

# Speak!

The Online Newsletter of the Genealogical Speakers Guild



## In This Issue

From Our President .....	1
New Members .....	2
Join the GSG .....	2
Member Profile: Sheila Benedict .....	3
ConferenceKeeper.org .....	5
Member Benefits .....	8
GSG Speaker Engagements .....	9
<b>Speak!</b> Policies/Board Members .....	10

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*The next issue of **Speak!**  
will be published in December 2023*

## From Our President

Wow! Where has the past year gone?

We welcome our new members on page 2.

We are looking forward to the next year and getting back on schedule. We have some tremendous members and it would be great if more genealogical speakers would join our Guild. I am hoping, as you give presentations, you are encouraging other presenters to join. We

will be soliciting presentations for our quarterly webinars which we have moved to Zoom.

The Guild recently started moving all of our documents to Google for Non-Profits. If you are a former Board member and believe you have copies of documents that should be stored on the drive, please scan and send them to me. This will make it easier as people transition on and off the Board to have access to the documents required.

I still owe pictures to several of you who presented at the NGS Conference in Richmond. Unfortunately, many did not come out very well as it turned out there was a bit of an issue with my camera. But for those that came out okay, watch for an email from my business account.

Speaking of the NGS Conference, NGS announced that 2024 (only) will be online as they consider the cost-effectiveness of in-person conferences. To that end, the Guild and APG are looking at ways to work cooperatively to promote both organizations. Many of you are members of APG as well as the Guild and we believe it would be mutually beneficial to help each other out. If you think of anything, please let me know.

This year's been a bit of a learning curve for me, but our great leadership team has helped me tremendously. We are looking for others to join our leadership team and help with a committee. Among our committees are:

- Publicity/Marketing
- Educational Webinars
- Finance



- National Conference
- Strategic Planning

A few announcements:

We are still looking for someone to volunteer as treasurer. It is not time-consuming nor complicated. If you are interested, please email me at [President@GenealogicalSpeakersGuild.org](mailto:President@GenealogicalSpeakersGuild.org).

We will be holding our annual meeting later this month, so watch for the specifics.

Thanks for listening!

*Larry*

Larry W. Thomas  
PO Box 1511  
Powder Springs, GA 30127-7511

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

We welcome the following new or returning members who joined GSG 30 June – 6 Sept. 2023. We look forward to their contributions to the Guild!

**Andrea Bentschneider   Donald Moore**

**Cynthia Patton   Paula Williams**

We also wish to acknowledge members who renewed. Thank you for your continued support!

Carol Ansel	Natalie Bodle
Maureen Brady	Margo Fariss Brewer
Claire V. Brisson-Banks	Michael Cassara
Michele Doyle	Laura Hedgecock
Diane Henriks	Suzanne Hoffman
Peggy Jude	Daniel T. Jungclas
Michael Lacopo	Winona I. Laird
Jamie L. Mayhew	Linda Okazaki
Dana Palmer	Cheryl Passey
Larry Thomas	

## NOT A MEMBER??

Join the Genealogical Speakers Guild to take advantage of its benefits (see page 8) and the expertise and experience of accumulated knowledge from its outstanding roster of speakers.

Sign in on our website at [Join GSG – Genealogical Speakers Guild](https://www.genealogicalspeakersguild.org) and choose from various levels of membership:

- **Membership Plans**

1 Year Membership - \$40 / 1 Year

*One year membership in the Genealogical Speakers Guild.*

2 Year Membership - \$80 / 2 Years

*Two year membership in the Genealogical Speakers Guild.*

1 Year Family Membership - \$45 / 1 Year

*One year Family membership in the Genealogical Speakers Guild.*

2 Year Family Membership - \$90 / 2 Years

*Two year Family membership in the Genealogical Speakers Guild.*

## MEMBER PROFILE

I lead with an apology. In our last issue Eleanor O. Brinsko was our featured member in this column. Unfortunately, her name was misspelled. As someone whose last name is frequently mangled, I understand how aggravating that can be. I offer my apologies to Eleanor and to all our readers for my mistake.

