

The History of Hanover Township

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Hanover Township has a most interesting history. One of the original Connecticut Townships laid out by the Susquehanna Company, Hanover Township is located in Northeastern Pennsylvania along the Eastern Bank of the Susquehanna River in the heart of the scenic Wyoming Valley. Its early history is interwoven with some of the most stirring incidents of the Wyoming Valley life of pioneer days.

The pioneers in Hanover Township had already made history in Southern Pennsylvania. Among the settlers were strong-minded, self-reliant men of Scotch-Irish antecedents, men who, in the time of Indian unrest that followed the French and Indian war, had relied more upon themselves than upon the government for protection. The "Paxton Boys" of Lancaster County, had dealt so sternly with the Conestoga Indians in 1763 that there was peace on the Conestoga and that part of the Susquehanna for many years after. Captain Lazarus Stewart and his company of forty — most of who were "Paxton Boys" — moved from Lancaster County into the Wyoming Valley in 1770 and fought for Connecticut against the Penns. For their services to Connecticut, Captain Stewart and his followers were granted the tract of land which became Hanover Township. The Township area embraced all the land from Wilkes-Barre south to Newport Township, and all the land between the Susquehanna River and the Lehigh River, including most of the land now within Hanover, Wright, Fairview, Bear Creek, Buck Dennison, and Foster Townships plus two thirds of Nanticoke and all of Ashley, Sugar Notch, and Warrior Run. Hanover Township was founded in 1770 by Captain Lazarus Stewart and named for his hometown of Hanover in Dauphin County.

The present Hanover Township is bordered on the Northeast by the city of Wilkes-Barre, on the Southwest by the city of Nanticoke, on the Northwest by the Susquehanna River, and extends to the top of the Penobscot Mountain on the East. The Township covers an area of 21 square miles and has a population of over 11,000 people. Areas carved from the original Hanover Township are Dennison Township 1839, Wright Township 1851, Foster Township 1854, Sugar Notch Borough 1867, Ashley Borough 1870 and Nanticoke City 1874.

Early history tells us that the Township was very scarcely populated; Indian raids were frequent. One of these was the historically famous Wyoming Massacre in which 25 residents of Hanover Township were killed.

Captain Stewart built the first house, a blockhouse one and a half stories high, in 1771 in the Breslau area between Buttonwood Creek (now Solomon's Creek) and the river. His brother Charles Stewart built the second home in 1771 in the same area.

William McKarrigan started the first store in 1776. The military training ground for many years was Hanover's "green" where the Hanover Green Cemetery is now located. The first schoolhouse was built on "the Green" on River Road; the first teacher was Henry Emhart. On the site of the Garrison at Fort Durkee (now known as the Crossroads), the battle engagements took place during the Yankee-Pennamitte wars. In 1783 a log gristmill was built in the township near Plumpton known today as Warrior Run.

In 1820 coal was discovered by Colonel Washington Lee in the Township on property owned by Captain Stewart. The first year 1,000 tons were mined and sent to Baltimore at a cost of \$8.00 a ton. Land sold for \$25 per acre.

Although there was no telegraph office in Hanover Township the first telegraph message in the state of Pennsylvania passed through Hanover Township.

In 1873, Joseph Neuhart was the postmaster of the post office at Hanover Center, today known as Askam. Philip McCabe was the Hanover Green postmaster in 1892. In 1903, the Breslau post office was discontinued. In the 1960's the post office at Halesy's gas station/candy store was discontinued.

The Hanover Green Cemetery (1776) is one of the oldest in existence in Pennsylvania and is the burial place of many outstanding personalities including Rufus Bennett the personal bodyguard of President George Washington, Colonel Washington Lee, Spanish-American war veterans, and former Pennsylvania Governor Arthur H. James, to name a few.

The first railroad to be established through Hanover Township was the Ashley Planes, constructed in 1843 and extended from Wilkes-Barre to White Haven. In 1848 the first steam locomotive traveled over its tracks.

In 1955 the Township consisted of 56 miles of Road, which were owned by the Township but maintained by the Glen Alden Coal Company. In 2000 the Township consists of 110 miles of road that are owned and maintained by the Township. A \$700,000.00 road-paving project has been undertaken by the Township Commissioners.

Samuel Holland purchased the first land in Hanover Township to be used for coal mining purposes in 1838. His investment was very successful and mining became a leading industry. In the early 1930's Hanover Township was called the Richest Township in the World. The assessed valuation of Hanover Township in 1913 was \$73,000,000, in 1955 it was \$26,000,000, and in 2000 it was \$27,210,830.

Hanover Township has many industries, which employ thousands of people from the Township and from surrounding areas. The businesses located in the Hanover Industrial Park constitute the major employer of Hanover Township. A new state-of-the-art Industrial Park, Hanover Crossings, on Middle Road is currently under construction.

Hanover Township was designated a First Class Township on February 24, 1911. The population of Hanover in 1796 was 475, in 1850 it was 1,505, in 1900 it was 4,655, in 1930 – 17,700, in 1950 – 15,051, and in 2000 the population was over 11,000.

A canal boat landing was located in Hanover Township where Center Street intersected with the Susquehanna River. Called Butzbach's Landing, it had a small dance hall, a band for entertainment, and it served beer and refreshments to passengers of the steamboats plying the river. It was also called Steele's Ferry and people were transported across the river from Plymouth to Hanover at this location. It was active from about 1830 when the dam was built at Nanticoke, until 1902 when canals were replaced by railroads.

The first amusement park in Hanover Township was opened in 1893 as Hanover Park and was renamed in 1905 as Sans Souci Park, a French name meaning "without care". It was located in the Korn Krest section of the Township and contained 155 acres and in 1955 it was one of the largest and oldest amusement parks in the state. In the summer of 1956 attendance at the park exceeded 500,000 people. In 1905 a brochure published "To those inclined athletically – there is a fine field, level as a proverbial board, laid out for baseball, tennis, etc. with a grand stand and bleachers for the accommodation of spectators. There is a charming lake, with a launch and row boats, for the accommodation of those who delight in aquatics. Swings, hammocks, etc. abound in all parts of the ground; open streetcars carry you through the wonderland." The park was sold to Kuenhule and Brown in 1905 and was operated by the late Frank B. Brown and late George K. Brown. Edward Lee, the nephew of one of the founders, and Attorney James L. Brown operated the park from the early 1950's until its closing in 1970. Many schools and churches held their annual outings at this wonderful park and the big-name-band dances held there were an attraction to young and old alike. Today the modern Hanover Area Jr./Sr. High School is located at this site.

In 1896 the Wyoming Valley Country Club was built in the center of Hanover Township. It is located on Middle Road across from what is now the Hanover Industrial Park. It is one of the five oldest golf courses in the country. The first Country Club president was Andrew F. Derr in 1896.

Prior to the 1900's Hanover Township had very little in the way of municipal services. In 1914, fire equipment was stored at the private home of Julia Riley, Anna Dougherty, Joe Talbot, Patrick Boyle, George Matyas, and Anna Balajszis at a cost of \$6 each per month. At that time, the board of Commissioners, which consisted of President John Caffrey, Frank Balajszis, Thomas Finnegan, R.D. Greenwalt, John Harrison, and William Nancarrow, decided to build six new firehouses at a cost of \$8,500 each.

Today Hanover Township owns and maintains eleven buildings for storage of its equipment and for municipal equipment.

Six fire stations that house fire and rescue apparatus are located at strategic points in the Township to provide efficient fire protection. The six pieces of Township-owned fire apparatus are complimented by a ladder truck, rescue truck, brush trucks, ATV's, and rescue boats maintained by the volunteer fire companies. Six full time fire truck drivers and six well-trained volunteer fire companies insure around the clock protection for Township residents and businesses. The fire department is attempting to purchase a thermo-imaging unit for the safety of the residents

Three state-of-the-art ambulances are housed in Hanover Green and Preston. They are staffed 24 hours a day by paramedics, EMT's and volunteers and provide quality medical service. All staff constantly attend class to provide the best medical service available. The first ambulance call was answered by George Matyas, Mike Matyas, Tom William, and Michael Steve.

A well-organized police department consisting of 17 police officers, eight cruisers, a bicycle patrol, K-9 unit and special entry team provide for the safety of Hanover Township residents under the leadership of Chief William Howatt. The police department was established in 1914 and consisted of 12 officers. The first police chief was James Campbell. Officers were paid \$900.00 per year. The first Justice of the Peace was Samuel Jameson and Israel Inman in 1840. The current District Justice is the Honorable Joseph Halsey.

Hanover Township also maintains 110 miles of road, 10 playgrounds, sewers, flood control, weekly refuse and bi-weekly recyclable collection with a 20 person staff. Township employees maintain two pumping stations and over 2 miles of dikes to provide flood control for the Township. The Solomon Creek pumping station in Breslau is the largest flood control pumping station on the Susquehanna River.

A seven person administrative staff conducts daily operations. The Code Enforcement office is staffed by a Code Enforcement Officer, Building Inspector, Zoning Officer, Electrical Inspector, Plumbing and Heating Inspector and Health Officer.

Hanover Township was the first municipality in the area to have a sewage treatment facility. Today Hanover Township is the home of the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority located in the Breslau Section.

Hanover Township is a thriving progressive community with diverse industry, housing, recreation, improved roads, quality schools, public buildings, growing shopping areas, and elected officials that are very optimistic about its future.