

Spring 2016



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MGAHS Chairperson's Report
By Susan Hostetter

Greetings Everyone!

I have just returned from the Society's Winter/Spring program: *Mount Gretna's Railroads: A Visual Perspective* presented by Don Rhoads, Jr. (see photo below). The threat of snow never materialized and we were delighted at the capacity crowd of approximately 125 history and railroad enthusiasts who attended. At the end of the program, we were treated to a first-time public showing of Fred Swarr's oil painting of the engine from Coleman's Narrow Gauge Railroad. The painting will be featured on the cover of the summer events booklet produced by the Mount Gretna Arts Council and auctioned at the Summer Premier on May 28th.

Sadly, we were missing one of our most beloved and dedicated longtime volunteers, **Pat Pinsler**, who passed away in December. Her wonderful smile, bright hazel eyes, and silver bracelets along with her first-hand, in-depth knowledge of Mount Gretna's history will be greatly missed. Among her many volunteer roles at the Society, Pat loved being a docent, telling visitors colorful stories from her days growing up in Mount Gretna. Thanks to those who generously donated funds in Pat's memory to help with archiving our collection and to complete Museum projects.

Speaking of stories, we need to collect more stories about people, cottages, and activities specific to the Mount Gretna area so that, like Pat, we can share them with others. If you would be willing to have us interview you or someone you know in an easy and informal, one-on-one conversation, would you contact us at info@mtgretnahistory.org or call the Society at 964-1105?

Thank You for Being a Part
Our History!



HISTORICAL SOCIETY TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY TO CAPITAL CAMPAIGN GOAL

By Larry Bowman

Since its launch in November of last year, the capital fundraising campaign of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society (MGAHS) has reached the two-thirds mark towards its goal of \$125,000. The fundraising efforts established by the organization's Board of Directors is intended to allow the retirement of the remaining balance of \$100,000 on the Historical Society Museum located at 206 Pennsylvania Avenue in the Chautauqua area of Mt. Gretna. The Capital Campaign this year is also designed to provide approximately \$25,000 towards the establishment of a reserve fund for use in covering any future repairs or improvements needed on the Museum building and infrastructure.

The nearly \$85,000 in funds raised to date in the Historical Society's capital campaign has come from 85 donors. Included in this current campaign figure is a \$50,000 pledge from long-time Mt. Gretna resident Joyce Ebright.

The Historical Society greatly appreciates the significant support provided by Ms. Ebright to the organization's capital campaign and the Museum's future. Thanks to all of our other donors to date for helping to ensure the success of this campaign and MGAHS' ability to preserve long-term, the rich history of the Mt. Gretna area. Plans are currently being discussed by the Historical Society's Board of Directors on the appropriate means to permanently recognize in the Museum building the capital campaign contributions of all donors.

The MGAHS Board is continuing its efforts to secure the remaining \$40,000 needed to achieve the campaign goal of \$125,000. If you have not yet contributed to the capital campaign, we encourage you to consider doing so. Contributions in any amount are welcomed and appreciated. Information on the MGAHS' capital campaign and how to contribute can be found on the Historical Society's website at mtgretnahistory.org or by calling 717/964-1105.

Many Thanks to All!





Mary Hernley - Mt. Gretna's Flower Lady

Forty-Nine Years of Beauty and Tradition 1967 to the Present

By Marla Pitt

Traditions are a valuable part of Mt. Gretna's history, playing an integral role in shaping the character and personality of our unique community. Traditions link the past to the present and create a dynamic living narrative for our village. One telltale sign that spring has arrived in Gretna is seeing Mary Hernley's white truck parked along Route 117, filled with jars of brilliantly colored spring flowers. Mrs. Hernley, affectionately known as *Mt. Gretna's Flower Lady*, is the embodiment of a time-honored tradition that still can be experienced today. This spring Mary begins her 49th season bringing beauty to our town.

Mary's first visit to Mt. Gretna was in 1953, following her high school graduation. As Mary recalls, "High school seniors, who were members of the FHA (Future Homemakers of America) came out to Gretna for a week during the summer months. Our teacher came along as our chaperone. We had a wonderful time." Three years later in January of 1956, Mary and her new husband, Peter began their life together on the family's 155 acre farm in Rapho Township. For the next ten years, Mary and Peter reared their children and ran the farm, harvesting crops, and raising cattle and chickens. She remembers, "It was normal to have ten to twelve people around the dinner table, especially during the growing season".

In the spring of 1965, as Mary and Peter awaited the birth of their fifth child, she decided to plant her first gladioli bulbs (also known as glads). That August during the customary event called "baby visiting", family and friends arrived to see their newborn daughter for the first time. Mary had decorated her house for the occasion with vases of glads filling her home with bright colors.

Throughout the years since she began her flower business, Mary has faithfully logged the number and color of each gladioli bulb she planted in small notebooks. She created her own coding system which she still uses today. In early spring 1966, Mary recorded she had sowed an additional 293 bulbs and following the harvest, sold her first gladiolas to Hostetter's Flowers and Manheim Flower Shop.

Mary marketed flowers because she wanted to support an orphan girl in India. Mary stated, "I thought selling my flowers might help me do that. I felt it was something I could do with my girls, something we could do together." At first, knocking on doors of Mt. Gretna cottages with her arms full of glads was not easy for Mary. She recalls she wanted to do it, but was intimidated. She notes that "Before I knocked on that first door I prayed if the Lord wants me to do this someone will buy some". On July 25, 1967, Mary detailed in her notebook that she had sold 6.7 dozen glads in Mt. Gretna at \$1.50 a dozen. Over the next few summers, Mary and her daughters continued to sell the glads door to door in Gretna village.

