



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



Photo left: 2012 photo when we found the Hoch burial ground

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Work is underway to repair falling walls at the Hoch burial ground in Fleetwood. This burial ground has been tended by David Schlegel, and is need of some serious wall work to prevent collapse. If you are descendants of the Hoch family we need your help!

Contributors

Staff/Photos

Mike Angstadt

Sean Brown

Karla Hummel

Les Rohrbach

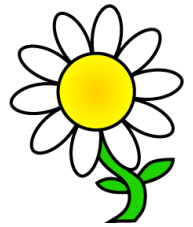
Keith Schaffer

Anne Wagner



Although March was a really cold, windy month, members braved that wind to take some time to reset displaced tombstones in the Herman – Sassaman burial ground. We had no photos to tell us where the stones belonged that were out of their spots for decades. Mike Angstadt and Sean Brown worked on old aerial photos and figured out, based on size of shadows (and a few other complicated things) where the stones should be. Each time we work in there we find something else and this was no exception. Karla discovered more pieces to the monument for twin infants Cornelia and Paulina Helfrich.

As usual, I slacked off and just took pictures while Les Rohrbach, Ron Smith, Dave Schlegel, Keith Schaffer, John Lutz, Mike Angstadt, Anthony Funez and Karla Hummel did all the work!



Kemp - Levan

David Schlegel and Les Rohrbach tackled this one on their own while the rest of the group worked longer at the Herman - Sassaman. Karla Hummel joined them later and checked out the tombstones that need work. This will need a day of just tombstone resetting in the very near future as some are leaning badly. This is the very large burial ground of the family of Captain George Kemp in Maxatawny Township. Over the years we have talked about getting the unique brick walls rebuilt, but have not received any support for the project. Access is a bit difficult as it is uphill in the middle of a farm field. We will certainly do tombstone work in the near future.



Hoch (from page 1)



After a winter of disassembling the wall, Keith Schaffer is now in the rebuilding phase. Anthony Funez will be lending a hand doing things to help in other areas of the other walls and tombstones. We would love to be able to do more than one wall in the near future and need your support!

LETTER FROM LES

You have seen some new names contributing articles in recent newsletters. Mike Angstadt who has been a BCAGP member for several years and Sean Brown who joined just last year have brought new ideas and initiated some projects that promise revelations into BCAGP's history and the historic graveyards that we preserve.

One of their projects has been to digitize old records that have been sitting in file cabinets, forgotten and out of sight. Those of us active in BCAGP today were not part of the association in the 1990s when it was incorporated. Much graveyard activity was occurring then, but our current board really only knows bits that have been passed on by a few members from that era and from what we have learned by reading old newsletters. Now our board will more easily be able to view a wider gamut of records.

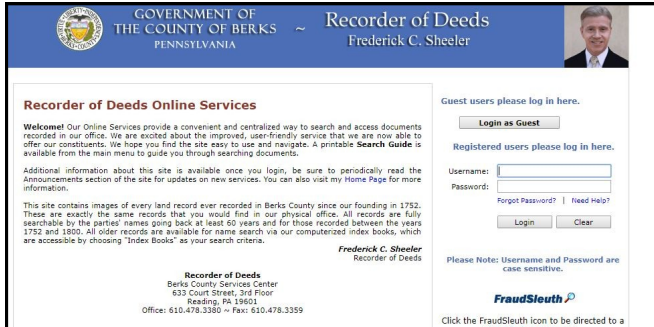
Another area where Mike and Sean are improving our knowledge concerns the graveyards themselves. BCAGP published *Epitaphs* in 1998, listing private graveyards and information about them. That book has been the foundation for our current board, telling us much of what we know. However, we have questions about some of the information *Epitaphs* presents and we have no supporting documents to justify statements made. What was the basis? We don't know.

