



John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology: Edward González-Tennant

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The John L. Cotter Award in Historical Archaeology was created by the Society of Historical Archaeology (SHA) in 1998 to both honor Cotter, a pioneer in the field, and to recognize the outstanding work of emerging scholars. Edward González-Tennant is the SHA's John L. Cotter Award recipient for 2023 (Fig. 1).

Edward's first experience in historical archaeology was during the summer of 2001, when, as an undergraduate student at the University of Arkansas, he attended an archaeological field school at Van Winkle's Mill. Ed went on to receive his B.A. in anthropology from Arkansas in 2004, a master's degree in industrial archaeology from Michigan Technological University in the summer of 2005, and began the graduate program at the University of Florida in the fall of 2005. Ed received an M.A. in anthropology from the University of Florida in 2008 and completed his doctoral degree there in 2011.

In every way, Ed's work has been exemplary. In his first decade in anthropology, as an undergraduate and graduate student, Ed conducted fieldwork on a blacksmith site associated with a sawmill complex in the Arkansas Ozarks (Brandon et al. 2003); worked on 19th-century mining camps in New Zealand, Montana, Peru, and Alaska (E. González-Tennant 2009, 2011b); studied industrial sites in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, Norway; and explored research opportunities while traveling in the Guangdong and Fujian provinces



Fig. 1 Edward González-Tennant, recipient of the 2023 John L. Cotter Award. (Photo courtesy of the University of Central Florida.)

of China (E. González-Tennant 2011a). These experiences were supported through research grants and similar funding sources. In addition, he has worked in the Caribbean (Fort Charles on the island of Nevis) (E. González-Tennant and D. González-Tennant 2020) and was a key collaborator in the University of Florida's

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research program at the Kingsley Plantation site on Fort George Island, Florida.

Ed's scholarly output is impressive by any measure; in the past 12 years he has published 17 peer-reviewed articles or book chapters, 7 non-refereed articles, and a sole-authored, peer-reviewed book. Several of these projects and published works, taken as thematic groupings, could easily serve as a basis for the Cotter Award, but, since 2008, as a doctoral student, his research has been more focused on a series of complementary and long-term goals that follows a few key threads: investing in community and collaborative archaeologies over a span of several years, building memory projects, and documenting racist mob violence. Within these intersecting interests and projects, the overarching example of these methodologies and goals has been the town of Rosewood, Florida, the Black community in Levy County that was utterly destroyed by a white mob in January 1923 (E. González-Tennant 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018).

While founded with enslaved labor in the mid-19th century as a white enclave, by the early 20th century the small town was almost exclusively African American. Between 1 January and 7 January 1923 Rosewood would experience a series of events that would quickly encompass the entire town, to its utter ruin. White men of the adjoining sawmill town of Sumner, while in pursuit of a supposed Black fugitive, encountered a Black Rosewood resident who was swiftly interrogated, tortured, and killed. A series of subsequent encounters with other Rosewood residents proved equally lethal, and, while most of its citizens were able to escape in the night with their lives, over a weeklong period the entire town was looted, ritually vandalized, and finally set on fire. In less than seven days a town of approximately 200 all but vanished from the landscape.

Remembered only by the perpetrators, the survivors, and their descendants, Rosewood's history became common knowledge in the 1980s through a series of newspaper articles. In 1994 the state legislature officially and finally recognized the attack on the Rosewood community's civil rights and its loss of property with monetary compensation in the amount of \$2.1 million.

Initially denied access to the physical space of the former town to conduct conventional archaeologies, Ed began the Rosewood Heritage & VR Project by collaborating with Rosewood survivors, their

descendants, and allies, as well as landowners and community leaders in Levy County. He collected oral histories of living survivors, interviewed the historians who penned the 1994 official state history of the massacre, and engaged in considerable documentary research. In 2008 Ed created a Website (<<https://www.virtualrosewood.com>>) to document his work, including the exploration of emerging digital technologies (e.g., gaming software) to generate a 3-D computer simulation of the town and its immediate environs based on oral histories and memory maps, among other sources. Iterations of this virtual Rosewood are interactive and allow the viewer to “walk” around and “see” the town as it was in December 1922, less than one month before its destruction.

Given the almost exclusively white population of Levy County, a partial result of African American outmigration in the aftermath of Rosewood's destruction in the early 20th century, the contemporary population might seem ambivalent to outside attempts to resurrect its past. Several forays at community outreach, with the goal of gaining access to properties associated with the former town, were ignored. Edward persevered and began giving a series of public-history talks in Cedar Key, the closest populated town and home to the Cedar Key Historical Society. After Ed talked about Rosewood and the county's history more broadly, locals would meet with him and discuss his research and its intent. In the process, Ed built a series of bridges between his academic locus and the living white community.

This outreach work led directly to an invitation by the owner of the property containing the historic Rosewood Cemetery to document extant grave-stones and still-visible sunken grave shafts, and employ ground-penetrating radar to search for additional graves. This and related work were funded by the Florida Division of Historical Resources' Small Matching Grant Program (2018–2019). One product of this research was a virtual reconstruction of Rosewood Cemetery (<<http://www.virtualrosewood.com/virtual-rosewood-cemetery/>>) that allows users to explore a spatially accurate version of the graveyard. This model is based on a combination of data: the ground surface is derived from LiDAR and photogrammetry data, surviving graves are documented using a mix of photogrammetry and 3-D modeling, and the location of unmarked graves documented through a combination of total-station mapping and

ground-penetrating radar survey. This work also provides compelling information regarding the final resting places of those Rosewood residents who lost their lives that first week of 1923.

In the literal decade that it took to slowly break down distrust among both the Black and white communities associated with Rosewood, Ed completed his dissertation on the topic, produced 10 articles on the town's history, and in 2018 published a peer-reviewed University Press of Florida book on the events of Rosewood, in addition to the myriad digital ways to commemorate and remember the town and its community. Ed's approach to researching the past, always situated within a collaborative framework, is a model of how difficult histories can be brought to the present. His work has been slow and steady, centering the concerns of interested parties alongside his own. Given our current national climate, this approach serves to reach across various boundaries and is increasingly timely.

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