



A Township Since March 1886

Smithfield Township was formed officially on March 24, 1886, when Huntingdon County Judge Austin O. Furst filed his opinion on establishment of the Township in that day's session of Argument Court. The new Township was formed out of parts of Juniata, Walker, and Porter townships and included the Village of Smithfield and the "State Reformatory" buildings and grounds. Since the bulk of the area included in the new municipality was originally a large field in the William Smith tract, it was named "Smithfield." The smallest, area-wise, of the 30 townships in Huntingdon County, Smithfield Township comprises an area of 5.8 square miles and now includes 26 miles of roads.

The Village of Smithfield dates back to the 18th century, with the sale of a few lots from a field, along the southern bank of the Juniata River, in the Smith tract, which was warranted as early as 1755. Early residents/business owners in the village were Adam Hoffman, potter; his son Adam, a wheelwright, who also made chairs and other household furniture; Christian Port, a wagonmaker and proprietor of a public house; and James Gehrett, proprietor of a gun shop. By 1886, when the Township was formed, the village had grown to approximately 175 inhabitants, all of whom lived along the Alexandria Turnpike (now Pennsylvania Avenue), then Smithfield's only street. Even though situated along the busy waterway, the village's early growth was probably slowed by the high ground rent: The owner of a lot in Smithfield had to pay, in addition to the purchase price, a ground rent of \$1.50 per year (50 cents more than for a lot of equal size in Huntingdon Borough, across the river).

From 1871-73, A.B. Kennedy plotted additions to the village, but most of those lots were bought by the Commonwealth for its State Industrial Reformatory.

The court, in 1886, also declared that elections, beginning with the one on April 20, 1886, be held in the village schoolhouse. The Township office is now the poll site.

For many years, Township business meetings were held at the school. Following the Flood of 1972, business was conducted from a building at 902 Pennsylvania Avenue. From there, Township officials moved, in 1978, to the current office/maintenance complex, at Mount Vernon Avenue and South 13th Street. The three elected Township Supervisors hold their official business meetings at 7:00 p.m., the second Monday of every month, at the Township office.

The Township History was compiled and researched by Marian Sue McElwee, Senior Staff Writer for *The Daily News*. Sue spent a number of hours on this project and her tremendous efforts will be rewarded. Thank you Sue for all you have given to Smithfield Township.