

The Goff Building

Nathan Goff, Jr., had a life-long love affair with Clarksburg. Born February 9, 1843, in Waldomore at 400 West Pike Street the son of Waldo P. and Harriet L. Moore Goff, Nathan Goff, Jr., graduated from Clarksburg's Northwestern Academy, established a law practice in the town in 1865, and began a career that would make him the most prominent and the wealthiest citizen of the town.

By 1905, when income from oil sales alone in ten years had totaled \$1,077,991.52, Goff had invested heavily in his hometown. In 1897 he and other Waldo P. Goff heirs had given land for North Fourth Street leading from West Pike Street to the Fourth Street Bridge which Goff built himself to open up his land in Glen Elk. In 1901 Goff built the Elkbridge Building, a \$60,000 brick structure at the north end of the Fourth Street Bridge. In 1903 Goff and associates of Goff formed the Clarksburg Gas and Electric Company and won the franchise to furnish gas and electricity to the city for thirty years; and in the same year Goff built the Oak Hall Building, a \$35,000 office and apartment building on West Main Street. Between 1901-1904 Goff spent more than \$400,000 to erect the Waldo Hotel, one of the largest and most elaborate hotels in West Virginia and built next door to the house where Nathan Goff, Jr., had been born and reared.¹

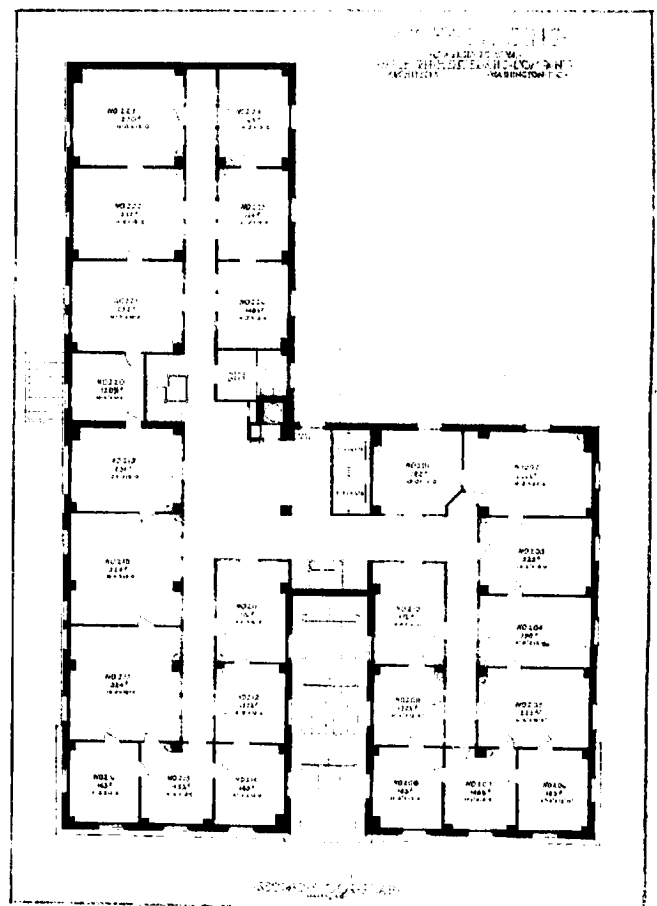
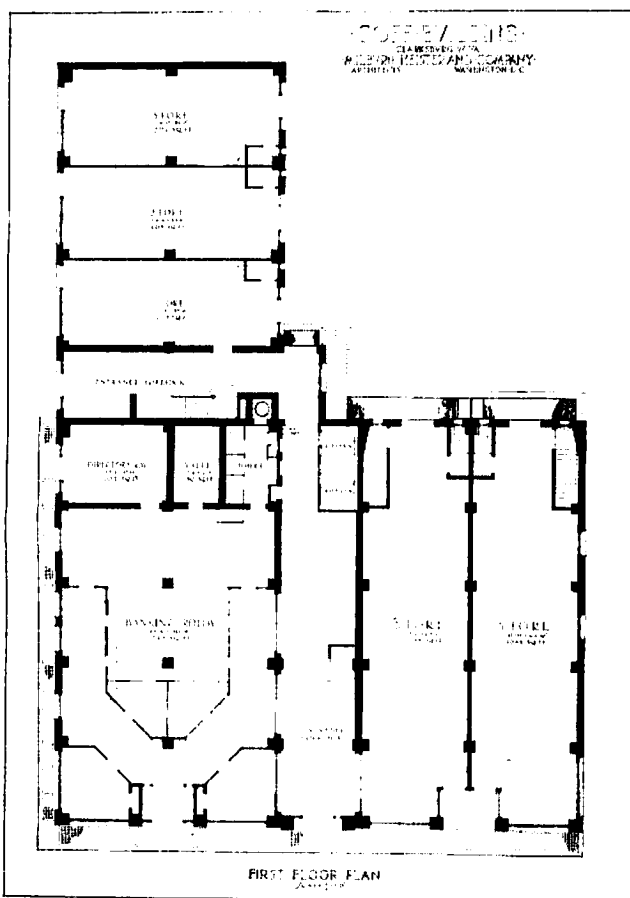
Goff liked to build fine buildings. By 1907 he was ready to replace with a modern structure the brick office building he had erected in 1891 on the corner of West Main and Courts streets, and next door to the Harrison County Courthouse. Goff's work had sent him frequently to Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina because those states plus West Virginia were under his jurisdiction as judge of the U.S. Circuit Court for the Fourth Judicial Circuit. As senior circuit judge, after November 1893 Goff had assigned cases over which the seven district judges in the circuit would preside at a time when custom dictated that judges sit in cases outside their respective districts when services were needed.² Goff traveled the circuit frequently as judge from 1892-1913. He admired the work of Architect Frank P. Milburn which he saw reflected in Union Station, the dome of the South Carolina State House, and other buildings in Columbia, South Carolina³, for Milburn designed at least two hundred fifty major structures in the South.⁴

