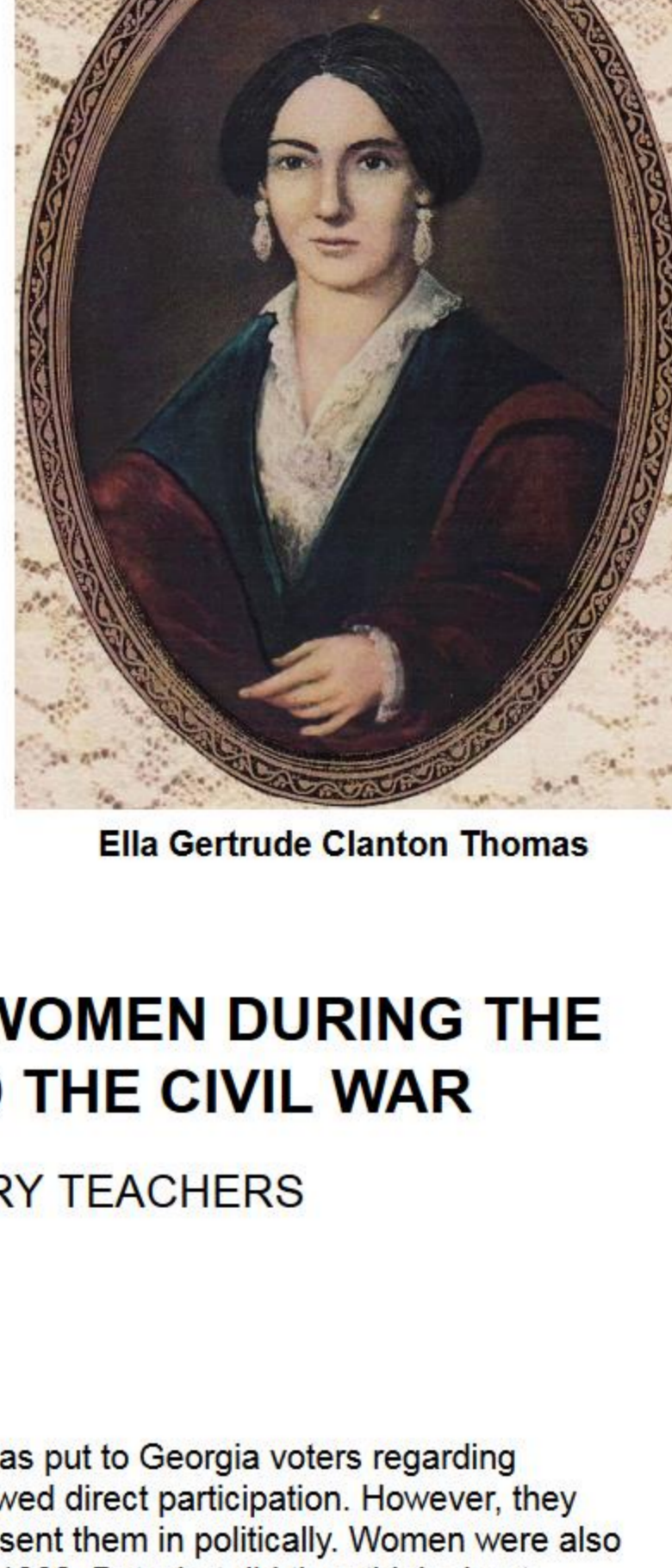


Mary Ann Cobb



Eliza Frances Andrews



Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas

## LOOKING INTO THE LIVES OF WEALTHY WOMEN DURING THE GEORGIA SECESSION DEBATES AND THE CIVIL WAR

### A LESSON PLAN FOR SECONDARY HISTORY TEACHERS

By Sarah Upton

In 1860, women in the United States were not allowed to vote. So, when the vote was put to Georgia voters regarding secession from the union, women—even wealthy planters' wives—were not allowed direct participation. However, they did attempt to influence matters by speaking to the men who were charged to represent them in politically. Women were also present in the gallery to observe the secession debates in Milledgeville, Georgia in 1860. But what did they think about secession? This lesson serves as an initial exploration of these women's views.

