The Gretna Chronicles

Mt. Gretna Area HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Round and Round Again with Mount Gretna's "Golden Age" Carousels *by Josh Groh*

Flying horses, extravagant palaces and exotic menageries sound like the stuff of fairy tales, but for the managers of Mount Gretna Park, they were valuable business assets.

The heyday of Mount Gretna's four (count 'em – four!) carousels coincides neatly with the golden age of carousels in American parks, generally agreed to be between the 1880s and the 1930s. After the initial success of the first picnic held at Mount Gretna in 1884, a series of park managers capitalized on public fascination with the amusement ride in the hopes they could attract a healthy stream of visitors to the burgeoning park.

The first of these businessmen was Lebanon inn proprietor E. M. Boltz, hired in 1885 to manage the picnic grounds. After seeing a carousel draw regular crowds on the streets of Lebanon that fall, Boltz decided to purchase the first park carousel for the 1886 season. The "Flying Horses" was installed in the park on June 16 of that year and went into operation the next day. The ride featured more than just horses – a menagerie of "wild and domestic animals" were carved to serve as seats for patrons.

While a single, walking horse powered the flying steeds under the tent, riders were able to view hand-illustrated scenes of Mount Gretna, Lake Conewago, Governor Dick, a collier's cabin, and Sheep Hill, a scenic railroad stop near the border of Cornwall and West Cornwall townships.

The 1886 carousel was the creation of the C. W. F. Dare Company, formed in 1884 by Charles Dare. A New York City-based maker of children's carriages and toys, Dare had become one of the country's foremost carousel manufacturers by the 1880s. The oldest existing carousel in the U.S. today is another Dare carousel built in 1876, also named the Flying Horses, located on Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

It is unclear when exactly the Flying Horses ceased operation, but by March of 1891, Boltz had sold the ride's organ to a buyer in Danville, Pa., likely signaling the end of the first carousel.

Visitors to the park were not bereft for long, however. After Boltz left his position at the park picnic grounds, Herman B. Griffiths stepped in to take his place, installing a new carousel of his own for the 1891 season. Significantly larger than its predecessor, the "Palace of Flying Animals" was a 70-seat tent carousel with three concentric rows of animals. Both the ride and its brass calliope

In This Issue

The "Flying Horses" carousel installed at Mount Gretna Park in 1886 by E. M. Boltz

Photo by Luther Harpel, provided from the MGAHS Archives.

Round and Round Again with Mount Gretna's "Golden Age" Carousels

(a keyboard instrument using a set of whistles) were powered by a steam engine.

Little is known about the Palace, including its manufacturer, as newspaper advertisement of it virtually evaporated after the 1891 season. However, it is worth noting that there were at least two other "Palace of Flying Animals" carousels operating in 1891, one in Philadelphia and another in Plainfield, N.J. The latter carousel, similar in cost, design, and features to that of Mount Gretna's, was created by the G.A. Dentzel Company, another prominent manufacturer with about two dozen models still in operation today.

In 1917, Ferdinand Gremminger, who assumed control of Mount Gretna Park in 1915, advertised the installation of a new $10,000 carousel and the removal of the "old carousel," presumably the Palace. The old carousel animals were repurposed as playground hobby horses, which can be seen in several photographs.

This third carousel is not to be confused with the carousel that was installed for the 1926 opening of Kauffman Park. When park namesake Abraham Kauffman developed an amusement park to rival Gremminger's Mount Gretna Park, he contracted with the Philadelphia Toboggan Company to construct a roller coaster on the grounds and purchased one of their pre-existing carousels.

The carousel at Kauffman Park was originally built in 1905 and numbered PTC #9. After several ownership changes, the carousel was taken back to the factory in 1925, refurbished to include "jumper" animals that could move up and down, and sold to Kauffman.

Installed in 1917 by Ferdinand Gremminger, the last of Mount Gretna Park's carousels sat inside a red-roofed shelter as seen in this postcard dated to 1921. Photo from the MGAHS Archives.

In "Mt. Gretna: A Coleman History," Jack Bitner misidentifies PTC #9 as the carousel installed by Gremminger. In fact, postcards and photographs of the two carousel structures confirm they were separate machines. The Otto family eventually came to manage both Kauffman Park and Mount Gretna Park, the former ceasing operations in the early years of the Great Depression and the latter shutting down shortly after World War II.

The fate of the Gremminger carousel contraption is undocumented, but the red-roofed structure housing it continued to remain standing until 1985, when it, along with the few dilapidated buildings remaining of the original Mount Gretna Park, were demolished.

Though the Mount Gretna Park carousels have been lost to history, the Kauffman Park carousel has been salvaged as one remaining amusement from a bygone era of the community's history.

This photograph of the second carousel, the "Palace of Flying Animals," was taken in 1896 at the earliest, when the Stars and Stripes gained a 45th star for the state of Utah. Photo from the MGAHS Archives.

