



The Gretna Chronicles NEWSLETTER



Fall Edition 2008

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society "We are running on the fast track"

By Fred Buch

A fantastic year! The Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society took ownership of the new headquarters at 206 Pennsylvania Avenue, opening the facility to the members on June 28th and had a ribbon cutting on July 5th opening the facility to the general public. Our Docent Staff hosted 1519 visitors in two months. Early in the year a group formed the Architectural Preservation Advisory and presented their first program in June. The Program Committee arranged five Friday evening programs in cooperation with the Chautauqua Summer Programs, two programs in cooperation with the Campmeeting, and one program at Cornwall Manor. During the summer months many visitors to the Society Headquarters were impressed and decided to become members bringing our total membership to 500.

Continued interest by people wanting to tour the facility, has resulted in a schedule of additional hours every Sunday from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. until the end of the year. For those wishing to visit during the Thanksgiving Holiday, the museum will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday following Thanksgiving from 2 to 4 pm each day.

In just four short years since the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society was founded, the Society owns

their new home at 206 Pennsylvania Avenue. The facility housed in an early Chautauqua cottage, circa 1895, located right next to the Playhouse, provides a great opportunity for visitors and residents alike to learn more about Mt. Gretna's unique past while viewing many rare artifacts and photographs. The environmentally controlled interior of the cottage boasts a first floor museum, a kitchen, a handicap accessible entrance and restroom. The second floor is 90% original permitting visitors the opportunity to see how life was lived during the summers over 100 years ago. The lower level that was created two years ago by lifting the cottage twelve feet in the air and digging a basement, contains an office, a library/research area, museum display area, a fire proof vault and the heating and air conditioning equipment. You, as a member of the Society, can be proud of one of the finest small town museums around. Show it to your family and friends.



The Society home at
206 Pennsylvania Avenue in Mt. Gretna

Special Seasonal Hours

- November 23, 2008 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- November 28, 2008 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- November 29, 2008 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- November 30, 2008 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- December 7, 2008 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- December 14, 2008 - 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

To pay for this facility, a Special Gifts Campaign has begun and we are looking to start a Trust Fund to assure the perpetuation of the Society. Susan Wood has provided information regarding this Campaign elsewhere in this newsletter.

Chaired by Earl Lenington, the Architectural Preservation Advisory, consisting of two local architects and two other qualified people, is available at NO charge to Mt. Gretna property owners who are interested in restoring or

remodeling their cottages and homes according to the correct architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This group is available to give advice,



provide literature showing various types of windows, doors and other architectural elements. They also know the sources for some of these hard to find items. Available from this group are paint color charts and names of contractors referred to us by satisfied home owners. Much of the help you will need is available from this committee of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society.

We are blessed to have almost sixty people who have volunteered to help in various ways, as needed. There are 22 people involved on the Docent Staff to assist visitors with information. In the spring, we plan to have classes to provide more information about Mt. Gretna History. If others are interested in attending the classes, we may have limited space to include them. Other volunteers will be assisting with interior and exterior maintenance and as needed for future projects. We are certainly on our way.

TRIVIA

Did you know that Pennsylvania is the first state of the fifty United States to list their web site URL on a license plate?

Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society

OPEN Till Christmas on Sunday!

Join us Sunday afternoons from 2-4 pm November 2nd through December 14th when the MGAHS is OPEN! Bring your friends to see the exhibits, as they will be changed in March 2009.

On **Sunday, December 14th**, everyone is invited to a special **HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE** – tea and cider – treats and Victorian attired hosts will greet guests. Antique toys, the miniature cottage and more attractions for young visitors will all be on display. Bring the whole family!

**MGAHS Somewhere in Time:
25% there, next \$100,000 needed**

By Susan Wood

We have now raised \$110,100 of our \$400,000 goal in pledges for MGAHS over three years. \$63,100 is coming from MGAHS board members and

\$47,000 from our committee's efforts. Despite difficult times, we are moving forward with the "Somewhere in Time" campaign and are delighted to report significant giving. See the donor list below for these gifts.

We have a small, but energetic committee who are inviting people to contribute to the MGAHS, seeking foundation support, and planning events to include all parts of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society. Next summer, a featured program will be the history of Timber Hills, Conewago Hills and Timber Bridge.

