

Reber Family Re-dedicates Cemetery

BCAGP Supported Lion's Share of Project

Pat Reber, on behalf of the Re-dedication team: Louise Knight, Debbie Walker, Kurt Reber, Dan Sunderland, Lisa Yates, Jim Reber, William Reber, Karen Molzhon, Barbara Deardorff and Faye Urban.



L to R Paul Schumann (BCAGP treasurer), Pat Reber (our primary contact for all things Reber & board member of the Reber Family association), Les Rohrbach (BCAGP president), Wayne Kline (BCAGP member & Reber descendant), Lara A. Thomas (BCAGP secretary).

Photo by Brian Belida

Some 60 Reber family members from all over the country gathered in late July to re-dedicate the Reber Cemetery and its newly rebuilt walls. The sky was deep blue. The temperature was well up in the 90s. A constant breeze on the hill - and the shade of the trees and pop-up awnings - gave pleasant relief. The Rev. Scott Cooper, pastor of the Mohrsville Church of the Brethren where many Rebers have been members, spoke and blessed the cemetery.

How did we get to this remarkable day? BCAGP responded to our crisis in 2018 as the walls were crumbling under rampant overgrowth. An emergency volunteer clean-up crew of nine responded to the call for help. Three of the BCAGP members who helped that day joined us on July 23 for the re-dedication: Les Rohrbach, Paul Schuman and Wayne Kline. BCAGP's Lara Thomas also joined in the celebration. The group then reached out to us with an offer we couldn't refuse. If the Reber family could raise funds to contribute to rebuilding the worst wall, BCAGP would see

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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.

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

Contributors Staff/Photos this issue:

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



First burials: Salome Reber (1776-1850) and husband Johannes Reber (1775-1860).

Photo by Brian Belida



Reber Cemetery

Photo by Les Rohrbach

how much help it could give from its dwindling financial resources. Remarkably, 25 families responded with contributions. Even more remarkably, they represented descendants of 10 of the 12 children of Jonathan Gicker and Clara Snyder Reber (one-time owners of the farm on which the cemetery is located) who lived to adulthood.

That was 2019, when the first wall and a half were rebuilt by BCAGP’s Keith Schaffer. He worked alone, digging out a six-foot-deep retention wall across the uphill slope. The family kept raising money, and with continuing support from BCAGP and Keith, the second and third walls and the remaining half wall were rebuilt.



Pastor Cooper speaks. In the foreground are the tombstones of Conrad Reber (1798-1872) on the left with the engraved heart, and his son Joel (1843-1900). Conrad wrote instructions in his will for the next farm owners to “always keep a good wall and keep it clean.”

Photo by Chris Conn.



View from inside, as Pastor Cooper at right under tan awning prepares to speak.

Photo by Brian Belida

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BCAGP members at the dedication.

Photo by Brian Belida

The continuing support and interest in the maintenance and upkeep of the Reber cemetery was evident at the re-dedication. Descendants of Jonathan's brother Elias (1864-1907), who is buried in the Reber Cemetery, drove from North Carolina and Indiana. Other family members who came were descendants of generations going back further than Jonathan and Elias, to their cousins and great great uncles and to the very first Rebers (Johannes and Johanna Magdalena, who arrived in 1742 in the colonies.) Younger family members in their 30s and 40s who are eight and nine generations removed from the first burials (Salome and Johannes Conrad Reber, 1850 and 1860) attended. At the youngest end, we had two teenagers and a 7-year-old!!!

The farm on which the cemetery is located was in the family from 1770 to 1999. The Reber Reunion on July 23, 2022, gave continuing approval to paying the granddaughter of the current farm owners to weed-whack within the walls. And the owner himself mows outside the walls. We are trying to be true to the words of one-time farm owner Conrad Reber (1798-1872), who wrote in his will that whoever next took the farm should "always keep a good wall and keep it clean."



Wide angle view of wall and people gathered.

Photo by Brian Belida

Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President



Johnson grass, the tallest vegetation, 2 1/2 weeks after spraying

In January I reported on Johnson grass and the ongoing problem it has been at the Schneider graveyard. A simple refresher on Johnson grass is that it grows rapidly reaching 6 to 8 feet, is a rhizome whose roots send out shoots to start new plants, and that its seeds can survive up to 10 years. Plus it is extremely difficult to kill.

Following our guidance, which was relatively consistent from multiple sources, we watched and waited for the recommended spraying time when Johnson grass is between 12" and 18". This occurred in late May. The herbicide being used, Roundup, is especially toxic so the person doing the spraying is advised to wear long sleeves, long pants, gloves, and a mask, not the outfit for a hot summer day. Luckily the day chosen to do the spraying was overcast and not particularly warm.

