
Boehm's Chapel Society

SPRING-SUMMER 2021

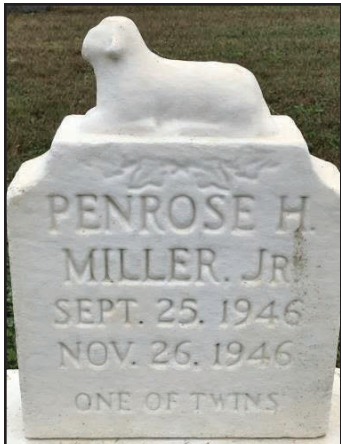
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West Boehms Road, Willow Street, Pa., 17584

Inside

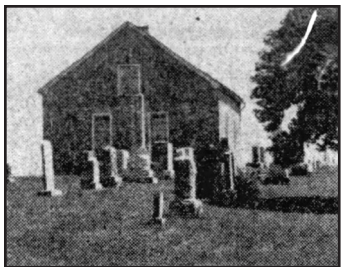
Membership drive

Enclosed is a signup card for the coming fiscal year.



Symbolic stones

Dr. John Edward Dagen, whose grandfather bought a family plot in the Boehm's Cemetery, finds that markers tell stories. Pages 2-3



A close call

In the late 1940s, plans for a highway came close to dividing the property of Boehm's Church. Pages 4-5

THE CHAPEL IN NOVEMBER TWILIGHT



The sun goes down behind the Chapel, and the moon is up, on the evening of Friday, Nov. 20, the day the Chapel Society held an open house for its participation in the Extraordinary Give program. The photo was taken by board member Elizabeth Mills. For more photos and information on the day, please see Page 6.

Stones tell their stories

Interpreting the symbols in the cemetery at Boehm's.

By Dr. John Edward Dagen

Boehm's Chapel cemetery has historic and personal significance for me. From birth I attended and was later a member of Boehm's United Methodist Church in Lancaster County, Pa.

It is in the village of "Willow Street," which you might imagine was a source of mailing address issues before ZIP codes. Because of denominational gyrations, it has evolved from Methodist to Methodist Episcopal to United Methodist. The original Boehm(s) Chapel was built in 1791 by Martin Boehm who was an excommunicated Mennonite bishop.

The Mennonites could not tolerate Boehm's desire to preach salvation to anyone who would listen after the style of John Wesley, who founded Methodism in England. Martin Boehm met and co-founded the United Brethren in Christ denomination with Phillip

Otterbein. Boehm built the chapel (originally called a meeting house) specifically for the Methodists to use for meetings instead of meeting in homes or barns.

The original Boehm Chapel is now Boehm's Chapel. The cemetery is shared with the second larger church building erected in 1899. I refer to Boehm's Chapel Cemetery, although some use the Boehm's United Methodist Church label. Boehm's Chapel was the first Methodist Church in Lancaster County, remodeled in 1883 and restored close to the original structure in 1991.

I am in possession of a deed from 1930 when my grandfather purchased Lot 48 in the cemetery. I will join my parents and grandparents there.

The Methodist and United Brethren in Christ denominations are not known for extravagance so there are no gaudy monuments. I will describe some meaningful symbolism found at Boehm's cemetery.

The oldest marker is for the



At left, the stone for Martin and Eve Boehm. Lower middle, left, a stone in German with a tulip at the top, and at right, the broken pillar, and bottom, a cross and ivy on top of a stone. Photos were taken by Dr. Dagen, his wife, Linda, and Dolores and Robb Myers.



About the author

Dr. Dagen is a retired urologist. He is the son of the late Roy K. and Verna Dagen, who were longtime active members at Boehm's. In those days, he was known as Ed or Eddie.

He wrote this article, which was edited for the newsletter, as a paper for a graduate course in thanatology (the study of death) in his preparation to do hospice work. One of his course assignments was to visit a historic cemetery and find grave markers with interesting symbolism.

He and his wife, Linda, live in Carlisle. They have three adult children and five grandchildren.

It was a difficult vocation as exemplified by their ages at death. There is a flat plaque between their stones identifying them as circuit riders.

