2026 Candidate Statement for the Timber Framers Guild Board of Directors

Derek Calhoun

My grandfather's basement carving shop started my lifelong obsession with building and creating. The sounds and smell of that shop still live in me today. Not long after, I discovered Eric Sloan's books, and my "Reverence for Wood" grew.

Tools and what you can do with them have been part of my journey as well. The old adage, "He who dies with the most tools wins", has been a goal of mine for some time. My wife still does not understand why you need 3 chainsaws, 5 hammers, etc.

I have had a wood shop for the last 20+ years, starting in a barn, then a garage, and now in the basement of my home. I have been a licensed North Carolina General Contractor since 2009 and Carolina Timberwork's Virginia General Contractor qualifier since 2023.

I served 2 terms on the board of Directors of Ashe County Habitat for Humanity. I currently sit on the Ashe County Planning Board and just started my third term.

My curiosity about timber framing gained traction around 2008 while watching *This Old House* and seeing the Bensonwood team assemble the frame for the show. I thought there was no way their joints were that tight in that big a piece of wood.

I have been with Carolina Timberworks since 2018. While I would rather be in the shop or on-site raising a frame, most days, you can find me emailing or on the phone with builders, architects, or engineers talking about timber framing.

As much as I enjoy building and creating, I also enjoy traveling and meeting people. Those two things have come together and catapulted my career at Carolina Timberworks.

I have given over 30 TFG AIA presentations to architects and builders across the country. One of my goals is to help the Guild update the AIA presentation and teach and encourage others on how to present it.

If I am not at work or in my shop, you can probably find me at one of my kids' sporting events or, if we are lucky, wetting a line or taking a walk in the woods. My wife, Falon, and I have 11-year-old boy/girl twins.

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Wynne Hannan

My timber framing journey began one September when I volunteered to help build a community pizza pavilion. What I thought would be a fun week embedded me in a community that has changed my life.

I hadn't expected a craft to bring so much richness to my world, but of course it did. Timber framing connected me to place, to the forests of southern Vermont where I live and work, and most importantly to incredible people, many of whom I now count as mentors and friends. I want to serve on the board because I see doing so as an opportunity to foster that same sense of belonging and connection for more emerging timber framers.

My background is in teaching leadership in outdoor settings. When I learned to timber frame, I knew I wanted to be part of the moments where we bring new people into the fold, helping them see what they are capable of building and watching a group come together on raising day. Today I lead the timber framing program at Yestermorrow Design/Build School, where I get to relive the magic of discovering the craft with each new group of students.

In addition to my teaching work, I serve as the staff liaison to the board at Yestermorrow, sit on several of its committees, and am a member of the Guild's Diversity Committee. Through this work I have learned how much of the Guild's strength runs on its members and volunteers, and how much a clear, welcoming path for newcomers shapes whether someone comes back after their first build.

This year I worked with members of the Diversity Committee to create the Train the Trainer Program that is now shaping our approach to community build leadership. As a board member, I would continue that work and help implement the next changes to grow and improve our educational offerings, and to make our community gatherings and builds more accessible, inclusive, and fun for everyone.

Thank you for considering my candidacy. I hope to meet many more of you soon!

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Chadwick Hillier

I began timber framing (and log building) back in 2005 working for a local Ontario company that was just beginning. We cut numerous frames and learned quite a bit while doing it. We were not Guild members and it was a few years before I found out about the Guild and joined up.

I worked for that company for numerous years with brief stints doing other work and travelling Europe and Asia when we did not have a project to keep us busy. I was working there full time when my wife graduated with her masters degree in 2014. Her first job took us to northern British Columbia and although surrounded by breathtaking trees there was little to no timber framing going on. We filled our time hiking and fishing and it gave me the opportunity to try out some other professions. I was a substitute public school teacher, worked with autistic children and high risk youth, worked for the British Columbia Government in adoptions, and spent a couple of years as a paramedic. Even with the years-long gap in timber framing my wife would answer the standard question asked when you meet someone; 'what do you do for a living?' with 'He's a timber framer'.

We returned to Ontario when our second son was on the way to be closer to family. We settled in Huntsville, Ontario, had two more children, and my wife was correct. I circled back to timber framing and opened Hillier Timberworks in 2020 and have not looked back.

I rejoined the Guild after my membership had lapsed for some time and what sold me on the organization was the hours of help a fellow member, that I had never met before, gave me problem solving an issue I was having with a SketchUp model. To say that being part of a community like this when I was starting out back in 2005 would have been helpful is an understatement.

I have since taken part in as many Guild events as I can. Conferences and Rendezvous, volunteering at Community Builds, and most recently instructing at one. Last year we began teaching a five-day Introduction to Timber Framing class here at our workshop. In every interaction I have with timber framers, those brand new and those who have been doing it for fifty years, it never ceases to amaze me the endless knowledge there is to gain when we get together. It is clear to me that this profession will never become boring and I enjoy being a part of this community sharing what I know and learning from others. I would appreciate the opportunity to take more of a leadership role in the Guild and continue to be a part of the best community of people I've had the privilege of working next to and learning from.

