

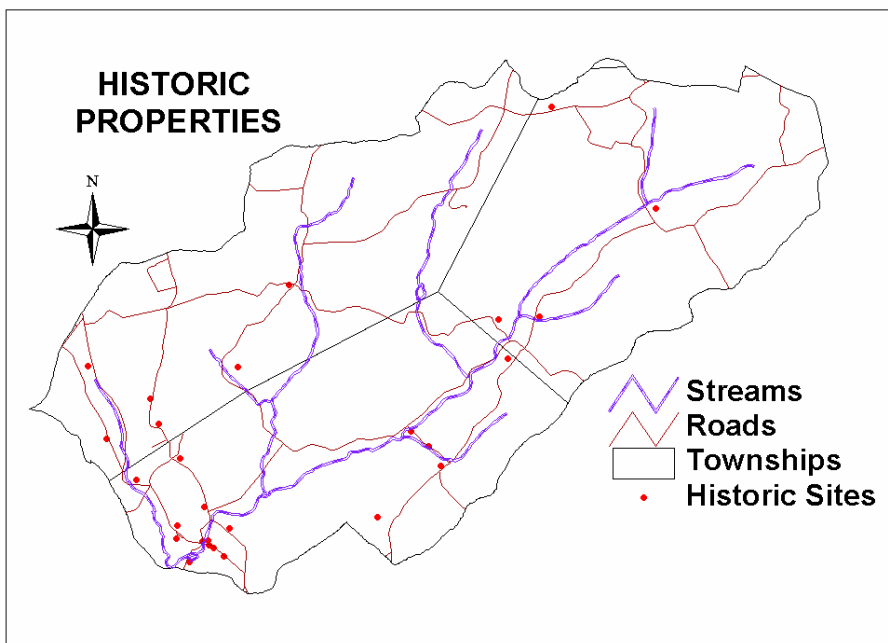
CULTURAL RESOURCES AND SOCIOECONOMICS

History

The rural Historic character of the region provides evidence of its agricultural and industrial prominence in the 18th and 19th centuries. Located at the head of the Oley Valley, the Lobachsville and Pikeville region attracted settlers from German, French and English origins who were related to other Oley Valley families. By 1775, the land was occupied by families named Keim, Hoch, Pott, Lobach, Lee, Oyster and Motz.

Lobachsville is a small country village whose central core preserves its eighteenth century heritage in its stone buildings, a house, former hotel and former store. Spreading out from this crossroads setting are several brick houses of the 1890's and several farm properties, and a historic gristmill. This is not a typical Pennsylvania German linear village with uniform small lots, but a sprawling rural settlement area with lots from one-half acre to 20 acres, replete with barns, outbuildings, gardens, and fields. Because of its well-preserved 18th and 19th century heritage, the Lobachsville – Pikeville region was determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a rural historic district.

In addition to supporting the agricultural and milling center around Lobachsville, the waters of Pine Creek were used to power iron works established by Jacob Leshner in 1793, and later by Reuben Trexler, Jacob Deysler and Francis Heilig. Iron mines were established along Mine Road, and the extensive woodlands were used for charcoal production for the iron furnace and forges. These were important sites at the time Berks County led Pennsylvania in the number of iron-works in the early 1800's.



The map on this page shows the location of historic sites in the watershed, which are listed in the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission Historic Sites Inventory. These sites were documented in the Berks County Conservancy's Historic Sites Survey during the 1980's.

Population

The Pine Creek watershed has retained its historic landscape patterns more successfully than other eastern Berks County regions, due largely to its topography and ownership patterns. Most of its land has severe development constraints such as uplands with steep slopes, rocky soils and dense forest cover, and lowlands with extensive wetlands and poorly drained soils. Also, much of the land is held in large tracts where owners have not been interested in developing their land. On the other hand, the three watershed municipalities have undergone dramatic growth during the past decade. Comparison of population statistics between the 1990 and 2000 Census counts illustrates that Rockland Township grew by 40%, Pike by 23%, and District by 20%. The growth is due to the increasing number of residential subdivisions within commuting distance of Reading, Allentown, and other employment centers, both inside and outside of Berks County. Housing is more affordable than in the counties to the east, hence, the eastern section of Berks County has become a target area for developers of affordable housing tracts.

An analysis of population trends undertaken for the Schuylkill Watershed River Conservation Plan projects greater than 30% growth for this general region between 1990 and 2010. The Upper Manatawny region was identified as a *most threatened* area for continued population growth in the Schuylkill River watershed. This projection serves as a warning to Pine Creek and its adjacent watersheds to implement watershed protection plans while there is still time to guide growth rather than react to it.

Land Ownership

Berks County Tax Map parcels are shown on the map to the right. The section of the creek along Bertolet Mill Road including the watershed land in Oley Township is not included in this map.

