



**ERIE READER**

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# STRANGE DEATHS

**THE DEAD DON'T DIE IN LILY DALE**

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**From the Editors****Spooky season remains a sensation**

The month of October is having a moment.

With #trending autumnal obsessions gaining major ground — whether it's the overabundance of pumpkin-patches-turned-all-out-theme-parks (with the cost of entry mirroring that shift), fall festivals happening every weekend in October (and many days in between), or the estimated \$10.6 billion expected to be spent on Halloween-related merchandise in America, it feels like Spooky Season is starting to outpace Christmas.

And although it may seem so, with the advent of social media filling us in on the obsessions of everyone we've ever met, our fascination with the true spirit of Halloween — ghosts, zombies, and the dead in general — is nothing new. Corpses being reanimated or coming back from the dead has been a part of human culture for millennia. The Bible has too many resurrection stories to list (one major one in particular, ahem). We started telling stories in America of ghosts and zombies as far back as the 1600s and we've never really stopped.

Our obsession with scaring ourselves with stories of the dead starts in childhood — think sleepovers with burning candles and Ouija boards, reading R.L. Stine and Christopher Pike books with a flashlight under your covers, watching horror movies huddled in the dark, exploring Axe Murder Hollow, and sharing stories around a campfire of the legend of the Vampire Crypt or Witches Circle at the Erie Cemetery.

As we grow up, this obsession can mingle with grief, as we try to contact those we have lost through a medium on a visit to the legendary nearby Spiritualist hamlet of Lily Dale. Or deep-dive into research, learning about those people who once lived in our region hundreds of years ago, and telling their stories.

In this October issue, we're covering all of the #fallvibes — from listing all of the Fall Fests we could muster, to watching scary movies come to life on the stage with *Misery* coming to the Erie Playhouse, and getting into our creepiest costumes for the upcoming *Basement of Terror* concert at *Basement Transmissions*. We've also taken inspo from our incredible cover (created by the G.O.A.T. "Monster" Mark Kosobucki) and shared spooky legends from the Erie Cemetery, discovered some ghosts from Erie's past, unearthed the story of a violent heist from Crawford County's oil boom days, and communed with the dead at Lily Dale.

Whether you have an Instagrammable October full of apple orchards and flannel shirts, a terrifyingly haunted month of ghost stories, gory decorations, and horror movies, or if you'd rather just cozy up with the ghosts in your own home, we at the Reader wish you the spookiest of seasons, however you choose to celebrate.

# Surprise Disguises: Drawing on Erie History For Halloween

Past residents led fascinating double lives

By: Liz Allen

When my kids were little, I'd sew cute or trendy Halloween costumes for them — a furry mouse, a suave magician, the Karate Kid, Ghostbusters, GI Joe. But I'm not very creative in crafting my own costumes. When I greet trick-or-treaters, I'm either dressed as a non-scary clown or a cheerleader — and sometimes a mash-up of both.

My mom made the clown costume for my youngest sister in the early '80s and I bought the cheerleader clothes — a pleated skirt and a sleeveless V-neck top — after St. Andrew's Catholic School closed in 2007. "I don't even want to ask why you are buying that," the Rev. Richard Sullivan, St. Andrew's pastor, joked as I made a donation for the cheer gear.

I don't inhabit some weird fantasy world, I assured him. Rather, I wanted to play dress-up with my granddaughters, pretending to be a cool chick, instead of a nerd like I was in eighth grade when my friends and I made the cheer squad and had to wear skirts that hung below our knees (the nuns measured hems) and waffle-weave blazers.

But as Halloween approaches, I'm ready to retire those costumes to step into the shoes of some interesting but relatively obscure characters who made brief appearances in Erie's history.

Judge Florence Ellinwood Allen (no relation to me), the first woman appointed to a U.S. Circuit Court, had a shot at breaking the glass ceiling of the U.S. Supreme Court decades before Sandra Day O'Connor was named a justice in 1981. Internationally known mathematician Artemas Martin was also a farmer who sold lettuce on State Street. Alexandra Kozłowska posed as a man until her gender was revealed when she fainted at an Erie boardinghouse. Charles Crozat Converse wrote the music (but not the lyrics) for "The Erie Hymn," more commonly known as "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." He also came up with the first gender-neutral pronoun.

I researched Crozat Converse's Erie connection after a *Jeopardy!* clue piqued my interest. I learned about Allen, Martin, and Kozłowska-Zeleski from the 50th anniversary edition of

the Erie Daily Times. I read every inch of that edition, published on April 12, 1938, on microfilm when I edited the newspaper's 1995 Erie Bicentennial tab. It's jammed with uplifting stories (Erie violinist Franz Kohler showed Helen Keller how music created vibrations), stunning news (99 Erie deaths blamed on "bicycle craze" in 1908), points of civic pride (Erie resident James Gibbons, an Irish immigrant, fired the first shot for the Union in the Civil War), and appalling revelations (the KKK forced an Erie woman to flee town in April 1923).

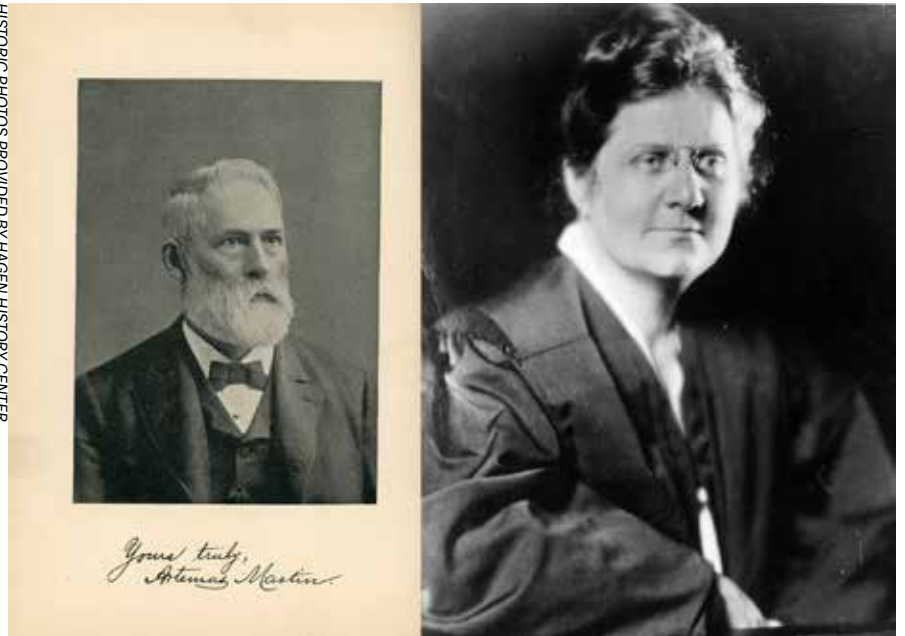
The 50th anniversary edition also took pains to celebrate Erie women. "From the pioneer women ... to the present, (the) history of Erie women tells of high courage, endurance in trial, and of alertness and wit to meet the daily adventure," Society Editor Mary McKee wrote. "Among the living 'great ones' whose nativity was in Erie County is Judge Florence E. Allen ... who was prominently mentioned among the possibilities for elevation to the Supreme Court to fill a recent vacancy."

According to McKee, Allen was born on a farm south of Girard and spent time there with her grandparents after her parents moved to Ohio. The "History of the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court," written for the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976, said that Allen was born in 1884 in Salt Lake City. She died in 1966. Wherever her birthplace, Allen forged ties here, with the Erie newspaper covering her career as she moved up through the judiciary by winning elections to the Common Pleas and Supreme Courts in Ohio and then being appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati in 1934.

The Sixth Circuit history notes that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt urged FDR to consider nominating Allen to the U.S. Supreme Court in the late 1930s. "She was a true pioneer in the fields of law and women's rights," the Sixth Circuit history said, pointing out that in addition to her New York University law degree, Allen received 16 honorary degrees. She was also an honorary member of the Erie Women's Club at West Sixth and Myrtle streets, according to McKee's story.

Like Judge Allen, Artemas Martin received a host of prestigious honors, including honorary degrees from Yale,

HISTORIC PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HAGEN HISTORY CENTER



**Artemas Martin (left) was born in 1835 and lived near Erie for most of his life. He was a farmer and schoolteacher by trade but proved himself to be a skilled and important mathematician. Judge Florence Allen (right) grew up just south of Girard and became the first woman appointed to a U.S. Circuit Court.**

Rutgers, Hillsdale College and the University of Michigan. He was also named an honorary member of the London Mathematical Society. Antonella Cuppillari, associate professor emerita of mathematics at Penn State Behrend, co-authored two papers about Martin with Patricia Allaire, assistant math professor at Queensborough Community College of City University of New York. Their papers are deep dives into math calculations that Martin labored to perfect, too complex for a non-mathematician like me to understand.

But there is no doubt that Martin, who died in 1918 at age 83, was, in Cuppillari's words, "a fascinating person." She wrote in an email: "His contribution to the production of American mathematical journals was important. While not a stellar mathematician, he was a strong representative of the average dedicated mathematicians who were fundamental to the establishment of the mathematical culture in America."

According to the professors' research, Martin was born in Western New York and grew up near Erie. He learned to read and write at home and had less than five years of formal schooling. "He worked as a teacher in district schools in the late 1850s, but otherwise earned his living as a farmer and oil well worker," they wrote in *The Wittenberger Articles: Artemas Martin on Averages*.

Martin's background as a farmer drew scorn from an unknown Boston Post writer in a story published by The New York Times on Dec. 11, 1885. Martin had moved to Washington, D.C., to be the librarian for the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. The article described Martin as a "tall, ungainly" truck farmer and "an odd sort of person (who) has a half dozen prefixes and suffixes, all given to him by learned societies ... The problems of calculus are to him mere child's play ... Twice every week he was found in his stall (on State Street), as little known to his customers or to the people of the city (of Erie) as was the vendor of poultry or the seller of beads and buttons in the neighboring stalls."

I like the notion that a farmer skilled in calculus impressed Ivy League scholars, yet felt at home in Erie. I found thousands of references for "Artemas Martin" through a Google search — his math books are even cited on GoodReads.

Alexandra Kozłowska, however, doesn't have a digital footprint, only scant information from several Erie Daily Times and the Erie Dispatch stories.

"MASQUERADED AS MAN AND DID A MAN'S HARDEST WORK. Alexandra Kozłowska Worked Six Months in Local Manufacturing Concerns Before Her Sex Was Discovered — Worked in



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Alexandra Kozlowska as She Appeared While Masquerading As a Man and in the Dress of Her Sex Photographed Today.



TRADE WITH PHILIPPINES HAS GREATLY INCREASED  
 The National Trade Association, Washington, D. C., April 11—A report issued today by the Bureau of Statistics says trade with the Philippine Islands has more than doubled since the maximum in 1909 of the law providing for the free trade between these islands and the United States. The total trade from the Philippine Islands for the first months ended with February.



Alexandra Kozlowska (left) successfully disguised herself as a man, living and working in manual labor in Erie, as an attempt to seek out her missing, grieving husband after the death of their child. Charles Crozat Converse (right) wrote the music for the popular hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” while living in Erie. He often referred to the song as “The Erie Hymn.”

a Boiler Shop, Mined Coal and Drove Mules While Going About in Vain Searching for Missing Husband,” reads the Times’ seven-deck headline from April 12, 1912.

There’s no byline, but Kozlowska awed the reporter. “If all the women professing the beliefs promulgated by the leaders of the suffragette movement possessed the determination, the grim courage and persistence of Alexandra Kozlowska, the women would rule for a certainty and man, poor man, would be relegated to the precincts of the nursery, the kitchen, and other feminine pursuits.”

The story explained that Kozlowska had emigrated with her parents from Poland when it was part of Russia to Gary, West Virginia, at age 15. A year later, she married George Zeleski; they had a baby who died at two months. Her husband then disappeared.

After suffering from typhoid fever, which caused her to lose her hair, she figured that her husband abandoned her because of his grief. Determined to find him, she disguised herself as a man and found work in New York City, Philadelphia, and the coal fields near Pittsburgh. Hearing that people from her husband’s region of Russia lived in Erie, she moved here and posed as a man to work a paper mill and, later, as a

drill-press operator.

Six months into her life in Erie, she fainted at an Erie boardinghouse. “The women who rushed to her assistance made the discovery in their ministrations that Alexandra was a girl — a

“If all the women professing the beliefs promulgated by the leaders of the suffragette movement possessed the determination, the grim courage and persistence of Alexandra Kozlowska, the women would rule for a certainty and man, poor man, would be relegated to the precincts of the nursery, the kitchen, and other feminine pursuits.” — unattributed Erie Daily Times reporter

soft-fleshed, well-moulded girl — and when Alexandra was revived and accused of passing herself off as a man, she promptly confessed, as well as she may, for in all her masquerading as a man, Alexandra had been a model of propriety ... there were no reproaches

awaiting,” the Erie Times reported.

The young woman told the paper she would continue to search for her missing husband, and the story ending on an approving note: “Hats off to Alexandra Kozlowska-Zeleski, known when masquerading in the guise of a man as Stanley Kozlowska.”

Whatever happened to Alexandra/Stanley? I don’t know. But in the Times’ anniversary edition in 1938, 26 years after the original glowing story, the newspaper’s headline described her masquerade as a “hoax” and accused her of “duplicity.”

If only she had crossed paths with Charles Crozat Converse in Erie. He set to music a poem by Joseph Mendicott Scriven, an Irish immigrant to Canada whose life was beset by tragedy. The song is popularly known as “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” but Converse called it “The Erie Hymn,” which he wrote in 1868 when he was working in Erie.

After I heard a *Jeopardy!* clue referring to the “Erie Hymn,” I did some research into Converse, who was born in Massachusetts in 1832 and died in New Jersey in 1918. Some sources say the rhythms of Lake Erie inspired his music. The “Erie” connection turned out to be a sidelight when I learned that Converse had coined the first gender-neutral pronoun, “thon,” a contraction of “that one,” in 1858.

According to merriam-webster.com, “The initial reason that thon caught on was that one or more editors at Funk and Wagnalls took a shine to the word.” In its 1903 dictionary, Funk and Wagnalls defined “thon” as “Pronoun of the 3rd person, common gender, meaning ‘that one, he, she or it,’ a neoterism proposed by Charles Crozat Converse, and apparently complying with the neoteristic canons, since it supplies an antecedent blank, obeys a simple and obvious analogy, and is euphonious.”

I looked up “neoterism,” which means a new word or phrase, and “euphonious,” defined as “pleasing to the ear.” Should I dress up as Florence, Artemas, Alexandra/Stanley, or Charles for Halloween? Or a mash-up of all four of them?

My husband, however, votes for the cheerleader costume.

Liz Allen will likely just wear her *Eerie Sea Wolves Howl-O-Ween* jersey for Halloween, to celebrate the team’s Eastern League championship. You can reach her at lizerie@aol.com.

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## The Dead Don't Die in Lily Dale

Lily Dale Assembly in Western New York has offered mediumship since 1879

By: Amy VanScoter

As the leaves begin to change and fall, it is said in some traditions that the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead becomes thinnest. The month of October is especially known as a time of transition. When the days become shorter, we instinctively prepare to temporarily withdraw for the colder months ahead. The peacefulness of this slower, more inward time of year can especially be felt in Lily Dale, where the veil between the living and the dead always seems a bit thinner, regardless of the season.

A beautiful autumn drive, you can take the scenic route to Lily Dale from Erie in about an hour. Lily Dale is self-proclaimed as the largest Spiritualist community in the world, with its 160 acres governed by the Lily Dale Assembly. It is a hamlet, located in the town of Pomfret, New York, on the east side of Cassadaga Lake next to the Village of Cassadaga.

Lily Dale was incorporated in 1879 as Cassadaga Lake Free Association, a camp and meeting place for Spiritualists and Freethinkers. The name was changed to The City of Light in 1903 and then to Lily Dale Assembly in 1906. The name Lily Dale came from the abundance of lilies at the lake. The stated purpose of Lily Dale was to further the science, philosophy, and religion of Spiritualism. Lily Dale is home to the headquarters of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches (NSAC), which was founded in 1893.

