



The Illuminator

Quarterly Newsletter of the Zion Genealogical Society, Zion, Lake County, Illinois

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Genealogy – Researching Around the World

~ ~ ~ Society Officers ~ ~ ~

President	Vicki Mattson	Board Members	Joan Bomkamp
Vice-President	Nancy Scott		Myra Coddens
Secretary	(open)		Charleen McFarlin
Treasurer	Kathy Whitmore	Newsletter Editor	Carol Awe
Past President	Joanne Layne	Website Coord.	Myra Coddens
NGS Delegate	Charleen McFarlin	Facebook Coord.	Vicki Mattson

~ ~ ~ World Wide Web ~ ~ ~

Please visit our website at:
<https://zionilgensoc.org>

Please visit our Facebook page at:
www.facebook.com/ZionGenealogicalSociety

Zion Genealogical Society research materials are available for public use at the Zion-Benton Public Library, 2400 Gabriel Avenue, Zion, IL 60099-2280 – phone (847) 872-4680

Research assistance is available on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Appointments are required.

Call the Library at the phone number above to make your appointment.

The intent of this publication is to inform our readers. If material is used from this publication for the purpose of sharing information, please give attribution to the Zion Genealogical Society.

Zion Genealogical Society and Lake County Genealogical Society – 2026 Calendar

Our general meetings are held jointly with the Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society and begin at 7pm and are open to the public. We offer “hybrid” meetings (in-person and Zoom), but some meetings may be Zoom only or in-person only. The program may be a Zoom presentation by an off-site speaker. After the presentation, there will be a short business meeting. Zoom meeting login codes and handout files will be furnished by email. Members will be informed of the meetings by email if there are any venue changes.

DATE	TOPIC TITLE AND SPEAKER
May 19	“Internet Archives: The Amazing Genealogical Resource That You’re Not Using!” – Debra Dudek – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Gurnee Village Hall, 325 N. O’Plaine Road in Gurnee
June 11	“Revolutionary Ancestors” – Jenny Warner – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Cook Memorial Public Library, 413 N. Milwaukee Avenue in Libertyville
July 9	“Painting the American Revolution” – Joel Farkas – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Cook Memorial Public Library
August 13	“Chain Migration” – Suzanne Hoffman – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Cook Memorial Public Library
September 15	“Emigration and Immigration: The Story of Your Immigrant Ancestors” – Jacque Schattner – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Gurnee Village Hall
October 20	“AI and Genealogy: Evolving Role of Artificial Intelligence in Genealogy” – Eric Vavra – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Gurnee Village Hall
November 17	“Understanding and Benefiting from Process Changes to England’s Civil Registration for B/M/D Certificates” – Paul Milner – <i>(hybrid)</i> at Gurnee Village Hall

For additional information, please contact any of our Board members. If anyone has a special request for a program or area of research idea, please share your thoughts so we can consider them for future meetings. Our Society meetings are informational, educational and fun! We always have knowledgeable speakers. You will have the opportunity to network with genealogists of all experience levels. Together we can share information, sources and resources. Now is the time to kick-start your own family tree research.

Genealogy Web and Research Assistance at the Zion-Benton Public Library

See the Zion-Benton Public Library website at <<https://zblibrary.info>> or call 847-872-4680. The library is open on Monday through Thursday from 9am to 9pm, Saturday from 9am to 5pm, and Sunday from 1pm to 5pm. The library is closed on Fridays. The library is located at 2400 Gabriel Avenue in Zion, Illinois.

The Zion-Benton Public Library has computers with Internet access to countless genealogical sites as well as subscriptions to Heritage Quest, NewspaperArchive and Ancestry.com and is a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. Our research assistance volunteers are available at the library on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Appointments are required, so please schedule through the library (see website address and phone number above).

Our Society-donated research materials are maintained in a genealogy reference room at the Zion-Benton Public Library, complete with a computer and printer. Additional materials have been added to our collections, so please come see what we have! We have a large collection of research books and an extensive collection of newsletters from genealogical societies from all over the country. All research materials can be viewed at any time the library is open, but are not available for checkout. The library also has an extensive collection of genealogy-based books that can be checked out in section 929.

Let's Carpool to Our Monthly Meetings!

Because the 7pm meetings of our merged genealogical society may be located more mid-county to accommodate all of our members, carpooling can be a good idea. Nighttime driving may be a challenge for some of us, so let's call on a buddy to attend the meetings together. Attending the meetings in person can be a great advantage by giving us the opportunity to network with other friends on our genealogical journeys. Let's make it fun!



President's Message

by Vicki Mattson, ZGS President

Spring Has Sprung and Our Society Is Ready for a New Chapter!

Winter is on the way out and plants are peeking through the soil, my lilac tree is budding, and the days are getting longer. Starting a new season is exciting and I look forward to my flowers and trees coming to life again.

The Zion Genealogical Society is also starting a new season as we merge with the Lake County Genealogy Society. The officers and board members of both societies have worked together this past year to lay out the plans for our new and improved organization. We held our first joint meeting in person at the Gurnee Village Hall in April. As we move forward with new experiences, we will also continue with many of our old traditions.

As *The Illuminator* is the last newsletter to be published by the Zion Genealogical Society, I want to take the time to thank everyone for all their support over the years. So many people have been so generous with their time and their knowledge and supporting our Society and me in so many ways. You are what has made the Zion Genealogical Society such a success for over 47 years. I'm grateful and excited to move forward with all of you into the next chapter of Lake County Genealogical Society.

