

# Austin Families Association of America

## Summer 2025

# NEWSLETTER

*Fostering Austin Genealogy & Heritage*



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## Nathaniel Austin (1704 – 1777)

### Suffield to Sheffield

By Alice Austin Martin

*Several generations of Austins had grown up in Suffield, the Massachusetts town that their grandfather, Anthony Austin, had helped to found. Within two generations the land in Suffield had been taken up. The next generation began an exodus — a migration of the young. To establish themselves they had to leave. This was also occurring throughout Connecticut, the state into which Suffield was taken by a boundary change in 1749.*

In 1733 Nathaniel Austin, son of Nathaniel Austin and Abigail Hovey, and his cousin Anthony Austin, son of Anthony, Jr., moved about fifty miles west and were among the thirty-nine original proprietors of Housatonic Township #1. They each were allotted 400 acres of land in the Third Division of the Lower Housatonic Township, an area in Massachusetts that came to be known as Sheffield Plain. This wilderness area had been purchased from the Indians in 1723, but it was not until 1733 that settlement really began and the town was incorporated as Sheffield. It was reached by two Indian trails, one on each side of the Housatonic River, and a trail across the mountain from Springfield.

In 1733 Nathaniel, 29, had just married Agnes Adams. Nathaniel and Agnes had at least nine children, born between 1733 and 1750, whose names are in the Sheffield vital records.

At the first town meeting, Jan. 16, 1733, Nathaniel was elected a fence viewer and Anthony, a tithingman. A fence viewer was a public official, typically elected or appointed, responsible for inspecting and resolving disputes related to fences and property boundaries. A tithingman was a local official with diverse duties related to maintaining public order and enforcing

social and religious norms.

At the second meeting, two weeks later, Nathaniel and Anthony were on a 3-member committee to plan the building of a meeting house.

In 1738 the proprietors chose Nathaniel to represent them before the General Court in Boston to get a confirmation of their land.



In January 1773 Captain Nathaniel Austin served on an 11-member committee which was “appointed to take into consideration the grievances which Americans in general and the inhabitants of this province in particular labor under.” This committee drew up the Sheffield Declaration, containing fourteen resolutions, which was unanimously passed in the town meeting, printed and widely read throughout the colonies.

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Suffield to Sheffield, continued from page 1

In 1774 Nathaniel was one of seven delegates sent by the town of Sheffield to a convention of Berkshire towns, at which it was resolved not to purchase or consume goods arriving in America from Great Britain.

With tensions growing between the colonies and the colonial government, which represented the British crown, skirmishes between British troops and colonial militiamen



in Lexington and Concord in April 1775 kicked off the armed conflict, and by the following summer the rebels were waging a full-scale war for their independence. Nathaniel's six sons (Gad, John, Joab,

Levi, Judah and Elijah) fought as members of the Berkshire Regiment.

The Continental Congress voted in favor of independence on July 2, 1776. The final draft of the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776 and the thirteen American colonies severed their political connections to Great Britain, declaring themselves an independent nation. With the British surrender at Yorktown, Virginia in 1781 the Americans had effectively won, although fighting did not formally end until 1783.

Nathaniel died in 1777 but his will was not probated until 1779. The official printed probate form that was used refers to Sheffield as "within His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England." However, "His Majesty's Province" was crossed out by pen and "the State" was written in.

Nathaniel Austin is listed in the DAR Patriot Index as having provided Civil Service and Patriotic Service.

## Sheffield Declaration (from Wikipedia)

The Sheffield Declaration, also known as the Sheffield Resolves, was a [Colonial American](#) petition against British policies and manifesto for individual rights, drawn up as a series of resolves approved by the Town of [Sheffield, Massachusetts](#), on January 12, 1773 and printed in *The Massachusetts Spy, Or, Thomas's Boston Journal* on February 18, 1773. The meeting took place in the [Colonel John Ashley House](#), a property listed in the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in Ashley Falls, a neighborhood of Sheffield, Massachusetts.

