

Future Farmers of America Kutztown Area Highschool

On Thursday, April 25th, the first of what we hope to be of many, the Kutztown Area High School's Chapter of Future Farmers of America volunteered with us for the day. This terrific set of girls and their teacher Ms Blatt worked hard all day and got three of the area burial grounds completed. We visited the Kemp, Sassaman and Schmidt. We are looking forward to working with you again! We'd also like to thank the Rohrbach's for hauling away all the brambles, poison ivy, berry bushes, Bradford's pear etc.



"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.

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Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President



During an early 2024 meeting we discussed a plan to rid the Hill graveyard (Earl township) of red-dish brown stemmed picky vines which grow to about 5 feet before additional growth causes the top to fall back to the ground. (When describing them to someone more into plants than I am, she said they might be wineberries that are ripe for picking in July.) Historically, we have cleared this graveyard in late fall when we have a full year's growth to contend with. The stalks sometimes resist string trimmers and because of the way the later growth falls over, getting to the part coming out of the ground may require pushing through the picky stem that has fallen over.

In our innocence we devised a plan to deal with these plants this spring and plant ground cover to reduce future problems. Well, our May workday

was damp and only two of us showed up. That wasn't a problem but we were stunned to find grass as high as the two and a half foot walls. We have never had grass to deal with in the fall. Further, the targeted vines could not be found in all the grass. Where do we dig to get them out?

We began by trimming the grass. Searching the ground then for the desired vines we could only find clumps of somewhat woody stems. We tried digging these out and found they came from underground rhizomes. Our effort did not cover the entire graveyard but quite a number of these clusters were exposed. I have what is probably a naive wish that by leaving the stump and a section of the rhizome exposed maybe some damage will be done to the health of whatever it was. Our work here reflects our desire to reduce the yearly effort required in some of these graveyards and our lack of knowledge to effectively accomplish that goal.

On a more positive note, after one of our spring workdays a request for 5 gallon buckets was put on our Facebook page. Their use has grown among us as a means of toting tools and supplies from our vehicles into graveyards. Until two years ago I had a garage attic with a couple dozen from years of sealing my driveway but they were discarded when I moved.



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Letter from Les (Continued from page 2)

Mr Ralph Bascelli contacted us and when he learned we were still in need of buckets he provided us with a vehicle filled with useful items including a rake, pitchfork, hoes, saw, lopper, blue rags, different types of gloves, hand tools, and of course the requested buckets. Ralph was unknown to us before this donation but we have quickly come to appreciate him and thank him for his contribution.



Mark Your Calanders!

Saturday, September 14th we are planning on doing a number of stone repairs. We will visit multiple site during the day. Check your email (or our website) about a week prior to the event for details!

Rothermel – Walnut Tree

The Rothermel on Walnut Tree in Maiden creek Township has been getting some great improvements thanks to Russ Delp, his grandson Jesse Cohick, and father and son team of James and Steven Kline. Together they are completing the wall repair that begun a few years ago by another voleenteer and are keeping the weeds and grass trimmed!

Thank you for all of your dedication and hard work! - Photos courtesy of Russ Delp



Veteran Focus

Lara Thomas – Secretary

The Croll tombstone/burial ground and Kutztown Area School District FFA Students lead us to our veteran piece for this issue.

This spring we began a new relationship with the Future Farmers of America of the Kutztown Area School District. Thanks to an intermediary, board member Lara Thomas (me) was able to get in communication with the new FFA teacher in this district. The budding relationship has had a fantastic start. With Maxatawny Township alone having 17 cemeteries, and adjoining Richmond another 14, this area is our next most work intensive after Oley. Ms. Ayla Blatt was familiar with Jeremy Deysher of Oley's FFA as a model and after some calls and emails, Kutztown FFA, Ms. Blatt, and several board members had the first successful collaboration and community service on April 25th. The group was willing and had fun learning about our shared history, invasive/problematic plants and just how dirty we can get in a cemetery. A huge thank you is due this group and if you ever have the opportunity please support the Kutztown FFA!



Recent photo of Elisabeth Croll tombstone.

Trying to cover multiple issues in one trip, president Les Rohrbach, second VP Karla Hummel and this author then stopped at Saucony Meadows apartment complex and the small Croll/Kroll burial ground.

Several years past we covered the Croll burial area in our newsletters. Now limited to one remaining tombstone of sandstone, the management of the surrounding apartment complexes have been very supportive. In the 1950s, they built a wall around the tombstone of infant Elisabeth Croll and added some shrubbery. Decades later, that shrubbery was too large and the complex removed it and asked BCAGP review and advise.

