

## Oley Day of Caring

Each year we team up with the Oley High School Future Farmers Of America under the guidance of Jeremy Deysher to clean up approximately twenty Oley area family farm burial grounds.

One of the primary goals of the National FFA Organization is to provide hands-on opportunities for students to learn leadership skills. The local chapter at Oley Valley High School is particularly successful in this endeavor. The FFA and BCAGP join together in our annual Day of Caring to restore about 20 graveyards in the Valley.

Photos of their hard work can be seen throughout this issue! Thank you for all of your hard work!



"Grave Happenings," is a collection of member contributed articles written to keep everyone advised of recent and on-going preservation activities, BCAGP needs, and incidental graveyard related material.

We are always looking for items of interest and are open to suggestions on future content.

Permission to reprint any materials herein is granted provided they are printed in their entirety and that BCAGP's author is cited.

Our newsletters are archived online on our website in full color

**Contributors Staff/Photos this issue:**

Meredith Goldey; Karla Hummel; Les Rohrbach; Keith Schaffer; Lara Thomas; Anne Wagner; Gary Koenig



# Set in Stone

Karla Hummel – Vice President



Lawrence Jay Houp, at the Bieber/Lesher burial ground during the Oley Day of Caring, 2023

---

BCAGP awards one senior student, who receives the Jacqueline Nein Award, in the amount of \$250, named in honor of our founder,

I had the pleasure of working with this year's award recipient, Lawrence Jay Houp, on Day of Caring. His leadership skills were evident throughout the day, as he directed and encouraged others -- always leading by the example of his own hard work. I was particularly impressed with his efforts.

"Jay" also had the exciting experience of discovering a buried tablet tombstone at the Bieber Lesher burial ground on Mud Run Rd. It fit perfectly with the upper part of a neighboring stone that must have been mistakenly moved many years ago. BCAGP will need to go back to repair the stone.

Our sincere congratulations to Jay Houp and best wishes in his future endeavors!



Oley Day of Caring—Keim Pike township

---



Oley Day of Caring—Keim Rockland township

---



# Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President

Occasionally BCAGP is offered the opportunity to make a presentation and spread our message. One such instance came last year when Doug Madenford invited BCAGP members to participate in one of his podcasts. Doug's podcasts focus on Pennsylvania Dutch, the language, the culture and our history. He is a strong proponent of our heritage and promotes it via his podcast. You may visit Doug's website and subscribe to his pod cast at <https://padutch101.com/>.

Doug is also an active participant in the Kutztown Folk Festival and suggested afterwards that BCAGP make an application to the festival to host a stand there. We did as he suggested and were accepted. We set up our stand in the Nochberschaft Haus this year.



This was a new experience for BCAGP. We have had passive stands at the Oley Fair where BCAGP information is available for the taking and one of our members could have possibility been present. For the most part though we have never had someone continually manning a display. In Kutztown we had one and most often two members at our stand all day and engaging with interested passersby. I was pleasantly surprised at the willingness of our members to participate, and to do so on multiple days.

Our presentation was intended to be educational. We searched through our pictures for representative views of our activities and tried to have at least one picture from each existing graveyard that we have been to. The pictures were presented on a 23" television screen in a slide show format. We had pictures from graveyards where we have done restoration work, where we have restored walls and reset and repaired tombstones, and where we have searched for buried tombstones. We have worked at probably all the sites on display.



Jaidan Goldey at the BCAGP booth.

In addition, we were a resource for individuals who were looking for their ancestral connections. While information on most colonial graveyards and burials has been lost, for the graveyards that have survived we had names of those buried, though only those with readable tombstones which is just a fraction of the actual burials. We were able to connect people with some knowledge of their forebears to people and locations where their ancestors may have settled.

BCAGP found its week at the Kutztown Folk Festival to be quite enjoyable. We spoke with many people from throughout the region with concern for historic graveyards and passed

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Our Mission

We strive to preserve and maintain the historic Berks County graveyards in Eastern Pennsylvania. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Historic Burial Places Preservation Act (1994) provides for the preservation of historic burial places, tombs, monuments and gravestones and imposes penalties for violations. Research supports the existence of over 300 historic graveyards in Berks County of which approximately 120 remain with some sort of visible surface evidence. The BCAGP is working aggressively to preserve these historic grave sites for future generations.