According to Michael Emerich, former historian of the Landis Valley Farm Museum, the ornamentation on the Rev. Wilson's old sandstone marker is acanthus leaves. The acanthus was at one time the plant most associated with funeral architecture. The leaves represent overcoming the cyclical trials of life and death and symbolize the immortality of the soul.

The Rev. Martin Boehm died in 1812 at age 86 and shares a modern stone replacement with his wife, Eve, who died in 1822. There is a lengthy,

Rev. William Jessop. He died in 1795 at age 30. The second grave marker is for the Rev. Michael Wilson, who died in 1798 at age 27. Both were circuit riders or saddlebag preachers. They relentlessly traveled on horseback around defined routes to preach the gospel.

but modest epitaph on the stone. Of significance, there is an engraving at the bottom stating that the Mennonite Church reinstated him as Mennonite bishop emeritus in 2016 at the 225th anniversary ceremony for the Chapel.

There are slate markers for Martin's sister, Susanna, and her husband, Henrich Resch. They are stored inside the Chapel because they were starting to delineate or fall apart. The inscriptions are in German script and Henrich's includes a tulip at the top done in the Fraktur design of German folk art.

The tulip is not intended to look natural but represents a lily which represents purity. The tops of the slate are somewhat delineated and the width of dirt at the bottom corresponds to the depth that the slate was in the ground.

An 1878 stone is on a base with an arched top under which is inscribed "Our Mother." On top of the arch is a cross wrapped in ivy, which is eternally green and associated with immortality and fidelity. Ivy clings to a support, which makes it a symbol of attachment, friendship and undying affection. Its three-pointed leaves make it a symbol of the Trinity. The empty Latin Cross speaks to the death and resurrection of Christ resulting in the possibility of eternal life.

There are several small stones marked with a lamb carving on top symbolizing innocence of an infant. Christ is referred to in Scripture as the Lamb of God.

There is a worn marble marker for an infant with a bent rose, mourning a life lost too soon.



There is a family plot with a broken pillar. It is the family stone for the Rev. Marris and Carrie Clark Hackman and their three young children.

An upright, sculpted pillar may symbolize the bridge between earth and heaven. When the top of a pillar is intentionally carved to appear jagged and broken, it denotes young life cut short.

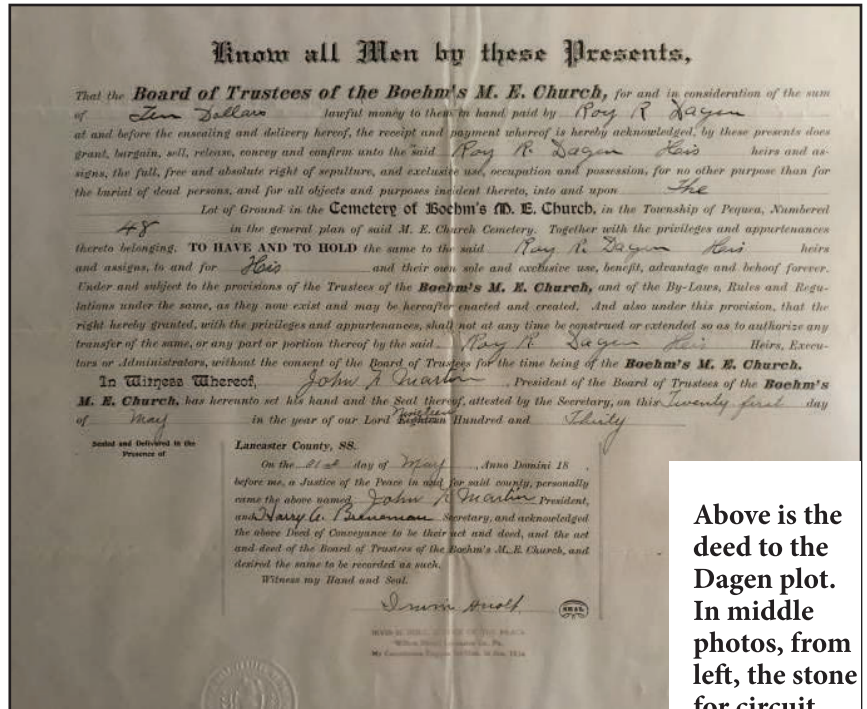
I found a husband-wife stone with a cross at the top of each corner. There is a Russian Orthodox Cross above the husband's name and a Latin Cross above the wife's name. The Russian Orthodox Cross has an angled crossbar below the main crossbar.

