

Section Preview

As you read, look for:

- Georgia's first two female legislators,
- new forms of music,
- problems in agriculture, and
- **vocabulary terms:** jazz, the blues, boll weevil, and Great Migration.

The Roaring Twenties

When the peace treaty ending World War I was signed, people throughout the nation were ready to celebrate the end of rationing, the end of worry about loved ones overseas, the end of sadness associated with a deadly worldwide flu epidemic, and the end of hard times associated with the war. In his presidential campaign, President Warren Harding had promised to return the country to normalcy, and that is exactly what he tried to do. But the normalcy of the past was going to take a big left turn.

The New Woman

On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, giving women the right to vote. Suddenly, women felt a new sense of equality and a new freedom of expression. Many who had stepped into the labor force during the war years wanted to continue working.

The idea of femininity changed drastically. Out were tight corsets and long petticoats. In were knee-length, free-moving dresses that exposed women's legs and arms. Out was the long hair put up in buns or braids; in was a short, bobbed, boyish hair style. Out was the natural look; in was make-up such as lipstick and rouge. Out was the demure, modest, and well-behaved matron. In was the young woman who drank, smoked, and danced all night without a chaperone. And times would never again be the same. Many of the females of the 1920s proudly took on the label *flappers*. The term was first used in Great Britain after World War I to describe young girls between childhood and adulthood. But writer and publisher H. L. Mencken described the flapper as "a somewhat foolish girl, full of wild surmises and inclined to revolt against the precepts and admonitions of her elders."

The Nineteenth Amendment also opened the doors for women to run for political office. In 1922, two women became the first female legislators in the Georgia house of representatives—Bessie Kempton Crowell from Fulton County and Viola Ross Napier from Bibb County.



The Art of Politics

In that same year, Rebecca Latimer Felton was honored when Governor Thomas Hardwick appointed her to fill the U.S. Senate seat of Tom Watson, who had died in office. Felton's appointment was an acknowledgment of her outstanding reform work and efforts supporting the suffrage movement. Since the Senate was not in session at the time of her appointment, Felton was not officially sworn in to her new office. Nor did she really serve time in Congress; Walter F. George was elected to the Senate seat in a special election. But when the Senate reconvened, the 87-year-old Felton was sworn in for a day, making her the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate.

Music

Thousands of clubs called *speakeasies* opened across the country, and most were well stocked with illegal liquor. Often, the music that was played in those clubs was a unique African American contribution known as **jazz**. Jazz was different from traditional music styles because it relied on improvisation. That is, jazz was “on the spur of the moment”; it did not follow written notes. Although jazz had been around for a long time, it burst onto the national stage during the 1920s. Musicians such as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong played at jazz clubs, which opened up around the country. The most famous club was the Cotton Club in Harlem, which was packed each night with black and white audiences.

The blues was another popular music of the period. Blues music was based on black folk music. Georgia's own Ma Rainey became known as the “Mother of the Blues,” and she recorded about one hundred songs between 1923 and 1928. Her songs usually spoke of lost love, loneliness, poverty, and jealousy. Another popular blues singer of the period was Bessie Smith.

An African American musical, “Runnin' Wild,” featured a dance that swept the nation and became synonymous with the period—the Charleston.



Rebecca Latimer Felton was the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate. Mrs. Felton was also the senator who, having served one day, served the shortest term and was the oldest senator, at age 87, at the time of her swearing-in.

Did You Know?

The music of the era also led to a new craze—**dance marathons**. One marathon held at **Madison Square Garden** in 1928 lasted **481 hours**. **Ninety-one** couples took part.



Above: The bob hairstyle was popular in the 1920s. **Opposite page:** Women's fashions of the 1920s reflected social changes.



Crime

There was a dark note to the Roaring Twenties, as the period was called. The prohibition of the 1920s gave rise to organized gangs in large cities such as Chicago and New York. These gangsters made millions by supplying illegal liquor to speakeasies and other private clubs. The public followed the misdeeds of such mobsters as Scarface Al Capone, “Bugs” Moran, Baby Face Nelson, and Frank Nitty.

