

2026 Nominees for the NGS Board of Directors (and Continuing Directors)

The following are biographical sketches of the nominees for the board of directors election, as well as those who will continue to serve. Four current directors—John Dougan, Judy Nimer Muhn, Cheri Hudson Passey, and Fr. Symeon Williams—have terms that expire in 2028 and are not up for election. David Rencher will serve as past president.

Nominees

President: André Kearns, Washington, D.C.



André Kearns was elected to the board in 2020 and serves as Vice President. He chairs the Development Committee, serves on the Finance and Governance Committees, and was the founding chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. A professional genealogist, author, and speaker, André is the founder and CEO of **Black Ancestries**, a genealogy and storytelling company that helps people of African descent uncover, celebrate, and preserve their family histories. André has researched his family history for more than twenty years, tracing one branch of his ancestry to some of the earliest Africans to arrive in colonial Virginia. His research has deepened his appreciation for genealogy’s power to restore the names, lives, and contributions of people who have too often been rendered invisible in our history, including those who endured enslavement. André is the author of the book *Finding Cornerstone Stories: Uncovering Inspiration in Your Family’s History*, published by American Ancestors. He holds a BA in business administration from Morehouse College and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He shares his family research at CumboFamily.com and writes about genealogy, history, race, culture, and leadership on Medium.

Vice President: Ellen Pinckney Balthazar, Texas



Ellen Balthazar joined the board in 2018, serving as vice president (2020–2024) and secretary (2024–2026). She currently chairs the Membership Committee, focusing on member engagement and new audiences, and serves on the Development Committee. Balthazar leads a collaborative initiative to preserve historical collections in and around Austin, Texas, and to advance public access and programming at the local history center. A retired marketing and non-profit executive, Ellen honed her consumer research skills at Procter & Gamble, her brand marketing expertise at Frito-Lay, and her public relations acumen in the international division of PepsiCo’s restaurant businesses. In 2005, she successfully transitioned to the not-for-profit sector, becoming CEO of a leading 501(c) (3) organization in Austin, Texas, focused on children’s issues. Under her leadership, the organization doubled the number of families served, as well as the budget. Since retiring in 2012, she has enjoyed being a volunteer mentor and consultant to non-profit organizations. Ellen served her local community as a trustee on the school board for 24 years (2001–2025). A University of Georgia Bulldog (BSHEJ, MS), she and her husband live in Austin with their children and grandchildren right around the corner.

Vice President for Society and Organization Management: Dawn Carey Henry, Michigan



Dawn Henry is a professional genealogist and owner of Discover Your Roots, LLC, specializing in the Great Lakes region, Irish, and Canadian ancestry and citizenship by descent projects. A member of NGS since 2013, Dawn chaired the first Delegate Council Steering Committee following the 2020 NGS-FGS merger. As chair, she led the development of the council's framework and its purpose, “Building the Community of Genealogy Organizations through Collaboration, Communication, and Counsel.” In recognition of this work, she received the NGS 2022 Shirley Langdon Wilcox Award for Exemplary Volunteerism. Dawn

has served as president, conference chair, and genealogist of the Illinois State Genealogical Society; conference chair for her local society; and was conference manager of the Association of Professional Genealogists (APG) Professional Management Conference. She holds a BS in Distributed Studies (International Relations) from Iowa State University, a Certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston University and is a graduate of ProGen 25 and GenProof 87, with advanced coursework at GRIP and SLIG. Dawn is also a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, Western Michigan Genealogical Society, New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, Ontario Genealogical Society, and International Society for British Genealogy and Family History.

Secretary: Michelle Enke, MLIS, Kansas



Michelle Enke has been a genealogy librarian at the Wichita Public Library since 2002. While manager of the Genealogy / Special Collections Center, she grew the genealogy collection to almost 50,000 books and added pertinent microfilm and databases to the collection. She has a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Missouri and has held a Certified Archivist credential since 2004. She chaired the ad hoc Wichita Photo Archive Committee from 2002–2004. The group project included the public library, university special collections, and historical museum and was tasked to digitize their photographs and place them on one website. Since 2002, she has served on committees for the American Library Association including the Genealogy Committee, Local History Committee, Professional Development Committee, and the Genealogy Pre-conference Planning Committee. In 2023, she received the American Library Association History Section Genealogy/ History Achievement Award. In 2024, NGS presented her with its Filby Award for Genealogical Librarianship.

