

HERMITAGE

Hermitage takes lead as most populous city

Sharon-Herald – Thursday, March 10, 2011

By Joy Leiker, *Herald Staff Writer*

For the first time in Mercer County history, Sharon isn't the largest city. Wednesday the U.S. Census Bureau released Pennsylvania's 2010 Census data, and it confirmed that Hermitage, the newest city, is now the county's most populous — with 16,220 residents. But the slight population gain in Hermitage — 63 residents — is overshadowed by the countywide loss, said Hermitage City Manager Gary Hinkson.

“Whatever value there is now (being the biggest), it's overshadowed by the fact that the county and the region is not growing and it's not even remaining stable,” Hinkson said. “All the numbers are disappointing and really show that there is a lot of work ahead of us in promoting economic development and the region as a place to work and live. We've got to figure out the best way to get that message out there.”

Hermitage eclipsed Sharon, which now counts 14,038 residents, down 2,290, or 14 percent, since the last census a decade ago. Sharon was one of nine municipalities in the county to experience a double-digit percent population loss. And overall, Mercer County's population story still is a losing one. Countywide the population dropped 3 percent, from 120,293 to 116,638.

Of the 48 municipalities in the county, 28 experienced a population decrease. The biggest loser, so to speak, is Fredonia, where almost one out of four people who lived there in 2000 aren't there today (652 compared to 502 residents.) But the numbers are just as startling in Jefferson Township, where the drop is 22.2 percent. Jefferson and Pymatuning townships both lost more than 500 residents in the last decade, a drop that at first glance is mysterious, and surprising to Daniel Gracenin, executive director of the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission.

“It's a pretty high number,” Gracenin said, noting his initial glance at the numbers Wednesday hadn't yielded a reason for those stark drops. There were explanations for some of the numbers, though. In the 10 years since the last census, Mercer County built a new jail, and moved it from the borough of Mercer to Findley Township. Findley Township showed the second-largest population increase in the county, up 26.2 percent, from 2,305 to 2,910

The biggest jump occurred in Wilmington Township, with a 28.1 percent spike. Its population increased from 1,105 to 1,415. Gracenin's speculation as to the cause of that hike: The Amish. The Amish population is growing — and moving far beyond the traditional confines of Pennsylvania. According to a 2008 USA Today story citing research from Elizabethtown College's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, the Amish population nationwide nearly doubled in a 16-year span.

The population losses aren't confined to Mercer County. Most adjacent counties — Crawford, Lawrence and Venango — also experienced drops. The lone exception is Butler County, which experienced a 5.6 percent increase, up from 174,083 to 183,862 people.

Statewide, Pennsylvania's population increased 3.4 percent since 2000 — from 12.2 million to 12.7 million.

Hermitage overtook Sharon as the largest of Mercer County's 48 municipalities in the newly released 2010 population figures. While Hermitage added a handful of people, Sharon lost 14 percent of its population in the past decade.

