

Sixth Annual Meeting Approaches

Invite friends and family to be a part of the sixth annual meeting of Back/Bach descendants on Saturday, October 9, 1999. Registration will be at the Pine Mountain Grill in Whitesburg, Ky.

The local organizing committee is putting together plans for another excellent gathering. During the day on Saturday, tentative plans call for a genealogy workshop, a museum tour, a visit to the Challenger Learning Center, plus "The Back/Bach Follies." The Saturday evening meal will again be at the Pine Mountain Grill. Following the meal there will be a program of musical selections,

and Stephen Bowling will discuss Back/Bach families of Breathitt County.

Mark your calendar now and plan to attend. All members will receive a detailed letter in late summer, but you may want to make room reservations sooner at:

Super 8 Motel: 606-633-8888
Parkway Inn: 606-633-4441
Salyers House B&B . . 606-633-2532

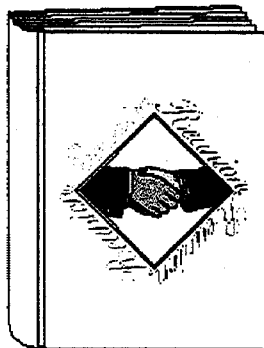
If you prefer to write, all three may be reached by simply addressing to Whitesburg, Ky. 41858.

Annual Membership Drive

The Society's current membership year ends June 30, 1999. If you are not a lifetime member, *it's time to renew your annual membership!* Please complete and return the enclosed form at your earliest convenience — your prompt response will help us control mailing expenses. Our low membership dues remain unchanged this year. Benefits of membership include the annual directory of members, a subscription to the Descendant News, and an invitation to the reunion. Membership in the Back/Bach Genealogical Society is a way to honor your ancestors and to learn from and about your genealogy and rich German-American heritage. As we embark on new projects and adventures related to these goals, we invite and encourage YOUR active participation.

This year we are issuing a special challenge to EVERY MEMBER to recruit at least one new member to the Society, with the goal of doubling our current roster. Please extend a personal invitation to join the Society to someone who shares your interest in the Back/Bach family. For a little extra fun, have the members you recruit write your name on their membership form (copy as needed); the member with the most recruits by October 1 wins a prize and special recognition!

Interest in genealogy is hitting a new high, re-energized by new generations and new tools. Many people are searching for their roots, and for meaningful connections to their relatives. The Back/Bach Genealogical Society is dedicated to these goals; let's *branch out!*



Join your Kentucky kinfolk this fall for another fun-filled weekend reunion in the "heart of the hills."

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Steering Committee Contacts:

Reedus Back, President
(606) 784-4730

440 Forest Hills Dr.
Morehead KY 40361

Represents and promotes the Society; oversees general operations; collects, reviews and edits genealogical data; responds to general inquiries; and acts as meeting host.

Stella Elam, Executive Director
(606) 633-8941

4638 Hwy 7 South (NEW)
Blackey KY 41804

Collects dues and fees; maintains and reports on financial, membership, and administrative records; coordinates meetings, registration and special projects.

Ray Back, Treasurer

(606) 633-9974

PO Box 282

Blackey KY 41804

Manages financial accounts.

Minerva Craft, Editor

(606) 485-7757

23 Old Stephenson Mill Rd.

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Collects, reviews and edits newsletter content.

**Mona Landrum Proctor,
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Processes memberships; publishes and distributes materials; coordinates computer projects.

Regional Contacts

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Southeast: Shirley Back Fowler

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To My Ancestors

Would that I could see you folk of old
And know each one intimately —
The good, the bad, the warrior bold —
Because through you I came to be.

Many hours I've sought in day and night
To pierce time's cloak of secrecy.
That I might bring your deeds to light
And view the heritage passed to me.

Sometimes I find in files, long-laid,
Note of a birth, a marriage, a will,
Or a statement of fact you carefully made
Some timely inquiry to fulfill.

From these yellowed pages outlines grow
Of your lives far in the past;
And though but slightly, I come to know
More long-lost kin at last.

Then pondering on your hopes and fears,
In fancy I often make my way
And dwell with you in the yesteryears,
Unmindful of what is today.

I ride your ship on the little-known sea
And suffer with your motley band,
Wondering with you how things will be
In the new and lonely land.

Ashore, I, too, become a pioneer —
A rugged, full-bearded man;
And together, we roam the wild frontier
Where a highway never ran.

