

GRAVE HAPPENINGS



OLEY DAY OF CARING 2016

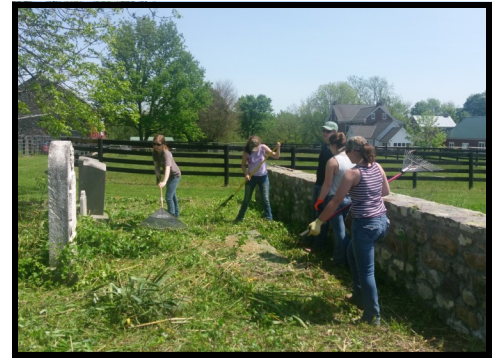
Oley Day of Caring went off without a hitch, with beautiful weather to take care of graveyards! 27 students, with teachers/drivers went out with us, to take care of 21 graveyards. This event earns them community service hours but also is an educational opportunity. We couldn't ask for a better group of kids to help preserve the heritage of the Oley Valley area. We will give you a sneak peek on page 2.



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



2016 Oley Day of Caring



There are so many great pictures of Day Of Caring, that it is hard to choose. Please check out FACEBOOK for the pictures of the day. We cannot begin to thank these kids, the teachers, all the drivers and the Oley School District for their participation! This a a fabulous program. The kids learn a lot about the history while getting the burial grounds accessible for Memorial Day.



A work crew went out in April to clean up the **Kemp-Levan** in Maxatawny Township. There is at least a full day still needed just for tombstone resetting. This will be a good place to use our tripod that we have ordered. The brick walls are in shambles and many tombstones are fallen. This would be a good project for a service club or group to keep this maintained! Are there any volunteers?



The **High - Hoch** has some water issues. We will be in there soon to reseal and clean the walls. This will cost approx \$1800.00, so if you are a High Hoch family member please consider sending your donation. The burial ground has been maintained by the owners of the landfill where the graveyard sits. They have done a fabulous job keeping the grass cut and maintained!

LETTER FROM LES

As is apparent through much of this newsletter, another successful cleanup was conducted with Oley High School students and staff. The weather, the students, the effort all contributed to the day. We thank the students, their parents, landowners, and the Oley School District for their participation.

Following up on the Herman/Sassaman graveyard which has been the subject of a series of my letters, we received permission to have a monument mover access the graveyard mid-way through the winter. We contacted three businesses that deal with graveyard monuments. One did not bother to respond. The others responded, but at their pace.

One fellow visited the site with us. He seemed to have interest in the job, but expressed concern about the obelisk we want leveled. He thought there might be up to six sections that had been stacked on top of each other and thought it likely that steel rods had been used to hold the sections together. He speculated about deterioration of the rods and the effect of moving the obelisk even if only to level it. He never provided us with a bid.

His concern about deterioration of steel rods does mirror what we sometimes see in tombstones with stone bases. Rods can be used to support and attach the tombstone to the base and we do see rusted rods with tombstones that have fallen from bases. I would like to think that because a tombstone is at ground level where water and snow are more likely to penetrate to steel rods, rusting is more likely to occur. However, I can appreciate the difficulty of dealing with the unknown unseen conditions of an object with the size and weight of this obelisk which has been exposed to the elements for a century or more.

By the time we had found a second vendor who was willing to look at the job, the approach of spring planting caused us to defer the project for the season. We hope to pursue this effort again when crops are harvested and there is a window for access. We have been left with recognition of a concern that all vendors are likely to have.



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.

While many are celebrating Independence Day with picnics and swimming, there are those that are also working on honoring those that served in the Revolution that led to our Independence.

This group has worked hard over the years to preserve the burial places and headstones of our Revolutionary War veterans. Our government Veterans Administration has for years provided replacement headstones for veterans when needed. And we have, on occasion applied for replacement; however, the rules have changed.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Department of Military Affairs | | BURIAL PLACE OF VETERAN | |
| NAME BARNET, Daniel | AGE 79 | DATE OF BIRTH 3/2/1762 | DATE OF DEATH 10/11/1839 |
| VETERAN OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR | | SERVED IN ARMY (A) NAVY () MARINE CORPS () | |
| DATES OF SERVICE 1777. | ORGANIZATION (S) Capt. Hoy's Co. 7th Co., 2nd Battn. B.C.M. | RANK Private | |
| CEMETERY OR PLACE OF INTERMENT | NAME Peter's Private Cemetery | | |
| | LOCATION Maidencreek 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 1-11-1935 | | | |

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.

unsuccessful attempts to have a replacement stone approved. We are not the only ones who tried.

Dave Reinhart is the General manager at Berks Memorial Gardens Cemetery, and has long been a friend to the Barnet Peter Burial ground, that sits behind their cemetery. He too has tried to apply for a Veteran marker and was denied based on the argument that there is no proof that he actually fought. This month Dave has generously offered to pay for and install a replacement veteran marker for Daniel Barnet. We will show you when it comes!



This is what is left of Daniel Barnet's tombstone at the Barnet - Peter burial ground

One issue we have been struggling with, is the case of Daniel Barnet. We have a Department of Military Affairs burial record clearly showing he served in Captain Hoy's 7th Company, 2nd Battalion, C.C.M. in Maidencreek Township. In the box saying "Veteran Of",

REVOLUTIONARY war is in capital letters. However, the VA no longer is issuing replacements unless the veteran can be shown to have actually been in active service. Daniel's tombstone was one that was vandalized many years ago. There have been several

When tombstones are no longer legible, new markers can be requested from the Veterans administration.



I ask that while celebrating your Independence, to remember why we are celebrating, and remember those that were part of it all.