Mike and Sean are conducting a methodical review of the graveyards in *Epitaphs*, township by township. Two thirds of these, more than 200, had no surface evidence in 1998 meaning their inclusion was based on verbal and written information of varying reliability, accuracy, and pertinence. Certainly there must be errors in what we think we know. We hope Mike and Sean (and the volunteers aiding them) will be able to teach us more about these sites and confirm them or expose fallacies as they continue their research.



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.

A lot of our burial ground research involves examining the deeds and searching from the current property owner back to the family who is buried there (and sometimes beyond). Several of our members work on the deeds, particularly Betty Burdan and Sean Brown, who put together detailed research documents to share with others.



Fred Sheeler, Berks County Recorder of Deeds, has been especially helpful allowing us access to use and print deeds, as well as providing guidance in the use of the Office's website. We in Berks County are fortunate to have online deed access. Often we find that mention of the burial ground has been omitted from the more current deeds. It is often necessary to work a little harder going backwards to find the burial ground evidence in print. Things like right-of-ways are important to note. Our local Recorder of Deeds office has been very supportive.

We also have had help from Larry Medaglia, Berks County Register of Wills, whose Office's hallway features a display for our organization.

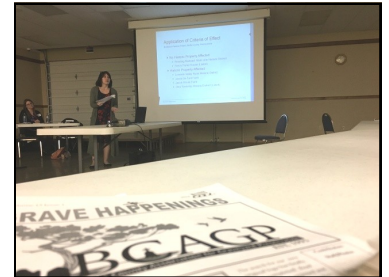
The County Department of Veterans Affairs Director, Dale Derr, has been happy to assist with any issues from records to flag holders and has supported us in every way.

County Commissioner Christian Leinbach assisted us with getting old light poles and

trash out of the Fix-Gerber-Bitting burial ground, and Commissioner Mark Scott helped us with legal issues in getting access to the Hechler-Esterly site in Exeter Township.

We have had a relationship with the prison, probation departments as well as the County Planning Commission. We are often notified by county or local municipalities when development may impact a property on which a burial ground exists.

We are also listed as a consulting party for state projects that may impact a burial ground. Last



Meeting for consulting parties for the pipeline project

year, Les Rohrbach and I were asked to testify before the

PA House Committee investigating cemetery laws in regard to access. This year, we find that State Rep. Mark Gillen managed to spearhead the writing and passage of improved graveyard laws that will now be in effect.

This year we have in place some projects in partnership with Kutztown University for use of Ground Penetrating Radar to scientifically determine the exact burial spots, which we look forward to. (You will be hearing more on this as the projects unfold)

With the added support of so many individuals and agencies, we have come a long way! We are extremely grateful for every bit of help we get, although we don't always express it enough. We are Volunteers with a common goal and we hope you all join us!

*Anne E Wagner, VP
awagner615@aol.com*

Constable Turned Criminal by: Sean Brown

The **Noll** and **Schmeck** in Alsace have been hypothesized to be the same burial ground, at least since 1992 (Miller, Laura, Mary Ellen Lash and Kathleen Lorah, *A Genealogical Guide To Berks County Private Cemeteries*, Reading, PA, 1992, Page 22).

The **Schmeck**, its location confirmed from aerial photography, is now unmarked and in the backyard at 103 Jessica Meadows Drive, Oley.

Two known interments:

Name	Relationship	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Aged	Source
Elisabeth Jäger Schmeck	Wife of Heinrich	1786-Jul-30	1833-Jun-30	46y11m0d	<i>From the Note Book of Raymond K. Keibach, "Schmeck", (BCHS Janssen Library Call Number GA K47t)</i>
Catharina Schmeck	Daughter of Heinrich and Magdalena	1805-Oct-25	1810-Nov-24		<i>Trinity Lutheran Records, Page 364 (BCHS Janssen Library Call Number CR T832m)</i>

The **Noll** location is not so certain, but a sensible assumption can be made from these facts.

