



Backenstoss

FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Est. 1927

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

Summer 2015

Plan to attend our 83rd Reunion Sunday, August 2,
And celebrate the
Family's first 272 years in America!

This year's gathering will be held Sunday, August 2, 2015 at Hunsicker's Grove in Mertztown, PA. Last year's reunion at this site was enjoyed by all! We were particularly happy to see many children and teenagers fishing, playing volleyball, wiffleball, frisbee and other games. (Fishing requires a PA fishing license for those 16 and older.)

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|------------|---|
| 8:00 A.M. | The grove is reserved for our use from 8:00 A.M. until dusk. Feel free to arrive before our official 12:00 noon registration. |
| 12:00 Noon | Relaxation/Meeting of old and new friends
Registration |
| 12:30 P.M. | Opening ceremonies followed by lunch, games and socializing
Bring your fishing rod! There is a small lake located next to the picnic grove that will provide plenty of fishing excitement for young and old. |
| 2:00 P.M. | Family members will be invited to tell famous or "infamous" stories about their branch of our Family Tree! |
| 3:45 P.M. | Adjournment of reunion, followed by a meeting of the Board of Directors |

Hot dogs, rolls, ice tea, lemonade, soda and condiments will be provided. Please bring your own additional picnic fare, plates, napkins and utensils. There are plenty of picnic tables at the site. Lawn chairs are optional. Directions to Hunsicker's Grove can be found on Page 3 of this newsletter.

Recognized

Family Spellings:

BACASTOW
BACKENSTO
BACKENSTOE
BACKENSTOES
BACKENSTOS
BACKENSTOSE
BACKENSTOSS
BACKENSTOW
BAGENSTOES
BAGENSTOS
BAGENSTOSE
BAGENSTOSS
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BAGGENSTOSS
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Judith Bacastow
Esther (Backenstoe) Schiavone
Veronica Backenstoe
Dawn Rosenbaum
Newsletter Editor
Brian W. Bagenstose

President's Message

Last year's successful reunion at Hunsicker's Grove in Mertztown has prompted a return to that location for this year's 2015 reunion. A combination of the large and comfortable pavilion, the well-maintained volleyball court and open areas for games and, probably most of all, the adjoining lake stocked with trout and plentifully supplied with pan fish made Hunsicker's a "can't miss" location for family fun. The 2015 Backenstoss Family Association reunion will be held on Sunday, August 2. Hunsicker's Grove is located in Mertztown, PA, which is just southwest of Allentown. (See Page 3 of this newsletter for directions to the site.)

If you haven't already visited the Backenstoss Family Association website at www.backenstoss.org, I hope that you will do so in the near future. We have added a link to an audio presentation that briefly describes our family history and the current initiatives and services provided by our family organization. The original links to pages containing past newsletters, a "Backenstore" listing a wide variety of items bearing the Backenstoss shield, and a "Backenblog" where visitors can post thoughts and comments are also available. Items for sale on the "Backenstore" page, while providing an excellent way to display and promote interest in our family, do not provide substantial funds to our organization. The B.F.A. budget is funded almost exclusively through the \$5.00 annual contribution we ask of each member and voluntary contributions and bequests received from individuals.

We hope members who visit the website will recommend it to others who might have an interest in the Backenstoss Family Association. We intend for the website to be recognized as an easy way to keep in contact with our organization and its activities. In the past, except for occasional phone calls or emails to officers, members and interested individuals had to wait for our annual newsletter to receive information about our association. Now, because the website is updated whenever new information becomes available, anyone can easily stay in touch on an ongoing basis. For example, the location of each upcoming reunion will be announced on the website as soon as the site is chosen, thereby giving members additional time to make plans to attend.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at Hunsicker's Grove on August 2. Don't forget your fishing rods. (Those 16 and older should have a PA fishing license.) It will be a day of fun, the telling of old and new stories and a sincere celebration of our shared ancestry. I look forward to seeing you on August 2!



