



# Backenstoss

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## **FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

**Est. 1927**

**“For the perpetuation of the history and traditions of the family and its social enjoyment”**

### **Summer 2023**

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**Plan to attend our 91<sup>st</sup> reunion on Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup> 2023  
Celebrating the Family’s first 280 years in America!**

**This year’s reunion will be held on Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup> 2023 at the historically significant, Belleman’s Church 3540 Belleman’s Church Rd, Mohrsville, PA 19541**

The reunion schedule is as follows:

12:00 Noon Relaxation/Meeting of old and new friends & Registration

12:30 P.M. Opening ceremony is followed by lunch, games and socializing.

2:00 P.M. Election of Officers and Directors

3:45 P.M. Adjournment of reunion

Picnic fare will be provided – hot dogs, ice tea, lemonade and sodas. We suggest you bring side dishes, snacks, or desserts in quantities for sharing. Remember place settings for each family member and serving utensils for covered dishes. There are picnic tables located in the pavilion but please bring your favorite lawn chairs.

**Recognized  
Family Spellings:**

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

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Veronica Backenstoe  
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**Newsletter Editor**  
Brian W. Bagenstose

# President's Message

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The Backenstoss Family Assoc. of America (BFA) will hold its 91<sup>st</sup> reunion on Sunday, August 6th, 2023 at Belleman's Church, located at 3540 Belleman's Church Rd, Mohrsville PA 19541. The reunion will begin at noon. Please visit our association's website at [backenstoss.org](http://backenstoss.org) to find our complete 2023 newsletter and many other topics and items of interest.

Our association's current plans call for family reunions to be held at Belleman's Church every five years. The Backenstoss family arrived in America in 1743, so this year's reunion will mark the 280th anniversary of that event. The church is located only a few miles away from the original Backenstoss homestead, and "Bagenstose Rd." is also only a few turns and miles from the church parking lot. The 1805 Belleman's Church still stands and, with its wineglass pulpit and many other interesting architectural features, is recognized as a national historic site. The church cemetery contains the resting places of over 80 Backenstoss descendants representing all of our New World generations. As our organization looks to the future and the continuation of our reunions, newsletter and genealogical records, it is self-evident these efforts will only endure if new generations of Backenstoss descendants take up the task. At present, the officers of the association number four "Boomers" and one Generation X'er. We all hope to continue serving the association for the foreseeable future, but good stewardship requires consideration of passing the torch to younger members.

It was in the early 1990's when I was contacted by Henry (Hank) Backenstoss, who was at that time President of the Backenstoss Association of America. I was aware the organization existed, but I had never been an active member. In fact, I had never attended one of the reunions.

Hank Backenstoss was a Lehigh trained engineer who had achieved a highly successful career in the business world. He was small in stature, but I came to know him as one of the most persuasive and persistent people I had ever met. He was, simply, one tough wonderful guy! Hank prevailed upon younger (at that time) members of the organization to join those who were involved with the continuation of the B.F.A. Those of us who became involved have been rewarded with a deeper understanding of our family's history and traditions. We have met, personally, virtually and through correspondence, Backenstoss descendants throughout the United States and many foreign countries, and we have enjoyed and strengthened relationships with each other as a result of our service to the B.F.A.

We ask that younger members of our organization (I'll let each of you define "younger") who are interested in helping continue our family organization contact any of the officers whose email and phone information is listed on this page. Email, Zoom, social media, etc. has made it possible for anyone to take on a meaningful role regardless of their place of residence. We hope you will join those who have made possible "The perpetuation of the history and traditions of the family and its social enjoyment." We wish all B.F.A. members a healthy and happy 2023.



President, Backenstoss Association of America

# **A Bagenstose and a Baggenstoss walk into a Swiss bakery**

By Kyle Bagenstose

Toward the end of May 2022, I began planning to fulfill a decade-long dream of traveling to Switzerland. I'd always wanted to see Rafz, the small town near the country's northern border with Germany, from which our family history indicates the original Baggenstoss family immigrated to America in 1743.

After developing an itinerary, one night I was preparing to purchase plane tickets. It was then my wife, Samantha, informed me she had taken at-home pregnancy tests and they were positive: our first child was on the way. After the initial emotions subsided, we had a brief discussion about whether to push ahead with the trip. We quickly decided yes. Who knew when we would get another opportunity!

That August, after stops in London to see my sister Amanda (Bagenstose) Marsden, who coincidentally was also vacationing, and in Paris to visit my wife's cousin, we flew on to Zürich. As we rented a car, the receptionist remarked on my last name. I told him it was Americanized from the Swiss Baggenstoss, hoping to see whether he could confirm or deny its apparent rough translation as “a punch in the cheek.” Without prompting, he reached up and put his fist to his jowls. Translation confirmed.