Treasurer: Douglas Klein, CPA, Ohio



Doug Klein was elected treasurer of the board of directors in 2022 and chairs the Finance Committee. He spends about fifteen hours a week as a tax director for a large national CPA firm in the National Tax Office. When time permits, he is also a volunteer Y-DNA surname project co-administrator, volunteers occasionally for the National Park Service doing transcriptions for the Black Homesteading Project and still chases his family history. Klein has completed the Boston University Certificate in Genealogical Research Program, ProGen Study Group 56, and is currently completing the NGS Advanced Skills Course. Doug's career started in public accounting over thirty-five years ago and includes eight years with the IRS where he was a revenue agent. Like many CPAs, he is no stranger to nonprofit boards and has served several cycles as the treasurer and chair of the finance and audit committees of a large local nonprofit (over \$25mm).

Director Region 1: Marlis Humphrey, Arizona



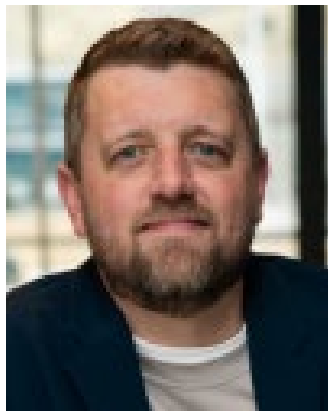
Marlis Humphrey was elected to the board in 2020. She currently chairs the Futures and Foresight Working Group; serves on the Development and GenTech Committees; and is a member of the Veteran Bounty Land Records Campaign Cabinet. Humphrey is a professional genealogist and a frequent speaker at genealogy conferences. She is CEO and co-founder of the L'Dor V'Dor Foundation and its Documentation of Jewish Records Worldwide project. She was formerly president of both the Florida State Genealogical Society and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies. Marlis is a senior executive who drives global growth through innovation in the face of disruptive technology in both the commercial and non-profit sectors. She has served on and led national and international non-profit and trade association boards for three decades. She has an MS in Management of Technology, University of Miami, and a BA in Russian Language with a minor in Math and Computer Science from Knox College, Illinois. She is passionate about the discovery of unknown ancestors, teaching others to be successful, and the sharing of family histories.

Director Region 2: Lisa Fanning, Indiana



Lisa Fanning was elected to the board in 2022 and currently serves on the Development Committee and is a member of the Genetic Genealogy and Futures & Foresight Working Groups. As chair of the Membership Committee from 2022 to 2024, she enhanced member engagement by hosting and developing MemberConnects! and creating Culture Conversations. Lisa is a professional and genetic genealogist with more than thirty years of experience. Her investigative genetic genealogy work has included the DNA Doe Project, Search Squad, and the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Identification Project. She directs the DNA curriculum track for the Midwest African American Genealogy Institute (MAAGI). Lisa has appeared on WOIO/Cleveland 19's *Unidentified* television program and was a panelist on Season Ten's PBS *Finding Your Roots* National Virtual Event. She participated in a side event during the Fourth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, and most recently was a featured guest on Crista Cowan's *Stories That Live in Us*. Lisa has had a diverse career in international affairs, professional and leadership development, and strategic planning, enhancing diversity and inclusion in the US workforce across healthcare, higher education, and international development. She holds degrees in French (BA) and Intercultural Communication (MA) and is an award-winning photographic artist. Lisa has extensively researched her family history, focusing on African and Tri-Racial Isolate communities in Indiana, North Carolina, and Virginia, dating back to the 1600s, as well as Iron plantations in Middle Tennessee.

Director at Large: Eric Allen, Utah



Eric Allen joined the board in 2026. He is Vice President of Commercialization & Growth at Ancestry, where he works at the intersection of technology and family history. Since joining the company in 2012, he has played a key role in shaping how millions of people discover their heritage. Eric was a founding member of the AncestryDNA launch team, helping build its first consumer experiences and later leading growth strategies that have delivered DNA insights to more than 30 million people worldwide. He has also helped drive commercial initiatives that expand record access for millions of subscribers. Eric has held several leadership roles at Ancestry, including Senior Director of Commercialization and Director of Onsite Conversion. He focuses on improving the user experience so family history research is easier and more rewarding for everyone. Eric earned a degree in Finance from Utah Valley University and brings a strong data-driven approach to his work. A passionate genealogist for nearly twenty years, he researches his Icelandic, Swedish, English, Colonial, and Revolutionary War roots. He lives in Lehi, Utah, with his wife and four children.

