

# Bonner Hozey Abercrombie

Illustrator



**Bonner Hozey Abercrombie** is the illustrator of the *Celebrate America!* book series honoring our *America 250* observance.

A graduate of Lander University, Bonner began her career as an art teacher at Cambridge Academy in Greenwood, South Carolina. Now the graphic designer for Lander's Office of Marketing and Communications, Bonner creates the visual identity for the University.

Away from the office, her art captures the magic of the world around her from oil paintings of the cities she's traveled throughout the world to sketches of landscapes from her everyday life to charming watercolors of flowers.

Bonner and her husband Josh are parents to an adorable canine, Loki.

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# Beth Francis

## Martintown Road Chapter, Regent



**Beth Francis** is a retired Executive Registered Nurse and Adjunct Professor of Nursing at the Medical College of Georgia and a passionate steward of Aiken and Edgefield County's rich heritage. She brings warmth, enthusiasm, and a natural gift for connecting people with the stories that define their communities. Through her involvement with the Edgefield County Historical Society and the Daughters of the American Revolution, Beth works to preserve and share the people, places, traditions, and history that have shaped the region.

With a special appreciation for historic homes and family history, Beth has a remarkable ability to bring the past to life. Through educational programs, special events, historical tours, and community gatherings, she helps others discover the individuals and families whose lives

helped shape Aiken and Edgefield County—and, in turn, our nation. She also plays an active role in organizing events that celebrate America's history and honor the patriots and community members whose contributions are part of our national story.

As an author, Beth is committed to documenting and sharing the stories of both counties so they may be appreciated by today's residents and preserved for generations to come. Her writing reflects a deep belief that personal stories, family memories, and community traditions are not merely recollections of the past, but essential parts of the historical record.

Beth's commitment to **service, sisterhood, and community** is at the heart of all she does. For her, preserving history is about more than remembering the past—it is about creating meaningful connections between generations, strengthening community pride, and ensuring that important stories continue to be told.

Through her energy, generosity, and dedication, Beth makes local history accessible, engaging, and meaningful, helping ensure that the heritage of Aiken and Edgefield County remains vibrant for generations to come.

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# E. Frances Frame, Ph.D.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney Chapter - 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Regent  
Moderator

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Having taught at The Citadel since 2000, Dr. Frame is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Fine Arts & Communications.

She earned her B.A. from Davidson College, her M.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill, and her Ph.D. from USC-Columbia (1999).

Her area of specialization is Victorian literature. Other courses include Making a Comeback: The Growth Mindset in Literature and Film, The Sinking of the *Titanic* in Literature and Film, and The Bible as Literature.

Her forthcoming book is entitled *Unmasking Victorian Masculinity: Passive-Aggressive Men in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Frances serves as the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Regent of the Eliza Lucas Pinckney chapter of NSDAR.

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# Lynn Bush Genda

## Carolina Gold Chapter



**Lynn Bush Genda** lived most of her life in the mid-west. She has always loved reading and historical fiction is one of her favorite genres. She attended Western Illinois University and earned her B.S. She received her M.S. in education from North Texas State University. Lynn taught elementary school in IL and Texas. Later in life, she owned and operated her own college bookstore, Titles and Texts.

Upon moving to South Carolina, she worked at Brookgreen Gardens in the gift shop. During this time, she was able to pursue the genealogical interests which her grandmother had started. Through her research she was able to find her patriot and join the DAR. Further research led her to

discover her ancestor, John Cooke, who was a passenger on the Mayflower, enabling her to join the General Society of Mayflower Descendants.

Lynn and her husband Bill, a retired minister, have two children, their son Chris and daughter Sarah. They have twin granddaughters, Colleen and Eiryn.

Her book title is “My Name is John, John Cooke, a Mayflower Passenger’s Story.” It begins with a fictional character, William Pratt, interviewing Lynn’s 80 plus year old ancestor, John Cooke, who was a young passenger on the Mayflower. William asks questions of John that all of us might like to know, such as those early times in England and Holland, the voyage on the Mayflower, and the settlement of Plymouth and the surrounding areas and his participation in the development of the cities of the area.

