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Andrew C. Nosti  
*Gettysburg College*

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# A Gettysburg Snapshot: N. Stratton Street in 1943

## **Abstract**

This paper provides a brief examination of the east (odd) side of North Stratton Street in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during 1943. As N. Stratton was primarily a residential road, the examination focuses on the individuals' and families' connection with each other, the Gettysburg community, and the broader world.

## **Keywords**

Gettysburg, World War II, Gettysburg Furniture

## **Disciplines**

History | Social History | United States History

## **Comments**

This paper was written for Dr. Michael Birkner's *HIST 300: Historical Method* course, Spring 2016.

# A Gettysburg Snapshot: N. Stratton Street in 1943

Andrew C. Nosti

Professor Michael Birkner  
History 300: Historical Methods  
4/29/2016

I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work  
and have not witnessed a violation of the honor code.

## **Introduction**

Situated between York and Lincoln, N. Stratton is a quiet, mostly residential street located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The street extends four blocks, beginning with the north-side turn off of York Street. The first block contains the more industrial portion of the street while the remaining three consist almost entirely of quaint, Victorian-style houses, save for the fire department at 109 and a three-story, ten unit brick apartment complex that begins after the turn onto Barlow Avenue on the east side of the street that encompasses all of the house numbers running from 300 to 318. The E. Railroad tracks cut across the first block and a small creek runs underneath and on both sides of the northern end of the second block, parallel to E. Water St. Most of the houses stand two or two-and-a-half stories high, modestly constructed of either red brick with a few built out of white wood, all typically with black-shingled roofs. All of the homes have front lawns, and, if they have more space between their neighbors, a few have yards that extend around the sides. Like most relatively small-town, residential streets, N. Stratton houses a host of stories, both with the buildings and with their residents or owners. Those stories connect their subjects with their neighbors, with their town, with their nation, and with their time.

This paper aims to discover those stories from the east side of N. Stratton Street in 1943. Since 1943, the most drastic change along N. Stratton would come from inside the homes, the continual change that results from a home passing from one family to another, or, in the case of a business, such as the building positioned on the corner off the turn from York Street which was once Plank Garage, the business of famed baseball player and Gettysburg graduate, Eddie Plank, the entire purpose of the structure may change. Despite the internal changes, however, N. Stratton looked almost exactly the same in 1943 as it does today. Some building renovations here

and there have slightly altered the street's appearance, but otherwise one could hold a snapshot of the stretch of road from that time and the only immediate difference would be the advancement in car production over the past three quarters of a century.<sup>1</sup>

N. Stratton Street contained an eclectic and yet still related group of residents in 1943. House size varied from two people to seven. The larger house sizes typically included extended family, such as the Schmitt household at 149. Jay Schmitt (who was listed as the head of the house) lived with his fifty-two-year-old step-mother, seventeen-year-old step-brother, and seventy-two-year-old great uncle, along with his wife, Anna, and their two young children, Susanne and Jay Jr. Some families simply grew through the birth of multiple children, such as the seven-person Sentz family at 169. John Sentz lived with his wife, Irene, three daughters, Mary Louise, Treva, and Patsy, who were eighteen, twelve, and three, respectively, his nineteen-year-old son, Guy, and his thirty-five-year-old sister-in-law, Beulah. One can imagine how crowded a house along Stratton Street could feel if four rowdy children stampeded through the house. Some children, especially if unmarried, remained with their parents well past adulthood. Laura Steinberger, a seventy-three-year-old widower, lived in her house at 233 with her fifty-one-year-old daughter, Grace, and her thirty-year-old son, Regis. A couple households even included lodgers, such as Maurice Hewlett who lodged at 310 in Mervin Bream's home.<sup>2</sup>

### **N. Stratton and Employment**

N. Stratton's most obvious connection with the rest of the town came through the residents' employment. Residents' jobs were the single greatest source of diversity along the street. In 1943, a musician for a private orchestra, a locomotive engineer for the Reading Railroad, a doctor with his own osteopathic practice, a private farm owner, a laundry owner, a

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<sup>1</sup> Photo of Stratton Street, Stratton Street Folder, located at the Adams County Historical Society. Henceforth Adams County Historical Society will be abbreviated ACHS.

<sup>2</sup> 1940 United States Census, Ancestry.com, ACHS.

