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Longtime Harborcreek resident Betty Bliss and her family. Story on Page 3.

Hours: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the offices of the Society are closed to the public through at least July 4, 2020. Please watch our Facebook page for updates.

THE HARBOR VIEW

Harborcreek Historical Society celebrates 25 years in 2019!

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Pavilion project inches ahead

By Louise Smerick

Someday, we will again be able to gather in larger groups for special events, and the Harborcreek Historical Society is preparing for those days. Our goal with the pavilion project, which was first announced at the annual meeting held in January, is to create an outdoor multipurpose venue that will be used for Society sponsored events and that will be available to the community for private functions, such as family gatherings, parties, weddings, and more.

Fundraising for the pavilion kicked off earlier this year with the “Pennies for the Pavilion” campaign, which encourages visitors to the Gifford-Blanchfield House to give to the project. Over the next two years, the Society will seek grant funding and business support for the construction project.

Go green and request an e-newsletter!

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

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 Lori Sheridan, President
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 Brenda Weaver



Work on the site has also started. This spring, Township workers have been hard at work preparing the future site of the pavilion. Brush has been cleared, select trees have been removed, and a tentative footprint for the pavilion has been outlined with stakes and rope. The proposed location is near the driveway and will allow for handicap access.

Watch for updates on the pavilion project in the quarterly newsletter and on our Facebook page, and, if you would like to join in the effort, please contact us at harborcreekhistory@gmail.com. We are actively recruiting committee members with construction experience and/or an interest in helping with fundraising.

Gifts to the Society

Louise & Rick Smerick
Kathy & Nick Maura
John & Judy Skuce

In memory of Virginia Andersen for the Pavilion Project
In memory of Virginia Andersen for the Pavilion Project
In memory of Virginia Andersen for the Pavilion Project

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.

Book project nearing finish line By Jane Ingold

We are diligently working to finish up our latest book, a retrospective of the Society's first 25 years of service. The volume will focus on gifts to our archives over the years and tell stories about the people, places, and stories that make our community so interesting. We thought we would preview some of the vignettes in the next few newsletters, starting with businesses.



Irwin R. Crain Eggs, date unknown.

You can count on Harborcreek folks to have the entrepreneurial spirit. There was Bell Mineral Spring water (popular as far away as New York City); the Pussy Willow Tea Room (which stood on the grounds of Brevellier Village); Schaaf's grocery (later Dolph's, located on Station Road); Crain Eggs (maybe you took a school field trip there); Houck's Sinclair station (remember Dino, the Sinclair brontosaurus?); and Bonniger's Harborcreek Vinegar Works (which was raided during prohibition). If you have memories of any of these (or other) establishments, we would love to hear about it. Drop us a line at harborcreekhistory@gmail.com or comment on our Facebook page.

400th anniversary of Mayflower voyage By Brenda Weaver

This year, 2020, marks the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower voyage and the founding of Plymouth Colony. One hundred and two brave passengers took this treacherous voyage to the New World in 1620. Not all the passengers had the same motive for taking the journey. Thirty-seven were from the separatist Puritan congregation in Leiden, Holland and referred to themselves as "Saints" not Pilgrims. They were joined by English families or individuals hoping to better their life situations. This group was often referred to as "Strangers."

The "Saints" and "Strangers" wrote a set of rules for self-governance called the Mayflower Compact. The Mayflower Compact was the first true governing document created in a New World colony. The Mayflower Compact is considered a precursor of the Constitution of the United States.

A temporary exhibit at the Gifford-Blanchfield House explores the connections between the township and the Mayflower. Joseph Backus, an early settler in Harborcreek, descended from Pilgrim Stephen Hopkins. Another connection between the iconic vessel and the Erie area is that Oliver H. Perry descended from Mayflower passenger William Brewster.

Many families hold a tradition that they are descended from the Pilgrims. If you believe you may be a descendant of one of these brave passengers and would like assistance with genealogy research, contact Brenda Weaver at (814) 899-5788.



