

An Abridged History of Pike Township

In Berks County, Pennsylvania

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Preface Pike Township is rife with incredible scenic beauty and steeped in vibrant history. You can find many examples throughout the township, but no place exemplifies this better than the village of Hill Church. Here, nestled deep in the Oley Hills, you will see a spectacularly quaint church that has been a landmark here since the 1740s. Stroll through its historic cemetery, and marvel at the artistry of the tombstone cutters whose works have been on display for over two hundred years. Note the German inscriptions on the oldest tombstones, the native tongue of many of the townships early settlers. Pause a while....look at all of the buildings in the village and take in the hilltop vista in all directions. You are looking at something special and unique, something unspoiled by the march of time. It's a view that your great-great grandfather would have seen if he stood here in the 1880s.

While the township abounds in beauty and history, it's most valuable and most important asset is the people who live here now and those who lived here before us. The township's rich history is a testament to the strong character of the people who built this township and those who continue in this tradition.

The history, put to paper below, is a summary of research compiled to provide the reader with a basic overview of the township's history. It is a prelude to a comprehensive history that will be published at a later date. You are welcome to copy and distribute this document as you see fit. In return, I ask that you contact me via email to discuss pictures, information, artifacts, and stories that you may have concerning the township.

Original Inhabitants The history of the township begins with the original inhabitants, the Lenni Lenape Indians. They inhabited a large portion of eastern Pennsylvania but relinquished this land to William Penn in the late 1600s. Penn subsequently parceled and sold all of the land to the colonial pioneers. There is little doubt that early settlers like Johannes Keim, who settled south of Pikeville, lived alongside the original inhabitants of the township. By the 1730s, the Indians vacated much of present day Berks County and moved north of the Blue Mountains. One can still find the occasional arrowhead attesting to the presence of the Indians within the township.

It is worth noting that one of the most important Indian relics ever found in Berks County was discovered in a Lobachsville cemetery. For decades, two heavy and curiously round stones, sat here undisturbed. Many people knew of their existence, but none knew their importance. Then, around 1910, Benjamin Owen came across them while researching tombstone inscriptions. He realized that the two stones comprised one of the finest examples of an ancient Indian corn mill. Today, the mill is proudly on display in the Berks Historical Society's Museum.

Pike Township

It is generally accepted that the township was named for the species of fish so plentiful in township streams in the early 19th century. This assertion came from A. E. Wagner, et al. in *The Story of Berks County* written in 1913. Indeed, the township building is adorned with a stained glass transom depicting a pike fish and a weather vane fashioned into the same. However, the reader should be cautioned that time has a way of turning folklore into fact, particularly if the folklore is published as fact. It may very well be true that Pike Township was named after the so named species of fish, but this author could not find factual evidence to support this assertion. If A. E. Wagner, et al. read the Reading Eagle on December 6, 1873, the township history they wrote might have been very different. This early newspaper article indicates that the township name is descriptive of the numerous rocks and stones found on the grounds within the township. This explanation has merit if you consider that Pike Township abuts a township that was aptly named Rockland.

The township was erected in 1813 from land taken predominantly from District Township with minor contributions coming from Rockland, Oley, and Earl Townships. The original township boundary changed a few years later to appease petitions from residents seeking easier access to schools and polling places. The first boundary change came in the early 1840s when Rockland Township ceded much of the Pine Creek Valley to the township. In the early 1850s, Pike's eastern boundary moved further west when it ceded land to Washington Township. The final change also occurred in the early 1850s when Earl Township gave up land, extending Pike's southern boundary further south.

Lobachsville

Drawn here by the potential water power of Pine Creek, George Weidner became the first pioneer to settle Lobachsville in the 1730s. He built a saw mill and a fulling mill here, but quickly sold both mills to William Pott. Pott ran these mills for a few years before building a gristmill a few hundred yards further upstream. Pott then sold the saw and fulling mills to his step-son, Peter Lobach, in the 1740s. With this transaction, the village began its ascent as the commercial center of the township and eventually assumed the namesake of the family that drove its success.

