



Harborcreek Historical Society
5661 Buffalo Road, P.O. Box 121
Harborcreek, PA 16421
T: 814.899.4447
E: harborcreekhistory@gmail.com
www.harborcreekhistory.org

Hours: The Gifford-Blanchfield House
is currently closed to the public.



THE HARBOR VIEW

A quarterly publication of the Harborcreek Historical Society



Inside this issue...

Gifts to the Society	...Page 2
Tribute to Lori Sheridan	...Page 2
Hoag marker installed	...Page 2
Fruit stand improvements	...Page 3
Cowell Boatworks	...Page 3
Community cookbook exhibit	...Page 5
Highlights of Harborcreek history	...Page 5
2020 Year-end financials	...Page 6

Go green and request an e-newsletter!

If you would like to request to receive newsletters electronically, send a current email address to harborcreekhistory@gmail.com.

Print copies of the newsletter are available in black and white only, while the digital version is in full color.

Board of Directors

Melinda Meyer, Vice President
John Skuce, Treasurer
Jane Ingold, Secretary
Nancy Brown
Tracy Longnecker Moore
Bill Rodland
Louise Smerick
Brenda Weaver

A tentative re-opening

We miss you. Since March 2020, the Harborcreek Historical Society's Gifford-Blanchfield House has been closed to the public, like so many other historical societies, museums, and historic sites across the country. Our volunteers have continued to answer research requests and talk with those wanting to donate to the collections, but it has been from a safe distance. We are excited to share that a re-opening date has tentatively been set for Saturday, June 5th. Barring a resurgence of COVID-19 or new mitigation instructions from the Governor, the Gifford-Blanchfield House will re-open with limited hours Saturdays 10 am – 2 pm and adhere to the state health department's guidelines for operating safely. For additional information, contact us or visit our website at www.harborcreekhistory.org.

Society seeks candidates for open board seat

The Harborcreek Historical Society is managed by an all-volunteer team, which includes a nine-member board of directors. The board meets every other month and oversees the Society's decision-making with regards to finances, education and community outreach, collections management and care, operating the township-owned Gifford-Blanchfield House, stewardship of the Gospel Hill Burial Ground, and community partnerships. Anyone interested in learning more about the role or expressing their interest in joining the board is encouraged to contact the Society.

Renew your membership

This past year has been difficult for so many reasons. But we are humbled by the generosity of our members. Your support this past year helped cover expenses incurred during the shutdown. While the Gifford-Blanchfield House was closed to the public, we continued to incur utility and operating costs, and income generated through memberships and donations enabled us to remain on-budget. Please consider renewing your membership for 2021. (*Membership renewal notices are included with this issue of the newsletter. For those who receive the newsletter electronically, a separate mailing will be sent.*)

Gifts to the Society

Amy Bross
Valerie Heinrich
Knox Law Firm
Amelia Kapsar
Sandra Guckes
Dave Goddard
George & Cam Stadtmueller

In memory of Richard Guckes
In memory of Richard Guckes
In memory of Richard Guckes
In memory of Richard Guckes
In memory of Richard Guckes
In memory of Richard Guckes
In memory of Bob & 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 appreciation to our outgoing president

By Cam Stadtmueller

The board of directors of the Harborcreek Historical Society express their sincere gratitude to Lori Sheridan, who served as President of the Society from 2013 to December 2020. Lori first started volunteering for the Society in 2009 as a member of the Archives Committee, and she was elected a director in 2010. During her seven-year tenure, the Society:

- Moved its office and collections storage twice, once within Knowledge Park and then to the township-owned Gifford-Blanchfield House;
- Initiated a wayside marker program that now includes interpretive panels installed at Shades Beach, the Gifford-Blanchfield House, Roadside Park, Gospel Hill Burial Ground, and Hoag Cemetery;
- Participated in Erie Yesterday's Out of the Box project and developed an educational trunk about Harborcreek history that teachers and educators can borrow;
- Celebrated its 20th anniversary with a series of special events and projects;
- Worked with Harborcreek Township and the Blanchfield family to make decisions on the renovation and dedication of the Gifford-Blanchfield House;
- Developed a strategic plan for the Harborcreek Historical Society and Gifford-Blanchfield House property and drafted a revised set of by-laws for the Society;
- Held six annual meetings, as well as more than ten public programs and special events, including a successful fundraising event at 6 Mile Cellars; and
- Joined the Township's Community Engagement Team.

