

# PONTIUS FAMILY ASSOCIATION

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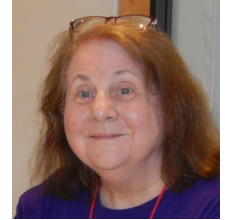
NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026

## Message from the President—Betty Hall

Dear Cousins,

I hope you are all having as wonderful weather as we are having in Iowa. A few weeks ago we had our second “snow” on Monday and by Thursday it was over 70 degrees.



I have finally been doing a lot of the genealogy that I inherited from my parents, 20 years ago. I have been busy scanning and putting the information on an external hard drive and/or zip drive. Just organizing the hundreds of obits that my parents saved is a big job. I have also been reading the old PFA newsletters (very interesting) along with several other projects. My problem is that I have too many projects that I have going at the same time so have not completed any of them.

My son, Karl, and I just got back from the hardware stores. We are going to have our/Karl’s kitchen remodeled. Karl is deciding everything but the dishwasher. That is enough decision making for me. I get confused with all the terminology such as granite versus marble versus quartz counter tops. Don’t get me started on all the options for cupboard pulls.

If anyone has anything to add to the agendas for the July meetings, please let me know. As I guess I forgot to ask for a vote last year, we need to approve the Bylaw changes. We also have a couple of tabled items. Of course, we will always have our committee reports and election of the board and officers.

Mitzi Schwertfeger and Carol Pontious will be giving talks on their ancestors on Friday morning. Any other suggestions or comments would be appreciated.

If you would like to become more involved, please let us know.

See you in July in Illinois.

Betty Hall, President

319-358-6673

schotziewas1809@gmail.com

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](http://www.pontiusfamilyassociation.org)

## FUTURE REUNION DATES:

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



2027 **Host and location needed**

2028 Mifflinburg, 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](mailto: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 [KJLowe@hotmail.com](mailto:KJLowe@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:

I hope all of you enjoyed the most recent Bridge Builder #51. We appreciate all the work that Joan Pontius and the others did to get this published.

**PLEASE CONSIDER HOSTING the 2027 REUNION.** No town is too big or too small. Denise Millard and I will be glad to assist you in anyway we can.



## CEMETERY COMMITTEE — Mark Wehr:

Update on the Nicholas cenotaph: The final proofs were approved last month and the stone is being cut and in production. I'm hoping to have it in place and pictures for the Reunion in July.



Thank you to Sandra Auch and Anne Armstrong who sent donations to start to replenish the Cemetery Fund for future projects.

Anyone else 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.

## JOIN US AT OUR 2026 Reunion in Vandalia, Illinois

Hosted by Mitzi Schwertfeger (J-73723121\*)

Mitzi has invited us to have our reunion in Vandalia, Illinois, 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.

On Friday morning we will have our Meet and Greet session, and in the afternoon we will visit the Vandalia Statehouse, Fayette County Museum, and National Road Interpretive Center.

Micheal Pontious will be running the Genealogy Session on Friday evening at 6:30 pm.

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 and has beautiful stained glass windows and a hand-carved altar). Of course, there will be plenty of visiting with cousins,



Saturday evening, we would like to continue our "Pontius Got Talent" show from last year when we ran out of time in Worcester. It was fun and amazing to see what a talented group we are. (Bridge Builder #51 features some of the activities of last year's reunion in Massachusetts and some of the variety of talent that was showcased.) We will also be featuring our popular PFA Raffle to benefit our association and add to the fun!

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 are in Effingham, Illinois, which is 30 miles east on Interstate 70. So, if you plan to travel to Vandalia by plane, train, or bus, please note that on the Registration Form so that we can let you know who else might be doing the same and you can coordinate car rentals, etc. The hotel does not have a shuttle, and Vandalia does not have local transportation services.

Please see the Tentative Agenda on page 4 for more specific information so you can plan your trip.

