

Profile 5 - Cultural Resources Profile

Introduction

Cultural resources consist of prehistoric and historic districts, sites, structures, artifacts, and other physical evidence of human activities considered to be important to a society. A wealth of cultural resources may be found throughout Mercer County. Knowledge of these resources increases our understanding and appreciation of the local heritage and improves the overall quality of life of local residents. This chapter will provide an inventory of the various cultural resources located within the County and will give particular attention to local historic preservation efforts.

Mercer County was described by William Phillson, Executive Director of MCHS in a letter to J. Mickey Rowley, Deputy Secretary for Tourism, PA DCED, dated February 27, 2004:

Mercer County has a unique character. We have tightly packed urban areas, and within a ten-minute drive, rural farms and woodlands. We have a blue-collar, mill-shaped industrial history combined with an agrarian past and present, we represent the evolution of travel from Indian paths to covered bridges and roadways, from canals to railways, and from state routes to interstates. Our heritage assets reflect white and blue collar workers as well as miners and farmers. We are aware of our heritage and it is reflected in many ways in our museums and sites.

National Register of Historic Places

- There are fifteen Mercer County listings on the National Register of Historic Places (see Table 5-1). An additional 26 properties, historic districts, or historic areas have been deemed eligible for listing by the National Park Service, the lead federal agency. Most of these are located in the County's older communities.
 - The nine listed properties include schools, churches, post offices, taverns, bridges and homesteads.
1. **Wendell August Forge**, located at 620 Madison Avenue in Grove City Borough. The original facility was a one-story, gabled, steel-frame manufacturing building, constructed in 1932. It is believed that the forge was the first to produce hand hammered aluminum wares. The forge and craftsmen originally associated with the forge became leaders in the design and production of hammered aluminum gift wares. Prior to production at this forge, aluminum was melted and poured into a mold to create decorative arts objects or architectural decorations. Today the forge is among the largest and oldest hand forge operations in the United States. It also contains a gift shop and is a popular attraction for visitors. Custom architectural and gift items are still produced in addition to hand hammered gift wares.

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Table 5-1 National Register/Listed and Eligible Properties in Mercer County, 2003

Municipality	Historic Name	Address	Listed	Eligible	Key No.
Coolspring Township	Zahnizer, George and Margaret, Farm	319 Tait Road		6/12/2003	116339
Delaware Township	New Hamburg Historical Area	Rte. 58/L.R. 43096; Shenango R. Banks, 7 mile South	12/02/1974		00601
East Lackawannock	Sharlow Farm	750 W. Middlesex Road		02/12/1987	088823
Farrell City	Farrell, J.A., Elementary School	1020 Spearman Avenue		07/24/1998	110198
Farrell City	Shenango Land Plan Historic District	Union Street, Pargny Avenue, Indiana Avenue		06/19/2001	116340
French Creek Township	Bridge in French Creek Township	L.R. 43074	06/22/1988		000050
Greenville Borough	Greenville Borough Building	125 Main Street		6/27/2003	
Greenville Borough	Greenville Commercial Historic District	Centered on Main Street, Canal Street & Clinton Street	08/10/2000		105794
Greenville Borough	Greenville Hall	Thiel College		12/16/1991	097642
Greenville Borough	U.S. Post Office, Greenville	55 Clinton Street		07/03/1984	064525
Greenville Borough	Waugh, A.P. & James, House	23 W. Main Street	04/23/1998		102195
Grove City Borough	August, Wendell, Forge	620 Madison Avenue	11/07/1996		102379
Grove City Borough	Chestnut Street Bridge	Chestnut Street		07/13/1994	102413
Grove City Borough	Grove City U.S. Post Office	117 E. Pine Street		07/10/1984	067751
Hempfield Township	Quaker Bridge	L.R. 43135	06/22/1988		000018
Hermitage City	Gibson Property	2245 Valley View		05/26/1995	103574
Hermitage City	Joseph, Bryan, Property	1460 N. Hermitage Road		05/26/1995	103567
Hermitage City	Kelly Road Bridge	T-388		11/28/1990	097021
Hermitage City	Western Pennsylvania Adolescent Center	1055 N. Hermitage		05/26/1995	103576
Jackson Township	King's Tavern	Cor. S.R. 2007 & S.R. 0955		04/07/1995	103306
Jamestown Borough	Campbell, James, House	403 Liberty Street		11/19/1982	001560
Jamestown Borough	Gibson House	210 Liberty Street	12/01/1978		000604
Jamestown Borough	Stone Arch Bridge, Jamestown & Franklin Railroad	Over PA Rte. 58		05/09/1990	096834
Jefferson Township	Big Bend Historical Area	Rte. 258/T-577; N. Bank Shenango R.: 6 mile Northwest	04/21/1975		000605
Lake Township	Bridge No. 1608	T-732		11/30/1993	101973
Mercer Borough	Courthouse, Mercer County		11/12/1998		102380
Mercer Borough	Houston's Building	110 N. Pitt Street		10/03/2001	118668
Mercer Borough	Lindsey, Christiana, House	313 E. Butler Street	01/15/1998		105471
Mercer Borough	Mercer County Jail	S. Diamond Street		07/20/1978	050939