Spiritualism is a movement based on the belief that departed souls can interact with the living. Spiritualists seek to make contact with the dead, usually channeled through a medium — a person believed by Spiritualists to have the ability to contact spirits directly. The town of Lily Dale is known for its registered mediums, many of whom allow visitors to knock on the doors of their homes, requesting readings. Lily Dale mediums are registered with both the Assembly and the Medium's League where they undergo testing and vetting "to ensure the highest quality mediumship," according to their website. Many who reside in Lily Dale are also ordained clergy with NSAC.

The hamlet of Hydesville, in Wayne County, New York is historically considered the original birthplace of Modern Spiritualism. It is alleged that communication between "the seen and unseen" began here on March 31, 1848 in the Fox Cottage. Margaretta and Catherine Fox, ages 14 and 12, are credited as the major participants in the Advent of Modern American Spiritualism. The Fox Cottage was later moved to Lily Dale for preservation and as a memorial. It was taken apart and shipped across Lake Ontario to Buffalo then driven by truck into Lily Dale where it was reassembled. The cottage was destroyed by a fire in 1955. The ground it sat on in Lily Dale remains a memorial and mediation garden open year-round for visitors.

In the 2011 documentary *No One Dies in Lily Dale*, many of the visitors portrayed are looking to connect, heal, find answers, and get closure with deceased



**A haven for spiritualists, free thinkers, and registered mediums since the turn of the 20th century, the hamlet of Lily Dale, just a short trip from Erie, has been a beacon for those hoping to commune with the dead for centuries.**

loved ones. They travel from across the country and sometimes around the globe, with hopes of reconnecting with someone on the other side. But many say they are simply curious about what they may experience during a reading. "I just wanted to see what might come up," said Karen Hime, an Erie resident who visited Lily Dale with her family members. "I had a reading with one of the mediums and she knew about some specific jewelry that I had received after my mother's death. It was something there was no way she could have known," said Hime. "She talked a lot about my grandmother and how she was a baker and made big meals and took care of us," she said. Other family members had mixed reviews of their readings overall, but all said that they had positive experiences.

It is suggested that visitors make appointments with registered mediums before arriving, regardless of the season, but you can also check a sign at the post office to see which registered mediums are staying in residence year-round. There is also a list with contact information on their website. Registered mediums are also available for phone readings and contact information can be found on the Lily Dale Assembly website.

There seems to be a consensus among visitors that arriving at Lily Dale and passing through the com-

munity gates feels as if they are entering someplace otherworldly. The energy and peaceful nature of the town are just a couple reasons why many visitors are said to continually return. Many of the homes in Lily Dale are 19th Century Victorian, with some dating from the 1800s, giving the town a feeling of time standing still. There is no fee to enter the gates during the offseason, which begins each year after Labor Day. Approximately 22,000 people visit Lily Dale each year, and about 250 residents are reported to make it their home. The grounds are completely walkable and much of Lily Dale is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Visitors not interested in receiving readings may find that the history and natural surroundings provide peace and space for quiet reflection. The area has plenty to do including outdoor activities and a walk through the Leolyn Woods, a small, 10-acre tract of largely untouched old growth forest on the grounds. The woods contain the Inspiration Stump, a spot that residents say may help you get in touch with spiritual energies if you are in an open, receptive state. The woods contain some of the most accessible old, large trees in the region, including an eastern white pine standing at least 135 feet tall. Some trees are estimated to range in age from 200 to 400 years old. The woods contain Lily Dale's pet cemetery, a final rest-



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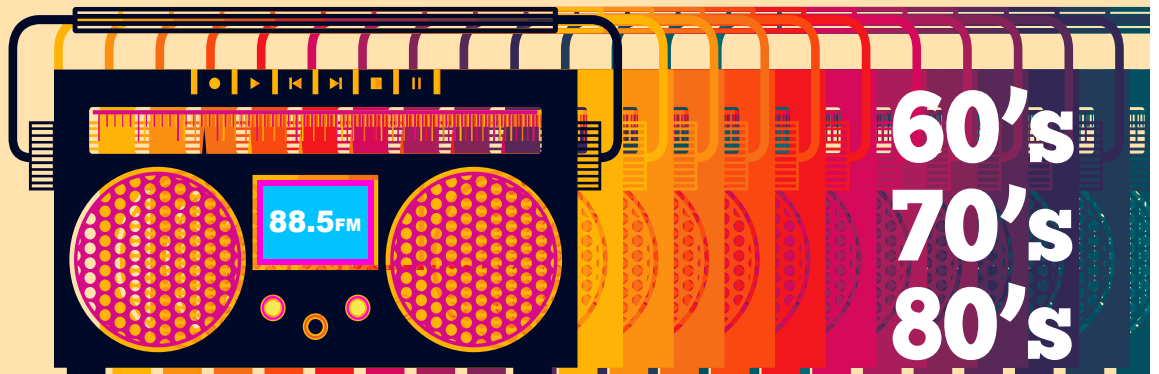
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## FEATURE

AMY VANSOTER



**The Marion Skidmore Library, established in 1886 and located within the Lily Dale Assembly, is the largest private library specializing in Spiritualist, New Thought, and psychic research materials and rare books.**

ing place for beloved pets since 1900. Lily Dale is also home to two hotels, guest houses, Spiritualist and New Age bookstores, restaurants, and a café.

The Marion Skidmore Library was founded in 1886 and is closely connected to the history of women's suffrage. Marion Skidmore was one of the founders of Lily Dale, and was an advocate for women's rights, a liberal thinker, and a friend of Susan B. An-

thony, who is said to have been a frequent Lily Dale guest. The library boasts the world's largest private collection of Spiritualist, New Thought, and psychic research materials, as well as rare books. It serves as an in-depth research library and is frequented by undergraduate through doctoral level students as well as lecturers, academic scholars, and authors. The grounds also contain a Spiritualist museum, and the Healing Temple where visitors can, when in season, attend a healing and message service. Churches offer seminars, development circles, classes, and activities throughout the off-season.

During the summer season, Lily Dale often hosts well-known speakers. Deepak Chopra, the late Dr. Wayne Dyer, and John Edward have frequently appeared at Lily Dale. Television mediums Lisa Williams and Michelle White dove are said to have homes in Lily Dale. The town has even served as inspiration for television episodes and a series of young adult paranormal novels by New York Times bestselling author Wendy Corsi Staub, who grew up a few miles from Lily Dale. A book about the town, *Lily Dale: The True Story of the Town that Talks to the Dead*, by Christine Wicker, offers more details on the town's fascinating lore and history. Through their registered mediums, lectures, and deeply rooted history, Lily Dale offers many visitors hope that just as the light will surely return, those who have left us will continue to live on.

*Lily Dale Assembly can be found at [lilydaleassembly.org](http://lilydaleassembly.org) or by calling (716) 595-8721. Their hours through the fall and winter are Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.*

*Amy VanScoter can often be found in nature or teaching yoga and meditation at School House Yoga. She can be reached at [avanscoter@gmail.com](mailto:avanscoter@gmail.com).*

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**The Fox Cottage, long believed to be the birthplace of modern Spiritualism, was moved from Wayne County, New York to Lily Dale to preserve the sacred space. It burned down in 1955 and the spot where it once was is now a memorial and meditation garden.**



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# Strange Deaths, Ghosts, and Legends at the Erie Cemetery

Newly founded foundation reanimates public tour series

By: Erin Phillips

“A” is for Amy who fell down the stairs, “B” is for Basil assaulted by bears... “C” is for Charles who died retrieving a pencil and “W” is for William who drank water, too cold? These last two are not quite what Edward Gorey wrote in the 1963 macabre children’s classic *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, but no less strange — these latter two real-life, mysteriously gothic, intriguingly bizarre deaths are included on the revived public tour series through the Erie Cemetery, which was reestablished after the recent creation of their Erie Cemetery Foundation Association.

Tour leader, historian, and educator Anna Foll tells the stories of these two deaths of Charles and William, as well as many others, during her cemetery tour entitled “Strange Deaths.” Little William VanValkenberg rests in his family’s plot in the southern portion of the Erie Cemetery. He was just a 10-month-old baby when he died in 1858 from “drinking ice water.” Upon seeing this cause of death in the internment books, Foll immediately got to work researching how this could possibly be. Apparently, it was not an isolated occurrence.

Foll comments on her research, “Apparently in 1820 in Boston, 16 people allegedly died from drinking cold water.” The truth of the matter is much more likely that there was an underlying, undiagnosed cardiac issue with poor baby William that was exacerbated by the shock to his system from drinking very cold water. Foll continues, “Actually, in 1999, there was a case of cardiac arrest in a 12-year-old who drank a frozen slushie really fast. The cause was found to be cardiac arrhythmia, due to an undiagnosed cardiac condition. Something similar is likely what happened with William.”

The case of Charles Finn, who lies in an unmarked grave closer to the entrance to the cemetery, is no less bizarre and upsetting. A 17-year-old boy working at the Erie Manufacturing Company (which was located at 1030 W. 12th St.) was riding in a freight elevator when he dropped his pencil down into the elevator pit. He went into the pit to retrieve it and didn’t realize the elevator was already descending with a large load of freight. He tried to leap out onto the floor above, but his effort was too late and he was crushed between the elevator and the floor. The Erie Times News article from March 25, 1912 reported on his death stating, “He died without uttering a word. Had he remained in his position at the bottom of the pit, and not have attempted to get out, he would not have been harmed.”

Foll’s current slate of tours, happening on Saturdays and Sundays throughout October, is the “Ghosts and Legends” tour, which covers some of the more spooky cemetery legends that have grown, changed, and become more elaborate through the generations in Erie. There are approximately 10 stops on this tour covering everything



(Clockwise from top left): The desecration and subsequent zany investigation of the Scott Mausoleum is one of the stops on the upcoming Ghosts and Legends tour. This unmarked crypt built into a hill has been the subject of many an urban legend – rumored to be the daytime resting place of a vampire. The Erie Cemetery Association Foundation has recently succeeded in erecting a monument to the Burrell Waters family, as their grave plots were previously unmarked. The mysterious “Witches Circle” of gravestones towards the front entrance contains some of the oldest stones in the cemetery.

from the legendary break-in at the Scott mausoleum to the infamous Vampire Crypt and Witch’s Circle: if you’ve heard an urban legend about it, Foll will take you there.

Foll will recount the stories you may or may not have heard, all their various versions, and then tell the true stories as best as she can. Some may prefer to continue on believing in the legend, and that’s, in a way, what Foll hopes will happen, “As historians, we always want to know the truth. But if you’d like to think there’s a vampire in this crypt, go ahead and keep believing that. Urban legends are cool and they fascinate people and get them to interact with local history.”

As she shows me around the impressive Scott mausoleum (a massive, church-like structure that sits a few dozen yards west of the main entrance), she reflects on the importance of learning about local history: “The popularity of these tours makes me excited as a historian and educator, to think people are interested in hearing about local history. I was raised in Erie and we never learned much about our own history. So all these people on my tours, whether they’re tourists or are actually from Erie, are excited, and it makes me excited to talk about some of these historic gems here in the cemetery.”

The Erie Cemetery Association Foundation

(ECAF), which was established in 2020, not only brings fascinating tours to the public with varying themes ranging from Strange Deaths and Ghosts and Legends to more serious subject matter like African American trailblazers, Erie artists, and military tours — the Association also addresses issues long lacking a steward in the cemetery including gravestone cleaning, preservation, as well as providing gravestones for previously unmarked graves (hopefully someday one for poor Charles Finn).

One of the major accomplishments of the association thus far was marking the Burleigh Waters family plot with a memorial. Harry T. Burleigh, composer, musician, and arguably one of the most nationally famous historical figures from Erie, along with his family were buried in the Erie Cemetery for generations but no one knew their location because their graves were unmarked. Betsy MacKrell, director of the ECAF comments, “There are 11 members of the Burleigh family buried there, and they were all civil rights workers in their own rights, some in quiet ways. They deserve to be marked, to be able to be a part of school tours, and to carry on Harry T. Burleigh’s family legacy.”

One of the most intriguing ways to learn about local history is by taking a walk through a historic cemetery and the Erie Cemetery, being the oldest non-denominational cemetery in Erie (established in 1851), is a great place to start. With graves dating back to Revolutionary War veterans, there’s

something to spark anyone’s interest — urban legend-wise or just basic local history. Every grave in the cemetery has a story to tell (some more bizarre than others), but it is through learning and sharing these stories that we keep these people alive.

With modern technology, researching the names on gravestones is now easier than ever. With free online resources like findagrave.com, genealogical websites, and the Erie County Public Library’s subscription to NewsBank (which allows one to search through hundreds of years of local newspapers as easily as doing a Google search), you can leave your curiosity behind and *actually learn* the stories of those resting in our own historic cemetery.

MacKrell comments on the importance of preserving and learning the history of our cemeteries, “Everybody has a story to tell and everybody’s story is important. And if we keep telling the histories of the people in our cemetery, we help keep their stories alive.”

One can speculate about the afterlife, heaven, hell, etc. One can share spooky stories of ghosts and zombies wandering the earth after they’ve shuffled off this mortal coil. The only way someone truly lives on after death, especially if that death was generations ago, is through someone taking the time to discover and share their memory and the story of their lives. As old marble gravestones become moss-covered, weather-worn, crack, and crumble — the names, dates, and words left behind

fade, and the only way to know the people below the stones is to learn their stories.

*If you’d like to join Foll on one of her upcoming Ghosts and Legends tours of the Erie Cemetery, you can do so by emailing [eriecemeterytours@gmail.com](mailto:eriecemeterytours@gmail.com) or by calling 814-459-2463. The tours are held on Saturdays and Sundays throughout October, each day at both 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. and cost \$12 for adults, \$8 for children, rain or shine, at the Erie Cemetery, 2116 Chestnut St.*

### **Beyond the Erie Cemetery**

The Erie Cemetery isn’t the only establishment calling upon its history and heritage this spooky season. The borough of Girard is also hosting cemetery tours, for those residing on the western edge of our county. Local historian and author Stephanie Wincik has scheduled tours of the Girard Cemetery, sponsored by the West County Historical Association, happening on Oct. 6 and 7. These tours will cover some major historical figures buried in Girard. Wincik also hosts Candlelight Ghost Walks in and around Main Street in Girard throughout the season. For more information visit: [candlelightghostwalks.com](http://candlelightghostwalks.com)

*When Erin Phillips isn’t wandering among the gravestones, she can be found on her computer, searching for the names and stories of the dead. She can be reached at [erin@eriereader.com](mailto:erin@eriereader.com)*

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# The Benninghoff Heist: The Wild West of Pennsylvania

Boomtowns beget treachery, intrigue

By: Jonathan Burdick

The history of Pennsylvania's Oil Region is as enthralling as it is deeply layered. Locations such as Titusville, Oil City, and Pithole along with people such as Edwin Drake, Coal Oil Johnny, and Ben Hogan have been immortalized into the region's historical canon. It's a history brimming with quirky characters, intense rivalries, and a perpetual conflict between order and chaos that rivaled western counterparts like Deadwood and Dodge City.

Each place had its own distinct people and stories, including the sometimes overlooked localities of Rouseville, Plumer, Pleasantville, and Petroleum Center. The last of these was a boomtown in Cornplanter Township located halfway between Titusville and Oil City alongside Oil Creek. Newspapers in 1868 marked it as "one of the richest [locations] in the world." One resident was Samuel A. Woods, a young man who lucked into a "princely income" after striking "liquid wealth." The Erie Daily Times described how he "lived high" sporting fancy suits and expensive diamonds. He also adored gambling. He'd play dice any time of day and it wasn't uncommon to witness his \$1,000 bets.

Petroleum Center was infamous for this gambling. There was no central hub. Games sprung up all over town: saloons, offices, engine houses, even private homes. "[A] rickety table, a greasy writing desk, or a board laid across the head of an old barrel answered as well as the equipment of a gambling palace," explained the Erie Daily Times.

