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Speak!

The Online Newsletter of the Genealogical Speakers Guild

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*The next issue of **Speak!***
will be published in December 2026

From Our President

Welcome to our new members listed on page 3. We are glad you are here!

Thirty-five years! Ann Staley pointed that out to me recently, and I have been thinking about it ever since. The idea for this Guild was conceived on 17 August 1991, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, when twenty-four speakers sat down together at the close of the FGS conference and decided they could do better together than apart. But an idea is not an organization. It was not until 2 May 1992, at the close of the NGS conference in Jacksonville, Florida, that the bylaws were passed and the Genealogical Speakers Guild was formally organized. The members then elected our first officers:

- **Marsha Hoffman Rising** as president
- **Kathleen W. Hinckley** as vice president
- **Marie Martin Murphy** as secretary
- **Sandra H. Luebking** as treasurer
- **Henry Z. "Hank" Jones Jr.** and **Sydney Beckett** as representatives
- **Helen Hinchliff** as newsletter editor.

We let the anniversary pass this August without so much as a cake, so consider this column my attempt to make up for it.

Those founders banded together over speaking conditions and pay, and it worked! NGS and FGS revised their honorarium and speaker packages, and speakers began receiving royalties on recorded sessions. Sharon DeBartolo Carmack wrote that history up in "Historically Speaking: A Look Back at the Guild's Founding," which can be read at https://www.genealogicalspeakersguild.org/about-gsg/historically-speaking/. It is worth ten minutes of your time. We are not, and have never been, just a directory. We are a group of people looking out for one another.

That is still the reason to belong, and it is the spirit behind something I want to tell you about. In October we hosted a roundtable for the people who hire us: the program managers and program chairs of genealogical

Happy 35th Anniversary

to the

Genealogical Speakers Guild

societies. Sixteen of them came, from Texas, Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, and Oregon. We brought them together to ask one question. What are you hearing from your audiences, and what makes your job hard?

Some of what we heard will be familiar to you. Audiences want how-to, not just storytelling. DNA and AI are at the top of the list, along with immigration records and probate. They want interactive and hands-on sessions, because that gets people to attend live rather than watch later.

Some of it was harder to hear. Budget is the wall most of them run into. Many are working with an honorarium ceiling of $100 or less, and the program chairs told us plainly that they wish they could pay more. Terri Ward walked them through value-based pricing, weighing audience size and whether the session is recorded, and how even a small event can cover a speaker through the cost of a Zoom subscription. That conversation is going to continue; we owe them guidance, and they owe us honest budget numbers. I came away convinced that speakers and societies are not on opposite sides of this. We need each other.

Two practical things from the roundtable I want to pass along:

First, *topic search*. I want to clear up something that came up more than once in the meeting: searching the Guild website's "Directory of Members" for a speaker by specialty or topic works fine. The search feature is already there and does what it is supposed to do. What we heard is that program managers do not always know it exists or how to use it, so we will be talking more about getting the word out and walking people through it. Also, the search is only as good as what is put in it. **Look at your profile and presentation descriptions and ask whether a program chair who has never heard of you would know what you actually talk about**. One of the most common complaints is a description does not match the presentation.

Second, a written contract and communication that is clear to both sides are needed before an event. Both of those protect you, and are the mark of professionalism.

While on the subject of societies finding us, one piece of housekeeping: The **website calendar is fixed**, and I thank you for your patience while that was sorted out. Nothing you had entered was lost. If you have a presentation coming up, put it on the calendar. When your event is there, we can help publicize it, and Terri is always looking for speaking engagements to share.

Please join me in welcoming **Anni Parsons** as our new Membership Coordinator. **Ann Staley** handed the role over to Anni in August, and Anni has been quietly getting her feet under her ever since. Membership questions? Ask Anni at membershipchair@GenealogicalSpeakersGuild.org. Thank you, Ann, for your years of service in that seat, and welcome, Anni.