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Table 5-2 National Register/Listed and Eligible Properties in Mercer County, 2003 continued

Municipality	Historic Name	Address	Listed	Eligible	Key No.
Mill Creek Township	Bridge No. 1211	T-733, Plants Road		11/30/1993	101972
Pymatuning Township	Kidd's Mills Historic Area	Rte. 58/T-653; Shenango R. Banks, 5 miles South of	12/02/1974		000603
Sharon City	Buhl, Frank H., Mansion	422 E. State Street	12/02/1977		000606
Sharon City	Sharon Junior & Senior High School	36 Case Avenue		07/31/2001	116951
Sharon City	West Hill Historic District	State Street, Irvine Avenue, Hall Avenue		03/21/1990	096809
Sharpsville Borough	Erie Extension Canal, Lock No. 10	High Street Near Shenango River		06/29/1988	095508
Sharpsville Borough	First Universalist Church of Sharpsville	131 N. Mercer Ave.	5/29/2003		119107
Sharpsville Borough	Kelly Road Bridge	T-388		11/28/1990	097021
Sharpsville Borough	Pierce, Jonas J., House	60 Shenango Street	10/24/1996		102985
South Pymatuning Township	Orangeville	Orangeville, Both in Ohio and in Pennsylvania		01/04/1990	050940
Springfield Township	Johnston's Tavern	U.S. Rte. 19 – Six Miles East of Mercer	03/24/1972		000602
West Salem Township	Porter House	264 Porter Road Greenville		06/25/2001	116956

Source: Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, Bureau of Historic Preservation (2003)

2. **Bridge in French Creek Township**, spanning French Creek on New Lebanon Road, just south of the Village of Carlton in French Creek Township. The bridge is an intact example of a multiple span Pratt through truss bridge. The bridge was built in 1898 by the Columbia Bridge Works of Canton, Ohio. The two pin-connected spans are made of typical members and feature decorative portals. This bridge is a well preserved representative of a bridge type used frequently in northwestern Pennsylvania, in this instance in a multiple-span configuration. The bridge is owned by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

The Frank H. Buhl Mansion, located at 422 East State Street in the City of Sharon. The Buhl Mansion was built in 1891 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, with a unifying series of arches, columns, finials, and turrets. Frank H. Buhl, the head of the Sharon Iron Company and one of Western Pennsylvania's leading philanthropists, reportedly had the home built for his wife shortly after they were married. The home is representative of those built by the great industrialists of the era. The Buhl's philanthropy is still evident in the area in the form of the Buhl Club and Buhl Farm Park. The Buhl Mansion has recently been operated as a bed and breakfast and is currently for sale by its owner.

3. **The Mercer County Courthouse**, located in the "Diamond" in the Borough of Mercer. The current building, built between 1909 and 1911, is the third courthouse built by Mercer County on the site (the first two courthouses were destroyed by fire). The nominated property also includes the Diamond, along with several contributing resources, the Mercer County War Memorial and the old Mercer County Jail, now the South Court House Annex.

The Mercer County Courthouse is red brick and light gray sandstone, rectangular in form with monumental entrances and a central rotunda. The carefully symmetrical Classical/Beaux Arts-styled building is three stories tall with a domed bell/clock tower. In addition to its height, it is located on a hill which makes it visible for several miles on the ground and it served as a navigation point for early commercial aviation. The principal designer of the building was Charles F. Owsley, whose family also designed the Buhl Mansion. The courthouse contains three courtrooms, two of them original to the building. The monumental stairs and rotunda (containing allegorical paintings and circular stained-and-art glass light) are two outstanding features of the interior. The building is still in use as the Mercer County Courthouse and has recently undergone an extensive historic renovation.

4. **The Gibson House**, located at 210 Liberty Street in the Borough of Jamestown. Built around 1855, the Gibson House property encompasses a block in the center of the borough. The house is a two story square structure with a hipped roof and central cupola, built with homemade bricks and contains elements of Georgian, Greek Revival, and Italianate styles of architecture. Behind the house is a large, two story carriage house similar in style to the main house. The Gibson House was reportedly used as an Underground Railroad site and visited by Mark Twain, who was a friend of its builder, Dr. William Gibson. It is reputed that Twain based the character of the doctor in his book Innocents Abroad on Dr. Gibson.

The facility is owned and operated by the Jamestown Future Foundation (JFF), a non-profit organization and is open seasonally, April through December. Free historical tours of the house are available to the visitor. A community library is located in the lower level of the building.

