

“NOT RATIFIED BUT HEREBY REJECTED:”

THE WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN GEORGIA, 1895-1925

by

ELIZABETH STEPHENS SUMMERLIN

(Under the Direction of Kathleen A. Clark)

ABSTRACT

The women’s suffrage movement in Georgia consisted of a small but spirited group of women who unsuccessfully fought for enfranchisement from 1895 to 1920. Though this movement failed nominally, the strategies white southern women pursued represent an important case study of conservative progressivism in the New South. Suffragists publicly pushed for change while maintaining that their enfranchisement would actually shore up existing power structures, especially white supremacy; however, their very existence in politics and public space symbolized the disorder that many southerners had used to characterize the changes wrought by industrialization and modernization in Georgia. While comprehensive studies on this subject have been limited, this thesis also benefits from seminal regional and transnational studies that have inspired more theoretical perspectives on this topic and illuminated the complex forces that impacted Georgia’s suffragists in their battle for the ballot.

INDEX WORDS: Georgia, women, southern politics, woman suffrage, New South, women’s rights, anti-suffrage movement, white supremacy, gender, 19th Amendment, Mary Latimer McLendon, Rebecca Latimer Felton, Mildred Rutherford, Eugenia Dorothy “Dolly” Blount Lamar

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INTRODUCTION

The women's suffrage story in the South does not coincide with the usual accounts of triumph presented in the national narrative. Southern suffragists trod upon difficult terrain in their efforts to attain the vote, and they stumbled over numerous obstacles. Suffrage movements in the South attracted fewer followers than those in the rest of the nation, and in several instances, southern states ultimately rejected women's voting when Congress sent the Nineteenth Amendment to the states for ratification. Yet, in one of history's more ironic turns of events, the South did deliver the most important ruling on women's enfranchisement, as Tennessee rendered the necessary vote to successfully ratify the Nineteenth Amendment.

This study examines the tumultuous relationship between white southerners and the women's suffrage movement. Yet, this does not tell a story of ultimate victory as was the case with Tennessee. Rather, I present a more typical outcome for southern suffragists by tracing events in Georgia, the first southern state to formally reject the Nineteenth Amendment during its ratification process. Though the movement's efforts in this state nominally failed, Georgia presents an important case study of southern politics in the midst of the Progressive Era and Jim Crow. Most especially, it speaks to the particular situation of southern white suffragists, who simultaneously pushed for social change along the lines of gender while trying to maintain, or at least not threaten, traditional racial and class hierarchies.

The women's suffrage movement in Georgia and the South at large has received limited attention in scholarly literature. While numerous works have addressed the achievement of women's rights during the early twentieth century, historians have less frequently highlighted the important experience of women's suffrage campaigns in the American South. Perhaps this relative inattention rests upon the assumption that since the South largely rejected the Nineteenth Amendment, few significant suffrage efforts took place in the region.¹ Nevertheless, the tireless efforts of the pioneer suffrage historian A. Elizabeth Taylor suggest otherwise, as she carefully chronicled suffrage movements in many individual southern states. These works, completed approximately fifty years ago (in many cases), have remained the definitive studies on suffrage movements in individual southern states, including Georgia. Taylor's pieces consist largely of descriptive narratives with little or no theoretical basis, and they communicate only the most basic information about the movement's major events. Georgia's suffrage movement deserves reexamination in light of new perspectives and frameworks in historical studies.²

The two most significant and more recent studies that explore women's suffrage in the South are Marjorie Spruill Wheeler's *New Women of the New South* and Elna C. Green's *Southern Strategies*. Both have made important contributions to our

¹ In addition to Tennessee, the state that delivered the necessary three-fourths majority for the amendment's ratification, Kentucky, Texas and Arkansas were prominent exceptions from the South; however, with the exception of Tennessee, the rest could not be considered "Deep South" states, thus indicating the relative difficulty many southern women faced in the region.

² Taylor's work includes studies on Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. As is the case with Georgia, most of these works remain the definitive studies on this subject, Taylor's works lack a theoretical base and are largely descriptive, thus demanding a more analytical approach in light of the gains made in historical research and inquiry over the past couple of decades. See Bibliography for full citations.

understanding of the southern suffrage movement as a variant of the national narrative. Using a biographical approach that examines the lives of twelve southern suffragists, Wheeler asserts that the suffrage movement gained momentum in the South when its participants offered women's voting as an expediency measure to counteract black political power in the 1890s. When this strategy failed largely due in part to black disenfranchisement measures passed during the period, the suffrage movement limped along in the South until the Progressive Era provided the necessary inspiration to reinvigorate it. Wheeler argues that race continued to shape suffrage arguments in the 1910s, but that southern suffragists had expanded their arguments to include progressive social reform legislation and leaned less on white supremacist rhetoric as a strategic aim. Green disputes Wheeler's emphasis on race, contending that "southern women did not band together and work for ten or twenty (or more) years to obtain the ballot in order to outvote their black neighbors." Rather, she claims that southern suffragism arose as a middle-class response to problems produced by urbanization and industrialization in the region; she argues that suffrage debates concerning the race issue typically occurred only as a response to anti-suffragist prodding and were secondary to primary concerns of women's suffragists, such as civil reform and labor regulation. The debate between Wheeler and Green over the significance of race and class interests is an important jumping-off point for this study, as I examine the particular combination of interests, motivations, and goals that animated the woman suffrage movement—and the anti-suffrage movement—as it developed in Georgia.³

³ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Elna C. Green, *Southern*

Interestingly, both Wheeler and Green largely ignored Georgia in their works. Wheeler's study included one Georgian, Rebecca Felton, but she was hardly representative of Georgia suffragists. Green's study leaves out Georgia altogether. Nevertheless, Green's work does provide a useful framework to differentiate between suffragists and anti-suffragists, which I have found useful for my own work. Green argues that suffragists and anti-suffragists generally differed according to their respective backgrounds: Pro-suffragists represented the emergent middle class of the industrializing New South, whose presence would provide the impetus for sustained region-wide suffrage in the 1910s, while anti-suffragists typically claimed lineage to the elite planter tradition of the Old South. In Georgia, rank-and-file anti-suffragists and suffragists generally aligned with the planter elite/urban professional paradigm laid forth by Green, but suffrage leaders Rebecca Felton and Mary McLendon were significant exceptions to her argument.

My own research suggests that race was indeed critical to the development of the suffrage movement in Georgia, but in ways that differ from Wheeler's analysis. Wheeler argues for a declining emphasis on race in suffragists' ideology by the 1910s, and she asserts that white southern suffragists only used race-based strategies when prompted by their anti-suffrage opponents.⁴ I offer a different interpretation: Georgia's women often employed white supremacist rhetoric to advance their cause even without the prodding of anti-suffragists and did so in both phases of the southern movement. Perhaps Georgia was an exception to the general pattern found by Wheeler (or the predominance of class over

Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xii-xiii.

⁴ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 127.

race interests identified by Green elsewhere in the South). Even if this is true, Georgia's particular situation needs to be taken into account in order to move closer to a truly regional narrative of women's suffrage in the South, in all its complexity. And, the persistence of racial arguments by Georgia suffragists suggests that historians might want to revisit this issue in other states as well.

Georgia's suffrage movement also offers important insights into a number of historiographical topics. For one, it speaks to the great transformations occurring in the early twentieth century South. Calls to industrialize and modernize urged that the image of the Old South gave way to a "New South," a moniker which even to this day remains a difficult entity to define. In the center of this transition was Atlanta, the city that positioned itself as a symbolic leader of the new order. Following the devastation wrought by Sherman's infamous "March to the Sea," city leaders including Henry Grady, the *Atlanta Constitution's* famed editor, urged an industrial initiative that would welcome Northern businessmen and migrants to its burgeoning metropolis. The city presented itself as ready and willing to embrace the promises of a modern age.⁵

But, New South advocates had to tread lightly, lest they seem to be the agents of a social revolution as well as an economic one. As George B. Tindall aptly noted in his preface to *The Emergence of the New South*, the significant changes in the region "set off defensive reactions against the new and unfamiliar."⁶ While many white southerners near the turn of the twentieth century wanted to present themselves as resilient and resourceful

⁵ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Harold Eugene Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990); George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967).

⁶ Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, ix.

in the wake of the demoralizing defeat of the Civil War, none of them wanted a revolution. The “New South” retained many of its old habits, as a resurgence of racial strife and intense regionalism also characterized the region during this time. Southerners approached new reform agendas with caution, as many impulses for change had originated in locations outside the region. However, the increasing prominence of urban centers in the South sparked interest in reform issues such as temperance, labor regulation, and age of consent legislation among middle-class urbanites in the region, and several reform-minded women’s clubs gained public recognition.

This was the period in which southern suffragists asserted their right to the franchise. By trying to insert themselves into the electorate, suffragists sparked an intense debate over the role of women in a changing society. Theirs was a difficult battle, as they tried to reformulate the meaning of elite southern womanhood in the context of considerable changes being brought about in the region. Suffragists had to pursue these changes in the gender power structure without seeming to upend social hierarchies of race and class or straying too far from deeply entrenched ideas of distinct southern womanhood. Woman suffragists repeatedly assured their detractors that though they wanted to modify gendered power relations, their entry into the public world of politics would not produce a ripple effect in regard to other southern social hierarchies or transform southern “ladies” into mirror images of their Yankee counterparts. In their effort to bring about moderate but not revolutionary change in regard to gender roles, Georgia suffragists argued that political power embodied in the sheer number of their ballots would enable them to help elite white men keep the South’s race and class structures more firmly in place in the context of the emerging New South.

This effort to separate gender from race and class, and argue that changes in one would not destabilize others, was perhaps futile—or at least severely compromised—from the start. Like any women who joined reform initiatives at this time, southern suffragists had to confront their society's gender ideology, which typically aligned with the vision of separate male and female spheres. The southern ideal of womanhood arguably presented more difficult obstacles for southern suffragists, however. The image of the elite white woman occupied a central place in white patriarchal order. Her purity, domesticity, and morality in the private sphere when combined with the white southern man's honor, valor, and chivalry in the public sphere created the ideological foundation for the southern social order. Following the Civil War, southern elites became even more committed to reconstructing this order as they tried to recover and rebuild stable hierarchies of race and class in the postwar—and post-slavery—South.⁷

In fact, the war had struck at the very foundations of the South's gender hierarchy. When Confederate men left for war, southern women had to fulfill traditional male roles in their absence. In addition to their duties of child rearing and housework, southern women managed plantations and local stores, cared for wounded soldiers, and at times defended their homes from destruction—tasks traditionally prescribed for males.⁸

Many white southern men saw the dual roles played by women in the war as one of the devastating consequences of the conflict and sought to reinvigorate white patriarchy. The enfranchisement of newly freed slaves following the war's end

⁷ Anne Scott, *The Southern Lady: From the Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 1-37; Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 1-9, 153.

⁸ Ibid.

compounded the issue. White manhood, or at least the way it had been socially constructed in the South, depended on the sole political control of white men, and some white southern men believed that black males gaining “manhood” embodied by full citizenship rights seriously challenged white male authority. Thus, the gender upheavals wrought by the Civil War engendered a need among white men to reassert their dominance over both African-Americans and white women.⁹

Historians have differed in their interpretations of white women’s response to these changes. Anne Scott asserted in *The Southern Lady* that southern women assumed an increasingly active and consciousness role in public affairs in the decades following the war’s end. She argued that the war marked a watershed moment in southern women’s political awareness and activity. More recently, scholars such as LeeAnn Whites, Drew Faust, Susanne Lebsack, and George Rable have refuted some of Scott’s findings. Claiming that southern white women in fact sought to return to their prescribed gender roles immediately after the war in an effort to sustain the damaged white patriarchy, they argue that women only began more assertively to reshape their ideas on gender in the late nineteenth century. Nonetheless, recent works by Caroline Janney and Jane Turner Censer have demonstrated that Scott’s work still has merit, as many southern women did exhibit an unprecedented political and social awareness in the postwar period. Such activity is evidenced by women’s participation in memorial societies and their expanded professional and educational opportunities due to a shortage of available working men and the implementation of public school systems across the South. This historiographical debate emphasizes the nuanced and complex situation southern women faced as they

⁹ Ibid.; Leeann Whites, *The Civil War As a Crisis of Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 1-14.

neared the twentieth century; assuredly, some if not many southern women at least entertained the idea of assuming more socially and politically active roles, which eventually led some to assert their right to the franchise in the 1890s.¹⁰

In their attempt to assuage fears concerning gender hierarchies, suffragists inevitably confronted issues dealing with the South's racial hierarchy. Even at the turn of the century, the pain from Reconstruction still lingered among many southerners, who had battled with the federal government and their former slaves for political control. With the demoralizing defeat of the Civil War still fresh on their collective memory, many white southerners developed the rhetoric of the Lost Cause, which sought to glorify the days when slavery and white political control ruled the day. To many, the widely promoted Nineteenth Amendment raised the ghosts of Reconstruction, as southerners repeatedly connected the proposed measure to the Fifteenth Amendment, which had enfranchised former slaves and consequently dissolved the absolute power of white supremacy. Of course, voting restrictions and regulations ultimately disenfranchised the black male electorate, but the possibility of extending the franchise to a new and unpredictable pool of voters frightened white political elites. Moreover, the prospect of an amendment that would enfranchise female voters engendered fears among Georgians that black women might successfully exercise their own right to the franchise and overturn many of the state's disenfranchisement laws that came about near the turn of the century. Indeed, they feared the proposed Nineteenth Amendment would successfully

¹⁰ Ibid.; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996); Susanne Lebsack, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984); George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

bring black men back into the electorate, a measure the Fifteenth Amendment had attempted but failed to secure. White Georgians and white southerners alike remained dedicated to white supremacy in government.¹¹

Anti-suffragists' arguments necessarily placed women's suffrage advocates in a difficult position. Their opponents' accusations raised deep-seated distrust of federal legislation as a threat to local and state political power, and Georgia's women suffrage supporters continually batted down the idea that their movement had any aspirations toward black enfranchisement. Assuredly, this stance was in part a tactical one, as no southern legislature would approve of any measures remotely related to African-American voting. Yet, it is important to remember that southern suffragists, including the ones leading Georgia's own movement, were by no means progressive on issues of race.

From the 1890s to 1920, Georgia suffragists tapped into white supremacist rhetoric in order to advance their cause, asserting that whiteness should be privileged with participation in government. Mary Latimer McLendon, the so-called "Mother of Suffrage in Georgia," frequently lamented that "negro men, our former slaves" had obtained the vote before the states' well-respected club women.¹² Her sister, Rebecca Latimer Felton, employed similar rhetoric before committee hearings of the Georgia's General Assembly. In some cases these actions involved strategic measures, but they accurately reflected many suffragists' personal racist sentiments and deeply held

¹¹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*; Green, *Southern Strategies*; Dewey Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹² *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 July 1914.

convictions. Certainly their aims at progressive legislation like women's suffrage fit the paradigm of "whites only" progressivism and suggested that these reformers believed that their "whiteness" or "Anglo-Saxonism" made them better suited for political participation.¹³

In addition to the racial component, Georgia's suffrage movement must be put in context of the intense regionalism pervading the South during this time period. A strong spirit arose among many white southerners to reclaim the glorious image the South had once portrayed by promoting the so-called "Lost Cause" of the Confederacy with an intense religious fervor. In response to those trying to create a "New South" following the Civil War, Lost Causers endeavored to keep the values of the Old South firmly intact while promoting a "Confederate-friendly" history for future generations. In their view of history, Reconstruction represented a severe violation in local autonomy, as outsiders—namely white northerners and black southerners—had wrested control from the rightful, capable white ruling class. Such sentiment set off a staunch regionalist stance in response

¹³ Woodward, *Origins of the New South*; Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History* 88 (Mar., 2002): 1315-1353, will provide another important theoretical base for the thesis. I see that his conception of trans-national whiteness supports much of the evidence I have found indicating that Georgia's suffrage movement did tap into worldwide currents that conflated white superiority with citizenship. Anglo-Americans near the turn of the century purported that their shared racial characteristics made them more attuned to government than other races. Francesca Morgan, like many scholars, uses the term "Anglo-Saxon" in reference to the rhetoric employed by these historical actors. In many cases, "Anglo-Saxon" and similar terms simply refers to "white," as people of the late nineteenth and early twentieth usually consolidated their visions of race into a bifurcated view of black and white; Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 172-173. Matthew Frye Jacobson has explained this practice in his work *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). See also Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998); Kim E. Nielson, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2001).

to outside forces that had tried to shape southern politics, culture and society during Reconstruction.¹⁴

Women figured prominently in the promotion of the Lost Cause, and its strongest supporters typically aligned themselves with anti-suffragists. Studies by Caroline Janney and Karen Cox argue that southern women, not ex-Confederates, led the Lost Cause and “were responsible for remaking military defeat into a political, social, and cultural victory for the white South.” Though politically conservative, women of the Lost Cause clearly contributed to the emerging image of a “new” southern woman. While many in the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and Ladies’ Memorial Associations (LMA) believed the woman’s proper role was one in the private sphere, the women found no contradiction in taking on public roles to commemorate the Confederacy since southerners had looked upon them to instill among southern children a reverence in Confederate tradition for future generations. The women also assumed the role of a helpmate, as they sought to uplift demoralized Confederate men, impressing upon them the righteousness of their cause and the willingness among southern women to return to the southern feminine ideal. Still many of these women did not extend the public and political roles they gained by promoting the Lost Cause to the fight for women’s suffrage.¹⁵

¹⁴ A few secondary works addressing the Lost Cause: Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003) .

¹⁵ Janney, *Burying the Dead*, 3; Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*. I don’t mean to imply that all “Lost Causers” were anti-suffragists, but the general record shows that this trend is more so direct than indirect.

In fact, Lost Cause anti-suffragists looked upon women's rights as a movement originating from an outside source. To be sure, no real suffrage activity even existed in the South until the 1890s, approximately forty years after the Seneca Falls Convention had convened in New York. The national suffrage movement's early alliance with the northern abolitionist movement further cemented this belief among white southerners, as many of the region's leaders deemed the movement unnecessary and decidedly "unsouthern." In their attempts to sustain the traditions of the Old South, which entailed excluding women from electoral politics, women's suffrage was anathema to most Lost Causers.

Mildred Rutherford of Athens, Georgia serves as a perfect case in point. As the UDC historian-general, Rutherford staunchly spoke out against woman suffrage and the Nineteenth Amendment on the basis that it represented an attack against traditions of the Old South, namely female deference to male authority and states' rights. Yet, in her fight against the woman's vote in Georgia, Rutherford appeared in public repeatedly to implore Georgia's politicians to block the measure. Though anti-suffragists like Rutherford benefitted most when employing the rhetoric of the Lost Cause, none of them seemed to notice that their repeated appearances in public against women's suffrage represented a stark contradiction to the values they were trying to preserve.¹⁶

Woman suffragists thus had to consider local circumstances of the South when campaigning for the movement that many southerners considered anathema to the region. Lost Cause rhetoric and issues of race particularly confounded their efforts. Frustrated by

¹⁶ Ibid.

the limitations at the local level, southern suffragists often sought inspiration from successful suffrage movements outside the region.

Women's rights activists in the United States, southerners included, cast their suffrage campaign in the context of Progressive Era reforms that had made sweeping gains across the globe. Too often now, we forget that the fight for women's suffrage played out on an international stage, but women across the globe did see their political situation as one connected to that of other women. Worldwide organizations such as the International Woman Suffrage Alliance represented ways in which women created such forums for exchange and support. Suffragists understood their movement accompanied a much larger one that contained a more expansive vision of female citizenship. Inspired by suffrage victories in New Zealand and Great Britain in addition to those in western United States, suffragists in Georgia used these successes to justify their own claims to the franchise. "Suffrage [was as] sure as [the] rising sun," they argued.¹⁷

Georgia's suffragists used the successes abroad to lift their own spirits and advance their cause. The universal language employed by many suffrage campaigns provided the impetus for many women to get their movements off the ground, but Georgia suffragists did not apply their argument for universality to all potential voting blocks, namely the state's black population. The women instead argued that the worldwide advances of woman suffrage represented a trend toward the global dominance of white government and pushed for their inclusion into the electorate on account of their "whiteness"—New Zealanders and the British did share in their "Anglo-Saxon" heritage, after all. Not unlike their southern counterparts, northern suffragists led by NAWSA

¹⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 June 1914.

leader Carrie Chapman Catt pursued exclusionary terms for the franchise as well, but they targeted the “undesirable” immigrant vote. In one speech, Catt condemned the “ignorant and corrupt foreign vote,” which had been conferred upon the “riff-raff of Europe that [had] poured upon our shores.” Thus, northern and southern suffrage aspirations were firmly situated in local, regional terms, as southern suffragists argued to maintain black disenfranchisement while northern suffragists wanted to curtail the immigrant vote; however, transnational reform currents provided inspiration and rhetorical devices for the suffragists’ cause.¹⁸

Because Georgia’s suffrage movement did operate in local circumstances, it subsequently exemplified the mainstream political ideology of the state—a rising political consciousness among mainly conservative southern women. It is often easy to cast suffragists and anti-suffragists as two diametrically opposed camps: one liberal, one conservative. However, members of both sides held remarkably similar views. Aside from the female suffrage question, women and men on either side of the issue fundamentally agreed on other matters, namely temperance, black disenfranchisement,

¹⁸ Catt’s quote is found in Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 115. Daniel Rodgers’ seminal work, *Atlantic Crossings*, has inspired studies that tie the Progressive era movements for social change to a much larger dialogue of an emerging international liberalism. Throughout the work, Rodgers emphasizes that American progressives sought inspiration from like-minded individuals across the Atlantic, thus undermining the notion that this period of social change gained momentum entirely from inward looking domestic reformers. Rodgers’ reassessment of this time period will provide one of the theoretical bases for my own vision of Georgia’s suffrage movement; See Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Ian Tyrrell’s work aligns in the same vein as Rodgers; See Tyrrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1800-1930* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Very few works have placed suffrage movements within the context of international exchange that Rodgers explains, and even those that have, have done so in relation to Third World international feminism, which occurred much later than Georgia’s women’s suffrage movement during the Progressive Era. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan’s edited collection of articles in *Suffrage and Beyond* remains the most prominent example of historians willingly and intentionally expanding suffrage efforts beyond national borders. See Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds. *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) and Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of the International Women’s Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

and education reform. Generally, pro and anti-suffragists shared similar social standing as middle to upper class white citizens, but they typically diverged in regard to family background. Most anti-suffragists could claim lineage to the old planter aristocracy while the suffragist rank-and-file usually hailed from urban, professional middle-class families. Nevertheless, members of both sides were held in high esteem in their respective communities regardless of their family's lineage.¹⁹

Thus we might understand the materialization of women's suffrage in Georgia as illustrative of changes that emerged within the women themselves. Women from each side of the issue had led relatively active lives in the political affairs of the state without having the right to vote. Years before the suffrage movement gained momentum in Georgia, various women's clubs had lobbied local politicians to pass legislation favorable to social reforms regarding temperance, child labor, and the age of consent. Anti-suffragists and suffragists alike had benefited from the experience of a public political life. Sharing similar political values, those involved in the debate largely deliberated over the best way for the state's politically active women to continue to influence local reform legislation. Those most eager to see quicker action on the part of Georgia's General Assembly in favor of social reform generally favored the women's suffrage route, as they believed that incorporating women into the formal political process would expedite their reform agenda. The men and women who would align with the anti-suffrage movement

¹⁹ See Lula Barnes Ansley, *History of the Georgia Woman's Christian Temperance Union from its Organization, 1883-1907* (Columbus, GA: Gilbert Printing Company, 1914). Elna Green provides a thoughtful, nuanced account in *Southern Strategies* that argues against the notion that suffragists and anti-suffragists occupied vastly different positions on the race issue and held opposing views in the debate over the primacy of federal or states' rights. Her study, however, only gives scant attention to Georgia, despite the fact that Georgia was the first southern state to reject the Nineteenth Amendment and was the first southern state in which NAWSA chose to hold its annual convention.

ultimately argued that the “outsider” position of women afforded them distinct advantages in the political process.

Yet, the explanation of political expediency does not fully account for why these actors were so similar in some respects but greatly diverged on the suffrage issue. Here, Elna Green’s findings can illuminate this disconnect, as her work has best distinguished between the views of suffragists and anti-suffragists. According to Green, subtle nuances in their socio-economic or class backgrounds proved to be the most divisive factor among these women. This study supports Green’s conclusions, excluding the exceptions of women like Rebecca Felton who led the pro-suffrage campaign; Georgia suffragists as middle-class urban professionals depended on the well-being of the urban class for their livelihood. The “antis,” on the other hand, occupied positions related to agriculture and connected industries, thus rendering their interest in combating the problems of the emerging industrial South less intense.

