



2015  
County of Lycoming  
Historic Structures Survey





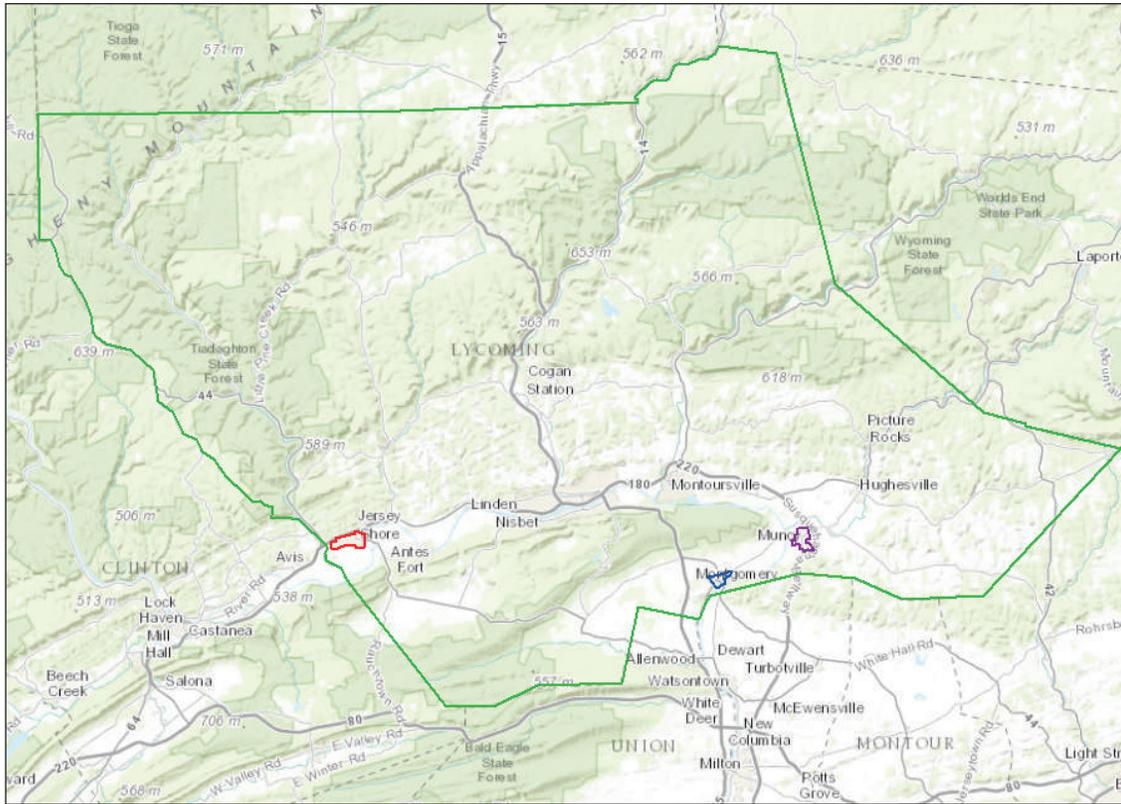


Figure 2: Location of boroughs surveyed within Lycoming County.

