

# Warren County in 2025

Steve Sorensen © 2004  
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At the insistent dinging of the alarm, Warren Q. Countian jumped out of bed and into the shower on a beautiful spring morning in the year 2025. He looked forward to his daily drive south on Rt. 62, the corridor connecting I-86 north of Jamestown with a revitalized Warren.

Because the outlook of the people in this scenic town had dramatically changed, some had unofficially dubbed it "Prosperity, Pennsylvania." The little city was fortunate that the descendants of the timber and oil men had the foresight to invest in a variety of industries, and that diversification was bearing fruit today.

The oil refinery on the banks of the Allegheny was now creating revolutionary high-speed self-cleaning lubricants. The 115-year-old direct marketing company had learned to cope with sweeping technological change and was now entering European and middle-Eastern markets. The buildings on the old state mental hospital grounds had been razed and the site rebuilt into Prosperity College, a technology school that spawned dozens of new businesses and served tens of thousands of students around the world.

As Mr. Countian passed the two-story mall at the Hatch Run intersection, he swung into the Starbuck's drive-thru to grab a

large coffee, and dropped off his daughter. She was the owner/manager of the Valley View Sandwich Shop, a locally owned partnership with the world-class coffee purveyor.

When he passed the new church in Venturetown, he was reminded of the dozens of new enterprises centered in what old-timers still called North Warren. This innovative church on the former site of Big Joe's Market offered meaningful spiritual

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## *By the way...*

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guidance while appealing to a wide variety of interests, and improved the quality of life for people in ways churches hadn't done in a generation.

In fact, the array of buildings between the expanded mall and Venturetown represented everything from large retailers to spin-offs from local industries, many serving markets far beyond northwest Pennsylvania.

The new sign at the city limits said, "Welcome to Warren, Home of More Than 15,000 Friendly People." The population had rebounded from a low of fewer than 10,000 in 2008, causing a boom in housing. The remodeling of handsome older homes provided work for dozens of small quality home crafters. Several hundred new homes had been built in Glade, Conewango and Pine Grove Townships and

the population of the entire county approached 60,000. Thanks to the rapidly expanding tax base, real estate taxes had not been increased in almost 15 years.

While driving across the bridge at the foot of Market St. Mr. Countian noticed several fishing boats in the river, reminding him that the outdoor pursuits in Warren County had never been better.

Since timbering regulations on the Allegheny National Forest had been relaxed in 2017, Mr. Countian's own business had grown. He began making custom cherry furniture just 10 years ago. His first customers had come to him by word-of-mouth, but now he was taking orders from tourists and shipping his designs all over the country. His wife's job in the personnel department at Northwest Savings Bank, the large regional bank based in Warren, was instrumental in bringing creative people into the local economy, complementing the hard-working people who grew up here.

As Mr. Countian pulled into his parking space, he caught the news of his second-term congressman's increasing influence in Washington. An athletic star at Warren High, the young man had gone on to be a college football all-American and have a successful 14-year career in the World League of American Football, successor to the NFL. Just before turning off

the car, an ad on WNAE reminded him he needed to reserve tickets for the outdoor amphitheater on the shore of the Allegheny Reservoir. The story of Chief Cornplanter called "Uneasy Peacemaker" was one of several annual performances at that venue. The play had been written by a local student in 2015, was performed by students at both high schools every year since, and had received national acclaim.

An insistent dinging sound reminded him to take the key out of the ignition. He struggled with the key – until he woke up and turned the bedside alarm off. As he jumped into the shower he thought, "Why not?"

*"The world is but a canvas to our imaginations.*

*~Henry David Thoreau*

*Steve Sorensen lives in Russell with his wife and Greta. He has been a puppet, a pauper, a preacher, a poet, a pawn, and he knows a king. He pounds on the keyboard because he thinks that a word is worth a thousand pictures. He's seen it done, but hasn't yet succeeded in writing that word himself. Maybe next time. Greta, by the way, is a miniature dachshund, just to clear up the pictures that word created. You can contact Greta or her master at Greta52@verizon.net.*