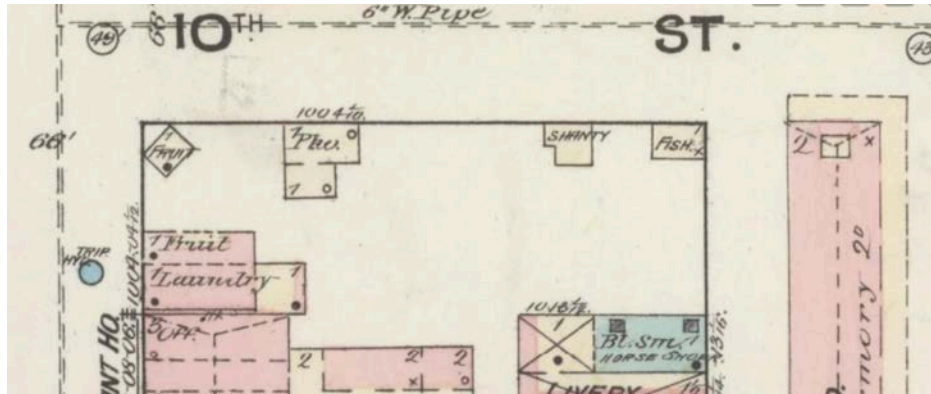


1000-1004 Main Street

This building, located at the intersection of 10th and Main Streets, has an interesting history, which isn't surprising, given its prime location directly across from the Wheeling Suspension Bridge. Early maps help with determining what was on this corner at what time period.

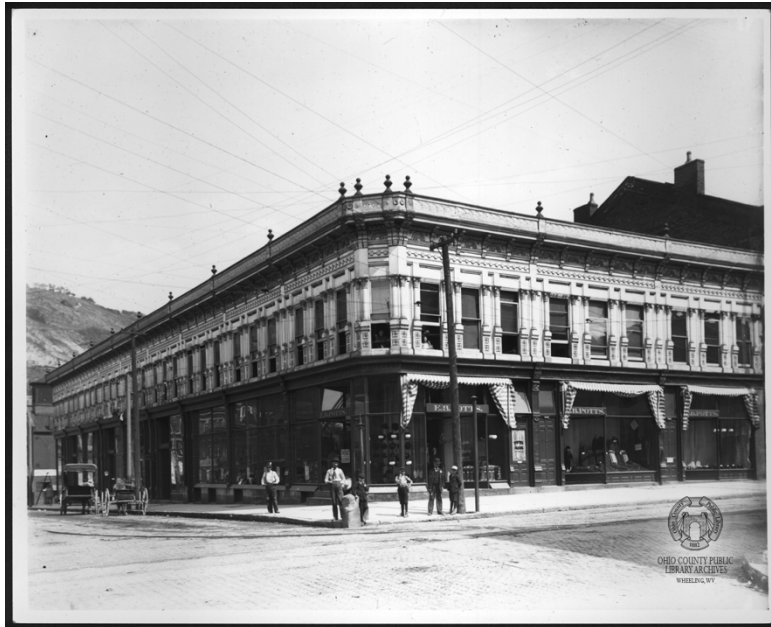
The 1884 Sanborn Insurance Map shows a lot that is mostly empty, with a brick fruit store and laundry on the southwest corner, identified as 1004 and 1004 ½ Main Street. A small fruit stand is at the northwest corner, and a small fish shop on the northeast.



Deed records indicate that James L. Hawley (1844-1930) purchased the property in early 1890, and a March 18, 1892 *Wheeling Daily Register* newspaper article reported that, “the new Hawley block nears completion,” adding that there were many “comments upon the peculiar shape and style of the building. From an architectural standpoint, it is safe to say it is unlike anything now in the city, but there are few blocks illustrating a more economic utilization of space. Among other things, the public is gratified at last to see a building gracing the site of what was so long a positive eye-sore to the residents of that section. For fifteen years the ruin of the Grant House¹ formed an unsightly pile in the very heart of the city.”