*(Continued from page 3)*

along tips for best practices in dealing with old tombstones. Often they were disappointed to hear that Berks is the only nearby county to have an organization such as ours. We were happy to



Our Secretary, Lara Thomas, at the Kutztown Folk Festival



Our new Vice President Gary Koenig at the booth

encounter landowners who invited us to inspect sites on their properties that we have in our records but current membership has never visited. And, an added bonus, we sampled many edible treats while we were there.



Oley Day of Caring—WeiserDeTurk



Oley Day of Caring—Hoch



Oley Day of caring—Ohlinger



# Clean up at Rothermel 1

On September 8th a number of members met in Maiden Creek to clean up the Rothermel 1 on Walnut Tree Drive. This clean up was to prepare the cemetery the Ground Penetrating Radar that will be conducted by Dr. Laura Sherrod of the Geology Department, Kutztown University in the upcoming weeks.



# Still Battling Johnson Grass!

How fast does Johnson grass grow and what happens when it does? It allows other plants to grow by providing windbreak and sunscreen. It hides holes. It allows groundhogs that would normally be seen by predators to happily burrow and shift the soil and tombstones.

Johnson grass, how do I hate thee, let me count the ways...

May 12 versus July 18, same cemetery, red circle is same tombstone.



Deturk 2 on May 12th 2023



Deturk 2 on July 18th 2023



# Veteran Focus

## Abraham DeTurck of Oley Township

Lara Thomas – Secretary

Some of the members of BCAGP have heard me talk about how we could play 6 Degrees of Berks County. If you are unfamiliar with the phrase "6 degrees of Kevin Bacon", there is a game/exercise that you can connect any actor to the actor Kevin Bacon via six or less interconnected actors. For example: George Clooney was in Ocean's Eleven with Matt Damon, Matt Damon was in The Departed with Jack Nicholson, and Jack Nicholson was in A Few Good Men with Kevin Bacon. Nicholson has a Bacon number of 1, Damon has a Bacon number of 2, and Clooney has a Bacon number of 3. All connected in less than 6 steps. Well, we can do 6 Degrees within all our cemeteries!

For this newsletter, I chose Abraham DeTurck from the DeTurck Family Cemetery also known as DeTurk #2. My group was there during Youth Day of Caring this year, with the Oley Valley High School Future Farmers of America. Here is where the Six Degrees comes in. Previous veteran subject George Kemp (veteran from October 2020, Kemp family burial ground, Maxatawny) was married into the Levan family, who was also intermarried with Daniel DeTurck (veteran from July 2021, DeTurk Rothermel family burial ground Muhlenberg). Daniel DeTurck is the brother of Abraham DeTurck in Oley!

Abraham was born in 1752, the 7th out of 12 children of Johannes/Johan/John DeTurk and wife Deborah Hoch DeTurk. Some of you might be aware of the Johannes DeTurck home that is part of the Historic Preservation Trust of Berks. Abraham was a teenager when this was built. Now it is one of our oldest preserved homes in Berks. While his older brothers married and started their own farms and families, Abraham and younger brother Philip stayed on the DeTurck farm of their father, Johan. Abraham's mother passed away in 1779, the same year Abraham begins to show up in census and tax lists. By 1781, his father Johan died and Abraham and Philip each received 187 acres of land with buildings and water access.



Johannes DeTurck Axillary House.

In between these events, we know that from August of 1777 to January of 1778, Abraham served in Captain Reiff's Company, Co. 7 of the 1st Battalion of the Berks County Militia. Pennsylvania had been having a difficult time gathering enough men to serve in the new Revolution. Previous calls for enlistment were often ignored. By 1777 if one did not respond, you were not only fined £5 but would also have to pay a penalty of the amount you paid in taxes, annually! One month's salary for serving in the Militia would pay a soldier £2 and 10 s. Better to be paid, than pay. Abraham, as well as several of his brothers would all serve in the new military during the Revolution.

*(Continued on page 7)*





Oley Day of Caring 2023 at DeTurck 2 Burial Ground.  
Abrahams stone can be seen behind the students.

Abraham survived his enlistment and returned home to Oley. He married Anna Weiser in 1782. A good farmer, by 1783 he was already being taxed on 3 horses, 3 cows, 12 sheep, a house and a barn. Interestingly, the assessor noted 5 people on the property. Perhaps Philip is living with him, perhaps he has hired labor. Sons Abraham the younger and Isaac were born in 1785 and 1789.