This lesson can be understood as part 2 of 2, with both parts focused on Georgia secession from the union. The first part would provide background ideas and accounts of what Georgia men were doing and thinking during the period (see other lessons on the Cobb House Teacher Resources page). These two lessons combined with a few others would lead to a consideration of the Civil War itself.

#### WEALTHY WOMEN DURING THE SECESSION DEBATES: Learning Goals and Guiding Historical Questions

##### Overall Learning Goals:

- Through this lesson students will be come to understand that, not only were there different opinions on the secession question and the possibility of a civil war between the north and the south, but also important differences among states in the south as well as within states.
- Students will also learn that, despite holding a common grievance narrative against northerners, white southerners held different conceptions and ideas about its features. For example, although most white Southerners accepted and defended slavery, not everyone favored secession. As it turned out in Georgia, a small planter class was largely responsible for driving a decision that affected so many others.
- Students will also have the opportunity to practice in understanding how to think historically through analyses of accounts, drawing evidence from them, and building interpretations.

##### Specific Questions Students will Address by Engaging in the Lesson:

- What were Georgia wealthy women doing and thinking leading up to the Georgia secession debates and into the civil war?
- What were other Georgia women thinking?
- Were there differences in their ideas and beliefs? If so, why?
- Why were the other more numerous classes of women during this period under-represented in the conversations and debates about secession? How can we explain this? What effect did it have on the debates?

#### LIST OF MATERIALS AND RESOURCES (Included at end of this lesson)

- Primary sources: Excerpts from letters and diaries.
- Secondary sources: Excerpts about the lives of the women's focus.

### Investigating the Past, Learning American History: A Research-Based Approach to Lesson Design

The approach and design of this lesson plan is rooted in several decades of research on how students learn history. It has been research for history teachers to tell students the story of the past as a means of getting them to reproduce what they hear. However, research consistently presents evidence that such an approach seldom succeeds. Simply put, students seem to quickly forget what they hear.

In studying how students learn history more deeply, researchers have found that students are far more likely to understand the past and therefore reproduce their understandings later if they have authentic opportunities to investigate the past themselves (i.e., to do history). As a result, history teachers who structure lessons around questions, accounts (firsthand and secondary), and investigations into those accounts as a means of answering the questions posed are far more likely to help students attain strong understandings of the past.

This lesson is designed to draw from the research by structuring its sequencing in an investigative way. It poses crucial questions for students to address, invites them to dig into the accounts that might help provide answers to those questions, draw evidence from them, and make claims about what the past means and what happened back then. Such claims represent students' growing understandings of history. By "doing history" themselves, students come to understand it much more deeply and are prone then to remember what they learn.

#### Lesson Sequence



**Suggested Timeframe for the Lesson:** One 90-minute class period, or two 50-minute periods

##### Introducing the Lesson:

Open up a discussion with students asking:  
What do you imagine it was like being a woman in the pre-Civil War years? How about the plantation woman? The small farm woman? The slave woman?

Follow with what they think women were doing and/or thinking Georgia seceding from the union and the Georgia secession debates in 1860.  
Allow no more than 5 minutes for discussion/response time.

Ask students to write in their notebooks a paragraph summarizing their personal opinion on what women were doing and/or thinking. (Students will keep these paragraphs to compare their initial thoughts to their thoughts after examining documents and class discussion.)

Point out that they will be checking out their "conjectures" against what they actually will learn from the correspondences of selected women's lives. Students will investigate their initial conjectures and learn and refine them by drawing support from details and ideas taken from accounts of the period they will be reading.

##### Conducting the Investigation:

Divide the students into approximately 6 groups total:

- 2 Groups will examine documents from or about **Mary Ann Cobb**
- 2 Groups will examine documents from or about **Eliza Frances Andrews**
- 2 Groups will examine documents from or about **Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas**

##### Note to Teachers:

The purpose of dividing the students into 2 groups for each woman is to allow for additional interpretation of each woman.

Students will spend 20-30 minutes examining the documents to get a better idea of what these Georgian women were thinking and doing.  
Students will record their ideas and the evidence they find about the women's lives and thoughts on the PAiRe Recording Sheet provided below, one sheet for each student.

