



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(EMAIL ADDRESSES ON THE WEBSITE)

LES ROHRBACH, PRESIDENT 610-323-1703
 ANNE WAGNER, VICE PRESIDENT 610-926-5036
 KEITH SCHAFFER, 2ND VICE PRESIDENT 610-689-5164
 PAUL SCHUMAN, TREASURER 484-529-8682
 KARLA HUMMEL, SECRETARY 610-987-9569

Gail Hesser
 Ralph Lorah
 Ed Gensemer

Newsletter contact: Anne Wagner

Betty Burdan
 Cynthia Jimenez

Don't forget to check our facebook for updates and more photos!
 Check the www.bcagp.org website for internet edition newsletter archives.



BCAGP
 Berks County Association
 for Graveyard Preservation



Contributors
Staff/Photos
 Kathryn Angstadt
 Mike Angstadt
 Betty Burdan
 Karla Hummel
 Les Rohrbach
 Keith Schaffer
 Anne Wagner



WWW.BCAGP.ORG

Check our web site for meeting dates

BCAGP
 PO BOX 3707
 READING PA 19606

SCHAEFFER



Wall collapsing at the tree. Tombstones at risk.

Many years ago, as one of the first projects BCAGP became involved with, the Schaeffer burial ground was restored. Money was raised between descendants, grants and BCAGP.

We noticed last year the tree in the front began to knock in the wall, so we had it removed and rebuilt that section of the front wall. At the same time we had the other side of the wall chipped and re pointed.

Although the expense to remove trees professionally is a lot, the cost of repairing and restoring walls is much greater. There were a total of 3 trees removed for the safety of the burial ground. More work will be needed but for now it is stable. We sometimes receive criticism for removing trees. But this is the reason we do this.



Wall being rebuilt where tree pushed



AFTER



To make this work, every burial ground needs an advocate! It can be a family member, a property owner, or just someone with a special interest; but a small group of volunteers like we are at BCAGP can't possibly keep up on everything for 150 (give or take a few) burial grounds. We need people to "adopt".

When I started with this group, I attempted to make a contact database of all who are property owners that each burial ground sits upon. By the time I finished it, was already outdated. Even trying to keep track of which burial grounds had its 1st, 2nd or no biocide treatment was not an easy chore, let alone having someone checking for maintenance issues.

Family Associations that are actively looking after their burial grounds are far and few between. People are not instilling in their younger generations the pride and responsibility of caring for the family burial ground.

Maybe we think it's way more important to preserve these than it actually is? They are dead right? Should the farmers just be allowed to drop the stones, and cover them and plant like they did before there were graveyard preservation laws? In other countries, once the "lot rent" is not paid, they kick the dead guy out.



Why do some of us care so much about preserving the graves of the dead? I have asked myself that a lot. Why do I spend so much time on this activity when no one of my line is even buried in one of these historic burial grounds? Apart from the interesting things we find, and the good company of others in the group and the exercise we get just getting to the spot, why do we do this? It is very hard to explain.

Maybe my kids don't care that much, and your kids don't care that much, but their kids might. If we don't preserve what we have now, there will be nothing left for future generations to learn from and to discover where they came from. Once it's gone, it's gone.

I encourage you all to pick a nice spring/summer day and take a book and a blanket or chair, and visit a family burial ground (with permission of course where needed). Just sit there... look around and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. Give it an hour or two. You don't have to pull even one weed if you don't want to. You don't have to reset a tombstone if you are not able. I just want you to feel it. Then, when you get home, tell me why we should care about restoring the burial grounds. Visit our facebook and tell us!! We want to hear from you!



Anne Wagner
awagner615@aol.com

LETTER FROM LES

Most years our ongoing cleanup activities have been conducted, broadly speaking, in a triangle with the Oley area at one corner and sides extending toward Maiden creek and Maxatawny townships with Route 222 approximating the northern edge. This area contains a disproportionate share of Berks County graveyards. Once we begin working at a site, we like to return periodically so as not to lose the gains. Thus, this area has been a focus of our attention.