1788-Apr 29: Valentine Noll purchased 84 acres 22 perches from the Elder and Younger John Penns, Honorable Proprietors of the Province (now State) of Pennsylvania (cited in DBV 13, Page 160 and DBV 36, Page 319)

1793-Jan-11: with his wife Elizabeth, sold 13 acres 20 perches to Abraham Schneyder (DBV 13, Page 160)

1794-Apr: **Valentine Noll was sworn in as Constable of Alsace Township**, a locally elected official who provides services including prisoner transport, warrant service and civil process service (*Court of General Quarter Sessions of Berks County, Quarter Session Minutes 1794-1795, BCHS Microfilm EA-57*)

1794-May-24: with his wife Elizabeth, sold the remaining 71 acres 2 perches to Conrad Keller (DBV 36, Page 319). This is now eleven separate addresses in Alsace and Muhlenberg townships.

1795-Nov: **Valentine Noll was charged with Riot and Rescue** (*i.e.*, helping fugitive slaves) and released on £150 bond and orders not to depart. Among his Associates were his neighbor David Betz who owned the land on the east side of his property (see 1790 Federal Census, DBV 36, Page 319 and DBV 14, Page 46) and David and Abraham Becker (see Becker in Alsace); also Henry Hartman, Leonard Gotschall (sworn in as constable of Alsace township in April 1795) John Wentzell, Frederick Maurer (*Court of General Quarter Sessions of Berks County, Quarter Session Minutes 1794-1795, BCHS Microfilm EA-57*)

1795-Feb-17: Barbara Noll, daughter of Valentine Noll, aged 9y6m2w2d, buried on her father's farm (*Records of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Volume 1, Page 43, BCHS Janssen Library Call Number CR T832m*)

1795-Apr-14: **Valentine Noll was pardoned by Governor Thomas Mifflin, having been convicted of Riot and Rescue** and sentenced by the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, of the County of Berks, to three months at hard (*sic*) and fined 40 shillings with costs (*Pennsylvania Archives, Series 9, Volume 2, Part 1, Executive Minutes of Governor Thomas Mifflin 1794-1796, Page 964*)

It is reasonable Valentine Noll was serving his sentence, selling his land to pay the legal fees and fines *and* was actually still living on this land, tenanting from Conrad Keller (carpenter) when Noll's daughter died. His financial hardship explains why Barbara was buried on the

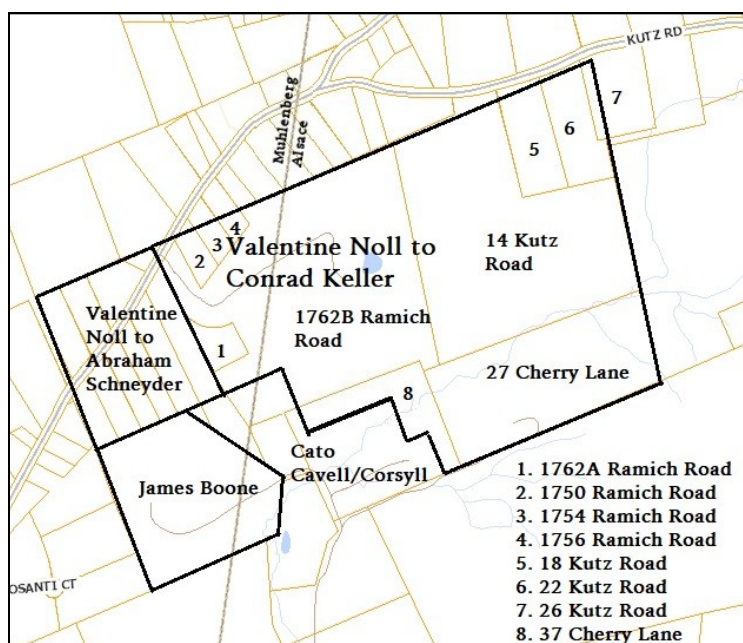
farm when the Spies Church (where she was baptized, (*Zions (Spies') Union Church Records, Page 8, BCHS Janssen Library Call Number Z79s-1*) and Trinity Lutheran Cemeteries were accessible and why Noll purchased his next land on mortgage in 1804 (Mortgage Book H, Page 52); this is now 28 Mexico Road, Oley.

