

# THE HARBOR VIEW



*A quarterly newsletter of the Harborcreek Historical Society*

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

## Harborcreek Historical Society

5661 Buffalo Road, P.O. Box 121  
Harborcreek, PA 16421

T: (814) 899-4447

E: [harborcreekhistory@gmail.com](mailto:harborcreekhistory@gmail.com)

[www.harborcreekhistory.org](http://www.harborcreekhistory.org)

**Hours:** Saturdays 10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
& Wednesdays 12:00 - 4:00 pm (June thru November), or by appointment

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melinda Meyer, President  
John Skuce, Treasurer  
Jane Ingold, Secretary  
Nancy Brown  
Cindy Duda  
Sue Heuvel  
Louise Smerick

## Fall Speakers

*Programs are free and open to the public.*

### The Era of Prohibition and Rum Running

Wednesday, November 2, 2022 at 6:00 pm

At the Harborcreek Township Municipal Building, 5601 Buffalo Rd.

This star-studded panel discussion includes longtime Harborcreek resident and history enthusiast Richard Cowell and local authors and historians Debbi Lyon and David Frew. Each will share their knowledge of Harborcreek's role in rum running, as well as their recent experience being interviewed for the debut episode of WQLN's Chronicles, an Erie history documentary series.

### Archival Consulting and Processing:

#### The Dodge Collection at HHS

Wednesday, November 9, 2022 at 6:00 pm

At the Harborcreek Township Municipal Building, 5601 Buffalo Rd.

Bryan Colvin, the Mercyhurst University archivist, will discuss how he became involved with the Harborcreek Historical Society and his work on the preservation plan for the Dodge Collection. Mr. Colvin will be joined by Eva Philips, a senior History major at Mercyhurst University and archival assistant at the Mercyhurst Archives. Ms. Philips will discuss her involvement on the Dodge Collection project as the processing archivist. She will describe the steps of archival processing, the challenges of the project, and the project's outcomes.

## Holiday Open House

December 3, 2022 10 am – 2 pm

At the Gifford-Blanchfield House, 5661 Buffalo Rd.

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 are 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 house. Our board members and volunteers would love to chat with you about all things Harborcreek!

## Wednesday Hours Extended

Due to their popularity with researchers, the Society's Wednesday open hours are being extended through the end of November. The Gifford-Blanchfield House is open 12 – 4 pm on Wednesdays.

## GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

*In support of the Society*

*In support of Dodge Family Collection*

*See Erie Gives donor list included on Page 4 of this issue.*

*Susan Hayes-Masa*

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.

### "Show & Tell" Highlights

The Harborcreek Historical Society's annual meeting was held August 27<sup>th</sup> at the Harborcreek Township Municipal Building. Following a brief review of the organization's achievements and financial activities in 2021, the board shared information on the in-process archives and pavilion projects.

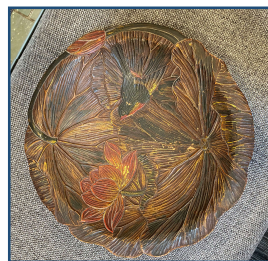
The second half of the meeting was an open "Show & Tell." Shared here are three objects and their stories as told by members Nancy Brown, Barbara Chambers, and John Skuce. We know that you will enjoy them as much as we did!

#### My Swedish Bowl by Nancy Brown

This traditional bowl was carved and painted by my Swedish great grandfather, Anders Nelson. He came from Sweden with his wife Ingrid and their three children to settle in the Moorheadville area in the 1880s. Both he and his wife had cousins living there. Anders, who was known as Andy after coming to America, had the typical Swedish-American dream of owning his own house and a piece of land, which was next to impossible in Sweden at that time. He accomplished both here in Harborcreek while working hard and holding onto some Swedish customs, like having a dirt yard which was swept



*Photograph by John D. Fox  
Photography.*



daily, singing long storytelling sagas in Swedish, and carving traditional Swedish bowls as special gifts for occasions like a housewarming.

I'm sure the bird and flower design in this handcrafted bowl, once brightly colored, had some significance, but I do not know what it was. That information was lost as the bowl was passed down through the generations.

