

The Memory of Slavery in the Peach Tree State

Race, Education, and History in Georgia, 1920-1991

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To Mom

Abstract

In the period between 1920 and 1991, the history of slavery in high school textbooks in the state of Georgia changed from celebration of the practice to recognition of its effects on Black Georgians. The history of slavery, once viewed as beneficial to Georgia because it provided economic success and social structure, changed as the Civil Rights Movement and federal legislature passed and the narrative created during the Jim Crow Era could not be continued. This thesis utilizes textbooks written for Georgia public high schools between 1920 and 1990 and articles from the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, an academic journal, to track how the history of slavery shifted from being celebrated, to being downplayed, and finally beginning to be reckoned with for its negative effects on slaves. This thesis employs a state-specific approach to a topic that normally focuses on the history of Reconstruction or the history of the Civil War to demonstrate that the history of slavery shifted narratives to begin to recognize what slavery was like.

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Introduction

How do we come to understand our history? How does our understanding of history influence our present and future decisions? These questions are posed daily as we seek to learn from our past, whether there were mistakes made or not. The relevance of the history of slavery is particularly high in recent years, as social movements like #BlackLivesMatter and discussions around the history of slavery and Black History courses in schools have become more prevalent.¹ While it may seem as though a state in the American Deep South like Georgia would have a relatively simple history of slavery because of its geographic location and political leanings, it is complex, with a shift from voting Democrat to voting Republican in 1964 in response to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.² In Georgia specifically, there is currently a large shift to Black voices being heard and given representation within the state legislation, with the election of Democrat Reverend Raphael Warnock as senator in 2020 and the voter registration campaign spearheaded by Stacey Abrams that helped register over 800,000 voters in the state.³ Georgia has become increasingly important in the fabric of the United States' viewpoints on important social issues, as the state now has two Democratic senators and voted for Joe Biden in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election.

Teaching the history of slavery has changed significantly from the Jim Crow Era to the end of the Civil Rights Era, from celebrating slavery and its pro-Confederate ideals to breaking

¹ Giulia Heyward, "Critics say Florida aims to rewrite history by rejecting African American studies," *NPR* (January 27, 2023): <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/27/1151725129/florida-advanced-placement-african-american-studies-backlash>.

² "How Georgia, once a Republican stronghold, came to swing," *The Economist* (October 31, 2022): <https://www.economist.com/interactive/united-states/2022/10/31/how-georgia-once-a-republican-stronghold-came-to-swing>.

³ Katanga Johnson and Heather Timmons, "How Stacey Abrams paved the way for a Democratic victory in 'New Georgia,'" last modified November 9, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-election-georgia/how-stacey-abrams-paved-the-way-for-a-democratic-victory-in-new-georgia-idUSKBN27P197>.

down the former narrative and allowing the history of slavery with the addition of the perspective of former slaves to be heard. For years, teaching the history of slavery was simple – white people longed for the glory days of the antebellum period in Georgia, so the history of slavery was taught to depict the ease of life before the Civil War, claiming that slaves enjoyed their time in enslavement because they knew their place and there were no issues within the state until after they were freed. This changed when the national discourse on slavery shifted during the Civil Rights Era. Georgia could not escape from federal legislation, and after the passage of the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Georgia was forced to abide by federal law and move away from the oppression in the Jim Crow Era. This meant changing the way slavery was taught from celebration to downplaying the shameful decisions of the past. However, Black voices in the state became impossible to ignore and new histories of the state were commissioned, hoping to begin to understand the new way that the country was coming to understand its history. Finally, the narrative surrounding the history of slavery was broken down and replaced with the beginnings of understanding what slavery was like for the slaves, not just white Georgians.

This thesis will prove that the institution of slavery was delegitimized in Georgia educational culture between 1920 and 1990. It is not obvious that this would happen, as the memory of the Confederacy was rampant and white supremacy was still prevalent in the American Deep South and elsewhere in the nation.⁴ It is necessary to note that I will not be focusing on Black voices in this thesis; they will be present but the focus of this thesis will focus more on public culture of the memory of slavery as found in educational curricula and an

⁴ Michael Ayers Trotti, “What Counts: Trends in Racial Violence in the Postbellum South,” *The Journal of American History* 100, no. 2 (2013): 375.

academic journal. These spaces were very white, and therefore the evidence in this thesis will mostly come from white Georgians.

Historiography

The field surrounding race, memory, and education engages with two different historiographies. The first, race and memory in the South, is a well-developed field, although it is one that has focused primarily on Reconstruction. The second focuses on the literature on race and memory in textbooks, specifically. I am building on both of these historiographies to tell a state-level story of slavery and memory in textbooks in Georgia in particular.

The secondary literature about the transformation of memory between 1920 and 1991 has focused more on the memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction than the memory of slavery. This approach has put more emphasis on the way that the public remembers the Civil War and Reconstruction through the lens of three major visions according to historian David Blight: white supremacy, reconciliation, and emancipation.⁵ Blight argues that reconciliation triumphed over emancipation in the national culture, but that the unfailing demand for a truly integrated society shifted the memory of the Civil War in American society in the last third of the 20th century.⁶ Moreover, he argued that the national memory of the Civil War was rooted in “sentimental remembrance” rather than memory, and that there was a misconstruction of the beginnings of the war that did not have to do with race.⁷ He debunks this belief system, writing that “race was so deeply at the root of the war’s causes and consequences, and so powerful a source of division in

⁵ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

American social psychology, that it served as the antithesis of a culture of reconciliation.”⁸ Since it was difficult for Southerners to fit in the horrors of slavery into the history remembered after the Civil War, they decided instead to focus on a romanticized version of remembering the time before the war and instead focusing the cause of the war on a non-race issue.

Blight’s approach was utilized by Bruce E. Baker on his state-level study of South Carolina, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*, published in 2007. *What Reconstruction Meant* focuses on the memory of Reconstruction in South Carolina, demonstrating that the memory of Reconstruction in South Carolina is important because of its social and cultural implications on the way that people in the state choose to remember the past. James C. Cobb’s *Georgia Odyssey*, published in 2010, focuses on the history of the state and the political implications of Reconstruction and Jim Crow and does not touch on the way that slavery was taught in Georgia. Cobb perpetuates the narrative that does not include the history of slavery within secondary literature. Modern historians have succeeded in providing a comprehensive narrative on social memory within the American South as a whole or on a state-by-state basis but have not provided a complete view on the importance of the history of slavery and its relevance, specifically in Georgia. There are some studies into the memory of slavery, like Derek H. Alderman’s “Surrogation and the politics of remembering slavery in Savannah, Georgia.” Alderman’s argument is that the politics of remembering slavery should be seen through the lens of surrogation, the search for a suitable commemorative memory for those who were enslaved, and textual politics, the “recognition that the words used to represent slavery are at the heart of the struggle to remember (or forget) the trauma of enslavement.”⁹ This thesis

⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁹ Derek H. Alderman, “Surrogation and the politics of remembering slavery in Savannah, Georgia (USA),” *Journal of Historical Geography* 36 (2010): 90.

focuses more on the collective memory of how slavery was taught and how Georgians came to understand the memory of slavery at each moment in time, rather than looking at a modern-day understanding of each time period's understanding of slavery.

While the national culture faced challenges on how to remember the Civil War and slavery, authors of history textbooks for schoolchildren also faced a dilemma on how to teach slavery. Historian Donald Yacovane believes that textbooks taught white supremacy and “crafted whiteness as a national inheritance, a way to preserve the social construction of American life and, ironically, its democratic institution and values.”¹⁰ He argues that textbooks constructed a narrative of the greatness of the white man and his need to control the Black population.¹¹ He explains that textbooks perpetuated white supremacy through the assumption that people with Anglo-Saxon backgrounds are at the top of the social hierarchy, and that it was developed in reaction to the institution of slavery. The “soul of the nation remains white” because slave narratives and Black voices were seen as illegitimate following the end of slavery; textbook authors chose to not include their experiences to maintain the common belief that white supremacy was the natural order of things.¹²

American history textbooks had always faced issues, according to Joseph Moreau. He argues that mass education determines the kind of nationalism and pride that predominates the country.¹³ Moreau explains that the information in popular histories, or the lack thereof, makes it easy for certain viewpoints to become popular. He introduces this with the example of the lack of information on Black people following emancipation, noting that “it was easy for White students

¹⁰ Donald Yacovane, Introduction to *Teaching White Supremacy: America's Democratic Ordeal and the Forging of Our National Identity*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2022): xiv.

¹¹ *Ibid*, xix.

¹² *Ibid*, xx.

¹³ Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004): 18.

to imagine Blacks' irrelevance to the national community."¹⁴ Chapter 4 of Moreau's book focuses on race and the "limits of community," as community in most textbooks normally means a community of white men.¹⁵ While history textbooks had linked race and the idea of 'nation' since the 1820s, the events that occurred directly before and after the Civil War caused a larger focus on race. Historians in the early 20th century chose to either include or not include the perspectives of nonwhite groups in their works, with the latter usually being the default, as "the removal of Blacks from American history and the national community began with the language writers employed, at times probably without conscious intention."¹⁶ Moreau's discussion on the invisibility of Black voices within history textbooks continues to explain that popular textbooks in the South tended to focus on the "naturally submissive" nature of Black people.¹⁷ He attributed their popularity within academia and education to the common prejudices at the time.¹⁸ Moreau's work set the foundation for a discussion on racist textbooks that were popular predominately in the South, which I will be engaging with to further the conversation on the idea of the creation of certain narratives in history textbooks.

The narrative in this thesis departs from other scholars by focusing on the teaching of history of slavery in Georgia specifically. This is different from the work done by other scholars because of the decision to discuss the way slavery was taught, rather than how the memory of Reconstruction has changed over time. I focus on the memory of slavery to provide a glimpse into the way Georgians look at their own history and hold themselves accountable as times changed and the way that the past is looked at it changes as well. While the large claims of the

¹⁴ Ibid, 20.

¹⁵ Ibid, 138.

¹⁶ Ibid, 164.

¹⁷ Ibid, 165.

¹⁸ Ibid, 174.

history of memory in the American South provide sweeping claims that can be applied to the states in the South, I instead hope to illuminate the teaching of the history of slavery in Georgia, a state that may have been overlooked in the past because of states like South Carolina, that seceded from the Union first, or West Virginia, that had explosive and violent controversies that made national news.¹⁹

Methodology

Each one of the three chapters of this thesis follows a similar method: general context on what was going on in Georgia during the time in each chapter, a discussion on the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, and then an analysis of the textbooks that were most popular during the time. The general context provides a lens into the political and social atmosphere during the time, which sets up the conversation around the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* and the textbooks. Since the *Quarterly* was written by historians and the audience was mostly other historians, the way that the articles in the journal compared to the historical context provided a viewpoint into how historians were writing about history based on the current times. The textbooks, in comparison, were written for school-age children and written by historians, but in a much less formal way. Textbooks were subject to public opinion and were looked at with a closer eye than the articles in the *Quarterly*. By providing context into the political and social tendencies during each period, it sets up the rest of each chapter to understand how the articles and textbooks fit into the social changes, if there were any, and how the articles and textbooks changed over time as there were contextual changes over time and across the chapters.

¹⁹ Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Carol Mason, *Reading Appalachia from Left to Right: Conservatives and the 1974 Kanawha County Textbook Controversy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 3.

Utilizing the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* as a set of primary sources allows for an in-depth perspective into the historical profession that cannot be seen by just analyzing textbooks. The *Quarterly* was and remains a major source of information and dialogue for historians to critique other historical works and provide their opinions on specific cases that interest them. An academic journal also allows for an ongoing conversation, allowing for more knowledge to be built upon past ideas and seeing how these past ideas compare to current ideas and the current social and political climate. By looking at the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, I can analyze trends within the historical profession and how the journal changed to promote history becoming more accessible for all readers, which can be compared to the call for a new, comprehensive history of Georgia to be completed at around the same time. Historians wanted more people to read about history, and in doing so, looked at the way history was taught in the past and decided that it needed to change.

Textbooks are then analyzed to understand what was being taught to students and how the authors wanted students to perceive the information in them. Relative to the general context, the textbooks asked the children reading them to base their decisions off the information given to them in the textbook, rather than the times around them. In his textbook *History of Georgia*, Coulter asks the reader to read the book as a “coming voter to determine the future of yourself and those who come after you.”²⁰ There is emphasis on the future and to align future votes with the information provided in the textbook. The textbooks serve as a way to look directly at what students were being taught and what the state deemed acceptable to be taught by the Board of Education. Textbooks also provide a way to track how certain topics, like the history of slavery, have been taught over time. Comparison between the textbooks in each of the chapters can be

²⁰ Ellis Merton Coulter, *History of Georgia* (New York: American Book Company, 1954), 5.

made on how they taught slavery, which allows for a greater discussion on how the history of slavery was being remembered in general.

I chose this methodology because it allows for a comprehensive look into the historical profession around the teaching of the history of slavery. By looking at the *Quarterly*, it provides a glimpse into the conversations that scholars were having with each other about the history of slavery and provides a space for scholars like Coulter to discuss their views in a way that is different from the textbooks. Analyzing textbooks allows for a direct look into what students were being taught in schools and how the state wanted its students to look at the history of slavery. Textbooks provide a comprehensive view into the history of the state, while the journal is more limited.

There are limitations to using both, particularly with the *Quarterly*. The journal does not compare directly with the textbooks since the purpose of an academic journal is different than the purpose of a school textbook. Moreover, it adds an additional element of analysis throughout the thesis that may not seem entirely relevant to the textbooks. With the textbooks, there is not a lot of information on how long these textbooks were used for and if they were used in private schools as well. It also was difficult to choose certain textbooks over others; I chose textbooks based on authorship and if they were mentioned in secondary scholarship. This is by no means a complete source base of textbooks; there are far too many and they are far too rich a source for it to be a complete history. It is my hope that the methodology chosen for this thesis will provide a comprehensive view into the way that slavery was taught within the historical profession and a deeper and more interactive insight into how historians wrote and taught slavery.

Outline of Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis examines the history of slavery in 1920s and 1930s Georgia through Ellis Merton Coulter and three widely distributed junior high school textbooks, *A Short History of Georgia* by Coulter published in 1933, *The Story of Georgia: A School History of Our State* by Edward S. Sell published in 1942, and *History of Georgia* by Coulter published in 1954. Chapter One examines Coulter throughout his time at the University of Georgia through his writings in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, an academic journal that he was also editor of, and his textbook. The first chapter aims to describe the celebration of slavery written in Coulter's writings along with other writings in the historic profession at the time, providing a background on the way that slavery was taught in Georgia during the Jim Crow Era. The chapter describes the hostility and violence in Georgia between white and Black citizens and how textbooks and academic writings perpetuated pro-Confederate ideals even after Reconstruction, seeking to keep Black people in their place as lesser than their white counterparts and maintaining the status quo of slavery.

Coulter created a historical narrative in Georgia where slavery was beneficial for both Black and white Georgians. In his textbooks *A Short History of Georgia* (1933) and *History of Georgia* (1954) and his academic writings from the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Coulter sought to persuade readers to keep white supremacy relevant within the state and maintain the status quo of Georgia during the antebellum period. He wanted students to vote for the candidate that shares the same beliefs as them, which would be the beliefs taught to them in the textbooks. Information taught in schools ensured that students would follow what the state wanted them to believe in, while the information in the *Quarterly* provided a space for Coulter to push his pro-Confederate ideals with other historians and in a more academic setting. Chapter One will prove

that the slavery was taught as a necessary institution that kept Black people in their place and maintained an easy lifestyle for everyone that was ruined by the Civil War.

Chapter Two moves into the Civil Rights Era in Georgia, placing the school textbooks in the context of a changing federal and statewide view on slavery, which sought to provide change in the way that slavery was recognized in textbooks approved by the state. Even after the 1954 Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Georgians refused to acknowledge the mandatory desegregation of schools until 1960, when federal judge William Bootle forced the University of Georgia to admit two Black students to the university because they were sufficiently qualified to be admitted. The University of Georgia was so powerful that there was no contesting the decision, but textbooks did not examine the effects of slavery on the Black population. Rather, Bernice McCullar's textbook *This is Your Georgia* marked a change in the way slavery was taught; rather than celebrating slavery, like Coulter did, white historians began to downplay slavery and did not outwardly support pro-Confederate ideology.

