

The History of Green Lane & Perkiomenville

Green Lane borough is the smallest municipality in Montgomery County. Incorporated in 1875, the borough is located at the convergence of three 19th century turnpikes: the Spring House turnpike (constructed in 1848), the Perkiomen turnpike (opened in 1849) and the Green Lane and Goshenhoppen turnpike (completed in 1851). Tolls were collected for road maintenance and to provide a profit for the investors. The state purchased the roads about 1919 and tolls were no longer collected.

The 206 plus acres of the borough were all a part of the Mayburry land title. Thomas Mayburry founded the Green Lane Furnace in 1737. The furnace operated here from 1737 until 1813 under various owners. After standing idle for a number of years, the forge was re-started by William Schall ca. 1835. By the mid 1850s, the forge was inoperable and in disrepair. By the 1870s, all trace of this significant industry in the heart of Green Lane Borough had virtually disappeared.

The name Green Lane is believed to have been given to the iron works because of the abundance of evergreens covering the rocky hills surrounding the valley and the narrow road or lane that led from the "highway" to the furnace. The name of the borough is derived from the furnace name.

The Perkiomen Railroad was extended through Green Lane and Perkiomenville in 1872. A train station in Green Lane made the community more accessible to the outside world. This encouraged the growth of the borough, increasing the population and expanding industry. By the turn of the 20th century, Green Lane was home to many businesses, including banking, carriage works, mercantile, cigar factories, ice manufacturing and clothing mills.

Perkiomenville is split between two townships by the Perkiomen Creek. This small village is in both Upper Frederick and Marlborough townships on both sides of the creek. Rahn's store and hotel, constructed in 1846, is the first building in Perkiomen Village on the Frederick Township side of the Perkiomen Creek. Initially, the village was known as Perkiomen Village, named for the Perkiomen Creek.

This tour is an introduction to Green Lane Borough, the village of Perkiomenville and the countryside in between. Along the way, sites important to this communities are noted. A variety of architectural styles will be seen reflective of influences sweeping the United States at the close of the 19th and the opening of the 20th century. In addition to interesting architectural styles, the history of the communities will also be introduced.

Green Lane and Perkiomenville



Self-guided Tour

Tour #4

of a series of 7 tours



Cover Artwork

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

Green Lane & Perkiomenville 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.

Starting at the intersection of Routes 63 and 29 in Green Lane set your trip odometer to 0.0.

This intersection is where three 18th and 19th century "turnpikes" merged, and around which Green Lane developed: the Spring House (Route 63), the Perkiomen-Sumneytown (Route 29 South) and the Green Lane and Goshenhoppen Turnpikes (Route 29 North).

1. Schall House (odometer 0.0)

This large stone home has stood on this corner since 1835. This house was built for William Schall, then owner of the property formerly known as the Green Lane Forge. The forge was a major iron manufacturing facility in



the 18th and 19th century with an important foundry operation in the immediate vicinity. Note the two "front" doors on different streets indicating the importance of both roads when the house was built. The formal, balanced arrangement of windows and doors identify the style of architecture as Federal which was most common from the 1820s to the 1840s.

Continue south on Route 29

2. Red Men's Hall (on the right) (odometer 0.0)

This community landmark was built in 1907 for the Tohicken Tribe, Improved Order of Red Men a fraternal organization providing social fellowship for men in the area. Organized in 1896, the lodge members met elsewhere in town until their permanent home was built. The first floor of Red



Men's Hall was rented for commercial use: in 1908 Valley Bank occupied one room, Gouldin's Clothing Store, the other. The hall was important not only to the lodge members, but also to the community attending plays, graduations and other meetings

held in the second floor auditorium. Red Men's Hall was sold to the Goshenhoppen Historians in 1973. This group, dedicated to the preservation of regional PA German folk culture, has used Red Men's Hall for its headquarters and museum since then. Today the 3-story building has two original early 20th century shop fronts. The shop on the left is still rented. The Historians Country Store Museum is located on the right. A hall and stage make up the second floor space and museum exhibits are located on the third floor. The building is open to the public Sunday afternoons April through October. Call 215-234-8953 for information.

Continue South on Route 29, the corner of Green Street and Route 29, 100 Green Street.