Frank Pierce Milburn (1868-1926), a native of Bowling Green, Kentucky, practiced as an architect in Louisville, Kentucky, 1884-1889; in Kenova, West Virginia, 1890-1895. He moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1895 to be architect for the Southern Railroad Company⁵, and in the same year won the contract as architect for the Mecklenburg County Courthouse at Charlotte. He built the first steel frame building in North Carolina and the first steel frame building in South Carolina, where he moved from Charlotte to take up residence in Columbia, the state capital.⁶

In his first fifteen years of practice, Milburn designed nineteen railroad stations; twenty-six county courthouses; fifteen residences; nine college buildings, including five for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; plus offices, churches, banks, schools.⁷ "He is said to have acquired in a few years the largest architectural business south of the Mason and Dixon line."⁸ Milburn employed Michael Heister as designer and together the two opened "Milburn, Heister & Co., Architects" circa 1904 in Washington, D.C. The Washington firm executed designs in Washington for the Department of Commerce Building, the Navy Building, The House of Representatives Office Building, and Lansburg's Department Store. "Stylistically Milburn was typical of nineteenth century eclectics and at other times adopting the classical attitudes of the Neo-Classical Revival or Beaux Arts Classicism...His notable achievement was in skyscraper construction with the vertical emphasis of a tall structure terminating in an ornate and usually wide overhanging cornice."⁹

Goff hired Milburn in 1908 to draw up plans for his office building. A newspaper in 1909 reported: "The Goff Building will be nine stories in height... The old buildings at the corner of Main and Court streets have already been razed and the excavation for the foundation is expected to be begun at a very early date."¹⁰ November 11, 1909, Manufacturers' Record, an architectural trade journal, published a sketch of the structure projected by Milburn & Heister Architects to be built in Clarksburg.¹¹

Sketches by architect of interior ground floor and one interior upper floor of Goff Building.



Ground was broken for the Goff Building June 28, 1910.¹² Representatives from Milburn & Heister rode the B & O Railway often to Clarksburg for "the firm was expert, relieving the client of all worry."¹³ "Milburn was a conscientious architect who felt that standards within the architectural profession should be as high as those in medicine and law. It was his belief that the architect is more important than doctor or lawyer, since the architect is responsible for the supporting structure, practical planning, sanitary conditions, heating, ventilation and acoustics, and the economics in addition to the politics in the erection of a building."¹⁴ A son of Frank P. Milburn said of his father: "For twenty-five years he traveled thirty thousand miles a year in sleepers, doing a day's work each day, and then moving at night to the next stop. He felt this necessary to explain his drawings to the various contractors and to see that they were properly executed."¹⁵

The contractors who executed Milburn's plans for the Goff Building had at their fingertips expert workmen and local sources of supply because they knew the Clarksburg turf. H. W. Elliott and E. L. Winchell had built structures in the town since 1903¹⁶; "Contractors Elliott and Winchell are prominent in their line, having had a wide and successful career. They came to West Virginia eight years ago and among the monuments to their ability are the [Harrison County] jail and sheriff's residence [1905], the Empire Building [1906], two schoolhouses, and V. L. Highland's residence [circa 1904] here besides the Goff Building. They have also erected large buildings in Wheeling, Charleston, Mannington, and other West Virginia places."¹⁷

