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 Or by appointment



THE HARBOR VIEW

A quarterly publication of the Harborcreek Historical Society

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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
 Louise Smerick
 Brenda Weaver

Holiday exhibit and hours

At the Gifford-Blanchfield House

Saturdays November 27th and December 4th, 11th, and 18th

The holidays are a special time of year. They offer opportunities to connect with family and friends...and the Harborcreek Historical Society! Whether it's been a while since you last visited, or you're looking for a place to "shop local" and pick up Harborcreek-themed gifts for your family and friends, please consider stopping in during our holiday open hours.

You can also check out the new holiday exhibit, "Harborcreek's Ties to Boston Store's Mack Family." Elisha and Sarah Mack, owners of Erie's well-known Boston Store, lived for many years in the stately mansion at 4215 Station Road, which is today known as Penn State Behrend's Logan House. The home was built in 1928. Clarence Mack, one of three children adopted by Elisha and Sarah, lived in the home following his parents. It was donated to Behrend in 1991 by then owner Kay Logan, who also funded the renovation of the home into a space for lectures, poetry and literary readings, discussions, and music performances.

After a series of sales and unable to compete with suburban shopping centers like the Millcreek Mall, the Boston Store closed July 7, 1979.



The Boston Store may be closed, but folks fondly remember meeting under the clock and Toyland, a destination for children of all ages and where one could dine on breakfast with Santa.

Harborcreek's Ties to Boston Store's Mack Family exhibit at the Gifford-Blanchfield House.

Gifts to the Society

Willie Bruce

In memory of Joe Bruce, a former Director for Harborcreek Historical Society

Mary Ellen Flowers

In honor of Paul and Esther Stewart

Carm Bell

In honor of grandson Bryan Bell, Afghanistan, 2012

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.



Hosta plantings were done by Club President Carolyn Bock, Terry Danylko, and Jackie Orelski, with assistance provided by Society director Louise Smerick.

Donation from Gospel Hill Garden Club

This summer and fall the Gospel Hill Garden Club helped enhance the landscaping of the Gifford-Blanchfield House by donating plants to the Harborcreek Historical Society. Eleven hostas, which came from the garden of Club Vice President Ellen Kunselman, were planted around the foundation of the house, and a rhododendron and two mountain laurels were planted elsewhere on the grounds. The work was completed by Club President Carolyn Bock, Terry Danylko, Jackie Orelski, Sandy Koons, Susie Hedlund, and arborist Denny Fiscus.

The Gospel Hill Garden Club was founded in 1956, with many of its founding members coming from the Reese Road area. They have membership with the National Garden Club, Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania, the Central Atlantic Region of Garden Clubs, and the Erie County Council of Garden Clubs. The Club has adopted several gardens for which to care, including all the parks in Wesleyville Borough and the garden of the Gifford-Blanchfield House. Activities are supported by a single annual fundraiser, a mid-May plant sale at Wesleyville Hose Company. Learn more about the Gospel Hill Garden Club by visiting their Facebook group. We are so appreciative of their help in keeping the Gifford-Blanchfield House looking amazing!



Artwork raffle to benefit Society

The Harborcreek Historical Society is raffling 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. Tickets are \$5 each or \$10 for three. **The winning ticket will be drawn Saturday, December 18, 2021.** Tickets may be purchased at the Gifford-Blanchfield House during open hours or the Harborcreek Township office. For additional information, please call or email.

Fall Speaker Series a success!

In an effort to "get back to normal," the Society hosted a series of speakers every other Tuesday in September and October. Presenters included Dave Skellie from the Lake Erie Region Conservancy, Jeanette Schnars and Jeremy Bannister from the Pennsylvania Archaeological Shipwreck Survey Team, Harborcreek native Richard Cowell, and Presque Isle State Park educator Brian Gula. The four events attracted 119 attendees! We are grateful to our speakers for giving of their time and expertise, Harborcreek Township for permitting us use of the municipal building, and you – our members and friends – who came out to join us.



Photograph courtesy of John D. Fox Photography, <https://www.johnfox.us/>

HC's faculty variety show by Nancy Brown

Do you recall the old Harbor Creek faculty variety shows of the 1960s which were conceived and directed by band director Al Cerutti? The events proved effective fundraisers, helping to raise money for scholarships and loans for seniors. The Society has documentation for four shows that were produced: the Minstrel Show (1963), Yokel Boys Make Good (1964), a prison or convicts-themed show (1966), and the U.S.S. Codfish (1968). Both high school and elementary teachers participated.



The first show, the Minstrel Show, included costuming, dialogues, dancing, and singing and was performed for two nights. (Pictured) The show raised more than \$1,500 which was put into a scholarship fund benefiting Harbor Creek students planning to attend college.

