

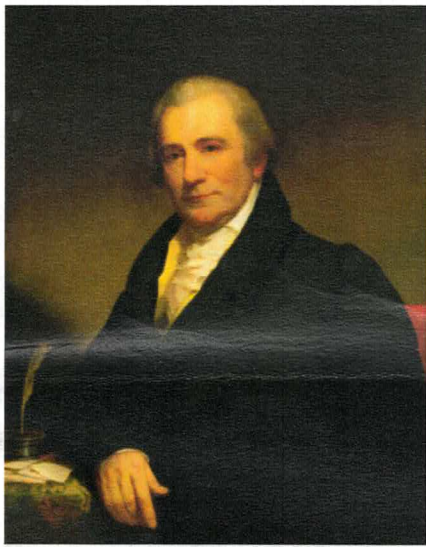
Mount Gretna Chronicles



PUBLISHED BY THE MOUNT GRETNA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY • Winter 2020

by Morgan Smith

A Colebrook Chronicle



Portrait of Robert W. Coleman

Colebrook, Pennsylvania is considered an unincorporated community in South Londonderry Township. It is located at the intersection of Pennsylvania Route 117 and Mount Wilson Road. Colebrook originated as a small industrial village, founded by Robert W. Coleman in the 1790s.

Robert W. Coleman was an Irish immigrant who settled in Central Pennsylvania. He was born in County Donegal, Ireland and settled in Philadelphia in 1764. At first, he began his work as a bookkeeper and clerk at the Hopewell Iron Furnace. He eventually amassed enough funds from this career to lease Salford Forge near Norristown in 1773. He immediately made a decent profit by manufacturing cannonballs at both Salford Forge and Elizabeth Furnace. With those profits, Coleman purchased a two-thirds share of the Elizabeth Furnace, and some shares of the Cornwall Furnace and the Upper and Lower Hopewell Furnaces. He was also able to assume ownership of the Speedwell Forge.



Pictured: Colebrook miners' homes (left), The Colebrook Grist Mill (middle), and the Colebrook Store (right).*

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*Your Help is Needed!

Efforts to preserve the Grist Mill are underway. To get involved contact the South Londonderry Township Area Historical Society by calling Sid Hostetter at (717)-964-3412.

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Gretna Chronicles

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THE MGAHS MUSEUM is open
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appointment basis throughout the year.

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A Colebrook Chronicle (cont).

Shortly after the success of his other iron furnaces, in 1791, Coleman was able to construct the Colebrook Furnace. It was supplied with ore from the Cornwall pits via Mine Road. During the same time, he gained complete ownership of the Elizabeth Furnace and 80% ownership of the Cornwall Furnace and its deposits of iron ore. Due to the success of his iron empire, Coleman became Pennsylvania's first millionaire.

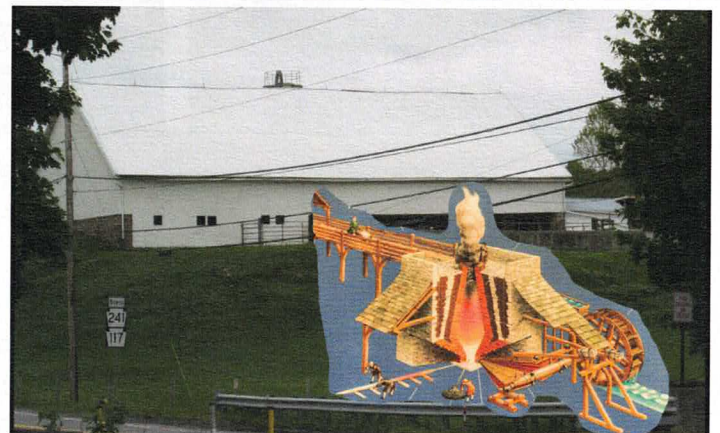


Pictured: Main road running into
Colebrook, Orley Farm on left(top)
and the barn on the Orley farm
today.

Similar to the Cornwall Iron Furnace, the Colebrook Iron Furnace was powered by charcoal, made by colliers, to process iron ore. Coleman's operation was useful in many aspects, including the Revolutionary War. It produced 114,000 tons of mined ore in just 57 years. While the furnace itself is not standing, it was located on what is now the Cliff and Lynn Orley Family farm, with the charcoal barn still standing intact on a slight rise. One can visualize the furnace down the hill (across the road from what is now Collins Grocery) and imagine the charcoal being transported by wagon to fuel its furnace.