**Heredity is the quality that is showing up
when a father says:**

"I don't know what has got into that boy."

— *Duluth Herald (date unknown)*

Many Thanks to Our Sponsor: the Zion-Benton Public Library

The Zion Genealogical Society has been sponsored by the Zion-Benton Public Library since its inception in 1979, when the director was JoAnn Ellingson. While the Zion Power Plant was contributing tax dollars to local entities, the library would match donations made by the ZGS. When the Zion Power Plant closed, the library could no longer match our contributions. Our Society has continued to add to the genealogical collection by purchasing books, other materials and equipment for the library. These are all available for research use in the Genealogical Room at the library.

As our two genealogical societies merge, the Lake County Genealogical Society will continue to be sponsored by the Zion-Benton Public Library. We truly value our continued partnership.

Stop In to Read a Bit!

You need to stop in at the Genealogy Room at the Zion-Benton Public Library and read a bit!

We have some back issues of genealogy magazines such as the National Genealogical Society, Illinois State Genealogical Society, Chicago Genealogical Society, Wisconsin Historical Society, New England Historic Genealogical Society, etc.

We also have a collection of newsletters from other genealogical societies from many states and counties all over the country. If you have any ancestors from somewhere other than Zion (and we all do!), then you need come to the library to check out these resources.



“America at 250”

by Carol Awe, ZGS
editor, *The Illuminator*

The Zion-Benton Public Library hosted a great workshop/conference on Saturday, March 14, 2026. This event was co-sponsored by the Zion Genealogical Society (ZGS) and the Lake County Genealogical Society (LCIGS). We had attendance of 39, including 15 members of the ZGS and 8 members of the LCIGS. We were especially pleased to have quite a few guests and library patrons who attended. Everyone received a handout for the main presentation, plus family tree sheets, beginner packets and a bookmark listing our upcoming monthly meetings.



Our guest speaker, **Scott Norrick**, Ancestral Past, gave a presentation on “America at 250: Researching Your Revolutionary Ancestors”. He discussed the timeline and events of that period. Mr. Norrick discussed what records might be found and where to find them. A good resource at the national level is <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution>.

Many more records might be found at state or local levels. Many documents have been digitized and eventually will be made available online. The most popular online (paid) websites are Ancestry at <https://www.ancestry.com> and Fold3 at <https://www.fold3.com/collection/us-revolutionary-war-us>. A free site worth checking out is FamilySearch



at familysearch.org/en/wiki/Finding_Your_Revolutionary_War_Ancessor. Scott Norrick can be reached at scott@ancestralpast.com.

After a quick break for coffee and “red, white and blue” cupcakes, we continued with more short presentations. **Caron Smith**,

Regent of the DAR, Little Fort Chapter (Waukegan), shared information, plus the offer of assistance to those who may wish for more help in making a connection to their own Revolutionary patriot ancestors. You can visit the DAR website at <https://www.dar.org> or send an email to **Debbie Grove** at debs1953@comcast.net for more information.



Then **Catherine Landbrecht**, Program Director of the Highland Park Genealogical Society, spoke about “Community Cookbooks: Finding Family, Friends and Lost Recipes (A Culinary Handbook)”. She shared information about genealogical information and stories that can be gleaned from old cookbooks, many that were put together by our mothers and grandmothers who belonged to a local church or women’s club.





Following that was **Myra Coddens**, member of the ZGS Executive Board, whose presentation was “Lake County in 1776”, sharing fascinating information about the pre-Revolutionary War era around the Great Lakes before white European migration settled the area that later became Illinois.



Karen Kunz from the LCIGS and **Joanne Layne** from the ZGS, both highlighted the extensive collections in our genealogical libraries in Vernon Hills and Zion that are great resources for anyone doing research all over the country and the world, not just Zion or Lake County. Both societies have dedicated volunteers who are experienced and knowledgeable genealogical researchers who can be available to help you. Please check out the respective websites for more information on reserving an appointment with a researcher.

LCIGS at <<https://lakecountyilgenealogy.org>>

ZGS at <<https://zionilgensoc.org>>



***The Leaves of Healing* Issues Have Been Digitized and Are Available Online**

Most of the volumes of *The Leaves of Healing* have been scanned and digitized. Full-page images can be found online at <<https://advancinggenealogist.com/resources/lake-county-illinois-the-leaves-of-healing/>>

Upcoming Genealogical Conferences

Some genealogical society meetings, webinars, conferences and workshops may still be held virtually or use a “hybrid” format.

- **CAGGNI GeneaQuest 2026: July 18, 2026** for an all-day in-person genealogy conference at the Wojcik Conference Center at Harper College in Palatine, IL. Conference title is “Pursuit of Ancestry: Life, Liberty & Heritage” with

presentations focusing on Legacy of Liberty, Journeys to America, and Tech Meets Tradition. For more information: <<https://www.caggni.org/GeneaQuest2026>>.

- **National Genealogical Society (NGS) May 27-30, 2026.** The 2026 Family History Conference will be held in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Mark your calendar now. For more info: <<https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org>>

Zion Genealogical Society Officers and Executive Board Members – 1980-2026

We wish to acknowledge the Officers and Executive Board Members of the Zion Genealogical Society. The tireless dedication of these amazing people cannot be overstated! Our monthly meetings featured excellent guest speakers who presented on a vast variety of topics. There were workshops, conferences, research trips, field trips and fundraisers. The combined efforts of these dedicated volunteers made it all happen. Other volunteers (not listed here) assisted as chairpersons of a variety of committees and projects over the years. We could not have done it without you! Kudos to all!