Due to the success of the first show, a second one was produced in 1964. Yokel Boys Make Good had a hillbilly theme and involved audience participation. Following this show, it was decided that, due to the time and effort involved in producing the event, shows would be offered every other year with funds raised divided between two graduating classes of seniors.

The Harborcreek Historical Society has found no documentation of the third faculty show performed in 1966, but I was in the orchestra and can relate what I remember. The theme was convicts, and the show followed the same format as the first two...with one exception. As the principals performed their introduction numbers, Jerry Bobango played the part of an arsonist. While he sang, he lit matches for effect and tossed them onto the stage where they subsequently burned out. Unfortunately, one missed the floor and landed on a stand in the pit where it caught the music on fire! There was quite a scramble to try to find something to put out the flame. Finally, a shoe was used, and the show went on. And what a show it was! Mary McGee sang Molly Malone in an old Irish woman's costume. Gary Krantz showed up in very high heels, a slinky sparkly black dress, and a long blonde wig with a cigarette and holder. At first no one knew who he was. He made a very convincing woman. The most memorable performance was a group of the biggest, burliest male teachers dressed in pink tights and tutus with wreathes of flowers in their hair dancing to the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Bob Denniston was the standout there.

This was the era of the TV variety show, and when word got out that the show was a good one, even people with no connections to Harborcreek purchased tickets. The event sold out very quickly, so an extra performance night was added.

The last show for which the Society has documentation was held in 1968 – the U.S.S. Codfish. There may have been more than four variety shows, but we really are not certain. If you know more information, please let us know or share with us your memories of attending or being in one of the shows. They were performances too good to forget!

Penn State Behrend sees changes to historical buildings by Jane Ingold

The Harborcreek Historical Society publishes local history focused articles in the Township's *YourHarborcreek* quarterly magazine. The following is an excerpt from the full article that will appear in the Fall 2021 issue of *YourHarborcreek*, which will be available online at <http://www.harborcreek.org>.

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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 • Website: www.harborcreekhistory.org

New Members

Debra LeDuc (Kuna, ID)
Patti Martin (Washington DC)
Seth Tuttle (Harborcreek, PA)

Changes to historical buildings *(Continued from Page 3)*

Penn State Behrend recently said a fond farewell to Erie Hall which is being replaced by a new complex. Planning for Erie Hall began within a year of the opening of the campus in 1948. All the standing buildings from Glenhill Farm were in use and space was at a premium. Physical education classes were taking place outdoors and in off-site locations and there was a need for more office space. The Behrend Advisory Board envisioned a recreational space for their students and for the wider community and in the early years local schools, including Wesleyville, used the space for dances and commencement. Edwin Nick oversaw the campaign, and the first donor was Mary Behrend who pledged \$1000.00. Because the money was raised locally, the decision was made to name the building Erie Hall. Besides sports, offices, and academic work, Erie Hall was also the scene of a popular campus event, Duffy's Tavern, which was a talent show. The building saw several renovations over the years, including the construction of some walls in the basement by Behrend engineering students, but it no longer fits the needs of the campus.



The 1952 groundbreaking for Erie Hall. Photograph courtesy of Behrend Archives.

The Federal House, meanwhile, is getting a facelift and an addition. Thomas Rees built the house, which he sold to Thomas Bonnell in 1838. For half a century it was passed down through several generations of the Bonnell family until the estate of Richard Bonnell sold it in 1891 to John Van Scoter (Vanscoter), the first of a series of short-term owners. Van Scoter, who had made a fortune in petroleum, continued to live in his home on Erie's Millionaire's Row and hired Frank and Appolonia Geil to live there and farm the land for him. Van Scoter was the widower of Helen Morrison Van Scoter, whose sister Ella lived down the street with her husband Charles Reed in what is now the Erie Club.

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

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

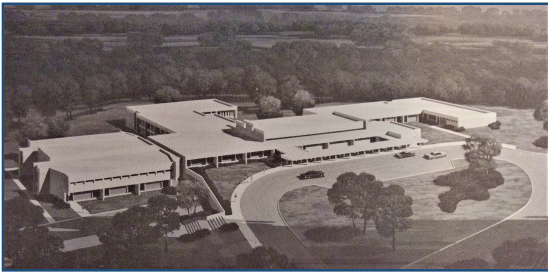
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***Businesses which have been a Society sponsor for ten years or more.**

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 eighth installment.



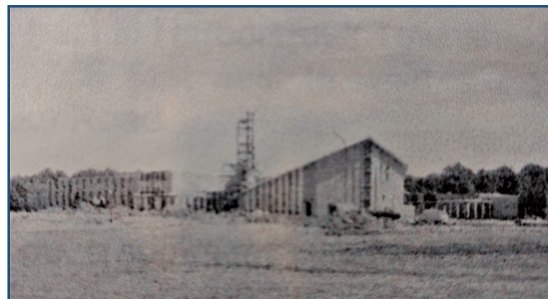
1970: The new Rolling Ridge Elementary School was dedicated on October 18, 1970. The total cost of the building and equipment was \$2,525,000. The student population in 2020 was 480 students with 33 teachers for Grades K-6.

