

Atlantic World Research Network

Graduate Student Research Prizes—2014-2015

First Prize Shared by Two Winners

Arlen M. Hanson

Title: “Business as Usual: Charleston and the Final Frenzy of the Legal Atlantic Slave Trade, 1804-1808”

The committee found this essay striking in its combination of factual reporting about and moral judgment on a strange twilight episode in the history of the legal Atlantic slave trade. As the 1808 deadline for prohibition approached, slave traders and buyers in the port of Charleston dramatically increased their turnover in human merchandise, accepting the eventual ban on their trade, but exploiting the last legal window to make extraordinary profits. The author’s original research in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, his handling of the secondary literature, and his general writing style make for a solid and enlightening reflection on the unintended consequences of law and policy.

Sarah E. McCartney

Title: ““The untrodden wilds of the west”: Dunmore’s War, the Mathews’ Store, and the Levels of Greenbrier”

The committee praised this dissertation chapter for its rigorous “micro-historical” focus on local sources from the Greensbrier Valley of western Virginia (now West Virginia) in 1774, the last year before the American Revolution began in earnest in Massachusetts. When Lord Dunmore’s southern army massed on the Levels of Greenbrier that summer, they played an integral role in forging a Backcountry community that sought to maintain Atlantic World connections and commerce, while also turning towards the Interior and an independent identity of its own. This essay is equally impressive for its wide range and use of primary and secondary sources, and its professional, balanced, and convincing argument.