



- *Businesswoman*
- *Philanthropist*

TIMELINE

1894 - Marries Joseph Brown Whitehead, who later co-founds Coca-Cola Bottling Company

1906 – Husband Joseph dies of pneumonia

1913 - Marries Arthur Kelly Evans, retired Canadian Army Colonel

1934 - Appointed to Board of Directors of Coca-Cola Bottling Company

Lettie Pate Evans

1872–1953

Inducted 1998

Letitia Pate Whitehead Evans—or Lettie, as she was known—served on the Board of Directors of Coca-Cola's major bottler for nearly two decades. The Atlanta-based company experienced extraordinary growth in those years, and as it prospered Lettie shared her good fortune serving humanity in wise and visionary ways.

Born in 1872 into one of Virginia's first families and educated at private schools there, Lettie married an attorney named Joseph Brown Whitehead in 1894. They settled in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where their two sons, Joseph Jr. and Conkey Pate, were born.
Coca-Cola Annual Report

In 1899 Joseph Sr. and a fellow attorney conceived of expanding the market for an increasingly popular soda fountain drink by bottling it. Before long they secured a contract granting them exclusive rights to bottle and sell Coca-Cola throughout most of the United States.

The Whiteheads moved to Atlanta to develop the new bottling venture. But in 1906—well before the potential of his extraordinary enterprise had been realized—Joseph died of pneumonia. Lettie was only 34 years old, but she assumed complete control of the family's business interests, overseeing the growth of the bottling firm while serving as chairperson of the Whitehead Holding Company and president of the Whitehead Realty Company.

“Great works of Christian charity do not come out of the blue like a stroke of lightning. They require the inspiration of a gentle and guiding hand. Mrs. Evans made it her business to go about the world doing good. She believed in seeing the result of her material benefactions and in feeling the pulsations of the intangible ones.”

- Hughes Spalding, attorney and friend

Lettie sought counsel and advice from trusted friends but she did not delegate her responsibilities, and in subsequent years the businesses

1945 - Creates Lettie Pate Evans Foundation

1953 - Wills remainder of estate to her foundation

1998 – Georgia Tech renames administration building in honor

became increasingly successful. Robert Woodruff, who is credited with Coca-Cola's mid-century success, had great respect for Lettie's prudent approach to financial matters. Lettie became one of the first women to serve on the board of a major American corporation when she was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company in 1934. She held that position for almost 20 years.

Seven years after her first husband's death, Lettie married Arthur Kelly Evans, a retired Canadian army colonel. They made their principle residence in Hot Springs, Virginia, at an estate overlooking the Homestead Resort, at which they entertained guests like the Vanderbilts and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Lettie was a gracious and cultured woman of dignity, humor and charm. She wore fine clothes and had an aristocratic manner, but she was self-effacing and modest, extending praise and empathy to everyone she encountered. It was this concern for others—a benevolence of spirit—that became her most prominent characteristic. In memorial upon Lettie's death the Coca-Cola Board noted that "Endowed with material things, she had a conviction that she held them as trustee for the poor, the meek and the unfortunate."

In her lifetime, Lettie donated millions of dollars to more than 130 different organizations. She was actively involved in many of them, serving as a trustee of Emory University, Agnes Scott College, the American Hospital in Paris and the Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond.

In 1945 Lettie created the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation, dedicated to charity, education and religion. She funded the foundation with generous gifts, and upon her death left her residuary estate to it. The estates of her sons also became foundations: Joseph's in honor of his father, Conkey's in honor of his mother.

Lettie Pate Evans died on November 14, 1953, after a life of extraordinary and continuing impact on her adopted state of Georgia.

Additional Resources

Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University
Special Collections & Archives
Manuscript Sources For Women's History

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Letitia Pate Whitehead Evans Papers
Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library
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