## **July 16—18, 2026 Reunion - Tentative Agenda—Vandalia, Illinois**

### Thursday, July 16

2:00-5:30 pm Registration

5:30 pm Dinner on your own

6:45 pm Log in on Discord for Board members not at Reunion

7:00-8:30 pm Board of Directors Meeting

### Friday, July 17

6:00-8:30 am Breakfast on your own, included with room.

8:00-9:00 am Registration table open

9:00-11:00 am Meet and Greet Meeting

Welcome by President

Introduction of first-time attendees

Advisory for Saturday elections

Distribution of postcards to send to those not attending

Begin individual/family introductions & photo taking for Memory Book

11:00 am-12:30 pm Lunch in meeting room

1:00-4:00 pm Tours of Vandalia State House, National Road Interpretive Center, and Fayette County Museum. We will divide attendees into three groups and carpool to downtown Vandalia, rotating groups at these three locations.

Dinner and evening on your own.

6:30 pm Genealogy Meeting with Micheal Pontious, PFA Archivist

### Saturday, July 18

6:00-8:30 am Breakfast on your own, included with room.

9:00 am-12:00 pm General Membership Meeting

Election of Officers & Board Members

Committee Reports

Future Meetings:

2027 - HOST AND LOCATION NEEDED.

2028 - Mifflinburg, PA - hosted by Mark Wehr

2028 - Fall German Trip - organized by Karl Lowe

12:00-1:00 pm Lunch on your own

1:00 - 4:00 pm Driving tours of Zion Lutheran Church and Old Loogootee Cemetery where many Pontious's are buried.

5:30 pm Group photos. Location to be announced.

6:00 - 9:00 pm Banquet Dinner in Meeting Room

Continue Meet & Greet and photos for those missing morning sessions.

Banquet, "Pontius Got Talent" continued, Raffle, and closing remarks by President.

Please complete and mail the Registration Form on page 7.

# WELCOME NEW and LIFE MEMBER

## Michael Brunk (J-73723131) of Pittsburgh PA

First cousin of Mitzi Schwertfeger.

## 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](mailto:Joanpontius@yahoo.com) or mail to 4879 Manor Lane, Ellicott City MD 21042-6119.

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



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## 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](mailto: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.**

## MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHIVIST by Micheal Pontious:

402-290-9261

mspontious@cox.net

I was recently contacted by member Sheila McCartney (N-63312\*173). She was one of the 36 members without PFA ID numbers. She sent her family group sheet and her ancestors' information. With the information she furnished, I was able to determine her number. Nine of those members are in the database with limited information.



Last month I realized that I had switched files for inputting information. Unfortunately, it was about 6 months ago! The problem was the older file I was using had all the new information but was missing information from the correct file entered before the switch! Luckily, Family Tree Maker can merge files into one without duplicating entries. Steps have been taken to prevent this in the future.

The proofreaders for the last issue of The Bridge Builder noticed that the information from Family Tree Maker wasn't always listing multiple marriages in proper order. I was not sure why this was happening. I think what was happening was Family Tree Maker was listing them in the order I was entering them. I found that I can manually change the order of multiple marriages.

Our family tree currently has 29,886 individuals.



### **DECEASED MEMBER** - *Remembering his family in sympathy.*

#### **Brad Vinson 1938 –2025**

Dr. S Bradleigh Vinson, a distinguished figure in the scientific community and a professor at Texas A&M University for 47 years in Bryan, TX, passed away. Born in Mansfield, Ohio, on April 8, 1938, Dr. Vinson spent his early years collecting wildlife and insects around his grandfather's farm which led him to develop a small zoo in his basement and backyard.

He received a B.S. degree in Entomology at The Ohio State University in 1961 and M.S. degree at Mississippi State University for his work on brown recluse spiders. His research demonstrated the first case of vertebrate insecticide resistance, published in Science in 1963. He received his Ph.D. in 1965 for his research on parasitoids and imported Fire Ants (IFA).