#### Great Grandma Chamber's Bell by Barbara Chambers

Tarnished over the years, bent from numerous falls to the floor, this old brass bell continues to ring loud and clear to all in hearing range.

My great aunt, Jessie Chambers Bliley (1872-1962) gave me the bell when I was a child, probably at age 6 when I was recouping from being hit by a car. The bell had belonged to her mother, my great grandmother, Maria Funston Chambers (1849-1929), who was married to Cassius M. Chambers (1845-1915). They lived in the old family home where the Harborcreek Baptist Church on Buffalo Road now stands.

Some years after my great grandfather died, great grandma became an invalid, confined to her bed. The story passed on to me was that she was quite demanding! She rang the bell loudly and frequently to get the attention of anyone and everyone who could hear it to come to her aid.



So, if you are passing through Wesleyville on Station Road and hear a loud bell ringing PLEASE stop and give me help!

**Update:** An internet search revealed that the 5-inch-high bell, from England circa 1870s, probably once stood on a small marble base. Most likely, it was a desk bell at a hotel.

## Family Breadboard – Part I

by John Skuce

As I looked for an heirloom to present at the annual meeting, I nearly overlooked this old breadboard that has been passed down through my grandma's family. I have good reason to believe it is over 100 years old, which is evidenced by its physical condition. In comparison to the end boards, notice how the center board has shrunk in width over time.

While growing up in our multi-generational home, it was common for everyone to use the breadboard. Everyone had their specialties and each, including me, had favorite memories. However, the person I most associate with this board is Gram - Julia Almon – who seemed to use it every day. She made white and Swedish Rye bread; dinner, cinnamon, and pecan rolls; apple and prune kuchen; noodles; short cake; and a variety of other staples and treats. Whatever we kids asked for would be the source of the smell to which we would awake the next morning.

The board, which was handed down to Gram, came with her when she and my grandpa moved to Harborcreek in 1938. She was not happy to move to "that God-awful place," as she called it. Nevertheless, they were here and rented the big brick house on Buffalo Road from Lewie and Emma Swanson, who lived across the road from them.

The very first day, Emma brought gifts of fresh eggs, a wide-mouth jar of milk, the top quarter being cream, and butter she had just churned. It was the attitude-changer that turned Gram's opinion around. She was instantly happy and felt like she was in Heaven, never complaining again. She and Emma formed a life-long friendship.

The dings, nicks, gouges and worn corners of this board, along with the fact that it was never discarded, symbolize my grandma's life. But what it does not show is the love with which she baked and cooked, creating just plain downhome wonderful food for us and others – those who visited our home as well as those in far and wide circles.



*John Skuce "showing and telling" about his grandmother's wooden breadboard at the Society's annual meeting Saturday, August 27, 2022. His grandmother, Julia Almon, was born in 1897 in McDonald, PA as the youngest of six children.*

## Thank you for giving for Erie Gives!

We so deeply appreciate all those who gave to the Harborcreek Historical Society on Erie Gives Day, the Erie Community Foundation's annual 12-hour community-wide online giving campaign held August 9, 2022.

On behalf of the Harbor Creek High School Class of 1953, a donor matched every dollar given to the society during Erie Gives up to \$2,000. So, each dollar given was matched by a dollar from the donor (up to \$2,000), plus a prorated match from the Erie Community Foundation. Just over \$4,500 was raised for the Harborcreek Historical Society!

We are now working to purchase items needed for the archives project with funds raised during Erie Gives Day, such as temperature and relative humidity sensors, 2-3 additional fire extinguishers, 1-2 dehumidifiers, and upgrades to the security system.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

