

3526 Jacob Street

The property on which this house stands, “Square 23, Lot 5, Ritchie City,” along with the adjacent Lot 6, were sold by John Morgan to Robert Hazlett Cummins on August 18, 1852 for a total of \$1000. Cummins, a medical doctor, lived at 1314 Chapline Street but apparently owned the Jacob Street property until his death from pneumonia on April 12, 1873 at age 56. At that time, it apparently transferred to his heirs. On June 15, 1887, Lots 5 and 6, along with several other lots in the general neighborhood, were deeded to Robert Cummins’s son, James, whose address in City Directories was on Wheeling Island¹. Later that same year (December 29, 1887), Harry B. Seybold purchased the Lot 5 property for \$1750.



Harry B. Seybold (1864-1940) was educated at Washington School, Linsly Institute, and Frazier Business College. His obituary states that he served as Justice of the Peace in Clay District of Ohio County². The 1888 Wheeling City Directory lists Harry B. Seybold as an “individual bookkeeper” at the Bank of Wheeling, who “resided at 3708 Chapline Street, after September 1, 1888 [at] 3526 Jacob Street.” That entry suggests that Seybold moved into the house in the fall of 1888. However, a portion of his December 29, 1887 deed includes, “Also all the household, kitchen furniture, and personal property now in the Brick House No. 3526 Jacob Street situate upon said lot No. 5.” That statement suggests that the house already existed by late 1887. There are no Cummins family members listed in City Directories at 3526 Jacob Street at that time, so it’s possible that the Cummins family built the house and rented it to others before selling it to Seybold. In 1889, Harry Seybold was involved in a bank scandal that landed him in prison. His story is attached.

The style of the house is similar to the Klieves brothers houses on Chapline Street Row and the Robert W. Hazlett house at 921 Main Street. Those houses were designed by architect Edgar W. Wells³ during the same general time period that 3526 Jacob Street was built, so it’s likely that he was also the architect of this house and that Klieves & Kraft were the contractors.

The rest of the history of the house is fairly straightforward. It passed from Harry B. and Minerva (Minnie) Seybold to Henry Wöhlert (aka Wheeler) on December 30, 1892. German immigrant Wheeler is listed in the 1880 City Directory as a cigar manufacturer,

¹ At the time of his death in 1944, James Cummins lived at 304 South Front Street, a home now owned by Debi and Greg Smith. His occupation was listed as “merchandise broker.”

² At the time of his death of a heart attack at age 76, he resided at 99 ½ 12th Street.

³ Edgar W. Wells drowned in a riverboat accident in the Ohio River on May 7, 1890.

with a German-born wife, nee Caroline Seabright, and West-Virginia-born children Louisa (age 8), Henry (age 6), and Albert (age 1). Henry Wheeler died on May 17, 1912 and left the property to his daughter Louise, “subject to the use for the remainder of the natural life of wife Caroline.” Upon Louise’s death in 1935 it passed to her brother, Albert Wheeler.

Albert followed his father’s profession of cigar maker. A feature article in the October 21, 1964 *Wheeling New-Register* quotes the then 87-year-old Albert as saying that in his younger years he could hand roll 1500 to 1800 stogies per day, when the average was just 500. He started his career with Augustus Pollock, whom he called “one of the best men he had ever worked for.” Albert proudly said that Pollock called him “King of the stogie makers” due to his speed.

After Pollock’s death, his plant was struck by the union, and Albert Wheeler went to work for himself with as many as 14 employees. He reportedly seasoned his own tobacco in a building behind his home and during World War II supplied some 35 stogie rolling companies with tobacco. He also said that he delivered many Christmas baskets for Bill Lias, and that Lias always insisted that his name be kept secret. “I’ll stand up for him anytime,” Albert said. And he said he had met rival brewers Henry Schmulbach and Anton Reymann. He urged Wheeling to start its own brewery again, to “save millions of dollars from leaving the area for imported beer.”

Albert and his wife Millie (nee McElroy) had three children, Dr. Albert M. Wheeler, who died just as he was about to go to Japan during World War II; Ellen, who was married to Dr. John Lowther; and William. Following the death of Millie, Albert married the former Mary Rhea Coleman. Albert died on February 14, 1973, and the property was sold to Charles and Agatha Holmes, then to Dorothy M. Browning (1979), James K. and Dawn Means (1999), and finally to Jared Stone in late 2013.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling
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Sources:

- Wheeling City Directories
- Ohio County Deed Records
- 1890 Sanborn Map
- Obituaries
- *Wheeling News Register* feature article (October 21, 1964)
- WV Vital Records

Photo by Joanne Sullivan

Seybold Scandal

The year was 1889. Harry Bates Seybold was a 25-year old “collection clerk” at the Bank of Wheeling, the son of Joseph Seybold, the respected Assistant Cashier at the same bank. He had been married to Minnie Rosenberg, the daughter of a prominent Wheeling contractor, for four years. In the spring of 1889, a package of money containing \$24,000 was mysteriously missing from the bank vault – the value today would be over \$638,000.