Peter Lobach continued operation of the woolen mill at the intersection of Lobachsville and Long Lane Roads for the next 40 years. The mill was located between Pine Creek and the former hotel. When Peter Lobach died in the 1780s, his son, Samuel, took over its operation. He replaced the original mill around 1800 with a large, two-story mill constructed of stone. Samuel also added a carding mill and a dye house. This second factory became obsolete in the 1840s and was rebuilt by his son, William, about a quarter mile below the original location. Neither of these woolen factories is standing today. The ca. 1800 woolen factory found use as a creamery in the 1880s, but was torn down at the turn of the 20th century. The ca. 1840s factory changed hands several times, after William Lobach died in the 1850s, and was razed around 1870.

As mentioned earlier, Wilhelm Pott built a gristmill that was located on Mill Road in the 1740s. One source indicates that the mill was rebuilt with stone in the 1760s. It remained in service until the 1880s when David Reinart built a new mill adjacent to the ca. 1760s mill. The ca. 1880s mill was last used commercially by Clarence Yoder in the early 1960s. The mill is now privately owned, and the owner resides in the ca. 1760s miller house. The gristmill is in excellent condition and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

John Lobach operated a turning mill in the latter half of the 18th century that was likely located across the street from the original woolen mill. The business expanded and reached its zenith after Samuel Lobach took over its operation in the 1820s. To accommodate the increased production, a two-story, stone factory was built on Lobachsville Road between the general store and Pine Creek. The factory produced bureaus,

cupboards, chests, tables, and high post beds. However, the factory is best known for producing bamboo style Windsor chairs. Hard times hit the factory during the Civil War, forcing the Lobach's to shutter its doors. The building found intermittent use as a carpentry shop through the latter half of the 19th century. It last found use as an ice house in the early part of the 20th century, before being razed in the 1920s.

It is worth noting that the establishment of the State Road through Lobachsville in the early part of 19th century helped propel the village to the forefront of commerce and industry in the township. The State Road was the main travel route between Kutztown and Philadelphia. Today, this road is called Lobachsville Road, before changing into Hill Church Road, and then into Old State Road towards Philadelphia. Lobachsville already had a woolen factory, a saw mill, a gristmill, and a furniture factory. The Lobach descendants later added a hotel, a general store, a carpet weaving business, a creamery, a vineyard, and a blacksmith shop to take advantage of the increased traffic through the village.

To accommodate weary travelers as they made their way through Lobachsville on the State Road, Samuel Lobach converted his parent's ca. 1780s home into a hotel and tavern in the 1830s. The hotel was located on Lobachsville Road near Pine Creek, and was initially operated by Samuel's brother, William Lobach. The Lobach family continued as owners of the hotel and tavern for much of the 19th century and employed several proprietors. As early as the 1830s, the Lobachsville Hotel was a stop for a stage coach that traveled on the State Road to transport people, mail, and goods. George Weidner was the owner of the hotel when the looming threat of prohibition forced its closure in the 1920s. The former hotel stands today and is a private residence.

Samuel also built a general store that was situated across the street from the hotel. The store opened in the 1830s and perfectly complemented his flourishing furniture factory. He often delivered chair parts and chairs to destinations such as Philadelphia, Norristown, and Reading. Instead of bringing home an empty wagon, he purchased housewares and goods to stock his store. The Lobach family owned the store until the early 1890s when it was purchased at auction by Rudolph Angstadt. A few years later, the store was sold to George Weidner and it stayed in the Weidner family until the early 1970s. William Becker was the owner of the store when he closed it for good in the early 1980s. The former general store still stands today and is a private residence.

A post office was established in the general store in the 1830s. David Lobach was the first postmaster, and he retained this position into the 1860s. The Lobachs owned the store that housed the post office and employed several postmasters until it was sold in the early 1890s. George Weidner purchased the general store in the 1890s and became its last postmaster in 1900. The Lobachsville Post Office closed just a few years later after free rural delivery from the Oley Post Office was established.

