

FALL 2015

The Gretna Chronicles NEWSLETTER

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MGAHS Chairman's Report *By Susan Hostetter*

It has been a very busy year for the Historical Society.

This year we have added a number of new members and businesses to our membership rolls. We are thankful to those of you who understand the importance of being a part of maintaining our Historical Society. Spread the word, tell a friend!

Our congratulations on the recent good news that Pennsylvania Chautauqua has received approval and has joined Campmeeting on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincere thanks go to Tom Meredith and Earl Lenington for their tireless efforts in this achievement. The panel who toured our Museum during the application process com-

mented that ours is one of the nicest they have seen.

In the September issue of *Old House* magazine, Mount Gretna was featured in the "My Neighborhood" section. Recently, as a result of a tour of our Museum, *The Lebanon Daily News* featured our own Pat Pinsler in its October 5th "Just Folks" column.

In 2003, the MGAHS was only a dream. Our focus for this coming year is to keep the dream alive and to retire the remaining \$100,000 debt on the Museum building. Soon you will be receiving a letter explaining the campaign. It is because of you, our faithful members and volunteers, that we exist. A



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

Chairpersons Report (Cont.)

gift of any amount will be greatly appreciated. You can also consider a legacy gift when doing your estate planning.

Like all museums, we are in the business of collecting and preserving. Do you have a story to tell about an experience you had in the Mount Gretna area or perhaps a picture or item that relates to Mount Gretna that you could share? Please check our website (mtgretnahistory.org) for a link that makes this easy to do or call us at **964-1105**. It is with a sense of urgency that we ask you to help us collect these stories and items before they are forever lost or destroyed. In particular, we would like to have a file of information on as many cottages as possible (See the story below). **Thank you for being part of our history!**

Before It Was “Dove Cottage”

By Tom Meredith



Rhododen Cottage (built in 1914) as it appeared circa 1968

Standing on Yale Avenue, looking up at the spacious brown cottage the visitor took in the name, “Dove Cottage” on the lamp post. Knowing that no one by the name of William Wordsworth had ever lived there, he looked around at the greenery – trees, shrubs, flowers – and then towards Lake Conewago glinting through the pines. “Well, yes, if you really liked English romantic poetry, the name would almost shout itself in your ear. Not a bad choice, really.”

But what the visitor was really seeing was an earlier incarnation – a yellow and green cottage, an open porch high above Yale Avenue and reached by a long set of steps at the top of which a portion of the porch railing opened inward to admit visitors – or confine small children or dogs. There is Sara, sitting in a rocking chair on that wide and comfortable porch, her morning cup of coffee in her hand, listening – no, talking – to the mockingbird perched on the railing.

The name then was “Rhododen”. Will Yearick and Abraham Kauffman had scoured the woods looking for native rhododendron bushes they could plant around the cottage. “It must be Rhododen” Will’s wife, Sara decided. That was 1918 and Sara and Will were honeymooning in Mount Gretna. It was Will’s cottage – he had

Dove Cottage (Cont.)

designed it in 1914 for his father, a minister in the Reformed Church who had heard about the offerings of the new Pennsylvania Chautauqua. In 1918, Will claimed the cottage for himself and his bride and for the next twenty years it embraced the two of them every summer and on many spring and fall weekends. As their family grew, the cottage hosted their two daughters and a dog with the porch often full of visiting family members.

Dim and misty rememberings crowd in upon the visitor. Yale Avenue does not suffer from excessive traffic so he stands there, remembering a time when Byng, the family Boston terrier chased a very surprised mouse into the kitchen only to have it escape under the dry sink. Ever after it was his duty to be first into the cottage to make sure no other mouse was attempting to exercise authority over Byng territory.

Even the stairway has its own remembering – of a necktie hung there and forgotten by Will Yearick after disposing of the luggage of three no-longer-high school girls who had been told that Lake Conewago was a good substitute for the Atlantic Ocean at graduation-party time. Unnoticed by the girls, the tie was still there when three no-longer-high school boys, also convinced of the virtues of Lake Conewago, unexpectedly showed up. The implications of the dangling necktie were explored at great length and with much hilarity by the males, to the considerable annoyance of the females.

