

# **CURATOR'S REPORT**

## **THE BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**SEPTEMBER 9, 2025**



**FORMER FARM HOME OF JAMES  
CALVIN & BERNADINE GRACE (BRUCK)  
SARVER**

**IN THE WILDS – A HUNTING PARADISE  
OF**

**ALLEGHENY TOWNSHIP**



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### **ANITA HANKINSON AND PEGGY SAYLOR**

**Anita Hankinson** was assisted by **Peggy Saylor** in displaying many delicious cookies that Anita baked in her New Baltimore kitchen for Berlin Area Historical Society's open house held on August 7, 2025. Not only were the cookies plentiful, but they were all delicious and appreciated by folks coming out to tour the network of buildings at the Berlin Area Historical Society.

It was a beautiful evening when numerous individuals, couples, and families toured the Humble House, the genealogy-museum building, the Heritage Haus, our barn and the Pious Springs garden and its stone bake house. Two new couples joined the society, Our volunteers helped people with genealogy and searched for Glencoe area pictures for a couple who own a cabin in that vicinity. We had dedicated volunteers on hand to assist the visitors as they toured the facilities. Everyone seemed to enjoy the fellowship and an opportunity to share a cookie or two from Anita's display table.

**OUR OPEN HOUSE ON AUGUST 7, 2025**

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**PASTOR LARRY HOOVER AND HIS WIFE, LINDA (MILLER) HOOVER ADMIRERD ONE OF THE TWO QUILTS TO BE RAFFLED OFF AT OUR SEPTEMBER ANNUAL DINNER MEETING.**



**THREE GENERATIONS TOURED OUR FACILITIES. JEFF AND DESIREE (HOYMAN) PETRO WITH THEIR TWO DAUGHTERS AND TWO GRANDSON: ALISHA (PETRO) COULTER, BACK ROW, AND NOELLE (PETRO) DUNMEYER. CLAYTON COULTER, GOING INTO THE THIRD GRADE, EASTON COULTER, BEGINNING FIRST GRADE.**



**RICHARD STURTZ (LEFT) AND HIS VIDEOGRAPHER PETE BARTA**

Filming **"Valor in Battle"** - an upcoming podcast in a series for **Takes OF The Alleghenies** by Richard Sturtz. **"Valor in Battle"** features the late WW I soldier, the late **Alvie Martz**, a native of Northampton Township. The filming took place in our Humble House by Pete Barta. The picture of Alvie Martz and some other items used in the filming were borrowed, including items from our WW I display at the Berlin Area Historical Society.

### **DONATIONS AND HAPPENINGS**

**Darrell M. McClintock** donated a 1930 calendar from Fred Groff's store. **Dave Holliday** donated Geneva Altfather's WW II Ration book. **Ed Landis** donated a Ken Lafferty pen and a 1985 Berlin Street Sellebration plaque. **Kay Ann Cober** donated pictures, sports booklets and other memorabilia for the John and Lucille Lichvar Sports display area. **Robert Ansell** has agreed to serve on BAHS Board of Directors to fill the unexpired position held by the late John Long. **Mary Margaret Werner** donated Bervalon yearbooks, 4-H pins, BBHS Class of 1977 reunion pictures, a small Snyder's chip bag (she worked for Snyder's for 45 years), and miscellaneous items.

**George and Carolyn Custer** donated Philip and Mary Glessner family genealogy. **Robert Blubaugh** donated 15 old time Berlin school student's pictures. **Sara Berkley** donated reunion pictures of Berlin's Class of 1947 and other miscellaneous items. **Joyce Shaffer** donated a 1943 Mining agreement for a vein of coal under the former Madison U. Brant farm. **Mike Merrill** donated "Photo Story of Pittsburgh" (1936) and a 1905 photo book of Pittsburgh. **Mandy Bockes** donated a number of colonial costumes worn by family members for various Berlin's celebrations. **Betty Anderson** donated a 1935 Stonycreek Valley Community Association booklet for 1935 and a newspaper story featuring Blanche Long and her sister Fay Hitchew. **LaVerne Coslic** donated a 1951 Bervalon.

**Richard Sturtz** brought in a basket of (large) red cherry tomatoes from his garden which were distributed to volunteers. One person enjoyed snacking on 10 of them and later passed up a tomato sandwich for his lunch!

# **FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET BERLIN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**SEPTEMBER 18, 2025 AT THE BERLIN COMMUNITY BUILDING**



## **RANDY MUSSER DURING HIS PRESENTATION ON PATRIOT PARK**

Once again we had great response for attendance at our annual meeting and banquet as well as the sales of our raffle tickets toward numerous prizes that were awarded. We had 235 paid reservations for our beef dinner. President Leanne Calvert conducted the business meeting and presided over the activities. Treasurer Stew Saylor reported that there were currently 1,020 members of the society with 752 issues of the Memos being mailed to member families.

### **THE FOLLOWING WERE NAMED WINNERS IN THE RAFFEL DRAWINGS:**

1. **BONNIE MILLER, LONACONING, MD – BLAZING STAR QUILT**
2. **WILLIAM BAKER, BERLIN – COUNTRY GRAPES QUILT**
3. **SHARON ASHBROOK, BERLIN – BRAIDED RUG BY JEAN OGBURN**
4. **ROBERT S. HEFFLEY, EAGLE, IDAHO – PRINT OF PIOUS SPRING BY LINDA CODDINGTON**
5. **SUE KARALFA, TOLEDO, OHIO – BASKET OF HILLEGAS MAPLE PRODUCTS**

### **TWO TICKET DRAWINGS FOR THOSE IN ATTENDANCE:**

1. **HELEN BRANT, SOMERSET – PAINTING BY THE LATE MRS. ROBERT (ETHEL) MILLER DONATED BY JOYCE KNOTTS.**
2. **AUDREY TWOMBLY, BERLIN - PLANTER WITH MUMS –HAND-CRAFTED BY THE LATE JOHN F. LONG.**

# There was love in every stitch

By MARY REAM  
City editor

Blanche Long and Fay Hitechew are more than sisters. They're friends.

That friendship has been literally sewn together over the years.

The two have lived together in Stonycreek Township for "a good many years," and during that time they've sewed and stitched together around 600 gowns and thousands of other dresses.

There were nine children growing up in the Hitechew family in Central City. Blanche was 8 when she started sewing. Her first creations were clothes for Fay's doll-baby. She used her mother's old pedal-operated machine.

Over the years, she's worn out several electric sewing machines. "We always had two — one for a spare," points out Fay, adding, "because you couldn't postpone a wedding."

The sisters had been sewing for several young women in the Shanksville area. It was the era of big, full skirts, made from as many yards of material as could be pleated or gathered together. Then, three brides-to-be came to ask if the sisters would make their wedding gowns.

"We'd never done any gowns before, except for prom gowns, but we made 15 dresses in about two weeks' time," Fay says. All three became brides on the same weekend.

"It was our first try," adds Blanche. Fay, as usual, did the cutting, applique work and hand-stitching, while Blanche ran the sewing machine. Fay admits she has never as much as threaded Blanche's machine.

They designed the gowns themselves, using newspaper to cut out the patterns. "We called them our *Daily American* patterns," laughs Fay.

The girl would bring a picture out of a bride magazine, or, Blanche recalls, "three pictures and you put them together."

Fay adds, "I don't think we ever used one pattern a gown." Because of Blanche's failing health, the sisters made their last wedding gown in 1978.

Then they started making quilts. So far, they've turned out about 20. There's one in the frame propped against the living room wall waiting for Blanche to quilt when she can see again. In about two months, the stitches from her corneal transplant in her right eye will be removed. She's had cataracts in both eyes, and says she doesn't expect to ever see more than shadows with her left eye.

## Area personalities



### Sisters and friends

Fay Hitechew, standing at left, and her sister, Blanche Long, have done a lot of sewing over the years. They've made a lot of young women happy with prom and wedding gowns. Designing and sewing the gowns has also cemented their friendship. Behind them is the quilt that they plan to finish as soon as Blanche's eyesight improves. (Staff photo by Mary Ream)

Says Fay of the quilt: "That will give her something to look forward to. It's there to remind her."