Out of approximately 1,000 graves there are 121 veterans buried at Boehm's, beginning with Revolutionary War veterans. Many small American flags wave throughout the cemetery.

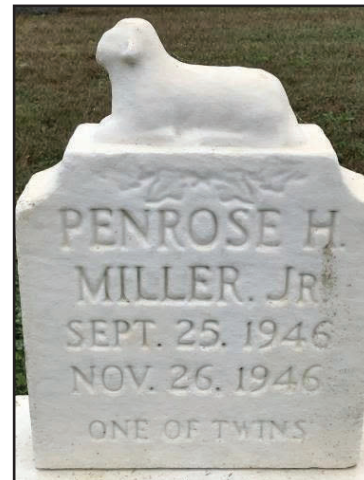
I have always had an interest in the life of John Wesley and the methodical Methodists.

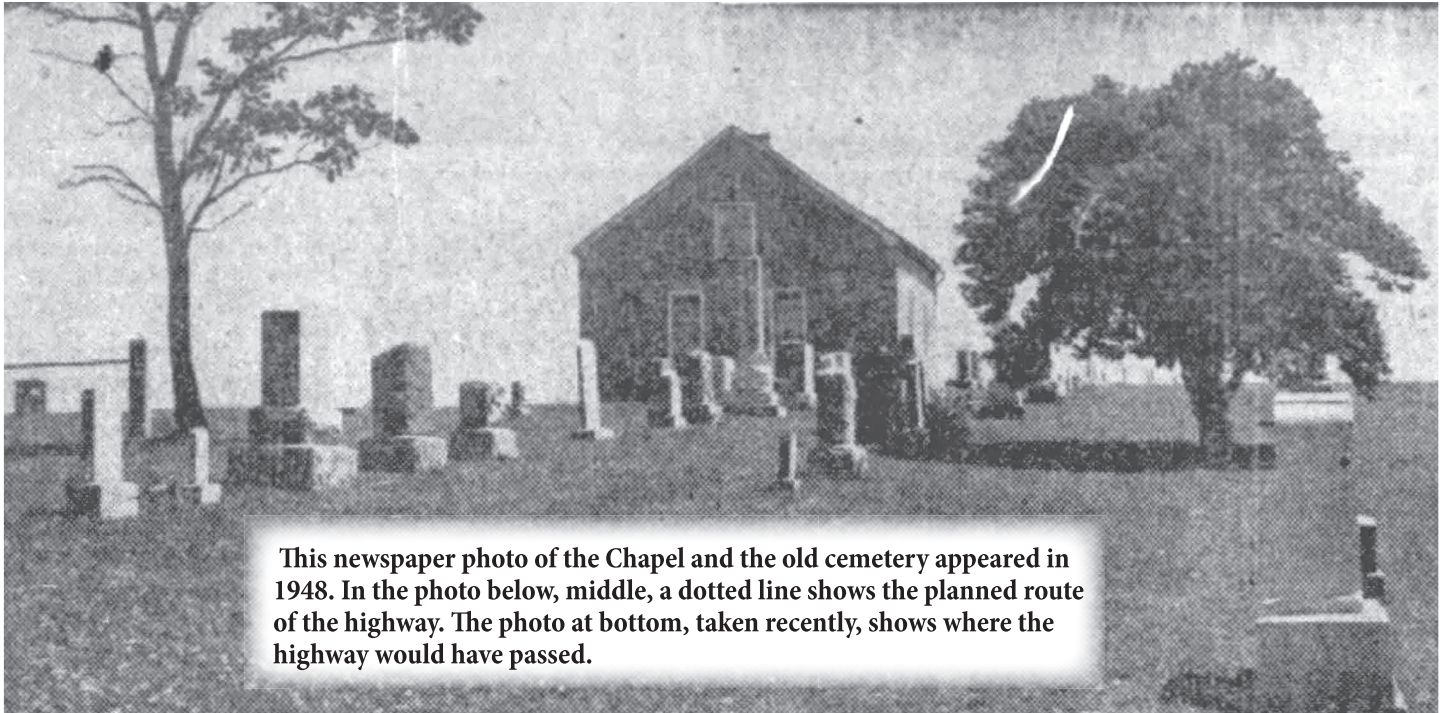
I now attend an Anabaptist church associated with the Brethren-in-Christ church founded by Martin Boehm, who gave comfort to the first Methodists in Pennsylvania along with a meeting house in which to worship.

