

Epitaphs



Publication of the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation-Vol. 6 February 2001

Hello and Welcome from the current officers.

Executive Director: Fran Rasweiler

Asst. Director: Doreen Layman

Treasurer: Jacob Greene

Secretary: Hugh Schiffer

Mark your calendar:

**Annual General Membership Meeting –
7:30 P.M.**

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Oley Legion Post 878

Rt. 73 & Rt. 662. Oley, PA

LOOKING BACK...

From its inception in 1994, the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation has been recognized and honored for its dedication to restore, maintain, and preserve the historic gravesites in Berks County.

On September 27, 1994, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania cited the restoration of the Schmehl Family Graveyard and noted that the Association was caring for sixty sites.

The efforts of Jackie Nein and the dedicated members of this Association have left us with a heritage to be proud of and the challenge to continue to see that every historic gravesite in Berks County is restored and provision made for continuing maintenance and preservation.

It is not an impossible dream but a realistic goal that can be accomplished by this Association. Your membership will help to meet the financial aspect of our task and if every member will donate a few hours of his or her time, it will get done.

If not a current member, join us as we continue the work begun by Jackie and other founding members.

It may sound like an oxymoron to think of a cemetery as a "living history", but think about it and be part of a group that is dedicated to the presentation of that portion of our history.

LOOKING AHEAD –THE CHALLENGE...

This year we are concentrating on evaluating the gravesites we as an Association are responsible for and confirming the name, company and or government body responsible for maintaining other named gravesites. This is an area where we need your help. If you are currently involved in some way, please give the Director, Fran Rasweiler, your information.

In addition, we must select and evaluate new sites as we expand gravesite responsibility. Each year we need to repeat this process. Maintaining current sites, and continually adding new sites, an ever-expanding challenge for this Association.

Where do you fit in?

1. Support the Association by being a member.
2. Let the Association know of gravesites in order to keep our lists current.
3. Become a caretaker – visit one or more gravesites routinely to evaluate its current needs.
4. Give of your time to cut grass (weeds) and/or generally clean up a site.
5. Become a Board member. A phone call will let us know your interest. (Fran 610 582-1720)
6. You tell us how you can help!

Tribute to Jackie

An award to be given in Jacqueline B. Nein's name was voted on at March 2000 Meeting. The award was given to Beth Sweigert, a senior at Exeter High School given to Beth Sweigert, who had given 500 hours of community service.

Recommended Bylaw changes:

The following changes to the bylaws are in italics. Please bring changes with you to March meeting.

ARTICLE II - Purpose

in general, it shall be to promote respect for all graveyards, and to facilitate the restoration, maintenance and preservation of neglected or abandoned historic graveyards lying within the bounds of Berks County, Pennsylvania.

ARTICLE III Membership

Section 2. Dues and levies of any kind shall not be imposed without approval of the Association sitting in assembly. *The amount of dues may be set at an Annual Meeting by a majority of the members present to be effective the following calendar year. Dues shall be paid by June 1 of the current calendar year. Membership rights and privileges, including the right to vote and make proposals will terminate upon failure to submit dues by June 1 deadline.*

Subsection a. Recognition of membership for the current year may be granted to individuals or groups who are perceived to have made a meaningful contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Association during the current year. Such membership may be granted by a vote of not less than seven members of the Board. These memberships shall have full rights and privileges, including proposal and voting. Current Section 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be eliminated.

ARTICLE IV Meetings.

Section 1. Meetings of the Association shall be held at a time, date, and place designated by the Board.
Section 2. *Change Executive Committee to Board.*

ARTICLE V Officers of the Association

Section 1 The officers of the Association shall be the President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Section 2 Terms for all officers shall commence at the close of the Annual Meeting and extend for two years or until a successor has been elected or appointed. These officers shall perform their duties as prescribed by law, by these bylaws and by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Association. No member shall hold more than one office at any

given time. However, officers may serve on, or chair, any committee except the Nominating Committee. Acceptance of the resignation of any office and appointment of a replacement to that office is at the discretion of the Board

Section 3. *The 1st Vice President shall fill a vacancy in the office of the President occurring for any reason whatsoever. A vacancy in any office other than the President shall be filled by a two-thirds vote of the Board. Any person(s) so chosen shall serve until an election has taken place at the next Annual Meeting.*

Substitute President for Executive Director, 1st Vice President for Assistant Director

Subsection 4C The 2nd Vice-President shall assist the President at his or her discretion, and shall perform duties of the President and of the 1st Vice President in the absence or inability of that officer to act.