Soon afterwards, Harry Seybold announced that he had won the Louisiana lottery and had used the lottery proceeds to build a new home at 3526 Jacob Street at a cost of \$8,000 (the equivalent of over \$216,000 today). However, he had not drawn down any funds from the bank where he was employed.

County Prosecutor B. B. Dovener was called into the case of the missing money and “went into the matter energetically and intelligently.” He checked with the local express office, telegraph office, post office, and local banks and found that no one had received a considerable amount of money from New Orleans. Dovener then traveled to New Orleans and met with Louisiana lottery officials, finding that no one in Wheeling had been a winner.

He did learn that an account of about \$15,000 had been opened at the Bank of the Ohio Valley in the name of Seybold and Hennig, the members of the firm being Harry Seybold and George Hennig. When Hennig was called in for questioning, he stated that Seybold had told him that he had borrowed the \$15,000 from Anton Reymann and had wanted to keep the loan a secret, asking Hennig to agree to depositing the money jointly. Hennig was cleared of any wrongdoing. Harry Seybold was arrested on August 2, 1889, in front of his wife, who “broke down completely and wept bitterly.” When faced with the evidence, Seybold admitted his guilt. He apparently had funds in several banks sufficient to replace the missing money, and it appeared that his house was built before the theft had taken place.

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* continued covering the story the next day, August 3, 1889. It was alleged at that time that Seybold had actually taken nearly \$35,000 from the bank over the period of several months or years. He apparently would lock the safe and vault but not set the time clock at the end of the day. When other employees had left the bank, he would return, unlock the vault, take funds from it, relock the vault and then set the time clock. The most recent theft, totaling \$24,000, had occurred on April 10, 1889. He kept the cash at home until his wife accidentally discovered it in the attic. He told her he had won the money in the Louisiana lottery and at that time deposited \$15,000 in the bank.

Banking and police officials visited Seybold’s “fine new brick home” and were reportedly surprised at its elegance. The paper stated that the home had been built in the fall of 1887. “It is elegantly furnished and contains a ballroom, something no other Wheeling residence boasts. One of the owners of the bank said that his house was not nearly so nicely furnished. The inference is from the history of the losses by the bank,

that part of their money went to build this house.” Seybold subsequently deeded to the bank the house, lot, and furniture – total value \$12,000 (valued at over \$325,000 today).

Seybold’s wife, Minnie, was so distraught that she was described as sinking to the floor in a swoon and was revived with difficulty. Harry’s father, Joseph Seybold, put up \$4000 (today, over \$100,000) in bail, and Harry was released.

When the trial date arrived, in late September 1889, Harry Seybold failed to report, leaving his father to pay the bond and the Sheriff directed to find Harry. The paper reported that the forfeiture of the bonds “does not by any means nullify the indictment against him, nor release him from being tried under it if he is found by the Sheriff.” The report went on to say “the disappearance of the young man was one of the principal topics of talk” in town. A month later, on October 29, 1889, the paper reported that the father, Joseph Seybold, had sold some property “on the South Side” to Anton Reymann for \$5,600. Perhaps that sale was used to cover his loss.

On November 25, 1889, famed Wheeling lawyer W. W. Arnett appeared in court, on behalf of Joseph Seybold, asking that the bond be reduced. That application was refused, but “the Court took occasion to express sympathy for Mr. Joseph Seybold,” and the December 16, 1889 *Intelligencer* reported that Joseph Seybold, Harry’s father, had finally paid the \$4000 forfeited bond.

Nothing newsworthy seemed to have happened until mid June of the following year, 1890, when the paper reported that Harry Seybold had been arrested in Winfield, Kansas, where a relative, William Seybold, lived. Apparently, Harry had been in Kansas City and St. Louis since he had fled Wheeling. Authorities were surprised to learn that he had actually been in Wheeling having Christmas dinner with his family a few months before his capture, spending four days here before returning to Kansas.

Sheriff Lewis Steenrod and Prosecuting Attorney John A. Howard traveled to Kansas and brought Harry back with them. The paper reported that Harry “seemed to be in much better spirits than when he was first arrested.” He was placed in the old “debtor’s room” in the county jail, where he was visited by his wife, Minnie, his father, his father-in-law, and defense attorney W.W. Arnett. A few days later, Harry was released from jail when his father-in-law, J.H. Rosenberg, paid his bail of \$1500 (the equivalent of about \$40,000 today).