The Lobachs built a two-story weaving building constructed of wood around 1840. It was situated across the street from the general store and to the left of the hotel. They hired weavers such as the Hausemans to make Jacquard rugs in the 1830s through the 1860s. The weavers were supplied with wool thread produced at the wool factory and colored in the dye house. The weaving building was razed in the 1920s, but the Hauseman weaving loom survives and is privately owned.

The Lobachsville area had some of the finest timber stands in all of Berks County. Consequently, several saw mills were erected to process this resource. The oldest saw mill in the township was erected by George Weidner around 1740. It was located at the intersection of Lobachsville and Long Lane Roads, next to the original woolen mill. The Lobach family operated this mill for over 150 years before it was dismantled in the late 19th century. Another saw mill was established a few hundred yards further north at

the gristmill. It was in use as early as the 1850s, but was probably built much earlier. A third mill was operated by Jacob Weidner in the 1860s on Long Lane Road, across from the gristmill.

Several temporary saw mills were set up in the early part of the 20th century to process the abundant lumber found in the area. In 1906, steam powered mills were set up on the hills north of Lobachsville to produce staves. The staves were later assembled into barrels for transporting enormous amounts of Portland cement to Panama for construction of the canal. A second, temporary saw mill was set up in 1913 by Mahlon Boyer. He employed a steam powered saw mill to process the virgin timber on the old Keim Homestead located on Boyer Road. Some of this timber was sent to Germany where it was used to make fine furniture, and some of it was shipped to Wilmington, Delaware for the construction of large ships.

The Lobach family opened a creamery in the abandoned woolen factory in the 1880s. The creamery was operated by William Keim for just a short time, closing its doors in the late 1890s. The creamery was replaced by Henry Stauffer who purchased a wood frame creamery building with machinery in the early 1900s. He moved it to a field behind the general store and hired Irwin Keiffer as the proprietor. Attached to the creamery was a frame ice house that was supplied by two ice ponds associated with the business. When Henry Stauffer died in 1914, the creamery was purchased by Charles Herbine, and he retained Irwin Keiffer as the proprietor into the 1930s.

A blacksmith shop was established behind the general store. The earliest known blacksmith to work there was William Weidner in the 1880s. However, the shop was much older since it was referred to as the "old village blacksmith shop" when it shut down in the early 1920s.

The Lobach family owned a 29 acre vineyard about a mile north of the hotel near Ruppert School Road. It produced hundreds of gallons of wine every year and was likely in operation during the first half of the 19th century. However, we can only confirm that it was producing as early as 1860. When the Lobach estate was sold in the 1890s, the vineyard was still in fine bearing condition and produced 160 gallons of grape wine.

The residents of the Lobachsville area built a log school house on Boyer Road in the 1820s. The school was built on the property of John Keim, a few hundred yards south of his home. The children who went to this school paid for their education. The school was replaced in the 1850s with a free school as mandated by the common school law adopted by the township. The ca. 1820s school sat idle for the next 75 years, before it collapsed in the 1920s.

Not wanting to travel the nearly four miles to the Hill Church, the residents of Lobachsville built their own church in the 1830s. The church is located about a half mile southwest of the former hotel on land donated by Samuel Lobach. This structure served its patronage well for over 40 years before being replaced with the current structure in the 1870s.

In 1850, David Lobach published a "centennial" edition of the famed Scull and Heap map that depicts Philadelphia. While the map is plagued with typographical errors, it is still well executed and quite rare. The publication of Lobach's map profoundly affected subsequent editions of this map because most retain these typographical errors.

Pikeville

John Keim was the first to settle in the Oley Valley, after he made his home here in the early 1700s. However, the focal point of the village is the former general store building that dates to the 1750s. In the 1830s, a letter mailed to the post office here was simply addressed to "Pike Township". This provided the likely origin for the village name. We can only speculate about the early history of this ancient building that eventually became the general store. It was built on Mine Road near Oysterdale Road on the border of lands patented to John Keim in the 1730s and Anthony Lee in the 1740s. It is possible that either of these families could have built this building. To complicate matters further, it's just as likely that Tobias Schall purchased this land and built this building after settling here in the 1740s. The only thing we know for certain is that Tobias Schall's grandson, George, owned and operated the general store at this site in the 1820s. The Schall family also operated a hotel and tavern in the same building.

