

SUMMER 2011

The Gretna Chronicles NEWSLETTER

Historical Society Names New Trustees *by Marla Pitt*

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Below: Working to preserve the trees that shade beautiful Mt. Gretna.

Photo by Madelaine Gray

The Board of the MGAHS is pleased to welcome three new trustees. The membership of the MGAHS elected Larry Bowman, Ron Hontz, and Michael Remel at the annual meeting held on June 14, 2011, at 7:30 p.m., in the Heights Community Building.

Larry Bowman lives on Bell Avenue, in the Campmeeting, with his wife Kathy Wall. Their 101 year old home, built in 1910, is the second cottage they have owned in the Campmeeting. Larry and Kathy were excited to discover their Bell Avenue home was featured on a Mt. Gretna post card, in the 1920s. Larry graduated from Lebanon Valley College and earned his Master's from State University of New York at Albany. Larry is employed by Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce, and is a native of northern Lebanon Township.

Ron Hontz purchased his cottage, on Seventh Street in the Campmeeting, in 2006. When Ron and his wife, Karrie, moved in, they learned their cottage had once been owned by "The Bather" who famously posed in an early Mt. Gretna postcard. This spawned their interest in Mt. Gretna's history. Their primary residence is in Montgomery County. Ron graduated from Penn State University with a Bachelor degree in finance. Ron is employed in technology at Seimen's Healthcare. He is originally from Lafayette Hill in Montgomery County.

Michael Remel lives in the Campmeeting, with his 10-year-old son, Shawn. Michael is the pastor of the Mt. Gretna United Methodist Church and resides in the parsonage. He



completed his undergraduate degree at East Stroudsburg University and graduate work at Palmer Theological Seminary. During his graduate work, while studying "Church History Throughout the Ages," Michael wrote a research paper, on the American Campmeeting Movement. Michael has been a pastor for 12 years, serving in other churches in the area. He is originally from Nazareth, Pa.

The MGAHS is fortunate to have these new trustees on the board.

Historical Society Event *Arborist to Share Expertise*

Please join us for "Cottage Restoration & Remodeling – Tree and Landscape Restoration," on Sept. 2, at 7:30 p.m., in the Hall of Philosophy, for our last summer program of the 2011 season.

Arborist John Brewer, from Arborist Enterprises, will be our guest speaker. John is familiar with Mt. Gretna's parklands and the health and challenges of Gretna's forest. He walked Mt. Gretna's parklands

repeatedly to analyze the health and growth of the forest. John and his company have recently been hired by the Chautauqua, to begin restoration and preservation of Gretna's trees, in the high impact areas of the parklands.

John will entertain any questions attendees may have in regard to the care and planting of trees around homes. He will also address the problem of the Emerald Ash Borer, which will

potentially kill 300 million trees in Pa. alone. Treatment can be successful, if completed before any signs of infestation appear in the tree. Longwood Gardens trust the care of their trees to John Brewer and Arborist Enterprises, so we think Gretna will be in good hands. Join us and learn how to restore our forest, and ensure future generations a Mt. Gretna, shaded by the beautiful trees we know today. *By Marla Pitt*



A Bell of a Story by Tom Meredith



Fred Swarr's Artwork with bell.

Photo by Madelaine Gray

By the time you read this, Mt. Gretna's "Grand Illumination" will have been turned on for the Fourth and then turned off – for a year, a short year in the Campmeeting, where, in a few weeks, residents will again illuminate their walks and porches as their parents and grandparents did years ago in farewell to the young campers marching and singing in a candlelight procession from Hershey Hall and Otterbein Lodge to the Tabernacle for the concluding vesper service. During the community-wide Illumination, appropriately for the Independence Day theme, bells were prominent among the decorations – painted bells, lighted bells, ringing bells at the Playhouse and at the Tabernacle. A century ago, bells rang to signal opening and closing of the gates and the start of lessons in the Chautauqua auditorium. In the Campmeeting, the Tabernacle bell was rung to call worshippers to the services. And so it still is.

In the time warp of Mt. Gretna, it is not hard to find oneself thinking -- floating? -- dreaming? about the Tabernacle and Playhouse bells: How did they get here? Where were they made? When were they made? Is the Tabernacle bell the same one the Association had at Stoverdale? Was Schuyler Enck, a young student in 1891 attending camp at Stoverdale, allowed the honor of ringing the

bell to start the business session at which the decision was made to leave the worldliness of the Stoverdale campgrounds? Of course, we don't know. He was there and a bell was rung, but for the rest the record is silent. There is, however, a bit of very basic information about the bell in the records, but nothing to indicate that it was taken to Mt. Gretna.

