

History of Port Washington

In 1827, Colonel John Knight traveled from his native Harrison County to the southwestern portion of Tuscarawas County, with the intent of constructing a flour mill along the Ohio Canal. As Knight fulfilled his intentions, he discovered that he inadvertently had created a community which he called Salisbury. Salisbury was ideally located along the Ohio Canal and the Tuscarawas River in the eastern section of Salem Township, which took its name from the nearby Christian settlement of Delaware Indians. Salisbury enjoyed a prosperous existence due to its association with the Ohio Canal and in time was renamed Port Washington.

The Ohio Canal was a life source for Port Washington from its founding and it continued to be for many years. Port Washington served as a major stop on the canal between Cleveland and Portsmouth, and farmers brought produce from fifty miles around Port Washington for shipment. Most of this canal-bound produce was brought into Port Washington via the Old Port Washington Road which connected the town with Millersburg. This road had the distinction of being the first state road and the first improved road, two achievements which point to its importance. It is because of this road, and the vital trade-link which it provided, that Port Washington became a major midway point on the canal between New York and New Orleans.

In 1868, Port Washington was incorporated as a village. At the time it boasted approximately 400 inhabitants, due to the prosperity brought about from the canal and the railroad. In 1878, the village constructed a large three-story brick town hall for the sum of \$3,500. It housed the mayor's office, prison, fire department, Masonic Temple, and a spacious stage for community entertainment. In 1979, it was declared a National Historic Site retaining its three story spiral staircase, one of the last remaining of this type in the country.

Port Washington is today a peaceful, little, quiet town, the type of village in which people like to raise children or retire. The prosperity of the canal and the railroad are now gone, however, Port Washington still evokes memories of the booming canal town that it once was. It had and yet retains the qualities that make it a great American village.

If you wish to receive more information on the History of Port Washington 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.