

## Jackson Township History

Jackson Township was established in 1854 from portions of Cranberry and Connoquenessing Townships. There had been thirteen townships prior to that time. During 1853 and 1854, Cyrus E. Anderson presided over a group to assist people in recognizing the need for new townships in Butler County. A petition to create ten new townships each 5 miles square was submitted. Opposed to this action were three existing townships: Buffalo; Middlesex; and Cranberry. These townships asked that the petition to create new Townships be set aside. However, their request was denied. What resulted was a general sub-division of Butler County that established a total of thirty-three (33) townships. All but three of these townships were nearly 24 square miles in area. Jackson was one of the newly created townships. It was named for President Andrew Jackson who had served two terms as President of the United States from his election in 1828 through 1836.

Jackson Township is in the Western part of Butler County. It is bounded by Lancaster Township on the north, Forward Township on the east, Cranberry Township on the south and Beaver County on the west. Its soil was suited for agriculture, and it was rich in minerals, such as coal, oil, iron ore and limestone. Timber had also been an early resource.

Within the Township are three towns incorporated as boroughs: Harmony; Zelianople; and Evans City. Because these three towns lie geographically within Jackson Township, their histories overlap.

Harmony was created in 1805 by George Rapp and his followers. They organized the Harmony Society. Members came from Germany. Some came ahead to build houses, and the town was ready in February of 1805. In 1814, the town was purchased by Abraham Ziegler and the Harmonites moved to New Harmony, Indiana. Harmony was incorporated as a borough in 1838.

Zelianople was developed in the early 1800's by Detmar Basse, who named the town after his daughter, Zelie. Zelianople was incorporated as a borough in 1840.

Evans City was not incorporated as a borough until 1882. Thus its history is also part of the history of Jackson Township. Evans City was first called Boggs Mills and then became Evansburg for its founder. The village was laid out in 1882 by a surveyor named William Purviance for Thomas B. Evans, who had bought 200 acres of the Boggs farm to erect the town. Evans was a millwright and, outside of the Boggs residence, had the first house in the village. Robert Boggs had come to the area from Allegheny County in 1800. He settled on a farm of about 475 acres on the Breakneck bottom lands. He was a millwright in addition to being a farmer. Breakneck Creek runs through Evans City. Tradition says that the site of Evans City had once been an indian village, but it was most likely just a temporary encampment. The aborigines named the creek Big Beaver Run. Later the name was changed to Breakneck Creek because a horse allegedly fell and broke its neck on a stoney path along the creek.

Earliest settlers in the area that was to become Jackson Township are not known. The earliest settlements for which there is an accounting were on the Breakneck in 1800, Zelenople in 1802-3 and Harmony in 1805. People who settled here were largely German and "Pennsylvania Dutch". The "Pennsylvania Dutch" came mainly after the Harmonites left Harmony in 1815.

James Magee, born in 1769, was from County Down Ireland. He came to the Connoquenessing Valley in 1797 and was one of the first settlers. He had thirteen children. William Martint also from Ireland, came to the Breakneck area near Evansburg in 1797. He had eleven children. By 1803, other settlers were: Michael Martin William's brother; David Young; Thomas Wilson; Thomas Scott; John Dunn; James Donaldson; Detmar Basse (also known as Dr- Muller or Miller); Morris and Phillip Covert; Joseph Morris; Daniel Fieldler; and George Rapp.

Later Settlers were: John Nixon; John Fleming, teacher; Jacob Kelker; Samuel Beam; Abraham Ziegler; Jacob Swain; Tjomas Harper; Jonas Hartzell; Lewis Gunsz; John Dambach; George and Henry Marburger; Henry Stokey; Dr. Adam Weiser; the Passavants; the Buhls; the Muntzs; the wises; the Allens; and many others.

The early industries in the area to become Jackson Towhship were: agriculture; the Muller saw mill (1804); grist mill (1806); Bassenheim furnace (1814); and numerous tanneries and distilleries. The first manufacturing industry in Jackson Township was the Muller saw mill. Muller then had a grist mill erected in 1806. The Herr mill was built by John Herr. It changed ownership in 1857, becoming the property of Albert Seidel and Joseph Schwartz. Schwartz sold out to Seidelr and upon his death in 1880, the mill went to Seidel's sons. In 1889, Harper and Keefer took over, with Harper becoming the sole owner in 1892.