In the winter of 1869, Woods found himself in a pickle. He was at the Rochester House when he engaged in a betting war with another wealthy oil producer named Colonel Brady. The encounter would later be described as "the greatest game of dice on record in the oil region."

What started with \$50 bets soon spiraled out of control. By morning, Woods was down \$32,000 to the colonel. He wrote out the check, held it up, and made a simple proposal: one throw each and double-or-nothing. The colonel accepted and rolled a nine. Woods rolled an 11. The two agreed to continue playing and Woods won all of the colonel's cash by morning's end: about

\$3,000. He handed his opponent a \$20 bill before departing. "I can't see a man go away dead broke," Woods quipped.

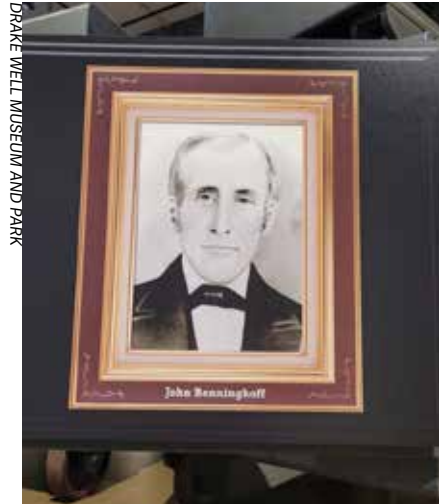
Needless to say, there was a lot of money floating around Petroleum Center and it attracted some interesting characters. In 1892, the Erie Daily Times noted that the "remarkable happenings" from the "old bonanza days" were as entertaining as any chapters from *Arabian Nights*.

One of these happenings involved a German American farmer named John Benninghoff. Known to locals as Old Benninghoff, he found himself, as one 1910 newspaper described it, at the center of "one of the most remarkable robberies ever perpetuated." As was common during this time though, accounts differed slightly (and sometimes not-so-slightly) from newspaper to newspaper. Much was clearly sensationalized or not vetted for accuracy. Names varied from paper to paper. Truth and fabrication blended. All the same, it was unquestionably quite the heist.

John Benninghoff was born on Dec. 25, 1801 in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania to German immigrants. In 1825, he married a young woman named Elizabeth and a decade later, the family (which eventually included 12 children) moved onto a 57-acre farm on a tributary to Oil Creek (later named Benninghoff Run). The house was small and on a quiet road, about a quarter-mile from the nearest neighbor. They eventually expanded their property to nearly 300 acres. In these early years on the farm, Benninghoff and his wife earned a modest income selling produce in Titusville transported on an oxen-pulled sled.

When the oil rush erupted in the 1860s, the children were already grown and the couple lived on the farm with their niece Eliza. Petroleum Center sprang up nearby with 3,000 residents. This was smaller than neighboring Pithole's 20,000, but it still had all the boomtown staples: hotels, stores, churches, saloons, a theater, and a bank.

Benninghoff, now in his sixties, struck oil on his property. It was a lot of oil. The family was earning a staggering \$50,000 per month — nearly a million dollars adjusted for inflation. The Erie Observer referred to him as an "oil king." They hired two men to



**John Benninghoff (left) was a simple, frugal farmer living in Petroleum Center when he struck oil on his expansive property that made him a fortune. Not trusting banks, he kept money at home in a safe (right) protected by a bodyguard. On Jan. 16, 1868, robbers broke into his farmhouse, tied everyone up, and stole between one-quarter and half a million dollars from this safe, which is currently on display at the Drake Well Museum and Park in Titusville.**



assist with the operation, working as help and night watchmen: Henry Geiger, blonde and expressionless and still learning English, and a fellow by the name of Elbridge.

"But wealth brings trouble," noted the Pittsburg Dispatch, "and John Benninghoff worried as never before in his days of poverty."

He didn't change much otherwise. The Pittsburg Commercial wrote that he continued to live as a "plain, hard-working farmer" and his "sudden and dazzling fortune never made a fool of him." His dress didn't change, they lived humbly, and he worked even harder than before.

This thriftiness rubbed some the wrong way. In the Franklin Evening News, John L. Hunter wrote that Benninghoff was an "exemplary citizen" but that "nature had endowed him with a greed for money and a distrust for his fellow men." Still, Hunter argued, there was something admirable about his restraint. "The glamour of city life ... failed to appeal to him," he wrote.

It's uncertain what everyone thought of Benninghoff. The editor of the Mercer Republican called him a private, quiet, and inoffensive citizen. Conversely, the editor of the Pithole Record criticized him for his frugality, calling him an "injury to the human race." He was even worse than the "reckless, extravagant, foolish, and corrupt" Coal Oil Johnny, who famously (and drunkenly) blew through his family fortune. "A

miser is infinitely worse than a spendthrift," he alleged, "for while the latter may injure himself, he benefits the community by circulating his cash."

Indeed, Old Benninghoff didn't even use any of the local banks. He trusted banks less than he trusted people, having lost money years earlier when a Franklin-based bank failed. Instead, he purchased numerous large safes for his home in which he kept the majority of his money. It also seemed to be common knowledge.

"Friends warned him of the risk he ran in keeping so much money about the house and advised him to place it in a bank," wrote Hunter. "This he refused to do."

Three strangers stopped at the house at dusk one evening requesting milk and whisky. Benninghoff was immediately suspicious. He didn't invite them in and wouldn't give them whisky, but did offer some milk. Later that night, the family awoke to a sound and discovered someone prying open a window. Benninghoff grabbed his rifle, his son Joseph grabbed a revolver, and they began shooting from the front porch. Multiple figures returned fire before scrambling away. Fortunately, nobody was injured.

On the evening of Jan. 16, 1868, Benninghoff, Elizabeth, Eliza, and their hired hands, Geiger and Elbridge, were winding down for the night. Joseph was attending a dance and wouldn't be back for a few hours. There was a

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The historic photo from *Source Sketches in Crude Oil* by John James McLaurin shows the Benninghoff Run Oil Wells that were erected on the property of John Benninghoff, a 300-acre farm on a tributary to Oil Creek in the 1860s.

knock at the door. Geiger moved to open it as Benninghoff objected, but it was too late. Three armed and masked men burst through the door and pushed past Geiger. A fourth stood as a lookout. As described in the Titusville Herald, Benninghoff, a considerably strong man for his age, physically engaged the assailants but was thrown to the ground and punched and kicked into submission. They bound his arms and legs and tossed him into a bed. If he didn't comply, the men threatened, he and the others would all be killed.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth had secured a revolver and handed it to Geiger, but he cowered in a corner of the room. One of the masked men took the gun with ease. They then led Elizabeth to another room and tied her up. Eliza was taken into a third room. "You are rather a pretty girl," uttered one of the assailants. "Someday I may come back and marry you." He then tied her to a chair.

According to an account in the Pittsburg Dispatch, the men tortured Benninghoff for information by burning his feet. Eventually, they found a key, quickly located the safe, and began ransacking it. For about an hour, they searched the home and helped themselves to their food. They then slipped a noose around Geiger's neck and demanded that he take them to the barn to secure horses and lead them to Meadville.

Eliza was able to loosen her ties. She frantically unbound her aunt, uncle, and Elbridge. By that point though, the masked men were gone along with Geiger. Elbridge left to alert the authorities. When Joseph arrived back from the dance, he was shocked by the sight of the home and his beaten father.

In the morning, Geiger returned. His

face was bruised and battered. He'd resisted their demands, he said, but they left him no choice. Benninghoff was despondent. Joseph went to neighbor William Spence's home to inform him of the armed burglary. Spence listened closely, then asked about the two hired men.

"[Y]ou will think as I do," seethed Joseph. "[Geiger] knew all about it beforehand." It was Eliza who'd noticed that they hadn't bound Geiger like the rest of them. In fact, they barely seemed to notice his presence at all until the end. And why hadn't he at least *threatened* to shoot them?

The four men had made away with \$260,000 — the equivalent of \$5.5 million today. Fortunately, they had missed one of the safes.

The next day, the Franklin Evening News called it "the greatest robbery in the annals of oildom." The Beaver Argus referred to it as the "most daring and successful affair" done by villains with "coolness and deliberation" in a theft that "has seldom been equalled." National and international news picked up the story.

"[H]e had taken the notion into his head to be his own banker," the Titusville Herald stated. "And now he has paid the penalty of very foolish and short-sighted temerity." The Pithole Record outright blamed Benninghoff. The Erie Observer published that locals didn't have much sympathy and spoke of his misfortunes with sarcasm.

Benninghoff, still physically recovering from his attack, hired armed guards. It was rumored that he moved the rest of his fortune off the property completely, presumably into a bank. Encouraged by his son Joseph, he initially offered a \$10,000 reward, eventually increasing it to \$50,000 (around \$1



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This antique stereoscope photograph shows the oil boom town of Petroleum Center in Cornplanter Township located halfway between Titusville and Oil City alongside Oil Creek.

million today). Allan Pinkerton personally offered the services of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. Detectives from *all* over the country poured into the region.

Whispers of Geiger's involvement circulated. There were also rumors about two men who'd been bragging around Meadville mere days *before* the robbery that they were about to strike it rich. Savvier detectives secured names: a Civil War veteran and merchant named Jim Saeger and a farmer and brewer named Louis Welde (sometimes printed as Welby or Wardle). In the days *following* the robbery, they were also seen spending money quite openly at Saegertown saloons. Two other names also circulated: shoemaker George Miller and cooper Jacob R. Shoppert (or Shopport). If *that* wasn't suspicious enough, after three days of decadence, Saeger and Shoppert simply disappeared.

These tips were correct. In the months before the heist, Saeger, Welde, Miller, and Shoppert were spending their free time drinking and gambling throughout Saegertown and Meadville. According to the Titusville Herald, Saeger's father (for whom the town was named) had left him \$60,000, which he subsequently burnt through, leaving him a "vagabond on the earth." It was after Saeger took a short trip to the oil region that he returned to his friends with an idea.

"Boys, I have a scheme that can easily be worked by which we can make a pile of money," conspired Saeger. He swore them to secrecy, then divulged what he had learned about Benninghoff. "The money will do us more good than it will him," he reasoned. He asked if they were on board. If they preferred though, they could drop the idea right then. All three agreed. Their shares in the fortune would be equally split, but

Saeger would hatch the plan that they all had to agree to follow.

Saeger next hired two expert safecrackers from Philadelphia: John McDonald and George Elliot. Their fee was a non-negotiable \$25,000 each. Saeger accepted. On Jan. 14, 1868, the six conspirators met at Welde's home. After an hour of discussions, McDonald approached Saeger privately in another room. He had instincts and Shoppert and Miller were not reliable. He didn't trust them to keep a secret either. He suggested that they kill the two, cut a hole in the ice of nearby French Creek, and dispose of the bodies. They wouldn't be found for weeks and, by then, they'd all be long gone.

Saeger was shocked at the suggestion. It turned into a heated argument. Had he underestimated his new associate's callousness? McDonald suggested killing only Miller. After all, it was clear he was a spineless drunk with loose lips. Saeger refused. If this involved murder, he was out. They found a compromise. Shoppert and Miller would each be offered \$1,500 to drop out of the plot and never speak a word of the plan — *if* they wanted to live, added McDonald. Perhaps sensing McDonald's nature, they accepted.

So, two nights later, the four remaining men boarded a livery rig and headed towards Petroleum Center. They walked the last mile by foot. Welde provided eyes outside while Saeger, McDonald, and Elliot burst through the door. The plan worked brilliantly.

Just before arriving back to Meadville trailing Geiger, McDonald and Elliot demanded their share. Saeger stated they could have *part* of their share, but they needed to count the entirety of their bounty before splitting. They drew their revolvers. It was money *now* or they'd kill both of them and take the

entirety of the fortune. Saeger conceded. They parted ways and he and Welde returned to Saegertown. Within a few days, they left too.

According to John L. Hunter's almost certainly embellished account, Miller, who'd pocketed his hush money, was drinking whisky dejectedly that summer at Foglebaugh's Saloon in Saegertown when a homely tramp entered. Over the following few days, sometimes with a Meadville resident by the name of Wegefarth, the tramp took up odd jobs around Saegertown during the day, returning to the saloon each evening. Miller and the tramp ended up in a friendly game of cards one evening when a drunken Miller slapped his cards onto the table. "I am tired of this hand-to-mouth way of living," he declared, pulling out a thick wad of cash. "I didn't have to work for that and there is more where it came from."

The tramp's expression changed and he drew a revolver. He pulled back his coat to reveal a silver star. Miller was stunned. He asked the tramp who he was.

"Around here, I am called a tramp," declared the stranger. "[Elsewhere], I am known as Detective [Robert] Hague." Hague, a future police chief of Pittsburgh, was already accomplished, referred to in the New York Times as "one of the most skillful detectives in the country." Miller inquired how the detective found him. Hague was vague, but it seemed Geiger told him where he'd taken the men. Hague simply followed the lead. Miller was arrested as an accomplice. He confessed everything.

Before long, Welde was arrested in Akron, Ohio. He was operating a distillery and hotel. He refused to talk. Shoppert was apprehended too. He had ended up in St. Louis where he was supposed to meet Saeger, but Saeger never showed. Shoppert blew half of his money before losing the other half in a hotel fire. As for Geiger, he was arrested too, but maintained his innocence. It was revealed in court his connection to Welde and several witnesses testified seeing him with Saeger, but he was acquitted. Welde was sentenced to five years. Shoppert earned 18 months. Miller did one year. The hired safecrackers were discovered in Canada, but escaped extradition.

That left Saeger. According to some reports, he'd fled to New Orleans, Cuba, and then Brazil. Eventually he returned to the states with a new pseudonym, T.L. McGee, and operated a prosper-

ous cattle ranch in Texas. A few years later, he brought his cattle to market in Denver. A bartender who'd known Saeger personally from their Pennsylvania days recognized him. They had a pleasant reunion. In one version of the story, the bartender later contacted the local sheriff himself. In another, he wrote home to his family in Meadville about the encounter and they contacted authorities. Regardless, Saeger was eventually arrested. His notoriety (and the potential reward) were well-known, even out west.

Some accounts state that Titusville Chief of Police M.R. Rouse and Joseph Benninghoff then traveled to Denver where Saeger intimidated the men into letting him go. Later in life though, Rouse told the Petroleum Gazette that wasn't accurate. He showed documents demonstrating that Saeger had indeed been jailed, but eventually, for a variety of reasons, was able to prevent his extradition through some conniving with the help of apathetic local detectives who lost interest once they realized a reward was no longer being offered. An 1889 account in the Pittsburgh Dispatch claimed that Saeger told them his money was tied up in cattle, so they'd have to travel to Texas to settle the matter. When Rouse refused this — Texas was too dangerous and they'd be on *his* territory — there were negotiations. Joseph eventually agreed to settle the dispute and move on for a modest sum. "[Saeger] was soon at liberty and under another name [McGee] is one of the most respected and substantial citizens of the great West," wrote the Pittsburgh Dispatch.

Hague, along with three others, eventually received rewards from the Benninghoffs (although it involved the courts).

Not long after the heist, the still considerably wealthy Benninghoff sold off his farm. The family moved to Greenville, Pennsylvania. Elizabeth died on July 16, 1872, around the same time that Petroleum Center became a ghost town. Benninghoff died on March 20, 1882 of pneumonia at the age of 81. He was buried with Elizabeth in the Shenango Valley Cemetery. The estate was left to their children. His obituary ran in the New York Times. "[T]o see him on his farm," they eulogized, "one would never have picked him out as a millionaire."

*Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at [jburdick@eriereader.com](mailto:jburdick@eriereader.com)*



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# The Jefferson Educational Society's Global Summit XV

Think tank brings global issues to local audiences for 15 years running

By: Erin Phillips

Worldwide issues take stage locally during the upcoming Jefferson Educational Society's (JES) Global Summit, the 15th of its kind. This year, the slate of speakers is dense — 18 individual speakers within 14 total events spread over only three weeks time, and those organizing the event are more excited than ever to bring these global issues to our local population.

