

Baseline Survey Census Research Cumberland 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.

Cumberland 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](#).



Stereograph of a paper mill in Mount Holley Springs, Cumberland County

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Cumberland County was founded on January 27, 1750. It is comprised of 46 municipalities and as of the 2010 federal census, the total population was 235,406. The first recorded federal census in Cumberland County occurred in 1790. A total of 18,243 inhabitants were recorded, 223 of whom were enslaved Black people and 206 of whom were “Other Free Persons” of non-White race. The total population of Cumberland County has experienced steady growth since 1790, with a larger increase in the total population at the mid-20th century.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Cumberland County represented between 2 and 3 percent of the total population from 1800 to 1860. From 1870 to 1910, the percentage of BIPOC residents began to increase, making up 4 to 5 percent of the total population. From 1920 to 1960, the percentage of BIPOC residents in Cumberland County decreased to between 1 and 2 percent. With the exception of 1900 and 1910, the BIPOC population in Cumberland County was predominantly Black. The Black population was at its highest in 1880 at 2,167 individuals.

Asians were documented living in Cumberland County between 1880 and 1930 and in 1960. Prior to the 20th century, most Asians in Cumberland County and the United States were of Chinese descent. By 1960, Cumberland County had nearly the same number of Chinese residents (21) as Japanese residents (22). Native Americans were living in Cumberland County and documented in the census from 1890 to 1930 and in 1960. Notably, in the 1910 census, 1,027 people identified as Native American. Five people of Hispanic descent were recorded in the 1930 census. 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	17814	223	0	0	0	206
1800	24829	228	0	0	0	329
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	23464	745	0	0	0	0
1830	0	7	0	0	0	0
1840	29933	1020	0	0	0	0
1850	33370	957	0	0	0	0
1860	38758	1340	0	0	0	0
1870	41895	2015	2	0	0	0
1880	43807	2167	0	3	0	0
1890	44804	2091	370	6	0	0
1900	47509	1818	1015	2	0	0
1910	51662	1788	1027	2	0	0
1920	56985	1582	10	1	0	0
1930	66930	1296	3	2	5	0
1940	73602	1201	0	0	0	3
1950	92772	1665	0	0	0	20
1960	122878	1847	20	46	0	25



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This graph shows the relationship between BIPOC populations (right side axis) and total population (left side axis) in Cumberland County from 1790 to 1960. Significant events that have a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Cumberland 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 7 enslaved people in Cumberland 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.

