

## **Smokin' Up the "Bloody Eighth": An Analysis of the Cigar and Tobacco Trade in Harrisburg's Eighth Ward, 1839-1930**

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The tobacco industry was a relative latecomer to Central Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco was grown in small quantities beginning between 1825 and 1830, and it appears that this early crop was grown for home consumption. Farmers in Dauphin County began to grow tobacco in the mid-1800s.<sup>2</sup> From its early history, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which is located in Dauphin County, had businesses that dealt with tobacco. An 1839 city directory showed two tobacconists, William Duncan and Frederick Weitmyer, operating in the town. Their shops were located on Market Street opposite Wilson's Hotel and on Second Street near Chestnut, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

As the city expanded during the mid-nineteenth century, so did the tobacco trade. In fact, an examination of the expansion and contraction of this trade can reveal how the different parts of the city waxed and waned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is also true for Harrisburg's Eighth Ward, which was coined the "Bloody Eighth" by newspapermen of the era because of the neighborhood's shady reputation as a hotbed of taverns, mayhem, and crime. This paper will explore various aspects of the tobacco trade in the Eighth Ward between the years of 1866 and 1920.

Before delving into the discussion, the methodology employed during this research will be briefly explained. First, the study area for the purposes of this paper is bounded by Filbert Street on the east side, Briggs Street on the north side, Fourth Street on the west side, and Walnut

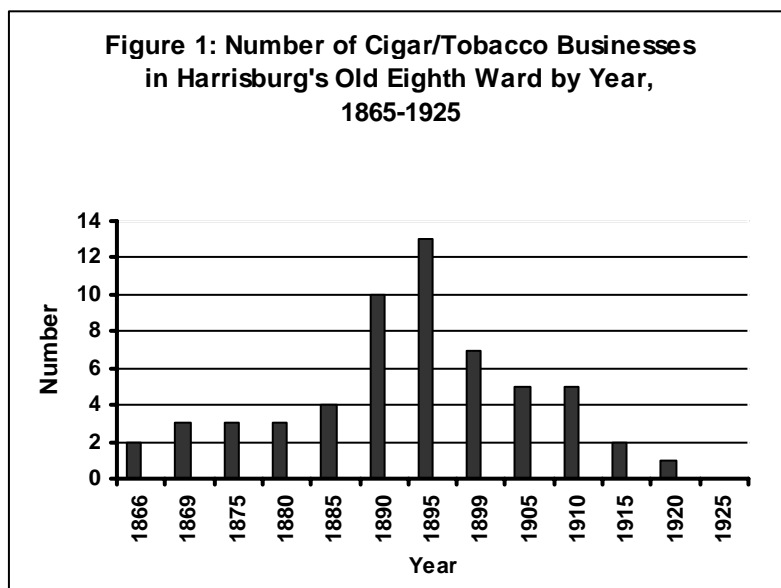
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1 This paper was completed during spring 2002 as part of Prof. Michael Barton's Nineteenth-Century America graduate seminar and has been edited and expanded by Stephanie Patterson Gilbert, webmaster of *Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward*, found at <http://www.old8thward.com>.

2 William H. Egle, *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lancaster in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1883).

3 P. Sturtevant, *Harrisburg Directory and Stranger's Guide*, (Harrisburg, 1839).

Street on the south side. The primary source used for this paper is a series of city directories spanning the period from 1839 to 1930. Other sources included a 1902 Mercantile Appraiser's List from the *Harrisburg Telegraph* newspaper. In order to observe long-term trends in the tobacco trade in the Eighth Ward, sample data from the city directories was taken at regular, five-year intervals. However, given the lack of yearly regularity of the directories in the Historical Society of Dauphin County's collection, this was not possible until the 1880 edition. Prior to 1880, the year closest to the five-year interval was used. For example, 1839 was used for the 1840 slot and 1866 was used for the 1865 slot.<sup>4</sup> During data collection, the names of tobacco business owners and the locations of their shops were recorded for the entire city. Tobacco shops falling within the "Bloody Eighth" were denoted.<sup>5</sup>



The first tobacco shops appeared in the Eighth Ward in the mid-1860s (Figure 1).

