

Vernon Township, New Jersey

Vernon Township is a township in Sussex County, New Jersey, United States. It is located about one hour's drive from New York City and is part of the New York Metropolitan Area. As of the 2010 United States Census, the township's population was 23,943,^{[9][10][11]} reflecting a decline of 743 (-3.0%) from the 24,686 counted in the 2000 Census, which had in turn increased by 3,475 (+16.4%) from the 21,211 counted in the 1990 Census.^[19] It is both the most populous municipality and the largest in area in the county.^[1]

Vernon is home to Mountain Creek (formerly Great Gorge and Vernon Valley), a ski resort and water park as well as the Crystal Springs Resort's Minerals Hotel and Elements Spa. The Hidden Valley ski resort, which opened in 1976 and occupied a 140-acre (57 ha) property that included one of New Jersey's three remaining downhill skiing facilities, closed at the end of the 2013 season and could find no buyers at an auction held that year;^[20] it has since reopened as the National Winter Activity Center.

The Great Gorge Playboy Club was located in the Vernon community of McAfee, but was sold and turned into a hotel, now called the Legends Resort & Country Club. Opened in 1972 at a cost of \$20 million, featuring 700 rooms and 27 holes of golf, the hotel was sold to Americana in 1982 and later was resold to Metairie Corp. which branded the property as the Legends Resort and Country Club. In 2017, the township started eviction proceedings against low-income residents who had been living in the defunct resort on a permanent basis.^[21]

Contents

History

Geography

Communities and neighborhoods

Demographics

2010 Census

2000 Census

Economy

Parks and recreation

Government

Local government

Emergency services

Vernon Township, New Jersey

Township

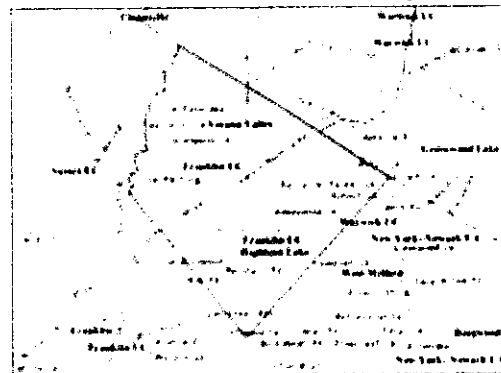
Township of Vernon



Along Route 517



Map of Vernon Township in Sussex County. Inset: Location of Sussex County highlighted in the State of New Jersey.



Census Bureau map of Vernon Township, New Jersey

Coordinates: 41.197847°N 74.48458°W﻿ / ﻿41.197847°N 74.48458°W﻿ / 41.197847; -74.48458^{[1][2]}

Country

 United States

State

 New Jersey

Federal, state and county representation

Politics

Education

Transportation

Roads and highways

Public transportation

Notable people

References

External links

History

The independent township of Vernon was established on April 8, 1793, from portions of Hardyston Township, and the township was formally incorporated on February 21, 1798.^[22] The 68 square miles (180 km²) which marked the town's borders over 200 years ago have not changed since. However, the population of Vernon, which was 1,548 people as recently as 1950, has steadily grown since the 1960s, when the ski industry was introduced to the area. Additional growth has come as home prices have soared in the inner suburbs of New York City and property buyers seek the better values available from real estate developments in the area.

Iron mining in the town of Vernon was prevalent during the mid-to-late 19th century. Mines such as the Canistear Mine, Williams Mine, and the Pochuk Mine created industry which spawned local businesses, and brought rail travel to the town.