Capone, dubbed Chicago’s “Public Enemy No. 1,” was finally arrested and convicted of tax evasion. Capone spent one year in the Atlanta federal penitentiary before he was transferred to Alcatraz.



Life in the Roaring Twenties

After the war years, life was good. A trip to the doctor’s office was only \$5, and for an extra dollar or two the doctor would come to your home. Many things came right to the front door—milk, butter and cream, ice, and even fresh vegetables. Vegetable deliveries were short lived, however. In 1926, a man named Clarence Birdseye perfected a method for freezing and packaging foods. His process freed women from the chore of buying fresh foods every day and from having to cook everything from scratch.

Little by little, life was becoming more convenient. Electricity became more widely available, and electric appliances



became more common. For example, in 1927, the first pop-up toaster was introduced. Gas ranges replaced wood and coal stoves. Convenience foods began to appear. Quick-cooking rolled oats, pancake mix, and canned goods (everything from tuna to pineapple) were available. By the end of the decade, families could buy presliced bread. Gerber’s baby foods first went on the market in 1928.

In November 1920, radio station KDKA started broadcasting in Pittsburgh, and it changed America forever. One year later, Americans spent \$10 million on radio sets and parts. Families gathered around the radio to listen to baseball games, news reports, and favored programs such as “The Grand Ole Opry.” In 1922, WSB radio in Atlanta joined the ever growing number of stations throughout the country. Those tuned in heard a jazz rendition of the “Light Cavalry Overture.” The station became known as the “Voice of the South.” In 1923, WRAB radio was licensed in Savannah, and in 1924 radio station WDBA was li-

Top : This is an early washing machine. **Center:** These flappers of the 1920s are dancing the Charleston. **Bottom:** The two items in the background are early radios. The disks in the foreground are 78rpm records.

Did You Know?

The call letters for radio station **WSB in Atlanta** reportedly stood for “**Welcome South Brother.**”

censed in Columbus. The radio stations linked Americans to each other and to the world more than ever before.

Movies were a favorite pastime. In 1927, the first talking motion picture, *The Jazz Singer* with Al Jolson, hit theaters. Children and adults were enthralled just a year later when Walt Disney's first talking cartoon, "Steamboat Willie," appeared. It introduced a new American movie hero—Mickey Mouse.

The Destruction of King Cotton

For many Georgians, the twenties were not a time of abundance. A small, grayish, long-snouted beetle, the **boll weevil**, was destroying the primary source of income for many Georgia farmers: cotton. The boll weevil had come from Mexico, moved through Texas, and into the southern states in the 1890s. The beetles hatch in the yellow flower of the cotton plant. As the flower becomes a boll (the place where the fibers are formed), the larvae feeds on the growing white, fluffy cotton, making it useless.

The boll weevil appeared in southwest Georgia in 1915 and quickly spread across the state, destroying thousands of acres of Georgia's major agricultural crop. By 1923, cotton production had dropped to 600,000 bales from a high of 2.8 million bales in 1914. The post-war price was only fifteen to seventeen cents a pound.

In 1924, Georgia farmers were hit with another natural disaster—a major drought. The sun-baked fields slowed down the destruction of the boll weevil, but the drought ruined most of Georgia's other crops. Over 375,000 farm workers left Georgia between 1920 and 1925. The number of working farms fell from 310,132 to 249,095.

When farms failed, banks that had loaned the farmers money took huge losses. Many farm-related businesses closed. Georgia was in a deep depression.



Above: These young African American men from the South moved north and found work in shipyards, meat-packing plants and steel mills.

The Great Migration

While parts of the nation were living it up during the Roaring Twenties, an agricultural depression led many tenant farmers to leave the South and migrate north looking for work. Black farmers, in particular, moved to northern industrial cities such as Chicago and Detroit, hoping to find work in factories and assembly plants. This movement of southern blacks, which lasted until the 1960s, was called the **Great Migration**.

In the South, most well-paying jobs went to whites. Better jobs and higher pay were available in the North. In fact, many northern companies actively recruited African Americans for jobs.

There were other reasons for the migration. Southern states restricted voting rights, while the North offered the hope of full citizenship rights. Public

schools for African Americans in much of the South were poor, and the North offered more educational opportunities. Health care was better in the North. In addition, segregation in the South kept African Americans from hotels, restaurants, and recreation areas, while the North offered open access to these facilities.