I am grateful to my grandfather for thinking ahead. I am honored to eventually reside next to my parents.



Above is the deed to the Dagen plot. In middle photos, from left, the stone for circuit rider Michael Wilson, and a stone for an infant. Lower left, a bent rose on a stone. At lower right, Ed and Linda Dagen walk through the cemetery.





This newspaper photo of the Chapel and the old cemetery appeared in 1948. In the photo below, middle, a dotted line shows the planned route of the highway. The photo at bottom, taken recently, shows where the highway would have passed.

What if highway plan had not changed?

By **Marv Adams**

President

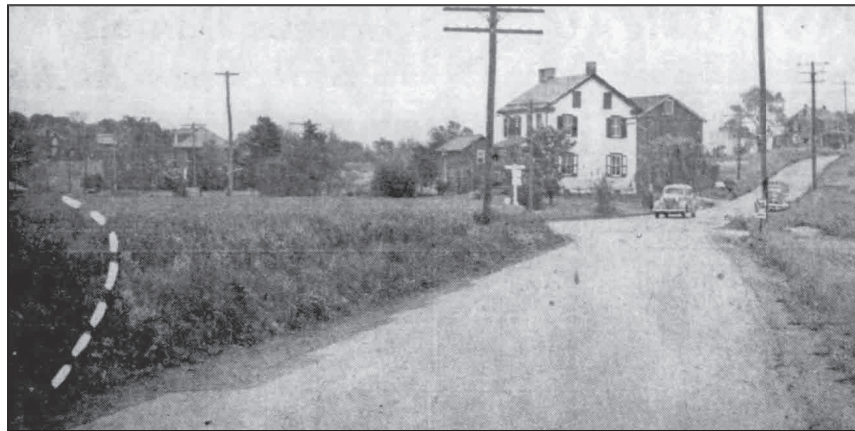
Boehm's Chapel Society

A few years ago, Dolores Myer, then the Chapel Society executive director, came across an old news story in the archives of the Lancaster newspapers.

The Boehm's trustees had thanked the local state representative for changing the planned route of a highway so that it did not come near the church.

Both Dolores and I assumed, in an article for the newsletter back then, that it meant that the highway, built in the late 1940s, would not run on the doorstep of the church, which was built in 1899.

Imagine our surprise when, while doing more research recently on the cemetery, Dolores discovered that the original plan was to run the highway behind the present church!



Route 272, a noisy and busy four-lane highway, now runs several hundred yards to the east of the

church. This version of the highway was built starting in 1968. Some 20 years earlier, the route south out of

Willow Street to the Maryland line was a combination of narrow back roads. The original plan, for a new highway,

to be designated Route 72, would replace those roads with a new asphalted and wide two-lane road with 10-foot-wide shoulders, running for five miles south from Willow Street.

If you are of a certain age, you remember that stretch of road.

In Dolores' research she found that the road would come out of Willow Street and take a straight shot right by the back of the church, perhaps calling for the moving of some graves.

The highway would have cut off the church from its cemetery and the Chapel. At this time, Boehm's Church did not have the parsonage next door. An attached education building would not be built until the mid 1960s.

The first story about the new Route 72 appeared in the Lancaster New Era, an afternoon paper, on May 12, 1947. There was no

argument that a new road headed south was needed. The back roads were full of dangerous hairpin turns.

