Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society

FALL 2012



Campmeeting Named to National Register of Historic Places



Kudos to Mount Gretna Resident Tom Meredith for his diligent work that garnered Campmeeting a spot on the National Register of Historic Places. As of September, Mount Gretna is represented. Research is now in the works to add Chantauqua to the list. Just another reason to preserve the history of our unique community.

Listed at Last! by Tom Meredith

The September listings posted to the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service added five Pennsylvania locations, one of them being the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting, to the national list. This listing marked the culmination of six years' effort to meet the strict requirements of the National Park Service for inclusion on the national list.

In 2006, following a

presentation in the Mt. Gretna fire hall by staff members of the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation, the Campmeeting Board of Managers authorized Tom Meredith to submit an application to the Park Service. The state bureau recommends districts to the Park Service, with the final decision being made by the Keeper of the Register at the Park Service headquarters in Washington, DC. Requirements

for listing are extensive and detailed: the district must retain a significant architectural and historic integrity, and its relevance to national and local cultural trends or events must be documented.

In order to make its recommendation, the bureau requires the applicant to submit a Survey of Historical Resources with maps, photographs, an inventory of the cottages and other buildings in the district, and a

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A membership to the MGAHS is a great holiday gift for your friends and neighbors! <<

Campmeeting designation (con't from front page)

Enthusiasm and excitement over the listing are apparent in the Campmeeting, where a summer of celebration is being planned for 2013, with a formal dedication ceremony scheduled for Memorial Day. detailed physical description and historical narrative of the area in question. If this survey indicates that the district will meet national requirements, a national application form must be completed, covering the same information but in more detail and with full documentation including a bibliography of all sources used in the preparation of the form. More photographs and more maps are required and, if possible, contemporary illustrations are to be used to provide visual "Before and After" data.

The completed national form is submitted to the trustees of the state Bureau for Historic Preservation for their approval and recommendation to the Park Service. The trustees, a group of highly qualified professionals in history, art, architecture, and public administration, meet three times a year to consider applications. Their June meeting in Harrisburg reviewed ten applications, Mt. Gretna's among them. Of the ten, eight were approved for nomination to the Park Service, and in September the Service approved five. Again the Campmeeting application was among

them. It was listed as of September 4, 2012.

It is a tribute to the Campmeeting itself and to the dedicated work of the committee that individual trustees of the state bureau commented on the excellence of the Mt. Gretna application and the quality of the resources: "remarkable architectural quality," "that Tabernacle is a national treasure." The application committee, chaired by Tom Meredith, included Jim and Linda Campbell, Ted and Esther Mefferd, George and Chris Resh, Madelaine Gray, Nancy Brooks, and Aniko Gayhart. Collectively they counted all 255 buildings, structures, and sites in the Campmeeting, describing each and every one in detail according to National Park Service guidelines. Some buildings were examined two or three times before the committee could agree on its style or the siding material.

The quality of Madelaine Gray's photographs, several of which were displayed on monitors around the room while the trustees were considering the application, had much to do with the favorable consideration it received. Pat Gibble, a trustee of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society, was most helpful. She assisted with the selection of contemporary photos from the Society's Jack Bitner Collection and then digitized them for the application, making the "Before and After" element easy to provide. The preservation of important Campmeeting maps eased the fulfillment of the map requirements, although representing the area as it was in 1890 was a challenge that Nancy Brooks met successfully. Altogether the application consisted of 31 pages of forms and text, six maps, 41 current and contemporary illustrations, and a 12 -page inventory.

Enthusiasm and excitement over the listing are apparent in the Campmeeting, where a summer of celebration is being planned for 2013, with a formal dedication ceremony scheduled for Memorial Day weekend and a series of special Bible Festival programs planned to celebrate the nearly century and a quarter of continuing summer worship programs - the Campmeeting tradition in its 21st century manifestation: "Christian spiritual renewal in a unique Victorian setting." ß



Postcard Presentation returned this summer

Shown above is a postcard photo of the Kauffman House — See Story Next Page. Back by popular demand, Morris Greiner presented his Mt. Gretna postcard collection. Last winter, he shared the most complete collections in existence at a Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society program to a packed house at the Fire Hall.