seamstress, and the Gettysburg chief of police all lived along the east side of N. Stratton. Men vastly outnumbered women in employment; the women's traditional domestic duties of mother and wife went unlisted in the census.<sup>3</sup> Some women, of course, did still find work. The most common female occupation was that of clerk; Marian Reibold of 300 clerked at a dress shop, Maurice Hewlett of 310 at the bank, and Edna Eicholtz of 312 at the courthouse. The others included an assortment of jobs, but most of which still fell under traditional gender roles. Fern Myers of 135 worked as a seamstress at a sewing factory. Gertrude Smith of 163 did domestic work for a private family. Grace Steinberger of 233 was an undergraduate nurse at a private house. Lydia Myers of 300 cooked for a local college fraternity house. And Nan Dellinger, another working woman from 312, was a bookkeeper for a local mill. A few of the residents, unlike Gertrude Smith listed above, worked for the home in which they lived. A few of the houses, such as the Myers at 135, included maids. The Myers likely hired Miss Elizabeth Heller to help maintain the house and take care of their four young daughters while both Jacob and Fern went to work, the house being one of the few locations where both parents had employment. A few other homes included housekeepers, such as Marshall Eck who lived at 245 with his housekeeper, Christine Plank, and her two daughters, Gladys and Goldies. Eck may have hired Plank because he believed his house, empty of a wife or daughters, needed a feminine touch; or maybe Eck did not know how to do or did not particularly enjoy domestic housework; or perhaps the fifty-three-year-old grew a little lonely in his middle-aged bachelorhood; or, maybe the most

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<sup>3</sup> In the course of researching this paper, I did not manage to find any employment listing besides the 1940 census in which I could compare the rate of female involvement in the Gettysburg workforce. It is not difficult to imagine that the female spike in employment that America witnessed throughout World War II found its way into the Gettysburg area.

likely of all, some combination of these reasons led to the decision. And some of the residents, of course, had retired by 1940.<sup>4</sup>

The two most common employers for Stratton Street residents on the 1940 census are Gettysburg College and the “furniture factory.” In 1943, five Gettysburg College professors resided along the eastern side of the 300 block of N. Stratton. Lester Johnson, an assistant professor of education at the college, lived at 304 with his wife, Mildred, and their four-year-old son, Rolf. Clyde Stover, an associate professor of chemistry, the registrar of the college, and the secretary to the Faculty Committee, lived with his wife, Adelaide, at 313. Professor Stover retired in 1943 after serving as an educator since 1896 and registrar since 1912.<sup>5</sup> George Larkin, an associate professor of economics, lived with his wife, Anna, and their teenage children, Bertram and Shirley.<sup>6</sup> Henry Bream, an assistant professor of physical education at the college and varsity football and basketball coach, lived with his wife, Louise, and their eight-year-old son, John, at 317.<sup>7</sup> Albert Bachman, a professor of romance languages and head of the department at the college, lived at 325 with his wife, Gertrude, and their two sons, Albert Eric and Edwin.<sup>8</sup> These five professors likely just walked up either Lincoln Avenue or Stevens Street to go to work, the edge of Gettysburg College’s open campus located only two blocks away from N. Stratton Street.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 1940 Census.

<sup>5</sup> Stover’s involvement with Gettysburg College extended even beyond his years as a professor. Stover attended Gettysburg College from 1890 to 1896, earning a bachelor’s and then a master’s degree in chemistry. Thus his retirement in 1943 officially ended an ongoing fifty-three year connection with the college.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the census lists Bertram and Shirley as having been born in China.

<sup>7</sup> Bream became a bit of a legend at Gettysburg College. He served on numerous committees throughout his tenure, oversaw construction of Musselman Stadium in 1965, and helped develop the Health and Physical Education Department. Upon retirement, the college named the healthy and physical education building Bream helped establish after him. Bream Gymnasium still stands at Gettysburg College, and a large plaque of Bream hangs in the building he worked so diligently on. For more information on Bream that falls outside the scope of this paper, consult the extensive source material stored in the Henry T. Bream files at Gettysburg College’s Special Collections.

<sup>8</sup> The census says that both Albert and Gertrude were born in Switzerland.

<sup>9</sup> 1940 Census; Spectrum, 1943, 21-23 in Special Collections at Gettysburg College; Conversation with Ron Couchman, employee at Special Collections at Gettysburg College; 1945 Telephone Book Directory, ACHS;

The stories of those working at the “furniture factory” are a bit more complicated than those of the college professors. By 1943, Adams County, and specifically Gettysburg, had a long history of furniture manufacturing. In 1902, the Warner Furniture Company was established in Gettysburg, starting this long history. By 1931, four different furniture factories operated in Gettysburg: the Gettysburg Furniture Company (previously the Warner Furniture Company), the Reaser Furniture Company (previously the Eagle Furniture Company), the Gettysburg Panel Company, and the Gettysburg Chair Company.<sup>10</sup> The crippling depression that spanned the 30s did not seem to slow down the furniture industry in Gettysburg. It did, however, extend its trend of union formation to the Gettysburg employee population; in 1937, the United Woodworkers Local Industrial Union No. 461 was certified for collective bargaining. The introduction of the union did not immediately rectify the local labor unrest. Resentment, especially directed towards the wealthy business owner Chisling Jones, often simply called “Mr. Jones,” permeated the furniture labor body in the early 1940s. Circulations with questions – perhaps more fittingly, accusations – such as “Why does Millionair Chisling Jones Pay less than Nazi Slave labor” in which the furniture workers are referred to as “Gettysburg War Prisoners” spread throughout the labor force.<sup>11</sup> Workers accused Jones of using his “Little Happy Family,” which included the other furniture companies, the *Gettysburg Times*, the Gettysburg Draft Board, and the First National Bank of Gettysburg, to silence them and keep their wages down. And Jones did not simply sit back and take the attacks. When a local doctor claimed the furniture workers played a vital role in the war effort, Jones responded that he was unaware that foxholes contained dining tables and wardrobes. Despite his efforts to push against the tide of discontent, the union made

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Faculty Committee Minutes: Sept. 1938-May 1947, in Special Collections at Gettysburg College. Henceforth Special Collections at Gettysburg College will be abbreviated as SC.

