



Queen of the Confederacy: The Innocent Deceits of Lucy Holcombe Pickens

Elizabeth Wittenmyer Lewis

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“Submissiveness is not my role, but certain platitudes on certain occasions are among the innocent deceits of the sex.”

A strong character with a fervent belief in woman's changing place, Lucy Holcombe Pickens (1832-1899) was not content to live the life of a typical nineteenth-century Southern belle. Wife of Francis Wilkinson Pickens, the secessionist governor of South Carolina on the eve of the Civil War, Lucy was determined to make her mark in the world. She married “the right man,” feeling that “a woman with wealth or prestige garnered from her husband's position could attain great power.”

Lucy urged Pickens to accept a diplomatic mission to the court of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, and in St. Petersburg Lucy captivated the Tsar and his retinue with her beauty and charm. Upon returning to the states, she became First Lady of South Carolina just in time to encourage a Confederate unit named in her honor (The Holcombe Legion) off to war.

The only woman to have her image engraved on Confederacy paper currency. Heralded as the uncrowned “Queen of the Confederacy”.

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