The village of Colebrook blossomed around the success of Coleman. The town was small, originally only

containing the company store, iron workers' housing, the furnace, a sawmill, a grist mill and Coleman's mansion (called the ironmaster's mansion) at the corner of Mt. Wilson Road and Route 241. A church (St. Lawrence Catholic Church) was built in 1852 by St. John Neuman, to serve the workers. It closed its doors in 1862 when the furnace ceased to operate. A small monument marking the spot can still be seen along Mt. Wilson Road heading north.



Pictured: Aerial image depicting the Orley Family Barn and diagram of the Colebrook Iron Furnace. Images courtesy of Lynn Orley and Bruce Chadbourne.

A Colebrook Chronicle (cont).

Upon Coleman's death in 1825, his son, Thomas Bird/Burd Coleman inherited both the Colebrook Furnace and the Ironmaster's mansion. By 1850, Colebrook was ranked fourth in the country for iron production. Recognition of the furnace grew when poet George Boker published "The Legend of the Hounds," a poem depicting the cruel furnace manager Squire Jacobs. In this poem, it is said that after bragging about the skills of his hunting dogs, Jacobs took them for a hunt to prove it. Following an unsuccessful day of hunting, Jacobs was extremely angry with his hounds and ordered them to be thrown into the flames of the furnace. Whether or not this story is true cannot be proven, however those who still live in the area recognize the historical importance of the legend.

In 1879, Thomas's grandson, Robert Habersham Coleman took over the family business. Shortly afterwards, he developed the Cornwall & Lebanon Railroad which ran from Cornwall to Elizabethtown (now a Rails to Trails path). He also founded the neighboring village of Mount Gretna as one of the station stops along his railroad. Unfortunately, Coleman's wife, Lillie was frequently ill. They traveled to Europe, which was common for people to do when chronically ill, as it was believed a change in air and scenery could benefit the afflicted. Not long into their trip, Lillie died. Coleman was extremely distraught over this.



Pictured: The Coleman Mansion, barn, and stables.

During the same time, a bowling alley was being constructed adjacent to the mansion in Colebrook and a new mansion with stables was being built in Cornwall. Devastated by his wife's passing, Coleman had the Cornwall mansion destroyed, though the stables there remained. The Colebrook mansion also remained, along with its brand-new bowling alley. As newer furnace operations, fueled by anthracite, became popular, the furnace was eventually shut down by 1862.

By the 1900s, the Youtz family owned the Coleman Mansion. Edward Youtz opened a hotel in the mansion in 1907. Over time a gas station across from the hotel was converted to a tavern. During the 1920s, Rosa Youtz, Edward's daughter, opened a tea shop, the Colemanor Tea Shoppe, on the premises. According to local newspapers, it was rumored to have served, during the Prohibition Era, as a local speakeasy. It remained the Colemanor Tea Shoppe until Prohibition was repealed in 1933. The structure is still standing in Colebrook and is well-known to locals as the Colebrook Tavern (now closed).



Pictured: The Colemanor Tea Shoppe (left) and the Colebrook Tavern (right).

A Colebrook Chronicle (cont.)

Colebrook functioned as part of the large Pennsylvania National Guard military encampment from 1885 - 1935 training men for the Spanish-American War and World War I. and gained national attention. The encampment extended from Mount Gretna along Route 117 in to Colebrook. In particular, the horses for the cavalry were stabled in Colebrook. In June 1926, per an *Army & Navy Journal* article under the 104th Cavalry notes, "a swimming pool, used by the soldiers, was constructed at the Cavalry Field, Colebrook, PA." It was also said they waded the horses through it. Today, we know this pool as Cavalry Dam on the State Game lands as it still exists. It is now used as a wildlife habitat.



Pictured: Colebrook military barracks along Mt. Wilson Road.



Pictured: Troops and their horses standing in front of the Youtz Hotel (above) and the same location at the Coleman Mansion today (left).



A Colebrook Chronicle (cont.)

