

The Brown Leaf

Manufacturers, Rollers, and Dealers Of Boonville, Cooper County, Missouri

By James F. Thoma

If you have never been addicted to the brown leaf in any of its myriad forms, then it may be hard to understand the power of tobacco. And even if you do enjoy the aroma of tobacco you may think only of the large multi-national tobacco corporations of today. But let me take you back to the days before those corporations when tobacco manufacturers were small and local; to the time when cigars were made only a short time before they were smoked. To a time when the smoke filled room could have been in your own home.

Boonville had tobacco manufacturers, people who made cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, and "roll your own" pouches, as early as 1836 and possibly before that time. In 1850, David Spahr's tobacco factory produced 7.2% of the entire value of products produced in Boonville. And by 1876, Boonville could boast three cigar manufacturers and 1 tobacco manufacturer. Boonville could boast about originating one of the most famous cigars of the time, the Dexter, known from Maine to California. But learn more about the "Dexter", "Boss", "Lone Star", "Nancy", "A-1", and the infamous "Peach Juice" by reading these short sketches on *"The Brown Leaf Manufacturer, Rollers, and Dealers of Boonville, Cooper County, Missouri"*.

J. HENRY RECKMEYER

J. Henry Reckmeyer (1851 - 1877) was born 1805 in Prussia and came to Boonville in 1851. Exactly when Reckmeyer started his business is not known; however, a safe assumption would be 1851. Tony Hyman, Curator of the National Cigar Museum, lists J. H. Reckmeyer as being a cigar maker in Boonville in the year 1875. Additionally, Reckmeyer is listed in the Patrons Directory of the 1877 Atlas as being a manufacturer and dealer in cigarettes and tobacco. So while Reckmeyer was in business in 1877, it

still is not known when he closed his shop. It is quite possible that Fred Dahman a cigar maker working for Reckmeyer who was also Reckmeyer's brother-in-law may have taken over the shop for a brief period.

Emile Palliou in his Home Town Sketches published in 1926 gives his youthful remembrances of Reckmeyer in his sketch entitled:

"Old Reckie"

Did you learn to chew and smoke tobacco quite early in life, you who are now approaching sixty or even seventy? If so, you started to smoke on Reckmeyer's cinnamon cigars. M-m-m-m! But didn't they smell good? And oh, weren't you terribly sick at the stomach after your first one? And your first chew was of that wonderfully, but deceptively named chewing tobacco, Peach Juice. I see you smile. I knew it! And you got it from Reckmeyer's little cabin-like tobacco store on Main Street, between Kyle's Grocery and Mrs. Beck's Confectionery.

Reckmeyer was a little, baldheaded, gray, friendly man. Did any one ever see him outside of his shop?

He could keep secrets, could Reckmeyer. He never told our parents who his customers were - that would have hurt his business.

Heigh - ho! How sweet smelling were those cinnamon flavored cigars and what a fascinating name had Peach Juice chewing tobacco; but oh, what a kick each of them carried!

With the information that Emile Palliou provides on the location of Reckmeyer Cigar Store we can locate a photograph of his shop from the archives. Because as we all know Mary Beck's Confectionary Shop was the stuff of legends.



The main building is Mary Beck's famous "Gingerbread Place" the smaller building to the right with "Cigars" painted on the window glass is J. H. Reckmeyer's Cigar Shop.

DAVID SPAHR AND SONS

David Spahr (1836 - 1861) was born in 1807 / 1808 in Pennsylvania, and when a young man he migrated west in about 1836, and settled in Boonville, where he entered the manufacturing business, operating a tobacco factory, associated with Mr. Calhoun. The factory of Spahr & Calhoun was located on Fourth Street, and the firm was a very successful one. This was the tobacco factory that made the famous, but deceptive, "Peach juice," which was the favorite "eating" tobacco of the 1870's and 1880's. Later, Calhoun sold his interest in the factory, and Jacob W. Spahr, a son of David Spahr, entered in partnership with his father. The dissolution of the Spahr and Calhoun partnership occurred before 1850 as John Calhoun, aged 39, is listed in the 1850 census as having the occupation of merchant and not tobacconist. The 11 Apr 1846 Boonville City Directory lists David Spahr having a cigar store on Main Street in Boonville. Of course, the location of the cigar store is different from that of his tobacco factory. Four years later the 1850 "Products in Industry" section of the US Census lists David Spahr as a tobacconist in Boonville and making \$8100 annually.

