

Backenstoss Schild

# Backenstoss

## FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Est. 1927

"For the perpetuation of the history and  
traditions of the family and its social enjoyment"

**Summer 2008**

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Plan to attend our 76<sup>th</sup> Reunion Sunday, August 3,  
And celebrate the  
Family's first 265 years in America!

This year's gathering will be held Sunday, August 3, 2008 at the Hereford Township Park, located on the Seisholtzville Road, between Hereford (Rts. 100 & 29) and Seisholtzville, PA (see map).

The schedule this year will be as follows:

12:00 Noon	Relaxation/Meeting of old and new friends Registration
12:30 P.M.	Opening ceremonies followed by lunch, games and socializing
2:00 P.M.	Program - History of the Pennsylvania Swiss and Germans
3:00 P.M.	Business Meeting Call to Order of Annual Meeting, Invocation, brief reports of Secretary, Treasurer, Historian and President, and New Business
4:00 P.M.	Adjournment of reunion, followed by a meeting of the Board of Directors.

Picnic fare will be provided - hot dogs and assorted sodas. We suggest you bring chips, cake, pie, other snacks and goodies in quantities that can be shared. Remember place settings for each family member and serving utensils for covered dishes. Family members are encouraged to bring a favorite recipe to exchange.

Recognized

Family Spellings:

BACASTOW  
BACKENSTO  
BACKENSTOE  
BACKENSTOES  
BACKENSTOS  
BACKENSTOSE  
BACKENSTOSS  
BACKENSTOW  
BAGENSTOES  
BAGENSTOS  
BAGENSTOSE  
BAGENSTOSS  
BAGGENSTOS  
BAGGENSTOSS

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Bruce R. Backensto

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Veronica Backenstoe  
Stanley P. Backenstoss II  
Dawn Rosenbaum  
Newsletter Editor  
Brian W. Bagenstose

## President's Message

Greetings to all Backenstoss Family Association Members!

It has been an eventful year for this country, especially politically and economically. While many are experiencing difficulties, I trust and hope that everyone reading this continues to meet with success. As is described in other sections of this newsletter, the Association is having a good year. The Treasurer reports that finances are better than they have been in recent years. The Historian reports promising initial sales of our popular Family History on CD.

However, as always, we need your help in ensuring that the Association continues to meet its goals. Please consider attending this year's reunion to meet and share time with relatives both close and distant. As is traditional for our Association, our reunion will be held on the first Sunday in August. This year's program will address the history of German and Swiss immigrants in PA and should be very educational.

If you cannot attend this year's gathering, we ask that you return the post card included in this newsletter.. This new feature will make it easier to send updates concerning members of your immediate family. Events such as graduations, honors and awards, publications, marriages, and new additions to the family will be of interest to future generations and are important additions to our family history. Also, if you change your address, please include that information or contact the Secretary or any Director so that we will be able to have next year's newsletter mailed to you. We also ask you to send the names and addresses of any family members who would like to be added to our mailing list.

Lastly, if you have not provided a donation, please consider doing so. The funds the association receives are used to provide benefits to the Association's members, such as this newsletter, and to help with the reunion. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

I thank you all for participating in our Family Association and I hope to see you at our reunion in August.

Jon Backenstose  
President  
Backenstoss Family Association

## **BACKENSTOSS HISTORIES AVAILABLE ON CD!**

The two volume Backenstoss Family History is available on a Compact Disc. The indexes list all the family and proper names contained in the history from 1743 up to and including 2002. The History is enriched with irreplaceable information about the origin and meaning of the family name, the Coat of Arms, the original homestead in America, the will of Ulrich Backenstoss, passenger lists, and a history of the Family Association. The "Did You Know" feature of the Addendum is priceless. Finally, there is information about the Oregon, Washington State, Canadian, Minnesota and other branches of the family in North America as well as Switzerland, Germany, England and New Zealand.

It is recommended that a first time viewer read the Table of Contents, the Forward and the other introductory pages as well as the explanations of the historical format used by the historian. A review of the opening pages of both books will give the reader some acquaintance with the breadth and depth of the manuscript. The history was originally contained in two printed volumes – the first published in 1993, followed by an Addendum published in 2002. Within the new CD format, the indexes of each volume are set forth separately for immediate access. Each volume is then presented in 50 page blocks, again, for easier access.

To order our popular "Backenstoss Family Compact Disc" please contact our Historian, John E. Backenstoe at 2310 Kirkland Village Circle, Bethlehem PA 18017 or through e-mail at [Johnedwin1@msn.com](mailto:Johnedwin1@msn.com). The cost of each disc is \$30.00, which includes shipping. The material is readable and printable on any computer able to read the PDF format.

