



Shaun Harris, Tim White and TJ Thomas.



BEER FRONTIER

On Allison Hill, three men are on track to open PA's first black-owned craft brewery.

BY LIZZY HARDISON

Shaun Harris was watching TV in his Harrisburg home when he caught an episode of “Moonshiners,” a show about illegal whiskey production in the Appalachian Mountains. As he witnessed scofflaws in rural Virginia distill liquor from giant drums of hog feed, Harris thought to himself, “You can do that?”

As it turns out, you can't. A quick Google search told Harris that brewing liquor in America is illegal without a license. Brewing beer, on the other hand, is fair game. Harris promptly bought a simple home-brewing kit, made his first batch of beer and “was immediately blown away.”

Harris roped his friends JT Thomas and Tim White into joining him for a daylong home-brew session. They brought one of their first kegs to a summer barbeque, where they offered it to a dozen friends with a disclaimer—they didn't know how it would taste.

“Six gallons were gone in like, 20 minutes,” said Thomas. “People had one and wanted another and another and another.”

Harris describes that barbeque as a light-bulb moment. He didn't know yet what craft beer was, but he did know that the ingredients and production that went into his keg didn't cost much.

“Where we're from, you try to monetize everything—it's called being a hustler,” Harris said. “We thought, we can do something here.”

That was four years ago. Since then, Harris, White and Thomas started making beer as the Harris Family Brewery, and they just secured a location for a taproom on 13th and Market Streets, in South Allison Hill. They still need to obtain a brewer's license and retrofit the empty space with brewing equipment and seating, but they're hoping to sell the first beers over their 10-seat bar in early 2019.

When it opens, Harris Family Brewery will be the first craft brewery in Allison Hill and likely the first black-owned brewery in Pennsylvania. Harris hopes that the business will inject new life into its neighborhood and broaden Harrisburg's craft beer scene beyond its downtown and Midtown epicenter.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

The guys at Harris Family Brewing don't just see their new business venture as a way to do what they love—it's also an opportunity to bring a new base of consumers into a lucrative market.

Craft beer sales in the United States topped \$26 billion last year and account for 13 percent of the country's total beer industry. But African Americans, who make up 14 percent of the country's total population, only consumed 4 percent of its craft beer in 2014, according to a Nielsen study.

Mike Potter is the editor of Black Brew Culture, a Pittsburgh-based online magazine dedicated to advancing African Americans in the craft beer industry. Potter said that people of color haven't traditionally been exposed to craft beer, in part because the industry hasn't invested in marketing to minority customers.

Craft beer consumption among blacks is on the rise, but Potter said that fewer people of color enter the industry as brewers and brewery owners.

“We’re getting to a point where there are more and more of people of color in craft beer, but they’re not getting the same amount of exposure due to lack of resources,” Potter said. “We’re playing a bit of catch up.”

Since national brewer associations don’t track the demographics of brewery owners, Black Brew Culture keeps its own tally. Potter estimates that people of color own roughly 50 of the country’s 2,800 craft breweries, and he’s certain that Harris Family Brewery will be the first in Pennsylvania.

Harris says he’s used to being one of the only black people at craft beer tastings and breweries. To him, that’s not a problem so much as a sign of untapped potential. Shortly after they brewed their first successful batch of beer, White pointed out to Harris that they would have a niche market for their product.

“I thought, ‘You’re telling me that we have a whole market that doesn’t know there’s a product out there that is this big?’” Harris said. “I say, ‘Let’s open that market up.’”

To that end, their brewery location will be key. Though the brewers initially had their eyes on property in Steelton, serendipity led them to their spot above a laundromat at 13th and Market. It’s snug, but Harris said they hope to open “a nano-brewery in the truest sense,” meaning that all of the small-batch beer they produce will be sold on site. The space is just big enough to accommodate their current home-brew set up and a 10-seat bar. They don’t plan to serve any food, but do anticipate a busy carryout business once they start selling bottles and cans.

Harris Family Brewing will start small, but its proprietors are already charting plans for growth. They’ll start with an off-site canning facility once the taproom on Market Street takes off. They then hope to distribute their beer across the state and grow their presence through festivals and industry expos. They’ve already sampled their beers during Harrisburg Beer Week and also held a pop-up tasting in Strawberry Square with local event organizer and promoter Sara Bozich.

They’ll also bring kegs to Steelton Community Day on July 23 and will hit the road for the Aug. 11 FreshFest, a black brewing festival in Pittsburgh hosted by Black Brew Culture.

STRANGEST INDUSTRY

If you already own a brewery in Harrisburg, it could be easy to see a new one as competition. But that’s not the case for Brandalynn Armstrong, co-owner of Zeroday Brewing Co. on Reily Street. Armstrong, who’s also on the board of the PA Brewers Association, thinks that expanding the craft beer market into a new neighborhood can only help Harrisburg’s existing breweries.