Extreme highs and lows noted in color

| MUNICIPALITY | RANK IN COUNTY | POPULATION 2010 | POPULATION 2000 | CHANGE No. | CHANGE Percent |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Clark | 39 | 640 | 633 | 7 | 1.1% |
| Coolspring Twp. | 16 | 2,278 | 2,287 | -9 | -0.4% |
| Deer Creek Twp. | 45 | 502 | 465 | 37 | 8.0% |
| Delaware Twp. | 15 | 2,291 | 2,159 | 132 | 6.1% |
| E. Lack. Twp. | 20 | 1,682 | 1,701 | -19 | -1.1% |
| Fairview Twp. | 27 | 1,085 | 1,036 | 49 | 4.7% |
| Farell | 6 | 5,111 | 6,050 | -939 | -15.5% |
| Findley Twp. | 12 | 2,910 | 2,305 | 605 | 26.2% |
| Fredonia | 44 | 502 | 652 | -150 | -23.0% |
| French Creek Twp. | 35 | 771 | 764 | 7 | 0.9% |
| Greene Twp. | 26 | 1,091 | 1,153 | -62 | -5.4% |
| Greenville | 4 | 5,919 | 6,380 | -461 | -7.2% |
| Grove City | 3 | 8,322 | 8,024 | 298 | 3.7% |
| Hempfield Twp. | 9 | 3,741 | 4,004 | -263 | -6.6% |
| Hermitage | 1 | 16,220 | 16,157 | 63 | 0.4% |
| Jackson Center | 46 | 224 | 221 | 3 | 1.4% |
| Jackson Twp. | 24 | 1,273 | 1,206 | 67 | 5.6% |
| Jamestown | 41 | 617 | 636 | -19 | -3.0% |
| Jefferson Twp. | 19 | 1,880 | 2,416 | -536 | -22.2% |
| Lackawannock Twp. | 14 | 2,662 | 2,561 | 101 | 3.9% |
| Lake Twp. | 34 | 780 | 706 | 74 | 10.5% |
| Liberty Twp. | 23 | 1,414 | 1,276 | 138 | 10.8% |
| Mercer borough | 17 | 2,002 | 2,391 | -389 | -16.3% |
| Mill Creek Twp. | 37 | 721 | 639 | 82 | 12.8% |
| New Lebanon | 47 | 188 | 205 | -17 | -8.3% |
| New Vernon Twp. | 43 | 504 | 524 | -20 | -3.8% |
| Otter Creek Twp. | 42 | 589 | 611 | -22 | -3.6% |
| Perry Twp. | 21 | 1,453 | 1,471 | -18 | -1.2% |
| Pine Twp. | 5 | 5,150 | 4,493 | 657 | 14.6% |
| Pymatuning Twp. | 11 | 3,281 | 3,782 | -501 | -13.2% |
| Salem Twp. | 36 | 754 | 769 | -15 | -2.0% |
| Sandy Creek Twp. | 33 | 795 | 848 | -53 | -6.3% |
| Sandy Lake borough | 38 | 659 | 743 | -84 | -11.3% |
| Sandy Lake Twp. | 25 | 1,226 | 1,248 | -22 | -1.8% |
| Sharon | 2 | 14,038 | 16,328 | -2,290 | -14.0% |
| Sharpsville | 7 | 4,415 | 4,500 | -85 | -1.9% |
| Sheakleyville | 48 | 142 | 164 | -22 | -13.4% |
| Shenango Twp. | 8 | 3,929 | 4,037 | -108 | -2.7% |
| S. Pymatuning Twp. | 13 | 2,695 | 2,857 | -162 | -5.7% |
| Springfield Twp. | 18 | 1,981 | 1,972 | 9 | 0.5% |
| Stoneboro | 28 | 1,051 | 1,104 | -53 | -4.8% |
| Sugar Grove Twp. | 29 | 971 | 909 | 62 | 6.8% |
| West Middlesex | 31 | 863 | 929 | -66 | -7.1% |
| West Salem Twp. | 10 | 3,538 | 3,565 | -27 | -0.8% |
| Wheatland | 40 | 632 | 748 | -116 | -15.5% |
| Wilmington Twp. | 22 | 1,415 | 1,105 | 310 | 28.1% |
| Wolf Creek Twp. | 32 | 832 | 729 | 103 | 14.1% |
| Worth Twp. | 30 | 899 | 830 | 69 | 8.3% |
| COUNTY | | 2010 | 2000 | No. | CHANGE % |
| Mercer County | | 116,638 | 120,293 | -3,655 | -3.0% |
| Butler County | | 183,862 | 174,083 | 9,779 | 5.6% |
| Crawford County | | 88,765 | 90,366 | -1,601 | -1.8% |
| Lawrence County | | 91,108 | 94,643 | -3,535 | -3.7% |
| Venango County | | 54,984 | 57,565 | -2,581 | -4.5% |
| PENNSYLVANIA | | 12,702,379 | 12,281,064 | 421,325 | 3.4% |

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau