



# Backenstoss

## FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Est. 1927

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

**Summer 2017**

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Plan to attend our 85th Reunion on Sunday, August 6,  
And celebrate the  
Family's first 274 years in America!

This year's reunion will be held on Sunday, August 6, at the Cumru Township Building, located at 1775 Welsh Rd.; Mohnton, PA 19540-8803. The township building is an air conditioned facility, equipped with a full kitchen, lavatories and plenty of tables and chairs. There is a large parking lot next to the building that provides easy access. The site includes a playground, volleyball and basketball courts, and a spacious, well maintained lawn area.

**Reunion schedule:**

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>12:00 Noon</b> | <b>Relaxation/Meeting of old and new friends<br/>Registration</b>  |
| <b>12:30 P.M.</b> | <b>Opening ceremonies followed by lunch, games and socializing.</b>  |
| <b>2:00 P.M.</b>  | <b>Association officers will provide an update concerning our internet<br/>genealogy project followed by time to view exhibits of Backenstoss<br/>memorabilia.</b> |
| <b>3:45 P.M.</b>  | <b>Adjournment of reunion, followed by a meeting of the Board of<br/>Directors.</b>  |

Sandwiches, iced tea, lemonade, soda and condiments will be provided. Please bring your own additional picnic fare, plates, napkins and utensils. Directions to the Cumru Township Building will be posted on our website at [www.backenstoss.org](http://www.backenstoss.org). no later than July 1. Please call or email any of the officers listed on Page 2 if you have questions concerning directions to the reunion.

**Recognized**

**Family Spellings:**

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

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Ethelmae (Backenstoe) Marushak  
Esther (Backenstoe) Schiavone  
Veronica Backenstoe  
Dawn Rosenbaum  
**Newsletter Editor**  
Brian W. Bagenstose

## President's Message

This year, the Backenstoss Family Association will return to our customary "First Sunday in August" for our annual reunion. On Sunday, August 6, we will gather at the Cumru Township Building in Mohnton, PA to once again renew acquaintances and friendships, and, as is frequently the case, see who has made an unannounced trip of hundreds or even thousands of miles to make a first appearance at our reunion.

The photographs on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter capture the enjoyable time we had at last year's gathering. Everyone appreciated the picturesque setting at Gring's Mill. As always, a representative from each branch introduced their family members and gave a brief explanation of their place on the Backenstoss family tree. Good food, enjoyable conversation and a beautiful, sunny day made for a nearly perfect experience. (Truth be told, it was just a bit hot!)

Some basic math reveals next year's 2018 reunion will celebrate the 275th anniversary of the Backenstoss family's arrival in the New World. In 1743, when Hans Ulrich Backenstoss led his family onto the ship "St. Andrew" at the start of their Rotterdam to Philadelphia voyage, he surely could not have imagined that in 2018 there would be well over 12,000 direct descendants of Backenstoss lineage in North America. On the next page of this newsletter, our treasurer, Ken Bagenstose, details the steps that are being taken to place the entirety of our family history onto the internet, thereby making the Backenstoss story available and expandable in our time and for the generations yet to come.

While the site of the 2018 reunion has not yet been confirmed, we hope to be able to return to Belleman's Church, Bern Township, PA, which is the burial site of many of the original Backenstoss family members who arrived in Philadelphia in 1743. The original Backenstoss homestead is located only a few miles away. As you may have guessed, early Swiss settlers named the township for Switzerland's capital city.

It is no secret that family, benevolent and fraternal organizations of all kinds are being affected by the increasing use of social media. Our current genealogy project is an indication the B.F.A. embraces this changing reality. However, there is still value in meeting family members face to face, looking them in the eye and hearing them tell the stories that have been handed down through their branches of the Backenstoss family tree.

Please join us this summer at the Cumru Township Building in Mohnton, PA. Bring your best Backenstoss stories and memorabilia! Scrapbooks, newspaper articles, photos, etc. would make interesting displays. There will be enough tables to accommodate your exhibits. Please label your items, if possible.

We look forward to seeing you on August 6!

*Brian W. Bagenstose*

## **BACKENSTOSS GENEALOGY UPDATE**

As many of you know, the B.F.A. Board has undertaken the task of updating our family records. At the same time, and even more importantly, we intend to provide future generations with an easily accessible online method of maintaining the family history. The last official update was Woody Backensto's final volume, "Addendum to Backenstoss-Baggenstoss Family History," published in 2002. That was 15 years ago. Many new Backenstosses (et. al.) have arrived, and dear ones have departed since then. It now falls to us to record those changes and provide a method to acquire and publish new family information.

