigated him for being a greedy politician with relatives who were convict lessees and a friend of Colonel James M. Smith, the owner of Smithsonia, the largest convict plantation in

⁷⁶ Ansley, p. 261.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ The Atlanta Georgian, "Felder Committee's Report...", 28 August 1908; "Just So Mr. Holder", "Holder and His Bill", 2 September 1908, front page.

Georgia. The Georgian printed resolutions from Atlanta businessmen and labor leaders urging the Legislature not to adjourn until they abolished the convict lease system in September of 1908.⁷⁹ The Legislators passed a version of the Holder Bill that would only extend the Lease for two more years. Representatives Hooper Alexander of DeKalb County and Seaborn Wright of Rome, prohibitionists and friends of the Feltons' succeeded in passing a bill that terminated the Lease forever in 1911. When Governor Hoke Smith threatened to call a Special Session of the Legislature to renew the debate over the convict lease system and veto Holder's bill, the State Senate adjourned without considering this bill and so the convict lease system withered away.⁸⁰ The Journal summed up the battle against the Convict Lease System on 18 August 1908 in an editorial declaring that Felder and Hoke Smith "Broke Up the Convict Lease". Paradoxically, Felder, who strove to improve justice for blacks, introduced the successful bill to deny most of them the right o vote in the same session of the Legislature.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid; The Independent, 25 November 1920, front page.

⁸⁰ Alexander J. McKelway, "The Convict Lease System of Georgia", The Outlook, 12 September 1908, vol. 90, no. 2, p. 69.

⁸¹ "Who Broke Up the Convict Lease?", The Atlanta Journal, 18 August 1910, c. 2-5, p. 8.

Felton dwelt on Robert A. Alston's role in the second decade of opposition to the Lease, his murder allegedly with the connivance of the convict lessees and Felton's WCTU prison work in the 1880s. She even obliquely referred to the Howard Association when she wrote that the Convict Lease System seemed barbaric in London, England. She concluded in her Memoirs with the regret that she could not publish her complete chapter on the Convict Lease System from the 1870s through the 1900s because of its length. She preserved and edited her manuscript as if she considered publishing it as a separate pamphlet or book. She sent a small portion of the manuscript to Lula Barnes Ansley for publication in The History of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1880-1907 (1914) and in 1919 reprinted the letter in Country Life in Georgia in the Days of My Youth and Other Essays. She and Alexander J. McKelway were the only writers denouncing the Convict Lease System in 1908 who would still memorialize Robert A. Alston.⁸²

Anti-Lynching and Woman Suffrage, 1919-1920

Rebecca Latimer Felton saw suffrage as part of her overall reform campaign. She was eighty-four in the second decade of the twentieth century when she joined many other influential white Georgians who were sickened by the

⁸² Ibid; Convict Lease Folders, Felton Collection, reel 8, no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

increasingly violent atmosphere in the state in fighting and lynching. She offered her opinion on black voters and the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in a letter demanding that Georgia's white women be allowed to vote. She still argued that white women should be able to vote under the terms of the Fifteenth Amendment, which did not refer to males directly, because women were taxpaying citizens just as black men were. She asserted that the Woman Suffrage Amendment would confirm black voting rights by enfranchising women.

Felton was furious at Mildred L. Rutherford for betraying her race and sex by sabotaging the Suffrage Amendment in order to harm the Fifteenth Amendment. Rutherford apparently thought that the rejection of the Suffrage Amendment would cause Congress to repeal the amendment enfranchising blacks. Felton wondered what Rutherford and Hoke Smith, her relative by marriage, meant by the idea that "good women would not vote". Rutherford was wrong in becoming a reactionary ally of the opponents of President Woodrow Wilson.⁸³ Felton argued;

The Negro soldier's uniform enfranchises him, and we behold in the general assembly of Georgia the astonishing sight of white men, clothed with brief authority, actually refusing to allow the mothers of white sons the privilege of citizenship, and with no apparent scruples as to whether their own wives and mothers are reduced to serfdom, while

⁸³ "Mrs. W.H. Felton on the Suffrage Amendment", The Atlanta Independent, front page, 19 July 1919.

every state in the union is hurrying to the ratification-except Georgia.⁸⁴

Although Felton addressed her letter to the editor of The Atlanta Constitution, it was reprinted by Benjamin J. Davis, Sr., on the front page of the black newspaper, The Atlanta Independent. Davis would seem to have been Felton's opposite because he was a slave woman's son, a self-educated journalist and life-long Republican Party activist. By 1919, Davis had turned The Independent from the bulletin of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (the South's richest black fraternal order) into the nation's most militant black weekly newspaper. He was an at-large delegate to the Republican National Convention during the McKinley, Roosevelt and Taft Administrations from 1900 to 1912, and a strong voice in dispensing Republican patronage.⁸⁵ Davis was as outspoken a social reformer as Rebecca Latimer Felton and just as reviled by the Georgia Democratic Party and white male national Republican leaders, including Theodore Roosevelt. Davis was attracted to Felton's letter because she embraced the Fifteenth Amendment and castigated the local Democrats, Confederate patriots and national Republicans. Davis could

⁸⁴ Ibid. there is a distinction and a difference.

⁸⁵ Rayford W. Logan and M.R. Winston, Dictionary of American Negro Biography, (New York, 1982), pp. 159-160. Davis had the power to approve Federal office holders from rural post-masters to the United States District Attorney, Hooper Alexander, who was an admirer of Dr. Felton.

even praise white women for working hard to gain the right to vote and exercising it. They were not slackers who did not do their civil duty and blacks must follow their example.⁸⁶

On 20 January 1920, Davis used a letter Felton wrote denouncing lynching as the basis for his own editorial. He honored Felton for her courage in telling the truth about lynching, the worst of southern crimes after the convict lease system.⁸⁷ Like her, he cited an article by the Reverend Sam Small, a prohibitionist and Constitution columnist, who believed that lynch mobs threatened civilization and defamed sheriffs and judges every time they kidnapped a prisoner from the jail or lynched a man without trial. Davis, Small and Felton summarized court cases where white men were given very mild sentences or found not guilty for raping black women while even elderly black men could be lynched or shot for defending black women or for no reason. The killers of black men never had to fear being brought to justice for their crimes. Davis even quoted Felton who believed that;

Since it has been made the privilege of juries to fix the sentence of the person or persons convicted of the crime of mob violence, the matter has become worse. For instance, I can direct you to a case tried before a Superior Court Judge in September, where a white man, or a man born with white skin, for there is a distinction and a difference,

⁸⁶ Ibid; The Independent, 25 November 1920, front page.

⁸⁷ Benjamin J. Davis, "Mrs. W.H. Felton on Mob Violence", The Atlanta Independent, 20 January 1920.

entered the home of a negro woman, surrounded by her children, and committed such an act of violence as to be indicted by a grand jury of white men, convicted, on the evidence furnished at the trial, by a jury of white men, and that jury, with the usual mob spirit inside the, placed a sentence of a year in the chain gain. The indictment was for rape.⁸⁸

Davis used Felton's letter to remind his readers that such horrendous conditions were causing black people to leave their farms for the protection of cities like Atlanta where they found overcrowding, unemployment and poverty. The South was even losing a vital part of its work force as blacks left the region seeking safety. Felton agreed with Davis in an essay for Country Life and even predicted that mob violence would spread north due to white men's unreasoning fear of blacks. This devaluing of black lives was the lasting curse of slavery.⁸⁹

Felton and Davis did not exhibit the pessimism that overtook Hooper Alexander during the seemingly endless fight against lynching and the chain gangs which replaced the convict lease system. Alexander had been appointed.

Conclusion

Rebecca Latimer Felton has never been given credit as one of the Georgians who began the struggle to bring equal justice for the races and the sexes to Georgia. She was repeatedly

⁸⁸ Felton quoted in Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid; Felton, Country Life, pp. 79, 92-93.

attacked in the 1880s and 1890s for daring to expose the convict lease system and lynching in 1921. Felton never was credited with maturing in her thinking about racial and gender issues. Undoubtedly, Felton had great difficulty in realizing that blacks deserved educations and equal justice but she loved Georgia too much to see its society destroyed by corruption, ignorance and mob violence in order to preserve the so-called privileges of certain white people.

Her attacks were particularly effective exposés of the evils of Georgia society because she could appear to be a Confederate patriot (witness her assault on Sledd), but also had credentials with the national Progressive organizations. In contrast, reformers from outside Georgia lacked Felton's and McLendon's local sources of information in the WCTU or the woman's clubs, while the radical reformers who never associated with more conservative social groups were easily ignored. While Rebecca Latimer Felton did not share some of the concerns of later generations of social reformers, she did not deserve her reputation as a racist which she had fought hard to avoid when she was alive. People who dismissed her as another southern reactionary never compared her 1897 speech to her 1896 letter to the Macon Wesleyan Christian Advocate. They did not read the complimentary letters she received in 1896 from Bishop Henry M. Turner. She received a letter from Supreme Court Justice John M. Harlan, the only dissenter to

the separate but equal ruling. Harlan regretted not being able to address a conference that Felton organized, even though his wife would have liked it.⁹⁰

Felton and her contemporaries lived in an extremely violent and corrosive atmosphere at the end of the 1890s which has not been considered in relation to her racist reputation. She understood that the violence would not end until whites realized that lynching was a reaction to old fears from the lingering curse of slavery.

Rebecca L. Felton around 1909, after Dr. Felton died. Courtesy: Georgia Department of Archives and History.

⁹⁰ Hall, pp. 43-154, Felton Collection, reel 1, Collection no. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.



Rebecca L. Felton around 1909, after Dr. Felton died. Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

CHAPTER VII

The Latimer Sisters and Feminism, 1900-1940

Rebecca Latimer Felton, who was seventy-five in 1900, and Mary Latimer McLendon, at seventy-two, had good reason to be pessimistic about the course of social reform as the new century began. They had led the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) since the 1880s, only to see it in ruins in the early twentieth century. They had convinced the Atlanta City Council and other municipal governments to pass prohibition in the 1880s and 1890s, but the legislators allowed their friends and household help to sell homebrew without restrictions. The State Legislature would pass Prohibition in 1907, but the sisters and other WCTU members still wanted Federal Prohibition. They believed that unfriendly state officials who fought suffrage would never enforce Prohibition. Beyond temperance issues, the sisters' other reforms remained unrealized as the twentieth century began. Child laborers, leased convicts and rental money from railroad leases still formed a vital part of Georgia's economy. The race war with all of its brutal murders, lynchings and riots grew increasingly vicious.

But the Progressive Movement brought victory in many of these battles. The sisters were among the few southern women social reformers, born in the late 1830's, who lived to see their goals come within reach after 1910. These socially

minded women had always worked to improve the lives of working women and their families, through the WCTU and other clubs, most recently the Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA) where girls could learn more efficient housekeeping, receive educations and participate in social action. The Progressive movement drew strength from these organizations in the south.¹

The Latimer Sisters and Victory in Prohibition

Felton, McLendon and the members of the woman's clubs had to rebuild the WCTU in the first two years of this century, overcoming the disputes over woman suffrage in 1898 which had caused many small town chapters to disband. Bishop Candler's efforts to turn the Southern Methodist hierarchy against the WCTU denied the members meeting places and money. Georgians attended no annual conventions in 1900 or 1901, and even in 1902 Jane Thomas Sibley could only convince eight chapters to send delegations to the state meeting at Augusta. These delegates listened to speeches by Belle Kearney of the National WCTU, who was a moderate suffragist, and the Sibleys. Mary L. McLendon's Southside Atlanta WCTU was among the eight delegations.² McLendon presented the annual report of the Southside chapter, one of Georgia's most active WCTU chapters. Its members had established missions at the Atlanta Woolen

¹ Scott, Natural Allies, p. 14. Atlanta Willard WCTU to Co.

² Ansley, p. 181. and History.

Mills on Wells Street at the corner of the Southern Railway and at the Concord Woolen Mill at 95 Peachtree Street among other low income neighborhoods of Atlanta. The ladies ran soup kitchens, donated clothing to the poorly paid mill workers' families and held Sunday School classes at these missions. The Southsiders lobbied the legislature to pass Prohibition laws and make school attendance compulsory.

Jane Thomas Sibley retired from her twenty year presidency of the WCTU in the early 1900's. Her successor and sister-in-law, Jennie Hart Sibley of Augusta, her successor and sister-in-law, presided over the renaissance of the Georgia WCTU.³ During Jennie Sibley's administration, the executive committee started the Georgia WCTU Bulletin in 1904. This monthly newspaper provided an outlet for women who were as dedicated social reformers and prohibitionists as the Latimer sisters but had been unable to publish their ideas in the daily newspapers.

Delegates to the state conventions published petitions to Congress for various reforms (Prohibition laws, outlawing prostitution in newly acquired Manila, etc.). The ladies also began collecting reminiscences for a new history of the Georgia WCTU in the Bulletin. In 1916, Lula Barnes Ansley

³ Ansley, pp. 181; McLendon and Atlanta Willard WCTU to Ga. House and Senate, 28 June 1906, WCTU folder vertical files Ga. Department of Archives and History.

used these to compile The History of the Georgia WCTU, 1880 to 1907.⁴ Rebecca Latimer Felton contributed the chapter on the history of WCTU's opposition to the convict lease system, beginning with Robert A. Alston's murder and her own realization of the system's horrors, especially for female prisoners.⁵

Even though Rebecca Felton did not play as important a role in the daily work of the WCTU as Mary McLendon was, she was the chairwoman of legislative lobbying and guided the WCTU's petitioners through the maze of local and national politics. They used the Bulletin to offer sample lesson plans for school teachers who had to prepare to teach scientific temperance instruction as well as their main subjects. On 17 December 1901, Governor Allen D. Candler had signed the bill requiring all students, possibly including blacks, to study the scientific reasons for not drinking. After this, WCTU members became more intense in their lobbying for compulsory school attendance. They could now pressure county school boards, since the "Scientific Temperance Instruction" law made the boards responsible for such instruction. They hoped to persuade members to join the campaign for compulsory school \

⁴ Ansley, pp. 187-8; The Georgia WCTU Bulletin's files are

⁵ Ansley, pp. 187-8; Felton, Country Life, pp. 289-295.

attendance so more children could benefit from temperance lessons.⁶

Governor Candler gave WCTU members more hope for future success when he vetoed the dispensary bill in 1902. This bill would have allowed pharmacies to sell small amounts of liquor as medicine even after Prohibition became law. Felton had been a leader in opposing such practices since 1898. The editors of The Atlanta Journal had asked her, as the most famous woman prohibitionist in Georgia, for her opinion on the Athens dispensary which sold alcohol as a medicinal elixir. She was outraged that members of the Sarepta Baptist Association ran the dispensary with a Methodist store clerk.⁷ She entitled her letter "The Striped Pig" of Georgia, comparing the Athens dispensary to the traveling zoo that promised to show the residents of a New England prohibition town a zebra. The zoo's owners only offered the audience free whiskey and exhibited a pig with stripes painted on its body. She applied this incident to anyone, even Baptists and Methodist church members, who tried to sell liquor in disguise. According to Felton, the women of Athens should demand the dispensary be closed rather than remain open,

⁶ Ansley, pp. 192-193.

⁷ Ibid., p. 220; Felton, Country Life, pp. 242-247.

selling liquor to anyone, including children.⁸ Athenians had to understand that it must close for the sake of the University of Georgia students. Newton County was dry because of Emory College and Bibb County was about to abolish saloons because of Mercer.⁹ If Athenians did not close the dispensary,

[there] is a state institution down at Milledgeville that tells us what will result from the unabridged sale and use of whiskey. The state penitentiary and almost countless county chaingangs will verify that story. It surpasses belief that preachers and church members should claim public protection because it is handed over the counter by church people. If there is a sober brain to hire, the saloonist will get him to manage the cash box. The Liquor Dealers' political association is careful to nominate its sober but ambitious candidates to fill public offices and carry out its well-planned designs for self-protection. But what about the poor drunkard who upsets his own and becomes a maniac, in his miserable craving for the drink that destroys him? Who is accountable, the seller or the buyer?

Felton's opposition to the dispensary bill brought her into conflict with State Representative Seaborn Wright of Rome who supported the bill. To exempt physicians and druggists from prohibition, Wright, the son of an ante-bellum U.S.¹⁰ Representative and Confederate Congressman, had admired Dr.

⁸ Ansley, p. 200; Felton, Country Life, pp. 243-244.

⁹ Felton, p. 245.

¹⁰ Ansley, p. 220; Barton C. Shaw, The Wool-Hat Boys, Georgia Populist Party, (Baton Rouge, 1984), pp. 150-151.

Felton and had become an Independent prohibitionist legislator.

In spite of her vigorous support of prohibition, Rebecca Felton expressed the distaste of many Georgia women for the extreme tactics of Carrie Nation in 1901. Felton thought that Nation's saloon smashing was unnecessary and divisive because prohibition would triumph on its merits.¹¹

But Mrs. Nation goes about [promoting Prohibition] in a way that reminds one of a poor dog that snarls bites at himself because the fleas bite him. If she could get to the core of the trouble she might disperse saloons but her present method is simply lacerating her poor mistaken self without abating the swarms of evils that are infesting the country's progress and prosperity.¹²

In defense of Nation, Hooper Alexander, an attorney and prohibitionist, informed Felton that although Kansas had prohibition, saloons continued to flourish because the State Government would not enforce the laws. Nation believed that she would arouse public anger against the legislature by exposing the injustice. Since the saloon owners were breaking the law, they had no rights and deserved to have their property destroyed. He regretted Felton's distastes for Nation's tactics because they all agreed on the basic necessity of Prohibition. Alexander predicted that newspapers

¹¹ Mrs. W.H. Felton, "Mrs. Nation, the Smasher of Saloons", The Atlanta Journal, 29 January 1901, p. 4.

¹² Ibid. front page, 30 January 1901.

and other opponents of prohibition would claim that Nation was an extremist who harmed prohibition or that prohibitionists were so deeply divided that governments could ignore laws against drinking. In fact, on the very day Alexander wrote, The Atlanta Journal published a front page article, "Kansas Women Smash Saloons; Use Bottle on Dealer's Head," which made the Kansas WCTU women, their men and children appear to be a mob of hysterical fanatics.¹³

Local Prohibitionist Win

On the other hand, many women who wrote to the Georgia WCTU Bulletin in the early 1900's were more concerned with the meetings, membership drives and other events of the local and state WCTU chapters than with national prohibition events. All of these correspondents expressed their admiration for Jennie Hart Sibley, her innovations and regrets at her resignation in 1905. She required the individual chapters to offer prizes to high school and college students for the best essays on "the effects of alcohol, tobacco and narcotics on the human system" or "international peace." She named Mary L. McLendon chairwoman for these contest and the organization published the winning entries and information on new contests in the Bulletin. Mary L. McLendon joined the other chapter

¹³ Shaw, p. 205; Hooper Alexander to R.L. Felton, 30 January 1901, University of Georgia Special Collections, No. 81, Reel 4; "Kansas Women Smash Saloons; Use Bottle on Dealer's Head", The Atlanta Journal, front page, 30 January 1901.

presidents in writing reports of the chapters' meetings and mission work. As it had been in 1900, McLendon's Southside Willard WCTU continued to be more active than most other chapters. Since she was also a member of the executive committee, she signed the annual resolution of goals of the Georgia WCTU. She wrote a regular column on the achievements and purpose of the Demorest Medal Essay Contests which she directed. William Demorest, a philanthropist, began these contests in the New York WCTU in the 1880's with his own money and spread the idea nationally. Elementary school students read simple passages on the prohibition of alcohol, cigarettes or narcotics from WCTU children's books. High school and college students wrote their own speeches to be read in competition for bronze, silver or gold medals at state conventions. The gold medalists were invited to compete for a gold and diamond medal at the national conventions.¹⁴ McLendon believed that such contests gave young people experience in public speaking and;

"Many anti-prohibition fathers will attend a contest where 'Mary' or 'Johnnie' is to recite when they could not be induced to hear the most noted Temperance lecturer."¹⁵

¹⁴ Georgia WCTU Bulletin, collection 648, Emory University Special Collections; Ansley, p. 220.