The **Noll** and **Schmeck** are now asserted to be two different burial grounds.

And the slaves Valentine was helping—probably his neighbors. Negro Cato and a woman are listed alongside Valentine Noll in the 1790 US Federal Census, albeit described as free non-whites. In Valentine Noll's deed to Conrad Keller the name is Cato Cavell. In James Boone's (Cato's other neighbor) deed from the Penns, the name is Cato Corsyll (DBV 11, Page 513). There is no record of Cato buying or selling land or paying taxes.

The tract that Abraham Schneyder bought from Valentine Noll, he, in turn, sold to his son Jacob in 1818 on condition of bond that he be allowed to live freely thereon (DBV 81, Page 275 and DBV 29, Page 424). Abraham died in 1835 and his son Jacob presented his will to the Registrar of Wills Office at that time. In 1848 Jacob's sister Esther Kissinger contested the will, so the Registrar questioned the witnesses. Solomon Fisher stated he had never seen the will. The other witness, George P. Herlein—buried at the Becker in Alsace, admitted on oath to having been coerced by Jacob to forge the will, ("Pennsylvania Probate Records, 1683-1994," Berks County, Pennsylvania Estates 1800-1850, Smith, Joseph-Spencer, Daniel, Page 615-652). Schoolmaster and organist George Herline's cause of death was ruled a suicide by Coroner Keen and jury; he hung himself from a cherry tree (*Berks and Schuylkill Journal, 1855-Sep-01, Page 2*)

1822-Jun-05: Valentine and Elizabeth Noll were sponsors of Henryette Herline, daughter of George P. Herline (*Records of Spies Church (Lutheran and Reformed), Page 32, BCHS Janssen Library Call Number CR Z79s*)





We had a fabulous group to work on the Kinsey, which had not been touched in a few years. Mike Angstadt brought his drone and captured both video and still shots from the air (you can see the video on Facebook).

Lucas and Kathryn Angstadt, Max Trommutter and Anthony Funez joined Les Rohrbach, Paul Schumann, Keith Schaffer, Irving Gring, Ron Smith, David Schlegel and Anne Wagner. We deeply appreciate everyone's help, but especially the young ones who most certainly would much rather have been in a warm house watching Netflix or doing their homework for Monday school.



SET IN STONE

When you were a child, did you ever build a sandcastle on the beach? In your young mind, that bucketful of damp sand should stand proudly forever. But, once that sandcastle began to dry, or the tide crept up upon it, the individual particles would separate and the lofty tower would crumble back into millions of miniscule pieces.

That is exactly what occurs in the process of “*sugaring*.”

While many kinds of stone can crumble, sugaring most often occurs in limestone, sandstone, and marble. Sugaring is the loosening of mineral grains, such as calcite crystals on the surface of marble. The material disintegrates into small crystals, like course sugar.

There are several stresses that can cause sugaring. It may occur because of a natural weakness in the stone. Or, as discussed in previous articles, it may be the result of acid rain, or repeated freezing and thawing, both of which definitely weaken our historic tombstones. There are 2 other primary causes of sugaring:

Salt migration with efflorescence: Oddly enough, sugaring can be caused by salt. You are familiar with the damage that applications of de-icing salt can cause to your sidewalk. Naturally present salts have a similar impact on tombstones. There are 3 parts to the efflorescence process. First, there must be water-soluble salt present in the stone. Second, sufficient moisture must seep into the stone to dissolve the salt. Third, that moisture must evaporate, pulling the salts to the surface of the stone. Thus, crystals from inside the stone are pulled to the surface by either groundwater or rain. The resulting white powder then “flowers” (efflorescence) across the face of the stone. Misguided repairs to tombstones, such as the use of Portland cement, can increase this damaging migration of salts.

