



Keith busy at work rebuilding the wall surrounding the Conrad Burial Ground in Rockhill Township and resetting a stone that was previously buried (more photos on page 8)

"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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Our newsletters are archived online on our website in full color

Contributors Staff/Photos this issue:

Meredith Goldey, Karla Hummel; Les Rohrbach; Keith Schaffer; Lara Thomas; Anne Wagner

SET IN STONE

Karla Hummel – Second Vice-President, BCAGP

The Grim Burial Ground in Maxatawny Township sits on top of a steep hill (we were all breathless reaching it, but in our defense, we were carrying loppers, weed eaters, rakes, shovels, and all the equipment needed to reset and repair headstones). It is also a very cold site – with a stiff wind and 20 degree wind chill on our chosen cleanup day.

The graveyard contains 5 fairly neat rows of tombstones. It also contains hundreds of sumac saplings, many several inches thick and over 6 feet tall, and nasty red-thorned brambles. Our hearty (or crazy) board members went to work despite the temperature and woody growth and in about 2 hours of labor that didn't warm us up in the least, had the site under control.

Mr. Carl Peterson, a local Scottish folksinger and author, stopped by to talk with us about the Zimmerman graveyard and correct some theories we'd had. We also chatted about other graveyards in the immediate area. More on that in another newsletter.

That left us with another major goal to achieve for the day. One large tombstone was lying on the ground having fallen off its base. As was common with thicker stones, iron rods had been inserted into the tombstone and the base, with lead poured to hold them in place. Water and freeze/thaw conditions over time cause the rods to rust and the base of the stone to deteriorate. This heavy stone, belonging to Benjamin Grim (1797-1860) who fought in the War of 1812, needed to be reset.



Repair work on Benjamin Grim (1797-1860) stone; a veteran of the War of 1812

We opted to try a new technique that we'd learned at a course with professional conservator Jonathan Appell.

The heavy base for the stone had been leveled at our last Grim visit, and we confirmed that it was still properly in place. We mixed Pratley Putty, a two-part epoxy that is kneaded together to activate, and applied it in the slots for the original rods. These had to be trimmed down as a third part, the shoulder of the base, is not intact. Once cleaned and chiseled to fit, we added short strips of the epoxy putty to the base and then attempted to lift the stone, using prybars and force. Even with all of us, we weren't getting the leverage we needed.



Completed repair



Stone that requires to be reset to the repaired base

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That's when help arrived in the form of Grim descendants Mrs. Irene Boyer, who provided a wealth of information about the family, and her grandson, Mr. Ethan Boyer, who along with his knowledge of local history, provided the extra manpower we needed to upright the stone.

Later the next week a couple members returned to retrieve the boards and clamps that are holding the tombstone plumb and level until the putty has set. This is our first use of Pratley Putty and we need to determine if lead shims or hydraulic lime mortar will be needed to fill in the joint of the stone and base.

We also used Akepox to begin repairs on a second stone. This time a thin-set epoxy was called for to piece together parts of a base before we can begin work raising the tombstone. We continue to apply what we've learned in various training and improve the condition of broken stones.



Photo of the Grim Burial Ground Photo taken early 1900s. Photo used with permission of Ethan Boyer photo taken by an Aunt.



Photo of the Grim Burial Ground April 2nd 2022



In the Grim Burial ground the wall is beginning to fail at several locations due to the trees growing into it. There are six trees (hemlock and cedar) that are growing against the walls and they are approaching the end of their lives and will require removal in the upcoming years. This will be a costly and laborious project that will need to be evaluated.

Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President

Leydich Burial Ground

In 2019 BCAGP was contacted by the Leydich Family Association and offered the opportunity to make a presentation at their annual meeting which occurs at their family graveyard located about 7 miles east of Gilbertsville in Upper Frederick township, Montgomery County. Mike Angstadt, a member of our board at the time, volunteered to do so and I tagged along to partake of the afternoon.

