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magazine

FALL 2025 | Volume 1, Issue 1

EXCLUSIVE REVEAL

2026

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MOUNT GRETTA MAGAZINE

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 13 Exclusive Reveal! Art Show 2026 Poster
by Kerry Royer
- 15 Gretna Music: Cheers to 50 Years
by Meagan Cassel
- 18 Spirits in the Woods
by Michael Long



DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Cottage Life: The Cottage That Found Us
by Linda Brain Beck
- 7 Gretna Together: Footprints of Kindness
by Kevin C. Wells
- 10 Meet the Artist: The Art of Seeing Clearly
by Karen Hendricks
- 22 Then & Now: The 'Jacks' Bitner
by Stacy Schroeder
- 24 Local History: Paging Through History
by Margaret Hopkins
- 28 Seasonal Contemplations: Fall-ing
by Vicki Kensinger

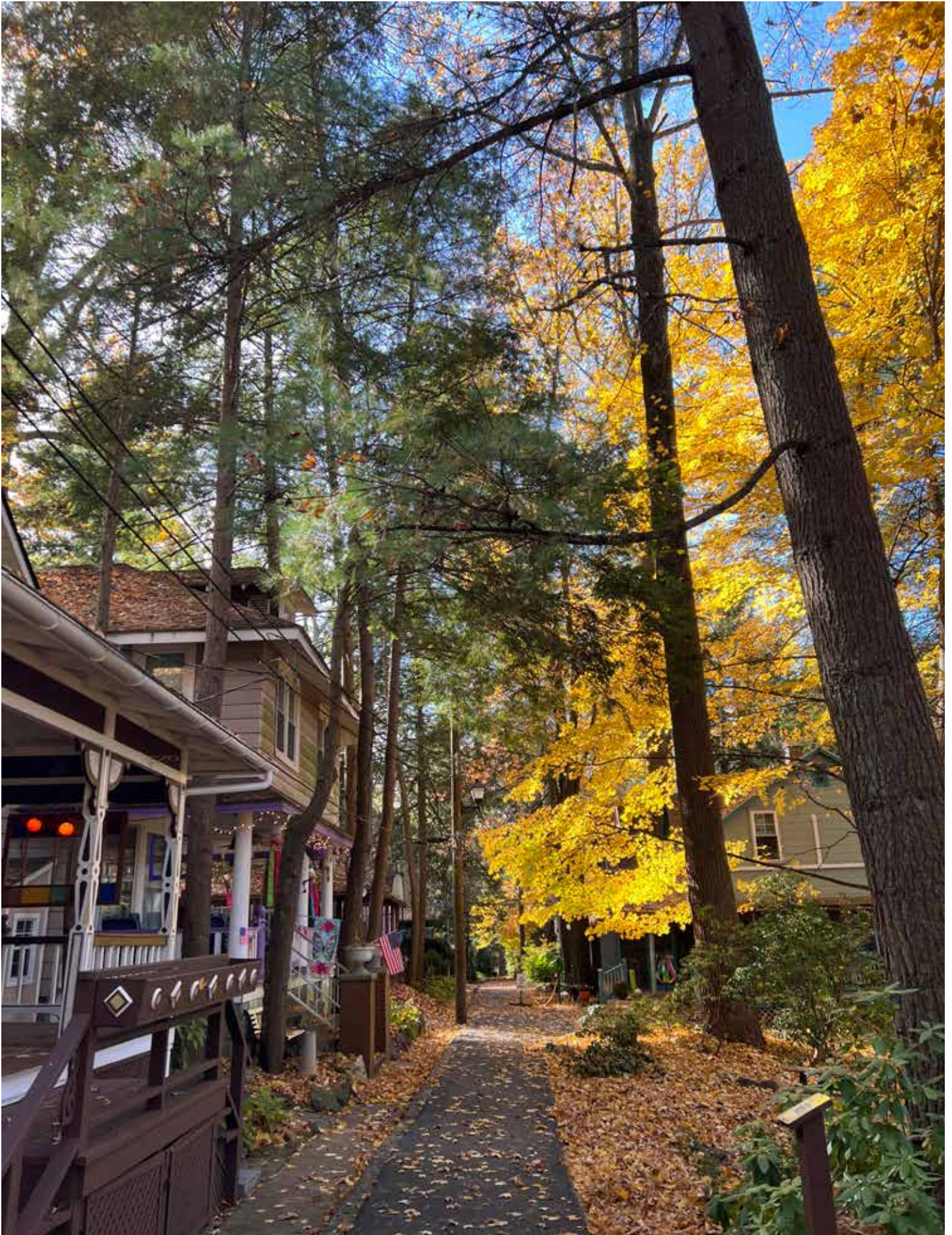


IN EACH ISSUE

- 3 The View From My Porch
- 21 Spot the Gretna Cousin

*Photos clockwise from top left: Shannon Fretz Photography, Mount Gretna Area Historical Society, Stacy Schroeder.
Cover photo: Shannon Fretz Photography.*

Stories That Connect + Inspire





Photos this page and page 2:
Stacy Schroeder.

The View From My Porch

There's something about Mount Gretna that makes even the most reluctant writer wax poetic. I've read countless attempts to distill its essence into a few poignant sentences — and I've penned a few of those myself.

Thankfully, *Mount Gretna Magazine* isn't bound by such constraints. Whether you're reading in print or on screen, you're holding an entire issue filled with layered voices and perspectives on this remarkable place. And next season, we get to keep on going. Ours is a maximalist approach to storytelling.

Rather than reduce Gretna to a single phrase, I'd rather show you the full scope of what we hope to cover. For that, I invite you to glance at our Contents page — but not for the reason you might expect.

Designing a magazine means dreaming big, knowing only a fraction of those dreams will come to life — and often in unexpected ways. You get to witness all the micro-milestones — the roller coaster of frustrations and joys that make up the whole. While laying out this issue, I reviewed my work and noticed something unintentional yet emblematic of our mission. I hope you'll see it too.

Look closely at the photos on the Contents page, especially the top two. What differences do you see? What threads connect them?

One is color, the other is black and white. One vertical, one horizontal. One present day, one in the past. A contemporary home just outside of town, a historic cottage in its heart.

A young family in casual clothes, an older couple in formalwear. Opposite ends of the spectrum yet well-balanced. Both find themselves nestled in a small forest town with a rich appreciation of creativity, the outdoors, and rhythms of rest and renewal. I could keep going, but I think you get the “picture.”

And the pumpkins in the third photo? Even they are a nod to the seasons present in our quarterly cadence.

Borough lines or ZIP codes do not define *Mount Gretna Magazine*. We draw a bigger circle — let's call it cultural Gretna — and we aim to make that community stronger. Whether you live here, love to visit here, or are just learning about this place, you are part of this community. And in our pages, you'll find stories from every corner of it — from the headliners to the quiet details that rarely make the spotlight. We hope these stories connect you to one another and inspire you to discover new ideas, experiences, and ways of seeing.

Welcome to *Mount Gretna Magazine*.



Stacy

Stacy Schroeder
Founder + Creative Director



The Cottage That Found Us

Story: Linda Brain Beck
Photos: Shannon Fretz Photography

“If we owned this cottage”

That’s what my husband, Ed, and I whimsically pondered last August as we sat on the bright red rocking chairs as renters of 114 Otterbein Ave.

Through some mystical Mount Gretna magic, we found ourselves sitting on those same chairs just a few months later, this time as cottage owners and part-time residents.

The idea of owning a 130-year-old cottage certainly gave us some pause. But our rental experiences had cemented the feeling that this community was a perfect fit for us. Like many residents before us, we succumbed to Gretna’s charm and embarked on this promising new adventure. Through that, we’ve discovered previously unrecognized

connections, unexpected finds, and an unbeatable sense of community.

Unrecognized connections

Looking back, I realize that Gretna played a subtle yet supportive role throughout our lives.

Ed’s father’s family owned a Pennsylvania Chautauqua cottage that his grandfather, Edgar Beck, sold during World War II due to gas rationing. The gas rationing made the short drive from Middletown problematic.

Like many of Ed’s relatives, we often lamented not having that legacy. As a child, Ed’s family took regular trips here. His father frequently tried to pinpoint where the Beck cottage had been located — now a research project for us.

Having grown up in Elizabethtown, I, too, have fond memories of trips to get ice cream at The Jigger Shop Ice Cream

Parlor. My high school prom was at the Timbers Restaurant and Dinner Theater. I played mini golf many times over the years. And I distinctly remember reading a news article about quiet hours and marveling at how this concept could be achieved.

