

ASTON TOWNSHIP



HISTORICAL TRAIL

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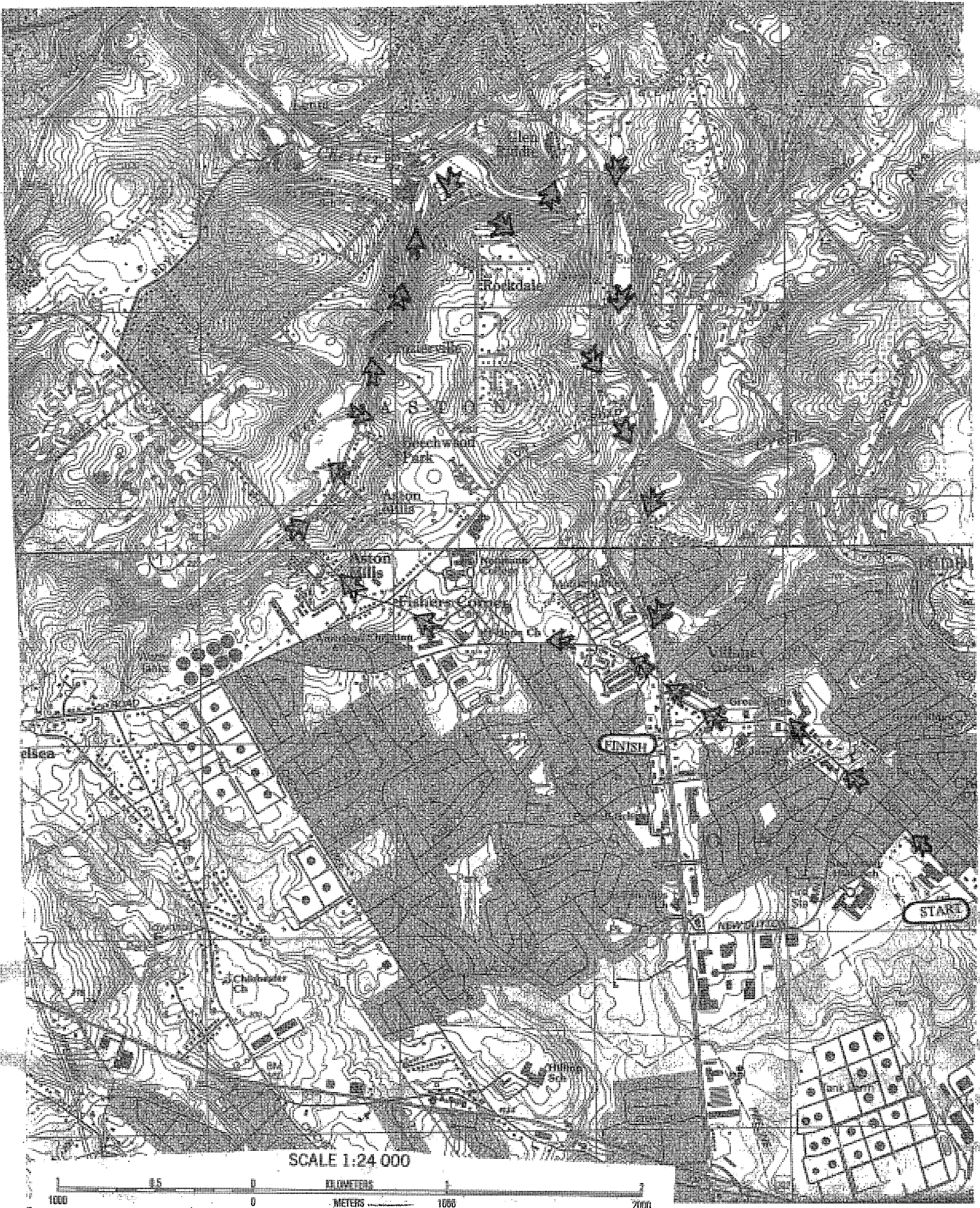
Compiled By

