

Old Eighth Ward Butchers, 1890-1917

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This project focuses on the butcher shops operating in the Eighth Ward during the period 1890 to 1917.¹ Data was gathered by searching for meat markets in *Boyd's Harrisburg Directory*, which lists the residents of Harrisburg by their profession. In general, very few butchers operated within the Eighth Ward during this period. Those butcher shops that did business there did not move. These butchers must have made a good living, which allowed them to actually purchase their places of business.

According to Gerald Eggert's book, *Harrisburg Industrializes*, as Harrisburg began to grow, their need for many craft workers, such as butchers, carpenters, and blacksmiths, also rose (213). From the period of 1850-70, 150 butchers were added to the population in Harrisburg (214). How many were located in the 8th ward during this time is unknown. If one looks at the pattern of butcher shops within the Eighth Ward, one can assume their number grew anywhere from one to two butchers per year. One popular meat market was Young's Meat Market (Myers). This business was later passed on to his son, H.F. Young.

In Michael Barton and Jessica Dorman's book, *Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward*, the old State Street Market is discussed (105). The market at first was a failure, but eventually it became a busy place for residents and shoppers within the Eighth Ward (Barton et al 107). The State Street Market became a place where butchers located in the Eighth Ward could take their meat products and sell them in an open air forum. Many took advantage of the opportunity and feeling of community eventually created by such a place, adding a much needed burst to the community. Why was this open market a good forum and possibility for the residents of the

¹ This paper has been edited by Stephanie Patterson Gilbert, webmaster of Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward website, found at <<http://www.old8thward.com>>.

Eighth Ward? One possibility is the ease of location within the Eighth Ward. Residents had little money, which is one of the reasons they lived in the Eighth Ward, so to have the opportunity to get all of their food products at one place was convenient.

Pinpointing the exact ethnicities of the citizens who worked as butchers in the Eighth Ward would not only be a daunting task but a challenging one by passing judgment on ethnicities just by a name. However, the ethnicities that usually lived within the Eighth Ward were minorities: African-Americans and people who recently emigrated from countries like Ireland and Germany. Surname searches online were unsuccessful in finding an exact ethnic origin. The social class of those within the Eighth Ward was made of factory workers, skilled workers, and food tradesmen (Eggert 214).

One of the Eighth Ward residents, H.G. Walter, lived at 434 State Street from 1892-1916. The year 1916 is the last record of Walter's shop being open during the time periods researched. Walter appeared to have a longstanding business, which shows he either had a successful location or he had loyal customers. Whether or not there were economic problems in the city, Walter still made enough money to keep his business open for so long.

Henry Bink only remained in the butchering business for a period of two years, 1890-91, at the residence of 424 Walnut. Perhaps he suffered from the competition of the two longstanding stores within the Eighth Ward or relocated due to loss of wages. Later on, this address was a butcher shop owned by John Soell, who resided there and opened the butcher shop for two more years (1893-94). The location at 424 Walnut appears to have not been a good location for meat butchering.

Soell later moved to 428 Walnut, where he operated his shop from 1895-96. A change of ownership also occurred at this address from 1898-1901, to F.E. Taylor. H.D. Koons operated the shop for one year, 1902. In 1903, there were no businesses registered at this address which leads me to believe the property was on the market until 1904, when Lecrone & Company

bought the shop. However, a business partnership only lasted one year when the property was sold to Meyer Gross, who operated from 1905-10 in this residence. This is probably one of the most sold properties in the meat industry within the Eighth Ward. Gross reopened his shop in 1915 and 1917 at the same address. He had finally found some sort of stability in the meat market at this address. The instability of this address may be indicative of a broader instability of Walnut Street within the Eighth Ward, as 424 Walnut suffered earlier in the time period as well.

One of the longest running butcher shops operated by H.F. Young, opened at 506 Walnut from 1891-1913. This data leads to the idea that this butcher was not only very profitable to remain open for many years but must have been frequented by many residence within the Eighth Ward. H.F. Young had operated the business after his father had given him the it in 1888. According to John Myers paper, Young's Meat Market had longevity, staying open for 53 years.

L.C. Shammo registered his butcher shop in 1892 at 501 State Street, but in 1893 and 1894, it operated at 505 State Street. Possibly, this move was to a better location.

Reverend Julius Kanter, who resided at 523 South Street, only remained in the butchering business for one year, 1898. Kanter, being a man of the church, most likely was transferred out of the area, which resulted in closing his side business after only one year. Philip Brode operated his butcher shop in 1899-1902 at 523 South Street. However, from 1905-1907, Philip Brode operated his butcher shop out of 121 Angle Avenue. This span of three years shows the instability of the meat market during the early 1900s.

