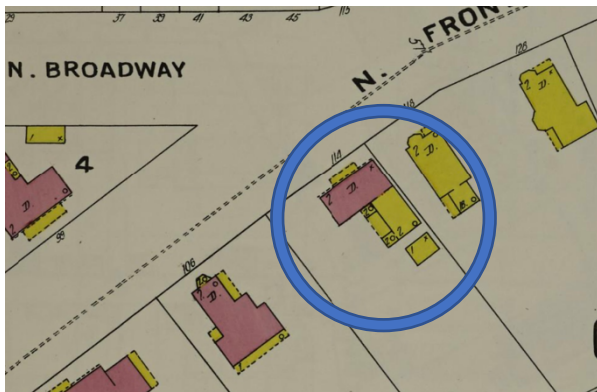


## 218 North Front Street

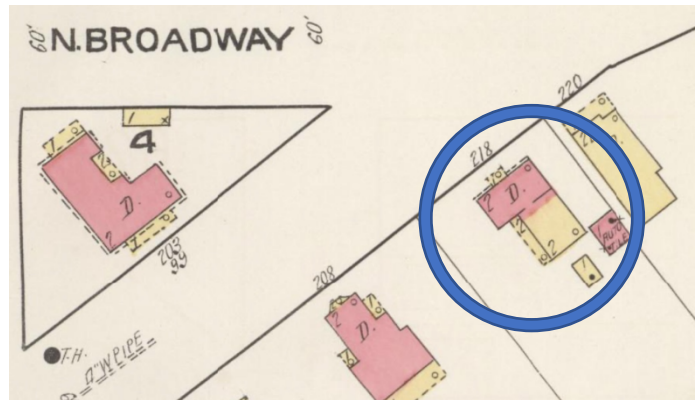


The National Register nomination for the Wheeling Island Historic District estimates 1870 as the date of construction of this house, and other records suggest the same. Maps of Wheeling from that early time period don't include the Island, but a 1902 Sanborn Insurance Map shows the house – a brick<sup>1</sup> dwelling with a frame addition on the rear, when street numbers were different. And the 1921 Sanborn map confirms the current address of 218 North Front Street

Ohio County deed records show that Nelson Starks acquired the property in 1870, and he appears in the next available Wheeling City Directory, dated 1874-1875, as “colored” and living at 116 North Front Street<sup>2</sup>.



1902 Sanborn Map



1921 Sanborn Map

According to his obituary, Nelson Starks (c. 1827-1911) had been “born a slave” in McMechen, Marshall County, and “was freed through Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation... He was noted for his sterling qualities. Faithful, industrious, and frugal.” He married Sarah Boadly (1827-1906) in 1867. His obituary states that the couple had no children, but the 1880 Ohio County Census lists a son William, and the 1900 Census includes a son George. Starks’ occupation was listed as “laborer.” At times, it appears that there were also boarders in the house. Examples include Robert O. Greenlee (c)<sup>3</sup>, driver for WV Steel Company, and Edward Rice (c), plasterer – second floor.

<sup>1</sup> Sanborn maps were color coded, with pink representing brick structures and yellow meaning frame.

<sup>2</sup> Although the 1902 map indicates the address as 118 North Front, all other records show the early street number as 116 North Front.

<sup>3</sup> The notation (c) was used in early directories to show that a person was “colored.”

Following the death of Nelson Starks in 1911 – age 84 years, 11 months, he was first interred in Peninsula Cemetery but was later moved to Mt. Zion Cemetery, perhaps when Interstate 70 construction caused removal and re-interment of many remains. The property was next deeded to his uncle, Birt Harris (1876-1923). According to City Directories, Harris (c) was a barber with Cumberland and Harris, in a shop at 1100 Market Street, second floor. Harris and his wife Lelia (laundress) lived with Nelson Starks toward the end of his life. According to the 1910 Census, their home also included other family members and tenants, nephew Lawrence Wayland and roomer Levi Allen (“Black”). Later tenants over the years included Mrs. Laura Woods (c) – second floor; and Clyde B. Jones (c) – waiter, McLure Hotel, second floor.

Following the death of Birt Harris, his widow inherited the property and married George H. Wilson (\*)<sup>4</sup>, occupation cook. Second floor tenants included laborer Robert J. Brown (\*) and his wife Ollie. The Wilsons sold the property to Florence L. Carter and her husband John Hill Carter in 1926.

In early 1933, the Carters, “of Fairfax, Virginia,” sold the property to Albert W. Slater (single) and Mary M. Slater (widow). Slater operated Slater’s Record Shoppe at 1412 Market Street.

In 1960, (Rita) Joyce Simon and her husband Fred Simon, Jr. purchased the property. Fred Simon (1926-2013) was a Navy veteran, having served in World War II and Korea. He was a graduate of Linsly, WV State College, and the National Institute of Cleaning and Dyeing. He operated the long-term family business, Cashmere Care Cleaners. He was also a special education teacher at Lincoln School and later Wheeling Park High School, served on the Wheeling Planning Commission for 20 years, and had been president of the Island Community Association. He was survived by his wife, three daughters, and two sons. (Rita) Joyce Simon (nee Orndol) outlived her husband by 10 years, until her death in 2023. Both Simons were buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

In 2024, the current owners, Doug and Joanna Pell, purchased the property and are in the process of rehabbing it.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling  
November 6, 2024

Sources:

- Ancestry.com
- FindaGrave.com
- Ohio County Census Records
- Ohio County Deed Records
- Sanborn Insurance Maps
- Wheeling City Directories
- *Wheeling Daily Register*
- *Wheeling Intelligencer*
- WV Vital Records

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<sup>4</sup> By the time of the 1923-1924 City Directory, African Americans were identified with \*.