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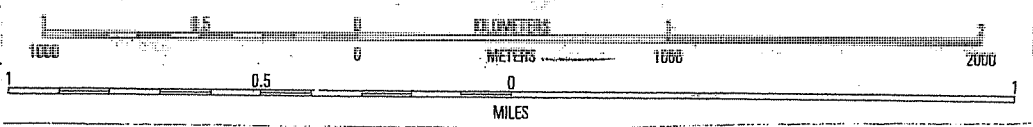
Troop 5917, GSA

President, Venturing Crew 225, BSA

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SCALE 1:24 000



Welcome to Aston, Pennsylvania

The purpose of this trail is to show the citizens of Aston Township the historical significance of the familiar places around town. Most people walk or drive past areas and don't even realize the historical importance. On this trail you will be taken past various sites such as the one room school house and Mt. Hope Church. I hope that after following this trail you learn more about the town you call home.

You may follow the Aston Historical Trail as a hike or a driving tour. If you hike the entire trail it should take approximately 3 hours. If you drive it will take you less than 18 minutes, without stops to examine the sites. You may choose to do some or all the trail at your discretion. Included in the hike are certain basic compass skills for the benefit of Boy Scout hikers completing First Class rank requirement # 2 or Second Class rank requirement # 1b.

The Aston Historical Trail Patch

The patch you will receive after completing this trail was designed to illustrate what you learned while on the trail. The colors that are used on the patch, mostly blue and gold, are Pennsylvania's state colors. The dates are also significant to Aston's history. In 1680 came the original land grant in the township. 1687 was when the settlement's name was changed from Northley to Aston. In 1688 Aston was formally incorporated as a township and later in 1906 it became a first class township.¹

The mill in the center of the patch signifies the cotton factories that provided the early industrial base for Aston. The seven stars bordering the patch symbolize the original seven mill sites. The seven stars also call to mind the Seven Stars Hotel, which you learn more about as you hike the trail.²

Guidelines for Safe Hiking

When hiking on roads without sidewalks, you must pay close attention to the traffic. Some of the roads on this trail are particularly dangerous if you're not paying close attention because they are narrow. This hike is intended to be enjoyed during the day. You should never hike during the dark hours. Bright clothing is important to wear when hiking in trafficked areas to heighten your visibility to drivers. For youth groups proper supervision is important. Generally you must walk in single file and on the left hand side of the road, facing traffic, except when road conditions suggest otherwise.

Courteous Hiking

Here are some good tips to being a courteous hiker:

- Share the road! Many of these roads along this trail do not have sidewalks and are heavily trafficked, so sharing the road is important. Be courteous to drivers and bicycle riders.
- When walking along this trail be aware of private property. If you respect people's private property then you won't have any problem.

- "Leave No Trace"³ You probably already know what this means, but for those of you who don't it's just a basic guideline for hiking. It means that when you leave an area there should be no trace of you ever being there. This means no littering and keeping the area as clean or cleaner than it was when you got there.

OUTDOOR CODE

As an American, I will do my best to
Be clean in my outdoor manners,
Be careful with fire,
Be considerate in the outdoors,
and be conservation-minded.

THE TRAIL

If you wish to use a topographical map to aid you in your hike you should look at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) maps "Marcus Hook Quadrangle, Pennsylvania-New Jersey- Delaware 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic) 1995 and "Media Quadrangle, Pennsylvania 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic) 1995.

Northley Middle School

0.0 miles

This is the first stop on the historical trail through Aston. Before 1687 Aston was known as Northley⁴. The name Aston came from Edward Carter⁵, and was chosen in remembrance of his old town in England. The 1736 Carter family burial ground is located further east on Concord Road. In 1688 the Grand Jury laid out a highway from Chester to Aston, which is now known as Concord road leading inland from Chester and the Delaware River and the reason we are starting at NMS. Across from the school is the intersection with Bridgewater road. Historically, Aston had 7 mill locations, called "mill sites", one of which was located where Bridgewater road crosses Chester creek. In 1680 this land was originally owned by William Woodmansey whose estate was known as "Herald".⁶

