

Significant Dates in the History of Moreland Township and Willow Grove.

Compiled by Edward Momorella

1682. A warrant was granted by William Penn to Dr. Nicholas Moore for 9,815 acres, called the Manor of Moreland, within Philadelphia County, and later known as Moreland Township.

1687. Nicholas Moore died, leaving his property and debts to his widow Mary and his children, Mary, Samuel, Rebecca, Sarah and Nicholas. To settle his estate, his heirs had to sell most of the property over the next fifteen years.

1703. Sarah Moore, daughter of Nicholas, and her husband William Sluby sold 1200 acres (most of the Willow Grove area of present day Upper Moreland) to land speculators Thomas Shute and Nicholas Waln.

1705. John Dawson, hatmaker, settled in what is now known as Hatboro. Part of his hat factory later became the Crooked Billet Tavern.

1707. Huntingdon Valley area was named in tribute to the then Countess of England.

1711. Old York Road from Philadelphia to New Hope was built through the area, then known as Round Meadow.

1717. The Fountain House Inn, a tavern and livery was built on Old York Road across from Cherry Street.

1718. Thomas Shute's son-in-law, Sampson Davis built a cabin and settled on a hilltop on Old York Road, still known today as Sampson's Hill. His tract extended eastward, embracing the tract now occupied by Upper Moreland Senior High School down to Davisville Road, where in 1727, he established a grist mill on Round Meadow Run. (Later purchased and expanded by Thomas Parry.)

1719. James and Jacob Dubree purchased 250 acres from Shute and Waln and by 1736 had established a double house, a barn and young orchard. The house was located on Park Avenue and is believed to be the first house in the area. In 1950 it was sold to Upper Moreland for use as the Township building and was demolished in 1967 when the existing Township building complex was built.

1721. Surveyor Nicholas Scull II laid out the road from Old York Road in Willow Grove to Graeme Park in Horsham, the residence of Sir William Keith. Once called Governor's Road, today it is known as Easton Road.

1731. Thomas Parry's grist mill, later known as Morgan's Mill was built at the intersection of Terwood and Davisville Roads. This land was originally owned by James Cooper (1711), grandfather of author James Fenimore Cooper.

1732. One of the first industries in the area was a scythe factory built by father and son, James

1732. Peter Kalms, sent to America by the King of Sweden to survey the new land, camped on top of Fraziers Hill and recorded his observations of the area's environment.

1755. The Hatboro Union Library was founded. It was the first in Montgomery County and the third in the state.

1759. The large stone house of Joseph B. Yerkes was built on Old York Road, south of Hatboro, and still exists today.

1762. On the point between Easton and York Roads, an inn was kept by John Paul, which displayed the sign of "The Wagon." The land was originally owned by the Dubrees and while there is no record that they kept a public house there, it is not unlikely. During the Revolution it was known as "The Red Lion" and was used as a hospital for the Battle of Edge Hill wounded. The inn was operated by Joseph Butler, who was arrested by the British in 1778.

1777. Washington's army marched through Willow Grove on the way to meet the British landing at Philadelphia.

1778. The Battle of Crooked Billet took place near Hatboro.

1784. Montgomery County was established from part of Philadelphia County. This included the Township of Moreland.

1790. The population of Moreland Township was recorded as 1,284.

1792. Reading Howell, a mapmaker, was travelling through the area making a map and renamed the area Willow Grove because of the presence of willow trees growing in the marshy land.

1803. John Rex opened the famous Mineral Springs Inn, with adjacent park and lake. It was located on the east side of Old York Road at Easton Road and stood until 1937 when it was demolished.

1811. Willow Grove Post Office was established with Israel Michener as first postmaster. Originally located in The Red Lion Inn, it was moved to a general store at Easton Road and Park Avenue; then the Mineral Springs Inn; the Rush Building on Davisville Road around 1916; to 71 Old York Road in the 1920's; to 31 Easton Road near the Willow Grove Bank; and in 1962 to its present location at 611 N. Easton Road.