From the beginning of the Civil Rights Era to the end of it, Georgia shifted to a colorblind society that sought to forget the systemic beginnings of Black oppression. Despite national and statewide efforts to change and become more inclusive, white historians taught slavery in the lens of white attitudes, which proved ambivalent. This led to attitudes being pushed so that white people could move on past the Civil Rights Era rather than understanding how the way slavery was taught upheld Black oppression for years following the Emancipation Proclamation. Chapter Two marks a contextual shift in which national legislation marks the end of Jim Crow, but the teachings within textbooks change slightly from celebrating slavery to downplaying it and its effects after its ending. While there was radical legislative change, this did not signal a systemic overhaul of Georgia education that would fall more in line with the new

laws. Rather, there were fewer outward demands for the Georgia lifestyle before the Civil War and less nostalgia on the times before the war.

Finally, Chapter Three introduces a new era in Georgia from the 1970s to the early 1990s that recognizes the horrific acts of slavery and begins to break down the traditional history of slavery that had been taught in the past century. *The Georgia History Book*, a textbook by Lawrence Ronald Hepburn, utilizes primary source slave accounts and provides space for slave voices that had not been given in the past. For the first time, a widely produced and distributed textbook in Georgia had readers learn about the slave experience from former enslaved people themselves, rather than a narrative mostly told from a white perspective. In *The Georgia History Book*, Hepburn provides accounts and images from when slavery was still in place, marking a beginning to recognizing that slaves were treated like other goods, not like humans. Thomas Dyer, the new editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* in 1975, promoted accessible history for all Georgians, and made the *Quarterly* more interactive for readers. Kenneth Coleman, a historian from the University of Georgia who was taught by Ellis Merton Coulter, wrote *A History of Georgia* in 1991 along with other scholars from the university. In *A History of Georgia*, Coleman and F.N. Boney reckon with a history of slavery that had strict codes for slaves and acknowledges that slaves did not have any personal freedoms. Serving as a new, more inclusive history of the state, *A History of Georgia* offers a blunt description of the lives of slaves and does not sugarcoat their experience.

In the third chapter, I have chosen two textbooks that mark the beginning of an understanding of slavery that had not yet been seen before and fulfills the crumbling narrative of a history of slavery that had been taught since the end of the Civil War. While these textbooks do not change the way slavery was taught in the past, they do acknowledge that there should be a

new way of teaching history based on the current times that called for an analysis of past histories. The third chapter depicts an improvement in the way Georgians think about their racial heritage and the long and slow improvement on the way slavery was taught. However, there are limits to this improvement. More attention was paid to the negative experience of slaves, but there was little attention paid to slave agency or slave revolts that took place. Moreover, there is little attention paid to the ways that this reverberated through and defined later Georgia history. Georgian histories on slavery written during the 1980s began to include Black voices and slave voices within the discourse and emphasized the horrors of slavery yet failed to see the lasting effects of slavery on Black Georgians.

Chapter 1

Ellis Merton Coulter and the History of Slavery in Jim Crow Georgia

During his visits to Warm Springs, Georgia, President Franklin D. Roosevelt often sounded his affection and gratitude to Georgia and its people. However, when he openly defied Senator Walter F. George because he was opposed to the New Deal, President Roosevelt was met with anger from the Georgians he came to know so dearly. When asking a tobacco farmer why he was upset with President Roosevelt and why the farmer supported Senator George, the farmer responded, “We Georgians are Georgian as hell!”¹ Georgians are a proud group of people that love their state and will defend it against opposition and outsiders that do not understand their culture. Georgians defended their history, including the history of slavery and its cultural and social effects.²

Since the beginning of the Civil War, discussions on slavery attempted to explain who and what systems it benefited along with how it helped the United States prosper as a young country.³ As mentioned by David Blight, there are three ways of looking at the history of the Civil War: white supremacy, reconciliation, and emancipation.⁴ The first, white supremacy, began early and characterized itself with terror and violence. Reconciliation was similar to white supremacy, but focused on the loss suffered by both sides during the Civil War as a means of explaining away the root cause of the war. Finally, emancipation focused on the liberation of Black men and women in hopes of obtaining citizenship and Constitutional equality.⁵ While Blight looks at the history of Civil War memory through these perspectives, I will focus

¹ James C. Cobb, *Georgia Odyssey* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

specifically on the history of the teachings around slavery through the white supremacist view that dominated Georgia from the antebellum period until the mid-20th century.

The concept of looking at the history of memories around the Civil War, slavery, and Reconstruction are not new, but by looking specifically at the memory around slavery rather than other the memory of Reconstruction like in South Carolina, or the American South as a whole, I will explore the narrative created by historian Ellis Merton Coulter during the Jim Crow Era that celebrated slavery.⁶ By analyzing this development within Georgia, I hope to provide a glimpse into the American South without making large, sweeping claims about the region as a whole. It is important to note that looking at the American South in its entirety is important to understand the underlying tension between North and South, but this can be explained more specifically by looking at one state.

This chapter is not meant to serve as a history of slavery in Georgia, rather, it is meant to act as a history of the celebration of slavery created and taught during the period. I will begin by first providing context into Jim Crow Georgia and explaining the violence that ensued between white and Black men after the Reconstruction period to begin to explain the general feelings of resentment that white people had toward freed Black people. Next, I will describe how Ellis Merton Coulter, a prominent Southern historian at the time, oversaw the creation of a historical narrative in Georgia where slavery was beneficial for both Black and white Georgians. I chose Coulter in particular because of his various positions in academia and the sheer number of writings he produced during this period, which will be discussed later in the chapter. I will continue to discuss Coulter, looking at some of his writings from the 1930s-1960 to demonstrate

⁶ Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Blight.

the types of historical sources that claim to have been written to educate but acted as a persuasive means to keep the white supremacist vision alive.

Coulter is also not a new figure in the culture of education in Georgia and the history of slavery. Him and his works have been the focus of entire dissertations, like “ELLIS MERTON COULTER AND THE SOUTHERN HISTORIOGRAPHIC TRADITION” by Michael Vaughan Woodward, and the focus of journal articles on historiographic traditions in Southern and Georgian history. Historian John Hope Franklin recognized weaknesses in Coulter’s study of Reconstruction as early as 1948, as he noticed that Coulter chose to write his works based on the spirit of the time of Reconstruction rather than the present-day, which Franklin combatted with the idea that “there is...a grave danger of the author’s injecting his point of view or of mis-constructing the period when he is not satisfied with permitting the characters to speak for themselves.”⁷ While the writing of history is inherently political, it is also important to recognize that most times it is necessary to be as unbiased as possible.

Moreover, Franklin noticed that that Coulter was “especially partial to those sources that create a particular kind of atmosphere,” which praised Confederate soldiers’ bravery and condemned Black Georgians’ lack of composure.⁸ Coulter’s source base was not exhausted, as he ignored the records of articulate freed slaves available to him and has no evidence of searching for Black voices when making his claims about the experience of freed slaves.⁹ Franklin also noticed Coulter’s tendencies to distort his sources to fulfill an “overweening desire to produce illustrations to support a particular point of view.”¹⁰ Franklin is critical of Coulter’s

⁷ John Hope Franklin, “Whither Reconstruction Historiography?,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 17, no. 4 (1948): 449.

⁸ *Ibid*, 449.

⁹ *Ibid*, 449.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 453.

works, but also recognized the importance of his place in the historiography of Georgian and Southern history that should push historians to advance the historiography of such topics.

Like Franklin, Historian John David Smith criticized Coulter while understanding his importance in the field. He recognized that “Coulter’s modern reputation rests primarily as a conservative, racist, white southerner” who had a sympathetic view of the Confederacy and thought that slaves were simple people.¹¹ However, he does laud him as one of “the deans of southern historiography” and connects his racist views to the time, likening him to the “many whites living in the Age of Jim Crow [that] held an intensely racist view of blacks.”¹² Smith viewed Coulter’s works achievement that “deserves high praise” while also distancing himself from agreeing with Coulter’s views.¹³

It is my hope that by the end of this chapter, the reader will understand the feelings during this time surrounding the history of slavery and how it was taught. Slavery was taught as an important and necessary institution in Georgia because it made the state economically prosperous and kept Black people in their place. The white supremacist and pro-Confederate ideals of slavery were taught long after the Emancipation Proclamation so that people would never forget the ease of life before the Civil War.

Setting the Scene: What is Jim Crow Georgia?

In the years following the end of Reconstruction, white Southerners sought to maintain the status quo of slavery by enacting Jim Crow laws that put Black Southerners at a disadvantage. In 1896, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that the

¹¹ John David Smith, “E. Merton Coulter, the “Dunning School,” and The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 86, no. 1 (1988): 52.

¹² *Ibid*, 52, 63.

¹³ *Ibid*, 66.

federal doctrine of “separate but equal” is constitutional. The ruling gave permission to any establishment or person to not give Black people the same opportunities as their white counterparts. Jim Crow Georgia was anything but “equal,” as almost all facilities meant for Black people were inferior to the other establishments. Such laws meant to keep Black people in their place, which was a position that would always be inferior to white people. Jim Crow Georgia was riddled with violence and force to keep the Confederate lifestyle and views at the forefront of people’s minds. In Jim Crow Georgia, there was no room for Black people to begin to heal from the horrors of slavery; rather, they were quickly reminded of their history if they were accused of stepping out of line. Jim Crow Georgia was a time to remember the glory of the antebellum South, the destruction of the peaceful way of living during Reconstruction, and an attempt at redemption to the antebellum way of life.

Demographics of Georgia During Jim Crow

Georgia was a fast-growing state during the time of Jim Crow, with a total population of 2,908,506 people in 1930.¹⁴ According to the 1930 U.S. Census, there were 1,071,125 Black residents in Georgia, which accounted for 37 percent of the total population. This marked a decrease in the percentage of Black residents in Georgia, as in 1890 Black residents accounted for 47 percent of the total population. This figure continued to fall, and in 1940 was 35 percent.¹⁵ The most populated cities during the Jim Crow Era were Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, and Macon, and Savannah. Atlanta both recognized and condemned the Black community during the

¹⁴ “Population of Georgia, urban and rural: 1790 to 1950,” U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-14.pdf>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

period, as Black inhabitants felt empowered to attempt to begin a life of normalcy but were met with harsh punishments by others in the community.

Life and Violence During Jim Crow

Laws passed during the Jim Crow period upheld the ideals of white supremacy and slavery far after the Emancipation Proclamation and the passing of the 13th Amendment. In an effort to reduce the chances of Black voters, Democratic party leaders in 1908 passed a constitutional amendment that required a literacy test to register to vote. Democratic leaders explicitly helped potential white voters bypass the test if they were veterans or descendants of veterans, owned property of a particular value, or possessed good character. There were very few Black voters in Georgia by the mid-1920s because of the political and legal oppression that the Black community faced.¹⁶

White journalists who reported on the laws passed during Jim Crow often told the story that Black people did not object to the oppressive legislation. The sentiment spread throughout Georgia was that Northerners told a story of horror and cruelty toward Black people in the South that was unfathomable to Southerners because they believed Black people knew their place and liked the laws that perpetuated their oppression. The Athens Banner, a newspaper ran out of Athens, Georgia from 1902-1923, published an article in 1905 that claimed that Northerners did not allow “negroes [to] earn an honest living as laborers” and that Jim Crow laws were “an evangel of peace.”¹⁷ White journalists pushed the ideals of what they believed to be true, rather than what was true. This piece does not have quotes or mentions from Black people that may have had something to say regarding the laws. Moreover, there is no discussion surrounding the

¹⁶ Cobb, 44.

¹⁷ “Jim Crow Laws,” *Athens Banner* (Athens, GA), November 13, 1905.

Black experience through the lens of the Black perspective. It is a piece of writing that conveys what white people believe and want to be the truth, rather than using experiences or perspectives other than their own to tell the true and full story of the Black experience during Jim Crow.

Not only did the white population create the story that their own views of Jim Crow were the views of the entire population during the time, but they also used violence to assert their dominance over Black citizens during this period, leading to hundreds of deaths and countless other casualties throughout the period. One of these instances included the Atlanta Race Riot in September of 1906. The riot began when Atlanta newspapers alleged that Black men assaulted four separate white women. The newspapers published more sensationalized and unsubstantiated accounts of these attacks and white men and boys gathered in downtown Atlanta to protest. The white men then became violent and attacked Black men and Black-owned businesses in the city, killing 25 Black men. News of the riot was so popular that it made its way to France, where the newspaper *Le Petit Journal* published a depiction of the riot on the front cover of its publication with the caption “Lynchings in the United States.”¹⁸

¹⁸ “WHITES AND NEGROES KILLED AT ATLANTA; Mobs of Blacks Retaliate for Riots - Two Whites Killed; MANY NEGROES SURROUNDED; Two of Band That Killed an Officer Try to Escape, but Are Captured and Lynched,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), September 25, 1906. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1906/09/25/101846871.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2022).

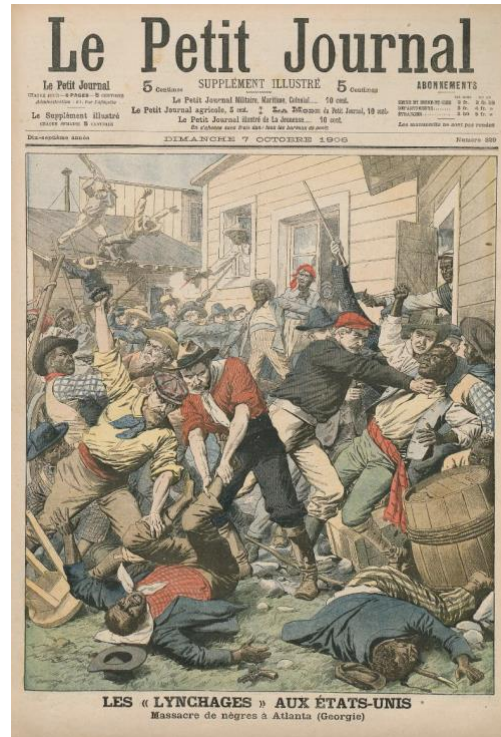


Figure 1: Cover of *Le Petit Journal*

Other instances of violence took place throughout the state with a geographic focus on South Georgia because of the concentration of Black Georgians there. Between 1899 and 1918, Georgia led the United States in number of lynchings, with a recorded 27 lynchings in 1899.¹⁹ In the half century between 1882 and 1930, there were 435 recorded lynchings, and 86% of the 435 occurred in either the Cotton Belt or South Georgia.²⁰ The purpose of these lynchings explicitly was to punish Black men for alleged assaults on white people, but implicitly was to strengthen the grip of white supremacy that had the South in a chokehold. Lynchings were a spectacle, a white community release and warning to their Black neighbors that stepping out of line would result in swift punishment.

¹⁹ Cobb, 41.

²⁰ Ibid, 42.

Ellis Merton Coulter and Georgia History in the Jim Crow Era

By the time Georgia reached the Jim Crow Era, the importance of academia and the university was well-established within the state. Georgia was the first state in the country to establish a state-funded university system, as the University of Georgia was chartered by the Georgia General Assembly in 1785.²¹ Originally known as Franklin College in honor of Benjamin Franklin, the University of Georgia opened its doors to students in 1801 and closed during the Civil War, but reopened in 1866.²² However, the university did not teach practical subjects that would prepare students for work, so the Georgia School of Technology, later known as Georgia Institute of Technology, opened in Atlanta and became a part of the state-funded university system.²³ The University of Georgia and the Georgia School of Technology were the leading institutions at the time for white students.

There were colleges and universities created for Black students that were mostly situated in Atlanta. The state opened Atlanta University in 1867, two years after the end of the Civil War.²⁴ There were not many Black students in attendance, however, since many of them were illiterate and needed to have a primary school education prior to attending university. There is a lack of dialogue from the 1900s-1960s surrounding the Black universities; they tend to be merely looked over and not given the space that they deserve. While I will not be focusing on Black universities, I believe it is necessary to recognize their place in the university system of Georgia.

²¹ F.N. Boney, *A Pictorial History of the University of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 2.

²² *Ibid*, 2.

