

LOUIS BERNHARD: JEWELER, INVENTOR,
ARCHITECT AND ARTIST

In Business in Town for Sixty-Seven Years

Introduction: *Louis Bernhard, one of Bloomsburg's prominent businessmen, was born in Bavaria, Germany, on June 18, 1839. He spent his boyhood years in New York and Wilkes-Barre before he came to Bloomsburg in 1856 at the age of seventeen. He had a very fine reputation as one of the best jewelers in the area. Also he was known as an inventor, artist, and as an architect, designing several homes in Bloomsburg. He died at the age of eighty-seven at his home, 37 East Fifth Street, on May 23, 1927. The newspaper article comes from The Morning Press, December 15, 1923.*

"Yes, it was more than sixty-seven years ago [in 1856] that I first landed in Bloomsburg." Yesterday remarked Louis Bernhard, jeweler, inventor, architect and artist, now in his eighty-fifth year and the sole survivor in business of the generation that laid the foundation for Bloomsburg's development of today.

"The station in those days was down at East street, and I first landed in Bloomsburg after night when I was about seventeen years of age. Norman Hendershott was the station agent then. I looked around and the only buildings I could see were those along Furnace Row, near McKelvey-Neal furnace. I inquired whether that was Bloomsburg, and was told it was not: that I should get in the hack and that would take me to Bloomsburg. I got in but we had gone only about a hundred feet when the horses went on the rampage and began to kick and tear around so much that I got out. It was too much for me. I walked up to the town then. A few years ago I related my experience in first entering Bloomsburg and 'Bill' Gilmore spoke up and said: 'And I was driving the team that night; I remember it well.'"

"Yes, indeed, Bloomsburg has changed since the day I opened up for business in the Jack Evans building at the [southeast] corner of Iron and Main Streets. He had bought it just before I landed in Bloomsburg and everybody was declaring what a fool he was for paying \$3,000 for that corner. Now I guess they wouldn't call him a fool. Yes, indeed, times have changed."

"Do you know that I often wish the old log cabin that stood for many years where the building occupied by the Economy Store now stands, had been let stand. What an old landmark that would have been by this time! A family lived in it for many years."

He chanced to glance across the street and saw the office of Harry S. Barton. "That was a saddler shop for many years," he said. "It was later that the Bloomsburg Banking Company had its place of business there."

Then his mind turned to the industries Bloomsburg had when he arrived in town. They included the Irondale furnace, McKelvey-Neal furnace, Simon Shieve's factory stood at the [southwest] corner of Main and Iron Streets and the Moss car shops in the building now occupied by the Weis Store.

"Many's the time," he said, "that I have seen the horses pull the finished flat cars down from the Moss shops to the railroad. George Hassert, Sr. learned his trade with Moss and it was the experience he gained there that resulted in the establishment of the plant of Harman & Hassert."

He commented upon the fact that in those early days Rod Drinker lived far down East street and walked every day from the Irondale furnace to his East street home.

Mr. Bernhard was exactly thirty years of age when he moved into the comfortable home on Fifth street which he still owns and which he had then just completed. That was more than fifty-four years ago. At that time Dr. Schuyler, who was in the lumber business, was building the residence now owned by Miss Sarah I Van Tassel, and those were the only two residences on the street. It was some time later that Mr. Bernhard designed for John A. Funston the residence of Mrs. S. C. Creasy at Fifth and Iron streets, and owned for many years by Mr. Funston's son-in-law, Paul E. Wirt.

There was one thing in those days that were a usual occurrence and of which we don't have much now. Then we had fights – street fights and lots of them. When the miners and iron workers got filled up with drink, trouble could be expected and it usually came."

Considering his years, Mr. Bernhard is enjoying exceptional health and bids fair to continue to be for years to come the eldest figure for continuous years of business in all this part of the state.