

The 500 Block of North Street in the Old Eighth Ward, 1876-1883

Michael Stanilla
AMSTD 482/Fall 2004
Penn State Harrisburg

Who were the people of the Old Eighth Ward of Harrisburg?¹ This paper will examine who lived on the 500 block of North Street between 1876 and 1883. I have researched only the even-numbered addresses, 500 to 540, as they were the most numerous. Figure one from the Roe Atlas of 1889 shows the location of this block in relation to the northern half of the Ward. Even though this map postdates the years researched for this paper, it gives a satisfactory picture of the location of these residences.

The data for this research came from the *Boyd's Harrisburg City Directories*. These directories are the equivalent of today's phone books. These directories are not absolutely reliable, however, because the publisher did not go out each year to every address in the city and knock on the door. The data was compiled by sending out requests for information on sheets or cards and hoping the people living there filled them out and returned them. Some direct visits were done, but the bulk of the information was based on what the individual(s) living at the address(es) wrote back.

There were other data problems. The Boyd's Directory for 1879-1880 contained information only on businesses, organizations, churches, and government; no individuals were listed. The year 1881 was covered in the 1880-1882 directory. I can only guess that financial reasons caused a year to be skipped. I have assumed that the individuals living at a particular house number in 1880 were also there in 1881, although this probably introduces error, given the amount of mobility on this street.

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

I have used as resources other papers that were completed in Professor Barton's courses. In the Spring 2002 semester, Chris Potts researched North Street for the years 1871 to 1875 (Potts 2002), and Marc Anderson researched North Street for the years 1883 to 1887 (Anderson 2002). By my filling in the years 1876 to 1883, we now have a 16-year span of residents for one street in the Eighth Ward.

The directories I used were quite thorough in the data they provided. Some addresses were missing, however, and should be studied further. Figure two is a table in house number order that lists the resident's name, occupation, and whether or not they are a boarder or owner. What follows is a brief overview of each of the addresses and their residents.

500 North

This house number did not have a consistent resident until 1880 when James Nalen, a ragdealer, moved from 506 North Street. He was the resident into 1882 and, based on Anderson's research, he was the resident into 1887 (Anderson 2002). Prior to 1880, there was a new resident listed each year. In 1876 Charles Lefever, clerk, David Lefever, grocer, and William McLane, laborer, are the residents. By 1877 the residents have changed—P. Boyne, a boarder, and Owen Henry, resides. It appears that in these cases it was a parent and a working age child who lived there. For one year, 1878, no reference for this house number could be located in the directory.

502 North

This house number did not show up in the directory in 1876. The following year, 1877, two women, Mrs. Jennie Lahley and Mrs. Mary Smith, are listed as residing. My guess is that they are widowed sisters living together, although in other instances when a widow is identified, her husband's name is also given. In 1878, a doctor, Adonijahs McClure, moved into the house

and stayed for one year before moving to 509 North, where he was still listed in the 1887 directory (Anderson 2002). In 1880, a paperhanger, Frank Gembe, moved in and stayed until 1882, when he moved to Raspberry Street. No resident was located for the property in 1882.

504 North

This property also saw many different residents. In 1876, Michael Conway, laborer, is listed as the resident, and then in 1877, George Myers, machinist, moves in until 1880. In 1880, Luther Keller, machinist, moves in and stays until at least 1886. In 1887 he is listed at a different address (Anderson 2002).

506 North

Very little information showed up in the directories for this property. There is no listing in the 1876 directory. And then Jason Nalen, ragdealer, is listed as residing there in 1877. In 1878 he is listed as James Nalen, who then moves to 500 North Street in 1880. The next listing is not until 1882, when a domestic, Laura McCamat, is the only resident. The lack of information for this property cannot be explained at this time. It could be that the people living there just did not send in their information when the directory requested it. Maybe some deed research at the courthouse could provide some information.