We introduced our son — now 24 — to Gretna through playdates at the playground. More recently, we’ve all attended the art show and become season subscribers to the Gretna Theatre.

As we grew to know Gretna better, we discovered the Chautauqua Summer Programs series. As lifelong learners and educators, we realized spending an entire summer here would allow us to soak in immeasurable formal and informal learning opportunities. So, we decided to begin by renting for one week in July 2024, with the intention of gradually adding more weeks to our rental period. We had only added one more week

when we completely upended that bucket-list item.



Unexpected finds

Fortunately, most of our cottage's major systems were already updated, allowing us to focus on transitioning it from a rental unit to our little haven.

We have discovered the art of thrifting and giggle at some of what we've gotten for little or no money. Besides frequenting thrift stores, we have gathered items left on the curb by people selling their belongings, taken advantage of the May porch sale, and responded to Facebook posts about items from cottages being remodeled.

We've gained valuable intel from other residents about where to find the best deals. And it seems to be true that many items never leave Gretna; they just get passed on to a different cottage.

We're told it takes about five years to get through the initial to-do list. However, we have also learned that work on a cottage is never quite done; it's an ongoing, evolving process. We're on track for that five-year plan and settling in for the long haul. Our short time here has convinced us to become full-time residents at some point.

I've also unexpectedly found an interest in Gretna's history. While Ed has always been a history buff, I've only tolerated lessons of the past. Now, I eagerly want to soak in as much as I can about how our cottage and Gretna came to be.

As we've sifted through the far corners of the cottage, we've discovered vintage items remaining from previous renovations, including the "Smoker's

Cottage" sign. It's a relic from former owners — not, as we initially believed, a reference to any vices. Apparently, in jest, the cottage across the street was also once known as the Drinker's Cottage. We have touched base with the Smoker family and have plans to meet up and learn more about the evolution of the cottage.

Gretna lore tells us that the stair railing in the cottage was from a train car that Franklin D. Roosevelt once rode in. We also understand that Maria von Trapp's granddaughter once stayed in the cottage while in town to perform at the Mount Gretna Tabernacle.

One of the many things we love about our cottage is its proximity to the Tabernacle, sitting just to the rear of the building. We often open the door to find ourselves eavesdropping on practices or pre-concert sound checks. And, of course, we have prime seats for listening to all the happenings there.

Unbeatable sense of community

Like many Gretna residents, our lives "in residence" revolve around our idyllic wraparound porch. As renters, we enjoyed chatting with passersby while relaxing there. That's one of the reasons we wanted a cottage on a pedestrian-only street despite the two-block walk to the parking lot. Part of the magic of Gretna is the people we meet and the stories we hear.

We joke that it takes longer to get anywhere around Gretna. As we walk our dog or head out to a program, we often stop and chat with a new neighbor or peek around other cottages to see what others have done with their places.

Although we have honored the rentals for this summer, which has limited our time here, we have enjoyed getting to know others at Friday

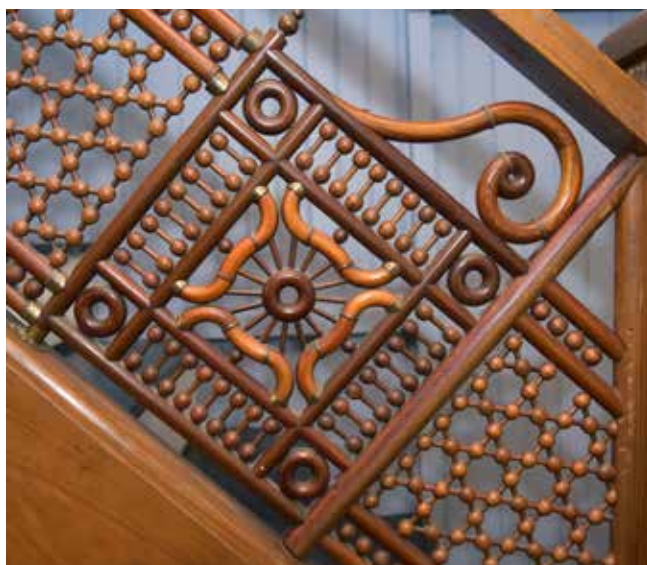
Happy Hours and even as new members of the Mount Gretna Community Marching Band. The hardest part is remembering which names go with which cottage.

It seems every person we meet here has a fascinating story. Their lives, passions, and stories of what brought them here interest me to no end. At Gretna, time seems to slow down enough to allow for listening to others and discovering many shared connections.

We recognize that nothing is perfect, and we don't expect the Gretna community to be any different. But we feel fortunate to be part of the unique bond and shared pride of being a Gretna resident.

Our cottage didn't just find us. It led us to a deeper connection with a place that has always been part of our story, which is now becoming the heart of our shared future. 🍷

Linda Brain Beck's diverse career spans corporate and academic realms. She teaches communication courses for HACC, Lebanon Valley College's MBA program, and Dale Carnegie. A seasoned speaker, she delivers keynotes and has given a TEDx presentation. With her husband, Ed, she co-manages a communications and leadership training company.



The railing on the cottage's stairwell was salvaged from a train car rumored to once carry Franklin D. Roosevelt.

THANK YOU.



We extend our deepest thanks to the people, businesses, and organizations* listed here.

Their generosity helped bring *Mount Gretna Magazine* to life during our earliest days. They believed in our vision, took a leap with us, and came through in all kinds of ways. We are honored to recognize them publicly and grateful for their role in helping us launch this community magazine.

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Philanthropy Woven Through the Woods

FOOTPRINTS OF KINDNESS

Story: Kevin C. Wells

Photos: Shannon Fretz Photography

Nestled among the trees of Central Pennsylvania, Mount Gretna is a community defined as much by its generosity as by its winding paths, the Pennsylvania Chautauqua roots, and artistic spirit. From its earliest days, the people of Gretna have poured time, talent, and treasure into shaping a community where tradition and progress intersect.

In this premiere issue of *Mount Gretna Magazine*, we begin a series exploring community-wide themes through diverse voices and lived experiences. There's no subject better to start with than philanthropy.

Defining philanthropy in Gretna

What does philanthropy look like in Gretna? How do personal values and community traditions shape the ways people choose to give? The answers vary depending on whom you ask.

"One of the things I most appreciate about Mount Gretna Campmeeting is that all of our concerts are offered on a pay-what-you-wish basis," says Larry McKenna, administrative director of Mount Gretna Summer Concerts.

"When I think about philanthropy in Mount Gretna, I'm grateful for those who support our nonprofit organizations — whether it's Summer Concerts, the annual Mount Gretna Campmeeting Heritage Music Festival, or the Mount Gretna Bible Festival," he says. "I'm equally thankful to the individuals who place a \$20 bill in the free-will offering to help offset costs for those who may only be able to give a dollar, or nothing at all. Volunteerism across all these organizations is another vital form of philanthropy."



Community volunteers greet participants for Gretna Music's 2025 Tour of Homes.

Gretna cottage owner Faye Maulfair echoes this sentiment. "I'm reminded of all those who go above and beyond to support the many performances at the Tabernacle, ensuring they can be enjoyed by all. But philanthropy also includes the generous offering of time and talent, such as volunteering or contributing to the preservation of the charm and character of our unique community, so that visitors may continue to be captivated by Mount Gretna's beauty."

This ethos of contribution is palpable throughout the distinct neighborhoods that comprise the broader Gretna community. From Mount Gretna Campmeeting cottages to the Mount Gretna Heights and Timber Hills, residents offer what they can — be it dollars, elbow grease, or creative vision.

Take the Mount Gretna United Methodist Church (MGUMC) Drendall Endowment, for example. This philanthropic fund has quietly underwritten a variety of projects that have made a lasting impact:

improved accessibility to the Tabernacle, enhancements to the MGUMC community, support for programming, and funding for this magazine.

These values often center on preservation, creativity, inclusivity, and spiritual connection, which are principles passed down through generations and expressed in formal and informal giving.

Some Gretna visitors describe an inherited ethic when it comes to stewardship.

"My grandparents had a cottage here, and I remember tagging along with them to paint walls or helping at special events," says William Anderson of Huntington, New York. "They didn't call it philanthropy. It was just what you did if you loved this place."

Cultivating a culture of philanthropy
Yet philanthropy in Gretna is not without complexity. While giving unites people, it can also raise questions about access, influence, and visibility. Who gets to



Mount Gretna United Methodist Church, home to the William Drendall Endowment (of which this debut issue is an honored grant recipient) has long been part of the fabric of local generosity. Learn more about this active faith community at MtGretnaChurch.org.

decide where the money goes? Who feels empowered to apply for a grant or serve on a board?