Then, since the person doing the spraying is not supposed to walk on the sprayed leaves, the plan was to use the rows of tombstones as a guide. Spraying began along the left wall, moving left to right across about half of the graveyard to where the tombstones stop, then from the rear to the front gate. The whole process went well. The one glitch was the 5 gallon buckets that had been half filled with water. Driving across the lumpy field, water spilled into the back of my car.

I held my breath when I returned a week and a half later. Without walking through the graveyard I could not see real evidence that the Johnson grass had been killed. It had not grown much if at all. It may have been stunted but it was still there. I left disappointed.

Later that week Gary Koenig floated the idea of doing a cleanup at the Hoch/DeTurk/Shenkel graveyard along Route 662 near Oley. Several of us accompanied him and after completing we decided to go to the nearby Schneider graveyard. Trimming and walking through the graveyard with a closer view I could see areas where Johnson grass had been killed which was a more positive sign and new growth was limited. We cannot be sure whether the apparent slow growth was the result of spraying or just that conditions for more rapid growth had not yet arrived.

Reflecting on our first spraying of Johnson grass, our experience has mirrored what research had told us. It is difficult to get rid of. It takes years. We will continue to address Johnson grass. Whether the weather and conditions permit more spraying this year remains to be seen.



Schneider graveyard after cleanup 6/12

Veteran Focus

Benjamin Grim

Lara Thomas – Secretary



Benjamin Grim's Stone in 2009

Earlier this year, BCAGP spent time both cleaning and repairing at the Grim family cemetery in Maxatawny. Those who follow us on social media saw that after clearing the cemetery of its yearly growth, several of us worked on righting and repairing the stone of veteran Benjamin Grim.

Benjamin and his brother David both have what is known as cradle graves. In Victorian times, families would work all week and then come and tend family plots on Sundays, picnicking, gardening, and spending time with family both present and gone. A cradle marker has a headstone, foot stone and then at least 2 side pieces, meant to create a bordered small garden. They were more expensive and elaborate than a normal marker. Unfortunately, time can be very hard on these markers. Metal pins holding the pieces together fail, stones fall and sometimes break, and at the Grim in Maxatawny groundhogs throw dirt and rocks into the areas that once held carefully tended flowers. We may not visit weekly, but today we'll make an effort to spend some time remembering veteran Benjamin Grim.

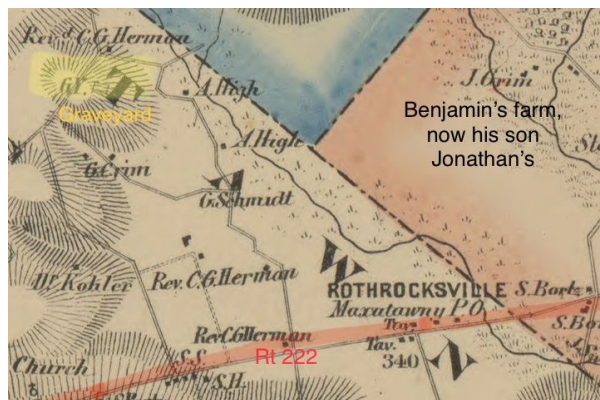
Benjamin

Grim born on his father Gideon Grim's farm in Maxatawny in 1797. Gideon and wife Elisabeth Kirby had eight children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. It must have been a busy and active childhood. The Grim farm had a blacksmith shop, distillery, an orchard, etc. Gideon owned significant property and over the years and had purchased and added to the Grim family holdings.

When Washington DC was burned by the British in August of 1814, Benjamin was only 17 but one of many Pennsylvanians to join the Pennsylvania Militia. Records survive to document that Benjamin served with Captain John Christian's Company of the 2nd Regiment of the 2nd Brigade from September 1, 1814 to December 4, 1814. It is unlikely he saw much action. By this point, the young United States had significant wins in Baltimore and the Great Lakes; the Treaty of Ghent was already being negotiated. But he left the farm for a bit and I'm sure it was something for the family to talk about.

Benjamin enters the written record next during probate, at his father Gideon's death in 1823. We do know that when Gideon passed, his will left the Maxatawny farm, smithy, and distillery to the eldest brother, David. Despite not being the eldest son, Benjamin was bequeathed a farm with "dwelling house" and mill just across

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1862 map showing the Grim Farm.

the county line, in Weisenberg Township, Lehigh County. There were other Grim cousins across the county line, and it must have been seen as a good settlement both he and at least one of his other brothers had to make installment payments each year to Gideon's younger son (their other brother), since there was not enough land to go around.

Five years later we find Benjamin in the records of Ziegel's Union Church, when he married Catharina Ziegler on December 9th, 1827. By the 1830 census, there were already five people living on the farm, including two small children.

Benjamin and Catharina had six children survive to adulthood, as far as we know. Son Benjamin was born in 1830, Mary Ann in 1831 (or earlier), Gideon in 1832, Nathan in 1835, Jonathan in 1838 and finally Willoughby in 1843. Some of these dates are approximate as there are some conflicting sources.

