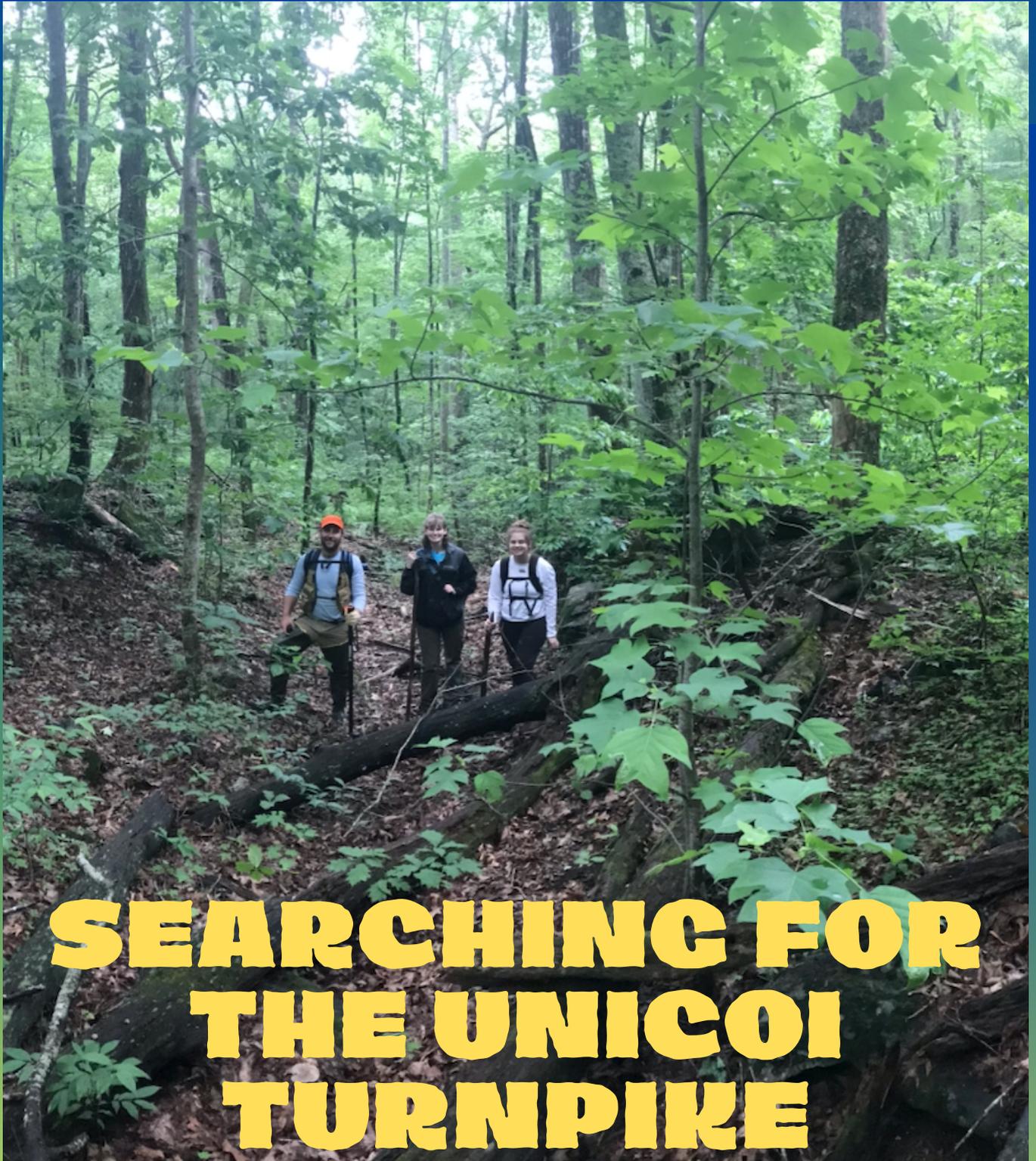


FALL 2021

# gam *essenger*

Georgia Association of Museums



## SEARCHING FOR THE UNICOI TURNPIKE

Pictured: Dr. Jake McDonald and interns Brittany Mann and Katelyn Comer

# From the President



Hey GAM!

