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MANUFACTURING “SEGARS” WAS A MANCHESTER SPECIALTY

By JOE GETTY

Manchester at one time was an important center for the manufacture of cigars, or segars as formerly spelled. This industry developed some time after the Civil War and continued up to about 1930 or so providing annual employment for about 200 men who made cigars by hand. ... The general pattern of these factories was to have the factory on the second floor and a retail store on the first floor.

This observation by Reverend Harvey G. Schlichter, as reported in his *Two Centuries of Grace and Growth in Manchester 1760-1960*, was based on conversations with many residents in the 1950s who recalled the heyday of cigar manufacturing in the town. How Manchester developed into this unique position as a leader in cigar manufacturing is an interesting story of enterprising business leaders and traditional commercial and cultural ties to the Pennsylvania German communities of York and Lancaster counties, where cigar tobacco and cigar manufacturing flourished in the late 1800s until the mid-1900s.

Prior to the formation of Carroll County in 1837, Manchester was a dominant commercial center in northwestern Baltimore County because of its location at the crossroads of two major thoroughfares, the Hanover Pike from Reisterstown and the Manchester Road from Westminster. In the era of wagon transportation, the route from Pennsylvania through Manchester to the port of Baltimore was critical for transporting agricultural products for national



Sign for cigars made by Manchester's Southern Cigar Company in the collection of the Manchester Historical Center.
(HSCC photo, 2022.)

and international trade. The route out of York and Lancaster counties also provided a path for the expansion of Pennsylvania German settlements into Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Manchester's strong connection to its Pennsylvania German roots was maintained by family ties and commercial relationships well into the 20th century. Newspaper accounts show that cigar factory workers moved between Manchester and factories in York and Lancaster counties. The town's location and commercial ties to both Baltimore and central Pennsylvania created a favorable economic climate for its entrepreneurs to establish cigar factories.

As demand for cigars surged in the post-Civil War era, economic opportunities expanded

throughout central Pennsylvania and drifted south across the Mason-Dixon line. An 1883 census report on the national tobacco crop indicated that the 36 million pounds of cigar tobacco grown in Pennsylvania was more than twice that of other leading states. Pennsylvania was also the second leading state for cigar manufacturing behind New York; with Maryland ranked sixth. Although most Maryland cigar factories were in Baltimore, which rated sixth among cigar-producing cities in the nation, Manchester became another hub of the industry.

Cigar making involved many steps. Tobacco leaves were dried for four to six weeks to reduce sugar content while concentrating nicotine. Then workers moistened the dried leaves, “stripped” their veins, and separated them into three groups. Those of the best quality and size became wrapper leaves to cover the entire cigar; filler leaves comprised the next layer; and lesser quality binder leaves held together the filler leaves. Then the intensive, hand labor of rolling each cigar began.

Employees sat at work stations, gathered a selection of filler leaves, and wrapped them with a binder leaf into a uniform shape and firm consistency called a “bunch.” Each bunch was placed in a separate compartment of the lower half of the cigar mold. Once the mold was full of bunches, a top was put on, and a worker stacked molds under a screw press and applied pressure. After a time from two hours to overnight, the molds were opened, and each bunch rotated to eliminate seams. The molds were put back under the press for another period, and once the bunches had taken shape, they were removed from the mold. Employees then rolled a wrapper leaf on each to produce a finished cigar, tied cigars into bundles, and prepared them for shipment in



Factory floor of Charles A. Warner facility showing ten work stations, c.1890. Note the bundles of cigars on middle shelf and chopping machine and tobacco screw press on left. (Unless otherwise credited, all images are courtesy of the Manchester Historical Center.)

wooden boxes stamped with the company's name and brand.

Many families in Manchester participated in this industry in some capacity, with women comprising part of the work force. In 1880, the census for Manchester listed 19 people as “segar maker,” along with Samuel Lilly, who was a “cigar manufacturer.” In 1900, when Manchester's total population was 609, there were 151 people whose occupations were related to the cigar industry. While most residents identified as “cigar makers,” occupations of “tobacco strippers,” “cigar packers,” and “cigar salesmen” were also listed. The number remained steady for three decades: 151 in 1900; 117 in 1910; 137 in 1920, but then dropped off dramatically after the Great Depression: only 34 in 1930; 8 in 1940; and just 1 in 1950.

