

mount GRETNA

magazine

AWAKE

DORMANT

FRIEND

ESCAPE

DOOR

Mystery

Gretna's
TINY TREASURES

EMBRACE

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Happy 100th,
Mount Gretna
Borough!

THE ART
IS IN THE
DETAILS

Why Performers
Keep Coming Back
to Our Town

SHMOOZE

THRU

SUMMER

SUMMER 2026



Volume 2, Issue 3



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Photos clockwise from top left: Suzanne Stewart, executive director of Gretna Music, addresses a Playhouse audience. Photo courtesy of Gretna Music. Campmeeting Americana. Photo by Shannon Fretz Photography. This year's Great Gretna Plate amateur chefs. Photo by Kristin Kissell. Cover photo: Shannon Fretz Photography.

STORIES THAT CONNECT + INSPIRE

WORD of the SEASON

Celebrating the beauty
of uncommon words

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A Greek word meaning to do something
with soul, creativity, or love, leaving a
piece of yourself in what you are doing.

**A PERFECT WORD FOR
SUMMER IN GRETNNA!**

THE VIEW FROM MY PORCH

A year to remember

When we first explored launching a magazine in Mount Gretna, the hope was for a summer 2025 debut. It quickly became clear that timeline was not realistic and, looking back, I'm glad. Fall 2025 proved to be the perfect beginning.

This first year has flown by, and it feels fitting that we now arrive at our first summer issue. Gretna is lovely in every season, but summer brings something extra — and this issue is bursting with that same energy, abundance, and sense of connection.

So what have we learned in our first year?

That there is a **deep hunger for connection, laughter, and local stories.**

That this community **values both cherished traditions and fresh creative offerings.**

And that, despite what the broader media industry may say, **print is still very much alive** — and even preferred — here.

We're proud of what we've accomplished in our first year and excited for the stories, events, and ideas already taking shape for our second.

We'd also like to warmly welcome two of Gretna's newest business owners: **Dayna Bernard** of MG Mercantile and **Reney Bartolomei** of Mount Gretna Coffee Cottage. May your introduction to Gretna be every bit as delightful as ours has been.

What to expect this autumn and beyond

In our second year, we are:

- Launching a multi-issue series exploring Gretna's future
- Introducing several new guest writers
- Taking a break from Spot the Gretna Cousin to highlight some other interactive features
- Considering custom magazine merch (tell us what you'd love to see!)
- Expanding our events and event planning teams

Ways to get involved

Here are some options:

- Participate in our October 18 Speed Neighboring event (*details on page 20*)
- Contribute high-resolution seasonal photos
- Pass on story ideas
- Suggest Words of the Season

- Submit Gretna Trail Mix or Reader Voices content
- Subscribe to our e-news
- Like, follow, and share us on social media

** And finally, a very important ask **

We are in the midst of our main fundraising campaign of the year. **If you have been enjoying what we create, please consider helping to fund our work.**

Our print magazine, digital content, and community events are funded through a mix of advertising and charitable giving, with annual expenses reaching close to \$60,000.

Our campaign goal is to raise \$15,000–\$20,000 this summer, with giving levels beginning at just \$30 (the equivalent of a one-year subscription). Every gift, large or small, helps support our mission as we continue growing a sustainable magazine.

Campaign details are provided on the back cover or at MountGretnaMagazine.org. All gifts are tax-deductible.

Would you consider making a contribution? We would be so grateful for your support.



Stacy

Stacy Schroeder
Founder + Creative Director
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A FINAL WELCOME TO ...

Members of the Chautauqua Trail, who will gather in Mount Gretna for their annual meeting July 31-Aug. 2. The Pennsylvania Chautauqua — which shares the same geographic boundaries as the borough of Mount Gretna — is one of 18 remaining Chautauquas in North America. Learn more at ChautauquaTrail.com.

*Photos this page (starting at left): The interior dome in the Slotznick cottage in Mount Gretna. Repurposed glass cabinet doors from the demolished Preachers' Dormitory live on in the Wein cottage. **Page 5:** Sisters Juno and Willa Heverling delight in Gretna's Fairy Garden. All photos by Shannon Fretz Photography.*

Gretna TRAIL MIX

Sweet, sometimes nutty, rarely salty — snippets of Gretna life and the stories behind our pages.



Readers Share Their Quirkiest Cottage Elements

We asked ... and you delivered! Here are some of our favorite cottage tales:

When the old Preachers' Dormitory next to the Methodist Church in the Campmeeting was taken down in 1991, we bought the glass cabinet doors from its fitted bookshelves — complete with latches — and installed them in the empty transoms over the bedroom doors in our Heights cottage (pictured in the middle of the column at right). They fit perfectly (in a Gretna cottage way). They can even be opened and shut! We also bought narrow beadboard and used it to panel our bathroom. — *Elizabeth Wein*

Boat oars as handrails on the stairs. — *Barbara Latz*

A red sandstone wall sets my home apart from all others in Chautauqua. That plus a park for my porch's front yard!

— *Allan Feldman*

The cast iron “subterranean receiver,” i.e. underground garbage can, in my garden. Evidently, this is the first version of a garbage can for food scraps, popular in the early 20th century — though it's hard to imagine how garbage was removed from this deep can. — *Pat Brosious*

Our cottage has an interior dome over the living room (pictured at left), just like the State Capitol in Harrisburg. We also have a three-floor elevator and close to 200 wind chimes on our porches. — *Christine Slotznick*



More on Gretna's Tiny Treasures

Outtakes from our story on page 26

From Julie Herman:

Julie loves observing the creativity of children's rock poems. One in particular that gave her a chuckle: discovering the “escape” rock set apart in the woods.

From Luke Royer:

Gretna's self-guided walking tour began in 2017 via the Mount Gretna Area Historical Society (MGAHS) and was rounded out in 2022 when Luke instituted QR codes as his Eagle Scout project. He recalls researching historical facts, collaborating with web developers on code compatibility, and coordinating sign production and locations. “In looking for a project, I knew that I wanted to do something for my community. Growing up in Mount Gretna, I learned much about the rich history of our small town. After speaking

with [MGAHS], I thought that bringing attention to the incredible historical tour that they created via physical signs would be a perfect project.”



From the Fairy Garden Caretakers:

Carol Morgan managed this treasured spot for years, responding to children’s fairy letters and saving notebooks full of them. “It was one of the best times for me,” she recalls. “It was so magical and fun.” Sylvia Cueto, who has assumed the role today alongside Sandy Moritz, loves how the community rallies around the tradition. “I didn’t realize how beloved that garden is, how many people had done work to it,” she says. “When I come up with an idea, people just show up. It’s neat to watch everybody be excited about it.”

Gretna Through the Eyes of Its Performers

For more, see the story on page 14

Linda Tedford, Susquehanna Chorale

Of Linda Tedford’s last time conducting the Susquehanna Chorale at the Bible Festival on Aug. 23, she says, “It’s going to be very emotional for me and the singers.”

She has planned a program called “My Favorite Things.” “I chose music that’s been really close to me for the past years. The whole thing is American composers because of America’s 250th.”

Even though her tenure as the conductor will be over, one thing remains. She says, “I’ll still come to Gretna.”

Bart Briody on performing:

“I do it for the fun of it. I’m yapping with the audience or jumping off the stage. That’s all part of it for me.” And, at age 71, Bart says, “I kinda made a statement a couple of years ago. I’m going to keep doing it until I break a hip. That’s not as funny as it used to be.”