	1980 – 1981	1981 – 1982	1982 – 1983	1983 – 1984	1984 – 1985	1985 – 1986	1986 – 1987	1987 – 1988
President	Joanne Layne	Eileen Whitmire	Eileen Whitmire	Debbie Noblin	Linda Worstell	Linda Worstell	H. Jay Warren *	H. Jay Warren *
Vice President		Carol Frederickson *	Joan Bomkamp	Joan Bomkamp	Debbi Brown	Debbi Brown	Debra Hickey	Debra Hickey Miesala
Secretary	Susan Clark	Hallie Hess *	Hallie Hess *	Betty Burns	Martha McElroy *	Debbie Schneider		Pearl Reasor
Treasurer	Susan Clark	Florence Kreis *	Kathy Whitmore	Kathy Whitmore	Nancy Salmela	Nancy Salmela	Coralie Cox *	Coralie Cox *
Past President		Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Eileen Whitmire	Debbie Noblin	Debbie Noblin	Linda Worstell	Linda Worstell
Board Members				Susan Clark Florence Kreis *	Joanne Layne Eileen Whitmire	Joanne Layne Eileen Whitmire	Joanne Layne Eileen Whitmire	Nancy Salmela Eileen Whitmire
	1988 – 1989	1989 – 1990	1990 – 1991	1991 – 1992	1992 – 1993	1993 – 1994	1994 – 1995	1995 – 1996
President	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Wanda Solheim *	Van J. Herrero *	Van J. Herrero *	Debbie Schnider	Debbie Schnider	Joanne Layne
Vice President	Catherine West	Wanda Solheim *	Rosalie Bosner	Nancy Salmela	Pat Sage *	Carroll Frederickson *	Joanne Layne	Pam Rioux
Secretary	Ruth Hacker *	Donald Taylor *	Donald Taylor *	Donald Taylor *	Carrie Johann *		Michelle Fritz	Patricia Williams
Treasurer	Rosalie Bosner	Rosalie Bosner	Pat Sage *	Pat Sage *	Nancy Salmela	Coralie Cox *	Louise Pocklington	Louise Pocklington
Past President	H. Jay Warren *	H. Jay Warren *	Joanne Layne	Wanda Solheim *	Wanda Solheim *	Van J. Herrero *	Van J. Herrero *	Debbie Schnider
Board Members	Marge Queen Debbie Schnider	Marge Queen Catherine West	Joanne Layne Eileen Whitmire	Debbie Schnider Eileen Whitmire	Debbie Schnider Donald Taylor *	Rosalie Bosner Mary Young *	Rosalie Bosner Coralie Cox *	Terry Larson Ralph Trantham *
	1996 – 1997	1997 – 1998	1998 – 1999	1999 – 2000	2000 – 2001	2001 – 2002	2002 – 2003	2003 – 2004
President	Carrie Johann *	Carrie Johann *	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Betsy Alleman	Joanne Layne	Vicki George *	Vicki George *
Vice President	Pam Rioux	Carol Kessinger *	Patty Garrett	Betsy Alleman	Joanne Layne	Betsy Alleman	John Fearday *	Shery Wood
Secretary	Sally Martin	Rita Ann Huber	Carol Bradbury	Barb Lanier	Charlene Smith	Charlene Smith	Elaine Walenter	Elaine Walenter
Treasurer	Louise Pocklington	Pam Rioux	Jeanne Hemeyer *	Bill Johansen	Bill Johansen	Vicki George *	Charlene Smith	Charlene Smith
Past President	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Carrie Johann *	Carrie Johann *	Joanne Layne	Betsy Alleman	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne
Board Members	Joanne Layne Ralph Trantham *	Carroll Frederickson * Carol Lee Mallery	Rosalie Bosner John Fearday *	Rosalie Bosner John Fearday *	John Fearday * Harold Osborn *	John Fearday * Harold Osborn *	Harold Osborn * Shery Wood	Harold Osborn * Peggy Rommel
	2004 – 2005	2005 – 2006	2006 – 2007	2007 – 2008	2008 – 2009	2009 – 2010	2010 – 2011	2011 – 2012
President	Shery Wood	Shery Wood	Nancy Salmela	Nancy Salmela	Nancy Salmela	Carol Bradbury	Carol Bradbury	Joanne Layne
Vice President	Vicki George *	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Shery Byrne	Shery Byrne	Joanne Layne	Nancy Palla
Secretary	Debby Fohn	Jo Ann Dechant	Vicki Flowers *	Jo Ann Dechant	Beverly Millard *	Beverly Millard *	Nancy Palla	Gail Dever
Treasurer	Charlene Smith	Beverly Millard *	Beverly Millard *	Beverly Millard *	Jo Ann Dechant	Jo Ann Dechant	Shery Byrne	Kathy Whitmore
Past President	Vicki George *	Vicki George *	Shery Wood	Shery Wood	Shery Wood	Nancy Salmela	Nancy Salmela	Carol Bradbury
Board Members	Rosalie Bosner Peggy Rommel	Rosalie Bosner Pam Roux	Rosalie Bosner Pam Roux/Jo Ann Dechant	Carol Awe Rosalie Bosner	Carol Awe Rosalie Bosner	Carol Awe Don Classey	Carol Awe Don Classey Patty Wensle *	Carol Awe Shery Byrne Don Classey
	2012 – 2013	2013 – 2014	2014 – 2015	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017	2017 – 2018	2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020
President	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Don Classey	Don Classey	Don Classey	Vicki Mattson
Vice President	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Joanne Layne	Don Classey	Vicki Mattson	Betty Burns	Betty Burns	Betty Burns
Secretary	Teresa Hatten	Teresa Hatten	Kathy Whitmore	Gail Dever	Barb Howe	Barb Howe	Kathleen Getz	Charleen McFarlin
Treasurer	Kathy Whitmore	Kathy Whitmore	Teresa Hatten	Kathy Whitmore	(open)	Kathy Whitmore	Kathy Whitmore	Kathy Whitmore
Past President	Carol Bradbury	Carol Bradbury	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Don Classey
Board Members	Shery Byrne Don Classey Gail Dever	Don Classey Gail Dever Margaret Young *	Gail Dever Patty Wensle * Margaret Young *	Betty Burns Alan MacDougall Margaret Young *	Carol Awe Betty Burns Shery Byrne	Carol Awe Betty Burns Carlton Smith Terry Turner	Carol Awe Carlton Smith Terry Turner	Carlton Smith Barb Howe Carlton Smith
	2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – 2025	2025 – 026		
President	Vicki Mattson	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Joanne Layne	Vicki Mattson		
Vice President	Carol Awe	Carol Awe	Carol Awe	Myra Coddens	Nancy Scott	Nancy Scott		
Secretary	Charleen McFarlin	Charleen McFarlin	Joan Bomkamp	Joan Bomkamp	Gail Dever	Charleen McFarlin		
Treasurer	Kathy Whitmore	Kathy Whitmore	Teresa Hatten	Teresa Hatten	Kathy Whitmore	Kathy Whitmore		
Past President	Don Classey	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Vicki Mattson	Joanne Layne		
Board Members	Kathleen Getz Barb Howe Carlton Smith	Joan Bomkamp Kathleen Getz Carlton Smith	Myra Coddens Kathleen Getz Charleen McFarlin	Barb Howe Charleen McFarlin Carlton Smith	Barb Howe Myra Coddens Carlton Smith	Joan Bomkamp Myra Coddens Charleen McFarlin		