Substitute Board for Executive Committee wherever needed

A quorum of the Board shall be seven or a majority of the current board members.

ARTICLE VI Board

Substitute Board for Executive Committee

Section 1. Remove – All power of the Executive Committee is at the discretion of a majority of the general assembly of the Association.

Section 2. The Board shall be composed of at least four board members in addition to the officers.

ARTICLES VI and VII

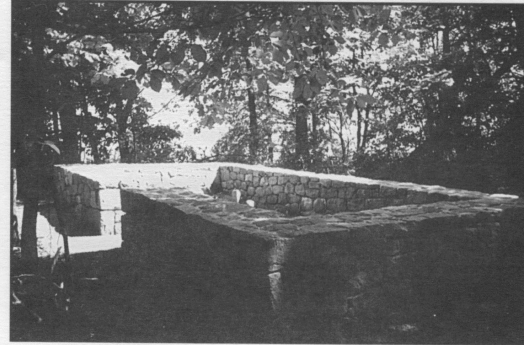
Change Restoration to Preservation to be consistent with the name and primary focus of the Association.

ARTICLE VII Committees

Section 3 Remove Subsection c.



2 Hill Graveyard (First Major Masonry Project 1995)



Above – The Zug Cemetery – Before and After.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

The work on the **Zug cemetery** was completed August 2000. This work was under the guidance of the B.C.A.G.P., with financial support from New Morgan Borough. New Morgan Properties donated rocks needed. New Morgan Academy is considering adopting site. More later. Pictures above taken by Keith Schaffer.

The **Snyder cemetery** has been totally enclosed. Rock was donated by Rolling Rock, Inc. Money for this work has come from family members.

The **Siegfried Cemetery** in Maxatawny Township had stonework repointed with clean up done by an Eagle Scout. Three years of funding was made by property owner and was not previously reported.

Family members repaired the **Kirby cemetery** in Maiden creek Township after damage by a tornado.

A new stainless steel plaque has been installed in the **Angstadt cemetery** in Rockland Township by descendants of the family.

The **Philip Braun/Brown cemetery** near Womelsdorf has been enclosed with 18 x 24 white vinyl fencing and ground covered with red decorative stone. Members of the Brown Family reunion covered the cost. Plans are being made to place a bronze plaque at the entrance of the cemetery to commemorate our ancestors and the donors. Thanks to BCAGP for providing the motivation to complete this project. *Submitted by Shirley M. Brown.*

THANK YOU

The BCAGP is grateful for the tremendous support they have received from the entire Berks County community. Networking with other non-profit organizations and government officials has enabled us to achieve our preservation efforts much more quickly. **Thank you, Berks County!**

Hilda Fisher extends her personal thanks to the following from the Oley Area.

A belated Thank You to all landowners in Oley Township who have cared for a historic family graveyard, and a special salute to those owners not related to the burials and yet have felt it a privilege to care for them. Also, we compliment family associations who have adopted to care for the final resting place of their ancestors.

Also it is time to recognize the many volunteers who gave their time and labors to cut the growth on neglected sites and Thank You for helping us on the goal to preserve Oley's historic graveyards. Here are some of the many volunteers who have served from 1994 to date:

Family of Bob & Diane Hazysah
 Boy's Scout Troop #992, Barry Kircher, leader
 Camp Fire Girls –
 Karen Schulze & Anna Mae Hoppe (leaders)
 Future Farmers of America – Oley Chapter –
 Jeremy Deysher, leader
 Three Members of Honor Society of
 Oley Valley Area High School
 Oley Legion –
 Harold Lorah, Ralph Lorah, Marty Wegman
 and Michael Wentzel (Gate)
 Salem United Church of Christ- 12 adults and 2 youths
 (Continued next page)

Motor Cycle Club & Scouts – Bernie Bingham, leader
 Community Service Day –F.F.A. and adults
 Richard Yoder & son, Ralph Lorah, Jack Keller,
 Mary Savage, Patti Kline, Hilda Fisher, Carl Bowers,
 Chuck Nissley
 Summer City/Youth Work Crew –
 Larry Kirlin, leader, Eric Uliasz (1996 crew leader),
 Paul & Marie Brumbach, Frank, Kent & Hilda
 Fisher, Scott David Allebach (Eagle Scout Award)
 Masoners have been Nate Fetter and Keith Schaeffer

Welcome to newest caretaker John R. Witman,
 who has assumed the care of **the Fix/Gerber
 cemetery** in Reading, which is so very visible from
 Bypass 422 westbound.