In the Sunday News on May 18, a photo was published showing how the new road would straighten out a sharp bend in the road at Baumgardner and West Boehms roads. The photo shows only a few structures. Most of the houses that now line those roads would not be built until the 1950s and later. The highway would have had an easy path right to the church. As anyone who travels to Boehm's knows, that hairpin turn still exists (see photo on previous page).

In a New Era article on Dec. 5, 1947, the pastor of Boehm's, the Rev. Frank M. Dilks, said the new road would "mar the appearance of the cemetery."

Rev. Dilks also complained that the path of the highway would leave the church with an unusable triangle of ground,

As best I can tell, the church had bought a vacant property next door in the mid 1930s, which stretches from the road in front of the church, to the property line behind what is now "The Tying Shed," the auxiliary building for the Chapel.

I assume the pastor was talking about where the parsonage now stands.

The two houses next to the parsonage and the motel below them would not have been there in 1948, indicating the approximate route of the highway. Two older homes did stand on the other side of the church, one owned by Ira and Anna Hackman, now owned by their son, Richard, and one next to them, since demolished. The road would have cut through those two properties.

A state engineer said any change in the plan would mean a new survey and moving three miles of the planned highway.

But things moved fast, very fast. An article in the New Era on Dec. 29 reported that the state would change the route of the road.

Church officials were

elated and thanked state Rep. Norman Wood for his work in convincing the state to change its plan. A bridge spanning the Susquehanna River in southern Lancaster County, built in the late 1960s, is named in honor of Wood.

The northbound lanes of Route 272 today, east of the church property, are the original lanes of Route 72.

An article in the Sunday News on June 28, 1948, intimated that graves would have been moved under the original plan. The large photo on the previous page was part of that article. But another article said no graves would have been moved.

The photo shows a lone stone, at the far right. It marked the lower boundary for the plots in the old section of the cemetery, and still does. It is the plot of John E. and Elizabeth Rohrer. He died in 1933. She passed in 1935. If the highway had gone through as planned, the Rohrer graves would have been next to, or very near, the shoulder of the southbound lane. I imagine guardrails would have lined the path of the road to protect the church building and cemetery.

To those of us who grew up at Boehm's Church, it is mind-boggling to think of what could have happened if the original plan had gone through.

Over the years, Route 72 became extremely busy as the area south of Willow Street saw explosive growth, necessitating the need to enlarge the highway to four lanes.

With heavy traffic roaring by the back of the church, would the Boehm's congregation have stayed or moved to a new home? Or merged with another United Methodist Church.

And the cemetery? It is a quiet place to visit. As Rev. Dilks presciently noted, that all would have changed.

What of the Chapel? It was in disrepair and would not be reconstructed for another 40 years. Would it have survived?

Would the heritage of Martin Boehm have survived?

We will never know.

Thank goodness.



Tour with a message

Before the pandemic closed down tours and weddings at the Chapel, Matt Buckwalter, a former Society board officer, led a tour for Youth with a Mission (YWAM) staff, who were opening a base in Lancaster, Pa.

While YWAM has bases around the world since the 1970s, there had not been a base in Lancaster until last year. Teams of young people take part in the Discipleship Training School before taking the Gospel into various parts of the world.

Matt said, "The goal of our time at Boehm's was for these young people to recognize the spiritual history of Lancaster County, specifically Martin Boehm's unique role in this region.

"We also looked carefully at the reconciliation which has recently taken place as the Mennonites of Lancaster Conference acknowledged the wrongful excommunication of Martin and restored his bishop credentials. It was a great time together that day."

Matt is head of the Linville School, a Christian school in Paradise and Gap.



In photo above, the group enters the Chapel. At left, Matt Buckwalter and Luke Weaver speak to the class. Luke is a director of YWAM.



Photo by Chere Fizer

Lighting the path to the Chapel

The Boehm's Chapel Society held an open house for the Extraordinary Give of Lancaster County, raising approximately \$2,384, on Nov. 20.

In the photo above, lanterns light the way to the Chapel. At right, a glance through a Chapel window. Bottom right, Richard Hackman talks with Doris Moore,

middle, and Sharon McCullough over snacks. At lower right, a camp fire took some of the chill off the late autumn evening.

