

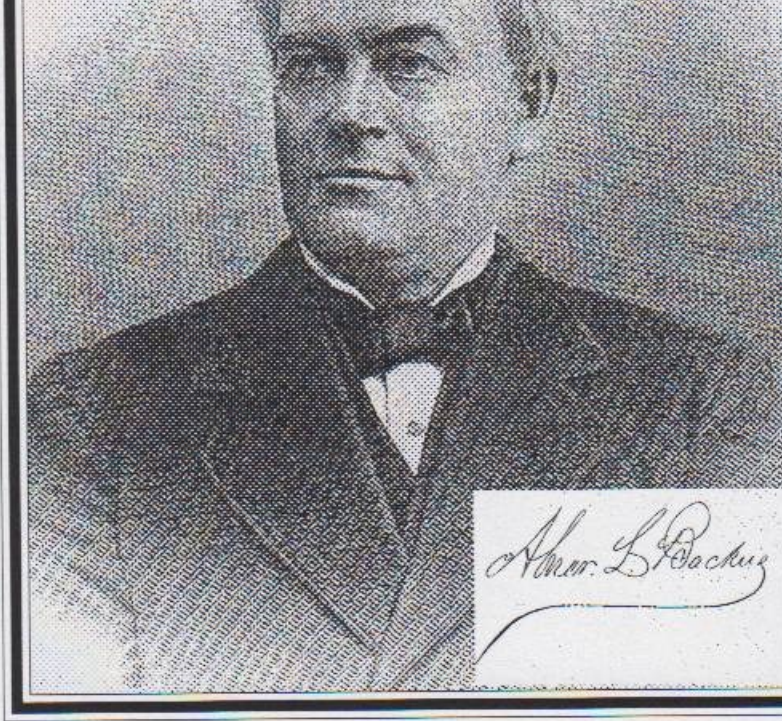
ABNER LORD BACKUS

b. June 27, 1818

d. June 14, 1895

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Picture from: *Memories of Lucas County
and the City of Toledo*



Abner Lord Backus was of a line that could trace ancestors back to Norwich, England:

AT GREAT GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER

In 1637, William (or Stephen as some authorities Backus moved to Saybrook, Connecticut from Norwich, England late in his life. He was married twice. He had his first wife Sarah Charles had three daughters, later married John Reynolds, Benjamin Crane and John Bailey, and two sons, William Jr. and Stephen. He later married Mrs. Anne Bingham and acquired a step-son, Thomas Bingham.

In 1659 William and his family moved to Norwich, Connecticut following the leadership of the Reverend James Fitch and John Mason. He was the oldest settler and the other settlers consented to naming the new town from where he had come in England. He died shortly thereafter being the first Englishman to die in the colony and the second person to die in the settlement.

AT GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER

William's sons were almost mature at his death. With their help the family prospered. Stephen married Elizabeth Spencer in December of 1666 and they had 8 children. William Jr. (the direct line of our subject) married Elizabeth Pratt of Saybrook. They lived in Norwich and had six children, William, John, Joseph, Nathaniel and two others whose names we do not know. We will continue the Backus line following Joseph.

AT GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER

Joseph Backus was a Justice of the Peace and a

representative of Norwich in the Connecticut Legislature for several years. He and his wife, whose name we do not know, had eight children. Of these Simon and Joseph, Jr. graduated from Yale College with Simon becoming a celebrated clergyman and Joseph Jr. being noted as "lawyer Backus of Norwich." However, we will follow the line of Samuel Backus, another of Joseph Sr.'s sons.

GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER

Samuel Backus was born January 6, 1693 and died November 24, 1740. He was Joseph Sr.'s second son. He was a prosperous farmer but had little to do with public affairs. He married Elizabeth Tracey on January 18, 1716. They had 11 children:

Samuel	(1-1-1717, 10-2-1796)
Ann	(1-10-1718, 12-29-1756)
Elizabeth	(2-9-1721, 7-1-1745)
Isaac	(1-9-1724, 11-20-1806)
Elijah	(3-14-1726, 9-4-1798)
Simon	(1-17-1729, 2-16-1764)
Eunice	(5-17-1731, 8-10-1753)
Andrew	(11-16-1733, 11-20-1796)
Asa	(5-3-1736, 7-23-1788)
Lucy	(4-19-1738, ?)
John	(10-16-1840, 4-27-1814)

The family moved from the original home lot located near by the Landing to Yantic where Samuel erected a grist mill, the town's second one. He also received special grants from the town to build an iron works.