The post office established here in the 1820's was initially called Schall's Store, before its name was changed to Pike Township in the 1830's. The post office closed in the early 1900s when free rural delivery was offered. The hotel also served as a stop for the stage coach that ran from Summneytown to Reading as early as the 1850s.

The house located at the corner of Oysterdale and Marburger Roads was known as the 'Doctor's home'. Nearly all of the doctors that served Pike Township lived and practiced out of this home. William Herbst became the first licensed doctor in the township after receiving his degree in the 1820s. He owned and practiced from this house and later rented the house to his successors after he retired. The home continued for this purpose until 1904, when Dr. Brown became the last doctor to practice in the township.

Less than a quarter of a mile to the west, on Marburger Road, sits an early gristmill that was built by the Lee family sometime prior to the 1790s. The mill burned to the ground in the 1880s, but was rebuilt with the addition of roller mills. The mill still stands today and is privately owned.

A blacksmith shop was established by Morris Fretz on Oysterdale Road across from the 'Doctor's home' in the early 1880s. The shop continued to operate at this location until the late 1950s before it was moved to a new facility about 100 yards up the road. This shop is still in business today and is called the Pikeville Equipment Company. A smaller blacksmith shop was operated by George Reichert in Pikeville in the early 1900s. It eventually became known as the Pikeville Garage. Reichert was succeeded as the garage operator by Charles Diehl and then by Amandus Reichert in the early 1950s.

There was an ancient school house located on Oysterdale Road across the street from Marburger Road. Just like the school house located near Lobachsville, it was built on a former Keim Homestead. It was likely razed in the mid-19th century and replaced with a free school as mandated by the common school law adopted by the township.

Hill Church

The village is nestled in the Oley Hills and aptly named after the historic church established here in the 1740s. The original church was a log structure and was referred to as the 'corn church' because farmers hung their seed corn under its roof projections. This building was replaced with a stone building in the 1780s, and again in the 1850s with a larger stone building to accommodate the growing congregation. Despite these expansions, the congregation outgrew the third building and was compelled to build a fourth church in the 1880s that still sits at this site today. The church, with its spire rising above the tree tops, exudes a simplistic beauty, and its presence is known for miles around by the tolling of its bells.

Several stores were established in the village to take advantage of the sizable number of people that frequented the church. The first store was established around 1760 in a log house near the church. Not much is known about this store except that it more closely resembled a trading post.

Another store was located in the building directly across from the church. Again, very little is known about this store other than it was in operation as early as the 1880s. The post office was purportedly moved to this site in the early 1900s before the store closed in the 1920s.

The most prominent store in the village was established in a large stone building built by the Reidenaur family in the early 1800s. The store was located on Orchard Road, about 300 yards to the southeast of the church. We can surmise that Gideon Reidenaur converted his private residence into a store and hotel/tavern. He sold the businesses to John Dotterer in the early 1860s, and he subsequently hired Adam Glase to manage these interests. A post office was established here in the 1860s, and Glase was the first postmaster. Dotterer's son, John, built and operated a creamery next to the store in the late 1890s. To keep the dairy products from spoiling, he built and maintained an icehouse. That same year, Dotterer built a steam powered gristmill and operated a feed store. The creamery and feed store served the community until around 1920. The post office closed around 1915, after remaining open longer than any other in the township. In 1930, Hettie Dotterer and her husband, Harvey Weller, inherited all of the Hill Church business interests. Harvey Weller continued as proprietor of the store until his death in the early 1960s. Upon his death, the store was closed, its contents were sold at auction, and the building reverted back to a private residence.

