

CURATOR'S REPORT

THE "BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY"

AUGUST 11, 2026



JOHN STAPINSKY

**OF CLEVELAND, OHIO
RELAXING AT HIS HOME IN**

MACDONALDTON

JOHN STAPINSKY ENJOYS RETURNING HOME TO MACDONALDTON

A 1959 GRADUATE OF BERLIN BROTHERSVALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

BY DAVID R. HAY

I was in for a delightful treat the afternoon of June 19, 2026, when I found John Stapinsky of the New Burgh Heights suburb of Cleveland, Ohio relaxing at his parental and part-time home along Adams Street (now Church Street) in the heart of Macdonaldton. John and his long-time wife, Joann (May) Stapinsky were seated around a retro 1950s chrome table in their kitchen as we enjoyed reminiscing about John's life that included childhood memories of growing up in the former coal mining community of Macdonaldton.



John mentioned that he was born in the same home on September 26, 1940 as the son of John and Stella (Slifco) Stapinsky. His classmate, David Smith and the Landis brothers that were sons of Judd and Ruby Landis were close friends while growing up. John recalled that sometimes he and David Smith camped out over the garage at Dave Smith's parents' home (Wilfred and Mildred (Scurfield) Smith.) He recalled Mildred hosting her card club and coming out afterward with a platter of leftover specialty foods to share with the boys. .

His father, John Stapinsky (1915-1989) was an employee of the Scurfield coal mines. About the same time that the mines closed, John had graduated in 1959 from Berlin Brothersvalley High School. Both John and his parents headed to Cleveland, Ohio looking for employment. They resided in the upstairs of the double home of John's uncle and aunt, George and Susan (Slifco) Mack. John's father joined George Mack in working on the

pipeline construction, while the 1959 graduate found employment that lasted 32 years at the Richmond Brothers Clothing factory. Some weekends and vacation times brought the Stapinsky family back to Macdonaldton where many of their relatives remained. Through the many years the Stapinsky home and its more than 12 acres remained in the family. The ownership has continued through the years to the second generation, where John and his wife, Joanne (May) Stapinsky have enjoyed spending vacations and retirement weeks at their home across from the small store and beer garden owned by the late Joe Toth. Another section of that building housed a clothing store operated by Mike, the Jew.

John worked 32 years for Richmond Brothers clothing factory, where suits and men's clothing were fashioned. Eventually John supervised some 42 persons that worked under him at Richmond Brothers in the plant's pressing department. "When the clothing left our department, they were ready to go on the racks of the numerous Richard Brothers stores," John recalled. Today the large plant sits empty in Cleveland.

George and Susan Mack introduced John to Joanne May, the daughter of their friends in Cleveland. After a courtship they married and raised their two daughters, Sandy and Carol while living in Cleveland.

After the enjoyable visit with John and his wife, Joann, I felt like I had known the special couple for much longer than originally having photographed them at one of the annual reunions of his maternal grandparents, Michael and Mary (Swanek) Slifco at the Berlin Community Grove.