Committee members are:

David Bronstein D.O.	Thomas Mayer
Rupert Bullard	Ellie Miller
Fred N. Buch	Steve Gibble
Madelaine Gray	Cindy Myer
Deborah Hurst	Marla Pitt
Dr. Jeffery Hurst	David Wood
Evelyn Koppel	Susan Wood, Chair

MGAHS completed the purchase of 206 Pennsylvania Avenue on September 30th. There was high interest in making sure that our new home was open to the public on summer weekends. Over 500 people toured the museum during the Art Show. The MGAHS was also a new attraction on the Tour of Homes! If you want to bring friends to see it during the winter, call Fred Buch at 800-242-3901 or Susan Wood at 964-3069.

One of the most pleasant surprises heralding the opening of the building has been many generous donations and loans of unique items for use by the Society. Furniture, clothing, military artifacts, hotel memorabilia has practically been coming out of the woodwork! Thank you to all who are bringing these items of historic interest to our attention.

**"Somewhere in Time"
pledges as of November 1, 2008**

\$15,000

Fred and Ruth Buch
Rupert Bullard and Madelaine Gray
Susan and David Wood



\$10,000

Dr. David Bronstein and Reba Thomas
Pat Quarato

\$5,000 – 9,999

Jack and Jane Anderson
Shirley and Terry Miller
James and Ellie Miller
Nancy Bowman Hatz

\$1000 - \$4999

John and Elaine Feather
Karl and Linda Gettle
Shawn and Robin Harbaugh
Jeff and Deborah Hurst
Rebecca and Earl Lenington
Roland and Joyce Nissley
Ted Martin
Cynthia and Warren Myer
Peggy O'Neil
Charles and Marla Pitt
Peter Siebert

\$500-1000

Colonel George and Chris Resh

Meet Ann Hark, Mt. Gretna's Mystery Writer

By Tom Meredith

Ann Hark, lover of Mt. Gretna and the Pennsylvania Dutch countryside, newspaper reporter, author and lecturer, probably first came here at the age of 1 during its founding year, when her father, the Rev. Dr. J. Max Hark was serving as the first Chancellor of the Pennsylvania Chautauqua Association.

As an adult, Ann learned shorthand, and went to work in Philadelphia as a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and then the *Public Ledger*. Disliking the noise and commotion of the city, she spent restorative weekends in the cottage at the extreme western end of what was then Pennsylvania Avenue – next to the state game lands.

Between 1936 and 1939 she wrote and published five books, of which *Hex Marks the Spot* (1938) had the widest national circulation, going through at least five printings and bringing to its readers one of the first objective accounts of Pennsylvania Dutch culture based on close personal observation. From her home base in Mt. Gretna she traveled the surrounding countryside, making friends with her Amish and Mennonite neighbors, reporting on their customs and way of life. In 1943 she wrote *The Story of the Pennsylvania Dutch*, a children's book beautifully illustrated by C. N. DeWitt.

In 1939 Ann completed *The Phantom of the Forest*, a juvenile mystery set in the old Conewago Hotel, whose owners were forced to close it as business declined following the departure of the National Guard for Indiantown Gap, the lingering effects of the Depression, and concerns about the war in Europe. A caretaker is employed to watch over the building, but who else is living there? As two school girls unravel the mystery much Mt. Gretna folklore and many old legends and customs are revealed.

But it is a book published nine years later, *Blue Hills and Shoofly Pie* (1952), that best conveys Ann's deep attachment to Mt. Gretna and is regarded by many as her best book. Written in her easy, conversational style, focused on what she called her "Pennsylvania Dutchland," and centered in Mt. Gretna, *Blue Hills* takes the reader on a year long, month by month visit to Mt. Gretna and the neighboring farms and villages so beloved by the author. It is a book that "had to be written," Ann wrote as she revisited in memory the friends she had made years before in her beloved blue hills.

Ann died in 1971 in Norristown, PA. She was cremated and her ashes scattered. Obituaries do not specify the place, but one can hope it might have been near her cottage in Mt. Gretna.

She was born on August 27, 1891, and each year on the last Sunday in August a group of Friends of Ann Hark meets in the Campmeeting Tabernacle to celebrate her birthday and discuss her life and work. (There are still a few members who remember Ann as a visitor to their cottages.) On



occasion, Ann herself, portrayed in a strikingly realistic fashion by Linda Campbell, has joined the group. Anyone interested in Ann, or who wants to learn more about her life and writings is welcome to attend these meetings; the date is announced in the *Mt. Gretna Summer Calendar* published by the Mt. Gretna Arts Council.