### Office Hours

**Saturdays 10:00 am – 2:00 pm &  
Wednesdays 12:00 – 4:00 pm (June thru November)**

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

Tom Kennedy  
Karen Ellen-Baker  
Cindy Duda

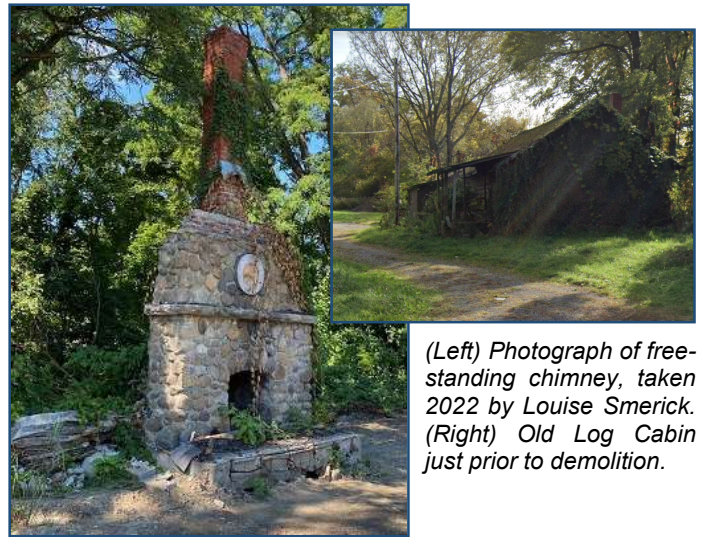
## Erie Gives *(Continued from Page 3)*

**Thank you** to our generous donors, who include: Barbara Anderson, Diane Baumgardner, Larry Beard, Lorraine Bucklin, Barbara A. Chambers, Joseph & Jaclyn Cofield, Mark and Anna Dalglish, Sarah & Bill DePlatchett, Karen L. Drake, Cynthia M. and Kenneth F. Duda, George and Char Frank, Larry & Vickie Gilchrist, Lois Heise, Steve & Robyn Heitzenrater, Jane Ingold, Heather Kensill, William H Klauk, Tom Kennedy, Nancy and Eric Marshall, Nick and Kathy Mauro, Charles & Judith McKay, Jack and Melinda Meyer, Eric & Tracy Moore, Chuck and Patti Myers, John Nowak, Rabbit's Hat Antiques, Carolyn Ruth, Lori Sheridan, Dolores Shiel, Beth Simmons, John & Judy Skuce, Rick & Louise Smerick, Cam Stadtmueller, and Carol Wood.

## The old Log Cabin by Jane Ingold

Harborcreek Historical Society board member Louise Smerick took this photograph of the chimney of the Log Cabin, located on the south side of Rte. 20 at Depot Street, after the rest of the building was demolished this summer. We were able to cull a little bit of information about it from our files and the Erie newspapers. Here's what we know so far.

Built around 1930, the property had been Nonomaque's orchard, but the logs were dragged to the site from their nearby property using a team of horses. It was a dance hall and social hall that boasted card parties, tureen dinners, amateur night talent shows, meetings, and square dances. Our



*(Left) Photograph of free-standing chimney, taken 2022 by Louise Smerick. (Right) Old Log Cabin just prior to demolition.*

treasurer, John Skuce, remembers the Harbor Creek rifle team using the facilities in the 1950s.

It was originally run by the Harborcreek Athletic Association until it was sold to the Gem City Gun Club. Eventually, Barry Rodemaker opened the Institute of Tae Kwon Do in that location.

We would love to know more about the cabin and its various "owners," especially the Harborcreek Athletic Association, so that we can do an in-depth article in a future issue. Can YOU help? Did you or a family member attend events there? We would love to hear your stories and add your photographs to our collection or scan them for our archives. Contact us at (814) 899-4447 or harborcreekhistory@gmail.com.

### 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 twelfth installment.

**1999:** Knowledge Park was co-developed by Penn State Behrend and the Greater Erie Industrial Development Corporation "as a place to bring forward-thinking companies together with faculty, staff and students of Penn State for business and technology advancement." Governor Ridge presided over the dedication on October 18, 1999. The complex consists of 200 acres and now (2022) has five buildings with 20 companies who employ over 500 workers. Between 1999 and 2014, Harborcreek Historical Society had offices in two of its buildings, first at Knowledge Center and later the Merwin Building.

**2003:** In September, the half-mile-long Nagle Road Harbor Park Bridge reconnected Harborcreek and Lawrence Park Townships and Rte. 955 and Rte. 20/Buffalo Road. The at-grade railroad crossing was closed in 1957 due to multiple accidents. The \$7.2M project ensured safe passage for residents over the second busiest freight corridor of Conrail (CSX) and Norfolk & Southern rail tracks. Township supervisors Bossart, Mindek, and Springirth presided over the dedication.

