

GRAVE HAPPENINGS

Bieber/Lesher



The Bieber/Lesher burial ground has been re pointed and stabilized for many years to come. The former long term caretaker Herbert Bieber is no longer able so we are looking for family members to continue. If you are not family but would like to help that would work too! Let us know what you can do!



BEFORE

Contributors Staff/ Photos this issue

- Sean Brown
- Betty Burdan
- Karla Hummel
- Les Rohrbach
- Keith Schaffer
- Anne Wagner

Kirby burial ground along 222 in Maidencreek Township.



Many of these stones had been repaired years ago by family members, when a tornado went through the path of the cemetery.

We noticed last summer several stones down, and broken so we had some work done before winter to make it easier to take care of, and hopefully the repairs will hold. There are still some missing pieces but hopefully some day they will be found.

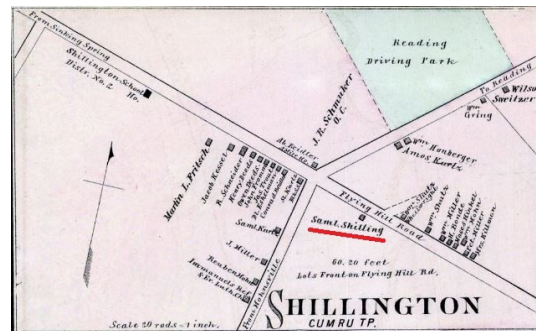
Our stonemason had found at least 5 different materials used to repair these stones over the years. As time goes on, better repair materials come on the market. We try to keep up on new advancements.

A Blind Old Lunatic Is Buried in an Unmarked Grave

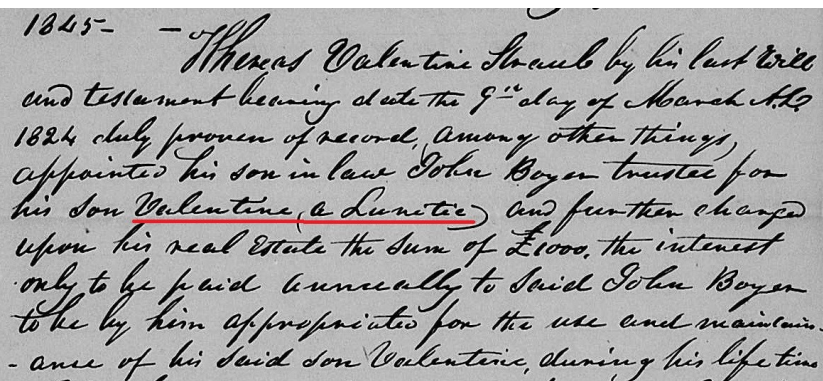
Sean Brown

Somewhere in Shillington Borough, on the south side of Philadelphia Avenue and between New Holland Avenue and Spruce Street, Samuel Shilling buried his 76 year old ward at his house on December 9, 1863.

Reverend Charles Pauli recorded in his journal that he performed the burial rites for Valentine Straub and he was buried "at the house" (Records of Rev. Charles A. Pauli, 1860-1871, Page 214, HSBC Janssen Library Call Number CR C236a, Page 214).



Valentine Straub was the son of Christian Valentine and Elizabeth Straub. When he died in 1825, he bequeathed his estate to his with Elizabeth for the rest of her natural life so that she could provide for their son Valentine. Upon her death his Executor, Jacob Shilling (married to Christian's daughter Hannah), was to sell everything and put £1000 into a trust with interest to be paid to his son-in-law John Boyer (married to Esther) to take care of the younger Valentine. On the 64th page of Christian's probate, Valentine is labeled a lunatic. Unfortunately, John had died before Elizabeth in 1843, so Jacob Shilling put \$700 into a trust and became the caregiver of Valentine (Pennsylvania Probate Records, 1683-1994, Berks County, Estates 1800-1850, Stocker, John-Swavely, Samuel, Pages 1031-1098).



Jacob died in 1847 and his son Samuel acquired his father's estate of 128 acres, 3-Mile House and the responsibility for Valentine Junior (Pennsylvania Probate Records, 1683-1994, Berks County, Estates 1800-1850, Sheidy, John-Schuelgen, Theodore, Pages 489-552).

The 1860 Federal Census shows Valentine living with Samuel Shilling's family and checked as blind (Cumru Township, Page 15 of 56).