The Audiences and Venues

“The audience is so supportive. Artists are super talented, but the audience would clap and cheer even if you mess up. That’s the best kind of audience.” — *Caitlin Dailey*

“We have many Gretna friends! Chef Daniel, who’s a local celebrity chef, always brings us home-cooked food. The local firefighters and first responders always come out to the show, and we honor them before and during the show. We love the local community.” — *The Bronx Wanderers*

“The Playhouse can be challenging when the temperatures and humidity are high, but the staff are an amazing team that really takes care of its artists and run an extremely efficient and professional outlet.” — *Jeremiah Shaw, Telegraph Quartet*

American Ideals Thrive in Mount Gretna

After visiting Mount Gretna for decades beginning in childhood in the late 1960s, I finally convinced my husband — and our golden retriever, Kula — to spend the summer of 2025 here. During our working years in Iowa, that dream felt impossible. Retirement changed that. What began as a one-time splurge quickly became something more permanent, and by summer’s end, we were cottage owners.

The warm welcome from our neighbors has been deeply moving. You embody many of the qualities that have sustained Gretna for more than a century: creativity, individuality, curiosity, thrift, and a deep appreciation for the area’s beauty and history. Beneath it all is a spirit of shared joy and community care that feels increasingly rare.

I expected Gretna to quiet down after Labor Day, but October proved otherwise. While volunteering at the Halloween Parade, I unexpectedly became the marching band’s sign bearer — with Kula at my side. As dusk fell, witches, dragons, angels, and ghouls filled the streets while the band played ‘The Addams Family,’ ‘The Munsters,’ and eventually ‘Ghostbusters’ at the firehouse finale.

At one point, Kula looked up at me with unmistakable concern, as if to say, “This is a highly unusual sight.”

Oh, just Gretna magic, I silently assured her.

Thanks to everyone who helps make this place so special. We are grateful to now be part of it. — *Liz Miller*

... GRETNA TRAIL MIX continued on page 7 ...

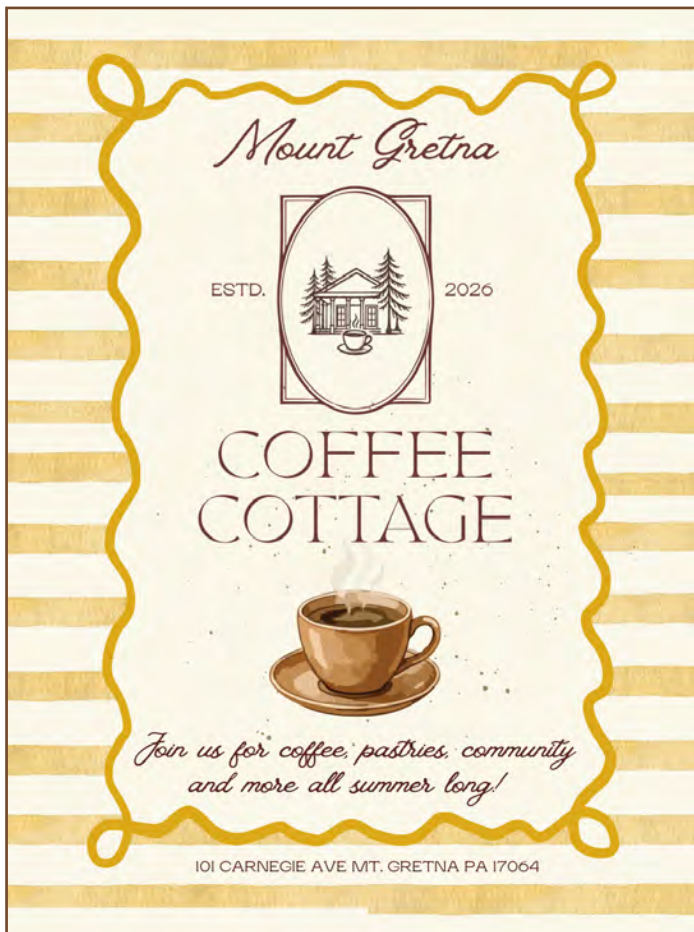
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... GRETN TRAIL MIX continued from page 5 ...

Centenarian Birthday Greetings

Mary Ellen McCarty, a longtime former Mount Gretna resident, celebrated her 104th birthday this June. Happy birthday to you, Mary Ellen!

Answer Our Next Reader Voices Question



In honor of Mount Gretna Borough's 100th anniversary, we want to know: "What would you put in a Mount Gretna time capsule to be opened 100 years from now?" Answer by Aug. 1 at MountGretnaMagazine.org/Reader-Voices.

Readers ... this space is for you too! We invite you to share short tidbits and witty observations of life in Gretna with us. We will publish as many as we can here, with a light editorial touch. Share stories via the form at MountGretnaMagazine.org/Contact.

As a starting point, we'd especially love your responses to our next Reader Voices question, listed above.

Wide-Open Spaces. Warm-Hearted Places.

Summer means sunshine on rolling farmland, trails that stretch for miles, and charming small towns where you'll feel right at home. A place where history lives on in open-air performances, evening walks through town, and ice-cream cones enjoyed at an unhurried pace—simple joys passed down for generations.

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Photos this page: A canoe is repurposed as a planter for hosta, assorted elephant ears, and Persian shield (left); moss-covered chairs are surrounded by upturned tree roots and Boston fern (above). **Page 7 (clockwise from top right):** Potted plants on display at the Mount Gretna Community Library include hostas mixed with impatiens, cannas, coladium, coleus, sweet potato, begonias, and elephant ears. Bleeding hearts, hosta, and sweet woodruff bloom in front of a small waterfall. A stone bookshelf is accompanied by assorted ferns, rex begonia, coladium, ivy, and creeping Jenny.

Shade Gardening in Gretna

Story + Photos: Ryan Fretz

I've worked in the landscape here in Mount Gretna for the past 16 years, and the topic of shade gardening arises again and again. I'd like to share my approach, some observations, and advice to make gardening under the shade more accessible.

Philosophy of shade gardening

Before we focus on the landscape, I tell people to begin with themselves. We are cultivating a mindset just as much as we are cultivating a garden. Embracing the forest aesthetic allows us to work with nature rather than against it. By making simple additions, subtractions, and embellishments to the natural world, we can achieve beautiful results.

There is an innate human desire to control our surroundings. In the constructed world, we see managed landscapes with simple designs and clean lines. By letting go, we make room for serendipity and invite nature and time to become our collaborators.

Observations and advice made in the shade

A good place to start when thinking about what to plant is taking a walk

and looking at what grows well in landscapes similar to your own. Pay attention to the degree of shade. Some locations receive morning or afternoon sun; others get dappled sun spots through the day. Still others are blanketed in deep shade, which can really limit options. Take note of ground conditions. Are you in a boggy hollow or on a dry slope?

Garden art, outdoor living spaces, and elements of whimsy are ubiquitous in Gretna's gardens. These elements offer an opportunity for self-expression, and you don't have to worry about underwatering your garden gnome.

Potted arrangements of mixed annuals and perennials are highly effective in creating beautiful focal points in the landscape. They work well framing entryways and are a good solution for dry spots where mature trees compete for moisture.

Buying plants for shade limits your palette. Annuals in full sun offer a cascade of blooms, but many of those best suited for shade have showy foliage, pastel hues that pop in the dark, and shimmery sheens.

Some of my favorite foliage plants are coleus, caladium, Persian shield (*Strobilanthes dyeriana*), and Rex begonias (*Begonia rex-cultorum*). Favorite flowering options are impatiens, bedding begonias, *Streptocarpella*, and 'Velvet Elvis' (*Plectranthus*). There are also plants labeled for sun, such as cannas and Elephant Ears (*Alocasia* and *Colocasia*), that will do just fine in the shade, but on a diminished scale, growing to just a fraction of their potential.