Ethelmae Marushak

Retires as BFA Secretary



Ethelmae has served as secretary and a director of the Backenstoss Family Association for nearly 50 years. Her unflinching dedication to our organization has been evident in the careful manner in which she has maintained our mailing and membership lists. Always present at annual reunions and directors' meetings, Ethelmae's minutes from each gathering constitute an accurate record covering the majority of the time our organization has been in existence. She also organized the annual mailing of our newsletter, which in itself is no small task!

At the April 2015 directors meeting, upon Ethelmae's retirement, Bryn (Bagenstose) Weckel was elected as the new secretary of the Backenstoss Family Association. Bryn wishes to express her admiration for the manner in which Ethelmae performed her duties for so many years. Bryn knows she has "big shoes" to fill and promises to do her best as association secretary.

The members of the Backenstoss Family Association also wish to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to Ethelmae for her long and valued service as secretary of our organization. We look forward to many more years of relying on her experience and judgment as she continues to serve as a director of the B.F.A.

Directions to Hunsicker's Grove



Street Address: 9350 Longswamp Rd., Mertztown PA 19539

Directions

Take Fleetwood/Lyons/Topton road (Main Street) to Topton (Weis Street). Continue through Topton (Main Street) through Longswamp to Lower Longswamp. Turn left at the Blue Orchid Inn onto Smith Lane. Continue to stop sign, turn right -- park entrance is 0.8 mile on your right, across from Brookvue Farms sign.

From Route 222 (Monterey): Take L.R. 06138 to Five Points, turn right, continue to Topton. Turn left at the traffic signal, follow directions above.

From Route 100: Turn left at Hereford onto Hereford Road (L.R. 06119.) Continue through Harlem, Seisholtzville, Red Lion, and Maple Grove to Lower Longswamp. Turn right at the Blue Orchid Inn onto Smith Lane. Continue to stop sign, turn right -- park entrance is 0.8 mile on your right, across from Brookvue Farms sign.

From the BFA Treasurer - 2015

From the Treasurer
By Ken Bagenstose

Hello again family members.

The New Year always brings with it new opportunities for projects and ideas to build upon the Backenstoss Family Association's wonderful foundation. This year, a proposal was introduced that we hope will help bring us closer together by sharing some family stories that will highlight our diversity and talents. Many such stories already exist in the pages of the Backenstoss Family History, but it is 2015 now and there must be countless untold stories to be shared. I have one to share with all of you.

I was in the 4th grade [I think], in the early 1960's, attending Charles S. Foos elementary school in Reading, 2 blocks from my home. No buses necessary. I remember being herded into the auditorium where the entire 4th grade class was being screened for any latent musical talent. I didn't know it at the time but my and my sister's blood was thick with it! If you screened positive, you were given options of a musical band instrument to try. When I told mom and pop about this exciting opportunity, they told me the choice was clear... I was to play the clarinet, in the hopes that someday I could progress to the more challenging saxophone and follow in my father's footsteps! What? Pop played sax? I had no idea!

Earl [W. Bagenstose], my dad, never really talked much about it, but when I was alone with mom, she would tell me all about pop's early days playing sax and clarinet with his bandmates in the 'Greystone Club' in the late 1920's and into the 1930's... yep, during prohibition. There weren't too many places with a live band playing that didn't have some bathtub gin flowing, so there was always the risk of the 'feds' bringing on a raid!

Well, pop never went to jail, and I never learned to play sax but my sister went on to be a fabulous classical piano player [my greatest inspiration], and I ended up playing a pretty good guitar, and some piano – after all, it was the 60's when hair got long and music got loud. To this day, I still perform around southeastern Pennsylvania with various fellow musicians and groups.... And, yes, the baton has been passed to my son Chris, our BFA webmaster, who is rocking the new century with his guitars and bandmates.

So the beat goes on. 2015 is the 88th year of the establishment of the BFA. ...12 more years till our centennial and it will be here before you know it. I bet there are many such stories we'd love to tell each other. So be on the lookout for news of the Backen-Story sharing program we hope will be lots of fun and interest to all family members.

And, as always, please remember that it is the generosity of our members that makes it possible for us to grow the association and the ranks of our membership and we ask that you continue to help us out by returning the coupon with your kind donation and of course to provide us with any pertinent family information so we can keep the history up-to-date and growing. The directors ask that each member contribute \$5.00 annually to the cause.