The participation of **Dave Schlegel** has changed our dynamic. Dave has been tending to many of the graveyards in his native Fleetwood area. When we discuss where work parties are needed, we learn what Dave has quietly been up to and that expected cleanups are often unneeded.

Looking for new sites, we decided on Hereford township. In 2009/2010 we had a member from Hereford who spent time working here, but no one had returned. Quite a few of us had never been to these graveyards. It provided us with an opportunity to visit new graveyards in a section of Berks where many of us have only passing knowledge.



Our first work party was to the Federolf/Bittenbender graveyard. This drew a new face to our meeting site. Fred Fonseca, a BCAGP member from West Chester, was there because he wanted to find the graveyard of his Bittenbender ancestors. As a bonus for BCAGP, Fred volunteered himself and some family members to maintain the graveyard and has solicited funds from family members to support wall restoration.

Our second work party to the Rauch graveyard brought a distinct change. While the Federolf/Bittenbender graveyard is surrounded by an impressive wall between a wooded area and a farmed field, the boundaries of the Rauch site were indistinguishable in woods at the top of a hill. From this location we could see the steeple of Huff's Church off in the distance.



Our trips to Hereford township yielded the satisfaction we normally feel from restoring a graveyard's appearance, but for me, visiting a new area, one in which my ancestors lived, was an added bonus.

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.

Angstadt Burial Ground

By: Kathryn and Michael Angstadt

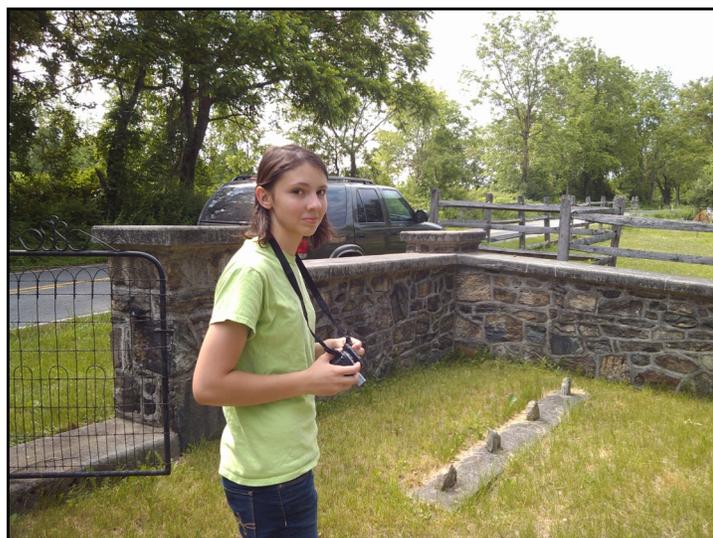


In 1733 George Angstadt of Saxony embarked with his two sons, George and John, on the Palatine ship Richard and Elizabeth, Captained by Christopher Clymer. Fleeing the religious persecution, wars and turmoil of the time, they sought a new life in the religiously tolerant colony newly formed by William Penn. After some years George Angstadt was given a land grant which he divided among his sons and they were able to build lives for themselves in what is today Rockland Township.

Near the original Angstadt Family farm the first generation of American Angstadts created a family cemetery. As years passed the cemetery fell into disrepair until the Angstadt- Freundschaft Association took it upon themselves to care for this treasure of early American pioneer history. In 1927 they sponsored the building of a wall and in 1939 formally had the graves marked. The Angstadt- Freundschaft Association has been ensuring the preservation and care of this cemetery ever since.



It is believed that eleven are laid to rest including wives of the Yoder and Kolb families.





BITTENBENDER

Work is gearing up for the left side of the front wall. Materials were brought there in March and the job is in progress. It appears that some of the rock may be missing, but Keith spent some time digging around and found some under the ground in back and in front of the wall.