An important consideration in plant selection is whether a plant is native, non-native but well-behaved, or non-native and aggressively invasive. Our native plants are the foundation of the ecosystem, converting the sun's energy into food for everything else.

Most insects rely on specific host plants to reproduce — the relationship between the monarch butterfly and milkweed being the most famous. Non-native plants exist outside of these relationships and therefore do not contribute to our ecosystem.

Many non-natives from similar global climates are welcome additions to our

landscape, such as hostas, but it's the use of non-natives that aggressively spread that is a real problem. Privet, barberry, and burning bush are sweeping across the forest. Wisteria, English ivy, and trumpet vine are pulling down trees and threatening our homes, while a host of groundcovers vie for their own monocultures. These invasive plants outcompete and replace natives, decreasing insect populations, which, in turn, reduces bird populations, and so on.

Pachysandra and other invasive ground covers are well established in Gretna. They can be effective and attractive, but it's best to be aware of their aggressive tendencies and keep them in check. Consider native options such as golden

ragwort (*Packera aurea*), wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), or our native pachysandra for use as ground cover in the landscape.

Dealing with deer

Another challenge facing Gretna's gardeners is the overpopulation of white-tailed deer. Not only are they halting the natural regeneration of the forest, but they are also coming for your flowers. Be prepared to use a deterrent spray, such as Repels-All, to protect your plantings, or focus on using plants deer do not eat. The menu is ever-expanding, but ferns are a safe bet.

One effective strategy for planters is to place them in elevated locations just out of reach of hungry herbivores. Cottages

in the middle of the neighborhoods are more protected, but anyone living on the forest edge knows the deer well. Some choose to maintain their beautiful garden oasis by installing deer exclusion fencing.

Part of the magical feeling of being in Gretna is the sense of separation from what constitutes everyday life in the outside world. Our collective attentiveness — the care and love put into our shade-filled forest gardens — helps cast that spell. 🍄

Ryan Fretz is a Mount Gretna native with a degree in fine art and a career in landscaping. His current work seeks a synthesis of that education and his preferred medium: the gardens of his hometown.

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Echoes of the Forest

Commemorating Mount Gretna Borough's Centennial

Story: Michael Long

Photos: Shannon Fretz Photography

A tempest of post-World War I optimism shook the trees of Mount Gretna in 1926, as the roar of the 1920s approached full bellow. A roller coaster rumbled, a carousel whirled, and worsted wool-clad bathers splashed about in the “million-gallon” pool that summer at entrepreneur Abraham Lincoln Kauffman’s newly opened amusement park, just east of the Campmeeting in what is now West Cornwall Township.

Automobiles, no longer an exclusive novelty for the wealthy, enjoyed free parking at the park after making their way to Gretna via the concrete highway that Kauffman’s son-in-law, Andy Daigneau, helped to lay just two years earlier. The same railroads that first reached into the

woodlands in the late 19th century were fueling 20th-century industrialization and economic exuberance that rapidly converted millions of Americans into credit-accruing consumers, all hungry for a bit of leisure.

Tennis at the Conewago Hotel and then perhaps a refreshing dip in the lake, anyone?

In addition to managing a hotel owned by his father-in-law Kauffman, Daigneau ran a local garage to service the many Model T Fords coming up the highway. In 1926, he became a hoseman in Mount Gretna’s first official fire company. Formal infrastructure, like a fire company, grew around the crush of people who were descending on Gretna each summer. In 1926, the United Brethren campmeeting reported average daily attendance of

1,200, and Sunday services could exceed 10,000 souls.

Add in the several thousand Pennsylvania National Guard troops who cycled through the Camp Edmund Lynch training grounds that summer, and the need for a permanent public-service framework — water, sewer, electricity, phones, fire, and police protection — was rapidly transforming the summer playground into a year-round, four-seasons habitable sylvan outpost.

Some of the Pennsylvania Chautauqua regulars who longed to make Gretna a more permanent address petitioned the Lebanon County Court of Common Pleas in August 1925 for municipal status. On Oct. 7, 1926, the court’s president judge, Charles V. Henry, granted the petitioners’ right to

incorporate Mount Gretna into a borough along the lines of land owned by the Pennsylvania Chautauqua Association in South Londonderry and West Cornwall townships.

By the time the November election rolled around, some 60 voters had registered Mount Gretna as their primary polling place. The borough's first elected mayor, referred to then as a burgess, was John Geiger Ingram, a Bethlehem Steel mining engineer who lived in Colebrook but "cotted" with his family in Gretna, as the local newspapers described it.

Looking at Gretna today

A century later, the borough, at least on the surface, looks much the same as it did when Calvin Coolidge was president. The number of homes has increased, but only at about one cottage every 14 months. The number of dwellings continues to exceed the number of permanent residents. When the borough first incorporated, it claimed 113 residents and 135 dwellings; today, it has approximately 190 permanent residents and 217 dwellings.

The Pennsylvania Chautauqua, the not-for-profit that owns most of the public spaces and has been charged with preserving the culture and programming that is the town's lifeblood, continues to work hand in glove with borough officials to maintain historic and natural spaces. The borough, with its six full-time employees, patches potholes, fixes curbs, and, during the winter months, clears roads of snow.

Some of the most important and least visible changes that have shaped the borough across the century have happened underground. For nearly a half-century, Borough Director of Public Works Bill Care has helped guide the invisible work that keeps the borough healthy and welcoming for visitors.

At 76, Bill is older than the pipes running beneath borough streets — pipes he had a hand laying as a member of the borough's water and sewer authority. The borough hired him fresh off earning his plumber's license in 1977, just a few years after the municipal authority took

control of the borough's underground network. Back then, its substructures were rapidly deteriorating.

"If I would have realized at the time how bad things were from an infrastructure standpoint," Bill recalls with a laugh, "I probably wouldn't have taken the job."

Despite the crumbling infrastructure, Bill says he came into borough operations at a time when forward-thinking people were invested in revitalization.

This year, the municipal authority finished replacing every water main in its system. This project began in the 1980s, and through upgrades and replacements, the authority has been able to sustain a sewage plant that dates to 1940. While they might not be the showiest strands in the colorful fabric of the Gretna community, Bill and his crew are the essential threads that hold it all in place.

The borough's more ethereal, artistic underpinnings, marked by a Chautauquan philosophy that celebrates personal growth and expression in a



Photo page 8:

A unique perspective of the Mount Gretna Playhouse, situated in the heart of the borough's downtown area. Mount Gretna Borough corresponds geographically with the Pennsylvania Chautauqua, one of seven distinct neighborhoods that together form the Mount Gretna community. **This page:** Violet Peters participates in the Chautauqua's Fourth of July Bike Parade, July 2025.



Photo: Caroline Weaver, Mary Ellen Kiehne, and Joe Estock (left to right), part of the judge's panel at last year's Fourth of July Bike Parade, July 2025.

Happy 100th, Mount Gretna Borough & Happy 250th, United States of America!

restorative natural environment, have only grown stronger across the century.

Generations of dedicated patrons managed to squeeze two centuries' worth of visual, musical, and performing arts into the last 100 years. Gretna Theatre has tallied 99 years of continuous performances, with the likes of Oscar-winning talent Charlton Heston and Broadway icon Bernadette Peters gracing the Mount Gretna Playhouse stage.

