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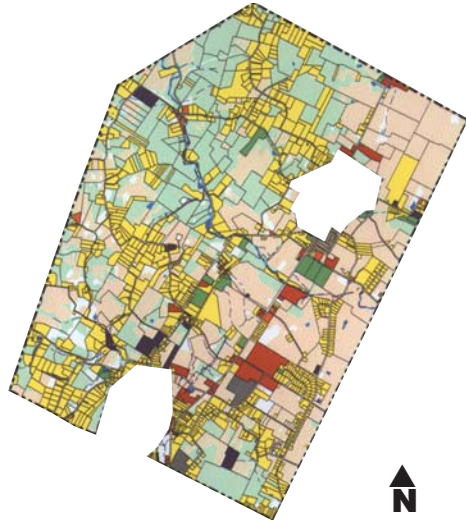
# Washington Township

## Berks County's 250th Anniversary

Next week:  
Wernersville  
Borough

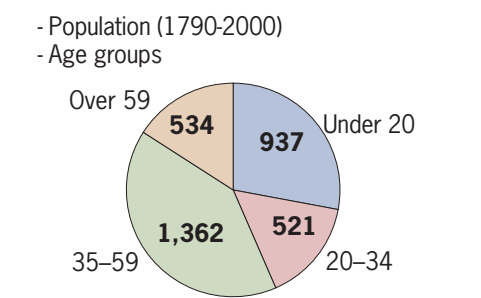
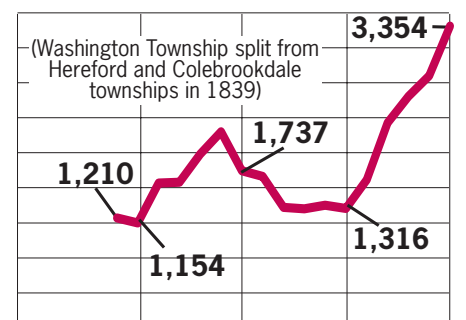
### Facts & figures

**Settled:** 1736  
**Incorporated:** 1839  
**Origin:** Hereford and Colebrookdale townships  
**Total area:** 14.1 square miles  
**Land usage:**



**Legend:**  
 Agriculture (light green), Commercial (orange), Rural (light blue), Commercial recreation (dark blue), Woodland (dark green), Industrial (purple), Single family (yellow), Public/nonprofit (light purple), Multifamily (red), Water (dark blue)

### People:



- People per square mile: 237.9  
 - Poverty level: 2.1%  
**Economy:**  
 - Median household income \$53,241  
 - Median home price: \$113,700  
 - Households: 1,210  
 - Total assessed property value: \$166,700,054

**Government:**  
 - School district: Boyertown  
 - Top elected official: Michael E. Krestynick, chairman of the Board of Supervisors

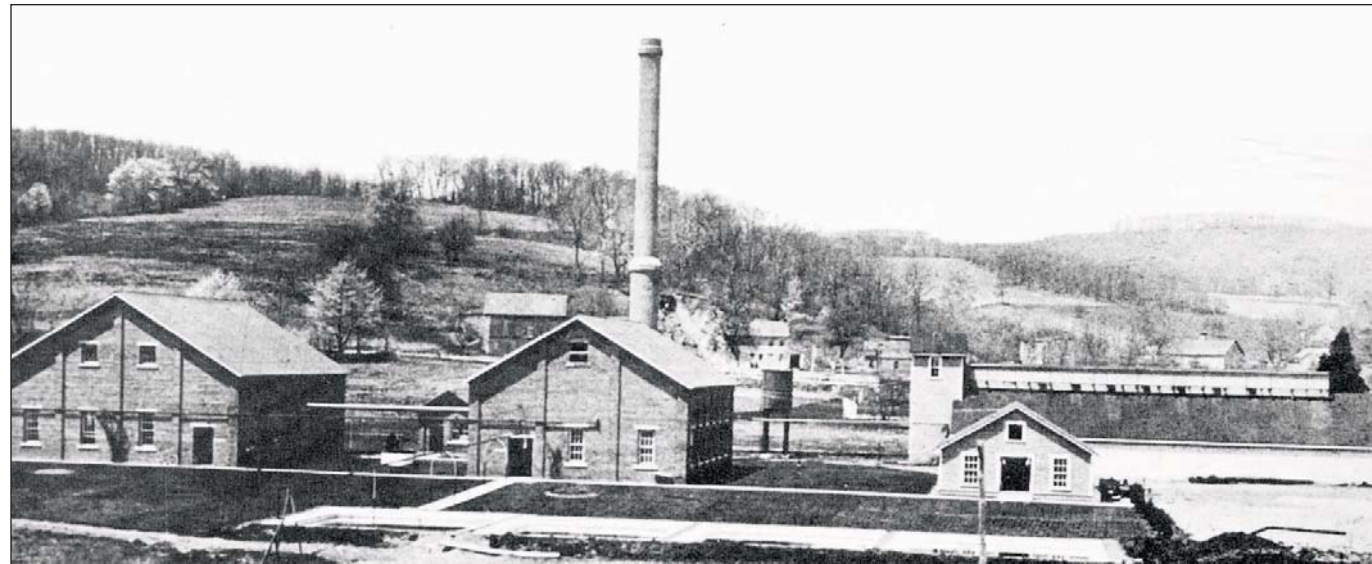
**History:**  
 - Namesake: George Washington  
 - Early churches: Mennonite house of worship built of logs, 1731; St. Paul's Chapel, built 1743; Hereford Mennonite, built 1852; Trinity Lutheran Church, built 1886; Bethany Evangelical Congregational Church, built 1897.

