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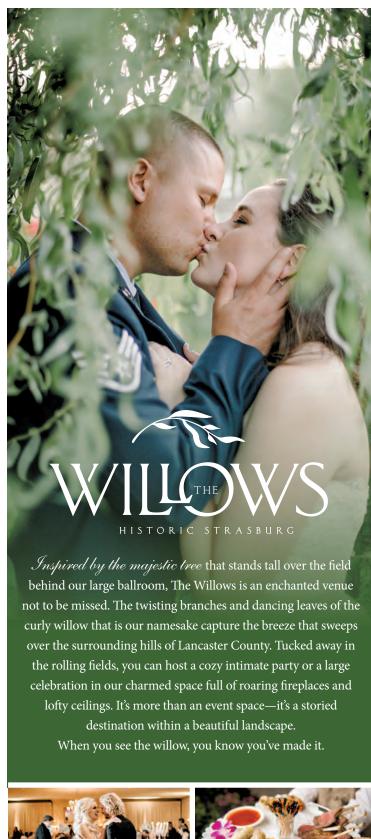
Readers' Choice favorites



TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF APRIL AND BRYAN PHOTOGRAPHY

COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUL FOCUS MEDIA

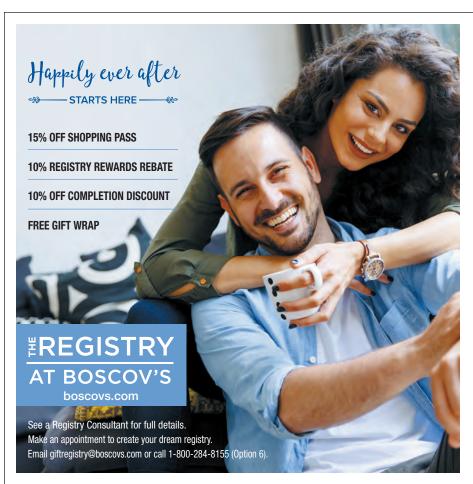
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Tiffany Rupert, owner of Tiffany's Bridal Boutique in Stevens, says sparkly dresses offer more than meets the eye.

"A wedding dress with textured tulle and decadent beading gives the illusion of stars and galaxies — an enchanting choice for a romantic evening wedding," she says. "Brides will feel modern in this trend, yet timeless as well."

Rupert says wearing a sparkly gown does come with some caveats.

"If you go with a dress that has lots of bling and sparkle, we recommend keeping your accessories and flowers very simple," she says. "They should complement the dress, not compete with it."

3

It's hip to be square

The square neckline trend that showed up in years past is coming back, Berte says.

"We have seen in the red carpet events this trend for evening wear in the last six months and now it is coming to bridal," she says.

The trend is showing up on both strapless gowns and gowns with straps, she says.

"With a strapless gown (we're seeing) a straight-across neckline instead of the sweetheart look and strapped gowns are done with a square neck instead of the deep V," she explains.

Square necklines work well for different body types, she says.

"Square necklines are good for both fuller-busted gals because it secures their bust line better but also excellent for smallerchested gals to create a fuller look," she says.

4

Minimalist makes an appearance

This trend is the opposite of the sparkle trend, Berte says, but provides an opportunity for brides to wear a classic look.

"I'm thrilled to see this clean and elegant look made popular by the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle," she says. "Whether fitted or full, it's clean and pristine."

Rupert says that while these gowns are not a new concept, their appearance on trends lists is a testament to their classic style.

"We like to think of the phrase 'Less is more' when it comes to this style," she says. "They can be sophisticated, yet classy. This style of dress is perfect for the bride who perhaps doesn't love lace but wants to still make a statement."









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NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- O Set a date
- O Prepare a budget
- O Determine the time and place of the wedding and reception
- O Draw up a guest list
- O Choose members of the wedding party
- O Buy a wedding gown
- O Shop for bridesmaids' dresses
- Interview photographers, videographers, florists, musicians, caterers and bakers

SIX TO NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- Shop for wedding invitations
- O Decide on attire for groom and groomsmen
- O Start planning honeymoon
- Decide on florist, caterer, bakery, photographer, videographer and entertainment

FOUR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- O Register with a bridal gift registry
- O Reserve rehearsal dinner location
- Arrange accommodations for out-of-town attendants and book a block of rooms for other out-of-town guests
- O Select a wedding ring for the groom

THREE MONTHS BEFORE

- Address invitations
- Meet with caterer
- O Firm up honeymoon plans
- O Shop for attendants' gifts
- Make appointment with a hairstylist

TWO MONTHS BEFORE

- Mail wedding invitations
- Meet with musicians
- O Get together documents for marriage license

TWO TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- O Set time for wedding rehearsal
- O Get marriage license
- O Have a final gown fitting
- O Keep track of invitation responses
- O Give caterer solid estimate of number of guests
- Draw up a seating arrangement for rehearsal dinner and reception and make place cards
- Make name and address changes on bank accounts, credit cards, driver's license, etc.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

 Make final checks with officiant, florist, caterer, photographer, videographer, bakery, musicians, etc.

