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Press Release

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National Genealogical Society Awards Excellence in Genealogy Scholarship and Service at National Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan

GRAND RAPIDS, MI, 4 MAY 2018—The National Genealogical Society (NGS) held its annual banquet on Friday evening, 4 May, at the NGS 2018 Family History Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to present awards that acknowledge and honor genealogical scholarship and service. The banquet speaker, Ric Mixter, spoke on the topic “*Great Storms of the Great Lakes.*” Each year, these awards are presented to organizations and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to NGS programs or have performed outstanding work in the field of genealogy, history, biography, or heraldry.

National Genealogy Hall of Fame

Beginning in 1986, the National Genealogy Hall of Fame program, administered by the National Genealogical Society, has honored outstanding genealogists whose achievements in the field of American genealogy have had a great impact on the field. Qualified nominations are solicited annually from genealogical organizations. Those nominated must be deceased for at least five years and have been actively engaged in genealogy for a minimum of ten years. Their contributions to the field of genealogy in this country need to be significant in a way that was unique, pioneering, or exemplary. Such contributions could have been as an author of books or articles that added significantly to the body of published works, served as a model of genealogical research or writing, or made source records more readily available. Nominees could also have been a teacher or lecturer, or a person who contributed to the field through leadership in a genealogical organization or periodical. Entries are judged by a panel of genealogists from various parts of the United States.

This year, **Mary Smith Fay**, whose nomination was made by the American Society of Genealogists and the White County Historical Society, was **elected to the National Genealogy Hall of Fame**.

Mary Smith Fay was one of the country's most eminent genealogists. She became a professional genealogist after retiring from the Shell Oil Company in 1969. Her research interests spanned the United States from New England to Texas, which led her to author two books and more than three dozen articles, all of which highlighted her genealogical research skills. Her professional work included serving as genealogist for the Howard Hughes estate and investigating claims of those purporting to be his heirs. She was active in numerous genealogical societies and lectured at both local and national genealogical conferences. Fay was born in Burnt Prairie, Illinois, on 27 August 1915; she died in Houston, Texas, on 7 July 2000.

In 1979 she published *War of 1812 Veterans in Texas*. Eleven years later the Fay genealogy, *Edwin Fay of Vermont and Alabama 1794-1876: His Origins from 1656 and His Descendants to 1987* was published. Numerous articles appeared in the major genealogy journals. Notably, "The Three James Hickmans: Identifying Revolutionary War Veterans," *Virginia Genealogist*, 41(1997):52-54; "Genealogy of Howard Robard Hughes, Jr.," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, 71(1983):1-12; "Sheltons of Connecticut to Texas," *The Genealogist*, 2:1(Spring 1981):115-23; and "Some Descendants of Richard and Sarah (Best) Tritton of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and New Haven, Connecticut," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 145(1991):125-28.

Fay served as president of the Houston Genealogical Forum in 1968; as State Chairman, Lineage Research Committee for the Texas Society, DAR, 1973-1976 and 1979-1981; and as a trustee for the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) 1983-1995. She was certified by BCG in 1974, became a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists in 1997, and an Honorary Admiral, Texas State Navy. In December 2000, the Mary Smith Fay Genealogy Library of the White County Historical Society, Carmi, Illinois, was named in her honor.

NGS Fellow

Fellowship in the National Genealogical Society recognizes a valued servant of the NGS. This year's **Fellow** was **presented to Melinde Lutz Byrne**, CG®, FASG, of Derry, New Hampshire.

Since 2006 Melinde Lutz Byrne has edited the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* with Thomas Jones, PhD, CG, CGLSM, FASG, FUGA, FNGS. As editor she has made a major contribution to NGS by continuing and enhancing the *Quarterly's* standing as a premier scholarly journal of genealogy. She has authored or co-authored thirty books, including the monumental *Great Migration, Immigration to New England, 1634-1635*. She also has written more than sixty articles as well as numerous editorials and reviews. She is the director for genealogical programs at Excelsior College and at Boston University (BU), including BU's Essentials, its Genealogical

Research Certificate Program, and the Summer Seminar Series. A past president of the American Society of Genealogists (ASG), she was elected a Fellow of ASG, which reinforced her status as a nationally recognized genealogist.

The Shirley Langdon Wilcox Award for Exemplary Volunteerism

The Shirley Langdon Wilcox Award for Exemplary Volunteerism recognizes a volunteer whose generosity of spirit and time has greatly benefited the National Genealogical Society and the genealogical community in general over a period of years. Pamela S. Pearson of Somerville, New Jersey, was the recipient of the Shirley Langdon Wilcox Award for Exemplary Volunteerism.

