

A TIMELINE OF BUCKS COUNTY HISTORY— 1600s-1900s

1600's

Before c. A.D. 1609 - The native peoples of the Delaware Valley, those who greet the first European explorers, traders and settlers, are the Lenni Lenape Indians. Lenni Lenape is a bit of a redundancy that can be translated as the “original people” or “common people.”

Right: A prehistoric pot (reconstructed from fragments), dating 500 B.C.E. to A.D. 1100, found in a rockshelter in northern Bucks County. This clay vessel, likely intended for storage, was made by ancestors of the Lenape in the Delaware Valley. Mercer Museum Collection.



1609 - First Europeans encountered by the Lenape are the Dutch: Henry Hudson, an Englishman sailing under the Dutch flag, sailed up Delaware Bay.

1633 - English Captain Thomas Yong tries to probe the wilderness that will become known as Bucks County but only gets as far as the Falls of the Delaware River at today's Morrisville.

1640 - Portions of lower Bucks County fall within the bounds of land purchased from the Lenape by the Swedes, and a handful of Swedish settlers begin building log houses and other structures in the region.

1664 - An island in the Delaware River, called *Sankhickans*, is the first documented grant of land to a European - Samuel Edsall - within the boundaries of Bucks County.

1668 - The first grant of land in Bucks County is made resulting in an actual settlement - to Peter Alrichs for two islands in the Delaware River.

1679 - Crewcorne, the first Bucks County village, is founded on the present day site of Morrisville. The village was built by a dozen families (mostly English Quakers). This original village has completely vanished and its name no longer appears on a map.

1681 - William Penn asks King Charles II of England for a tract of unexplored wilderness in the New World in lieu of the 16,000 pounds he owes the Penn Estate. Penn becomes the sole proprietor of the largest piece of land ever owned by a British Citizen. The territory become known as Pennsylvania, meaning “Penn's Woods,” though Penn had originally preferred the name “New Wales.”

August 3, 1682 - Formal beginning of the colonial government. William Penn sends his cousin, William Markham, to explore and govern the newly acquired territory. Markham is ordered to summon a council that includes existing inhabitants (mostly Swedish and Dutch with a few Finns and English).

July 15, 1682 - William Markham negotiates Penn's first purchase of land from the Lenape Indians. The purchase includes all of present-day Bristol, Falls, Middletown, Lower and Upper Makefield, Newtown, and some of Wrightstown – over 8,000 acres.

October 1682 - William Penn arrives in Pennsylvania, and views the site chosen for his manor house of “Pensbury” in Bucks County.

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November 1682 - William Penn makes his Treaty of Friendship with the Lenape Indians under the “Great Elm Tree” at Shackamaxon (now the Kensington section of Philadelphia).

Left: “William Penn’s Treaty with the Indians,” Edward Hicks, Newtown, Bucks County, 1840-1845, Mercer Museum Collection.

November 1682 - Penn divides his land into three original counties: Bucks, Philadelphia and Chester. Bucks County received its name from Buckinghamshire, the county in England where Penn’s family seat was located.



1683 - William Penn begins construction of his home, Pennsbury Manor, along the Delaware River in Falls Township.

Left: A small surviving remnant of Penn’s manor, “Pennsbury.” This is a wooden baluster or pendant—an architectural fragment from the manor house. Virtually nothing else original remains of Penn’s original home along the Delaware. Mercer Museum Collection.

May 2, 1683 - The first Monthly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Falls was held. This was the first officially held Quaker meeting in Bucks County. The numbers of Quakers grew rapidly, and soon Philadelphia and Middletown Township established meetings as well.

1700’s

1718 - William Penn dies in England, leaving the colony of Pennsylvania to his sons Thomas and John Penn.

1720’s - The “Log College” is built and ran by William Tennent. It was the only higher education institute in Pennsylvania at the time. It only last 20 years but has great influence.



