William Backus, Lieutenant, 20 OH Light Artillery, U.S. Army

1834 April 8: Backus was born in Bingen an der Rhine, Germany.

1851 Immigrated to the U.S.

1854 Naturalized as a U.S. citizen.

1857 December: Married a German girl named Lydia “Lena” Strobel in Cuyahoga County, OH.

1860 June 27: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH showed William, a saloon keeper, living with his new wife Lydia.

1861 A Cleveland newspaper article on a murder mentioned William Backus being a witness to a murder that happened in his saloon on Merwin Street.

1862 August 28: William Backus enlisted in the U.S. Army and mustered into the 20 OH Light Artillery on October 29th. His rank at enlistment was Corporal. When he left home, he left his young wife with a toddler to take care of on her own.

October 31: Cleveland Daily Leader, Cleveland, OH listed the newly formed 20th OH Artillery and its officers.

1863 February 15: William was promoted to Quarter Master.

May 22: William was promoted to Lieutenant.
1864  November 30: William and his battery fought at the Battle of Franklin. Their battery was positioned right in the Carter House yard. The soldiers were in terrible fighting within the Confederate breach.

December 5: William was promoted to Captain

1865  July 13: William mustered out with his regiment at Camp Cleveland, OH.

1870  June 3: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH showed William, a liquor dealer, and Lena living with their son William.

1876  The Cleveland City Directory showed this as the year William started working as a traveling salesman for Leonhard Schlather Brewing. He worked for the company for many years.
1880 June 11: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH showed William, a brewing agent, living with his wife Lena.

1900 June 6: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH showed William, a book keeper, and Lena living with their adult son. Also living with the family, is a servant, illustrating the family has done well through the years.

1910 April: The U.S. Federal Census enumerated in Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, OH showed a widowed William as a manager at a brewing company. Living with him was his housekeeper.

October 3: William Backus died in Cleveland, OH. He was buried in Calvary Cemetery.

A History of Cleveland, Ohio: Biographical
By Samuel Peter Orth, published 1910

WILLIAM BACKUS.

“William Backus, who has acted as manager of the Schlather Brewing Company of Cleveland for the past twenty-one years, was born in Bingen an der Rhine, Germany, his natal day being April 8, 1834. The paternal grandfather, Valentine Backus, followed farming at Bingen an der Rhine throughout his entire business career and passed away in 1842. The father of our subject, who was likewise a native of Bingen, Germany, devoted his attention to general agricultural pursuits throughout his entire life and was called to his final rest in 1865.

William Backus attended the public schools of his native land until fourteen years of age and after putting aside his text-books worked on his father's farm for a period of three years. When a young man of seventeen he set sail for the new world and after landing in New York made his way direct to Cleveland, Ohio, first securing a position in a tannery, where he remained for six months. Subsequently he acted as porter in the Merchants Hotel for a year and then accepted a clerkship in a grocery store, continuing in the latter position for three years. On the expiration of that period he went to Chicago and worked as a porter in the Tremont Hotel for a year and a half. Returning to Cleveland, he started out in business on his own account as proprietor of a restaurant on Merwin street, successfully conducting the same until he joined the Union army in 1861. He served with the Twentieth Ohio Light Artillery for three years, being mustered out with the rank of captain. After returning to this city he acted as government inspector of tobacco and cigars for two years and afterward was made superintendent of city markets, holding that position for a period of five years.

In 1876 he entered the service of the Schlather Brewing Company and in 1888 was made manager of the concern, in which connection he has since represented its interests. The plant has an annual capacity of one hundred and fifty thousand barrels of beer, while fifty men and twenty-five wagons are employed in the conduct of the business. The company does an extensive and profitable business and one-third of their customers are out of town patrons.

In December, 1857, in Cleveland. Mr. Backus was united in marriage to Miss Lena Strobel. They are the parents of a son, William, who is now forty-eight years of age and is a practicing attorney of Mexico.

In his political views Mr. Backus is independent and, not being bound by party ties, casts his ballot as his judgment dictates. He belongs to the Loyal Legion and is honorary president of the German-American Central Bund. His residence is at No. 2600 Carroll avenue. The hope that led him to leave his native land has been more than realized, for in this country he has found the opportunities he sought and through their wise utilization has gained a measure of prosperity that well entitles him to recognition among the substantial and prominent residents of the city in which he has made his home for more than a half century. Though now past the seventy-fifth milestone on life's journey, he is still an active factor in business circles and in spirit and interests seems yet in his prime.”