

## Hanover's History

The town of Hanover in York County, Pennsylvania was laid out in 1763 around a hub of five radiating streets which led to towns and cities in southern Pennsylvania and in Maryland (Abbottstown, Baltimore, Carlisle, Frederick and York). The Monocacy Road also passed through Hanover close to this central core. This ancient route, originally an Indian trail, was heavily used by settlers traveling from Philadelphia across York County and into western Maryland and Virginia. Because of this lucrative location at the intersection of six major public highways, Hanover became a prominent center of commerce providing goods and services to scores of travelers. In 1852 Hanover's first railroad was constructed furnishing an indirect route to York City (the county seat) and Harrisburg as well as Gettysburg and Littlestown in adjoining Adams County. A more direct line to York was built in 1873 and four years later a line connecting Hanover to Baltimore was constructed. The railroads brought further economic wellbeing to the town and its prominence as a trade center increased. Industries anxious to take advantage of this profitable access to outlying markets began to locate along the railroad tracks in northern Hanover. Because of this economic boom prompted by railroad activity, Hanover entered into its most prolific period of building construction during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The most commonly used architectural styles and forms include Colonial Revival, Pennsylvania German vernacular, Queen Anne and American Four-Square. The boundaries of the Hanover Historic District were selected in order to encompass the oldest portion of the town containing the highest number of contributing architectural resources. Very few buildings from Hanover's earliest years exist today; the oldest is the c. 1783 Neas House. The period of significance for the Historic District therefore begins with this date and continues to 1946 (or fifty years ago as indicated by National Register eligibility requirements).

In 1727 Irish nobleman John Digges obtained a grant from Lord Baltimore for 10,000 acres of land. Digges' Choice, as this land became known, included all of Penn Township and

Mule teams and men paving Center Square in 1872.

Source: *Borough of Hanover*

part of Heidelberg Township in York County as well as acreage in Adams County. German settlers almost immediately began purchasing tracts of this land from Digges and in 1730 the Conewago Settlement was established in the vicinity of the future Hanover Borough. There was some controversy regarding whether this land was in Maryland or in Pennsylvania; the issue was finally settled in 1768 when the Mason-Dixon Line was drawn. In 1745 Richard McAllister, a Scots-Irishman, purchased the tract of land upon which Hanover would later be built. Two well traveled public routes intersected in McAllister's property. One was the Monocacy Road. This ancient trail, originally an Indian path, extended from Philadelphia to Frederick, Maryland. It entered York County at what would become Wrightsville on the Susquehanna River in the northeast and exited through what would become Hanover in the southwest. It was in use for many years before the approximately 35-mile York County portion was officially opened as a public highway in 1739. The other public route, constructed in 1736, led from Baltimore to the Conewago Settlement and was later extended to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This was York County's first official road. It later became known as the Hanover and Baltimore Turnpike. McAllister built a 2½-story log tavern at the crossroads formed by these two roads, the former now called Middle Street and the latter Baltimore Street. This combination tavern, public inn and store became a well-known and popular stopover for travelers including Benjamin Franklin in 1755. The 1745 McAllister's Tavern no longer exists; now on this site is a c. 1930 store (Map 5 Parcel 29-Hanover News Agency at 150 Baltimore Street at East Middle Street).

In 1763 Richard McAllister, by that time a very influential person, decided to establish a town on his property. He accordingly began to divide the farmland surrounding his tavern into lots. The purchaser of each lot was required to build a house at least eighteen feet square within two years of the time of purchase. The majority of these new homes were log, constructed from the hickory trees that grew so



abundantly in the area. In fact the town's first colloquial name was Hickory Town. Much of the land was marshy due to numerous spring in the area. Very fertile farmland emerged once the springs were redirected and the land cleared and drained. McAllister laid out his new town around a central hub from which radiated five streets: Abbottstown (now Broadway), Baltimore, Carlisle, Frederick and York, named for the communities to which they led. This configuration is still in place today. Originally called McAllister's Town, the name was later changed to Hanover in honor of Hannover, Germany since the majority of citizens were of German heritage. The town was an immediate success largely due to its fertile soil and its beneficial location along well-traveled public highways, particularly the Monocacy Road which was in constant use by settlers from the east heading for western Maryland and Virginia. By the time of the Revolutionary War Hanover had 500 inhabitants and by 1790 there were 190 houses and two churches. The New and Universal Gazetteer (as quoted in the Centennial of Incorporation reference book listed in the attached Bibliography) reported in 1800 that the town was both the second-largest and second-wealthiest in York County, containing 260 mostly brick houses, two churches, five main streets, two smaller streets and a spacious center square.

