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 Or by appointment



# THE HARBOR VIEW

*A quarterly publication of the Harborcreek Historical Society*

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## 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, President  
 Vickie Gilchrist, Vice President  
 John Skuce, Treasurer  
 Jane Ingold, Secretary  
 Nancy Brown  
 Cindy Duda  
 Louise Smerick  
 Brenda Weaver

## Society awarded grant funding for collections projects

The Harborcreek Historical Society is pleased to announce that the organization has been approved for grant funding through the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for projects relating to the collections.

The Society partnered with seven other historical organizations to apply for an Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority Community Assets Grant through Erie Yesterday, a consortium of museums, historical societies, and historic sites in Erie County. Of the \$11,501 awarded to Erie Yesterday, the Harborcreek Historical Society is receiving \$1,750 to purchase technology and equipment to support digitization of its collections, as well as light blocking window treatments for all areas of the house where collections are exposed to natural light.

In December, the Society was notified that its application to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's Historical and Archival Records Care Grant had been approved. This \$5,000 grant will be used to (1) contract with an archives professional to assess the Society's collection management policies and procedures, as well as the physical conditions of the collections storage area, prepare a written report, and oversee implementation of prioritized recommendations and training for the Society's volunteers, (2) hire a student intern to assist with implementation, and (3) purchase archival supplies and equipment.

Digitization efforts will focus on the Dodge Family Collection, which includes personal journals and correspondence and financial ledgers and other business records dating from 1841 to the 1920s relating to the family of John Dodge, Sr. The collection was donated to the Society in 2019 by Susan Hayes. Ms. Hayes found the family collection in the early 2000s in her mother's home where they had been stored for 30 years.

The multi-year projects will begin this May.

## Gifts to the Society

*In honor of Neil K. Evans  
In memory of Dave Hines*

*In memory of Ed Miller (Miller's Farm)  
In honor of the Stelle Family  
In commemoration of the Class of 1960  
60<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion  
In support of the Pavilion Project  
In support of the Society*

*By Beth Simmons  
By Stephanie Dennison, Steve Thompson, Lisa Dumbeck, John Skuce, Ellen Macie, and Doris Cornman  
By Joyce Ross  
By Pat Cochran*

*By Karlynn Bernhard  
Carol Wood, Neil Evans, and Andy Krahe  
John Berry, Debra LeDuc, Dolores Shiel, Robert Gindelsperger,  
Clifford Snyder, the Scott Families*

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 donating "In Memory," "In Honor," or "On the Occasion" of a person or event that is important to you.

## Artwork winning ticket drawn

This past fall, the Harborcreek Historical Society raffled off a framed, signed print of "The Iron Steamer," U.S.S. Wolverine leaving Presque Isle Bay 1876, by David W. Bennett. The artwork was generously gifted by Richard Gacka to raffle as a fundraiser benefiting the Society. It is 35" W x 28.5" H and numbered 23 of 480 prints produced in 1992. The winning ticket was drawn Saturday, December 18<sup>th</sup> and was purchased by longtime member Doris Crain Cornman. Congratulations, Doris! Thank you to all who purchased tickets, too!



## 1950 Census records go public in April

The National Archives releases census records to the public after 72 years. As a result, the 1930 census records were released April 1, 2002, and the 1940 records were released April 2, 2012. The 1950 census records will be released April 1, 2022. Visit the National Archives and Records Administration's Census Records webpages to learn more about the availability of microfilmed and digital census records for genealogical research. (<https://www.archives.gov/research/census>)

## Society welcomes new director Cindy Duda to the board



Cindy is a lifelong resident of Erie County, moving to Harborcreek in 1995 when she married her husband, Ken. They have four children and two grandchildren. She has a BA in American history from Allegheny College, an MA from Gannon University in Social Studies with an emphasis in American History, and a Master's in Library and Information Science from University of Pittsburgh. Cindy worked in data management in banking for 10 years, but most of her 30-year career was at Allegheny College and Gannon University in Advancement Services management, supporting alumni services and fundraising. She has also done a lot of volunteer library work at Mercyhurst Preparatory School library, as well providing online research services at the Internet Public Library (now retired), a service provided by a consortium of university library schools. She retired from Gannon in 2018 and is enjoying occasionally working as a per diem clerk at the Erie County Public Library as well as reading as much as she can, gardening, and spending time with her grandchildren. She has always been very interested in genealogy and studying American and local history, and she is looking forward to learning more about Harborcreek Township and the resources held at Gifford-Blanchfield House.