Director at Large: Reem Awad-Rashmawi, JD, California



Reem Awad-Rashmawi was elected to the board in 2024. She currently serves as acting chair of the DEI Committee, chairs the Genetic Genealogy Working Group and is member of the Membership Committee. She is an immigration lawyer and a professional genealogist. Reem is the founder of the National Society for Arab and Arab American Genealogy (NSAB) and actively participates in and speaks at several regional, state, and local genealogy organizations. In 2019, after researching her own family for over thirty years, she opened "Photographs and Memories by Reem," offering genealogy consulting and research services. Reem's prior volunteer and nonprofit work include programming and communications for her local genealogy society, contributing to various educational initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing the learning experience and fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for students, and addressing issues related to Arabs and Arab Americans. Reem holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in International Relations and Sociology from the University of California, Davis, and a law degree (JD) with a focus on international law. She currently resides in Davis, California.

Director at Large: Edgie E. Donakey, Utah



Ed Donakey was elected to the board in 2020, chairs both the Audit Committee, and the GenTech Working Group, and serves on the Governance Committee. He is employed as vice president of strategic relations and deputy chief genealogical officer at FamilySearch International where he manages the Chief Genealogical Office. Ed also serves on the IAJGS board of directors. He was a member of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) board of directors at the time of the merger, having previously served that organization as vice-president of development. He was the National Conference co-chair for the 2014 FGS Conference in San Antonio, Texas. A professional strategist and past CEO, Ed provides business and technology support to genealogical societies, non-profits, and emerging businesses. A happily married father and grandfather, his genealogical interests keep him in the Deep South, Ireland, and Scotland.

Director at Large: Geraldine Knatz, CG, California



Geraldine Knatz is a certified genealogist specializing in German, Irish, and New York City research. She is the author of three books, including the award-winning *Terminal Island: Lost Communities on America's Edge*, and particularly enjoys discovering genealogical information in overlooked government sources. She is secretary of the Immigrant Genealogical Society and served for ten years on the board of the Los Angeles Historical Society. She holds a Certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston College and completed the Gen-Fed program in 2023. A strong advocate of doing research onsite, Knatz traveled to archives, libraries and small villages in Germany and Ireland. She earned a BS from Rutgers University and an MS and PhD from the University of Southern California (USC). During a thirty-five-year career at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, she served as CEO of the Port of Los Angeles and helped establish its archive ensuring the protection of a century's worth of documents and photographs. She is professor emerita in the School of Engineering at USC and currently serves on multiple non-profit and corporate boards.

Director at Large: Terri Ward, Florida



Terri Ward is a genealogist, educator, speaker, and founder of The Front Porch Genealogist. She specializes in African American genealogy, with expertise in Coastal Georgia, the Low Country, and Gullah Geechee communities. Her research combines genealogical records, oral history, DNA, and historical context to recover family and community histories and connect them to the broader American narrative. Ward is a graduate of the inaugural cohort of the National Genealogical Society's James Worris Moore Leadership Academy. She serves as publicity director for the Genealogical Speakers Guild and previously served as publicity director and a member of the board of the Georgia Genealogical Society. She holds a BA in Foreign Language with a minor in Latin American Studies from the University of Central Florida. An experienced educator and nationally recognized speaker, she has presented for genealogical, historical, and educational organizations on African American research, Reconstruction, Free People of Color, DNA, and Coastal Georgia history. Through research, education, storytelling, and leadership, Ward advocates for rigorous scholarship, broader access to genealogical education, and fuller representation of historically under-documented families and communities.

Continuing Directors

Director Region 3: Cheri Hudson Passey, South Carolina



Cheri Passey joined the board in 2020, at the time of the merger, when she was elected the Society's first Vice President for Society and Organization Management. She currently serves on both the Marketing and Awards committees. Cheri is a professional genealogist, instructor, writer, speaker, and owner of Carolina Girl Genealogy, LLC. She hosts the YouTube genealogy chat show *GenFriends* and works as a genealogical researcher, subcontracted by Eagle Investigative Services, Inc., for the US Army Past Conflict Repatriations Branch. Cheri is actively involved in a wide range of genealogy societies and organizations. Her work emphasizes sound research methodology, context-driven analysis, and making genealogy approachable and meaningful for researchers at every level. She writes the blog *Carolina Girl*

Genealogy, where she shares practical research tips, proven methodologies, family stories, and her own research adventures. Cheri is also the author of *Genealogy in Reverse: Finding the Living, A Practical Guide for All Genealogists*.

