



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



The Kutz descendants have been taking turns working on the burial ground in Maxatawny Township. Arlene Kutz Ingram and her sister Rachael Kutz Klinger, brought their 11 and 12 year old sons, Bradley and Matthew Klinger, and Alex Ingram to help . The wonderful thing about this, is that these children will grow up knowing they have a family burial ground to care for! Arlene took these pictures on one of the hottest summer days. This one has a Johnson grass problem that makes it harder to keep looking groomed. It has a neglected look very quickly because of how fast that grass grows. The families are working on a solution and have taken the lead in the graveyard maintenance.

**Contributors
Staff/Photos**

- Mike Angstadt
- Sean Brown
- Betty Burdan
- Karla Hummel
- Arlene Kutz Ingram
- Jarusha Kutz
- Les Rohrbach
- Keith Schaffer
- Paul Schuman
- Anne Wagner
- Rod Wagner





BCAGP now has access to an Aerial Camera Drone! Able to achieve an altitude of up to 400 feet and options for pictures or video, we can explore new possible graveyard sites as well as conduct surveys and documentation of known sites. We're looking forward to seeing what this new tool can do to help with graveyard preservation.



Aerial Photos of the **Leiby** burial ground in Perry Township & the **Barnet-Peter** burial ground in Maidencreek Township taken by Mike's drone camera.



Michael Angstadt



Keith Schaeffer repairs footstone, resets headstone and clears the grounds of



weeds this Summer at the **Leiby** burial ground.





BCAGP Archive: by Sean Brown

On May 26th of this year, BCAGP initiated a Wikipedia-style archive of the information on our many burial grounds and our activities to research, record and restore them.

A ten-inch tall stack of papers still awaits to be scanned into the database by the Angstadt family. Angel Dotterer contributed by scanning slides into digital photos that we can upload, including this nice pair of photos of "before and after" of the Spohn Cemetery in Greenwich Township from 1995-96. (Editors note: In 2011 BCAGP again repaired and re pointed the wall).

Over 2500 items have been uploaded, 613 web pages have been created and a searchable map of Berks County with every known and located burial ground pinned. Currently there are 286 known BCAGP Burial Grounds—that's one cemetery for every three square miles of Berks County; 132 still have walls or headstones standing, and 13 have only a memorial marker placed by later generations.



Reading Eagle, Reading, PA July 23, 1875 - Hamburg —On the farm of Daniel Nies, Upper Bern, an enclosed lot contains a number of graves. Who is interred here, no one seems to know, and the memory of the oldest inhabitant is lacking the elasticity to tell. That "hobgoblins," "spooks," and nocturnal visitors here assemble, we were in younger days informed.

We found the first minutes for BCAGP and the original 1993 proposal from Jackie Nein to the Berks County Genealogical Society for the creation of a cemetery subcommittee. We have learned of three burial grounds **not** listed in *Epitaphs* that were in the notes we've sorted so far; there is an Ulrich "south of Robersonia," a Louck Cemetery in Womelsdorf on the west side of Water Street, and the rather forebodingly described graveyard on the property of Daniel Neis of Upper Bern Township mentioned in an 1875 edition of the *Reading Eagle*. (see above)

We count 8 burial grounds with remains disinterred and moved into church cemeteries, and 1 onto state land.

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For now this archive is under construction and only the board members and persons willing to help edit and research this archive will have access.

We are just getting started and already have many mysteries to solve—an easy one if you'd like to help: Point out the location of the fenced-in memorial marker on the property at 469 Dunkels Church Road, Kutztown for the Leiby in Greenwich and send a photo if you can to BCAGPArchivist@gmail.com.

Work will continue on the archive and all the private family cemeteries in our care. We are less than 5% complete. If anyone has any questions or would like to help, please send an email to BCAGPArchivist@gmail.com.



LETTER FROM LES

BCAGP first became active at the Hoch graveyard in 2013 when Dave Schlegel asked for help. Then, this site just outside of Fleetwood was filled with scrub trees 12 to 15 feet high and plenty of undergrowth. After BCAGP worked with Dave to get the growth to ground level, Dave took over - and the graveyard early this year looked as good as many lawns.

This summer we were discussing the crumbling walls here and encountered a situation new to BCAGP since my time with the association. This is a large site 45' by 85'. When considering ballpark estimates for rebuilding all 4 walls the realization sank in that the cost would consume a large portion of BCAGP's assets.



For the last 10 years, BCAGP has had enough funds to attack graveyards as we have found them. We have mostly avoided purchasing expensive stone, but otherwise attempted to use what was available on site to achieve the best restoration for the resources that we had without considering the cost.