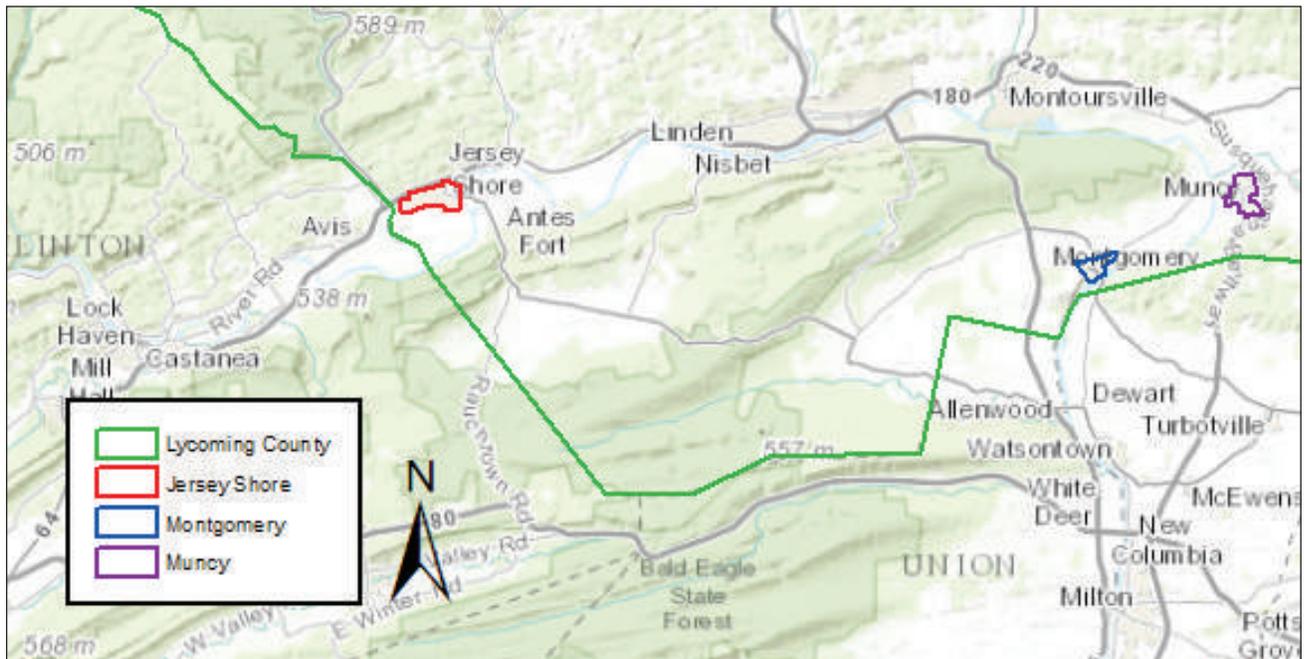


Figure 3: Location of boroughs surveyed.

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## History of Lycoming County

Lycoming County was formed from Northumberland County in 1795. In its earliest years, the territory was the American Frontier, and was populated by Native Americans and sparse settlers who emigrated from both Europe and other parts of the existing colonies prior the formation of the United States.

At this time, the natural resources of the County were incalculable and unrealized. The land was rich with coal, iron, timber, stone, oil, and fertile agricultural lands (Lloyd 1929, p116).

A quote from Thomas Lloyd's "History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania" describes it thusly:

"This immense territory embraces the Appalachian chain of mountains and, with the foothills on both sides, makes an extremely wild and romantic region. Originally nine-tenths of this vast territory was a gloomy wilderness, through which the foot of white man had never trodden. The forests covering the mountains were principally composed of stately pine and hemlock, the tress so thickly on the ground that their evergreen foliage almost obscured the light of day. The river and smaller streams, rising almost to the same dignity, fed by many purling brooks, flowed through this wilderness and mingled the music of their laughing waters with the weird sighing of the wind through the overhanging branches of the tress. The larger streams were filled with choice fish, while myriads of speckled trout disported in the crystal waters of the brooks as they leaped over rocks and formed beautiful cascades.

Through this primitive wilderness the red man had roamed from the earliest times. His highways, known as "paths," ran in every direction. They were laid out so accurately as to reach all important points in the least possible distance, and when the white surveyors came to locate lands they were surprised at the knowledge displayed by these rude engineers of the forest. An in later times highways were laid upon them when the advancing tide of civilization demanded better roads, and today the Indian Trail has grown into many of our finest thoroughfares." (Lloyd, 1929, p155)

Soon pioneers came with axes, rifles, and their families. They felled trees, built homesteads, and claimed the land (Lloyd 1929, p 155).

Before the formation of Lycoming county, there had been rush of settlers hoping to occupy the lands in the West Branch Susquehanna River Valley. At that time, the valley was part of Northumberland County and was quickly becoming the most populated area within that county. The country was still in a primitive state of development, with no bridges spanning any of the rivers or streams, and long distance travel was dangerous (Meginness, p210).

Northumberland County was quickly becoming to be seen as too large, as it occupied approximately one quarter of the state at the time (Lloyd 1929, p113). Its ungainly size forced the majority of its approximately 17,000 residents to travel long distances to reach the county seat for mundane and essential business matters, such as attending court and filing deeds.