Standing at the school sign, take a compass bearing of 330 degrees and begin your hike. As you proceed up Concord road, you will pass the Penn-Delco School District's William C. Moser Administration Building named for the former superintendent of the Penn-Delco School District. William C. Moser (1920-2005) was the first superintendent of the newly merged district in 1955 and held the position for 24 years. He negotiated the donation of 35 acres of land from the Sun Oil Company on which the current Sun Valley High School and Northley Middle School are located.⁷

Dutton Mill Road**0.4 miles**

As we progress down the road, the next major intersection is Dutton Mill and Concord. Dutton Mill was named after one of the early settlers, John Dutton. He owned 500 acres of the surrounding area.⁸ Continue on a compass bearing of 330 degrees.

American Legion Post 926**0.5 miles**

This is a popular site for the annual Memorial Day celebration. The American Legion, a veterans' organization, was founded in Paris in March of 1919 by members of the victorious American Expeditionary Force who had won World War I.⁹

Saint Joseph Roman Catholic Church**0.6 miles**

This parish was established in the summer of 1947 in response to the growing post World War II Catholic population in Aston Township. Father James A. Donnelly was appointed the first pastor. On November 8, 1949 the cornerstone was laid for the original church on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Jurich. The present church building was dedicated on September 16, 2001.^{10 11}

Donnelly Avenue adjacent to the school is named for Father Donnelly.

Aston Community Center**0.7 miles**

Dedicated in October 1997, on the site of the former Green Ridge Elementary School, the Community Center is the site of the township library, meeting rooms, athletic facilities, and the Aston Township Historical Society.

From the bend in the road, take a compass bearing of 285 degrees, and proceed down Concord Road.

Lehr Boulevard**0.9 miles**

Lehr Boulevard was named in honor of Richard D. Lehr, the township manager who has served the township since 1971.¹² From the corner of Lehr and Concord, proceed on a bearing of 310 degrees.

Five Points**1.1 miles**

Five Points is the center of Aston. Where Zac's Hamburger is currently located used to be a well known inn that went by the name of the Seven Stars Hotel. It was the first licensed house in Aston.¹³ Built in 1738, the hotel become a spot for coaches to water and change horses. This hotel also believed to have served as an overnight quarters for British General Lord Cornwallis immediately after the Battle of Brandywine on

September 13, 1777 when the British Army passed through Aston following the retreating Continental Army. The inn was destroyed by fire in the 1950s.¹⁴

From Five Points, take a compass bearing of 328 degrees and look at the tree line. What do you see?¹⁵

Proceed at 328 degrees down Concord Road for .3 miles, until you come to the intersection of Red Hill Road.

Red Hill Road

1.4 miles

Red Hill Road cuts off to the right and runs across Aston Ridge to its end in Crozerville. To the right of the road and also bounded by Legion Road is the Red Hill Farm which belongs to the Sisters of St. Francis. Continue on a bearing of 280 degrees and follow Concord Road to Mt. Hope.

Mt. Hope

1.8 miles

This church was founded in 1807 and was one of the early churches in the township. British Troops camped near the church following the Battle of Brandywine. The church is closely associated with the early development of Methodism in American. Originally the ground was donated by Aaron Mattson in 1807.¹⁶

If you detour left at Mt. Hope Methodist on to Tryens Lane, and proceed to the first residence on the left, you will see the oldest residence in Aston and a station on the Underground Railroad. This 1684 house, located about 75 feet off Tryens Road, was used to harbor a runaway slave. The young girl was named Kitty and was disguised as the family's housekeeper. A trap door in the kitchen served as an area for Kitty to escape when slave hunters arrived one day after receiving a tip regarding the runaway slave. Kitty was never discovered and lived her life with the McCracken family until she died.¹⁷

From Mt. Hope proceed on a bearing of 320 degrees.