<sup>10</sup> A fifth furniture company, the Hanover Cabinet Company, was located in Hanover, Pennsylvania.

<sup>11</sup> Another interesting attack on Mr. Jones states, “Limberger Cheese Smells Bad an so does Mr. Jones.”



tremendous progress in their efforts. The effects of the union appear in the profound increase in workers' wages in only a few years' time. In 1943, Gettysburg furniture workers averaged about \$25 per week, or 65¢ per hour. Only four years later, they averaged around \$35 a week.<sup>12</sup>

The union did not only fight for increased wages; it also served as a social body for the workers. One surviving piece of documentary evidence titled *First Annual Ball Souvenir Journal* provides information on the ways in which the union brought the workers together. The journal itself commemorates a ball the union held for its members on December 16, 1938. Within the journal, a list of recurring union events appears: the union met collectively every first and third Tuesday evening of a month; the Executive and Grievance Committee met every second and fourth Tuesday; and the union held bingo every Friday night at eight. These types of events likely continued into 1943 as the workers grew closer in their solidarity against the villainous figure of Mr. Jones.<sup>13</sup>

The reason so many N. Stratton Street residents worked at the factories was likely due to ease of access. The 1941-42 Telephone Directory lists all four Gettysburg furniture companies at 302 York Street, which really comprised a large track of land that contained the cluster of the large concrete and brick structures that made up the furniture factory compounds that branched off of York Street. The N. Stratton furniture workers included a wide array of occupational specialists: John Sentz of 167 worked as an "operator sander"; Henry Sterner of 205 was a trimmer; Monroe Dellinger of 312 was a foreman; and Amos Starry of 125 built frames. In all likelihood, most if not all of the at least five N. Stratton men who worked for the furniture companies joined the union. Jacob Myers of 135, listed only as "laborer" at the furniture factory

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<sup>12</sup> "History of Gettysburg Furniture Manufacturing," Gettysburg Furniture Company Folder, ACHS; "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form: Reaser Furniture Company," Gettysburg Furniture Company Folder, ACHS; Blue sheet with typed notes on the back that denounce Jones and include a response, Gettysburg Furniture Company Folder, ACHS; "Wage Inflation Varies Sharply: Chart Gives Pre-War, War, Post-War Pattern," Gettysburg Furniture Company Folder, ACHS.

<sup>13</sup> First Annual Ball Souvenir Journal, United Furniture Workers of America, CIO Local 464 Folder, ACHS.

in the 1940 census, had an active, perhaps leading role in the union. For instance, in the journal from 1938, Myers is listed as one of the members of the ball committee. Only a year after its conception, at least one N. Stratton Street resident heartily participated in the furniture union. Perhaps Myers played a part in the arbitration agreements that followed the war and assisted in the increase of wages for his fellow Stratton Streeters, leading production slows or other means that similar discontented labor forces employed.<sup>14</sup>

It is not difficult to imagine the group of men from N. Stratton Street who worked at the furniture factories bonding together. Perhaps they walked to work as a group every morning, lunch pails swinging from one hand, and then back home together in the evening. Maybe they joined together in mutual abhorrence of the dreaded Mr. Jones, comparing the economic hardships that their “Nazi slave labor” wages brought them. Regardless of whether those speculative scenarios actually took place, the men certainly had to encounter each other. N. Stratton Street itself was not that large of a stretch of houses, and they all likely walked the same way to the furniture factories.

### **N. Stratton and Community Involvement**

Many N. Stratton residents participated in community activities outside of just work. Henry Bream alone was a member of the local Lions Club, which between 1940 and 41 he served as president of, Elk’s Lodge, Good Samaritan Lodge, and American Legion. The Lions Club often held social events, meeting weekly for dinner sessions. The Lions Club also acted as a charitable body to the community, enacting standards such as an annual donation to the local YWCA. The Elk’s Lodge counted amongst its members at least three east N. Stratton Street residents in 1943, Glenn Guise and Richard Codori joining Henry Bream. The Elk’s Lodge

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<sup>14</sup> 1941-42 Telephone Book Directory, Adams County, ACHS; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1947, Images 12-13, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Folder, ACHS; 1940 Census; Gettysburg Panel Company Folder, ACHS; First Annual Ball Souvenir Journal.

