MORGAN RAWLS

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Morgan Rawls was born in Bulloch County, Georgia in 1829. He later moved to Effingham County where he married Selina Elkins in 1851. Mr. Rawls was Lieutenant Colonel of the 54th Georgia Infantry during the Civil War until he was wounded at the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864. After the war, he represented Effingham County in the Georgia legislature from 1868-1872, 1886-1889, and from 1896-1904. Morgan Rawls died October 18, 1906. He is buried in Guyton Cemetery.
THE LIFE OF MORGAN RAWLS

The state of Georgia has produced many outstanding soldiers and statesmen in the past 250 years and the Coastal Empire can boast its fair share of these fine leaders. One of the more colorful, though almost forgotten, celebrities of Georgia was Col. Morgan Rawls of Effingham County, whose public career spanned thirty-five years (1860 - 1895).

Morgan Rawls was born near the post office now called Rufus, in Bulloch County, on June 29, 1829. The Rawls family moved to Effingham County when Morgan was still very young, and there he was educated in the local schools, all the while training to become a farmer. On October 22, 1851, Morgan married Miss Selina V. Elkins, and from this marriage there were fourteen children. In 1856, he and his new family moved to Guyton. He unsuccessfully ran as a candidate for delegate to the 1860 convention on the Union party platform.

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1"Morgan Rawls Dead at Guyton". Savannah Morning News, 19 October 1906, Col. 5, p. 5.


3Marriage License of Morgan and Selina Rawls, 22 October 1851, Miscellaneous and Marriage Index 1790 - 1935 of Effingham County, Vol. I, Effingham County Probate Court. p. 19.

4Savannah Morning News, 19 October 1906, col. 5, p. 5.

5Biographical Directory, 1950, p. 1720.
Five months after the Civil War broke out, Mr. Rawls was elected Captain of Company C of the 1st Brigade, Georgia State Troops, on September 18, 1861. He was mustered out of service in that unit on March 18, 1862. Between the time he enlisted and the time he was mustered out, his unit performed a variety of duties around the Coastal Empire. In the Roster of Confederate Soldiers of Effingham County, there is an article that records the following on the 1st Georgia State Troops:

The Company was mustered in at Guyton, Georgia, and was sent from there to #7 in the Guld RR where the Regiment was formed and drilled. There removed to near Savannah, Georgia where it was engaged in ficked (sic) duty and walking for "POSTS" around the city. Assisted in constructing a gun boat and in planning obstructions in the river. And was mustered out of service on the 8th day of March 1862. Having completed its tour of enlistment. The officers and men returned to their homes for a short while. The most of them re-enlisted in Confederate service for the war.

Morgan
E. E. Fry
J. J. Nease

Later, Captain Rawls was elected Captain of Company I, 54th Regiment, Georgia Infantry, and became Lieutenant Colonel on May 16, 1862. He was absent on General Court Martial at Savannah (not his own court martial but someone else's) from January to February 1863. Colonel Rawls was elected by his county to the Georgia Legislature, so he was granted a leave of absence on October 30, 1863. By the spring of 1864,

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7 "For Six Months" Roster of Confederate Soldiers of Effingham County, p. 15.
8 Roster of Confederate Soldiers of Georgia, p. 709.
he was back in active duty in the Army of Tennessee, stationed in northern Georgia near Dalton. He participated in all of the major battles against the Union Army until he was wounded at the famous Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864. In fact, as he was being carried to a field hospital, a cannon ball passed right through the blanket upon which he was being carried. Amazingly enough, the projectile did not even scratch him.  

After the Confederate Armies surrendered in 1865, Colonel Rawls returned to his home where he "bent his energies towards saving his country and state from the negroes and carpet bag rule". One of the ways he helped out his state immediately after the war was by serving as a member of the State Reconstruction Convention in 1865, and then getting elected to the Georgia House of Representatives from 1868 - 1872. Apparently, Mr. Rawls was well-liked by the press in Chatham County, because the newspapers were constantly praising him and the virtues of the Democratic Party. For example, during the campaign of 1872, the Savannah Morning News ran an article which stated:

...If Col. Rawls is elected our people will have a faithful, reliable Representative, who is a warm friend of Savannah and who feels a lively interest in the prosperity of the state. He will receive the support of the interior counties of the District, and if we are disgraced by being misrepresented in the next Congress by a scalawag the fault will be largely our own. Chatham can prevent this catastrophe, and the brunt will be in Savannah. Let us be up and doing, adopting measures to roll up for our ticket the largest vote ever given in Chatham.