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

- O Pamper yourself
- O Rehearse ceremony with wedding party
- O Get a good night's sleep



NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- Set wedding date
- O Draw up a guest list

SIX TO NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- O Ask family/friends to be in the wedding
- O Decide on wedding attire
- O Start planning the honeymoon

FOUR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- O Select wedding ring for the bride
- O Reserve site for rehearsal dinner
- Arrange accommodations for attendants
- Help bride with bridal registry selections
- Shop for attendants' gifts
- Apply for passports if needed for honeymoon

TWO TO THREE MONTHS BEFORE

O Firm up honeymoon plans, final payments

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS BEFORE

- Be sure to have all blood tests & paperwork needed for obtaining marriage license
- O Make necessary changes to insurance

TWO TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- O Apply for marriage license
- Give wedding party, close friends & family all information regarding rehearsal/rehearsal dinner

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Give restaurant or caterer firm number for rehearsal dinner attendees
- O Double check honeymoon plans
- Begin packing for honeymoon
- O Attend your bachelor's dinner

THE DAY BEFORE

 Rehearse your ceremony with bridal party & enjoy rehearsal dinner

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

- O Bring the marriage license to be signed
- O Give your best man the officiant's check to handle
- O Remember to bring your bride's ring
- O Arrive an hour before the ceremony
- Have fun & congratulations





LIS KING | LNP CORRESPONDENT

hen Rebekah Anderson and Michael Garrety went looking for a jaw-dropping place to say "I do," they found it in Strasburg. It was the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania.

"It blew us away the minute we stepped inside to check it out," Rebekah says." We're both history buffs and love museums. In fact, my degree is in archival management of museums. So this was perfect for our wedding. We had about 150 guests and they enjoyed it as much as we did. We had a buffet-style dinner, and loads of wonderful photo ops, what with all those antique trains as backdrops. And our love affair with historic trains continues. For Christmas, our parents gifted us with a two-hour dinner cruise on an antique train out of Reading."

The Garretys' quest for an unusual wedding venue doesn't surprise Tara Folker of Splints & Daisies, Lancaster. A busy floral designer, she sees firsthand what brides want on their big day. "Unique wedding venues are absolutely trending," she says. "Yes, the Lancaster region's countryside and picturesque farms and barns continue to attract brides, but now industrial spaces are getting a lot of attention as well.

Places like The Booking House, a former cigar factory, and Historic Shady Lane's greenhouse come to mind. Anything goes, it seems, as long as it isn't a stuffy ballroom."

Wedding planner Lori Hemphill of The Perfect Plan agrees. "A lot of creativity is coming into play here, and aren't we fortunate that our area offers so many opportunities for out-of-the-box weddings? All those former industrial buildings with their wood floors, exposed brick walls and often intricate architectural details are great venues. Some modern industrial spaces, such as The Rock, the entertainment complex in Lititz, work well, too."

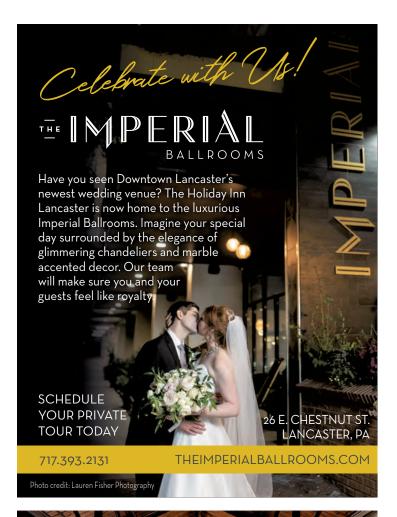
Minimalistic or not?

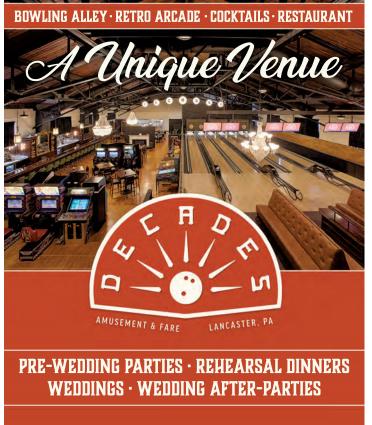
But how to convert such spaces to decorative wedding venues? After all, some of them are startling in their minimalism. Hemphill says their sparsity is precisely their appeal. "Brides can truly make such spaces their own," she says. "At many traditional venues such items as carpeting, upholstery, draperies and lighting limit the bride's color and style choices. In industrial spaces, the sky is the limit."

However, many venues, such as art galleries, museums, libraries, distilling companies and antique emporiums are super-cool, speak for themselves and require minimal input to make it wedding-appropriate. Art galleries and museum, for example, offer bridal couples a choice of backgrounds, something that could serve as a theme, and what could be cooler than the exhibits at a natural history or science museum?

With the craft beer craze in full swing, breweries are becoming especially popular wedding destinations. The vibe is industrial chic, and the added attraction is all that beer. That's what Amber Sharkawy and Jesse Simpson thought when they chose the Appalachian Brewing Company in Harrisburg for their wedding.

"Early on in our relationship, we found that we bonded over good food and beverage, and we found that most of our favorite





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brew pubs have good food and beer," Amber says, "So we knew if we got married in such a place, we wouldn't have to sacrifice two key things we wanted: great food and an open bar with craft beer."

Their wedding was just as much fun as they thought it would be, and emphasizing just how unique they are, Jesse took Amber's last name, not the other way around.

Pro favorites

Hemphill has planned weddings at such unusual places as Lancaster's Amtrak Station and the Hershey War Museum, but she calls the gorgeous, historic Fulton Theater one of her most spectacular venues of all time.

"I have only done one wedding there," she says, "but I'm hoping that the theater's expansion program will make it easier to fit in weddings."

It looks like Hemphill will get her wish. Steven Green, the theater's special events manager, says that the expansion should indeed make it possible to schedule more weddings.

"Right now it's difficult to fit in events between shows," he says. "But it's such a great place to have a wedding and we definitely want to accommodate more of them. Just think how our scenery could set the theme and there are several options for receptions."

The Excelsior, a landmark historic property in Lancaster, is a favorite of Kent Mast of K+A Films.