usually held social events, often meeting in the home they acquired in 1940, such as a Mothers' Day Observance in 1942 where members serenaded their mothers in song. The organization also prided itself in its marching club which took part in many a Gettysburg parade. The Good Samaritan Lodge primarily held social events as well, most often exclusive to its members. One instance of such a closed ceremony took place on September 26, 1943, when upwards of 200 members of the Good Samaritan Lodge gathered at the "masonic home" in Elizabethtown. A Dr. Harvey D. Hoover preached a sermon for the event while a Reverend Howard S. Fox played the organ and an Austin Lang sang a solo. The American Legion, which boasted 151 members at the beginning of 1943, held weekly Monday meetings at the Legion home in Gettysburg. The Legion, similar to its function today, often took part in philanthropic endeavors. For example, from February 1 to March 15, 1943, the Women's Auxiliaries of the Legion in Adams County raised over \$17,500 for the war effort, more than \$10,000 over their goal. The Gettysburg auxiliaries led their counterparts by a substantial margin: they sold \$11,600 worth of bonds and stamps throughout the drive, Biglerville coming in second at \$4,672.50.<sup>15</sup>

Like many other 1940s Americans, N. Stratton residents also connected with their community through church involvement. A number of churches with a range of Christian denominations, from Lutheran to Presbyterian to Methodist, stood scattered around town. Members of St. James Lutheran Church would only have to cross York Street over to the south side of Stratton to attend church on Sundays. Some N. Stratton Street members were, obviously, more involved in church than others. Glenn Guise, for example, was elected to the Trinity Church committee by his congregation.

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<sup>15</sup>"Henry T. Bream," Special Collections Finding Aid, SC; "Gift for Lions Held at Final Club Meeting," The Gettysburg Times, June 8, 1943, Ancestry.com, ACHS; "Lions Club Votes \$10 to YWCA Here," The Gettysburg Times, May 18, 1943, Ancestry.com, ACHS; "200 Masons at Service," The Gettysburg Times, October 2, 1943, Ancestry.com, ACHS; "Mothers' Day Observance," Elks, Benevolent & Patriotic Order 1045 Folder, ACHS; "Legion to Hold Dinner Jan. 14th," The Gettysburg Times, January 8, 1943, Ancestry.com, ACHS; "Legion Women Go 'Over Top' in Bond Drive," The Star and Sentinel, March 27, 1943, Newspaper Archives Database.

One can imagine how, as soldiers went off to war, church offered a place of spiritual fulfillment in a time of intense anxiety. Reverends adapted their sermons as male members of congregations disappeared from the Sunday sermons, off in some far-away domestic camp or base or perhaps in some foreign land, serving the call for their country while their families and neighbors served the call of church bells back home. Reverend Spencer W. Aungst gave one such sermon: “Our hearts are greatly troubled with our present woes and because our thoughts go out this day to those loved ones who are now in danger of this war, help us, O God, not to forget those who in another generation gave their lives that we might live in peace. Help us in this service of dedication to honor both the memory of those who are gone and the courage and faith of those who serve our country and the world today.”<sup>16</sup> In the middle of war, with the fear of loved ones dying under the looming shadow of Nazism or the expanding Imperial Japan, Gettysburgians found solace in their faith.

### **N. Stratton, Gettysburg, and the War**

“I have seen the ravages of war...and believe me Hen it isn’t pretty,” wrote a former student to Henry Bream who was fighting in continental Europe, having seen the destruction of London and Paris at the hands of Nazi Germany.<sup>17</sup> Bream received many letters of this kind, personally experienced the war in a direct manner, both abroad and at home. Many of Bream’s former students and players served in the war effort, not surprising considering that just between February 8th and 11th, 1943, over 100 Gettysburg men enlisted in the army reserves received letters that called them to active duty. In fact, the exodus of male students from Gettysburg occurred on such a large scale that only ~~1/4~~ <sup>1/5</sup> of the men who contributed

<sup>16</sup> “Trinity Church Congregation Holds Meeting,” The Gettysburg Times, January 23, 1943, Ancestry.com, ACHS; St. James Lutheran Church Address, July 23, 1944, St. James Lutheran Church Vertical File, File #2873, ACHS.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Wilmer “Jake” Dracha to Bream, quoted in Michael Birkner, “‘This Darned War Won’t Last Forever’: Hen Bream’s Boys and World War II,” Building Men: Hen Bream and Gettysburg College Athletics (Gettysburg, PA: Gettysburg College, 2009): 76.

enrollment at Gettysburg College in 1942 managed to return in 1943. Five starters from Bream's 1942 football team would die in combat. Bream suffered terribly from the loss of his former students and players. The professor and coach would write condolence letters to the families of the deceased young men he knew, and one mother recognized a grief so deep that she wrote him back and remarked on how much Bream must have cared for her son.<sup>18</sup>

Bream did not only experience the war through letters, however. While male students flocked overseas by the hundreds, Air Force cadets appeared in similar numbers on the Gettysburg College campus. Gettysburg College was approved to house the 55th College Training Detachment during the war. Faculty members taught the cadets throughout their stay on campus, supplying them with both a place to train and a place to learn. The physical education department was charged with leading the fitness exercises for the arriving men, and Gettysburg College President Henry Hanson placed Hen Bream in charge of the program. Between March, 1943, and May, 1944, Bream helped train and teach 1,659 cadets at Gettysburg College.<sup>19</sup>