In 1788 and 1789 he was taxed on having a servant. Likely, he had purchased the indenture on a recent immigrant. By paying the costs of the voyage over the ocean and agreeing to feed, clothe and sometimes train or educate an immigrant, Abraham would have been entitled to all the indentured person's labor for anywhere from 2 to 18 years, although the norm was 7

years. The fact that he has the cash to be paying for labor and buying an indenture contract shows how well he is prospering. Oddly, the 1790 Federal Census lists one free white male over 16, two free white male under 16 and one white female.

Daughters Catherine and Hannah followed in 1792 and 1796. In 1800, he shows up in both the Federal Census and Pennsylvania's Septennial Census, listed as a farmer. But by 1820, the head of household was now Abraham DeTurck, the Junior. The household size swelled to twelve as it is likely the two households have combined as Abraham and Anna have aged. In 1822, daughter Catherine died, and son-in-law Peter Deysner remarried soon thereafter.

Unfortunately, the next record is that of probate and will. April 19th of 1829, Abraham passed away at the age of 77. I always find reading these documents fascinating for what they tell us about how the person lived and what they did with their time. It is known that the DeTurcks had wetland on their property and apparently grew flax, eventually turning it into linen. At inventory, flax, tow, a flax brake with heckles, and yards and yards of linen are listed, as well as 21 bed-sheets, hand towels, pillowcases, curtains and 38 tablecloths!

Abraham and Anna lived comfortably enough to also have a 10 plate stove, beehives for honey and wax, an apple mill, clock with case, desk and chairs, four bibles and books of testament. Oddly, there is even half a barrel of mackerel listed. This would have been brought in from Reading and



Two completed walls BCAGP restored on the DeTurck 2 Burial Ground.

(Continued on page 8)





Abraham Deturck's Stone

Philadelphia as it is a salt water fish. Why they did this when fresh water fish were readily available may have been as a bit of a status issue, showing they could afford it.

Bequests were made to his wife and children. Catherine's son Moses must have been living with him, as arrangements are made to set a guardian for the young grandson. Lists of bonds and notes with interest due as well as cash of over \$500 are itemized.

Of special interest to us at BCAGP is that a payment is noted for his tombstone... of \$41.12! That is equal to his entire wheat harvest that year. The note is made that one John Fellears (sp?) is paid for the stone although his tombstone was carved by Mors of Reading, one of largest and enduring of the stone mason companies. His stone is not overly elaborate or complicated, but elegant in simplicity. It is taller than that of his wife Anna, who would follow him to rest only three months later.

my debt Henry Fink	3 52:4
my debt Anne's Honorable Guardian	<del>150 00</del>
my debt John Fellears for Tomb stone	41 12 4
my debt Jacob Salade	1 99
my owe Elijah Deibert attorney	5 60

Record for the payment of Abraham DeTurck's stone.



Barbara DeTurck Witman speaking to a student during the 2023 Oley Day of Caring.

Abraham and Anna rest almost perfectly centered in the family burial ground. Their final resting place is a topic of interest to Barbara DeTurck Witman. BCAGP was able to do work there several years ago and used existing stone to rebuild two of the original four stone walls. As often happens, later generations apparently reused stone taken from the other walls. A large ash tree died and falling branches did damage. Barbara has taken initiative and paid to have the remains of the tree removed and the stump ground out. She is looking to help raise funds to do more work to restore this historic final resting place of veteran Abraham DeTurck.

Please remember Abraham and if able, reach out to us for more information on helping restore this graveyard to honor Abraham, his sacrifices and successes, and those of his family.

