



# HISTORIC GERMANTOWN SCIENCE *Sleuths*





# A Brief History of Pennsylvania & Germantown

## FIRST PEOPLE

### *Did you know?*

Lenape families were matrilinear, with households arranged around the mother's side of the family.

## The Native Americans

The first people to live in the area we now call Pennsylvania were often called "Indians" by the Europeans who came to America. These native peoples lived in this area for more than 10,000 years before Europeans arrived. They formed many different tribes, or groups, and called themselves by their own tribal names. They had different languages and different customs, though they shared some heritage and beliefs. Today, we generally use the term Native Americans for these people because they were native, or born here.

## The Lenape

Native Americans, long ago and still today, are not one group of people. The Native Americans who lived in the area we now call Pennsylvania included the Susquehannocks [sus kwa HAN nuk], Munsee, and Lenape [le NA pay]. The Lenape lived in the Delaware Valley, in the area that is now known as Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The Lenape lived in towns; they built longhouses and smaller houses made of branches, bark, and reeds. The men were hunters and fishers. They used bows and arrows to hunt and they built traps, called weirs, to fish. To travel, they hollowed out huge logs and made dugout canoes. The women gathered nuts, berries, and roots. They also took care of the children and cooked.

## **FIRST PEOPLE (CONTINUED)**

By the 1600s, the Lenape were also good farmers and traders. They grew maize, or corn, an important plant for food. They also made baskets and other craft objects which they traded with other Native peoples and the Europeans who had begun to arrive in the area.

The Lenape were peaceful people. Some Native American groups fought with one another over land and trade. Some, like the Susquehannock, moved from one place to another to avoid fighting. The Lenape protected their people by forming alliances with stronger or larger tribes and communities, like the Haudenosaunee.

### **The Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy**

The Haudenosaunee [hoe-dee-no-SHOW-nee] or the Iroquois Confederacy was a powerful alliance of Native nations. They controlled much of New York and northwestern Pennsylvania. Five nations – the Mohawk, Oneida [oh NI duh], Onondaga [ah nun DAH guh], Cayuga [ki YEW guh], and Seneca [SEN eh kuh]– formed the Iroquois Confederacy. After the Tuscarora [tusk uh ROAR uh] joined it, the Confederacy became known as the Six Nations. At their Great Council, the tribal leaders met to solve problems together by agreement of all members.

#### *Did you know?*

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy of six nations has been called the oldest democracy on earth. Its ideas influenced Colonial leaders like Benjamin Franklin. The Lenape and William Penn's government both sought to build alliances with the Confederacy.

## *Did you know?*

It was not until 1682 that England won the battle and established the colony as English with an English name – Pennsylvania.

## The Dutch, French, and Swedes

Dutch trappers and French explorers arrived by the early 1600s. They moved around the area, but did not build towns. Settlers from Sweden established the first European colony along the Delaware River in 1638. They negotiated for land with the Lenape. They built forts and log houses and began farming by planting seeds they brought from Europe, crops such as rye and wheat, as well as learning Native American methods of growing maize and other grains. They raised the animals they brought from Europe: cows, horses, and pigs. They also tried to grow tobacco and raise silkworms to make silk.

## Other Europeans

People from Finland, the Netherlands (Holland), Germany, and Poland joined the Swedes in New Sweden. As early as 1639, there was also at least one enslaved African, Anthoni, who was forced to come to this region. Born in Angola, Anthoni's life changed when Portuguese traders kidnapped him and sold him, either to an English or a Dutch ship captain. His life changed again when he was sold to a Swede who lived in New Sweden. Anthoni became known as Anthoni Swartz or, in English, as Anthony Black. By the 1640s Dutch settlers along the Delaware were also enslaving Africans.

New Sweden failed. The settlement never attracted more than a few hundred colonists. It also never made money for its mother country, Sweden. By the 1650s, the Dutch claimed the area, but allowed the Swedes to continue living there. Holland, Sweden, and England fought to control the land for many years.

# THE FIRST EUROPEANS (CONTINUED)

## Europeans & The Lenape

European settlement changed the life of the Lenape. At first, the Lenape enjoyed new opportunities for trade with the Europeans. The Europeans wanted the beautiful furs and other natural resources of this land. As payment to the Lenape, the Europeans traded European-made goods – beads, iron pots, jackets, knives, and other objects. Both the Lenape and Europeans benefited from this.