Colebrook's most famous resident and one of America's first dietitians was Sarah Tyson Rorer. Rorer was a world-renowned author and authority on diet and cooking who presented her recipes at the 1893 Chicago and 1904 St. Louis World's Fairs. She embraced the Chautauqua ideals and led efforts to raise money to build the Hall of Philosophy in Mount Gretna. She eventually settled in Colebrook, where she lived until her death in 1937. Her home still stands and used to be the Colebrook Post Office.



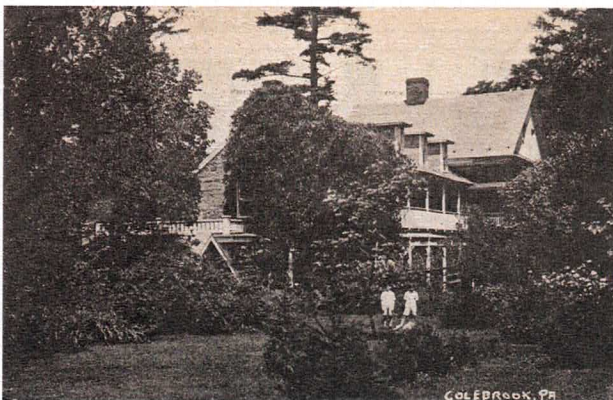
Pictured: Sarah Tyson Rorer (left) and her former home (above).

Many of the original buildings in Colebrook are still standing. The Iron master's mansion, built in 1791 by Robert Coleman, is still well-kept and owned by Barry and Susan Bucks. This lovely property has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The mansion's former 1880s single lane bowling alley (across from Route 241), built by Robert Habersham Coleman, was situated along the Conewago Creek. It was subsequently destroyed by the 1972 Agnes flood. Much of the property is surrounded by cast iron fencing, probably cast at Cornwall or Elizabeth Furnace.

The old Colebrook Grist Mill about a mile west on Route 241 remains. Spring water can be obtained at the small spring house on the Orley farm along the east side of Mount Wilson Road. A more modern icon of Colebrook, Collins Grocery, started in 1950 and is still family owned as is the Twin Kiss next to Colebrook's playground.

Colebrook may be a small village, but it is packed with a rich history of both millionaires and the working class. It is a valued part of the Central Pennsylvania community.

Then and Now



The Colebrook Mansion, also known as the Iron Master's Mansion from the South view.



Sources:

Bitner, Jack. *Mt. Gretna: A Coleman Legacy*. (Lebanon, Pennsylvania: Donald Blyler Offset, 1990).

Bucks, Susan, interview with Susan Hostetter, November 2020.

Orley, Lynn, interview with Susan Hostetter. November 2020.

Current images courtesy of Sid Hostetter.

Our Doll House



The Campmeeting Cottage doll house is a “recollection” of a Mount Gretna cottage in the 1930s-1940s. It was built by Joan G Nagle of Aiken, South Carolina. Her husband, Elliot V. Nagle, had grown up spending summers in the cottage owned by his parents at Third and Mills in the Campmeeting. Joan, Elliot, their daughter and son-in-law, Emily and Jack Green, bought their own cottage at 79 Third Street in 1994. This display is a gift to the museum from them in memory of Elliott, who died in 2000, after enjoying his last summer in Gretna.



This dollhouse is furnished as a typical cottage of that era, with some items that would have been bought new for the purpose, like the wicker table and chairs, others brought from the family’s town house, and some that were necessities for Gretna, like the kerosene stove. Elliott’s grandmother, Lydia Kreider Kettering, had built the Third and Mills cottage as a wedding gift for his parents, so there was a room for her that includes her quilting frame. The child’s room has a crawl-through into a toy room in the attic.

Pictured: Eleanor Sarabia working on the dollhouse that is on display on our second floor. A number of years ago, Eleanor used her talents to install lights in the rooms of the dollhouse.





IF COTTAGES COULD TALK:
THE HISTORY
OF MY MOUNT GRETNA COTTAGE/HOME

Street Address of My Mount Gretna Cottage/Home _____

Current Owner(s) _____

My Cottage/Home Is Located In: _____ Campmeeting _____ Chautauqua _____ Conewago Hill
_____ Mt. Gretna Heights _____ Stoberdale

Year My Cottage Was Built (If known) _____ Original Owner (If known) _____

Name of My Cottage (If applicable) _____

Any Previous Name(s) of the Cottage _____

OWNERSHIP	Date of Purchase	Purchase Price
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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Continue on the back of this form if additional space is needed.

