

History



Cornwall owes its being to Peter Grubb, a 19 year old immigrant who in 1737 came prospecting and discovered three hills of magnetic iron ore, purchased a total of 442.5 acres of land for \$675.00, and established what was to become one of the world-renowned and most productive iron ore mining operations of all time. Following continuous operations for 236 years, during which time 110 million tons of iron ore were produced, along with 447,000 tons of copper, plus iron pyrite (fool's gold), cobalt, and trace elements of silver and gold, the famous Cornwall Iron Ore Mines closed in 1973. Twenty-five common and 57 uncommon minerals were associated with the ore and attracted mineral collectors from around the world.

Grubb erected a furnace in 1742 to process the iron ore metal and named the furnace Cornwall – after his father’s birthplace in England.

Much appreciation and credit for the development of Cornwall rests with the Cornwall Ore Bank Co. (The Grubb, Coleman, Alden, Freeman and Buckingham families and descendants who were the shareholders) until 1894 and successor owners – Lackawanna Iron and Steel Co., and Bethlehem Steel Corporation, who developed and maintained town sites nearby the mines and furnaces during a period when transportation was limited to the horse and later the early automobile.

Cornwall became a borough on October 11, 1926 after having been a part of northern Lancaster County and, for a while of eastern Dauphin County as Cornwall Township. At the time it officially became a Borough, it was comprised of 6 widely separated villages. In 2002 it currently consists of 16 separate villages or developments with a total population of about 3,486. Cornwall Borough embraces 9.7 square miles in area (more than twice that of the City of Lebanon at 4.6 square miles and has about 1/10 the population as has the City). Cornwall maintains more than 50 miles of paved roads and streets. It is the largest borough geographically, in the continental United States. Cornwall is also larger in area than the City of Harrisburg – the Capital of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Cornwall’s heritage is completely that of a industrial complex which flourished for 236 years, generated by the world famous Open Pit Iron Ore Mine, and underground mine at Burd Coleman and another at Rexmont, iron furnaces at North Cornwall, Burd Coleman, and Anthracite Village, ore roasters at Anthracite, an iron ore Concentrator Plant at Rexmont, all of which were serviced by three railroads – Cornwall Railroad, Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad, and Cornwall Ore Bank Railroad. The former two railroads transported passengers, as well, with the Cornwall R.R. handling more than five million passengers during its operating years. All of the foregoing have disappeared, leaving only the original Charcoal Furnace (1742) standing intact as a museum, having ceased operations in 1883.

Cornwall’s industry produced cannon and munitions and iron products for all of the wars in which our Country was engaged from the Revolutionary War through Vietnam. It supplied the iron for rails and spikes necessary for the westward expansion and development of the United States and for its bridges and buildings. Cornwall played a vital role in the overall development and protection of our Country.

[*More Cornwall History*](#)