



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



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Photos this issue**

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We had a good size crew work on the Grim this Spring! We will need to get back and do more work like filling in the groundhog holes and resetting some stones in the very near future. The stones were treated with D/2 biocide so will be a lot easier to read the next time we go back.

Covid has made things a little harder to navigate, but we can still get some things done. (see more on p. 9)



One of our immediate goals is growing and maintaining an active volunteer corps. BCAGP has a good-sized membership base, but we will always value new hands in the graveyards. In the last year or so we have welcomed some great, energetic volunteers and they've made cleanups a much easier group effort.

Just what is involved in cleanups that you might enjoy? Everyone simply assumes the job they are comfortable with!

Starting with the roughest locations, we face various challenges. On a site with trees, there may be chainsaws in use – but don't panic, only those with real experience grab a saw. Several of the guys have adapted their weed eaters to strengthen the blades or clippers to use in heavier growth, like invasive Johnson grass. Others use standard threaded weed whackers.

Not into power tools? There is always a need for loppers, clippers and such. Plus, we need a cleanup crew to rake or gather debris that is moved outside the perimeter, piled inside the walls, or loaded for transport to other nearby sites. At some sites we also let the piles dry so we can return and do a controlled burn to remove the rubble.

Aren't into too much effort? We routinely check all tombstones to determine if there is recent damage, toppled stones, or any that require cleaning with D/2.

The most fun – at least in my opinion – is searching for missing stones or pieces, identifying stones that need restoration, and planning how to carry out those activities. We often find stones, especially foot stones, that need to be repositioned.

You can also come out just to get experience reading tombstones whether they be inscribed in block letter English, or complex German fraktur.

Les always announces cleanups by email and Anne posts on Facebook. If we have dates early enough, you'll also find information in the newsletter. Join us in the field!



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Veteran Focus: Jacob Kauffman

Often when I visit one of the cemeteries BCAGP has picked for maintenance, I think to myself how lovely and peaceful the sites are. The Oley Kauffman Farm Cemetery is surrounded by a stone wall, on a lovely hill with a pine tree to the side. While there this fall, we cleared poke, blackberry, and weeds before we treated and cleaned the tombstone of Jacob Kauffman, husband to Susanna Keim.

Jacob, son of Jacob Keim and Hannah Hill, was born March 10, 1757 and inherited the family farm. According to old news articles and genealogy records, in 1777 he swore the oath of allegiance and joined service for the Revolutionary War. They also state that he mustered out just before the Battle of Brandywine which was in September 1777. Six months was a common enlistment. The age of ability to research on the internet and Ancestry showed me evidence of a Jacob Kauffman enlisted in what is now known at the German Regiment. This group of men was formed exclusively from the ethnic German residents of Pennsylvania and Maryland and formed in Philadelphia. Reverend Peter Muhlenberg served as Brigadier General. I found Jacob Kauffman on the payroll book in September 1777, as well as 1779 and August - December of 1780, all with the German Regiment. It is possible there is an error with the early recorded history, or that I have found another Jacob Kauffman. Either way, he served in the same department as General Washington.

In 1807, Jacob married Susannah Keim, daughter to good friends. He appears to have been extremely devoted, despite a 26 year age difference. Together they would have 5 sons and 3 daughters. Jacob's will has the normal arrangement of having his sons provide for Susanna in her widowhood with food, firewood, provisions and a large addition to the home for her to live until her death or end of her widowhood. Unusually, he set aside quite a bit of cash for her own use, dictated which funds were to remain hers alone and furthermore that her sons pay her annually \$132, even if she remarried. Jacob lived to the age of 86. Susannah, despite being only so many years younger did not remarry but was buried next her husband at the age of 88.



We can't claim that level of care and maintenance, but in honor of this veteran and father, we do our best to keep Jacob's final resting place clear and peaceful. He has earned it.



Lara Thomas
Secretary, BCAGP



Letter from Les

As our fall cleanups were drawing to a close, I was reflecting on how BCAGP has changed and grown over my 12 years volunteering with it. We undertook a larger cleanup effort this fall in part because the covid-19 lockdown in the spring mostly kept us out of graveyards. Six cleanups were scheduled last fall at a total of 9 locations. These all occurred on Sunday mornings. Three took place on consecutive weeks, and if a Sunday with a meeting is also included, BCAGP had some activity occurring for 5 consecutive Sundays.

I was apprehensive, especially during the three week stretch, about the size of the turnout. Was too much being asked of our volunteers? Were they sacrificing too many Sundays? We only know who will show up on the day of the event. Yet for every cleanup there were sizable numbers of individuals present and actively contributing. This is so in contrast to my first years with BCAGP when the turnout often consisted of Keith, Anne, and myself and we were facing graveyards that had been untouched for years.

