

The History of Marlborough Township

Marlborough Township was founded in 1741 and included Sumneytown, the largest colonial rural village in Montgomery County. Sumneytown was important at this time because of a creek crossing at this spot funneling traffic from both sides of the stream through the town. Also, the Sumneytown Pike, which crossed the ford, served as the main thoroughfare for travelers and manufactured goods coming from Philadelphia to the village and settled areas beyond Montgomery County.

Thomas Mayburry built the Green Lane Forge in 1730. Much later, this land was separated from Marlborough Township and incorporated as the Borough of Green Lane. The Forge brought people and prosperity to Marlborough Township. Homes were built for workers, and buildings for the various support trades required to operate a large iron forge were constructed. In this way, the future Green Lane Borough grew and developed.

In addition to Sumneytown and Green Lane, three other named villages were settled in the township: Marlboroughville, Hoppenville and Perkiomenville. Marlboroughville, along the Upper Ridge Road, boasted an inn, schoolhouse and a number of homes. The inn closed in the 1930s leaving very little evidence of a village today. The Hoppenville community included a hotel, store, cigar factory and post office along Geryville Pike. While this is no longer considered a village, the homes along the road with the sign over the Post Office/General Store are evidence of a once prosperous little village. The village of Perkiomenville still exists, split by the Perkiomen Creek.

The fast flowing streams of the township provided energy for a number of mills which harnessed this readily available source of power. The streams that powered the mills were the Unami, the Macoby and the Perkiomen. Their plentiful and rapid waters were easily dammed and channeled to turn water wheels operating a variety of mills. The first grist (flour & animal feed) mill in the township was built and operated by Samuel Schuler and was later sold and converted to gun powder production during the revolutionary war. An atlas published in 1785 shows that in addition to several powder mills, the streams of the township supported three grist mills, two saw mills, two oil mills and one hemp mill. By 1857, the variety of mills had changed to ten powder mills and seven oil mills. Powder mills were very dangerous and many workers and owners were killed and property destroyed in powder mill explosions and fires.

Because of this, very little evidence remains of the operations of powder mills in the township.

The Sumneytown and Springhouse Turnpike was completed in 1848. The Sumneytown to Geryville Turnpike, the Macungie Road, was opened in 1865. Prior to these privately owned turnpikes where tolls were collected for upkeep and profit for the investors, roads were not maintained in a coordinated, formal manner. Both roads were much older than the dates when the turnpikes were established, having been used by many generations of settlers traveling northwest from the city of Philadelphia.

The railroad was constructed here in 1870 with three stops in the township: Perkiomenville, Green Lane and McLean's Station. McLean's Station primarily served the local creamery, sending milk on daily early morning trains into the city. In addition to industry, the trains also carried passengers both into Philadelphia and from the city to the country. Vacationers escaping the heat and congestion of the city became an important part of the Marlborough Township economy. Passenger rail service continued into the 1960s and freight service continued a little longer. Little evidence of the existence of the railroad is left in the township.

Inns, general stores and post offices were established in the township as soon as people started settling the area. The Sumneytown area was once home to four early 18th century inns. Postal service began in Sumneytown prior to 1816 and continues to this day.

A tour of Marlborough Township is an introduction to the architectural heritage of the Upper Perkiomen Valley. Very early buildings, some of the earliest in the Upper Perkiomen Valley, reflect typical regional styles. Additionally, a tour through Marlborough Township is a beautiful drive through scenic countryside. The history of the community is introduced through this tour.



Cover Artwork

"Back-A-Ways", Watercolor
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Marlborough Township



Self-guided Tour

Tour #7

of a series of 7 tours



Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center
Pennsburg, Pennsylvania

Marlborough 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 at the intersection of Route 63 and Geryville Pike, with the odometer set at 0.0, follow Geryville Pike to Swamp Creek Road. Turn right onto Swamp Creek Road. At the stop sign, Swamp Creek Road intersects with Magazine Road. This is the first site.

1. Grist/Saw/Powder Mill and one lane stone bridge (odometer .5)

This mill was used as a grist mill in the 1840s, possibly earlier, and modified later as a sawmill. The tract of land was originally purchased from the William Penn family by Hans Teeter Bowman in the 1750s. It is likely the site of a devastating powder mill explosion in 1790 which took the lives of subsequent owners Jacob Dascht and his wife. A one lane, stone bridge just past the mill is a good example of a once common site on rural roads in southeast Pennsylvania in the early 20th century.



Turn left onto Magazine Road to the stop sign. Turn right onto Geryville Pike. Continue through the next stop sign to odometer reading 1.5.

2. Sorrel Horse Inn (odometer 1.5)

At the far left hand corner of Geryville Pike and Upper Ridge Road is a private residence, once called the Sorrel Horse Inn. Built prior to 1800, an inn was operated here until around the turn of the twentieth century. Inns were most commonly named after owners who ran the



business, but occasionally some inns had other names. Local sources recall the Sorrel Horse Inn was called in the Pennsylvania German dialect "Uxokopp", translated as "Oxhead".

3. Rheinland Inn (odometer 2.5)

This inn was built in 1821 and was known as the Marlborough Inn. The inn was closed during prohibition and then reopened in 1934. It operates today as a popular restaurant serving German Cuisine.

4. Andreas Reid House (odometer 3.3)

The Andreas Reid house and outbuildings are among the most striking examples of restored 18th century private buildings in the region. Built and expanded in the 18th century, the earlier ca. 1750 section is closer to the road. After Reid purchased the farm ca. 1777, he added the large addition extending from the second window. This can be clearly seen by comparing the spacing of the windows along the dies of the house. The log addition is a modern kitchen added in recent years. Reid also constructed a tannery in 1777 on the property using the small stream for his water source. Dr. William Mayberry, a prominent physician in the community, owned this home from 1833-1855. Note the schoolhouse and various outbuildings. Especially note the prominent location on a small stream, a common practice of early settlers. Of additional interest is the milestone on the property along the road: "36 M to P" or 36 miles to Philadelphia.



Continue to odometer reading 3.9 on right.

5. Gerhart Farmhouse (odometer 3.9)

This house was originally a typical square hewn log house and has evolved to what we see today by ca. 1811. The original log house, ca. 1730, can be seen as the smaller part of the house to the right, now the central portion. The larger stone addition on the left was built by 1750, but only as wide as the first two windows along the road. Note the segmented stone arches above each of the lower windows. The door and window above it were added at another later time thus expanding the house once again. At some point around 1800, a summer kitchen was added to the original log house. Stucco would have originally covered the stonework.

Continue to odometer reading 4.0 on left

6. Hoppenville General Store (odometer 4.0)

Hoppenville was a small community along the Geryville Pike which at one time consisted of farm buildings, a cigar factory, hotel, store and post office. Today, a few older homes and the store/post office remain.



The post office was established here in 1855 and continued to serve the community until 1928. The building seen today is reminiscent of the typical store/post office once a common feature of "small town" America.

Turn right on Brinckman Road and continue to the stop sign at Finland Road. Turn Right. Continue on Finland Road to the stop sign on Upper Ridge Road. Turn Right.

7. Ca. 1870 House (odometer 6.7)

In this immediately vicinity, the little village of Marlboroughville, referred to earlier, developed in the 19th century. This home, built ca. 1870, is a good example of a notable regional style found in the Upper Perkiomen Valley. It is a frame house with slate, rather than wood, sheathing, reserving the wood for the area under the porch. How and why this style of façade construction evolved in this area is not known, but it is a style not commonly found elsewhere. Two surviving examples can be seen along Main Street in Red Hill as well as here and there throughout the Upper Perkiomen Valley.

8. Musser Scout Camp/Camp Delmont (odometer 6.8 through 8.8)

The 1400 acre Musser Scout Reservation is today three Scout Camps: Camp Delmont, Camp Hart and Camp Garrison. First called the Delmont Scout Reservation, it was named for the two counties that made up the original Valley Forge Council, DELaware and MONTgomery, or the Delmont Council. The original 35 acres was purchased for \$500.00 in 1916 and included a stone house. Generous gifts and land purchased expanded the first 35 acres to today's over 1400 acres. The camps of today serve Cub and Boy Scout troops from throughout the Philadelphia region.

Continue through the next two stop signs. Perkiomenville Road enters at an angle from the left. Continue to Crusher Road, turn left. Turn into the parking area for the Perkiomen Trail on the right (odometer reading 11.1) turn around and head back to Perkiomenville Road.

9. German Settler House (odometer 11.7)

As you approach the intersection of Perkiomenville and Upper Ridge Road, note a white house on the left with a lower section nearer and a taller addition on the far side of the house. The lower section is a small stone cabin built about 1800, a good example of a settler's house. Dominated by a massive stone chimney in the gable end, the three room plan is derived from 18th century houses of German immigrants. Original 6-pane-over-6-pane windows survive. The porch and the addition are later, ca. 1860 to 1879.

Turn right onto Perkiomenville Road.

10. ca. 1810 house (odometer 11.9)

Just after turning onto Perkiomenville Road, on the left is a barn and then a 2 ½ story, 7 register (meaning the number of front windows) example of a German three room design, built about 1810, converted to a central hall plan house with an addition erected in the 1870s.

Turn right onto Sumneytown Pike, Route 63 South.

11. Sumneytown Village

The village of Sumneytown was an important community in the 18th century, once considered in the running for the county seat of Montgomery County. The area was known for its abundance and diversity of mills: grain, wood, oil and powder. The village's prosperity can be seen in the styles of buildings still standing. Please note the pleasant mix of buildings. Types of buildings seen include the 1820s Federal style with a very balanced, formal appearance. Also in town are Colonial stone buildings with their more rustic appearance and smaller windows spaced further apart. Even the charming, decorative Queen Anne style with a multitude of decorative trim features is represented. Utilitarian mills, recently converted to apartments as well as 20th and 21st century structures can all be found along this section of the Sumneytown Pike.



Turn Right onto Church Road.

12. Frieden's Church and Cemetery (on right)

Frieden's Church was built in 1858 in the Italianate style, which is reminiscent of northern Italian country villas. Once this was a

Union Church with St. John's Lutheran Church. This means that two congregations, normally a Lutheran and a Reformed (now United Church of Christ) shared the same building. The Lutheran congregation built a separate church building and the reformed congregation stayed here. The church building consists of a single gable nave with stuccoed walls and three tall, round arched windows. The altar ceiling is a painted arch, worth a stop to appreciate. Of special interest outside is the carpentry of the belfry and mansarded (concave sides) pavilion roof. The cemetery rises behind the church, along the surrounding hill.



Turn around and drive down Church Road to Route 63.

13. 1895 Queen Anne stone mansion (at right corner) (odometer 13.0)

The home at the corner of Sumneytown Pike and Church Road is built in the Queen Anne style of architecture, common in the 1880s and 1890s. This prominent example of this building style features a spirit of exuberance and an excess of decoration. Please note the extraordinary double curved staircase surrounding the arched basement entrance off Sumneytown Pike, a form more appropriate for a monumental civic building. This house illustrates both changes in local architectural preferences as well as increased mercantile and manufacturing wealth which made homes on a grander scale possible.

Right on Sumneytown Pike, Route 63 South.

14. Kauffman House (on left)

On the left is a three story hotel, built in 1850. At one time, this was used as a cigar factory. This is the third of three major inns in located in Sumneytown. This is a good example of a 19th century stucco on stone building built in the Vernacular style of architecture. The Vernacular style was built without an architect, reflecting regional adaptations, such as the long porch and three stories.



15. Benner Print Shop (on left)

The Benner Print Shop was constructed in 1838 as a house and was quickly converted into a print shop. This is among the most notable houses in Sumneytown as it marks the prosperity of the

village in the 19th century. The local newspaper, *Der Bauern Freund (The Farmer's Friend)*, was published here until 1858. It remained a print shop into the 20th century. This well preserved Federal style house is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

16. Sumneytown Hotel (on left at corner)

The hotel, built in 1875, has been extensively modernized in a series of re-buildings. The earliest building on this site dated from the 1760s when Isaac Sumney, a French Huguenot immigrant, was licensed to operate a tavern. This village at the crossing of the Perkiomen Creek was named in tribute to his tavern. The presence of several inns in the community of which only two have survived - testifies to the town as a regional center of importance.



17. Jacoby House (on right at intersection)

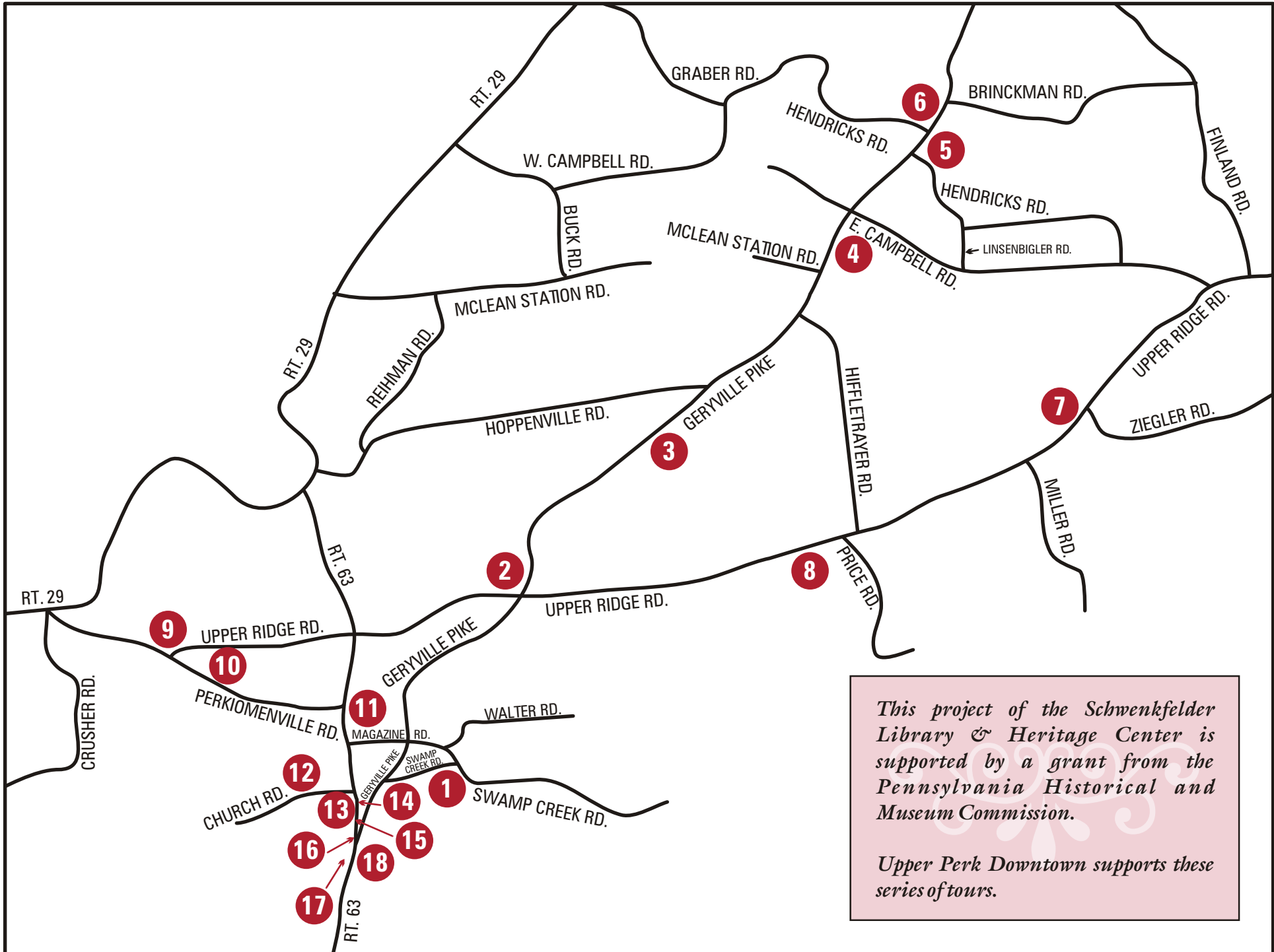
The Jacoby family built the most impressive house of its day, ca. 1790, in Sumneytown. Note the five handsome windows across the upper floor, the dramatic front door leading to a center hall which remains intact. The columned porch is an addition from ca. 1900 reflective of Colonial Revival architectural style. Jacoby was the principal industrialist and developer of Sumneytown. Jacoby's powder mill was a landmark on the Unami Creek into the 19th century.

18. Post Office/Geiger Store (across intersection)

Geiger's Store is a handsome stone building that shows features typical of the late 18th century. Especially typical is the diminishing size of windows from first to third floor and the small panes of glass used in the windows. Built in 1790 by industrialist Lorenz Jacoby, the building was leased to Jacob Geiger to operate a store. The center hall presumably included a store on one side and family rooms on the other in the fashion of similar buildings in the region. The building was nearly doubled in size in the 1850s with rear extensions on each wing. This carefully restored building was a major community center and marketplace in the 18th century.



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.