

ION

Bethinking of Old Orleans ¹⁻³⁰⁻⁸⁵

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GOVERNOR RUFUS B. BULLOCK 1834-1907

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“Every man’s life is a
fairy tale written by
god’s fingers.”

— Hans Christian Anderson

Orleans County has had many prominent residents who have been in the national spotlight. Rufus Brown Bullock is one of these people who made a distinguished name for himself through the force of his own abilities. He was born in Bethlehem, Albany County, N.Y. March 28, 1834. At six years of age he moved with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Volkert B. Bullock to Albion, N.Y. The family resided on the northwest corner of Liberty and West Park Streets in what is now the Noon residence. Volkert Bullock was identified for many years with the Albion Gaslight Co.

Rufus graduated from the old Albion Academy in 1850. He then mastered the knowledge of telegraphy at his home in Albion. His father was a promoter of the first telegraph line through Albion which gave Rufus reason to adopt telegraphy as a profession.

With this kind of background he became the inventor of a combination printing telegraph system which he introduced in many large cities. By the mid 1850's he became manager of a telegraph company in Philadelphia. His ability as an organizer won for him an appointment in 1857 as assistant superintendent of the Adams Telegraph Co. in the southern states. He made his headquarters in Augusta, Ga. where he formed the Southern Express Co., becoming one of its active managers. After the Civil War broke out, he continued this occupation under the direction of the Confederate Government, establishing railroads and telegraph lines. Knowing Confederate Pres. Davis and members of the Confederate Cabinet, he was placed in charge of transportation facilities and telegraph lines for the Confederate forces with the rank of Assistant Quartermaster General. He surrendered as such with General Lee at Appomatox.

Following this, he resumed management of the express business as a trustee and secretary of the company. Much of the company's prosperity was credited to his wise policies. He also helped organize the First National Bank of Georgia and was elected president of the Macon and Augusta Railroad.

When Georgia accepted the reconstruction scheme, the first of all the southern states, a convention was held at Atlanta under the command of Gen. Pope. Rufus Bullock was chosen a delegate to this convention. Through his efforts, he became one of the organizers of the Republican Party in the State of Georgia. During the course of the convention, which framed a constitution under the reconstruction laws, he gained the unanimous nomination for Governor. After a bitter canvass in 1868, the constitution was adopted and Rufus Bullock was declared governor. But this however was only the beginning of great adversity.

The reactionists against him obtained a majority in the Georgia Legislature and expelled the twenty-seven black members of that body, whereupon, Gov. Bullock appealed to Congress and was empowered to reassemble the old legislature and seat the black members. Gov. Bullock is mentioned a number of times in "Gone With The Wind". Here is what Scarlett O'Hara had to say in relation to his governorship. "...I know Southerners. I know Georgia. They are a tough and bullheaded lot. If they've got to fight another war to get back, they'll fight another war. If they've got to buy black votes like the Yankees have done, then they will buy black votes. If they've got to vote then thousand dead men like the Yankees did, every corpse in every cemetery in Georgia will be at the polls. Things are going to get so bad under the benign rule of our good friend Rufus Bullock that Georgia is going to vomit him up."

Gov. Bullock's advocacy of black rights made him very unpopular, which led to much personal abuse. At the next election in 1870 the opposition controlled the legislature and Gov. Bullock resigned his office. Charges of corruption were brought against him and excitement ran so high that he came north for a short time. Eventually, a hearing was held in the courts at Atlanta and he was acquitted and fully vindicated of any charges. During his term as governor, over 600 miles of new railroad were built in Georgia.

He and his wife, the former Marie Salisbury of Pawtucket, R.I. continued to live in Georgia. During this period he became president of one of the largest cotton mills in Atlanta. He once commented "I made the mistake of getting into politics." However, he was a frequent contributor to the New York press on political subjects. The portrait of him shown here was taken by none other than Mathew Brady, the noted photograph artist of the Civil War era.

In 1902 ex-Governor and Mrs. Bullock returned to Albion to live in his family home on Liberty Street. Marie Bullock died in 1904 and Rufus Bullock died in 1907. They are both buried in Mt. Albion Cemetery and were survived by a daughter and a son.