* deceased as of 2026

2026 ZGS Volunteer Awardees

As we wrap up the 47-year history of the Zion Genealogical Society, we wish to recognize our amazing volunteers. In past years the Society has awarded monetary awards to a Volunteer of the Year and an Honorable Mention. Since our Society will be merging with the Lake County Genealogical Society this summer, our Society officers and board decided to recognize three exceptional volunteers for their many cumulative years of dedicated service. In lieu of monetary awards, the following ZGS members will have their names engraved on a plaque that is displayed in the Genealogy Room at the Zion-Benton Public Library.

Carol Awe has been a ZGS member since the mid-1990s. In 2007 she took on the role of editor for *The Illuminator* quarterly newsletter. Do you know how hard it is to publish 76 newsletters over 19 years and never miss a deadline! Carol also served several years on the Executive Board and three years as Vice-President. She was awarded the Volunteer of the Year six times. She was a general meeting program presenter twice. Over the years, Carol has put her graphic design skills to best use by creating and printing just about everything from posters, fliers, name badges, and all sorts of documents and spreadsheets to assist in Society operations.

Rosalie Bosner joined the ZGS as Member #4 in 1979! Rosalie has served as Vice-President and Treasurer and on the Executive Board. She was the newsletter editor from 1989 to 1997. Rosalie was awarded Volunteer of the Year four times. She became our Society “expert” in reading Old German script. She volunteered for 23 years, assisting Society members and library patrons who wished to begin or continue their family history research. Rosalie was also a program presenter.

Vicki Mattson joined the ZGS in about 2012 and has been very active in a number of roles, including serving five years as Society President. She was a program presenter three times. Vicki was awarded the Volunteer of the Year five times. While juggling all sorts of other responsibilities, she also served as President of the Illinois State Genealogical Society

for three years! Vicki’s leadership role has been especially helpful as we navigate the merger with the LCIGS.

The other five ZGS members also recognized on the plaque include:

Miriam Eliason was an inspiration to all. In her later years (she lived to be 104) she annually donated to the ZGS a dollar for every year of her age. Our society created the Miriam Eliason Scholarship in her honor and has given annual awards for Volunteer of the Year and Honorable Mention since 1997.

Joanne Layne was co-founder of the Zion Genealogical Society with membership #1. Her passion for and dedication to the ZGS is off the charts! She served 14 times as Society President! She was awarded Volunteer of the Year four times. Joanne presented a lecture on Courthouse Research and coordinated genealogical workshops for the society. She also volunteered for over 40 years, assisting library patrons to begin or continue their family history research.

Nancy Salmela was ZGS President for three years, plus a number of years as Treasurer, Vice-President and Executive Board member. She was the previous newsletter editor from 1998 to 2007. She was twice awarded Volunteer of the Year. Nancy donated her extensive genealogical collection to the ZGS, where some of her books were added to the genealogy room at the Zion-Benton Public Library. Other books and materials were donated to the National Genealogical Society collection, some of which can be loaned to individuals.

