

# THE HARBOR VIEW



*A quarterly newsletter of the Harborcreek Historical Society*

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## Request an e-newsletter!

If you would like to request to receive newsletters electronically, send a current email address to [harborcreekhistory@gmail.com](mailto:harborcreekhistory@gmail.com).

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

## Harborcreek Historical Society

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melinda Meyer, President

John Skuce, Treasurer

Jane Ingold, Secretary

Nancy Brown

Cindy Duda

Sue Heuvel

Louise Smerick



## Follow up on the old Log Cabin By Jane Ingold

Thanks to all who responded to our request for more information about the recently demolished Log Cabin east of the subway which was the original home of the Harborcreek Athletic Association. The first mention of the HAA in the Erie paper was a February 26, 1931 notice which announced that the Association was sponsoring a dance at town hall. The planning committee consisted of James Hill, Lawrence Adams, and Kenneth Neff with music by the Jack Norris Rhythm Kings. At that point the group held its meetings at the Harborcreek Fire Hall. In October of that year, they hosted their first annual coon and hound trials. At some point before 1937 the group built the familiar log cabin which they called their "clubhouse." Two years later Eliza "Rusty" Keene was elected president of the auxiliary. A nurse by training, she was one of the many cooks who helped put on the specialty dinners over the years featuring fish, steak, or ham. Their dinners and dances benefited many organizations such as the March of Dimes and the Harborcreek Fire Department which bought gas masks with the proceeds in 1943.

Meanwhile, Rusty's husband, Emmett, a crane operator who worked at "the GE" and was known to most as Pete, took care of several aspects of the venue. Besides stamping hands at the door, he managed the books and took on many maintenance tasks including caring for the floors using oiled sawdust and working with a broom until they gleamed. His daughter Karen remembers roller skating there with her friends. She recalls that the "square dances were very jolly and there was always some sort of countrified gentleman who

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## GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

*In memory of Tracy Longnecker Moore  
In memory of Irene Smerick*

*Louise Smerick  
Rick and Louise Smerick*

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.

### Old Log Cabin *(Continued from Cover)*

would call the dances. They had live music and the bandleader was Hugh Harrity." She also remembers dancing the polka with a young man they called "JoeJoe" or "JoJo," but his last name is now forgotten.

The Keenes' elder daughter, Lorelee, was privileged to have as a best friend, Diane Grenz Baumgardner, who recalls the good times they had at the dances. "I recall when the trains went by, we just had to stop talking because it was so loud. Their house was very close to traffic and of course there was no air conditioning then and we had the windows open."

The clubhouse was the site of many banquets including some for Harbor Creek alumni and Our Lady of Mercy Altar Society. In his memoir *Growing Up In Harborcreek, PA*, George Pierce, Jr., whose parents recalled that he and his bride Doris Witherow Pierce held their wedding reception there in January 1950. On our Facebook page, Renee Newberry noted that she attended her niece's bridal shower at the facility.

Other Facebook commenters included Linda DeAngelo who told us that her husband Bob attended Scout meetings there. Pam Yates, Carol Langdon, and Wendy Roman Cabrera enjoyed auctions there run by local fireman Garth May in the 1970's. A 1972 notice in the classifieds for an auction there advertised clothing, food, and toys and listed Tom Sterrett of Fairview as that night's auctioneer. Finally, A.J. Learn used to race remote-controlled cars at the property. We are grateful for all of those who shared their memories with us.

On August 9, 1968 a classified notice announced the dissolution of the Harborcreek Athletic Association and, as noted in our last issue, the Gem City Gun Club and the Institute of Tae Kwon Do later owned the property.

*Cover Photo: We snapped this photograph of a photograph from a family scrapbook kept by Karen Keene of an unknown event at the "clubhouse."*



*Karen Keene has graciously given us this photograph. Her sister Lorelee is in the white dress with Diane Grenz Baumgardner to her right. To Lorelee's left is Patricia Rundstrom. Do you recognize any of these youngsters? Please let us know.*

### Save these dates!

The 2023 calendar is beginning to fill up. Please be sure to save the dates for these upcoming events with which the Harborcreek Historical Society is participating.

**Big Truck Day** May 20, 2023 10:00 am - 1:00 pm  
At the Harborcreek Township Garage

**HistERIE Week** June 5-10, 2023  
A week-long celebration of local history

**Smiley's Ice Cream Truck**  
In the Gifford-Blanchfield House Parking Lot  
June 22, July 27, and August 24 5:00 – 7:00 pm

**Genealogy Road Trip to Erie** August 10-12, 2023  
Hosted by Erie Society for Genealogical Research Seminars, networking, tours, and more!

**Keep It in the Creek Week** October 7-13, 2023  
A week-long celebration of Harborcreek



## “Duck and cover” By Melinda Meyer

In reorganizing the basement storage for the Harbor Creek School District’s senior high school, staff recently rediscovered relics of a by-gone era, a time when the threat of nuclear war felt imminent...and, yet, survivable with the right preparation.

