

History...

Upper Merion Township's earliest settlers are believed to be Swedish trappers who made their way up the Schuylkill River in the 1640's. A large part of what is now the township was sold by William Penn to Welsh settlers in 1681. By 1712, Swedish settlers had purchased land in the Swedesburg and Swedeland areas. The first immigrants, no matter what their national origin, established one of the earliest settlements in Montgomery County.

Environment forced the early residents to be hardy folk who depended upon the rich land for sustenance. The family was the focal point of life where the philosophy of religion and the need for education were emphasized. The first school came to the township in 1692 with the construction of Gulph School.

Agriculture was the main source of livelihood in the early years, but industry soon followed. As early as 1708, it is known that mining was under way when limestone was found on Letitia Penn's manor. In years to come, the township produced one-third of all limestone in the country. Marble was quarried and a saw mill for cutting it was established in the Bridgeport area. Other saw mills, lumber mills, water mills and forges evolved.

The Revolutionary War saw Upper Merion soil sanctified in history by George Washington's Continental Army at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78 when the new Nation was born. War's bitterness passed and Upper Merion was incorporated in 1789. During the 1800's, the township's industries grew. New mills, furnaces and granaries developed. Population tripled from the earlier days. In 1883 there were 12 public schools with more than 400 pupils.

Despite the fast-paced growth of industry, Upper Merion remained primarily an agricultural township for nearly two centuries. For two World Wars, she felt the heavy burden of wartime mechanization and produced vast amounts of steel and iron. Yet, the rolling fields of farmland and wooded areas remained dominant. Within a decade following World War II, a drastic change occurred.

With the coming of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in 1951 and the Schuylkill Expressway in 1953, Upper Merion was virtually made what it is today. The township was transformed rapidly from a quiet community of the farmer to a bustling area of the businessman. It became a blend of the residential, industrial and commercial into a thriving, progressive community.

Upper Merion, indeed, survives with a proud past, a fine present and a stable future.

—WILLIAM GRAHAM

(Assistance of the King of Prussia Historical Society is gratefully acknowledged.)

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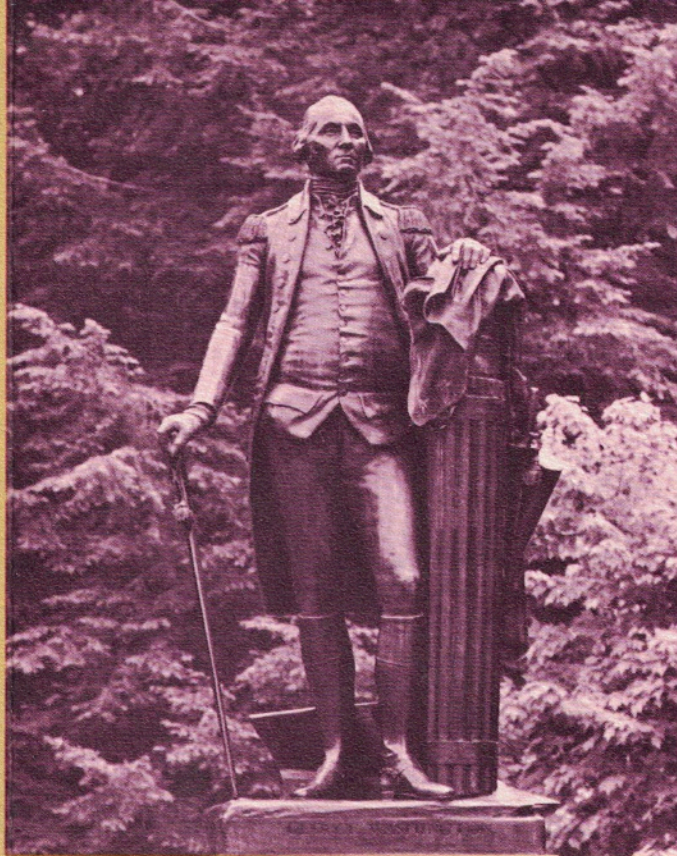
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UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP: FREEDOM'S FORGE



Upper Merion Senior High School

Community...

Encompassing 17 square miles, Upper Merion Township is designated—statistically and proudly—the fastest-growing community in Montgomery County. Residing in the township are 23,000 persons, almost four times its population 15 years ago. Population 10 years from now is predicted to be 35,000.

Upper Merion is a second-class township, governed by a board of five supervisors. Elected at large for six-year terms, the supervisors operate the daily workings of the township government and its employees through a fulltime, salaried manager.