Some time afterwards I was reviewing some of my ancestry records and came across Michael Krauss who purchased 170 acres along the Swamp Creek in the 1700s and was buried in the Leidig burial ground. *What! I have an ancestor buried there?* While Michael Krauss' tombstone no longer exists, it was a pleasant surprise to learn that I had visited his burial ground. If you have researched colonial individuals, you quickly become aware that the spelling of names often varied especially when comparing English and German speakers who were doing the spelling. Thus, Leydich, Leidig, Leidy, and other variations can refer to the same family.

Michael Krauss' daughter Elizabeth married Johann Adam Muthard who settled in the Hill Church area of Pike township, hence my connection to the Montgomery County settlers. Our ancestors settled many places and we today, wherever we live, have roots that extend in some unknown and often surprising directions. BCAGP as an association has to define a scope to its domain, Berks County, but we as individuals have roots that extend beyond county boundaries to graveyards near and far.

As you can see from the photos from the day in 2019, the Leydich graveyard is quite large. Since the Rev. John Philip Leidig is buried here, I assume it is named for him. He was one of 4 individuals who donated a corner of their properties to create the graveyard. Among other burials here include those of Stetler, Langbein, Bitting, Grob, Aker, and Kuntz families.

The Leidig Burial Grounds Association has many of the same key issues that BCAGP faces including limited funds, expensive repairs, and aging members. If you have an interest in this graveyard, would like more information, or would like to contribute, contact Stephen Kehs, the President, at 856-206-9227 or skehs@comcast.net.



Leydich Burial Ground 2019



Leydich Burial Ground 2019

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.

Veteran Focus

Isaac Ritter

Lara Thomas – Secretary

For our last veteran focus, I mentioned that the Young Kissling was a new burial ground for me, and we all got to know more about Daniel Jung (Young). Only half a mile away, neighbor, and contemporary to Daniel Jung, lived Isaac Ritter.

Those who have been familiar with BCAGP for quite some time know about the lovely walled and fenced family burial ground known as the Ritter, or Ritter #2 (Ritter #1 has been lost to development). The Ritter family were prosperous for decades. Notably, the Ritter family is known for having worked in printing and starting the first English language daily evening newspaper in Berks, The Reading Daily Eagle, as well as owning Der Readinger Adler, the German language paper.

Isaac Ritter was the son of George Ritter, himself a veteran of the Revolutionary War. George had sizable farm of over 150 acres bordering Daniel Jung. The Ritter family and their farm were prosperous

enough that in 1812, when Isaac was 30 and problems with England were once again coming to a head, he volunteered to Captain Henry's Jarrett's Troop of Horse and marched to Philadelphia. There is a record of him having been paid \$ 20.42 for 35 days of "service of their Country including two days prior to their march and calculating three days to return home at sixteen miles per day."



Isaac returned home to the farm that he had inherited due to the death of his parents. The farm must have been quite a thing to see. Tradition says that "the first part built was of logs, 30 by 30 feet, and the addition, which was of stone... The fire-place in the log part was 16 by 4 feet in clear. It commenced in the basement, and the walls were 3 feet thick... In front of the house was a good spring and a large pond, and, to one side, what (was) the Jacob R. Ritter meadow. The spring has long been known as the Trout Spring from the

Form MA60-41... J. A. THOMPSON & CO., HARRISBURG, PA.		RECORD OF BURIAL PLACE OF VETERAN		BERKS County	
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs					
NAME RITTER, Isaac		AGE 68	DATE OF BIRTH 9/19/1782	DATE OF DEATH 11/6/1850	
VETERAN OF 1812 WAR		SERVED IN ARMY (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) NAVY (<input type="checkbox"/>) MARINE CORPS (<input type="checkbox"/>)			
DATES OF SERVICE 9-12-1814 to 11-25-1815		ORGANIZATION (S) Capt. Henry Jarrett Co. Vol.		RANK Private	
CEMETERY OR PLACE OF INTERMENT		NAME Ritter's Private Cem. (John J. Kutz Estate)			
		LOCATION Exeter Twp., Berks Co., Pa.			
LOCATION OF GRAVE IN CEMETERY		HEADSTONE Marble			
SECTION LOT NO. RANGE GRAVE NO.		GOVERNMENT () COUNTY () FAMILY ()			
INFORMATION GIVEN BY R.S. Dotterer-Grave Registrar		REMARKS			
DATE 2-26-1935					
After being Recorded in the County Veterans' Grave Registration Record This card is to be sent to THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for final Record.					