I rejoice with you when a baby is born,
And attend your wedding feasts.
I go hunting with you in the early morn
To stalk and kill the wily beasts.

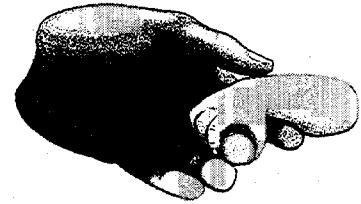
I help you to fell the giant trees
To prepare the land for grain.

I share in your hardships and disease
And westward go with you again.

I sit by your beds as death hovers nigh
In mansion and log-cabin home,
And stand by your graves for a last goodbye
At places long since unknown.

— Troy L. Back, 1959, printed with permission

This poem, "To My Ancestors," by the late Troy Back, one of the authors of A Back Family History, was read by his great-grand-daughter at our 1998 Annual Meeting.



HISTORY

Third of a Series

Our Ancestral Family in Colonial America: A Continuing Look

by Reedus Back

This article is a continuation of the June and November 1998 look at our ancestral family. This installment examines three previously identified defining factors: leadership, view of community responsibility, and occupation. As previously stated, the assumption that to the extent these factors reveal the beliefs, attitudes and actions of the early German-Americans as a people, they may also define our smaller Back/Bach ancestral family group.

Leadership, as a defining factor, is somewhat varied. The earliest German-Americans did not make a significant mark in the arena of public leaders. Later generations, however, produced many prominent leaders, especially in education, war and politics. Because of their success in other endeavors, it can be assumed that the delayed move into high level public leadership roles was not due to lack of talent, but to lack of desire. Several factors may account for this low level of desire to be in leadership roles. First, they were hesitant to push themselves forward into the larger arena until they became well-acclimated to their new environment. Such slowness in adjusting to a new world may have been due to their tendency to live in close-knit communities, to continue to speak their native language, to follow their native customs and to privately educate their children. Another reason may be that they simply were satisfied with using their considerable talent to pursue scholarly and financially profitable endeavors. A final factor may be that they particularly enjoyed the peaceful life associated with farming and living in the rural countryside. (The German Element of the Shenandoah Valley, J.W. Wayland, p.134)

Though the early German-Americans may have been few in high leadership roles, they were especially strong in local community support. They were a community-minded people with a desire to upgrade and maintain the communities in which they lived. To them, strong, cohesive communities were absolutely essential to the welfare of all society. They often served as mayors and city clerks, but perhaps their greatest contribution was their quick response in providing the knowledge and labor to build roads, bridges, and ferries for the welfare and convenience of the entire community. They were also prominent in founding towns.

Of all the occupations pursued by the German-Americans, farming is the one in which they particularly excelled. It appears that they understood the business of farming more than other early settlers. A major factor contributing to their success in farming was their innate love for the land. Their actions in this regard seem to bespeak a people who regarded the soil which they farmed as a gift from God, and they, as God's partners, had a responsibility to protect this essential resource. They were known for their ability to develop new farms on the frontier and to re-establish previously owned farms. The early German-Americans were often described as possessing attributes that are generally considered requisites for success in farming, such as a propensity for hard work, thriftiness and an unusual steadiness. Additionally, they tended toward perfection, which may not have contributed much to their success in farming but did contribute to the sturdiness and beauty of their farmsteads.

As farmers and as a people, the early German-Americans made favorable impressions on many who knew them. One such person was George Washington. He proposed a plan to recruit a contingent from the old country to settle on ten thousand acres of unimproved land south of the Ohio. Based on what he had heard about their reliability and thriftiness in farming, he was ready to offer free transportation from Germany, subsistence up to the first harvest and four years of free rent. The plan was thwarted before it became operational because of the onset of the Revolutionary War. (The German Element in the United States, Albert Bernhardt Faust, p. 80)

This conclusion for our series of articles presented in the *Descendant News* clearly shows that our ancestors as a group were characterized by steadiness, application of intelligence to action, devotion to their religious beliefs, desire for the welfare of their community, and foresight for the education of their children. However, an attempt to describe a total people does not necessarily describe specific individuals. There are always variations from the norm in any group.

The content of this three-part series was taken from A Family Portrait, by Reedus Back, Family History Publishers, Bountiful, Utah, 1991, and the other references as cited. All rights reserved.