***Speak!*** is pleased to provide a forum for members of the GSG to introduce themselves to one another and to the many others who read ***Speak!*** If you are a new member, or a longtime member who has not yet been profiled, we would love to invite you to take the opportunity to let the genealogical world know who you are and what your particular talents and accomplishments are.

We are pleased to present in this issue a profile of GSG member, Sheila Benedict.

If you are interested in having your profile featured in an upcoming issue of ***Speak!*** please contact Lauren Maehrlein at [Editor@genealogicalspeakersguild.com](mailto:Editor@genealogicalspeakersguild.com)

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### SHEILA BENEDICT

**SHEILA BENEDICT** is the twice-widowed matriarch of a large family of children, step-children, and grandchildren. She lives with her dog in the lovely little Danish town of Solvang, in Santa Barbara County, California.

Born in Chicago, she moved to California in her teens and completed her schooling there. She's earned an AA in History and a BA in Political Science and is a member of Phi Kappa Phi Scholastic Honor Society.

Her resume of genealogical awards and achievements is an impressive one. She was a member when GSG first began, dropped out for a while, but rejoined about four years ago. She is the current president of the APG Writer's SIG, past president of a virtual group, past corresponding secretary of The Irish Ancestral Research Association (TIARA), past president of her local Rotary Club, current board member of GSG, moderator of several Irish SIGS for local societies, and a member of the APG Listening Committee. In the "far distant"



past, Sheila was on the APG board. She was also certified as a CGRS when BCG had categories.

Although she doesn't consider herself unique, she is sure to always follow the ethics, research the laws that apply, and make sure the research is as accurate as possible.

Sheila's initial interest in genealogy stemmed from her interest in finding the ancestry of her maternal grandfather, who died when her mother was about five years old. She continues to pursue grandpa.

One of her research specialties is California research, and she is the author of the NGS *Research in the States* book on California, published in 2015. Additional topics she covers are Irish research, methodology, and forensic cases.

Sheila has worked as a speaker for about 30+ years, and she covers the geographic gamut of local, regional, and national events. Since 2019, only two of her presentations have been in person, the rest were virtual. She has also participated in many webinars, which she enjoys.

Marsha Rising (deceased); Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG; Tom Jones, CG; and others have

mentored and/or positively influenced Sheila. We all learn from those who paved the way.

Teaching is something Sheila particularly enjoys. Those lessons she wishes to impart on her students include the importance of accurate research, using as many resources as are available, making sure they apply, and that the law is a top priority. There is always more to learn. Although she may be the teacher, there are times she becomes the student, too.

She is currently working on a book about a topic she taught at a local community college adult education class.

Sheila's advice to all speakers: Know your topic or don't present it. She never uses notes but instead uses her power point presentation as a guide.

She does not have a blog. Her website is <https://www.benedictprogenealogy.com>,  
Email: [benedictresearchservices@gmail.com](mailto:benedictresearchservices@gmail.com).

## **ANNUAL GSG MEMBERSHIP MEETING 25 SEP 2023**

### **Put the annual meeting on your calendar!**

Join us for the annual GSG Membership meeting. The election results and additional information about what the Guild has been up to this past year will be provided. This is also the perfect opportunity for you to let the Board know your ideas for the future of GSG.

Date: **25 Sep 2023**

Time: **8:00 PM EDT**

Place: Zoom Meeting

The Zoom link will be provided in an email to all members.

### **See you at the meeting.**



## CONFERENCEKEEPER.ORG: SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST GENEALOGY CONFERENCES!

*By Tami Mize*

*ConferenceKeeper.org* is a completely free-to-use website, providing the most comprehensive online calendar of all kinds of genealogy events, and much more. Its mission is to help those who are seeking genealogical education connect with those providing such opportunities, whether in person or online. In 2022, it officially became an IRS-recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization, *Genealogy ConferenceKeeper.org, Inc.*, #87-4496451. By the end of 2023, we will be merging our operations with the National Genealogical Society, which will extend our reach and help bring even more events to this free online genealogy resource.

