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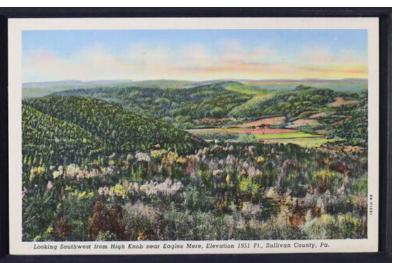
Pennsylvania's historical racial and ethnic diversity and the surviving older and historic places that embody that diversity is not well understood or well documented. By understanding what populations were present, when, and where they lived, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)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

Sullivan 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.

Looking Southwest from High Knob near Eagles Mere, Elevation 1951 Ft., Sullivan County, Pa.

Historic Postcard of Sullivan County

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

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Sullivan County was formed from northeastern portions of Lycoming County on March 15, 1847. There are 13 municipalities in Sullivan County with a population of 6,428 as of the 2010 federal census. It is Pennsylvania's least populous county today. Sullivan County's population steadily increased through the 19th century, peaking at 12,134 residents, and steadily declining to the present day. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) of Sullivan County represent a small yet ever-present number of the overall population of the county, with notable peaks around 1890 to 1900 and 1960 to 1970. The vast majority of BIPOC in Sullivan County identify as Black.

The first federal population census for Sullivan was in 1850 and counted 3,495 inhabitants in the county: 3,484 white people and 11 black people, which were described as "Free Colored" people in the language used by the census at that time. As the table below shows, Sullivan County's population ballooned at the turn of the 20th century. This increase was predominantly made up of white people. However, it is worth noting that the number of Black people counted by the census increased by 466% between 1880 and 1890, and by 70% between 1890 and 1900.

Native American and Chinese people have not been detected by the means used by the federal census in Sullivan County up to 1970. People of races other than Black, Native American, or Chinese were counted in Sullivan County beginning in the 1960 and 1970 censuses.
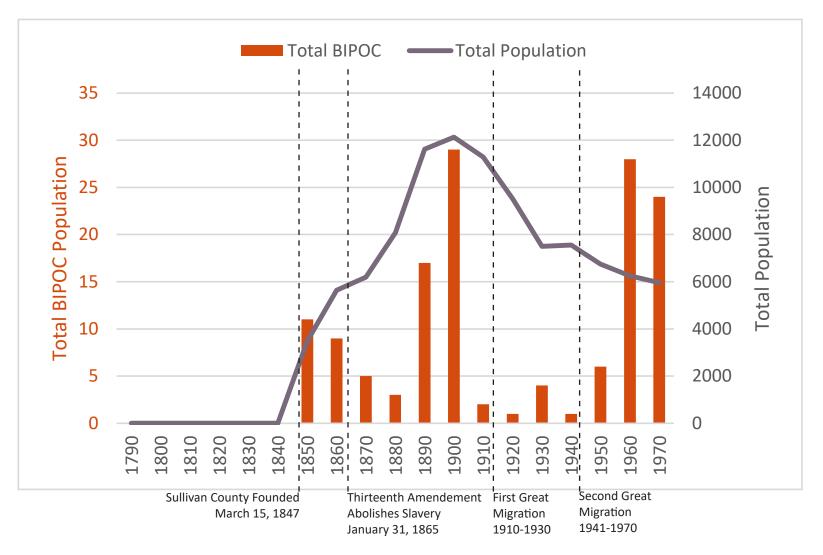
	White	Black	Native American	Chinese	Other
1790	0	0	0	0	0
1800	0	0	0	0	0
1810	0	0	0	0	0
1820	0	0	0	0	0
1830	0	0	0	0	0
1840	0	0	0	0	0
1850	3,484	11	0	0	0
1860	5,628	9	0	0	0
1870	6,186	5	0	0	0
1880	8,070	3	0	0	0
1890	11,603	17	0	0	0
1900	12,105	29	0	0	0
1910	11,293	2	0	0	0
1920	9,519	1	0	0	0
1930	7,495	4	0	0	0
1940	7,553	1	0	0	0
1950	6,739	4	0	0	2
1960	6,223	26	0	0	2
1970	5,937	15	0	0	9

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

No data is available prior to 1850 because Sullivan County was not yet established.

Sullivan County Founded
March 15, 1847

Thirteenth Amendement
Abolishes Slavery
January 31, 1865

First Great
Migration
1910-1930

Second Great
Migration
1941-1970