

history of tuscarawas county ohio

History of Tuscarawas County, Ohio

Tuscarawas County, Ohio, boasts a rich and diverse history that reflects the broader narrative of American development and settlement in the Midwest. Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, this county is not only significant for its natural beauty but also for its historical contributions to the state of Ohio and the nation. From its early Indigenous inhabitants to its role in the industrial boom of the 19th century, the history of Tuscarawas County, Ohio is a fascinating journey through time.

Early Inhabitants

Indigenous Peoples

Before European settlers arrived, the area that is now Tuscarawas County was inhabited by various Native American tribes. The most notable of these were the Delaware (Lenape), Shawnee, and Wyandot. These groups utilized the region's abundant natural resources for hunting, fishing, and agriculture.

- Delaware Tribe: Known for their agricultural practices, the Delawares cultivated crops such as corn, beans, and squash. They also engaged in trade with neighboring tribes.
- Shawnee Tribe: The Shawnee were more nomadic, moving through the region in search of game and resources.
- Wyandot Tribe: As skilled traders, the Wyandot played a pivotal role in connecting various tribes and European settlers.

European Exploration and Settlement

The first recorded European exploration of the area occurred in the late 17th century. French explorers ventured into Ohio, but it wasn't until the 18th century that significant settlement began.

- Land Claims: The Ohio Company, formed in 1747, aimed to settle in the region, but tensions with Native Americans led to conflicts.
- Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1768): This treaty opened up parts of Ohio for European settlement, laying the groundwork for the influx of settlers into Tuscarawas County.

Formation of Tuscarawas County

Tuscarawas County was officially established on February 15, 1808. The county was formed

from portions of Jefferson and Muskingum counties and was initially a part of the larger Northwest Territory. The name "Tuscarawas" is derived from the Native American word meaning "open mouth," which is believed to refer to the Tuscarawas River.

Geography and Early Settlements

The geography of Tuscarawas County features rolling hills, valleys, and rivers, making it an appealing location for early settlers. The county seat, New Philadelphia, was laid out in 1804 and became a central hub for commerce and governance.

- Key Early Settlements:
- New Philadelphia: The first settler, John Knisely, arrived in 1801, and the town rapidly grew.
- Dover: Founded in 1807, Dover quickly became an important trading post.
- Sugarcreek: Established in the 1830s, this town became known for its Amish population.

Development of Industry

The abundance of natural resources contributed to the county's industrial growth in the 19th century.

- Iron Industry: The discovery of iron ore deposits in the region led to the establishment of furnaces and forges. By the mid-1800s, Tuscarawas County was a leading producer of iron.
- Railroads: The arrival of the railroads in the 1850s significantly boosted the local economy, facilitating trade and transportation of goods.
- Agriculture: Agriculture remained a vital part of the economy, with farmers producing grains, livestock, and dairy products.

Role in the Civil War

Tuscarawas County played a notable role in the Civil War, contributing both soldiers and resources to the Union cause.

Military Contributions

- Troops: Approximately 2,000 men from Tuscarawas County enlisted to fight for the Union. Many were part of the 104th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the 126th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.
- Support: The local economy supported the war effort by supplying food, clothing, and materials for soldiers.

Post-War Reconstruction and Growth

After the Civil War, Tuscarawas County experienced a period of reconstruction and growth. The population increased as returning soldiers and new settlers moved to the area, attracted by job opportunities and land availability.

- Infrastructure Development: The county invested in schools, roads, and public services to accommodate the growing population.
- Cultural Growth: The establishment of churches, libraries, and community organizations enriched the cultural fabric of the county.

20th Century Transformation

The 20th century brought both challenges and innovations to Tuscarawas County.

Economic Changes

- Decline of Traditional Industries: The iron industry began to decline in the early 1900s due to competition and changes in manufacturing practices.
- Emergence of New Industries: As the economy transitioned, industries such as rubber manufacturing, plastics, and machining began to take root.

World Wars and Their Impact

Both World Wars had a profound impact on Tuscarawas County, as many residents served in the armed forces, and local industries shifted to support the war effort.

- Economic Boom: The demand for wartime supplies led to a temporary economic boom, with many factories converting to produce military equipment.
- Post-War Adjustments: After World War II, the county faced challenges as factories closed or downsized, leading to economic adjustments.

Modern Era and Community Development

Today, Tuscarawas County is a blend of its historical roots and modern growth. The community has adapted to changes in the economy and demographics while preserving its rich cultural heritage.

Education and Health Care

- Schools: The county invests in education, with several districts providing quality education from elementary to high school levels.
- Health Care: Local hospitals and clinics serve the community, emphasizing health and wellness.

Tourism and Preservation of History

Tuscarawas County is home to numerous historical sites and attractions that celebrate its heritage:

- Historic Sites: The county features several museums, historic homes, and landmarks, such as the Tuscarawas County Historical Society and the National Road.
- Outdoor Recreation: With its scenic landscapes, the county offers opportunities for hiking, fishing, and camping.

Conclusion

The history of Tuscarawas County, Ohio is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of its people. From its Indigenous roots and early European settlements to its industrial growth and modern community, Tuscarawas County reflects the broader story of American development. As it moves forward, the county continues to honor its past while embracing new opportunities, ensuring that its rich history remains a vital part of its identity for generations to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the significance of Tuscarawas County in Ohio's early history?

Tuscarawas County played a crucial role in early Ohio history as a center for Native American communities and later became a strategic area for European settlers during the westward expansion.

When was Tuscarawas County established?

Tuscarawas County was established on December 15, 1808, making it one of the original counties in the state of Ohio.

Which Native American tribes originally inhabited Tuscarawas County?

The area was originally inhabited by the Lenape (Delaware) and other tribes, including the Shawnee and Wyandot, before European settlement began.

What were some of the early industries that developed in Tuscarawas County?

Early industries in Tuscarawas County included agriculture, pottery, and limestone quarrying, which contributed to the local economy and growth of towns.

How did the Ohio and Erie Canal impact Tuscarawas County?

The Ohio and Erie Canal, completed in the 1830s, facilitated trade and transportation, significantly boosting the economy and population growth in Tuscarawas County.

What role did Tuscarawas County play in the Underground Railroad?

Tuscarawas County was an important stop on the Underground Railroad, with many residents actively helping enslaved people escape to freedom in the north.

What are some historical landmarks in Tuscarawas County?

Historical landmarks in Tuscarawas County include the Historic Schoenbrunn Village, the Tuscarawas County Courthouse, and various sites linked to the Ohio and Erie Canal.

When did Tuscarawas County become officially recognized as a county in Ohio?

Tuscarawas County was officially recognized and organized as a county in 1808, shortly after Ohio became a state in 1803.

What is the historical significance of the town of New Philadelphia in Tuscarawas County?

New Philadelphia, founded in 1804, is significant as the first settlement in Tuscarawas County and served as a key supply point for settlers and travelers heading west.

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