

About Indiana County Parks & Trails

Indiana County offers one of Pennsylvania's most diverse county parks systems.

The 2,700 acre park system consists of three regional parks, five historic sites, two natural areas, two bicycle trails, and four covered bridges.

We offer places to play, relax, improve your health and fitness, learn about our heritage, and explore the natural world.

The county's parks and trails play an important role in making Indiana County a better place to live, work, and play. We invite you to visit these special places.

Smicksburg Area Heritage Society

The SAHS was founded in the early 1990's to help preserve and promote the significant heritage of Smicksburg and the surrounding area. The Society operates a heritage center in Smicksburg which features displays, artifacts and other interpretive information about the community's engaging history.

For more extensive reading on Smicksburg we recommend, *In the Valley of the Fair Mahoning*, written by Tim Spence.



To learn more about our county parks & trails, please visit our website:
www.indianacountyparks.org

Indiana County Parks & Trails
1128 Blue Spruce Road
Indiana, PA 15701
(724) 463-8636



*Photos used with permission of
Smicksburg Area Heritage Association.*

Old Smicksburg Park



Indiana County Parks & Trails
www.indianacountyparks.org

Significant Events in Smicksburg's History

Pre 1827 to 1854 Founding

Pre-1827 – Native Americans have a presence in the Mahoning Valley. Two Indian paths, the Venango-Frankstown and Great Shamokin Path pass near the town.

1827 – Reverend John George Schmick lays out town plan, the forty-five by two hundred foot lots sold for \$10 each.

1830 – Methodist Church becomes the first of four churches in Smicksburg.

1830 to 1854 – Smicksburg establishes itself as a commercial and industrial center for the surrounding area.

1854 – Smicksburg incorporated as a Borough.

1855 to 1870 – War Years and Beyond

1860 – Smicksburg population, 134.

1867 – Smicksburg Foundary established.

1870's – Timbering becomes an important industry throughout the Mahoning Valley

1871 to 1900 – Period of Growth

1870 – Population, 144.

1880 – Population, 223.

1900 to 1955 – Period of Progress

1914 – Telephone service by the Farmers Telephone Exchange.

1916 – Natural gas service by T.W. Phillips Gas Company.

1918 – Spanish Flu epidemic—gatherrings disallowed by Borough Board of Health.

1930 – Population, 230.

1932 – Bank robbery at Smicksburg State Bank

1936 to 1945 – Period of Major Changes

1936 – St. Patrick's Day Flood.

1940 – Population reaches peak, 240.

1941 – Federal Flood Control Commission purchases 22 properties. Only 65 percent of the town population remains.

1945 to 1960 – Period of Decline

1950 – Population, 90.

1950's – Only three businesses remain: a General Store, Post Office and Smicksburg Builder's Supply.

1960 – Population, 60.

1960 to 1985 and Beyond – Period of Transition

1960's – Amish move into area from Ohio, eventually becoming the third largest Amish settlement in PA and the 11th largest settlement in the U.S.

1963 – Mahoning Cheese Cooperative established using Amish and other farmers milk to make cheese. The business continues to operate under new ownership.

1972 – Hurricane Agnes produces some of the worst flooding known in Smicksburg. A 1976 flood would be just as severe.

1974 – The Enersons begin growing grapes northeast of Smicksburg. Windgate Winery established in 1984.

1985 – Numerous shops and businesses created in and around Smicksburg by Amish and non-Amish. Tourism becomes a significant part of the local economy.

1992 – Smicksburg Area Heritage Society begins effort to establish park in Smicksburg on Army Corps flood control property.

2000 – Smicksburg Area Heritage Society assumes management of Old Smicksburg Park.

2010 – Population, 45.



Smicksburg, 1952

About Old Smicksburg Park

Old Smicksburg Park offers a unique opportunity to tell the story of a small village that has undergone tremendous change in its time. The 33-acre park is located on property acquired in 1941 by the federal government to serve as a flood control area for Mahoning Dam, located 11 miles downstream of the village.

The acquisition of the property by the federal government resulted in the loss of two-thirds of the town. Twenty-two buildings were lost including several fine homes, the Lutheran Church, three cemeteries, the grist mill, creamery, telephone exchange, gas station, and the school house.

The town was originally established in 1827 on a plan of lots laid out by Rev. John George Schmick and others. From 1827 until 1940 Smicksburg was a thriving community and business center in northern Indiana County.

The establishment of Old Smicksburg Park dates from the 1990's when the Smicksburg Area Heritage Society (SAHS), under the direction of Rev. Tim Spence, initiated efforts to establish a community park and historical site.