This division also illuminates an important and discernable urban-rural gap that widened near the turn of the twentieth century in Georgia. The state’s increasing focus on Atlanta and city boosterism set off fierce reactions by citizens in the economically stagnated countryside against the “progressive” aims of the city. Indeed, Georgia’s rural “have-nots” became increasingly distrustful of “the city” and what it symbolized for a new southern political order. Instead of sparking a Populist-type revolt, however, rural activists pursued a staunchly conservative agenda to combat the imperatives of the state’s emerging urban industrial elite. As the New South changed due to new industrial initiatives, these state politicians and community leaders were divided on what measures

best benefitted the state, and consequently a “reconciliation of progress and tradition,” or a dialogue of change and continuity predominated state affairs.²⁰

By incorporating the themes discussed above, this study hopes to bring this moment of social protest into broader historiographical contexts. Furthermore, I hope it suggests the continued utility of individual state studies, which have fallen out of vogue among some historians who have deemed it a symptom of a “hyper specialization” within the field. Ultimately this piece should indicate that these studies still have much to contribute to our understanding of historical causation and that incorporating more expansive perspectives (even a transnational one, at times) can produce new and exciting ways to look at local events that often become obscured when trying to characterize events that took place over more vast geographic areas.

This study proceeds chronologically, as this organization presumably best promotes understanding for how a social movement unfolded. The thesis’ general themes are woven into the general narrative, as they are present in most stages of this movement. Its intent is not to provide an institutional history of suffrage organizations, but this information, when appropriate, is included. Rather, the focus of this work rests upon the fascinating story of this movement and the individual people who led it. This perspective includes the experiences of individuals well-known to the southern suffrage movement already—Rebecca Latimer Felton, Mary Latimer McLendon, Mildred Rutherford and Dorothy Lamar—but, it also introduces equally important actors like Bishop Warren Candler, Eleonore Raoul, and Emily McDougald onto the southern suffrage stage and explains their critical roles in shaping Georgia’s state suffrage movement. Despite never

²⁰ This phrase references Dewey Grantham’s book on southern progressivism with the same title. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*.

gaining a large number of converts to their cause, both Georgia's suffrage and anti-suffrage proponents prompted intense debates over the meaning of citizenship in Georgia as it related to race, class and gender.

The first chapter begins in 1895 with the NAWSA convention held in Atlanta during that year. NAWSA had never held its annual convention outside the confines of Washington, D.C., and the meeting reflected the organization's desire to gain more publicity for the "woman's cause" in the South. This chapter also addresses the debates over suffrage, particularly in relation to black disenfranchisement and the temperance movement, from the mid 1890s through a so-called "doldrums" period that lasted until the 1910s. Here, I take issue with the prevailing narrative that suffrage activities both at national and regional levels entered a near dormant state during this period; rather, I find that while suffragists were less active on the suffrage scene due to a paucity of legislation that arose in the period, they were no less involved in other areas, including their pursuit of various social reforms. The tendency to overlook this transitional period has rendered this aspect of many suffrage studies somewhat reductive since important developments did occur between the 1890s and 1910s.

The second chapter covers the expansion of activity among Georgia's suffragists in the 1910s and the concurrent appearance of organized anti-suffragists, who debated the woman's right to vote mainly in the halls of Georgia's General Assembly. This period best represents how a number of social currents—the continued debates on the race issue, an increasing focus on Reconstruction memory, a deepening divide between rural and urban areas of the state, anxieties over the heightened public profile of southern women, among others—all shaped suffrage efforts in the state. These forces typically worked to

suffragists' disadvantage with the state's conservatives, and at times they were a detriment to maintaining harmony among suffragists themselves. In order to continue hoping for the eventual success of their movement, Georgia suffragists often looked to victories outside their state to counter the devastating defeats they frequently experienced with the General Assembly.

By 1917, suffragists shifted their efforts to the national scene, as they held little hope that Georgia's legislators would deliver a victory for their cause. These final years leading up to the successful ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment and the subsequent battle to have the amendment enforced in Georgia are the focus of the third chapter. This section concludes by tracing the lives of important leaders in the movement following the achievement of the Nineteenth Amendment, and it comments upon the political status of women following their formal inclusion into the public political sphere.

Finally, this study focuses extensively on issues concerning race, but it does not include the experiences of the African-American women who also sought the vote during this time. This decision was not made in ignorance of studies by Glenda Gilmore and Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, which have shed light on how black women pursued rights for themselves and for all African-Americans. Indeed, black women demonstrated great commitment to the woman's cause by forming their own suffrage organizations and attending public rallies, but African-American women who lived in the North like Ida B. Wells Barnett and Mary Church Terrell could engage in these activities more freely than most southern black women who faced different circumstances in the land of Jim Crow. Southern black women had to take a more cautious approach to their fight for the ballot in light of the harsh racial oppression they faced at home, which rendered their efforts

less visible. Assuredly the infamous Atlanta race riot of 1906 heavily weighed upon black women's decisions to publicly assert their civil rights in Georgia. Furthermore, these women were excluded from the organized push for women's suffrage by the "mainstream" white suffragists themselves, who employed white supremacist rhetoric to advance their own case for obtaining the franchise. While uncovering the relatively concealed activities of Georgia's black suffragists is beyond the scope of this project, these efforts are no less valuable in understanding how southern women articulated their visions for an inclusive political society.²¹

Hopefully this state study will illuminate issues that have become obscured by studies that have employed more expansive geographic scopes. Its narrow focus should clarify overgeneralizations like the "doldrums" argument which have long dominated the traditional suffrage narrative. Furthermore, informed by the seminal regional studies by Wheeler and Green, I also hope to tease out some of the differences between their arguments and my own regarding the race issue, as I tell the varied and complex story of the woman suffrage experience in Georgia.

²¹ Gilmore, Glenda. *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of Race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

CHAPTER 1

A Cautious Beginning: The Atlanta Convention and the “Doldrums,” 1895-1912

If Georgia women could vote, this National Convention could hold its session in our million dollar capitol, which rears its grand proportions on yonder hill. Crowning its loftiest pinnacle is the statue of a *woman* representing Liberty, and on its front the motto, ‘Justice, Wisdom and Moderation.’ It was built with money paid into our State’s treasury by women as well as men, both white and black; but men alone, white and black, have the privilege of meeting in legislative session to make laws to govern *women*.¹

Mary Latimer McLendon delivered the preceding address at the annual convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) held in Atlanta, Georgia in 1895. The convention came to Atlanta after a small group of women persuaded NAWSA to move its convention to the city in order to bring publicity to Georgia’s emerging suffrage movement. As McLendon’s speech indicated, Georgia’s suffragists anticipated great change for the state, which had largely denied women’s formal participation in politics, not to mention its physical political structures. These women hoped that one day “Liberty” would not be the only woman upholding “Wisdom, Justice, and Moderation” at the state capitol building.²

McLendon’s speech is as provocative as it is revealing. Her speech reflected resentment that all men, including African-Americans, enjoyed the privilege of the franchise, while all women were denied that right. Perhaps McLendon underscored the

¹ Ida Husted Harper, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, eds., *The History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4 (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1922), 242.

² Ibid. For bibliographic information on McLendon, see Stacey Horstmann Gatti, “Mary Latimer McLendon: Mother of Suffrage Work in Georgia,” in *Georgia Women: Their Lives and Times*, vol. 1, eds. Ann Short Chirhart and Betty Wood (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009): 245-271.

inclusion of black men in Georgia's electorate to emphasize the wrong she felt was committed against herself and other elite white women in the state. McLendon and her fellow suffrage sisters represented the "respectable," white tax-paying citizens of the state, but the laws of the land barred them from full political participation on account of their sex. If black men could be afforded entry into the state capital for legislative purposes or otherwise, McLendon certainly felt that elite white women deserved the same privilege as well as full voting rights. Yet, her speech indicated a certain sympathy for black women as well. McLendon did not delineate between rights that should be accorded to black or white women; rather, she spoke of women's suffrage as a class issue, a concern for propertied women, "both white and black."

McLendon's speech reflected the nebulous racial temper of the late nineteenth century South. In Georgia and elsewhere in the region, a rising black professional class had emerged after Reconstruction, achieving a considerable margin of success in light of their previous conditions under a slave society. Their achievements were a particular sore point for white southerners seeking to shore up racial hierarchy. At the same time, in the early 1890s, the success of the Populist movement in parts of the South produced some tentative alliances between non-elite whites and African-Americans. By the 1880s and 1890s, railroad segregation and widespread lynchings indicated that white southerners were pursuing dramatic efforts to suppress black progress and cross-racial political alliances. Attempts made to deprive African-Americans of their political rights ensued, beginning in Mississippi in 1890. Disenfranchisement, however, was not a foregone conclusion in Georgia at the time of the 1895 NAWSA convention in Atlanta. Several states including Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia had

passed voting restrictions, mainly in the form of poll taxes, which had prevented a sizeable number of black citizens from voting. However, African-Americans still exercised some political clout in several southern states, including Georgia. Women suffragists across the nation had also referenced the issue of “taxation without representation,” which best explains McLendon’s reference to the rights of taxpaying black women. The rising tide of race antagonisms and a move toward more stringent disenfranchisement measures in the South would fairly quickly cause white southern suffragists like McLendon to adopt more racially conservative stances over their more universal claims to equality. However, that path was not pre-determined—at least not in Georgia in 1895.³

Still, the South in the 1890s was an unlikely place for a suffrage movement to develop. Indeed, the women’s suffrage movement reached most of the South only during its second phase following the Civil War. Before the war, the movement’s association with abolitionism had made it difficult to rally southern women to “the cause,” and it took the formation of a reform-minded consciousness among women in the 1890s for the movement to take hold in the region. As they increased their participation in missionary societies, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and other women’s clubs, a small but notable number of southern women began to take up the suffrage cause in the late nineteenth century. In Georgia, clubwomen formed the state’s first suffrage organization

³ Many works address the Jim Crow era in the South. A sampling of these works include: C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing, 1993). Glenda Gilmore discusses the particular situation of southern black women in the post-Reconstruction era in *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

in 1890. Though this and other organizations represented an important step forward, southern suffragists would face formidable obstacles in trying to achieve their aim of women's voting at a time when white political leaders throughout the South were working to set new limits on the franchise.

Georgia was already pursuing disenfranchisement measures for its black citizens when the suffrage movement first appeared in Georgia, but these policies became more aggressive in the years following the 1895 NAWSA convention. This disenfranchisement movement, which played out throughout other southern states as well, achieved its first victory in Georgia with a cumulative poll tax passed in 1887. The measure proclaimed that anyone who did not pay a poll tax would have to pay all back taxes before they could vote in an election. The tax did much to limit the black vote in the state, but urban areas still had a sizeable number of black voters at the polls. Thus began an urban movement across the state to apply white primaries in cities, which culminated with the state's largest metropolitan areas, Atlanta, Augusta, Macon and Savannah, all implementing white primaries over a twelve year period, from 1892 to 1904.⁴

Georgia's politicians had effectively stymied much of the black vote with the implementation of the cumulative poll tax and the white primary, but the disenfranchisement movement continued. In 1899, Thomas Hardwick, protégé of famed Populist leader Tom Watson, entered a motion before the General Assembly to disenfranchise black men by means of a state law. The bill failed miserably with a 137-3 vote against it, which came mostly due to the Democratic Party's aim to keep the black

⁴ Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 94-101; J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 65, 211. White primaries became law in Atlanta in 1892, Augusta 1900, Macon 1901, and Savannah in 1904.

population formally enfranchised as a precautionary measure in case they needed the black vote to defeat political opponents or challenge reform groups from within the party, namely Populists. It would be eight years before the state's politicians would have a change of heart over the issue of state-sanctioned black disenfranchisement, when rising racial tensions finally came to a violent, bloody head with Atlanta's infamous race riot in 1906.⁵ The state's push to unify the franchise certainly did not provide an encouraging backdrop in which Georgia's women would push for their right to vote. Nonetheless, a modest and lively contingent of suffragists exerted considerable influence upon the affairs of the state during the early twentieth century, in part by arguing that the woman's suffrage movement would strengthen rather than weaken the hand of white supremacy.⁶

Gender conservatism was also an obstacle to women's suffrage in the South. Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, women in Georgia debated whether or not suffrage efforts undermined the ideal of white womanhood predominating in the South that promoted the woman's place in the home. This ideal did not necessarily contradict women's involvement in politics or social reform; rather, it set boundaries on the particular ways that women participated in such activity. In fact, women in Georgia and the South at large participated in numerous political causes and won many battles for social reform in the decades following the Civil War. Furthermore, southern women's

⁵ David F. Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) is among several works that address the 1906 riot.

⁶ Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 94-101; Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 65, 211. The following works all address the significance of the race issue as it impacted suffrage movements in the nation and the South: Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*; Lorraine Gates Schulyer, *The Weight of Their Votes: Southern Women and Political Leverage of the 1920s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*; Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). Elna Green also addresses this issue but deemphasizes the importance of race in the suffrage movement. See her *Southern Strategies*.

involvement in various clubs and public organizations provided invaluable training to women who did take on the suffrage cause after the turn of the century. Causes such as prohibition, child labor, health care, education, and age of consent laws mobilized southern women from the “pedestal” into “politics” and afforded them a special opportunity to venture out into the public sphere at an unprecedented level. Nevertheless, a sizeable portion of southerners—men and women—believed that existing political influence provided women a substantial and appropriate voice in government that rendered women’s suffrage unnecessary.⁷

In this challenging context, however, there were women in Georgia who argued that female suffrage was both appropriate and necessary. Most trace the beginning of this fledgling suffrage movement in Georgia to the efforts of Augusta Howard, a resident of Columbus. Howard, who had never met a suffragist or even read suffrage pamphlets, drew her motivation to organize women for the vote from personal experiences. The untimely death of her father had saddled her mother with exorbitant taxes that came with no provision for representation in the government as a voter. Alluding to the Revolutionary War’s ballyhooed issue of “no taxation without representation,” Howard, like other nascent and elite woman suffrage activists, based her initial claims to the franchise on the premise that propertied women who paid taxes deserved the full privileges inherent in American citizenship regardless of their sex.⁸

The injustice of “taxation without representation” prompted Howard to organize Georgia’s first woman suffrage association in 1890 at her home, “Sherwood Hall.” The

⁷ Scott, *The Southern Lady*; *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 July 1913.

⁸ A. Elizabeth Taylor, “The Origin of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Georgia” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 38 (June, 1944); *ibid.*, “Woman Suffrage Activities in Atlanta” *Atlanta Historical Journal* 43 (Winter, 1979), 48.

groups' founding members consisted mostly of Howard's own family members: her sisters Claudia Hope Howard and Miriam Howard Du Bose, their mother Anne Jane Lindsay Howard and a few other residents of Columbus were its only members for two years. By 1892, the group had attracted a few more members including ones outside of Columbus. Among the newest additions was Mary Latimer McLendon, an activist for Georgia's temperance movement, who by 1894 was presiding over a sister branch in Atlanta that boasted forty members, including some men. These local groups became known collectively as the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association (GWSA), which affiliated with NAWSA.⁹

Though mainly the province of women, Georgia's incipient suffrage movement did attract some men who were sympathetic to the cause. In 1894, the year before the Atlanta convention, the GWSA circulated a pamphlet titled, "Prominent Georgia Men in Favor of Woman Suffrage," which offered pragmatic reasons for female enfranchisement. Such arguments rested on the idea that women were taxed but not represented in government and that a female's virtue and innocence would eradicate many evils within the political system. Of the men quoted in the pamphlet, Major Charles W. Hubner made one of the more matter-of-fact arguments in favor of women's voting. He declared that he "trusted [his] wife in the most sacred relationships and most important duties of life" and saw no just cause to block her from performing her civic duty. This endorsement among others led the women of the GWSA to believe that their

⁹ *Columbus Enquirer*, 26 May 1948; Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 237, 581.

state might be ready for more sustained suffrage agitation, and they set their sights on bringing the national convention to Georgia.¹⁰

The 1895 convention meeting in Atlanta came about when Howard's suffragists finally convinced NAWSA that moving the annual meeting from its traditional location in Washington, D.C. to the Georgian city would bring much needed publicity for the woman's right to vote in the Deep South. Personally, Howard hoped that the publicity surrounding the meeting might positively impact the opinion of Georgia's leading newspapermen and politicians who had previously expressed strong opposition to female enfranchisement or ignored the issue entirely. Indeed, when the convention met in Atlanta, it did provide the stimulus in news coverage that Howard had wanted, as several Georgia newspapers gave detailed accounts of the meeting's proceedings and speeches. The *Atlanta Constitution* and *Atlanta Journal*, for example, provided daily reports on convention activities. Though most newspapers conveyed negative opinions toward suffrage, the publicity at least attracted attention to the suffrage issue, which had been a relative nonentity in most southern states.¹¹

As they looked forward to the upcoming meeting, Georgia suffragists could rejoice that a movement that had originated in the North and achieved great successes in the West was finally coming to the South. Bringing much needed attention to the women's movement in the South, which had been relatively non-existent before the 1890s, the decision to hold the convention in Atlanta demonstrated that national

¹⁰ Georgia Woman Suffrage Association, "Prominent Georgia Men in Favor of Woman Suffrage," 1894, 1:6, Women Suffrage Collection, Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia. Hereafter, each subsequent manuscript collection will be abbreviated. The Woman Suffrage Collection will be abbreviated WSC, for example. If applicable, any box and folder numbers will be listed with the box number, a colon and then the folder number as demonstrated in this note.

¹¹ Ibid.

organizers would not work solely outside the South in their efforts to achieve a national amendment. As Marjorie Spruill Wheeler has argued, NAWSA's leaders sought to include the South in their campaign despite the region's resistance to the issue, reflecting a shift in strategy to focus on state-by-state individual legislation in the 1890s and early 1900s. Frustrated by their lack of progress with unresponsive and hostile congressmen, NAWSA turned to individual states, using grassroots campaigns to gain state suffrage victories that, they hoped, would render a federal amendment inevitable.¹² Of course, the convention represented a particularly important moment for suffrage in Georgia, as the largest women's suffrage organization in the world was going to convene in its state's capital. If suffrage would ever make inroads with Georgia's reform-minded women and men, reasoned McLendon and other Georgia suffragists, the convention was certainly the best opportunity for it, and indeed, the 1895 NAWSA meeting would provide the impetus for many of state's clubwomen to join the suffrage cause to create a small but spirited movement.¹³

NAWSA had never held its convention outside the confines of Washington, D.C. before 1895, but it had shown an inclination toward this action. In 1892, the organization set up a committee for the southern states with the hope that it might invigorate suffrage sentiments in the region and persuade those whom Anne Scott referred to as "secret suffragists" to come out of hiding. Then, leaders at the organization's 1894 convention broke with tradition and suggested that they convene in a different city for their next

¹² Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 20. The relative failure of suffrage in the South, however, indicates that having the South's backing was not essential for the amendment to pass, but Tennessee's role in ratifying the amendment was crucial.

¹³ It is difficult to pinpoint actual membership numbers for suffrage organizations due to the nature of archival material available. Organizational records are scattered and do not divulge enough information to give accurate numbers. However, it can be surmised from other studies on suffrage movements in the South, which contained modest numbers in most cases, that Georgia's would be similarly small.

meeting. Upon this suggestion, contingents from Detroit and Cincinnati made strong claims in favor of their respective cities, but Howard's small group from Georgia produced the most convincing argument. Howard addressed the convention stating:

You might hold thousands of conventions in Kansas or any other place above Mason and Dixon's line and you will never hear anything of it in the South. The Georgia papers and the far southern papers still insist that women do not want the ballot. Until you hold a convention in the South and prove to them that this is not so, they will keep on saying it is. While a great many of [the attendees in Atlanta] would come to laugh, many of them would go away with NAWSA membership tickets in their pockets.

Moved by Howard's speech, a member called for NAWSA to bring a "battle right into the enemy's quarters and make the Solid South a friend to woman suffrage." National suffrage leader Anna Howard Shaw also endorsed Atlanta, believing the choice would improve the suffrage situation in the South. After a favorable vote, the convention recognized Atlanta as the location for NAWSA's 1895 convention. Thus, the organization's twenty-seventh convention would reflect the growing sentiment among NAWSA's leadership that they needed to bring about more widespread support for their cause in the country, including the seemingly intractable southern states. The "Howard girls," as they were called by national officers, had successfully capitalized upon this initiative within the organization.¹⁴

In the months leading up to the meeting, citizens of Atlanta expressed great interest in the upcoming convention, but this enthusiasm did not necessarily reflect pro-suffrage sentiment. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported that conventions provided a great opportunity to enhance Atlanta's image in the nation and world at large and that the

¹⁴ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 234-236; Dewey Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*, 209; Anne Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 170; Proceedings of the Twenty-sixth Annual Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1894 (Washington: NAWSA 1894), 93, 104, 106, 110; A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Origin of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 43 (June, 1944), 69-70.

revenue raised by such activities would boost Atlanta's growing economy. The paper put it bluntly, "They may not find suffrage among us, but they will find that our people will gladly give them a hearing." Furthermore, the attendance of internationally recognized figures spurred curiosity in otherwise disinterested southerners who desired to catch a glimpse of widely known female "celebrity" suffragists. Susan B. Anthony, for instance, had only traveled to the South once before the meeting, and she had taken a less active role in the opening and closing addresses of past conventions. However, in an effort to drum up support for the incoming suffragists, NAWSA widely advertised several of her speaking engagements that would take place over the course of the convention. The organization had feared their decision to move their meeting to the South might negatively affect attendance, and leaders knew Anthony's widely recognized name would draw large crowds.¹⁵

The publicity ultimately paid off. When the convention finally arrived on January 31, 1895, it attracted a packed house at Atlanta's De Give's Grand Opera House. Completed in 1893, the site was the first Atlanta stage to boast incandescent lighting, and it stood as one of the city's more popular attractions. The decision to use this venue seemed highly appropriate as it reflected Atlanta's dedication to the "modern" and "progressive," a spirit the women wished to carry forth to their own cause. In the audience one could find up and coming urban professionals like *Atlanta Constitution* business manager, William A. Hemphill and his wife as well as *Atlanta Journal* editor F.H. Richardson. The state's first lady, Susan Atkinson, who later hosted a reception for the visiting suffragists, also attended the meeting with her husband, Governor William

¹⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 January 1895; *ibid.*, 31 January 1895; Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 238.

Atkinson as a sign of welcome to NAWSA's members. The convention's chief organizers, the Howard sisters, had refused any financial assistance from national advisers in organizing the event, and they alone paid for its cost, which amounted to six hundred dollars. Among other preparations, they commissioned a special banner that hung over the speaking platform. It depicted the standing of suffrage in states across the nation, with different colored stars conveying each state's status. According to NAWSA's official report, "Wyoming and Colorado [the only states that provided complete suffrage rights to women] shone with full and undimmed luster." This banner, accompanied by the national association's flag and portraits of suffrage pioneers, Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, made for an inspiring backdrop.¹⁶

The convention began with speakers touting the reforms made by women in suffrage states. Susan B. Anthony, presiding as NAWSA's president, called Alberta C. Taylor to the platform to speak on the successes made in Colorado on the legal age of consent. Anthony's choice of Taylor, an Alabama native and daughter of the state's former governor, Reuben Chapman, was a calculated one. She was a prominent southern woman who could testify to the successes of woman suffrage before a southern crowd that contained less than enthusiastic supporters for the cause. Furthermore, the age of consent had long occupied Georgia's women, who deplored the state's rather embarrassing status on this issue: Georgia's law only applied to girls up to ten years of age, the lowest of any state in the nation. The testimonial would be a shot in the arm of those already on board with suffrage, while on the other hand serving as supporting evidence for those ambivalent or opposed to suffrage that women could bring about necessary moral reforms. An audience member called out, "Let it be recorded that the

¹⁶ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 236, 582.

first bill introduced by a woman member in any State Legislature was a bill for the protection of girls.”¹⁷

Convention speakers in turn linked local efforts to a worldwide movement for women’s rights and progressive reform. Orators like Anthony urged the audience to align with the growing number of suffrage supporters in the world, making the case for women’s suffrage within a movement that viewed a suffrage victory in one area of the globe as a step in favor of women in other nations. The reports on suffrage advancements, for instance, treated “glorious” successes in New Zealand and Australia in the same breath as those made in American states like Ohio and Idaho, speakers connected this progress to achievements in the western United States. Speakers also framed the fight for suffrage in terms of the language of civilization vs. barbarism, urging southerners to join the presumably good, enlightened people of the West who did not enslave women like the “backward” people of the Orient supposedly did. In doing so, suffrage leaders adopted and expanded upon an increasingly powerful set of beliefs linking the status of women to imperialist ideologies of racial and national supremacy, a strategy that they presumably calculated would resonate with the identities and apprehensions of their elite southern white audience.¹⁸

Indeed, convention organizers displayed considerable sensitivity regarding white southerners’ ongoing efforts to limit the franchise along lines of race and class. At the convention, NAWSA cautiously endorsed speeches promoting educational qualifications

¹⁷ Ibid., 238-240.

