In the northeastern corner of Pennsylvania lie the breathtakingly beautiful Pocono Mountains, which includes Monroe County. Monroe County is known as the "Honeymoon Capital of the World". Because of the natural appeal, this area has given rise to some of the finest and most elaborate hotels, resorts and recreational areas/facilities in all of Northeastern Pennsylvania. It is also widely recognized as a place for vacationing and romantic weekend "getaways" because of the fiery beauty of the surrounding wooded peaks and valleys. Monroe County has built an industry of service that boasts the finest in personal accommodation anywhere. Visitors and vacationers can find an abundance of activities and places to visit that are guaranteed to be rewarding in any season of the year.

History

Monroe County was created on April 1, 1836, from parts of Northampton and Pike Counties and named for President James Monroe. The southern boundary of the county was the ridge of the Blue Mountain; to the east, the Delaware River; and to the west, the Lehigh River formed its natural borders. The county did not have a county seat because no site had been selected (that was not done until July 1837). There were also no county facilities, such as a courthouse, offices and jail. These were to await the selection of a site and the election of county commissioners. For eight months following its creation, a Board of Trustees, named in Act 161, managed the county. The five trustees, named in the law, were all well known and respected residents of the county. They resided in the most populous townships. At that time, there were 10 townships and 1 borough. The trustees were Moses Coolbaugh - Middle Smithfield; Benjamin Bush -Smithfield; William Van Buskirk - Stroud Township; and Michale Shoemaker and Joseph Trach - Hamilton Township. None was from Stroudsburg Borough; but borough leaders would do much to shape the County's future. These five trustees performed a vital function in the birth of Monroe County, even though they were, in effect, interim commissioners.

On August 31, 1837, Stroudsburg became the county seat. Stroudsburg, incorporated as a borough on February 6, 1815, was named for Jacob Stroud, a settler. (Stroud built this home for his son, which has now been restored and now operates as a museum by the Monroe County Historical Association at the intersection of 9th and Main Streets.) The new commissioners supervised the erection of the courthouse in 1837, along with a separate building as a jail.

Today, Monroe County is comprised of 16-second class townships and 4 incorporated boroughs with a combined population of approximately 168,237 residents. Three of the boroughs and all of the townships were settled in the 18th century. However, most were not incorporated until the 19th century. The oldest of all the municipalities, in terms of settlement, are Smithfield Township and the borough of East Stroudsburg.

Religion

Throughout the county's history, religious communities have exerted a positive influence on the lives of the people. With the arrival of the early frontier settlers, the Protestant Church established a foothold that flourished over two centuries. In the years prior to the Revolution, religious activity centered on the Dutch Reformed and the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

Moravian Brethren from the Bethlehem area came into the community in 1743. The Presbyterians also responded to the call of the "Great Awakening" in 1744 with the arrival of David Brainerd of Connecticut. The Brainerd Presbyterian Church in Snydersville bears his name.

By the twentieth century, many other congregations had been formed, representing a variety of traditions. Established by that time were: Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutheran and Reformed Church, Roman Catholic, African Methodist, Baptist Church, Episcopal Church, Salvation Army, Assembly of God, Byzantine Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Hindu, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish, and United Church of Christ. Churches function as an integral part of community life. The rich, diverse heritage of Monroe County's religious communities will continue to expand to meet the needs of its thriving population.

Education

The churches not only took care of the spiritual needs of their congregations, but also provided for its socialization as well. The churches provided the fundamentals of education to the children before a public school system became operative. Schooling among frontier children was minimal at best. The distance between families made it difficult to gather the children for school and the necessity for children to work on their parents' farm made it difficult to hold school for more than a few months during the year.

Small schools were mostly held in homes or churches in early America. The earliest schools in Monroe County were organized on this private

education system before 1800. During this time, Middle Smithfield residents sent their children to an old log house for instruction. In Stroud Township, members of the Stroud family built a log schoolhouse on the road from Stroudsburg to Wind Gap. A third log school operated in Hamilton Township.

Schools slowly spread throughout the county. Instruction was often given in both English and German. All of the schools were one-room stone or log structures operated largely by teachers with little or no formal training. That changed by 1900.

In order to accommodate the students who wanted to learn more than the three R's, an academy was begun. Academies taught subjects such as Latin, Greek, higher mathematics, literature and rhetoric, preparing students for enrollment in college or a teaching position. At the West End, the county had two academies: Fairview, founded in 1881, and the Polytechnic Institute (now the fellowship hall of the Salem Church) in 1886 in Gilbert. The Polytechnic Institute was founded as an agricultural college. Over 125 students per year received training in business and academic courses, and vocal and instrumental music. The third institution of higher education in Monroe County was the East Stroudsburg State Normal School, (now East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania), which opened on September 4, 1893, with 320 pupils. By the turn of the century, many of the first graduates of these institutions of higher education were employed in Monroe County Schools.