George Krause and R. Elsheid each operated shops by 1866.

These were located at State Street and West Alley and Walnut Street and Tanner's Alley, respectively, near the

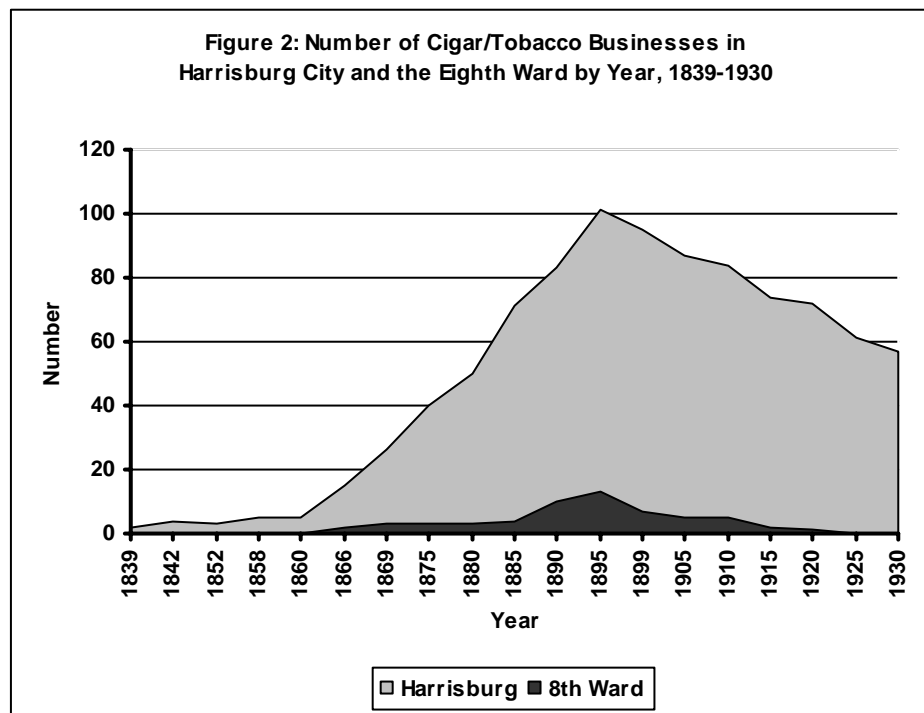
western edge of what was to become the Eighth Ward. It is likely that these men produced their own cigars for sale in their shops. This was commonly practiced by tobacconists in the mid- and late 1800s before the onset of large-scale factory production and the importation of cigars from

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the city directories for the mid-1870s displayed obvious sampling omissions. The problem with these years appeared to be that only certain business owners who paid advertisers were listed in the city directories. This was revealed when only six tobacconists were listed in the 1874-5 directory, when twenty-six were listed in the 1869 edition and fifty were in 1880 version. As the correct data from the mid-1870s was not available, the tobacco businesses for this period were estimated for this report.

<sup>5</sup> Data recorded during this study can be found in Appendix A of this paper.

outside the region (e.g., Florida, Cuba, Dominica), which began in earnest in the late 1890s.

By 1866 the tobacco business in Harrisburg was experiencing rapid growth, expanding from five shops in 1860 to fifteen by 1866 (Figure 2). This growth rate of 200 percent can be considered meteoric. Harrisburg's population was also burgeoning in the 1860s, growing from 13,405 in 1860 to 23,104 in 1870, an expansion rate of 72.4 percent (Figure 3). The population growth rate of Harrisburg during this decade even outstripped growth during the 1850s (71.0%) and was never equaled again.<sup>6</sup> In addition to population growth, massive quantities of locally-produced tobacco fueled the cigar business (Figure 3). By 1860, over five million pounds were harvested in adjacent Lancaster County. This number more than doubled by 1871, when over twelve million pounds were cultivated in agriculturally-abundant Lancaster County.<sup>7</sup>