Before long, the population began to call for a new county to be formed. The urging began around 1786, but the County of Lycoming wasn't formed until April 13, 1795 (Lloyd 1929, p114).

When Lycoming County was formed it was vast, containing 12,000 square miles and extending as far west as the Allegheny River and as far north as the New York State line. Over time, the counties of Armstrong, Bradford, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Indiana, Jefferson, McKean, Potter, Sullivan, Tioga, Venago, Warren, Forest, Elk, and Cameron were formed from parts of the original lands of Lycoming County. Today the county contains approximately 1/10<sup>th</sup> its original lands, being approximately 1220 square miles (Lloyd 1929, p116).

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was little development in the county. Farms had been cleared, homes built, and the people of the county were generally occupied by agricultural pursuits and home industries (Lloyd 1929, p156; LCPC 1971, p2). "Hay and grain became important crops in the higher elevations, the northern and southern parts of the County. Dairying and poultry farming also were introduces, as was tobacco culture." (LCPC 1971, p7).

Saw mills and grist mills were pioneer industries throughout the county, as grain and lumber were two immediate needs of the settlers. Distilleries were also considered essential and were developed in the region around the same time (Lloyd 1929, p 141). Other small industries and tradespeople, such as hatters, shoe makers, tailors, cabinet makers, gun smiths, watch makers, blacksmiths, harness makers, wagon builders, tanners, and coopers opened up shop in larger towns and settlements, such as Williamsport (Lloyd 1929, p141). Knitting factories, woolen mills, carding mills, distilleries, tanners, plants for manufacturing fillers and paints from shale formations, shingle and stone mills, flagstone quarries, and plants for manufacturing pumps and agricultural implements were among the industries established to meet local needs throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lloyd 1929, p143).



Figure 4: Early pioneer family in front of cabin. (Source: James V. Brown Library).

By the middle of the century, residents began to find profit in an abundant, local, natural resource- lumber. Pine and hemlock trees were abundant in the area and the five large streams that flow into the Susquehanna: Pine, Larry's, Lycoming, Loyalsock and Muncy creeks aided in the transportation of the harvested lumber (Lloyd 1929, p156). Mills were established, and farmers began to add lumbering to their usual business. Timber cut in the hills around the county was floated down the Susquehanna to Williamsport, where it was milled and processed by small water powered mills. As the industry grew, it was recognized that even the byproduct of milling lumber, saw dust, could be profitable as it could be used as fuel.

By 1860, the lumber industry was in full swing with larger, steam powered mills now in operation (Lloyd 1929, p156). The mills were run "night and day" during the spring and summer seasons to cut the logs before winter arrived. During the height of the industry, there were more than 75 mills in the county and more than 400 million feet of sawn lumber was produced annually. According to Thomas W. Lloyd, "[I]t is estimated that during the years of its ascendancy as much as 7 billion feet of logs were sawed up in different sections of the county." (p157).

The Civil War and the following reconstruction period increased the demand for raw lumber and milled lumber products. Lumbering steadily increased in Williamsport and it came to be considered the "Lumber Capital of the World" until the supply of raw timber began to dwindle around 1891 (Lloyd 1929:320).

While Williamsport was considered the lumber capital, according to A Survey of Historic Sites and Landmarks of Lycoming County, [B]y 1870 there were over 600 factories in the County including tanneries, foundries, machine shops and furniture factories. Woolen mills supplied lumberjacks with clothing and blankets. Iron production was also a major industry in the region. Ore mines in Lycoming Township were worked extensively from the 1850s through the 1880s (Lloyd 1929, p 139).

With the decline of the lumber industry in the county starting in the early 1890s, most of the population who lived in small towns and rural areas returned to farming. Existing factories were transformed to support other industries (Lloyd 1929, p310). "By the 1930's more than 500 different items were produced by the nearly 200 factories in Lycoming County, including metal products of great diversity, furniture, and other wooden articles, chemicals, food products, textiles, leather and rubber goods, and many miscellaneous smaller items" (LCPC 1971, p7).