Bream, of course, was not the only person on N. Stratton Street to experience the war. In 1943, at least three people who lived – or at this point, had lived – on the east side of the street were enlisted in the army. Jacob “Met” Sheads of 115, a Gettysburg National Park battlefield guide and high school history teacher, was able to finish his fall 1941 semester before leaving. The moment he heard of the attack on December 7, Sheads knew he would get called away. By this point, Sheads, who was in the ROTC program throughout his years at Gettysburg College, had achieved the rank of first lieutenant. Sheads spent the majority of 1943 stationed at Fort Benning in Georgia, but did make visits back home when his duty permitted. The next year,

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<sup>18</sup> Birkner, Building Men, 66-69, 74-76.

<sup>19</sup> In 1944 and 1945, Bream would also fill in as coach for the Biglerville High School football team who lost three successive coaches to the war effort. Famed for his coaching abilities, this point in his career may have been Bream's most frustrating. The depleted male student population caused deficiencies in the Gettysburg sports teams, the 1943 year witnessing the suspension of the basketball program. The Gettysburg cadets could not participate in varsity sports. Birkner, Building Men, 67-70.

Sheds would see service overseas and spend two years, from 1944 to 1946, in Paris. Despite his time in Europe, Sheds never saw active combat. His master's degree in history awarded him the ability to serve as the historical officer for his unit, a position he gained only seven days before he was scheduled to storm the beaches on D-Day. When questioned about his service, Sheds responded, "Look, I'm no hero you know, I didn't want to get killed. My only thought when I went back to the military was to survive."<sup>20</sup> Two other residents of the east side of N. Stratton Street were not so lucky in their military assignments during 1943.<sup>21</sup>

Harold R. Sharpe lived with his parents, John and Emma Sharpe, at 163 N. Stratton Street when he entered active service on February 17, 1941, at twenty-four-years old. Harold joined Company E at that time, the local reserve company. Between June and September of 1943, Sharpe completed a course in mechanical training



*Richard "Bud" Codori in his navy uniform with his brother, Robert. Richard lived at 316 N. Stratton before going off to war in 1944.*

<sup>20</sup> Shaw, Justin, Jacob Sheds Oral Interview, World War II Oral Histories Collection, SC. Sheds became a bit of a legend in Gettysburg by his later years, even conducting the battlefield tour when President Jack and First Lady Jackie Kennedy visited in 1963. For decades, Gettysburg High School students adored Colonel Sheds - the rank he would eventually obtain. One *Gettysburg Times* article declared that "Met' Sheds and history have been like Santa Claus and snow." When asked his age, 'Met' would say he was just as old as the Pennsylvania Monument on the battlefield, and then make the asker figure it out. Terry Fox, a former student who would eventually replace Col. Sheds after his retirement, said, "He was just the finest teacher a kid could have. When I was in eleventh grade, I had no clue what I wanted to do. I was in his class one month, and I knew. I wanted to become an American history teacher." Another student called the year he spent in Sheds's homeroom "the greatest year of [his] life." Sheds was tremendously proud of his teaching career, and could claim an almost perfect attendance record outside of the time he spent in active duty. "Freedom Foundation Medal Holder, Col. J.M. Sheds, to End 36-Year Teaching Career," The Gettysburg Times, May 28, 1971; Andy Clarke, "Famed Teacher J.M. Sheds dies at age 91," The Gettysburg Times; Kami Masemer, "Scholar, Soldier, Historian Jacob Sheds Laid to Rest," The Gettysburg Times; Handwritten Paper by Col. Sheds in Sheds Family Vertical File, Folder 5, ACHS. All of the newspaper clippings appeared in Folder 5 of the Sheds Family Vertical File at ACHS.

<sup>21</sup> Other N. Stratton residents would also seem military duty, but not until 1944. Richard "Bud" Codori (pictured above with his brother) began active service for the Navy in April, 1944, and then foreign service in late May of the same year. Codori would stay abroad until July 13, 1945. Glenn Guise also began domestic service in April of 1944, with the Marine Corps, but he did not see any foreign service. "Brothers in Service," The Gettysburg Times, July 3, 1944, Ancestry.com, ACHS;

at Fort Belvoir in San Antonio, Texas, that allowed him to become a technical sergeant in the Army. Following this three month program, Sharpe returned to Company E in Gettysburg. About a month after his return from schooling, Sharpe's time for foreign serviced arrived. Sharpe's compensation application files list his foreign service as extending from October 8, 1943 to October 1, 1945. A report in *The Gettysburg Times* indicates that news of Sharpe's safe arrival in the British Isles reached his parents in mid-November of 1943. Another report five months later notes that sixteen Adams County soldiers held a reunion somewhere in Wales, which makes it likely that Sharpe remained somewhere along the British Isles throughout that stint of service. However, Sharpe must have seen some action before the end of the war, as a *Gettysburg Times* report in March, 1945, lists him among some Adams Countians who served as members of the 728<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Company of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, an outfit that had received an award during the war. Sharpe would return from his foreign duties on October 2, 1945, and was discharged five days later, almost two years to the day after he entered foreign service.<sup>22</sup>

