

HISTORY

The first counties in Pennsylvania were established in 1681 under a charter granted to William Penn by Charles II, King of England. Settlement occurred mainly east of the Susquehanna River until the conclusion of the Indian Treaty of 1736, when the limits of Lancaster County were extended indefinitely westward. These fertile lands were soon occupied by immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany. *(Source: 1987 Dover Township Comprehensive Plan).*

Boundary Formation

It was under the authority of the Lancaster County Court that Dover Township was formed in 1743. It was formed out of old Manchester Township which was so large that it extended into Adams County. The township's name, Dover, was apparently selected because of some Englishman's nostalgia for his earlier home in England.

The shape of Dover Township is irregular with its southwestern boundary resting upon what is now Jackson and Paradise townships. To the west lie Warrington and Washington Townships, while to the east lie West Manchester, Manchester, and Conewago Townships. Its original boundaries were not well-defined, but they included part of what is today Washington and Conewago Townships, and Dover Borough.

In 1770 the area which stretches from the top of the Conewago Hills to the Big Conewago Creek was added to Dover Township from Warrington Township. The Big Conewago Creek forms its present western boundary line. Then, in 1818, Dover residents east of the Bull Road petitioned the York County Courts to form a new township known as Conewago Township. About two-thirds, of this new township came from Dover Township, and one-third from Newberry Township. It is this line along the Bull Road, delineated in 1818, which forms the present eastern boundary of the township. The northern boundary is formed where the eastern and western boundaries of Dover Township meet. The southern boundary consists of a line which originally separated Dover Township from Paradise Township. Today, it separates Dover Township from both Paradise and Jackson Townships. Jackson Township was an offspring of the original Paradise Township. The southeastern boundary of Dover Township is delineated by the Little Conewago Creek up to the point where it meets Bull Road.

The incorporation of the Borough of Dover was the last major change in the boundaries of the township. This incorporation of the town of Dover, as it was then called, took place in 1864 after it was originally laid out by Jacob Joner, around 1747. Since that time, the only changes in the land area of the township that have occurred were due to a few annexations by the Borough of Dover.

(Source: 1987 Dover Township Comprehensive Plan)

Early Settlement

Early in the eighteenth century, Indians from the Potomac River area, Philadelphia, and the Delaware River areas, mingled using the grounds between their settlements as hunting grounds. Smaller settlements were spread here and there and a group of Indians, later to be known as the Conewagos, lived along creeks such as the Conewago Creek, Little Conewago Creek, and Fox Run in Dover Township. The original Indians of this region, the Susquehannocks, had been annihilated by tribes of the Iroquois Nation.

Dover Borough / Dover Township Joint Comprehensive Plan
DRAFT EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

Place names, family traditions, and artifacts substantiate the fact that Indian settlements existed in and around the Dover Township area. At the time of these settlements, though, the township was merely an extension of the wilderness that was part of Lancaster County; which was still under the jurisdiction of Philadelphia. The Indians of the York-Dover area were distributed and had, on occasion, complained to Philadelphia about the white settlers who were crossing the Susquehanna River and clearing the wilderness and planting. It became evident that the settlers were coming into the area to live and settle.

The Palatinate country along the Rhine River in Germany was the origin of nearly all of the original settlers of Dover Township. These settlers came to the new world either directly or by way of an interim life in Switzerland or Holland in order to escape religious persecution. Some of these early settlers of Dover Township were of the German Baptist Church, but most of them were of the Lutheran and Reformed Congregations. The customs of the Fatherland, the church, and the school were brought here by these early German Settlers.

Much of the land in the township was fertile and produced abundant crops. The major source of income for these early settlers was farming. Corn, wheat, and potatoes were the primary crops except in the northern section where peaches and strawberries were cultivated and became an important industry in that section during the early days of the township. Other important industries during the early days of the township were weaving, tanning, quarrying, and harness and wagon making. The sandstone for the ornamentations on the Harrisburg court house was quarried in the township. The township location was ideal for the tanning industry because hides could be obtained from nearby butchers and de-haired with the lime from the West Manchester Township lime kilns.

In 1762, Gerhart Graft was granted a license to open a public house on the road from York to Carlisle for travelers. The same year, Jacob Joner purchased 203 acres of land from Nicholas Joner, and in 1764 this land was laid out in regularly plotted lots for sale. Homes and stores were built around Graft's public house. By 1783, there were 81 persons living in the village of Dover. Various trades flourished including boot makers, weavers, tailors, innkeepers, a blacksmith, a locksmith and a Justice of the Peace. Dover was incorporated as a Borough in 1864, with Reuben Hoffeins as the first Brugess responsible for a population of 500. In 1965, an areas of more than 76 acres, located to the east of the Borough, was annexed.

An early inventory of Dover Township (1783), showed 219 horses, 146 barns, 697 male and 670 female inhabitants; 4 slaves, 7 mills, and 23,811 acres of land. From the early inventory (1,367 inhabitants), the population of the township has shown a slow but steady increase except for two distinct periods. Before and after the turn of the twentieth century the population showed a slight decline while during recent years, there has been a tremendous influx of people into the township.

Several of these settlements of people in Dover Township reach back into its very earliest days of existence. The oldest settlement was Emig's Mill where Dietrich Updegraff took up land in 1745 and where a house of public entertainment existed. Later, a roller mill which originated as a mill in colonial times, flourished here. Also, many Indian artifacts have been found by collectors along the Little Conewago Creek from Emig's Mill to its mouth at York Haven.
(Source: 1987 Dover Township Comprehensive Plan)