Here we go again! Just when it seemed like things would be slightly less, err, infectious out there, Georgia again finds itself in the throes of a raging pandemic. Some of us re-opened our museums a while ago; others just recently, and a few were planning to open in the fall. The Delta variant of COVID has been a challenge to us all about how to adjust, especially since the vaccine provides such a degree of protection, but still permits us to pass it around to those who are not or cannot be vaccinated. I can't offer any answers, just sympathy and an open mind to how other institutions and people are handling this round. We remain optimistic about an in-person conference in Thomasville in February, where the theme will be "The Next Normal." Whatever that is!

Hope to see you all soon and stay well,

Ephraim

.....

## ***The Next Normal:***

### **GAM 2022 in Thomasville, February 6-9**

Preparations for the Georgia Association of Museums Conference in Thomasville are continuing. The local host committee, which includes staff from the Thomasville History Center, Jack Hadley's Black History Museum, Pebble Hill Plantation, Thomasville Center for the Arts, the Mitchell-Young-Anderson Museum, and the City of Thomasville, is planning some great events at all of the facilities, including off-site workshops and special tours.

The Thomasville – Thomas County Humane Society is even getting involved: The conference coffee breaks will now also be puppy and kitten breaks! Take a mental health break between sessions by playing with some furry friends; we're not responsible if you adopt one. For the Tuesday night's MUSE auction and dinner, you'll have a chance to sample some of Thomasville's best restaurants who will be setting up a food tour at the Thomasville Center for the Arts. There's plenty of other surprises and good news coming about our 2022 conference. See you there!

# Searching for the Unicoi Turnpike

by Jennie Inglis  
Marketing & Development Coordinator  
Sautee Nacoochee Cultural Center

The Sautee Nacoochee Community Association (SNCA) is excited to announce a new research project to locate and map the Unicoi Trail in northeast Georgia. In December 2020, Alan Hall, president of the SNCA Board of Directors, initiated a collaboration with the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega to find, digitize and map what is left of the Unicoi Turnpike in Georgia. Beginning in early June and working through July, Professor Jacob McDonald and two interns used a variety of means to find, verify and map what is left of the old road.

The Unicoi Turnpike was the “first vehicular route to link East Tennessee, Western North Carolina and North Georgia with the head of navigation on the Savannah River System.” According to Hall, “Much of the 200+-year-old Unicoi Turnpike has vanished under plows and bulldozers, but important sections remain. We hope to engage citizens to help us find, verify and map the remaining traces of the old road, ultimately through all of Georgia.”

For Inglis, it is personal. "Growing up in north Georgia, I have heard of the Unicoi Turnpike much of my life, but its history was overshadowed by the history of the Civil War in Georgia. The turnpike's roots are deep, literally and figuratively. It is an ancient trace that served Native Americans as well as White Settlers. It's roadbed was built by extraordinary labor, the banks of which ride high on either side of the road. It is amazing to see the turnpike deep in the forests of the mountains and even running along property lines of cleared fields. I look forward to hearing the story told by this exciting project."

Dr. McDonald is an assistant professor at the University of North Georgia Lewis F. Rogers Institute for Environmental and Spatial Analysis in Dahlonega. He chose two of his students, Brittany Mann and Katelyn Comer, to do nine weeks of research on the project. The SNCA History Committee and the White County Historical Society funded expenses for the interns and will provide research support.

The team began in Towns County at Unicoi Gap and worked their way southeast, doing ground-truthing “where data collected at a distance are confirmed by measurements made on location,” interviews with local historians and property owners, and precisely mapping potential routes. Their findings will be used in conjunction with Lidar to compile maps of the trail. Lidar, an acronym for Light Detection and Ranging, “is a remote sensing method that ... allows scientists and mapping professionals to examine both natural and manmade environments with accuracy, precision, and flexibility.” At the completion of the project, the maps will be shared with the public via SNCA's award-winning smartphone app The Heart & Heritage of the Northeast Georgia Mountains and with Google Earth Pro, which anyone can download and use.