1830. The population of Moreland Township was recorded as 2,044.

1839. Ferdinand R. Hassler, Superintendent of the U.S. Coast Survey, who was ordered by President Thomas Jefferson to survey the Eastern Coast, placed a marker on Frazier's Hill (Woodlawn Park), marking the area's highest point. Lost for 100 years, the marker was found in

1978 by U.S. Geodetic and Philadelphia Electric Company surveyors. The marker is now in the Upper Moreland Library.

1839. John Rex, owner of the Mineral Springs Inn, donated land on Davisville Road upon which a two-story stone school house was built.

1840. The Doylestown-Willow Grove Turnpike (Easton Road) was opened.

1845. The first fire company in town was organized and a hose cart was kept in a structure adjacent to the present Ehrenpfort Building. The group apparently disbanded until the organization of the present Fire Company in 1906.

1847. Benjamin J. Morgan took ownership of what has become known as Morgan's Mill at Davisville and Terwood Roads. The mill stayed in the Morgan Family from 1847 to 1954.

1848. Dr. Charles Schiffendecker established the Hydropathic Institute near where Cold Spring School stands today. Patients came from around the world to be treated at the Institute with water from the mineral springs.

1849. The Commonwealth's Public School Law of 1836, originally opposed and resisted by the residents, was enforced and the Davisville Road School was one of five recognized public schools in Moreland Township.

1850. The Township's population was listed as 2,348.

1853. The Germantown-Willow Grove Plank Toll Road (Easton Road to Glenside) was opened.

1857. One of the earliest hand drawn maps of the center of Willow Grove and Hatboro was published by Kuhn and Shrope as part of the atlas for Bucks and Montgomery Counties and the Consolidated City of Philadelphia.

1870. The Cherry Inn was built on Old York Road and Cherry Street. Purchased by the Willow Grove Methodist Church in 1963, it is now known as Aldersgate.

1871. Moreland Township was reduced by 500 acres by the incorporation of the Borough of Hatboro.

1872. A farmer's cooperative creamery was organized and was later known as Tribbels Creamery. Creamery Hall, located on Davisville Road, was used for many local gatherings and meetings. It eventually gave way to J.L. Rush and Sons Wagon and Carriage Shop.

1872. On December 18, the steam operated railroad came to Willow Grove when the North East Pennsylvania Railroad opened the 7.3 mile line from Glenside to Hatboro. The Company was absorbed by the Reading Railroad in 1945.

1872. A phosphate industry was established by William C. Newport, called the Newport Rectified Phosphate Works, and was located on Moreland Road at Davisville, the Abington side, where Linens & Things stands today.

1889. The Willow Grove Methodist Church was organized by George W. Quigley, and a church constructed on York Road and Church Street in 1891.

1889. On September 5, a parade and caravan of coaches with President Benjamin Harrison passed through Willow Grove from Jenkintown to Log College in bucks County. The President had spent the night with friend and Postmaster General John Wanamaker at the Bryer Estate.

1889. The Bucks County Railway opened a trolley line from Doylestown to Willow Grove.

1891. The Pennsylvania Railroad opened the Trenton Cut-Off Line on a ridge through the Township. Later the Pennsylvania Turnpike would parallel this route.

1895. The Peoples Passenger Railway Company (later known as the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company) opened a trolley route (Route 55) from Philadelphia to Willow Grove on May 10.

1896. On May 30, Decoration Day, Willow Grove Park opened. The idea of businessmen Peter Widener and William Elkins, the park was owned and operated by the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company to promote trolley ridership on the weekends.

1898. The Huntingdon Valley Country Club was organized. In 1927, the club moved to its present location in Upper Moreland Township.

1901. On May 25, John Phillip Sousa's band conducted its first concert at Willow Grove Park. The world famous band would perform there yearly until 1926.

1902. The McKinley Baptist Church was established. The church building on Cedar Avenue was built in 1924.

1906. The Willow Grove Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 was organized and chartered after a devastating fire destroyed the former Red Lion Inn and David Nolan's General Store and stable at Easton and York Roads. W. W. Frazier donated a temporary fire house across the street from the Cherry Inn on York Road to house the first hose cart.