²³ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

Ellis Merton Coulter and the Dunning School

Born on July 20, 1890 in the small town of Connelly Springs, North Carolina, Ellis Merton Coulter was one of eight children and one of six sons.²⁵ While his father picked him to be the son to enter the Lutheran ministry, Coulter chose to focus on history instead, as he preferred to hear stories about the Confederacy rather than information about the ministry.²⁶ His parents supplied him with plentiful information about the former, as both of his parents had personal experience with the horrors of the Civil War. Both of his grandfathers fought for the Confederate States Army; his maternal grandfather was killed during the Civil War and his paternal grandfather was a Prisoner of War. Coulter grew up with a fondness for the Confederacy that continued into his college-level studies. Coulter attended the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in the fall of 1910 where J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton acted as his mentor. Hamilton was a leading Southern historian at the time who taught that Southern white people suffered under Reconstruction and that freed Black people were not ready to be freed, hence causing their suffering.²⁷

²⁵ Horace Montgomery, "A Few Words About E. Merton Coulter: ELLIS MERTON COULTER BEGINS HIS THIRD CAREER," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1974): 6.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 8.



Figure 2: E. Merton Coulter from “A Few Words About E. Merton Coulter,” pg. 6

Hamilton was a student of William Archibald Dunning, a professor at Columbia University, known for the Dunning School. The Dunning School was a historiographical school of thought that focused on Reconstruction and was prominent between 1900 and 1930. It taught in opposition to the Radical Republicans at the end of Reconstruction and sympathized with plantation owners. The Dunning School also taught that allowing freed slaves to vote and hold office was a mistake because they did not know how to take care of themselves.²⁸ The Dunning School was the main school of thought surrounding Reconstruction in the historical profession in

²⁸ Eric Foner, “Black Reconstruction: An Introduction,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (2013): 410-13.

the earlier part of the 20th century and completely dominated historical discussion during this time. It was so influential that historian Eric Foner said on the Dunning School:

“It was a justification for the white South resisting outside efforts in changing race relations because of the worry of having another Reconstruction. All of the alleged horrors of Reconstruction helped to freeze the minds of the white South in resistance to any change whatsoever...For a long time it was an intellectual straitjacket for much of the white South, and historians have a lot to answer for in helping to propagate a racist system in this country.”²⁹

The “straitjacket” of the Dunning School held a grip on its students for decades to come and acted as a means of refusing the ideals of Reconstruction or what life after slavery could be like.

The students of the Dunning School were so heavily influenced by these teachings and continued the way of thought to their future students, which is what Hamilton, and later Coulter, did.

The influence of the Dunning School on Hamilton and then Coulter demonstrates the influence that teachers have on their students and future generations on the way that information is accepted as fact. History flows through generations, particularly through what students are taught in schools. By looking at the influence of the Dunning School, we are able to see that generations of information can be taught a certain way and can go unchallenged, therefore being accepted as truth. Three generations of anti-Reconstruction and pro-Confederacy rhetoric taught younger people the hope of keeping the Confederate dream alive and to never forget the ideals of the antebellum South. In a letter to a colleague in 1945, Coulter wished him a Merry Christmas and hoped that he was “fully recovered from [his] brush with ‘them flues’ as our colored population call that enervating thing.”³⁰ Coulter and his colleagues mocked Black Georgians in their correspondences, unabashedly supportive of the inferiority of the Black population in the state, which was displayed in Coulter’s writings.

²⁹ Eric Foner, “How Radical Change Occurs: An Interview with Historian Eric Foner,” interview by Mike Konczal, *The Nation*, February 3, 2015.

³⁰ E. Merton Coulter to Stephenson, 26 December 1945, Box 54, Folder 3, E. Merton Coulter Manuscripts, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries.

The Depth of Coulter's Influence

Coulter sought to preserve these ideals when he began teaching at the University of Georgia in 1919. He was a professor of history for six decades and was selected as chair of the History Department in 1940, which he served until his retirement in 1958. During his time at the University of Georgia, he wrote and produced 26 books, 10 edited volumes, and over 100 journal articles.³¹ His books included histories of the state of Georgia, like junior high school textbooks *A Short History of Georgia* (1933) and *History of Georgia* (1954). I will discuss both in greater depth later in this chapter to analyze how he wrote with a purpose of influencing young and impressionable Georgians to vote for people who shared the same ideals as them, which meant that they thought slavery was beneficial to the Black population of the South and that Reconstruction was a farce constructed by Northerners to wield their power over the South after their defeat in the Civil War.

Coulter quickly rose to fame in the historical profession and demonstrated his power within academia and history following his appointment as editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* in 1924, which he maintained until 1974. The *Georgia Historical Quarterly* is the scholarly journal of the Georgia Historical Society and has been published continuously since its inception in 1917.³² During his time as editor, he not only edited but also wrote several hundred articles for the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. His influence in writing is evident, as the Library of Congress lists 50 books written or edited by him.³³ Later in this chapter I will discuss a few of his journal articles written for the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* to display Coulter's influence and how much he wanted to defend the legacy of the Confederacy. His works were deemed so

³¹ B. Phinizy Spalding, "ELLIS MERTON COULTER," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 65, no.1 (1981): 3.

³² "Georgia Historical Quarterly," JSTOR, accessed November 1, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/journal/georhistquar>.

³³ Spalding, 2.

influential in the historic profession that they were “as valuable in the history of history as [they were] in the history of the Reconstruction.”³⁴

Coulter’s influence beyond the classroom was evident in his various journal articles and books. One of his more professional writings during this time was his textbook *A Short History of Georgia*. The textbook focused on the economic importance of slavery that both slaves and plantation owners understood to be necessary and beneficial for both groups as to prevent race issues. During his time as editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, he wrote hundreds of articles, one of which will be analyzed below about slave trials in Georgia. Coulter’s hope was that he could successfully defend the legacy of the Confederacy, or at least ensure that Georgians would always remember the joy of the antebellum South.

Coulter’s position as editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* allowed him to make it his journal. He read and decided which manuscripts to publish, wrote book reviews, contributed articles, did most of the proofreading, and handled the printing arrangements, all without the help of a full-time secretary.³⁵ He felt passionate about the importance of the *Quarterly* as a mode of maintaining Georgia’s history, and believed it helped “to rescue Georgia’s history from oblivion.”³⁶ His dedication on the journal improved its success and reputation within academia and began some of the features that are most well-associated with the journal, including articles with full scholarly apparatus, a “Notes and Documents” section, and books reviews critiquing Georgia history. Coulter did all of this work “without credit from the University of Georgia and without pay from the Georgia Historical Society.”³⁷ During the 1920s, the *Quarterly* was focused on building up its presence as a reputable scholarly journal, which can be attributed to Coulter’s

³⁴ Franklin, 461.

³⁵ Montgomery, 11.

³⁶ Ibid, 11.

³⁷ Spalding, 3.

dedication to the journal, as he “singlehandedly gave the group a regional and statewide credibility” because of the regular issuance of the *Quarterly*.³⁸ During the 1930s, the amount of book reviews in the *Quarterly* increased from three an issue to at least six in an issue. Articles published in the 1930s focused on the “historical exploitation of the South” as Jim Crow and the post-Reconstruction sentiment of longing for antebellum Georgia became prevalent.³⁹

Outcomes of Slave Trials

An article published in the *Quarterly* on the topic of slavery during the Jim Crow Era by Coulter was “Four Slave Trials in Elbert County, Georgia.” In it, Coulter described the laws slaves had to abide by and the legal process when a slave was accused of petty crimes or a more serious offense. While he included a lot of information on the slave trial process, he recognized that “information on the original trials of slaves in the lower courts has been very scanty” and petty crimes and offenses did not have many original documents explaining the offenses.⁴⁰ He attributed this lack of information about petty crimes to the process of punishment by slave owners, rather than the courts, and that the records were kept in separate ledgers and not the usual minutes and dockets.⁴¹ He used a record from Elberton, Georgia, titled “Complete Trial Records of Four Negro Slaves 1837-1849” to write the article.⁴² While most of the information was lost, Coulter was able to describe the process for capital offenses that must be punished by death, including “insurrection or attempt at it, rape on a free white female or attempt at it, murder

³⁸ Ibid, 3.

³⁹ E. Merton Coulter, “HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES ON SOUTHERN SUBJECTS,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1930): 58.

⁴⁰ E. Merton Coulter, “Four Slave Trials in Elbert County, Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 41 no. 3 (1957): 237.

⁴¹ Ibid, 237.

⁴² Ibid, 241.

of any person, and poisoning.”⁴³ All instances of slaves accused of a capital offense were sent directly to the Superior Court. By law, any witness could be sworn in, but slaves could not testify against a white person even though they were both “persons and property.”⁴⁴

Each case described by Coulter had a different outcome; one was hanged, one was whipped, one was whipped and branded, and one was acquitted.⁴⁵ He wrote that “the facts surrounding these trials give an interesting glimpse into the institution of slavery as it existed...during the quarter century preceding the Civil War.”⁴⁶ Coulter recognized that justice served in the nineteenth century was “rigorous and barbarous measured by twentieth-century standards,” but it was “impartially applied to slave.”⁴⁷ Moreover, because slaves were punished only after being found guilty by a jury and having a legal defense, it was fair for their punishments to be given out swiftly and harshly. Even though slaves could not testify against a white person, Coulter thought that they were given similar enough rights to have a fair trial. This indicated that Coulter thought that slavery was an “amenable” way of life and that it was not as bad as Northerners claimed.⁴⁸

The Public Face of History in Jim Crow Georgia

It is important to understand that the teaching of history goes far beyond the classroom and extended into the everyday lives of Georgians. While history taught and written within an academic setting was important, more important were the implications of these teachings on those who read and listened to them. Coulter wanted his arguments to be widespread across the

⁴³ Ibid, 239.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 237, 240.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 246.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 241.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 246.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 237.

state, writing a junior high school textbook that became the standard in the state. Moreover, textbooks like Coulter's explicitly stated that they wanted to teach the younger generations so that they could vote for those who had the same beliefs as them, which would mean the beliefs taught in these textbooks. History was no longer a way to remember the past, but now a way to influence the future and shape an identity to all of those who seemingly shared the same history.

High School Textbooks

Published in 1933, *A Short History of Georgia* is a thick textbook that tracks Georgia's history from its inception up until the beginning of the 1930s. Coulter wrote the book due to "the need for a history of Georgia brought down to the present," which he hoped was "of value both to the general reader and to the student."⁴⁹ Its first in-depth discussion of slavery begins on page 250, when Coulter personified the growing production of cotton in the state that "began a steady march" and required the system of slavery to keep up with its growth and its plantations.⁵⁰ The combination of the plantation with slavery created an institution that "captured the imagination of the people as no other economic organization has ever done."⁵¹ He likened the explosion of cotton to the explosion of slavery across the state, which "came to dominate agriculture" and cemented its importance in the economic success of the state.⁵² He continued his discussion of slavery with the growth of the Black population, which he referred to as "the growth of the black belt."⁵³

⁴⁹ E. Merton Coulter, Preface to *A Short History of Georgia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1933).

⁵⁰ Ibid, 250.

⁵¹ Ibid, 250.

⁵² Ibid, 250.

⁵³ Ibid, 251.

Coulter claimed that slavery was necessary to maintain the plantation as the economic foundation of Georgia rather than a way to perpetuate classism and racism against Black people. To Coulter, “white cotton and its ally, the contrasting black slaves, dominated the picture of antebellum social and economic organization,” and ensured that people understood their place in society and there would be no uprisings that would threaten the general peace.⁵⁴ Slaves were “treated no better or no worse than their economic well-being demanded,” which is an interesting metric that is hard to comprehend in the current understanding of slavery. While this is a means of understanding slavery that was clear to Coulter, it is not evident to the reader, especially without footnotes that Coulter chose not to include as he felt it was “unnecessary to encumber the pages with footnotes.”⁵⁵

A Short History of Georgia focused on the idea of slavery as a necessary means to keep the economic prosperity of Georgia flourishing. To Coulter, Georgians were proud of slavery and all Georgians, slaves included, believed that “Georgia was the heart and soul of the slavery South” and prevented race issues from arising.⁵⁶ The potential race issues are not further discussed by Coulter in the book and the reader is left to believe that the issues that took place during Reconstruction were the race issues that Coulter was concerned about because those are the issues that he gave the most writing space to in the textbook. Moreover, Coulter wrote that slavery was necessary because of the costs of slaves themselves, as the number of slaves in the state was worth more than all of the land and cities combined.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid, 258.

⁵⁵ Ibid, preface.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 284.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 284.

The crux of his argument is that both Black and white people alike understood that without the institution of slavery, race issues would overpower the success of the state.⁵⁸ Slavery was a good and beneficial system for everyone in the state because everyone benefited from it economically and because everyone knew their place in society.⁵⁹ Most Georgians felt that “the general opinion of Georgians was that the Negro element in their population was undesirable,” which slavery improved because it gave Black Georgians a set place to be and also provided a social hierarchy.⁶⁰ It set up a social system of three roughly divided groups outside of slaves: large planters, yeoman farmers, and “the so-called poor white trash.”⁶¹ Moreover, Georgians did not want to hear from outsiders on slavery and what should be done about it; Coulter wrote that slavery was “a matter of her honor and dignity and equality in the Union” and that “it was easier to provoke a dispute with Georgians over slavery than on any other issue; their suspicions increased and their nerves became more and more frayed.”⁶² White Georgians were proud of slavery because it made their plantations successful and kept Black Georgians inferior.

Coulter wrote that issues with slavery only arose when “the Pandora’s box which the abolitionists flung open” became an issue in Georgia, and not just Northern states.⁶³ Since he believed that slavery was crucial for the success of Georgia as it was the “keystone in the arch of Southern civilization,” it made defending slavery against the abolitionist movement necessary.⁶⁴ Coulter painted the picture of slavery as one that was economically and socially necessary, because “without slavery, there would be a race problem.”⁶⁵ Coulter’s views on slavery were that

⁵⁸ Ibid, 284.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 258.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 258.

⁶¹ Ibid, 251.

⁶² Ibid, 284-285.

⁶³ Ibid, 251.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 284.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 284.

it prevented race issues, ensured Georgia's economic success in agriculture, and guaranteed that Black Georgians would know their place as inferior to white Georgians.

One other textbook published during the Jim Crow Era that was used in public schools in Georgia is *The Story of Georgia: A School History of Our State* by Edward S. Sell. Published in 1942 under the direction of the State Board of Education, *The Story of Georgia* was a high school textbook that was mass distributed to high schools in Georgia. *The Story of Georgia* has colored images and maps to keep the reader engaged with the material. However, it does have the same sentiments as *History of Georgia* and mitigates the horrible lives that slaves had to endure under their masters. The combination of the teachings of these two textbooks illustrates the warped history that was disseminated to the younger generations of Georgians and created a public feeling of resentment to those who wanted to abolish slavery.

The Story of Georgia painted the picture of the glory days for Georgia before the Civil War. According to the textbook, during this time, everyone was happy within the system of slavery, even the slaves. Slaves had "good treatment, plenty of food, and medical care"⁶⁶ by their masters, even claiming that the "plantation system and its attitude toward the Negro were humane and progressive"⁶⁷ with no footnotes or sources to support this statement. There is a consistent lack of evidence for the claims made in both textbooks, which adds to my current confusion on how these textbooks that were created for the sole purpose of educating Georgia's youth were able to be taught in high schools. Moreover, the State Board of Education oversaw the production of this textbook, which further proves that there was a general consensus among

⁶⁶ Edward S. Sell, *The Story of Georgia: A School History of Our State* (Atlanta: Science Research Associates, 1942), 177.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 175.

historians and educators to teach the younger generations that slavery was not that bad and that everyone was happier before the war because slavery was still in place.

In 1954, the same year that *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that all schools in the nation must eliminate segregation, Coulter published his junior high school textbook *History of Georgia*. A part of the Martin Rowan Chaffin Collection of Public School Text-Books, *History of Georgia* provides a glimpse into the lessons that were presented to the future generations of Georgia. The textbook is relatively short and easy to follow, with colored pictures and maps to keep the reader engaged and excited to turn the next page to learn more about what Coulter had to say about the great state of Georgia.