The first school house in the township was built here in 1750. It was a wood edifice built for the general use of the community. It was replaced in the 1790s with a stone structure that served as both a residence and a school house. This building remained in use for this purpose until the 1850s, when the school directors of the township erected a public school next to the church property.

Many of the tombstones in Hill Church Cemetery and possibly other township graveyards were carved at the marble yard located across the street from the church. Thomas Hoffman crafted many of these stones during the 1860s and 1870s. Benneville Dellecker replaced Hoffman and cut tombstones for the needs of the township into the 1890s.

Oysterdale This region, originally owned by the Oyster family, encompassed the middle and lower parts of the valley located in the center of the township. The word 'dale' means valley, so this area was known as Oyster's dale in the 18th and 19th centuries. The focal point of the township at that time was the circa 1750 house built by George Oyster at the intersection of Oysterdale and Carl Roads. He operated an alcohol still that likely led to the establishment of the tavern and inn at this location.

The building also housed a general store that served the early residents of the township. Since this building was the focal point of the township at that time, it was the logical choice as the first polling place in 1816. Elections continued here, for the most part, until the late 1950s. There almost certainly was an early blacksmith shop located on the property since the Oysters practiced this trade throughout the latter half of the 18th century. A little further north, at Keim and Hay Roads, the Oysters operated a small tannery that closed in the 1850s.

One of the six common schools was established next to the general store in the early 1850s. It remained here until the mid-1880s when a new school was built less than a mile up the road.

The prominence and growth of Oysterdale ended when the State Road was established in the early part of the 19th century. This road diverted traffic away from Oysterdale, pushing it closer to Pikeville and directly through Lobachsville. Abraham Yoder took ownership of the tavern and ended all of the business interests before converting the building back to a private residence around 1865.

District Ironworks

John Leshar established the District Furnace on Pine Creek near the present day border between Pike and District Townships. It was built prior to the Revolutionary War and supported the American effort. A gristmill was built just below the furnace sometime before 1790. The gristmill was still operational in the early 1900s and was run by Jackson Eydel. However, only the ruins of this three-story stone mill are found today. There was also a saw mill associated with this site. Two forges were added to the ironworks about a half mile downstream from the furnace in the 1790s. At its height, the ironworks encompassed over 1500 acres of land and employed nearly 100 people. The furnace shut down around 1820, and both forges closed in the 1860s.

The largest tanning yard in the township was located at Mill and Boyer Roads and was in business until the 1870s. It's not clear who erected the tannery or when it was erected. It is likely that it was built prior to the Revolutionary War as part of the District Ironworks. The founders of the ironworks, Leshar, Ross, and Morgan, purchased the tract of land on which the tannery was located in the 1740s, along with most of the land in the Pine Creek Valley.

Schools

The first school in the township was established at the Hill Church in 1750. Two pay schools, one south of Lobachsville and one south of Pikeville, were established in the early part of the 19th century. These three schools became obsolete in the 1850s after the township was required to provide free schooling. To meet this requirement, six common school districts were established and crude schoolhouses were grudgingly built for each of the districts. The township replaced all six school buildings between 1875 and 1890 with first-class, one-room schoolhouses. These six schools can be found today as private residences and, in one case, as the township meeting building.

Grist and Saw Mills

With abundant water power, the township was perfectly suited for the operation of gristmills and saw mills. The following gristmills and saw mills operated in the township and were not previously discussed.

Abraham Yoder constructed a gristmill in the 1830s on Oysterville Creek at Rolling Rock Road. A saw mill was also established at this site. His son, Abraham, inherited the mills in the 1860s, but they were operated by his brother-in-law, Jacob Reider. He operated the mills for over 30 years before taking ownership in the 1880s. The mills changed hands several times before the gristmill was destroyed by fire in the 1890s. It was rebuilt by Ferdinand Warmuth, who operated it on and off, until he took his own life on the basement steps of the mill in the late 1930s.

Mathias Motz built a grist mill on Oysterville Creek at Carl Road sometime prior to the Revolutionary War. The mill operated successfully through the 19th century before shutting down in the early 1900s. A saw mill was associated with this site.