After the death of Valentine, Samuel Shilling laid out and began selling lots for houses and Shillington began to take shape.

The 1876 Atlas places Samuel Shilling's residence just south of what will become Philadelphia Avenue and west of the intersection of what will become School Lane.

This burial was a new find for our records, and while it's not a private family cemetery, it is worth noting.

It's been 155 years since Valentine Straub – or Stroup – was buried. The exact location is unknown and unmarked, so if you're running new water lines, Shillingtonians, or planting a tree in the area, watch carefully as you dig.

And Halloween is coming. This sounds like the back story of a horror movie.

24	440	446	Samuel Shilling	40	m	Farmer	10.000	2.789	pro			24
25			Catherine	24	f							25
26			Whamprey J.P.	4	m							26
27			Howard	3	m							27
28			George W.	1	m							28
29			Alroy	1	y	Levin						29
30			Valentine Stroup	75	m							30



LETTER FROM LES



This summer BCAGP has received 2 different emails illustrating the precarious nature of preserving small private graveyards. In both cases, the Leydich Family Burial Ground in Montgomery County and the Reber Graveyard in Bern Township, there are active descendants who have worked to preserve these sites. However, as individual priorities change or expensive repairs become necessary, family members can find it difficult to provide what is needed.



Both situations are typical, both are in need of stone work, the expensive part of what we do. The Leydich graveyard, being in Montgomery County, is outside the scope of BCAGP's mission. The stone work needed by the Reber graveyard will be evaluated by BCAGP and may be considered sometime in the future. However, the Reber graveyard is also now facing the lesser task of controlling grass. This occurred when a descendant helping to care for it had other priorities develop in his life.

Even when some family members anticipate future needs, provisions to deal with them can be overcome by time. Trusts lose their effectiveness as prices increase just as weather wears on a tombstone. The earnings on what seemed like sufficient funds at the time, \$1,500 or \$15,000 put aside decades ago, pay for little in today's world. Other unforeseen obstacles develop. The Hechler/Esterly graveyard had a trust. but when the administrator died the bank would not allow the deceased's executor



to do anything with the funds. The last we knew, probably 2 years ago, that money was in Pennsylvania's hands but still in limbo.

BCAGP has been lucky to have the Jacqueline B. Nein Trust to support a major portion of our spending. For about 10 years, we have been able to address many needs without too serious of a consideration for the costs. As that trust begins to wind down, BCAGP can see the day when we, too, face the problems the Leydich and Reber families face. Our efforts will increasingly be focused on keeping weeds and grass under control, and hoping our current work on walls survives. That day is not here yet, but it is on the horizon.

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.



Like any organization that is volunteer based, our labor pool could use a little boost!

We survived another year of the growing season, yet many of the burial

grounds will not have a fall clean up. With the summer heat behind us and summertime activities at an end, we could really use your help!

Even if we are not having an organized clean up, there are many burial grounds you can go to at your own leisure and time to do a late season clean up.

Some of the burial grounds already have a "caretaker" who has adopted this as their personal project. Those persons are almost always happy to have some extra hands.

In a perfect world, the family members would be dedicated to taking care of their ancestors' burial places. Family reunion committees don't always come forth and we are finding that many family groups have stopped operating as the seniors have passed and the younger ones are not as devoted.

The next best, would be if the person who owns the land or lives in the home closest to the burial ground would take care of the grounds. That sometimes happens. But often those persons are farmers and barely have the time to keep their farms in good order.

WE as an organization, have tried to make the policy that we select burial grounds to invest money in repairs, with the understand-

ing that someone will take care of it from there on. That has not always panned out the way we would have liked.

Over the years many graveyards have been covered over with weeds and trees that have toppled tombstones, and they have all but disappeared. Even if we can get one or two cleanups a year, it will preserve them long enough for someone to start caring again.

*To be clear, we do **not** own any burial grounds. Our function has often just been a intermediary to connect interested persons with the information they need to take matters into their own hands. We can do the "hard part" to get a group or individual started in keeping after it once we have brought it back to life.*

SO here is my challenge to those of you who have a family member resting in a burial ground that needs some TLC: Organize a few family members or friends and call our president (Les Rohrbach) or send an email to let us know which one you want to work on. We can let you know if anyone is taking care of it and who to contact for access permission if needed. If you give us a date, some of our members may even be able to come along and help. And if you do not have a known ancestor but want to help anyway, we can let you know which is closest to you that can use your love! A little secret I will share is that I do not have any (that I know of) ancestors in any of them..imagine that?

*Anne E Wagner, VP
awagner615@aol.com*

Schneider caps

The rear wall of the Schneider burial ground in Oley has been totally rebuilt and now the capping is finished as well. This is a huge burial ground and we are doing the best we can to make the walls sound again.



REMNANTS OF OLD GRAVEYARD

Betty J Burdan

The Reading Eagle reported that in 1906 Mr. Henry Deetz had a mansion built by contractor Nathaniel Wampole. Upon completion, Mr. Deetz was not happy. Saying that he did not believe in ghosts, nevertheless, he did not want to live among remnants of an old graveyard. His complaint was that that Mr. Wampole got a lot of old tombstones from an abandoned cemetery at a bargain price. These tombstones were incorporated into the pillars and other parts of the stone work on the porch of his mansion. In his haste to complete the job, the contractor failed to take the time to remove the inscriptions, and as a consequence there was an odd assortment of sad graveyard epitaphs all about the porch. After the owner complained, the builder cut out as much of the lettering as possible, leaving Mr. Deetz still unsatisfied, so he brought suit.



FINDING GRAVEYARDS IN BERKS

Betty J Burdan

Doing research is part of what BCAGP does. Not all the graveyards of Berks have been discovered and documented. The slightest clue, mention, hint or evidence that a graveyard exists or existed and the hunt is on... The best evidence is usually a deed granting the use, care and keeping of a burying place to the next generation.

Such a deed was found recently in Berks County Deed Book Volume 46 page 77, titled simply "Burying Ground Deed." It couldn't be any clearer than that and looked to be an easy find. Wrong! While it was a deed to a graveyard it was very vague in its description.

The deed, written in 1835, told us that John Seyr (aka Seyer) of Oley, yeoman and his wife Elizabeth granted to their son Daniel Seyr (aka Seyer) and son-in-law George Mielot (aka Melot) a certain parcel in Oley. Land bounded by a post and rail fence on the south east corner of this parcel was described as "for many years used as a burying ground."

Daniel and George were to hold the graveyard "in special trust ...for the sole and only use...of a burying ground or place of interment." It was to be preserved for the use of the grantors, grantees and their families. Those who attended funerals were to have free access. In the event the currently enclosed graveyard became too small, it was to be expanded on the sides adjoining John Seyr's other land.



At first blush it looked as if it might be the Bieber-Lesher graveyard on Mud Run Road. After all, John Seyr had purchased the land from Jacob Bieber and his wife Esther, who were both buried in that graveyard. But, being the Bieber-Lesher came into question when it was discovered that Jacob's son, William, had purchased the original Bieber plantation where the Beiber-Lesher graveyard is located.

The Seyr land was purchased in 1814 as part of two tracts purchased by Jacob Bieber. One from Peter and Susan Hillebesh, subject to a dower for the widow of Benjamin Huffnagle, and the other from Elizabeth

(Huffnagle) Hillebesh only heir of Elias Huffnagle. Huffnagle ownership went back as far as 1755.

From here the answer should have been to follow the chain of deeds to the present to determine where the graveyard is or was. Wrong again.

George Melot conveyed his share of the land to Daniel Seyer in 1845. In 1859 Daniel sold 5 acres 59 perches to Levi Youse. It was described as by lands of Peter Glase, David Brumbach, G. Hinterlieder and Jessiah Yerger, a line of a graveyard and Abraham Breil. It was sold subject to a parcel of ground "which has for many years been used as a burying ground,... situate on the south east corner of this tract." Meaning, Levi Youse was now the owner of the graveyard.

A search for a deed from Levi Youse to anyone turned up nothing. He died in 1898 and his will, nor estate papers defined his real estate. It proved only that there was a farm in Oley of approximately 5 acres and his present dwelling and lot in Friedensburg. It did not say who either tract was sold to. Next was a look at Levi's children, one of whom may have taken the graveyard tract.

Levi and his wife Emma (Haas) Youse had 10 children, 7 surviving to adulthood: Augustus H. Youse; Harriet wife of James Seyler; Emma wife of William Remack; Abraham Youse; Mary married John Gross; Edward and Levi H. Youse, with whom Levi Sr. lived at the time of his death. A search for a deed from any of these to anyone also turned up nothing.

