

## **Family and Local History Workshop Presenter Bios**

**Shannon Ammons** is the chief executive officer for the Alabama Association of Nonprofits, which is a membership-based organization formed to serve the needs of Alabama's growing nonprofit sector. Previously Shannon was the director of knowledge and impact assessment at Blackfish Strategies with a background as a gymnastics coach and studied aerospace engineering at Auburn University.

**Donna Cox Baker**, director of *Alabama Heritage* magazine, has a PhD in history and formerly served in history acquisitions for a scholarly press and as communications director for an international computer corporation. She has recently joined the ranks of independent publishers, founding Golden Channel Publishing in 2018. She is the author of *Views of the Future State: Afterlife Beliefs in the Deep South, 1820–1865* and *Zotero for Genealogy: Harnessing the Power of Your Research*, with *The Zotero Solution: Knowledge Management for the Scholarly Researcher* forthcoming. Her coedited volume, *Alabama from Territory to Statehood: An Alabama Heritage Bicentennial Collection* is due out this fall from NewSouth Press. Her blog, *The Golden Egg Genealogist*, is available at [gegbound.com](http://gegbound.com).

**Maiben Beard** is an outreach associate at the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University, where she develops, implements, and manages statewide arts and humanities outreach programs and initiatives. In addition, she curates and interprets the historic 1847 Scott-Yarbrough house, known as Pebble Hill. Beard graduated from Emory University with a bachelor's in art history and a minor in anthropology. She currently serves as membership secretary for the Alabama Historical Association, community representative for the Digital Public Library of America, and commissioner for the City of Auburn Historic Preservation Commission.

**Mike Bunn** is a historian and author who has worked with several cultural heritage organizations in the Southeast. He currently serves as director of Historic Blakeley State Park in Spanish Fort, Alabama. He is author or co-author of several books, including *Early Alabama: An Illustrated Guide to the Formative Years, 1798–1826*; *Well Worth Stopping to See: Antebellum Columbus, Georgia Through the Eyes of Travelers*; *Civil War Eufaula*; *Battle for the Southern Frontier: The Creek War and the War of 1812*; and *Images of America: The Lower Chattahoochee River*. Mike is also editor of *Muscogiana*, the journal of the Muscogee County (Georgia) Genealogical Society, and serves on the board of several local and statewide historical and cultural organizations.

**Yvonne Shelton Crumpler** worked as a librarian in the Tutwiler Collection of Southern History and Literature at the Birmingham Public Library for more than 30 years. For much of that time, she served as map curator and rare books librarian, until her retirement in 2006. She has presented workshops to genealogical and historical societies in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi on the Draper Manuscripts, land records, and many other topics. She earned a masters in history from UAB and an MLS from the University of Alabama.

**Jim Day** is the Michael J. Grainger Professor in Modern History at the University of Montevallo. He holds a bachelor's in engineering from the US Military Academy at West Point, a master's in history from the University of Georgia, and a PhD in history from Auburn University. His monograph—*Diamonds in the Rough: A History of Alabama's Cahaba Coal Field*—combines technological and social history to examine the industrial development of central Alabama. The book won the Alabama Historical Association's 2014 Clinton Jackson Coley Award for the best work on local history, and Jim was named UM's University Scholar for Academic Year 2014–2015. Since retiring from the Army in 1995, Jim has taught history at Marion Military Institute, Judson College, Auburn University Montgomery, and the University of Montevallo. At UM, he teaches courses in Colonial America, Revolutionary America, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian America, the Gilded Age, US History since 1945, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the History of Alabama's Constitutions. He also has developed Staff Ride/Terrain Walk courses on the Civil War battles of Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Franklin.

**Nancy DuPree** is the coordinator of the Alabama Department of Archives and History Research Room. She has worked at ADAH as a research archivist for the past 22 years and specializes in genealogy. She has a BA in history and a master's degree in education. In the ADAH Research Room, Nancy provides reference assistance to historical, academic, legal, and genealogical researchers. She coordinates and answers research requests that the Alabama Archives receives from researchers worldwide. She acts as a liaison for the numerous volunteers who assist the staff and patrons in the Research Room. She teaches genealogical research and conducts workshops and gives presentations about the many research treasures of the Alabama Archives.

