



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



SEE PAGE 2

Another wall has been completed at the **Hoch** burial ground in Richmond Township. There is a small wall on the left side of the gate that is crumbling and the back has not been done.

Funding will be needed to complete this project. We did 3 walls in the last few years.

**Contributors Staff/Photos
this issue**

- Betty J Burdan
- Karla Hummel
- Les Rohrbach
- Keith Schaffer
- Paul Schumann
- Lara Thomas
- Anne Wagner
- Rod Wagner

HOCH

We have been fortunate to have received financial assistance from the Jacqueline Nein Trust to fund the majority of this wall rebuild. Keith Schaeffer has done a beautiful job. It would be wonderful to be able to totally finish, but funding just is not coming in. If anyone with a particular interest in this burial ground could work on looking for other funding possibilities it would be a huge help. David Schlegel has been mowing this and several others himself for a few years now. If you would like to take a turn or give him a hand and work with him, we can put you in touch with him to co-ordinate.

Jacob Scholl

One of the graveyards worked on during our last cleanups was the **Hoch**, in Richmond Township. A veteran marker for the less frequently seen War of 1812 distinguishes the final resting place of Jacob Scholl.

Jacob Scholl, born in 1774, was one of nine children born to native born settlers. Although his parents would later move on, Jacob was baptized, married and lived all his life in Richmond and Ruscombmanor Townships. He can be found, surrounded by the same families as in the Hoch cemetery in the 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840 and even 1850 census records.

Maybe that's why, with a lifetime in Berks County, in 1814 he joined the Pennsylvania Militia. He left behind at least three children and his wife Anna. Luckily, Jacob had a son, Johannes, who was 15, to help the family in his absence.

He enlisted as a private in Captain Theophilus Hughes' Company, of the First Regiment under Colonel Jeremiah Shappel. They formed at York in September of 1814 and served until the end of the war in March of 1815. The regiment was made of men from Schuylkill, Berks, Lancaster and Bucks counties.

Governor Simon Snyder gathered and sent the Pennsylvania Militia to Philadelphia and then toward Baltimore and beyond. Washington DC was burned by the British in August of 1814 with raids and battles along the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers that fall. President Monroe called for more men to help keep off the British. Letters detail that Pennsylvania men answered the call, but often without weapons, as what was available and stored in Carlisle had already been distributed. Soldiers spent the winter in crowded tents, undersupplied in a war that luckily for them was turning out to be too much of a drain on Britain's resources, already depleted from fighting Napoleon.

February of 1815 brought the news that the Treaty of Ghent ending the war had been signed back in December. By March, the men were sent home.

Jacob Scholl returned to the Richmond and Ruscombmanor area. Censuses show his home full of young people, as he had ten children. Benjamin Parks, also buried in the Hoch Cemetery, is his neighbor for decades. The last information found prior to his death in 1851 is in the 1850 census.

He lived his final years surrounded by family. His daughters Lovina (yet unmarried), Sarah Wyandt and her daughter Catherine, Esther Miller and her two sons Lucan and Jacob are all in his home. His occupation, even at 76, is a hotelkeeper, with property valued at over \$6700! His neighbor is his son, William, now married and a merchant with property of his own. William's own son is only 16 and listed as a salesman. One more house down is his daughter Esther and her husband John Schlegel, a tailor. Their son Jacob is also already listed as a tailor at age 16.



Jacob Scholl began as the grandson of immigrants, served his county and left his family prosperous and well cared for. BCAGP is happy to help maintain his grave.

Lara Thomas
Secretary, BCAGP

Nick Lesher Scout Community Service



When **Nicholas Lesher**, age 12 from Troop 154 Bellemans asked if we had community service for him, the answer was an affirmative! His community service is to help achieve his 2nd class rank in his Boy Scout troop. His timing couldn't have been more perfect as the tombstones in the **Reber** burial ground, which is only a few miles from where his troop meets, needed the final treatment with D/2 biocide. He showed his leadership skills by recruiting his twin sister **Angela** to help as well. We had a tiny



amount of a special cleaner that is safe for tombstones called Orvus which he used to clean one he selected as the most needy of cleaning, before they treated every stone with D2 biocide. It was a perfect age- appropriate job for a preteen and they both got to see the stonemason at work on the side wall. Both children helped several years ago to spray stones at the Herman/Sassaman burial ground so they were already skilled. We always appreciate the time spent and hope this keeps them interested in historic preservation.



