A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHUYLKILL TOWNSHIP
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On November 4, 1826, the Chester County Court declared, "*...it is agreed that the Township of Charlestown be divided according to the report of the Court and that the Eastern section thereof be called the Township of Schuylkill.*" In 1849, the establishment of the Borough of Phoenixville further defined the limits of the township. Thus, Schuylkill Township is located along the Schuylkill River on the eastern border of Chester County. The Schuylkill forms the township's northern boundary and Mount Misery (also known as Valley Forge Mountain) its southern boundary. To the east, Valley Forge National Historical Park is a green cushion between the Township and the highly urbanized areas of King of Prussia and Devon. Phoenixville is the western border. 2006 marks the 180th anniversary of Schuylkill Township's incorporation.

The Lenape Indians were settled along the Schuylkill River and the Pickering Creek when European settlers arrived. These Swedish and Holland Dutch families named the river "Schuylkill" meaning *hidden river* in Dutch. The first permanent white settlers arrived around 1713. Among these was James Anderson, whose descendants were prominent inhabitants of the township for 150 years and whose homestead and farm remained in family hands until 1955.

Being a rich farmland, opportunities for peaceful prosperity existed during the 18th century. A rich harvest of fish (especially shad) from the Schuylkill River added to the resources in the area. Settlement followed.

The Anderson family was joined by the Moore family who built Moore Hall, an aristocratic mansion of the time. Early inhabitants of the township included Welsh, Quaker and Scotch-Irish, and a few Pennsylvania Dutch families.

Patrick Anderson was a Major in the Continental Army, and was well-known by General George Washington. His son Isaac, elected to the United States Congress, voted for the Louisiana Purchase and was a Presidential Elector in 1816. He lies buried in the Anderson Cemetery on Valley Park Road.

The British Army marched through the township in September 1777 on its way from Brandywine to Philadelphia. They forded the Pickering at the lower end of the Anderson homestead and the Schuylkill River near the mouth of the Perkiomen Creek.

The Anderson Cemetery has been deeded to Schuylkill Township. A plaque has been installed to identify members of the family buried here. First recorded in the Deed Book of Chester County in 1839, eighteen people lie in peace within the stone walls. The last burials were in 1955 and 1968.

During the l777-1778 winter encampment of the Continental Army at Valley Forge, many 18th century iron forges and other commercial endeavors including a textile mill and mining operations functioned in the area. Between the forges, the village of Corner

Stores was the major commercial center located at the intersection of Nutt's Road and White Horse Road. This historic transportation route connected the area with Samuel Nutt's iron furnace in the Coventry section of Chester County. Philadelphia to Lancaster stagecoaches ran through the village and most local township people were dependent upon the village for supplies with the first store opened in 1749.

This Historic Valley Forge Corridor (PA Route 23) continues to connect the village of Valley Forge and the Borough of Phoenixville along a scenic landscape.

After meetings held at the historic Bull Tavern built in 1734, local businessmen worked to establish the Philadelphia to Reading situated along the south side of the Schuylkill River. The Reeves family, owners of the Phoenix Iron Works, pushed for this so that the trains could be utilized to move the iron from their facility in Phoenixville, It did not affect the rural nature of the township with the exception of the Wheatley mines to the west of Williams Corner. Remnants of the Charles Pickering mining venture, the Wheatly mines operated sporadically during the 19th century with indifferent results.

In 1818, the Schuylkill Friends Meeting House was established and continues in service today. Prior to the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, Quaker families in the township aided fugitives and slaves from Maryland and the south. A station of the Underground Railroad existed near Corner Stores in the 1850's. Noted abolitionists are on record for their visits to the meeting.

Some industrialists like the Reeves family and other professional men of the Borough of Phoenixville lived in the township in the late 1800's. An Anderson relative, Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker, was elected governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1903. Galusha Pennypacker was the youngest general in the United States Army during the Civil War and was a Medal of Honor recipient. The Pennypacker farm survives on South White Horse Road.

Trolley lines and the arrival of the automobile began to alter the pattern of life in this part of the country early in the 20th century. A trolley line known as the Phoenixville, Valley Forge and Strafford Electric Railway was used by area residents to reach the Valley Park amusement park on Valley Park Road. The fare was five cents and included entertainment in the park which consisted of moving pictures shown on an outdoor screen and vaudeville acts plus eating and picnic facilities. Later a merry-to-round was added and boating and baseball were enjoyed. With increased use of the automobile, the park closed in 1923.A stone building, once for the purpose of providing food and drinks and comfort facilities, still stands. It is in the process of being restored as a historic artifact of that era.

The auto also brought additional changes in the township. In the 1920's the beautiful countryside began to attract Philadelphians, among them the Clothier family of the department story legacy. They purchased large tracts of land and established country homes here. The Pickering Hunt established by these entrepreneur families had its

headquarters here and enjoyed an international reputation. It later moved to Chester Springs.

In 1928, the Philadelphia Suburban Water Company purchased land along the Pickering Creek and built the Moore Hall Dam. The resulting privately-owned reservoir widened the creek to the proportions of a small lake. This area provides habitat for plants and animals that enjoy the pristine environment found here. The company changed its name to Aqua Pennsylvania in recent years.

McAvoy Brick Company has functioned here for decades and continues to do so in family hands. A new industrial park is in development in the western part of the township and many small businesses and retail facilities thrive in the township.

The suburban expansion of the Greater Philadelphia area after 1945 and the growth of the industrial parks surrounding the township began to affect its population in the late 1950's. Between 1955 and 1965 the population rose rapidly, and in 1955, the first zoning ordinance was passed. The Zoning Ordinance of 1955 and subsequent regulations provided a variety of zoning districts and uses succeeded in maintaining the essentially rural character of much of the township. Current updates and revisions to the ordinances in 2005 continue to manage development.

Schools public and private are part of the landscape. Schuylkill Township is part of the Phoenixville Area School District with the 2006 newly opened Schuylkill Township Elementary School and the Phoenixville Area Middle School within our boundaries. The Renaissance Charter School was established here and Schuylkill is home to the Center for Arts and Technology Pickering Campus, a part of the Chester County Intermediate Unit. The site of the Valley Forge Army Hospital in Schuylkill Township has become home to the Valley Forge Christian College for the past 30 years. Many pre-schools operate in our area, too.

Various religious groups have established houses of worship throughout Schuylkill Township. A regional headquarters for the Girl Scouts of America is located here.

The 1990's saw a population growth as large tracts of open space were converted to residential areas. As the township entered the new millennium, it continued to strive to retain the quality of life all have come to enjoy in Schuylkill Township. A new township building was built in 1999 and houses the administrative offices and the Police Department. The charming 1929 township building has been designated as the Roads Department, a center for emergency planning and the offices of the Schuylkill Township Historical Commission. The Valley Forge Volunteer Fire Company maintains a fully-equipped facility in Valley Forge and has expanded with an annex to better service the western sections of the township.

Schuylkill Township is a township of the second class with a board of five elected supervisors. It covers 9,445 square miles with 39.35 township roadways. The 2000 census reported a population of 6,960. Trail systems continue to be planned and the

Pickering Preserve has been established as part of the open space preservation plan for the township. Agricultural landscapes as well as the historic villages and hamlets are protected. The old barns, National Register homes, school houses and our scenic by-ways all contribute to the beauty of Schuylkill Township. The Board of Supervisors is part of a six-municipality regional planning group and continues to take a broad view of its place in the region as well as Chester County. The scenic beauty and the accessibility to metropolitan areas make Schuylkill Township a very desirable place to live and work. Our supervisors work to enhance the quality of life for all Schuylkill residents.