- Oldest buildings: early resident Jacob Stauffer's former home, 570 Niantic Rd.; Barn at 1848 County Line Rd.

**Points of interest:**  
 - National Centre for Padre Pio  
 - Washington Township Monument, Route 100 and Barto Road  
 - Grandview Speedway, Passmore and Wilt Roads

**Did you know:**  
 - Thomas Edison and Henry Ford had financial interest in an iron furnace in the township. Later, Edison established his Ore Concentrating Plant nearby with an experimental 9-ton magnet he invented to separate iron ore from rock. The experiment failed and the contraption was moved to New Jersey.  
 - Washington Township resident Annie Funk (1874-1912) was lost in the sinking of the Titanic.  
 - The township had nine schools for many years, the most of any Berks County township.

**Quotable:**  
 "When God the first breeze stirred, upon a woodland here, the pine tree heard the whisper clear, and oak and tulip too, and all the other trees, the benediction drank, 'Peace sweet peace be unto you.'"  
 - Washington Township poet **Ralph W. Berky**, 1890-1977



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.

## Washington was busy place

THE AREA THAT IS NOW Washington Township was part of a 1681 grant from William Penn — who had bought the land from the Lenni Lenape tribe — to an Englishman named John Coles. Eventually, the land — in northern Colebrookdale Township and southern Hereford Township — was surveyed and subdivided and various tracts were taken up by a number of early settlers in the early 1730s.

Among them was a group of Schwenkfelders — followers of German Kaspar Schwenkfeld, who advanced the cause of the Reformation and practiced a somewhat mystical interpretation of the Christian faith.

As the settlers soon discovered, the region's water power was unsurpassed in Berks County.

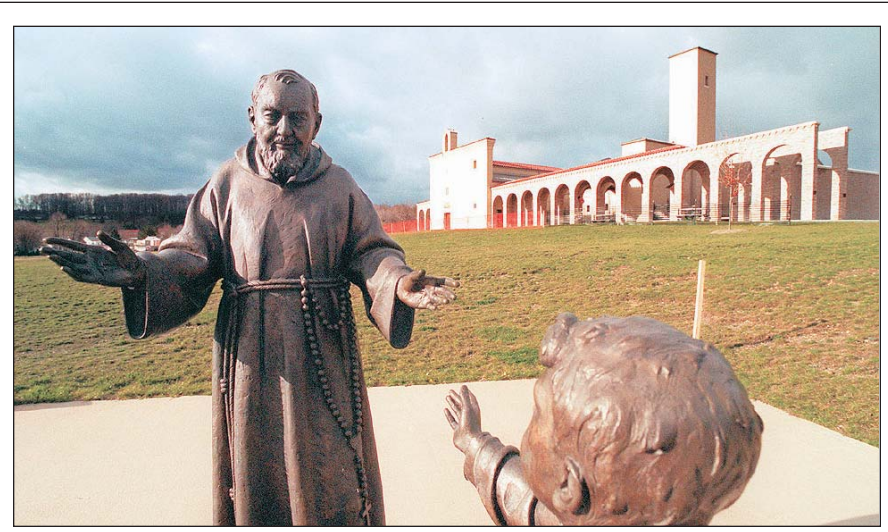
That power, along with the area's rich natural resources, allowed the successful operation of a large variety of mills, furnaces and forges, including what was first known as Focht's Forge and later as the Dale Forge, operated by David Schall. Others included the Mount Pleasant Furnace and Fisher's Forge.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