While the quality and caliber of the speakers remains consistent with past schedules, Ben Speggen, vice president of the JES, is looking forward to a new local partnership that will change the landscape of the Summit, "This year we are partnering with Gannon University for the institution's 'Gannon Reads' event and including it in the Summit lineup. This inclusion strengthens an already strong partnership between the college and the think tank, and continues to help promote the intergenerational learning opportunity the Summit has become known for — as it brings students, seniors, and learners of all ages into one room to learn shoulder to shoulder."

Speggen continues, "The benefit of the Summit is that we strive to offer a well-rounded lineup of speakers covering a wide range of topics. Our goal is not just to have 'something for everyone' but to excite everyone about something." This year's subject matter spectrum promises to do just that — covering everything from U.S. foreign policy, climate change, artificial intelligence (AI), racial and economic equity, and ancient history, while featuring guest speakers from fields ranging from politics to public health specialists. There truly is an event within the Summit that will energize the intellect of any attendee.

The JES strives to figure out how these huge global issues relate locally, and the organization continues to help make the conversation relevant to Erie. Issues like climate change, AI, and racial inequalities are all at play here in Erie on some level and our involvement, challenges, and solutions all contribute to the international conversation regarding these issues.

Speggen relates everything back to the JES's motto for the Global Summit, which is "Think Globally, Learn Locally" — "We need our work in Erie to be informed by the best and brightest, and through our platform to create civic dialogue, we can come together as a community — stakeholders and residents alike — to become better informed so that actions our community takes have the benefit of stemming from the mind, not the gut. The community needs a space where ideas can be discussed and vetted. A space where dialogue is a two-way street, not a one-lane alley."

Global Summit XV is that space.

The Summit will take place between Monday, Oct. 23 and Monday, Nov. 13 and with events at either The Jefferson Educational Society (3207 State St.), the Warner Theatre (811 State St.) or Gannon University. Some events are free and open to the public, other ticket prices are \$25 (early bird) or \$35 (regular) for general admission. Preferred seating is available for \$50 (early bird) or \$60 (regular). Visit [jeserie.org](http://jeserie.org) for tickets and info.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



The 15th annual Global Summit presented by the Jefferson Educational Society will cover a wide breadth of topics with a diverse slate of speakers scheduled from Oct. 23 to Nov. 13. They are as follows [left to right, top to bottom], Peter Baker, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, Brian Freedman, Richard Florida with Bruce Katz, Matt Weidinger, David Urban, Richard Lesser, Richard Reeves, Della Clark, Tom Nichols, Robert Garland, Major General Edward L. Bolton, Karen Tumulty, Laura Coates, and Lisa Adams, Val Demmings, and Michael Steele.

## Monday, Oct. 23

### Peter Baker Speaks on U.S. Foreign Policy, Russia-Ukraine, Putin, and Campaign 2024

The Chief White House Correspondent for the New York Times makes a stop in Erie to kick off the 15th Annual Global Summit. Baker has been covering POTUS since the Clinton administration (when he was with the Washington Post) and has worked with all of the presidents since then including George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden. His topic of discussion, which will take place at Gannon University, is U.S. foreign policy, specifically focusing on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the effect of those foreign policies on the upcoming presidential campaign of 2024.

7:30 p.m. // Yehl Ballroom in Waldron Campus Center, Gannon University, 124 W. 7th St.

## Tuesday, Oct. 24

### Gannon READS Speaker: Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha

Gannon READS (which stands for Reading to Enhance Awareness of a Diverse Society) is partnering with the JES to highlight their regular public reading series with relevant global topics for the Summit.

This event will feature Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, an associate dean for public health and C. S. Mott Endowed Professor of Public Health at Michigan State University (MSU) College of Human Medicine. Dr. Hanna-Attisha is

also the founding director of the Pediatric Public Health Initiative, an innovative partnership between MSU and Hurley Children's Hospital in Flint, Michigan. She will be reading from and discussing her recent book *What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City*, which tells the story of the Flint water crisis as told by herself, the tenacious physician who stood up to those in power on behalf of the residents of Flint.

7 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // FREE (advanced registration required)

## Wednesday, Oct. 25

### Crushed: How a Changing Climate is Altering the Way We Drink — and Eat

Brian Freedman, who is the author of the book bearing the same title as the discussion topic — is a wine, spirits, travel, and food writer, restaurant and beverage consultant, drinks educator, event host, and speaker. His book deals with the way climate change has already affected the way we grow our ingredients, specifically in the wine industry, and how those changes will alter the way we eat and drink in the future. Speggen comments on the relationship of this topic to us locally, "Here in Erie, we know we are blessed to have an abundance of agriculture — including the miles of vineyards from North East to Lake City and beyond. So when it comes to looking at a topic like climate change, why not find

a way to make that local? Brian Freedman's book approaches climate change through the lens of what we drink and how that is being impacted."

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

#### Thursday, Oct. 26

##### **The Future of the American City**

Richard Florida is a professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and School of Cities. He is also a visiting fellow at New York University's Schack Institute of Real Estate and has published extensively on the topics of inequality, segregation, and the urban crisis. His most recent publications include: *The Rise of the Creative Class* and *The New Urban Crisis: How Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What to Do About It*. Florida's books largely assert that cities with high concentrations of tech workers, artists, musicians, LGBTQIA+ populations, and "high bohemians" exhibit a higher level of economic development.

Joining to moderate the conversation is renowned urbanist Bruce Katz, who's no stranger to Erie. The co-founder and inaugural director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University, Katz made his first trip to Erie for 2014's Global Summit to present on his critically acclaimed book, *The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros Are Fixing Our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy*. He's returned multiple times, most recently working with civic and community leaders to develop the investment playbook stewarded by Infinity Erie.

1 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

#### Friday, Oct. 27

##### **Poverty in America: Measurement, Politics, and Progress**

Speaking on the topic of poverty in the United States is senior fellow and Rowe Scholar in Opportunity and Mobility Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, Matt Weidinger. In addition to his scholarly work, Weidinger also served as the deputy staff director of the House Committee on Ways and Means and as the longtime staff director of its Subcommittee on Human Resources. His talk for the Global Summit will focus on safety net policies like cash welfare, child welfare, disability benefits, and unemployment insurance. Drawing on data while examining how government programs aim to reduce poverty in America, and how poverty statistics are measured, Weidinger will discuss what is working, how, and look at ways to improve outcomes.

7:30 p.m. // Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

#### Sunday, Oct. 29

##### **2024: Politics, Pennsylvania, the Status of the GOP, and "The Race"**

David Urban, a lobbyist and political commentator for CNN, will address the upcoming 2024 election, specifically in Pennsylvania, through his presentation at Gannon University. He is currently the managing director for BGR Group (formerly Barbour, Griffith & Rogers) which is a lobbying and communications firm based in Washington D.C. Prior to joining BGR, Urban, a West Point graduate and Army veteran of the Persian Gulf War during Operation Desert Storm (for which he was awarded a Bronze Star), was executive vice president

of North American corporate affairs for ByteDance (which is the parent company of TikTok). Urban also served as the president of ACG (another lobbying firm), was chief of staff to former U.S. Senator Arlen Specter, and was chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

Urban served as a senior advisor to the 2016 Trump presidential campaign and helped organize the 2016 Republican National Convention in an effort to win Pennsylvania, which was successful.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

#### Monday, Oct. 30

##### **Artificial Intelligence, the Environment, and Resiliency: Focus and Priorities for Leadership Today, Tomorrow**

Rich Lesser, global chair of Boston Consulting Group (BCG), will speak on the effects of artificial intelligence at Gannon University during the Global Summit. Within his work with BCG he engages with CEOs, boards of directors, and senior leaders internationally regarding topics including climate, sustainability, resilience, and purpose.

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**"The benefit of the Summit is that we strive to offer a well-rounded lineup of speakers covering a wide range of topics. Our goal is not just to have 'something for everyone' but to excite everyone about something." — Ben Speggen, vice president of the Jefferson Educational Society**

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Speggen comments on the greater emergence of artificial intelligence, "AI will affect humanity in ways big and small — it already has. What does that mean for us now? For us in the near-range and long-term future? We can't afford to delay learning about it and understanding its impact locally and globally." Within his lecture for the Summit, Lesser will touch on these impacts of AI, and how leadership in Erie can effectively handle the ramifications of the technology and ideally, use it to our advantage.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

#### Tuesday, Oct. 31

##### **Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What To Do About It**

Richard V. Reeves, the author of the book which is also his lecture's title, is a senior fellow at the Brookings

Institution in Economic Studies, where he holds the John C. and Nancy D. Whitehead Chair and leads the Boys and Men Project. He has published four books, *Of Boys and Men* being his most recent, and he is a contributing writer to a number of publications including *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, and *The Observer*. He is also a regular contributor to the online Think Tank section of *The Wall Street Journal*, which makes him well-suited to contribute to our local think tank in the JES.

His most recent book focuses on the societal shift away from "traditional" male roles and the changing workforce which "values cognitive skills over physical strength." He looks at this issue through multiple lenses: academic decline of young boys, divorce rates, survey data, incarceration rates, racial inequalities, and gender equality.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

#### Wednesday, Nov. 1

##### **Promoting Racial and Economic Equity: Ways to Lead Community Relations**

Della Clark, the president of the nonprofit organization Enterprise Center in Philadelphia, will present on the topic of racial and economic equity as experienced through her leadership in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The Enterprise Center is an organization at the forefront of Philadelphia's entrepreneurial ecosystem, and their mission is to cultivate and invest in minority entrepreneurs to inspire economic growth in communities.

The center's goal, which Clark helps them achieve through her work within the organization, is revitalization, but done in a way which honors the diversity of the communities and aims to connect small businesses and neighborhoods with opportunities for growth and success, "We invest in people and projects in the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to own and build wealth for themselves, their families, and their communities."

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

#### Thursday, Nov. 2

##### **Insights on the Decline of Democracy and the Rise of Illiberalism**

Tom Nichols, a five time *Jeopardy!* champion, will be speaking at Gannon University on topics he has specialized in during his tenure in academia. Nichols was a professor of international relations and government at Georgetown University and Dartmouth College, and served as a fellow at the Naval War College. His studies, writing, and professorships often focus on Russian studies, nuclear weapons, and national security issues.

Nichols is a contributing writer for *Atlantic* magazine and Professor Emeritus of national security affairs at the Naval War College. He also worked in government and public policy in the Massachusetts House and in the U.S. Senate. He is a prolific author, having penned eight books over the past 30 years. His most cited work is 2017's *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

## FEATURE

**Wednesday, Nov. 8**

### **The Other Side of History: Daily Life in the Ancient World**

Ancient civilizations expert Robert S.J. Garland will bring his vast knowledge of ancient Greece to Erie. For those curious about what day-to-day life was like thousands of years ago, Garland will shed a light. Garland has written a vast number of books on the topic — 14 to be exact — including (but not limited to): *The Greek Way of Death*, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World*, and *Athens Burning: The Persian Invasion of Greece and the Evacuation of Attica*. The British classical philologist and historian is currently the Roy D. and Margaret B. Wooster Professor of the Classics at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York.

7:30 p.m. // The Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

**Friday, Nov. 10**

### **From Erie to the White House and Beyond**

Edward L. Bolton Jr., who is the recipient of this year's Thomas B. Hagan Dignitas Award, is a retired United States Air Force Major General, who also served as a senior executive at the Federal Aviation Administration and as a senior vice president in the space/defense industry.

Bolton was born in Erie, and will speak on his experiences of growing up in our city, and how that shaped the trajectory of his career, which has taken him from being a chief at a ballistic missile office in California

to being responsible for the management of the Air Force's \$110 billion budget. He is highly decorated and experienced, through his many appointments within the Air Force and has earned multiple badges including Presidential Service Badge, Master Space Badge, and Senior Cyber Badge.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

**Sunday, Nov. 12**

### **The Road to the White House 2024 and the State of Media**

Karen Tumulty, Laura Coates, and Lisa Adams will address the upcoming election and how the media plays into the distribution of information for this political moment, in conversation with Global Summit Chair Steve Scully. Tumulty is a deputy opinion editor and columnist for The Washington Post. She was previously the national political correspondent for the same publication, and during her tenure in that position she earned the Toner Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting. Coates is a CNN anchor and chief legal analyst, as well as a SiriusXM talk show host for her program *The Laura Coates Show* on the POTUS channel, which airs weekdays at 7 a.m. Lisa Adams is a veteran reporter and anchor for Erie News Now, and hosts the weekly public affairs program *The Insider*. While she's covered news and politics at the state and national levels, here she'll offer local-level insight from Erie — a political bellwether county in a political bellwether state.

The three cover a wide variety of media outlets from print to television and radio, and are particularly qualified to speak on the current state of the media's ability to report accurate information to the public.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

**Monday, Nov. 13**

### **The State of American Politics: A Conversation with Val Demings and Michael Steele**

Closing out the 15th Global Summit is another political duo of speakers addressing the current political state in America. Val Demings is an American politician and was the first female chief of the Orlando police department, who served as a Democratic U.S. Representative from Florida's 10th congressional district (which encapsulates the greater Orlando area) from 2017 to 2023. She is a member of the New Democrat Coalition and the Congressional Black Caucus.

Michael Steele was elected lieutenant governor of Maryland in 2003 and made history as the first African American elected to statewide office in Maryland. He was also the first African American chairman of the Republican National Committee, to which he was elected in 2009. He has served as a political analyst for MSNBC, a columnist for the Washington Post subsidiary *The Root*, and was named a faculty fellow at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs.

7:30 p.m. // Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 124 W. 7th St.

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## EVENTS

### The Fifth Annual 40 Under 40 Experience

Get your cabooses to the Concourse at Union Station for the party of the year

FRIDAY, OCT. 13

It's not just a party, it's an *experience*. Now in its fifth year, the 40 Under 40 Experience is an event unlike any other in Erie. Created to celebrate and honor those who have been featured each year as Erie's 40 Under 40, this year's celebration is no different in that regard. Highlighting 40 young people in 2023 making a difference in Erie, the party also welcomes alumni from the previous 11 years of the distinction, while also welcoming anyone 21 or older to join in the celebration.

The Erie Reader's Editor-In-Chief Adam Welsh reflects on the experience, "We're so excited to bring the 40 Under 40 Experience back to downtown Erie for the fifth time. This celebration of all our amazing 40 Under 40 honorees from throughout the years has become one of the most anticipated parties of the year, and this year is no different. It's going to be a blast."

This year's party will take place at the Concourse at Union Station, the expansive event venue adjacent to the Brewer, which has all of the elements of an old train station (high ceilings, arched entryways, original light fixtures, and historic elements throughout) but with all the amenities of a great event venue. Expect epic food, including the Concourse's signature charcutERIE table (no no, not just a mere board), and various hors d'oeuvres (including vegetarian options) and desserts.

The cost of the ticket includes an open bar with brewed and fermented libations provided by Allegheny Beverage Company (owner John DiMario honored in the 2023 40 Under 40 class). There will also be a coffee station from Doug Baker of North Edge Craft Coffee (Class of 2022), who will be supplying samples of his 40 Under 40 related coffee roasts — including "Ghost



The silent disco is one of the more anticipated elements of the 40 Under 40 Experience each year. With three different locally-curated stations to choose from, you can dance your heart out oblivious to the sounds of the outside world.

Roast," which was made in collaboration with Tyler Smilo (Class of 2023) and his band Smilo and the Ghost, as well as his "Don't Give Up the Drip" and "Reader's Roast" made in collaboration with Werner Books and Coffee owners Kyle Churman and Lauren Shoemaker (both featured in the Class of 2023).

The experience also includes live, local music from Elle Taylor (Class of 2023) with Dave Tamulonis (Class of 2022) and Nick Warren, as well as a live performance from Eric Brewer and Friends including Brewer (Class of 2013) and Ralph Reitingier III (Class of 2023) with a guest appearance from Charles Brown (Class of 2013) alongside friends Steve Barone and Charlie Meyer.

In between performances, DJ Tony from Erie Encore Entertainment will keep the crowd moving before the silent disco happens, which is arguably the defining experience of the experience. With three stations curated by Adam Holquist (aka onewayness — Class of 2014),

there's a song for everyone but no onlooker will be the wiser as to the song that's making the moves happen on the silent dance floor. It's a sight to behold.