According to the 1869 city directory, the Eighth Ward picked up a third tobacco shop, that of H.E. Newmyer at Cowden and State. Both Krause and Elsheid remained in the Eighth Ward, though

each moved their shops several doors to the west. Harrisburg's total tobacco businesses grew to twenty-six, an expansion of over seventy-three percent in just three years. Many of Harrisburg's

<sup>6</sup> Gerald Eggert, *Harrisburg Industrializes*, (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1993), Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> Franklin Ellis and Samuel Evans, *History of Lancaster County Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1883), 355-357.

early tobacco businesses were situated close to the river along Market, Second, and Third streets. By 1870, fifty-one people were employed in cigarmaking in the city.<sup>8</sup> The vast majority (82.4%) of these workers were white and American born. The remaining 17.6 percent were foreign born. No blacks were employed as cigarmakers in Harrisburg in 1870.<sup>9</sup> Only 9.8 percent of the cigarmakers owned real estate in 1870, down from twenty-five percent in 1860.<sup>10</sup>

As explained in the first footnote, city directory data in the mid-1870s concerning Harrisburg's tobacco business was spurious. But based on the 1880 directories, it is safe to say that tobacco shops continued to expand across much of the growing landscape of the city. This, however, was not true for the Eighth Ward, where the number of shops remained unchanged from 1869. However, three different proprietors were now in operation: John Tallard at Elsheid's old shop at Fourth and Walnut, William Reed at 518 Walnut, and James McManus at 507 State. Both Elsheid and Newmyer were gone and did not show up again in the city directories as tobacconists. Krause, who was not listed in the 1880 directory, either temporarily left the city, took up a new profession, or was simply skipped by the directory's compilers. Krause did reappear in the 1885 directory as a tobacconist at 419 State. In the city at large, fifty tobacco shops were in operation, a ninety-two percent increase over 1869. By 1880 there was one tobacco shop for every 620 residents of Harrisburg. Shops began to appear in the northern and eastern parts of the city at an increasing rate in the 1880s, although the area along the river retained the greatest number of tobacconists.

This explosion of tobacco-related business was manifested across the region in the 1880s. As crop production and demand for tobacco products grew during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the local production of cigars greatly increased. So-called cigar factories opened in nearly every small town and village in south-central and southeastern Pennsylvania.

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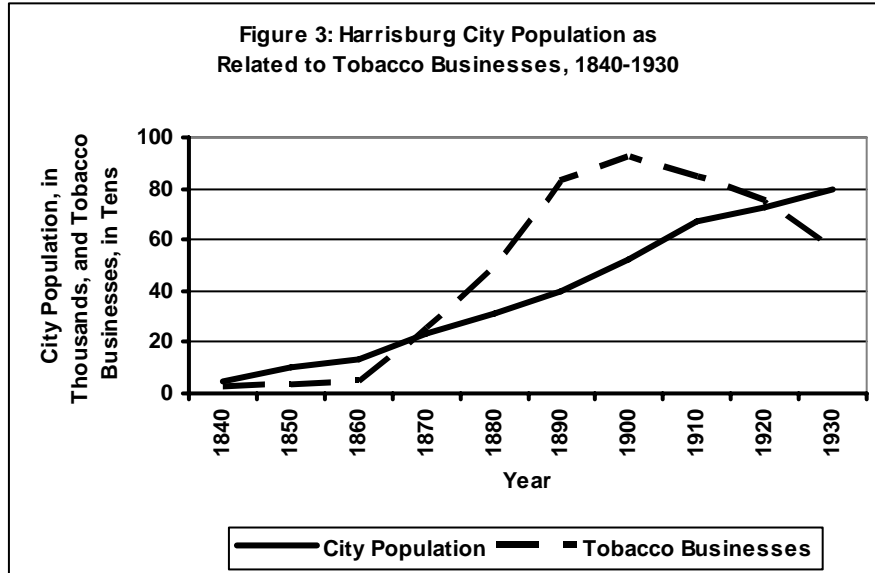
8 Eggert, 220.