"I often film weddings," he says, "and I love

it when the venue offers lots of visual charm. Well, the Excelsior has that in spades. The architectural features are awesome, from the brewer's catacombs to the courtyard."

So what can you expect to pay for such extraordinary venues? Lori Hemphill says that for the venue alone, the price tag can go as high as \$11,000, and that includes only tables and chairs. Everything else is extra.

"Venues in the Lancaster area cost more than in Philadelphia," she says, "But the food here is less. So it all evens out. Except, of course, that in the Lancaster region you have such a range of possibilities for unexpected, exciting and highly personal weddings. We've got it all: from barns and wineries, parks and historic landmark buildings to yesteryear's factories and mills, museums, art galleries and caverns."



WHAT TO ASK

Ask lots of questions before you sign up for a venue, warn wedding planners. A lot of variables are in play, especially when you're considering a unique venue. Here are some basic questions to ask:

- Is my date of choice available?
 If not, what surrounding dates are available? Or do you have a wait list?
- What are the rates for different days of the week and times? What about different seasons?
- How many hours are included in the rental?
- What is included in the total price? Does it include gratuity, service charges and cleaning fees, or are they extra?
- When is the last date to make changes for our reservation?
- Is parking available onsite?
 How much space is there?
 Will guests be charged for parking?
- How many people can fit into the space?
- Are there any decor restrictions? Or noise restrictions?
- Do we have to use your vendors? Is there an in-house caterer or can we hire our own caterer?
- Do we have to buy liquor through you, or can we bring it in from elsewhere? If we do that, is there a service fee?

Renovated Denver silk mill now a wedding venue



PHOTO COURTESY OF LOOM 142

ne of Lancaster County's newest unique wedding venues, Loom 142, opened in December on the third floor of a renovated silk mill in Denver.

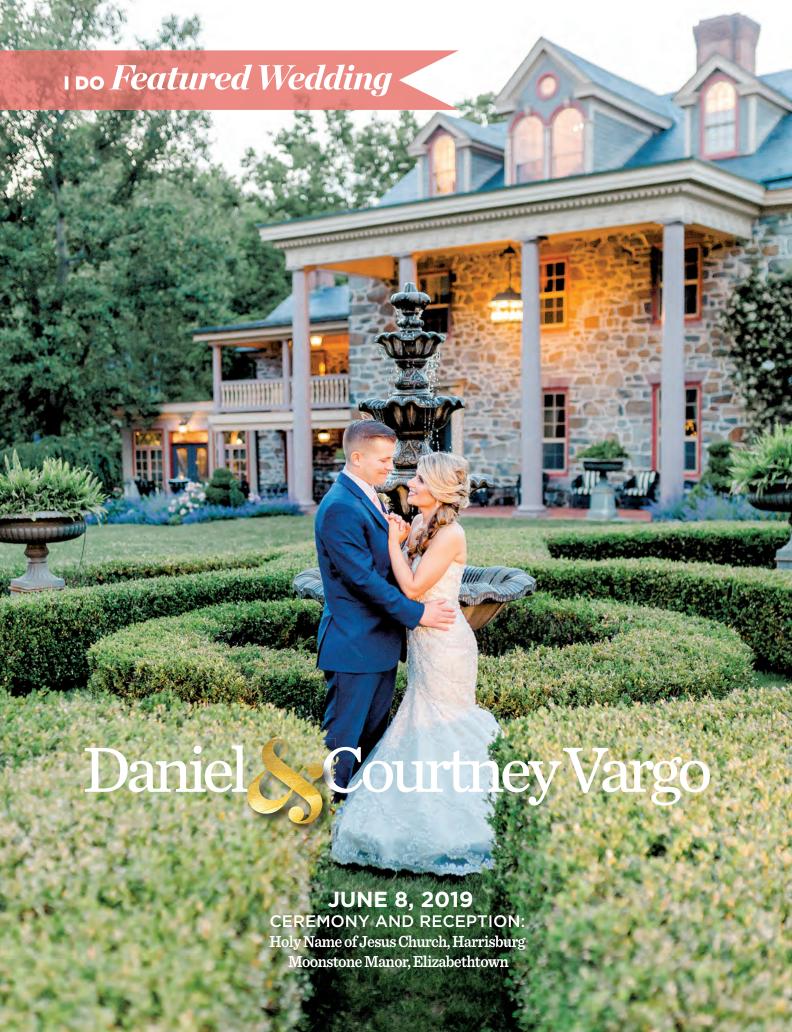
The building was constructed as the Westerhoff and Napier silk mill in 1902. Over the next 107 years, it was home to various fabric makers, all using weaving looms. During World War II, Vanity Fair manufactured parachutes in the building for the war effort, with workers on roller skates laying out fabric on the third floor. Most recently, the building was home to Weave Corp., a manufacturer of high-end decorative upholstery and drapery fabrics.

The building was vacant from 2009 until 2017, when Harding-Yost Insurance revitalized it and moved their offices to the second floor, an effort that earned the company the C. Emlen Urban Award for Adaptive Reuse from the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County.

While weaving looms no longer fill the historic building, the name Loom 142 honors its history, and the industrial modern event space on the third floor offers a blank canvas where couples can weave new memories. The exposed brick, high ceilings and hardwood floors lend themselves to events in every style from classic to vintage to rustic to industrial, owner Heather Lapi says.

Loom 142 offers a mix of high-top cocktail tables and seated round tables that can accommodate up to 120 seated guests or 160 standing guests. Future plans include a courtyard for outdoor weddings.

They are currently booking for 2020 and 2021, Lapi says.