Howard J. Hummer, who lived with his parents, Bert W. and Bessie Hummer, at 153, also saw active foreign service in 1943. Like Sharpe, Hummer entered domestic service on February 17, 1941, and also served in the Army. Unlike Sharpe, however, Hummer did not spend his domestic time with Company E in Gettysburg. Hummer was first stationed with the 28th Division at Camp Livingston in Louisiana, where he was promoted to a technical sergeant, until May, 1943, when he was transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordnance Company M.M, APO 45 in Camp Pickett, Virginia. An article in late November, 1943, says that Hummer was "receiving his mail in care of the postmaster at New York City," so he moved northward at some point between May

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<sup>22</sup> Harold R. Sharpe, Pennsylvania Veteran Compensation Application Files, World War II; "Company E's Roster," The Gettysburg Times, February 17, 1941; "3 Appointed to Ft. Belvoir's Officers' Class," The Gettysburg Times, June 18, 1942; "Big Maneuvers Keep County Soldiers Busy," The Gettysburg Times, September 3, 1942; "Arrive Overseas," The Gettysburg Times, November 18, 1943; "Sixteen County Soldiers Hold Reunion Overseas," The Gettysburg Times, April 21, 1944; "Countians Members of Honored Outfit," The Gettysburg Times, March 9, 1945. All information was accessed on Ancestry.com through ACHS.

and November. Hummer must not have stayed in the north very long, because on December 12, 1943, he began his foreign service, which lasted until mid-September, 1945. While in Europe, Hummer experienced one of the most emotionally impactful events an American soldier possibly could: while with Patton's 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, he stumbled upon a concentration camp. In a letter written back home quoted in a *Gettysburg Times* piece, Hummer describes the experience: "Today we visited a Jerry (prison) camp and if I could tell you what I saw you would never ever have anything to do with or even look at a German again."<sup>23</sup>

N. Stratton Street also experienced the war through the participation of volunteer firefighters. Since the early 1900s, one of the two volunteer Gettysburg fire departments was located at 109 N. Stratton, the same address it remains at today. When war came in the early 1940s, twenty-three Gettysburg volunteer firefighters heeded the call and enlisted.<sup>24</sup> Out of those twenty-three, as Reverend Robert M. Hunt of the Presbyterian Church lamented in a memorial on September 9, 1947, "two...made the supreme sacrifice." William A. Beales and Horace M. Bushman were the closest people to N. Stratton Street residents to die in service of their country in World War II.<sup>25</sup>

Most N. Stratton Streeters did not experience the war in the direct way of those who served, but that does not mean the domestic front did not have its own unique share of stories. Many Stratton Street residents would have participated in the war through the purchase of war bonds, as evinced by the Gettysburg Women's Auxiliaries of the American Legion's \$11,600 generating drive mentioned above. Dozens, if not hundreds, of newspaper articles, like the one

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<sup>23</sup> "Sgt. Hummer Sees Nazi Prison Camp," *The Gettysburg Times*, April 26, 1945; Howard J. Hummer, Pennsylvania Veteran Compensation Application Files, World War II; "Adams Countians in the United States Service," *The Gettysburg Times*, March 3, 1941; "Army Promotion," *The Gettysburg Times*, July 27, 1942; "With Our Service Men," *The Gettysburg Times*, May 31, 1943. All the information was accessed through Ancestry.com at ACHS.

<sup>24</sup> Similar to the contribution in World War II, ten volunteers enlisted to fight almost three decades earlier in World War I.

<sup>25</sup> Accession: 1152: Memorial Service for Unveiling Memorial Plaque, Gettysburg Fire Department Folder, ACHS.



that ran on March 31, 1943, in the *Gettysburg Times*, attempted to convince people to buy war bonds. That March 31<sup>st</sup> article was titled “Bonds or Bombs?” and implied that using spare cash to buy luxury items instead of investing in war bonds indirectly assisted the enemy cause in the war. In other words, if one did not use his or her extra cash to buy war bonds, that person essentially helped American soldiers get bombed overseas. Examples of the types of bonds residents could buy can be found in the United States Treasury 2nd War Loan pamphlet located in the Adams County Historical Society World War II files. This specific document lists the bond series that the government began issuing on April 12, 1943. Three different series, E, F, and G, appear in the pamphlet. Series E targeted individuals or a partnership of co-owners. This bond series accumulated at a rate of 2.9% with a ten year maturation rate, and capped off at an annual limit of \$3,750 in cost price, so \$5,000 at maturation level. Series F attracted individuals as well, but was primarily meant for trustees, partnerships, associations, and corporations, with the lowest prices, starting at \$18.50, “provided especially for small groups, clubs, school classes, etc.” This series also matured in ten years, but did so at a 2.53% rate, so that \$18.50 would grow to \$25, with an annual max of \$100,000 cost price between it and Series G. Series G worked similarly to Series F in its intended consumers and in its maximum cost price, but matured at a rate of 2.5% over twelve years. The war bond drive was so popular that four factory workers built a twenty-five foot, twenty inch square wooden thermometer in the oval in the center square of town.<sup>26</sup> A movable red frame on the thermometer measured the progress made in the Adams County Series E war bond movement, topping off at the monthly quota for the county, which