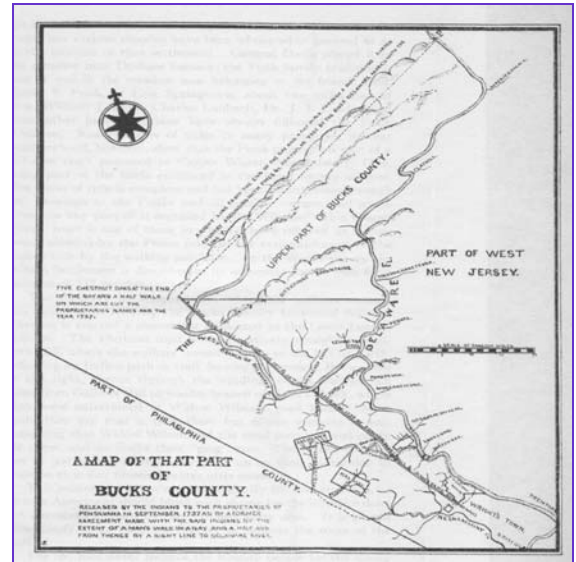
1727 - The Durham Iron Company is formed, operating one of the earliest blast furnaces in Pennsylvania. The extraction of iron from ore, and the production of cast iron becomes Bucks County’s first full-scale industry. Durham produces plates for stoves and various domestic implements, as well as pig iron—raw material for iron casting or conversion into wrought iron.

Left: Cornerstone from the Durham Iron Furnace, Durham Twp., Bucks County, 1727. Mercer Museum Collection.

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1737 - Agents for the sons of William Penn negotiate a questionable land transaction - “The Walking Purchase” - with the Lenape Indians, resulting in a huge swath of southeastern Pennsylvania being opened to European settlement. The Lenape believe that they have been cheated out of their most valuable remaining lands along the Delaware River.

Right: Map of the “Walking Purchase,” showing the area of Pennsylvania extending from Wrightstown to present-day Port Jervis on the New York border that was taken from the Lenape in this land grab.



1754-1763 - Bucks County suffered little direct impact from the French and Indian War, waged in America between the global powers Britain and France, and their Native American allies. However, it was a Bucks County event—the Walking Purchase—that had a significant influence on the War. The Lenape people who had been displaced by what they saw as the theft of their ancestral lands were now openly hostile to the British and more than willing to fight with the French. During the War, the family of Edward Marshall (who had been a party to the execution of the Walking Purchase Treaty) was attacked repeatedly. At their homestead in Tinicum Township, Marshall’s wife and two children were killed in these reprisals.

Below: The rifle of Edward Marshall, attributed to Andreas Albrecht, Christians Spring, Pa., c. 1760. Marshall, one of the participants in the so-called “Walking Purchase” of 1737, is alleged to have used this rifle to help defend himself and his family from attacks by Native Americans in the latter years of the French and Indian War. Mercer Museum Collection.



July 1774 - A public meeting is held in Newtown in response to the Boston Tea Party. Most Bucks County citizens agreed that the British Parliament made laws affecting the colonies without the colonies consent. Still, there was a strong conservative base in the government and Quakers were resistant to aggressive opposition to the English crown.

October 1774 - The Continental Congress produces the “Association of 1774,” calling upon the colonies to unite in refusing imports, export or consuming British goods. It also authorized counties and localities to elect committees to ensure these provisions were carried out.

June 1775 - Following the first shots of the Revolution at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, the Continental Army is formed. George Washington is elected commander-in-chief.

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October 1775 - Augustine Willett of Bensalem Twp., Bucks County, become captain one of the Pennsylvania Battalion companies. His company is sent off to take part in the American offensive against Canada. Later Willett rises to the rank of Brigadier General of militia.

Left: Uniform Coat of Gen. Augustine Willett, 1780s, Mercer Museum Collection.

July 1776 - At the Pennsylvania State House (“Independence Hall”) in Philadelphia, the Continental Congress declares its Independence from Great Britain.

Three of the signers of the Declaration have Bucks County connections: Gregory Taylor worked at Durham Ironworks as early 1754 and was Colonel of the Bucks County Associators; Robert Morris was a famed financier of the Revolution and owned land in Falls Township; and George Clymer was a prosperous merchant who lived in Morrisville.

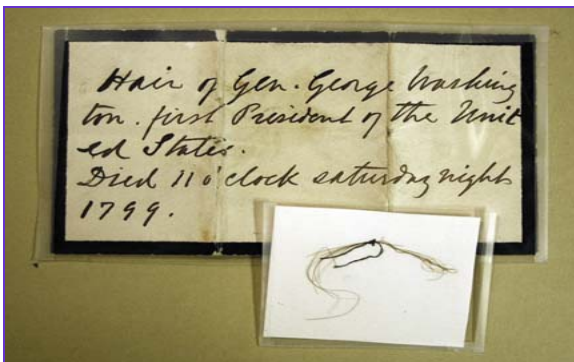
December 25, 1776 - On Christmas night, George Washington leads his army across the Delaware River to make a surprise assault on the Hessian garrison at Trenton. The surprise is complete and helps revive the sagging fortunes of the American cause.