Transportation

In the early days, people traveled by stagecoach, wagon and on water. Then, the railroad arrived in Monroe County in 1856, and a new era of transportation began, changing the landscape and opening opportunities. The first train to come was the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western line, which traveled from Scranton to New York. The first depot was built that same year in Dansbury Manor (now called East Stroudsburg). The railroad led to the creation of new villages and hospitality businesses. Furthermore, it connected Monroe County with large urban centers, increasing market opportunities for big Pocono crops, such as ice.

Tourism thrived as the increased comfort of travel brought more vacationers to the Poconos. The flourishing of hotels near the railroad station formed the nucleus for the separate town of East Stroudsburg, established in 1871.

In 1857, the mail delivery system changed from the four-horse stagecoach to railway. Sidings to the main railroad lines replaced the old plank roads to the tanneries. In 1900, the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad ran a new fast train from new York to the Poconos called the "Phoebe Snow". This train brought more tourists to Delaware Water Gap and Mount Pocono. Stagecoach routes covered the Poconos. Trolleys were first pulled by mules, then by steam engines called dummies, and eventually by electricity.

Other "modern" services followed the introduction of the railroad to Monroe County. A telegraph line was connected to Stroudsburg in 1855. It provided connection with the rapidly moving world outside the upper Delaware Valley. Water was necessary for fighting fires and for drinking. A public water system was completed in Stroudsburg in 1868. Today, the only trolleys still existing are for sightseeing, and some of the old train depots have been turned into museums or restaurants. The existing railroad is used for hauling freight. Commuters who now travel from the Poconos to jobs in metropolitan areas are yearning a high-speed train line.

Commerce

The first industries in Monroe County grew from its natural resources - lumber and agriculture in the summer, ice in the winter, and tourists year round to enjoy all of its beauty. Sawmills turned timber into lumber. Bark suitable for tanning hides prompted tannery construction. Gristmills grounded agricultural crops. Bricks were made throughout the county. Evergreens became Christmas trees and holiday decorations, while elsewhere on the mountain; huckleberries, chestnuts, hickory nuts, and maple syrup were harvested. Quarrying operations yielded flagstone, building stone, slate and sand. Icehouses on the lakes thrived until electricity made the need to refrigerate with ice obsolete.

Water from Ross Common Springs was being bottled for sale throughout the East. The Crystal Springs Brewery, located near the railroad in East Stroudsburg, bottled mineral water, as well as beer and ale. The bottles necessary to hold the water were produced locally. The East Stroudsburg Glass Company was the longest-lived firm. They produced large bottles cased in wickerwork for protection. By 1900, dairying was the most important farming occupation in every county in Pennsylvania. Monroe County's milk was sent to New York markets via a special night milk run on the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad.

With the Industrial Revolution, manufacturing began in the late 1800s, and companies put the area's healthy wood supply to use in making products, such as clothespins, shoe pegs, window sashes, brooms, matches, barrel hoops, baskets, pulp and paper, piano stools and other needs. Waste leather scraps from tanning were combined with tanite to make solid emery wheels. Mills and factories prompted development of other businesses to repair and service their iron tools and machinery.

As the population grew, so did the need for retail shops and shopping districts to supply goods ranging from foods to clothing to gift items for tourists. Shopping districts thrived in Stroudsburg, East Stroudsburg, and other areas with large varieties to offer its consumers and tourists. In 1911, Stroudsburg became the site of the first of J.J. Newberry's nationwide chain of "five and dime stores".

Tourists continued to travel to Monroe County and the Poconos, turning the resort industry into the sole source of economic development for the area. Tourism moved farther north onto the Pocono Plateau, taking advantage of forest scenery, the cooler temperature of higher elevations, and available real estate. Resort hotels became resort complexes. As the 20th century progressed, tourists were no longer satisfied to sit on a porch of the hotel. Tennis courts, golf courses, bowling alleys, billiard rooms, swimming pools, and hiking trails were added to hotels in an attempt to attract the tourist.

After World War I, the tourist were no longer summer visitors, rather the introduction of the automobile made tourists much more mobile and

they only stayed for only a week or a few nights. With the introduction of skiing to the general public, resorts in Monroe County could be enjoyed in the winter as well. Highways, the automobile and tourism promoted yet another type of development - the roadside "strip". Billboards, motels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and gas stations lined the main roads, each competing to attract the speeding motorist's eye and money. Through the early 1900s, Americans enjoyed a higher level of material success, and the family vacation was no longer the sole province of the wealthy. Monroe County benefited by the urban and suburban tourists and it firmly established Monroe County and the Poconos as a popular resort area in the East coast for much of the 20th century.

After the Depression and World War II, a changed economy and culture made the country a very different place than it had been. Renewed prosperity and improved highway systems brought literally thousands of tourists to Monroe County and the Pocono resorts. Vacant and undeveloped land in Monroe County was sought after for second homes, ski slopes, and summer resort complexes. The second half of the 20th century saw Monroe County relying almost exclusively on a tourist-based economy. The growth of second home population led to an increase in permanent population, especially among retirement age persons.

It appears that the county will continue to use its scenic resources and provide recreational services for the Northeastern region. The county continues to encourage economic development by attracting new industries and bringing new jobs to its residents, allowing them to spend more time with their families, and thereby reducing commute to jobs outside the county to metropolitan cities in New York and New Jersey, and surrounding counties, like Northampton and Lehigh.

