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## Parrish, C. S.

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**Without Abstract**

## Basic Biographical Information

Parrish (1853–1918) who preferred, Celeste, was born in Pittsylvania County, Virginia Thomas (2006). She died in Clayton, Georgia, where her grave monument bears the epitaph, “Georgia’s Greatest Woman,” an honor bestowed upon her by the State Superintendant of Georgia’s public schools. Orphaned at age 10, by age 15 and largely self-taught, it became necessary for her to teach in a rural Virginia school to support herself and her siblings. In 1893, after years of considerable sacrifice, hard work, and further education, Parrish was offered the chair in mathematics at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College (R-MWC) in Lynchburg, Virginia (R-MWC began admitting males in 2007 and was renamed Randolph College). Being responsible also for philosophy, pedagogy, and psychology, Parrish volunteered to learn psychology. Working around her obligations at R-MWC, she earned a bachelor’s degree (Ph.B.) in psychology at Cornell University in 1896. Her supervisor was the well-known experimental psychologist, E. B. Titchener (Parrish 1925).

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## Major Accomplishments/Contributions

Modeled on Titchener’s laboratory, Parrish established the psychological research laboratory at R-MWC in 1894, which is widely recognized to have been the first such laboratory in southern USA. In 1901, she was appointed Director of the “Practice School” and Chair of Psychology and Pedagogy at the Georgia State Normal School in Athens, Georgia (“normal schools” specialized in teaching post-secondary students to become teachers). In 1902, Parrish obtained funds from

the philanthropist, George Foster Peabody, to establish a first-rate psychological research laboratory and to build a practice school building at the Normal School. Parrish also taught child psychology during summers at the University of Georgia (Athens, GA), and circumstantial evidence suggests she was instrumental in establishing the first psychological research laboratory there in 1902.

Following her Ph.B. degree, Parrish spent three summers at the University of Chicago studying with John Dewey. She became a tireless advocate for progressive educational reform based on Dewey's pedagogical theories. Her advocacy was multiplied when her Normal School students began to teach, and Parrish obtained even wider results after she became a State School Supervisor (1911) responsible for the public schools in Georgia's 48 northernmost counties. In 1914, she evaluated the Atlanta Public School System, and the Board of Education enthusiastically adopted the progressive recommendations in her 33-page report.

Parrish's passion for implementing progressive education in Georgia also had deleterious effects on her career. She was a strong advocate for equal educational and employment opportunity, especially in education, for women. However, her advocacy of education for Negroes, despite how necessarily muted it had to be in the south in the early 1900s, was far less well received. Early in her tenure at the Georgia State Normal School, a bitter and enduring conflict arose between Parrish and the school's president, E. C. Branson, initially due to her refusal to behave subserviently toward him and to her insistence that she was his academic peer. Branson declared very early that one of them would have to go, but that the separation was delayed until 1911 (Montgomery 2008).

An early crisis for Parrish arose at the Normal School when in a class discussion about what interests whites should have in the Negroes, a student asked Parrish for her views about teaching them. Parrish replied that she had been glad to teach Negro teachers in their normal schools and would do so again. When the student replied that she would never teach Negroes, Parrish told her that if that was true, then she should get out of teaching. The student complained inaccurately to her politically influential father, and efforts were made in 1902 and in 1903 to have Parrish fired. She was exonerated on both occasions, but in 1911 Branson succeeded in getting the Board of Trustees to dismiss Parrish.

Parrish still had considerable influence and, as noted earlier, was appointed to be a State Supervisor responsible for public schools in Georgia's 48 northern counties. At that time she relocated her residency to Clayton, Georgia, where she remained until her death.

Parrish's theoretical contributions were best expressed as an innovative founder and advocate. Founding the first psychological laboratory in the south (and two others) contributed to psychology's development as a science. Equally important were her advocacies for Dewey's ideas for progressive education, women's rights, and for equal educational opportunities for Negroes.

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