The resolves were debated and approved by a committee of eleven local citizens: Deacon Silas Kellogg, Col. John Ashley (committee moderator), Dr. Lemuel Bernard, Aaron Root, Major John Fellows, Philip Callender, Capt. William Day, Deacon Ebenezer Smith, **Capt. Nathaniel Austin**, Capt. Stephen Dewey, and [Theodore Sedgwick](#), who wrote the text. <sup>[1]</sup>

The Declaration's first resolution was that "Mankind in a state of nature are equal, free, and independent of each other, and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property."

These words are echoed in the most famous line of Thomas Jefferson's [Declaration of Independence](#) three years later: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."  
[1] James M. Banner Jr, "Sedgwick, Theodore"; [American National Biography Online](#), February 2000.



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I hope your summer is off to a great start! It's hard to believe that half of 2025 is already behind us. So, where do things currently stand with our databases and websites?

The board has decided not to move our databases to FamilySearch at this time. While this option may remain on the table for the future, we will continue to manage and maintain the databases ourselves, thanks to the dedication of our tireless volunteers.

We're still waiting for our AFAOA website host ([www.afaqa.org](http://www.afaqa.org)) to finalize the new Responsive Design. This upgrade will make the site accessible, not only from desktop and laptop computers but also from tablets and phones. Unfortunately, the process is taking longer than anticipated, and we now expect the new version to launch at the end of this year or early next year. In the meantime, our current website remains robust, and we'll continue to make minor updates and enhancements to keep it fresh and functional.

Behind the scenes, we recently completed a seamless migration of our database website ([www.afaqa-tng.org](http://www.afaqa-tng.org)), which houses all 69 of our databases, along with our test site. These platforms are now hosted on a faster, more reliable server. We also upgraded both sites to the latest version of the TNG software (15.0.1). While these improvements may not have been visible to most members, they involved considerable effort. I want to extend special thanks and recognition to our new webmaster, Bill Austin, who collaborated closely with former webmaster Joy Davis, as well as the hosting provider's support team, to make these upgrades possible. We're fortunate to have Bill on board! While some tasks remain—such as merging several database lines — most of the near-term updates are now done.

I also want to express heartfelt thanks to those who stepped forward to support our newsletter efforts. A big thank you to Mike Wright, Barbara Giacomelli, and Linda LaMere, for volunteering to join the newsletter team and continue its high-quality production, and to Robert Osborn for continuing his role of graphic designer.

Alice Martin, former newsletter editor and current membership chair, will support the team by consulting on newsletter content and providing a quarterly list of active members for mailing.

Finally, a word about volunteering: if you have skills or time to offer, or even if you're not quite sure how you can help, please reach out to me. We can find a place for you to make a difference. Then you'll be able to say, "I volunteered for this cool genealogy organization — and gained lifelong friends in the process!"

Enjoy the Summer Newsletter and remember: *Genealogy is like Einsteinian physics — in the end, it's all relative!*

David Neithamer  
[president@afaqa.org](mailto:president@afaqa.org)

## Newsletter

The AFAOA Newsletter is a way for us to learn about Austin heritage and to keep informed about what is going on in this association and in Austin research. It is also a way to share and preserve stories about our Austin ancestors. However it takes work to keep these pages filled with interesting and timely articles. That is where you, the AFAOA members, come in.

Please send stories about your Austin ancestors, male or female. Do you have ancestors who were pioneers or war heroes? famous or infamous? What did they accomplish? How did they participate in the events of American history? Tell their stories!

Is there an interesting problem that you have solved in your research? Is there a research source that you would like to recommend?

Sending a story is easy. Type it up and email it to [newsletter@afaqa.org](mailto:newsletter@afaqa.org). Your article can either be carefully worded and ready to print, or a rough draft that needs some editing. Either one will be appreciated.