The town continued its steady increase in population and building construction until the War of 1812 when it experienced a slight lull. Hanover was incorporated as a borough on March 4, 1815; there were 900 inhabitants at the time. In the same year a market house was erected on the west side of the central square close to Frederick Street; the intersection was duly named Market House Square. In 1820 the population of the borough was 946; that figure increased by 259 over the next thirty years. In 1852 the Hanover Branch Railroad was constructed, linking Hanover to York City, the county seat. This railroad headed east to Smiths Station, Porters Sideling, Jefferson Station and Hanover Junction. At the Junction it connected with the Northern Central Railway, which led north to York and Harrisburg. This link to outlying cities caused a new surge of growth and development in Hanover. Many of the original log buildings

Residence of Jacob Wirt from 1801 - 1869.  
 Source: *Borough of Hanover*



in the town were torn down at this time and new ones of brick or frame erected in their place. The 1860 map of the borough shows that the railroad by that time also extended to the west, one branch to Gettysburg and one to Littlestown (both in Adams County). In the decade between 1850 and 1860 the population jumped by 425 bringing the total to 1,630. This was no doubt due to the increased economic opportunities brought about by the construction of the railroad.

Progress in Hanover and in many other communities in the vicinity was temporarily checked by the Civil War; however, the town recovered from its losses and continued to grow. In 1870 the U.S. Census listed 1,839 persons in Hanover. Three years later the central Market House was torn down and a park-like traffic circle featuring an elaborate fountain was erected; the intersection was renamed Fountain Square. Also in 1873 the Hanover and York Shortline (now the Penn Central) was constructed. This 18-mile railroad provided a more direct line to York than the 1852 Hanover Junction/Northern Center route. In 1877 the Baltimore and Hanover Railroad created a continuous route from Baltimore to Gettysburg by connecting the Western Maryland and Bachman Valley Railroads (to the southeast of Hanover Borough) with the Hanover Junction/Hanover and Gettysburg Railroad thereby establishing a very important link between Hanover and Baltimore. This route later became part of the Western Maryland's Baltimore to Harrisburg line. Hanover's economy benefited to a very great extent from these railroads, particularly the Western Maryland. According to Prowell's 1907 History of York County Pennsylvania (page 616) "The freight interests of the Western Maryland at York, as well as at Hanover, increased three-fold between the years 1895 and 1907." During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries Hanover Borough was one of the southern Pennsylvania's most active trade centers. Its freight and passenger facilities were as modern as in any other town in the vicinity.

Hanover Borough's population more than doubled from 1870 to 1890. This was partly due to its railroad-related economic

Broadway in 1863 looking from the Square towards intersection of York and Abbottstown streets. High structure on right is Albright Building.  
 Source: *Borough of Hanover*



boom and partly due to the increase in its total are. The original borough boundaries as seen on the attached 1860 and 1876 maps were extended in 1887 to include Abbottstown Street (now called Broadway) and 339 additional acres (from Penn Township). This expanded the borough on almost every side and particularly to the north of the railroads incorporating the most recently built industrial enterprises and residential neighborhoods. Electricity came to Hanover Borough in 1893 and around the turn of the century a comprehensive sewage system was installed. Hanover Borough entered the twentieth century as a vigorously growing railroad town with a post office, several fire stations, police protection, a water company, a sewage treatment plant, schools, banks, stores, industries, numerous churches and residential neighborhoods and other attributes of a thriving community. Its population in 1900 was 5,302; by 1907 it was about 9,000.

The first Borough Manager was elected in 1928 and this helped to consolidate the town's cooperative development efforts. In 1932 the much-needed 46.5-acre Sheppard-Myers Dam outside of town was constructed to ensure an adequate water supply for the community. Twentieth-century residential neighborhoods began to grow up around the edges of the older central part of town. Great strides were made throughout the 1940's, '50s and '60s in the areas of engineering, police and fire protection, street maintenance, storm water drainage, sewage treatment, refuse collection and public area maintenance. In 1962 a second dam (Long Arm) was built and in 1968 the traffic circle in Center Square was removed.

*Source: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places, Continuation Sheet, Hanover Historic District, York County, PA.*

The Market House dating from 1815 until 1872 when it's weakening structure was torn down. *Source: Borough of Hanover*



The Fountain was placed on the Square in 1873. It was purchased by some of the wealthier citizens as a replacement for the Market House. The Fountain occupied the oval until 1904 when it was moved to Wirt Park to make way for The Picket. *Source: Borough of Hanover*