David and Ann Elizabeth nee' Foble Spahr, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, were the parents of the following children: Jacob W., who was born 1829; Mrs. Maria Brewster, born 1831; David O., born 1833; Mrs. Susannah R. Steel, born 1834; Mrs. Frances (Watson) Hurd, who married a brother of ex-Congressman Hurd, of Sedalia; Mrs. Levina Edgar, born 1838;

Adda, born 1840; Helen; Captain Andrew Jackson, born 1842; J. C., born 1845; Thomas Frederick, 1848; and Charles C., Spahr. David Spahr, the father, died in 1861 and his wife died about 1884. The remains of both parents rest in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Jacob Spahr (1850 - 1876), born 1829 in Pennsylvania, was the eldest son of David Spahr and by the time he reached his majority was following his father's vocation. After his father's death in 1861, it is likely that Jacob joined his brothers in the Spahr Bros operation. Later, Jacob was doing business in 1870 as J. W. Spahr & Co. and operating a tobacco factory manufacturing chewing and smoking tobacco. Tony Hyman Curator of the National Cigar Museum lists tobacco maker J. W. Spahr & Co., as doing business in Boonville in 1875. In 1876, the firm of Brewster and Hillard is known to be doing business in Boonville and the Brewster and Hillard firm is known to be the successor to the Spahr firms.

Spahr Brothers (1861- 1864) - History records the firm Spahr Bros & Co. as coming into existence and being a successor firm to David Spahr's tobacco factory. The most probable date for the formation of this company is 1861, although it could have been as late as 1862. The Spahr brothers established a tobacco manufacturing plant in St. Louis, which was absorbed by Liggett & Myers around 1864. Mary Bell of the Liggett Group Inc. has indicated that her company "was operating in St. Louis in 1854 under the name of Liggett & Dausman. On December 27, 1872, the Liggett & Dausman factory, which had operated at Walnut & Second Streets for almost 19 years, burned down along with an adjoining building. At the time, John Edmund Liggett was President of the St. Louis Tobacco Association. After that, Mr. Liggett wanted to expand the company but Henry Dausman was reluctant. In February 1873, Mr. Dausman's interests in the company were acquired by George Smith Myers and the company then became known as Liggett & Myers." It is known from the biography of Andrew Jackson Spahr that the St. Louis plant was acquired in 1864. Therefore, Spahr Bros & Company would have been acquired by Liggett & Dausman and not by Liggett & Meyers as recorded by Boonville history.

Spahr Bros & Brewster (1861- 1870) History also records the name of this firm as operating in Boonville. Although there is no proof, I would suspect that Spahr Bros and Brewster was the Boonville operation of the David Spahr legacy. That is was established in 1861 after the death of David Spahr and was the inheritance of his children. I also suspect that this partnership was broken up and all interests were acquired by J. W. Spahr & Co. While I list 1870 as the end of this partnership, I suspect that it actually was broken up in 1864 at the same time as Spahr Bros & Co.

Captain Andrew Jackson Spahr, was born Dec. 25, 1842, in Boonville, a son of David and Ann Elizabeth (Foble) Spahr. Captain Spahr attended the Loomis Private School and Kemper School, the latter being later known as Kemper Military School. After leaving school, he followed farming for two years and then returned to Boonville and began the work of carriage making. This business he abandoned to begin, with his brothers, the manufacture of tobacco. Of the plant the Spahr brothers established, Captain Spahr was foreman and when it was taken over he took to the river. He was for 50 years employed as pilot on the Missouri River, a part of the time with Captain Kinney's boats and later with the Star Line. He made regular trips from St. Louis to Kansas, and, for a time, to Fort Benton in Montana, the head of navigation on the Missouri River. It usually required from two to three months to make the trip to Fort Benton, and the return trip was made in from 8 to 10 days. As pilot, Captain Spahr received from \$600 to \$700 per month remuneration. The capacity of the boats was from 200 to 500 tons. Captain Spahr worked on the river until 1919, and the last 25 years of his work on the river was done for the Government in the Missouri River improvement work. He recalls that in 1868 his crew had a skirmish with the Indians in Montana, and again at Fort Peck, where one of their number was killed. Captain Spahr has the distinction of having brought Sitting Bull with 250 Sioux Indians from Fort Buford to Fort Yates, at the time of Sitting Bull's surrender.

Oct. 17, 1880, Captain Spahr and Erma Palmore Browne, a daughter of W. S. and Mary (Blackburn) Browne, of Miami, Mo., were married.

