Stephens City , Virginia

Stephens City (/ ?sti?v?nz / STEE @-@ v?nz) is an incorporated town in the southern part of Frederick County , Virginia , United States , with a population of 1 @,@ 829 at the time of the 2010 Census . In 2014 , it was estimated that the population of Stephens City had risen to 1 @,@ 921 .

Founded by Peter Stephens in the 1730s , the colonial town was chartered and named for Lewis Stephens in October 1758 . It was originally settled by German Protestants from Heidelberg . Stephens City is the second @-@ oldest municipality in the Shenandoah Valley after nearby Winchester , which is about 5 miles (8 km) to the north . " Crossroads " , the first free black community in the Valley in the pre @-@ Civil War years , was founded east of town in the 1850s . Crossroads remained until the beginning of the Civil War when the freed blacks either escaped or were recaptured . Stephens City was saved from intentional burning in 1864 by Union Major Joseph K. Stearns . The town has gone through several name changes in its history , starting as Stephensburg , then Newtown , and finally winding up as Stephens City , though it nearly became Pantops . Interstate 81 and U.S. Route 11 pass close to and through the town , respectively .

A large section of the center of the town , including buildings and homes , covering 65 acres (26 ha) , is part of the Newtown @-@ Stephensburg Historic District and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992 . Stephens City celebrated its 250th anniversary on October 12 , 2008 . The town is a part of the Winchester , Virginia @-@ West Virginia Metropolitan Statistical Area , an offshoot of the Washington ? Baltimore ? Northern Virginia , DC ? MD ? VA ? WV Combined Statistical Area . It is a member of the Winchester ? Frederick County Metropolitan Planning Organization .

History

Founding and early days

Jost Hite , a German immigrant , purchased a large land grant in the northern Shenandoah Valley in 1731 . Peter Stephens and a small party of German Protestants from Heidelberg , in the Palatinate , arrived about 1732 to buy and settle that land , including the site of what became Stephens City , named for the Stephens family . Although Hite 's title to the land was challenged by Thomas Fairfax , 6th Lord Fairfax of Cameron , the land baron of the area , the matter was settled amicably .

Town lots were laid out beginning in 1754 , and on September 21 , 1758 , Lewis Stephens petitioned the colonial government of Virginia in Williamsburg for a town charter . The Virginia General Assembly approved the charter for the town of " Stephensburgh " on October 12 , 1758 . The mostly German @-@ speaking residents soon left off the " h " ; the town was usually spelled " Stephensburg " . By the start of the Revolutionary War , Stephensburg was often called simply " New Town " or " Newtown " , as the new settlement on the Great Wagon Road south of Winchester .

Shenandoah Valley and Newtown 's central location attracted heavy traffic through the region , and wagon @-@ making emerged as an important industry for the town ; Newtown artisans supplied wagons throughout the state . By 1830 , the town 's population had reached 800 . In the late 1850s , free blacks began a settlement about a mile east of town which became known as Crossroads or Freetown , which lasted until the time of the American Civil War . After the January 1 , 1863 , Emancipation Proclamation , most of the newly freed slaves and many of the already free blacks left the area .

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861 , the majority of Newtown 's young men joined Confederate forces . During the war , the town was " between the lines " , nominally controlled by the Union but with much Confederate partisan activity . On May 24 , 1862 , Stonewall Jackson 's Confederate forces advanced northward on the Valley Pike and attacked Union troops . At Newtown , General George Henry Gordon of the Second Massachusetts Infantry ordered his Federal troops

to make a stand . The skirmishing involved heavy artillery fire , but Gordon 's men retreated without loss of the important supply wagons . When Gordon left the town to Jackson 's forces , both sides claimed a victory .

In June 1864 , Major Joseph K. Stearns of the 1st New York Cavalry arrived under orders to burn the town down to help stop Confederate ambushes on the wagon road . Because the remaining population mostly consisted of women , children and the elderly , Stearns allowed the town to stand . He required the adult residents to take the " Ironclad oath " , in which they swore that they had not voluntarily provided aid to the Confederacy . The government required the oath , effectively excluding ex @-@ Confederates from the political arena during Reconstruction Era .

