

## Brunerstown (Somerset town)

Somerset (formerly known as Brunerstown) was founded as county seat on the 12 September, 1795. Brunerstown was a thriving city in the heart of newly formed Somerset County. Somerset County was carved out of neighboring county, Bedford, in May of 1795. More and more settlers were moving into the wilderness areas of Western Bedford County and Somerset County and were completely cut-off from any type of formal justice system. Travel to and from Bedford County was hazardous at times and the new settlers wanted their own country representation and legal system. The settlers in Brunerstown and near-by Berlin Village petitioned Governor Thomas Mifflin of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the formation of Somerset.

It took five months before the Governor dispatched his representatives to Somerset County. When they finally arrived they were entertained by the local families and given tours of both Brunerstown and Berlin Village.

Berlin was the more largely populated city and was much older than Brunerstown. Surrounded by lush farm fields, it was well established with churches and schools. The German settlers who founded Berlin expected that the Governor's committee would surely place the honor of county seat upon their "Bruder Thal".

The commission, however, chose "Summerset" as the county seat - much to the chagrin of the Berlinites. The commissioners, William FINDLEY, John BADOLET, James CHAMBERS, Thomas CAMPBELL, and A.J. DALLAS, stated, "We, the undersigned commissioners....have viewed the county of Summerset and taking the centre and other important circumstances under view do unanimously fix the town of Summerset (formerly Brunerstown) as a proper seat of justice for the said county." (Somerset Past, Vol. V, o. 2 page 17).

The Berlinites and the Brunerstown people took the commission's consideration without question, though, the Berlinites were said to have been very disappointed. Some even speculated that the commission was "bought off" - wine and dine by the Brunerstown people and that they returned the favor by pronouncing county seat at Somerset.

Brunerstown was renamed the same day and was given the county name of Somerset - which was in reference to Somersetshire, England. The town's people set out immediately to create a county government and by the following December a full board of county officers were in place.

The first session of court was held on December 21, 1795 with Judge Alexander Addison presiding. The county court house was erected in 1801.

### **First Elected Officers**

James WELLS of Quemahoning Twp., Associate Judge Abraham CABLE of Brothers Valley Twp., Associate Judge Ebenezer GRIFFITH of Elk Lick Twp., Associate Judge Thomas KENNEDY, Sheriff. David KING, Coroner. John FLETCHER, Berlin, County Commissioner. John READ, Quemahoning Twp., County Commissioner. John LEECH, Milford Twp., County Commissioner.

### **County Seat Apportionments**

Adam SCHNEIDER donated "court square" where the present day court buildings stand - also for a Lutheran Church and burying ground (now Union Cemetery). Peter ANKENY donated land for a Reformed Church and cemetery

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