

Thank you to Oley Valley and to Brandywine Heights Future Farmers of America! Both schools donated their time and efforts at the end of the school year.



See the pages within and our Facebook page for more pictures!

A new partnership with Brandywine Heights FFA ! Ms. Paige Sheeler was familiar with our mission from her student days with Oley Valley FFA. This May was their first time out with us and it was fantastic!

Our partnership with Oley Valley FFA continued this June . This marks our ### Year with the group that started it all.



"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.

Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President

This is a continuation of my Spring 2025 Grave Happenings article on the history of BCAGP. That article concluded with the death of Executive Director Jackie Nein in 2000. A vacuum in leadership developed after her death and over the next few years BCAGP membership drifted away. Finally, in the mid 2000s a handfull of people began an effort to restart BCAGP. The only activity that had continued was the Oley High School Day of Caring in which students spent a day of community service maintaining graveyards. A positive change was that Jackie had created a trust in her will to support BCAGP. Her trust has funded most of our costs in the graveyards, especially wall repairs. The first major restoration, the rebuilding of walls at the High-Hoch graveyard in Cumru township was completed in 2007.



High-Hoch

In 2008 Anne Wagner came to a BCAGP meeting representing a woman with an interest in the Jacob Levan graveyard in Maxatawny. Anne appeared at the second or third meeting I attended. Before long she and I were BCAGP officers. Anne did much research to expand our knowledge of the graveyards, their history and who the current landowners were. She also pestered Keith Schaffer into taking her to graveyards to view their condition. Cleanups were mostly done by a very few individual volunteers. Often Keith had to clear a graveyard before he could work on the walls. If there was a multi-person BCAGP cleanup it was often just Anne, Keith and myself.

With the money from the Nein trust available and Keith as our willing stone mason we began a random program of restoring and rebuilding graveyard walls. At times descendants with interest in a specific graveyard came forward to request assistance, sometimes with financial inducements. Other times members visiting graveyards identified needed work.

As our activity continued and BCAGP became better known, our membership slowly grew. Some were especially valuable because of their very active participation. In graveyards they brought new skills and interests, allowed us to expand the number of graveyards we work in, and increased the frequency in which we can return. Administratively, they have allowed us to spread the workload, better organize our records, and be more effective. The sad aspect is that the majority of us are retired and the point is reached where active people have ended their participation. Thus, a constant influx of new members is important to maintain our level of activity.

In 2024 BCAGP received its last payment from the Nein trust. All its money has been distributed and the trust terminated. That money allowed us to make repairs that were out of the question in Jackie's day.

(Continued on page 3)

Many graveyard walls and tombstones are in a much better condition today than they have probably been for decades and it should be decades before significant restoration will be needed. The masonry work we do in the future will have to be viewed more critically because we know our funds will not be replenished, but some of that work will continue. Cleanups will also continue as the work is done by volunteers who mostly provide their own equipment at their own expense. We hope and expect that our membership continues to support us. Frequent returns to graveyards for inspection and cleanups keep them accessible and available to future generations.

DeTurck Cemetery #2

The restoration of the DeTurck Cemetery #2 has been completed as of August 2025. Many thanks go to the BCAGP for their wisdom & support. Thanks go to family & friends who donated money to the restoration & for their interest in keeping family history alive. Thanks also to the contractors & the Gotwals family for the work they did to make the cemetery restoration possible.

While the cemetery does not have the conventional look of most family cemeteries, it was designed for the purpose of needing little maintenance over the years. Since beginning this project in 2019, solutions had to be explored to get rid of weeds & Johnson grass & the ever-present groundhogs. A third stone wall had to be built & thanks to the professional work of stone mason, Keith Schaffer, it looks beautiful. Time will tell if it maintains its present look with minimal maintenance.

As a ninth-generation member of the Isaac, John & Abraham DeTurck family, I am thankful to all who made this endeavor one that makes me proud.

Barbara Janet DeTurck Witman



Veteran Focus

Heinrich Siegfried

Lara Thomas – Secretary



Heinrich Siegfried

17 April 1751-9 August 1822

It was fortunate timing that I was working on this article around the Independence Day holiday, as our veteran for this newsletter served during 1777 and the American Revolution. But how did Heinrich Siegfried's story begin?

The Siegfried family was one of the earliest non-native families to settle in Maxatawny Township. Names of friends and associates in legal matters and documents should be familiar to our reader: Kutz, Kemp, Zimmerman, Levan, and Bieber. What is unusual is their Moravian connections.

