



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



*Kerner Tool & Die Company
 Page 5*

Hours: To accommodate those wanting to purchase local history-themed gifts for the holidays, the Society's office will be open December 5, 12, and 19, 2020 10 am – 1 pm.

THE HARBOR VIEW



A quarterly publication of the Harborcreek Historical Society

Inside this issue...

- Old Friends poem ...Page 2
- The life of Elvira Twitchell ...Page 2
- Oldest reference to Harbor Creek on a map ...Page 3
- Kerner Tool & Die Co. ...Page 5
- Harborcreek Highlights ...Page 6

Holiday hours

The holidays are here, and, for those wanting to buy family and friends a local history inspired gift, the Society is opening the office December 5, 12, and 19 from 10 am to 1 pm. Masks are required, and only two people will be admitted at a time. Anyone wishing to remain in their vehicle is welcome to call in an order, and Society volunteers will bring the order to the parking lot.

All visitors will receive a free copy of a map of Harborcreek Township from the 1865 Atlas of Erie County (as seen on page 2) or a Cherie Harger print of the old Central School.

The Society's most popular gift shop items include a Harborcreek Township commemorative throw, sets of six notecards with a variety of local history sites, and the Harborcreek Township Driving Tour.

Should the county's COVID statistics change, the Society will close the office. It is recommended that visitors call or email in advance to confirm the Society's hours or check the Harborcreek Historical Society's Facebook page for updates.

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

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

Ice cream truck a summertime hit

By Louise Smerick



Smiley's Ice Cream Truck served up smiles and tasty treats September 17 from the parking lot of the Gifford-Blanchfield House. It was the third visit this summer!

The truck, which serves Penn State Berkey Creamery ice cream, drew a crowd and helped raise funds for the Society's pavilion project.

Gifts to the Society

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.

Old Friends

Submitted by Dorothy Dodge Wilkes Lorentz

In July, Dorothy (Dee) Lorentz sent the following note and poem to the Harborcreek Historical Society for inclusion in *The Harbor View* newsletter.

This is a transcription of my grandfather's – Charles M. Dodge. It was in my Aunt Dorothy's belongings, who lived with me several years before she passed in 1993. Charles was born July 16, 1858 to John and Jemima Dodge, and died June 10, 1940. Dorothy Augustus Dodge Waters was born October 17, 1904, and died March 15, 1993 in Bellville, OH.

Thank you, Dee, for this submission!

Old friends are best
As years roll by
New friends seem not to stand the test
I wonder why

As temples grey
Ones thoughts oft turn to memory lane
To drift along its shadowy way
In thoughts at least, we're young again

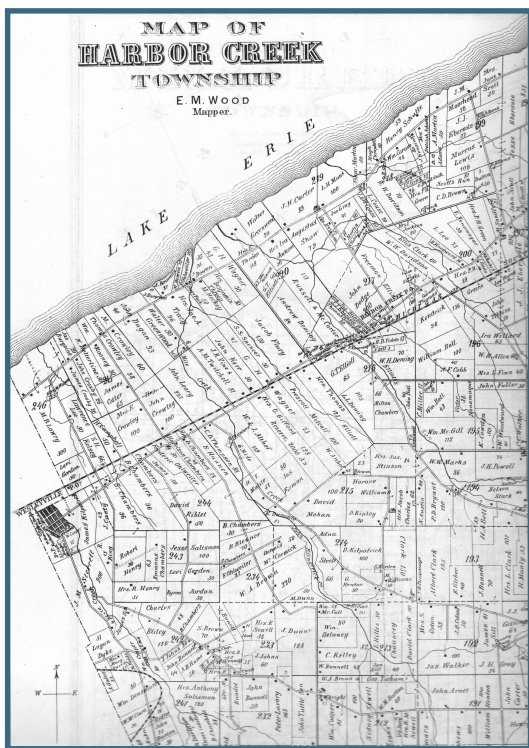
Sweet memories of those vanished years
Have never failed to warm my heart
They banish many doubts and fears
And to my life new strength impart