We need people to write articles, but we also need people to search for interesting stories and suggest topics that would be helpful to include.

Stories - ideas - offers to help. Let us hear from you!

Newsletter Team  
[newsletter@afaqa.org](mailto:newsletter@afaqa.org)

# Austin Families Association of America Newsletter

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## NEW MEMBERS — And their Earliest Known Austin Ancestors

### C.A. Quinn

560 W 218th St, 6G, New York, NY 10034  
caq.genealogy@gmail.com **"Robert Austin of Kingston, RI"**,  
Joseph b. est. 1668, Robert b.1710 RI, Benjamin b.1747 RI, Rev.  
William b.1767 RI, Thomas Jefferson b.1808 NY, Charles Steven  
b.1842 NY, Ella b.1872 NY (m. Harry Bullock)

### Ann Austin McCormick

9200 Quantrelle Ave. NE, Apt. 201, Otsego, MN 55330;  
**"Richard Austin of Charlestown, MA"**, Anthony b.1638 Eng,  
Dr. Nathaniel b.1698 MA, Capt. Nathaniel b.1703 MA, Gad b.1773  
MA, Nathaniel b.1764 MA, Alvah b.1799 NY, Orville b.1829 NY,  
John b.1861 WI, Louis T. b.1891 WI, John C. b.1921 MN

### Jared Bellingham

105 Astor Blvd, Belleville, MI 48111;  
jaredbellingham@gmail.com; **"Richard Austin of  
Charlestown, MA"**, Anthony b.1638 Eng., Anthony b.1668 MA,  
Anthony b.1700 MA. Anthony b.1733 MA, Silas b.1766 MA, Anson  
b.1792 MA, William S. b.1818 NY, Myrtle Adelia b.1862 NY  
(m. Charles Barton)

### Pamela Kotval

700 7th St. NW, Apt 433; New Brighton, MN 55112;  
pakotval@msn.com; **"Richard Austin of Charlestown, MA"**,  
Anthony b.1638 Eng, Dr. Nathaniel b.1698 MA, Capt. Nathaniel  
b.1703 MA; Diadama b. 1736 (m. Nathaniel Kellogg)

### Justin Michael Austin

426 North 15th Street, Heber Springs, AR 72543;  
Beyondhsa@gmail.com; **"John Austin of Monongalia, VA"**  
b.abt.1765, William b.1800 VA, Joseph b.1833 VA, Joeph Leonard  
b.1875 WV, William Edward b.1903 WV, Raymond Russell  
b.1936 WV

### Dennis Cox

4001 Tea Rose CT, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762;  
dennis.cox@sbcglobal.net; **"Samuel Austin of Boston MA"**  
b.1639

### Kathy Austin Wright Peoples

3550 N. Burroughs Path, #28; Beverly Hills, FL 34465;  
wyhtak@aol.com; **"John Austin of New Haven, CT"** b.1643 CT,  
John b.1677 CT, Samuel b.1706 CT, Joseph b.1753 CT, Nelson  
b.1806, Theodore b.1833 CT, Wilbert. b.1859 CT; Ellsworth  
Welles b.1891 CT; Donald Cook b.1926 CT

### Scott Edward Austin

2152 Mariaville Road, Mariaville, ME 04605;  
scott.austin@rivah.net

### Martha Molina

3357 Dead Horse Mountain Rd., Fayetteville, AR 72701;  
marthajsm@gmail.com; **"William Wilson Austin of Hanover  
Co., VA"** b.abt.1680 Wales; William Wilson II b.abt.1725 VA;  
Peter Lucilius b.1791 VA, John Alexander b.1820 VA, Henry  
Clifton b.1867 MO, Nelson William b.1897 MO

### James Kleerup

8149 S. Monaco Cr., Centennial, CO 80112;  
fragolakat@gmail.com; **"William Wilson Austin of Hanover  
Co., VA"** b.abt.1680 Wales, William Wilson II b.abt.1725 VA;  
Peter Lucilius b.1791 VA, Robert Archibald b.1835 VA



Thanks to all members for your support of the Austin  
Families Association of America!



