

112 14th Street



The National Register nomination for the East Wheeling Historic District estimates the construction date of this house at 1880. At that time, it was owned by Jacob R. Greer, Sr. and his wife Elizabeth, who purchased the property from the widow Rachel Hornbrook in the fall of 1865 and owned it until February 1884. Greer (1815-1902) was a partner with Alexander Laing in the hardware firm Greer & Laing.

A slightly later date – 1884, is more likely, when it was owned by Irish immigrant Robert Nesbitt. The 1884 Wheeling City Directory lists Robert Nesbitt as boarding at 1408 Chapline Street, “after October 1, 1884, will remove to 112 14th Street.” His brother, Thomas W. Nesbitt, has a similar directory listing – residing at 137 14th Street, “after October 1, 1884, will remove to 114 14th Street.” Robert (1836-1921) and Thomas (1834-1927) Nesbitt were partners in Nesbitt

& Brother, dealing in “hardware and cutlery, house furnishing goods, stoves, copper, tin and sheet iron ware and tinnerns’ supplies” at 1312 Market Street. A close look at the first two floors of the neighboring houses shows very similar detail, suggesting that they were built around the same time, and the National Register nomination calls the two houses “twins, except for the mansard roof “on 112 14th Street.

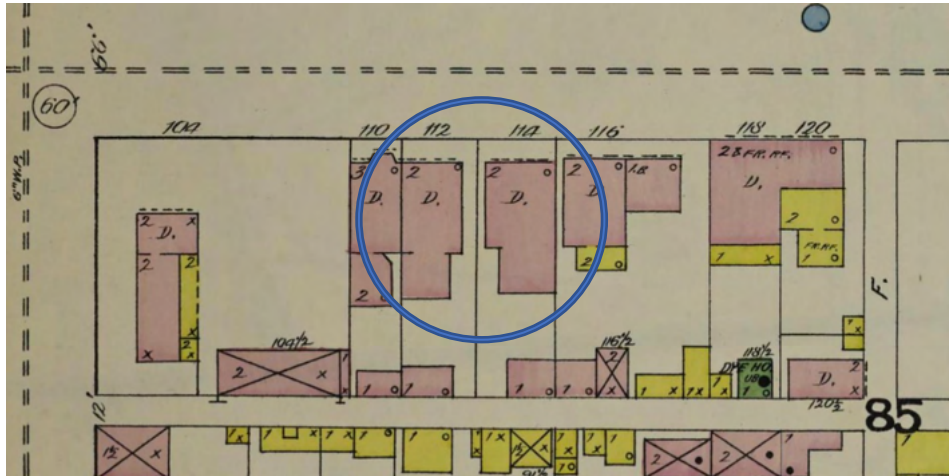
Their business opened in late 1878 and was described in detail in the December 21, 1878 *Wheeling Register*.

A large advertisement in the 1884 city directory includes a sketch of their storefront.



And an undated postcard shows their storefront on Market Street. Theirs is the first visible building on the right, with the name "Nesbitt & Bro." above the entrance.

The 1890 Sanborn Insurance Map clearly shows the two-story house, using the pink color to designate brick construction, and its neighbor at 114 14th Street.



The two brothers continued living side-by-side until around 1895, the year that Robert's first wife, Martha (nee Campbell) died. The next city directory (1896) shows Robert Nesbitt as boarding at the Stamm Hotel, with the Rev. Joseph Speers, pastor of Second Presbyterian Church, as residing at 112 14th Street. By the time of the 1907-1909 directory, Robert is listed as retired and living in the Leatherwood neighborhood of Wheeling. Beginning at that time and continuing until around 1930, Rev. Charles H. Robinson, pastor of the First United Presbyterian Church of Wheeling, lived at the 112 14th Street address.

In late 1905, Robert Nesbitt applied for a passport. The information included stated that he had immigrated in 1850 (which would have been when he was about 14 years old) and became a naturalized citizen in Wheeling in 1858. He is described as being 5 feet 5 ½ inches tall, with dark brown eyes, mixed gray hair, and a full, short beard.

Robert Nesbitt died in 1921, leaving the property to the First United Presbyterian Church. Trustees of the church sold the property in 1936 to sisters Katherine Walt (1887-1959) and Regina Houts (1891-1947), who was married to Edward E. Houts (1888-1965). Edward Houts was listed as an attendant at the Stobbs Parking Lot, Regina was a clerk, and the unmarried Katherine was a bank accountant at Wheeling Dollar Savings & Trust.

Following the death of Regina Houts, her widower and sister sold the property in 1948 to George A. and Phoebe Wright. George Wright was a printer with Wright Sales. The house was apparently divided into three units at that time, with meter repairman William King and his wife Phyllis and salesman Robert L. Stewart and his wife Jean also listed as residing at 112 14th Street, along with the Wrights.

Robert and Jean Stewart briefly owned the property from May 1951 until March 1952, when they sold it to Ronald A. and Edythe M. Topp. Ronald Topp (1897-1966) was President of Kroggel & Topp, wholesale fruit and vegetable merchants, and Edythe (1903-1980, nee Shadwick) was the firm's secretary-treasurer. The Topps lived in Highland Park and rented out three units in 112 14th Street over the next few years. Examples of tenants during their ownership

include the Stewarts, teacher Donald Warden and his wife Nancy, and Sears Roebuck employee Kenneth R. Smith and his wife Dorothea in 1953; Clem McConnell, Rena Wagner, and John and Dorothy Richey in 1960; and Rose Jacobucci, Thelma Moran, and Rena Wagner in 1970.

In the fall of 1980, Virginia L. Joseph, widow, purchased the property and again seems to have rented three units. By 1989, Virginia Joseph had remarried. She and her husband Alban Adkins sold the property that year to James H. Thornton.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling
January 2023

Sources:

- Ancestry.com
- FindaGrave
- Ohio County Deed Records
- Wheeling City Directories
- WV Vital Records