We wish to thank all family descendants and
 owners of property on which there are gravesites for
 both their care of family gravesites or in the case of
 property owners, their permission to function as
 caregivers and/or for help in the preservation
 process. *We would appreciate your making us
 aware of work done on gravesites in order to keep
 our files up to date. If you see a gravesite that is in
 need of work, please call 610-582-1720 and leave
 message. We do greatly appreciate your care and
 concern.*

COMMUNITY GRANTS

A number of townships applied for community
 block grants and are currently being funded for use
 this year. Among them are three for Oley Township
 in the amount of \$32,000. The projected gravesites
 are Barto, Hoch/Bertolet and Peters.

Maxatawny Township is funding via a grant of
 \$3,000 the Grimm graveyard as in greatest need,
 although there are several more sites in great need.
 BCAGP has voted to supplement both of these
 townships; limiting ourselves to four sites this year.

Additional grants have been funded for the year
 2002, and reports on these graveyards in Executer,
 Cumru and Longswamp Townships will be
 published later this year.



*Above picture shows stainless steel plaque placed
 in the Angstadt Cemetery by family members.*

BCAGP MEETS THE PUBLIC

Volunteers will be present this coming spring at
 the **Schuenkfelder Library and Heritage Center,
 105 Seminary St., Pennsburg, Pa 18073, April 21
 from 10am to 3 pm.** If you have a few hours to
 share, call Cynthia Jimenez (610-374-2753) and she
 will give details and assign you time.

Volunteers are also needed to give a couple of
 hours at the **Kutztown Fair from June 30 to July
 8, 2001.** Again call Cynthia. This is a great chance
 to make the public aware of the Association and
 more important the need for preservation of these
 valuable historic graveyards.



*Nelson Farr Service Award to Hilda Fisher. Nov.
 2000. From left – Hilda Fisher, Jake Greene,
 Treasurer and Fran Rasweiler, Executive Director*

**BUILDING ON THE PAST – excerpts
from the first five volumes of the Epitaph**

*The following was lead article in Vol. I February
1995 Epitaphs Newsletter.*

Schmehl Graveyard Rededication

The Schmehl Historic Graveyard dating back to the late 1700's in Ruscombmanor Township, Berks County was rededicated on October 15, 1994. At the same time, gravestones in remembrance of two Revolutionary War soldiers, John Adam Schmehl and Conrad Schmehl were dedicated.

The graveyard was discovered on property Scott and Carla Blumfields purchased in 1992. The graveyard was not visible at the time as it was overgrown with trees, brush and old dog kennels. Vandalism had removed many of the tombstones. The stonewalls around the cemetery had fallen and scattered. Fortunately for the Schmehl family, the Blumfields were interested in preserving the cemetery.

Bob Schmehl, working with the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation, began the difficult job of clearing the area, erecting the fallen tombstones, rebuilt the stone wall and planted grass. Preserving the graveyard was not enough for Schmehl. He decided to do some research which revealed Conrad Schmehl served in the Revolutionary war. Conrad was born in 1723 and arrived in America in 1739. He died in 1815 but did not have a tombstone marker for his service. The research also revealed Conrad's son Adam who lived from 1754 to 1825.

Schmehl completed forms that were sent to the Department of Veterans Affairs office in Washington, D.C. using information he found in the Pennsylvania Archives. He also had to document that he was a descendant of Conrad and Adam Schmehl. He informed the department that neither had a marker issued to soldiers in the Revolutionary War and that Adam did not have a tombstone. Several weeks later, he received the tombstone and the markers.

This activity led to a regrouping of the Schmehl family. Members of the family were participants in dedication service.

CITATION

The following is the citation made in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in recognition of the mission of B.C.A.G.P.

Whereas, The Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation is being honored upon the dedication of the restored Schmehl Family Graveyard; and

Whereas, The Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation is dedicated to restoring, maintaining, and preserving abandoned historic graveyards in Berks County. A group of civic leaders, professionals and interested citizens plan, engineer and oversee the restoration and preservation of these graveyards which involve initial clean-up, wall restoration, tombstone resetting, and regular inspection and maintenance; and

Whereas, Berks County was once home to over three hundred family burial grounds. The Schmehl Family Graveyard is just one of sixty which is presently being cared for. Through the efforts of the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation, this family plot and others like it have been preserved for future generations.