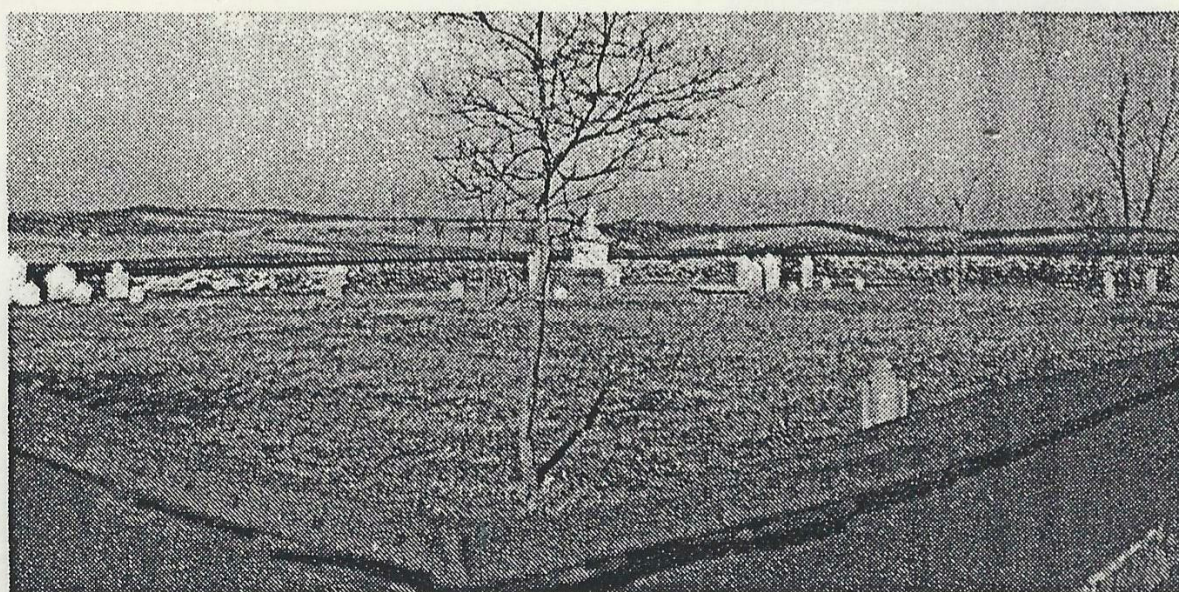
Most of us learn in elementary school that Pennsylvania owes its founding philosophy of religious tolerance to founder William Penn. Our early settlers had experienced centuries of turmoil in Europe over the freedom to follow one's conscience and wars stemming from one religion throwing another's leaders out

(sometimes literally throwing them out the window, see Defenestration of Prague). One religion might lure immigrants over, for them only discover even more alternating and alternative spiritual choices. This seems to be true of Mennonite Johannes Siegfried, the immigrant, who arrived in 1719. The family did well enough that by 1724 they had 300 acres in Oley but petitioned for the area around the Saucony to be divided for settlement. By 1732 the Siegfried family, having encountered the Moravian Brethren in Oley and had children's baptism recorded there, settled on 300 acres in what would become Maxatawny Township.

Heinrich Siegfried's father Joseph was one of the sons of Johannes the immigrant. Both immigrant Johannes and his son Joseph, who had inherited half of the original farmstead, hosted Moravian Brethren as they passed through the area as missionaries and travelers. While Joseph had several of Heinrich's siblings baptized Moravian (or at least recorded with the Moravian church), Heinrich was not. Joseph returned to the Moravian faith at the end of his life and his death and obituary are recorded with the Moravian Church in Emmaus. There is some debate about the actual resting place of Joseph as the

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obituary states he was buried at the family burial ground but other records of the Moravian church state he was buried with no tombstone at Emmaus's "old God's Acre" plot 106a.



SIEGFRIED

Regardless, Heinrich, one of the six surviving sons and two daughters, was born in 1751 on the farm he would inherit. His childhood appears to have been uneventful until the Revolutionary War. I spent quite a while trying to find details of his time in the Revolution but the PA Archives, Morton Montgomery, and others were not helpful. He does have a veteran's burial card giving the year 1777 for his service, and that it was with Captain Schmeck's unit, 5th Company of the 2nd Battalion. Due to the

idiosyncratic manner of naming and renaming the Pennsylvania units, we may never know more details about his actual service. Ironically, he was also charged to pay muster fines for missing service between 1777 and 1778. He was ordered to pay 7 shillings and 6 pence. Perhaps he served some time with the army, but not as much as was called for due to his family's pacifist leaning.