We greatly appreciate the time, talents, and leadership Lori provided the Society over the last seven years, and we wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

Hoag Cemetery marker installed

This past fall, the crew at Harborcreek Township installed the Society's newest interpretive panel at Hoag Cemetery. We are grateful for the Township's support of the wayside marker program and encourage you to stop by and see the new sign, which includes the history of the cemetery, an overview of the most recent clean-up effort, and a list of known burials. The cemetery is located on Depot Road just north of the intersection with Clark Road. Funding for the marker was provided by the Harborcreek Historical Society and Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.





Fruit stand to receive improvements

Harborcreek Township is making repairs to the old Blanchfield family produce stand on Route 20. An addition on the back of the original fruit stand that was no longer functional was removed last fall. Look for work to resume in the spring.

The building is evidence of Harborcreek's deep-rooted agricultural heritage. Built around 1954 by Covington and Dorothy Blanchfield, the stand was known for its sweet corn and closed in 2000. Since becoming the property of the Township, the stand has been leased and operated by the Burch family.

Cowell Boatworks: The rough water boats by Richard Cowell

The Harborcreek Historical Society seeks guest writers for both The Harbor View quarterly newsletter and YourHarborcreek magazine on an ongoing basis. The following article was submitted to the Society in February 2021 by Richard Cowell, whose family owned and operated Cowell Boatworks from 1953 to 1962. Mr. Cowell's full article will appear in the spring issue of YourHarborcreek magazine, which will be available online at <http://www.harborcreek.org>.



A Cowell Boats promotional photograph with pilot Ron Smith, Nancy Altman Fye, and Barb Janicki.

He was a man with a strong sense of adventure, with a keen eye for entrepreneurial opportunity, with the self-confidence to bring a "dream" to reality. These are a few descriptions of Thomas Cowell and his boundless energy that led to the founding of Cowell Boatworks in Harborcreek Township.

The Cowell property is located on the north side of East Lake Road and includes the mouth of Six Mile Creek. It previously belonged to Davenport and Winifred Galbraith, whose permanent home was at 6th and Myrtle Streets in Erie, now occupied by The Woman's Club of Erie. The Harborcreek property was their summer residence and source of relaxation along the Lake Erie shore. The Galbraith's had a Tudor style home on the west side of Six Mile Creek, which is a Cowell residence today. East of the creek they had multiple cottages.

Tommy and Sally Cowell purchased the property in the '40's. They opened a small boat livery at the site of the earlier Heath livery and adjacent frame cottages. The 1940 Lyman boats offered for rent at the livery were better suited to inland lakes with low to moderate waves. Tommy knew that the Great Lakes, Lake Erie in particular, required a more substantial boat. For years he had been thinking of redesigning boats to be sleeker, stronger, and more dependable. He told Sally that Lyman boats were hard to get, and he should build his own boats for the livery to flourish. Build a factory just to supply boats to a small boat livery...who would do that? Not for one moment was Sally fooled, but she knew it was his dream and agreed.

(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.

New Members

Ruth Speice, Erie
Esther Tuttle Wagner, Wattsburg
Mark and Anna Daghish, Lawrence Park

Telephone: 814.899.4447 • Email: harborcreekhistory@gmail.com • Website: www.harborcreekhistory.org

Cowell Boatworks *(Continued from Page 3)*

In 1953, the long cement block building at the mouth of Six Mile Creek was ready and comprised a factory and small livery. Tom hired local men who were skilled builders or who were willing to learn the boat building process. Philippine mahogany and oak were purchased and arrived in Erie by train. A stake body truck would bring the loads of wood out to the Boatworks. Oak was formed into the ribs over which marine plywood and oak would be secured together with mahogany to form a sleek, stylish hull and interior seating. The earliest models were 14-foot fishing and pleasure craft further evolving into models ranging from 15 to 20-feet.

The works building consisted of different sections for milling, steaming ribs and planks to be shaped on a form or jig. The various models were outfitted with accessories including storage areas, bunk sleepers, steering mechanisms, windshields, convertible tops, and side, as well as stern, curtains, and eventually a standard fiberglassed hull for maintenance.

Prices in the earliest years of production went from \$310 to \$410 and, near the end of production, up to \$1,660 for the 20-foot Windswept model, which was an inboard marine engine with outboard drive. The various models were, for the most part, given nautical names, such as "Fisherman," "Viking," and "Sea Pup," but one was titled "King", named for our Great Dane.

RUNABOUT

A rugged craft that appeals to all who seek boating adventure . . . built to give the proud owner every comfort and pleasure possible. Offers ease in handling, superb riding and stability.