We then set off on a tour around the heart of the country, first heading south and stopping in beautiful Lucerne and even more beautiful Interlaken. We marveled at the cleanliness and orderliness of everything: the pristine blue waters, quaint cobblestone streets, and trains that ran regularly and on-time.

Next, we headed for the Alps, driving our rented vehicle onto an auto train that ran straight through a mountain for several minutes. Then, parking and taking a passenger train into Zermatt, a fairy tale-like town in an Alpine valley where no cars are allowed. Zermatt serves as the launching point for expeditions to the adjacent and world famous Matterhorn peak.

Departing from the Alps, we then visited the country's capital Bern and stopped for two nights in northern Basel, an artistic town that perhaps most captured my affection. The rivers in Switzerland are so clean you can swim in them and see to the bottom, even in city centers. In Basel one morning, I slipped into the Rhine for a float, contemplating the likely passage of the Backenstoss family by boat down the river as they began their emigration 275+ years ago.

The finale of this trip was a visit to Rafz. Driving into town I was struck by how much it's rolling green hills and pastoral settings reminded me of Berks County. But unfortunately, I encountered no Baggenstosses in this sleepy village, despite a decent search, save one recent gravestone in a cemetery.

I would have better luck the next morning before our flight, when we located a “Baggenstoss” bakery in a town southeast of Zürich. Fourth-generation proprietor Albert Baggenstoss greeted us with open arms, conversing with us in very good English for some 45 minutes and guiding a tour of the bakery. Although it was not clear whether we were related by lineage, Albert relayed some interesting details.

First, that the name Baggenstoss can also be translated to mean a general rabblouser. Second, that many immigrants from Switzerland in the mid-1700s did so because of poverty, exacerbated by drought and bad harvests. Third, that following the Schism, Catholics took the name Backenstoss and clustered in certain cities, while Protestants took Baggenstoss and lived in others. And most surprisingly fourth, that my wife's mother's maiden name, Knisely, is derived from Knüsli, a well-known Swiss name originating from the same region as the Baggenstosses. Fortunately, our son was still born healthy with all twenty digits!

All in all, it was a wonderful and emotional trip, which I encourage every American “Baggenstoss” to make, if time and means allow. I'll forever treasure that I embarked on this journey with the next, 11th generation of American Baggenstoss as a stowaway, and hope that he too can one day see the land of our ancestors with his own eyes.

**WEBSITE AND GENEALOGY NEWS**  
**Christopher Bagenstose – Webmaster**  
**Backenstoss.org**

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Hello and thank you for continuing to be a part of our great family history. Keep checking our website often and please make sure we have your email address and general information. Information should be sent to: [webmaster@backenstoss.org](mailto:webmaster@backenstoss.org). Or email contact form on our website. I hope you and your families are safe, happy and prosperous in 2023. Perhaps I will meet some of you at the family reunion this year, should be a good one! As webmaster and historian/genealogist, I am involved in every part of our family association. I very much enjoy these duties and the time I spend with our other family members and online interactions.

My goal for this year is to simplify the contact forms, email contacts and new family submissions system. We are also exploring options with our family genealogy search system going forward. More details will come as we have a firm plan.

You can still submit new and updated family information by going to our website and clicking on the "GENEALOGY" link at the far right of the screen. Use the form that will appear on the first page of the link (you may have to scroll down just a bit). You **DO NOT** have to complete all the fields! Just use the fields that apply to your information. Then click on "SUBMIT" at the bottom of the screen. At that point, your job is done! Please contact me with questions and I'll try to respond as soon as I can. Thank you for your interest in our family history and records.

## **2023 Backenstoss Contribution**

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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 organizing the annual reunion, maintaining the association website, and publishing the association newsletter. At this time, as began last year, we made the decision to help with mailing costs to publish this newsletter at our website [www.backenstoss.org](http://www.backenstoss.org) and deliver to email address we have on file. We will still mail copies for those who prefer at your request.

While the association treasury remains sufficient to support our current activities, recent contributions have not matched the organization's expenses. We realize these are difficult times for many, but we ask those who are able to please continue your support for the B.F.A.

Please return this form along with your 2023 contribution. The B.F.A. budget is funded exclusively by our member's \$5.00 contributions and 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.

### **Contribution Mail Return Form**

Cut -> -----

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Total 2023 Member Contribution(s) \$5.00 each

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

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

Our current and past newsletters can be found on our association website, [backenstoss.org](http://backenstoss.org). Please return this form to B.F.A. Treasurer, Kenneth C. Bagenstose; 1015 Conifer Road; Leesport, PA 19533.