

## Mount Gretna Chronology

- c.1732** Land was used to produce trees that were harvested and turned into charcoal for iron production at local furnaces.
- 1742** **Peter Grubb** builds **Cornwall Furnace**.
- 1764** **Robert Coleman**, age 16, arrives in America with little money & two letters of introduction.
- 1766** Robert Coleman is hired by **Curtis & Peter Grubb**, sons of Peter #1, as keeper of the records at **Hopewell Furnace**. He remained at Hopewell for 6 months.
- Robert Coleman is under the employ of **James Old** of **Speedwell Forge** near Brickerville. Coleman lived with the **Old** Family.
- 1773** Robert Coleman married Old's daughter **Ann Old** in **October 1773**.
- 1776** Coleman leases **Elizabeth Furnace** in Brickerville. Revolutionary War begins. Robert employs **William Henry Stiegel**. Seventy Hessian prisoners from the Battle of Trenton were brought to Elizabeth Furnace to dig a ditch to Furnace Creek thus increasing the water flow to run the water wheel for power.
- 1784** **James Coleman**, 6th son of Robert and Ann Coleman was born.
- 1786** Robert Coleman purchases 2/3 ownership in **Elizabeth Furnace**, 1/6 ownership of **Cornwall** from the Grubbs, all of **Speedwell Furnace**, and 1/3 of the **Upper and Lower Hopewell** all for 25,000 pounds.
- 1791** Robert Coleman builds **Colebrook Furnace** getting ore from Cornwall over Mine Road. Also in that year he built the beautiful stone house in Colebrook.
- 1794** **Thomas Burd Coleman**, the 11th child of Robert and Ann Old Coleman was born.
- 1796** The Coleman's 12th child, **Ann Caroline**, was born. Robert and Ann Coleman, it is believed, had 14 children. Two died in infancy and six died without any children. Two of the sons and their decedents expanded the Coleman Empire.
- 1798** Robert Coleman now owns all of Elizabeth Furnace and 5/6 of Cornwall.
- 1802** **Sarah Hand Coleman** was born. As a young lady she fell in love with **William Muhlenberg**, the Rector of St. James Church. Since Robert Coleman and Muhlenberg disagreed about Wednesday evening services, Coleman would not permit the Rector to enter his house. Following Robert Coleman's death in 1825, restrictions in his will prevented Sarah from marrying the Rector. Sarah was also sent to sister Margaret's home in Philadelphia to live. Sarah died prematurely under suspicious circumstances (similar to Ann Caroline Coleman who died several years later).

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- 1809** **Robert Coleman** retired and moved to Lancaster. The Colemans were very active in St. James Episcopal Church in Lancaster. Young **Ann Caroline Coleman** became enamored with another parishioner, **James Buchanan**. Ann's father was vehemently opposed. When they became engaged.
- 1809** Coleman broke it off and sent **Ann** to live with her married sister, **Margaret**, in Philadelphia. Ann died under suspicious circumstances on **December 9, 1819**. Buchanan never married.
- Thomas Burd Coleman became an apprentice in the Cornwall iron operation at the early age of 15. He later moved to York and married **Hannah Cassat**. They had six children. When Hannah died at age 34, Thomas and the children returned to his parents' home in Cornwall where he died 6 years later.
- 1821** **James Coleman**, the 6th child of Robert and Ann, took over the management of several furnaces. At age 37, James married **Harriet Dawson** of Philadelphia. They had five children: **Robert, George Dawson, Anna, Sarah Hand, and Harriet**.
- 1831** **James Coleman** died. His family moved to Philadelphia but spent their summers at Elizabeth Furnace. George Dawson and Robert Coleman managed Cornwall and Elizabeth Furnaces which they inherited.
- 1836** **Thomas Coleman** dies and sons **Robert W. and William** inherit jointly father's estate which included 25 shares of the 80 original of their grandfather in the Cornwall operation. Their two daughters were **Ann** and **Margaret**. Ann married **Bradford Alden** and Margaret married **William Freeman**. The daughters' husbands worked in the business.
- 1852** **George Dawson Coleman** bought Robert's interests in the furnaces and continued active in the business his entire life. He married **Deborah Brown** of Philadelphia. They had 11 children. At age 14, son **James** was thrown from a horse and died. **Coleman Chapel** in Brickerville was built in his memory.
- 1855** **William Coleman** married **Ellen Habersham** of Savannah. Ellen Habersham was from a very affluent family and it is not known how they met. William's brother **Robert W.** never marries. Robert W. lives with William's family and both brothers run the Cornwall operation.
- 1856** In 1856 **Robert Habersham Coleman** is born to William and Ellen, and in 1858 daughter **Anne** is born. Ellen went to Savannah for the births of both children. Raising the children and the stress of the Civil War were difficult for Ellen, but she remained loyal to her husband.
- 1861** **William Coleman** dies at age 35 and **Robert W. Coleman** takes control of the Coleman Iron Empire. **Robert Habersham**, age 9, and sister **Anne**, age 7, inherit a fortune. **Robert H.**'s inheritance was approximately 7 million (today 30 billion). **Samuel Small**, an attorney, becomes the children's guardian. Ellen takes charge of the the children's education (including **Edith Johnstone**, orphaned daughter of old friends in Savannah.)
- 1864** **Robert W. Coleman** dies. **Robert W.** earns profits from the Civil War but doesn't live to enjoy them. The controlling interest of the iron empire passes to **Robert Habersham Coleman**.

