

1796

Context:

The Capitol of the United States was Philadelphia.

John Adams was the President of the United States.

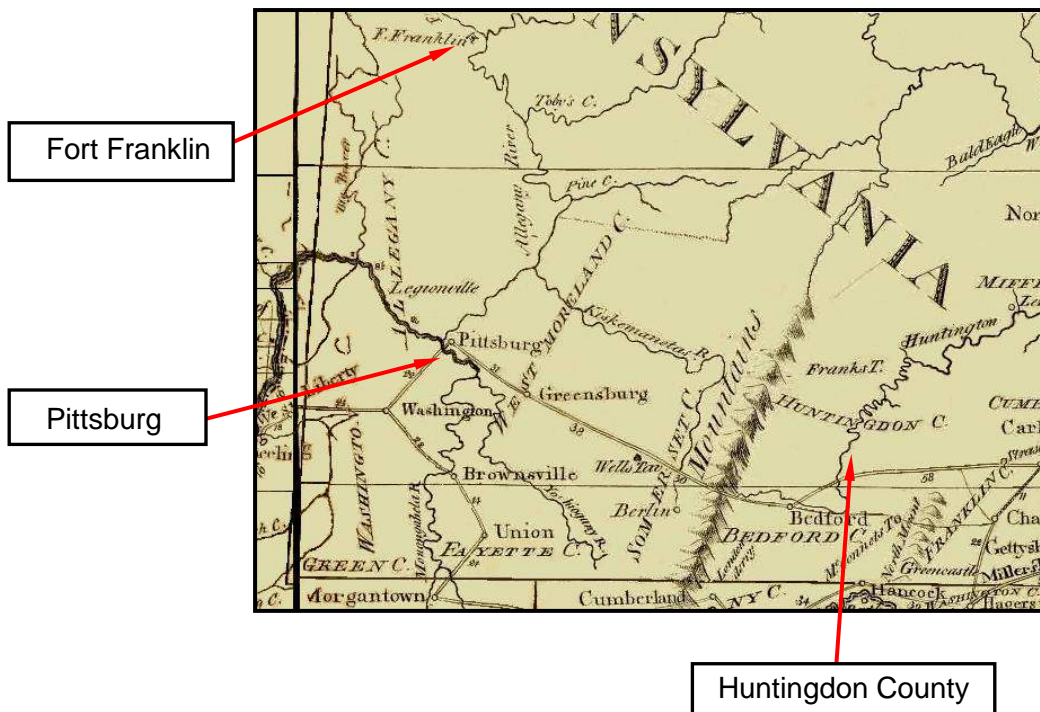
There were 16 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia.

There was no standard time in the United States. Localities set their own time of day often kept by some well-known clock.

This is a 1796 map of western Pennsylvania.

Note:

Valentine and Margaret Glenn Cunningham emigrated from Huntingdon County.



Settlers coming into the area typically used the Venango Path.

Note:

The Venango path was the major Indian trail through the area. The path was named after the Indian village where Franklin is now located. It ran from the forks of the Ohio River in Pittsburgh to Presque Isle.

This map shows the location of the path through the area settled by the Cunninghams and the other early settlers.

The path ran by the site of the Old Stone House near Slippery Rock (originally in Mercer County). The current PA Rt 8 closely follows the Venango Path.

