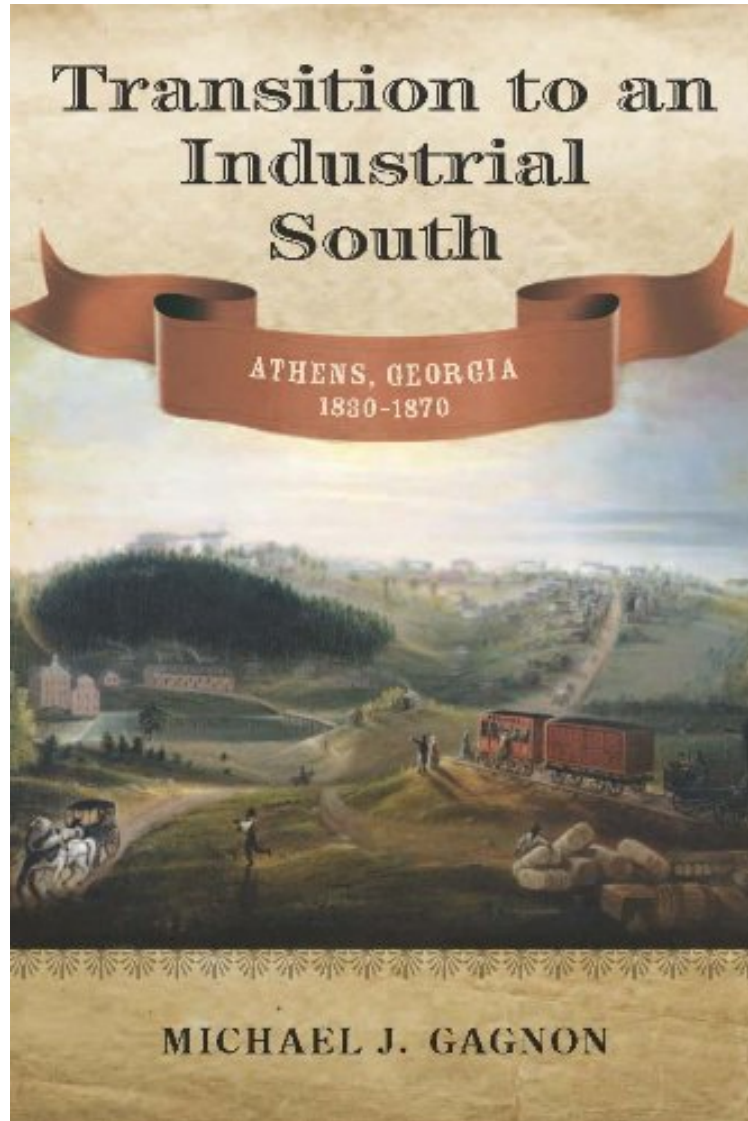


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Transition to an Industrial South: Athens, Georgia, 1830ndash;1870

Michael J. Gagnon

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent BookBy CindyA scholarly yet interesting book about early cotton mills in the south, specifically Athens, Georgia and surrounding areas. Interesting to see the effects on the community and economy. Fascinating read!4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great insights into antebellum industrialization in the SouthBy Michael WaldAthens, Georgia, now known mainly as a college town, has a long history as the home of the University of Georgia. What Professor Gagnon points out in this scholarly history is

that the town also has a fascinating history as one of the primary industrial centers of the South in the antebellum period. Many of us growing up were taught that the northern states had the industry while the South focused solely on agriculture, thus explaining why the South lacked the industrial infrastructure needed to conduct a war successfully. More recently, southern historians are providing new evidence of the industrialization of the South pre-Civil War. Internal improvements, such as railroads and canals, along with development of factories occurred in the southern states at the same time these projects were being pursued in northern states. This book provides another proof of this industrialization by focusing specifically on one geographic area, but its arguments can be expanded to encompass many regions in the South. Through extensive research, the author shows how prominent families in the Athens area committed to "improvements" while still pursuing their plantation-based economy. It also highlights how movements begun elsewhere, such as temperance and Great Awakenings, were translated to fit specific southern views of culture. While some readers of southern history may shy away from a book that supplies such detail in a small geographic area, anyone interested in industrialization in the antebellum South, a field that is growing in importance and interest, should add this book to their collection.

Renowned New South booster Henry Grady proposed industrialization as a basis of economic recovery for the former Confederacy. Born in 1850 in Athens, Georgia, to a family involved in the city's thriving manufacturing industries, Grady saw firsthand the potential of industrialization for the region. In *Transition to an Industrial South*, Michael J. Gagnon explores the creation of an industrial network in the antebellum South by focusing on the creation and expansion of cotton textile manufacture in Athens. By 1835, local entrepreneurs had built three cotton factories in Athens, started a bank, and created the Georgia Railroad. Although known best as a college town, Athens became an industrial center for Georgia in the antebellum period and maintained its stature as a factory hub even after competing cities supplanted it in the late nineteenth century. Georgia, too, remained the foremost industrial state in the South until the 1890s. Gagnon reveals the political nature of procuring manufacturing technology and building cotton mills in the South, and demonstrates the generational maturing of industrial laboring, managerial, and business classes well before the advent of the New South era. He also shows how a southern industrial society grew out of a culture of social and educational reform, economic improvements, and business interests in banking and railroading. Using Athens as a case study, Gagnon suggests that the connected networks of family, business, and financial relations provided a framework for southern industry to profit during the Civil War and served as a principal guide to prosperity in the immediate postbellum years.

About the Author Michael J. Gagnon is assistant professor of history at Georgia Gwinnett College.