# Meet Your New GAM Board Members



## MELISSA SWINDELL

Melissa Swindell is the Executive Director of the Georgia Writers Museum in Eatonton, Georgia with a mission to celebrate the state's rich literary history, promote its contemporary writers, educate readers and writers of all ages and connect people to the literary arts of Georgia.

Melissa is a native Georgian and holds a BA in History from Georgia State University (2009), and MAs in

American Studies from The George Washington University (2012) and Museum Studies with a certificate in Non-Profit Management from Johns Hopkins University (2013). She began her career as an intern and subsequently a Junior Fellow in the Associate Director's Office of Curatorial Affairs at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Following this experience, Melissa transitioned into small museum administration with a specialty in public history and audience development and retention. She first served as Curator of the Andrew County Museum and Treasurer of the St. Joseph's Museum Association in northeastern Missouri. She then served as Director of Historic Resources and Education Programs at Heritage Sandy Springs in Sandy Springs, Georgia, and later as Executive Director of The Wren's Nest: National Historic Landmark in Atlanta, Georgia.

"I look forward to serving on the GAM board and having the opportunity to better get to know my fellow museum professionals across the state."



Karin Johnston Dalton is the Museum Registrar and Collections Manager at The Georgia Capitol Museum where she looks after a diverse collection including two hundred flags and a two-headed calf. Professionally, she serves as the President of the Friends of the Georgia Archives, as a member of the American Alliance of Museums, the Registrars Committee of the American Alliance of Museums, the Association of Registrars and Collection Specialists, the Society of Georgia Archivists as well as the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries. In addition, Karin is a Certified Archivist and a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists. She attended GAM's 2020 annual conference and presented "Make Over - How Museums Have Learned from the Past & Create a Vision for the Future". While her first GAM conference, she was impressed by the quality of topics, speakers and events and is excited to be part of the team that created this program as well as work with other museums and professionals throughout Georgia.

Previously, Karin was the Exhibit Registrar at the US Capitol Visitor Center in Washington DC where she lived for almost 20 years. She graduated with Bachelor degrees in Archaeology/Anthropology and Ancient Welsh History from Washington and Lee University and a Master's degree in Museum Studies from the George Washington University.

Karin lives in Ormewood Park, a neighborhood in Atlanta, with her husband and two cats.



## KARIN JOHNSTON DALTON



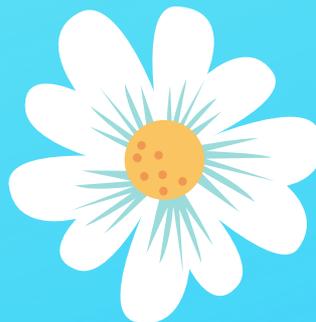


# HARVEE WHITE



Harvee White is happy to be a new member of the GAM board. She is the Education Manager at History Cherokee in Canton, Georgia. Harvee graduated in 2013 with an undergraduate degree in Art History from Georgia State University, and she received her MA in Public History and Museum Studies from the University of West Georgia in 2017. While in college, Harvee participated in GAM as part of the annual conference intern program. In addition to her role in GAM, she also serves on the editorial board of NCPH's *The Public Historian*, and is on the historic marker review panel for the Georgia Historical Society.

Harvee is a plant mom to 15 plants, and she loves a good podcast recommendation. She says- "Thanks for having me on the GAM board!"





# POLLY HUFF

Polly has served the arts and culture industry in Georgia for more than two decades, ranging in capacities from art teacher, to programming director, to gallery and museum curator and administrator. For the last 21 years she has served at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, with the last 11 years being in her current position at ABAC's Georgia Museum of Agriculture. Her job as a Curator for the Historic Collection and Director for the Art Gallery has allowed her not only the opportunity to design and create exhibits, but the privilege to tell stories, and nurture

relationships. Additionally Polly spends time on the main college campus where she oversees 113 years of institutional archives. On the museum's campus, she gets to spend her days caring for a collection of over 100000 artifacts and 36 historic structures, and she considers herself a guardian and a steward of all the stories that come with those. For the last two years, Polly has also overseen and cared for a new historic house on a third campus, which is now a part of the College's portfolio. In addition, for the last 9 years she has served as the staff liaison for a local producers' Farmers Market located on site at the Museum. At all three sites, one of the highlights of Polly's work is getting to be directly involved in the lives of her interns, all of whom stay in touch long after they graduate, and most of whom she has had the joy of assisting with getting into grad school, getting their first dream job, planning their weddings, or shopping for their first babies.

