

GRAVE HAPPENINGS



This Summer we completed the restoration of the **Keim burial ground** that we started in 2012. There were several reasons we didn't do it all at once, but it is finally done. There was question as to what we wanted to do about the stiles that were no longer safe and were too bad to restore. The opening where the stiles were is surrounded by shrubbery, so we decided to create a second entrance on the other side to make sure there is access, and to remove the damaged stiles and leave it open. It looks fabulous and now this completes both Keim burial grounds in that neighborhood. The beautiful stone walls had been plastered many years ago to keep them from falling in but the walls are back to their original stone.



Contributors

Staff/Photos

Mike Angstadt
Betty Burdan
Karla Hummel
Les Rohrbach
Keith Schaffer
Paul Schuman
Sandra Stief
Anne Wagner

BITTENBENDER



The front wall of the Federolf – Bittenbender burial ground is now completely restored, and it looks amazing! We decided to go ahead with another wall there. Last meeting we approved the expenditure of approximately \$13,000.00 to do the left side wall, and go around the unique corner in the rear. While we were cleaning up, we also treated the stones with D/2 biocide and they are looking almost like new. We would love to be able to finish this, but need donations to continue to come in. Please help restore this Hereford Township outdoor museum!



HIGH-HOCH



We hired a brick mason to restore the High-Hoch burial ground in Cumru Township in 2007. It looked spectacular! No one expected that, 9 years later, the seals around the caps would leak and cause a mold to grow on the brand new brick walls. We consulted brick experts and they determined it was a fault of a bad seal and recommended several cleaners. The problem is there is

no water available onsite to do the cleaning. We are hoping the very expensive biocide we use on tombstones will do the trick. In September 2016, we had the caps resealed and the walls treated with D/2 biocide, and we hope that fixed the problem. Sometimes things just don't go the way you plan, so we do the best we can to make it right. We hope to be able to show you pictures of it finished early next year.

BERNHARD-ADAMS



Also known as the Welch Baptist burial ground, the Bernhard-Adams is truly an orphan. To the best of our research, no legal owner exists and the cemetery has been abandoned for decades. Various persons and groups have intermittently done some maintenance over the years. This year, Irving Gring has begun to take on the task of resetting stones and cleaning up branches, grounds, and even some wall work. The before picture shows the heavy granite stones that had broken off their base and the after shows the fabulous job he did setting them up!



LETTER FROM LES

Since our last newsletter BCAGP has lost 2 active members who lived the BCAGP mission. **Ralph Lorah's** membership dated back to the founding of BCAGP in the mid 1990s. His roots in the Oley/Lobachsville area extended to his Lorah and Hoch ancestors of the early 1700s. He was a member of St Paul's Lutheran Church in Lobachsville and served on its cemetery board. Once when searching with him for a lost graveyard near Lobachsville he mentioned seeing the tombstones we were looking for as a boy walking to school.



Ralph Lorah Sprays the stone of a veteran with D/2 biocide, and adjusts the flag at the Schneider burial ground in Oley

During the 1990s Ralph took particular interest in graveyards in the Oley area and spent many hours helping to preserve and maintain them. When BCAGP founder Jackie Nein died in 2000, Ralph was one of a handful of individuals who kept BCAGP on life support and eventually began its resurrection. He was a long time board member, a past President and Treasurer. He took it upon himself to get things done when no one else was there to do them. He was instrumental in continuing the Oley High School Day of Caring which gives numerous graveyards an annual cleanup and provides Oley students with an opportunity to see their Oley heritage first hand. It was an event he looked forward to every year.

Stanley Deeds was a more recent member of BCAGP. He lived in Maiden creek township near a Rothermel graveyard. For years he maintained the graveyard without BCAGP's knowledge, as a service and responsibility he took upon himself, though he had no family tie to it. We only met Stanley when his health began limiting his activity and the graveyard became more than he could tackle. We appreciate the interest he had in his local graveyard and grieve in his passing.

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.

Over the years this organization has accumulated a large amount of photos, research documents and general information on the many family burial grounds in Berks County. Most of this has been stored either in metal file cabinets off-site or in the private homes of members who have attempted to share the information.

Betty, for instance, has been accumulating deed research and many obituaries. Les has a lot of family history on multiple burial grounds, and some of us have tons of pictures. Some have official records of the organization like minutes and financials, and others have various amounts of documents sent to us by family members or our own research.

