



Legislator Occupations: Hotel Operators in the Pennsylvania House

Historically, Pennsylvania's Representatives have hailed from a diverse array of occupations. Periodically, the House Archives newsletter showcases the



Green's Hotel, Philadelphia, circa 1900-1920 (Free Library of Philadelphia).

backgrounds that have led 300 years' worth of Members to service in the House, such as our recent piece on farmers-turned-legislators. From lawyers and coal miners to physicians and jewelers, the membership of the House has been comprised of a wide variety of professions. In this issue, we'll be taking a look at

some of the Representatives who have also been hotel workers, operators, and owners, nearly 20 of whom we have been able to identify to date, who served between 1824 and 1950.

This issue also includes some recent research on the patchwork of hotels, boarding houses, and other temporary residences that provided nineteenth century Representatives with a home base while they conducted government business in Harrisburg. In these years, travel from the corners of the Commonwealth took significantly



Bedford Springs Hotel, early 20th century (Omni Bedford Springs Resort)

longer—sometimes days—and each session, manuals and legislative directories recorded the temporary residences of members, providing contact information so that legislators, staff, and members of the public could reach them during the term.

William A. Upshur (1894-1963), a World War I veteran and graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Eckels School of Embalming, represented Philadelphia in the PA House from 1947-1948. Upshur was employed as an undertaker for much of his life, but also spent time as a clerk and porter at Green's Hotel in Philadelphia, one of the city's most prominent hotels and bars, which stood at the corner of Eighth and Chestnut Streets on property that once belonged to the prominent Philadelphia Shippen family.



William A. Upshur circa 1947 (PA Manual).

Joseph Taylor Alsip (1846-1914) worked as a clerk for the Pennsylvania Railroad prior to beginning his political career. He also managed the famous Bedford Springs Hotel (left), known for being the summer vacation destination of President James Buchanan for 40 years, for several of

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which it served as the “Summer White House.” Numerous other U.S. Presidents, including Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Dwight Eisenhower, also stayed there. In 1858, it became the site of the first transatlantic cable message ever to be transmitted, when President Buchanan received a message from England’s Queen Victoria. Alsip also owned and operated the Arandale Hotel, and represented Bedford County from 1903 to 1906.

Sharpless Morgan Dietz (1867-1931) was born in Montour County, and represented it from 1923-1926, but only after a career as a rolling mill employee and fireman and engineer on the T and P Railroad in Texas. He was the proprietor of the Riverview Hotel in Danville for 23 years and also owned and operated Glendower House for nine years.



Sharpless Morgan Dietz circa 1923 (PA Manual)

Asa A. Weimer (1858-1959), a livestock farmer, managed the Weimer Machine Works and Weimer Chain and Iron Company



Asa A. Weimer circa 1917 (PA House Archives)

in addition to his hotel proprietorship with the Hotel Conewago Company. He also owned and operated Lebanon’s Hotel Weimer, and represented Lebanon County in the House from 1915-1918.

James Joseph Dunn (1864-1934) was born in Ireland and served in the United States Army during WWI. He worked in a coal mine, a cotton factory, as a store clerk, and as a builder and contractor before beginning a political career in Nanty Glo in Cambria County. There

he operated the Home Hotel, and represented Cambria County in the House from 1909-1912.

Edwin Peters (1853-1925) was born in Bushkill and attended Pennington Institute, Wyoming Seminary, and Eastman’s College before becoming a farmer. He also helped to run the family business, a top summer resort destination near Bushkill Falls, Peters House (right), and represented Pike County from 1913 to 1916.