Fisher's Corner

2.1 miles

This is the intersection where Convent road connects with Concord and Aston Mills road. If you look right down Convent road you will see Our Lady of Angels convent, the motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia, an order of Roman Catholic nuns¹⁸. Its affiliate, Our Lady of Angels College, founded in 1965, has now become Neumann College¹⁹. The property originally housed the Aston Ridge Seminary for Young Ladies, an Episcopal institution. In 1859 St. John Neumann, then the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, purchased the building for use as Philadelphia Preparatory Seminary. In 1871 the Sisters purchased the building and the 300 hundred surrounding acres for their mother house.²⁰

From the intersection of Concord and Convent Roads take a compass bearing of 328 degrees and proceed WITH GREAT CAUTION down Aston Mills Road, remembering to keep to the left hand side of the road and yield to oncoming traffic.

Mount Road at Aston Mills

2.5 miles

At the base of the steep hill descending from high ground of "Aston Ridge" to Chester Creek is the old mill site of Aston Mills. This area has also been known in the past as Llewellyn Mill, Rhodes Mill and Tyson's Mill. This is one of the original seven mill sites in Aston. It marks the western end of the 1682 land grant to John Neild. The Neild grant of 250 acres including what later became the village of Rockdale.²¹ Proceed right onto Mount Road and look for the fire house on your left. Continue on a 90 degree compass bearing.

Aston Beechwood Volunteer Fire Co.

Chartered in 1948 by Ed Cordell in what was known as the Beechwood Park section of the township, Aston Beechwood is one of two volunteer companies in Aston Township. Firefighter Herbert J. Pinkowicz (1954-1986) is the only member of the company ever killed in the line of duty. FF Pinkowicz was fatally injured while responding to an alarm and his name is inscribed on the township memorial at Five Points.²²

The other fire company in the township is the Green Ridge Volunteer Company Number 63, which was founded in 1942. Their present firehouse on Dutton Mill Road was completed in 1965.²³ Both fire companies provide critical emergency services to the citizens of Aston.

Proceed down Mount Road until you reach the park.

Lewis H. Fisher Memorial Park Trail Head

2.8 miles

Formerly known as Eagle Park, the park was renamed on November 17, 2007 to honor the late Lewis H. Fisher former Second Ward commissioner (1986-2005) and district justice for his 26 years of public service.²⁴ Just past the playground area is the head of a graveled trail through this township park which parallels the West Branch Chester Creek. Follow the gravel trail and enjoy a small bit of nature. Chester Creek has two branches, the main branch and the West Branch. The main branch has a source near Kirkland and along its course is dammed to form the West Chester Reservoir and Milltown Reservoir. The West Branch originates near Dilworthtown and flows east. In eastern Chester County is it dammed to form Brinton Lake. The branches converge at Rockdale.²⁵

Trail's End**3.0 miles**

Immediately behind the Southwest Delaware County Municipal Authority Eagle pumping station, the trail forks. Bear right and return to Mount Road turn left and proceed down Mount road, exercising great caution since there is no shoulder on the road.

Red Hill Road/Crozerville**3.3 miles**

Crozerville is one of the seven original mill sites of the Rockdale District and was named for John Price Crozer. He was the most prominent of the mill owners in the mid-1800s, when the cotton textile industry flourished along Chester Creek. Crozer was a self made man, a devout Baptist, and founder of mills in Upland.²⁶ He was the patron of Upland Baptist Church. The Crozers also subsidized the Crozer Hospital, now the Crozer Chester Medical Center, and the former Crozer Theological Seminary, where civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King earned his bachelor of divinity degree in 1951.

From the intersection of Red Hill Road and Mount Road take a compass bearing of 54 degrees and look up hill. What do you see?

Tenements

Look to the right uphill and you'll see the "English Hill" tenements.²⁷ These were workers' houses constructed a mill owner and leased to his workers. They were located close to the factory because the workers had to walk to and from work in all weather. A bell on the top of the factory building would ring to call the workers to their jobs. Many of the textile mill workers at Crozerville were immigrants from Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Continue down Mount Road.