He again presented "Old Mt. Gretna Through the Eyes of a Postcard Photographer" in August at the Hall of Philosophy.

Greiner, whose father once ran the Mt. Gretna telegraph station said Mt. Gretna is more than the focus of a lifetime search for postcards relating to this area, it underscores his own heritage. His father first began working for the military here, and Mt. Gretna is where he spent his childhood years.

His collection now includes hundreds of colored postcards, most in perfect condition and many with personal inscriptions written more than a century ago. Except for three that are copies, all of the original postcards of Mt. Gretna ever printed are now part of his vast collection. (Source: Roger Groce newsletter)

Mt. Gretna Literary Journal Launches by Dr. W. Jeffrey Hurst

The Mt Gretna Historical Society announces the inauguration of a new peer reviewed literary journal titled The Mt Gretna Review with the first issue initially planned for early 2013. The journal welcomes submissions of poems, short stories, historical narratives, book reviews, black and white drawings and photographs about Mount Gretna and the surrounding region. Submissions are welcomed at any time and will be reviewed by a member of the Editorial Board. Initially, issues will be published when sufficient material is in hand to complete an issue. Only original contributions are solicited and

can be submitted via email to mtgretnareview@aol.com. Should you have any questions, please contact us via email at the above address. We welcome your submissions and inquiries. **C**



Abraham L. Kauffman—Entrepreneur by Patricia E. Gibble, Ph.D.

As visitors and residents travel west on RT. 117 toward the homes and buildings that make up Mount Gretna today, few are aware of the rich history of the areas lying east and north of the Campmeeting community. In the 1920s, entrepreneur Abraham Lincoln Kaufman operated both commercial establishments at the eastern end of the town settlement, as well as an amusement park north of Rt. 117. At the time, his resort rivaled the entertainment facilities created by Robert H. Coleman in the 1890s.

Abraham L. Kauffman was raised in nearby Annville, Pa. As a member of the United Brethren Church, he spent many summers during his youth at his parent's Campmeeting cottage. In 1907, Kauffman began his initial economic ventures in Mt. Gretna, purchasing a 20 acre plot known at the time as the



Jacob Galebach Farm. The

farm was located east of the present day Campmeeting boundary. Kauffman named his new resort, **The Willows**, and erected a spacious Hotel on Kauffman Avenue just south of present day Hide-Away restaurant. Kauffman's general store was situated west of the Hotel, directly outside of eastern entrance to the Campmeeting grounds. The store provided the necessary amenities for visitors to the Gretna encampment including a bakery, ice house, creamery and outdoor ice cream parlor. He ran a laundry for Gretna visitors and provided horse stables in the existing Galebach barn for tourists who traveled to the resort by buggy. By 1926, his son-in-law Andy Daigneau was operating a petrol station north of the Kauffman Hotel to provide fuel for guests arriving in automobiles. Kauffman also built the Gables across from his general store that offered entertainment such as a silent picture theater and dance hall featuring local big bands. Mr. Lichenthaler managed the Gables during the early period with Bill Embar running the facility in the mid-1920s. On June 27, 1907, the Lebanon Daily News heralded Kauffman's new resort as a great addition to growing number of tourist attractions that could be enjoyed in Mount Gretna.

Following the success of these enterprises, Kauffman constructed an impressive family residence on the 20-acre plot he had acquired. The house has been restored and is open to vacationers today as the Mount Gretna Inn. In

Above is the entrance to the Gables. Below is the Kauffman House, and Bungalows. Now the Mt. Gretna Inn. Welcomes visitors.





addition, Kauffman built several rental cottages southeast of his mansion on Hollobaugh Avenue. Known as **The Bungalows,** these cottages were designed to accommodate family groups, but when originally constructed had no kitchen facilities. Families who rented these homes could take their meals across the street at the near-by Kauffman Hotel. By 1929, the bungalows had been purchased by several individuals and are maintained as private residences today.