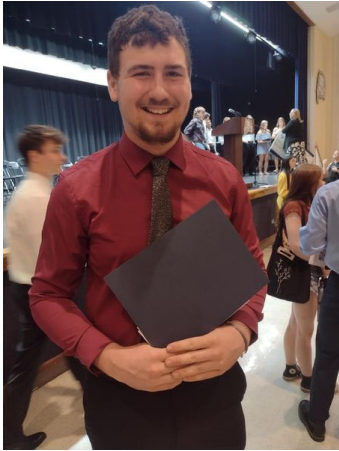
We found everything in a good state, then carefully cleaned the rough sandstone and upon reviewing our files decided to get a better photo of the stone to document any changes and make sure we had as much visible epitaph as possible. We also discussed the Revolutionary War veteran marker there with the management of the apartments. As you might have surmised, small Elisabeth was not a

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Oley Day of Caring

Jacob Mowry earns the Jacqueline Nein Award

Karla Hummel



Jacob Mowry earns the Jacqueline Nein Award

This year's Day of Caring, in which the Oley Valley High School FFA joins us in cleanup and restoration efforts in about 20 of the valley's graveyards, was as successful as ever. With 3 busloads of volunteer students we completed the same amount of work that it would normally take our "older" regular members 10 days to finalize. As always, the Jacqueline Nein Award was presented to one of the FFA student volunteers. This year's \$250 stipend went to Jacob Mowry. Jacob was an absolute dynamo in the burial grounds, between wielding a weed wacker through thick brush and single-handedly hoisting a huge tombstone for repair in the Hoch graveyard, his leadership efforts were clear to all. I even found him staying behind



Jacob completing a stone repair in Bieber Leshner.

after we'd completed lunch to help bus tables of the remaining trash and cups! I was proud to present his award at the Senior Awards Night at the high school on May 22nd where he earned several other accolades. Thank you sincerely to all the FFA students and staff for their outstanding efforts on our behalf.



Stone cleaning at Weidner



Jean Bartolet



Deturck 1



Hoch



Ohlinger



Leshner

Oley Day of Caring (continued)



Peter



Kinsey



Schneider

Other news!



On April 28th, Mosko Cemetery Monument Services came back to assist us with stone repairs. Time was well spent at Kirby and Kemp. Photos above of the repair work on Anna Maria Fox Kirby's stone that has been broken for several years.



Gary Koenig had a noisy supervisor at the Koenig Burial Ground



Breitenstein in Shillington



Barnet Peter visit for Memorial Day.

BCACP Participates in Community Cleanup Event for 19th Century Cemetery

Marie Maly, Secretary, St. Paul's Cemetery Association

Built on land sold for \$1 by the executors of prominent Berks County resident and Revolutionary War veteran Peter Trexler, who died in 1828, the St. Paul's Union Cemetery is situated adjacent to a church also located on the former Trexler land. Originally called St. Paul's Lutheran Church, it operates today as the Christian Congregation Church of Mertztown, Pa. It was here, last April, that the St. Paul's Union Cemetery Association sponsored a cemetery cleanup event. And while it's not the first cleanup event the Association has sponsored, it was by far the one with the largest turnout – and much of the credit for this support belongs to the BCACP.



While several men focused efforts on hauling wheelbarrows of dirt to fill in low spots and holes, improve sunken burial sites, and sow grass seed, others were at work to remove spent grave flowers and grave blankets. Still others worked on a task never before undertaken: Cleaning grave memorials using D/2 Biological Solution. Following a very brief, on-the-spot seminar about the proper procedure for using the cleaning material and brushes, the volunteers – a good number of them elementary-school girls – got to work, with several adults joining in and offering guidance. Long after most of the adults had to run out of steam, the girls were still going strong.

BCACP officers Les Rohrbach and Lara Thomas took on the task to upright and repair a few badly damaged and sunken grave markers while other markers in less dire condition were uprighted by others elsewhere in the cemetery.

(Pictured) One of several youngsters who worked hard to clean one of the many unusual and elaborate markers in cemetery. One child was so excited to take part in the event that she prepared by watching a YouTube video on memorial cleaning. The long-handled Tampico brushes we purchased turned out to be the perfect tool for little hands.

The St. Paul's Cemetery Association received a \$250 grant award from Thrivant to offset the cost of purchasing needed cleanup supplies and refreshments for participating volunteers. Biological solution was also donated by Brenda Winkler, a member of the Warmkessel family (many of whom are buried in this cemetery).

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.

veteran and died years before the Declaration. But clues in historical and property records make this as good a place as any to mark the final resting place of Jacob Levan, son of Jacob Levan the immigrant.

