



GRAVE HAPPENINGS

BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

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WWW.BCAGP.ORG

Check the web for meeting dates

PO BOX 3707
READING PA 19606

Special points of interest:

- Barnet Peter Puzzle
 - Oley Levan
 - Spohn
- Graveyard Updates
- Upcoming Projects
- Veteran Highlight
- Epitaphs

BCAGP
Berks County Association
for Graveyard Preservation



BARNET (BERNET) PETER



The Barnet Peter family graveyard is located in the back of Berks Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Maiden Creek Township. Many years ago there was a combination of vandalism and tree damage done to all but one stone in the graveyard. Unsuccessful attempts were made to put them together in the past. Paul Schuman, who has volunteered to maintain the graveyard, made great strides in cleaning away growth and debris, and carefully excavating many more stone fragments. We approved the funds to chip out and re-point the walls inside and out and remove a tree that was bending the wall. For the last few months we have been working on cleaning the pieces and putting the puzzle together and have made great progress. We desperately need photos of this graveyard prior to the destruction to guide us in our preservation efforts. We are still hoping to recover more buried pieces. While reading the old German was a big aid in solving the puzzle, this was not always an option. We then examined the textural qualities (i.e. grain and granularity) of the individual pieces and measured their depth at points of contact.



Daniel Bernet,
Veteran of The Revolution



Maria (Lies) Bernet



Abraham Peter



Susanna Bernet Schmeck

LETTER FROM LES

After retiring, one of my first pursuits was researching my ancestry. I approached this as a novice. Relatives had provided me with male lines for both paternal grandparents and for one maternal grandparent back to their ancestors arrival in the 1700s, but just about everything else was missing. As I quickly realized, there were hundreds of families in my ancestry for which I knew nothing.

I found abundant resources at the Berks Historical and Genealogical Societies. Among these were the Genealogical Guide to Berks County Private Cemeteries (1992) by Laurel Miller and others, and Epitaphs (1999) by Jacqueline Nein, Joan Texter, and Cynthia Jimenez, and published by BCAGP. These books contained tombstone readings from

private cemeteries in Berks County, and were quite helpful to me in filling gaps in my ancestry.

I believe it was the fall of 2007 when I noticed in the Reading Eagle an upcoming rededication of the High-Hoch graveyard in Cumru township, the walls of which had recently been rebuilt under the auspices of BCAGP. I attended this event. The graveyard is located on land of the Western Berks Landfill. It highlighted for me how the times have changed our surroundings.



From a hill above the graveyard were scenic vistas looking into Reading,

at Neversink mountain and the Schuylkill River, and towards Birdsboro. I thought of people standing at the same spot 250 years ago and thinking what a magnificent location this is.

As I filled in my genealogy and found connections to many families, I felt an urge to see where these people had settled. Since I knew I had ancestors in historic graveyards, joining BCAGP and volunteering for its activities was a way to locate and see where many of them lived, see some of their homes, and visit their burial sites. Many were in similarly scenic locations as the High-Hoch graveyard. Not only has this satisfied a desire to connect to my ancestors, but it has given me exercise and outdoor activities that I enjoy.

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. You can contact Les at: 610-323-1703

VETERAN HIGHLIGHT

BY KARLA HUMMEL

The Nein family graveyard (see page 9) is the final resting place of Daniel Nein, a Revolutionary War veteran. Born Feb. 4, 1755, he was in his early twenties when he served in the Berks County Militia in 1777-1778. He was home in Oley for at least part of that service since he married Ester Bertolet in De-

ember of 1777. With the rank of Private, Daniel was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Company (comprised of men from the eastern side of Oley) under the command of Captain Daniel Reiff. On May 31, 1844, Daniel Nein passed away



Karla Hummel is a BCAGP Board member, and former US ARMY Air Defense Artillery Officer

Doing the Deed

The greater part of the work being done by the BCAGP is restoration and conservation of the several hundred family graveyards in Berks County. In addition to the physical labor, there is also much research and documentation that needs doing. Idealistically, we would like to complete a title search on each of the graveyards, going from the present back to a Penn Grant. This research establishes who the tract belonged to through the generations and which families might be buried in them. There is also a need to determine if there is a separate deed to the burial ground or if it is mentioned in a deed to a larger tract. A

right-of-way, or an easement, that provides access to the burial ground, is another vital piece of information we look for.