THE PAL

A real value in a seaworthy boat. Styled for comfortable roominess by eliminating the midship deck from the Runabout hull, and shortening the forward deck. The hinged backrest of the bow seat folds aft, providing ample stowage space under the deck. Note that there are no obstructions from forward deck to stern.

SEA PUP

A favorite at parks, resorts and boat liveries is this most practical and versatile boat in the moderate price class. Dependable and seaworthy in the heaviest water, it can still be lifted from the water with ease.

THOMAS W. COWELL
FOUNDER

Cowell Boats promotional flyer featuring three of their wooden boats models.

Read the full article in the spring issue of the YourHarborcreek magazine, which will be available online at <http://www.harborcreek.org>.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

6 MILE CELLARS / Bart Towell and Patrick Walsh	580-8375	5727 FIRMAN ROAD
BREVILLIER VILLAGE	899-8600	5416 EAST LAKE ROAD
C&C PRINTING	725-3047	23 S. LAKE STREET, NORTH EAST
CHARTERS BY AIR DENVER / Dave Kempa	(800) 333-4057	www.AirDenver.com
DAVE'S APPLIANCE SERVICE	838-8213	1119 POWELL AVENUE
DUSCKAS-TAYLOR FUNERAL HOME	315-0911	5151 BUFFALO ROAD
EASTWAY LANES*	899-9855	4110 BUFFALO ROAD
ERIE MILL & PRESS / J.Nowakowski	454-1581	953 EAST 12 TH STREET
GINDY'S MOBILE HOME PARK / Robert Gindlesperger		4004 BUFFALO ROAD
HEISE REBUILDING / Joe and Lois Heise	899-8186	1291 WALBRIDGE ROAD
JOHN D. FOX PHOTOGRAPHY	434-3445	176 CAMBRIDGE ROAD, ERIE
JOHNSTON'S EVERGREEN NURSERY, INC.	739-2820	10000 WALES ROAD
MY DADDY'S BARBER SHOP*	899-6471	4013 MAIN STREET, LAWRENCE PARK
RABBIT'S HAT ANTIQUES/ Katherine Carlson & Kristine Nelson	878-2198	
RE/MAX Real Estate Group / Linda Miklinski*	898-3558	4939 BUFFALO ROAD
RE/MAX Real Estate Group / Seth Tuttle	898-3558	4939 BUFFALO ROAD
SMILEY'S ICE CREAM TRUCK Laurie and Jim Smialek	737-9360	
STAN'S GARDEN CENTER*	899-5424	5001 BUFFALO ROAD

Your business could be listed here as a sponsor. Please contact us to learn more.

*Businesses which have been a Society sponsor for ten years or more.



Community cookbooks offer more than recipes

“...over a century before pinboards were virtual and bookmarking had nothing to do with actual books, people shared their domestic prowess through community cookbooks. And these cookbooks were so much more than just a catalog of recipes - they were fundraisers, political pamphlets, and historical accounts of the communities they served.” (<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2012/07/18/156983942/long-before-social-networking-community-cookbooks-ruled-the-stove>)

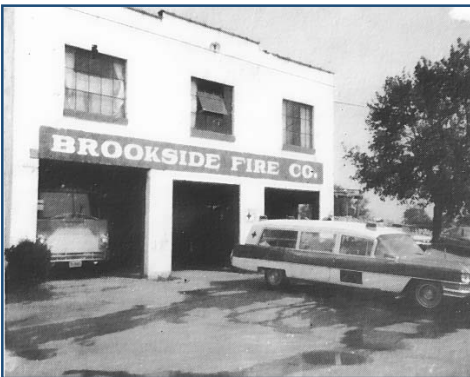
The Harborcreek Historical Society archives and reading room contains several historic and contemporary cookbooks published by Harborcreek churches, organizations, and social clubs. They reflect the social and cultural history of the Township. Society volunteer Brenda Weaver has selected about ten of these cookbooks to display inside the Gifford-Blanchfield House, and the exhibit will be available to view once the Society resumes open hours in June.



Highlights of Harborcreek history by Cam Stadtmueller

1950s: During the “golden era of drive-in theaters,” Harborcreek had two popular drive-ins. Lakeview on East Lake Road was built and owned by Tommy and Sally Cowell and opened July 1950 with the feature “A Letter to Three Wives.” The Lawrence Park Drive-In at 4690 Iroquois Avenue was originally operated by Gold and Colean, but, in 1952, came under the ownership of Earl Beckwith and Blatt Brothers.

1959-60: Interstate 90 bisected Harborcreek Township and brought about the gradual decline of restaurants, service stations, tearooms and tourist homes, motels, fruit stands and other businesses dependent on tourist travel along Routes 5 and 20.