Because they did not have enough money to move everyone at once, African American and poor white families first sent their young men to get jobs. Most were unskilled and found work in the meat-packing plants, shipyards, and steel mills. When they had saved enough money, they sent for the rest of their families. The African Americans generally improved their lives by moving north. But they were also crowded into segregated housing in overpopulated cities and faced a different type of prejudice than they had known in the South.

The Klan Strengthens

In Chapter 10, you learned that the Ku Klux Klan was reborn in Atlanta in 1915. The Klan's targets included not only African Americans but also Jews, Catholics, and immigrants. Talk of "returning America to traditional values and morals" and a "patriotism of traditional America" gained the group new members. Not only did membership increase in numbers, it also increased in stature as doctors, lawyers, judges, businessmen, and even ministers joined.

During the 1920s, the Klan gained a foothold in the Midwest and the Southwest. By 1922, the Klan had branches in all forty-eight states. In 1925, forty thousand costumed and hooded Klansmen marched past the White

Below: The Ku Klux Klan was not just a force in the South. This march took place in Washington, D.C., in 1926.



By the Side of the Road



GEORGIA'S PIONEER AVIATOR BEN T. EPPS —1888-1937—

Ben T. Epps - Georgia's First in Flight - designed, built and in 1907 flew the first airplane in the State of Georgia. He was born in Oconee County, educated in Clarke County, and attended Georgia Tech. A self-taught aviator, aircraft designer, and builder, Epps built the 1907 Monoplane in his shop on Washington Street in Athens and designed and flew new airplanes in 1909, 1911, 1916, 1924, and 1930. The 1924 Epps Monoplane weighed only 350 pounds, had a wingspan of 25 feet, and was powered by a two-cylinder motorcycle engine. Designed for the average man, easy to fly, and inexpensive to operate, it would get 25 miles per gallon at 60 miles per hour. Epps began operation of an airport at this location in 1917, and operated a flying service for the next 20 years. In 1937, he died of injuries incurred here after engine failure and the crash of his light biplane on take-off.

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GEORGIA HISTORIC MARKER

1987



A native of Oconee County, Ben Epps is known as the “father of aviation in Georgia.” The first Georgian to build and fly an airplane. Epps

was fascinated by the stories of the Wright brothers’ experiments. One of the models he designed was a light monoplane (a plane with one wing) that he hoped would make flying economically available to the average person. You can learn about Ben Epps when you visit his home in Athens and see the historical marker beside the Athens-Clarke County Airport.

