

“Carroll’s Tonsorial Artists”

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The local barbershop, or “tonsorial saloon” as it was sometimes called a century ago, was an institution in Carroll’s communities. The 1892 Commercial and Industrial Review of Northern and Western Maryland included colorful descriptions of several establishments:

New Windsor
U. G. Heltibridle
Tonsorial Establishment

“Away back in scriptural history, the custom of shaving the face has had its birth and this habit for generations untold still exists in every tribe and race of men. The present age has marked an improvement in the method of removing the hair from the face, as regular practitioners pursue this as a business. Mr. Heltibridle in August, 1890, located here and conducts a fine establishment, where a comfortable, clean shave or fashionable hair cutting is done. Two finely upholstered chairs are in use, and a competent assistant is employed as occasion demands, leaving nothing undone to cater to the best interests of the patron. The shop is 12 x 16 feet in dimensions and fitted out in metropolitan fashion for the edification of a fine trade. A line of cups speak in silent accents the esteem in which his services are held. Born in Carroll County, the subject of this article has been in this business for nine years, chiefly in the West, and is thorough master of its every detail, proving himself an adept. As a member of the New Windsor orchestra, he stands well socially.

Manchester
C. Andrew Myers
Tonsorial Artist and Segars

In reviewing Scriptural history, we find the custom of shaving the face is thousands of years old. From barbarous man down to the present civilization until the habit has been reduced to a science practiced by adept hands. Among those engaged in this capacity is Mr. C. Andrew Myers, who occupies an attractive saloon. Here are two finely upholstered chairs and a large line of cups, that speak in silent accents the esteem in which his services are held. Fashionable hair cutting is done as well as clean, smooth, easy shaves, shampooing, etc. He also conducts the exclusive segar and tobacco store in town, carries a fine line of sweet and natural leaf, manufactured tobacco, segars, pipes, snuffs and smoker’s articles generally. To successfully conduct the trade, a competent assistant is employed and no lack of attention bestowed on the comfort or convenience of the patron. It may be well to add that he also conducts an extensive butchering establishment, upwards of three beeves besides a large amount of smaller stock is killed weekly and served to the distant trade. Born in Baltimore, Mr. Myers located here on the 27th of April, 1880. He was for five consecutive years, Mayor of this town and now sustains the position of Councilman as well as Chief of the Fire Department, commanding the respect due a progressive, public spirited citizen.

Westminster
John H. Gerke
Barber

The oldest instituted custom in the history of mankind is to remove the hair from the face, and so popular has this habit become that in the present dawn of civilization, it has been reduced to a science practiced by a class of men known as barbers. Among the best equipped shops in Carroll County, we disclose that of Mr. John H. Gerke, who, in 1867, succeeded Prince Albert Smith, and is now the oldest tonsorial artist in Westminster. His saloon is clean, and contains four finely upholstered, revolving chairs. To obviate all long and tedious waits, two skilled barbers are steadily employed, and a large line of cups are seen that speak in silent accents the esteem in which his services are held. All the latest styles in hair cutting are regarded for ladies, gentlemen and children, shampooing, clean, smooth, easy shaves, etc. Mr. Gerke is also agent for the Star Steam Laundry, and solicits work which is delivered weekly. Born in Germany, he came to this county in 1853, and has been a barber for 34 years. He is connected with the I. O. of M.

Union Bridge
Union Bridge Shaving Parlor
Dealer in Tobacco and Segars

As cleanliness is next to godliness, the occupation of the barber plays an important part on the stage of life in arranging justifiable appearance, the outward aspects of man. An establishment worthy of every success it has achieved, is that of Mr. Jesse S. Whitmer, who in July, 1890, succeeded Joseph Eckert to the proprietorship of this business. The parlor is 15 x 18 feet in size, well arranged and fitted out with all the appliances of a first-class establishment, two chairs, a line of cups, etc. From his first inception here, has met with popular success, due to exercising a liberal degree of skill in the manipulations of this business, by clean, smooth shaving and fashionable hair-cutting, shampooing, etc. He also carries a line of tobacco and segars. A native of Carroll County, Mr. Whitmer has always been in this line of business, and has become a thorough adept. A competent assistant being employed, and all long tedious waits obviated. As a member of the Knights of the Mystic Chain, the I. O. R. M., and the Maryland Beneficial Association of Hagerstown, he stands well in social circles."

The lines of cups mentioned in the descriptions belonged to individual customers and were used to mix the shaving soap prior to the use of a straight razor. The invention of the safety razor in the early twentieth century gradually led to a decline in the shaving business; however, barbering remained an essential trade.



Uriah G. Heltibridle (center), two assistants and customers posed in his New Windsor "tonsorial establishment" in c1910. A corner cabinet held a number of ceramic shaving cups that bore the names of their respective owners. Like most of his counterparts, Heltibridle offered a fine selection of tobacco products. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of J. Leland Jordan, 1954.