

Hotels and Businesses

The Mansion House was the first hotel in town. Built in 1861, two years before the town was incorporated as a borough. This hotel was under the management of Wilbur Smith, a Vermonter. He was proprietor for nearly twenty years. After him, Charles King became proprietor and was landlord for about ten years, when Charles Burchill became proprietor with William Johnson as head clerk. About 1900 Peter Gorman took over the hotel and ran it for nearly twenty years. Robert Fobia then purchased the building and renovated it changing its name to Hotel Mansion. (*Editor's Note: In 1853 Jacob Faust built the Mahanoy House, an inn and tavern, for Emanuel Boyer. It stood on the south side of the first block on East Centre Street where the entrance to the M&T Bank drive thru is now located.PTC*)

In the first sixty years of its life the Mansion House had two porches on the first floor, one on Center Street and the other on Main Street. On the large porch on Center Street the traveling men and boarders sat on a summer evening. Above this porch was a balcony where the lady boarders sat with their gentlemen friends. Over the three large shops, which extended to 20 West Center Street, were long balconies on the second and third floors, where several suites of rooms might be had. The porch on Main Street was the Ladies' Entrance to the hotel. From the early days until the '90's it was considered a breach of etiquette for a woman to enter a hotel by the same door where the men entered, so a ladies' entrance was provided for them. A room on the second floor facing Center and Main Streets was called the Ladies' Parlor, which was very artistically furnished. All hotels had such rooms for the ladies.

On the east side of Main Street to the north was located the Eagle hotel, built in 1862 and under the proprietorship of Seth Kaley. From 1870 until 1884 Harrison Derrick was proprietor and the hotel was then known as the Derrick House. His son, Charles Derrick, was clerk. This hotel was not as large as the Mansion House, but it was considered a very good hostelry. About 1884 Charles D. Kaier bought this hotel and Aaron Brownmiller was landlord here for several years. About 1900 Frank Reed became landlord and remained here for many years. Mrs. Margaret Beck had a tearoom in this building at one time. At present the hotel is unoccupied. During the influenza epidemic of 1918 the building was used as an emergency hospital. (*Editor's Note: This hotel became known as the Kaier Hotel. It was demolished in 1950 to make room for a new Kaier Brewery building. That building still stands on North Main Street. PTC*)

The Anthracite Hotel located at 62-68 North Main Street (site of the Thomas Wholesale Grocery Store) was a two story frame building under excellent management. It burned down on the night of St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1873. This ground was a vacant spot for ten years. Charles Hagenbuch sold the lot to David E. Focht who erected on this site the first wholesale grocery

store in Mahanoy City. *(Editor's Note: The Thomas Wholesale building still stands on North Main. Most recently it was the site of Duke's salvage. PTC)*

The Miners' Arms located at the opposite corner on the same side of Main Street was owned by Joshua Holt, Sr., an Englishman, who did a thriving business in the early days. Later this hotel was owned by Henry Gebhardt.

The Exchange Hotel located at 16 East Center was owned by Patrick Ryan. Mr. Ryan was blind which had been caused by a premature explosion at one of the collieries in 1861. Formerly he had a hotel at 404-406 East Center Street. This hotel was abandoned in 1890.

Washington Hotel at the corner of Center and First Streets or 37-39 East Center Street was owned by Harrison Derrick in 1862-1870. Later it was a storeroom and a restaurant.

The Merchants' Hotel on the north side of the 200 square on West Center Street was owned by Henry Sharp, in the '60's. Later it was owned by a man named Keyser. It became the Pennsylvania Hotel under the management of the late Senator Daniel Thomas, who was proprietor for about ten years.

The Central Hotel was located at 9 and 11 West Center Street. The proprietor was William Bensinger, Sr. This place was abandoned as a hotel about 1900. Before this was a hotel it was Wesley Hammer's general store in the latter '60's and '70's. The Newberry Store is now located on this site.

