

PONTIUS FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Number 129

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025

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Message from the President—Betty Hall

Dear Cousins,

I hope you all had happy holidays. Iowa is currently having green lawns due to only a small amount of snow so far.



The PFA Board and some others received the most delightful poem and photo from our German cousins Iris and Berno Nagel. (See next page.) I wish the United States had such beautiful scenery. Our 250 years sounds like a long time until we compare it with European history.

Speaking of Germany, we have our next adventure to our “homeland” planned for 2028. If you are interested in joining us, please keep that in mind. We normally need around 30 for it to be financially feasible.

In July, we will be joining Mitzi and her family in **Vandalia**, Illinois (the former capital of the state). As a self proclaimed “Lincoln Freak”, I am looking forward to see what new history I can find as that is where he served as a Statesman.

Betty Hall, President
319-358-6673
schotziewas1809@gmail.com



Come to the Pontius Family Reunion

July 16-18, 2026

In Vandalia, Illinois.

Directors Emeritus:

Anita DeGraff, Donald Forquer, Virginia Johnson, Edith Swank, and Eileen Pontious Surridge

The Pontius Family Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to research, education, and preservation of family history and genealogy.

www.pontiusfamilyassociation.org

Weihnachten – A German Christmas Poem

Weihnachten (Christmas) is one of the most famous German Christmas poems. It was written by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788 – 1857).

The poem starts with the mention of a market. The Christmas Market – Weihnachtsmarkt – is a big part of the Christmas season in Germany. It usually opens with the start of Advent. It's an open air market where people sell food, drinks and holiday items.

Traditional songs can be heard at these markets. This poem starts after the close of the market, when the streets are empty, yet the spirit of Christmastime remains.

Weihnachten

Markt und straßen stehn verlassen,
Still erleuchtet jedes Haus,
Sinnend geh' ich durch die Gassen,
Alles sieht so festlich aus.
An den Fenstern haben Frauen
Buntes Spielzeug fromm geschmückt,
Tausend Kindlein stehn und schauen,
Sind so wunderstill beglückt.
Und ich wandre aus den Mauern
Bis hinaus ins freie Feld,
Hehres Glänzen, heil'ges Schauern!
Wie so weit und still die Welt!
Sterne hoch die Kreise schlingen,
Aus des Schnees Einsamkeit
Steigt's wie wunderbares Singen –
O du gnadenreiche Zeit!

Christmas

(English Translation)

The market and the streets stand empty,
Every house is quietly illuminated,
Musing I go through the streets,
Everything looks so festive.

In the windows, women have
Colorful toys decorated sacredly,
A thousand little children stand and look,
They're so thrilled and wonderfully quiet.

And I wander past the walls
Until out in the open field
Sublime radiance, the saints behold!
How immense and silent is the world!

Stars up high and circling around
Over the snowy solitude
Rising like wonderful singing –
O thou blessed time!



Dear friends in the USA,

We wish you all a blessed Christmas, a happy New Year,
good health, and all the best.

To get you in the Christmas spirit, we'd like to share a short
poem by Joseph von Eichendorff.

Many greetings from the German Pontius family.

Berno and Iris Nagel

Auf der Ritzwies 21
66625 Nohfelden-Walhausen
Germany
0172-9695526
Berno.Nagel@t-online.de



FAMILY TRADITION— FROM A MEMBER:

Bobbie Bongorno



When I started dating my husband, Dave, around 1967, I was invited to attend his “Bongiorno” family gathering for Christmas Eve. My “Miller” family at its biggest was 8 people—two grandmothers, two grandfathers, my parents, my sister, and me.

Dave’s family was quite a bit larger. His parents had six children and his uncle had nine children. Everyone was invited to Christmas Eve at George and Catherine Bongiorno’s little house in Garfield Heights, Ohio. Dave’s grandmother whipped up a feast with several main dishes and everyone gathered in the basement for the meal. I had never experienced so much food or so many people in one house. It was amazing!

As years went by and George and Catherine could no longer host, Dave’s parents, Joseph and Eleanor Bongorno*, took over hosting the Christmas Eve celebration for Joe’s side of the family including his six children and their spouses and grandchildren. We had many wonderful years celebrating in their home. As time went by and they were no longer able to host, the next generation took over.

Hosting has rotated through the six grown children from oldest to youngest and is now up to 55 potential guests if everyone comes with their spouse, children, and grandchildren. In the last few years, we have moved from having the event in each of our homes to renting a community center or a room at a restaurant due to how our numbers have grown. (50 attended this year!)