These questions are not rhetorical. They point to the generational, economic, and cultural shifts taking place in small communities across the country, including Gretna. Younger residents may engage differently, often favoring collaborative projects over institutional affiliations and contributing their skills instead of financial resources. Seasonal renters may be less connected to legacy giving efforts, but they generally express strong passion for sustainability, social equity, and public arts.

“I think we’re redefining what giving looks like,” says a graphic designer and Gretna resident who moved to the area during the COVID-19 pandemic and wishes to remain anonymous. “When I volunteer for an event in Gretna, that’s my contribution. It might not be a \$5,000 donation, but it’s still meaningful.”

This spirit of broadening the definition of philanthropy is evident in the quiet, often unsung initiatives that may not make headlines but shape the culture of Gretna.

It resides with the caregiver who checks in on older neighbors during the

winter and with the art teacher who generously donates time each summer to lead children’s programming at the Mount Gretna Community Library. It’s found in the simple but thoughtful act of a neighbor walking deliberate paths through the snow around vacant cottages, creating the impression of an active presence to deter unwanted attention. These everyday gestures of care and vigilance speak volumes about the kind of community Gretna strives to be.

“One of the things I most appreciate about Mount Gretna is that giving here is not transactional,” says Carrie Munson, a frequent visitor from Erie, Pennsylvania, who returns year after year for the community’s tranquility and hospitality. “It’s relational. You see a need, and you respond. You witness beauty, and you honor it. Generosity here is woven into the rhythm of daily life.”

This relational giving has also shaped the physical landscape of Gretna. The historic Tabernacle, lovingly maintained through volunteer efforts and donations, remains a sacred and civic centerpiece. The Mount Gretna Playhouse, which was rebuilt after a devastating roof collapse, has been upheld by widespread community fundraising. It now thrives as the home of Gretna Theatre and other cultural events.

And yet, the question remains: How do we sustain this spirit of giving into the future?

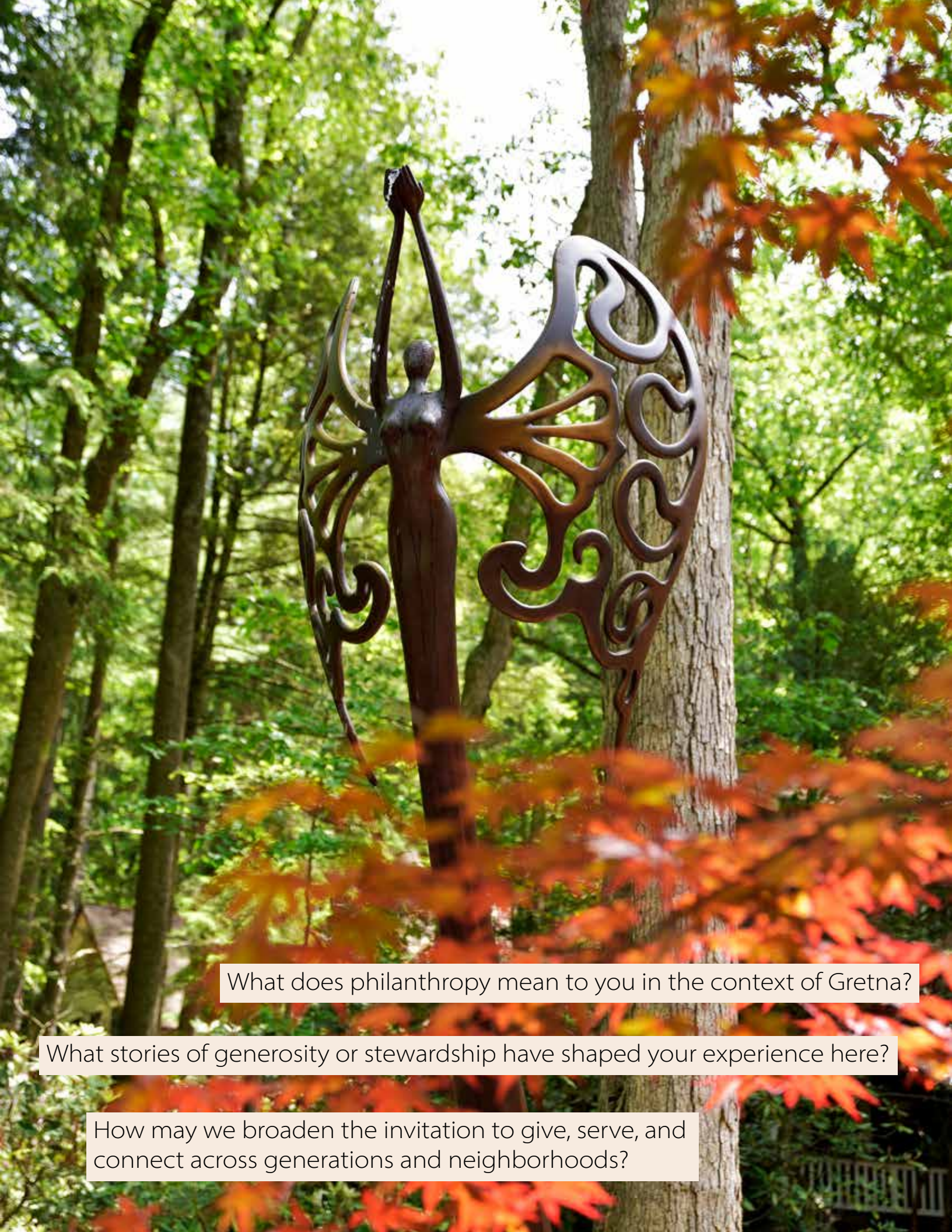
Maintaining a culture of philanthropy requires openness in practical and philosophical terms. It involves creating accessible pathways for participation and recognizing that meaningful contributions come in many forms. Philanthropy is not limited to large financial gifts. People can express it through mentoring a young person, restoring a public bench, or serving on a committee tasked with thoughtful decision-making. At its core, sustaining generosity begins with a willingness to engage.

This article invites you to do just that: Engage. Reflect on the ways philanthropy has shaped your experience in Gretna. Consider how your gifts — whether they are financial, artistic, practical, or relational — might align with the needs of the community. Have you been part of a tradition of giving here? Do you have a vision for what stewardship could look like in the years to come?

As we continue this series in future issues, we hope to highlight more stories of community care, challenge assumptions about giving, and celebrate the generosity that threads through Gretna’s past, present, and future. Each story will serve as a reminder that philanthropy is not reserved for a few — it is a shared practice that strengthens the bonds among us. By lifting up diverse voices and everyday acts of stewardship, we aim to inspire deeper reflection, greater connection, and continued engagement across the extended Gretna community. 🍷

Kevin C. Wells is a writer, community volunteer, and proud Mount Gretna resident. Serving on the Mount Gretna Campmeeting Association Board of Managers and as chair of its communications committee, he also works in education administration. Kevin treasures Gretna’s close-knit spirit and delights in sharing stories that spark connection and a sense of belonging.