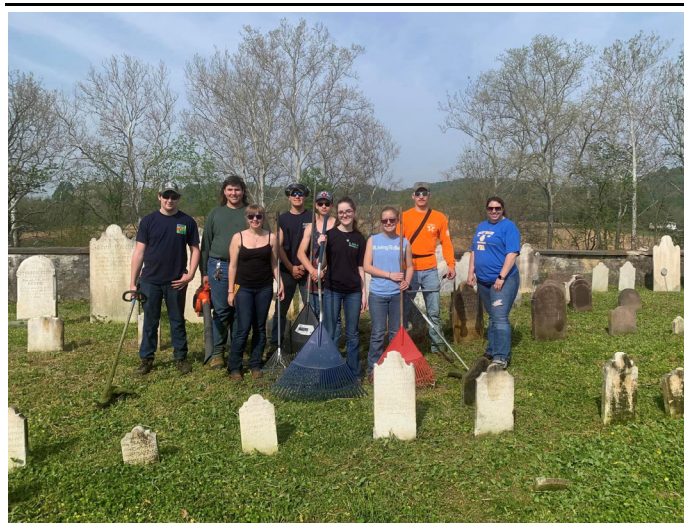




Oley Day of Caring—Wendy's Group of Students



Oley Day of Caring—Mr Deysher's group



Oley Day of Caring—Group 3



Oley Day of Caring—Deturk 2



Oley Day of Caring—Kauffman



Oley Day of Caring—Hoch/Deturk/Shenkle





Oley Day of Caring—Hunter Kemp



Oley Day of Caring—Bertolet



Oley Day of Caring—Dowsing demo at the Schneider



Oley Day of Caring—Watermelon break at the Schneider

## Join us in the field!

BCAGP has a good-sized membership base, but we will always value new hands in the graveyards. Just what is involved in cleanups that you might enjoy? Everyone simply assumes the job they are comfortable with!

- Using weedwhackers, loppers cut the vegetation back.
- We remove all of the trimmings to a pile outside the wall or load it for transport.
- We then examine stones and take inventory of needed repairs to stones or walls.
  - We conduct searches for broken pieces.
  - We clean the stones with D/2
  - Repair stones

Les will send out emails with full details and they will be also be posted to Facebook.

Please bring tools and work gloves with you.

Some suggested tools are: Weedwhackers, Loppers or Clippers, Rakes.



# JOIN OR DONATE TODAY!

If you're not a current member, please join us in preserving and maintaining our historic graveyards. If you do not wish to be a member at this time but you are interested in contributing support for a specific graveyard, please indicate that graveyard on the form below. We also appreciate contributions to the general fund.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2023

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Save a tree! Please e-mail me the newsletter.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Annual Membership, \$15

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Family Annual Membership (residing in same household), \$25

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Municipality or Business Annual Membership, \$35

### Additional Donation Earmarked for:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ General Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Burial Ground

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Municipality

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mail Checks to:

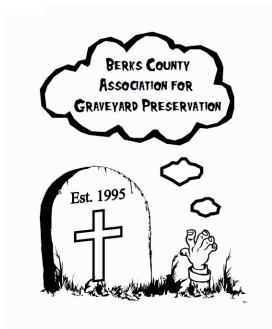
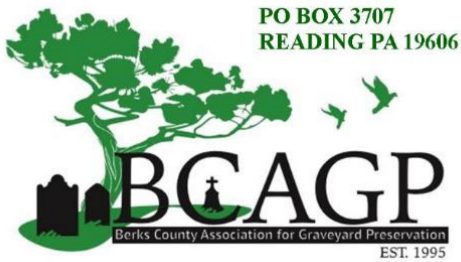
**BCAGP**

**PO Box 3707**

**Reading, PA 19606**

- **Membership runs a calendar year (January to December).**
- Membership dues paid after October 1st will be applied to the next membership year.
- This form is also available on our website in the internet edition of the newsletters which can be printed.
- The official registration and financial information of Berks County Association of Graveyard Preservation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999.
- Registration does not imply endorsement.
- Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation is a registered 501 (c) (3). Please check with your tax advisor as to the deductibility of your contribution.





[WWW.BCAGP.ORG](http://WWW.BCAGP.ORG)

Check our web site for details for scheduled clean ups, meeting dates and for internet edition newsletter archives in full color!

## **BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION**

### Officers and Board of Directors

President:	Les Rohrbach	610-323-1703	rohrbach_la@comcast.net
Vice President:	Gary Koenig	610-780-1583	dkbucs@aol.com
2nd Vice President	Karla Hummel	610-987-9569	BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com
Treasurer	Paul Schumann	484-529-8682	schu2112@msn.com
Secretary	Lara Thomas	610-914-5534	thomas_lara_a@yahoo.com

Other Board Members at large:

Ed Gensemer; Meredith Goldey; Keith Schaffer; Ron Smith; Marvin Stamm; Anne Wagner

Newsletter Contact: Meredith Goldey (Mergoldey@gmail.com)



Don't forget to check our Facebook and Instagram for updates and more photos.