I came up with the idea of sharing pictures on facebook a few years back because of the length of time it was taking me to send pictures at people's requests. That has worked fairly well as long as one day it doesn't disappear. We put our newsletter archives on our website.

Although most of our members are not completely technology clueless, our various degrees of ability in the technological field have still left us unsure the best way to share our collective work.

Recently we were joined by Mike Angstadt and his teenage daughter, Kathryn. Now they are the "babies of the group," and are a little more tech savvy than most-and have a little more ambition to turn our records into something to be shared in a big way.

Mike has offered to sort our collective records and research and put it together on a file sharing site so we can hope that our work won't die with us (when we do). Mike estimates it may take a year or more in between his other work, but has vowed he will sort our stuff, organize it and preserve it in a community sharing system.

To me this is a blessing because I have more than 32 Gigabytes of files for BCAGP and have long lost track of what I have shared and what I haven't, and what is sorted and what is not. If they can make sense out of it all, and make them orderly and searchable they will be my heroes!

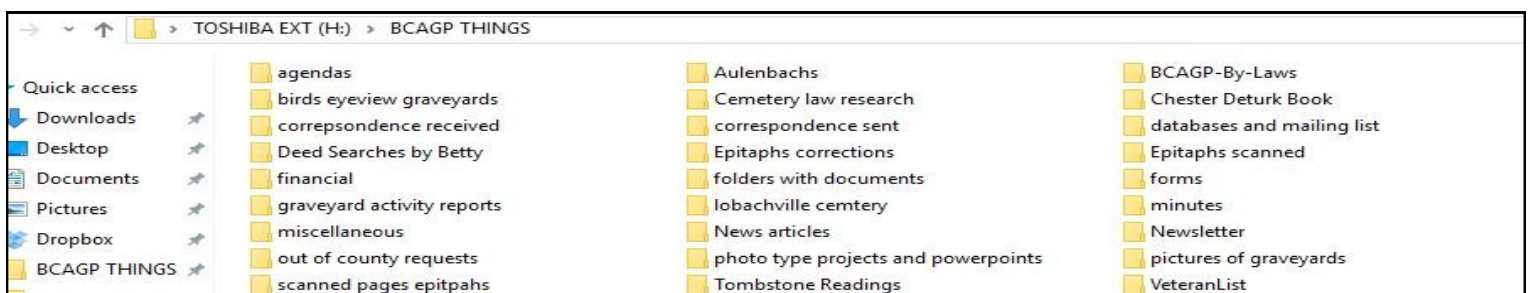
Ideally this is how it will work: We all send Mike our files of research relating to the families and burial grounds, and Mike and Kathryn sort it out for duplicates, put it on the site, and we will be able to send others the link to the information, saving tons of time sending files back and forth! It will also include historical minutes of BCAGP which contains a lot of informational background on work that was done.

If you have files to share that you think are relevant you can email them to Mike at : kkiaserdrago@yahoo.com. Please include something in the subject line so he knows it is BCAGP related.

Document digitization has been a topic at the top of the list of most preservation groups. We love to share what we find! Hopefully soon we will have an easier method of answering your requests.

Anne Wagner

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A group of our members were invited to visit the Leiby burial ground in Perry Township by the Sunday family after our last meeting. Karla translated the German on the monument and stones. We treated stones with biocide and will be resetting two stones in the near future. The wall is amazing. It is built on a hill. Very unusual but great protection from farm animals. This is the small burial ground of the family of Jacob Leiby.



LEIBY



From the monument:

“Jacob Leiby machte die Grabsteine für sich und seiner Gattinen Den Letzen monaten seinen Lebens.”

Jacob Leiby made the gravestones for himself and his wife in the last months of his life.

Where is Little Gladys Irene Miller buried?

Frank W Shalkop Undertaker Records, Trappe, PA

Gladys Irene Miller, b. Sept. 14, 1922; d. Apr. 27, 1923, 5mo-13da.
dau. of Preston & Minnie (Auchey) Miller, Limerick Twp.
bur. Little Oley Rev. N.F.Schmidt,

The above information, was part of the records of Frank W. Shalkop, Undertaker of Trooper, Montgomery County, PA. Rev. N. F. Schmidt, who served St. James at Limerick in Montgomery County, records that Gladys Irene Miller, 5 month old daughter of Preston and Minnie Miller of Limerick was buried at Little Oley. The question is, where in Little Oley.