The tradition is evolving, but is still a wonderful celebration of family getting together every year and enjoying each other’s company. I hope that you have traditions that your families hold dear.

**In case you noticed the change in the spelling of Bongiorno/Bongorno, it is not a typo. Dave’s father’s birth certificate had Bongiorno misspelled without the “i”. Joseph didn’t know until he joined the Navy, and they said—you can’t write your name like that. From then on his name was spelled Bongorno, and thus all of his children spell their name without the “i”. Maybe there are similar stories for the various spelling’s of Pontius, Pontious, Pountius, Pontzius, Poncy, Porter, Punches, etc. I know former Bridge Builder Editor, Bill Porter, told us how his name changed in an article in Bridge Builder #35, October 2003.. Do you know how or why some of the changes came about?*

CEMETERY COMMITTEE UPDATE:

Mark Wehr

As was reported at the July general meeting, the Cemetery Committee is proceeding with getting a cenotaph for Nicholas Pontius put in the National Pontius Cemetery in Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania, which is where Johannes Pontius is buried.

The quote for the stone was higher than expected, but the Board has approved going ahead with this project which we hope will be completed before the July 2026 reunion.

This will deplete the money that was allocated for the Cemetery Fund. Anyone wishing to may send a donation to rebuild the Cemetery Fund so that money will be available for future projects. Please send to Pontius Family Association, 21810 Fairmount Blvd, Cleveland OH 44118-4816 and mark Cemetery Fund Donation in the memo.

FUTURE REUNION DATES:

2026 **Vandalia, Illinois July 16-18**
Hosted by Mitzi Schwertfeger



See 2026 Reunion details on page 5.

Make your HOTEL reservation NOW.

2027 **Host and location needed**

2028 Mifflinburgh, PA
Hosted by Mark Wehr



Please mark your calendars to join us and think about hosting a reunion in the future. The “Reunion Hosting Guidelines” booklet is being revised and is available.

Please contact Denise Millard if you are interested in discussing hosting a meeting in the future at 610-223-1239 or denisemillard57@gmail.com.



FUTURE GERMAN TRIP:

Karl Lowe of Iowa City, Iowa, will be the host our next German trip in 2028.

Please reach out to Karl at KJLowes@hotmail.com if you have suggestions for the trip. Details will be in future newsletters as they become available.

Message from the Editor—Bobbie Bongorno:

Over the years, many of you have been able to attend our Pontius Family Reunions and get to know your distant cousins. We appreciate all of those who have offered to host in the past and are currently working on plans for our future meetings.

At this time, we do not have a volunteer to host our 2027 Reunion. Due to current technology, our Board could meet remotely to handle the organization’s business, but it would be a sham to not be able to get together and see each other. It is always such fun.



PLEASE CONSIDER HOSTING the 2027 REUNION. No town is too big or too small. It is always interesting to visit a town we have never been to and find out its hidden treasures. Denise Millard and I will be glad to assist you in anyway we can.

A BIG THANKS goes to our Bridge Builder Editor, Joan Pontius, and those who contributed articles and information for the current issue #51—Donald Schnure, Mitzi Schwertfeger, Mark Wehr, and Micheal Pontious. They put in a lot of effort making this a wonderful, accurate, & interesting publication. We hope you enjoy it from beginning to end and realize how lucky we are.

COME TO OUR 2026 Reunion in Vandalia, Illinois—hosted by Mitzi Schwertfeger

Mitzi has been busy making plans for us to visit an area which is near and dear to her family. Please plan to join us **Thursday, July 16—Saturday, July 18, 2026**, at the Quality Inn Vandalia, 1920 N. Kennedy Blvd, Vandalia, Illinois. This year we will be able to have our meetings in the same hotel as we are staying. The room charge is \$62.00/night plus tax. There are two floors and no elevator, so be sure to request a first floor room if that is a concern. A continental breakfast is included.

Of the most importance is that you **make your reservation NOW**. This hotel will not hold a block of rooms for us as most hotels have done in the past. **Please call 618-283-4400 and say that you are with the Pontius Family Association Reunion to get the \$62.00+tax rate**. The manager said this hotel gets busy April through August, so do not wait to make your reservation. They will run your credit card one week ahead of your reservation date. So, if you want to cancel your reservation, you will need to do it 8 days in advance.

