

Boehm's Chapel Society

SPRING 2016

boehmschapel@gmail.com

13 West Boehms Road, Willow Street, Pa., 17584

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Digging in!



Photos by Dolores Myers

It has been a long time coming, but ground was excavated for the Boehm's Chapel Society's auxiliary building in December. The basement walls have been poured and at the deadline for this newsletter, framing was soon to start. For an article and more photos, please see Page 2.



Auxiliary building will rise

As construction of the auxiliary building gets underway, we are left to wonder how anything ever gets built.

December was beautiful, except for the bales of paperwork and permits we had to get. And it did not help that during the process two of the three local township supervisors quit, stalling the operation. Then a snowstorm that measured up to 30 inches hit.



Photos by the Rev. Chris Eden

Above, men guide the chute of a concrete truck as the basement walls are poured. At left, a workman works on the forms that hold the concrete. Below, the forms were removed to reveal the basement and foundation walls. Shown is the back of the foundation.



But for all those problems, excavation was started and the walls of the basement were poured.

Soon, the framework of the building, meant to look like a smaller version of an old-time tying shed, will rise. Check the website for those photos as work progresses.

We aim to finish the building and dedicate it on Heritage Sunday, June 26.

That day will include ceremonies for the 225th anniversary of the Chapel. The actual Boehms congregation goes back to 1775.

Photo by the Dolores Myers



Photos by the Rev. Chris Eden

Chalking up another artistic Vespers service



The annual Boehm's Chapel Society's Advent program of Lessons and Carols was held Sunday, Dec. 6. The event brought out a good-sized audience. Above, the people in the lower part of the Chapel are shown; just above, chalk artist Josiah Hurst entertains and educates with a drawing, and at left, a view from the balcony.



Photos by the Rev. Chris Eden

Don Walters: The man who wears many hats

One of the hats he wears is used in portraying the nation's 15th president, James Buchanan.

Don Walters is a member of the Boehm's Chapel Society and has played many characters at the Society's events.

But he is probably best known for playing the part of the only president of the United States to come from Pennsylvania — James Buchanan.

The following article on Don was first published by LNP in its new magazine "Sunday." It is reprinted here with permission.

By Blayne Waterloo

At 78, Donald Walters is already older than the man he portrays. But while in the role, Walters brings vigor to President James Buchanan, a historic figure few audience members know much about. This President's Day, Walters dons Buchanan's persona to perform again at Wheatland, the 15th president's home in Lancaster. He'll take part in a daylong "living history" presentation there on civil rights.

Ahead of this event, we spoke with Walters, a retired

professor from Temple University, about doing volunteer history work, how he became a history buff and the unique challenges of playing a character such as Buchanan.

How did you become so interested in history?

I guess I sort of got hooked on this when I was a child, because both my parents were teachers. During the summertime, we often took trips to historical sites or national parks. The first trip I can remember for sure is when I was finishing the fifth grade ... we took a trip up to Detroit and into Canada. And in Detroit we visited Fort Wayne. I often tell people — they sometimes don't think their kids are going to remember anything — and I say, "You'll be surprised what they remember." Because I can remember some of those details better than some of the places I've been recently. In Toronto, we visited a castle called Casa Loma, and I got to push the button that opened up one of the secret passages. I still remember that.

In this photo taken in 2012, Don Walters portrays Dr. Jacob Gatchell, Civil War surgeon and later a member of the state Senate. The event held in the graveyard at the Chapel was called "Stories Behind the Stones." Dr. Gatchell is buried at Boehm's.

What did you do before you came to Lancaster?

I was at Temple for 36 years. I first retired down to South Carolina, where I worked at the Coastal Discovery Museum as a volunteer. I did primarily history tours there that dealt with the Civil War. But as a nice change of pace, I did a nature tour. It was a beach walk. I had lived in Miami, and of course, even up here you get down to the shore every once in a while to learn that there was a little bit more than sand at the beach.