Anecdotal and/or historical information about the cottage/home:

Other things for which the cottage may have been used in the past (rental cottage, boarding house, etc.):

Additional information (Please feel free to include diagrams, upload a picture or pictures (send to mtgretnahistory@gmail.com) and add additional pages):

Thank you for sharing this information on your Mount Gretna cottage/home. We will add it to the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society's archives of historical information on this historic community.

Please return to: Mount Gretna Area Historical Society, PO Box 362, Mt. Gretna, PA 17064 or to mtgretnahistory@gmail.com

CALLING ALL COTTAGE/HOME OWNERS!
What is your property's story?



Have you ever wondered what your cottage would tell you if it could talk? In fact, in 2006 we hosted a program with that title: "If Cottages Could Talk." At the program, cottage owners shared the results of their research, enlightening all in attendance about the cottages and the broader history of the community. One of the most often asked questions we get is, "What can you tell me about my cottage?" The Mount Gretna Area Historical Society would like to compile a database of such information and encourages all owners to research and share with us what they learn about the history of their properties. To help people begin this fascinating quest, the Board has compiled some resources.

- A good place to begin is the Lebanon County Recorder of Deeds, Room 107, Municipal Building, 400 S. 8th Street, Lebanon, PA. The office is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Appointments are required and can be made by calling 717-228-4447. Property ownership records are in the deed books. Included in the record are the date of the sale, the name of the seller, the name of the buyer, and the purchase price, all fascinating information, particularly the last item! Property records are also available at www.landex.com/remote or www.landex.com/webstore. There is a charge to use this online service.
- Another source of information is local newspapers. The Mount Gretna Historical Society has a subscription to Newspapers.com. Using names, dates, and the cottage name, if known, researchers should check the social pages of these publications to be transported to an earlier era when get-togethers on the porch were regular activities--indeed much as they are today though they most likely do not make the newspaper's society pages! Contact the Society for help with using the database.
- A final, if random, way to learn cottage history is through oral history. Talking to neighbors who have owned nearby cottages may yield unexpected, delightful anecdotes. People walking by may also add details as they reminisce about renting or even owning the property. In addition, we have volunteers who serve on our Oral History Committee who would love to talk with you and record your memories about your cottage or others. Call or email the Historical Society.

We hope these resources and suggestions inspire you to get started on your own historical journey. We would also like to note that the use of the noun "cottages" may suggest a limited style of residence when, in fact, we are eager to learn about ALL residences in our unique Mount Gretna community to appreciate their role in our ongoing story; the form included with this article may be used to share what you discover with Mount Gretna Area Historical Society. Please contact us if you have questions.

717-964-1105

mtgretnahistory@gmail.com

FOR A SAMPLE OF A COTTAGE HISTORY, SEE THE LERCH COTTAGE HISTORY ON pp. 10-11

THE LERCH-BRANDT COTTAGE AT MT. GRETNA

BACKGROUND

For years a number of family members have been curious about this 20th century family cottage built at the Mt. Gretna Campmeeting grounds located in Lebanon County PA. Started in 1892, this campmeeting was a summer religious retreat for the then United Brethren church of southern Pennsylvania. Having received many pictures from family cousins over the past 10 years showing gatherings at the cottage whet my interest. Living very close to Mt. Gretna for the past 13 years, I have had the opportunity to visit there often and learn that the cottage and lot are no longer in existence. My 2nd cousin Diane Smelker and I began researching the history of the lot/cottage and present our story of the Lerch Cottage.

SPION KOP AND THE LERCH COTTAGE

Ruben Lerch was my mother's grandpa and Nellie Burnham's parents. He and wife Alice would provide a stable home in the early 1900's for many of my other maternal ancestors including my own mother. They were all active in the Highspire United Brethren Church and took advantage of the church's new 20 acre campmeeting grounds located on ground purchased from wealthy Robert Coleman who was the Ironmaster at Cornwall Furnace, and also owned the Cornwall and Lebanon RR. In the early days Mt. Gretna was a popular stop on the C. and L. RR. Ruben and a fellow church member bought a lot at this new campmeeting grounds in 1900, the lot size was 60X80 feet. In that year, the campmeeting grounds were populated by many primitive cottages and tents, occupied by church brethren from central PA United Brethren churches attending their summer religious retreats. The first retreat took place in 1892, and Coleman's C and L RR was responsible for bringing many of the people there in those early years.