Work is progressing on the side wall of the **Reber** in Penn Township. Thank you to everyone that has contributed, as this is a huge expense and a big project. It isn't easy to raise money to repair historic family burial grounds. Thank you to **Pat Reber** for rallying the family support to help get this done!



Letter from Les

For the second time during my 12 years with BCAGP, we have applied for a grant. We discovered one administered by the [Berks County Community Foundation](#) focused on open space, environmentally sensitive land, and historic properties. It seems the wall rebuild under way at the Reber graveyard in Penn township gives some hope of being successful. It is in a rural area and meets Pennsylvania's definition of an historic burial place.

This has been a collaborative undertaking with the family. Supporting the large expenditure that BCAGP has made, Reber descendants have contributed in excess of \$10,000. Completion of currently authorized work (about 55% of the 4 walls) is expected this spring at a cost of \$32,300. While the BCCF grant (a maximum of \$2,500) would be a small portion of the expected cost it would nevertheless be an appreciated supplement to the contributions of BCAGP and the Reber descendants.



The BCCF grant is the rare occurrence of one that BCAGP in some way qualifies for. We reviewed several opportunities earlier

this year under the umbrella of the National Historic Preservation Trust. However, membership at an annual cost of \$375 for a limited ability to apply for grants, and more for a favored opportunity to apply for a grant seemed an imprudent use of BCAGP's funds. In addition, the National Trust requires public access to the restoration being done which is not true for most of the graveyards where we work.

Other investigations we have made into grant possibilities have run into the requirement to be designated a historic site, a judgment bestowed by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. However, it will not grant a graveyard this designation unless a significant person is buried in it. Though important to us, our ancestors in the graveyards BCAGP seeks to preserve do not measure up.

Thus, our opportunities to receive grants appear limited. We will await with interest the decision of BCCF which will come in June.



BERKS COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

If you are reading this online, you can click their logo to go to their webpage.



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.

Although doing maintenance and restoration of the historic family burial grounds is our primary mission at BCAGP, there is also a lot of research being done.

Every now and then, someone contacts us with information on a possible new burial ground we did not know about. Most of the time once a further look is given we find it is one we actually knew about but a name was different or the spot wasn't exactly the same, or its not in Berks County.

Currently we are looking into several "new" burial ground sites and it looks like one or more may actually be something new!

*Corrie Crupi Zana brought us information about a possible one that is located on the grounds of a large company in the city, that many years ago may have unknowingly built over the burial ground. Although there will be nothing we can do other than document it, we are certainly looking into the history. Betty Burdan began looking for deeds and Mike Angstadt dove right into the historic aerials. George Meiser provided a verbal history he was given a long time ago that leads us to believe that it may have been a **Nagle** Family. We may find that the burials were removed to another graveyard or we may find they were just covered and forgotten decades ago. We may find that there never was a burial ground there but someone saw a tombstone laying and just assumed, or we may have a dead end. We just never know until we gather what we can find.*

*We also have a newer member Joan Wertz McCracken who recalls seeing tombstones as a young girl near the golf course in Kirbyville that she believes was a **Madenford** bur-*

ial ground. This is very close to the Kirby burial ground, and we are still looking for a number of missing tombstones from there. It is possible these will turn out to be the missing Kirby stones if not a new burial ground, but this is all preliminary research.

*Lara Thomas was looking at the library at the old land maps and found a graveyard with a name (**Geo. Folk**) we do not recognize in the Maxatawny Township area.*



This may turn out to be out of Berks County as the county line is close, or may turn out to be one we know about already but has been given a different name or it may be a brand new old graveyard that we can document. Since those old maps did not have street names it will take a while to actually figure out exactly where it is.

Over the Winter months these are some of types of research we do along with things like updating lists of property owners and access information. Les has been working on grant applications and we are all on the lookout for possible financing for our bigger projects.

