

GRAVE HAPPENINGS

GRAVE HAPPENINGS

VOLUME 6

ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2011

BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION OFFICERS:

LES ROHRBACH
PRESIDENT

KEITH SCHAFFER
1ST VICE PRESIDENT

WEBSITE ADDRESS
WWW.BCAGP.ORG

KAREN BROWN
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

SPECIAL POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL
- ARTICLES FEATURING A SUMMARY OF 2010
- LETTER FROM BCAGP PRESIDENT, LES ROHRBACH
- DISCOVERY OF MISSING TOMBSTONE AT KUTZ GRAVEYARD

ANNE WAGNER
2ND VICE PRESIDENT

CYNTHIA JIMENEZ
TREASURER

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LETTER FROM BCAGP PRESIDENT, LES ROHRBACH

2010 IN REVIEW

Greetings! For the first issue of Grave Happenings in 2011, I want to review the year of 2010 and provide insight into our activities. First, with regard to Grave Happenings itself, it is our hope to have a quarterly edition. This may not always happen, and we did miss a Spring edition in 2010. Also, in reviewing printing and mailing costs in 2009, we felt the cost for Grave Happenings was disproportionately high for our budget. We have pruned our distribution list, found a new commercial printer, and decided that the Spring and Fall issues will be internet only issues available on our website (<http://www.bcagp.org/>). These steps promise to significantly reduce the costs of producing Grave Happenings.

Our intent with Grave Happenings is to communicate to our members and interested persons what we are doing. Our activities are driven by our active members who are mostly volunteers. There are just a few who work on graveyards and, being volunteers, the work they do fits their schedules and interests. We welcome anyone, member or otherwise, who has a wish to help maintain a gravesite, participate in our activities, or take ownership for maintenance of a site.

Our activities are not limited to graveyard maintenance, however. Anne Wagner, the dynamo of BCAGP, has been photographing tombstones and graveyards, and placing them on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/photos.php?id=150047911461#!/pages/Berks-County-Association-for-Graveyard-Preservation/150047911461>). She has used Facebook to stimulate interest in BCAGP, connect to descendants, and solicit contributions.

We are also doing deed research as there seems to be no consistency as to whether a graveyard is part of the surrounding property, or is on a separate deed, possibly with different ownership. We have seen where deeds of surrounding property sometimes provide for a right of access to the graveyard, but with the passage of time, knowledge of the access privilege is lost. Deed research can be done from home with an internet connection, and one of our members is willing to train anyone with a desire to learn. Our research is performed by members who have an interest in doing it, and, again, as it fits into their personal schedules.

Access to graveyards is sometimes a problem, mostly because they are surrounded by crops and inaccessible during the growing season. Gratefully, some farmers do provide access through the crops. Conversely, some owners do not permit access even when crops are not an issue. With issues such as these, BCAGP has been fortunate to have the law firm of Mogel, Speidel, Bobb & Kershner provide Mr. Scott Jacobs, Esq., to provide advice and guidance.

The projects we undertake are often driven by property owners or descendants who come to us with a request to do a cleanup or repair, or rebuild a wall or walls. We like to have some financial contribution from the owner or descendants, though generally

much of the funding comes from BCAGP. We ask the people coming to us for some commitment to maintain the site once we leave. Given the expense of rebuilding brick and stone walls, our philosophy of several years ago to be 'historically accurate' has been amended to 'historically accurate with a reasonable cost.' In this regard, we have limited the height of some walls that we have built. Also, so as to not spend a disproportionate amount of money and time at one site in any given year, we have taken to building one wall with the possibility of returning in the future. We do not have a policy on this per se, but, we think it best to be seen as active with multiple projects in a variety of locations.

Notwithstanding the individual contributions we receive each year, the majority of our funds come from the Nein Trust, a bequest of BCAGP founder Jackie Nein. BCAGP has been asked by the trust to begin planning for the time when its funds run out, and how we will transition to it. This will be a focus of our discussions in early 2011. Should we try to work on graveyards where we have had little or no involvement in the past? Should we focus on locations where we have previously worked? Should we try to preserve the physical existence of graveyards, in some cases possibly by building just one wall?

In 2010, we performed major wall rebuilds at the Peter (Oley), the Ruppert (Rockland), and the Weidner (Oley) graveyards. A pier and chain perimeter was erected around the Kelchner (Richmond) site. In addition, less extensive masonry repairs were performed at the Feick (Upper Tulpehocken) and Kirby (Maidencreek) graveyards, and iron gates were installed at the Koenig (Bern) and Seifert (Upper Bern) sites.

In 2010, cleanups, primarily brush clearing and weed whacking, were performed at the Barnet/Peters (Maidencreek), the Breitenstein (Cumru), the Kemp and Kutz (Maxatawny), the Rauch (Hereford), the Reichert/Dum (Richmond), and the Schneider (Oley) graveyards. Working with a descendant who funded the work, we arranged for ongoing mowing at the Kirby (Maidencreek) graveyard. We directed a scout looking for an Eagle Scout project to the Ritter2 (Exeter) where he removed a forest of sumac and brush.

We received support again this year from the Oley School District which allowed student and faculty volunteers to take a day away from school to clear 14 graveyards. This annual support keeps a sizable number of the Oley and Pike township graveyards from getting too far out of control. (One depressing aspect of this avocation is that Mother Nature starts undoing our work as soon as we leave.) We arranged with the Berks County Prison to have its work crew perform cleanup at the Fix/Gerber/Bitting (Reading) site along Route 422 near Lancaster Avenue, and hope to have them continue this effort in 2011. Community Outreach from Kutztown University began volunteering for us late in the year and contributed to the cleanups at the Kemp and Reichert/Dum graveyards.

For 2011, we expect our activities to continue much as in 2010. We hope you continue your membership or join us for 2011. Be sure we have your email address, if you have one. We began using email to communicate the time of our meetings, will use it to communicate the availability of the online version of Grave Happenings, and will use it for other purposes if there is a need. Thanks for your support in 2010.

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YEAR IN REVIEW-2010

Election of Officers for 2011

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TREASURER

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SECRETARY



Election of Officers occurred in November.

In accordance with the BCAGP bylaws, nominations were solicited at the October 2010 meeting and officers were elected in November 2010.

Ritter, Exeter Township

Eagle Scout candidate, Ethan Kingsley, recently completed the clean up for the Ritter graveyard. Ethan cleared the graveyard and eradicated the staghorn sumac. He also repaired one of the tombstones with the assistance of a BCAGP member. Thank you Ethan for doing an amazing job making this site presentable and accessible!

Eagle Scout candidate, Ethan Kingsley, at the Ritter graveyard in Exeter Township (right)



YEAR IN REVIEW- 2010

Bertolet #3, Oley Township

In the Fall of 2010, a new gate was installed at the Bertolet graveyard. Since our last newsletter, property owner, Michael Matlock, has removed the remaining trees surrounding the gravesite which posed a threat to the wall and tombstones. We are grateful to Michael Matlock for his assistance in overseeing, as well as funding the tree removal. The assistance of property owners is vital in helping our organization to continue.



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Tree removal at the Bertolet#3 graveyard in Oley Township (left)

Weidner, Oley Township



BCAGP worked with the property owners Mr. & Mrs. John Franz to restore the rear wall, as well as the wall adjacent to the gate.

Also last year, the gate was repainted and reinstalled by The Lobach Cemetery Company..

We would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. John Franz for their support in funding this project.

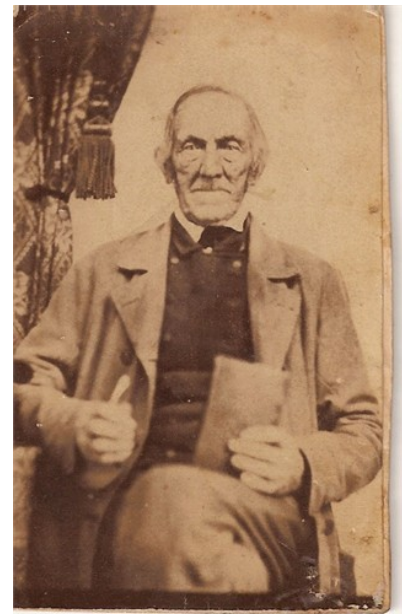


Images of the Weidner graveyard in Oley Township. BCAGP (left)

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Deturk #2, Oley Township

The photo of Abraham DeTurk (right) was provided courtesy of Rosslyn Kooser.