While I did not attempt to gather a list of attendees and do not have precise numbers, our smallest turnout was about 9 people and we had as many as 13 for the DeTurk/Rothermel cleanup. There were 18 people who participated in at least one cleanup and I have possibly missed one or two. Many people were at multiple cleanups. This is terribly helpful in that we were able to hit two graveyards on 3 occasions. One of our longer term members remarked about how much more quickly a cleanup goes with more people contributing.

I am using this letter to express my thanks to all those who participated last fall. It was quite satisfying to get to work in the number of graveyards that we did, to leave them looking presentable, and experience the helpful camaraderie that existed among us.



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.

The year 2020 was like no other most of us have experienced. Covid 19 has put a damper on our activities and we are playing catch up. Our meetings have been a little different as the majority of our members are in the risk group that is most affected by the deadly virus we are dealing with. We have had to move our meetings to outdoors due to the small meeting room we have been using for more than a decade. For Winter, we were happy to accept the offer of Aulenbach's Cemetery President **Ed Gensemer** who also doubles as one of our board members, to use their meeting room as it's larger. We are wearing masks unless we can be outside and distanced.



Between the last newsletter and now we also were sad to learn two of our long term and founding members have passed on. **Cynthia Jimenez** worked tirelessly over many years for our organization. (Some have sent contributions in her memory and

we thank them and Cynthia's family.) We also learned that **Gail Hesser** who was also a trustee of the Jacqueline Nein Trust (which was been pour primary funding for all the larger graveyard projects) passed in March. In 2015 both ladies were honored at our meeting for their service along with **Ralph Lora** who passed a year after.



We had our annual meeting in February and elections of officers. The officers stayed the same but we welcomed **Gary Koenig** and **Marvin Stamm** to the board. Last year **Mike Angstadt** asked to not be nominated for another term. Mike was our innovative techie kind of guy that was excellent at figuring new ways to do things. We miss him already and hope he still sticks with us as a member.

Recently we were contacted about multiple burial grounds that are not part of a family burial ground but are part of a group I call "defunct church cemeteries." We wish we could help more when people contact us about other cemeteries but we just do not have the volunteer power nor the funding to expand our mission. We were able to consult on one, did a clean up on another. **Karla** and **Lara** are planning to help repair a couple tombstones in one, but honestly it is doubtful we will be able to do much more than we did. There are so many of these abandoned graveyards and township's and community groups are needed to help when a larger cemetery is abandoned. You can help by encouraging your church group, scout groups, or other service groups to do a clean up at a cemetery in need.

If you support our mission please remember that we have fixed bills to exist as a 501 c (3) non profit organization. We have insurance and accounting fees, post office box fees and expenses that need to be covered each year aside from graveyard maintenance cost. Each year we file a 990 tax form which is available online or by request. Your donations make it possible for us to keep taking care of graveyards and related research rather than taking time away from that for fundraising.

Thank you for your support!



Anne Wagner
VP BCAGP

A Forgotten Cemetery

By Betty J. Burdan

Quit Claim deed to Aaron B. Hafer, his wife Clara Hafer and Amos E. Seyler, Trustees of St. Paul's In September BCAGP received a query, much like many queries received over the years. The writer said, while walking in the woods behind my parent's home in Berks County, I came upon a small overgrown, neglected grave yard. The pictures sent showed engraving that was clearly readable. With that the search was on to find out whose cemetery it was and how it came to be so neglected.

The Berks Tax assessment maps were no help, the cemetery was not identified. It would take a deed search of parent's home to see if a cemetery was mentioned.

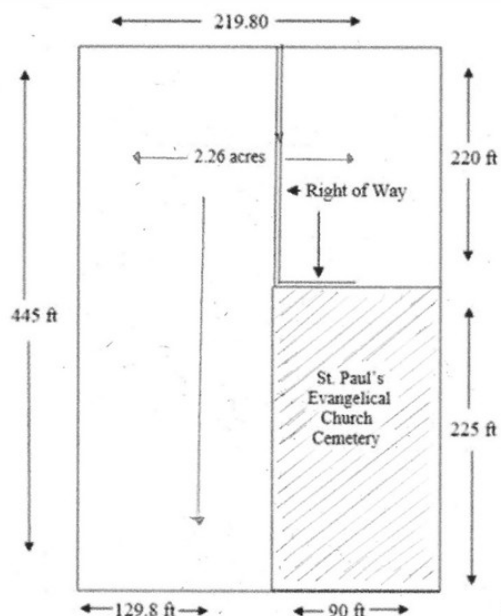
The deeds combined with a local history revealed that the parent's home was once the Salem Evangelical Church. It was built in 1857 by John Brown, Franklin Palm and the Rev. Henry Bucks. The exterior of the building changed little from its early days to the present, but it is now a private home.

The Salem Evangelical Church was built on 1 acre of land and served a very small congregation until 1885. At that time Ephraim Stitzer, Obadiah Manwiller and David Bierman were its trustees. In May of 1891 Salem reorganized their Sunday School and elected Milton J. Schitler, superintendent, Washington Moyer, assistant superintendent and treasurer; and Benjamin Wentzel as secretary.