Right: “Washington at the Delaware,” Edward Hicks, Newtown, Bucks County, c. 1840. Mercer Museum Collection.

August, 1777 - Washington’s army, a total of 11,000 men, encamps in Warwick Township, Bucks County. Making his headquarters at the home of Hannah Moland, Washington is joined there for the first time by the Marquis de Lafayette and the Polish nobleman Casimir Pulaski, both of whom come to play important roles in the American cause.

May 1, 1778 - The Battle of Crooked Billet - Named after a tavern and tavern sign in the village now known as Hatboro, this engagement was a British victory. Troops under American general John Lacey were taken by surprise and forced back deeper into Bucks County.



June 20, 1778 - Washington’s army passes through Doylestown, a stop in his last march through Bucks County on his way to defend Philadelphia. Washington stays one night in Jonathan Fell’s house, about a mile east of the center of town.

Left: A purported strand of the hair of General and President George Washington, taken apparently while on his death bed in 1799. Mercer Museum Library Collection.

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1780 - Pennsylvania passes an *Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery*. The 1790 Federal Census records 581 free blacks and 261 slaves among the county's more than 25,000 citizens. By 1810 eleven African-Americans remain as slaves in the county.

Right: Bucks County Register of Slaves, 1783-1830, Bucks County Archives, collections of the Mercer Museum. With the Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery came the requirement that slave owners register their slaves with the county governments. Under the law, the importation of slaves into Pennsylvania was banned, and the children of slaves became indentured servants required to work for their masters until they reached the age of 28, when they would be freed.

Master's Name	Slaves	Sex	Years Old
Charles Garrison	Abrem	Male	30
	Stace	Male	20
	Tom	Male	7
Richard Leedom	Hannah	Female	8
Gerardus Wynkoop	Floa	Female	14
Adam Barr	Catharine	Female	29
	Rachel	Female	5
	Sam	Male	1
John Solomon	A Slave for		
Thomas West	Jean	Female	4
John Ramsay	Matt	Female	44
	Patt	Female	8
	Peter	Male	6
	Hannah	Female	2

November 21, 1787 - Pennsylvania votes to ratify the Constitution. Bucks County residents Gerardus Wynkoop, John Chapman, Valentine Opp and Samuel Foulke join with other Pennsylvanians to approve the document establishing the new American government.



1781-1788 - A group of Tory sympathizers and outlaws who terrorized southeastern Pennsylvania, the Doan Gang operated for several years toward the end of the Revolution and afterwards. The gang originated and often returned to Bucks County. Involved in a string of robberies with targets that included tax collectors, militia officers, and government treasuries, most gang members were eventually rounded up, killed, hanged or exiled to Canada.

Left: Powder Horn of Moses Doan, 1771, Collection of the Mercer Museum. Moses served as one of the influential ringleaders of the Doan Gang.

August 22, 1787 - Bucks County resident John Fitch demonstrates the first full sized steamboat on the Delaware River. However, it is Robert Fulton, with his line of commercially successful steamboats on the Hudson River, who eventually gains widespread recognition for the invention.

Right: Model of John Fitch's Steamboat, Nobel F. Beacham, Lahaska, Bucks County, 1960s, Collection of the Mercer Museum.



1798-99 - "Fries' Rebellion" - Opposition to the assessment of a direct federal tax on individual citizens leads to a militant challenge to the authority of the new national government in northwestern Bucks County. Led by John Fries and others, the uprising is eventually put down by federal troops, and the trial and conviction of its ringleaders.

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1800's

May 19, 1800 - Joseph and Robert Smith, brothers belonging to a Quaker family in Buckingham Township, invent and patent a plow with a cast iron, rather than wooden, moldboard. This tool helps to revolutionize farming.

1804 - Asher Miner begins publishing the *Pennsylvania Correspondent and Farmer's Advertiser* in Doylestown. In 1824 it became the *Bucks County Patriot*, and in 1827 the *Bucks County Intelligencer*, the ancestor of today's *Intelligencer* newspaper.

December 1808 - Construction begins on the Bucks County "Poorhouse," now the Neshaminy Manor complex on South Easton and Almshouse Roads.