Brownmiller's Hotel at the corner of Center and First Streets was conducted by Charles Brownmiller, Sr. for thirty years. There was also a very well-known restaurant in this hotel where very delicious fried oysters were served. Mrs. Brownmiller and Rachel, the cook, know the culinary art in all its details. On the side of this hotel building was painted a large sign which extended to the third floor. The painting showed an immense champagne glass filled with that beverage. A ladder led to the top of the glass. A gnome or dwarf had climbed the ladder and was just about to take a sip of the champagne. This painting was very realistic. At the side of the glass was painted in large letters all the eatables cooked in the hotel. About 1910, Jacob Frank, Jr. became landlord and for many years it was known as Hotel Frank. The hotel caught fire some twenty years ago and Mr. Frank sustained heavy loss from this calamity. About 1923 it was managed by a company of men and called the Crystal Hotel. In 1935 it again was conducted by Jacob Frank, Jr.

Jacob Frank, Sr. had a hotel at 433-435 East Mahanoy Street in the '60's. He purchased the four story property from John Hersker, who had bought it from a man named Bessler, who had built it. The property is still standing but is now two residences. There was also a basement to this

structure. On the fourth floor of this building the Masonic Lodge and Independent order of Odd Fellows met in the early days of our town's history.

There were other hotels which were really saloons or beer gardens and restaurants. Among them were Scheurman's Hotel at the corner of Sixth and Mahanoy Streets, which was patronized chiefly by the farmers coming in from Locust Valley and surrounding farming country. This hotel was torn down several years ago. At the corner of Sixth and Center Streets was a hotel with the sign of Washington on horseback, on a large pole at the corner. Matt Donahoe had a hotel at 301 West Center Street in the '60's. This was the polling place of the West Ward. Harry Stride had a hotel at Center and D Streets. Keller's hotel at the corner of Center and Fourth Streets and Joe Miller's place at 204-206 East Center Street are also very old hostelries. Ferdinand Metz had a hotel at the corner of Main and Market Streets which later was conducted by his son, Constantine from the sixties to the eighties.

The popularity of "Oyster Rays" among the theatre patrons led to much patronage before the 1900 era. Brownmillers, Stitzers, Tobias Gerhardt, William Bensinger, John Williams, Eddy Leonard, Fred Bosch, and James McIlhenny did a thriving business. David Dresch and Jenkin Hopkins sold oysters, together with fish and vegetables to private families.

From Livery Stable to Garage.

By 1910 a great change had taken place in modes of transportation. The time-honored institution, the livery stable, was passing away to be gradually replaced by the garage. The livery stable was the prototype of the garage.

To many persons a livery stable is an unknown subject. When transportation was chiefly by wagon and carriage it was necessary to have horses to pull these conveyances. These horses were boarded at what was known as livery stables. Carriages, buggies, and wagons were also to be had there for rent or storage. Other trades that depended upon the livery stable were the blacksmith, wheelwright, saddler, harness maker, and the feed store.

If a carriage or wagon got out of order the wheelwright fixed the spokes of the wheel or placed an iron or tin tire upon it. If an axle broke the wheelwright and blacksmith were called into service. The blacksmith made a shoe for the horse if needed. The saddler made the harness and saddle for the horse. Other accessories which he made were fly nets, reins, whips, straps,

feed bags, etc. The feed stores supplied the hay and oats for the horses. Hitching posts were placed at hotels to tie the horses so they would not run away. Watering troughs were put at convenient places to quench the thirst of the animals. All these trades and conveniences are not needed anymore. Yet to understand the life of Mahanoy City and its tradespeople of the earlier days, the livery stable must not be forgotten.