¹⁵ Ansley, pp. 228-230.

The WCTU's lobbying and publicity drives made prohibition the leading issue of the 1907 General Assembly session. The bill that banned alcohol consumption in Georgia was one of the twenty-one bills that attempted to support dry counties or forbid the transportation of liquor between counties. Lula Barnes Ansley probably described the debate over the main bill to abolish liquor sales and consumption that occurred on the evening of 28 June 1907. This bill had several sponsors in the Georgia House and Senate, including senator L.G. Hardman and Representatives W.S. Covington and Hooper Alexander.

McLendon, Mary Harris Armour (Jennie Hart Sibley's successor) and other Prohibitionists rejoiced when the Georgia Legislature finally abolished liquor consumption. They had been developing the Georgia WCTU with this goal in mind, apart from national Prohibition, for twenty years and had created the most powerful woman's organization in Georgia.¹⁶ M. Teresa Griffin of Columbus, the Corresponding Secretary in 1902, recalled their great triumph in the State House of Representatives on the evening the Prohibition measure passed;

Never was there such an exhibition of iron endurance and firm self-control as was shown by the gallery crowd on that day. It was all the more remarkable because before the House convened, from six o'clock until half past eight, they were talking, laughing and singing 'Georgia's Going Dry,' and many feared they could not be brought to order. In the midst of the singing a well-known

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 230.

leader of the anti[-prohibitionists] came in and his indignation was very apparent as he roamed around the floor of the House clenching his fists and shaking his head.¹⁷

The enormous crowd sat silently after the debate began at nine p.m. The anti's must have held the floor in the beginning of the debate because they began their speeches by saluting "the fair ladies honoring this House with their presence." The younger Representatives could not understand the seriousness of prohibition and offended the Prohibitionists. They began to filibuster by behaving as if they were at a football game. The Liquor Trust's men in the galleries hissed when Seaborn Wright, the author of the Prohibition bill, became impatient with these insults and rose to object.

The prohibitionists began cheering in retaliation when Wright's turn to defend his bill finally came. Mary H. Armour believed that Wright's statement of the Prohibitionists beliefs, goals and the crowd's cheering response were signs of Prohibition's divine fitness. The WCTU members under the direction of Mary L. McLendon served dinner on the grounds of the State Capitol as if to prove that outspoken, political women could be homemakers too. All the Prohibitionist legislators and most visitors were welcomed to have dinner

¹⁷ Ansley, p. 231.

with the WCTU.¹⁸ The jubilant prohibitionists eventually wore their opposition out so the vote on Wright's bill was overwhelmingly positive. Wright's supporters became even more elated when they learned that Prohibition became veto proof with ninety-two favorable votes. They still listened quietly while the Clerk of the House read the final totals. Wright's bill had passed by one hundred votes, 139 to 39.¹⁹

Mary Harris Armour, Mary Latimer McLendon and the other district WCTU chapter presidents began to march down Alabama Street towards Henry Grady's Monument at Marietta and Forsyth Streets. They were followed by the people from the galleries at the Capitol and many of the Legislators as they walked near Collins and Decatur Streets, Atlanta's notorious red light district, before turning onto Peachtree. The crowd gathered at the Atlanta Georgian's offices to listen to Seaborn Wright praise Fred L. Seely for publishing so many favorable Prohibition articles. Governor Hoke Smith came over from the Governor's Mansion at 208 Peachtree.²⁰ He offered his congratulations to the Prohibitionists:

I know what has brought you here, my friends. I understand your feelings and enthusiasms and want to assure you that my signature will be affixed to the bill the moment it reaches me. I wish to say

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 233.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 261.

²⁰ Ansley, p. 240. (Atlanta, 1902), pp. 51-53.

further that I shall exhaust every resource of the executive power to see that the law is enforced when it is placed on the statute books.²¹

Smith promised to sign the law that abolished the sale of hard or malt liquor and even wine in Georgia. People who ere caught selling liquor were charged with misdemeanors and sentenced to a year on the chain gang. Seaborn Wright, the Representative from Rome and Rebecca Felton's ally, finally passed his amendment exempting physicians and druggists from the Prohibition Law. Physicians had to declare that small amounts of pure alcohol were necessary for their patients and write prescriptions that could only be redeemed by the patient within forty-eight hours of the doctor's visit. Physicians and druggists could still donate larger amounts of alcohol to charity hospitals, if the hospitals opened their records to police inspectors. Artists and scientists would not be prevented from using denatured alcohol by the new law.²²

Smith raised the hopes of Georgia Prohibitionists because he had been a local option prohibitionist for twenty years as most of rural Georgia went dry. Yet, he could not afford to be too closely identified with the prohibitionists, especially the WCTU, because many legislators opposed the abolition of liquor sales. Despite his congratulatory message to the

²¹ Ansley, p. 261.

²² Georgia Laws, 1908. (Atlanta, 1908), pp. 81-83.

prohibitionists, Smith needed the votes of those legislators who still favored temperance and high license fees to control liquor sales and might also vote for the abolition of the convict lease system or the regulation of the railroads.²³

Smith was reluctant to praise the WCTU leaders for lobbying because he never accepted some members' belief in woman suffrage, that other important plank in the National WCTU's platform. Although the Latimer sisters and other WCTU members could not vote for Smith, the organization influenced the votes of men through their wives in the entire state by 1908.

Smith's praise for the new Prohibition law may have seemed to some in the crowd a bit too late to be sincere. He had not been publicly active in supporting the bill in his gubernatorial campaign in August of 1906. He used the disfranchisement of black voters as the basis for many of his campaign speeches. He even raised the Reconstruction Era spectre of the meddling New England lady school teacher who forced social change, including Prohibition and woman suffrage, on traditional white southerners. Smith's stump speeches contributed to the disastrous race riot that occurred seven months before Prohibition became law. The proud Prohibitionists who marched on Peachtree were parading where

²³ Gratham, Hoke Smith, pp. 160-161.

the mobs of drunken young men had surged.²⁴ Nevertheless, Smith was certain that he had been important in driving liquor from Georgia and hoped never to see it return. He even campaigned against Joseph M. Brown by claiming that "the combination of liquor interests and the negro vote threaten white civilization in Georgia." Black social reformers were probably made even more angry and pessimistic by such remarks than the WCTU because Smith ignored their race and pointed to them as the source of all Georgia's troubles. Up to 1904 black leaders, like Benjamin J. Davis, believed that Progressive social legislation would lead to racial reconciliation and a better society for all Georgians.²⁵

The Latimer Sisters and Woman's Clubs

The successful campaign that Rebecca L. Felton, Mary Harris Armour and Mary L. McLendon led to make Prohibition a state law was part of the much wider woman's club movement that they also led. These women would base their ardor for prohibition on their desire to help families, especially mothers. Felton, the WCTU's lobbyist, addressed the duties of mothers and fathers to their children several times in the early 1900s.

²⁴ Dittmer, Black Georgia, p. 98.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 111.

Felton brought the Compulsory School Attendance Campaign and the Crusade for Informed Motherhood together when she addressed the Georgia Legislature in 1901 and the Georgia Sociological Society in June of 1902. She wanted to spread the woman's clubs goals for education to legislators who had the power to enforce a law compelling parents to send their children to school. She believed that some mill hand or sharecropper parents, especially fathers who had degrading jobs, would not voluntarily lose their child's needed salary any more than they would stop drinking liquor.

Felton and Alice M. Birney popularized their ideas on child rearing and the rights of wives in magazine articles, woman's clubs, lectures and legislative lobbying. Felton brought the Compulsory School Attendance Campaign and the Crusade for Informed Motherhood together when she addressed the Georgia Legislature in 1901 and the Georgia Sociological Society in June of 1902.²⁶ Felton realized that some parents, especially fathers, would never, could never be reached through voluntary methods, so she presented the WCTU and woman's club case for compulsory school attendance. In her speech before the Legislature, she wondered how the Legislators dared to ask for a larger education budget, when most poor white mountain children did not attend school. She

²⁶ Felton, Country Life, pp. 170-198; 279-284.

illustrated her argument with several examples of children who worked in fields and factories, whose fathers objected to school attendance. These parents had to be forced to send their children to school under a Compulsory School Attendance law or the tax money spent on public schools would be wasted. Poor white mountain children deserved to be educated at State expense just as much as blacks. These club women shared the beliefs of a black member of the Boston New Era Club who was selected as a delegate to the biennial convention of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs held in Los Angeles in April of 1902.

Efforts to coordinate the activities of southern white women with their African-American neighbors and the New Englanders who supported them failed. Isma Dooly, The Atlanta Constitution's woman's page editor, wrote three articles that emphasized the divisions that the presence at the convention of blacks caused between northern and some southern women. She wrote an article called "New England Women to Back up Colored Clubs" where she recalled dealing with integration-minded New England women and a black committee member.²⁷ Dooly concluded that New England women should join the Federation of Colored Woman's Clubs if they really wanted to help black women improve their lives. Black women could

²⁷ Notable American Women, Vol. I, p. 148.

improve the living standards of their race more through their own federation than by becoming individual, subordinate members of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs.²⁸

Dooly interviewed Mrs. A.O. Granger on the approaching convention and the problem of the black delegate. Granger agreed with Dooly that black women would be better served in their own federation.²⁹ Granger, the President of the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs, and the President of the New York Clubs agreed on a compromise amendment to the Federation's constitution that would require prospective woman's club members to have sponsors among individual club members. These restrictive membership rules seemed to create common methods of maintaining racially separate social reform associations. Dooly also interviewed Rebecca D. Lowe, who expressed her own opinion on the race issue.³⁰ She believed that the race question would unite club members from all the regions of the United States. If women discussed this matter they could understand the beginnings of racial divisions and see where black and white women had common interests. These discussions were not mentioned in the program that accompanied

²⁸ Isma Dooly, "New England Women to Back up Colored Clubs", Atlanta Constitution, 4 April 1902.

²⁹ "Color Question will be Issue at Los Angeles", Atlanta Constitution.

³⁰ Ibid.

Dooly's interview, but the amendment to the constitution which did not compromise with black women was probably voted on in the business meeting.

Members of the Georgian delegation to the General Federation of woman's clubs at the San Francisco convention presented papers that reflected the varied interests of the clubs in education, child labor or working women. Rebecca Felton spoke on the importance of libraries during the civic affairs seminar. Isma Dooly addressed the "Press Session" in "Are Women Necessary to the Newspaper Business" on the convention's third day. Mrs. A.O. Granger spoke on "Child labor in the South" in the "Industrial Problems Session" on the second day.³¹ Rebecca D. Lowe presided over most of these panel discussions and gave the President's address at the closing ceremonies where she outlined the Federation's goals for the year.³²

Isma Dooly rarely discussed the controversial leaders of the woman's club movement, except to criticize them, in her occasional generalized essays on the woman's club reform programs in juvenile justice or kindergartens. Alice Burney attracted Dooly's critical attention in an article presenting

³¹ Isma Dooly "Color Question will be Issue at Los Angeles" Atlanta Constitution; "Program of Federation Biennial Announced by Mrs. Lowe, President."

³² Ibid.

her as a neglectful mother and an hysterical female whose ravings might discredit woman's education. The Latimers were not even mentioned in an announcement that temperance lecturer Belle Kearney would be the guest of the W.X. Witham family, cousins of Felton and McLendon, when she addressed the 1900 Georgia legislature. Dooly's articles on the General Federation of Woman's Club's goals always took second place to columns on the Metropolitan Opera's week of programs in Atlanta, fashions or debutante balls. The conservatism of the Constitution's editors or Dooly's lackluster commitment to the woman's club movement may have led to this situation.

The Country Home

Rebecca Felton began writing a column "The Country Home; Women on the Farm" for the semi-weekly Atlanta Journal in the fall of 1900. She continued to use this column to promote woman's club goals through the 1920s. Hoke Smith had sold The Journal to other investors just before Felton began working there.³³ The new editors allowed her to write about anything and seemed to be much more favorable to progressive ideals than The Constitution's editors were.

Felton used "The Country Home" to express her life long concerns about the education of Georgia's children, that included boys and African-American children. She could offer

³³

Ibid.

students advice on studying, question them on literature or history and even lectured the legislators and school board members on spending tax money wisely. Her subjects ranged widely. In one 1905 column, she was arguing for the establishment of Jefferson Davis County. In "What's the Matter with Russia?," she claimed that Czar Nicholas the Second was so isolated from his subjects in luxury that he could not understand their needs.³⁴

The beginning of the twentieth century brought further bitter conflicts between the suffragists and their opponents. The argument that woman suffrage would make public funding for educating the poor or other social reforms possible did not convince her. Indeed, the arguments between the two women became more bitter and more public during the second decade of this century. The Latimer sisters and their associates were not deterred from their goal of making women full participants in Georgia's public affairs by the anti-suffragist's harassment.

The Latimer sisters were as active in the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA) and the woman's clubs. Mary L. McLendon recalled that her sister was the GWSA's Auditor in the early 1900s. Felton took the train from Cartersville to

³⁴ Felton, "The Country Home, Timely Topics", Reel 20, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

Atlanta to join her sister at the annual state conventions.³⁵ McLendon, the statewide President from 1906 to 1921, always gave the welcoming address for the Atlanta Chapter and would begin making the president's address. The sisters were actively involved in planning meetings and in building the membership and presenting the association's suffrage petition to the hostile Georgia Legislature. They continued to be joined in these activities by H. Augusta Howard, the Association's founder, Frances C. Swift, and Gertrude Thomas. The members held one of their first meetings in the new century in conjunction with a Southern Chautauqua lecture series. Felton, McLendon, the other GWSA officers, invited guests and the curious heard Frances A. Griffin from Alabama, F. Henry Richardson, editor of The Atlanta Journal and Lucian Lamar Knight of The Constitution lecture on the importance of woman's right to vote during this day-long event.

In "Robert Louis Stevenson's Creed," Felton contrasted his simple creed with the isolated luxury of very rich Americans and Czar Nicholas II. People could demonstrate unselfishness, she claimed in "The Mosquito Pest," by draining stagnant ponds or pouring kerosene on the water to smother the pests. She implied that prohibition could limit the swarms of

³⁵ Talmadge, Felton, p. 104; Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 6, p. 121. This evidence contradicts Talmadge's assertion that Felton was not involved in Suffrage before 1910.

mosquitos because they loved to bite drunks so much that they even became drunk. She even published a set of questions for students on current events, history and geography.³⁶ In April of 1905 she published one little girl's answer to these queries. This letter, written by Rubie Ward of Cork, Georgia, was one of many hundreds that people sent to Felton for "The Country Home." She closed one column, around 20 September 1900, with "A Word to School Children" where she recalled her own childhood and advised them to become effective public speakers and writers. They should not memorize speeches just to impress adults during examination season. If students were encouraged in such cramming they tended to graduate knowing a smattering of unconnected facts on a variety of subjects without being skilled in anything or understanding the relations between the facts. Felton pleaded with county school boards to supply wagons to all the schools, including the ones that served black children. She wondered if the children, blacks and bi-racial ones included, would be too tired and footsore after plowing behind that mule all summer to ride the animal to school. She was also concerned that their families might need to use the mule for work, leaving

³⁶ Felton, "The Country Home, Women on the Farm," *Daily Journal*, c. 20 September 1900, collection 81, reel 20, University of Georgia Special Collections.

³⁶ Felton, Reel 19, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

the children to walk to school.³⁷ She did not believe that taxpayers should suffer so the school board members could have more money in the school budget. She wanted the school board members to assign five wagons and drivers to each teacher because many farmers worked too hard and were still too poor to buy wagons of their own. Felton predicted:

From Jersey wagons we will rise to a demand for automobiles in the near future. The commissioner when pressed for an answer in Griffin said: 'Heaven knows no negro will ride in my Jersey wagons.' But the negro is here to stay -- the public schools are here to stay, and he will give place to a new commissioner, who will promise to ride negroes to get elected by negro votes. Don't you know it?³⁸

Felton argued that white voters had to recognize common social and economic problems with blacks (the old Populist approach) or racial animosity would always be used to stifle social progress. Felton reprinted "God's Weapons" by John Greenleaf Whittier to expand the theme that the struggle for progress was as great a conflict as the Civil War had been. She recalled ante-bellum times in her essay, "An Old Time Wedding," but warned people not to dwell on the past.³⁹ She could also worry about the effects of the lingering cold weather on the peach crop and recall the spring of 1849 when

³⁷ Felton, "The Country Home, Women on the Farm", the Semi-Weekly Journal, c. 20 September 1900, collection 81, reel 20, University of Georgia Special Collections.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. *History of Women Suffrage*, vol 6, p. 122.

cold destroyed fruits and wheat and farm families had to eat corn bread at each meal.⁴⁰

In 1901 the sisters arranged to open the convention in the Universalist Church where McLendon and Thomas greeted the delegates. They met in the woman's club room on the afternoon of 25 November to hear Carrie Chapman Catt report on the national woman suffrage campaign and the necessity of voting rights for women.⁴¹ McLendon and her staff used these and other meetings to recruit new members.

A prime goal for the local group was to argue for local option woman suffrage in Atlanta's new city charter. The Council's franchise committee was willing to appoint women or allow their election to school or hospital boards, but in 1902 the full council vetoed the proposal. McLendon and the others were outraged at being denied the right to vote on the \$400,000 bond issue. Although Livingston Mims, the Mayor, told them that he was for woman suffrage and would push the bill through the Council, he never brought it to a vote. The GWSA members posted signs near the polling places on election day demanding that women taxpayers be allowed cast ballots and

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, vol 6, p. 122.

also placed articles in newspapers and passed out suffrage literature.⁴²

The battle over the municipal franchise for women continued into 1903 and became the theme for the GWSA State convention. Kate M. Gordon, the National Corresponding Secretary, recounted the successful struggle of Louisiana women taxpayers for the right to vote in bond referendums. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, the National Vice-President of NAWSA, inspired the delegates at this convention with her lecture on "The Fate of Republics" in which the franchise was arbitrarily limited.⁴³

While the Latimer sisters attracted regional and national attention as prohibitionists and suffragists, they always remembered the needs of Georgia's women, especially those who had no men to protect them. The sisters' concern for working women and female prisoners set them apart from the more intellectual leaders of the national movement. Felton and McLendon again fought the Georgia legislature over hiring women as guards for female prisoners, raising the age of sexual consent for girls and requiring school attendance, old battles, not yet won. McLendon finally used this agenda to convert Jennie Hart Sibley, Lula Barnes Ansley and other WCTU

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 124; *Constitution*, 28 September 1903, p. 4.

leaders with similar ideas to woman suffrage by 1907. McLendon continued to direct the suffragists in handing out literature at State Fairs.

