

# Excited about new development even though it means loss of family connection

The Bethlehem Gadfly 14-18 W. 3rd. St. March 16, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on 14-18 W. 3rd. St* 

*Joshua Pepper is a professor of physics and astronomy at Lehigh University and lives in West Bethlehem.*

Gadfly:

I'd like to comment about the proposed construction at 14-18 W. 3rd. St. I lived on the Southside for 5 years, moved to the Northside last year, and I often walk or bike to work past this location. The current buildings and lot are an eyesore, and the community would benefit from a new building. More residential units will increase foot traffic in the neighborhood and build a greater economic base for the Southside. I do hope that the new building will leave ample space on the sidewalk along 3rd St. for easy pedestrian traffic and will keep trees along the sidewalk. I especially hope that there will be ample bike rack space to encourage outdoor activity and reduce dependence on cars. And it is vital that the back of the building integrate well with the Greenway, and not impede its usage.

Much of the discussion at the Historic Conservation Commission meeting centered on the building height. I've always been a little puzzled by general concerns about height without specifying what it is about the height that is the problem. In this case, the building's shadow will be across 3rd St, not the Greenway or any residential buildings. A building that high will also draw the eye away from the Comfort Suites, which has a pretty unattractive exterior. A better point made at the meeting is that the new building should have a more broken up roof line, so that will not appear to be a massive monolith towering over the street, but would instead show more variation across the top. If necessary, I think it would be fine to trade off more height in exchange for a better shape of fit to the surrounding area. By making the height the key metric, we just force all buildings to look like a rectangular slab, since the developers have to stuff as much volume as they can under a given height to make it economically viable.

Finally, I have a personal connection to the current building. Although I was born and raised in Cleveland Heights, OH, my father attended Lehigh University, class of '59. Before that, my great-grandfather Aaron Goldberger lived at 14 W. 3rd St, with my great-grandmother Lillie, and 4 children, including my father's mother, when it was in the city of South Bethlehem. He was living there in 1911 when he became a naturalized American citizen. We have his naturalization certificate showing his address and family, and also that he was previously a subject of Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary. He came from Galicia in western Ukraine. I understand that he worked in one of the many small cigar factories in the Bethlehem area at the time.

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR**

To be given to the person  
Naturalized.

No. **165436**

Petition, Volume 2, page 127 Sub, Volume 7358, page 11

Description of holder: Age, 32 years; height, 5 feet, 7 inches; color, White; complexion, Dark; color of eyes, Brown; color of hair, Black; visible distinguishing marks, (none)

Name, age and place of residence of wife: Lillie age 28 years # 14 West 3<sup>rd</sup> St. So Beth Pa

Names, ages and places of residence of minor children: Milton age 6 years  
Bertha age 5 years, Hilda age 2 years, George age 1 year  
all reside at 14 West 3<sup>rd</sup> St. South Bethlehem Pa.

**ORIGINAL**

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA )  
COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON ) S.S.

Aaron Goldberger  
(Signature of holder.)

Be it remembered, that as a Regular term of the **COMMON PLEAS** court of **NORTHAMPTON COUNTY**, held at Easton on the 25 day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eleven Aaron Goldberger who previous to his naturalization was a subject of **FRANCIS JOSEPH, EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA AND APOSTOLIC KING OF HUNGARY**, at present residing at number 14 West 3<sup>rd</sup> St. street, South Bethlehem town of Pennsylvania State having applied to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, pursuant to law, and the court having found that the petitioner had resided continuously within the United States for at least five years and in this Territory for one year immediately preceding the date of the filing of his petition, and that said petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, had in all respects complied with the law in relation thereto, and that he was entitled to be so admitted, it was thereupon ordered by the said court that he be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of said court is hereunto affixed on the 25 day of September in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eleven and of our Independence the one hundred and thirty fifth.

Thomas A. L. Hoag  
**PROTHONOTARY.**  
(Official character of attester.)

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR**

While it would be sad to see a building with a family connection lost, the building is crumbling and falling down, and doesn't have any civic historical significance that I know of. And it will be wonderful to see that spot becoming part of a new building for people living in the area. I am excited to see this spot being developed with care and attention to the economic and environmental needs of the community.

Joshua Pepper