

Baseline Survey Census Research Cambria 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.

Cambria 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 Cambria Steel Company in Johnstown, Cambria County

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Cambria County

Cambria County was established on November 2, 1807. There are 63 municipalities in the county and as of the 2020 federal census, the total population was 133,472. The population of Cambria County was first recorded in the 1820 US Census. A total of 3,379 inhabitants were recorded, 3,359 of whom were White and 20 of whom were “Free Colored” people. No enslaved people were recorded as living in Cambria County during any US Census year. The total population of Cambria County continued to grow larger decade-by-decade from 1820 to 1940, peaking in 1940 at 213,459 total residents. From 1940 to 1970, the total population of Cambria County began to decrease, bottoming out at 186,785 residents in 1970.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Cambria County have historically represented between 1% and 2% of the total population of Cambria County from 1820 to 1970. The BIPOC population in Cambria County remained predominantly Black through 1970. The Black population was at its largest in 1960 at 3,526 individuals. The total BIPOC population of Cambria County was highest in 1970 at 3,736 individuals. The 1970 census did not provide a breakdown by race. This trend shows that while the total population of Cambria County was decreasing into the mid-20th century, the number of BIPOC residents was increasing.

Asians were documented as living in Cambria County as early as 1890 and were predominantly of Chinese descent until 1960. In 1960, the number of Japanese people (30) exceeded the number of Chinese (22). Four Filipino people were also first recorded as living in Cambria County in 1960. Native Americans were recorded in Cambria County in 1910, 1930, 1940, 1950, and 1960. There were 388 people of Hispanic descent, classified as “Mexicans,” that were recorded only in the 1930 census. The “Other” category has been used to describe different groups through time. Prior to emancipation, “Other” specifically noted BIPOC people, predominantly Black Americans, 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	0	0	0	0	0	0
1800	0	0	0	0	0	0
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	3359	20	0	0	0	0
1830	0	0	0	0	0	0
1840	11158	98	0	0	0	0
1850	17645	128	0	0	0	0
1860	29040	115	0	0	0	0
1870	36471	98	0	0	0	0
1880	46602	209	0	0	0	0
1890	65909	458	0	8	0	0
1900	104308	519	0	10	0	0
1910	165462	640	1	28	0	0
1920	195318	2429	0	28	0	1
1930	200651	2086	1	20	388	0
1940	211083	2356	4	13	0	3
1950	206448	3062	11	17	0	3
1960	199683	3526	8	56	0	10
1970	183049	0	0	0	0	3736



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This graph shows the relationship between BIPOC populations (right side axis) and total population (left side axis) in Cambria County from 1790 to 1970. Significant events that had a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Cambria County's total populations at these important points in time.

The 1810 census is not digitized and therefore no data was available. 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 Cambria County in 1830 and no distinction of race among free people, therefore the BIPOC total for 1830 based on what is known is zero.