The Early Cigar Entrepreneurs (1875 – 1890)

Manchester is located at the northern tip of Parr's Ridge, the first high ground of the Piedmont Plateau, west of Maryland's tidewater region. The 1884 *Report on the Culture and Curing of Tobacco in the United States* noted, “Those [soils] on the slopes and foothills of Parr's ridge are best suited for tobacco.” However, the 1880 census of agriculture identifies only three farms where insignificant

amounts of tobacco were grown in the Hampstead and Manchester Districts.

Under its Manchester entries, the 1880 *Maryland Directory* listed **Samuel L. Lilly** (1852–1917), Charles Hively, and Nelson Warehime as merchants in “cigars and tobacco.” The 1880 U.S. Census identified Lilly as the only “cigar manufacturer,” although 14 other residents listed their occupation as “segar maker.” According to Schlichter, Lilly owned one of the earliest cigar factories in town. Under the Manchester business references in *An 1877 Illustrated Atlas of Carroll County*, the 25-year-old Lilly ran the following ad:

Samuel L. Lilly, Manufacturer and
Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Cigars.
Keeps constantly on hand the largest and
best stock of Cigars in the county. Also the
best brands of Tobacco and snuff.

Lilly, like many cigar manufacturers during this period, moved his operations to various locations within town. First he placed his factory at today’s 3107-3111 Main Street, then later in the building at the southeast corner of Main and York streets (3197 Main Street).

In 1884, Lilly relocated to Frederick, and the local newspapers reported that he joined with W.C. Murray to establish a cigar factory. The *Democratic Advocate* noted that Lilly took with him several employees, including Charles Masenheimer and Archie Buchman, who both later returned to Manchester and started their own factories. Murray left the firm in 1885, and Lilly continued with a successful business until running into financial difficulties in 1914. Though he lost his store in a sheriff’s sale, he remained in the industry as the manager of the Charles E. Everhart cigar factory in Frederick.

Lilly’s Manchester location was subsequently taken over by husband and wife Nelson and Sarah J. Warehime. The *Democratic Advocate* reported in 1884: “Nelson Warehime has rented Henry F. Warner’s house, corner of Main and York streets, at present occupied by Lilly & Murray, to take possession on the 1st of April. Mr. Warehime intends to employ about thirty persons in manufacturing cigars, and also to

open a retail cigar and tobacco store.” By 1890, “Mr. Nelson Warehime has removed his cigar factory to the large carriage factory on York Street, which has been fitted up to accommodate his increasing trade.”

Nelson Warehime (1848–1939) was listed as a cigar manufacturer in the 1880 *Directory*, but the 1892 *Directory* gave more information, describing his 1874 start in the cigar industry (at age 26) and his subsequent move into the hotel business. Later, his wife, **Sarah J. Warehime** (1848–1927) is listed as the owner, a status confirmed by the 1899 *Insurance Directory* and 1902 *Cigar Journal*.

In 1888, Mrs. Warehime moved into a two-story building with retail (featuring the sale of packed leaf tobacco and manufactured goods) on the first floor and a factory on the second, a common arrangement. In 1892, her Excelsior Cigar Factory, the largest firm in Manchester, employed 22 and produced 80,000 to 100,000 cigars per month, shipped to Baltimore City for sale throughout the nation. Excelsior trade names included *Gilt Edge*, *Sunlight*, *Cronies*, and *Good Record*.

The Warehimes eventually moved to Harrisburg but maintained close connections to the Manchester cigar community because their daughter, Josephine, married William Masenheimer, the supervisor of the Masenheimer cigar factory.

Charles J. H. Ganter (1851–1926) advertised his Manchester pharmacy in the 1892 *Directory*, illustrating how cigar making could become an entrepreneurial opportunity for an existing business. Ganter opened the drugstore in 1878 and added an adjacent cigar factory to his commercial enterprises in 1892, producing 15,000 cigars per month. They were sold in Western Maryland and Virginia under the brand names, *Ganter’s Golden Seal*, *Ganter’s Special*, and *Ganter’s Segars*.

Ganter’s career also illustrates the various roles in public service held by Manchester’s cigar factory owners. He served as the town’s postmaster during Republican presidential administrations in 1888, 1897, and 1906; as editor of the town’s short-lived newspaper, *The Telephone Messenger*, in 1888; as mayor of Manchester in 1896; and as a

member of Maryland's House of Delegates for two terms (1899-1903).