Dam**3.5 miles**

Prior to the advent of steam engines, mills of all sorts were driven by water power and water wheels. The Rockdale industrial district is located on fall line of the Chester Creek and West Branch of Chester Creek. The fall line is where the creek descends from the inland plateau toward the Delaware River valley below. It descends sharply (a drop of 90 feet) over a 3 mile distance between Lenni and Knowlton Mills. The Dam was built to store up water power to turn mill wheels of factories through a system of channels called mill races.²⁸ Continue down Mount Road to the next intersection.

War Memorial**3.6 miles**

At the intersection of Mount and New Roads is a memorial honoring veterans from Aston and Middletown. One monument is dedicated to the soldiers of World War I and bears the names of James L. Killen Jr., and Jesse S. Miles who were killed in action in that war. The second memorial honors the veterans from Rockdale who served in

World War II and Vietnam and bears the name of Thomas L. Brown who was killed in action during the Vietnam War. Directly across the bridge on the right is located the local Magisterial District Court. Further up New Road is the parish of St. Francis DeSales which was founded in 1894.²⁹ From the War Memorial walk down Team Road on the near side of Chester Creek. At the end of Team Road you will reach a bridge crossing Chester Creek.

Confluence

3.7 miles

Rockdale is located where Chester Creek meets West Branch of Chester Creek. If you stand on the bridge you can see the exact point where they meet. Lenni Mill is located across the creek. Named by early mill owners who associated the location with Lenni Lenape Indians. It is also one of the seven original mills. This mill was once owned by Daniel Lamot who was one of the early industrialists.³⁰ He was also a close friend of the DuPont family, whose gun powder mills were located west on the Brandywine Creek. From the bridge walk back up Convent Road and turn left at Herald Square. You are now in downtown Rockdale.

Herald Square

3.8 miles

The tiny street named Herald Square was where the newspaper of Rockdale was located during its glory days. The paper was called *The Rockdale Herald*. The name is a gentle parody of the somewhat larger and more famous Herald Square in New York City. Turn Right on Oakhurst Street and proceed one block to Mount Road. On your right you will see the former Ahearn's Market, one of the last retail establishments in Rockdale. Turn Left on Mount Road. You will see the former Rockdale School on your right, now a private business.

Rockdale Theater Site

3.9 miles

As you proceed down Mount Road past Old Rockdale School, you come to a grassy lot on your right which was once the site of a motion picture theatre. You can still see the remnants of the back wall of the foundation of the building.

Crozerville United Methodist Episcopal Church

This congregation was originally founded in 1851.³¹ John P. Crozer made significant gifts to the church which was renamed as the Crozerville Methodist Church in his honor. The building was remodeled in 1899. Continue down Mount Road again exercising caution due to the narrow shoulder.

Calvary Episcopal Church

4.3 miles

This church started as a Sunday school and was sponsored by Richard Somers Smith. He also owned the Old Sable Forge where Kings Mills is now located. Originally

it had an attendance of around 20 children, but soon it became 100 children. In 1834 Bishop Onderdonk licensed Kington Goddard to hold services there. Around 1836 the construction of the church began and by 1839 it was consecrated by Bishop Onderdonk.³² Proceed down Mount Road.

AOH Hall

On the left you will see a large red brick building with a tablet located near the peak. The tablet is engraved with "AOH" and the date 1892. AOH, which stands for Ancient Order of Hibernians, is an Irish American fraternal society³³. Many mill workers and Samuel Riddle, the prominent owner of the Parkmount Mill, immigrated to America from Belfast Ireland in the 1820's. Riddle worked his way to great wealth.³⁴

Railroad Trestle

As you progress down Mount Road you will see an abandoned railroad trestle traversing Chester Creek. This is part of the former Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad. The Chester Creek Branch railroad was constructed shortly after the Civil War and served the interest of local businesses in the Chester Creek Valley. After the railroad line sustained severe flood damage in 1971 the line was taken out of service and has since been deeded to SEPTA. The Chester Creek Rail-Trail Association has proposed to turn this former rail line into a recreational trail.³⁵

Pennell Road

4.4 miles

At the intersection of Mount Road and Pennell Road turn right. Pennell Road proceeds east to "Five Points" and is named for John Pennell, one of the early land owners in Aston. Walk carefully on the right side of the road until you see Kings Mills Banquet Facility across Pennell Road.

