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# HERITAGE TRAIL

## LEBANON COUNTY



Myerstown

Map

Map

Myerstown

Welcome to historic **Myerstown**. As you tour the magnificent historic buildings of Myerstown, imagine what it might have been like when the Union Canal was in use.

Casper Wistar, a land speculator and brass button maker of Philadelphia, purchased land from the Penn family. In 1738, Wistar sold 249 acres of his land to Valentine Herclerode whose one daughter would marry Isaac Meier. Due to financial problems, Meier purchased the land at sheriff sale in 1756.

Main Street was an Indian footpath that was widened as part of the Turnpike from Harrisburg to Reading to Philadelphia in 1817. The town was first called *Tulpehockentown* (Indian for "Land of the Turtle") and then Meier's Town. Meier laid out the streets of the town in 1768, donated land for the first school, and gave books and financial assistance to the Juliana Library in Lancaster.

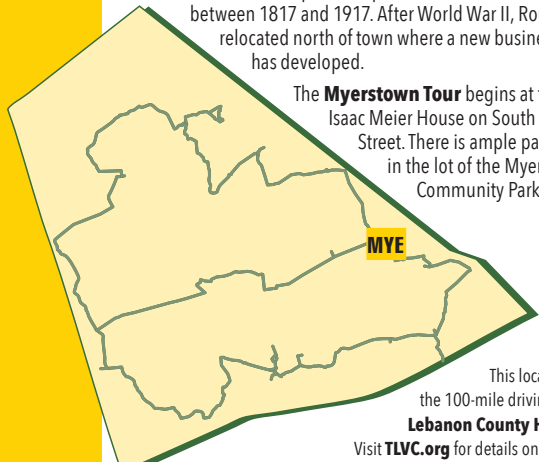
The town, which sits upon beds of limestone, was originally part of Chester County until 1729 when Lancaster County was formed. In 1785, it became part of Dauphin County, then Lebanon County in 1813, and incorporated as a borough in 1912. Once the 2nd most populated town, there are now more than 3,000 residents. Likewise, it was home to the 2nd highest number of businesses in the county.

The Union Canal is the site of the first attempt at canal building in the country. Construction began in 1792 but wasn't operational until 1828 through 1884. Trains came later building up the town along Railroad Street leading to Main Avenue. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad ran through town offering passenger service from 1857 until 1963. The rail system continues to move through town as a cargo line only.

Myerstown had stores, shipping of flour, liquors, malt, meats, pig iron, whiskey, and horse trading. There were blacksmiths, breweries, butchers, cabinet makers, carriage making, distilleries, drovers, foundries, hotel keeping, mills, saddlers, taverns, tobacco/cigar and cigar box makers, and wheelwrights. Limestone from local quarries and locally-made bricks were used in home building. Indians and fur traders traveled the route of the Tulpehocken Creek.

The Berks and Dauphin Turnpike made Main Avenue a toll road between 1817 and 1917. After World War II, Route 422 was relocated north of town where a new business district has developed.

The **Myerstown Tour** begins at the Isaac Meier House on South College Street. There is ample parking in the lot of the Myerstown Community Park.



This local trail is part of the 100-mile driving and walking **Lebanon County Heritage Trail**. Visit [TLVC.org](http://TLVC.org) for details on the entire trail.

### 1 Isaac Meier Homestead

524 S. College St.

"The old Fort" was the residence of Isaac Meier, a gentleman farmer and money lender who founded Myerstown. The smaller kitchen building at the east end was built in the 1740's by Meier's father-in-law. Meier owned slaves which was legal in PA until 1780. Meier was shot at the Buch Tavern in 1770 and died the next day at age 40. The murderer was never found despite the reward of 100 pounds offered by the colony's governor, John Penn. The limestone walls are 2' thick with 11-stone arches over the windows. The building was added to the *National Register of Historic Places* in 1973.

### 2 Loose & Haak Marble Memorials

425 S. Railroad St.

Once the gravestone business moved, this grain warehouse and coal yard operated until 1926. It later became the mission church of Mary Gate of Heaven to serve the growing Catholic community. Local Catholics at the time were mostly Italian families who came to work in the limestone quarries.

### 3 George Coover Mansion

301 S. Railroad St.

George Coover was the owner and publisher of the Myerstown Enterprise newspaper. Capt. J. H. Bassler was co-owner from 1894 to 1896. With other preceding newspapers, often short-lived, printed in German, this was the most successful newspaper printing from 1888 until 1918.