# What could have been in Harborcreek

by Cam Stadtmueller

Charles Lindbergh almost landed on the airfield at the Nagle property in 1927. Following Lindbergh's famous solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean he began to publicize the mission of the Guggenheim Association for the Promotion of Aeronautics. The goal was to have the "Lone Eagle" take their message to every state between July 20 and October 20, 1927. Erie City Mayor Joseph C. Williams sent Lindbergh an invitation to land in Erie. Milburn Kusterer was the advance man who approved of the landing sites. He assessed three areas near the City of Erie: Griswold Field on West Lake Road, a field near the area of Peach and Cherry Streets and the Nagle Farm, a half mile east of Wesleyville. All three were rejected by Kusterer. He observed that the Harborcreek land "had plenty of room, but 'the ground was too rolling for safety.'" therefore, Lucky Lindy flew "The Spirit of St. Louis" over the Erie area, dipping its wings, doing aerial antics and dropping his "note" to the crowds gathered near the Erie Post Office. Lindbergh's signed message contained the challenge "We feel that we will be amply repaid for all our efforts if each and every citizen of the United States cherishes an interest in flying and gives his earnest support to the air mail services and the establishment of air ports and similar facilities."

Inspired by Lindbergh's words the Mayor, City Council and Aero Club, which was composed of former Army pilots, increased their efforts to establish an Erie Airport. In their opinion the Nagle site had the most accessibility to the City of Erie. An airport would give Erie a competitive edge in commercial & industrial development, as well as bring airmail and passengers to the area. The plan was for the city to enact a lease to own agreement with the Nagle heirs and nearby landowners George Cook, A.H. Knoll and C.G. Chambers. In July 1928 the City leased the combined acreage for a five-year period. And then the Mayor and City Council began to rethink their decision. Lindbergh and Lt. James Doolittle had both criticized the Buffalo Road site as being too small for expansion of future aviation traffic and did not encourage the United States Congress to approve funding. Another major setback developed when the heirs of the Nagle Farm renegotiated that the lease time be lowered from five to three years. Not wanting to abandon their plan, the Mayor, Council and Finance Director Thomas McHaffey agreed to go forward with the lease at \$30 an acre. City officials joined in an agreement with the Chamber of Commerce being responsible to raise the needed funding for land grading and drainage at the site. The Chamber failed to develop the needed revenue and the City leaders turned to looking westward for a suitable site. AND that is What Could Have Been in Harborcreek!

## Sources:

Erie Times News (published as The Erie Daily Times) July 26, 1927, February 15, 1928, and August 22, 1928  
Freeman, Sabina. *Cloud Busters: Neil McCray and the Erie County Airport*. Fairview, PA: HiFlight Press, 2009  
Freeman, Sabina. "From Griswold Field to the Erie International Airport," an addendum to *Cloud Busters*, 2011

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 1927.

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## Erie Needs an Airport

ERIE needs an **airport**, just like every other city in the country. We should have one. The Times, which was the first newspaper of Erie to sponsor a successful flight of an aeroplane in this city, believes that the day is not far distant when an air port will be as essential as a bus terminal or a harbor.

But we must be reasonable.

Thus far the hysteria of wishing a landing field on the city has been prompted by selfish reasons. Individuals owning suitable fields want the city to buy an air port.

Erie city can't afford to buy one and it shouldn't at present. It needs a hundred other things more beneficial to its citizens than an air port. It needs, first of all, a sewage disposal plant and that costs money.

We are not going to see Lindbergh. It isn't a calamity although it would have done honor to the city for its citizens to get a glimpse of him or shake his hand.

But confronting the city today are many improvements needed for the health and development of the people. They come first.

When other essentials are secured and the city's financial condition is healthful we can then go out and buy a tract of land. Until then, we can't afford it—unless some benevolent land owner of the county gives us one.

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## Office Hours

**Saturdays 10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

The office is also open by appointment. Please call or email to schedule an appointment with our volunteers.  
Research inquiries are accepted by mail or email.

Telephone: 814.899.4447 • Email: [harborcreekhistory@gmail.com](mailto:harborcreekhistory@gmail.com) • Website: [www.harborcreekhistory.org](http://www.harborcreekhistory.org)