Kings Mills

4.7 miles

Once known as Old Sable Forge, Kings Mills was built around the 1700's. It was composed of three grist mills at first, and used the water power to grind grain. The building also served as a place of worship while Calvary Episcopal Church was being completed. It then became a place to produce iron, supplying such things as nails. When the Revolutionary War came, the mills began producing musket balls and canon balls. George Washington came there to pick up ammunition before the battle of Brandywine. In the 1800's they became textile mills and produced such things as uniforms for the Civil War. It was also used by the Underground Railroad to hide runaway slaves. Later on, the mill began producing costumes, and is responsible for making some of the early Disney World costumes.³⁶ Continue down Pennell Road.

Up the hill on the right you will see recently developed commercial area that was the site of the 1785 Hillwood Farm.

Across the street you will see the Aston Middletown Little League athletic fields, which are located on the banks of Chester Creek. The creek may be accessed along this stretch. Much of Chester Creek, including this stretch, are approved trout waters.

Proceed down Pennell Road to the Barnaby's Restaurant at the intersection of Pennell Road and Glendale Boulevard.

Old Pennell Road **5.1 miles**

From the Barnaby's parking lot, look across Glendale Boulevard and you will see the road bed of old Pennell Road heading up the hill side parallel with the present Pennell Road. Follow this road bed. It will lead you over the hill and to the current end of Old Pennell Road at the intersection of Legion Road. Proceed down Old Pennell Road to the intersection with new Pennell Road. Cross new Pennell Road and continue on Old Pennell Road until it once again rejoins new Pennell Road. You will see the Old Village Green School House on your left.

Old Village Green School House **6.1 miles**

The original one room school house was built in 1802. However, the building you now see was built in 1866. This building housed one teacher and up to 50 students. It was home to students of grades first to eighth. It closed in the late 1940's. A historical marker has been placed by the Aston Historical Society. Proceed up Pennell Road towards Five Points. On your left you will see a three story building.

Village Green Grange

If you look at the stone placed near the peak of three storey building's roof, you will see an inscription "Village Green Grange P. of H. No. 1299". The Grange is a national fraternal organization dedicated to advancing agriculture and the interests of rural America. Its formal name is the Order of Patrons of Husbandry (P. of H.).³⁷ This reminds us that once Aston was a farming community too.

Memorial Garden **6.3 miles**

The Aston Township Veterans Memorial Garden was dedicated on Veterans Day 2006 and established to honor military, police, firefighters and emergency services personnel who have served the United States and the township with valor, particularly those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.³⁸

On August 13th, 2007, the memorial clock was formally dedicated. The clock was a gift from the Aston Business Association.³⁹

Estimate the height of the clock.⁴⁰ Proceed down Pennell Road until you reach the Aston Township Municipal Building.

Your trail concludes at the Aston Municipal Building, the seat of municipal government. The Aston Police Department and Aston Public Works Department are also located at this site.

Aston is a first class township and is governed by a township commission composed of seven members who meet monthly in public session. Each commissioner is selected from one of the seven wards in Aston and serves a four year term. The elections are staggered so that no more than four commissioners are up for election in any given year.

Since the Board of Commissioners are part time officials the daily township administration is handled by a township manager who is a full time employee. The Board of Commissioners meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month and are open to the public.⁴¹

We hope you have enjoyed your trip through three centuries of Aston's history. Every community, no matter how small, has a fascinating story to tell and we hope you will share this with others. If you are interested in following other trails through American history you can get information from these sources:

Valley Forge Trail, Valley Forge National Park, sponsored by the Cradle of Liberty Council, Boy Scouts of America, Telephone: 610-688-6900

American Historical Trails - <http://www.thecarolinatrader.com/trails.htm> - includes the Philadelphia Trail of Freedom and the Benjamin Franklin Trail.