### Keep your membership records up to date!

- Did you provide names and dates for your Austin ancestors when you joined?
- Have you found your Austin ancestors in the AFAOA Database? Is their information complete and correct?
- Do you have a new postal address or email address?

Contact us with changes or new information.

Alice Austin Martin  
membership@afaoa.org



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## The Power of DNA Testing

*What would compel 80-year-old Mika Feleu to travel 4,096 miles from a remote South Pacific Island to Los Angeles, and then drive another 3,319 miles across the United States to the tiny town of Vanceboro, Maine — to visit the grave of a man he never met? It's a compelling story of human connection — made all the more interesting by a subtle link to an Austin family.*

On May 9, 2025, after a lifetime of searching and a journey of more than 7,000 miles, Mika stood at the grave of his father, Earl W. Hilchey. There, he placed a long strand of shells — a traditional Polynesian necklace symbolizing honor, respect, and sacred rite. In Polynesian culture, the shell necklace is known as the “cord that unites all shells.” In that moment, it became a symbol of return—not just to a physical place, but to a sense of origin, to *Fenua*—the homeland. In this case, his father’s homeland: Vanceboro, Maine.

After 80 years of not knowing his father’s name, not having a single connection, Mika had finally arrived — both literally and emotionally. He met and embraced six half-siblings and a cousin he never knew existed. And now, the shells on that sacred cord were truly united.

The delicate necklace, draped around the name carved into dark Maine granite, spoke volumes — more than words could ever express. Tears fell freely. Mika was honoring the father he had never met, a man whose name had been a mystery until a recent DNA test revealed it.

Through his smiles and tears, Mika radiated something new — a sense of wholeness. A long-lost chapter of his identity had been restored. Surrounded by newly discovered family, Mika was no longer alone. After eight decades, he had found his place in the story.

Born in October 1944 on Wallis Island in Polynesia, Mika was the son of a local woman, Mikaele Feleu, and an American Marine, Earl Hilchey, who had been stationed

briefly on the island during World War II. Earl was re-assigned before ever knowing he had fathered a child. Soon after, Mika’s mother left him with her brother and disappeared from his life.

Growing up, Mika was often teased for being different — taller, with distinctly American features — and for being called “an American.” Yet he knew nothing of his father’s identity until he was 14, when he was told only that his father had been an American soldier.

Decades later, with the help of a friend, Mika took a DNA test. The results led him to the Hilchey family through Ancestry.com. One of Earl’s daughters, Terry, contacted the Vanceboro Historical Society for help locating Earl’s grave, and plans for the reunion began.

Earl Hilchey had passed away in Golden, Colorado, in 1986. Years later, four of his children decided to “bring him home” to Vanceboro, where he now rests alongside his sister Ethel Hilchey Grass, near their parents and grandparents.

Now, thanks to a cord of shells and a son’s unwavering journey across oceans and continents, Earl Hilchey is finally surrounded by all of his children — some in spirit, some in tears, and all united at last.

*By Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw  
Vanceboro Historical Society (edited with permission)*

**Note:** *Earl Hilchey’s 1st wife, Lydia Faulkner, is the niece of Leon Faulkner, who married Bertha Austin of the Benoni Austin Line (Bertha<sup>6</sup>, Charles<sup>5</sup>, James<sup>4</sup>, Stephen<sup>3</sup>, Benoni Jr.<sup>2</sup>, Benoni Sr.<sup>1</sup>)*

## Austin Y-DNA Project

A reminder to AFAOA members that have been DNA tested: FTDNA (Family Tree DNA) provides a test number when you order a test for the first time or transfer data from another DNA testing service. Using your test number and password you can get your test data and change your profile. If you are interested in getting more testing done, or upgrades to your existing testing, this should be done from that original test number. Upgrades are less costly than ordering a new test, because they store your DNA sample for future testing and don’t repeat the testing already done. If you have forgotten your password there is an easy way to reset it, but it depends on the email address you have on file with FTDNA. Keeping your email ad-

dress and your mailing address up to date is important in getting access to your test data and upgrading.