Biological Growth The final stress known to cause sugaring is acid from biological growth. Mosses or lichens, for example, produce acids that deteriorate the face of the stone. They loosen the grains of the stone’s surface, resulting in localized sugaring. Plus, it is the microscopic rootlets of these living growths that penetrate the stone, forcibly breaking apart the stone and resulting in sugaring.



Sugaring can destroy the entire face of a tombstone, removing all inscriptions and carving, in just a handful of years! What can be done to stop the degradation of these historic monuments? We'll look into that in the next issue.

Left: Note the upper right corner of this tombstone. It has “sugared” and would crumble at just the touch of your fingertip!

Karla Hummel
BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com

Rickenbach in Bern Township



Ed Glausman has offered to maintain the Rickenbach family burial ground, off Cross Keys Road in Bern Township. Although the inside has had a pretty mayapple ground cover, the outside has always been so full of invasive brush that the burial ground is often hidden. Over the years there have been multiple community service projects here, yet no one had offered to keep up on the maintenance until now. Thanks to Ed, these grounds will now regularly be maintained!

Rickenbach in Ontelaunee Township



four and one-quarter (4¼) Minutes West, one hundred thirty-eight and sixty hundredths (138.60) feet to a point; (8) North two (2) degrees forty-five and three-quarters (45¾) minutes East, eighty-seven and forty-five hundredths (87.45) feet to a point; (9) North eight (8) degrees forty-nine (49) minutes West, one hundred thirty-two and twenty-seven hundredths (132.27) feet to the place of BEGINNING.

CONTAINING in area thirteen (13) acres and twenty-four and eighty-one hundredths (24.81) perches of land.

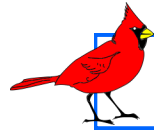
BEING PART OF THE SAME PREMISES which Colitz Mining Co., Inc. by deed dated November 20, 1965, and recorded in Deed Book Volume 1478, page 125, Berks County records, granted and conveyed unto Hi-Way Realty Co., Inc., Grantor herein.

EXCEPTING AND RESERVING thereout a burial lot enclosed by a stone wall which said burial lot shall remain for the purposes expressed under the Last Will and Testament of Jonathan Rickenbach, deceased, and the right of ingress, egress and regress and to keep the same in proper repair, is forever reserved to the heirs and legal representatives of said Jonathan Rickenbach, deceased.

SUBJECT to and together with the rights and privileges in and to a certain private road or driveway as more fully set forth in

Deed book 1557 page 0257 recorded 10/31/1969

Across the river from the Jacob Rickenbach burial ground in Bern Township, is the Jonathan Rickenbach burial ground in Ontelaunee Township. Although surface evidence is no longer visible, the burials remain. Anyone that has information as to what happened to the tombstones is encouraged to contact us.



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 board will be Sunday, April 8th at 2PM at the Oley Legion Hall off route 73 in Oley, As always, members are invited to attend.

If you have old photos or research on any family burial grounds you would like to share with others, please email our Archivist, **Sean Brown** at BCAGParchivist@gmail.com. Sean is gathering all our collective research and organizing it so that it can be shared and used to help BCAGP help the burial grounds. We appreciate your contributions and hope you are as happy as we are to share them with future generations in our digital records and publications. Photos and materials will be scanned and originals returned if requested.

Irv Gring is continuing the work at the Former Welch Baptist Church burial ground (AKA Bernhart Adam). This is a sizeable burial ground and a lot of work for one person and quite a monumental task. If anyone is interested in helping him out this season, we can put you in touch. Although not historic by state law standards just yet, due to burials in the past 50 years, this burial ground has multiple veterans and is truly an abandoned burial site. Deed research by Betty Burdan shows that it is orphaned and without volunteers it would not be cared for at all.





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 - 2018

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



PO BOX 3707

READING PA 19606



WWW.BCAGP.ORG



BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

Officers and Board of Directors

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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.

Permission to reprint any materials herein is granted provided they are printed in their entirety and that BCAGP's author is cited.

Our newsletters are archived online on our website .

Don't forget to check our facebook for updates and more photos!

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