1809 - The first black church in the county is formed in a community called Washington Village, now part of Langhorne. It continues to be a church today – Bethlehem African Methodist Episcopal Church.

May 12, 1810 - Doylestown is selected as the location of the new County Seat. With the completion of a courthouse structure three years later, county government is transferred from Newtown to Doylestown.

August 7, 1813 - A meeting in Newtown calls for a company of men to be raised to battle the British in the War of 1812.



1815 - Edward Hicks, an ornamental painter and Quaker preacher, paints his first *Peaceable Kingdom* in Newtown, Bucks County. He would create more than sixty variations on this same theme before his death in 1849, helping to make him one of America's most celebrated folk artists.

Left: "The Peaceable Kingdom," Edward Hicks, Newtown, Bucks County, c. 1837. Mercer Museum Collection.

1827 - The Delaware Division of the Pennsylvania Canal breaks ground for Bucks County's first canal water route. It waterway runs from Bristol to Easton. Work is finished and the canal opens in 1830.

1833 - Bucks County's first section of railway, constructed by the Philadelphia and Trenton Railroad Company, was built between Morrisville and Bristol.

1837 - The Bucks County Anti-Slavery Society holds its first meeting. Many members of the Society were Quakers opposed to slavery.

1850 - Women's Medical College of Philadelphia is instituted with the help Bucks County residents Joseph and Thomas Longshore. Many Bucks County women graduate from this institution, including Hannah Longshore (Thomas' wife), Susan Parry of Buckingham, and Lettie A. Smith of Newtown.

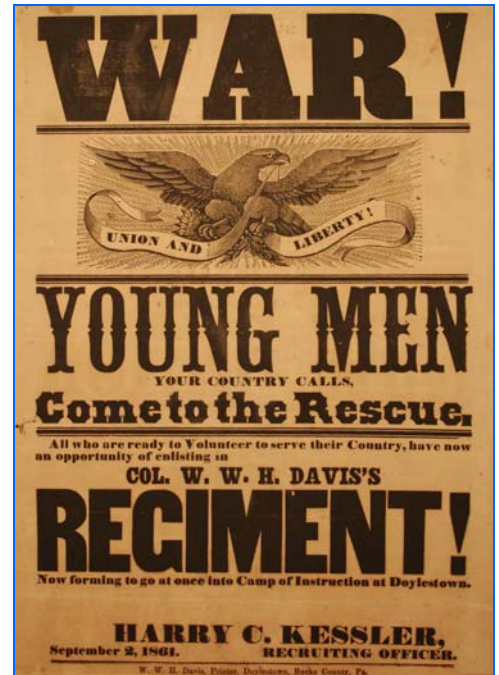
1852-56 - The North Pennsylvania Railroad is constructed, intended to link all of the coal-producing regions of northeastern Pennsylvania. The construction of the railroad was the last large-scale public improvement project in Bucks County to take place for before the outbreak of the Civil War.

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1856 - Henry Chapman Mercer is born to William and Mary Mercer in Doylestown.

1861 - The Civil War erupts. Camp Lacy is established in Doylestown to train recruits for the “Bucks County Regiment,” the 104th Pennsylvania Volunteers. Bucks County men also enlist in the 3rd Pa. Reserves, the 128th and 138th Pa. Infantry, the 1st New Jersey Cavalry, and many other outfits. Local men see action in every theater of the war, while area women organize “ladies’ aid societies” to send supplies and items of comfort to soldiers in the field.

Right: Recruiting poster for the “Ringgold Regiment,” later known as the “Bucks County Regiment” or 104th Pa. Volunteers. The unit was commanded by Col. William Watts Hart Davis, editor of the *Doylestown Democrat* newspaper and later the founder of the Bucks County Historical Society. Mercer Museum Library Collection.



1862-1863 - In an effort to raise more troops for the Union war effort, conscription or the “draft” is instituted. Some Bucks Countians go willingly into drafted regiments like the 174th Pa. Infantry, while others resist or desert.



1863 - African-Americans are permitted to enlist and serve in the Union Army. Black abolitionist Frederick Douglas speaks at several locations in Bucks County, encouraging local blacks to join regiments of “colored troops,” then organizing at Camp William Penn in the “Chelton Hills” outside of Philadelphia.

Left: Muster certificate of Thomas Dye of Bucks County in the 6th United States Colored Troops, August 1863. Mercer Museum Library Collection.

