

# Mount Bethel Reflections

*A Publication of the Mount Bethel Cemetery Company - A Non-Profit Cemetery*

Summer/Fall 2022

## ***President's Message***

Cemeteries are the last places most people expect to go. Yet lately, cemeteries have also become prime tourist turf, attracting sightseers on the trail of history, genealogy information or just interested visitors to seek a quiet place to walk or rest.

Mount Bethel is no exception to this trend. We have a data base on our website that allows people to get burial grave information, our events and our history. You may visit the website at [mtbethelcemetery.org](http://mtbethelcemetery.org)

Unique tombstones in Mount Bethel can tell many things: grim tales of epidemics or military history of veterans. Urns, angels, flowers and other symbols are a visual glance of one's life. Some visitors even enjoy studying the many headstones worn to layers of granular marble or limestone as well as the more durable granite, all just another way of looking at history.

The task of care, restoration and maintenance is the first and foremost priority of Mount Bethel Cemetery. Dedicated volunteers donate hours of their time for restoration care. We need more dedicated volunteers. If you or anyone you know is interested in the preservation of these historic grounds, please contact me at 717-575-9760.

We, as a board, hope to continue to expand and capture the interest of all age groups to use Mount Bethel as a personal link with history, a source of family information or perhaps just a quiet spot for rest or relaxation.

Sincerely,

*Jane Moore*

President, Mount Bethel Board of Directors

## ***Mount Bethel Cemetery: The Early History***

Mt. Bethel is the oldest burial ground in Columbia and is the final resting place of between ten and eleven thousand of its former citizens, many of them significant persons from the rich history of our Borough.

The little settlement of Wright's Ferry was sometimes referred to as "Hempfield" as it was located in the township of Hempfield. Samuel and Sarah Blunston, members of the Society of Friends, gave the land for the cemetery and enclosed it with a wall. The property was at the far end of Susanna Wright's tract of 100 acres and is now part of Mount Bethel Cemetery. Most of the Quakers had no tombstones, however Susanna kept copious notes on who was buried in the cemetery beginning with the first burial in 1730 of John Deval.

The very first formal burial ground in Columbia was set apart shortly after the settlement of the Blunstons, Wrights, and the Barbers in the early 1700s. This is now identified as Section I but was originally called "Old Bethel." Later it became known as the "Old Brick Cemetery" when it was enclosed by a thick brick wall around 1746. The bricks were imported from England by Samuel Blunston who intended to build a residence for himself. Unfortunately he died before the arrival of the bricks in Columbia. There were many early burials in this section, many do not have markers or can no longer be read. The earliest burial marker still legible is dated 1745.

Mt. Bethel Cemetery was created by a petition signed by the following: John Houston Mifflin, Samuel Truscott, John L. Denny, C. S. Kauffman,

*continued on page 4*

## 2022 Friends of Mount Bethel Events Upcoming Fundraisers

### September 9 – Fête en Noir

An outdoor picnic held on the grounds of Mount Bethel Cemetery, the Fête will be a unique combination of elegance and casualness. Those in attendance are asked to dress in black, if possible, for this gathering which will be held from 6:00 to 9:00 PM with admission beginning at 5:30. Live music provided by a favorite local group, **The Kracker Beez**, featuring selections for **listening or dancing** is included in the \$20 per person fee payable by September 1. Admission is limited to the first 500 paid guests, but guests to complete that number may be accepted after September 1 or at the gate for \$25 per person. Please contact us at our event phone line listed below before arriving to determine the availability of seating. Those who attend should bring their own picnic basket with food and beverage. Tables, chairs, and linens will be provided. Ticket sales are now underway. Contact [friendsofmountbethel@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmountbethel@gmail.com) or call 717-681-6768 to reserve your tickets now!



Guests shown above enjoyed the Fête en Noir in 2021. Even more features added this year make the 2022 event a draw!

### October 30 – Columbia Halloween House Tour Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) Celebration



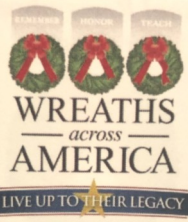
The grounds of Mount Bethel Cemetery are an anchor location on this annual Halloween House Tour coordinated by Create Columbia. Begin the tour by purchasing your tickets at Mount Bethel Cemetery's Caretaker's Cottage (700 Locust Street, Columbia PA) from 2:30 to 5:30 PM. The grounds of the cemetery are part of the tour. Remember those who have passed in a Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration that is traditional to the Mexican culture. Decorate a mask or enjoy a guided mini-tour with narration on the half-hour. The Halloween House Tour runs from 3:00 to 8:00 PM. The first mini-tour will begin at 3:00 PM; the last tour will begin at 7:30 PM.

### December 17 – Wreaths Across America


Mount Bethel Cemetery participates in this national program to honor veterans. Wreaths are sponsored by local individuals and organizations through Wreaths Across America. A ceremony, which begins at noon, is followed by placement of wreaths on identified veteran graves by community volunteers and wreath sponsors. To sponsor a wreath, visit [www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org](http://www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org). Be sure to use our location ID of PAMBCC and our fundraising group ID of PA0358P. For quicker access, use the QR Code shown to the right.

*Shown to the left, Jason Price lays the wreath on behalf of Marines during the 2021 ceremony. The ceremony precedes decorating veterans' graves at Mount Bethel Cemetery.*





[www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org/PA0358P](http://www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org/PA0358P)



1. Open the Camera app on your phone.
2. Point camera at code.
3. Click on the link that shows up.

## ***Recognition Stone Erected***

At the May 2022 meeting of the Mount Bethel Cemetery Board of Directors, formal action was taken to erect a monument to recognize major donors from years past. The stone will also leave room to add names in the future should additional bequests of a substantial nature be made.