After excavating, "The foundations under foundations for the walls and for the steel columns were reinforced with two courses of lugged and twisted steel rods laid right angles and worked into the concrete foundations or footings. The foundations were tested with a dead load of 6,000 pounds to the square foot for forty-eight hours without settlement, thus showing the stability of the ground sustaining the building."¹⁸

The building of steel frame fireproof construction with reinforced concrete floors and gypsum block partitions that rose above the foundations fronts eighty-six feet on West Main Street and one hundred twenty feet on Court Street. The exterior walls are stone in the lower stories, impervious press brick above. The roof is of steel construction with book tile covered by slate.¹⁹

"On the first floor is a modern equipped banking room and five stores, and the upper stories contain 193 offices. There are two iron and marble stairways from the ground to the top floor, also two traction type high-speed electric passenger elevators, and a glass and bronze mail chute the full height of the building. Each office contains a porcelain lavatory, with hot and cold water, electric light and telephone connections, and gas for dentists.

"The banking room is finished in marble and bronze, has large fireproof vaults; the main entrance corridor has marble floors and wainscoting, ornamental beams and cornices, etc.; and all the corridors in the upper floors are finished in marble mosaic. All the interior wood finish is of oak and birch. The building contains a separate pressure system to insure water to all parts of the building at all times, also contains a fire line stand pipe with hose connections on each floor, and all plumbing and electric light fixtures, as well as all hardware, are of the best manufacture. The building is heated by an overhead direct steam system, using natural gas for fuel."²⁰

The contractors were proud that they could turn over to the owner in January 1911 the building completed without a single serious injury or loss of life "which is an unusual condition on buildings of this size, where so many men of various trades are employed, showing the contractors were careful and diligent in every particular."²¹

"It is a massive structure as a few figures furnished by Contractor Elliott show. There were 3,826 cubic yards of dirt in the excavation, 48 [railroad] carloads of crushed limestone were used, twenty-one cars of Portland cement, 41 cars of sand, 982 thousand brick, eleven cars of furnace flag, five cars of fireproof partition blocks, twelve cars of wall plaster, one car of plaster paris, one car of roofing slate, one car of galvanized iron cornice, 776 tons of structural steel, 56 tons of ornamental iron, eighteen tons of glass, 8½ tons of sashweights, two cars of framing lumber, four cars of flooring, 2 cars of interior finishing lumber, 55 tons of radiators, 31 tons of steam pipe, 205 tons of vitreous china lavatories, 1,156 gallons of paint, 32 tons of Alabama marble for terranza [sic] floor and marble mosaic and 90 barrels of chandeliers [sic] for gas and electric lights."²²

The geographic location of many of the concerns that supplied help in erecting the Goff Building shows the hand of Architect Milburn: B. McKenzie, Greensboro, NC, heating; The McClamrock Marble & Tile Co., Greensboro, NC, marble mosaic and terrazzo work; W. T. Vandergrift, Charlottesville, VA, inspector; J. E. Moss Iron Works Co., Hamilton, OH, ornamental ironwork; Evans Marble Co., Baltimore, MD., marble floors and wainscoting; E. J. Myer & Co., Hamilton, OH, vault or sidewalk light; Union Bridge Co., Rutherford, NJ., bronze work in banking room; Diebold Safe & Lock Co., Pittsburgh PA, structural steel; The John O'Hare Co., Clarksburg, WV, plumbing; Cutter Mail Chute Co., Rochester NY, mail chute; S. G. Crow, Bellaire OH, painting; Otis Elevator Co., Pittsburgh PA, elevators.²³

The Daily Telegram of January 30, 1911, reported "only a few touches remain to make the completion of the new Goff Building, a nine-story skyscraper, here complete and business firms and professional men are already busy moving into the great structure."²⁴

Moving into the first floor banking room was the Farmers Bank; into the two store rooms facing West Main Street were Williams - Coffman Hardware Co. and Bane and Bond (millinery); into store rooms on the Court Street side. Hayman Greenhouse Co., Ernest Siers (haberdashery) and P.M. Long (insurance). Moving into offices on the second floor were Dr. Arnett and Gaston, Dr. L. F. Kormann, Dr. F. B. Stathers, Dr., H. H. Haynes, Dr. R. A. Haynes, Taney Harrison, E. D. Lewis, W. E. Morris, G. H. Montgomery. Moving into offices on the third floor were Post & Reger Co., John Ross, Jr., Davis & Davis (John J. and John W.), Osman E. Swartz, E. B. Templeton, Charles W. Moore. Moving into offices on the fourth floor were Charles B. Johnson, G. M. Hoffheimer, H. H. Stagers. Moving into offices on the fifth floor were Drs. D. B. Davis and J. F. Williams, Miss F. Huber, J. W. Robinson, Pardee & Curtin Lumber Co. Moving into offices on the sixth floor were Fidelity Casualty Co. (Ledru Tracey), C. C. Davis, Finley and Burnside, Miss M. D. Freeman, Swager Coal Co. Moving into the seventh floor were J. B. Hoffmier, Drs. H. E. Sloan and R. V. Lynch, E. F. Garrett, W. Frank Stout, R. E. Parrish. Moving into offices on the eighth floor were B. M. Despard, Edward C. Bassel, S. R. Bentley and Thomas Shaw, Pennsylvania Oil & Gas Co. (Samuel Shrader). Seventeen rooms on the ninth floor were not yet rented in January 1911.²⁵

Milburn built for the 200,000 contract price²⁶ which later increased to \$250,000²⁷, a structure that has served Clarksburg almost unchanged for seventy-four years and a structure that has been a money-maker for Nathan Goff, Jr., and his estate through the years.²⁸ "....the exterior of the building is precisely the same as originally constructed, and the interior is basically the same with a few minor adjustments on some of the floors to accommodate some of the larger firms. The marble stairways and marble floors are still intact, and also the interior wood finish. As shown on the first floor plan, the original construction housed a [Farmers] bank, which went out of existence in the early 1930's. Since that time that particular space was occupied by Byard's Pharmacy for a number of years, and is presently being occupied by Aaron's Shoe Store. The other eight floors are occupied by various types

of business offices, such as Legal firms, Insurance, Real Estate, Coal Companies, Oil and Gas Companies, Dentists, Doctors, Accountants, etc.”²⁹

Footnotes

1. G. Wayne Smith, Nathan Goff, Jr., pp. 210, 212, 217, 218.
2. Ibid., pp. 213-6.
3. Mary Kathryn Frye, Columbia, SC. in a letter to the Harrison County Historical Society, August 15, 1977.
4. Lawrence Wodehouse, “Frank Pierce Milburn (1868-1926), A Major Southern Architect”, North Carolina Historical Review, July 1973, p. 289.
5. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. XII, p. 103.
6. Lawrence Wodehouse, North Carolina Historical Review, July 1973, p. 290.
7. Ibid. p. 291.
8. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. XII, p. 103.
9. Wodehouse, North Carolina Historical Review, July 1973, pp. 295-6.
10. The Clarksburg Daily News, Industrial Edition, Clarksburg WV, 1909.
11. Manufacturers’ Record, Baltimore MD, November 11, 1909.
12. Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg WV, January 30, 1911.
13. Wodehouse, p. 300.
14. Ibid., p. 295.
15. Ibid., p. 289. Frank P. Milburn died at age fifty-eight on September 21, 1926. Ibid., p. 302.
16. One newspaper story labeled the two contractors “local”. The Clarksburg City Directory does not list either as residents of the city in the period 1903-1912.
17. Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg WV, January 30, 1911.
18. Ibid.
19. “Goff Building, Milburn, Heister & Co., Architects, Washington, D.C.”, Nathan Goff Estate, 910 Goff Building, Clarksburg WV.
20. Ibid.
21. Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg WV, January 30, 1911.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. G. Wayne Smith, Nathan Goff, Jr., p. 218.
28. “The Goff Building was a profitable investment, in some years returning a net profit over \$20,000.” G. Wayne Smith, pp. 218-19.
29. Howard Caplan, attorney at law, in a letter to Dorothy U. Davis, September 12, 1977.

Bibliography

Clarksburg Directory. Pittsburg PA: R. L. Polk & Co.

The Clarksburg Daily News, Industrial Edition, Clarksburg WV, 1909.

Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg WV, January 30, 1911.

“Goff Building, Milburn, Heister & Co., Architects, Washington, D.C.”, a single printed sheet describing the building, on file in Nathan Goff Estate, 910 Goff Building, Clarksburg WV.

The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography Being the History of the United States as Illustrated in the Lives of the Founders, Builders, and Defenders of the Republic... New York: James T. White & Company, 1904, Vol. XII, p. 103.

Smith, Gerald Wayne. Nathan Goff, Jr.: A Biography... Charleston WV: Education Foundation, 1959.

Wodehouse, Lawrence. “Frank Pierce Milburn (1868-1926), a Major Southern Architect”, North Carolina Historical Review, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Vol. L. No. 3, Summer (July) 1973, pp. 289-302.