##### PAiRe Guide Recording Sheet:

	<b>Identify:</b> What is this document? When was it written?	<b>Attribute:</b> Who is the "author"? What do you know about the Author? Why did the author create this?	<b>Perspective:</b> What is the Authors' perspective? What is he/she trying to communicate? To whom? Why?	<b>Reliability:</b> How might this account or image and the perspective it contains be used to address the questions you are asking or being asked? Is it reliable evidence? Why or why not?
Document 1:				
Document 2:				
Document 3:				
Document 4:				

Primary Source Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

##### Concluding the Lesson:

Bring students back together and allow them to discuss what they read and how that either supports or changes their initial thoughts about what Georgia women were doing and/or thinking around the time of the Georgia secession.  
Allow about 20 minutes for discussion.

##### Note to Teachers:

The goal of this discussion is to not only to allow students rethink their initial conjectures about Georgia women by having read these firsthand and secondary accounts but also to help them understand that, although these 3 women were all from the same elite planter class, they each had different about secession and the Civil War.

During the discussion, point out the similarities and differences between these women. Also point out that these are only 3 accounts from wealthy, planter-class women. Missing are the voices of different classes, including yeoman farmer women and slave women.  
If time, engage the question of why these other voices might be missing and would there be some way to investigate their ideas and thoughts as well.

#### Assessing Student Learning

##### Short Essay Assignment

Let the students know that they are responsible for writing a short essay summary about the similarities and differences in these women and how there were factors in the women's views of secession and the Civil War. Students are looking for evidence from our discussions and the documents themselves that they examined to support their views and interpretations.

##### Guidelines:

The essay should be 1-2 pages. Students will have the remainder of class time to begin and finish their essays if possible. If some students do not finish the essay, they are to take the assignment as homework and turn it in the following class period.  
Instruct the students that the point is not to write whether they agree or disagree with the way these women lived and their beliefs. Instead, students should

- focus on writing about the similarities and differences
  - with supporting evidence
  - show how the evidence changed or supported their initial conjectures of what women were doing and thinking during this time.
- Score of 5—if the students meet all of the above goals.
  - Score of 3—if the student does not include enough supporting evidence or does not write about how their initial opinions were changed or supported.
  - Score of 1—if the student does not include any supporting evidence they will score a 1

##### Note to Teachers:

I have left gaps in the scoring system for interpretation purposes. The point of this writing assignment is not have all the students give the same answer. The point is to see that students have understood the idea that there are different accounts with different explanations of these women.

I consider this a legitimate way to assess, since I am trying to teach students how to think historically without necessarily demanding that they come up with ONE common understanding or interpretation. So, a more open but evidence-accountable rubric is justifiable here.

#### Student Resource Packet

##### Note to Teachers about these readings:

The readings are long and complex, complete with arcane language common to the period. Teachers may want to ease these readings, select smaller portions, edit them somewhat for clarity, and substitute difficult words with more simple synonyms to lift the reading burden for students.

##### Mary Ann Cobb

- Document 1a: Excerpts from the "Mary Ann Cobb in Confederate Athens" article from the *The Georgia Review*, 22(3), 360-369 by Kenneth Coleman (Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41396480>)

##### Mary Ann Cobb in Confederate Athens

By KENNETH COLEMAN

MARY Ann Lamar was born on her father's plantation near Milledgeville and grew up there. At the age of seventeen she married Howell Cobb of Athens. In the next twenty-five years (1835-1860) twelve children were born to the Cobbs but four died in infancy. During this period Howell Cobb's political career included membership in Congress (Speaker of the House of Representatives, 1849-1851), Governor of Georgia, 1851-1853, and Secretary of the Treasury, 1857-1860. The Cobb family lived in Athens, made frequent and long visits to Macon, and maintained official residences at least part-time in Milledgeville and Washington. Thus Mary Ann was used to frequent moves, long separations from her husband, and running a sizeable household establishment.

By the time that war broke out in 1861, Mary Ann Cobb had become a good manager; running a household with eight children and a dozen servants tends to develop managerial skills. She had the respect of her husband, children, and neighbors. She was very close to her unmarried brother John Basil Lamar (1813-1862), who lived in Macon and managed the family plantations in Baldwin and Sumter counties. It was in Lamar's Macon home, called "The Bear's Den," that the Cobbs frequently spent Christmas and made a second home. A brother-in-law, Professor Williams Rutherford of the University in Athens, was Mary Ann's confidant on religion and other personal matters in the absence of her husband. The relation between Mary Ann and Howell Cobb was close, and she habitually told her absent husband everything she thought and did, frequently asking his advice. Most of the excerpts of Mrs. Cobb's letters quoted below are letters to her husband.

