



THE ATHENS STROLLER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FALL 2020

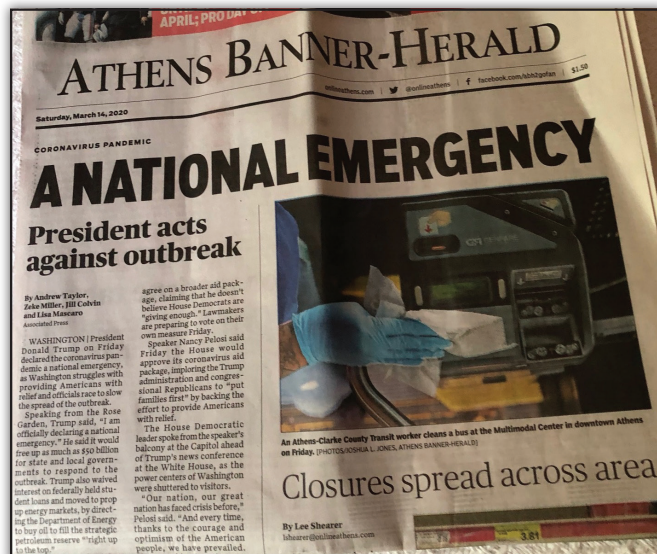


Note: Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was no Spring 2020 issue of the *Stroller*, and Beth and Steven Brown's two-part program, "Lost Athens: Exploring the North Side before Urban Renewal," scheduled for April 22 and May 6 at the ACC Library, had to be cancelled. Hopefully that program can someday be re-scheduled. Some material that was to be in the spring *Stroller* is included here.

ATHENS' FIRST PANDEMIC: 1918



Oct 8, 1918: *Athens Banner* article on outbreak of Spanish flu pandemic



March 14, 2020: *Athens Banner-Herald* article on outbreak of Covid-19, Athens' second pandemic

prohibited until further notice. The only exception was necessary war work, as World War I was still raging abroad.

Andrew Cobb Erwin, the mayor of Athens at the time, ordered a strict enforcement of an anti-spit ordinance on the sidewalks of the city and in all public places. Physicians were required to report all cases of influenza within 24 hours of diagnosis. If no physician was available, this became the responsibility of the head of the household. Photos show people wearing masks.

However, the 1918 quarantine in Athens was much briefer than today's and apparently the city suffered less. According to the *Athens Daily Herald*, Nov. 1, 1918, the quarantine was lifted

on Nov. 2. The Athens Board of Education voted for the schools to have only one week of Christmas break to make up for lost time as a result of the quarantine. According to the December 3 *Athens Banner*, Christmas vacation began on Dec. 20, 1918, and ended on Dec. 30. Between 800-1,000 people in Athens had been infected with influenza, but only 17 died. "Compared with other cities, this showing is remarkable both for the relatively small number of cases and for the extremely low death rate," the paper said.

It may seem to many of us that the pandemic and the consequent closings and regulations are a bizarre first in the history of the United States and Athens, but this is not the case. The Great Influenza epidemic of 1918 spread over the country by fall of that year, along with fear and panic. As a Grenada, Mississippi newspaper reported, "The young and old alike have furnished victims for the influenza . . . Death stalks abroad at all times and at all hours." Known as "the Spanish flu," it was history's most calamitous infectious pandemic to date, killing five percent of the world's population. The disease was marked by rib-cracking coughing spells, intense pain, and the skin turning a deep blue.

Athens, Georgia, was not spared. According to the *Athens Banner*, October 8, 1918, , an ordinance went into effect on October 7, at 7 pm closing all of the city's "moving picture establishments," pool or billiard rooms, amusement halls or tents, schools, churches and Sunday schools. All public gatherings were also



Signs of COVID-19 in Athens

AHS BOARD UPDATE

UPDATED AND CORRECTED LIST OF CURRENT AHS BOARD MEMBERS AND THEIR TERMS

Note: In 2017, the AHS Bylaws were updated to allow fifteen members to serve on the Board rather than twelve. The 2019-2021 terms end in January, although they may be extended for a short time this year due to the COVID-19 cancellation of AHS events.