Pam Pearson offered to assist the editors of the *NGSQ*. Pam manages and tracks the flow of submissions of articles through their arrival, editorial reviews, field reviews, revisions, and contracting. She routinely handles all incoming and outgoing correspondence with authors and field reviewers, and the editors. She organizes and documents each editorial decision at each stage of the review process.

Pearson also manages the balloting for the annual Award for Excellence for an *NGSQ* article chosen by the editorial board.

Award of Merit

The Award of Merit is presented to an individual or non-profit genealogical or historical organization to recognize exceptional contributions to the field of genealogy over a period of five or more years, which has significantly aided research or increased interest in genealogy.

In recognition of her efforts on behalf of the National Genealogical Society, the Board of Directors has **awarded Shirley DeBoer** of Grand Rapids, Michigan, its 2017 **Award of Merit**.

DeBoer has been a very active member of the Western Michigan Genealogical Society for many years. She has served as the society's recording secretary, vice president, program chair, research chair, volunteer coordinator, and a contributor to the society's quarterly magazine the *Michigana*.

DeBoer has taught many genealogy classes, lead research trips to various research facilities, worked on local genealogy projects, and spoken at conferences. She wrote the National Genealogical Society's Research in the States Guide for Michigan. She has also published a number of pamphlets and indexes including "Cite Your Sources?" and "Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve" as well as an index to the Grand Rapids Newspapers based on "The Story of Grand Rapids" edited by Z. Z. Lydens.

In recognition of her efforts on behalf of the National Genealogical Society, the Board of Directors has **awarded Nancy Simons Peterson** of Portola Valley, California, its 2017 **Award of Merit**.

Nancy Simons Peterson, CG, served the California Genealogical Society for more than a decade. Her search for her maternal ancestors led ultimately to the publication of the definitive San Francisco research guide. *"Raking the Ashes: Genealogical Strategies for Pre-1906 San Francisco Research,"* first published in 2006 and revised and updated in 2011, it continues to be the society's best seller. Peterson volunteered countless hours as the society's research director. She co-led numerous research tours and served on the board of directors for three terms. Her research, writing, editing, and lecturing skills were always in demand, and she generously gave her time for an endless variety of projects.

In recognition of her efforts on behalf of the National Genealogical Society, the Board of Directors has **awarded Gladys Cajke** of Wahoo, Nebraska, its 2017 **Award of Merit**.

Gladys Cajka has spent thousands of hours fulfilling genealogical requests from all over the United States and other countries. She has researched records throughout Saunders County, Nebraska, in every county office, churches, cemeteries, and town and city halls. She has worked tirelessly for almost forty years on genealogical research and has contributed to the ongoing pursuit of preserving the history of Saunders County.

Cajka was instrumental in organizing and maintaining the research room at the Saunders County Museum.

Family History Writing Contest

Sharon L. Hoyt, MLIS, CG of Saratoga, California, was the **winner of the Family History Writing contest** with her entry, *"Her Sixth Matrimonial Venture: The Many Marriages of Ida May Chamberlain."* This award is to encourage NGS members to write a family history that covers at least three generations and not more than four generations of their family.

National Genealogical Society Quarterly's Award for Excellence

The **NGSQ Award for Excellence** is presented for an outstanding article published in the NGSQ in the previous calendar year. For 2017, the editors have chosen *George Washington Cottrell of Texas: One Man or Two?* by **Judy G. Russell**, JD, CG, CGL, of Avenel, New Jersey, published in the September 2017 issue of the NGSQ.

Award for Excellence: Genealogy and Family History Book

This year's recipient was **Albert E. Fiacre, Jr.**, of Hartford, Connecticut. The title of his entry was *Ancestors, Descendants, and Related Families of Jacob Smith, Sr. (1773-1834) and his Wife, Margaret Smith (1777-1834)*. This award is for a specific, significant single contribution in the

form of a family genealogy or family history book published in the past five years. Entries serve to foster scholarship and/or otherwise advance or promote excellence in genealogy.

Senior Rubincam Youth Award

Ryan Bobo of Meridian, Indiana, was the winner of this year's **Senior Rubincam Youth Award** for students in grades ten through twelve or between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. The title of his entry was *A Genealogical History of Ryan Bobo*. The Senior Rubincam Award was established in 1986 to honor Milton Rubincam, CG, FASG, FNGS, for his many years of service to NGS and to the field of genealogy. The award encourages and recognizes our youth as the next generation of family historians.

Please visit the [NGS Pressroom](#) for further information.

Founded in 1903, the [National Genealogical Society](#) is dedicated to genealogical education, exemplary standards of research, and the preservation of genealogical records. The Falls Church, Virginia, based nonprofit is the premier national society for everyone, from the beginner to the most advanced family historian, seeking excellence in publications, educational offerings, and guidance in research. It also offers many opportunities to interact with other genealogists.

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