Anne Wagner
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BITTENBENDER

Work continues on the front wall of the Federolf –Bittenbender burial ground in Hereford Township . If you stop to visit, BEWARE OF SNAKES! Fred Fonsesca has been keeping the grass cut while Keith works on the wall-carefully avoiding snakes. We need fundraising to continue this project.



The Heckler-Esterly has new caretakers this year. Mike Angstadt and his family have volunteered to take over for Neil Scheidt, who is no longer able to do it. Mike is a veteran himself and is excited to preserve the graves of two Revolutionary War veterans.

Kathryn and Lucas are not afraid of the tools! Thanks guys!



Grave Happenings in 1881

A body, snatched in Berks County!
This bit of news was published in the Reading Eagle on January 5, 1881 under the headline *CORPSE OF YOUNG LADY; Supposed to Have Been Stolen from Graveyard Near Moselem Springs.*

J. S. Rothermel recently informed us that the grave of James Rothermel's daughter had been tampered with and that according to indications it is supposed to have been stolen. The daughter's appearance at the time of burial was very natural and life-like. She was interred in the graveyard situated on Peter Rothermel's farm, near Walnuttown. An investigation was to be taken, but as yet we have not been able to glean any further particulars.

Was this a case of body snatching for profit? Did the perpetrator intend to sell the cadaver to a medical college? Was it apprehensive relatives who felt the young lady looked too life-like to really be dead? Many a funeral was held up in the 19th century, when the family would not accept the death as a reality. Was it a family member who wanted the deceased buried in a church yard or in one of the newly established public garden like graveyards now called cemeteries? Was it a shallow grave, disturbed by some animal? We certainly hope it was not a case of the deceased digging her own way out and walking away.

We can only assume the act took place under the cover of darkness, as the graveyard is actually located close to a barn in the middle of a field visible from a well traveled roadway. The farm house is just on the other side of the barn from the graveyard. Certainly anything unusual in the daylight hours would have been noticed. No further details were found in a search of newspapers for the month following this article. If any reader knows the rest of this story, please share it with us.



The graveyard on the former Peter Rothermel farm

By Betty J. Burdan
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SET IN STONE

Sadly, nearly every historic graveyard has seemingly more than its share of children. Infant mortality was high, and death in childhood was all too common. Even in 1915 Pennsylvania records show ~110 deaths of infants under 1 year per 1,000 live births (United States Public Health Service, Vital Statistics Rates in the U.S. 1900-1940). Note that this number did not include stillbirths, nor the many who died as toddlers and young children.

Early tombstones of children are normally smaller than those of adults, and often feature specific symbolism. You may find a lamb, dove, or flowers such as lily of the valley representing innocence and purity either engraved in, or set atop a child's stone. Perhaps a small angel was carved to watch over the little one. In small Berks graveyards though, most children's stones are simply miniature versions of the tall white stones of their parents. The stone bears the child's name, perhaps those of his or her parents, dates of birth and death, and age. Simple, practical monuments to remember short lives.

You can often find tombstones that bear no first or Christian name, but are inscribed "Infant," particularly if the baby died unbaptized, or "Stillborn." Two particularly touching nameless stones are in the Hoch in Oley. Each is simply engraved as *Twin son* of Josua & Lidia Hoch with their respective ages at death – one 5 hours, and the other 5 days. They rest between their siblings Jacob (8 months), Abraham (3 months), & Lidia (13 months). Five tiny siblings who all died between 1832 & 1842.

If you step just a few feet behind their graves, you will find 5 other small children, those of Gideon & Naomi Hoch, who ranged in age from 12 days to 19 months, all passing between 1862 & 1872.

There is one oddity worth mentioning here. To our sensibilities naming a newborn after his or her deceased sibling seems peculiar, but it was not uncommon in early families in Berks. Obviously, this can cause considerable confusion in genealogical research! For example, in the DeTurk 2 graveyard in Oley you will find Hannah, who died at age 7, as well as Hannah, who lived only 8 months. Both were daughters of Abraham & Ester DeTurk.

While losing a child – or several children – was common, I can't imagine that it was any less heartrending in the 19th century than it would be today.



KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com

SCHNEIDER

There is always patchwork and repair on a large burial ground with stone walls. This year when David Schlegel went to do the grass, he noticed that the gate was split. We removed the gate and Fred Fonesca will be crafting a replica of the original wooden gate. This is such a large burial ground there is always something that needs to be done.



Removal of a dead tree and patchwork all the way around the walls were done this Spring at the **Klein** in Jefferson Township. Stones were also treated with biocide.



A work group went in to give David Schlegel help with raking up and filling groundhog holes at the **Schaeffer** burial ground in Fleetwood. It was a nice day out in the Sun.



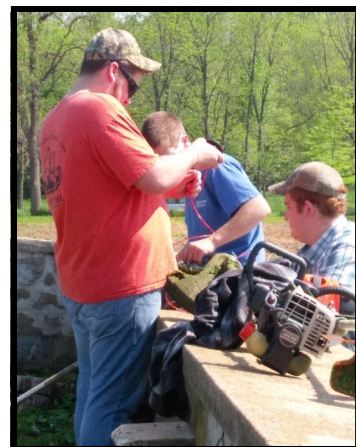
Our Mission



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.



Congratulations to Cole Schaeffer who is our 2016 Jacqueline Nine Award winner. This award is given to an Oley senior who has been helpful in Day of Caring and is selected by the Agriculture teachers. A certificate with \$250.00 was presented to Cole at graduation ceremonies.



The next board meeting of BCAGP will be July 31st at 2PM at the Oley Legion Hall. As always, members and the public are invited to attend.



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*

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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"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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