Ralph Trantham was a very supportive ZGS member, also serving as our Membership Chair. He was always the first one to assist with meeting arrangements and fundraisers. Ralph was a 2001 Volunteer of the Year.

Vicki George Flowers was our Society President for two years and served as Secretary and Vice-President, plus led our writing workshop for a few years. Her husband, **Don Flowers**, requested that funeral donations (\$1100) in Vicki’s memory were to go to the ZGS.

Zion Genealogical Society Volunteer of the Year Awardees – 1997-2026

Please see the following chart for the full list of the Zion Genealogical Society Volunteers of the Year since 1997.

Year	Award Type	Awardee	Year	Award Type	Awardee		
1997	Volunteer of the Year	Rosalie Bosner	2015	Volunteer of the Year	Carol Awe		
	Honorable Mention	Joanne Layne		Honorable Mention	Vicki Mattson		
	Honorable Mention	Donald Taylor *		2016	Volunteer of the Year	Lee Clark *	
1998	Volunteer of the Year	Pam Rioux *	Honorable Mention		Don Classey		
1999	Volunteer of the Year	Carrie Johann *	2017	Volunteer of the Year	Vicki Mattson		
2000	Volunteer of the Year	Patty Garrett		Honorable Mention	Jo Ann Dechant		
2001	Volunteer of the Year	Nancy Salmela	2018	Volunteer of the Year	Barb Howe		
	Honorable Mention	Ralph Trantham *		Honorable Mention	Joanne Layne		
2003	Volunteer of the Year	Rosalie Bosner	2019	Volunteer of the Year	Carol Awe		
2004	Volunteer of the Year	Sherry Wood		Honorable Mention	Teresa Hatten		
2005	Volunteer of the Year	John Fearday *	2021	Volunteer of the Year	Vicki Mattson		
2006	Volunteer of the Year	Sherry Wood		Honorable Mention	Sherry Byrne		
2007	Volunteer of the Year	Rosalie Bosner	2022	Volunteer of the Year	Carol Awe		
2008 thru 2011	Volunteers of the Year and Honorable Mention	Carol Awe, Sherry Byrne		Honorable Mention	Kathy Whitmore		
		Joanne Layne, Don Classey	2023	Volunteer of the Year	Joanne Layne		
		Jo Ann Dechant, Beverly Millard *		Honorable Mention	Myra Coddens		
2012	Volunteer of the Year	Don Classey	2024	Volunteer of the Year	Joan Bomkamp		
		Honorable Mention		Beverly Millard *	Honorable Mention	Charleen McFarlin	
		Honorable Mention	Margaret Young *	2025	Volunteer of the Year	Barb Howe	
2013	Volunteer of the Year	Carol Awe	Honorable Mention		Nancy Scott		
		2014	Volunteer of the Year	Don Classey	2026	Volunteers of the Year	Carol Awe
				Honorable Mention			Angela Westphal
Honorable Mention	Vicki Mattson			Vicki Mattson			

* deceased as of 2026

ZGS Meetings Over the Years

In the early years (1979-1999) the ZGS monthly general meetings were mostly held at the Zion-Benton Public Library, although several meetings were held at East School. Occasionally meetings were held at several other locations including Shiloh Park School, Kenneth Murphy School, Waukegan Public Library, Zion-Benton Township High School (Pearce Campus), and the Zion Senior Citizen Center. During the years of 1999-2019, most meetings were held at the Beach Park Village Hall. Then Covid happened in 2020 and we met on Zoom until Summer 2022. Since then our general meetings have been hybrid (Zoom and in person at the Zion-Benton Public Library) until the end of 2025.

Our monthly Board meetings were generally held in the home of one of the Society officers until Covid chased us to Zoom meetings, which worked very well. **Carol Awe** recalled an earlier Board meeting at her home during a fierce thunderstorm. When the power went out, she lit numerous candles and

the meeting continued without a hitch. Now that’s dedication on the part of the ZGS officers and executive board members!

ZGS Founding Members Started It All in 1979!

In a flashback to 1979, we want to give a quick shout out to the founding members of the Zion Genealogical Society. **Joanne Layne, Connie Allen, Rosalie Bosner, Susan Clark and Eileen Whitmire** were there from the beginning when they met for the first time at the “old” Zion Library by the Shiloh lagoon. Librarian Gertrude Ko had mentioned to Joanne and Connie that the library was getting inquiries from patrons asking about genealogy. There was a genuine feeling of the need to create a “club” of like-minded people who wished to take this journey together to learn more about genealogy and do more research into their own family trees. And so our Society came into being, bringing together so many friends who share the same interests (obsessions)!

ZGS Member Memories

As a recap of 47 years of memories, members of the Zion Genealogical Society were asked to share some of those memories.

Carol Awe

I have been honored to be your ZGS newsletter editor for 19 years! *The Illuminator* has been a great way to stay connected with each other and the wider genealogical community, as well as sharing information to further our own family tree research. We've made some great friends along the way. I've been to a few FGS/NGS conferences and several state and local events, plus the Allen County Public Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana (twice). I always learn so much more. As we move forward with the merger with the LCIGS, we look forward to learning more and sharing more, and making more friends!