Now therefore, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania congratulates the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation upon its richly deserved recognition; commends it as a shining example to other Pennsylvania counties concerned with preserving their heritage; offers best wishes for its continued success as it moves into the next millennium; And directs that a copy of this citation, sponsored by the Honorable Dennis E. Leh on September 27, 1994, be transmitted to the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation, 4701 Saint George Street, Reading, Pennsylvania 19606.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE-1994

Executive Director: Jacqueline B. Nein
Assistant Director: Laurel Miller
Secretary: Mary Ellen Lash
Treasurer: Elaine Schwar
Publicity: Jacqueline B. Nein
Membership: Carol Coleman
Research: Sandra Stief
Finance: Richard Turnbach
Preservation: Nelson Farr
Legal/Municipal Liaison: Mary Ellen Lash
Historian: Louise Feger
Patriotic: Martin Peicker
Publications: Harry Adams
Maintenance: Kevin Kozak
Solicitor: Tim Rowley

A significant step towards protection of historic gravesites from Vol 2 February 1996 of Epitaphs Newsletter

**“9” HOMESTEAD
REGISTERED WITH
AMERICAN FARM TRUST**

In 1994 Severin Fayerman registered the “9” homestead property in Berks County, PA with the American Farm Trust. Whenever this property is sold it can only be used for farmland and cannot be subdivided for building lots. This also means that the historic “9” graveyard will never be in someone’s backyard. We are thankful to Severin Fayerman for his kind consideration.

The John F. Snyder farm in Oley where the Herbein graveyard is located has settled the matter of subdividing with the State and County and that graveyard too will never be surrounded with housing plots. Thank you!

SPRING BOARDS TO EXPOSURE AND SUCCESS

Last Spring our hands-on masonry workshop for building stone walls was well attended. This fall our summer crew was featured on the Berks Cable TV 5:30 news report. Filming took place at the Barnet/Peters and the Reichert/Dum historic graveyards. The crew’s efforts were featured in local newspapers with pictures. Representatives Rohrer and Caltagirone were pictured with Nelson Parr and Jacqueline B. Nein in the Morgantown publication. Hilda Fisher and Jacqueline B. Nein appeared on George Meiser’s Berks County Historical monthly TV program on Channel 20 featuring a progress report of our summer program including 12 historic graveyards.

Hilda and Jackie were also featured February 26, 1996 on the WEEU *Feedback* radio show. A swim party and picnic for the summer crew was well attended. Among those in attendance were Judge Art Grim, Representative Dante Santoni Jr., Severin Fayerman, Representative Sam Rohrer’s secretary, Jennifer Coriell and representatives from the Berks County Employment and Training Office.

In addition to our continually updated panels in the corridor connecting the Berks County Court House with the Service Center, smaller displays

were featured at the National Penn and Meridian Banks in Oley and at the Berks County Historical Society. Presentations were made for various community groups by Martin Peicker, Louise Feger and Jackie Nein. A stand was shared with the Oley Valley Heritage Society at the Oley Community Fair. The December hoard meeting was held at the Richmond Township Municipal Building to activate interest in the Richmond/Maxatawny areas. Our group had a manned display at the Berkshire Mall and also in the lobby of Boscov East.

These activities are all great spring hoards to success. We thank all the volunteers who helped and invite others to join us.

DEED CHAINS

By Mary Yeich 1996 Epitaphs.

The deed chain reveals the owner of a particular property and for how long they owned it, the deed description and any sales out of that deed description shows the amount of land owned.

Generally, the chain can be formed by the following the recitals of the deeds; the recital paragraph “Being the same premises”, of “Being part of the same premises” etc as in Deed book volume and page, follows the legal description. It is not a necessary part of a deed. You will find deeds which have no recital clause or the recital will not have the deed book number, only a date. One then uses the grantor and grantee indexes. I would *grantee* the name of the party selling the property, in a deed that omits the recital clause.

A “Whereas deed” has the recital in the beginning of the instrument – before the legal description. This is often found when the property owner is deceased or in the settling of an estate. Some sheriff deeds do not have the usual recital clause. The parties involved in the court case, and the term and number will be given. I would then *grantee* (index) the name of the defendant, A.B.C. Bank vs. John and Jane Doe, (John and Jane Doe as the defendants being sheriffed). The date of purchase of the property must be determined. It must be remembered that deeds were not always recorded at the time when written. An unrecorded deed from the 1800’s can be recorded that year, or whenever it was produced. When a recital gives the parties and date of deed, but no deed reference, the indexes are checked from the date of the deed forward to find any late recordings.