We are also taking a hard look at our bylaws. The Board has begun a review to make sure our governing documents reflect how the Guild actually operates today, and to close gaps that have accumulated over three and a half decades. Some of you will be asked for input. When that happens, please weigh in.

In November, we will be set up at the Texas State Genealogical Society conference. If you get an email from us about brochures, that is why. We are counting what we have and figuring out who needs to send more. If you

are a newer member, plan on sending yours. Your brochure on our table is often the first thing a program planner picks up.

Call for Presentations: Our Education Committee will be meeting soon, so this is the moment to speak up. If there is a topic you would like to hear covered in a webinar, or one you would like to present yourself, please send it to President@GenealogicalSpeakersGuild.org.

We would rather plan our year around what you actually want than guess at it.

Thanks for listening. Together, we continue to make the Guild not just a society, but a community where speakers support speakers.

Larry

Larry W. Thomas
C/O Gilshot Genealogy Svc
PO Box 1511
Powder Springs, GA 30127-7511

Welcome to our New Members

1 July 2026-30 September 2026

We welcome the following new members and thank you for joining! We look forward to your contributions to the Guild.

Mark Fearer **Matthew Morgan** **Stewart Traiman**

For those who have renewed their membership or those who may have rejoined after a hiatus, we thank you for your support!

Julia A. Anderson
Carol Ansel
Andrea Bentschneider
Jeffrey A. Bockman
Caron Primas Brennan
Claire Brisson-Banks
Michele Doyle
Diane Henriks
Peggy Jude
Thomas Koselka
J. Mark Lowe
Annette Burke Lyttle
Jamie Lee McManus Mayhew
Jill Nock
Cheri Hudson Passey
Georgia Pribanic
Diane L. Richard
Sheila Smith
Debbie Smyth

Welcome to our New Membership Chair

Anni Parsons is now serving as the Membership Chair for the Genealogical Speakers Guild following Ann Staley's transition to the role of National Booth Coordinator. She is excited to take on this position as she loves seeing organizations like ours grow and enjoys helping new members discover and take advantage of the many benefits their membership offers.

If you know a speaker who isn't yet a member of our group, please reach out and invite them to join us!

Guild Members are Busy this Fall!

The Utah Genealogical Association Summit of Excellence Virtual Conference was held 10-12 September 2026. Guild members providing presentations were:

Sara Cochran
Christine Cohen
Linda Debe
Karen A. Fortin
Diane Henriks
Jean Wilcox Hibben, PhD
Alina Khuda
Sue McNelly
Cheri Hudson Passey
Cynthia K Patton
Torhild Shirley
Michael L. Strauss, MA, AG, AGL
Larry W. Thomas
Paula Williams

The North Carolina Genealogical Society 2026 Fall Conference was held 18-19 September 2026, in Raleigh, NC, at the McKimmon Center and virtually. A total of 436 attendees, including a good number of GSG members, were in attendance. Guild members providing presentations were:

Linda Debe
J. Mark Lowe, FUGA
Matthew R. Morgan
Cheri Hudson Passey
Diane L. Richard
Judy G. Russell, JD, CG, CGL
Craig R. Scott, CG®, FUGA
Larry W. Thomas

The Texas State Genealogical Society 2026 Family History Conference will be held 6-7 Nov 2026 in Fort Worth, TX. The Guild will also have a vendor booth to promote the Guild. Guild members providing in-person and virtual presentations are:

Linda Debe
Jean Wilcox Hibben, PhD
J. Mark Lowe, FUGA
Annette Burke Lyttle, CG
Diane L. Richard
Michelle L. Spencer
C. Ann Staley, CG, CGL, FNGS
Larry W. Thomas

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: DIANE L. RICHARD

Diane has/had two Fall speaking engagements, both virtual and in person.