¹⁸ Ibid., 237, 363; *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 February 1895; Patricia Grimshaw, *Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Louise Newman, *White Women’s Rights*, 17, 23. Grimshaw argues that the women of the South Pacific agreed with this worldwide vision, and they prided themselves in paving the way for future suffrage victories abroad. Instead of viewing women’s political action as a disparate, spontaneous incident, she posits that these seemingly individual occurrences might have contributed to a collective, worldwide action.

for voting privileges, even as they steered clear of the explicitly racist rhetoric that would increasingly characterize the arguments of southern suffragists in the coming years. This reflected an ongoing shift in the national organization's strategy during the 1890s. Even though suffragists in the earlier stages had appealed to lofty principles of equality and justice for all human beings, the leaders in the national movement had increasingly adopted a policy of convenience, advancing the cause of middle-class whites over African-Americans and foreign born immigrants. Even convention speaker and noted abolitionist Henry Blackwell advocated the use of educational requirements in determining suffrage privileges. He noted that "two great bodies of illiterate citizens" were present in the country, as foreign immigrants raised concerns in the North while African-Americans presented unease in the South. The policy was intended to allay fears over the expansion of suffrage rights to certain "undesirable" elements of society—the poor white immigrants flocking to Northern cities and the black population of the South. Northerners and southerners alike could agree on certain terms of exclusivity for voting rights.¹⁹

Suffragists worked hard to sustain local interest over the course of the convention. They held meetings for state and committee reports every morning and afternoon, which were well attended, but they reserved evening sessions for formal speeches in the hope of reaching larger audiences. Speakers ranged from local organizers to nationally recognized figures—Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt made appearances in

¹⁹ Dewey Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*, 114; J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, 239; Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 246, 363; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*; Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). Blackwell published a pamphlet under NAWSA's auspices on the same subject. See Henry Blackwell, "A Solution to the Southern Question" (Boston: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1890).

addition to the ones made by Anthony and Blackwell. The appearances of these high-profile suffragists at evening sessions and mass meetings over the course of the convention did achieve a few converts to the woman's cause. In fact, a single mass meeting held under the auspices of the Atlanta Equal Suffrage League and Susan B. Anthony won over thirty-four new members for the league.²⁰

The Howard sisters chose Carrie Chapman Catt to close the convention at the end of the week in an attempt to draw a final large audience. Catt posited the need for suffragists to pursue a more vigorous approach to recruitment and bring more organization to the movement. "The size of our membership is not at all commensurate with the sentiment for woman suffrage," she added. Catt attributed this situation to early efforts that sought to educate the public on the merits of woman suffrage rather than encourage them to form effective organizational units within NAWSA. Instead, Catt called for intense suffrage agitation in the form of putting forth suffrage amendments to individual state legislatures and Congress. She believed suffragists had made enough headway to sway sentiment favorably in a sufficient number of states that such a strategy was appropriate.²¹

And so, Georgia suffragists could be proud of their achievement and hopeful for the future in the wake of the 1895 convention. At the close of the convention, NAWSA leaders passed several resolutions, including one that acknowledged the critical role of the Atlanta press, which "added greatly to interest and attendance." Indeed, the meeting had brought together thousands of women and men devoted to suffrage cause as well as hundreds of curious spectators; at a single meeting, suffragists reported having attracted

²⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, 6 February 1895.

²¹ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 248-249.

forty new members, all of whom lived in the Atlanta. At the very least, the Atlanta convention had enabled suffragists to accomplish their goal of getting the suffrage conversation going in the South.²²

Yet, in the years following the 1895 convention, the women's suffrage campaign did not take off in Georgia or elsewhere in the nation but fell into a period frequently described by historians as a "doldrums." This phase of depressed activity, lasting from approximately 1896 to 1910, heavily impacted the South, as the movement was starting to gain momentum there. In several cases, membership in southern state suffrage organizations dwindled to just a handful of members or ceased to exist until revived in the 1910s. The survival of those organizations that did persist depended on the efforts of a few committed leaders to keep suffrage sentiments alive during the period. Events in Arkansas illustrate an extreme case in point: after its leader Clara McDiarmid died in 1899, no one formed a new organization until 1911. Though less extreme, women in Alabama and Mississippi also experienced particularly difficult times.²³

Georgia suffragists fared better than most of their southern sisters, yet this period was discouraging for them as well. They had received a considerable amount of publicity due to the convention, but the exposure did not bring many new suffragists to the GWSA. Georgia suffragists did not hold any statewide meetings until 1899 and experienced frequent changes in leadership, having five different presidents following Howard's

²² *Atlanta Constitution*, 3, 6, February 1895.

²³ Anne F. and Andrew M. Scott, *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975). For a description of suffrage movements in Mississippi and Arkansas see: A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Mississippi" *Journal of Mississippi History* 30 (February 1968): 1-34; *ibid.*, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Arkansas" *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15 (Spring 1956): 17-52. For an account of the Alabama woman suffrage movement see: Lee N. Allen, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Alabama, 1910-1920" *Alabama Review* 11 (April 1958): 83-99.

vacancy from the presidency in 1895 until Mary Latimer McLendon took permanent control of the organization in 1906. Certainly, the changes in the GWSA's administration did not provide any sense of stability for Georgia's suffrage movement while it was trying to gain momentum. However, the fact that the organization persisted while sponsoring a few local functions from year to year was an accomplishment when compared to the fate of other state suffrage movements in the South. These women did not fall into total obscurity as the label of "doldrums" might suggest.²⁴

Indeed, the sweeping claims for a doldrums period, while not inaccurate, have tended to lead to reductive accounts that overlook significant activities that did take place during this time. In fact, Georgia's suffrage movement suggests contrary evidence to the "doldrums" paradigm. Though activity did wane after the movement's auspicious start, Georgia's suffragists made important strides in terms of political "training" during the period in which they lobbied politicians to approve social reform legislation. Furthermore, many of the ideas discussed at the Atlanta convention heavily influenced the way Georgia suffragists fought for the ballot, providing both inspiration and a strategic framework for the movement's subsequent revival in the 1910s.

Georgia's suffragists used a firm but cautious approach to promote their movement in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The Atlanta convention had produced mixed reactions in the state, which indicated that many Georgians were not receptive to the amendment initiative Catt had promoted. In fact, only one paper in Atlanta, *The Sunny South*, endorsed women's suffrage in the wake of the convention. The publication even

²⁴ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, v. 6, 121. The following women served as president of the GWSA: H. Augusta Howard, 1890-1895; Mrs. Frances Carter Swift, 1895-1896; Mrs. Mary Latimer McLendon, 1896-1899; Mrs. Gertrude C. Thomas, 1899-1901; Miss Katherine Koch, 1901-1904; Mrs. Rose Y. Colvin, 1904-1906; Mrs. Mary Latimer McLendon, 1906-1921.

printed a lengthy letter from Mary Latimer McLendon, who tried to enlist women and men to the cause by pointing out its inclusivity—the GWSA was non-partisan and not affiliated with any particular religious denomination. Another organ, Milledgeville’s *Union Recorder*, provided a hesitant endorsement, claiming, “We are not prepared to say this will be best. But no backward steps will be taken in efforts to make the world better; and a scheme that promises so fair will not remain untried.”²⁵

Other papers put forth strong condemnations of the movement. The *Cordele Sentinel* printed a mocking editorial that mused, “How these women do envy us men!” while the *Albany Herald* remarked that the women of the NAWSA convention were “leading forlorn hopes.” The *Dawson News* provided a backhanded compliment to the suffragists, claiming that NAWSA composed “bright women on a very foolish mission.” Still others questioned whether women even wanted the ballot, despite the fact that thousands of women had just met in Atlanta to promote that very cause. One paper remarked, “In Georgia the men are in favor of giving the women everything they want. They don’t want the ballot, and say to the men, ‘keep your old britches, we don’t want them.’” Even the state’s first lady questioned the extent of suffrage interest in the state. In a letter published in the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Union Recorder* Susan Atkinson stated, “When women earnestly do want the vote the men will not stand in their way.” She went on to add, “When the women feel that it is to the interest of the country that they be given the ballot, they will ask for it.”²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., vol. 4, 582; *Sunny South*, 2 March 1895; *Union Recorder*, 5 February 1895.

²⁶ *Cordele Sentinel* quoted in *Union Recorder*, 19 February 1895; *Albany Herald* quoted in *Union Recorder*, 12 February 1895; *Dawson News* quoted in *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 February 1895; *Union Recorder*, 26 February 1895; *Atlanta Journal*, 14 February 1895.

Suffragists could not find support among those who supported women's education either. The ladies of the NAWSA convention had requested the use of the hall of Georgia's House of Representatives for the meeting's last day on February 5th, but Governor William Atkinson had refused on the basis that this would be "unconstitutional." Atkinson's rejection came as a surprise since he had played an instrumental role in establishing the first state woman's college, Milledgeville's Georgia Normal and Industrial College (GNIC), in 1889. GNIC's president, J. Harris Chappell came out strongly against the suffrage issue as well, citing the national association's ties to abolition. Chappell became particularly enraged by NAWSA's decision to honor Frederick Douglass when he died in February of 1895.²⁷

In light of these negative stances on suffrage, it was surprising that suffragists could find support among even a few state politicians. Nevertheless, eleven months after the convention, Fulton County's Arnold Broyles introduced a bill in 1895 to Georgia's House of Representatives that would strike "male" from the state's constitution. The bill, which had been drawn by Charles A. Reid, a lawyer and member of the GWSA, was not acted upon by the legislature. Similar measures came up in 1899 and 1900, but according to Mary Latimer McLendon, they achieved "barren" results. The legislature did, however, grant the GWSA the use of the hall of the House of Representatives for their first annual state convention held in November of 1899. The women had achieved some progress since Governor Atkinson's refusal to do so just four years earlier.²⁸

²⁷ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 583; James F. Cook, *The Governors of Georgia, 1754-2004*, 3d ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 187-190; *Union Recorder*, 5 March 1895.

²⁸ *Union Recorder*, 26 November 1895; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register*, 1925-1926, 338; Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6, 121; *ibid.*, vol. 4, 583.

Nevertheless, the relative lack of progress at the time influenced Georgia's suffragists to turn their efforts toward social reform legislation. While women's voting still remained their priority, suffragists in the state believed that the successes they achieved on reform issues would serve as proof of the purifying influence of women in politics and might convert people to their cause. Additionally, the issues with which they took interest reveal underlying reasons why many women took up the suffrage cause in the first place. Generally, most sought full property and wage rights for women and resented the fact that they were taxed without representation in government as citizens without full voting rights. These ideas, essentially associated with fairness and property, extended to include other ideas of equality when suffragists advocated co-educational universities and the inclusion of women into professional positions. Suffragists argued that if bestowed with the vote, they could protect propertied women's assets in a more timely and efficient manner.

As early as 1895, Georgia suffragists made strong arguments for improved property rights for women. They championed the cause of "equal pay for equal work" and argued for greater gender equity for working women. These demands emerged in a context in which increasing numbers of middle-class women were working for wages in the wake of the economically ravaged and deprived state of the southern economy after the Civil War. While the ramifications of the war forced some women into the wage economy, others seized upon opportunities laid before them during the postwar era, seeking personal fulfillment outside the home through education and work as teachers and secretaries. As the rising numbers of women achieved new earning power, white southern women grew increasingly distressed that the South's laws did not adequately

define their wages as their own property. Indeed, most southern suffragists represented the viewpoint of propertied women who wanted their individual assets protected by law.²⁹

Georgia's women pressed the wage issue before the General Assembly in 1895. When the state's Speaker of the House of Representatives, William H. Fleming attempted to improve upon the state's Married Woman's Property Act of 1866, suffragists expressed great delight. Fleming suggested that the law, which had provided property ownership to wives, should expand to include their wages. His bill passed the House mightily by a 98-29 vote, but it died when it reached the Senate. Additionally, suffragists lobbied for a bill in 1898 that provided for police matrons in large cities. While it did not pass in either house, Atlanta's city council did create such a position with a salary of forty dollars per month, but the position remained unfilled until 1901 and the salary decreased to a rate of thirty dollars per month.³⁰

At its first annual statewide convention in 1899, the GWSA set out to organize a more efficient political machine. Members agreed upon a six point agenda that they would push before the General Assembly over the next decade. Their platform argued:

1. That the University of Georgia be opened to women.
2. That women be members of the boards of education.
3. That woman physicians be placed on the staff of the state insane asylum.
4. That women be made eligible to the office of president of [Georgia Normal and Industrial College].
5. That the "age of protection" for girls be raised from 10 to 18 years.
6. That girls of eighteen be permitted to enter the textile department of the State Technological School.

²⁹ For an explanation of the changing economic status of women and concern's over their property rights after the Civil War, see chapter 5 of Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*.

³⁰ *Sunny South*, 2 March 1895; Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 584, 586-588.

As a result of their lobby in the state legislature, suffragists saw four bills of interest considered by the General Assembly in 1900 alone. Among these bills was a measure to limit child labor as well as provisions related to item numbers one and six. The legislature twice considered an “Age of Protection” bill wrought by Campbell County Representative Charles S. Reid, but it failed to pass both times. The bill had proposed a relatively modest change for the age of consent to rise from ten to twelve years old, expecting that the fairly small increase would pass with greater ease. Representative Reid speculated that his bill failed to pass because it did not propose a sufficient increase in the ages protected. However, the legislature’s previous votes on the matter indicated that legislators’ was an opposition in principle to the bill rather than its specifics.³¹

Indeed, the failures in the legislature had nothing to do with the specifics of the bills at all. The reform measures suffragists pursued pertained more to urban middle-class professionals than any other demographic in the state. Certainly, the onset of industry in Atlanta had made the call for labor reforms, especially for women and children, more pressing among the city’s urban elite. Therefore, it is not surprising that legislators from Atlanta and its environs supported such reforms while those outside the city limits found little use for them as their constituents had not faced the problems of an emerging industrial society including wage labor disputes and the abuse of laboring children.³²

Suffragists gained support, whether direct or indirect, for some of their social reform endeavors from other organizations. The State Federation of Labor inserted a

³¹ Ibid., 584-585; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1973-1974*, 1433; Campbell County was ceded to neighboring Fulton county in 1932. The legislature had received several petitions on the age of consent before the one in 1900, which was the first one the General Assembly carried to a vote.

³² Here, I draw upon Elna Green’s *Southern Strategies*, which has clarified difference between suffragists and anti-suffragists by examining their socio-economic backgrounds.

strong endorsement of women's suffrage to its platform and worked alongside the GWSA to combat child labor in factories. The alliance with the organization further supports the point that the suffragists' campaign resonated with the concerns of urban-dwelling reformers who wished to alleviate the mass of troubles attributed to industrialism. At the same time, the state's branch of the WCTU provided support for some aspects of the suffragists' agenda. Like the GWSA, the GWCTU submitted petitions to raise the age of consent, although members sought an upper limit of twenty-one years instead of the suffragists' suggestion of eighteen. And while there were women like Mary McLendon who worked for both the GWSA and GWCTU and their respective causes, the two organizations did not typically share a symbiotic relationship.³³

In fact, the suffrage issue created sharp divisions within Georgia's WCTU branch. Beginning in the 1890s, women of the GWCTU frequently debated the merits of women suffrage at group meetings and state conventions. Many members supported women's voting as a means to enact temperance legislation, especially in the wake of General Assembly's repeated failure to do so. When the Assembly defeated a bill that called to close saloons in Atlanta in 1892, some WCTU members began to believe in earnest that suffrage might be the best route for their own agenda. Nevertheless, the issue came under harsh attacks from many GWCTU leaders who saw suffrage as a distraction within the organization.³⁴

Bishop Warren Candler, president of Atlanta's Emory University, led the most virulent attacks against suffragist sentiment in the GWCTU. An ardent supporter of

³³ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 4, 584.

³⁴ Lula Barnes Ansley, *History of Georgia's Woman's Christian Temperance Union from its Organization, 1883-1907* (Columbus, GA: Gilbert Printing Co., 1914), 134-149.

temperance for religious purposes, Candler believed suffragists in the WCTU were leading the organization astray from its holy mission, and as a prominent community leader, his opinion held great sway with its members. He became increasingly distressed as President Mrs. William C. Sibley spoke favorably about suffrage in her appearances around the state. WCTU President Frances Willard further frustrated Candler when she inserted a women's suffrage plank into the national organization's platform even though she did encourage local organizations to pursue paths that best suited their interests. Nonetheless, Willard's assertion that "the WCTU is doing no more important work than reconstructing the ideal of womanhood" certainly did not sit well with the bishop. Candler's own wife became so wary of the apparent hold suffragists had on the organization that she refused to attend the state convention in 1892.³⁵

Candler eventually issued an ultimatum to the GWCTU on account of the suffrage question: drop the issue altogether, or lose his support. In a letter to Sibley, Candler remarked, "We [my wife and I] will not cooperate with the WCTU until the suffrage business is stopped." In addition to detracting from temperance concerns, Candler cited women's suffrage agitation as "unscriptural and sinful," claiming that no proper woman would ever desire to enter politics, the "rightful" province of men. Certainly, Candler's stance presented an awkward situation for Sibley, who personally wanted to advance women's suffrage but needed to keep Candler as an ally as well. She approached Candler diplomatically, asserting that the organization had adopted neither favorable nor negative

³⁵ Missouri Stokes to "Dear Mrs. Moore," 12 Mar 1892, 3:7, Warren Candler Collection, Manuscript and Rare Book Library, Emory University; J.E. Sibley to Candler, 29 April 1892, *ibid.* Chapter nine of Ansley's *History of Georgia's WCTU* addresses Candler's involvement in the organization's suffrage debate. Willard's quote found in Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 103.

suffrage platforms, and she encouraged the bishop and his wife to speak to the organization about their misgivings.³⁶

Ultimately, Candler and his followers triumphed over the suffrage contingent in the GWCTU, as the organization never endorsed women's suffrage. Candler held an estimable position in the southern religious community as a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and as an assistant editor to that organization's widespread publication, *Christian Advocate*. He held clout among religious circles of the South, and suffragists did not want to antagonize such a powerful man nor a sizeable group of Christians who had by and large supported their prohibition campaign. Candler's repeated threats to use this power and that of his brother, Coca-Cola founder Asa Candler, to influence state politicians further substantiated their fears. GWCTU women so resented Candler's attack on their organization that they devoted lengthy sections of the organization's published history to his meddling. Nevertheless, though a strong suffrage sentiment remained in the organization, the women in Georgia's temperance crusade batted down suffrage resolutions at several conventions in the 1890s, usually carrying a 2:1 margin against the suffragists. Their task, the antis argued, was to combat liquor interests as they posed a threat to the stability of home and family, which should not involve women taking on politically active roles.³⁷

This justification attracted a wide range of women to the WCTU, while suffrage proponents remained on the defensive. Women in the WCTU felt more comfortable

³⁶ Ibid., Warren Candler to Mrs. W.C. Sibley, 2 May 1892, 3:7, Candler Collection.

³⁷ Mark K. Bauman, *Warren Akin Candler: The Conservative as Idealist* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1981); "History of GA WCTU," (n.p), Georgia WCTU Records, 10:7, Manuscript and Rare Book Library, Emory University. Chapter 9 of Ansley's *History of Georgia's WCTU* history recounts the resentment many women within the organization felt toward Candler.

advocating reforms that they felt only affected the private sphere and thus did not threaten to topple the southern patriarchal order. Women, viewed as caretakers of the home, could feasibly assume a public role to fight for temperance legislation because they were trying to preserve order in their own domain: the home and the family.

Suffragists, on the other hand, were believed by many to pose a threat to the gender order in their attempts to gain political power outside the home, and their campaign presented anxieties about the ramifications their movement would produce within the family itself if it succeeded. Anti-suffragists hurled labels of “short-haired female agitators,” “platform screamers,” and “Jezebels” at suffragists, who represented the “wrong sort of woman,” whose willingness to flout gender norms made her anathema to the feminine ideal held by most elite white southerners. In a letter to the editor of Milledgeville’s *Union Recorder*, Augusta Howard mocked the anti-suffrage temperance women, depicting them as politically impotent and attempting to turn the tables by portraying their organizing tactics as noisy and obnoxious:

The [temperance] woman and the woman-suffragist evidently agree that women have a right to entertain opinions on political matters. As to means they are not agreed. The suffragist think [*sic*] that the proper mode of influencing the decision of public questions is to go to the polls in a quiet manner, deposit one’s ballot so that one’s opinion will be counted, and return home . . . temperance women seem to think that the proper mode of women’s influencing the decision of public questions is for them to parade the streets in a body, sing their opinions at the polls, and then, after so much noise, to go home without having one of those opinions counted.

Temperance organizers countered that once men “responded nobly” to the GWCTU’s “appeals for home protection, there would be no necessity for the women of this country to defend themselves at the ballot box,” reflecting their belief that a male presence alone in politics could achieve their agenda without the enfranchisement of women. These

tensions, rooted in conflict over gender, help to explain why a wider range of women felt justified joining the temperance movement but less so the suffrage movement.³⁸

Unlike suffrage organizations outside the region that had benefited from the support of the WCTU, most southern suffrage organizations like the GWSA had to work without the aid of this potentially powerful ally. Similar situations to the one in Georgia arose in WCTU state branches across the South, in which temperance organizers shied away from the suffrage issue due to the belief that it harmed their prohibition efforts. Organizations in Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee, for example, tried to disassociate themselves from the national WCTU endorsement of woman suffrage. Their reactions ranged from indifference to outright rejection of the organization's approval of the cause. North Carolina's WCTU voiced halfhearted support for the suffrage campaign; it had a suffrage plank in its platform, but only two state affiliations ever campaigned for the cause. All of these women drew significant support from southern churches headed by male clergymen, who had not shown strong inclinations toward supporting women's rights. Consequently, the suffrage issue was one many southern women of the WCTU wanted to avoid, at least in part because they did not want to antagonize their powerful male allies in the fight for prohibition.³⁹

The situation in Georgia's WCTU certainly reflected the tactics of other southern WCTU branches. Though many women in the GWCTU expressed discontent over Candler's meddling in the organization, only one WCTU state branch ever adopted a

³⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 August 1894; *Union Recorder*, 29 March 1887 and 19 July 1892.

³⁹ Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 171; Mary Jane Smith, "Constructing Womanhood in Public: Progressive White Women in a New South" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 2002), 180-183. Chapter 6 in Smith's work addresses the woman suffrage issue as it arose within individual WCTU branches in the South.

suffrage plank, and it was McLendon's own group from Atlanta's south side. The GWSA had also extended friendly "greetings" through McLendon at the GWCTU annual state convention in 1905, but her efforts ended in vain. Suffragists eventually found additional support in 1907 when leading WCTU officials, Lula Barnes Ansley, Jennie Hart Sibley, and Mrs. L.W. Walker joined the suffrage cause. Their affiliation came after the temperance women had achieved a state-wide prohibition act in that same year, and their decision in no way reflected a change in sentiment on behalf of the state WCTU.⁴⁰

While debates on gender roles were highlighted by the division between suffragists and anti-suffragists in the WCTU, issues of race composed an equally important component in Georgia's suffrage movement. Race tempered suffragists' arguments from the inception of their campaign. In the days leading up to the 1895 NAWSA convention, Susan B. Anthony politely asked her friend and woman suffrage ally Frederick Douglass to forgo the event in light of the convention's unprecedented appearance in the South. Anthony's request reflected the strategy among NAWSA's northern leaders to move away from an abolitionist past toward a stance more compatible with southerners. Georgia's suffragists predictably welcomed Douglass's absence as well since their affiliation with a well-noted black man and abolitionist would have undoubtedly destroyed their movement's chances of gaining any momentum in the state.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the leaders of the GWSA could not avoid the essential contradictions between their efforts to expand suffrage and intensifying efforts to restrict access to the polls in Georgia. Initial disenfranchisement measures of a poll tax and the

⁴⁰ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6, 123.

⁴¹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 113-116.

white primary in major cities had discouraged many black citizens from voting by the mid 1890s, but the state lagged behind other states in the South, which had implemented far more rigorous and extensive suffrage restrictions from 1889 to 1903. Every other former state of the Confederacy had employed a poll tax and at least another statewide restrictive suffrage measure during this time, but Georgia's only statewide restriction was a poll tax.⁴²

As proponents of an all-white franchise pressed forward, the turning point came in 1906. That year's gubernatorial race pitted *Atlanta Constitution* editor Clark Howell, a conservative Democrat, against Hoke Smith, a progressive who received the highly coveted backing of the highly influential Tom Watson. Watson, who had previously sought out black voters in his own Populist campaign, had since abandoned this strategy in favor of one that advocated black disenfranchisement completely and agreed to back Smith if he would insert such a measure in his platform. Both candidates played upon race antagonisms, but Smith proved the best at stirring up fears of "Negro Rule," which referenced the emergence of a black elite in cities like Atlanta that allegedly threatened to topple the white-dominated social order. Smith's landslide victory in the election intensified racial animosities throughout the state, which contributed to Atlanta's infamous race riot in September of 1906.⁴³

The race riot prompted significant legislation in the General Assembly's 1907 session. Newly elected Governor Smith carried forth his disenfranchisement platform by

⁴² Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*, 114.