Thrice blessed is he who can recall at will
More joy than sorrow from their vanished past
Can now and then his glass refill
And smile at death until the last

By Chas. M. Dodge

Almost a Century of Active Life Laid to Rest Today

Research by Carol Laughlin and Brenda Weaver and composed by Cam Stadtmueller



This headline from the *Erie Daily Times News* of February 22, 1910 was rare compared to 2020 when our news sources report obituaries for multiple nonagenarians and centenarians. The woman featured in several *Erie Daily Times* articles was Elvira Twitchell, affectionately known to Harborcreek Township as "Grandma Twitchell."

Elvira Townsend and Aaron Twitchell married in a Unitarian ceremony at her home in Dublin Cheshire, New Hampshire, September 1, 1831. Her wedding dress was "dove gray," and she wore her hair up without veil or flowers. Elvira described the attendance at the ceremony as "considerable" with relatives and friends. She was the oldest of seven daughters and three sons. Her parents were distressed to see their 19-year-old daughter mount the horse drawn wagon and depart for the wilderness of western Pennsylvania. Their sorrow was softened by an uncle who spoke of being here during the War of 1812 and said the land was fertile and streams abundant along the Lake Erie shore.

The 1865 map of Harborcreek Township (seen here to the left) locates Twitchell's as the first acreage east of Six Mile Creek along what later became Buffalo Road/Route 20.

(Continued on Page 3)

Almost a Century of Active Life Laid to Rest Today *(Continued from Page 2)*

Their property was within the Irvine Reserve, along with lands owned by Gershom Gifford, Washington Gifford, John Kerr, John Leary, Walter Greenwood, and many others. In a 1905 interview with a *Times News* reporter, Elvira talked about the simple log cabin built in 1831 that became the focal point of their home as more and more rooms were added, including a “proper parlor.” She said her bake oven was inside compared to that of her neighbors.

Aaron and Elvira had two sons, Joshua (1834 -1850) and Martin (1840 -1902). In 1874, Martin married Rachel Lyons of Clermont, OH, and they had a daughter, Rachel, and son, Frank, also listed as Franklin. Aaron had passed in 1871, and Martin and family returned to the 87-acre Harborcreek farm to reside with Elvira.



*Elvira Twitchell gravesite at Wesleyville Cemetery.
From www.findagrave.com*

Grandma Twitchell was featured in an August 4, 1902 news article celebrating her first visit to Waldameer Trolley Park. At age 93 she was described as “quick, spry, agile and considered one of the oldest citizens in Erie County.” In a 1905 article Grandma was recounted for her “witty, congenial, welcoming and spiritual demeanor.” She would visit both women of her age and younger, many members of the Wesleyville M.E. Church. Renowned for her needlework, knitting, weaving, and quilting skills, she willingly taught others. In 1905 she made a quilt with 195 blocks, each block having five pieces fashioned in the necktie pattern. This was accomplished in one month! Another news story told of Elvira’s 98th birthday on February 5, 1910 being acknowledged with a “Postcard Shower” of 170 cards from friends and other well-wishers unknown to Grandma. Elvira remained in good health until three days before her death on February 21, 1910. Following services at Wesleyville M.E. Church, Elvira was buried beside family members in the Wesleyville Cemetery.

Oldest reference to Harbor Creek on a map (1791) and the law (1792) By Beth Simmons

While I was researching Thomas Rees’ background as a surveyor, this 1791 map emerged. Note on the enlargement that it says “Harbour Creek.” I was amazed! That same night, reading the 1792 settlement law, I found that it stated that certain lands were to be set aside, including 2000 acres on either side of “Harbor Creek.” These discoveries show that our township name predates the arrival of Thomas Rees in 1794 and the township being established in 1803.

So, what did the legislative act of 1792 say, exactly?

[Section Xlii.] (Section XIII, P. L.) And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the following tracts of land shall be reserved for the use of the commonwealth, that is to say:

(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.