Mary L. McLendon promoted woman's education and woman's rights in her August 1908 speech to the appreciative Georgia Agricultural Association.⁴⁴ When The Constitution's editor began separating woman's club news from the society columns, conservative and progressive women had one publication to exchange ideas instead of occasional essays in several newspapers. The Constitution's woman's club page was as important to the spread of social reform, including Prohibition and woman suffrage, as Felton's "Country Home" essays. Women who would never dare attend a suffrage or Prohibition rally could read the plans of the GWSA, WCTU or the Calhoun Woman's Club and compare them with the UDC's goals. These newspaper departments made the GWSA and the WCTU seem less radical because they shared educational and other social reform goals with the more socially conservative organization. McLendon had a new means to publicize the GWSA's, WCTU's and the goals of the women's clubs. McLendon and other women sent in announcements of suffrage, prohibitionist and even UDC and Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) meetings. The UDC members contributed a long

⁴⁴ Anthony, p. 124; Constitution, 265 September 1909, p. 4.

article on the restoration of the Robert E. Lee home at Arlington. The Woman's Club of Calhoun shared their experiences in working with school board members to create playgrounds and school libraries.

The Latimer sisters' GWSA conventions became increasingly important to the NAWSA leaders as they fought to convince the United States Senate to debate woman suffrage. McLendon arranged to share the platform at the 1908 convention with Laura Clay.⁴⁵ When Clay spoke on "Who Works against Woman Suffrage?," she described the conservative patriotic and religious organizations that were uniting with the liquor dealers to defeat suffrage nationally. McLendon presided at this evening session. H. Augusta Howard and William S. Witham also addressed the audience. Rebecca L. Felton, Mary L. McLendon and the other officers of the GWSA joined in NAWSA's letter writing campaign of 1909. The sisters urged the members of the Georgia Congressional Delegation to vote for woman suffrage. Senators A.S. Clay, Augustus O. Bacon and two of the Representatives responded with polite but neutral letters, while the remaining eight Representatives never replied. The sisters may even have gone to Washington, D.C. as delegates to the NAWSA conventions in the early years of the century but they had to balance their southern loyalty

⁴⁵ Anthony, p. 123.

with their friendships for such NAWSA's leaders as Kate Gordon and Laura S. Clay who began separating from NAWSA over race. Gordon and Clay would become outspoken advocates of Henry Blackwell's idea that enfranchised white women would outvote blacks in the second decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

Dr. Felton's Death

Rebecca Felton experienced an enormous personal tragedy when her husband Dr. William H. Felton died 26 September 1909⁴⁷ after fifty-six years of marriage. Rebecca Felton received condolence letters from every Georgia Congressman and Legislator. Even though A.S. Clay had opposed Dr. Felton on every issue when they served in the Legislature, he praised the doctor's integrity and compassion. Clay concluded that Dr. Felton could have been a Democratic Party leader if he had only been loyal to the Bourbons. Tom Watson, an old friend of the Feltons, eulogized Dr. Felton in his Jeffersonian Magazine.⁴⁸ He might have been expressing bitterness at his own treatment by the Bourbons, when he wrote of Dr. Felton:

At length, the prisoner is free. At length the outlaw can join the kindred spirits of the other outlaws who stole fire from the heavens, for the benefit of benighted mankind, and reaped the bitter

⁴⁶ Anthony, p. 124; Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, p. 174.

⁴⁷ Felton Collection, 81, Reel 20, Special Collections, University of Georgia.

⁴⁸ Felton, Memoirs, pp. 15-16.

reward of ingratitude that gnaws and gnaws at the vitals.⁴⁹

Watson still shared grievances with Rebecca Felton. For example, both agreed on the lack of honest writing, the large number of advertisements in the Atlanta newspapers or the Candler family's attraction to Chinese missions while Georgians went hungry.

Watson wanted to separate himself from The Atlanta Journal's editorial writers, but The Journal eulogized Dr. Felton in words that were just as glowing and no less emotional than Watson's tribute. The Journal wrote:

Although he 'touched nothing but to adorn' and contributed to progress and uplift of Georgia in many ways, it is probably his participation in politics, and his tireless efforts in furthering the interests of the people by which he will be longest remembered.⁵⁰

The Journal's writer even complimented Mrs. Felton for her brilliance and help to her husband. The Roman emphasized his friends in Rome and the importance of his Congressional career to the Seventh District. The Georgian's article was much longer and was a complete biographical sketch like The Journal's and also praised Mrs. Felton for her service to her husband and Georgia:

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 16.

⁵⁰ Felton Collection, 81, Reel 4, Special Collections, University of Georgia. In 1909 he complained about Bacon's polite coldness to his attempts to be recognized or pensioned for service as a U.S. Representative in 1892.

Mrs. Felton is no less famed than her husband, for she has long been known as a writer and lecturer through the Southern states. It is said that there has perhaps not lived a couple in Georgia who have, independent of each other, gained so much fame for themselves as Dr. Felton and his wife.⁵¹

Rebecca Latimer Felton threw herself into WCTU, GWSA and other social reform work to honor Dr. Felton's memory and for comfort. She was to become even more famous in the second decade of the twentieth century as the WCTU fought for national Prohibition, woman suffrage and the social reform agenda. She became, in the 1910's, the defender of Dr. Felton's reputation, a national representative of the southern women believers in the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment and consultant for many Georgians. She and other Georgian social reformers were coming out of the early 1900's, where government almost ignored their goals, into the climactic battles when many components of the social and political agenda became law.

*Rebecca Latimer Felton in a drawing made during the 1910s.
Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History.*

⁵¹ Felton Collection, 81, Reel 20, Special Collections, University of Georgia.



Rebecca Latimer Felton in a drawing made during the 1910s.
Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

CHAPTER VIII

Victory at Last; 1910-1920

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary Latimer McLendon, old women in 1910, had more allies at this point than they ever could have imagined in 1880 or even in 1890, but the sisters were forced to choose sides in the increasingly bitter warfare over the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment and the disfranchisement of blacks. Whatever position the Latimers or their friends took, they were accused of working for black political domination and also of being unfeminine, by the nationally-organized hardline suffrage opponents. The existence of highly organized black women's groups working toward many of the sisters' goals often proved awkward. The sisters could sacrifice their dearest social beliefs to preserve their status as true southern women or live with the risk of black equality and become targets of racist taunts from the anti-Prohibition and anti-suffrage forces.

Even though Georgia women did not favor the extreme civil disobedience of the British woman suffragists or their young American disciples, they faced charges of being radical feminists and socialists. The anti-suffragists had a new inflammatory label, feminism, with which to assault the NAWSA or even the GWSA members. American writers adopted the term from British and French women intellectuals in the 1910's to describe the abrupt departure of the younger better educated

women from a concentration on the franchise. Although it came to mean that these women were aggressive, unfeminine, irreligious or anti-family, the term originally stood for concepts that the Latimer sisters knew well. The sisters had denounced male control of female rights and the alleged divine inspiration for female inferiority. Moreover, they (Felton and McLendon certainly) identified with the other women in the WCTU or the GWSA.¹

Rebecca L. Felton began writing her memoirs in 1911 because "the outside world really knows very little of how the people of Georgia lived in the long ago..." She implied that Augusta Jane Evans Wilson's or Dolly Blount Lamar's romantic view of upper class woman's life in the ante-bellum period was wrong. Felton presented the Latimer genealogy to prove that women with aristocratic family backgrounds could be social reformers. She presented her mother and grandmother as strong, capable women who were ready to act in any situation and were not pampered southern ladies. Since these women and their daughters behaved like business executives in managing their plantation homes and house slaves, Felton suggested that the former mistresses were qualified to vote and participate in public affairs. Rebecca Latimer Felton wrote My Memoirs of Georgia Politics (1911) and Country Life in Georgia in the

¹ Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, (New Haven, 1987), pp. 4, 5, 14 and 15.

Days of My Youth (1919) to prove that southern women could be both true to the region and at the same time espouse social reforms. Mary McLendon used this theme in her chapters on Georgia woman suffrage for The History of Woman Suffrage, Volume IV (1902) and VI (1922) edited by Susan B. Anthony and in Ida Clyde Clarke's Suffrage in the Southern States (1914). McLendon presented incidents in the lives of average American or European women using or fighting for the vote in her Constitution column, "The Political Rights of Women" (1913-1917). She, like Felton, wanted to prove that voting, holding paying jobs or political office did not make women unfeminine or uninterested in their families.

These women social reformers hoped to see the passage of both national Prohibition and the Woman Suffrage Amendments in the second decade of the twentieth century. Although Georgia women won only a few successes in the first decade amidst many frustrations, they could see President Theodore Roosevelt beginning to build what was, for them, a more satisfactory domestic policy structure. This Progressive Republican President, a grandson of the Bullochs of Roswell, had an agenda of preserving wilderness and regulating industries. The steel, oil and railroad trusts were now regulated by the Sherman Anti-Trust Act and the Interstate Commerce

Commission.² A reformer in the Presidency could get America out of its rut of complacency and make social progress respectable.

Rebecca L. Felton, like many other social reformers, supported the Progressive Republican or Bull Moose Party in the election of 1912. This third political party, which nominated President Theodore Roosevelt, openly appealed to Progressives with an organized domestic agenda. The party seemed to ignore Europe's threats of wars, while promising reformers woman suffrage, national laws against child labor and protective legislation for women workers. The Bull Moose Party split the Republican Party vote between Roosevelt and William H. Taft, the less activist President, and made Democrat Woodrow Wilson's victory possible. Wilson too had a reform platform.

Rebecca Felton and the L&N Railroad

Rebecca Latimer Felton struck a personal blow against an old enemy of her family, the railroads, in August of 1910 when she won the family's lawsuit against the Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad. The Feltons owned a quarry, known as Feltonia, near Cartersville, which they rented to a

² Norman K. Risjord, America: A History of the United States, Vol. 2; since 1865, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1985), p. 167.

commercial mining company.³ Dr. Felton had given a right of way, worth \$2,000, to the L&N Railroad on the condition that a spur line and station at Feltonia be built and maintained. Rebecca Felton accused the railroad of allowing the track to deteriorate leading eventually to the destruction of the track and the station. She claimed that the L&N's actions made both leasing and working the mine impossible. The railroad not only threatened her income but also increased unemployment among the workmen in Bartow County. She presented facts and figures to prove that ore shipping fell off as the railroad workers abandoned Feltonia's station and tracks. She wondered how the railroad corporation could make money hauling ore from Feltonia if the tracks were never maintained.⁴

The railroad's chief attorney, John L. Tye of Tye, Peebles and Jordan, defended the L&N Railroad before the Georgia Railroad commission. He claimed that the railroad executives had the station closed and the track destroyed because it was unprofitable. He further alleged that the Feltons did not have to be consulted in this matter because the railroad owned the right-of-way. He almost certainly believed that the contract with Dr. Felton had been broken

³ "Fight is Won by Mrs. Felton", Atlanta Constitution, 19 August 1910, p. 3, c. 1.

⁴ Ibid. Atlanta Constitution, 19 August 1910, p. 3.

when the Doctor died, leaving Mrs. Felton with no grounds for a lawsuit.⁵

When Rebecca Latimer Felton won her lawsuit against the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Corporation, she became the first woman to argue her own case before a state commission and win. The Georgia Railroad Commission ordered the L&N Railroad to relay the track and re-open that station immediately. Felton was pictured by the Atlanta papers as a white-haired, elderly, recent widow, dressed in black. The reporters were surprised that a woman, even one as famous as Felton, could be so analytical. They exaggerated when they claimed that she was not assisted by an attorney in her lawsuit. She had been corresponding with attorney William S. Witham, a cousin, a prohibitionist, and woman suffragist, for most of 1909. He investigated the railroad's activities, interviewed witnesses and filed official documents with the Railroad Commission.

By 28 August, Felton was receiving congratulatory telegrams and letters from Berthe Honore Palmer and other friends from her World's Columbian Exposition days. They apparently were inspired to praise her success after reading

⁵ Ibid; "Aged Widow of Dr. Felton Ably Pleads her own case", Atlanta Constitution, 18 August 1910, p. 3.

the Atlanta and other newspapers.⁶ Members of the Georgia Bar Association praised Felton for her precedent-setting victory over the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. They all responded to comments such as this one from the Atlanta Journal:

Intrepid and persuasive as Portia herself, Mrs. W.H. Felton appeared before the state railroad commission last Wednesday to plead her cause against a great corporation. Opposing her were ten or fifteen distinguished railroad attorneys, men skilled in the law and all its tactics. Yet, when the commission's decision was rendered yesterday, it was in Mrs. Felton's favor.⁷

In Dr. Felton's Memory

Rebecca Latimer Felton was too busy honoring her late husband in other ways to be fascinated by the fame she earned through her lawsuit and writing. She had an obelisk erected and dedicated in a ceremony that was held on 19 June, 1910, the eighty-fourth anniversary of Dr. Felton's birth. She corresponded with her son-in-law, John R. Gibbons of Bauxite, Arkansas and Nate E. Harris, future Governor of Georgia about the choice of a speaker for the dedication ceremony.⁸ Gibbons was sorry that the speaker whom his wife Anne had suggested, would be unavailable for the ceremony. Gibbons, the President

⁶ Felton Correspondence, 28 August 1910, Reel 4, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁷ Ibid; "Mrs. Felton her own Lawyer", Atlanta Journal, 20 August 1910, p. 6, c. 2.

⁸ J.R. Gibbons to Felton, 9 July, 28 August 1910, Reel 4; Scrapbooks, 1884-1927; Reel 20, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

of a Bauxite mining firm in Arkansas, was a typical late nineteenth century husband and father who would not let his wife and daughter travel to Cartersville if he could not accompany them.⁹

Nate E. Harris expressed a similar combination of respect and reluctance to attend and speak at the monument-dedication ceremony. He recalled hearing his mother say that Dr. Felton was more eloquent than all the East Tennessee preachers that she had ever heard. Since commencement at Vanderbilt University might conflict with Felton's ceremony, Harris was worried that his duties as a trustee would keep him from speaking at the Felton memorial service.¹⁰ He was also trying to stop the growing separation between the University and the Methodist Conference. He advised Felton to have an alternate speaker in mind to fill in at short notice. He finally managed both to attend Vanderbilt University's commencement and to speak at the ceremony unveiling the monument to Dr. Felton.¹¹

Harris and other friends of Dr. Felton spoke to a crowd of over two thousand at the unveiling of the thirty-foot high

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ N.E. Harris to Felton, 23 April 1910, Reel 4, Scrapbooks 1884-1927, Reel 20, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

¹¹ Ibid.

obelisk made of Elberton Granite. The crowd, including parishioners and many of the couples married by the doctor gathered on the lawn of the Bartow County Courthouse near the Sam Jones Memorial Chapel in Cartersville.¹²

Unfortunately, Rebecca Felton could not long enjoy the good feelings generated by the memorial service because her husband's monument soon became a target for a newly revived conservative KKK. She wrote to Bishop Warren Akin Candler later angrily describing how the Ku Klux Klan knocked down a marker to Dr. Felton at Felton's Chapel, on the outskirts of Cartersville, and had hidden it under the front steps. She suspected the influence of the Ku Klux Klan when the pastor of Felton's Chapel wanted to select a biblical name for the building, which had been donated by the Feltons to the North Georgia Methodist Synod.¹³ She felt the Klan had dishonored Dr. Felton by parading past the memorial to him on the courthouse lawn before entering the Sam Jones Tabernacle:

[Jones was] ending its services at night meeting [when] a hooded gang marched down the middle aisle with pillow slips and bed sheets covering them, and handed up an envelope to the preacher, I am told there were \$50 in the envelope. My son thinks there were at least twenty-five in the KKK

¹² "To Unveil Shaft to Memory of Dr. Felton", Atlanta Constitution, 13 June 1910, p. 8; 20 June 1910, p. 6.

¹³ R.L. Felton to W.A. Candler, 29 September 1924, W.A. Candler Collection, No. 2, Box 51, Folder 9, Emory University Special Collection.

procession. He came home immediately. The K[KK] swept the elections a few days later.¹⁴

Thus through this Klan connection she felt the Methodist church betrayed the Feltons' beliefs. But Rebecca Latimer Felton did not depend solely on the good will of the Southern Methodist Church to preserve Dr. Felton's memory. She wrote My Memoirs of Georgia Politics to fulfill her husband's dying wish to set the record straight on his career in the United States Congress and Georgia House of Representatives. She was still furious at Georgia politicians of the 1870's and 1880's for using a popular revulsion against Reconstruction as cover for looting the treasury.¹⁵ She argued:

Only a few dared to fight them!...So it happened that Ring Rule in Georgia expanded into full flower! For nearly a third of a century a few controlled Georgia politics and paid themselves out of the State's revenues, in railroad and convict leases,¹⁶ for their trouble. It required a man of courage to step out into the open and 'defend the bridge at Rome.'¹⁷

She presented the book to Congressmen who had served with Dr. Felton for libraries in their home states and to the Librarian of Congress. The Atlanta Journal's reviewer wrote

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Felton, Memoirs, pp. 5-11.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 7-8.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

nostalgically about the Doctor and other orators of Georgia in the 1880s and 1890s.

Prohibition, 1910-1918

Rebecca Latimer Felton did not ignore social problems in the second decade of the twentieth century. She and Mary L. McLendon both saw the contemporary struggles over alcohol, child labor or woman suffrage as new versions of nineteenth-century battles against corruption. Felton summed up the progressive ideals of the WCTU and the GWSA in "Why I am a Suffragist" (1915).¹⁸ Interestingly, she reconciled her arguments with the traditional references to the cult of domesticity;

This woman's movement is a great movement of the sexes toward each other, with common ideals as to government, as well as common ideals in domestic life, where fully developed manhood must seek and find its real mate in the mother of his children as well as the solace of his home. 'The time has long passed since the hard-drinking, fox-hunting, high-playing country squire was excused because of his generosity and hospitality.' He was not the equal of his sober mate, whose hand held the distaff, who made good cheer from kitchen to drawing-room. The call of the age is for partnership in the family, in the church, in the State and National affairs, between men and women.¹⁹

¹⁸ A.B. Caldwell to R.L. Felton, 14 June, 22 June, 3 October, 1907, Reel 4, Collection 81; Reel 20, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections. Felton also wrote a sketch of her husband in Men of Mark in Georgia and she also reminisced with the editor about Judge W. Hamilton Felton (the Doctor's first cousin) and Amos T. Akerman. She was listed as a contributor in Volume III after she sent brief biographies of her husband and the other men.

¹⁹ Felton, Country Life, p. 260.

Her sister Mary continued to be equally active, and vigorously promoted these and other goals in a variety of ways. She continued to sponsor the Demorest speaking prize.²⁰ She expressed the long held conviction that fathers could become drawn into partnership with their wives in raising their children and in promoting Prohibition by these contest. She was still writing announcements of the Demorest contests for the monthly Georgia WCTU Bulletin in the second decade of the twentieth century. She reminded recent local high school and college winners to enter the state and national competitions and urged local presidents to submit names of contestants and the titles of their speeches to the Bulletin. These articles appeared every month until the momentous year 1921 when Prohibition became a Constitutional Amendment, women took political office and McLendon herself died at age eight-seven.²¹

Under McLendon's guidance the annual report of the WCTU's resolutions committee which set the association's agenda for its thirty-first year, reflected Frances Willard's "do everything" ideal because the Georgia WCTU members became involved in all aspects of women's lives, from education and child care to female prisoners. It worked to improve the

²⁰ Georgia WCTU Bulletin, 15 October 1911, p. 3, Op. Box 7, WCTU Collection, No. 647, Emory University Special Collections.

