



# GRAVE HAPPENINGS



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Photos this issue**

Karla Hummel

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**The fall work party at the  
Hechler/Esterly burial  
ground was a huge success.  
See page 5 for more.**

## Hill clean up



Although I was told that they had a lot of fun petting cows we still wish to thank them for the actual work they did cleaning up the Hill. Thank you **Les Rohrbach, Karla Hummel, Lara Thomas, Aidan Emerich, Meredith and Jaidan Goldey, Marvin Stamm, Joe Gross, Gary Koenig, Paul Schumann and Ron Smith.** This is located on the property of the Wholesome Dairy Farm. The same crew did the Hunter/Kemp.



### John Christian Schlegel, Jr.

For our veteran feature this newsletter, we visit the historic farm known as Schlegel Adventure, home to veteran Johan Christian Schlegel, Junior.

Johan Christian (known as John in many of the remaining documents) was the first son and American born to parents Johan Christian the elder and his second wife, Anna Catharina Reed/Rieth in 1744. His father is found on the ships' lists, arriving in Philadelphia in 1737. By 1738, the Schlegels had a land warrant for 252 acres near what is now Fleetwood. Here the Schlegel Farm Cemetery still stands, well maintained.

John was a prosperous farmer. We know from an inventory taken at his death that he was an educated man owning over 12 books. He kept a book of accounts with debts owed and received. He was a successful beekeeper with over 30 hives in addition to stores of honey and wax. He likely was a weaver, working with his last wife Esther to list on hand over 170 yards of cloth, spinning equipment and looms as well as \$337 cash and \$50 in old silver at his passing.



He also answered the call of Gov McKean in 1776 to join the militia and "immortalize your names by mingling your achievements with the events of 1776... and famed for... establishing a lasting foundation the liberties of one-quarter of the globe."

He returned home safely, built the lovely stone family home in 1797, married a total of three times, having seven children who all survived to prosper due to his efforts. He assuredly can be credited with establishing a lasting foundation not only for liberty, but his posterity.



*Lara Thomas*  
*Secretary, BCAGP*



Before and after pictures taken by Gary Koenig at the NEIN burial ground in October



Gary Koenig was busy on his own doing burial grounds missed due to cancellation of Day of Caring



Koenig burial ground in Bern Township



Jean Bertolet burial ground in Oley

Before and after pictures taken by Lara Thomas at the Kauffman in Oley during a successful group clean up in November. Thank you to **Les Rohrbach, Lara and Micah Thomas, Karla Hummel, Paul Schumann, Ron Smith, Irv Gring, Joseph Gross, and Meredith Goldey.** This group also did the Gulden in Yellow House.





## Letter from Les



One of our fall cleanup efforts took place at the DeTurk/Rothermel graveyard in Muhlenberg township. The land was first settled by Daniel DeTurk who acquired 200 acres from his father John in 1773. The tract bordered the Schuylkill River. Daniel and his wife Catharine, daughter of Abraham Levan of Oley, apparently had no sons who survived. Ownership of the land passed to their eldest daughter Susanna who married Peter Rothermel, son of Paul of Maiden creek township and his wife Sophia Maurer. Thus, the basis for the name assigned to the graveyard.

While I have done no extensive research into the ownership history, the land evidently remained in the Rothermel family for decades. The last Rothermel burials were mid 19th century. When the time came to sell the land surrounding the graveyard, the graveyard itself was excluded from the sale and the family reserved access to the graveyard through the sold land. Ownership of the graveyard may have never been conveyed to anyone so that technical ownership today consists of the descendants of whomever sold the property around it. They likely know nothing of the graveyard or that they own it.

That leads directly to the situation of today. The graveyard sits isolated in the rear right corner of a lot with a home and its yard surrounded by other residences. Did the Rothermels ever imagine that when they made the sale? The graveyard is not part of the deed but there is an easement through the homeowner's property granting access to it.

Having had a neighbor and the homeowner express concern to BCAGP about the state of the graveyard in the last couple of years, our objective was to make it easier for the homeowner to care for the graveyard. The situation we faced differs from what we are accustomed. Disposal of the debris required that it be hauled away. We needed to be sure we had volunteers with trucks. Access to the backyard was through a gate next to the house. The truck's rearview mirrors had to be folded in so the truck could pass through the gate and then with only inches to spare and people watching both sides while passing through. The load on the truck bed was tramped down and packed in to minimize the number of trips to the recycling center. Still, 5 trips were needed to remove all debris.

The wall is a mixed bag. Some sections are reasonably good but many sections are piles of stone. One of the homeowner's complaints was that he was destroying blades on his lawnmower by hitting loose stones. The size of the graveyard puts the walls beyond the means of BCAGP to repair. Even sectional repairs are more difficult due to the yard and getting materials to the site. Future efforts here will be discussed but talk may be all that happens.



Jaidan Goldey finds pieces to a broken stone

**Les Rohrbach** is President of BCAGP and very active in both the organizational aspects and the hands on "down and dirty in the graveyard" activities of the group. Les travels from Pottstown to his "roots" in Berks and is an avid hiker and genealogist.