9 Ibid., 218.

10 Ibid., 220.

Many factories could be classified as “cottage industries,” and cigar box manufactories also began operation during this period. Like Harrisburg, larger regional cities like Lancaster, Reading, and Allentown also experienced massive growth in the tobacco trade in the 1880s.<sup>11</sup> By the 1880s, literally hundreds of cigar manufactories were in operation in the region, employing both men and women. Millions of cigars were rolled, and it was said in 1883 that the tobacco industry employed more people than any other agricultural interest in Lancaster County.<sup>12</sup> In Harrisburg, twenty-four cigarmaking firms produced over \$500 worth of goods each annually, with an average yearly output of \$3,325.<sup>13</sup> In 1885, the Eighth Ward added a fourth tobacco shop, that of Emil Wehmeier at 445 State. McManus and Reed were still at their former locations, while Krause returned to the city at 419 State. The city had seventy-one tobacco businesses, a forty-two percent rise over 1880.

The 1890s witnessed the zenith of the tobacco trade in Harrisburg (Figure 2). This



follows trends in the surrounding region, including southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania. In 1890, eighty-three shops were selling tobacco products in Harrisburg. The Eighth Ward also saw its

share of this increase, as ten tobacco shops were in operation (Figure 1). Nine of these shops

<sup>11</sup> Ellis and Evans; Morton L. Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania*, (Chicago, 1909); Charles R. Roberts, J.B. Stoudt, T.H. Krick, and W.J. Dietrich, *History of Lehigh County Pennsylvania*, (Reading, 1914).

<sup>12</sup> Ellis and Evans.

<sup>13</sup> Eggert, 226.

were clustered in the southern half of the “Bloody Eighth” between State and Walnut streets. William Reed and George Krause remained in their previous locations, but James McManus had left the Eighth Ward to set up a tobacco shop at Seventh and Maclay. And Emil Wehmeier apparently left the trade. By 1890, the first female-owned tobacco shop, Mary Vinson’s, began operation at 441 State--two doors down from Wehmeier’s old place. Other newcomers were M. O’Donnell at Cowden and Primrose, F.C. Fisher at 108 Cowden, S.W. Popel at 108 Filbert, G. J. Vogt at 129 Short, F.A. Barnes at 420 Walnut, F.E. Hummel at 402 Walnut, and Cadow & Zarker at 101 N. Fourth.

By 1895, 101 tobacconists were plying their trade in the city--the highest number ever attained (Figure 2). Based on estimated population for that year, Harrisburg boasted one tobacco business for every 435 residents. This pinnacle was also reached in the “Bloody Eighth,” which listed thirteen tobacco businesses in 1895 (Figure 1). Again, these were primarily located in the southern half of the ward between State and Walnut. A few shops sprang up north of State along Cowden and Filbert Streets. These included Alfred Hake (505 Cowden), M. Barnes (502 Cowden), and J.C. Courter (507 Filbert). One M. Moore had taken over M. O’Donnell’s shop on Cowden and Primrose. O’Donnell had moved south to the corner of Cowden and South. Remaining in their previous locations were Krause, Vinson, Popel, Reed, and Vogt, although the latter was now run by Sydney Vogt. John Hosler had taken over Cadow & Zarker’s shop at 101 N. Fourth, while M.O. Barracliff had started up business at J. McManus’ old haunt (507 State). Another former tobacco shop--445 State, which was previously run by E. Wehmeier--was opened by F.W. Darrow. It seems that the use of formerly (but not continuously) occupied tobacco shops (445 and 507 State) indicates that these addresses served as generic storefronts.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the cigar and tobacco business began to both retract, in terms of the number of separate tobacco-related businesses in the city, and transform, in terms of product. Still, cigarmaking ranked as one of Harrisburg’s more productive industries. In

