

The Settlement of Erie... Town and Country

A Slow Start After the American Revolution (1775–1783), the newly formed state of Pennsylvania looked forward to expanding settlement of its western lands. The territory known as the “Erie Triangle,” the northern-most piece of Pennsylvania today, offered access to the Great Lakes and a safe harbor, a temperate [climate](#), fertile soil, and an abundance of fresh water (creeks and streams). Settlement of the Erie Triangle was delayed, however, because the states of New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut all claimed this western land. The land (Erie Triangle) was [ceded](#) to the federal government during the 1780s as a result of territorial compromises made by each of the states with the federal government. In 1792, the state of Pennsylvania purchased the Erie Triangle from the federal government for 75¢ per acre...the total came to \$151,640.25.

Actual settlement of the Erie Triangle began but with tremendous conflict. The Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy (Seneca, Mohawk, Onieda, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Tuscarora) claimed ownership of the Erie Triangle even after the state of Pennsylvania purchased the land. Settlement was made possible because, a year earlier, General “Mad” Anthony Wayne defeated the Western Indian tribes. The Six Nations could not win the battle for the Erie Triangle without their western neighbors. Therefore, unable to defend the Triangle any longer, the **S**ix Nations signed a peace treaty in Canandaigua, New York with the United States of America giving up ownership of the Erie Triangle.

Solve the Mystery

Who was General “Mad” Anthony Wayne, why was he "Mad"?

How is he important to the history of the Erie Region?

Riddle Clue: The General came, but not to stay
Too sick to leave, in Erie remained

Death came quick, they buried him here
Peacefully laid until the thirteenth year

His bones removed, the treatment severe
He returns to search the first of each year

A Town at Presque Isle Once the treaty was signed, a [surveying](#) party was sent to the Triangle. In the summer of 1795, Andrew Ellicott and General William Irvine **S**urveyed lands of the Erie Triangle, and located and laid out the towns of Erie and Waterford. That same year, **E**rie’s first family of settlers arrived. Camped along the bayfront, another man hired to continue surveying the land, Deputy Surveyor Thomas Rees, and a few of his men spotted a campfire on **P**resque Isle. Fearing Indians had moved onto the peninsula, Rees and a few armed men took canoes across the bay at dawn to explore the mysterious fire. They found Colonel Seth Reed, his wife, and his two sons. The Reed family, also fearing an Indian attack, explained to Rees and his

party that they had been too afraid to settle along the shore and had felt safer on the peninsula. Rees brought the Reed family back to shore, where they built the first house in Erie. It was made of logs and stones from the creek bed, and was located at the mouth of Millcreek.

Drawn by Erie's fertile soil, freshwater streams and hardwood forests, settlers from the east (New York and New England) moved to the "Town at Presque Isle." Erie County was named, and its boundaries set on March 12, 1800. The first section of the town of Erie was incorporated as a **borough** in July 1805. It was one square mile. Erie became a **city** in 1851.

Did You Know?

Judah Colt was resident land agent in the Triangle who worked to attract settlers to the area by laying roads and clearing lands for farming and building. His office was located where Colt Station is today (Rte. 89 & Station Road).

A Profile of A Surveyor: Andrew Ellicott

Andrew Ellicott was born in Bucks County, **P**ennsylvania in 1754. A miller by trade, his surveying career did not begin until after the American Revolution. In 1784, Ellicott was appointed to work with James Madison to complete surveying of the Mason-Dixon Line. This project began his lifelong commitment to the scientific community.

Benjamin Franklin knew of Ellicott's surveying abilities and suggested that President George Washington hire him to survey lands in New York and Pennsylvania. His survey established boundaries for the Erie Triangle. Ellicott and his surveying party located and laid out the towns of Erie and Waterford almost ten years later in 1795.

Andrew **E**llicott had several other noteworthy accomplishments. In 1791, he worked with Pierre L'Enfant to survey and design the Federal City (Washington, D.C.), and in 1803, he taught surveying techniques to Meriwether Lewis, one of the leaders of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Word Wizard

cede – to give up ownership

climate – weather conditions of a place (temperature, wind speed and precipitation)

survey – determine the size, shape and position of a tract of land using latitude, longitude and mathematics

miller – a person who operates a mill and grinds grain into flour

borough – a self-governing town or village

township – a unit of local government common in northeastern states

city – a city is an urban area, which differs from a village or town because of its size, population, importance and government

What's In A Name?

Known simply as Junction, the town of Corry began as an intersection of the Sunbury & Erie and the Atlantic & Great Western Railroads, and was renamed in honor of early settler Hiram Cory in 1861.

Corry Area Historical Society
945 Mead Avenue, Corry

Union City, originally named Miles' Mills after founder of the [township](#) William Miles, is located in southeastern Erie County. The town was renamed **Union City** in 1871.

Union City Area Historical Museum
11 South Main Street, Union City

Albion, first named Jackson's Cross Roads, was located along the Erie Extension Canal, which opened for business in the spring of 1845.

Valley School Museum Society
1 Harthan Drive, Albion

North East, first known as Burgettstown, and then Gibsonville, became a borough in 1834.

Lake Shore Railway Museum
31 Wall Street, North East

Girard, named after Stephen Girard who owned land in the area, was originally located west of its current location. When the path of the Erie Extension Canal was determined, the people of Girard decided to move the town closer to the canal.

Hazel Kibler Memorial Museum
522 East Main Street, Girard

Edinboro's first permanent settler, William Culbertson, arrived in 1801 and built a gristmill along Edinboro Lake, then known as Conneauttee Lake. Edinboro was incorporated as a borough in 1840.

Goodell Gardens & Homestead
221 Waterford Street, Edinboro

How well do you know Erie County?

Maps are made for many different reasons, and may vary in content and appearance. Maps are used every day by explorers and vacationers, military strategists and scientists, and people just like you.

Maps of this region used by Andrew Ellicott, Thomas Rees, Colonel Seth Reed and William Culbertson were relatively blank. As the area developed, maps of Erie County included township and borough boundaries, major roads and railroad routes. Modern maps of Erie County have much more to show.

Begin with a blank sheet of paper. Draw from memory an outline of Erie County. Mark dots within the outline where you think Corry, Erie, North East, Union City, Girard, Fairview, Harborcreek, Waterford, Wattsburg and Edinboro are located. Label the peninsula, Interstate 90 and Interstate 79. When finished, compare your map to a modern map of Erie County. How did you do? Were you surprised by how much you know?

A Tech-Note (Technology of the Settlers)

When the first permanent settlers arrived in Erie County they found thick hardwood forests. Early settlers had to clear the land before they could start businesses, build houses, or plant crops. Many of the tools and other items needed and used daily were made from trees. Wheels, water pipes, shovels and toys were also made from wood.

Trees are still an important natural resource, but unlike Erie County's early settlers, our homes and classrooms are filled with thousands of things made from metal and plastic. Can you list ten things you will use today that are made out of wood? Can you list five things you will use today that are made of plastic, but were once made from wood?

What is it?

You will find bold letters scattered throughout this page. Write down all of the bold letters you find on a separate sheet of paper. Unscramble the letters to answer the riddle below.

What grows and migrates, and has a neck and points?

Answer: Presque Isle