

Kemp Family Burial Ground – Preservation Update

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Previous State 2020



Current State 2025

"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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Letter from Les

Les Rohrbach – President

I received an email in early June from a lady who said she had the tombstone of Johannes Rothermel (24 Jun 1802 - 4 May 1826) in her backyard. Her ex-husband had purchased it at a yard sale in the 1990s and it had been in the backyard ever since. A number of years ago she had seen a Reading Eagle article about a cleanup BCAGP had done at the DeTurk-Rothermel graveyard in Muhlenberg township and suspected the tombstone had come from there because the yard sale had been in the same neighborhood.

I checked our records of tombstone readings and found Johannes. My reaction and initial reply was that since a tombstone was already in the graveyard whatever was in her backyard was a second or a practice tombstone. When I visited the site to confirm our records I was shocked to see what I thought was an entire row of tombstones missing. Checking our records again I found this key line above 11 listed burials "Additional inscriptions copied about 1940". Wow! The tombstone offered to us likely did belong here.

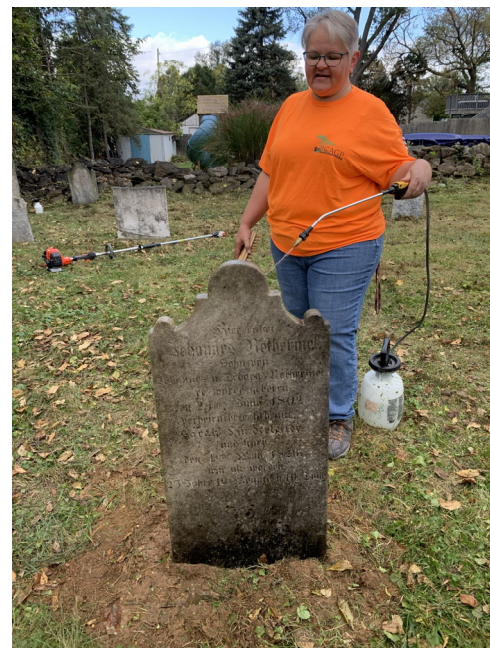


Sometime between 1940 and the 1990s this and likely 10 other tombstones disappeared. Certainly, the later decades of these years saw immense change to the surroundings as farmland became a suburban landscape. What prompted the disappearance of these tombstones? The graveyard itself survived. Had the tombstones fallen over? Were they pulled out of the ground on purpose? Why? Other tombstones are still here.

With the assistance of the couple in possession of Johannes' tombstone, it was moved to the DeTurk-Rothermel graveyard June 27. On October 11 a BCAGP work crew planted the tombstone in the graveyard. The location was determined by dowsing done by Keith Schaffer. I might be skeptical of using dowsing for this but it is a large graveyard and where would we put it otherwise? Years ago I asked Keith whether he could determine if two of my ancestors were buried in a graveyard giving him only their names, and just her maiden name. I did not tell him they were husband and wife. Using dowsing he said yes and put one of the couple next to their son, the other in the same row but several graves away. So, for me, I think Johannes is placed as well as we can do it 200 years after his death.

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Johannes Rothermel was the son of Johannes Rothermel (1766 - 1826) and Deborah DeTurk (1782 - 1844). He was married to Sarah Hinterleiter but there is no record of her burial here. The history of the land begins with Daniel DeTurk (1742 - 1791) the 3rd DeTurk generation and his wife Catharine Levan (1746 - 1819) who settled here. Their daughter Deborah married Johannes Rothermel and they inherited title to the land and the graveyard. Johannes was the son of Johann Paul Rothermel (1718 - 1811) one of 5 Rothermel brothers who immigrated together in 1730 and his second wife Sophia Maurer (~1735 - 1813). Johann Paul had settled in Maiden creek township along what was then called the road from Reading to Easton, today approximately across Route 222 from the Memorial Gardens Cemetery.



2025 Year in Review

In 2025 BCAGP and Members were able to visit and maintain the Graveyards listed below.