On the website at *ConferenceKeeper.org*, you'll find easy-to-use calendars with thousands of genealogy events: meetings, webinars, seminars, workshops, and, of course, conferences, as well as just about any type of event related to family history. These events are hosted by genealogical societies, public libraries, state archives, individuals, genealogy-related businesses, and others. Events listed indicate whether or not they are free or require a fee, but these details are entirely up to the event hosts. *ConferenceKeepers* is just sharing the information!

If it's any kind of event of interest to genealogists and family historians, we're happy to add it to the calendar! There is never any charge to add events to the calendar, or to use the website.

*ConferenceKeeper.org* is run entirely by volunteer effort, and our website expenses are covered by the kind donations of users and revenue from genealogy specific advertising that you'll find on the website sidebars.



*ConferenceKeeper* was begun by Jen Baldwin and was originally intended to just track major conferences.

Jen eventually turned it over to Eowyn Langholf Walker and Tami Mize, who expanded the vision. Eowyn left after a year, and for the next seven years, Tami has handled everything herself: building the website, programming automations, adding 100-200 new events a week to the calendar, writing the weekly newsletter, and turning the whole operation into a 501c3 non-profit.

She quit her full-time job last year to be able to concentrate on *ConferenceKeeper*. Although she misses the income, she loves the work!

Tami is excited to be merging with NGS, as they will be taking over all the paperwork, leaving her to focus on what she likes most: making the website as useful as possible for other genealogy enthusiasts.

Tami Mize, a member of GSG, is also Proofreader for *Speak!*

### TWO THINGS ABOUT CONFERENCEKEEPER

1. It's a lot more than just conferences
2. It's a lot more than just a calendar!





When you arrive at the home page, [www.ConferenceKeeper.org](http://www.ConferenceKeeper.org), right under the masthead, you'll see a set of large, colorful, square "buttons." Each one links to an entire page of information. The *Main Calendar* is where you'll find everything that has a date associated with it – *all* events and deadlines. The *Virtual Calendar* is, as the name implies, just for events with a virtual option (either entirely virtual or hybrid). The other buttons are for pages just as they are labeled: a page listing *Calls for Presentations and Papers*, a list of genealogical Volunteer opportunities; lists of family history Podcasts and YouTube channels; genealogical Scholarships; just to name a few. You can find even more pages under the *Other Events & Opportunities* tab in the top menu bar. Take a little time to check it all out!

Here are some tips for getting the most out of this free resource:

#### **KEEP UP WITH NEW EVENTS**

With thousands of events on the calendar at any given time, how do you know when something new is added? Subscribe to our **once-weekly email** that provides some important information about deadlines and event changes, and links to our list of all events that were added during the previous week. The email usually comes out on Saturday evening, and aside from an occasional clearly indicated sponsor, does not include any affiliate advertising or sales pitches, just genealogy event information. The email always includes a link to the website's blog page, where the full list of between 100-200 newly added events will be found. On the website's blog page, you can also read past weeks' posts to see what you might have missed from previous weeks. The weekly email sometimes includes something special for subscribers

that you won't find on the blog page: maybe a DNA kit giveaway, or free *ConferenceKeeper* swag. Only one email is sent each week, and it's dedicated to genealogy education information.

#### **FIND THE EDUCATION YOU WANT**

***Is that week-long institute you want to attend too far away, or cost prohibitive?***

Search the calendar to see whether any of the speakers might be presenting similar programs at a society or library venue virtually, and maybe free or at a reduced cost.

***Do you have a favorite speaker (or two)?***

Search the main calendar for names to see whether they've got any upcoming programs you might want to attend.

***Hit a research 'brick wall'?*** What skill do you need to learn to move forward? Search keywords to find online webinars and local programs on any subject.

***Don't know what you don't know?*** Attend an online genealogy chat, group discussion, or "brick wall" session. Get someone else's perspective on your puzzle. Maybe another genealogist has a suggestion for your research!

***Like to read?*** Search the calendar for "Book Club" to see which societies or libraries are offering one, what they're currently reading, and how you can participate.

***Need some like-minded friends?*** While we've all gotten quite used to staying home, there's nothing like getting together with other people who understand your obsession. Many societies often have a meet & greet before their programs, and several societies have just plain "Let's Chat" zoom sessions.