PTC #9 was sold to Twin Grove Park in 1935 and dismantled around 1980, its parts ending up in various collections around the country, including the Society museum, home to two PTC #9 animals. Thanks to more than 20 years of volunteer efforts, the PTC #9 carousel has been restored and can today be visited in Pottstown, Pa.

Sources

Lebanon Daily News, 15 April 1885, pp. 1 – Hiring of Boltz

Lebanon Daily News, 28 Sept 1885, pp. 1 – Boltz purchases carousel

Lebanon Daily News, 18 June 1886, pp. 1 – Installation of first carousel

Lebanon Daily News, 26 July 1887, pp. 1 – Carousel details

Lebanon Daily News, 3 March 1891, pp. 6 – Boltz sells organ

Lebanon Daily News, 9 March 1891, pp. 1 – Griffiths takes over

Plainfield Courier, 5 Oct 1891, pp. 3 – Plainfield Palace

Philadelphia Inquirer, 29 Jan 1892, pp. 1 – Philadelphia Palace

Lebanon Evening Report, 6 July 1898, pp. 4 – Dissinger & Lesher

Lebanon Evening Report, 6 April 1917, pp. 1 – Gremminger carousel

Lebanon Evening Report, 10 Sept 1917, pp. 8 – Second carousel dismantled
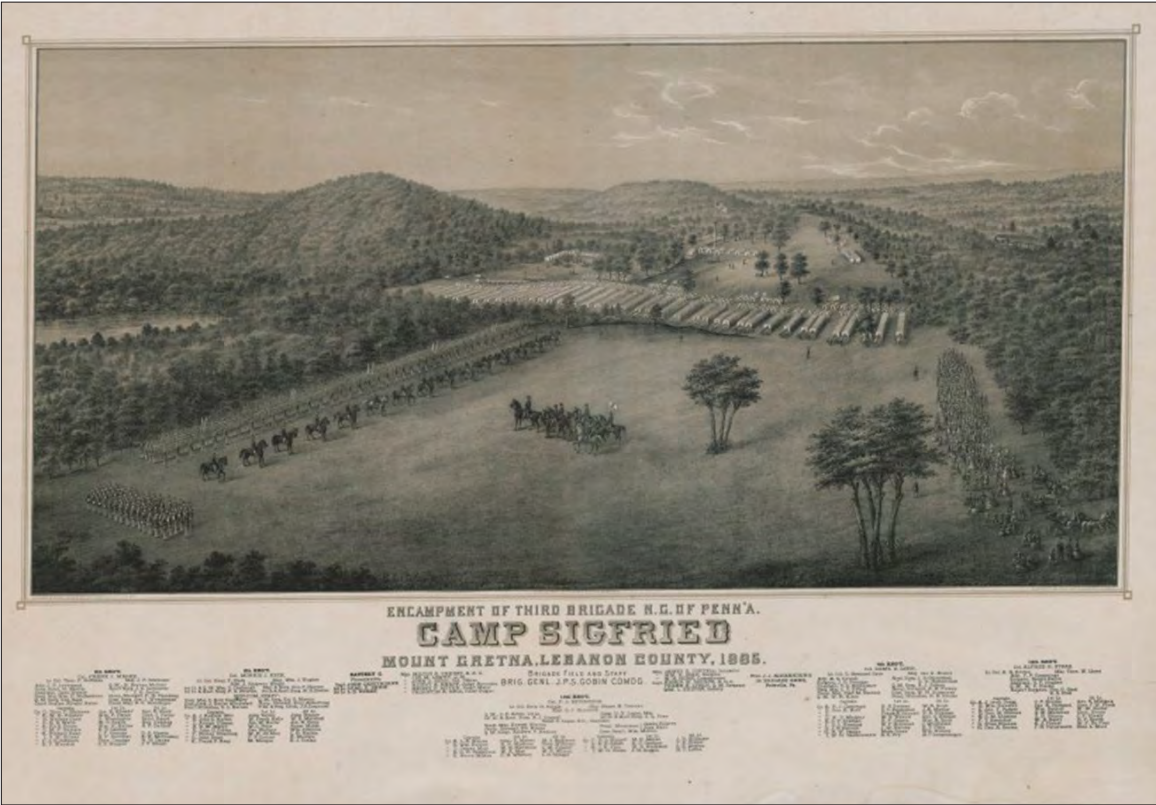
Bitner, Jack. Mt. Gretna: A Coleman Legacy. 1991.

At left, Philadelphia Toboggan Company #9, bought by Abraham Kauffman for his rival Mount Gretna Park, was housed in this large, round-roof enclosure. Photo from the MGAHS Archives.

From Chicken Coop to Historical Society: Tracing the History of a Rare Lithograph

by Josh Groh

Local Mount Gretna historian Jack Bitner found this lithograph of Camp Sigfried in northeast Pennsylvania.