²¹ Ibid.

lives of women and their families. McLendon and her committee wanted to organize school health examinations. They lobbied with partial success for state and local laws outlawing prostitution and raising the age of consent for sex or marriage for girls from ten to eighteen. The legislators always opposed this bill because black women might expect to be included in its provisions. McLendon and the committee repeated their longstanding demand that the aldermen of cities with populations over ten thousand (chiefly Atlanta) hire a jail matron for female prisoners.²²

McLendon had a personal interest in the WCTU's state committee's resolution to allow local chapters to create woman suffrage departments even though the Georgia WCTU itself never had such a department. She could not convince the delegates to the state convention in 1912 even to second her motion to form a suffrage committee. She no doubt hoped that delegates would accept the measure after Lula Barnes Ansley and Jennie Hart Sibley had joined the GWSA in 1907.²³ Mary Harris Armor, the president of the Georgia WCTU, became a member of the GWSA in 1909, but when the suffrage motion was finally voted on, it was unanimously defeated. McLendon always believed some other WCTU members did not consider the

²² Bulletin, 27 October 1911, p. Op. Box 7, Georgia WCTU Collection. No. 647, Emory University Special Collections.

²³ Ibid.

franchise for women on its own merits. She achieved more unity between the GWSA and WCTU later in this decade when she made a suffragist welcoming speech to the delegates of the national WCTU delegates in 1914. She was honored as a "brave pioneer" at the opening ceremonies of the 1919 WCTU state convention. Yet she must have found these victories hollow because the Georgia WCTU never founded a state-wide suffrage committee²⁴ and the state never approved the national woman suffrage amendment.

Although Mary L. McLendon and Rebecca Felton never aroused widespread enthusiasm for woman suffrage in the Georgia WCTU, they could join their friends in rejoicing at Prohibition's growing popularity in the Georgia Legislature and Congress. McLendon included praise (in her Bulletin articles) for Hooper Alexander's attempts to have the legislature enforce the state Prohibition laws. The editors of the Bulletin also denounced the habit-forming qualities of Coca Cola, comparing it to alcohol. They may have suspected that part of the formula contained mashed coca leaves. They were still outraged by Coca Cola's and Dr. Warren A. Candler's opposition to the WCTU and even Prohibition because of the national WCTU's suffragism. In spite of these local disputes, McLendon and the others were proud that Richmond P. Hobson,

²⁴ Ibid; Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. VI, pp. 123 and 129.

reformist Representative from Alabama, introduced the National Prohibition Constitutional Amendment in the U.S. House of Representatives.²⁵

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary Latimer McLendon were proud to have Georgia Prohibition laws in effect after thirty years of fighting, but they still had to struggle for legislative enforcement of these laws. The Georgia Legislature, in another social reform gesture, voted to ratify the Constitutional Prohibition Amendment on 2 July 1918. Mary L. McLendon and Rebecca had led an Atlanta unit of the WCTU in joining the National WCTU, the Anti-Saloon League and the Prohibition Party in sending President Wilson and Congressmen letters urging the enactment of national Prohibition. They sold Prohibition as a wartime conservation measure as well as a social reform because bread was a better use for grain than beer or alcohol. Grapes were better eaten whole or mashed into jam and fruit juice than fermented into wine. In the seven months after the Georgia Legislature ratified the Amendment, twenty-seven more states endorsed the statute. The Federal Government would forbid the distillation or importation of liquor.

The National WCTU leaders achieved another nineteenth century goal when Congress passed the Harrison Anti-Narcotics

²⁵ Georgia WCTU Bulletin, August 1912, p. 4; November, 1912, p. 4; December 1913, front page.

Act in December of 1914.²⁶ Like alcohol, heroine and cocaine were removed from patent medicines and so-called soft drinks. Only physicians and licensed pharmacists could legally buy limited amounts of narcotics after paying an enormous fee.

Georgia's Prohibitionists were elated that liquor sales were forbidden nationally. James A. Hollomon, an Atlanta Constitution columnist, wrote scornfully in "Seen and Heard in Washington" about the liquor lobby's plans to challenge the amendment in court. The Anti-Prohibitionists argued that the amendment was void because it had taken more than seven years for state ratification, that the federal and state governments together could not constitutionally enforce the amendment, and it violated states rights. In contrast, Holloman proclaimed:

Where the great heart of the nation beats so nearly with one accord, on a moral issue of such wide significance, there is no power under heaven that can turn the tide of public sentiment from its destined channel. National prohibition is here!²⁷

The Atlanta Journal, on the other hand, published a front page cartoon called "Gone Dry" instead of an editorial. This drawing featured a wall map of "The United States of Sahara," the caption "thirty-seven states ratify national Prohi[bition] Amendment," and a battered "Old John Barleycorn" slinking off

²⁶ Mullins, "Home-Front Activities of Atlanta Women During World War I", p. 58, McLendon, et. al. "Committee on Resolutions Reports", Georgia WCTU Bulletin, November, 1919, p. 8, c. 1-3.

²⁷ James A. Hollomon, "Seen and Heard in Washington", Atlanta Constitution, 29 January 1919.

saying "This Way Out."²⁸ Only The Georgia, of the local newspapers, mentioned the religious origins of the Prohibition Amendment in an editorial called "Prohibition is a Magnificent Triumph for the American Clergy." John T. Graves, the Prohibitionist editor of The Georgia, concluded that in the future the liquor dealers would be like Georgia's ante-bellum slave owners were by 1919. They might feel bitter, but in later years like the slavers they would see that their sacrifice was in the best interest of their descendants.²⁹

The men who wrote for Atlanta's general newspapers could not have been happier over the success of national Prohibitionist than Mary L. McLendon and the WCTU committee who edited the Georgia WCTU Bulletin. They gloated in an editorial, "The Scarcity of Convict Labor," that Georgia's county sheriffs had to trade prisoners because there were too few drunks to grade roads or break rocks on the chain gang. They looked forward to the day when bootleggers and liquor importers would replace the common drunks in chains.³⁰ These WCTU members seemed unconcerned by the vileness of the county

²⁸ "Brewerton's Billboard of the Week's Events", Atlanta Journal, 19 January 1919, front page.

²⁹ "Prohibition is a Magnificent Triumph for the American Clergy", Atlanta Georgian, 30 January 1919, p. 14.

³⁰ "Scarcity of Convict Labor", Georgia WCTU Bulletin, August 1919, p. 4, c. 3 and 4, WCTU Collection, No. 648, Box Ov 8, EUL.

chain gangs that replaced the hated convict lease system.

Rebecca L. Felton and her late husband were praised for

A long hard fight which triumphed at last doing away with this abomination whereby blood money was being wrung from the miserable creatures under unspeakable conditions and whereby some of the great fortunes were made in the state and are now being enjoyed by the grandchildren of men who have gone to their account [all opponents of the WCTU and woman suffrage].³¹

A survey of other articles in the Bulletin from 1918 to 1919 showed how much the lives of the Georgia WCTU members changed over the thirty-eight year struggle for prohibition. Some of the Latimer sisters' supporters were parlor prohibitionists in the 1880s, discussing the problems of alcohol abuse, lobbying the legislature for local prohibition, but denouncing middle western women who assaulted saloons. They might have believed in woman suffrage as the means to achieving prohibition, but were too reticent to demand it in the 1890s. IRS Agents were looking for whiskey stills near Augusta when they followed two farm wives into the woods, only to be surprised to find them chopping and burning a still.³² The Augusta WCTU members joined the Bulletin's editors and James A. Hollomon in worrying that National Prohibition would be as unenforced as state Prohibition had been. The war was

³¹ Ibid.

³² Georgia WCTU Bulletin, December 1919.

not over. Hollomon criticized National Prohibition for allowing medicinal liquor exemptions.³³

Prohibition and Child Labor

On another front, McLendon personally fought without success to stop the hiring of ten and twelve year old factory hands in Georgia. The National Child Labor Committee was equally unsuccessful in persuading Congress to pass a Child Labor Constitutional Amendment. The traditionalist Georgia Legislature was not alone among southern general assemblies in not enforcing Prohibition or protecting children. The Latimer sisters saw their beloved WCTU fade because its main goal, national Prohibition, proved such a violent failure. The federations of woman's clubs, black and white, took over as the chief leaders for child protection and improved city services after World War I.³⁴

Educated black women probably did join Mary L. McLendon, the WCTU or the GWSA in lobbying the State Legislature for equal rights in divorce laws for abolition of child labor. McLendon recalled the many times in the twenty years before 1915 when the Legislators refused to debate fair child guardianship laws or ending child labor. Too many Legislators subscribed to the statement of Asa W. Candler, who said: "The

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Georgia WCTU Bulletin, November 1921; Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. VI, p. 133.

most beautiful sight that we see is the child at labor; as early as he may get at labor the more beautiful, the more useful does his life get to be."³⁵ The opponents of the anti-child labor bill in the Georgia Senate appointed as Georgia's U.S. Senators men who joined other conservative Senators in their coldness towards abolishing child labor.

Like Mary L. McLendon, many national nineteenth century social reformers pursued the goals of enfranchising women, prohibiting alcohol use and abolishing child labor at the same time with equal zeal. They were opposed by similar hostile legislators on the state and federal levels who filibustered major bills to prevent women from obtaining the vote or children from being exploited at work.

The Washington Post reported in 1916 that some southern Senators would even filibuster President Wilson's world War I Preparedness Bill in 1916 to block the Suffrage Amendment. The Reverend Mr. Alexander J. McKelway was the Southern Field Secretary for the National Child Labor Committee, a Prohibitionist and opponent of the Convict Lease System. He wrote it the National Woman's Party (NWP) (The Suffragist magazine) on their extreme statement that all Southern Congressmen opposed the Child labor Bill. He did not believe "that some of the most violent opponents of the child labor

³⁵ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, v. 6, p. 133; Woodward, p. 418.

bill [and woman suffrage] are leaders of the Democratic Party and willing to exert all possible power, even to the extent of fighting the most vital issues of their party, in order to further measures in which they have a direct personal or political interest.' ³⁶

Black social reformers also maintained contacts with their white counterparts in the WCTU between 1912 and 1919. The National WCTU's Union Signal published an article by the Reverend Mr. Henry Hugh Proctor describing Prohibition's benefits to black families. He believed that blacks had to be freed from the evil of strong drink as the Emancipation Proclamation freed them from slavery. African-Americans would work and make progress at a faster pace to create their own salvation once they accepted prohibition. ³⁷

Leila Dillard, the superintendent of World War I relief work among blacks, probably followed the National WCTU's policy of Americanizing blacks as immigrants were. She reported on the similarities between black and white WCTU organizations and black progress in recruiting Prohibitionists.

³⁶ A.J. McKelway to The Suffragist, 3 March 1916, National Woman's Party Papers Group 1, Reel 23, Library of Congress Special Collections.

³⁷ Georgia WCTU Collection, Ov Box 7, No. 647, Emory University Special Collections; for a different view see Rouse, pp. 59-60.

The Impact of World War I

Woodrow Wilson was socially concerned, but the regulation of banking and big business came first. He had to be convinced that woman suffrage and national prohibition were national rather than purely state problems.

Woodrow Wilson saw reform legislative agenda threatened when reformers such as Felton called for America to settle the European war peacefully or join Britain and France militarily.

Mary L. McLendon and the 1912 Resolutions Committee could not dwell on the past glories of a splendid little war when the horrors of the civil war in the Balkans, Armenia and World War I loomed. The members of the Resolutions Committee denounced war every October beginning in 1912 because its chaos destroyed families. The WCTU's Columbus chapter sponsored a "pray for peace" day in October of 1914 to promote this goal.³⁸

McLendon and her resolutions committee of the Georgia WCTU were distracted from their goals by the increasing international tensions that led to World War I. This committee encourage local WCTU chapters to sponsor "pray for peace" days in Georgia cities beginning in 1912, but they were still dedicated to domestic reform issues.

³⁸ Ibid, 27 October 1911, p. 2, October 1914, p. 4, c. 3.

As war threatened in early 1914, the Atlanta Equal Suffrage Association continued to study European woman suffrage, examining Scandinavia and Great Britain. A visiting English woman suffragist assured many Georgians who believe in votes for women that not all British suffragists were as violent as the Pankhursts. The radicalism of these sisters and their mother allowed the conservative opponents of American suffrage to claim that all suffragists had similar radical ideals. When war actually came, McLendon's sympathy for the British, French or Belgian women's sufferings was deeply aroused. She and other WCTU members worked to support French and Belgian orphans. She led the WCTU and GWSA in participating in war work, even though she still wanted women's organizations to work for peace between nations.

Rebecca Latimer Felton (still remembering the horrors of 1861-1865) forcefully expressed her own disgust at the carnage in Europe:

I would have liked (if I had been twenty years younger) to have been one of [Henry Ford's] peace party. Surely, surely, nobody is solicitous to keep warfare going when it means only destruction, disease and death, all spelled with capital D's, and the horrors far beyond the reach for those who do not see it.... This bloody war discounts the Christian religion, it is a foul blot on twentieth century civilization, indicates a relapse into barbarism, it shows the total absence of brotherly

Mullins, p. 3.

Mary G. Mullins, "Home-Front Activities of Atlanta Women During World War I", (Atlanta, 1947), pp. 19-20.

love where science, culture and higher education have long existed.³⁹

When Woodrow Wilson finally decided to send American troops to fight beside the British and French soldiers in northern France in 1917, Georgia woman's club members found the best outlet for their civic responsibility in the preparedness drives after 1917.

The War brought new challenges which overwhelmed other woman's club campaigns. The Georgia Federation of Woman's Club members were determined that the drunken rioting of the Spanish-American War training camps should never be repeated.⁴⁰ The Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs joined the National League for Woman's Service,⁴¹ as club women across the country did, in March of 1917. Experienced soldiers and new recruits of both races and all social classes rushed to enlist in the Army after President Wilson declared war on 10 April 1917. Georgia's Congressional Delegation and the state's Chamber of Commerce succeeded in having Atlanta designated a Government commodities depot for the Quartermasters Headquarters. Recruits were sent to Fort

³⁹ Felton, "The County Home", The Journal Tri-Weekly Edition, 15 December 1915, Reel 20, Collection 81, University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁴⁰ Mullins, p. 3.

⁴¹ Mary G. Mullins, "Home-Front Activities of Atlanta Women During World War I", (Atlanta, 1947), pp. 19-20.

McPherson in Atlanta; Fort Benning in Columbus (Site of the notorious Spanish-American war training camp) and Camp Wheeler at Macon near the Chickamauga Civil War battle field. The U.S. Army ordered Peachtree Road paved and a new cantonment, Camp Gordon, opened in the summer of 1917 in northeastern DeKalb County. Men joined the Army at an even faster rate after Congress authorized a draft at the end of April. The Reverend Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, an old colleague and friend of the sisters and now the president of NAWSA, was appointed National President of the Woman's Committee Council of National Defense by Woodrow Wilson. This Council was designed to co-ordinate the many activities of the woman's club members of the Service League.

Mary L. McLendon, as an executive committee member of the WCTU and GWSA, worked under the direction of Nellie Peters Black, president of the National League for Woman's Service,⁴² and Mrs. Samuel N. Inman, president of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, Georgia Division.

Groups of women, through the YWCA, chaperoned dances for the soldiers or arranged for a service man to have dinner with a family. Soldiers were matched with Atlanta families by Council members and the council members kept the membership

⁴² Mullins, p. 8.

informed of other organizations schedules for dances and volunteer work. Women operated a YWCA hut at every Army training camp where they sewed, wrote letters, ran a library and helped the recruits in many ways. The WCTU members objected to other woman's club volunteers giving the soldiers cigarettes or including cigarettes in personal-care kits for troops in France. The Atlanta WCTU members gave the men anti-smoking and Prohibition tracts instead.⁴³

Even Rebecca Latimer Felton, despite her opposition to the war, could see that women were becoming much more independent through war work. She was a part of the campaign to promote Food Control Administrator Herbert Hoover's goals for the production of more grains and food conservation. Felton found that her most cherished remedies for southern agricultural problems, crop diversification and kitchen gardening, had now become national domestic policy. Hoke Smith and the rest of Georgia's Congressional delegation, only became grudging supporters of food control after much coercion. The Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs members had to do more than just write press releases to convince Smith's followers that food control would benefit them. Many people

⁴³ Mullins, pp. 5-8, 32-35; Georgia WCTU Bulletin, Collection 647, Emory University Special Collections.

thought of any Federal program as an attempt to bring back Republican rule and Reconstruction.⁴⁴

Women from the Atlanta Equal Suffrage Party sponsored a plowing contest at the corner of Peachtree and Baker Streets in order to prove the efficiency of mechanized farming. The women's team beat Governor Hugh M. Dorsey and Mayor Asa G. Candler, who plowed the traditional way with mules and plowshares. These women joined other woman's club members in selling fresh produce at a farmers' market near Peachtree and Baker, where the McLendons had once lived.⁴⁵ The members of the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs assisted the children who tended the demonstration kitchen garden and also gave cooking and canning lessons to poor women. Since club members gave home economics lectures, they deepened their old interest in children's health. The club members carried out Felton's ideals of improving children's health by sponsoring free weigh-ins and check-ups. President Wilson believed that improving children's lives was almost as important as winning the War.⁴⁶

Atlanta's black women had been organizing woman's clubs which had the same goals as the white Georgia Federation of

⁴⁴ Livermore, pp. 138-139; 51-53.

⁴⁵ Mullins, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁶ Mullins, p. 166.

Woman's Clubs. The common need to care for World War I soldiers brought Mrs. Samuel N. Inman into correspondence with Alice D. Clary, the President of the Georgia Federation of Colored Woman's Clubs, for the first time. Black women had more work than just making the soldiers feel at home and replacing the saloons. Black Atlanta women used wartime mobilization to urge that black soldiers and civilians be treated fairly in the streets and on streetcars. They believed that provost marshals, army officers who patrolled black neighborhoods, would keep white soldiers and civilians from rioting.⁴⁷

Mrs. Inman and Nellie Peters Black reported on black women doing War and social reform work to white woman's club members. Inman and Peters were apparently allocating financial resources to the clubs, sharing space and delivering press releases on child health or food preservation from Washington. Inman and Black had to collect reports from all the woman's clubs to send to Dr. Shaw in Washington.

The members of black woman's clubs, as well as white ones, fulfilled Felton's cherished goals by raising money to support the well-baby clinics, home economics demonstrations and publicity for their work. Women, both black and white, won the right to sell war bonds and then out sold the

⁴⁷ Jacqueline A. Rouse, Lugenia Burns Hope, Black Southern Reformer, (Athens, Georgia, 1989), p. 95; Mullins, pp. 7, 46.

salesmen. The Girl Scouts used Mother's Day, as an occasion to raise money for baby clinics. The fund-raising activities climaxed in October of 1918 with an enormous parade that featured the gold star mothers, who had lost family members in the war, followed by woman's club members in separate black or white units. The National league for Woman's War Service staged a rally at Piedmont Park where Atlantans were thrilled when an Army Biplane landed in the meadow.⁴⁸

The Anti-Suffrage Organization

The greatest impact of World War I was the changes war work made in the lives of Georgia women. women learned to drive cars, ambulances or tractors; more women were working and a few had even gone to law or medical school in Georgia. Even housework, cooking and child care, once woman's individual tasks, had become the subjects of woman's club lectures and well baby clinics. This transformation and the expansion of woman's rights to include a demand for professional recognition terrified conservative women. Some Georgia women found the Georgia legislators' traditional views of femininity comforting. These men and women opponents of woman suffrage in Georgia and other states had no national organization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, until 1912.