5. **Johnston's Tavern**, located six miles south of Mercer Borough in Springfield Township. The tavern is a two story, five bay structure, constructed of fieldstone in the country Greek Revival architectural style, with chimneys on either end. The tavern was built in 1831 by Arthur Johnston and in the early days of Mercer County was one of the few, early stage stops on the Pittsburgh-Erie Turnpike providing food, refreshment and lodging. It probably served the needs of the nearby Springfield Furnace. Originally named the New Lodge Inn, a post office was located there from 1836 to 1845. Currently, the tavern is privately owned.
6. **The Christiana Lindsey House**, located at 313 East Butler Street in the Borough of Mercer. The house is a two and a half story brick Italianate-style residence with a slightly raised sandstone ashlar foundation and a truncated hip slate roof. It was designed in the centered gable substyle—only about fifteen percent of all Italianate-styled buildings in the nation fall into this category. The house is noteworthy as one of Mercer Borough's large and stylistically ornate Victorian-era mansions, but it is truly significant because it is the only high-style Italianate residence in the borough and because of the abundance and quality of its stylistic details.
7. **The Jonas J. Pierce House**, located at 60 Shenango Street in the Borough of Sharpsville. Built by the industrial Pierce family in 1868, the Jonas J. Pierce house is a three story, wood-sided, wood frame residence, an outstanding regional residential example of the Second Empire style. The house has six first floor rooms, is three bays wide and five bays deep and has a large octagonal tower rising above the third story. The design of the house is dominated by the asymmetrical massing, concave Mansard roof, tower and a variety of windows. The house is currently privately owned and being used as office space.
8. **The Quaker Bridge**, traversing the Little Shenango River on Williamson Road in Hempfield Township. The bridge is an intact example of a Pratt through truss bridge. The bridge was built in 1898 by the Cleveland Bridge Company. The bridge is representative of a bridge type used frequently in northwestern Pennsylvania. The bridge is owned by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and is currently slated for replacement.
9. **James Waugh House**, on 23 West Main Street in the Borough of Greenville. The house, constructed in 1826 of locally produced orange red brick, is the oldest documented surviving building in the Borough of Greenville. Unusual features of the two story, five-bay Federal-Adams styled house include the surviving stepped gables, first floor windows that extend nearly to the interior floor level, and a nearly intact entry. The house is currently owned by the Greenville Area Historical Society.

10. **The First Universalist Church of Sharpsville**, located at 131 North Mercer Avenue in the Borough of Sharpsville. The brick and stone church was built between 1882 and 1884 in the High Victorian Gothic Style and is richly decorated. Constructed by the industrialist Pierce family, who were instrumental in the development of the Borough of Sharpsville, the church at the time of its completion became home to the only Universalist denomination in Mercer County. The church reflects new trends in the design of church interiors, using the “Akron” plan layout with an auditorium-style sanctuary. The church contains thirty stained glass windows, the second pipe organ built in Mercer County and the oldest one still in existence, and its use of gas lighting predated the introduction of gas service by nearly twenty years. The church is now owned by the Sharpsville Area Historical Society.

- There are four historic districts in the County. An historic district is a single geographic area of contiguous historic properties. The Greenville Commercial Historic District is a listed site. The Shenango Land Plan Historic District, and the West Hill Historic District are eligible sites.

1. **The Greenville Commercial Historic District**, located in the center of the Borough of Greenville. The district lies east of the Shenango River, contains approximately nine acres and is centered on Main Street, one block of Canal Street and a portion of Clinton Street. The Post Office building, the 1905 Bessemer Depot and the Lake Erie Railroad Depot are along the Clinton Street portion of the historic district. Other buildings of architectural significance include the Masonic Hall, Packard Building and N.N. Moss building. There are forty-eight contributing buildings and nineteen non-contributing buildings in the district.

The majority of the contributing buildings were built between 1871 and 1890 (after major fires in 1871 and 1873) resulting in an architectural distinctive appearance characterized by brick materials and Italianate and other late 19th century stylistic influences. The district was important for its association with the commercial life of the borough, from the era of the Erie Extension Canal to the railroads to iron manufacturing. The district consists of commercial streetscapes built flush to sidewalks, mostly two stories in height, of brick masonry construction and having recessed entrances.

- The County’s three historic areas are the New Hamburg HA, the Big Bend HA, and the Kidd’s Mill HA, and all are listed sites.

1. **The New Hamburg Historical Area**, located at the site of the Village of New Hamburg in Delaware Township. The historical area comprises a site of 159 acres and contains the ruins of several sites of historical significance.

The Village of New Hamburg was founded in 1834 and soon thereafter flourished due to its location next to the Erie Extension Canal. Coal from the area was shipped to Erie as a source of fuel for the large lake freighters. The discovery that the coal in this area produced the best grade of pig iron in the world resulted in the construction of the

Hamburg Iron Furnace in 1846. The furnace was located on the right bank of the Shenango River and connected to the canal and town on the left bank by a railroad.

The bed of the railroad, on both river banks, is still visible. Adjacent to the furnace, are ruins of a grist mill with mill race. On the left bank, earth mounds on which a canal lock was constructed are evident along the visible remains of the canal and towpath. Several old building foundations of the canal era had been located in New Hamburg, one of these being the remains of a canal official's dwelling. Except for the hiking trail, the site is currently heavily overgrown.

The site is currently owned by the United States Corp of Engineers. The Shenango Trail (maintained by the Shenango Outing Club), traverses the towpath of the old Erie Extension Canal and connects the Kidd's Mills, New Hamburg and Big Bend Historical Areas.