Other land acquisitions expanded Kauffman's business interests. He purchased two land tracts consisting of 160 acres from R.E. Hartman and Emanuel Keener with the intention of creating a large housing development. Hartman/Keener had previously timbered the land and divided it into lots, installing sewers, water and roads and erecting some homes on the site. Kauffman's plan was to build larger, more permanent houses than the typical seasonal cottages used by those attending the Campmeeting retreat. He called his new housing community, **Kauffman Heights**, but it is better known today as simply "the Heights."

According to historian Jack Bitner (1990), Abraham Kauffman had always been interested in purchasing the Mount Gretna Lake and Amusement Park created by Robert H. Coleman in late 1890s. In the early 1900s, Ferdinand Gremminger had acquired these properties from Coleman's descendants. When Kauffman could not buy the Gremminger properties as he had hoped, he purchased another 53 acre parcel from E. A. Keener on September 29, 1923. Originally part of Robert H. Coleman's estate up to 1879, the acreage had passed to Anne C. Coleman Rogers in 1903. From 1914 through 1918, the South Mountain Lumber Co. owned and timbered the parcel. The property today is bounded on the south by highway Rt. 117, to the west by the present-day Butler Road and on the north by the Lebanon County Rail -Trails, formerly the C&L Railroad tracts. In the next several years, Kauffman would realize his dream of owning an amusement park that he called **Laurel Park**.

Kauffman first erected a dam west of the headwaters of the Conewago Creek, thus creating a small lake for boating. Visitors entered Laurel Park from RT. 117 via a road that ran directly across the dam head. He then installed a million gallon cement swimming pool and bath house. In order to maintain the quality of the spring-fed pool, Kauffman regularly drained the water, hiring local men to clean the silt and residues on the pool walls and floor. He then refilled the pool in time for weekend bathers. He added other attractions to his new amusement park including a luncheonette, gift shop, shooting gallery and ride called the Whip. In 1926, The Philadelphia Toboggan Co. was commissioned to design and build a roller coaster and carousel for Laurel Park. The roller coaster alone cost \$13,600. Kauffman hired Midge and Gene Otto to manage the park; they were concessioners living in Harrisburg and during the Park's first summer season, they traveled from Harrisburg to Gretna to work for Mr. Kauffman. The Lebanon Daily News ran a large advertisement for Kauffman Park on July 1, 1926, describing the amusement facilities and transportation to the park via the railroad.

However, both natural and man-made events would cause Kauffman's investment schemes to be short-lived. Several summers of inclement weather led to the cancelation of Kauffman's special events calendar *(con't next page)*



Laurel Park Entertainment

Imagine the Heights with the Laurel Park Carousel (above) and roller coaster (at left.)

When the park officially opened on the 4th of July, 1926, visitors could enjoy food at the concession stands, practice their aim at a shooting gallery, cool off in the swimming pool, or take a thrilling ride on the Whip, roller coaster, or carousel.**cs**



View of the Kauffman Store from the eastern entrance to the Campmeeting grounds.

Our Mission: The Society is

charged with preserving the

heritage of the entire Mount

Mount Gretna Borough, the

Pennsylvania Chautauqua,

Gretna area, including

Campmeeting, Mount

Hills, Conewago Hill,

Stoberdale, areas to

Guard, and areas of

Coleman family.

Gretna Heights, Timber

Colebrook once occupied by

the Pennsylvania National

Cornwall which involved the

Mount Gretna

(con't) that had been booked for the 1926-1927 seasons. The Stock Market crash in 1929 followed by the Great Depression in the 1930s also contributed to a drop in tourism to Mount Gretna and impacted the success of Mr. Kauffman's business ventures. In 1928 - 1929, the Farmers Trust Company of Lebanon, took over the Willows acreage not including the Kauffman mansion. The Bank also took possession of the Kauffman Heights development and Laurel Park property on May 8, 1929. At that time, the Bank asked Gene and Midge Otto to continue managing the Park which they did up to 1934. The Otto family used the second floor of the refreshment stand as their residence. Mr. Kauffman died a few years after the bank's intervention, ending an ambitious and extensive entrepreneurial career. By 1934 the park's carousel and roller coaster were badly deteriorated and were taken down. All that remains of the amusement park today are the dam head, concrete pool and foundational footers for the roller coaster

hidden by a dense growth of mature trees and vegetation.