Charles H. Brillhart (1852 – 1923) began his career as a schoolteacher. In March 1884, he started a cigar factory which, by 1892, was manufacturing 40,000 cigars per month with four full-time employees. His brother, Franklin Brillhart (1864 – 1938), supervised the operation which produced the *Louise*, *Happy Thought*, *Winner*, and *Old Smoker's Delight* brands.

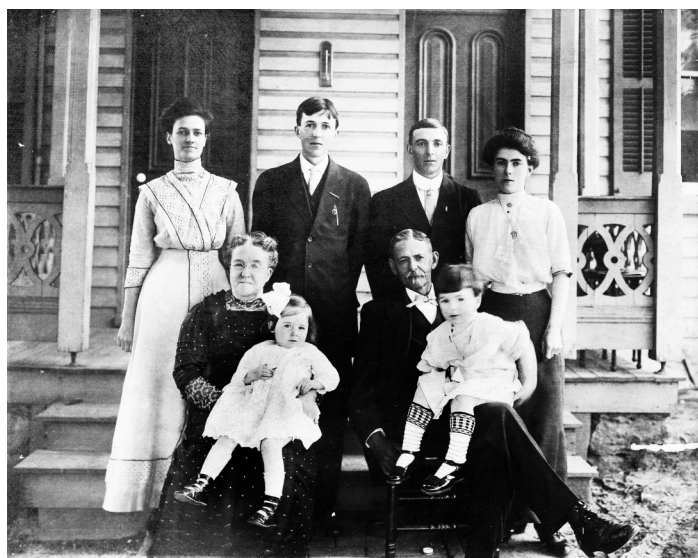
The Brillhart family home and cigar factory are no longer standing but were located on Main Street south of New Street in the vicinity of today's St. Bartholomew Roman Catholic Church.

While most of the tobacco used in Manchester factories was purchased from the cigar tobacco markets in Lancaster and Baltimore, there are scattered references to tobacco being grown locally. A 1913 newspaper entry advertised:

Mr. Charles Brillhart and sons, finished cutting and housing their tobacco crop which proved to be quite a fair one. They have been quite successful raising tobacco for some years, the whole of which is used at home in the cigar factory of Mr. C. Robert Brillhart and Brother.

Like Ganter, Brillhart was active in the leadership of the community and was elected the Treasurer of Carroll County in 1893 and 1895. His sons, C. Robert Brillhart and Walter F. Brillhart, continued to work in the cigar business in the early 20th century.

Early entrepreneurs had laid a foundation for larger scale operations in Manchester. For example, Charles Masenheimer, who went to Frederick with Lilly in 1884, returned to Manchester and formed a partnership with William N. Gettier. It proved successful, and it was reported in 1893, "Messrs. Masenheimer & Gettier sold 1,735,000 cigars the last year, all of their own manufacture." They later split into two separate factories and led the town in large scale operations.



Charles H. Brillhart and his family. Seated, left to right: Elizabeth with granddaughter Vallie and Charles with grandson Walter F., Jr. Standing, left to right: Addie; C. Robert; Walter F., Sr., and Maggie.

Manchester Dominates Cigar Manufacturing (1890 – 1920)

The *Democratic Advocate* claimed in 1895, "We hear cigar making is dull, but on inquiry find that in Manchester they can't make cigars fast enough to meet the demand."

The 1902 national directory of cigar manufacturers listed seven companies in Manchester: C. Brillhart, C.E. Dudrear, W.N. Gettier, W.D. Hanson, W.L. Hoffman, C.M. Masenheimer, and S.J. Warehime. This is compared to four in Westminster (G.A. Bixler, J.C. Leffert, H.W. Stein, and C.V. Wantz), three in Hampstead (J.W. Esterloug, Grogg & Crampton, and Geo. W. Houck), two each in Taneytown (E.C. Sauerhammer and F.S. Staley) and Harney (John V. Eckenrode and J. Newcomer), and one in Greenmount (W.E. Rupp), Snydersburg (Snydersburg Cigar Co.), and Millers (J.H. Barlow).