The article continues, “The project affords one of those unusual instances where almost more money is invested under ground than above, the capital in this case entering largely into the foundations, which are the largest, most substantial and finely built in the city.” Owner Hawley described this foundation as consisting of “a great number of solid cut stone piers four and a half feet square, with a first course of ten inch footers six feet square, and a second course of ten inch footers five feet square; and after this foundation was complete, I determined that the one story to go onto it must be strong and permanent, so I built the brick wall with all mortar joints ‘full and shoved up,’ all of hard brick with no part of the wall less than twenty-six inches thick, besides numerous piers still heavier, and strong enough to carry a ten or twenty story skyscraper.”

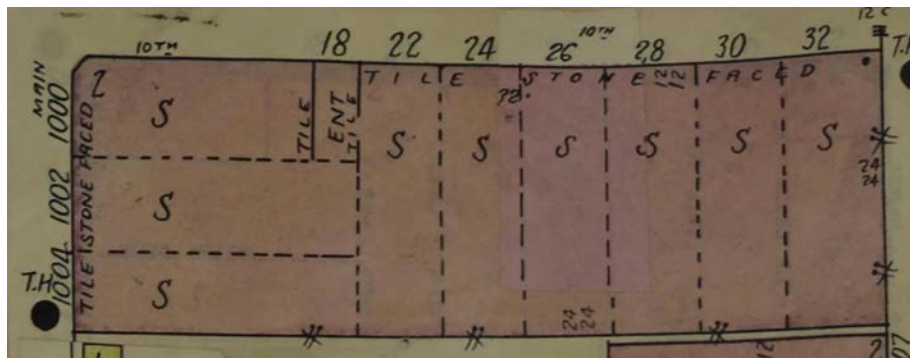
¹ The four-story Grant House hotel burned to the ground on March 29, 1877. Several commercial businesses and a stable were also located in or adjacent to the hotel building. Fortunately, no lives were lost, but property losses were extensive.



Three storefronts faced Main Street at that time, with six potential storefronts facing 10th Street and residential apartments on the second floor. “The corner suite of rooms all have windows and are admirably situated, presenting a particularly fine view from the front. This flat will be rented at \$60 a month, but the others a little cheaper. The supply of plate glass recently arrived for the block was the largest single consignment ever sent into Wheeling.” The photo shows E.B. Potts’ dry good store on the first floor corner. That store appears in the 1903-04 City Directory.

By the time of the 1907-09 City Directory, the building was referred to as the “Hawley Block,” with tenants including the WV Optical Company at street address 1000 Main Street, S.C. Cozad at 1000 ½, the Wheeling Traction Waiting Room at 1002, and The Rose clothing store at 1004. Over the next few decades, a wide variety of tenants included long-term tenants WV Optical Company and The Rose (ladies clothing), a waiting room for Wheeling Traction Company, a tailor, and a physician and a couple of dentists and furnished apartments on the second floor.

The 1921-22 Sanborn map shows at the site a two-story “tile stone-faced” building that is colored pink, representing brick.

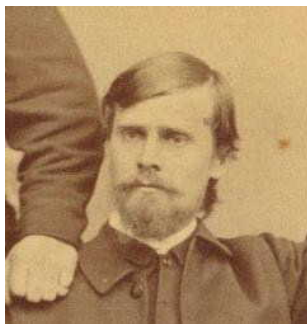


Hawley died of pneumonia in 1930, and the property then came under the ownership of The Hawley Corporation. The building was "modernized" in 1938 under the direction of Wheeling architect Fred Faris (1901-1964), nephew of noted Wheeling architect, Frederick F. Faris (1870-1927). The modernization included the reconstruction of the first floor for storerooms to front both Main and 10th Streets, the conversion of the second floor into office space, exterior walls of Indiana limestone, trimmed with aluminum and carrera glass, and large plate glass display windows. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* on July 20, 1938 reported that "...the improvement will

change the appearance of this building," but that, "originally constructed approximately a half a century ago, the foundation of the building is of solid hand-cut sandstone and would carry a skyscraper and as a result has been left intact."



Tenants changed frequently over the next decades and included the Firestone Home and Auto Supply Store in the early 1940s and the Stone and Thomas Appliance Center in the southernmost portion later that decade. From 1943 to 1977, C.A. Music occupied the first floor on the Main Street side. The Children's Museum was a more recent tenant. Ownership changed during this span of time, with OVB LLC purchasing it from the Hawley Corporation for \$425,000 in late 1995. The building was sold to Community Impact Land Holdings in late 2021.



