

# Baseline Survey Census Research Mercer 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.

Mercer 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 Mercer Motel, Mercer County

## Learn More:

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

# Baseline Survey Census Research

## Mercer County

Mercer County was founded on November 7, 1803. There are 56 municipalities in Mercer County and as of the 2020 federal census, the total population was 110,652. The first recorded federal population census in Mercer County occurred in 1800. A total of 3,228 inhabitants were recorded, 13 of which were Black. Five were enslaved Black persons while the remaining eight were free Black persons. The total population of Mercer County has steadily increased each decade since its founding. Larger than normal increases in the 19th century occurred between 1830 and 1840 (+13,144) and between 1860 and 1870 (+13,393). Larger than normal increases in the 20th century occurred between 1900 and 1910 (+20,312) and between 1910 and 1920 (+16,089).

The population of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) of Mercer County represented less than 1% of the total population until 1920, when the total number of BIPOC residents increased from 632 in 1910 to 2,856 in 1920 (3% of the total population). The majority of BIPOC individuals in Mercer County identify as Black.

Native Americans were counted in the 1880, 1920, 1930, 1950, and 1960 censuses. Asians were counted by the census from 1890 to 1930 and 1950 to 1960. Most Asians in Mercer County were of Chinese descent until 1950 descent, when 18 Japanese and 4 Chinese people were documented as residents of the county. In 1960, the majority of Asians in Mercer County were of Japanese or Filipino descent. No Hispanic people have been counted via the federal census in Mercer County from 1800 to 1960.

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Other
<b>1790</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1800</b>	3215	13	0	0	0	0
<b>1810</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1820</b>	11590	91	0	0	0	0
<b>1830</b>	19723	6	0	0	0	0
<b>1840</b>	32545	328	0	0	0	0
<b>1850</b>	32881	291	0	0	0	0
<b>1860</b>	36575	281	0	0	0	0
<b>1870</b>	49972	277	0	0	0	0
<b>1880</b>	55735	425	1	0	0	0
<b>1890</b>	55434	304	0	6	0	0
<b>1900</b>	57029	351	0	7	0	0
<b>1910</b>	77067	621	0	11	0	0
<b>1920</b>	90932	2842	2	12	0	0
<b>1930</b>	96536	2694	7	7	0	2
<b>1940</b>	98625	2406	0	0	0	8
<b>1950</b>	108397	3516	17	22	0	0
<b>1960</b>	122442	5022	11	33	0	11

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## Mercer County

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

No data is available prior to 1800 because Mercer County was not yet established. The 1810 federal census is not publically available online. The 1830 census only provided the total population, total number of free persons, and total number of enslaved persons, which in Mercer County was 6. The race of free persons in Mercer County in 1830 cannot be determined.