Now we are into Spring mode when the growth is beginning and we need, at least to try, to keep a way in to as many as we can. Please keep an eye on our Facebook for group work projects and if you have special things you wish to help with, contact our President Les Rohrbach!

*Anne Wagner
VP BCAGP
awagner615@aol.com*



Fix/Gerber/Biting

Reading Times, Reading, PA
 April 17, 1939

SAMUEL F. MILLER, 79, died at his home, 232 S. Fourth st. He was a son of the late David and Amanda (Fix) Miller. Surviving are a brother Charles Miller and three sisters, Mrs. Emma Cutler, Mrs. Virginia Cramp and Miss Amanda F. Miller, all of this city.

Funeral services Wednesday at 2 p. m. in the Miller Funeral Home with the Rev. W. O. Laub officiating. Interment in the Fix family cemetery.



Adam Reichert 1750-1825



The St. Henry's (also known as Reichert/Dum) had a huge accumulation from multiple work parties, of debris to get rid of. David Schlegel worked multiple sessions to get the growth cut down. Les, Rohrbach, Gary Koenig, Karla Hummel, Ron Smith and his two grandsons joined David to help drag everything to one spot and do a controlled burn to clean up.



SET IN STONE

The Civil War had a major impact on tombstones.

Although most of the stones we find in historic family sites are **not** adorned with symbols, like floral wreaths, weeping willows or carved animals, they **do** differ in scripts, shape and ornamentation.

The most typical stone we see is the 3 part tablet, with the tympanum (often referred to as a lunette although there are subtle differences) or center portion, and the shoulders on either side. While many such stones have an ornate symbol on the lunette, the headstones BCAGP work with generally have the beginning of the epitaph inscribed, often with an ornate first letter such as the “H” in “Hier.” The epitaph is most likely to be written in German, without any standardization of spelling between carvers.

With schrift or fraktur style fonts, these stones appear ornamental and highly-wrought simply by nature of their inscriptions. This also makes such stones difficult to read for people with no German background.

This leads us to the influence of the Civil War.

The other common style is the single tablet with a arch at the top. While various headstones exist from the earlier time in Berks County history, some in fraktur and in the dialect, we find that Civil War and later-era arched tablets are written in what we would consider a standard font in English. These are from a time when either the family has intentionally distanced itself from its German origins in patriotic fervor for their adopted nation, or has eshewed the more elaborate appearance of the older stones.

Headstones following the Civil War became more solid, more stoic, and more unimpassioned. Why? Claire Messimer, in her book **Known by the Work of His Hands** (edited by Willard Wetzel. Kutztown, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania German Society, Volume XXXII, 2000) postulates several reasons. For example, the horrors and losses of the Civil War destroyed the concept of a “romantic death” of the period. Also, there were simply more English speaking people moving into Berks. Soon after this, families began to bury their dead in churchyards rather than on their property and the age of these small, historic graveyards came to an end.



Two headstones from the Nein Graveyard in Oley. David Nein (d. 1865), and Ester Nein (d. 1877) post-Civil War. Note the radical difference in styles, both of the stone shape and the engraving.

Karla Hummel
2nd VP BCAGP
Berks Epitaphs@gmail.com



Two young men have approached BCAGP with a proposal that would benefit all. Micah Thomas **Aidan Emerich**, both of Shoemakersville, are current sophomores at Hamburg Area High School. They must complete a community service project before graduation. Each must complete at least thirty hours of volunteer work, write a paper about the experience and give a speech to a mixed group of classmates and adults, including a representative from the organization with which they cooperated.

Micah Thomas is the nephew of secretary Lara Thomas and has been aware of some of what the BCAGP does for clean ups. When Micah decided to learn more about what BCAGP does, he mentioned us to Aidan, who was also thinking about what to do for his project. The two have been friends for four years and have similar interests. The two attended a meeting and shared what they needed to accomplish with the group. After some friendly discussion about what sort of things they were both willing and able to do, an agreement was reached. Both Micah and Aidan will help with clean ups and general maintenance, especially at the Welsh Baptist Burial Ground, also known as Bernhard

Adam. They are also on call for any clean ups taking place on weekends, as they will still be students.