In 1969, he became an associate professor and then moved to Texas A&M University, where he discovered polydnviruses. His international recognition stemmed from his research on parasitoid Hymenoptera, imported fire ants, and solitary bees of Costa Rica. He contributed significantly to scholarly publications with 741 papers, 87 book chapters, 12 book reviews, and edited 7 books. He organized numerous symposia and was invited to speak at 206 events. In 2012, he received the International Society of Hymenopterists Distinguished Research Medal. He has been cited over 30,000 times, reflecting his substantial impact on the field of entomology.

Dr. Vinson is survived by his wife of 64 years, Pat (Kidner) Vinson, their daughter Shirleigh, her husband Steve Bechtolt and their three daughters Carleigh, Kimberleigh, and Emileigh, and their son Stuart Brentleigh (Ozzy), his wife Candy and their three daughters (Carly (Auston Luther)), Shayleigh, and Sabriel, and four great-grandchildren, Olivia, Laikyn, Axl and Alice.

*Pat (J-73544\*42) and Brad joined the PFA in 1986 and are Life members. Pat served on the Board from 2011-2015. Pat and Brad hosted our Brian/College Station, Texas, reunion in 2014. Brad took the children who attended the reunion over to Texas A&M to see the Entomology Dept.*

**Pontius Family Association**  
 July 16, 17, and 18, 2026 – Vandalia, Illinois  
**Register for Reunion BEFORE June 30, 2026.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ PFA# \_\_\_\_\_ (If known)

Other Adults Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

Children Under 18 Attending: Names & Ages \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

First Time Attending? Yes _____ No _____
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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration for Reunion per Adult . . . . . # \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Friday, July 17 -

Light Lunch to be served at Quality Inn Meeting Room (kids free) # Adults \_\_\_\_\_ x \$ 5.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Vandalia State House Tour (children will be free) # Adults \_\_\_\_\_ x \$ 4.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

National Road Interpretive Center and Fayette County Museum (donation at site suggested)

Saturday, July 18 – Evening Dinner at Quality Inn Meeting Room

Dinner Catered by Ponderosa Steak House #Adults \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#Children \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please let us know if you have any dietary issues. TOTAL = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make your check payable to: Pontius Family Association and mail with this registration form to:  
 Roberta Bongorno, 21810 Fairmount Blvd, Cleveland, OH 44118-4816.

Questions: Call or email **Bobbie Bongorno** at 216-308-0584 or [bjbongo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bjbongo@sbcglobal.net) or  
**Mitzi Schwertfeger** at 414-581-3962 or [mitzi.schwertfeger@frontier.com](mailto:mitzi.schwertfeger@frontier.com).

If you will be flying or traveling by train, please check here so that we might be able to coordinate car pools with others doing the same. \_\_\_\_\_ Your arrival date/time if known \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Amtrak Station is ½ hr. east of Vandalia and St. Louis Lambert Airport is 1-1/2 hr. west of Vandalia.)

You must make your hotel reservations now at:  
 Quality Inn Vandalia  
 1920 N. Kennedy Blvd  
 Vandalia IL 62471

**Call 618-283-4400**

Be sure to tell them you are with the  
**Pontius Family Reunion** to receive our  
 special rate per night + tax.  
 \$62.00/night + tax = \$67.58/night.

Please bring any items you would like to donate to the **Raffle** (home-made items, baskets of cheer, fun stuff), and any **goodies** (baked goods/munchies) you want to share.

\_\_\_\_ I/We would like to present a “talent” on the Saturday evening “Pontius Got Talent” Show.

**REGISTER for Reunion BY June 30, 2026 / Make your Hotel Reservation NOW.**

Roberta J. Bongorno, Treasurer  
PONTIUS FAMILY ASSOCIATION  
21810 Fairmount Boulevard  
Shaker Heights OH 44118-4816

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**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](http://www.pontiusfamilyassociation.org).

Future **Newsletter** articles may be sent to Bobbie Bongorno at [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](mailto: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.

**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](mailto:markwehr@windstream.net) with for information or with questions.

**Legacy Fund**—The Application Form & Protocols are available at [Pontiusfamilyassociation.org](http://Pontiusfamilyassociation.org).