

Future Farmers of America



Brandywine Heights FFA - May 21st



Kutztown Area FFA - April 21st



Oley Area FFA - May 30th

Pictures and details continue Page 2

"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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Future Farmers of America

Our 2026 season was kicked off with the volunteer efforts of three local High school chapters of the Future Farmers of America. We are so grateful for the partnership, hard work, and willingness to get dirty.

We kicked off in April with the efforts of the Kutztown Area High School on the 21st. We started the day at the Richert Dumm where they accomplished a lot of trimming and resetting a few stones. Then after a pizza fuel up went Sassaman where the group's previous efforts are paying off. We could walk in and do quick work on the vegetation and then work on a few stone repairs where the group got their first experience helping us mortar broken stones together. We then ended our day at Schmidt where raspberry canes continue to be a problem.



Stone Repair at Sassaman

Then on May 21st we were joined by the Brandywine Hights FFA for a rainy workday. We started at the Conrad/Conrath clearing vegetation and then headed to the challenging Rauch in Hereford Township. The wet fields meant carrying the equipment across into the wooded area. So thankful to the students who carried 40-pound bags of stone so that we could reset several tombstones.



Clean up at Conrad

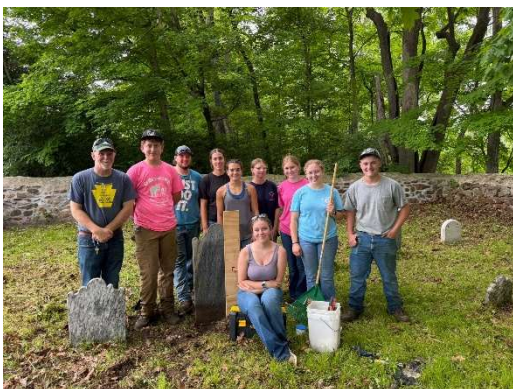


Stone Repair at Rauch

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Last but of course not least we wrapped up with the longstanding partnership with Oley Area Highschool FFA on May 30th. This is our largest group with almost 30 students we divide and conquer to tackle over 20 graveyards in a single day!

Group 1 was able to complete the Hunter/Kemp, Deturk 1, Peter, Bieber/Lesher, Weiser, Hoch, Weidner.



Group 2 was able to complete the Gulden 2, Kauffman, Bertolet, Hoch/Deturk/Shenkel, Schneider, Bertolet 3.



Group 3 was able to complete Ohlinger, Keim Pike, Levan, Lesher, Weiser/Deturk, Kinsey.



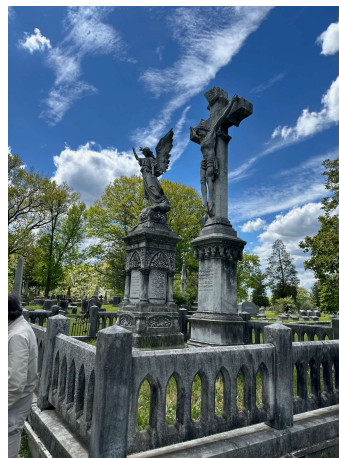
Thank you to all of the Future Farmers of America groups for donating your time to our organization! Your hard work and dedication is amazing! Looking Forward to working with you in the Fall and next Spring!

Letter from Les

LES ROHRBACH – PRESIDENT

BCAGP has had an interesting spring. The defunct Kutztown Folk Festival had been the only opportunity that we have had to participate in public gatherings at which we have a chance to interact with the general public and discuss our mission. This spring we have had three such opportunities.

First, was a meeting of the Association for Gravestone Studies held at the Berks History Center. BCAGP's Lara Thomas began the program with a welcome and a discussion of the work of BCAGP before a room full of attendees. She was followed by talks on late 18th century Pennsylvania German Funerary Art, Abandoned Cemeteries, and the 1925 Funeral of a Dallastown Klu Klux Klansman. Quite a few BCAGP members attended. We had the opportunity to discuss the work of BCAGP and learn about related topics from the other presentations. After lunch we toured the Charles Evans Cemetery led by two local historians who provided history of the cemetery, showed burial sites of some prominent people, and showcased unique monuments and tombstones.



ASG Meeting Photos

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In May we had a table at the Cherry Fest put on by the Oley Valley Heritage Association. This turned out to be a very rainy day. Still attendance was better than we might have expected. Vendors, demonstrators, and reenactors were present. Multiple historic Keim buildings were open for investigation. BCAGP had numerous discussions with attendees on tombstone cleaning, our graveyard work, and genealogical connections to area families. We conducted two tours to visit a nearby Keim graveyard and discussed the people buried there. And, of course, we sampled baked goods a local church offered for sale. Kudos to the OVHA for being well prepared for the rain and bringing the day off in the conditions we faced.



