Washington was busy place

The pumping station at Barto was erected in 1908 by Ohio Standard Oil Co. to relay western Pennsylvania crude oil to the state of New York. It functioned until around 1950. The buildings, from left to right, are the pump, power and tool houses.

The area that is now Washington Township was part of a 1861 grant from William Penn — who had bought the land from the Leni Lenape tribe — to an Englishman named John Cole. Eventually, the land — in northern Delaware County, Pennsylvania — was surveyed and subdivided and various tracts were taken up by a number of early settlers in the 1730s.

Among them was a group of Swedes and Germans. They enforced the cause of the Reformation and practiced a faith that was as somber as it was intellectual. As the settlers soon discovered, the region's water power was unsurpassed in Berks County.

That power, along with the area's rich natural resources, allowed the successful operation of a large variety of mills, furnace and forges, including what was first known as Ford's Forge and later as the Dale Forge, operated by David Schall. Others included the Mount Pleasant Furnace and Fisher's Forge. The iron industry made the area one of the busiest sections of the county.

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Later, agriculture became the township's main industry. The population in the area increased, the need for a more localized government became apparent and Washington-Township, named for the nation's first president — who had died 40 years earlier — was incorporated in 1818.

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