

The History of Upper Hanover Township

In 1741, Upper Hanover Township successfully petitioned the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to separate from Hanover township, both still a part of Philadelphia County. In 1784, Montgomery County was formed from Philadelphia County, with Upper Hanover Township now a part of the new county.

The highest point in the county, Mill Hill (elevation 700 feet), and the lake behind the Green Lane Dam, the largest body of water contained in the county, lie within Upper Hanover Township.

Two early privately owned turnpikes passed through the township on their way between Philadelphia and the outlying areas of rural Pennsylvania. The first, chartered in 1847, was the Green Lane and Goschenhoppen Turnpike with its starting point at the present day intersection of Route 29 and 63 in Green Lane and ending at the intersection of Route 29 and 100 in Hereford. The second, the Sumneytown Geryville Turnpike or the King's Highway (a road authorized by the PA Provincial Council in 1735) runs from Sumneytown, at Route 29, to Shimersville, Lehigh County, rejoining Route 29 once again. The state purchased these roads, making them toll-free publicly owned roads around 1919.

These were private roads with toll houses spaced at approximately one (1) mile intervals throughout the route, collecting tolls which paid for road maintenance and provided a profit for the investors. Tolls were collected until the state purchased the roads in 1919. Toll houses on the Green Lane Goschenhoppen Turnpike were located in Green Lane (by the Macoby Creek), Marlborough Township (at McLean Station Road), Red Hill (house unknown), Pennsburg (between 7th and 8th Streets), East Greenville (between Front and 2nd Streets), Palm (at the Hosensack Creek).

Settlements in the township included the early community of Kleinville (along Geryville Pike) and Hillegassville (now Red Hill), the Pennsburg/East Greenville communities and Palm along the Green Lane Goschenhoppen Turnpike (now Route 29). While Red Hill, Pennsburg and East Greenville all formed separate boroughs. All that remains of Kleinville is a row of homes along Geryville Pike.

Agriculture was the main economic activity in the township from early times well into the 20th century. With the coming of the railroad in 1874, industrialization began to change the community. Markets in Philadelphia were much more readily available and improvements in agricultural machinery rapidly changed the practice of farming. By the second half of the 20th century, agricultural activities were becoming larger and more businesslike. Very few working farms now exist in the township where once they were plentiful.

Early industries in the township included numerous mills, tanneries and blacksmith shops. More specialized manufacturing was exemplified in the Krauss family of organ, clock and farm machinery manufacturers. This family from Kraussdale, along Kraussdale Road, near the Geryville Pike, manufactured and installed organs from the early 19th through the early 20th centuries. They counted clock and watch making and the manufacture of farming equipment among their many entrepreneurial efforts.

With the coming of the railroad, ice dams were erected on various waterways in the township. The ice was harvested and stored in large, insulated warehouses and shipped by railroad to the Philadelphia marketplace. Industries which developed during the 20th century include Acorn Glove Manufacturing, began in 1909, and Knoll (manufacturers of quality office furniture) founded in the township in 1945.

Upper Hanover's largely unspoiled historical landscape offers the visitor a glimpse into a typical Pennsylvania rural township. Along with a taste of the history of our community, this driving tour provides you with examples of various styles of architecture and building use forms.

Upper Hanover Township



Self-guided Tour

Tour #5

of a series of 7 tours



Cover Artwork

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

Upper Hanover Township 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.

Beginning in the northern edge of the township, on Leshar Mill Road where the mill is on the left and the Mill house and farm are on the right, set your odometer reading to 0.0. Mileage markers throughout these directions will be total miles from this beginning.

1. Leshar's Mill

Conrad Knetz (1742-1822) built up this grain mill on Leshar Mill Road, the mill farthest up the Perkiomen in Upper Hanover Township. In 1888 Isaac Leshar purchased the farm and the 1862 mill building. His son James and his grandson Wilmer continued the mill trade, mostly focusing on dairy and poultry feeds, after other township mills discontinued business. Most of the buildings from the farm-mill era are still in place, offering us a rare insight into the look of a 19th century mill operation. Still visible is the 1862 date stone on the original mill building.

Drive straight (north) to stop sign (0.2 mi), turn right onto Toll Gate Road. Go to stop sign (0.8 mi), turn right onto Gravel Pike (Route 29). Continue to Station Road (1.0 mi), turn left. Park at Matt's Deli if you want to stop. Acorn Glove Company is on Gravel Pike. Palm Store is at the corner of Gravel Pike and Station Road.