There will also be a live art demonstration happening throughout the night, executed by local artist Ceasar Westbrook (Class of 2020) as well as live tattooing from local artist Jen Minor of Mid-Town Tattoo.

Join us at the Reader as we celebrate all the good work young people do in our community to help make it a better, more beautiful, and fairer place to live. If there is a cause worth celebrating for a night, we believe it is this. Special thanks to our sponsors Allegheny Beverage Co., Parker Phillips, Give a Crepe La CrepeErie, Erie Federal Credit Union, the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul, and the Hagen History Center. — Erin Phillips

7 to 10 p.m. // The Concourse at Union Station, 121 W. 14th St. // \$40 // 21+ // For tickets and info: [tickets.erie reader.com](https://tickets.erie reader.com)

### Stephen King's Misery Coming to Erie Playhouse For Spooky Season

'In a book, all would have gone according to plan...'

PREMIERING FRIDAY, OCT. 13

Stephen King is one of the most renowned authors to have set pen to paper, and his novel *Misery* is one of his most psychologically creepy stories. The scene is set on a wintry road where author Paul Sheldon has crashed his car. Sheldon writes a series known to the audience as *Misery's Child* and has garnered a large following.

One such fan of his work is Annie Wilkes, who claims to be "his number one fan." Annie finds Paul after his wreck and takes him home to tend to him and mend his wounds. From there, things get strange and take dark, unexpected turns.

Carolin Lynn is the director on this three-person performance and she is very excited to be back in the director's chair, "I haven't directed a show since the last show presented before the pandemic shutdown in March of 2020." Lynn also notes that she's most excited to be involved in a production of this kind, "I am always excited to be involved in the non-musical productions we do at the Playhouse." Lynn is genuinely



The iconic Stephen King novel *Misery* comes to the Erie Playhouse stage just in time for spooky season. The small, three-person cast creates an insular, intimate, and psychologically terrifying experience for theatergoers.

enthusiastic about the actors involved in this production. "Sue Ellen (Wojciechowski) who is playing Annie, Matt (Fuchs) who is playing Paul Sheldon, and Wayne

(Gardner, in his mainstage debut) who is playing Buster, are doing such a wonderful job working so hard on their parts. With only three actors in the show, there is nowhere to hide on that stage."

Speaking on preparing for these roles, Lynn says, "To come into rehearsal in the right emotional state, especially if we have those 'dark' moments to practice, gets hard in some moments. We'll run those particular sections a few times so we can get our emotions aligned the more we perform it." She adds, "It helps that the actors are all supportive of each other during all of this."

Whether they're King fans or not, any audience member will be lucky to witness this small cast with huge hearts playing this story out on stage. *Misery* is an enthralling story directed by a Playhouse veteran of 29 years, told by some very talented local actors. Oh, and the opening day is on Friday the 13th. SPOOKY! — Jordan Coon

Weekends throughout Oct. 29, Premiering Friday, Oct. 13 // 7:30 p.m. // \$20.40 // For tickets and info: [erieplayhouse.org](https://erieplayhouse.org)

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## Erie Philharmonic Rocks to The Police Deranged with Stewart Copeland

Iconic drummer and composer brings together rock and orchestra in perfect 'synchronicity'

BEGINNING SATURDAY, OCT. 21

The Erie Philharmonic is bringing classic rock to the Warner Theatre with The Police Deranged for the first Pops Concert of the 2023-24 season. Featuring legendary drummer and composer Stewart Copeland, the new orchestral arrangements pay homage to The Police's beloved songs that have thrilled generations.

"From 'Roxanne' to 'Don't Stand So Close To Me,' and 'Message in a Bottle' to 'Every Breath You Take,' this performance reinterprets these timeless tracks through a symphonic lens, breathing new life into them," according to an Erie Philharmonic statement. "Four versatile singers, backed by the rich sounds of the full orchestra, will transform the hall into a sonic landscape brimming with the energy and spirit of The Police's most significant hits."

Steve Weiser, executive director for the Erie Philharmonic, was already on board when planning the show but was even more excited to find out Stewart Copeland would be performing: "To have Stewart Copeland play so many original Police songs on the drums while in front of the orchestra is something that I think anyone who grew up listening to this band will find incredible, to see those two things together."

The songs span from all five studio albums from The Police: *Outlandos D'Amour*, *Regatta de Blanc*, *Zenyatta Mondatta*, *Ghost in the Machine*, and

*Synchronicity*. "Each of the songs are rearranged. It's still going to sound like the original, but they're rearranged to include the full power of our orchestra mixed in with a band on stage, Stewart Copeland playing drums, and gospel singers will be singing instead of Sting," Weiser describes. "That's such a great way to re-hear these songs in a new light, with these singers tackling what Sting had sung."

Stewart Copeland's career after The Police put the focus on classical composition and arrangements for film and television, including Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 film *Rumble Fish*, Oliver Stone's 1987 film *Wall Street*, and the video game series *Spyro the Dragon*. In addition, Copeland's classical compositions include the jazz-inspired "Off the Score," "Tyrant's Crush," and the operatic works "The Invention of Morel," "Satan's Fall," and "The Electric Saint."

"That fully plays into why these arrangements are so perfect," Weiser said when looking back at Copeland's career. "You had a drummer who was a film composer, an orchestra composer, and he actually wrote a percussion concerto. So you have someone who really knows all the ins and outs of how to write for an orchestra. It makes these arrangements so tangible and easier to love because he knows how to incorporate the brass section and the woodwind section into these songs he knows so well, instead of it being a rock concert



The sounds of the Police, via iconic drummer Stewart Copeland, combined with the orchestral talents of the Erie Philharmonic create an unforgettable experience – performing all the hits like you've never heard them before.

where it just happens to be a band playing with an orchestra. This is so much more seamlessly integrated, and I think it only happens because of Stewart Copeland's genius as a composer and drummer."

For audience members who want a sneak preview of the concert, Weiser recommends listening to the album

*The Police Deranged for Orchestra*, released in June of this year. "It's amazing. It's such a different way to hear these songs, but it's the songs you know and love which is the best part." — Thomas Taylor

Saturday, Oct. 21 at 8 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 22 at 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$14-\$60 // For tickets and info: [eriephil.org](http://eriephil.org)

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## EVENTS

### An Evening with a Legend

Bob Dylan's 'Rough and Rowdy Ways' Tour makes a stop at Erie's historic Warner Theatre

**MONDAY, OCT. 23**

It's a momentous occasion for music lovers as the iconic Bob Dylan continues his *Rough and Rowdy Ways Tour*, making a stop at the illustrious Warner Theatre. This highly anticipated concert promises to deliver the legendary artist's distinctive sound and unparalleled storytelling in a night that will resonate through the ages.

Bob Dylan, born Robert Zimmerman in 1941, is an iconic American singer-songwriter and musician. Renowned for his poetic and thought-provoking lyrics, Dylan is often considered one of the most influential artists in the history of popular music. He emerged in the 1960s as a prominent figure in the folk and protest music movements, using his songs to address social and political issues of the time. Hits like "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are a-Changin'" became anthems for a generation seeking change. Throughout his career, Dylan has continually reinvented himself, exploring various musical styles, from folk and rock to blues and country. His contributions to music and lyrics have earned him numerous accolades, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2016, making him a true legend in the world of music and songwriting.

His *Rough and Rowdy Ways* album, released to critical acclaim in 2020, marked a remarkable return to original songwriting after several years. With its blend of blues, folk, and rock, the album

showcases Dylan's enduring relevance and his continued ability to captivate audiences. Fans can look forward to hearing selections from this latest, as well as fan favorites from his expansive repertoire.

Bob Dylan's enigmatic persona and lyrical prowess have made him a figure of fascination in the world of music. Although he often lets his songs speak for themselves, his live performances are a testament to his unmatched artistry. Audiences can expect a night where the music takes center stage, allowing the songs to weave their own narratives and emotions.

Whether you've been a lifelong devotee of Dylan's music or are just beginning to explore his catalog, this concert at the Warner Theatre promises an unforgettable experience. It's a chance to be in the presence of a living legend and to be immersed in the poetic tapestry of his songs. Erie will undoubtedly come alive with the sounds of Bob Dylan on this historic night.

— Michael Hull  
8 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // \$61 - \$133.50 // Tickets and information: [erieevents.com](http://erieevents.com)

Please note: The artist has required that this show must be a phone-free experience. Use of cell phones, smart watches, cameras, and recording devices will not be permitted in the performance space. Upon arrival at the venue, all devices will be secured in YONDR pouches that will be opened at the end of the event.



Catch the one-and-only Bob Dylan on his *Rough and Rowdy Ways* tour, as he performs his newest album alongside old favorites at the Warner Theatre. A living legend, Dylan's latest album is all original songs, containing elements of blues, folk, and rock.



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## For Your Consideration: Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro

*Och and Oy! A Considered Cabaret* comes to Mercyhurst

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 25

Sometimes, two very different worlds collide in surprising — yet delightful — ways, and the result is an explosion of storytelling and song with truly electric chemistry.

That was certainly the case when multi-award winner and denizen of screen and stage Alan Cumming teamed up with NPR host and Pink Martini alum Ari Shapiro to create a show called *Och & Oy! A Considered Cabaret*, which they are bringing to the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center as part of the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture's 2023-2024 season.

"Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro are both multi-talented, award-winning storytellers who have entertained and inspired audiences worldwide through their artistry and activism." — Dr. Brett Johnson, MIAC artistic director

The title derives its "Och" from Cumming, who is a famous Scotsman, and its "Oy" from Shapiro, who is Jewish — while the two might not seem so alike on the surface, dig a bit deeper and you'll find the threads that connect. "*Och & Oy!* is a storytelling show, with considerably more talking than one finds in a traditional cabaret act," said Dr. Brett D. Johnson, artistic director for the MIAC. "Patrons can expect some great songs, expert-



With its creative mix of talents, *Och and Oy! A Considered Cabaret* brings a unique twist to the Mary D'Angelo stage at Mercyhurst University. Featuring the talents of Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro, the performance will be a mashup of songs and stories.

ly delivered by Cumming and Shapiro, but it's the stories that differentiate this show from some of our other programming." (Note: that storytelling can be a bit ribald and bawdy — so this show isn't for youngsters; just the young at heart!)

MIAC is also proud to have partnered with the Greater Erie Alliance for Equality (GEAE) in bringing this performance to Erie. Said Johnson, "Alan Cumming and Ari Shapiro are both multi-talented, award-winning storytellers who have entertained and inspired audiences worldwide through their artistry and activism. We couldn't be more excited about their Mercyhurst engagement." — Cara Suppa

7:30 p.m. // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // \$30-\$40 // For tickets and info: [miac.mercyhurst.edu](http://miac.mercyhurst.edu)

## Spend Halloween Weekend in the Basement of Terror

Do the dance of the dead to some local metal

SATURDAY, OCT. 28

Time to let your inner demon loose at the second annual Basement of Terror this Halloween weekend at Basement Transmissions. The event is hosted by Odd Atrocity and artist Marvin's Chair — they plan to scare up some of their favorite local metal bands to be the soundtrack for the evening. In between performances from these titans of terror, all you groovy ghoulies will be able to dance to the music of MC/DJ Lone Sav. While enjoying the music, plan to conjure up some unique gifts from many of the vendors that will be on hand, and pick your poison from the beverages provided by Erie Ale Works.

Stirring the cauldron of sound this evening will be post grunge/metal band Odd

Atrocity, as well as lead vocalist Cy Eihwaz's newest project, Isle of Dread. The latter has a heavier sound, but continues to rock with the same melodic harmonies as Odd Atrocity and also features members of Grim Grin. Local metal from Fastfall and Amavasya will be sure to rattle your bones. Creeping up from south of I-90 will be Meadville's Myconaut. And dragging themselves all the way from the yuck-eye state will be Dead Cassette from Northeast Ohio, who will play metalcore that will melt your face faster than Tarman in *Return of the Living Dead*.

Even though there will be plenty of tricks and treats, this event is only open to those who are 18 and over. There will be a costume contest with prizes that will reward those for the funniest, scari-

## Kellar's Hosts Enchanting Halloween Magic Performance

Erie's modern magic and comedy club feature magician Bobby Borgia

BEGINNING FRIDAY, OCT. 27

Kellar's, a Modern Magic and Comedy Club, is hosting a Halloween-time performance of eerie entertainment and conjuring cocktails in celebration of National Comedy Week. The interactive magic show will feature comedy sets and laughs provided by Bobby Borgia, club owner and long time optical illusionist. There are two chances to catch the show on the last Friday and Saturday in October, just in time for Halloween.

Kellar's has brought a fresh wave of humor and entertainment to the venue that once housed Jr's Last Laugh Comedy. The re-established club is named after the great Heinrich "Harry" Kellar, a magician from Erie who died in 1922. Also known as the Dean of American Magic, Kellar took his talents across the globe with performances on five continents. He inspired Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz* and worked with illusionist Harry Houdini.

National Comedy Week runs from Oct. 22 through Halloween, in celebration of early pioneers in the magic scene. "Kellar's story inspired Borgia to take up magic at age six and follow in his footsteps. The entertainment hotspot is a gift to Borgia's hero. It not only pays tribute to Kellar, but looks inside his life and illusions with memorabilia and genuine artifacts from Kellar and Houdini's careers," Kellar's described in a press release.



Local optical illusionist and owner of Kellar's Modern Magic and Comedy Club Bobby Borgia presents a spooky night of entertainment presented in celebration of both Halloween and National Comedy Week.

Borgia, who's also originally from Erie, took over the comedy club in 2020. Before managing Kellar's, Borgia graced stages and studios from coast to coast, offering his talents to everything from Hollywood's Magic Castle to Disney Channel's *Now You See It* magic film (as a consultant). Now, Borgia is focusing his talents on his hometown. — Julia Carden

Friday, Oct. 27 and Saturday, Oct. 28 // 7:30 p.m. // Kellar's Magic and Comedy Club, 1402 State St. // \$35 // 18+ // For tickets and info: [kellarismagic.com](http://kellarismagic.com)



Join the slate of local musicians alongside some guests from out of town as they celebrate a spooktacular night of hijinks, hard rock, and handicrafts. Costume contests, local brews, and plenty of non-stop music help ring in Halloween weekend at Basement Transmissions.

est, cutest, and most creative costumes. So, grow some fangs and don't tell your Mummy how late you will be out, because the Basement of Terror will take

you into the witching hour... if you dare! — Larry Wheaton

5 p.m. to midnight // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$10 // 18+

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Remember to visit the Erie Reader's Online Calendar at [eriereader.com/calendar](http://eriereader.com/calendar)

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## EVENTS

### Fall in Love with Fall Fests in Erie

Get in the spirit of the season with these autumnal events

Now that summer has officially come to a close and there's a chill in the air, Erie is gearing up to celebrate fall with seasonal events throughout the city and county. There's something for everyone, from large festivals with vendors and rides, to community gatherings with live music. So, sip on some apple cider or a pumpkin spice latte and check out the fall fests happening this season.

#### Peek'n Peak Fall Fest

1405 Old Rd., Clymer, N.Y.

Peek'n Peak Resort is hosting its 35th annual Fall Fest on the weekends of **Oct. 14-15** and **Oct. 21-22**. Each day will be packed with activities, including a craft fair with over 100 vendors, games and pony rides for children, a farmers market, and ski lift rides to enjoy the fall foliage. Carolyn Tome, senior marketing manager for Scott Enterprises says the pumpkin cannon will return this year, as well as The Southern Tier Classic Chevy Club Cruise-In car show from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Oct. 15.

#### Fall Harvest Festival at Port Farms

2055 Stone Quarry Rd., Waterford

From **Sept. 16 through Oct. 29** celebrate the fall season with Port Farms at their Fall Harvest Festival. Visitors can enjoy food and drinks, pick pumpkins and gourds, traverse the extensive corn maze, and listen to live music performances. There are also a variety of activities and games for kids like feeding goats, riding the pedal carts, and apple cannons. Tickets can be purchased online or at the gate.