508 North

This property had a long-time resident, police officer Bernard Carlin. He is listed in each of the directories until 1882, when he is not listed anywhere in the city of Harrisburg. In 1877, Mrs. Hannora Carroll is listed as also residing at the property. She is also listed at this property in the 1875 directory (Potts 2002). In 1880, Michael J. Carroll, clerk, is listed as residing at this property as well. And then in 1882, Peter Carroll, machinist, who had been at 510 North Street,

is listed as the resident. From the 510 North Street listing, I believe he is a brother who moved out to his own place.

510 North

John Carroll, laborer, is the only resident listed in 1876. In fact, he is listed as a resident of this property until 1887 and keeps the same job, laborer. In 1877, another Carroll, machinist Peter J. Carrol, is listed along with John. And in 1880, another Carroll moves in, Michael F. In 1882, John and Michael F. are still residing there, and Peter has moved to 510. Michael F. is also listed with John in the 1887 directory. This could be one brother first moving to Harrisburg and then sending for his brothers to come and join him.

512 North

Three people are listed as residents--Annie Kammerer, miller, Margaret Kammerer, widow, and Patrick O'Henry, ragdealer. And one boarder, Charles Bird, is listed. My thought is that Margaret and Annie are mother and daughter. In 1877, only one person is listed, Allen Colbert, laborer. In 1878, the resident changes again, to William Willson, laborer, who stays until 1882. In 1880, Samuel Willson, laborer, is listed as an additional resident. Again I think it could be a brother coming because the other brother told him about the opportunities in the city. In 1882, neither is listed in the city, and a new resident has moved in, Thomas Lego, foreman.

514 North

This is another property that had a long-time resident. Cornelius Nelly is listed as a machinist in 1876 and then as a grocer in 1877. He is listed until 1880 when Jacob Beck, engineer, and his mother, Julia Beck, widow move in. They are also listed in 1882 along with Charles Beck, laborer. In the 1883 directory, Jacob and Julia have moved to 517 North Street

(Anderson 2002). Also in 1883, Cornelius's widow, Sarah, is listed as residing at 514 North Street, but she is not listed prior to that (Anderson 2002).

516 North

This property appears to stay in the same family until some time prior to 1887. In 1876 and 1877, William J. Ettinger, telegrapher repairer, is listed. Then in 1878, his laborer son, William J. Ettinger, Jr., and Elmer E. Ettinger, messenger, are listed as boarders. I think Elmer is also a son. They are listed until 1882, when Elizabeth Ettinger, widow of William J., is listed for the first time. William Jr. is no longer listed as a boarder and neither is Elmer. Elizabeth Donnelly, widow, who was not listed in any directory prior to 1882 is now listed as a resident. James Donnelly, dispatcher, from 526 North Street, is also now listed. All of these people are also listed in the 1883 directory, but then move to various locations by the 1887 directory (Anderson 2002).

518 North

This is another property that has a long time resident. First, in 1876, Henry Gitt, collector, is listed as a boarder, and Alexander Siers, lumber, is listed as resident. In 1877, John Holtzendollar, switch tender, moves from 530 North Street and remains the resident into the 1882 directory. A new resident is listed in 1883, and John Holtzendollar is no longer listed in the city of Harrisburg.

520 North

In 1876, Owen Henry, ragdealer, is listed as the sole resident. In 1877, he moves to 500 North Street, and John Donnelly, telegraph for PRR, lives here for one year before moving to 516 North Street. In 1878, another new resident is listed, George Kennedy, brakeman. He is

there for two years; in 1880, blacksmith Joseph Goodhart moves in for a couple of years. And finally in 1882, John Looker, laborer, and Emily Looker move from 528 North Street. Emily is listed as widow, so I think this is a mother and son home. They are listed at this residence until at least 1887 when they both move to 516 North Street.