GREAT GRANDFATHER

Now following the line of Elijah Backus, the child of Samuel and Elizabeth. Elijah married Lucy

wold, a daughter of John Griswold, Esq. of Lyme, on January 9, 1753. They had nine children.

Elijah	(7-17-1754, 3-8-1755)
girl	(1-1-1756, 2-21-1756)
Lucy	(1-31-1757, 10-1-1817)
Elijah	(5-2-1759, ?)
James	(7-10-1761, 1-17-1762)
girl	(3-18-1763, 4-20-1763)
James	(7-14-1764, 9-29-1816)
Mathew	(9-24-1766, ?)
Clarina	(8-7-1769, 7-21-1831)

Even though Elijah possessed a large estate, was a skilled mechanic and had influence in his community, his life was undoubtedly filled with sorrow losing at least 4 children under the age of 1. Note how the names of the children were reused when one died. He and his son James carried on the grist mill and the iron works, which played an important part in the Revolutionary War. Elijah died on September 4th, 1798.

GRANDFATHER

We will now follow the line of Elijah's and Lucy's 4th son, Elijah. This Elijah moved to the Northwest Territory and became a Receiver of Public Moneys. He married Lucretia Hubbard, who died on February 17, 1787. They had two children:

Thomas	(8-8-1785, 10-25-1825)
Lucretia	(1-7-187, ?)

He then married Hannah Richard.

On December 1, 1801 Wyllis Silliman as Publisher and Elijah as Editor started the third paper published in Ohio, the *Ohio Gazette and Virginia Herald*. Elijah owned the first printing press west of the mountains. He was a good lawyer and was elected to the Senate.

FATHER

Thomas Backus, Elijah and Lucretia's only son, married Temperance Lord, at Marietta, Ohio in November 1810. They had five children as follows, the last being our subject Abner Lord Backus:

Elijah	(3-3-1812, 1-7-1855)
Lucretia	(6-14-1813, ?)
William W.	(10-12-1814, 10-12-1842)
Alexander	(9-15-1816, 12-13-1861)
Abner Lord	(6-27-1818, 6-14-1895)

ABNER LORD BACKUS

Our subject was a civil engineer, who constructed and managed Ohio's 80 miles of canals for almost 40 years between 1837-1878. He began as a rodman with the state engineering department. He moved to Maumee, Ohio in 1838 to work on the Wabash & Erie Canal (a portion of which was later taken over by the Miami & Erie Canal.) He became a constructing engineer, then a superintending engineer, canal toll collector

appointed in Maumee City in April 1844, a member of the Ohio Board of Public Works in 1857, and eventually worked his way to President of the State Board of Public Works, being elected to this high position by Ohio citizens. This was quite a feat as every other Democratic candidate on the ticket was defeated.

For over 25 years he was engaged as a grain commission merchant, owner and manager of a grain elevator in Toledo and his sons followed him in business.

Abner married Elizabeth Reed. They had 9 children:

William Woodridge	(4-1-1846, ?)
Elsie McDowell	(8-26-1847, ?)
Samuel Reed	(3-10-1849, 4-6-1901)
Alexander	(10-18-1850, ?)
Adelaide	(5-25-1852, ?)
Elizabeth Reed	(12-26-1853, 9-25-1854)
Twin girls	(7-9-1855, 8-13-1855)
Julia	(5-7-1857, ?)

Upon his death in 1895, his obituary and the tribute paid to him by the Toledo Grain Commission did an outstanding job of describing his life as follows:

Toledo Blade, Saturday June 15, 1895

**CITY MOURNS
ONE OF HER MOST HONORED BUILDERS
PASSED AWAY
ABNER LORD BACKUS DIED YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON
HE CAME TO TOLEDO IN THE EARLY
YEARS**

And Was an Active Promoter of Her Prosperity.

