DEMUTH'S
1770

The History of a Lancaster Tradition
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Being a Brief History of the Demuth Tobacco Shop which was Founded at Lancaster in the Province of Pennsylvania in the Year of our Lord 1770

Written and Compiled by HENRY C. DEMUTH

1925
THE FIRST GENERATION

The Demuth Tobacco Shop was established in 1770 by Christopher Demuth, the paternal great-grandfather of the present proprietor. This was in the days of cocked hats and powdered wigs, when snuff-taking was not only a consolation of the poor but a cherished foible of the rich and blue-blooded. So that when Christopher Demuth opened his little shop in Lancaster, snuff was undoubtedly his most popular article for sale. According to the records, he was a manufacturer and vendor of both snuff and cigars. He carried on the business most successfully for 165 years and in 1814, having earned for
himself a sufficient competence, and finding himself drawing near the sunset of life, he sold his business to his son, Jacob Demuth.

Christopher Demuth had an honorable military record, serving as a private in Capt. Jacob Krug’s Company, of Colonel Matthias Slaugh’s Battalion, Lancaster County Riflemen, in 1777.

It is worthy of note that the founder of the business, Christopher Demuth, started the business during the rule of King George III and maintained it through the stirring days of the Revolution. His period of ownership saw the successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War, the birth of the United States and a greater part of the second war with Great Britain.

OLD LANCASTER COURT HOUSE

The old Court House was erected 1784-1787 and stood in the center of the Square. The State Legislature met here from 1799 to 1812 when Lancaster was the capital of Pennsylvania. The building was replaced in 1852 by the present Court House standing at Duke and East King streets.

The above is a fac-simile of part of a receipt sent to Jacob Demuth by Tunis & Way, Philadelphia brokerage house. Here are listed the bank notes received and after each is written the discount it bore. There was no stabilized currency at that time and very little par money. The Steuben-ville note was returned because the bank was “unchartered and no good.” This gives some idea of the difficulty of transacting business during that period.
THE SECOND GENERATION

Jacob Demuth assumed proprietorship of the business and conducted it just as his father had conducted it before him. He continued to operate the store and the factory up to the time of his death in 1842—a period of 28 years. He had assumed ownership just as the War of 1812 was being concluded. Other significant historical events during his proprietorship were the Southern Indian Wars, the beginning of the anti-slavery movement, the Black Hawk Indian War, the annexation of Texas and the beginning of our dispute with Mexico.

JACOB, SON OF CHRISTOPHER
1814-1842

LAWRENCE I. DEMUTH, SON OF JACOB
1843-1853

THE SECOND STORE
THE THIRD GENERATION

EMMANUEL, SON OF JACOB
1842-1843 and 1853-1864

Emmanuel E. Demuth, oldest son of Jacob, succeeded to the business on the death of his father. But after operating it for about one year, he sold it to his brother Lawrence I. Demuth. In 1853 Lawrence resold the property and business to Emmanuel and the latter continued in proprietorship until 1864. At that date, the business was purchased by a younger brother, Henry C. Demuth, who continued in business until his death, which occurred in 1906. This generation witnessed the Mexican War, the Civil War, the reconstruction of the South and the Spanish-American War.
Respected Friend

March 10, 1819

Philadelphia

Thesegays orders from Maryland the Spanish Tobacco are ready but we have not succeeded in procuring a conveyance for them by a Waggonee that we are acquainted with. If any of the Waggonees known by you are coming to town you had better give an order for them. We received by your letter of 23 February last one hundred fifty dollars for what we sold five dollars fifty cents each leaving 144.50 at your credit. Tobacco are very scarce at this time - Kentucky 10 to 12/2, Virginia 12 to 25 cts. and the old about same price - we expect it will be lower in the course of a few weeks more especially when the Kentucky begins to come to market in May next.

Yours ever, 

[Signature]

This letter was written to Jacob Demuth by Tunis & Way, of Philadelphia, and illustrates the difficulties of transportation in the early nineteenth century. Merchants in Philadelphia who sold their goods to out-of-town customers had to depend on the slow and rather irregular movements of “Waggoneers” for delivery of their wares.

HENRY C., SON OF JACOB
1864-1906
One of the most treasured possessions of the Demuth Store is the original sign, a carved and painted wooden figure made in 1770. It is said to be one of the finest examples of Colonial carving in existence, portraying a typical gentleman of pre-Revolutionary days. It now stands in an honored niche in the present store.
THE DEMUTH SHOP AND LANCASTER

The Demuth shop has been much more to the community than a tobacco shop for years past. It has drawn across its threshold representative men of the city who there enjoyed many hours of pleasant social intercourse.

From time immemorial, the Demuth shop has been, after the old fashion that changeth not, much more than an ordinary snuff counter and tobacco box. It has been the resort of a notable clientele. In years gone by, the aristocrats of an earlier day, soldiers and statesmen, wits and beaux, lawyers, doctors and nearly always at least one smoke-perfumed clergyman, delighted in gathering there and discussing matters of large and small concern. Affairs of

state and of society, of funds and finance, law and literature, politics and picnics were touched upon with equal gravity and in the friendly atmosphere of tobacco smoke.

Here Justice Jasper Yeates, of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, bought his Rapppee. Here President James Buchanan, laid in his stock of fine cigars for guests at "Wheatland."

Today, the present Demuth Tobacco Shop, more imposing than any of the preceding stores stands as a monument to a worthy family tradition being carried on in a worthy manner, a tradition that has few parallels in American history.

CHRISTOPHER, SON OF HENRY C.

Who served in the Rainbow Division and in the Army of Occupation during the Great War. He is now active in the operation of the business.
THE FOURTH GENERATION

Upon the death of Henry C. Demuth the business passed into the hands of his sons Ferdinand A. and Henry C. These brothers formed a partnership, which marked the first time in the history of the business that it had been under joint ownership. It seemed that the famous old tobacco shop was fated to be operated under single control, however, for five years later, on January 26, 1911, Ferdinand A. Demuth died. This left the business to the management of Henry, and he purchased his brother's interest from the estate. Since that time, H. C. Demuth has been conducting the time-honored business under his own name.

THE BUSINESS TODAY

While the establishment at 114 East King Street is conducted as a retail store and has the appearance of a modern tobacco shop, the manufacturing end has never been discontinued. Mr. Demuth still makes several brands of Maccabey and Rappee Snuffs and scrap tobaccos. Demuth's "Golden Lion" and "Mia Querida" cigars have been manufactured for many years and enjoy a wide popularity, not only in the city of Lancaster but outside the boundaries of the state.