



# The Gretna Chronicles NEWSLETTER



Summer Edition 2006

## MEET OUR LEADERS

The Mt Gretna Area Historical Society, an organization less than two years old, nevertheless has a wealth of experience in its leadership team. A review of the training and experience of the two principal leaders, Fred Buch and Peter Seibert, reveals their remarkably complementary backgrounds. Chairman Buch has been associated with private historical societies and groups for the past thirty years, and Trustee (former Vice Chairman) Peter Seibert, President of the Heritage Society of Lancaster County, has spent his entire professional life in museum and historical society work.

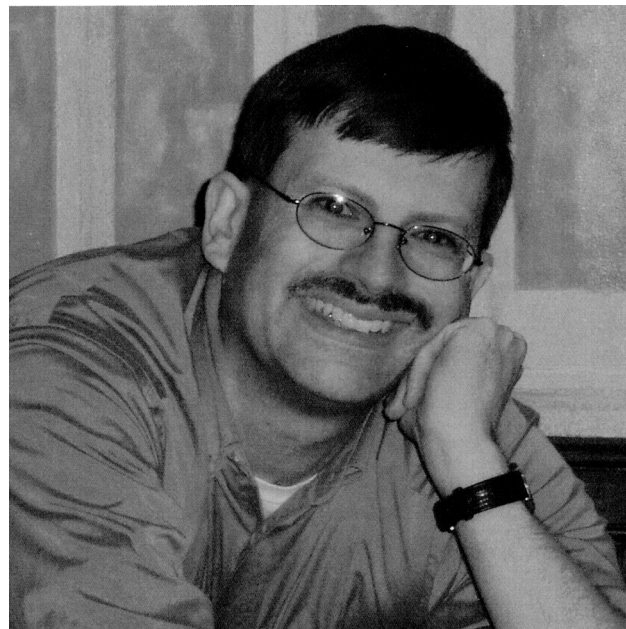


### **Fred Buch**

Chairman Buch has been associated with the Cocalico Valley Historical Society since 1976, serving as its president for 21 years. He has chaired committees on long range planning, property acquisition, and fund raising. Under Fred's direction, the Society established its Library/Research Center and purchased a neighboring property to expand the museum and L/R Center.

But guiding a well established society is not Fred's only experience in the field;

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### **Peter Seibert**

Peter Seibert, vice chairman of the Mt Gretna Area Historical Society for its important first year, is President of the Heritage Center of Lancaster County, Inc., a position for which he was chosen in August of 1993.

Peter holds a Master of Arts degree in American Studies from Pennsylvania State University (1992), having earned his Bachelor of Humanities degree in American Studies from the same university in 1987.

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in 1992 he helped establish Grave Concern, Inc. for the preservation of historic burial grounds in Lancaster county. He was a founding member of Poole Forge, Inc., near Churchtown, PA, and since 2004 has been an organizational consultant to that group. Since 1982 he has been a trustee for historic Old Zion Church in Brickerville, and in 1994 was president of the board.

Fred's education, began in the public schools of Ephrata. He graduated at The Peddie School in Hightstown, NJ, and earned his college degree in sacred music at Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ.

But even before graduation from Westminster Choir College Fred had established a church organ business, which ultimately became today's Buch Church Organ Company located in Ephrata. Fred is president of the corporation and a consultant and designer of Buch/Walker Custom Organs.

Fred's commitment has resulted in his being called to serve as a director of numerous organizations. He is a deacon at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Lancaster and a trustee of Skilton House Ministries, a Christian ministry in Philadelphia. He was a trustee of Westminster Choir College from 1980 to 1983 and has been a member of the National Leadership Council since 1993. From 1987 to 1989 he served on the board of the Preservation Trust of Lancaster County. He has been a member of the Regional Board Fulton Bank since 1995.

Ever since becoming a cottage owner in the Chautauqua and engaging Jack Bitner in many conversations, Fred's commitment has been to the preservation and interpretation of the historic and unique qualities of the Mt. Gretna area. The establishment of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society in 2004 is the result of that commitment.

Beginning in 1986, when he took a summer job with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Peter has studied and worked to preserve and interpret our historical backgrounds. From 1988 to 1993 he was Executive Director of the Historical Society of Dauphin County where he supervised the museum library, the archives, and the educational programs of the Society.

As president of the Lancaster County Heritage Society, Peter has expanded its facilities, established the Lancaster Quilt and Textile Museum (opened in 2004), and conducted four successful capital campaigns the last of which raised \$2.75 million for the Society.

Besides being an effective fund raiser, Peter is also an effective teacher. He has joined the Adjunct Faculty of the Pennsylvania College of Art and Design and has established a partnership between the Heritage Center and the school to develop a 9 credit certificate program in folk art. In 1996 he was an Instructor in American Studies at Pennsylvania State University.

Peter has received many awards for his outstanding performance, including the Distinguished Alumni award from Penn State in 2002. The American Association for State and Local History has cited Peter three times for outstanding exhibitions and publications.