DANIEL MEIER/MYER HOME (5)



ISAAC MEIER HOMESTEAD (1)



LOOSE & HAAK MARBLE MEMORIALS (2)



GEORGE COOVER MANSION (3)



JOSEPH PAINTER, SR., HOME (4)

### 4 Joseph Painter, Sr., Home

110 S. Railroad St.

Joseph brought his foundry to Myerstown in 1872. He built this home before 1900. It was later owned by granddaughters Matilda Painter and Margaret, wife of Carl Karmany. Margaret started the first 2 Girl Scout troops in the County in 1919 - Lebanon in October and Myerstown in November. Carl was a successful Lebanon Insurance Company officer.

### 5 Daniel Meier/Myer Home

102 S. Railroad St.

This log construction home was owned by Isaac Meier's grandson Daniel. This had been a 100-acre farm with a horse trading business. A lieutenant in the Revolutionary War, Daniel donated land behind the house on Cherry Street for the first United Brethren Church and burial ground.

### 6 Mechanics Hall

15 S. Railroad St.

This was once the meeting place of the Patriotic Order of America Lodge Camp No. 321 and later a U.S. Post Office and then District Justice's office.



MECHANICS HALL (6)

### 7 Donges & Stoner Department Store

2-4 E. Main Ave.

Founded prior to 1870 as the Donges & Stoner Department Store, by 1905 it was called the Myerstown Department Store. It had one of the first open stairways on the East Coast. In 1905, \$1,200-\$1,500 of the store's best guns, revolvers, canvas leggings, shoes and clothes were stolen from the store by means of removing a window on the second floor with a ladder. The upper floors have been apartments and the 3rd floor had been used as a lodge and town meeting hall.

### 8 Dr. George Flanagan's 'Hospital'

32 E. Main Ave.

Built for residential and medical purposes, this served as doctor's residence on the west side and had a bedroom on the second floor. In the 1930s-1950s, the east side served as a waiting room, exam room, drug room, and was later used for eye exams and ENT services. The second floor had delivery rooms and a nursery for babies. Xrays were developed in the basement.



DONGES & STONER DEPARTMENT STORE (7)

### 9 Loose Log House

204 E. Main Ave.

This log home dates from the early 1800s. At one time transom lights above the door were made by Henry William Stiegel, the famed glassmaker from Schaefferstown and Manheim. In 1860, it was owned by Adam Loose.

### 10 John Noecker Home

248 E. Main Ave.

John originally constructed a log home here. His son Martin, who served in the Revolutionary War, was given the property and built this larger home.

### 11 Philip Breitenbach Home

450 E. Main Ave.

Philip was a local saddler and tanner. The original log fort that occupied this site had a palisade fence and a 17 foot deep cellar for protection from Indian attacks during the French and Indian War. His son, Dr. Jeremiah Breitenbach, replaced it with this brick house in the early 1800s. Dr. Breitenbach was a co-founder of the earliest medical society in the US, Lebanon County Medical Society.



DR. GEORGE FLANAGAN'S 'HOSPITAL' (8)

### 12 Peter Len/Lein Home & Tavern

459 E. Main Ave.

This limestone home was built by Peter Lein in 1777. It served as a tavern on the main road into Myerstown from the east. This home is almost identical to the Bassler home on Race Street. The barn was used for horses and carriages of patrons who came to the tavern. This is typical of 1700s barn construction with rafters and support beams assembled with wooden pegs and a threshing floor in the center storing hay. Peter's daughter Catherine married John Myer, a grandson of founder Isaac Meier.