John Lee built a gristmill and saw mill on Miller Lane sometime prior to the 1790s. The gristmill operated for many years before burning down in the 1880s. It was rebuilt and successfully operated by the Yoder family for the next 70 years. It was last operated by the Kulp brothers in the 1970s.

Three additional gristmills operated on Oysterville Creek in the 19th century. Unfortunately, very little is known about these mills except that they were operated by Herbst, Kleh, and Yoder in the early part of the 19th century. The Yoder and Kleh mills were still in operation, to some degree, in the 1880s.

Blacksmiths This craft was needed by nearly everyone in the township until the early 20th century. As a result, there were dozens of people who practiced this trade within the township. Samuel and Daniel Oyster are the earliest known blacksmiths in the township. Both were practicing as early as the 1760s, with Daniel continuing until the late 1790s.

The blacksmith business reached its peak in the 19th century, and shops were found throughout the township. William Hess operated a blacksmith shop across from his house on Hill Church Road between Old State and Bechtel Roads. He operated this business for many years, starting in the 1850s and continued into the 1880s. Another long-running shop was found on Hess Road and was operated by Peter Wesner from the 1840s to the 1870s. In the northwest part of the township, near Keim and Heilig's School Road, Lewis Rohrbach ran a shop in the 1860s and 1870s. Two separate shops were located south of Lobachsville and Pikeville; one operated by Ephraim Rohrbach in the 1840s and 1850s, and another run by Charles Seidel in the 1860s through the 1880s. Below Pikeville, Lewis Flicker operated a small blacksmith shop around 1860 known as Flicker's Forge. It was located on Oysterdale Road, just south of Mill Road. Finally, Tobias Carl operated a small shop in the 1860s at an unknown location.

Shoemakers This trade was just as important as the blacksmith as evidenced by the fact that over 30 people took up this profession within the township. The following is a list of some of the more prominent shoemakers. Benjamin Bridegam established his business on Haas Lane and operated it from the 1850s through the 1880s. Samuel Walter competed against Bridegam during that same time period with a shop at the intersection of Hess and Goat Roads. In the 1860s and 1870s, Martin Frey operated a shop on Old State Road near Diener Road. Daniel Carl had a shop next to the Pikeville Store in the 1860s and 1870s, and Jacob Moser set up a shop on Hartline Road in the 1860s and 1870s.

Mountain Mary Anna Maria Young came to Pike Township just after the Revolutionary War with her mother and two sisters. They settled on the side of a hill on Mountain Mary Road about two miles northwest of the Hill Church. After her mother died and her two sisters married, Mary lived alone in this secluded area for over thirty years. Today, she is an enigma to historians because the separation between fact and fiction surrounding her life has been obscured by time. However, it is clear that she was revered by her contemporaries as a hardworking, intelligent, pious, and selfless person. Her life's deeds, whether real or romanticized, became legendary after her death in 1819.

Fish Hatcheries The fish hatchery on Haas Lane, just south of Lobachsville, was in business breeding trout prior to the 1880s. In the 1950s, the hatchery business began to wind down, and it became home to a members only fishing club. The hatchery is fed by an extremely high volume spring of pure cold water. This desirable commodity became a target for acquisition in the 1890s when the Borough of Boyertown surveyed the spring as a possible site for its new water works facility.

Fortunately, an adequate source of water was located closer to Boyertown. One hundred years later, the Wissahickon Spring Water Company of Philadelphia targeted the hatchery for use as a source for bottled water. This was thwarted by the efforts of the Oley Coalition and Berks County Conservancy who secured developmental rights to the trout hatchery, guaranteeing its preservation forever.

Two smaller fish ponds were built by Nathan Landis in the late 1880s for breeding mud and leather carp. They were located across the street from the former Pikeville Store, near Marburger Road.

