

Long-Missing George Schmidt Gravestone Located!

By Carol M. Aulenbach

Many hands made quick work of the berry bushes and brambles at the Schmidt burial ground on March 5. The next task was probing for the missing gravestone of George Schmidt (1770-1855).



In just a minute or two, Juli Winkler located a promising underground object next to Margaret (Klein) Schmidt's (1768-1850) grave. Several helpers removed layers of soil and tree roots. About 12 inches down and 20 minutes later, cheers! Lying perfectly flat in the excavation was a tall marble tablet matching Margaret's stone. Her husband George Schmidt was found at last.

According to BCAGP records, George's stone had disappeared before 1930. A quick rinse by Lara Thomas revealed the long-buried inscription, as crisp and legible as the day the marker was carved 168 years ago. She believes

(Continued on page 2)

"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, Pat Reber, Gary Koenig



that, based on superior condition, the stone had been buried for more than a century. George's translated epitaph follows:

A Memorial to
Johan George Schmidt
Born on 12 February 1770
Died on 21 January 1855
Age 84 years 11 months and 9 days
Text 1st Book of Moses (Genesis) Ch. 25 V. 8

Who was George Schmidt? Morton L. Montgomery's *History of Berks Co.* reports that George was the first generation in his family to be born on this continent, in Lehigh County in 1770. At that time, Pennsylvania was one of 13 British Colonies. The Revolutionary War began in 1775, the year the Schmidt family moved to this 123-acre farm in Maxatawny Township. George and Margaret spent the rest of their lives on this homestead, putting down deep roots and rearing a family. They were blessed to live into their 80s and undoubtedly enjoyed watching their numerous grandchildren grow. Margaret died at age 82, less than five years before George.

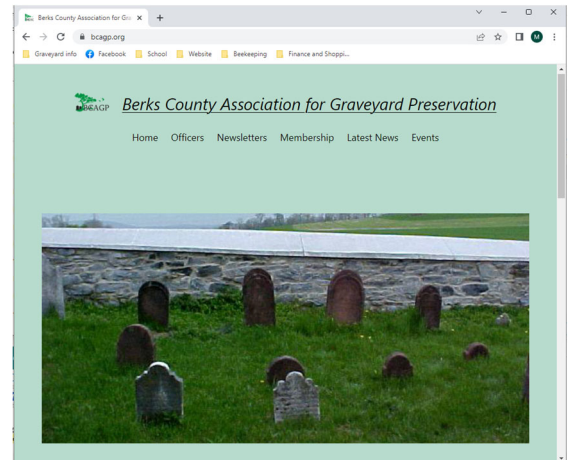
George's funeral text is fitting, taken from the biblical story of Abram: "Then he breathed his last, dying at a ripe old age, grown old after a full life; and he was taken to his kinsmen."



Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President

If you ever view the BCAGP online webpage, you have noticed a change recently. Last fall our long time web administrator suggested that we look into finding a replacement as he was getting older and was looking to get out of the business. Luckily one of our newer members, Meredith Goldey, had knowledge of how to proceed and offered to manage our online migration to a new site, one which BCAGP members can administer themselves. The initial phase has begun and is what you see visiting www.bcagp.org. To begin we have moved 'the essentials', easily recognizable carryovers from the prior website. At present we are reliant on Meredith to closely guide us. As some of us learn how to use the website, changes will become easier. Hopefully, more content will be provided and on a more timely basis. Expect the look to evolve as new ideas come about.



Another behind the scenes effort is also under way. When I began with BCAGP 15 years ago all records were paper and much was missing. The research on graveyards done in the 1990s was no where to be found. What we had was the fruits of that research, the book Epitaphs which we have used as our Bible ever since. However, as questions have arisen new investigations have taken place by a number of us which we have individually filed on our personal PCs. Much of what we now have is scattered about and unavailable to BCAGP as a whole. Meredith has acquired storage space 'in the cloud' for us which we will use to consolidate and organize the information currently held by various members.