JOHN AND LOUIS BERNARD

JOHN BERNARD (1838 - 1899) was a manufacturer of cigars and a dealer in tobacco. He was a native of France, and was born in Lorraine (now a part of Germany), in November 1819. When a lad ten years of age he was brought to this country by his parents; who immigrated to America in 1829. Landing at New York they remained there until the following spring, when they came west to Canton, Ohio. From Canton they afterwards removed to Bolivar in the same state, and lived there until 1838, when they came to St. Louis. John Bernard, the eldest of the family of six children, attended the common schools of Ohio, but early went to work to earn something toward his own support and that of the family. For some time he drove horses on the Cleveland canal, prior to the time that General Garfield was employed in the same class of work. Subsequently he learned the cigar maker's trade under his father, who was a master of that trade, and he has followed this with but little interruption from then until now. He worked at his trade in St. Louis from 1838 (when he began to learn it) up to 1844, at the expiration of which time he went to Westport, Missouri (Kansas City)

and was there until December of the following year. From Kansas City he returned to St. Louis by horse back, making the trip in thirteen days, and remained in the Mound City, his old home, following his trade until he came to the city of Boonville. He established his business in Boonville in the year 1851, and conducted it with the most gratifying success. He occupied a well earned standing among the leading cigar manufacturers and tobacco dealers of central Missouri. He was the original manufacturer of the celebrated Dexter cigar, which was named after the well known trotting horse, Dexter. This brand was known for its excellence and popularity from Maine to California, and from the lakes to the gulf. And it was not long until Mr. Bernard was employing a force of from 15 to 20 cigar makers. Mr. Bernard's success in life was not unattended by substantial evidences of prosperity. By industry and good management he accumulated a comfortable competence to rely upon, when it become necessary for him to give himself over to the rest and ease of old age. He held various offices in the public service. He was a member of the school board of Boonville for nineteen years, from 1863 to 1882. For many years he held the office of justice of the peace, and served from time to time as member of the city council for the last twenty years or more. In 1862 he was a member of the militia for a short time. June 11, 1848, Mr. Bernard was married to Mrs. Mary Schneider, a widow lady, and a Hanoverian by birth. They were the parents of the following children: Kate, married William Fessler, Nevada, Mo.; Louis D., Boonville, Mo.; Mary, married Frank Sombart, and resided in Kansas City, Mo.; Susanna, married William Boehm, Coffeyville, Kan.; John, Jr., St. Louis, Mo.; Anna, died at the age of 12 years, and Oscar who was accidentally killed by an explosion during a 4th of July celebration in 1866. All the children of the Bernard family were educated in the public schools of Boonville. John Bernard died in 1899 and his wife in 1902. Both are buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery in Boonville.



Golden Buck cigars produced by John Boehm of Boonville, Missouri

Louis D. Bernard, a well-known cigar manufacturer of Boonville, was a native of Boonville, Missouri, born Jan. 14, 1854, a son of John and Mary (Schneider) Bernard. Louis D. Bernard learned the cigar-makers trade in his father's factory in Boonville and has spent his life in the cigar business. During his career in the manufacturing of cigars he has probably made over two and a half million cigars himself.

Mr. Bernard is a member of the Knights of Pythias and is one of the seven surviving charter members of the Boonville lodge, out of a charter membership of 35. Mr. and Mrs. Bernard have a pleasant home at 1858 East Spring Street and rank among the leading citizens of Cooper County.

JOHN N. GOTT & SON

John N. Gott & Son (1883 - 1910), manufacturers of plug and smoking tobacco. To own and successfully conduct a large tobacco manufactory, as is well known, requires no secondary order of business

qualifications or small amount of means. The fact that Captain Gott & Son have one of the leading manufacturing establishments in this line in Central Missouri, and are conducting it with marked success, speaks enough, therefore, for their standing as capable and successful businessmen. And more than ordinary credit is due to Captain Gott, himself, for he started out in life without means or influential friends and has worked his way up by his own exertions and worth alone.

He was born in Ionic county, Michigan, December 25, 1833, and was there reared and educated in the common schools. He studied in Ann Arbor, Michigan and spent two years at Wesleyan Seminary, afterwards taking a partial course at the University of Michigan. His parents, Charles and Maria Gott, were originally of New Jersey, but settled in Michigan in an early day. He began his business experience in a mercantile store at East Saginaw, Michigan, and was located in that city until 1856, when he came to St. Louis, secured a position in the wholesale hardware house of Wilson Bros. & Co., of that city, which he filled until the breaking out of the war.

