



*Welcome to your ultimate summer trip, Road to Roots! Below you will find information on the 13 historic sites you will be visiting across Berks County this summer. If you have any questions about any of the historic sites below, call our friends at the Berks History Center Museum at 610-375-4375. Enjoy, and have fun! Make sure you bring your finished map (10/13 locations visited) to the library with your contact information on the back to earn a prize and entry for our raffle!*

1. **Berks History Center Museum & Henry Janssen Library.** 940 Centre Ave, Reading, PA  
The Berks History Center (BHC) was established in 1869 as the Historical Society of Berks County, making it Pennsylvania's second oldest historical society. The BHC museum and headquarters is a landmark in the Centre Park Historic District. At the BHC Museum, discover the essential stories of Berks County and its people. We showcase local history through a vast collection of artifacts and documents, educational programs, workshops and community events. Or perhaps you are interested in local historical research or family genealogy? Then let the staff at Berks History Center's Henry Janssen Library assist you in your search. **Museum admission is by appointment only. Call 610-375-4375 to schedule a visit. Children Admission is \$4 and adult admission is \$7. For library research services, please call 610-375-4375.**  
<https://www.berkshistory.org/>

2. **Morlatton Village.** 31 Old Philadelphia Pike, Douglasville, PA- Swedish pioneer Magnus Jonasson, aka Mouns Jones, came up the Schuylkill River from Philadelphia in 1701 and founded the settlement of Morlatton, near present-day Douglassville. Other Philadelphia Swedes followed soon after, making this the first European settlement in Berks County. It was not long before Morlatton became a busy crossroads, trading post and center for regional commerce with access to the port of Philadelphia. By 1719, the Swedish settlement had progressed and a township, Amity, was formed. Today, the township's motto is "First in Berks." In its early days, Morlatton was a meeting place for colonists and Native Americans, and Jones served as an Indian interpreter and trader. Morlatton's importance grew as roads leading to Tulpehocken, Oley, Reading and Philadelphia intersected there, and the settlement became a routing center for refined iron from Pennsylvania's earliest forges and grains from the Oley Valley heading downriver. **No admission fee.**

<http://www.historicpreservationtrust.org/historic-properties/morlatton-village/>



**Photo of the Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles courtesy of Berks History Center's Photograph Archives**

3. **Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles.** 85 S. Walnut St, Boyertown, PA- The Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles houses more than a collection of automobiles. Organized in 1965

to collect, preserve, restore, study and exhibit vehicles and memorabilia, it includes horse-drawn buggies, wagons, trucks, bicycles and more. Together these artifacts represent the legacy of vehicle craftsmanship that set the standard for the local automobile manufacturing that followed. Starting with the first carriage built by Jeremiah Sweinhart in Boyertown in 1872, and following through successive Berks carriage, sleigh, bicycle and motorcycle builders, the collection illustrates the turbulent, but irresistible, transition to gasoline powered vehicles. **Admission is \$10 for Adults. Children are free.** <https://boyertownmuseum.org/>



**Photo of the Hopewell Furnace courtesy of Berks History Center's Photograph Archives**



**Photo of the Hopewell Furnace courtesy of Berks History Center's Photograph Archives**

**4. Hopewell Village & Furnace.** 2 Mark Bird Lane, Elverson, PA- Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, a 19th century iron plantation, is within bounds of French Creek State Park. Conditions in colonial Pennsylvania were ideal for the iron industry to take root and flourish. The colony was blessed with abundant ore, large forests from which charcoal could be made, rich deposits of limestone for "sweetening" fields and numerous streams for powering water wheels. Pennsylvania's climate of religious tolerance helped attract entrepreneurs and skilled workmen from across the Atlantic.

The first bloomery forge in Pennsylvania was built by Thomas Rutter in 1716 near what is now Pottstown, Montgomery County. In 1720, Rutter built Colebrookdale, near Boyertown, the first blast furnace in the colonies. About the same time, he partnered with Thomas Potts, founder of Pottstown, to establish Pine Forge in Douglass Township. (Later on the tour you will drive by Pine Forge Academy which was the location of Pine Forge.) There in 1733, William Bird, newly arrived from England, was able to find work cutting wood for 2 shillings, 9 pence a day. Typical of first-generation ironmasters, Bird worked his way up, learning his trade at a number of forges before going into business for himself. By 1740, he had bought land and built Hopewell Forge on Hay Creek, in what is now Birdsboro. He continued to acquire the surrounding land until he had secured 3,000 acres.

Bird laid out a town in 1750 and called it Birdsboro. A year later, he built a two-story mansion, now Birdsboro Community Center, on Main Street close to his forge. He fathered 12 children, including Rachel, who married James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration of

Independence; Mary, who married George Ross, Jr., son of George Ross, another signer of the Declaration; and Mark, who married Mary Ross, sister to that signer.