1870s - Though Bucks County remains heavily agricultural, some industries begin to boom in the region. In Bristol, the textile and iron industries bring new workers to the small community and the population swells. In Upper Bucks, the expansion of cigar manufacturing makes the County the third largest producer of “stogies” in the state.

1878 - The construction of Bucks County’s second courthouse is completed. The stone structure, designed by architect Addison Hutton, sports a dramatic clock tower that can be seen for miles.

1881 - The Pennsylvania Railroad is extended through Wrightstown, Buckingham, and Solebury Townships to New Hope on the Delaware River.

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1896 - Bucks County's first trolley route is constructed—a railway less than two miles long in Langhorne. The years that follow see an explosion of trolley lines and routes linking the communities of Bucks and those of neighboring counties.

Right: In this postcard view from the early 1900s, a trolley crosses over the Tohickon Creek in Bedminster Township, Bucks County. Mercer Museum Library Collection.



1898 - The painter William L. Lathrop rents and later buys Phillip's Mill in Solebury Township, making his new home the focal point of what would become known as the New Hope "artist colony."

1900's

1900-1930's - The artistic movement that would become known as "Pennsylvania Impressionism" develops around New Hope Borough and the Phillip's Mill Community in Solebury Township. Artists such as William L. Lathrop, Daniel Garber, Robert Spencer, R. Sloan Bredin, George Sotter and Charles Rosen revel in painting the Bucks County countryside in its varying moods and seasons.

Right: "October," by Daniel Garber, Solebury Twp., Bucks County, c. 1918. Mercer Museum Collection.



1906 - Tile manufacturer Henry C. Mercer is asked to design and install the floor - his "carpet of history" - for the new Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg. This commission helps launch Mercer on a successful career as an Arts & Crafts Era tile maker.

1907-1912 - Henry Mercer designs and constructs Fonthill, his castle home from 1912 until his death in 1930. There Mercer designs his tiles, writes extensively on the subjects of early tools and technologies, and works on developing his varied collections of prints, foreign tiles and pre-industrial hand tools and objects of everyday life in early America.

1913-1916 - With a crew of eight men and a horse named "Lucy," Mercer plans and directs the construction of the new museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, or "Colonial Museum," in Doylestown. The castle-like building, which will eventually be renamed in his honor following his death, houses the Society's collections of tools connected with pre-industrial crafts and trades, and agricultural labors, as well as artifacts and documents of local and family history.

1916 - Company G of Pennsylvania's National Guard, headquartered in Bucks County, is among the units sent to El Paso, Texas to patrol the Rio Grande, while other troops are sent into Mexico in pursuit of the Mexican outlaw Pancho Villa.

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1917 - Pennsylvania creates the Washington Crossing Park Commission, designating the area where George Washington led his troops across the Delaware River in 1776 a state historic park.



1917-1918 - The Pennsylvania National Guard is reorganized into the 111th Regiment, a unit within the 28th Infantry “Keystone” Division. Called up as America enters World War I, units of the 28th Division, which include Bucks County’s Co. G, fight across France at Chateau-Thierry and Montfaucon. In late September, 1918 they join in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the final push that wins the war for the Allies.

Left: Members of Doylestown’s American Red Cross prepare bandages and other supplies for the European war in 1918. Mercer Museum Library Collection.

Fall 1918 - The Spanish Influenza epidemic strikes Bucks County with a reported 9,500 cases. Throughout the United States, 350,000 people are killed by the virus.

1931 - Pennsylvania Governor Gifford Pinchot signs the Delaware Canal Bill, preserving some forty miles of the former Delaware Division Canal, now fallen into disuse, as a public park. The signing marks the beginning of continuing efforts to preserve and maintain the canal’s towpath and right of way for public recreation and sightseeing. In 1933 citizens forms the Delaware Valley Protective Association to help oversee these efforts.

1930s - The Great Depression strikes the United States, including Bucks County. Nine federal relief projects, established by the Roosevelt Administration, are initiated in the County. These include a new water works in Sellersville, an addition to the high school in Bristol, and the reconstruction of William Penn’s manor house at Pennsbury.

1930s-1940s - Bucks County establishes its reputation as a haven and second home for novelists, playwrights, actors, songwriters, poets and other cultural artists. Ex-urban migrants from the New York metropolitan area find inexpensive land and a romantic landscape in Bucks County’s aging farms and historic farmhouses. Especially popular among these artists and writers is New Hope and the surrounding countryside.

