

Mount Bethel Reflections

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

2023 Edition

mtbethelcemetery.org

President's Message

Friends,

Since 1995 (almost three decades!) we have overseen a significant number of improvements at our beloved Mount Bethel Cemetery. These improvements include:

- Careful maintenance and grounds keeping
- Improvements and repairs made to fencing and roads
- Hundreds of monuments carefully restored
- Record keeping researched
- Cottage and shed facilities updated.

None of these important projects would be possible without our many devoted volunteers, dedicated board members, community members and, of course, our generous donors.

Mount Bethel Cemetery is in the heart of the Columbia community. It is a place rooted in history that will branch out into future generations. We continue to strive to make improvements wherever we can. Take advantage of the present by enjoying our grounds and

attending our programs created by Friends of Mount Bethel.

Despite all these efforts, there is still much work to be done: headstones to be cleaned and reset, brick pathway to be restored, trees to be planted, and possibly a new pet cremation garden. We need help to improve and maintain the hallowed grounds of our Founding Families.

At this time we are asking you to help in any way that you can, whether it be financial support, through participation at our events, or through volunteering your time and talents.

Enclosed with this mailing is a reply card and pre-addressed envelope to facilitate your response. We welcome any suggestions you may have concerning our mission. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Jane Moore

President, Mount Bethel Board of Directors

Mount Bethel Cemetery: History, Part 2

In the late 1890's, contracts were let to erect the first section of iron fence on Locust Street. Other sections were erected in the early 1900's.

On July 13, 1905 a motion was made to accept propositions of the Congregations of Methodists, Lutherans and Presbyterians. This action started the transfer of their burial grounds to Mt. Bethel. In March of 1906 all were transferred for the consideration of \$1.00. This was also the consideration when the heirs of John Wright transferred the Old Brick Cemetery in 1909. The Society of Friends, because there was no longer a congregation in Columbia took longer. The first parcel was transferred in 1919, another in 1922 and the last in 1924.

At the turn of the twentieth century the Cemetery began to decline. The number of burials became less and the only new lots sold were in the old roads that existed in the cemetery. During the later part of the century as the members of the Board of Directors passed away they were not replaced. R. Clark McCachren was the last elected member of the Board and when he suffered a stroke he asked his colleague Ted Miller to take over the management of the Cemetery. Ted was never elected to the Board until the Board's reorganization. He assumed this new responsibility as he did many others in the community. Ted tried to operate the cemetery with the receipts from the Cemetery Trust that amounted to approximately *continued on page 4*

2023 Friends of Mount Bethel Events

Upcoming Fundraisers

April 28 and April 30 – Art by Bill Clark

Artwork created by Bill Clark will be on display Friday, April 28, from 5:00 to 8:00 PM and again on Sunday, April 30, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. Light refreshments will be available while we admire the work of this Columbia native. Bill started painting when he was 68 years of age, seven years after his retirement from Lancaster Newspapers. Self taught, Bill paints mostly in acrylics and enjoys painting landscapes, flowers and buildings, especially European homes, and farm outbuildings. Most are painted from memory, especially from Bill's extensive travels. The exhibit will be held at Mount Bethel Cottage. Bill is shown to the right holding one of his works.



May 27– Mount Bethel Cemetery Memorial 5k

Runners and walkers alike will enjoy this unique course with a stunning view of the Susquehanna River. The run – entirely contained on the grounds of Columbia High School – offers mixed terrain. No spikes will be permitted on this course which includes macadam/cement, grass, and track surfaces. Easy parking will be available at Columbia High School. Pre-registration will be available for a \$20 entry fee, or participants may register on the event day for \$25. On the event day, registration activities and bib pick up will begin at 7:30 AM in the gym. The race will step off at 8:30 AM. Professional timing services will be used for this race. Additional details and the registration form may be found at mtbethelcemetery.org.

June 17 – Last Ride & Macabre Creations

The grounds of Mount Bethel will come to life when professional vehicles gather for a cemetery-related car show. Held in conjunction with the *Thunder on the River Car Show* coordinated by the Columbia Lions Club, this display of hearses, flower cars, and more will be complemented by vendors featuring macabre creations. Activities will be open to the public between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.

September 8 – 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 for your listening or dancing pleasure is included in the \$20 per person fee payable by September 1. Admission will be accepted until our tables are filled. Reservations will be accepted after September 1 or at the gate for \$25 per person, provided seating is available. Please contact us at 717-681-6768 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. In the event of rain, the Fête will be held in the Columbia Market House where space will limit the number of guest to 225.

October 29 – 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. Stop by the cemetery as part of your tour ticket to remember those who have passed in a Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration that is traditional to the Mexican culture. Visit our ofrenda (altar) to purchase luminaries to honor departed loved ones, decorate a mask, or enjoy a guided mini-tour with narration.

December 16 – 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. 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 left.



Recognition Stone Dedication Planned

On Sunday, April 30, 2023, Mt. Bethel Cemetery, will recognize three men and four women who have made outstanding contributions to the cemetery. A monument has been recently installed in their honor and will be dedicated at 2:00PM. The public is invited to attend this ceremony which will feature a portrayal of Susanna Wright by local thespian Janet Wood.

The honorees include these individuals.