Director Region 4: Rev. Fr. Symeon Williams, Pennsylvania



Fr. Symeon (Samuel) Williams was elected secretary of the board in 2022. He was a founding member of the Delegate Council Steering Committee, serving as vice-chair 2020–2021, and chair 2021–2022. Williams has served on the boards of the Virginia Beach Genealogical Society, the Virginia Genealogical Society, and the Virginia Mayflower Society. As the owner of The Orthodox Genealogist, LLC, he lectures and conducts client work, specializing in Greek American and Central Virginian research and solving genetic genealogy mysteries. He is an alumnus of ProGen 50, NGS American Genealogical Studies, and several institutes. Williams studied International Affairs and Spanish at James Madison University and theology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Fr. Symeon was ordained a Greek Orthodox priest in 2024 and currently serves the Philadelphia suburbs at St. Sophia

Greek Orthodox Church in Jeffersonville, Pennsylvania.

Director at Large: John Dougan, Missouri



John Dougan was elected to the board in 2024. He serves on the Awards, Mar/Com, and Membership committees, and on the Futures and Foresight Working Group. He is also a member of the Records Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC) steering committee. John is the state archivist and chief administrator of the Records Services Division for Missouri where he works to preserve and provide access to Missouri's state and local government records. A recent past president of the Council of State Archivists, his work includes development of the award-winning Missouri State Archives and Missouri Digital Heritage websites; numerous innovations in the State Imaging Lab and State Records Center; conservation of the state's most important and most damaged records; and the growth of onsite and online volunteer programs. Throughout his career in Missouri, and previously at the

Memphis/Shelby County Archives in Memphis, Tennessee, Dougan has advocated for online access to genealogical and family history records. A frequent lecturer for the St. Louis Genealogical Society, Missouri State Genealogical Association, NGS, and IGHR, along with local, state, and national historical, library and archival organizations, his interests include developing underutilized records, using historical and legal context in family history research, and developing volunteer tools and programs. Dougan holds a master's in history from the University of Memphis. John and his wife Patricia have two children and enjoy heritage activities that include fruit production, gardening, and maintaining a small apiary.

Director at Large: Judy Nimer Muhn, Michigan



Judy Muhn joined the board in 2021, chairs the Awards Committee, and serves on the Finance and DEI Committees. She is the NGS Delegate for the French-Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan, and she collaborates with the Mar/Com team on behalf of the Awards program. A researcher, writer, society leader and traveler, Judy is president of both the Michigan Genealogical Council and the Oakland County Genealogical Society, and is the founder/CEO of Lineage Journeys, specializing in research of French-Canadian, Acadian, Native/Indigenous populations in Ontario, Quebec, Michigan and the fur trade era. She holds degrees in Medical Technology (Michigan State), Counseling Psychology (Univ. of San Francisco), and Organizational Development/ Nonprofit Management (Boston University). A member of many genealogical societies, Judy is a recently retired nonprofit specialist in organizational development. She

is thrilled to be home in Michigan after her husband's 22-year Air Force career.

Past President: David E. Rencher, AG, CG, FUGA, FIGRS, FNGS, FSG, Utah



David Rencher was elected to the NGS board in 2020, currently serves as president, and co-chairs the Veteran Bounty Land Campaign Cabinet. He is employed as the Chief Genealogical Officer for *FamilySearch*. A professional genealogist since 1977, he has earned both credentials: Accredited Genealogist® with ICAPGen in Ireland research (1981) and Certified Genealogist® with the Board for Certification of Genealogists (2006). He is the Irish course coordinator and instructor for the GRIP Genealogy Institute and the Institute of Genealogical and Historical Research (IGHR). David graduated from Brigham Young University in 1980 with a BA in Family and Local History. He is a past president of the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) and the Utah Genealogical Association (UGA). He is a fellow of UGA, NGS, the Irish Genealogical Research Society, and the Society of

Genealogists, London. Rencher is the past chair of the Record Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC), and he serves on the council for the New England Historic Genealogical Society.