There is only one burying place in Little Oley which is the ancient Fritz Graveyard. There is no headstone at the Fritz for a Gladys Irene Miller. Could it have been so small it fell victim to a groundhog hole, sinking far below the surface? Could it be one of the tombstones removed to a nearby farm for utilitarian purposes? Or was she buried with no headstone at all?

Local news articles, published 30 years prior to Gladys' death suggest the last burial at the Fritz was likely to be that of Mrs. Sarah Yorgey. Sarah died September 13, 1893. Sarah was buried next to her husband George who died December 19, 1884. The news articles did not say Sarah was the final burial, only that she might be. Was Gladys Irene Miller the actual last burial at the Fritz in Little Oley?

Perhaps by coincidence or perhaps not, John Auchy, uncle of Gladys' mother, Minnie (Auchy) Miller, was a border on the farm of Henry B. and Maggie (Gresh) Yorgey in 1910. Henry B. Yorgey was a nephew of George and Sarah Yorgey, the couple buried at the Fritz. Henry's farm was next to his Uncle George's farm, in Douglass Township, Berks County a short distance from the Fritz. Did Uncle John tell the Millers about the Fritz at Henry Yorgey's suggestion?

To complicate matters Gladys' death certificate simply says she was buried in Oley, which we might assume was the Oley Cemetery in Spangsville, Berks County. Although a search of the headstone reading of that cemetery, revealed no Gladys Irene Miller buried there.

The flip side to the Yorgey coincidence is that two of Gladys' Great Uncles, John Auchy and

Mahlon Auchy are buried in the Oley Cemetery at Spangsville. Mahlon was buried in 1919 before Gladys died, John died long after Gladys. Mahlon lived in Boyertown and worked in Pine Forge in Douglass Township, Berks County. Did they bury little Gladys with her Great Uncle Mahlon Auchy, with no headstone to prove she is buried there? Or did Great Uncle Mahlon learn of the Fritz Graveyard while working in Pine Forge?

Preston Trucker Miller and Minnie (nee Auchy) Miller lived in Limerick, Montgomery County much of their lives. They both died as residents of Pottstown, Montgomery County. They were buried in their family plot in St.



The Fritz in Douglass, Berks

James Cemetery, Limerick, many years after the death of Gladys. Would the Millers have traveled all the way to Oley Township, Berks County to bury their child or would they more likely go to the Fritz in Little Oley, which is only 30 feet over the Montgomery County line?

Besides Gladys, the Millers had at least 4 other children. They were: Blanche (b. a. 1905); Franklin (b. a. 1911); Dorothy (b. a. 1914); and Gerald (b. a. 1926). None are buried in the Oley Cemetery in Spangsville. The question remains, where is little Gladys Irene Miller buried?

By Betty J. Burdan
bjburdan@dejazzd.com

SET IN STONE

Historic preservation methods are constantly changing. We now work with the premise that the least invasive method is best and we have technology to support our efforts. The first rule is "Do No Harm." Many approaches that were common just a decade ago are now considered damaging.

All early (pre-granite) gravestones have suffered over time from wind erosion, acid rain, repeated freezing, and biological growths – which combine to make them difficult to read. Many common practices used to read inscriptions have been proven to accelerate the deterioration of these wonderful memorials.



Elizabeth Bittenbender's stone before treatment

For example, rubbings, placing paper over the inscription and rubbing with a crayon to make a copy, have been proven to damage the surface of sedimentary stones. Tape utilized to adhere the paper to the stone causes flaking and leaves residue. Obviously scrubbing or brushing the stone does even more damage by abrasion! Bleach and other cleaners begin an immediate degenerative process. Shaving cream, applied to fill in the engraved letters, contains both stearic acid, which essentially exfoliates the face of the stone, and emollients, which provide fats upon which biological growths feed. Flour, brushed or blown onto the stone, works similarly to whiten the lettering, but its small particles can go deep into the porous material and swell when wet. That expansion will ultimately cause damage. Likewise, chalk, baby powder and corn starch are harmful. Water will not fully remove any of the above!

