

# The Gate City

## A Brief Sketch of the EARLY BEGINNINGS Terminus, Marthasville, Atlanta

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### The Early Beginnings

#### Terminus – A town of Wonderful Promise

Before railroads traversed this sparsely settled country various humble manufactures were carried on, and a busy trade was kept up with the seaports. After awhile the railroads changed all this, and the little hamlet, then almost unknown, came to the front, first as Terminus, then as Marthasville, and then as Atlanta. A period of flush times and disorder followed. In those days there was little respect for law in a new settlement. The sheriff was an insignificant figure. Each man in the community regulated his own affairs, and frequently attempted to regulate those of his neighbors. Even under these unfavorable circumstances the place became known far and wide as a town of wonderful promise. People flocked here from every part of the country, and the village grew into a town, and the town soon became a city.

### “This City, the backbone of the Confederacy”

#### Rising from the Ashes – Atlanta, the Representative City of the NEW SOUTH

Then came the quickening agitation of a gigantic civil war. The history of this epoch has never been written. We have the records of battles and sieges, and even the story of Sherman's famous march to the sea, but there is nothing in print that deals fully and accurately with Atlanta's part in the war between the States. For years the city was one of the most important strong-holds of the Southern Confederacy. It was a rallying point for the enthusiastic volunteers and raw levies. It was a vast depot, where the most valuable munitions of war were deposited. It was a center of manufacturing, a city of hospitals, a collection of barracks, a shelter for thousands of refugees-in short, it was the backbone of the Confederacy. How the city was peopled, how the inhabitants lived, the character of their occupations and amusements during the war, are matters not treated by our historians. Even the siege has never been described, except from an outside military standpoint. The besiegers, who were sending a fiery rain of shot and shell into the beleaguered city, have recorded their observations and reflections, but the sufferings and the heroic endurance of the people inside of the stoutly defended breastworks have never been made public. History is equally silent concerning the events accompanying the Federal occupation of the place. The destruction of the city, when it was abandoned by General Sherman, the return of the Confederates and the exiled citizens, and the condition of affairs during the stirring days of reconstruction, are topics heretofore almost untouched. But, apart from these exciting and romantic points of interest, an account of the rise of Atlanta from her ashes, and her social, educational, religious, political, commercial and industrial development should be of interest to every student of political economy, every business man, and patriotic citizen. It is not claiming too much to say that Atlanta is everywhere regarded as the leading representative city of the New South. This is the opinion entertained by the outside world, and it is well founded. No place in the South is more thoroughly American. Here all sections meet, fraternize and unite in one harmonious whole. Nowhere in the land is there to be found a greater degree of toleration in thought, speech and conduct. All shades of religious and political opinion exist here, and sectional prejudices are entirely unknown. That such a condition of affairs did not characterize our past is only too well known. Perhaps the causes underlying this

remarkable change will be revealed to the thoughtful reader of these pages. In the days of slavery Atlanta was naturally identified with the Old South. Even then, however, her advantages as a distributing point, and her proximity to the coal and iron fields, tempted enterprising capitalists to engage in various manufacturing ventures. The conditions were unfavorable. We were on the eve of war. The idea that cotton was king controlled the popular mind. Slave labor did not mix well with free or skilled labor. We were a community of free traders, and it was the general belief that the Southern States would forever remain purely agricultural commonwealths. The rude lessons of the war revolutionized the ideas of our people. The new city, built upon the site of the old Atlanta, was largely built by new men with new ideas, new hopes, and new ambitions. Honest differences of opinion were respected, diversified industries were encouraged, and geographical lines were ignored. Immigrants from all quarters were welcomed, and gradually all were fused together in one solid body, knowing no North, South, East, or West, and all pulling together for the common good. Practically, this was a co-operative community during its rehabilitation. It was enough to announce that the public interest demanded a certain thing: Immediately there was a spontaneous movement. Work and money were forthcoming, and the want was supplied. So much for the policy of pulling together. It must be admitted however, that long before anyone dreamed of the New South, there were far-seeing and sagacious men, who predicted great things for Atlanta. As early as 1845 John C. Calhoun, with his usual remarkable foresight, made some very significant remarks in the Southwestern Convention, held that year at Memphis. Mr. Calhoun said : "What, then, is needed to complete a cheap, speedy and safe intercourse, between the valley of the Mississippi and the Southern Atlantic coast is a good system of railroads. For this purpose the nature of the intervening country affords extraordinary advantages. Such is its formation from the course of the Tennessee, Cumberland and Alabama rivers, and the termination of the various chains of mountains, that all the railroads which have been projected or commenced, although each has looked only to its local interest, must necessarily unite at a point in De Kalb county, in the State of Georgia, called Atlanta, not far from the village of Decatur, so as to constitute one entire system of roads, having a mutual interest each in the other, instead of isolated rival roads." When Mr. Calhoun made this prediction Atlanta had only one railroad and a population of one hundred souls. Her tremendous strides since that time bear testimony to the wonderful prescience of the great South Carolinian. Viewed from every standpoint, the record of Atlanta's onward march has a peculiar fascination. It blends the romance of pioneer life with the " pomp, pride and circumstance of glorious war," and the brightest achievements of a peaceful civilization. If " history is philosophy teaching by ex-ample," this volume needs no apology for its appearance. The story of the " **Gate City** " will speak for itself.