522 North

This is the first property where the same residents reside in 1876 who resided here in 1871 (Potts 2002) and who continue to reside here all the way through to the 1887 directory (Anderson 2002). Patrick Elliot, cupola tender, and John McGrath, machinist, are both listed in every directory from 1871 to 1887 as residents of this property. The only change is that in 1882, John and Mary Elliott are also listed as residents for one year. I'm not sure of the relationship of John and Mary to Patrick; my guess is extended family members passing through.

524 North

Henry Morne was an engineer who called this property home for one year before moving. Harry Pressley, also an engineer, moved in for one year. And then Charles Neith, a conductor, moved in 1878. He is listed as the resident until 1887 (Anderson 2002). All three of these men are not listed as boarders, but yet they all have jobs with the railroads. It could be interesting to see if they did actually own the property or whether the railroad provided it as housing.

526 North

This property had a short list of changing residents until 1878. In 1876, John Baker, a cigar maker, was a boarder, and Emanuel Clinton, dispatcher, was listed. By the next year, only Emanuel was listed. In 1878, John Donnelly moved in from 520 North Street and stayed into 1882. In 1880, Catharine Griffee was also listed as residing at the address.

528 North

William Bedow, engineer, is the only resident in 1876. He has left the city by the next year when Mrs. Emily Looker, confectionery, John Looker, laborer, and Samuel Looker, laborer, move in. In future directories, Emily is listed as widow, so I think this is a mother and her working children. In 1880, William Shertzer, huckster, is also listed as residing at the property. In 1882, Shertzer is not listed in the directory, and the Lookers have moved to 520 North Street, where they stay until at least 1887 when they have moved to 516 North Street.

530 North

John Holtzendollar, switch tender, lives here during 1876. He then moves to 518 North Street and stays there until 1887. Jason McAdams, machinist, is the next resident, and he remains until at least 1880. In that year Rebecca Broumbaugh, widow, and Henry Kemp, machinist, are the residents. By 1882, Rebecca is the only resident. Beyond 1882 she is not listed in the directories.

532 North

This location is another one where a resident remained for many years. Prior to 1876, Michael McAdams, laborer, John McAdams, moulder, and Thomas McAdams, machinist, are the residents. Michael is listed as owner and John and Thomas are listed as boarders. It would appear to be three brothers living together (Potts 2002). In 1876, all three are still the only ones listed. By the 1877 directory, only Michael is listed at the property. He remains the sole resident until 1887, when he is no longer listed in the city (Anderson 2002).

534 North

During the years I researched, William Smith, shoemaker, is the only resident at this location. Prior to 1876 and after 1882, the property had different residents.

536 North

Starting in 1877, Michael Carroll, laborer, is the only resident listed. Michael remains at this location until 1887, when he moves to Cowden Street (Anderson 2002).

538 North

This location represents the longest continuously occupied house by the same resident on this block of North Street. James Springer, flagman, is listed in the 1871 directory (Potts 2002), and he is listed all the way through the 1887 directory (Anderson 2002). Besides being at the same address, he is also listed with the same job for all those years. Staying at the same location and having the same job for all those years was, I believe, quite unusual for this time.

540 and 542 North

These last two addresses I have put together because there was very little information on them. Nothing is listed for either address until 1880, when Joseph Garner, laborer, appears in the directory. By 1882, Charles Bentney, laborer, is listed, and he remains for only one year. At 540 North, only 1882 had a person living at the property, Mary Barringer, widow. By the next year she has moved. This lack of early information is confusing. Since both of these properties sit at the end of the block, my thought is perhaps they were not built until 1880 or so. Or it might be that residents prior to 1880 and 1882 didn't respond to the directory's information requests.

I think that research on the even numbers of the 500 block of North Street has turned up some interesting results. For the most part, it appears that people liked to live on this block. There are several long-term residents at the same address, and there are a good number of people who stay in the block for many years and simply change addresses. Another result is that there was a mix of occupations. There were machinists, ragdealers, laborers, engineers, and conductors. A good number of individuals worked in the railroad industry. One thing that I was not able to research was the residents' ethnicity, as I was not certain of the origins of the surnames.