Mostly this effort is being done by Lara Thomas. In the pre covid world a prior BCAGP secretary, Sean Brown, had begun this effort. He did fantastic work but he died suddenly in the early stages of his project. He was putting his findings with lots of documentation into a 'wiki' format. In the wake of his death those of us left in BCAGP have found the wiki format to be difficult to work with and close to impossible to extract anything we might want in another format to use elsewhere. Lara's effort is centered on digitizing what exists only in paper form, combining it with other digital documents that we have, and including data from the wiki in a more standard digital file structure that we all can work with. We welcome anyone who has old information and photos of a graveyard to share them with us.



And, as a final note, to follow up on last year's discussion of Johnson grass, my effort to spray it proved quite unsuccessful. Johnson grass grew as if untreated. Subsequent discussions suggest the failure to use a surfactant in combination with the weed killer was my undoing. This year BCAGP will be paying a professional herbicide company to treat the Johnson grass. The cost is not something we want to incur year after year but it will be interesting to see how effective professional treatment is. We hope to get a bit of a reprieve from the task of cutting Johnson grass this year and gain some knowledge to formulate plans for future years.

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.



Sassaman Twins

Karla Hummel – Secretary

If you look at records of the Herman/Sassaman burial ground in Maxatawny, you'll find a sad reference to an infant, Cornelia Helfrich, born March 6th, 1856. She died just two months later, on May 5th. When the site was first examined in the 1990s, her stone lay face up so her information was easily obtainable.

But...it troubled me on my first visit to the site. Not only was her tombstone a bit too large for what we'd expect to find for an infant, but its visible measurements matched those of another stone with which I was familiar. Located just over the Lehigh County boarder, that other stone was actually an obelisk.

After several visits and some heavy lifting, we found to our surprise that Cornelia's stone wasn't a slab at all, but rather a large cube - the base of an obelisk as suspected. And, more importantly, that there was a second inscription that had been below ground all these years.

Cornelia had a twin sister, Paulina! Little Paulina also died shortly after birth at age 1 month, 15 days. This explained the grief that inspired the parents, J. Henry and Hesther E., to provide such an elaborate tombstone for their children.

Over subsequent visits we placed the main cube onto its 2-tiered base. That left an obvious missing piece because the top surface had a hole through which a support rod would be placed. On our visit in early

(Continued on page 5)

March this year, we focused on probing the area in a search for the missing piece(s). Because the area is very rocky, we spent a great deal of time digging, until we finally spotted a flat marble surface. Another layer of the obelisk is now in place!

However, the pinnacle is still missing. It will take more manpower and time to carefully dig the surrounding area and locate what I believe will be a hemi-octahedron top, although it may indeed be an urn or other shape. We often seem to have "beginner's luck" so perhaps you'd be interested in joining us on our next visit to this site to be the volunteer who completes this lovely obelisk?



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.

Veteran Focus

Jacob Kelchner of Richmond Township

Lara Thomas – Secretary



Those of you who follow us on Facebook or Instagram saw some photos from March 20th when several board members visited the Kelchner family burial ground, also known as the Kelchner cemetery, in Richmond Township. The Kelchner is not easy to see from the road and board member Keith Schaffer had to stop and get the rest of us pointed in the correct direction. I don't believe we have mentioned the Kelchner much since work was done in 2010. Back then, Bud Kelchner and family helped rehabilitate this small but beautifully located burial ground. Tombstones were repaired and reset. Keith Schaffer and Mr. Kelchner installed granite pillars and chain to protect the stones from tractors or other farm equipment as well as provide a border.

Today, it is still wonderfully maintained and surrounded by farmland almost entirely unchanged in its scope and property lines. Betty Burdan (long time member and former board member) helped research the Kelchner estate and burial ground, which gave me information to work from.