This kind of title search, to establish a chain of title and uncover any exceptions to the deed, is time consuming. It is sometimes made more difficult by the number of deeds in the chain that were not recorded for many years after the transfer or in some cases not recorded at all. Couple that with the need to learn deed-speak, including legalese and ancient phrases, along with deciphering some not so stellar copies, requires a true deed detective. There are many twists and turns in the process, but in the

end it is very educational and very rewarding to complete the task.

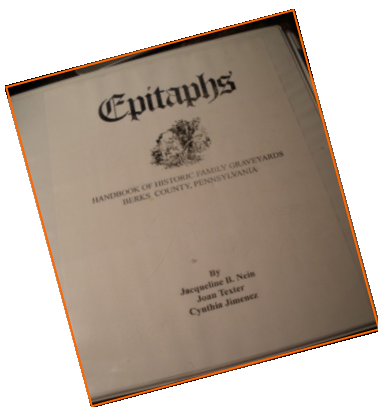
We are always looking for volunteers, with a driving curiosity, who are interested in learning to do the deed. I will be more than happy to share what I have learned and perhaps you could teach me a trick or two.

Betty Burdan

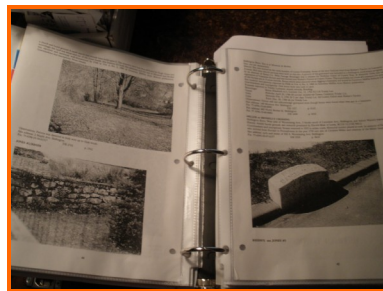
bjburdan@dejazzd.com

Betty is an accomplished genealogist and researcher, who maintains an extensive personal library of historical documents. We are pleased to have Betty join our board this year.

EPITAPHS -THE BOOK



Epitaphs was published by BCAGP in 1999 by Jacqueline Nein, Cynthia Jimenez and Joan Texter. The 270 page (including indexes) loose bound book is packed full of information



on the Berks historic family graveyards. You can still buy the original version of the book through the mail or in person at a meeting for \$25.00 plus tax and shipping charges. Over the years some mistakes have been noted and additional in-

formation has surfaced. Karla Hummel has volunteered to be "the collector of additions or corrections" so that at such time as we re-publish, it can be enhanced.

Karla can be reached at:

notamuggle@hotmail.com

More information on ordering is on our website.

ABRAHAM LEVAN FROM OLEY

In August BCAGP had this graveyard cleaned up and stonework repaired and re-pointed. In places it was needed to stabilize it. Years ago there was a wooden cap on the wall. Others recall metal caps and yet another suggested that tiles were there originally. You can see slots were cut out for the wooden caps. Abraham's original tombstone is at the Berks Historical Society and a replacement stone is in the graveyard. If you like the work we did and want to see more, please send your contributions!



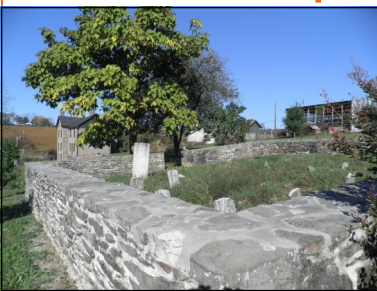
More work is needed on the inside now that the wall is structurally sound

OTHER RECENT CLEAN UP PROJECTS

- ✓ Breidenstein—Cumru Township
- ✓ St. Henry/ Reichardt Dumm—Richmond Township
 - ✓ Ritter—Exeter Township
 - ✓ Ohlinger— Ruscombanor Township
- ✓ Bernhard Adams-Reading (community service crew)
 - ✓ Kauffman—Maidencreek Township
 - ✓ Schneider—Oley Township
- ✓ Barnet Peter— Maidencreek Township
 - ✓ Bertolet #1— Oley Township

Please remember that most of the funding we are given is for specific graveyards and specific uses. We still need contributions for things like insurance, office supplies, newsletters, postage, accountant fees, and miscellaneous expenses that are not directly to graveyard maintenance. Our volunteers have been using their own gas and much of their own equipment when going to work on graveyards. If you cant physically help ,can you please send a check for general fund use?

Spohn in Greenwich Township



The Spohn was one of the earliest projects done after BCAGP formed. Volunteers were supervised by a stonemason to build the walls around the graveyard. This year we had the tops chipped out and re-pointed to better seal the walls from water damage. We also replaced the hardware for hanging the gate and the Meitzler's have said they will build the new gate. Some tombstone repairs and re setting will be needed.