A foundry in the area manufactured cooking and heating stoves. The water power was also used to prepare whetstones, run a tannery and distill oils.

Later, agriculture became the township's main industry.

As 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 1839.

Early villages included Barto, laid out in 1869 by Thomas Christman, the guardian of Abram H. Barto, after whom the hamlet was eventually named. It started as Mount Pleasant, named after the furnace, which had stood nearby. But the railroad company



A statue of Padre Pio stands at the entrance to the National Centre for Padre Pio in Washington Township.

## Padre Pio center -- honoring a saint

The most popular tourist attraction in Washington Township is the National Centre for Padre Pio near Barto.

Township resident Vera M. Calandra, whose daughter, Veramarie, was healed by the monk in 1968, established the center in his honor.

About 1,000 devotees gathered at the center in June to watch via a 16-foot television screen Pope John Paul II declare the late Italian mystic monk a saint.

Veramarie's recovery from what doctors diagnosed as a terminal congenital kidney disease prompted her

mother to found the shrine.

Then 2 years old, Veramarie had a damaged liver and was near death. After physicians gave up hope, Vera turned to Pio, a monk in southern Italy.

The miracle came just months after Pio blessed her and touched her forehead, Vera said.

She said that a few months after the encounter her daughter's bladder regenerated and she has led a normal life ever since.

The center features a replica of the Italian chapel where Pio celebrated Mass for 50 years.

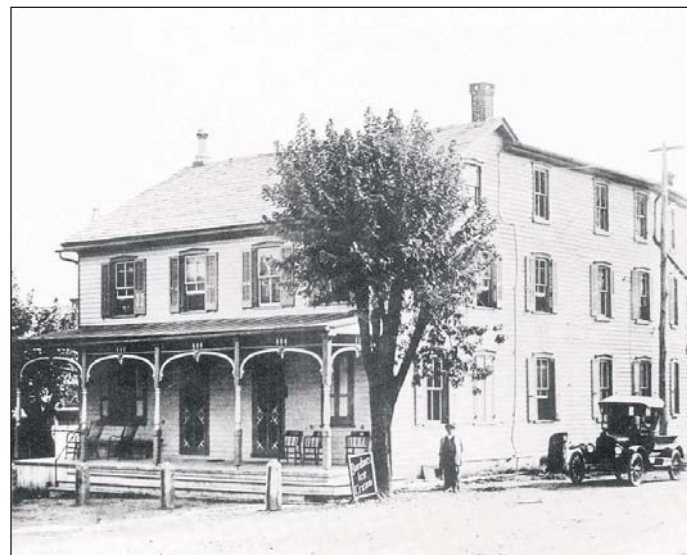
that was erecting a depot in the village changed the name in 1875 to distinguish it from other places with the same name.

Other township villages were Churchville, later changed to Bally, and

Bechtelsville, described in 1886 as "a growing village, with a fine large furnace, mills, several stores and taverns and 60 good houses occupied by 70 families."

Farming remains the townships leading industry.

### THEN



The Barto Hotel, built around 1880, is seen here in 1908. At the time, John B. Baus was proprietor.

### NOW



The well-preserved building is still known as the Barto Hotel.

**Just A Few More Weeks Left...**

**Nov. 11**  
**Nov. 18**  
**Nov. 25**  
**Dec. 2**  
**Dec. 9**

**Wernersville**  
**West Lawn**  
**West Reading**  
**Windsor Twp.**  
**Womelsdorf**

Contact Kristen Barlet at 610-371-5190  
 Deadline is Thursday prior to publication

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**Project editor:** Jeff Kauffman  
**Contributor:** James Gilmartin  
**Research:** Mike Urban, George M. Meiser IX  
**Design:** Bob Schneider