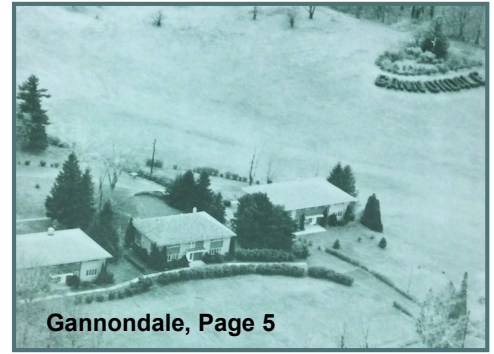




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Hours: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the offices of the Society are closed to the public. Please watch our Facebook page for updates.

THE HARBOR VIEW



A quarterly publication of the Harborcreek Historical Society

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Thank you Erie Gives donors!

By John Skuce and Cam Stadtmueller

We are grateful to those who gave to the Harborcreek Historical Society on August 11th during the Erie Community Foundation's annual Erie Gives event. Donations will be used to support operating expenses for the Gifford-Blanchfield House and future projects. The following donors, plus three anonymous donors, gave a total of \$2,802 to the society.

Thank you, Barbara Anderson, Charles A. Bliley, Nancy Brown, Team Cofield, Sarah and Bill DePlatchett, George Frank, Kelly Hess, Carol Huber, William H. Klauk, David and Andrea Maille, Eric and Nancy Marshall, Charles and Judy McKay, Jacques and Melinda Meyer, Eric and Tracy Moore, John and Eleanor Nowakowski, Linda Robbins, Michelina Rodland, Carolyn Ruth, John and Judy Skuce, Ruth Speice, John and Brenda Weaver, and Carol Wood.

Go green and request an e-newsletter!

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You can find the full results for the 2020 Erie Gives event at <https://www.eriegives.org/>.

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Smiley's Ice Cream Truck draws crowds

By Louise Smerick



Smiley's Ice Cream Truck served up smiles and tasty treats July 23rd from the parking lot of the Gifford-Blanchfield House. The truck, which serves ice cream made by the Penn State Berkey Creamery, drew a crowd of 50 or more and helped raise just over \$100 in donations for the society's pavilion project.

Smiley's Ice Cream Truck will make another appearance in the society's parking lot on September 17th 4:00-7:00 pm. Be sure to stop in and satisfy your sweet tooth!

Gifts to the Society

Anna Mae Van Dyne
Rick and Louise Smerick
George and Cam Stadtmueller

In Memory of Virginia "Ginnie" Andersen
In Memory of Carlene Stroup
In Memory of Carlene Stroup

The Society began the Memorial Gifts program a decade ago, and many members have given to the organization in recognition of a loved one, a classmate or a family celebration. We invite you to consider making a donation "In Memory," "In Honor," or "On the Occasion" of a person or event that is important to you.

With deep appreciation, we remember Carlene Stroup, a ten-year member of the newsletter team

By Cam Stadtmueller



Photograph Source:
<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/16574854/Carlene-Ann-Stroup>

An important member of *The Harbor View* newsletter team recently and unexpectedly left us. Sadly, Carlene Stroup died on July 4th. Over the past decade, she meticulously proofread every issue of the quarterly newsletter before it went to publication.

Carlene and her husband Bob were patrons of the Harborcreek Historical Society for many years, and they actively took part in our activities. When the society was working on the 2003 publication *Harborcreek's Yesteryears*, they photographed the buildings featured in the "Times Gone By" photograph gallery of the section "Barns of the Township." Carlene also contacted all the churches in the township and wrote the section "Churches and Community Services." For her efforts, she was credited with co-writing *Harborcreek's Yesteryears* with Harold Kirk, Louise Smerick, and Cam Stadtmueller. Harold Kirk, another one of our hard-working volunteers lost too soon to us, gave Carlene a nickname during work on the project that stuck. We are thankful for all the contributions Carlene - the English 'Major General' - made to the team, and we deeply feel her loss.

Russell Log Cabins Fireplace

By guest writer Martha Smith Bunnell

A little over a year ago, two students enrolled in Mercyhurst University's Introduction to Historic Preservation course helped develop text and select photographs for an interpretive panel presenting the history of the free-standing fireplace located in front of the Harborcreek Township office and alongside Buffalo Road. The fireplace is a remnant of the Russell Log Cabins. In gathering information from the family, the society was fortunate to receive the following information from Martha Smith Bunnell, a granddaughter of the couple who owned and operated the roadside amenity.