Special thanks goes to Society boards members Doris Moore, JoAnne Foss and Elizabeth Mills for their work in readying the Chapel and grounds for the open house.

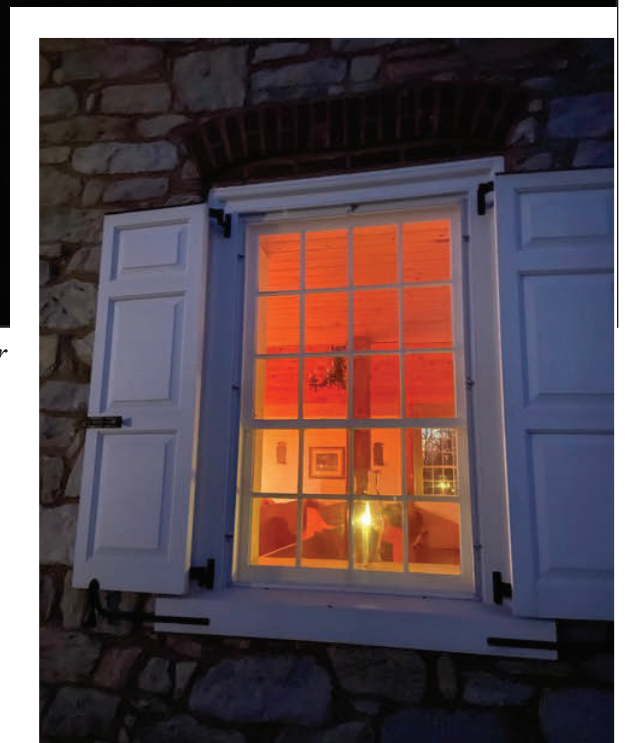


Photo by Elizabeth Mills



Photos by Chere Fizer

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Boehm's Chapel Society newsletter

Heritage Sunday and other Society news

By Marv Adams

President

Boehm's Chapel Society

Although the COVID pandemic of 2020-21 has slowed us down, work and planning still goes on at Boehm's Chapel.

Presently we are looking into working with a consultant to map the future of the Society. A new website is the first item on the list.

■Heritage Sunday, which we did not hold last year because of the pandemic, is tentatively set for Sunday, June 27.

The event will open with a business meeting at 3:30 p.m., with a worship service set for 4 p.m. The holding of the event, which is often a reunion for Boehm descendants, depends

on the course of the pandemic.

■This past year, the Society board donated \$2,000 each to Boehm's United Methodist Church in memory and honor of Jim McCullough, Dave Hess and Maxine Meck. The three were instrumental in starting and maintaining the Society and the reconstruction of the Chapel.

Jim served several terms as president of the Society; Dave was a longtime board member; and Maxine was the Society historian, who organized the rededication program for the Chapel on its 200th anniversary.

■The Society received the following memorials:

For the late Bertha Adams, an original member of the Society, \$950; Maxine Meck,

\$1,000; Jim McCullough, \$500; Jay Hess, a member of Boehm's, \$25; Doris Biechler, who was buried in the Boehm's cemetery, \$1,100; and Ethel Bielmier, who attended Boehm's, \$200.

■Physical work on the Chapel this year will include repointing the front of the building and replacement of some of the shutters.

■Brides-to-be continue to contact us about holding their weddings in the Chapel. At its January meeting, the board declared a moratorium on weddings until we meet again, probably in April.

Most of the brides who contacted us were planning large weddings that would have filled the Chapel, leaving no room for social distancing.

The board continues to follow the recommendations of the Rev. Peggy Johnson, bishop of the Eastern Conference PA of the United Methodist Church, to follow the guidelines of the state. Those guidelines allow 25 percent of capacity for indoor events.

■Also, remember to use AmazonSmile when making purchases. You will help support the Society every time you shop online.

An AmazonSmile icon has been added to the homepage of www.boehmschapel.org. Click on the icon, and you will be taken to the sign-in page for AmazonSmile or go to smile.amazon.com and select Boehm's Chapel Society from the drop-down list before you begin shopping.