

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.

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

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2023 HistErie Week June 5-10

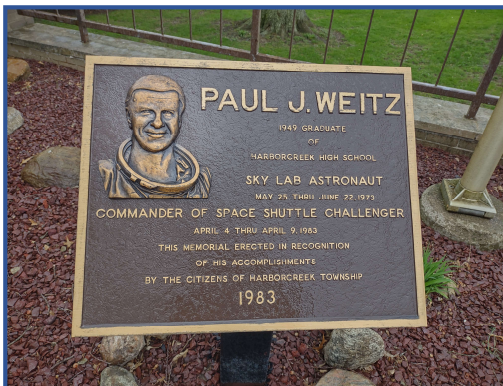
HistERIE Week, the Erie County Public Library's annual celebration of Erie County history is happening June 5-10, 2023. This year's theme is "History is Everywhere!" Ever notice those metal historic marker signs while you are out and about? You may be surprised to know there are over 200 historic markers in Erie County!

The week-long schedule of events includes tours, lectures, special events, and more. Find the HistERIE Week schedule at <https://eriecounty-pa.libguides.com/HistERIE2023> and pick up a HistERIE Week take-home packet while supplies last from any branch of the Erie County Public Library.

Harborcreek Historical Society's

HistERIE Week Program by Jane Ingold

Join us Friday, June 9th at 7 PM in the Township Building as HHS secretary Jane Ingold presents "Celebrating Paul Weitz 50 Years after Skylab." Weitz piloted Skylab from May 25th through June 22, 1973. In October of that year, he and his family were treated to a whirlwind weekend of activities that included the dedication of Paul Weitz Stadium and the awarding to him of the first Behrend Medallion. The presentation will recall the events of that special weekend.



Harborcreek native and NASA Astronaut Paul Weitz. Weitz's first mission, Skylab-2 in 1973, was the first of three crewed Skylab flights. It lasted 28 days, setting a new world record at the time. Credit: www.nasa.gov

This plaque honoring Astronaut Weitz is located outside the south entrance of the Harborcreek Township Municipal Building.

You might also be interested in visiting Behrend that afternoon where Yahn Planetarium director Jim Gavio will speak about NASA's Artemis Program at 1 pm and 3 pm. He's a great person to ask your more technical questions about Skylab. From noon until 5 pm Ms. Ingold, in her role as Behrend Archivist, will be giving archives tours and it will be a last chance to see the current exhibit, "Bazooka, Boats, and Bravery: Behrend and Hammermill in World War II" at the Lilley Library.

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

*In memory of Joe Bruce by Willie Bruce
In memory of Nancy Stelle Howell by Pat Cochran
Donation by Harborcreek Chapter AARP 4434*

*In memory of Judy Wieczorek by Cam Stadtmueller
In memory of Judy Wieczorek by Louise Smerick
Donation by Stewart B. Chambers*

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.

In memory of society co-founder Judith A. Wieczorek

It is impossible to talk about the early years of the Harborcreek Historical Society without including mention of Judy Wieczorek. She and Beth Evans Simmons were appointed by Harborcreek Township Supervisors Mindek, Bossart, and Akerly to lead the township's contribution to the City of Erie 1995 bicentennial celebration. They chose to create the Harborcreek Historical Society.

Judy served as president of the new organization from 1994 through 1998 and was at the helm when the society selected the long-term stewardship of Gospel Hill Burial Ground as a special project. With strong support from the community, the society created a list of all readable gravestones, restored select monuments and stones, built a cairn from broken pieces of headstones, installed a meditation garden and fencing around the burial grounds, and placed a wrought iron marker with the cemetery name along Station Road. Judy and co-chair Don Robbins oversaw this project until 1999. This is an example of the many community and research projects she made happen through the society.

Judy was born April 22, 1935 to John and Mary Stoffa Wieczorek and grew up on Lighthouse Street in Erie with siblings Eileen (1918-2011), John Jr. (1921-2014), and Dolores (b. 1930). In 1955, she entered the U.S. Army Women's Army Corps (WAC) (1) and served in Company B, 1st Platoon, Section A, WAC Training Battalion, WAC Center, Fort McClellan, Alabama. After two years with the army, she was honorably discharged and returned home.

