

History of Newcomerstown

Newcomerstown (located at the intersection of three counties and having both east-west and north-south interstates) has been a settlement in Tuscarawas County since 1750. It is also known by its Indian name Gekelemukpechuk, which was the capital of the Delaware Indian Nation. The Indians living in Newcomerstown were peaceful. Their Chief was Netawatwes or Chief Newcomer.

Christmas Day, 1750, Christopher Gists' journal (an official authority beyond dispute) tells of being in Newcomerstown where he found a white man, named Thomas Burney, settled in business as a blacksmith. He also writes of several other white men living here peacefully among the Indians. The Indians asked Mr. Gist and his party to remain among them to instruct them. The Chief was instrumental in keeping the peace during the Revolutionary, French, and Indian Wars. He also helped to convert the Indians in his tribe to Christianity. David Zeisberger was invited to preach in Newcomerstown in 1771 and accepted. The sermon was preached in the Chief's log cabin, which had wooden floors, an upstairs, and a chimney. A monument marks the spot where the first Protestant sermon west of the Alleghenies was given in Newcomerstown by Zeisberger. In 1771, Netawatwes gave Zeisberger Indian owned land to found a settlement for converted Indians. In 1772, Zeisberger returned with 241 converts to found Schoenbrunn. Newcomerstown had approximately 100 Indian built log cabins in which the Indians lived. White settlers also used some of these log cabins. Readers can quickly see that the Indians were advanced in knowledge and living conditions for these times.

In 1827, the Ohio Canal was built here, ran to Coshocton, and the Eureka Hardware building was a canal boat turn-around. One home on Canal Street still has the canal ditch in the front yard that is not filled in.

One of the oldest homes in town is the Temperance Tavern Museum built in 1841. Serving as a hotel and tavern in the 1800's, it has a place in the cellar where run-away slaves were hidden by the Underground Railroad. The advent of the railroads in the mid 1800's served to slow down and finally end traffic on the canals. The mainline of the Pennsylvania Railroad ran east and west through Newcomerstown and the C&M went north and south.

Newcomerstown has many native born notables that are not only famous in their home state but nationally. Cy Young, the most winning pitcher in baseball; Woody Hayes, long time coach at Ohio State, whose dad was Superintendent of Schools here; Anita Loos, author who wrote "Gentlemen prefer Blondes;" Shannon Rodgers, a dress designer; Ivy Beeks, who married actor Francis X. Bushman; Mary Hayes North, a Broadway actress; Bob Bruan, newspaper columnist "Bruan over Miami" for the Miami Herald, and many others.

To take a glimpse into Newcomerstown history you must visit the Temperance Tavern Museum. Temperance Tavern was formally an Ohio canal and stagecoach stopover, it is now a museum with displays dedicated to Cy Young and Woody Hayes, period costumes, the original 1841 tavern room, and much more.

If you wish to receive more information on the History of Newcomerstown contact the Tuscarawas County Convention and Visitors Bureau at 124 East High Avenue, New Philadelphia, Ohio, 44663, call (330) 602-2420, or visit our website at www.ohiotimelessadventures.com. For further information contact the Tuscarawas County Public Library in New Philadelphia at (330) 364-4474 or the Tuscarawas County Historical Society at the Tuscarawas Campus of Kent State University at (330) 339-3391 Extension 47494.