⁴³ The 1906 gubernatorial race and the Atlanta race riot have been addressed in several works. See Godshalk, *Veiled Visions*; Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Dewey W. Grantham, *Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958); C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Macmillan, 1938; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

passing a constitutional amendment that privileged voting requirements upon the fulfillment of one of five qualifications. The qualifications entailed a “grandfather clause,” poll tax, property requirement, “understanding clause,” and a “good character” character clause, which intended to reassure poor whites who could not meet the other qualifications that they would remain enfranchised. The riot had also increased support for prohibition, as many pinpointed black access to alcohol as the primary cause of the riot. Rather than identifying woman suffrage as a potential remedy for this problem, however, Georgia politicians emphasized white women’s vulnerability and need for “protection.” Urban politicians repeatedly pointed to the need to defend white women against the alleged threat posed by drunken black men. The GWCTU added their voice to the growing chorus, petitioning the legislature to act favorably on prohibition in light of “several outrages [that] had been committed by negroes upon unprotected white women.” Hostilities in the aftermath of the race riot encouraged the speedy approval of statewide prohibition in 1907, a measure that reinforced rather than challenged male authority and female dependence.⁴⁴

Other efforts at progressive reform were similarly entangled in racial politics, although the context of Jim Crow worked against Progressive goals more often than not. Like other white southern reformers, Georgia’s suffragists aimed their agenda at improving the conditions of the white working class with measures targeted toward enacting legislation concerning child labor, mandatory education, and the age of consent. Even though the intent of such proposals targeted whites as a means of shoring up white supremacy, the General Assembly often batted down such measures in light of potential ramifications for the black citizenry. Education reforms similarly failed to pass due to the

⁴⁴ Ansley, *History of Georgia’s WCTU*, 261.

fear that blacks might “exploit” them for their own edification. The General Assembly’s argument against raising the age of consent was particularly troubling; its members opposed the reform because it would expand protection to young black girls as well. Southern white Progressives worked hard to connecting their reforms to advancements in white supremacy. The task was particularly daunting for suffragists who had to reconcile their movement, which was predicated upon ideas of expanding rights, with ongoing efforts toward exclusivity, and who also sought to alter a gender order that was commonly understood to be a cornerstone of Jim Crow.⁴⁵

In light of all their failures, it seems somewhat remarkable that Georgia suffragists pressed on in their efforts, but press on they did. One source of hope and optimism for suffragists who struggled locally was their perception of worldwide momentum on their side. As evidenced by the speeches at the 1895 Atlanta convention, suffragists increasingly felt it advantageous to express their “solidarity” with the women of the world who also sought voting rights. Recent scholarship suggests that women across the globe saw their situation as one connected to that of other women, and they created worldwide organizations such as the International Woman Suffrage Alliance to provide forums for exchange and support. National suffrage leaders believed that gains made in Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and its territories rendered “the suffrage battle nearly won.” They gained strength and encouragement from across the globe as they struggled to move their own cause forward. In light of their frustrations at the local level, Georgia’s suffragists sometimes drew upon this international conversation for inspiration and to advance their own cause. Inspired by suffrage victories in New Zealand and Great Britain in addition to those in western United States, they used these successes

⁴⁵ Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 116-119.

to justify their own claims to the franchise. “Suffrage [was as] sure as [the] rising sun,” they argued. Mary McLendon echoed this sentiment in the *Atlanta Constitution*, referring to woman suffrage progress in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand, she asserted, “With resistless force, it will sweep over the entire union.”⁴⁶

Yet, Georgia’s suffragists, like other southern suffragists, understood that the peculiarities of the South would dictate that their movement assume a politically conservative route. Certainly the rhetoric of their movement contained expansive notions of citizenship within it, but suffragists understood the South had a long tradition of eschewing inclusive politics. Indeed, in their attempt to advance their own cause they cast the international woman suffrage campaign as a solution to both international and local problems concerning race. Suffragists cited women’s rights advancements in countries of “Anglo-Saxon” heritage as examples of a growing trend toward international white supremacy. Southern women found these connections especially enticing as a vision of woman suffrage that rested upon the white privilege to govern could “[walk] hand in

⁴⁶ *Atlanta Constitution* 23 Feb. 1898, 9 Nov. 1902 and 28 June 1914; A “solidarity” like the term “imagined community,” which Benedict Anderson coined in his work of the same name, acknowledges an identification of people on some ideological/philosophical basis that usually transcend national borders in favor of these ideas. This term, coined by Daniel Rodgers, refers to an ideological grouping rather than a geographic one. Rodgers’ seminal work, *Atlantic Crossings*, has inspired studies that tie the Progressive era movements for social change to a much larger dialogue of an emerging international liberalism. Throughout the work, Rodgers emphasizes that American progressives sought inspiration from like-minded individuals across the Atlantic, thus undermining the notion that this period of social change gained momentum entirely from inward looking domestic reformers. Rodgers’ reassessment of this time period will provide a large theoretical basis for my own vision of Georgia’s suffrage movement; See Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Ian Tyrrell’s work aligns in the same vein as Rodgers; See Tyrrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1800-1930* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Very few works have placed suffrage movements within the context of international exchange that Rodgers explains, and even those that have, have done so in relation to Third World international feminism, which occurred much later than Georgia’s women’s suffrage movement during the Progressive Era. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan’s edited collection of articles in *Suffrage and Beyond* remains the most prominent example of historians willingly and intentionally expanding suffrage efforts beyond national borders. See Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds. *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) and Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of the International Women’s Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

hand with Jim Crow,” thus allowing women space in political activities that could reinforce rather than undermine the continued subordination of southern blacks.

Georgia’s suffragists responded to the obstacles presented by race anxieties by claiming that their movement was one that was working to uphold white supremacy not only in the South but around the world.⁴⁷

The ways in which this ideological framework played out in the 1910s when Georgia experienced a resurgence of suffrage activity will be the basis of the following chapter. Debates over gender, race and class ensued just as they had in incipient stages of the suffrage movement, but suffragists faced stronger organized opposition when anti-suffragists initiated a movement of their own to counteract that of the suffragists. Despite the surge in their opposition’s ranks, Georgia’s suffragists were finally able to make woman’s voting a frequent yet hotly contested issue in the General Assembly.

⁴⁷ Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 172-173. Morgan, like many scholars, uses the term “Anglo-Saxon” in reference to the rhetoric employed by these historical actors. In many cases, “Anglo-Saxon” and similar terms simply refers to “white,” as people of the late nineteenth and early twentieth usually consolidated their visions of race into a bifurcated view of black and white. Matthew Frye Jacobson has explained this practice in his work *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). See also Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998). Though not addressed in this study, the nation’s foray into imperialism near the turn of the century certainly would have played into this discussion as well, since imperialism frequently brought up debates on the relationship between race and citizenship. See Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870-1929* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008); Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Paul Kramer’s conception of trans-national whiteness supports this concept, as Anglo-Americans near the turn of the century purported that their shared racial characteristics made them more attuned to government than other races; Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88 (Mar., 2002): 1315-1353.

CHAPTER 2

Momentum Gained and Lost: Suffragists, Anti-Suffragists and the General Assembly, 1913-1916

Considering the odds, Georgia's suffragists weathered their "doldrums" period relatively well. From 1895 to the 1910s, they consistently held meetings and distributed pamphlets, hoping that their visibility alone would attract additional supporters. Unlike some southern suffrage sisters, their organization never disbanded, and Georgians more capably handled changes in leadership. Nevertheless, the GWSA had less than a hundred members as of 1912.¹ Suffragists had spent much of the first decade of the twentieth century trying to attract a sufficient number of adherents to form a movement that could demand genuine consideration from Georgia's General Assembly, but these efforts largely failed—at least locally. A small number of suffragists pushed on, however, even as there was little evidence to suggest that they would ever achieve their aim.

This chapter will explore the social undercurrents that influenced Georgia's suffrage movement as it moved further into the twentieth century. A number of forces came to a head during the 1910s, and acted as a detriment to the suffragists' cause. A discernable rural-urban gap opened, pitting progressive reformers in the city against more traditional conservatives in the countryside, and the suffrage movement became entangled within a power struggle among the state's legislators. Suffragists also contended with southern anxieties concerning the increasing prominence of the "new woman," who circumvented the existing southern ideal of separate male and female

¹ Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*, 211.

spheres by pursuing a public life. Issues on race worked to suffragists' disadvantage as well; an invigorated and organized opposition movement repeatedly used Lost Cause rhetoric, connecting the proposed Nineteenth Amendment to the Fifteenth Amendment, which had enfranchised black men during Reconstruction. With these forces at work, suffragists often became discouraged over the lack of progress they made at home, and they looked to sweeping suffrage victories in the nation and abroad to gain hope that their movement would eventually achieve victory.

Georgia's suffragists found reasons for hope as they surveyed the national political landscape of the 1910s. At the national level, Progressivism was in full swing, and an invigorated leadership initiative by NAWSA President Carrie Chapman Catt had begun to make inroads in both state and national campaigns, indicating a revival of the movement across the nation. This revival, however, coincided with an intense period of conflict in the South. Most of the underlying societal tensions could be attributed to southerners' efforts to shore up race, class and gender power structures even as they tried to refashion the old South into a new one. Pushing for a major social reform like women's suffrage thus became entangled with an ongoing counter-effort to bring stability to a region that had endured—and continued to undergo—much change.²

Arguably the most dramatic changes resulted from efforts to transform the southern economy. An unprecedented wave of industrial capital flooded the region as a part of an endeavor to build a "New South" less dependent on monoculture-based farming production, which had stagnated, particularly due to falling cotton prices. In the 1880s, nascent southern industries had begun to take root. Railroad, factory and mill

² For secondary literature on southern progressivism, see Grantham, *Southern Progressivism*; Dittmer, *Black Georgia*; Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*; Jack Temple Kirby, *Darkness at the Dawn: Race and Reform in the Progressive South* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1972).

construction all experienced a boom in the late nineteenth century, and thousands of tenant farmers abandoned the countryside for a chance at prosperity in the city. Consequently, urban growth coupled this industrial expansion. By 1910, 20 per cent of the South's population lived in urban areas. Birmingham grew a whopping 4200 per cent from 1880 to 1910, while Memphis nearly tripled its population and Richmond and Nashville more than doubled theirs. In Georgia, Atlanta's population increased 72 percent between 1900 and 1910, while Augusta, Macon and Savannah also experienced unprecedented growth yet to a lesser degree.³

Rapid industrialization had brought people together physically, but unprecedented population growth had placed a tremendous strain upon cities. Budding southern progressives had a number of concerns to occupy their reform agendas, including city management, political corruption and labor abuses. Urban living presented a host of new problems, but life in the countryside offered its own disadvantages. In fact, most southern cities and towns experienced a higher level of prosperity than rural areas. In Georgia, farmers earned less than half of the income of non-agricultural workers in the state. Even factory workers, who earned considerably low wages in the South, fared better than their rural counterparts, and they also had access to progressive-era social reform programs that generally eluded the countryside. Indeed, a sizeable gap in prosperity grew up quickly between the state's urban and rural populations. These disparities and increasing focus on city boosterism in Atlanta left many in the countryside feeling like the state's

³ Don Harrison Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 15. From 1880 to 1910, Atlanta grew by 314%; Augusta, Macon, and Savannah grew by 87, 219 and 112 percent, respectively.

“have-nots,” believing that the city’s progressive agenda had superseded their conservative values and rural interests in state affairs.⁴

One of the more troubling developments for traditional conservatives and many urban reformers concerned the emergence of the “new woman” in the city. Industrial expansion afforded new opportunities to southern women and contributed to their expanded public profile in the twentieth century. In Atlanta, a variety of jobs became available to women, including positions as secretaries, store clerks, box makers, textile workers, washerwomen and prostitutes among many others; the influx of women into the wage economy grew so steadily in the 1910s that more than forty per cent of the city’s female population over the age of sixteen would be working for wages by 1920.⁵ While the city’s poorer working class normally took these positions, more elite women found opportunities outside the home as professionals, most notably as teachers. These women also found fulfillment outside the private sphere by advocating city reform and forming organizations that promoted urban health, sponsored social welfare programs for the poor, and combated citywide vice. Women’s involvement in these progressive reforms and their collective grouping in large cities proved critical to the revival of southern suffrage efforts, as suffragists could pull from a large mass of women who had honed effective organizational and political lobbying skills while working for other social

⁴ Numan V. Bartley, *The Creation of Modern Georgia*, 2nd edition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 109, 127, 131; Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

⁵ Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in a New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 26. Hickey’s work provides an excellent account of the rise of prostitution in Atlanta in the early twentieth century and the subsequent efforts to combat it. See in particular pages 135-144.

reform groups.⁶ The state's traditional conservatives, however, deemed the increased visibility of urban women as a sign of the problems of industrialization and modernity, as Atlanta's women were increasingly subverting the southern concept of an ordered society that relegated women to a private sphere. The presence of these "new women" thus signaled a loss of control for many conservative southerners who fought for a revitalization of southern patriarchy by opposing expanded women's rights.⁷

While many white southerners grew agitated over the apparent loss of control over southern women, they also feared a loss of control over African-Americans. Though many southerners felt they had solved the "negro-question" through segregation and disenfranchisement measures, others still doubted whether these precautions would keep white supremacy intact in the 1910s. Some perceived a rising tide of black empowerment in developing African-American owned and operated business that provided support to black communities. The outbreak of World War I prompted the Great Migration of hundreds of thousands of blacks from the South to industrial hubs of the North (and from the rural South to urban South) that offered both financial opportunities and chances to escape southern oppression. Furthermore, the emergence of W. E. B. Du Bois and the NAACP as the most influential forces within national black leadership inspired further racial uplift and aggressive attacks on segregation. Black activities during the period

⁶ Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia*, 124; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 13-15, 26.

⁷ One of the clearest manifestations of the South's anxieties over changing concepts of gender came with the murder of thirteen year old factory worker Mary Phagan and the subsequent trial of her accused murderer, Leo Frank. For an exploration of this event, see Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *Journal of American History* 78 (December 1991): 917-48.

indicated a more powerful, more resistant force working against southern white supremacy.⁸

White fears of black empowerment appeared in a number of manifestations. Black migration deprived the South of a significant portion of its rural agricultural labor force. White southerners expressed resentment toward northern industrialists to whom they attributed plots “to rifle the entire South of its well-behaved, able bodied Negro labor.”⁹ Their inability to maintain complete and total control over black movement undoubtedly pushed some white southerners to maintain power by force, as lynchings occurred with great frequency during the period with Georgia leading the nation in recorded lynchings.¹⁰ At the same time, the newly formed NAACP encouraged increasingly aggressive attempts at self-defense by blacks, which further compounded white anger and fear over rising black militancy. In fact, the combination of rising black resistance and the highly publicized Leo Frank case and lynching contributed to a renewed interest in a second Ku Klux Klan, which organized in November of 1915 on the top of Stone Mountain in Georgia. Just a few days earlier, the film *The Birth of a Nation* appeared in Atlanta to great fanfare, which had also fueled renewed interest in the Klan. To whites, the events of the period begged comparisons to the age of Reconstruction in which fears over black power and mobility and a highly visible Klan permeated the South.¹¹

⁸ Tindall, *Emergence of the New South*, 158; Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*; Dittmer, *Black Georgia*.

⁹ Tindall, *Emergence of the New South*, 148.

¹⁰ Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 131. From 1882 to 1923, Georgians committed a record of 505 lynchings, and while most lynchings subsided in the period from 1900 to 1920, they occurred with greater frequency in Georgia than they had in the previous twenty years.

Thus, as Georgia's suffragists entered into the second phase of their movement in the 1910s, they did so against a backdrop fraught with tension. These tensions, having arisen in the context of significant change throughout the South, augured ramifications for existing race, class and gender power structures, prompting many conservative southerners to champion a return of the ways of the Old South. Consequently, the battle for women's suffrage in Georgia would be a difficult one.

In spite of these challenges, however, suffragists saw a surge in their ranks during this period. Under the leadership of Mary McLendon, who was elected to the GWSA presidency in 1906, the GWSA gradually expanded in the 1910s. GWSA nearly tripled its membership from less than a hundred members in 1912 to approximately 250 in 1913. In 1914 the organization exceeded 1,000 members, and it had established 11 subsidiary branches by 1915. In a short time span of roughly three years, Georgia's suffragists had managed to accomplish a task they had set out to do nearly twenty years ago with the 1895 NAWSA convention in Atlanta.¹²

The renewed interest in the state coincided with a revival of suffrage activity throughout the South. Historian Marjorie Spruill has argued that the emergence of the Progressive Movement alone provided the necessary impetus for this upsurge, but Elna Green's conclusions appear to apply most directly to the situation in Georgia. Green argues that the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the South created a critical

¹¹ Of the many accounts on the Frank Case, Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case*, 2nd edition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987) and Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Pantheon, 2003) are the most definitive.

¹² Statistics for all Georgia suffrage organizations are scattered over a number of sources. Including volumes 4 and 6 of *The History of Woman Suffrage* and articles written by A. Elizabeth Taylor on the Georgia suffrage movement. However, Dewey Grantham's *Southern Progressivism* compiles most of this information in a concise paragraph. See Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 211.

mass of reform-minded women from which the movement could pull adherents. She also points to the invigoration of suffrage activities nationwide under the auspices of NAWSA as providing the necessary stimulus for the movement's revitalization. Rapid successes in many western states aroused efforts throughout the rest of the country, including the South. Washington, California, Oregon, Arizona and Kansas abruptly broke out of lengthy "doldrums" periods by granting the vote within a three year period from 1910 to 1912. Building upon these successes, nearly every southern suffrage organization had suddenly re-formed, reorganized or resurged by 1913. The achievements came after a long drought in suffrage victories. Idaho, the last state to allow women the vote, had done so in 1896.¹³

The appearance of new, more aggressive leadership on the national suffrage scene sustained the reinvigorated the suffrage movement. Carrie Chapman Catt grew increasingly influential in the organization and advocated more aggressive agitation than the uninspired leadership of Anna Howard Shaw had. Catt, who eventually assumed the reins of power when Shaw courteously stepped down from the presidency in 1915, possessed a strong organizational acumen, which ultimately served to mobilize a formidable army of women and men to the suffrage campaign. Her "Winning Plan," designed to petition for state and federal suffrage amendments simultaneously, attracted suffragists throughout the nation who could feel a sense of accomplishment working toward a national suffrage law even if their efforts at the state level were unsuccessful.¹⁴

¹³ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 126; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 13-14, 210 (n. 75). Georgia had experienced a wave of "Progressive" fever, best embodied by the administration of Governor Hoke Smith; however, since the suffrage movement remained relatively stagnant in Georgia during this time, it is less probable that this movement invigorated suffrage efforts in the state. Dewey Grantham addresses Hoke Smith and Georgia's Progressive Movement in his book *Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South*.

Local contingencies affected the surge in suffrage interest at this time as well. Expanded educational and professional opportunities in the decades following the Civil War had cultivated a new generation of white southern women, who embraced an attitude of “nondependence.” These women flocked to cities in search of cultural and intellectual fulfillment, entered the wage economy as clerks, teachers, factory workers, and domestics and participated in reform-oriented organizations. The “nondependents” were among the tens of thousands who contributed to Atlanta’s growth by 314 per cent from 1880 to 1910. The GWSA benefitted from the allocation of this critical mass of young, educated, independent women in the city, illustrated by its spike in membership beginning in 1912.¹⁵

Among the thousands of new women attracted to Georgia’s suffrage movement, suffragists particularly coveted the public endorsement of Rebecca Latimer Felton. Felton, the seventy-seven year old widow of the prominent state politician William H. Felton and sister of Mary Latimer McLendon, finally affiliated with the GWSA in 1912. Having contributed regularly to southern newspapers including the *Atlanta Journal*, Felton had achieved a considerable level of fame throughout the South. Southerners appreciated her homespun wisdom and looked to her opinions on a variety of topics, women’s suffrage included. After the 1895 NAWSA convention, newspapers speculated what views “Mrs. Felton” held on suffrage. One publication added that if she did support the cause “[her husband would] hear from her.” The addition of a local celebrity of sorts,

¹⁴ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14; Censer, *Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 7-10. The term “nondependence” is borrowed from Censer’s book.

certainly pleased the GWSA, and the organization presumably benefitted from Felton's notoriety due to the esteem in which she was held by many southerners.¹⁶

Felton in particular reflected the transition of the Old South into the New, as she identified as an elite white southern woman but employed the rhetoric of the "new woman" of the early twentieth century, which presumably attributed to her widespread appeal. Indeed she embodied a paradox for the southern woman: she vigorously espoused liberal reforms such as women's suffrage, yet she voiced the most virulent defenses of southern racism and promoted lynching as a means of social control. In a now infamous speech at Tybee Island in 1897, she declared, "If it takes lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from drunken, ravening human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week if it becomes necessary." Her fiercely independent nature, central involvement in her husband's political campaigns, and concern for progressive reform legislation contributed to her decision to become a suffragist. The fact that her sister had been active in the suffrage movement since 1892 might also have contributed to her joining the movement as well.¹⁷

Felton's decision to declare herself a suffragist offered hope to many in the GWSA. Though she was hardly representative of a typical Georgia suffragist (her age alone starkly contrasted with the young women who were flocking to the GWSA in the 1910s), her estimable position in the state as the wife of a well-known politician afforded

¹⁶*Atlanta Constitution*, 31 Jan 1895.

¹⁷ Quoted in Williamson, *The Crucible of Race*, 128; Felton's views on race and the subjugated position of women are the subject of several works, see Lee Ann Whites, "Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Wife's Farm: The Class and Racial Politics of Gender Reform," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer, 1992): 354-372; Mary A. Hess, "A Call to Honor: Rebecca Latimer Felton and White Supremacy," M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1999. For Felton's biography see John Erwin Talmadge, *Rebecca Latimer Felton, Nine Stormy Decades* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1960) and Leeann Whites, "Rebecca Latimer Felton: The Problem of Protection in the New South," in *Georgia Women*, 224-244.

the movement much needed publicity. Furthermore, her political clout with those of the old planter aristocracy to which most suffragists did not belong, gave the movement invaluable credibility. Though not a direct consequence of the GWSA's sudden revitalization in 1912, Felton's decision to join the organization in that year would have certainly contributed to the renewed interest in Georgia's suffrage movement.¹⁸

The attraction of thousands of "New Women of the New South" to women's suffrage translated into a rash of new suffrage organizations to complement the GWSA. The rationale behind the additional organizations was to diversify the constituency lobbying politicians for change. Suffragists hoped that forming groups comprised of people of varying professions and of varying locations would make their cause more prescient throughout the state.¹⁹

The first organization of significance to form after the GWSA was the Georgia Woman Suffrage League (GWSL), which formed out of the Atlanta Civic League in 1913. Frances Smith Whiteside, a high school principal and sister of the prominent Progressive politician Hoke Smith, served as the organization's only president. Capitalizing on an opportunity to draw upon Atlanta's rising population of reform-oriented middle class professionals, Whiteside founded the GWSL entirely on the premise of organizing working women and men in favor of woman suffrage into a single organization. Having attracted a large number of teachers to join its ranks, the GWSL sponsored contests for the best woman suffrage essays in local schools as a part of its campaign to impress the importance of the women's movement upon school-age children. The Georgia Woman Suffrage League gained 500 members by 1914, but it

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, v. 6, 133-134.

attracted few followers outside Atlanta's city limits; like its counterpart, the GWSA, the league faced an improbable task of extending its base beyond urban, reform-minded professionals into the rest of the state's largely rural populations.²⁰

Frustrated by their weaknesses outside of Atlanta, suffragists formed a third state organization in 1914. The Equal Suffrage Party of Georgia (ESPG) arose among the women who were dissatisfied with what they perceived to be the lack of organization and efficiency in the state's two existing associations. Accordingly, the ESPG pursued a more expansive agenda than its predecessors had. Under the leadership of Atlanta's Emily McDougald, who served as the organization's president during its entire existence, the ESPG extended the women's campaign outside of the suffrage-friendly confines of Atlanta by creating thirteen regional branches in prominent cities.²¹ Each branch elected a president who simultaneously functioned as a representative on the organization's Executive Board. Under the directives of the Executive Board, the ESPG circulated thousands of pamphlets, books and printed speeches, and local women raised funds for education campaigns that used parades, plays, movie slides and student essay contests to reach broad sections of local populations. By 1915 the organization attracted nearly 2,000 members.²²

²⁰ Ibid. Interestingly enough, Hoke Smith would never support his sister's suffrage endeavors, and he was one of the most committed foes to the movement in Georgia. The term "New Women of the New South" is borrowed from Marjorie Spruill Wheeler's book bearing the same phrase as its title.

²¹ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, v. 6, 133-134. Major cities included Albany, Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah.

²² Ibid., 135; A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Woman Suffrage Activities in Atlanta" *Atlanta Historical Journal* 23 (1979). Each of these larger organizations formed smaller subsidiary branches throughout the state, but Georgia's suffrage movement at large came under the directive of these bigger organizations. Though each organization operated independently of the other, all of them were affiliated with NAWSA. The Georgia Young People's Suffrage Association, a smaller affiliate of the GWSA arose in 1915 on account of educational suffrage campaigns, but it largely served ceremonial purposes for the statewide movement.