Jack Bitner's decades-long interest in the history of Mount Gretna was piqued one day in 1959 – when he peeked inside what he described as "a chicken coop."

While visiting an antiques shop near the New York border in northeast Pennsylvania, Mount Gretna's future historiographer happened to spot this lithograph inside the shop owner's chicken coop. Though Bitner had summered with his family in the Camp-meeting in his youth, he had never before heard of Camp Sigfried, a National Guard of Pennsylvania (NGP) encampment staged there in 1885.

Bitner purchased the lithograph and began researching the encampment, eventually deciding to write a document on the entire history of Mount Gretna, which he presented to the Lebanon County Historical Society in 1962.

In his 1990 history, "Mt. Gretna: A Coleman Legacy," Bitner described his discovery of the lithograph as the result of "sheerest chance" and revealed that inquiries he made at museums, auction houses, and other antique vendors had failed to turn up any other copies.

In that year, Robert H. Coleman invited the NGP to Mount Gretna, clearing a 120-acre parcel of land after officials approved the site for training purposes. Under command of John P. S. Gobin, the 3,000 or so men of the Third Brigade began an encampment on the site on July 25, 1885. The camp marked the beginning of a decades-long NGP presence in Mount Gretna that ended in 1935 when training operations were moved to Fort Indiantown Gap.

Traditional lithography – the production of images through the use of stone – was invented in the late 18th century. An image is applied to a limestone "plate" using an oily medium. The plate is then treated with a series of chemicals which make the rest of the stone's surface oil-resistant. Finally, an oil-based ink is applied to the plate, adhering to only the original image, and a paper print can be made.

The depiction of Camp Sigfried was the work of H. H. Rowley, a landscape artist of Utica, N.Y., who partnered with lithographers C. H. Vogt & Son, based in Cleveland, Ohio, to create and sell the artwork.

The lithograph is, in his words, "an unsolved mystery, for many hundreds had to be printed to defray the cost of preparing the stone, and certainly many would have been sold in this area."

The scarcity of those prints is even more unusual as the lithograph commemorated a significant event for the National Guard of Pennsylvania that began training in Mount Gretna in 1885.

From 1878 to 1885, Rowley operated the H. H. Rowley Company in Hartford, Conn., where he produced intricately detailed bird's-eye-view lithographs of New England cities. According to contemporary reports in the Evening Gazette of Pittston, Pa., Rowley was a veteran, presumably of the Civil War. Beyond this, biographical information on Rowley is virtually nonexistent and his reasons for depicting the camp at Mount Gretna are unknown.

The lithograph found by Bitner appears to remain the only print of the original 1886 series to have resurfaced. At some point following his discovery, Bitner lent the print to his friend Charles Oellig, curator of the Pennsylvania National Guard Military Museum at Fort Indiantown Gap, who made several reproductions of the print. These copies can today be found at the Gap, the State Museum of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Military Museum, according to Oellig, who also keeps a copy at his house.

"[Bitner] told me that he never saw another copy of the original and neither did I," Oellig wrote in an email.

At least a few more details about the production of the lithograph have been uncovered since the publication of Bitner's history. According to a report in the Evening Gazette of Pittston, Pa., Rowley received the first proof of the Gretna lithograph in January 1886 after having sent his initial illustration to the lithographer in Cleveland.

By springtime, Rowley was selling copies in Pittston, located between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. Each print sold for one dollar.

Rowley appears to have been residing in Pittston at the time. If he sold most of his copies in that area, it may explain both Bitner's discovery of it in northeast Pennsylvania and why no copies have been found around Lebanon County. For at least a brief period in March, however, Rowley traveled to Pottsville in Schuylkill County to sell copies.

A November 1885 report in the Pittston Evening Gazette explains one confusing detail about the picture: the anachronistic appearance of Conewago Lake to the left. While the creek had been dammed in late 1885, the lake itself would not have filled in until the following spring. Knowing Coleman's intention to create a lake, Rowley had simply added it under artistic license.

Sources
Bitner, Jack. *Mt. Gretna: A Coleman Legacy.* 1991.
Lebanon Daily News, 23 July 1985, pp. 76.
Pittston Evening Gazette, 9 Nov 1885, pp. 4.
Pittston Evening Gazette, 7 Dec 1885, pp. 4.
Pittston Evening Gazette, 29 Jan 1886, pp. 4.
Pottsville Republican, 8 March 1886, pp. 4 MGAHS

Circles Under the Trees: LIDAR at Mount Gretna
by John Garrick

New technologies sometime emerge that can shine a light on the historical past. Lidar, short for Light Detection and Ranging, is one that offers a glimpse into our local history.