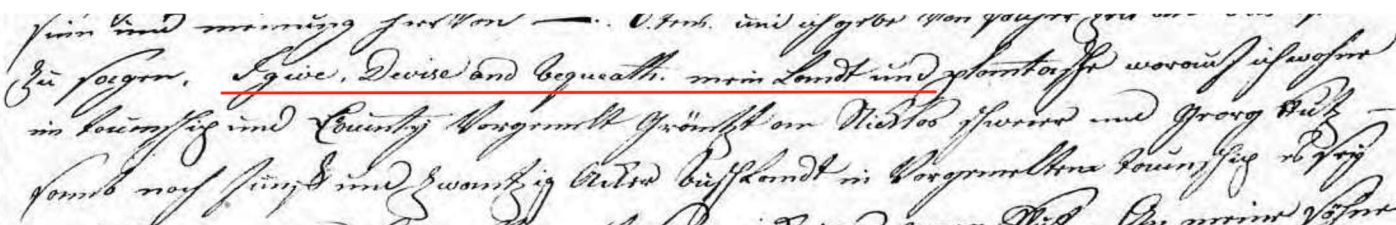
The surname Levan is certainly not new to our readers, but this is the first Levan veteran article. Originally, five brothers and one known sister all emigrated to the Berks County area with one of the brothers, Joseph, dying enroute in the early years of the 18th century. Abraham settled in the Oley area while Isaac settled in the Exeter area. Daniel, Anna and Jacob all settled in the Maxatawny area. Daniel's family would intermarry with the Kemps (as in our veteran George Kemp) while sister Anne intermarried with the Zimmermans and settled just north of what is now the Hottenstein Mansion along Rt 222.

Jacob the immigrant settled further toward what would become Kutztown and start a family on a large farm, referred to as a plantation. This brings us to his youngest son, Jacob Junior, born approximately 1736. We currently can say his year of birth with certainty as it predates any of the current churches of the area.

We know that the earliest mill was erected and was also used as a dwelling place, possibly as early as 1738. As opportunity and finances provided, more land was purchased and improved upon, parcels being in invested in by brothers or sold between family from any of the immigrant siblings. When Jacob Levan the immigrant passed in approximately 1766 and probate was processed in 1768, there was so much land that parcels went to both brother Daniel as well as Jacob's sons including Jacob the veteran.

A tax list of 1768 shows Jacob the veteran as one of the richest married men of the district, with 300 acres, most of it cleared, horses, cattle and sheep... and an enslaved person. He also used indentured labor, posting as far as Philadelphia that Jacob Levan junior of Berks was offering a 2£ reward for a runaway servant name Daniel Winekar, a weaver, age 24.

Jacob the veteran's wife was named Catherine although there is disagreement as to whether she was a Levan cousin or a neighboring Wink. Jacob and Catherine had four children together by 1773 when for whatever reason, Jacob felt the need to write a will, in a mix of German, dialect, and English. Perhaps the political climate made him anxious. Perhaps he was ill, such as a persistent cough that presaged consumption, or what we now know as tuberculosis. We can only guess... but he made provision for his wife to receive most of his worldly goods until his children were to come of age.



Section of Jacob Levan's Last Will and Testament written in a mix of High German and English.

He directed that Catherine his wife ensure that the children be sent to a school to learn to read and write and that even if his widow remarried, that she "strive to keep the plantation in such a condition and continue the farm in sewing (sic)and planting as I have done in my lifetime and to be very careful not to ruin the timber

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and at all times consult about the farm with my hereafter named executor Frederick Hill in order to benefit the children.”

In 1777 Jacob answered the call for soldiers and served as lieutenant under neighbor George Kemp until early 1778¹. By May of 1778, he was dead, leaving Catherine with four minor children. She soon married Philip Geehr, who had served in the war with her husband. We can only speculate (and this is only if dates on tombstone are correct) as daughter Susanna Geehr was born in June 1778.

The bulk of the farm passed to Jacob’s eldest son John and then to John’s son David. Some of the land went to the neighboring Schweyer family who had also bordered former Croll property. David built a lovely brick home on the corner of Willow and Normal. Eventually, the acres were parceled and sold off so that in the 1930s it was reported that the Levan family burying ground on the old David Levan farm was almost totally obliterated with only fragments and possible field stones remaining. Whatever evidence that might have remained was likely lost when the apartment complexes of Saucony Meadows and Wilson Manor were built, mistaken for random stones and uneven ground. The BCAGP reference of Epitaphs contains no mention of the David Levan private burying ground. Find a Grave website incorrectly places his burial in another Levan family burial ground, near Eagle Point Road.

So, perhaps Jacob’s only remaining testament to his grave, the veteran’s association flag marker, is not too far from where Jacob’s resting spot is. A fresh flag is always placed there. Residents of the apartments still come and visit, then ask the apartment manager about the marker. We have provided him with information and he states he will share with whomever asks. Time has removed almost all evidence of Jacob Levan, but his service is still remembered.

4th Co.—Maxatawny.