After frequent strikes by workers in silk mills in Patterson, New Jersey, many of them relocated to the eastern Pennsylvania region. Lloyd's History of Lycoming County states: "Lycoming County profited by this move and one or more silk mills were located in every small town in the county and have added very materially to the prosperity of

each” (Lloyd 1929, p158).

As time went on, inhabitants of Lycoming County relied on agriculture and manufacturing of various products to sustain themselves. Today, Lycoming County is still reaping the benefits of the natural resources within its borders. Situated on top of one of the largest Natural Gas Fields on earth, Marcellus Shale is providing Lycoming County with another booming industry.



Figure 5: Group portrait at lumber camp. (Source: James V. Brown Library).



Figure 6: Log cabin at lumber camp. (Source: James V. Brown Library).

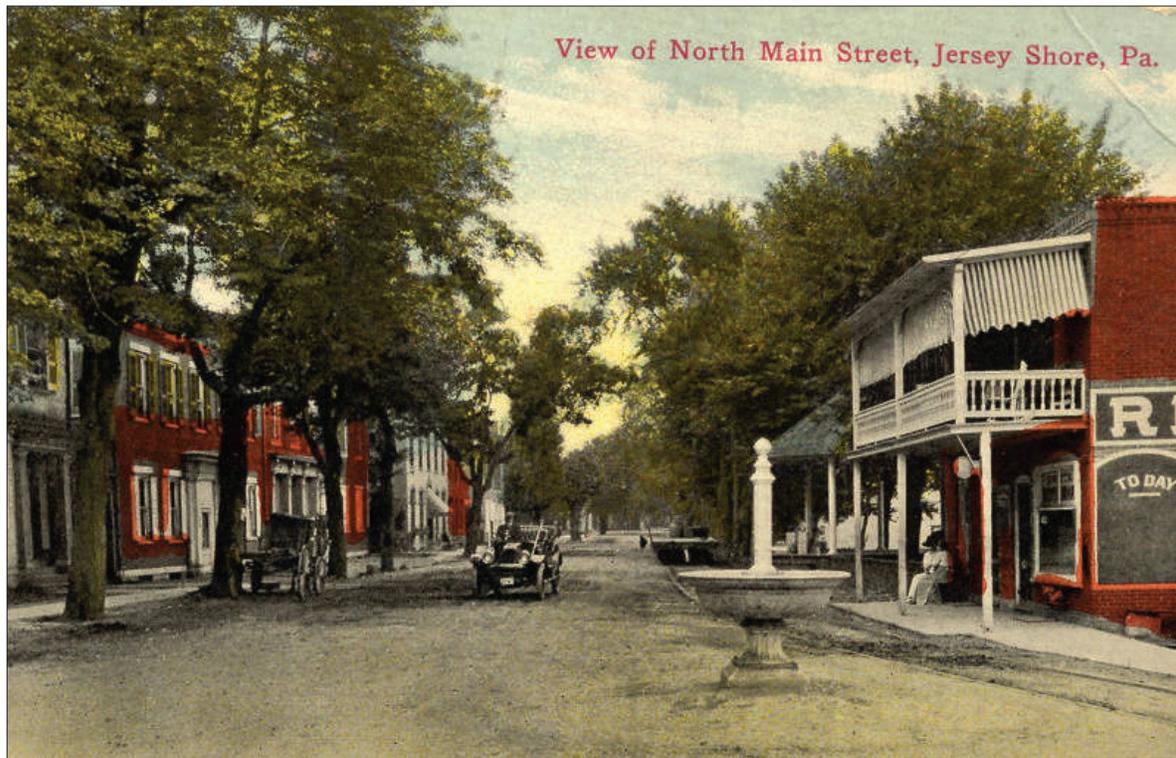


Figure 7: View of North Main Street in Jersey Shore, PA. (Source: James V. Brown Library).

### ***Jersey Shore***

The original settlement of Jersey Shore was laid out on a portion of land mapped in six surveys made as a result of warrants issued in May 1785, after the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, in which the boundary between Indian lands and the British colonial settlements was pushed westward. Previous to that time the land on which Jersey Shore now sits was within Indian land. The original land grants from North to South were: Forrest Situate, Richmond Situate, Richland Situate, and Forge Hammer (Wagner 1974, p2).