One of Peter's current projects is the completion of his book on Pennsylvania German furniture, scheduled for publication in the spring of 2007 by Schiffer Publishing of Atglen. In 2003 Schiffer published Peter's earlier book, *How We Lived: Everyday Furniture, Fashions and Settings, 1880-1940*. In addition to these two books, Peter has written numerous essays and articles for such publications as *The Magazine Antiques* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Biography*.

## Historic Action?

For all those residents of Chautauqua, the Campmeeting and the Heights who currently enjoy the experience of living in a community that has changed so little over the years, May 17, 2006 may turn out to be a significant date.

That's when a group of interested residents gathered in the Mt Gretna Fire Hall to hear from Michele Lefevre, a member of the Bureau of Historic Preservation in Harrisburg, and Carol Lee just what to do to establish Mt Gretna as a registered historic district.

This would be the official recognition of the historic significance and importance of the area and would provide some support for preservation efforts.

Mr. Lefevre was emphatic in explaining that no restrictions are imposed on the property owners or the community by the designation.

The process for obtaining registration as an historic district was described in detail by Carol Lee, a coordinator for the Bureau of Historic Preservation. An application form must be filled out with information about the location of the area, its historic significance, and its present day use. This application will then be reviewed by the Bureau of Historic Preservation.

The Bureau usually responds in about three weeks, either approving or rejecting the application. If approved it will be sent on to the National Register, which is maintained by the National Park Service.

At the conclusion of the presentation, attorney John Feather, chair for the meeting, asked if there was serious interest in seeking a historic district designation for all or parts of Mt Gretna. Most of those present expressed a desire to move ahead with the process, and groups in both the Chautauqua and the Campmeeting are proceeding with applications.

## Annual Meeting Highlights

Fred Buch, chair of the MGAHS Board of Trustees, reported that membership for 2006 stands at about 350 individuals who are members, an increase of 150 from last year.

Looking ahead, Buch explained that the Society plans to have a Headquarters and Education Center open next year. Details about the center have not been fully developed, but a cottage next to the theater is available and could provide an open exhibit area on the first floor. The second floor, which has not been modernized, could be a display in itself.

The Society has in its collections a significant number of Mt Gretna and area artifacts that could be displayed, and one of the goals for the Education Center is to have a series of large posters telling the Mt Gretna story in pictures and text.

Peter Seibert, whose guidance was very helpful, spoke briefly about the major progress the Society has made in its short existence. A strategic plan has been approved to guide the future development of the Society. The plan includes the establishment of a headquarters because, "the Society needs a home."

"The Mt Gretna Area Historical Society transcends all entities," in the area, Seibert said, "and therefore needs a headquarters that is accessible to residents and travelers alike."

"The biggest challenge now," he said, "is money, but the Society is a long term organization, and its headquarters will be here to tell Mt Gretna's story."

## Monument Dedication

The new item at "the point," the triangle where Village Lane branches off from Timber Road, is actually an old item. It is the rejuvenated stone memorial to the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division, moved from its former nearly invisible location at the behest of Jim Seltzer.



Dedication (or should it be re-dedication?) ceremonies were held on July 1 with Major General Wesley Craig, 28<sup>th</sup> Division, as the main speaker. Jack Bitner, Jim Seltzer, and Fred Buch also made appropriate remarks.

### **Jack Bitner on “The Heights”**

On the evening of June 16, the Society co-sponsored with the Chautauqua Summer Program another of the much anticipated talks by Jack Bitner. This evening Jack turned his attention to “The Heights,” as that portion of Mt Gretna east of the Campmeeting is known.

Jack began by observing that while the Heights has a shorter history than either Chautauqua or Campmeeting, it too is a tribute to the vision and determination of one man. In this case it was Abraham Lincoln Kauffman, not Robert Coleman, who touched off the activities that resulted in the development of Mt Gretna Heights.

Kauffman was born in Annville, into a religious and patriotic family (another son was named George Washington Kauffman). In 1907 he purchased 20 acres just east of the Campmeeting grounds, on which he built a hotel, a store, and an icehouse. The hotel and the store were flourishing business enterprises for more than two decades. In 1923 Kauffman added 62 acres – most of the present Mt Gretna Heights – to his holdings, and three years later he built his own amusement park, complete with a million gallon swimming pool and a \$13,600 roller coaster.

There followed an unusually rainy summer, and Mr Kauffman had very substantial debts as a result of all these acquisitions, so one day in 1932 he found a way out of debt for himself by committing suicide.

The remains of the swimming pool are still visible just north of the Butler Road—

117 intersection. Nothing except the land remains of the amusement park.

Jack provided a little “dessert” for his presentation by returning to two of his favorite themes – Robert Coleman and the Narrow Gauge Railroad.

In 1891, Robert Coleman was one of the wealthiest men in the United States and Pennsylvania’s first millionaire. But things were going badly for Coleman. His investments were losing value; he could no longer afford the luxury of his favorite hobby – the Narrow Gauge Railroad, so in 1893 the last Narrow Gauge train chugged its way up to Governor Dick. There were two passengers: Robert Coleman and his son, Robert, Jr.