The items staff found were labeled “CIVIL DEFENSE HOSP.” and dated 1952, with at least one item having a sticker from the American Red Cross Erie, PA Chapter. To understand why this collection of cots, pillows, wool blankets, and 10-gallon milk dispensers was strategically placed in the basement of the school, it is important to consider world and national happenings at the time. Taken from the “Civil Defense and Homeland Security: A Short History of National Preparedness Efforts” published in 2006 by the Homeland Security National Preparedness Task Force:

*The climate of civil defense changed dramatically with the successful Soviet test of a nuclear weapon in August of 1949. The United States lost its monopoly on nuclear weapons and the corresponding negotiating power that this entailed. Local officials began to demand from the Federal government a clear outline of what they were to do in crisis situations.*

*In response, Congress enacted the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, which placed most of the civil defense burden on the States and created the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) to formulate national policy to guide the States’ efforts. The FCDA led shelter building programs, sought to improve Federal and State coordination, established an attack warning system, stockpiled supplies, and started a well known national civic education campaign. The FCDA specifically aimed to teach schoolchildren about preparedness, primarily through civil defense drills. In order to effectively educate the entire youth population, the FCDA commissioned a movie studio to produce nine civil defense movies that would be shown in classrooms across the nation – among them Duck and Cover. The movie, through its main character Bert the Turtle, showed children what to do when they saw*

*“the flash of an atomic bomb.” Ultimately, the film was seen by millions of schoolchildren during the 1950s. The public education campaign throughout the decade promoted the idea that with preparation, a nuclear attack could be survivable.*

Locally, the Erie County Civil Defense organization kicked into action in 1951, with an initial \$53,000 budget approved by county council, half coming from the federal government. By 1952, plans were in place for air raid warning sirens to be placed in North East, Girard, Waterford, Union City, Albion, Corry, and Edinboro, and the first mass volunteer enlistment drive aimed at recruiting air raid wardens took place in November of that year. As part of the campaign, which mirrored a similar national effort, enlistment displays were placed in the storefronts of the Boston Store, Trask’s, P.A. Meyers, and Isaac Baker and Sons. By February 1954, the total number of volunteer members of the Erie County Civil Defenses corps was 1,200.



Drew Mortensen, Assistant Principal at Harbor Creek High School, shows off one of the 10-gallon milk dispensers that was part of the cache of fallout shelter supplies located in the school’s basement.

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### 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 • Website: www.harborcreekhistory.org

### New Members

Charles and Judith McKay  
Harborcreek, PA

## 2022 Yearend Financials

### INCOME

Donations	\$5,698.65
Grants	\$5,550.00
Memberships	\$2,400.00
Gift Shop Sales	\$29.00
Interest	\$86.48

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**TOTAL INCOME     \$13,700.13**

### EXPENSES

Utilities	\$1,547.96
Office	\$1,830.21
Newsletter	\$178.65
Pavilion	\$500.00
Prof. Memberships	\$170.00
Insurance	\$679.00
Collections	\$7,109.15
Misc.	\$231.82

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**TOTAL EXPENSE     \$12,246.79**

Financials provided by Harborcreek Historical Society Treasurer John Skuce.

Thanks to the generosity of our members and friends, the Society remains financially sound in an era when so many nonprofits continue to struggle through, due in large part to the public health crisis. We are so deeply appreciative of your ongoing support, whether you give financially or attend our community events. Thank you!

## Transportation exhibit in-process

Transportation is an important aspect of every community. Here in Harborcreek, residents have had access to unique roadways, like the Great Lakes Seaway Trail / East Lake Road / Route 5 and historic U.S. Route 20 / Buffalo Road, railroads and trolleys, sailing vessels and power boats, and airplanes. A new exhibit being created by volunteers Cindy Duda and Carol Laughlin includes it all! Stop in this spring to see it.



### 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
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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.



# 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 thirteenth installment.

**2004-05:** World War II veterans and Harborcreek residents Joe Lesniewski and Spencer Wurst spoke at the Harborcreek Historical Society twice, enthralled audiences both times with their accounts of military missions. Joe served with the Easy Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, which dropped soldiers behind enemy lines following the D-day invasion of Normandy. The story of E Company was told in both the *Band of Brothers* book and miniseries.

Spencer published a memoir of his combat missions as "Descending from the Clouds." A member of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division, Spencer was dropped into an area of fighting around the Normandy region of Sainte Mere Eglise and fought in the Ardennes Campaign (Battle of the Bulge).

**2006:** In June, the Harbor Creek School District held its 100th Annual Commencement on the stage of the Warner Theatre. One hundred and forty-five students from the Class of 2006 received their diplomas, with several providing words of inspiration. In contrast, with seven women and four men giving speeches, the 1907 commencement was held at Central School Auditorium in May.

