

Brief History of Grove City, Ohio

Information updated Oct. 1, 2010

Grove City has both a rich history and a promising future. As a Columbus suburban community, the city and its nearly 32,000 residents have been able to maintain a small town atmosphere while becoming one of Central Ohio's fastest growing suburbs. Grove City has a variety of homes with a median price range of \$230,971 and homes priced over \$1 million.

Founded in 1852, the city is located in southwestern Franklin County and is bounded on the north by I-270 with I-71 slicing through the eastern edge of the city. The primary highway that intersects the Grove City Town Center is US Rt. 62, also known as Harrisburg Pike or Broadway. The name Grove City comes from a large stand of trees left by early settlers when the area was being cleared for farming.

The city has over 400 acres of parklands close to population centers and housing developments.

Fryer Park, the city's largest, is home to a YMCA complex, Discovery Frontier interactive playground and Century Village. Fryer also boasts a catch and release lake for fishing where no license is required, two docks, picnic areas, ball diamonds and hiking trails.

Windsor Park, the city's oldest facility, has many ball diamonds, lighted tennis courts, play area for children, shelter, the E. L. Evans Senior Center and a playground.

The Gardens at Gantz features herbs gardens, walking trail, developing arboretum, tennis courts, playground, shelter house and a large gazebo.

Evans Park has ball diamonds and also is home to The Big Splash aquatic center.

Numerous neighborhood parks are located throughout the city.

History of Southwest Franklin County

Grove City can trace its early beginning to two Virginia Military Land Grants held by General Daniel Morgan and Colonel William Washington, a nephew of General George Washington. Both were veterans of the American Revolution. Morgan's grant was for 2,222 acres and Washington held a warrant for 2,000 acres.

It's hard to picture what it was like in those early days. A dense forest had to be cleared in order for cabins and houses to be built. Records indicate panthers, bears, wolves and other wildlife were plentiful and that at one time a bounty was paid by Franklin County for each large cat killed. Packs of wolves hunted the area and terrorized many of the early settlers.

Early settlers, the Grant family

Hugh Grant Sr., a native of Maryland who lived in Pittsburg at the time and operated a mill moved his family from Pennsylvania to Chillicothe, Ohio in 1804. While in Chillicothe, he purchased 450 acres from Morgan and moved by ox cart to what is now Jackson Township. He settled along the Scioto River because Grant was unable to clearly identify his property. During the winter of 1805, he was killed falling from a tree trying to capture a bee hive. His family eventually located and settled on their land in what is now Grove City becoming the first permanent white settlers in the area.

Hugh Grant Jr. was willed the homestead and became an influential farmer and community leader. His son, Adam G. Grant (A.G.) was responsible for much of the early development in Jackson Township and the village of Grove City. Grant was a contractor and business owner. Some of his ventures included a brickyard, bank, and developer of a residential area west of the railroad named for his daughter, Beulah. Grant also developed a successful street rail line between Grove City and Columbus. Grant also was a trustee for the original Franklin County Fair Board in 1895; he donated property to the township school district for a building on Park Street, gave the land for a Methodist Church on Park Street and made the land available to build Stone Pike, now known as Haughn Road.

Early settlers, the Breck family

William Foster Breck purchased 15½ acres in Jackson Township in 1846 or 1847 from the Grant estate. Two years later, a road was built that ran from Harrisburg to Columbus known as the Highland Road, Hillsboro Road and more commonly Harrisburg Pike. This became a major traffic artery that led to the development of Grove City.

In 1851, Breck, George Weygandt, William Sibray and Jeremiah Smith platted 15½ acres that would become the village of Grove City. The name was selected because of a large grove of trees settlers had left standing as land was cleared for homes and farms. On March 6, 1866, the village was incorporated and on May 10, 1866, the village held its first election. Dr. Joseph Bulen, the village doctor, was elected the first mayor. Randolph Higgy was elected clerk; Gabriel Postel Sr., was elected marshal; William Sibray, Anton Pilger Sr., A. M. Anderson, John L. Smith and Leonard

Buckholtz was elected to the village council. By 1959, Grove City had achieved city status and the transition from a historically rural settlement to a metropolitan suburban community was underway.

Breck became the second founding father to die in a freak accident. A rider from Columbus galloped into Grove City shouting Abraham Lincoln had been nominated for a second term as President. Breck, a Republican, was so excited and shouted and spooked his team of horses and fell off a tall load of oats. This was Aug. 8, 1864.

Early settlers, the Gantz family

The Gantz farmhouse, built in the 1830's by Adam and Catherine Gantz, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of Grove City's oldest buildings. The farm and 10 acres were donated to the city in 1973 to be used as a municipal park.

It is believed Adam's parents, Andrew and Margret Gantz, purchased the 200 acre tract and moved to Ohio from Washington County, PA in 1817. The land was originally part of a land grant and was purchased for \$5 an acre from Franklinton businessman Joseph Foos. Adam was 12 when the land was purchased.

Unfortunately, there is no record the family actually occupied the land until around 1830 when the house was built. Family member Wilbur Gantz has suggested the family may have lived in a cave or some other primitive type of dwelling near a spring before the house was built. He recalls that spring is near the city street Independence Way. The area was also known as Wolf Ridge because of the large number of wolves that roamed the area.

Grove City, the early years of growth . . .

Traffic between Columbus and Grove City got an early boost in the early 1800's when the Grove City and Greenlawn Street Railway was placed in operation. The line operated until the late 1920's when other means of transportation became more popular.

Grove City was an early lodging destination for travelers. There were two large hotels in the Town Center, another is thought to have been located somewhere close to Stringtown Road and Jackson Pike and there are stories another hotel was located just south of Grove City on what is now Harrisburg Pike. One of the early stops along the dusty roadway was the old hotel, better known today as Plank's on Broadway. When new siding was installed on the building several years ago, its southern wall facing Park Street exposed a well preserved *Chew Mail Pouch* sign that had been hidden for years. A depiction of that early scene can be seen on one of the murals in the Grove City Town Center. The upstairs where sleeping rooms were located is closed to the public and no longer used as part of the business.

City Government, Services

Grove City is a charter city with a mayor and council form of government. The mayor and city council are elected, the administrative assistant, who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the city, is appointed by the mayor. Major city departments include police, parks and recreation, finance, service, building and administration.

The city also has a variety of boards including the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Civil Service Commission, Park Board and Tree Commission. Members are appointed by the mayor and all are volunteer positions.

Grove City has four wards and a councilperson is elected to serve four year terms of office. One person is elected to a two year council-at-large post. Administrative functions are handled by a full-time council clerk.

Read More on Local History

More stories are found in two publications by the Southwest Franklin County Historical Society, *Reflections I* and *Reflections II* and another publication, *Images of America Grove City*. All are available at Sommer House Gallery in the Town Center.

Information and reference sources:

1900 Franklin County Census
Grove City, The Town with a Future, 1927, Lewis Garrison
Reflections, 1986, Southwest Franklin County Historical Society
Grove City, Ohio On The Move, 1991, Grove City Area Republican Club
Grove City Community Guide, 1997, Grove City Area Chamber of Commerce
A World of Opportunity, 2000, State of the City
Reflections II, 2004, Southwest Franklin County Historical Society