Until we find who Levi Youse's 5 acres 79 perches, with a graveyard, was sold to, the trail ends here. It is possible that the recitation from Levi Youse to the next owner was included in a future deed. If anyone has come across such a recitation for Levi's land, please let us know, so this graveyard can be found and documented.

Contact: bjburdan@dejazzd.com





The Barnet/Peter graveyard has been mentioned numerous times in this newsletter. It is the graveyard in Maiden creek township in the rear of Memorial Gardens Cemetery. The tombstones were severely broken by vandals sometime after 1984.

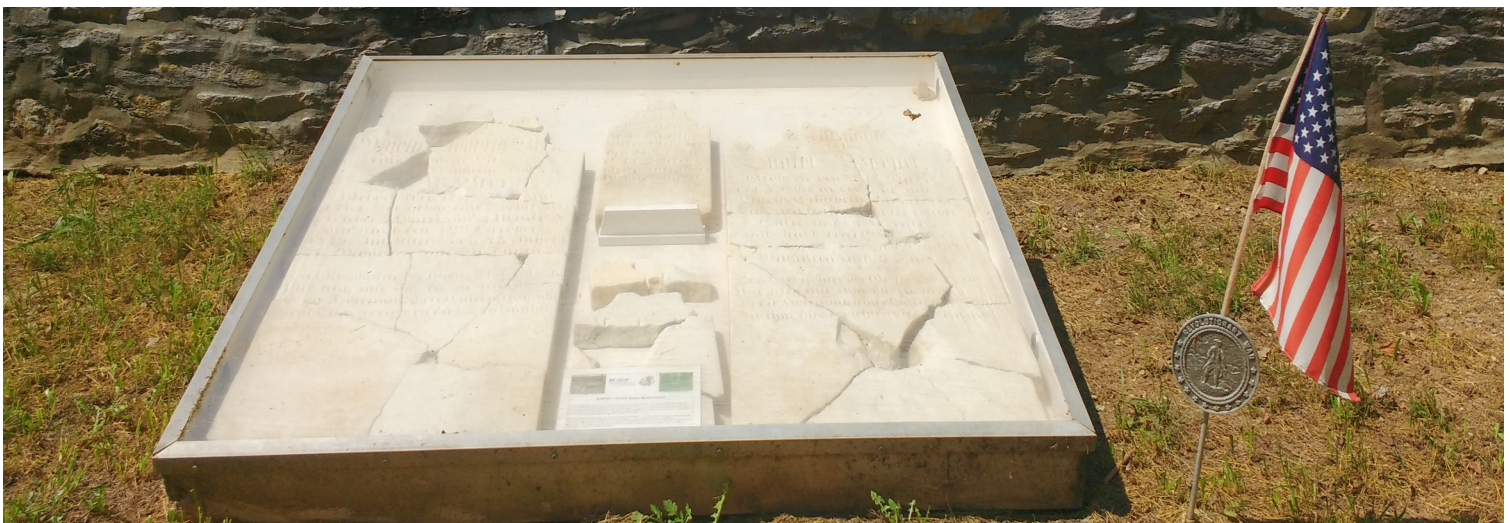
Several years ago Anne, Karla, Paul, Keith and maybe some others devoted a good bit of time probing for buried pieces and fitting the pieces together. I thought it was impossible, but they did an amazing job and put the pieces together. We then had three display cases

made to organize the fragments to approximate as best as possible the original tombstone.

One of the broken tombstones was for Daniel Barnet who was a member of a Berks County militia unit during the Revolutionary War. Since the Veterans Administration provides tombstones for veterans, I as a descendant of Daniel, made an application with the VA for a replacement stone a number of years ago. That was rejected because Daniel's unit is not known to have engaged in any fighting.