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<sup>26</sup> The available information does not name the four factory workers, and it is possible that one or more of the N. Stratton Street workers participated in the construction of the thermometer.

extended anywhere from \$25,000 to \$180,000. Glenn Guise of N. Stratton helped letter the thermometer.<sup>27</sup>

Even the children of N. Stratton likely participated in the war bond effort. As Bruce Westerdahl and Nancy Ogden note in their post “Supporting the War Effort” on their blog *Growing Up in Gettysburg*, during October and November of 1943, students set school records for the amount of war bonds and stamps bought, totaling \$1,890.50. The next March, another drive would tally up \$6,556.70. Students also participated in other domestic war programs, such as the drive in March, 1943, in which students at Lincoln Elementary School amassed 28,903 tin cans. Students also collected other items, including “rags, paper, rubber, scrap metal, aluminum foil, and milkweed pods.”<sup>28</sup>

Heavy rationing accompanied the material collection drives. Ration cards spread throughout the town of Gettysburg, charging people to sign pledges such as the one that read “In the interest of National Defense I pledge myself to use  $\frac{1}{3}$  less gasoline.” “Met” Sheads’s most vivid memories of his returns home during his domestic active duty revolved around rationing. In an oral interview, Sheads recalled going to the store with his uniform on and buying ten pounds of beef – the owner bent the rules for the active serviceman – so his wife, who could only buy 2 pounds a month, would have some extra after he left. Rubber, metal, canned goods, dairy, and sugar, among other odd and end goods such as typewriters or even cars, were rationed as well. As implied in the oil pledge above, petroleum was perhaps the most strictly rationed product. In early 1943, oil cuts upwards of 45% caused the area to outlaw any form of pleasure driving. Chief of police Glenn Guise, who lived at 169 N. Stratton, was commonly called on to

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<sup>27</sup> “Bonds or Bombs,” *The Gettysburg Times*, March 31, 1943, World War II Vertical Files, Box 2; *United States Treasury Second War Loan*, World War II Vertical Files, Box 2, War Bonds Envelope, ACHS; “‘Thermometer’ In Square Will Show Bond Sale,” *The Gettysburg Times*, February 19, 1943, Ancestry.com, ACHS.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce Westerdahl and Nancy Ogden, “8. Supporting the War Effort,” *Growing Up in Gettysburg* (Jan. 30, 2015), <http://www.growingupingettysburg.com/2015/01/seventh-grade-at-lincoln-school-in-1943.html>

enforce these restrictions. On January 8, 1943, fourteen people were turned over to the rationing officials for pleasure driving around Gettysburg. One such accused motorist claimed he came into town to buy bricks and had to drive around to discover where to do so, a defense the police did not seem to believe. Other evidence of the legal enforcement of rationing appears in plenty throughout 1943. For example, on January 2, Guise cited a “defendant to the local rationing board for abuse of the tires on his car.” Apparently on the night before, the defendant went out on a New Year’s Eve joy ride that, according to the rationing rules, put unnecessary wear on his tires.<sup>29</sup>

Guise also commonly had to report people who violated air raid test regulations. During one of these tests, everyone was expected to rush off the streets and use dark curtains to black out any light from escaping their homes. Drivers were expected to stop their cars and turn off the lights. These rules meant to darken the town so that enemy airmen could not find any site to attack when flying over the area. But some people, likely to the frustration of Guise, either did not know, did not care, or simply did not properly go about executing these regulations. “Met” Sheads’s own sister had to spend a night in prison before getting let off with a warning after she forgot to place a curtain over a small window in her cellar. After a drill in late January, 1943, Guise had to file a report on a Mr. Harvery Warner who had to appear before a hearing on a charge for failing to stop his car and turn out its lights during a raid test. A few months later, Guise had to file two more reports after a May raid test which had thirty-eight minutes of prior warning. One of the two men was accused of double parking his car. The other had a much more

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<sup>29</sup> Ration Card, World War II Vertical File, Box 2; Shaw, Oral Interview with Jacob Sheads; “OPA Fices ‘Par’ For Canned Goods,” The Gettysburg Times, January 28, 1943, WWII Vertical File, Box 3; “Ration Allowance is 3 Cans Per Person in March,” The Gettysburg Times, February 22, 1943, WWII Vertical File, Box 3; “Meet Supply Raises Issues for Ration,” The Gettysburg Times, March 5, 1943, WWII Vertical File, Box 3; “All Pleasure Driving Out; Fuel Oil Cut 45%,” The Gettysburg Times, January 7, 1943, WWII Vertical File, Box 3; “14 Spotted for Illegal Car Use,” The Gettysburg Times, January 8, 1943, Ancestry.com; “Chase in Town Brings Charges,” The Gettysburg Times, January 2, 1943, Ancestry.com. All of the information besides the Sheads oral interview was accessed at ACHS.