3. Royer House (odometer 0.1)

Built ca. 1875, only a few years after the railroad came to Green Lane and the same year the borough incorporated, this home demonstrates the mix of "city" and more common "country" architectural styles. The elegant mansard roof, with the decorative slate shingles, is more commonly found in cities where wealth was more prominently exhibited. The "country" style is seen in the wood siding on the home. This was a common building material and exterior finish in Germanic communities. The arrival of the railroad to Green Lane brought more people with new ideas to the community as well as ready access to city culture and ideas. This home is an excellent example of the city influences in a more rural countryside.

Continue about a mile, turn right onto Iron Bridge into Green Lane Park.

4. Iron Bridge (odometer 0.7)

Engineers for the Montgomery County Commissioners selected the site for this iron truss bridge in 1902. The bridge was completed in 1903. It remained in place and 'as is' until 1987, when the bridge underwent considerable renovations. Prior to 1987 the one-lane bridge was a 'two-way' span. Vehicles needed to wait their turn to



cross. After the renovations, Snyder Road was made one-way going into the park. The 1848 map of Marlborough Township shows the original span crossing the Perkiomen Creek about 50' northeast of the current span. The earlier crossing was probably nothing more than a wooden bedding laid beyond the foot of the

dam (where the water was the most shallow) that provided the power for Jacob Snyder's mill. It was little more than a place to ford the Perkiomen Creek and was located close to the Mill where the Perkiomen and Deep Creeks merge (today part of Knights Lake). According to Bean's 1884 *History of Montgomery County*, the Snyder mill was the second mill built in Marlborough Township. It was part of the original Thomas Mayburry tract and constructed by the Mayburry family.

Continue across bridge and into Green Lane Park

5. Green Lane Park (odometer 0.8)

This county owned park was established in 1939 by the Montgomery County Commissioners as the 425 acre Upper Perkiomen Valley Park. This was the second park in the Montgomery County Park system to be opened to the public. The park was very popular with families from more urban southern Montgomery County when it first opened. From the beginning, the stream was stocked with brown trout and fishing was a primary activity. Today, with 3400 acres preserved for recreational use, the Green Lane Park's picnic facilities, programs, hiking trails, boating, camping and fishing, are still popular family destinations.

Continuing through the park, turn left at the stop sign at Deep Creek Road. Immediately to your right is a parking area for the Perkiomen Trail.

6. Perkiomen Trail (odometer 1.1)

The Perkiomen Trail is a 19 mile multi-use Trail extending from the park to its connection with the Schuylkill River Trail in Oaks. The Perkiomen Trail travels through a rich and varied landscape, including town centers, suburban landscape and rural, remote areas, as it follows the Perkiomen Creek. The Trail has provided an opportunity to preserve much of the old Reading Railroad right-of-way while serving as a regional access between the Upper Perkiomen Valley and the Schuylkill river corridor.

Continuing on Deep Creek Road you will come to the village of Perkiomenville.

7. Perkiomenville and Perkiomenville Hotel (odometer 1.6)

Perkiomenville is split between two townships by the Perkiomen Creek. This side of the creek is in Upper Frederick Township. The village traces its beginnings to 1846 when the Rahn's Hotel was constructed. A store and post office were also located in the building. Today it is the Inn at Perkiomenville.

By 1884, the town had a post office, general store, tavern, Odd-Fellows' Hall, community hall, creamery, reservoir, wheelwright shop, eight houses and about 60 inhabitants. Note the mix of older, elegant homes with more modest modern dwellings.

Continue to Route 29, turn left, after crossing the bridge, turn right onto Upper Ridge Road and immediately right again onto Crusher Road. Shortly, on the right, is a small parking area for the Perkiomen Trail (odometer 2.4). Park here and follow the trail back to the intersection and cross Route 29 to the mill and bridge.

8. Route 29, Upper Ridge Road and Crusher Road Intersection

At the corner of Route 29 and Upper Ridge Road is a wonderful stone farmhouse, once stuccoed, which marked the intersection of an important crossroads (the Perkiomen Turnpike and Upper Ridge Roads) linking the community of Sumneytown with the turnpike heading toward Collegeville. Just past Crusher Road, in the corner of Crusher and Upper Ridge Roads, is a large brick house built about 1830. Note the low roof pitch, the small attic windows and the stone lintels over the windows. This is very typical example of early 19th century farmhouses built along the traditional Turnpike toll roads of rural Pennsylvania.