2. **The Big Bend Historical Area**, located at the eastern end of the Shenango Reservoir in Jefferson Township. The area, comprising three areas totaling 209 acres, was the location of the town of Big Bend, which no longer exists. The town took its name from its location at a hairpin bend in the Shenango River.

Formerly the site of a Delaware and Seneca Indian village, the town was initially laid out in 1808 but developed little until the opening of the Erie Extension Canal in 1840. Subsequently, Big Bend prospered as a major shipping and destination point along the canal. By the 1850's, it contained an iron furnace, a couple of nearby woolen and lumber mills, a hotel, warehouses, a church, a school, a blacksmith, two grocers and a butcher. The iron furnace, built in 1846, was considered one the pioneer iron works in the United States.

However, because it was so far from other population centers in the county, it did not develop beyond the canal trade. When the canal shut down in 1871, Big Bend virtually disappeared by 1900.

Located in the three areas comprising the historical area are the canal towpath (which is now the Shenango (hiking) Trail), the site of the iron furnace and nearby Shenango House Hotel, the remains of Dam No. 2 and two locks and accompanying lockkeeper's houses north and west of Big Bend. Except for the hiking trail, the site is currently heavily overgrown.

The site is owned by the United States Army Corp of Engineers. The Shenango Trail (maintained by the Shenango Outing Club) traverses the towpath of the old Erie Extension Canal and connects the Kidd's Mills, New Hamburg and Big Bend Historical Areas.

3. **The Kidd's Mills Historic Area**, located adjacent to Kidd's Mills Road in Pymatuning Township. The historic area comprises an area of about thirty-three acres and contains the only historic covered bridge in Mercer County and the sites of two grist mills. The covered bridge was built in 1868, crossing the Shenango River along an old country road

connecting modern State Routes 18 and 58, and replaced a bridge that been swept away during a flood the previous year. The bridge is the only remaining example in the eastern United States of a “Smith Cross Truss”. The truss was patented in 1869 by Robert Smith of Tippecanoe City, Ohio.

The Bigler Home was moved to the site by the Shenango Conservancy from nearby Delaware Township in 1993. This home was owned by Susan Bigler. Their sons, William (Pennsylvania) and John (California), became the first brothers to become governors of two states simultaneously.

The Kidd’s Mills Historic Area is owned by the United States Army Corp of Engineers and is currently leased and maintained by the Shenango Conservancy. The covered bridge is owned by Mercer County and is also leased to the Shenango Conservancy. The Shenango Trail (also maintained by the Shenango Outing Club), traversing the towpath of the Erie Extension Canal, connects the Kidd’s Mills, New Hamburg and Big Bend Historical Areas.

- One additional property, The Erie Extension Canal, Lock No. 10, is worth noting for its significance in state history.
 1. The Erie Extension Canal, Lock No. 10, located along the Shenango River off High Street in the Borough of Sharpsville’s Community Park, is noted as an eligible site on the National Register of Historic Places. The guard lock was built between 1835 and 1838 as part of the Erie Canal System and was at a point where canal boats left slackwater to enter the canal channel, with a difference in water level amounting to seven feet. The lock is complete except for its wooden gates and is the only extant masonry lock in northwestern Pennsylvania.

Located nearby is the Raisch Log Cabin, dating back to the early 1800’s. It was discovered beneath the veneer of a house on East State Street in Hermitage that was being razed in 1977. The cabin was restored by the Mercer County Historical Society (MCHS) under the direction of Frederick Raisch, a director of the society and eventually relocated to its current site in Sharpsville near the lock. The MCHS hosts local artisans and craftspeople during the summer months at the site.

- Listing in the National Register contributes to preserving historic properties in a number of ways:
 - Recognition that a property is of significance to the Nation, the State, or the community.
 - Consideration in the planning for Federal or federally assisted projects.
 - Eligibility for Federal tax benefits.
 - Qualification for Federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available.

- Like many state and federal preservation programs, the interest in National Register listing originates with the land owner. Once approved by the state, the state historic preservation agencies can nominate the property to the national level.
- Listing in the National Register does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage, or dispose of property. However, it often changes the way communities perceive their historic resources and gives credibility to efforts to preserve these resources as irreplaceable aspects of the community.

State Historical Markers

- Fifteen state historical markers symbolize the significance of Mercer County sites in Pennsylvania history. The historical marker program, established in 1946, is one of the Commission's oldest and most popular programs. The blue and gold markers located throughout the state highlight people, places, and events significant in state and national history.
- The vast majority of historical markers in the County are roadside markers.
- The historical markers represent a wide range of historical categories ranging from Government & Politics, and Governors, to Transportation, Bridges, and Canals, to the Native American, Underground Railroad, African American, and Women, to Business & Industry, Buildings, Taverns.

