



# BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH

## Dalton's Southern Belle with a Cause

Robert D. Jenkins, Sr., October 30, 2020

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After the Battle of Missionary Ridge in November 1863, troops retreated to Dalton, an event that Miss Emma Love Thompson would have witnessed. | Library of Congress

Born the daughter of Master Carpenter J. P. Love, Emma Love Thompson was just 17 when the Civil War broke out. Her father had moved the family to Dalton, Georgia, during the young city's "boom town" years before the war. Dalton had grown from the sleepy little village of Cross Plains since the granting of her charter on December 29, 1847, and into a rising southern city with two railroad lines linking her with the rest of the nation. With some 3,000 residents by 1861, easily surpassing Chattanooga's relatively flat populace of about 2,000, Dalton was literally growing daily, and demand for more houses, commercial buildings, hotels, offices, churches, and public buildings increased with it. J. P. Love found himself in high demand as his fortunes rose with the rise of the young and prosperous city. With it, came increasing social status for the Love family, and Miss Emma Love found herself with a front-row seat for the events in Dalton during the Civil War. Emma had a twin sister, Jane, and a brother, Robert, who was 20 when the war began. Fortunately for posterity and for us, Emma kept a journal! Following are excerpts from her journal with editorial comments in parentheses:

*"The first regiment that I saw was one that came through Dalton in May, 1861. It was the fourth Alabama regiment, which stopped over in Dalton for several days. The Dalton Guards left some weeks later. They were commanded by Captain Tom Cook. (Cook later rose to the rank of Colonel, commanding Phillips Legion in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia). He was killed in battle (at Fredericksburg) and was brought back to Dalton and buried Christmas day. He was to have been married on that day to Miss Jemima Black, daughter of Dr. Black. (Cook was buried at the Presbyterian Cemetery.)"*

*"The next company enlisted for six months. This company was commanded by Captain John Walker. They were sent to Savannah. My brother, R. R. Love (Robert), was a member of this company. (This was the Wright Infantry, Co. H, 2nd Georgia.) A large number of the young men looked upon the war as a picnic for they supposed they would return in six or twelve months with laurels on their brows, but they were doomed to disappointment. Their chivalry and ardor were considerably dampened before the close for they suffered often from lack of food and clothing."*

*"I think it was in 1862 they turned all the public houses into hospitals, the court house, churches and one of the hotels. The ladies of the town formed a cooking society to make soup and light rolls for the sick and wounded. They secured a vacant house and four or five ladies would go every day in the week and prepare the food."*

*"It was in October or November of '63 (November 27, 1863) that the army of Tennessee fell back to Dalton after the battle of Chickamauga. (Chickamauga was a Confederate victory in September 1863, but the Battle of Missionary Ridge fought on November 25, 1863 at Chattanooga resulted in a Confederate defeat and a retreat to Dalton.) They went into winter quarters and remained until May."*

*"They had a review of the troops in March or April. Colonel Gordon asked me to escort him, which I agreed to do, but he was compelled to command his regiment as the Lieutenant Colonel was absent. He asked a friend, Colonel O'Neill of the 29th Tennessee Regiment, to take his place, which he did. He reviewed the whole army, riding up one line and down the other. I rode a black pony and wore a long black riding habit with a black turban with a long white feather in it."*

*"Costumes, at that time, were very scarce whether for street, evening or home wear. Our house dresses were homespun, the thread dyed and then woven on looms in the country. The southern women made almost every thing they wore from shoes to palmetto hats. That was in the last two years of the war."*

*"It was in February or March that General Hill, Provost Marshal, sent a request for a lady to search two women who had come through the lines. I can't remember the name of the first, nor how she managed to get through. She was stopping at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Blount just across the street from General Hill's headquarters. He sent an orderly with us. We went in and made our mission known to her. She became very indignant and said she would not submit to it. I turned to the orderly and told him to watch her while I went across the street to see General Hill. He told me to tell the orderly to see that his orders were carried out. When I got back she was putting some papers in the stove. She reluctantly consented to having her baggage searched. She had a large Saratoga trunk. It was packed but we went to the bottom of it, piling the things on the bed. When we got through she thought we should pack it again. I told her we had no orders to do that. We found no papers to convict her of being a spy; if she had any she had destroyed them."*



Dr. Mary Edwards Walker | National Archives

*"We went from there to my father's, J. P. Love, where Dr. Mary Walker was under guard. She was taken prisoner at Tunnel Hill. (This is Dr. Mary Edwards Walker of New York, a surgeon in the Federal Army and the only woman to receive the Medal of Honor.) She had gone to the picket lines to send some mail. It was supposed that her principal object was to get a view, or learn something about our army, or she may have expected to be taken and exchanged, and by going through the southern states she would gain some knowledge of the situation of the army and other conditions. She*

*was kept prisoner in Dalton about two weeks; she was then sent to Richmond where she was exchanged after being kept there some time. She was a surgeon in the army with a rank of Major. She wore a blue cloth bloomer suit with a red sash across her shoulder, a cocked felt hat and boots. When we went in and told her of General Hill's order, she agreed at once and was very agreeable. We had her disrobe as she had no baggage. I had her take her boots off, but I failed to find anything. After Sherman came to Atlanta she came back through Dalton."*

Georgia's Governor during the War, Joseph M. Brown, penned this following the war:

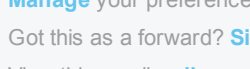
*"To the essayist, wishing to immortalize with his pen the deeds of great men, here is opened one of history's favorite chapters; to the artist eager to depict the romantic and picturesque, here too is displayed the scenery which thrills the emotions; while to the patriot who delights to tell of achievements of men who dared face death for their country, their cause and their flag, here is shows the theatre of their toils and their glory."*

Following the war, Emma Love Thompson married Mr. Thompson, moved to Atlanta, and lived the rest of her days there. Miss Emma's journal offers a fascinating window into wartime Dalton. Dalton's "Southern Belle with a Cause" was well aware that the times in which she lived were extraordinary.



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