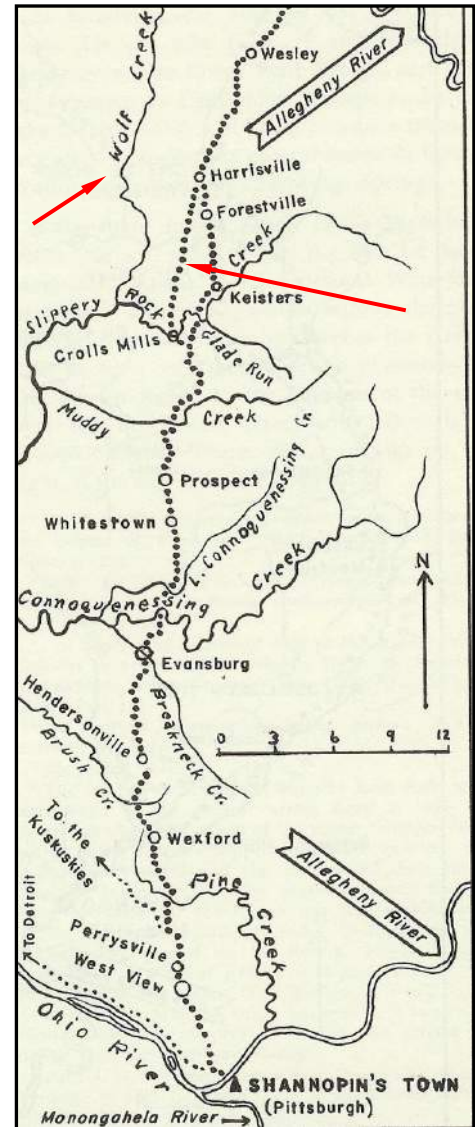
Settlers would most likely have traveled on various Indian trails to the Venango Path. They then would have traveled north into the area.

This is the likely path followed by George Washington traveling north in late 1753 to deliver a message from the governor of Virginia to the commander of French troops at Fort Le Boeuf demanding the French leave the Ohio Country. (There is some speculation that Washington may have taken a route further to the west, taking him through what would become Mercer County.)

In 1787 Captain Jonathan Hart, was sent with a company of soldiers to build Fort Franklin. He widened the path in 1787 on his way to build the fort.

About 1795-96, Thomas Tailor (aka Taylor) settled in the Plain Grove area.

Note:
Thomas Taylor came from the Ligonier Valley, in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and settled. He built a cabin and established a homestead.



1798

Valentine and Margaret Glenn Cunningham and their two sons, Charles and James G. settled on the bank of Wolf Creek on what is now Liberty Street in Grove City.

Note:

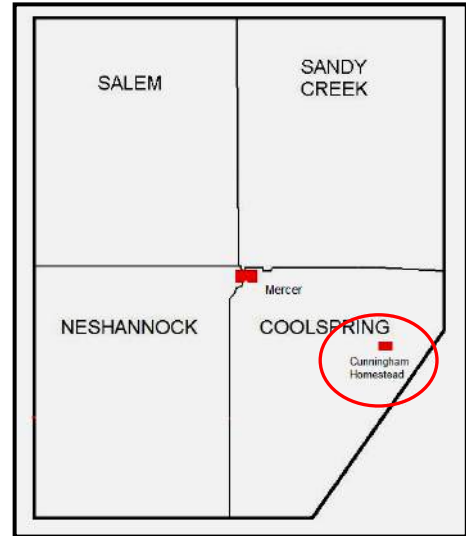
They are believed to be the first permanent (European) settlers in the area that was to become Grove City. They cleared a field and built a log house on a 400-acre tract of land on the eastern bank of Wolf Creek near a spring. This spring would have been an important factor in determining the location of the house.

Cunningham named the stream Wolf Creek because the large population of native wolves that routinely used the creek as a watering place.

The early settlers, both men and women, were usually young. The Mercer County Census of 1800 lists both Valentine and Margaret as between 26 and 45 years of age.

It appears that like most early settlers in the area, Valentine Cunningham came with his family and relatives. It was typical for settlers to organize into a “company” to prepare for the journey before moving into a wilderness area.

The company frequently included several relatives, families, or friends who would work together to survive in the new “colony” as the settlements were called. Help was needed to clear the land and to build log houses.



The Cunningham group came to Mercer County from Huntingdon County. Huntingdon County, located in central southern Pennsylvania, was settled in 1767. Fort Shirley (Huntingdon County) had been a trading post and defensive fort since 1756. The Charles Cunningham and the James Glenn families had immigrated to Huntingdon County from Ireland. Charles’ son, Valentine, was born in Huntingdon County. Valentine married James daughter, Margaret; James son, Robert, married Charles’ daughter, Polly.

In addition to Valentine Cunningham, Members of the Cunningham group likely included:

William Cunningham
brother of Valentine (date unknown); not listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800, listed on the Wolf Creek Census of 1810.

James Glenn
brother-in-law of Valentine Cunningham, (came from Huntingdon County in 1798); listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800, the Wolf Creek Tax List of 1802, and the Slippery Rock Township Census of 1810.

