

Baseline Survey Census Research Montgomery 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.

Montgomery 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](#).



Historic HABS Photograph of WCAU Television Station

Learn More:

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

Baseline Survey Census Research

Montgomery County

Montgomery County was founded on September 10, 1784. It has 30 municipalities and as of the 2020 federal census, the total population was 856,553. The first census to take place in Montgomery County was during the first United States census in 1790. A total of 22,929 inhabitants were recorded, 114 of whom were enslaved Black people and 440 of whom were “Other Free Persons” of non-White race. The total population of Montgomery County experienced steady upward growth through 1980. The total population of Montgomery County was at its largest in 1980 with 643,621 residents.

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population of Montgomery County have historically represented between 1% and 6% of the total population from 1790 to 1980. Increases in the total number of BIPOC in Montgomery County increased proportionally with the total population from 1790 to 1980. The BIPOC population in Montgomery County from 1790 to 1980 were predominantly Black. The Black population was at its largest in 1980, with 30,222 individuals.

Asians were documented as living in Montgomery County in 1890 and were predominantly of Chinese descent until 1950. In 1950, the number of Japanese people (87) exceeded the number of Chinese people (29). Native Americans were recorded in Montgomery County from the 1890 census to the 1980 census. Twenty-eight people of Hispanic descent were recorded as living in Montgomery 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	22465	114	0	0	0	440
1800	18364	17	0	0	0	366
1810	0	0	0	0	0	0
1820	34848	875	0	0	0	300
1830		1	0	0	0	0
1840	46561	680	0	0	0	0
1850	57434	857	0	0	0	0
1860	69595	904	0	0	0	0
1870	77158	1302	0	0	0	3152
1880	94731	1763	0	0	0	0
1890	120506	2753	17	14	0	0
1900	184436	4503	19	37	0	0
1910	163507	6021	16	46	0	0
1920	190905	8326	13	55	0	69
1930	253113	12572	20	51	28	0
1940	274881	14269	1	68	0	28
1950	337978	14931	17	116	0	26
1960	497269	18834	80	445	0	54
1970	598800	22560	0	0	0	2439
1980	604101	30222	553	7836	0	909



Baseline Survey Census Research Montgomery County

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