A major project that is currently in progress is the rebuilding of the wall at this property in Oley. For years, the wall has been collapsing and the appearance of the gravesite has greatly suffered. We expect work to be completed at this site by early Spring.



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“Every man is a quotation from all his ancestors.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Reichert/Dumm, Rockland Township



This graveyard has always been a challenge in keeping up with weed growth. This past fall, students from Kutztown University came to help us clean the site. What a difference they made– the photos above of before and after pictures of the graveyard show the results of their efforts. THANK YOU!

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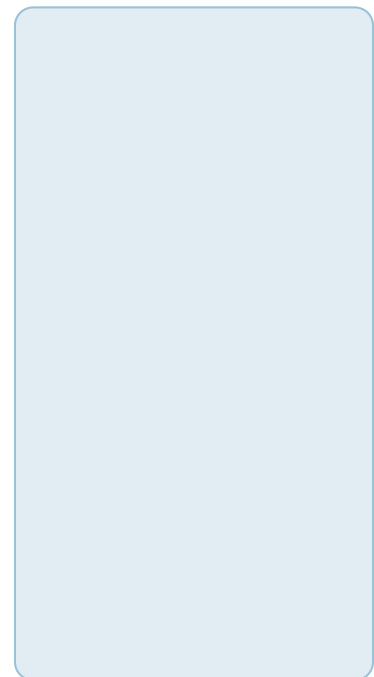


Spohn, Greenwich Township

Recently a vandalized tombstone at the Spohn graveyard has been cleaned to remove paint (pictured below)



The wooden gate will be restored and the walls are scheduled for minor repairs. Most of this project will be completed in the Spring of 2011. Typically work outside is slowed by the colder days of weather, but work continues year-round.



DISCOVERY OF MISSING TOWNBSTONE AT KUTZ GRAVEYARD—SUBMITTED BY ANNE E. WAGNER

When someone died before there were established church cemeteries, the family chose a perfect spot on their land, dug a hole, and buried their loved one. This practice continued on family farms for many years. These burial grounds were lovingly tended by the family and as the farm changed hands to a younger descendant, the care continued.

At some point, many farms were sold to a non-family member. Most of the graveyards became neglected and abandoned as the living descendants became more removed from the deceased. Depending on their interest, some property owners do some maintenance, but most do not. The responsibility ideally belongs to the descendants! So in the middle of cornfields and in backyards remain the burial grounds of our earliest Berks pioneers, frequently unknown to those nearby.

The Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation has done some work in the Kutz Graveyard over the past several years. In Winter 2008 we decided to remove the tree that the one remaining tombstone had been imbedded into. It led to the removal of all the remaining dead or dying trees and turned into quite a project. We also did some fence repairs and replaced some rails. The following spring we located a descendant who was interested in working on the graveyard.

Robin Smallen brought in her family and they weed whacked the graveyard, dug the stone out, and reset it upright. We gave the stone a biocide treatment to help clean the stone safely without doing any damage to the aging marble. Most of the time the discolorations on a tombstone are not dirt but are actually biological growths—mold, fungus, lichens, etc. On October 16 something spectacular happened! Again BCAGP members went in to clean up the graveyard as no one had been able to do it this year. We were impressed with how clean the remaining tombstone was a year after the biocide treatment, but disappointed that the stumps have not started rotting.

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*The Kutz graveyard is located
in Maxatawny Township*



DISCOVERY OF MISSING TOWNBSTONE AT KUTZ GRAVEYARD- CONTINUED



We discussed the plan of action while Les and Keith Schaffer were working on the weeds. When preparing to leave, at the moment we were on the way out, I noticed something odd appearing in a groundhog hole. Much to our amazement we uncovered the tombstone of Maria Kutz! Laurel Miller's 1992 book *A Genealogical Guide to Berks County Private Cemeteries* states that there was one remaining stone but noted inscriptions taken in 1941 which included two more.

There have been three footstones, but only one headstone since Laurel's book was printed. The tombstone was almost a foot beneath the ground and may never have been found if it were not for the groundhog that left a hole! The stone was in two pieces, the bottom which is what I saw in the groundhog hole, and the top half was under one of the tree stumps. You can see all of the pictures including the unearthing of the stone, on our Facebook if you search for Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation.

Johan's stone has been the lone stone for so many years that it will bring us great satisfaction to be able to repair and reset the stone of his wife Maria aside of his.