Later that same year, 1938, Rhododen passed into the possession of the Hill family who eventually adapted it for year round living, changing the exterior color in the process. The Rhododen sign came down and was lost to posterity, replaced by “Dove Cottage” when Jack and Jane Anderson found Mount Gretna to be the environment in which they wanted to spend their retirement summers.

The changes in name and some physical details of Rhododen/Dove Cottage are but one example of the history and life experiences that many cottages in Mt. Gretna have witnessed since the town began in 1892. People who have purchased homes in the village have lovingly maintained their properties, and continue to enjoy the historic and family-friendly atmosphere that have made our community such a unique place to visit and live. The Mt. Gretna setting echoes over one hundred and twenty-five years of memories that you can hear if you stop and listen closely.



Dove Cottage (formerly Rhododen Cottage) as it appears today

Highlights of 2015 MGAHS Calendar

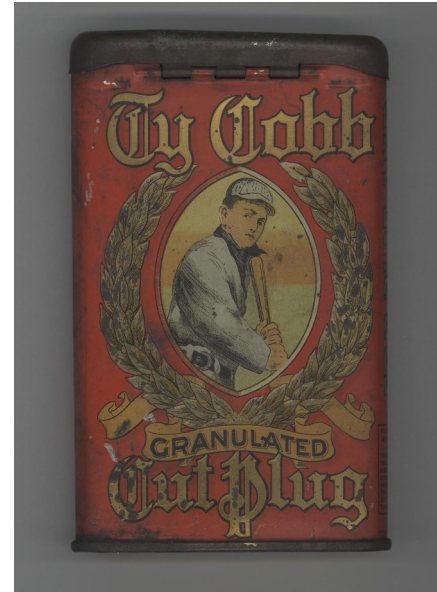
MGAHS had a very busy and successful 2015 spring-summer season. On Monday, May 18, 2015, we opened our social calendar with the first annual “Meet & Greet” Porch Party held at the MGAHS museum on Pennsylvania Ave. Attendees enjoyed complimentary beverages and light refreshments, and toured the Museum’s exhibits spanning the more than 125 years of Mount Gretna’s history. This event provided an opportunity for visitors to learn more about the historical society’s efforts to preserve and promote the rich history of the Mount Gretna area. Members of the Historical Society’s Board of Directors were on hand to greet visitors and answer questions about the organization, its mission, and yearly activities. The annual Village Porch Sale on May 23 enabled us to generate income from the sale of duplicate posters, postcards, and items sold at the museum..

A new Board of Directors was elected at our annual membership meeting on June 2 including Chairperson Susan Hostetter, Vice-Chair Dwayne Heckert, Secretary Connie Dwyer, and Cindy Myer, Treasurer. .

Area residents interested in learning the value of family heirlooms, antiques, or those items that may have been sitting for years in their attic attended the MGAHS-sponsored Antiques Appraisal Fair at the Mount Gretna Fire Company Social Hall. Terry Breidenstine, owner of All County Jewelry, Coins, and Antiques, conducted the appraisals. One item, an old beat-up Ty Cobb tobacco tin, eventually sold online for over \$17,500. Needless to say, its owner was pleasantly surprised. **We plan to make the Porch Party and Antiques Appraisal annual events so look for details in the Spring 2016 edition of the newsletter.**

In July, the MGAHS board created a new organizational award acknowledging the tireless efforts of Ruth and Fred Buch, who founded the society, provided funding for the establishment of our museum, and put in endless hours over the past eleven years to further MGAHS’ historical mission. Future Buch Awards recipients will be recognized for their efforts to promote and present our organization and its objectives.

Throughout the 2015 season, MGAHS hosted six historical presentations chronicling our town, social activities, and individuals who played an important role in Mt. Gretna culture. In April 2015, Jim Polzyinski ushered in the 2015 season speaking about his extensive research of the Coleman Family and their influence on the growth of Lebanon County.