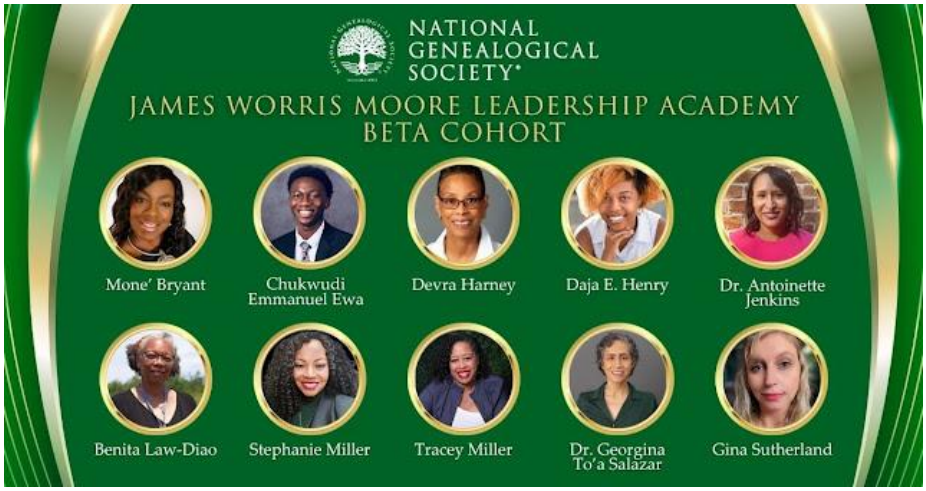
Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (virtual, three tracks), 24 October 2026
https://www.aahgs.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=623005&module_id=790880

Research Enslaved and FPOC Skilled Artisans and Craftspeople – Their Stories Are Waiting to Be Told!
We often hear about Thomas Day, a free man of color who was a cabinetmaker in early 19th-century North Carolina, and John Hemmings, an enslaved joiner and cabinetmaker at Monticello [VA]. There were hundreds, if not thousands, more skilled enslaved and FPOC artisans/ craftspeople whose stories are waiting to be told. Let's explore resources that might help us learn more about these valued individuals and their contributions to antebellum communities.

Texas State Genealogical Society (in person & virtual), 6-7 November 2026
https://www.txsgs.org/2026-conference/

The Power of People – Voices Via Petitions
Sometimes we have to "fight" for what we want, and that leads to certain types of petitions. Sometimes we seek government authorization for certain activities, and that requires a different type of petition. Petitions are a means by which one or many people can seek to change the status quo. Much of early legislation in our country is a result of petitions. (Pre-recorded Lecture)

Were Your Ancestors Masons? Let's Talk About Available Records
This talk focuses on records available to those researching Masonic ancestors; the perspective is access to genealogically relevant records versus Masonic membership insights. These records can be an invaluable resource if ones' ancestors belonged to a lodge in the US, UK, Canada, or Europe. We'll discuss online records and finding aids, and on-the-ground repositories.



See the next page for information on the NGS Leadership Academy.

NGS Welcomes the James Worris Moore Leadership Academy Beta Cohort

The National Genealogical Society (NGS) is pleased to announce the **beta cohort of the James Worris Moore Leadership Academy**, an accomplished group representing the continued growth and future of genealogy. Following the successful alpha cohort of eight members, the Academy received a large and highly competitive applicant pool for its second year. The exceptional strength and breadth of the applicants led the Academy to expand this year's cohort from eight to ten members.

Like the inaugural class, the beta cohort brings together members of Generation Z, millennials, and Generation X from around the country. Their cultural roots and research interests extend across Africa, China, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Pacific Islands. Together, they bring African American, African, Louisiana Creole, Creek Freedmen, Samoan, Polynesian, and broader diaspora perspectives to the field. They reflect the depth of talent within genealogy and are not simply preparing for the future of the family history community; they are already helping create it.

The beta cohort members are genealogists, public historians, educators, attorneys, journalists, scientists, nonprofit founders, and advocates. Their work spans DNA research, archival preservation, historic schools and cemeteries, African and diaspora genealogy, enslaved-person research, adoption and unknown parentage cases, oral history, and community education. They have led genealogical organizations, digitized records, published family and cultural histories, developed programs, and helped individuals and communities recover stories that might otherwise have been lost.