Department of Military Affairs		SERIAL FILED OF VETERAN	
NAME BARNET, Daniel		DATE OF BIRTH 79 3/2/1762	DATE OF DEATH 10/11/1839
VETERAN OF REVOLUTIONARY WAR		SERVED IN ARMY (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) NAVY () MARINE CORPS ()	
DATES OF SERVICE 1777.	ORGANIZATION (S) Capt. Huy's Co. 7th Co., 2nd Battn. B.C.M.	RANK Private	
CEMETERY OR PLACE OF INTERMENT	NAME Peter's Private Cemetery		
	LOCATION Maiden creek Twp. Berks Co., Pa.		
LOCATION OF GRAVE IN CEMETERY		HEADSTONE Marble	
SECTION LOT NO.	RANGE GRAVE NO.	GOVERNMENT () COUNTY () FAMILY ()	
INFORMATION GIVEN BY R.S. Dotterer-Grave Registrar		REMARKS	
DATE 1-11-1935			
After being Recorded in the County Veterans' Grave Registration Record This card is to be sent to THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for final Record.			

Barry Kauffman from Alsace Cemetery felt the VA had erred in rejecting my request, and was kind enough to submit a tombstone request himself. Again the VA rejected it. Dave Reinhard, the superintendent at Memorial Gardens, was aware of our efforts and offered to investigate what he could do. It took several years, but Dave found a contact who had a suitable stone and had it engraved as a favor to Dave. That stone has arrived and will be placed at the foot of Daniel's broken stone. Many thanks to Dave for his efforts.



Les Rohrbach

Weiser/Deturk

The Weiser/Deturk burial ground in Oley Township is being cared for by the **Zook family** (the property owners) in conjunction with members of the nearby **Reading Motorcycle Club**. BCAGP provided some financial support by purchasing new fence posts this past Spring, after the existing posts deteriorated. The Reading Motorcycle Club also cares for the Barto burial ground, which is on RMC property.



September 4, 2018

Mr. Les Rohrbach
Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation
P.O. Box 3707
Reading, PA 19606

Dear Mr. Rohrbach:

Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$700 in payment of the annual distribution from the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation Fund of Berks County Community Foundation. This fund was established with a bequest from the Estate of Carrie F. Knabb and is to be used for the preservation of the Snyder Family Historic Graveyard and the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation.

Please acknowledge this grant in any publications or promotional material as having come from the "Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation Fund of Berks County Community Foundation." There is no need to send a formal acknowledgment receipt letter to Berks County Community Foundation for this grant.

Please accept this check with our best wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely,

Heidi A. Williamson
Vice President for Programs and Initiatives

Enclosure

If you are considering funding a trust to provide for some maintenance for your family burial ground, The Berks Community Foundation may be able to assist you with that. Annually we receive funds from a bequest from the Estate of Carrie F. Knabb which is handled through Berks Community Foundation. This particular trust is earmarked for the Snyder (Schneider) burial ground in Oley. You can find them at BCCF.org or the old fashioned way at 610-685-2223. They are located at 237 Court Street , Reading PA 19601. You may also add to this particular trust if you wish.



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.

If anyone is interested in working on the Fix /Gerber/ Bitting burial ground off Route 10 near Queen City Diner please let us know. Neil Thomas has been working on it the past few years and needs help.



BCAGP's Annual Meeting will be held in Feb. 2019.

Officers and the board will be elected at that meeting. Nominations for officers and the board can be made at the remaining 2018 meetings or by emailing our Board Secretary, Karla Hummel, at BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com.

Candidates must be BCAGP members for a minimum of 6 months.

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 - 2019

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.

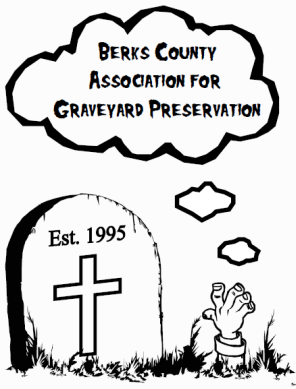
The official registration and financial information of Berks County Association of Graveyard Preservation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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





PO BOX 3707

READING PA 19606



WWW.BCAGP.ORG



BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD
PRESERVATION

Officers and Board of Directors

(email addresses on the website)

Les Rohrbach, President 610-323-1703
Anne Wagner, Vice President 610-926-5036
Keith Schaffer, 2nd Vice President 610-689-5164
Paul Schumann, Treasurer 484-529-8682
Karla Hummel, Secretary 610-987-9569

David Schlegel Michael Angstadt 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.

Permission to reprint any materials herein is granted provided they are printed in their entirety and that BCAGP's author is cited.

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Check the www.bcagp.org website for internet edition newsletter archives in full color!

