

DOWNTOWN YORKVILLE, 1858

A visitor to downtown Yorkville in 1858 who picked up a copy of the Yorkville Enquirer and examined the newspaper's advertisements would have to conclude that Yorkville was a thriving town.

Most impressive was the number of manufacturers of carriages, buggies and harness. Wheeler's Carriage Emporium, owned by B. T. Wheeler, built carriages, buggies, and harness using the brand name "Excelsior." Wheeler also repaired carriages and buggies. He assured the reader that he had on hand enameled and patent leathers, fringes, tassels, carpets, mats, ivory, brass, silverhead nails and varnishes of all kinds.

Wickert & McCants Coach Co., formerly Wickert & Walker, turned out carriages and buggies while J. Ed Jeffreys specialized in making and repairing wagons in his shop near the Masonic Hall.

The Railroad Hotel kept rental conveyances for the convenience of their guests. The hotel also accommodated stock drivers (cattle were brought from the countryside and shipped by train.)

The business house of Allison and Bratton, one of the largest, had available 40 gallons of "Burning Fluid" manufactured from 95% alcohol. The smokeless substance was guaranteed to furnish a "clear and brilliant light."

Allison and Bratton also boasted of its York District franchise on Dayton's Imperial Sealing Cans with air exhausters for "canning vegetables, fruits, fresh and sweet for winter use."

There were other dry goods stores. L. Bloomberg & Brother simply advertised the best quality goods without a hint of what they might be, but "Fancy Dry Goods," which was apparently the name of the shop, offered silks, linens, hosiery and embroideries.

Yorkville Grocery Market offered more than groceries. They advertised bagging, bale rope, candles, nails and yarn as well as coffee, mackerel (salted in barrels), rice, sugar, and salt.

There was also the Yorkville Produce Market which advertised "wagon prices" on apples, bacon, butter, beef, beeswax, cotton corn, chickens, eggs, feathers, flour, fodder, lard, meal, oats, pork, peaches, peas, potatoes, turnips, tallow, wheat and wool.

Dr. Alfred Craven, Yorkville's "resident surgeon dentist," was also a skilled goldsmith and silversmith. Another dentist-surgeon, Dr. J. T. Walker of Chester, came to Yorkville's Cornwell House on Monday and Saturday. He announced that he mounted teeth "on the cheoplastic process--the perfection of mechanical Dentistry for the mounting of partial or full sets of teeth."

John R. Schorb, an instructor in the Female Academy, advertised that he took pictures next door to the Presbyterian Church on Saturday between half-past eleven to two o'clock.

M. Johnson advertised for "green and dry hides". Mrs. L. D. Owens' ad only needed one word: "Dressmaking." Richard Hare advertised tombstones and Louis Smith, boot and shoemaking.

Evidence that Yorkville was in a pre-industrial stage is found in Adams, McCorkle & Co.'s ad: "WANTED 50,000 yds of cloth--woolen janes and linsey cloth." Obviously, Adams, McCorkle & Co. factored cloth that was woven in households spread over a rather large area. Sheep and flax were still commonly grown.

Yorkville, a county seat, had its share of lawyers: Col. I. D. Witherspoon, G. W. Williams, Col. William C. Beatty, Walter B. Metts, John L. Miller and Samuel Youngblood, let the public know of their services. Today's citizens would immediately cry "conflict of interest!" John L. Miller was the Commissioner of Equity, an elective office, and Samuel Youngblood was also the sheriff of York District. Both carried on a private law practice from their courthouse offices. Lancasterville and Charleston lawyers also advertised.

The paper regularly ran notices on stray horses, unfenced cattle, partnerships being formed and dissolved, and the notices of candidates for tax collector, sheriff and the legislature. There were even lists of names of people who had undelivered letters at the post office.

Lindsey & Gordon purchased all the clean cotton and linen rags available--probably for paper making.

By Louise Pettus