It is not known how Vernon Township got its name, but a number of theories have been offered by author Ronald J. Dupont Jr.:

- Admiral Edward Vernon. Dupont writes that this is very possible because of two things: 1. the township was created in 1792, the year that George Washington was reelected as President, and 2. because Vernon Township's first Masonic Lodge in 1820 was named Mount Vernon (Washington was also a Freemason during his life), likely after Washington's Virginia residence. The residence, in turn, got its name because Washington's brother Lawrence Washington served with Admiral Vernon.^{[23][24]}
- A family named Vernon. Not likely, Dupont says, although he notes that a Nathaniel Vernon was a licensed tavernkeeper in Sussex County in 1756. However, the tavern was likely elsewhere, and not in what is now Vernon.^[23]
- The Latin root "Vernus." One form of "vernus" is "vernal," as in vernal equinox ("spring"), and so Vernon "had connotations of spring: green, lush, fresh, fertile, etc., and hence was an attractive name for a place."^[23]

County	Sussex
Established	April 8, 1793
Incorporated	February 21, 1798
Government ^[7]	
• Type	Faulkner Act (mayor–council)
• Body	Township Council
• Mayor	Harry Shortway (term ends December 31, 2019) ^{[3][4]}
• Administrator	Charles G. Voelker ^[5]
• Municipal clerk	Lauren Kirkman ^[6]
Area ^[1]	
• Total	70.587 sq mi (182.819 km ²)
• Land	68.234 sq mi (176.725 km ²)
• Water	2.353 sq mi (6.094 km ²) 3.33%
Area rank	15th of 566 in state 1st of 24 in county ^[1]
Elevation ^[8]	571 ft (174 m)
Population (2010 Census) ^{[9][10][11]}	
• Total	23,943
• Estimate (2016) ^[12]	22,383
• Rank	102nd of 566 in state 1st of 24 in county ^[13]
• Density	350.9/sq mi (135.5/km ²)
• Density rank	466th of 566 in state 12th of 24 in county ^[13]
Time zone	UTC-5 (Eastern (EST))
• Summer (DST)	UTC-4 (Eastern (EDT))
ZIP code	07462 ^[14]
Area code(s)	973 ^[15]
FIPS code	3403775740 ^{[1][16][17]}
GNIS feature ID	0882258 ^{[1][18]}
Website	www.vernontwp.com (http://www.vernontwp.com/)

Dupont Jr. also writes that in the late 19th century *two* places named Vernon existed, one in Sussex County and another in Essex County. When the Essex County community was granted a post office, they found out that another Vernon existed, and so they eventually named the community Verona.^[25]

Geography

According to the United States Census Bureau, the township had a total area of 70.587 square miles (182.819 km²), including 68.234 square miles (176.725 km²) of land and 2.353 square miles (6.094 km²) of water (3.33%).^{[1][2]}

Highland Lakes (2010 Census population of 4,933^[26]), Vernon Center (2010 Census population of 1,713^[27]) and Vernon Valley (1,626 as of 2010^[28]) are unincorporated communities and census-designated places (CDPs) located within Vernon Township.^{[29][30][31]}

The township is bordered by Hardyston Township and Wantage Township, all of which are within Sussex County. Vernon borders Orange County, New York with the Town of Warwick. Vernon also shares a border with West Milford Township in Passaic County.

Elevation varies greatly due to the valleys, rolling hills, and mountains. The United States Geological Survey places Glenwood at 580 feet (180 m), McAfee at 435 feet (133 m), and Highland Lakes at 1,260 feet (380 m).

The township is located in the Kittatinny Valley which is a section of the Great Appalachian Valley that stretches 700 miles (1,100 km) from Canada to Alabama.

Portions of the township covering 5,400 acres (2,200 ha) of land are owned by the City of Newark, Essex County, for their Pequannock River Watershed, which provides water to the city from an area of 35,000 acres (14,000 ha) that also includes portions of Hardyston Township, Jefferson Township, Kinnelon, Rockaway Township and West Milford.^{[32][33]}

Communities and neighborhoods

Other unincorporated communities, localities and place names located partially or completely within the township include:^[34]

- Barry Lakes
- Canistear Reservoir
- Cedar Ridge
- DeKays
- Glenwood
- Great Gorge
- Highland Lakes
- Independence Corners
- Kampe P.O.
- Lake Conway
- Lake Panorama
- Lake Pochung
- Lake Wanda
- Lake Walkkill
- Lake Wilderwood
- Maple Grange
- McAfee
- Mud Pond
- Owens

- Pleasant Valley Lake
- Prices Switch
- Vernon Village "Town Center"
- Vernon Valley a.k.a. "The Valley"
- Vernon Valley Lake
- Wawayanda
- Wawayanda Lake

Glenwood and McAfee are located in the western portion of the township, McAfee to the South and Glenwood to the North. Highland Lakes is in the Eastern portion of the township. Pleasant Valley Lake is in the southwest portion of the township. Four of these sections have a post office. Vernon also has many developments.