The Manchester entry in the 1910 *Business Directory*, a supplement to the *Democratic Advocate*, heralded the town's celebrated role in cigar manufacturing:

Manchester is situated on Parr's Ridge with the highest elevation of any town in the county. It is surrounded by a very

fertile farming district and is the centre of the cigar manufacturing industry of Carroll County. About two hundred people are employed in the manufacture of many millions of cigars annually.

The contributions of cigar factories to the local economy were frequently the topic of newspaper commentary, as shown by a 1911 report in the *American Sentinel*:

Our cigar factories are putting in full time, 12 hours a day, from 6 to 6, to meet their orders. In conversation with the manager of the Gettier factory, he said they are handicapped for want of hands and that their shipments are from 190 to 400 thousand a month, most of which go to the Pacific Coast. The Masenheimer and Hanson factories are also in full blast with heavy shipments each month. Each week they pay more than a thousand dollars to their employees.

Another newspaper entry trumpeted:

Our cigar factories are working full time and over time. The El Dallo firm has put in several bunch machines and the rollers are putting in full time from 6 A.M. to 8 and 10 P.M. and on pay day draw from \$5 to \$20.00 or more a week and the other factories too are at the busiest so that quite a good sum of money is paid out every week.

Manchester factories often faced a shortage of workers during this dynamic period. In February 1920, Wertheimer Bros. ran display advertisements in *The Times* with bold lettering: "Wanted - Learners! We offer an opportunity to learn Cigar Making! Paid While Learning - \$9.00 PER WEEK. Rapid Advancement Assured. Apply EL DALLO CIGAR FACTORY - Phone H 20 - Manchester, Md."

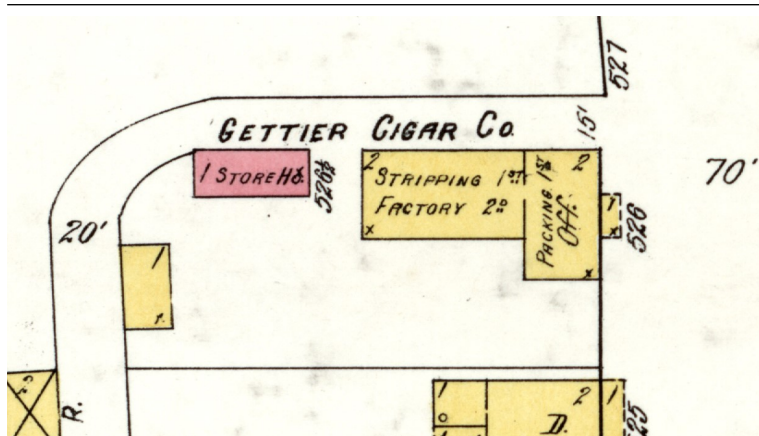


William Gettier, c.1890.

Four of the principal manufacturers during this era were William Gettier, Charles Masenheimer, Charles Delone, and Samuel Wertheimer. **William N. Gettier** (1865–1955) developed a large cigar factory on North Main Street, today's 3272 Main. In 1895, Gettier and business partner Charles M. Masenheimer purchased this property from William F. Masenheimer, after which Gettier became the sole owner. He ran a successful operation there for more than a decade but ran into financial trouble, perhaps because of the national financial panic of 1907. His mortgage was foreclosed upon in

late 1908, and his property described for sale as follows: "These lots are improved by a large two and one-half story FRAME BUILDING used for the manufacture of cigars and capable of accommodating ninety workmen; by a brick building used for 'sweating house' for tobacco; and by a wood shed. ... This property was formerly used by William N. Gettier for the manufacture of cigars."

Charles J. Delone (1866–1940) of Hanover, PA, bought the William N. Gettier property and continued cigar manufacturing. The Gettier name stayed with this operation as shown by the newspaper entry: "The Gettier Cigar factory, Horatio Oursler, foreman, is doing a fine business at present. About twenty men have



Plan of the Gettier Cigar Co. from the 1911 Sanborn map. (Library of Congress.)

been put to work and they have advertised for twenty-five more."

On the 1911 Sanborn insurance map, the property was still identified as the Gettier factory, with a frame two-story structure facing Main Street and business office and packing operation on the first floor. A rear wing on the house was labeled "stripping" on the first floor and "factory" on the second floor. A separate one-story "storehouse" structure of brick construction was located at the rear of the property.