In April 1867 , the Virginia General Assembly granted a charter to the Winchester and Strasburg Railroad Company . The company was authorized to construct a rail line between Winchester and Strasburg , linking Newtown to the rest of the nation by railroad for the first time . Though the railroad improved the local economy , which had lagged after the end of the war , it decimated the wagon @-@ building trade . In 1880 , the United States Post Office Department , faced with nearly a dozen Newtowns in Virginia , announced that the local post office would be renamed Pantops . Dissatisfied with the name , the townsfolk chose " Stephens City " .

= = = 20th century to present = = =

The 20th century brought improvements to energy and domestic systems : electrical service was introduced in 1915 ; and in 1941 , just before World War II , the town installed a water system . The construction of Interstate 81 (I @-@ 81) during the early 1960s depressed business development in the town . The wagon road , which had been made part of U.S. Route 11 , had led traffic through the center of town , but the interstate passed less than a tenth of a mile to the east , drawing off development , retail trade and ultimately , businesses . This caused downtown to decline . Developers constructed new residential subdivisions both within and outside the town boundaries to the east for access to I @-@ 81 .

The town surveyed its older buildings to establish architectural significance and to determine those that contributed to the town 's historic center . The Newtown @-@ Stephensburg Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in August 1992 . Renovation of the town center has attracted heritage tourism . Anticipating more growth , the town annexed 360 acres (1 @.@ 5 km2) of unincorporated Frederick County in 2005 , another 100 acres (0 @.@ 4 km2) in 2006 , and 175 acres (0 @.@ 7 km2) in 2007 . The town celebrated its 250th anniversary on October 12 , 2008 .

Virginia school systems had practiced resistance following the United States Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) that segregated public schools were unconstitutional . The United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia ordered Frederick County schools desegregated (including those serving Stephens City) in Brown v. County School Board (1964) . In 1994 , Virgil E. Watson was elected as the first African American to serve on the Stephens City Town Council . Watson served for one term from 1994 until 1998 .

On September 17 , 2004 , remnants of Hurricane Ivan spawned an F1 tornado that touched down just south of the town along Interstate 81 . It caused approximately $ 1 million in damage and injured two people . It was one of a record 40 tornadoes to hit northern Virginia that day .

= = Geography = =

The town is located between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Appalachian Mountains in the northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in close proximity to West Virginia , Maryland , and Pennsylvania . Washington , D.C. , is approximately 65 @.@ 9 miles (106 @.@ 1 km) to the east and Baltimore is 84 miles (135 km) to the northeast .

= = = Climate = = =

Stephens City is located in the humid subtropical climate zone (Köppen climate classification : Cfa) , exhibiting four distinct seasons . Its climate is typical of Mid @-@ Atlantic U.S. areas removed from bodies of water . The town is located in plant hardiness zone 7 throughout the town and surrounding Frederick County , indicating a temperate climate . Spring and fall are warm , with low humidity , while winter is cool , with annual snowfall averaging 15 @.@ 0 inches (38 cm) . Average winter lows tend to be around 30 ° F (? 1 ° C) from mid @-@ December to mid @-@ February . Blizzards affect Stephens City on average once every four to six years . The most violent nor 'easters typically feature high winds , heavy rains , and occasional snow . These storms often affect large sections of the U.S. East Coast .

Summers are hot and humid ; during this season , highs average in the upper 80s ° F (lower 30s ° C) and lows average in the upper 60s ° F (lower 20s ° C) . The combination of heat and humidity in the summer brings very frequent thunderstorms , some of which occasionally produce tornadoes in the area . While hurricanes (or their remnants) occasionally track through the area in late summer and early fall , they have often weakened by the time they reach Stephens City , partly due to the city 's far inland location .

The highest recorded temperature was 107 ° F (42 ° C) in 1988 , while the lowest recorded temperature was ? 18 ° F (? 28 ° C) in 1983 .