The nearest airport is Lambert Airport, 1.5 hours west on Interstate 70. The nearest Amtrak Station and Greyhound Bus Depot is Effingham, Illinois, which is 30 miles east on Interstate 70.

Friday activities may include visiting the Vandalia Statehouse, Fayette County Museum, and National Road Interpretive Center. On Saturday afternoon, Mitzi would like to take us on a tour to visit Pontious historical sites in Fayette County including Old Loogootee Cemetery (where 40 Pontious's are buried) and the Zion Lutheran Church (which was Mitzi's home church). Of course there will be plenty of visiting with cousins and possibly a continuation of our "Pontius Got Talent" show from last year when we ran out of time in Worcester.



More details, the schedule of events, & the Registration Form will be published in April's newsletter.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATION NOW.

Pontius Family Association—Membership Application (for new members) Date _____	
Name _____	Date of Birth _____
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip Code _____
Telephone _____	Email _____
Name of Spouse _____	Wife maiden name _____
PFA # (if known) _____	Name/Relationship of Ancestor _____
Where did you hear about the PFA? _____	
Membership Fees: ____ 1 year \$12.50 ____ 2 year \$24.00 ____ 3 year \$35.00	
____ Life (69 & under) \$120.00 ____ Life (70+) \$100.00 ____ Junior \$4.00 (Age 1-21 w/o Br.Bldr.)	
To pay by PayPal, add \$1.00 for processing fee. For PayPal use: PontiusTreasurer@gmail.com.	
Checks payable to: Pontius Family Association may be mailed to: Roberta Bongorno, Treasurer, 21810 Fairmount Blvd, Shaker Heights OH 44118-4816. Questions—call Bobbie 216-308-0584.	
PLEASE CONSIDER BUYING A MEMBERSHIP AS A GIFT FOR A FAMILY MEMBER.	

REGULAR CHANGED TO LIFE MEMBER

Donald A. Schnure J-32*59123 of Lewisburg, PA Member since 2013

R. Glenn York J-54*(10)1431 of Fort Collins, CO Member since 2020

WELCOME NEW and LIFE MEMBERS

Sarah Gouzoules N-936113*12 of Greenland NH

Brent Allard Pontious J-73723122 of St. Peter, IL Brother of Mitzi Schwertfeger
& Michele Perkins, Life members

Brent Alexander Pontious J-737231221 of Columbia, IL

Adam Christopher Pontious J-737231222 of Franksville WI

Joshua Michael Perkins J-173723123*1 of Effingham IL

Alexandria Victoria Pontious J-737231223 of Denver CO

Kimberly Ann Perkins Vandenberg J-7372312 of Pana, IL

Life memberships paid by Mitzi Schwertfeger J-73723121 for 5 nieces and nephews.*

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

George Robert Hallagan J-723212*7 of Bloomington, IN

Vincent Roland Hallagan J-723212*74 of Bloomington, IN

Valeda Van Natta J-73723116* of Nashville, IL Sister of member Darrin Pontious

Thank you to those who purchased memberships!

BRIDGE BUILDER Editor — Joan Pontius:

If anyone has interesting stories or genealogy about a family member, send the information to Joan and she can help write the article. She asks that the article be sent in a word document, not a PDF file. Please send any photos separately.

Email to Joanpontius@yahoo.com or mail to 4879 Manor Lane,
Ellicott City MD 21042-6119.

If you have questions, please call 443-963-4403.



MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHIVIST by Micheal Pontious:

402-290-9261

mspontious@cox.net

We have 9 new members since the PFA meeting last July, and they all have PFA ID numbers determined. For members that do not have a PFA ID number, please contact me. I have finally started working again on the ream of obituaries I received from my predecessor. These are Pontius's obituaries found when Jeannette Weaver was researching other people. Some are already in the database and others are not. I am adding them to the database as I can.

The PFA family tree currently has 29, 596 people up 216 since the last newsletter. The increases are due mainly to PFA ID numbers, new members, and obituaries.



DECEASED MEMBER - *Remembering families in sympathy.*



Patricia Ann Consola Weber 1943—2026

Pat Weber, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and sister, passed away peacefully on January 3, 2026, after a long battle with dementia. She passed away on what would have been her and Dale's 11-year wedding anniversary. She was 82 years old.