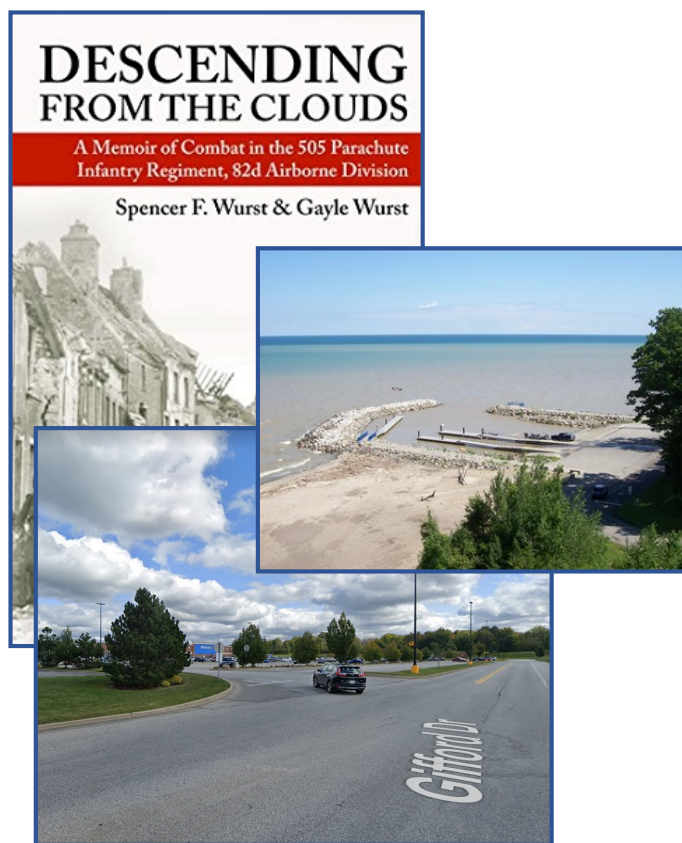
**2007:** On October 19<sup>th</sup>, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to celebrate completion of Phase 2 improvements at Shades Beach, a \$2.6 million offshore marina. The beach provides boaters with a launching area, as well as a breakwall shelter from Lake Erie's waves. Park visitors can walk along the breakwall, which originally contained a railed fishing area for the handicapped.

**2008:** On Depot Road north of Interstate 90, John Schaefer began construction of the first houses and patio homes of the Harbor Ridge Golf Community. A 9-hole golf course encircles the residences and a clubhouse / restaurant providing indoor and outdoor views of Lake Erie. Today, there are approximately 150 homes and four condominiums, with more being added each year.

**2008:** The Walmart Plaza is built on Buffalo Road. Shoppers entering the plaza from Route 20 do so on Gifford Drive. The township chose this name because the development borders property once owned by the Gifford Family. In 1836 Gershom and Lucy Gifford purchased 120 acres of Irvine's Reserve, built their home, raised cattle, and farmed. The last Gifford family descendent to own the property were Gerald and Bette Blanchfield and their son Rick. Today, the plaza houses Walmart, Bob Evans Restaurant, and Erie Bank and includes acreage for future growth.

**2008:** Behrend College opened in 1948 as a one-year school affiliated with Penn State and, over 60 years, developed into a vibrant campus with four-year programs. Growing out from the historic Glenhill Farmhouse, the campus has become an impressive complex. The school is now one of Penn State's largest branches, attracting students and faculty from all over the world.

**2010:** Harborcreek Township's population grew by 2,000 new residents between the 2000 (15,178 people) and 2010 (17,234 people) U.S. Censuses.



Photographs: (From top to bottom) Book cover of Spencer Wurst's *Descending from the Clouds*, Shades Beach, and a Google Maps image of Walmart and Gifford Drive.



## “Duck and cover” *(Continued from Page 3)*

For many, this is an era of history that was experienced rather than read about in books and articles. Should you wish to share your first-hand accounts of living during this era and volunteering for the Erie County Civil Defenses corps, or participating in “Duck and Cover” drills at school, please email a write-up of your memories to [harborcreekhistory@gmail.com](mailto:harborcreekhistory@gmail.com).

The Society is appreciative of the Harbor Creek School District’s donation of one of each fallout shelter supply. Look for more information about the donated items to appear in future newsletter issues.

## Membership renewal reminder

By Cindy Duda

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to all our lifetime members and those who have renewed their membership and sponsorship for 2023. If yours was lost in the Thanksgiving and Christmas rush, look for a new form in your mail soon. Your support is warmly appreciated!

## We enjoyed seeing you in December

The holidays are now well behind us, but our memories of seeing you this past December are still fresh in our minds. The Harborcreek Historical Society helped staff the cookie booth at Harborcreek Township’s Light Up Night, and we hosted an open house at the Gifford-Blanchfield House the weekend before. It was great being out in the community!



## An update on the archives project

Society volunteers continue to make improvements for the benefit of the collections. The Gifford-Blanchfield House has large 20 windows. They let in an amazing amount of natural light, but sunlight is a common source of ultraviolet light, which can cause irreparable damage to all works on paper, photographs, library and archive collections, museum objects, leathers, and fabrics.

Purchased last fall and installed this January by volunteers Cindy and Ken Duda, all 20 windows now feature light-blocking shades. The shades will help in controlling the internal building temperature, as well.

Last summer, under the supervision of Bryan Colvin, who is the University & Ridge Archivist for Mercyhurst University, student Eva Phillips organized the Dodge Family collection and began digitizing the collection using Preservica digital archives software.

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