Since 2000 the SAHS has served as the caretaker and manager of the park. In 2010 the park's management was transferred to Indiana County Parks & Trails. Management of the park is a cooperative partnership of Smicksburg Borough, the SAHS, Indiana County Parks & Trails, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The story of Smicksburg's founding, early growth, unfortunate decline, and eventual transition as a popular tourist destination is a compelling one.

Walking Tour

The walking tour of Old Smicksburg Park contains 19 points of interest that interpret the historic, cultural, and natural features of the park.

Point 1: Mill House

The mill house housed the miller and his family. While in operation the grist mill required constant attention and observation.

Point 2: Grist Mill

A grist mill owned by John Stiteler and later George Stear operated here until the 1936 flood. Farmers brought grain to the two story mill to have it ground into flour.

Point 3: Riethmiller Store

Located at the corner of Mill Street and Kittanning Street this store and gas station was originally constructed in 1910 by John Campbell. When the store property was condemned in 1941 for flood control purposes, the Riethmillers moved their store to Clarion and Kittanning Streets out of the flood zone.

Point 4: F.W. Beere's Atlas Map

The Beere's Atlas map from 1871 depicts the borough 44 years after it was first established. There were about 33 buildings on the park property at this time.

Point 5: Church Street

The street has had several different names including Market, Main, and Church Street. After 1885 the street was referred to as Church Street after three churches were built near the north end of the street.

Point 6: McCormick House

One of the most elegant homes in Smicksburg existed here. The lot had been the site of a Presbyterian Church beginning in 1854. The inventor, John B. McCormick, bought the lot in 1904 and his widow Mabel McCormick, lived here from 1924 until 1941.

Point 7: Second Salem Lutheran Church

In 1899 the congregation constructed its second church on this lot. The church was torn down in 1944 by congregation members and the materials were re-used in the new church built on Clarion Street.

Point 10: Three Cemeteries

Three cemeteries once existed in this part of town. The cemeteries were moved into a combined location two miles south of town on Route 954 after 1941.

Point 11: Wildlife Area

This portion of the park is a magnet for wildlife. Condrion Run, Little Mahoning Creek and a variety of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers provide an inviting location for songbirds and other wildlife.

Point 12: Little Mahoning Creek

Little Mahoning Creek rises in the northeast corner of Indiana County. The creek joins Mahoning Creek northwest of Smicksburg. The stream is home to an impressive number of freshwater fish, aquatic and insect species. It is also home to the unique eastern hellbender salamander.

Point 13: Condrion Run

Condrion Run is a small stream that dissects the park property.

Point 14: Glenn & Lowe Foundry

The foundry and machine works were established in 1867 by Abraham Glenn. Lowe bought the business in the 1870s and operated the foundry until his death in 1898.

Point 15: Elkin House & Blacksmith Shop

This was the site of the Elkin House & Blacksmith Shop. There was at least one other blacksmith shop in Smicksburg.

Point 16: Farmer's Telephone Exchange

A telephone cooperative was established in 1913-14. Members organized the cooperative by paying \$5 a share. A central switchboard was located in the George Welsh house. Tilly Pierce served as the switchboard operator.

Point 17: Smicksburg Co-operative Creamery

Local farmers brought their raw cream and milk to the Creamery to be processed into butter, cheese, milk and ice cream. The products were shipped by train from the nearby Goodville Station to markets in Dubois and Punxsutawney. The Creamery remained in business until 1945.



Point 8: St. Thomas Episcopal Church

The church was constructed about 1872 and served the congregation until it disbanded between 1913 and 1920. Eventually the lot became an Episcopal cemetery until it was abandoned in 1941.

Point 9: First Lutheran Church

The first building constructed by the Lutherans was a frame structure erected on Mahoning Street in 1853. Market Street was later named Church Street.