A front-page article in the November 25, 1890 *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported on the beginning of the trial. Prosecutors were John Howard and B.B. Dovener; W.W. Arnett was the defense attorney. Large crowds attended the trial, and Minnie Seybold sat beside the defense attorney, occasionally seen with her head bowed on her hands on the table in front of her.

Initial testimony described the events following the discovery that a package containing \$24,000 was missing from the bank. Witnesses testified that, after first denying any knowledge of the missing money, Seybold later confessed to having taken it. However,

when Harry was called to the stand, he stated that Harry List - a teller at the bank and son of bank president D.C. List - had given him the money to hold and that List wanted to go West and start a new bank with it. He went on to say that he hadn't mentioned List's involvement before, because he "didn't want to get him into trouble." He also stated that attorney Arnett had suggested that he leave town and forfeit his original bond and that he might eventually have to pay a fine of a few hundred dollars. Harry also stated that he expected to be able to return to his job at the bank, with assurance that no additional money would disappear. He testified that he believed that, if the bank partners didn't testify against him, the State would drop the matter and no prosecution would be made if the money was returned.

The Sheriff testified that when Harry had been arrested in Kansas, he had told the Sheriff that "a girl he did not know" had handed him the money in front of the bank. During his testimony, however, Seybold stated that "a girl" had been present when Harry List had given him the money - in front of the Second Presbyterian Church. He said he could not describe the girl and had not tried to find her to serve as a witness to the alleged money exchange.

The prosecution then called Michael Freismuth, who operated a barber shop next to the bank. Freismuth testified that Harry had asked to go through the barber shop to enter the bank from the rear between 5 and 6 o'clock one evening in early April 1889. He stated that Seybold stayed in the bank for about three minutes and returned through the alley gate with a bundle wrapped in newspaper under his arm.

It took the jury only 20 minutes to find Seybold guilty. Upon hearing the verdict, Minnie Seybold "dropped her head to her knees and sobbed hysterically... She placed her arms firmly but lovingly about her husband's waist and cried piteously, 'They must not take you from me. Can I not go, too? Oh, Harry, Harry!'" Harry reportedly seemed unmoved by Minnie's devotion, pushed her away, and said, "Go home and go to bed; don't bother about me." His sentence was two years and six months in the Moundsville penitentiary.

Life went on for the family while Harry was in jail. Minnie was able to keep the Jacob Street house for a time, even hosting a church social for the benefit of Third Presbyterian Church in August 1892. The event was described in the local paper as a "parlor concert, followed by a lawn fete, at which refreshments were served." Entertainment included piano and vocal solos, a guitar solo, a zither solo, and a couple of readings.

Minnie made two unsuccessful trips to Charleston, seeking release of her husband from prison, carrying with her petitions for clemency signed by "a number of prominent persons." Harry's health was reportedly declining due to his imprisonment, and, due to his health problems and good behavior he was eventually pardoned by WV Governor Aretas B. Fleming in late October, 1892, six months before his sentence was due to end. About six weeks later, the *Intelligencer* included a brief announcement that the residence at 3526 Jacob Street, "one of the most desirable in the city," would be offered for sale at the court house door. On December 30, 1892, the house was purchased by Henry

Wheeler, a cigar manufacturer and father of Albert Wheeler, whose fame as a cigar roller is well-known to South Wheeling residents.

The rest of the story ...

Harry did not return to work at the bank. The 1896 and 1898 City Directories show his address as 62 15th Street, occupation “oil leaser.” The 1910 census shows his occupation as “oil operator” and his address as 1104 Main Street. By the time of the 1920 census, he was a Justice of the Peace, and Minnie worked as a manicurist. They still resided at 1104 Main Street at that time and had two roomers. No children were listed.

Minnie Seybold’s father, J.H. Rosenberg, built the “Rosenberg Arch,” an impressive stone memorial structure in Mt. Wood Cemetery.

In 1903, a few years after the scandal, prosecuting attorney John A. Howard bought land and began building a lavish home, Howard Mansion on Howard Hill. He lived until 1933.

Defense attorney W.W. Arnett often served as a defense attorney in many high-profile (O.J. Simpson-type) cases. A Fairmont native and Confederate Civil War veteran, he practiced law in St. Louis following the war before moving to Wheeling in 1875. He was the lead attorney when suit was filed to return the state capital to Wheeling and was described as being “unequaled in his knowledge of criminal law, certainly unexcelled in its presentation to the jury.” He died in 1902 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

Harry Seybold died of coronary disease on December 14, 1940 at age 76. He was buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling
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