The Europeans, however, also brought something deadly to the Lenape. The Europeans carried diseases with them from Europe which made Native Americans sick. By the time William Penn arrived in 1682, many Lenape had already died of these diseases, including measles and smallpox. The Lenape way of life changed forever because of exposure to these new people.

### Did you know?

William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania in 1682. Born in England, Penn became a Quaker as a young man, and was persecuted because of his religion. He wanted his new colony to be a place where people could live in peace and practice the religion of their choice. Many settlers came to Pennsylvania to seek a new way of life. They sailed in ships across the Atlantic Ocean. Some stayed in the new city of Philadelphia, and some settled nearby in Germantown as early as 1683, while others moved farther into the country.



Left: Map showing the location of the five Iroquois nations in 1550. Source: Miller, Randall M. and William Pencak, editors. *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*. The Pennsylvania State University Press. University Park, PA, 2002.

## *Did you know?*

William Penn wanted other English people and Europeans to come to Pennsylvania. He wrote advertisements that described this beautiful place filled with forests, good land, and plenty of water. He also promised freedom of religion and good government. He said it was a place of opportunity – for a new home, a new life, and new fortunes. He invited people to build houses, start farms, create businesses, and set up trade in the new colony.

People responded to Penn's ads. The first English Quakers arrived in 1682, as did Penn himself. Many more settlers followed. They came from England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Holland, and France. They got off ships that had traveled over 3,000 miles from Europe to Philadelphia. Philadelphia was tiny and at first some people lived in caves. Penn had big dreams for the city, and created a plan of streets and parks that still exists today.

## **Germantown**

Some settlers stayed in Philadelphia, while others moved out into the countryside. One of the earliest groups went directly from Philadelphia to an area they called Germantown. These people were mostly Quakers who came from parts of Germany and Holland. They settled on what is now Germantown Avenue. They spoke German and built small stone houses that looked like those in Germany. Germantown still exists, more than 300 years after the first Germans settled in it.

# AFRICANS IN PENNSYLVANIA

The first Africans in Pennsylvania did not come here by choice. By 1684, Europeans were transporting enslaved Africans to Philadelphia by ship. These Africans did not enjoy the same freedom and opportunities as other Pennsylvanians, but, over the next hundred years, Philadelphia would become home to one of the largest and most successful free black communities in the country.

In the 1680s, life was different; Pennsylvania needed lots of people to work to build a new colony. There were no machines to plow fields or saw wood. People made everything by hand. Building houses, clearing fields, and planting crops were hard work that needed many people to do it. Many Colonists brought servants to help with this work, but building Philadelphia and Pennsylvania still needed more hands. Some Colonists, including William Penn, turned to enslaved labor as a way to find more laborers.

## Slavery

Slavery is a system in which people are owned as property by other people. As property, enslaved people can be bought and sold. Slavery has been practiced throughout the world for thousands of years. Different people have been enslaved at different times. Before the 1400s, most enslaved people were those who were captured during times of war. In Ancient Rome, the upper classes often owned slaves who had been captured in wars. In Biblical times, people who could not pay what they owed would enter into slavery or sell their children into slavery. In Italy, many enslaved people were Russians or Arabs who had been captured during battles or through trade.

### *Writing Prompt*

How did enslaved Africans come to be in Pennsylvania – William Penn’s “holy experiment”? This is a hard question for people to think about today.

## **AFRICANS IN PENNSYLVANIA (CONTINUED)**

### *Did you know?*

In 1619, a Dutch ship brought twenty Africans to Jamestown, Virginia. They were probably the first Africans to arrive in the English colonies. They may have worked as indentured servants, much like English indentured servants. But over time, colonies wrote laws that treated Black servants differently from white servants. Black servants lost rights, including the right to be free. Even before any British colony made slavery legal, most Black servants were in bondage (servitude) for life, as were their children, grandchildren, and their descendants.

Things changed in the 1500s. Spanish and Portuguese explorers began to exploit resources in Africa. They took out gold. They also enslaved some of the people who lived there. They took these Africans away from their homes against their will to Spain and Portugal. Others were forced to become laborers in South America, Cuba, and the Caribbean island of Hispaniola.

The English colonies in North America did not only use enslaved Africans for labor. At first, England sent many of its own poor, unemployed, and even those who were convicted criminals to work in its colonies in Virginia and the West Indies. These people were called indentured servants. Indentured servants did not have enough money to travel to a colony. Instead, they signed a contract and agreed to work without pay for a set number of years. Once they finished the contract, the indentured servant was free.