Much of our early funding (none of us here now were here then) probably came from one of our founders, Jackie Nein, who established a trust to support our mission. The Trust has continued to provide annual grants, while we have freely used our bank account to pay for projects. Consequently the value of our bank account has fallen from \$126,000 at the start of 2011 to \$52,000 today. We knew our assets were falling but prefer putting them to use rather than sitting on them.

While the Trust's fund is dwindling and earns a pittance at today's interest rates, it has not run dry and we expect continued support for some time. We are at the point now where a more measured approach may be needed as we plan for future projects. This will be a topic when we next meet with the Trust.

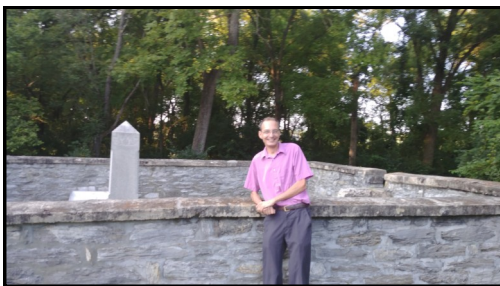


Les Rohrbach is President of BCAGP and very active in both the organizational aspects and the hands on "down and dirty in the graveyard" activities of the group. Les travels from Pottstown to his "roots" in Berks and is an avid hiker and genealogist.

Sean Brown has been working very long hours on the BCAGP archive, so when he submitted his article about the archive, I understood how he “conveniently forgot” to include his involvement in the project. Sean lives in Florida, and has teamed up with Mike Angstadt and his family, to work on the archive project—from afar. Sean has no family buried in our local burial grounds, but he has logged hundreds (nearly 1000) hours helping Mike get our collective research in order for sharing. Sean is reading every piece of data that every person submitted, sorting it appropriately, and entering it on the Wiki. He quite possibly knows more about our organization than anyone, in the short amount of time he has known about us. So while Sean would not credit himself and his work in the article he wrote, I felt the need to clarify his role.



Sean was at our last meeting, as he scheduled a mini vacation to Berks County, and the timing was right! Mike Angstadt gave Sean a tour of some of the burial grounds they were working on, that Sean had become so familiar with on paper.



a mini vacation to Berks County, and the timing was right! Mike Angstadt

Jarusha Kutz also traveled again this year from Oregon, and logged some hours in on the Kutz family burial ground. That burial ground is so populated with invasive Johnson grass that it takes more work to maintain than it should and she did a turn this year, as

did other Kutz family members. Although her trip this year was not entirely cemetery related, she made sure to spend some time and did her part for her family burial ground.



Many of our members are not local to Berks County, Pennsylvania. If you are planning a trip back to see the cemeteries of your ancestors, if you let us know, we may be able to help navigate or even get

an impromptu work party together.

Several families work on their burial ground when their family reunion comes around, and there are people from out of the area there as well. If you are part of such a group and would like to send along photos of your work party we can add it to our archives and/or the newsletter as well.



Mark Zimmerman and Arlene Kutz Ingram photo taken by Arlene's husband.

If you are from out of the area you also can help by networking with your fellow descendants. Fundraising for repairs and maintenance to burial grounds we are working on is always welcome. If you have a family reunion organization and want to help more, you could be our liaison with the family.

There are many ways you can help even though you don't live in Berks County! Let us know what you are willing to do.



Anne Wagner
Vice President
awagner615@aol.com

Before



After



The Oley **Herbein** burial ground has been getting some patchwork, and will need more work in the near future. This stone wall had been cemented, so it will require a lot of concrete removal to make the repairs and restore the wall to its original look.



On a hot Sunday in September we gathered at the **Barnet-Peter** burial ground, to take apart the display boxes, clean them, and re arrange the stone pieces again. We are experimenting with using air-dry clay to hold spaces where pieces are missing. Paul Schuman has been the caretaker of the grounds, and the burial ground itself is looking good. Kathryn Angstadt and Max Trommutter, students at Tulpehocken High School, gave up their morning to join us, and were a huge help especially with the clay.

You may recall that we had the dilemma of what to do with the badly damaged stones, and we had display boxes built. This experiment has gone well. The Plexiglas is holding up, and the boxes are providing a good shelter for the stone fragments. We did notice the stone pieces



shifting so we hope by using space holders (the air-dry clay) they will stay in place better. Les Rohrbach, Paul Schuman, Ed Gensemer, Mike Angstadt, Karla Hummel, Kelly Koup, Anne Wagner, and Ray Canfield helped clean glass, boxes, arrange pieces and re assemble. Although we can never restore this back to what it once was, we can preserve what we can of the Barnet and the Peter family history. Max is considering continuing with us for his high school community service requirement. We will be happy to have him!