Salem operated under the umbrella of the East Pennsylvania Conference of Evangelical Association. In July of 1895 the East Penn Conference and the Evangelical Association of North America deeded the church tract with the cemetery to Washington Moyer, Benjamin Wentzel and Amos Seyler, trustees of the former Salem EC, now St. Paul's Evangelical Church. From this we assumed the reorganization in 1891 included a name change to St. Paul's.

The next we found of St. Paul's Evangelical Church property was in March of 1930 when the Trustees of the East Pennsylvania United Conference of Evangelical Church issued a Evangelical Congregational Church. This seemed to be an affirmation of the transfer of 1895.

Membership dwindled and in March of 1932 the three trustees sold the church building and a portion of St. Paul's tract to Howard S. Deysher. No longer needed as church the building became a family dwelling. The premises transferred to Deysher did not include the cemetery. An exception for a right-of-way to the cemetery was included on this 1932 deed (DB 749 p. 63, Nov. 17, 1932)



The current owner purchased the church section and a lot next to the original church tract. The cemetery remains the property of St. Paul's Evangelical Church, even though it is defunct. The last trustees found were Aaron B. Hafer and Clara (Heckman) Hafer and Amos E. Seyler.

Amos E. Seyler died June 1, 1938 and is buried with his wife, Sallie (Parker) at Frieden's Cemetery in Oley. Aaron B. Hafer died March 18, 1960 and Clara Hafer, died May 11, 1961. They are buried at Bertolet's Union Cemetery in Oley.

A headstone reading conducted by Carl Schroeder, Anna Schroeder and Elaine D. Schwar in 1991, noted 24 headstones. The earliest burial was in 1871, and the most recent was Anna B. Francis who was born April 1, 1859 and died January 29, 1943.

The sketch here, drawn according to the dimensions in the deeds, identifies the location and size of the cemetery. It also shows the right-of-way to access St. Paul's Evangelical Church Cemetery in the 1932 deed.



ABANDONED



St. Paul's (Salem) Evangelical Cemetery



RESTORE RESPECT





This hand carved primitive fieldstone was repaired by **Keith Schaffer** at the **Klein burial ground** in Jefferson Township. The mortar line will fade and blend in time. It's a real shame when we run into a break like this. These are examples of early burial practices and often the hand carved stones hold up better than the more expensive marble stones.

Over the years we have heard the stories of people working in burial grounds who thought they were just rocks and moved them think-

ing they were cleaning up the area. When they have been knocked over and/or broken and have been laying in the ground for years, they often do look just like a rock. Berks County has many grave markers that are simply carved or even uncarved rock.



FINAL REBER WALL

The last wall is in progress now. We could not have done this without the contributions of the Reber family members and the Jacqueline Nein Trust. Our large projects will be slowing down as the Jacqueline Nein Trust is winding down its funds. We need contributions to continue what we do. The grounds have been well maintained by Reber descendants so this was a good investment to preserving this burial ground. Please help us pay for this by sending your contribution earmarked for REBER.





Breidenstein



April 11, 2021 we are planning a clean up at the Breidenstein burial ground in Cumru Township. Please see our Facebook for directions or contact Les Rohrbach. Bring hand tools, gloves.

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.



May 2 at 2PM at the Oley Legion will be our next board meeting. We will be meeting outside under the pavilion due to covid precautions. Members are invited to attend. Masks will be needed if enough people come that we can't spread out.



Kemp-Levan updates

[BCAGP position statement](#) regarding the possible removal of the Kemp-Levan burial ground can be found on our website under news.



Photo taken by Mike Angstadt
April 2016

If you are viewing this online you can click any of the links to go straight there!

The [Kemp-Levan](#) burial ground has its own website!!!

<https://kempfamilyburialground.com>

- ✓ [Senator Judy Schwank](#) speaks out to save the Kemp-Levan burial ground in the Reading Eagle March 10, 2021.
- ✓ [Save The Historic Kemp Facebook](#) can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kempburialground>. You can follow updates from this page.

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 - 2021

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.

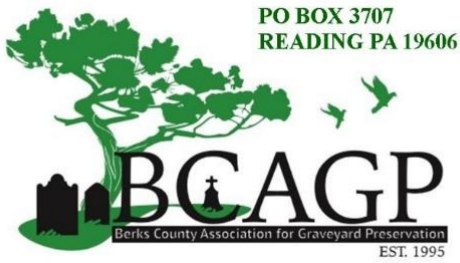
The official registration and financial information of Berks County Association of Graveyard Preservation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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





WWW.BCAGP.ORG



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David Schlegel * Ed Gensemer * Ron Smith * Keith Schaffer * Gary Koenig * Marvin Stamm

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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