In 1913, the Gettier factory became the first to consolidate with larger outside firms. *The Times* reported that "the Cigar Factory on North Main Street changed its sign the first of the year, from 'The Gettier Cigar Factory,' to 'The American and West Indies Cigar Co., Factory 1108, Dist. Of Md.' This company has factories in Hanover, Lancaster and other points in Pennsylvania, all merged into the above Co[mpany]." The supervisor of the company remained Horatio S. Oursler. Delone sold the property in 1915 to the Carroll Cigar Company but then two years later repurchased it. In 1918, Delone again sold the factory to The Wertheimer Realty Co.

When **Charles M. Masenheimer** left his partnership with Gettier in 1897, he built a new factory on Foundry Avenue, now 3121-23 Westminster Street. Masenheimer had been one of the 13 people who moved with Samuel L. Lilly to Frederick, with whom he presumably learned the cigar making trade.

The 1911 Sanborn map shows the original frame building enlarged with a third story and packing on the first floor, storage on the second, and the factory on the third. To the rear was a long wagon shed.

On June 23, 1922, *The Times* reported that Masenheimer sold his factory and equipment to an unnamed purchaser



Employees of the Gettier cigar factory, c.1900. (HSCC collection)

and that after the sale, one of the Wertheimer brothers of Baltimore travelled to Manchester and told Masenheimer that the El Dallo Cigar Company was the mystery purchaser. The 1924 Sanborn map showed the factory as belonging to the Wertheimer Bros. It has the identical configuration as Masenheimer's, but added to the east are four townhouses constructed as housing for factory workers.

While Brillhart, Gettier, and Masenheimer were the biggest operations in the first two decades of the 20th century, there were several smaller cigar



The Masenheimer Cigar Factory with staff, c.1900.

manufacturers scattered throughout the town. The Charles W. Warner factory on South Main Street was later taken over by Samuel Abken. Robert M. Shower advertised that his company was a union shop during a period when cigar makers nationally had formed their own union. Charles W. Motter also had a factory on South Main Street near the center of town that is listed as “cigars and dwelling” in an 1899 insurance directory.

Consolidation and Decline of the Cigar Industry (1920 – 1940)

By the 1920s, many local manufacturers had been bought out and consolidated into larger out-of-town operations whose machine-rolled cigars were more economical to produce. Wertheimer, who went on to buy up many of the local operations, had established a presence in Manchester as early as 1915. “The Wertheimer Bros. of Baltimore, leased the lower story of the William E. Sharer home on North Main Street and are occupying it for a cigar factory that they moved here from Hampstead.” As they expanded as a large national operation, the Wertheimer Brothers purchased the former Gettier factory in 1918 and the Masenheimer factory in 1922, giving them two factories in Manchester and three in Dallastown, Windsor, and Delta, PA.

A cigar box in the collection of the Manchester Historical Center confirms that Wertheimer Bros. continued operations as the “Manchester Cigar



Small tin from “Manchester Cigar Mfg. Co., Baltimore, MD” with rare, intact cigars and revenue stamp. (HSCC photograph, 2022.)



Former Oursler factory employee Romaine Harper with cigar molds, 2014. (Author’s photograph.)

Mfg. Co., Baltimore, Md,” producing a popular brand, *Duke of Manchester*. Eventually the company consolidated in Baltimore and closed the Manchester operations.

After **Horatio S. (“Raish”) Oursler** (1869 – 1964) served as factory supervisor for both Gettier and the Wertheimers, he operated his own factory into the late 1940s. It was located behind his house on Church Street (currently the parking lot behind Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church) and later in the alley behind 3138 Main Street.

When Lineboro’s **Romaine Harper** (1927 – 2021) graduated from high school, her first job in the early 1940s, was in the Oursler cigar factory. She held a variety of positions, from answering phones in the front office to rolling cigars on the factory line. The teenaged Harper was paid \$15 per week. She described her experiences in a 2014 oral history interview with the author:

Raish would say to me, ‘Hon, why don’t you come out back and I will show you how we make cigars.’ We went out to where the dried tobacco leaves laid in sheaves on the table but needed to be

moistened prior to the stripping process. While Raish held a hose that propelled a fine spray, I would hold up the sheaves to be moistened and then I would hang them along a bamboo pole.

Raish would say, 'Hon, you need to know how these cigars are made so that you understand what customers are talking about when they call to complain,' so I would sit at the work table next to Ruby Leppo Bull and roll the filler tobacco into a cigar shape, twist both ends and place it in the wooden mold.