When the president called for volunteers with which to quell the rebellion of the Southern states he responded to the call and enlisted in the first year of the war in the 33rd Missouri Regiment. In 1862 he was promoted to the post of quartermaster sergeant of his regiment. After the battle of Helena, Ark., he was again promoted for conspicuous bravery in the face of enemy fire and was advanced to the post of sergeant major. He was a brave soldier and while the battle of Helena was raging among the hills, he performed a feat which brought him well merited recognition and promotion. Under his charge a wagon load of water and whiskey was being transported to the Federal soldiers. He rolled up the barrels to the men engaged in battle and thus saved the day.

In December, 1863, he was appointed by President Lincoln to the post of first lieutenant, regimental quartermaster, and he filled this important post satisfactorily and well. When peace was concluded he was brevetted a captain and mustered out in the spring of 1866.

In 1866, he came to Boonville and engaged in the brick business in partnership with Constantine Helm. He continued two years, when he was appointed deputy county clerk and afterwards receiver of public moneys in the United States Land Office in Boonville. He filled this office from 1868 to 1876 with marked ability and entire satisfaction to the government. In 1876 became bookkeeper in the Central National bank of Boonville, discharging the duties of that position two years. He then occupied the position of bookkeeper in Brewster & Hillard's tobacco factory. On the

death of Mr. Brewster in 1883, he bought out the establishment to which he has since devoted his whole attention. He was joined by his sons, with the business being conducted until 1910 under the name of John N. Gott and Son. This factory made the famous " Lone Star " and " Boss " smoking tobacco, also the " Nancy " twist and plug, " A 1 " and the " Peach " Juice." These goods had a wide reputation and the trade of the establishment is rapidly increasing.



The Gott Tobacco Barn circa 1883. Photograph from Images of Time A Pictorial History of the Boone's Lick Area

John N. Gott was married in St. Louis, Nov. 13, 1859, to Miss Angeline Lawton, a daughter of the late Dr. Edward Lawton. Mrs. Angeline Gott was born Sept. 16, 1836, and died Oct. 15, 1910. The children born to this marriage who are of the ninth generation of the Gott family in America are: Charles P. and Henry H. Gott. Henry H. Gott married Kittie Genslinger, now deceased, of Piqua, Ohio, June 18, 1896, and is practicing dentistry in St. Louis. John N. Gott died in Boonville on 02 Nov 1912.

Charles P. Gott (1884 - 1900) was educated in Cooper Institute, of Boonville. For a period of four years he was connected with the mercantile firm of Sauter Brothers and was a partner in this concern for one year. He then joined his father in the tobacco manufacturing business and was engaged in this enterprise until 1900, beginning in 1883. The business was then disposed of and Mr. Gott removed to his farm of 370 acres south of Bunceton in this county where he remained engaged in farming and stock raising for five years. He is a large land owner and owns 700 acres of land in Howard County, 500 acres of which is very rich Missouri River bottom land. Mr. Gott conducts a farm loan business in Boonville.

JULIUS WITTENDORF

Tony Hyman, Curator of the National Cigar Museum lists Julius Wittendorf as being a cigar maker in Boonville in 1875. No other information is known about Julius Wittendorf.

Jacob Ellis

The 11 Apr 1846 Boonville City Directory lists Jacob Ellis and having a cigar store on Main Street in Boonville.

EDWARD J. GARTHOFFNER

Edward J. Garthoffner (1890 - 1910) was born in Boonville, Mo., April 11, 1867 and died in Boonville June 19, 1955. He was the second son and child of George J. and Victoria nee' Wagner Garthoffner. After attending the parochial schools of Boonville, Edward J. Garthoffner learned the trade of cigar maker and followed his trade for twenty years, becoming a partner in business with his brother in 1890. He remained with him until 1910, when he closed out his partnership interest in the business.

Mr. Garthoffner was active and influential in Republican politics and served on the County and Congressional Central Committees. He was frequently a delegate to the State convention of his party and attended the National conventions. For several years he was vice-president of the Young Men's Republican Association. He was elected to the office of city treasurer in 1908 and filled this office for two years. He was a member of Sts. Peter and Paul's Catholic Church, is a Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, and is affiliated with the Woodmen of the World.