1900, cigarmaking was rated fourth in terms of output (3.3 percent of the city's total industrial output) and fourth in number of workers (7.8 percent of Harrisburg's industrial work force).<sup>14</sup> This period also saw the mechanization of the cigarmaking process and the concentration of production at large-scale factories. Several such larger operations opened in Harrisburg between 1899 and 1915, including the Dauphin Cigar Company, the Capital City Cigar Company, the Central Cigar Company, and the Harrisburg Cigar Company. Using the principal of economy-of-scale, these larger operations took business away from Harrisburg's small-time cigarmakers, who suffered during the early 1900s for numerous reasons. Price and labor competition, changing tastes to more consistent and milder cigars, and the importation of cigars from Florida and Cuba wreaked havoc on Harrisburg's small-scale, cottage-industry cigarmakers and forced many to abandon the trade.<sup>15</sup>

Focusing in on the Eighth Ward, a clear decline was in effect in 1900. Only seven tobacco businesses were found within the ward by 1899 (Figure 1). Gone were the four shops that had operated north of State Street in 1895. Only one shop, Lewis Gastrock's at 411 North Street, was in operation north of State. Further displaying the volatility of the tobacco business, many other shops changed proprietors from 1895 to 1899: Mrs. Fannie Moore took over at Mary Vinson's shop at 441 State, H.L. Fehleisen took over at Barracliff's shop at 507 State, J.C. Cadow took over at Hosler's shop at 101 N. Fourth, and R.L. Douglass took over William Reed's operation at 518 Walnut. Other shops simply closed down: George Krause (419 State), F.W. Darrow (445 State), M. O'Donnell (518 South), and Sydney Vogt (129 Short). In all, eight shops closed, while only two new shops opened (including C. H. Crothers at 711 State). One of the tobacconists to leave the "Bloody Eighth" was M. Moore, who relocated just to the north at 908 Cowden. Others either retired or left the craft for another endeavor.

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<sup>14</sup> In 1900, the iron/steel industry, machine manufacturing, and shoemaking were the Harrisburg's three leading industries, in that order. Eggert, 136.

<sup>15</sup> Eggert, 229-232.

Initial interest in the subject of cigar/tobacco businesses in the Eighth Ward was spurred by a 1902 Mercantile Appraiser's List from the *Harrisburg Telegraph* newspaper. Information from this list showed further evidence of the tenuous nature of tobacco sales in the "Bloody Eighth." For instance, C.L. Crothers (711 State) was no longer in the tobacco business by 1902. Two newcomers in 1902, A. Arnold at 159 N. Fourth and William Forbes at 501 State, were not listed in the 1905 directory. The Mercantile List also denoted seven other businesses that sold tobacco as a secondary product (Appendix A.) These businesses, which were not recorded in the 1902 city directory under "Cigar/Tobacco," included several hotels and saloons, a grocery, and a candy store. Again, these businesses were concentrated on the southern half of the "Bloody Eighth."

A full-blown decline among tobacco shops in the Eighth Ward was evident in the 1905 city directory (Appendix A). Only five businesses were listed (Figure 1). Four of the five were holdovers from 1899. The lone newcomer, C.W. Shelly, apparently shared the same address as the shop of Lewis Gastrock. Tobacco businesses in the Eighth Ward shifted to the east during the latter half of the first decade of the twentieth century. This shift may have been due to a general exodus of businesses from this part of the ward, perhaps due to the construction of the new capitol building and the "City Beautiful" campaign. Across the city, tobacco businesses were decreasing in number (Figure 2). Only eighty-seven were in operation in 1905, decreasing to eighty-four in 1910. In the Eighth Ward that year, five tobacco businesses were recorded (unchanged in number from 1905). Several proprietors shifted around, however. J.R. Hanes took over at 507 State from H.L. Fehleisen. R L. Douglass closed shop at 518 Walnut, but the Frank Brothers opened a short-lived shop at 400 Filbert.