When the Mansion House was built in 1861 Wilbur Smith, a Vermonter, became the first proprietor. The hotel had its livery stables from the creek to Pine Street, in the rear of the hotel on Main Street. These stables were under the management of Charles W. Smith, brother of the proprietor of the hotel. When Wilbur Smith ceased to be proprietor of the Mansion House, Charles W. Smith and his son, Charles O. Smith became owners of the livery stables. In 1890 the O'Hara brothers of Shenandoah purchased these stables. Charles O. Smith entered into partnership in the contracting business with Patrick J. Campion and they had livery stables on Pine Street where the Penn Garage is now located. Other livery stables in town were those of Joshua Lutz in the rear of the Kaier Hotel on Commercial Street, and Keyser's livery stable in the rear of Merchant's Hotel on West Railroad Street. (*Editor's Note: Patrick Campion was the contractor who built the "new bridge" over Main Street in 1913. It stands today. PTC*)

The saddlers and harness makers of town were: Jacob Bricker, Ralph Bricker, William Medlar, John Hoover, and Eugene Gruber. The wheelwrights were: Philip Fox, George Gunthner, Sr., Jacob Deem, William Deem, and Timothy Cockill. The feed stores were owned by Daniel Barlow, Daniel Hoppes, William Nagle, Charles Egolf, Edward J. Cronin, and O.C. Lewis & Son. The blacksmiths were: William Schweitzer, Edward Gorman, George Gunthner, Sr., Tobias Schroeder, Phineas Gerber, Philip Fox, H. Baumgarten, and Gottfried Reidinger.

All the livery stables seemed to have been built upon the same plan. A weathervane perched on the top surmounted by a wooden horse told what the property was, even though it was not necessary, as the odor was enough to make a discerning olfactory nerve tell. The entrance to the stable was via an inclined platform with ribs across it to give the horse a purchase when he negotiated a landing. In some mysterious manner this platform was always wet and slippery for some reason or other and this wooden bar was a necessity. The office was usually at the left-hand corner as you entered. It had a small gas burner in winter and after the advent of electricity there was a small incandescent globe to let you see what the place contained. A lot of whips, horse blankets, fly nets to cover the horse in summer, reins, and bridles, etc. were stowed aloft. There was room for only one man to sit comfortably yet there were always four present. The window facing the street was never cleaned so not much daylight ever entered this office. There was a veterinary's sign on the wall. There were always some men to be found in this office on Sundays and holidays. What their occupation was or how they existed no one ever knew.

Mike or Joe the hostler, was not so rapacious as the mechanic of the roadside garage to whose tender mercies one entrusts his automobile. Of course, the patient horse of bygone years could never tell when he was skimped in oats except by lack of spirit when driven out, but as a rule he was fairly used. A good part of the livery stable income was acquired by Sunday "buggy" rides. A girl whose gentleman friend took her for a trip to Ringtown, East Mahanoy Junction, Barnesville, Locust Valley, and sometimes Shenandoah, Tamaqua, or Pottsville had a very enjoyable time. The average cost of this luxury was two dollars exclusive of a quarter to the hostler. Sunday night was a busy one with the stable keeper who made it a point to be on hand to redeem his flock of horses from the tender mercies of the amateur driver. "You've druv this hoss purty hard, young man," was often a just accusation. It required no license to drive a horse and not many a young man would admit his incapacity to handle the reins. The carriages were spacious and well cushioned with springs which made the trip pleasant upon the stony, rutty, roads in winter and although the dust was thick in summer many a cushioned tire made the journey one of pleasure and much joy. In winter the two and three seated sleighs and the large box sleigh were much used for sleighing parties. The cutter intended for "just two" makes the young gentleman and lady of a former generation wish for the return of the "good old days".

Cigar and Tobacco Stores

There were three cigar and tobacco stores in Mahanoy City in the first thirty years of its early life. Cigars were also sold in drug stores and saloons. Tobacco was sold in packages in all grocery stores. In the middle '80's cigarettes were introduced but did not become popular until the World War, prior to which time smoking was indulged in by men only. A woman who smoked was considered an outcast from good society. The three Mahanoy City tobacco stores mentioned above, were those of Lewis Grimm, William Davis, and Jacob West. Lewis Grimm's store was located at the corner of Center and First Streets with his cigar factory in the rear on Market Street. Jacob West's store was on West Center Street in the Barry property, now the site of the Kline apartments. William Davis' store was on North Main Street in the Co-operative Building. William Davis was a miner who had his back injured in the mines and lived for many years a cripple in a wheeled chair. After his demise the store was owned by Abram King.