If you are thinking about getting Big-Y tested, or have already been Big-Y tested, make sure your birth year is correct. This is one piece of information that FTDNA uses to estimate the date of your terminal SNP.

Your oldest known ancestor is used on several displays from FTDNA and adds to the chance that someone who matches you will contact you.

Let me know if you need help. I have detailed procedures and recommendations for joining projects, transferring data, adding your oldest Austin ancestor, upgrading, etc.

Art Sikes  
DNA project Administrator  
Y-DNA@afaoa.org

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## Fort Wayne, Indiana

Fort Wayne, the county seat of Allen County, derives its name from a U.S. military fort established in 1794 by Gen. Anthony Wayne. This fort, built where the St. Joseph and St. Mary's rivers come together to form the Maumee, followed Wayne's victory over the Miami Indians. Originally the capital of the Miami nation, the first European settlers were French fur traders who established their trading post during the 1680s. The first French fort, named Fort Miamis, was built in 1697. It was annexed by the British in 1760, after the French and Indian War, and renamed Fort Miami, but it was taken over by the Indians following Pontiac's Rebellion. Indian rule lasted for about 30 years, following which the United States army attacked the region and established their hold. Settlement took place in 1815. Fort Wayne was platted in 1824, and was made the county seat. The city charter was obtained in 1840.

The local economy was aided by the arrival of the Wabash and Erie Canal in 1843, linking the navigable water of the Maumee River with the Wabash through the seven mile portage at Fort Wayne. This provided easy and rapid travel for incoming settlers and a convenient way for moving their agricultural and other products. The arrival of immigrants from Germany and Ireland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century increased the population and brought about a mixed culture in the city.

**The History Center** 302 E Berry St.  
[www.fwhistorycenter.com](http://www.fwhistorycenter.com)

The History Center, managed by the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society, is a museum housed in the Old City Hall building, which was constructed in 1893 and served as the seat of city government until 1971. The center holds an extensive collection of archival records and more than 22,000 artifacts that trace the community's heritage from the Glacial Age to the Information Era.

**Allen County Courthouse** 715 S. Calhoun St.  
[www.allencountycourthouse.org/history.php](http://www.allencountycourthouse.org/history.php)

A National Historic Landmark, and one of the finest examples of Beaux Arts architecture, the restored Allen County Courthouse boasts magnificent art glass, exquisite murals and intricately patterned tile floors. Completed in 1902, it was meant to express in art and architecture the dignity of the government and the grandeur of the law.



**Historic Old Fort** 1201 Spy Run Ave.  
[www.fortwayneparks.org/facilities/historic-old-fort.html](http://www.fortwayneparks.org/facilities/historic-old-fort.html)  
[www.oldfortwayne.org/](http://www.oldfortwayne.org/)

The reconstructed Fort Wayne is a faithful copy of the post built by American troops in 1815-1816. The original complex was perhaps the most sophisticated all-wooden fort built



in North America. The Old Fort is a public park, so you can always wander and enjoy the Fort's grounds. The buildings are open for special events.

**Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center** 900 Library Plaza  
[www.genealogycenter.org/](http://www.genealogycenter.org/)

The Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne boasts the second most complete genealogical collection in the United States, with over 350,000 printed volumes and 513,000 microfilm and microfiche items. The library's holdings include family histories, state, city and town records and histories, census records, city directories, passenger lists, military records, U.S. Special Collections, and records for Canada, the British Isles, Germany and other countries.