2. The Acorn Glove Company

This factory began production in Palm in the fall of 1907. Brothers and co-owners, Allen and Henry Stauffer constructed the factory building we see, to house their eight machines, producing 50 pair of gloves a day. A 1912 addition tripled glove production. In 1946, a three-story wing was added. When the Boss Manufacturing Company bought the plant in 1949, production continued here until 1959. The building was then used as a warehouse. Today, several businesses share this space.



3. Palm Store

This large brick Victorian building, built ca. 1865, was once the center of Palm village community life. Operated by the Stauffer family for many years, this was a general store and the store-keeper's residence. This grand building still houses a deli store, a post office (established in 1866) and multiple living quarters in the former single family store/residence. Note the superb craftsmanship of the trim above the windows (cast metal) and the woodwork below the eaves.



Continue east on Station Road away from Route 29 to the stop sign (1.7 mi). Turn right onto Treichler Road. At Hosensack Road (2.0 mi), turn right. Mill Hill is on the left.

4. Mill Hill

This part of the Hosensack Hills has the highest elevation in Montgomery County at 700 feet above sea level. The hill is an outcrop of molten granite that geologists estimate pushed its way up through the earth's crust about 150 million years ago. At the end of the 1800s, silver was mined on the hill as well as a paint pigment known as ocher. Neither venture was financially successful. Today, Mill Hill is preserved as open space by Montgomery County.

Continue west on Hosensack Road through the railroad underpass. Before the stop sign, pull to the side of the road (2.8 mi). The George Krauss house is on the right, the Organ Factory is straight ahead and the Saw Mill site is on the left.

5. George Krauss Home

An organ builder from about 1829 to 1880, Krauss lived in the brick house on the corner of Gravel Pike (Route 29) and Hosensack Road. George and his brother Joel assisted their father, Andrew, in the trade until his death in 1841. Shortly before Andrew's death, the business was moved to Palm. The family was very highly regarded as organ designers and builders throughout southeastern PA and credited with the construction and installation of over 50 church and parlor organs. Huff's Church Union Church and Bally Catholic Church have Krauss organs still in use.



6. Organ Shop

Ca. 1840, George and Joel Krauss converted an old residence across Gravel Pike from his house into an organ shop. The building which stands between the road and the Perkiomen Creek is a residence today. If you look carefully, you can still see traces of the older building.

7. Krauss Saw Mill

Many of the beautiful wood cabinets encasing the church and parlor organs began here, at the Krauss water-powered sawmill. The mill stood in the meadow between Hosensack Road and the Hosensack Creek.



The original foundation of the sawmill still remains with the much later residence built on the old foundation.

At the stop sign turn left onto Gravel Pike (Route 29) the old Green Lane and Goschenhoppen Turnpike. Continue through the rail road underpass and turn left at Kraussdale Road (3.9 mi - at the Kervers sign) turn left) Continue on Kraussdale Road just past Warner School Road. The Kraussdale Schwenkfelder Meeting House is on the right. Pull to the side of the road past the meeting house if you want to stop (5.0 mi)[CAUTION: THIS IS A BUSY AND DANGEROUS ROAD] A working farm is on the left.

8. Kraussdale Schwenkfelder Meetinghouse

The Schwenkfelders are a small Protestant denomination who fled persecution in Silesia for Pennsylvania in the 1730s. 200 immigrants settled in small groups throughout Montgomery County. Six churches located in southeast PA still exist. The first Kraussdale meetinghouse was built on this site in 1825 although it is claimed by some that the first building was erected in 1815. Burials of Schwenkfelders on the Krauss "farm" had taken place for many years prior to the construction of this building. The first building erected was used for both worship and as a school. It was a rough stone building with the joints painted white. In 1875, the old stone building was replaced by the present brick structure, which was remodeled in 1900 and abandoned in 1911 when the new Palm Church was built. Three congregations joined together to form Palm Church. This building, used occasionally for weddings and worship, is one of the three.



9. A Working Farm

This present-day working farm is typical of the era when agriculture dominated the area. This site presents a good view of the various buildings and fields which comprise the traditional family farm.