Thousands and thousands of indentured servants came to the English colonies from the 1600s through the 1700s, but the colonies needed more labor to do the hard work of building houses, farms, and businesses.



## ***AFRICANS IN PENNSYLVANIA (CONTINUED)***

A few Africans, such as Anthoni Black, the enslaved African from Angola mentioned above, lived in New Sweden as early as 1639. Many more came, starting in 1684 when the first ship carrying a full cargo of enslaved Africans sailed into Philadelphia. Pennsylvanians quickly purchased the enslaved people to help build farms and houses. Many wealthy Quaker merchants entered the slave trade. They imported enslaved Africans for their own use and to sell.

Philadelphia merchants purchased small groups of enslaved Africans, usually two or three skilled people, from merchants in South Carolina and the Caribbean. They came in ships filled with sugar and other Caribbean goods to be sold in Philadelphia markets. The Philadelphia merchant sold all the goods on the boat – sugar and enslaved Africans. Then they filled the boat with goods to sell in South Carolina and the West Indies. Once there, they repeated this cycle. Philadelphia merchants became rich from this trade.

### *Did you know?*

In the first part of the 1700's, most enslaved people in Pennsylvania did not come directly from Africa. They came to Philadelphia either from South Carolina or the West Indies in the Caribbean. Some had been born there to African-born parents. Others had been enslaved in Africa and taken there. In South Carolina and the Caribbean, they worked on sugar and rice plantations.

## **AFRICANS IN PENNSYLVANIA (CONTINUED)**

### *Did you know?*

Most enslavers in Philadelphia held only one or two enslaved people. Many enslaved Africans in the Philadelphia area worked as house servants, or in the trades. They worked making barrels, they helped build ships, they were tailors, and they tanned leather. Many were already well trained craftsmen before being enslaved, but learned the "English" way when they arrived in the colony. Some worked as farm hands, but with a shorter growing season in the North, there wasn't the need for the large groups found on the huge plantations of the South. A few large groups of enslaved Africans worked outside the city in mines and at iron forges.

What happened to the people who came to Pennsylvania this way? They had not come by choice. Once they got here they had little, if any, choice about their future. Some had been taken from their homes and families in Africa. They had survived awful sea voyages where many died before landing in the West Indies or South Carolina. They had worked in brutal heat on rice or sugar plantations. Now they lived in the unknown land of Pennsylvania. What was their life like in this new place and this new colony? Pennsylvania was a very different place from Africa or the South.

Though slavery in Pennsylvania was different from that on Southern plantations, it was still slavery. Some enslaved Africans resisted it and ran away to seek a free life. There were European settlers who also found slavery unacceptable. In 1688, a group of Quakers living in Germantown wrote a protest against slavery that was one of the first in North America. Francis Daniel Pastorius wrote and sent this protest to other Quaker meetings in the area.

## AFRICANS IN PENNSYLVANIA (CONTINUED)

The Germantown Quakers believed it was wrong to enslave people. They believed it broke the “golden rule,” that you “do unto others as you would have done unto you.” This letter became known as “The Germantown Protest,” but it failed to bring change in 1688.

Change took years. More people – Quakers, Germans, and others – began to speak out against the practice of slavery. Enslaved Africans continued to resist the system.

Philadelphia became a center for a strong community of free Blacks. Black Philadelphians set up businesses and built homes. They founded churches and organizations. They organized and helped run the Underground Railroad.

### *Did you know?*

It was not until the 1770s that most enslavers in Pennsylvania began to free their enslaved Africans. In 1780, Pennsylvania passed the first abolition bill, or law, in the United States. Even this did not immediately free all enslaved Africans because, under this law, an African born after the law was passed could continue to be enslaved until they turned 28 years old.



The two sides of the The 1688 Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery. Photos taken by conservators of the original document for Germantown Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends.



## Did you know?

Germantown Avenue is one of the oldest roads in Pennsylvania?