**Botanical Conservatory** 1100 S. Calhoun St.  
[www.botanicalconservatory.org/](http://www.botanicalconservatory.org/)

Three indoor gardens cover over 25,000 square feet and showcase 1,200 plants (over 500 species). Stroll through four outdoor gardens featuring a variety of ornamental grasses, rhododendrons, trees, shrubs and perennials. Visit the Showcase Garden with its lush seasonal displays, and the Tropical Garden where orchids and palms thrive in the shadows of a cascading waterfall, or retreat to the quiet beauty of the Desert Garden.



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## 2025 Austin Families Association Conference • Fort Wayne, Indiana

**Wednesday & Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>**

Early arrival activities • Thursday evening social hour

**Friday & Saturday, October 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>**

Conference Speakers • Saturday evening Dinner

Come join your Austin friends and cousins in Fort Wayne, Indiana this Fall! Part reunion, part informational speakers and research, and part simply enjoying the city chosen as our host, the annual AFAOA conference is an event many of us look forward to every year. Get help with your Austin research and take advantage of research facilities at the Allen County Public Library's Genealogy Center, which boasts the second most complete genealogical collection in the United States. Other places of interest in Fort Wayne include the Allen County Courthouse, the Botanical Conservatory, the historic Old Fort, and the History Center.

### CONFERENCE HOTEL

**Courtyard by Marriott – Fort Wayne Downtown  
1150 South Harrison Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46802**

The Courtyard Fort Wayne Downtown is mere steps from the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library and is conveniently located near the Botanical Conservatory and other attractions in downtown Fort Wayne. The conference rate for Standard Rooms is \$145 single/double occupancy. Rooms include 1 King or 2 Queen beds, with a mini-fridge, coffeemaker, microwave, and complimentary WIFI. There is a restaurant onsite, and parking is available for \$10/day.

**We hope to see you in Fort Wayne this October!**



### HOW TO REGISTER

1. **Register Using the Registration Form:** Print out the **2025 Conference Registration Form**, included with this newsletter, and send your completed form, with a check payable to AFAOA, to **Austin Families Association, P.O. Box 92, Blooming Glen, PA 18911-0092**
2. **Register Online:** Go to the website **Conference Registration Page** (Members should login first; this will pre-fill your information). *If you register and pay your fee online, please email additional information: your earliest known Austin ancestors, your arrival date, and your interest in early arrival activities to the Conference Chair at [conference@afaoa.org](mailto:conference@afaoa.org).*

### HOTEL RESERVATIONS

A block of rooms has been reserved, at the conference rate, for the nights of Tuesday, October 7th through Sunday, October 12th. To make your reservation, use our AFAOA link, **Book your group rate for 2025 Austin Families Association Conference**, and choose your dates. Reservations at the conference rate must be made by Friday, September 19th or before the group block is sold-out, whichever comes first. After this date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis at regular rack rates. So, make your reservations early!!

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

The conference registration fee is \$150 per person, which includes Friday and Saturday speakers and workshops, the Thursday social hour and the Saturday night dinner. The fee is \$75 per person for those who wish to attend only the social hour and dinner.



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[www.afaoa.org](http://www.afaoa.org)

# Austin Families Association of America

Austin Families Association of America  
P.O. Box 92  
Blooming Glen, PA 18911-0092

Address Service Requested

## Austin Families Association of America

### Objectives

- To gather, preserve and disseminate Austin genealogies and Austin family histories.
- To establish a specialized database of Austin information that can assist genealogists and family members to learn as much as possible about their Austin heritage.
- To foster acquaintances and long-term friendships among the members of all branches of Austin families.

Please notice the membership renewal date on your address label.

If you receive your Newsletter only by email, find your dues expiration date on our website (AFAOA Members Login – Profile)

Annual dues are \$20.

Dues may be paid for 1, 2 or 3 years

It is now possible to renew your membership and pay dues by credit card on the website. (You do not need a PayPal account.)

If you prefer, you may pay by check.

Send to: Austin Families Association  
P.O. Box 92  
Blooming Glen, PA 18911-0092