The first recorded settler on that land was Reuben Manning, who settled on the north portion of Thomas Forster's land. At that time, Thomas Forster occupied "Long Island" located across the river from what is now Jersey Shore. As their settlement along the river grew, it came to be known as "Jersey Shore" because both Forster and Manning hailed from Essex County, New Jersey which at the time, was considered the 'Jersey Shore'. It was a derisive nickname given to the land by Irish settlers in Nippenose Bottom, located across the river. Although it was given the name "Waynesburg" in 1805, it was officially given the name "Jersey Shore" when it was incorporated as a borough in 1826 (Meginness 1892, p488).

Around 1800, members of the Manning Family laid out the land in town lots (Meginness 1892, p486). At that time, the land was located within Lycoming Township, which was established on August 22, 1785. At the turn of the century, settlement was slow but steady. The first settlers came from New Jersey, England, Vermont and Boston and served as shopkeepers, merchants, tanners, jewelers, milliners, cobblers, and innkeeper (Meginness 1892, p486).

Jared Irwin was the first to open a store, and Gabriel Morrison opened a hotel. Benjamin Uncover opened a blacksmith shop, Sampson Crawford established the first tannery, Leonard Smith set up shop as a shoemaker, Patrick Smith set up a tailor shop, and in 1805 William Miller opened a jewelry store. In 1806 Samuel Updegraff opened a shop for making hats, 1809 Richard Webb a shoemaker. Thomas Calvert was the pioneer cabinet maker (Meginness 1892, p486-491).

The borough was incorporated by act of March 15, 1826. In 1828, Long Island was annexed by the borough only to be detached and annexed by Nippenose Township a few years later. Part of Porter Township was annexed to the borough of Jersey shore by act approved May 6, 1854, and in 1885, 57 acres on the northwestern side of the borough were appropriated (Meginness 1892, p492).

The Pennsylvania Canal (West Branch Division) began construction in 1828 and was completed in 1835. The canal ran

from Northumberland through Muncy, Williamsport, Jersey Shore, and Lock Haven to Farrandville (Shank 1986, p52-53). In Jersey Shore, the canal ran along what is now Pennsylvania Avenue. It was abandoned and allowed to run dry shortly after the Great Flood of 1889. Prior to the canals completion, "the town was on a public road that supported considerable traffic by wagon and stage coach (Wagner 1974, p3).

The convenient access to water transportation attracted many manufacturing operations. A distillery was established in 1838, but failed in 1841. Soon after, Delate and Cilley started a saw mill in the old distillery building. The saw mill was enlarged after it was purchased by Woods and Childs, who established a steam gang mill. That mill was very successful until the canal was abandoned and the operation was forced to move the plant up Pine Creek. In 1851, W.R. Wilson and company established a foundry and machine shop in Jersey Shore (Meginness 1892, p493).

The coming of the railroad to the area brought an influx of people and opportunities. Frank W. Lloyd described it in his 1929 "History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania" as such:

"When the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad was built through this section it passed the somnolent little town on the other side of the river, two miles away. But what did the people care? They had a canal and a stage coach and what more did they want? Merchants enjoyed a good trade and they had no use for fast freights or passenger trains.

But the Railroad did come eventually in spite of them. It came from an unexpected direction and revolutionized the town. The Beech Creek and Fall Brook roads, now a part of the New York Central system, were built and the whole junction made at Jersey Shore. And then like magic the whole character of the village changed almost overnight. The population increased by leaps and bounds. The town grew and prospered as all railroad towns do. And then came the building of the mammoth car shops at Avis just across Pine Creek.

Jersey Shore became the center of an industry that employed, and still does, upwards of 1,000 skilled mechanics at wages which run into hundreds of thousands of dollars annually."(p162)

The final addition to the Borough was a 465 acre parcel which included the cemetery, railroad station, machine shops, and the small village which had grown up around these facilities called "the Junction." These were annexed by decree of June 10, 1891. At that time the population increased by approximately 600 to about 2500 total (Meginness 1892, p492).