1907. A North Springfield Water Company (now Philadelphia Suburban Water Company) main was extended from Abington into the Willow Grove area to provide fire hydrants for the center of town.

1913. On September 24, Abington Hospital opened.

1916. The area for the borough of Bryn Athyn was carved from Moreland Township.

1916. St. Davids Catholic Church was built on Easton Road at Summit Avenue.

1917. Moreland Township was divided into Upper and Lower Moreland Townships.

1917. Henry Specht built the Willow Grove Planing Mill located on a lot behind the Fountain House Inn property on York Road.

1918. Dedication of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit trolley barn and waiting room at Easton and York Roads (now Burger King).

1919. A four room York Road School was built at York Road and Mineral Avenue. Grades 7 through 9 attended this school. Higher grades attended the Abington School.

1920. The population of Upper Moreland Township was recorded as 2,195.

1922. Ground at Easton Road and Park Avenue was purchased from Willow Grove Park for construction of Memorial Community Hall, to commemorate the

veterans of the World War. It also became home of the American Legion Post 308.

1924. The Willow Grove Fire Company purchased its first motorized equipment, a 1924 American LaFrance Pumper. Affectionately known as “Bertha”, the refurbished engine is still on display today at the main station on Davisville Road.

1924. The Upper Moreland Police Department was started with Earl Swayze as the first Chief of Police.

1925. A fire house was constructed at 221 Davisville Road. The building exists today as a business establishment next to the present fire house.

1926. Orchestra leader Myer Davis purchased Willow Grove Park and continued to schedule big band concerts, but this would be the last year that Sousa’s band would perform at Willow Grove.

1929. Upper Moreland High School’s first graduating class of 23 seniors, held commencement at the Grove Theater on York Road.

1930. Upper Moreland was designated a First Class Township under Commonwealth Law, due to the increase in population.

1931. Electrification of the railroad from Glenside to Hatboro was completed.

1935. Leslie W. Harvey organized the American Legion Post Military Band with 18 members.

1938. The Second Alarmers Association and Rescue Squad of Montgomery County was organized. Five members of Willow Grove created the group that would provide relief for firemen, police and rescue workers.

1942. The Federal Government built Fulmor Heights Project No. 1 to house employees of the Johnsville Center.

1943. To accommodate the children of the Fulmor Heights residents, the Federal Government built a nine-room, two-story brick school on Byberry Road, which was later sold to Upper Moreland School District (Round Meadow Elementary School).

1945. The Hankin brothers purchased 12 acres from Willow Grove Park to be developed as the Willow Grove Shopping Center. In 1947, the Penn Fruit Supermarket opened and in 1953, Snellenburgs and the C.G. Murphy stores opened.

1950. The population of Upper Moreland Township was recorded as 8,936.

1951. Woodlawn Elementary School was built.

1954. The Willow Grove Interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike was opened.

1955. North Willow Grove School was built.

1956. The U.S. Navy Band performed the last concert in the Willow Grove Park band shell in honor of John Phillip Sousa.

1958. The old Route 6 PTC Trolley line was abandoned for a bus route.

1959. Upper Moreland Senior High School on Terwood Road was built.

1959. The Hankin family purchased Willow Grove Park.

1960. The population of Upper Moreland Township was recorded as 21,032.

1961. Willow Grove Park Lanes, at the time the largest bowling facility in the world (116 lanes) was built on Moreland Road across from Park Avenue.

1961. Upper Moreland Township celebrated the 250th Anniversary of Willow Grove and the Manor of Moreland (1711 – 1961).

1962. Cold Spring Elementary School was built.

1962. The new Post Office at 611 N. Easton Road opened.

1967. The U. M. Township building and library was constructed on the site of the original Manor house on Park Avenue.

1968. A new fire house was constructed at Abbeyview Avenue and Davisville Road, and the old fire house sold for commercial use.

1970. The Upper Moreland Middle School was built.