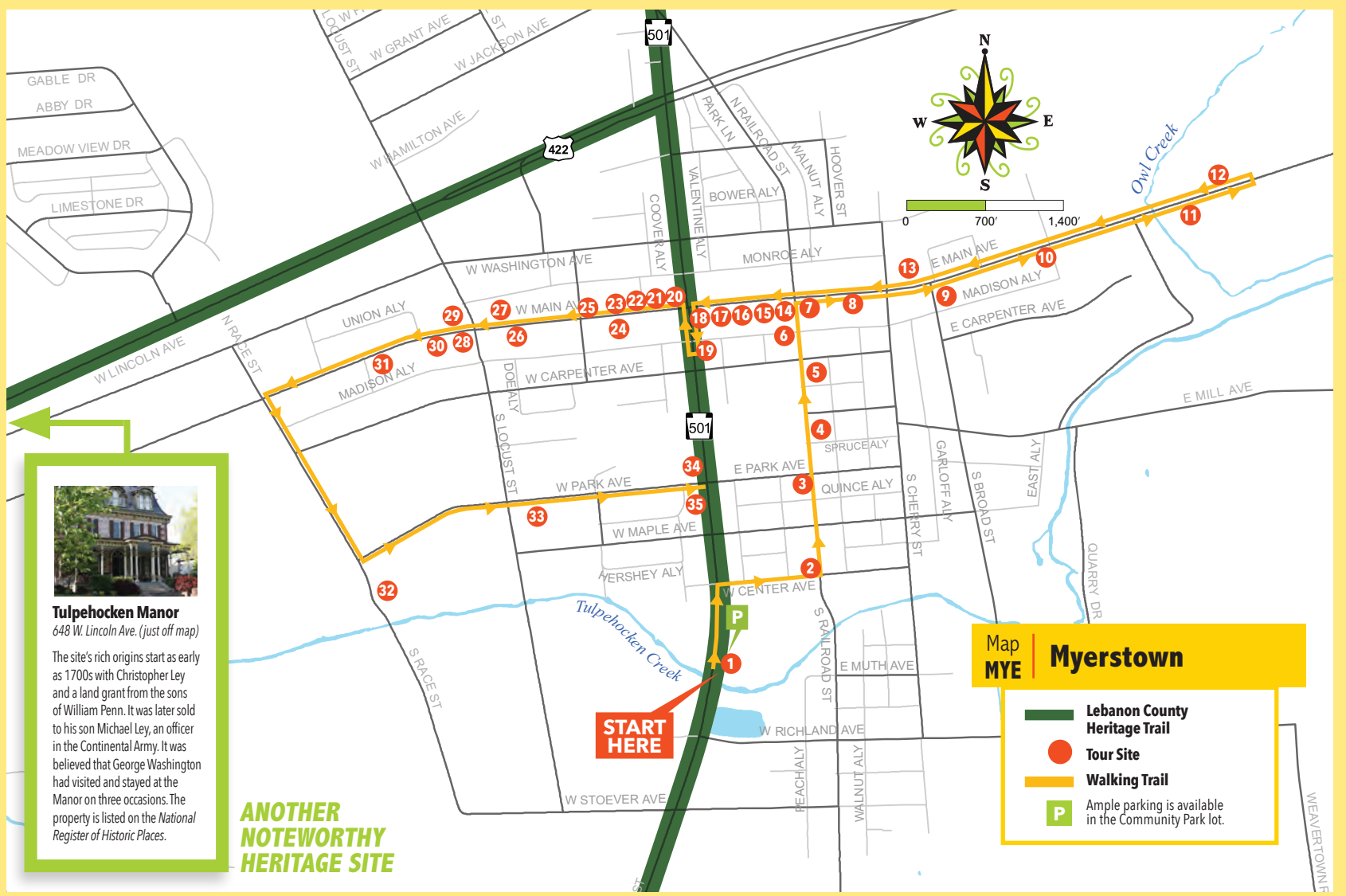
### 13 S. Liebovitz & Sons

113-119 E. Main Ave.

This clothing factory was founded about 1880 in New York City by Simon and Fannie Liebovitz and their 3 sons headquartered in the Empire State Building. They sold clothing throughout the world. Their Myerstown factory opened in 1905 with shirt making as a priority. It was later Publix Shirt Factory which closed in 1986.



LOOSE LOG HOUSE (9)



**Tulpehocken Manor**  
648 W. Lincoln Ave. (just off map)

The site's rich origins start as early as 1700s with Christopher Ley and a land grant from the sons of William Penn. It was later sold to his son Michael Ley, an officer in the Continental Army. It was believed that George Washington had visited and stayed at the Manor on three occasions. The property is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places*.