Continue on Kraussdale Road to the stop sign (5.8 mi) and turn right onto Geryville Pike. Continue to Route 663 (7.3 mi), straight through the light. (you will now be traveling through what used to be called Kleinville). Turn right onto Slotter Road (8.6 mi) and continue to the stop sign. Turn right on St. Paul's Church Road (9.2 mi) and look for the church on the right.

10. St. Paul's Lutheran Church

This congregation originated in a shared building with New Goshenhoppen Reformed Church (see number 15). In 1750, the Lutherans built their own log church here. When a new church was built in 1802, a specially designed alcove for the organ gave the building its nickname: the "six-cornered church". In 1875, the second building was replaced by a larger church but was destroyed by fire three years later. By 1897, the fourth and present church for this Congregation was completed.



While the six corners of the second church have long since disappeared, the nickname for the church is a local tradition.

Continue on St. Paul's Church Road to the stop sign. Turn right onto James Road. which will become Sixth Street (9.7 mi). Go to the traffic light (10.2 mi) and turn left onto Gravel Pike (Route 29/Main Street) (10.6 mi). Go to Third Street and turn right. Third Street becomes Markley Road. Go to the second stop sign (12.2 mi) and turn right on Knight Road.

11. Green Lane Reservoir

In 1954, the Philadelphia Suburban Water Company began construction of a 424 foot wide dam to impound the water of the Perkiomen Creek. About 200,000 tons of Concrete was pored into the dam which took a year to complete. Although the dam is outside the township, 90% of the retained water lies within the townships boundaries. The water level stands at 288 feet above sea level and inundates about 815 acres. The lake is about six miles long and occupies about five percent of the townships total acreage. The reservoir covered some of the most productive farmland of the Upper Perkiomen Valley.

Continue on Knight Road which becomes Kutztown Road.

12. Kutztown Road

In the 1730's Thomas Mayberry, a colonial ironmaster, used Kutztown Road to travel between his forge in Green Lane and the ore mines and furnaces of Hereford Township. The presence of the forge brought prosperity to the community of Green Lane and the ore furnaces helped in the early settlement of Hereford Township.

Continue on Kutztown Road through light at Route 663 over the Molasses Creek Bridge to Fruitville Road (15.3 mi) and turn right, the Simon Adam Tavern is on the left at the corner of Kutztown Road and Fruitville Road.

13. Simon Adam Tavern

The Simon Adam Tavern has a center chimney, windows spaced far apart and four walls positioned to form a rough square. These three characteristics point to this log building as a typical 1750s Germanic structure common to southeast Pennsylvania and the Upper Perkiomen Valley. The Kutztown Road building was later used as a farmhouse.



Continue on Fruitville Road to the stone-arched bridge and the iron bridge (16.6 mi).

14. Iron Bridge and Stone-Arched Bridge

The Fruitville Road stone-arch bridge has an insert which forms a border around the arching an architectural feature common to stone-arch bridges throughout Montgomery County. The narrow 1904 iron bridge which crosses the Perkiomen Creek was built when horse and buggy was the primary means of transportation.



Go over the bridges to the stop sign. Turn right onto Church Road and look for the church on the right and turn right into the parking lot if you wish to stop (17.4 mi). The old cemetery is in front of the church. The School House is on the corner of Third Street and School House Road.

15. New Goshenhoppen Church & Cemetery

As early as the 1720s, John Sproegel, a land speculator, set aside land for a community church and this ecumenical burial ground. The New Goshenhoppen Reformed Congregation constructed a log building here to use as their first church. In 1769 it was replaced by a larger stone structure which was used until 1857. The present 1857 Victorian brick church was built to accommodate a Sunday School on the lower level the area of the rectangular windows, and a sanctuary above it the area of the arched windows. The cemetery in front of the church is the oldest section. In it are buried Lutherans, Reformed, Schwenkfelder and Mennonites whose graves are marked by hand-carved tombstones.