Lobby of Hotel Weimer, Lebanon, Pennsylvania

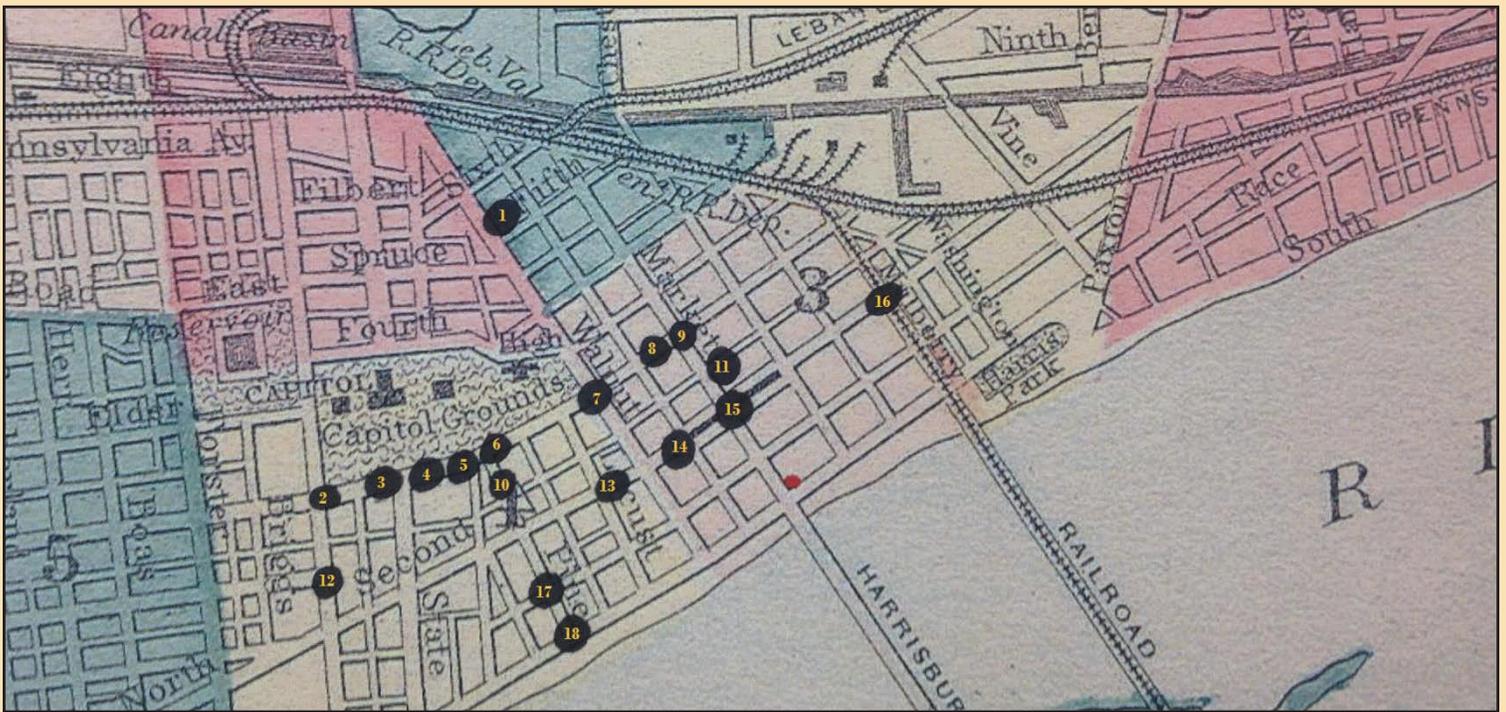


THE HOME HOTEL, NANTY-GLO, PENNA.



Spruce Cabin Inn, Canadensis, Pa.





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|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. United States Hotel | 7. State Capitol Hotel | 13. Miss Leibrick's |
| 2. Mrs. Gill's | 8. Harris House | 14. Globe Inn |
| 3. Miss Allen's | 9. Lochiel Hotel | 15. Jones House |
| 4. Hutchison's Hotel | 10. Miss Allen's | 16. Mrs. Johnson's |
| 5. 402 N. 3rd Street | 11. Bolton Hotel | 17. Executive Mansion |
| 6. 312 N. 3rd Street | 12. Pennsylvania House | 18. Mrs. Espy's |

Above: Map of Harrisburg circa 1900 (Digital Harrisburg). All postcards pictured here are privately held.