Gretna Music's 51 years have featured top-tier jazz and classical musicians, including legendary jazzmen Dave Brubeck, Sonny Rollins, and Wynton Marsalis, as well as violinist Hilary Hahn and pianist Emanuel Ax. The borough's

marquee annual event, the Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show, now in its 52nd year, can still pack them in by the thousands like those Sunday services of yore.

Fostering a 'sense of place' in Gretna
Art Show director and recently elected borough mayor Kerry Royer has lived in the borough for nearly a quarter-century. She has climbed the hill many times, walked the terraced streets, talked with neighbors, and watched as slack-jawed out-of-towners who sought out Gretna for its arts community fall under the spell of its charm and natural beauty. She figures what drew people to Mount Gretna in 1926 is the same thing that draws people here today: The simple

magic of a community tucked into the side of a mountain surrounded by forest and water.

"It's a nostalgic connection to nature and history and civic values," Kerry says. "That sense of place is precious to people, and it's something they find when they come here and then they want to continue it. Because when you're here, you feel like a caretaker of these cottages and this natural land. You want to preserve it for people to experience because it is so rare."

Deb Simpson is among the people whom Gretna mesmerized, and now she's working to preserve the enchanting borough for posterity. A State College resident for 38 years, Simpson discovered Mount Gretna leafing through a travel magazine while waiting for a dental appointment. She figures the pictures of trees made her stop and read the article about what seemed to her a utopian village.

Weeklong stays through the 2010s led her to build a house on Lebanon Avenue in 2020. Now retired from her job as a systems analyst at Penn State University, she serves as president of the borough council. Whether the borough makes it another hundred years, she says, likely will depend on its ability to protect and stay connected with Gretna's sacred canopy.

"I think we will be here as long as the trees are here," she proclaims. 🌿

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.



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Story: Linda Brain Beck

Over the decades, many artistic groups and performers have graced Mount Gretna's performing arts venues with their talent. Throughout the summer, various festivals bring residents and visitors together to enjoy good music in the company of good friends.

Discover what brings local and top-name entertainers back to Gretna's stages again and again.

Mount Gretna Heritage Festival

Bart Briody doesn't have to travel far when he plays with his band.

"In all fairness, I never left Mount Gretna," he says.

Galbraith, Briody and Friends plays regularly around the area and will return to the Heritage Festival at the Campmeeting Tabernacle on Saturday, Aug. 8.

While he lives in Lebanon, Bart's family has been in and around Gretna since 1955. They currently own the Timbers Restaurant and Dinner Theatre.

"I played at the very first Art Show 50 years ago. We played on the steps of the Chautauqua Community Building (now the Hall of Philosophy)," he says.

In 1986, Bart and his friends, Scott Galbraith and Andy Roberts, formed the band. Bart plays the harmonica and sings.

"They're the serious musicians. I'm like the dancing monkey. The other guys make me look good," he says.

Bart wondered at first how audiences would respond to the music. "How does Campmeeting feel about a nine-piece rock band? Having said that, the turnout was really good, and the people are really involved. That makes it easy for us."

Larry McKenna's Mount Gretna Summer Concerts

That sentiment is shared by Caitlin Dailey, a returning performer to Larry McKenna's Mount Gretna Summer Concerts, also at the Tabernacle. Caitlin has performed in multiple shows and will return this summer, singing with three others for the July 11 show, "The Music of Four Fabulous Female Icons," which will

feature music by Carole King, the Fifth Dimension, Fleetwood Mac, and more.

"Getting to meet him (Larry) was the best," Caitlin says. When they first met, "he was going on and on about Mount Gretna. I said, 'Sure, there's this magical land called Mount Gretna.'"

Caitlin lives in Philadelphia and has been charmed by the Gretna community. "Coming from the city, it's like an oasis," she says.

Performances, Caitlin says, are "rain or shine. Whether it's cold, the audience will be there ... You have everyone within the Tabernacle, and then you see everyone on their porches. Am I in a storybook? Is this for real?"

"Heck, yeah. Anytime, I can get to Gretna, sure," she says.

Mount Gretna Bible Festival

Linda Tedford, founder and conductor of the Susquehanna Chorale, agrees with Caitlin about the magic of Gretna. "When we first moved here, we had little kids. We fell in love with the whole place, The Jigger Shop Ice Cream Parlor, the



Photo page 12: A festive crowd at the Tabernacle. This page: Jeff Coon onstage during Summer Club. Images courtesy of Mount Gretna Summer Concerts and Frank Scott for Gretna Theatre, respectively.

playground, just everything,” says Linda, who hails from Palmyra.

Even though the 40-member Chorale typically doesn’t perform outdoors, she

eagerly agreed for them to do so at the first Mount Gretna Bible Festival in 1993. The group has returned every year since.

Of the Tabernacle stage, she says, “It’s outdoors, but it’s not really outdoors. The acoustics are actually pretty good.”

The biggest challenge is the weather.

“But, whatever the weather, we do it cheerfully and just love being at Gretna,” Linda says.

She remembers one concert when a thunderstorm knocked out the power, including the lights. They switched to singing hymns, while someone held their cellphone for the accompanist to see.

“The whole atmosphere was that we’ll just make the best of it,” she says.

This year, the Chorale returns for Linda’s last time directing them on Aug. 23.

“I am stepping down as conductor of the Chorale,” she says. “Although my contract ends June 30, I said I would love my last performance to be at Gretna.”

The Original Mount Gretna Cicada Music Festival

The Original Mount Gretna Cicada Music Festival, held at the Mount Gretna Playhouse, expands its reach to include nationally and internationally recognized artists.

“When groups come here, they don’t know what to expect; however, when they come, they love it,” says organizer Ceylon Leitzel.

The Cicada Festival typically offers different programming each year, but also has some returning crowd favorites.

One group, The Bronx Wanderers, first appeared in 2011 and now performs annually in Gretna.

The band has a Las Vegas residency and typically plays approximately 250 shows a year. They performed in Gretna this June 12 and 13.

“We wouldn’t cancel Mount Gretna for anything,” says band member Vincent John.



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JULY 9 - 12

HAIR

JULY 23 - AUG 2

Broadway's Best
**A NIGHT OF MUSICAL
SHOWSTOPPERS**

AUG 21 & 22

MEET THE ARTIST

"This year, we're bringing our nine-piece big band show. We're going to use local string and horn players for the first time," Vincent says. "We're very excited to incorporate the local community into our Vegas show."

The Lords of 52nd Street will make their fourth appearance at the Cicada Festival on Aug. 3. The band consists of Liberty DeVitto, Russell Javors, and Richie Cannata, all members of Billy Joel's original band who recreate the sound of Joel's '70s and '80s classic hits.

"The crowds are always extraordinary," says Andy Gilmartin, the band's agent. "It's an open-air venue with good sound and solid audiences. We love Ceylon and Gretna."

Gretna Music

Jeremiah Shaw (cello) and Joseph Maile (violin), members of the Telegraph Quartet, echo that love for Mount Gretna. The Telegraph Quartet is scheduled to perform June 13-15 as part of this season's Gretna Music programs.

"My connection to Gretna is sentimental, and knowing about all the great music that was performed on that stage over

the past five decades and being part of that history has a very special place in my heart," Jeremiah says.

Jeremiah remembers visiting Gretna "many times as a kid" with his father, Clyde Shaw, who played cello with the internationally-acclaimed Audubon Quartet. "I grew up running through the village and playing at the playgrounds," he says.

"Certainly, performing in the kind of humidity and rain that sometimes assails the Playhouse is not without its challenges," Joseph says, "and yet, that cozy feeling of family that Gretna exudes is a big reason we hope to continue coming back, with our own (violinist Pei-Ling Lin and my) family in tow. That includes our now 4-year-old son Felix, who has already started asking us when we'll be coming back to get ice cream at the Jigger Shop and ride his bike around the neighborhood!"