The Garthoffner Cigar Store, a log building that stood on the site of the Knights of Pythias building. It was razed in 1898. Photograph had to be taken sometime between 1893 and 1898. Photograph by Maximillian E. Schmidt

NAPOLEON BEATTY

At an early day, Napoleon Beatty, quite an original character, lived 18 miles west of Boonville, in Cooper County, on what was called Shave Tail Creek. In that vicinity a store was located, the predominating articles of trade being tobacco and whiskey, the latter the matutinal drink of the old pioneer. Beatty was noted for his bonhomie, and was not only the recognized fiddler of the neighborhood where he resided, but was intensely fond of and well posted in all the rural games and sports of that day. During his early manhood he was

*"In wrestling nimble, in running swift;
In shooting steady, in swimming strong.
Well made to strike, to leap, to throw or lift,
And all the sports that shepherds are among."*

It is doubtful that Beatty manufactured the tobacco that he traded in his store. Since this area is no longer in Cooper County, Missouri, the time frame for Beatty's operation would have been from 1820 to 1833. Which are the dates from the formation of Cooper County and the date that Pettis County was formed from Cooper County.

CHESTER H. BREWSTER

Chester H. Brewster married Maria L. Spahr on 23 October 1853 in Boonville, Missouri. Maria was the oldest daughter of David and Ann Elizabeth nee' Foble Spahr. They were the parents of Hillard Brewster and Mrs. John Combs of Shreveport, Louisiana. Chester was a river captain and tobacco factory operation with Spahr Brothers. Later the tobacco factory operation was to become Spahr Brothers & Brewster and later still Brewster & Hillard. The earliest known date for the entity of Brewster & Hillard would be in 1876 when John N. Gott was noted as being the bookkeeper for Brewster & Hillard. It remained Brewster and Hillard until the death of Chester H. Brewster in 1883. At that time it was purchased by John N. Gott and become John N. Gott & Son.

It is doubtful that Chester Brewster was active in the operation of the tobacco factory. There are early records of his first being a clerk on the steamboat Cora and then later working as a steamboat pilot. More than likely the tobacco operations were an investment for Mr. Brewster as he is also noted to be an investor in the Boonville Wine Company. No record can be found of the name surname Hillard. However it could be that the Hillard in Brewster & Hillard was Hillard Brewster, the well-known son of Chester H. Brewster.

ROBERT THOMAS DRAFFEN

Robert Thomas Draffen who settled in Boonville at a very early date was a cigar manufacturer who also bought and sold tobacco. Robert Thomas Draffen was the father of William Draffen (1820 - 1906). Since William Draffen is known to have settled around Pisgah, Moniteau Township, Cooper County, Missouri in the early 1830's; it would be safe to assume that his father settled in Boonville on or before that date. Robert Thomas Draffen is not listed in the 1850 Cooper County census. Given all of this information, the dates of Draffen's operation would be in the range of 1830 to 1850.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Jacob Kiburtz, kept a cigar manufactory on Second Street in St. Louis between Plum and Popular Streets. Although Kiburtz never manufactured cigars in Cooper County, Missouri, he does have a connection with Boonville. When the Civil War erupted on the scene, Kiburtz joined the Union Army under Lyons and was in the Commissary of Company B, Second Regiment. It was in that capacity that he was killed in the First Battle of Boonville on 19 Jun 1861.

Bibliography

Bell, M; Liggett Group Inc.

Boonville City Directory, 11 Apr 1846

Details of the Battle of Boonville; The New York Times; 24 Jun 1861

Dyer, R. L.; *Boonville An Illustrated History*; Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Press Co. Inc.; 1987.

History of Howard and Cooper Counties, Missouri; St. Louis: National Historical Company; 1883.

Hyman, T; Curator; *The National Cigar Museum*

Johnson, W. F.; *History of Cooper County, Missouri*; Volume I and II; Cleveland: Historical Publishing Company; 1919.

Levens, H. C. and Drake, N. M.; *A History of Cooper County, Missouri*; St. Louis: Perrin & Smith Steam Book and Job Printers; 1876.

Melton, E. J.; *History of Cooper County Missouri*; Columbia: E. W. Stephens Publishing Company; 1937.

Paillou, E. R.; *Home Town Sketches*, Boston: The Stratford Company, Publishers, 1926.

Rainey, S. Compiler; *Images of Time A Pictorial History of the Boonslick Area*, Marceline, Missouri: D-Books Publishing, Inc; 1999.

The 1850 Census of Cooper County, Missouri.

The 1860 Census of Cooper County, Missouri.

The 1870 Census of Cooper County, Missouri

Thoma, J. F. Ed.; *1877 Patron Directory*, MoCooper GenWeb:

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper/>.