Lidar uses a laser beam shot from an airplane, drone or satellite to scan an area of interest below. This remote sensing technology generates a topographic picture or map that strips away the vegetation and reveals the underlying features and terrain of a particular region.

In 2017, the U.S. Geological Survey conducted Lidar scans of much of Lebanon County and posted the images online (1). Included were scans of Mount Gretna, which the author studied.

Fig. 1 Circle Closeup

While the posted Lidar images show mostly terrain, close ups reveal faint images of many circles. Figure 1 shows an example near State Route 117 with red markers highlighting each circle's location.
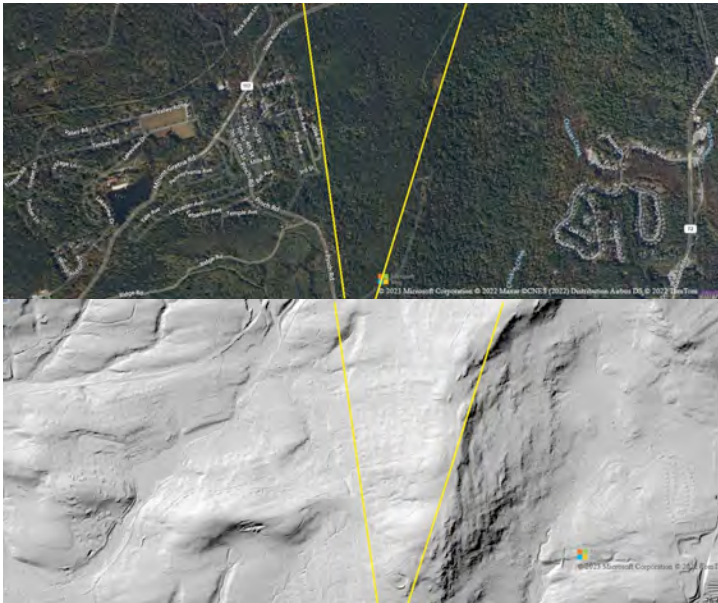

Fig. 2 Satellite and Lidar Area View:
A 2017 satellite Picture and Lidar scan of the area of interest near Mount Gretna

As a neophyte on many things having to do with Mount Gretna history, this author proceeded to try to identify how many circles, where they were located, and most importantly, what they were.

To understand the number and location of the circles, the author created an overlay view (Fig. 3) of successive individual closeup Lidar scans from north to south. Doing this revealed numerous circles (marked in red) across an area east of Mount Gretna with broad tree cover today.
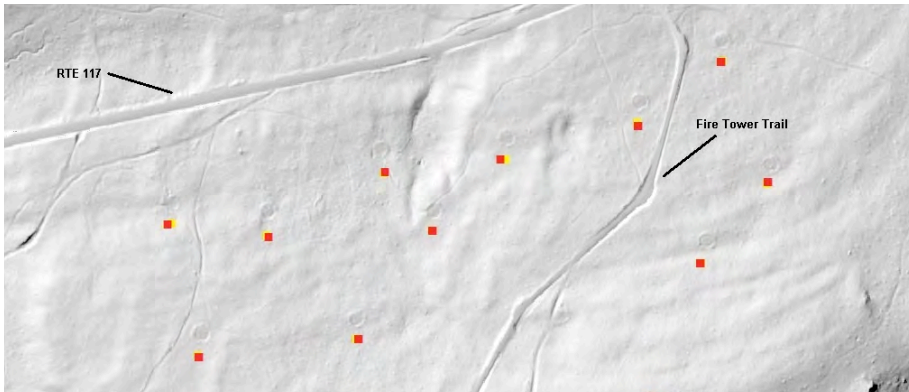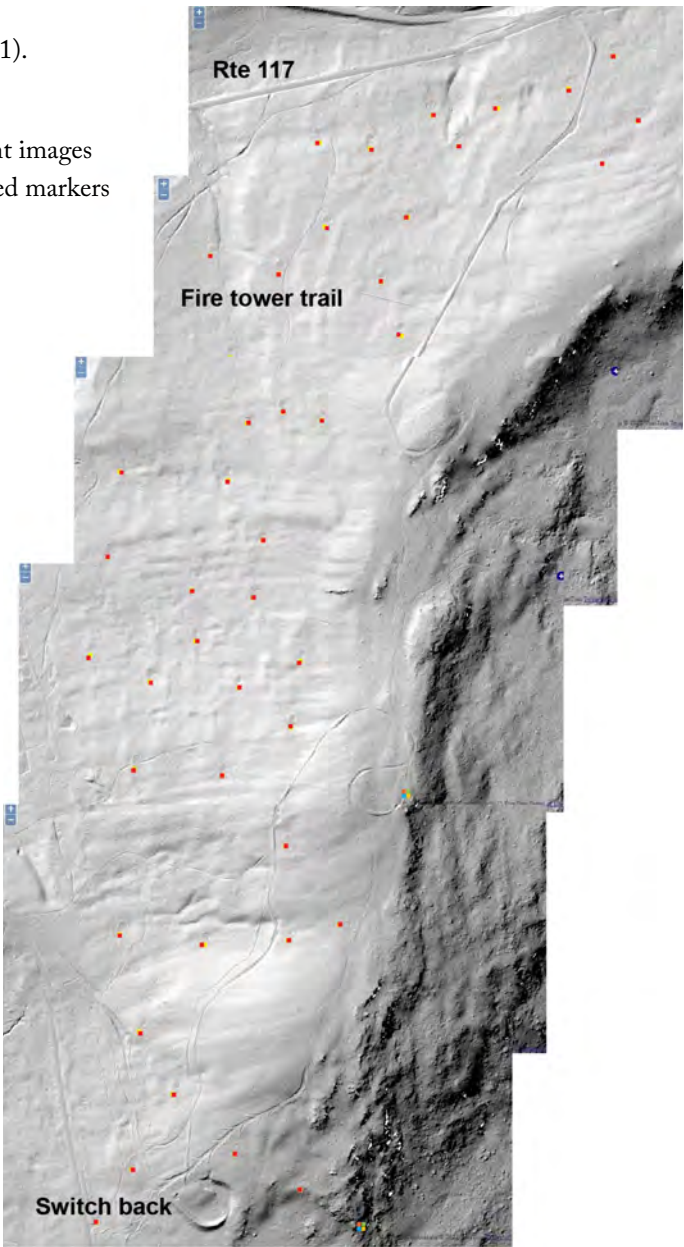