Though most suffrage organizations in the state comprised mostly women, Georgia did attract male woman suffrage advocates in the 1910s. Leonard Grossman. Grossman, a bright young attorney from Atlanta, was the most important of these male allies. He provided legal counsel to both the Georgia Woman Suffrage Association and the Equal Suffrage Party of Georgia and helped draft suffrage bills to be introduced in hearings of the General Assembly. He canvassed the state for male advocates of female suffrage as well. His efforts culminated with the formation of the Georgia Men's League for Woman Suffrage in 1913, which served as an important symbolic gesture to the women of the state. Like the GWSA and GWSL, the organization gained most of its members from Atlanta while attracting only a few members outside the more liberal leaning city, but interest in the Men's League always appeared vulnerable. Mary McLendon and Grossman even discussed how they needed to get the organization in place before "interest die[d] out."²³

Despite the meager success of the Men's League, Grossman provided legal assistance to Georgia's suffragists as they resumed what had been a tenuous relationship at best with the General Assembly in 1913. Hoping to capitalize on the fortuitous surge in the GWSA membership, suffragist organizers requested the opportunity to hold hearings at the state capitol to coincide with the organization's annual convention. Their initial appeal asked permission to use the Senate's chambers for an evening program of speeches related to the "Scope of Elective Franchise." The program's aim was educational, as suffragists had intended to teach public audiences the importance of voting and good citizenship. Yet, several senators vehemently reacted to the request,

²³ Mary L. McLendon to Mary M. Dennett, 14 July 1913, 1:1 WSC; Harper, et al, *History of Woman's Suffrage*, v. 6, 126.

believing that the measure's sole purpose was to promote the woman's right to vote. Senator William Weldon Stark of Banks County led the opposition against the proposal and suggested that the request to use the Senate's chambers be tabled indefinitely. Upon this request, Senate President J. Randolph Anderson called for a vote on Stark's proposal, and the motion won by a vote of twenty to seven.²⁴

Angered by the lack of consideration given to the organization's request, Mary McLendon, Grossman and GWSA treasurer Amelia Woodall demanded an explanation for the Senate's action. Having been present for the proceedings, McLendon embarked upon the Senate floor and called for Stark to rationalize his outright rejection of their program. Stark curtly responded, "I have absolutely no sympathy with your cause" to which McLendon retorted that he had made a grave mistake in judgment. The senator continued the exchange with an indignant rejoinder: "Maybe Christ made a mistake when he appointed twelve apostles and didn't make six of them women. Now don't you think there ought to have been at least one woman in the place of Judas Iscariot?" Enraged over Stark's challenge, McLendon briskly departed from the Senate floor and immediately pursued other venues for the GWSA convention hearings.²⁵

McLendon turned her focus to the Georgia House of Representatives. She found allies in Fulton County's John Y. Smith and R. B. Blackburn, who agreed to introduce resolutions for the convention's request before the House chamber. Although she was grateful for another opportunity to advance the woman suffrage cause, McLendon certainly did not enjoy pandering to male state politicians, as she deemed such actions

²⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 July 1913; Georgia Archives, *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1989-1990*, 211; *ibid.*, 1939-1941-1943, 96; Timothy Crimmins, *Democracy Restored: A History of the Georgia State Capitol* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

embarrassing and insulting. She found it “indeed pitiful that women have to beg men for such favors as this. Elected by men, the average Georgia legislator seems to be afraid that the women might rise against them, so they keep their heels on women’s necks.”²⁶

Ultimately, suffragists won a marginal victory in their battle to use the state legislature’s facilities. Following the lead of the Senate, the House sharply opposed Representative Smith’s resolution; however, another measure arose in the Senate when Whitfield County’s Senator Malcolm Connor Tarver, having tired of the debacle, motioned to have the Senate Committee on Halls and Rooms decide the final outcome of the issue. Surprisingly, many senators supported this action because they felt that they had submitted their previous votes too hastily; they had not understood that the request to use the Senate chambers was not meant to bring up a vote on whether the senators actually supported women’s suffrage when the request from the suffragists was only one of many made by various citizens who wished to use public space for meetings.²⁷

Another surprise arose when the House introduced a similar measure allowing suffragists the use of its chambers. The body unanimously adopted this motion, which presented yet another venue for the suffragists to hold their meeting. Nonetheless, suffrage supporters did not consider the sudden turn of favor a success; Georgia’s legislators had clearly demonstrated their opposition to the idea of female suffrage and only reversed their initial decision once they understood that they were ruling on a simple request for the use of a public facility. McLendon’s troubling encounter with Senator Stark and the fury with which a majority of the General Assembly had responded to the

²⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, 5 July 1913; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1977-1978*, 1471-72.

²⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, 8, 10-11 July 1913; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1933-1935-1937*, 394.

GWSA's program had provided a valuable lesson to suffrage supporters. The Senate's quick refusal to even consider their program of speeches demonstrated that the movement faced a long, uphill battle to convince Georgia's legislators of the worthiness of the cause. Whatever faint hope that suffragists might have held regarding the sympathies of Georgia's politicians seemed to fall apart abruptly on the floor of the Senate chamber.²⁸

Nevertheless, suffragists did not let the legislators' actions deter them from bringing their cause before the Georgia General Assembly in 1914, but they had to contend with an additional obstacle—a newly formed anti-suffrage organization, the first in the state. While most pro-suffrage organizational efforts gained momentum in the early 1910s, a contingent of Georgia's more conservative women mobilized in response to the surge in suffrage interests. In May 1914, the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage formed in Macon and grew to be one of the largest and most powerful anti-suffrage organizations in the South. Its President, Caroline Patterson of Macon, boasted that the organization had grown to 2,000 members scattered in ten branches across the state in approximately three months. Though Patterson held the presidency, the group's most effective and notable leaders were Eugenia Dorothy "Dolly" Blount Lamar and Mildred Rutherford. Lamar and Rutherford represented the state's strain of more politically conservative women who advocated a return of the traditions of the Old South. Both espoused the tradition of the Lost Cause, which proved to be the single most difficult obstacle for women's rights achievements in the postbellum South. Among their deepest concerns were the rising prominence of the South's "New Woman," whom they

²⁸ Ibid.

believed posed the greatest threats to the South's traditional social hierarchies concerning gender, race and class.²⁹

Examining Lamar and Rutherford's backgrounds provides insight into the types of women who fought against the woman suffrage campaign. Lamar, the daughter of James Blount, a U.S. congressman and leading planter in middle Georgia, experienced the life of the state's well-to-do. She attended Macon's Wesleyan College and Wellesley Women's College in Massachusetts, and upon her return to Georgia, she married businessman Walter Lamar. Lamar devoted much of her adult life to club work; she held memberships in the YWCA and the Georgia Federation of Club Women, but she undeniably enjoyed her time with the United Daughters of the Confederacy the most. Serving as the President of Georgia's UDC chapter, she worked tirelessly to revive the image of the Old South through her promotion of the Lost Cause.³⁰

Lamar's work with the Daughters brought her the acquaintance of Mildred Rutherford. Rutherford, a resident of Athens was reared in the traditions of the antebellum South from birth. Her father Williams Rutherford and uncles Howell and T.R.R. Cobb belonged to the state's elite planter class, and she attended finishing school at the prestigious Lucy Cobb Institute, where young southern girls received a combination of academically rigorous coursework and lessons in subjects that would

²⁹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 106-107. Though women's suffrage campaigns in the South typically failed, very few states had large, effective anti-suffrage organizations that opposed them. Georgia's anti-suffrage campaign, however, was one of the region's strongest. For an article-length explanation of Georgia's anti-suffrage movement, see Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, "Caretakers of Southern Civilization: Georgia Women and the Anti-Suffrage Campaign, 1914-1920" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82 (Winter 1998): 801-828.

³⁰ McRae, 802; Eugenia Dorothy Blount Lamar, *When All is Said and Done* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1952). The Lost Cause has been addressed in several secondary works. See David Blight, *Race and Reunion*; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past*; Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*; Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*.

enhance their gentility. Upon graduation, Rutherford pursued a career as a teacher and returned to Lucy Cobb in 1880 to serve as its principal. A pupil of history and literature, Rutherford also issued numerous publications that purported to “correct” southern history and vindicate the southern way of life, which she and many southerners felt had been much maligned in the wake of the Civil War. The passion with which she pursued these efforts earned her the positions of lifelong historian of Georgia’s UDC division and historian-general of the national UDC from 1911 to 1916.³¹

Anti-suffragists like Lamar and Rutherford represented the voice of women from the rural-based planter elite who had little concern for urban reform efforts that attracted many suffragists. In fact, they were illustrative of a persistent ambivalence toward changes characterized by the “New South.” Rutherford proclaimed in a 1912 speech that “there is no New South. The South of today is the South of yesterday remade to fit the new order of things. And men of today and the women of today are adjusting themselves to the old South remade.” She like other women of the Lost Cause waged a war of vindication during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as they endeavored to transplant Old South traditions into a frequently changing southern world.³²

Two issues that became frequently intertwined within the Lost Cause agenda were gender and race. Groups like Ladies’ Memorial Associations (LMA) and the UDC had

³¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 August 1913. For analysis on Rutherford, see Sarah H. Case, “The Historical Ideology of Mildred Lewis Rutherford: A Confederate Historian’s New South Creed,” *The Journal of Southern History* 68 (Aug., 2002): 599-628; *ibid.*, “Mildred Lewis Rutherford: The Redefinition of New South White Womanhood,” in *Georgia Women*, vol. 1, 272-296; Grace Elizabeth Hale, “Some Women Have Never Been Reconstructed: Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Lucy M. Stanton, and the Racial Politics of White Southern Womanhood, 1900-1930,” in *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State, 1865-1950* ed. John Inscoe (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994): 173-201; Fred Arthur Bailey, “Mildred Lewis Rutherford and the Patrician Cult of the Old South,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78 (Fall 1994): 509-35.

³² Mildred Rutherford, “The South in the Building of the Nation,” in *Four Addresses* (Birmingham: Mildred Rutherford Historical Circle, 1916), 14.

impressed upon southerners the necessity of white women returning to the southern feminine ideal of a woman atop a pedestal to revive the spirit of defeated Confederate men and put women firmly back into their “rightful” place in the home. The Civil War had indeed prompted much change in gender, as it propelled many white southern women with the opportunity—or necessity—to take on new roles in southern society, which some historians have contended led to the emergence of the “New Woman” in the South both during and after the war. Yet, conservative southerners argued for the return of the “lady,” and portrayed the “New Woman,” as anathema as she represented the familiar and orderly traditions of the Old South.³³

Lost Causers saw the expansion of black rights during Reconstruction as another devastating consequence of the war. They frequently alluded to the Fifteenth Amendment as a punishment inflicted upon them by northern outsiders, who had wreaked havoc in the southern social order by empowering black males. Without black men under the control of white males, advocates of the Lost Cause claimed that the sanctity of white womanhood, which formed a crucial part of white southerners’ sense of an orderly world, was in danger, especially in light of increasing black militancy during the 1910s. In order to return to the stability of old, men and women of the Lost Cause argued for the shoring up of white supremacy, which required bolstering white patriarchy. Such arguments placed southern suffragists in a difficult position as they pushed for change; they had to make conscious efforts to appear in line with “traditional southern values” if they had any

³³ For an explanation of this historiographical debate see the Introduction.

chance at all of successfully attaining the vote, yet their opponents rightly identified suffragists as a force for change over continuity.³⁴

The prodding of anti-suffragists combined with the memory of their prior failures to enact progressive reforms near the turn of the century prompted suffragists to increasingly adopt a policy of expediency in relation to race issues. It is difficult to surmise whether race-baiting reflected suffragists' beliefs or strategic measures. Certainly one argument for expanding suffrage rights rested on principles of universal equality; however, such arguments had never been dominant in the South. Whatever their personal beliefs, suffragists demonstrated their willingness to promote the continued subordination of black citizens, as they endeavored to advance their cause to Georgia's politicians. Moreover, there is no evidence whatsoever that the majority women involved in Georgia's movement shared the ideologies of egalitarian liberal-minded reformers who were among those who fought for equal rights elsewhere. Ultimately, Georgia's suffragists' race-baiting most likely reflected individual and collective racist beliefs as well as a savvy campaign strategy.

Throughout the 1910s, Georgia's suffragists argued that the extension of the vote to white women would help maintain white rule. Suffragists connected the right to vote to intelligence and morality, traits they believed had been conferred upon and reserved for only white people. Frequently, these visions transcended regional and national borders, as a transnational belief that whiteness privileged Anglo-Americans for world domination arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These connections expressed

³⁴ The anti-suffrage movement in Georgia was highly important to the women's suffrage movement. The "antis" often repeated appeals to history and tradition forced suffragists to uphold images of the Lost Cause rather than allowing them to force discussions on their own terms.

larger solidarities among whites across the globe who viewed race as key to power and control.³⁵

If given this political power, suffragists argued that white women would help maintain the interests of “white civilization.” For example, Mary McLendon commented upon the insult of “negro men, our former slaves” having the vote, while upstanding southern women did not have the franchise. Furthermore, Leonard Grossman repeatedly attempted to assuage the prevalent fear that women’s suffrage would usher in black enfranchisement by arguing that Georgia’s white primary would successfully bar any black woman who might try to vote. Grossman’s appeals explicitly stated that women’s suffrage would ensure “white supremacy for a white man’s country.”³⁶

Rebecca Felton, however, represented these broad visions of white supremacy more than any other Georgia suffragist. In the wake of the United States’ increased presence abroad, members of the suffrage debates such as Felton employed the rhetoric of empire to promote their cause. In an article published in 1915 Felton conflated “white blood” with freedom, a privilege attributed to the white woman by the blood of her “Anglo-Saxon forefathers.” Voting, “the badge and synonym of freedom,” was absolutely essential to the continued supremacy of the race of white people around the globe whose whiteness better suited them for governing. This sentiment was not felt by

³⁵ Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons,” *The Journal of American History*, 1315-1353. Kramer’s conception of trans-national whiteness supports much of the evidence I have found indicating that Georgia’s suffrage movement did tap into worldwide currents that conflated white superiority with citizenship. Anglo-Americans near the turn of the century purported that their shared racial characteristics made them more attuned to government than other races. Louise Michele Newman’s work on women’s roles in transnational white supremacy efforts has also contributed to this perspective. See Newman, *White Women’s Rights*.

³⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, 17 December 1915; *ibid.*, 27 April 1919; *ibid.*, 8 July 1914; *ibid.*, 3 August 1913; Mrs. William H. Felton, “On the Subjection of Women and the Enfranchisement of Women” (Cartersville, GA: n.p., 1915), 13.

Felton alone. Repeated connections among race, voting, and “civilization” were drawn by those both for and against Georgia’s suffrage movement.³⁷

Anti-suffragists built their arguments around the supposition that the extension of voting rights to women would overturn restrictions for disenfranchised black voters. Such an extension would undermine the men of white nations, whom they believed possessed unique talents for government. Anti-suffragists argued that a feminine presence in voting would debase “the integrity of the white race and the survival of white civilization” by allowing the perceived “weaker sex” to participate in government. They concluded that barring such measures would insure the sanctity of “white government.”³⁸ Moreover, suffrage opponents tied woman suffrage to the decline of two separate “civilizations,” one being the United States, the other the South. In a speech before the Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, Eugene Anderson, a businessman of Alabama, argued that women’s suffrage would give way to the black vote, which would destroy the entire white race in the South and the nation. He added that Uncle Sam, the “modern Samson,” and leading nation and “envy” of the world could not afford to “give Delilah the shears with which to trim his locks and bring about the destruction of the temple.”³⁹ Anderson’s speech reflected the prevalent fear that women’s voting would empower African-Americans. It also reflected an association between civilization and a dominant

³⁷ The term “civilization” is employed frequently by both suffrage and anti-suffrage camps. While both camps situated their efforts at the local level, they tap into rhetoric that embraces a much wider geographic scope that emphasizes a solidarity with other white people of the world. Moreover, members of the debate connect their respective causes to national stability—each implying that the strength of the nation rested upon the woman suffrage issue and its connection to black voting.

³⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, 27 May 1914; *ibid.*, 14 August 1920.

³⁹ Eugene Anderson, “Unchaining the Demons of the Lower World or A Petition of Ninety-Nine Per Cent Against Suffrage,” Macon, GA.: n.p., n.d., 13.

white manhood, which necessarily precluded the value of women's political participation.⁴⁰

The combination of organized and mobilized camps on each side translated into frequent and contentious debates on the suffrage issue before legislative committees of Georgia's General Assembly beginning in 1914. As a general rule of procedure, both the House and Senate Committees on Constitutional Amendments conducted public hearings on the suffrage issue each time the General Assembly referred a bill to their respective committees. Proponents and opponents of the issue had the opportunity to give speeches before the members of these committees made their final recommendations to the legislature. While members of each camp spoke eloquently and ably for their position, the anti-suffragists proved most successful, particularly in their adept use of Lost Cause rhetoric.

Hearings in the House of Representatives occurred on the sixth and seventh of July, 1914, with a crowd of two hundred women present. The committee allowed the pro-suffrage contingent led by GWSL President Frances Whiteside and GWSA President Mary Latimer McLendon to deliver their speeches first. Whiteside initiated the proceedings by claiming the recent successes of women's suffrage in the nation as a testament to its inevitability. She declared that suffrage would become law "in most of the states in a few years" and that suffrage legislation currently pending in some states could potentially give pro-suffrage states a 12 electoral vote margin over non-suffrage states in presidential elections. McLendon used her time to expound upon Whiteside's

⁴⁰ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1995). See also Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

assertion. She claimed that pro-suffrage states would soon control 179 electoral votes and that it would be in the best interest of Georgia to include itself in this sizeable voting bloc. Lastly, suffragists anticipated that anti-suffragists would use their allotted time to promote the prevalent fear that women's suffrage would usher in black enfranchisement. Consequently, they had Leonard Grossman express his legal opinion that Georgia's white primary among other voting qualifications would successfully bar any black woman who might try to vote.⁴¹

Anti-suffragists applied a combination of arguments about gender and the Lost Cause to advance their position. Dorothy Lamar delivered the first of two speeches by the GAOWS. She represented the organization's belief that "the disadvantage of political life for women far outweighs any advantage that has ever been gained by such increase of the electorate," and that women should reserve their time for the "highest of all vocations—wife and mother." Mildred Rutherford followed Lamar and purported that the suffrage movement had originated with "abolition women" in the North who had no understanding of southern ideals and ways of life. Further substantiating this statement, Rutherford noted that NAWSA Vice President Jane Addams, who had recently traveled to Georgia to speak on behalf of woman suffrage, favored rights for African-Americans. Rutherford added that Georgia's suffrage bills, having no chance at passing, served the interests of the proposed Susan B. Anthony Amendment, which would give the right to vote to women of all races in every state of the nation. According to Rutherford, this prospect represented "the greatest menace that has threatened the South since the days of

⁴¹ *Macon Telegraph*, 7 July 1914; *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 July 1914; *ibid.*, 8 March 1914; *Georgia House Journal*, 1914, 24, 287; Emily McDougald to Equal Suffrage Party of Georgia, May 1914, 1:1 WSC.

reconstruction” because of its encroachment upon states’ rights. Anti-suffragists effectively swayed the committee, which struck down House Bill no. 792 by a 5-4 vote.⁴²

The breakdown of votes in the House committee generally speaks to the widening gap between urban and rural ideologies during this period. Demonstrated by suffragists’ ability to gain converts more readily in Georgia’s cities than in the country, the suffragist agenda as a rule did not coincide with the sensibilities of the more conservative sections of the state. In fact of the four of the five negative votes from the House committee were rendered by representatives hailing from counties that had overpowering majority rural populations. Conversely, the representatives who supplied affirmative stances on the suffrage bill served counties that had experienced either significant urban growth or rural decline. Though the committee’s vote was close, suffragists continually found it difficult to bring their to Georgia’s countryside.⁴³

A similar fate occurred in the Senate’s Committee on Constitutional Amendments just nine days following the House committee’s decision. In front of yet another large audience, several women argued for and against the bill that would amend Section 3426 of Georgia’s Code. Lamar addressed the committee with a reiteration of the same concerns she voiced before the House Committee while the pro-suffrage contingent advanced an even more vigorous white supremacist stance than they had before the House Committee.

⁴² Ibid.; *Atlanta Journal*, 20 July 1917; *Atlanta Constitution*, 8-9 July 1914; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1931-1932*, 100; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1965-1966*, 1327, 1334, 1363, 1370, 1391, 1393, 1416, 1489. The committee’s chairman, Chatham County’s Shelby Myrick gave the deciding vote with Representatives John P. Cheney of Cobb County, Robert C. Lesueur of Crawford, Alpha A. McCurry of Hart and Grover C. Edmonson in favor of the bill while Floyd County’s W. J. Nunnally, Taliaferro’s C. H. Stone, Forsyth’s Louis E. Wisdom, and Baldwin’s J. Howard Ennis ruled against it.

⁴³ US Census results for 1910 for Baldwin, Brooks, Chatham, Cobb, Crawford, Floyd, Forsyth, Hart, and Taliaferro counties.

Mrs. Elliott Cheatham of the ESPG led off the proceedings. Referencing anti-suffragists' repeated attempts to connect a woman's suffrage bill to black enfranchisement, she explained, "Our opponents never seem to tire of bringing up the question of the negro woman vote. If the state of Georgia enfranchises its women, the state of Georgia will say which women shall vote, just as it says which men shall vote...the equal suffrage bill allows every white woman to vote, and practically not a single negro woman." Rebecca Felton followed up on Cheatham's speech by more firmly pressing the "negro question." She alluded to the senators' collective sense of chivalry and righteousness by observing, "I have no knowledge of any law that gives you liberty to deny any right of citizenship to your mother who loves you. You will grant that she is as good as you are. The Savior of mankind entrusted his own mortality to a woman. I repeat it—you need the help we can give you more than we need the ballot. It lies in your power to help [yourself] by helping us." The "help" to which Felton referred was the continued effort to maintain Georgia's political conservatism, especially the disenfranchisement of African-Americans, whom she believed threatened the very sanctity of white womanhood. Felton went on to condemn Woodrow Wilson's appointment of an African-American to a judgeship and disparaged the favorable vote given by southern politicians to confirm the appointment.⁴⁴

The committee permitted anti-suffragists to submit a rejoinder to the suffragists' statements. Dorothy Lamar proclaimed that their opponents did not represent the values of most southern women. She attributed the presence of woman suffrage advocates in the South to an outside attempt to rid the region of its conservatism, claiming that the leaders of the Progressive Party under Theodore Roosevelt, "that Bull Moose in the china shop of

⁴⁴ *Atlanta Journal*, 19 July 1914; *Atlanta Constitution*, 17 July 1914.

history, had their guns trained on the South to break it.” Previous arguments made by Whiteside and McLendon on the political strength of suffrage outside the South fueled her suspicions. Arousing white southerners’ memory of Reconstruction, Lamar also warned the senators not to follow the path of equal suffrage, as it would once again bring the South under the control of political outsiders. She recalled the fate of Governor Charles J. Jenkins, who was deposed by a “negro legislature” during Reconstruction. Lamar forced the issue further by recalling the historical memory of the era, “Jenkins...was given a medal bearing the motto: *In arduis fidelis*. Gentlemen, when you have piloted Georgia through the throes of this equal suffrage scheme, you will stand worthy recipients of similar tributes.” In the end, Lamar and the anti-suffragists prevailed; the committee members voted down the suffrage bill by a vote of 5-2 that once again pointed to a urban-rural divide, as the senators who voted in the negative represented districts of with overwhelming rural majorities while those in the affirmative stance had constituents in expanding urban areas.⁴⁵

The exchanges between the two suffrage groups carried into a heated public debate following the General Assembly’s hearings in 1914. Anti-suffragists added a veritable boon to their cause when James Callaway, editor of the newspaper the *Macon Telegraph*, began to use his editorial column to fight against the state’s suffrage campaign. Unabashedly privileging the viewpoint of anti-suffragists, he allowed Dorothy Lamar and Mildred Rutherford ample space in the paper’s columns. To Callaway, the women’s movement held dangerous potential: He claimed that “feminism is abhorrent to the southern idea of home and society [and] proposes social revolution.” The unequivocal

⁴⁵ Ibid., *Georgia Senate Journal*, 1914, 77, 236. Senators Sweat, Burtz, Kea, Kelly and Nixon cast the deciding votes against the measure while Searcy and Tyson represented the minority opinion. US Census results for 1910 for Clinch, Gilmer, Glascock, Fayette, Laurens, and Toombs counties.

bias in the Macon paper did not go unnoticed by Georgia's suffragists, who looked to Rebecca Felton to fight Callaway's smear campaign.⁴⁶

On numerous occasions women throughout the state asked Felton to use her position as an estimable public woman to combat anti-suffragists, as her notoriety increased the likelihood that publications would print her statements. Emily McDougald and Mary McLendon both enlisted Felton to represent their respective organizations in speaking engagements throughout the state. Felton even appeared in the anti-suffrage stronghold of Macon to deliver an address, an effort to overcome the antis clear advantage there. Apparently, she won a few converts; Felton received a letter after the speech stating, "I have never given suffrage any thought until I went out to hear you."⁴⁷

With the backing of the state's suffrage organizations, Felton took on anti-suffragists through the print media. Even Callaway respected her position enough to print her rebuttals to his editorials in the *Telegraph*. In a published letter to Callaway, Felton took particular issue with several articles published in the paper by Mildred Rutherford. She demanded that Rutherford end her incessant efforts to draw connections between women's voting and the inclusion of black voters into the electorate since a majority of suffragists did not want blacks to receive the vote either. She stated, "After the negro man was enfranchised I should despise myself as a free born white women [*sic*] to be classified as a Serf," thus making clear that southern suffragists did not deem African-Americans worthy of voting privileges. Furthermore, she criticized Rutherford for

⁴⁶ *Macon Telegraph*, 26 March 1915.