More on James Hawley:

James Lindsey Hawley was born in Wheeling in 1844, the son of James Overton Hawley and Catherine Bailey. He became a wealthy real estate investor who is most well-known today from his name on the Hawley Building on the west side of Main Street. Hawley, who never married, lived modestly in the second floor of 1065 Main from around 1898-99 up until shortly before the time of his death in 1930². He ultimately owned several buildings in downtown Wheeling and amassed a fortune estimated by the time of his death at \$3 million (the equivalent of more than \$46 million today, when considering inflation).

In early October 1930, several days of hearings were held to determine his mental competency. Friends and business relations testified that Hawley, nearly age 86, did not seem capable of handling his own affairs and urged the court to appoint a committee to take charge of them. Others stated that he had been seen on 12th Street, about a block from his residence at 1065 Main Street, wandering around lost, thinking that the bank was his barber shop and not recognizing

² Sometime during the last months or years of his life, Hawley lived with Mr. and Mrs. James Keeley at 104 ½ Main Street. Keeley had been a handyman for Hawley, and his wife helped care for Hawley as his mental health declined.

people he had known for years. And others remarked that in recent months “you couldn’t carry on a conversation with him. He couldn’t comprehend.” His long-time doctor, J. Plummer Cole testified that Hawley suffered from “senile dementia” and had come to the doctor’s office looking unkempt and wearing one shoe and one slipper. The final straw in efforts to have him declared incompetent seems to have been when Hawley changed the names of those who would serve as executors of his estate.

Hawley had written a will in 1903, naming his half-brother and various nieces and nephews as heirs and his lawyer, T.S. Riley, as the executor of his estate. As his fortunes grew, he added his broker, L.P. Brand, and his accountant, George Oldham, as additional executors in 1925. On August 2, 1930, he had attorney John Arbenz prepare a new will, with the terms remaining the same but naming Arbenz as the executor, along with accountant Oldham and Hawley’s secretary, Anna Hodge. A court battle followed. Extensive coverage in the *Wheeling Intelligencer* included allegations against Anna, who had been hired by Hawley about a year and a half before. She was alternately characterized as “a designing woman exercising influence over a senile man and dominating him in the management of his property” or “a capable, alert, faithful secretary, efficiently handling the affairs of her employer and protecting him against false friends.”

Court scheduling caused a postponement in the sanity hearings after the October 10, 1930 session. A few weeks later, Hawley died of pneumonia on November 13, 1930. Eight days later, his heirs petitioned to have his will probated. Will litigation began anew, with coverage in the *Wheeling Intelligencer* totaling hundreds of articles in the years 1930 through 1933. Following hearings in probate court, the case went to the Ohio County Circuit Court, where charges were made that Anna Hodge³ (by then married to Charles Strobe) and Harold W. Becker, president of the Wheeling Building Material Company, had conspired to cheat “the eccentric millionaire” out of several thousand dollars. “Becker⁴, while testifying during the trial, suddenly went insane, being adjudged so by the Ohio County board of mental hygiene.” The Circuit Court ruled that the 1930 will was invalid, and on March 14, 1933 the WV State Supreme Court denied an appeal that had been filed by John Arbenz and Anna Hodge Strobe. The newspaper reported that the case “was the longest in the annals of the state’s legal history.”

Deed records from October 2, 1933, indicated that the bulk of Hawley’s estate had been distributed to his relatives, who formed The Hawley Corporation to oversee the extensive holdings. The executors – the men named in the original will, Thomas S. Riley, Louis F. Brand, and George W. Oldham – received 500 shares of stock in the Hawley corporation with par value of \$50,000 (the equivalent of more than \$995,000 today).

³ No additional information was found on Anna Hodge Strobe. Her husband, a chiropractor, died in 1936, age 41, “after an extended illness,” with the cause of death listed as “sarcoma of the shoulder.”

⁴ In 1940 Becker died of peritonitis following a ruptured appendix at the state mental hospital, Weston, WV. He was 47 years old.



Hawley was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in an impressive, individual mausoleum. Cemetery records show no other interments in that mausoleum.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling
January 7, 2023

Sources:

- Ancestry.com
- Greenwood Cemetery Records
- Ohio County Census Records
- Ohio County Deed Records
- Ohio County Public Library
- Sanborn Insurance Maps
- *Wheeling Intelligencer* Newspaper
- WV Vital Research Records