Most of Benjamin's children stayed at home or close to home up until the time of his death. Even in the 1860 census, of all the children, only Benjamin Jr. is not in the household. It appears Nathan might have been the child that gave our veteran the most trouble. We'll get to that.

October 15 of 1860, the same year as that last census, Benjamin died, leaving a widow still in her 50s and almost all his children at home. His will and probate leave an interesting picture. Mention is made of the mill, and in the inventory there are two millstones listed at the house, as well as an 8-day clock, desk with looking glass, corner cupboards and a stillyard. We often forget that Pennsylvania has a history of whiskey making. The will also state that Nathan has "already received his portion" but he does bequeath him \$25 but it is to be subtracted from what Nathan still owes his father, as recorded in a book! It is interesting to note that while most of his children remained in the area, Nathan supposedly moved to away. Records show he did not remain in Weisenberg Township but in lived Macungie and later Breinigsville.

Grim family and descendants still live and work in the Maxatawny and Lehigh County. Let's all take a moment to remember and thank veteran Benjamin Grim.



Repair work in progress April 3rd, 2022



Repair work in progress April 3rd, 2022



Completed work

Oley High School Day of Caring

May 9th 2022



Oley High School students at Conrad

At Keim in Rockland



At Keim in Pike

Kinsey

Levan



Ohlinger

Weidner

Weiser /Deturk

Wall repair work on the Nein Cemetery



Clean up at Hoch Deturk Shenkel (Before and after)



Jacqueline Nein Award

Each year, BCAGP is privileged to present a \$250 stipend titled the Jacqueline Nein Award to an outstanding student member of FFA (Future Farmers of America) at Oley Valley High School. Students must be enrolled in agricultural science programs at the school in order to be members of FFA. Of course, it is members of FFA who join BCAGP for the annual Day of Caring. Without their efforts we could never maintain the number of sites -- about 21 -- that we work in on that day. I had the exciting duty of making the presentation this year at the school's awards night. BCAGP responds to the suggestion of FFA Advisor Mr. Jeremy Deysler in making the senior class student selection. This year's award winner was Bradley Arnold. Congratulations to Bradley and to all the seniors graduating from this renown Oley FFA program.

Housekeeping Thoughts

We know you have seen just what the work can be like when we work. We also know there are individuals out there, sometimes unrecognized, that help maintain burial grounds all on their own. THANK YOU!

BCAGP would just like to remind folks that even if a burial ground has its own deed, the land around it is owned by someone else. PLEASE always be considerate of the property of these folks who work with us and/or allow us access to the graves.

When we dispose of cuttings and branches, we work with the property owners for a plan. Sometimes they haul it away for us. Some prefer it be left outside the walls or borders of a burial ground, to smother new weeds, feed livestock, or eventually biodegrade. A few even take it away and burn it for us. We NEVER burn within a cemetery and work with the property owners that surround or own the burial grounds.

If you have any questions about boundaries, access, easements, etc., please let us know. The Historic Burial Places Preservation Act of 1994 (Act of Apr. 29, 1994, P.L. 141, No. 22 Cl. 37, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/LI/US/HTM/1994/0/0022..HTM?63>) helps all of us by providing protection. However, it is still reliant on individuals following both the spirit and word of the law. We can't expect property owners to be helpful or cooperative if we are not understanding and cooperative with them.

THANK YOU to all those out there helping, be it cooperative property owners or those cleaning and accessing responsibly.



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, September 18, 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. Add Berks County Assn for Graveyard Preservation <bcagp@bcagp.org> to your trusted contact list.

Leydich Burial Grounds Annual Meeting

The Leydich Burial Grounds **annual** meeting will be held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Zeiglerville, (at Route 73 and Neiffer Road) on Sunday September 18th at 2 pm. This is a rain or shine event. If the weather is bad, it will be inside. Otherwise, bring lawn chairs and meet on the church grounds or parking area. The speaker for the event is Barry Rauhauser, the Executive Director of the Historical Society of Montgomery County.

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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: _____

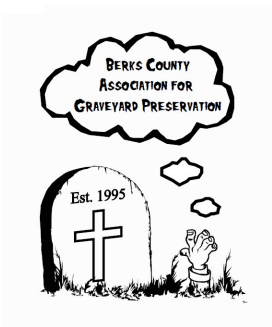
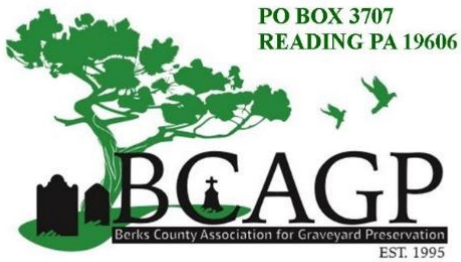
Mail Checks to:

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
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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.