S. Kranzman operated a butcher shop at 507 Walnut in 1901. In 1903 C.E. Bryan opened a butcher shop at 426 Walnut while H. Smith opened one at 427 State Street. However, it appears that successful meat markets were less likely than failing ones. Brubaker and Epler opened their shop at 515 Walnut in 1909 and were closed after one year.

One trend evident in the time period of 1909 to 1917 is the decrease of butchers in the Eighth Ward. During this period, the Eighth was being demolished for the Capitol Park Extension, making doing business within it less desirable. Other than the demolition of the Ward, other possible causes of the decline in independent butcher shops could have been an increase of grocery stores carrying meat products. The early twentieth century saw an increase in grocery stores acting as the sale point for meat while the butchering was done off premises. Another possible scenario as to why butchers decreased within this period could be that people were moving outwards from the city center into the suburbs of Harrisburg.

Many questions can be derived by looking at the data presented from 1890-1916. Why were the meat markets able to stay open? Was it because the people who lived in the Eighth Ward depended on local meat markets? Did they lack finances to access transportation to another location within Harrisburg? Or was it the relationship that each member held with their butcher? These butchers lived in their part of the city, knew their situations, and saw their faces, making the consumer feel comfortable.

Another question that needs to be researched farther and answered is: What kept the customers coming back to these meat markets? Obviously ease of location, prices, and a feeling of familiarity and friendliness played a big part in customer loyalty. However, other factors influence why people continue to shop at a place that are unspoken. Did the butcher shops offer any other alternatives in meat selection than the grocers did? Was there a feeling of knowing where the meat had come from important to the consumer?

One question that can be answered is why there is a noticeable decline in butchers from 1911-1917. The increase of grocery stores playing a larger role in the lives of Americans, butcher shops were becoming obsolete. Transportation also began to become more readily available to those who were in lesser social classes. One thing which remained constant in the

time period studied was the two main butchers, who thrived throughout the time period researched, Walter & Young.

What history took place during 1890-1916? History is another key fact, which plays a part in the role of the American butcher shop. Ellis Island became the place to immigrate too (infoplease.com). This increased the population within the Eighth Ward greatly. *Plessey vs. Ferguson* legally allowed segregation in 1896, which had to influence the large African-American population residing within the Eighth. A major event that possibly dictated the reason for less butcher shops was World War I, which lasted from 1914-1918. Since Young and Walter remained open during this time period, one may assume they were too old to participate in war, which allowed them to stay open during this time period. However, other men who owned shops may have served in the military (<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0903596.html>). Finally, the city's beautification movement eventually forced the demise of the Ward, resulting in the demise of the butcher shops there as well.

Where were the most successful butcher shops located? Research shows H.G. Walter and H.F. Young operated the most successful butcher shops. Both men were located along two of the most frequented streets within the Ward--Walnut and State. Their customers had easy access to these stores. These two men's successful businesses were a threat to those new incoming butcher shops, which were never able to get themselves to where Walter and Young actually were.

Works Cited

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Appendix 1: Butchers in Harrisburg's Eighth Ward, 1890-1900		
<i>YEAR</i>	<i>NAME OF BUTCHER</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>
1890	Henry Bink	424 Walnut
1891	Henry Bink	424 Walnut
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1892	L.C. Shammo	501 State
	John Soell	424 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1893	L.C. Shammo	505 State
	John Soell	424 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1894	L.C. Shammo	505 State
	John Soell	424 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
1895	John Soell	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1896	John Soell	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1897	No book on record	
1898	Rev. Julius Kanter	523 South
	F.E. Taylor	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. young	506 Walnut
1899	Philip Brode	523 South
	F.E. Taylor	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1900	Philip Brode	523 South
	F.E. Taylor	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut

Appendix 2: Butchers in Harrisburg's Eighth Ward, 1901-1909		
YEAR	NAME OF BUTCHER	LOCATION
1901	P. Brode	523 South
	S. Kranzman	507 Walnut
	F.E. Taylor	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1902	P. Brode	523 South
	H.D. Koons	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1903	C.E. Bryan	426 Walnut
	H. Smith	427 State
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1904	Lecrone & Company	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1905	Meyer. Gross	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
	Philip Brode	121 Angle Ave
1906	Meyer. Gross	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
	Philip Brode	121 Angle Ave
1907	Meyer Gross	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
	Philip Brode	121 Angle Ave
1908	Meyer. Gross	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1909	Brubaker & Epler	515 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
	Meyer Gross	428 Walnut

Appendix 3: Butchers in Harrisburg's Eighth Ward, 1910-1917		
YEAR	NAME OF BUTCHER	LOCATION
1910	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
	Meyer Gross	428 Walnut
1911	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1912	H.G. Walter	434 State
	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
1913	H.F. Young	506 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State Street
1914	H.G. Walter	434 State
1915	Meyer Gross	428 Walnut
	H.G. Walter	434 State
1916	H.G. Walter	434 State
1917	Meyer Gross	428 Walnut