- Document 1b: The following is from a letter by Mary Ann Cobb to the editor of the *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 1863, referring to an operation in which horses were seized by a Confederate Garrison for war purposes.

After joy cometh sorrow this time. There is a clamor in town because General Cobb's horses have been relieved. ... You know that it is not pride that makes me desire to hold these horses, but Easter. It is only because they were raised by my [dear] brother and were his pride that I am attached to them, but I am willing to part with them cheerfully for my country's [the South] good, if you say so. I would prefer their being used by you and my sons, if they have to go. ... You know it is not my nature to enjoy anything that will cause contention. If I cannot enjoy a pair of horses to which I am clearly entitled in the sight of God and all just men, in consideration of the misery and the sacrifices I have been called to make during this [Civil] war, then I say, go. I will not have them.

With the present state of feeling in town I cannot consent to drive our horses thro town as heretofore. And if my keeping them is to complicate and harass you, I will give them up to you and if I live thro the war the day may come when the people of Georgia will think that I am entitled to a fine pair of horses of our own raising for past services if not for present services, sacrifices and hardships. ... If my countrymen and countrywomen feel that they are injured by my horses being released, they shall have the satisfaction of knowing that General Cobb's wife is still ready to make sacrifices to save her country from Yankee rule. This is the first privilege I have enjoyed since the war began, and even this is denied me by my country people. And in the spirit of St. Paul if my liberty maketh another man to offend I will not exercise that liberty or privilege.

Under such a pressure I cannot hold such a pair of horses as ours... I will not drive them again. My stay in Athens will be very short. Next year you can get me a one-horse carriage and buy a mule for me. Anything for peace and to "avoid, the appearance of evil."

##### Eliza Frances Andrews

- Document 2a: Excerpts from the "Eliza Frances Andrews (1840-1931)" article from the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* by S. Kittrell Rushing (Retrieved from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/eliza-frances-andrews-1840-1931>)

Eliza Frances Andrews was a writer, newspaper reporter, editor, columnist, social critic, scientist, and educator. By the time of her death in 1931 in Rome (GA), Andrews had written three novels, more than a dozen scientific articles on botany, two internationally recognized botany textbooks, and dozens of articles, columns, and reports on topics ranging from politics to environmental issues. She was best known for her *War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl*, 1864-1865.

Andrews's father was an ardent Unionist and believed strongly that secession was a mistake. He was a supporter of slavery, and much of the Andrews family fortune came from slave labor and cotton farming. He felt that leaving the Union and an ensuing war would put the family's holdings at risk. Andrews and her four brothers disagreed strongly with their father, believing instead that secession was the only way to protect their way of life.

- Document 2b: Excerpts from *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl*, 1864-1865 (Retrieved from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/gpn/andrews/andrews57>)

The more prominent families all over the country knew each other by reputation, if not by actual contact, and to be a member of the privileged few in one community was an [unofficial] title to membership in all. To use a modern phrase, we were intensely "class conscious" and this brought about a solidarity of feeling and sentiment almost comparable to that created by family ties. Narrow and provincial we [southerners] may have been, in some respects... it is doubtful whether the world has ever produced a state of society more rich in all the resources for a thoroughly wholesome, happy, and joyous life than existed among the privileged "4,000" under the peculiar civilization of the Old South—a civilization which has served its purpose in the evolution of the race and passed away forever. So completely has it vanished that the very language in which we used to express ourselves is becoming obsolete. Many of our modern words, among them a name scarcely less dear than "mother," are a dead language. Others have a strangely archaic sound to household ears. When the diary was written, women were still regarded as "females," and it was even permissible to have a "female acquaintance," or a "male friend," when distinction of sex was necessary, without being relegated forthwith to the ranks of the [vulgar]. The words "lady" and "gentleman" had not yet been brought into disrepute, and strangers of all, to modern ears, the word "rebel" was so bitterly resented as casting a stigma on the Southern cause, is used throughout the diary as a term of pride and affectionate endearment.

