

Mount Gretna Campmeeting Chronology

1876? First campmeeting of Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ held at the commercial campgrounds owned by Edward Stover. *Date is uncertain. No official records have been found, but there are press references to Stoverdale campmeetings much earlier than the 1891 of which we do have record.)*

1891 August: dissatisfaction with conditions at Stoverdale Campground and non-cooperation of management leads Association under presidency of H.B. Dohner to accept Robert Coleman's offer of space at Mt. Gretna.

The Coleman Offer: 20 year lease on 20 acres of land, \$1.00, renewable for 20 years; Association to have right to build cottages for sale or rent; if land not used for two years, it reverts to Coleman; all cottages to be removed at Association or owners' expense on termination of lease; Coleman workers to erect chapel, dormitory, and store for Association use; dormitory to be available for C&L workers when not required by Association; Association to receive rebate on every C&L ticket sold to Mt. Gretna.

1892 Winter, 1891 and spring 1892 Mt Gretna site cleared (8 acres), 102 cottages built; provisions made for operating store, boarding hall, evangelistic program for nine days (August 2-10), arrangements for tents, cots, bedsprings, hay (to absorb the mud), sanitation facilities (primitive and ultimately unsatisfactory), transport of baggage from and to RR station, cottage and lot prices, coordination with Chautauqua season.

Management: Originally, 9 members, 7 clergy, 2 laymen. Today: eleven members, ten cottage owners, one representative from Tabernacle Association (which is a subcommittee of the CMA - the Byzantine relationships here are of concern only to the Bible Festival Program Committee and the IRS.)

Summer: 102 cottages erected and occupied (the "circle" around the grove and the northern and western sections - nothing on First Street. Grounds dedicated "to the glory of God," nine days of prayer, preaching, evangelism, and singing followed.

1893 Lots on 7th Street and west of 7th were opened for selection. Notation in minute book: "N.B. On motion decided the Association build no more cottages for individuals." Decided to put 4-strand barbed wire fence around grounds and ask cottage owners for a "proportionate contribution to the placing of a fence."

1896 First mention of needing Sunday worship services before and after

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1897 Coleman bankruptcy. Discussion with Coleman-Rogers estate re purchase of leased campground.

Committee appointed to provide worship services "before and after." *[Note: In later years the non-camp Sundays were listed on the inside front cover of the program along with the clergyman holding the service.]*

1898 After careful survey, decide to add land to the south and purchase a total of 30 acres @ \$300.00

Managers recommend all cottage owners have their deeds (from the Campmeeting) recorded at the courthouse. Very few comply.

1899 Feb. 10, first mention of sewerage as a solution to sanitation problem. Committee appointed to "ascertain cost of sewerage privileges."

Tabernacle completed; dedicated August 6 by Bishop Ezekiel Boring Kephart

August 15, fatal cottage fire on 5th St. between Otterbein and Glossbrenner.

1905 Agreement reached with Pennsylvania Chautauqua allowing Campmeeting to build a sewer system and connect to the Chautauqua treatment plant. Construction of campmeeting sewer system begins.

Summer program becomes a Bible Conference.

1906 Sewer system completed and connected to Chautauqua system. More buyers for CMA lots - frequently purchasing more than one lot - cottages are getting bigger.

Association instructs the Board to consider a "Bible School

1907 Sanitary inspection of entire Mt. Gretna-Conewago Valley area, requested by the Pennsylvania Adjutant General in preparation for the 1907 National Guard encampment, reveals devastating failure of sanitary facilities.

Karl Lorenz music director for 1907 season.

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- 1910 Political unrest in Campmeeting: United Brethren Church controls the Association, but more and more non-UBs are buying lots, building cottages, and demanding influence in campmeeting municipal affairs. Taxpayers' League takes management to court, wins two seats on board.
- 1911 First election under court-imposed requirement for two non-UB members. Chautauqua builds new sewage treatment plant. Campmeeting continues as "customer."
- Campmeeting population: 170 property owners.
- 1912 Constitution and By-Laws amended to create an Executive Committee to be elected by non-UB cottages owners, from which committee the two non-UB board members are to be elected.
- 1929 Christian Endeavor conference; Summer Assembly
- 1944 First year-round Sunday worship services: Marlin Seiders in Tabernacle back room. 1950: moved to Hall of Christian Education (also known as Gretna Hall and Parish Hall).
- 1949 Devastating, non-fatality fire in November wipes out the block between 3rd and 4th and Otterbein and Markwood, now referred to as "Memorial Park."
- 1952 Age Group Camping replaces Summer Assembly.
- 1952 Mt. Gretna Evangelical United Brethren Memorial Chapel, later changed to Mt. Gretna Evangelical United Brethren Community Church and still later to Mt. Gretna United Methodist Church.
- 1960 All camping activity moved to Gretna Glen.
- 1963 Campmeeting store converted to new church building.
- 1989 Parish Hall demolished for parking space.
- 1991 Latest addition to church completed.