The further decline and eastward migration of tobacco businesses in the "Bloody Eighth" was manifested in the 1915 city directory, which listed only two shops (Figure 1). These included A. Zeger's shop at 511 Walnut and Mrs. E.E. Toomey's at 721 Cowden. All five of the



shops listed in 1910 had vanished by 1915. In the city, tobacco businesses were reduced to seventy-four.

By 1920, Mrs. Toomey ran the only shop located near the “Bloody Eighth,” and by 1925 she was gone as well. No shops were recorded in the Eighth Ward in 1925 or 1930 (Figure 1 and Appendix A). By this time, the condemnation of this area for the Capitol Park Extension was well underway. The demolition of the neighborhood of the Eighth Ward permanently ended the tobacco trade in this part of Harrisburg. In the city, tobacco shops closed at an ever-increasing rate: sixty-one remained in 1925 and fifty-seven in 1930 (Figures 2 and 3). These numbers fell lower than the 1885 counts.

Looking back, it can be said that the rise and fall of the tobacco shops in the Eighth Ward basically mirrored the birth and death of the area itself. The neighborhood certainly was in decline in the early 1900s. Tobacco shops dropped from 101 in 1895 to zero by 1925, only thirty years later. This analysis has shown that the tobacco business was a long-term success for several of the merchants, including Krause, McManus, Popel, Reed, and Douglass. But more than often, Eighth Ward tobacconists fared poorly with many lasting only one to three years. Of the thirty-six different people who ran tobacco shops in the Eighth Ward, the average confirmed minimum years in the tobacco business was only 4.8 years. This includes proprietors who moved their tobacco business out of the Eighth Ward and continued to operate. Hence, we can see that this was a fairly risky business. For the most part, men ran the show, although three female-owned shops were identified. Women constituted eight percent of the total proprietors.

In total, thirty-five different addresses in the Eighth Ward served as tobacco shops. Many of these were occupied by different proprietors over a long period of time. On the other hand, some were very short-lived shops that only served in the tobacco trade for a year or two. Tobacco products were also available at other types of businesses (hotels, saloons, and groceries), which may have cut into the tobacco shops’ business. This trend undoubtedly

increased during the twentieth century. For the most part, the tobacco trade was limited to the southern half of the “Bloody Eighth.” From this data, it can be surmised that the southern half (State to Walnut) was the commercial portion of the ward and the northern half (State to Briggs) was more residential in nature.

Trends in the tobacco trade in the Eighth Ward show some similarities and differences with those in the city at large. First, while tobacco was growing rapidly in the city after 1860, the trade did not expand greatly in the Eighth Ward until 1885. Both the Eighth Ward’s and Harrisburg’s tobacco trades peaked in 1895 and declined thereafter. This also generally follows regional trends in the tobacco trade. In the Eighth Ward, however, the tobacco trade suffered an early demise by 1925 due to irrevocable changes to the urban landscape.