George Kemp,	Captain.
Jacob Levan,	1st Lieut.
Michael Peifer,	2nd Lieut.
Jacob Schweyer,	Ensign.
Philip Geehr,	Court Martial
Peter Scherer.	men.

Pennsylvania Second Battalion Fourth Company Officers¹

Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Cards, 1777-1999 record for Jacob Levan

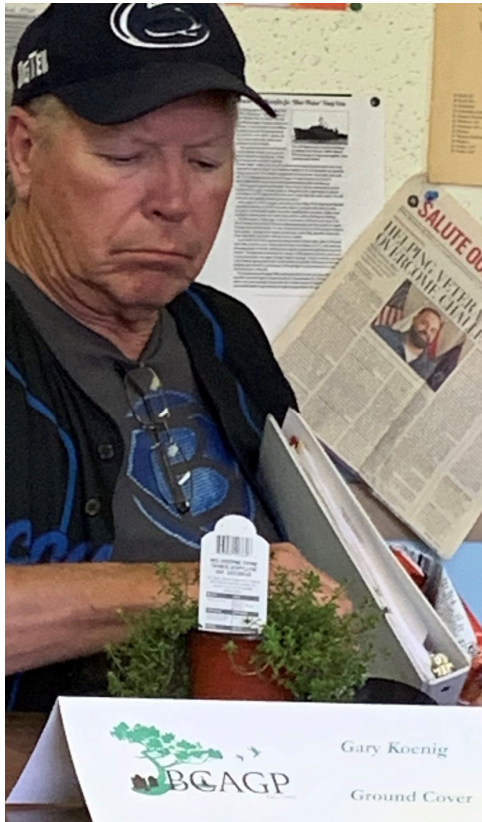
Form B420-41 (Rev. 1-1-77) HARRISBURG, PA. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs		RECORD OF BURIAL PLACE OF VETERAN		BERKS County	
NAME LEVAN, Jacob		AGE 42 ?	DATE OF BIRTH ? 1736	DATE OF DEATH ? 1778	
VETERAN OF REVOLUTIONARY		WAR	SERVED IN ARMY (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) NAVY () MARINE CORPS ()		
DATES OF SERVICE 1777 - 1778		ORGANIZATION (S) Capt. Geo. Kemp's Co. 4th Co. 2nd Batn.		RANK Private	
CEMETERY OR PLACE OF INTERMENT		NAME David Levan- Private Cemetery LOCATION Maxatawny Twp., Berks Co., Pa.			
LOCATION OF GRAVE IN CEMETERY		HEADSTONE			
SECTION LOT NO.	RANGE GRAVE NO.	GOVERNMENT () COUNTY () FAMILY ()			
INFORMATION GIVEN BY R.S. Dotterer-Grave Registrar		REMARKS			
DATE 2-15-1935					
After being Recorded in the County Veterans' Grave Registration Record This card is to be sent to THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for final Record.					

Jacob Levan Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Card

¹ Montgomery, Morton L. (1894) , History of Berks County, Pennsylvania, in the Revolution, from 1774 to 1783, p63



Join us at the Kutztown Folk Festival again this year, from June 29th to July 7th. We'll be in the Nochberschaft - also known as the PA Dutch Crafts and Culture building - just opposite the giant Grundsau (the huge groundhog statue). We can chat about specific graveyards, tools, maintenance, and restoration, or answer whatever questions we can for you. And we'd love to meet those of you who don't attend our meetings. The Folk Fest is open daily from 9am to 6pm. Check out all the events at www.kutztownfestival.com.



The newest member of the ground-cover committee looks over a sample of Creeping Red Thyme. Experiments with ground cover to choke out weeds are underway. — photo Anne Wagner

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, Axes, Shovels



BCAGP Board Meeting Sunday, September 8th, at 1 PM

Oley American Legion
12 Deturk Rd
Oley, PA

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.



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: _____

- **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.

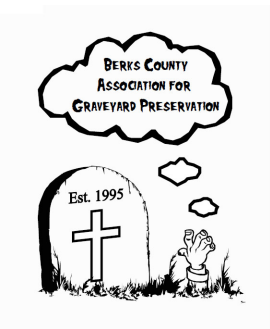
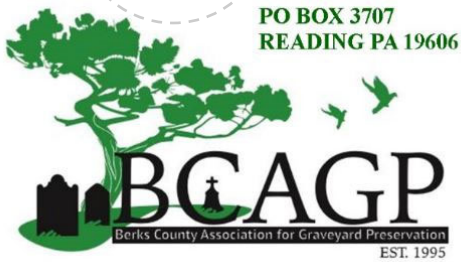
Mail Checks to:

BCAGP

PO Box 3707

Reading, PA 19606

Now you can pay dues, or make donations via [PayPal!](#)



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

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

