

Community News

GWINNETT COUNTY: Brack takes a long look back in history book

By Shane Blatt
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JAN. 6, 2009 -- For those with a grasp of Georgia history, here's a pop quiz.

> Name the county with the largest, most diverse school system.

> Name the county with more cities than any other in the state.

> Name the county with a population expected to top 1 million by 2020.

Answer "Gwinnett" to all three? Keep reading.

The county's fast-paced growth, colorful past and hopeful future are richly detailed in "Gwinnett: A Little Above Atlanta," a modern history by author and retired journalist Elliott Brack.

Even for ardent Gwinnett gurus, this 850-page book, slated to be released early this month, is a wealth of new information and perspective, Brack said.

Using data gathered the past three years from hundreds of sources, Brack chronicles the transformation of a rural county into one which, by 2020, might be the most populous in the state.

He tells the story in the context of the individuals and families he credits as being "those who made a difference."

Also included is more than 150 pages of tables listing the names of legislators, community leaders, financial information, educational figures and a host of fun facts, including the names of every "Miss Gwinnett" since the pageant began in 1955.

Brack got the idea for the book 3 1/2 years ago while trying to establish a relationship between Duluth, Ga., and Duluth, Minn. He said he looked for a short history of Gwinnett to take up to Minnesota, "but there was nothing around."

So he returned with the goal of penning a 100-page manuscript. Brack sat down one afternoon and wrote 50 pages. "I thought, 'Lord, I haven't even touched the surface,'" he said.

It grew from there.

"All my life, I've been limited to the space of a newspaper," said the veteran journalist who once worked for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. To cover the story of Gwinnett, "I didn't put any limits on the depth of [the book]."

Now that Brack has finished the encyclopedic account, there's one question burning in his mind.

"What did I leave out?"

DID YOU KNOW?

- > Gwinnett County was named for Button Gwinnett, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.
- > Lawrenceville, the county seat, is the oldest city in metro Atlanta. It dates back to 1821.
- > Gwinnett has seen its population base jump from 32,250 people in 1950 to nearly 800,000 in 2008.
- > The Gwinnett County school system teaches English as a second language to students from more than 100 countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.
- > Gwinnett is the only county in Georgia with a water intake into Lake Lanier, where it gets its raw water.

Source: "Gwinnett: A Little Above Atlanta"

ABOUT THE BOOK

- > Size: 850 pages
- > Cost: \$65 (available only in hardback)
- > Release date: Early January
- > More information: www.elliottbrack.com