***Looking for a specific topic?*** Attend a Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting. There are many topic-specific choices on the calendar, such as DNA, German, Scottish, or even Technology! OR, go to your state's page and find one of the most comprehensive lists of genealogical societies available online! (see the Locations tab, or type it in yourself, i.e., [www.conferencekeeper.org/new\\_york](http://www.conferencekeeper.org/new_york) )

#### **HOW CAN CONFERENCEKEEPER.ORG BENEFIT SPEAKERS?**

***Do not miss any opportunities!*** When I gave presentations, I spent way too much time checking websites and society newsletters so I wouldn't miss out on an opportunity to submit a proposal. The *Calls for Papers* page on *ConferenceKeeper* was the first additional page after the website's main calendar was set up – it's the page that will let you know which societies or organizations are looking for speakers for an upcoming conference or their monthly programs. (*New Calls for Presentations* are listed separately on our weekly email along with the date that applications are due, so you will want to sign up for the weekly email if only just for that!) Also, it's a good idea to check the *Calls for Papers* page from time to time for any proposal requests that may come and go quickly between our weekend emails.

In addition, genealogy speakers should review the *Virtual Calendar* to see which societies and public libraries are hosting speakers *virtually* (not just local talent). Calls for proposals are not always posted, so consider contacting groups yourself.

***What's hot and what's not!*** If you're a genealogy speaker, peruse the calendar to see what program topics seem to be plentiful, and more importantly, which areas of genealogy research are NOT being covered.

***Other societies nearby?*** If you love to present to a live audience, go to the *Location* page for the state you reside in ([conferencekeeper.org/\[your state\]](http://conferencekeeper.org/[your state])) and check out the list of societies on the right side of the page. These lists are the most complete listing of state genealogical societies available! (And please let me know if you find a bad link!)

***Promote yourself!*** If you've got upcoming speaking engagements, make sure they're on the calendar! Either ask the venue to submit the event, or feel free to submit it yourself – again, it's free. Chances are good that if your presentation raises attendance (and possibly membership), you might get asked back again and again! Not all societies have the time to submit their events, so do feel free to submit your events yourself using the *Submissions* tab on the menu bar of the website.

***More than just presentations?*** If you have a Podcast or YouTube channel, be sure to submit it for inclusion on both of those dedicated pages.

***Want even more visibility?*** Take out a sidebar ad for a month or sponsor one of the weekly emails. Both are very affordable and have an extensive reach to individuals who are both members of, as well as decision makers for, all kinds of organizations who hire speakers. These sidebar ads, along with



donations, are what help cover the website's operating costs.

#### **HELP FOR PROGRAMMING CHAIRS**

***What's hot?*** Scan the calendar to see which speakers are covering which topics. Are certain topics or speakers saturating your area? Make a note of which speakers have unique and interesting presentations that maybe you haven't heard of before!

#### ***Submit your events to ConferenceKeeper!***

Having your event added to our calendars and shared on our social media is completely free. Yep, free publicity! If you want to just submit one or two events at a time, please use the *Submission* tab on the menu bar of the website. If you'd like to submit more, like for a month or the year in advance, feel free to email the information to me (or a link to your society's website

*Events* page) and ask me to get them added for you. I'm always happy to help out and support the success of societies in any way that I can.

#### **HELP FOR EVERYONE**

***Tell your friends!*** We've always known that genealogy events are more fun with friends, so be sure your online genealogy friends and your society members are aware of *ConferenceKeeper.org*. The more folks know about the site, the more submissions we get, and the more genealogy events we have on the calendar! It's a win-win for everyone!

Follow, like, and comment on our event posts for *ConferenceKeeper.org* on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/ConferenceKeeper/>

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GUILD MEMBERSHIP?**

In our current brochure we note the benefits of your Guild membership as:

- Display of brochures at various genealogical conferences
- ***Speak!*** Newsletter
- Inclusion in online directory
- Website links
- Banner promotion of speakers at major conferences

These offerings are all great and help your businesses, but there's more!

Have you joined the Facebook group and page? Have you used them? "Why?" you ask.