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numerous trout found there (sic) as Isaac Ritter took to preserve them. He did not allow fishing unless somebody was sick in the neighborhood, or as far as Reading, when he would fetch trout for the sick without a cent of pay. The fish were not sold. He tended to them himself. Whole bucketfuls of buttermilk, after the cream was taken off, were thrown into the spring to feed them.” (Biographies from Historical and Biographical Annals, M Montgomery).

The barn that was known as the Isaac Ritter barn was torn down in 1862 and supposedly still had a straw roof. It was large enough that other family members brought their grain there for threshing. He was also known for keeping straw bee skeps, raising 25-30 hives and collecting enough honey to provide for all his children’s families as well.

While Isaac Ritter was apparently well regarded due to his farming and husbandry, he also was reputed as quite an amateur historian, and can be found in history records for some unusual things we today take for granted.

The Second Great Awakening reached its height in the 1830s. Religious fervor, evangelizing, new churches, and new forms of worship were spreading. Mr. Ritter, as well as a group of other prominent Berks Countians, became concerned by attempts to change the US Mail system to eliminate Sunday delivery, as this was perceived as work breaking the Sabbath. New churches were pushing for changes. He did not like the influence church was trying to establish with state.

Additionally, various churches were funding and leading Sunday Schools. This version of Sunday School is not quite what many of us are familiar with, having memories of singing songs, doing finger plays and



Historical Photo of the Ritter Burial Ground



Ritter Burial Ground today

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memorizing verses. At this time, Sunday Schools operated after services on a Sunday or often weeknights, to accommodate those who worked. Individuals were still taught basic catechism but also reading, mathematics and sometimes a little history. However, whatever what was taught was only that which fit the views of that church institution. There was a huge concern about “indoctrination” and that these church schools would work to take the place of local government, rather than remain separate from it. Older members of the community had grown up hearing the tales of the Revolution, or, like Isaac, had fought in the War of 1812. They were adamant not to return to systems of government where the lines between a ruler, the ruler’s church, and the government were often blurred.

Isaac Ritter was a signing member of a committee of correspondence in the 1820s and 30s which posted the equivalent of op/ed pieces in the paper and wrote letters to Congress (History of Berks County, M Montgomery). He must have been greatly relieved when the School Act of 1834 finally allowed for free public schooling in Pennsylvania, supported by the government rather than individual churches.

By 1840, the census shows a busy household with nine members including a girl under the age of 9. By 1850, living with him are his son Joseph, Joseph’s wife Sarah, as well as Sarah’s sister, Esther. Joseph and Sarah appear to have a toddler named Emma with them. Isaac’s ten-year old grandson and namesake was also living with them, as his own father, David, had passed three years earlier. Isaac had been a widower of some duration. His wife Anna, whom he married in 1805, had died a young woman of only 39. We can hope it pleased Isaac to have young people around him. Perhaps they made him feel young and maybe he didn’t anticipate dying when he did.

Isaac Ritter died only three months after the census taker recorded the details of the farm in 1850. He left no will and his descendants listed out the surviving children and grandchildren when the estate when through probate, a helpful thing to historians and genealogists.



Anna Ritter wife of Isaac

Oley High School Day of Caring!

May 6th

BCAGP will be hosting a group of students from Oley High School for their annual Day of Caring on May 6th!