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# Theresa Mary Gordon

## Fort Sullivan Chapter, Associate

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Theresa Gordon is a creative entrepreneur with a lifelong passion for storytelling, education, and heritage. A proud American, devoted mom, Nana, and second-generation Daughter of the American Revolution, Theresa fondly remembers the pride she felt each morning reciting the *Pledge of Allegiance* at school, the excitement of Fourth of July celebrations, and the deep sense of gratitude she developed attending veterans' events and historical activities alongside her mother, a fellow DAR member. Those early experiences—simple yet powerful—planted the seeds of patriotism that would later inspire one of her most heartfelt creations.

Theresa developed Patriot Buddy, a 12-inch plush doll, and *ABC America: Land That I Love*, picture board book, to help young children connect both emotionally and intellectually with the symbols, values, and stories that shape the United States. Her goal was to nurture unity, pride, and civic awareness at a time when many children feel distant from the founding ideals of our country.

Patriot Buddy and the companion book are part of a broader initiative called *Pledge With a Buddy*, which encourages children to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with understanding and intention as we celebrate America's 250th birthday. Through partnerships with schools, museums, veterans' groups, and families nationwide, Theresa is working to bring patriotism to life — one Buddy at a time. She is the founder of Curly Girly Button Buddies, a brand that blends storytelling, educational tools, and hands-on learning experiences to enrich young hearts and minds.

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# Alexia Jones Helsley

University of South Carolina Chapter



**Alexia Jones Helsley**, a member of the USC Chapter, NSDAR, is a Senior Instructor of History at the University of South Carolina Aiken, where she also serves as University Archivist. Prior to joining USC Aiken, she worked as an archivist with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

An accomplished author and historian, Helsley has written several books on South Carolina and regional history. Her most recent work is *Rebecca Brewton Motte and the American Revolution in South Carolina*.

Helsley's contributions to history and archival preservation have earned her numerous honors, including the South Carolina Governor's Archives Award, the SCDAR Bobby Gilmer Moss Award, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the South Carolina Archival Association.

Her professional and civic leadership is equally extensive. She is a former president of the South Carolina Historical Association, a board member of the Nineteenth Century Studies Association, president of the Pace Society of America, and chair of the South Carolina Old Exchange Commission.

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# Corinne Pate McLaurin Hoch

## Carolina Gold Chapter, Regent



Corinne was born in South Carolina, reared in North Carolina, and grew up spending her summers at a pre-Revolutionary rice planter's seaside plantation in Murrells Inlet—one of the oldest homes along the creek. Those summers fostered an enduring appreciation for the history, people, and traditions of South Carolina's Lowcountry.

After earning art degrees from Salem College and Appalachian State University, Corinne embarked on what became a long and successful career in technology, working with Citibank and Columbia University in New York. She eventually retired early and returned to Murrells Inlet to become a full-time resident. Retirement, however, proved short-lived: she was soon recruited to serve as CEO of an international technology organization.

Today, Corinne devotes her time and energy to a remarkable range of interests. She is active in her church, where she gardens, ushers, serves on the Centennial Committee, and frequently writes and produces historical dramatizations. She enjoys driving and showing British and German sports cars, improving her golf game, traveling extensively, and serving on the boards of numerous organizations, including the South Carolina American Revolution Trust.

History remains one of her greatest passions. Corinne has researched, written, and published monthly historical articles and has spent considerable time “chasing the Swamp Fox” through her work with the Georgetown County 250 Committee. These pursuits repeatedly delayed another project especially close to her heart: completing a book about her family's beloved summer home. At long last, that book has been published.

*Woodlawn Plantation: An Enhanced Memoir* documents the important roles the plantation and its owners played in the history of Murrells Inlet and Georgetown County. Drawing upon historical research, family memory, and imagination, Corinne seeks to bring Woodlawn back from the embers, recreating the lives and stories that once unfolded within its walls and offering readers a glimpse of the people and events that shaped this remarkable corner of the South Carolina Lowcountry.

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# Aliene Shields Humphries

William Capers Chapter



**Aliene Shields Humphries** was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and soon afterward moved with her family to Edgefield County. After graduating from Columbia College with degrees in Special Education and Public Speaking/Drama, she worked with the South Carolina Department of Education and taught students with special needs. Following her retirement from formal education, Aliene continued her lifelong passion for teaching by promoting the value of lifelong learning.

In 2010, she authored her first book, *The Legacy of a Common Civil War Soldier*, based on letters written by her paternal great-grandfather, Private Thomas Marion Shields, during the Civil War

from 1861 to 1865. She published the book under her maiden name, Shields, preserving a personal connection to the ancestor whose story inspired it.

Aliene is currently promoting *The Importance of South Carolina in the American Revolution*. The book highlights 63 historic sites, as well as the Revolutionary War Visitor Center in Camden, South Carolina. Through these places and the stories associated with them, she seeks to encourage their visitation, preservation, interpretation, and appreciation while increasing awareness of South Carolina's important role in the American Revolution and the struggle for independence.

Central to Aliene's work is the belief that understanding our history helps us better understand ourselves. She encourages others to explore their family histories, honor the sacrifices of their ancestors, and preserve their stories for future generations. As she reminds us, our ancestors **“did their duty,” and now it is time for us to do ours.**

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# Karen Petit

## Issaqueena Chapter, Regent



**Karen Petit** developed an appreciation for history at an early age, listening to family stories passed down from one generation to the next. Those stories sparked a lifelong curiosity about the past and a passion for telling stories that connect people, places, and generations.

A native of Durham, North Carolina, Karen was raised in Greenwood, South Carolina. She earned a bachelor's degree in news-editorial journalism from the University of South Carolina and began her professional career as an award-winning newspaper reporter and editor. She later moved into higher education, working in public and media relations at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Today, she is a writer at Lander University.

Driven by her passion for reading, writing, and history, Karen began writing children's books. Her *Celebrate America!* series introduces young readers to the American Revolution through engaging historical adventures featuring Louie, a mischievous, time-traveling dog.

Her first book in the trilogy, *Celebrate America! The People Declare Independence*, debuted in 2025 and has since captured the hearts of thousands of readers. Karen and illustrator Bonner Abercrombie have traveled extensively to promote the book, including a trip to New York City, where they were finalists for three awards presented by the Dog Writers Association of America. Their work has been featured in television, radio, and newspaper interviews, as well as on the American Kennel Club website.

Karen and Bonner have now returned with the second book in the series, *Celebrate America! The Fight for Freedom*, continuing Louie's adventures through the American Revolution.

Karen's love of history extends well beyond her professional work. She serves as Regent of the Issaqueena Chapter, NSDAR, and as Chair of the South Carolina DAR Public Relations and Media Committee. An enthusiastic amateur genealogist, she also enjoys helping others discover the people and stories hidden within their own family histories.

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# Melissa Whiteford St. Clair

## Thomas Heyward, Jr. Chapter



Melissa Whiteford St. Clair grew up a stone's throw from the Mason-Dixon Line. She married her high school sweetheart, who soon afterward said another important "I do"—this time to the United States Marine Corps. As a military spouse facing the frequent moves that accompany military life, Melissa became an entrepreneur, establishing a virtual assistant business that provided her with a portable career.

Over time, Melissa found herself increasingly affected by issues of racial and social injustice in America. Determined to better understand racism and systemic racism, she began a personal journey of study, reflection, and conversation. Poetry became one of the ways she processed what she was learning and shared that journey with others.

Melissa is the founder of White Girl Advocacy LLC, through which she encourages lifelong learning, thoughtful conversation, and advocacy for social justice. Beyond her writing and advocacy, Melissa is the owner of Paper Chaser Biz LLC, a

virtual company providing online office support to busy women solopreneurs. Through White Girl Advocacy LLC, she continues to build a community of lifelong learners, encouraging others to use curiosity, conversation, and creativity as tools for personal discovery and greater understanding.

Her writing has been praised for its honesty, courage, and accessibility. Readers of *Home Work* have described the collection as inspiring and applauded Melissa's willingness to approach difficult subjects with candor. *Heart Work* has likewise been recognized for combining poetry, personal reflection, and thought-provoking prose while introducing readers to aspects of Black history and racial inequity.

A lifelong learner, Melissa continues her study of race and her involvement in antiracism efforts, frequently sharing her spoken-word poetry at open-mic gatherings and public events. She was named the South Carolina State Winner of the "Rise and Shine: What America Means to Me" competition sponsored by the South Carolina State Society of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), for an entry combining photography and poetry.

When she is not writing, working, or advocating, Melissa enjoys some decidedly quieter pursuits. She has a particular affinity for bees, yoga, and the simple pleasure of porch sitting.

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