Samuel Glenn
son of James (came with his father in 1798); listed on the Wolf Creek Tax List of 1802 and the Slippery Rock Township Census of 1810.

Samuel Glenn became a farmer and a bridge builder.

Samuel's son Robert (born March 22, 1802) is listed on the Wolf Creek Tax List of 1802 and on the Wolf Creek Township Census 1810. Robert Glenn became one of the first Presbyterian ministers in western Pennsylvania

William and Jane (Cunningham) Glenn
residing in the area by 1800; listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800, the Wolf Creek Tax List of 1802, and the Wolf Creek Census of 1810.

In 1823, they moved to Circleville, Ohio for a year and then returned to establish a 280-acre farm.

Their son, James T. Glenn, was born on July 27, 1812. James became a farmer and Post Master of Balm.

D. C. Cunningham,
(date unknown); not listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800, listed on the Wolf Creek Census of 1810.

James Graham,
brother-in-law of Valentine Cunningham. (See Shaw's Mills).

Sources disagree on how long the Cunninghams lived after settling in the area. The date of Valentine Cunningham death is disputed (e.g. 1801, and 1806); he is not listed on the 1810 Wolf Creek Census. Although a source states that Margaret died in 1800, she is listed as a head of household on the 1810 Wolf Creek Census. The Cunninghams were buried in the Old Cemetery on Greenwood Drive, near the site of Valentine's mills.

The Cunninghams had three children Charles, James G., and Elizabeth (1799). All are listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800.

Valentine's son, James G. Cunningham, married Elizabeth Whittaker, who was born about one mile to the north of the Cunningham residence. Elizabeth was a daughter of John Whittaker, a pioneer of Mercer County (Listed on the Census of 1810), who came from Allegheny County.

Shaw's Mills (aka Slabtown) was settled.

Note:

Both the 1877 History of Mercer County and John G. White's *A twentieth century history of Mercer County, Pennsylvania* record that James Graham settled in the area in 1798. The 1877 History also identifies James Graham as a brother-in-law of Valentine Cunningham who came with Cunningham.

White states that James Graham settled in the area where the current PA Rt 208 crosses Wolf Creek in the area that became known as Shaw's Mills or Slabtown.

He records that James Graham built a gristmill there in 1806, and Robert Moore built a sawmill nearby in 1812, and states that James McCoy was the millwright.

However, there is no census or tax record of either James Graham or James McCoy. James Graham does not appear on the Census of 1800. There are several Grahams listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800: Marey, William, and Thomas. There are also two Grahans listed: Henerey Grahan and John Grahan. A Thomas McCoy is recorded on the Census of 1800. Interestingly, no Graham or Grahan is listed on the Tax List of 1802. Thomas Graham is listed on the Wolf Creek Census of 1810.

A Robert Morigin is listed on the census of 1800, and Robert Moore appears on the Census of 1810.

Hugh McKee settled in the Plain Grove area between 1796 and 1798.

Note:

Hugh McKee came from Ireland in 1788. He then moved to Plain Grove and settled on 397 acres of land. His land patent is dated March 21, 1809.

The Deniston family came from Washington County and settled in the southwest part of Springfield Township, before 1798-99.

Note:

Deniston family settlers included: George Deniston, Johnston Deniston, Alexander Deniston, James Deniston, and Andrew Deniston.

Andrew Denniston located in the northwest part of what is now Plain Grove Township.

George Rogers settled in the Plain Grove area in c1798.

Note:

George Rogers, who came from County Armagh, Ireland, about 1790, first settled first in Washington County. About 1798 he moved from Washington County to the Plain Grove area.

According to White in his history of Mercer County, in 1797 David Courtney settled in what is now North Liberty Township.

Note:

It is likely that David Courtney settled later. He is not listed on the Mercer County Census of 1800 nor is he listed on the Wolf Creek Tax List of 1802, but is listed on the Wolf Creek Census of 1810. (See 1800)

Adam McCracken settled in the Plain Grove area in 1798.

Note:

Adam McCracken, originally from Ireland, settled on 400 acres of land.

James McCamanon settled in the Plain Grove area in 1798.

John Gealey came with his family to the Plain Grove area.

