

#3 – Southern Women



Left: A perfect picture of the proper little girl and the ideal family in the South in the 1930s. *Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Norton Meredith*

"We must persistently strive against selfishness, ill-temper, irritability, indolence. It is impossible for the self-centered or ill-tempered girl to win love and friends.

One of the greatest blemishes in the character of any young person, especially of any young girl or woman, is forwardness, boldness, pertness. The young girl who acts in such a manner as to attract attention in public; who speaks loudly, and jokes and laughs and tells stories in order to be heard by others than her immediate companions, . . . who expresses opinions on all subjects with forward self-confidence, is rightly regarded by all thoughtful and cultivated people as one of the most disagreeable and obnoxious characters to be met with in society."

--Helen Ekin Starrett, *The Charm of Fine Manners* (1920)

Source: <http://library.thinkquest.org/12111/girl.html>

"Southern Belles and Ladies"

A southern belle was a girl who was expected to grow up into a lady. She was supposed to be fragile and flirtatious while also sexually innocent. She was beautiful but risky to touch, like porcelain. Every southern belle was expected to be up-to-date on the latest fashions, which often proved tricky and expensive because fashion was constantly changing throughout the nineteenth century. A true lady embodied the ideals of the South, and was thus hospitable and graceful. Newspapers often took it upon themselves to update their lady readers on the newest fashion trends. The Natchez Weekly Democrat reported on November 22, 1873, that lady readers will be interested to know that spotted short veils are no longer fashionable. Bracelets are now made to twine around the arm and require no clasp. In the new style of hairdressing, called the Josephine, chignons are entirely abolished. The hair is drawn up from the back of the head and piled on the top in thick coils or braids, and loosely frizzled in front.

Source: <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/2259>