Rosalie (Shirling) Bosner

I had always been interested in family stories which became an obsession to find actual facts. Little was known about where in Germany my maternal grandparents came from, but I knew that mom's family was extremely special to her and she yearned to know more. Being the last of 11 children, her parents were no longer interested in talking about the "old country". I wanted to learn all I could about them to fill in the blanks for mom. I started research by writing several requests to churches, cemeteries, relatives and archives for any information. I then met **Joanne Layne** at the old Zion library and the rest is history. She was interested in forming the Zion Genealogical Society, and she signed me up as the 4th member. This grew to be a lifelong friendship with many research trips to Salt Lake City. Not only did I discover more than I could have ever imagined about my ancestors, but with the expert help from the staff at the family history library, I have one of my greatest accomplishments to thank them for. They encouraged me to learn how to read old German, French and Latin script. Together Joanne and I had very memorable times, shared in each other's triumphs and met many great and interesting people along the way. I didn't even mind that Joanne would wake me up before 6am so we could be first in line at the Family History Library!

Susan Clark

I started working at the Zion-Benton Public Library in March 1979. I went to the first meeting of the Zion Genealogical Society that met in the old library building by the lagoon. I joined the club that **Joanne Layne** and **Connie Allen** had organized. In those days, before computers and the Internet, we waited forever to get books through inter-library loan and had to pay to borrow census records on microfilm and then scroll through the rolls on an old hand-crank microfilm reader/printer. Everything took a long time and we ordered almost blind, without knowing if the names we were looking for would be found in the materials we ordered. While working at the library for 33 years, I got to know many of the ZGS members better than just seeing them at the meetings. I especially remember **Miriam Eliason**. The last time I saw her in the library, she was 99 years old and still reading large print books with the help of a magnifying glass. She would try to name all the presidents of her lifetime in order and have me check for accuracy! She did this several times over the years and always got it right. I have such good memories of the people I met through the ZGS.

Myra (Jackman) Coddens

A friend, Cathy, mentioned that our mutual friend, **Carol Awe**, was a member of the Zion Genealogical Society. I had done genealogy research with my mom on our families and was just starting to search for my husband's ancestors. I thought it could be interesting to see what others were doing, so I started attending meetings. At that time, I was living in Grayslake, IL, and working. So once a month, I'd either rush home to grab dinner, give a quick hello to my husband and head out or just skip the stop at home and drive directly to the meeting. The drive was 45 minutes, depending on traffic, but when I got to the meeting and was met by friendly people, I switched out of my "work" mindset and entered the world of the quest for ancestors and history. I am not a person who generally joins groups and societies, but after a few meetings and seeing the benefit the Society brought to people like me, I joined and then became a lifetime member. Now I live in Pleasant Prairie, WI, just 15 minutes from the Zion-Benton Public Library, and attended meetings as often as

(ZGS Member Memories continued)

possible. Soon the merged society will be moving meetings to more central Lake County and I'll be reversing my initial drive, heading back closer to where I used to live. But it's worth the trip to have the social interaction with like-minded people and hear the excellent speakers. And that's why I stay.

Jo Ann (Carman) Dechant

I moved to Zion, IL, in 2001, to live with my daughter Tammy and her family after the passing of my husband, Jim. My daughter noticed an article in the *Zion Benton News* (Note: the newspaper is no longer published) of April 2005 about an upcoming meeting of the ZGS at which time the speaker was to be Craig Pfannkuche. My daughter recognized the name and that the presentation was to be "Hands-On Analysis of Old Photographs". As I had just received some old photos of family members, my daughter thought that I might be interested in the program, and she also reminded me that I knew Mr. Pfannkuche, a substitute teacher at Woodstock High School, in Woodstock, IL, where I had worked in food service. The newspaper article included information about contacting **Joanne Layne** if interested in attending the program. At the meeting I met several members: **Margaret Young, Nancy Salmela, Vicki George Flowers, Rosalie Bosner, Betsy Alleman, Beverly Millard, Ann Darrow, Sherry Wood, Ralph Trantham** and **John Fearday**. John recognized me because he also worked in Woodstock and ate at several of the same area restaurants. Thanks to the article in the newspaper, I have met and become friends with many nice people. After that initial meeting, Joanne and I went out for dinner one night and for many years after that. She has become "my sister from another mother"! And I am convinced that although she is not directly related to me, she is related through her mother to the husband of my great-aunt on my mother's side! I also continue to keep in touch with Betsy, who is a shining light for all who know her. Through the Writing Workshop that we used to have, I became acquainted with several members, learning things about each other that would never have come up in regular conversations. I would like to see the Society start a new Writing Workshop.

Don Flowers

My late wife, **Vicki George Flowers**, introduced me to genealogy. We were married June 24, 2006, and she passed away April 7, 2024. Vicki was a long-time ZGS member, serving several times on the Board, including two years as the Society President. She was such an inspiration with her family tree research. I recently found more paperwork from her family from the 1700s that I'll be sending to relatives in Salina, Kansas. Vicki was in the process of documenting proof to join the DAR, but never finished. I've been slowly working on my own genealogy, recently with my brother John finding the graves of our paternal grandparents in Florida.

Kathy (Howe) Getz

I met **Barb Howe** in 2015 when my husband and I went to her office to have our taxes done. I mentioned that my maiden name was Howe. We talked a bit and realized that we were not related. I mentioned that I'd started researching my family history and joined a genealogy group in Florida where my late husband, Ron, and I vacationed every winter. She told me about the Zion Genealogical Society group that met in Beach Park and encouraged me to come to a meeting and see if I'd be interested in joining. Thanks, Barb! You helped me find my people. Everyone in the group has been so friendly and welcoming! Of course, I joined and have looked forward to all of our meetings.

