

Baseline Survey Census Research Bedford County

The Federal population census is an important tool for understanding the history of a community and how that community has changed over time. The census provides data that can help us to better understand Pennsylvania's diverse racial and ethnic populations (referred to as underrepresented communities for purposes of this Baseline Survey effort), where these populations settled historically, and how they left their mark on the Commonwealth's landscape.

Pennsylvania has a history of being ethnically diverse in both the urban areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and in the commonwealth's smaller cities and rural areas. Native Americans have called Pennsylvania's lands home for centuries. Dutch, Swedish, and Finnish settlers moved to Pennsylvania in the late 17th century, and were quickly followed by English, German and other Europeans by the turn of the 18th century. Both enslaved and free Africans and African Americans lived in Pennsylvania as early as 1690 and the commonwealth's Black communities grew exponentially with the First Great Migration in the early 20th century. By the mid-20th century, people from almost all racial and ethnic groups had settled in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's historical racial and ethnic diversity and the surviving older and historic places that embody that diversity is not well understood or well documented. By understanding what populations were present, when, and where they lived, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) can identify and document the older and historic places associated with these underrepresented communities through targeted survey work.

Once this information is collected and added to PA-SHARE, Pennsylvania's online database of older and historic places, this important information will be available to professionals and the public alike, providing everyone with data to support the need to tell broader and more inclusive stories.

It is important to note that census data is only one part of the extensive research that is necessary to understand Pennsylvania's varied and changing communities over the last four hundred years. The information collected, methods for collecting it, and categories and definitions changed from census taker to census taker and from year to year.

Bedford County is one of the fifty-two counties in Pennsylvania where PA SHPO and its contractors will be working over the next two years to collect information about historic places that are underrepresented in Pennsylvania's statewide historic inventory.

It is important that PA SHPO collects information about the older and historic places that Pennsylvanian's value in their communities. PA SHPO welcomes public recommendations for places that should be documented in this survey. If you would like to provide your feedback, please fill out this [short survey form](#).



Historic Postcard of East Pitt Street, Bedford County

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[PA-SHARE](#)

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Bedford County

Bedford County was founded on March 9, 1771. It is comprised of 37 municipalities and as of the 2010 federal census, the total population was 49,762. The population of Bedford County was first recorded during the first United States census in 1790. A total of 13,124 inhabitants were recorded, 46 of whom were enslaved Black people and 34 of whom were “Other Free Persons” of non-White race. The population in 1800 was 1,034 people less than in 1790 though this downward trend was temporary. The population of Bedford County experienced steady growth until another minor dip in 1850, followed by five decades of steady growth. The total population plateaued at just less than 40,000 residents in the early 20th century, followed by a modest rise from 1930 to 1960.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Bedford County represented approximately 1% of the total population from 1790 to 1960. The BIPOC population in Bedford County are predominantly Black. From 1800 to 1820, the Black population increased by 317 individuals. The BIPOC population continued to rise through the 19th century, peaking at 587 individuals in 1890. After 1890, the BIPOC population began to fall.

Asians were documented as living in Bedford County in 1900 and 1960. Native Americans were living in Bedford County and recorded in the 1880 and 1960 census. No people of Hispanic descent were documented as living in Bedford County between 1790 and 1960. The “Other” category has been used to describe different groups through time. In 1790 and 1800, “Other” specifically noted BIPOC people who were not enslaved. In later decades, it is inconclusive whether “Other” includes only mixed-race people or people of Black, Native American, Asian, or Hispanic descent during any given decade.

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Other
1790	13044	46	0	0	0	34
1800	12010	5	0	0	0	24
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	19897	346	0	0	0	0
1830	0	0	0	0	0	0
1840	28865	490	0	0	0	0
1850	22637	415	0	0	0	0
1860	26242	494	0	0	0	0
1870	29804	487	0	0	0	0
1880	34346	577	6	0	0	0
1890	38057	587	0	0	0	0
1900	38968	499	0	1	0	0
1910	38513	365	0	0	0	1
1920	37923	354	0	0	0	0
1930	37029	280	0	0	0	0
1940	40579	227	0	0	0	3
1950	40552	215	0	0	0	8
1960	42285	162	1	2	0	1

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This graph shows the relationship between BIPOC populations (right side axis) and total population (left side axis) in Bedford County from 1790 to 1960. Significant events that have a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Bedford County's total populations at these important points in time.

The 1810 federal census is not digitized and therefore there is no population data. The 1830 census only provided the total population, total number of free persons, and total number of enslaved persons. There were no enslaved people in Bedford County in 1830 and no distinction of race among free people, therefore there are no BIPOC totals for that decade.