WORDS OF WISDOM FOR **FUTURE BRIDES:**

PRACTICAL ADVICE:

"Don't get caught up in other people's opinions. It is your wedding, and as stressful as planning can be, you will surely miss it when it's all over. Enjoy it while it lasts!"











hen you come right down to it,
a wedding is about two people,
and two people only, the bride
and groom. It's easy to get
overwhelmed by other details
— the guest list, who's sitting

where at the reception, how to handle different opinions on what the bridesmaids will wear, etc.

If it all seems a bit much, there is another option: eloping.

You may hear the word "elopement" and think of sneaking off into the night for a quickie wedding, but the term means much more than that, says Rebecca Gallagher, innkeeper at the Historic Smithton Inn Bed and Breakfast in Ephrata.

"I think there's something special and really intimate about elopements," says Gallagher, who offers elopement packages at her B&B. "It's ALL about the bride and groom, not the guests or any other 'distractions and drama' that's bound to happen at a big wedding. I think couples find a way to be romantic and financially practical when they choose this route."

Nancy Skee, owner and innkeeper of Olde Square Inn in Mount Joy, agrees, adding that an elopement can offer so many advantages over a big wedding.

"With an elopement, the bride and groom are more focused on committing their lives to one another than on throwing an expensive party," she says. "They can have a beautiful, elegant, memorable occasion while still honoring their financial futures."

And, she adds, eloping can help couples be present in the moment and truly enjoy their big day.

"The best part is that they can bypass the hassle, stress and expense of all the extended planning," she explains. "Couples are released from the pressure of coordinating the details, worrying about who's invited and who isn't, and can just enjoy the moment. At the inn we like to take care of it all so the bride and groom can focus on what's important – their commitment to one another."

For Victoria Sokolowski, director of strategic planning at Cameron Estate Inn Events in Mount Joy, eloping offers the future bride and groom the chance to do what works best for them.

"To us at Cameron Estate Inn, eloping means making a choice for yourself and your partner that makes sense for the two of you," she says. "It is not stressing over what society or Pinterest tells you is necessary, but rather doing what is in your heart. It is about beginning the next chapter of life with your soulmate."

She says the idea of elopement is becoming more and more popular in the county.

"We have noticed a trend in wedding guest count decreasing while the quality of services offered is increasing," she says. "We love this at Cameron Estate Inn — quality over quantity. While we are more than happy and able to work with weddings in the 150-200 range, as well, we have seen a rise in couples wishing to hold smaller more intimate affairs to celebrate their union with those closest to them."

Skee says she's seen not only an increased interest in eloping but also a shift in who is requesting this type of wedding.

"We're noticing much more interest, with many of the grooms contacting us and making the arrangements for the event," she says. "I was surprised to see that it's not just the ladies orchestrating everything anymore."

Eloping is particularly popular among the millennial crowd, says Dave Westfall, president and CEO of Where to Elope, based in Denver, Colo.

"Millennials are the least religious generation," he says. "Two-thirds are already living together, plus they have lots of student debt, so the big white church wedding just doesn't work for them. Elopements are also very popular for remarriages."

Westfall says interest in eloping is steadily increasing.

"The number of web searches on 'elopements' has quadrupled from 110,000 per month in 2011

to an average of 447,000 per month now," he says. "So, we estimate that about 25 percent of all weddings now are elopements."

Results of his company's latest polls show couples are eloping to save money, to have fun and enjoy a ceremony on their terms, to "maintain sanity," to avoid family politics, to save time and to have freedom from the norm.

Carl Kosko, owner of Harvest Moon Bed and Breakfast in New Holland, has been offering elopement packages for about 15 years.

"Not everybody wants to have a gazillion-dollar wedding," he says. "Not everyone wants a \$200 plate per person. Some people want something smaller and more intimate."

He offers three packages for eloping and says each goes beyond just saying "I do."

"With an elopement package, you're going to have a nice, small wedding and it's going to make you feel like you did a little more than just going to the town hall to get married," he says.

He helps couples plan their elopement "from soup to nuts," adding, "it may be small, but it's still your special day. It still brings the love."

He will sit down with a couple before the event and go over all details, from timing to favors, decorations and food.

"I try to make it special in every point of the word," Kosko says. "It's an elopement but it doesn't mean it's less."

Nicole Daacke, owner of Nicole Daacke Photography in Glen Rock, specializes in photographing elopements, specifically "adventure elopements" that include travel and the outdoors.

"I began to shoot traditional weddings and quickly realized that many times, couples weren't having the experience that they wanted to have," she says. "Elopements allow me to share my passion and expertise of traveling, national parks and adventures, with people who value those same things, and allow me to help couples create a once-in-a-lifetime experience that is solely about them and celebrating their love."

She, too, has seen an uptick in interest from local couples about eloping.

"The adventure elopement niche is rapidly growing, and I believe it'll continue to do so," she says. "Once people realize that there is a way to get married that means not having a wedding (and the cost, drama, stress and attention that comes with one), but still can have a meaningful, exciting and intentional day, it's hard to go back."

At Olde Square Inn, couples can choose from elopement packages for two to eight participants for \$1,255, Skee says.

Included in the package is a two-night stay at the property's private carriage house, use of indoor common areas and grounds, flowers, a





wedding cake, champagne or sparkling beverage toast, linens, dishware and a three-course breakfast each morning, among other amenities.

"Sometimes our elopements morph into small weddings with the bride and groom wanting to share their special day with a few more people," Skee says. "In that case, we go with our intimate wedding package." This package includes more guests (up to 22 indoors or 35 outdoors) and amenities and starts at \$8,999.

Skee will also recommend a photographer, officiant and musician.

Historic Smithton Inn features two elopement packages: "Weddings for Two" and "Weddings for a Few."