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Table 5-3 Pennsylvania Historical Markers in Mercer County

Marker Name:	Dedicated:	Location:	Category:	Marker Text:
City Markers				
Mercer County	5/12/1983	County courthouse, at Courthouse Square, Mercer	Government & Politics, Government & Politics 19th Century	Formed March 12, 1800 from Allegheny County. The U.S. census reported 3228 residents in 1800. Named for General Hugh Mercer, Revolutionary hero killed at Battle of Princeton, 1777. Early iron and coal center. Mercer, the county seat, was incorporated 1814.
Roadside Markers				
Albert Bushnell Hart	4/30/1948	Pa. 258 at Clark	Professions & Vocations, Education	Distinguished scholar and historian, Harvard graduate and member of its faculty for sixty years, was born nearby, July 1, 1854, and lived here six years. He died July 16, 1943, at Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Bigler Graves	11/12/1946	Pa. 58 SE of Greenville	Government & Politics, Government & Politics 19th Century, Governors	Jacob and Susan Bigler, parents of two governors, are buried here. Their son William was Governor of Pennsylvania, 1852-55; and their son John, Governor of California, 1852-56.
Bigler Home	11/12/1946	Pa. 58 SE of Greenville	Government & Politics, Government & Politics 19th Century, Governors	Jacob and Susan Bigler, parents of two governors, lived nearby after 1822. In January 1852 their son John became Governor of California, and their son William became Governor of Pennsylvania.
Camp Reynolds	9/1/1994	Rte. 18 S of Greenville	Military, Military Post-Civil War	Site of a 3300-acre U.S. Army facility, 1942-45. Originally the Shenango Personnel Replacement Depot; renamed 1943. During World War II about a million troops passed through here; most were headed for Europe. A peak of 75,000 were housed here at one time; racial unrest flared up, July 1943. Here also were over 1800 German prisoners of war, 1944-46. After 1946 this became a scene of major civilian development.
Clay Furnace	1/20/1949	U.S. 62 W of Charleston	Business & Industry, Iron, Coal, Furnaces	First successful use of raw bituminous coal in place of charcoal, 1846; and of unmixed Lake Superior iron ore in 1856. Built 1845 by Vincent & Himrod; named for Henry Clay. Abandoned in 1861. The site is 2 miles away.
Erie Extension Canal	4/30/1948	Wasser Bridge Rd. (SR 4003) just E of Pa. 18, S of Greenville (Missing)	Transportation, Environment, Canals	Route of travel and trade, Pittsburgh to Great Lakes, 1840-1871. The old canal bed may be seen here in Clarksville and for about four miles eastward along the road to Mercer.
Erie Extension Canal	11/12/1946	Junction Pa. 18 & 518	Transportation, Canals	Route of travel and trade, Pittsburgh to Great Lakes, 1840-1871. Important to the western Pennsylvania iron industry before the rise of the railroads. The only remaining canal lock still stands in Sharpsville.

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Marker Name:	Dedicated:	Location:	Category:	Marker Text:
Erie Extension Canal	11/12/1947	Wasser Bridge Road, .3 mile E of Pa. 18, S of Greenville (Missing)	Transportation, Environment, Canals	The channel is clearly visible from here. Part of the Shenango Line, from New Castle to near Conneaut Lake. Built by the State; formally opened to Greenville, Aug. 23, 1840. Run by the Erie Canal Co., 1844-70. Closed 1871.
Freedom Road	8/23/1948	U.S. 62 SW of Sandy Lake	Underground Railroad, African American, Women	In search of freedom, men and women brought from the South by the "Underground Railroad" settled near here about 1825 and later. After 1850, most of them went on to Canada. Their cemetery, still in use, lies a short distance above the road.
James Sheakley	3/6/1967	U.S. 19 at Sheakleyville	Government & Politics, Government & Politics 19th Century	Fourth Territorial Governor of Alaska, 1893-1897, James Sheakley (1829-1917), was born in Sheakleyville, which was named for his grandfather. Appointed by President Cleveland, he also served as United States Commissioner of Schools for Alaska, 1887-1892.
Johnston Tavern	8/24/1948	U.S. 19 N of Leesburg	Business & Industry, Buildings, Taverns	Kept by Arthur Johnston; licensed in 1827. Present building erected in 1831. Served travelers on the Pittsburgh-Mercer road, and stood conveniently near Springfield Furnace, in operation after 1837.
Kidd's Mill Covered Bridge	7/15/1995	SR 4012 5 miles S of Greenville	Transportation, Bridges	Built in 1868, spanning the Shenango River. The only remaining bridge in Pennsylvania with an all-wooden truss design patented by Robert Smith of Tippecanoe City, Ohio. The last historic covered bridge in Mercer County, extending 120 feet in length and restored in 1990.
Pymatuning	11/12/1946	Pa. 258 E of Clark (Missing)	Native American	Delaware Indian village on opposite river bank about 1764-1785. Name was once used for upper Shenango River, which flowed from Pymatuning Swamp, now Pymatuning Reservoir.
Shenango Town	3/14/1947	Pa. 118 SE of West Middlesex (Missing)	Native American	Wyandot and Delaware Indian town on nearby riverbanks about 1750-1785. Under control of Seneca Iroquois, of whom a few bands remained in this region until about 1812.

Source: PHMC

Additional Historical and Cultural Interest Sites

In addition to sites of state and national significance, there are a number of properties in Mercer County that signify County and local history or that represent cultural aspects of history not recognized by the National Park Service.

