

Gone With The Wind

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There was once a land of Cavaliers and cotton fields called the Old South. Here in this pretty world of Gallantry took its last bow. Here was last ever seen the Knights of their Ladies Fair, master, and slave. Look for it only in books because it is no more than a dream remembered, a Civilization Gone with the Wind.

Gone with the Wind, first published in June 1936, is according to many sources, the most successful and widely read novel ever published in America. The author, Margaret Mitchell of Atlanta, received a Pulitzer Prize in May of 1937 for her sweeping historical novel of the Old South set during the War for Southern Independence and Reconstruction. The novel was also wildly successful internationally. By 1965 it had been published in twenty-five different languages in twenty-nine countries.

The movie premiered at the Loew's Grand Theater in Atlanta on December 15, 1939, in what may have been the grandest event ever held in Atlanta. It went on to set records that have not yet been matched, even by Titanic. The film, produced by David O. Selznick, starred some of Hollywood's and Britain's most acclaimed and unforgettable actors and actresses: Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard, Olivia de Havilland, and Hattie McDaniel. It swept the Academy Awards, receiving Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Cinematography, and Best Actress (Vivien Leigh as Scarlet O'Hara). For her truly unforgettable supporting role as "Mammy," Hattie McDaniel became the first African-American to receive an Oscar.

Who can forget her famous line when Scarlet tells Mammy how famished she is and how much she could eat as Mammy prepares her for an important dinner and social event where she will encounter her romantic favorite at the time, Ashley Wilkes (played by Leslie Howard):

Hattie McDaniel (Mammy): "Oh no you ain't! If you don't care what folks says about this family, I does. And I done told you and told you, you can always tell a lady by the way she eats in front of people like a bird. And I ain't aimin' to see you go over to Mista John Wilkes' house and eat like a field hand and gobble like a hog."

Another classic pair of lines by British actress Vivien Leigh as Scarlet and Clark Gable as the dashing Rhett Butler shocked movie audiences of the time:

Vivien Leigh (Scarlet), in a very authentic Old Atlanta dialect: "Rhett...if I go...where shall I go? What shall I do?"

Clark Gable (Rhett): "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

Scarlet's final line symbolized the Southern people's determination to survive the destruction of war and Reconstruction:

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“After all, time sews another day.”
Category: ~~Time Sewing~~ ~~Other~~

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The movie has become an American classic.
Hits: 6990

Margaret Mitchell was born in 1900 into an Atlanta family with strong ties to the Old South and the struggle for Southern Independence and Southern Rights. As a small girl she listened as relatives told many stories of the War and Reconstruction. She did not discover that the South had actually lost the War until she was ten years old. Her devoutly Irish-Catholic mother encouraged her to read the classics and to write her own stories. Her mother also impressed upon her the precariousness of life and the necessity of a trained mind and dogged determination to survive, just as had her family during the War. Her father, an Atlanta lawyer, also encouraged her in reading and the importance of honesty and originality. Growing up, her favorite authors were Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens. No doubt she was strongly influenced by the romanticism of Scott and the vivid character descriptions and development of Dickens.

Margaret Mitchell was a small woman, but quite attractive and very vivacious. She could also be very head-strong. She was popular with boys and had many suitors. In the summer of 1918 she met, fell in love with, and became engaged to Lieutenant Clifford Henry. He was killed in battle a few months later. In 1919 her mother died of flu and pneumonia. After attending Smith College for a year she returned to Atlanta to take care of her father, and at the age of nineteen became mistress of the house. She made her social debut into Atlanta society the same year. Despite being lovely, engaging, and intelligent, she was snubbed by Atlanta's Junior League because she and a young man had performed a "scandalous" Apache dance during an Atlanta ball.

In September 1922 she married Berrien Upshaw despite the objections of her father and brother. Upshaw proved a violent and dangerous man, who deserted her after only a few months of marriage. She was granted a divorce in 1924. In 1922 she had begun working for the Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine. She wrote 129 feature stories over the next four years, learning to love Atlanta and developing her writing skills. In 1925 she married John Marsh, an old friend, fellow journalist, and her literary mentor. In 1926 she began the historical research and writing of *Gone with the Wind*. It took her ten years to complete it. No one but she and her husband ever saw the manuscript until it was given to MacMillan Publishing in 1935.

Just one month after publishing, *Gone with the Wind* was selected as July 1936 Book of the Month and sales skyrocketed. David O. Selznick bought the movie rights for \$50,000. This was at the time the highest amount ever paid for movie rights. By the time of the movie premier in Atlanta in 1939, Margaret Mitchell had already become a literary legend. *Gone with the Wind* was Margaret Mitchell's first and only novel.

On August 11, 1949, Margaret and her husband, John, were on their way to see a movie only a few blocks from their house. As they were crossing Peachtree Street, a speeding driver slammed on his brakes, but not in time to avoid hitting Margaret. She died five days later on August 16th, never having regained consciousness.

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Category: Mike Scruggs' column
There is a wonderful full-face photograph of Margaret Mitchell on the wall of the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. She was a strikingly attractive woman. But few remember now that Margaret Mitchell was also a compassionate and generous supporter of the Red Cross or that she was very active in supporting America's war effort in the Second World War. Fewer still know that she inspired the building of the first African-American hospital and worked with Morehouse College to establish fifty scholarships for African-American medical students.

All Atlanta and all of Georgia mourned on the news of her tragic death. Her love story, so vivid in character development, and set in the Georgia of the Old South, centering on real and familiar places in Atlanta, Decatur, Jonesboro, and Fayetteville, had not only fascinated and entertained millions, it had educated them. The South that she portrayed may in many respects be gone with the wind, but her fictional novel portrayed the South and Southerners as they were, not according to modern standards of political correctness. For that especially, the nation owes her a debt of gratitude.

It is for this last reason, the cause of truth, that we ought to come to a higher appreciation of both the novel and the movie, *Gone with the Wind*. There are truths and virtues that must not be forgotten or discarded. They must be preserved and honored.

Mike Scruggs is a retired financial consultant and corporate business executive. He holds an MBA from Stanford University and a BS from the University of Georgia. He is a USAF combat veteran of the Vietnam War, holding a Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart. He was recently Chairman of the Board of a Classical Christian School and is a former Republican County Chairman. He writes and lives in Hendersonville, NC.