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2026 Candidate Statement for the Timber Framers Guild Board of Directors

Eliot Lothrop

In the fall of 2001, Randy Churchill drove me down to West Virginia for the 17th annual TFG Conference. I was 22, new to timber framing, and was mostly planing, sanding and oiling timbers with Randy's crew at Joint Effort Timber Framing. Somewhere between launching flaming pumpkins by trebuchet and watching Ben Brungraber wrestle the Old School Builder fellas around midnight, in a work kilt, I knew right away that these were my people and that I wanted to be part of this community for life.

I had taken a somewhat roundabout path to get there. I started working in construction at 15, later landed a job at an architecture firm in Concord, NH, and studied pre-architecture in college before being drawn to historic preservation. Just before starting grad school at the University of Vermont, I took the Intro to Timber Framing class at Heartwood. Timber framing brought together the things that had interested me all along: building, design, craft, and the stewardship of old structures.

After grad school, I spent several years working for barn restoration folks before starting Building Heritage in 2004. We've specialized in that work ever since, taking on some of the larger and more complex barn restoration projects in Vermont. What continues to draw me to restoration is not just the scale of these buildings, but the labor and skill that went into constructing them and the generations of stewardship that have allowed them to survive. That is something worth celebrating and carrying forward.

In recent years, through my work with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, I've had the opportunity to teach and train young people. In 2025, several of us started a Timber Frame Pre-Apprenticeship program modeled after the Guild's Apprenticeship Program. It has been wonderful to see so much interest in a craft that has been such a big part of my life.

At a time when many trades are struggling to attract the next generation, timber framing seems to offer something young people are looking for. We are a thoughtful building bunch. We care about what we build, where the materials come from, how they are used, and whether what we make will endure. In a world where so much can feel disposable and disconnected from the people who make it, those things matter.

Timber framers are also a remarkably accepting group, and making sure that sense of belonging extends to people who might not otherwise find it is important to me. I've enjoyed serving on the Diversity Committee, and if elected to the Board, I would like to continue that work while supporting apprenticeship, education, and stronger pathways into the craft.

Lothrop cont’d

I currently serve on the Board of Rokeby Museum, where I chair the Buildings and Grounds Committee. I’ve considered running for the TFG Board over the years, but the timing never felt quite right. Now, after 25 years in the Guild community, more than 20 years running Building Heritage, and growing involvement in teaching and training, I feel I have the experience and perspective to contribute.

I would be honored to help strengthen the community that has meant so much to me and help make sure the next generation of timber framers finds the same opportunity, purpose, and sense of belonging that I did.

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Chris Newman

I discovered the Guild in early 2000 through an episode of *This Old House*. Seeing Tedd Benson solve the client's dilemma by proposing a workshop to create their timber frame barn home really resonated with me. I had already been in the construction field for a little over 5 years and was looking for something new and this just felt right.

I learned Square Rule from Will Beemer and Dave Carlon at Rocky Mountain Workshops in Pingree Park, Colorado, in September 2001. I was blown away by the talent and abundance of patience those two displayed while shepherding students with wide-ranging abilities through the learning process, and I still hear Dave's voice every time I pick up a saw: "Don't cut a line that you can't see." They made learning effortless and as we raised the frame under clear blue skies, I fell in love with the craft.

I attended my first conference the following spring and took part in my first Community Building Project shortly after that. I spent three glorious weeks in Sechelt, British Columbia, learning new things every day, putting my existing knowledge to work, and helping these strangers (soon friends) create something bigger than myself. I have never felt more at home with a group of complete strangers.

After participating in more than a dozen projects (including one that I brought to my hometown), the magic of the process, the joy of the camaraderie, and the satisfaction of the completed project is still an amazing thing. Most recently, I served as the Project Manager for the Thresheree Build in Wisconsin.

I consider myself very fortunate to have learned from so many talented people over the years. Whether it's a technique for tuning a joint just right, figuring out the trick to help someone achieve that "light bulb moment," or keeping all of the plates spinning while managing a project with humor and grace, I enjoy every moment with Guild people. The Guild's strength is in our members and our passion for, and the ability to, teach the craft. I try to carry these lessons with me, whether in a leadership role on a Guild project or in one of the workshops I teach throughout the year.

I am running for a seat on the Board because I feel that it is time I gave back directly to the members that make this group the incredible entity it is. I want to make sure that we can continue provide the same educational experience that I had to future generations of people looking to connect with a bit of history. I have been in the trades for 30 years, a Guild member for 25, and a teacher for 12. I have been a board member of three non-profit groups, two that ran on grant money and one that gave it out, and I am currently a member of the Projects committee.

We need to define our path forward, while continuing to grow as a community and deepening our program capacity; I hope to be able to help achieve that goal. By focusing on securing funding to create educational opportunities, developing further relationships with like-minded organizations across the world, promoting more member engagement, we can build upon the vision that began 40 years ago and set it up to flourish in the future.

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