



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



See page 9



CRONRATH

Contributors Staff/Photos

- Betty Burdan
- Ed Gensemer
- Karla Hummel
- Les Rohrbach
- Keith Schaffer
- Anne Wagner





Before

Samuel Clauser

Born Oct 9 1807 Died April 19 1864

Son of Peter & Anna Maria Clauser

Married Jan 11 1860 to Margaret Kauffman

Buried in Kauffman family burial ground in Oley

Brothers Daniel and Tobias and sisters Esther, Sally, Polly and Hannah.

[Find a grave memorial added](#)



Veteran of the Civil War



Neil D Scheidt (#47099775)
Find A Grave member for 8 years, 24 days

Profile Messages [Add to MyFriends]

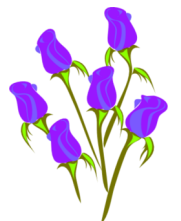
Bio and Links
My particular areas of interest are Berks, Montgomery, Schuylkill, Chester, Montour and Lehigh Counties in Pennsylvania. My strongest passion is to locate and honor all war veterans who sacrificed years of their youth, healthy lives and sometimes their adulthood. They must never be forgotten. All of my entries to findagrave have been added with honor, one by one!

Contributions to Find A Grave

- 48,919 Memorials Added
- 49,035 Memorials Managed
- 116 Memorials/Week
- 22,158 Photos
- 81 Photo Requests
- 380 Volunteer Photos Taken
- 18,114 Virtual Flowers
- 14 Virtual Cemeteries
- 2 Fame Ratings
- 1 Sponsorship
- 26 Friends

Many of those doing family research are from out of the area, and not able to walk around our cemeteries looking at tombstones. Fortunately among our members is **Neil Scheidt**, who is a long time [Find A Grave Contributor](#). Neil at this moment has added 48,919 memorials, and has put up many of our family

burial grounds. When you find your ancestors burial on Find a Grave in Berks County, there is a good chance Neil has put it there for you to have found. Neil is a retired Electrician who has a deep interest in cemeteries and burials, but primarily Veteran memorials. Any time there is a question on a Berks County Veteran, Neil is the first person I will contact or refer people to. Since I do a bit of Find A Grave myself, I know the amount of time it takes to have accomplished what he has done. If you are researching your ancestor from Berks County, check out Find a Grave (FAG) to see what is already there!



SET IN STONE



Most burial grounds in Berks have *headstones* and many also have a *footstone* (a smaller, upright slab resembling the headstone, usually with only initials inscribed). Nearly all are *tablets* (rectangular gravemarkers set at a right angle to the ground, normally with an inscription. Those simple terms fail to give any idea of the type or shape of the stones, so I'll attempt to provide some general terms that cover the majority of tombstones we see.



Most headstones in these early graveyards are a single *slab*. These are often significantly larger than what is visible above ground level, some having as much as 50% of their height beneath the surface.



Fewer tombstones are in 2 pieces – the *base* and the *die*. The base itself is unornamented. Most bases feature a concave or hollowed groove. The die is then *bottom jointed*, having a protruding piece (or pieces) that fits into the base (think insert tab A into slot B). There are also some 2 piece

stones that use rods or rebar to connect the base and the die.

A handful of sites feature one or more *ledger stones*. These tombstones are the size of a grave and lie flat, parallel to the ground. We generally refer to these as *tabletop stones*, although the precise definition of that term would require them to have legs (like a table). Some ledger stones have a base or platform beneath them. The bases we see are only a few inches in height and these are referred to as *false tombs*, but the burial is fully underground at normal depth.



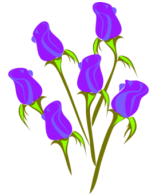
There are also several burial grounds that contain obelisks, square or tapering shafts much taller than standard tombstones. These monuments were added by families or descendants, generally at later dates than the burials, and are dedications to some or all of those buried in the graveyard.

KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com

LETTER FROM LES

As I write this in early March 2017 we have tempered optimism that the work we wish to have performed at the Herman/Sassaman graveyard in Maxatawny township will be completed. As described in previous articles, this work involves straightening a leaning obelisk, and moving and appropriately placing the bottom and top sections of two table top monuments in the graveyard.



Most monument companies we have contacted have shown no interest in this job. The difficulty of finding a monument company has been compounded by the fact that we need to find the farmer outside where we can talk to him because phone calls have been fruitless. Unfortunately this requires a 20 to 35 mile one way trip for any BCAGP board member in the hope of finding the farmer. Keith attempted this several times and in February received permission to proceed.



I immediately contacted the one monument company that had not dismissed us out of hand to evaluate the job. Concerns raised included whether one or two of the top sections of the obelisk would have to be removed to reduce weight so that it could be lifted, how the obelisk would be reassembled after it was leveled, and the size of the truck that might be needed to accomplish this. After considering alternatives, the monument company conceived a different approach to leveling the obelisk. Now it is not expected to be disassembled. Smaller equipment regularly used in graveyards will be used. The possibility of creating ruts in the field is reduced and the work is less dependent on the weather and wetness of the ground. Still, the weather can come into play and the work has to be done before planting begins. We hope to report that this job has been completed in the next newsletter, but as the monument mover remarked, "People are always dying." He will have to find an opening in his schedule when weather and field conditions permit.

Editors note: The work did get done in March, and will be featured in the July newsletter.

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.

Elections of the board went off without a hitch in February. You will be seeing the same names for Officers, as nothing changed there. Our additional board members though have been altered. New to the Board are Mike Angstadt and David Schlegel. Those leaving the board have in no way shape or form have left our group! **Betty Burdan** has been dealing with debilitating health issues and is unable to attend meetings which, are the main function of the board. She is still working from home, doing graveyard research, writing for the newsletter and doing the financial audits.

Cynthia Jimenez has just decided she wanted to step back and just be a regular member as did **Gail Hesser**. Cynthia and Gail Hesser are from the original founding membership/board of BCAGP. They deserve a well-needed break. As much as I wanted to coax and try to convince them to stay on the board, I also didn't want to make them feel that they will be harassed to do more than they are comfortable doing if they stayed active.

David Schlegel has been caring for burial grounds long before he joined up. He has lovingly been keeping many burial grounds in the Fleetwood/Oley area weed free and placing Veterans' flags and holders as needed. David had been a valuable asset as he is a hands-on worker with a huge heart.

Mike Angstadt is a dedicated researcher of multiple areas and very computer/technology savvy and is helping us get organized for the future generations. He recently joined the Aulenbach's board as well, when the former leadership decided it was time to retire. Mike also brings his daughter to the group and we were excited to have had her and Mike the past year.



Ed Gensemer was elected as well to continue, as he was appointed when Ralph Lorah died this summer. Ed is another family history/cemetery buff and is the new

President of Aulenbach's cemetery in Reading. Ed is full of energy and is most willing to try something new and tackle a new challenge.

Les Rohrbach, as our President, has done a superb job of keeping track of everything and things running smoothly. He has an extremely organized approach and we need that badly when too many of us are going different directions.

Keith Schaffer, 2nd VP knows more about the graveyards than anyone. He has a long history of being in the burial ground dirt and he is our resident expert for sure. Keith's years of contacts with the property owners makes things go a lot smoother when requiring access.

Paul Schumann has really picked up the Treasurer's duties last term and we are grateful to him for continuing. It's not the most fun job in the group but it may be the most important. Paul prefers to be outdoors, and working in the open air of the burial grounds suits him well. Paul is also working on GPS co-ordinates for all burial grounds.

Karla Hummel is again the Secretary, which relieves the rest of us of being "grammar corrected" by her, because she truly pays attention to details. She is the primary person that also proofreads the newsletter when I have finished because frankly, I write like I talk and trust me we need her! Karla also is doing more than the minutes and her job has expanded. She constantly finds projects like documenting all the cemeteries on the historic registers which is a mountain of paperwork.