In front of each of these tobacco stores stood a wooden Indian holding a bunch of wooden cigars in his extended hand. These unoffending Indian emblems of the tobacco trade, frequently, on a pay night, became the objects of hostility on the part of inebriated men who misconstrued this silent Indian gesture. Many a man who assaulted these Indians was rewarded by broken knuckles to nurse the next day.

Public Halls

The first public Hall build in Mahanoy City was Gorman's Hall at the corner of Locust and Market Streets. Edward Gorman built a blacksmith and horse shoeing establishment on the second floor of which was a large room used for dancing, and meetings of persons who were forming new religious denominations.

Ferdinand Metz built a public hall over his hotel. This hall was very popular for gatherings, dancing, and other social amusements such as fairs and suppers. When traveling theatrical troops came to town their dramas were enacted on the stage at one end of the hall and chairs were placed in rows for the audience.

Several lodges held their meetings in a hall which stood at 433-435 East Mahanoy Street and which belonged to Jacob Frank, Sr.

Roose' Hall at 237-239 East Mahanoy Street was used for church gatherings, clubs, and co-operative meetings.

Seifert's Hall, 108-110 West Mahanoy Street, was a place for lodge meetings since 1880.

At 128-130 East Center Street, was a large hall where the Citizen's Band met to practice. This hall was used also for meetings of various clubs.

At 124-126 East Center Street was Becker's Hall where the Lodge of the Harugare met. This lodge was composed of Germans and their descendants, who met for sociability, benevolence, and philanthropic work among the German immigrants.

At 600-602 East Center Street was a hall on the second story where the Liberty Band practiced.

Phillip's Hall at 121-123 West Center Street was used for meetings of many societies and clubs.

The Co-operative Building at the corner of Main and Center Streets (site of the present Union National Bank Building) had a large hall on the third floor where the Grand Army of the Republic met. On the second floor of this building were the rooms of the Young Men's Republican Club. *(Editor's Note: This is now the site of the Rhoades Building and the Mahanoy Area Historical Society. PTC)*

On the second floor of the First National Bank building corner of Main and Center Streets, the Masonic Lodge met in the '70's. When a third story was added to this brick building the same lodge occupied the third floor until 1890. This later became McCann's Business College. (Editor's Note: This is now the site of the M&T Bank Building.PTC)

The third floor of the Parmley building at the corner of Center and Catawissa Streets was used by the Masonic lodge meeting place [sic] until about 1920 when they built their own lodge hall at 120-122 East Center Street. Here the Masonic Tyrian Club also meets.

Knapp's Hall built in the early days of Mahanoy City has been used as a lodge hall by many fraternal organizations. The Odd Fellows met here in the 70's and '80's. They met prior to that time in Frank's Hall at 433-435 East Mahanoy Street. The Patriotic Order Sons of America met here before they build their new hall.

The Odd Fellow's Hall located at 118-128 West Mahanoy Street was built about 1888. Here the Rebekah Lodge also meets.

About 1890 the Patriotic Order Sons of America erected a hall at the corner of Pine and Second Streets. The woman's lodge of Patriotic Order of True Americans also meets here.

The Young Men's Democratic Club had rooms in Knapp building.

The Elks Hall is located at 133-135 East Center Street.

The Loyal Order of Moose have a lodge room in their building at 101-109 East Center Street.

The fraternal Order of Eagles at 9-11 East Center Street.

American Legion Home is at 108-110 East Center Street.

Knights of Columbus Building is located at 19-21 West Mahanoy Street.(Editor's Note: Now the Mahanoy City Public Library.PTC)

The Polish Hall at the extreme end of South Catawissa Street is where the Polish organizations meet.