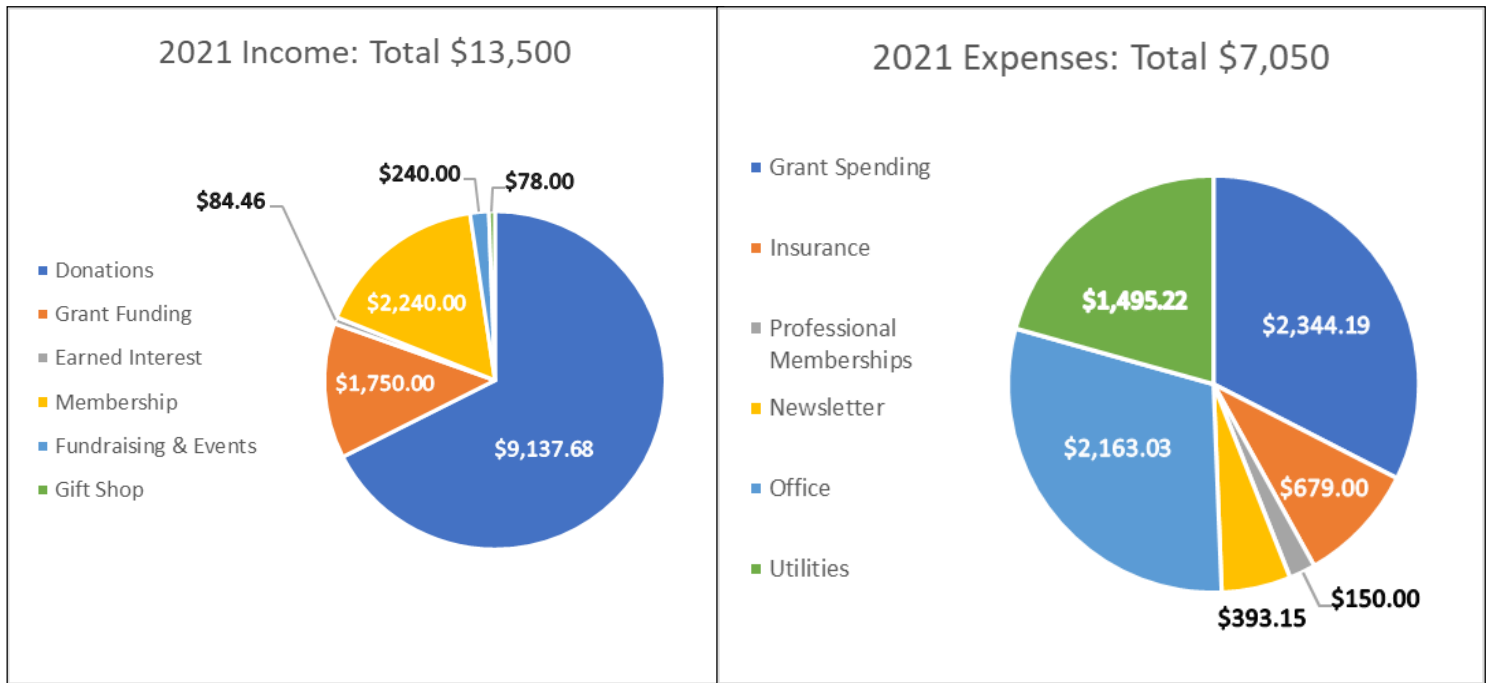
## New Members

Lisa Dumbeck (Erie, PA)  
Bill and Carrie Graham (Harborcreek, PA)



## 2021 Yearend Financials by John Skuce, Treasurer, Harborcreek Historical Society

It is with the sincerest gratitude that we thank you – supporters of the Harborcreek Historical Society – for your generosity. While many other organizations have experienced negative economic impacts created by the public health crisis, you have made certain that the Society remains strong and capable of caring for the collections and the historic Gifford Blanchfield House. The greatest number of donations were given as general support or for the pavilion project and were received on Erie Gives day. The Society's most significant expenditures in 2021 were for office expenses (printing, telephone, internet, etc.), utilities for the Gifford Blanchfield House, and grant funded special projects. Three interpretive panels, which were 50% funded from grants from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, were fabricated and placed last year. Should you have any questions about the Society's 2021 actual budget, please contact us at harborcreekhistory@gmail.com or (814) 899-4447.



### PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

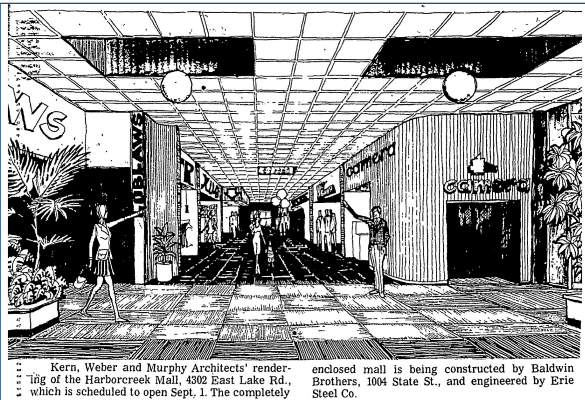
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\*Businesses which have been a Society sponsor for ten years or more.

# Highlights of Harborcreek History by Cam Stadtmueller

In 2019, the Harborcreek Historical Society's 25th anniversary year, the newsletter team began sharing the history of the township through a series of 'articles' formatted as a timeline. The following article is the ninth installment.