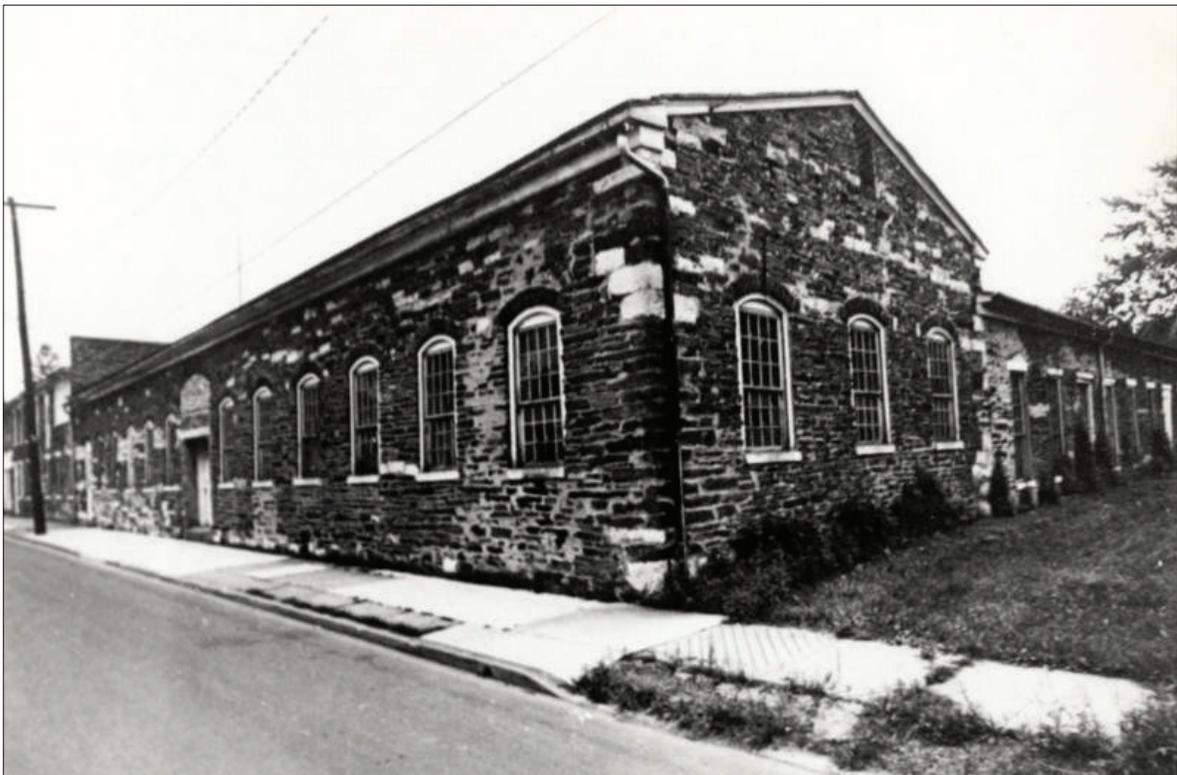


Figure 8: The Foundry- Locust Street- Jersey Shore, PA. (Source: James V. Brown Library).



Figure 9: Aerial Muncy map. (Source: Muncy Historical Society).

### ***Muncy***

The land on which Muncy is located was reported by John F. Meginness in his 1892 “History of Lycoming County Pennsylvania” to have been one of the first places in the West Branch Susquehanna River Valley to have been populated by white settlers. It is named after the Monsey Tribe, which populated the area before their arrival. The Monsey Tribe was eventually driven out of the region and settled in what is now Muncie, Indiana (Lloyd 1929, p167).

The original tract of land, Muncy Manor, was ordered surveyed and laid out by John Penn in 1769. The area was settled soon after. Thomas W. Lloyd states:

“During the gloomy period of the year 1777, settlers... flock[ed] to the West Branch Valley. Most of them came from New Jersey, which had been overrun by both the British and Continental Armies, and they were desirous of settling in a more quiet neighborhood. But, except for the more fertile land which they were enabled to acquire by this move, it is a matter of doubt whether they had bettered themselves materially, for the valley now became under constant menace from the northern Indian tribes.” (p108)

William and Benjamin McCarty, two of four Quaker brothers who came to the area from Bucks County in 1787, purchased a 300 acre tract of land known as the “John Brady Farm.” The brothers split the land, the portion of Muncy occupying the area between West Water Street and Muncy Creek being occupied by William, and the portion between West Water Street and the current southern boundary of the town being occupied by Benjamin. What is now Main Street marked the boundary between the Brady Farm and the neighboring farm, owned by Isaac Walton (Meginness 1892, p468).