Weddings for Two costs \$1,009 and includes the honeymoon suite, full breakfast the next morning, a nondenominational officiant, flowers, recorded music and use of the inn both indoors and outdoors. Additional options include a small wedding cake, a photographer, dinner at a local restaurant and a couples in-room massage.

Weddings for a Few start at \$1,529 for up to 10 guests and include the basics of the Weddings for Two package plus several additional amenities.

At Harvest Moon B&B, the Harvest Days Wedding Package costs \$1,200 and includes up to 10 people for a ceremony and reception, a two-night stay for the bride and groom, breakfast, reception and ceremony coordination, wedding cake, flowers, music and a sparkling cider toast. For \$1,500 the Harvest Moon Package includes the same amenities plus a catered rehearsal dinner, light afternoon refreshments and more. And for \$1,800, the Harvest Bounty Ceremony includes a

personalized menu brunch buffet and all the amenities from the other packages.

Cameron Estate Inn offers an elopement package that begins at \$1,500 for the couple and four guests, Sokolowski says. Elopements can be booked between two weeks and 60 days in advance and include an onsite ceremony, flowers, a five-course dinner with an open bar, a champagne toast, a wedding cake and a one-night stay for the couple in the inn.

Gallagher says no matter what type of elopement you plan, there is no doubt it will still be a special day.

"Elopements are as unique as the couples doing the eloping," she says. "No matter what you want, it's out there. You can make it happen and it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. It's all about you."

Thinking about eloping?

CONSIDER THESE TIPS FROM EXPERTS:

• You need to plan.

"There is paperwork involved," Skee says. "Couples will need to get a marriage license, which is what makes their wedding legal."

You need time.

"Many of my couples book over a year out and there is still a lot of planning and intention that goes into the day," Daacke says. Kosko says he will accommodate short notice if he can, but notes, "Some people call me and say, 'We're getting married in a month. Do you have availability?' If I can do it, I'm happy to do it, but more planning gives them better opportunity."

You need an officiant.

"What type of ceremony are you looking for — justice of the peace, mayor, a minister or other religious officiant?" Gallagher says.

You need a budget.

"Although much less an expense than a large wedding, there are still a few costs involved: fees for the license, the officiant, honeymoon, clothing and such," Skee says.

You need to know what you want.

"What's really important to you?"
Gallagher says. "Some want fantastic flowers but don't care at all about having a video or photography to

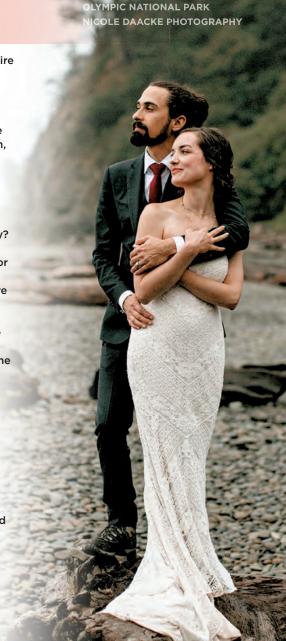
commemorate the event. Others will hire a really high-end photographer. Some hire live music. Others are OK with having a Pandora station playing on an iPod. I suggest couples spend their money and focus their planning on the things that are truly important to them, the things they'll remember fondly on their 50th wedding anniversary."

You need to answer the 5 Ws.

"Who would you like to share this celebration with? What is most important to you on your wedding day? Where you are celebrating, and you should always have a backup option for inclement weather. When is the best time of year or day of the week that we want to celebrate as our forever anniversary? Why are we choosing to elope?" Sokolowski says. "It should be because you love one another, have discussed your future and align with the other's goals and aspirations, and are ready to take that next step toward a blissful marriage and honest partnership."

You may need a thick skin.

"Be ready for the reactions of your family and friends," Skee says. "Those close to the couple might be hurt or surprised that they weren't part of the event. Elopement is a very personal decision, and ultimately the day should be about what makes the bride and groom the happiest now and in the future."



Not sure if eloping is right for you? Take Westfall's quiz WHERETOELOPE.COM/SHOULD-YOU-ELOPE and find out.



1 DO Featured Wedding

Hannah Peck and Ethan Farrell

JAN. 4, 2020

CEREMONY AND RECEPTION:

Ceremony was in our home in Mount Joy.

"We chose to have the ceremony at home because we love our home and it gave the cozy, intimate feeling that we wanted for our wedding. It is also special to us because it is our first place together and where Ethan proposed. We had 19 guests at the ceremony and the reception." Reception was at Bube's Brewery in Mount Joy.

"The reception started with cocktail hour at Bube's original bar, followed by a tour of the unique building that ended in the catacombs where we had dinner. After dinner, our guests tried their luck at the Escape Room at Bube's!"

PHOTOGRAPHER: April and Bryan Photography | COLOR SCHEME: Different shades of green and white.





DID YOUR WEDDING HAVE A THEME?

"We had a winter/cozy/intimate theme, I would say. We had a lot of greenery, candles and had the feeling of cozy comfort by serving tea, coffee and homemade cookies before and after the ceremony. We even gave our guests wool socks as the favor to add more warmth and coziness!"

CAKE:

Bella Manse. We chose to have carrot cake as the flavor because it is our favorite!

HAIR AND MAKEUP:

Alan at Details Salon and Spa in Mount Joy



FLOWERS:

Rhapsody in Bloom in Palmyra created the bride's bouquet and the groom's boutonniere. Hannah's mom, who used to own her own wreath-making business, made all the greenery at the ceremony and reception using unwanted tree/yard trimmings from her local compost facility.