interesting experience. Whether unaware of the test or apathetic towards it, the man continued to walk along Baltimore Street during the raid test until wardens forcibly removed him. Schools also experienced their fair share of war preparation drills. Westerdahl and Ogden recall marching out into the hallways and sitting against the inner walls with their hands covering their heads while air raid sirens blared around town. Gettysburg had to be ready at a moment's notice to run for cover or, at night, completely disappear.<sup>30</sup>

Guise also had an active role in other domestic war activities. In March, 1943, a local spotter post, known as Aircraft Observation Post 202-A, opened at the edge of town. Ads in the newspapers called for 150 volunteers to sacrifice their time in the protection of Gettysburg. Guise, an influential local official, was in charge of processing the volunteers, including fingerprinting them. These volunteers were tasked with spotting any approaching planes and triggering the warning that would cause the town to begin the kind of raid practices detailed above. When not enough volunteers initially came out, Guise himself volunteered to serve as an alternate spotter. Guise was also the chairman of the payroll purchase plan committee and played a part in working out school plans in regards to the rationing rules. For instance, state high school exams in the 1943 spring term were held in seven different centers instead of the customary one in order to save oil and rubber by preventing people from driving as far to get to their testing locations. Lastly, Guise was a member of the 1st Platoon of the state guard, a unit that was "uniformed" in 1943 because of the war.<sup>31</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>30</sup> "Blackout Rules," The Gettysburg Times, June 16, 1942, WW II Vertical Files, Box 1; Shaw, Oral Interview with Jacob Sheads; "Man Accused of Raid Violation," The Gettysburg Times, January 28, 1943, Ancestry.com; "2 Violations are Reported in Raid Test," The Gettysburg Times, May 6, 1943, Ancestry.com. All of the newspaper articles were accessed at ACHS.

<sup>31</sup> "Local Spotter Post to Open Here Saturday," The Gettysburg Times, March 8, 1943; "More Spotters Needed at Post," The Gettysburg Times, March 18, 1943; "To Hold High School Exams in 7 Center," The Gettysburg Times, March 23, 1943; "Local Unit of State Guard to be Uniformed," The Gettysburg Times, May 1, 1943. All articles were accessed through Ancestry.com at ACHS.

During one visit to the Adams County Historical Society, we struck up a conversation with an older person who worked there. When he heard of our project on Stratton Street, he informed us that he lived on N. Stratton for a time when he was younger, in a house three doors down from the Sheads at 115. He remembered a large fence circling the house and a building sitting between his home and the train tracks. Despite admitting that, while living near the Sheads house, he never got to know the infamous Col. Sheads that well, he does fondly remember the few friendly exchanges he shared with his neighbor.

These kinds of interactions can shed a light on the atmosphere of N. Stratton Street in the time period of this paper. N. Stratton Street was a stretch of pavement lined with families that vastly varied in size, age, occupation, educational level, and place of origin. But this diverse group of people still found ways to come together, both on their street and with their town. Some of the members likely bonded together because they worked for the same employers or in the same occupational field, such as the group of furniture factory workers and Gettysburg College professors. Perhaps they got to know each other through conversations about the war, families asking the Hummers and the Sharpes and the Sheads, and then later the Guises and Codoris, how their sons, brothers, and fathers fared overseas. Perhaps these families knocked on their neighbors' doors to sell stamps or collect spare paper or metal to help the war effort and, by doing so, their loved ones. Maybe they joined together to complain about the stringencies of war rationing and air raid regulations. Perhaps they knew each other because their children played together in the street, or maybe, like our interviewee and Jacob Sheads, they mostly just smiled and waved at each other, the kind gestures of friendly neighbors.

The exact experience of each individual N. Stratton Streeter in 1943 can never be fully teased into existence. The wealth and breadth of stories, along with a loss of evidence to the

process of time, makes that endeavor impossible. Some N. Stratton Streeters, such as Jacob Sheads, Glenn Guise, and Henry Bream, appear much more often in the documentary evidence, all due to their prominence within the community. Others' legacies are not so lucky. But, despite the challenges and setbacks, a picture of N. Stratton Street can be painted with the information that has trickled down through the decades. Looking back, one sees a street filled with both the joys of 1940s America, an era beyond the Depression, mixed in with the anxieties of the combined Nazi and Japanese threat. N. Stratton Street, and, as a whole, the town of Gettysburg, came together through their experiences at work, in the community, and with the war, and, in doing so, cultivated connections that spanned from cordial acquaintances to close friendships and made memories that should never be forgotten. That much stands clear today.

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