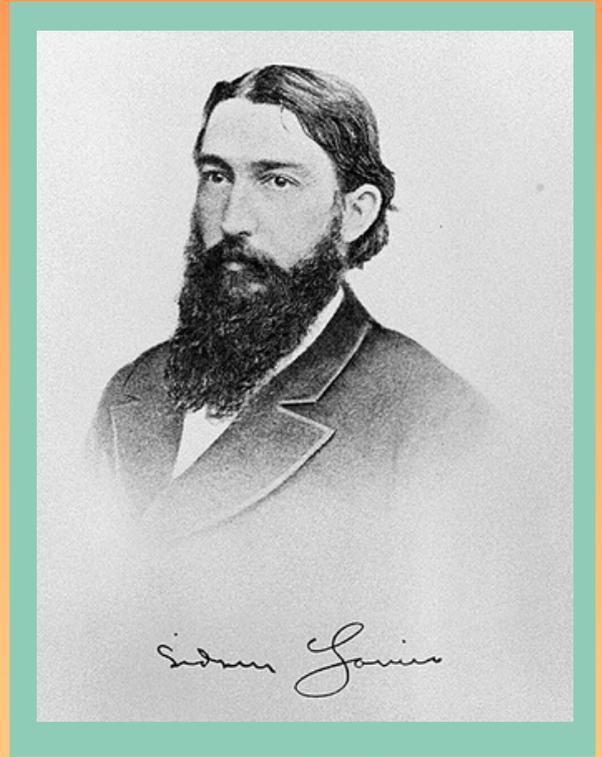
Polly has been actively involved with GAM over the last 9 years, having served two consecutive board terms over the last 6. She deeply cares about the museum industry and her colleagues across the state who keep it alive and thriving. After a year off the Board, Polly is ready to serve again and see what the future holds for our industry in a post-pandemic world.



# Georgia Writers Museum Receives Loan of Sidney Lanier Artifacts

This January, Georgia Writers Museum received a significant collection of historic artifacts from Historic Macon Foundation. Sidney Lanier's poetic and musical presence will soon be on display in a new exhibit, complete with his actual possessions.

"Sidney Lanier has been in my backyard," boasted Chip Bell, a board member and researcher for Georgia Writers Museum. "I have a home that sits right on the banks of the Chattahoochee River in the North Georgia mountains. In the early mornings, as I hear the river rushing over giant rocks, I can hear the enchanting words of Lanier's 'The Song of the Chattahoochee:'"



Out of the hills of Habersham,  
Down the valleys of Hall,  
I hurry amain to reach the plain,  
Run the rapid and leap the fall,  
Split at the rock and together again,  
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,  
And flee from folly on every side  
With a lover's pain to attain the plain  
Far from the hills of Habersham,  
Far from the valleys of Hall.

I had to memorize the full poem in junior high, but never really appreciated it until my experience of this mighty river," Chip told us.

Sidney Lanier was born in Macon in 1842. At an early age, he began playing the flute, which became a springboard for his mastery of many musical instruments. He graduated first in his class at Oglethorpe University. He was only seventeen years old at the time. Following graduation, Lanier enlisted in the Confederate Army and served as an officer in the signal corps. He was captured and imprisoned for five months. In prison, he contracted tuberculosis, which would ultimately take his life.

*continued on pg. 9*

After the Civil War, Lanier worked as a hotel clerk, then as a teacher, and later as a school principal, a tutor, and eventually practicing law under his father in Macon. During this time, his love of music persisted, and in 1873 he was accepted into the Peabody Symphony Orchestra in Baltimore, Maryland. He was the orchestra's first flautist and served as a professor of literature at Johns Hopkins University. During the last 20 years of his life, Lanier produced volumes of literary works and composed scores of music.