Sources: <https://www.themayflowersociety.org/the-pilgrims/the-pilgrims>

Celebrating the Class of 2020 By Cam Stadtmueller

School districts around Erie County have been doing many activities to make 2020 graduations as memorable as possible. With schools closed due to COVID-19, the novel coronavirus, students and teachers are not able to congregate to celebrate end-of-the-year festivities. Harbor Creek School District began honoring graduates in late April with car parades to Seniors' homes. With horns honking and fire truck sirens blaring, teams of teachers, administrators and fire department volunteers presented each of the 182 Seniors with a cap and gown, placed a Class of 2020 sign in the yard, and set off small fireworks.



Daily postings on Facebook feature a Senior photograph and post-graduation plans for that student. Superintendent Mrs. Kelly Hess reached out to community members to volunteer to "Adopt a Senior." Volunteers sent cards, mementos, digital messages, and more to graduates. Also, all Seniors' names are listed on a prize wheel that is spun weekly, giving them the opportunity to win gift cards to local businesses. More special events are in the planning stages, along with the distribution of the ever-popular *Harborian* yearbook.

This is how Seniors are being recognized in 2020, but what did Harbor Creek School District do in 1918 during the last pandemic? That was the year Spanish influenza spread from Europe to America as soldiers returned home from World War I. Schools, churches, and public gathering places were closed. People were quarantined as we are now. Perhaps you are a descendant of a member of the Class of 1918. Did the graduate ever talk about their experiences during the influenza pandemic?

Class of 1918 members included Maude Bard, Harriet Schutte, Dorothy Brown, Claude Garfield, Margaret Baumeister, Kenneth Morse, Robert Mulvin, Abbie Nelson, Irene Olson, Elsie Lind, Helen Wellba, and Irene Weston. In the first floor Reading Room at the Gifford-Blanchfield House, there is a collection of Harbor Creek School District annuals and *Harborians*. From 1914 through 1929, there were no publications. Harbor Creek Highlights became the school newspaper with a special photograph section of graduates. In 1935, the first *Harborian* was published, and it continues today.

A bit about Betty, a Harborcreek lady of The Greatest Generation

By Carol Laughlin and John Skuce



From L to R: John Skuce, Betty Bliss, and Judy Skuce at Betty's 95th birthday celebration February 24, 2018.

Carl Owens, originally from the Corry area, moved to Erie to find better employment and was hired as a laborer at a machine shop on 12th Street. In time, Carl met the lovely Maria Heffner. They married in the early 1900s and settled in Wesleyville. Together, they raised ten children. Betty Owens Bliss was the second to the youngest child. She was born on February 25, 1923.

If you know Betty, you know that she exhibits the characteristics for which The Greatest Generation is known. They take personal responsibility, have integrity and humility, and are known for their work ethic, financial prudence, and faithful commitments.

(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

Michael D. Taraszki
Richmond, CA

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About Betty Bliss *(Continued from Page 3)*

It was a comfortable life for the Owens family until the Great Depression of the '30s. The family had to relocate to the west side of Erie on 26th Street where they found affordable housing. Betty was only 11 years old when her mother, Maria, died. The family had to adjust, and Betty began cooking the family meals. It was an overwhelming chore for such a young girl, but she took it in stride and did her part as did the other children.

Betty was employed as a bookkeeper at a business on State Street before marrying Paul Bliss in the '50s. Paul was employed at General Electric. They moved to a remodeled schoolhouse on Williams Road in Harborcreek Township. The one-room school closed in the 1940s. They raised eight children: Ken, Gary, Grant, Virginia, Debbie, and stepchildren Paul, Ronald and Patricia. The children graduated from Harbor Creek High School.

While the children were growing up, Betty worked for 12 years in the cafeteria at Clark Elementary on Depot Road. The students referred to her as 'lunchroom lady.' Those who carried their lunch eagerly awaited Betty who lined them up to go into the cafeteria by calling out, "Line one - milk only. Line two - milk and ice cream." In some ways, the cafeteria was like home, where the children knew she cared for them. She was also the disciplinarian when necessary, but she never lost the respect and admiration of her kids.