Althouse : Sean Brown

According to Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania Historian Schuyler C. Brossman (1976), Isaac Althouse reported that his grandfather is buried along a fence row near Mohrsville (Lauren Miller *et al*, *Genealogical Guide to Berks County Private Cemeteries*, 1992, Page 43).

With that third-hand testimony above began the search for the Althouse Burial Location, the first (alphabetically) in our Archive.

In Epitaphs, Page 31, they located this burial ground at 3612 Berne Road, Mohrsville, but gave sources. This meant starting completely over with the research.

The burial of Johannes Althouse was on his farm - and a possible suicide - which would prevent his burial in a church cemetery. This information came from a mention on ancestry.com, but the source cited makes no mention of this. [Sourced as: Adam J. Althouse, compiler, "Family History of Joseph Wilson Althouse"; Ancestral File, Revised (June 1976), George Louis Frederick Althouse, East Greenville, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, USA. It is available at the Tulpehocken Settlement Historical Society Library in Womelsdorf, PA, Call Number G003.002].

Catharine Blatt Althouse (b. 1797, d. 1854) was married to Johannes Althouse, b. 1792-Dec-24, d. 1838-Mar-26 (Brossman, Schuyler, "Our Keystone Families," *Lebanon Daily News*, 1975-Mar-20).

Brossman cited for his source: Reed, Herbert P., *The Althouse Family (as related to the Reed family)*, Wernersville, PA: 1974-Nov.

This text was kindly shared by PM_ME_YOUR_GRAMA on Reddit from the Reynolds Historical Genealogy Collections of the Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The Reed Text repeats the family recollection of Johan-

nes Althouse having committed suicide, and explains that when his father Daniel died, he gave a large share of his land to his older son Daniel and a smaller share to Johannes with the stipulation that Daniel help Johannes build up the smaller part with buildings and creating arable land. Daniel reneged on these instructions and Johannes, falling further into debt and despair, committed suicide. His probated estate shows his property being sold off to pay his creditors.

On Page 8, Herbert Reed speculated on the likelihood that Johannes was buried near his grandfather and grandmother, Johannes and Maria Elizabeth *Zacharias* Althaus, also buried on the family farm.

That gave us three interments, not just one.

Johannes Althaus (b. 1721, d. 1790) emigrated from Elsoff, Wittenstein County, Westphalia Province, Prussia on the Galley *St. Andrew*, landing at Philadelphia 1738-Oct-27

Maria Elizabeth *Zacharias* Althaus (b. 1728, d. 1791), wife of Johannes Althaus

Johannes Althouse (b. 1792-Dec-24, d. 1838-Mar-26), grandson of Johannes Althaus, son of Daniel Althouse

On Pages 9-10:

Isaac (grandson of Johannes) states that the plot on which this burial took place is located west of Dauberville, turning west at the site of the Noecker Cabinet Factory and proceeding about one-half mile up the hill. The plot then would be at the west end of a field close to a woods, in a cultivated field. About 1918 Llewellyn (Isaac's father), Howard Zerbe (Llewellyn's cousin), and Isaac hunted for the grave, the location of which Mr. Zerbe knew, but all they found in the search was some mortar, although it is believed that there was a stone wall around the graves at one time.

In a conversation with the Leesport Historical Society, 2017-Jul-14, the Noecker Factory was the former Lenhart Schoolhouse, the building still exists and is at 804 Bellemans Church Road, Mohrsville.

"Half a mile west" places the location along the backside of the Emanuel Althouse property along Bellemans Church Road.

So with diligent research, the Althouse went from a vague third-hand retelling of a single burial and a shadowy "west of Mohrsville" location to the rediscovery of two additional interments and restricted the possible location to a 46-acre tract outside of Dauberville.



From the Map in the BCAGP Archive



SET IN STONE

This article's topic may remind you of high school chemistry and geology, but please bear with me!

Although we spend a good deal of time protecting historic tombstones by removing moss, lichen, fungal, and algal growths, we can do very little to stop the source of the **worst damage: acid rain**.

Rain, the same moisture that is so vital to everything living thing on our planet, is destroying the inscribed tombstones that our ancestors thought would be permanent grave markers.

