

Christiana's Beginnings

1691-1846

The year was 1691 when the settler, John Kemmerly, moved into the area now known as Sadsbury Township. Shortly thereafter, William Penn granted his first tract of one thousand acres which included a Shawnee Indian village.

Indian villages were once located in a number of places surrounding what is now Christiana Borough. One such village was located at the end of Broad Street, near the Williams Run development. It was a large Shawnee tribe who quarried soap stone from a mine located on a hill overlooking the creek along which their homes were located. Pieces of soap stone bowls and other artifacts could be found in this area as late as 1900.

Through warrants issued in 1702, 1703, and 1709, a tract of one thousand and fifty acres, on a part of which was taken up as 'servants land.' Twenty-one servants came from England into Pennsylvania and were each granted fifty acres by virtue of the Proprietary's promise in their homeland. These original settlers were Friends and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.

Lancaster County was formed from a portion of Chester County in 1729. Through this separation, Sadsbury Township, Lancaster County was formed from Sadsbury Township, Chester County.

Christiana began as a settlement in 1775 when Calvin Cooper constructed a fulling-mill, the first of many mills along the banks of the Octopara. It has been held that the machinery used was brought to this country from England. Moore's, Sterrett's, and Taylor's grist mills were erected soon after the organization of the county.

Because of word in 1833 that the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad would build a line that would pass through the area, William Noble constructed a foundry, blacksmith shop, and machine shop and, using the railroad to form a dam breast, a waterwheel-house. All were put into operation in 1834.

In 1844, Hugh McClarron built a warehouse near the railroad and, for some years thereafter, engaged in the grain and produce business. Mr. Noble's foundry continued operation until 1844 when operations were suspended. At this time, the settlement was known as McClarronville.

In the summer of 1845, Samuel L. Denney purchased the foundry from Mr. Noble along with twelve acres of land. He again opened the foundry and started the operation of a machine shop. This shop later became known as the Christiana Machine Company. Because of the successful operation of this business, an influx of workmen were brought to the area. Also in town, were the farm buildings of Samuel Slokom and Zercher's Hotel.

1847-1883

Because of the dissatisfaction of the local populace with the name McClarronville, the town name was changed in 1847 to Christiana, in honor of Christiana Noble, the first wife of William Noble. During the same year, Pownall and Dickinson erected two brick dwellings and a brick store, now part of Christiana Enterprises. During this same year, a warehouse was constructed and a lumber-yard established by the same Pownall and Dickinson. It went through several owners until 1873 when it was purchased by Brinton Walter who enlarged the buildings and increased the capacity of the business. He laid a double track from the Pennsylvania Railroad, and erected coal bins with a railroad track on trestles above them.

The events of September 11, 1851, now known as the Christiana Riot, brought great excitement and national recognition to the area. Blood was shed, one person lost his life, another was severely wounded and many of the town's residents were arrested, placed in jail and tried for treason against the United States Government. Found "Not Guilty," many of those charged went on to be forceful spokesmen for the cause of freedom and worked for the revocation of the Fugitive Slave Act.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Mr. Denney noticed that, because of a shortage of molasses and syrups, manufacturing them from sorghum cane could be very profitable. He had invented a process and obtained a patent for a mill or machine for pressing the juice from the cane. He sold this right to Isaac Broomell and the manufacture of this machinery proved to be an important addition to the articles already produced at the machine company. All of the power for the machine company, until about 1883, had been furnished by water power from the North Branch of the

Octorara Creek. But, by this time it was no longer sufficient and steam power was introduced and used almost exclusively.

In 1882, the National Bank of Christiana was formed with a capital of \$50,000. And by 1883, Christiana was considered one of the most active business towns in Lancaster County. The population had reached an estimate of 800. It had four general stores, one hardware store, one grocery, three millinery stores, two drug stores, two physicians, two restaurants, a bakery, three shoe shops, one merchant tailor, one barber, two tin shops, two blacksmith shops, one agricultural implement warehouse, one coal and lumber yard and three livery stables.

In 1883, the town's first newspaper, the Christiana Ledger, was published by A.J. Melcher and J.M. White. It was a weekly paper of six columns, devoted to local and general news and was printed on a steam-powered press.

1884 - 1894

On August 22, 1893, a petition was approved by the Lancaster County Grand Jury stating that the right to incorporate could be placed on the ballot and a vote taken by those living in Christiana.

"And now, December 4th A.D. 1893, the Court confirm the judgment of the Grand Jury, and declare that the said town of Christiana be incorporated into a Borough in conformity with the prayer of the petitioners; that the corporate style and title thereof shall be 'The Borough of Christiana.'" The incorporation was finalized in January, 1894.

Voting took place on February 20, 1894, and the move was made to incorporate. Those elected to office were:

Isaac W. Slokom	Mayor
Mahon B. Kent	President of Council
James B. Kennedy	Councilman
E.G. Bromell	Councilman
Harry Deves	Councilman
John D. Harrar	Councilman
Brinson Walter	Councilman
Thompson Pennock	High Constable
P.E. Hannum	Clerk
Nathaniel Gillespie	Treasurer

The Council fully adopted the By-Laws on March 12, 1894 and on March 14, H.G. Book and A.W. Moore were hired to make a survey of the Borough limits. The cost for this service was \$8.00.

On September 3, 1894, Andrew J. Melcher was offered the sum of \$450.00 per year to furnish 25 lights of 32 candlepower to be located as directed by Council and for full night service of one hour after sunset and to continue until one-half hour after sunrise. The contract was to last for five years. Full, moon-lit nights were excepted. The first electric bill presented to the Council for one month was \$38.50. The Christiana Electric Light Plant lasted until 1912 when it was sold to the Electric Company of Lancaster. The local company served Christiana, Atglen, Kinzers, and Lenover.

1895 - Today

On January 14, 1895, a lock-up was constructed in the fire hall, located on East Slokom Avenue. The lock-up was on the first floor and Council met on the second floor. This lock-up was used until 1939.

Andrew J. Melcher was given permission to dig up Borough streets on September 11, 1902 in order to lay steam pipes to be used for the heating of homes. It's not known how long his steam heating system lasted but, by 1906, there were 34 electric lights in the Borough. At the same time, Mr. Melcher established a telephone system in town, the first in the county outside the city of Lancaster.

For entertainment, the local band arranged for five concerts to be held on the steps of the bank during the summer of 1913. The burgess was instructed to hire an officer to keep order during these occasions. He was to be on duty between the hours of 7:00 and 8:00pm and was paid \$1.00 per night.

By 1916, the high level of taxes caused much talk among the local citizens. The tax was 35 cents for each horse kept within Borough limits. Since this was the main method of transportation at that time, the people were of the opinion that they were paying too much.

In checking the Borough Council minute book, the Council continued to use a horse and cart of Borough service as late as March 7, 1939.

It was once stated that Christiana was as well and favorably known as any town of its size in Pennsylvania. "The name of the town is associated with antebellum events scarcely less known in political history than John Brown's raid and the Harper's Ferry Riot."

Christiana Borough has remained, to the present, a quiet town with a country atmosphere. The population has remained at the same level over the past twenty-five years and building construction has been limited to the one area of the Borough. Our citizens feel that they belong here and that this is where children can be raised in a proper manner in healthy surroundings.

The Christiana Riot Monument, standing at the corner of Green Street and East Slokom Avenue stands as a silent reminder of the events that once put Christiana on the national map. It reminds those passing that our past residents, long gone from the scene, believed that freedom belonged to everyone and that the law should be a protector of all its citizens.