Death came Saturday afternoon to Abner L. Backus after a lingering illness of some five months. Mr. Backus had suffered from a complication of disorders that had seriously affected his heart, and that the physicians were unable to cope with. The end came at 2 o'clock yesterday at his late residence No. 1509 Summit street.

By his death Toledo loses a pioneer who was identified with the city's interests for many years; a man prominent in business affairs, and a leader in building up some of Toledo's most valuable interests.

Abner Lord Backus was born in Columbus, Ohio, June 27, 1818. He came of a family that settled early in

Ohio, and was prominent in the affairs of the state, in the early days. His paternal grandfather removed to Marietta in 1800, and his maternal grandfather, Abner Lord, came to Ohio with the very first of the pioneers, settling in Marietta in 1788. Abner L. Backus's father was one of the early practicing attorneys of Franklin county and died when his son was but seven years of age. The young man received his education at Marietta, and in 1837 began life as a rodman in the civil engineer's department of the state, which was then at work on Ohio's canal system. From that humble start he advanced rapidly, until he had filled the positions of constructing and superintending engineer, member, and finally president of the Ohio Board of Public Works. When he withdrew from the public service in 1878 he had served with the exception of six years, for forty continuous years.

He Began a Democrat

In early life he was a staunch Democrat, and in 1857 was elected to the board when every other Democratic candidate on the ticket was defeated. He withdrew from active politics during war times, and afterward party ties were never strong with him.

In 1843 he was detailed to close up the construction accounts of the Western Reserve and Maumee road (Perrysburg and Bellevue), and for some years afterward had charge of the work.

This led him to consider the possibilities of the Maumee valley, and he took part in several enterprises along the river.

In 1868 he associated himself with Samuel M. Young in the well known firm of Young & Backus. A large elevator was built in Toledo, and the firm continued successfully in business until 1880, when it was succeeded by A. L. Backus & Sons.

Mr. Backus took a prominent part in securing what was then the Columbus & Toledo road, and which was brought to Toledo in 1872. He was for eight years a director of the road until it was consolidated with the West Virginia road. In 1879 he assisted in organizing the Union Elevator company, and was for many years its president.

Since 1872 he has been a director of the Toledo Gas Light and Coke company. Mr. Backus has been a director of the Produce Exchange since its organization [1876], and has served both as president and vice president of that body.

In 1844 Mr. Backus married Miss Elizabeth Reed, who died in 1878, leaving three sons, William W., Samuel R. and Alexander, and three daughters, Mrs. S. L. Fraser, Mrs. Edwin Jackson, of Duluth, and Julia M. Backus.

In 1884 Mr. Backus married Mrs. Lucretia Maples Hough, who with the children mentioned above, survive him.

The funeral will be held from the family residence at the corner of Summit and Bush streets, at 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

RESOLUTIONS OF RESPECT.

Produce Exchange Took Action on the Death of Mr. Backus.

The following tribute of respect was paid by the members of the Toledo Produce exchange to-day:

"We are summoned once more in the Providence of God, to a mournful duty. Another of our brothers and fellow-members has fallen asleep. Thrice have we commemorated these mournful events in the short space of four months — Mr. Coon, on February 12th; Mr. Chapin, on February 26th, and now Mr. Abner L. Backus has passed away from earth.

"Mr. Backus was born at Columbus, in this state, in June, 1818, and had arrived at the ripe age of 77 years. His family were descended from the Marietta settlers of the state.

"He came to Maumee City in 1838 as civil engineer, and occupied a prominent and responsible position in the construction of the Wabash, and the Miami & Erie canals. Upon the completion of the Wabash canal Mr. Backus was the first collector of tolls at Toledo. Soon after this, in 1844 he commenced the mercantile business at Maumee. During his residence at Maumee he was nominated and elected a member of the state board of public works in a canvass that re-

sulted generally in favor of the Whigs. Mr. Backus came to Toledo in 1863, and in partnership with Samuel M. Young, esq. of this city, built the Miami elevator, and embarked with the gentleman in the grain commission and storage business. Later the firm of A. L. Backus & Sons was formed and the Union elevator was built by them, and is now one of the leading storage facilities of our city. Our friend has also been conspicuously connected, as a citizen, with the interests of Toledo. With Mr. Young and the late Horace S. Walbridge he was prominent in the conception and organization of the Columbus and Toledo railway, now one of the large contributors to our commerce.