= = Demographics = =

As of the 2010 United States Census , the population of Stephens City was 1 @,@ 829 people in 743 households , and 447 families residing in the town . The total showed an increase of 59 @.@ 6 % from 2000 . The 2014 estimate placed the population at 1 @,@ 921 . The racial makeup of the town was 85 @.@ 1 % White , 7 @.@ 1 % African American , 0 @.@ 4 % Native American , 1 @.@ 8 % Asian , and 2 @.@ 8 % from other races . Hispanics or Latinos of any race were 7 @.@ 3 % of the population .

Of the 743 households in 2010 , 28 @.@ 8 % had children under the age of 18 living with them , 38 @.@ 5 % were married couples living together , 14 @.@ 4 % had a female householder with no husband present , and 39 @.@ 8 % were non @-@ families . 27 @.@ 8 % of all households were made up of individuals and 24 @.@ 1 % had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older . The average household size was 2 @.@ 46 and the average family size was 3 @.@ 06 . The age distribution was 24 @.@ 1 % under 18 , 9 @.@ 2 % from 18 to 24 , 31 @.@ 5 % from 25 to 44 , 24 @.@ 3 % from 45 to 64 , and 10 @.@ 9 % who were 65 or older . The median age was 35 @.@ 6 years . The median income for a household in the town was $ 51 @,@ 944 , and the median income for a family was $ 66 @,@ 442 . In 2009 , employed males had a median income of $ 31 @,@ 875 versus $ 35 @,@ 461 for employed females . In 2009 , the per capita income for the city was $ 20 @,@ 581 .

On the 2010 Census , residents self @-@ identified with a variety of ethnic ancestries ; the major categories reflect descendants of the settlers of the 18th and 19th centuries . People of German descent make up 20 @.@ 4 % of the population of the town , followed by Irish at 11 @.@ 2 % , English at 7 @.@ 3 % , Italian at 5 @.@ 4 % , Scotch @-@ Irish at 3 @.@ 4 % , Polish at 2 @.@ 5 % , Scottish at 2 @.@ 4 % , Dutch at 2 @.@ 2 % , Danish at 1 @.@ 2 % , French at 1 @.@ 2 % , Swedish at 1 @.@ 1 % , Austrian at 0 @.@ 9 % , Portuguese at 0 @.@ 5 % , European at 0 @.@ 4 % , Russian at 0 @.@ 4 % , Welsh at 0 @.@ 4 % , British at 0 @.@ 3 % , Canadian at 0 @.@ 3 % , Croatian at 0 @.@ 2 % , Slovak at 0 @.@ 2 % , Subsaharan African at 0 @.@ 2 % , and French Canadian rounding out at 0 @.@ 2 % . 628 persons were of " other ancestries " .

= = Economy = =

The economy of Stephens City features several industries . According to the 2000 United States Census , the industries in the town (by percentage of employed civilian population 16 years and over) were manufacturing at 20 @.@ 4 % , educational , health and social services with 19 @.@ 9 % , retail trade at 12 @.@ 8 % , arts , entertainment , recreation , accommodation and food services

with 9 @.@ 0 % , construction at 8 @.@ 0 % , other services (except public administration) with 6 @.@ 8 % , transportation , warehousing , and utilities at 4 @.@ 6 % , public administration with 3 @.@ 9 % , professional , scientific , management , administrative , and waste management services at 3 @.@ 7 % , finance , insurance , real estate , and rental and leasing with 3 @.@ 4 % , wholesale trade at 3 @.@ 4 % , information with 2 @.@ 2 % and agriculture , forestry , fishing and hunting , and mining at 1 @.@ 9 % .