1. **Indian Cemetery**, located in French Creek Township at the site of Custaloga Town, a Boy Scout Camp, is owned by the Mercer County Historical Society and maintained by the scouts. There are at least three Native Americans interred in the cemetery. One of these is alleged to be Guyasuta, an important Seneca Chief and guide for George Washington while Washington was attempting to convince the French in northwestern Pennsylvania not to settle on land claimed by England. A monument is located here to Chief Guyasuta, although there is a belief that Chief Custaloga may actually be buried here.
2. **Caldwell One-Room Schoolhouse**, located in Delaware Township at the junction of State Route 58 and Hamburg Road, is owned by the Mercer County Historical Society. The schoolhouse was built in 1880 and was the last of more than 300 one-room schoolhouses in Mercer County to close, in 1960. The schoolhouse is open for tours and contains a museum which examines this means of education, in addition to rural life.
3. **The Columbia Theatre**, located in Sharon. The Columbia Theatre, built by the Columbia Amusement Company, opened its doors to the citizens of Mercer County on November 22, 1922. With imported marble staircases to the balcony, ornate plaster medallions and grill work, the auditorium seated 1,700+ and featured a full stage, orchestra pit, seven dressing rooms, projection booth and theatre office. The Columbia was hailed as the "finest theatre between Pittsburgh and Erie," providing the ultimate in patron comfort and modern theatrical systems. For three generations, the Columbia Theatre was Mercer County's home for grand entertainment. Long time residents affectionately remember their experiences in the opulent auditorium, under the magnificently lit dome.
Everyone went to the Columbia. As was the case with literally thousands of theatres across North America, the advent of television spelled the decline of the Columbia. After a long and noble struggle, she closed her doors for the last time when, on January 29, 1981, a fire destroyed the adjacent Rembrandt Studio building which housed the Columbia's entrance hallway. Although the auditorium was not damaged by the fire, the theatre suffered through many winters without heat, a badly leaking roof and overdue maintenance. In 2002, the Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation purchased the Columbia Theatre. With the support of the community and the contributions of the artists it will soon become the home for future induction ceremonies and concerts.
4. **The Avenue of Flags and Hillcrest Memorial Park, Hermitage**. American flags for as far as the eye can see greet visitors as they enter the Hillcrest Memorial Park in Hermitage, Pennsylvania. Originally flown for the American hostages that were held in

Iran between 1979 and 1981, the 444 flags remain today a symbol of American hope and pride.

Visitors to the picturesque 71-acre memorial park are greeted by the striking view of the 444 flags on the Avenue. In their shadow stands a small yet comfortable chapel that enables families to conduct on-site memorial services. Situated just beyond the impressive entrance is a tranquil pond and fountain. It is there that visitors will find graceful swans and ducks all year long. Throughout the winding paths of the park, there are monuments recognizing the achievements and sacrifices of veterans of the wars and conflicts of this century. (Source: www.avenueofflags.com)

- 5. The Canal Museum, Greenville.** The Canal Museum was established in 1990 and pays tribute to the Erie Extension canal era from 1827 to 1871 with various displays of artifacts and historic information. It includes a replica of the Rufus S. Reed, a canal boat used to haul raw and finished goods on the canal. The Museum was located on the exact location of Lock 22, a guard lock on the Erie Extension Canal. This canal was vital to the growth and development of Greenville during this time.
- 6. The Greenville Railroad Park and Museum, Greenville.** The Greenville Railroad Park and Museum is a 501c3 non-profit organization, founded in 1985. The Park and Museum is located on Main Street and boasts Engine 604, the largest switch engine ever built and the only one in existence world-wide. Along with other original rail cars, the park has reconstructions of a stationmaster's quarters, dispatch office house, timetables, and other railroad memorabilia. The park is home to the Empire Car, one of 500 built in Greenville by the Greenville Metal Products Company. It is also home to an exhibit featuring the first parachute, invented in Greenville by the Slovakian Stefan Banic, a Greenville coal miner, and patented in 1914. The Park and Museum is supported by volunteer workers, membership fees, donations, and gift shop sales. The organization would like to expand its exhibits and obtain more rolling stock for the Park.

Local Historic Preservation and Cultural Activity Organizations

Many organizations have been formed to preserve the history of Mercer County and to promote its heritage and cultural activities.

