

Jacob A. Horn
(1849-1916)

Had you been living in Dover during the latter part of the Nineteenth Century and into the early Twentieth Century, the name of Jacob A. Horn would have been familiar to you. He has been called one of the leading businessmen in Dover and the surrounding area during that time period, having had a career spanning forty-six years. But let us go back further, to 1849.

Jacob A. Horn was born on September 1 of that year to German immigrant parents, Ludwig ("Lewis") and Elizabeth Lind Horn. He was the fourth son, and the fifth of their six children.

Jacob's father passed away in 1859. When Jacob was thirteen, he left school and began to work to help support the family. He started learning the malting trade. Six years later, he went to work at the Dover Blast Furnace and began saving his money. When Jacob was twenty-two, he was able to purchase one-third ownership in the canal boat "Hazel Dell," a venture he kept for two years. He also started to acquire real estate and began to accumulate his wealth.

On October 11, 1870, Jacob married for the first time. His bride was Caroline Baker, and they had three children - two sons and a daughter. Caroline passed away in 1876. In 1877, Jacob married his second wife, Elizabeth Schaffer Sykes. Together, they had five children - three sons and two daughters, making Jacob the father of eight.

In 1880, Jacob purchased properties in the Dover downtown area, improving and expanding his business investments. Initially, there were The Electric Sample Room (saloon), Bodego Restaurant, and City Bakery. Later, they became Horn's Place (Café), Horn's Hotel and Restaurant, and Horn's Bakery and Grocery Store. Their location was on the current site of the Chase Bank parking lot, facing West Third Street. These businesses adjoined the Horn residence, which was located to the left of the Café. Jacob was known as a jolly tavern keeper. Within the next six years, he also became the owner of two farms and a coal mine in Dover Township. Several years after that, he purchased and improved property on Factory Street (now Tuscarawas Avenue); this would become the location of The Sykes Company. The Sykes Company offered clothing, shoes and furnishings. It also housed The Sykes Store Bank, which was strictly a savings bank and was founded to encourage financial responsibility. He became known as a wise and insightful businessman.

Jacob A. Horn was very civic minded, which was reflected by his memberships in the Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Lieutenant Colonel of the Fifth Regiment of the Uniform Rank, and Elks. Along with his family, he was a member of St. John's Evangelical German Church. He was also a member of the German Working Men's Society, to whom he once delivered an address in German! Several of Jacob's children carried on his legacy of entrepreneurship and civic involvement.

Jacob served on the Dover Board of Education for nine consecutive years. It was during his tenure that Oak Grove School was built. He worked very hard to ensure that the building was built well and correctly.

Jacob's determination prevailed once more when a concrete bridge was to be built over the Tuscarawas River and Canal. The plan called for the bridge to be sixty feet wide, and the contract was awarded. However, strong efforts were made to reduce the width to forty-five feet. Along with another gentleman, Jacob obtained an injunction to prevent the change, and the bridge was built at the original sixty-foot width.

In 1890, Jacob went into partnership with Christian Deis and Phillip Scheffer to build The Big Four Opera House, after a fourth partner, Joseph Beiter, dropped out. The opera house hosted both local and traveling plays, orchestras and Vaudeville acts. The building in which it was located is still in existence, across West Third Street from where Jacob's three businesses stood. Then, in 1904, he was one of four Dover men who partnered to build the Tuscarawas Valley Brewing Company, which was said to have produced exceptional beer. Unfortunately for Jacob, the county went dry in 1908 and the brewery had no business. In addition, although the Big Four Opera House was important to the city, it was not profitable in terms of an investment and eventually went defunct. Jacob's considerable wealth was lost. People who knew Jacob were sorry about this turn of events for a man who was so committed to the welfare and progress of Dover. It was felt that after a lifetime of hard work, he should have been able to enjoy the fruits of his labor instead of having to begin again.

Jacob A. Horn died on November 17, 1916, at the age of sixty-seven. He is buried in Maple Grove Cemetery.