

J. F. Groover and Bro. Store, Lewisburg, PA

By George A. Reish with Kristin J. Gibson

J. Frank Groover (1882-1968) started a dry goods store with his brother, Obed E. "Obe" Groover (1884-1973) in 1904 in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. They opened at 420 Market Street and stayed there for 19 or 20 years before moving over to 434 Market Street in the same building until closing the store in 1947. The official name was J. F. Groover and Bro. but people referred to it as "Groover Brothers."

The store's location was ideal. The railroad station was only a block away. Railroad passengers who stepped off the train could stop in and get a cold drink or candy. People would see the store on the way to the Post Office next door or the hotel a few blocks farther away. Market Street was a dirt road at the time.

When the brothers leased the space, they found drums of gasoline in the basement. Their insurance company wouldn't allow them to keep such a flammable substance in the basement of the store, so they rented land for \$5 a year to store the gasoline and became the only filling station between Milton to the north and Sunbury to the south. Automobiles were just starting out at that point.

The "Groover Brothers" store sold everything from men's clothes, thread, and cloth by the yard, to shoes, candy, and canned foods. They even sold local farm products, including lard and eggs. Buster Brown Shoes was a well-known brand for children's shoes. They also sold Chicago Royal Blue Shoes.

One of the candies sold at the store was teaberry candy. Filling a special wooden scoop from the teaberry jar cost one cent. Teaberry was a local remedy for upset stomach before products such as Tums or Alka-seltzer existed.

The store was a favorite fashion store of Bucknell college women. Even though the Groover Bros. store only sold clothing for men, George A. Reish remembers seeing the college women in the mid-1940s buy and wear men's clothing: ready-made men's white shirts were purchased over-sized and worn outside their jeans, with the shirt sleeves turned up with big cuffs. The jeans were about four inches above the shoes, and the outfit was trimmed off with white bobby socks and black-and-white saddle shoes.

Advertisements could be placed in several ways. The side of the store had a large advertisement painted onto it. Advertisements were also put on the delivery wagon - Obe Groover delivered goods to customers by horse-drawn wagon. Sometimes, an ad could even be put on the horse!

Groover Brothers printed calendars for their customers, and handheld fans as advertisements. The fans were especially useful on hot summer days before air conditioning was available.

The J. F. Groover and Bro. business lasted 43 years.

This, many other Lewisburg businesses and more can be seen in the upcoming book *Lewisburg*, one of the Images of America series by Arcadia Publishing, and soon available from the Union County Historical Society (570-524-8666). The 128-page volume, authored by Lois Huffines and Richard Sauers, will show through period photographs the history of Lewisburg from its earliest beginnings until recent times.



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