

## The History of East Greenville

Only a few homes on farmland dotted the immediate vicinity of East Greenville in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century construction of the Green Lane and Goschenhoppen Turnpike gave impetus to the emerging village. A tollgate was located along Main Street in East Greenville for the Turnpike which disbanded in 1912.

The Borough of East Greenville was incorporated on September 6, 1875. At that time, the community had fifty houses, eight stores, a hotel and various business establishments, including two cigar-manufacturing factories, which provided employment for the residents. The first post office was established on January 26, 1877 at Fourth and Main Streets, with Henry S. Kriebel as postmaster.

In 1894 borough residents requested a municipal water supply. Approving indebtedness of \$16,000, they built a waterworks plant along the Perkiomen Creek ½ mile west of the borough. A new water plant was erected in 1938 which continues to serve the borough today.

While a hose cart to fight fire was obtained as early as 1895, the East Greenville Fire Company was not officially chartered until May 25, 1900. The first fire hall was erected at 435 Main Street in 1896 with the second floor suitable for a meeting room. The original fire alarm can be seen in front of current fire house at Fourth and Washington Streets.

Gas and electric services came to the borough around the turn of the twentieth century. A gas manufacturing works was established in 1900 on Railroad Street near Fourth Street and gaslights were installed along borough streets. After an electric company was formed in neighboring Pennsburg in 1901, East Greenville sought in 1907 to obtain electric power. In 1923 PP & L purchased Pennsburg Electric Company and continues to supply power today.

Schools were generally church related until 1853, when the Greenville Academy was established in a house adjacent to the post office at Fourth and Main Streets. The private school became burdened with debt and was sold. The Greenville Literary Society, founded in 1872, erected a school building on Third Street, west of Main Street which served as an elementary school until 1951. In 1914, a new building at Fifth

and Jefferson Streets was constructed to serve as a high school. The first four year high school class graduated in 1920.

The first church in East Greenville was built on Main Street, north of Second Street, in 1875 by the Grace Evangelical United Brethren Church. As early as 1851, a general merchandise store operated in the 500 block of the town's Main Street. The Perkiomen Weekly Ledger began in 1890 in a small building also in the 500 block of Main Street. This newspaper operated as a tabloid until its demise in 1912.

In 1890 the borough had 186 taxable inhabitants, 8 trains stopped daily at the Fourth St. railroad station. A Perkiomen Beer was made on a small scale, but no records are available. Tradesmen such as bootmakers and shoemakers, tailors and blacksmiths were prominent. As early as 1856 Thomas Gerhart and Daniel Dimmig were engaged in cigar production. This was the largest industry in town and by 1899 employed 325 persons. Cigar box making also started in 1897. Silk weaving was prominent in 1895.

At the turn of the century the ice business became quite popular. Ice dams were built in the area and ice houses stored ice for summer use. The Sweinhart Ice Co. Dam and ice house was located where the YMCA pool is today. Ice was harvested during the winter, stored in the ice houses, and retailed during the summer by horse and wagon teams.

East Greenville's prime banking institution, the Perkiomen National Bank, was founded in Green Lane in 1874. Three years later the bank reorganized and moved to Main and Bank Streets where a new building in 1877 cost \$3400.

Instrumental music has been an integral part of the cultural life of the town and dates back to 1853, when a dozen young musicians formed the Citizens Band. In 1875 it became officially known as the East Greenville Band. Baseball holds the spotlight in East Greenville's sports history when the first game was played as early as 1887.

# East Greenville Borough



## Self-guided Tour

**Tour #2**  
of a series of 7 tours



### Cover Artwork

*"Back-A-Ways", Watercolor*  
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*Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center*  
*Pennsburg, Pennsylvania*

## East Greenville Self-Guided Tour

WE ASK THAT YOU RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE OWNERS OF THE TOUR SITES BY REMAINING ON SIDEWALKS OR ROADWAYS WHEN VIEWING THE SITES, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.

*The walking or driving tour of East Greenville can be started by parking at the St. Marks's Lutheran Church parking lot at Front and Main St. in the town of Pennsburg.*

*Proceed north on Main Street.*

### 1. 108 Main Street

Built in 1875 of the Queen Anne style which is characterized by an asymmetrical or irregular shape or façade. This slate roofed cottage has a three bay window in the front. Notice the highly ornamental corners on the steep pitched roof and unique shingled façade on top of the windows. Dr. Henry Bobb, proprietor of the Eagle Drug store at 218 Main St in the same year, and President of the first Borough Council lived here.

### 2. 113-115 Main Street

Built in 1885, this twin corner store/dwelling housed the Buch butcher shop. Take note of the roof line with the functional, yet decorative eave brackets. Think of the pride that went into the milling of the attractive side porch railings.

### 3. 136 Main Street

This farmhouse was built in 1860 by George Seisholtz. This is an early modernized stucco residence which has two bay windows irregularly spaced facing the North. The style of porch roof covering the central entrance is called a "hipped-roof".

### 4. 206 Main Street

Built in 1875 as a church, this structure was extensively renovated in 1960 when it was reduced from two floors to one. It now serves as the East Greenville Borough Building. Note the original half moon window facing the street. The shape of the doorway (an arch) in the entrance vestibule still reflects the buildings original purpose.

### 5. 232 Main Street

Built in 1869, this three-story Town House has a nearly flat roof. Squared lintels and sills provide a simple decoration to the windows. The plain columns of the porch support a roof with four sloping sides (hipped roof). Daniel Dimmig, the first undertaker in the valley, lived here.