"With an easy, tolerant and yet trenchant pen, our city is indebted to him as a liberal and instructive contributor to the constructive press upon commercial and engineering topics.

"From his advent to Toledo he has been a leading spirit and wise councilor in our exchange before and since our present organization, of which he has been president.

"Mr. Backus was endowed with intellectual developments beyond the average. With clear perceptions, sound judgment and unswerving integrity, he had a courage equal to his strong and earnest convictions in organizing and completing enterprise commended itself to his judgment. He was a true and loyal friend to those with whom he came in close contact and no man was more loving and beloved and respected by his family. His health has been broken for a year, and in his last four months he as fought his way down the dark passage inch by inch with great suffering, but finally passed through the gate that must open to all of us.

"As we recall the manly and kindly traits of our brother and fellow member, let us be thankful for his example with his abiding trust that, having finished his course on earth, he has entered into rest eternal. Therefore be it "Resolved, That this memorial be entered on our records, and a copy of it be sent to the family."

"That our hall be draped, as usual, for thirty days, and that we do now adjourn."

The above obituary and tribute omitted other information that was found on Abner's life. The following

fill in the details:

Abner served in the Fifth Division of the Ohio Militia as an Engineer. He was under the command of Major General James B. Steedman, about whom another "Canawlers At Rest" column has been published.

Abner supported Steven A. Douglas for President when he was an alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention held in Baltimore. At the turn of events he became dissatisfied with the party and never took an active part in partisan management again.

On July 23, 1862 when the Military Committee for the district of Toledo met, those present representing Lucas county were, F. R. Warren, W. A. Scott, John T. Maher, W. H. Howe, J. M. Brigham, A. L. Backus, Geo. W. Reynolds and R. C. Lemon.

In 1863 Backus purchased 20 feet of river front west of Adams street on which to build the Miami elevator along with Stephen Young. In July 1880 after 23 years with Young, the firm became known as A. L. Backus & Sons.

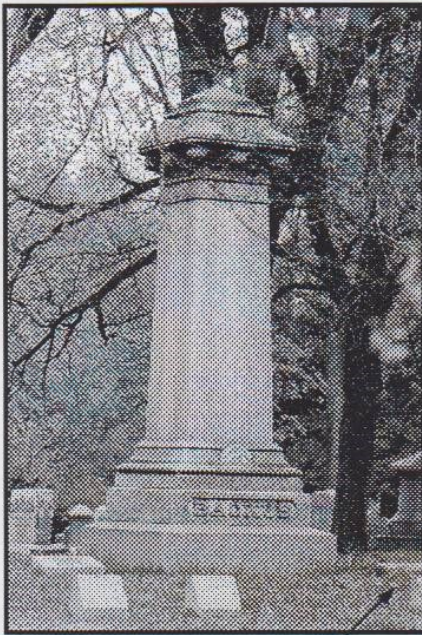
In January 1866 A. L. Backus of Young & Backus, Grain Commission was listed on the Toledo Board of Trade #3.

In the 1867 Board of City Improvement election, A. L. Backus and John T. Maher were defeated by Warren Colburn, Andrew Shurtz and Henry Breed.

The Ohio Legislature passed an act during its 1880-1881 session for a Metropolitan Police Board for the city of Toledo. Governor Foster appointed Abner as one of the commissioners of it. Others were Guido Marx, John Cummings and George Milmine. After the original appointments, board members were to be elected on a general ticket for four years each. As a member Abner helped secure a greatly improved police organization for the city. However, this plan was soon followed by a system consisting of one Commissioner elected from each Ward of the City, who, with the Mayor, constituted the Police Board.

