

# NORTHWEST INDIANA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

## *A Local Resource for Finding Your Roots*

By Cheryl Wooten

Have you ever wondered about your family tree? Do you know where your ancestors came from? What interesting stories are buried in the fog of the past, waiting to be revealed? No matter where you're at in your genealogical search, the Northwest Indiana Genealogical Society, a local nonprofit organization, is dedicated to providing relevant information on genealogical topics and to preserving the history of Lake and Porter counties.

The Society hosts informational meetings at 10:00 a.m. on the third Saturday of each month, January through November, alternating between the Valparaiso and Merrillville Public Libraries. With a nominal annual fee, members receive *TWIGS*, their bi-monthly newsletter and benefit from networking opportunities, forum discussions and more.

"Our programs are in the areas of general genealogy, and occasionally location specific," shares NWIGS president Pat Mitchell. "We don't just look at Lake and Porter counties, but cover topics like how to use the census, how to read land plats, immigration trails across America, European ancestors, and so forth."

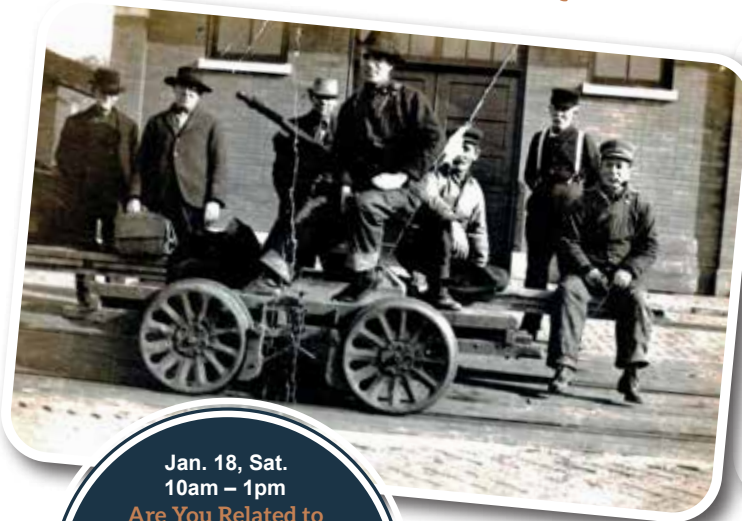
Marlene Pajor, the Society's secretary adds, "There's always something different with each speaker who brings a new perspective. It's always informative and I always learn something new."

NWIGS was started in 1970 and will celebrate their 50th anniversary this April. They anticipate a large group as a special guest speaker discusses the topic of DNA and genealogy.

Over the years, the Society has completed numerous genealogical projects. One was the reading, recording and indexing of all existing cemeteries in Lake and Porter counties. "We went from stone to stone and copied down the name, birth date, death date and any other notations," says Pat. "We gathered the data, then alphabetized it and published it in book format which can be purchased on our website or accessed at the Valparaiso library's Larry J. Clark Genealogy Center." The group later added that information to findagrave.com where it can be searched online.

"We also have several searchable databases on our website with information from Lake and Porter counties such as voter registrations and obituaries that we transcribed from official records," says Marlene. The group is currently working on indexing Lake County marriage records from the 1920's to the most recent dates available.

For those who don't have ancestors from



**Jan. 18, Sat.  
10am – 1pm**  
**Are You Related to Someone Famous?**  
@ Valparaiso Public Library

**Feb. 15, Sat. - 10am – 1pm:**  
**Proving Adoption**  
@ Merrillville Public Library

this area, Marlene says that it's still good to be a member and learn from others. "It's important to learn about your family history. One of my favorite discoveries to date is that my 9th great-aunt, Damaris Westcott, married Benedict Arnold Sr. Their great-grandson was the infamous General Benedict Arnold V. That was jaw dropping to me!" she exclaims.

Another benefit of genealogy, according to Pat is that "you begin to understand so much more about history in general and it becomes more alive to you. It's much more fascinating when you can put your own family someplace in the continuum and see where they were and what they were doing."

The Society welcomes new members and encourages anyone interested in genealogy to attend their free informational meetings.

To learn more about NWIGS visit [www.nwigs.org](http://www.nwigs.org) or their Facebook page.