BIGGEST CHALLENGE:

"We wanted our wedding to be as stress-free as possible and I would say we mostly succeeded. However, the wooden name cards we chose did not come out the night before the wedding. We had to make an emergency trip to the store at 9 at night after rehearsal dinner and get a little creative in coming up with new place cards. Good thing we had a small number of guests because that would have been an all-nighter!"

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR FUTURE BRIDES:

"Take a step back from the planning to remember why it is you are getting married. Whether you are having a small intimate wedding with 20 guests or a formal affair with 200 guests, at the end of the day you are marrying the one that you love. And that is what is most important."



Do guests a favor

Dazzle them with fun gifts and experiences

LIS KING | LNP CORRESPONDENT

he days of sending wedding guests home with boring favors are long over. That's the experience of Lancaster vendors, who've been there, seen it all, and lived to tell the tale of favors done wrong and right.

"A lot of couples don't bother with favors at all anymore," says Lori Hemphill of The Perfect Plan. "And that's OK. I would hate to see couples on tight budgets spend money on some so-called keepsake that'll probably end up in the trash. There are much better ways to leave guests feeling cared for and valued.

"One way is to provide experiences beyond the wedding itself. For example, in the case of weekend weddings we're seeing couples arrange special excursions and surprises. This works especially well in the Lancaster area. One reason is that our location — sort of in the middle for guests coming in from the south and the north - has made us a perfect wedding destination. Another is that there's lots to see and do here."

April Koppenhaver of Mulberry Art Studios agrees. "Lancaster is indeed a wedding destination," she says. "We've even hosted weddings where guests flew in from Africa, India and Thailand. Such guests obviously stay at least for several days, which results in bridal couples going out of their way to provide warm welcomes and things to do before and after the wedding. I remember one bride scheduling three days of excursions and activities. And how about babysitting services? What parent of young children wouldn't rather have that than some tchotchke?"

A tour of Lancaster's historic downtown or Gallery Row, the Railroad Museum in Strasburg, Amish farm excursions, hot air balloon rides, events in Hershey, dinner cruises down the Susquehanna River, and even bowling tournaments are among wedding extras mentioned by Hemphill and other vendors.

66 A lot of couples don't bother with favors at all anymore. And that's OK. I would hate to see couples on tight budgets spend money on some so-called keepsake that'll probably end up in the trash. There are much better ways to leave guests feeling cared for and valued."

- LORI HEMPHILL



PHOTO COURTESY OF TREASURED EVENTS

Venues offering extras

Some venues have built-in extras for guests' enjoyment. A good example is The Bond in York's historic downtown. Owned by the JDK Group, it's a former Studebaker factory located in the quirky Royal Square district, which offers a host of activities for early wedding arrivers as well as those who want to keep the celebration going.

"The Mural Walk of giant paintings on the walls of the historic buildings is a must," says Michelle Hare of JDK. "But there are also fine shops, art galleries, tap rooms and even a tattoo parlor. Plenty of things for guests to take in."

"If you really want guests to feel pampered, we like Allenberry Resort in Boiling Springs," Hare adds. "Here they can stay over in lodges or cottages and enjoy magnificent nature, a playhouse with live performances, spa treatments, fly-fishing and more."

Welcome favors

"There's no question that experiential kinds of favors have become popular," Hare says. "But, actually, the whole favor scenario has changed. For instance, we're now seeing a variety of different kinds of food trucks pull up at the end of the event to offer guests 'favors.' In fact, edible takeaway items are infinitely more popular than such items as monogrammed glasses and other keepsakes."

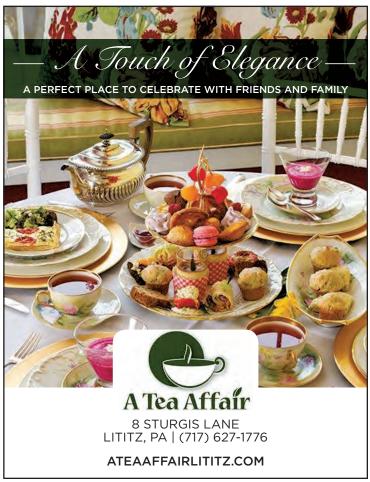
Treasured Events, a Lancaster wedding décor and rental business, finds that a doughnut bar is a favorite as guests get ready to take their leave. A special table with a variety of candy is another way that Treasured Events helps brides satisfy guests' sweet tooth. "Guests just fill a bag with their favorite candy as they leave," says co-owner Fiffer Rausch.

Donations to charity in lieu of favors are mentioned by a number or wedding planners, and to involve the guests some couples choose two charities, one for him and one for her, and then ask guests to choose which one they prefer. To this end, they set out two bowls into which guests can drop their votes.

For guests checking into a hotel for a weekend wedding, consider a welcome bag, Hemphill suggests. The bags can be filled with items that will be helpful to have on hand throughout the weekend. Bottled water, for example. And mints, snacks and aspirin. Or more luxe items might be added. Like mini bottles of champagne and local delicacies. Homemade jams and honey come to mind.

And, finally, a word of warning from savvy vendors: Don't even think of making your own favors, especially if you're considering something edible. As charming as that idea may seem, brides tend to underestimate how busy those last days before the wedding will be. And edible favors typically need to be made and packaged the day before or even the day of the wedding.





Flaming doughnuts and fortune tellers

Couples look for creative ways to entertain their guests

LIS KING | LNP CORRESPONDENT
PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL REDMOND, MLR IMAGES



n element of surprise is a new item for weddings. It might be acrobats swirling through the air during the reception, a palm reader telling guests their fortunes, or fireworks to cap off the evening. Sometimes the bride and groom themselves become part of the surprise, and wedding planners are delighted.