9. Mill and Perkiomenville Bridge (odometer 2.2)

The Perkiomen Trail now travels over the original Perkiomenville bridge the first and largest stone bridge built in Upper Frederick Township (1839). The eight large arches spanning the Perkiomen Creek connect the



village of Perkiomenville located on either side of the creek. The bridge cost \$11,000 when built. It was repaired in 1926 and went out of use in 1967 when traffic was re-routed from the Upper Frederick side of Perkiomenville. While visitors can walk across the bridge, it is difficult to appreciate the eight stone arches today. The dam creating the mill pond can still be



seen as well as the mill race coming out and under the road. Imagine the flow of the water turning the wheel in turn operating an abundance of labor saving machinery and making the innovations of our modern time possible.

Return to Route 29 (odometer 2.6), turn right and travel through Perkiomenville in Marlborough Township.

10. Perkiomenville in Marlborough Township (odometer 2.7)

This side of the Perkiomen Creek is in Marlborough Township. Driving through this narrow section of road provides a sense of the old Perkiomen Turnpike, when the houses were built along a narrow road. The post office and the train station once stood on this side of the river. Note the homes along the road, some brick and some with tall peaks in the front (known as Gothic style). The Railroad passed through to the right, just as the road leaves town. Traces of the abandoned rail bed can be seen.



11. Perkiomen Sale (odometer 2.8)

As the buildings along the road end, the Perkiomen Sale can be seen to the right. The "Sale" started as a cattle auction on the other side of river in Frederick Township, across from the Perkiomenville Inn. In 1938, the "Sale" was moved to its current location and offers a huge flea market and livestock auction every Monday.

Continue on Route 29 to Green Lane.

12. Perkiomen Creek Dams (odometer 2.9-3.9)

Along the Perkiomen Creek, between Green Lane and Perkiomenville, many mills put the plentiful waters to good use. Prior to 1784, the first mill, a grist mill, was built along the Perkiomen between Green Lane and Perkiomenville. Early in the 19th century, 15 mills operated along these waters: a forge and furnace, grist mills, oil mills, powder mills, a plaster mill, a wool mill and a saw mill. By 1884, the number was down to seven mills operating along this stretch of the Perkiomen Creek, including three grist-mills, two chopping-mills, a planning mill and a saw mill. By the turn of the twentieth century water powered mills were a thing of the past and ice harvesting was a major economic activity. Several dams were scattered along this section of the Perkiomen and Deep Creeks including the Klondike Dam, Kratz's Dam, Knickerbocker Dam and Brey's Dam. Ice was harvested in the winter, stored in large insulated buildings, and transported by train to Philadelphia throughout the summer months.



Turn right onto Green Street just after entering Green Lane, then turn left onto 4th Street.

13. Isaac R. Smith Park (odometer 4.1)

This large tract of open space on your left was donated to the borough by its namesake in 1934. Smith's only request was to retain water rights and a barn on the property. The picnic pavilion was constructed with money raised through plays performed at the Red Men's Hall stage. Isaac Smith settled in Green Lane in 1876. He eventually became the largest landowner in the borough. His civic involvement and philanthropy in the borough was exceptional. His service to the borough included: borough Council, treasurer (42 years), school board, fire company treasurer, electric company organizer and the donor of land for the Green Lane Sunday School.

Turn left onto Route 63 or Main Street to Third and Main, pull over at the corner on the right.

14. Green Lane Sunday School (odometer 4.4)

For over 100 years, the Green Lane Sunday School has provided religious education on a nondenominational basis for the borough's predominantly Pennsylvania German residents. The community's Union Church (now Frieden's UCC) was located just east of Sumneytown, a sizable distance from Green Lane in the time of horse travel. Therefore, citizens wanted a more convenient Sunday School for the borough's children. Sunday classes met in the Green Lane School building from 1877 until this building was constructed in 1896.