Harper also recalled that most of the Oursler factory production was for a Baltimore company. It supplied the leaf tobacco, and the finished product was labeled and packed in boxes showing the Baltimore company's brands. Management staff frequently visited the factory to inspect quality and discuss the product line.

Conclusion

By the 1940s, the nation's cigar industry had introduced large-scale machine factories, replacing labor-intensive hand rolling. In addition, cigars had declined in popularity because cigarette companies had distributed free cigarettes to troops in World War I to encourage broad acceptance. Cigarettes soon became the preferred method of tobacco consumption. According to Schlichter, "The advent of mass-production methods made the old manual methods uneconomical, and local manufacturers were either unwilling or unable to install needed machinery." Lastly, the economic turmoil of the Great Depression caused many small businesses to collapse.

The Oursler factory was the last of its kind and closed in the post war years, ending a unique period of history. Its heritage survives in the fanciful cigar boxes, cigar molds, and intricate company block logos found in collections like that of the Manchester Historical Center.

Manchester Cigar Makers

The following have been verified as owners of cigar factories in Manchester:

Abken, Samuel
Ament, Curvin F.
Becker Bros.
Betts, C.E.
Bonn and Becker
Brilhart, Charles H.
Buchman, Archie
Carroll Cigar Company
Cohn, Philip
Delone, Charles J.
Dudrear, Clarence E.
Everhart, William Tell
Ganter, Charles J.H.
Gettier, William N.
Hanson, W.D.
Hively, Charles
Hoffacker, J.S. & S.H.
Hoffacker, J.W. & L.H.
Hoffman, C.
Hoffman, W.L.
Kling, Jacob C.
Lilly, Samuel L.
Lippy, Oliver
Loring, George J.
Manchester Cigar Manufacturing Co.
Masenheimer, Charles M.
Miller, John K.
Motter, C.W.
Musselman & Bro.
Oursler, Horatio S.
Riley, George W.
Shower, Robert M.
Slack, Frank
Southern Cigar Factory
Stambaugh & Folker
Wagaman, James
Warehime, Nelson and Sarah J.
Warner, Charles A.
Wertheimer Bros.
Winthrow, _____

During the Civil War in 1864, the federal government began to tax certain luxury items, including alcohol and tobacco, to finance the war effort. To ensure that producers, wholesalers and retailers could not avoid taxation, Congress passed a series of laws to regulate the manufacturing and distribution of alcohol and tobacco.

Cigars were taxed individually, but regulators had a challenging time maintaining inventory control in the early years when they were shipped in bundles and placed in large barrels. Congress passed new laws in 1865 establishing a standardized process for the packing and retail sale of cigars. Manufacturers were required to pack them in wooden boxes containing either 25, 50, 100, 250, or 500 cigars. This allowed the Internal Revenue Service to keep track by mandating the placement of pre-purchased revenue stamps on each sized box showing that requisite taxes had been paid before shipment.



W.D. Hanson cigar box. (All photographs, HSCC, 2022)



H.S. Oursler *Havana Fives* box.

Federal authorization was also evident in the custom stamping of cigar boxes. Manufacturers purchased plain wooden boxes from suppliers in Baltimore, and these were stamped in the packing room with the makers' name on the outside, and ornamented with colorful labels as borders or designs inside. Printing blocks used by the Brillhart cigar factory that survive in the collection of the Manchester Historical Center are examples of how the boxes were stamped with makers' names on the outside. Each of the blocks features a Victorian-style monogram of the letters "C.H.B & Co." as part of the design. With any type of printing block, the design is backwards so when it is stamped on the box it reads correctly. The images of these blocks have been reversed so they can be read.



Brillhart cigar company printing blocks.



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Employees of the Southern Cigar Company, c.1925. Front row, left to right: Willa Abbott, Ruth Leese, Tootie Burgoon, Mrs. Therit, Bertha Rusk, Cecilia Buchman, Amelia Masenheimer, Laura Burgoon, and John Adkins. Back row, left to right: Horatio Leese, Ray Abbott, Renee Loats, Simon Shultz, unidentified, Elva Erb, George Rush, Jake Warehime, Goldie Lippy, Albert Brilhart, unidentified, Eddie Burgoon, Elmer Lippy, Temp Menchey, and Billy Hoffman.

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