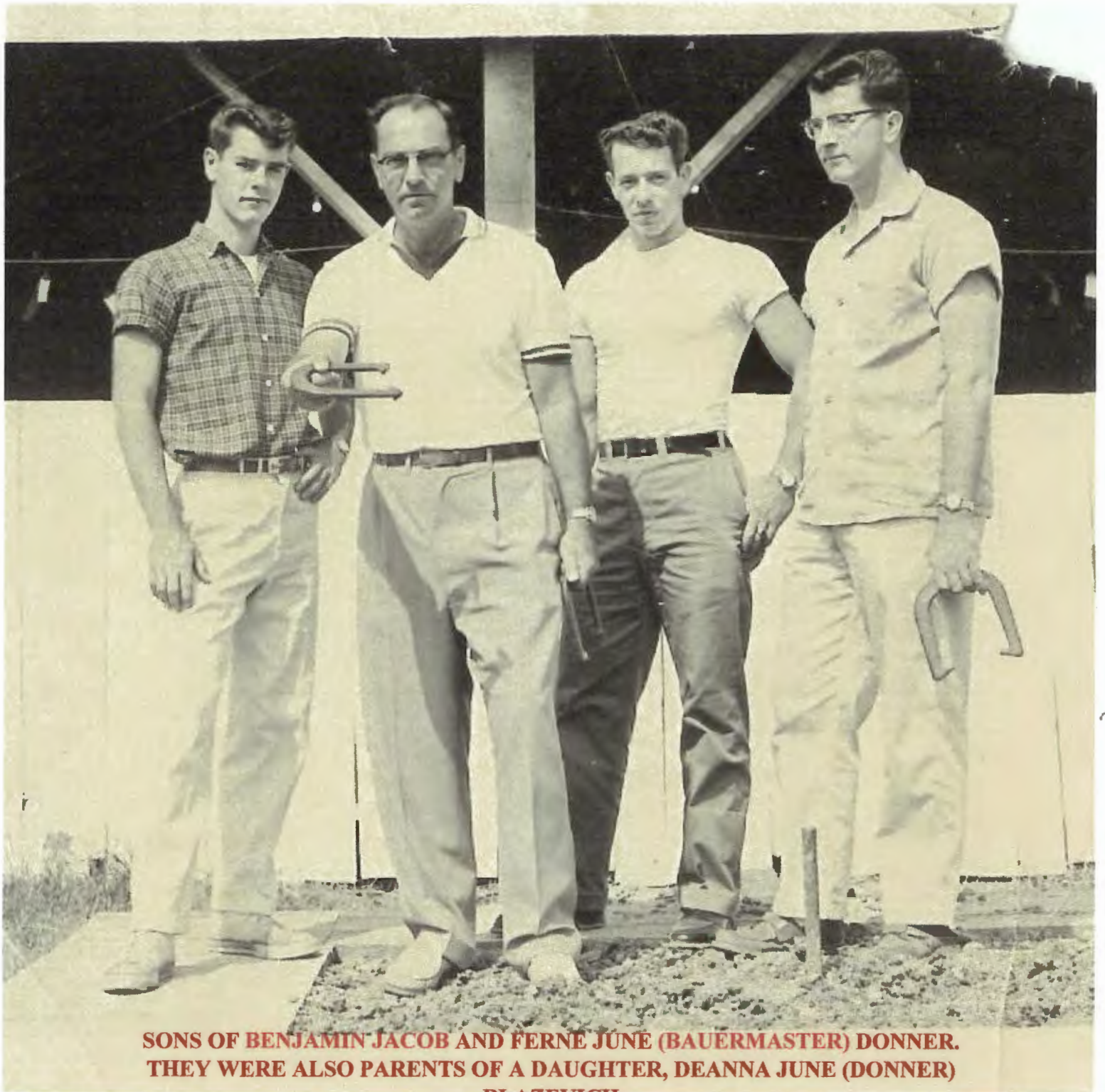
John's paternal grandparents Stasko and Susan Stapinski, were a mining couple that also lived in Macdonaldton raising their 7 children.

Coming home to Macdonaldton is extra special to John and Joann Stapinski because so many of John's cousins and their families still live in that area. They like the quiet, peaceful, and friendly community that provides a relaxing atmosphere compared to the faster pace of life they experience in the Cleveland area.



JOHN & JOANN STAPINSKY

**BENJAMIN JACOB DONNER AND HIS THREE SONS:
(L TO R): NEIL J. DONNER, BENJAMIN - FATHER, ROBERT
"LYNN" DONNER, AND LEE BAUERMASTER DONNER.**



**SONS OF BENJAMIN JACOB AND FERNE JUNE (BAUERMASTER) DONNER.
THEY WERE ALSO PARENTS OF A DAUGHTER, DEANNA JUNE (DONNER)
BLAZEVICH**

NEIL J. DONNER

Born: July 15, 1938 - Brotherton, Somerset County, PA

Died: April 5, 2026 - San Ramon, Contra Costa County, CA

SUMMIT SCHOOL 1933

BROTHERSVALLEY TOWNSHIP - ALONG THE GARRETT SHORT-CUT



This is a 1933 photo of the students who attended the Summit School in Brothersvalley Township. Top row, from left are: Dorothy Shaffer Romesberg, Rowena Romesberg Hillegas, Roy Romesberg, Dorothy Stahl Michaels, Ernest Brant, Grace Shaffer Shoemaker and Mildred Hines. Middle row, from left are: Harry

Brant Jr., Evelyn Miller Hillegas, Elise Brant Ross, Martha Brant Fisher, Galen Shaffer, Earl Brant and Rebecca Romesberg May. Bottom row, from left are: Paul Stahl, George Foust, Mary Brant Barkman, Earlabell Foust, Mary Shaffer and Donald Brant. Photo and information submitted by Rowena Hillegas, Somerset.