⁴⁷ Emily McDougald to Rebecca Felton, 9 July 1914, box 4, Rebecca Latimer Felton Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia; Mary McLendon to Rebecca Felton 11 July 1914, box 4, RLF. Mary McLendon to Rebecca Felton, 12 October 1912, box 4, RLF; Helen Shaw Harrold to Rebecca Felton, 10 March 1915, box 5, RLF; "Priddy" to Rebecca Felton June 1915, box 5, RLF. As shown in this note, the Rebecca Latimer Felton Collection will be abbreviated RLF.

bringing up “dead issues of the past” over the “living” ones that concerned southerners at the time. Reconstruction was as “dead as Hector,” Felton argued, and reviving its memory accomplished nothing for the future.⁴⁸

Also at this time, Felton published a widely read pamphlet, “The Subjection of Women and the Enfranchisement of Women.” In the piece, she stated that if the antis could stand for having voting privileges conferred upon black men without having the ballot themselves, then there should be no need to “disturb their stagnant equilibrium.” She further observed that if women like Lamar and Rutherford “prefer to hug their chains,” she would “have no sort of objection,” but she would rather they step aside for the white women who wanted political power. Nevertheless, Callaway and the anti-suffragists continued their campaign against the women suffrage movement. The *Telegraph* maintained that it would be shameful to have women “surrender [their] first class womanhood . . . to become a second-rate man,” and it abhorred the thought of women mingling with “dirty politicians.”⁴⁹

The debate continued when another suffrage bill came before the General Session in 1915. Once again the House and Senate committees conducted hearings, allowing both advocates and opponents of the issue to address them. Suffrage proponents did not have much hope for a successful vote by either committee. A member of the ESPG even wrote that the women of the party were in “a depleted state.” They did, however, receive permission to place a table stocked with suffrage literature in the corridor between the House and Senate chambers, as well as a map on the wall of the corridor showing the

⁴⁸ *Macon Telegraph*, 29 March 1915; “The hearing before the Senate” unpublished manuscript, box 16, RLF.

⁴⁹ Felton, “On the Subjection of Women and the Enfranchisement of Women,” 11; *Macon Telegraph*, 14 March 1915, 26-28 March 1915.

status of women's suffrage across the United States. ESPG president Emily McDougald declared that the table gave Georgia's suffrage movement much needed publicity among Georgia's legislators and declared that their presence alone would at least press the issue more forcibly upon the lawmakers.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, this seemed to have little effect on members of the General Assembly. Even though the ESPG had circulated a petition in opposition to statements made by members of the legislature who claimed that only a few women desired the right to vote, McDougald reported that the "situation seems almost as hopeless as last year." Furthermore, in a report to NAWSA, McDougald wrote, "We hope to receive more consideration this next time, but I am afraid we are still pretty far from victory."⁵¹

McDougald's prediction proved correct when both committees unanimously voted down suffrage bills. Though brief, the hearings before the House caused much distress for the suffragists. The chairman, whom suffragists claimed had been "elected on a liquor ticket," allowed one hour for suffragists and anti-suffragists to deliver their arguments. He permitted anti-suffragists, Dorothy Lamar and Mildred Rutherford, to begin these proceedings, and once more they connected woman's suffrage to "negro supremacy" and a "Yankee scheme" to topple the South's political conservatism. Lamar and Rutherford had been permitted thirty minutes to voice the anti-suffragist position, but their speeches occupied more time than provided—an hour and fifteen minutes. The committee did not extend the same courtesy to the suffragists, and unsurprisingly did not adopt the measure. The Senate also held a hearing, but the committee simply voted on the

⁵⁰ Mary N. Raoul, to Rebecca Felton 18 May 1915, box 5 RLF; Emily McDougald to Anna Howard Shaw 24 June 1915, 1:1 WSC; Emily McDougald to Clara Savage, 28 July 1915; 1:1 WSC.

⁵¹ Ibid., *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 August 1915; *Georgia Senate Journal*, 1915, 519-520; *Georgia House Journal*, 1915, 1073.

suffrage bill without speeches. Another suffrage bill appeared in the same year, but the legislature relegated it to unfinished business and decided to address it in 1916.⁵²

In light of the lack of progress suffragists experienced in the General Assembly's committees, Georgia's suffrage leaders decided that a parade might garner public support for their cause. Eleonore Raoul, a citizen of Atlanta who represented the city on the ESPG's Executive Board, organized the first suffrage parade in Georgia. Raoul hoped to reach a large number of Atlantans by scheduling the parade on November 16, 1915, the same day as the city's harvest festival and parade. The strategy apparently worked, as many people in the audience had no idea that Georgia even had active suffrage associations and were awed at the spectacular show Raoul had arranged.⁵³

The elaborate display gave no indications that suffragists were suffering from any troubles in advancing their cause throughout the state. Leading over two hundred women, Raoul rode atop a white horse down Atlanta's Peachtree Street. Behind her were women driving eighty cars adorned with suffrage banners from New York and various yellow flowers. One of the cars belonged to national movement leader Anna Howard Shaw. Additionally, the parade boasted "a brilliantly shaded yellow float in the center of which stood a beautiful woman blindfolded representing 'Justice.' Surrounding her and holding ribbons attached to a cupola were eleven tiny children [representing] the suffrage states. Behind this float trotted a pony cart covered with yellow chrysanthemums and a large

⁵² Ibid.; "How They Do in Georgia," unpublished manuscript, 1915, box 16, RLF.

⁵³ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 129, 135.

sign reading ‘Georgia Catching Up.’” Raoul reported that everyone in attendance reacted positively to the parade with “no adverse sentiment.”⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the parade succeeded only at the surface level. Despite requests from Raoul for police protection, the City of Atlanta Police Department provided very little assistance in maintaining order at the parade. Having stopped all traffic for the harvest parade, the police did not show the same courtesy to the suffragists. Traffic “of all kinds” continually broke into the parade procession, which had to rely upon the “common sense” of Atlanta’s citizens to preserve public order. The situation deeply disturbed Raoul, who had enlisted the help of Atlanta’s Police Chief and Mayor in order to avoid trouble and unwanted bad publicity. The neglectful attitude of the police and the mayor’s office illustrated once more that many of Georgia’s men in power had little if any sympathy for women’s right to vote. Raoul herself incurred a personal insult after the parade. She returned her horse to a stable and walked to her home, a Victorian red house on Peachtree Street, while still wearing her riding ensemble. A group of men began to throw insults at her to which she took great offense. When asked about the incident in an interview, she recalled, “They knew I had been in the parade. The argument then was that we would lose chivalry if we got suffrage. I turned around to those men and said, ‘This is chivalry?’ That shut them up.”⁵⁵

The treatment Raoul and her suffrage sisters received reflected the ongoing resistance many white southerners had toward the increasing public presence of southern women during the early twentieth century. For many, the most appalling consequence of

⁵⁴ Eleonore Raoul, “First Suffrage Parade in Georgia,” n.d. 33:3 Raoul Family Papers, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. This collection will be abbreviated RFP.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; Eleonore Raoul to NAWSA, 16 November 1915, 1:1 WSC; *Atlanta Constitution*, 18 February 1969.

this new trend was the ubiquity of female prostitutes throughout the city. Atlanta's reputation as a city with widespread commercial vice contributed to a situation in which all public women became associated with prostitution, an unfortunate development for Georgia's suffragists, whose activities also led them to occupy public spaces. Even though the suffragists' agenda proposed to uphold southern traditions, their very existence in politics and public space represented disorder—which in turn reinforced the associated with prostitution. The city officials and the local men who had not afforded Raoul and parade participants the chivalry the women believed they deserved enacted a widespread adverse sentiment toward public women, whether suffragists or prostitutes.⁵⁶

In response to the lack of progress in southern suffrage states, including Georgia, the organizers of the national suffrage movement began to take a more active role in their activities. This increased presence effectively changed the nature in which suffragists operated their statewide suffrage campaign in Georgia. Though all of Georgia's prominent suffrage organizations were subsidiaries of NAWSA, the leaders at NAWSA had held only a limited presence in the state. However, following her ascendancy to NAWSA's presidency in 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt initiated a long process of gathering information on the situation in movements across the nation, including Georgia. Upon Catt's direction, NAWSA secretaries solicited the leaders of the state's suffrage organizations for a variety of information, including the status of woman suffrage bills in the General Assembly as well as that body's record on legislation related to child labor, compulsory education, and the age of consent. More than likely Catt's request coincided

⁵⁶ Hickey, *Hope and Danger*, 136, 138, 246 (n. 13).

with her vigorous strategy of the “Winning Plan,” which sought to simultaneously conduct suffrage campaigns at both national and state levels.⁵⁷

Georgia’s suffragists thus became heavily involved in NAWSA’s strategic initiative. Eleonore Raoul assumed an especially active role and participated in several workshops, or “suffrage schools,” sponsored by NAWSA. A “Travelling Campaign Kit,” a product of her experience at the suffrage schools, outlined strategies for Georgia’s suffragists. The kit contained a variety of information related to Georgia’s “commercialized vice,” child labor, literacy, and age of consent laws in addition to Bible passages, jokes and anecdotes that supported the suffrage cause. Raoul anticipated that the kit would rally support among local communities as well as with the state press in hopes of influencing public opinion and ultimately the state legislature; however, Georgia’s anti-suffrage sentiment remained as strong as it ever was, implying that the kit had little impact on statewide suffrage efforts.⁵⁸

NAWSA also advised Georgia’s suffragists on how to interact with politicians. In sharp contrast to Rebecca Felton and Mary McLendon’s strong public images, national advisors suggested that Georgia’s women pursue less aggressive means in their protests for the vote. They encouraged Georgia suffragists to refer to their position as loving and innocent mothers who were concerned only with carrying out their proper civic duties to

⁵⁷ Mary Latimer McLendon to Mary Sumner Boyd, 12 August 1916, 1:1 WSC; Emily McDougald to Mary Sumner Boyd, 10 April 1916, 1:1 WSC; Emily McDougald to Carrie Chapman Catt 2 February 1916 1:1, WSC; Ella M. Thornton to Mary Sumner Boyd 31 July 1917, 1:1 WSC. Though it is difficult to document every instance in which this trend is illustrated the Women’s Suffrage Collection at the Georgia Archives collectively shows this trend. The Women’s Suffrage Collection at the Georgia Archives will hereafter be abbreviated WSC as shown above. Furthermore, any cited archival materials will have a box number with a folder number (if applicable) following a colon to denote their location in that collection. Also, Wheeler’s research indicates that NAWSA would interfere in state movements in which they felt suffrage had a chance, and oftentimes, they would abandon state movements in which they felt no progress could be made. This is interesting when applied to Georgia, though, since the state’s suffragists made only meager gains in their movement.

⁵⁸ “Travelling Campaign Kit,” n.d., 33:4 RFP.

their country. Georgia's suffragists were also advised to meet with politicians in person under the recommendation that such visits "impress them to know that a woman cares so much about [the woman's vote]." These suggestions reflected NAWSA's relatively conservative efforts in dealing with politicians. They encouraged suffragists throughout the nation but especially in the South to avoid overly aggressive tactics, as they believed that they were more effective when appearing as courteous and gracious as possible in trying to break down opposition to women's voting. NAWSA deftly understood the South's conservatism on issues concerning gender, but the organization might have inadvertently stymied some of the more necessary aggressive tactics that could have better served the movement since some politicians questioned the sincerity of suffrage interest among suffragists themselves.⁵⁹

Ironically, the increased prominence of national suffrage leaders only served to antagonize Georgia suffragists' potential political allies. Indeed, national leaders undertook a campaign that seemed to contradict their conservative advice to state leaders. In response to the apparent intractability of Georgia's politicians, NAWSA initiated a propaganda campaign that published highly disparaging articles regarding Georgia's suffrage position even though the organization had urged Georgia's own suffragists to use more conservative measures. Using the data gathered from Georgia's leading suffrage workers, one such article, "What is the Matter with Georgia?" presented Georgia as a state dominated by ignorant, immoral, and backward men who deprived their women of freedom and true happiness. Supporting this claim, the piece asserted that the state "enfranchises the man who can only vote by means of pictures and disenfranchises the

⁵⁹ Ethel Adamson to S.B. Turman 16 February [no year] 1:1 WSC; unknown sender to S.B. Turman 16 February 1916, 1:1 WSC.

educated woman. It gives the vote to the man who is content to have the virtue of a ten year old child stripped of legal protection and denies it to the virtuous woman.” The article also portrayed Georgia’s suffragists as in need of outside assistance when it made a passionate plea to fellow sisters to “help the women of Georgia.” The call for suffragists to intervene on Georgia’s behalf only served the anti-suffragist argument that the suffrage movement served the interests of “outsiders,” who had no understanding of what women of the South actually needed or wanted. The movement’s national leaders perhaps believed that this harsh tone might shame Georgia’s politicians into endorsing female enfranchisement, but this negative propaganda placed Georgia’s suffragists in an especially awkward circumstance since they had to lobby before the same legislators that their counterparts at NAWSA had criticized in their publications.⁶⁰

Despite—or perhaps in part because of—this new approach in dealing with Georgia’s politicians, suffragists saw no improvement in their situation during the 1916 session. On July 7th, the House finally addressed Muscogee County Representative Edward Wohlwender’s suffrage bill, which had been introduced in 1915 but relegated to unfinished business for 1916. In an effort to delay a decision on the bill once again, opponents to the bill filibustered until the House adjourned at one o’clock. The filibuster came as a huge blow to the suffragists’ morale, and Emily McDougald described Wohlwender’s bill as “buried for the session.”⁶¹ Eventually, a resolution came about to make the bill a special order of business, but the house defeated the motion by a 90-21

⁶⁰ NAWSA, “What is the Matter With Georgia?” July 1916. 1:9 WSC. “What is the Matter With Georgia” clearly alluded to William Allen White’s famous 1896 editorial in the *Emporia Gazette*, “What is the Matter With Kansas,” which disparaged Kansas’ political leadership for allowing Populist policies to curtail the availability of economic capital in the state.

⁶¹ Emily McDougald to Carrie Chapman Catt 7 July 1916, 1:1 WSC.

vote. Immediately following this rejection, Mary McLendon found support for the introduction of new female suffrage bills in both houses, but neither one made any headway; the House voted down the measure in committee and the Senate committee failed to report its bill's status.⁶²

Meanwhile, the suffrage movement around the state canvassed for support in the upcoming elections in 1916. The movement's leaders believed that their only opportunity for "real progress," or any progress at all, rested upon changes in personnel at all levels of government that would put an end to their "wasting time."⁶³ Emily McDougald found this outlook especially valid in light of the state legislature's recent rejection of its suffrage bills. In a letter to Carrie Chapman Catt, she conveyed the hopelessness of Georgia's suffrage leaders: "I am greatly disappointed to find the anti-suffrage sentiment among the legislators as strong as ever and that as far as they are concerned the suffrage plank in the Democratic platform is considered a huge joke. One senator, who is considered one of the leaders, Mr. John D. Walker, told me that he disapproved of the suffrage plank because [of its lack of sincerity] . . . Some of the legislators [were] speaking of the bill as 'that so-called woman suffrage bill.'"⁶⁴

Nevertheless, Mary McLendon still tried to garner suffrage support among Georgia's political parties. She found an ally in Julien Yates, a businessman in the automobile industry from DeKalb County, who promised to issue a resolution in favor of suffrage at a meeting of the state convention of the Progressive Party. Yates' resolution

⁶² *Georgia House Journal, 1916*, 354; Mary Latimer McLendon to Mary Sumner Boyd 12 August 1916, 1:1 WSC; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1939-1941-1943*, 159.

⁶³ Frances Whiteside to Carrie Chapman Catt 5 August 1916, 1:1 WSC.

⁶⁴ Emily McDougald to Carrie Chapman Catt 7 July 1916, 1:1 WSC. Walker represented Georgia's 20th senatorial district in middle Georgia comprised of Baldwin, Hancock and Washington counties from 1915 through an extended session of the General Assembly in 1917.

called for “the full and speedy emancipation of the women of Georgia [and] that a good and godly throng of intelligent, able and thoughtful and willing workers be added to those who advance the material and moral status of the state.” However, this resolution fell flat at the convention because the men present were not sure of the ramifications of such an endorsement, and they did not want to be saddled with a controversial issue. The party’s rejection of the resolution demonstrated the reluctance of even liberal-leaning men to confront the issue. Thus, suffrage sentiment among even the more progressive leaders in Georgia remained ambivalent at best. Even when suffrage leaders found able and willing allies, their efforts became undermined by political maneuvering.⁶⁵

Yet another conflict arose for suffragists in 1916, but this one emerged among suffragists themselves. Women in the ESPG had grown increasingly divided over what strategic aims would best insure the movement’s progress in the state. One problem was the lack of unity among the state organizations. In particular, having the party’s headquarters in Atlanta effectively cut off rural areas from full participation in the organization. Eleonore Raoul tried to address this issue by campaigning in the countryside, but she received little support from her fellow ESPG Executive Board members. The board members carried regional prejudices that further alienated potential rural suffragists, despite the fact the organization had been founded upon the belief that suffragists needed to extend their influence beyond the stronghold of Atlanta. In fact, the organization’s own president, Emily McDougald, deemed rural districts “impossible to reach” and claimed these areas had an “ignorant and hopeless” population.⁶⁶ This

⁶⁵ Julien Yates, “Resolutions by Mr. Yeates [sic] of Dekalb County,” 2 June 1916, 1:1 WSC; Mary Latimer McLendon to Mary Sumner Boyd, n.d. 1:1, WSC.

⁶⁶ Emily McDougald to Clara Savage 28 July 1915, 1:1 WSC.

assessment largely undermined Raoul's efforts and damaged the ESPG's chance at progress outside Atlanta, and rural suffrage support remained at a minimum, fueling the argument that few women in Georgia desired the ballot. Additionally, Georgia's county apportionment paid little attention to the state's population distribution and placed a considerable majority of political power in rural areas, so any suffrage sentiment that could have possibly arisen there might have received a bit more consideration from Georgia's politicians.⁶⁷

On account of this discord, ESPG Executive Board member Eleonore Raoul vacated her leadership position in the ESPG while Emily McDougald remained with the organization as its president. In an address to the ESPG members, Raoul cited her inability to "work in harmony" with party leaders and the "lack of democracy" in the organization as reasons for her resignation. She mentioned her attempts to consolidate all of Georgia's suffrage organizations into one collective body, which she believed to be imperative for an effective fight for the ballot. In addition, she further stressed the need for the movement to focus outside the friendly confines of Atlanta and make inroads in rural areas, which on the whole remained adverse to the suffrage cause. Following her departure, tensions remained among group members, who referred to Raoul's supporters as the "awful Raoul crowd."⁶⁸

Such infighting only hampered their efforts because they provided a distraction from the necessary task of changing the minds of Georgia's political elite. In fact, several

⁶⁷ For information on the county apportionment, see Louis T. Rigdon, *Georgia's County Unit System* (Decatur, GA: Selective Books, 1961).

⁶⁸ Eleonore Raoul to the Equal Suffrage Party of Georgia, 9 March 1916, 33:1, RFP; May Belle Smith to Eleonore Raoul, 21 March 1916, 33:1RFP; *AJ*, 20 July 1917; *The Evening Sun*, 22 October 1915. Though Raoul did receive letters from the NWP's Alice Paul asking for her support for a NWP chapter in Georgia, it does not seem that Raoul committed to any "camp" per se, considering that she remained in contact with Carrie Chapman Catt and attended suffrage schools sponsored by the NAWSA.

politicians used this tension as a reason not to pass favorable suffrage legislation, arguing that suffragists themselves could not agree on what they wanted. Until they could provide a clear, articulated vision of their aim without any quarrelling among their leaders, suffragists would have even less hope of attaining the right to vote. However, the ESPG might have also welcomed Raoul's departure in light of her affiliation with left-leaning political activists. She had developed a relationship with the National Woman's Party President Alice Paul through written correspondence, and even though Raoul never did affiliate with Paul's more radical and militant organization, the association with Paul likely disconcerted her fellow ESPG members. Furthermore, Raoul's own family members were known members of the Socialist Party. Her sister Mary Raoul Millis, also a suffrage activist, held leadership positions with the organization to which their brother William Greene Raoul also belonged. Such affiliations with leftist political activists would have likely reflected poorly on the ESPG, which could not afford to appear out line with the state's mainstream political conservatism if it wanted to gain additional adherents to their cause.⁶⁹

In the meantime, Georgia's anti-suffragists continued their campaign against the woman's vote. They reveled in their victories before the state House and Senate Committees, but they did not grow complacent. Having not had the opportunity to appear before legislative committees in the General Assembly due to the failure of suffrage bills in 1916, they continued to canvass support for their own cause and hold regular meetings of the GAOWS. Dorothy Lamar published what became a widely read pamphlet, "The Vulnerability of the White Primary," in which she reiterated the artis' opinion that the extension of women's suffrage would usher in the black woman's vote. Using the device

⁶⁹ Ibid.; "Letters to Mary Wadley Raoul," 1909-1934, box 14 and 17, RFP.

of Lost Cause rhetoric, which had served her well before state legislators, Lamar once again reminded the public of the tumultuous times of Reconstruction. She reasoned, “It has taken us forty years in the South to counteract the evils of the [Fifteenth] Amendment, and here are our southern suffragists lending their time and talents to letting loose upon us, the evils of unrestricted suffrage.” As the suffragists limped along in their campaign in 1916, anti-suffragist sentiment seemed as high as ever in the state as the two campaigns entered the latter years of the 1910s.⁷⁰

While Georgia’s suffragists had anticipated great possibilities for their movement in 1913 when it began attracting thousands of women to the cause, these expectations were left unfulfilled by 1916. A strong anti-suffragist contingent made it difficult for them to engender support among Georgia’s political leaders, as antis had effectively touched upon fears of change to thwart suffrage legislation in the General Assembly. Opponents of suffrage foremost argued that a woman suffrage amendment would prompt a return of black men to the polls and the loss of power among the white patriarchy that had characterized the South during the turbulent times of Reconstruction. Suffragists attempted to assuage these fears with white supremacist rhetoric, but their efforts came to no avail. Furthermore, the presence of suffrage “outsiders” inhibited suffragists’ ability to appear in line with traditional southern ideals. Suffragists’ repeated references to gains made in the women’s movement outside the South only fueled the anti-suffragist claim that the movement represented a conspiracy to break the South of its traditions and conservatism.

⁷⁰ Mrs. Walter D. Lamar, “The Vulnerability of the White Primary,” Macon, Georgia: Georgia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, 1916.

As the suffrage movement continued, it grew increasingly focused on a national amendment, as the hope of attaining a statewide measure was growing ever faint with each successive year suffragists pushed their agenda before the General Assembly. The inability of suffragists to agree upon a statewide suffrage strategy that targeted areas in the less amenable countryside exacerbated this problem, as rural support was crucial for any political measures to pass through the General Assembly. Suffrage debates at the local level thus became more entrenched with policy issues at the national level until the successful ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. This phase of the movement will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Victory? State and National Campaigns Collide, 1917-1925

Georgia's suffrage movement had achieved very little by the time the General Assembly ended its session in 1916. Anti-suffragists continued to hold favor with the state's politicians, who had not shown any indication of changing their position on women's suffrage since the suffragists had requested to use the General Assembly's facilities in 1913. In addition to this strong opposition, suffragists continued to experience difficulties within their own ranks, as the ESPG splintered over strategy and policy. Furthermore, the presence of national suffrage organizers in Georgia's suffrage affairs made it difficult for suffragists to thwart the antis' argument that the suffrage movement represented an outside attack on traditional southern values.

Indeed, many southern suffragists felt hampered by NAWSA's more aggressive tactics, which seemed out of line with southern sentiments. Southerners had shown discontent with NAWSA's policies as early as 1913 when Kentucky's Laura Clay and Louisiana's Kate Gordon formed the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference (SSWSC) on the basis that NAWSA's insistence upon a federal amendment was at odds with the southern policy of state's rights. The women continued to criticize NAWSA's actions. Clay expressed concern over publications in NAWSA's *Woman's Journal* that misrepresented the South often to the detriment of local southern suffragists. Gordon expressed similar discontent with NAWSA when they arranged speaking engagements of various individuals who may or may not have been ideal for southern audiences.

Likewise, Georgia's suffragists had experienced related problems with such incidents as NAWSA's "What is the Matter with Georgia" article and Jane Addams' visit to the state.¹

Carrie Chapman Catt's "Winning Plan" also came under attack by southern suffragists. Conceived in 1916, the plan advocated a strong push for a federal amendment, which Catt hoped to attain by "piling up state victories until their cumulative effect proved irresistible." Fully committed to a federal suffrage amendment, NAWSA antagonized southern suffragists like the ones of the SSWSC who believed that a victory achieved state by state better coincided with the southern principle of states' rights. Furthermore, Catt limited state suffrage campaigns to those in which victories were expected, as defeats would stymie the "irresistible" wave of enthusiasm she deemed necessary for successful ratification at the national level. The strategy undoubtedly disheartened many southern suffragists, whom NAWSA expected to place their efforts for a federal amendment above their own local interests.²

Another contingent of suffragists had grown weary of NAWSA's policies. Women of the Congressional Union (CU), which ultimately became the National Woman's Party (NWP), had arisen within NAWSA and advocated that the organization abandon statewide suffrage movements in favor of focusing solely on a federal amendment. Led by Alice Paul, who had spent time working for Britain's suffrage movement, these women urged more aggressive suffrage campaigning, which entailed criticizing the party with political control at the time—the Democrats. NAWSA expelled

¹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 138-141. For an explanation of how NAWSA's policies directly affected Georgia see chapter 2.