1939 - The Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope opens to its first season. Well-known actors and actresses of stage and screen perform in “summer stock” productions on the New Hope stage.

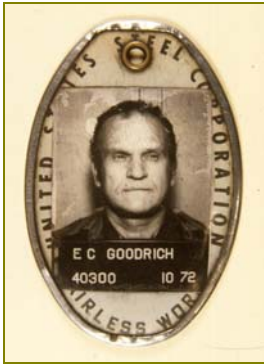
Right: Postcard view of the Bucks County Playhouse, c. 1940. Mercer Museum Library Collection.



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1941-1945 - With the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United States enters the Second World War. Two Bucks County soldiers die in the Pearl Harbor assault. In addition to sending her sons to fight, Bucks County also makes contributions on the home front through wartime industries. The Brewster Aeronautical Corporation establishes a plant in Warminster producing military aircraft and employing some 6,800 workers at its peak. The Fleetwings Company in Bristol, and several smaller firms throughout the county, are also engaged in war production.

1951 - The company founded by William Levitt begins construction of its second “Levittown” (the first was on Long Island) on former farm land in lower Bucks County. The last Levitt houses in the development are erected in 1958. At the time, Pennsylvania’s Levittown was the largest suburban planned community in the United States, attracting many first-time home buyers with low prices, safe streets and community amenities that included pools, churches, ball fields, schools, a shopping center and a movie theater.



1952 - The United States Steel Corporation completes construction of its new Fairless Works plant along the Delaware River in Falls Township. By the next year the facility is employing nearly 8,000 workers in the main plant and adjacent shops, with the intent of producing some 1.8 million tons of steel annually. Another planned community and housing development, now known as Fairless Hills, constructed by a subsidiary of U.S. Steel is constructed to help house the industrial workers who flood into the area from western and northern Pennsylvania.

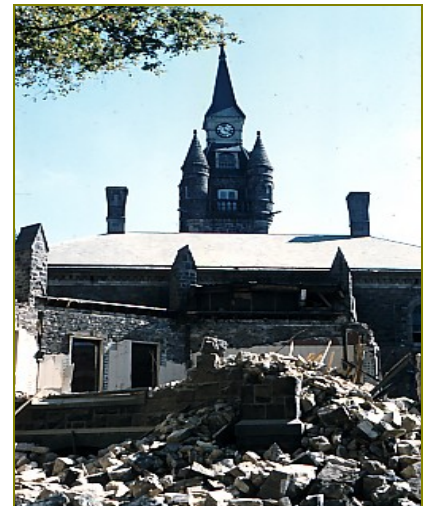
Left: Employee Badge of Ed. C. Goodrich, worker at the Fairless Steel Plant, 1972. Mercer Museum Collection.

1954 - Pennsylvania Turnpike is completed through Bucks County, with the Valley Forge to Bristol segment opened. The bridge carrying the Turnpike over the Delaware River into New Jersey is finished two years later. The Turnpike helped pioneer various aspects of modern superhighway design.

1955 - Hurricanes Connie and Diane, striking the East Coast within days of each other, produce a major flood on the Delaware River, inundating Bucks County towns from Riegelsville to Yardley. The River rises twenty-four feet above normal. Towns and villages along Neshaminy Creek are also devastated.

1960 - Demolition of the old Bucks County Courthouse to make way for a new courthouse structure. Population growth had made the old 1878 building inadequate for modern government, though many lamented the loss of the Victorian landmark. The present Courthouse was dedicated in 1962.

Right: The clock tower of the 1878 Doylestown Courthouse remains standing—though not for much longer—as demolition is underway to make room for a new Courthouse complex in 1960.



1967 - The Bucks County Parks Foundation changes its name to the Bucks County Conservancy. Now the Heritage Conservancy, this non-profit group continues to spearhead efforts for open space and historic preservation in the County. In 1975 the organization established the Bucks County Register of Historic Places.

1980-1986 - One of the major political battles of the late twentieth century pits environmentalists against governmental entities, utilities and development advocates. The so-called “Pump” controversy centers on whether billions of gallons of water should be diverted from the Delaware River to meet the needs of a nuclear power facility and suburban development in northern Montgomery County. In the end, the facility is built despite the efforts of an environmental group calling itself “Del-AWARE.”