“Bridging neighborhoods is incredibly important, as long as it’s done through responsible development,” Armstrong said. “And what better way than using craft beer to link our neighborhoods together?”

She and Harris also think that each individual brewery in the city benefits from customers having more options. Harris hopes that Harris Family Brewery will introduce many of its customers to craft beer, encouraging them to “expand their palates” and try other beers in the city.

Harris, who works full-time in corporate IT when he’s not brewing beer, called craft beer “the strangest industry you ever saw—it’s more like kids on a playground than corporate America.”

He’s been shocked by his company’s warm welcome into the local brewers’ network, which he described as more collaborative than cutthroat. Harris Family and Zeroday recently held a joint brew day to develop a collaboration beer, which they’ll debut on July 3 during a screening of “Poured in PA,” a documentary about the statewide craft beer industry.

Harris, White and Thompson learned to brew by watching YouTube videos and have honed their craft through trial and error. They developed some of their favorite recipes through pure experimentation, like when they made a Christmas stout (which they dubbed “Black Santa”) by fermenting the ingredients for fruitcake—currants, raisins, sour cherries and ginger spice.

Now that they’ve secured seed funding for their site and begun renovations, the trio is focused on perfecting their recipes and setting a menu for the taproom. Since they’re playing the long game, they’re already thinking about potential businesses that they could spawn by bringing craft beer to a new neighborhood and customer base.

“In five or six years, I want to look back and say, ‘We blew the scene up,’” Harris said.

Potter agreed that Harris Family could inspire other people of color to pursue careers in brewing or brewery ownership.

“I think it’ll be a huge blueprint for brewers across the country trying to get into the game,” Potter said. “Being the first is a big deal.” **B**

For more information on Harris Family Brewery, visit harrisfamilybrewery.com or the Facebook page.

Photos by Billy Hicks.



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Josh Longo's future was written on a napkin. One day, he scribbled the word "cheesesteak" on a cocktail napkin, and when he came home from work that night, his fiancée Kerri Little saw the note. She grew suspicious.

"What are you up to?" she asked him.

Longo admitted that, indeed, he had an idea. He knew that the owner of The Harrisburger was closing his hamburger stand in the Broad Street Market, and he wanted to do something with the space. Cheesesteaks seemed like a natural choice.

Just a few months later, The Cheesesteak Guy opened in the back of the market's stone building. Since July, co-owners Longo, a former manager at Zeroday Brewing Co., and Little, a Florida transplant, have been filling a niche by churning out the legendary sandwich to market patrons and passersby alike. They average about 100 cheesesteaks a day on market days.

Perhaps this quick success should come as no surprise, as Pennsylvania is practically synonymous with the word, "cheesesteak."

According to Philadelphia's official tourist site, the sandwich was invented in the 1930s by hot dog vendor Pat Olivieri in South Philadelphia. Olivieri was grilling beef from the butcher and placed it on an Italian roll. A passing cab driver caught a whiff and asked for the "steak sandwich."

The rest, as they say, is history.

Longo's personal history also indicates that he made the right choice to enter the cheesesteak biz.

His aunt, Stephanie Stence, owns Premier Caterers in Camp Hill. His uncle, Donny Brown, owns Black 'n Bleu in Mechanicsburg and formerly owned the Firehouse Restaurant in downtown Harrisburg.

Longo and Little took advantage of the family's institutional knowledge. They went to his aunt for advice before starting the business. They also credit Broad Street Market Manager Beth Taylor for supporting them as they worked through the process of getting up and running.

Since Longo had also worked at Zeroday's Outpost in the market, just a few feet from the new stand, he was intimately familiar with the location and its potential.

"I was eager to make cheesesteaks that are authentic, without cutting corners," he said.

The only corners that Longo and Little cut are the ones on the ends of the rolls they use for sandwiches, which makes them the perfect size. The owners tried out quite a few breads and dimensions before settling on Glassboro, N.J.-based Liscio's Bakery, whose slogan is, fittingly, "It Starts with the Bread." Liscio's is a cheesesteak fan favorite. So, Longo and Little have the bread delivered to their house between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. weekly.

"We had a visitor from south Jersey come to the stand one day, and she gave me her name and number and said, 'If you ever have rolls left over at the end of the day, can I buy them from you?'" Little said.

But there has been nothing to spare, not even the cut corners. Longo and Little donate those to fellow Broad Street vendors Raising the Bar bakery, which uses them for their bread pudding, and to Hummer's Meats, which puts them in their meatloaf.

Beyond the bread, Longo and Little emphasize the freshness of all the ingredients they use in their sandwiches.

They get to their stand at 6:45 a.m. every workday to hand-slice all of the ingredients, including mushrooms, onions and peppers. The shaved, choice ribeye is purchased from Warrington Farms in Dillsburg and broken down by hand. Their cheesesteaks also feature the ever-famous Cheez Whiz. But, to give it a creamier consistency, they add some sour cream. If patrons prefer another option, The Cheesesteak Guy also offers provolone, American, cheddar and pepper jack cheeses.