Born on February 22, 1943, in Galt, Ontario, Canada, Patricia was the oldest of 4 children. She dedicated many years as an administrative assistant, working in hospitals including Good Samaritan Hospital in W. Palm Beach, nursing homes, & a civil engineering firm, retiring in 2012.

Patricia found joy in her creative pursuits, particularly crafting. Patricia was also a deeply involved grandmother, always eager to support her grandchildren's activities.

Patricia is survived by her loving husband, Dale E. Weber, and her 3 daughters: Michelle Consola Young (husband Roger), Lisa Spalding (husband Jeff), and Tracy Katz (husband Hal), and by her grandsons Spencer Katz (husband Alex), Jordan Katz, and Brandon Consola (wife Heather), and her great-grandchildren, Mirabella and Serafina Consola. Patricia is mourned by her sisters, Lynda Rakovits and Gwen Smith, and her brother, Guy Atkinson.

Dale Weber joined the PFA in 2005 and is a Life member. He served on the Board of Directors from 2013 to 2021. Dale is the brother of Life member and PFA Secretary, Miriam Brown. Dale's son, Michael Weber of Florida, is also a PFA member.

LEGACY FUND PROGRAM:

As was documented in the Minutes of our June 2023 meeting, the Legacy Fund has been established and has begun to be funded. Members of the PFA can apply for funds for any activity that would promote the heritage of the Pontius Family. The Legacy Committee will review and accept or deny the Applications. Please direct any questions to Betty Hall at 319-358-6673 or schotziewas1809@gmail.com.

The Application Form and Protocols are available at: pontiusfamilyassociation.org.

If you would like to make a contribution to this fund, please send your check to: Pontius Family Association, 21810 Fairmount Blvd, Cleveland, OH 44118-4816.

Money available in this Fund will come from donations and bequeaths not from the regular budget.

Bridge Builder Please submit to our Editor, Joan Pontius, 4879 Manor Lane, Ellicott City MD 21042 or joanpontius@yahoo.com or call Joan at 443-963-4403. Past Bridge Builders are available for purchase. Catalog is on our website: www.pontiusfamilyassociation.org.

Future **Newsletter** articles may be sent to Bobbie Bongorno at bjbongo@sbcglobal.net.

Reunion Photo Books Picture books created by Dave and Bobbie Bongorno are available for past reunions. If you would like a copy, please send \$7.50 each to cover the booklet and postage to: Pontius Family Association, Roberta Bongorno, 21810 Fairmount Boulevard, Cleveland OH 44118. Be sure to indicate which year(s) you want.

2024 Orange Cty, VA
2023 Denver, Pennsylvania
2022 Springfield, Illinois
2021 Dayton, Ohio
2019 Hannibal, Missouri
2018 Iowa City, Iowa
2017 Mifflinburg, PA
2016 Richmond, Virginia

2015 Frankenmuth, Michigan
2014 Bryan/College Station, Texas
2013 Denver, Pennsylvania
2012 Circleville, Ohio
2010 St. Louis, Missouri
2009 Belleville, Michigan
2008 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



PDF versions of the Photo Books are available for free. Email request to [Bjbongo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bjbongo@sbcglobal.net).

Email List - If you are not already on our "email" list and would like to receive PFA updates if they occur during the year between the published Newsletter mailings, please send your email address to Bobbie at bjbongo@sbcglobal.net. Be sure to edit your settings to allow our group email to be received.

Address Changes - Please remember to send any address changes to Bobbie Bongorno at the address above or [Bjbongo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bjbongo@sbcglobal.net) or call 216-308-0584. Thank you--this helps us keep our postage costs down. Also, if you know of someone's passing, please forward information and/or obituaries.

Membership Application Form is available at www.pontiusfamilyassociation.org or from Bobbie Bongorno at 216-308-0584. Please use this Membership Application to purchase memberships for your family members or give to those you may be interested. Dues notices are sent to remind those who are already yearly members when renewal is due.

Cemetery Restoration Assistance/Application

If you are interested in applying for assistance with repairing or restoring a cemetery stone for a Pontius ancestor, please contact Mark Wehr, Chairman of the Cemetery Restoration Committee, 1060 Buffalo Creek Rd, Mifflinburg PA 17844-7708 or 570-966-2304 or email markwehr@windstream.net with for information or with questions.

Legacy Fund—The Application Form and Protocols are available on our website.

PFA Website: Pontiusfamilyassociation.org.

Mark your calendars for Vandalia, Illinois July 16-18, 2026 and reserve hotel NOW.