"I'm going to do it in December," promises Blanche.

Blanche, who is six years older than Fay, is a widow. Her husband, Robert, was a dairy farmer when they first married, and then he became a contractor. She spent her honeymoon making sugar at the maple camp on their Stonycreek Township farm. The sisters still live in the comfortable farmhouse.

Blanche has two children, Roberta Browning of Manassas, Va., and Robert Barry Long of Stonycreek Township; and four grandchildren.

For 10 or 12 years, Blanche and Fay provided all the gowns used by the Maple Queen and her court at the coronation ceremony. The sisters carefully made everything to match. They designed the gowns, chose the material and often sewed them together with just the girls' measurements to work with.

"They didn't know what they

were getting until they came to be fitted," Fay says. "Sometimes some of the girls helped, but it was mostly our choosing."

The sisters never charged one cent for their work. They never even asked to be reimbursed for the material for the gowns. Because Blanche's husband was a businessman, the festival association always gave him a full-page ad for free in the festival booklet.

About 10 years ago, the festival association stopped having the sisters make the gowns. Now, the queen and her court wear gowns of various colors and designs.

Often, school girls would arrive in groups. "The different gangs of girls didn't want others to know what their prom gowns were like. So, they'd try on their gowns in different rooms," recalls Fay.

Blanche relives the good times they had with the teen-agers. "I have a mirror upstairs, that if it could talk to you, it would tell you a lot of good things," she says. It was a mirror that could be carried around, from room to room.

"Sometimes a girl would come

just to talk. They'd just pour their hearts out to us," recalls Fay.

The sisters also made cheerleading outfits and majorette uniforms for the Mt. Savage High School for many years. About 10 years ago they turned out 200 waitresses' uniforms for Sever Springs. "The whole house was red. The material rubbed off on everything," laughs Fay.

Then there was the time they began sewing after attending a wedding on Sunday afternoon and by 4 a.m. Monday had completed 50 Hia-wa-pawn-chees outfits in plenty of time for the Memorial Day parade that day. The group's leader and two others helped with the work.

"We enjoyed it," says Fay when asked why they kept at it. She recalls the time a neighbor girl came to ask if they could make her a prom gown with the \$8 she had saved by baby-sitting. It was all the money the girl had.

"Whenever she came to try it on," Blanche says, "the tears flowed to the floor." Of course the gown's actual cost was more than the \$8, but that's all she paid for it.

Blanche's health problems are complicated by her diabetes. She also had pneumonia this summer. Four years ago, she broke her foot and then had a heart attack a week later. In February, she suffered a stroke that left her with a slight impairment in her left side. But despite her problems, she's not giving up.

"We're going to fight the battle and win. Everyone has their battles. Some just have more than others," Blanche asserts.

Fay takes care of her sister and serves as her eyes. And they have a lot of memories to relive as they chat and wait for the day Blanche can put a needle to work again.

Those were the good times, with something new being created at the time. Blanche said it was worth the work.

"Seeing the stuff on the girls, seeing the girls be happy when they looked at themselves in the mirror," she says, made it all worthwhile.



## **GRANDCHILDREN OF MICHAEL & MARY (SWANEK) SLIFCO**

**Formerly of the Macdonaldton area!**

**AUGUST 2, 2025 REUNION AT THE BERLIN COMMUNITY GROVE.  
OF THE 18 LIVING GRANDCHILDREN, 15 WERE IN ATTENDANCE.**

**Originally there were 31 grandchildren – the third generation of the family in America.**

**Front Row: Debbie Mack and John Stapinsky. Seated (l to r): Paul Slifco, Edward Slifco, Robert Mack, Georgia (Slifco) Person, Dorothy Sue (Slifco) Klotz, Debbie (Slifco) Baker, and Nancy (Slifco) Brown. Back row (l to r) William Slifco, Nick Slifco, Jr., Donna Slifco, Steve Slifco, Joanne (Slifco) Harris, and Gloria Slifco.**

**Photo by Scott Etris on Debbie Mack's camera**