

Tempus et Locus - Time and Place

A Journal of GGC's History and Geography Department

This Issue:

Feature Story p. 1

Ex Libris Column p. 2

Faculty News p. 3

Student, Alumni/ae & Course News p. 4



Issue

25

May 2024

Michael Gagnon: First Historian to Retire from GGC

Editorial Note: In honoring colleagues who have taught for over a decade at GGC before retiring, we recognize Dr. Michael Gagnon.



History Professor Michael Gagnon retired from GGC on February 1, 2024, after teaching for more than 30 years at the college level. Gagnon first taught for several years on the GGC campus for UGA Gwinnett, and then became the first historian on staff at GGC in 2007.

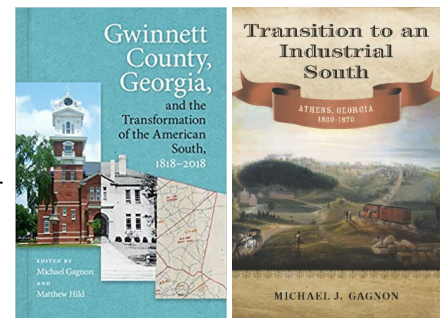
Like all of GGC's historians, Gagnon led an interesting life before coming to GGC. He joined the Navy upon graduation from high school and served as a laboratory technician on a nuclear powered submarine. Afterwards, Gagnon attended Georgetown University on the GI Bill and earned a degree in International Politics. During the next five years, he worked for a municipal government, became involved in historic preservation in his community, and wrote a successful federal grant to assess establishing a municipal archives.

In 1989, Emory University accepted Gagnon into its doctoral program in history. He wrote a dissertation on Athens, Georgia, as an industrial center before the Civil War. While a graduate student, he helped an Athens business get grants to microfilm and make public its records on slave insurance. He also founded an international organization, the Southern Industrialization Project, to promote the study of the history of industrialization in the southern US, and served as an officer of the organization for the next fifteen years. Emory awarded Michael Gagnon a doctorate degree in 1999.

Gagnon published his dissertation with LSU Press in 2012, and then published an edited collection of essays on Gwinnett County history (he contributed 2 essays) with UGA Press in 2022. He also published several online encyclopedia articles and numerous scholarly

book reviews, and he gave presentations on southern history at academic conferences and public forums. He also published a website of early republic primary document collections at earlyushistory.net. He continues researching a biography of Judge Augustin Smith Clayton, for whom Clayton County is named.

As a teacher, Gagnon emphasized telling history as a story, and teaching students the skills of historical research. "I always wanted to take students from where they were and get them to where they needed to be," he said. He also believed that history should be grounded in place, and thus regularly took students on field trips to historical sites, or to scholarly history conferences.



Gagnon presenting his final lecture at GGC in January 2024. It was on "Judge Clayton of Georgia: A Life in the Early Republic."

Ex Libris: On Dendrochronology



Joseph Henderson earned the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Tennessee. Prior to teaching at GGC, he taught at the United States Military Academy, West Point.

Geography is an extremely diverse discipline, being both a natural and a social science. As such, a plethora of disciplines exist, and my expertise is primarily on the natural side. My master's research was on landslides in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and my Ph.D. research was in tree-ring science or dendrochronology.

Dendrochronology is inextricably linked to history in various ways, as dendrochronology, as an academic discipline in the U.S., was born out of dendroarchaeological studies in the U.S. Southwest. A.E. Douglas, a professor at the University of Arizona, used cross-dating to link old timbers in Southwestern ruins to the tree-ring patterns of living trees in the 1920s. Consequently, he determined the dates of construction for those ruins, some as old as 700 A.D.

Dendroarchaeological studies to determine construction dates of historic structures is a common research endeavor. The University of Tennessee's Laboratory for Tree-Ring Science conducted several such studies in the past few decades, including the dating of the "Messiah," a violin made by Stradivari. I was part of a research team that dated the Hoskins House in the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park in Greensboro, North Carolina (photo). The process involved taking core samples from all available logs, creating a master chronology for the structure, and attempting to cross date the tree-ring pattern with existing tree-ring data from the local area that (theoretically) dates back to the construction date of the dwelling.

"...trees can't tell you the whole story, as many factors impact the growth of a tree."

Clearly, dendrochronology informs history, but the opposite is also true. In my research on longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Mill.) trees in the Southeastern U.S., historical research helped me understand some of the anomalous tree-ring patterns in the historical record, dating back to the 1600s in some cases. I was

attempting to reconstruct annual precipitation patterns in the tree-ring data, but the trees can't tell you the whole story, as many factors impact the growth of a tree. For example, an extremely tight (narrow rings) sequence beginning in 1835 in the Florida panhandle seemed to be impacted by an historic ice storm and freeze that dramatically slowed the growth of pines. I wouldn't have known that without digging into the history.

I also looked at fire history (using dendropyrochronology... that's a mouthful) at selected sites in eastern Texas, Florida, and the coastal region of South Carolina.



Henderson taking wood samples to determine a building's date.

Fire scars in remnant wood provide a record of fire occurrence in the past. In the mid-1800s, on Sandy Island, South Carolina, fire frequency was at its peak during the period of record I examined. A peek into the history of Sandy Island showed that more fires were likely ignited by humans during this period because agriculture activities peaked during that time. My appreciation for history was significantly enhanced during this research,

so *Tempus et Locus* makes sense to me.

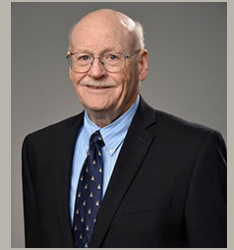
For Further Reading:

James Speer, *Fundamentals of Tree-Ring Research*. University of Arizona Press, 2012.

Take a Bow! Faculty Accomplishments

GGC History Professors publications

Edward Simmons saw two pieces published: 1) "Should Immigrants, Strangers, or Foreigners Be Considered Neighbors?" *American Baptist Quarterly* (Volume XL, #2) special issue: *Immigrants, Strangers, and Foreigners*; 2) "On Teaching Column: Anthropocene and World History," *Middle Ground Journal*, December 1, 2023. Link to the article (copy and paste): <https://middlegroundjournal.com/2023/12/01/on-teaching-column-anthropocene-and-world-history/> Simmons is awaiting a date for yet another article accepted for publication.



Publications:

Georgeta Connor published the journal article, "Shifting Rural Property from Private to Collectivized Land: The Politics of Land Reform and Agricultural Development in Romania, 1939-1962," in *Balkanistica* 36 (2023): 63-107.

Patrick Ludolph published two journal articles: 1) "Measuring Critical Thinking in Reacting to the Past," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 48, 1 (Dec. 2023): 91-105; and 2) "Supporting Thinking in Reacting to the Past," *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians* 40 (2024): 53-82.

Michael Gunther published a review of Erika Bsumek's *The Foundations of Glen Canyon Dam: Infrastructures of Dispossession on the Colorado Plateau* in *H-Environment* (June, 2023).

Eugene Berger. This has already been carried in the *SLA News: Liberating Arts*, but it is mentioned here for the sake of completion. Berger published *This Incurable Evil: Mapuche Resistance to Spanish Enslavement, 1598-1687*, University of Alabama Press, 2023.

Drs. Michael Gagnon and Matthew Hild's edited book, *Gwinnett County, Georgia, and the Transformation of the American South, 1818-2018*, (University of Georgia Press, 2022) was awarded the "GHRAC (Georgia History Regents Academic Committee) Excellence in Documenting Georgia History."

Academic Presentations:

Michael Gunther presented a paper, "Albert Gallatin's Final Days and the Fate of the Antebellum West," at the New England Historical Association Fall 2023 Conference.

Richard Rawls presented "Epictetus' Power of Public Speaking and the Faculty of Moral Purpose in the *Discourses*" at the 29th ACTC Conference in Memphis, in April 2024.

Patrick Zander presented "First Shots: Mussolini, Croatian Fascism, and the Murders in Marseille, 1934," in November 2023, at the Annual Conference of the Southern Historical Association in Charlotte, NC.

Andres Hajar presented "This is Why We Stay: Culture, Identity and Migration for the Urban Zoques in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas and the Raramuri in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua" at the XXXV Congreso Internacional de Literatura y Estudios Hispánicos, in Oaxaca, Mexico, on March 5, 2024.

Special On-Campus Presentations:

Eugene Berger and Andres Hajar gave a presentation in April 2024, on *This Incurable Evil: Mapuche Resistance to Spanish Enslavement*, to the "Lectures in Latin American History and Culture" series, sponsored by the **Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS)**. OLAS, advised by Richard Rawls, won the "RSO" of the Year for the fifth time in the last 11 years.

Richard Rawls presented *The Gothic Language Inside and Outside of Rome's Empire* to the "Talks in Linguistics" series, on March 19, 2024.

Constitution Day: History and Geography Contributions 2023

Three days of Constitution Day observances commenced on Thursday 14 September with a panel on the "Constitution and Age" on Thursday 14 September. Historians Michael Gunther and Richard Rawls were joined by Drs. Laura Bourland (POLS) and Gaynell Simpson (Social Work). Gunther's presentation was titled "American Gerontocracy?: Historical Roots and Considerations." In addition to organizing the observances, Rawls moderated the panel. On Tuesday 19 September, faculty presented at "The Constitution, Political Districts, and the Politics of Geography." Historian Richard Cook presented "'What the Heck Is a 'Gerrymander'?" Geographer Joseph Henderson presented "'Gerrymandering: Blue or Red?" Joining them were Drs. Steven Jones (POLS) and Janita Rawls (Management). On Wednesday 20 September, Judge Kristina Blum, Chief Magistrate of Gwinnett County, presented The Judicial System and Constitutional Ties in Gwinnett County."

Alumni/ae, Student, and Event News

News About our Grads

Terrence Stover, '13, History Teacher Cert., was named "Teacher of the Year" at Peachtree Ridge High School for 2023-2024.

Monica El-Amin, '17, History, is the Coordinator of African-American History at the DeKalb History Center in downtown Decatur, Georgia.

Amelia Porter, '17, History, received the prestigious "Gwinnett Young Professionals 35 Under 35 Award."

Kolton DeFoor, '21, English major, History minor, was appointed to the GGC Alumni Board.

Charis Wilkinson, '23, history, was hired as a paralegal for Gary Martin Hays & Associates in Duluth, GA.

Student News

Matt Long, history, presented "The Panzer Problem: Re-buking Nazi Tank Superiority and Doctrinal Genius," at the The James A. Barnes Club Graduate student organization of the History Department at Temple University Conference on 23 March 2024.

Create Symposium. On November 30, 2024, GGC hosted its annual CREATE Symposium. The following history majors presented their research (with titles of presentation):

Amanda Ashley: "The Hoodoo About Hoodoo: White Perceptions of African Syncretic Religion in Savannah."

Jayla George: "The Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1876 Savannah"

Malik Watkins: "Freedmen's Education in the South"

Yonatan Hagos: "Atlanta Race Riot of 1906"

Robert Benca, geography minor, presented "On The Siege of Tyre" at the CREATE Symposium.

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Graduate School Admissions

Taylor Tabb, '16, was admitted into a masters degree in Public History at Southern New Hampshire University.

Adam Huff, '20, was admitted into the MLIS program at Valdosta State University.

Gunter Bales, '19, was admitted into the Ph.D. program in history at Georgia State University.

Kiley Olchaskey, '23, History Minor, was admitted to Valdosta State University's MA program in English with an emphasis in rhetoric.

Matt Long, (current student) was admitted into the MA program in history at Georgia State University.

Samih Awad, (current student) was admitted into the MA program in history at Georgia State University.

Fall 2023 Commencement



Faculty and Students After the Ceremony. Standing (L-R): Drs. David Dorrell, Patrick Ludolph, Richard Rawls, Nathan Orgill, Michael Gunther, Ellen Rafshoon, and students Jennifer Langham Charis Wilkinson, and Brian Davis. Kneeling: Kiley Olchaskey, Austin Bibb, and James O'Donovan.

The Fall 2023 Commencement Ceremony was held on December 14, at the Gas South Arena. Nick Masino, president and CEO, Gwinnett Chamber and Partnership Gwinnett, gave the commencement address. Those graduating with a bachelors of arts in history included: Austin Bibb, Brian Davis, Jennifer Langham, Bryce Martin, James O'Donovan, and Charis Wilkinson. Those graduates with a bachelors of arts in history with teacher certification included David Do and Jongmin Mafuku. Kiley Olchaskey earned a minor in history, and Robert Benca earned a minor in geography.