GRAVEYARD UPDATES

ST HENRY'S OR REICHERT/DUMM, RICHMOND

Work continued on the St Henrys Graveyard through the Summer. Stones were treated with biocide and can be read so much better! This is a huge graveyard as it was a Catholic Church Cemetery. The Church closed and the graveyard walls were actually built from rock from the church. Then the graveyard was abandoned. Ideally this should be maintained by the Catholic Church or perhaps a youth group due to its history and size. Due to the extreme neglect BCAGP members decided to get it back to dignity. Any groups interested in adopting this?

BCAGP WOULD LIKE TO THANK JOHN FRANTZ FOR PAYING FOR CAPS TO BE ADDED TO THE SECTION OF WALL THAT WE REBUILT EARLIER THIS YEAR AT THE WEIDNER GRAVEYARD . IT LOOKS FANTASTIC!



The wall on the side of the bushes was on the ground for years before we could make this project happen. Through contributions of the Frantz family and the Jacqueline Nein Trust we were able to preserve this historic spot.

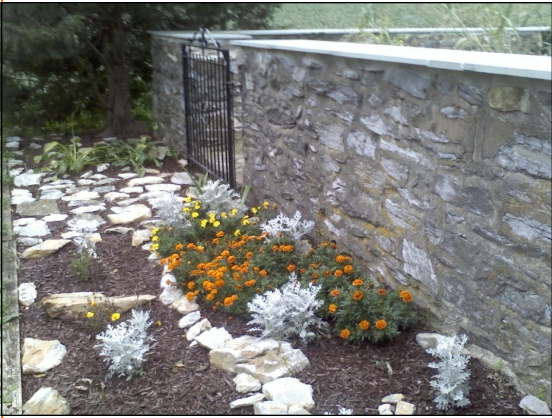
There are still walls remaining that should be rebuilt as they are hollow and pushing so donations are needed to fund that project when the time comes. Lobachsville Cemetery does the grass but money is not there for other maintenance.



Nein (9) in Oley

submitted by karla

In Oley Township, the Nein family graveyard is easily distinguishable by its lone ever-green surrounded by fields. It has been the site of considerable effort this summer. Unique in that it has a garden section surrounding the outside of its stone walls, the site has been “adopted” by a BCAGP member (Karla Hummel) who will provide ongoing maintenance. We had a stroke of good fortune when the surrounding acreage was not planted until mid-July, giving us access by vehicle to the site. First, the perimeter walls of this 15’ x 20’ graveyard were capped – an important measure in protecting the walls from rain and ice damage. The head and footstones of the six graves of Daniel Nein and his family were treated with biocide and now are readable and remarkably clean. One footstone was reset and another base moved. Then the overgrown outer garden was completely re-dug; flowers were planted and heavily mulched. The entrance walkway was enhanced with additional stones. In the graveyard, weeds such as 5’ tall Johnson grass and thistle were repeatedly pulled and hearty lavender was planted in the corners. Work was completed just in time for the Nein family reunion’s tour of the homestead.



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Ohlinger clean up

We had a good crew to break ground into the Olinger family burial ground which hasn't been touched for many years. More work is needed but our crew of BCAGP

members Les, Keith, Gail, Neil, John and Sharon, Anne, and family members Danny and Mark really made a dent! See the whole days progress on facebook!



When we aren't working on Graveyards we do research and field questions, often from descendants who are working on their genealogy and have discovered their ancestor's burial spot. To make it easier to share information we have a FACEBOOK page with 100 albums of graveyard pictures for you to access. The pictures are in various stages of historic, work in progress and finished jobs. Please find our facebook and "LIKE" it so we know you're out there! It takes a lot of work to document these graveyards to share with you, and we want to make sure you know the facebook is there. Just search our name and find the page. We also periodically post work parties for you to join us and other information.



OUR MISSION

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.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

KNABB, OLEY TOWNSHIP

The Wisniewski family keeps the grounds of the Knabb graveyard immaculate, but there are many tombstones that will need professional re-



pairs. This will be an



ongoing project to evaluate and determine how to best repair the stones. This will commence this fall when its not too hot and not too cold for good adhesion.

DETURK#2, OLEY TOWNSHIP



A second ,shorter wall will be done this fall/winter! Please contribute! Thank you to those who have.

JOIN OR DONATE TODAY!

If not a current member, please join us in preserving and maintaining our historic graveyards. Or if you do not wish to be a member at this time, but are interested in contributing support for a specific graveyard, please indicate that graveyard on the form below.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2012

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

Membership runs a calendar year January to December . Membership after October will be applied to 2012 membership year

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