Like a lot of the retired people around here, when they ask where you're from, you say, "Where do you want me to begin?" Because we're a bunch of vagabonds who've lived hither and yon. But wherever I've lived, especially here, I've tried to get immersed in local history.

And then after you learn all that, you want to tell people about it. It's like where to find a good restaurant — "Have you heard about this place? It's a nice place to eat." Well, I want to tell people about Buchanan, and Edward Hand and Rock Ford... If they give me a chance, I'll be in their ear a while.

How much did you know about President James Buchanan before coming to Wheatland?

I didn't know much. But

I did visit Wheatland for the first time in 1985 and began to learn more about him. And as soon as I decided to retire to Lancaster, I thought working in a museum or a historic house would be quite interesting. So I contacted the folks at Wheatland and also the folks at Rock Ford, and the historic Lancaster walking tour folks. Everybody needs volunteers, you know.

How do you relate to a group who might not be interested in history?

I try to find out the language of the person, and something about their background to see if I can make it more interesting: I've often suggested that what we need to do – which I've seen at some presidential houses, where there are a lot of foreign visitors – is that there will be at least some brochures which have been prepared in French, Chinese, German and the like.

I remember telling a Chinese visitor that when I was in Europe, some of the tours I went on the guide didn't speak English. So I didn't learn much about that tour.

We customize each tour, obviously, to the things we're interested in, and what we think our visitors would be interested in. I often tell folks who are interested in learning more about Wheatland to go through the tour with different people.

At 78, you're older than Buchanan was. Does that make it challenging?

That's one of the nice things about being involved in this thing. You know, they always say to keep yourself mentally active. And I do that by working at different places. I often tell people, "I don't know who I am today until I



In these photos taken in 2012, Don Walters portrays Henry Boehm, greeting visitors at the annual Heritage Sunday.

put my clothes on." Whether I'm going to be Colonial or Victorian or whatever.

Can you share some of the fun parts of portraying Buchanan?

A fun part is having been invited to participate in things such as the unveiling of the Buchanan dollar by the U.S. Mint; tossing out the first ball at one of the Barnstormers' games; and appearing with Abraham Lincoln (portrayed by the late Jim Getty) at the Convention Center.

Are there parts of Buchanan's life that you avoid re-enacting?

We do a re-enactment of his funeral, and I had to say I would not get in the casket. So we always use a mannequin for that.

What I've never really learned is enough of a little Irish accent to put on. Of course, his ancestors were from Ireland, so I'd like to think he had a little bit of an Irish accent.

And I used to try to remember to tilt my head to one side and squint one eye closed, because he had a problem with his eyes. When he would talk to a person up close, he would close one eye, look at you with his nearsighted eye and tilt his head to the side. And I can imagine that would make people wonder, "What's this guy up to?" He evidently had no glasses for that, but I don't go that far.

Contact us

Boehm's Chapel Society maintains a website:
www.boehmschapel.org/

You can also contact Executive Director Dolores Myers at:
boehmschapel@gmail.com.

They lie in unmarked graves at Boehm's

By Dolores Myers
Executive Director
Boehm's Chapel Society

The final resting places of many of the Lancaster County Boehm ancestors have disappeared.

After a visit to the old, shared, Hess/Boehm Cemetery 87 years ago, a Boehm descendant noted the existence of approximately 29 headstones standing in the Boehm section. Today, only five small, roughly carved, field stones can definitely be connected to Boehm family members. The same situation, of missing grave markers, applies to ancestors of many additional Lancaster County families.

There is an ongoing project to discover the identity of all persons interred in the section of Boehm's graveyard, which is adjacent to the Chapel.

The oldest legible tombstone, which is also the largest standing tablet-style tombstone, dates to 1795, erected in memory of Methodist circuit rider William Jessop. His story was recorded in the spring 2011 Chapel newsletter.

Mentioned in the same article was another Methodist traveling preacher, Michael H.R. Wilson. His thick, squat, sandstone tombstone is inscribed with the death date of 1798 and stands to the left of Jessop's, his brother in Christ.