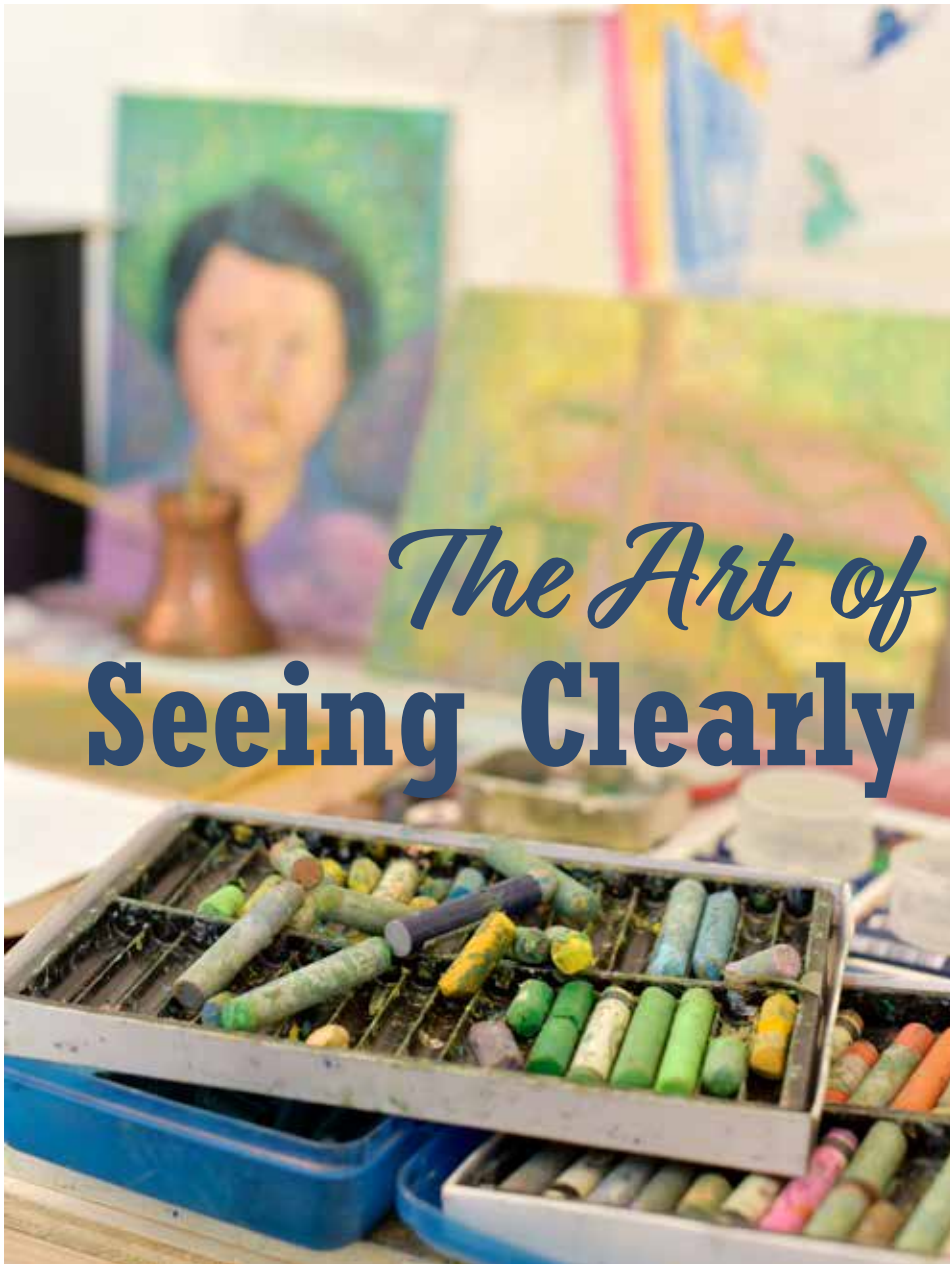
Photo on next page: “The Guardian of the Arts,” a sculpture designed by Cory Wanamaker and installed this spring, is another example of philanthropic efforts across multiple organizations.



What does philanthropy mean to you in the context of Gretna?

What stories of generosity or stewardship have shaped your experience here?

How may we broaden the invitation to give, serve, and connect across generations and neighborhoods?



Photos at left and on next page: A peek into the studio of artist Dae Hong Kim.

The Art of Seeing Clearly

Inspired by Mount Gretna, artists Dae Hong Kim and Ellen Thilo Kim connect life, love, and vision.

Story: Karen Hendricks

Photos: Shannon Fretz Photography

What does it mean to see clearly?

Husband and wife artists Dae Hong Kim and Ellen Thilo Kim are pondering this question in 2025, inspired by the devotional Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, written by Annie Dillard.

“The secret of seeing is the pearl of great price,” Annie writes. And “although the pearl may be found, it may not be sought. The literature of illumination reveals this above all: Although it comes

to those who wait for it, it is always, even to the most practiced and adept, a gift and a total surprise.”

These words guide not only the Kims, but also a Christian artist collective they lead called Art for Story. “To see clearly” is the group’s 2025 theme, culminating in an October exhibit.

In a greater sense, the Kims — “seeing clearly” — put major life changes into motion over the past five years, as they envisioned Mount Gretna as their new home.

“You know how everyone had a pandemic moment,” Ellen says, describing their reprioritizing process. “We kept coming to Mount Gretna, down through the ravine — the glen — and it was so magical. We loved the area so much; we decided to build a house. It felt like the perfect opportunity and timing.”

You could say the Kims discovered — and saw clearly — their pearl.

Creating a home

“We built a home here mainly because of the way the trees draw us in, toward this peacefulness and magical quality that I just can’t quite describe,” says Dae, as his gaze wanders to the greenery outdoors, through the windows of his two-year-old, A-frame home, nestled into The Preserve at Mount Gretna.

“But this area also has a lot of elements that we liked about the city, where we used to live in Lancaster,” Ellen adds. “You can walk to get ice cream or to the theater. We love the kids’ program here, plus the lake and library.”

Gretna feels familiar and comfortable — just like a home should. Today, in their 40s, the Kims have three children — two sons and a daughter — ages 7, 5, and 1. Aside from the home, the family is nurturing a flower-filled meadow. As the wildflowers take hold, the family, too, is establishing their roots.

Inside, walls, bookshelves, and surfaces showcase a wide variety of art — about half of it created by Ellen and Dae. Art imitates life, as the collection reflects a nine-year-long marriage of their styles, thoughts, and personalities.

Art, intertwined

Dae’s artistic path began as a digital designer who enjoyed part-time creative pursuits for many years. Now, in Gretna,



he's "fulfilling a vision" by pursuing art full time, creating with watercolors, oil pastels, and clay.

"People have described my work as landscape — not in a literal sense," explains Dae, "but it has landscape elements, a lot of contrasting light and dark, with a water quality. My work is fluid, with a texture that gives it a sense of atmospheric and tonal quality."

That's on the surface. Dae's underlying themes go much deeper, into "loss, renewal, and restoration."

"My driving force is definitely my faith," he says. "The primary reason is because I'm interested in a third perspective as a third-culture person, grappling with the disconnection between meaning and place. My art wants to speak to this place — being not where you need to be, but finding a path, a sense of being."

He's speaking of his Korean heritage. Just steps inside the home are two portraits he created of his parents. There's a reverence, an honor, in the way they are framed and displayed in symmetry with accompanying chairs and pillows.

In Lancaster, the Kims' studios were perched atop their previous home in a hot attic — much like an afterthought. In Gretna, they've intentionally located their studio space in the home's foundational first floor, with natural light spilling in from the walk-out basement.

Ellen's artistic path included stints as a portrait artist at Hersheypark; a youth minister, a position in which she created murals and set designs; and, lately, as a collage-style artist. She combines historic family photos — sometimes her own, as well as commission work — with treasures.

"For me, truth, beauty, and goodness frame what I try to create," Ellen says. "But not traditional beauty; a lot of what I do is quirky, playing with darker themes — and that's part of truth."

Together, the Kims founded Art for Story in 2019. The concept has remained unchanged throughout the years: inviting

about a dozen artists to come together monthly and create art based upon an annual theme, culminating in an exhibit.

Creating a like-minded community

"Creativity plus community is one of the values that's very important to me," Dae says, "so that I'm not creating in isolation, but inviting others along in the process."

He likens the group's Christian focus to "being a light in the darkness. The Christian belief that Christ died on the cross and rose again — creating is a reflection of that," Dae explains.

From the start, Ellen says one thing was apparent: "The level of professionalism was very high — our artists do excellent work," she adds.

Garrett Moore of Elizabethtown is one of those artists. He's been involved in Art for Story since the beginning. Primarily a painter who creates in oil, but who also dabbles in hand-drawn animations and painted paper collage, Garrett says he's inspired by the group's "creative accountability."

"The fellowship we have as believers. The way we share — it's edifying and encourages us in our faith," Garrett explains.



"Fairies of the Hollow" by Ellen Thilo Kim. Image provided by the artist.

MEET THE ARTIST



"After Rain" (above), an original watercolor by Dae Hong Kim. Image provided by the artist.

One of his standout Art for Story memories happened at the very first exhibit, during an interaction with a visitor.

"He said it was the most sincere, authentic experience he'd ever had at an exhibit, due to our deep connections as artists — very different from what he experiences at exhibits in New York," Garrett recalls.

Garrett believes this authenticity flows from Ellen and Dae.

"As people, I would say they have a lot of joy, and that draws me to them," Garrett

says. "They've expressed a creative vision for their family, and it overflows into others." 🍷

Karen Hendricks is a lifelong journalist based in Central Pennsylvania whose work has garnered more than 20 journalism awards. She enjoys helping Central Pennsylvania wake up and prepare for the day as host of WITF's Morning Edition. Karen is also writing her first book, a memoir about running. Learn more about her work at WriterKarenHendricks.com.



Art for Story's 2025 Exhibit
TO SEE CLEARLY
First Friday, Oct. 3, 6–8 p.m.
Hub 450 (Neighbors Cafe)
450 N. Prince St.