In 1797, 10 years after coming to the area, Benjamin McCarty decided to start a town. Benjamin laid out lots on the boundary of his farm, now Main Street; his brother, William, laid out lots on his land, north of Water Street; and neighbor Isaac Walton laid out lots on his land as well. They called the town Pennsborough, in honor of the Penns who first ordered the original tract of land surveyed. For many years, the town experienced slow growth and was “nothing but a straggling village for many years” and as such became known as “Hardscrabble” for many years (Meginness 1892, 468-469).

Almost thirty years after Benjamin McCarty had the idea of starting a town, Pennsborough was incorporated as a borough by act approved March 15, 1826. On January 19, 1827, an act changed the name from Pennsborough to Muncy,

as the named would “be more in accordance with the historical associations of the place, and serve to perpetuate the name of the tribe that first dwelt there” (Meginness 1892, p469). A subsequent act of assembly in 1853, extended the northern boundary of the town to its current location to include additional lots laid out by H. Noble, then known as Nobletown.

In Thomas W. Lloyd’s “History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania,” published in 1929, he describes Muncy thusly:

“...Muncy has progressed slowly but substantially and is today one of the most delightful towns in which to live to be found anywhere. It possesses a delightful social atmosphere and its people are noted far and wide for their culture and refinement. It is located on the Susquehanna Trail about fourteen miles east of Williamsport, and thousands of tourists pass through it in a single day. It is also on the Reading railroad line and the Pennsylvania is on the other side of the river, two miles away, but a bus connects with all trains. There is also a bus line to Williamsport, one to Milton, one to Hughesville and Picture Rocks, and during the summer season, one to Eagles Mere.” (p167-168)

The Pennsylvania Canal (West Branch Division) began construction in 1828 and was completed in 1835. The canal ran from Northumberland through Muncy, Williamsport, Jersey Shore, and Lock Haven to Farrandville (Shank 1986, p52-53). Because of its location on the river and the location of the canal, as well as the abundance of natural resources in the region, Muncy became a small center of commerce and industry.

Saw and planing mills were constructed, and Muncy became a stopping point for timberman transporting logs down the river. The lumbermen patronized and helped to support Muncy’s taverns, hotels, and distilleries. The canal was used for transporting exports around the region. These included hogs, wheat, flour, leather, spirits such as whisky, and the ubiquitous lumber. These industries allowed Muncy to support carriage makers, an iron foundry, drug stores, broom makers, dry goods stores, drug stores, a newspaper, hotels, restaurants, and an opera house which also housed the town’s billiards room (Muncy Historical Society Website).

As a result of cheap transportation, first the Canal then later the Railroad, several industries thrived in Muncy creating “an era of well-being and prosperity for a wide spectrum of its residents” (Ritchey 1979, p9). The Muncy Woolen Mills Company was founded in 1882 and chartered in 1892. In 1891 the company manufactured and sold 30,000 blankets and utilized the canal for shipping and receiving. Average employment ranged from 50-60 people (Meginness 1892, p476). Thomas W. Lloyd described it and its products in 1929:



Figure 10: A red oak log cut near Muncy. (Source: James V. Brown Library).

“The Muncy Woolen Mills, employing about fifty persons, has a reputation which is only bounded by the two coasts. Until very recently, it had been in the hands of two members of the same families for more than seventy years. The company devotes itself entirely to the manufacture of all-wool blankets and its reputation for good workmanship and the high quality of its output extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific and even to Europe. It is in almost continuous operation.” (p168)

The Muncy Manufacturing Company, Limited was a furniture producer which was active at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was established in 1887 and was located between the railroad and the canal. Its annual production value was \$100,000, and it employed between 50 and 60 people (Meginness 1892, p476). Other industries included Waldron Company, employing about 800 men and women, and the Robinson Manufacturing Company, employing about two hundred, both of them engaged in the manufacture of milling machinery (Lloyd 1929, p168).

