

Development and Changes for Union County River Towns

The river towns of Union County were foreseen in 1775 with the development of a road from Bald Eagle Creek near Lock Haven, through the Nippenose Valley, along the Susquehanna River past White Deer Hole Creek and south to Shamokin (now Sunbury).

Transportation improved when ferries crossed the river eastward from Union County. Watson's Ferry was at White Deer; Boal's Ferry was near West Milton. Goods and people also crossed from Lewisburg and Winfield.

Early maps show settlers Matthew Brown and Hugh Colwell (in present-day Gregg township), Catherine Smith and William Blythe (present-day White Deer), Jacob Baker, John Fisher and Peter Swartz (West Milton), and John Aurand and John Lee (Winfield).

Catherine Smith's grain and grist mill supported early settlers, and her boring mill may have re-bored rifles for Revolutionary War militia.

Early settler Matthew Brown was a member of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention in 1776, the Committee of Public Safety, and a soldier in the Continental Army. He died in 1777. His family remained in what is now Gregg Township and by 1787 fourteen more families had settled there.

Other early residents included John Farley's family, from New Jersey, who built a gristmill, and Frederick Vollmer (or Follmer) who built a mill at Spring Garden, Peter Herrold, John Flackinger, Adam Haines, Joseph McLaughlin and William Armstrong.

Uniontown

John McCurdy had a tavern north of White Deer Hole Creek and laid out a town there. Uniontown developed slowly until a bridge connected it with Dewart, and the Pennsylvania & Erie Railroad, on the eastern side of the Susquehanna in 1852. Uniontown was also called Slifer (its post office was named for Eli Slifer), Cairo (its railroad station) and eventually Allenwood.

By 1900, Allenwood had about 300 residents, served by a school, a chapel, two stores, a lumberyard, a gristmill and a planning mill, and two hotels for travelers. Lumbering was a big industry in the late 1800s and early 1900s, until the trees were gone. The Letterkenny Ordnance Plant near Allenwood employed many during WWII.

Washington, Brady and Gregg

When Union County split from Northumberland in 1813, New Berlin became the county seat. The great distance Gregg township residents had to travel, over two mountains, to the new courthouse, caused the residents to ask for their township to join Lycoming County to the north. The White Deer Hole area was attached to Washington Township, Lycoming County, in 1814. Washington was divided and the southern portion was subsequently renamed Brady Township.

In 1855, Union and Snyder counties split, and the Union County seat was moved to Lewisburg. This prompted the residents of Brady Township to ask to rejoin Union County. The request was approved by the state legislature in 1861, and in 1865 the township's name was changed to Gregg, for State Senator Andrew Gregg who supported the return of the area to Union County.

Researchers now find considerable difficulty searching records for families who "moved" from Northumberland to Union to Lycoming and back to Union counties, and are counted in census and tax records for White Deer, Washington, Brady and Gregg townships, or in Uniontown and Allenwood.

Fortunately, these researchers and many local families have maintained wonderful photographic records of the area, and these can be seen in the newly released *Union County River Towns*, published by Arcadia Press for the Union County Historical Society.



Store in Allenwood



Main Square in White Deer