*From the Vol. 5 February 1999 Epitaphs
Newsletter*

**PRESERVE OUR PAST, CREATE OUR
FUTURE - BERKS - A HISTORIC
MILLENNIUM COUNTY**

**ASSOCIATION RELEASES HANDBOOK OF
HISTORIC FAMILY GRAVEYARDS**

This 280 page unbound informational publication was compiled by Jacqueline B. Nein, Cynthia Jimenez and Joan Texter and will be available at our March 9th general meeting at Lorane Elementary School Cafeteria at 7 P.M. The cost of the book is \$25 plus tax and \$3.50 P. & H.

Included are 310 sites: 125 without surface evidence. Information includes over 200 site pictures, township maps with locations of all sites with and without surface evidence, history and evaluation of the sites and inscriptions. After March 10 copies will be available at the Recorder of Deeds Office on the third floor of the Berks County Services Center, the Berks County Historical Society and the Berks County Conservancy. Other organizations, townships and/or businesses that wish to sell books on consignment should contact the association office.

This compilation is dedicated to our ancestors and to the precious heritage and culture they initiated for us in Berks County. Many individuals have been involved in a continuing commitment to discovering and preserving information about our early history and the early families who traveled to America seeking out a better way of life, a life of freedom and liberty and opportunity. This compilation is also dedicated to the many genealogists and historians who have added to the volume of information so industriously: researching, compiling, recording and/or sharing the information with others. To share with others is the true essence of our heritage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication would not have been possible without the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation and the many people who contributed so generously of their time, energies and their expertise. The organization was formed in 1993, and incorporated in 1994.

In this short span of time the preservation activities and accomplishments of this organization are impressive, and *the inclusion of the location of each historic gravesite on public record is likely the single greatest accomplishment.*

In 1997 representatives of the Association met with Ellie Antione, Berks County Recorder of Deeds to request her assistance in preventing the obliteration and desecration of any more historic family graveyards. As possible avenues were explored, and other county departments contributed ideas, we had a plan in place for recording the location of these sites and having them readily available as a matter of public record. The Berks County Planning Commission uses parcel identification numbers (PIN.). The Recorder of Deeds needed deed book and page numbers. Collecting this information for each site was no small task. Ninety percent of this information was made available to us by the untiring efforts of many township officials and employees. We strongly encourage each township to buy his or her own copy and to become a member of the BCAGP. The process provides for continual updating through our annual newsletter.

Sites with surface evidence are obvious, and we appreciate and thank the landowners who have cooperated and protected these sites. The location of many sites without surface evidence came as a surprise to many other landowners. All of these sites were found because research and historic documents and records gave evidence or clues to their existence. Certainly Laurel Miller's 1992 publication A Genealogical Guide to Berks County Private Cemeteries served as the primary source of information, putting together in one publication the works of so many earlier researchers.

Local township historians serving as guides for field trips enabled our evaluators to locate many unmarked sites and to identify and meet and/or confer with the owners.

The Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation is grateful for the tremendous support they have received from the entire Berks County community. Networking with other non-profit organizations and government officials has enabled us to achieve our preservation and protection efforts much more quickly. Thank you, Berks County! The Association looks forward to your continued support and cooperation.

If not a current member, join us as we continue the work begun by so many before us.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____

\$ _____ Annual membership, \$15.00

\$ _____ Donation earmarked for the Association General Fund.

\$ _____ Donation to be used for the _____ gravesite.

Mail checks to: B.C.A.G.P. P.O. Box 3707, Reading, Pa. 19606

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

General Membership Meeting

March 13, 2001

Oley American Legion Post 878 7:30 P.M.

Rt. 73 & Rt. 662

Important agenda item: Bylaw changes.

Directions: Route 73 to De Turk Rd turn North a short distance, make left to Parking Lot and Legion Building. (Look for sign at De Turk Road. Facing north, De Turk Road is to the left of the Oley Legion Diner on Rt. 73 close to where it intersects with Rt. 662)
The Oley American Legion Home telephone # is 610-987-6611. Someone will be at this number from seven o'clock to answer direction questions.

Epitaphs



**BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION for GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION
P.O. Box 3707, Reading, Pa 19606**