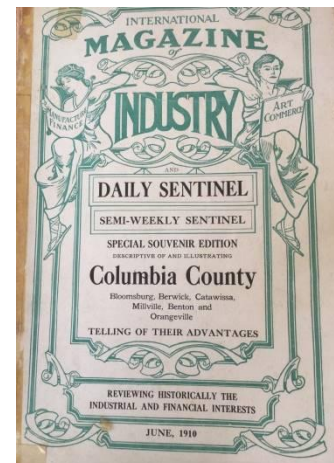


The City Hotel
By Dani Crossley
(as told to her by Rod Erwine)



Living in Bloomsburg today, one would be very surprised to know that in 1910 there were eight hotels in the town: City Hotel, East End Hotel, Exchange Hotel, Central Hotel, Hotel Irving, Hotel Heddings, Hotel Hilday and St. Elmo Hotel. Rod Erwine's great-grandfather, William "Old Bill" Hartzell was the proprietor of the City Hotel at 125 West Main Street, Bloomsburg for about thirty years at the turn of the 20th century. It was located at the northeast corner of Main Street and Murray Avenue, where Clancy's Restaurant used to be and the West End Ale House is now. As noted in Andre Dominguez's research on Bloomsburg Hotels, from a 1910 publication, "Magazine of Industry, Special Souvenir Edition, Columbia County," we learn that:

A leading hostelry in the City Hotel, owned by William A. Hartzell, with his son, George W. Hartzell, as clerk. The City Hotel was established over twenty years ago by George W. Sterner, who conducted it until 1895, when the present owner purchased the premises and has conducted the house ever since that time. The City is modern in its appointments and has ample bath facilities and seventeen sleeping rooms which are well furnished. The dining room is a model and the menu is the best the market affords. The office is pleasantly arranged, and the bar is one of the best in the city, and supplied with the choicest of imported and domestic wines, liquors and cigars. Mr. Hartzell well understands the wants of his patrons and is in all respects an ideal host and with his son's assistance and the courteous help employed makes this hotel one of the most popular in this part of the state. The building, as will be seen by the accompanying cut, is a modern three-story brick, centrally located in the heart of the business section, and almost directly across the street from the electric railway depot. Mr. Hartzell is a native of Danville, where he spent his boyhood days, but has been a resident of Bloomsburg since 1876. First he was in the draying [Drayman: One who drives a long strong cart without fixed sides for carrying heavy loads] business, then he conducted a livery stable for 13 years before purchasing his present property and for some time ran a stable in connection with his hotel. He is a great lover of horses and owns some fine, fast and stylish drivers at the present time. As a judge of horses he has



few equals and during his life has owned and driven a good many of the fast ones on the racing tracks throughout the country.



As was the custom, William Hartzell and his family resided in the hotel while he was proprietor. Old Bill's son, George W. Harzell, was the clerk; wife, Hannah Jane, was the cook/chef and daughter-in-law, Cora Kline Hartzell, was the waitress in the "saloon" and the chambermaid. It was not unusual at all for the hotels at the time to have a restaurant/saloon on the premises and, as it is today, *The saloon at the City Hotel* with (l-r) the bartender, George W. Harzell, and William A. Hartzell

it was the main source of income. Old Bill took all his meals at the hotel, by himself. His wife would cook them and his daughter-in-law would serve them. On holidays (Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas), he would invite his family to join him at table and they were delighted to do so.

The hotel was by the alley, with a livery stable behind it. WCNR was in the building and the Morning Press occupied the east end of the block. William was a great lover of horses and had a great talent with them. He often could be found at the Fairgrounds working out with his horses and he entered many area races.



William Hartzell with his horses

From a Morning Press article dated 13 Dec 1941:

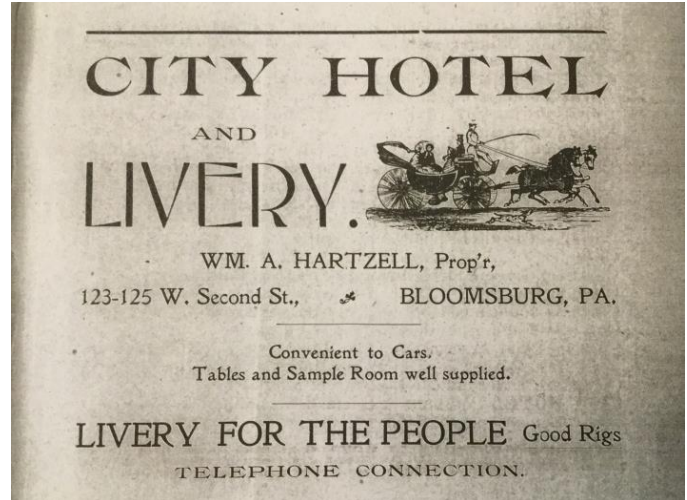
...When it is read that he has driven a horse ever since he was old enough to drive, that in more than forty years he was never without a race horse or two, and frequently a team besides, there can be formed an idea of his fondness for a horse—a fondness that made him a familiar figure behind his horses for many, many years.