Weddings were never more creative, fun and entertaining, they say.

"Of course, it's the bride's big day, but more than ever, much thought is given to the guests having a really great time, too," explains April Koppenhaver of Mulberry Arts Studios, a 22,000-square-foot historic Lancaster building that hosts many weddings. "We have over 1,700 paintings that can help set a wedding theme, but our brides love to share their art interest in other ways as well. For example, sometimes a local artist is hired to do caricatures or sketches of the guests. Painting workshops for kids attending the wedding is something else that brides love."

The JDK Group headquartered in Camp Hill also finds that entertainment has become an important wedding element. "We've seen acrobats, stilt walkers, aerialists and sleight-of-hand magicians," says JDK's Michelle Hare. "We also do a good deal of interactive food stations. We call it food-tainment. For example, we've done flaming doughnut stations, flaming Brazilian meat parades and interactive milkshake bars that include our chefs 'painting' an edible masterpiece on the table for guests to then use as toppings for their sundaes or milkshakes. And sometimes we dream up an unusual way to serve the food or drink. Like having aerialists pour champagne as a welcome drink experience."

Fun and games

Krystal Younglove, known as York's Circus Sweetheart, entertains at many a wedding. She does aerial acrobatics, eats fire, walks on stilts, and may even lie on a bed of nails while her husband, Christopher, wields a hammer on a concrete block resting on her chest. That bed of nails act is known as "bizarre magic," but Christopher, a mentalist, entertains wedding guests on his own as well. Mind-reading is his special talent.

Sometimes Krystal performs on a stage, but when she dons stilts it's often to walk among guests when they first arrive at the reception. "It's a great icebreaker," she says.

Yard games for outdoor celebrations are one of the offerings from Treasured Events of Lancaster, and at weddings using farms or barns as venues it's not unusual to see alpacas and other animals as part of the festivities,

Karen Schultze of Intercourse tells of officiating at a wedding at an animal rescue ranch where the best man was a mini horse. "This couple were horse lovers," she says, "so the hand-fasting cord was braided by the bride from the hair of their seven horses' tails."

Surprise arrivals

Often, today's fun-loving couples are in the center of the entertaining surprises. Schultze recalls an outdoor wedding where the groom rode a horse up the hill into grass carved into a heart shape and then rode down the hill to the aisle entrance where he did a double backward flip off the horse. "And mind you, he rode that horse while drinking whiskey," Schultze says.

She smiles talking about another couple that paddle-boarded across a lake to the ceremony.

"Their kids greeted them when they reached the shore and walked them up to me," she says.

How about boarding a ski lift to get married on a mountaintop? That's what Laura and Shaun Egolf did, and their guests, too, got to enjoy fabulous views as they rode to the top of the mountain at Roundtree Resort in Lewisberry,

The Egolfs, both in doctoral cancer research programs at the University of Pennsylvania, call the ride to the mountaintop an unforgettable experience for everybody.

And then there are the pranksters. Melissa Martin of Stylish Occasions tells of a wedding where pranks ruled the day. The bride and groom distributed outrageously prankish gifts and even had whoopee cushions on several chairs. "This was a wedding of friends, who really love pranks and practical jokes," she says, "so it was a fun wedding."

"Of course, music is always an important part of weddings," she adds, "and we're seeing a lot of live bands now, anywhere from five to 10 pieces. While I love a good DJ, a band can really interact with the guests and get the energy pumping."

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALYSSA CHRISTINE PHOTOGRAPHY





Readers' Choice Favorites in Bridal



As voted on by LNP | LancasterOnline readers

BRIDESMAID DRESSES

1 In White

18 N. Queen St., Lancaster inwhite.com

2| Tiffany's Bridal Boutique 1832 N. Reading Road, Stevens tiffanysbridalboutique.com

3 Blush Bridal 1641B Manheim Pike, Lancaster blushbridalpa.com

BRIDESMAID GIFTS

1 Brent L. Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths

1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster brentlmiller.com

2 Cork Collection 480 New Holland Ave., Ste. 8203, Lancaster shopcorkcollection.com

2 Ream Jewelers 58 N. Queen St., Lancaster reamjewelers.com

3 Blush Beautiful 1446 Passey Lane, Lancaster blushbeautiful.com

DRESS ALTERATIONS

1 Country Threads Bridal by Gail

194 Doe Run Road, Manheim Search "Country Threads by Gail" on Facebook

2 In White 18 N. Queen St., Lancaster inwhite.com

2 Lancaster Tailor Co 235 Bloomfield Drive, Ste 101, Lititz Search "Lancaster Tailor Company Inc" on Facebook

DJ

1 30 West Entertainment

Lancaster
30WestEntertainment.com

2 DJ Boots and Nancy Ephrata bootsandnancy.wixsite.com/ bootsandnancy

3 DJ Flaco Various Locations Search "DJ Flaco in the Mix" on Facebook

ENGAGEMENT RINGS

1 Brent L. Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths

1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster brentlmiller.com

2 Finch Jewelers 1575 Fruitville Pike, Lancaster finchjewelers.com

3 Koser Jewelers 811 E. Main St., Mount Joy koserjewelers.com

ENTERTAINMENT

1 DJ Boots & Nancy

33 Arrowhead Drive, Ephrata bootsandnancy.wixsite.com/bootsandnancy

2 30 West Entertainment Lancaster 30WestEntertainment.com

3| Elite Entertainment 1390 Columbia Ave. Ste 119, Lancaster eliteentpa.com



FLORIST

1 Royer's Flowers & Gifts

Various Locations royers.com

- 2 Petals With Style 117 S. West End Ave., Lancaster petalswithstyle.com
- **3** Hendrick's Fower Shop 322 S. Spruce St., Lititz hendricksflowershop.com