### 6. 238 Main Street

This late Victorian home, built in 1871, is a two-family dwelling. Looking upwards, note the large roof supports on the side wing and the square tower added later. The side porch has some interesting turned posts, decorative roof brackets and the double leaf entrance door. This was the Alan Hood House.

### 7. 256 Main Street

Built in 1916 this tall downtown building is known as Realty Hall, named after the Realty Co., the group of stockholders who originally owned the building. The massive size, ornamentation, arches, and symmetrical façade all point to an architectural style called Beaux Arts, popular with public buildings at this time. When it was built, the first floor housed several businesses, a second floor auditorium, which was also used by East Greenville High School as a gymnasium; and a third floor meeting hall for the Knights of Pythias Lodge #282.

### 8. Main & Bank Streets

Built in 1852, remodeled in 1880 and again in 1930, the Keely House Hotel is now the Owls Nest, a fraternal clubhouse. Although not the builders of the hotel, the Keely family owned and operated the business from 1870 through 1910, thus imprinting their family name to the building. Though greatly modified, we can still see some traces of the old hotel. It lacks its early porch and has gained a square peaked roof tower and side and rear additions. Decorative brackets under the roof eaves remain. In 1875, East Greenville Borough Council meetings were first held in a livery stable at rear of this hotel. The livery stable is long gone.



*All the houses in the 300 and 400 block on Main Street are of a popular home style reflecting American patriotism and a desire for simplicity called Colonial Revival. The triangular roof lines (gables) of these Cottages and Row houses are typical of the style built between 1855 and 1900.*



### 9. 345 Main Street

Be certain to notice the various trim decorations on this home built in 1890. Note the flat, open scalloped design in the uppermost section of molding just below the roof-line. The cast iron fencing has attractive ornamentation on each post.

### 10. 353 Main Street

This was the site of the Greenville Academy School established in 1853.

### 11. 407, 409 & 411 Main Street

These homes, built in 1855 are the oldest homes in town. The three unit row of homes have a combination of simple and decorative features which can be clearly seen upon close examination. Hint: look at the support posts, roof brackets and small triangles above the porches.

### 12. 433-435 Main Street

The first firehouse, built in 1896, is now used as a Borough Maintenance Building with a Boy Scout meeting hall upstairs. Behind the building is the site of the borough water storage tank soon to be replaced - and a modern cellular telephone tower in the rear.



### 13. 443 Main Street

Behind the house, please note the carriage house built around 1890. The tall spire topping the center of the roof is a ventilator, a decorative piece with a practical purpose of providing air flow through the building. This was especially important when the building was built, when the horse and carriage was housed here.

***At this point, please return to Fourth Street and turn right.***

### 14. 206 Fourth Street

This brick house, built in 1875, has an unusual roof. Notice the steep slope on each of the four sides. A sharp eye will see a second, more shallow slope toward the peak. This is called a mansard roof. Note the slate shingles and the dormer common to this style roof. The home's front door provides an unusual entrance for visitors to this elegant home.

### 15. 207 Fourth Street

The triangular decorative piece along the roof line on this home built in 1890, called a pediment, adds a distinctive appearance to the home. Note the shingles in the gable section - they are called "fish-scale shingles".

### 16. 300 Fourth Street

This building, built in 1900 by William Frank, is representative of the corner grocery store found throughout the town in the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Frank sold the business to Willoughby Bieler whose son and grandsons continued the business to the 1950s. A private residence today, it is still known around town as Bieler's Store. Note the milled trim between the porch posts.



### 17. 326 Fourth Street

The Globe Hotel was built in 1875 in conjunction with the opening of the railroad to provide accommodations for rail travelers. The brick construction, fireplaces, use of pillars, the majestic porches, yet simple, classical detailing point to a Colonial Revival style of architecture. Look closely at the porches for subtle decoration in the eaves, and with the roof and railing posts.

### 18. 408 Fourth Street

The East Greenville Railroad Station was built in 1920, replacing the first rail station of 1875. A former one story passenger station, the building has been converted to a residence.



### 19. 410 Fourth Street

The D. D. Fritch Milling Company, built in 1899, has gone through many renovations. A brick building at the first floor level with stucco finish at second floor provides a formidable facade. The arched windows and door openings further identify this building as constructed in the Gothic architectural style. The upper story is new. The building is now a residence.



***Please turn left on State Street, proceed to third street, and turn left.***

### 20. 230 Third Street

Built in 1860, this three-story brick cottage has two dormers per side in the unusual, yet eminently practical Mansard roof (see 206 Fourth Street description). A Mansard roof provides additional living space on the top floor of a home. Note the flat roofed porch which has supporting brackets and decorative scroll work.

### 21. 227-229-231 Third Street

This three-family gabled slate roof building with a central roof peak was built in 1880. Notice the brickwork in the window arches and the simple stone sills below the windows. The porch features especially attractive decorative rails adding a delightfully fanciful feature to this row home.

### 22. 201 Third Street

Built in 1900, note the decorative slate roof and large wooden supports, or "brackets" under the eaves. Let your eyes follow the various lines throughout the face of the structure and note how they blend on this homes façade.

***Please turn right on Jefferson Street.***

### 23. 241 Jefferson Street

This building was built in 1900 to house the Dimmig Cigar Company, one of several cigar manufacturing businesses in town. During the turn of the century this was among the most thriving industries upon which the economy of the community depended.



### 24. 147 Jefferson Street

Built in 1908, this home opened as another small local grocery store. This three-story brick corner store and multi-family dwelling still has the glass store entrance. Now unusual, this storefront appearance was a common site around town.

***Please continue on Jefferson Street to the St. Mark's parking lot.***

***THIS CONCLUDES THE TOUR***

*This project of the Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.*

*Upper Perk Downtown supports these series of tours.*