We recently checked the **Klein** burial ground in Jefferson Township to see what was needed at the request of family member Wayne Kline. We determined a dying tree needed to be removed, and we did not want branches breaking stones, so that was done. At that time, we treated the stones with biocide and had Keith look over the walls. There is some wall repair that needs to be done and we will be looking at that in the near future. If you are a Klein descendant, please contribute, so we can get this project on the table.

We also have a **Keim** burial ground that is still unfinished. One wall and a corner need to be done plus the fallen in stiles need to be removed.

The **Bittenbender** project is a huge one, so fundraising needs to happen for this project to continue beyond what we have approved so far on the front wall. If you have an organization, family association or group that will fundraise with Fred Fonseca please let us know and we can put you in touch.

We try to spread ourselves around and try to help where it is most needed, but we also have to prioritize when specific donations come in. If you can spearhead fundraising projects for your favorite burial ground, through your family associations or community groups please contact us. Come to our meeting and propose your plans. Our Board meetings are open to everyone. We value your ideas and input and especially your time to help coordinate. If each burial ground had its "advocate" we could do much more to preserve them and keep them safe. Remember we are not paid staff. We are volunteers.

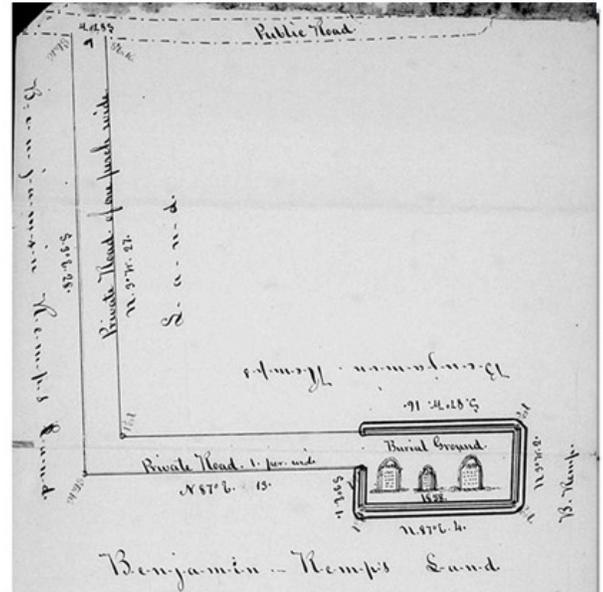


Remp Family Graveyard, Brecknock Twp

In the century before public cemeteries, families took varied steps to preserve the family graveyard for future generations. Few went as far as Benjamin Remp, who actually had a professional survey done of the graveyard and access road to it in 1858. The surveyor created an exact sketch of the tract complete with wall and tombstones.

Benjamin inherited the Remp family plantation of 122 acres, more or less, from his father Jacob. Jacob died in 1841 naming his son Benjamin and daughters Elizabeth, wife of Abraham Steffe; Sarah, wife of Jacob Hemminger; Catherine (deceased), and husband Peter Weid; Leah wife of John Hornberger; and Eve, wife of Daniel Berlot in his will. Jacob's wife, Catherine survived him by 12 years and is buried with him in the graveyard.

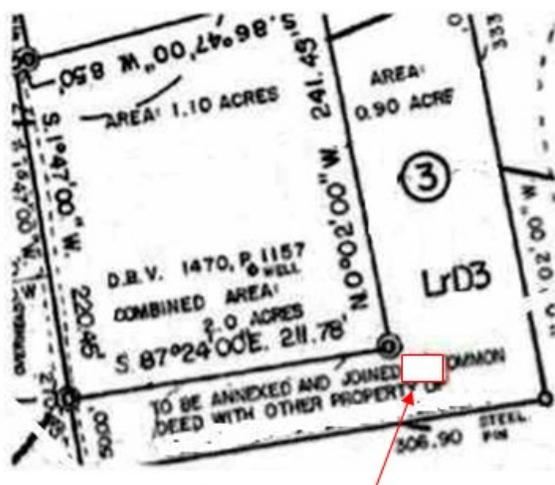
Benjamin lived his life on the Remp homestead and died May of 1872. He and his wife Barbara are also buried in the graveyard. His will, written in 1860, left funds to a granddaughter, Christina Ziegler, for being his caretaker. Next he ordered his real and personal property sold, the income to be shared equally among his heirs. Item 4 of the will, specifically addressed the preservation of the family graveyard and the survey was annexed to the will.



