

History of New Philadelphia

New Philadelphia was founded in 1803 when John Knisely purchased a 3,554 acre tract of land for \$5,454. Knisely bought the land from John Heckewelder, who was acting as a land agent for Godfrey Haga of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The town was plotted by Joseph Francis, a surveying friend of Knisely, into 559 lots situated along two streets (Broadway and High) which intersected at a public square. In 1808, when Tuscarawas County was formed the first rivalry between New Philadelphia and Dover began as they contested for the county seat. The deciding factor was probably Knisely's generous donation of a portion of land consisting of 100 lots within the city and some 160 outlying acres. In the early years, the village was a focal point for settlers traveling to Ohio from eastern Pennsylvania. Taverns did a thriving business with local merchants prospering.

With the coming of the Ohio-Erie Canal, New Philadelphia soon became an important wheat marketing center. Large warehouses were built to store incoming and outgoing freight. The canal also furnished water power for flour and woolen mills.

By 1850 the population had reached 1,414 most of whom were German, Swiss, Irish, or Welsh. In 1854, the first railroad was completed leading to vast coal mining in the New Philadelphia area and eventually the steel mills. The first paved street in the city was the public square, in 1898. It also included part of Broadway and High Streets extending for short stretches in four directions off the square. The 1895 census advanced the village to the status of a city. To be a city, the population had to be over 5,000. In 1895, New Philadelphia's actual census showed 5,673 residents.

The New Philadelphia Post Office, built in 1929, was constructed to be reminiscent of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, including the bell tower, doors, windows, and entrance.

Also located in New Philadelphia, the Tuscarawas County Courthouse was officially founded in 1808. Before that time, county officials met in a local tavern. The original courthouse was a two-story log building with a jail on the first floor and county offices on the second, and it also served as a church. It was built by Peter Minnich for \$1,500. In 1818, the county had outgrown the courthouse, and the Commissioners advertised for a new building and completed construction seven years later. The architecture of the building was similar to the original state capitol building in Chillicothe. Most of the first floor was used as the courtroom. The Clerk and the Auditor each had one office also on the first floor. The second floor had a separate room for juries. The building was renovated in 1837 after fire damage and the courtroom occupied the entire first floor post renovation. In 1882, the county's third courthouse was designed by architect Thomas Boyd and built by T.B. Townsend of Zanesville for a contract price of \$98,860. Townsend purchased the old building from the county for \$900 and used the bricks for fill material for under the new building. On October 25, 1882, the cornerstone was laid after a parade longer than 2 miles which converged on the Public Square. Over 10,000 people attended the cornerstone laying ceremony. The stone for the building was from a quarry in Medina, causing a special railroad track to be built to the site of the Courthouse. The building was 96' by 112' and consisted of 38 rooms on 3 floors and an attic. The 1882 Courthouse houses a 1888 Seth Thomas clock with solid brass gears. It is 8' tall and has a 225 pound solid cast iron pendulum. The faces on the portions showing outside are 6' in diameter, made of glass 1" thick. The clock

has to be wound once a week with the help of a small motor. The bell is rung by a hammer. The Courthouse was constructed with a dome with a statue of 3 women made from zinc or lead-like metal weighing more than 699 pounds and was 10' wide. It was called the Three Ladies of Justice and had to be removed for safety reasons in 1959. The heads of these ladies are on display in the Commissioners' Board room. Topping the dome today is a cupola which was lifted into place by a helicopter on July 26, 1973. The Courthouse is on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

Telling the history of New Philadelphia would not be complete without mentioning the Historic Schoenbrunn Village. Schoenbrunn founded in 1772, as a Moravian mission to the Delaware Indians, was the first Christian settlement in Ohio. Although the village prospered for several years, pressures from encroaching settlers and British-aligned Indians forced the abandonment of Schoenbrunn in 1777, shortly after the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. The village, now restored to appear as it did more than two centuries ago, includes the original cemetery and eighteen reconstructed log structures, where costumed interpreters demonstrate period crafts and customs. Also, located in New Philadelphia is Trumpet in the Land, an outdoor drama relating the story of David Zeisberger and his mission to establish a peaceful Indian settlement in this area.

Today, New Philadelphia still flourishes as the county seat with new industries settling in the area boosting the economy.

If you wish to receive more information on the History of New Philadelphia 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.