What we do know is that somehow the managers acquired a bell to use at the first camp in August of 1892. There is a notation in the minutes of their meeting on Aug. 19, at the conclusion of the camp, instructing their president, Rev. H. B. Dohner, to purchase "the bell which had been in use during the camp." But from whom did he buy it? How much did he pay for it? Did the managers take a special collection to pay for it? (There are frequent complaints in the minute book about the necessity of "so many special collections.") Was it mounted on a pole or hung from a tree? (Probably mounted on a pole, because early pictures of the Grove prove that the crews from the Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad who cleared the camp site did a perfect job.)

Five years after the purchase of the bell, at a manager's meeting on Aug. 3, 1897, Treasurer S. N. Eby was directed "to have the bell scaffolding properly braced so as to make it perfectly se-

cure." No doubt the single pole was a little top heavy, so the managers wisely gave it a more substantial support. Post card photos taken after 1899 show the bell in differing mountings. One, no doubt the earliest one, shows a single pole with the bell securely in place at the top. It just looks top heavy, and the later illustration shows a four-legged scaffold supporting the bell, placed just outside the porch at the back door of the Tabernacle office.

A few years ago, Merv Lentz, the Campmeeting's superintendent of buildings and grounds, had a hydraulic platform lift in operation near the Tabernacle to trim back a bunch of overhanging branches. He willingly diverted the machine from its pruning operation to engage in a bit of "on the spot" historical research. The resulting photograph provides a much better view of the bell and its current mounting, and a reading of the bell's inscription, "Cast by J Wilbank, Phila, 1838," at least tells us how old it is and where it was made. But how it got to the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting is still unknown, a challenge to future historians.

We also know, through the medium of a couple of rare post cards, that in 1899, after the Tabernacle was built the bell was mounted at the top of a single pole just beyond the back door.

Visit the Mt Gretna Area Historical Society museum to see this train and other relics of the community's history.



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In memory
Dale L. Grundon, 1932—2011
Neighbor, friend, artist,
photographer,
Mt. Gretna civic icon.

Database of Mt. Gretna Properties

by W. Jeffrey Hurst, museum chair

One of the long term goals of the society is to develop a database that includes every home in Mt. Gretna. With over 400 properties in the community, this is no small undertaking and we will need your help to accomplish this goal.

Information on each property will be included in a file folder in the research library and will serve as a repository for data on the property. Many individuals currently have information and if you do, and feel comfortable doing so, we would be grateful for a copy that you or the society

can file. The information should include the date the property was built, plans, costs, neighbors, color schemes and any other items you would like to include. Additional information could be added at any time.

Finally, based on your wishes, the file can be opened to the community or have restricted access. We hope that you will be interested in participating in the opportunity. Should you have any questions about this initiative, stop by the research library from 9-11 a.m. on Saturdays this summer.



Cottages worth cataloging. Photo by Madelaine Gray



"Special thanks to Society members who gave additional contributions to the MGAHS with their memberships this year. Your support helps us to preserve the unique history of Mt. Gretna.."

— Fred Buch

P.O. Box 362

Mt. Gretna, PA 17064

The Society home is

206 Pennsylvania Ave. in Mt. Gretna

717.964.1105

We're on the web!

www.mtgretnahistory.org



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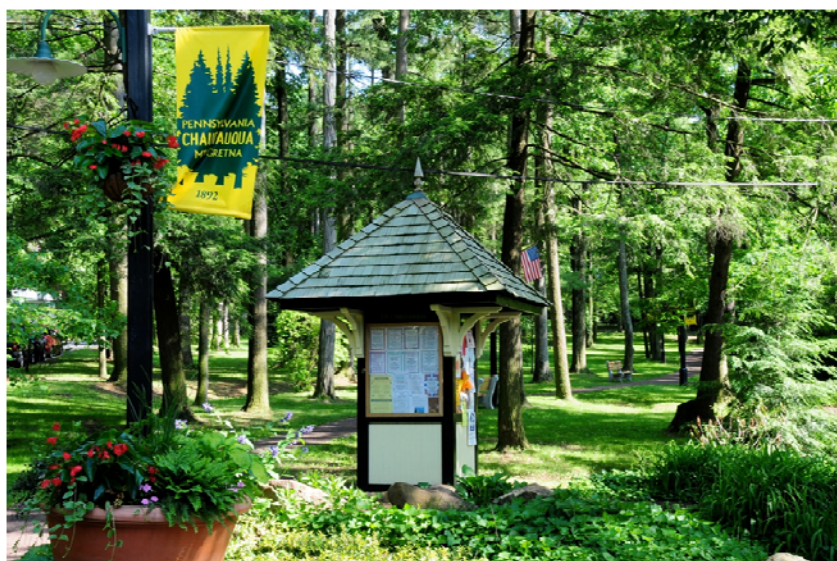
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*There is always something going on in Mt. Gretna during the summer.
Check out the various information areas or stop by the MGAHS museum.*

A record number of visitors have joined us this summer!