The flag by Johan's stone actually belongs to his father Johann Nicholas Kutz Jr. who was born in 1722 and died in 1790. We presume that since it was the only stone left, that is where the flag was placed.

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“Laurel Miller’s 1992 book A Genealogical Guide to Berks County Private Cemeteries states that there was one remaining stone but noted inscriptions taken in 1941 which included two more.”

DISCOVERY OF MISSING TOWNBSTONE AT KUTZ GRAVEYARD—CONTINUED

We are seeking any historical information on the graveyard and also family members to help with maintenance. Does anyone have pictures of this graveyard when more tombstones were visible?

The graveyard still needs work. The shifting ground has moved the fence again. We will be using probes to see if we can find the other missing tombstone noted in 1941:

Johan Nicolaus

s/o Nicolaus & Eva Catharine

Feb 14 1764-May 4 1831

Maria Susanna (nee Scharatin)

w/o Johann Nicolaus

Feb 10, 1769-May 20 1847, aged 78/3/10

James Alfred Reisinger

s/o Daniel & Maria

July 18, 1844-April 20 1846

According to Robin Smallen, a family member who has researched the family, the following should certainly also be buried there:

Johann N Kutz and Anna C Grim

Johann N Kutz II and Eva Catherine Brobst

We believe that there are several more burials but do not have the historical information to confirm who they are. This Kutz family graveyard along Hottenstein Road is one of thirteen known historic family graveyards in Maxatawny Township alone and each one has unique traits and special features.

Part of what we do at the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation is to find groups, individuals, family reunion committees, etc. to adopt graveyards and commit to some maintenance. We have also worked with Scouts needing Eagle Scout Projects on a more complete restoration.

If you are "Berks bred and Berks fed," chances are you have an ancestor in one of the historical graveyards needing work. We are always looking for help and always needing contributions.

You can find more information on this and other graveyards on our website at www.bcagp.org and also our Facebook! Just search the name.

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"This Kutz family graveyard along Hottenstein Road is one of thirteen known historic family graveyards in Maxatawny Township alone and each one has unique traits and special features."

YEAR IN REVIEW—2010

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to the volunteers who have help us throughout 2010

2010 has been another busy year for BCAGP. We were fortunate to have the assistance of many volunteers throughout the year. Individuals, groups of students and teachers, Eagle Scouts, as well as property owners have given much of their time to help us. Your continued support is key in helping our organization thrive in the years ahead.

Support from property owners has had a significant impact over this past year. We appreciate their contributions; whether it be financial support or maintenance of gravesites and access paths to gravesites.

Even with the excellent work of our current volunteers, the number of graveyards in need of care often exceeds our capabilities to maintain on a regular basis. We are looking for volunteers to perform tasks such as mowing, weeding, and raking.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us for information on the specific graveyards in need of care. BCAGP maintains records of graveyards organized by township .

Thank you again to all the volunteers who have assisted us over the years!!



Kutztown University volunteers: Michele, Jared, and Liz at the Kemp graveyard, Maxatawny Township (above). KU students also helped us clean up the Reichert/Dumm graveyard, Rockland Township.

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**“We make a living
by what we do, but
we make a life by
what we give.”**

Winston Churchill

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JANUARY IS THE TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIPS

IF YOU WOULD LIKE
TO CONTINUE YOUR
SUPPORT OF BCAGP,
PLEASE COMPLETE AND
RETURN THIS FORM

If not a current member, please join us while we continue the work begun by so many before us. Or if you do not wish to be a member at this time, but are interested in contributing support for a specific graveyard, please indicate that graveyard on the form below.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - JANUARY 2011

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

\$ _____ Annual Membership, Individual \$15 Family (residing in the same household) \$25

\$ _____ Annual business or municipality membership, \$35

\$ _____ Donation earmarked for the Association General Fund

\$ _____ Donation to be used for the _____ gravesite

\$ _____ Donation to be used in _____ municipality

Total Amount enclosed: _____ Date _____

Mail Checks to: B.C.A.G.P., PO Box 3707, Reading, PA 19606

*INDIVIDUAL
MEMBERSHIP- \$15*

*FAMILY
MEMBERSHIP - \$25*

*BUSINESS OR
MUNICIPALITY-
\$35*