Judy then completed undergraduate studies at Mercyhurst College, completing a BA from 1957 to 1961. She then went on to Marquette University, where she earned her MA 1961-1963. In 1963, she finished a PhD from the University of Massachusetts and returned to Mercyhurst College, where she taught for more than 30 years. She became the director of the Department of Sociology in 1970.



Among her news-making achievements, Judy led 200 students in a prayer vigil with Sister Carolyn Herrmann, president of Mercyhurst College, following the brutality towards voting rights activists in Selma, Alabama in March 1965. In 1968, she co-authored the article "Behavior of College Students under an Unlimited Cut System," published in *The Journal of Experimental Education*, with Barbara Cancilla and Bernadette Hordinski. She also started a program for older adults at Mercyhurst called the College of Older Americans. When the program launched in 1972, it was one of only three in the country. It was based on the premise that formal education should be an option at any age. Attendance was free-of-charge, as the program was funded by the Older Americans Act. Course offerings included sports, hobbies, and films, to name a few, as well as practical instruction, such as how to create a will or fix your television.

(Continued on Page 3)

In memorial *(Continued from Page 2)*

The College for Older Americans was such a new idea, even the New York Times called about the program! Approximately 200 adult students (age 55+) enrolled in the College's first year, and enrollment peaked in 1974-1975 at 866 adult students.

In 1973, Judy was honored by being featured in the Outstanding Educators of America (2) publication.

Her civic accomplishments included being a consultant for the Erie Junior League and serving on the Erie Opportunities Industrialization Center (3) Board of Directors, City of Erie Mayor's Council on Aging, and Harborcreek Planning Commission. She was also a long-time supporter of the Tamarack Wildlife Center, possessing a love and respect for all animals.

At home, Judy and Jean Ames raised goats and enjoyed their one-acre farm in Harborcreek.

Her final residence was the PA Soldiers and Sailors Home, where she died January 28, 2023.

We are deeply appreciative of Judy's contributions to the Harborcreek community and beyond and extend our condolences to her family.

(1) The WAC was created as the women's branch of the U.S. Army during World War II. The WAC Center at Fort McClellan was discontinued in 1976, and the entire branch was disbanded in 1978 and integrated into the male units.

(2) Outstanding Educators of America was an annual awards program honoring distinguished men and women for their exceptional service, achievements, and leadership in the field of education. Each year those selected were featured in a national awards volume, "Outstanding Educators of America." Nominations for the program were made by officials of colleges and universities including presidents, deans, and department chairmen. Guidelines for selection included the educator's talents in the classroom, contributions to research, administrative abilities, civic service, and professional recognition.

(3) Founded by Baptist minister Leon Sullivan in 1964 in Philadelphia, the Opportunities Industrialization Center provided job training for African Americans. With the help of federal funding, by the 1960s the OIC established centers in eight other cities, including Erie.

Pavilion project moves ahead

The society recently received a \$12,000 grant from the Erie Community Foundation and a \$9,822 grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority to support construction of a 20 ft. x 30 ft. educational pavilion on the grounds of the Gifford-Blanchfield House. With these funds approved and \$6,500 raised in donations, we are excited to share that work can begin this spring!

The Gifford-Blanchfield House, which was rehabilitated in 2016 by Harborcreek Township to serve as the permanent headquarters of the Society, has an occupancy limit of 15 people, making it difficult for the organization to host larger events and group tours in the building. This challenge was exacerbated by the Covid-19 public health crisis. Small spaces like the Gifford-Blanchfield House were rendered unusable when mitigation guidelines called for physical distancing. The proposed pavilion will create a space for the Society to convene larger groups of people in a safe, outdoor environment and provide a new outdoor space for public use.

We thank our donors, the Erie Community Foundation, and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority for your support!



With help from Harborcreek Township, the pavilion site has been prepped and is ready for construction. In the fall, Harborcreek Township employees cleared and leveled the site where the pavilion is to be located, which is directly behind the Gifford-Blanchfield House. Also last fall, the Society commissioned an architect from Rock Hill Engineering to create the architectural drawings required by the township.