Abner Backus of A. L. Backus & Sons, Grain Commission was a member of the Toledo Produce Exchange on January 1, 1878. He became its first vice president in 1880. He became its president on January 1, 1887.

The Toledo, Ohio Directories of 1889-1891 list Abner L. Backus as vice-president of Vulcan Iron Works Co. of Toledo, Ohio along with Alexander Backus as president and John W. Smith as secretary.



**BACKUS
FAMILY
STONE**

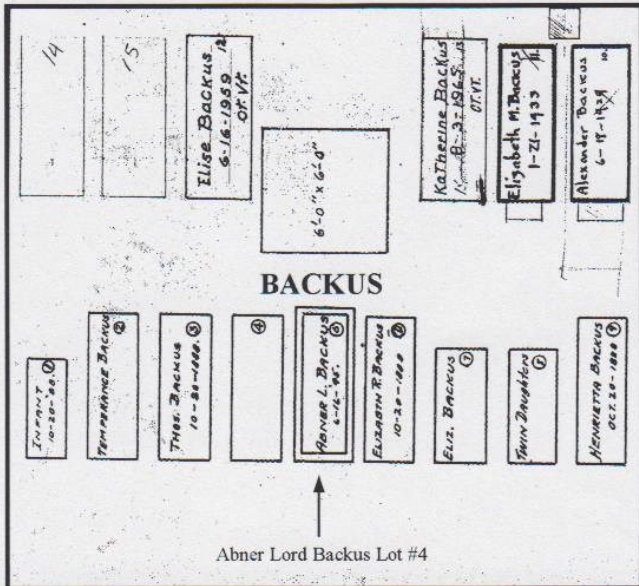
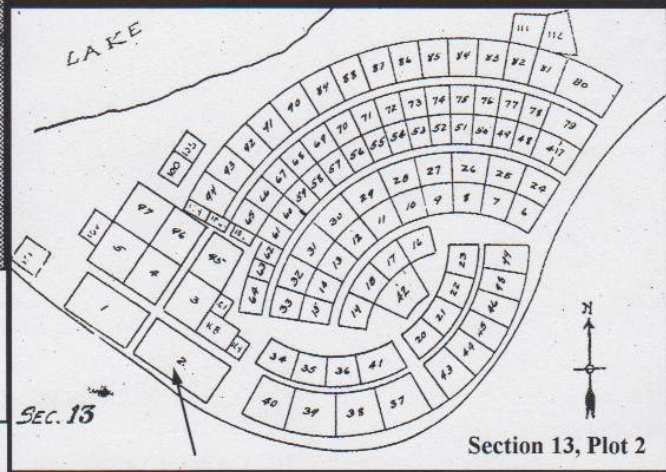
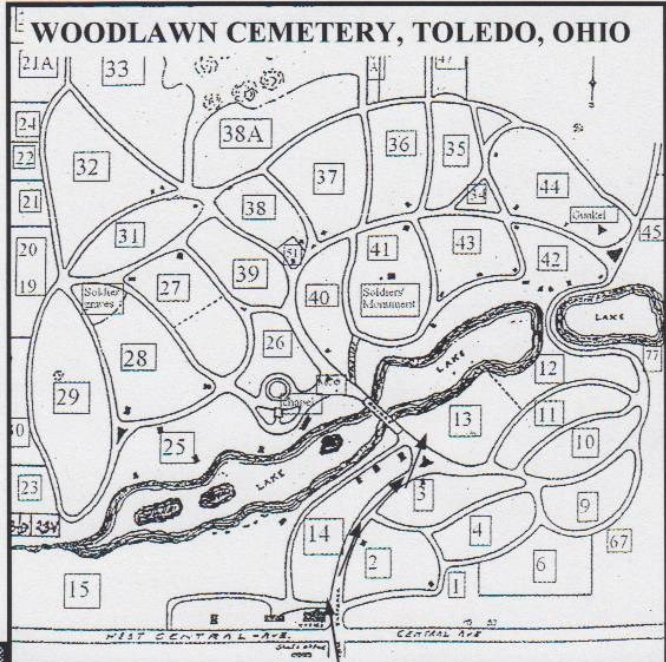
**ABNER
LORD
BACKUS
&
ELIZABETH
REED
BACKUS
STONES**