What can be done that *does* comply with the "Do No Harm" mantra? The best method is simple: photography. The high resolution capacity of digital cameras, plus the ability to manipulate photos, has made many tombstones decipherable. Photographing the stone at several times of the day helps get the right lighting, but cloudy days may prove challenging.

To create an immediate lighting source, use a handheld mirror to direct the sun's rays so that inscribed letters create shadows. Creating a darkened tent by pulling a large cover over yourself and the stone, and using a flashlight beneath it, may enable you to see in the dark what was not visible in daylight. Using a 75 watt or higher black light is also effective in many cases.

Another means is the use of aluminum foil. Sheets of foil can be placed over and on the tombstone without placing adhesive on the stone itself. With the dull side of the foil facing you, lightly press with a damp sponge to create a 3-D impression of the writing.

Even simply wetting down a stone with water may bring eroded inscriptions back into legibility!

Nearly all stones benefit from cleaning to remove insidious growths. Since scrubbing and brushing are very harsh – and do not remove the roots of biological growths that destroy the stone from the inside out – the recommended product is D/2. This liquid has been thoroughly tested and is used in national parks and military cemeteries. It is a biodegradable, ph neutral cleaner that removes moss, lichen, mildew, algae and mold, simply by spraying it on. It begins to work immediately – often causing the stone to turn a distressing but harmless and temporary orange as the growths die. It continues to work over time, inhibiting new growth. About \$40 per gallon, D/2 is a necessary expense in our efforts!



Elizabeth Bittenbender's stone after treatment with d-2

KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com

Occasionally we see the small family burial ground expanded on, and become a much larger public cemetery. Such is the case at Aulenbach's which sits partly in Mt Penn and partly in the city of Reading, between Perkiomen Avenue and Howard Blvd. Andreas Aulenbach was a veteran of The War of 1812 and was the first to be buried on the farm. That section is referred to as **The Aulenbach Reserve**. Since 1853 Aulenbach's has been incorporated and has thousands of burials being cared for primarily by volunteers and a small paid grounds crew, surrounding the original family burials. Ed Gensemer, who was recently installed as a BCAGP board member after being an active volunteer, has just also been placed on the non profit board of Aulenbach's as President. Taking care of a larger and active cemetery is a bit different than what we do working with a small family burial ground. We face similar but different challenges. There is a work party planned at Aulenbach's for November 6th in the morning, for those interested in getting more involved. They also have a [facebook](#) page that you can visit for upcoming activity notices and fundraisers.

Contact Ed at: caddy1217@aol.com for more information.



PICTURE COURTESY OF SANDRA STIEF,



BCAPG extends sincere gratitude to the **Pike Oley District Preservation Coalition (POD/PC)** for providing an exhibit on local burial grounds at the 70th Oley Fair! Carolyn Reider of POD/PC toured and photographed several graveyards with Keith Schaeffer as he shared his knowledge of BCAGP's labors to preserve those sites. From that, Carolyn produced a large display entitled "Grave Memories," which included current photographs, Epitaphs and other books, BCAGP

brochures and back-issues of our newsletter, and even a stone display! Thank you for inviting us to staff this wonderful display! Other POD/PC exhibits this year showed successful land preservation efforts and information about the detection and control of the spotted lantern fly. For more information about preserving our local land and watersheds, visit www.podpc.org.



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.

The next board meeting of BCAGP will be November 13th at 2PM at the Oley Legion Hall. As always, members and the public are invited to attend. Nominations will be taken for Officers and Board positions to be voted on at the February annual membership meeting, date to be announced in the January newsletter. Anyone interested in a position please contact any member of the board for more information. Minimum of 6 months membership is required for consideration.



Kathryn and Lucas Angstadt carry equipment up the long path to access the Hechler-Esterly burial ground.



Kathryn Angstadt works a weed cutter through the Hechler-Esterly burial ground.



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 - 2016

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 dues paid after October 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.

*Please check our website www.bcagp.org
for meetings times*

BCAGP

Berks County Association
for Graveyard Preservation



PO BOX 3707

READING PA 19606



WWW.BCAGP.ORG

Check our web site for meeting dates



BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

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(EMAIL ADDRESSES ON THE WEBSITE)

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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.

Don't forget to check our facebook for updates and more photos!

Check the www.bcagp.org website for internet edition newsletter archives.