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

Judy Henry
Dennis Dolph

Jefferson Educational Society partners with Harborcreek Township to expand lecture series in East County

The Jefferson Educational Society of Erie has partnered with Harborcreek Township to expand its programming to the northeast region of Erie County. The JES, a non-profit think tank based in the city of Erie, has other satellite locations in Corry, Fairview, Edinboro, and the lower east side of the city of Erie. The upcoming lecture series in Harborcreek will take place at the Harborcreek Township building (5601 Buffalo Road, Harborcreek, PA 16421).

Headlining the new FREE lecture series will be the Harborcreek Township Supervisors, who will give a presentation about their vision for the future of Harborcreek Township on Wednesday, June 28 at 6:00 p.m. The following program will be a presentation by Melinda Meyer about the Harborcreek Historical Society on Wednesday, July 5 at 6:00 p.m.

The FREE lecture series will include programs once or twice a month on topics such as community-building, agriculture, ecology and conservation, local and national history, and more. To learn more about JES Satellite Programming and our new East County/Harborcreek location, please visit www.JESErie.org/satellite-programming.

Local genealogy workshop

The Erie Society for Genealogical Research invites you to save the date for their upcoming Genealogy Roadshow, featuring a seminar by American Ancestors and co-hosted with the Erie County Historical Society's Hagen History Center.

Friday, August 11th includes an open house at the Hagen History Center with information tables manned by local historical societies, authors, and other organizations, including the Harborcreek Historical Society. Tours of the Center's immigration exhibits and archives will be available, as well as small group tours of the Erie County Courthouse and the Erie County Public Library's Heritage Room.

Saturday, August 12th features a full-day seminar led by the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), widely known as American Ancestors. Their expert genealogists will cover topics suitable for genealogists with all levels of research experience. The seminar will include a special focus on how to trace ancestors who were on the move. Founded in 1845, they are the oldest genealogy society in the United States and provide expertise and research across America.

Find more information at www.genealogyerie.org

Gospel Hill spring clean-up

Youth volunteering with ServErie are scheduled to help with the annual spring clean-up at Gospel Hill Burial Ground Sunday, May 21 1:00-3:00 pm.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

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STAN'S GARDEN CENTER *	899-5424	5001 BUFFALO ROAD

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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 fourteenth installment.

2010: Of the 13 township one-room schools built in the 1800s, Chambers School was the only one without exterior renovations. It was School #4 and was also known as the Walbridge School due to its location on Buffalo Road. With the opening of Central School in 1902-1903, this school closed and was acquired by Frederick Ohlweiler. The brick building had several owners, with Rose Construction being the last before demolition in 2010. The land is now used as an entrance to Stan's Garden Center.

2010: The Harborcreek Historical Society signed up to become a Blue Star Museum and is fulfilling its connection to our community's military, for those on active duty or veterans. The Gifford-Blanchfield House has exhibits featuring community veterans, as well as Military Honor Roll notebooks with information on over 220 service men and women. Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and museums across America, offering free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families.

2011: The Harbor Creek School District launched the Athletic Hall of Fame. Harbor Creek High School is well-known for its outstanding sports teams. The Athletic Hall of Fame gives recognition to accomplished athletes, winning teams, and dedicated coaches. Beginning in 2011, the Athletic Hall of Fame has chosen new members every two years. Listings of those inducted can be found on the Harbor Creek School District website at: <https://www.hcsd.iu5.org/athletics/>

2012: Giant Eagle Supermarket relocates to 4265 Buffalo Road. The Pittsburgh-based food supplier and pharmacy opened in 1984 at 4401 Buffalo Road. After three years, the need to offer more food choices caused them to build a larger store at 4500 Buffalo Road. Fifteen years of steady customers brought about the Giant Eagle Corporation's decision to relocate to a new developing plaza at its present location. A nearby GetGo Café & Gas Station was established to serve the Buffalo Road business corridor traffic.

2014: The Harborcreek Historical Society launched its interpretive panel project, which now includes seven historic markers or panels located throughout the township.

- *The Gauge War*, Roadside Park (2014)
- *Gospel Hill Burial Ground*, Gospel Hill Burial Ground (2015)
- *Gifford-Blanchfield Family*, Gifford-Blanchfield House (2017)
- *Harborcreek's Lake Erie Shoreline*, Shades Beach Marina (2017)
- *Hoag Cemetery*, Hoag Cemetery (2020)
- *Harborcreek's Agricultural History*, Gifford-Blanchfield House (2021)
- *Russell's Log Cabins*, Gifford-Blanchfield House (2021)

2017: The Harborian Yearbook announced 115 seniors were graduating in the 2017 class.

