

Elected Officers



Gail Arnert – President & Newsletter Editor – I grew up in small town Ohio surrounded by extensive family. My father died when I was 9 months old and my two grandfathers before I was born. I was always asking questions about them and looking at family photo albums. History and genealogy were in my blood. My mother remarried in 1959 to a wonderful man and we were off to southern California. I was in California for 19 years living in the southern part, then San Luis Obispo getting my BS in Home Economics, and finally the San Francisco Bay area working as an Industrial Security Manager for TRW (now Northrop-Grumman). I came to Colorado in 1978, went to work for Martin Marietta (now Lockheed Martin), got married and had two wonderful sons. I really got involved in AGS and have been collecting more dead relatives ever since. I've held offices to include CCGS delegate, Librarian, President, and currently Newsletter Editor, and President (again).



Melanie Golden - AGS Membership Vice President - got her B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of Arizona in 1983. She then decided to see the world before settling down, so she became an international flight attendant for American Airlines, where she flew for almost 40 years. Fascinated by different cultures, in 1995, she decided to go back to school, all while continuing to fly, and get an M.Ed in Family Studies from Loyola University Chicago. Her interest in families lead her to begin working on her personal genealogy, as well. After many years and many countries, Melanie finally retired from the airlines and started her own business called, "A Golden Opportunity", where she works with individuals as a Family Life Educator. She is currently conducting classes helping others document their own family stories in her class, "Storying Your Life". Having finally settled down in retirement, Melanie is enjoying her work with genealogy and storying.



Judy Holtus – Vice President Programs & Publicity – Hello! Let me introduce myself. I am Judy Christensen Holtus and I was born and raised in Denver, making me a native Coloradoan. Moving to Aurora soon after marriage made this eastern suburb my home. Peter and I had two children and I became a homemaker who volunteered at my children's school, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. I began my employment with Aurora Public Library in 1978 and retired after thirty years of service in 2008. My genealogy journey began with the birth of my great nephew, Sören Alexander Christensen, born in 1995. His given name of Sören is very prevalent in my paternal

lineage and I desired to know more about my Danish heritage. Thus, I joined Aurora Genealogical Society of Colorado in June, 1996 and was nominated and voted to be the Vice President of Programs/Publicity on the Board two years later. This has been my position at the Board meeting table ever since, some twenty-six years. The friendships, knowledge and growth I have experienced while serving on this Board have been immeasurable. I recommend it to every member of this Society.



Lana Overturf – Secretary – I started my genealogy journey over 35 years ago, but like many bitten by the bug, time devoted has been not always consistent with our many obligations in life! I was fortunate to grow up next door to my grandparents in Illinois, in addition to having many extended family around, and from these connections, I was always learning about those that came before me at a young age. When I started my genealogy journey, my Mother joined in which has been very helpful with searches, as she started gather data from Tennessee where she was raised and we would work as a team at the National Archives Center in Lakewood back in the "Soundex/microfiche" days. Much of my focus has been in

Germany on my father's side, but I have started to research my Mother's ancestors, which for the most part came over in the 1600-1700's from present day United Kingdom in addition to a little digging on my husband's side in the midwest. Genealogy can be all-encompassing for me, as I love the puzzle work with attempting to piece together information, as to better understand my ancestor's lives and motivations. It is not uncommon to go down that proverbial "rabbit-hole" at 10 pm, then all of a sudden it is 3am for me when doing genealogy. The enthusiasm with other family members has strengthened bonds while researching together, visiting extended relatives in the US and Europe, and even with just driving from cemetery to cemetery. I have worked in the medical field for my entire career, so it has been a pleasant shift to learn the history of the world behind my ancestor's life choices and learn their story. I love, too, working with others to ignite this passion in them, and make discoveries in their past! Belonging to the Aurora Genealogy Society has been a great fit with welcoming, like-minded souls, many with extensive genealogical backgrounds, which is great to seek advice from with my searches!