Township services include police protection provided by a 22-member force headed by a professionally-trained chief. Other activities administered by the township include engineering, sanitation, building and local highways. A summer recreation program is maintained at five areas. Dedicated volunteer firemen—members of the Swedeland, Swedesburg and King of Prussia companies—utilize modern equipment in affording 24-hour fire protection.

The township's public senior high, junior high and five elementary schools are attended by 4,250 students. One thousand pupils attend the one parochial school. The township real estate tax has remained at eight mills and the school real estate tax at 50 mills since 1960.

Valley Forge Golf Club



Washington's Headquarters

Valley Forge...

Valley Forge, where our nation's freedom was forged in the historic winter encampment of 1777-78, is commemorated by a beautiful state park of almost 2,050 acres. The park receives its name from a forge located at Valley Creek. Three-quarters of the park is within Upper Merion Township.

National Memorial Arch, authorized by Congress on June 25, 1910, is one of many sights and symbols dedicated to General George Washington and the soldiers of his Continental Army. Situated in one focal point are Washington Memorial Chapel, Valley Forge Museum and the Bell Tower. Housed in the Bell Tower is the Washington Memorial National Carillon of 56 bells.

Washington's Headquarters, restored to conform to Colonial times, stands next to the Park Museum. The only statue of Washington is located between these two buildings not far from Valley Creek. It's a reproduction of the Houdon statue at the State Capitol in Richmond, Va.

Among numerous points of interest are Mt. Joy Observatory, Anthony Wayne Statue, Von Steuben Statue, Star Redoubt, Ft. Huntington, Varnum's Quarters, Artillery Park, Pennsylvania Columns, Massachusetts Memorial and New Jersey Monument. In early May, the park offers a spectacular dividend with the magnificent blooming of the dogwood trees.

King of Prussia Inn, early 1900's





Old Roberts School

Heritage...

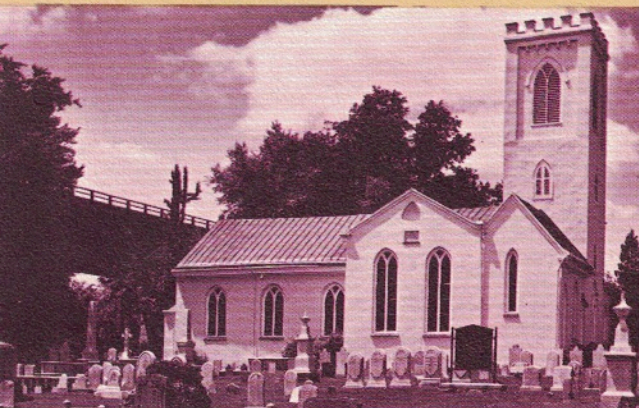
Historic King of Prussia is the hub of Upper Merion Township—one of the few areas in the country that can trace the evolution of American architecture, industry and culture by original buildings still standing. The township represents an unbroken progression of American heritage from the 1600's to the 1960's.

Her old buildings and her picturesque names evoke memories of great men and great times. Frederick the Great of Prussia is honored by the King of Prussia Inn, circa 1709, which gives its name to the area formerly known as Reeseville around Routes 202 and 23. The inn still survives and is being rehabilitated.

The Village of Gulph Mills, second of three in the pre-Revolutionary period, was called Bird-in-Hand until 1830. Hanging Rock, an unusual rock formation, still juts out over Route 23. The third pre-Revolutionary village is Swedesburg, site of beautiful Christ Church (Old Swedes) which remains today as a historic house of worship.

These are a few of the names and places that assure Upper Merion Township of a meaningful place in American heritage—a mecca for visitors who can enjoy a modern community and its facilities while paying homage to the eventful past.

Christ Church (Old Swedes)



American Baptist Convention

Commerce...

Strategically situated in the heart of the Eastern Seaboard, Upper Merion Township offers a pleasant business climate which has attracted topflight industries especially in scientific, research and administrative fields. The township affords thoroughway and rail transportation, low tax rates and governmental cooperation. A diversified labor pool is available.

Local industry has been followed in the past decade by some of the nation's leading commercial firms. These companies have located at individual sites near major transportation arteries or in the 700-acre King of Prussia Park. Twelve nationally-known concerns already are park tenants.

Neighborhood stores have been joined by two regional shopping centers. Valley Forge Center, opened in 1957, plans to expand to 60 chain and independent stores occupying 350,000 square feet of retailing space. The newer King of Prussia Plaza, envisioned as one of the largest shopping centers in the country, expects to grow to 125 chain and independent stores occupying 1,300,000 square feet of retailing space.

In 1963, the township led all 62 municipalities in Montgomery County in assessment gains. It added \$20 million in assessments in the past three years. Actual market value of property is more than \$160 million.

Wolfsohn Memorial Library