16. Church School or Bullfrog Academy

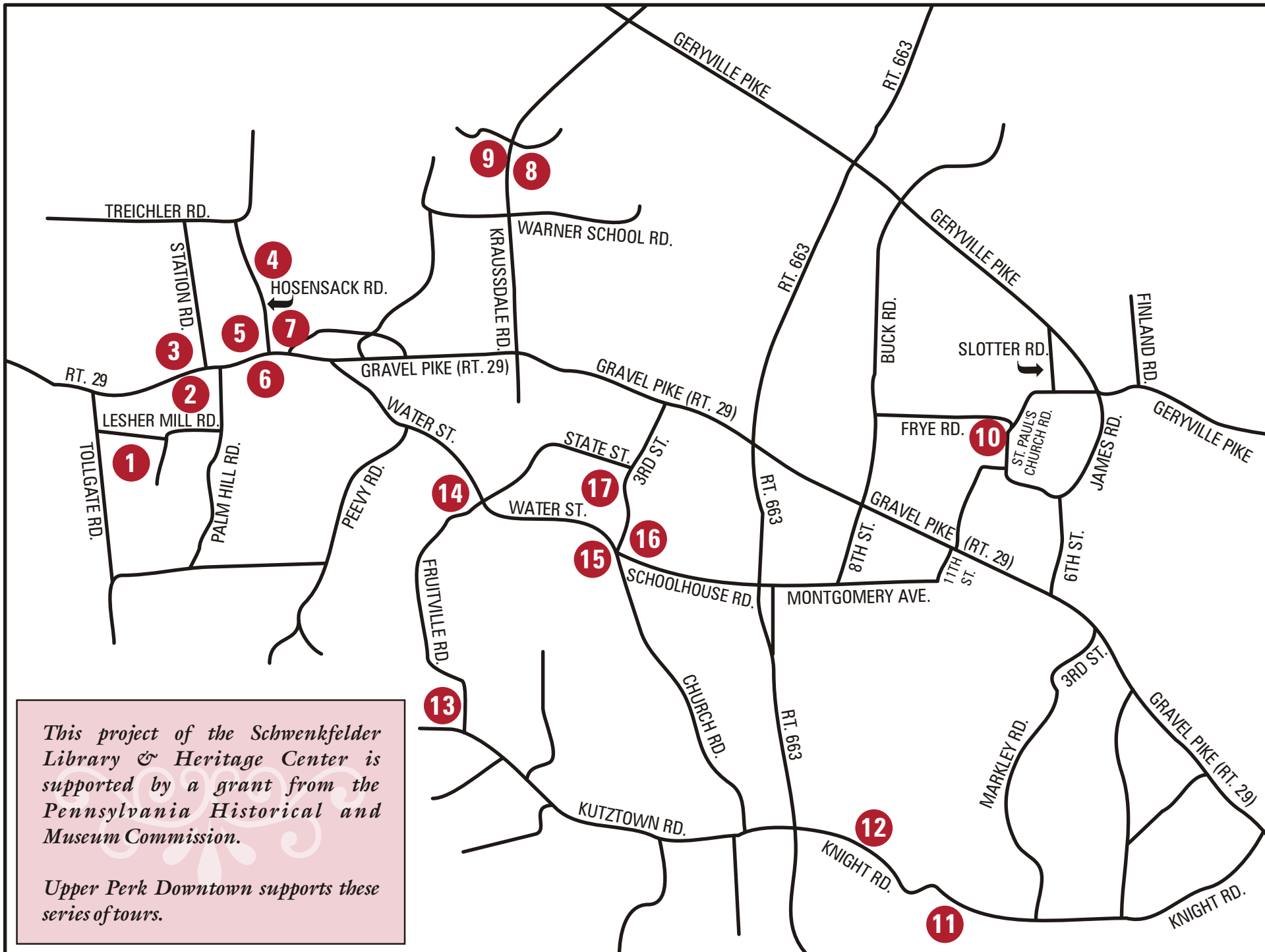
This Victorian brick building was a one-room public grade school built in 1860. This school, called the Church School because of its proximity to the church and also Bullfrog Academy because of the many frogs singing in the pond and stream nearby, remained in use until 1955 when the Upper Perkiomen School District was formed. The cement block structure on the right was a later addition to the school house after it closed.

Drive east on Third Street to the church Park on the left (17.8 mi)

17. New Goshenhoppen Park Band Shell

In 1923, a wood-framed band shell which is touted to have perfect acoustics was built at New Goshenhoppen Church Park. In 1924, a roofed pavilion was added to the band shell to protect the audience. The masonry dining hall was built in 1954. The park has long been a site for Sunday School picnics, band concerts, church suppers and other community events.

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 Perik Downtown supports these series of tours.