*Kern, Weber and Murphy Architect's rendering of the Harborcreek Mall, Erie Times-News, April 28, 1974*

**1974:** The 70,000-square-foot Harborcreek Mall was constructed in the 4400 block of East Lake Road at the intersection with Nagle Road at a cost of \$4M. The anchor store was Loblaws Food Market; a bank, drug store, children's clothing store, and multiple small shops filled the rest of the mall. It closed in 1998 and was demolished in 2009 to make way for redevelopment. Harborcreek Township and Affordable Senior Housing Opportunities of New York closed in February 2011 on the company's \$550,101 purchase of the 18.6-acre site, and it now features the Harborcreek Adult/Senior Apartments, a three-story building comprised of 119 one- and two-bedroom units.

**1978:** Central School on Iroquois Avenue closed. It served as the school district's first elementary and high school. Construction began in 1902, and the first class graduated May 15, 1907. Following the opening of the 1941 high school, it continued to serve as an elementary education center. On December 20, 1978, a spectacular blaze reduced the stone edifice to rubble. Today, an Erie Water Works tower stands on the former playground.

**1980:** The current United States Post Office in Harborcreek was constructed at 7175 Buffalo Road on land owned by the First Presbyterian Church and used as their cemetery. Graves were removed to South Harborcreek Methodist Cemetery and Erie Cemetery. This facility is larger and offers more parking compared to the previous location at 6952 Buffalo Road, which is now occupied by Harborcreek Hair and Tan Lines. Prior to that site, the post office was housed in private homes and businesses in the village.

**1980:** A new Harbor House opened under the ownership of Jim and Mary Gelsie. The name was familiar to students and residents since the "first Harbor" was owned by Albert and Ida Hadberg, who sold the business to Charles Richart in 1946. The Logan Family renamed it Agave from the mid-60s to the mid-70s. The last owner, James Gelsie, opened the popular banquet hall under the name of Harbor House. In 1987, it burned and the land it occupied west of Presbyterian Manse remains vacant today.

**1981:** Benetwood Apartments (pictured at left) at 641 Troupe Road opened. Built by the Sisters of Saint Benedict, the 76-unit complex cost \$2.75M and offered housing for elderly and handicapped persons. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was November 12<sup>th</sup> and included remarks by Joan Chittester, prioress of the Erie Benedictine Sisters, Erie County Executive Russell Robison, and Erie mayor Louis Tullio.



*Harborcreek U.S. Post Office, Google Maps*





## Township's annual Light Up event a success

The 2021 holidays are in our rearview mirror, but we want to take the time to thank all those who visited our booth at Harborcreek Township's annual Light Up event, which returned last year after being cancelled in 2020 due to the public health crisis. Volunteers Vickie Gilchrist and Louise Smerick worked with more than seventy kids to create peanut butter and pinecone bird feeders. It was a sticky success!

The family-friendly event took place Friday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. Activities focused in and around the old barn located just west of the municipal building, as the township plans to use the barn more regularly for community events. The event also included cookies and hot cocoa, horse-drawn carriage rides, and a visit from Santa Claus.

We are thankful for a year to plan and look forward to seeing folks again at the 2022 event.



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## Spring clean-up days scheduled

Every spring since moving into the new headquarters, the board of directors of the Society has held a clean-up day at the Gifford Blanchfield House to help tidy the garden, pick up sticks, rake leaves, and get the property ready for summertime activity. It takes a team to keep Harborcreek's historic house looking good.

Volunteers are welcome! If you are so inclined to join us, please save the following dates on your calendar. The Harborcreek Historical Society spring clean-up is Saturday, April 23, 2022 at 10 am. In case of poor weather, Saturday, May 7, 2022 at 10 am is the rain date.



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## Keep up with the Harborcreek Community Engagement Team

Harborcreek Township launched the Harborcreek Community Engagement Team (HCCET) in 2018. The purpose of the group is to foster collaboration for the betterment of Harborcreek through the sharing of ideas and support of community-based activities within the Township. It is made up of representatives from churches, non-profits, businesses, the Harborcreek School District, Harborcreek Township and other local organizations, including the Harborcreek Historical Society. Stay up to date with the HCCET on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/HCCCommunityEngagement>



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## Seeking guest writers

Would you like to share your historical interest or family lore about Harborcreek Township with the readers of *The Harbor View*? We welcome submissions from guest writers for each issue. They are usually one page in length and may contain photographs or other graphics. Please contact the Society via email at [harborcreekhistory@gmail.com](mailto:harborcreekhistory@gmail.com) or call (814) 899-4447 if you have a story you'd like to see printed. We look forward to hearing from you.