**2003:** The \$31M Bayfront Connector Wintergreen Gorge Bridge was part of one of the last sections of the Bayfront multilane highway to be built. The highway circumnavigates Erie City along the waterfront and provides access to Interstates 90 and 79. The 1,100-foot-long bridge spans the section of Four Mile Creek known as Wintergreen Gorge, a popular hiking area. It is named the Donald S. Oaks Memorial Bridge in memory of the first Erie County and Harborcreek soldier who was killed near Baghdad, Iraq on April 3, 2003.

**2003:** In this the township's 200<sup>th</sup> year, Harborcreek Township, Harbor Creek School District, Harborcreek Chamber of Commerce, and the Society jointly coordinated the bicentennial celebration. The event included, painting the Rte. 20 railroad underpasses and landscaping nearby areas, a parade in the Village ending at the school, where community groups hosted outdoor exhibits, guided bus tours of the township, and the publication of *Harborcreek's*

Yesteryears, a book "dedicated to the preservation of the history and heritage of Harborcreek through a collection of stories and pictures from the people who lived it." Additionally, the lawn of the Township Municipal Building was transformed into a Bicentennial Garden. The bicentennial logo was used to unify activities and residents around this milestone in township history.



Photographs: (Top) Harborcreek Bicentennial logo, (Center) Harbor Park Bridge, and (Bottom) Cam Stadtmueller sitting on the center barrier of the soon to open Donald S. Oaks Memorial Bridge.

## An update on the archives project

From August through the end of September, Mercyhurst University student Eva Philips completed 160 hours of work in the Dodge Family Collection. She organized the collection into sections such as Correspondence and Financial Records, transferred all materials into archival quality boxes and folders, prepared a finding aid for the collection to help researchers use it, and began digitizing the collection using Preservica digital archives software.

Her work was overseen by archives consultant Bryan Colvin, who is the University & Ridge Archivist for Mercyhurst University. Earlier in the summer Bryan completed an assessment of the archives and prepared a report with suggested actions, which are now being implemented.

The project is being supported in part with grant funding from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission.

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.



*Mercyhurst University senior History Major Eva Philips processing the Dodge Family Collection, a 42-box collection generously gifted to the Society by Susan Hayes-Masa.*

## Presidential candidate Wendell Willkie broadcasted nationally from Harborcreek

By Nancy Brown

Wendell Willkie, businessman and Republican nominee for the presidency of the United States, delivered a nation-wide broadcast October 24, 1940 from Harborcreek, where his train stopped for half an hour before proceeding to Erie.

Delayed by a late start out of New York the previous night, the train was late arriving at Harborcreek, and technicians worked frantically to make the connections. At approximately 12:13 pm – thirteen minutes late – the candidate went on the air from a soundproof car on his special train.

Willkie shared that there was no issue between himself and the third-term candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he opposed bank insurance, and the national income had decreased under Roosevelt's presidency.

The 13-minute delay was said to have cost NBC nearly \$4,000, half the total cost of the broadcast. During the delay, approximately 200 stations heard organ music as "studio fill."

Willkie went on to speak at Union Station in Erie, where more than 25,000 people had gathered in and around Griswold Plaza.

Willkie ultimately lost the race with Roosevelt, who was elected to an unprecedented third term. Still, Harborcreek can claim its place on Willkie's 1940 campaign trail.

## Local barns highlighted

Harborcreek Township's Helinski Barn and 6 Mile Wine Cellars' barn were both featured this past August on the first ever countywide historic barn tour organized by Preservation Erie. The Helinski Barn, located just west of the Township Municipal Building, was restored several years ago by the township, and is today used for storage. The horse barn at 6 Mile Wine Cellars is a pre-Civil War structure, and today it houses the winery's tasting room and production space.

While these two barns were featured on the recent tour, the township boasts many, many more. Around 2003, Society members Bob and Carlene Stroup documented many – not all – of the barns in Harborcreek Township. This archival collection of photographs helps document 30-50 local barns, some of which are no longer standing.



For those wanting to know more about the township's agricultural structures, we invite you to stop in!

*Helinski Barn, located west of the Municipal Building on Rte. 20.*