Before going to work, Betty would wash loads of clothes with a wringer washer and hang them on an outdoors clothesline to dry. She planted and tended a large garden. Ripe vegetables were welcomed at the family meals and for canning. Paul and Betty shared a pleasant life together until Paul's passing in 1994.

In 2018, the family arranged a dinner to celebrate Betty's 95th birthday. Her children, 21 grandchildren, and 15 great grandchildren, along with friends from near and far, came to honor her.

Whenever I see Betty, she brightens my day like no one else. And, if in a group, she will always be the center of attention. The reason is no secret, at least to me. Betty has a deep love of people. I am one of many, I am sure, who is on the receiving end of her beautiful smile, gentle greetings, kind words, and warm hugs.

Now, I am not all that much younger than Betty, and I have enough years to know that none of us escape life without a few bruises. As we interviewed Betty, we did not dwell on hard times, because Betty is not defined by difficulties. She is about contentment and happiness. Her life is about family, friends, faith, and joy. Thank you, Betty, for sharing yourself with all of us. Our calendars are marked for your 100th, and, in a of couple years, we will celebrate once again and tell you how much you mean to us!

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
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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
ENGRAVED IMAGING	897-7807	4535 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
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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
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.**

Highlights of Harborcreek history By Cam Stadtmueller

During 2019, the Harborcreek Historical Society's 25th anniversary year, the newsletter team would like to share with you the history of the township through a series of 'articles' formatted as a timeline. The following article is the fifth installment.

1920 Women's Right to Vote was guaranteed by the 19th Amendment. The first Harborcreek woman to vote in the November Presidential Election of Warren G. Harding was Ida Firman. The voting place was probably the Keystone Tavern (now Fiddle Inn) on Buffalo Road. In future years, Ida and her sister, Mame, became the Village Postmistresses.

1926 In the Brookside area off Station Road a new brick elementary school was begun with two rooms. By 1950, Brookside Elementary was enlarged to 18 classrooms as outlying one-room schools were being closed.

1926 Lawrence Park Township was formed by acquiring land from Harborcreek Township and Millcreek Township. Prior to this date, Four Mile Creek and its amusement park were in our township.

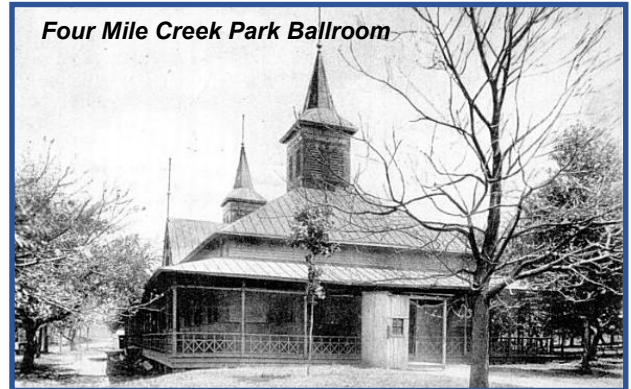
1926 Perry Kennel on Buffalo Road was under the ownership of John and Babette Seyschab. They imported German Shepards, Doberman Pinchers, and Schnauzers to our township from Germany.

1930 Camp Glinodo for Girls was opened by the Sisters of Saint Benedict. The cabins were built near the mouth of Seven Mile Creek north of East Lake Road. Today, it serves as a conference center.

1935 The Harbor Creek High School yearbook became the *Harborian*. Within the next few years, the husky dog was accepted as the school mascot. Students selected it to honor the fierce tenacity of the husky dogs, which pulled Admiral Byrd's 2nd expedition to the South Pole in 1933.

1941 The "new" Harbor Creek High School was built. Central School continued to be used as an elementary school.

1948 The popular Pussy Willow Tea Room was established in a quaint cottage on the property of Frederick and Katherine Conrad Brevillier. Fraulein Margaret Brudsche was well known for her delicious menus and hospitality. The business closed when the Conrad House was built in 1972 and Brevillier Village developed along East Lake Road.