The Economy grist mill was erected on Scholar's Run in 1806 or 1807. There was a distillery on the Little Connoquenessing.

In 1837, David Ziegler and Aaron Schontz converted the big barn of the Economites into a steam flouring mill. Later, Jacob Ziegler erected a distillery above Harmony.

The Bassenheim furnace was established by Detmar Basse Muller in 1814 and he operated it until 1818r when he returned to Germany. P. L. Passavant was the actual director of work at the furnace from 1816 to 1818. Daniel Beltzhoover and Co. owned the furnace from 1818 to 1824 when it was closed. By 1826, Beltzhoover owned the farm where the ruins of the furnace stood. The bellows worked by water power until the dam gave way. A steam engine was then introduced.

The Wilson salt works was established at Harmony in 1816 and was carried on in conjunction with the salt well on Yellow Creek.

In the Harmony area, there were several tanneries and distilleries. This became an area for people from Butler, Beaver and Armstrong Counties to exchange farm products for flour, groceries, whisky and leather.

Detmar Basse brought the first Merino sheep here in 1807. People from the eastern states came to purchase them at enormous prices.

A little piece of Jackson Township is famous. Not many people realize that the Evans City Cemetery is located in Jackson Township and partially in Forward Township. It is not in Evans City at all. The Evans City Cemetery was the cemetery used in the film, "The Night of the Living Dead". The scenes were shot in November of 1967. The cemetery was the last scene filmed. John Russo, who authored the book, "The Complete Night of the Living Dead filmbook", said that he wanted to identify the cemetery because everyone swears that the cemetery in the movie is from his/her hometown. The film premiered in Pittsburgh on October 1, 1968.

The railroad brought vacationers for boating and swimming on Connoquenessing Creek. The railroad also took milk from farmers to Pittsburgh.

There was a Big Harmony Fair on 18 acres across the road from the Drover's Inn. Around 1875, the fair was staged by Connoquenessing Valley Agriculture Association for the counties of Armstrong, Beaver and Butler. The fairgrounds were then used for farming. The Jackson Manor housing development is now there. Next to Jackson Manor is the one-room Schontz Schoolhouse.

In the early 1920's, work camps housed men who rebuilt and paved Rt. 68 between Zelienople and Evans City. Jackson funded the Rt. 68 paving through a bond issue. Route 19 was paved from the Harmony bridge to Scott Ridge Road in 1925. Until then, Mercer Road was dirt. In 1936, Rt. 19 was rebuilt, bypassing Harmony when a bridge was built over the Connoquenessing at Zelienople. Many roads were named for early families that lived on or near them. Roads have also been named for the town or towns the roads connect. Some are named for schools, which were once named for the family that created them. In the mid-1800's, the road from Cranberry to Zelienople was made of planks. However, money was scarce and the road was not properly cared for. It rotted and fell apart. Tollgate Road, which intersects Rt. 19 and Old Perry Highway, is a reminder of the plank roads. In 1857, those who did not pay the toll would be chased. Route 19 (Perry Highway) was the path for troops who hauled

supplies for Commodore Perry's fleet at Erie in 1812. Franklin Road follows the Vanango Path from Pittsburgh to Erie via Venango, now Franklin. Logstown Path brought George Washington through Zelenople and Harmony on his way to Fort Le Boeuf near Erie in 1753.

After Basse bought 10,000 acres in 1802, he had a few roads cut through the wilderness and had a castle built on a hill overlooking Zelenople. Later George Rapp bought half of the Basse land. The Harmonites built the settlements of Ramsthal (Ramsdale) and Edenau in Jackson. Edenau became known as Harmony Junction when the trolley came.

There was a power plant along Rt. 68 near where Berry Metals is. The electricity was used for the trolleys. Coal from nearby hills was hauled to the surface by mule teams to fire up the plant.

The following is from the history of Franklin Park. The Venange Trail connected Fort Duquesne in Pittsburgh with Fort Mocaule at Venango (now Franklin). The present Rt. 19 was built in 1932. The first passenger train on the Pittsburgh and Western Railroad reached Zelenople on January 1, 1879. The repair shops were located here.