9Savannah Morning News, 19 October 1906, col. 5, p. 5.
10bid.
12Savannah Morning News, 18 October 1872, col. 1, p. 2.
And again, another article written two weeks later:

Mr. Rawls does not pretend to be as learned or eloquent as others may be, but he is a good and sensible, a sound and working man who will seek wisdom at the parent fountains in the homest discharge of his duties.13

Compare those compliments from the Savannah press with their scathing denunciations of Mr. Rawls' opponent, Mr. Andrew Sloan, of the Republican Party:

Let the 5th of November teach Mr. Sloan that you have no votes for him, who would sell his country for a mess of pottage, prepared by Hale and Bryant, carpet baggers, and their forty thieves. Our battle is through the ballot-box. If over-powered we will submit until reason resumes her sway over men's minds. Evil will have its reign, but it will also have its downfall.14

Fortune at first seemed to be with Mr. Rawls, for he won the election and went to the Legislature in 1873. However, "the election was contested by Sloan...and after Col. Rawls had served about half of the term, he was unseated by the overwhelming Republican Congress."15 One article in the Savannah Morning News has this to say about Mr. Sloan's protests:

...He claims that he was elected to Congress from the First District by a large majority. He claims that the election in Savannah was illegal; that the returns from Isle of Hope, Chapman's House and Cherokee Hill, though rejected, are the only legal returns from Chatham County. He claims that in Burke County a mistake was made in the counts and that in Camden County the vote was sent in too late to be consolidated. Granting some irregularities, it is a principle of law in election that mere irregularities which work no wrong to anyone, do not vitiate an election.16

14Ibid., 29 October 1872, col. 2, p. 2.
15Savannah Morning News, 18 October 1906, col. 5, p. 5.
Rather than letting this disappointment cause him to retire from politics, Mr. Rawls ran for Congress again in 1886 and served to 1889, and then again for the last time from 1896 to 1904.\(^{17}\)

Although he was popular enough with the people of the 1st District, one article seems to say that he was against progressive education during his latter years in Congress:

Colonel Morgan Rawls is sincere in his enthusiasm against the Technological school. This school is simply another school that will turn out teachers. If Georgia wants to get rich, let her educate her children and they will show her how to develop her mines, build railroads, establish factories, and make her lands twice as productive as they are.\(^{18}\)

Towards the last years of his life, Mr. Rawls went to numerous political and social functions where he was invited as the main speaker. On one such occasion, a reunion of Confederate veterans from Effingham County, one journalist wrote:

The Colonel is always a popular speaker, and no public occasion in Effingham is considered to be in proper form unless he speaks.\(^{19}\)

Morgan Rawls retired from public life in 1904 to enjoy his last years on his farm.\(^{20}\) He died at 11 o'clock in the morning on October 18, 1906 in Guyton. He was survived by eight children:

Mrs. D. R. Groover (who was named administratrix of his estate\(^{21}\)) of

\(^{17}\)Biographical Directory, 1950, p. 1720.


\(^{19}\)"On to Springfield", Savannah Morning News, September 11, 1901, col. 3, p. 3.


\(^{21}\)General Index of Estates of Effingham County, Georgia vol. I, p. 141.
Statesboro, Mr. Charles Rawls, Mr. James Rawls, and Mr. L. P. Rawls of Savannah, H. R. Rawls of Atlanta, Mr. George Rawls and Mr. D. D. Arden of Statesboro, and Miss Annie Rawls. His entire estate was auctioned off for the grand total of $1,143.53. Mr. Morgan Rawls is buried in Guyton Cemetery.

22 Savannah Morning News, 19 October 1906, col. 5, p. 5.
23 Sale Bill of Estate of Morgan Rawls, Filed in Office, 5 March 1907, Recorded on Book B. pp. 41 - 45.
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2. General Index of Estates of Effingham County, Georgia vol. I.

3. Miscellaneous and Marriage Index 1790-1935 of Effingham County,
   vol. I, Effingham County Probate Court.

4. Roster of Confederate Soldiers of Effingham County. (Found in
   National Guard Armory in Springfield, Georgia.)

5. Roster of Confederate Soldiers of Georgia 1861-1865

6. Sale Bill of Estates of Morgan Rawls, Filed in Office; 5 March
   1907.

7. Savannah Morning News, 18 October 1872, 29 October 1872,
   1 November 1872, 25 November 1872, 11 January 1887,
   11 September 1901, 19 October 1906.