Thank you for your support and dedication in our mission

Kinsey Alsace	Herman/Sassaman	Maxatawny	Schneider	Oley
Koenig Bern	Kemp	Maxatawny	Weidner	Oley
Hill Earl	Siegfried	Maxatawny	Weiser	Oley
Hechler/Esterly	DeTurk / Rothermel	Muhlenberg	Klein	Penn
Klein-Close	Bertolet 1	Oley	Reber	Penn
Ritter Exeter	Bertolet 3	Oley	Keim	Pike
Fetterolf/Bittenbender	Bieber/Lesher	Oley	Conrad	Rockland
ford	DeTurk 1	Oley	Keim	Rockland
Rauch Hereford	DeTurk 2	Oley	Ohlinger	Ruscombmanor
Bright/Brecht Jefferson	Guldin 2	Oley	Schmehl	Ruscombmanor
Kirby Maiden creek	Hoch	Oley		
Rothermel 1 Maiden creek	Hoch/DeTurk/Shenkel	Oley		
Rothermel 2 Maiden creek	Hunter/Kemp	Oley		
Brown Marion	Kauffman	Oley		
Kilmer Marion	Lesher	Oley		
Kurtz Marion	Nein	Oley		
Yoder Marion	Peter	Oley		
Grim Maxatawny				



Veteran Focus

Samuel DeHart

Lara Thomas—Secretary

One of the more rewarding fixes this fall was accomplished at the Knabb homestead burial ground, Oley Township, off Reifsnyder Rd. BCAGP has had the Knabb burial ground on our list for attention for some time, but like any large project, it is easy to push to a later date. In October, we stopped putting it off and began to repair and reset at the Knabb.



His grave is off to the side and seemingly alone. The appearance and yet survival of an intact marker prompted this article.

Samuel Dehart (also listed as DeHart and even as Samuel D. Hart) was born in 1826 in nearby Amity township. His parents were Jacob Dehart and Susanna Knabb, which helps explain his presence here. His obituary states that he was the last of their nine children and I found him to be the only son. His father died at only age 44 and it appears that his mother may have had a challenging time as a result. Her own probate shows she was still owed money from her brother's estate and more, with few material possessions. Samuel worked as a laborer for

One of the first tombstones worked on was a veteran, that of Samuel DeHart. Only the top of the arch with the beginning of the epitaph showed above the grass. We assumed it was broken. After almost 2 hours, we returned his tombstone, still whole and in the base, to the surface and marked his grave with a flag and new veteran's marker.



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others and sometime shoemaker as a young man, living quietly enough to not show up in many records until June of 1863.

The summer of 1863 was hard for Pennsylvania. Drafts were required to add to what were called volunteer regiments, including the 99th Regiment of PA Volunteers. I cannot find proof, but Samuel is documented on the draft registration in June. His veteran's card only credits March of 1865 through July of 1865 but with his draft occurring in 1863, and most drafts were for 3 years.... He was assigned to Co K of the 99th.

Persons eligible of personal subject to the military duty and being three years and all unexpired personal subject to the military duty those being of thirty days and under the age of thirty days. Class II comprises all other persons subject to military duty.

TABLE B--CONSOLIDATED LIST of all persons of Class II, subject to the military duty in the Civil Congressional District, residing at the County of Delaware, enumerated during the month of June, 1902, under direction of Henry T. Kapp, Personal Marshal.