Nations Trails - <http://www.nationstrails.com/>

¹ Delaware County TODAY/Almanac, 73rd edition, Mau Publishing Co., Upper Darby, 1998, p 21.

² Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2005, pp 3, 10, 11

³ Leave No Trace, http://www.scouting.org/boyscouts/resources/21-117/064_principles.html

⁴ Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania*, Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Co., 1884, http://www.delcohistory.org/ashmead/ashmead_pg290.htm retrieved 1/25/06

⁵ John W. Jordan, LL. D., *History of Aston [sic] Township, Pa. From: A History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania*, Edited Published By Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York 1914, <http://history.rays-place.com/pa/aston-t-pa.htm>, retrieved 1/2/06

⁶ Ashmead, p.290

⁷ Penn Delco School District website, <http://www.pdsd.org/Administration/Moser.html>, retrieved 11/25/07

⁸ Ashmead, p 290

⁹ The American Legion,

http://www.legion.org/?section=our_legion&subsection=ol_history&content=ol_history_1919, retrieved 11/25/07

10 Saint Joseph parish, <http://archdiocese-phl.org/parishes/8035.htm>, retrieved 11/25/07

11 Saint Joseph parish, <http://www.stjosephaston.org/>, retrieved 11/25/07

12 *Town Talk* (Aston, Brookhaven, Chichester, Edition) Volume. XXXX, No. 24, p. 2A

13 Paul Dougherty, GoAston.com , Town History,
<http://www.gomytown.com/pa/delaware/aston/community/history.shtml>, retrieved 8/10/01

14 "Aston Township, Pennsylvania", Wikipedia,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aston_Township_Pennsylvania, retrieved 1/4/07

15 Chapel dome and bell tower of Our Lady of Angels Convent at Neumann College

16 Mount Hope Methodist Church,
<http://www.mthope.org/templates/System/details.asp?id=36614&PID=387716>, retrieved 11/25/07

17 "The Trackless Train", *Delaware County Daily Times*, February 28, 1999, pp. 40-42.

18 History of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia,
http://www.osfphila.org/sp/about_us/history.html, retrieved 11/25/07

19 Neumann College history, http://www.neumann.edu/about/history_mission.asp, retrieved 11/25/07

20 Aston Township *Township Times*, Vol. 2, Issue 4, April 2006.

21 Ashmead, p. 290

22 History of Aston Beechwood Volunteer Fire Company,
<http://www.astonbeechwood72.com/history.php> , retrieved 11/25/07

23 Green Ridge Fire Company website, <http://greenridge63.com/history.php>, retrieved 8/21/06

24 Aston Township, *Township Times*, Vol. 3, Issue 12, December 2007.

25 "Chester Creek", Wikipedia, http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chester_Creek , retrieved 12/5/07

26 Wallace, pp. 16, 41

27 Wallace, pp. 14, 41

28 Wallace, p. 11

29 History of St. Francis de Sales, http://www.sfdchurch.org/parish_history.htm, retrieved 11/25/07

30 Wallace p. 17

31 History of Crozerville United Methodist Church,
<http://oldchesterpa.com/churches/crozervilleumchurch.htm#history>, retrieved 11/25/07

32 History of Calvary Episcopal Church,
<http://www.calvaryepiscopalrockdale.org/CalvaryHISTORY.html>, retrieved 11/25/07

33 History of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, <http://www.aoh.com/history.html>, retrieved 11/25/07

34 Wallace, pp. 18, 37

35 Short History of the Chester Creek Branch,
<http://www.chestercreektrail.org/Website/About%20th%20Trail/Short%20History%20of...>,
retrieved 12/5/07

36 The History of King's Mills, brochure by King's Mills, Inc., n.d.

37 History of the Grange, <http://www.nationalgrange.org/about/history.html>, retrieved 11/25/07

38 Aston Township *Township Times*, Vol 2, Issue 12, December 2006

39 Aston Township *Township Times*, Vol. 4, Issue 9, September 2007

40 The clock is 16 feet high.

41 Aston Township *Township Times*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, March 2007