*The work detail at the **Hechler Esterly** burial ground in Exeter Township brought out a good crew! Covid-19 also meant socially distancing precautions but there was plenty of work all around that it was not a problem. Because we lost our annual Oley Day of Caring due to the virus, we had a lot to catch up on. Gary Koenig went back the next day and did work on the tree stumps and went over the entire grounds with a mower.*



*This burial ground is a good size, and needs more maintenance than we alone can provide. Sunday we were fortunate to be there at the right time when a neighbor came by to talk about helping. If things go well, we may have a neighborhood group to “adopt” and they can supplement what we do! This is fabulous news because the ideal situation is to have family members or local groups focusing on one burial ground whereas we have many to divide our attention and resources.*

*The work detail at the **Kemp** (see p.9) was a huge hit and several of the descendants of the families buried there also came along for their first visit and clean up. Although the future of the Kemp/Levan is up in the air at the moment, we hope that the descendants will continue to care for it as long as possible with our guidance.*

*A third wall was completed at the **Reber**, and Reber descendants continue to raise funds to complete the project. Co-operation and fundraising from family is the only way we can afford to do these restorations! If you can help please contact Pat Reber (see p 6). One long wall remains to be completed.*



Kehl Rothermel in his family burial ground

*A work Party at the **Deturk/Rothermel** (see p 4) was also attended by descendants and hopefully more interest can be generated to keep this in better condition. Thanks to **Les Rohrbach, Joan McCracken, Kehl Rothermel, Irv Gring, Gary Koenig, Keith Schaffer, Paul Schumann, Ron Smith, Lara and Micah Thomas, Aidan Emerich, and Meredith and Jaidan Goldey,***

*We can accomplish so much more when family groups come out and stay involved than we can with our members alone. Happy Winter!*



Anne Wagner  
VP BCAGP



## Reber Cemetery Work has Rallied the Family

BCAGP first met us at the **Reber** Cemetery in Bernville in 2009 as our family worried about a wall sagging from downhill pressure. We kept the graveyard mowed inside the walls, thanks the Risser family: the late David Risser, his son Jonathan Risser, and David’s widow Elizabeth Risser of Wernersville, who continues to keep the grass down inside the walls.

But by 2018, overgrowth and poison ivy threatened from outside the walls. I sent an alarm to BCAGP, who put us on the fall clean-up schedule – and to our surprise and gratitude, on their reconstruction list.

Since then, BCAGP’s Keith Schaffer, their master stonemason, has single-handedly rebuilt two and a half walls and is now working on the second half of that entry wall. He tackled the upper wall first, building a five-foot deep retaining wall. Much of the cost went into buying and hauling up new stone.

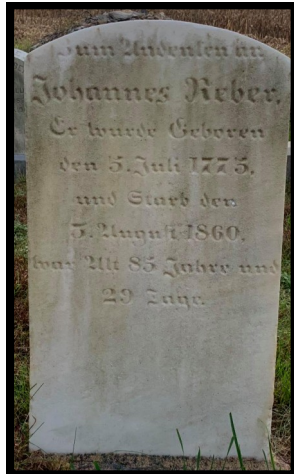
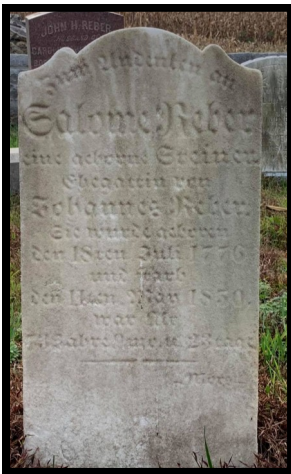


Twenty-three of our Reber cousins have rallied to the cause, raising nearly \$10,000 – about one-third of the costs so far. We are descendants of Jonathan G. (1863-1947) and Clara Snyder (1867-1932) Reber, who were in the succession of owners of the Reber Farm. Twelve of their children lived to adulthood. Descendants of nine of them have contributed - including several of their far-flung great great grandchildren, a tribute to their connection to Berks County roots!

That connection started in 1770 when our direct ancestors Valentin (1742-1818) and Maria Susannah (Haas) (1744-1823) Reber bought the farm. It stayed in the family through to my late cousin Bruce Kauffman’s ownership, ending in 1999. The Reber reunion was held for decades at the farm, and we fished in the small lake that generated power for the cabin where some of us spent summers. The current owners, Marshall and Sherry Lytle, keep the cemetery mowed outside the walls.

Valentin is buried at Friedens Lutheran Church in Bernville, where his grave is honored as a Revolutionary War veteran. Three of my own paternal generations are buried in the Reber Cemetery, spanning 1850 to 1912. The most recent burial of a cousin was 1942. The cemetery is our last toehold on our ancestral grounds.