RESIDENCE	NAME	AGE	EDUCATION		PLACES OF RESIDENCE During the Year, 1901	PREVIOUS MILITARY SERVICE	REMARKS
			Was in School	Precedent Education			
Center	1. Charles Jacob	20	Yes	High School	None		1
	2. Charles Wm	20		None			2
Center	3. Charles Jacob	26		None			3
	4. George Effinger	27		High School			4
	5. Peter Lane	23		None			5
	6. Charles Jacob	26		College			6
Center	7. Charles Wm	27		None			7
	8. Charles Jacob	29					8
	9. Isaac Henry	31		None			9
Effinger	10. Charles Lane	26		High School			10
Center	11. George Lane	21		None			11
Center	12. Charles Charles	28		None			12
	13. George Lane	27		High School			13
	14. Isaac Jacob	28		None			14
Effinger	15. Peter Jacob	21		None			15
Center	16. William Jacob	28		None			16
	17. Peter Jacob	27					17
Center	18. George Jacob	28		College			18
Center	19. George Jacob	28		None			19
Center	20. George Jacob	28					20

Class I June 1, 1902. Station: Headquarters. 8th Comp. Dist. of Delaware.
 Personal Marshal General C. B. Washington, D. C.
 Date: July 11, 1902.
 Henry T. Kapp, Personal Marshal.

One month later, July of 1863, this same unit fought at Devil's Den in Gettysburg. I am not going to attempt to explain what happened there. Much better writers have done so and if you are curious, google Matthew Brady, photographer, and Devil's Den. Words won't be needed. The battle cry of "This is Pennsylvania, and our Home" was documented by the 99th at Gettysburg.

After Gettysburg, the 99th pursued Lee south.

The Battle of the Wilderness followed in spring 1864, as did Spotsylvania, Fredericksburg Road, Cold Harbor and the horrible Siege of Petersburg. Books have been written about Petersburg, over 30 miles of trench warfare, the explosions left craters still visible today. But after 10 months of repeated battles, Lee gave way and abandoned Petersburg and Richmond, capital of the Confederacy.

In April of 1865, Co K lost more men at Appomattox Court House but Lee surrendered the war. May 23, 1865, Samuel DeHart participated in the Grand Review of troops in Washington DC and mustered out (was discharged) July 1, 1865.

I could not find Samuel in the 1870 census. But his son, Llewellyn Dehart is documented in 1870 in Earlville, only 3 months old. There has been some confusion over who Samuel Dehart married. Many have tied him to Susanna Weidner Dehart (1831-1912). This is not possible, as in many newspaper articles, as well as census records, Samuel is listed as either single or as a widower. Susanna Weidner Dehart outlived our Samuel, and died in Bloomsburg, in the home of one of her several daughters. Samuel's obituary clearly states that one child survived him - son Llewellyn Dehart.

A closer look at records show that Llewellyn's mother is one Mary Smith. Llewellyn appears with Mary Ann Smith on a farm with Isaac Smith and his wife Susanna... in Amity, the same township Samuel was from. 1880 shows Llewellyn still residing with his grandparents, Isaac and Susan Smith. However, Mary Ann disappeared. This same year, Samuel is listed as a widower. Mary Ann Smith/Dehart apparently died between 1870 and 1880.

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Samuel worked as a hostler as well as farm hand. A hostler is a person who cares for and/or manages horses, usually at an inn or tavern. He was a "veteran fisherman" and his catches even made the paper. As the years went by, he returned to farmwork, living with others, but still handy with animals. The Reading Eagle wrote that at age 78 he made a point of being the first to drive a new road "on an unruly mule!"

OPENING A NEW ROAD.

Peter Griesemer, supervisor of Lower Oley, has a force of 20 men at work all week opening a new road near here, and it will require some time to finish the road. The petition for the new road had 38 signers, and D. A. Knabb, Mahlon Hoffmaster and Charles Herbolin were awarded damages. Some property owners have given land gratis, being a great benefit to them. Samuel Dehart, one of our oldest citizens and a veteran of the Civil War, was the first to drive over the new road with an unruly mule.

But on April 1 of 1905, despite having worked in the barn the day before, he passed away, age 79. His obituary ran in both the Reading Eagle and the Reading Times, making a point of mentioning his service in the Civil War, as well as his son Llewellyn. Only 3 weeks later, the paper posted that the county paid the expense of \$40 to John L. Lutz, for the burial of "deceased soldier Samuel DeHart". I can find no probate or will, so the evidence suggests that Samuel Dehart died as simply as he lived. With no funds to bury him, the County stepped forward. This would also explain the simple non-Germanic marble stone that marks his grave, so unlike in design and language.