Any challenges "are easy to overlook once you realize and feel how attentive and appreciative the audience is, when we all come together and share a beautiful evening over the magic of chamber music," Jeremiah says.

Gretna Theatre

The Playhouse also hosts returning performers to the Gretna Theatre stage. One of them, Jeff Coon, joins five other performers and a 17-piece band on Friday, Sept. 4, for the annual Summer Club.

"We love that there are so many folks who have made the Summer Club a part of their final summer weekend since 2019. We always look forward to seeing familiar faces in the audience and so appreciate the loyal support that Gretna audiences have shared with us," Jeff says.

Gretna is more than just a typical venue for those who return to its stages. It's often more like a homecoming, with enthusiastic crowds in a quintessentially Gretna environment. 🍷

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.



Learn More

about the organizations featured in this story — and others across Gretna

[Mount Gretna Heritage Festival](#)

[Larry McKenna's Mount Gretna Summer Concerts](#)

[Mount Gretna Bible Festival](#)

[The Original Mount Gretna Cicada Festival](#)

[Gretna Music](#)

[Gretna Theatre](#)

Click the links above, scan the QR code, or visit
MountGretnaMagazine.org/Mount-Gretna



Photo: The Bronx Wanderers, a perennial Gretna favorite, onstage this June. This year, they expanded their sound with four local musicians: Donovan Donnelly (trombone), Kristopher Hartman (trumpet — not visible in this photo), Ali Koch, (cello), and Lena Spadaccino (violin). Photo by Stacy Schroeder, June 2026.

Larry McKenna's MT. GRETNA SUMMER CONCERTS

2026 SCHEDULE



GUY GROUPS TO BOY BANDS

BEACH BOYS
BEATLES
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DOOBIE BROTHERS
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EARTH, WIND & FIRE
FOUR SEASONS
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MAY 23

Four Legendary Voices. One Incredible Night.

Karen, Linda, Dolly, Carole

THE MUSIC OF FOUR FABULOUS FEMALE ICONS

JULY 11

CAIT DARLEY ALEXIS RAMAGNANO HANNAH REINIGER GILLIAN BOOTH

A Celebration of Karen Carpenter, Linda Ronstadt, Dolly Parton, & Carole King

FOUR MAGNIFICENT MALE ICONS:

THE MUSIC OF NEIL DIAMOND ELVIS PRESLEY BOBBY DARIN BARRY MANILOW

JULY 18

FEATURING

GHAS PORTERQUE JOHNNY DRUHODOLE MASSIMO BRUTTO LUKE PERGINS

BLIND

Let The Sunshine In

the fifth dimension & fleetwood mac

JULY 25

BIG & HAIR MIX TAPES

THE HITS OF THE '80s

AUG. 29

HANNAH REINIGER ANDREW BRIZICK COLIN KASH ALEXIS RAMAGNANO

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PULL UP A CHAIR

How Campmeeting is building community across Gretna

Story: Kevin C. Wells
Photos: Nate Godfrey

On summer evenings in Mount Gretna, the rhythm of Campmeeting shifts in subtle and meaningful ways. Lawn chairs accumulate around the Tabernacle. Laughter drifts across porches. A cooler settles in at the pavilion, and neighbors smile as they share their favorite dishes. What began as a simple idea of ending the week together has grown into something more intentional: a renewed commitment to community.

In recent years, traditions like Friday Happy Hours and Oktoberfest have emerged as defining features of Campmeeting life. Though informal, these gatherings reflect a desire to strengthen connections both within Campmeeting and across the wider Gretna community.

“We realized that people were here, but not always together,” says Nate Godfrey, chair of the Community Activities and Recreation Committee. “Everyone loves Gretna, but sometimes we stay in our own circles. We wanted to create

something that invites people beyond that and brings them together.”

Friday Happy Hours, now a hallmark of the summer season, embody that vision. There is no agenda, only a time, a place, and an open invitation. Their simplicity is precisely what gives them meaning.

“It’s the simplicity that makes it work,” says a Campmeeting resident who requested anonymity. “You don’t have to plan much. You just show up. And in that showing up, relationships start to form.”

Among the most anticipated moments of the season is Pizza Palooza on July 31, when Campmeeting residents and chefs Joe Lento, Jason Henery, and Nate himself fire up wood-fired pizzas for a themed, family-friendly evening. What began as a modest idea has quickly become a centerpiece of the summer, where long lines turn into conversations and shared tables become spaces for connection.

Another tradition has quietly taken hold beneath the open-air beams of the Tabernacle: family-friendly Friday

night movies. As dusk settles, families and neighbors gather with blankets and chairs, drawn not only by the film but also by the experience of being together. Children play, parents relax, and generations intermingle in a setting that feels nostalgic and new.

“It feels like something out of another era,” Kenny Carl says. “You’re not just watching a movie. You’re sitting with your neighbors, hearing kids laugh, and seeing people you recognize from around town. It reminds you that this place isn’t just beautiful, it’s alive.”

These gatherings extend well beyond Campmeeting’s borders. Visitors from across Gretna and beyond have found themselves welcomed into the rhythm, often returning week after week.

At the heart of it all is a simple but deliberate message: Everyone is welcome. Whether a cottage owner, summer renter, visiting family member, or day guest, all are invited.

Community here is not defined by ownership or tenure, but by presence and participation.

“I came the first time because a friend invited me,” says Mitchell Kaplan, a Gretna cottage renter from outside Campmeeting. “I didn’t know what to expect, but within 10 minutes, I was talking to people I’d never met before like we’d known each other for years. That doesn’t happen everywhere.”

This openness has become a defining strength, though not without its challenges. As attendance grows, organizers continue to balance expansion with the intimacy that makes these gatherings feel special.

Oktoberfest reflects that same balance. Held in the fall, it blends seasonal celebration with community connection, offering a festive yet familiar space for residents and visitors alike. Its growing appeal was evident in 2025, when more than 200 attendees gathered, an encouraging sign of participation and a shared desire for connection.

“We wanted something that extended beyond the summer,” Nate says. “Gretna

has such a strong seasonal identity, but the relationships we're building don't have to end when the summer does."

While weather, logistics, and evolving expectations present challenges, the intentionally organic nature of these gatherings remains central. Without structured programming, conversations unfold naturally. Neighbors share stories, and newcomers find a sense of belonging.

Maureen Callahan, a longtime summer visitor whose family has had a Campmeeting cottage for generations, reflected on the experience: "I still met people at Happy Hour that I'd never crossed paths with. Now, when I walk through town, I recognize more faces. That changes how a place feels," she says.

For some, these gatherings deepen long-standing relationships; for others, they spark entirely new ones. Campmeeting seasonal resident Natalie Whitfield describes how a simple conversation about books at a Friday Happy Hour led to a lasting friendship, one that now extends well beyond the events themselves.

At its core, this effort is less about any single gathering and more about a shared mindset. Community is not simply a byproduct of proximity; it is something shaped through intention, effort, and choice.

That mindset continues to evolve with each season — create a space where people feel genuinely connected.

As Gretna continues to grow and change, Campmeeting offers a quiet but powerful example of what intentional community-building can look like. It suggests that connections need not be complicated.

Sometimes, it begins with something as simple as pulling up a chair and joining the conversation.