⁴⁸ Mullins, pp. 104, 109.

The "National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage" was organized in 1912 in New York by Mrs. Arthur M. Dodge to lobby Congress and the State Legislatures against woman suffrage. She founded a national magazine, Woman's Protest Against Woman Suffrage, to publish examples of enfranchised women sabotaging Prohibition, crippling social reform work among the poor, harming the American government structurally by allowing unqualified immigrant women to vote or by neglecting their homes.⁴⁹ Dodge selected essays for her magazine that associated woman suffrage with socialism: for example, "An Indissociable Alliance: Socialism, Suffragism, Feminism." Dodge, who had spent years and a fortune in the kindergarten movement, was almost certainly afraid of losing support of corporate executives and legislators whom she cultivated by means other than the vote.⁵⁰

Southerners' racial fears became more important in the fight against woman suffrage during the 'teens and lasted until the amendment became part of the Constitution.⁵¹ Some of the worst racist anti-suffrage literature was anonymously printed in Selma, Alabama for Texas legislators. The Alabama

⁴⁹ Eleanore Flexner, Century of Struggle, p. 306; "Josephine Marshall Jewell Dodge", Notable American Women, Vol. I, pp. 492-493.

⁵⁰ Flexner, p. 314; Catt, pp. 314-315.

⁵¹ Catt, p. 314.

Association opposed to woman suffrage sponsored the printing of a political cartoon from The Crisis which was unattributed and recaptioned.⁵² The Association's version of the cartoon was entitled, "The South's 'Battalion of Death' - Making the World Safe for Democracy." The drawing, by John Henry Adams, featured a black share-cropper's wife standing on the buzzard's carcass called "grandfather clause," while beating the "Jim Crow" buzzard with the "Federal Constitution" log. She and her two children were menaced by "Segregation" and "Seduction." The Alabama Association obviously intended to scare whites away from woman suffrage by raising the specter of black electoral controls. The reference to 'making the world safe for democracy' was probably meant to mock President Woodrow Wilson's World War I goal. The writer of this handbill deliberately confused the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) magazine, The Crisis, with the NAWSA magazine, The Woman Voter, to scare white Alabamians by equating black civil rights and white woman suffrage.

The Alabama Association circulated another broadside with a terrifying racist headline emphasizing the anti-segregation sympathies of some suffragists. They reprinted letters to The Crisis by Dr. Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt.

⁵² The Crisis, May 1915, Vol. 12, p. 42; Robert L. Rodgers Collection, GAR-27-10, Box 2, Folder 13, GDAH.

W.E.B. DuBois, the editor of The Crisis, had asked for these letters as part of a symposium called "Votes for All" which was published in November 1917. Shaw could not understand why lawful black citizens were not allowed to vote. She longed for the day when Americans would stop manufacturing artificial ethnic and racial differences and realize that all were Americans with common goals. Catt, like Shaw, believed that Americans should stop allowing themselves to be drawn into endless racial, class or ethnic warfare. They had to believe that if Democracy was the best system of government, it had to include everyone in order to function.⁵³

Alabamians were not the only southerners who believed in suffrage ideas and founded chapters of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage to combat them. Georgians organized their own chapter of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in July of 1914. Ernest H. Hill, an attorney from Dothan, Alabama, wrote to Bishop Warren A. Candler asking for anti-suffrage essays. Hill had been challenged to a debate on suffrage by Frances Griffin, a friend of the Latimer sisters, who had been a suffragist for twenty-five years. Hill had also written the Reverend Mr. W.D. Ellis of Dawson, Georgia, for a copy of Ellis's sermon against enfranchising women. Hill needed Candler's advice on

⁵³ "Votes for All," The Crisis, Vol. 15, pp. 19-20; Rodgers Collection.

denouncing woman suffrage because he desired "...to make the strongest plea against this evil, as I can see it, possible. . ." Dr. Candler certainly suggested enough sources for Hill to believe he could score debating points against Griffin. Dr. Candler had continued writing anti-feminist articles for newspaper and magazines between 1912 and 1919.⁵⁴

The Bishop received many approving letters from lawyers and businessmen who were also anti-suffrage. Samuel B. Adams, an attorney and judge from Savannah, believed that the ballot for women was the beginning of the destruction of differences between the sexes. Adams found an article in Scribner's Magazine of November 1913, "The Feminist Intentions," where the author made this claim and even predicted that woman suffrage would end marriage.⁵⁵ Adams was proud that his anti-suffrage essay was being used by Congressman Thomas Heflin in an anti-suffrage address, which would appear in the Congressional Record.

Adams and Candler corresponded with other anti-suffragists, Hamilton McWhorter and Major J.C.C. Black.

⁵⁴ Woman's Protest, July 1914, p. 3; E.H. Hill to W.A. Candler, Candler Collection, No. 2, Box 23, Folder 3, EUL. Mary Martha Thomas, The New Woman in Alabama: Social Reforms and Suffrage (1890-1920), Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1992, pp. 125-128.

⁵⁵ Kraditor, pp. 15-37n, more general magazine anti-suffragism; S.B. Adams to W.A. Candler, 19 December 1913; Candler Collection, Box 22.

McWhorter, the assistant general counsel for the Southern Railway Company, like many others in the power structure, praised Adams and Candler for their verbal assaults on woman suffrage. He believed that Georgia women did not want to vote, that they were too pure to be soiled by filthy politics and that they would be distracted from their places at the center of their homes. Extreme anti-suffragists like attorney George W. Norman, of Hamburg, Arkansas, rather illogically declared that war with Mexico or Germany was a thousand times better than the morally degrading woman suffrage.⁵⁶

Bishop Candler was also corresponding with and possibly becoming a member of the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. He teamed himself with two women who became dedicated foes of the Latimer sisters, Dolly Blount Lamar and Mildred Lewis Rutherford. Lamar, the president of the Georgia United Daughters of the Confederacy, became a vice-president of the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, while Rutherford, the UDC's Historian-General, was appointed an honorary vice-president. The Association members began spreading anti-suffragism through every small town in Georgia in direct competition with Emily C. McDougald's Equal Suffrage Party, Mary L. McLendon's WCTU (which had become more suffragist by 1913), and the woman's clubs. Caroline

⁵⁶ Adams to Candler, Box 22, Folder 8; G.W. Norman to W.A. Candler, 26 October 1913, Box 22, Folder 8; Thomas, pp. 145-147.

Patterson, president of the Opposition to Woman's Suffrage, proudly reported to Bishop Candler on 3 November 1916 that woman's club members in Atlanta, Augusta and Savannah had defeated woman suffrage resolutions in their organizations. She was pleased that Senator Hoke Smith believed that her poorly funded Association had done a great deal of good in stopping woman suffrage.

Lamar knew, however, that the Association still had work to do when Wesleyan women attending a Wilson rally at the Macon Auditorium chanted "We want to vote" and were joined by Mercer men who responded with "votes for women." The politicians and other older people at the rally, however, did not applaud the students. She asked him to write "some strong, short, pertinent arguments against suffrage for distribution among students. . . ." In 1917, as the Woman Suffrage Amendment was coming close to passage, Congress, Patterson and Bishop Candler were still exchanging anti-suffrage pamphlets.⁵⁷ Patterson, who was closely connected with Dolly Lamar, still believed that Bishop Candler and Judge A.B. Lamar could defeat woman suffrage both in Georgia and possibly nationally. She believed that popular opposition and active lobbying against woman suffrage among the members of

⁵⁷ The Woman's Protest, May 1915, p. 19; Caroline Patterson to W.A. Candler, 3 November 1916, Box 35, Folder 4; 31 July 1917, Box 37, Folder 6, Candler Collection, No. 2, EUL.

Georgia's Congressional delegation and Legislators would persuade people of the evil of enfranchising women.⁵⁸

Members of the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage attempted to dissuade woman's club workers, temperance women from the WCTU, and other Georgians through essays in The Macon Telegraph (the home town newspaper of many), handbills, and pamphlets. Patterson, Lamar and other Georgia Association members joined like-minded people in Alabama in expressing the fear that votes for women would mean jury duty as well. County court officials would not consider excusing women from service because of their special maternal duties while others would bribe officials to be released as men did. Members of the Alabama Association were worried because "delicate" women might be selected to sit for trials dealing with murder, prostitution, or bootlegging cases, even though temperance workers had been investigating unsavory sides of life for forty years. Anti-suffragists fantasized that women would be shocked by listening to obscene testimony or be locked in a jury room overnight with men.⁵⁹

Lamar and the other Georgia anti-suffragists were as intent on preserving the traditional forms of southern life

⁵⁸ Patterson to Candler, 31 July 1917, Candler Collection, No. 2, EUL.

⁵⁹ Rodgers Collection; William A. Lind, The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930, (Chapel Hill, 1992), p. 300.

and electoral control by white people as the UDC was. Newspaper writer and editor Eugene Anderson addressed an anti-suffrage meeting at the Dempsey Hotel in Macon and invoked the standard accusations against woman suffrage popular since 1867. Although he believed the woman's place was in the home, he had to admit that women were good office workers (he operated the Georgia-Alabama Business School). He shared a belief in technical education for women with Rebecca L. Felton, the anti-suffragists' most outspoken opponent, but Anderson also shared the ideals that Corra White Harris promoted in her magazine essays in the early 1900's. She idealized the image of the home-loving traditional Georgia woman, who worked outside her home only by necessity and would never vote. Georgia's white women must defer their right to vote to white men to keep masculine respect and preserve the white primary.⁶⁰

Anderson, Harris or Rutherford were never as certain as Lamar that woman suffrage would lead to blacks voting again. Lamar strongly believed that the home was woman's real place, but suggested that women who worked before their marriages made more understanding wives.⁶¹ The ideal of the

⁶⁰ Eugene Anderson, Unchaining the Demons of the Lower Deep or a Petition of Ninety-Nine Percent against Suffrage, (Macon, c. 1915). Corra W. Harris and Charlotte P. Gilman, "The Future of the Home," Independent, Vol. IXI, 4 October 1906, pp. 788-798.

⁶¹ Lamar, When All is Said and Done, pp. 208-209.

traditional southern homemakers was, however, secondary to her worship of the white primary. According to her early anti-suffrage essay, "Mrs. Lamar Sets Forth Reasons for the Formation of League to Oppose Woman Suffrage in Georgia":

...Miss Jane Addams, Anna Howard Shaw and other heritors to Susan B. Anthony's slogan, "Suffrage regardless of sex or color," have sat at the suffrage table and have [claimed] since 1869 that they would break their fast by enactment of a federal law forcing equal suffrage on all states.⁶²

She expanded on the concept of woman suffrage leading to federal election controls and black voting in "The Vulnerability of the White Primary" (1915). She considered Georgia woman suffragists, like Rebecca L. Felton and Mary L. McLendon, the unwitting accomplices of the northern progressives who wanted to break the solid south. Once white women won the right to vote, blacks would only need a leader and better organization to win their voting rights. She published this pamphlet as an essay, "The Menace of Suffrage in the South," in the July 1914 issue of The Woman's Protest.⁶³

The Association may even have sold copies of "The Vulnerability of the White Primary" and "Unchaining the Demons

⁶² "Some Reasons for the Formation of the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage", Constitution, 21 June 1914.

⁶³ Dolly B. Lamar, "The Vulnerability of the White Primary", (Macon, c. 1914), pp. 5-7; "The Menace of Suffrage in the South", Protest, July 1914, pp. 5-7.

of the Lower World" through the "Georgia" column by Caroline Patterson in The Woman's Protest. The Association even printed a post card claiming that property values would fall, taxes and election costs would rise and blacks would vote if woman suffrage became federal law. The group (Lamar or Patterson) even circulated James Callaway's articles from The Macon Telegraph, one of which praised the President of the West Virginia and Virginia WCTU for denouncing woman suffrage.⁶⁴

The national WCTU convention closed its annual convention in Atlanta in November of 1914 with the other state WCTU presidents, including Mary L. McLendon, demanding the right to vote in order to enforce Prohibition. But newspaperman Callaway reminded his readers that Georgia and Virginia had Prohibition without woman suffrage, while California and other western states had woman suffrage but not Prohibition. Callaway's essay, "Taking a Lesson from History," was also reprinted. He repeated the standard anti-suffrage arguments and even claimed that women demanding equal rights had led to the fall of Ancient Rome.⁶⁵ The Georgia Association Opposed

⁶⁴ James Callaway, "Taking a Lesson from History", Woman's Protest, July 1914, p. 7; "The Preservation of Southern Civilization", Woman's Protest, November 1917, vol. XI, no. 6, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid; James Callaway, "Notes and Comments", The Woman's Protest, December 1914, Vol. VI, No. 2, p. 15; Lind, pp. 316-321; Callaway, "Taking a Lesson from History", Pretest, August 1915, pp.

to Equal Suffrage was almost certainly frustrated by their first organizational year because the GWSA would not be destroyed even though the new group had energetically recruited people opposed to enfranchising women and circulated anti-suffrage handbills and pamphlets at WCTU or woman's club meetings in 1914 and 1915.

Although Corra White Harris never seemed to be an Association member, the anti-suffragists certainly had to be proud when her novel ridiculing politically active women was published in 1915. She centered The Co-Citizens on satirical portraits of Rebecca L. and William H. Felton, whom Harris saw as slightly unnatural oddities in nineteenth century Georgia culture. Harris believed that Susan Walton, really Rebecca Felton, was scandalous for attracting attention through public speaking when it was unknown for women.⁶⁶ Harris claimed that Mrs. Walton:

...had kept her husband, an elegant soft old gentleman, in congress for a quarter of a century and up to the very day of his death by being a thorn in the side of the political life of the state. She kept scrapbooks in which she pasted dangerous and damaging information about politicians and prominent men generally. Whenever one of them became a candidate in opposition to her husband, she prepared an awful obituary of him from her encyclopedia of past records; he usually withdrew from the race or was defeated. Few men

⁶⁶ Corra Harris, The Co-Citizens, (Garden City, N.Y., 1915), pp. 21, 93.

live who can face their former deeds in a political campaign.⁶⁷

In this novel, Walton used her masculine brains and feminine emotionalism to guide a small town woman's club in the North Georgia mountains. Club members had turned to her for advice when a rich elderly widow died without heirs leaving the club her entire fortune. The local politicians were outraged when they discovered that the woman's club would collect rents on every office building on the courthouse square. The women managed the property themselves, behaving like children, until the seemingly more rational men intervened.

Rebecca L. Felton might have been expected to respond to Harris's portraits of her as a slovenly old busybody and her husband a fool. Felton took the whole novel as a joke because Georgia woman's club members had been calmly changing social conditions in Georgia for forty years.⁶⁸ Felton had refuted slander like Harris's in My Memoirs of Georgia Politics, published in 1911.

Suffrage, 1913-1920

Mary L. McLendon and Rebecca L. Felton certainly believed that Georgia's Democratic Party leader would sacrifice any goal, including Prohibition, to preserve child labor and/or

⁶⁷ Harris, p. 22.

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 25-28; Talmadge, Rebecca Latimer Felton, p. 96. R.L. Felton, Emory Doubleday Publishers, Collection 81, Reel 4, University of Georgia Library Special Collections.

defeat woman suffrage. The sisters and their friends also had to fight fierce opponents in the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in the second decade of the twentieth century, but the Latimers had new allies in the Georgia Equal Suffrage Party, the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference and the Georgia Woman's party (GWP), even though the members of these organizations disagreed with the sisters over whether the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment or local option suffrage should be the chief goal of Georgia suffragists.

She contributed a long statement to Suffrage in the Southern States by Ida Clyde Clarke in 1914.⁶⁹ Clarke praised the sisters because they

...have long stood for equal suffrage; they began when it took real bravery to espouse an unpopular gospel, and have never flinched. They have labored steadily to raise the disgracefully low age-of-consent law in their State; to secure the right of women to practice law, as well as many other measures of belated justice or protection for women.⁷⁰

McLendon may have written a basic story of Georgia suffrage and condensed or expanded it for Anthony or Clarke. McLendon's contribution to "Suffrage in Georgia" from Southern Suffrage seems to be a condensed version of the "Georgia" chapter from the History of Woman Suffrage. She and

⁶⁹ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol IV, pp. 581-5; Vol. VI, pp. 121-142; Ida Clyde Clarke, Suffrage in the Southern States, (n.p., 1914) pp. 26-31.

⁷⁰ Clarke, p. 27.

Clarke used statements from Emily McDougald and Frances Smith Whiteside to continue the Georgia suffrage narrative into the twentieth century's second decade.⁷¹

Mary L. McLendon began her association with the British feminists when she became one of the few southern women to join women from across the nation in petitioning President Woodrow Wilson to release the radical English suffragist, Emmeline Pankhurst, from detainment on Ellis Island.⁷² McLendon believed that,

It is a downright shame. I would consider the deportation of Mrs. Pankhurst a disgrace to America. It is unbelievable that such a thing could happen in a country that poses as a civilized nation. If she had been a man she would have been allowed to enter the country and go about her business. But in the case of a woman, the sole desire seems to be to deprive her of all her rights, even the few that most men think she has.⁷³

President Wilson allowed Emmeline Pankhurst to go on her lecture tour of the United States after two and a half days of pleas, like McLendon's, on her behalf. McLendon wanted Emmeline Pankhurst to present a forceful address on woman suffrage and on her experiences in Britain to southern women. McLendon did not recall that Pankhurst ever accepted an

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 29-31; Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. VI, pp. 133-139.

⁷² Ford, p. 33.

⁷³ Emma V. Paul Scrapbook, MSS 269F, 10-A-4, Atlanta Historical Society.

invitation to speak in Atlanta in October of 1913. McLendon was joined by Frances Smith Whiteside, a rival for suffrage leadership in Georgia, in the admiration of Pankhurst.⁷⁴

The Georgia Woman Suffrage Association and its sometime allies had a delegate, Leonard J. Grossman, at the mass demonstration in Washington, D.C. on 8 December 1913. Grossman was among the crowd waiting to hear the Reverend Dr. Anna Howard Shaw discuss the suffrage amendment with President Wilson.⁷⁵ Grossman summarized the President's suffrage remarks in this recollection for McLendon's newspaper column:

As the head of [the Democratic] party [Wilson] could not include any reference or recommendation to enfranchise all the women of the union by an amendment to the [Constitution] of the United States of America. Some of us thought he had paid a high price for the honor, and the big [payment] he receives for four years' service, but women have never been tempted and tried as are those who are permitted to hold such offices.⁷⁶

Grossman implied that President Wilson had exchanged his belief in woman suffrage as a social reform measure for conservative support in winning the presidency.

The Latimer sisters joined in a national campaign in the winter of 1913 to persuade the President and Congress to

⁷⁴ Ford, p. 33; Paul Scrapbook, "Wilson Bombarded by Pleas to Free Militant", "Leader of Militants May Crusade South".

⁷⁵ Mary L. McLendon, "The Political Rights of Women", The Atlanta Constitution, 14 December 1913, p. 3B, c. 4-5.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

debate woman suffrage. Felton and McLendon followed all of the developments in the national Congressional lobbying campaign by corresponding with the leaders of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU) and NAWSA. They also corresponded with the moderate suffragists who founded the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference.