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- 1871** **Robert Habersham Coleman** is enrolled in "The Rectory" in Hamden, CT, a prestigious Episcopal prep school. The academic, military, and religious training prepared Robert for college.
- 1873** **Robert H.** entered Trinity College in Hartford, CT, preferred by families with substantial means, Episcopal.
- 1874** **Freshman Year** - Robert H. fits in well with physical and social graces and excels at sports but lacks motivation in his academics. In October he joined the Delta Psi fraternity. At the end of freshman year, **1874** he finished last in his class. His mother was disappointed but Sam Small knew he would learn the business on the job. His experiences in college, other than academics, would prepare him as a person.

**Sophomore Year** - Robert H. wanted to do better but by midterm was still last in his class. He became a leader in social affairs. His off-campus apartment was the scene of frequent parties and dances. At the end of the year he was next to last in his class.

The summer between his Sophomore and Junior year at age 19, Robert H. spent time learning about the Cornwall operation under Sam Small.

**Junior Year** - Academically Robert H. did much the same as before. He became an avid baseball player and in 1876 was elected President of his class and Chess Club. He was appointed manager of the baseball team and was popular with the Hartford ladies. In the spring of 1876 his attention turned to **Lillie Clark**, the orphaned daughter of a minister and foster daughter of a wealthy merchant.

Summer of 1876 was spent in Europe much like when he was younger. Mother, sister Anne, Edith Johnstone, and Robert travel together.

**Senior Year** - Fall of 1876 Robert H. begins his senior year and because of his diverse activities and accomplishments, college permits him to finish his senior year. He takes a "Special Course Program" designed for his interests and diploma.

- 1877** In March, **Robert Habersham Coleman** turns age 21. The formalities of the Estate are settled and he has a bank account of \$1,200,000. Robert H. is free to spend but is conservative. Upon returning to campus and hearing of plans to move the campus, he erects a new fraternity house for his fraternity.

Commencement is **June 28**, and Robert H. is last in his class again. He leads the academic procession as Class President. Robert H. introduced a series of speakers, and **Professor Jim**, an ex-slave who had been employed by the college since its founding, was honored at his (Jim's) last commencement.

The entire group visited the site of the new campus. In the evening a magnificent ball was held, provided by Robert H. Coleman. Quoting **Jack Bitner**, "His formal grooming was now finished, and he stood at the threshold of his reign as head of the Coleman Empire."

Robert H. Coleman returns home to Cornwall.

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Due to lack of experience, Robert H. doesn't take over the iron operations for another two years. This gave him more time to travel to Hartford to oversee the construction of the new fraternity house and visit his beloved Lillie Clark.

- 1878** The Fraternity House is completed in May at a cost of \$28,000.00. Built of granite, it resembled a small castle with steep slate roof and tower. The architect was **Josiah C. Cady** who later designed the Metropolitan Opera House.
- 1879** **January 5, 1879**, Robert H. Coleman marries Lillie Clark in Hartford. His sister, Anne, was maid-of-honor and Edith Johnstone was a bridesmaid. They went on their honeymoon in a private railroad car arriving back in Cornwall in late January. They took up residence with Robert's mother, Ellen. Robert H. was already speaking to an architect regarding the building of a mansion to show their status in life, probably being the largest house in the state.
- 1879** **Robert H.** took control of the Iron empire. **Artemis Wilhelm**, manager, encouraged Robert to expand the company. He purchased land northwest of Lebanon along the Quittapahilla Creek where he ordered construction of two modern anthracite furnaces, called **Colebrook I and II**, after the one his great-grandfather built in 1791.

