

GRAVE HAPPENINGS



Photo by Franklin Fahrenbach

Oley Day of Caring 2019 went perfect! Oley High School FFA Students and Teachers, along with BCAGP cleaned up more than 20 burial grounds in the Oley area in May. Below is the Deturk.

Contributors Staff/Photos
this issue

Sean Brown

Betty Burdan

Franklin Fahrenbach

Karla Hummel

Les Rohrbach

Keith Schaffer

Paul Schumann

Lara Thomas

Anne Wagner

Rod Wagner



Hoch



The Second wall at the Hoch burial ground is now complete. Picture above shown in progress.



Reber

Work is beginning in June at the Reber burial ground. Reber family members have donated considerable amounts of money to supplement what BCAGP will contribute to get this burial ground stabilized again. Look for photos in the October Grave Happenings which is an online only edition and can be found on our website. Remember the more donations we get for this burial ground the more walls we can do. Please specify REBER with your contribution.



Hemmig/Kutz



We had a large group of people clean up the Hemmig burial ground in Kenhorst in April. It was the first time we have worked there and it was very overgrown. Most of the people in the area had no idea it was a burial ground. We even had neighbors join in.

Dr Sherrod and her students from Kutztown University went in May to do ground penetrating radar. Results are available on request. The Engineers for the Borough of Kenhorst, McCarthy Engineers, offered to do a survey of the boundary lines as it sits on a parcel that the playground is on. Brian Cole, borough manager, was very helpful in figuring out the logistics and getting perimeters marked.



Breidenstein



David Schlegel, Les Rohrbach, Gary Koenig and Ron Smith cleaned up the Breidenstein burial ground despite the rainy forecast.



Letter from Les

When families sell land encompassing a graveyard, it often only takes a generation or two for the family to lose touch with the graveyard. Once this occurs maintenance becomes sporadic if it happens at all. During periods of inattention, nature's detritus collects on the surface and growth quickly overtakes the graveyard.

When an effort is made to reclaim a graveyard, tombstones may be fallen, broken, off bases, or sunk into the ground. Ground hogs and branches broken from trees often contribute to the disarray. Tombstones or pieces may be sitting against trees or walls, giving evidence that someone at a prior time found them in some way out of place and set them aside.



The Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) analyses performed in 3 graveyards last spring by Kutztown University brought a new perspective to my thinking. The 3 graveyards had both potential burials without tombstones and tombstones with no apparent graves. Putting it into the context of what I have seen, though, brought home the realization that what BCAGP does today when it first enters and clears a graveyard may have occurred numerous times in the past.

What is true for current BCAGP members, whose involvement began in 2008 or later, certainly was true as well for BCAGP's founders when they entered graveyards in the 1990s. These graveyards have been around for more than two centuries. Many of the families whose ancestors are buried in them moved away more than 100 years ago. How many times in the interim has an effort been made to reclaim the graveyard?



Each time those clearing the graveyard are faced with making sense of what they find after nature, trees, groundhogs, vandals have spent years altering what is there. The individuals doing this in most cases have no knowledge of the original layout. Their restoration is based on what seems right, not what they know to be correct. Consider how many times this may have occurred over more than 100 years and the disarray that greets each new effort. It seems almost certain that errors

are made in resetting or placing tombstones and it is quite possible those errors are compounded in later reclamations. GPR brings home the point that what we find today could be the culmination of a series of well meaning but potentially flawed interventions.

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.



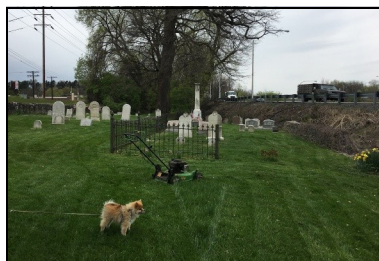
St Henry's burial ground which we also refer to as Reichert/Dumm, in Richmond Township was let go for quite a while again. The Catholic Diocese of Allentown is actually responsible for the maintenance, but they did not do it for quite some time.

Research done by other members previously indicate this was at one time a family burial ground. BCAGP from time to time have taken care of it. Les Rohrbach, David Schlegel, Lara Thomas and Karla Hummel went out in May to get it presentable. The Burkholder family who owns the green house in front of the burial ground have always been kind enough to allow us to park and walk up since access from their property is closer and easier, which we are thankful for.