**Dr. Liberty Evanko** (née Schwendiman) is an advanced genealogist who has been bringing heritages to life for more than 20 years. Incorporating DNA into genealogical research has become her passion. She enjoys providing family history education to individuals and groups, both the young and young at heart. In addition to her family history knowledge and skills, Dr. Evanko also holds a PhD in physics and astronomy from Brigham Young University. She can be contacted through her "Bringing Your Heritage to Life" website at <http://www.FamilyTreesbyDrE.com>.

**Mary-Haynes Furman** is a transplant Alabamian from Mandeville, Louisiana. She graduated from the University of Montevallo in December of 2018, where she earned a BS in history and worked in the Annie Crawford Milner Archives and Special Collections. She began working at ADAH in March of 2019 as the Communications Assistant. Her interests include the history of women's education, sustainability, and art.

**Laura Newland Hill** is the communications manager for the award-winning, online Encyclopedia of Alabama. She joined the EOA staff in 2009 and is responsible for promoting the site through a variety of methods, including social media. She has more than 30 years of public relations experience, and has worked with nonprofit educational and arts organizations in Tennessee, Massachusetts, and Alabama. Hill earned a MS in Communication from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Her research on public relations practitioners' perception of the world wide web as a communications tool was

published, in 2000, in the peer-reviewed journal *Public Relations Review*. She currently serves on the education committee for Alabama Bicentennial Commission and Alabama's 19th Amendment Centennial committee. She is an active member of the Alabama Historical Association, and recently served a term on its board of directors. She was also a member of the Alabama's World War I Centennial Committee and contributed several posts for its blog.

**Georgia Ann Conner Hudson** is a native of Baldwin County, Alabama. She holds a bachelor of arts in both history and studio art from Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. Since 2013, Georgia Ann has been the communications coordinator at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, serving the agency through a period of exciting growth and transition. Her primary responsibilities at the Archives include marketing, public relations, graphic design, and development.

**Jennifer Maier** is the executive director of the Shelby County Museum & Archives and the Shelby Iron Works Park. In the past four years she has overseen the digitization of all of the county records within the museum's archives. More recently, Jennifer facilitated the merger of the Shelby Iron Works Park under the umbrella of the Shelby County Historical Society. She has first-hand experience with the ever-evolving role of historical societies in the community. In her role as director, Jennifer wears many hats. Her activities include fundraising, program development, communications, marketing and all administrative functions for both the museum and the park. She believes that collaboration with other local non-profits is essential, and she maintains positions of leadership within her community. Jennifer serves on the board of directors of the Shelby County Arts Council where she has played a role in the development of a new multi-million dollar performing arts center in Columbiana. She serves on the board of Columbiana Main Street and is active on various municipal boards and is a member of several local civic organizations.

**Rebecca Todd Minder** serves as marketing and digital media manager for *Alabama Heritage* magazine. She handles corporate sponsorships and marketing efforts, coordinates all social media, special online sales and subscriptions, website content, and the magazine's digitization efforts, which won her the Digital History Award from the Alabama Historical Association (AHA) in 2018. Rebecca is serving her second term on the AHA board of directors. She is a committed leader in the local community and was an active part in the creation of Tuscaloosa's new civil rights trail. Rebecca earned a master's degree in American studies with a focus on Southern popular culture and her bachelor's in public relations, both from the University of Alabama. Before joining *Alabama Heritage*, she was the publicist for the University of Alabama Press, and a managing editor at Randall-Reilly Publishing for two of its construction industry magazines.

**Steve Murray** is director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the state agency that serves as the permanent repository for state government records, a special collections library, and the state's history museum. Murray became director in 2012 after serving for six years as assistant director for administration. His prior experience in public history included service as managing editor of the *Encyclopedia of Alabama* and *The*

*Alabama Review*, both at Auburn University. Murray is a member of the Alabama Bicentennial Commission and co-chairs its Education Committee. He co-chaired the Alabama World War I Centennial Committee and is past president of the Alabama Historical Association. At the national level, his service includes terms on the Council of State Archivists and the board of the American Association for State and Local History.