Martha Smith Bunnell and her husband, John, c. 1962.

If I were to tell the story of the fireplace, I would begin with Leo Russell, who was born at Wilgus, Ohio. His father owned the local general store, and he was the postmaster and a teacher. As a teen, Leo traveled as a buyer for his father's store. Leo and Nina Gifford Russell were married in 1900, and, after her father's (Horace Gifford) death, they moved to the 70-acre property in Harborcreek in 1901. Nina grew up in the Gifford-Russell House, just as her father Horace Gifford did, and her grandparents Washington Franklin and Eunice Gifford.

Leo began farming with horses on the property, growing grapes, strawberries, peaches, apples, potatoes, and many other types of produce, which brought many steady customers out from Erie.

(Continued on Page 3)

Russell Log Cabins Fireplace *(Continued from Page 2)*

Leo was outgoing; he enjoyed interacting with people and, of course, had experience working with the public from his days employed at his father's store. These interests inspired him to build a small log building on Buffalo Road using logs from the property. From here, they served beverages. They also put in gas pumps. To satisfy hungry customers, Nina made beef sandwiches at lunchtime (from filet mignon!). One thing led to another, and when customers began asking for an expanded menu, the idea of a restaurant developed. Again, logs were brought from the woods for the building. Leo built the restaurant with the help of their hired man, Tom Stell. The farm had many large rocks, which, when cracked open, revealed sparkling interiors. Leo found an expert stonemason to build the restaurant's fireplace, install a stone fireplace in the downstairs bedroom in the house, and add trim to the new front porch on the house, all with the beautiful stones from the property. Each of the four pillars across the front of the house were stoned up about halfway, and stone was added to each side of the steps forming a railing. Leo had a barter system with this man. The stonemason worked on Leo's property, and, in exchange, he had permission to take stones from the property to use in his other buildings projects in Erie. Many years later, when Rick Blanchfield had the fireplace refurbished, his expert craftsmanship was highly praised! In later years, Leo liked to point out "his stones" on many houses in Erie to his grandchildren. Unfortunately, the stonemason's name has been forgotten!



*Leo Russell and his grandchildren,
September 1965.*

The purpose of the next expansion of the business was to provide overnight accommodations for tired travelers. Once again, Leo went back to the woods to harvest trees, and 21 log cabins were built. The restaurant stayed in business until 1944; it was closed during WWII and used as two permanent rental units. The cabins stayed open until Interstate 90 came through around 1960. The restaurant building was taken down by Leo's daughter Mildred and her husband Ivan in the winter of 1958, but the fireplace was left standing. When Ivan and Mildred sold the property to Harborcreek Township in 1967, it was stipulated that the fireplace be left standing as a part of the history of Harborcreek Township. During the dedication of the Gifford-Blanchfield House in 2017, an interpretive panel was placed by the house showing a photograph of the restaurant. At that time, it was noted that the hearth was much lower to the ground than it had been in 1961. Either the fireplace has settled, or the land has been built up.

The Two Thomas Reeses *By Brenda Weaver and Cam Stadtmueller*

When the society was formed in 1994, one of the first things the charter members did was research the earliest families to settle in the area. It was well-documented that Thomas Rees, Esquire, was a surveyor and agent for the Pennsylvania Population Company. His first visit to the area was in 1794, and he "served Pennsylvania as the commissioner for the sale of property in the Erie Triangle" from 1796 to 1802. When he resigned from the post, his final payment included 1,000 acres in the Gospel Hill area of Harborcreek Township. At age 39, Rees established his home in Harborcreek, and his wife Ann Pearson Rees joined him. In 1816, their only child, Ann, was born. Rees' mother, Sarah, also lived with the family, and, eventually, Rees' niece, Helen Ewing, came in 1830. Census records confirm that Rees brought to Harborcreek two enslaved children, who remained with the family until they reached the age of manumission at 28. Rees gifted 50 acres of his land to each those men, James Titus and Robert McConnell.

(Continued on Page 4)

Office Hours

Regular office hours have been suspended due to COVID-19.

Please call or email to schedule an appointment with our volunteers.

We continue to accept research inquiries.

