

Baseline Survey Census Research

Franklin 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.

Franklin 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 Tuscarora Summit Inn, Franklin County

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[PA SHPO's Baseline Survey Project](#)
[PA-SHARE](#)

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Franklin County was founded on September 9, 1784. It is comprised of 24 municipalities and as of the 2020 federal census, the total population was 155,932. The first recorded federal population census in Franklin County occurred in 1790. A total of 15,653 inhabitants were recorded, 330 of whom were enslaved Black people and 273 of whom were “Other Free Persons” of non-White race. The total population of Franklin County has experienced steady growth from 1790 to 1960.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Franklin County increased between 1790 and 1870, peaking in 1870 at 5.4%. After 1870, the percentage began to steadily decrease until hitting 1% in 1960. The BIPOC population in Franklin County were predominantly Black. The Black population of Franklin County was largest in 1880 at 2,551 individuals.

Asians were documented living in Franklin County from 1890 to 1930, 1950, and 1960, the majority of whom were ethnically Chinese. After 1950, the majority shifted to Japanese descent (17 out of 25 total). Native Americans were living in Franklin County and documented in the census in 1910 and 1950. People of Hispanic descent were not recorded as residents of Franklin County between 1790 to 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	15050	330	0	0	0	273
1800	18793	131	0	0	0	664
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	31218	1566	0	0	0	0
1830	0	11	0	0	0	0
1840	35760	2006	0	0	0	0
1850	37956	1948	0	0	0	0
1860	40327	1799	0	0	0	0
1870	42903	2462	0	0	0	0
1880	47304	2551	0	0	0	0
1890	49412	2019	0	2	0	0
1900	52944	1954	0	4	0	0
1910	58054	1716	3	2	0	0
1920	60816	1457	0	2	0	0
1930	63703	1306	0	1	0	0
1940	67846	1524	0	0	0	8
1950	74562	1344	12	9	0	0
1960	86422	1716	0	25	0	9

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This graph shows the relationship between BIPOC populations (right side axis) and total population (left side axis) in Franklin County from 1790 to 1960. Significant events that have a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Franklin 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 11 enslaved people in Franklin County in 1830 and no distinction of race among free people, therefore the BIPOC total for that decade only reflects those people who were enslaved.