By the end of December of 1913, the suffragists in Washington, D.C. had convinced Wilson to support a bill creating a suffrage committee in the House of Representatives. Alice Paul, President of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, sent Mary L. McLendon a telegram asking Georgia suffragists to convince Representative Thomas M. Hardwick, an anti-suffragist, to vote for the committee's creation.

But the path was still not smooth. Suffragists failed in attempts to discuss suffrage with the President in May of 1915. They tried again to see him on his visit to Philadelphia "to welcome into citizenship 4,000 newly-naturalized foreign [male voters]."⁷⁷

Kate Gordon of New Orleans and Laura S. Clay of Kentucky were among other southern woman suffragists who became terrified that the passage of the Federal Suffrage Amendment meant the return of black Republican rule. In an effort to

⁷⁷ McLendon, The Atlanta Constitution, 21 December 1913, p. 10F; Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage to R.L. Felton, 6 May 1915, Felton Collection, No. 81, Reel 16, University of Georgia Special Collections.

preserve the white primary but still have the female vote, Gordon founded the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference to persuade southern legislators to pass local option laws to allow southern women to vote before Congress enacted the Suffrage Amendment. Rebecca L. Felton was one of the suffragists from across the country who attended the Southern States Woman Suffrage in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in November of 1914. She listened to the Conference officials present their plans to convert the Democratic party to woman suffrage work. One speaker declared, "that white women would be voting in the next five or six years, if southern Democratic legislators supported suffrage." The conference members fought a bitter and futile four year struggle to prevent the Federal Suffrage Amendment from passing.⁷⁸

Felton and her sister did not agree with the arguments and tactics of the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference's organizers, but the sisters believed that such women were sincere suffragists.

As veterans of Georgia's Temperance and Convict Lease System battles, Felton and McLendon knew that Southern

⁷⁸ Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920, (New York, 1967) pp. 178-185; Paul E. Fuller, Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movements, (Lexington, KY, 1992), pp. 139-141; "The Southern Women's Conference", The Woman Voter, December 1914, Vol. 5, No. 12: "First Annual Convention of the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference", New Southern Citizen, December 1914, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 6-16. Library of Congress; Woman's Suffrage Collection, Folder 1, A.C. 0079a, GDAH.

Legislators would never willingly share power with white women and had to be forced to do so by the Federal Constitutional amendment. Nevertheless, McLendon admired Kate Gordon for assuming the heavy speaking schedule of Dr. Anna Howard Shaw who had been injured. McLendon wrote in her column that Gordon would deliver an eloquent address in Atlanta, but she would miss Dr. Shaw. Even though Gordon had resigned from NAWSA, Shaw had continued to serve on the board of the SSWSC. Interestingly, many NAWSA leaders continued to be much more enthusiastic about the SSWSC than the Latimers were. The Congressional Union, although it had allowed women from the National Association for Colored Women to march in demonstrations, even believed that enfranchised white women would negate black voting power.⁷⁹ NAWSA's leader seemed to be unwilling to ignore this new suffrage organization, even if they loathed the idea of local option suffrage only. They were either unwilling to alienate another suffrage association or had private misgivings about another federal elections amendment that might give black voters more strength.

The national woman suffragist who was the most committed to the new organization was Alva Belmont. Belmont donated \$10,000 to the SSWSC in 1913, when the Gordon sisters were organizing the association. She had become the national

⁷⁹ McLendon, "Political Rights", Constitution, 8 March 1914, p. 3F; Ford, pp. 111-113; Kraditor, p. 179.

financier of woman's club projects and suffrage organizations, using the fortune from her settlement in a divorce with a Vanderbilt and her inheritance from her deceased second husband, Oliver H.P. Belmont.⁸⁰ Like Rebecca Felton, Belmont was a southerner who had conflicting emotions about southern traditions and high New York society. Belmont seemed to pursue high society in Mobile and New York at the same time as she was donating thousands of dollars to organizations which made professional socialites irrelevant. She was converted to suffragism by Anna Howard Shaw, Mary L. McLendon's friend, after O.H.P. Belmont died in 1908 and became a founder of the National Woman's Party. The Atlanta woman's club members dedicated their dormitory for unmarried working young women to Belmont and Mary L. McLendon in 1917.

The GWSA members made other overtures towards the SSWSC, including Frances Smith Whiteside's welcome delegation for Kate Gordon in January of 1916.⁸¹ Leonard J. Grossman, the GWSA's attorney, claimed that Confederate veterans who settled Wyoming were the first American men to allow women to vote in

⁸⁰ "BELMONT, Alva Erskine Smith Vanderbilt, Notable American Women, vol. I, pp. 126-128; "Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont, Honorary Vice-President, Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference," New Southern Citizen, December 1914, pp. 2, 13-16.

⁸¹ Hattie Rowland Parker, "On the Way to Richmond", New Southern Citizen, January 1916, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 8. This magazine was founded by Jean Gordon to publicize the idea of local option woman suffrage.

state elections. Nate Harris, the last Confederate Veteran to be Georgia's Governor, had promised falsely to sign a suffrage law. Grossman believed that the GWSA could support suffrage and States Rights at the same time.⁸²

The staff of the New Southern Citizen could be condescending about the GWSA members attempts to court them. Hattie Rowland Parker implied that Mary L. McLendon was old fashioned in "On the Way to Richmond," which Parker wrote for the New Southern Citizen of January, 1916:

The presiding officer [of an evening suffrage meeting in Atlanta] was Mrs. [McLendon], an octogenarian and a pioneer suffragist. Much interest was manifested as to the real purpose of the Southern Conference and Mrs. [McLendon] voiced the fears of her followers that we might be antagonistic to the National Association. This we, of course, disclaimed and quoted our Constitution to show that while we were for suffrage PRIMARILY by that State's Rights route, our "summum bonum", is suffrage, and we are working to promote that throughout the South.⁸³

Whether they believed in woman suffrage by constitutional amendment or through States' Rights, most southern suffragists came to feel as vilified as Rebecca L. Felton had felt during the Temperance battles of the nineteenth century. Felton wrote of those earlier days in a chapter for The History of the Georgia WCTU (1914):

⁸² "Leonard J. Grossman's Speech in Atlanta", New Southern Citizen, June 1915, Vol. 1, No. 9, p. 7.

⁸³ Hattie Rowland Parker, "On the Way to Richmond", New Southern Citizen, January 1916, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 4.

How many taunts and slanders, and covert insinuations that were thrust at me, eternity alone can discover. How many sneers were leveled at me, I perhaps will never know, but as I look back at the struggles of that early period, I almost tremble to remember that I was the target of such entrenched power and influence, and that their slanderous liquor-soaked tongues could disseminate their vile hints and innuendos and like thistle down in the wind, scatter them everywhere - in public or in secret.⁸⁴

McLendon continued to collect stories on the Georgia Woman's Party and Equal Suffrage Party events for her weekly column, "The Political Rights of Women", in The Atlanta Journal from 1913 to June of 1915. She used examples of European, even German, women, doing men's jobs successfully to demonstrate that ordinary women can be independent and responsible. She and other Georgia feminists probably learned some of their stories of European women's war efforts through reading the National WCTU's Union Signal, the Suffragist or corresponding with NAWSA and the GWP.

McLendon expressed her admiration for Alaskan men who valued the few women in the territory by voluntarily enfranchising them. She was happy for Kansas women because one was a candidate for Congress and rejoiced that women received the ballot in Illinois. She was insulted when President Wilson pled ill-health to postpone receiving forty-eight NAWSA state presidents. Since he refused to see a

⁸⁴ Felton, Country Life, p. 287.

delegation from the National WCTU for the same reason, McLendon questioned the depth of Wilson's reformism. She reminded the President that western women had voted for the Senators and Representatives who finally listened to the NAWSA state presidents. These Senators had finally voted the Suffrage Amendment out of committee favorably and almost passed it on 19 March 1914.⁸⁵

McLendon devoted most of her space in The Constitution to Georgia suffragists' constant lobbying for a jail matron, support for child protection laws or a minimum wage act. She presented Georgia suffragists as normal southern women who defended their families and were proud of their region.

Mary L. McLendon found an ally in Helen Shaw Harrold for the campaign against the old accusation that woman suffragists and Prohibitionists were extreme radicals from New England bent on returning Federal, Republican and black rule to southern elections. Harrold defended Georgia women in an article for The Macon Daily Telegraph called "Carpetbagger Women in Georgia" on 29 August 1915. She had lived in Georgia since 1906 and was a member of the youngest generation of nineteenth century southern woman suffragists, a true college

⁸⁵ Mary L. McLendon, "The Political Rights of Women", The Atlanta Constitution, 14 December 1913, 28 December 1913, 8 February 1914; Carrie C. Catt and Nettie R. Shuler, Woman Suffrage and Politics; The Inner Story the Suffrage Movement, (New York, 1926), pp. 495-6.

graduate. Harrold was a member-at-large of the Georgia Equal Suffrage Party's Executive Committee in 1915. She was joined on the committee by Mary Raoul Millis as the chairwoman of chapter organizing and Emily C. McDougald, president.⁸⁶

Harrold defended not only her own belief in woman's rights but those of Mary L. McLendon, Rebecca L. Felton and Emily C. McDougald. McDougald, a sometime ally from Augusta, was a member of the Latimer sisters generation who got married and became the mistress of an enormous plantation near Columbus before the Civil War. She might have been simply the respected widow of a Civil War colonel, but she obviously had social concerns beyond the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). She joined the suffrage movement and the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs after she came to Atlanta in 1897. By the spring of 1914, Emily C. McDougald had also been elected state president of the Georgia Federation of Woman's Clubs. McDougald was sufficiently prominent that Jane Addams contacted her when seeking women to support Leo Frank's

⁸⁶ Harrold Brothers Collection, Folder 7, Box 478, Emory University Special Collections; Helen Shaw Harrold, "Carpetbagger Women in Georgia", The Macon Daily Telegraph, 29 August 1915; "Georgia", New Southern Citizen, Vol. 1, No. 5, February 1915, p. 9, Library of Congress.

petition for a new trial on his conviction for murdering Mary Phagan.⁸⁷

Atlanta had several woman suffrage associations during the second decade of the twentieth century whose members were frequently at odds with each other over tactics, personalities and the right to represent all of Georgia's suffragists.

McLendon did not accept McDougald's moderate woman's clubs as genuine reformers. In a letter to Rose Young of The Woman Citizen, she objected to the inclusion of McDougald's Equal Suffrage Party of Georgia in the State Suffrage Section because they did not lobby the Legislature on behalf of the woman suffrage or age of consent, another important reform. She was not even sure that McDougald was still working for woman suffrage which would entitle the Equal Suffrage Party members to join the GWSA.⁸⁸ McLendon considered the leaders of the GWSA's other rival organization, the Woman Suffrage League, to be power hungry radicals. McLendon wrote that Frances Smith Whiteside, a radical, had been elected president of the league soon after its founding in 1912. Whiteside claimed that the League had been organized as the Equal

⁸⁷ Harrold, "Carpetbagger Women," Etta B. Worsley, Columbus on the Chattahoochee, p. 252; Jane Addams, New York Times, 26 March 1914, p. 5, c. 1.

⁸⁸ M.L. McLendon to Rose Young, 22 September 1917, Woman's Suffrage Collection, No. 0079a, Folder 1, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

Suffrage Association in 1892 and was later known as the Atlanta Civic League. Whiteside's League used the WCTU's favorite tactics of high school and college essay contests, street corner lecturing and protest marches.

The suffragists almost certainly wanted to encourage college essayists such as "A.C." who wrote "Should Women Vote?" for the October, 1915 issue of The Brenau College Journal. "A.C." believed that women should be voters because they worked and paid taxes. Women had to vote in order to express their concerns over education or sanitary conditions of food, milk production and the city water systems.⁸⁹

Atlanta's woman suffrage leaders could put aside their disagreements to educate women who were not college students about voting. While the members of these organizations may have quarreled over the reasons why women should vote, they all felt compelled to spread the concept of enfranchising white women without forcing them to choose sides.

McLendon recalled that all three suffrage organizations passed out thousands of handbills and pamphlets during their street corner talks. These handbills, headlined "Isn't it True?," pointed out that businessmen were successful not only

⁸⁹ McLendon to R.L. Felton, 12 October 1914, Felton Collection, 81, Reel 5, University of Georgia Special Collections; Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. VI, p. 133; Clarke, p. 31; A.C., "Votes for Women?", The Brenau College Journal (Gainesville, Georgia), October 1915, p. 22-3, Drawer 245, Box 70, Georgia Department of Archives and History (GDAH).

from personal ambition but from electing representatives who promoted business interests in Congress and the state legislature.⁹⁰ Rebecca L. Felton wrote one of the most popular pamphlets, "Why I am a Suffragist" in 1915. Felton's pamphlet was a more philosophical history of the growth of woman suffrage and the WCTU than Mary L. McLendon's which dealt with activities and events. Felton argued against the anti-suffragists' claims that educated women would not use the ballot:

It is a stock argument with our anti-suffrage friends that women do not care to vote.... This can only be proven when the test is applied. There are those who say they have all the rights they want - have never needed better laws than we have had in Georgia since it was a colony.... Such arguments were presented to the Legislature last summer by highly educated Georgia ladies. To these I can only say if they prefer to hug their chains, I have no sort of objection. If they accept the position of inferiority, why try to impress them with repeated arguments against serfdom in mind, body or estate?⁹¹

Rebecca L. Felton, Mary L. McLendon and other Georgia suffragists believed that the anti-suffragists' States Rights and traditional womanhood opposition to woman suffrage would become irrelevant in the second decade of the twentieth century. The other women might not have been as harsh as

⁹⁰ Anthony, p. 135; Raoul Family Collection, No. 548, Box 33, Folder 3, Emory University Special Collections; A.C. - 0079a, Folder 9, GDAH.

⁹¹ Felton, Country Life, p. 255.

Felton was when she denounced the States Rights believers for wanting to "...hark back to a charnel house for healthy inspiration to try and find rules and regulations, drawn from the fetid atmosphere that prevailed in the early [1860's]."⁹²

Georgia's woman suffragists buried their disputes on 16 November 1915 to join an eighty car and float procession through the streets of downtown Atlanta. Mary L. McLendon, carrying an enormous bunch of yellow chrysanthemums, rode in a yellow car with "Eastern Victory" painted on its sides. Her car was followed by a brass band and two hundred women holding banners from a parade in New York City which had failed to convince the New York State Legislature to enact woman suffrage. Mrs. W.S. Witham, the Latimer sisters' first cousin, Mrs. Robert Alston, Mrs. Z.D. Harrison and Eleanor Raoul were among those who rode in the sixty-three other decorated cars.⁹³ The parade ended with two floats, one in yellow and white symbolizing a globe with a "Universal Suffrage" banner and one with children wearing sashes of the suffrage states, surrounding a lovely, blind-folded woman holding a "Justice" banner. The parade ended with a chrysanthemum draped pony cart with "Georgia Catching Up" on

⁹² Felton, Country Life, p. 253; Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, p. 60.

⁹³ Raoul Family Collection, No. 548, Box 33, Folder 3; Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, p. 135.

a sign on its sides. Eleanor Raoul concluded her notes on Atlanta's largest suffrage march by commenting on the public and police response:

The audience showed absolutely no adverse sentiment. Nothing but astonishment and commendation was heard along the line [of march].

The only flaw was that the Chief of Police in spite of a written letter and verbal assurances of the fullest police protection gave no order regarding the suffrage parade and street cars and all kinds of vehicles filled the street directly after the city parade ended. [Our] parade was continually broken and the marchers were jammed between street cars and onlookers who were not kept to the side walk.... Great indignation at this treatment was felt not only by suffragists but by those not really interested in the cause.⁹⁴

When Eleanore Raoul rode in the Fulton-DeKalb Equal Suffrage Party's car in the Atlanta Suffrage parade, she had been organizing weekly neighborhood suffrage meetings in Atlanta for about a year.⁹⁵ Mary Raoul Millis, Eleanore's sister, joined her in founding neighborhood equal suffrage associations in the way that the Latimer sisters organized neighborhood WCTU chapters twenty-five years earlier. Mary Wadley Raoul must have been very proud to see her daughters joining her in the campaign for woman suffrage. Mrs. Raoul was the daughter of William M. Wadley, the founder of the Central of Georgia Railroad, and married to William G. Raoul,

⁹⁴ Eleanore Raoul, "First Suffrage Parade in Georgia", Raoul Collection, Box 33, Folder, 3.

⁹⁵ New Southern Citizen, February 1915, p. 9.

another railroad magnate. The Raoul sisters' parents, in 1915, were also founding the Atlanta Associated Charities.⁹⁶

Eleanore Raoul became so deeply involved in suffrage work that she became a field secretary for NAWSA, working from the New York office. Before she returned to Atlanta for its suffrage parade, she was one of the thirty thousand women who marched on Fifth Avenue in New York. After the New York and Atlanta suffrage marches, Raoul became a suffrage organizer in West Virginia's panhandle counties. She even created suffrage majorities in these mountain counties where people had been the most opposed to enfranchising women. She wrote letters to her mother and sisters in Atlanta, expressing her pride in being a NAWSA field secretary and working at the New York headquarters.⁹⁷ She told her family that the Atlanta suffrage atmosphere seemed hopelessly tame when compared to the NWP's silent picketing of the White House, the mobs on Washington, D.C., street corners screaming insults at the picketers and the jailed militant suffragists' hunger strikes. Raoul, like Mary L. McLendon, singled moderate Emily C.

⁹⁶ Mary Raoul Millis, The Family of Raoul; A Memoir, (Asheville, N.C., 1943), pp. 200-203.

⁹⁷ Catt, p. 290; Raoul Collection, No. 548, Box 30, Folder 16, Emory University Special Collections.

McDougald out for special condemnation as an obstacle to the passage of the Federal Woman Suffrage Amendment.⁹⁸

Rebecca Latimer Felton challenged the anti-suffragists basic beliefs when she and other suffragists defended the Georgia bill for woman's right to vote before the Georgia Senate in the summer of 1915. Felton, Mary L. McLendon, and their Georgia Woman Suffrage Association associates overcame the obstacles erected by getting Representative Edward Wohlwender of Muscogee County to introduce a suffragist bill. The next year they persuaded State Senators William A. Buchannon of Blakely in Early County and E.P. Dobbs of Marietta to schedule Judiciary Committee hearings. Felton and other suffragists applied to testify for the enfranchisement of women. The anti-suffragists led by Dolly Blount Lamar and Mildred Lewis Rutherford spoke for the opposition. Felton made notes for the Woman's World newspaper articles in which she complained that the disputants were directed to appear at 2:30 p.m. on the hottest day of the year when temperatures went over one hundred and were kept waiting over two hours while the Legislators endlessly debated the creation of more

⁹⁸ Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. VI, p. 139; "How They Do in Georgia", Felton Collection, No. 81, Seal 14, University of Georgia Special Collections.

⁹⁸ Raoul Collection, Ibid; Linda G. Ford, Iron-Jawed Angels: The Suffrage Militancy of the National Woman's Party, 1912-1920, (Lanham, MD., 1991), pp. 123-133, 197, 207.