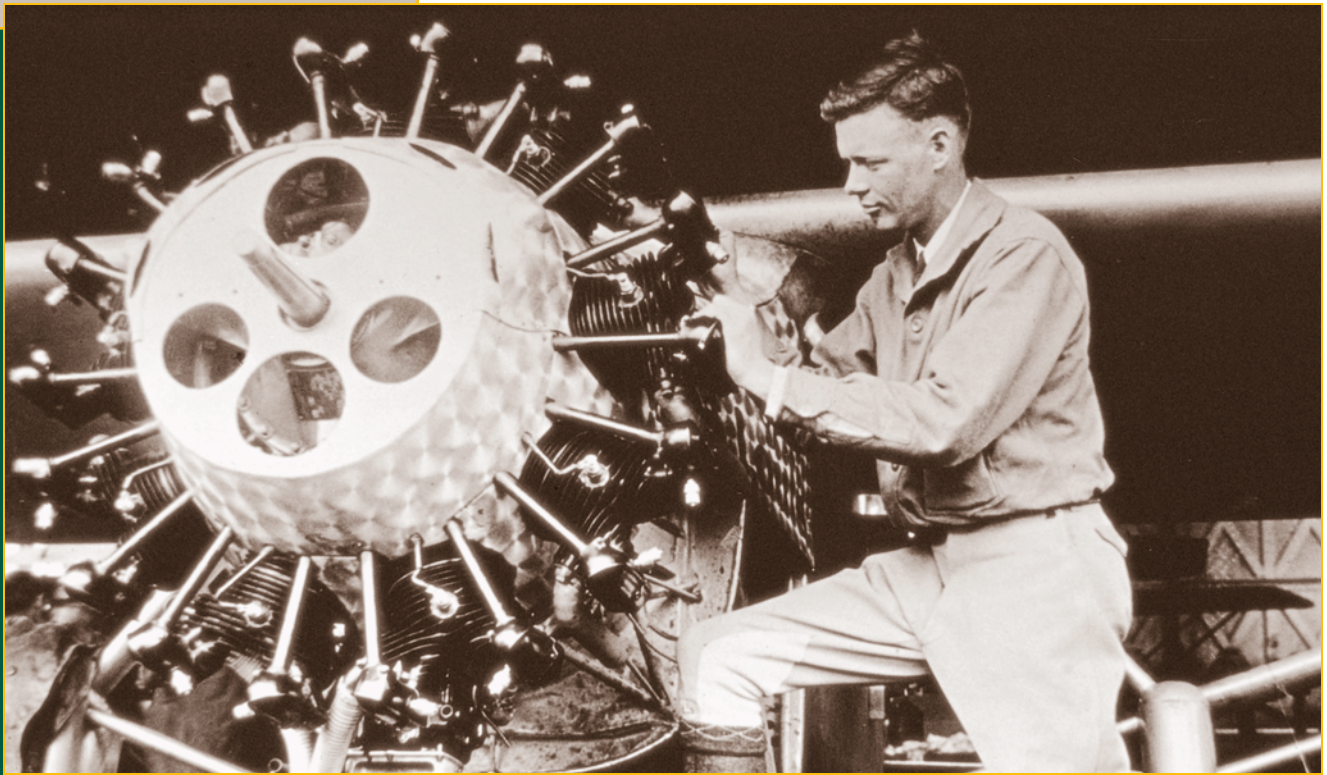
House. Only rain prevented them from burning a cross beside the Washington Monument. The Klan also gained political influence, and five U.S. Senators elected in the 1920s were open members of the Klan. One member, who later recanted his membership, became a Supreme Court justice.

Race riots broke out in many parts of the country in the early and mid-1920s. In some places, the Klan even became an organized part of local law enforcement.

Scandals within the Klan leadership in the late 1920s led to a decline in membership throughout the country. People began to see the relationship between the Klan and racial terrorism. By the time the Depression hit, the Klan had lost most of its national power.

A Special Day

In 1919, a wealthy hotel businessman announced a prize of \$25,000 to the first person who flew nonstop from New York to Paris, France, or from Paris to New York. In May 1927, three pilots in the United States were poised to make the attempt. One was a tall, lean, quiet, boyish pilot who had flown mail out of St. Louis. In fact, he named his plane the “Spirit of St. Louis.” He was 25-year-old Charles Lindbergh, and he tackled the 3,600-mile transatlantic trip alone.



Above: Charles Lindbergh checks the engine of his plane, the “Spirit of St. Louis,” before his record-breaking flight to France. Because he was a lone pilot in a single-engine plane, he was nicknamed the “Lone Eagle.”

Lindbergh flew without the help of navigational or weather instruments, using only landmarks to guide him. He took with him a bag of sandwiches and a quart of water, along with a rubber raft in case he had to ditch in the ocean. Lindbergh took off on a misty Friday morning, May 20, 1927, at 8:00 a.m., from Long Island, New York. The public followed his progress, staying glued to their radio sets.

The trip took 33½ hours. Upon his arrival in France, Lindbergh became an instant hero. Songs were written about him, including one called “Lucky Lindy.” Wherever he went, crowds of people gathered to see him. In October 1927, six months after his historic flight, Lindbergh flew into Atlanta, where he was welcomed by over 20,000 admirers. Soon afterward, a street in the city was named Lindbergh Drive in honor of the “Lone Eagle.”

Did You Know?

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh was the first person honored as *Time* magazine’s “Man of the Year.”

It's Your Turn

1. Who were the first female members of the Georgia General Assembly?
2. Who was the “Mother of Blues”?
3. What two factors led to Georgia’s agricultural problems during the Roaring Twenties?
4. How does the Great Migration pattern of sending young men to find work and then moving families to join them repeat itself today with immigration patterns in the United States?