Photos by
Scott Bieszczad



ABNER LORD BACKUS
COLUMBUS O JUNE 27, 1818
TOLEDO O JUNE 14, 1895

ELIZABETH REED
WIFE OF ABNER L. BACKUS
AT SHARON CONN JULY 4,
1824
TOLEDO O OCT 25, 1878



Abner Lord Backus was laid to rest in the Backus plot 2 in section 13 of Woodlawn Cemetery in Toledo, Ohio. To reach the grave turn off West Central Avenue into Woodlawn Cemetery, and follow the lane passing two side lanes on the right and take a left at the small triangle of land but to not cross the bridge on the left. Section 13 and Plot 2 is in front of you. In the center of the plot is a large marker for the Backus family. Abner is buried in Lot 5 directly in front of the marker. His wife Elizabeth is buried on his right and the lot on his left is empty with Thomas Backus buried to its left.

Six years after Abner's death, the *Toledo Blade* of Monday April 8, 1901 announced the death of Abner's second wife, whose first name they do not mention, and Samuel Reed Backus, his son by his first wife, as follows:

DEATH CLAIMS TWO MEMBERS OF THE BACKUS FAMILY

Samuel R. Backus, a Prominent Grain Man, Succumbs to Bright's Disease.

Samuel R. Backus died on Saturday evening a 6 o'clock. He had been suffering for a year or more from Bright's disease and, while his condition was considered precarious, the announcement of his death was a surprise to his many friends and acquaintances. He died at the family home, 2306 Jefferson street.

Samuel R. Backus was born in Maumee on March 10, 1849. Seven years later he came to Toledo with his father's family. He was given the advantages of a public school training and then he entered the employ of the Brown Brothers Insurance Agency. Later, as he was given a clerkship with his father in the grain commission firm of Young and Backus, when the senior member of the firm retired, the company was organized a A. L. Backus and Sons and then as the Abner L. Backus Sons Co. Samuel R. Backus was a member of both these firms.

When Abner L. Backus died a few years ago, Samuel Backus reorganized the firm under the name of S. R. Backus & Co.

The deceased is survived by his widow, a daughter, Emma, aged 16, one brother and three sisters, Alex. Backus, Mrs. Edwin Jackson, of Toledo; Mrs. Fraser, of Duluth, and Mrs. Porter, of Cleveland.

His widow was Miss Elizabeth Hoagland, daughter of one of Fort Wayne's best families. Her father was a Maumee pioneer.

Samuel R. Backus was best known for his business integrity. His word was as good as his bond. Business obligations, as well as social, were kept inviolate. He was quiet and unassuming, and yet he was always bright and contented, and his presence radiated sunshine and joviality. He was everybody's friend.

The funeral will be held to-morrow afternoon [Tuesday] at 3 o'clock from the family residence.

The Toledo Produce Exchange to-day adopted the fol-

lowing memorial resolution for Samuel R. Backus:

Once more the great destroyer of our race has invaded the ranks of our membership, and Mr. Samuel Reed Backus, in the prime of his manhood, robust health and usefulness, has fallen a victim to his relentless grasp. Mr. Backus was born in Maumee City, March 10, 1849, and had therefore, entered upon his 53rd year of his life. He was the son of the late Hon. Abner L. Backus, who came to Maumee in 1837, and who, as a civil engineer, was employed in the construction of the Wabash and Erie canal. After a course of education in the Toledo schools and some minor business training, our friend entered the office of Messrs. Young & Backus, and soon thereafter became a partner in the house. His firm were members of the old Toledo Board of Trade, and bore a leading part in the organization of the Produce Exchange in 1876. He has ever since been with us as a highly esteemed member of our association. His firm has been conspicuous, not only for leadership in the daily round of traffic on the floor of our Exchange, but for a business career marked by a high degree of promptness and fidelity to all their obligations.