Of the people in the labor force in the town over the age of 16 , the majority , 597 people or 66 @.@ 1 % of the population , were in the civilian work force , while 306 people , or 33 @.@ 9 % , of the population were not in the labor force at all . At the time of the Census , only nine people , or 1 @.@ 0 % , were unemployed , with none in the Armed Forces . Of the 588 residents employed age 16 and over , private @-@ sector wage and salary workers accounted for 457 of them or 77 @.@ 7 % . Ninety @-@ five people were classified as federal government workers , or 16 @.@ 2 % of the population , with the self @-@ employed making up 5 @.@ 8 % of the population or 34 people . Two people , or 0 @.@ 3 % , of the population were classified as unpaid workers .

The median household income for the town of Stephens City was $ 35 @,@ 200 , with the majority , 126 persons , or 24 @.@ 8 % , of the population in that class of income . Eighty people , or 15 @.@ 7 % , identified themselves as retired .

= = Culture = =

Town residents have access to two parks within town limits : Newtown Commons and Bel Air Street Park . Newtown Commons , sometimes called Newtown Park , is located along Main Street , and the other is on Bel Air Street . At Newtown Commons , residents can hold outdoor events such as picnics , fundraisers or small concerts . The Bel Air Street Park is a playground for children with standard swingsets and other activities .

Just outside Stephens City is Sherando Park . The park houses several trails , ponds , a pool , sports fields and more . Sherando Park is also home of the Virginia Tech Memorial Garden , planted in memory of the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre , which took place approximately 175 miles (282 km) from the park . It has " a winding sidewalk shaped in the college 's trademark ' VT ' " and " a flagpole surrounded by 32 Hokie Stones " , one for each of the 32 victims of the shooting . The Memorial Garden was dedicated and opened on April 16 , 2009 , the second anniversary of the shooting . The park was built by the Shenandoah Chapter of Virginia Tech Alumni Association , which is based in nearby Winchester , Virginia .

The Family Drive @-@ In Theatre , a two @-@ screen drive @-@ in theater , is located near the town , on U.S. Route 11 just south of Stephens City . It is one of ten drive @-@ ins in the state of Virginia . The theatre converted to all @-@ digital in 2013 . Stephens City plays host to the annual " Newtown Heritage Festival " held each Memorial Day weekend . The three @-@ day event features many crafts , carnival @-@ style food , a tractor wagon ride through town , local music at Newtown Commons , a parade on Saturday and fireworks .

Stephens City is one of the towns along the Route 11 Yard Crawl . A yearly event held during the second Saturday in August , the Yard Crawl is an almost 50 @-@ mile @-@ long (80 km) yard sale that stretches from Stephens City 's Newtown Commons south along U.S. Route 11 to New Market , Virginia . The event is sponsored by the Shenandoah County Chamber Advisory Group , five chambers of commerce , and the town of Stephens City .

= = Government = =

In 2010 , the head of Stephens City 's government was Mayor Joy B. Shull , a former member of the Town Council , who was elected in an unopposed May 4 election , and served four years as mayor . Shull succeeded Ray E. Ewing , who had served since 1994 , and retired at the end of his term . The representative body of Stephens City is known as the Town Council , whose members (as of November 2012) include Ronald Bowers , Linden A. Fravel , Jr . , James H. Harter , Joseph Hollis , Joseph Grayson and Martha W. Dilg . Dilg was elected in a May 4 , 2010 , election to

succeed Michael Grim , who left the Town Council at the end of his term . Shull 's replacement on Town Council was originally to be decided at a May 5 , 2010 , Town Council meeting but was not announced until June 29 , 2010 , when Joseph Grayson was officially named to fill Shull 's seat . On November 6 , 2012 , Joseph Hollis , Joseph Grayson and Ronald Bowers were all reelected to the Stephens City Town Council . Council member James Harter resigned on December 31 , 2013 , as he had moved outside of the town limits .

The town council voted to appoint Jason Nauman to fill Harter 's position on February 4 , 2014 . Mayor Shull @-@ Gellner announced in late July that she would be retiring after 34 years working for and with the town . Her last day with the town is on July 31 . Town councilwoman Martha Dilg was appointed mayor on September 2 , 2014 . In the November 4 , 2014 election , Regina Swygert @-@ Smith replaced Martha Dilg on the town 's council . Councilmen Linden Fravel and Jason Nauman were reelected . Mike Grim was elected mayor of the town , replacing Shull @-@ Gellner who stepped down in July .