Both tombstones stand, in the row of honor, next to the Chapel. Continuing research into the life of Michael Wilson revealed a living ancestor, who was able to supply a few more tidbits about the life of the itinerant minister.

Wilson's parents were George and Lydia Roby Wilson of Frederick, Maryland. Michael's two middle initials, H.R., reflect the name of his maternal grandfather, Hines Roby. He never married



At an Apple Festival a tractor pulls a cart full of kids along the edge of the Boehm's graveyard.

A faded photograph of what is described as the original stones of Martin and Eve will appear in the 225th-anniversary book for Boehm's Chapel.

but dedicated his short life to spreading the Gospel on horseback.

The original tombstones for Rev. Martin Boehm and his wife Eve Steiner Boehm were removed from the graveyard, most likely in 1929 when the present memorial stone was erected. A faded photograph of what is described as the original stones of Martin and Eve will appear in the 225th-anniversary book for Boehm's Chapel.

The two oldest slate stones, marking the deaths of Rev. Martin Boehm's sister and brother-in-law, Susanna Boehm Resch and her husband, Heinrich Resch, were removed from the graveyard, by the Chapel Society, before the

winter of 2015, to save the Old German inscriptions. They will be preserved in the new auxiliary building, planned to be completed in June. Substitute stones will be placed to mark the graves.

In addition to Susanna, Rev. Martin's sister, Fronica Boehm Shoff, spouse of Jacob Shoaff/Shoff, is believed to be interred in the oldest part of the graveyard. No stone remains for Fronica but it is probable she rests in one of the unmarked graves among her siblings.

Perhaps if her tombstone was carved from slate, like that of her sister, Susanna, it simply deteriorated and crumbled away, after facing decades of Lancaster County's winter.

All available sources have been used to uncover those interred in the cemetery. At present, there are 10 persons known to be buried in unmarked graves.

■ Howard Brindle is buried in an unmarked grave in the newest part of Boehm's grave-

yard. Little is known about his life. His name was discovered in a search through available Pennsylvania death certificates for any persons interred at Boehm's.

His date and place of birth were recorded as April 3, 1900, Manor, Pennsylvania, and his parents were listed as John George and Ethel (Effie) McMichael Brindle. Howard apparently had a near relative, Robert A. Brindle, who acted as the informant for the certificate of death. After the discovery of his name, a search on Ancestry.com revealed Howard Brindle had enlisted in the Navy in December, 1919.

Additional sleuthing showed he was scheduled to take a course in steam fitting at the school for shipfitters in San Francisco. The source of the information was The Weekly Courier, Connellsville, Pennsylvania. The Armed Forces Death Record listed his rank at discharge as Apprentice Seaman. Howard served only

ayear in the Navy, being discharged Dec. 8, 1920, due to an undescribed physical disability.

The Dec. 14, 1922, Morning Herald of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, included an article titled, "Automobile Hits Train."

"While returning to their homes in Connellsville, Tuesday evening, Howard and Samuel Brindle were shaken up and injured when their automobile ran into a train at Trotter crossing." Both Howard and Samuel, along with a probable sister, Stella, and another brother, John G., were listed as living with their parents, John and Ethel Brindle, in the 1921 Connellsville city directory. Howard was listed with no occupation.

In 1935, 1936 and 1940, Howard was found in the Altoona, Pennsylvania, city directories, living at the Altoona Rescue Mission. His occupation was listed as a driver. The year 1950 found Howard living at the Water Street Rescue Mission in Lancaster.

The Rev. Frank P. Lawrence came to Lancaster in 1951 as superintendent of the local mission. Under his supervision, the mission grew to three times its original size and was moved to its present location on South Prince Street, Lancaster. It is most probable that Rev. Lawrence secured a burial plot for Howard Brindle at Boehm's. Rev. Lawrence and his wife, Pauline, are buried close to Howard's grave.

A United States flag was placed on the otherwise unmarked grave of veteran Howard Brindle. His date of death was April 25, 1958.