**Joyia Pittman** is an education program specialist with the Alabama Bicentennial Commission. She is originally from Birmingham, Alabama, and earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Alabama. Following her undergraduate studies, Joyia went on to receive a master's degree in museum education from George Washington University in Washington, DC. Joyia has held positions at the Dumbarton House, National Museum of African American History and Culture, National Museum of Natural History, and National Air and Space Museum. She is a member of the Junior Executive Board at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and Alabama Emerging Museum Professionals. Joyia is passionate about museums as nontraditional learning spaces and creating engaging museum experiences for all visitors.

**Susan Reynolds** is the editor of *Alabama Heritage* magazine. She oversees the daily editorial functions for the magazine, cultivates new content, and manages a team of contributing editors and writers. She earned a PhD in English at the University of Alabama and has a master's in library science. Prior to working at *Alabama Heritage*, Susan was employed by *Southern Living* magazine and taught courses in the University of Alabama English department. Her first book—the coedited volume *Alabama from Territory to Statehood: An Alabama Heritage Bicentennial Collection*—is due out this fall from NewSouth Press. Her essays on Augusta Evans Wilson appear in *Alabama Heritage* and in the award-winning new book, *Alabama Women: Their Lives and Times*.

**Shirley Spears**—a retired high school and public librarian—devotes her time to managing the B. B. Comer Memorial Public Library Foundation, an organization that has offered donors the opportunity to give to the B. B. Comer Memorial Library for more than twenty-eight years. Spears earned an M. Ed. and an Ed. Doctorate at Auburn University, an experience that influenced her to view the study and preservation of history as a library service.

**Michelle L. Spencer**, owner of RomaMaryGrace Historical Research, has conducted research for clients from the Midwest and Southeast US to Germany and the United Kingdom. She has written and spoken extensively on research methods, as well as military and historical events. She has co-authored more than two dozen successful nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and is also a member of the National Genealogy Society, the Genealogical Speaker's Guild, and the Association of Professional Genealogists. Her website and blog can be found at [romamarygrace.com](http://romamarygrace.com).

**Frazine K. Taylor** served as the head of reference for the Alabama Department of Archives and History for nearly a quarter-century and is an expert in Alabama records. She is the author of *Researching African American Genealogy in Alabama: A Resource Guide* (NewSouth, 2008) and coordinated the African American Course for the Institute of

Genealogy and Historical Research for 14 years. She has served in leadership roles in historical and preservation organizations statewide—now president of the Alabama Historical Association and 2019 winner of the Virginia van der Veer Hamilton Award for her dedication to bridging the gaps between scholars and lay historians. She has an MLS in Library Services and continues to offer her services as an archivist part-time at Alabama State University.

**Tracey C. Thomas**, director of the B. B. Comer Memorial Library in Sylacauga, Alabama, has worked in the public library for 18 years with an additional two years in the school library. Thomas earned a MLIS from the University of Alabama, and through her library work has developed a deep interest in preserving local and personal family histories for future generations. Partnerships are vital to the preservation projects that Thomas has helped to develop at Comer Library.

**Elizabeth Crabtree Wells** served many years as special collection librarian and archivist at Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama. She specializes in Alabama and Southern records, religious records, local and state governmental records, and repositories. She has served in leadership roles in state and local historical, genealogical, and archivist societies and won numerous awards for her achievements. She speaks at national, regional, state, and local conferences and programs. Her publications include: *Daughters of the Dream: History of Judson College* with Frances Hamilton; “Genealogy Section,” *Magazines for Libraries*; state advisor (Alabama), *Best Books for Academic Libraries*, and “Church Records” chapter in *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy. The Alabama Baptist: Celebrating 175 years of Informing, Inspiring and Connecting Baptist*. She holds a BA from Judson College, an MA from Auburn University, an MLS from University of Alabama, and honorary doctorate from Judson College.