2019-2021

Dan Aldridge
Larry B. Dendy
Bill Mann
Patricia McAlexander
Harry Neely
Ashleigh Oatts
Ashley Shull
Fred Smith

2020-2022

Tom Gresham
Cindy Hahamovitch
Kristie L. Person
Randy Reid
Jonathan Scott
Frank Thornburg
Sam Thomas

The Winter 2020 Stroller went to print before all Board nominations were in. Here are the two new Board members whose bios and pictures did not appear in that issue:



Jonathan Scott has a master's degree in historic preservation and public history from Georgia State University. He's been a curator for projects with the Atlanta History Center, the Smyrna Museum of History and the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw. He was co-curator of an exhibition on the Titanic held in China, and he's been a historical consultant for a television series. He lives in Winterville where he has a consulting business and is secretary of the Winterville Historic Preservation Commission.



Frank Thornburg retired in 2007 from a 25-year career in the U.S. Air Force with the rank of colonel. His training is in health care, with a specialty in the area of nursing, and he held command positions in medical operations at Air Force bases in the U.S., England, and Germany. After retiring, Col. Thornburg held leadership positions in nursing at hospitals in Colorado and the VA Medical Center in Augusta. Since moving to Athens 10 years ago, he's taken a strong interest in local history and is active in both the Athens Historical Society and Historic Athens. He volunteers with Meals on Wheels, is on the board of the American Legion and on the alumni committee of the Athens-Clarke County Citizens Police Academy.

THANKS TO ATHENS BOARD MEMBERS

Thanks to the Board members who stepped down at the end of their terms, with a particular recognition for Svea Bogue, who handled refreshments at programs and served as membership co-chair; Jordan Shoemaker, the other membership co-chair, keeper of the Excel mailing list, and coordinator of the Jefferson ramble and the AHS program in Winterville; and Steve Armour, AHS historian. Although she is not a member of the Board, Theresa Flynn, former AHS vice president and one of the editors of the *Athens Historian*, will take Steven's place as AHS historian.

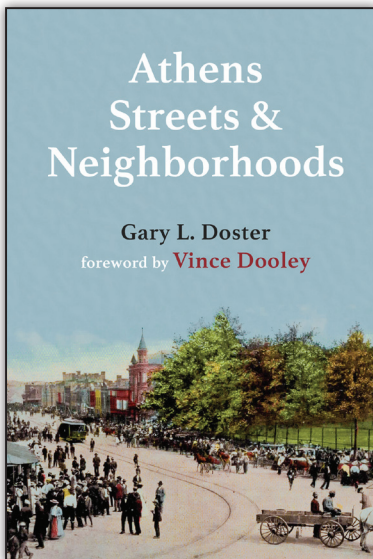
We also thank these Board members who have agreed to serve as AHS officers for another year: Sam Thomas, President, keeps us organized at the TRR Cobb house meeting room; Harry Neely, Treasurer, handles dues, donations, and budget (and checks our mail); Ashley Shull, secretary, not only takes the minutes at our meetings but also is ACC library liaison and responder to AHS email; Larry Dendy, vice president, takes care of many ad hoc tasks and serves as chief editor of the *Historian*. We also particularly thank Dan Aldridge, for doing a great job managing our merchandise as well as arranging for the publication of Michael Thurmond's book and the maps of Winterville; Ashleigh Oatts, who does our Facebook posts and is our liaison to Inherit Athens; Bill Mann, who maintains the AHS membership list; and Pat McAlexander, *Stroller* editor and an *Historian* editor.

AVID BOOKSHOP, THE WILLSON CENTER, AND AHS CO-SPONSOR "CONVERSATION: CLAUDIO SAUNT WITH NICHOLAS ALLEN"

On October 22, Avid Bookshop, UGA's Willson Center for Humanities and Arts, and the Athens Historical Society co-sponsored (will co- sponsor) a Zoom conversation between Claudio Saunt, Richard B. Russell Professor in American History at UGA, and Professor Nicholas Allen, Director of the Willson Center for Humanities. Professor Saunt discussed his book *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (W.W. Norton & Co, 2020), which is a finalist for the National Book Award.