- Susanna Wright, daughter of the John Wright, town founder, compiled a list of names of the people who were buried in the Cemetery between 1730 and 1750. In the custom of the Society of Friends, most of the graves had no tombstones, except for those marking the graves of Samuel and Sarah Blunston. Susanna gave her land for the Cemetery and later it was enclosed with a wall of brick left over from the enlargement of Samuel Blunston's home, thus the name "the Brick Burial Yard." Among those on Susanna's list of burials in her plot were several negro children, two negro men, a Conestoga Indian youth, and an Indian man. Susanna is buried at Mt. Bethel but with no stone to mark her grave.
- Helen Schlossman, born on July 24, 1909, was a Columbia Borough schoolteacher. She was the daughter of Abram and Effie Ackerman Schlossman. Helen was a member of the Pennsylvania State Retired Teachers Association and a volunteer at the Columbia library. Helen passed away on February 11, 2001, leaving part of her estate to Mount Bethel.
- Marjorie Heim, widow of Charles Heim, born on December 4, 1919, was a member of the Columbia Presbyterian Church and was the last of her family. She too left a part of her estate to the Cemetery.
- Anne Schwartz Hoehn, a former Mt. Bethel Board member, assisted in the entry of burials into the Cemetery's database. She was an artist and collector born on June 30, 1957 and died on May 28, 2020. She also left a part of her estate to the Cemetery.
- The three men who are being honored are presently board members: John Hinkle Jr., David Mountz Esq., and Ronald Mable. At the turn of the twentieth century the Cemetery was in decline. In 1994 these three men were a part of a committee to discuss the future of this historic Cemetery that was facing a lack of funding and in deplorable condition. In 1995 the Board was reorganized and these three men became members of the new board.



Janet Wood, dressed as Susanna Wright, will appear at the dedication ceremony.

"Honoring Our Fallen" Project

Special Cemetery Maintenance Event

Mount Bethel Cemetery is the final resting place for over 683 veterans. While some of these graves do not have tombstones, the remainder of those veteran gravesites that do have markers will be the focus of a special maintenance event planned by Ryan Sexton, Mount Bethel Cemetery's new superintendent.

Ryan is encouraging the community and military veterans to assist in the "Honoring Our Fallen" project. The goal of the project is to clean the headstones of all veterans. No prior experience is necessary. Gloves and brushes will be provided.

The event is scheduled at the cemetery on Saturday, April 22 and Sunday, April 23, between 10:30AM and 5:00PM each day. Lunch will be provided by Hinkle's Restaurant on April 22 and by Rosie's Deli on April 23 for those who RSVP to (717) 813-1560 by April 3. In the event of rain the event will take place the following weekend.

Mount Bethel Cemetery thanks Hinkle's Restaurant, Rosie's Deli, Columbia Water Company, and D2 Biological Solutions for their donations to this event.

Mount Bethel Cemetery: History, Part 2

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\$5,000 per year and from contributions received from persons who were sent an annual solicitation letter.

In 1994 the Columbia Lions Club organized a cleanup of the Cemetery. They had over 100 volunteers show up on a designated Saturday and were able to mow the entire cemetery. The hope was that we would give Ted Miller and Paul Hedricks, who lived in the caretaker's house, a head start on keeping the grounds mowed during the summer. This did not last as they had difficulty finding persons to mow especially for the small amount of funds available. Later that year a group of volunteers began meeting to see what could be done to restore the cemetery. A committee was formed with John Hinkle, Kevin Kraft, Ted Miller, Dave Mountz, William Linkous, John Kraft, Fred Gerfin Jr., Marlin Morrison, and Ron Mable meeting to discuss the future of the cemetery.

On Feb. 23, 1995 a meeting of the stockholders of Mt. Bethel Cemetery was called for the purpose of reorganization of the Board.

Since none of the volunteers were stockholders, the committee did not know if any would attend the meeting. None did attend but the committee had secured by proxy the only known shares that were owned by Betty McCachren, Clark's widow. These shares were voted and a new Board elected with John Hinkle, President, Ted Miller, Secretary, Kevin Kraft, Treasurer, and Ronald Mable, Superintendent.

Our current Board members continue to care for these Hallowed Grounds with the support of the Friends of Mt. Bethel, Columbia Borough, community volunteers and benefactors.

Superintendent Retires

Ron Mable officially retired as superintendent of Mount Bethel Cemetery on February 8, 2023. Ron first developed an interest in Mount Bethel as a boy when his family home bordered the cemetery. That connection lasted a lifetime.

For twenty-eight years Ron Mable has volunteered hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours caring for Mt. Bethel Cemetery as its superintendent. His care for these hallowed grounds was a labor of love for him and for his family who supported his endeavors. Ron's involvement in the Columbia Lions Club helped him form a cadre of helpers to assist with more cumbersome tasks such as resetting headstones. Ron has left the cemetery in far better condition than he found it when he began as superintendent in 1995.

Although Ron has decided to retire as superintendent, he will continue to serve as a member of the Board of Directors. We cannot thank Ron enough for his dedication to these Historic Burial Grounds.

A New Superintendent

At the March 8, 2023 meeting of the Mount Bethel Board of Directors, a new cemetery superintendent was approved. Ryan Sexton will now take over the care of Mount Bethel Cemetery following the retirement of Ron Mable from this role.

Ryan was born and raised in Southern Lancaster County. After graduating from Solanco High School he worked for Herr's chips for a few years before deciding to join the Army. Ryan served 8 years, including 2 combat tours in Iraq. Ryan is now the father of 2 children: a daughter Rylee, who is 11 and attends Taylor Middle School; and a son Greysen, who is 5. Ryan currently serves as a School Director for the Columbia Borough School District and as a representative of the 1st Ward for the Columbia Republican Committee.

Ryan looks forward to the opportunity to be involved in the cemetery. He plans to bring a new outlook and to provide a great final resting place for our beloved friends and families here.

Mount Bethel Leadership

Officers

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

Board Members

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

We are very fortunate to receive help from many groups who assist in needs at the cemetery site:

Catholic War Vets, Dayspring Christian Academy, Manos House, MBC "Stoners", Park Rangers, Susquehanna Glass Company, and many community members. **THANK YOU!**