



- *Activist*
- *Educator*
- *Journalist*

Julia Anna Flisch

1861–1941

Inducted 1994

A letter to the Editor appeared in the Augusta Chronicle in 1882. Signed "A Young Woman," it said in part: "Give a worthy aim to the young girl who looks with eager eyes into the dim vista of the future. Point out a path by which she can, with honor and credit, make herself independent, at least in a measure. Give her some hope, other than that of an early marriage; give her the pleasure of earning her own money, and learning to lay it out to the best advantage; and better than all, give her the dignity of knowing herself to be of some active use in the world . . . If indeed we must give account of idle words and idle hours, where will the mighty Judge lay the fruitless lives of so many of our Southern women. In their name I beg of you — give the girls a chance!"

The "Young Woman" was Julia Anna Flisch. Born in the first year of the Civil War to immigrant parents, she was not a typical daughter of the Old South. During her childhood years, her father ran a sweet-shop and ice cream parlor in Athens, near the campus of the University of Georgia. There she acquired a lasting ambition for the academic life.

***"Give the girls
a chance!"***
—Julia Anna Flisch

After graduating with honors from Athens' Lucy Cobb Institute, she promptly applied to the University, and was just as promptly refused because she was a woman. She then became an articulate and powerful advocate for women's rights to higher education. Many state newspapers carried her articles and letters. She continuously attacked "the ornamental and superficial" education offered at young ladies' finishing schools, and she campaigned for women's rights to training for jobs where they could earn a living wage. She also wrote fiction, and a novel, *Ashes of Hope*, was published in 1886 to positive reviews. It is, fittingly, the story of three young women struggling for independence.

When the Georgia Normal and Industrial College at Milledgeville (later Georgia State College for Women, now Georgia College & State University) was dedicated in 1891, Julia Flisch was the only woman on the speakers' platform. She first took a job teaching

stenography and typing at the new college, and later was able to teach her favorite subject, history. Teaching became the center of her life. After some years at Milledgeville, she went to the University of Wisconsin, where she received the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History that were not available to her in Georgia. She returned to teach at the Tubman School for Girls in Augusta. When the state's first junior college opened in Augusta, she became the Dean of Women and Senior Professor of History. In 1899, she was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Georgia, which had refused to admit her 20 years earlier.

Julia Flisch gave total devotion to her teaching. Her intelligence was awe-inspiring, but not threatening because of her personal warmth and concern for her students. She was a role-model of practical activism for her students. She spoke tirelessly for Women's Suffrage, state grants for women's higher education and vocational training, and collective bargaining rights for teachers.

In 1936, failing eyesight forced her to retire, and she died in Augusta five years later, having dedicated her life to significantly advancing her vision that society should "Give the girls a chance!"

Additional Resources

Julia A. Flisch Collection

Ina Dillard Russell Library
Georgia College & State University
Milledgeville, GA
(478) 445-5004