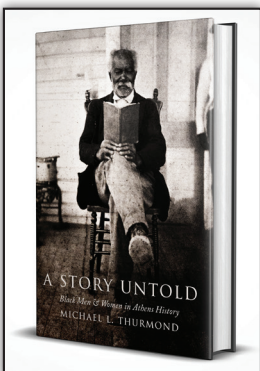
In May 1830, the United States formally launched a policy to expel Native Americans from the East to territories west of the Mississippi River. *Unworthy Republic* reveals how expulsion became national policy and describes the chaotic and deadly results of the operation to deport 80,000 men, women and children. It was selected as one of five finalists for the National Book Award in nonfiction from among more than 600 books submitted for consideration. The winner of the award will be announced Nov. 18. Saunt's book can be ordered at www.avidbookshop.com.

GARY L. DOSTER'S BOOK *ATHENS STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS* SOON TO BE AVAILABLE



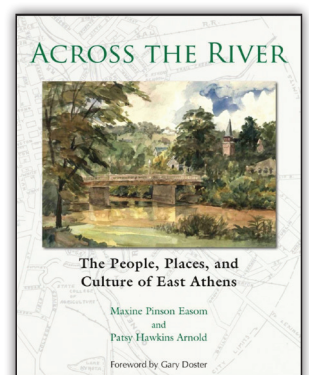
The Athens Historical Society has contracted with Deeds Publishing to publish Gary L. Doster's latest book, *Athens Streets and Neighborhoods: The Origins of Some Street Names and Place Names in Athens, Georgia*, with a foreword by Vince Dooley. When you read this book, you'll learn the history of "Five Points," which street was once named States Rights Street, and many other fascinating facts and stories about our city. *Athens Streets and Neighborhoods* will be available by early December, in time for the holidays. AHS will email members purchase information.

OTHER BOOK NEWS



With the arrival of covid-19, the scheduled signing events for Michael Thurmond's book *A Story Untold: Black Men and Women in Athens History* (40th anniversary edition) were cancelled. However, it is still available for sale. The ebook can be found on Amazon (Kindle books), and AHS still has hardcover copies available for \$25.00. Email AHS if you are interested in purchasing a hardcover copy.

Maxine Easom and Patsy's Arnold's book *Across the River: The People, Places, and Culture of East Athens* been awarded an Excellence in Documenting Georgia History award from the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council at the Georgia Archives. It is available at Avid Bookshop: www.avidbookshop.com.



PORTRAIT OF MR. TED COMES HOME



Owen Park of Athens Framing Gallery hung the portrait in Clarke Central High School's Mell Auditorium.

Probably in the early 1920s, Mary Jett Franklin, a celebrated and widely traveled Athens artist, painted a large oil on canvas portrait of Edward ("Mr. Ted") Mell, beloved principal of Athens High School from 1909 to 1943. It was hung in the city auditorium, a building on the Athens High School campus on Prince Avenue at Hill Street—appropriately so, for the building was named Mell Auditorium for Mr. Ted. The *Athens Banner-Herald* ran a front-page story about the naming of it for Mell on 17 May 1923). Apparently, the naming for Mell was the idea of the school's PTA. The last paragraph states, "The cornerstone to the Mell Auditorium will be laid during commencement week with Masonic ceremony. The auditorium is now being constructed and will be one of the most handsome buildings in the city. It was provided for in the \$225,000 school bond issue last year."



Then Owen took this picture of Harriet Anderson, Pat McAlexander, and Larry Dendy with the portrait.

The old Athens High Building on Prince Avenue was demolished in 1959. The portrait apparently remained in the Mell Auditorium until that building was demolished in the 1970s. Wendy's now occupies the Athens High site, Captain D's the site of the Auditorium.