Note:

John Gealey came to the area from Washington County in 1797, with his daughter, Margaret. They cleared land, built a log cabin, and began raising corn. That fall, they returned to Washington County. In 1798, Mr. Gealey returned with his daughter and his young son, William.

Gealey left his children at the homestead and returned for his wife and the rest of his family. They returned to the homestead in 1799. His children, Renwick Sarah, and Harry, came with them on this final trip.

The transcript of the Census of 1800 has the following entry: "Ge----, John [lost in bottom margin]"

James Ramsey settled in the Plain Grove area in c1798.

Note:

James Ramsey came from the Chartier's Valley, settled on a three hundred acre tract, and built a log cabin. Ramey married Sara Taylor in 1801.

The Andrew Rose family settled in the area in 1798.

Note:

Andrew Rose had sent his two sons to build on 400 acres that he had in Grove City in 1798. Rose family tradition indicates that the land was donation land received for Andrew's service in the Revolutionary War. In 1799 the rest of the family joined the sons in Wolf Creek.

Andrew Rose appears on the original Census of Mercer County in 1800, the Wolf Creek Tax list of 1802 and the Wolf Creek Census of 1810.

1799

In 1799, Valentine Cunningham completed the construction of the first gristmill along Wolf Creek.

Note

Valentine Cunningham built a dam on the bank of Wolf Creek about 220 yards upstream from where PA Route 58 crosses Wolf Creek. It is likely that he was assisted by the Glenns.

Google image (2012) of the location.

A rough log structure on the west bank of the river housed simple gristmill machinery powered by water flowing over the dam. The mill utilized millstones to crush the grain and



perforated deer hides to separate the grain from the chaff.

John G. White states the millstones were quarried on the farm of Minor Gulick located “near by”. No additional sources were found verifying this report or detailing Minor Gulick. There is no record of a Gulick, or similar name, on the Census of 1800.

This original mill was reported to be the only gristmill within a twenty-mile radius. In 1807, after Valentine’s death, the original Cunningham mill was replaced with an improved mill established by Robert and Samuel Glenn.

In 2009, a dam on Wolf Creek under the bridge spanning PA Route 58 was removed emptying the water from the small lake behind it. After the water had receded, a 60”, 300 pound, white oak gear wheel was discovered in very good condition.



This gear wheel was inspected by two industrial archeologists from Youngstown University and Chris Tyner of Neshannock Woods and Co. Judging from the estimated age of the gear and the location in which it was discovered, it was thought to be the main gear from the original Cunningham Mill.

Grove City College donated the gear to the Grove City Area Historical Society. The wheel was restored by Chris Tyner.

The restored gear is now on display at Cunningham Mill Park.



In 1799, Samuel Allin (aka Allen) settled in the Slippery Rock area.

William Elliott settled in Plain Grove.

Note:

William Elliott was a surveyor and civil engineer who came from the East Liberty.

In about 1793-94, he had acquired control of several thousand acres of land.

He married in 1799 and established a homestead. In 1803-04 he built a log gristmill.

In the spring of 1799, William Montgomery settled at the headwaters of Wolf Creek. (North of US I-80)

Note:

William Montgomery moved his family from Chartiers Creek (near Pittsburgh) to the headwaters of Wolf Creek.

In March 1797, William Montgomery and his two oldest sons William and Thomas had come to northern Wolf Creek Township to settle two tracts of land. Montgomery and his sons built a log cabin on each tract. The sons established a corn crop while the father returned to Chartiers Creek. That fall, when he returned they harvested the crop and returned home for the winter.

In 1799, the William Montgomery family settled on the land permanently.

In circa 1836, they established a mill on Wolf creek.

In *A twentieth century history of Mercer County, Pennsylvania*, author John G. White records that "One of the first settlers was John Montgomery, who in 1797 located two hundred acres on the head waters of Wolf creek." However, according to the Montgomery family genealogist, Chris Stefanovich, this information is incorrect. It was William Montgomery, his wife (Mary Nichols Montgomery), and their children who settled on Wolf Creek. William Montgomery is listed on the Census of 1800. There is no John Montgomery listed.

James Miller established a homestead in Pine Township before 1800.

John Perry established a homestead in Pine Township before 1800.

John Sutherland established a homestead in Pine Township before 1800.