Jack’s “dessert” was two rare pictures of the Colemans on that last trip, pictures that Jack prizes very highly.

### **Membership Information**

At the Annual Meeting in June, Membership Chairperson Betty Miller reported there were then 186 paid memberships. Chairman Buch added that allowing for family memberships, there are approximately 350 people in the area who are involved with the Society.

Membership in the Society is open to all who are interested in learning about the history of the Mt Gretna area. Finding and preserving significant items relating to the Mt Gretna-Colebrook-Lawn-Cornwall area is a major goal.

The classes of membership are:

Individual	\$10 per year
Family	\$15 per year
Business	\$50 per year

For more information or to become a member, contact Betty Miller at PO Box 362, Mt Gretna, PA 17064.





## Business Memberships

One of the many significant events in the short existence of the Mt Gretna Area Historical Society is the number of area business people who support the Society with full business memberships.

It is gratifying indeed to know that so many of the commercial and professional members of the community are interested in preserving its heritage.

Please think of these names first when you want one of their services.

Becky's Gift – Rental Cottage  
[www.mtgretna.com/beckysgift/](http://www.mtgretna.com/beckysgift/).

Buch Church Organ Company  
Custom built church organs, Ephrata

Chef on the Go  
Rebecca Briody, PO Box 194 Mt Gretna

Designer Window Fashions  
Blinds and Window Treatments, Mt Gretna

Thomas Harlan, Esq.  
Legal services, 100 Maple Ave, Mt Gretna

Hoaster Gebhard & Co  
Insurance consultants, Lebanon

Jigger Shop  
A summer tradition since 1895, Mt Gretna

Le Sorelle  
Serving breakfast and lunch, Mt Gretna

Mt Gretna Realty  
Local real estate services, Mt Gretna

Nissley Architect  
Architectural Designs, PO Box 460, Mt Gretna

Remember When  
An Unusual Gift Shop, Mt Gretna

Timbers Dinner Theater Restaurant  
Timber Road, Mt Gretna

## Society Programs

The Mt Gretna Area Historical Society has a charter obligation to educate the public about our past. This obligation is being met in 2006 with a series of programs, some of which are co-sponsored with Chautauqua Summer Programs or the Campmeeting Heritage Festival.

On June 1, Steve Somers spoke in Freeman Hall at Cornwall Manor about the Cornwall Iron Furnace.

On June 16, Jack Bitner's talk about Mt Gretna Heights was co-sponsored by Chautauqua Summer Programs. (See story on page 4.)

On July 1, the Campmeeting Heritage Festival co-sponsored Peter Seibert's illustrated talk in the Tabernacle about "American Interiors from 1890 to 1920." Peter is president of the Heritage Center of Lancaster and an authority on the topic.

Kathy Snavely, co-sponsored by Chautauqua Summer Programs, reminded her audience in the Hall of Philosophy that America's first dietitian, Sarah Tyson Rorer, taught cooking skills in Rorer Hall, which then stood where the Hall of Philosophy now stands.

And on July 28, a panel of former campers and counselors from Camp Mt Gretna, assembled by Karl Gettle and co-sponsored with the Chautauqua Summer Programs, relived some of their best and worst moments in the camp.

Among the best were the great Saturday night song services, when campers marched in small groups to the Tabernacle, stopping on porches along the way to sing their special song as other groups went by. While the main purpose of the procession was to participate in the final vesper service, it also served to keep the campers busy and clean (they were going home the next day).

The worst moment? The night everybody got sick.



## Society Headquarters

Clio, the Muse of History, must have been smiling on Mt Gretna. How else to account for the availability of an “original condition” cottage at an ideal location next to the Playhouse, just when the Mt Gretna Area Historical Society went looking for an appropriate headquarters and display building?

Chairman Buch and the trustees moved quickly to secure the property, which has already proved its value by providing display space on the porch for the carousel horse and organ during Art Show weekend.

Looking forward, the chairman and the trustees are planning to make full use of the cottage as a headquarters building, with storage space, display space, and meeting facilities.

## DVDs Available

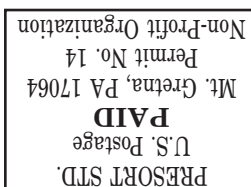
Two of Jack Bitner’s Hall of Philosophy programs on aspects of Mt Gretna history were video recorded during their presentation and are now available to Society members and the general public.

Titled “An Excursion Into Mt Gretna’s History and Its Narrow Gauge Railroad,” the set of two DVDs is priced at \$29.95. To purchase one or more sets, contact Dick Smith at 717-964-3225. There is a charge of \$4.00 for mailing.

Each video contains all the slides Jack used in the presentation. The Early History talk runs 1 hour and 9 minutes; the Narrow Gauge talk runs 35 minutes.

This set makes an excellent reference for early Mt Gretna events and at the same time allows us to hear and see “Mr Mt Gretna whenever we want to.

Return Service Requested



Mount Gretna, Pennsylvania 17064-0362

