

CURATOR'S REPORT
THE BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY 12, 2026



HOMER P. BOGER

**FOUNDATION STONES OF THE
FORMER SIMON HAY GRIST MILL**

HAY'S MILL

HOMER P. BOGER

Having had the opportunity to capture Homer Poorbaugh Boger's picture standing inside the remaining stone walls remaining from Pioneer Simon Hay's grist mill in the Village of Hay's Mill in Brothersvalley Township was like capturing a part of local history that escaped a decade before my birth. And since the grist mill was built in 1806 for operations by my German ancestor, it was a delightful pleasure to capture a remaining segment of history. An Irish stonemason by the name of Thomas Short built the beautiful stone foundation.

It was an opportunity that would never afford itself again because Homer, a retired farmer and former owner of the grist mill, was still able to climb over barb-wire fencing and walk through tangled meadow grass to show me the mills' remaining stone walls. In his younger years Homer helped his father operate the grist mill. Actually it was in the 1930s when Homer became the new mill owner that he made the decision to dismantle the three-story structure which had fallen into despair. The cost for installing a new roof on the mill was too expensive during the Depression Years when Homer was a young man taking over the family farm. His parents Ephraim and Mary Melissa (Poorbaugh) Boger and grandparents Daniel and Margaret (Deal) Boger had earlier owned both the farm and grist mill after the grist mill passed out of the ownership of Simon Hay and several generations of his family.

Developing an interest in my family ancestry at a young age, I've always felt blessed that I was able to frequently visit the Simon Hay stone house (built in 1792) and the farm buildings as a youngster and throughout my working years. In addition to the property being settled by my Hay forefathers, the owners of the house and farm in my youth and middle aged years were my Uncle Homer and Aunt Sadie (Swearman) Boger on my mother's side of the family..

Uncle Homer Boger chose farming for his life's career and operated the farm as a dairy and crop operation. Not only did he attend the one-room Hay's Mill School but after it closed as a house for learning, Homer purchased the building for use for equipment storage. It was a great treat to sit down with the retired farmer and listen to the stories that he told about Hay's Mill earlier years. The village developed on the banks of the Blue Lick Creek after the grist mill flourished and several small family businesses developed.

After this picture was taken I had additional opportunities to visit the mill's remaining stone foundation and occasionally accompany German cousins through the meadow to visit the site. Pictures of some visitors to the wall are proudly displayed in my photo albums. I'm happy that one of my younger distant cousins salvaged one of the stones from the mill's foundation and later permanently incorporated it into his newer home in Lincoln Township, Somerset County.

When the children of Homer and Sadie Boger sold the farm to settle the estate, one new owner sold the mill stones. Those stone walls came down, the stones were sold and removed, and a valuable piece of history disappeared. Pictures of the grist mill have been framed in wood salvaged from the grist mill. You can view one of the framed pictures at Berlin Area Historical Society and another one in my home.

Curator David R. Hay

THE BARN CREW AT WORK ON APRIL 29, 2026



LEFT TO RIGHT: TOM LOWRY, RALPH BARRON, TAMMY ROHRS, STEVE ROHRS, MARK GINDLESERGEFR, ELMER ALTFATHER AND ROBERT ANSELL

WORK CREW CREATING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE INTERIOR OF THE BARN. A NEW STAIRWAY HAS BEEN BUILT TO ACCESS THE SECOND FLOOR DISPLAY AREA.

inscribed with the International Teleconference information. Michael Merrill donated a Tipton's Jewelry ash tray and a Philon's National Bank clock. Doris Fogle-Moore donated dedication programs for October 24, 1965 when our current Berlin Community Building was erected and a recognition banquet program for September 23, 1972 honoring Ernest S. Walker for serving 25 years as Chief of the Berlin Fire Department and miscellaneous items.

Eloise Long and family have donated an amazing display of Coca Cola memorabilia and local advertising items that she and Johnny Long collected through the years. Eloise's father, Russell Gill and Grandfather William Gill as well as Joseph Chalk were responsible for the coca cola plant coming to Berlin and operating for many years. Watch for an amazing Coca Cola display area to be developed as a testimonial to the important place the Coca Cola plant played in Berlin's economy. Special pictures will be part of our June 2026 Curator's Report.

The Brothersvalley Church of the Brethren at Brotherton held a special homecoming day with a morning worship service and a fellowship dinner on April 26 that brought numerous former members back for a memorable time with the congregation.