Militia Volunteers from the township joined the militia to supplement the army during emergency situations. In Pike Township, they enrolled with the 77th regiment, 2d brigade, 6th division of the Pennsylvania militia. They occasionally met to elect officers, and "exercise in the military discipline." George Weidner's Inn was one of the first meeting places prior to 1820. William Lobach, owner of the hotel and fulling mill in Lobachsville, was elected commander of the unit and assumed the rank of colonel in the early 1820s. He and his brother, David, each hosted militia meetings during the 1820s. Another Pike resident, David Schall, was elected to the rank of Major, and commanded the regiment's 2nd Battalion in the early 1830s.

Politics Pike Township and Berks County residents have proven to be among the most independent voters in the state. The township and county embraced the Democratic ideology in the early 1800s. They stayed true to the party despite overwhelming support from most Pennsylvanians for Abraham Lincoln's newly formed Republican Party. While Republicanism swept across every county in the state, Democratic fervor in Berks County actually increased. Berks County continued as a Democratic island in a Republican state well into the 20th century. This century saw a major shift in geographic support where the traditional support base for Republicans switched from urban to rural areas. Despite being a predominantly rural county, the populous of Berks largely voted Democratic until the 1980s.

Polling Places Despite the formation of Pike Township in 1813, the residents were obliged to vote in their former townships. The first election in Pike Township occurred a few years later at the home of George Oyster at Oysterdale and Carl Roads. The polling place was moved to Daniel Oyster's house about a half mile further north on Oysterdale Road in the late 1820s. Just prior to Daniel Oyster's death in the 1840s, the law was changed to allow the polling place to be moved to the Pikeville Store and Hotel. It is not clear if an election was ever held in Pikeville, because a group of Pike Township residents presented a remonstrance to the State Senate to stop the move. In any case, by the early 1860s, the polling location was moved back to the original site at Oysterdale and Carl Roads. It remained here until the 1950s before being moved to Yoder's Restaurant on Hill Church Road. In the late 1960s, the polling place was moved to Drumheller's School. It later moved to the Pikeville Sportsman Club and then to its current location at St. Paul's Church in Lobachsville.

Religion The presence of two early churches within the township attests to the devotion of the residents. In the 1820s, Pike Township had four representatives on the Berks County Bible Association. They prepared a list of families living in the township that did not have a bible in their home and made efforts to supply them with such.

Stage Coaches

The stage coach was used to transport people from place to place, much like our modern bus or rail system. It also transported goods from railroad hubs, such as Reading, to stores in the township. Finally, it was used to transport the mail to the post offices at Pikeville, Lobachsville, and Hill Church. The earliest confirmed stage coach route through the township was in the 1830s. It left Kutztown every Friday at 6 AM, stopped in Lobachsville and terminated in Trappe, Montgomery County at 7 PM. The stage coach traveled the reverse route and returned the next morning at 6 AM. Later, several additional stage routes were established through Lobachsville and Pikeville. The stage coach became obsolete as more efficient travel options became available. These options included train travel, the trolley between Boyertown and Reading, and finally the proliferation of motor vehicles. The proprietor of the Pikeville Hotel, Zacharias Miller, ran one of the last horse drawn stage coaches in the county around 1914.

Cigar Makers

Cigar smoking was very common at the turn of the 19th century, and Berks County was a leading producer of cigars. Reuben Drumheller was a significant producer of cigars in the 1860s and 1870s. His factory may have been at his home on the north side of Hill Church Road, just east of Mountain Mary Road.

Undertakers

Until recently, the business of burying the dead was taken care of by the family of the deceased. It was their responsibility to obtain a wooden box and adorn the inside with cloth. In the early 1700s, rich aristocrats in England began to hire people to "undertake" this responsibility. The most prominent undertaker in the township was Samuel Brumbach. By 1860, he strategically opened up a carpentry shop at the intersection of Old State and Hill Church Roads to take advantage of the traffic moving between Philadelphia and Kutztown. At some point, he took on the role of undertaker. The ideal location of his shop and his strict business integrity allowed him to develop a large patronage for several decades. It was here, in Pike Township, that he trained his sons in the craft of carpentry and undertaking. One of his sons, Daniel, moved to Boyertown where he opened a furniture store and undertaking rooms in the 1870s. Later on, he helped organize the Boyertown Casket Company and became its first president.