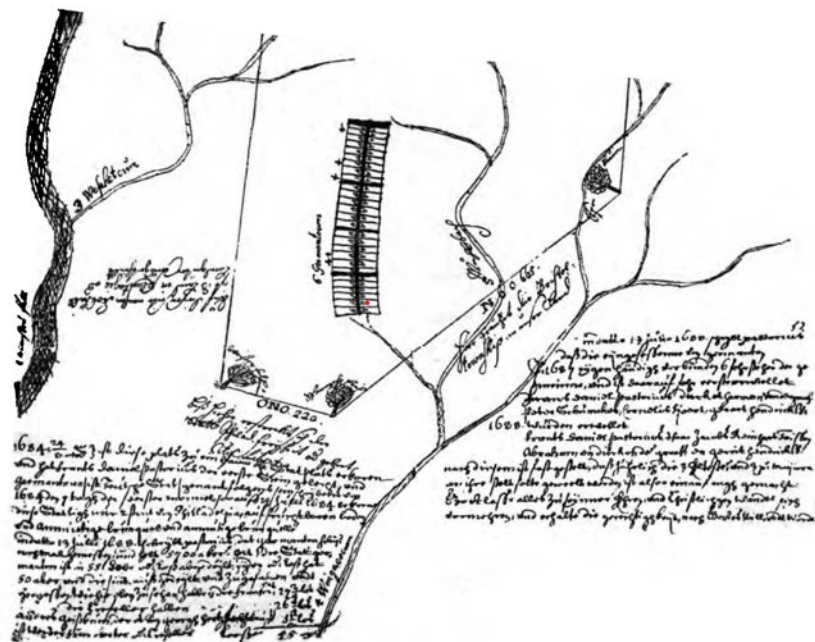
## History in Your Backyard

Did you know that your own Philadelphia neighborhoods, such as Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill are an area rich in history? The history of northwest Philadelphia and the five sites you will visit in the Science Sleuths Program teach us a great deal about Pennsylvania and its people. They tell us about our country's history as well.

## In the Beginning....

Germantown began in 1683. A small group of German and Dutch people settled along "The Great Road" – what we know today as Germantown Avenue. This road had existed well before Europeans arrived in Pennsylvania: it had begun as a Native American trail, part of the Minsi Path, which provided a means of travel and communication between the lower Delaware River, to the south, and the Hudson River, to the north.

Right: Original plan of Germantown by Francis Daniel Pastorius in 1688. The rectangular house lots border modern-day Germantown Avenue. Wissahickon creek is the larger waterway on the left and the Wingohocking creek (now channelized) is the waterway on the right. Image from Pennypacker, Samuel W. (1899) "The Settlement of Germantown and the Beginning of the German Emigration to North America" Philadelphia, William Campbell.