We also have seen a few new faces to volunteer and we hope for more this year. We accept whatever help you want to give. There are no minimum requirements. Come as you are!

Anne Wagner
Vice President
 awagner615@aol.com

New officers elected at the February 2017 meeting

Les Rohrbach , President

Anne Wagner, Vice President

Keith Schaffer, 2nd Vice President

Paul Schumann, Treasurer

Karla Hummel, Secretary

Board Members at Large: Ed Gensemer, David Schlegel, Mike Angstadt



SCHNEIDER



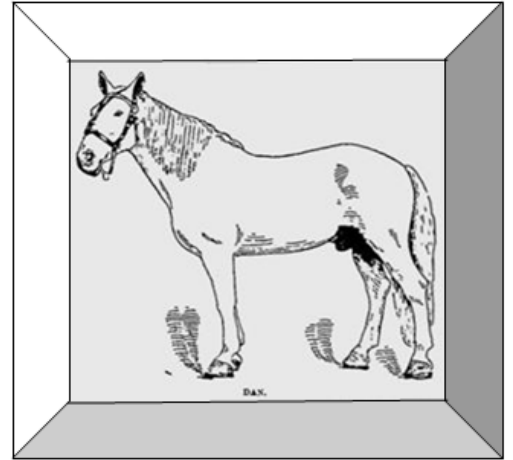
The entire rear wall is being repaired and re pointed

Dan's Private Burial Ground, Near Sinking Spring

By Betty J. Burdan

bjburdan@dejazzd.com

In 1890, the Neversink Fire Company added an iron gray steed named Dan to their stable of horses that pulled Neversink's steam engines. Dan was 4 years old, 16 hands high, and weighed in at 1,479 pounds. He cost a whopping \$375, or \$10,000 in round numbers today. Dan became the partner to Joe, a 1,730 pounder who had already been with the department 4 years. They worked well together and for the next 12 years, under horseman William Haas, they galloped to many a fire call.



Dan earned his keep not only by hauling the engine to fires, but in entertainment value. The Neversinks claimed Dan was so smart he could practically talk. They said he could tell you his age by stamping a hoof on the ground the correct number of times and he could answer questions by nodding his head yes and no. Dan grew to be a 1,670 pound legend as a mature horse.

Much to the sorrow of the Neversinks, Dan fell ill with a terminal cancer. When all that was left in life for Dan was suffering, the Neversinks decided on euthanasia. Dan was taken to the farm of Jacob Wanner near Sinking Spring, somewhere along the Cacoosing Creek. The sight was chosen by William G. Edwards, Calvin Addie and John F. Feffer. Irvin Maurer, Morris Delong, Frank Hahn, and Charles Cole did the digging while Dr. Philips kindly assisted Dan on his way to horse heaven. The grave was a full 8 foot deep and no doubt appropriate words were said over the remains.



Dan was so loved that his death garnered two separate obituaries in the Reading Eagle in April of 1902. Out of respect for their four legged fellow fire fighter and the job he'd done, the Neversinks established a fund to raise money to install an appropriately engraved granite tombstone on Dan's resting place. Contributions and subscriptions were accepted and dozens of portraits of Dan were sold to raise funds.

Last mention found was that fund raising continued but, nothing was found on whether they actually achieved their goal and installed the tombstone. While the Wanner family was found to have lived and farmed in Spring Township, a careful search of deeds in

Berks, revealed no farm owned by a Jacob Wanner. If anyone knows where it may have been or where Dan rests, please let us know so we can complete our file on Dan's Burial Ground. Or let us know where the Jacob Wanner farm was so we can look for Dan's grave. The only clue to Dan's Burial Ground and the Jacob Wanner farm near Sinking Spring"along the Cacoosing."