Debbie (Kuhnen) Grove

I have only been with ZGS for a short time. The presentations and topics have been great, and I have enjoyed meeting very nice (and smart) people. I hope to get smarter, too, as I continue my own genealogical research!

Joanne (Conine) Layne

I am one of the co-founders of the Zion Genealogical Society. In 1979 **Connie Allen** suggested that we start a genealogical society. I have been involved since that time. I have volunteered at the Zion-Benton Public Library for about 40 years, assisting patrons in starting or continuing their family history research. I have made many friends through the society. **Jo Ann Dechant** became a best friend.

The ZGS has become a large part of my social life since we all share the same hobby/addiction. I have made 33 trips to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City (10 days at a time). In addition, I have trained at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. (once for a week) and at the Institute of Genealogical and Historical Research (twice for a week each time) held at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. I attended my first genealogical conference in 1984 in Columbus, Ohio, where I heard Elizabeth Shown Mills speak for the first time. Her lecture topic was “White Potato Willie and Sweet Potato Sam”. Her lecture was about using agricultural censuses to solve a research problem. I was hooked on Elizabeth and her lectures on methodology. I attended multiple conferences where she was speaking and also heard other lecturers which helped educate me on genealogical research. I started research in 1972 before libraries had genealogical collections. I had to create my own forms and charts, subscribed to *Everton's Genealogical Helper* and travelled to many county courthouses, cemeteries and libraries. I wrote lots of letters well before the Internet became a research tool. I have been blessed to have a hobby that gives me something positive to think about in good times and bad. So many ancestors, so little time!

Vicki (Dixon) Mattson

As I look back on my 15 years with the Zion Genealogical Society, I remember many people and events. Some people have passed away or moved on and new people have taken their place. All meetings were in person with snacks, coffee and tea. I learned so much at the first meetings I attended, not only from the speakers but from other members. Our rummage sale was a good money maker and a lot of work. Our bake sale/hot dog sale is now our biggest fundraiser, and it is always a fun day, chatting with people while selling baked goods and hot dogs. Some years were blazing hot and we spent the day moving our chairs, chasing the shade. Some years were chilly, but almost every year we were fighting the yellow jackets that were always buzzing around our table of sweets. I remember attending Lake County Genealogical Society and McHenry Genealogical Society conferences with our group.

Many of us carpoled and stopped for dinner or at least at the Riverside Chocolate Factory on the way home. My first trip to the Allen County Public Library was with **Joanne Layne**, **Gail Dever** and **Sherry Byrne**. This is where I learned to plan ahead of time for a research trip. My mini-trip in October 2016 to the Newberry Library with Joanne Layne, **Jo Ann Dechant** and **Rob Schwartz** was such a learning experience. I'll never forget how good Jo Ann Dechant's homemade sandwiches were that we ate in the car in the parking lot of the Newberry. 2016 must have been the year of field trips as nine of us made a trip to the Civil War Museum in Kenosha that April and then had dinner at the Villa D' Carlo restaurant. It was such a fun day! I miss our Sunday afternoon writing workshops where I learned so much about others in our group. Some of my closest friends are in this Society. I'm glad we will still be together in the Lake County Genealogical Society and continue to make more memories.

Angela Westphal

I became aware of the Zion Genealogical Society when I started working at the Zion-Benton Public Library. Later in my career I became the liaison between the Society and the library. I would sit in on the board meetings and report to them about genealogy programs I would be doing and any relevant updates about the library. I met many interesting members and speakers and learned so much from them. This in turn helped me help others find their ancestors at the library. My maternal grandmother started me on my journey searching for the paternal side of my family tree. When working at the library, I used what resources the library and Society had available. Just last Fall 2025 at Discovery Day at the Buffalo Grove Family History Center, I found two more generations of my Keith ancestors by marriage and death records, plus I found another sailor in the family. I also found one more generation of McMillan ancestors in the same marriage record. I could only see the full record by going to a Family History Center. I was so excited to finally see this marriage record! These Scottish ancestors are on the maternal side of my family. I am looking forward to the next chapter of our Society.

(ZGS Member Memories continued)

Gail (Frasier) Dever

A dear grade school friend, **Ann Darrow**, and I reestablished contact in the 2000s. She introduced me to the Zion Genealogical Society. At the first meeting I won the monthly drawing for 4 hours of research, donated by **Joanne Layne**. She came back from Salt Lake City with great information for me, and got me started on my family search. My continued family research added ancestors and more new friends. **Cindy Braze** and I found that we had a side-bar relationship. Her mother was married to one of my husband's cousins. More new friends were added as I became active in the Society, working on Christmas in July dinners and raffles, Labor Day bake and hot dog sales, plus serving as Society Secretary. Another great memory was when **Vicki Mattson** drove four of us on a genealogy trip to the Allen County Library in Fort Wayne, IN. We had a good time together and came home with more great information. Another great memory was when a 2014 blizzard hit our area the day of our Society's 35th anniversary for which I had picked up a large sheet cake at Sam's Club. Several calls were made and the meeting was canceled, leaving me stuck with a huge sheet cake and a small freezer. **Carol Awe** had a large freezer and saved the day!

