

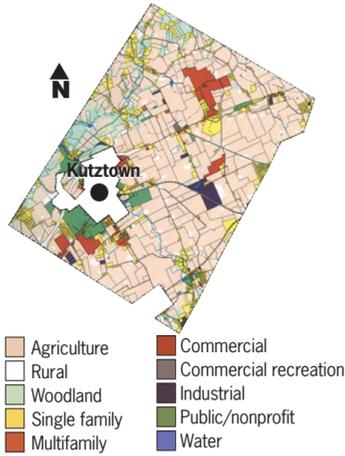
Maxatawny Township

Berks County's 250th Anniversary

Next week:
Mohnton Borough

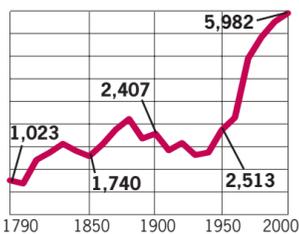
Facts & figures

Settled: 1732
Incorporated: 1742
Origin: Philadelphia County
Founders: Jacob Levan
Total area: 26.3
Land usage:

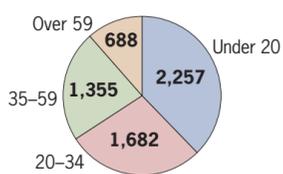


People:

- Population: (1790-2000)



- Age groups:



- People per sq. mile: 288
- Poverty level: 5.7 percent

Economy:

- Median household income: \$35,018
- Median home price: \$101,800
- Households: 1,348
- Total property value: \$165,305,500
- Largest employer: Kutztown University

Government:

- School district: Kutztown
- Top elected official: Carl Zettlemoyer, board of supervisors chairman

History:

- Namesake: Macksithanne, American Indian word meaning Bear's Path Creek
- Famous citizen: Linette Mertz — Miss Pennsylvania, 1995
- Early churches: Maxatawny Church (Reformed and Lutheran); Zion's Church, Evangelical Association

Oldest buildings:

- Hottenstein Mansion: built 1783 now owned by Berks County Conservancy.
- Kemp's Hotel: Built early as 1755, but the main portion of the present structure appears to date to 1787.
- Siegfried's Dale Farm: built between 1719 and 1727.

Points of interest:

- Rodale Institute Experimental Farm, a 333-acre organic farm.
- Kutztown University

Did you know?:

- John Adams is said to have spent the night in Kemp's Tavern, a Maxatawny Township inn a mile east of Kutztown.
- It is believed Count Zinzendorf, a Moravian minister, preached to settlers in 1742 from the balcony of Levan's Mill, near Eagle Point.
- The Centennial White Oak of Pennsylvania or Mammoth White Oak of Berks was located on the farm of J. Bieber Jr. The oak lived for more than two centuries.

Quotable:

- "Like most Pennsylvania Dutch farming communities of the early 1800s, Bowers tolerated no loafers or idlers."
- Township resident **John DeLong** in a June 26, 1986, *Eagle/Times* article.



Photo courtesy of George M. Meiser IX

The interior of the Rothrockville general store looked like a set from a period piece -- complete with potbellied stove. In fact, this photo was taken in 1897, the same year proprietors William Martin Croll and William Smith dissolved their partnership.

Region had farms, mills, factories

Sitting on the northeastern boundary of Berks County along the Lehigh County border is Maxatawny Township, home to rolling farmland and several small towns.

The township's first known inhabitants were the Lenni Lenape Indians. When Europeans arrived in the mid-1700s, some Lenni Lenape stayed in Maxatawny, even after others in their nation had left the county.

Most of the early immigrants were farmers; some became manufacturers of tools used in the home and on the farm. On the Saucony Creek others built grist, saw and clover mills and gun-barrel factories.

During the Revolutionary War, soldiers camped in Maxatawny Township between the residence of John Kemp Esq. and the farm of Daniel Zimmerman. George Washington and his wife, Martha reportedly accompanied the soldiers and lodged in the home of Joseph Gross.

Maxatawny, the largest village in the township, was called Rothrockville for the first 90 years of its existence.

The village was named for Dr. Jonas G. Rothrock, who came to the area from Macungie and purchased four tracts of land. He acquired the first tract in 1829 for \$621 in gold and silver. Soon after buying the land, Rothrock established a public house where he also practiced medicine and served as justice of the peace.

Rothrock acquired more land and even built another public house, but he was a poor business manager and could



Photo courtesy of George M. Meiser IX

The Rothrockville Cornet Band was ready to roll in their bandwagon, parked outside the general store and post office in this 1898 photo.

not keep his creditors at bay. In 1846 one of the hotels he owned was sold at sheriff's sale to Jesse Grim.

Kutztown University is in Maxatawny Township on the edge of the borough of Kutztown. The school was established in 1835-36 as a prep school called the Franklin Academy. In 1860 it became Fairview Seminary, in 1863 Kutztown Seminary and then in 1864 Maxatawny Seminary.

In 1866 it became Keystone State Normal School; in 1928 it was designated

Kutztown State Teachers College. The school became Kutztown State College in 1960 and in 1983 the name changed yet again, this time to Kutztown University.

Today, it is one of the 14 public institutions of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and has about 8,000 students.

As the university and the surrounding area attract modern settlers, the population of Maxatawny is growing, and cows and tract homes now share the same landscape.

THEN



Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Milkins

Bowers Hotel was built in 1820 and with the coming of the railroad was enlarged in 1859. This photo is from the late 1800s.

NOW



Eagle/Times: Richard J. Patrick

Today the Bowers Hotel, still in operation, is on the Historic Register of Berks County.

Timeline

- 1732:** Maxatawny is settled by Johannes Siegfried.
- 1740:** Daniel Levan opens the Kemp Tavern.
- 1742:** Maxatawny Township is incorporated.
- 1817:** George Bohn opens a store
- 1848:** An American Indian burial ground near Kutztown is explored.
- 1850:** A post office is established in Bowers.
- 1853:** Rothrockville becomes Maxatawny.
- 1859:** The East Penn Branch of the Reading Co. Railroad is built and a station is established in Bowers.
- 1863:** Daniel Clader opens a general store in Maxatawny.
- 1883:** William Martin Croll and William Smith enter into partnership to operate Rothrockville General Store.
- 1909:** The name of the village of Bowers Station is shortened to Bowers.
- 1915:** The Fegely family takes over the general store in Maxatawny.
- 1925:** Bowers is renamed Sally Ann Furnace.
- 1927:** Sally Ann Furnace again becomes Bowers.
- 1965:** Kutztown annexes 192 acres of Maxatawny Township after owners of the land petitioned for the annexation. Township supervisors oppose the annexation.
- 1972:** Four out of five members of the township planning commission quit because of ongoing arguments with residents and among board members themselves.
- 1972:** The four Maxatawny Township planning commission members who quit rescind their resignations.
- 1974:** Township supervisors reject plans for a shopping center.
- 1978:** Maxatawny Township supervisors discuss the feasibility of merging the township with Kutztown Borough.
- 1992:** A Kutztown-area landlord sues the Maxatawny Township codes enforcement officer to obtain a building permit, claiming the official is subservient to the wishes of Kutztown University because the township solicitor is a university trustee.
- 1994:** An auto-emissions test center originally planned for a Kutztown neighborhood chooses a location instead in a commercial district across from the airport in Maxatawny Township.
- 1995:** Maxatawny Township resident and Miss Pennsylvania Linette Mertz competes in the Miss America Pageant as a strong supporter of retaining the swimsuit competition.

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Bowers Road & Old Bowers Rd.

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BOWERS HOTEL