Mark took over the operation of his father's interests after William died in 1761. One of the largest landholders in the county, he eventually owned thousands of acres of woodland, iron mines, and water rights. For Hopewell Furnace, built in 1771, he chose a site near French Creek, five miles south of his father's forge and close to his Hopewell Mine. During its first six years, Hopewell Furnace contributed munitions and material to the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Bird, like many of his fellow ironmasters, over-expanded during the war and was hard hit when it ended and the national economy faltered. The furnace was put up for auction in 1786 and Bird fled to North Carolina to elude creditors. **No admission fee.**

<https://www.nps.gov/hofu/index.htm>



**Photo of the Bertolet Cabin on the Daniel Boone Homestead courtesy of Floyd Turner**

5. **Daniel Boone Homestead.** 400 Daniel Boone Road, Birdsboro, PA- George Boone was one of the first English settlers in the Exeter region. His son Squire Boone and Squire's wife, Sarah, bought 250 acres here in 1730. Squire labored on it as a farmer, blacksmith, and weaver. His and Sarah's sixth child, Daniel, was born on their farm on November 2, 1734. Daniel spent his first 15½ years growing up here before the family moved to North Carolina in 1750. Later in life, Daniel Boone traveled through Cumberland Gap to Kentucky, where in 1769, he established a settlement that became known as Boonesboro. Follow in the footsteps of a legendary frontiersman. The homestead, on 579 acres of rural countryside, includes the Boone House,

restored and furnished with an outstanding collection of period Pennsylvania furniture, tools and farm implements. **No admission fee.**

<https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Museums/Historic-Homes/Pages/Daniel-Boone-Homestead.aspx>



Photo of the Conrad Weiser Homestead courtesy of the BHC Archives

6. **Conrad Weiser Homestead.** 28 Weiser Lane, Womelsdorf, PA- Conrad Weiser was an 18th century German immigrant who served as an Indian interpreter and negotiator, and maintained peaceful relationships with Indians for decades. Weiser became known as *Tarachiawagon*, his Indian name that translates to “Holder of the Heavens.” Weiser’s death in 1760, along with the end of the French and Indian War, concluded Pennsylvania’s treaty system of negotiations between Europeans and American Indians. The Conrad Weiser Homestead is located on 26 acres of land. Seven total buildings exist on the property; three are open for touring. Two large monuments, a gazebo, the Weiser Family Cemetery, and a pond are also on the site. Two picnic areas are present in the western section of the park and can be utilized at any time without reservation. The park is an attractive venue to walk, run, or play Frisbee. Public restroom facilities are available. Dogs are permitted, but must remain on a leash. **No admission fee.**  
<http://www.conradweiserhomestead.org/>



Photo of the Reading Pagoda courtesy of Floyd N. Turner II

7. **Pagoda.**98 Duryea Dr, Reading- At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mount Penn was buzzing with activity, including hotels and a popular gravity railroad. Below the Pagoda, on the side of Mount Penn, now mostly obscured by the trees, is the remains of a stone quarry which was owned and operated by William Abbott Witman, Sr. The residents of Reading were very unhappy with the hideous “scar” on the side of their mountain and were very vocal about it. Being an entrepreneur, Mr. Witman had the idea to build a luxury hotel on top of the mountain that was a reproduction of a Japanese battle castle in Nagoya, Japan. He boldly began construction about 1907. As the building was being completed in 1908, Mr. Witman filed for a liquor license for his hotel. Unfortunately, it was denied. Without a liquor license, the operation of a luxury hotel would

be impossible. Ultimately, the bank foreclosed on the property and, in 1910, sold it to Jonathan Mold. Shortly afterward, Mr. Mold sold the property to the City of Reading for one dollar. The City made the Pagoda part of their parks system and opened it to the public. With a commanding view of the city and countryside, the Pagoda quickly became a popular destination for tourists and locals. In 1972, with the help of Pagoda-Skyline Inc., the Pagoda was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The important designation by the U.S. Department of Interior will help to ensure this unique landmark watches over Reading and Berks County for the foreseeable future. <http://www.readingpagoda.com/home.html>

8. **Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center at Kutztown University.** 22 Luckenbill Rd, Kutztown, PA. An open-air folklife museum and research center dedicated to preserving and celebrating Pennsylvania German folk culture. Includes a one room school house, two log cabins and a 19th Century Farmstead. *Not currently holding in person events.*\*\*\*

<https://www.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/pennsylvania-german-cultural-heritage-center.html>



