

NORTHWOODS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3

106 N. Stevens St., Rhinelander, WI 54501-3158

March, 2025

*** HISTORY LESSON: ORIGIN OF A WAKE ***

Many years ago, lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination of alcohol and lead poisoning would sometimes knock a guy out for a couple of days. Anyone finding such a man, would take them for dead. The man would then be laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around, eat and drink, and wait to see if he would wake up – hence the name of the custom of holding a “wake”.

PROGRAM: Our program is unknown. But it seems like we can always find lots to discuss during our ‘share time’.

WATCH OUT FOR THE SAME GIVEN NAMES. Watch for more than one child in a family with the same name. I have been reminded of this recently. Apparently, some couples really desired to have a child named after someone. In one instance, when their first son, John, died; less than two years later, the second son was also named John. Recently, son Wenzl, died at age 3. Just 5 months later, when a new son was born, you guessed it, he was named Wenzl. Sometimes, this results in having an incorrect birth date for our heir. If dates don't match with census and other records, do some digging. I just came across a family that had three daughters with the same name within 5 years. Sadly, none of them survived past the age of 3.

ALWAYS CHECK THE HISTORY OF AN AREA. If all of a sudden, you lose an ancestor, check out what was happening nearby or even not so close. Such as in 1850, a New Jersey shoemaker found a large pearl inside of a river mussel. The pearl was sold to Tiffany & Co. for \$1500. Thousands flocked to that area to search for more pearls. Likewise, in the early 1880's there was another pearl discovery in Arkansas. Again, many rushed to Arkansas where more than \$2.5 million in pearls were harvested. One being a rare pink pearl found in 1897, almost 20 years later.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MIDDLE NAMES. You may have overlooked the significance of middle names. Middle names can be incredible clues as to a person's ancestry. First of all, not everyone is going to have a middle name. The Germans started using them in the 17th century and the custom gradually made its way to the rest of Europe and to America in the 18th century. Some receive a middle name at Baptism or Confirmation. Some parents only provided a middle initial, not an actual name. Some people use their middle name and not their first. In the Southern states, first and middle names are interchanged frequently. A middle name has some significance. It could be a maiden name of a relative, which could be very helpful. Or from a deceased family member. Or, in honor of a favorite clergyman or Saint. Sometimes the first name of a Godparent. Typically, it is important to figure out the middle names, just in case it is a clue.

FINDING INVISIBLE RECORD HOLDINGS. Many sites, such as *Ancestry.com* and *FamilySearch* have what is called “invisible holdings”. They are databases that don't come up when one does a Record Search because they are not indexed. Sometimes, the database is available to search, the long way by paging through all the filmstrips but they can be very rewarding if you know a date range and are quite certain your ancestor was part of the “Oklahoma Land Rush” or whatever. Think outside of the box and look for these invisible databases. Get ideas by searching the area, state, or county.

GRAVESTONE SYMBOLS: Most symbols of the current Armed Forces are easily recognizable, but you might find other symbols such as a “Southern Cross of Honor” for Civil War Confederates or a “Sunken Shield” for Union soldiers, or Anchor for sailors.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025 Rhinelander District Library Downstairs Meeting Room 1:00 P. M.

Meetings of the Northwoods Genealogical Society are typically held on the second Wednesday of the month (except July and December) at 1 p. m. in the downstairs meeting room of the Rhinelander District Library. Membership dues are \$10.00 individual, \$11.00 family.

CHAIRMAN: JoAnne Rajek

VICE CHAIRMAN: Ila Turgeon

SECRETARY: Dave Melancon/Anita Foss

TREASURER: Gloria Rahlf

DIRECTORS AT LARGE:

Marie Byatt

Augden Windelborn

NEWSLETTER: Gloria Rahlf

WEBSITE: sites.google.com/site/northwoodsgensoc/

NEXT MEETING: April 9, 2025 - TBD

Upcoming Events:

ROOTS TECH: March 6th to 8th, 2025. In person or free virtual, hundreds of seminars, including every ethnicity. Register in advance: familysearch.org

FIND YOUR ANCESTORS: DECIPHERING PENMANSHIP AND SPELLING MATTERS: March 8, 2025, at 2 p. m., Appleton Public Library virtual or in-person. Register at: bit.ly/3zDZCCn

RAILROAD RECORDS AND HISTORY: March 8, 2025 at 9 a. m., free, virtual, details at: www.wagswi.org.

GENE-A-RAMA 2025: DNA AND SOCIETIES, March 28 & 29, 2025 in Holiday Inn Eau Claire South. In-person by WSGS, more at wsqs.org/2025-GAR