The property lines and oldest documented tombstones here date from Jacob Kelchner (1760-1823), first American born child of Johan Michael Kelchner of Mosbach, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Jacob's father Michael emigrated here with family around 1731. Tax records survive showing the Kelchner's paying property taxes in Richmond Township as early as 1759. Jacob's father died young but left provision for in him in his will, including that he should be sent to school and educated in both English and "Dutch."

Records grow quiet until we find Jacob on the roles for service in the Revolutionary War under Captain Ferdinand Ritter 7th Company in Colonel Michael Lindenmuth's 4th Battalion



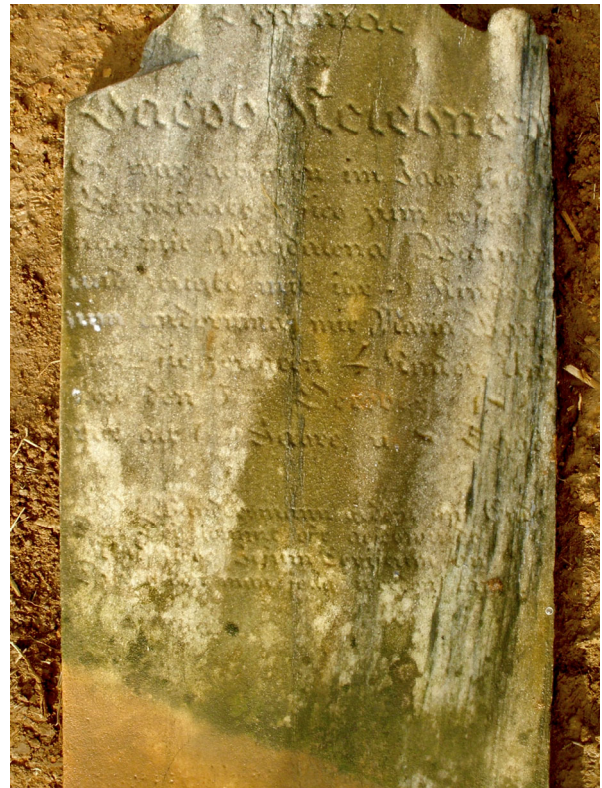
(Continued on page 7)

of the Pennsylvania Militia. Most of these men were pulled from the northeastern Berks townships of Albany, Windsor, etc. not far from the line of the Blue Mountains. As a young unmarried man, he was a perfect recruit for the relatively unstructured Pennsylvania Militia.

Luckily for us, Colonel Lindenmuth, who had his own farm in Windsor Township, kept a diary with entries that cover the month Jacob served, from August 8th to September 9th, 1780. I will quote it here with some modernized capitalization and spelling because it is worth it. Remember, the time of the Revolution was spent not just fighting the British, but Native Americans. The first inhabitants of eastern Pennsylvania fought for both sides, in addition to taking advantage of the chaos to try to reclaim land that had once been theirs.

“August 27th, 1780 Mr. Newman with two children were killed and a girl of eleven years was taken prisoner. August 28th, with sixty men of the militia I went to Conrad Muench. August 29th, with forty-five men we went over the second mountain to the Broad Mountain. On the third day we found the foot prints of the Indians with the child’s foot prints nine miles from the big Schuylkill. August 30th, I separated the men into three parts. Captain Wetzstein with fifteen men to go to Mahanoy. Captain Schardel with fifteen men to go to Swatara. I with fifteen men to go up the Big Schuylkill. August 31st we came again to Conrad Muench and ordered six men to stay there, and six men to stay with Captain Wetzstein on the Little Schuylkill.”

“September 1st, 1780 I came home and the Indians had taken two horses. September 3rd, I rode on horseback over the Henry Schumachers. We called out the first and second class. Their time started on the 1st. September 4th, I placed forty men as guards on the borders.”