Our Society celebrated that anniversary one month later and enjoyed that sheet cake, in good condition. Everyone had a great time together! Making friends with so many ZGS members while working, helping and sharing over the years has been a blessing. I'm looking forward to a great future together!

**Make new friends but keep the old,
one is silver and the other gold!**

ZGS Fundraisers Over the Years

For many years our ZGS members have raised a lot of money to support our Society. Our summer rummage sales were held at the home of one of our Society officers, most recently for several years at **Joanne Layne's** home in Beach Park. Our other annual fundraisers have been bake sales at the Zion Labor Day Parade. Our volunteer bakers furnished a great variety and amount of baked goods which always sold well. Other volunteers handled the grilling of hotdogs, plus sales of chips, soda and water. Sales were especially brisk when the weather was hot. The monies earned from these fundraisers added to our Society's treasury to help pay for guest speakers every month. The monies raised also went toward purchases of books and other materials and equipment for the Genealogy Room at the Library.

Membership Dues for the Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society

As the Zion Genealogical Society merges with the Lake County Genealogical Society, we will also be moving our membership to the LCIGS, whose fiscal membership year starts on July 1. Current ZGS members are being offered a reduced rate (\$25 instead of \$30) for a one-year individual LCIGS membership for this 2026-2027 "overlap" year.

Please see the form on the next page. You may make a copy of this form and mail it with your check by July 1 to PO Box 998, Mundelein, IL 60060-0998. Or...you may bring the form and check in person to our next general meeting (see calendar on page 2). The membership form is also available online at the LCIGS website at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezmpLfzoBeNLRQLh8j7GCDwbAYEyl>

[oXbB1o23siyXpFWZkXA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSezmpLfzoBeNLRQLh8j7GCDwbAYEyl/viewform)> with the option of using PayPal for payment **by July 1, 2026**.

At our general meetings, we have knowledgeable guest speakers who cover a variety of topics from locale or ethnic-specific presentations to research-based mini-workshops that may pique your interest to do further research on your own family trees. Most of our monthly meetings will be "hybrid" (in-person and via Zoom). The program may be a Zoom presentation by an off-site speaker. The Zoom meeting code will be sent to members via e-mail. Please see page 2 for the schedule of guest speakers and topics for the next few months.

Make copies of this form to pass along to family and friends. Have them join you in this grand adventure! There are many benefits of being a member of the Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society.



LAKE COUNTY (IL) GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 998, Mundelein, IL 60060-0998
www.lakecountyilgenealogy.org
 (847) 918-3584 ~ LCIGS1170@gmail.com

R F L Y _____
 (for LCIGS use only)

Membership in LCIGS is open to any person or organization interested in genealogy, no matter your location. Membership dues help fund the Society's library and monthly programs. Members receive the Society's Quarterly Publication (electronic), free queries, and discounts on Society publications and conferences.

Membership Year: July 1st to June 30th

Renewal Membership New Membership - beginning July 1, _____
 (Year)

MEMBERSHIP TYPES (please check one):

Special Offer for ZGS Members \$25 Individual (paid until July 1, 2027)

\$33 Family

\$35 Library*/International

* includes paper quarterly

	➔				
		Membership amount	(a)	\$	_____
		Receive Hardcopy of the Quarterly (Optional - \$5/yr)	(b)	\$	_____
		Subtotal (a+b)	(c)	\$	_____
		Number of Years (max of 5 years – Please note that pre-paid dues and Quarterly are non-refundable)	(d)		_____
		Membership Total (c X d)	(e)	\$	_____
		Donation* (optional)	(f)	\$	_____
		Total Amount Enclosed (e+f):		\$	_____

Please make your check payable to: **LCIGS** [Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society] and mail it to the above address, along with this form. **Or renew online on our website – www.lakecountyilgenealogy.org**

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you would like your membership card mailed to you. Please print:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____ May we publish it (please circle one)? **Y** **N**

E-mail: _____ May we publish it (please circle one)? **Y** **N**

Would you be willing to help our society by volunteering in our research room or for one of our projects (please circle one)? **Y** **N**

List names you are researching for the annual directory. We accept a maximum of four names per individual and eight names per family membership. Additional names may be listed on the back of this form. Please list only one name and one location per line; if you would like to list two states or countries, please use two lines. **Please print:**

SURNAME	GIVEN NAME	LOCALITY	TIME PERIOD
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

*LCIGS is a 501(c)(3) Organization. Your voluntary donation may be tax deductible according to current law.

The Zion Genealogical Society

The Zion Genealogical Society (ZGS) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization sponsored by the Zion-Benton Public Library. The Society's genealogical research materials are housed at the Zion-Benton Public Library for public use. General meetings are open to the public. Most meetings are "hybrid" (in-person and via Zoom). Please check the 2026 Calendar on page 2 for a list of meeting dates, speakers, topics and venues.

The Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society

The Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society membership year runs from July 1 to June 30. Individual annual dues are \$30 which includes digital files sent via email of the monthly newsletter and the Quarterly. There is a small additional fee if you wish to receive a printed copy of the Quarterly. Annual dues may be paid at Society meetings or sent to the Lake County (IL) Genealogical Society (LCIGS) at PO Box 998, Mundelein, IL 60060-0998. Please notify the Society promptly of any changes to either your postal or email address.

DATED MATERIAL

Zion-Benton Public Library
Zion Genealogical Society
2400 Gabriel Avenue
Zion, Illinois 60099