For those craving something other than a cheesesteak, Longo and Little make hamburgers with meat from Hummer's. It's another popular choice, as they sell about 25 burgers a day. They also serve breakfast sandwiches, grilled cheeses and BLTs.

"Midtown sucks you in," said Longo, reflecting on the jump to start and own a business in the popular, historic Harrisburg neighborhood. "You see the same people, and it's great. It's the only place we like to hang out."

Then Little added: "It feels good to be your own boss." **E**

The Cheesesteak Guy is located in the stone building of the Broad Street Market, Harrisburg. For more information, visit the Facebook page: The Cheesesteak Guy.

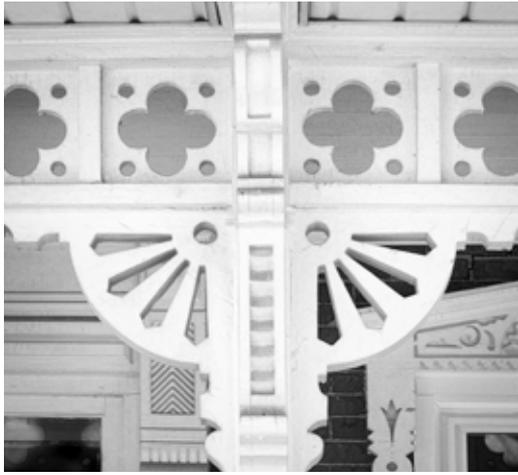
HAPPINESS IS A WARM BUN

Meaty, gooey delights at The Cheesesteak Guy.

BY ANN BETH KNAUS



Josh Longo and Kerri Little



THE BEVEL'S IN THE "DETAILS"

New exhibit casts a lens on Newport's architectural finery.

BY DON HELIN

In the early 19th and 20th centuries, Newport was the economic and industrial hub of Perry County.

The Pennsylvania canal system and the Pennsylvania Railroad brought prosperity to the eastern part of the county, and industry flourished. A housing boom resulted, and Victorian craftsmen created beautiful details for the buildings of Newport, which was home to canal boat captains, business owners and bankers.

"Despite floods and periodic economic downturns, magnificent examples of Victorian architecture survived in downtown Newport," said Roger Smith, former executive director of the Perry County Council of the Arts (PCCA).

Starting in early May, you can take an up-close look at these architectural flourishes, as PCCA opens the photo exhibit, "Downtown Details," in Landis House.

Local history buff Jane Hoover thought up the project to highlight the decorative elements so abundant in Newport's historic district, which is on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

"Sadly, many people walk the streets here in Newport and never look up to see the beautiful work these craftsmen did," Hoover said. "My concern was that the narrative developed by the National Park Service lacked history and visual appeal to help people realize the prize we have here. Additionally, the narrative lacked any photographs."

So, Hoover spoke with Smith, and he organized a group to review the town's historic buildings and deepen the existing narrative. The group included Hoover, Smith, photographer Irene VanBuskirk and Bryan Van Sweden, historic preservation specialist for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

"I had been taking photos of the buildings in Newport," VanBuskirk said. "Since the town had already inspired my artwork, I wanted to be involved. My intent in this project has been to create artful, rather than documentary, images."

One example is 51 S. Second St., once owned by Peter Schlomer, a 28-year-old immigrant from Germany, who arrived in Newport in 1889 and bought the lot from an A.B. Demaree. From his shop, Schlomer started out selling saddles and

harnesses and later expanded into clothing. The house reflects its dual use as a residence and shop.

This building has an elaborate frieze board under the eaves, brackets that seem to support the frieze and eaves, drip caps that surround the tops of the windows to protect the glass from rain, and gingerbread trim that takes its theme from natural forms. Local planing mills provided the high-quality woodwork needed for the elaborate ornamentation.

The PCCA show, which runs through early July, highlights 20 of these homes. The exhibit then moves to the Veterans Memorial Building in New Bloomfield and wraps up at Newport High School, so students can see and study examples of Victorian architecture. The exhibit is funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Moreover, Sunbury Press plans to publish a companion, travel-friendly paperback book highlighting the buildings. So, after seeing the photos, visitors can tour Newport and see the architecture for themselves.

"This exhibition continues the work of PCCA to highlight history through the arts," said Erika Juran, the current PCCA executive director, who emphasized the connection between the exhibit and Newport's bicentennial in 2020. "So, come and help us celebrate." 

"Downtown Details" runs May 4 to July 7 at Landis House, 67 N. Fourth Street, Newport. For more information, visit www.perrycountyarts.org or call 717-567-7023.

Sunbury Press may be reached at sunburypress.com or by calling 855-338-8359.



Photos from "Downtown Details," courtesy of PCCA.