- To connect with other speakers in, or near, your area – your physical area and/or your area of research.
- To ask advice about purchases, business practices, etc.
- To connect with other speakers to share ideas.
- And much more.



## GUILD MEMBER NEWS

### **NCHRO PRESIDENT RECEIVES AWARD OF MERIT**

North Carolina Historical Records Online (NCHRO) President and founder David McCorkle was given the 2023 National Genealogical Society Award of Merit for “his work in digitizing and providing easy and free access to records of critical importance to North Carolina researchers. Those efforts included the creation of a free website, North Carolina Land Grants Images and Data, to make North Carolina’s land entry and grant records accessible and the creation of a nonprofit for the North Carolina Historical Records Online.”

The award was presented at a reception 31 May hosted by Judy Russell, *The Legal Genealogist* ®. David McCorkle gave a three-minute talk regarding the project.



### **SALT LAKE INSTITUTE OF GENEALOGY**

**SLIG Spring Virtual 2024 Courses**, featuring several GSG members are now open for registration.

Sign up at <https://sligAncestors.ugagenealogy.org/cpage.php?pt=650> for classes to be held February-May 2024.

**Course 1:** *Bring ‘Em Back to Life: Writing Our Ancestors’ Stories*. Annette Burke Lyttle, MA

**Course 2:** *You’re Invited: Public Speaking from Concept to Delivery*. D. Joshua Taylor, MA, MLS, FUGA

**Course 3:** *The Art of Writing a Research Report*. Debra A. Hoffman, PLCGS

**Course 4:** *BCG Certification: Understanding and Meeting Standards*. Angela Packer McGhie, CG, FUGA, and Karen Stanbary, MA, LCSW, CG

**Course 5:** *DNA Dreamers in Action: Writing Proof Standards*. Karen Stanbary, MA, LCSW, CG

**Course 6:** *Editing Genealogical Writing*. Karen Mauer Jones, CG, FGBS, FUGA

**Course 7:** *Gothic Script & Fraktur Workshop: Reading Records of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, & the Czech Republic, plus German-American Church Books & Newspapers*. F. Warren Bittner

## *Speak!* Policies

*Speak!*, the quarterly newsletter of the Genealogical Speakers Guild, is published in March, June, September, and December. The deadline for submission of articles and other material for the newsletter is the 15th of the prior month (15 February, 15 May, 15 August, and 15 November).

As stated in Article II of the Bylaws of the Genealogical Speakers Guild (as amended and restated May 2004), the objectives of GSG shall be

1. To provide a unified, effective voice to promote speakers' interests by providing a forum for the discussion of topics of concern to genealogical speakers;
2. To broaden the speaker base by identifying, educating, and assisting promising speakers;
3. To raise professional lecture standards; and
4. To aid speakers in understanding and fulfilling their obligations to program planners and to audiences.

**Guidelines for Submitting Feature Articles** Prior to submitting a feature article, authors are requested to review the newsletter guidelines outlined in this document (*Speak!* Policies) and submit article topic to *Speak!* editor, Lauren Maehrlein ([editor@genealogicalspeakersguild.org](mailto:editor@genealogicalspeakersguild.org)), for approval. Unsolicited articles will be returned to the author along with a copy of *Speak!* Policies.

- Articles must address a topic directly related to genealogical speaking.
- Articles should be no more than 2,000 words.
- Book reviews should be no more than 750 words.
- The editor retains the right of acceptance of all articles, news, and announcements.
- The editor retains the right to edit articles for accuracy, clarity, and length. Articles will be edited to conform to the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Authors retain their copyright.
- First-time submissions should be accompanied by a short (75 words or fewer) bio of the author and a photo. Both will be printed with the article when published.
- Not all articles submitted may be accepted for publication.
- Articles may not be published in the order in which they are received. The editor will balance content and topics throughout the year.
- Articles by non-members will be considered when space permits.

*These guidelines do not apply to member news, calls for papers, or other notices and/or announcements submitted by GSG members. Adopted November 2010; updated January 2015.*

### **GSG BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President: Larry Thomas, 2024

Vice President: Michele Doyle, 2023

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