After the Auditorium was demolished, the portrait of Mell mysteriously disappeared. In 2018 it reappeared equally mysteriously, donated by persons unknown to the current iteration of Athens High—Clarke Central, located off Milledge Avenue and Baxter Street. The portrait was in bad shape, and the frame damaged. Under the leadership of Mary Bondurant Warren, with the help of Harry Neely, Pat McAlexander, and Larry Dendy, AHS undertook to restore the portrait and repair the frame. Members and friends of the Society donated funds, and in January 2020 the restored portrait was hung in the present Mell Auditorium, located in a wing of Clarke Central. There, it paired with a later large oil portrait of Mell by Reuben Gambrell, a resident of Athens from 1938 to 1942 while he was a Master of Fine Arts student at the University of Georgia under Lamar Dodd and then a UGA art instructor. The portrait was probably painted during those years.

The AHS liaison at Clarke Central was drama teacher Harriet Anderson, and it turned out that her mother, Margaret Timm, and Mary Bondurant Warren had been close friends—and that Harriet herself had babysat for Larry Dendy's son when she was a high school student. These connections made the delivery of the portrait seem right, even, we might say, destined. As Harriet, Larry, and I posed with the newly hung portrait in the new Mell Auditorium, it seemed the long-lost image of Mr. Ted had indeed come home. Now of course, both portraits look out over a mostly empty auditorium, but we hope that soon students will again return, and that they will take note of these portraits of a much beloved man, so important to their school's history.



This portrait of Mr. Ted by Reuben Gambrell now has a companion.

AHS WINTER PROGRAM ON GERMAN POWS



Jason Wetzel speaking at the Winter AHS program on his book on January 26

At our winter program on January 26, Jason Wetzel presented a program on *Georgia POW Camps in World War II*, his recently released book co-authored with Kathryn Roe Coker. In a talk illustrated with many amazing slides, Mr. Wetzel described the lives of those POWs after their capture—including the process of removing them to camps in America and their daily lives in those camps. Twelve thousand POWs were sent to Georgia where they underwent prisoner re-education and work programs, particularly on farms. The audience was entranced by the presentation and the archival slides



Cover of Life magazine showing German prisoners



Here, watching the screen, is Lugwig Uhlig, retired head of the UGA German Department, who as a boy lived in Dresden, Germany during the bombing of that city by the Allies during World War II.



Jason Wetzel signing books at reception after the program. He sold all but two of the books he brought with him. (photos by Pat McAlexander)

In Memoriam

Lugwig Otto Uhlig

**Retired Head of the UGA German Department
June 2, 1931 – February 25, 2020**

Dr. Harvey Cabiness, Jr., MD

September 20, 1927 – March 4, 2020

HERITAGE ROOM AND HARGRETT ARE OPEN

The Richard B. Russell Library building reopened to the public on August 10. The Hargrett reading room is open for research Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. The exhibit galleries are open the same days 8:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m., with the *Strategies of Suffrage* exhibit up through December 18. This exhibit, curated by Sidonia Serafini, a doctoral student in the English department of UGA's Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, features newspapers, magazines, books, photographs, and pamphlets that illustrate the campaign in the United States for women's right to vote, a campaign that eventually led to the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.



The Richard B. Russell Library which houses the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library is now open, as is the Heritage Room at the ACC Library. (photo by Patricia McAlexander)

The Heritage Room at the Athens-Clarke County Library again became available to researchers on Monday, October 5, though now by appointment only. To book an hour-long appointment call 706-613-3650 ext. 350 or email heritageroomref@athenslibrary.org. Appointments are available Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., and Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Patrons will need to wait at the front doors of the library to be escorted to the Heritage Room. Staff will meet you at your designated appointment time. Appointments are for just one hour per day, as only a limited number of people can be in the building at once. The collection will be closed for browsing, but staff will pull any items you may need. They also will continue to offer virtual assistance via online video and phone.

UPDATING THE AHS WEBSITE

As many of you know, we need to update our website. Helping us with this project are students enrolled in UGA's New Media Institute, which houses the University's largest certificate program. According to their website, the New Media Certificate is a credential that demonstrates a student is "technowledgeable": that is, that he or she understands new media technologies and their application in a chosen field. The program culminates in New Media Capstone projects—a program under the direction of John Weatherford. As Weatherford explains, students in his NMIX 4510/6510 class work together, calling "upon all of the skills gained throughout their certificate journey to develop, design, and debut [a project] for a client." At the end of the semester the students participate in "SLAM," a day (virtual this year) of showcasing their projects and networking with industry guests and program alumni.