Just south of Pikeville, near the intersection of Oysterdale and Mill Roads, Henry Yerger operated an undertaking business in conjunction with his cabinet making business. A third undertaking business was established by Elias Weidner near Lobachsville.

Railroad

Shortly after the civil war, great effort was exerted to lay a railroad spur through the Oley Valley. Several routes were considered, with all of them having the purpose of providing access to the numerous iron mines in and around the Oley Hills. In the early 1880s, the Oley Valley Railroad Company surveyed a route that bisected the Oley Valley, entering Pike Township just west of Pikeville. The route followed Oysterville Creek through the Oysterdale Valley before terminating in Siesholtzville. A corps of engineers began working on the line and estimated its completion within a year. However, its construction met resistance and failed because of exorbitant damage claims for lands.

Keim Homestead

Jacob Keim built this home on Boyer Road in 1753. The home retains much of its original elements and character. The Keim property is listed on National Register of Historic Places and is owned by the Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County.

Cider Presses

Through much of the 19th century, nearly every farm in the township had apple trees, and some farms even had orchards. Because apples are perishable, much of the crop was turned into cider. This was done using immense cider presses like the one located on the Keim Homestead. This 30 foot long press was moved from the Hartman Homestead to the Keim Homestead in 1975. The cider press is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This press provides an accurate picture of what Abraham Yoder's press looked like. He pressed apples for the community in the 1820s with a press that was just 2 ft. shorter than the Hartman press. Yoder's press was likely located on Mine Road below Shade Road. A third press was purchased by James Bechtel and put to use in the 1880s.

Slaves

The abhorrent practice of slavery is evident in the township as early as the 1740s. Some slaves were from Africa while others were Dutch, Scottish, Irish, or German immigrants who were hired as indentured servants in exchange for passage across the Atlantic. John Leshar was one of the largest slave owners in the county and almost certainly employed slaves at the District Ironworks. His father-in-law, John Yoder, was also a slave owner living near Lobachsville.

Another prolific slave owner was George Weidner. He had many slaves working at his brick and tile business. His Lobachsville neighbor, William Pott, and Oysterville native, Daniel Oyster, were also slave owners.

Baseball

In the early 20th century, the residents of the township embraced America's pastime by fielding three teams. One from Lobachsville called the Pros, one from Pikeville called the Pikeville Athletic Association, and the last from Hill Church called the Aces.

Epilogue

In an early description of Pike Township, Israel Rupp indicated that "nothing of any remarkableness.....occurred in this township". On the surface, these seem like harsh words for the township we call home. In Rupp's defense, he wrote these words nearly 170 years ago, and the connotation of these words is that the township was underdeveloped and sparsely populated in comparison to others in the county. Though many years have passed, the township's landscape is still pristine, and only a handful of townships in Berks are more sparsely populated. Ironically, the attributes that Israel Rupp thought made Pike Township unremarkable 170 years ago are precisely the attributes that make it so remarkable today. There are no great cities, there are no schools, and there are no gas stations, not even a traffic light. Truth be told, most of us live here because we prefer the tranquility. We are willing to sacrifice urban conveniences in favor of a simpler and less hectic place to live and raise our families.

When you think of Pike Township, your mind may conjure views of the spectacular valley surrounding Oysterville Creek or the old gristmill in Lobachsville. Some of you may think of the historic Hill Church or the serenity of the Oley Hills. For me, I think of the Pike Township meeting building. This former one-room school house was built over 130 years ago, and it still retains much of its original character. Today, the building is the perfect blend of history and purpose. When you step into the building, it is easy to visualize a child working on a math problem at the chalkboard. Only time separates this image from reality. There is simply nothing more endearing than attending a township meeting in this historic, one-room school house. This is just one of the many reasons that makes Pike a remarkable township.