

# Baseline Survey Census Research

## Dauphin 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.

Dauphin 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](#).



HAER documentation photo of Walnut Street Bridge, Dauphin County

### Learn More:

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

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Dauphin County was founded on March 4, 1785. It is comprised of 58 municipalities and as of the 2010 federal census, the total population was 286,401. The first recorded federal population census in Dauphin County occurred in 1790. A total of 18,177 inhabitants were recorded, 212 of whom were enslaved Black people and 57 of whom were “Other Free Persons” of non-White race. The total population of Dauphin County has experienced steady growth since 1790, with a steeper increase from 1940 to 1960.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Dauphin County has steadily increased over time, beginning at 1.5% in 1790 and steadily increasing to 9.7% in 1960. The BIPOC population in Dauphin County were predominantly Black. After 1790, the number of enslaved Black people dropped from 212 individuals to 93 individuals and continued to drop until slavery was abolished entirely. The decrease in enslaved Black people before nationwide abolition was a consequence of the Gradual Abolition Act of 1780, which freed Pennsylvania Black people born into slavery on their 28th birthday and prohibited the continued transport of Black people to Pennsylvania for the purpose of enslavement in 1780. The Black population of Dauphin County was at its highest in 1960 at 21,172 individuals.

Asians were documented living in Dauphin County in from 1880 to 1960 and most were ethnically Chinese. After 1960, Japanese people became the majority among Asians. Native Americans were living in Dauphin County and documented in the census from 1890 to 1960, with the highest numbers in 1960 with 36 Native American individuals. People of Hispanic descent were documented as living in Dauphin County only in 1930, when there were 63 Mexican residents. 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
<b>1790</b>	17908	212	0	0	0	57
<b>1800</b>	22011	93	0	0	0	166
<b>1810</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>1820</b>	21597	506	0	0	0	0
<b>1830</b>	0	18	0	0	0	0
<b>1840</b>	29170	957	0	0	0	0
<b>1850</b>	34476	1278	0	0	0	0
<b>1860</b>	45047	1709	0	0	0	0
<b>1870</b>	57768	2972	0	0	0	0
<b>1880</b>	72864	3780	0	4	0	0
<b>1890</b>	91400	5551	4	22	0	0
<b>1900</b>	107976	6445	6	16	0	0
<b>1910</b>	129593	6536	10	13	0	0
<b>1920</b>	144777	8305	17	17	0	0
<b>1930</b>	154815	10321	5	24	63	0
<b>1940</b>	166274	11113	2	20	0	1
<b>1950</b>	183067	14667	17	24	0	9
<b>1960</b>	198902	21172	36	94	0	51



# Baseline Survey Census Research Dauphin County

This graph shows the relationship between BIPOC populations (right side axis) and total population (left side axis) in Dauphin County from 1790 to 1960. Significant events that have a bearing on the population are included below the graph to show Dauphin 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 18 enslaved people in Dauphin 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.