Local Links

In addition to its rich cultural heritage, Monroe County is home to East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and the Monroe County Campus of Northampton Community College in Tannersville, the Pennsylvania portion of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Sullivan Trail (The portion of the route of General John Sullivan's famous march of 1778 from Easton to New York that reaches from Tannersville to Pocono Pines. This trail leads to the road that scales Big Pocono Mountain, one of the highest points in the Poconos that offers magnificent vistas.), Sanofi Pasteur (manufacturer of vaccines), Pocono International Raceway (home two major NASCAR events held annually), Camelbeach Water Park and Ski Area, Shawnee Mountain Ski Area, The Crossings Factory Stores (named the number one outlet center in North America by the Outlet Retail Merchants Association (ORMA) for 2000-2001), three state parks (Big Pocono State Park, Gouldsboro State Park and Tobyhanna State Park, and Tobyhanna Army Depot (a major element of the Communications-Electronics Command is the largest and most progressive Communications-Electronics repair, overhaul and fabrication facility in the Department of Defense).

County Government

The chief governing body within Monroe County is a three-member board of county commissioners. There are also numerous other elected officials to a large extent independent of the county commissioners. These include the sheriff, district attorney, prothonotary, clerk of courts, register of wills, coroner, and recorder of deeds. Additionally, there are the elective offices of the controller and treasurer who are county finance officers. The public defender is appointed as provided by law. The county commissioners, the elected officers and the county court individually or jointly appoint a number of other county officials and employees needed to carry out county functions by law. The county commissioners have an excellent vision for the county, which is described in Monroe 2030, a cohesive plan of action for Monroe County. Its approach is structured to bring together people from every corner and every walk of life to prepare Monroe County for the new millennium.

For more information on the cultural heritage and history of Monroe County, you are invited to visit the Monroe County Historical Association located in downtown Stroudsburg.

Demographics

Monroe County is located in eastern Pennsylvania, situated 90 miles north of Philadelphia, 75 miles west of New York and 116 miles east of Harrisburg. Today, the County stretches across 611 square miles of rural terrain, rolling hills, and farmlands to the more populated boroughs. It consists of 16 townships and 4 boroughs. The Townships are governed by supervisors and the Boroughs by mayors. As you can see from the Census information, we are growing rapidly, and in fact, we are the second fastest growing county in Pennsylvania.

- **Population**

1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
45,422	69,409	95,709	138,687	169,842	168,327

- **Area**
  611 square miles (391,040 acres)

- **Local Municipalities**
  Barrett Township (2020 population – 4,053)
  Chestnuthill Township (2020 population – 16,723)
  Coolbaugh Township (2020 population – 20,805)
  Delaware Water Gap Borough (2020 population - 675)
  East Stroudsburg Borough (2020 population – 9,669)
  Eldred Township (2020 population – 2,596)
  Hamilton Township (2020 population – 8,597)
  Jackson Township (2020 population – 6,578)

Middle Smithfield Township (2020 population – 16,053)
Mount Pocono Borough (2020 population – 3,089)
Paradise Township (2020 population – 2,899)
Pocono Township (2020 population – 10,884)
Polk Township (2020 population – 7,473)
Price Township (2020 population – 3,678)
Ross Township (2020 population – 5,475)
Smithfield Township (2020 population – 7,967)
Stroud Township (2020 population – 19,834)
Stroudsburg Borough (2020 population – 5,927)
Tobyhanna Township (2020 population – 8,315)
Tunkhannock Township (2020 population – 7,037)

- **Region**
  Pocono Mountains (part of the Appalachian chain)

- **Major Natural Resources**
  Scenic beauty, lakes, streams, mountains

- **Mountains**
  Big Pocono
  Blue Mountain

- **Major Rivers**
  Delaware (forms eastern boundary of County)
  Lehigh (forms northwestern boundary of County)
  Other major waterways: Brodhead Creek, McMichaels Creek,
  Pocono Creek

- **Major Lakes**
  Tobyhanna Lake, Pocono Lake, Brown's Lake, Lake Naomi,
  Stillwater Lake

- **Major Industries**
  Tourism
  Construction (primary housing construction)

- **Major Occupations**
  Services related to tourism and construction

- **Date Established as a County**
  1836 (formed from parts of Northampton and Pike Counties)

- **Major Historical Events**
  1853 - First railroad (Delaware, Lackawanna & Western)
  1857 - First Telegraph line
  1889 - Electric lighting in Stroudsburg
  1955 - Flood related to hurricane - caused extensive damage and loss of life

- **Places of Interest**
  Delaware Water Gap
  Bushkill Falls
  Cranberry Bog
  Big Pocono State Park
  Tobyhanna State Park
  The International Pocono Raceway (NASCAR)
  Mt. Airy Resort and Casino
  Shawnee Mountain Ski Resort
  Camelback Ski Resort
  Camelbeach Water Park
  Great Wolf Lodge and Water Park
  Kalahari Resort & Convention Center