#### Eerie Fall Fest

598 Liberty St.

Gridley Park is having a spooky fall celebration on **Oct. 21 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.** with crafts, games, free food, and horse-drawn carriage rides around the park. All of the event's activities will be run by student volunteers from Gannon University, says Marissa Litzenberg of Our West Bayfront. At noon kids can show off their costumes for a trick-or-treat parade with candy stations supported by local organizations.

#### Downtown Fall Fest

601 State St.

Erie Downtown Partnership is hosting their fifth annual fall festival in Perry Square on **Oct. 22 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.** The event includes the Classic Car Trunk or Treat, food vendors, and live music.

CONTRIBUTED



The Eerie Fall Fest is an annual celebration at Gridley Park, presented by Our West Bayfront. It includes a costumed parade, multiple craft and vendor stations, a pumpkin toss, and horse drawn carriage rides around the park. It is one of many fall festivals happening throughout the Erie region this month.

There will be photo opportunities and kids art activities throughout the day. And of course, plenty of candy to go around!

#### Waterford Community Fall Harvest Festival

1 High St., Waterford

On **Oct. 15 from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.** Waterford Township welcomes fall with a one-day festival at Gazebo Park. The event features live music, pie and basket raffles, pumpkin decorating, and food vendors. Visitors can buy their fall flowers and score free seeds at the festival as well.

#### Children's Fall Fest at HarborCREEP Nights

5601 Buffalo Rd., Harborcreek

This festival was created especially for children to enjoy the fall season with pumpkin decorating, fire trucks, and a kid-friendly haunted house. The event will take place on **Oct. 28 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.** at the Harborcreek Township building.

#### Fuller Hose Company Fall Fest

10300 W. Main St., North East

This year, the Fuller Hose Company is bringing artisans and local vendors to their fall fest on **Oct. 6 from 4 to 9 p.m.**

and **Oct. 7 from noon to 9 p.m.** at Gravel Pit Park in North East. The vendors include local breweries, meaderies, and food trucks. There will also be live music playing throughout the event. All proceeds support the Fuller Hose Company, a volunteer firefighter organization.

#### Fairview Fall Fest

8271 Barker Rd., Fairview

Fairview Parks and Recreation Authority is hosting an afternoon full of fall activities on **Oct. 15 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.** at Pleasant Ridge Park. Visitors can enjoy free games and prizes, pumpkin launching and carving, and hay rides.

#### Best Little Fall Fest in Erie

10760 Donation Rd., Waterford

Mound Grove Golf and Events' second annual festival takes place on **Oct. 22 from noon to 5 p.m.** at Mound Grove in Waterford. The day will be full of activities, including a potato slingshot, a cake walk for prizes, and pumpkin decorating. Fifty vendors will display their handicrafts and musician Chris Higbee will perform at 4:30 p.m. The event benefits Hope on Horseback Therapeutic Riding Center. — Alana Sabol

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## Art Review: Painting For Answers

New work by Erie's Sarah Jacobs

By: Justus Cotterill

What person who has gazed into the stars hasn't asked the big existential questions: *Why am I here? What does this all mean? What happens after I die?* Most know those moments when life itself seems bigger than we can comprehend. Erie-based artist Sarah Jacobs has also asked these questions but through oil paint — her new show of paintings at the Zynka Gallery in Pittsburgh brings the viewer to the wonder and contemplation these questions can evoke.

There are large works, like *The Hawk Circles at Midnight*, where the viewer is dwarfed by mountainous legs and feet that, bathed in bluish hues, give one the impression of walking into the darkness and encountering giants lounging in the moonlight. In the painting, the artist has provided a tiny bench where one can sit and watch these titans lolling on the earth's surface. In this as in the majority of the works, Jacobs is playing with scale. Her figures are like gods inhabiting the earth and sky as one continuum.

In *Votive*, an almost life-size (apparently) male figure made up of clouds and sky climbs a ladder from the sea into the heavens to reach what lies beyond.



The enormity of James' surreal oil painting *The Hawk Circles at Midnight* is a play on scale. Included with the painting, currently on exhibit at Pittsburgh's Zynka Gallery, is a small-scale bench which aids the viewer in understanding the magnitude of the main subject.

A beautifully rendered mallard duck flies by and lets the viewer follow its feather patterns into the clouds above it. The artist likes to hide things in her paintings, and when you are absorbing all there is to see you notice the other ladders or birds or bugs in her work as small symbols to evoke even deeper mysteries.

In the work *Threshold*, we see two sets of human legs, barefoot, one of someone raised on tiptoe to reach the other person at a point beyond the canvas. There is a window in the background through which we see an urban setting with a few birds and a helicopter moving through a clear blue sky. The viewer's perspective is from ground level, like that of a child sitting on the carpet. Or maybe a pet? I assume the window is the threshold of the title, and the two sets of legs belong to a couple embracing before setting off on what will come next. It's a viewpoint that creates a phantom third person in the piece, and I was left wondering if I was that child or pet.

---

I thought about all those small details painted into Jacobs' work and how each was a small new discovery, an extra treat for those who took the time. We are constantly racing against time; but here in these paintings is a perfect lesson in stopping to think, to ponder, to ask questions, and to find those hidden clues.

---

Not all the works were physically large. There were some smaller paintings, but all dealt with big questions. One, *Betelgeuse*, had a hand reaching out of the darkness for a large chess piece; the viewer's perspective was perhaps that of a pawn on the board. The hand had red-painted nails, and the bishop it was reaching for had a swirl of red surrounding it. This color, I assumed, was a nod to the red supernova of the title. Chess pieces, glowing orbs, a house of cards, are all objects Jacobs uses to suggest a depth of dimension she's reaching for, though I'm not sure she always needs these symbols. Her ability to create wonder and emotion through color and scale alone distinguishes her work.

One of my favorite pieces in the show is *Waiting for Something or Nothing*. It is another large work that features a globe covered by a cloth with a small part of the earth visible from one corner. It sits on a wood table top that is floating in space, a few stars dotting the darkness. The globe in the painting is not a tool for navigation or scientific study — there are no mapping lines. Instead we see a swirl of atmosphere



This work by Sarah James titled *Waiting for Something or Nothing* is currently showing at the Zynka Gallery in Pittsburgh. James, an Erie resident, tackles existential questions through her evocative artwork.

meshing with clouds on a dimmed surface. It is earth as it exists, though captured by the cradle mount. Oddly, the painting reminded me instantly of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. Something about the round shape — a head, a globe — partially draped by fabric, the visible blue color, the similar light of face and drape against a dark background, all brought me back to that work. The two paintings couldn't be more different in subject matter, but that a Dutch Master's work was my point of comparison shows the skill of Jacob's brush.

When I met with Jacobs, I asked if she worried that viewers would be so impressed with her skill as a painter, with the well-wrought images, that they might not look deeper to see her underlying questions and interests. Because these paintings are visually beautiful, she felt the viewer would be attracted and brought into them by this adeptness and hopefully would then use the chance to study each image further.

I thought this was a good answer.

One could only hope a painting keeps the attention of a viewer long enough for the bigger picture to come into focus. I thought about all those small details painted into Jacobs' work and how each was a small new discovery, an extra treat for those who took the time. We are constantly racing against time; but here in these paintings is a perfect lesson in stopping to think, to ponder, to ask questions, and to find those hidden clues.

Sarah Jacob's work is part of the two-person exhibition, "Otherworldly," at The Zynka Gallery, 904 Main St., Pittsburgh. The gallery is open Thursdays through Sundays and Jacob's show will be displayed until Oct. 29. For more info: [zynkagallery.com](http://zynkagallery.com)

Justus Cotterill has an ongoing studio practice in Erie. He holds a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA from Edinboro. He can be found at [justuscotterill.com](http://justuscotterill.com)

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**Wicked Erie**

Justin Dombrowski takes another dip into Erie's dark side

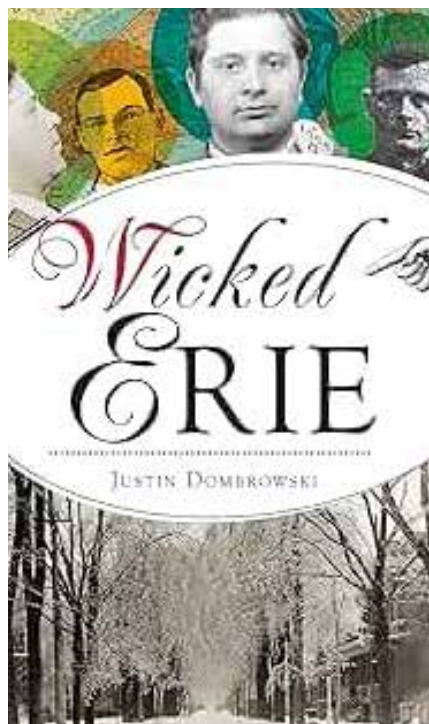
If you are wondering how Erie author Justin Dombrowski has the time, you are not alone. In the span of a little over a year, he has published *Murder & Mayhem in Erie, Pennsylvania* (June 2022), *Erie's Backyard Strangler: Terror in the 1960s* (February 2023), and on Oct. 9, his third local true crime history, titled *Wicked Erie*, hits bookstores.

As with Dombrowski's previous two books, *Wicked Erie* is published by The History Press (a subsidiary of Arcadia Publishing) and from its first chapter, it is quite clear that the speed in which he researches and writes does not negatively affect the quality of his storytelling. The seven stories within the book cover the "not always pleasant" side of Erie's past, including "stories of scandal, robbery, murder, suicide, the mob, and more" — or as the book's epigraph suitably proclaims: "Hell is empty and the devils are here."

Whether it's the story of Ferdinand Fischer and his 1911 escape from the State Hospital for the Insane, the Phantom Burglar and his "reign of terror" across Erie in the 1920s, or the gruesome mass murder of a family by a deranged father, Dombrowski weaves together stories into thrilling, detailed, and sometimes disturbing narratives, shifting between descriptions and direct quotes that serve the account as dialogue.

At just over 200 pages, the narrative is also broken up with dozens of photographs from historical archives as well as simple, yet elegantly crafted maps designed by the author's father. Of course, as always, Dombrowski has the receipts too in the form of a detailed bibliography.

"Historical true crime often walks a fine line between passion and obses-



sion," writes Dombrowski in *Wicked Erie's* introduction. In his hands though, these stories are told with passion, but not with sensationalization. They are tales of Erie itself, stories about *people*, about *families* and the long-term effects of these crimes, and they remind us that there is both wickedness and goodness to be found everywhere.

You can purchase a copy of *Wicked Erie* from your favorite local book retailer or online. Books signings will take place at Barnes & Noble on Saturday, Oct. 14 from 2 to 4 p.m. and Werner Books on Saturday, Oct. 21 from 1 to 3 p.m. A *Wicked Erie* tour in collaboration with the Hagen History Center will also take place on Friday, Oct. 13.

— Jonathan Burdick  
The History Press // 208 pages // True Crime, History

**Lights**

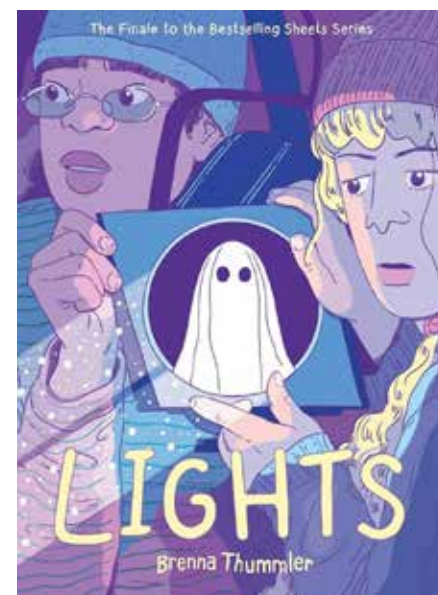
The finale to Brenna Thummler's *Sheets* series is as graceful as ever

Things were never quite the same for Marjorie Glatt after she met Wendell. That's because Wendell is a ghost. A sweet, imaginative boy, he appears to Marjorie and her (human) best friend Eliza in a traditional sheet, complete with requisite eye holes. Eliza, a photographer obsessed with the paranormal, is so focused on Wendell's afterlife that it becomes a detriment to her more "normal" relationships. Marjorie, on the other hand is trying to balance her older friends with some newer ones, Sid and Sasha, much to the chagrin of Eliza.

Moving from birthday parties to haunted hotels to ice skating rinks, Marjorie finds herself at the fictional Lake Erie Academy of Dance (LEAD). There, clues surrounding Wendell's death begin to surface. When a mysterious fellow ghost hunter, Tierney Keller, steps onto the scene, things really start unraveling.

Interspersed with wistful flashbacks to Wendell's human life, his story takes center stage. The three graphic novels, *Sheets*, *Delicates*, and *Lights* all center around one main character and an aspect of their lives that serves as an extended metaphor. For *Sheets*, it was Marjorie and laundry, for *Delicates*, it was Eliza and photography, and for *Lights*, it's Wendell and dance. Theater serves as a running motif throughout the book, with characters drawing their own symbolism from the stage within the text itself.

Thummler's abilities both as an illustrator and an author are working beautifully in tandem here. She is able to let the characters (and readers) breathe when they need to, be drawn in when necessary, and be so expertly clear in her graphic storytelling that thousands of important details are filled in to go



along with the dialog.

Set in a fictional town along Lake Erie, Thummler's gorgeously lush illustrations will conjure up rich memories of growing up, no matter what age you are. With visual references to Geneva on the Lake, her hometown of Meadville, and more, Thummler's work is loaded with familiar scenery and detailed winter vistas. Her color palette maintains the settling pastels of its predecessors.

This entire trilogy is highly recommended for anyone interested in comics, ghosts, or making friends. It's a touching conclusion to a fully realized world and a set of unique characters that you'll be sad to leave, but happy to have met. It's a quick read at 360 pages (the longest of the series) but one that's meant to be savored. Expertly paced and lovingly crafted, *Lights* could not be more perfect for the season.

— Nick Warren  
Oni Press // 360 pages // Comics, Paranormal, Young Adult



## Gem City Style

Jesse (Olszewski) James - Filmmaker

By: Jessica Hunter

**Jessica Hunter (JH):** Jesse, for those of us that have not had the pleasure of meeting or working with you, please tell us a little bit about who you are and how you got to where you are today.

**Jesse (Olszewski) James (JJ):** I've always had an innate desire to create in various forms. This enduring passion has been a guiding force throughout my life, leading me through diverse chapters that include explorations in visual arts, theater, and even a stint as a magician. However, it was in the world of filmmaking that I discovered my true calling, where I could artfully craft captivating narratives through the medium of film. The sense of fulfillment I derive from this choice is something I still find astounding.

Today, I'm widely recognized as a go-to person in Erie's vibrant film community, or better known as a "fixer." This role entails helping productions secure the resources they require, whether it's essential equipment, a skilled crew member, or the perfect location that welcomes a film crew onto their property. Over the past decade, I've dedicated myself to refining my skills as a filmmaker while also lending a hand to fellow creators in our region, empowering them to transform their cinematic visions into reality.

**JH:** Describe your experience with the film industry in the Erie region. What are some resources in the area that may have helped your growth as a film professional? How does Erie compare to larger film markets?

**JJ:** My experience in the Erie film industry has been both enlightening and enriching. Having worked in both larger and smaller markets, I've noticed a distinct character to the narrative projects that emerge from Erie. Technological advancements and the wider availability of filmmaking tools have leveled the playing field between smaller and larger markets when it comes to the actual production of films. The scripts and stories still rely on a blend of talent and skill, and marketing a film remains a unique challenge. However, what sets Erie apart is the palpable passion that infuses our local projects.

In Erie, our filmmaking community is close-knit. Most of us know and respect one another. When we come together to collaborate on each other's projects, we tap into something truly special.

For aspiring filmmakers, it's crucial to know that Erie offers a wealth of support organizations. The Greater Erie Film Office, a program of the Film Society of Northwestern Pennsylvania, has been instrumental in my growth. It's designed to connect productions with Erie's resources, whether it's actors, crew members, locations, equipment, or guidance on project success.