Neil Thomas is the caretaker of the Fix/ Gerber /Bitting burial ground near Morgantown Rd & Lancaster Ave. The International Order of Odd Fellows adopted it a few years ago, and Neil is a member of that group. Most of the time he

does it himself and could use a little help. David Schlegel and Anne Wagner went to help do the first clean up for the year. If you have a little extra time and can help Neil every now and then we can put you in touch with him.



Irv Gring takes care of the Bernhard/Adams burial ground which is also known as the Welch Baptist. This is a large cemetery that sits aside of Thomas Ford elementary school in West Reading. If you want to help Irv take care of this on a regular or occasional basis we can put you in touch with him.



GPR Results of the Kutz Graveyard Are In!

Sean Brown

A great big thank you to **Dr. Laura Sherrod** and her student team from Kutztown University for their wonderful GPR work last May (*Grave Happenings*, July 2018, Page 2). It has been a long wait, but we have received their first report. What a way to start the year!

We also extend a great thank you and applause to Arlene Ingram and the Kutz Family for their care for the graveyard and their enthusiasm for this project.

We now KNOW that there are SEVEN UNMARKED GRAVES in the Kutz to accompany the three known, and there is great excitement among BCAGP members and the Kutz Family, launching much research and speculation as to who and which the seven unknown interments are.

The three known are quickly and easily identified; their stones are nearly perfectly aligned.

No. 3: Johann Nicolaus Kutz (III) b. 1764-Feb-14, d. 1831-May-04

No. 4: Maria Susanna *Sharatin* Kutz b. 1769-Feb-10, d. 1847-May-20

No. 9: James Alfred Martin Reifinger b. 1844-Jul-18, d. 1846-Apr-20, son of Daniel and Maria *Rupp* Reifinger

Daniel was a blacksmith who lived at and worked for Samuel Kutz' Carriage Shop (1840 Federal Census); Anne and Keith placed the stones precisely where they found them in 2011 (*Grave Happenings*, January 2011, Pages 8-10 and Devlin, Ron, "Marker of too-brief life unearthed, back in sunlight," *Reading Eagle*, 2011-May-02).

Samuel Kutz was the son and beneficiary of Nicholas (III) and the fourth Kutz landowner; he and his wife are buried at St. John's UCC in Kutztown. Samuel was the one who established the care and upkeep of the graveyard in his will and attached codicil, proven 1878-Jun-06, bequeathing to his son Isaac (Will Book 13, Page 548). Isaac (d. 1910) planned to pass the land to his wife Susanna (*née* DeLong), but since she predeceased him (1908), it went to their sons Franklin and Charles; Franklin sold his share to Charles in 1916. Charles sold it in '28, but the new owners defaulted on their mortgage; it returned to family ownership in '37. His widow Kate (*née* Ressler) sold it in '45 and established "for herself, her heirs and assigns...the right of ingress and egress at any and all times" to the graveyard (DBV 927, Page 204).

According to Robin Smallen (*Epitaphs*, Page 124, and by emails in 2008-2010), a family member who has researched the Kutz genealogy, the following should certainly be buried here:

Johann Nicholas Kutz (I) b. 1691, d. 1749-Jun-10

Anna Catharine Grimm b. 1695-Oct-20, d. 1768-Apr-7, daughter of Hans Jacob and Anna Catherine *Heinrich* Grimm

Johann Nicholas Kutz (II) b. 1722, d. 1790-May

Eva Catherine Brobst b. 1740, d. 1790-May

Nicholas (I) patented 53 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres which he purchased from 1743 to 1745. When he died intestate, the land was partitioned to his surviving four sons, Jacob, Nicholas (II), George and Thomas, with Nicholas (II) becoming the second owner of the land on which the family graveyard stands; Nicholas (II) bequeathed it to Nicholas (III). As the legal landowners, it makes sense they should be buried here.

Below is pure SPECULATION:

Descendant Jarusha Kutz has speculated that George and his first wife Joanna (*née* Hottenstein) Kutz may be interred here:

Johan George Kutz b. 1730, d. 1788-Apr-22 (Brother of Johann Nicholas Kutz (II))
 Joanna Hottenstein b. 1727-Feb-19, d. 1752 (first wife, married 1750), daughter of Jacob and Maria Reber Hottenstein; they had no children

