

**“Howgait”  
97 Bethany Pike**



This 2 ½ story, five-bay brick house was built in 1911 by Wheeling manufacturer and publisher George A. Laughlin and his second wife, Anna on three parcels of land purchased in August 1910. Much of that land had once been the site of the Wheeling Golf Club (1900-1906), which featured a six-hole golf course between the current Hawthorne Court and the Greggsville playground. Noted Wheeling architect Edward Bates Franzheim was the architect of the home. The couple named it “Annaknoll.”

Interest in the house must have been great, since reports of construction progress appeared frequently in the *Wheeling Intelligencer*.

- February 1, 1911 “ The new residence of George A. Laughlin at Woodsdale will be ready for occupancy early next summer.”
- March 11, 1911 “ Work upon the erection of a fine new residence for George A. Laughlin in Hawthorne courts, near Greggsville, is progressing nicely and the second story has been started. This will be one of the largest and finest houses in the suburban district when completed.”
- March 20 “One of the most magnificent houses being erected in Woodlawn and immediate vicinity is that of George A. Laughlin in Hawthorne Courts, the new addition on the Bethany Pike. The residence will contain about fifteen rooms and will cost from \$35,000 to \$40,000 complete. Edward Franzheim is the architect.”
- A May 10, 1911 article about homes being built on the grounds of the former Wheeling Golf Club included, “Mr. Laughlin is now erecting a palatial residence, costing in the neighborhood of fifty thousand dollars. <sup>1</sup>”

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<sup>1</sup> When applying inflation, \$35,000 to \$50,000 in 1911 would be the equivalent of about \$1 ¼ to \$1 ½ million today.

- July 19, 1911 “The magnificent residence of George A. Laughlin at Hawthorne Court is nearing completion. This will be one of the finest homes in this section of the country.”
- August 9, 1911 “Work on the new Laughlin mansion at Hawthorne Court is progressing rapidly and the structure is fast nearing completion. It is thought that it will be ready for occupancy by the first of September.”

Nothing was found in the paper in September 1911, so it is assumed that the home was finished by then, as anticipated.



GEORGE A. LAUGHLIN.

George Ashton Laughlin (1862-1936) was a son of Samuel Laughlin, who had been head of Laughlin Drug Company, president of the Junction Iron Company, and the holder of a large interest in the Laughlin nail mills in Martins Ferry. George had received his early education at the Linsly Institute and was then associated with his father in the iron business. In 1887, he went to Cleveland, Ohio, and worked in the manufacturing of tin plate. He moved to Richmond, Indiana, in 1896 where he worked in the same business for three years, returning to Wheeling in 1899. He had married Lucy McDonald in 1885 in New Orleans; she died in 1899 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery. He married Anna (nee Boettger) Bruning in 1906 in New York City.

Laughlin was instrumental in the founding of the Wheeling Board of Trade in 1900, serving as its first president. That same year, he was elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates. In 1908, he was chosen as a delegate-at-large from West Virginia to the Republican National Convention, during which William Howard Taft was nominated for the presidency. He later supported Theodore Roosevelt when the Republican party split in 1912. He narrowly lost an election to the U.S. Congress that same year. In 1928, he served as a member of the West Virginia Capitol Building Commission.

Laughlin’s business interests over his career included serving as president of the Cleveland-Canton Spring Company and chairman of the board of directors of the Western Spring and Axle Company of Cincinnati, Ohio.

He served as president of the *Wheeling Intelligencer* Company from 1900 until 1908, guiding the editorial policies of the newspaper from 1902 through 1904. He leased the *Wheeling Telegraph* in 1914 and was its publisher until the newspaper was discontinued in 1929. For many years, he was a member of the board of directors of *The Wheeling News* and *The Wheeling Intelligencer*.

Laughlin was an active member of the First Presbyterian Church and was on the boards of directors of the Woodsdale



Children's Home and the West Virginia Home for Aged Women. He donated land along Bethany Pike and provided a playground there. And he was very involved in the Eighteenth Street Chapel of the First Presbyterian Church, donating his time and finances and serving as the church school superintendent for more than twenty years. Today, that chapel bears his name. He is also remembered today for his funding of the "Laughlin Plan," which provides interest-free home loans to qualified buyers. As of this writing, some 300 families have benefitted from this program.



George A. Laughlin died of a heart attack on December 7, 1936. A front page, banner headline announced his death, describing him as "a loyal and progressive citizen who took a lively interest in all that touched the material and civic advancement and prosperity of Wheeling. Of sound judgement and of proved public spirit, Mr. Laughlin was recognized as a man eminently well fitted for public trust."

Anna Laughlin (1878-1951), George Laughlin's widow, remained in their home until she died while vacationing in Florida. Her obituary states that she had been a member of the Fort Henry Club, the Duquesne Club of Pittsburgh, and the Wheeling Country Club. She and George were

both interred in one of the large mausoleums in Greenwood Cemetery. The couple had no children together.

The property was left by will to Anna's son from her first marriage, Joseph Bruning, and his wife Muriel. The obituary of Joseph Bruning (1900-1959) states that he was a graduate of the Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana, and Dartmouth College, had been a member of the Wheeling Country Club and the Elks, and served on the board of directors of the Fort Henry Club.

The Brunings<sup>2</sup> sold the property in early 1954 to William W. and Margaret Glass Holloway. The Holloways had sold their former home to the Sisters of St. Joseph. They called their new home "Howgait," reportedly Welsh for "hollow way."

William Warfield Holloway (1886-1969) was heavily involved in the area's steel industry. Educated at St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire, and Yale University, he began his professional career in 1909 in the open hearth department of LaBelle Iron Works, Steubenville, Ohio, a predecessor company of Wheeling Steel. In 1912, he began with Wheeling Corrugating Company,



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<sup>2</sup> The Brunings' daughter Barbara was married to W.P. Holloway, a nephew of William W. Holloway.

also later part of Wheeling Steel. After serving three years with the U.S. Army during World War I, he returned to Wheeling Corrugating.

In 1922, he was elected president of Whitaker-Glessner Company, another Wheeling Steel predecessor, and a year later became president of Wheeling Corrugating. After the various companies consolidated into Wheeling Steel Corporation, he was elected to its board of directors in 1927 and became its chairman in 1941. He retired from that position in 1958 but continued as a director until 1964.

Holloway also served as a director and member of the executive committee of the American Iron and Steel Institute (1931-1958) and as a director of the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he was a director of the Belmont County National Bank, Fostoria Glass Company, Hazel-Atlas Glass Company, and Wheeling Dollar Savings and Trust Company and was active in a number of social organizations.

William Holloway's wife Margaret Glass Holloway (1886-1980) was a daughter of Alexander Glass, who had also served as chairman of the board of Wheeling Steel Corporation. She was one of the founders of Wheeling Country Day School and was the mother of three children, William, Jr., James, and Sallie. Following her husband's death in 1969, she remained living in Howgait until her own death.

In early 1981, executors of Margaret Holloway's estate sold the property to Henry C. and Edna R. Miller for \$135,000. Miller (1926-2009) was a Warwood High School graduate and an Army Air Corp veteran of World War II. The Millers divided the property into rental units. Following Henry's death, Edna sold the property to the current owners, Jon and Kathleen Ren, in late 2011. Since that time, the Rens have returned the home to a single family residence. It is currently for sale.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling  
November 4, 2023

Sources:

- Ancestry.com
- FindaGrave.com
- National Register of Historic Places
- Ohio County Assessor Records
- Ohio County Deed Records
- *West Virginians of 1934-1935*
- Wheeling City Directories
- *Wheeling Intelligencer*