



The Athens, Georgia, Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s:

What Can It Tell Us about the Era and America?

Nancy MacLean, Duke University

Sunday, April 10, 2011

3:00 p.m., Athens Regional Library Auditorium

The Ku Klux Klan that arose after World War I became the most powerful right-wing movement in American history. Established in Atlanta in 1915, this Klan thrived not only in the South, but throughout the nation, with chapters in every state and in most cities and towns. In addition to the racism and vigilante violence for which the Klan is remembered, the organization also sought to enforce traditional moral codes on young people in “Jazz Age” America and to shore up the economic standing of native-born Protestant white men in the changing political economy symbolized by the spread of chain stores and the League of Nations and World Court. Boasting more than two million members, the Klan dominated the legislatures and executive branches of several states and the police forces and courts of thousands of communities in the 1920s.

Among them was Athens, Georgia, home to a rare surviving cache of internal Klan records. The historian Nancy MacLean employed these Athens records to make new sense of the movement in her prize-winning book, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, named a noteworthy book of the year by the New York Times when it first appeared. In her April 10 lecture, Dr. MacLean will use her research on the Athens Klan to offer a new understanding of the 1920s and to explore some enduring patterns of response to economic crisis and social challenge that have a haunting resonance for our own time.

The meeting is free and open to the public.

*Copies of Dr. MacLean’s book will be available for sale after the meeting,
with an opportunity to get your copy autographed!*

About our speaker: Dr. Nancy MacLean is an Arts and Sciences Professor of History at Duke University. Her scholarship has focused on the role of social movements in changing American culture and public policy, with particular focus on the twentieth century and on the roles of class, gender, race, and region in shaping these movements and determining their outcomes. Her first book, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), was among the first historical studies to apply a gender analysis in order to help make sense of the phenomenon of reactionary populism. More recently, she produced *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Harvard University Press, 2006), which examined the role of jobs issues in the African-American and Mexican-American civil rights movements and the women’s movement, and exposed the enduring conservative opposition to the quest to create inclusive workplaces. Since then, she has produced two books for course use: *The American Women’s Movement, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009) and, with Donald T. Critchlow, *Debating the American Conservative Movement: 1945 to the Present* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009). She is currently working on the deep history of the push to privatize public services and decision-making, with a focus on school vouchers.

Newsletter

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Historic Georgia Newspaper Archives now online – The Digital Library of Georgia (DLG) has added searchable issues of Athens newspapers from 1827 to 1923 to their online collections. Visit the MEDIA tab in the DLG at <http://dlg.galileo.uga.edu> to access the various newspaper collections, including papers from Athens, Atlanta, Columbus, Macon and Milledgeville. You will need to install the free DjVu software (see the link on the website) onto your computer in order to view the digitized pages properly.

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Upcoming AHS Meeting Dates

April 10, 2011

***The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s:
What Can It Tell Us about the Era and America?***

Nancy MacLean

3:00 p.m. Athens Regional Library

May 15, 2011

The Forts of the Oconee

Steven Scurry

October 16, 2011

TBA

AHS Website & Information

www.rootsweb.com/~gaahs/
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The Athens newspapers in the collection include *Athenian* 1827-1832, *Southern Banner* 1832-1882, *Southern Watchman* 1855-1882, *Daily/Weekly Banner-Watchman* 1882-1889, and the *Daily/Weekly Athens Banner* 1889-1922. Enter key words in the search page at <http://athnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/athnewspapers/search> to locate issues where those key words can be found. Remember, sometimes “less is better” - if you give the search engine too much information, the very issue you want to find might not show up in the list because all of the words are not found on that page. We have even found a 62-page centennial issue of the *Athens Daily Banner* in June 1901 that contains extensive write-ups of many businesses and businessmen who helped to make Athens great! Have fun!

Sesquicentennial of the War Between the States 1861-1865 (AKA “Civil War”) – As we move into the 150th year since the “late unpleasantness,” numerous organizations all around the country will be commemorating the lives and events of that era. The Athens newspaper collection mentioned above poignantly reveals life in our fair city during the war, including the hardships, deprivation and loss of so many of our citizens during that time and afterward. Get involved! What part did you family play in this conflict? What happened to them?

Ask Granny™ – Local genealogists Judith Russell and Greg Crane have developed a very simple (and FREE) family history program that can be used to get started documenting a family. Geared for use with family reunions, senior citizens groups, and even elementary school children, volunteers should contact them at ask.granny.us on Facebook or email them at ask.granny.us@gmail.com for details on the program.