Vernon is home to many lake communities, including Highland Lakes, Barry Lakes, Cliffwood Lake, High Breeze, Lake Conway, Lake Wanda, Laurel Lake, Lake Wildwood, Lake Glenwood, Lake Panorama, Lake Pochung, Lake Walkkill, Pleasant Valley Lake, Scenic Lakes, and Vernon Valley Lake.

The township's largest housing complex is Great Gorge Village. Originally built as a slope-side vacation housing development with 1,356 units, the village is no longer affiliated with the ski resort and is operated by real estate investor Andrew Mulvihill. Village residents, who pay \$5.5 million in condominium fees to cover services, have argued that Mulvihill and affiliated businesses have used their control of the community's board of directors to direct contracts to affiliated vendors.^[35]

Demographics

2010 Census

As of the 2010 United States Census, there were 23,943 people, 8,622 households, and 6,595.830 families residing in the township. The population density was 350.9 per square mile (135.5/km²). There were 10,958 housing units at an average density of 160.6 per square mile (62.0/km²). The racial makeup of the township was 95.18% (22,790) White, 1.39% (332) Black or African American, 0.17% (40) Native American, 0.78% (186) Asian, 0.03% (8) Pacific Islander, 1.10% (263) from other races, and 1.35% (324) from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 6.41% (1,534) of the population.^[9]

There were 8,622 households out of which 35.6% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 63.0% were married couples living together, 9.0% had a female householder with no husband present, and 23.5% were non-families. 19.0% of all households were made up of individuals, and 4.8% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.77 and the average family size was 3.18.^[9]

In the township, the population was spread out with 24.3% under the age of 18, 8.7% from 18 to 24, 24.5% from 25 to 44, 34.0% from 45 to 64, and 8.4% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 40.5 years. For every 100 females there were 102.9 males. For every 100 females ages 18 and older there were 101.2 males.^[9]

Historical population

Census	Pop.	%±
1810	1,708	—
1820	2,096	22.7%
1830	2,380	13.5%
1840	2,395	0.6%
1850	2,649	10.6%
1860	2,190	-17.3%
1870	1,979	-9.6%
1880	1,811	-8.5%
1890	1,756	-3.0%
1900	1,738	-1.0%
1910	1,675	-3.6%
1920	1,433	-14.4%
1930	1,279	-10.7%
1940	1,407	10.0%
1950	1,548	10.0%
1960	2,155	39.2%
1970	6,059	181.2%
1980	16,302	169.1%
1990	21,211	30.1%
2000	24,686	16.4%
2010	23,943	-3.0%
Est. 2016	22,383 ^{[12][36]}	-6.5%

The Census Bureau's 2006-2010 American Community Survey showed that (in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars) median household income was \$81,129 (with a margin of error of +/- \$5,949) and the median family income was \$87,215 (+/- \$4,152). Males had a median income of \$62,462 (+/- \$3,163) versus \$41,917 (+/- \$2,121) for females. The per capita income for the borough was \$32,649 (+/- \$1,365). About 3.2% of families and 4.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 6.4% of those under age 18 and 2.5% of those age 65 or over.^[48]

Population sources:
1810-1920^[37] 1840^[38] 1850-1870^[39]
1850^[40] 1870^[41] 1880-1890^[42]
1890-1910^[43] 1910-1930^[44]
1930-1990^[45] 2000^[46]^[47] 2010^[9]^[10]^[11]

2000 Census

As of the 2000 United States Census^[16] there were 24,686 people, 8,368 households, and 6,610 families residing in the township. The population density was 360.9 people per square mile (139.4/km²). There were 9,994 housing units at an average density of 146.1 per square mile (56.4/km²). The racial makeup of the township was 96.56% White, 0.76% African American, 0.09% Native American, 0.70% Asian, 0.03% Pacific Islander, 0.79% from other races, and 1.07% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 3.60% of the population.^[46]^[47]