² *Ibid.*, 161; NAWSA, *Victory: How Women Won it* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1940), 123-124.

the CU from its membership in 1914. The Union carried its campaign to the South beginning in 1915, but its aggressive tactics did not align well with southern views on female decorum. Moreover, its unapologetic criticism of the Democratic Party, which reigned supreme in the South, did not curry favor of many southern suffragists who were trying to convince southern Democrats of the worthiness of their movement.

Consequently, the organization held only limited influence in the region, but it did attract a small following in South Carolina and Virginia. It even established a branch in Georgia in 1917, but its aggressive image never settled well with the state's mainstream suffragists.³

NAWSA further criticized the NWP when it continued to criticize Woodrow Wilson and the Democratic Congress during World War I. Beginning in 1917 Paul's suffragists picketed the White House while NAWSA unequivocally supported the Wilson administration's war measures as a show of women's loyalty to the country. The militant tactics of the NWP drew harsh criticism across the nation including the South, as many deplored the actions as unpatriotic and unbecoming of women. Southerners often pointed to this activity as evidence that suffrage would "unsex" their women. A newspaper in Milledgeville, Georgia observed that the protesters "belong to the women who do not

³ For a history of the NWP and its relationship with NAWSA, see Christine A. Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1910-1928* (New York: New York University Press, 1986) and Karen Ford, *Iron-Jawed Angels: The Suffrage Militancy of the National Woman's Party, 1912-1920* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991). Arguably, the NWP did not have a large following anywhere in the South, but sizeable groups of NWP adherents did exist in some southern states including South Carolina and Virginia. Though the state had a strong anti-militancy stance, the NWP counted 62 members in North Carolina. See Sidney R. Bland, "Fighting the Odds: Militant Suffragists in South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 82 (Jan. 1981): 32-43; Jennifer Davis McDavid, "All Kinds of Revolutionaries: Pauline Adams, Jesse Townsend, and the Norfolk Equal Suffrage League," *Virginia Cavalcade* 49 (Spring 2000): 85-95; and A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 38 (January and April 1961): 45-62, 173-189, respectively. *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 November 1917.

know and cannot understand our ideas of womanliness;” the aggressive White House picketer certainly did not coincide with the ideal image of the reticent southern “lady.”⁴

Accordingly, southern suffragists used the war as an opportunity to showcase their patriotism and support their native son, Woodrow Wilson. Generally, the South exhibited a conflicted position on the war. Historians have argued that only a small, rural contingent of the region expressed opposition to the conflict while most of its political elite fell in line with Woodrow Wilson. However, Georgia’s position was particularly tenuous, as some of its leading politicians virulently opposed the nation’s involvement in a war that purportedly supported Northern industrial capitalists. Tom Watson, Populist rabble-rouser, and Hoke Smith, a long-time foe of Wilson’s, best represented this sentiment, and their estimable position in state politics caused many Georgians, especially those in rural areas, to speak out against the war that they felt did not serve southern interests.⁵ Despite these notable condemnations of the war, Georgia’s suffragists still supported Wilson because of the intractability of Watson and Smith on the suffrage issue as compared with other Georgia politicians like William J. Harris, a “Wilson man,” who showed more leniency on the issue.⁶ The women critiqued the “unladylike” practices

⁴ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 75-76.

⁵ George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*; Joseph Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002); Anthony Gaughan, “Woodrow Wilson and the Rise of Militant Interventionism in the South,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 65 (Nov. 1999): 771-808. Through her research on draft resistance in the South, Jeanette Keith argues that southern opposition to the war might have been more pronounced than Tindall, *et al* have allowed. See Keith, *Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South During the First World War* (Chapel Hill: Univ. North Carolina, 2004).

⁶ The general opinion among Georgia’s suffrage leaders was that Watson and Smith would never change their stance on women’s suffrage, so they focused their efforts on those more sympathetic to their cause.

of the women protesting the war, held bake sales, worked for the Red Cross and even temporarily suspended their campaigns to focus on the war effort.⁷

Thus, Southern suffragists received conflicting advice from a variety of suffrage organizations all suggesting different avenues by which to attain the vote, and World War I also tempered their actions. Though pursuing the state by state route of the SSWSC would align best with southern states' rights values, the unsuccessful efforts of southern suffragists up to that point indicated that a federal amendment was perhaps the surest way they could obtain the vote. Yet, southern women wanted their legislators to come around to the women's movement without having a federal law imposed upon them, in light of the historical memory of Reconstruction, which anti-suffragists had successfully used to their advantage in their campaign. The conundrum ultimately placed a majority of southern women in the middle ground with NAWSA, as it at least promoted a combination of both tactics. A clear reflection of this conundrum came when Rebecca Felton asserted, "If you should refuse to notice the appeal—we can work with diligence for the National Amendment, but it would be more satisfying—and less tyrannical to say—let the people of Georgia—the qualified voters pass on it."⁸

While most southern women still aligned with NAWSA over the more extreme approaches of the SSWSC and NWP, the attraction of some women to these organizations reflected an internal struggle permeating within the national movement that had reverberations in the South, including Georgia. As evidenced by the troubles within the ESPG, Georgia's suffragists also debated the best strategies to use for their

⁷ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6, 136; Taylor, "Revival and Development."

⁸ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 151; "Women Voters," unpublished manuscript, box 16, RLF.

movement. In light of their lack of progress in obtaining a statewide suffrage amendment, the women went along with NAWSA's "Winning Plan," which necessarily changed the focus of suffrage activities in the state. Events at the national level including the push for a federal suffrage amendment grew ever more present in Georgia's suffrage movement following the events of 1916. The national leaders themselves helped contribute to this shift by impressing on Georgia's suffragists that "federal work" would be the "only way [they could] get suffrage soon."⁹

Despite the previous difficulties with the General Assembly, suffragists pressed on and focused their efforts once again on a statewide suffrage amendment. Following their general procedures, both houses had suffrage bills introduced and sent to their respective Committees on Constitutional Amendments where hearings on suffrage took place. Like the suffrage debates at the national level, the hearings were tinged with allusions to the United States' involvement in World War I with speeches from both sides of the issue arguing eloquently for the ideals of freedom and democracy.

Since the outbreak of World War I, those in favor of and opposed to women's suffrage had debated what the worldwide conflict meant for their respective movements. Some suffragists believed that women's voting would bring hope for world peace. Anna Howard Shaw asserted, "We do not want the ballot because we are women and because we desire to fight, but in order that we may keep men from fighting . . . The women's suffrage movement stands for the systematic disarmament of the nations, for it holds that preparedness for war is an incentive to war."¹⁰ However, anti-suffragists feared that Germans and socialists would use women's voting to undermine national security. In a

⁹ Ethel Adamson to Rebecca Felton, 28 January and 4 April 1915, box 5, RLF.

¹⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, 14 April 1915.

pamphlet titled, “Is Woman Suffrage Pro-German?” the Massachusetts Public Interests League of Anti-Suffragists asserted, “To weaken the countries of her enemies through socialism and woman suffrage is Germany’s cleverest device.”¹¹

These debates reverberated among Georgia’s suffrage and anti-suffrage camps before the United States even entered the war. Mary McLendon echoed the sentiments advanced by Shaw. She agreed that women would encourage peace so that their husbands and sons were not “set up as targets for bullets.” Dorothy Lamar advanced the same concern expressed by anti-suffragists at the national level. She penned an article in the *Atlanta Constitution* in which she purported that women’s suffrage had socialist connections that threatened national security.¹²

Generally, women on both sides of the debate were distressed by the presence of women suffrage picketers outside the White House during the war. Employing strategies she used during her participation in the British suffrage movement, Alice Paul and members of her Woman’s Party targeted the Democratic Party for its failure to enact suffrage legislation even though it controlled congressional power and the presidency. Their main target, nevertheless, was Woodrow Wilson, whose policies exhibited glaring inconsistencies: promoting democracy and self-determination abroad while denying women the ballot in the United States. NAWSA President Carrie Chapman Catt co-authored a letter to the public with GWSA’s own Mary McLendon that denounced Paul

¹¹ Massachusetts Public Interests League of Anti-Suffragists, “Is Woman Suffrage Pro-German?” October 1918.

¹² *Atlanta Constitution*, 26 April and 21 June 1914.

and her supporters as “unwomanly” and completely unaffiliated with NAWSA or its local state branches.¹³

The General Assembly’s House Committee Hearings in 1917 were informed by these debates at the national level. Arguing the anti-suffragists’ position, Mildred Rutherford declared that the suffrage movement did not comprise the “right sort” of women. She pointed to the women picketing outside the White House as evidence of this opinion. Rutherford further substantiated her claim by charging that former NAWSA Vice President Jane Addams, whom she had previously targeted for her views on race, was a well-known supporter of Germany and that supporting suffrage might lead to a German or socialist takeover. In response to Rutherford’s speech, McLendon urged, “All we ask of you is to make of us the other half of humanity, the equals of yourselves. Before we go abroad to teach democracy to other nations, we should first give liberty to our women at home.” This statement came under attack from Macon’s Caroline Patterson of the Anti-Suffrage League of Georgia, who interjected that “forcing” the ballot upon women was highly undemocratic since a majority of women in the state did not desire the right to vote.¹⁴

Suffragists had faced an issue similar to the one raised by the women suffrage protestors outside the White House. The militant tactics of British suffragettes overseas had exacted a comparable effect. In their long struggle for voting rights, British women caught worldwide attention with actions that many Georgians and southerners deemed “violent and hysteri[cal].” As Elna Green and Marjorie Spruill Wheeler have pointed out,

¹³ Ibid., 23 December 1918.

¹⁴ *Atlanta Journal*, 20 July 1917.

southern suffragists found these actions so appalling that they consistently avoided the term “suffragette” because of its affiliation with the British suffrage movement.¹⁵

As early as 1914 Georgia suffragists had to cope with the negative image of aggressive suffragists. In a hearing before the House Committee on Constitutional Amendments, Frances Whiteside tried to allay the committee’s possible fears that suffragists in Georgia might pursue the same path as the militant British suffragettes, appealing to the committee’s desire for law and order and proper decorum from women. The women further distanced themselves from the suffragettes by conducting a series of lectures that argued that the militant wing of Britain’s movement represented only a small portion of suffrage advocates. Without fail they insisted that these women had not influenced the tactics of Georgia’s suffragists. Despite these attempts, however, anti-suffragists repeatedly referred to the violent actions of women like Britain’s Emmeline Pankhurst as connected to the general cause of women suffrage, which they believed put violent women in positions of power that were traditionally reserved for men.¹⁶

In the 1917 House hearings, Georgia’s suffragists responded to the “White House Pickets” argument in a similar fashion as they had to Britain’s suffragettes. They virulently denounced the “unpatriotic” tactics of the Woman’s Party and Mary McLendon remarked that the organization “had become so militant in its methods that it was a menace to the organization and to the cause of woman suffrage.” The ESPG characterized the women as extremists, labeling them as “fanatics seeking martyrdom.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 206; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 76.

¹⁶ *Atlanta Constitution* 5 April 1909, 8 January 1914, and 7-8, 28 July 1914; *Macon Telegraph*, 7 July 1914.

¹⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 July 1917; *Union Recorder*, 26 June 1917.

Unexpectedly, the committee declared that time had expired for speeches and brought them to an abrupt halt. The men then voted solidly against the suffrage bill. This action came at an unfortunate time for Frances Whiteside, who had prepared a response statement to the anti-suffragists' remarks. The decision enraged Mary Latimer McLendon, who felt that the committee had privileged the "most ridiculous assertions" of Rutherford and Patterson over the pro-suffragist's remarks by providing the antis with more speaking time. The actions of committee chairman Volney Liston Williams of Ware County had further angered McLendon because she had hoped that he would speak for the suffrage cause since she "knew him to be a suffragist." On the contrary, Williams had seemed to "lose his head" when he faced opposition from other committee members and made no such speech. Nor did he attempt to resolve the dispute over the hearing's time limit.¹⁸

Suffragists found a bit more success in the Senate, however. After hearing statements on the issue, the committee headed by the suffragists' former ally in the House, Edward Wohlwender, voted in favor of the measure with more than fifty women present. The affirmative 8-4 vote represented a resounding victory for the suffrage movement in Georgia, as the decision was the first official legislative action that supported female enfranchisement. The jubilation over the committee's decision ended quickly, however, when the Senate refused to take further action on the bill. The 1917 General Assembly adjourned, leaving the suffrage bill on the table.¹⁹

¹⁸ Mary Latimer McLendon to Rose Young 2 September 1917, 1:2 WSC; *Atlanta Georgian*, 20 January 1917; *Georgia Register*, 1967-1968, 1450; *Georgia House Journal*, 1917, 587. McLendon had every reason to hope for a favorable stance from Williams who hailed from Waycross, Georgia. Waycross had granted municipal suffrage to its female citizens earlier in 1917, thus making it one of only a few cities in the state that had taken this action.

Suffrage activity receded after these hearings in 1917 and the General Assembly refused once again to take up the woman suffrage issue. Perhaps Georgia's suffrage leaders recognized the futility of their repeated attempts to sway the General Assembly's attitude toward female voting rights. No suffrage resolutions came before Georgia's legislators in 1918, which seems to indicate that suffrage organizations in the state had turned their focus toward a national amendment, which had gained considerable ground after Woodrow Wilson finally endorsed women's voting. However, Georgia's suffragists found no more sympathy in the United States Congress than they did at home.²⁰

As early as 1909, Georgia's suffragists had lobbied their representatives in Congress to enact a federal suffrage amendment. Under the directives of Carrie Chapman Catt, the GWSA conducted a letter writing campaign urging senators and representatives to vote favorably upon women's suffrage, but they received a lukewarm response. Only four congressmen replied out of twelve, and these replies were evasive as to each man's position on the suffrage issue. The women resumed the practice in 1910, writing to President William Howard Taft and Georgia's congressmen and governor, Joseph M. Brown. That year, the women received four replies again, but none of the letters indicated support for suffrage. The ambivalence did not deter suffragists, who petitioned each successive member to Congress with meager results. Only Senator William West, who replaced the deceased Augustus Bacon in 1914, seemed "amenable to reason" due in part

¹⁹ *Georgia Senate Journal, 1917*, 611-612; *Atlanta Constitution*, 27 July 1917. Wohlwender had drafted the suffrage bill that came before the House Committee on Constitutional Amendments in 1916.

²⁰ *Georgia House Journal, 1918*; *Georgia Senate Journal, 1918*.

to his connection to the suffrage-friendly city of Columbus, Georgia, but his tenure in office lasted less than a year.²¹

The congressmen whom suffragists confronted the most over the second phase of the suffrage movement were Senators Hoke Smith and Thomas Hardwick, elected in 1911 and 1914, respectively. Neither Hardwick nor Smith showed favorable inclinations toward the woman's cause. The Woman's Party publication, *The Suffragist*, listed the two senators among the "thirty-four willful men" opposing Woodrow Wilson's endorsement of women's suffrage in 1918. Suffragists were angered to learn of Hardwick's repeated attempts to block the Susan B. Anthony Amendment during the sixty-fifth Congress after he had previously expressed to Rebecca Felton his willingness to "work together in so great a cause." Hardwick defended his changed stance, arguing that the issue was a "question of purely local character" and that local rule "should be supreme." Assuredly, his bid for re-election factored into his decision as well, since anti-suffrage sentiment throughout the state remained high.²²

Suffragists considered Hardwick's about-face a substantial blow, but they consistently counted Hoke Smith among their greatest foes. Smith never supported their cause even though he had championed Progressive reforms as Georgia's governor and as a congressman. Despite the fact that his own sister, GWSL president Frances Whiteside, supported the women's movement, the senator deplored the very idea of women's suffrage and stated that "the best women in [his] state did not want to vote." Mary

²¹ *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6, p124-125, 127. Senators Clay and Bacon and Representatives Griggs and Lewis were the congressmen who replied in 1909. In 1910 Senator Clay responded again, while Representatives W.C. Brantley, S.A. Roddenberry and W.C. Adamson also sent letters.

²² "The 34 Willful Men Opposing the President," *The Suffragist*, 12 October 1918, 33:11 RFP; "McLendon Scores Foes of Woman Suffrage" n.d. 1:12, WSC; Thomas Hardwick to Rebecca Felton, 8 April 1915 and 24 Jan 1918, box 5, RLF.

McLendon attributed Smith's opposition to the suffrage amendment to his not wanting to have to face a potential bloc of woman voters whom he ignored throughout their lobbying process.²³ Indeed, Smith worked diligently against federal suffrage amendments during his terms in Congress. A leading figure in the country's war preparation campaign, he denounced woman's suffrage as a distraction to the country efforts to defeat "the enemy of government by the people throughout the world" in World War I. Additionally, Smith inserted anti-suffragist literature from the *Macon Telegraph* and the GAOWS into the *Congressional Record* and flatly stated his position on suffrage as "intensely against it" during Senate's proceedings.²⁴

Georgia's junior senator, however, showed more enthusiasm for women's suffrage than did most Georgia politicians. William J. Harris, who won Hardwick's Senate seat in the 1918 congressional elections, pledged his support for suffrage when he took office in 1919. This put the Senate's Democratic support of female enfranchisement at twenty-six votes in favor of the amendment while nineteen opposed the measure and two had yet to commit.²⁵ It is not clear what made Harris so inclined to support women's suffrage, but his papers indicate that he was a staunch supporter of Woodrow Wilson and wanted to support the Democratic Party's national agenda.²⁶ Therefore, once Wilson endorsed the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in 1918, it appears that Harris followed the president's lead. He asserted, "I would uphold the hands of my president whenever I

²³"McLendon Scores Foes of Woman Suffrage" n.d. 1:12, WSC.

²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 65th Congress, 2nd Session, 3 October 1918, 11039-11040; *ibid.*, 66th Congress, 1st Session, 26 May 1919, 226-233.

²⁵ "Southern Democrats and Suffrage," *The Suffragist*, 24 May 1919, 2:3, Anne Olsen Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library, Atlanta, Georgia. This collection will be hereafter be abbreviated AOP.

²⁶ William J. Harris Papers, Richard B. Russell Jr. Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

think he is right.”²⁷ Even this victory seemed like a half-hearted one for Georgia’s suffragists, however, as their senator’s endorsement had not come from his personal conviction that women’s suffrage was right but instead out of obligation to his Democratic Party leader, Woodrow Wilson.

With support for the suffrage amendment increasing in Congress among members like Harris, Georgia suffragists turned their efforts back to the General Assembly, hoping that they might persuade Georgia’s legislators to endorse women’s enfranchisement. Suffrage organizations across the state began to canvass on behalf of the federal amendment that awaited the Georgia’s legislators, who were to return to the state capitol on June 25, 1919. Anticipating Georgia’s ruling on the federal amendment, the NWP publication, *The Suffragist*, dedicated a cover of one of the magazine’s 1919 issues to this prospect. The cover depicted a melon symbolizing Georgia that “plunked” at the touch of an unsuspecting suffragist. The cartoon commented upon the utter hopelessness of the situation in Georgia, which did not value its women’s opinions. The fact that the melon “plunked” perhaps indicated that the state was not prepared, or ripe, for women’s suffrage, or it might have implied that Georgia’s political leaders were too stubborn to adopt the cause. The party presumably believed that this harsh tone might shame Georgia’s politicians into endorsing female enfranchisement, but this negative propaganda placed Georgia’s suffragists in an especially awkward circumstance as the suffrage amendment neared ever close to being acted upon the General Assembly.²⁸

In addition to covering Georgia’s suffrage situation in its publications, the NWP sent organizers to the state to assist its local branch in securing support for the impending

²⁷ “Senator Harris Declines Suggestion by the Leaders of Woman Suffrage,” 5 July 1919, 1:12 WSC.

²⁸ *The Suffragist*, 24 May 1919, 2:3, AOP.

legislation. The arrival of national NWP organizers prompted protests from local suffragists, who chose to “paddle their own canoe” in their own push for ratification. Suffragists did welcome, however, support from less controversial figures. Woodrow Wilson sent a telegram asking for ratification as a matter of expediency for the Democratic Party, while William Harris traveled to Atlanta to promote the amendment. Meanwhile, Governor Hugh Dorsey, who had taken office in 1917, expressed his position that signing a woman suffrage bill into law would be a “privilege.” Yet, legislators denounced the endorsements of these “meddlers.”²⁹

On the eve of its session’s commencement, the General Assembly also received a massive influx of letters from suffragists. The Equal Suffrage League of Muscogee County had placed advertisements in the *Columbus Ledger* for women to flood the General Assembly with telegrams urging the ratification of the amendment. They went even further on June 26th by placing form telegrams in the *Ledger* that urged women to submit telegrams under specific classifications including businesswomen, nurses, teachers, and widows. In a surprising turn of events, however, suffragists abruptly halted their statewide thrust for the amendment. Leaders found little chance in having the federal amendment ratified and decided to try once more to introduce bills allowing for women’s suffrage at the state level in case the amendment did not pass at the national level. They arrived at this decision because of the widely accepted conviction that Georgia’s politicians were more likely to pass legislation of their own making rather than accept a federal law. Furthermore, they believed that if their state-level efforts in the General Assembly failed once again, it would be best to delay any action on the federal

²⁹ Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 6, 142; *Atlanta Constitution*, 30 June 1919 and 2 July 1919.

amendment with the hope that it might gain support among Georgia's legislators if more states in the nation acted upon it favorably. Yet, most looked upon this prospect skeptically; Eleonore Raoul mused, "I certainly do want the opportunity to vote before I have one foot in the grave."³⁰

Upon the opening of the General Assembly's new session, Georgia was poised to be the first state of the Deep South to act upon the suffrage bill. At this time, the once expansive visions used to secure or deny women's suffrage in Georgia became embedded in state politics because of the nature of the ratification process. Seizing upon this unexpected opportunity to voice the first opinion on the amendment in the South, the state's General Assembly moved quickly to render its decision, but this enthusiasm did not reflect a sudden change of heart for Georgia's politicians, who had consistently shown opposition to women's voting.

In an ironic turn of events, Colquitt County Senator Thaddeus Hall Parker and Jones County Representative Joseph Benjamin Jackson each introduced resolutions to ratify the federal suffrage amendment even though they staunchly opposed female voting. They explained their actions as strategic measures to kill the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in Georgia once and for all. In an interview with a Georgia newspaper, Parker explained that Georgia's position as one of the leading states in the South made a quick ruling on the amendment necessary because the state would likely influence the position of states in which ratification was less likely. Parker also supplied pragmatic

³⁰ *Columbus Ledger*, 24, 26, 27 June 1919; Eleonore Raoul to "Mrs. White", 11 May 1919, 1:2 WSC.

reasons for his action, citing the difficulty in having to alter voting restrictions like the poll tax in sufficient time for the 1920 election.³¹

The opportunity to influence other states in the nation weighed heavily on the legislators. In both houses an amended version of the suffrage resolution appeared that not only ruled unfavorably on women's suffrage but went further to actually reject the amendment. In fact, the substitution declared Georgia's position on the Susan B. Anthony Amendment as "not ratified, but hereby rejected." The alternate measure came in light of Alabama's concurrent attempt to become the first southern state to render its decision on the amendment. NAWSA sent representatives to fight the "rejection campaign" in Alabama, but did not offer the same assistance for the women in Georgia. Thus, Georgia's suffragists were left to their own devices to confront a legislature that had exhibited strong opposition toward their movement.³²

Each resolution came to a third reading before either body acted upon them. Parker had drawn up his resolution on July 1, 1919, but the Senate refused to respond. In an attempt to induce the Senate to act, John J. Flynt of Spalding County took the floor of the Georgia Senate on July 3 and delivered the following address: "Georgia, I love thee. It is the best state in the union. I'd rather live in Georgia than any other place on the globe. And Georgia, if you are the only state in the union that shall reject this amendment that destroys the last principle of Jefferson democracy, for which our ancestors, from

³¹ James A. Hollomon, "Senator Parker Tells Why He Introduced Resolution to Ratify Equal Suffrage," 1919, 1:3 WSC; *Columbus Ledger*, 30 June 1919; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1929-1930*, 82; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1961-1962*, 1310. Because Georgia's legislators cited themselves as the first southern state to confront what became the 19th Amendment, I do the same; however, I use Deep South to delineate from the South in general because Texas, which some may or may not include in their definition of "the South," ratified the amendment before Georgia ruled upon it. Certainly, the speeches of Georgia's legislators indicate that they did not include Texas as a southern state.

³² *Georgia Senate Journal, 1919*, 250-251, 261-262, 267-269, 597-599, 652-657, 674-678; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 174.