**ANOTHER NOTEWORTHY HERITAGE SITE**



**JOHN NOECKER HOME (10)**



**PHILIP BREITENBACH HOME (11)**



**PETER LEN/LEIN HOUSE & TAVERN (12)**



**S. LIEBOVITZ AND SONS (13)**



**WASHINGTON HOUSE (14)**



**DR. GIBSON BOWER HOME (15)**



**DR. F. H. BOWER HOME (16)**



**HENRY BUCH TAVERN (17)**



**EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CENTER (35)**



**PALATINATE COLLEGE (34)**



**CHARLES S. "POP" KELCHNER HOME (33)**



**JOHANN HEINRICH BASSLER HOUSE (32)**



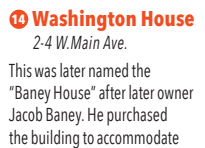
**CAPT. JOHN HENRY BASSLER HOME (31)**



**GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH (30)**



**OLD UNION CEMETERY (29)**



**14 Washington House**  
2-4 W. Main Ave.

This was later named the "Baney House" after later owner Jacob Baney. He purchased the building to accommodate people attracted from all over the world to his huge horse sales. Myerstown's first bank used a room in the western part of the building from 1873 until 1920.

**15 Dr. Gibson Bower Home**  
16-18 W. Main Ave.

He was a son of Dr. William Bower who resided where the Northwest Bank now stands. Dr. William had several sons with a long family tradition of medical service in town. The home's third floor has a mansard-style roof.

**16 Dr. F. H. Bower Home**  
32 W. Main Ave.

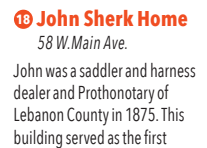
This building was home to the public library before moving to North College Street.

**17 Henry Buch Tavern**  
40 W. Main Ave.

Originally a tavern, the building was twice as wide with the door entering the center. The eastern section of the building was removed in the 1930s for the Lutheran Parsonage to be built. The building is log covered with clapboard siding and has been moved back from the sidewalk at some point. Town founder Isaac Meier was shot in the neck here on July 14, 1770, and died at his home the following day.



**MOSES BOWMAN MERCANTILE HOUSE (28)**



**18 John Sherk Home**  
58 W. Main Ave.

John was a saddler and harness dealer and Prothonotary of Lebanon County in 1875. This building served as the first library in town, the home of Farmers Bank & Trust in 1910, Myerstown Trust Co. in 1914, and Lessig's Clothing Store in 1953.

**19 Corl's School House**  
14 S. College St.

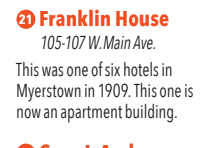
In 1860, this school was one of several around town that replaced schooling at home or church-run schools. Those who could pay were charged 50 cents/month. Until 1885, children came from as far as 3 miles away and often were taught in German.

**20 Noecker Cabinet Shop/Bahney Furniture**  
103 W. Main Ave.

This is a log structure where cabinet maker Isaac Noecker made and sold beds, chairs, chests, coffins and tables starting in 1834. His daughter Sara married Adam Bahney who worked here. The original Bahney's Furniture store was to the left in 1834. Until 2012, Bahney's Furniture was the oldest family business in Myerstown and the oldest furniture store in continuous existence in the US having been owned by six generations. His apprentices resided in the two-story addition to the rear. All but the original log building burned down in 1955.



**MYERSTOWN MERCHANDISER (27)**



**21 Franklin House**  
105-107 W. Main Ave.

This was one of six hotels in Myerstown in 1909. This one is now an apartment building.

**22 Gov. J. Andrew Melchior Schulze Mercantile**  
111 W. Main Ave.

Andrew became a merchant in Myerstown in 1804. An ordained minister, he was one of the founders of Myerstown's Lutheran Church in 1812. He became a state representative in 1806, senator in 1821, and Governor of Pennsylvania from 1822-1829. This building later served as the post office. His grandparents were Rev. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and Conrad Weiser's daughter Anna Maria Weiser.

**23 William Ney Home**  
125-129 W. Main Ave.

This log building was home to local weaver William Ney. He is known for making very colorful, woolen Jacquard-style coverlets in dark blue, green, gold, red, and white which bore his name and "Myerstown, Lebanon County."

**24 Judge Joseph Coover Home**  
148 W. Main Ave.

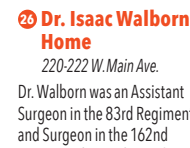
An Associate Judge of Lebanon County, Judge Coover was a large landowner in town and donated 3 acres for the Palatinate College. He also had charge of the turnpike in the area.