Form MACO-41—J. A. THOMPSON & CO., HARRISBURG, PA.		RECORD OF		BERKS County	
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs		BURIAL PLACE OF VETERAN			
NAME SIEGFRIED, (Henry) Henrich 71		DATE OF BIRTH 4/17/1751	DATE OF DEATH 8/9/1822		
VETERAN OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR		SERVED IN ARMY (<u>A</u>) NAVY () MARINE CORPS ()			
DATES OF SERVICE 1777	ORGANIZATION (S) Capt. Schmeck's Co. 5th Co. 2nd Batt.		RANK Private		
CEMETERY OR PLACE OF INTERMENT	NAME Siegfried Private Cemetery				
	LOCATION Maxatawny 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 2-25-1935					
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.					

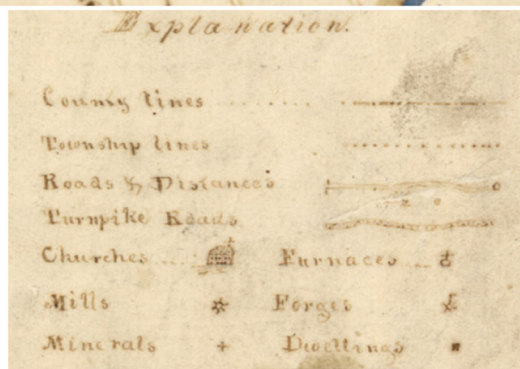
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I could find no record of his marriage but his first child with wife Elisabeth Kutz occurred in 1781 when Heinrich was 29. Elizabeth was the daughter of local Johan Nicholas Kutz and Eva Brobst. That makes her the sister of Johan Nicholas Kutz, our veteran from the January 2024 newsletter!

Children followed every two to three years. The surviving children of Heinrich and Elisabeth were: Catherine (1781-1871) who would marry neighbor Johannes Bieber, Solomon (1783-1853) who would marry Maria Catharine Hoch, Maria Magdalena (1785-1863) who would marry Johannes Metzger, namesake Heinrich who would die young (1787-1803), Joseph (1789-1863) who would marry Elisabeth Saeger, Elizabeth (1791-1830) who married Daniel Troxell, Johannes (1796-1864) who would marry Catherine Bieber, David (1898-1845) who never married, and lastly Abraham (1800-1846) who married Elizabeth Schaffer. While not as many Moravian records mention Heinrich, like his father, some of his children's baptisms were documented in their records. Apparently the son, like the father, had not

totally settled on a religion.

A portion of an 1818 map of Berks County
(notice Kutztown is about 10 homes)



Tax records show a prosperous farm of over 180 acres (no mean feat when the original 300 acres was subdivided and divided again). Brothers' and cousins' farms surround him. A rare map from 1818 shows the preponderance of Siegfrieds in Maxatawny. But in this time of prosperity, Heinrich's wife Elisabeth died in 1816 at age 55. Whether Heinrich was lonely, needed help managing his household or both, it seems shortly thereafter he married widow Magdalena Levan. Magdalena brought with her a daughter Elizabeth from her previous marriage to Jacob

Levan.

Heinrich and Magdalena had six years together before his passing in 1822. We are lucky enough to have Heinrich's will and probate, in English, which gives excellent direction as to his heirs. His will and probate show a detail oriented man who also was strictly fair in his treatment of his heirs. Several sons had been advanced money in order to purchase their own farms and he makes note of that in his

documents, leaving them only \$1 or even having them pay back funds to his estate.

Widow Magdalena was amply provided for and even stepdaughter Elizabeth received a dresser and a heifer. His son Johannes/John received the home farm. His daughters shared the proceeds of the sale of his crops, household goods not given to the widow, and personal property. Bushels of rye, wheat, buckwheat and flax, as well cattle, pigs, horses, and even geese all were sold for the estate. There were also promissory notes (money owed from neighbors) and over \$140 in physical cash to

be dispersed. He also owned two guns, a Bible, and "other books".

Once all was tallied, his estate was worth over \$4,600. In 1822, one cow was worth \$10-15 dollars. For perspective, a calf today can go for \$1,400. Playing loosely with math, that puts his estate at around \$460,000 in today's money.

Heinrich, his first wife Elisabeth, and son Heinrich who died young are all buried in the Siegfried family burial ground. Most of his other children are buried at nearby Zion Maxatawny. This church, visible from Rt 222, owes a great deal of its start to Heinrich's cousin Johannes's son, Johannes. I know. It is a LOT of Johannes. The church was originally even known as Siegfried's Church. However, unlike his father, Heinrich and his children all have tombstones and these tombstones are not the flat style of most Moravian ones.

