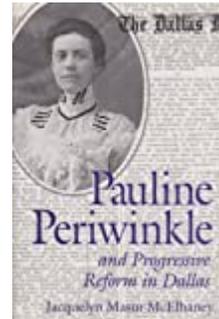




Jacquelyn Masur McElhaney. *Pauline Periwinkle and Progressive Reform in Dallas.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998. xix + 201 pp. \$29.92 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-89096-800-0.



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Pauline Periwinkle and the Dallas Morning News

Jacquelyn Masur McElhaney's study of Isadore Miner Callaway, AKA Pauline Periwinkle, the first women's editor for the Dallas Morning News from 1896 to 1916, adds to the growing body of literature of influential but forgotten turn-of-the-century middle-class professional women who through their jobs and their voluntary associations played critical roles in Progressive reforms. McElhaney combines biography and evidentiary materials from Callaway's editorials to recreate the Dallas world of that time and show us Callaway's place in it.

Sara Isadore Sutherland Miner Callaway was born in Michigan in 1863. She did not have a happy childhood. Her father, a Civil War soldier, died when she was seventeen months old, leaving his young widow with two children, Isadore and three-and-a-half-year-old Daniel. Her mother remarried a year later, and she and her new husband began a family where Isadore and her brother had no place. During most of her early years she and Daniel lived with various relatives. Nevertheless, as McElhaney reports, Isadore managed to get a good education, attended college, and began her journalism career.

Isadore followed her mother and other relatives in

their Seventh Day Adventists beliefs. Battle Creek, where she lived for several years, was known for its sanitarium and Kellogg Cereal Company. It was also the home of Ellen G. White, founder of Seventh Day Adventists, and the group's large publishing company. By 1883 Isadore had secured a job writing for one of its magazines, *Good Health*, and in 1889 became its editor. During this time she married her first husband, James W. Minor. The marriage did not work out, and in 1891 she left Battle Creek for Toledo to work at the *Toledo Commercial*. Two years later she moved to Dallas to join her mother, stepfather, and half siblings, perhaps as McElhaney suggests, forgiving her parents for her earlier treatment. She and Minor were divorced in 1895.

She began writing for the Dallas Morning News in 1894, and in 1896 became the paper's women's editor. During her early years in Texas, she helped organize numerous women's organizations: the Dallas Federation of Women's Clubs, the Equal Suffrage Club of Dallas, and the Texas Woman's Press Association, among others. She married William A. Callaway in 1900.

For twenty years, until her death in 1916, she edited

and wrote her weekly “Woman’s Century” page. In her first column as woman’s editor, she began using her Pauline Periwinkle byline. McElhaney doesn’t explain why she chose this nom de plum. Although well-known earlier nineteenth-century journalists Jane Cunningham Croly wrote as “Jennie June” and Sara Willis Parton wrote as “Fanny Fern,” most professional women wrote under their own names. Perhaps Isadore took a nom de plum as a way to conceal her divorce. McElhaney notes that Isadore identified herself as Mrs. S. Isadore Minor (widow J.W.) in Dallas city directories for two years after the Michigan divorce. Pauline Periwinkle made it possible for her to ignore the unpleasant subject altogether.

Although McElhaney begins with a biography of Callaway, the book’s substance depends on Callaway’s or Periwinkle’s *Dallas Morning News* columns. A quick perusal (a non-scientific estimate) suggests that a fourth to a third of the book features page-long excerpts from the newspaper. This is in no way a criticism. The columns, although sometimes tedious to read, provide rich and fascinating tidbits from daily life in turn-of-the-century Dallas and Texas. They also provide a window on gender issues in general and on the relationship between Pauline Periwinkle and women’s voluntary associations, particularly the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs (TFWC). For instance, in 1904 Callaway, as Pauline Periwinkle, urged her readers to support Texas legislation that would establish a juvenile court system. Many states had initiated juvenile courts, and Callaway and the TFWC believed that Texas had a compelling obligation to join that group. Legislators, however, were not so eager, and they rejected the proposal. Callaway showed her exasperation in her Periwinkle column of April 1905 shortly after the bill failed: “The very house that killed the bill framed to protect the boy passed one to protect goats and squirrels. Texas is way behind the procession of states that have cast aside the hide-bound, medieval method of treating wayward children as criminals” (p. 126).

As leader of the TFWC’s committee on juvenile courts, Callaway made sure that at its annual convention in Austin, in fall 1905, the federation committed itself to supporting another bill. With her eye to a coming election, Periwinkle, in a July 1906 column, directed her readers to “invite” candidates to “declare themselves.” Then she suggested that they “ask the man who, according to chivalric tradition, represents you by vote to cast his ballot for the candidate who pledges his support for juvenile courts ...” (p. 129). Finally in 1909, Periwinkle and her cause triumphed.

This is terrific material. The columns exemplify Periwinkle’s difficulties and those of other women who were denied suffrage yet wanted to participate in public affairs. They had to depend on the “chivalry” of the men in their households. With this in mind, the role played by Periwinkle in community activism is all the more important, and McElhaney should continually remind us of this. During the years of Callaway’s editorship, she and the majority of her readers relied on husbands, fathers, brothers, and uncles for getting their views voiced as votes. Callaway chose to get around this barrier by using traditional methods of appealing to men’s chivalry rather than tackling the problem head on by demanding women’s suffrage.

Did Periwinkle’s positions make her a leader in progressive reform or a follower? Many city newspapers provided space for women writers and many had women’s pages. McElhaney’s contention that Periwinkle was in the forefront of progressive reform would be more convincing if she had compared her methods to those of other newspaperwomen. McElhaney’s intent is to portray Periwinkle as a mover and shaker. More interpretation and analysis, not just historical context, that would have underscored McElhaney’s claim that Callaway was significant as an important figure in Texas politics during the Progressive era.

Consideration of race and ethnicity are surprisingly absent in the book. Yet this is the time of Jim Crow. Moreover, after the 1910 Mexican Revolution, the Mexican population in Texas increased. McElhaney dismisses race as an issue early on by observing that Callaway’s views were typically southern. This dismissal is a bit surprising since many of the reform measures Progressives wanted to see enacted were aimed at non-white or immigrant communities, although not exclusively. There were many white, non-immigrant children who lived wretched lives and Progressives included them in their programs. In Chapter Six, “The Children of the Present They are the Future,” Callaway involved herself and her readers in providing reforms that were at the heart of Progressives’ goals of assimilation: tuition-free kindergartens, playgrounds, and juvenile courts. In other cities, Progressives universally believed that poor children (read that immigrant children or children of color) lacked a proper family environment. They would profit from beginning school at the earliest age. Kindergartens would Americanize and introduce middle-class values to those children, and their school attendance would free up their older sisters so that they could attend school. Playgrounds would provide wholesome supervised play to

take those children off the streets and keep them out of unsavory places. Finally, juvenile courts would set up a system of probationary measures for adolescents accused of misdemeanors from those same families. In St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, among others, these reforms were aimed at non-white and immigrant communities. If Dallas's non-white or immigrant populations were not the target of these proposals, then McElhaney needs to tell us this, rather than leaving it up to her readers to speculate.

These comments aside, Isadore Minor Callaway and her newspaper columns have intrinsic value and we are thankful that McElhaney had brought them to our attention.

Review commissioned for H-SHGAPE by Gayle Gullett, Arizona State University.

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