

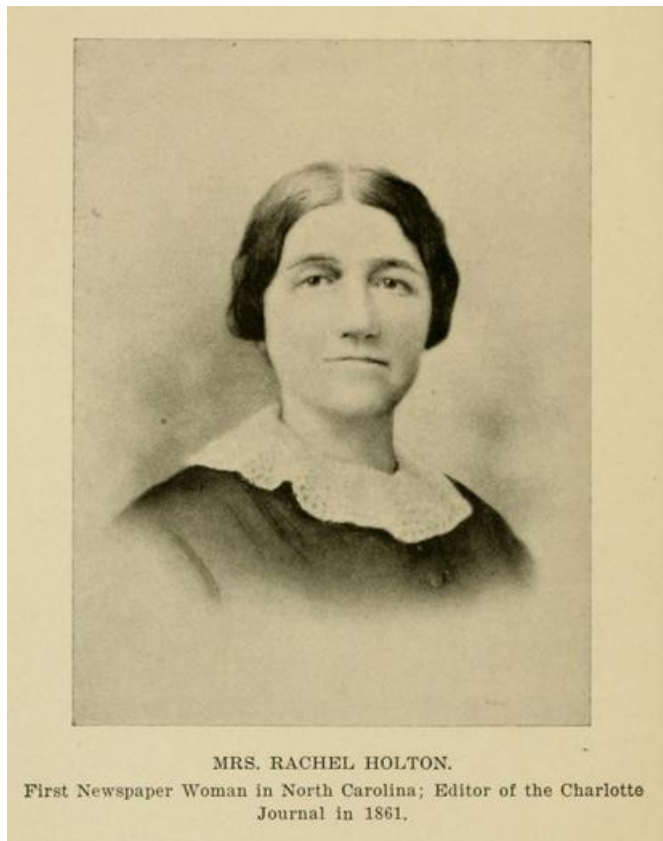
Holton, Rachel Regina Jones ^[1]

Holton, Rachel Regina Jones

by Kelly Agan, North Carolina Government & Heritage Library, 2016

23 May 1813-22 Nov 1905

See also: [Thomas Jefferson Holton](#) ^[2]



Portrait of Rachel Holton. From Daniel Augustus Tompkins' History of Mecklenburg County, published 1903, Charlotte, N.C.

^[3]Rachel Regina Jones Holton is considered to be the first newspaper woman in North Carolina. She became editor of the *North Carolina Whig* in 1860 when the paper's creator and editor, her husband Thomas Jefferson Holton, died unexpectedly from injuries sustained in a buggy accident.

Rachel Regina Jones was born in Richmond, Virginia in on May 28, 1813 to parents Leopold and Sarah Jones. She moved to Cabarrus County, North Carolina as a young woman to teach school and met and married Thomas Jefferson (T. J.) Holton. Holton, also originally from Virginia, was at the time working at the *Catawba Journal*. Rachel Jones and Thomas Holton were married on June 24, 1834 and set up their home in Charlotte around that time.

T. J. Holton's *North Carolina Whig* began as the *Miners' and Farmers' Journal* in 1830. In 1835, the paper changed its name to the *Charlotte Journal* and then to the *North Carolina Whig* in late 1851 or early 1852.

It is a fair assumption that Rachel Holton was closely involved in the business of the paper because she promptly took over operation when T. J. died in December, 1860. The masthead was quickly changed just a few weeks later and appeared under her name as "Publisher" for the January 15, 1861 issue. Rachel Holton appeared to have made her own immediate mark in assuming control of the paper: T.J. had credited himself in the paper's masthead as "Editor & Proprietor" -- Rachel took over as "Mrs. T. J. Holton Publisher." In February, she again changed the masthead to "Editor and Proprietor" and by the March 5, 1861 issue she was using "Editor and Proprietress." She managed to keep the paper going for a few more years during the Civil War, likely to sometime in 1863 based on surviving issues, despite the war and waning of the pro-union [Whig party](#) ^[4] in the secessionist state.

Rachel and T. J. Holton reportedly had eleven children. Their U.S. Census listing for 1850 suggests they had seven children living at home, ages zero to fifteen. The 1860 Census also listed seven children. At the time of her death in 1905, six children were reported living by the *Charlotte Daily Observer*: daughters Sarah Deaton, J.C. Crisp and H.C. Holton and

sons Harrison Holton, C.S. Holton, and E. J. Holton.

Rachel Horton was a well-known and prominent fixture in the developing city of Charlotte. Her name appeared frequently in the newspapers, and in her later years the *Daily Observer* referred to her as "Aunt Rachel." Her obituary in the paper reported that "No citizen of Charlotte has kept closer in touch with the activities of the city than the deceased. . . It is said that no one has been prouder of the strides forward made by Charlotte than has Mrs. Holton." She was reported as "one of the remarkable characters connected with the early history of [the] town." She spent the last eight years of her life homebound, never leaving her room, and lost sight in one eye at 89. She apparently remained in good health up until the end of her life and passed away after having contracted a cold or other mild respiratory virus.

In the 1890s she donated a large collection of documents and newspapers to the fledging Literary and Library Association, the organization that began efforts to organize the Charlotte Public Library and Museum, chartered later in 1903.

At her death, Rachel Holton owned significant real estate near the city center and lived in an "unpainted" antebellum mansion located east of the Trade Street railroad crossing. Papers reported her estate was valued at \$150,000. Her funeral was held at the Methodist Church on Tryon Street in Charlotte, and she was buried in the city's Elmwood Cemetery.

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[Rachel Holton.] Portrait. In Daniel Augustus Tompkins, *History of Mecklenburg County and the city of Charlotte: from 1740 to 1903*. Charlotte, N.C.: Observer Print., 1903. House. <https://archive.org/details/historyofmecklenb02tomp/page/n95/mode/2up?view=theater&q=holtan> [9]

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Authors:

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Origin - location:

Cabarrus County ^[16]

Mecklenburg County ^[17]

Charlotte ^[18]

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