Other former Kauffman properties changed hands in the 1940s. The Kauffman Hotel and the Gables were bought by the United Methodist Church for use as dormitories during the summer encampment seasons. The Kauffman Store was sold to John Mellinger who operated it in the 1940s. Both buildings were demolished in the 1970s. Laurel Park was also bought by various investors after the time of Mr. Kauffman's ownership. Farmer Trust Co. sold the property to Harvey G. Hastings for \$4000 in 1937. Hastings conveyed the acreage to Henry E. Otto, nine years later in 1946. On May 17, 1950, Mr. Otto sold the entire Laurel Park property to Dr. Elmer and Martha Denniston. The Dennistons constructed their family home on the site where the original Laurel Park carousel stood.

In 1960, Phares B. Gibble (deceased) and his wife, Joan, purchased the Laurel Park tract. As avid historians, environmentalists, and preservationists, the Gibbles meticulously researched and recorded the history of their property and the flora and fauna on their land for more than 50 years. Phares Gibble left detailed recordings and photographs of his research on native plant and forest species including bog turtles, bird, and reptile populations. In 1972, heavy wind and rain from Hurricane Agnes toppled the dam that had been originally constructed by Abraham Kauffman. The Gibbles had the dam head rebuilt and the cement swimming pool repaired. Their conservation efforts have preserved both the ecological and historical importance of this section of Mt. Gretna, and maintained the beautiful woodland character that attracts hundreds of visitors to the village each year.

I would like to thank all those who provided photographs and background information regarding the history of Abraham Kauffman including Jack Bitner (1990), Phares and Joan Gibble, Morris Grinner, Pat Pinsler, and Scott Saylor.

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info@buchorgan.com.



The Society home at 206 Pennsylvania Ave., Mt. Gretna Winter Hours Call for appointment: 964-3858 or 964-3813 Research Library is open—Call for appointment.

Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society

P.O. Box 362 Mt. Gretna, PA 17064

The Society home is 206 Pennsylvania Avenue in Mt. Gretna 717.964.1105

We're on the web! www.mtgretnahistory.org





See inside to read about Abraham Kauffman — Mount Gretna Entrepreneur. Pictured above is the Kauffman Hotel and Garage, facing south.

Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society Chair Report by Fred Buch

The 2012 season at the museum was extremely popular with large numbers of visitors interested in Mount Gretna history, as well as, those seeking specific information about their cottages and historic events. Researchers are uncovering new information buried in minutes books and in the many documents in our files. Some of this research will be shared in our newsletters and the literary journal "Mount Gretna Review" being planned for 2013 by Chairman of Publications, Dr. W. Jeffrey Hurst. This year we have received an unprecedented 900 to 1000 documents and artifacts from residents and former residents of Mount Gretna. In a few cases, we needed to be selective, particularly with furniture items, since space is at a premium.

A sincere THANK YOU to those who have already renewed their membership for 2012. Many of those who renewed included an additional donation, over and above their yearly dues, assisting us with the historical society programs and preservation. For this, we are extremely grateful.

If you have not renewed your membership this year, please do soon. You will save us the time and expense of a reminder that will be sent by the end of the year. Each membership is important to us in the preservation of documents and artifacts. With the winter season soon to be upon us, the cost of preservation increases. We depend on all of you to help.

For those on your Christmas gift list, consider the book and booklets "Mt. Gretna : A Coleman Legacy", "The Narrow Gauge Railroad" and the DVD of Mt Gretna History all by Jack Bitner, the History of the Campmeeting by Tom Meredith or the DVD of the Military by James Seltzer. Call us for details 964-1105.

Also, We have a Christmas Wish List:

Students to help at the museum next summer.

Past Perfect: Museum Software

New or recently used flat bed type Copy Machine (up to 11x17.)

If you can help, or know someone who can, please contact Fred at 1-800-242-3901.