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The Two Thomas Reeses *(Continued from Page 3)*

The Rees home was located near the ridgeline on Hannon Road hill. The agricultural fields and pastures stretched west along the ridge; Reese (Rees) Road now goes through them. At the intersection of Reese and Station Roads, land was deeded for an all-purpose meeting house and a cemetery, which is known today as Gospel Hill Burial Ground. All family members, except Helen Ewing, were buried there. McConnell and Titus family members are also interred at the cemetery.

In May, *Erie Times News* journalist Valerie Myers shared an email with the society that she had received from Laura Deering of Rushford, Minnesota. Deering was researching a Black stonemason credited with building many structures in the Rochester, MN and LaCrosse, WI area, and she had established that the man had been brought north by abolitionists George Stevens and his wife, Harriett Rees Stevens. Deering listed Harriett as the granddaughter of Thomas Rees, with Henry Joseph as her father and her mother being Mary Hubbard Rees, who is connected to the Hubbard House Underground Railroad Museum in Ashtabula County, OH.

Society researcher Brenda Weaver set to work learning more. She discovered that there were two Thomas Reeses listed in the U.S. Census in 1800, 1810, 1830, and 1840. One is labeled "Esquire," and this refers to the Harborcreek Thomas Rees born in 1763. The other Thomas, listed as Thomas Rees, Jr., was born in 1772. This Thomas married Mary Reed, daughter of Seth and Hannah Harwood Reed, who are considered the first permanent residents of Erie. Thomas, Jr. is listed in the county history by Warner, Beers & Company as an innkeeper for a hotel at Third and French Streets in Erie in 1812. Thomas and Mary, known as Polly, married in 1799 and had the following children: Henry Joseph, Hannah, Rebecca, Harriett, Sarah, Eliza, Thomas, Jr., George, Seth, and Roland. On October 28, 1826, Thomas died and was buried in the Erie Cemetery.

The mystery that remains as of the writing of this article is whether there is a familial connection between the two Thomas Reeses.

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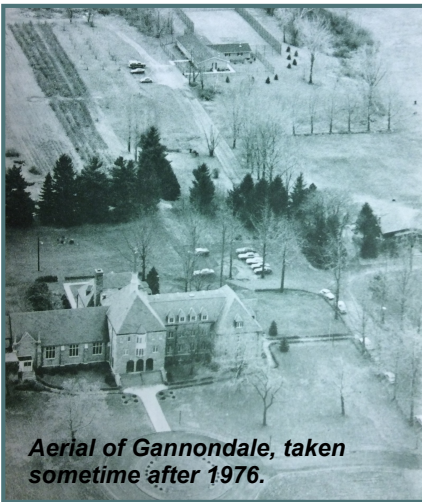
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Looking back on Gannondale

Gannondale is the focus of the Harborcreek Historical Society's next article in the Harborcreek Township supported *yourHarborcreek* magazine, which is published quarterly and mailed to every household in the township. The Fall 2020 edition is due out in August/September. Here is an excerpt from the article.



Aerial of Gannondale, taken sometime after 1976.

Gannondale began in 1934 at the prompting of Bishop John Mark Gannon, who was intent on creating a program aimed at caring for teenage girls and expanding the charities program of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie that, at the time, included St. Joseph's Home for Children, Erie Day Nursery, Saint Mary's Home, and the Harborcreek Training School for Boys. An order of Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the North American Union in Pittsburgh was invited by Bishop Gannon to lead the new program because of their long history of helping young women. The order's origins can be traced to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge, a congregation of religious women founded in Caen, France whose original purpose was to provide shelter for women of dissolute behavior, but it was later changed to include the care and training of neglected, dependent teenage girls. Congregations in the United States commonly run residential homes for women, nursing homes, day care centers, pastoral ministries, outreach programs, and programs offering care to immigrants.

As a result of Bishop Gannon's efforts, a new congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity was established in Erie, and the group purchased the property on East Lake Road, which included several small farmhouses that were quickly converted into residence halls. The new youth-centered charity was named Gannondale in honor of Bishop Gannon and was founded on the premise that all youth deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and have access to the best possible care and treatment, which would restore a sense of dignity, self-worth, and self-esteem. It was to cater to girls ages 10-21 (later changed to ages 12-18) who were in trouble with the law, suffering from abuse, or with family problems. Gannondale welcomed its first residents in May 1934 under the leadership of Mother Agnes Dunn (1934-1953), and the first mass was said in June.