In that simple act, something meaningful takes shape — one Friday evening, one shared story, and one new connection at a time. 🌿

Kevin C. Wells is a Mount Gretna resident working at the intersection of writing, education, and civic service. He holds a Master of Science in organizational leadership, works in education administration at Milton Hershey School, teaches creative writing at the college level, serves on the Mount Gretna Campmeeting Association Board of Managers, and supports local governance through the Derry Township Board of Supervisors.

The Campmeeting activity schedule is posted at MtGretna.org.

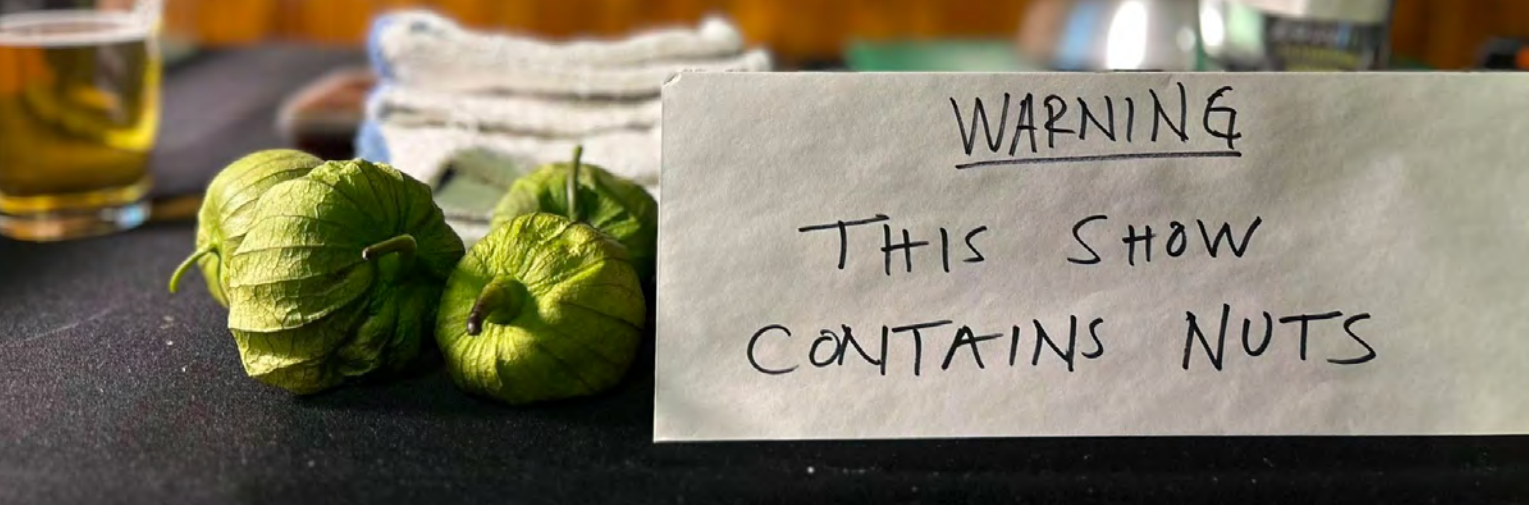


Photo page 16: Dale and Marie Martin work the grill at a Campmeeting cookout.

This page, clockwise from left: Movie night at the Tabernacle. Evan Fitzpatrick enjoys a classic soda. Kate Godfrey, Kendra Davis, Nikki Wolfe, and Jenn Henry play Sequence. Annie van Oss Roach and Michelle Shay (selfie by Annie). Joe Lento and Peggy Lichty pose with a homemade pizzas at last August's Pizza Palooza.

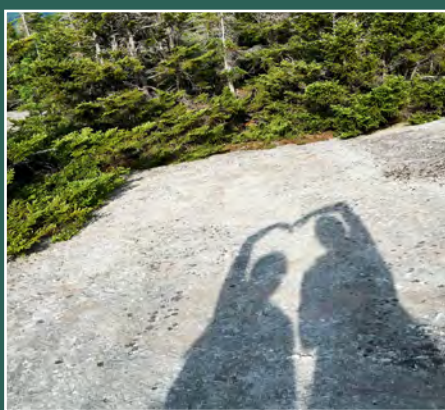


The Scoop on Gretna's New COOKING COMPETITION



Coming up next Speed Neighboring

Sunday, Oct. 18, 2-5 p.m
Governor Dick Environmental Center



Laugh, relax, and expand your circle of friends through speed-dating-style conversations and other fun activities. Details at: MountGretnaMagazine.org/Events

Story: Stacy Schroeder

On March 29, more than 100 people gathered at the Mount Gretna Fire Hall for the Great Gretna Plate, a new, sold-out, "Chopped"-inspired cooking competition hosted by *Mount Gretna Magazine*. Local amateur chefs Nate Godfrey, Alex Kinzey, and Shelby Larkin were given access to a full pantry, professional equipment, chef's jackets, and one hour to create a handheld dish. Each creation had to incorporate mystery basket



Photos this page, from top: A closeup of one of the chef's tables. Competitor Alex Kinzey and sous chef Jeff Spangler. Photos by Kristin Kissell.

Photos page 19, clockwise from top left: Nate Godfrey and sous chef Joe Lento. Shelby Larkin and sous chef Grant Williams. Shelby's savory breakfast pop-tart. Nate's Vietnamese chicken bánh mì. Alex's power tuna sammie. Nate with the event award. Top right photo by Kristin Kissell. Remaining images by Shannon Fretz Photography.



ingredients — orange soda, tomatillos, Porch & Pantry seasoning, and quince paste — before being tasted by a panel of judges. Winning chef Nate Godfrey created a Vietnamese chicken bánh mì with a fresh vegetable salad, dressed with fish sauce and finished with a garlic aioli drizzle. The award, pictured above, was created by Gretna artists Cory Wanamaker and Max Hunsicker.

For the full story, chef interviews, recipes of all three dishes, and more, scan the QR code at left or go to MountGretnaMagazine.org/Stories. 

Stacy Schroeder is the founder and creative director of Mount Gretna Magazine. She brings decades of experience in nonprofit leadership, event planning, writing, and design, along with a deep commitment to building community through storytelling.



The ART Is in the

Behind the scenes of planning one of the nation's most established fine arts shows

Story: Katy Shero

Under the trees of Old Chautauqua, the air is familiarly still, filled with birdsong, soft insect hums, and a tranquillity that reminds us to slow down and breathe. But for one weekend each year, this energy transforms. The stillness becomes motion, and chaos, a good kind, is invited in as hundreds of artists, volunteers, and visitors make their way to Mount Gretna to attend one of the area's most anticipated and esteemed events: The Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show.

Visitors see hundreds of booths filled with crafted goods, from watercolor paintings and abstract pottery to stained-glass garden art and handmade jewelry. However, beyond the booths, there's an unseen art: the year-round work behind the scenes that goes into the weekend.

"When you come in, you can see how beautiful everything looks. Everyone has worked so hard to prep everything ... from the tents and the entryway ... and the pots, which are from a local artist," says Kerry Royer, the Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show director. "We plan for this all year, and it's like everyone in the community has the opportunity to participate and come together."

Creating community amid the art

Kerry, a Mount Gretna resident who has been the Art Show director since 2018, says the event team begins planning next year's Art Show "pretty much after" the current show finishes.

From deciding which artists to let participate to coordinating with food vendors and the more than 300 volunteers who come to help every year, each detail

crucial to the success of the two-day event is meticulously planned and carefully thought out.

"During the weekend, we have people who are helping with operations and set up ... volunteers at gates and admissions, and booth sitters when the artists need a break. The fire company does all the parking, and the Lebanon Emergency Management Agency does all the logistics and traffic for us, and safety," Kerry says. "We like to keep it handmade, so we're also coordinating with local and small businesses and vendors. The whole process is a well-oiled machine."