## GERMANTOWN (CONTINUED)

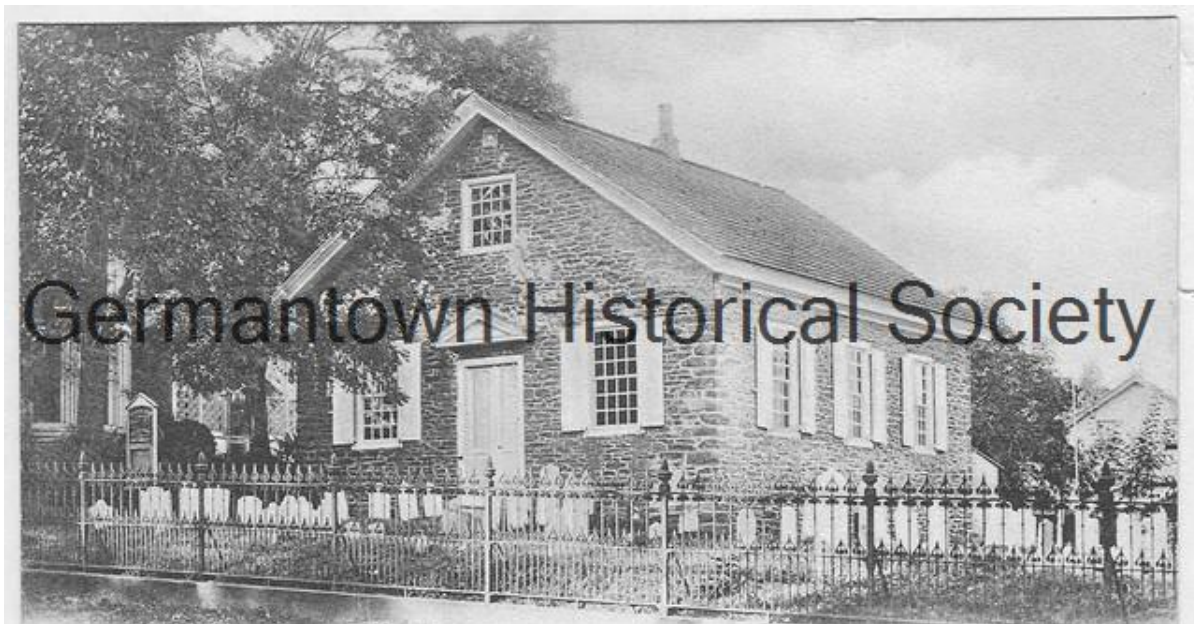
### The People of Germantown

Germantown was always a place of many peoples and religions. The village was the first German settlement on the continent. It was founded by a German, Francis Daniel Pastorius, and a group of Dutch Quakers and Mennonites who bought land from William Penn. In addition to Germans and Dutch, there were other peoples, or nationalities, including Swiss, English, French, Swedes, and Irish, as well as Africans who came against their will as enslaved laborers.

The first church or house of worship built in Germantown was a Quaker Meetinghouse, constructed in 1686. Other religious groups that settled in the village in its early years included Lutherans, the Reformed Church, Mennonites, and Dunkards, or Brethren.

#### *Did you know?*

The first church or house of worship built in Germantown was a Quaker Meetinghouse, constructed in 1686.



A photo of the 1770 Germantown Mennonite Meetinghouse taken in 1900. *Image from Germantown Historical Society archives*

## GERMANTOWN (CONTINUED)

### *Did you know?*

Germantown was originally a separate town, not a part of Philadelphia. Philadelphia used to be much smaller. It stretched only from the Delaware River to the Schuylkill River, and ran north and south from South Street to Vine Street, as these streets were later named. The separate village of Germantown, located about 6 miles from Colonial Philadelphia, grew along that area's main road, called the Great Road. It was called the "German Township" and included land that is now the neighborhoods of Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill. Settlers built homes, shops, and businesses along the road. They used narrow back lots for gardens, orchards, and fields. Later on, some people built larger estates like Stenton or Grumblethorpe.

When William Penn started his colony, he hoped that different trades and industries would flourish and many products would be made. Germantown grew as an "urban village" with many local industries. Most of the first settlers were linen weavers, using looms to weave thread made from the flax plant into sturdy fabric for clothing.

Some people also built mills along the creeks that ran through the township, using the water to turn large waterwheels that powered the mills. Here, mills made paper from flax rags, or ground up grains harvested from the field to make flour. RittenhouseTown, built along the Wissahickon Creek, was the site of the first paper mill in America. The German Township soon attracted people with other skills. Many other trades, industries, and businesses continued to appear throughout the 18th century.



Above: A photo of Old Roberts Mill, formerly on East Church Lane in Germantown. Taken 17 Jan 1906. *Germantown Historical Society Archives*



## GERMANTOWN (CONTINUED)

Germantown also became a summer resort. Wealthy Philadelphians, like Benjamin Chew of Cliveden, built big houses in Germantown starting in the 1760's. Every summer his family members left their hot city house in Philadelphia and moved to their cooler country house, "Cliveden," six miles away in Germantown. By the 1790's many people would leave Philadelphia to escape such diseases as yellow fever. In 1793, there was a terrible epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia. Those who could leave the city did. Many people, including President George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, moved to Germantown. Shopkeepers and businesses followed their customers out of the city, and opened Germantown branches. Later, in 1810 artist and museum founder Charles Willson Peale left the busy city for a quiet life of farming at Belfield near Germantown. Peale also hoped to avoid getting yellow fever.

During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, more and more mills, including textile, lumber and paper mills, appeared along the creeks of Germantown.

### *Did you know?*

One of the country's first railroad lines was built in Germantown in 1832.



Left: Charles Willson Peale's 1816 painting "Belfield Farm." *From the collection of Detroit Institute of Arts*