Pure, clean water would have a neutral pH, or 7 on the scale. The more acidic a liquid is, the lower the pH. For example, lemon juice has a pH of about 2, and hydrochloric acid is a 0. The normal pH of rain would be around 5.5 because of the emissions of decaying vegetation, volcanoes and other natural elements. Since the dawn of the industrial revolution, man-made pollutants have been entering our atmosphere. When we add in the emissions of power plants, cars, and industry, and the acidity increases so that rain's pH is altered to 4.

How does that impact your great grandmother's tombstone?

The primary component of marble is the mineral calcite. Calcite gives us a lovely white stone (colors and streaks in marble are visible signs of impurities), but calcite **dissolves** in acid. Put dilute hydrochloric acid on marble & the stone will fizz like soda. Marble and limestone are very porous, so they soak up groundwater and absorb rain – including the acids that water contains.

Known as **dissolution**, the action of air and waterborne acids dissolve the calcite in the marble, causing a more rapid deterioration of the stone. Sharp edges soften and curve. Inscribed lettering loses focus and depth. Great grandmother's name begins to fade as the surface of the stone is roughened and eventually removed by the acidity of the water.

The industrial revolution produced growth and vigor for Reading and beyond. It also began the insidious destruction of the wonderful works created in marble by stone carvers. In fact, if you had 2 identical tombstones – one in a rural area of northern Alabama, and its match in Berks County -- each with a lamb on the top and carved with the words "Infant Son of Jacob

Herbein," you could see the dramatic dissolution of the local stone here. No longer would the lamb have a detailed face or curls in its wool: perhaps the inscription would no longer even be readable. The stone in Alabama would look new in comparison.

Next newsletter: Spalling, sugaring, delaminating and other impacts of the elements on our beloved tombstones.



Although the inscription on this stone in the Spohn burial ground may become clear enough to read once the stone is cleaned, the rough texture of its surface clearly indicates a loss of depth and sharpness to the lettering.



This flower is the focal point of a of tombstone in the Spohn graveyard. It no longer has any real details, although it may have had veins in the leaf, curving petals and an intricate center. As calcite dissolved, so did the carvers work.



KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com



Federolf- Bittenbender



Wall number 3 has just been completed, and the final wall is underway! This is a large burial ground and has used a large amount of our money, so please help replenish it by sending your donations for this Herford Township burial ground!




Angel Dotterer and I are looking for people – and plants. The newly created “Groundcover Committee” is tasked with finding historically appropriate, non-invasive, native plants to replace the grass, weeds and bare dirt that cover Berks’ burial grounds.



Using trimmers to clear dozens of graveyards even once or twice a year takes excessive time and effort (which could be used on other preservation requirements). This is cautious work, as the lines of weed trimmers easily damage tombstones, & it is laborious – hiking with equipment & gas cans out to some locations is a trek! In addition, layer upon layer of grasses & weeds build up the ground level, effectively burying inscriptions on tombstones and hiding fallen stones deeper underground.



Frankly, we are not certain what plants were used as groundcover in our historic sites. Inquiries to several universities have produced no definitive answers. When these sites were in use on family properties, they were lovingly maintained - without mowers. So what exactly covered them?



Hence, we are seeking practical and, wherever possible, historically accurate solutions for our heavily -shaded, full-sun, and sun/shade graveyards. If you would like to assist us in this endeavor, please contact us at BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com. We’d appreciate your efforts!






KARLA HUMMEL





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 meeting of BCAGP board will be **October 1, 2017** at 2pm at Oley Legion.



As always, members are invited to attend.



From the collection of unusual articles of Betty J Burdan

**Reading Eagle, Reading, PA
May 25, 1910**

MUST PAY DEBTS BEFORE BUYING A TOMBSTONE

An account of Frank Y. Kaufman, Administrator of the estate of Reuben L. Reifsnyder, late of Ruscombmanor township was confirmed by Judge Bland.

The decedent died on March 23, 1909, survived by nine children, four of whom were minors. Aaron Reiff, guardian of Charles A., Esther R., David A. and Emily Reifsnyder, claims of the distributable fund \$300, the exemption required by the law to be set aside for the use of the minor children. The guardian during the past year expended \$58.50 for the support of his ward. The claim for the exemption is allowed.

The estate is insolvent. The claimants were allowed \$2,080.91 on their claims. It was during the hearing of this case that Judge Bland in giving his opinion of an insolvent having a tombstone over his grave said: "You are not entitled to that - a man must have his debts paid before he can get a tombstone."





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 - 2017

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 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.



*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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ED GENSEMER

Newsletter contact: Anne Wagner

"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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