The inscription on the memorial stone will read as follows:

*In Recognition Of Those Who Have Made  
Outstanding Contributions To Mount Bethel  
Cemetery*

At present the names on the stone will include:

Susanna Wright, who gave the land to the cemetery;

Helen Schlossman, who bequeathed a major financial contribution;

Marjorie Heim, who named Mount Bethel Cemetery as a beneficiary of her estate; and  
Ann Hoehn who bequeathed a major financial contribution.

The memorial monument is located in the circle first seen upon entering the cemetery.

## ***Mini-tours Now Featured***

Mini-tours that inform interested groups about the history of Mount Bethel and those interred in the cemetery are now offered. Upon request, your group may schedule a tour. Tour topics may be selected from our current list or may be tailored to your interests.

Recently developed tours centered on the following topics.

- Civil War bridge burners
- Veterans interred at Mount Bethel Cemetery
- Prominent Columbia citizens buried at Mount Bethel Cemetery
- Old Brick Yard burials
- Statuary symbolism
- Unique stones, monuments, and mausoleums

Dates and times for your group can be arranged to accommodate your schedule. Since tour proceeds benefit Mount Bethel Cemetery's maintenance, an honorarium for this service is expected. To schedule a tour or gather more information on this opportunity, contact Mount Bethel Cemetery by emailing [mountbethelcemetery@gmail.com](mailto:mountbethelcemetery@gmail.com).

## ***It's Donation Time!***

We know how much you care for the cemetery—like we all do. At this time, we are again asking for your financial support to help assure that we will be able to continue to keep this important historical landmark as an attractive place in our community. We sincerely hope you can assist us in our efforts.

Mount Bethel Cemetery is a non-profit corporation that relies upon the financial support of individuals and organizations to supplement the fundraising efforts of Friends of Mount Bethel Cemetery. Many projects also call upon the physical contributions of labor for completion. For more on this, see the *Superintendent's Corner* on the last page.

Enclosed with this mailing is a reply card and a pre-addressed envelope to facilitate your response. We welcome any suggestions you may have concerning our projects and welcome your anticipated support of Mount Bethel Cemetery.



*Workers donate time and effort to preserve monuments and aging headstones.*

## ***Mount Bethel Cemetery: The Early History***

*(continued from page 1)*

Jacob C. Pfahler, James Meyers, Samuel W. Collom, William Patton, J. L. Hess, Ephraim Hershey, Phillip Gossler, John B. Bachman, Michael Liphart, John DW. Steacy, Michael Shuman, Hiram Wilson, Frederick S. Bletz, Thomas S. Scott, Henry H. Houston, and A. J. Kauffman.

The petition stipulated the company to be a stock company run by a group of nine managers. A Charter from the State via the Lancaster Co. Court of Common Pleas was issued April 20, 1868. From the group of petitioners and stockholders, the nine Managers were elected and John Houston Mifflin was selected as President.

On August 11, 1868, an agreement of sale was executed between John Houston Mifflin and Mt. Bethel Cemetery Company for the tract of land bounded on the north by Locust St, on the west by 6th St. on the east by a line laying 320 ft. west and running parallel with 8th St., and on the south by the Mifflin Cemetery. The price was \$800 per acre. This was basically the front 2/3 of the present cemetery. Mt. Bethel did not originally own the back part of the cemetery along Cherry St., but it did own the land along 6th St.

In July of 1868, a contract was let to Krodel and Smith to build the Superintendent's house for the sum of \$1310.

In December of 1819, John L. Wright conveyed a plot of ground to the Society of Friends for a burial ground. This is Section J today. We have not found the paper work but this action led to the conveyance of a plot to the Presbyterian Congregation, Section K. the Methodist Congregation, Section L, and the Lutheran Congregation, Section M. Another plot was set aside for the Borough to use for the burial of the poor and the black population and is known as Potters Field. Unfortunately today we have few, if any, records of the early burials that are located in these sections of the cemetery prior to 1868. The only information we have comes from a survey of the markers and genealogy records done by a Francis X. Reuss and published in the Columbia papers in 1903.

Burials continued to take place in these early sections from the early 1700s to the mid 1800's when on October 12, 1852 John Houston Mifflin created the "New" or "Mifflin Cemetery." His plan was to create a cemetery north of the Congregational burial grounds. This cemetery was to be in the form of three circles, only one of which we find in the cemetery today, Section A. There was to be a circle on either side of this original one. This "New" cemetery was approved by an act of the Legislature on March 22, 1858. Ten years later this new cemetery was incorporated into the creation of Mt. Bethel.

### ***Superintendent's Corner***

Mount Bethel now encompasses 10 acres and is the final resting place of between 10,000 and 11,000 persons, many without monuments. That means we have many monuments to take care of. We have little or no vandalism in Mount Bethel but many monuments have poor foundations, thus gravity has taken a toll on the monuments and they fall and need repair. New monuments require a foundation of at least 30 inches deep and a 4 inch apron around the base of the monument, to prevent it from falling and make it easier to mow around the monument. A group of volunteers meet twice a month during the summer to repair stones. If you would like to be a volunteer email Ron Mable, the cemetery's superintendent, by using [mountbethelcemetery@gmail.com](mailto:mountbethelcemetery@gmail.com)

### ***Mount Bethel Officers and Board Members***

President – Jane Moore  
Secretary – Claire Storm  
Treasurer – Kevin Kraft

John Hinkle  
Kathy Hohenadel  
George Kernisky  
Kathleen Lutz  
Ron Mable  
Dave Mountz

Our web address has changed. Visit our new website by using ***[mtbethelcemetery.org](http://mtbethelcemetery.org)***.