Karen Bittner, Leanna Coughenour, Carolyn Payne, Leanne Calvert, Gary Estnick, and others have worked on improving displays in our genealogy building. Stew Saylor and Bob Platt have continued genealogical work and preparing pedigree charts for friends and members of the society.

Thank you to our volunteers for all the things you do in the operations of the Berlin Area Historical Society! Come visit with us and see the amazing things that have been donated to us through the years.



THE NEW BARN STAIRS TO THE SECOND FLOOR DISPLAY AREA



J. T. KLINE REPORTED 327 MILITARY BANNERS FOR 2026!



UPPER DIAMOND - BERLIN. (PICTURE DONATED BY MARK ENGLEKA

DONATIONS - ACTIVITIES

THE BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONTINUES TO BE BLESSED

Mark Engleka donated the above pictured large, framed aerial picture of Upper Diamond and Broadway Street in Berlin (circa 1950s) and two automobile Philson National advertisement banks.

An antique pair of spectacles was donated by Don Deaner. Ron Hillegas, Ken Miller and Gary Estnick replaced the motor on the heat pump to the office-genealogy building. Kay Ann and Bill Cober have made a substantial additional donation to the John and Lucille Lichvar Sports Museum. The Charles Maust Estate donated pictures and folders of music from the former Berlin Men's Octet. Jean Ogburn donated one of her braided rugs for our yearly raffle. It's a red, white and blue rug with applique wording for the 250th anniversary of the USA. J. T. Kline reported that Berlin will have 327 military banners erected this year in honor of veterans who have served our country. The barn crew has been working to improve the displays in the barn. Those persons include Elmer Altfather, Robert Ansell. Steve and Tammy Rohr's, Ralph Barron, Mark Gindlesperger and Tom Lowry. (See group picture in this report).

A new stairway to the second floor display area in the barn has been built by Mark Gindlesperger, Steve Rohrs under the supervision of Elmer Altfather. Displays have gathered some new and larger identifications. The barn is undertaking major improvements.

Stew Kreinbrook donated his 1967 BBHS Outstanding Athlete's trophy, a toaster, scales and a scrapbook filled with 1989 pictures and stories when six persons from Berlin visited Germany on the Youth Bridge program. Stew Kreinbrook served as Berlin's Mayor at that time. He also contributed 19990-1991 officers and directors of Berlin Lions' Club and various items from the Mayor's office. Items included Wilmer Kreinbrook's application (1951) to equip his private vehicle with a red light as Assistant Fire Chief. Also Teleconference material from May 7, 1987 with the celebration of Berlin, Germany's 750th anniversary when 16 American Berlin cities hooked up with Berlin, Germany. It included a coffee mug

(Continued next page)

CHARLES R. WETZEL

**LONG-TIME VOCATIONAL-AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRIAL ARTS,
AND PHOTOGRAPY TEACHER AND THE FFA ADVISOR AT
SHANKSVILLE-STONYCREEK HIGH SCHOOL**

APPRECIATION IS EXTENDED TO TOM LOWRY, BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEMBER, FOR HIS RESEARCH AND ASSISTANCE IN PREPARING THIS STORY TO FEATURE AN EDUCATOR WHO LEFT HIS MARK AS A DEVOTED SHANKSVILLE TEACHER FOR 24 YEARS..

The name of Charles R. Wetzel lives on in the Shanksville-Stonycreek School System for the years he devoted toward helping to educate the young people. Although a half-century has elapsed since this educator retired, many middle-aged and older graduates of Shanksville-Stonycreek High School retain their memories of the impact he had on their lives. The 1960 Chicahonian yearbook was dedicated to Mr. Wetzel, who at that time had already taught for 12 years. That year book congratulates him for his willingness to help others, which made him a good friend, as well as a devoted teacher to many students. Outside of the classroom, he served his community and many families with quality photography for their families and activities.

