Baseline Survey Census Research
Union 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.

Union 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.

Historic Postcard of Union County

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

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Union County was created on March 22, 1813. There are 21 municipalities in Union County. As of the 2010 federal census, the population was 44,947. Population growth and loss trends in Union County are unusual, having grown exponentially through the mid-nineteenth century until it dipped down from 26,083 residents in 1850 to 14,145 residents in 1860. This change may be attributed to the creation of Snyder County from portions of Union County in 1855. Union County's total population remained below 20,000 individuals from 1860 until 1940. From 1940 onward, the total population of Union County grew exponentially. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) of Union County have been predominantly Black and represented a small fraction of the total population until 1940, when the BIPOC population's numbers began to rise into the hundreds.

The first federal population census in Union County occurred in 1820. The total population of the county at the time was 18,619, made up of 18,544 White people and 75 Black people, three of whom were enslaved. Enslaved people were counted in the census in 1820(3), 1830(2), and 1840(3) and by 1850, no enslaved people were documented as living in Union County.

Native Americans were documented only in the 1960 census. Asians were documented only in the 1890 and 1960 censuses. No Hispanic people had been documented in Union County from 1820 to 1960. The "Other" category will often capture people of non-White and non-Black heritage.
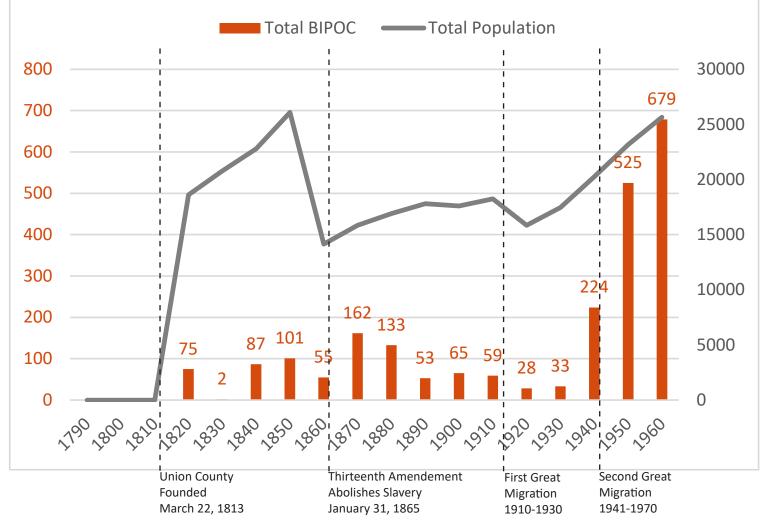
	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Other
1790	0	0	0	0	0	0
1800	0	0	0	0	0	0
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	18544	75	0	0	0	0
1830	0	0	0	0	0	0
1840	22700	87	0	0	0	0
1850	25982	101	0	0	0	0
1860	14090	39	0	0	0	16
1870	15695	162	0	0	0	0
1880	16772	133	0	0	0	0
1890	17767	52	0	1	0	0
1900	17527	65	0	0	0	0
1910	18190	59	0	0	0	0
1920	15822	28	0	0	0	0
1930	17435	32	0	0	0	1
1940	20023	214	0	0	0	10
1950	22625	514	0	0	0	11
1960	25635	649	2	17	0	11

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

No data is available prior to 1820 because Union County was not yet established. The 1830 census counted a total of 20,795 free people and 2 enslaved Black people. The 1830 census failed to count how many free people were also Black, resulting in an unusually low count of BIPOC Union County residents that year.

Legend: Total BIPOC | Total Population

BIPOC values by year: 1820: 75, 1830: 2, 1840: 87, 1850: 101, 1860: 55, 1870: 162, 1880: 133, 1890: 53, 1900: 65, 1910: 59, 1920: 28, 1930: 33, 1940: 224, 1950: 525, 1960: 679

Union County Founded
March 22, 1813

Thirteenth Amendement Abolishes Slavery
January 31, 1865

First Great Migration
1910-1930

Second Great Migration
1941-1970