If you visit the village during the summer months you will see vibrant glads adorning many Gretna porches, but Mary refuses to take credit for this custom. She says that decorating porches with flowers was already in place when she came to Gretna in 1967. Glads were the most popular flowers for outdoor decoration because

they were long lasting, and a nice, showy thing for a porch, while small bouquets couldn't be seen like tall bunches of glads. While peddling door to door, Mary became aware of another floral vendor in Mt. Gretna, and did not want to impose on her territory. However, when the first vendor stopped selling, a local resident suggested Mary set up her stand along Route 117 in the spot the original vendor had used. Even today, Mary's flower stand remains in this familiar location.

As time passed, Mary became known for her signature flower, but she has expanded her floral choices to include garden-variety posies such as snapdragons, sunflowers, daisies, zinnias, and dahlias. She also sells less commonplace blooms including calla lilies, larkspur, rose-like lisanthus, star lilies, and even wild flowers like Queen Anne's Lace. As the inventory has grown over the years, preserving the flowers from weekend to weekend became a challenge. Pinkerton's Flower Shop in Manheim offered Mary space in their refrigeration unit to preserve the gladiolas. Mary thinks this was a very kind gesture, but it would involve more work transporting the flowers back and forth. So by 1990, Mary and Peter purchased a used refrigeration unit originally designed for an ice cream truck.

In 1986, Mary and Peter traveled to India for their 30th Wedding Anniversary. Prior to their trip, the couple had been supporting two orphan girls. One had recently become self-sustaining and they wanted to help the other. They met Kalika at the Rama Bai Mukti Mission. Twenty nine years later in the fall of 2015, college graduate Kalika traveled from India to visit Mary and Peter, to see where she sold flowers. Mary says "This is what spurs me on ...this is my push behind it all... to help others".

Mary and her family now stagger the sowing of gladioli bulbs. It takes about two and a half months from the time the bulbs are planted until the glads are harvested. The first bulbs are planted in April when the ground thaws and about every two to three weeks after that until the 10th of July. The first glads are harvested in July, but with the multiple plantings, they have blooms until the first hard frost in October.



Her husband, children, grandchildren, and even some grandchildren, who travel all the way from Maine, help their grandmother sell her flower bouquets. Their efforts benefit children and missionaries in foreign lands. "The reason I do it," Mary says, "is the people...meeting people and becoming friends. If it wasn't for the people, and I just had to take the flowers some place and just leave my produce, it wouldn't be nearly as much fun."

Mary's flowers bring festivity and blessings to any special occasion, or lovely summer day. Her colorful blooms have graced village porches, the Tabernacle, community buildings, weddings, memorial services, quiet days, and a myriad of celebrations in Mt. Gretna. Although her off-spring have very busy lives, Mary hopes her family of six children, and nineteen grandchildren will somehow be able to continue the ritual. Those of us fortunate enough to live in a community with such a beautiful tradition inspired by a passion to help others, hope so, too.

Upcoming MGAHS Events 2016

You Won't Want to Miss Any of Our Upcoming Programs and Events

MGAHS PROGRAMS and Events

May 28— Our Annual Porch Sale at the Museum, 8am to 2 pm

May 29— Museum Open House/Porch Party, 4pm to 6pm with

Complimentary Refreshments and Tours of the Museum Displays

June 4— Antique Appraisals at the Mt. Gretna Firehall—9am to Noon

June 4— “A Celebration of Life” - Memorial Service for Pat Pinsler
at Heights Building—2:30pm.

June 24— “Historic Archaeology at the Alexander Schaeffer Farm/Distillery”
7:30 pm. Hall Of Philosophy. Dr. Patricia E. Gible, Presenter

July 8— Celebrating Mt. Gretna. Documentary Movie Premiere of “Mt.
Gretna: A Perennial Spirit”, Hall of Philosophy. 7:30pm- Reception to
follow celebrating our 124th Birthday. Reservations Required at
717-964-1830. Members- \$5 - Guests—\$10

August 5— “The Clarence Shock I Knew”, Hall of Philosophy. 7:30pm,
Frank Eichler, Presenter

September 2— “The Hotels of Mt. Gretna”. Hall Of Philosophy. 7:30pm,
Ron Hontz, Presenter

HISTORY WALKS

Conducted by Ron Hontz

Saturday, July 16—“ The Mt. Gretna Train Station and Narrow Gauge
Railroad”. Meet at the Timber Road Path to the Rails-to-Trails at
11:00am

All donations are greatly appreciated.

Please Support Our Business Sponsors

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Mt. Gretna, PA. 17064

717-964-3601



The Society's Home at
206 Pennsylvania Ave., Mt. Gretna

Research Library and Museum
Opens May 28th to Sept. 5
Library Hours—Saturday,
10 am to Noon
Museum Hours - Saturday
& Sunday
1 pm to 4 pm

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



Thanks to the members of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society who are receiving their newsletter by e-mail. This helps to curtail printing and postage costs and allows downloading the entire newsletter in full color. To receive your newsletter by e-mail, visit the website at www.mtgretnahistory.org and click on newsletter or

e-mail info@mtgretnahistory.org

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The Society Home is

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717.964.1105

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



Happy Spring!!