Berks County didn't forget what they owed Samuel Dehart. BCAGP does not, either.

Reading Times
Sat, Apr 01, 1905 · Page 2

SAMUEL DEHART.

Samuel DeHart, aged 79 years, residing the past two years with the family of William Deemer, at Oley Line, was found dead in bed at noon yesterday. In the morning he was enjoying usual good health and assisted Mr. Deemer at the barn. About 9 o'clock he complained of not feeling well and lay down for a rest. At the dinner hour Mr. Deemer called Mr. DeHart. He failed to respond. He was found in bed dead. The body was still warm.

It is supposed that heart disease was the cause of his death. He had lived with Mr. Deemer the past four years. He leaves one son, Llewellyn DeHart, of near Gabelsville. He was hostler at the Oley Line hotel about 10 years, retiring about 15 years ago.

Mr. DeHart was the last of a family of nine children. He enlisted June 12, 1863, in Company K, Ninety-ninth Regiment, P. V., and served with gallantry throughout the war, participating in a number of severe engagements. Funeral Director Lutz has charge of the remains.

Kemp Family Burial Ground – Preservation Update

Juli Winkler

Preservation efforts at the historic Kemp Family Burial Ground have been underway for several years, beginning for me in 2020 with basic but essential work: clearing heavy brush, removing roots and debris, and gently cleaning stones. Because the cemetery sits in the middle of actively farmed land, it has never been the most accessible site, and even the simplest tasks required coordination and a dedicated group of volunteers. For the past four to five years, we have made our way into the cemetery at least once a year together with Kemp descendants, and with consistent cleanups the results have truly begun to show.



This past spring, students from the Kutztown FFA joined the effort and brought fresh energy to the site. They helped clear brush, level several tilted headstones, dig out roots, and stack bricks along the deteriorating stone wall, important groundwork that prepared the cemetery for more technical restoration work.

In recent years, the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation has also welcomed Robert Mosko back to the burial ground for what is now his third or fourth training session with our group. On Sunday, November 16th, under his guidance, BCGAP members Brian Walbert, Ed Gensemer, and Lara Thomas learned to remove corroded iron pins, install fiberglass



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reinforcement rods, re set fallen stones, and apply lime mortar for historically appropriate repairs. The skills we have learned from Robert have become invaluable, not only at the Kemp site but in preserving other historic cemeteries throughout Berks County, where volunteers will be applying these and other techniques with confidence.

Several key markers, including those of Elizabeth Sharadin Kemp and Georg Kemp, have now been carefully stabilized and restored. It was especially fitting that Captain George Kemp's stone was cleaned, reset, and honored with a new veteran marker and flag during the week of Veterans Day, a meaningful acknowledgment of his service.

We are encouraged by the progress made so far and look forward to continue this important preservation work with the same shared dedication from volunteers, descendants, and community partners who make this effort possible.



Other Clean ups



Hechler Esterly



Hill



Hoch Deturk Shenkel



Kirby



Schneider



Nein

Another Successful Kutztown FFA outing!

On November 18th the Kutztown Future Farmers of America joined us once again to work on the Grim, Sassaman and the Siegfried in Maxatawny.



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.



Annual Membership

BCAGP Meeting

will be held on

Sunday, February 15, 2026 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:

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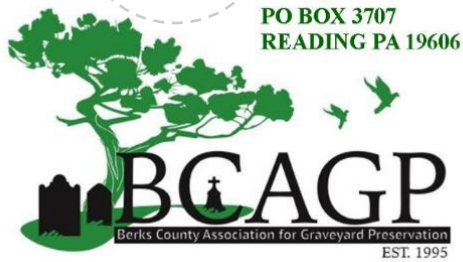
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Now you can pay dues, or make donations via [PayPal!](#)

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It is that time again! Renew your membership for 2026 now!

WWW.BCAGP.ORG

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

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