If you're more inclined to watch movies, the Film Society hosts regular film series at various venues and has revived the esteemed Eerie Horror Fest, offering curated film lineups and celebrity guest appearances. CAM Erie provides an incredibly affordable annual membership that grants access to their staff and facilities, including a professional recording studio, a large green screen cyclorama, editing suites, field equipment, a podcast



Local filmmaker and artist Jesse James talks with Jessica Hunter about artistic growth, the local film community, advice for aspiring artists, and his preoccupation with the supernatural.

studio, and more. They also offer training to learn and utilize these assets effectively.

In terms of education, Penn West Edinboro offers a four-year film program, while Penn State Behrend has its multimedia DIGIT (Digital Media, Arts, and Technology) program. I've had the pleasure of meeting numerous aspiring filmmakers from these universities.

WQLN plays a significant role in various media initiatives, highlighting and educating the public in ways that should make Erie residents proud. Their docuseries *Chronicles*, to which I've contributed in several episodes, showcases Erie's rich history while maintaining a production quality akin to a large network series.

Lastly, I must acknowledge the incredible filmmakers and production companies in Erie who have contributed to my growth as a filmmaker. Collaborating with these talented individuals and organizations, including Distorted Vision Productions, R Frank Media, Oddity Productions, Lyons Den Productions, Grant Larson Productions, FDF Productions, and Maple Street Productions, has undoubtedly made me a better filmmaker and enriched my experience in the Erie film industry.

**JH:** Can you shed some light on the pros and cons of indie filmmaking? Do you have any tips or advice for someone just starting out their careers in film, television, commercial, or new media?

**JJ:** Indie filmmaking is a journey filled with both challenges and rewards. One of the most significant hurdles is often funding, as enhancing production quality typically requires more hands and creative minds on board. Moreover, indie filmmaking can be a lengthy process. As an example, my filmmaking partner, Jim Morton of Distorted Vision Productions, and I tackled a 10-minute short film during the pandemic. Surprisingly, it took us over a year to transform the concept into a finished film. Nevertheless, the dedication and hard work invested

ultimately paid off, and we are immensely proud of the end result.

For aspiring filmmakers, my advice is to approach your journey strategically. While it's tempting to jump straight into creating a 90-minute feature film, I recommend starting with smaller projects. Keep that feature script close to your heart but begin by producing shorter pieces of content. Focus on making a five-minute short as exceptional as possible, then move up to 10 minutes, and gradually increase the duration. This incremental approach allows you to refine your skills and build confidence before taking on a feature film.

Learning to leverage resources is essential. This involves not only financial aspects but also borrowing, bartering, and collaborating with others in the industry. By developing your skills as a producer in addition to improving your screenwriting and directing abilities, you'll gain the expertise to create high-quality projects even on a shoestring budget, giving your work that Netflix-level polish.

Above all, my single most crucial piece of advice is to immerse yourself in the filmmaking community. Join the crews of other filmmakers, even if it means starting as a production assistant. Offer your assistance, be a valuable team member, and absorb as much knowledge as possible while on set. This approach allowed me to transition from traditional day jobs to working full-time in the film industry. It's hands-on education that can't be replaced, and it can open doors to paid opportunities as you build your career.

**JH:** You directed, wrote, and produced "The Visit" part of WQLN PBS's *Chronicles* series which recounts the infamous UFO sighting on Erie's Presque Isle Peninsula in 1966. I was able to watch you in action and work alongside you as the production designer for the episode, such a unique and memorable experience! Can

you share a little bit about that project?

**JJ:** "The Visit" has truly been the most demanding and rewarding production I've ever been a part of. It was another collaborative effort, co-written, co-produced, and co-directed by my partner Jim Morton and myself. We're immensely thankful to WQLN and the *Chronicles* team for entrusting us to take the reins on this episode.

I vividly recall the phone conversation with *Chronicles* Executive Producer Mike Berlin, where he gave us the green light and creative freedom for this Halloween episode. We didn't have to stick to the traditional documentary style, so we chose to tell the story in a narrative fashion. This decision led us to assemble a cast of about 50 actors from the community to recreate a bustling 1960s Presque Isle beach. Our journey also involved sourcing period costumes, securing a vintage classic car for the pivotal scene, maneuvering that car onto the sand, and employing advanced special effects to bring to life what the group of teenagers claimed to have witnessed.

Throughout the process, our commitment was to portray the events as accurately as possible, and this included countless research sessions at the Blasco Library's Heritage Room. I can't emphasize enough how much of a team effort this project was, from our dedicated cast and crew to the unwavering support of the *Chronicles* and WQLN staff. And, of course, a special mention to you, Jessica Hunter — your invaluable contributions to the production were instrumental in achieving the level of detail to our sets that we aimed for.

Regarding the event itself, and having thoroughly delved into every available article and statement, I continue to grapple with the question of whether it was an elaborate hoax or a legitimate close encounter. Intriguingly, in the past few months, there has been a surge of extraordinary information emerging from our government and various sources concerning Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAPs) and potential extraterrestrial encounters. While I may remain uncertain about the events of the 1966 sighting, the recent revelations unquestionably add an intriguing layer to the mystery, making it a topic that continues to captivate audiences.

For those interested, WQLN will be airing "The Visit" again this Halloween season on Oct. 7.

**JH:** Your genre of choice seems to lean more towards mystery, horror, thriller, fantasy and science fiction. I love all of the supernatural and suspenseful vibes! What draws you into this type of work?

**JJ:** That's because you have good taste, Jessica! For me, it's all about the extraordinary and the otherworldly. You see, I find the everyday world a bit, well, mundane and monotonous. There's nothing quite like the thrill of a hero's journey, filled with passion, danger, and triumphs.

As a defense mechanism, my mind seems to have compensated by developing traits like an overactive imagination, a penchant for excessive daydreaming, finding solace in introverted moments, and an insatiable hunger for introspection and people-watching. When the real world falls short, I take reprieve in the

rich tapestry of stories that play out in my head. And my mission? To bring these imaginative tales from the depths of my subconscious into reality through the magic of filmmaking. It's a real form of alchemy, and it's become my true passion.

**JH:** Jesse, what is the last horror movie that actually scared you? What is your favorite horror movie and why?

**JJ:** Great question, it seems like it can be challenging to find truly fear-inducing films in today's saturated market. For me, the some recent movies that genuinely gave me the creeps were *Insidious* and *Sinister*.

When it comes to recent favorites, I have to give the crown to *Hereditary*. It's another film with divided audiences, but personally, I think Ari Aster did a masterful job. He began by crafting a hyper-realistic portrayal of a dysfunctional family grappling with unimaginable loss. Then, he cranked up the tension by introducing a blow after blow of supernatural threats with a truly gruesome climax. It's a 5/5 for me!

Finally when thinking of my top-tops we have to look to the classics. *Jaws*, *Alien*, and *Aliens* are undoubtedly at the top of my list. However, if I had to pick an all-time favorite, it would be John Carpenter's *The Thing*. This film, in my opinion, epitomizes Lovecraftian horror by presenting a creature so otherworldly and enigmatic that it defies human comprehension. The sense of dread and paranoia it evokes is truly unmatched in the genre.

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**MOVIE REVIEWS**

**Wherever You Go, There You Are**

*Aftersun* is a modern masterpiece



The biggest problem with making a year-end top five before the year is over is that I inevitably watch a film that would have made the list after I already sent the list out. Last year, that was definitely the case with Charlotte Wells' *Aftersun*, a film that easily would have topped my top five of 2022. The film is quietly beautiful and subtly heartbreaking, with two incredible performances and surprisingly confident direction from a first-time filmmaker.

Thirty-one-year-old Sophie (Celia Rowson-Hall) is having doubts about herself. She has a newborn baby with her partner and the stress of parenthood is weighing down on her. This inspires her to look up old MiniDV footage from 20 years ago when she (now played by Frankie Corio) was on vacation with her father (Paul Mescal) giving the performance of his life). As we flash back to that time we, along with Sophie, come to a newfound understanding of her father that she never felt before.

Wells does an admirable job of merging



past and present and she shoots the vacation scenes in a soft, naturalistic style reminiscent of the films of Eric Rohmer. Mescal gives us a fully realized character, subtly portraying a depressed man trying hard to keep it together for the sake of his daughter. The performance thankfully (blissfully) never succumbs to melodramatic excess. We slowly learn that Sophie's father is not with her anymore, but Wells never reveals why. She simply lets the emotions wash over you until the film's bittersweet finale. A finale that (if you're lucky enough) may make

you want to call your parents and remind them how much you love them. — Forest Taylor

*Aftersun* will be playing on Thursday, Oct. 26 at 5 p.m. at Kellar's Modern Magic and Comedy Club as part of their Movie Magic series, in partnership with the Film Society of NWPA

Written and directed by Charlotte Wells // Starring Paul Mescal, Frankie Corio, Celia Rowson-Hall, Sally Messham, Ayse Park, Sophia Lamanova, Brooklyn Toulson, Spike Fearn, Harry Perdios, and Frank Corio // 102 minutes // A24 // Rated R

**Skeletons in the Closet**

*Cobweb* uses style to overcome its cliches



The streaming revolution has become a bit of a double-edged sword for many filmmakers. On one hand, it has allowed works of art to reach audiences that they might otherwise never have reached. On the other, they often get lost in the never-ending sea of content. But since we're in spooky season, I'll take this opportunity to let readers know about *Cobweb*, a creepy little tale that had the misfortune of being released in the middle of the Barbenheimer juggernaut. It's a shame it got lost in the shuffle because the film is a stylish horror story with some incredible directorial flourishes that elevate what could have been a pretty routine premise.

One week before Halloween, eight-year-old Peter (Woody Norman) begins hearing a strange tapping behind his bedroom walls. His parents (Lizzy Caplan and Antony Starr) blame an overactive imagination but Peter is certain that they're something more. As the noises become more prominent, Peter's investigation stirs a mistrust in his parents as he starts to believe that they could be



hiding some terrible secret.

The film's style and production design give it a wonderfully old-fashioned quality, like a modern-day Grimm's fairy tale or an urban legend told around the campfire. The story itself is, sadly, a little too predictable for anyone well-versed in horror movie tropes, but director Samuel Bodin maintains interest with some ingenious uses of light and shadow as well as some creative camera movements. *Cobweb* may be nothing

revolutionary, but it makes for some nice scary viewing just in time for Halloween. — Forest Taylor

*Cobweb* is currently available on Amazon Prime, Apple TV, Google Play, Vudu, and YouTube.

Directed by Samuel Bodin // Written by Chris Thomas Devlin // Starring Woody Norman, Lizzy Caplan, Antony Starr, Cleopatra Coleman, Luke Busey, Jay Rincon, Anton Kottas, and Aleksandra Dragova // 88 minutes // Rated R // Lionsgate



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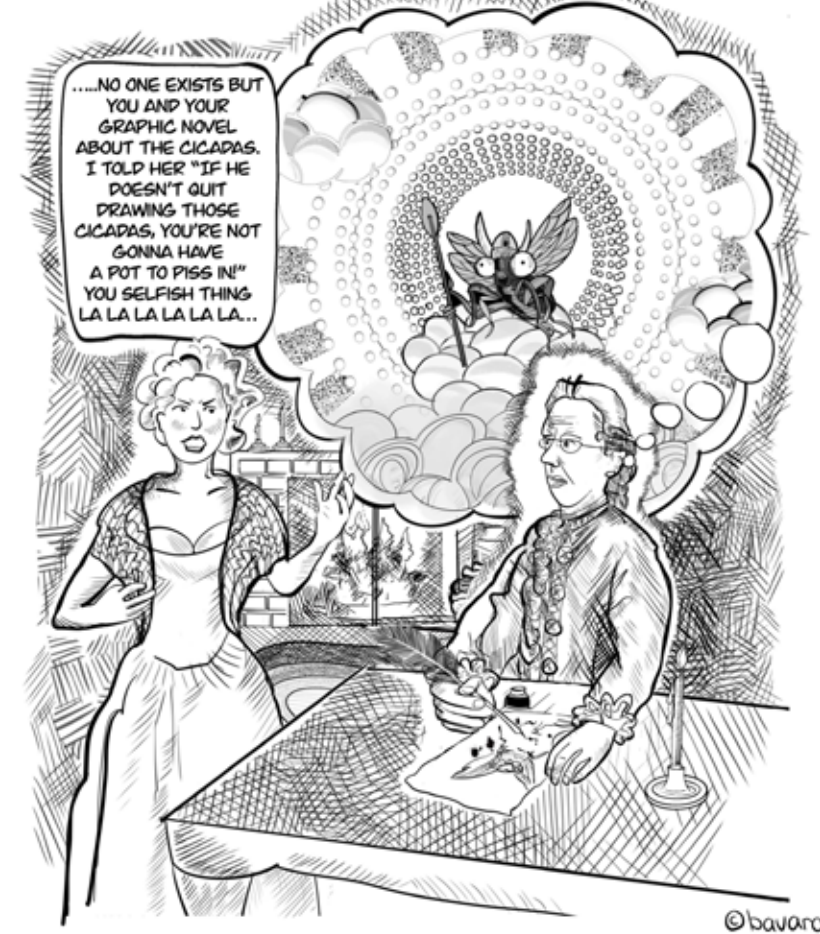
# PARALLELS

BY BRAD PATTULLO  
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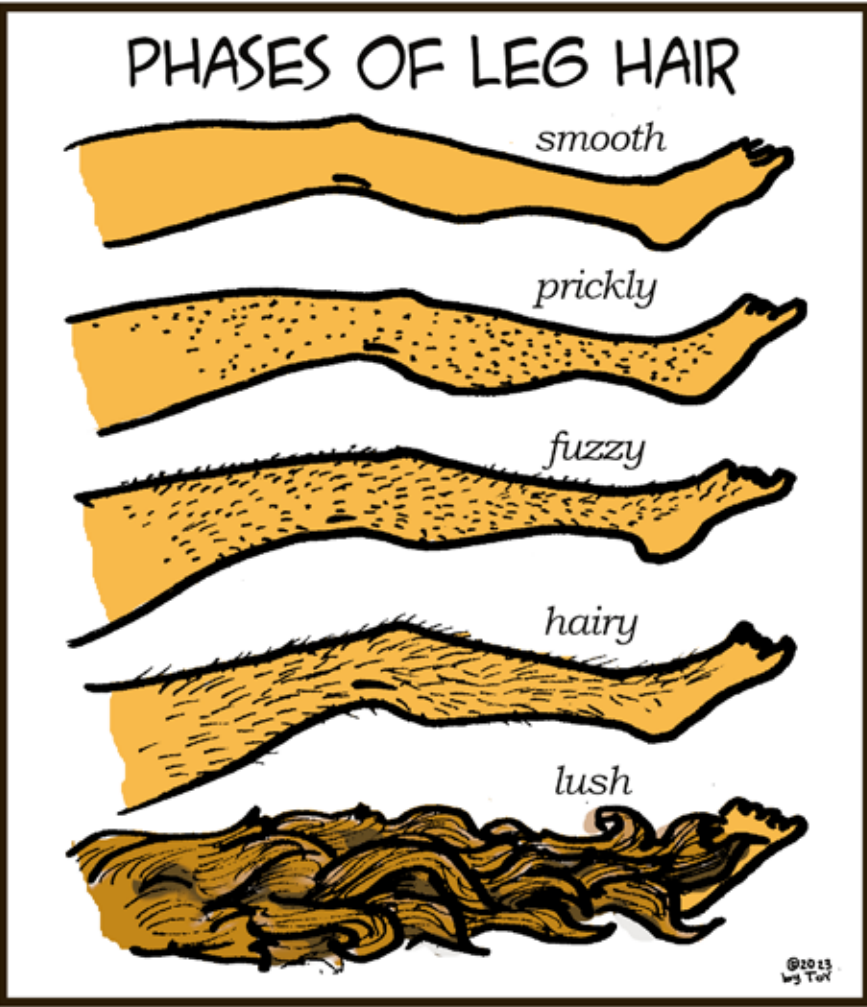


# Fish that Talk

in: ROCK ME AMADEUS



# JUST TOYIN' WITCHA — BY B. TOY



# THE ~~NG~~\* \* FROM EERIE, PA DATING CAPITOL OF THE WORLD DAT SAMNAIN



## ALBUM REVIEWS

### Olivia Rodrigo

*GUTS*  
Geffen/Interscope



Olivia Rodrigo's sophomore album unleashes all the potential she showcased on *SOUR* with megaton fury.