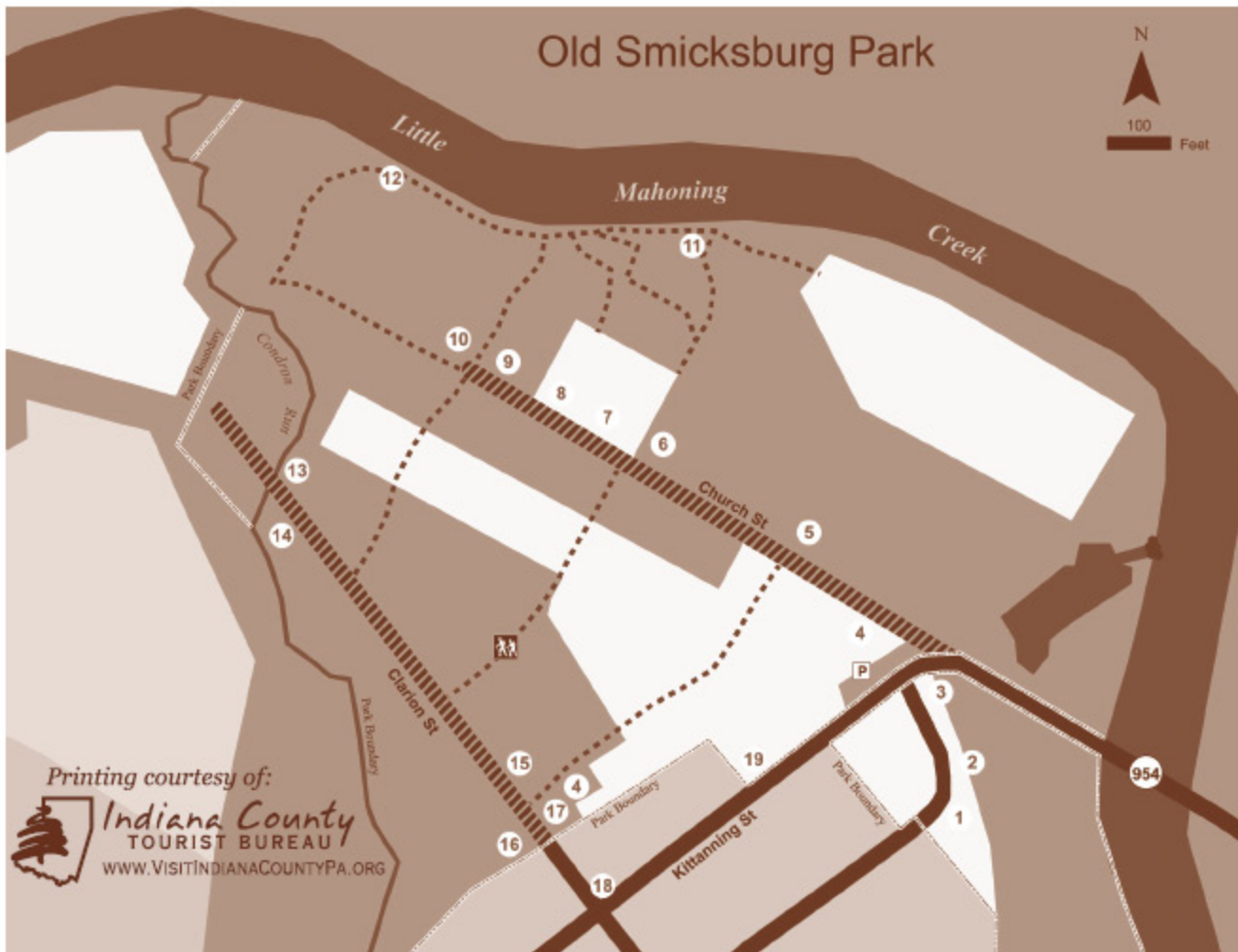


Point 18: M.A. Stear Store

One of the most important commercial buildings in Smicksburg was located here. The building was constructed in 1871 and served as a general store, music store, barbershop and eventually, a post office. The building burned down on Christmas Eve, 1905 in a fire that threatened the town center.

Point 19: Native American Paths

Two major Native American paths intersected near Smicksburg, the Great Shamokin Path and the Venango-Frankstown Path. These paths were used by Native Americans and early traders to travel throughout western and northwestern PA. Archeological evidence indicates that the Mahoning Valley has been populated for thousands of years.



MAP SITES

1. Mill House
2. Grist Mill
3. Riethmiller's Store
4. Beere's Atlas (two locations)
5. Church Street
6. McCormick House
7. Second Salem Lutheran Church
8. St. Thomas Episcopal Church
9. First Lutheran Church
10. Cemeteries (Lutheran, Episcopal, and Presbyterian)
11. Wildlife Area
12. Little Mahoning Creek
13. Condon Run
14. Glenn & Lowe Foundry
15. Elkin House & Blacksmith Shop
16. Farmer's Telephone Exchange
17. Smicksburg Co-operative Creamery
18. M.A. Stear Store
19. Native American Paths (were located in nearby area)

Printing courtesy of:

Indiana County
TOURIST BUREAU
WWW.VISITINDIANACOUNTYPA.ORG