




Giovan F Leboffe
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The Historic Towns of the Lehigh Valley

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Details

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Location: Bethlehem, United States

Description

The Historic Towns of the Lehigh Valley

Allentown Bethlehem Easton Nazareth Hazelton Jim Thorpe Wilkes-Barre

Allentown was a rural village founded in 1762 by William Allen, Chief Justice of Colonial Pennsylvania's Supreme Court, known as Northampton town. A thriving town with roots in the iron industry, by 1829 Allentown expanded from a small Pennsylvania Dutch village of farmers and tradesmen to a center of commerce. With the opening of the Lehigh Canal, many canal workers made their homes here.

The Lehigh Valley Gave Birth to America's Industrial Revolution

The Allentown Art Museum is one of the city's main attractions and the Museum of Indian Culture honors the legacy of native Lenape people. Allentown's Canal Park provides easy access to the *D&L Trail* and access to the waterways for hikers, bikers, joggers, paddlers and fishermen.

Bethlehem was named on Christmas Eve, 1741, by a group of Moravians who relocated from North Carolina and settled at the confluence of the Lehigh River and Monocacy Creek. The canal and the railroads lured large-scale industry to the south bank of the Lehigh River and the Bethlehem Iron Co., soon dominating the town's economy and way of life. Steel made from local iron, coal and limestone was milled and forged, launching the Industrial Revolution of the late 19th Century.

Bethlehem is the Lehigh Valley's Oldest City

The Central Bethlehem Historic District includes 165 buildings, 6 sites, 9 structures, and 4 objects. It is primarily residential, but also includes commercial buildings along Main Street. Most of the buildings were built between the mid-18th to early-20th century. The district encompasses buildings that reflect Bethlehem's development from a Moravian community, 1741-1844, to an industrial based economy, 1845-1938.

Easton is located at what the Lenape Indians knew as the *Forks of the Delaware* where the Lehigh and Delaware rivers merge and where the frontier town was laid out by William Penn. The town's focal point was, and still is, a large central square. The first public reading of the Declaration of Independence outside of Philadelphia took place in Easton's Centre Square in 1776 near the oldest continually running open-air Farmer's Market in the United States.

Nazareth is located seven miles northwest of Easton, four miles north of Bethlehem and twelve miles northeast of Allentown at the foot of the Blue Mountain and includes the townships of Bushkill, Lower Nazareth, Upper Nazareth and the boroughs of Nazareth, Stockertown and Tatamy. Nazareth is the hometown of the world famous Andretti formula 1 auto racing family.

Hazelton is located in the foothills of the Poconos, a vacation destination that offers year round recreation as a vacation destination. Starting from the 1830s, the borough's population grew steadily until the 1880s when waves of eastern European immigrants arrived to take jobs in the coal industry. In 1891, it was chartered as a city. **Jim Thorpe** was named after the legendary Native American athlete. It was originally established in 1818 as Mauch Chunk where entrepreneurs led by Josiah White formed the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company that shipped anthracite coal and other goods to market via the Lehigh and Delaware Canals. The town's steep hillsides, narrow streets, and terraced gardens earned it the nickname *The Switzerland of America*. Today, the restored Old Mauch Chunk Railroad Station in the center of the town offers visitor services and train rides into Lehigh Gorge. The Opera House presents live theater and music.

Wilkes Barre with the Susquehanna River flowing through the center of town, in the 1800s, hundreds of thousands of immigrants came to Wilkes-Barre to work the mines leading to economic and cultural changes and affecting the railroad-and-canal system that stretched 165 miles southward to Bristol.

Photo Courtesy Edmund Marion Ashe, Earth and Mineral Sciences Museum & Art Gallery, The Pennsylvania State University

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