

A Brief History of the Mount Gretna, PA Campmeeting

In 1891 the leaders of the United Brethren Campmeeting Bible Conference, held in Stoverdale, PA, expressed concern about strict adherence to religious beliefs and the importance of being insulated from worldly influences especially on the Sabbath. After much consideration, the Bible Conference left Stoverdale and relocated to Mt. Gretna. Robert H. Coleman, a wealthy iron magnate and philanthropist, leased the Conference twenty acres of land for twenty years at a total cost of one dollar.

The Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Association received its charter on March 17, 1892 and celebrated its first Bible Conference beginning August 2, 1892. At this time 102 cottages were already erected, a dormitory large enough for 60 cots, and a dining hall. The first year or two 12 'X12' canvas tents also housed some attendees. Tiny cottages and tents circled the worship area where folks sat on backless planks listening to lengthy sermons during the ten-day conference.

That Campmeeting "season" soon expanded to include the entire summer. Many more cottages were built, expanded upon, and Victorian embellishments added which became the cottages we still enjoy today. We have many year-round residents, including retirees and working professionals who enjoy the summer crowds, activities, and devotion, as well as the winter calm. Summer guests and residents still come for the Bible Festival. In addition, folks enjoy biking and hiking, theater, music of all genre, nature, educational and diverse arts programs. All appreciate the social nature of our porches. Many friendships begin on these porches and are renewed there each summer.



September 4, 2012 – Mt. Gretna Campmeeting historic area is placed on the National Register of Historic Places

The source of this information is from Mt. Gretna A Coleman Legacy; Bitner, Jack. A Lebanon County Historical Society Special Publication. 1990