**25 Goodwill Fire Company**  
155 W. Main Ave.

In 1867, this became the first fire company in Myerstown, erecting this building in 1875. A Volunteer Fire Police Force was organized in 1945 and is still headquartered here. The ambulance unit was a joint effort with Keystone Fire Company in 1967. In 2011, a new fire station was erected on West Washington Avenue.



**MYERSTOWN MERCHANDISER (27)**



**26 Dr. Isaac Walborn Home**  
220-222 W. Main Ave.

Dr. Walborn was an Assistant Surgeon in the 83rd Regiment and Surgeon in the 162nd Regiment during the Civil War. He returned to Myerstown to serve its residents until his death in 1881.

**27 Myerstown Merchandiser**  
239 W. Main Ave.

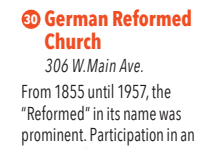
This was one of the original locations for the still popular *Merchandiser* in 1949. The offices moved several times, and then to Lebanon, and expanded to serve many more communities.

**28 Moses Bowman Mercantile House**  
300 W. Main Ave.

This building was built in 1848-1849 by Peter Stouidt in the classical vernacular style for Thomas Bassler, an entrepreneur along the Union Canal. In 1849, the Myerstown Lodge No. 358 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) began meeting on the third floor. It housed Moses Bowman's Mercantile store from 1867 until 1929. There are decorative iron grills on the third-floor windows and a large portico on two sides just like those that had been on most businesses of the day. Metal boot scrapers are outside all entrances to the building. Since 1993, under the ownership of Donald R. Brown, it became the home of the Institute of American Deltiology, for research, study and display of picture postcards as documents of our American heritage.

**29 Old Union Cemetery**  
NW corner Main & Locust Sts.

Michael Mosser and Simon Bassler gave this land for the first (and later a second) Lutheran church and cemetery in 1812. There are 44 Civil War soldiers buried here.



**30 German Reformed Church**  
306 W. Main Ave.

From 1855 until 1957, the "Reformed" in its name was prominent. Participation in an ecumenical movement among Protestant denominations during the 1950s caused it to become the Myerstown United Church of Christ. A community picnic for Myerstown originated by the church in 1884. They transported townsfolk by train to Mt. Gretna, and from 1909 until 1970 to Hershey Park. Pillars added on the front in the 1950s mask its bold PA German architecture.

**31 Capt. John Henry Bassler House**  
330 W. Main Ave.

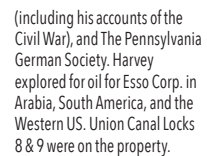
A descendant of Johann Heinrich Bassler, he raised a full company of Civil War volunteers from Myerstown known as the Bucktail Regiment. He edited "The Myerstown Enterprise" from 1894 to 1896, and authored many Civil War treatises.

**32 Johann Heinrich Bassler Homestead**  
410 S. Race St.

This third home on the property, built in 1799, has local limestone with bricks over the windows highlighted by double cornice of block along the gable. The Basslers owned slaves, had a distillery, saddlery, and sawmill. The family was active in the military and politics. John Bassler's great grandson Dr. Harvey Bassler was a famous explorer, geologist, naturalist, mining engineer, and scientist. Harvey donated large collections of books to Franklin & Marshall College, Lehigh University, Myerstown Community Library



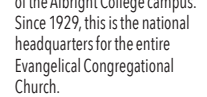
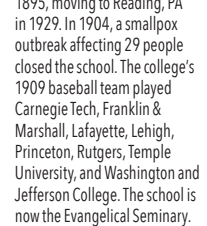
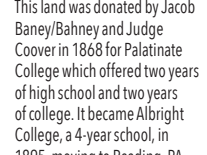
**DR. ISAAC WALBORN HOME (26)**



**JOHN SHERK HOME (18)**



**CORL'S SCHOOL HOUSE (19)**



**GOODWILL FIRE COMPANY (25)**



**JOHN SHERK HOME (18)**



**CORL'S SCHOOL HOUSE (19)**



**NOECKER CABINET SHOP/BAHNEY FURNITURE (20)**



**FRANKLIN HOUSE (21)**



**GOV. J. ANDREW MELCHIOR SCHULZE MERCANTILE & HOME (22)**



**WILLIAM NEY HOME (23)**



**JUDGE JOSEPH COOVER HOME (24)**