In 2000, Sidney Lanier was inducted into the first class of Georgia Writers Hall of Fame members. Lanier is often remembered as "Georgia's first 'national' poet." His birthplace, The Sidney Lanier Cottage House Museum, sits on High Street in Macon, Georgia. In 1973, the Middle Georgia Historical Society purchased the home and opened it to the public two years later. Through 2020, the home has served as a museum, event space, and offices for the organization. Last year, Historic Macon's Board of Trustees voted to disband the historic house museum as a single-family residence and transfer proceeds to endow the Lanier Education Fund with the Community Foundation of Central Georgia.

During this transition, the Cottage closed to the public and Historic Macon's Board of Trustees moved historic artifacts out of the house. Georgia Writers Museum was one of three locations selected to exhibit Lanier's historic collection. Since its inception, Georgia Writers Museum has been the repository for the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame.

"We are honored to receive this collection, and are currently creating a new exhibit to display Lanier's 19th century portable writing desk, the flute he played at the Peabody Orchestra, his alligator slippers, and other incredible items," said Melissa Swindell, executive director of Georgia Writers Museum.

"It seemed fitting that GWM became the recipient of artifacts from the Sidney Lanier Cottage," said Ethiel Garlington, executive director of Historic Macon. "We found in Georgia Writers Museum a place that is passionate about literary education and visitor inspiration, and know they will be responsible caretakers, displaying the artifacts with the same respect and commitment that HMF strives to practice."

Melissa Swindell  
Executive Director  
Georgia Writers Museum



**MORE FROM THE UNICOI TURNPIKE:**

Katelyn Comer, Dr. Jake McDonald, Brittany Mann & Alan Hall



**Do you have institutional news or notes on happenings in the museum field you'd like to share with fellow GAM members?**

**Submit your items of 100-500 words to:  
Holly Beasley Wait,  
GAM Newsletter Chair,  
at [director@portcolumbus.org](mailto:director@portcolumbus.org)**

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# New & Renewing Members

*Since June 2021*

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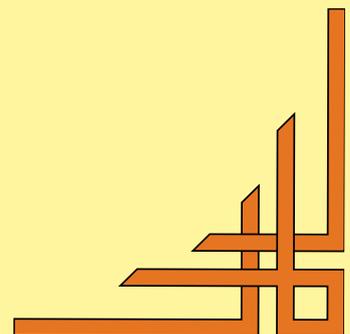
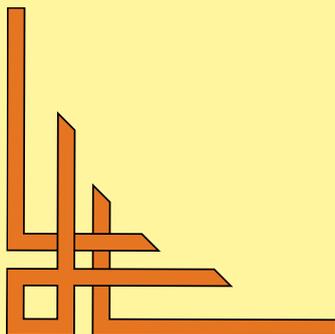
6th Cavalry Museum ~ Albany Museum of Art ~ Atlanta Historical Society  
Augusta Canal Authority ~ Biblical History Center  
Bowdon Area Historical Society ~ Brenau University Gallery  
Calhoun-Gordon Arts Council ~ Cherokee County Historical Society  
Chieftains Museum/Major Ridge Home ~ Chi Phi Fraternity  
City of Washington ~ Coastal Heritage Society  
Coffee County Historical Society ~ Collectible & Antique Chair Gallery  
Colquitt County Arts Center ~ Crawford Long Museum  
Decatur Historical & Genealogical Society ~ Elberta Depot  
Georgia's Rome ~ Grady County Historical Society  
Hay House ~ Heritage Hall ~ Historic Augusta  
Historic Banning Mills ~ Historic Columbus  
Historic Oakland Foundation ~ Jack Hadley Black History Museum  
Kingston Woman's History Club ~ LaGrange Art Museum  
Lowndes County Historical Society ~ Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art  
Meadow Garden ~ Monroe Cultural & Heritage Museum  
Morris Museum of Art ~ Museum of Aviation & Flight Technology  
Museum of History & Holocaust Education  
The Columbus Museum ~ The Computer Museum of America

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Guide to Georgia

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