First Floor Community Room, Lancaster
For more information: ArtforStory.org

For more information on artists Dae Hong Kim and Ellen Thilo Kim, follow [@ellenthilo](https://www.instagram.com/ellenthilo) and [@onceuponadae](https://www.instagram.com/onceuponadae) on Instagram.

To see some of artist Garrett Moore's work, stop by the Mount Gretna Historical Society, where his cardboard models of Gretna hotels are on display. Garrett created them during his residency at the Mount Gretna School of Art, 2024–2025.

Your Exclusive Poster Reveal: MOUNT GRETNA OUTDOOR ART SHOW 2026

Story: Kerry Royer

We're delighted to unveil the official 2026 Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show poster — a treasured tradition and beloved collector's item — making its grand debut in this inaugural issue of *Mount Gretna Magazine*.

Each year, this poster sets the tone for the celebration of the arts and becomes the centerpiece for the Mount Gretna Art Show, from marketing materials to the annual T-shirt. Long before the final brushstrokes dry at one year's show, plans for the next masterpiece are already underway.

This year's design holds special significance. In honor of the 250th

anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, I envisioned a tribute to America's heritage — a red, white, and blue homage that radiates unity, creativity, and pride.

I partnered with photographer and artist Shannon Fretz to bring this vision to life. Together, we selected a stirring, quintessential Chautauqua image: the Hall of Philosophy adorned with the American flag, screened in bold patriotic hues.

Shannon added a powerful finishing touch, incorporating the "We the People" font and classic stripes along the bottom — a visual nod to the enduring spirit of Old Glory.

As we count down to next year's Art Show, this vibrant design promises to be a beacon of inspiration, heritage, and celebration. 🎨

Kerry Royer has served as the director of the Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show since 2018. Learn more about the event at MtGretnaArts.com.

Turn the page for your first look!



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52ND ANNUAL
Mount Gretna
OUTDOOR ART SHOW

August 15-16, 2026

Under the trees of old Chautauqua

mtgretnaarts.com

Members of the Audubon Quartet, who lived and played in Gretna for numerous summers, were “instrumental” in Gretna Music’s success and a beloved part of each summer’s community.



Gretna Music: *Cheers to 50 Years*

The renowned summer music festival thrives in its wooded home.

Story: Meagan Cassel
Photos: Courtesy of Gretna Music

Little did Dr. Carl Ellenberger know when hastily selecting a home convenient to his first job how serendipitous a decision it would turn out to be. He had stumbled across our little community in the woods solely to be near Hershey Medical Center. And yet, the physician harbored a parallel passion for music that blossomed into five decades of acclaimed performances under the trees.

This year, Gretna Music celebrates its golden anniversary, having hosted more than 750 concerts by 2,100 musicians from six continents. But its beginnings were humble, classic “Gretna.” Carl, a flutist, was heard playing at his cottage alongside his wife, a pianist. They were invited to perform in the Community Building, now the Hall of Philosophy.

Carl recruited old and new musical friends to round out the group in exchange for hospitality in his idyllic

new hometown, and the response was enthusiastic. He views that year, 1975, as a turning point for Mount Gretna, when two beloved traditions began: the first Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show and the inspiration for Gretna Music.

“We had no idea that we were revitalizing the town,” he reflects. “We just did what we loved to do. And Gretna was the perfect place. If this took place in any old auditorium, we’d long be forgotten.”

Indeed, a new and unique auditorium — the stage that thousands of musicians would grace — was written in the stars.

During the following summer, the Mount Gretna Playhouse was found to be unexpectedly dark, yet in notable disrepair and with subpar acoustics. The Ellenbergers took a leap of faith and amassed volunteers to restore it enough to serve as their concert home.

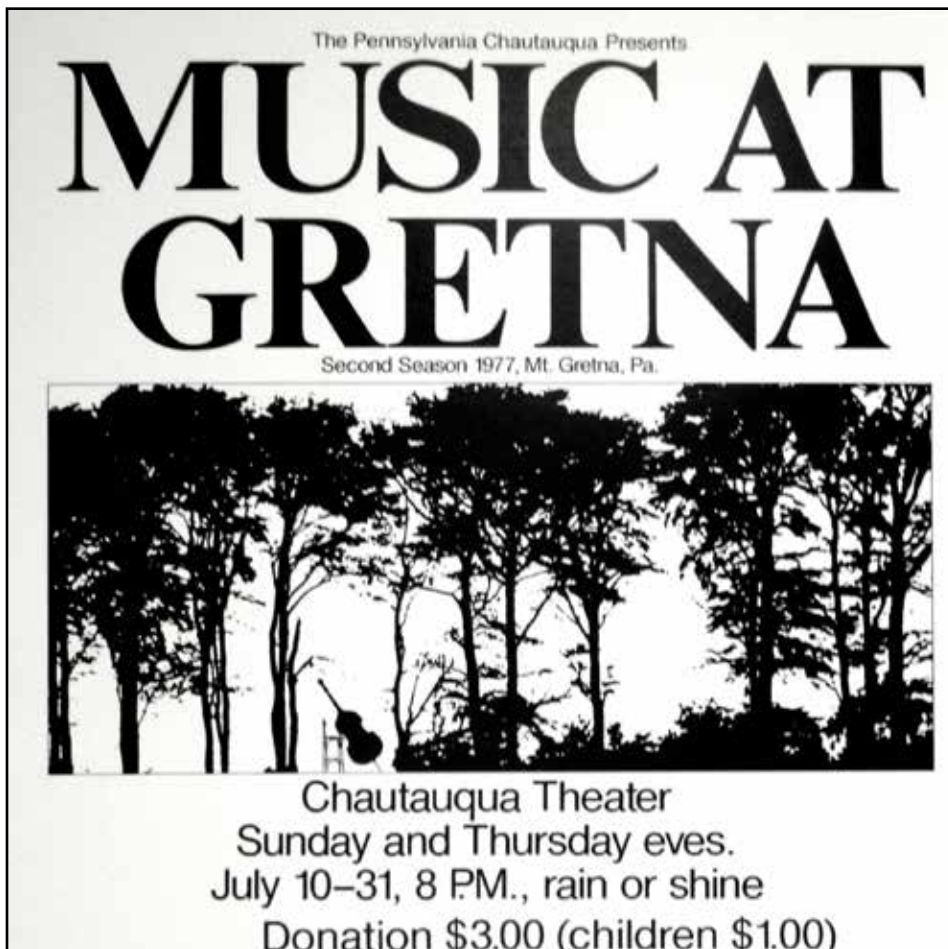
Bruce Johnson, a friend and co-founder of the Art Show, created the iconic Music at Gretna print (*pictured page 16*) to

begin spreading the word. The adventure became official and was later renamed Gretna Music.

Success would prove that centuries-old “classical” or “chamber” music was well received in Gretna. The open-air setting and wooded charm, however, made the music concept even more appealing, as did special programs like Artists in Residence.

In 1977, the up-and-coming Audubon Quartet lived and worked alongside locals for six weeks — and would continue to do so for years. It was a milestone in Gretna Music’s success. WITF announced that “some of the greatest music-making anywhere in the country is going on in our backyard right now.” But, as it turns out, the musicians becoming a part of the community was just as special.

“The Audubon got to know people,” Carl remembers fondly. “Kids got to know kids of the Audubon, and they played together on the playground.



Gretna Music's first poster, designed by Bruce Johnson for its second season in 1977.

dedicated to uplifting, inspiring, and uniting our community.

“Chamber music and classical music have this stigma of being ‘hoity toity’ or elitist, and that’s not true,” says Suzanne. “What we present spans from early music to contemporary compositions. Audiences appreciate that we challenge them with our programming. Our mission is to bring in incredible artists who might not otherwise be heard in Central Pennsylvania and open them up to all who wish to listen.”

This work means finding creative ways to reach new audiences, such as the First Listen Program, Gretna Music for Kids, International Music on Your Porch Day, the annual Mount Gretna Tour of Homes fundraiser, and local hosts who open their homes to visiting musicians.

“What a delightful experience,” notes resident Caroline Weaver of her weekend hosting Stergios Theodoridis of the Erinyes Quartet this past summer. “Stergios was charming, friendly, and had so many stories. He spoke of his love of his home country [Greece], his love of the cello, and his passion for playing in the quartet. We were privileged to hear him practice his cello in our home.”

The Audubon liked to cook, and they’d invite their next-door neighbors for dinner, and then they got invited back.”

This method of “producing” music expanded into “presenting” music, when touring jazz bands also joined the lineup. And so the tradition grew. Before long, in 1980, *TIME* magazine heralded Music at Gretna as “one of six of the best small summer music festivals” in the United States.