Draft of Burial Ground and Road reserved to pass and repass to and from the same. Situate in Brecknock township, Berks Co., PA. Surveyed for Benjamin Remp Nov. 18, 1858 containing 48 perches. S. M.

Item 4 - I do make and ordain, that whereas a certain Burial Ground is on my plantation ... which was, on the 18th of Nov. 1858, surveyed and laid out marked containing 48 perches... Together with a private road thereto laid out Beginning in public State Road all the way to the said burial ground a width of one perch as a free passage for ... the relatives or friends of my family... the said Burial Ground together with the road laid out shall be kept for said purpose and be kept separate and not be sold to any person ... separate from my plantation... by my Executors or survivors at all times.

Down through the years every deed written for the tracts surrounding the graveyard and access road have respected the fact that the access road does not belong to any of them, but is reserved as a private road that they have the privilege of using. The graveyard is recognized and mentioned in enough of them to establish its existence and its origin.



A 1994 subdivision of the surrounding 47 acres, laid out three lots. Lots 1 and 2 were deeded to the principals of the subdivision. Lot 3, a .90 acre tract containing the Remp Family Graveyard was reserved by the Grantor, who granted the 47 acres to the partners of the subdivision. Lot 3, a .90 of an acre tract was intended to be annexed to another 1.10 acres the grantors owned, creating a 2 acre tract. However, no deed of annexation was ever written. The original tract and Lot 3 remained 2 separate properties.

Miller & Zook Subdivision 204-0007. Remp Graveyard descendants of Jacob as well, meaning the Remp Graveyard has remained in the family for 175 years, just as Benjamin intended.

Ten years later only the 1.10 acre tract with dwelling was sold to new owners. The sale did not include the .90 acre Lot 3, thereby retaining the tract with the graveyard for the grantors. This is completely understandable as that grantor is a direct line descendant and a great-great-great granddaughter of Jacob Remp, first known owner of the graveyard. It is very possible that all the owners in between were also

By Betty J. Burdan

bjburdan@dejazzd.com

SET IN STONE



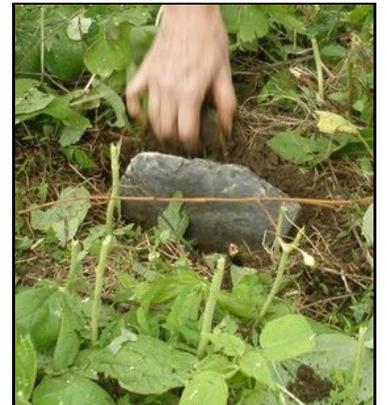
In previous editions we discussed the types of stone used in Berks graveyards, so now we can look at the various sizes of the markers used. First though, a note on “empty space”.

If you look at many local burial grounds, it will appear in many that there is space remaining within their walls. In some cases this is true. Once church cemeteries became available, families began to inter their loved ones in those and the use of private property gradually ceased.

For other sites, however, the apparently “empty space” may contain one - or even many - unmarked graves. Advanced (in this case, synonymous with expensive!) methodologies, such as Ground Penetrating Radar, can determine if graves are present. Excavation can also do

so, but BCAGP does NOT disturb even potential remains! The presence of slate or brick, used as a covering to protect remains from disturbance by animals, can be key evidence. Or we may find a possible marker, which leads us back to discussing the sizes of stones.

The smallest grave markers are simple, un-inscribed rock (which we commonly call “fieldstones”), or those with roughly scratched initials or markings. These are relatively small, rising perhaps 1 or 2 feet out of the ground. Made of an available rock found nearby, these mark graves of those who had no engravers available, of those who could not afford such services, and those who had no family members left behind – including the indentured, servants, etc. Unless initials or a name were crudely scratched onto the stone, we cannot identify the vast majority of these graves.



