

HISTORICAL SKETCH — NO. 16

The Amy Roberts Vance House

The Amy Roberts Vance House, 123 West Main Street, Clarksburg, West Virginia, which in 1980 is the site of the museum of the Harrison County Historical Society, is listed as the "Stealey-Goff-Vance House" in the National Register of Historic Places.¹ The nomenclature given in 1979 by the Register is apt because it names all the owners of the structure from 1807 to 1967, the year the property was conveyed to the historical society.

The "Stealey" in the name refers to Jacob Stealey who as a young man traveled from Baltimore, Md., to Lancaster County, Pa., and then to Monongalia County, Va. (W.Va.), where his brother John resided in the town of Morgantown. Here Jacob Stealey met and married Elizabeth Kerns, who, the daughter of Michael Kerns, had been born at Kerns Ford near Morgantown December 24, 1773. She was three years and two months younger than her husband Jacob born February 20, 1769.²

Jacob and Elizabeth Kerns Stealey loaded their possessions into a wagon to be pulled by ox team and moved with their infant son, John, born January 15, 1792, to Clarksburg in 1793. No record has been found of the Stealeys for two years after the move, except for the birth of a son Michael Kerns on March 26, 1794,³ until Jacob Stealey bought for 300 pounds from George and Elizabeth Jackson on November 17, 1795, the tanyard which Jackson had operated in Clarksburg. The tanyard lay "in line with lot No. 1 on Main Street and south of Tan Yard Run", a description which places the "3 quarters twenty-two poles and a half acres" in the northwest corner of streets labeled "Water Street" and "Washington Avenue" in 1980.⁴ The Jacob Stealey family took up residence in a log house which stood on the tannery lot.⁵

By 1804 Jacob Stealey was so successful as a tanner of hides and a retailer of leather that he looked about him for a site to build a fine home. Lot No. 3 on West Main Street in Clarksburg appealed to him because it lay high enough above Elk Creek that chance of flooding was slight and the back of the lot joined the tanyard lot. He may have started to gather materials for the house he would build as early as 1804 since one source states that his son John helped "carry bricks" for the new house when he was twelve years old.⁶ However it was, the deed for four lots, land on which the brick house arose, was not recorded until August 20, 1807, when George and Elizabeth Jackson sold to Jacob Stealey for \$709½ land on the "south side of Main Street to a lot the said Jackson formerly sold to said Stealey called the Tan Yard."⁷

Workers excavated for a basement to extend under all the "house" portion of the new structure and erected foundation stones around the excavation to support the outer walls of the house. Then bricklayers began to lay the outer walls of brick⁸ for two floors of rooms that would have ceilings 9'8" high on the first floor and 8'8" high on the second floor. The workers were skilled enough to lay Flemish bond in the front which faces West Main Street. Cut stone steps were laid on the west side of a small stoop at the front of the house so that the stoop could be flush with West Main Street.

The plan of the house is Georgian with an 8'10" wide hallway extending 24' to the back outer wall of the house and containing, opposite the front door, a staircase which leads to a landing from which steps climb toward the front of the house on the second floor; two doors opposite one another which lead to rooms on either side of the hallway; and under the staircase a door which leads to the stairs to the basement. The east room (drawing room) measures 24' by 14'3" and has two windows in the front and two windows in the back. The only windows in the east wall of the building are two small ones on either side of the chimney in the attic. The space to the west of the first floor hallway, 24' by 15'11", is divided into two rooms, a parlor and a dining room. Chimneys for fireplaces in the parlor and in the dining room lead into one chimney which balances the single chimney in the east wall of the house. A window was cut in the west wall to provide daylight for the dining room. The windows in the front west of the house balance the windows on the front east of the house: two downstairs with two directly above upstairs.

The plan of the second floor of the house is the same as the first floor except that the portion of the upstairs hall above the front door is enclosed for what would probably have been a small bedroom in 1807, making four bedrooms in the upstairs. Stairs were built, with a landing, from the second floor to the attic forming a stairwell from the first floor to the third. A window directly above the one in the dining room below gives light to the back bedroom on the west; a window directly above the front door gives light to the small room off the upstairs hallway. Two small windows, one on either side of the chimney, admit light to the attic from the west.

Jacob Stealey in his will was careful to separate "my household and kitchen furniture"⁹ since during most of the nineteenth century the kitchen was not considered a part of the house. A photograph thought to have been made in the late 1880's or in the early 1890's shows a long narrow wing built of brick or stone joined to a portion of the back of the house on the west. The wing looks to have been as long as sixty feet, ample room for storage rooms and kitchen.¹⁰

July 27, 1832, Jacob Stealey conveyed to his son John the tanyard "beginning at the NE corner of the lot whereon Brick House of said Jacob now stands. . . with tanyard, vats, horses and appurtenances; Tan House, Curryng House, Oats, Bark, Hides, Oil, Tools, Machinery to be used by Jacob during his life with all profits to Jacob."¹¹ May 13, 1836, Jacob Stealey conveyed to his son Edmond¹² Kerns Stealey "155½ acres on the west side of the West Fork River below the mouth of Elk Creek" (the Flesher farm).¹³ This is the area of Clarksburg known as "Stealey" in 1980.