Now, 45 years later, the mission to present exceptional chamber, jazz, and world music remains steadfast, despite some pressure to stretch genre borders over the years. Musicians have included GRAMMY winners, MacArthur Fellows, major orchestras, jazz legends, Metropolitan Opera stars, prodigies, and featured artists from major orchestras worldwide.

“I’m most proud of the people who took my idea and are determined to do the same thing I was determined to do,”

says Carl. “I can list hundreds of people who put everything they had into making it successful.”

One such passionate person is Executive Director Suzanne Stewart, who has served in the role since 2012. She leads a rich network of staff, board members, and volunteers



Noah Spangler Quintet, July 7, 2025. This group performed as part of Gretna Music's First Listen Program, now in its 14th season. First Listen offers talented local student musicians the chance to perform a mini-concert prior to main-stage performances.

Another core Gretna Music value since its inception has always been to make the arts accessible to as many people as possible. Initiatives like \$5 tickets for children, \$5 for accompanying adults, and “pay what you will” pricing remove barriers so everyone can experience the magic of live music.

The 50th season is no exception: a celebration of the past, but also a pledge to enrich lives through music for another 50 years. The 2025 lineup has featured award-winning new musicians, the introduction of flamenco to the stage, the return of Artists in Residence, and more intimate home and porch concerts.

One of Suzanne’s favorite moments from this year was after one such concert, a testament to the role that Gretna plays in touching hearts through music.

“A guest told me: ‘I’m still thinking about that house concert every day. It’s the first time I heard chamber music in a chamber. I was 4 feet away from the artist playing, watching his fingers on the strings. I’ll never forget that for the rest of my life.’ Those are the things that remind you why we do what we do,” Suzanne says. 🍷

Meagan Cassel lives in Mount Gretna with her husband and two children. They’ve been blessed to grow up surrounded by nature and the arts — one of the best parts of living in this town we call home.

For more information, visit GretnaMusic.org or pick up a copy of *Mozart in the Woods: Gretna Music’s 50 Years* by Carl Ellenberger.

MOZART *in the* WOODS



Gretna Music’s 50 Years
Carl Ellenberger

Sounds of Gretna

Fall schedule got you spinning?

Hit pause.

Sounds of Gretna is a short video series capturing the magic of Mount Gretna in 60-second doses — tree canopies, concert anticipation, evening laughter, summer rain. Artful. Peaceful. 100% Gretna.



VIEW ON YOUTUBE:
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Sponsor an upcoming video by reaching out to Janice@MountGretnaMagazine.org.
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**mount
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magazine



Spirits in the Woods

Story and Photos: Michael Long

Image (left): Shannon Fretz Photography

The woods, as American poet Robert Frost famously noted, are “lovely, dark, and deep.”

Mount Gretna, lovely beyond dispute, possesses deeper, darker features that emerge only as summer yields to autumn and the woodland retreat’s lengthening shadows begin to stir.

Hundreds of thousands of souls of varying temperaments have passed through these woods — pleasure-seekers, soldiers, Christians, and criminals — each carrying a distinct energy. Time pays no mind to the matter of these beings, erasing the physical traces of generations with a sweep of its indifferent hand, but the energy of people and creatures somehow slips through its fingers. The clergy who preach from the pulpit and the scientists who lecture from the lab know well the same truth: Energy persists.

Some call it spirit

Whence spirits come and whither they go is anyone’s guess, but they do seem to hang about the trees at twilight. At night, they move through the woods,



sometimes padding along with a whisper over a carpet of leaves and loam, sometimes stomping with abandon, whipping up an unholy racket as they crash through the underbrush. The Gretna woods teem with spirits whose intentions, kindly or wicked, depend on the eyes that look upon them, the ears that hear them, and the skin that feels their heat.

One of those spirits belongs to Mary Boyd, whose brief walk upon the Earth began in 1910 and ended before she reached what today would be the legal drinking age. Her solitary grave lies hidden among a thicket of pawpaw trees and Japanese barberry in the woods just south of the environmental center at Clarence Schock Memorial Park at Governor Dick (*see photo below left*).

In paper records, Mary, who died of typhoid fever in 1930 at age 20, has the dubious distinction of being older when she married than when she died.

Around mid-January 1926, two months before her 16th birthday, Mary Corkle became pregnant with the child of 24-year-old Manheim dairyman Arthur Boyd. By May, the two had married, likely without the blessing of Mary’s parents, who would have needed to give written consent to their union due to Mary’s tender age. Instead, the couple lied on their marriage license application, listing Mary as 21, an age she would never reach.

Mary gave birth to her first child, Arthur Jr., in October 1926, and she bore Arthur Jr. a sister, Edith, on March 26, 1928, the day before her 18th birthday.

The neat, deliberate signature Mary penned to her marriage license application would seem better suited to a schoolwork assignment. Arthur’s steady, practiced hand appears to have filled out both his and her portions of the application, including her inflated age. Whether Mary thought her circumstances favorable or ill is impossible to know, but on her deathbed, she or someone who loved her decided her eternal rest would come not in a cemetery where her husband might one day lie beside her, but on the land outside Mount Gretna where Elmer and Lottie Corkle raised her and her eight siblings.

The tree rooted at the head of Mary’s grave lived more than twice as long as she, yet time has reduced even that once-sturdy hardwood to a wizened stump and a couple of moss-covered logs tented over a metal grave marker stuck into the ground by a local funeral home that itself faded into history four decades ago.

Still, life blooms at Mary’s feet. Each spring, daffodils emerge to form a yellow skirt around her deathbed, and the woodland property’s owners, Brett and Janice Balmer, register Mary’s presence as benevolent, not menacing.

On the hunt — in life and death

To find a truly malevolent spirit, one would need to follow the Horse-Shoe Trail a couple of miles west to Colebrook, where late 18th-century ironmaster Samuel Jacobs once stoked the fires that fueled the burgeoning iron empire of the Coleman family, whose collective wealth would one day build Gretna.



Although Samuel Jacobs' dusty remains today lie entombed in a crypt in Harrisburg Cemetery, some say his tortured spirit still stumbles through the woods between Colebrook and Gretna, chased by a pack of baying hunting hounds he abused throughout his life.

The legend, first recorded in 1867 in an epic poem "The Legend of the Hounds" by Philadelphia writer George Henry Boker, goes something like this:

Despite holding the title of Squire — short for Esquire, meant to convey high standing — wealth had corrupted the spirit of the Colebrook Furnace ironmaster and made him a mean, lecherous drunk.

An avid fox hunter, the Squire boasted to his city friends about the excellence of his hunting hounds and took the men into the countryside on horseback to show off their prowess.

The pack, uncharacteristically indifferent to the hunt that day, failed to flush out a fox, enraging the Squire, who drove his dogs to the top of Colebrook Furnace and ordered his workers to toss them into the fiery maelstrom. He threw in the pack's leader, Flora, a devoted, sleek white beauty who had once saved his life and who licked his face even as he lifted her over the flames.

Haunted by what he had done, the Squire set out to drink himself to death.

Lying in bed, breathing his last in full view of the belching furnace outside, he claimed to see his hounds leaping from the flames, their noses ablaze with the scent of new prey: him.

As fantastic as the tale seems, the pearls of legend grow upon grains of truth. George Henry Boker first heard the story from a friend who lived in the Lebanon Valley, and newspaper records indicate the ironmaster was, in fact, a fox hunter of some repute. In 1812, the County of Lancaster paid him \$2.67 for 10 "old red fox scalps."

The Squire's general irascibility is harder to verify. Notice of his death at age 57, printed in the April 17, 1819, edition of the *Lancaster Intelligencer*, refers to "Samuel Jacobs, Esq." as "a worthy and respectable Citizen," a characterization any newspaper editor might have inferred from his courtesy title.

His wife, Sarah, followed him in death not a week later. Could Samuel have been so attentive, and his love for his wife so strong, that she died of a broken heart? Not likely. While Samuel's cause of death was never listed, given the times, he and his wife probably died of the same disease.

His status as a slave owner might be the most significant indicator of his nature. In 1790, when most members of polite society north of the Mason-Dixon Line were divesting their interests in the slave

trade, records show Samuel owned two slaves. While slave ownership may not contribute to creating a tortured soul, it's hard to imagine such a grisly tale issuing from the legacy of an otherwise well-adjusted, stand-up guy.

How did George Boker describe him?

"Stern and strong as the dark, pitiless vague form/ That reigns in Hades, when the storm/ Of wrath is wildest, and the lost/ On blazing waves are upward tossed/ Pale with their tortures; so the Squire/ Grim and unshaken in his ire."

