

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF GLENOLDEN

BY  
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Glenolden is a borough in Delaware County having an area of one square mile and a population of approximately 6,450 people. In order to tell the history of the borough itself, we must first consider the history of the area surrounding and including Glenolden.

The original residents in the area were the Lenni-Lenape Indians. The chief of this tribe was Chief Secane, who resided near what is now the town of Secane. The traditional "Council Rock" of the Lenni-Lenape Indians, named "Roavacoola" after Chief Secane's daughter, overhangs the Muckingsatus Creek just to the east of Glenolden Avenue in Glenolden. The Muckingsatus Creek was named after Chief Secane's son. Muckingsatus.

The first white settlers in the area were the Swedes. They came here from Sweden in 1642 under the leadership of Governor Johann Printz, and settled on Tinicum Island.

In 1668 the land in this area was divided among six Swedes, Morton Mortonson, Peter Peterson, Hance Urian, Swan Boone, Hance Boon, and Matthias Natsilas, by the English Governor of New York, Richard Nicholas. The area was known at that time as Calcon Hook, which is Swedish for Turkey Point.

The first English landowner in the area was Obadiah Bonsall. He came to America as part of William Penn's colony.

In 1686 the land that had originally belonged to the six Swedes was annexed to Darby Township. Part of that land was incorporated to form the Borough of Glenolden on November 15, 1894.

The area incorporated to form the Borough of Glenolden had previously been divided into four sections. One section was the town of Glen Olden, named after the Olden family and the shady glen in the area. This town closely resembled a country village, and was located along the present Pennsylvania Railroad. The other sections were Lanwellyn, along the present Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Warwick Annex, between Oak Lane and Ashland Avenue east of Chester Pike; and part of Warwick, on the south side of the present Pennsylvania Railroad.

The farm tracts included within the present area of Glenolden were the Knowls Estate, the Cooke Tract, the Doctor Boon Estate, and part of the Bethel Custer Tract home of the original houses and remnants of the original estates can still be seen in Glenolden today.

The Glen Olden Mills, located at Hook Road and South Avenue at the Muckinapatus Creek was built by Thomas Shipley around the year 1755.

Elisha Phipps became the owner in 1808. He used a small sailboat called the "Dusty Miller" to ship the flour ground at the mill to Philadelphia. Many New Jersey farmers brought their grain across the river to be ground at this mill.

In 1812 the mill was sold to Hallady Jackson, and in turn, in 1828, to Ephriam Inskeys, who named the mill Glen Olden Mills after his mother.

The water mill was replaced by a turbine in 1866. After being destroyed by a fire in 1896, the mill was rebuilt and used as a bobbin factory. Ephraim I. Ridgeway was the last owner of the mill property before it was purchased by the H. K. Mulford Company. Today the mill house, built shortly after the mill on the mill property, is still standing at the corner of Hook Road and South Avenue.

The Rice House, until a few months ago, was a familiar sight to anyone passing the corner of Chester Pike and Rambler Road. It was built by Jacob Rice in 1832 and was used as a toll house on the Queen's Highway. When Rambler Road was constructed, the house lost part of its wing and entrance porch. The last owner of the house was Charles Miller. The 126 year old house was torn down in October of 1958.

The Simes Estate, located along the Muckinapatus Creek between

Glenolden Avenue and South Avenue, was purchased in 1898 by the H. R. Mulford Company who produced various types of medicines and had a glassworks. This property, recently belonging to Sharp and Dome Company is now unoccupied.

The Knowls Estate, Knowlsboro, was located on Knowls Avenue north of Chester Pike. Remains of the drive that once led up to the Knowls house can be seen at the foot of the present Knowls Avenue. The house was located beside the present Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The cemetery adjoining Interboro High School's new athletic field was the Knowls family cemetery.

The Boon Estate was located south of Chester Pike. The original Boon house was, and still is located at Cook Avenue and Chester Pike. In the Boon Avenue section of the estate a drive was located which was bordered by large Beech trees. Most of these trees were cut down when Boon Avenue was constructed.

On the corner of Stuart Avenue and Chester Pike two buildings are located. These buildings were both places of business in the early days of Glenolden. The house on the corner was a general store, and the building adjoining the house, which now houses a garage, was a

blacksmith shop owned by Peter Ingram. If it can be said that the garage of today succeeds the blacksmith shop, then this may possibly be the oldest continuous business in the area.

The Glenolden Presbyterian Church located at Ashland Avenue and Chester Pike was organized in 1840. Originally it was a Congregational Church, and the first meeting was held at the home of George G. Knowls. Two years later the church became Presbyterian and the services were held at the members homes. In 1841 the original church building was constructed on land donated by George Knowls. The old building was replaced by the present one in 1901.

The government of the Borough of Glenolden is made up of three branches legislative, the Borough Council; executive, the burgess; and judicial, the justices of the peace.

The Borough Council is composed of seven members each elected for a four year term. In order to insure that experienced persons will be members of council at all times, the elections are staggered. Three members are elected at one municipal election, and four at the next. Council is responsible to the citizens of the borough for the conduct of the Borough's business and activities. It accomplishes this by passing

ordinances. If an ordinance is passed by Council, but vetoed by the Burgess, it may be passed over his veto by a three-fourths vote of Council. The work of Council is done by committees which supervise Borough activities and prepare legislation. Each councilman except the president is a committee chairman. The six committees of the Glenolden Borough Council are Finance and Law, Highway and Light, Police and Fire, Health and Sewer, Property and Park, and Building and Zoning. Each of these committees makes a report of its activities at the Council meetings, held on the second Thursday of each month. Council makes up the Borough budget.