At first look, *GUTS* appears to be a borderline retread of Olivia's previous project: the album covers share similar stylistic elements, the singles bounce between singer-songwriter and pop punk aesthetics, etc. However, the real success of *GUTS* is how it takes these elements and advances them to the nth degree.

A clear example of this improvement is the album's lead single "vampire," detailing a situation in which a boy took advantage of her, where Olivia showcases the artistic maturation she's undergone in just two short years. The lyrics are more vivid and biting than ever before, and the production is a feast with every listen, revealing another layer. The track is a perfect piece of anger-tinged heartbreak.

This level of improvement is present throughout all of *GUTS*. The album alternates styles seamlessly, flowing from one track to the next. The soft acoustics of "lacy" fits perfectly next to the reverb guitars on "ballad of a homeschooled girl." Every song builds to Olivia's "teenage dream," reflecting on the complex journey of growing up under the spotlight. *GUTS* is a clear sign that Olivia's pop dominance will continue to reign supreme for some time. — Nathaniel Clark

### Earl Sweatshirt & The Alchemist

*Voir Dire*  
Gala Music



A mesmerizing collaboration between hip-hop superstars Earl Sweatshirt and The Alchemist, *Voir Dire* feels like



a victory lap. The duo manages to somehow deliver precisely what fans have come to expect while showcasing their knack for conscious verses and soulful samples. As always, The Alchemist presents an intricate tapestry for Earl to rap over, weaving dusty, warbly beats with additional instrumentation. These haunting backdrops create an appropriate canvas for the rapper's introspective lyricism, shining brilliantly on tracks like "Vin Skully" and "27 Braids."

*Voir Dire* may sound like an intellectual journey through Earl's outlook, but for once (perhaps even more importantly) it just sounds nice. In this way, the project feels like a brighter extension of the rapper's sophomore LP, *I Don't Like Sh\*t, I Don't Go Outside*, a collection of gems that falls just short of the genre-bending brilliance of his strongest work, 2018's *Some Rap Songs*. Take an easygoing feature from MIKE, for example. The guest rapper brings added depth to single "Sentry;" it sounds like a beat he was born to be on. For fans of Earl's lyricism and The Alchemist's warm production, *Voir Dire* is as essential as it gets — in fact, it cements their status as tasteful trailblazers in the current hip-hop soundscape. — Aaron Mook

### Onyon

*Last Days on Earth*  
Trouble in Mind Records



Onyon's newest album *Last Days on Earth* is deceptively straightforward and ultimately unpredictable. Vocals tangle in threads of gritty, deadpan



delivery and nearly angelic harmonies akin to The Vaselines. Heavy beats lock arms with The Velvet Underground, steady yet halting and unapologetic. Guitars buzz and crunch like The Undertones, but are as lush as My Bloody Valentine — pieced together like Brian Gyson cut ups. Bass lines drip with the residue of Joy Division, slugging and punching along. Synths are lost between the hedgerows of New Wave fellow Germans Kleenex and Halloween sound effects albums.

Comparisons flood in easily but none accurately extol the fantastic slurry of this meaty album from Leipzig's Onyon. This second post-punk release conveys more confidence and depth than their first impressive initially self-released EP. Martin Mueller's production and mixing demands every component to be heard but never overshadows its partnered layers. "Egg Machine" is a new favorite which seems lifted from a motorcycle gang B-movie while "Blue Lagoon" busts out from the shadows of the spookiest of surf bands. This album could fly during any sweaty dance party or while sitting home alone in the dark. — Melissa Sullivan Shimek

### Chappell Roan

*The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*  
Amusement Records/Island



If you like fun, clever, brilliant pop music, this album is for you. This epic debut from the Missouri-born Kayleigh



Rose Amstutz — better known as Chappell Roan — is shockingly exciting and much anticipated, following a trickle of single releases. The record has 14 songs — predominantly self-written each one distinctly memorable. The first three tracks arrive one after another in quick succession, each a club-ready banger, culminating with the tongue-in-cheek self-critique of "Femininomenon," its self-aware hyperpop firing hard. Then comes the piano ballad "Coffee," wonderfully widening Roan's already colorful palette. The shift-up of "Casual" proves to the listener that Roan is a force to be reckoned with — a queer pop figure capable of truly great things. Existing somewhere between the comic cartoonishness of Remi Wolf and the heartfelt diary entries of Lucy Dacus, Chappell Roan has made one of the greatest albums of 2023. At times crude, but always authentic, *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* is one of the strongest debuts in recent memory, portending a collision course with superstardom. With the post-Madonna tones of "Super Graphic Ultra Modern Girl" and the unbridled teenage fun of "HOT TO GO," this is an album that's varied, dramatic, and always ready for a night out. — Nick Warren

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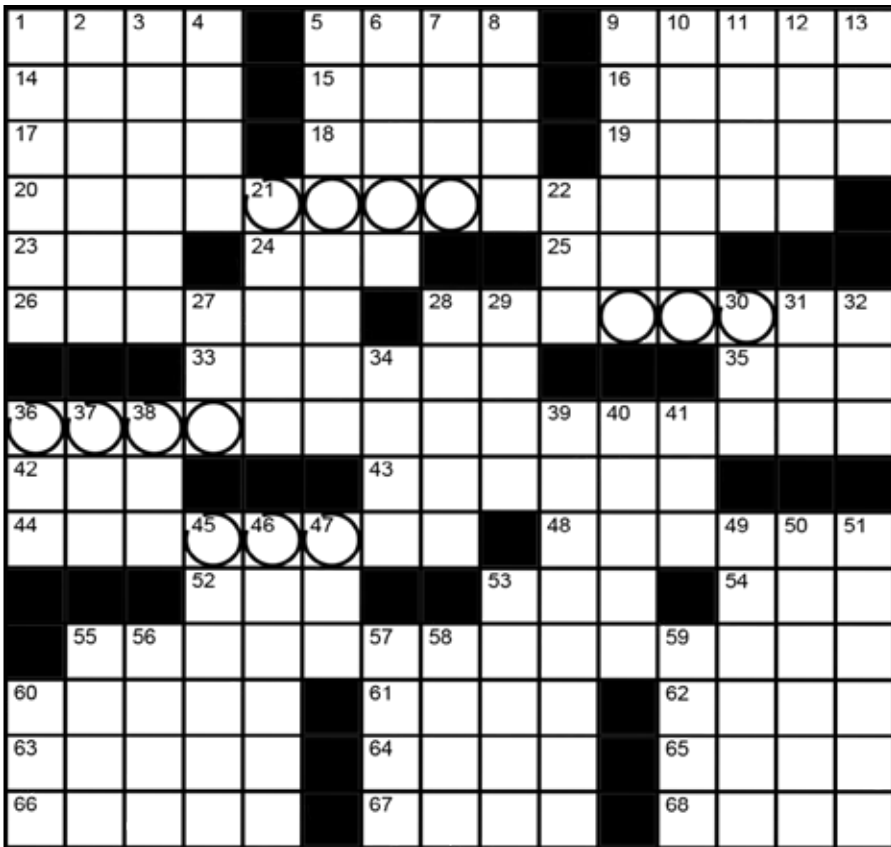
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# CROSSWORD



## Across

1. Desert crossed by the ancient Silk Road
5. Killer of the Night King on "Game of Thrones"
9. Hidden drawback
14. Height: Prefix
15. G
16. Actor Davis who says "Always do the right thing" in "Do the Right Thing"
17. Ask for Friskies, maybe
18. Sondheim's "Sweeney \_\_\_\_"
19. Hurdles for aspiring D.A.s
20. Tropical cocktail
23. End of a co. name
24. Chill
25. Unconfident utterances
26. "This being the case ..."
28. Plush fabric
33. Org. with ties to Sinn Fein
35. Batteries for some flashlights
36. "My pleasure!"
42. Peace activist Yoko
43. Jogging wear
44. Almond confection
48. Sounding sheepish?
52. "Force Behind the Forces" grp.
53. Belarus, once: Abbr.
54. Sky safety org.
55. Driving condition in

- a blizzard (or what this puzzle's circles offer)
60. Snake venom, e.g.
61. Liu who plays the superhero Shang-Chi
62. One-named Somali-American model
63. Put up
64. "Like \_\_\_\_ not ..."
65. Opposite of bueno
66. Cheesy chip
67. Like some numbers?
68. Watchful person

## Down

1. Smallest country in mainland Africa
2. Hurricanes form over them
3. Some rodeo rides
4. "Field of Dreams" state
5. Stuck on
6. \_\_\_\_ Island
7. "Anger, fear, aggression: the dark side of the Force are they" speaker
8. Car with a four-ring logo
9. Op-ed offering
10. Town with the Basilica of St. Francis
11. Ivan the Terrible, for one
12. New York's \_\_\_\_ Field
13. "For \_\_\_\_ a jolly ..."
21. Hardly mainstream
22. Hernando's "Huh?"
27. Rocky Mountains tribe
28. Dentist's insertion
29. Abhor
30. Calif. NHL team, on scoreboards
31. On the \_\_\_\_ (fleeing)
32. Direction opposite WNW
34. "\_\_\_\_ jungle out there"
36. Chance at an award, for short
37. Words with tear or dare
38. Neither's partner
39. Dynasty that was the driving force behind the Austro-Hungarian Empire
40. "Space Invaders" maker
41. Org. tracking metadata
45. Largest city in Switzerland
46. Doesn't get fooled by
47. First-person or third-person, briefly
49. "Please allow me ..."
50. Christmas in Rome
51. "I Will Survive" singer
53. \_\_\_\_ Says (kids game)
55. First name in the Harlem Renaissance
56. Wall St. figure
57. Egyptian fertility goddess
58. In \_\_\_\_ (as found)
59. Pad Thai garnish
60. Midmorning hour



## Answers to last puzzle



# CALENDAR

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## Wed 10/04

Night Of The Living Dead  
@ 8pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.

## Sat 10/07

Claudio Simonetti  
@ 9pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.

## Tue 10/10

### Featured



Sip 'N Paint with a Twist  
@ 6:30pm / \$35  
The Hippie Space, 211 Main Street West, Girard



## Wed 10/11

Paint Night with Brian Payne  
@ 5:45pm  
Presque Isle Lighthouse, 112 Thompson Rd

## Fri 10/13

### Featured



40 Under 40 Experience  
@ 7pm / \$40-\$50  
Concourse and Brewery at Union Station, 121 West 14th Street



### Featured



Naughty Frog ft. Higher Vibration  
@ 9pm / \$11.50  
Oct 13th - Oct 14th  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



## Sat 10/14

5K FOR KAIT  
@ 8am / \$30-\$30  
1501 W Sixth St

Into the Woods Six Miler  
@ 9am / \$30  
4105 Asbury Road

Be The One: Husky Hustle 1 Mile Run/Walk Benefit  
@ 9am / Free-\$20  
6375 Buffalo Rd, Harborcreek

## Sun 10/15

### Featured



Fall Wedding & Events Expo  
@ 4pm / Free  
Goodell Gardens & Homestead, 221 Waterford Street, Edinboro



## Thu 10/19

Dirty Dancing in Concert  
@ 7:30pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.

## Fri 10/20

Dark Star Orchestra  
@ 7pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.

### Featured



Murder For Girls ft. Isolation Forest and LYLlyTH  
@ 8pm / \$12  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



## Sat 10/21

Erie Runners Club Personal Endurance Classic  
@ 6:30am / \$15-\$15  
3133 Clark Rd

### Featured



Mini Psychic Fair @ The Hippie Space!  
@ 10am / \$30-\$60  
The Hippie Space, 211 Main Street West, Girard



Fright Nights at the Light!  
@ 7pm  
Oct 21st - Oct 28th  
Presque Isle Lighthouse, 301 Peninsula Drive

### Featured



Maritime Mayhem: "Dead Man Floating"  
Murder Mystery Dinner Theater at Madeline's  
@ 6:30pm / \$45  
Madeline's Dining & Events, 8844 Pennsylvania 18, Cranesville



## Mon 10/23

Flagship City Comedy Benefit Show : Headliner Daniel Van Kirk  
@ 7pm / \$20  
10/20 Collective, 1020 Holland Street

Bob Dylan  
@ 8pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.

## Sat 10/28

### Featured



Jimkata w/ Cypher Halloween Show - Oct 28 King's Rook Club  
@ 8pm / \$15  
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach Street



## Tue 10/31

Jesus Christ Superstar  
@ 7:30pm  
Warner Theatre - PA, 811 State St.

Calendar information is provided by event organizers. All events are subject to change or cancellation. This publication is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in this calendar.



# THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY'S GLOBAL SUMMIT XV



## Monday, October 23 – Through Monday, November 13

### WEEK ONE

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Peter Baker.** Chief White House correspondent for The New York Times and a regular panelist on "Washington Week" on PBS. He is the author of six books.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.**  
**Mona Hannon-Attisha** (This is a Gannon Reads event). Pediatrician, scientist, activist, and author, and played key role in uncovering the water crisis in Flint, Michigan.  
 Location: Warner Theatre, 811 State Street.



**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Brian Freedman.** Author and expert writer in wine, spirits, travel, and food.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023 AT 1 P.M.**  
**Richard Florida with Bruce Katz.**  
 Two of the top professionals in their field: Dr. Florida is an author, professor, and public policy expert from the University of Toronto, and attorney Katz, an urban policy expert and author, is director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



RICHARD FLORIDA

BRUCE KATZ

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Matt Weidinger.** Conservative scholar at American Enterprise Institute focused on cash welfare policy, child welfare, disability benefits, and unemployment insurance.  
 Location: Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.



### WEEK TWO

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**David Urban.** American lobbyist and political commentator for CNN and served as chief of staff for the late U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



**MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Rich Lesser.** Global Chairman and former Chief Executive of Boston Consulting Group, one of the world's leading advisers on business strategy.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Richard Reeves.** Senior fellow at Brookings Institution and author of "Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do About It."  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Della Clark.** Expert in minority entrepreneurship, Ms. Clark is President of The Enterprise Center in Philadelphia.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Tom Nichols.** Prolific author, academic, writer, professor, and national commentator on public affairs and international relations. He is also an expert on Russia, nuclear weapons, and national security.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



### WEEK THREE

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Robert Garland.** The Wooster Emeritus Professor of Classics at Colgate University, Dr. Garland is an expert on ancient history and the author of many books capturing details of ancient Greek and Roman life.  
 Location: Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.



**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Maj. Gen. Edward L. Bolton, Jr., Ret.** This year's Hagen Dignitas Award recipient was a distinguished United States Air Force major general. The Erie native also served as senior executive at the Federal Aviation Administration and as a senior vice president in the space/defense industry.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



### WEEK FOUR

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Laura Coates, Karen Tumulty and Lisa Adams**  
 Laura Coates is a CNN anchor and senior legal analyst, and Karen Tumulty, a previous Global Summit speaker, is an author, deputy opinion editor, and columnist for the Washington Post. Adams is a veteran reporter with Erie News NOW and anchor of "The Insider."  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



LAURA COATES

KAREN TUMULTY

LISA ADAMS

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2023 AT 7:30 P.M.**  
**Val Demings and Michael Steele.**  
 Former Congresswoman and U.S. Senate candidate Val Demings first gained national notoriety as the first police chief of the Orlando, Florida Police Department. She will discuss politics with former national GOP Chairman Michael Steele, a political analyst for MSNBC.  
 Location: Gannon University's Yehl Room at Waldron Campus Center, 124 W. Seventh St.



VAL DEMINGS

MICHAEL STEELE

\*\* Jefferson Global Summit XV Chairman **Steve Scully** will appear at several events.



STEVE SCULLY

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