Georgia counties. Felton acidly observed that Georgia already had more counties than Texas.⁹⁹

When the debate finally started, Felton became even angrier to find out that she, Harrold and Frances Smith Whiteside, who replaced Mary L. McLendon, had ten minutes each to present the case for woman suffrage.¹⁰⁰ Dolly Blount Lamar and Mildred L. Rutherford had fifteen minutes each to denounce it and one of them was allowed to drone on for forty-five minutes, reading her speech from a thick, typed document to her tired, hot, but extremely patient audience. Felton concluded that the committee hearings had been stacked against the suffragists by the Legislature's Liquor men. Felton wrote as scathingly about the legislators themselves when she described one as sleeping, another as asking childishly to be excused, and the rest as being distracted by the effects of their heavy lunches accompanied, no doubt, by liquor.¹⁰¹

Felton noted that the anti-suffragists' endless harangues against Jane Addams and the late Susan B. Anthony, were vile and hysterical. Mary L. McLendon, who did not testify at the suffrage hearings in 1915, almost certainly sat in the gallery

⁹⁹ Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. VI, p. 139; "How They Do in Georgia", Felton Collection, No. 81, Reel 16, University of Georgia Special Collections.

¹⁰⁰ Talmadge, p. 106.

¹⁰¹ Felton, "How They Do in Georgia", Felton Collection, No. 81, Reel 16, University of Georgia Special Collections.

making her own notes. She recalled that Lamar was extremely contradictory in claiming that women were too irresponsible to vote and then demanding too many services from the legislators. Rutherford reminded them that most Georgia women enjoyed so much male admiration and financial support that they would not sacrifice them for the right to vote. Lamar and Rutherford told the legislators not to believe the few women who wanted the ballot.¹⁰² The State Representatives greeted the anti-suffragists' speeches "with howls of appreciation [for] . . . the type that appealed to 'the woman who was the mother of children and realized that her place was at home with her hand on the cradle.'" Felton, McLendon, Whiteside and other woman suffragists were undoubtedly bitter but not surprised when the State Senate Judiciary Committee reported the bill unfavorably.

Helen Harrold and Rebecca Felton expressed their outrage in replies to Rutherford, Lamar or Caroline Patterson in southern newspapers. Harrold praised the Southern Conference for Education and Industry and its Resolution declaring that women must vote to improve schools. She believed that women could use homemaking as an exemption from jury duty the way men used factory work or their professions. She took James Callaway to task for stating in a column that women were unfit

¹⁰² Anthony, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. VI, pp. 139-140.

to vote. She also pointed out that the woman suffrage Constitutional Amendment did not mention color and was over forty years old rather than seventeen.¹⁰³ She defended the southern heritage of Emily McDougald, Mary L. McLendon and Rebecca L. Felton. Felton summarized "Why I am a Suffragist" when she lectured the legislators and The Telegraph's readers on the WCTU's long assistance to distressed mothers. She was as proud as ever that this Association saw enfranchising women as a way of protecting their lives. Like Harrold, she was proud of her southern heritage and that of other Georgia temperance or suffrage women.¹⁰⁴ She spoke for Harrold and other suffragists when she wrote:

The organization of anti-suffragists [also called anti-women] has been very fitly labeled when they are called an association of women who only made a business of travelling the state and nation to insist that all other women be denied a like opportunity. Why? Because these very timid women were made and only qualified to stay at home 'as ordained by God.' It was plain speaking but not too plain after Mrs. Whiteside and Mrs. Cheatam had been charged with fostering negro equality and abandoning their true positions to ask for equal suffrage, such as twelve states and one territory

¹⁰³ Helen Shaw Harrold, "Leading Southern Educators Endorse Woman Suffrage", Felton Collection, Scrapbook, Reel 19, No. 81, University of Georgia Special Collections, Harrold to The Macon Telegraph, 20 July 1915, University of Georgia.

¹⁰⁴ Harrold Carpetbagger Women in Georgia; "Reply to Miss Patterson", The Macon Telegraph, 1 January 1917.

had already granted and which twelve others were about ready to grant.¹⁰⁵

Rutherford was also attacked by Mary L. McLendon, who joined Emily C. McDougald and Frances S. Whiteside in "Suffragists Answer Miss Rutherford" in the 22 August 1915 of The Macon Daily Telegraph. McLendon and her co-authors believed that white women could vote under the same literacy qualifications as white men of that day were doing. They reminded The Telegraph's readers that the age of sexual consent for girls was still ten, even though men supposedly revered disenfranchised white women. McLendon knew many women who became suffragists in frustration over not being able to influence men to enforce Prohibition or city sanitation laws. Anti-suffragists' claims of indirect influence were attacked. The suffragists always believed that anti-suffragists' silly remarks symbolized their shallow position.¹⁰⁶

Mary Latimer McLendon and Rebecca L. Felton had earned the admiration of hundreds of Georgia women and some men who were not official suffragists. Since Felton was famous enough by 1915 to be protected from the worst of the anti-suffragists' verbal assaults, she was asked to defend suffrage

¹⁰⁵ Felton, "Mrs. Felton on that Hearing", The Macon Telegraph, 29 August 1915.

¹⁰⁶ Mary L. McLendon, et. al., "Suffragists Answer Miss Rutherford", The Macon Daily Telegraph, Section 1, p. 10, c. 1-2.

by many Maconites.¹⁰⁷ Charles C. Harrold, Helen Shaw Harrold's husband, Emma T. Martin and Emily C. McDougald joined in asking for Felton's help in challenging Dolly Blount Lamar for the presidency of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The Macon Telegraph published editorials in favor of Lamar, as if she were a candidate for county commissioner or the state legislature. Lamar was praised for all the traditional ideals of southern womanhood that made them oppose woman suffrage. While Rebecca did not campaign to become the regent of the UDC, she assisted Emily McDougald in her losing battle to oust Dolly Lamar and Mildred Rutherford from the leadership of the UDC.

Felton corresponded with Belle Bennett who sought her assistance in establishing equal rights for women in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Bennett and Felton faced the determined opponents in Bishop Warren A. Candler and the other anti-woman's rights Bishops.¹⁰⁸ Bennett had become president of the Woman's Missionary Council after twenty years of social reform work in the black community. Felton was also called on to help Helen Dortch Longstreet, another outspoken

¹⁰⁷ C.C. Harrold to Felton, 13 February 1914, E.T. Martin to Felton, 15 July 1914, 3 May 1915, Felton Collection, No. 81, Reel 4, University of Georgia Special Collections.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid; E.C. McDougald to Felton, 16 May 1915; Belle H. Bennett to Felton, 15 July 1912, Felton Collection, No. 81, Reel 4, University of Georgia Special Collections; Scott, Natural Allies, p. 91.

Georgia woman, to fight the power company over damming Talullah Gorge and destroying its beautiful falls. Longstreet had campaigned tirelessly to restore the memory of her late husband, General James Longstreet, often accused of failing Lee at Gettysburg, and unpopular also because of his Republican politics.¹⁰⁹ Helen D. Longstreet now joined the sisters in successfully lobbying the legislators to convert the Georgia Normal and Industrial Institute into the Georgia State College for Women in 1917. The new college's administration was dedicated to following Felton's goals from the 1880s by designing its curriculum for women, and adding technical courses to the academic curriculum. Felton was as proud of the college's young woman graduates as she was of her own grand-daughter. She saw other goals realized when Eleanore Raoul became the first woman graduate of Emory University Law School in 1920. A woman graduate of a Georgia College, Leila Daugherty, had also been admitted to the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta.¹¹⁰

The Latimer sisters were certainly proud of the women who won the right to vote in Lookout Mountain on the border

¹⁰⁹ H.D. Longstreet to Felton, 22 July 1915 and others "H.D. Longstreet", Dictionary of Georgia Biography, Vol. II, pp. 633-5.

¹¹⁰ "Longstreet", Dictionary of Georgia Biography, p. 633; Felton, Country Life, p. __; Bulletin Georgia State College for Women (Milledgeville, 1926), p. 4; GDAH, Millis, Raoul Family, p. 201.

between Georgia and Tennessee in 1917. The Tennessee legislature amended their laws to allow white women property owners to vote in city elections. The Georgia Senate finally reported favorably on a state suffrage bill after hearing from McLendon and Whiteside again. The Constitution reported on the legislature's unusual response to this woman suffrage bill in a brief front page article, in which McLendon's speech was summarized:

She showed the progress that has followed in the states where suffrage has been extended to women, and stated that it would only be a matter of time until the women in every state would be allowed the privilege of the ballot by a federal amendment, and that the women of Georgia preferred to have this right granted them by their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons.¹¹¹

Frances Smith Whiteside praised President Woodrow Wilson as the great American leader and proponent of woman suffrage because he realized that Democracy had to be inclusive. She appealed to the Georgia Senate to pass this bill in his honor.

This debate was in the background as white women property owners won the right to vote in Waycross in south Georgia that year.¹¹² McLendon believed that such local electoral victories would eventually lead to women voting for the state

¹¹¹ "Equal Suffrage in State Favored", Constitution, front page, c. 7.

¹¹² A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Woman Suffrage Activities in Atlanta", Atlanta Historical Society Journal, January 1979, p. 51.

legislature, even if Congress never voted for the Federal Constitutional Amendment. She was even more delighted when Atlanta became one of the large eastern cities to pass municipal woman suffrage in 1919. Even the anti-suffrage Atlanta Journal joined in congratulating this city's white woman for finally winning the ballot after a nineteen year struggle.¹¹³ The Journal reported McLendon's pride in the achievement:

Mrs. Mary L. McLendon, a pioneer leader in the state suffrage circle, prefaced her remarks with the statement that she had lived in Atlanta since 1860, almost without interruption save when she fled before Sherman's army, that she had paid tax here for many years and had always thought Atlanta a wonderful town. Now, however, she knew Atlanta to be the best city in the country.¹¹⁴

Emily C. McDougald and McLendon organized a meeting the week after the vote to teach women how to vote and how to use the ballot to further woman's club goals. McLendon wanted women to pay their poll taxes, but demand that the money be used only to buy text books or winter clothing for poor children who often missed school in cold weather. The Atlanta Equal Suffrage Party or the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association distributed handbills urging women to vote for better schools,

¹¹³ "Primary Action Entering Wedge, Say Suffragists", Atlanta Constitution, 4 May 1919, front page, c. 7, p. 9, c. 2-5.

¹¹⁴ "Atlanta Sets Pace by Giving Women Vote in Primary", Atlanta Journal, 3 May 1919, front page, c. 7.

sanitation and playgrounds.¹¹⁵ The handbill advised the new voters:

Don't shirk your task; Now that the opportunity has come to you, help make your ward the best in the city. Men and women make the home together. They work together, they play together; then why not vote together? Are the women of Georgia less equal to the task than the women of Arkansas?¹¹⁶

Georgia women seemed determined to prove that they were sensible voters and not Corra Harris's fictional frivolous, empty-headed females who were too shallow to work hard at governing.¹¹⁷

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary Latimer were certainly aware that Congress had, by an overwhelming majority, passed the Woman Suffrage Constitutional Amendment in June of 1919, without the votes of Georgia's delegation. Thirty-three states had ratified the Amendment before the summer of 1920, in spite of intense and vicious lobbying by the Anti-Suffragists.¹¹⁸ The National American Woman Suffrage Association organizers spent the summer successfully campaigning in every uncommitted state, including Georgia, and gained three more ratifications before August of 1920. In

¹¹⁵ "Mayson Tells Women How to Handle Ballot", Journal, 8 May 1919, p. 5, c. 1.

¹¹⁶ "Women! Your Home and Your Children Need You", Woman's Suffrage Collection, AC-00-079a, GDAH.

¹¹⁷ Harris, p. 37.

¹¹⁸ Catt and Schuler, Woman Suffrage and Politics, p. 371.

September and October, NAWSA's attorneys defended the Amendment against the Anti-Suffragists' lawsuits which sought to delay the registration of women and prevent their voting in the Presidential election in November of 1920.

McLendon hoped that Georgia's Legislature would not even consider the Amendment because she and the other local suffragists knew that it would be defeated. The Anti-Suffrage representatives introduced the amendment at the Legislature's opening, sure of its rejection. The Suffragists failed to have the debate and vote of the House Committee on federal Constitutional Amendment postponed. One representative who favored woman suffrage called the legislature's actions "bloodthirsty and vindictive." The Savannah Press declared the legislators "stupid and corrupt" for not ratifying the Amendment, but the male voters who had elected these legislators were really at fault when Georgia stood in the way of justice. The Anti-Suffrage legislators in each House repeated the same hollow arguments they had put forward in 1914 and 1917. Mary L. McLendon, Rebecca L. Felton and thousands of Georgia women were left in impossible legal circumstances by the legislators' defiance on woman's suffrage of the U.S. Congress and the Federal Constitution in spite of the urging of U.S. Senator Nate Harris and President Woodrow Wilson.

Although there were several woman suffrage bills offered by Progressive legislators in the 1917 and 1919 General Assembly sessions, none was reported out of committee or debated, much less passed. Not even the well-known Progressive prohibitionist and opponent of the Convict Lease System, William A. Covington of Colquitt County, managed to convince his fellow legislators to allow women to vote in National elections. John Y. Smith, one of the delegates from Fulton County and an attorney, saw his bill to permit female voting in State Primary Elections sent to the Privileges and Elections Committee. The City of Atlanta, however, had approved female suffrage so women social reformers could finally vote for their cherished ideals in education and prison reform. As the fall of 1919 approached, Mary L. McLendon and other prospective Atlanta woman voters were extremely confused by the city and federal laws favoring woman suffrage and the state's refusal to allow women to vote.¹¹⁹

McLendon worried about the women paying the poll tax, being accepted by the county clerks when they registered and the application of the male-oriented voter registration laws to women. She had been working with Georgia Attorney-General A.R. Denny since August to insure that women would be able to vote. Denny believed that women were not covered by the

¹¹⁹ Georgia House Journal; 1917, p. 380; Georgia House Journal; 1919, pp. 286, 623, 770, 823.

registration laws for men. Women could pay the poll tax and register on election day, since they were not allowed to enroll in August. McLendon urged women to "go to [the] polls and vote" based on Denny's legal opinion.¹²⁰

When she tried to register to vote in 1919 she was rebuffed by every official she approached. The Fulton County registrar told her the register had closed and she had to apply to the election commission. The tax collector insulted her by saying she could vote next year after accepting her money.¹²¹ The Secretary of State informed her that allowing women special permission to vote was not one of his duties. Governor Hugh M. Dorsey, a social reformer himself, refused even to answer her letter. She concluded that men would not allow women to vote unless women forced them to honor the new Constitutional Amendment:

They have proved this since 1895, when we begged them to eliminate the word 'male' from the state constitution, and on this good year of our Lord 1920, they have persistently refused to enfranchise women by state enactment. Thank God, the nineteenth Federal Amendment has knocked this foolishness higher than a kite and southern women will have at last what southern men have left to the negro man, presidential and municipal suffrage.¹²²

¹²⁰ Anthony, p. 142; Catt, p. 466; Mary L. McLendon, "'Go to the Polls and Vote' Urges Suffrage Leader", Atlanta Constitution, 1 November 1920, front page, c. 5; p. 6, c. 7-8.

¹²¹ McLendon, "'Go to the Polls and Vote...'"

¹²² Ibid.

McLendon apparently found a judge or other government official who gave her permission to register to vote and pay the poll tax on election day. Mary L. McLendon proudly cast her first vote at the age of eight-two in the Atlanta's city primary and had even served as a poll-watcher.

Conclusion

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary L. McLendon expressed progressive attitudes toward woman suffrage and social reform, but they could also be moderately conservative. They corresponded with NAWSA and even NWP leaders who believed that women had a natural right to vote and with the SSWSC founders who wanted local option suffrage only, with strict controls to keep African-Americans from voting. While the Latimer sisters felt that women ought to vote as taxpayers and citizens, they really believed that women needed the ballot to ensure the maintenance of prohibition, the ending of child labor and other progressive reforms. The sisters favored the national Woman Suffrage Amendment, bypassing the Georgia General Assembly, but acted locally as did many progressive reformers in other states. Mary L. McLendon led Georgia's woman suffragists in parading with suffragists in New York and Washington, D.C.. Atlanta's suffrage demonstration was not as violent as the one in Washington, D.C. or as militaristic as New York's 1913 parade, but was closer to the organized,

smaller American Suffragette march in New York in 1909.¹²³ Woman suffragists gained a public identity from these public rallies, as the WCTU members did in the nineteenth century. Men and women who were undecided about woman suffrage could see that suffragists were not disruptive radical feminists.

The growing political power of white women was an example of the many paradoxes of Georgia life in the early twentieth century because African-Americans were being disfranchised at the same time. Women were working to improve schools and beginning the campaign against lynching when the Ku Klux Klan was menacing more black Georgians. The Convict Lease System had been abolished, but prisoners continued to be abused in the county chain gangs into the 1950s. These old horrors from nineteenth century Georgia society continued to haunt the newly enfranchised Latimer sisters, even though the decade between 1910 and 1920 had seen many of their goals achieved.

United States Senator William Duffell of Georgia, the first woman Senator, elected on 27 November 1912. From Charles Kirtland, *22nd Century, 1912-1913*, Birmingham, AL., Osmor House, 1917, p. 123.

¹²³ Ellen Carol DuBois, "Marching Toward Power: Woman Suffrage Parades, 1910-1915," in William Graebner, ed. True Stories from the American Past, (New York, 1992), pp. 88-116.



United States Senator Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia, the first woman Senator, triumphant on 21 November 1922. From Charles Kuralt, Southerners: Portrait of A People, Birmingham, AL., Oxmoor House, 1986, p. 148.

CHAPTER IX

Epilogue: 1921

Even though the Woman Suffrage Amendment was approved by the United States Congress and ratified by thirty-two states, outside of the South, Georgia women still had to fight the Georgia General Assembly for the right to vote in crucial state elections. While woman voters did not drive corruption out of local elections, the woman's organizations raised the level of debate during the campaigns. These organizations provided voters with objective information on the candidates' backgrounds and attitudes toward social reform, lessening the opportunities for candidates to make wild claims. The Latimer sisters were leaders of the education movements as they had been in the struggle to win suffrage. The sisters and their associates on the national level did not seem to make much progress through using the vote; they faced the same local opponents for fifty years, the same racial violence and, after 1900, a conservative Republican President Warren G. Harding, with a very corrupt administration.

Mary L. McLendon's Death

Mary L. McLendon spent the last eleven months of her life working to make legislators accept the nineteenth amendment and working to improve Prohibition enforcement. She presided over her last weekly Atlanta-Willard WCTU chapter meeting at

the Trinity Methodist Church on 29 September 1921.¹ There were discussions and plans to compel the obstinate legislators to obey the U.S. Constitution on Prohibition and women voters. When Katie Lee Reeves noticed how tired McLendon looked, McLendon insisted that she was all right, but she wanted Reeves to conduct the weekly meetings in October and November until she felt better. McLendon was too physically infirm to attend the WCTU Annual Convention on 25 to 28 October 1921, but she sent a report on the Willard Chapter's distribution of Union Signals and other literature to anybody (including blacks) who wanted it.² She concluded the letter with a thought about the legislative barriers to women;

I have never been able to secure the privilege of putting [Temperance Rally] posters in the Court House, although women have been taxpayers from time immemorial.... Women are said to be voters now, although Georgia and Mississippi were the only two states in the United States who deliberately cheated their women out of what everybody said belonged to them. Women should see to it that good women are elected to every office men have been filling since Georgia men could vote themselves.³

¹ Katie Lee Reeves, Life Sketch of Mrs. Mary Latimer McLendon, (Atlanta, 1921), unpagged; biographical file Atlanta Historical Society Library.