**Pat Reber, Rockville, MD**  
[patriciareber@hotmail.com](mailto:patriciareber@hotmail.com)



After **Nick** and **Angela Lesher** cleaned the tombstones at the Reber Cemetery in March, we have a much clearer reading of them. Salome Steiner Reber (1776-1850) is the first documented burial in the cemetery. Her husband, Johannes Reber (1775-1860) is also buried there. Johannes and Salome were the second owners of the Reber farm, having purchased it in 1805 from Johannes' father, Valentin, for 2000 pounds. Salome is known as the grandmother of all of us Rebers. Pictured on the newly rebuilt walls in June 2020 are (left) Louise Knight, a four-times great granddaughter of Salome and Johannes; and Pat Reber, a three-times great granddaughter of Salome and Johannes.



## SET IN STONE



In early October, **Lara Thomas** and I had the exciting opportunity to attend a hands-on workshop led by **Jonathan Appell**. Jonathan is a renowned expert in tombstone restoration, and is best known for completing the Knight's Tomb in historic Jamestown – possibly the oldest stone in the United States.

The site was White Clay Presbyterian Church dating from 1750, with a lovely graveyard, still in use.

After a walk thru of the ~two thousand stone cemetery, our group chose a few tombstones to work on. Because there were a few participants who had not used D/2 before, we

began by cleaning 2 matching stones, one using the wet and brush method, and the other by simply spraying.

The first broken tombstone the group chose was a thick stone that had severe cracking of the base and upright because of metal rods that had deteriorated. We learned to use monument adhesive and putty epoxy to re-establish a joint between the parts, with lead spacers to maintain the right separation. One tombstone righted!

The second sample was one Lara and I chose. It was a simple upright marble, about 1 ½ inches thick, that had broken off completely near ground level – exactly what we see so often in BCAGP sites. Because it had broken recently, probably as the result of a lawnmower hit, the two pieces still fit perfectly. For that repair we mixed a 2 part epoxy – **NOTE** that this has been extensively tested and is specifically designed for historic use – that dries clear and bonds quickly. By using clamps on the sides of the stone the joint was supported as the bond cured. To fill in some slight chips and edges we mixed the left over epoxy with marble dust to color-match the stone. Repaired and restored!

The final stone was scary. It was a tall, substantial 3-part monument that was leaning precariously – the type stone that could badly injure or even kill someone. We reset it plumb and level, using only a large pry bar, spades, marble chips and sand. We hammered lead spacers

to support the individual pieces of the monument and then finished the repair by color-matching a hydraulic lime mortar and in-filling the tiny seams.

In future Set in Stone articles we'll explore each methodology in more depth as Lara and I, hopefully, hone our new skills in local burial grounds!

Lara and I jumped in and got good and dirty!



**Karla Hummel**  
2nd VP BCAGP  
BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com

## Ground Penetrating Radar At The Schlegel Burial Ground In Fleetwood



**Dr Laura Sherrod** from **Kutztown University** brought a team of students to evaluate the Schlegel burial ground using magnetometer and Ground Penetrating Radar. This is a valuable service as it can give clues to how many burials may be there unmarked, and if burials are outside the fence or wall. The students will evaluate the data gathered with the equipment and will form a report with the guidance of Dr Sherrod.



The burial ground was measured and gridded out before going over every inch with the specialized equipment that can show us what is below the ground. Although it isn't exactly like a picture, they can detect metal and see under ground disturbances. Hopefully it will be clear enough to see which direction the burials are and if there are

more that are not marked. There are rumors to be burials outside the fence so both outside and inside were done.







## Kemp/Levan

Descendants came out to help clean up at the Kemp/Levan burial ground .

The fate of this burial ground is unknown (see Grave Happenings October 2020) at this point, but we treated the stones with D-2 biocide and did a fall clean up. This is the burial place of Captain George Kemp and his



Thanks to Lara Thomas for the great pictures



# 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.

February 21 at 2PM we will hold our annual members meeting at Aulenbachs Cemetery. This will be on the 2nd floor. (small flight of steps) This change is due to covid and space needed to hold a meeting. The address is : 2050 Howard Blvd Reading PA 19606 . **Dues runs January to December so please send your dues for 2021!! Thank you!**



## Clean ups at Hunter/Kemp and Gulden



# 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 - 2021

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 \_\_\_\_\_

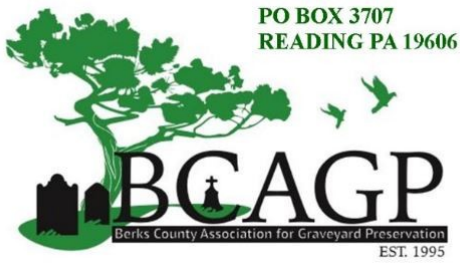
Mail Checks to: B.C.A.G.P., PO Box 3707, Reading, PA 19606

**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.

Please check our website [www.bcagp.org](http://www.bcagp.org)  
for meetings times



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

## BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

### Officers and Board of Directors

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**Lara Thomas, Secretary 610-914-5534**

**David Schlegel \* Ed Gensemer \* Ron Smith \* Keith Schaffer \* Michael Angstadt**

Newsletter contact: Anne Wagner

"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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