It is for the sake of the light it throws on the inner life of this unique society at the period of its dissolution—a period so momentous in the history of our country—that this contemporaneous record from the pen of a young woman in private life, is given to the public. The uncompromising attitude of the writer's father against secession removed him, of course, from all participation in the political and official life of the Confederacy.

...the spirit of chattel slavery was in the race, possibly from its prehuman stage, and through all the hundreds of thousands of years that it has been painfully traveling from that humble beginning toward the still far-off goal of the superhuman, is given to the public. It has ever awakened to a sense of the moral obliquity of the practice till its industrial condition had reached a stage in which that system was less profitable than wage slavery. Then, as [morality]... follow[s] closely the line of economic necessity, the conscience of those nations which had adopted the new industrialism began to awaken to a perception of the immorality of chattel slavery. Our Southern States, being still in the agricultural stage, on account of our practical monopoly of the world's chief textile staple [cotton], were the last of the great civilized nations to find chattel slavery less profitable than wage slavery, and hence the "great moral crusade" of the North against the perverse and unregenerate South. It was a pure case of economic determinism, which means that our great moral conflict reduces itself... to a question of dollars and cents, though the real issue was so [hidden] by other considerations that we of the South honestly believe to this day that we were fighting for States Rights, while the North is equally honest in the conviction that it was engaged in a... struggle to free the slave.

##### Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas

- Document 3a: Excerpts from the "Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas (1834-1907)" article from the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* by Katherine E. Rohrer (Retrieved from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/ella-gertrude-clanton-thomas-1834-1907>)

Ella Gertrude Clanton, known as Gertrude, was born in 1834 just outside Augusta in Columbia County to Mary Luke and Turner Clanton. Her father, a Virginia transplant, had established a new life in Georgia as a prominent planter and member of the state legislature. As one of the wealthiest planters in the state (his estate in 1864 was valued at an impressive 2.5 million Confederate dollars), he was able to offer his seven children lives of luxury and privilege. In her journal, Thomas describes a youth spent attending parties in the latest fashions, visiting friends and family across the region, and reading and writing.

Thomas was still a young woman in 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War, which permanently erased privilege and comfort from her life. Although she was a passionate Confederate nationalist at the onset of the war, she concluded that the South did not have a viable chance of victory. Nonetheless, she remained loyal to the Confederacy. She directed the Augusta Ladies' Aid Society, Southern States, being still in the agricultural stage, on account of our practical monopoly of the world's chief textile staple [cotton], were the last of the great civilized nations to find chattel slavery less profitable than wage slavery, and hence the "great moral crusade" of the North against the perverse and unregenerate South. It was a pure case of economic determinism, which means that our great moral conflict reduces itself... to a question of dollars and cents, though the real issue was so [hidden] by other considerations that we of the South honestly believe to this day that we were fighting for States Rights, while the North is equally honest in the conviction that it was engaged in a... struggle to free the slave.

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- Document 3b: Excerpt from Thomas' diary, in *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 272-275. Recorded by Thomas in 1865. (Retrieved from <http://susannah.org/sources/items/show/131>)

Here she discusses her struggles with her family's way of life near the close of the Civil War.

May 29, 1865. Out of all our old house servants not one remains except Patsy and a little boy, Frank. We have one of our servants Uncle Jim to take Daniel's place as driver and butler and a much more efficient person he proves to be. Nancy has been cooking since Tamah left. On last Wednesday I hired a woman to do the washing. Thursday I expected Nancy to iron but she was sick. In the same way she was sick the week before when there was ironing to do. I said nothing but told Patsy to get breakfast. After it was over I assisted her in wiping the breakfast dishes, a thing I never remember to have done more than once or twice in my life. I then thoroughly cleaned up the sitting room and parlour.... In the afternoon I went in the ironing room and in to see Nancy. The clothes were all piled upon a table, the flies swarming over them. The room looking as if it had not been cleaned up in several weeks. Nancy's room was in just the same state. I asked her "if she was not well enough to sprinkle some of the clothes?" "No," she replied, "she was not well enough to do anything." Said I, "Nancy do you expect I can afford to pay you wages in your situation, support your two children and then have you sick as much as you are?" She made no reply and I came in.