Reading Times, Reading, PA - Jun 16, 1903

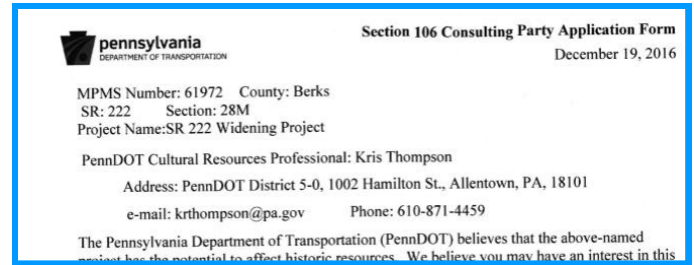
HENRY WINS AGAIN.
The annual outing of the Independent Gun Club was held on Jacob Wanner's farm, along the Cacoosing. The event of the day was the shoot for the badge of the club, which becomes the permanent property of the owner after being won three successive times. The winner was Charles Henry, captain of the Independent, who also carried it off at the first shoot for it. The trophy was fought for by a dozen marksmen, and Henry got it by breaking 23 out of 25 targets.



So, exactly **WHAT DO WE DO**, especially during winter months? There is so much more than weed whacking, tree trimming, tombstone resetting, grave marker cleaning, and general maintenance! **Here are excerpts from our February meeting to give you an idea of the scope of BCAGP's involvements beyond the on-site physical activities:**

Deed research: This is always ongoing. There are new questions raised frequently, and plenty more sites to be fully documented to determine sites' histories, ownership, and easements.

Properties: Since real estate changes hands, we often face questions of who, where, and how for both residential and commercial sites. Last month, we visited a company with a graveyard after learning that changes were pending in the entrance road. From the very cooperative owners, we determined that our access will remain unimpeded. On the other hand, we learned of a family member who is visiting the area and would like to see a graveyard that BCAGP has not accessed in several years. Despite leaving several phone messages and stopping at the property owners' home, we have not had any response from, or contact with, the owners for permission to enter.



With Spring fast approaching (hopefully), property owners need to be contacted about possible cleanups.

Governmental issues: BCAGP is a "consulting party" for various sites throughout the county, so we receive notification of activities that may impact graveyards. PennDOT is planning road work on Rt. 222 and sent us the 37 page PA Historic Resource Survey and other information relating to the Kirby homestead and graveyard for our review and response.

The Berks Veterans Administration, a good friend of BCAGP, sent us new information to review regarding memorials in case we meet the criteria for any funding.

More paperwork anyone? To further protect the graveyards, we have begun work to file a PA Bureau of Historic Preservation Cemetery Main Survey form for every graveyard (@ 6 pages each) with Harrisburg.



Media: A newspaper is planning an article about wood coping used as a cap on perimeter walls. They requested an old photo of the Hoch in Oley. [The Passing Scene](#) show on BCTV, hosted by George Meiser, IX & Michelle Lynch, will have Anne and Karla as guests.

Les was interviewed for a newspaper article, with publication date to be announced.

Records: Several members are working to copy and digitize our older photos and slides. With tens of thousands documents, photographs, and references, Mike and a group of members have begun to copy and organize them all on Google Drive as a shared backup & reference.

2017 memberships must be processed and logged.

The annual financial audit was completed and reviewed.

New old places???: While we love working in known graveyards, we also relish the excitement of discovery! At times we locate an undocumented tombstone, or at least a piece of one. At times we are told of places where someone remembers seeing tombstones years ago. Occasionally we find a burial ground referenced in a book, will, document, or on a map. Those instances require research! For example, right now we are hoping to find more information about the possible location of a 2nd Schaeffer graveyard along Fleetwood Lyons Rd, near Weaver's Hardware. We've also been told of a graveyard on Koffee Lane in Kutztown. Wouldn't a new discovery be fascinating?

Perhaps you haven't been actively involved with BCAGP because you thought some physical limitation prevented it. There are other ways to assist us in our mission! Contact us to find out more!



