The maps and charts that follow were created for the Chester County Historical Society’s exhibit, Many Nations – Chester County, on display in 2018. The data used in their creation was taken directly from the naturalization records located at the Chester County Archives. These maps and charts are used to highlight the immigration trends in the county. It should be noted that naturalizations represent only a small portion of the total number of immigrants that called Chester County home.

The naturalization maps display the top three or four immigrant populations found within each township or borough. The size of each circle is proportional to the size of that specific immigrant group as it relates to the other immigrant groups in that particular township or borough. By the twentieth century most immigrant groups were concentrated in or around the boroughs with only minimal populations found in most rural townships. The pie charts display all the nationalities of immigrants naturalized in the period represented.

### Early Settlement Patterns (Map 1)

Many factors made Pennsylvania unique, but nothing more so than religious freedom. The Charter of Privileges, signed by William Penn in 1701, guaranteed freedom of worship and conscience. Religious minorities throughout Europe found a haven in the colony, greatly contributing to the diversity of its population. Most of Chester County’s earliest immigrants were seeking freedom to practice their religion in peace.

**English** - Joining a small group of Swedish and Finnish settlers clustered near the Delaware River, English Quakers began arriving in increasing numbers throughout the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. By 1728 they had established over 21 meetings stretching from the Delaware River to Sadsbury in present day Lancaster County. In present day Chester County, they predominately settled in the eastern and central part of the county.¹

**Irish** – A small group of Irish Quakers established their own meeting in New Garden Township by 1715.

**Welsh** – Welsh Quakers, Anglicans, and Baptists settled in an area known as the Welsh Tract as early as 1682. In present day Chester County East and West Whiteland, East and West Goshen, Willistown, Easttown, and Tredyffrin were considered part of the Welsh Tract. Another group of Welsh Baptists settled in what is now London Britain Township by 1701.

**Scots-Irish** – Lowland Scottish Presbyterians, who had resettled in Ulster, Ireland in the seventeenth century, began arriving in large numbers in Chester County by the late 1710s. They were encouraged to immigrate to Pennsylvania by the Proprietors who saw them as a potential buffer between the pacifist Quakers communities on the Delaware River and the Native Americans on the colony’s unsettled land.

¹ Chester County once included all of present day Delaware County and all the land west of the Octorora Creek. Lancaster County was formed in 1729 taking most of the land west of the Octorora Creek with it. Delaware County was formed in 1789.
western border. In Chester County they mainly settled in the western townships that border present day Lancaster County.

_German_ – Persecuted religious minorities, like the Mennonites, began arriving in Chester County by the 1720s. The first known Mennonite congregation was formed in Coventry Township by 1724. The highest concentration of German immigration in Chester County occurred along the Schuylkill River in North, East and South Coventry, East and West Vincent, and East and West Pikeland.

**The Irish Wave 1798-1890 (Map 2 & Chart 1)**  
Irish immigration predominated most of the nineteenth century in Chester County. Before the Great Famine in Ireland (1845-1852), many Irish immigrants in Chester County worked in the cloth industry. They were tailors, weavers, wool carders, and blue dyers and were concentrated in the townships around West Chester. Along with modest immigration from Great Britain and Germany, these immigrants eventually helped fill the forges, nail factories, woolen factories and paper mills that sprang up throughout the county. After the Great Famine they began to concentrate in boroughs and factory towns like Phoenixville and West Chester. The only areas where Irish immigration did not predominate were in the traditional German townships of Coventry, Vincent and Pikeland.

**Southern and Eastern European Wave 1891-1960 (Map 3 & Chart 2)**  
By the late nineteenth century the third and largest wave of immigrants arrived in Chester County. Spurred on by the rapid industrialization of the country, thousands of Italians, Poles and Hungarians filled the growing demand for labor in the factories of Coatesville, West Chester and Phoenixville. Italians also supplied labor for the growing mushroom industry in London Grove, New Garden and Kennett. This wave slowly came to end after World War II.

**Korean and Vietnamese Wave 1961-1989 (Map 3 & Chart 3)**  
After the Korean War ended in a truce in 1953 the Korean people experienced high unemployment rates, political insecurity, and a military dictatorship. These factors, among many, led large numbers of Koreans to immigrate to the United States in the 1960s. Like the Koreans, the Vietnamese came to this country escaping conflict and political instability. After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, thousands of refugees relocated to the United States.

Map 2

- Ireland
- Great Britain
- Germany
- Switzerland
- France
- The Netherlands

Map 4

- Korea
- Vietnam
- Great Britain
- Italy
- India
- China
- Germany