Redesigning and updating the AHS website is one of the program's Capstone projects. We hope that, with the help of these students, the website can be made more helpful, user friendly, and visually appealing. We also hope to continue the project former Board member Donnie Summerlin began—posting on it a number of our *Historian* articles with keywords, thus making the information they provide available to the public—actually, the world!—via Google and other search engines.

CALLS FOR YOUR COVID-19 STORIES



The 2020 Stroller

Newspaper articles are a major source of information about the 1918 pandemic in Athens, and newspapers will likewise be a source for historians of this 2020 epidemic. However, today, both the A-C-C Library's Heritage Room and the UGA Special Collections Libraries have put out calls for art or writing by individuals describing their personal experiences, activities, thoughts, and feelings to be made available to future students, historians, and researchers to be resources as well. The Heritage Room asks for materials from "the Athens-Clarke County Community and surrounding communities" and says they "can be handwritten, typed, in audio (Voice Notes), or video"; they say not to worry about "length, handwriting, spelling, or grammar." Photos are also welcome.

The UGA Libraries website, which calls for all Georgians to submit, asks for similar materials: "Digital submissions may include personal reflections, photos, poetry, recordings or any other means that demonstrate how the pandemic affects people's lives."

It points out that, "The collection will act as a time capsule accessible to researchers, educators and students at UGA and around the world. The materials will provide context and personal stories of the positive and negative impact felt during this period."

These links take you to the Heritage Room submission form:

For Google users: <https://forms.gle/ZDByKJHUQQ5ojjZr6>.

For those without a Google account: <https://forms.gle/mJjAk4nxG8RtEGG27>

To submit items to the UGA Libraries, visit libs.uga.edu/covid-collection and click the appropriate submission button at the bottom.

FROM OUR PHOTO ARCHIVES:



July 19, 2015: AHS members Svea Bogue, Pat McAlexander, Larry Dendy, George Smith, and Steven Brown tour the basement of the Richard B. Russell Library—a reward for hand folding and placing copies of the Stroller in envelopes for of the Stroller for mailing. (Now Athens Mailing does this for us.)



November 21, 2015: AHS members on Beech Haven ramble listening to guide Lucy Rowland.

ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP LIST

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have for now been unable to continue our public in-person programs. Thus the Board decided to automatically renew our 2019 members for 2020. Those who have already paid dues for 2020 will be renewed to 2021 (actually to March 2022; our membership year is officially March 1 – March 1). We will continue sending members the Historian and Strollers as they are published, as well as emailing them information and notices. Below is a list from treasurer Harry Neely of those who paid their 2020 dues; these people should consider themselves paid through March 2022.

INDIVIDUAL

Allen County Public Library Fort Wayne
Leona Benkoski
Charles B. Bonner
Lynn Simmons Chvotkin
Heidi Davison
Delois Gainey
Max Gilstrap
Cheryl Granrose
Carolyn Hester
Claire James
Barbara Laughlin
Jane Marston
Judy Masters
Elaine Neal
John Nicholson
Susan Noble
Elizabeth Pape
J.B. Tanner, Jr.
Frank Thornburg
Captain R E Thornton
Reginald Vipperman
George Walker
Carol Williams

FAMILY

Dan & Judy Aldridge \$50 Family
John and Angele Barrow
Pat & Hubert McAlexander
Harry and Celeste Neely
Kristie & Erik Person
David & Katherine Rush
Natalie King Clapp & Richard Swatek

SUPPORTING

Historic Athens
Bill Paul
Arvid Vasenden

PATRON

Svea & Ron Bogue
Larry Dendy
Lucy Nickerson Tresp

DONATIONS (THANK YOU!)

Elaine Neal \$35
Lucy Nickerson (\$100 donation in memory
of Lothar Tresp)

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