Fig 3 2017 Lidar Area overlay

Conversations with Mount Gretna Area Historical Society members Pat and Ned Gibble and Audrey Wells, Gov. Dick Environmental Center, determined that the approximately 60 circles, now hidden by trees, are the scars from many years of charcoal making to support iron production at the Cornwall Iron Furnace.

Charcoal was used as fuel for Robert Coleman's cold-blast iron furnaces at Cornwall until their closure in 1883. The scars are suggestive of the pits measuring 30-40 feet in diameter where harvested trees—primarily chestnut—were burned in the multi-day process to make charcoal. It is estimated that 200 acres of forest were needed to make a year's supply of charcoal for a furnace.(3)

In addition to the circles, the scans show other features of historical interest—namely, the route of Coleman's Narrow Gauge Railroad that traveled to the top of Gov. Dick Mountain. Figure 4 shows the turnaround at the mountain top and a switch back at the bottom.
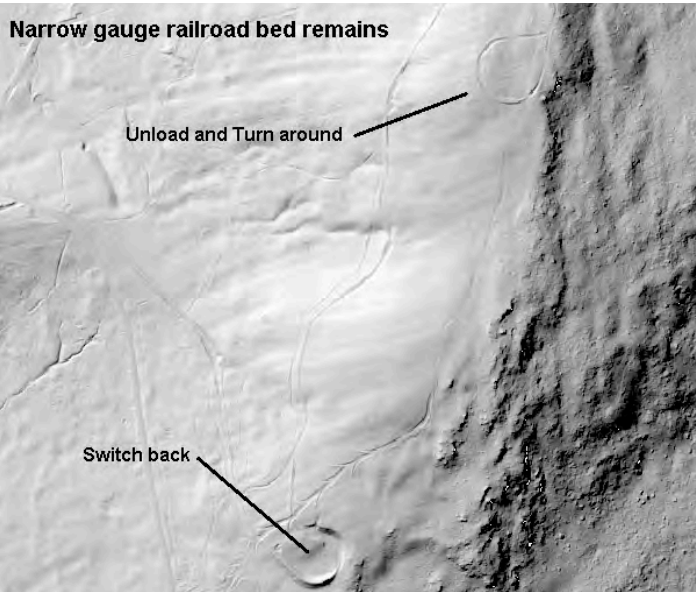
Fig. 4 Narrow Gauge Railroad