The efforts of Woody, our past historian, were unparalleled, as I am sure we all agree. Now, in the 21st Century, we have the opportunity to utilize the best new technologies and make our data available over the internet. Accordingly, the board enlisted the help of a systems specialist to achieve the project goal. The resulting software program allows us to take the texts of our family histories and covert them to a digital format. We will then be able to transfer our family history to one of many commercially available genealogy sites. This will make it easy for the B.F.A. to update family information. It will also make it possible to discontinue the practice of publishing expensive books that become obsolete minutes after the ink dries.

We have divided our project into phases to be completed over time. Here's where the project stands at this time:

### **Phase I: Convert the text of our family histories into a digital format.**

The 1993 and 2002 histories were scanned into digital format. This saved countless hours, which otherwise would have been spent retyping the 600 pages in these books. The information was then screened for accuracy. There are approximately 12,000 direct Backenstoss descendants listed in our histories. For the purposes of this project, each of these descendants is viewed as a "family." All of these listings were proofread to make sure they matched the lineage as described in Woody's volumes.

**Phase 1 was completed in December 2016.**





**Phase II: Organize each of the 12,000 families' information into a GEDCOM acceptable format.**

Each separate piece of information, from dates and places of births and deaths to everything that occurred in between, has to be "tagged" or placed in its appropriate file. This process is called "parsing." Because the original information is in paragraph form, it needs to be manually parsed to be accepted by GEDCOM, which is the universally recognized standard for genealogical data bases. The GEDCOM file is what will enable us to place our information on a commercial website and allow B.F.A. members to view our family history online.

Phase II is currently being managed by 4 board members and our systems programmer. At present, approximately 1,000 of the 12,000 families have been parsed. The learning curve has been steep, but the pace has accelerated as we have gained experience. An ambitious goal would be to complete 1,000 families each month. That would allow us to complete Phase II prior to the 2018 reunion. Whether we can achieve and maintain that pace remains to be seen. One thing is sure; the completion of this project is only a matter of time.

**Phase II is in progress.**

**Phase III: Upload all data in the GEDCOM file to a genealogical website.**

This will make our family history available over the internet. However, this phase will be limited to the data converted from our published histories, so it will only cover the years from 1743 to 2002.

**Phase III to be completed ASAP.**

**Phase IV: Develop a process for collecting and adding NEW family information.**

We will have all post-2002 data to catch up on, so this step will be very important. Current thinking is to develop an information request procedure so we can collect family data in an organized and efficient manner. We will publish more on this process as we approach the end of Phases II and III. However, we urge all family members to begin gathering post-2002 information of any kind.

**Phase IV to be completed ASAP.**

These are the major steps either completed, in progress or anticipated in the process of making our long, proud family history available over the internet to all B.F.A. members. We are hopeful this will be a durable system that will be viable and informative for the B.F.A. generations yet to come. Thank you for your continued support as we pursue this worthy goal.

Ken Bagenstose  
Treasurer, B.F.A.

2017 Backenstoss Contribution

The directors of the Backenstoss Family Association ask that each member contribute \$5.00 annually to support our organization's ongoing activities. These activities include our annual reunion and the publication of the association newsletter. Please support our association by returning this form along with your 2017 contribution. The B.F.A. budget is funded exclusively by our members' \$5.00 contributions and generous voluntary contributions and bequests from individual members. The B.F.A. is grateful for additional contributions and bequests of any amount. This practice is common among family associations and helps 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 2017 Member Contribution(s) \$5.00 each

\_\_\_\_\_ Additional contribution

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount

\_\_\_\_\_ Check if you wish to receive the 2018 newsletter by email rather than

U.S. Mail. Email adress: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to B.F.A. Treasurer, Kenneth C. Bagenstose; 1015 Conifer Road; Leesport, PA 19533.

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Please include updated information concerning any of our association members.

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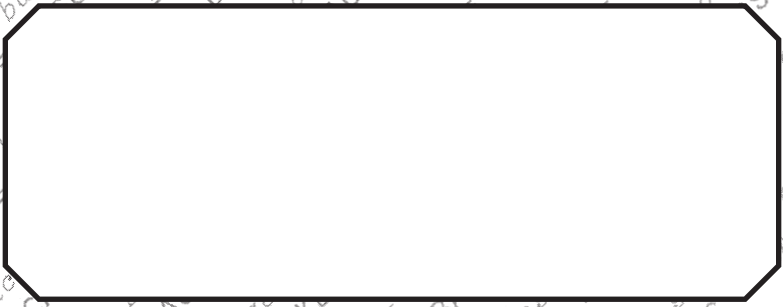
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**Backenstoss Family Association of America**  
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**Thank you for your continued genealogical support!**