- **The Mercer County Historical Society** - The Mercer County Historical Society (MCHS) is a private, nonprofit group (501c3) established in 1947. MCHS headquarters are located at the Anderson/Magoffin Complex, 119 South Pitt Street, Mercer PA. The MCHS Research Library and Archives features permanent and temporary exhibits, as well as valuable resources for local history and genealogical research; original manuscripts, newspaper maps, family histories census data published works microfilm, and oral histories are available for on-site use. Personal assistance is available. The headquarters have display areas and a library. The executive director is a full time employee. About three thousand guests visit MCHS sites annually, with just over one third being children on school field trips. The MCHS sells books and other small items at its headquarters. MCHS sites and services are free and open to the public; donations are accepted and encouraged. MCHS has knowledgeable, trained docents at each of its sites.
- In 1998, MCHS fostered the development of **the Mercer County Historical Societies Coalition (MCHSC)**. This group includes thirteen historic and preservation organization in the County.
- **Mercer County Genealogical Society** - The Mercer County Genealogical Society is a non-profit organization staffed by volunteers with a mission to promote the research of family history and to preserve historical data. The Society is located in the Shenango Valley Community Library, 11 North Sharpsville Avenue, Sharon. The research holdings of the society include records from county census, churches, funeral homes, and the poor (county) home. The society also maintains a collection of cemetery books, family histories, city directories, and courthouse certificates (birth, marriage, and death).
- **The Greenville Area Historical Society** - Greenville PA is the oldest city in Mercer County. Founded in 1798 as West Greenville, it became a borough in 1865 and changed its name to Greenville. The Greenville Area Historical Society was once housed on the campus of Thiel College, but as of spring 2003 is located at the Waugh House at 25 West Main Street. The Society's museum boasts rooms dedicated to different eras, such as the Civil War, WWI, and WWII, as well as to various themes, such as industry, health and medicine, and theater.
- **The Hermitage Historical Society** - The Stewart House is the home of the Hermitage Historical Society, located at 5465 E. State Street. The Society currently focuses its efforts on topical research, such as the city's oldest homes and the families who built them, Veterans from the Revolutionary War to the present, the City's 25 Cemeteries, canal history, early settlers, and photo-history.
- **The Jamestown Historical Society** - The Jamestown Historical Society was founded in 1974 with a mission to preserve the history of Jamestown and surrounding townships. Its

home, the Gibson house, contains displays and local artifacts that have been authenticated by research and local tradition.

- **The Jamestown Future Foundation** - The Jamestown Future Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing and expanding the cultural and educational life of a rural community and surrounding areas.
- **The Sharpsville Area Historical Society** – The Sharpsville Area Historical Society serves the Sharpsville, Clark, and South Pymatuning areas—part of the Greater Shenango Valley. (Follow-up: www.svol.net/~cke76/History)
- **The Shenango Conservancy** - The Shenango Conservancy is non-profit corporation approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and incorporated in 1986. Its goals include historic preservation and conservation in the watershed of the Shenango River. In 1990, the Conservancy completed restoration of the historic Kidd’s Mill Covered Bridge, a major two-year undertaking by volunteers and contractors. A park containing a picnic areas, canoe launch, landscaping, and improved parking has recently been completed as part of the bridge restoration project. Other projects include maintenance of the Shenango Trail, public education of history and nature, preservation of Beaver to Erie Canal and other historic sites and conservation activities.
- **The Wheatland Historical Society** – The Wheatland Historical Society is a local volunteer group that maintains display cases in the borough’s municipal building.
- **Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau** – The Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau is located in Sharon. The Bureau provides information on places to stay, things to do, community characteristics, and travel information for County visitors via paper and online publishing. The Bureau’s website also contains links to state search engines targeted toward travelers, allowing potential County explorers to locate other destinations across the state. The Bureau has published a media kit, entitled “Everyone needs an escape plan...,” which highlights the seasonal activities, unique features, and uncommon characteristics of Mercer County. (Source: www.mercercountypa.org)

Local Preservation and Cooperative Efforts

The following highlights note the efforts of the above listed organizations and others in inventorying historic sites and developing coordinated and cooperative marketing programs.

- **The Historic Resource Survey for the City of Sharon** - An Historic Resource survey recently prepared for the City of Sharon identified 67 properties of historical significance that are eligible for the National Register. However, they do not appear on PHMC’s 2003 National Register of Listed and Eligible Properties.
- **The Greenville Museum Alliance** - The Greenville Museum Alliance was formed in December 2002 and legalized in 2003 with a mission for promoting, preserving and

presenting Greenville's storied history. The GMA serves as an umbrella organization for the Canal Museum, the Greenville Railroad Park, and the Greenville historic society, to coordinate fundraisers, special events, and grant proposals.

- **The Mercer County Historical Society Coalition and the Greater Shenango Valley Tourism Corridor** - In February 2004, MCHS submitted a letter of interest for a Heritage Tourism Cooperative Marketing grant to DCED, stating that MCHSC was interested in creating a Greater Shenango Valley Tourism Corridor (GSVTC). Those sites and entities specifically included in the GSVTC include:
 1. The Canal museum
 2. The Greenville Historical Society
 3. The Greenville Railroad Park Museum
 4. The Jamestown Historical Society
 5. The Jamestown future Foundation
 6. Sharpsville Historical Society
 7. Shenango Valley Conservancy
 8. And the MCHS.

Other groups have expressed interest in being part of this project.

The first tasks of the GSVTC are to create a website with maps, descriptions, and other information, as well s links to independent sites; to establish and post uniform signage for GSVTC sites; and to develop and distribute pamphlets on the various sites. Follow-up tasks will reach into regional markers, such as Pittsburgh, Erie, Cleveland, Akron, and Columbus.