One of the earliest logistics of planning the show — and arguably, one of the most important — is selecting which artists will be invited to share and sell their craft at the show. Kerry says the Mount Gretna

Outdoor Art Show is one of “very high-caliber” art and highly desirable for artists to participate in.

“We have artists nationwide ... and it’s one of the most competitive shows,” says Kerry, who also serves as Mount Gretna’s mayor. “We had more than 500 applications for just 200 spots.”

In fact, Kerry says that in 2025, she even had a waitlisted artist drive more than 10 hours overnight, right before the weekend began, to be a part of the show.

She notes that 75% of the artists in 2025 were returning artists, many having participated in three or more previous shows. John Boyett is one of these artists.

John, who makes colorful hand-blown glass in his studio in Canton, Ohio, says he’s been part of the show for eight years and keeps coming back for a reason.

“It’s nice to be a part of a good show like this — great vendors, great patrons, and lots of people out here. I’ve been here for eight years because, you know, you find shows that work for you, and you

continue to go to them,” John says. “This is a full-time job, and I make everything myself, so after this show, I’ll leave and go back to Canton again, and start preparing for next year’s.”

Duane Wendling, another featured artist from 2025 (and semi-local, based out of Kutztown), also puts in significant preparation and care into his pieces and booth displayed at the show.

“This is the first time I’ve done an outdoor show in a while, so I had to make special props and stuff specifically for this show,” he says. Duane crafts wooden home decor that reflects the woodsy, whimsical aesthetic of Mount Gretna cottages. He attributes his woodworking roots to his father and says he was “excited” for the weekend because it was his first time having a booth at the Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show.

“I had my wife helping me set up and prepare today, and my son was helping yesterday,” Duane says. “It is a family affair.”

Organizing a ‘village’ of volunteers

Kerry says since artists are coming from near and far, there’s a lot of logistics they have to factor into their preparation, from figuring out how to haul their goods, given the narrowness of the town’s streets, to sleeping arrangements, which she says some artists even opt to “camp” in the woods nearby.

“It’s really important to us to make sure after the artists check in that we’re checking in with them to make sure they have everything they need and that we’re here to support them,” she says.

However, the volunteers have just as heavy a lift — figuratively and, occasionally, literally — throughout the weekend, too.

Cheryl Booth, a central Pennsylvania resident, has been volunteering for the past several years after her sister and former show director, Linda, encouraged her to get involved. Cheryl says being a volunteer is “more than rewarding.”

“I really enjoy it. I love to meet all the new artists and get to talk to them and know

DETAILS



Photo page 20: Borough employees Bryan Heisey (left) and Scott Cooling (right) are an integral part of setting up for the Art Show. *This page:* Felting piece by artist Laura Gutzwiller, a 2025 Judges’ Choice winner invited back to this August’s event. Art Show director Kerry Royer reviews her event checklist. *Photos by Shannon Fretz Photography, August 2025. Art image courtesy of the artist.*





Photo at left then below: Volunteers from the Keystone Challenge at Fort Indiantown Gap set up the Emerging Artists tents along Pennsylvania Avenue. Borough Manager Bill Care checks in with staff near the main gate of the Art Show. Photos taken August 2025 by Shannon Fretz Photography.



a little bit more information about them,” Cheryl says. “There are lots of artists that have gotten in every year over the years, too, so you really get to know them.”

Cheryl says volunteers can begin their work as early as months before the show to the day of. Her tasks last year included registering artists when they first arrived on Friday, the day before the festivities began. Volunteers are needed for all jobs, from visible ones like assisting with parking and counting tickets and cash, to directing artists where to go and guiding them to the “right people to answer questions,” she says.

“To prepare, I also sometimes look at the website prior to coming to kind of familiarize myself with some of the artists or see if my favorite artists are going to be here,” she says. “I remember faces, but if I look at the site, I see names, and when they’re here ... I try to be helpful and make them feel welcomed.”

One significant, and sometimes less obvious, challenge every year, Cheryl adds, is factoring in the weather. Last year’s weather was calm and sunny at 80 degrees, but that isn’t always the case.

Whatever the weather, storm, or challenge the months, weeks, or days before the weekend throw, Cheryl says the volunteers and everyone behind the scenes are standing together to ensure the artists and visitors have a memorable weekend.

“It’s just so fun to watch them set up, and it’s kind of sad to watch them tear down, but we always hope everyone had a really great show,” she says.

Kerry agrees, noting she cannot express her gratitude enough to everyone working tirelessly to make the show a success each year.

“I mean, since we plan all year for this, it’s so rewarding to finally get to see all the work we’ve put in all year,” she says. “Every detail, every volunteer ... It really takes a village.” 🌿

Katy Shero is a freelance writer, professional journalist, and editor. As a Palmyra native, she has many fond memories of visiting Mount Gretna while growing up. She most recently worked as the editor-in-chief for Susquehanna Style magazine before moving to Durham, North Carolina, in May 2025.

MT. GRETNA HERITAGE FESTIVAL

SUMMER 2026

Join us for Pay-What-You-Want Concerts
featuring regional artists. Watch for info on
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7:30 PM AT THE TABERNACLE

8/1: Common Vine
8/8: Galbraith, Briody and Friends
8/15: Crossing Abbey Road
8/22: Colebrook Road



*Celebrating Community
in Campmeeting*



Facebook.com/MtGretnaHeritageFestival

52ND ANNUAL
Mt. Gretna
OUTDOOR ART SHOW

August 15-16, 2026

Under the trees of old Chautauqua

mtgretnaarts.com



Story: Meagan Cassel
Photos: Shannon Fretz Photography

Summer in Mount Gretna welcomes a bustling calendar of arts and entertainment, but its charm also invites us to take a breath, slow down a beat, and spend afternoons meandering paths among the trees. For those days, we offer you a list of tiny interactive spots you may have overlooked — all free — tucked into the corners of town. How many have you discovered?

Campmeeting Community Garden and Scavenger Hunt

A pair of mailboxes in this woodland garden houses a hunt for young explorers. Find items like a birdbath, a bee house, and a sundial to receive a surprise.

Tip: Look for signs identifying native plant species so you can envision what to plant at home.

Fairy Garden

This imagination haven has inspired children for more than two decades with its miniature trinkets and tea sets. Last year, a new committee assumed the caretaking role and is busy creating a more educational vibe.

Tip: Check out new features like a colorful sentence-building station and a scarecrow in the fall.

Gretna Dog Library

Home to a different sort of collection, this station in Soldiers Field houses tennis balls, sticks, and toys for furry friends and neighbors.

Tip: Try the Chuckit! for the best throwing distance.

Interpretive Trail and Mud Kitchen

At Clarence Schock Memorial Park at Governor Dick, brand-new signs along Trail 16 describe trees, forest processes, mindfulness activities, and more.

Tip: Save time for kids to play with pots and pans in a mud sink, build with sticks, and climb on boulders.

Little Free Libraries

Discover a new read — or leave a book for others to enjoy — at one of three swap sites nestled into different neighborhoods.

Tip: For a more comprehensive selection, visit the Mount Gretna Community Library, open select hours daily.

Poetry Steps

Julie Herman lovingly paints a collection of rocks on the stone staircase by her cottage, inviting the community to mix and match words like embrace and friend and — her favorite — cattywampus.

Tip: Even if you're a returning poet, look for this summer's fresh new rocks.

Self-Guided Walking Tour

Stroll around town, and you'll find QR codes linking key Gretna sites to their stories, complete with photos and audio context.

