

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Biography

4/25/18

Recipient of the National Book Award for most distinguished novel of 1936, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction of 1937, and inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame in 2000, Margaret Mitchell is best known for her historical romance novel, *Gone with the Wind*. Since the release of this novel, Mitchell has been one of the most debated topics amongst the public. It is believed by some, due to the contents of her novel, that Mitchell was racist, while others believe that the reflection of these contents are only a product of her upbringing. ✓

Born November eighth, 1900 to Eugene and Mary Mitchell, Margaret was a fourth generation Atlantian. Having been born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia during a time period when Civil War veterans were still alive, Margaret was accustomed to afternoons spent with grandparents and their friends who passed time by recounting war stories. In an interview conducted by Medora Perkerson of the Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine, Mitchell informed us that she had three generations of grandfathers who served in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and The Civil War. She claimed that as a young girl, these war stories would bore her greatly; however, her grandfather had shaky knees, which kept her awake and alert as he held her in his lap and told his stories. She laughed as she recalled how this was later a blessing because all of this info had later become vital to the historical context she was able to present in *Gone with the Wind*. ☺

Around Mitchell's secondary educational years, her family moved to Peachtree Street, where Mitchell attended, first, Woodberry School, and later, a prestigious Atlanta finishing school, Washington Seminary. Here her writing took off. She was the founding member and officer of the school's drama

club, she was the president of Washington Literary Society, and she was the literary editor for her class yearbook. After graduation, Mitchell had planned to marry Clifford Henry, her first love, but he was killed overseas before graduation came. Mitchell went on to begin college at Smith University in Massachusetts. She completed her freshmen year, but had to come home shortly after to take on the role of mistress of her household because her mother had passed away of influenza.

Not too long after her arrival home, Mitchell began working at the Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine under her pen name, Peggy Mitchell. Here she met her first husband, Berrien K. Upshaw. The marriage was short, less than a year. Upshaw left for the Midwest and never returned. Mitchell later had the marriage annulled and married her second husband, John Marsh, in 1925. During her time at the magazine, she had written 129 articles over the span of four years. She and Marsh had moved in to an apartment on Crescent Avenue that Mitchell termed, "The Dump". The bedroom was barely big enough to fit their bed, the kitchen could barely hold the stove, and the sitting room was no bigger than the size of a closet. Little had Mitchell known at the time, this teeny tiny sitting room would be the cause of her fame.

Mitchell's career at the magazine was cut short due to complications from a broken ankle. She had been house ridden for months and began writing *Gone with the Wind* to keep her from going stir crazy. In the same interview with Medora Perkerson, Mitchell told us that as she began to write the book, she wrote the last chapter first, and all of the other chapters in no particular order. Her sitting room was cluttered with heaps of manuscripts thrust about the room, none of which made very much sense without any order to them. Mitchell revealed that the main character, Scarlett O'Hara, had originally been named Pansy O'Hara. It wasn't until nearly publication that Mitchell chose to change it to Scarlett. Margaret also revealed that the title "*Gone with the Wind*" is a metaphor for the ante-bellum civilization that was swept away by the tornado of war. The novel, claimed Mitchell, was never just

meant to be a historical novel strictly about the war, but rather about the effect the war had on a set of characters that lived in Atlanta at that time. *good*

In April of 1935, Mitchell received news that Harold Latham, a New York editor was touring the south for new manuscripts. It was not Mitchell's intentions at first to seek him out with her manuscripts for *Gone with the Wind*, but after several pushes from her close friend to do so, Margaret reluctantly agreed. She found Latham and gave him her seventy scattered chapters of *Gone with the Wind*. In July 1935, Latham offered Mitchell a contract, and by early spring 1936 *Gone with the Wind* was published with 1,037 pages, and sold at the cost of three dollars. Within the first year, *Gone with the Wind* sold 176,000 copies.

Within the years following, Mitchell caught all kinds of criticism for what people believed to be her racist nature. Due to the contents of her novel, the public eye thought Mitchell to be a southern prejudice; however, this just simply wasn't the case. She was raised in a time where Civil War veterans were her elders whom she had been taught to respect. Her goal, as stated at the end of her interview with Perkerson, was to make *Gone with the Wind* historically accurate in the smallest and largest of circumstances. She simply wrote the novel treating the Negro population as would the whites have done during that time. *vague pronoun reference* (This was in no regard to her personal beliefs. To help calm the public's eye over this matter, Mitchell set up scholarships for black medical students from 1941-1945 as well as backed the black civil rights movement. ✓

In the years that followed the progressing popularity of her novel, Mitchell made a point to respond to each and every fan letter personally. *intrusion into her privacy* (This eventually took its toll and at Mitchell's request all of her other original manuscripts were destroyed, leaving *Gone with the Wind* her only published work. ✓ She claimed that while she was very pleased with her stardom, she missed simpler times when she was

just Mrs. John Marsh. She continued to write for pleasure, and she and John lived simply for the next decade until her unexpected death in August 1949.

Mitchell's life was cut short at forty nine years of age. She and John had set out to see a movie at Peachtree Theatre and while crossing the street, Mitchell was hit by a speeding taxi. She was rushed to Grady Memorial Hospital where she remained unconscious. She never regained consciousness and five days later on August sixteenth, she passed away. She is buried at the Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, Georgia. Despite her tragically early death, Mitchell touched the lives of many through her historical romance novel of the south and to this day continues to touch many more.



Margaret Mitchell House – Crescent Avenue.



Kitchen



Bed



Bedroom Dresser



This was Mitchell's type writer while she worked at the Atlanta Journal Sunday Magazine. Above is a picture of her taking notes from gentlemen for an upcoming article she was writing.



Mitchell's personal type writer; where *Gone with the Wind* was written.



Mitchell's husband; John Marsh



Mitchell's family



Works Cited

*American Masters*. 4 May 2001, [www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/margaret-mitchell-american-rebel-biography-of-margaret-mitchell/2043/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/margaret-mitchell-american-rebel-biography-of-margaret-mitchell/2043/).

*American Masters*. 4 May 2001, [www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/margaret-mitchell-american-rebel-interview-with-margaret-mitchell-from-1936/2011/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/margaret-mitchell-american-rebel-interview-with-margaret-mitchell-from-1936/2011/).

The pictures were taken by me, Robin Gandolfi, on my tour of the Margaret Mitchell House in Atlanta, Georgia.

-all quite interesting

(A)

I believe this additional research project is worthy of honors credit. It adds to Robin's analysis of Gone with the Wind for her final paper in Am. Lit. II.