Cherry Festival



Americana Fest

In June we had a table at the Americana Fest hosted by Berks County Parks at the Berks Heritage Center. In contrast to the Cherry Fest, this was a beautiful, breezy, comfortable day. The Parks Department provided a large tent in a shaded area for us. We discovered our 4-panel display board and the pictures velcroed to it did not handle the breeze well. Nevertheless, despite numerous chases of pictures blown off our board, it was an enjoyable productive day. We again were busy discussing graveyard issues with passersby. Two of us were fortunate enough to be given samples of sour milk pie which is something like a colonial cheesecake by the next-door reenactors. It was clear evidence that our colonial ancestors ate well!

Just to show how busy BCAGP was on the day of the Americana Fest, Ed Gensemer directed a work crew of about 18 volunteers at St John's Host cemetery in Tulpehocken township as it prepares for its 300th anniversary. 25 to 30 tombstones were reset, a modified cradle grave was leveled, and many headstones were cleaned. At the same time, Lara Thomas met with 10 to 12 people at St Gabriel's Episcopal Church's cemetery in Douglassville to discuss the appropriate use of Orvus and D/2 to clean various tombstone types. After cleaning better reading of tombstones allowed identification of several veteran graves. Plus, two graves were repaired.



St. John's Host Cemetery

Happy 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence!

LARA THOMAS – SECRETARY

At this point in the year, perhaps you are tired of hearing of the 250th anniversary of the announcement that 13 colonies of Great Britain decided to “place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take.” For those men and women, it was an almost unheard-of concept. The many German speaking immigrants had found it easier to give up their entire lives to move to these colonies than to find freedom in their homeland. In order to escape decades of war, deprivation of farms, and incessant dictates regarding the religion they were to practice, they gave up almost everything. Perhaps that is why we find so many were willing to fight to guarantee the new freedoms they found.

This spring, the Brandywine Heights Future Farmers of America ended up spending a wet day with BCAGP but had a moving moment at what is known as the Rauch burial ground in Hereford Township. Ironically, no Rauchs are interred above a farm not far from Huff’s Church, but a Rauch once owned the farm. Not precisely a family burial ground, the Rauch once was the resting place of some of the founders of Huff Church, as well as several Mennonite families. Over the years, the Mennonite interments were moved to later formed Mennonite cemeteries and several of the Huff and related family members were moved down to the church once land was donated in 1810. But several graves still remain in the woods. Fallen trees and disruption by roots have put many of the remaining tombstones at risk and several have tipped and fallen. George Moll (also rendered as Mull) is a Revolutionary veteran whose tombstone and footstone now stand straight and clean thanks to the efforts of the FFA students.



Brandywine Heights Future Farmers of America at the Rauch

Like many ancestors of the Revolutionary time period, we only know a tantalizing glimpse of George’s life. It is likely he began as Johann Georg Moll, son of Johann Michael Moll who emigrated with his family from what we now call the Rhineland Palatinate/Rheinland Pfaltz area of Germany. For ease of reading, I will list him as Georg, as there will be other Georges. As a young man he left his parents in what is now Montgomery County and came to Berks. He made the same mistakes many of us make and married young, perhaps too young.

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In 1770, a baptismal record listed him as married to Elisabeth and baptizing a baby named Anna Maria at Hill Church in Pike Township. Whatever happened, his next appearance in records is the birth of son and namesake George Mull in 1774 with wife Catharina in Hereford Township. Someone of you might be questioning if this is really the same man. Hold that thought.

At least 5 children followed with wife Catharina (who may have been a Gauger, also given as Gauckler and Goucker). Catharina's maiden name is not listed on her tombstone, but most researchers believe her to be a Gauger. Children who lived to adulthood were George the younger, Johannes (John), Anna (known as Nancy), Thomas, Maria (Gehry), and Martha (Ahrens). Nancy would marry George Huff. This son-in-law would be so close to the family and Georg our subject that he was named as an executor over some of Georg Moll's own sons.



Catherine Gauchler Moll Stone

In the midst of establishing his family and running a tavern, Georg joined a Berks County militia under Captain David Strause and Colonel Daniel Hunter, the 8th Company of the 1st Battalion. He appears to have served in 1776 or 1777 but in 1778 he paid muster fines rather than give time. Service in this unit meant participation around Philadelphia, possibly at Brandywine or Germantown. Brandywine was one of the longest battles of the war and used the most men. However, the scale of fighting was much smaller than what we are familiar with today. The British military reported anywhere from 300 to 500 Americans killed. With no central government or rules regarding reporting of losses and death created until after the end of the Civil War almost 100 years after this, we may never know the actual cost in lives.

