

DELAWARE COUNTY HISTORIC
RESOURCES SURVEY

REPORT AND FINDINGS
FOR
LOWER CHICHESTER TOWNSHIP

Delaware County Planning Department
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Prepared as part of the Comprehensive Historic Resources Survey being conducted by the Delaware County Planning Department in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation.

BRIEF HISTORY OF LOWER CHICHESTER

The town of Chichester originally encompassed all of present day Marcus Hook and Trainer Boroughs as well as Upper and Lower Chichester Townships. Settled fifty years before Penn by Finns and Swedes, this river tier area provided fertile water meadows for farming. Much of Lower Chichester's history derived from activities in the town of Marcus Hook and is described in that survey report. The first mention of Lower Chichester in official records occurred on June 27, 1683 when a constable was appointed for "Chichester Liberty". The separation into two townships for tax collection purposes was recognized in 1715, but formal court approval of Upper and Lower Chichester did not take place until 1759. The township is 1.06 square miles.

The current township centers along Ridge Road, so named for the abrupt rise of land running east and west parallel to the Delaware River. Market Street, the main artery inland from the waterfront, still is the other principal road. The coming of the Penn Central Railroad line was an economic asset, but it also physically split the community from the parent village of Marcus Hook. The name "Linwood" for the crossroads area of the above streets came from the Philadelphia, Baltimore and Wilmington railroad station of Linwood, which serviced the Trainer mills. These mills, described in the Trainer Borough report, had been name "Linwood" in 1852.

The Linwood area became a residential neighborhood for the workers at the Trainer mills and othe industrial enterprises, which proliferated along the Delaware from the 1850s to the present. A second school, the Rick Hill School, was built in 1844 as the first had structural problems and was dangerously near the railroad. In 1849, the Farmers and Mechanics Lodge of the IOOF built a large meeting hall in Linwood. "The Heights" area became a popular place to build summer homes, such as actor-singer Chauncey Olcott's, and a select Seminary for Girls was operating in Linwood during the 1860s. Continued growth of the waterfront industries drew a large Catholic population, which in turn led to the construction of Holy Savior R.C. Church in 1914. The congregation shortly outgrew this chapel, so that the present structure was erected in 1917. The old church served as a parochial school until the existing one was built in the 1920s and now functions as a union hall.

Lower Chichester had one major mill on the east branch of Naaman's Creek. Established before the Revolution, this large flour mill expanded to include a sawmill by 1800. Known by various owners' names as well as "Ogden Mill" and "Diamond Mills", the structure and its race were razed in 1965 for construction of I-95. The sawmill with some of its race was obliterated with recent construction of the Sewer Authority's trunk lines. Before the major dam for these mills washed out in the 1930s, local dairies used to cut the ice provided by the extensive millpond.

The surrounding farming community used the Linwood station and roads to Marcus Hook and Philadelphia as a means to transport their produce. Milk and cherries were particular specialties until the 1920s Japanese beetle invasions permanently destroyed the fruit trees.

Residents of Lower Chichester continue to be employed by major Delaware River firms such as Congoleum, Sun Co., and BP Oil.