I was unable to find war pension records for Jacob. But he appears in tax records as a property owner in Windsor, Maxatawny, Ruscombmanor, and of course Richmond Township. In all he is listed as a single male or a non-resident single male. He still does as late as 1789. He invested in property and must have been quite an eligible bachelor.

In 1794 and 1796, he has daughters Catherine and Maria Elizabeth with Magdalena Elizabeth Wanner. While no marriage records survive, there are records of baptism listing the married parents. Around 1799, a son Daniel is born. Next, Reverend William Boos recorded Jacob marrying Anna Maria Wanner on July 29, 1800 in Ruscombmanor. Perhaps Magdalena had died giving birth to son Daniel. From her father Jacob Wanner’s will, we know that Magdalena and Anna Maria were sisters. Perhaps Anna Maria came to help Jacob Kelchner with his small children, and never went home.

Jacob went on to have four more children with Anna Maria. In 1801 they had a son Jacob, named after his

(Continued on page 8)

Samuel Ely, Jr.

On Wednesday, the 2d day of March next, at the house of Joseph D. Young, innkeeper, in Richmond township, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon: A certain tract of land, situated in Windsor township, Berks county, adjoining lands of the late John Daturk, deceased, George Gardner, lands of the late Jacob Kelchner, deceased, and containing 150 acres, more or less, on which are erected a two-story weather-boarded log dwelling-house, a log barn, a spring-house and other buildings. Also, another tract of land, situated in Maiden creek township, Berks county, adjoining lands of Jacob Ely, Peter Gardner and the Maiden creek, and containing 135 acres, more or less, on which are erected a two-story stone dwelling-house, a Switzer barn and other buildings.—Late the estate of *Martin Kistner*.

father and maternal grandfather. Later, another son, Samuel, followed by a daughter Maria in 1807 and then lastly a daughter Hannah in 1810.

We have a pretty good paper trail on Jacob's married life from there on, due to taxes paid on more properties and early census records. But for all his careful planning and investing, Jacob made one mistake that is a great find for those of us looking to learn about him. He died in 1823 with no will but extensive property.

Thank goodness for Betty Burdan reading property records and sorting out parcels. Till I downloaded all the renunciations and listings of "so-and-so many perches" by "this-and-that many acres," there are over 80 pages, listing the names, spouses, and need for guardians for Jacob's youngest children. There are diagrams of the properties and their neighbors, values for each of the properties, descriptions of townships and sometimes whether they contained buildings on the properties. Jacob provided for his family so well, there were still

newspaper advertisements listing his former properties for sale even two years later. All this was divided equally amongst his children and not finally settled until 1842!

Second son Jacob inherited the farm in Richmond that had once been his father's. His elder brother Daniel lived nearby for a time before moving west to Iowa. Several of Daniel's young children are also buried on land Jacob Kelchner set aside for a family burial ground. It is entirely likely Jacob's first wife Magdalena, as well as others are buried there. There is a broken marble missing an epitaph as well as a field stone and some footstones that are missing their headstones still enclosed at the burial ground.

When I went back at the end of March to clean tombstones at the Kelchner, a lovely image of a full sun is carved into Jacob's stone. The sun shown at a perfect angle to highlight it. I think that full sun is rather appropriate to this man who lived what must have been such a full life. We thank him even now, for his service.



Erratum: In the January 2023 newsletter, in the article on Lawrence Drescher, there was a mistake. It is in the sentence "Here resting in God, the deceased LORENS JACOB DREOSSER a son of the alien Philip, born in the year 1744 the 19th of November and died the 11th June 1818 having reached the age of 74 years, 6 months, 5 weeks and 1 day."

Lawrence Drescher died in 1819 and his tombstone does reflect that. We apologize for the mistake.

Tragedy Strikes BCAGP!

BCAGP board member and stone mason Keith Schaffer suffered a house fire while he was at work that originated from his chimney. His modest home is pretty destroyed as well as almost all of his belongings. He had no insurance.

Keith has been a friend to many and always willing to help others. He recently retired and only works a small amount of hours as a stonemason. His house is not livable at this moment.