1960: Ed Kerner gave \$3,000 to Brookside Volunteer Fire Department for equipment and expansion of the station at Athens and Station Road. The department was started in 1945, the same year that the Fairfield Hose Company on East Lake Road was established in response to rapid residential and commercial development. Harborcreek Village’s fire department dates to 1920.

1960: Eastway Plaza on Buffalo Road held its Grand Opening from March 31 - April 9. Miller’s Department Store and Century Foods were the anchor stores, but it included a dozen small businesses. Today, the space is occupied by Giant Eagle and an adjacent plaza.



1960-61: Eastway Bowling Lanes welcomed its first season of bowlers to its 16 alleys. Today, the popular business has 40 alleys and hosts many local and national tournaments.

1966: Port Erie Plastics moved to Troupe Road from its original plant in the City of Erie. The company was started in 1953 by Henry Witkowski.

1966: General Store in the Village closed its doors after 128 years of operation and five owners. Opened in 1838 by Ralph Carter, it was sold to Benjamin Riblet, William “Tip” Allen, Byron Roberts, and, lastly, Floyd Richards.

(Continued on Page 6)

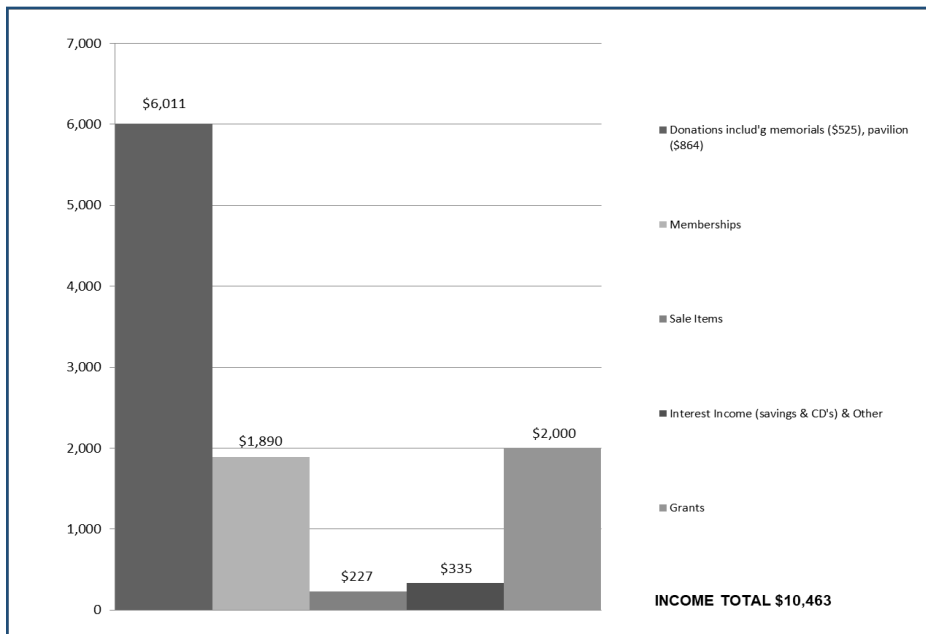
Highlights of Harborcreek history *(Continued from Page 5)*



1966: Construction of the Mount Saint Benedict Monastery at East Lake and Troupe Roads was started. The building included a devotional chapel, housing for the Benedictine Sisters, and areas for community-centered programs. Established in 1930, Camp Glinodo predates the monastery. The popular girls camp was phased out by 1980, and the Benedictines repurposed it as Glinodo Conference Center.

1969: A cornfield at the southeast corner of Buffalo and Nagle Roads became the K-Mart Plaza. The store's Grand Opening was November 24, 1969. K-Mart closed permanently in October 2017. Presently, a handful of the small storefronts are occupied, and the former K-Mart space awaits a new occupant.

2020 Year-end Financials by John Skuce, Treasurer



INCOME

Donations: \$6,011 (57%)
 Memberships: \$1,890 (18%)
 Sale Items: \$227 (2%)
 Interest Income: \$335 (3%)
 Grants: \$2,000 (19%)

INCOME TOTAL: \$10,463

EXPENSES

Office, Bldg/Grounds, Internet/telephone, ...: \$2,104 (32%)
 Grant Projects: \$1,871 (28%)
 Utilities: \$1,584 (24%)
 Insurance: \$632 (10%)
 Newsletter: \$190 (3%)
 Professional Memberships: \$170 (3%)
 All Other: \$89 (1%)

EXPENSE TOTAL: \$6,640

NET INCOME: \$3,823