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

Oldest reference to Harbor Creek (Continued from Page 3)

at Presque Isle, formed by Lake Erie, the island or peninsula which forms the harbor and a tract extending eight miles along the shore of the lake, and three miles in breadth, [Erie State Reserve & the Garrison Reserve] so as to **include the tract already surveyed**, by virtue of a resolution of the general assembly, and the whole of the harbor formed by the said Presque Isle at the mouth of **Harbor creek**, which empties into the Lake Erie, **and along the shore of the lake on both sides of said creek, two thousand acres. [bold added]**



The image above is an inset from the 1791 map of Pennsylvania made by John Adlum and John Wallis, "A map exhibiting a general view of the roads and inland navigation of Pennsylvania, and part of the adjacent states: Respectfully inscribed to Thomas Mifflin, governor, and the General Assembly of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania" (Philadelphia, 1791).

(Continued on Page 5)

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.

Oldest reference to Harbor Creek (Continued from Page 4)

Note the following details on the map: Harbour Creek[*sic*]; Fort at Erie; Presque Isle; Portage to LeBouef 15 ½ Mi; Walnut Creek; Elk Creek; Rapid Cr; Clear Creek; in New York, the portage from Barcelona to Lake Chautauqua 9 ¼ miles; the Indian Village on the east shore of Lake Chautauqua; its outlet to the Conewango River; Kiontonata, another Indian Village; and south to the Allegheny River. The contemporary names of the creeks identified on the map are: Six-Mile Creek for Harbor Creek, 16-Mile Creek for Rapid Creek at Freeport, 20-Mile Creek for Clear Creek.

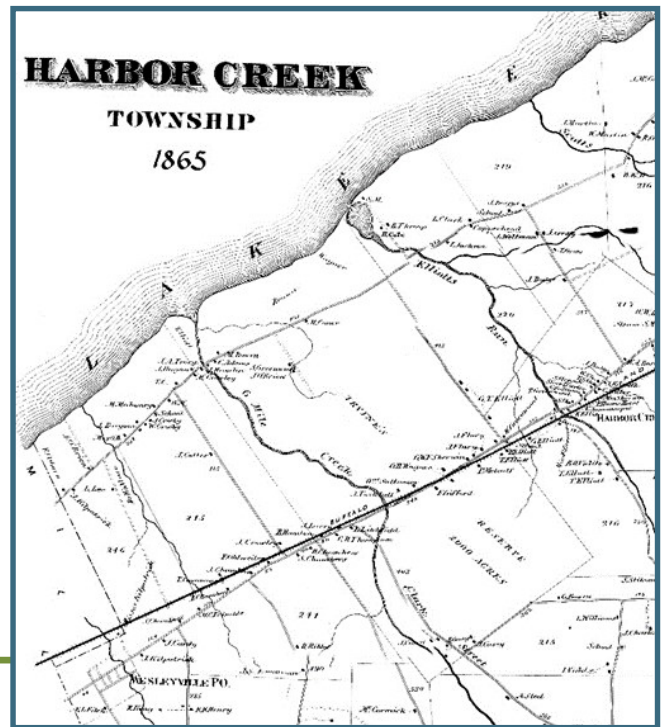
This section of the map had to have been developed from maps made by the French expeditions in 1749 and in the 1750s.

You can access the entire map online from the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library at <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:6w924q164>

Examining the map of Harbor Creek Township from 1865, we see that Irvine's Reserve, 2,000 acres that General William Irvine was awarded for his role in the Revolutionary War, spans SIX-MILE CREEK. And that there is a small inlet at its mouth.

Before the 1791 map appeared, we assumed that "Harbor Creek" referred to Four-Mile Creek where the ship Washington was built by the Population Company in 1797. John Miller in 1906 had Harbor Creek misnamed because 4-Mile Creek had a mill on it and Mill Creek didn't! We were all wrong! The name Harbor Creek predates all the other names in the county. Now we must find who named it and why. Who did that early survey?