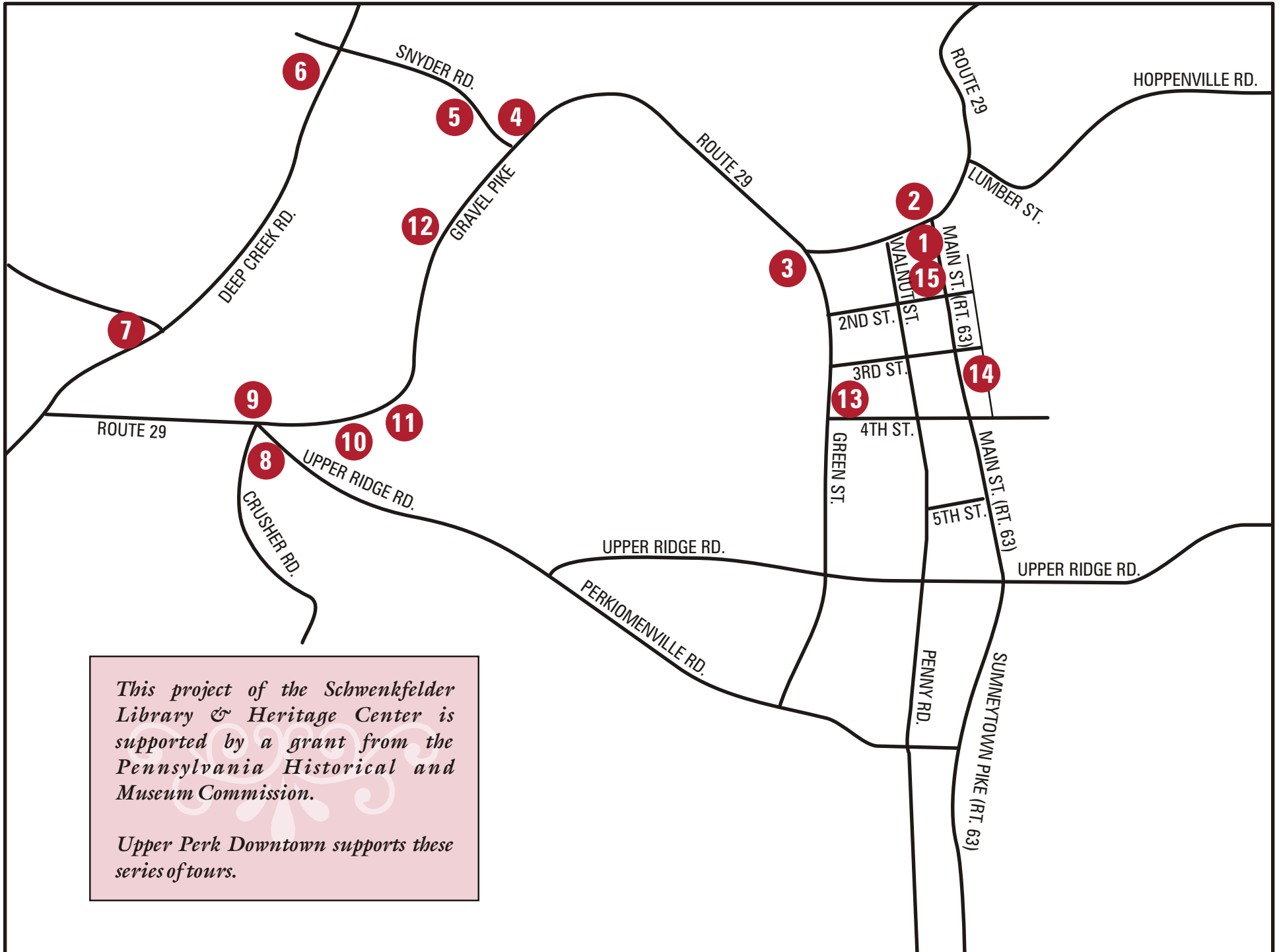
Continue to the 4th building on your left, after passing 2nd Street.

15. Yost's Carriage Works (odometer 4.6)

At 122 Main Street, the inscription "Yost's C... Works" can still be read on the street side of the three story brick apartment building on the left. The brick building was constructed after a devastating fire in 1902 destroyed a three story wood-framed structure. John Yost operated the carriage and wagon making business here (at least the third wheelwright at this location) until automobiles became widely popular in the 1920s and 1930s. He then switched to making automobile truck bodies in his shop.

Return to corner of Routes 63 and 29.

THIS CONCLUDES THE TOUR



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Upper Perkiomenville supports these series of tours.