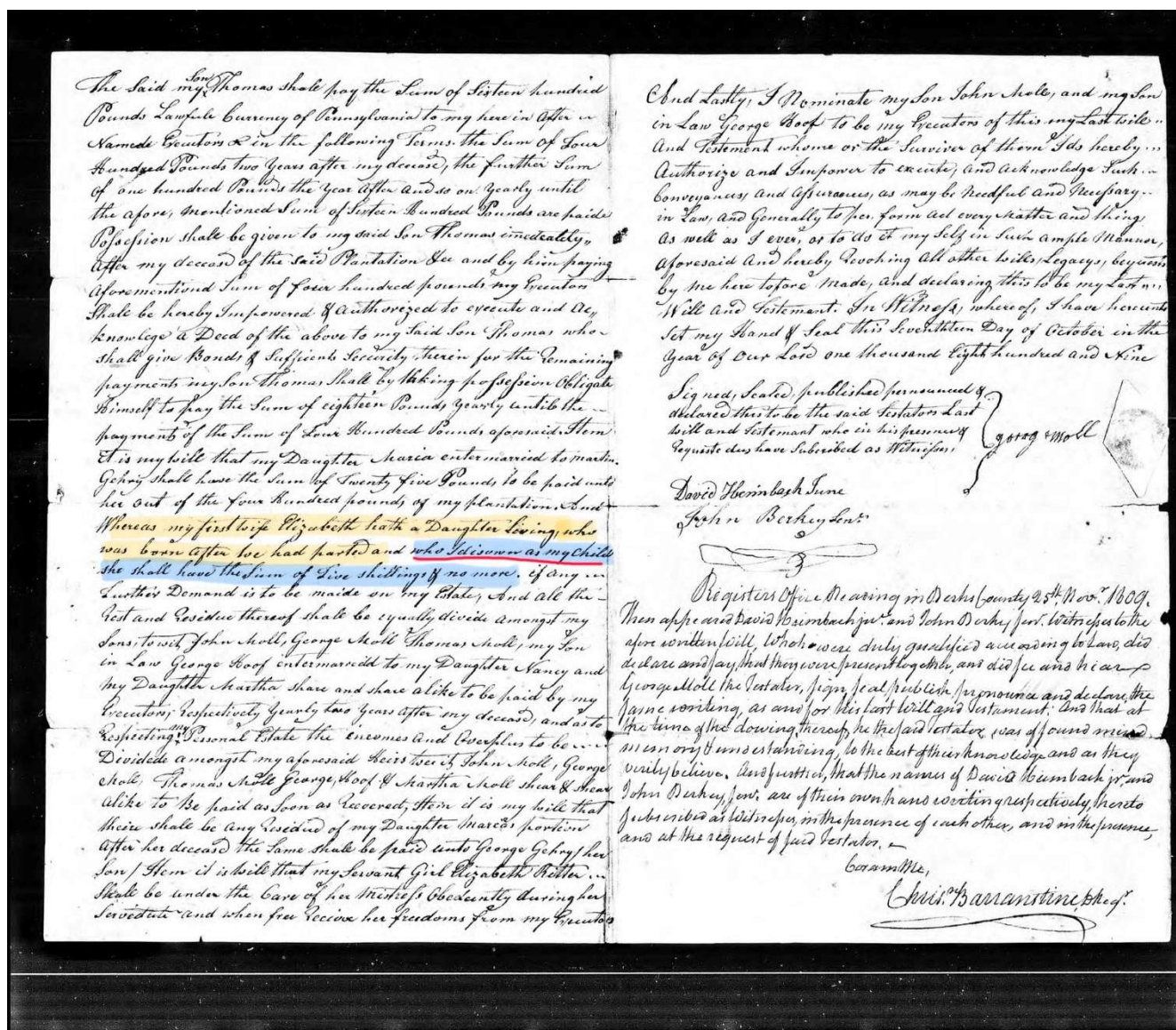
It is unlikely we will ever know exactly what Georg saw or did during the Revolution. There simply aren't surviving records. We do see him in tax returns and Pennsylvania census records starting 1779 and regularly for years afterward. Sometimes he is simply referred to as "yeoman" and other times his name is followed by "tavern" or "cordwainer" which is someone who makes new shoes. Obviously he is willing to put his hands to whatever he needed to provide for his family. His son George would be marked as a joiner, meaning he is constructing furniture.