The next morning after Patsy had milked the cow & had fire made in the kitchen, she [Nancy] volunteered to cook breakfast—immediately after breakfast as I was writing by the window Turner directed my attention to Nancy with her two children, Hannah and Jessy, going out of the gate. I told him to enquire "where she was going?" She had expected to leave with flying colours but was compelled to tell a falsehood for she replied, "I will be back directly." I knew at once that she surprised when I went into her room sometime afterwards to find that all of her things had been removed. I was again engaged in housework most of the morning....

Susan, Kate's nurse, Ma's most trusted servant, her advisor, right hand woman and best liked house servant has left her. I am under too many obligations to Susan to have harsh feelings toward her. During six confinements Susan has been with me, the best of servants, rendering the most efficient help. To Ma she has always been invaluable and in case of sickness there was no one like Susan. Her husband Anthony was one of the first to leave the Cumming Plantation and invited others to do the same. I expect he influences Susan, who has often heard Pa say that in case of a revolt among Negroes he thought that Susan would prove a rival leader. Aunt Vilet the cook a very excellent one at that left Sunday night. She was a plantation servant during her young days and another favorite of Ma's. Palmer the driver left the same morning with Susan, remained longer than anyone expected that he would. He is quite a Beau Brummell as he gallants a coloured demoiselle or walks up the street with his cigar in his mouth.... Yesterday numbers of the negro women some of them quite black were promenadeing up the streets with black face veil shading them from the embrowning rays of a sun under whose influence they had worked all their life.... On Thursday Rev. Dr. Finch of the Federal Army addressed the citizens on the subject of their late slaves and Saturday addressed the Negroes at the parade ground on their duty. I think now they have the Negroes free they don't know what to do with them....

June 12, 1865. I must confess to you my journal that I do most heartily dislike Yankees, Negroes and everything connected with them. The theme has been sung in my hearing until it is a perfect abomination—I positively instinctively shut my ears when I hear the hated subject mentioned and right gladly would I be willing never to place my eyes upon another as long as I live. Everything is entirely reversed. I feel no interest in them whatever and hope I never will....

##### Additional Sources:

- To find a collection of Primary Sources dealing with pre-Civil War history in the south, some of which offer accounts by women and slaves click <http://susannah.org/sources/items/browse?collection=1&page=4>
- Andrews, Eliza Frances. *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865. Electronic Edition*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997. (Retrieved from <http://docsouth.unc.edu/gpn/andrews/andrews57>)
- Andrews, Eliza Frances, and S. Kittrell Rushing. *In Journal of a Georgia Woman, 1870-1872*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002.
- Burt, Virginia L. *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas 1848-1889*. (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
- Curry, Carolyn N. *Suffer and Grow Strong: The Life of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas 1834-1907*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2014.
- Mays, E. (1940). "The Celebrated Mrs. Howell Cobb." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 24(2), 117-123. (Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40576697>)
- Mays, E. (1940). "The making of an ante-bellum lady—Mrs. Howell Cobb." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 24(1), 1-21. (Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40576680>)

##### At the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library (University of Georgia):

- Cobb, Howell. *Howell Cobb to his son, February 10, 1861*. Letter. From the University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. *The Howell Cobb Papers*. Box 44, Folder 37.
- Cobb, Mary Ann. *Mary Ann Cobb to Howell Cobb, January 18, 1861*. Letter. From the University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. *The Howell Cobb Family Papers*. Box 44, Folder 33.

## PAIRe Guide Recording Sheet:

<p>Place name of document or title for each one you read in this column below.</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> What is this document? When was it written?</p>	<p><b>Attribute:</b> Who is the “author”? What do you know about the Author? Why did the author create this?</p>	<p><b>Perspective:</b> What is the Authors’ perspective? What is he/she trying to communicate? To whom? Why?</p>	<p><b>Reliability:</b> How might this account or image and the perspective it contains be used to address the questions you are asking or being asked? Is it reliable evidence? Why or why not?</p>
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By KENNETH COLEMAN

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Andrews's father was an ardent Unionist and believed strongly that secession was a mistake. He was a supporter of slavery, and much of the Andrews family fortune came from slave labor and cotton farming. He felt that leaving the Union and an ensuing war would put the family's holdings at risk. Andrews and her four brothers disagreed strongly with their father, believing instead that secession was the only way to protect their way of life.