■At the time of his death, Reeder C. Eshleman's grave was noted by a small marker provided by the Reynold's Funeral Home, Quarryville, Pennsylvania. The marker has since disappeared. Per his obituary, Mr. Eshleman was born in 1962, at Reading, Pennsylvania. He was the son of the late Roscoe M. and Pauline Blankenbiller Eshleman of Holtwood, Penn-

sylvania. He was employed for the seven years prior to his death as a painter for Herr and Leaman farm implement dealers in Quarryville, Pennsylvania. The date of Mr. Eshleman's death was Nov. 17, 1990. A new funeral home marker has been obtained from Reynold's and will be placed on the grave.

■Husband David Lennert Charles and his spouse, Mary Kate Dietz (Deets) Charles, never had tombstones erected on their burial plots, which are in the older section of the church graveyard. David Charles, a local Willow Street farmer, was born Aug. 30, 1870, the son of Joseph and Elizabeth Lennert Charles. He died on Feb. 20, 1943, from chronic myocarditis, at his home in Baumgardner, near the Chapel. He was interred Feb. 22, 1943, under the supervision of Blanche Zercher, funeral director of the neighboring village of Conestoga. He was 72 years old.

Charles' wife, Mary Kate survived her husband by 17 years. She died Aug. 26, 1960, at the age of 86. She was born in Strasburg, Pennsylvania, and was the daughter of Frank and Letitia Greer Deets.

A granddaughter, Jean Hess, knows the approximate location of David and Mary's graves and they will be marked with funeral home markers.

Some unmarked graves were found while searching through old newspapers for various small villages located throughout Lancaster County.

■Clyde C. Tshudy's obituary was found in The New Holland Clarion, dated Nov. 3, 1950. In the newspaper's account of his death, he was born at West Willow, Pennsylvania, a son of Clemens H. and the late Leah Campbell Tshudy. He was a carpenter and a member of First Church of God.

In addition to his father, two children and his wife, Gladys Hartsough Tshudy, survived him. Information found on his Pennsylvania death certificate

indicates he was born Aug. 13, 1903, and died Oct. 29, 1950, from acute coronary occlusion at the age of 47. He was pronounced dead at his home by a Willow Street doctor. Additional research revealed Tshudy's wife, Gladys, remarried and was buried at Conestoga Memorial Park, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Clyde Tshudy's parents are interred at Boehm's, and perhaps their son is buried in an unmarked grave nearby.

■The death of an infant was reported in an article in the Lancaster New Era on Dec. 6, 1884. "Death has again visited this district, the victim being a little daughter of Mr. Jos. Charles, aged four months. The particular disease of which she died was not known, but the attendant physician pronounced it some affliction of the heart. The interment was made in the burying ground attached to Boehm's Chapel. The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Smith, of the Safe Harbor Circuit."

Charles family information, submitted by Michael Charles, indicates the infant is Margaret Charles, daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth Lennert Charles. She was born August 1864, and died Dec. 6 of the same year. The baby is most likely buried close to her parents.

■The death of Baby Boy Rittenhouse was discovered when searching through Pennsylvania death certificates for burials at Boehm's. The stillborn son of Rachel Rittenhouse was born July 9, 1909, at Hollingers, near Willow Street. Helen's sister, Lille Estelle Rittenhouse Duncan, is buried in the older section of the graveyard. The baby may be buried near his aunt, uncle and cousins.

■Also buried beside Lille Estelle and her husband, John Duncan, is their great-granddaughter, Doris Louise Long. Doris, the stillborn daughter of Ralph and Verneda Bitner Long, was born prematurely on June 27, 1934. Information

was obtained from her brother William R. Long. A funeral home marker will be added to Doris grave.

■The search for the infant child of Owen and Martha Dagen Goss was prompted by a question by relatives Christ and Elaine Hess. It took several trips to the state archives in Harrisburg to sort out death certificates for various infant Goss children, because no exact year of death was known. A death certificate for Charles Owen Goss was found for Nov. 26, 1921. He died at the age of one month, 17 days, from hemophilia, per the information recorded by A.E. Leaman, M.D., the physician at West Willow. He is assumed to be buried near his parent's tombstone.