There were 8,368 households out of which 45.0% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 68.1% were married couples living together, 7.6% had a female householder with no husband present, and 21.0% were non-families. 16.2% of all households were made up of individuals and 3.8% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.95 and the average family size was 3.35.^[46]^[47]

In the township the population was spread out with 30.6% under the age of 18, 6.7% from 18 to 24, 32.9% from 25 to 44, 23.4% from 45 to 64, and 6.3% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 35 years. For every 100 females, there were 102.7 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 100.0 males.^[46]^[47]

The median income for a household in the township was \$67,566, and the median income for a family was \$72,609. Males had a median income of \$50,084 versus \$33,292 for females. The per capita income for the township was \$25,250. About 2.8% of families and 2.9% of the population were below the poverty line, including 3.0% of those under age 18 and 3.9% of those age 65 or over.^[46]^[47]

Economy

The primary satellite uplink earth terminal facility for Sirius XM Radio is located in Vernon,^[49] as is the Vernon Valley uplink facility for SES Worldcom.

Parks and recreation

- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Mountain Creek Ski Resort and Mountain Creek Waterpark
- Hidden Valley Resort - Since January 2016, the area has been repurposed as the National Winter Activity Center, which provides education and ski / snowboard instruction to groups that might not have access to winter sports.^[50]

Government

Local government

In a November 2010 referendum, 70% of voters approved a change from the Faulkner Act (council–manager) form of government to the mayor–council form. Under the new plan, a mayor directly elected by the voters oversees the day-to-day operation of the township with the aid of a business manager, subject to the oversight of a five-member Township Council. The Mayor and Council took office after elections in May 2011, replacing the previously existing council.^[51] Under the terms of an ordinance passed in August 2011, the township's elections were shifted from May to November, with the council citing savings from eliminating the standalone municipal election.^[52]

The Mayor and all five members of the Township Council are directly elected by the voters on an at-large basis to four-year terms of office in non-partisan elections on a staggered basis, with either two or three seats up for election in odd-numbered years as part of the November general election. Three council seats come up for election together and the two other council seats and the mayoral seat are up for vote together two years later.^[7] Under the current plan, Vernon has a "strong mayor" system of government in which the mayor heads the executive branch, overseeing township functions, enforcing all ordinances and other regulations, appoints department heads and prepares a budget, with the assistance of a business administrator. The Township Council is the legislative branch, responsible for enacting ordinances, approving the mayor's department head appointments, can remove employees for cause and can modify the mayor's budget by majority vote, though budget increases require a ⅔ majority. The mayor has the option to attend and speak at council meetings but is not given a vote.^{[3][53]}

As of 2016, the Mayor is Harry J. Shortway, whose term of office ends December 31, 2019.^[3] Members of the Vernon Township Council are Council President Jean Murphy (2021), Council Vice President John Auberger (2021), Mark VanTassel (2021), Daniel Kadish (2019) and Sandra Ooms (2019).^{[53][54][55][56]}

Four members of the governing body were elected in May 2011 and took office on July 1, 2011, Jean Murphy was elected in November 2014 just beating Edward Dunn.^{[56][57][58]}

Emergency services

Vernon Township is serviced by the Vernon Police Department, two ambulance squads and four fire departments. Vernon Fire Department covers a significant portion of "the Valley", Highland Lakes Fire Department covers "the mountain", McAfee Fire Department covers the Pleasant Valley Lake area and Pochuck Valley covers most of the Glenwood section.^[59] The Vernon Township Ambulance Squad is split between two buildings, "the Mountain" and "the Valley" respectively, while the Glenwood section is partially covered by the Glenwood Pochuck Volunteer Ambulance Corps.^[60] Other than the Police Department, the rest of the emergency services are made up of volunteers.