One of the *Treasures* identified at the 2015 MGAHS Antiques Appraisal Fair



Dwayne Heckert, MGAHS Vice-Chair, presents a new service award to Ruth and Fred Buch named in their honor

2015 Events (Cont.)

Historian Jim Polzyinski (center), Scott Carr (left) of SWC Financial Advisors, sponsors of the Coleman presentation and Fred Buch, outgoing MGAHS Chairperson

Other historical presentations were featured in June. Dr. Carl Ellenberger spoke on the origins and 40 year evolution of “Music at Gretna” programs. Dr. Jeff Hurst presented his research entitled “A Food Scientist Looks at Ann Hark’s Cookbook Deconstructed”. His talk informed attendees about one of our village’s best known female authors and the science behind her recipes.

Dr. George Leyh presented a program entitled “What Happened at Campmeeting Stayed at Campmeeting or NOT” at the Hall of Philosophy in Mount Gretna’s Chautauqua area on Friday, July 10. Following this presentation, board member Ron Hontz conducted a walking tour of the historic Campmeeting grounds on July 11.

An enthusiastic crowd listen to Ron Hontz’s talk entitled “Abe Kauffman’s Grand Dream” on July 24. Ron highlighted the other park and swimming venue in Mt. Gretna called Laurel Park that drew regional visitors from 1926 to until the park’s closing in 1934. The following day, Ron led a walking tour of the former park location, site of the Kauffman’s family home, and Kauffman’s other Mt. Gretna attractions such as the Gables dancehall/theater, hotel, & store.

Board member Ron Hontz leading a walking tour of the Campmeeting section of Mt. Gretna village



Dr. George Leyh speaking on the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Movement

Sponsored by Chautauqua and MGAHS, Mike Chapman (a member of the Kettering family), Jack Graham, and Chuck Allwein, (the present owner of the Jigger Shop) spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at the Hall of Philosophy on the extensive history of Gretna’s famous ice cream parlor on September 4.

We rounded out the successful event season on September 5, when MGAHS hosted an annual Docent Reception at the Gretna Heights Community Building to honor the dedication of our wonderful docents and museum volunteers.

MGAHS is planning another fun and educational events calendar for 2016. Please check MGAHS Spring newsletter edition for details of our upcoming slate of historical speakers, visitors’ walking tours, and social gatherings.



Thanks, Volunteers and Docents!

As with most historical societies, volunteership is the life-blood of our organization. MGAHS depends on our talented docents (museum guides) to educate visitors, school tour groups, and Mt. Gretna residents who visit our museum. Other volunteers help to archive our ever-expanding collection of documents, photos, and artifacts as well as create displays that show the rich history of the village. Board member Pat Pinsler trains and supervises both the docents and archival volunteers. Over 975 guests visited the museum this summer. **MANY THANKS** to all who have given their time and efforts to making our spring-summer season so successful.

2015 Docents include: Morris and Pauline Greiner, George and Chris Resh, Ron and Karrie Hontz, George and Sandy Leyh, Carol and David Steinke, Jack and Pat Graham, Jack and Jane Anderson, Margaret Hopkins and Connie Pierce, Ralph Zimmerman, Robin May, Bill Stober, Janice Kehler and Mary Jane Harris, Tom Meredith, Esther Mefferd, Roberta Diehm, Eleanor Hoke, Barbara Fernsler, and Maureen Gettle. Ralph Zimmerman, Bill Stober, and Steve Pinsler contributed their time and talent to developing the new Attic displays in the museum.

Volunteers who helped with archiving our collections and creating the museum displays include: Glin Atkinson, Barbara Close, Connie Dwyer, Megan Walborn. Thanks to Eleanor Sarabia for her work on the miniature cottage and Barney Myer who maintains the museum grounds. **If you would like to volunteer, please contact Pat Pinsler at 964-3858.**

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



Arrw! Fall