Young Men's Christian Association had rooms on Hagenbuch floor of the Hagenbuch building in 1895.

Young Men's Hebrew Association had rooms in the Reing Building.

St. Fidelis Hall in the rear of that church on corner of South and Third Streets.

Armory Hall stood at 124-130 East Pine Street. This was formerly a Baptist Church built in 1865. The church organization did not long continue so it was sold and was later used as a dance hall and supper room on the first floor while the second floor was used for lectures and also for a ball room. Co.E.N.G.P. had their headquarters here many years. The building burned down January 3, 1922 and now there are eight houses build in its site -- four on Pine Street and four on Market Street.

Nork's hall is in the 400 square on West Mahanoy Street. Here are conducted dances, moving pictures, and theatricals.

Theatres.

The first theatre was in the second story of Metz hall and was called the Town Hall. This building was purchased by Charles D. Kaier in 1885 and remodeled. In 1893 Mr. Kaier built a beautiful new theatre on the ground floor which was called "Kaier's Grand Opera House". The old theatre was used as a dance hall. In 1913 this whole building was destroyed by fire and for many years it was not rebuilt. About 1922 the theatre was rebuilt under the Chamberlain Corporation and now a beautiful modern theatre stands on this site. (*Editor's Note: The Victoria Theatre opened at this site in 1925.PTC*)

The Family Theatre at the corner of Center and First Streets was built by John Hersker, Sr in 1895. It is now under the management of the Loyal Order of Moose.

The Regent Theatre in the Elks Building was built about 1905. It is now called the Elk's Theatre.

The Palace Theatre was a motion picture house at the corner of Pine and Main Streets.

A small moving picture theatre was located at the corner of Center and Second Streets in 1912 but it was abandoned two years later.

History of the Newspapers of Mahanoy City

In 1865 "The Mahanoy Gazette" was started by Dr. G.H.B. Swayze. William Ramsay purchased it in 1866. In 1878 this paper was bought by Andrew Comrey and T.H.B. Lyon, who changed the name to "The Mahanoy Tribune." In 1880, E.S. Reinhold and I.Y. Sollenberger bought the paper, but this partnership lasted only six months when I.Y. Sollenberger became sole owner. In 1886 it was bought by L.V. Rausch and J.B. Irish and after a short time, Guy C. Irish was taken into the partnership.

In 1871 the "Mahanoy City Local" was established by Charles Spencer. It was changed to the "Tri-Weekly Record," a small advertising sheet, November 2, 1871. Mr. Spencer also started the "Mahanoy Valley Record," a small subscription paper, which he sold to John Parker, who in turn left it to his son John W. Parker. This paper changed to a tri-weekly in 1877 and was named "Parker's Tri-Weekly Record." About this time, T.J. Joyce was getting ready to start "The Daily American." Mr. Parker changed "The Tri-Weekly" to a Daily Record. M.T. O'Conner, T.C. O'Conner (Editor), and Harrison Ball, bought "The Daily Record" from John Parker. The name of this paper was later changed to "The Mahanoy City Record."

Mr. Thomas J. Joyce sold "The Daily American" to D.M. Graham and then later published, for a short time, "The Black Diamond." Dr. A.P. Seligman and H.F. Bushar became part owners of "The Daily American," about the year 1910 and the name of the paper was changed to "The Mahanoy American." A few years later this paper was sold to Frank J. and Austin T. Noonan. They sold it in 1917 to J.H. Kirchner, owner of "The Mahanoy Tribune." Mr. Kirchner published the paper called "The American Tribune" until September 1, 1919. "The American Tribune" merged with "The Mahanoy City Record" and the result was "The Record American," our present local newspaper.

"The Saule" (Sun) a semi-weekly Lithuanian paper is published by the W.D. Boczkowski Company. This paper was established in 1888 and is one of the oldest Lithuanian papers in the world.