A Brief History of the Library

By Deborah J. Hurst

On the corner of Rt. 117 and Pinch Road, nestled under the pine trees sits a small building known as "our cute little" library. I hate the word cute. Cute means you have never been inside. Last count we had many, many books and it seems like many more when they have to come off the shelves to be cleaned and dusted. We have a high vaulted ceiling and the building was untouched inside until several years ago when a wall was put up to use the back area as the information center. After a year the information center moved across the street and the wall was taken down.

We hold children's programs that include storytelling and crafts, wine and chocolate tasting programs and book discussions. The board decided to have them in the evening so those that worked could attend. No one will ever forget the year Colonel George Resh hosted a book discussion



TRIVIA

Did you know that The Rockville Bridge in Harrisburg is the longest stone arch bridge in the world?

on *The DiVinci Code* by Dan Brown on one of the hottest nights of the summer. We had almost forty people in our "cute little" library. Talk about standing room only! After that the Board decided to move programs that would bring an increase in audience to the Tabernacle. The last couple of years we have had the honor of having Irene Rollman conduct historical programs and this year

TRIVIA

Did you know that Pennsylvania is the only original colony not bordered by the Atlantic Ocean?

MT. GRETNA'S ORAL HISTORY

By Jack H. Anderson

Have you ever had a relaxed conversation with a friend or acquaintance and shared a story about Mt. Gretna? Have you shared your knowledge of the history of a cottage, or an event, or an old Mt. Gretna tradition? What was your summer like in Mt. Gretna in times past? In recent years oral history has emerged as a useful means of recording and preserving the unique memories and life experiences of people whose stories might otherwise have been lost. Mt. Gretna has touched the lives of many people in so many ways and everyone has stories they can tell. The oral history project of the Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society offers an opportunity for people to do just that... to tell these stories in a relaxed conversation, and assure that they are preserved as part of the collective memories of Mt. Gretna. You can help the oral history project in the following ways: (1) suggest persons you think we should interview to collect their oral history; (2) become an oral history interviewee and share your own remembrances; (3) become an oral history interviewer for the Society; or (4) help the oral history project in other ways. Call Jack Anderson, 964-4975.



Linda Campbell joined the presenters.
One of the most interesting features of the library is the doors. At one time the building was the fire house for the Campmeeting and was located on Boehm and Third Street in the Campmeeting. The size of the doors is unique since they were made to allow the fire fighting equipment to be stored in the then fire house and pulled out when needed. Later it was moved to its present location.

TRIVIA

Did you know that the State Mammal of Pennsylvania is the White Tailed Deer?

MT. GRETNAL AREA HISTORICAL

SOCIETY BOARD TRUSTEES 2007 - 2008

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DEBORAH HURST.....Secretary
DR. JEFFREY HURST.....Trustee
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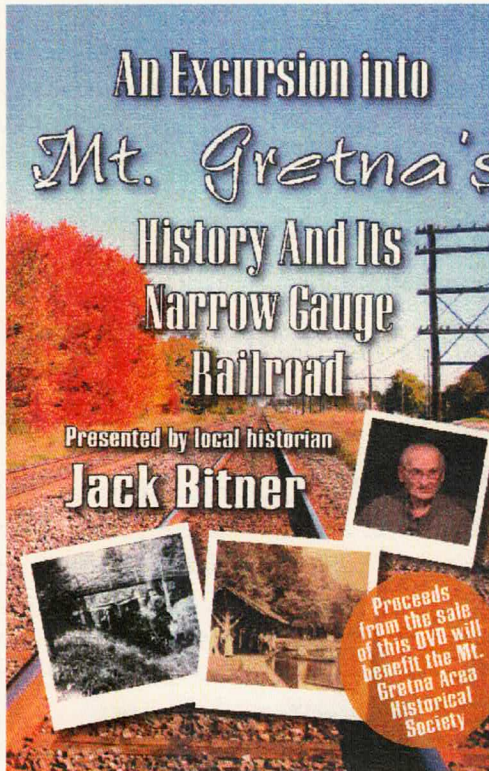
Thank You!

The Society wishes to thank all newsletter writers for their contributions and hard work.

Ted Martin, Editor



www.mtgretnahistory.org



MT. GRETNA AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Enjoy Jack Bitner's history of Mt. Gretna on a two DVD boxed set which includes the early history of the Chautaugua and the Narrow Gauge Railroad. The boxed set is only \$29.95. Order today or have it shipped for only \$4.00 more.

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