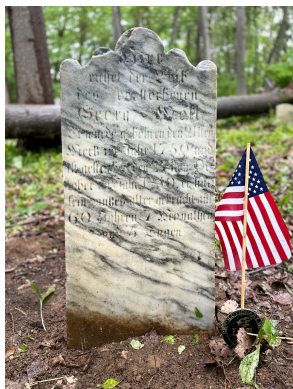
In 1801 Georg and Catharina had their last child who would survive to adulthood, daughter Martha. Georg was in his 50s, a man in his maturity, but with children to both support and be supported by. However, something was wrong with his health and he wrote a will with the words "being unwell and weak in body". He concludes it with the date of 17th of October 1809. Letters testamentary are signed 23rd and 25th November, 1809, and inventory taken of all his possessions and sworn in to probate on 25th November 1809. Georg's estate was valued at £610 3 shillings and 9 ½ pence. For perspective, a cow was worth almost £5. This is a substantial estate with many people owing notes of debt to him as well. Earlier in this article it was mentioned that as a young man he married a woman named Elisabeth and had a daughter named Anna Maria by her in 1770 but in Pike township, not the Hereford in which he lived all the rest of his life. It begs the question if this is the same Georg Mull. Here is the unfortunate proof of it. On the second page of his actual will, Georg dictates that his son Thomas inherits the physical plantation i.e. farm on which Georg had lived, as well as that daughter Maria who had married Martin Gehry is to receive only £25. Then this phrase:

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"whereas my first wife Elisabeth hath a daughter living who was born after we parted and who I disown as my child she shall have the sum of 5 shillings and no more..." From the wording it appears that both Elisabeth and child Anna Maria, now almost 39, were still living, yet he basically said that they were to receive the monetary equivalent of the cost of a blanket.

Georg's probate also shows the family were comfortably off enough to be able to afford a servant, perhaps indentured servant, or even a redemptioner. The difference in type could mean a difference in years of labor as well as terms such as being provided with an education while in servitude. In theory, an indentured servant signed a contract prior to the voyage and would be in a position to review different possible contracts. A redemptioner did not have this negotiation option. The person sailed and if no family member or friend showed to pay for their voyage once they arrived, the captain could sell that contract to the highest bidder. "It is my will that my servant girl Elizabeth Ritter shall be under the care of her mistress (likely the widow Catharine) obediently during her servitude and when free receive her freedoms from my executors." At least Elizabeth Ritter had her freedom included in Georg's will.





Johan Georg Moll

A final thing to consider is the oddity of Georg's tombstone. It reads: Here rests the remains of the deceased Georg Moll, he was born the 21st of March in the year 1750 and died the 27th October in the year 1810. He attained the age of 60 years, 7 months and 5 days. Did you catch it? Georg's will was probated in November of 1809, not 1810. The most likely explanation is that the tombstone was not placed at the grave until much later, perhaps not until the full estate was settled and his widow Catharine died in 1839.

Regardless of the date it was placed, his family had an elegant stone of Bridgeport marble with a matching footstone placed near where Georg lived and worked for decades. His efforts and impact on those around him had made a difference. His service to the freshly declared independent colonies made a difference. We thank him for it.



The next meeting of the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation will be held on Sunday, September 13th 2026 at 1 PM at the Oley American Legion on DeTurk Rd and Route 73 in Oley.



Marvin Stamm Retires from the BCAGP Board

We sadly accepted the resignation of Marvin Stamm from our board during our July board meeting. Marvin and his wife Patty Stamm moved to South Carolina in order be closer to grandbabies. We will miss Marvin's cheerful heart and willingness to turn up in unfortunate weather. Maybe it was the Penn State in him. We wish them blue skies and the best of times!

2026 Jacqueline Nein Award Winner



James Guntz

Welcome to our New Board Member!

We would like to take the time to welcome our newest board member Brian Walbert!

Brian has been a long standing member to BCAGP and an active volunteer. His knowledge and experience of stone repair has been a great addition to our team!



Brian trying to find the flag the students brought

The Reber family is having their annual reunion on July 26. It will be followed by a visitation to the rebuilt and relocated historic graveyard entrance that was overseen and funded by the family and supported by BCAGP.

The rebuilding of the pillars was done by our mason and board member Keith Schaffer.



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 currently 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.

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>

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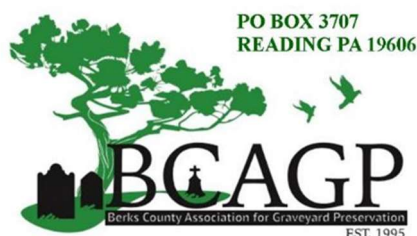
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Check our web site for details for scheduled clean ups, meeting dates and for internet edition newsletter archives in full color!

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