Photo of the Nolde Mansion circa 1953 courtesy of the BHC Archives

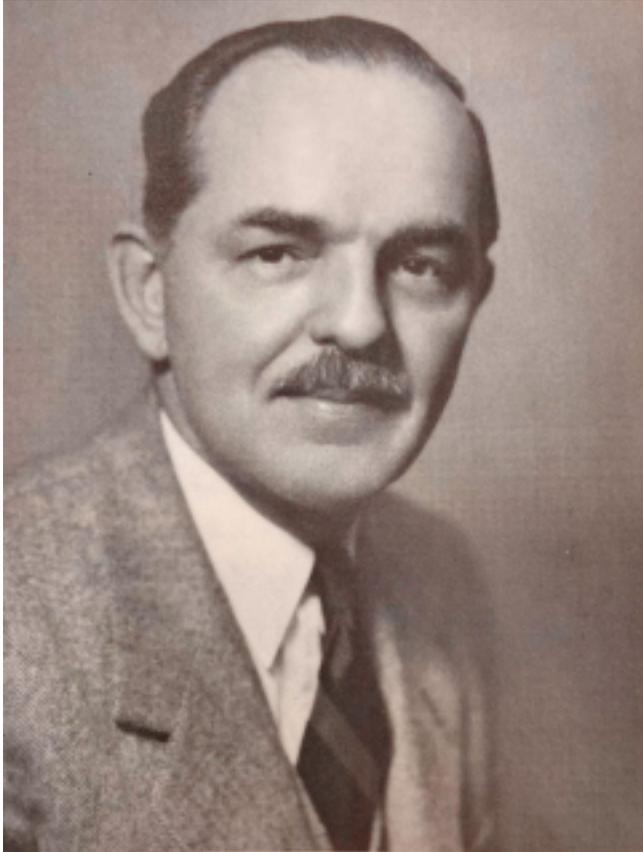


Photo of Hans Nolde circa 1945 courtesy of the BHC Archives

**9. Nolde Forest, Nolde Mansion and Historic Sawmill.** 2910 New Holland Rd, Reading. When hosiery baron Jacob Nolde acquired this area in the early 1900s, a single white pine grew amid meadow vegetation. Inspired by this tree, the German-born Nolde hired an Austrian forester to create a coniferous forest. As the plantations grew, they formed a “luxury forest,” a source of family pleasure and pride.

During 1926, Hans Nolde, a son of Jacob, initiated work on the Tudor-style mansion. When this year-round home was finished, it overlooked the sawmill pond and the lights of Reading.

The Nolde Forest continues to provide outdoor opportunities for visitors. The commonwealth purchased the property during the late 1960s with Project 70 funds. The Project 500 bond issues provided the funds necessary for the center’s development.

During 1970, federal program grants and the Berks County Intermediate Unit helped establish Nolde Forest as the first environmental education center operated by DCNR’s Bureau of State Parks. Since the center’s conception, the bureau has maintained an enduring commitment to environmental education and recreation.

***No admission fee.***

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/NoldeForestEnvironmentalEducationCenter/Pag>

[es/default.aspx](#)

10. **Reading Railroad Heritage Museum.** 500 S. 3rd St., Hamburg, PA. Admission is \$7 for Adults and \$3 for children. <http://www.readingrailroad.org/>

11. **Saucony Creek Brewery @ Franklin St Station.** 692 Franklin St, Reading, PA. The site where the present day Franklin Street Station is located has a long history related to the development of the railroad in Reading. It was on this block that the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad, later to become the Reading Railroad, began and where the first depot structure was erected at the northwest corner of South Seventh and Chestnut Streets. The Pennsylvania and Reading Company (P & R Company) purchased the land from John Francis Eichhorn on December 16, 1845 for \$1,800.00. The P & R Company erected a two-story brick building which was used as a passenger station. The first floor satisfied the need of a passenger station while the second floor provided space for the company's offices. Through various purchases, up to March 28, 1838, the entire block had been acquired by the P & R Company for the purpose of railroad shops. The first train ran through this line on December 6, 1837. By May 1, 1838, regular trains were running between Reading and Pottstown. One year later, trains were running to Philadelphia. By January of 1842, the entire line from Pottsville to Philadelphia was open and running. In 1844, a new depot was constructed at South Seventh and Chestnut Streets to accommodate increasing passenger services. The plans for the building were drawn by the famous Philadelphia architect Frank Furness, who also designed the Reading Terminal. The new Franklin Street Station opened on March 1. 1885. <http://sauconybeer.com/franklin-station>

12. **Wertz's Covered Bridge.** 1102 Red Bridge Road, Reading, PA- Wertz's Covered Bridge (also known as the Red Covered Bridge) was built in 1867 by contractor Amandas Knerr for the County of Berks at a price of \$7,650.00. In past history, Berks County had over forty wooden covered bridges. Today, Wertz's Covered Bridge is one of the five remaining covered bridges that exists in Berks County. With a length of 165 feet, it is one of the longest single span covered bridges existing in Pennsylvania. During its period of operation, Wertz's Covered Bridge was on a well traveled thoroughfare, and as was true of other covered bridges in Berks which spanned streams, provided immediate access to a mill. Being a vital transportation link, the bridge connected the Old Tulpehocken Road, the major route which paralleled the Tulpehocken Creek, with the Red Bridge Road, a roadway which was laid out as early as 1796. Knowing that the bridge was a highly travelled structure, a local merchant had his advertisement painted on the beams in the bridge. Dr. Reed's Common Sense Shoe Store, Reading, PA, is an advertisement that can still be seen today. Wertz's Covered bridge is adjacent to Tulpehocken Creek Valley Park, Berks County Heritage Center and Wagon Works. ***No admission fee for bridge and park.***

13. **Ridgewood Farmstead and Winery.** 2039 Philadelphia Ave, Birdsboro, PA. Has low cost historic tours. History includes ties to the Underground Railroad.

<https://www.ridgewoodwinery.com/>