GIFT REGISTRY

1 Boscov's

800 Park City Center, Lancaster **boscovs.com**

- 2 Details 30 N. Queen Ste 1, Lancaster detailslancaster.com
- 3 Radel & Stauffer 332 N. Queen St., Lancaster radelstauffer.com

GROOMSMEN GIFTS

1 Brent L. Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths

1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster

- 2 Cork Collection 480 New Holland Ave., Ste. 8203, Lancaster shopcorkcollection.com
- 2 Ream Jewelers 58 N. Queen St., Lancaster reamjewelers.com
- 2 Vincent & Company Fine Jewelers 1633 Lititz Pike, Lancaster vincentandcomp.com
- **3** Warren Jewellers 1490 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster warrenjewellers.com

HAIR

1 Envy Studio

24 W. King St., Lancaster bryied.net

- 2 | Empire Beauty School 1801 Columbia Ave., Lancaster empire.edu
- **2**| Luxe Salon & Spa Various Locations Iuxelancaster.com
- **3** Alure Salon & Spa 903 Wheatland Ave., Lancaster alurelancastersalon.com
- **3** Transformations Salon & Spa 27 W. Mohler Church Road, Ephrata transformations-salon.biz

INVITATIONS

1 RSVP Love

166 Beech St., Denver rsvp-love.com

- 2 Designs By Renee 1517 Biltmore Ave., Lancaster designsbyrenee.biz
- **3** Details 30 N. Queen St., Lancaster detailslancaster.com

MAKEUP

1 Blush Beautiful

1446 Passey Lane, Lancaster blushbeautiful.com

- 2 | Revolve Atelier | Barborshop + Beauty Bar 2470 Lititz Pike, Lancaster Search "Revolve Atelier" on Facebook
- 2 Shades of Blush Studio 70 King Pen Road, Nottingham shadesofblushstudio.com
- **3** Empire Beauty School 1801 Columbia Ave., Lancaster empire.edu/cosmetologyschools/Pennsylvania/Lancaster
- **3**| Luxe Salon & Spa Various Locations Iuxelancaster.com

REHEARSAL DINNER

- 1 Knight and Day Diner 3140 Lititz Pike, Lititz knddiner.com
- 2 | The Pressroom Restaurant 26-28 W. King St., Lancaster pressroomrestaurant.com
- **3**| Cork & Cap Restaurant 480 New Holland Ave., Ste. 3000, Lancaster corkandcaprestaurant.com

TUXEDO RENTAL

1 Central PA Tuxedo

2981 Hempland Road, Lancaster centralpatux.com

- 2 Filling's Clothing 681 Harrisburg Ave., Lancaster fillingsclothing.com
- 3 In White 18 N. Queen St., Lancaster inwhite.com

WEDDING BANDS

1 Brent L. Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths

1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster brentlmiller.com

- 2 Finch Jewelers 1575 Fruitville Pike, Lancaster finchjewelers.com
- **3**| Ream Jewelers 58 N. Queen St., Lancaster reamjewelers.com

WEDDING CAKES

- 1 Oregon Dairy 2900 Oregon Pike, Lititz oregondairy.com
- 2 Bella Manse 138 W. Frederick St., Millersville bellamanse.com
- **3** Byers Butterflake Bakery 44 W. Main St., Leola byersbakery.com
- **3** Rosie's Creative Cakes 2385 Junction Road, Manheim rosiescreativecakes.com

WEDDING CATERER

1 Enck's Custom Catering 244 Granite Run Drive, Lancaster enckscatering.com

- 2 Rettew's Catering 309 S. Main St., Manheim rettewscatering.com
- **2**| SEI Catering 152 Chestnut St., Lititz
- **3** Hess's Barbeque Catering 2635 Willow Street Pike N. Willow Street hessbbq.com

WEDDING DRESS

1 In White

18 N. Queen St., Lancaster inwhite.com

- 2 Tiffany's Bridal Boutique 1832 N. Reading Road, Stevens tiffanysbridalboutique.com
- 2 Posh Bridal Shop 820 First St., Lancaster poshbridal.com



WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER

1 Leslie Ann Photography Lancaster leslieannphotos.com

2 PhotOlé Photography 108 W. King St., Lancaster photole.com

3 Lauren Fisher Photography 335 E. Liberty St., Lancaster laurenfisher.photography

WEDDING PLANNER

1 Simply Events

201 Rock Lititz Blvd., Ste 44, Lititz simplyeventsinc.com

2 Fancy Peacock Events Mount Joy, PA fancypeacockevents.com

2 Planned Perfection 21 N. Prince St., Lancaster plannedperfectionpa.com **3** Cork Factory Hotel 480 New Holland Ave., Ste 3000, Lancaster corkfactoryhotel.com

3| Stylish Occasions Wedding & Event Planning Lancaster, PA stylisho.com

WEDDING TRANSPORTATION

1 Expressions Limousine of Lancaster

1030 Pointview Ave., Ephrata expressionslimo.com

2 Infinity Transportation Services 221 N. Prince St., Lancaster *infinitytransportationservices.com*

3 Shultz Transportation Co 8 Beaver Valley Pike, Willow Street shultztransportation.com

WEDDING VENUE

1 Cork Factory Hotel

480 New Holland Ave., Ste 3000, Lancaster corkfactoryhotel.com

2 The Farm at Eagles Ridge 465 Long Lane, Lancaster farmateaglesridge.com

3 Chestnut Hill Villa 543 Champ Blvd., Manheim chestnuthillvilla.com





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