Photograph: Cover photograph from the program booklet for the dedication ceremony, which was followed by an open house.



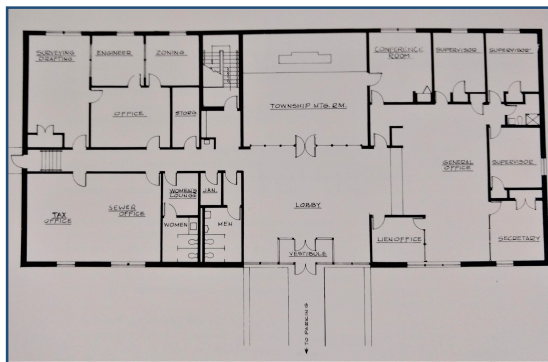
1970: Construction began on Conrad House in Brevillier Village at 5458 East Lake Road. The Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul announced that the building would have 133 efficiency and one-bedroom suites for elderly and handicapped residents. Renovations completed in 2019 enlarged the size of apartments.

Photograph: Conrad House following four phases of renovations. Read more about the renovations at <https://brevilliervillage.wordpress.com/2014/06/13/conrad-house-renovations/>



1970: The Mount St. Benedict Monastery opened. The Benedictine Sisters moved into the complex, which included a devotional chapel, housing for the Sisters, classrooms for music programs and Head Start Migrant children, and recreation areas.

Photograph: The Mount St. Benedict Monastery under construction, 1967.



1972: The Township Municipal Building was completed at 5601 Buffalo Road. A groundbreaking ceremony took place five years earlier on October 29, 1967 with Supervisors Frank Schwabenbauer, Robert Gindlesperger, and James Whitby, who turned over the first shovels of dirt for the main building and maintenance garage. The building was updated in 2021.

Photograph: Building layout as printed in the open house program, October 21, 1973.

1973: Astronaut Paul J. Weitz returned to Erie County for ceremonial events celebrating his 29-day Skylab mission. A parade on State Street in Erie, ceremonial dinners, and the naming of the Harborcreek High School stadium in his honor were just a few of the planned activities.

1973: A few years earlier, South Shore Village Subdivision began with single family homes on multiple winding streets that stretched from East Lake Road to the Lake Erie shoreline. In 1973, South Shore Village Apartments were constructed at 4600 East Lake Road. Both are popular living areas today.

Remembering our veterans year-round

Several years ago, volunteers with the Harborcreek Historical Society began a documentation project focused on identifying and documenting the service records for Harborcreek residents with United States military experience. The project has resulted in these two binders of material, which are organized alphabetically by veterans' last names. The binders include copies of service records which have either been gifted to the Society or made available through online resources like Ancestry.com, obituaries, hand-written and typed personal or family memories and stories, and photographs. But the binders will never be complete.



In recognition of Veterans' Day this year, we ask that you remember those who served year-round. And, if you haven't done so already, consider sharing information on the veterans in your life with us (or your own personal service experience), and make sure that they are recognized and included in this important and ongoing documentation project started by Sherri Towell.

Clarification on sale of sliver of land by Harborcreek Township

The *Erie Times News* recently published an article highlighting the township supervisors' vote October 20th to approve the sale of a small parcel of land located at 5661 Buffalo Road. It is a 51 ft. by 300 ft. piece of property located to the east of the Gifford-Blanchfield House, which is being split from the property surrounding the house and remaining barn.

Per the November 12th article, "...Palermo Realty & Development has expressed an interest in building a development similar to the company's Copperleaf in Summit Township, which includes townhouses, apartments and lofts as well as retail and community space. The development would potentially be built on the third-acre parcel owned by the township and on 19.3 acres to the south of that property, currently owned by Bette and Vicki Blanchfield, who filed a request in March to have the property rezoned from business to residential."

The sale of this small sliver of land **will have no impact** on the operations of the Harborcreek Historical Society nor its headquarters, the Gifford-Blanchfield House. Should you have any questions pertaining to the sale of this piece of land, please contact Harborcreek Township directly at (814) 899-3171.

Township's annual Light Up event scheduled for December 10th

Harborcreek Township's annual Light Up event, which was cancelled last year due to the public health crisis, is back for 2021. The family-friendly event is scheduled for Friday, December 10th in the early evening. Activities will be focused in and around the old barn located just west of the municipal building, as the township hopes to use the barn more regularly for community events. The historical society will be there, too. Our volunteers are currently planning for kid-friendly activities or crafts, so be sure to stop by our tent on your way to see Santa. The event will also include cookies and hot cocoa and horse-drawn carriage rides.



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 or call (814) 899-4447 if you have a story you'd like to see printed. We look forward to hearing from you.