<b>Appendix A: Tobacco Businesses in Harrisburg's 8<sup>th</sup> Ward, 1839-1930</b>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Min. Years of Operation</i>
1866	R. Elsheid	Walnut & Tanner's Alley		3
	Geo. Krause	E State & West Alley		29
1869	R Elsheid	Corner of Walnut & 4 <sup>th</sup>	Gone by 1880	3
	George Krause	E State, north of 4th		29
	H. E. Newmyer	State, north of Cowden	Gone by 1880	1
1880	J. McManus	507 E State		25
	William Reed	518 Walnut		15
	John Tallard	400 Walnut	Gone by 1885	1
1885	George Krause	419 State		29
	Emil Wehmeier	445 State	Gone by 1889	1
	J. McManus	507 E State	Moved to 7 <sup>th</sup> & Maclay by 1890	25
	William Reed	518 Walnut		15
1890	George Krause	419 State		29
	Mary E. Vinson	441 State		5
	William Reed	518 Walnut		15
	J. A. Barnes	420 Walnut		1
	F. E. Hummel	402 Walnut	Moved to 813 Market by 1895	5
	Cadow & Zarker	101 N 4 <sup>th</sup>		1
	F. C. Fisher	108 Cowden	Moved to 181 Swatera by 1895	5
	M. O'Donnell	Cowden & Primrose		5
	S. W. Popel	108 Filbert		20
	G. J. Vogt	129 Short		1
1895	George Krause	419 State		29
	Mary E. Vinson	441 State		5
	F. W. Darrow	445 State	Same shop as Wihnmeier's/gone '99	1
	M. O. Barracliff	507 State	Same shop as McManus'/gone by '99	1
	M. Barnes	502 Cowden	Gone by 1902	1
	Alfred Hake	505 Cowden	Gone by 1902	1
	M. Moore	714 Cowden	Moved to 908 Cowden by 1899	4
	John T. Hosler	101 N 4 <sup>th</sup>	Same shop as Cadow & Zarker's	1
	J. C. Courter	507 Filbert	Gone by 1902	1
1895	S. W. Popel	108 Filbert		20
	M. O'Donnell	518 South	Gone by 1899	5
	Sydney Vogt	129 Short	Took over G. J. Vogt's shop—relative?	1
	W. H. Reed	518 Walnut		15
1899	C. H. Crothers	711 State	Gone by 1902	1
	H. L. Fehleisen	507 State	Same shop as Barracliff's	6
	Fannie Moore	441 State	Same shop as Vinson's	3
	J. C. Cadow	101 N. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Cadow returns/takes over	3

			from Hosler	
	S. W. Popel	108 Filbert		20
	Lewis Gastrock	411 North		11
	R. L. Douglass	518 Walnut	Same shop as Reed's	16
1902*	A. Arnold	159½ N 4th	Not listed 1901 or 1905	1
	<i>H. Bucher</i>	<i>451 State</i>	<i>Saloon, changed to Smith's Saloon in 1905</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	J. C. Cadow	4 <sup>th</sup> & Walnut	Gone by 1905	3
	R. L. Douglass	518 Walnut		16
	<i>F. W. Ebel</i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup> &amp; State</i>	<i>National Hotel</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	<i>Ignatz Furber</i>	<i>542 North</i>	<i>Saloon, gone by 1905</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	W. H. Forbes	501 State	Not listed 1901 or 1905	n/a
	H. L. Fehleisen	507 State		6
	Lewis Gastrock	411 North		11
	<i>P. Levanson</i>	<i>502 Walnut</i>	<i>Listed as confectioner in '01 &amp; '05</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	<i>April McCoy</i>	<i>510 South</i>	<i>Groceries &amp; notions</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	<i>McCarthy Bros.</i>	<i>522 State</i>	<i>Hotel</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	Fannie Moore	441 State	Gone by 1905	3
	<i>E. A. Meyer</i>	<i>523 State</i>	<i>Saloon, gone by 1905</i>	<i>n/a</i>
	S. W. Popel	108 Filbert		20
1905	H. L. Fehleisen	507 State	Gone by 1910	6
	S. W. Popel	108 Filbert		20
	R. L. Douglass	518 Walnut	Moved to 1912 Forster by 1810	16
	Lewis Gastrock	411 North		11
	C. W. Sheely	411 North		5
1910	J. R. Hayes	507 State	Same shop as Fehleisen's, gone '15	1
	S. W. Popel	108 Filbert	Gone by 1915	20
	Frank Bros.	400 Filbert	Gone by 1915	1
	Lewis Gastrock	411 North	Gone by 1915	11
	C. W. Sheely	411 North	Gone by 1915	5
1915	Mrs. Toomey	721 Cowden		5
	A. Zeger	511 Walnut	Gone by 1920	1
1920	Mrs. Toomey	511 Walnut	Gone by 1925	5

Source: Harrisburg City Directories, 1839-1930

\*1902 Data taken from the *Harrisburg Telegraph's* Mercantile Appraiser's List. Items in italics sold tobacco as a secondary product.