Plotted on this map of Harrisburg are the most prominent locations where Members of the Pennsylvania House lodged during sessions between 1866 and 1873. Each January, at the start of a new session, the city awaited news of where the Representatives would be housed, and local hotels and boarding houses were proud to announce the arrival of their state guests, as shown here. One of the most prominent residences was the Bolton Hotel, which housed dozens of Representatives each session. The Bolton, where Charles Dickens stayed during his first American tour in 1842, was known for attracting high profile visitors. Smaller establishments run by city residents, often socially prominent widows, were also common. Mary H. Espy, for example, was the operator of a large boarding house at the corner

Of the Senators and members of the House of Representatives, the Lochiel Hotel has 8 Senators and 15 Representatives; the Bolton House has 12 Senators and 27 Representatives; the Jones House has 2 Senators and 14 Representatives; the Keystone House has 2 Senators and 12 Representatives; the State Capital has 3 Senators and 16 Representatives; the United States Hotel has 1 Senator and 5 Representatives; Mrs. Espy has 2 Senators, and 3 Representatives; the Pennsylvania House has 1 Representative; Miss Gill has 2 Representatives, and Miss Allen has 2 Representatives; Mrs. Johnson has 1 Senator and 1 Representative.

Harrisburg Telegraph, January 3, 1872



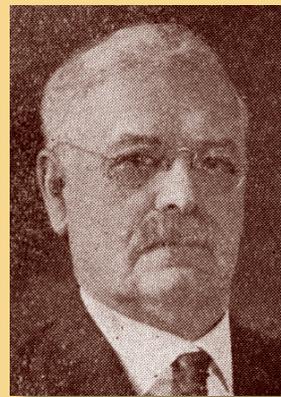
of Front and Pine Streets, and was well known for her home's comfortable parlor and literary conversation. Her husband, Prof. James P. Espy, was one of the founders of modern meteorology.

In the late nineteenth century, the legislative season occupied much of the capital's social calendar. Prominent hotels served as landmarks in this era and provided home bases for legislators from far-flung and nearby counties to meet and conduct business in the manner of the day.

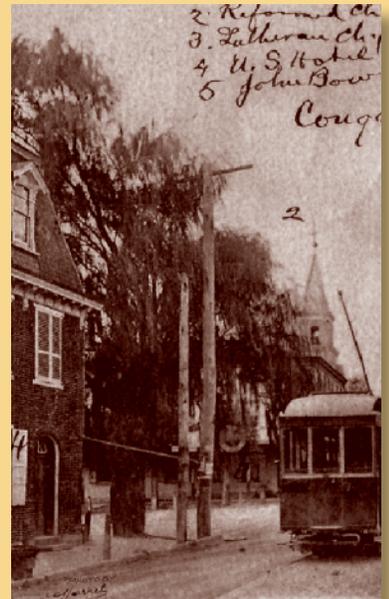
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The following individuals who served in the House prior to 1950 were also involved in the hotel business in establishments across the entire state.

- James N. Place (Monroe County, 1903-1906), hotel proprietor
- George T. Weingartner (Lawrence County, 1905-1908, 1941-1942), Director, New Castle Hotel Company
- George B. Mellott (Fulton County, 1913-1918, 1937-1938), proprietor, Mellott Hotel
- John F. Mannion (Lackawanna County, 1911-1914), hotel proprietor
- Ellsworth Kuhns (Lehigh County, 1911-1914), hotel proprietor
- John M. Holland (Lackawanna County, 1909-1910), hotel proprietor
- Frederick John Broad (Westmoreland County, 1937-1940), hotel proprietor
- Henry G. Walter (Lebanon County, 1889-1894), proprietor, United States Hotel, Lebanon, PA
- Sidney J. Peale (Sullivan County, 1937-1940), hotel proprietor
- Richard Irwin (Northampton County, 1921-1922), hotel keeper
- Fernand Thomassy (Washington County, 1947-1948), hotel proprietor
- Charles Gleim (Lebanon County, 1824-1826), hotel keeper
- Patrick J. Graham (Schuylkill County, 1907-1908), proprietor, Ferguson Hotel
- Wesley J. Price (Monroe County, 1907-1908, 1913-1914), owner, Spruce Cabin Inn (page 2)



George B. Mellott circa 1937 (PA Manual)



U.S. Hotel, Lebanon, operated by Henry G. Walter. D. Brown, Myerstown and Eastern Lebanon County (Arcadia Publishing, 2013)

DID YOU KNOW?

Harrisburg's Jones House was a stop on President Abraham Lincoln's inaugural tour in 1861. A historical marker stands at the former site of this hotel on the southeast corner of Market and Second Streets, where Lincoln gave a speech to an audience of 30,000. He was scheduled to spend the night at Jones House but news of a potential assassination attempt changed the president-elect's schedule. The Jones House building, which later became the Leland and then Commonwealth Hotel, was demolished in 1990.