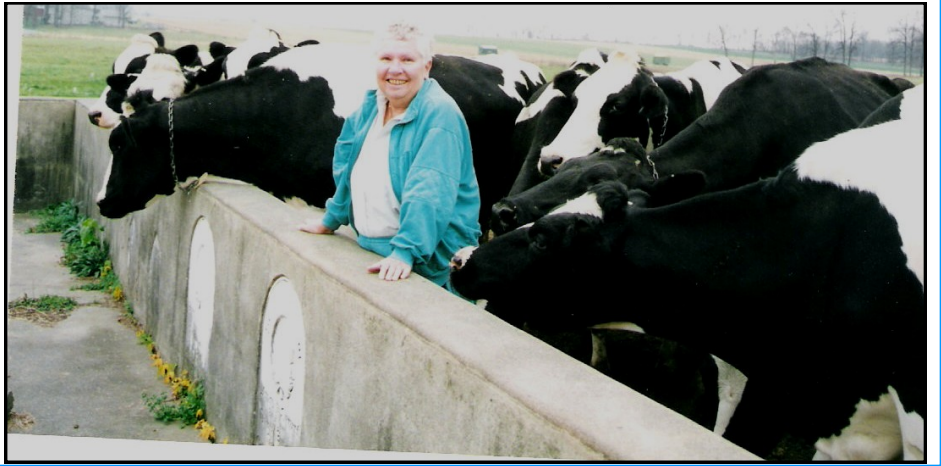
In the mean time, they will be getting together on some weekends and will start cataloging the current collection of photos taken over the last several years. These photos include images of tombstones as well as document past repair and clean up work.

At the end of the volunteer project, hopefully all parties will have profited. Already, Aidan has expressed concern over the fate of many of the veteran graves. We look forward to working with Micah and Aidan.



The Fix/Gerber/Bitting is a larger burial ground consisting of 3 families which include several war veterans. Neil Thomas has been taking care of this and has asked for help. If you can take a turn or can work with Neil please contact us and we can put you in touch with him.

Jacqueline B Nein who died in 2000 has been the primary support through her trust, of the graveyard projects we do . She is pictured at the Deturk#1 burial ground in Oley.



Reading Times, Reading, PA
October 20, 1879

AN IMPORTANT LAW.

Some of the Vandals who occasionally amuse themselves, under cover of darkness, in destroying plants, shrubs, etc., along the public thoroughfares out of sheer devilishness, and help themselves to "button-hole bouquets" from rose bushes and other plants in the cemeteries whenever they are not watched, had better cut the following bit of information out and paste it in their hats for future reference: "Among the laws of Pennsylvania for 1879 is one that makes it a penal offense for any person to pluck off, remove or deface any tree, plant, shrub or flower, placed in any cemetery or GRAVEYARD, for ornamental purposes, or to willfully trespass upon any private inclosures in such burial places."

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From Betty Burdan's collection of unusual articles

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.

Due to the precautions being taken to prevent the spread of the COVID 19 Virus we will not be setting the next meeting until things are more clear. Some of our members will likely be doing individual graveyard maintenance, however no group projects are scheduled at this time. Watch our Facebook for upcoming events.



\$5000 GRANT from OVHA

As part of the mitigation phase of pipeline construction in Oley Township, **DTE Midstream** provided a grant to the **Oley Valley Heritage Association**. They, in turn, have distributed the funds in accordance with the guidelines of the grant.

BCAGP is indeed fortunate to have met the parameters for historic preservation and has received a generous donation in the amount of \$5000. The stipulations of this grant require us to use the funds in Oley Township. Considering that Oley has the largest number of graveyards, there is no shortage of need!

We are sincerely grateful for this contribution to support our mission and are working to evaluate and prioritize sites for perimeter wall reconstruction, tombstone repair and resetting, and necessary materials.

Thank you to **Oley Valley Heritage Association** for valuing our ongoing efforts to protect and preserve Berks County's historic private graveyards.



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 - 2020

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

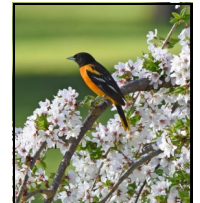
\$ _____ Annual Membership, Individual \$15; Family (residing in the same household) \$25

\$ _____ 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



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WWW.BCAGP.ORG

BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

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"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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