Those who were privileged to share his confidence, and to know somewhat of his inmost thought, desire to put on record their testimony to the manly virtues of our friend. He was a man of refined tastes, of genial good humor and kindly social nature. The changes in commercial conditions, success or adversity, seemed to make little impression upon his happy disposition. Our friend was essentially a domestic man, who found relaxation by his own fireside and in his family life. It is rare to find a more affectionate husband and father. His sudden departure leaves sorrowing hearts with great number of friends outside as well as inside our Exchange.

Therefore be it Resolved: That we offer to the family of our deceased friend the assurance of our tender sympathy in their great bereavement; that we drape our hall with the evidences of our mourning; that a copy of this memorial be sent to the family' that we attend the obsequies; and that we do now adjourn.

Beside the above article was the article about the death of Lucretia Maples Hough Backus, Abner's second wife:

Mrs. Abner L. Backus, Beloved for Church and Charity Work, Follows Step-Son

Mrs. Abner L. Backus one of Toledo's oldest citizens, died suddenly yesterday morning [Sunday]. Her step-son, Samuel R. Backus, died on evening. Mrs. Backus had been an invalid for three years. The direct cause of death was heart disease.

She was born at Norwich, Conn, on October 8, 1818. In 1840 she was married to Thomas H. Hough. Mr. And Mrs. Hough came to Toledo in the '50s. Mr Hough died in this city after which the decease's widow lived with her son, James M. Hough.

In 1884, she was married to Abner L. Backus and, on his death, she again took up her residence with her son, at whose home, 627 Elm street, she died.

She was an earnest worker in Trinity church and was one of the pioneers in that church organization. Until she became a confirmed invalid, she took a personal interest in church work, and her deeds of good are fondly remembered by her co-workers and those who benefited by her labors.

The funeral will be held to-morrow morning [Tuesday] at 10 o'clock from the residence of her son, 627 Elm street. Rev. Mr. Leffinwall will conduct the service, and the Trinity choir will participate. All friends are invited to attend the services.

Sources:

Backus, William W. *A Genealogical Memoir of the Backus Family*. Norwich, Conn./ The Bulletin Company. 1889.

Scribner, Harvey. *Memories of Lucas County and the City of Toledo*. Madison, Wis./Western Historical Association. 1910.

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Toledo, Ohio Directory 1889-1890 Toledo, OH: R. L. Polk and Co., 1890.

Toledo, Ohio Directory 1890-1891. Toledo, OH: R. L. Polk and Co., 1891.

Waggoner, Clark. *History of the City of Toledo and Lucas County, Ohio*. New York, NY/Munsell & Co., 1888.

Special thanks to Scott Bieszczad, CSI member from Perrysburg, Ohio, for his help with research in locating and photographing the Backus family gravesite and in finding the obituaries of Abner, Lucretia and Samuel Backus.

WHITEWATER CANAL TRAIL

The following report on the activities of the Whitewater Canal Trail was received from Paul Baudendistel or Metamora, Indiana:

In Franklin County

Donald Burden has succeeded in getting the Whitewater Canal Trail Group to host a campaign to "Save the Butler Run Culvert" A poster and hand-out sheets were designed and presented at the Franklin Co. 4-H Fair. This is the first ever public notice and fund raising effort to attempt to stabilize the collapsed arch of the Whitewater Canal located at Brookville, Indiana tunnel before restoration of the structure can take place. This was a very important step because it

clearly announces that the **Whitewater Canal Trail Group** has taken on the responsibility for preservation efforts of this canal structure. Other presentations will be made in the future.

In Fayette County

A manager of the **Whitewater Valley Railroad** informed me [Paul Baudendistel] of another 8' chord x 4' rise stone arch canal culvert .. under their railroad .. said to be located **1/2 mile south of Alpine**. We have not seen this culvert, we are not successful at finding a search location for it on various maps. It is apparently not on a very large stream. It may take a one mile hike to find it. This time of year... the vegetation is so thick that hunting structures is difficult, but the Alpine area is beginning to be of interest as a site of 2 locks, a culvert, and a very scenic view of the river. This section **is not in view** from SR121.