Samuel's spirit would seem a fit quarry for the hounds of hell ... in any woods where they might give chase. 🐾

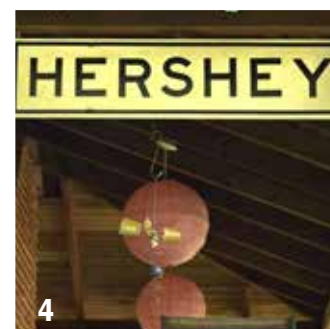
Michael Long is the deputy editor of the Investigations and Enterprise team for LNP | LancasterOnline and WITF. He and his family hail from northern Lancaster County and still frequent Mount Gretna.



Samuel Jacob's burial site at the Harrisburg Cemetery, as well as a closeup of the inscription on the tombstone (top left).

Spot the GRETNA COUSIN

A SPECIAL MOUNT GRETNA MAGAZINE GAME | THE "COTTAGE NAMES" EDITION



Gretna is full of one-of-a-kind charm, but even unique places have cousins. One of these cottage signs isn't from here, but it feels like it could be.



HOW TO PLAY: Can you spot our out-of-town cousin? Send us your best guess! The answer will be revealed on our Stories blog in late October — and the name of the first correct guesser will be listed as well. Submit your answer via our contact form at MountGretnaMagazine.org (and be sure to subscribe at the same time to get notified of the results).

Then & NOW



The 'Jacks' Bitner

Main photo: High school senior Jack Bitner examines the stained glass window his great-grandfather commissioned a local glassmaker to create with his family initial at its center.

Inset photo: A treasured photo of four generations. Gretna historian Jack Bitner, holding his great-grandson Jack. Standing are his son Robert (*left*) and grandson Richard (*right*). Photo provided by the family.



Honoring a family legacy through a senior's rite-of-passage.

Story: Stacy Schroeder

Photos: Bridget Milbrandt Photography

One beautiful day last May, members of the Bitner family gathered at their former cottage in Mount Gretna.

Once again, Jack Bitner was going to sit on its porch. Jonathan Richard Bitner, rising Hempfield High School senior, that is — not John Donald Bitner, the well-known Gretna historian who once lived in this home.

The younger Jack selected this site for his senior photos to honor his great-grandparents, Jack and Jeanine Bitner. Current resident Elizabeth Hummer generously opened her doors (and porch) for an afternoon of reminiscing. The family chose spring, when gardens that still bear Jeanine's hand would be in full bloom.

"It is nice to be able to form a connection with something as deeply tied to my family as this cottage is," says Jack.

Jack was born in 2008 just two months before his great-grandfather died. The family has one treasured photo of the four generations of Bitner men together, with the elder Jack cradling his namesake (*see page 22*).

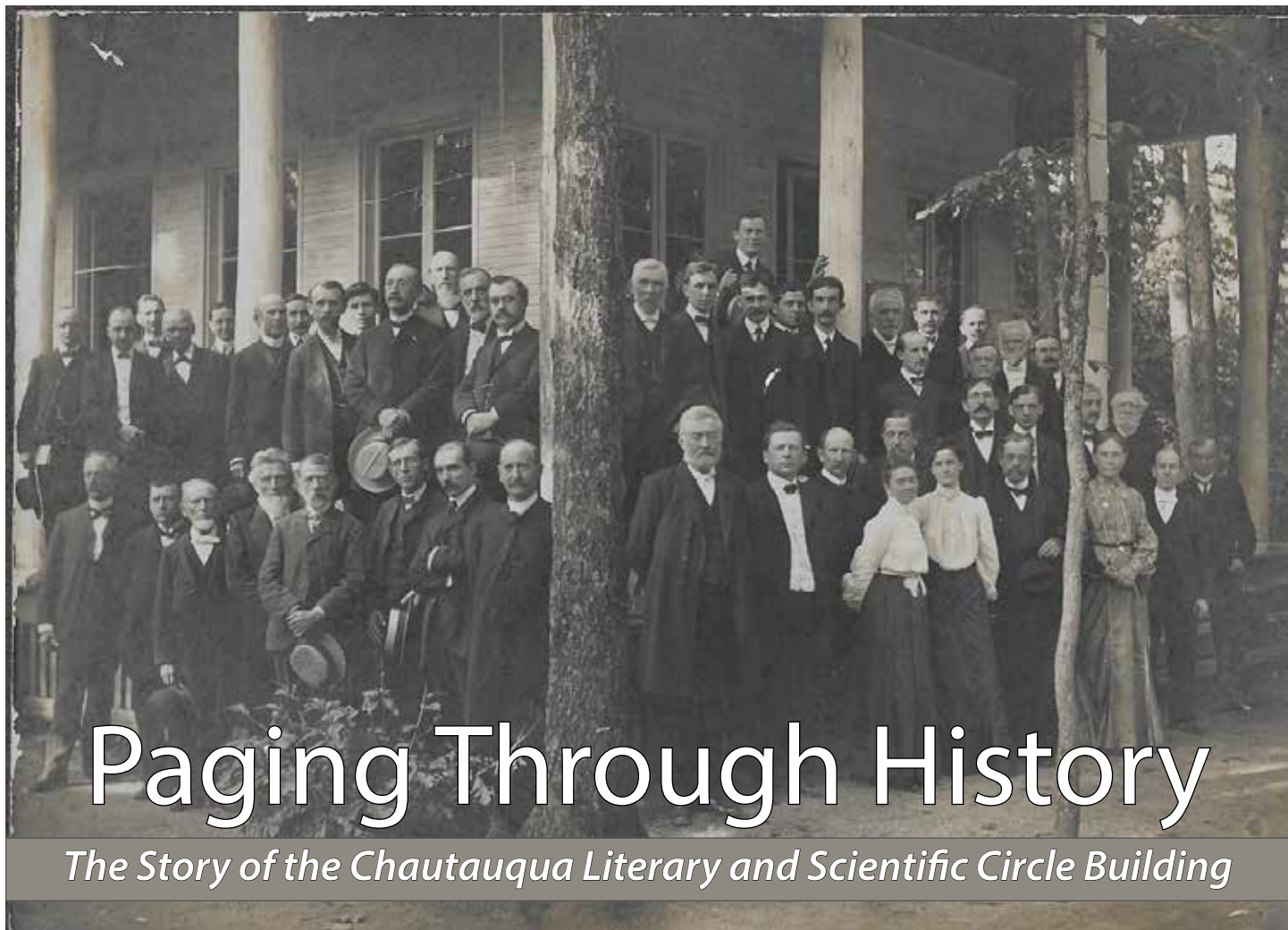
The day took on an extra celebratory feel as photographer Bridget Milbrandt captured some family photos around the cottage. They also strolled to the nearby Mount Gretna Area Historical Society Museum, which includes a research center named after the family patriarch.

"Our Jack loves Gretna as much as his great-grandfather and wanted nothing more than to have his pictures taken in a place he loves," says mom Emily Bitner. 🍷



Photo courtesy of Mount Gretna Area Historical Society





Paging Through History

The Story of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle Building

Story: Margaret Hopkins

Photos and Postcards: Courtesy of Mount Gretna Area Historical Society

Four years after its founding in 1874, the New York Chautauqua Institution (upon which Mount Gretna's Pennsylvania Chautauqua is based) opened a new chapter in American education with a novel four-year program, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC).

Sharing Chautauqua's mission to broaden access to education, the CLSC was open to all — whether an individual was a shop girl, farm boy, mechanic, or those with leisure time — at a cost of about two cents a day. Its goal was simple but ambitious: to develop people's God-given gifts of intellectual capacity, invention, and reason through reading and study.

"I am going to college, my own college, in my own house, taking my own time;

turning the years into a college term; turning my kitchen, sitting-room, and parlor into college halls, recitation rooms, and laboratory," wrote John H. Vincent, Chautauqua and CLSC co-founder, describing what program enrollees might have said about the experience.

Neither John nor Lewis Miller, also a Chautauqua co-founder, had formal schooling beyond early grades. Lewis was a businessman and successful agricultural inventor; John started teaching when he was 15, according to *Chautauqwhat? A Short History of a Place and an Idea* by Chautauqua archivist and historian Jon Schmitz.

The men met in the national Sunday Schools movement that promoted literacy for reading the scriptures. As devout Christians, they shared a passion for investigating new teaching methods and techniques. With support from the Sunday School Union of the

Methodist Church, John and Lewis developed the Chautauqua Institution, a multi-week program of study and instruction featuring well-known speakers and preachers.

The first assembly drew thousands. It confirmed the men's convictions that education was the best means to not only glorify God but also to enrich individuals.