The textbook downplayed the horrors of slavery with tales of mutual respect between slave and master and even friendship between the two groups. Coulter made the bold statement to say that “most slaves were well cared for...then, too, there was a close feeling of friendship between the slave and “old massa.””⁶⁸ To go along with this assertion is an image of what slave quarters looked like to the white eye, showing enslaved children sitting down in a group and enslaved adults riding on oxen and cattle to travel throughout the plantation. Coulter even goes so far to say that there were celebrations on plantations between slaves and master, where slaves “had a great frolic. Even while working in the cotton fields they sang songs. The beat of the music and the richness of their voices made work seem light.”⁶⁹ In this textbook, the lives of slaves seemed easy and simple. Slaves knew their place within the system because they “seemed better at raising cotton than anything else,”⁷⁰ and they let their masters take care of them by

⁶⁸ Ellis Merton Coulter, *History of Georgia* (New York: American Book Company, 1954), 135.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 135.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 134.

providing them with food and shelter. Coulter described the life of slaves as so nice that “they went to the same church as their masters, and sat in the balcony.”⁷¹

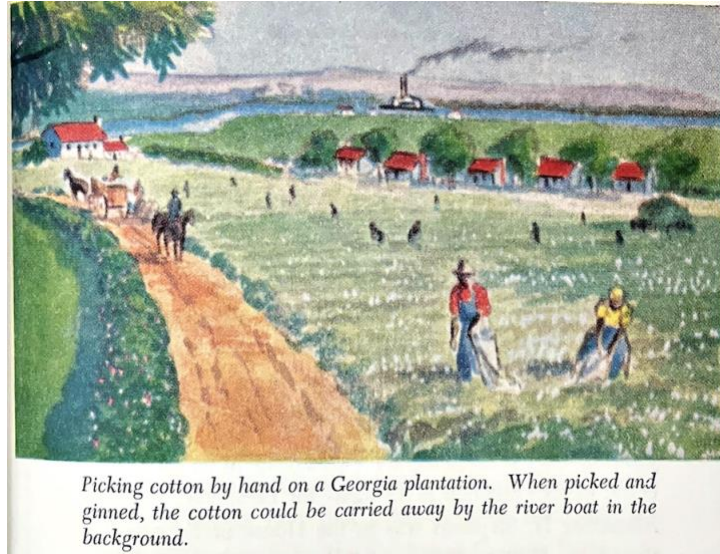


Figure 3: Illustration from *History of Georgia*, pg. 51

The textbook did not include quotes from either former slaves or former plantation owners on this alleged mutually beneficial relationship. It is a farce constructed by Coulter to begin to cast blame on the Northern states for the start of the Civil War. The “Things to Do” sections at the end of each chapter of the textbook reinforced this notion of a friendly relationship between slaves and masters by asking students to respond to the following questions: “3. Tell about a slave’s life on a plantation. What were some of the friendships between whites and Negroes? Did the Negroes like to go to church?”⁷² By asking students to describe this relationship as it was written in the textbook, it ensured that students do not view slavery as something to be ashamed about. The definition of slavery in this text made it appear to

⁷¹ Ibid, 136.

⁷² Ibid, 137.

students that it is not that big of a deal and that it was the way things were done in the South. To Coulter, if everyone within the system of slavery was happy within it and knew their place, why would they want to fight a war to get rid of it? To this leading Georgia historian, and now to the students who read his textbook, the war was instigated by Northerners who wished to destroy the South's "past greatness and easy lives"⁷³ before it.

It is important to note that Coulter made it clear that Southerners did not like Northerners or their ideals. He groups together the states that would later make up the Confederate States of America as "Southern States that felt the same way"⁷⁴ and that had a hard time allowing the government not to let "the Southern people have the kind of life they wanted."⁷⁵ This distinction between North and South as defined by Coulter creates a feeling of resentment toward the North, which pushed their beliefs onto the South because they had the backing of the federal government, which "was an enemy instead of a friend to the Southern people...that it helped Northern people more."⁷⁶ Coulter's version of history is one that made Southerners blame the North for the destruction of their way of life and made sure that Southerners did not understand the reasoning behind what would become the Abolitionist movement. This history rebuked any account from former slaves on their time in captivity and does not allow any room for opinion on the matter. The lack of sources and footnotes in the textbook made it hard to understand how such stories could be told as facts to thousands of students during the latter half of the 20th century, nevertheless as a public means of information for mass amounts of students.

Both *History of Georgia* and *The Story of Georgia* were created with the intent of influencing future generations to act by the teachings of the text. For example, in the *History of*

⁷³ Ibid, 199.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 157.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 158.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 159.

Georgia foreword, Coulter asked the reader as a “coming voter to determine the future of yourself and those who come after you.”⁷⁷ This is the meaning of these texts: to have future voters vote the way that they are taught in schools. If a student was taught that slavery was not that bad and that Northerners were inflating the issue of slavery, this student will then grow up to vote for whoever shares the same beliefs as them. In *The Story of Georgia*, Sell stated that he tried to “make *The Story of Georgia* exactly right in the facts it gives”⁷⁸ because of the disputed opinions over the subject matter. There was an acknowledgement of differing opinions of this information, yet there is no explanation into what these other opinions are and how they might be perceived. Moreover, *History of Georgia* has no footnotes, endnotes, or sources listed. To tell readers that “A Georgia boy or girl going through life without knowing something of the history of his State is like a person walking through the forest with no appreciation of the trees, the flowers, and the birds”⁷⁹ was a bold assertion that all the information in the text is true and that one must live their life in Georgia by the teachings in textbooks. Such information taught in schools ensured that students would be taught that slavery was not as bad as Northerners claimed it was and that there were no issues between races until after the Civil War.

Conclusion

The unapologetic racism and white supremacist ideology written and taught by Coulter and his peers provides a glimpse into the maintenance of the antebellum status quo in Georgia. Almost a century after the end of the Civil War, the ideals of idyllic Georgia before the war were celebrated and can be credited to the oversight of the celebration of slavery by Coulter. Jim Crow

⁷⁷ Coulter, *History of Georgia*, 5.

⁷⁸ Sell, 16.

⁷⁹ Coulter, *History of Georgia*, 6.

Georgia served as a space to maintain the beliefs of the past and to shape the hearts and minds of the future to uphold pro-Confederate ideas. Coulter dominated the historical profession and infiltrated various parts of the system, through academic textbooks for high school students and the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* to ensure that future Georgians would live along the lines of antebellum Georgia. The maintenance of de facto segregation through Jim Crow laws and undermining the negative effects of slavery to students led to the understanding that slavery was beneficial to everyone in Georgia, Black and white citizens alike. The teachings of the past were manipulated to create a narrative that slavery was a noble system that benefitted all.

Chapter 2

Bernice McCullar and the Culture of History in Civil Rights Era Georgia

Toward the end of the Jim Crow Era, a new era emerged that marked the beginnings of group protest and calls for action for equality for Black Georgians. There were organized groups that demanded change and did not rest until there was change on the national level, but this did not always mean that change occurred on the local level. A new era of history rushed in during the Civil Rights Era that was not outwardly racist or supportive of slavery, but instead had a more nuanced perpetuation of the teaching of slavery instead of the celebration of slavery in the Jim Crow Era. While scholars like John Hope Franklin called for a new type of history to be written by scholars, this new version of written history of slavery downplayed the institution and did not give it the space that it had where it was previously celebrated; rather, it was not fully discussed and not fully mentioned. The emergence of a post-Jim Crow society did not want to see that there were issues of race and instead wanted to forget the “systemic roots of Black oppression.”¹ White historians faced a dilemma: they could not celebrate slavery anymore, but they also cannot signal that they agree with the Civil Rights activists that slavery was a terrible evil and that the South was racist. They then decide to downplay slavery, focusing on white attitudes toward slavery and the ambivalence that white Georgians felt.

In this chapter I will explain how Georgians went from celebrating slavery to downplaying it despite national and local efforts of change. I will begin by explaining the context of the Civil Rights Era within Georgia and how, despite local and national efforts against discrimination, the violence of the Jim Crow Era continued into the Civil Rights Era. There will be a discussion about the challenges that leaders for desegregation efforts and history textbooks

¹ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 51.

that included Black history faced. I will then explain Black protest within various cities in Georgia and how resistance in the form of organized peaceful protests and demands for Black history within education emerged. A few articles from the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* will be viewed to see how slavery was discussed during the Civil Rights Era in the historic profession and to see how white historians discussed white attitudes toward slavery and the ambivalence surrounding it. Finally, I will analyze a few of the works of Bernice McCullar, a Confederate sympathizer who chose to ignore the topic of slavery in her works about the Confederacy and instead focused on other matters, which marked a change in textbooks from slavery being celebrated to its effects on Black Georgians being softened.

Setting the Scene: What is Civil Rights Era Georgia?

There was no formal ending to the Jim Crow Era in Georgia, instead, there was a movement toward Black voices and historians becoming emboldened to speak out against the mistreatment of Black people and called for more inclusivity and integration between races. This marked the beginning of the Civil Rights Era, which can be defined by national and local protest calling for the abolishment of legal segregation and discrimination throughout the United States. This proved to be difficult and it took years to pass national legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The passage of national legislation did not immediately change the discrimination faced by Black Americans, and the pain and suffering felt by them was not sufficiently addressed through legal equality. Legal equality did not correspond to equity, and Black Americans still had to endure difficulties because of their race, even though they became more emboldened to speak up against discrimination.

Demographics and Major Issues at the End of Jim Crow

The violence that defined the Jim Crow Era flowed into the early 1950s but varied throughout the state. Lynchings remained the main form of violence and fear tactic toward the Black community, and as the most extreme form of white supremacy, lynchings were so common in the rural parts that “if there was such a thing as a typical lynching it took place in a rural south Georgia county during the summer.”² Rural Georgia and the Sun Belt faced the largest amount of violence in the state. This differed from the northern mountain region city of Rome, where there was a reputation of more tolerant race relations.

Jim Crow Georgia had a large Black population that sought to practice their civil rights and liberties as freed men and women. In 1946, Georgia had 125,000 Black voters, the highest number of any other state; in comparison, Louisiana had 7,000 Black voters, and Mississippi only 5,000 Black voters.³ However, the Black population was subject to discrimination that led to high unemployment rates and wage gaps. The average annual salary for Black teachers was less than half the average salary for white teachers, and Black Georgians earned an average salary of \$403 at the end of the Jim Crow era compared to \$901 for white Georgians.⁴ Economic discrimination was similar to education and health inequality. The state allocated less than \$10 for each Black student, the lowest amount of any southern state, compared to \$40 for a white student. In the latter half of the 1940s, the State Agricultural and Industrial Board reported that 95 percent of Black schools were not able to be used. Infant mortality was sixty-seven per thousand for Black Georgians and was almost double the thirty-nine per thousand for white

² Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 12.

³ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

Georgians. Moreover, Black Georgians were three times more likely to die from the flu or pneumonia.⁵

Statistics alone do not accurately depict the effects on morale that such discrimination had on the black population. Children that were school-age could not attend school because they had to assist their parents on their farms, which led the average child to attend school only up until the fifth grade. The effects of segregation led to mental protest, as physical protest was likely to lead to violence.⁶ Poets like Alex Schmidt from Atlanta wrote about the mental resistance that took place:

Get back, take as little room as you can,
Up front if for your brother, they sit tight,
and spread their arrogance as peacocks fan
their tails; whose fault that you were not born white?

Unwanted by your kind who let you in,
Contained, alone, you find your grudging spare place,
And turn your thoughts maybe upon God's skin,
Hoping that He like you has a black face.⁷

Robin Kelley argued that the historiographical concentration on group-based civil rights protest dominated the conversation and did not leave room for the equally important instances of individual protest. Kelley's claim that individual decisions such as choosing to buy a copy of a Black-owned newspaper or to wear a nice suit is a protest of white supremacy that should be studied alongside group protest as "they are the two sides of the same coin that make up the history of working class self-activity."⁸ Kelley's argument can be defended by the amount of violence and fear of retribution for any form of resistance to white supremacy. Individual protest

⁵ Ibid, 15.

⁶ Ibid, 24.

⁷ Alex R. Schmidt, "Episode: A Street Car," *Phylon* 9 (1948): 247.

⁸ Robin Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 111-112.

that began during this period led to organized group protest later as individuals became more comfortable coming together and began to organize group resistance.

Desegregation and Protest After Brown v. Board of Education

Following the Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, there was massive resistance in Georgia to uphold the laws of the Jim Crow Era. The ruling stated that state-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution and was therefore unconstitutional. In response to the ruling, Georgia Governor Martin Griffin declared that “come hell or high-water, races will not be mixed in Georgia schools...no matter how much the Supreme Court seeks to sugar-coat its bitter pill of tyranny, the people of Georgia and the South will not swallow it.”⁹ Governor Griffin’s declaration let all Georgians know that their government would do whatever it could to maintain the status quo of segregation and that it would do anything it could to ensure that Black Georgians would not have the same opportunities that their white peers had. Fearful of the power that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) would get from the *Brown* decision, the Georgia state government attacked the group, looking into individual branches' taxes and banning teachers associated with the NAACP from teaching.¹⁰

A turning point of desegregation in Georgia occurred when the University of Georgia admitted two Black students. In December 1960, federal judge William Bootle forced the university to admit Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes because they were sufficiently qualified to be admitted to the university. Upon their arrival on campus, they faced death threats and riots, so the local NAACP branch hosted them and posted officers outside of Holmes’ house

⁹ Tuck, 98.

¹⁰ Tuck, 99.

in Atlanta. The importance of the desegregation of the University of Georgia to the state was evident, as *Time* reporter Calvin Trillin reported that “their entry will crack through the total segregation of all public education, from kindergarten through graduate school, in Georgia.”¹¹ The university was so important as “part of the fabric of Georgia” that the governor at the time, Governor Vandiver, could not shut down the university in opposition to desegregation.¹² The closure of high schools or even the Georgia Institute of Technology was likely if there was an attempt to desegregate them, but the University of Georgia was so important to the state’s morale as the flagship university of the state and remained open despite opposition.¹³ Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes successfully completed their education at the University of Georgia and graduated with their degrees in 1963.

¹¹ Charlayne-Hunter Gault, Foreword, in Trillin, *Education in Georgia*, x. Within a week of desegregation, Hamilton Holmes’s father, Alfred Holmes, had his business sale tax investigated by state officials. He had never been previously challenged by state officials.

¹² Tuck, 105.

¹³ *Ibid*, 103.

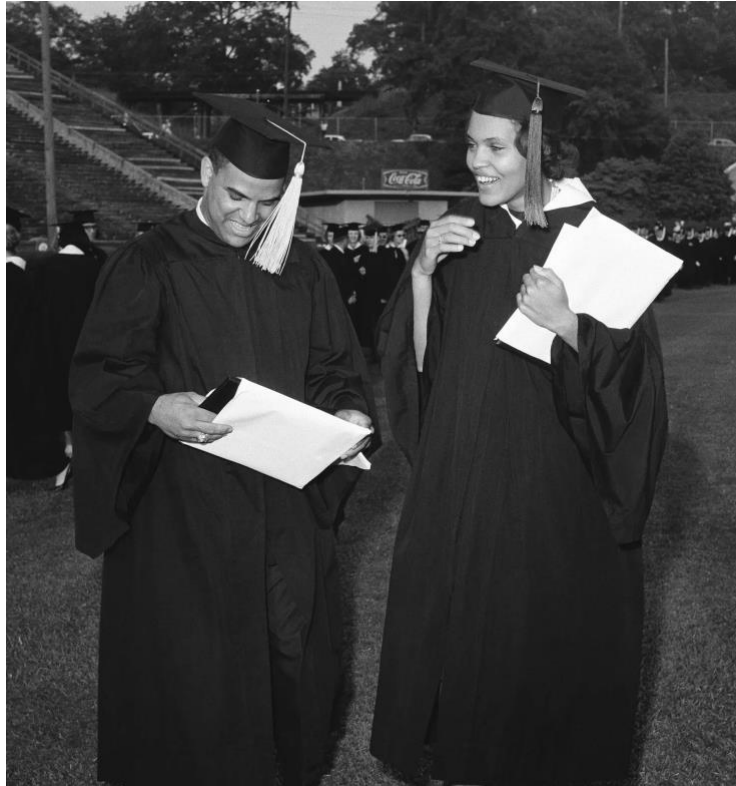


Figure 4: Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes at their graduation from the University of Georgia in 1963¹⁴

Integration efforts following the integration of the University of Georgia proved successful, as the integration of nine black high school students in an Atlanta public school in Fall 1961 was met with little resistance. Unlike the riot at the university after Hunter and Hamilton's admission, the high school students faced little reaction.¹⁵ The integration of the university was critical because it forced politicians and students to realize that integration was a part of their life now and they could not do anything to stop it. It was a successful challenge to Jim Crow that marked a new period of success for the black community and allowed for confidence in black group protest to build and flourish in the 1960s.

¹⁴ Charlayne Hunter-Gault, "I Desegregated the University of Georgia. History Is Still in the Making.," *New York Times*, (New York, NY), January 9, 2021: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/opinion/sunday/university-of-georgia-desegregation.html>.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 104.