As the summer religious retreats at Mt. Gretna became more popular, more people brought lots and built primitive cottages on their lots, in fact there were nearly 200 cottages on the Campmeeting site during the period when Ruben Lerch built his cottage. Many of them were eventually outfitted to be year around residences. A Campmeeting Association appointed a board of directors who set the rules and schedules for the summer retreats. We suspect Ruben built his cottage sometime between 1901 and 1906 based upon the pictures of my own ancestors taken at the cottage. His cottage was two stories with a spacious wrap-around porch, built from much of the wood taken from surrounding cleared lots (see Pictures). It was customary to give your cottage a name; Ruben chose "Spion Kop" to honor a 1900's battle in the South African Boer War (not really sure what he had in mind??). The cottage location was at the southeast corner of Third Street and Dickson Avenue up the hill from a tabernacle built by the association. Two other cottages named Pine Crest and Dor-Lo-Mar were situated along 3rd street beside Spion Kop between Dickson and Kephart Avenues through the 1940's.

For 24 years this was a popular retreat and reunion site for the Lerches, Etters and other family members. Many family pictures showed reunions at the cottage with as many as 36 people in attendance sometime around 1910. In 1924 the Lerches and Brandts sold the property, beginning a progression of sales to others through the final sale in 1994 to the Welte family now living at 505 Third Street in the campmeeting grounds. Sometime during this period something happened to the cottage originally on the Lerch property, and his lot was divided up with a permanent easement for a road to Second Street and other nearby cottages.

Today there is no Spion Kop Cottage or other primitive cottages in that area that existed in the early 1900's. Those cottages that have survived on the campmeeting grounds have all been modernized and do not look like the original Lerch Cottage. I am thankful I have a piece of our family history in the form of early pictures of this cottage and my ancestors to kindle my interest. Our story ends here, enjoy the attached pictures, many taken 100 years ago.

Joseph Wible
July 10, 2018

PICTURES OF THE LERCH FAMILY COTTAGE AT MT. GRETNA



THE ORIGINAL LERCH COTTAGE AT MT GRETNA ON THIRD STREET WITH LERCH AND ETTER FAMILIES

THE EARLY LERCH COTTAGE AT MT GRETNA



Campmeeting Grounds

A view up Third Street at Dickson Ave. on the Campmeeting grounds, showing cottages typical of those built after lots could be bought outright. At left center of the picture, note the name "Spion Kop" is partially visible on a cottage. It bears the same name today.

The floor of the forest has been thoroughly cleaned and smoothed, and the rocks collected formed into fern gar-



REMODELED LERCH COTTAGE AROUND 1910

Thank You

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Sniegocki Weaver Financial Services

Thank You

Thank You

Thank You

Thank You

NEW MEMBERS (2020)

Welcome to our new members who have made a special commitment to support the ongoing programs and projects of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society:

David Mumma	Pat Rhen
Chris and Mary Ellen Kienhe	Stacy Schroeder
Ted Barnhart	Terri Lorah
Steve and Jennifer Mellinger	James and Denise Cassel
Loiuse Morrow	Mark and Adrienne Turner

We Are Thankful....

Did you know there are 251 current members of the MGAHS from all parts of the U.S. and abroad with an additional 40 members in the process of renewing. Many of you have chosen to donate above and beyond your membership dues. Your extra gifts are much appreciated.



BUILDING AN ENDOWMENT



The Mount Gretna Area Historical Society extends its deepest gratitude to Jeffrey and Deborah Hurst, Joyce Ebright and the Anne Brossman Sweigart Charitable Foundation for their generosity in contributing to our endowment. Building our endowment ensures our financial stability and allows us to pursue expansion and continuation in preserving our historical artifacts.



HOW TO LEAVE A LEGACY GIFT



IMAGINE what Robert Coleman would think if he could see Mt. Gretna today? Many of our greatest community assets exist because someone thought it important enough to bequeath funds to develop and sustain it. If you would like more information on leaving a legacy gift to the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society, contact David Wood at mtgretnahistory@gmail.com. Consultation with a legal or financial adviser can help you to take advantage of any savings in inheritance tax. Our MGAHS representative will help guide you through the process and the details.