The burial grounds in and around Oley Valley that maybe be visited are:

Bertolet 1	Bertolet 3	Bieber/Lesher	Conrad	DeTurk 1
DeTurk 2	Gulden 2	Hoch	Hoch/DeTurk/Shenkel	
Hunter/Kemp	Kauffman	Keim-Pike	Keim-Rockland	
Kinsey	Lesher	Levan	Nein	Ohlinger
Peter	Schneider	Weidner	Weiser/DeTurk	

Repairs and workdays



As mentioned on the front cover the completed wall repair at the Conrad Burial Ground in Rockland Township



Historic Photo of the Klein Family Burial Ground in Jefferson Township and current photo taken at our April 10th Clean up (Another cold day!) Historic Photo courtesy of Wayne Klien.



Brecht/Bright Burial ground maintenance on April 10th.

Kinsey Burial Ground maintenance on April 6th

Stone repair at the Reber Burial Ground



Elias C Reber's stone repair completed!

Join us in the field!

BCAGP has a good-sized membership base, but we will always value new hands in the graveyards. Just what is involved in cleanups that you might enjoy? Everyone simply assumes the job they are comfortable with!

- Using weedwhackers, loppers cut the vegetation back.
- We remove all of the trimmings to a pile outside the wall or load it for transport.
- We then examine stones and take inventory of needed repairs to stones or walls.
 - We conduct searches for broken pieces.
 - We clean the stones with D/2
 - Repair stones

Les will send out emails with full details and they will be also be posted to Facebook.

Please bring tools and work gloves with you.

Some suggested tools are: Weedwhackers, Loppers or Clippers, Rakes.

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.



Next Meeting

Sunday, May 1, 2022, at 2 PM
Oley American Legion
12 Deturk Rd
Oley, PA

Don't Miss Out!

Many people have mentioned that our emails are being sent to their Junk Mail or SPAM folders!

Please take these steps to be sure that you are receiving our emails appropriately.

If an email from Berks County Assn for Graveyard Preservation <bcagp@bcagp.org> is in your Junk mail or Spam folder; right mouse click and mark as "Not SPAM" or "Not Junk".

– Or –

Add Berks County Assn for Graveyard Preservation <bcagp@bcagp.org> to your trusted contact list.

If you do these steps and our emails are still going to your Junk Mail or SPAM folders please send us an email and we can suggest other options.

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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 - 2022

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Save a tree! Please e-mail me the newsletter.

\$ _____ Individual Annual Membership, \$15

\$ _____ Family Annual Membership (residing in same household), \$25

\$ _____ Municipality or Business Annual Membership, \$35

Additional Donation Earmarked for:

\$ _____ General Fund

\$ _____ Burial Ground

\$ _____ Municipality

\$ _____ Total Amount Enclosed

Date: _____

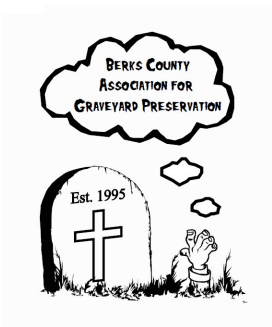
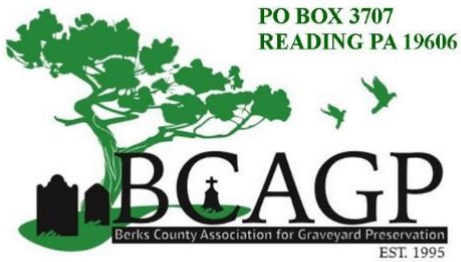
Mail Checks to:

BCAGP

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.



WWW.BCAGP.ORG

Check our web site for meeting dates and for internet edition newsletter archives in full color!

BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

Officers and Board of Directors

President:	Les Rohrbach	610-323-1703	rohrbach_la@comcast.net
Vice President:	Anne Wagner	610-926-5036	awagner615@aol.com
2nd Vice President	Karla Hummel	610-987-9569	BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com
Treasurer	Paul Schumann	484-529-8682	schu2112@msn.com
Secretary	Lara Thomas	610-914-5534	thomas_lara_a@yahoo.com

Other Board Members at large:

Ed Gensemer; Meredith Goldey; Gary Koenig; Keith Schaffer; Ron Smith; Marvin Stamm

Newsletter Contact: Meredith Goldey (Mergoldey@gmail.com)



Don't forget to check our Facebook and Instagram for updates and more photos.

