

A SHORT HISTORY OF COLEMAN MEMORIAL PARK.

Not far from the Union Canal, brothers George Dawson and Robert Coleman, built two hot-blast anthracite furnaces in the north-west corner of Lebanon, the first such furnaces in Lebanon County, in the 1840s. In 1852, Robert sold his interests in the furnaces to George Dawson. By 1853 George Dawson built the first mansion in what is now Coleman Park. This was a grand estate with stables, farms, an ice-house, a gate house and other related out buildings. The mansion was torn down in 1961 and in the history of the Colemans the mansion is called the "Homestead". George Dawson married Deborah Brown of Philadelphia in 1852 and as their children grew and married, the estate was parceled off to accommodate the children. The other mansions were built for Sarah and Arthur Brock, Debbie and Horace Brock, Bertram Dawson Coleman and John Penn Brock.

All of these properties were deeded to or sold to the City of Lebanon beginning in 1936 and Coleman Memorial Park was created. Today the "Homestead" stables, known as the Carriage House, stands in the center of the park. The "Homestead" gate house greets visitors to the park and the gate house for the Horace Brock mansion bids farewell to visitors as they exit the park. The Ready House, a garage, stands to the north of where the "Homestead" stood. The gift did include a statement from the family that, while the City of Lebanon was under no obligation to do so, the family suggested that the creation of a "museum for the preservation of colonial handicraft arts and a historical museum and library, and the use of the buildings to foster music, the drama, and handicrafts, are to be understood to be clearly within the purpose of the gift."

Other remains are visible in the park, including the garden area of the John Penn Brock mansion and many rare and beautiful trees planted by the Colemans. Also, along the south end of the park are remains from the furnace operations - the large stone wall on the right as you exit the park are the remains of a vanity wall constructed to shield the Horace Brock mansion from the operations of the furnaces. Later deeds and sales to the City added to the park's land, including the Arthur Brock Extension to Coleman Memorial Park - materials from the Arthur and Sarah Brock mansion were used to construct the original Bandshell. There was no trust included with the gifts and thus it became the City's responsibility to fund ongoing operations in the park. The day-to-day decisions for the park are the responsibility of a Board of Trustees.

Sarah Brock wished the Arthur Brock mansion demolished and in 1937 this work was completed under a work order from the WPA. The other mansions were gradually razed due to lack of funds to properly maintain the upkeep on the buildings until the last mansion, the "Homestead" was razed in 1961. During demolition the contractors got quite a surprise - they found the locally famous "Lincoln" letter written by Abraham Lincoln to George Dawson Coleman appointing Coleman to represent the United States to the Industry of All Nations exhibition to be held in London. This letter was discovered in a "hidden" office whose access was from a false bookcase.

The pool was added in 1940 and renovated at a substantial cost in the 1980s. The Gazebo was donated by Coleman descendant LeRoy Holman in memory of his mother, Harriet Dawson Coleman Glover. This was donated consistent with a Coleman Family reunion in May of 1994. The Friends of Coleman Memorial Park was formed in 2010. In 2010 Music in the Park celebrated its 20th Anniversary and in May of 2011 Coleman Memorial Park Celebrated it's 75th Anniversary!