For our members and friends living outside of the township, you can pick up a copy of *yourHarborcreek* from the Harborcreek Township office on Buffalo Road, or you can access a PDF of the publication online at <https://www.harborcreek.org/>.



An interview with Steven Mooradian, a Mercyhurst University student whose senior project will focus on the history of Buffalo Road

In an effort to introduce you – members and friends of the Harborcreek Historical Society – to Steven Mooradian, a Harborcreek native who is attending his senior year at Mercyhurst University and has decided to focus his senior project on the history of Buffalo Road, we corresponded with Steven via email and conducted the following interview.

Society: Can you share with our readers a little about yourself?

Steven: *I was born and raised in Harborcreek (HCHS Class of 2017) and am currently a senior public history student at Mercyhurst University! While history, both in study and practice, is my passion, in my free time I am an avid sports fan and golfer. I have also played guitar for 10+ years.*

(Continued on Page 6)

An interview with Steven Mooradian *(Continued from Page 5)*

Society: We understand that you've reached out to the Harborcreek Historical Society to discuss a potential project that would help you satisfy the requirements of your academic program at Mercyhurst University. What can you tell us about your proposed senior project?

Steven: *The project itself is still taking shape, however, I am setting up the framework to create a podcast series highlighting the dynamic and ongoing history of the Buffalo Road (US 20) corridor within Harborcreek Township. Each episode will likely cover one concept or theme relating to Buffalo Road, such as "transportation", "recreation", "agriculture", etc. The final number of episodes and length of each episode will be determined by amount of information available and research done. I would also love to include some personal interviews within the episodes, however due to our ongoing battle with COVID-19, it is unclear if this will be possible. I hold out hope!*

Society: You must have considered many different formats for your project. Why are you leaning towards creating a podcast?

Steven: *The possibilities for a project like this are nearly endless, but our society continues to push for and demand digital history and digital resources. I want whatever finished product comes from this project to be consumed and enjoyed by a wide range of people, both in the Harborcreek community and elsewhere. By creating a podcast, a popular media format for history and many other subjects, the outreach for this project could be significant. Reaching the most people in the most effective way is one of the ultimate goals of public history.*

Society: Why did you choose to work with the history of Harborcreek, and how did you decide to focus your project on the history of Buffalo Road?

Steven: *I knew right away I wanted to do my project on Harborcreek or at the very least the east of Erie County, because this is my home and while I certainly have some previous knowledge, I am excited to learn more about Harborcreek's past. The history of Harborcreek is quite extensive. I found out almost immediately that I would have to narrow my project down to one area or period of time. I think Buffalo Road is a brilliant case study in urban sprawl and development of suburban America. The stretch of US 20 within the Township has seen many changes and continues to be the main artery of our community.*

Society: What do you hope to accomplish with your project, both academically and in the Harborcreek community?

Steven: *I really hope to showcase the history of where I grew up and create a resource for those looking to learn more about Harborcreek. This is a fairly significant project and whenever you finish something like that there is always a sense of gratification. Of course, I want everyone to enjoy and learn something from my work, but because of its digital nature, I hope to get those in my age bracket to take interest in the history of the area. People live in places like Harborcreek for their entire lives and aren't presented with a good opportunity to learn about their community. I hope to change that.*

Society: Have you settled on a timeline for your project? What are your next steps, and when do you hope to start and wrap up work on the project?

Steven: *I have already gotten to work on framing the project and doing some preliminary research! A strict timeline has not been set and due to the pandemic, flexibility is going to be a major challenge of this project. Fortunately, much of the research can be done on my own, as well as the recording of the body of the podcast. I am due to graduate next May and usually projects are being wrapped up right up until the end of the semester. So, by April I should have most of the project completed.*

Society: Does the potential exist for the Harborcreek community to participate in the making of your project? If so, how do you think you'll engage the community?

Steven: *Absolutely! Again, I am hoping for some interview participants, but more to come on that if we can make it happen for safety reasons. If not interviews, any information regarding the Buffalo Road corridor or connections you might have would be wonderful. Harborcreek is a helpful community, so I anticipate this will be an interesting and important component to the project.*

Society: Is there anything that we didn't ask about, but that you'd like to share?

Steven: *If anyone is looking to provide information or just has more questions, email me! (smooradian4@gmail.com) I check email regularly and will reply as soon as possible. Thank you for your support Harborcreek! I look forward to taking this project on and can't wait to share the finish product in the spring!*