Construction of the mansion begins. Robert H. and Lillie travel to Europe to purchase furnishings for the mansion. They sailed for England on **November 8, 1879** intending to return to Cornwall in March. A frail Lillie became ill in February. They traveled to Italy for a milder climate. Returning to France in April, her condition worsened and she died in Paris on **May 10, 1880**.

Robert H.'s sister, Anne, married **Archibald Rogers** of New York the next day not knowing of Lillie's death.

- 1880** **Robert H.** returns to Cornwall with Lillie's body. Due to lack of interest and progress in the mansion's construction, Robert H. orders the mansion demolished without a trace of evidence that it ever existed. **St. Luke's Episcopal Church** in Lebanon was under construction. Robert H. donated stone from the mansion and financed the church's completion. Lillie was interred in a crypt under the altar. In his bereavement, Coleman took an increased personal interest in the agricultural development of his 24,000 acre estate in Lebanon, Lancaster, and York counties.
- 1882** In **June of 1882**, work on the **C & L Railroad** started. The C & L (Cornwall & Lebanon) had to cross the **Cornwall Railroad** in Cornwall. It traveled through the Conewago Hills to Conewago, just outside Elizabethtown to a junction with the **Pennsylvania Railroad Main Line**.

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**1883 April 21, 1883 (Lebanon Daily News)** "A short distance from Colebrook the (new C & L) Railroad enters the Conewago Hills... Near the top of the mountain is a station named Mt. Gretna... Here...the (C & L) Co. might lay out elegant picnic grounds, as everything combines to make it a delightful spot for such purposes."

A committee made up of **Robert H. Coleman, John Jennings, and Hugh Maxwell**, all officers of the railroad company, was formed to select sites and name the stations. They selected a date to complete the job but, on the date, selected, Coleman was not available. Jennings and Maxwell took the trip and decided on the station locations. Service was begun on **October 1, 1883.**

**Mount Gretna Station** was established by the Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad as a recreational stop for day-trippers.

By 1883 other furnaces were built using coal instead of charcoal and operation of the original charcoal furnace in Cornwall was terminated by Coleman in favor of the anthracite furnaces **Colebrook I and II.**

**1884 May 13, 1884 (Lebanon Daily News)** "The C & L RR, under Robert H. Coleman, intends laying out extensive picnic grounds at Mt. Gretna Station...(It is) admirably adapted...an abundance of good water & magnificent groves of pine and oak."

"The grounds will ...be handsomely laid out,...with pavilions, kitchens, walks...(and will be the) finest in the state."

**1884** The previous year, **Robert H. Coleman** had invested in a railroad parts company and in **February, 1884,** he travels to Florida to see the operation. On return in March he visits his mother, Ellen, in New York. **Edith Johnstone** (age 21) came from her Baltimore home to visit Ellen also. By the summer of 1884, she and Robert H. became engaged and married in October.

**May 17, 1884** 5 acres cleared, leveled & smoothed. **(Lebanon Daily News)** "Yesterday, masons started (enclosing) springs."

Mount Gretna picnic grounds opened to visitors.

**June 5, 1884** The first picnic was held in Mt. Gretna Park.

3 springs enclosed, 2 rustic bridges, dance floor laid.

By **June 20th,** attendance was 1,000.

**July 4, 1884** There was a crowd of 4,000-5,000 people in the park.

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**1885** The **Pennsylvania National Guard** was invited to use a 120-acre site west of the picnic park as a site for the annual encampment of the Guard. The Pennsylvania National Guard inspects the Mount Gretna proposed training area, approves, and begins training on **July 25th** as "**Camp Sigfried.**"

**June 10, 1885** There was a survey for the site of the lake and the dam was started across the Conewago Creek to form a 17 acre lake, primarily for winter ice production, army bridge building in the summer, and recreational purposes.

**June 27, 1885** Station enlarged and Park Main Avenue added. The picnic grove was enlarged as an amusement park. Bowling alley & shooting gallery installed, dance pavilion & dining hall finished: free kitchen.

**July 27, 1885** 12,000 - 15,000 people at Gretna.

**1886** **May 10, 1886** Lake completed: "Fully 15 acres."

**June 14, 1886** "The merry-go-round has been shipped from Phila. & will be placed in position this week."

**June 18, 1886** 15 boats now for hire on lake at 25 cents per hour. Daily picnics. Gravelled walks. Bell in dining hall.

**1887** **June 27, 1887** Big picnic for employees of **Robert H. Coleman.**

**July 15, 1887** 150 men clearing camp/parade grounds.

**July 27, 1887** **Pinch Road** north of Conewago Creek closed and rerouted to run south of creek (now 117), then north over the RR and hill (TV hill).

