

History of Dallastown Grocery Stores

Since the late 1800s, Dallastown supported a surprising number of small grocery stores within easy walking distance for their customers. One of the earliest was the Sechrist Brothers Butcher Shop which started in 1878 and is still in operation nearly 150 years later. Most, however, starting in the 1950s, fell victim to the competition provided by large, national chain stores within easy driving distance. By the 1980s, the last of these local food markets had closed.

Although details about the early grocery stores are somewhat sketchy, several patterns emerge. Not surprisingly, these stores tended to be family run. Leon, Stewart, and Pauline all worked in the Shenberger store. Four generations later Sechrist Brothers Butcher Shop is currently run by George III and Jacob II Sechrist.

Several chains existed in Dallastown. Stewart's, Heindel's and Shenberger's were Community Pure Food Stores which were a staple in York County in the 1940's and were was supplied by P.A. & S. Small Company of York, PA. Ehrhart's and Fife's were Yorktowne Service Stores. Knaper's was an Aunt Nellie's Food Store.

In the 1950s, Fife's and Ehrhart's advertised self-service and free delivery. Advertisements from that time include still popular brand names like Coca Cola, Royal Crown, and 7-Up sodas; Post Raisin Bran, Sugar Pops, and Frosted Flakes cereals, and Pensupreme and Warner's Ice Cream.

The eleven sites included in this tour represent those Dallastown grocery stores in existence and photographed by Richard Gemmill as they appeared in 1948. Some time later, Helen Fife Ehrhart compiled the original notes which were supplemented by Cathy Bankoske in 2022.