Perhaps the best testament to Heinrich and his family lies in who currently owns the farm passed down from Johannes the immigrant to Heinrich's son John's whose home built in 1827

still stands. Parcels were added and sold away but in 1972, 333 acres, including the family burial ground, three homes, two barns, and other associated buildings were all purchased by Bob and Ardath Rodale.

Today, the Rodale Institute is a leader in research and development of organic farming, known around the world. Rodale has helped change how markets see and use sustainable ecological agriculture. The farm, burial ground and more are protected and preserved. Rodale has done a wonderful job in keeping the burial ground mowed and maintained.

I think Heinrich and his family would be pleased to see the well managed legacy as it is today.



Civil War Soldier Grave Preservation at Nisky Hill Cemetery

BCAGP member Marie Maly recently participated in a cemetery cleanup event as a member of the Civil War Roundtable of Eastern Pa., Inc. and brought along a “miracle in a bottle.”

Following an annual Memorial Day ceremony, conducted by the 153rd Pa. Volunteer Infantry reenacting group, volunteer members of the Civil War Roundtable of Eastern Pa., Inc., converged on the massive, Victorian-era Nisky Hill cemetery, the burial site for about three dozen men who served during the Civil War in the Pennsylvania 153rd Regiment.



I'd previously attended this event and remembered how the post-ceremony cleanup around the soldiers' graves seemed like such a great way to give thanks to those who had put their lives on the line for America. But now, a few years later, I'd decided to put my fledging experience with D/2 cleaner, a Tampico brush and a pump garden sprayer to good use.

While some volunteers worked to refresh the paint on the cannon and cannon ball stacks, rake up debris, reset markers, “replant” flag holders and straighten, or replace, GAR* stars, my “students” and I went to work on the markers.

Thanks to veteran BCAGP volunteers, I'd seen the difference that a simple application of D2/ can make to a weathered grave marker. Once, I watched Lara Thomas apply some prod-

uct to a little girl's tiny and forlorn-looking, lichen-covered grave marker. It was like watching a miracle take place: From sad to not quite so bad ... in no time. And Lara assured me that the marker's condition would only get better with time. Which is why I was happy to purchase some D/2 product and bring it along to Nisky Hill with a few borrowed Tampico brushes and a pump sprayer.



The task was completed in no time. And we left that day, feeling like, perhaps, we had all found an even better way to properly thank those men for their sacrifice. How do I know? Because several of volunteers have already agreed to come back in fall, mostly anxious to see the results of our handiwork, but also to get in another application of D/2 before winter sets in.

* The Grand Army of the Republic is the largest of Union Army veterans' organizations.

Additional Future Farmer of America photos

There are too many to share here—please visit our facebook for more photos!



Brandywine at the Conrad Cronrath



Brandywine at Seigfried



Oley at Keim



Oley at Beiber



Oley at DeTurck/Shenkel



Oley at Hunter Kemp



The 2025 winner of the Jacqueline Nein Award is Oley Valley High School FFA member Cole Peifer. I had the privilege of escorting his team during the 2024 Day of Caring and it was clear that Cole leads by example, having cheerfully worked strenuously throughout the long day, encouraging the group with his energetic, positive attitude. I had the pleasure of presenting him with a \$250 stipend at the OVHS Senior Awards Night this Spring. Congratulations!

Thank you to Deitsch Eck Restaurant for selecting us for the June "Plate It Forward". \$1 from each special sold was donated to BCAGP.

If you have a desire for quality PA German cooking and other favorites, and OUTSTANDING baked goods and desserts, please visit Deitsch Eck Restaurant in Lenhartsville. Owner and chef Steve with his team of family and staff will take good care of you.

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.

BCAGP Meeting

The next meeting of the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation will be held on

Sunday, December 14th 2025 at 1 PM
at the Oley American Legion on DeTurk Rd
and Route 73 in Oley.



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 - 2026

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: _____

- **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.



<http://bcagp.org>

Mail Checks to:

BCAGP

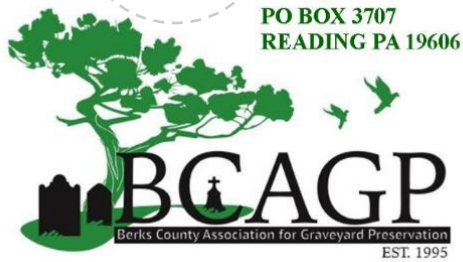
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Check our web site for details for scheduled clean ups, meeting dates and for internet edition newsletter archives
in full color!

BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

Officers and Board of Directors

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Vice President:	Gary Koenig	610-780-1583	dkbucs@aol.com
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Newsletter Contact: Meredith Goldey (Mergoldey@gmail.com)



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for updates and more photos.

