

Southern Historical Association
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Southern Historical Association announces Bennett H. Wall Award Winner

Athens, GA: The Southern Historical Association is pleased to announce that the 2018 winner of the Bennett H. Wall Award is Keri Leigh Merritt of Atlanta, Georgia for her 2017 Cambridge University Press book, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South*.

The Wall Award was established in 2000 to honor the long-term service of Bennett Wall, who served as Secretary-Treasurer of the SHA for more than thirty-three years (1952-1985) and as SHA President in 1988. In keeping with Professor Wall's own scholarly contribution to southern history, the Wall Prize is awarded to the best book published in southern business or economic history over a two-year period.

Merritt argues that the large white underclass created by the Old South's slave economy posed a serious threat to the plantation order and was policed accordingly. Emancipation may not have come as a Day of Jubilee for the freedmen, who were quickly returned to "slavery by another name," but poor whites change in status was profound. Merritt's "use of coroner's reports, legal records, and other primary sources," the committee notes in making its recommendation, "should encourage all of us to think again about the alleged solidarity of whites and whether an economy in which so many were blocked from meaningful participation in the labor market and the consumer economy could be considered capitalist."

About the SHA: The Southern Historical Association was organized on November 2, 1934 and charged with promoting an "investigative rather than a memorial approach" to southern history. Its objectives are the promotion of interest and research in southern history, the collection and preservation of the South's historical records, and the encouragement of state and local historical societies in the South. As a secondary purpose the Association fosters the teaching and study of all areas of history in the South. The Association holds an annual meeting, usually in the first or second week of November, and publishes *The Journal of Southern History*.

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