Congratulations to the ten members of the beta cohort!

Moné Bryant	**Daja E. Henry**	**Stephanie Miller**
Chukwudi Emmanuel Ewa	**Dr. Antoinette Jenkins**	**Tracey Miller**
Devra Harney	**Benita Law-Diao**	**Dr. Georgina To'a Salazar**
	Gina Sutherland	

Visit the **UpFront blog** to learn more about members of the new cohort. Learn more about the James Worris Moore Leadership Academy on the **NGS website**.

The James Worris Moore Leadership Academy is dedicated to advancing the future of genealogical leadership and is committed to providing the mentorship, professional development, and collaborative learning opportunities these leaders need to expand their impact. Through the Academy, members of the beta cohort will strengthen their leadership skills, build lasting professional relationships, and contribute to a genealogical field that is more inclusive, accessible, and representative of the communities it serves.

Calling All Guild Members!

The Website Committee needs current photos of our members giving presentations in front of an audience. There is nothing wrong with the photo on our homepage, but it has been there for years and can use a refresh.

We'd love some new action shots of you presenting! Please send us your recent conference, seminar, or society-meeting photos so we can showcase the Guild in action. By submitting a photo, you agree to allow us to post it on the GSG website.

Texas State Genealogical Society, Here We Come!

Booth Volunteers Needed

Will you be attending the Texas State Genealogical Society Conference (TxSGS)? It's being held 6-7 November, at the Riley Center in Fort Worth, Texas.

The Genealogical Speakers Guild will have a booth presence on site and needs your help! This is your opportunity to shine! **Volunteer** and you will meet the program chairs who are looking for speakers for their organizations!

Long blocks of time are not required. Give what time you're able. Breaks between sessions and during lunch are our busiest times, so even a half hour helps!!

Stop by our booth and sign up for as many time slots as you can donate. ALL time donated is greatly appreciated by **YOUR** GSG!

Thank you,
Larry W. Thomas, President GSG
President@GenealogicalSpeakersGuild.org

GSG 35TH Anniversary, Photos Sought

Were you there? Do you have photos?

We would like to provide a retrospective of the founding of our organization and salute our founding members, those who are still with us and those who have gone on to meet their ancestors in person.

If you have something to contribute, please send to Editor@GenealogicalSpeakersGuild.org before December.

What are the Benefits to Guild Membership?

- 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.

Have you volunteered in the Guild booth at the national conferences? **Yes!** This is a benefit. The networking opportunities to interact with the public—the public that hires you—is great. You can talk directly to the program chairs of many societies and their members, promoting not only the Guild, but yourself as well.

Have you offered your time to help with Guild matters, either on the board or as part of a committee? Have you shared your expertise in ***Speak!***? You'll have the opportunity to meet and work with like-minded individuals who enjoy working to continue the mission and legacy of the Guild.

Membership renewal allows you to take advantage of all the various benefits of the *Genealogical Speakers Guild*.



Not a Member??

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

Sign in at Join GSG – Genealogical Speakers Guild and choose from various levels of membership:

- **Membership Plans**

1 Year Membership - $40 / 1 Year *membership in the Genealogical Speakers Guild.*

2 Year Membership - $80 / 2 Years *membership in the Genealogical Speakers Guild.*

1 Year Family Membership - $45 / 1 Year

2 Year Family Membership - $90 / 2 Years

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*), 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 W. Thomas, 2028

Vice President: Michele Doyle, 2027

Treasurer: David McCorkle, 2028

Secretary: Laura Hedgecock, 2027

Director: Shannon Combs-Bennett, QG, 2027

Director: Jamie Lee McManus Mayhew, M.Ed., PLCGS, 2028

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Tami Mize, proofreader

Editor Emeritus: Phyllis Matthews Ziller, MLIS

Webmaster: Mark Beasley

Roots-L Mailing List Moderator: Jeannette Pieczynski

GSG Facebook Page Administrator: Eric Basir

National Conference Coordinator: C. Ann Staley