## **Greetings from Minnesota**

Our Minnesota (Baggenstoss Family) counterparts enjoyed another successful reunion in 2007. They met at Kolbinger Park in Becker, Minnesota on June 23 of that year. Their theme was "Hats Off To You" which inspired a variety of creative and hilarious headgear. The eldest family member in attendance was Kathryn Wingate at 94 years young.

We thank our Minnesota "cousins" for their continued generous support of our annual newsletter. Any family members who have questions regarding the Minnesota branch of our family or who would like to send greetings are encouraged to contact either Lana Lewer or Leah Rodriguez at the following addresses. We wish their family another successful reunion in 2008!

Lana Lewer  
12326 Zea St. NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55433  
763-323-3078  
[Llewer@msn.com](mailto:Llewer@msn.com)

Leah Rodriguez  
23499 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.  
Mankato, MN 56001  
507-345-6851  
[lkrdz@hickorytech.net](mailto:lkrdz@hickorytech.net)

**2009 Reunion**

Our 2009 annual reunion is tentatively scheduled to return to Belleman’s Church, located a few miles north of Reading, PA. Belleman’s Church is only a short distance from the original American Backenstoss homestead, and its cemetery contains many gravestones with the names of members of the Backenstoss family who lived during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. While a new church serves the present congregation, the original church, built in 1746, still stands. A tour of this historic structure, with its distinctive wineglass pulpit, should be a highlight of the 2009 gathering. As always, the reunion will take place on the first Sunday of August, specifically August 2, 2009. Further information and directions to Belleman’s Church will be included in the 2009 newsletter.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The association wishes to thank all members for their contributions. Your generosity has enabled us to maintain our family association activities. Your continued and growing support encourages us to continue the annual publication of our family newsletter. Please continue to keep in touch. Your help is needed to keep our records up to date. Please forward any change in address, births, marriages, accomplishments and passing of family members.

Warren Backenstoe

**Contributions**

The generosity of our members continues to provide sufficient resources to sustain current operations. The continuation of our newsletter, reunion and other family association activities is dependent on our members’ annual contributions. The directors of the Backenstoss Association ask that each member contribute \$5.00 annually. Please support our association by returning the following form along with your 2008 contribution. The directors also ask that members consider making additional contributions and bequests of any amount to the Backenstoss Family Association. This practice is common among family associations and will help ensure the financial health of our organization through future generations.

To: Warren B. Backenstoe, Treasurer  
18 East Berks Drive  
Wernersville, PA 19565

Enclosed is my check payable to B.F.A. for support in 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2008contribution (\$5.00) Name\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Additional Street Address\_\_\_\_\_

Contribution

City, State and Zip\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Submitted

## KEEPING THE SWISS MEMORY ALIVE IN THE U.S.\*

\*The following interview is excerpted from the February 25, 2007 edition of [swissinfo.ch](http://swissinfo.ch), an information platform devoted to covering stories about all things Swiss, including, but not limited to, current affairs, culture, sports and politics. The article is reprinted here with the permission of [swissinfo.ch](http://swissinfo.ch). Family members are encouraged to explore this informative website at [www.swissinfo.ch](http://www.swissinfo.ch).

Erdmann Schmocker, former president of the Swiss American Historical Society, tells [swissinfo](http://swissinfo.ch) about his hopes and fears for the little known and declining Swiss-American community. Bern-born Schmocker, who has been described as the living memory of Swiss-origin Americans, came to the United States in 1951 at the age of 20. An architect by trade, he has taught at universities in the U.S. for almost 40 years.

**Swissinfo: What were the main periods of Swiss immigration to the United States?**

Erdmann Schmocker: The first wave arrived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first immigrants were mostly mercenary soldiers, although there were some traders as well. The main motivation for these young men was adventure.

During the American War of Independence there were whole regiments made up of Swiss – on both the American and British sides!

But the main waves came in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1830 and 1860 an economic crisis and the political changes reflected in the Swiss Constitution of 1848 made many Swiss emigrate – many nobles but also farmers who went to Pennsylvania and Ohio in particular.

Between 1870 and 1890 most Swiss immigrants were attracted to the new lands in the West Appalachians, firstly to Indiana and Illinois, and then to regions confiscated by the American government from Native Americans in Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas.

In order to buy a plot of land, these immigrants had to prove they had lived there for a year and had to pay the amount fixed by the federal government.

**Swissinfo: The Irish, Jews and Chinese all faced discrimination in the U.S. Were the Swiss affected?**

Erdmann Schmocker: Not to my knowledge. There wasn't any stigmatization of the Swiss. Quite the contrary: some Swiss, such as the Mennonites, immigrated to the U.S. to escape persecution.

**Swissinfo: Is the American of Swiss origin an endangered species?**

Erdmann Schmocker: Yes. The number of Swiss immigrants to the U.S. was tiny in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the community rose to 300,000 in the following century. There were new arrivals at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – technicians and members of the professions.

The last immigration wave came in the 1950s. After that date the economy and standard of life in Switzerland developed markedly and the need to emigrate was no longer felt.

There are one million Americans of Swiss origin now, whereas there were two million 20 years ago.

There are many reasons for this decrease. There hasn't been any immigration for more than half a century. What also happens is that when Swiss are asked by the U.S. Census Bureau about their origins, many mistakenly assume their ancestors came from Germany. Then from the fourth generation onwards, immigrants tend to think of themselves first and foremost as American and to blend into the general population.

I predict that in the next census, slated for 2010, there won't be more than 750,000 Americans claiming Swiss origin and I fear that in 20 years, the Swiss-American community will have completely disappeared.

**Swissinfo: But aren't Swiss-Americans becoming more interested in their heritage?**

Erdmann Schmocker: The conscious effort to maintain Swiss heritage in the U.S. is a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. Before that, immigrants were mostly worried about survival. The town of New Glarus (WI), which has become the premier Swiss village in the U.S., didn't really reach its present form until 1940, when an economic crisis hit the local agriculture and dairy industry.

People were leaving the region to find work. Leaders in New Glarus then started to wonder what they could do to ensure the village's survival. They came up with tourism. They consulted the University of Wisconsin and the Swiss American Historical Society and the idea formed of building Swiss chalets and developing Swiss heritage to give the town and its region a new economic impetus.

**Swissinfo: The Swiss government is continuing its Swiss Roots project for the U.S. into 2007. Could this help reinforce identify among the Swiss-U.S. community?**

Erdmann Schmocker: I'm not sure if the Swiss Roots bus tour [of the U.S.] had made much more than a fleeting impression. I'd like a more long-lasting commitment. The Swiss government needs to help build something durable here and to support the towns where many Americans of Swiss origin live.

Some of these places are very motivated and gather resources themselves. Look at Bern in Kansas, where the inhabitants worked for 2,000 hours to restore a historical building.

The archives of living history, assembled by myself and others, should also be opened to the public. Living history is based on people and this oral history deserves to be preserved.

**Swissinfo-interview: Marie-Christine Bonsom in Washington**

Editor's Note: The first members of the Backenstoss family arrived in America in 1743 on the ship St. Andrew and many were initially involved in agricultural occupations. As we are among the earliest of Swiss families to arrive in the New World, the goal of our family organization to "perpetuate the history and traditions" of our heritage is of ever increasing import. The Backenstoss Family Association will continue to foster an appreciation of our rich history in the present and succeeding generations.

## BACKENSTOSS DAY AT THE "BALL GAME!!"

With your support, the Backenstoss Family Association will hold its third annual "Backenstoss Day at the Ball Game" at the Reading Phillies' First Energy Stadium in Reading, Pennsylvania. This event has been scheduled for Saturday, August 9, when the Reading Phillies will host the Erie Seawolves. Game time is 6:35 P.M. Gates open at 5:30 P.M.

We will reserve our seats under the covered grandstand area – out of the hot August sun and protected from any possible inclement weather. This will also allow participants to patronize the many refreshment stands and vendors, all providing the traditional hot dogs and beer, or "peanuts and crackerjack," that make up a typical day at the ballpark.

Ticket prices are \$8.00 per person.

Family members who wish to attend should return the following form, along with checks in the correct amount made payable to "The Reading Phillies." The form and checks should be sent to Brian W. Bagenstose; 117 Marie Drive; Sinking Spring, PA 19608. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope so that your tickets may be mailed to you. At the time this newsletter was printed, many tickets for the August 9 date remained. However, forms should be returned ASAP, but no later than July 19, as the section will sell out at some point. Questions may be referred to Brian at the above address or by phone (610-775-1760) or e-mail ([redknight67@comcast.net](mailto:redknight67@comcast.net)).

\* \* \* \* \*

YES! Sign us up for Backenstoss Day at the Ball Game!

Name of your group's contact person \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

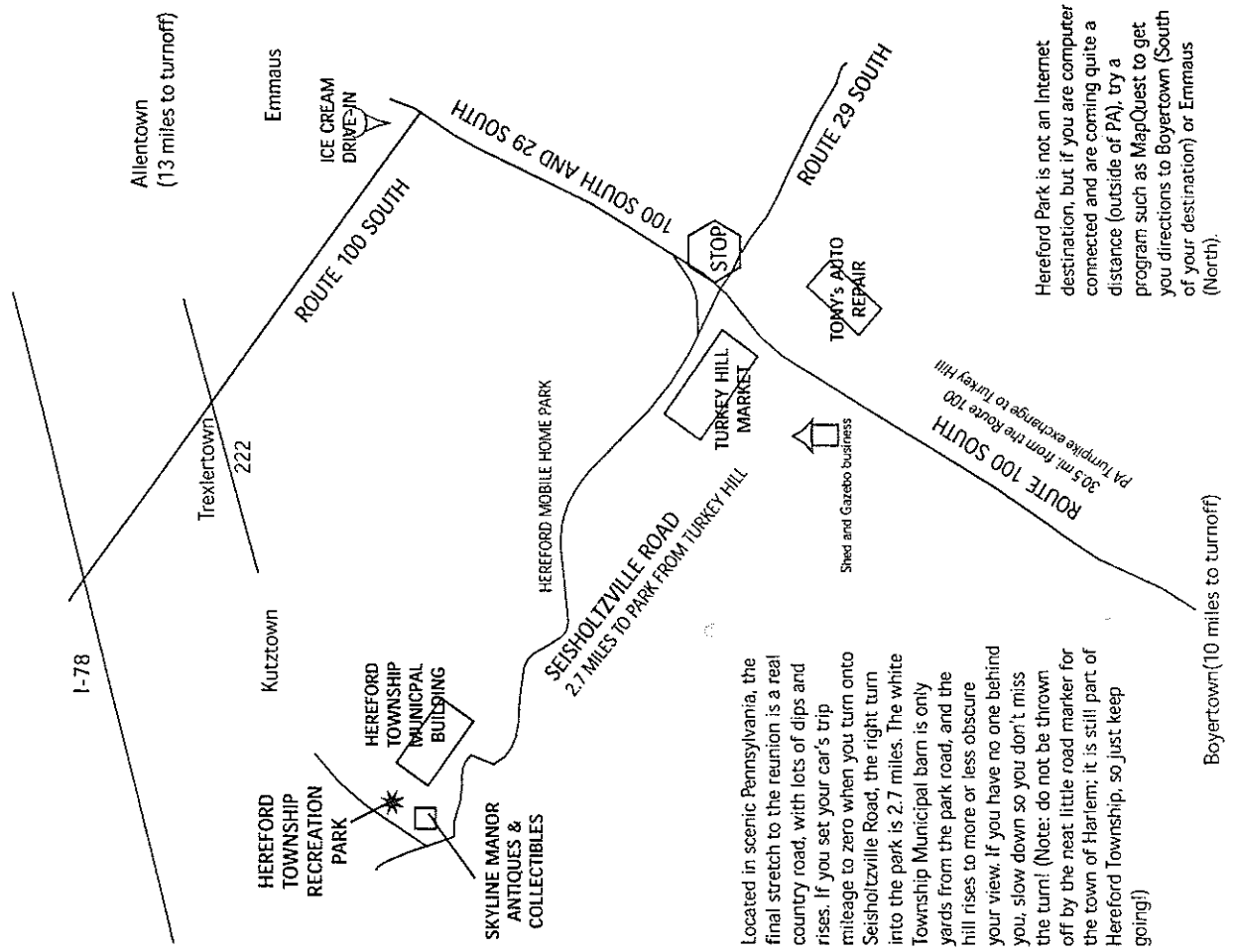
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tickets at \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed (checks only) \_\_\_\_\_

Return form and check(s), payable to "Reading Phillies," no later than July 19, to Brian W. Bagenstose; 117 Marie Drive; Sinking Spring, PA 19608.

(Please remember to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.)



Located in scenic Pennsylvania, the final stretch to the reunion is a real country road, with lots of dips and rises. If you set your car's trip mileage to zero when you turn onto Seisholtzville Road, the right turn into the park is 2.7 miles. The white Township Municipal barn is only yards from the park road, and the hill rises to more or less obscure your view. If you have no one behind you, slow down so you don't miss the turn! (Note: do not be thrown off by the neat little road marker for the town of Harlem; it is still part of Hereford Township, so just keep going!)

Hereford Park is not an Internet destination, but if you are computer connected and are coming quite a distance (outside of PA), try a program such as MapQuest to get you directions to Boyertown (South of your destination) or Emmaus (North).

**Backenstoss Family Association of America**  
**1495 Riverbend Road**  
**Allentown, PA 18103**

**Thank you for your continued genealogical support!**