

HISTORY

Penn Township is a rural community that has evolved into both a residential community and the home of several major industries in southwestern York County. The Township has over the years enjoyed a steady increase in population. The current population of the Township is estimated to be 15,563 persons.

Penn Township covers 13.2 square miles in area and is located in southwestern York County. It surrounds the Borough of Hanover on the north, east and south and borders Adams County to the west. The Township is 18 miles southwest of York, Pennsylvania and 42 miles north of Baltimore, Maryland.

Much of the area of Penn Township was originally included in what was known as "Digges Choice". In 1727, approximately 7,000 acres of land was given in a grant to John Digges by Lord Baltimore. A dispute was raised on whether the land was actually in Maryland or Pennsylvania. The dispute was settled by the King of England and resulted in the formation of the Mason-Dixon Line in 1768.

Penn Township was originally part of Heidelberg and Manheim Townships. In 1880 Penn Township was designated as a separate municipality by action of the York County Court.

The first settlers in the area were mainly Scotch and German. These settlers took advantage of the rich farmland soil in the area and became farmers.

The first roads in the area were small trade routes which followed Indian trails. These roads were important because they were the primary routes used to carry goods to market. The first roads connecting this rural area to major trade markets were constructed late in the 1700's. Branch railroads of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Western Maryland Railroad eventually came to the area, making railway transportation available. With the advent of the railroads, industry began to develop in the area, although agriculture still remained economically important.

The Hanover area and the area now known as Penn Township was the site of a Civil War battle prior to the Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863. This cavalry clash was known as the Battle of Hanover and occurred on June 30, 1863. The Battle was important because it delayed General Jeb Stuart from reinforcing the Confederates at the Battle of Gettysburg. Under Stuart's command were General Fitzhugh Lee (Robert E. Lee's nephew), and General Wade Hampton of South Carolina. The Confederates occupied the southeastern portion of the Township, roughly from the Baltimore Turnpike (Route 94) to the Littlestown Turnpike (Route 194). The Union cavalry was commanded by General Judson Kilpatrick. Under his command was General George A.

Custer, who led a brigade composed entirely of troops from Michigan. The union occupied the northeastern portion of Penn Township, from Midway northeast to the Pigeon Hills.

The Battle of Hanover began near Pennville and the area of the heaviest fighting occurred along the Littlestown Turnpike (Route 194). Although the losses were not great on either side, the Battle took its toll on the stamina of the Confederate troops who had been marching for days with little food or sleep. By the evening of June 30th, the Battle was considered a stand-off and General Stuart marched toward Dover, PA, desperately seeking General Robert E. Lee, while Kilpatrick received word from General Meade to join the Union at Gettysburg. Thus, the Battle of Hanover ended with neither side claiming victory.

The area now known as Penn Township continued to grow after the Civil War and in 1880 had a population of 1,962 resident. In 1880, Penn Township was incorporated as a separate municipality from parts of Heidelberg and Manheim Townships. While the Township was still primarily rural it was becoming more and more a suburb to the Borough of Hanover.

From 1880 to 1940 the Township flourished. The population grew from 1,962 to 4,299. As the area expanded there was also a demand for public utilities. In 1872 the Hanover Water Company was incorporated. This water company, which has gone through many changes in subsequent years, constructed a water supply system that provided a safe and reliable source of potable water to the Borough of Hanover and parts of Penn Township. Water is still supplied to the Township by the Borough of Hanover.

Wastewater collection and treatment did not come to the Township until much later. In 1964 the Township authorized design and construction of its own wastewater treatment facility. In 1977 this facility was upgraded and expanded to its present 4.2 million gallon per day capacity.

From 1880 until 1905, police protection for Penn Township was provided by the office of the Sheriff of York County. Also, citizens elected as constables were also used for police protection. In 1905, the Pennsylvania State Police organization was established. They provided protection for Penn Township from their headquarters in York until the 1950's when Penn Township employed a part time police officer. The department's roster currently calls for 22 police officers.

Education has also been an important part of the history of Penn Township. In 1885 there were six public schools within the Township for the first eight grades. High school students attended Hanover High School. In 1954 the South Western School

District was formed. This consolidation of schools provided complete educational facilities for residents of Penn Township from kindergarten through grade 12.

After World War II, Penn Township began to experience more rapid growth than ever before. During the period from 1950-1960 the Township experienced its greatest population increase with a 34% growth rate for the 10-year period.

Penn Township has also evolved into a suburban community with a mix of residential, commercial and industrial areas. It is the home of many businesses and industries, including Hanover Foods Corporation, one of the largest food processing companies in the United States.

Penn Township is also host to Codorus State Park. The Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks began to acquire land for this facility in 1965. This park of 3,320 acres includes Lake Marburg, which provides 26 miles of shoreline.

In 1961, the residents of Penn Township approved a referendum to change the form of government from a Township of the Second Class to a Township of the First Class. Much of this was done to allow the Township Board of Commissioners to prevent continuing annexation of portions of the township by the Borough of Hanover.