Baseline Survey Census Research
Delaware 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.

Delaware 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.

Historic HABS Photograph of Lazaretto Quarantine Station

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.

Learn More:
Historic Resources Survey in Pennsylvania
PA SHPO's Baseline Survey Project
PA-SHARE

Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION

Baseline Survey Census Research
Delaware County

Delaware County was founded on September 26, 1789. It has 28 municipalities and as of the 2020 federal census, the total population was 576,830. The first census to take place in Delaware County was during the first United States census in 1790. A total of 9,483 inhabitants were recorded, 50 of whom were enslaved Black people and 289 of whom were "Other Free Persons" of non-White race. The total population of Delaware County remained below six figures until 1910, which brought on a period of exponential growth through 1970. By 1980, the total population began to drop. The total population of Delaware County was at its largest in 1970 with 600,035 residents.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Delaware County have historically represented between 3% and 10% of the total population from 1790 to 1980. Increases in the total number of BIPOC in Delaware County increased proportionally with the total population from 1790 to 1980. The BIPOC population in Delaware County from 1790 to 1980 were predominantly Black. The Black population was at its largest in 1980, with 49,741 individuals.

Asians were documented as living in Delaware County as early as 1880 and predominantly of Chinese descent. In 1960, the number of Chinese and Japanese people living in Delaware County was equal (191). Native Americans were recorded in Delaware County from the 1890 census to the 1980 census, with 421 Native Americans being counted in the 1980 census. Thirty-seven people of Hispanic descent were recorded as living in Delaware County in the 1930 census. The "Other" category has been used to describe different groups through time. In 1790 and 1800, "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	9144	50	0	0	0	289
1800	10386	7	0	0	0	564
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	13261	1033	0	0	0	110
1830	0	3	0	0	0	0
1840	18458	1333	0	0	0	0
1850	23122	1557	0	0	0	0
1860	28948	1649	0	0	0	0
1870	35063	2536	0	0	0	1804
1880	51487	4613	0	1	0	0
1890	67684	6965	13	21	0	0
1900	84815	9894	8	45	0	0
1910	105949	11897	14	46	0	0
1920	157236	15717	20	81	0	131
1930	258234	21842	26	112	37	0
1940	287912	22708	22	74	0	87
1950	384636	29415	31	130	0	22
1960	513991	38529	93	441	0	100
1970	554417	43574	0	0	0	2044
1980	499326	49741	421	4333	0	1186

Baseline Survey Census Research
Delaware County

This graph shows the relationship between BIPOC populations (right side axis) and total population (left side axis) in Delaware County from 1790 to 1980. Significant events that had a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Delaware 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 three enslaved people in Delaware County in 1830 and no distinction of race among free people, therefore the BIPOC total for that decade is three.

Delaware County
Founded
September 26, 1789

Thirteenth Amendement
Abolishes Slavery
January 31, 1865

First Great
Migration
1910-1930

Second Great
Migration
1941-1970