DONATIONS

Debbie Mack donated a picture of her dad, George Mack, a Macdonaldton native, wearing his WW II uniform. **Ann (Ream) Slifco** donated a boys scout handbook and a United Church of Christ snow globe. **Roger Williams** donated five colonial and frontier history books. **Erika (Donner) Tippet**, daughter of the late Neil J. Donner of California, donated 1954, 1955, and 1956 Bervalon yearbooks,, Benjamin Jacob Donner's 1929 Berlin diploma, and Neil Donner's 1956 Berlin diploma and Neil's Letter B earned in Football-Basketball-baseball for the 1954-55 season. Also Ben Donner's certificate for Varsity B in basketball for 1928. Also donated was a picture of Ben Donner with his three sons: Neil, Lynn, and Lee. **Lee Donner died April 5, 2026 at San Ramon, CA.** **Sandra Jean and late James Ferguson's family** donated a Maust Brothers' Garage picture and a collection of various local history books

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers for all you do in the operations of the Berlin Area Historical Society.

David R. Hay, Curator

THE HISTORIC PIOUS SPRINGS

ON PROPERTY OWNED BY FIVE GENERATIONS OF THE HEFFLEY FAMILY.

HISTORIC SPRING HAS FINE SETTING IN WELL KEPT GARDEN AND LAWN

Property Has Been in Heffley
Family For Five Generations
—Site of First Settlement
Here.

Among the beautifully kept gardens and lawns of Berlin, one of the most interesting and attractive is that of Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Heffley. Sheltered by the walls of surrounding buildings and warmed by the water pouring forth from the historic Pius spring, it is one of the earliest spots in town in the production of flowers and fruits and vegetables. The passer-by pauses to note the orderly condition of things, the luxurious growth of vegetation and the fragrance of the flowers.

In the early springtime the tulips and crocuses first appear, as well as all the other early spring flowers. Snow ball and lilac bushes are heavily laden with their burden of sweet scented flowers. Later in the spring the yard is a mass of red, pink and white peonies, and in the early fall the air is filled with the sweet scent of a hundred beautiful white lillies. Among the stones the beautiful green fern adds the necessary green to mark the flower garden complete.

The spring is over twined by a large grape arbor, and throughout the yard are numerous fruit trees, which bear luscious fruit.

Mr. Heffley's great grandfather, Jacob Keffer, laid out the Pius Spring Tract, and it has been in the hands of five generations of Heffleys. For

17 years R. C. Heffley has held the deed. Before that it was owned by S. P. Heffley.

The Pius or Heffley spring is one of Berlin's historical as well as beautiful spots.

It is the head of Stonycreek, and is very adaptly situated, it being easily seen by the people passing by. The spring is walled up and the water is delicious and cold.

Close by the spring stands an old stone house built by Jacob Keffer over one hundred years ago.

The old house which once stood there has undergone a decided change. A number of years ago it was renovated and occupied by R. C. Heffley and family.

Nearly one hundred and sixty years ago, three men from the Reformed and Lutheran congregations in the East were sent across the Alleghenies to locate a suitable settlement. Where the depot now stands one of the men met with an accident it being impossible to go farther.

They located on that spot. After the other settlers arrived they decided to move up on the hill and located their first buildings close to the Pius spring (now known as the Heffley spring.)

In 1786 a tract of land, containing forty and one half acres on the head of the Stonycreek and known as the Pius spring Tract was granted for the use of the Lutheran and Reformed congregations. The lots were laid out alternately one Lutheran and one Reformed.

The price of the lot was one dollar (\$1.00) to be paid every year to the congregation, to which the lot belongs, this money to be used by the respective congregations.

A NEWS STORY FROM THE BERLIN RECORD (DATE UNKNOWN)
DONATED BY BETTY (SWEARMAN) FOGLE-MOORE