

MOUNT PLEASANT TOWNSHIP - A BRIEF HISTORY

Early Township Development

When the Lancaster County commissioners levied the county taxes for the year 1749, either late in the previous year or early in that year, there were then six established townships in what is now Adams County. The townships were listed as Berwick, Huntington, Menallen, Reading, Straban, and Tyrone. By the time the newly elected commissioners of the newly established York County met in December 1749 to levy taxes for the following year, there were ten established townships in the new county; Mount Pleasant township was among them. Thus, Mount Pleasant township was created during the year 1749. There is no known exact date for its creation and no explanation of how or why the name was chosen. The minutes of the commissioners, who first met in October 1749, contain no record of the establishment of any of the new townships. Early settlers of the land in the township indicate control by the Scotch Irish. By 1800, much of the land was being settled by the Low Dutch (Holland Dutch) or by Germans. That year marked the establishment of Adams County and Mount Pleasant township was included within the county. Religious backgrounds included Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic and United Brethren. The two older churches still in existence with active members is Salem United Methodist and St. Luke's Lutheran. Faith United Church of Christ also was established later and is active. (St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church is located in Bonneauville Borough). There are two older cemeteries located along Low Dutch Road, one at the Salem United Methodist church. One older cemetery is located at the St. Luke's Lutheran church. Mount Pleasant township to this day has substantially the same boundaries as those of 1749, with the exception of some land conceded to help form Union township in 1841 and the borough of Bonneauville being formed in August of 1961. Bonneauville is surrounded by the township. An 1847 draft shows the township with approximately 29.94 square miles. At the present, the township is listed as 31.5 square miles.

Early Local Government

Early local government officials' information shows this area had appointed constables and justices of the peace named to write deeds, witness wills, and enforce any early laws in effect. Tax collectors and assessors were also named as early as 1750. Overseers of the Poor were named to distribute funds to those less fortunate settlers. Most settlers at that time were farmers or fruit producers in this area. As development continued and roads were approved for construction, supervisors of the highways were appointed even as early as 1751.

Population Trends

Population rolls show a steady growth in Mount Pleasant township. In fact, comparing the surrounding areas in (then) York County, Mount Pleasant township showed a fairly high number of settlers through 1800. Early records show approximately 500 in 1762 with nearly 1000 by 1800 when Adams County was established. By 1850, the population rose to approximately 1600 and to 2000 by 1900. In 1960, 2500 taxable are recorded just before Bonneauville borough was established. In 1970, the township tax rolls show 1800 with Bonneauville showing over 800. The 1990 census listed just over 4000 residents in the township and approximately 1300 in the borough. A population of 4420 is listed in the 2000 census and

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4693 for the 2010 census listing. The more populated areas of the township are concentrated along Route 30 (York Road) and bordering the borough of Bonneauville with small villages interspersed. The predominance of farmland is still noted throughout the township.

Schooling

In the early 1800's when schools were being constructed on private lands for the area children, many schools were built in the township. 1834 marked the year when common schools or publicly funded school systems were established across the area. Mount Pleasant township was most likely one of the last districts in the area to accept the school taxing law and receive the state appropriation. Documentation points to the year 1838 for acceptance of the public school system by the township. Though the township may have been slow to accept the public system at first; when the Lower Adams County Joint School System came into being July 1, 1948, Mount Pleasant township joined in its creation. By 1961, part of the township's population was divided for schooling purposes. A portion entered into the Littlestown Jointure; the other portion became part of the merged New Oxford district. By 1970 and 1971, reorganization and renaming took place leaving the present Littlestown Area School District and the Conewago Valley School District serving the schooling needs of Mount Pleasant Township. As many as eleven schools existed in the township from the early days through 1954. Some of those buildings still exist throughout the township.

Other Information

Other items noteworthy of the 1800's would be the presence of many taverns, distilleries and mills scattered throughout the township as growth continued. Taverns often served as polling places for elections. The land had been and still is conducive to farming and rural residential development. One railroad line runs through the northern portion of the township. Tributaries of the Conewago Creek cut through the land, with a few tributaries of the Alloway Creek cutting through the southwestern corner of the township. The Conewago Creek empties into the Susquehanna River and the Alloway Creek into the Potomac River. Post offices were noted being established in the villages of Centennial, White Hall and at "Square Corner" just outside of Bonneauville. A small portion of the township is a dedicated Civil War battle area of the Gettysburg National Military Park and is located in the western portion of the township.

Current Township Statistics

2010 POPULATION CENSUS 4693

SQUARE MILEAGE 31.5 (sixth in size of the 21 Adams County townships) (20,160 acres)

TOWNSHIP MAINTAINED ROADWAYS 40.52 MILES

STATE MAINTAINED ROADWAYS 36.40 MILES

VARIOUS PRIVATELY MAINTAINED ROADWAYS

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AGRICULTURAL SECURITY LAND OVER 10,000 ACRES

TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT

THREE ELECTED SUPERVISORS

ONE ELECTED TAX COLLECTOR

THREE ELECTED AUDITORS

ONE ELECTED CONSTABLE

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