² Ibid.

³ Mary L. McLendon, "Fulton County", Report 38th Annual Convention of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Georgia (Atlanta, 1921), pp. 86-7.

She told Katie Reeves to tell the Atlanta members and the delegates "Sisters speed on - keep up the fight".⁴

Mary L. McLendon died on 20 November 1921, three weeks after she had sent the report to the WCTU Convention. The Georgia WCTU Bulletin published its president's funerary tribute to McLendon and also a biographical pamphlet by Katie Lee Reeves. President Dillard praised McLendon as a pioneer who worked on the lonely and rough task of clearing a path for younger women to follow. Reeves believed McLendon's life of service to her community through the WCTU should inspire women to continue the struggle for child protection, prison reform and prohibition's enforcement. The Atlanta WCTU chapters dedicated a marble drinking fountain in the State Capitol to her, named the south Atlanta chapter in her honor and held annual memorial services on 20 November during the 1920's. The Atlanta Constitution and Atlanta Journal published front page biographical tributes to her memory. Mary L. McLendon and Rebecca Latimer Felton were not only the most influential women in the state, but were more unusual because they were sisters.⁵

⁴ Reaves, Mary L. McLendon.

⁵ Leila Dillard, "Words Fitly Spoken", Georgia WCTU Bulletin, November 1921, p. 2, c. 4, p. 3, c. 1-3; Reeves, Life Sketch, "Her Two Ambitions Realized Mrs. McLendon Goes to Reward", Atlanta Constitution, 21 November 1921, front page; Mrs. August Burgard, "Mary L. McLendon as I Knew Her", Constitution, 27 November 1921; Journal, front page, 21 November 1921.

Every woman, of either race, who voted for better schools or improved city sanitation in May of 1921 paid Mary L. McLendon greater tributes than eulogies or a drinking fountain. They had voted to improve their schools and neighborhoods which were McLendon's most cherished goals. Black women had worked to delay an Atlanta school referendum until money was dedicated to a black public high school, which became Booker T. Washington High School. Atlanta women were allowed to vote after paying a dollar to register, even though the State Constitution made no provision for it and the legislators had refused the Woman Suffrage Amendment. An Atlanta attorney challenged the results of the balloting in court on the grounds that it violated state law. Georgia women were vindicated on 6 May 1921, when a Fulton Superior Court Judge validated the referendum's conclusions. Even the anti-suffrage Journal had to praise the referendum because more people voted than in any previous local election. The overwhelming number of votes to spend money for schools and civic improvements meant progress and a boost for business. The Georgia legislature, like other southern legislatures, lost to woman suffrage. Eventually even the undue influence of the conservative rural counties through the county unit

system could not keep southern white women from voting or running for office.⁶

The Latimer sisters seemed to inspire younger women to promote better schools or city sanitation by lobbying school boards and city councils more effectively or even running for office themselves.

Mary L. McLendon never lived to see her friend, Helen Shaw Harrold, win election to the Macon City Council. Harrold won her office on a platform of improving city sanitation and cleaning up corruption in City Hall, fulfilling McLendon's last wishes. Harrold proved that a woman could serve in a public office and be a wife and mother, contrary to the popular myth. Felton delightedly sent a post card to her successful friend and proclaimed, "There's one in the eye for Dolly Lamar!"⁷ Felton expressed the relief felt in 1920 by many women:

The nineteenth amendment was submitted in 1919, as everyone knows, and on August 26, 1920, the Secretary of State was able to certify that thirty-six legislatures had ratified it, and hence it was the law of the land. And the women of Georgia, along with their sisters in all the other states,

⁶ "Bond Validations Arguments Start", Atlanta Journal, 5 May 1921, front page, c. 3; "The Bond Issue Validated", Journal, 8 May 1921, p. 6, c. 2; "Brown Continues Fight on Bonds", Constitution, 7 May 1921, front page, c. 3; William A. Lind, The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, pp. 296-297.

⁷ Harrold Brothers Collection, No. 7, Box 478, Emory University Special Collections; Harris, The Co-Citizens, pp. 155, 216-217.

were made citizens.... It has been a slow process of evolution. But today our women face the most hopeful era in the history of women.⁸

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary L. McLendon not only experienced every change in Georgia society from 1850 to the 1920's, but helped create many of these changes themselves. They were not only passionate believers in Georgia's improvement but were keen observers and writers.

Racial Troubles

Rebecca Felton had become so famous as a political commentator by the early 1920s, an unusual role for a southern woman, that many young male social reformer politicians turned to her for advice and sympathy on social problems.

Hooper Alexander was overwhelmed by letters and telegrams from blacks and whites across Georgia begging for assistance for people held in involuntary servitude. Alexander was in a state of deep depression over his inability to help these people when he confided these thoughts to Rebecca Latimer Felton on 31 May 1921. He described a few of the situations his correspondents faced. He sadly concluded that racial violence had grown worse in the sixty-six years since the Civil War and would never improve during his lifetime.⁹

⁸ Felton, The Romantic Story of Georgia Women, (Atlanta, 1930), p. 29.

⁹ Hooper Alexander to Felton, 31 May 1921, Felton Collection, reel 20, no. 81, Dittmer. Black Georgia, p. 81.

He and Felton believed that lobbying President Warren G. Harding would convince the Chief Executive to put more money into and hire more attorneys to prosecute farmers who held people in peonage, but this did not bring a response.

Hooper Alexander appointed United States District Attorney for North Georgia by President Woodrow Wilson. He began prosecuting John N. Williams, a wealthy Jasper County planter, for keeping black prisoners in peonage well beyond the end of their minor sentences. He was later tried for murdering eleven prisoners and performing other cruelties to hide the peons from the Justice Department officials investigating charges probably brought by the Atlanta National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). County sheriffs arrested many blacks for vagrancy even if they had proof of employment or military service. Blacks who were accused of bootlegging, often without evidence, frequently shot it out with the posse which led to lynching and more violence.¹⁰

Governor Hugh M. Dorsey was so outraged by abuses revealed in the Williams trial that he compiled summaries of 135 cases where blacks were lynched, held in peonage, forced to leave certain rural Georgia counties by the Ku Klux Klan, or subject to acts of violence. He cited some of the same cases

¹⁰ Hooper Alexander to Felton, 31 May 1921, Felton Collection, reel 20, no. 81.

that Felton referred to in the Independent essay, such as the white man who was sentenced to a year in prison for raping and mutilating a black woman in front of her children or the elderly crippled black man who was shot while defending black women.¹¹ He was asked to present the results of his investigation of mob violence to a conference of Atlanta's Commission on Inter-Racial Cooperation (CIC), a voluntary association, in April of 1921.

The Feltons and the WCTU had been exposing the evils of the Georgia's prisons for forty years in local and national publications. Now they had allies. Dorsey, like the Latimer sisters and WCTU, believed in compulsory education for both races and campaigns in churches to promote racial harmony. Dorsey concluded that Georgians must investigate and publicize lynchings and rumors of peonage on farms themselves and not allow the Justice Department or the NAACP to use such events for their own ends. County commissioners who did not crack down on lynchers ought to be fined and removed from office by a panel of Superior Court Judges.¹²

The men and women who attended the CIC's conference on lynching and mob violence congratulated Governor Dorsey for

¹¹ Hugh M. Dorsey, A Statement of Governor Hugh M. Dorsey as to the Negro in Georgia, (no publisher, 1921) only at Emory University Library; Dittmer, pp. 82, 208.

¹² Dorsey, pp. 22-24.

his courage in exposing the horrible situation that black Georgians faced in the countryside. Zerelda I. Fitzpatrick of Madison and Mrs. Luke Johnson from Griffin, WCTU members, were among the people at the conference who became members of the first white State Committee on Race Relations. They resolved to campaign throughout the State to establish race relations committees for both races in every city and county.¹³

After being denied an invitation, W.E.B. DuBois ridiculed the Commission for selecting only the most conservative blacks to serve as members. Although his criticisms of the Commission's shortcomings was moderate in comparison to the revulsion that the Commission provoked among the members of the "Dixie Defense Committee (Georgia Division)". Like Rebecca Felton, Governor Dorsey was attacked as a betrayer of southern culture whose investigations had provoked northern newspaper to call Georgia the "American Congo" where blacks were enslaved and treated as wild beasts.¹⁴ Ridley believed that the verdict in the Williams case and Commission on Inter-Racial Cooperation's goals gave blacks a false sense of equality, making them even harder to manage. Ridley's pamphlet was the equal in vicious racism of those distributed

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Caleb Ridley, The "Negro in Georgia", (Macon: Dixie Defense Committee, 1921), only at Emory University Library; Dittmer, p. 208.

by southerners who opposed woman suffrage. Since the self-styled defenders of the southern way of life had failed to keep Prohibition or woman suffrage from becoming Constitutional Amendments, they would never allow the Federal Government, the NAACP or even white Progressive Georgians to change the way blacks were treated.¹⁵

Rebecca Felton and Woman's Clubs

Felton's life received a crowning honor in 1922 when she was appointed interim United States Senator from Georgia by Governor Thomas M. Harwick, an anti-suffragist. Felton's old friend, a racist, but at times a Progressive, died at the end of October, 1922, after winning the primary election for the Senate in August. She served as Senator for two months, while Democratic Party leaders made arrangements for a special election. This symbolic honor was a well-deserved reward for her forty-five years of dedication to social reform and feminist issues.¹⁶

Although she served only one day in the United States Senate, other feminists rallied around her when she was seated. Felton went to Washington, D.C. to make her one speech on 22 November 1922. She was photographed on the Capitol steps for numerous newspapers outside Georgia, filmed

¹⁵ Ridley, The "Negro in Georgia".

¹⁶ Talmadge, Rebecca Latimer Felton, pp. 169-170.

for a newsreel, and gave interviews to national woman's magazines. She became a member of the National Woman's Party by acclamation.¹⁷ She addressed the Senate briefly, thanking them for allowing her to be seated. She believed that her appointment was a sign that the Georgia Democratic Party had finally admitted the importance of woman suffrage and she also thanked Senator-Elect Walter F. George, who had delayed his swearing in ceremony until after Thanksgiving so Felton could be a Senator. She concluded these remarks with a prediction about Congresswomen in the future:

Let me say, Mr. President, that when the women of the country come in and sit with you, though there may be but very few in the next few years, I pledge you that you will get ability, you will get integrity of purpose, you will get exalted patriotism and you will get unstinted usefulness.¹⁸

Rebecca Felton worked towards her goal of bringing more women into the state legislatures and the United States Congress through the National Woman's Party. She never seemed to disagree with National Woman's Party leaders, like Alice Paul, over support for the Equal Rights Amendment. Yet Rebecca Felton still believed that women needed special legislation to protect their health and rights as a group.

¹⁷ Alice Paul, Sara Grogan to R.L. Felton, 3 October 1922, National Woman's Party Papers, Group II, Reel 9, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

¹⁸ "Senate", Congressional Record, 22 November 1922, pp. 1921-1922.

Mary McLendon's GWSA was reorganized into the Georgia league of Women Voters in 1919 and continued educating women and others about the issues in elections, the credentials of the candidates and the importance of voting. They joined other woman's clubs in monitoring the General Assembly on the issues of lynching, prison reform, education and child labor.¹⁹

The UDC ladies pursued their own educational and social goals. Mildred L. Rutherford published Miss Rutherford's Scrapbook from 1923 until she died in 1927 as an outline of southern history for schools and a bibliography of books on American history and literature approved by the UDC. She used the Scrapbook to raise money to complete the Confederate carving at Stone Mountain. She still denounced the Fifteenth Amendment as unconstitutional, calling for its repeal. She demanded that the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments be revoked because they oppressed the South's states rights. In her eyes, the federal child labor laws were socialist because they denied people under eighteen the right to work. Although she herself was a well-known public speaker, she believed that women in general were too concerned with physical appearance

¹⁹ Scott, Invisible Woman, pp. 222-242; Atlanta League of Woman Voters Records, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

to be good orators.²⁰ She was joined in these beliefs by Dolly Blount Lamar, who was glad that the Georgia Legislature had never ratified woman suffrage.

Lamar and Rutherford ignored the Georgia law passed in July of 1921 that allowed women to vote in the 1922 elections and Rebecca Latimer Felton to become a United States Senator. Lamar noted happily that the states that had passed local woman suffrage had not entered into a new era of honest government and predicted a similar fate for the nation under woman suffrage. Lamar and Rutherford never campaigned to abolish the suffrage amendment, and they may never have voted or encouraged other women to cast their ballots. Rutherford had more influence in persuading young women not to vote because she was the president of the Lucy Cobb Institute and director of the Athens, Georgia YWCA. The image of the old fashioned southern lady continued to form a large part of the thinking about southern women even after suffrage. Lamar and Rutherford seemed typical of many traditionally minded southerners who refused to believe that the organizations led by the Latimer sisters had changed Georgia gradually but deeply between 1880 and 1921. The traditionalists' more romantic southern image eclipsed the quiet hard working

²⁰ Mildred L. Rutherford, Miss Rutherford's Scrapbook, May 1924, p. 3; March 1925, p. 9; October 1925, p. 12. Only at the main branch of the Atlanta-Fulton County Public library,.

women's club members and made recent changes seem radical and disconnected to southern history.²¹

Rebecca Felton's Later Life

Rebecca Latimer Felton became so disgusted with the political patronage that surrounded national prohibition that she publicly supported the anti-prohibitionist, Roman Catholic, Alfred E. Smith, the Governor of New York and Democratic candidate for President of the United States. Felton expressed her support for Smith in a letter to Governor Thomas Hardwick that the Democratic National Committee publicized. She believed that Smith would enforce prohibition better than the Republicans had. She accused Southern Methodist women, who were certainly WCTU members, of deserting the Democratic Party, which had assisted the South after the Civil War. She was probably resented by the Georgia WCTU for this remark, although they were concerned about the numbers of young black women who had been caught selling illegal liquor by the glass and sentenced to the chain gang. The liquor dealers who convinced them to sell the liquor were not being arrested as the WCTU leaders had expected in 1919.²²

Felton defies easy attempts at classification. She did not join other southerners in supporting William G. McAdoo,

²¹ Lamar, When All Is Said and Done, pp. 213-214.

²² "First Woman Senator [Rebecca L. Felton] a Dry, Out for Smith," The New York Times, 1 October 1928.

from Marietta, Georgia. She allegedly campaigned for Smith because she opposed Woodrow Wilson, McAdoo's father-in-law, for intervening in World War I and proposing the League of Nations.²³

By the late 1920s, when Felton was over 92, Atlanta's Rebecca Latimer Felton UDC Chapter hosted birthday parties for her. The grand old woman of Georgia history and politics had finally worn out her most obstinate woman opponents and may even have made a few social reform converts among the younger members.

When Rebecca Latimer Felton died at the age of 95 on 24 January 1930, she was eulogized in terms usually reserved for male political leaders. the Atlanta Constitution and The Atlanta Journal, Felton's employer, published full page biographical sketches with photographs. The New York Times devoted a full column of its obituary page to her political activities from the 1870s to the 1920s, while the local papers combined her political positions with personal reminiscences. All of these writers were amazed that Felton could be so vigorous as to be a passenger in a dirigible at 94 or continue forcefully denouncing the corrupt General Assembly. She continued to write and make speeches about Georgia history,

²³ Marjorie S. Wheeler, New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States, (New York, 1992), pp. 188-192.

the Civil War or the important needs of mothers and woman's education. Felton's pioneering crusade for woman's rights in Georgia and her active devotion to that cause until the day she died led The Woman's Journal of the NWP, to praise her exemplary labor for these causes.²⁴

Felton came to Atlanta on 16 January 1930 to attend a board of directors meeting of the Georgia Training school for Girls. She, like Mary L. McLendon, told friends at The Atlanta Journal that she had not been feeling well. She entered an Atlanta hospital where she died of pneumonia eight days later.²⁵ Her body was returned to Cartersville where she lay in state in her home for a day until her funeral at Felton's Chapel when she was buried next to Dr. William H. Felton near the obelisk.²⁶

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary Latimer McLendon left Georgians an enormous legacy of woman's organizations that have not really been examined as a group. The Georgia Training School for Girls, a reformatory for female juvenile offenders, fulfilled the sisters' goals of educating poor

²⁴ "Colorful Career Ended by Death of Noted Woman; Mrs. Felton Led Way in Fight for Woman Suffrage", Atlanta Constitution, 24 January 1930, front page and p. 6; "Body of Mrs. Rebecca Latimer Felton Lies in State at Cartersville Home", front page and p. 2; "Mrs. Felton Dies; Former Senator", The New York Times; The Woman's Journal, March 1930.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

girls and reforming prisons at the same time. The sisters' other great woman's educational institution, the Georgia Normal and Industrial College, became the Georgia State College for Women which graduated hundreds of young women who went to work in businesses or became educators, lawyers or doctors. Even if they married, they could join other organizations that the Latimer sisters led. They could participate in the League of Woman Voters (formerly the GWSA) with its "get out to vote" drives and their legislative watch committees. By the 1930s, even black women had founded the Fulton-DeKalb League of Colored Women Voters to monitor the legislature. Such women could have become members of the Parent-Teacher Associations or other organizations of the General Federations of Woman's Clubs that the sisters founded.²⁷ These clubs kept up Felton's and McLendon's work of improving the school curriculum, bringing library books to rural people and conducting child health clinics. Many of the younger members of the GWSA, like Eleanore Raoul, became leaders of the Atlanta League of Women Voters in the 1930s. Some League and woman's club members even met their African-American counterparts in some early attempts to bridge the racial divide.²⁸ In, they looked toward a new, different, and

²⁷ Atlanta League of Women Voters Records Georgia Department of Archives and History.

²⁸ Ibid.

Rebecca Latimer Felton and Mary Latimer McLendon were significant because they brought together two divisions of American history that never seemed connected, southern history and woman's studies. The sisters were southerners who were also part of the national movement to create safer cities for women and children. They successfully challenged the traditional view of southern women as quiet, apolitical housewives or professional southern belles. The sisters, especially Rebecca Latimer Felton, presented an alternative view to the pro-business attitude of the New South boosters. The sisters and their associates were concerned with the well-being of urban female factory workers, farmers' wives and daughters, and female prisoners. They brought a popular outlook to the feminist movement which has long been accused of neglecting such women. The women who worked to abolish child labor in 1960 would still find hostile members of the General Assembly. The Latimer sisters set in motion a process that resulted in the election of the first Georgia woman to the United States Congress sixteen years after Rebecca Felton's death.

Although the sisters were born and brought up in the ante-bellum South, they looked toward a new, different, and better South.

ACRONYMS

- AAW, Association for the Advancement of Women, 1868-1890
- AWSA, American Women Suffrage Association, 1868-1890
- CIC, Commission on Inter-Racial Cooperation, 1919
- WCTU, Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1880-1930
- GWSA, Georgia Woman Suffrage Association, 1980-1920
- NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, founded 1909
- NAWSA, National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1890-1920
- NWP, National Woman's Party, 1915-1920
- NWSA, National Woman Suffrage Association, 1868-1890
- SSWSC, Souther States Woman Suffrage Conference, 1915-1920
- WTC, Woman's Temperance Crusade, 1873-1875
- WCTU, Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1875-1930

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Georgia WCTU Collection

Harrold Brothers Collection

Raoul Family Papers, Eleanore Raoul Correspondence

Georgia Department of Archives and History

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Mary Latimer McLendon, et. al., Atlanta Willard WCTU
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