#### 4. Document 2b: Excerpts from *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*. ([Link to full document](#))

The more prominent families all over the country knew each other by reputation, if not by actual contact, and to be a member of the privileged few in one community was an [unofficial] title to membership in all. To use a modern phrase, we were intensely "class conscious" and this brought about a solidarity of feeling and sentiment almost comparable to that created by family ties. Narrow and provincial we [southerners] may have been, in some respects, ... it is doubtful whether the world has ever produced a state of society more rich in all the resources for a thoroughly wholesome, happy, and joyous life than existed among the privileged "4,000" under the peculiar civilization of the Old South – a civilization which has served its purpose in the evolution of the race and passed away forever. So completely has it vanished that the very language in which we used to express ourselves is becoming obsolete. Many of our household words, among them a name scarcely less dear than "mother," are a dead language. Others have a strangely archaic sound to modern ears. When the diary was written, women were still regarded as "females," and it was even permissible to have a "female acquaintance," or a "male friend," when distinction of sex was necessary, without being relegated forthwith to the ranks of the [vulgar]. The words "lady" and "gentleman" had not yet been brought into disrepute, and strangest of all, to modern ears, the word "rebel," now so bitterly resented as casting a stigma on the Southern cause, is used throughout the diary as a term of pride and affectionate endearment.

It is for the sake of the light it throws on the inner life of this unique society at the period of its dissolution - a period so momentous in the history of our country - that this contemporaneous record from the pen of a young woman in private life, is given to the public. The uncompromising attitude of the writer's father against secession removed him, of course, from all participation in the political and official life of the Confederacy.

... the spirit of chattel slavery was in the race, possibly from its prehuman stage, and through all the hundreds of thousands of years that it has been painfully traveling from that humble beginning toward the still far-off goal of the superhuman, not one branch of it has ever awakened to a sense of the moral obliquity of the practice till its industrial condition had reached a stage in which that system was less profitable than wage slavery. Then, as [morality]... follow[s] closely the line of economic necessity, the conscience of those nations which had adopted the new industrialism began to awaken to a perception of the immorality of chattel slavery. Our Southern States, being still in the agricultural stage, on account of our practical monopoly of the world's chief textile staple [cotton], were the last of the great civilized nations to find chattel slavery less profitable than wage slavery, and hence the "great moral crusade" of the North against the perverse and unregenerate South. It was a pure case of economic determinism, which means that our great moral conflict reduces itself ... to a question of dollars and cents, though the real issue was so [hidden] by other considerations that we of the South honestly believe to this day that we were fighting for States Rights, while the North is equally honest in the conviction that it was engaged in a ... struggle to free the slave.

**5. Document 3a: Excerpts from the "Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas (1834-1907)" article from the *New Georgia Encyclopedia* by Katherine E. Rohrer ([Link to full document](#))**

Ella Gertrude Clanton, known as Gertrude, was born in 1834 just outside Augusta in Columbia County to Mary Luke and Turner Clanton. Her father, a Virginia transplant, had established a new life in Georgia as a prominent planter and member of the state legislature. As one of the wealthiest planters in the state (his estate in 1864 was valued at an impressive 2.5 million Confederate dollars), he was able to offer his seven children lives of luxury and privilege. In her journal, Thomas describes a youth spent attending parties in the latest fashions, visiting friends and family across the region, and reading and writing.

Thomas was still a young woman in 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War, which permanently erased privilege and comfort from her life. Although she was a passionate Confederate nationalist at the onset of the war, she soon concluded that the South did not have a viable chance of victory. Nonetheless, she remained loyal to the Confederacy. She directed the Augusta Ladies' Aid Society, worked in military hospitals, sewed Confederate uniforms, and made cartridges for military use. By the war's end, however, Thomas had adopted a defeatist attitude, reluctantly beginning to accept what a southern defeat would mean for her and her region.