Determining if we have found a fieldstone is a quest in itself. Over the decades these stones have been overtaken by surrounding plant growth, and may only have a few inches remaining above ground. First, we can look at any documentation of the site to find out how many graves are recorded there. Then we see if the rock is in a row or line with existing tombstones at the site. Elongated rocks were used as fieldstones so that they could be entrenched and remain upright; thus, digging out the rock is our final test. For example, in the Hoch/DeTurk/Schenkel in Oley, 2 of the rocks that we preliminarily believed to be fieldstones based upon their locations turned out to be at least 3 feet in length and absolutely perpendicular to the ground their entire length. In both cases only about 6 inches had still been above ground. That being unnatural placement for a rock, especially in the middle of an area that had been laboriously cleared to be a burial ground, we feel rather certain that these mark graves.

The other generally small stones we find are those of children – we’ll save that for the next issue.



KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com



Time, Trees and Stone Walls

Betty J Burdan



The family graveyards in Berks County were established as a place of respect where settlers could bury their departed loved ones. To mark and preserve these sacred sites, many were surrounded by beautifully built stone walls. Some were dry stacked and some were mortared walls designed to make them last longer. Stone, wooden or tin caps were put on top to protect them from the weather.

These stone walls had two enemies, time and trees. Time erodes all things slowly and repairs are needed, but for the most part the walls can withstand the elements for many generations. Trees are not so kind. They begin as what might look like

a weed or something called a scrub, then grow into a sapling and next into a full grown tree, that will continue to mature and grow. As the tree grows and matures its roots also grow and invade the integrity of even the best built stone wall. They push and displace the stones, cracking the mortar and crumbling the wall.

Anyone who has one of these graveyards on their property, or on their ancestral homestead, that is surrounded by a stone wall, should keep an eye out for these saplings. They need to be removed as a preventative. They and even young trees can be safely moved to another location where they will not interfere with the wall. If the tree is allowed to grow, or if it is already a full grown it becomes very time consuming and expensive to have them removed and to repair the wall. It is always better to practice prevention rather than lose a mature tree.



Betty Burdan has possibly the best collection of "death" of anyone you might ever encounter. She saves the most interesting and unusual things. This is the bill for burial for Daniel S Mathias to the Oley Cemetery August 17, 1911. Cost was \$18.48!

Spangsville, Pa., *Aug. 17* 1911

M Daniel S. Mathias Est.

In Account With **Lawrence W. Mathias**

Sexton Oley Cemetery.

To dig wall grave	6.00
" mortar	1.00
" painting	1.00
" haul ground	1.00
" 290 bricks @ 1.75	5.08
" plate stone	4.40
	\$18.48

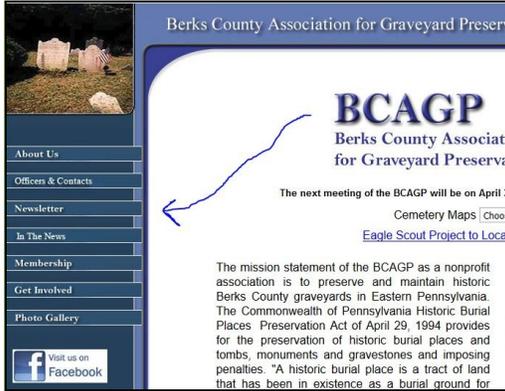
Recd. Payment
J. M. Mathias

[Reading Eagle - Aug 12, 1911](#) [Browse th](#)

DANIEL S. MATTHIAS PASSES AWAY IN EARL TOWNSHIP

Manatawny, Aug. 12.—At his residence in Earl township, near Manatawny, Daniel S. Matthias, one of this section's oldest and best known residents, died this morning of infirmities, aged 79 years. Mr. Matthias was born in Earl and resided there all his life. He was a son of the long deceased Daniel Matthias and his wife (nee Spohn). He was one of a family of seven children, five sons and two daughters, of whom all are dead except Jacob Matthias, of Conshohocken. Deceased married Wilhelmina Focht, a daughter of the late Elijah Focht, also of Earl township, 55 years ago. A daughter who was married to the late Jonathan Cleaver, died several years ago. Besides his widow, there survive a brother and a grandson, Daniel M. Cleaver. Deceased was a farmer all his life until several years ago, when he retired. He was a member of the Oley Reformed Church and a Democrat.