The Burgess is the Borough executive. He must preside over Council meetings twice during his four year term, and approves or vetos all ordinances passed by Council. He must be present at all council meetings and may vote in case of a tie. The Burgess is responsible for the enforcement of all Borough laws. He has charge of the police force, and may exercise the powers of Justice of the Peace.

In Glenolden there are two Justices of the Peace elected for six year terms. They try minor cases, hand over more serious cases to the State District Courts, and may hear civil cases involving not more than

\$300. Court costs are the Justices' only compensation.

Other officials important to the Borough government are the borough secretary, part time paid official who keeps records of Council's actions and conducts the Borough's correspondence; the treasurer, also a part time paid official who takes care of Borough funds; the Solicitor or Borough attorney; and the tax collector, who is elected for a term of four years and receives all Borough taxes.

At present Glenolden has very efficient fire and police protection. The police force consists of a chief; three regular patrolmen; one special policeman, who assumes duty when one of the regular policemen is ill or on vacation; and three crossing guards. The department is housed in the headquarters built in 1940 and located in the Glenolden Park. The police department is supplied by the Borough with a new car each year. Along with the fire company, the department is part of the Sharon Hill Network. This network provides two-way radio service which aids the police and fire departments to answer calls and give aid quickly.

The fire company, organized in 1916, is a volunteer organization. The chief and assistant chief are elected by the members, and the drivers, who must pass ridged qualifying tests, are appointed by the chief. The



members of this organization take training with the Public Service Institute of the State Department of Public Instruction. Housed in a building built just a few years ago, the fire company possesses a squad truck and two fifteen year old pumpers. A new fire truck is on order.

The first schools in this area were the Darby Township schools, the Southern School of Darby Township above, Ashland Avenue on Calcon Hook Road and the school for colored children at Academy Avenue and Ashland Avenue. After incorporation the Borough of Glenolden built its own school. The grade school on Logan Avenue was built in 1895. Originally it was a four room building, but it was latter enlarged to eight rooms. In 1927 the Boon Avenue addition was built and in 1951 the Mac Dade addition was completed.

In 1922 Glenolden, in conjunction with the Borough of Norwood, organized Glen Nor High School. The building was completed in 1923 and housed the first six year high school ever established in Delaware County. A wing was added to the original building in 1927 and during 1930-31 the gymnasium was built and a cafeteria installed in the old gym area.

In 1955 the Interboro School System was organized. This system includes Glenolden, Norwood, and Prospect Park.

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Glenolden is fortunate in possessing a fine park and two playgrounds. The park is available for picnics and other outings, and has fire places for public use if a permit is secured. Permits are issued by the chairman of the Property and Part Committee of Council.

The playgrounds, one adjoining the park and one at Ashland Avenue and Glen Avenue are completely equipped with swings, sliding boards. Part of the land for the playground at Glen Avenue and Ashland Avenue was obtained through delinquent taxes. The rest, with the exception of one section, was sold to the Borough at a very small price. The one section, too expensive for the Borough to buy, was purchased by Mrs. Purdy of Glenolden, and donated, along with the fence that now surrounds the playground to the Borough.

The Glenolden Library building was built in 1940. The building contains the library and a meeting room, which is used by the Borough Council. Use of the library is free for all residents of Glenolden, but non-residents are charged a registration fee of \$1.00. One librarian is employed by the Borough. The other workers are volunteers. The library is financed by a small appropriation from the Borough Council, yearly donations from the Woman's Club, fines, and rentals charged for new books.

Transportation between Washington and Philadelphia has greatly improved since Washington's time. The first direct route between the South and Philadelphia, then the Capital of our country, was made up partly by the Queen's Highway, now Chester Pike, which ran through Glenolden. This road, named after Queen Anne, and also called the Great Southern Post Road, was often used by George Washington in his travels between Virginia and Philadelphia. Running from Chester to Darby, the road was first laid in 1705. Because the residents refused to repave it, the road was in very poor condition. In bad weather it was impossible. Transportation at this time was very crude, mostly by packhorse. In 1845 the road was converted into a plank road, and six toll houses were set up. One of these was the Rice House at the corner of Rambler Road and Chester Pike. In 1921 the road was acquired by the State Highway Department and freed of all tolls. The road was paved in 1926 and until 1934 there were trolley tracks in the center. In 1934 the trolleys were replaced by buses, the tracks were removed, and the center of the road was paved.

Perhaps the greatest aid to the growth of Glenolden as far as population is concerned was the Pennsylvania, Wilmington, and Washington

Railroad, now the Pennsylvania Railroad. The first line, called the "Darby Improvement", was run between Philadelphia and Chester in 1872. As a result of this railroad, Glenolden became a popular picnic grounds and place for summer homes. The Glenolden Land Association was formed to accommodate the rapidly growing population with land on which to build their homes. The land association gave land to the railroad for a station. The railroad, in turn, gave free tickets to those who built on land association grounds.

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