Federal, state and county representation

Vernon Township is located in the 5th Congressional District^[61] and is part of New Jersey's 24th state legislative district.^{[10][62][63]}

For the 116th United States Congress, New Jersey's Fifth Congressional District is represented by Josh Gottheimer (D, Wyckoff).^{[64][65]} New Jersey is represented in the United States Senate by Democrats Cory Booker (Newark, term ends 2021)^[66] and Bob Menendez (Paramus, term ends 2025).^{[67][68]}

For the 2018–2019 session (Senate, General Assembly), the 24th Legislative District of the New Jersey Legislature is represented in the State Senate by Steve Oroho (R, Franklin) and in the General Assembly by Parker Space (R, Wantage Township) and Harold J. Wirths (R, Hardyston Township).^{[69][70]}

Sussex County is governed by a Board of Chosen Freeholders whose five members are elected at-large in partisan elections on a staggered basis, with either one or two seats coming up for election each year. At an annual reorganization meeting held in the beginning of January, the board selects a Freeholder Director and Deputy Director from among its members, with day-to-day supervision of the operation of the county delegated to a County Administrator.^[71] As of 2014, Sussex County's Freeholders are Freeholder Director Richard Vohden (R, Green Township, 2016),^[72] Deputy Director Dennis J. Mudrick (R, Sparta Township, 2015),^[73] Phillip R. Crabb (R, Franklin, 2014),^[74] George Graham (R, Stanhope, 2016)^[75] and Gail Phoebus (R, Andover Township, 2015).^{[76][71]} Graham was chosen in April 2013 to fill the seat vacated by Parker Space, who had been chosen to fill a vacancy in the New Jersey General Assembly.^[77] Constitutional officers elected on a countywide basis are County Clerk Jeff Parrott (R, 2016),^[78] Sheriff Michael F. Strada (R, 2016)^[79] and Surrogate Gary R. Chiusano (R, filling the vacancy after the resignation of Nancy Fitzgibbons).^{[80][77]} The County Administrator is John Eskilson.^{[81][82]}

Politics

As of March 23, 2011, there were a total of 15,476 registered voters in Vernon Township, of which 2,425 (15.7% vs. 16.5% countywide) were registered as Democrats, 5,489 (35.5% vs. 39.3%) were registered as Republicans and 7,538 (48.7% vs. 44.1%) were registered as Unaffiliated. There were 24 voters registered to other parties.^[83] Among the township's 2010 Census population, 64.6% (vs. 65.8% in Sussex County) were registered to vote, including 85.4% of those ages 18 and over (vs. 86.5% countywide).^{[83][84]}

In the 2012 presidential election, Republican Mitt Romney received 6,111 votes (56.8% vs. 59.4% countywide), ahead of Democrat Barack Obama with 4,322 votes (40.2% vs. 38.2%) and other candidates with 281 votes (2.6% vs. 2.1%), among the 10,753 ballots cast by the township's 15,729 registered voters, for a turnout of 68.4% (vs. 68.3% in Sussex County).^[85] In the 2008 presidential election, Republican John McCain received 6,778 votes (58.3% vs. 59.2% countywide), ahead of Democrat Barack Obama with 4,603 votes (39.6% vs. 38.7%) and other candidates with 184 votes (1.6% vs. 1.5%), among the 11,620 ballots cast by the township's 15,195 registered voters, for a turnout of 76.5% (vs. 76.9% in Sussex County).^[86] In the 2004 presidential election, Republican George W. Bush received 6,826 votes (62.4% vs. 63.9% countywide), ahead of Democrat John Kerry with 3,921 votes (35.8% vs. 34.4%) and other candidates with 149 votes (1.4% vs. 1.3%), among the 10,939 ballots cast by the township's 14,249 registered voters, for a turnout of 76.8% (vs. 77.7% in the whole county).^[87]