Black Protest in Cities

From 1960 onward, Black Georgians confronted Jim Crow laws head on and quickly organized group protests. The first sit-ins began in Atlanta and Savannah in the middle of March 1960 and quickly spread across the state “almost [as] a contagion, one community to the next.”¹⁶ By September 1961, at least 7,000 Georgians participated in some form of protest or demonstration and almost 300 were arrested. The rise in the number of protests was mirrored by the rise in the number of voter registration campaigns, and by the Spring of 1964, over half of Georgia’s counties had at least one voter registration campaign.¹⁷



Figure 5: Protestors on Broad Street in Albany, 1960¹⁸

¹⁶ *Atlanta Journal*, 8 April 1963.

¹⁷ Tuck, 135.

¹⁸ The Albany Movement Demonstration, Virtual Vault of the University System of Georgia Archives, <https://vault.georgiaarchives.org/digital/collection/vg2/id/5356/rec/1>.

City protests in Atlanta and Albany were the most well-known and well-documented areas of civil rights activity, but it is important to look at local protests to understand the effects of these on the larger protests. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his New Year's Day speech in 1964 described Savannah as "the most desegregated city south of the Mason-Dixon Line" because of its transient influx of inhabitants in its position as a coastal city.¹⁹ Another coastal city, Brunswick, was admired for its tolerance of different cultures and progressive attitude toward desegregation. Brunswick had a population of 27,000, including nearly 10,000 black citizens. Negotiations during the Summer and Fall of 1962 led to the desegregation of all lunch counters and city-owned facilities by the start of 1963. Observers were so surprised with Brunswick's liberal attitude that they contacted the *New York Times*. *Times* reporter Pat Watters concluded surveys with Brunswick's residents and wrote about the city, reporting that "Brunswick had the special distinction in the Deep South of seeking an accommodation with the Negro population without pressure of court actions or demonstrations."²⁰ Like Savannah, Brunswick had a cosmopolitan outlook common to coastal cities, and *Atlanta Journal* reporter Fred Powledge commented that there Brunswick had "this element of good faith between whites and Negroes [that] was lacking in other southern towns."²¹

Another city that had a liberal approach toward desegregation was Rome, in the northwest mountain region of the state. Rome had a determined biracial council called the Council of Human Relations, and by 1963, the council consisting of Black and white ministers had 180 members. Berry College, located in Rome, accepted Black students one year ahead of the rest of Georgia's colleges.²² Brunswick and Rome were two occasions of smaller cities in

¹⁹ Tuck, 133.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 135.

²¹ *Atlanta Journal*.

²² Tuck, 139.

different regions of the state that had tolerant and accepting views of integration and sought to create positive relations between the Black and white populations. Columbus, Georgia, can be directly contrasted to these two cases. Columbus's local NAACP chapter did not support six students arrested on buses in July 1961 due to a lack of adult leadership within the chapter. Moreover, the city closed swimming pools in July 1963 rather than integrate them, as had been demanded by the change in legislation. In Columbus, the Black group resistance did not support its members and was not organized well enough to confront the white politicians that upheld Jim Crow norms.²³

Life Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

The beginnings of Black protest in the early 1960s laid the foundation to the challenges to Jim Crow across the whole state after the passing of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. By 1966, Georgia had seven Black state senators, including Leroy Johnson, a founding member of Atlanta's Committee for Co-Operative Action. While there was an increase in Black political participation, the federal acts did not lead to a complete revolution. Black voter registration increased, but disproportionately few Black Georgians were elected as public officials. The federal acts did not address poverty, unemployment, and housing discrimination, and most children remained in segregated schools. Less than one-third of one percent of Georgia's Black children were educated in schools with white children. Moreover, more than one hundred of Georgia's school districts remained completely segregated by the Spring of 1967, and in at least fifty other districts over 98 percent of Black children attended segregated schools.²⁴

²³ Tuck, 143.

²⁴ Ibid, 142.

Moving Toward the New South

Black activism from the later years of Jim Crow to the mid-1960s began as a start to break free from the fetters of Jim Crow and then moved to eliminate all Jim Crow Era laws and norms. Protest began to include the issues of education, employment, and the economic gap. The importance of local NAACP chapters is evident as the strength of the local chapter would either support or discourage individuals to protest, as seen in Brunswick and Columbus. Since the NAACP was decentralized, individual chapters could look specifically at each county's needs and respond to them as necessary. Black Georgians felt that they knew the leaders of their local NAACP chapters and could affiliate with them, which led to strong branches. These local protests together had a cumulative impact on the statewide movements, but did not overturn all older discriminatory legislation. It is necessary to recognize the movements made toward progress during this period, but also to note that the racial struggle continued and did not end after the passage of federal legislation.²⁵

During this time, there was a progressive movement in the historical profession on the national level that called for new Black voices and a more inclusive history that added Black history to the history of the United States or the history of southern states. John Hope Franklin emerged as the leading historian on the matter, calling for a complete overhaul of American history and the way that it was taught. Franklin recognized that changes surrounding Black history took place at the end of Jim Crow and interest around Black history grew toward the end of the Jim Crow Era and at the beginning of the Civil Rights Era. He called for the recognition of the difference "between what has *actually* happened and what those who have written the history have *said* has happened."²⁶ Franklin saw the history of slavery as a history filled with

²⁵ Ibid, 250-252.

²⁶ John Hope Franklin, "The New Negro History," *Journal of Negro History* 42 no. 2 (April 1957): 89.

unbelievable hardship that concluded with eventual freedom and triumph for Black people to rise above slavery. He made it clear, however, that the history of slavery also included instances like Governor Hammond of South Carolina declaring that slavery is the best thing that happened to Black people.²⁷ He wrote that the current treatment of Black people was Black history. He understood and argued that Black history was distorted and written mostly by white historians that shifted the narrative to not include what actually happened, rather, it formed a narrative that included what they wanted to say happened.

Franklin called for new basic lessons to be taught, the most important one being that “the assumption that American history is not the success story of white Anglo-American Protestants, who, as the story goes, made this country strong and great against all odds.”²⁸ Franklin wrote that the story of America being a melting pot for all cultures to come and work together toward the American Dream was false and did not accurately depict the Black experience in America. He believed that it was an inaccurate description of the American Dream because it did not include the hardships that Black Americans suffered and their continued mistreatment, even following the end of slavery. There was a lack of analysis of the Black experience, beginning with the downplaying of slavery by white Americans, in textbooks. This history, to Franklin, was insufficient and needed to be rewritten to include the contributions of Black citizens to the country and its success.

Local Georgia NAACP branches demanded integrated textbooks in Georgia to ensure that everyone in the state was learning about Black history, not only Black citizens. In 1969, the president of the Savannah NAACP branch, W.W. Law, testified in front of the History of the American Negro Study Committee of the Georgia House of Representatives and called for

²⁷ Ibid, 90.

²⁸ John Hope Franklin, “The New American History,” *Negro Digest* 16 (1967): 11.

integrated textbooks because he felt that “neither his (the Negro’s) face nor his contribution [had] found a place in our history texts.”²⁹ Law believed that there was a need to expose all of Georgia’s youth to integrated history that included white and Black history, and that every student should be taught integrated history rather than the history of their own race. He thought that “the whites need it even more,” and said that only one textbook on the state textbook list was comprehensive enough on the development of the country, meaning that it included Black history alongside the typical curriculum that was seen in public school textbooks.³⁰

Georgia was not the only state that had local NAACP members calling for action in their state. W.C. Patton, a staff member of the NAACP in Birmingham, Alabama warned the Alabama State Textbook Commission that failure to present “a true picture” of the Black experience in the United States and failure to integrate a textbook with this information would lead to violence by “Black militants.”³¹ Patton claimed that “there has been almost a complete shut-out of information on the contributions of Negroes” by the lack of inclusivity and integration in the textbooks in the state.³² The case in Birmingham serves as another example of a statewide call for new textbooks that did not come to fruition. While there was a push for new textbooks on the statewide level, these new textbooks did not have the integrated history that Law and Patton asked for. Rather, the textbooks began to downplay slavery, describing slavery as a necessary means for the economic success of the state, rather than explain the experience of slaves; the textbooks continued to not mention anything about the Black experience in Georgia and focus on white attitudes toward slavery.

²⁹ “Integrated Textbooks Urged in Georgia,” *Call and Post*, December 13, 1969, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

³¹ “Alabama Advised to Discard Lily-White Textbooks: Negro Life And History Ignored,” *New Journal and Guide*, July 25, 1970, 2.

³² *Ibid*, 2.

Discussion of Slavery in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* and High School Textbooks

While Georgia was changing in all kinds of ways, the teaching of history proved much slower. People like John Hope Franklin, a historian that was urging a new approach, had a limited impact in Georgia, and the University of Georgia's history department was not hiring Black scholars. This is still the prerogative white Georgians had, who knew that they could not keep writing in the old ways reminiscent of the Coulter era but were not sure what the new way of writing is. The solution that white scholars arrived at was to downplay slavery and not give it a lot of space within the textbook, rather than follow the celebratory nature that Coulter made popular in the Jim Crow Era.

Scholars within the historical profession and education began to write about slavery in a new way; rather than celebrating slavery like previous historians had done, the scholars in the Jim Crow Era downplayed slavery in textbooks and did not give the issue a lot of space within the textbook for discussion. Coulter's celebratory stance on slavery was not as accepted anymore after the national legislation, so there began more nuanced ways of continuing the misinformation around slavery. New textbooks, such as Bernice McCullar's *This is Your Georgia*, only provided a glimpse into the history of slavery. Rather than define it as a noble system like Coulter, McCullar chose to write only a little on slavery and made it seem as a dated system from the past that did not cause current harm and did not have any effects after its abolishment. A new era in Georgia history emerged that fulfilled the idea of a colorblind society that ignored issues of structural racism by making race issues an individual issue instead of a social issue.

The End of the Coulter Era at the Georgia Historical Quarterly

Coulter remained at the University of Georgia until 1958, when he retired from teaching and focused on his editorship at the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* instead. Coulter was editor of the *Quarterly* until 1974 after 50 years in the position.³³ Billups Phinizy Spalding, a Georgia history scholar and professor of history at the University of Georgia accepted the monumental task of taking over Coulter's position at the *Quarterly* from 1974 until 1980. Spalding cemented the *Quarterly*'s spot as one of the leading academic journals in the country. The *Quarterly* began to have bright colors on the cover and engaging introductory materials as a reflection of Spalding's good-humoredness, which marked a departure from the seriousness of Coulter's *Quarterly*.³⁴

Coulter continued to publish his own articles during his time as editor, including an article called "Slavery and Freedom in Athens, Georgia, 1860-1866." He downplayed the severity of slavery in the first sentence of the article, writing that "in Athens, Georgia, servitude was not as harsh as the word sounded, and, indeed, in Georgia as a whole, this lot of the colored man varied from hard labor to virtual freedom from it."³⁵ He explained that in Georgia, the law stated that "the normal condition of a Negro was slavery."³⁶ Since Black Georgians would always be classified as slaves, it diminished the severity of what it meant to be enslaved. In this article, slavery was simply a part of life that did not mean good or bad things for Black Georgians. Coulter then described the necessary policing that was done in Athens when abolition first became discussed, which was an essential force because the Northerners were risking the Southern way of life. Rather than focus on the lives of slaves, Coulter focused on the issues that

³³ Horace Montgomery, "A Few Words About E. Merton Coulter: ELLIS MERTON COULTER BEGINS HIS THIRD CAREER," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1974): 5.

³⁴ Harvey H. Jackson III, "Billups Phinizy Spalding: A Tribute," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (1994): 2.

³⁵ E. Merton Coulter, "Slavery and Freedom in Athens, Georgia, 1860-1866," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 49 no. 3 (1965): 264.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 265.

arose because Northerners wanted to abolish slavery. Slavery, then, was an issue that led to larger problems that were deemed more detrimental to the state than slavery itself.³⁷ This was a change in the history of slavery that marked how slavery was not as important as the other issues that ultimately led to the Civil War. The focus shifted from slavery itself and making slavery seem like a beneficial institution to a small issue that was exacerbated by Northerners and therefore led to larger issues and then the Civil War.

Another article written during the Civil Rights Era that focused on slavery was “Slavery in Southwest Georgia” by William G. Proctor, Jr. The beginning of the article described a slave auction, a scene that called for discussion on the “harsh side of slavery” by abolitionists and supporters of slavery alike.³⁸ Southerners insisted that their slaves had “light-hearted, carefree” lives, while abolitionists described the horrible treatment of slaves that caused them to be beaten close to death.³⁹ He described the core tenets of slavery and the “concept that the Negro was an inferior human being...extended to the racial, intellectual, and moral nature of the black man.”⁴⁰ Not only did white Georgians view slaves as socially inferior, but their economic value was crucial to the success of the plantation system and slaves were viewed as “valuable property.”⁴¹ The combination of the inferiority and economic importance of slaves caused white Georgians to create laws that kept Black men and women enslaved by any means necessary, as to not ruin the structure that slavery gave Georgia.⁴²

While Proctor Jr. recognized the chattel-like nature of slavery and the inhumane treatment that slaves endured, he did recognize some benefits of the enslaved. For instance, he

³⁷ Ibid, 268.

³⁸ William G. Proctor, Jr., “Slavery in Southwest Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1965): 1.

³⁹ Ibid, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁴¹ Ibid, 4.

⁴² Ibid, 5.

thought that a white child “possessed a weak, underdeveloped ego while the slave’s ego might be strong and mature.”⁴³ He did note that “a lack of evidence makes it hard to document the effect of slavery on the Negro,” but made his own assumptions based off his beliefs regarding slavery.⁴⁴ To Proctor Jr., slavery was a polarizing social system that must be either both accepted and rejected, writing that “neither the abolitionists nor the proslavery thinkers recognized and interpreted the coexistence of the personal and impersonal sides of Southern slavery.”⁴⁵ He believed that both sides failed to understand the other side, therefore causing events that led to the Civil War.⁴⁶ He had an ambivalence to the inhumane treatment of slaves even though he recognized it, but wanted both supporters and attackers of slavery to understand where the other was coming from, which he believed was the real issue, not slavery itself. He considered how slavery was beneficial even though slaves sometimes treated poorly, assessing how slavery was important to Georgian society for social and economic reasons.

Articles written during the Civil Rights Era at the *Quarterly* discussed slavery and how its abolition affected Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction Georgia. “The Abolition of Slavery” by Patrick Sowle, a historian from Windham College, discussed if the South “accepted the death of slavery” and how its abolition affected white Georgians’ relationships with Black Georgians.⁴⁷ Sowle described slavery as a “way of life, a human institution designed to relegate an ‘inferior’ minority of the population to permanent subjection.”⁴⁸ The only way that the southern states would flourish after the abolishment of slavery would be if people faced their new reality instead of looking toward the past. He described the relationship that former slaves

⁴³ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 20.

⁴⁷ Patrick Sowle, “The Abolition of Slavery,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 52 no. 3 (1968): 237.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 237.

and their slave owners had after they were freed, which was “the most beneficent and positive attitudes toward the uprooted Negro.”⁴⁹

Despite the end of slavery, white Georgians still believed that Black Georgians were inferior to them. Georgians speculated that freed men would become extinct after a certain time, claiming that “no two races so unequal as the caucasian and the African can exist ... in the same space upon the terms laid down in the abolition platform ... it is not difficult to tell which must give way.”⁵⁰ The idea of perpetual guardianship for Black Georgians was prevalent during the Reconstruction Era, as people believed that freed slaves would violently rebel or stop working and that they needed to be guided by white people to ensure that they would be successful. Black codes continued to have language that assumed the inferiority of Black men and included the words ‘master’ and ‘servant’ in them to maintain the sentiment. Despite the discussion on the attitude toward slaves and freedmen directly following the abolition of slavery, Sowle did not discuss the lives of slaves. While he mentioned the whippings that slaves endured, he did not discuss further into the lives of slaves and what their experience was like. There was an extreme focus on white Georgians and their attitudes toward slavery, similar to Proctor Jr.’s article. Both Proctor Jr. and Sowle tried to paint a balanced portrait of white Georgians who wanted to take care of their slaves but were also fearful of emancipation and its social and economic consequences.

Bernice McCullar and a New Face for Georgia History

As seen in earlier parts of this chapter, in academic discourse in Georgia, the discussion of slavery was becoming more moderate, but still focused on privileged white voices. This was,

⁴⁹ Ibid, 243.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 246.

it seems, the best that white authors could imagine to do in a Civil Rights Era when the blatant racism of the Coulter period was no longer acceptable. And as we will see in this section, the same sensibility survived into the public culture of history, as found in high school textbooks, including one written by Bernice McCullar.

Bernice McCullar, born on March 5, 1905 in Richland, Georgia, became one of the leaders in Georgia education and teaching Georgia history. McCullar graduated from Georgia State College for Women in 1924 and was soon admitted to the Georgia Bar Association in 1929. She only practiced law for a short time alongside her husband, and began teaching English and History at Peabody College in 1937. McCullar became a professor at Georgia State College for Women following the death of her husband in 1942, working as an Associate Professor of English and Journalism, Director of Public Relations, and editor of the Georgia State College for Women Alumnae Journal. She also edited the Milledgeville Times. She later became the Information Director for the Georgia State Department of Education in 1951, where she remained until her retirement from teaching and education in 1966. McCullar was widely respected and celebrated throughout the state for her contributions to education in the state, recognized by Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter with “Bernice Brown McCullar Day” on March 9, 1974 and Georgia College honoring her with a scholarship fund in her name in 1975.⁵¹

McCullar wrote various articles during her career and after her retirement from education published articles in newspapers voicing her opinions on the Confederacy and Confederate men and symbols. One article depicted McCullar’s apologies for the Confederacy and its generals, calling General William Tecumseh Sherman “a champion of the South” even though she had

⁵¹ Bernice Brown McCullar papers, Special Collections, Ina Dillard Russell Library, Georgia College.

previously thought that he was an evil man.⁵² McCullar wrote the tale of a misunderstood man who struggled throughout his life, whose father did not support him in his initial search for a job within the church, and later did not find success when he attended West Point, where he “never was chosen for anything.”⁵³ McCullar wrote that hardship and trouble followed Sherman everywhere he went, as he failed to acquire a job in business in St. Louis, and later was unsuccessful in getting a job in the Army. Sherman found success when the war broke out and he became a general within the Confederacy where he initiated the infamous March to the Sea. Sherman focused on the march and did not listen to outside opinions, as he wanted to “bring the South to its knees” and was successful in doing so; McCullar wrote that “all Georgia—and not just my grandmother—thought a devil had been unleashed in their midst.”⁵⁴

Georgians thought Sherman should not be celebrated following his infamous March to the Sea, where he burned land and destroyed cities with the scorched earth theory, but McCullar described Sherman as a misunderstood man who did what he thought was best for the state. She saw Sherman as a tired man who wanted peace in Georgia and did not want to see the continuation of the war. McCullar described the juxtaposition of General Sherman’s opinions on the war, since he was once a man who wanted to “make Georgia howl” and later said that he “confessed without shame that [he is] sick and tired of fighting.”⁵⁵ Sherman was a confused man who struggled to find his place throughout his life. McCullar wrote that in his later years, though, he transformed into a man that was “poised and polished, suave and charming, popular with men and adored of women.”⁵⁶ She viewed him as a confused man who did not find success until later

⁵² Bernice McCullar, “WHAT EVER BECAME OF GENERAL SHERMAN?” *Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), May 10, 1964.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

in life, and wished to tell his story as one of a man who should be sympathized with because of the hardships he endured.

Another leading member of the Confederacy that McCullar wrote about was General Robert E. Lee. McCullar was outwardly affectionate toward Lee, as she observed his birthday on January 19 with “reverence,” as she thought he was “one of the greatest men since the legendary King Arthur of Camelot.”⁵⁷ In the article, she questioned why Lee looks sad in all of his images and monuments, which most people believed was because he lost the Civil War, and one Georgia editor in 1869 even wrote that he “never saw a sadder expression” after meeting General Lee.⁵⁸ McCullar, instead, attributed his sad expression to the departure of his father, Colonel “Lighthorse Harry” Lee from his life when General Lee was a boy. She believed that General Lee’s sadness started when he was young because his father was thrown into prison for outstanding debt. What followed for a young Robert Lee was a series of heartbreaks over the course of his life that did not allow him to find true happiness. McCullar wrote that Colonel Lee was not a bad father, but his absence from Robert’s life led to a “sadness in the heart..that sometimes shows in the eyes—forever.”⁵⁹ McCullar described General Lee and his father as “both heroes,” and while she does not give an explicit reason for her classification as General Lee as a hero, it can be assumed that she is a supporter of the Confederacy, but does not outwardly say so.⁶⁰ Rather, it is implicit in her reverence for Confederate leaders that she supported their mission and viewed them as beneficial to the state.

In 1966, one year after the passage of the Voting Rights Act, McCullar published *This is Your Georgia* as a high school textbook. The textbook is thick, consisting of 754 pages and

⁵⁷ Bernice McCullar, “Why Are Lee’s Eyes So Sad?” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 16, 1972.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

provided a thorough look into the history of Georgia, with an emphasis on the colonists' interactions with the Native Americans in the region, a topic that was not thoroughly discussed in the textbooks from the 1950s. The textbook's introduction is an interesting look into the importance of education on Georgia's population. It called on the reader to absorb and know as many facts as possible to help "Georgia solve its provocative problems and answer its disturbing questions: why do we have so many counties? What can we do to stop the killing on the highways and the pollution of our beautiful rivers?"⁶¹ While these questions are significant, it is interesting that one of the "provocative problems" or "disturbing questions" does not mention the racial struggle in the state. This omission is telling of a turn toward forgetfulness about slavery, rather than explaining its necessity through white supremacy. Textbooks are meant to educate and inform young people to build a better future, and McCullar acknowledges this, writing "what a Georgia we could build here tomorrow if we learned about what happened in our past."⁶²

It is curious to write about the importance of knowing history and its effects on the reader's decisions for the future, but to not mention the impacts of slavery and the Jim Crow Era, is an interesting omission, especially because the textbook was published right after the Voting Rights Act. Moreover, 1960 saw a sharp increase in the influence of Black group protests in Georgia, so to not make mention of how history is affecting current events leads the reader wonder what the intentions of the contents of the textbook are. Was it to inform readers about the past, or to rewrite a history in which the horrible evil of slavery was not discussed as thoroughly as it could have been?

McCullar did not mention slavery in its own section in *This is Your Georgia*, but placed it in Chapter 22, titled "How Land Problems Made History Interesting." Slavery is first mentioned

⁶¹ Bernice McCullar, *This is Your Georgia* (Montgomery: Viewpoint Publications, 1966), 2.

⁶² *Ibid*, 2.

with the discussion surrounding the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney, as the invention “helped entrench the institution of slavery in the South and gave it new importance.”⁶³ Slavery is therefore looped into being a “land problem,” rather than a social issue that should be discussed on its own. McCullar’s decision to not include a section on the lives of slaves or how slavery came to be in the United States makes it seem insignificant compared to the invention of the cotton gin. A lack of discussion around the history of slavery makes it seem as though it was not important compared to other matters that occurred during the period before the Civil War, like the invention of the cotton gin. While McCullar later makes slavery the reason for the beginning of the Civil War, writing that it was “the crux of the secession situation,”⁶⁴ but still pushes forward the idea that it was an issue over states’ rights and the federal government being able to control states.

Slavery, to McCullar, was a necessary evil that affected Southerners morally but was a necessity to maintain the South’s economic prosperity. People were “caught up in an economic system” because they “could not afford to lose the great amount of money they had invested in slaves, and no way could be found to reimburse them for the loss.”⁶⁵ Money trumped ethics according to McCullar, so the only way to decide how “the slavery situation” would be handled would have to be through war.⁶⁶ McCullar also asked what would happen to freed slaves that were “freed and uneducated and unprepared for freedom?”⁶⁷ This line of questioning made it appear as though slaves were happy in their enslavement and they would be a social burden once they were freed. McCullar also discussed the idea of sending freed slaves to Africa to start a new

⁶³ Ibid, 289.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 417.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 416.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 418.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 418.

colony. She commended Alfred Cuthbert, a slave owner who had a city in Georgia named after him for his kindness as a slave master, for freeing his slaves and paying their way to Liberia.⁶⁸ McCullar celebrated a man who paid for slaves to leave the country, but did not discuss the experience of why slaves would not want to be enslaved in the first place.

The section on the “slavery situation” was the last section to outwardly attempt to describe what slaves experienced, but it is more of an explanation for why white Georgians wanted to maintain slavery. The last mention of slavery in *This is Your Georgia* is ten pages later and the description of the last slave ship to enter Georgia, which illegally landed on Jekyll Island in 1858 and flew the flags of the New York Yacht Club to not draw suspicion to the ship.⁶⁹ Georgians, then, did not have a lot of information about slavery to discuss. McCullar did not write about the experience of slaves and did not focus on the hardships that slaves went through and why they did not want to be enslaved anymore. Her reasoning for the Civil War was that northerners did not want slavery to spread throughout the United States once the West Coast started being viewed for statehood. Such reasoning, to McCullar, was inherently a states’ rights issue, as the federal government did not want to spread slavery throughout the country, but southern states wanted to maintain their status as slave states and spread slavery to new states.

There was no discussion on what life in slavery meant and what it was like to be a slave during this time, and there was no mention of slave owners and their relationships with slaves like had been previously discussed in textbooks from the Jim Crow Era. This reasoning made by McCullar marked a shift from celebrating slavery to downplaying it, as McCullar does not outwardly support the Confederacy or relish its nostalgia like Coulter did, rather choosing an ambivalent attitude toward slavery and its role in the Civil War, blaming the cause of the war on

⁶⁸ Ibid, 418.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 428.

other issues. McCullar's omission of details on slavery instead of Coulter's embellishment of details was a new way of minimizing slavery's effects on public culture and also diminishing the role that slaves had in the success of the country.

Conclusion

The Civil Rights Era in Georgia marked the establishment of a new era in the teaching of Georgia history that downplayed slavery. Even though there were national and state-wide calls for change, this change did not come into fruition. Rather, there was a lack of blatant racism and pro-Confederate ideals that had been popular in the Jim Crow Era. Calls by NAACP chapters for new integrated textbooks were not met and did not mention the Black experience in the United States outside of their experience as slaves and then briefly as freedmen. While segregation was illegal and everyone was now equal under the law, there remained feelings of superiority over Black citizens and refusal to listen to their demands to further their pursuit of happiness.

Chapter 3

Incorporating Black Voices: Georgian Histories of Slavery in the 1980s

The 1970s and 1980s marked an important era in Georgia: there was both national and local legal change occurring following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but legislative change did not mean everyday life changed for Black citizens. There were more demands for multiracial textbooks that included both Black and white history which began to be met. Historians writing for the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* and the academic discourse in high school textbooks began to look at accounts from slaves and tried to help readers understand what slavery was like for the slaves, rather than just for white Georgians. There are still limits to this discourse, however. While there was an improvement from the discourse in the Jim Crow Era and the Civil Rights Era, the history is still written by white scholars. Moreover, the history written during this period does emphasize the horrors of slavery but did not focus on slave agency and slave revolts, and it did not focus on the ways that the legacy of slavery affected Georgia social life after emancipation.

This chapter is meant to serve as a recognition of a moment in Georgia history in which the demands for inclusion and actual integration are met, rather than just acknowledged by sweeping legislation. I will begin by providing context into the period following the Civil Rights Era and explaining the growing Black population that began to represent more of the legislative bodies in Georgia. There will be a case study of controversial textbooks in Kanawha County, West Virginia, to explain the larger context of controversy surrounding textbooks in the South that did not meet family ideals that some groups had. I will then discuss the beginning of the discussion of slavery in the early 1980s and then move into how the academic world changed in the mid-1980s, including the hiring of the first Black historian at the University of Georgia.

Finally, I will analyze a textbook published in 1991 that explains slavery and its horrors, one of the only comprehensive textbooks of the state to do so. Slavery was acknowledged and all its parts were taught and published in the textbooks, not just parts that were manipulated to fit a pro-Confederate agenda or not acknowledged at all. It was recognized that history changes based on the times, and that it is up to the current generation to keep questioning history to ensure that the entire truth is taught.

Setting the Scene: What is Post-Civil Rights Era Georgia?

In the years following the Civil Rights Era, Georgia became a place where Black people were more vocal about their demands for inclusion and for desegregation to mean integration, not just a blanket term meant to ease the federal government's demands. At the center of these demands was Atlanta, which accounted for almost half of the state's population, jobs, and personal income by the end of the 1980s.¹ However, Atlanta was not the only place in the state where change was coming - while change happened slowly in the countryside, it did occur and allowed for the countryside to aid in the economic development of the state. With a growing population and a growing demand for inclusivity, Georgia in the period following the Civil Rights Era underwent a progressive transformation.

Demographics of Georgia Following the Civil Rights Era

Georgia continued to grow following the Civil Rights Era, with a total population of 4,589,575 people in 1970.² Out of this figure, there were 3,391,242 white citizens and 1,187,149

¹ James Cobb, *Georgia Odyssey* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 87.

² "1970 Census of Population," U.S. Census Bureau, March 1973, https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_ga-01.pdf.

Black citizens. The population continued to grow over the next ten years and in 1980 there was a total population of 5,463,105 citizens; there were nearly four million white citizens and one and a half million Black citizens.³ The growing population was focused in Atlanta, which provided a massive economic boost to the state. By the end of the 1980s, the counties that consisted of the Atlanta metropolitan area accounted for 44 percent of the state's population, 48 percent of its jobs, and 52 percent of its personal income.⁴

While Atlanta led the state in the economy, the entire state saw a large increase in Black representation from the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1964, only a little more than one-fourth of Georgia's voting-age Black population was registered to vote and there were only three Black elected officials.⁵ This number grew, and in 1970 Georgia had nearly thirty Black elected officials. By 1990, there were nearly five hundred Black elected officials and Black voter registration increased 80 percent since 1964.⁶ This trend of increasing Black representation marked a new period in the state, where Black citizens' demands were being heard and they were representing their own interests.

Rise of the GOP in Georgia

The political arena shifted after the Civil Rights Era and the Republican party was ascendant in 1980s Georgia. The conservative shift to Republicanism happened slowly in the years following the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but Jason Gilliland argued that there were four critical moments in the realignment of white Georgians from the Democratic to the

³ "1980 Census of Population and Housing," U.S. Census Bureau, June 1983, <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980/tracts-states/CensusTracts1980-Georgia.pdf>.

⁴ Cobb, 87.

⁵ Ibid, 84.

⁶ Ibid, 85.

Republican Party: the 1966 gubernatorial campaign of Republican businessman Howard “Bo” Callaway, the successful 1978 bid for Congress from Newt Gingrich and Georgia’s Sixth Congressional District, the 1980 election of Mack Mattingly where he became Georgia’s first Republican senator since Reconstruction, and the 1992 election in which Republican Paul Coverdell defeated Democratic incumbent Wyche Fowler.⁷ Callaway’s successful campaign marked the beginning of the shift of white Georgians to the Republican Party, which led to the formation of the modern Republican Party in Georgia.⁸ Moreover, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 led to scores of Black Georgians registering to vote, who associated with Lyndon Johnson’s Democratic Party after being alienated by the new Republican Party platform that opposed Civil Rights legislation.⁹ Effectively, there was a new two-party system in Georgia: the Republican Party’s supporters were suburban white voters and the Democratic Party’s supporters were urban Black voters.

Gilliland argued that the most pivotal moment in the Republican “climb to power” was the election of Paul Coverdell, who served as one of the members of the “triumvirate” of the modern Republican Party in Georgia alongside Mack Mattingly and Newt Gingrich.¹⁰ Coverdell focused on the long-range strategy of the party, which served as the throughline for the three men and the turning point for the party, as the planning of the strategy gave the Republicans the drive and organization necessary to launch successful campaigns.¹¹ The long-range strategy focused on elections to turn seats, and the first major election was Newt Gingrich’s attempt to unseat Democratic incumbent John “Jack” Flynt.¹² Gingrich was successful in 1978, and the

⁷ Jason W. Gilliland, “The Calculus of Realignment: The Rise of Republicanism in Georgia, 1964-1992,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 96, no. 4 (2012): 415-416.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 421.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 435.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 436.

¹² *Ibid.*, 437.

long-range strategy then focused on the United States Senate, where a Georgia Republican had not served since Reconstruction; this focus was also successful and Mack Mattingly was elected as a senator in 1980.¹³ Throughout the success of the long-term strategy, the economic achievements of Georgia saw the growth of a white suburban middle-class, who aligned themselves with the modern Republican Party.¹⁴

Economic expansion and the rise of the suburbs saw the rise of conservatism and the Republican Party within Georgia, which is also discussed by Kevin Kruse in his book *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Kruse focused his argument on the Civil Rights Movement, arguing that white Georgians moved out of cities and into suburbs from 1940 to 1970 as a part of a broader political withdrawal.¹⁵ He separated this process into three phases: a working-class shift from violence to emphasis on civil liberties and property rights in the 1940s, middle-class resistance to integration of public areas in the 1950s, and upper-class required to desegregate their businesses in the 1960s.¹⁶ Moreover, Kruse described the grassroots conservative campaigning that occurred in Atlanta and elsewhere in Georgia that focused on the “freedom of association,” meaning people could associate or not associate with people of their choosing.¹⁷ He attributed the New Right and modern southern conservatism directly to the struggle over segregation, focusing on the privatization of public services and individualism in direct opposition to the federal government’s proposition of desegregation.¹⁸ He focused on the urban areas and the shifts within the urban areas rather than those within suburbia, choosing to start the story of white resistance to segregation in the 1940s rather than right after the Civil

¹³ Ibid, 440.

¹⁴ Ibid, 445.

¹⁵ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Ibid, 10.

¹⁷ Ibid, 162.

¹⁸ Ibid, 14.

Rights Movement. Individualism effectively reshaped the entire conservative movement within the South and Georgia specifically, although it happened slower than other Southern states.

Conflict in the South

While modern conservatism was slowly being constructed in Georgia, there were still demands for more multiracial and progressive textbooks to be included within the state curriculum. There continued to be an increase in advocacy and demands for more inclusive textbooks by politicians and education leaders throughout Georgia. In 1970, the Georgia Teachers and Education Association (GTEA) sought the state-wide use of textbooks that included Black history. The GTEA called for changes in legislation to ensure that all textbooks used in public schools adequately depicted the lives and experiences of all people, not just white Americans. The association argues that there had to be a “determined effort to correct the inaccuracies of the past” to teach children to treat all people with respect.¹⁹ They further argued that integration had not yet been accomplished and that racial discrimination was still prevalent. This legislation was never passed.

Seven years later, Democratic state representative David Scott introduced a bill requiring all Georgia high school students to complete a course in “Black American History” in order to graduate.²⁰ Scott argued that Black History Month was not enough recognition of Black history and that there needed to be an ongoing discussion of Black experience. He believed that the required teaching of Black history would benefit all races because “black history is a product of

¹⁹ “GTEA Seeks State-Wide Use of Multi-Ethnic Textbooks,” *Atlanta Daily World* (Atlanta, GA), January 2, 1970 (1).

²⁰ “REQUIRED COURSE IN BLACK HISTORY FOR GA. SCHOOLS SOUGHT,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 13, 1977 (3).

black and white experiences of America to the present.”²¹ This bill never passed, but over the next 15 years, there was change in high school textbooks for public schools that included more Black history and the experience of slaves.

While there were calls for more textbooks that included Black history alongside white history in Georgia, there was an eruption of violence in West Virginia over controversial textbooks. In April 1974, the Kanawha County Board of Education gathered for a normal meeting in Charleston, which included hearing a report from a textbook selection committee to adopt new textbooks for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade.²² Female board member Alice Moore objected to the books even though she admitted she had not read them, accusing the committee of having an ulterior motive and selecting books that followed “anti-American” trends that had “ghetto” language.²³ Organized protests formed and increased when the academic year began in the fall and parents began to boycott the schools and local businesses that were involved with committee members that had voted in favor of the books. Almost twenty-five percent of Kanawha County’s 45,000 students did not attend the first day of school in September.

²¹ Ibid, 3.

²² Carol Mason, *Reading Appalachia from Left to Right: Conservatives and the 1974 Kanawha County Textbook Controversy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 3.

²³ Ibid, 3.

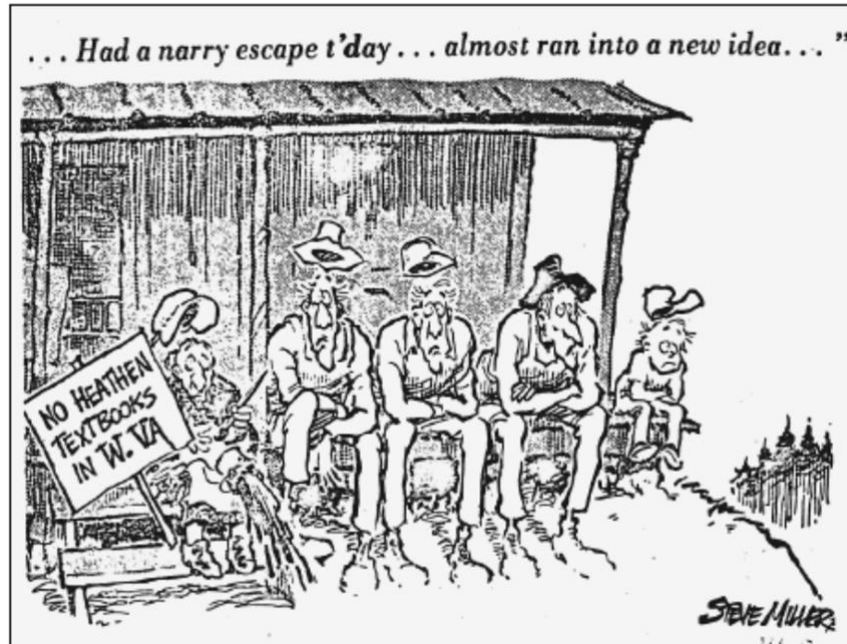


Figure 6: Cartoon published in the *Charleston Gazette*, November 18, 1974.

Tensions continued to increase throughout the fall, and gunshots were fired at schools. Arson and bombs closed Wet Branch, Midway, Chandler, and Loudendale elementary schools, and many school buildings were vandalized with Ku Klux Klan and Nazi insignia. Parents demanded the resignation and arrest of the board members for supporting “ungodly” books. While there was a lot of violence against the adoption of the books, supporters of the school board organized marches to advocate for academic freedoms. The controversy ended in 1975 when the school board reinstated the full line of books that they had previously voted for in April 1974.²⁴ The conflict in West Virginia marked a point in education in which people became violent over what their children were being taught in schools. While such an incident did not occur in Georgia, its relevance to the state of education is evident: public education was a fragile institution that was a point of contention for parents that wanted their children to learn about

²⁴ Ibid, 6.

certain things in schools and leave out topics that might be controversial. Such ideology is similar to the rise of individualism seen in Georgia and the rise of modern conservatism in the new Republican Party. Southern states had to learn how to find a balance between what the state thought should be taught in public schools and what parents wanted their children to be taught.

A New Academic Climate: Thomas Dyer and the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*

While there was conflict between modern conservatives and those who supported more integrated textbooks, historians began to change the way they were writing about slavery in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. Thomas G. Dyer, born in Marshall, Missouri on October 10, 1943, became the leading scholar in Georgia history and editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*.²⁵ After receiving his Ph.D. in history from the University of Georgia in 1975, he became increasingly important in the historical profession. His dissertation titled *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* was published in 1980 and he became editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* two years later.²⁶ Dyer was a fierce promoter of Georgia scholarship despite his Missouri roots and edited the *Quarterly* from 1982 until 1989. During his time as editor, he expanded the *Quarterly*'s book review section by commissioning full review essays on books in Georgia and southern history. He also introduced color covers and illustrations in articles to brighten the journal's appearance. He started a regular feature with F.N. Boney, "Georgia History in Pictures," which included photographic essays on the state.²⁷

²⁵ James Cobb, "Thomas G. Dyer," *Journal of Southern History* 80, no. 4 (2013): 1047.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 1048.

²⁷ John C. Inscoc, "Tom Dyer and Georgia History," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (2013): 269-270.

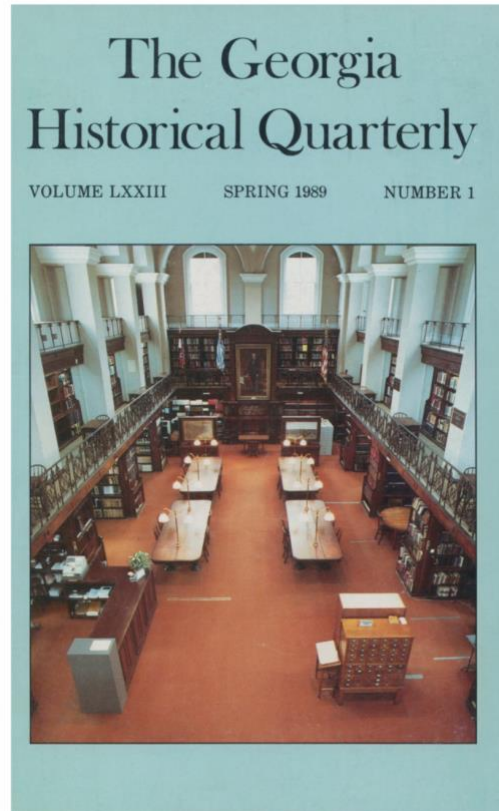


Figure 7: Front cover of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1989

Dyer was also instrumental in the conception of *The New Georgia Guide*, which was a collaborative effort between the University of Georgia, the University of Georgia Press, the governor's office, and the Georgia Humanities Council.²⁸ Dyer spearheaded the four-year-long project and saw its completion as executive editor and chairman of the editorial board. *The New Georgia Guide* served to display Georgia's history and present-day through a series of descriptive tours on the state's regions, along with interpretive essays from historians and literary figures on each of those regions.²⁹ Tom Dyer's efforts in Georgia history were appreciated by all in the field even though he did not seek out recognition from his peers. He aimed for history to

²⁸ Ibid, 270.

²⁹ Ibid, 270.

become “an unflinchingly honest, academic enterprise intended for a general audience.”³⁰ He was able to fulfill his goal and was a leading figure of Georgia history.

During Dyer’s time as editor of the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, the University of Georgia hired its first Black historian, Robert A. Pratt, in 1987.³¹ Pratt received his Bachelor’s degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and his Master’s and Ph.D from the University of Virginia. Pratt’s work focuses on race and civil rights in Georgia and Virginia. Some of his articles and essays were published in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, including an article of the opposition of desegregation of the University of Georgia, titled “The Rhetoric of Hate: The Demosthenian Literary Society and its Opposition to the Desegregation of the University of Georgia, 1950-1964.”

Articles published under Tom Dyer in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* shifted from mentions of Confederate ideology to the experience of slaves and then to desegregation. For example, Clarence L. Mohr wrote an article on the experience of a Black pamphleteer in Georgia named Harrison Berry. Mohr analyzed Berry because he believed that “direct testimony about the evolution of black attitudes before and after emancipation is rare but extremely valuable.”³² Berry was a man who supported the slave system in his early papers but later expressed frustration and confusion with his Blackness in a white-dominated society. Berry was one of the few slaves who was educated, yet he struggled with understanding his education in a world where he was not allowed to use it. He considered exchanging his slavery in Georgia for freedom in Liberia, but decided against it because he did not support African colonization. Mohr argued

³⁰ Ibid, 271.

³¹ “Robert A. Pratt,” University of Georgia Department of History, accessed April 10, 2023, <https://history.uga.edu/directory/people/robert-pratt>.

³² Clarence L. Mohr, “Harrison Berry: A Black Pamphleteer in Georgia During Slavery and Freedom,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (1983): 189.

that Berry's "personal indecision aptly symbolized the divided mind of antebellum Negroes on questions of racial separatism."³³ Berry's viewpoint, Mohr argued, was common amongst freed slaves because they were not given the space to explore their education while they were enslaved. This provided a perspective that was not widely published during Reconstruction or Jim Crow. Mohr's decision to write about Berry gave room for the experiences of former slaves within the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* and allowed the Black experience to be written about instead of forgotten.

Two years later, an article by Charles Kirk Pilkington explored the inception of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. The Commission on Interracial Cooperation was founded in early 1919 as an important milestone for southern liberalism. The Commission consisted of white southerners who questioned and disagreed with traditional southern ideals as well as Black southerners who wanted to voice their opinions on the matter. One Black member of the commission commented on the true purpose of the Commission, which, to him, was "the first agency set up to give Negroes and whites a chance to see into each other's hearts, on a large scale."³⁴ While the Commission did not get a lot of physical work done, it was a symbolic step in the progression of the South and allowing Black people a voice and representation. The inclusion of an article like this in the *Quarterly* acknowledged the importance of groups such as the Commission and their history. Articles such as these followed Dyer's guide of being histories of the state that anyone could read and understand.

³³ Ibid, 198.

³⁴ Charles Kirk Pilkington, "The Trials of Brotherhood: The Founding of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (1985): 55.

New Views on Slavery

While violent textbook controversies were apparent in other southern states like West Virginia, Georgia's controversies focused on anti-American and anti-Christian rhetoric. The call for new, more inclusive textbooks was unpopular with America-focused parent groups, but they were popular with Democratic and Black legislators and politicians who wanted to see change in the curriculum in Georgia. There was a change in the information written in textbooks from ignoring slavery to critiquing slavery and its implications and consequences on the Black population. History was rewritten yet again, this time to become more inclusive and tell a fuller truth of slavery rather than the story that was pushed throughout the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era textbooks.

Acknowledging Slavery

One textbook published during this period was *The Georgia History Book* by Lawrence R. Hepburn. Published in 1982, *The Georgia History Book* was mass-produced for students in public schools in Georgia and was produced under the Georgia Board of Education. *The Georgia History Book* features accounts from slaves, a technique that had not been seen before in high school textbooks in Georgia. It provides conflicting arguments to the issue of slavery in antebellum and Reconstruction Georgia, allowing the reader to form their own opinion based on each account rather than persuade the reader to only focus on one argument.

Lawrence Ronald Hepburn was born on September 26, 1940 in the Bronx, New York.³⁵ He received his bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees from Florida State University and

³⁵ Rebecca McCarthy, "Lawrence Hepburn added hard truths to GA history books," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Atlanta: GA), November 29, 2022, <https://www.ajc.com/news/obituaries/larry-hepburn-who-knew-the-best-and-worst-of-ga-history-dies/WHY2NJXRONFMVPO22PJ2FPWN2I/>.

moved to Athens, Georgia, with his wife in 1969. His Ph.D. was in Philosophy and his dissertation focused on learning about religion in secondary social studies classes.³⁶ His interest in the way subjects were taught in social studies classrooms led him to work for the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIIOG) at the University of Georgia, a sector of public service faculty at the university.³⁷ During his time at the University of Georgia, he and his colleagues wrote and edited textbooks for Georgia history classes even though he was not a trained historian. One of the textbooks he authored and edited, *Contemporary Georgia*, was negatively reviewed by the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* in 1989. He wrote a letter to the editor, claiming that his reviewer, Phinzy Spalding, wrote an unfavorable review of the textbook because Spalding did not like the change that was being discussed in the textbook. Hepburn writes that the textbook focused on change in Georgia and that “discomfort with change has stimulated many a good writer to criticize what is going on, but it is hardly a sound basis for a dispassionate review of a work focused on change.”³⁸ He remained passionate about his work until his retirement from the university in 2000 and remained in Athens until his death in November 2022.³⁹

The Georgia History Book credited Georgia’s economic success on slavery that changed the trajectory of the state forever. Hepburn, like others, acknowledged slavery’s impact on taking Georgia “from the poorest state in the Union in the 1790s...to, by the 1850s, become ‘the Empire State of the South,’” a nickname that remained with the state for years.⁴⁰ However, Hepburn made the distinction that supporters of slavery had different views on the institution than its non-supporters. He also questioned the experience of slavery with a section titled “What was slavery

³⁶ Lawrence Ronald Hepburn, “RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AND LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION IN SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES,” (Tallahassee: The Florida State University, 1969).

³⁷ McCarthy.

³⁸ Lawrence R. Hepburn, letter to the editor in “Communications,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3: 701.

³⁹ McCarthy.