■The name of Amanda Gochenaur was found in the mid-1930 cemetery transcription recorded by Albert Gerberich. Listed as a daughter of John and Mary Stettler Gochenaur, Amanda's birthdate is recorded as Nov. 11, 1863, and her date of death as Oct. 22, 1865. If the transcribed information is accurate, Amanda would be the twin sister of Emanuel S. Gochenaur, whose tombstone indicates the same date of birth as well as the same date of death. Gerberich did not include the name of Emanuel Gochenaur in his records. Most likely, Gerberich misread the child's name on the tombstone, which seems to indicate that as far back as the 1930s, some tombstone inscriptions were hard to decipher.

In all probability, there are other unknown persons interred at Boehm's. Gaps between the tombstones in the oldest section of the cemetery tend to lend support to this assumption.

Please contact boehm-chapel@gmail.com with the names of known friends or family members buried in the cemetery, who do not have a headstone to mark their graves.

Boehm descendant dies at age 90

Janet M. Wilson, 90, of Lancaster, died Friday, Dec. 18, 2015, at St. Anne's Home.

She was the wife of the late Robert B. Wilson who died in 2005. Born in Byerland, Pequea Township, she was the daughter of the late Charlie A. Abel and Edith E. Eshleman.

Mrs. Wilson was a descendant of Susannah Boehm, the sister of Martin Boehm, and the daughter of Jacob Boehm,

the first Boehm immigrant to Lancaster County. Mrs. Wilson was the ninth generation, including Jacob.

She spent most of her adult life as a homemaker, living in New Danville. She was a member of Boehm's United Methodist Church and was a first soprano in the choir. She belonged to the Chapel Society.

Surviving is a daughter, Dolores S., wife of Dennis E.

Myers of Millersville; a grandson, Robert E.W., husband of Elizabeth Z. Myers, of Millersville; and a granddaughter, Bethany S., wife of Andrew R. Railing, of Willow Street.

She was preceded in death by a brother, Paul E. Abel.

A memorial service was held Dec. 22 at Boehm's Chapel with the Rev. Michael W. Sigman officiating.

Interment was held in the



Janet Wilson

adjoining church cemetery.

The family asked that contributions in Mrs. Wilson's memory be made to Boehm's Chapel Society, P. O. Box 272, Willow

Street, PA, 17584.

Mrs. Wilson was the mother of Dolores Myers, executive director of the Chapel Society.

Boehm's Chapel Society

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Plans coming together for 225th anniversary

An anniversary celebration of 225 years of faith will be held Sunday, June 26, at historic Boehm's Chapel, 13 West Boehms Road, Willow Street.

The old stone chapel, designed by Bishop Richard Whatcoat, was erected in 1791, as the first church in Lancaster County built for the use of the religious society called Methodists.

It was called Boehm's Chapel because it was erected on land donated by Martin Boehm, and members of the

Boehm family aided in the founding of the church.

The Sunday afternoon celebration will feature several distinct segments.

The official opening and a walk-through of the Chapel Society's new auxiliary building will be held in the early afternoon, followed by the burying of a time capsule near the new building.

The event will be followed by the annual Chapel Society business meeting and recognition of Boehm descendants.

Bishop Peggy Johnson, leader of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, will bring the main message for the 35th Heritage Sunday worship service, at 4 p.m. Representatives of the Board of Bishops of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, district pastors, including Pastor Joe Garber of Byerland Mennonite Church, and Bishop Steve Weaver, will discuss the recently passed resolution regarding the remission of the censure of excom-

munication of Martin Boehm, in approximately 1775.

Special music by the Sun Boehms and other groups, participants in period dress, a circuit rider on horseback and members of a Colonial militia will be on hand to provide a feeling of 18th century lifestyle.

Definite times and additional details will appear on the Chapel website, prior to the June 26, celebration. Go to www.boehmschapel.org or phone 717-872-4133.