## GERMANTOWN (CONTINUED)

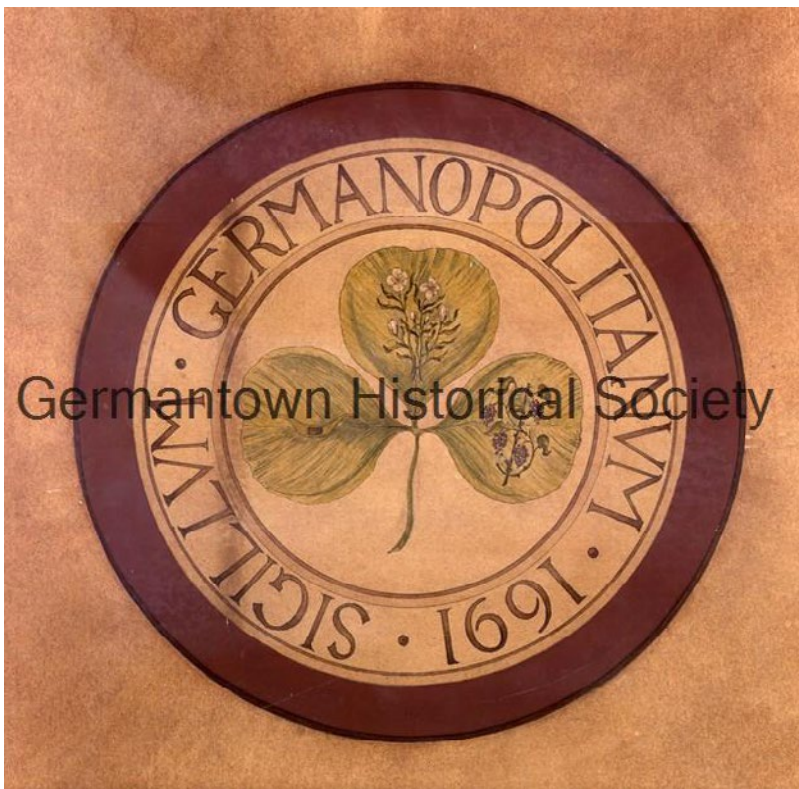
### *Did you know?*

The first written protest against slavery in the New World was authored and signed in Germantown?

Germantown became a center of the abolition movement before the Civil War. Some of its leading Quaker families, including the Johnsons, worked with Philadelphia's free Black community to help run the Underground Railroad. Enslaved Africans seeking their freedom passed through Germantown as they made their way north.

Throughout its history, Germantown has been a village of "firsts." It has been home to many of the city's and nation's leading figures. Today it remains a colorful Philadelphia community with its own rich history and unique identity.

Right: Seal of Germantown created in 1691 by Francis Daniel Pastorius. The words "Sigillum Germanopolitanum" mean "The German City's Little Seal." *Image from Germantown Historical Society Archives.*



## Germantown Facts & Firsts

<b>1683</b>	First German settlement in the New World – Germans still represent largest European ethnic group in the U.S., as of 2020 census
<b>1688</b>	First written protest against slavery in the New World
<b>1690</b>	Rittenhouse's paper mill is first in colonies and premier 17th century industrial site
<b>1698</b>	First schoolbook, "A New Primer", by Francis Daniel Pastorius
<b>1708</b>	First Mennonite church in America
<b>1738</b>	First Medical Diploma issued in America
<b>1743</b>	First Bible printed in a European language in North America, printed in German by Christopher Sower
<b>1761</b>	Establishment of Kirk and Nice, oldest continuously operating funeral business in U.S.
<b>1795</b>	Inhabitants first to petition for passage of Federal Constitution
<b>1795</b>	First to petition state legislature for religious freedom for all creeds
<b>1832</b>	First locomotive built, by Matthias Baldwin, in America (Old Ironsides)
<b>1832</b>	Opening of first commuter railroad – Philadelphia, Germantown and Norristown Railroad
<b>1840</b>	Coming of first commuter suburb, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Tulpehocken Station District
<b>1874</b>	First kidnapping for ransom – Charley Ross kidnapped outside his Germantown home
<b>1921</b>	Sadie T.M. Alexander 1st African American woman to earn Ph.D. degree, in Economics
<b>1945</b>	First Philadelphia neighborhood to lift ban on sale of homes to African Americans
<b>1947</b>	William Hastie 1st African American Federal Judge
<b>1951</b>	Raymond Pace Alexander 1st African American elected to Philadelphia City Council
<b>1958</b>	Robert N.C. Nix elected 1st African American to represent PA in Congress
<b>1980</b>	Mt. Airy Councilman Joseph Coleman serves as President of City Council
<b>1984</b>	Robert N.C. Nix, Jr. 1st African American Chief Justice of PA Supreme Court



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Cover images include a solar microscope, bone slide with mosquito specimen, and meteorological tablets from the collection of the Wyck Association; Isaac Norris' Thirty Year Pocket Almanac from 1677 from the Stenton Collection on deposit at The Library Company of Philadelphia; and Hexamer General Survey of Wingohocking Hosiery Mills, Shoemaker Lane and Wingohocking Creek, Germantown, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. vol.10 Plate 943, from the Free Library of Philadelphia.



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