Remains of Other Nearby Features Also Visible Through Lidar
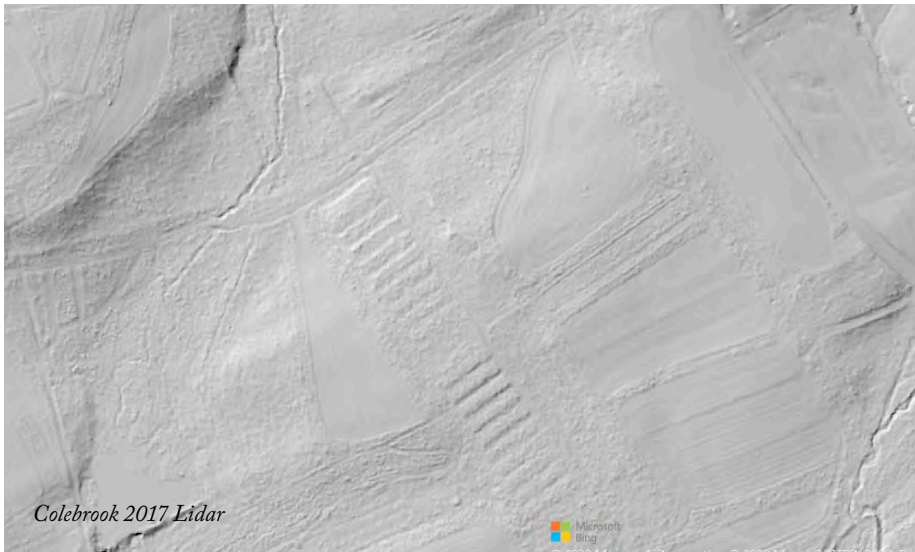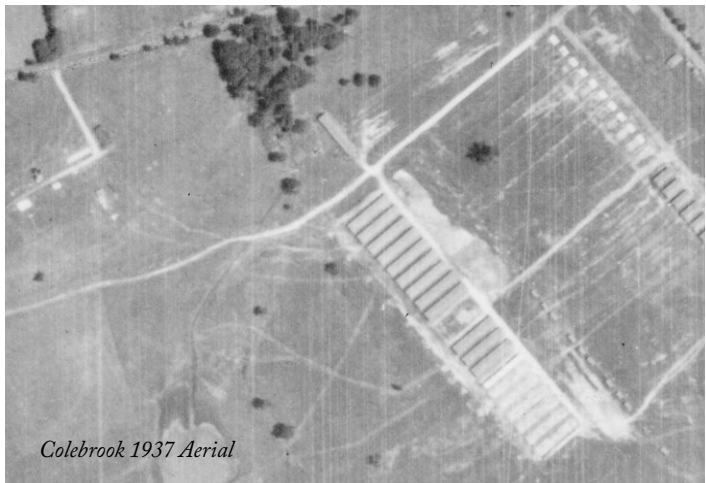

Colebrook 2017 Lidar

Figure 5 shows Lidar and photo pictures of foundation marks of calvary stables and barracks at the Colebrook portion of the Mount Gretna National Guard camp.

Colebrook 1937 Aerial

Colebrook 2017 Satellite

Circles Under the Trees *continued from pg. 7*

Similar Lidar and photo pictures in Fig. 6 below show details of the National Guard rifle rainge west of Mount Gretna.

Fig. 6 Colebrook Site:
PA National Guard

Besides revealing evidence of charcoal making, the Lidar scans provide more information about some of the Pennsylvania National Guard activity when the Guard trained in the area. In addition to exposing foundations and rifle range backstops, the Lidar scans show four linear features oriented in the same direction consisting of troughs and mounds that range in size between 50 ft to 150 ft in length and 10 ft to 15 ft in width. To the best of the author's knowledge, these features visible in the 1937 aerial photo have not been identified.

Lidar is an excellent resource and when combined with information from other sources, can complement learning about our historical past.

Sources:
(1) Lidar Maps
https://maps.psiee.psu.edu/preview/map.ashx?layer=1805
(2) 1937 Aerial pictures from Pennsylvania ImageryNavigator
https://maps.psiee.psu.edu/ImageryNavigator/

(3) Charcoal making at Hopewell
https://www.nps.gov/hofu/learn/historyculture/charcoal-making.htm

(4) 1941 National Park Service booklet "American Charcoal Making " http://npshistory.com/series/popular/14.pdf

NB   For instructions on using the Pennsylvania Imagery site Click "help" when the site opens MGAHS

A Note from Our Archivist...

Lidar surveys of portions of Mt. Gretna south of State Route 117 have revealed numerous features or disturbed soils from past human activities. It is critical to protect and preserve this historically important evidence from random digging and metal detection.

— Dr. Patricia A. Gibble, MGAHS Archivist

Jack and Jane Anderson *by Josh Groh*

Jack and Jane Anderson. Photo by Josh Groh

When asked, Jack and Jane Anderson are quick to modestly downplay the ways they've contributed to the preservation of Mount Gretna's legacy since they began summering here almost 30 years ago. There is, however, one thing they'll admit without hesitation.

"The history was one of the main things that drew us to Mount Gretna," Jane said. "It's just, to us, a magic place."

In the years after the Andersons purchased their Chautauqua cottage in 1997, they became friends with local historians Jack Bitner and Fred Buch. All shared a passion for uncovering details about Mount Gretna's past and preserving the stories of its institutions, businesses, and residents.

That passion resulted in the creation of the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society in 2004.

"We've been involved in the Historical Society ever since the beginning, really," Jack said. He and Jane became docents with the Society, and, alongside Buch, began organizing programs for the public.