2018: Harborcreek Township's population reached 17,232 people.

2018: The Harbor Creek School District All Alumni Reunion Weekend was created. The traditional fall Homecoming Weekend was invigorated when Justin Gallagher, a School Director, and his committee initiated change. At the Friday night football game, food trucks were added to complement the food choices at the concession stand. To bring all alumni together in a social setting, the East Erie Moose Club was reserved for a DJ and refreshments on Saturday evening. Each year the attendance has increased and word of the All Alumni event is bringing more classmates and classes together to "relive high school memories."

Big Trucks, Tuesday Talks, & more upcoming events

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

Tuesday Talk: Dirt Racetracks June 20, 2023
6:30 pm at the Gifford-Blanchfield House
Organized by Larry Beard and Nancy Brown, these "talks" are opportunities to share memories and research and learn more about Harborcreek.

Smiley's Ice Cream Truck

In the Gifford-Blanchfield House Parking Lot
June 22, July 27, and August 24 5:00 – 7:00 pm

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

The Lob Cabin by John Skuce

Through the Harborcreek Historical Society, and when the Lob Cabin was still standing, someone asked about the run-down building at the underpass in Harborcreek. It didn't look like much at the time, but it had been quite the place, and it holds a special spot in my heart.

My personal memories are from the 1950s, when it was the home of the Harborcreek Rifle Team. There was a small-bore, 50-foot rifle range in the back portion of the building where I spent many an evening. We shot .22 target rifles and competed with other teams throughout Erie County and one (Meadville) in Crawford County. The pistol team also claimed it as its home. The area for the targets would be covered and concealed when other events were held, such as dances.

There were eight or ten shooting positions, so not everyone could shoot at the same time. Those not shooting used the front portion of the building for socializing and often a friendly game of poker - penny ante. I remember being asked if I would like to learn how to play - right after they asked if I had any money. It was like a rite of passage for me - a kid shooting and playing poker with men I admired and looked up to. I felt special.

Tuesday evening was for practice and Friday was match night when we competed with other teams, either traveling to their range or hosting them at ours. On match night, when everyone was through shooting and the targets had all been scored and the winner determined, we all sat down together for sandwiches, snacks, coffee, soft drinks, and a few more hands of poker. Nothing bad happened there, but I learned that what was said or happened at the Log Cabin stayed at the Log Cabin - for the most part. My grandpa was always interested in how well I shot, but when my grandma and I would be alone, she would ask how I did at poker. I would tell her how much I won or lost - only ever a couple bucks either way. She loved a good card game.

My shooting skills began to develop when, as a Boy Scout, I went to rifle night right across the road in the old Harborcreek Town Hall. The range was upstairs, and shooting was Wednesday nights. When I was young, I worked for Bob Swift, one of the best riflemen in northwestern PA. His farm was at Highmeyer and Buffalo Road across from my house. Once he learned that I had been shooting with the Boy Scouts, he took me under his wing, polished me

up, and signed me up with the all-men Harborcreek Team.

I was 14 years old and instantly grew to love shooting and a few hands of poker. Those times at the Log Cabin were the highlight of my week, and great memories are etched in my mind to this very day.

In 1956 or 57, I never knew the reason, but rifle shooting at the Log Cabin ceased, and we all began shooting with the Lawrence Park Rifle Club, which was near where Twinbrook is now. In 1958, I began attending Gannon College and became a member of their team, competing in a much wider circle, which included schools in Ohio.

Life was much simpler when I was young, and it might be difficult for kids today to understand that shooting was a wholesome hobby that could keep a teenager from developing bad habits and possibly going astray. Whenever I told my parents I was going to the Log Cabin to shoot, they knew they need not worry.

Daniel Boone, a childhood hero of mine, is known to have said that to have a good life, all a man needs is a good horse, a good rifle, and a good wife. Although I only have two of the three, I am thankful for what began to shape me at the Log Cabin back in the 1950s - almost 70 years ago.



The old Log Cabin just south of the Route 20 underpass prior to demolition. In the Winter 2023 issue of The Harbor View newsletter, Jane Ingold wrote an article highlighting stories and memories collected from other community members. Credit: Google Maps.