As was the case for virtually all planter-class families of the South, defeat meant the collapse not only of the Thomas family's way of life but also of the southern class structure. Thomas and her family experienced economic hardship during Reconstruction; the family declared bankruptcy and suffered multiple foreclosures, a source of great humiliation for Thomas. The family's financial plight forced her to seek employment as an elementary school teacher, something that women of her class would have never considered before the war.

**6. Document 3b: Excerpt from Thomas' diary, in *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 272-275. Recorded by Thomas in 1865.* ([Link to full document](#))**

Here she discusses her struggles with her family's way of life near the close of the Civil War.

May 29, 1865. Out of all our old house servants not one remains except Patsey and a little boy, Frank. We have one of our servants Uncle Jim to take Daniel's place as driver and butler and a much more efficient person he proves to be. Nancy has been cooking since Tamah left. On last Wednesday I hired a woman to do the washing. Thursday I expected Nancy to iron but she was sick. In the same way she was sick the week before when there was ironing to do. I said nothing but told Patsey to get breakfast. After it was over I assisted her in wiping the breakfast dishes, a thing I never remember to have done more than once or twice in my life. I then thoroughly cleaned up the sitting room and parlour.... In the afternoon I went in the ironing room and in to see Nancy. The clothes were all piled upon a table, the flies swarming over them. The room looking as if it had not been cleaned up in several weeks. Nancy's room was in just the same state. I asked her "if she was not well enough to sprinkle some of the clothes." "No" she replied, "she was not well enough to do anything." Said I, "Nancy do you expect I can afford to pay you wages in your situation, support your two children and then have you sick as much as you are?" She made no reply and I came in.

The next morning after Patsey had milked the cow & had fire made in the kitchen, she [Nancy] volunteered to cook breakfast—Immediately after breakfast as I was writing by the window Turner directed my attention to Nancy with her two children, Hannah and Jessy, going out of the gate. I told him to enquire "where she was going." She had expected to leave with flying colours but was compelled to tell a falsehood for she replied, "I will be back directly." I knew at once that she surprised when I went into her room sometime afterwards to find that all of her things had been removed. I was again engaged in housework most of the morning....

Susan, Kate's nurse, Ma's most trusty servant, her advisor, right hand woman and best liked house servant has left her. I am under too many obligations to Susan to have harsh feelings toward her. During six confinements Susan has been with me, the best of servants, rendering the most efficient help. To Ma she has always been invaluable and in case of sickness there was no one like Susan. Her husband Anthony was one of the first to leave the Cumming Plantation and incited others to do the same. I expect he Influences Susan, altho have often heard Pa say that in case of a revolt among Negroes he thought that Susan would prove a ringleader. Aunt Vilet the cook a very excellent one at that left Sunday night. She was a plantation servant during her young days and another favorite of Ma's. Palmer the driver left the same morning with Susan, remained longer than anyone expected that he would. He is quite a Beau Brummell as he gallants a coloured demoiselle or walks up the street with his cigar in his mouth... Yesterday numbers of the negro women some of them quite black were promenading up the streets with black lace veil shading them from the embrowning rays of a sun under whose influence they had worked all their life.... On Thursday Rev Dr Finch of the Federal Army addressed the citizens on the subject of their late slaves and Saturday addressed the Negroes at the parade ground on their duty. I think now they have the Negroes free they don't know what to do with them....

June 12, 1865. I must confess to you my journal that I do most heartily dispise Yankees, Negroes and everything connected with them. The theme has been sung in my hearing until it is a perfect abomination—I positively instinctively shut my ears when I hear the hated subject mentioned and right gladly would I be willing never to place my eyes upon another as long as I live. Everything is entirely reversed. I feel no interest in them whatever and hope I never will. ...



### Additional Sources:

- To find a collection of Primary Sources dealing with pre-Civil War history in the south, some of which offer accounts by women and slaves, click [here](#)
- Andrews, Eliza Frances. *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*. Electronic Edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997. ([Link to full document](#))
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### At the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library (University of Georgia):

- Cobb, Howell. *Howell Cobb to his son, February 10, 1861*. Letter. From the University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The Howell Cobb Family Papers. Box 44, Folder 37.
- Cobb, Mary Ann. *Mary Ann Cobb to Howell Cobb, January 18, 1861*. Letter. From the University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The Howell Cobb Family Papers. Box 44, Folder 33.