As of 2014 , the town is served by Police Chief Charles Bockey and Fire Chief Greg Locke , both of whom are on the town 's Public Safety Committee . The town is served by five other committees : the Administrative Committee , the Personnel Committee , the Water and Sewer Committee , the Public Works Committee , and the Finance Committee . The members of those five committees are composed of Town Council members .

Stephens City is represented by Mark Berg (Republican) in the Virginia House of Delegates 29th District . Jill Holtzman Vogel (Republican) represents the town in the Virginia Senate 's 27th District . The town is represented by Frank R. Wolf (Republican) in the U.S. House of Representatives from Virginia 's 10th district . Barbara Comstock (Republican) will replace Wolf on January 3 , 2015 , as part of the 114th United States Congress . Tim Kaine (Democrat) and Mark Warner (Democrat) represent the town in the United States Senate .

= = Education = =

Frederick County Public Schools operate the public schools that serve Stephens City , although none are located within Stephens City proper ; public schools that serve Stephens City are within a mile of the town limits . The town and surrounding area are served by Bass @-@ Hoover Elementary School , Robert E. Aylor Middle School , and Sherando High School . The latter was named for one of the historic Iroquoian @-@ speaking tribes encountered by early European settlers to the Shenandoah Valley . Local private schools are available , and are also outside the town 's corporate limits . Shenandoah Valley Christian Academy is located at the northern section of the town limits . Powhatan School is in nearby Boyce in Clarke County , Virginia . Other smaller private or Christian @-@ based schools are located throughout Frederick County and elsewhere in the area .

= = Transportation = =

Historic U.S. Route 11 traverses Stephens City proper , while Interstate 81 serves as the eastern border of the town . Stephens City serves as the western terminus of State Route 277 , which begins at U.S. Route 11 and ends only 4 @.@ 72 miles (7 @.@ 60 km) away in Double Tollgate , Clarke County , Virginia , at U.S. Routes 340 and 522 .

Plans are in place to move State Route 277 to near The Family Drive @-@ In Theatre , 0 @.@ 50 miles (0 @.@ 80 km) south of its current western terminus with US Route 11 with the eastern terminus remaining at its current location . The planned construction will also move the I @-@ 81 interchange at Stephens City , where there are a number of service stations and fast food restaurants , south of the town limits to alleviate congestion on the current Route 277 bridge , which will remain after construction is completed . Planners expect expansion of Stephens City to the south .

= = Religion = =

The earliest organized religious services in Stephens City began in 1790s when a Methodist Episcopal church was created in the town . The first church structure , the " Methodist Episcopal Church in Stephensburg " , dates from 1791 . The current Stephens City United Methodist Church was constructed near that historic site .

The oldest surviving church building in the town is Orrick Chapel , built between 1866 and 1869 as the home of an African Methodist Episcopal congregation . Missionaries from this first independent black denomination came South after the war to aid freedmen and plant new congregations ; they attracted hundreds of thousands of new members . This church replaced an earlier Methodist chapel constructed in the late 1850s ; it was razed by Union troops during the winter months of 1864 ? 1865 near the end of the Civil War .

As of 2010 , within the town limits are congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and United Methodist Church as well as those of the Baptist , Mennonite , Pentecostal , Charismatic Episcopal and Full Gospel denominations of Christianity . Just south of the town limits is a Unitarian Universalist church . A Roman Catholic parish affiliated with the Diocese of Arlington and a Jewish synagogue , which each function as centers for their respective members in the entire Shenandoah Valley , are located approximately 5 miles (8 @.@ 0 km) north in Winchester .

= = Notable people = =

Timothy T. O 'Donnell ? Author and professor (since 1992) and president (since 2002) of Christendom College

Kelley Washington ? Professional football player in the National Football League