These are only some of the ventures that established what became known as the “Merchants Era” in Muncy. According to Tom Ritchey, “[A]s a direct result of this affluence, Muncy become recognized during this era, a heyday, for its cultural and educational facilities, and its pervading air of intellectualism. It had become the social and economic center in Lycoming County” (p8). That is until the economic rise of Williamsport during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ritchey describes the decline in the National Register Nomination Form for the Muncy Historic District:

“Slow at first, the decline of Muncy as a center of trade became rapid during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An inevitable switch caused in part by the Civil War from an economic base founded in individually run businesses, to one founded in industrialism and its mass employment, changes the economic and social complexion of the community. Muncy became a “working town” or a “factory town”, rather than a town run by individual businesses. Over the course of a few years the various cultural and educational establishments, and the general air of intellectualism that prevailed a half century before, slowly faded.” (1979, p9)



Figure 11: Grist Mill near Muncy. (Source: James V. Brown Library).



Figure 12: Bank and Post Office in Montgomery. (Source: James V. Brown Library).

### **Montgomery**

Montgomery is located on the north bank of the West Bank Susquehanna River approximately 5 miles southwest of Muncy. Frank P. Meginness described its setting in his 1892 "History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania" using poetic prose:

"There is much bold and beautiful natural scenery in easy view from the borough of Montgomery. Just across the river rears that abrupt range known as Muncy Hills, which has figured in history from the time of the advent of the first white men in this valley; and within their dark and hidden recesses many strange and startling scenes have been enacted. On the west side of the borough line the escarpment of Penny Hill is presented, with its craggy face and overhanging cliffs, covered with stunted foliage and ferns in summer time, and glittering icicles when the frost king reigns." (p532)

The first settler in Montgomery was Cornelius Lowe, who arrived in 1771. At that time, the area was within Clinton Township (Montgomery Borough Website). Following Lowe, in 1783, John Lawson settled on the site of the borough and established a farm. Meginness further described the early years of Montgomery:

"The farm of John Lawson passed through many hands until it finally became the property of John G. Huntingdon, who owned it when the Philadelphia and Erie railroad was graded in 1853. At that time Henry Bower owned the land south of Black Hole creek, and Jacob Herbst adjoined Huntingdon on the north, while the only building on the ground now occupied by the borough was an old saw mill owned and operated by Jonathan Bower, which stood directly behind the Decker block. These facts are vouched for by the Montgomery Mirror, of December 19, 1890. Just below the saw mill, along the creek, was a wool-carding mill owned by John G. Huntingdon. It was a primitive affair, but it supplied a great want in the settlement. The house lately occupied by Miss Lydia Bower was built in 1852, and is the oldest house in Montgomery. This was the extent of the town forty years ago." (Meginness 1892, p532-533).

John G. Huntingdon eventually sold his operations and properties to Robert Montgomery, a prominent farmer and resident who donated some of his land for a train station. The borough was incorporated by decree of the Court of Lycoming County on March 21, 1887 and named after Mr. Montgomery. (Montgomery Borough Website)

As in other communities throughout the region, many of Montgomery's industries were founded on the abundance

of lumber in the region. Early operations included planing and saw mills and furniture manufacturing operations (Montgomery Borough Website). The Montgomery Table Works was a well-known furniture operation of which H.M. Weller was president and William Decker was treasurer. They manufactured tables and other furniture.

In 1853, Samuel Hartzell established a combination shoemaker shop and confectionary in a small, two-story frame building. In 1859, P.M. Barber arrived in Montgomery and established a distillery. It was abandoned in 1869, and was replaced by a planing mill (Meginness 1892, p533). A machine shop was established around 1870 by a stock company, but it struggled until it was taken over by Levi Houston in 1873. It was stated by John F. Meginness that “[T]he remarkable growth and prosperity of the Montgomery Machine Shops have been the wonder and admiration of all.” (p533)



Figure 13: Montgomery Hotel. (Source:Montgomery Borough Website).