Other areas of interest along the GSVTC include the

- Brucker Blue Heron Sanctuary of Thiel College - the largest nesting reserve of these birds in Pennsylvania
- Camp Reynolds Depot Historic Marker (*See above*)
- Daffin's Candy - The Daffin Candy company dates to 1903, but was started in Sharon, Mercer County in 1947. In addition to its storefront, the shop served as a factory for creating the delectable candy delights that made the Daffin's name famous.
- Reyers Shoe Store – The World's Largest Shoe Store. Established in Mercer County in the 1940's, Reyer's offers selections from over 300 famous designer and name brands, and employs over 200 persons.
- Tara-A Country Inn, Clark - Based on the classic film, *Gone with the Wind*, this 1854 antebellum home has been renovated as a four-star lodging venue.
- the Vocal Group Hall of Fame
- the Winner – The World's Largest Off-price Fashion Store for Women, and
- Three by the River.

Other undocumented heritage assets that have expressed an interest in becoming members of the GSVTC are

- the Columbia Theatre,
- the Hermitage Historical Society
- the Wheatland Historical Society.

Linkages and cooperation are desired with other sites and organizations beyond the GSVTC, such as with Grove City Historical Society, Stoneboro Historical Society, Sandy Creek Conservancy, and the Mercer County Genealogical Society.

Cultural Landscape

According to the National Park Service (NPS), a cultural landscape is a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein), associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

- In the urban environment, the built features define the character of the local landscape. Building types, architectural styles, porch designs, window placement, and rooflines, particularly those prior to WWII, can be unique to a region or locale. These features can provide justification for historic significance and preservation as individual sites and collective districts.
- In the rural environment, historic sites are often farmhouses and barns. Until recently, there was no broader attention to the rural landscape as a whole as a representation of the past, in the way that historic districts recognize continuity in the urban environment. New efforts to designate rural historic landscape districts have helped rural areas to protect their community, foster community cohesion, and speak with one voice to federal, state, and regional decision-makers.
- Beyond the NPS definition, even ordinary neighborhoods are cultural landscapes as they reflect the ways of life and values of those that live there.
- No specific cultural landscapes have been identified in Mercer County.

Historic and Contemporary Arts

Cultural resources also include historic and contemporary arts, such as performing arts. These organizations and events represent ways in which County residents and communities interact with one another and with County visitors.

- There are two locations and associated organizations, in the County dedicated to performing arts.
 1. **The Vocal Group Hall of Fame, Sharon.** The Vocal Group Hall of Fame is a 501c3 non-profit foundation. The foundation was created to honor the Greatest Vocal Groups of the World, preserve their music at a world-class museum, promote their music and memories throughout the world and to pay tribute to them as National Music Treasures.

The Vocal Group Hall of Fame was designed to perpetuate the life long careers of the inducted artists, recognize them as inventors and creators of the music that has influenced today's pop culture. This is to be achieved by promoting their music to their many fans and by bringing to the attention of others, their legacy for many generations to come.

Source: The Vocal Group Hall of Fame (www.vghf.com)

- 2. The Columbia Theatre for the Arts, Sharon.** The Columbia Theatre for the Arts is a non-profit organization. Its mission is to offer a lively attractive arts and entertainment program in a quality venue for the regional community.

Indicators and Trends

“Historic” Identification

The built environment is an important part of a community's history and identity. Mercer County's architectural heritage, as well as the events that took place in those structures, are part of what makes the county a distinctive place. The community is fortunate that many of its historic resources remain.

- Identifying structures or other resources as historic is one of the first steps in determining its significance. Resources must be at least fifty years old to be designated as “historic,” using criteria established by the National Park Service. The actual number of sites in Mercer County that meet guidelines for identification as “historic” is believed to be significantly greater than what has been documented to date. Because these resources have not been properly identified, they may not have received adequate consideration in land use development.
- The Housing Chapter indicates that 42.3 percent of housing units are greater than 50 years old, however this percent does not represent commercial, industrial, government, or other public buildings over 50 years in age. The County may want to measure the percent of all buildings over 50 years old, as another indicator of cultural and historic resource conservation.

Historic Conservation

Once a historic district has been designated, a community can establish an historic architectural review board (HARB) if it desires to maintain the visual character of the district in addition to recognizing its geographic location. Properties within the designated district are then required to meet specific guidelines when making structural and aesthetic improvements.

- The County may want to measure the percent of buildings identified as historic that are subject to review before modification or demolition, as a new indicator of cultural and historic resource conservation. Buildings that meet this criterion would include properties

listed and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, as well as buildings in historic districts that have a HARB.

- There are no HARBs that administer review of structural and aesthetic improvements in the County's historic districts.

Trends

- Sites in Mercer County have been recently added to the National Register for Historic Places.
- Several state historical markers are missing from their locations, and have not been replaced.
- There are numerous local and county organizations with a mission related to historic and cultural resources.
- In recent years, organizations focused on Mercer County history have been seeking opportunities to market sites and service collectively.
- No specific cultural landscapes have been identified in Mercer County.
- Mercer County offers both historic and contemporary cultural resources.