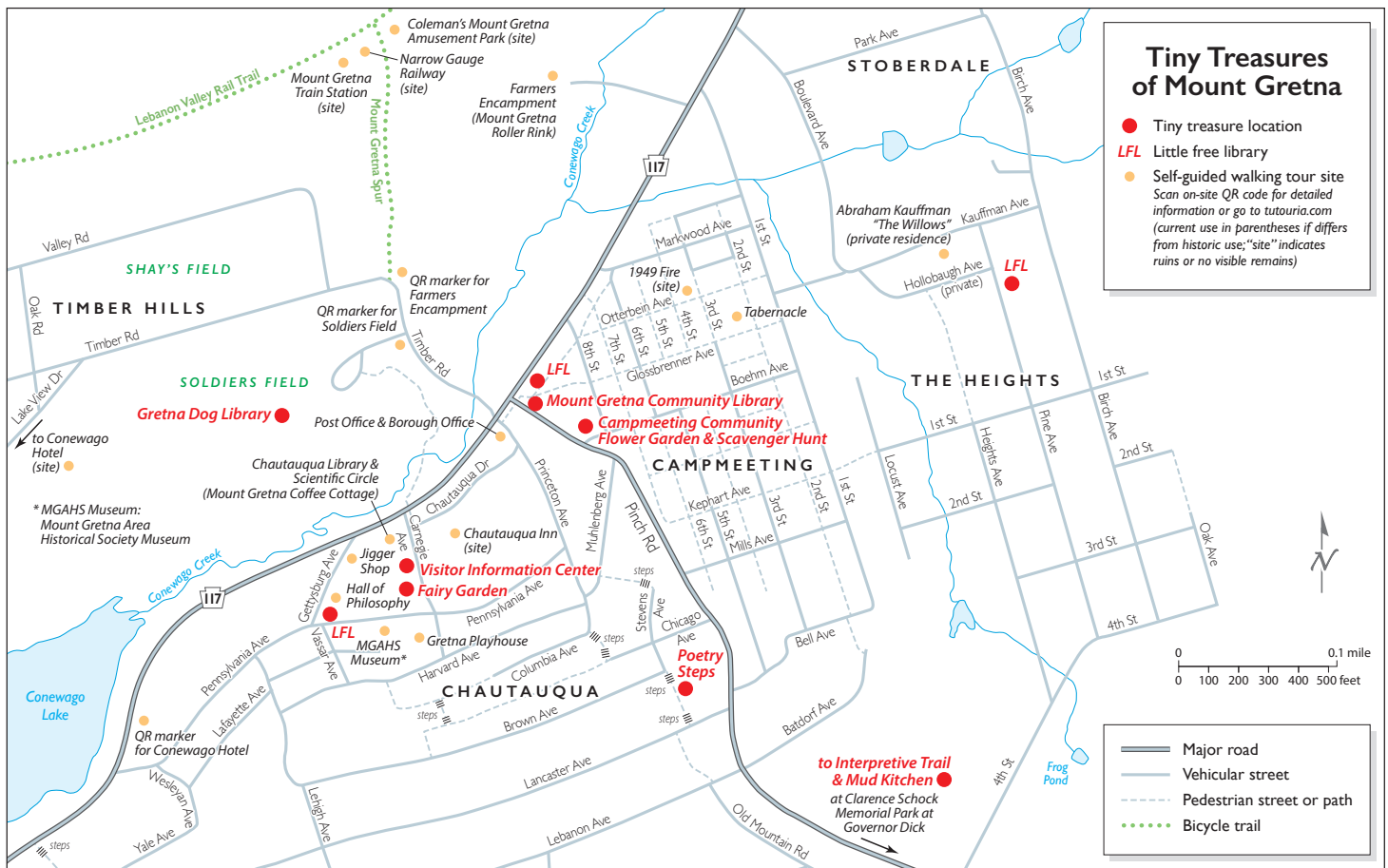
Tip: The Mount Gretna Area Historical Society has also introduced a guided walking tour, available on weekends this summer. Find information on both tours at MtGretnaHistory.org.

Visitor Information Center

This cozy yellow bungalow, packed with Gretna resources, boasts a refreshed interior this summer in addition to expanded hours.

Tip: Look for new merch like Gretna charms, plus the return of ornaments and mugs. ☺

Meagan Cassel lives in Mount Gretna with her family and is an active volunteer around town, including at the Mount Gretna Community Library. Admittedly, it's her favorite tiny treasure.



Images this page, clockwise from top: Tiny Treasures map by Bob Harding. Julie Herman holds up one of her favorite words at the Poetry Steps. New Gretna charms are available at the Visitor Information Center. Juno Heverling checks out the Campmeeting mailboxes for the latest activities.

Page 24: Goldendoodle Brinkley is a satisfied dog library patron.

Abiding in the Fullness

Seasonal Contemplations by Vicki Kensinger | Photo by Leeshaun Musick



Summer in Mount Gretna is a season of abundance. It mirrors the fullness of the earth itself — everything offering itself at once.

The calendar fills. Cottages open. The streets come alive again — around Mount Gretna Playhouse, the Jigger Shop Ice Cream Parlor, the lake, and the Tabernacle. All of it is held beneath the dense canopy of trees, offering their own gifts of coolness and shade.

From the first birdsongs of spring and the rising chorus of katydids and cicadas, to the first fall of acorns, the season swells.

People return like the birds — drawn to what is blossoming here. Theater and lectures, music and art, nature walks and Lebanon Valley Rail Trail rides, the Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show, and conversations on porches are part of our days.

So much life, so much goodness — almost overflowing.

It is a season of fullness. And yet, abundance — as much a gift as it is — can sometimes feel overwhelming.

I remember my first summers here, feeling as if I had to taste it all — moving from one offering to the next, afraid to miss something. As if the goodness might pass me by, I did not take it all in. I gorged on the buffet.

Still, something in me felt unsatisfied — not because there wasn't enough, but because there was too much to hold in that way.

I recently read that nature heals us, in part, because it is softly fascinating. It does not demand our full attention. It holds it gently.

We do not need to study every tree, every branch, and every needle — though each would reward us if we did. Somehow, we can take in the whole of it without strain.

In its abundance, we are not depleted. We are restored.

I think of those years as a young mother of five, when summers felt relentless. I was “on” all the time — moving, tending, and responding. There was little space to be still, to listen, and to notice anything beneath the surface of our days. I remember longing for autumn — not for its absences, but for its permission to slow down.

I am learning now that I do not have to wait for another season. I can choose it here and now.

In the midst of fullness, I can step back. I can leave space on my plate. I can let the abundance surround me without needing to take it all in — to receive, rather than consume.

Perhaps attention, like love, has more than one expression.

There is abundant attention — lush, responsive, and alive to what is blooming. And there is an abiding attention — quieter, slower, and rooted beneath it.

I may not always feel full in my love. There are days of frustration, of overwhelm, and of distance.

Yet, beneath those changing seasons, something remains: My love abides.

For those I love. For this place. For the earth itself.

Perhaps this is what summer is inviting us to remember — not to take it all in, but to be as we are in the season we are in.

Sometimes that looks like fullness — leaf, blossom, and fruit — and sometimes it looks like letting go.

Branches bare. Space opening.

Not less full — just here — present to what is given, and resting in what abides, like sitting quietly in the shade. ☺

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.

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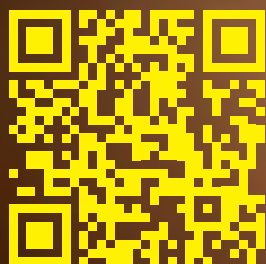
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