Brenda Brownlee – Treasurer – I'm excited to be a part of the AGS Board. I moved from the Central Coast of California four and one-half years ago and I've missed the camaraderie of a genealogy society; no one else understands the excitement of a genealogical find! My husband and I were RVers for decades and when we retired and began taking long trips to the east coast, I discovered that I had a Revolutionary War ancestor. That discovery began an obsession and I now know he was one of many

Patriot ancestors. Being a military child, I did not grow up around aunts, uncles and cousins so I missed out on the family stories and traditions. Genealogy has enabled me to learn amazing facts about my ancestors. It is rewarding to me that my son and grandchildren like to hear about my discoveries (although they don't want to be researchers). When not researching I like to read historical fiction and participate in lineage societies.



Richard Kautt – Parliamentarian – I've been a member of the AGS for thirty years and served two terms as president and many more terms as treasurer. I was born and raised in St Paul, Minnesota and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree and a law degree. I served 28 years in the Air Force as a military lawyer (JAG) and was stationed around the world from Viet Nam to Germany and many places in between, including Colorado. After retiring from the Air Force, I

settled in Colorado, enjoying the bicycling, skiing, and mountain climbing. Then after 28 more years in private law practice, I finally retired fully and devoted more time to genealogical research. My late wife, Margaret, and I were married for 34 years and had two children; my wife, Missy, and I have been married now for 19 years, and we have eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren between us. I was interested in history and genealogy at an early age, and my sister and I questioned our parents about all they knew about family and ancestors, having German and Polish ancestry. Over the years, I made notes about family information and other data I had collected, but I began serious genealogical research into my family and my late wife's family about 35 years ago and visited many courthouses and cemeteries over the years to collect data. I've branched out researching into related families, as well as helping friends and AGS members with their research. I've also tried to do my part in correcting inaccurate data that has appeared in online family trees and records.

Appointed Positions



Jeff Adams – Genealogist - I've probably been researching for 15 years now. My interest in genealogy research probably relates to my History degree in college as well as my many years as a researcher in the military. I spent almost 25 years in the Army and now I just do research for fun. However, I've taken many genealogical courses since 2017 and hope to someday become a certified genealogist by the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG). I recently took a trip around Wyoming stopping at a number of the places where my Scottish and Norwegian ancestors settled and worked in the coal mines. Many of those towns they settled in such as Carbon and Superior are now ghost towns or close to it. I'm originally from Texas but have called Colorado home for the better part of the past 13 years. I have a wife and daughter and aside from genealogy love gardening.



Alice Jablonski – Librarian – Like the proverbial bad penny, I am back as librarian of the Aurora Genealogical Society! And so happy to be here 😊 I have not done much genealogy in the last few years, though two recent searches have made me a firm believer in DNA research. I am at the point in my genealogy where I am ready to tackle a collateral line that has tempted me for years. I have been doing genealogy for over 20 years now, following in the footsteps of my grandmother and father, both of whom were very interested in genealogy and left lots of valuable information for me. I have done wonderful traveling in the name of research: Toronto, Minnesota, New York, Connecticut, Kentucky, England, and Scotland. I have spent most of my life in Colorado and love it to pieces. My family is/was made up of musicians and I still play the piano, after playing the cello for 47 years. I love to read and sew, so along with genealogy, I am never bored! I am widowed and my daughter lives in Los Angeles.



Vickie Smejkal – Computer Technical Support, Webmaster, and Face Book – I have been working on my family history for over 35 years. I retired from the military after 25 years; and retired from the Federal Government after 33 years. I was a Medical Corpsman in the regular army, and a teacher in the army reserves teaching a career course in Supply, while working concurrently for the Federal Government as a Supply Tech and later a Building Management Tech, which I greatly enjoyed. I assist my daughter, who lives with me, in raising three Special Needs children. I currently serve as a Family Search Director (now called Coordinator), which I enjoy – it keeps my fingers on the pulse of genealogy and the FamilySearch Family Tree program. We are a four generational home which includes: my

mother, me, my daughter, 3 grandchildren, and three dogs, one of which is special needs himself. My hobby, when I have the time, is visiting cemeteries to take pictures and post them on Find A Grave and Billion Graves; transcribing when I get a chance as well. And yes, I am still working on my Riverside Cemetery Babies and Veterans projects–
www.RiversideCemeteryDenver.Com. You can't miss me in a parking lot, I have a bumper sticker that states: I brake for Cemeteries.

Our members bring to the society their wisdom, knowledge, and expertise in various fields, such as, military, land records, censuses, genealogical mentoring, and so much more.