Reference: Gallo, Marcus, Improving Independence: The struggle over Land Surveys in Northwestern Pennsylvania in 1794, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 142, #2, April 2018, pp. 131-161, Fig. 3.



A brief history of Kerner Tool & Die Company By guest author Phil Kerner

The Harborcreek Historical Society seeks guest writers for both *The Harbor View* quarterly newsletter and *YourHarborcreek* magazine on an ongoing basis. The following is an excerpt of an article that was submitted to the Society in October 2020 by Phil Kerner, whose family has been involved in manufacturing in the Erie area for over 100 years. Mr. Kerner owned Kerner Tool & Die Company from 1991 to 2004, and he is presently a toolmaker with Specialty Machinist Industrial Sales & Manufacturing. Mr. Kerner has extensive experience in the tool and die industry, and, through his website [TheToolandDieGuy.com](http://www.harborcreek.org/), he connects current and future generations of journeymen tool and die makers with tools, mentors, and educational resources. He is also his family's historian. Mr. Kerner's full article will appear in the fall issue of the *YourHarborcreek* magazine, which will be available online at <http://www.harborcreek.org/>.

At the pinnacle of Gospel Hill, there once stood a place that was known as Gospel Hill Farms. From my research, and based on old photographs that I can find, Gospel Hill Farms was mainly a dairy farm. I say that based on the central barn, which was definitely more ornate than the average working farm. It was surrounded by many orchards that produced apples and pears, along with other crops that might be grown and sold in the area.

(Continued on Page 6)

Kerner Tool & Die Company *(Continued from Page 5)*

In 1944, Edward Kerner started his own tool and die company on Eastlawn Parkway in the City of Erie. The legend, which I cannot confirm, is that he connected two neighborhood garages together at the beginning. The result was that his neighbors experienced severe power shortages every time the machines were fired up. It was time to find a suitable and proper place for his new enterprise.

In the 1940's, Edward Kerner purchased the Gospel Hill Farms complex, which encompassed some 300 acres and included a dairy barn, a stately Spanish-revival farmhouse, and several outbuildings.

Thus, began a small but successful company with its roots based in, of all things, a dairy barn. By the late 1950's, the Kerner Tool & Die Company was one of the premier tool and die shops in the tri-state area.



This photograph was featured in the 1959 Kerner Tool & Die brochure. It should be noted that the actual photograph was taken in 1958. There are only two guys living today that were there, and one of them is Dick Forbes. He is the young lad at the far right, seated. I sent this photograph to Dick, and still being the sharp guy that he always was, he was able to identify everyone from memory. I am not only grateful to Mr. Forbes, but I am so glad that I did not wait any longer to dig deeper and get this wonderful piece of history validated.

Front Row (left to right): Russell Lynn, Emil Detrich, Paul Morrow, Bill Hilbert, Bob Toland, Mike Brosman, Joe Kochera, Unknown, Ed Knipper, Sam Schember, and Dick Forbes. Back Row (left to right): Ralph Hall, Fritz Kerner, Dick Cotterman, Jim Smith, Bob Krause, Andy Brower, Lynn Lewis, Amos Newman, Norb Kendziora, Harold Schroeck, Helmut Wenzel, Earl Rautine, John Swanson, Joe Duska, Lester Waldemar, and Jim Bunning.

Highlights of Harborcreek History An ongoing series by Cam Stadtmueller

1947: Former Harborcreek Fairgrounds became Fairfield Subdivision. Andrews Land Company sold "Farm Home" plots for \$300. The area encompassed Walbridge Road to Parkside Drive & Iroquois Avenue to East Lake Road.

1950: The National Bank of North East opened a new office at Buffalo Road and Bartlett. It had formerly occupied a space in the nearby Hollis Hardware Store.

1950: Cavaliero Motel was constructed on the East Lake Road property of Waite's Restaurant. The 12-unit motel and swimming pool were adjacent to the restaurant and Six Mile Creek. Cleo and Mary Waite ran the business for 31 years. It later became known as the Waterfall Restaurant.