Our newsletter archives are online, and thanks to **Elizabeth Lord** we now have an index! When you go to our www.bcagp.org website, click on newsletter. The index is right there



with all the previous newsletters. You can now find your family burial ground and see which issues of Grave Happenings it has been mentioned in, from 1995 to January 2016. I really want to thank my wonderful niece Beth, for spending countless hours reading and creating this index, because It will save me tons of time researching. Betty Burdan then took the database Beth created and converted it, so our web master, Doug, could put it there for everyone to access. The amount of work it took to

create this index was mind boggling and this is a valuable research tool. For instance, if you are interested in the Bittenbender burial ground, you will find it in the index and can find the issues easily. This also makes our work easier when we are looking to provide information to someone that has contacted us. Although I cannot guarantee this

- Bishop, John Vol. 4, Feb., 1998, 2
- Bittenbender Vol. 1, Feb., 1995, 5
- Bittenbender Vol. 2, Feb., 1996, 4
- Bittenbender Vol. 5, Feb., 1999, 5
- Bittenbender Vol. 4, Sept., 2009, 4
- Bittenbender Vol. 10, Apr., 2015, 7
- Bittenbender Vol. 11, Jan., 2016, 6
- Blanchfield, Lucy (Straub) Vol. 10, Jan., 2015, 3
- Blatt, Irene Vol. 1, Feb., 1995, 5
- Blue Mountain Academy Vol. 4, Feb., 1998, 3
- Blue Mountain Academy Vol. 5, Feb., 1999, 2
- Blumfield, Carla Vol. 1, Feb., 1995, 1
- Blumfield, Carla Vol. 6, Feb. 2001, 5

will stay updated for future issues, we will work on it as time permits . This was a project we talked about doing for years but no one had the time or motivation to dig in before Beth offered.

Grave Happenings
The newsletter of
Berks County Association
for Graveyard Preservation



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Just to note to explain the silly looking covers of Grave Happenings going forward. According to postal regulations, we must have the fold of our newsletter on the bottom. Not all of our newsletters get mailed out. We wanted to be able to flip the address part for mailing so the fold is on the bottom, but also leave it looking attractive for the overall front cover. Please bear with us while we figure out a good solution.

Our next meeting will be 2PM April 3rd at the Oley Legion hall. This is the annual General Membership Meeting.

Reminder: Grave Happenings is a mixture of mail out and internet editions. All of our newsletters are online in full color at www.bcagp.org.



[Historic Burial Places Preservation Act \(PDF\)](#) of April 29, 1994 (P.L. 141, No. 22)

This Act defines "Historic burial place" as "A tract of land that has been in existence as a burial ground for more than 100 years wherein there have been not burials for at least 50 years and wherein there will be no future burials or listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission."

It further states that municipalities may not use eminent domain to take a historic burial ground for an alternate use. PHMC approval must be given before a burial ground is taken for "public use." If the burial ground is taken for public use, then the burial ground authority must preserve a record of what was removed. This record must be sent to the county and PHMC.

Furthermore, this Act also stipulates that the following actions are illegal: the removals of a fence, tomb, monument, gravestone, or fragment. These actions are legal only if the object(s) is being removed with consent of the owner or descendent **and** a court order for the purpose of "repair or replacement, reproduction or preservation and display in an accredited museum."

"Grave Happenings" is a collection of articles provided by members of our membership about recent and on-going activities. We are always open to your suggestions for 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 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.

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 - 2016

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 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

for meetings times