



- *Activist*
- *Journalist*

## *Emily Barnelia Woodward*

1885–1970

### ***Inducted 2004***

On a large plantation outside of Vienna in Dooly County, Emily Woodward was born on May 2, 1885. Her parents were well educated and her life was comfortably affluent but that wasn't enough for Emily who would become one of the state's most influential journalists, an advocator of prison reform and an active member of the state's Democratic party.

Emily attended public schools in Vienna and Gordon Institute at Barnesville before returning home to work in various businesses. In 1916 she went to work at the Vienna News as Editor and Assistant Manager and moved up to Editor the next year. By 1918 Emily became the owner, Editor and Publisher of the weekly newspaper, being one of very few women in Georgia and the country to hold those responsibilities. Emily remained at the paper through 1932 but wrote and remained active in journalism throughout her life.

In August 1927 Emily was the first woman elected president of the Georgia Press Association and during her tenure she founded the Georgia Press Institute, offering annual seminars for newspaper editors. In addition, Emily became a member of the State Democratic Committee and attended the Democratic National Convention in Houston in 1928.

Controversy was no stranger to "Miss Em," as she became known in her hometown, and she fought for prison reform by directing town hall meetings at the Atlanta

Federal Penitentiary during the 1940s. In an article for The Atlanta Journal (June 14, 1942), she wrote, "With the fascinating panorama of the new life at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary crowding in on the canvas of the mind, perhaps it is the influence of this museum atmosphere that brings the great institution into focus as less a prison than a vast art center where deft sculptors

***"... But I believe that there is nothing wrong in Georgia that intelligent, informed, honest, unselfish, public-spirited citizens can't right."***

– Miss Woodward on radio station WSB, July 2, 1947

toil at the most difficult of all tasks – the task of remolding human bodies and souls.”

Emily also participated in the Atlanta Conference on Race Relations in 1943 and was an advocate of training local leaders to empower themselves to direct their county and state to greater heights. Her ideas for training are in her first book, “Forums – How and Why,” and she served as Director of Forums at the University of Georgia from 1938-1944. Emily also was the founder of the first Leadership Institute held at the university and served as its director from 1943-50. Emily, also a poet, authored an early pictorial history of Georgia, “Empire: Georgia Today in Pictures and Paragraphs,” which was published in 1936 and remains a valuable reference.

Emily traveled the world and went to England in 1944 at the invitation of the American and British Offices of War Information to hold forums in the interest of better relations between the two countries. Traveling with a convoy of other dignitaries, Emily delivered radio addresses over the BBC while bombs were falling. At the end of World War II, The United States War Department and the State Department asked Emily to serve on General Douglas MacArthur’s committee on education. She traveled to Japan where she visited schools and discussed what needed to be done to bring their educational system into the 20th century. Her work there has been a factor in Japan’s excellent educational system.

In Vienna, Emily was instrumental in securing funding from the Works Progress Administration to build a public library in her hometown and she led a fundraising drive when in her 80s to add a reading room to the facility. Emily was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Georgia in 1929 and received LaGrange College’s first honorary doctorate in 1946. She was inducted in the Georgia Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1973 and became the state director of Forums, an adult education program that grew out of President Roosevelt’s New Deal policies.

As a Georgia woman of achievement, Emily Woodward left a legacy not only for Georgians but for all citizens of a democratic society through her pioneering work on public forums and as a journalist, educator and advocate of prison reform.

### **Additional Resources**

**Vienna Historic Preservation Society**

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