Harborcreek In Bloom

Thanks to the hard work of the Gospel Hill Garden Club, who planted the garden at the Gifford-Blanchfield House the year it opened, the Society is participating in Harborcreek Township's 2020 Harborcreek In Bloom competition. You can too. The contest is open to residents and businesses for flower and vegetable gardens. To register a garden, stop by the Township Building before May 31st. All registrants will receive a "HC In Bloom" yard sign to display in a visible location.

Judging will take place between July 13th and August 10th. Winners will be notified at the end of August. Winning gardeners will be featured in the fall issue of *yourHarborcreek* magazine.



Local history featured in *yourHarborcreek* magazine

The Harborcreek Historical Society is regularly given two full pages of content in the Harborcreek Township supported *yourHarborcreek* magazine, which is published quarterly and mailed to every household in the township. The Summer 2020 edition is due out in mid-June and will feature a reprint of Dr. Marie Allen-Smith Alford's article about early township settler John Allen. The write-up originally appeared in the Harborcreek Historical Society's publication *Harborcreek's Yesteryears* printed in 2003 as a collection of stories and photographs from the community.

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/yourHarborcreek.htm?4>

Photograph caption: James Allen was the grandson of John Allen, who brought his family to Harborcreek in 1801. All three of James and Josephine Allen's children – from left to right, Minnie Josephine, Emory Brooks, and Frederick Cole Allen - were born in the family home on Depot Road. The house, which still stands, is located just south of the Harbor Creek High School.

Hoag Cemetery marker installation delayed

When the stay-at-home order was issued by the county executive in March, we were well-underway with planning for the installation and dedication of an informational marker at the historic Hoag Cemetery. Instead of a June unveiling, however, the marker will be dedicated when it is once again safe for us to gather as a group.

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 the interpretive panel, which presents the history of Hoag Cemetery and an overview of the recent restoration of the cemetery led by Robin Cuneo and Judy Ellwood. Society director Nancy Brown provided much of the research for the project, and Bill and Ann Nesgoda mapped the cemetery grounds.

The project is funded in part by a Community Asset Grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority awarded to Erie Yesterday and eight historical organizations, including the Harborcreek Historical Society.

HOAG CEMETERY

ONE OF THE TOWNSHIP'S OLDEST CEMETRIES

Established in 1817, Hoag Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in Erie County. It is located on the east side of the township, near the intersection of Buffalo Road and Depot Road. The cemetery is a significant historical site and is currently undergoing restoration.

List of Burial Plots:

Plot #	Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death
1	Allen, John	1801	1875
2	Allen, James	1810	1880
3	Allen, Josephine	1815	1890
4	Allen, Minnie Josephine	1820	1900
5	Allen, Emory Brooks	1825	1910
6	Allen, Frederick Cole	1830	1920

Historical Record of Hoag Cemetery:

The cemetery was established in 1817 by John Hoag, a pioneer settler. It has since become a resting place for many generations of the community. The restoration project aims to preserve the historical integrity of the site and provide a peaceful final resting place for those buried there.

List of Names Buried with Unknown Grave Locations:

- Allen, John
- Allen, James
- Allen, Josephine
- Allen, Minnie Josephine
- Allen, Emory Brooks
- Allen, Frederick Cole

Gospel Hill to be featured in driving tour of black history sites

Mercyhurst University student Hannah Pfeifer, working in partnership with project committee members Johnny Johnson, Chris Magoc, Sarah Thompson, and Melinda Meyer, is wrapping up her senior project, a driving tour and website highlighting African American heritage sites in Erie County. *A Trail of Shared Heritage* invites the public to discover key people, places, and events associated with the history of African Americans in Erie County and learn how they contribute to the broader economic, political, and cultural history of the region. Sites include both existing structures as well as locations where physical evidence of the past is long gone.

One of the sites included on the tour is the Gospel Hill Burial Ground. Land surveyor Thomas Rees brought two enslaved children to northwest Pennsylvania in the 1790s. Robert McConnell and James Titus were freed under state law at age 28, each receiving 50 acres of land. McConnell became prosperous, eventually owning 242 acres. He and his descendants are buried here near Rees. There are also 183 unmarked graves - believed to be those of children, freed persons, and slaves. While the completion of the tour has been delayed due to COVID-19, watch for it to debut sometime later this year.