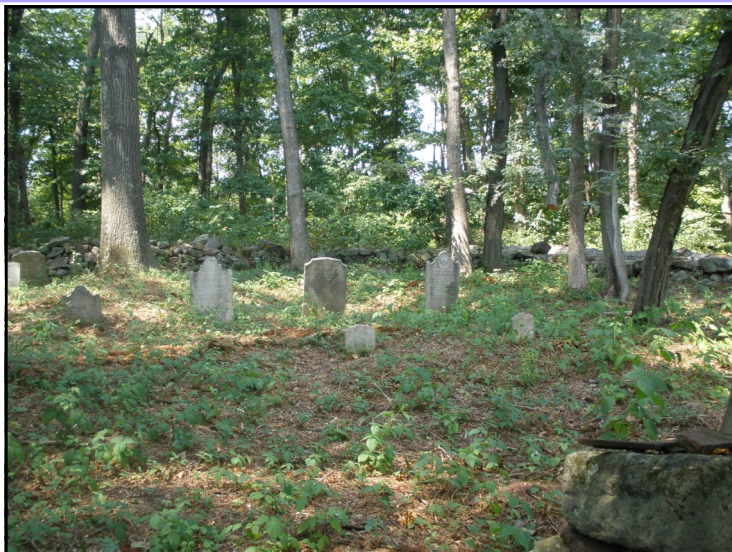
KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com

RICKENBACH



Anthony Funez, a senior at SV high school, has volunteered to scrape and repaint the fence at the Rickenbach burial ground in Bern Township. The fence was built years ago by Zach Beatty as part of an Eagle Scout project. We will show you the finished work in the next newsletter!



Join us Sunday April 2nd for a cleanup of the Breidenstein burial ground in Cumru Township. Arrangements have been made with the new property owners to access the burial ground for cleanup. Contact Les Rohrbach by phone or by email for more information. Watch our Facebook for meet place and time!

The wall work at the Cronrath burial ground was completed this winter. The object was to put back together the walls where they had fallen down. This is a dry stack wall. Keith worked on this over the winter as he didn't need weather conditions for cement; however many of those days were cold and windy. Between the property owner Mr. Ernst and his family, and Neil Scheidt, we believe the grounds will be maintained. We thank everyone for their care and concern in preserving this site.

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.

- ✓ The next meeting of BCAGP will be March 26, 2pm at Oley legion
 - ✓ Work party at the Breidenstein burial ground April 2.
- Contact Les Rohrbach for information

Aulenbach Family Burial Ground : Ed Gensemer

The Aulenbach cemetery was originally part of the farm owned by Charles Aulenbach and started with the burial of Maria Aulenbach, sister of Charles, in 1828, followed by the burial of Catherine Aulenbach (nee Bitting), mother of Charles, in 1836. Andreas Aulenbach, father of Charles, was buried here in 1845. Before his death, Charles Aulenbach, veteran of the War of 1812, asked his son to bury him under the chestnut tree. He died in 1869.

The area is known as the **Aulenbach Reserve**, and remains in the cemetery today allowing future generations to be buried on the family plot. The cemetery proper was incorporated by Charles Aulenbach in 1853.

[Aulenbach Cemetery](#) is running a bus trip to Washington D.C. on June 3rd. The cost is \$60 per person. For information call Ed Gensemer at 610-779-5882.



Aulenbach Reserve: photo courtesy of Aulenbachs, Ashley Harp

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 - 2017

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
for meetings times*



BCAGP

Berks County Association
for Graveyard Preservation



PO BOX 3707

READING PA 19606



WWW.BCAGP.ORG

Check our web site for meeting dates



BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

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KEITH SCHAFFER, 2ND VICE PRESIDENT 610-689-5164

PAUL SCHUMAN, TREASURER 484-529-8682

KARLA HUMMEL, SECRETARY 610-987-9569

DAVID SCHLEGEL

MICHAEL ANGSTADT

ED GENSEMER

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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Check the www.bcagp.org website for internet edition newsletter archives in full color!