Jack has also been involved in planning and conducting the Society's oral history program, which now includes an archive of dozens of recorded interviews with former and current residents sharing their memories of Mount Gretna.

As Chautauqua residents, the Andersons have continued to promote the mission of the 131-year-old organization.

One of their biggest insights into the origins of their neighborhood came in the early 2000s when they, along with several dozen residents, boarded a bus bound for the original Chautauqua Institution in New York.

"Through that, we began to learn about other Chautauquas," said Jack, who, along with Jane, gained a deeper appreciation for the Chautauqua movement's focus on adult education.

Jack has since served as a Chautauqua summer programs co-chair, where he has, in his words, focused most of his energy. He has spent his time working on events such as the University for a Day programs and the regular screenings of classic films – though he credits "movie man" Ted Martin for making the screenings a success.

"Our involvement has been one of support and helping out in whatever we could in a number of different ways," Jack said.

Jack and Jane met while attending college together in Maryland. While Jane was a Maryland native, Jack moved to the state from his hometown of Fieldale, Va. The two will celebrate their 65th anniversary this year.

The Andersons can thank a Valentine for bringing them to Mount Gretna – literally.

Charlotte Valentine was a summertime Gretna resident and childhood friend of Jane from Catonsville, Md. She and her husband Jim first invited the Andersons to come visit the town in 1994 – as Jack recalls, "the year after the Playhouse collapsed."

Both were quickly sold on the community's rural charm and natural beauty. Three years later, the Andersons purchased a Chautauqua cottage and have been spending summers in Mount Gretna ever since. The Anderson cottage at 410 Yale Avenue was constructed in 1914 and renovated in 1979. Previously known as the "Rhododen," the Andersons have taken to calling it "Dove Cottage."

"We named it that because we hoped it'd be a place of peace," Jane said.

In addition to the Andersons' family, which includes four great-grandchildren, Dove Cottage has hosted speakers booked by the summer programs committee who had traveled from out of town.

The Andersons continue to contribute in many ways to the Society and the Chautauqua and both enjoy the collaborative spirit of the community and its residents. They attend Sunday services in the Playhouse and the Mount Gretna United Methodist Church when in town. MGAHS

Help Us Catalogue Mount Gretna's Homes!

Have you got a history of an address that you'd like to share with us? If you are receiving this newsletter digitally, you can download the form, fill in your information in Microsoft Word, and email it back to us – no need to print it out, fill it in, and scan it! Please feel free to include any images, documents, or other information that you think deserves to be collected with this history.

You can also fill in a secure Google Forms version of the form at this link: forms.gle/drBXh5DsTDxGczPr9

If you would prefer to print the document or if you are receiving this newsletter in the mail, fill out the form and mail it to us at our post office address (listed on page 2 masthead). Learn more about this project at:

mtgretnahistory.org/2021/03/03/if-cottages-could-talk MGAHS

MGAHS LEGACY GIFTS

Imagine what Robert Coleman would think if he could see Mount Gretna today! Many of our greatest community assets exist because someone thought it important enough to bequeath funds to develop and sustain them.

If you are interested in learning more about legacy gifts to the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society, call us at (717) 964-1105 or email us at info@mtgretnahistory.org

Consultation with a legal or financial adviser can help you to take advantage of any savings on inheritance tax. Our Mount Gretna Area Historical Society representative will help you through the process and the details.

Mt. Gretna Area
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Take Home a Bit of History

Need a gift for the history buff in your family? Consider giving *Mount Gretna Through the Decades*, a look at the history of the area organized by decades from 1881 through today.

The book includes photographs and maps from each of these 14 decades showing how the area has grown from its beginnings as Mt. Gretna Park and the Pennsylvania National Guard into its current mix of past and present, tradition and innovation.

The text highlights the places, people and events that have given Mount Gretna its identities—military, agricultural, recreational, religious, educational, artistic.

Cost of the book is $30 for members of the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society. Non-members can purchase the book for $35.

To order your copy, visit https://mtgretnahistory.org/shop/mount-gretna-through-the-decades/ MGAHS
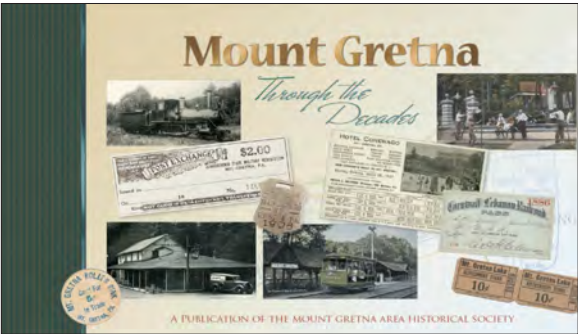
On the Historical Society Bookshelf

New in 2023 from the Mount Gretna Historical Society:

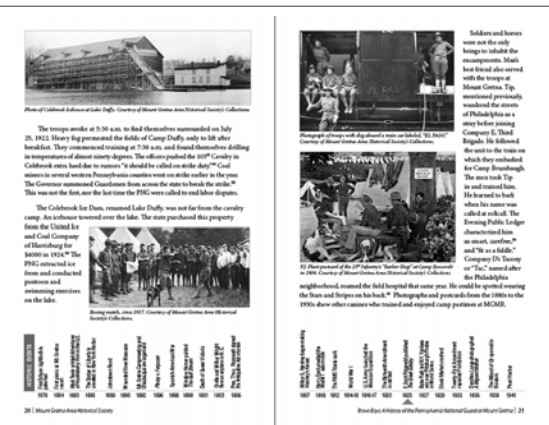***Brave Boys: A brief history of the Pennsylvania National Guard at Mount Gretna from 1885 – 1935*** by Curtis Royer.

On July 25, 1885, members of the Pennsylvania National Guard arrived in Mount Gretna for a weeklong training, the first of 50 years of military encampments. Royer draws upon primary sources to describe the development of the camp, rifle range, and parade ground on land donated by Robert H. Coleman. The booklet also includes details about training exercises, daily schedule and social activities before the Guard located to Fort Indiantown Gap.

Brave Boys

Camp Mount Gretna: Stories of Fun and Faith COMING SOON! by Lois Herr

From 1949 to 1970, hundreds of children and teenagers came for summer camp at Camp Mount Gretna run by the United Brethren Church. Herr who attended the camp as a teenager shares stories from dozens of former campers about their experiences in the woods and as part of a Christian community. The booklet also includes photographs of dormitories, worship services and outdoor activities. MGAHS
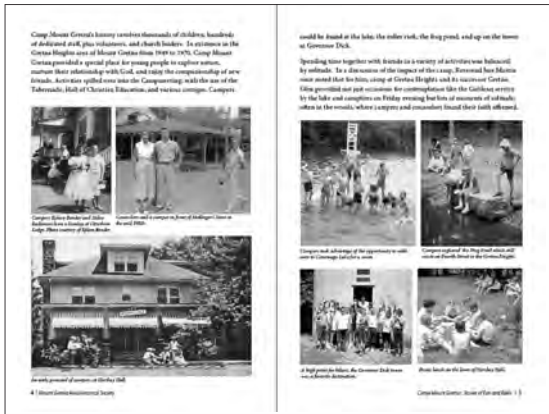
Camp Mount Gretna

BUSINESS MEMBERS

A warm thank you to our business members. Consider supporting them and thanking them for their support of MGAHS.

Chef on the Go
PO Box 194, Mount Gretna, PA
717-964-3451
rbchefonthego@verizon.net

Feather & Feather, P.C.
22 W. Main St., Annville, PA
717-867-1200
jef@featherlaw.com

Garver Insurance
809 Holly Lane, Lebanon, PA
717-274-5810
eigarver@comcast.net

Jonestown Bank & Trust Co.
PO Box 717, Jonestown, PA
717-865-4246
tpeters@jbt.bank

Mt. Gretna Realty
PO Box 100, Mount Gretna, PA
717-964-2100
gretna01@comcast.net

Mt. Gretna Lake & Beach
PO Box 100, Mount Gretna, PA
717-964-2058
info@mtgretnalake.com

Penn Realty
PO Box 270, Mount Gretna, PA
717-964-3800
Ftomecek422@comcast.net

Timbers Dinner Theater
PO Box 10, Mount Gretna, PA
717-964-3601

Gretna Graphics
PO Box 112, Mount Gretna, PA
717-279-1433
brad@gretnagraphics.com
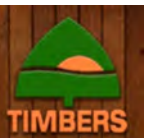
P.O. Box 362
Mt. Gretna, PA 17064

(717) 964-1105
info@mtgretnahistory.org

Learn about our
Mount Gretna History
& help to preserve it

JOIN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

OUR MEMBERS are the lifeblood of the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society. Your dues help us to maintain the MGAHS building and preserve our collection.

Your yearly membership includes discounts on merchandise, updates about the Society's programs, and newsletters with feature articles on area history. You will join a dedicated and growing group of people who value our past and who want to preserve it for future generations.

There are several ways to begin or renew your membership:

- complete an online membership form at
  https://mtgretnahistory.org/shop/membership;
- print our membership form (at right), complete it and mail it to us at P.O. Box 362, Mt. Gretna, PA 17064;
- call us at (717) 064-1105 to provide your information.

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, & YouTube!

Join Mount Gretna Area Historical Society

☐ $20 Individual Membership   ☐ $30 Family Membership
☐ $75 Business Membership

NAME _____

ADDRESS_____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL_____

☐ Check enclosed (payable to Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society,)
☐ Master Card ☐ Visa

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Mail to Mt. Gretna Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 362, Mt. Gretna, PA 17064