**August 6, 1887** Large map of entire Park and Camp area.  
(There are front page articles in the Lebanon Daily News **every** day, covering **everything** that happens at Mt. Gretna.)

**1888** (Files of Lebanon Daily News were missing for the entire summer of 1888.)

**1889** **March 29, 1889 (Lengthy article in Lebanon Daily News)** Narrow Gauge RR work to proceed at once, to be finished by June 15.

**June 8, 1889** Tower and Boarding Platform at **Gov. Dick.**

**June 24, 1889** New fourteen-room Bath House at Lake.

**June 28, 1889** Narrow Gauge RR running daily regular schedule.

**July 4, 1889** A new (third) engine arrived from Baldwin and was immediately put into service (10 days after order!). **Perseverance Band** played at the Park.

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**July 29, 1889** Lengthy description of Park, NGRR trains leave Park every half hour.

**August 5, 1889** Dining Hall will seat 800!

**August 19, 1889** Glowing description of Mt. Gretna (LDN), 5,000 rode NGRR in this week!

**August 22, 1889** Park main Avenue named **Cornwall Avenue**.

**1890 July 10, 1890 Lebanon Daily News** lengthy description of Park and ride to Gov. Dick on NGRR.

**July 24, 1890 President Benjamin Harrison** at Gretna to review troops.

**August 14, 1890** First **Farmer's Encampment** at Gretna.

**August 16, 1890** A "**Grand Illumination**" introducing the first electric lights in the park. Hot air balloon ascensions. **August 21, 1890** 20,000 attend exhibits.

**1891 United Brethren Campmeeting Bible Conference at Stoverdale** (near present-day Hershey) discusses relocation to Mount Gretna.

**June 11, 1891 Park** expanded by 30 acres to have capacity for 100,000 for **Farmer's Encampment**.

Carousel arrives from Atlantic City; has 70 figures. Steam operated with steam organ.

Detailed description of new scenic railway, which starts near Park entrance at the C & L Station and runs over 400 feet southeast (toward skating rink). It is 47 feet above ground at its highest point. (This is one of the earliest roller-coasters in Pennsylvania - perhaps the first.)

**July 18, 1891** Describes how RR car on a siding near the **Farmer's Encampment Building** provides electricity for the Park.

**1892** Visits to Mount Gretna by the newly organized **Pennsylvania Chautauqua Committee** and the newly organized **Mount Gretna Campmeeting Association**.

The **Pennsylvania Chautauqua** and the **United Brethren in Christ Campmeeting** take up residence in Mount Gretna. Both lease land from Robert H. Coleman. He makes many promises.

**1892** First **Chautauqua** was held at Mount Gretna **July 11, 1892 to July 28, 1892**.

First **Campmeeting** was held at Mount Gretna **August 2, 1892**.

Starting in 1892, when the Chautauqua and Campmeeting both started at Gretna, **Lebanon Daily News** reports of events in the Park were less detailed. The Park was now just one part of a larger complex, and it has approached the peak of its growth.



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- 1893** By 1893, the **1890 "Silver Law"** changed the financial core of the nation. The stock market depreciated and Coleman's investments were in trouble. On **September 22, 1893**, the last Coleman furnace shut down.
- In **December, 1893**, the Coleman family took the train to Hyde Park for Christmas with Coleman's sister Anne and Archibald.
- 1898** **Chautauqua** installs a new sewer system to handle the demands of the large crowds and preserve their springs. The mortgage was \$27,000.
- The **Chautauqua Inn** was built at the present day parking lot.
- 1909** Construction of the **Conewago Hotel** overlooking the Lake. 193 feet in length with 125 bedrooms. The foundation was started **April 17** and the hotel was opened **July 1909**.
- c.1920** Establishment of the **"Gretna Heights"** community to the east of the Campmeeting as a planned residential community.
- 1925-1926** The last carousel to come to Gretna was Philadelphia Toboggan Co. No. 9 which was returned to the factory from Euclid Park Cleveland in 1925 and delivered to Gretna in 1926 after a complete overhaul. At the same time, a Wurlitzer Model 148 Band Organ, also overhauled at the Wurlitzer factory was delivered to Mt. Gretna.
- 1927** Establishment of **Mount Gretna Summer Theater**.
- 1954** Gift of the **Governor Dick** tract of land (1105 acres) made to the Mount Joy School District by owners **Clarence and Evetta Schock**.
- 1974** First **Arts and Crafts Show** at Mount Gretna.
- 1975** **Music at Gretna** was founded by **Dr. Carl Ellenberger**.
- 2004** **Mount Gretna Area Historical Society** was founded 6/29/04

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