With the CLSC, John and Lewis expanded the Institution with a curriculum of structured and comprehensive readings, rigorous assignments, and written exams. Readings in science, history, and literature were included with religious texts. The blending of secular with the sacred was novel and not without critics, prompting John's response: "All things that are legitimate are of God. The human intellect belongs to God and is to be cultivated for him."

When he introduced the CLSC in 1878, John anticipated a few hundred people might enroll. By 1886, the CLSC had more than 100,000 students in the United States and beyond, according to John.

Six of those students came to Mount Gretna in 1892 to celebrate their completion of the program and receive their diplomas at the Pennsylvania Chautauqua's first Recognition Day. In contrast to that low-key event, the second and subsequent Recognition Days included flower girls, poems, recitations, band and choral concerts, and processions through decorated arches and the "Golden Gate" of knowledge, according to news reports.

While the heart of the CLSC program was individual study, John and Lewis encouraged local circles where students could gather to discuss their assigned readings and hear from invited speakers.

Rev. H. C. Pardoe, dean of the Pennsylvania Chautauqua's CLSC department, organized the "Hall of the Grove" circle in 1893. By 1899, this CLSC had 80 members who annually trekked to Gretna for the three-week, face-to-face sessions with fellow students and professors during summer assemblies, according to the *Daily News*.

In 1901, fundraising began for a permanent home for Gretna's CLSC. That next April, the Chautauqua board approved construction of a one-story building of Grecian architecture with meeting, reading, and reception rooms. John H. Cilley, who designed the auditorium, was awarded the contract for \$2,500, according to board minutes.

By mid-June, the CLSC house was ready for the 10th Pennsylvania Assembly. Wooden steps led up to the three-sided veranda ringed by stately chestnut columns, and the 40-by-60-foot meeting room was set for lectures, classes, and roundtable discussions. The June 18, 1902, edition of the *Daily News* declared, "The CLSC has erected a very handsome building ... where every comfort will be provided for its members and strangers

visiting the grounds and in which thirty-minute noonday lectures will be given by prominent speakers."

Until the Hall of Philosophy was completed in 1910, the CLSC house provided the primary meeting space for the Chautauqua board and for classes and lectures not suited for the auditorium. At one time, the building also became home to a community library with seven daily newspapers, maps, and 500-plus books. A librarian was hired to monitor the collection, according to Chautauqua board minutes from the 1920s.

Although membership in CLSCs started declining during the mid-20th century, the New York Chautauqua kept the program running by selecting literature for reading and discussion at its annual summer assemblies. Participation in the Chautauqua CLSC is stable, with approximately 200 people joining each year.

But membership numbers do not begin to tell the story of CLSCs' impact on models of informal education. Continuing education classes offered by university extension services — along with lunch-and-learns, self-paced trainings, and reading and book groups — owe much to the CLSC's core belief in adults' capacity and desire to learn.

As John Vincent wrote, "Show people, no longer young, that the mind reaches its maturity long after the school days end, and that some of the best intellectual and literary labor is performed in and beyond middle life." 🍷

Margaret Hopkins is a fourth-generation member and full-time resident of the Mount Gretna Campmeeting Association. She enjoys learning about Mount Gretna's history and has written stories for the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society newsletters.



Page 24: Members of the Spiritual Conference of the Reformed Church in the United States outside the Pennsylvania Chautauqua CLSC building, August 1903.



Photo by Shannon Fretz Photography

Left: The undated postcard shows the Pennsylvania Chautauqua's CLSC as it once was, while the bottom image was captured this summer.

Having trouble locating the modern-day CLSC in your mental map of Gretna? It's the building next door to The Jigger Shop. Over the years, the space has been rented by various shopkeepers—most recently, Kirsch's Antiques of Lititz.

Mt. Gretna



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Fall-ing

Seasonal Contemplations by Vicki Kensinger | Photo by Shannon Fretz Photography

In the autumn we moved to Mount Gretna, making it our permanent home — at least for this season of our lives — the chestnut oaks were having a mast year. Unfamiliar with the reality of dwelling beneath a dense canopy of trees, we were unprepared for the bombardment of acorns pummeling our metal roof.

That first September evening, lying in bed beneath the steeply sloped roof of our first home here, the report of those nuts, plummeting dozens of feet onto our cottage roof, then tumbling down its incline to drop once again with a knock onto the deck below, startled us awake. Soon enough, we became delighted with the percussive backdrop, a steady beat in the rhythm of our lives here.

Some years, the acorns are prolific. Children delight in gathering them as much as I do in marveling at the interplay of nature.

Walking the paths that weave their way down the hillside to the heart of our village, they roll and crunch beneath our feet, and we know that soon enough the squirrel population will be on the increase. In their interdependent, reciprocal dance — where the squirrels rely upon the nuts to feed themselves and their offspring, and where the trees depend upon the squirrels to bury a few more acorns than they can retrieve and consume — both thrive.

Sure enough, come springtime, oak saplings will be popping forth from flower pots and leaf litter. When the squirrel population grows a bit too great for there to be any leftovers remaining to grow into trees, the trees limit their production until the squirrels' numbers decrease in response.

In recent years, chestnut oaks have been fall-ing in other ways here in this forest home that we share with them — occasionally atop our tiny dwellings far below. Massive, they land with tremendous impact, sometimes doing unintentional damage. Neighbors, like squirrels, come scurrying out of their homes to survey, support, and wonder. Their falling reminds us of our vulnerability and our shared humanity. They prompt us to remember that we are interconnected, relational, and interdependent beings — human to human, human to earth — in a strange way, then, nurturing us even as they die.

Of course, were these giants to fall in a forest uninhabited by humans and their abodes, their lives would not end with that fall. Over time, their decomposing bodies would offer nurture and shelter for an abundance of life — from fungi to mammals. In their dying, they become a nursery bed.

Often when we think of autumn, of “fall,” we associate it with the more evident “falling” of leaves. We are reminded that when we cease the striving that is the summer season of our lives — for trees, all that chlorophyll production, making things green, producing food and shelter, sequestering carbon, and bequeathing oxygen — the beauty of who we are beneath that busyness is given space to be revealed.

The annual display blatantly reminds us to let go when the time has come to transition into a new season of life, even though our identity is enwrapped in all the greenery, and we may feel as if we've just arrived.

Often, I am struck by the idea that just at the point of ripeness, the season is coming to an end. The plant is preparing to die back just as its fruit is ripe. Pumpkins are lying in the field, seed heads are crammed atop browning wildflower stems, acorns are falling from the treetops, and giant chestnut oaks, at the prime of their lives, are lying down. It is a bittersweet moment, at times seemingly arriving all at once, this cusp between prolific fullness and a different sort of beauty that awaits in the season to come.

Although the signs of the season have been hinting, a sudden wind, sometimes harsh, sweeps away what a week ago felt so ripe and vibrant. At other times, this end of a season feels more painful. The chestnut oak suddenly falls; our well-prepared lives suddenly fall apart.

Nonetheless, the coming season patiently awaits, holding out its hand with its subtle offer — or its more insistent demand — of wholeness, inviting us to burrow underground for restoration and rooting, or to move more deeply into the crystalline stillness.

Slowly, the fallen seeds soften, and we decompose our lives to embrace what is a new way of being beautiful, one that offers nurture of another sort. Like the giant chestnut lying on the forest floor, after a life of producing and reproducing, our own fallen lives become a nursery bed, letting go to become something new. 🍂

Vicki Kensinger is a lover of the healing power of the written word and the natural world. Her daily journaling practice takes her into the wild terrain of the inner landscape, while her wilderness excursions carry her deep into the backcountry of Ontario via canoe. Mother of five and Gaga to 10, she lives in Mount Gretna with her husband, Don. She blogs at EmmaatLast.wordpress.com and AnAlgonquinAffair.wordpress.com.

A photograph of a forest floor covered in a thick layer of fallen autumn leaves. The leaves are in various stages of decay, showing colors from bright red and orange to brown and green. Sunlight filters through the trees in the background, creating a soft, hazy glow and lens flare effects. The text is overlaid in the upper left quadrant.

A season of letting go
to become
something new ...

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hiking | lake swimming | porch sitting | spooky fall theater | book reviews | plays | concerts
ice cream | bird walks | fairy gardens | holiday lights | mountain biking | children's playground
shopping | brunch | marching band | tour of homes | poetry steps | rental cottages
chautauqua summer programs | bible heritage festival | painting classes | dining + live music
environmental center | mini golf | leaf peeping | whimsical architecture | roller skating | rail trail
art show | winter strolls | history museum | film festival | ... and much, much more!



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Photo: Todd Nicholas