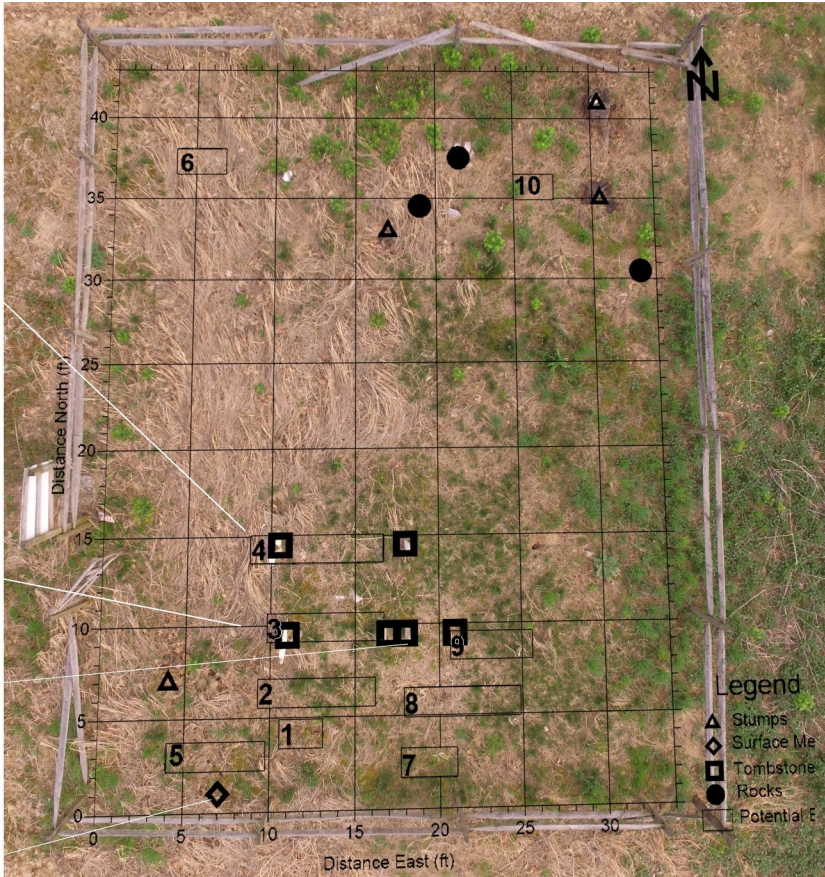
George was the founder of Kutztown. His second wife was Elizabeth Margareth Bieber, b. 1730, d. 1796-Jan-2 (married 1755); they had at least four children. She may be buried at St. Paul's Church in Fleetwood (Findagrave.com Memorial ID 89358897).

Johan Adam Kutz, son of Nicholas (I) and Anna Kutz died when he was 9 years old (1734-1743). So could **No. 1**, a short grave suggesting a child, be Johan Adam, **No. 2** his mother Anna, a mother and son buried side-by-side, and **No. 5** would be Nicholas (I)? Then **Nos. 7 and 8** could be Nicholas (II) and Eva Catherine Kutz, respectively, reflecting the pattern of the husbands being buried to the left of their wives.

No. 6 and No. 10 appear short and isolated; are they children? Nicholas (I)'s son Jacob had a son Johan Adam who died at about 16 years old and left a will (1759-1775, Will Book 2, Page 242). Nicholas (III) and Maria Susanna had two children, Catherine (1793-1865) and Samuel (1800-1878). If they had siblings that died young—otherwise unknown and there is a curious gap of 7 years between their births—their interments would fulfill the four generations legend (Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County*, Page 1191 (1908)).

As Anne Wagner noted, James Reifinger's burial suggests others from outside the family might be here as well. Joseph Gift and his wife Mariah (Steigerwald), also living and working for Samuel Kutz Carriage House, had a daughter in 1840 under 5 years old; she was not listed with the family in the 1850 Federal Census, suggesting another child may have died.

This article was left for us the week before Sean Brown unexpectedly passed away. We will make available the full Kutztown GPS reports upon request. Additionally Dr Sherrod has information posted on her [Kutztown research page](http://faculty.kutztown.edu/sherrod/Projects/BCAGP2018Kutz.aspx) at: <http://faculty.kutztown.edu/sherrod/Projects/BCAGP2018Kutz.aspx>





Oley Day Of Caring 2019



Photo by Lara Thomas



Photo by Anne Wagner



Photo by Keith Schaffer



Check our Facebook for more pictures of Oley Day of Caring

Jacqueline Nein Award

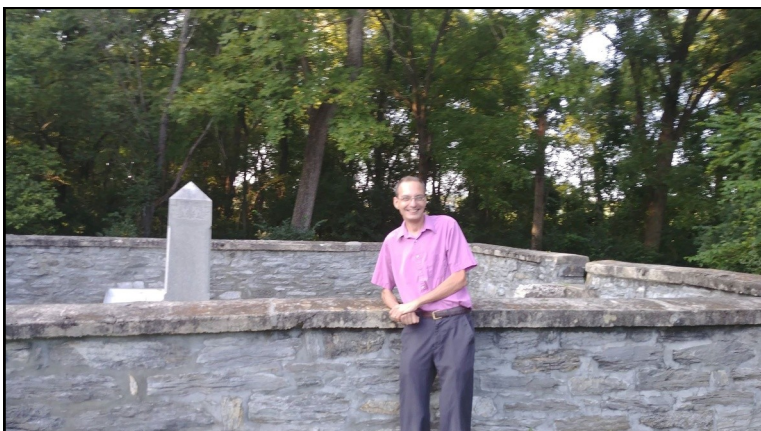


We congratulate this year's recipient of the **Jacqueline Nein Award, Oliver Prout**. Oliver, seen in the photo proudly wearing his BCAGP t-shirt at this year's successful clean up is a member of Oley Valley High School's FFA and has

served at the annual Day of Caring all 4 years of his high school attendance. We thank him for his efforts!

Nelson Fahr Award

Sean Brown was a gift to BCAGP. With a mind that could summon up nearly any detail he'd read, and the meticulous nature of a true researcher, Sean personified BCAGP's archival efforts. In the months between his moving to Berks and his untimely passing, Sean made BCAGP research nearly a full-time passion. The volume of his work as Archivist would have taken us years to match. In light of his



extraordinary efforts, we have posthumously presented Sean with the **Nelson Fahr Award**. We miss our remarkable friend and colleague.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/197713488/sean-michael-brown>

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 of the Board of BCAGP will be July 14th 2019 at the Oley Legion hall at 2PM. As always members and interested public are invited to attend.

Recorder of Deeds 125 Years Ago
by Betty J. Burdan

In March of 1894, a forward thinking Isaac W. Keim, Recorder of Deeds of Berks County, circulated a letter to all parties of interest, where he spoke on the importance of having all legal documents properly recorded in his office or other offices at the courthouse. Recorder Keim was suggesting what we know today as our backup files.

He cited soldiers' discharges, commissions and similar records, in the event the originals were lost or destroyed. Which was the case in July 1973 when the National Archives Records Administration (N.A.R.A.) suffered a devastating fire. He suggested agreements in real estate transactions, and alterations to property lines, needed to be made part of the record. The recorder also felt that this should apply to cemetery deeds, of which there had to be thousands of unrecorded transactions. All these records would provide a paper trail for new buyers, sellers, lenders and descendents.

Mr. Keim's suggestions did result in military records being filed in the Recorder's office. Properties were resurveyed and new descriptions written into new deeds, or written as exceptions near the end of the old description to record the change. But his suggestion fell short of the mark in recording cemetery transactions. There are many cemetery lots recorded, but far more remain unrecorded. Keeping of these records was left to the seller and buyer of the cemetery lots. The fact is the buyer is not really buying real estate. They are purchasing the right of sepulcher, or the right to bury their dead in it. The cemetery, as a whole, remains the property of whoever established it as a place of public burial, whether that is a church cemetery or a public cemetery.

Private or family graveyards were not public burying places. The families did not sell, nor intend to sell individual lots. Burial was at the discretion of the family who owned the burial place and could include family, friend or neighbor. Those who buried their loved ones there were most likely required to help maintain it. Some of these graveyards have deeds of their own that are recorded. Some are described as exceptions to or part of a deeded property that is also recorded. Sadly many were never recognized nor recorded on any deeds. Even more heartbreaking is the many private graveyards that were plowed under because the new owner had no connection to those buried there. Then there are those that were lost to time because there was no official record of them anywhere.

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 - 2019

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

If you prefer to NOT receive a mailed copy of the newsletter, and only view it online please check here .

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

(email addresses on the website)

Les Rohrbach, President 610-323-1703
Anne Wagner, Vice President 610-926-5036
Karla Hummel, 2nd Vice President 610-987-9569
Paul Schumann, Treasurer 484-529-8682

David Schlegel * Michael Angstadt * Ed Gensemer * Ron Smith * Keith Schaffer

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 in full color

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!