In the 2013 gubernatorial election, Republican Chris Christie received 69.0% of the vote (4,445 cast), ahead of Democrat Barbara Buono with 27.0% (1,740 votes), and other candidates with 4.0% (257 votes), among the 6,498 ballots cast by the township's 15,896 registered voters (56 ballots were spoiled), for a turnout of 40.9%.^{[88][89]} In the 2009 gubernatorial election, Republican Chris Christie received 4,441 votes (59.5% vs. 63.3% countywide), ahead of Democrat Jon Corzine with 2,106 votes (28.2% vs. 25.7%), Independent Chris Daggett with 732 votes (9.8% vs. 9.1%) and other candidates with 124 votes (1.7% vs. 1.3%), among the 7,458 ballots cast by the township's 15,109 registered voters, yielding a 49.4% turnout (vs. 52.3% in the county).^[90]

Education

The Vernon Township School District serves public school students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. As of the 2012-13 school year, the district's six schools had an enrollment of 3,630 students and 309.8 classroom teachers (on an FTE basis), for a student-teacher ratio of 11.72:1.^[91] Schools in the district (with 2010-11 enrollment data from the National Center for Education Statistics^[92]) are Walnut Ridge Primary School^[93] (grades K-1; 500 students), Cedar Mountain Primary School^[94] (2-4; 369), Rolling Hills Primary School^[95] (2-4; 422), Lounsbury Hollow Middle School^[96] (5-6; 562), Glen Meadow Middle School^[97] (7-8; 515) and Vernon Township High School^[98] (9-12; 1,212).^{[99][100]}

Transportation

Roads and highways

As of May 2010, the township had a total of 126.12 miles (202.97 km) of roadways, of which 85.21 miles (137.13 km) were maintained by the municipality, 32.31 miles (52.00 km) by Sussex County and 8.60 miles (13.84 km) by the New Jersey Department of Transportation.^[101]

The main highway serving Vernon Township is New Jersey Route 94. Other significant roads passing through Vernon Township include County Route 515, County Route 517 and County Route 565. County Route 644 and County Route 641 also pass through the township. In addition, direct access to Interstate 80 is offered via Route 94, and County Route 565 to Route 23 to Interstate 84 in New York. The New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway passes through Vernon, but only freight service is offered.

Vernon is the site of a wrong-way concurrency at the intersection of NJ 94 and CR 517 in McAfee.



The wrong-way concurrency of Route 94 and CR 517 in Vernon Township

Public transportation

NJ Transit offers seasonal bus service between the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown Manhattan and Mountain Creek on the 304 route.^{[102][103]}

Notable people

People who were born in, residents of, or otherwise closely associated with Vernon Township include:

- Helena Rutherford Ely (1858–1920), author, garden writer and creator of Vernon's Meadowburn Farm.^[104]
- Nicolas de Gunzburg (1904–1981), editor in chief of Town & Country and fashion editor at Vogue and Harper's Bazaar.^[105]
- Brett Hearn (born 1958), modified stock car driver.^[106]
- Ryan Izzo (born 1995), football tight end for the New England Patriots.^[107]
- John Winans (1831–1907), U.S. Representative from Wisconsin.^[108]
- Ross Winans (1796–1877), inventor, mechanic, and builder of locomotives and railroad machinery.^[109]

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External links

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- [Vernon Township School District \(http://www.vtsd.com\)](http://www.vtsd.com)
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- [Aim Vernon - Vernon's local newspaper \(http://www.aimvernon.com\)](http://www.aimvernon.com)

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 - [Pleasant Valley Lake's website \(http://www.pleasantvalleylake.com\)](http://www.pleasantvalleylake.com)
 - [VernonWeb \(http://www.vernonweb.com\)](http://www.vernonweb.com)
 - [Mountain Creek \(http://www.mountaincreek.com\)](http://www.mountaincreek.com)
 - [Crystal Springs Resort \(http://www.crystalgolfresort.com\)](http://www.crystalgolfresort.com)
 - [Vernon NJ Business Directory \(http://www.vernon411.com\)](http://www.vernon411.com)
 - [Barry Lakes \(http://www.barrylakes.org\)](http://www.barrylakes.org)
 - [Vernon creates law to limit sex offenders, Advertiser-News, April 2008 \(http://strausnews.com/articles/2008/04/17/advertiser_news/news/47.txt\)](http://strausnews.com/articles/2008/04/17/advertiser_news/news/47.txt)
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