Please send your return coupons and check contributions to:

Backenstoss Family Association [...or BFA]
c/o Ken Bagenstose, Treasurer
1015 Conifer Road
Leesport, PA 19533

Thanks in advance for your continued support of the BFA.

Ken Bagenstose
Treasurer, BFA

BITS OF OUR BACKENSTOSS BACKGROUND

(compiled by Ronnie Backensto/May 2015)

The list of immigrants to Pennsylvania show that on October 7, 1793, Hans Ulrich Backenstoss arrived at the port of Philadelphia on the ship "St. Andrew." He settled shortly after his arrival in Bern Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, where many Swiss immigrants were already domiciled, the township having received its name from the Swiss capital. (Page 15/1949 History)

At the 7th Annual Reunion in 1933, a memorial for Hans Ulrich Backenstoss, was dedicated. A short memorial service was held followed by the unveiling of the monument erected, "in memory of Hans Ulrich Backenstoss and family." (Page 154/1949 History)

The Backenstoss Family Association of America was organized on August 24, 1927 at Kutztown, PA. The Constitution and By-Laws were adopted on August 18, 1929 at Belleman's Church, Berks County, PA where the 3rd annual reunion was held. (Pages 150 & 153/1949 History)

The name Backenstoss was well known in northeastern Switzerland and adjoining Germany in which jurisdiction Rafz is located, a small Swiss village north of the Rhine. (Pages 11 & 12/1949 History)

There is another branch of the Backenstoss clan that is quite numerous, located in and around Gersau, and associated with the exploits of William Tell. It seems the Gersau branch is not as old as the Rafz branch. It is reported to be 100% Roman Catholic. (Pages 11 & 12/1949 History)

Martin Baggenstos, born 1887, was a son of a small farmer under very moderate conditions in Gersau. In 1907, he left for Rome as a twenty year old Vatican Guardist recruit. Through his accuracy, being very conscientious, zealous and able, it was through these virtues he made the advancement as Captain of the Swiss Guards of the Vatican. (Page 172/1949 History)

In 1948, Clarence Smith wrote to his cousin, Dr. Martin Backenstoe, in Emmaus from Vienna, Austria. He mentioned having visited "every corner of Switzerland." At Lucerne, he met Herman Baggenstoss of Gersau. Of the 1,600 inhabitants of Gersau, 400 are named Baggenstoss! People mostly own very small farms and feel rich and happy to own a few cows and sheep. They get along with very little and lead a happy and contented life. The Gersau Baggenstoss are an offspring of a 200 year older Baggenstoss body located at Rafz. Our ancestor, Ulrich Baggenstoss, came from Rafz, a Protestant village. We can all feel happy to know that we originated from a good family stock. (Pages 114&169/1949 History)

Clarence Edwin Henry Smith (see preceding paragraph) was born in April 1890, one of four sons of Amanda Backenstoe and Edwin Henry Smith of Upper Milford Township. He was a contractor and cement builder in Allentown, PA. He was a Chief Executive Engineer on the staff of General Dwight D. Eisenhower in Europe during WWII. He had charge of all road and bridge building in Austria. (1949 History)

There were no reunions for the years 1942-1945 inclusive, due to WWII. On August 11, 1946, our 16th Annual Reunion was held at Jerusalem Western Salisbury U.C.C. near Emmaus, PA. (Page 154/1949 History)



2015 Backenstoss Contribution

The directors of the Backenstoss Family Association ask that each member contribute \$5.00 to support our organization's ongoing activities. These activities include our annual reunion, the maintenance of the association website and the publication of the newsletter. Please support our association by returning this form along with your 2015 contribution. The directors also ask that members consider making additional contributions and bequests of any amount. This practice is common among family associations and will help ensure the financial health of our organization through future generations.

Enclosed in my check payable to the "Backenstoss Family Association:

Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City, State and Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

_____ Total Member Contribution(s) \$5.00 each

_____ Additional contribution

_____ Total Amount

_____ Please check if you wish to receive the 2016 newsletter by email rather than U.S. Mail

Please include updated information concerning any of our association members.



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

Thank you for your continued genealogical support!