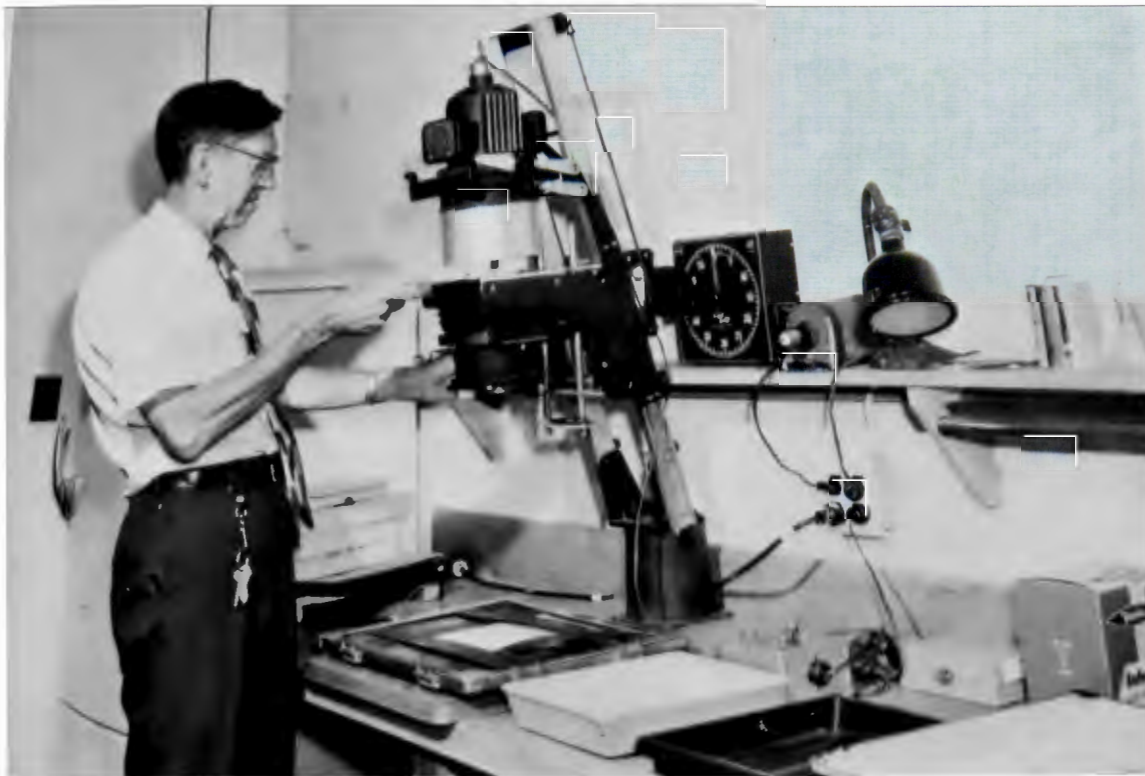


Mr. Wetzel came to the Shanksville School in the fall of 1948 and taught for 24 years until his retirement in 1972. At the time of his retirement the Vocational Agriculture program and the leadership with the FFA students came to a close. Robert

Dayhoff, Jr. was hired to fill his former position as Industrial Arts teacher, serving the school district for a two-year period. Mr. Dayhoff was succeeded by Barry "Butch" Sechler, who amassed a long history as an educator at Shanksville where he eventually retired.

Tom Lowry recalls that Charlie and his wife, the former Hope Stanley, resided in an apartment above the old Shanksville Fire Hall (Snider's Corner Store in 2026). Many will remember the four Wetzel children: H. Fred, James, Jane Ann Bungard, and Karen James.

FFA Advisor Wetzel was born on August 21, 1910 in Marion Center, a son of H. H. and Alice (Beatty) Wetzel. He obtained his B.S. Degree in Agriculture at Penn State and also did graduate work at Penn State where he was a member of Alpha Tau Alpha. Prior to moving to Shanksville in the fall of 1948, Charlie taught vocational-agricultural at Green Township, Mercer and Armagh. While living out his life in Shanksville, he was a member of the United Methodist Church, Shanksville Volunteer Fire Company, the Gold and Silver Club, Stoystown Lions Club, National and State Retired Teachers' Associations. Following his passing at the age of 65 years on March 5, 1976 he was buried in the Marion Center Cemetery. His widow, the late Hope, resided at the Somerset Towers for a number of years following her husband's passing.



In his later years of teaching, which included photography, at Shanksville Stonycreek High School, Charles Wetzel was pictured in the Chicahonian yearbook while working in his dark room printing pictures. He was also known as a community photographer, taking pictures of community and family events as well as for the FFA chapter activities.

By David R. Hay

QUEEN MAPLE LXXIX

ALEXIS FAIRMAN

**DAUGHTER OF DR. BRADLEY AND
DR. CRYSTAL (HERSHBERGER) FAIRMAN**



BERLIN BROTHERSVALLEY HIGH SCHOOL