A Go Fund Me has been set up for Keith. We are sure he will appreciate any contribution you might make.

Thank you to those who have already so generously donated !

You can find the Go Fund Me at: <https://gofund.me/4e7e2306>



The DeTurck/DeTurk/deTurk Family

By Barbara DeTurck Witman

There are many ways to spell that family name. But since my ancestors spelled it as DeTurck, I will continue to use it that way. I am a descendant of Isaac DeTurck, the immigrant (1685-1727) who settled in the Oley Valley in 1712. His land deeded by William Penn, was given to his son, John who then divided the original parcel of land to his sons. My father, Harold LeVan DeTurck was the 8th generation to own this land. During the years, some of it was sold to the Berks County VoTech School, Friedens Lutheran Church & the Oley Valley School District. The remaining property was sold to Bill Gotwals in 2000.

As a child, I spent a lot of time in the Oley Valley. My grandparents, Dr. Daniel & Hannah DeTurck, lived on Main Street in Oley as did my great-grandparents, Abraham & Alice. My grandfather was a veterinarian & I was allowed to watch him attend to big animals on the farms in the valley. My parents had tenant farmers on our farm, but we were there every weekend to visit & check on things & often stayed in the spring house by the creek. After my dad retired, my parents lived on the farm until their declining health forced a move. My memories of going to the Oley Fair every year are vivid. My uncle, Henry Eyrich supplied the potatoes for those yummy French fries & my aunt, Anna DeTurk always entered her creations in the fair exhibit halls. The DeTurck & Eyrich presence in the Oley Fair & Oley Valley have carried on for generations.

Since I returned to live in Berks County in 2019, I have visited the Gotwals farm now owned by Brad & Scarlett & noticed the deteriorated state of the DeTurck Cemetery #2. The DeTurck Cemetery #1 is on the original DeTurck farm at the end of DeTurck Road & is now owned by Bill Gotwals. Cemetery #2 is in need of major restoration & Meredith Goldey, BCAGP Board member, DeTurck descendant & I are spearheading this project. We have been reaching out to descendants of the DeTurck family by social media & other ways that we hope will gain interest & money for this project. If you are able to help in any way, please contact us.

Thank you.

Barbara DeTurck Witman - dbwit@outlook.com; Meredith Goldey - Mergoldey@gmail.com

2023 Officers Elected



President - Les Rohrbach



1st Vice President - Gary Koenig



2nd Vice President—Karla Hummel



Treasurer—Paul Schumann



Secretary - Lara Thomas



June 11th 2 PM
Oley American Legion
12 Deturk Road
Oley, PA

Don't miss out!

Many people have mentioned that our emails are being sent to their Junk Mail or SPAM folders! Please take these steps to be sure that you are receiving our emails appropriately. If an email from Berks County Assn for Graveyard Preservation <bcagp@bcagp.org> is in your Junk mail or Spam folder; right mouse click and mark as "Not SPAM" or "Not Junk. Add Berks County Assn for Graveyard Preservation <bcagp@bcagp.org> to your trusted contact list.

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: _____

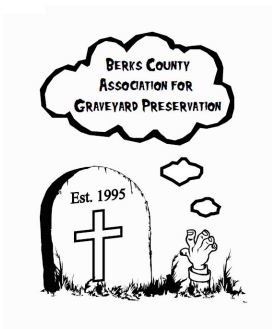
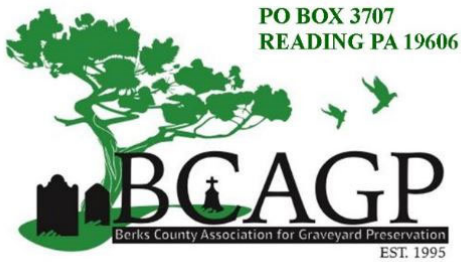
Mail Checks to:

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

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.