Holds Sleighing Record

When the winter's first snow came in the old days the familiar jingle of the sleigh bells

was heard when there was not an inch of snow on the paving, and everybody knew who was in the sleigh without looking. Of course it was Mr. Hartzell, who, so far as he could recall when we last talked to him was the first Bloomsburger out in a sleigh each winter for forty years.

Life was interesting growing up in a hotel. For Rod's mother, Helen ("Pinkie"), and her one-year-old sister, Hilda, Main Street was their playground. Their playmates on Main Street were Keller Pursel and Joe Conner, among others. When the Vaudeville performers would come to town, all the hoteliers would send surreys/carriages to the DL&W depot at 7th and Market Streets to meet the performers to compete for their business. Traveling salesmen were also regular customers and often became good friends of the family. A Mr. Slothauer used to visit the family even after they were no longer owners of the hotel. He was a traveling artist who painted the Christmas scene on the mirror shown in the saloon photo upper left. Fond memories in addition to china and whiskey bottles with the hotel name on them remain. Here is the hotel's ad in the 1901 Bloomsburg Town Directory.



The City Hotel, perhaps decked out for the 1902 Centennial

Back in the early 1900s, long before instant social media, the Morning Press received the latest news over the wire and used a bullhorn to announce important events out their second story window in their building at the end of the block. In 1918, when they announced the armistice on November 11, crowds formed a snake and danced right up Main Street!

In January 1920, the 18th Amendment took effect. Prohibition was now in force and that signaled the beginning of the decline of the prosperity of the City Hotel. William Hartzell sold the hotel in the mid-1920s and son George and family went to live on East Street. This is the residence Rod remembers visiting in his youth. William Andrew Hartzell, b. 1/8/1851, the son of William and Martha Clark Hartzell died on January 1st, 1925 of apoplexy. He is buried in Old Rosemont. His death certificate indicates that he was a retired landlord at 123 W. Main Street at the time of his death. His wife,

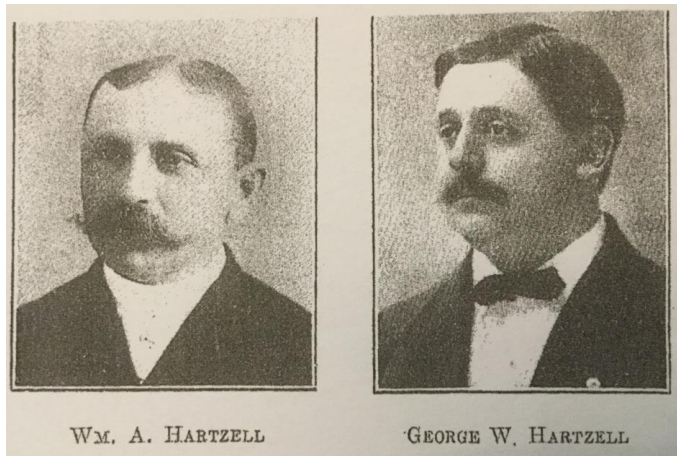


Hannah Jane Brewer, died 9/10/1939 and is buried with her husband in Old Rosemont.

William and Hannah were the parents of four children: George Washington Hartzell, b. 9/29/1874; Martha G. Hartzell, b. 5/13/1876; Charles W. Hartzell, b. 2/18/1878; and Margaret E. Hartzell, b. 11/13/1879. George W. and Cora Kline Hartzell, Rod's grandparents, were the parents of four children also: Hilda, b. 1909; Helen (Rod's mother), 1910-1948; Georgiana (1912-1913—died of chicken pox and pneumonia and is buried with her grandparents in Old Rosemont); and Bill, b. 1914, who married Olga and had two children: Patricia and Douglas Hartzell. At left is a photo of Cora Kline Hartzell in front of the hotel. Below are William and George Hartzell.

After the close of the hotel,

George was a notions salesman. He lived next to his sister Martha G. Hartzell Splain on East Street. He died in 1945 of a thrombosis. Cora died in 1966. Their daughter Helen married Warren 'Bud' Erwine and Rod and Gary, his brother, are their sons. Thank you for sharing your story about your family and the City Hotel, Rod.



Hilda and Helen Hartzell, circa 1912.



William "Old Bill" Hartzell