⁴⁰ Lawrence R. Hepburn, *The Georgia History Book* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 92.

in antebellum Georgia really like?” rather than make statements of what slaves’ experience was like according to their masters.⁴¹

Hepburn attributed his sources of information on slave life to four sources: two supporters of slavery and two former slaves. His first source, excerpts from Thomas R.R. Cobb’s *An Historical Sketch of Slavery*, claims that slavery is “the only effectual, and therefore cheapest, labor which the Southern States can use in the production of their staples” as to excuse slavery because it is the fiscally sound decision.⁴² Cobb wrote that Black people would be the sole laborers and would always remain a slave to the white men “so long as the profitable planting of cotton, rice, tobacco, and cane” was a part of the Southern economy.⁴³ Cobb not only believed that slavery was necessary because it was economically sound, but also because slavery had benefits to the Black population. Some of these benefits, according to Cobb, were the insurance of food and clothing along with healthcare. There was a strong connection between master and slave that made the master ensure that his slaves were cared for and protected, which was “an indisputable fact.”⁴⁴

Hepburn’s next account of the experience of slaves is from Charles H. Smith’s *A School History of Georgia*. Rather than discuss the economic benefits of slavery, Smith focused on the social benefits of slavery for slaves. Smith claimed that “there was no happier race of people upon the earth than the negroes of the South...they had all the necessaries of life and many of its comforts” and that masters were universally kind to their slaves.⁴⁵ Smith celebrated slavery’s benefits for those enslaved, writing that the race progressed faster than any other race and that

⁴¹ Ibid, 95.

⁴² Ibid, 96.

⁴³ Ibid, 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 96.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 97.

“the relation of master and slaves was one of tenderness and humanity.”⁴⁶ Smith viewed slavery as a mutually beneficial relationship between slave and master because slaves were cared for and masters allowed them to become part of the family.

After two pro-slavery selections, Hepburn turned his focus to accounts from former slaves, which were conducted through oral interviews. Hepburn did include a disclaimer before the slave accounts, a practice he does not include before his pro-slavery accounts, telling the reader that “it is important to keep in mind that the persons being interviewed were very old...also, the people who interviewed them may have allowed their own notions about slave life to influence the way they conducted or recorded the interviews.”⁴⁷ This addition effectively tells the reader that the slave accounts may be dramatized or falsified because of age or political agenda. In the first account, an oral interview of a former slave named Julia (Aunt Sally) Brown, she discussed how she “wasn’t allowed to go around have pleasure,” and that “patty rollers,” or slave patrol, would follow them around to scare them into continuing to do their work.⁴⁸ Julia continued her description on her time as a slave; she “worked hard always” and her interviewer “can’t imagine what a hard time [she] had...I split rails like a man...I worked from sun up to sun down.”⁴⁹

The next slave account is another oral interview with a former slave named George Womble. After his mother was sold to a plantation owner in New Orleans, he was placed in the house of his master, Mr. Robert Ridley, and taught to wait tables. When he was older and stronger, his master required him to pick 300 pounds of cotton daily.⁵⁰ Master Ridley’s required

⁴⁶ Ibid, 97.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 97.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 98.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 98.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 99.

his slaves to work every day unless they were too sick to walk. George then described the process of getting his food for the week, which meant he got two pounds of meat for the entire week and a quart of black molasses. The younger children were fed in a 20-foot trough that contained a mixture of milk and bread. His master made George and his fellow slaves pay their respects to “the newly born white children on the day of their birth...one by one they went through the room and bowed their heads as they passed the bed and said, ‘Young Marster’ or if the baby was a girl they said, ‘Young Mistress.’”⁵¹ George’s account supported Aunt Sally’s account of the amount of lack that they had while in enslavement and the amount of beatings and harsh labor they had to endure at the hands of their masters. The two slave accounts are in sharp contrast to the pro-slavery accounts that Hepburn first included.

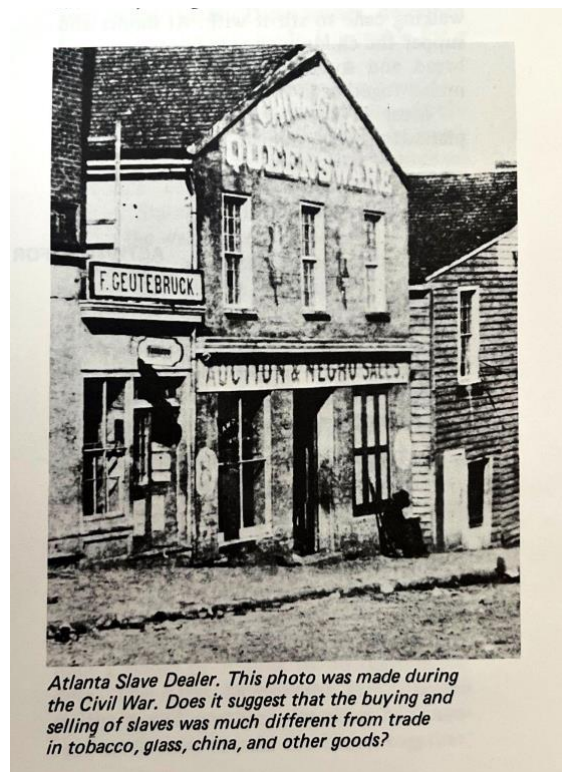


Figure 8: Image from *The Georgia History Book*, pg. 10

⁵¹ Ibid, 100.

Hepburn provided conflicting information on slavery so that the reader can form their own opinion, and while he does have some rhetoric about the potential falsification of slave accounts, he did give them space within the textbook to tell their story from their own perspective. In his discussion around the beginning of Reconstruction in Georgia, Hepburn wrote that “under slavery, blacks had been denied any education, given few responsibilities, and prevented from making decisions for themselves.”⁵² He acknowledged that slaves were not allowed any agency and that they did not have basic needs met like education. This marked a departure from the ignorance of slavery during the Civil Rights Era and turned toward admitting that slaves were not as lucky as pro-slavery supporters said they were. Moreover, the caption under a photograph of a slave dealer in Atlanta compares slaves to other goods, which makes the reader wonder how a human could be treating another human like a random good. The textbook did not revolutionize the discussion around slavery, and it did not change the social culture around slavery, but it did try to start changing the conversation around slavery in textbooks and move past the ignorance of the Civil Rights Era.

In 1991, Kenneth Coleman published *A History of Georgia* as part of a commission for the University of Georgia to prepare a new history of the state for high school students.⁵³ Coleman was born in Devereux, Georgia, in 1916. His family moved to Atlanta in the 1920s where he graduated from Boys High School. He attended the University of Georgia in 1934 and worked with E. Merton Coulter, who influenced him to pursue a career in Georgia history. After a hiatus from academia because of his service in World War II, Coleman completed his doctorate degree in 1953 at the University of Wisconsin. He taught at Georgia State University from 1949 until 1955, when he was appointed to the history faculty at the University of Georgia. Coleman

⁵² Ibid, 116.

⁵³ Jimmy Carter, foreword to *A History of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), xiii.

was a talented editor and spearheaded the most comprehensive state history at the time, *A History of Georgia*. Throughout his time in academia, Coleman published numerous comprehensive works on the history of the state and published articles in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. His prolific editorship and career led him to serve on the Board of Curators of the Georgia Historical Society and he received a 1992 Governor's Award in the Humanities.⁵⁴ Coleman dedicated his life to Georgia history, leaving one-third of his estate to the University of Georgia Press for publications in the field of Georgia studies following his death on November 27, 1999.⁵⁵

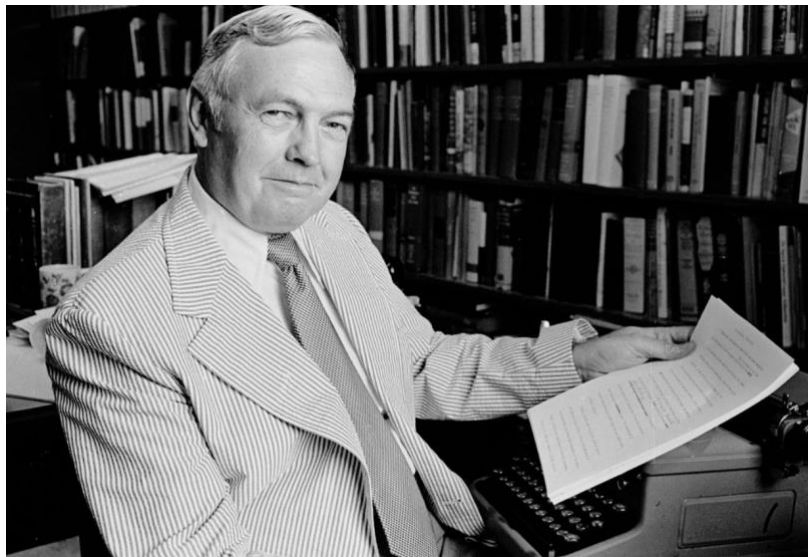


Figure 9: Kenneth Coleman in 1975, courtesy of University of Georgia Photographic Services

A History of Georgia provides a thorough history of the state from the colonial times up until the 1980s and includes a preface that calls on the importance of acknowledging the changes in the way history is written and understood. It calls upon the greatness of past historians of the

⁵⁴ Steve Gurr, "Kenneth Coleman," University System of Georgia Archives, last modified January 16, 2014.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

state, but makes note of the fact that as time and people change, the way of looking at history changes as well, thus understanding that “each generation tends to rewrite history.”⁵⁶ This is the crux of the argument posed in this thesis: the way of teaching and looking at history changes as times change. In former President Jimmy Carter’s foreword to the textbook, he called for a new history of the state because “a tremendous amount had changed” since the 1930s, when the last comprehensive history of the state was written.⁵⁷

The textbook’s discussion on slavery offers a blunt description of the lives of slaves that does not fluff the experience and rather emphasizes the amount of lack that slaves had in their lives. F.N. Boney, the author of Part 3 of *A History of Georgia*, wrote that slaves lacked all civil and political rights due to their place as property of their masters, and addresses the suppression of slaves by summarizing the slave code of 1833, that slaves “could not learn to read and write; they could not own property; they could not testify against whites in court; they could not travel without a pass; they could not bear arms, administer drugs, or work in printing shops. There was no such thing as legal slave marriage or family, and only by special act of the legislature could a slave gain his freedom.”⁵⁸ Rather than try to excuse the harshness of masters or the severity of slavery, Boney provides information that focuses on the experiences of slaves. Previous textbooks tended to focus on explaining why slavery was necessary or provide examples of slaves having good lives, but Boney focuses on the little amount of freedoms that they had. Boney even goes so far as to call slavery a “system designed to control blacks,” which marks an acknowledgement of the system being used to oppress Black people.⁵⁹ There were no economic

⁵⁶ Kenneth Coleman, preface to *A History of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), xv.

⁵⁷ Carter, xiii.

⁵⁸ F.N. Boney, “A Slowly Maturing Culture,” in *A History of Georgia*, ed. Kenneth Coleman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 182.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 183.

or social benefits for slaves; they were meant to be controlled and the system would change to ensure that they would remain enslaved and inferior to white Georgians. While older textbooks claimed that slaves were not the lowest part of society and could even be acquainted with their master's families, *A History of Georgia* writes that slaves were "subordinate, the mudsill of Georgia society."⁶⁰ In this textbook, the lives of slaves are recognized as being filled with pain and little to no freedom. Coleman's oversight and editorship on the textbook demonstrate a desire for a more comprehensive history of the state that includes the entire truth about slavery, not just the parts that appear beneficial to the white population.

Both *A School History of Georgia* and *A History of Georgia* provide a more thorough account of the lives of slaves. While *A School History of Georgia* gave first-hand accounts of pro-slavery supporters and former slaves so the reader can form their own opinion on what slavery was actually like, *A History of Georgia* does not use primary sources but instead gives facts on the lack of freedoms that slaves were forced to live without while they were enslaved. The purpose of *A History of Georgia* was to rewrite the history of the state, one that reckoned with the faults of the past rather than shining a light on the glory of pre-war Georgia. Moreover, *A History of Georgia* sought to acknowledge that the way history is taught changes as times change, and while the histories might be portrayed differently, it is up to the current generation to teach the right history. There was a demand for change that began to be met.

Conclusion

The beginnings of a new academic landscape that questioned and discussed the evils of slavery and gave room for the experience of former slaves in academic journals and textbooks

⁶⁰ Ibid, 183.

defined the period following the Civil Rights Era in Georgia. Although it took years of demands and proposals for legislative change that did not always happen, textbooks finally included a history of slavery that did not include pro-Confederate ideology or show ambivalence toward slavery altogether. Tom Dyer and the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* sought to make history more accessible and understandable to all Georgians, while historians like Kenneth Coleman were commissioned to rewrite a comprehensive history of Georgia that acknowledged the changing times. While it does not erase the mistakes made by previous historians, and it is important to note that these mistakes were made for years, it does mark a period in Georgian histories of slavery that did see change.

Perhaps it was not the most revolutionary time in Georgia history, but historians in the period following the Civil Rights Era did begin to acknowledge the importance of adding in the experience of slaves into textbooks and into academic discourse like the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. It became important for the history of slavery to be included in these forms of media and for the history of slavery to now contain the experience of slaves and the harsh reality of slave codes instead of celebrating slavery in the Jim Crow Era and downplaying slavery in the Civil Rights Era. The change began to acknowledge the horrible evil that was slavery, but still did not fully acknowledge the agency that slaves had in their lives or consequences of slavery on Black Georgians in the present. Some change was made to the discourse, and while it was not change that could rewrite past histories, it did begin to shift the narrative surrounding the history of slavery.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated the change in narrative about the history of slavery written in Georgia textbooks from 1920-1991. The history of slavery remains a highly contested topic, as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis banned public schools from participating in a pilot of the College Board's new Advanced Placement Course on African American Studies because it "significantly lacks educational value."¹ History is an ever-changing subject that changes as society changes and new social norms become prevalent, but it is important to understand how our perception of past histories is different than those who wrote it. It is my hope that this thesis sparked interest and concern with the way that our history is written and how we want to be remembered, but, more importantly, how we choose to write about those who are not able to write about themselves.

Slavery is a difficult subject to teach, as it admits the faults in the foundations of the country and how the young country was able to flourish economically. States are also not required to meet content standards for teaching social studies and United States history, leading to a lack of consensus on a curriculum for slavery.² In 2017, the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit group that researches and monitors hate groups, surveyed over 1,700 social studies teachers and 1,000 high school seniors only to find grave slavery illiteracy – only eight percent of students knew that slavery was the central cause of the Civil War.³ Schools are failing to keep history alive and teach the horrible truths of what the United States was founded on, and it is critical to never forget the history of slavery.

¹ Heyward.

² Nikita Stewart, "'We are committing educational malpractice': Why slavery is mistaught – and worse – in American Schools," *The New York Times Magazine*, August 19, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/19/magazine/slavery-american-schools.html>.

³ Ibid.

There are groups that are yearning to remember the past and make sure we never forget it. The 1619 Project, a long-form journalism endeavor developed by Nikole Hannah-Jones and writers from *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Magazine*, focuses on subjects surrounding slavery. The project began in August 2019, on the 400th anniversary on the arrival of the first recorded Africans to colonial North America.⁴ It seeks to teach about slavery and the founding of the United States, and creator Nikole Hannah-Jones won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for her introductory essay to the project. It was later developed into an anthology of poetry and essays in 2021 and an original series on Hulu in January 2023. While the project has a valiant mission behind it, it has been met by criticism from historians from both sides of the political spectrum who have reservations about the historical accuracy and the claim that slavery was necessary to the beginning of the American Revolution.⁵ Nevertheless, the 1619 Project searches to ensure the teaching of slavery throughout schools in the United States and sheds light on its importance on teaching it to the future generations.

My personal interest in the state of Georgia stems from my time growing up there – phrases that I never thought I would hear were normalized and people did not seem to question why social norms came to be. There was a quiet understanding that people acted a certain way because that was how it was always done, and an even quieter understanding that people not from Georgia would never understand the way that society down there works. On St. Simons Island, where I attended high school, neighborhoods still have the word “plantation” in them as the neighborhoods were built on old plantation grounds. The tabby slave cabins are a tourist

⁴ “The 1619 Project,” *The New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html?mtref=www.google.com&gwh=0541B56B01B85AED08929563C28CC817&gwt=regi&assetType=R EGIWALL>.

⁵ Victoria Bynum, James M. McPherson, James Oakes, Sean Wilentz, Gordon S. Wood, Letter to Dean Baquet, James Bennet, Jake Silverstein, and A.G. Sulzberger, December 4, 2019. <https://www.cbs17.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2021/07/NYT-1619-Letter-Bennet.pdf>.

attraction that nobody seems to talk about. This confused me; with so much history around us, how could nobody really be talking about it? I hope that this thesis has made you question the history that you have been taught and how there is a side to it that is either censored or not included to create a narrative beneficial to the “winners” of history. My hope lies in the current social movements and pushes for change to create a world where education includes the experience of both the winners and the losers.

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