

Baseline Survey Census Research Columbia 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.

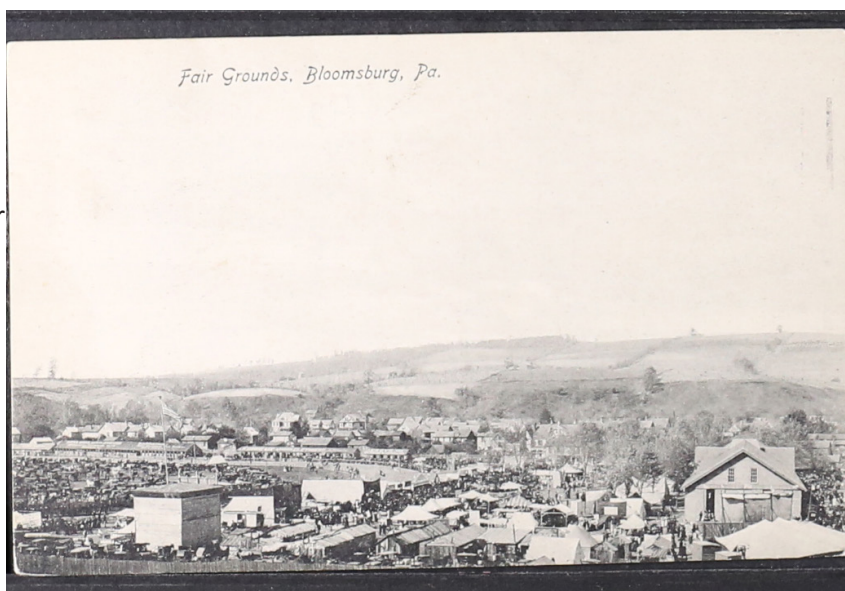
Pennsylvania's historical racial and ethnic diversity and the surviving older and historic places that embody that diversity is not well understood or well documented. By understanding what populations were present, when, and where they lived, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) 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.

Columbia County is one of the fifty-two counties in Pennsylvania where PA SHPO and its contractors will be working over the next three 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 Photo of Bloomsburg Fair Grounds, Columbia County

Learn More:

[Historic Resources Survey in Pennsylvania](#)
[PA SHPO's Baseline Survey Project](#)
[PA-SHARE](#)

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Columbia County was formed on March 22, 1813 from a portion of Northumberland County. There are 34 municipalities in Columbia County. As of the 2010 federal census, the population was 67,295. The first federal population census in Columbia County occurred in 1820, which included 17,943 White and 63 Black residents, all of whom were free. From 1820 onward, the total population of Columbia County has steadily increased.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) of Columbia County experienced a different growth pattern than the population at-large. From Columbia County's creation onward, the BIPOC population number steadily increased, peaking in 1870 with 189 Black residents. From 1870 onward, the total BIPOC population slowly decreased.

Native Americans and Asians were not documented in the Columbia County census counts until 1890. No people of Hispanic descent were documented in Columbia County from 1820 to 1960.

	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	17,943	63	0	0	0	0
1830	0	0	0	0	0	0
1840	24,192	75	0	0	0	0
1850	17,607	103	0	0	0	0
1860	24,962	47	0	0	0	56
1870	29,034	189	0	0	0	0
1880	32,264	145	0	0	0	0
1890	36,709	118	3	2	0	0
1900	39,746	126	15	9	0	0
1910	48,345	119	3	0	0	0
1920	48,252	96	0	1	0	0
1930	48,718	85	0	0	0	0
1940	51,325	87	0	0	0	1
1950	53,366	79	0	0	0	15
1960	53,390	71	4	14	0	10

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

No data is available prior to 1820 because Columbia County was not yet established. The 1830 census counted a total of 20,059 free people, but failed to divide this category by race, resulting in what looks like a BIPOC population of zero.