Jefferson down to the present, have defended with their very hearts, souls and minds, then I shall be prouder still that I am a Georgia democrat.”³³

Though the speech represented a strong condemnation of women’s suffrage, the Senate did not act upon the amendment until July 8th. On that day, the measure became locked in filibusters that blocked senate proceedings to the point that calls to adjourn for the day usually followed its introduction, thus leaving the resolution for unfinished business on several occasions. On July 16th the Senate made some progress toward a decision when the Committee on Constitutional Amendments recommended that Georgia reject the proposed amendment, but that motion was lost as well. This process continued until July 24th when the Senate finally approved of the committee’s ruling but offered that the body act upon an amended version of the recommendation. This substitute was adopted by a 35-8 vote favoring the amended version that went further than simply rejecting the amendment. In fact, the substitution declared the amendment “not ratified, but hereby rejected.” Meanwhile, Jackson’s resolution in the House faced less opposition. The House read his resolution for the third time on July 23rd, but a filibuster only delayed a ruling for one day. Jackson himself helped usher the measure through the House raised the ghosts of Reconstruction once again:

It means the final ratification of the fifteenth amendment to the constitution of the United States, nothing less. Of that amendment Frederick Douglass was the father and Susan B. Anthony, who received the negro in her home, the mother . . . If you pass this nineteenth amendment you ratify the fifteenth, and any southerner, knowing what that means, is a traitor to his section.

³³ James A. Hollomon, “Senator Parker Tells Why He Introduced Resolution to Ratify Equal Suffrage,” 1:3 WSC; *Georgia House Journal*, 1919, 884.

Once again, the suffrage opposition had raised the specter of Reconstruction and played upon the fear of losing white supremacy in the South. The House rendered its decision with a final vote tally stood at 132-34.³⁴

While members of both houses enthusiastically pursued this substituted measure, some legislators had expressed opposition to such activity. This minority group wanted to avoid any embarrassment for the Democratic Party, which had endorsed female suffrage and would not want Georgia's refusal to ratify the amendment to make the state's Democrats appear to be in conflict with the party's national agenda. Furthermore, with elections looming ahead in 1920, Georgia's Democrats did not want to feed into the hands of the Republican Party, which would have assuredly appealed to newly enfranchised women voters should the amendment pass.³⁵

Nonetheless, the men opposing suffrage held considerable influence in the legislature. The only substantial support suffragists found in the General Assembly came from its urban-dwelling members like John Y. Smith and Robert Blackburn, who lived in Atlanta, where the movement was more popular. On the other hand, the fiercest denunciations of women's suffrage hailed from rural areas. Due to the state's county apportionment laws these areas possessed greater political power than the smaller yet more populous counties like Fulton. The records of legislators like Senator Flynt and Representative Jackson of Spalding and Jones counties, respectively, clearly demonstrated the resistance suffragists faced in politicians from rural areas. These men were also among the General Assembly's more powerful members, which significantly

³⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 July 1919. *Georgia Senate Journal*, 1919, 250-251, 261-262, 267-269, 597-599, 652-657, 674-678.

³⁵ *Georgia House Journal*, 1919, 881-886, 906-910.

limited the suffragists' ability to effectively lobby for their cause. Flynt and Jackson, for example, both served on the state's Democratic executive committee, positions that undoubtedly afforded them significant political power. Accordingly, the majority of General Assembly members of both houses sided with the rejection position, wholeheartedly adopting the measures. The legislature was so enthusiastic about the rejection that the Senate and House quickly and collectively submitted their decision without adopting the other's decision.³⁶

While its rejection did not undergo a formal legal procedure, Georgia became the first state to reject women's suffrage. The decision probably came as little surprise to the leaders of the suffrage movement in the state, who had abandoned efforts to persuade the General Assembly with whom they had made little headway after seven years of vigorous lobbying. This was an incongruous end to a beginning that had offered so much hope for women's suffrage in the South—a hope embodied in NAWSA's decision in 1895 to hold its internationally recognized annual convention in Atlanta. Following Georgia's rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, seven states followed its lead and produced similar resolutions rejecting the amendment. Therefore, some might argue that these measures had fulfilled Parker and Jackson's hopes of Georgia's decision being the definitive one of the South. Georgia's women's hopes for the vote would have to be realized through the national ratification process.³⁷

³⁶ *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1973-1974*, 506; *Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1939-1941-1943*, 205.

³⁷ Southern rejections of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment were as follows: Alabama on Sep 22, 1919; South Carolina on Jan 28, 1920; Virginia on Feb 12, 1920; Maryland on Feb 24, 1920; Mississippi on Mar 29, 1920; Delaware on Jun 2, 1920; and Louisiana on Jul 1, 1920. Nonetheless, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia, of course, produced analogous decisions.

After the amendment passed through thirty-three additional states, Tennessee provided the crucial thirty-sixth vote for the requisite three-fourths of states needed to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. Women across the nation ventured out to the polls to vote for the first time in 1920 . . . not so in Georgia. Despite the amendment's federal application and the state Attorney General's assessment that the General Assembly would not have to pass an enabling law, Georgia refused to change its voting restrictions, and it was among only three states in the nation whose laws still barred women from voting in the national election of 1920. The restriction came on account of a state law that required potential voters to register at least six months prior to Election Day.³⁸

The state's suffragists attempted to vote regardless of the continued rejection of women's suffrage. Mary Latimer McLendon tried to cast her vote in Georgia's Democratic primary in 1920, but poll officials turned her away. She contested this action as a violation of the Nineteenth Amendment and appealed her case to United States Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby. Colby provided no assistance in this matter, as it was "not within the province of the department of state." McLendon took her case to several state officials and received further indifferent responses. In one last effort, she paid her state and federal taxes, believing the local tax collector would offer her a chance to register at that time. When he did not, she protested, and the tax collector replied that she would have her opportunity to vote by 1921 but not in 1920. McLendon scoffed at the tax collector and declared that he "was having heaps of fun fooling the old woman."³⁹

³⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, 19 Aug. 1920; A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Last Phase of the Woman Suffrage Move in Georgia" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 43 (1959), 28; Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 181. Mississippi and Virginia were the other states that did not adopt enabling acts.

³⁹ *Atlanta Constitution*, 9 September, 1920 and 1 November, 1920.

Yet, the tax collector's assessment was accurate. In 1921, the Georgia legislature passed a resolution that finally permitted women the right to vote in elections and hold public office. Though Georgia's politicians still refused to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, they had finally been forced to allow women more formally into the political sphere. In light of the great pains to which Georgia women had petitioned for the vote, the measure hardly appeared to be a rousing victory. However, Georgia's suffragists rejoiced for their opportunity to exercise their civic duty, even as another fifty years passed before Georgia formally recognized the Nineteenth Amendment by ratifying it in 1970.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, a modest victory counteracted these failures. The sudden death of one of the state's leading political figures, Tom Watson, produced an empty seat in the United States Senate during its intersession period of 1922. The public supplied several names to Governor Thomas Hardwick, who would name a temporary successor until the state could conduct a proper election to fill the seat, and among the names was Rebecca Latimer Felton. Felton had shared a close relationship with Watson, who regarded Felton with "great esteem and affection" and treated her as one of his own protégés. Hardwick felt it only appropriate that Felton succeed Watson, her mentor. Furthermore, the appointment would symbolize that Georgia had finally accepted women's suffrage.⁴¹

Seizing upon this opportunity, Felton pushed to be seated officially in the Senate. Even though the special election to fill Watson's seat selected Walter George before she would have the chance to report to Congress, Felton and her suffrage sisters believed that

⁴⁰ A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Last Phase of the Woman Suffrage Move in Georgia" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 43 (1959).

⁴¹ Talmadge, *Nine Stormy Decades*, 140. For a detailed analysis of Felton's Senate appointment see Talmadge's Chapter 15. Thomas E. Watson to Rebecca Felton, n.d., box 7, RLF.

even a temporary tenure in Congress would represent an important victory for women in government. In an auspicious turn of events, Walter George, who had gained his seat from a large contingent of women voters, intentionally delayed his presentation of credentials to the Senate. His absence thus paved the way for Felton to appear before that body, when she was sworn in as the first ever female member of the United States Senate. Though George would report to the Senate two days later to replace her, Felton's appointment to the Senate symbolized the culmination of women's efforts to enter the political sphere in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴²

Felton's appointment held additional significance as well. The ascendance of a well-noted white supremacist woman to one of the highest positions in the nation emphasized that white rule would still predominate Georgia's politics even with the inclusion of women into the electorate. Southerners still targeted African-Americans as victims of violence and disenfranchisement. Some newly enfranchised southern women did try to ameliorate the racial tensions by attempting to outlaw lynching. These efforts culminated with the creation of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, but the widespread prevalence and frequency of lynching in the early twentieth century substantiated that white rule would remain firmly entrenched in the South. The fact that white southerners still blocked African-Americans from voting implied that they continued to believe in the primacy of white blood in governing.⁴³

Mary Latimer McLendon could not take part in her sister's triumph, however. She died on November 20, 1921, having tirelessly worked for prohibition and female

⁴² Talmadge, *Nine Stormy Decades*, 148.

⁴³ Scott, *The Southern Lady*. In *The Weight of the Their Votes*, Lorraine Gates Schuyler argues that information provided at voter registration drives organized by white women inadvertently inspired many black women to push for voting rights, but these efforts met marginal success at best.

enfranchisement and seen the latter realized shortly before her death. The *Atlanta Constitution* paid tribute to McLendon, stating, “She had intellect, she had the qualities of leadership, and the ability for organization . . . In the early days she could have used these gifts for the more popular movements . . . But her vision was for other things, the harder things, and the smooth paths could not turn her away from the hard road—the road which for her was the right road. It took courage to follow it.” The GWCTU, which consistently rebuked McLendon’s efforts to join forces with Georgia’s suffragists, commissioned a fountain for the state capitol to honor her in 1923. The fountain represented an important symbolic gesture toward a woman who had devoted much of her life to reform efforts in the state. Its inscription read:

Mary Latimer McLendon
 June 24, 1840-November 20, 1921
 Mother of Suffrage in Georgia
 Pioneer in the Temperance Cause
 She made the world a wider world for women,
 a safer world for all mankind.
 She had the will to serve and bear
 love to do and dare.”

The moniker of “Mother of Suffrage in Georgia,” albeit a fitting one due to McLendon’s unwavering service to the woman’s cause, overlooked the fact that McLendon herself had not initiated the movement.⁴⁴

The women of the GWCTU had overlooked the efforts of Augusta Howard, who first started Georgia’s suffrage movement at her home in 1890. She and her relatives capitalized on the nascent women’s rights campaign in Georgia by distributing pamphlets and holding meetings at Howard’s home in Columbus where they slowly gained members for the GWSA. The “Howard girls” also brought NAWSA’s annual convention

⁴⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 Nov. 1921; “Mary Latimer McLendon Fountain,” Georgia Info, Galileo <<http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/statues/mclendon.htm>>.

to the Deep South for the very first time in 1895, which symbolized an important step forward for the national woman suffrage movement's progress in the region. However, Howard's tenure as GWSA president ended in 1895, and she faded from the public eye.

Howard had increasingly become labeled as an "eccentric" in her hometown of Columbus, Georgia. Her own brother denounced her suffrage position and worked to discredit her in town. Howard worked quietly alongside Mary McLendon and Rebecca Felton in GWSA activities, but she never again held a leadership position in the organization. Undoubtedly, she rejoiced alongside her suffrage sisters when the Nineteenth Amendment became law in 1920, but the amendment came during a time of personal crisis. On May 20, 1920, a young boy accused Howard of shooting at him while he picked blossoms off of magnolia trees on the property of her home, Sherwood Hall. Though suspicion surrounded the case—some accounts claim that the incident was most likely an accident—Howard was brought to court and found guilty by an all-male jury. Her brother, most likely trying to save the family from any further public scrutiny, intervened on his sister's behalf and struck a bargain with the court: Howard would leave the state in order to avoid her sentence of one to two years at the State Farm. She spent the remainder of her life in a boarding house in New York before she died on June 10, 1934. Her family arranged for her remains to return to Georgia, and following a private funeral Howard was interred in a cemetery plot with a marker that contained her biographical information as well as the word "Martyr."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, 21 May 1920. Much of this information on Howard is indebted to A. Louise Staman, *Loosening Corsets: The Heroic Life of Georgia's Fiesty Mrs. Felton, First Woman Senator of the United States* (Macon: Tiger Iron Press, 2006), 79-80, 219-220, 239-247. In conjunction with her research on Rebecca Felton, Staman also uncovered information on Howard, who remains a relatively obscure figure in Georgia's history.

Georgia's other suffrage leaders fared a bit better after the suffrage campaign ended, using their enfranchisement to continue their political activities in the state. On April 3, 1920 the ESPG merged into a state branch of the League of Women Voters after consulting all of its local affiliates. Despite the differences they had while with the ESPG, Emily McDougald and Eleonore Raoul both held leadership positions with the League. McDougald served as the organization's president and Raoul presided over the group's Atlanta/Fulton County branch. The League worked tirelessly to educate women about voting and attract women to the polls, yet leaders had trouble attracting and maintaining the interest of large numbers of women. The membership records of Raoul's branch alone indicate this trend. Membership ranged anywhere from 303 members to 935 in a mere four year span. In light of the incredible pains at which Georgia's suffragists fought for the right to vote, these developments were not particularly encouraging.⁴⁶

Despite the difficulties suffragists had in getting women to register to vote, state politicians quickly devised means to attract women to their campaigns even though they had fought diligently to exclude women from the electorate. Men running for local, state and national offices commonly employed the League of Women Voters to reach out to their potential female voters by publishing advertisements in the organization's bulletin, *The Pilgrim*. Thomas Hardwick, who had been an intractable foe of the woman suffrage effort, appointed a special committee comprised of clubwomen to seek out the woman's vote in his gubernatorial bid in 1922. Other politicians like one town councilman in LaGrange encouraged their wives to join the League of Women Voters to curry favor

⁴⁶ Carole A. Stevens, "The Road Is Still Rough: The Contribution of the Latimer Sisters to Georgia's Temperance and Suffrage Work, 1880-1921" (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 1994); Terrell Johnson, "League of Women Voters of Georgia" *Georgia Trend* (July 2006); Harper, et al, *History of Woman Suffrage*, v. 6, 142; "Membership Records," History of League of Women Voters, n.p., League of Women Voters Atlanta-Fulton County Records, 4:5, RFP.

with their female constituents. Even the Klan sought out women's political participation, submitting an "appeal to the Protestant Women of Atlanta" to vote for the candidates the organization supported.⁴⁷

Women also comprised an important voting bloc in matters of political expediency for the state. A small group of middle-Georgians living in Houston and Macon counties initiated a campaign for an independent county in 1914. The residents had asked for the creation of Peach County, which would form out of territories drawn from Houston and Macon counties. The campaign prompted fierce opposition from Georgians who felt that state government had created too many counties and questioned the need for more government. The debate lingered until 1922 when Georgians finally received the opportunity to rule upon an amendment to create the new county, and it was defeated. Advocates for the creation of Peach County were disheartened by this setback and vigorously lobbied newly enfranchised local female voters to adopt the resolution when another statewide amendment circulated throughout the state in 1924. On this occasion, voters approved of the new Peach County by an approximate 2:1 ratio. Though the addition of mobilized female voters alone cannot account for the success of the referendum, the women certainly helped create the new county.⁴⁸

Georgia's women assumed more politically active avenues as well. Many participated in various groups such as the women's councils and PTAs, leveraging their votes to achieve the specific policy aims of those organizations. Others ventured into

⁴⁷ Lorraine Gates Schulyer, *The Weight of Their Votes*, 77.

⁴⁸ *Milledgeville News*, 3 Nov. and 27 Oct. 1922; Peach County Historical Society, "The Creation of Peach County," <<http://www.peachcounty.net/history.cfm>>. The state had exceeded its 145 county limit delineated by a 1904 constitutional amendment by adding counties through additional constitutional amendments. In 1922, Georgia's counties totaled 160.

public office, and held positions as local superintendents and members of county and state party councils. Women even served in the state's General Assembly, but their presence was not always welcomed by their male peers. Two representatives in particular, Bessie Kempton and Viola Ross Napier, troubled male legislators due to their "militant sponsorship of progressive legislation." Local clubwomen, however, applauded their efforts to pass legislation on issues such as compulsory education and child labor, which had long been a part of the suffragist agenda before women attained the vote.⁴⁹

Georgia's anti-suffragists sustained their public lives as well. Mildred Rutherford and Dorothy Lamar both continued their work promoting the Lost Cause through activities of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The women worked with the Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial Association, which advocated the creation of a carving on the side of the mountain to commemorate the leaders of the fallen Confederacy. The project had gotten underway in 1914, but numerous delays and arguments between the association and project manager, Gutzon Borglum, who later carved Mount Rushmore after the association fired him in 1925, had halted the project.⁵⁰

Rutherford would not live to see the monument completed. She died on August 15, 1928 after a long battle with illness. More pomp and circumstance surrounded Rutherford's death than did McLendon's, as an estimated 2,000 mourners attended her funeral in Athens. The ceremony, described as being "intimately connected with the old South," was sponsored by the Daughters, the organization to which Rutherford had devoted much of her life's work. The *Atlanta Constitution* eulogized, "She was a woman

⁴⁹ Schuyler, *Weight of their Votes*, 81, 159, 193.

⁵⁰ Lamar, *When All is Said and Done*, 151-156; Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Granite Stopped Time: The Stone Mountain Memorial and the Representation of White Southern Identity," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82 (Spring 1998): 22-44.

of grace, culture, piety, all which outstanding virtues were linked with a warmth of heart, an appealing personality, and a radiating happiness that made her an unusual woman. Her long life was one of blessed service.”⁵¹

Dorothy Lamar outlived her colleague. A determined foe of women’s suffrage, Lamar traveled to North Carolina and Tennessee to urge that the legislatures follow in Georgia’s footsteps and reject the federal suffrage amendment. However, when the Nineteenth Amendment finally passed, she had an extreme about face on the suffrage issue. Describing herself as a “reluctant politician,” Lamar claimed that voting had become an obligation for all U.S. citizens, and she voted unfailingly in every election after 1920. She embraced an active role in politics and wholeheartedly endorsed the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In her autobiography, Lamar reflected upon her political life. She claimed, “My experience has shown that whatever resolve a southern woman of the old school may have about not taking part in politics, if she has any concern for the welfare of her locality or state, there are times when it seems imperative for her to raise her voice in politics.”⁵²

The events in Georgia that followed the Nineteenth Amendment demonstrated that there was room for women of both suffrage camps to continue leading political lives in the state. Though the suffrage movement had (indirectly) triumphed in Georgia, the women of the anti-suffrage campaign still exercised influence on the ways in which the New South operated in the successive decades of the twentieth century. In fact, both camps had laid the groundwork for women with a wide array of political ideologies to operate in politics without necessarily being feminists. The anti-suffragists in particular

⁵¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, 17-18 August, 1928.

⁵² Eugenia Dorothy Blount Lamar, *When All is Said and Done*, 220.

were the precursors of the conservative women who would find causes in opposing the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and the extended push for the ERA from the 1920s into the 1980s.

Yet, southern suffragists had also forged a place for women in the political arena in which they could leverage their votes to bring about reforms for the region. Women successfully lobbied for a number of the progressive reforms related to labor issues and education that had pushed many suffragists to join the movement for women's voting in the first place. At times, the mere presence of women in the electorate pushed male politicians to consider the needs of their female constituents more seriously, and they frequently viewed women voters as a powerful voting bloc that could not be ignored on the campaign trail. In light of the vociferous protestations many politicians expressed toward the woman suffrage campaign, most of these men presumably undertook these measures rather for the sake of political expediency than due to a change of heart. Regardless of politicians' sincerity, however, southern women forged a viable political identity for themselves by attaining the vote. Though theirs was an uphill battle, many of the women who campaigned for women's suffrage in Georgia had indeed voted before their "feet were in the grave."⁵³

⁵³ Eleonore Raoul to "Mrs. White", 11 May 1919, 1:2, WSC.

CONCLUSION

Having fought for nearly thirty years to attain the right to vote, suffragists in Georgia rejoiced when the Nineteenth Amendment became law in 1920, but they could not declare a total victory. Their movement experienced hardships from its outset, and they could never build an efficient political machine to overcome these obstacles due in part to disjointed organizations and disagreements among movement leaders. Furthermore, suffragists could not escape the prerogatives of national suffrage leaders nor the stigma attached to militant suffragists both at home and abroad. Ironically, suffrage efforts outside the nation had been a source of the movement's major ideological inspirations in Georgia, yet to many anti-suffragists, the movement represented an attack on existing southern power structures from meddling outsiders.

At times, suffragists themselves felt like outsiders at home. Generally they occupied the urban landscape, which had afforded them invaluable opportunities to seek fulfillment outside the home. Indeed, the city had produced this "new woman," whose very existence in public spaces and politics unnerved many southerners whose ordered world rested upon a vision of separate male and female spheres. In a number of respects, "the city" had come to symbolize much what state conservatives felt was wrong with the "New South" initiative in Georgia; the emergence of "new women" in the state was just one of the many consequences of modernization and industrialization. Thus, an ideological power struggle between the state's urban and rural areas ensued; women's

suffrage as a decidedly urban phenomenon became anathema to the citizenry in the country, who comprised a majority the state's anti-suffrage base.

In addition to these detrimental forces, suffragists faced a particularly difficult challenge when their opponents asserted that women's enfranchisement would topple the state's racial power structure. Employing virulent white supremacist rhetoric, they unfailingly expressed their support for the continued subjugation of local blacks, which reflected both their collective personal ideologies as well as an expedient (though presumably necessary) campaign strategy. Repeated attacks from anti-suffrage opponents, however, always prevailed due in part to their keen ability to invoke the ghosts of Reconstruction through Lost Cause rhetoric. Anti-suffragists argued that the proposed Nineteenth Amendment would potentially create an avenue through which the federal government could nullify the state's black disenfranchisement measures. The potentially devastating consequences of such legislation influenced many state politicians to vigorously fight against the woman suffrage initiative.

Thus, the combination of internal suffrage struggles and the overwhelming power of conservative political values on race, class and gender rendered the fight for women's suffrage in Georgia unsuccessful. The movement arose during a crucial transitional period for the South, as efforts to industrialize and modernize the region had given rise to tremendous changes that threatened to alter existing social power structures that many southerners fought to defend. Georgia's women suffragists had merely proposed moderate changes to the present gender order while maintaining their commitment to race and class power hierarchies, but these requests went unfulfilled. Instead, the movement

largely failed due to a dominant counter-effort to restore continuity to Georgia in light of the changes wrought by efforts to build the New South.

Yet, in spite of all the forces working against them, suffragists maintained hope for their cause. Frequently, they pointed to building successes of the national movement as evidence to the inevitability of their own movement's triumph. When victory was finally achieved at the national level, Georgia's suffragists could feel vindicated in their diligence to keep fighting in spite of great adversity. Anti-suffragists, on the other hand, faced a difficult dilemma when the Nineteenth Amendment bestowed the vote upon them despite their previous protestations: should they continue with their political lives as non-voting citizens, or should they embrace the opportunity for a formal political life they had not anticipated? Dorothy Lamar's experience suggests that many anti-suffragists who had led particularly active political lives voted as a means to promote their conservative agendas. Indeed, women from both suffrage camps continued to pursue political lives after attaining the ballot, but they could finally leverage the ballot to bring about the social changes they desired.

Despite frequent assumptions that the Nineteenth Amendment rendered no discernable changes in the existing political order, southern women did influence the political climate with the ballot in hand. Liberal and conservative women alike continued to push a social reform agenda before male politicians whom they cautioned to heed their concerns as constituents. The special attention these men paid to white women during their political campaigns of the 1920s evidenced that they at the very least acknowledged women's political clout. Historian Lorraine Gates Schuyler argues that southern women used the ballot as an important tool that leveraged social reform legislation from the

twenties onward. She claims that the Nineteenth Amendment effectively provided women a tool with which women could affect change and contribute to a more inclusive southern political order in the mid-twentieth century.¹

In 1970, Georgia's General Assembly finally ratified the Nineteenth Amendment fifty years after the measure had become federal law. The approval represented a symbolic gesture toward the women of the state who fought tirelessly to gain entry into the formal political sphere. It also coincided with a period in which women were pushing for expanded rights yet again; the battle over the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) loomed heavily in the state's political debates, which leaned strongly toward conservative, anti-ERA sentiment. Indeed, Georgia still remained politically conservative, but its politicians now recognized the undeniable validity of women's voting in the state, which perhaps gave hope to the individuals of the second women's movement that their efforts would not be vain. And, while the process might have been a slow one and arduous one, Georgia finally accepted women's suffrage by officially removing once and for all its previous stance of "not ratified but hereby rejected." Nevertheless, this action may have appeared to be a token gesture—and a somewhat hollow one at that—for feminists who struggled unsuccessfully throughout the 1970s on behalf of equality in Georgia, only to see the ERA meet the same fate as the suffrage movement before it.

¹ Schuyler, *The Weight of their Votes*, 228-230.

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