Jacob Stealey in a will written July 30, 1840, directed that at his death his son John should receive 24 acres lying south of the brick house (the Stealey orchard) and that his son Edmond K. would receive the "brick house and lot" with the reservation that the property would be the "life estate of wife [Elizabeth Kerns Stealey]" and that Edmond K. was to have no control of the house and lot during her lifetime.¹⁴

Elizabeth Kerns Stealey "died September 1, 1840, at about 20 minutes past 9 o'clock in the evening in her 67th year".¹⁵ Sometime after the death John and his wife Lydia Lacy Stealey, who between 1812 and 1829 had had seven children born to them¹⁶, moved into the brick house for they were living there when Jacob Stealey died September 13, 1841.¹⁷

Three days before his death Jacob Stealey had written a codicil to his will: "I give to my son John Stealey in addition to what I have already bequeathed him in the body of my will, the brick house and lot on which I now live being the same bequeathed in the body of my will to my son Edmond K., in lieu thereof my said son John is to construct a building and back building of equal dimensions, quality, and finish in every respect similiar [sic] to the said building that I now occupy with a cellar of equal dimentions [sic] under the principal building to the one under my present dwelling which buildings are to be constructed on the Flesher farm at such place as my

said son Edmond K. shall designate. The whole to be finished within three years after my death. My said son John shall have the privilege [sic] of taking stone and the necessary timber off the aforesaid farm, provided also that my said son Edmond K. shall have the use and occupation of the property whereon my said son John now lives free and clear of rent until [sic] the aforesaid buildings on the Flesher farm shall be completed."¹⁸

Edmund K. Stealey did not occupy the brick house on West Main Street while his brother John built the house stipulated in his father's will.¹⁹ Instead he continued to reside in the Nicholas Carpenter log house on the Flesher farm until a short time after his son Irwin was born in June 1843, when the structure identical in plan to the Jacob Stealey house was ready for occupancy at 412 Milford Street in Clarksburg.²⁰

Nathan Goff bought "in front of the Courthouse of Harrison County on the 25 day of May 1881" the lot "on which the brick house in which said John Stealey now resides. . . for \$2930" and twenty-four acres lying south of the house known as the "Stealey meadow and orchard for \$3600".²¹

John Stealey may have continued to reside in the house until his death on May 1, 1882.²² At any rate, the house, meadow and orchard must have been let by Nathan Goff and after his death by his estate until January 4, 1886, when "the lot on Main Street (on which is the brick house in which John Stealey formerly lived). . . [and] (where Mrs. Virginia Ramsey now lives) and also a piece of land called 'the Stealey meadow and orchard'" were conveyed to Mary R. Horner Goff²³ for \$7900.²⁴

During her marriage to Nathan Goff, Mary Horner Goff lived with her husband in the Nathan Goff house which stood on the lot west of Waldomore on West Pike Street, land on which a portion of the Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library stands in 1980.²⁵ After Nathan Goff's death, since by terms of the agreement drawn up before she married him, the Nathan Goff residence became the property of his estate, Mary Horner Goff may have decided to live in the brick house at 123 West Main Street.

She set about to remodel the house. A gable added to the roof in center front enlarged the attic which was divided into two rooms. Gingerbread was added to the roof overhang at the east and west ends of the building. A bathroom was installed on the second floor in the small room over the downstairs front entrance. The kitchen wing was torn down. A two-story clapboard extension 14'8" wide was built to extend 24'9" along the west side of the house at the back. The downstairs portion of the clapboard addition was made into a kitchen with one window and an outside door at the back, and a smaller room with two windows and with French doors leading to the lawn and the garden back of the house. Steps built from the first landing of the staircase in the original structure led to a bathroom and a bedroom on the second floor of the clapboard addition.

Mary Horner Goff was not living in the brick house at the time of her death in 1908.²⁶ John A. Windon ran a boarding house at 123 West Main Street in 1900.²⁷ Although the house is not listed with boarding houses in Clarksburg after 1900, it could have been a rooming house through 1908 because names occur in city directories during the period with 123 West Main Street as site of residence.²⁸

By terms of the will of Mary Horner Goff her estate would be divided equally between her nephews J. Carl Vance and Lynn S. Hornor with the reservation that if either or both should "die without children, their part would go to my [Mary Horner Goff's] sister and brothers and to the heirs of my deceased brothers and sisters."²⁹ Both nephews were young men, a fact that assured partition of the estate would probably not occur for many years.

Perhaps the assurance that the property would not be transferred soon caused Dr. Ulysses W. Showalter to rent the house in 1909 for his home and office.³⁰ He lived in the house and practiced medicine from the house until 1913. By 1919 Dr. Percy C. Showalter, son of Ulysses Showalter, had residence and office for the practice of medicine at 123 West Main Street.³¹ After the death of Dr. Percy C. Showalter, his widow Bertie Showalter lived in the house until 1932.³²

Lynn S. Hornor died in September 1933 without having been the father of children. J. Carl Vance, the other devisee named in the will of Mary Horner Goff, had died in 1922 the father of two sons, Cyrus Roberts Vance and John Carl Vance. The partition of the Mary Horner Goff estate was recorded December 15, 1933. As part of the partition Amy Roberts Vance, widow of J. Carl Vance, was awarded one-half interest and her sons Cyrus R. Vance and John C. Vance were awarded one-half interest in "all the lot on the south side of Main Street."³³ Amy Roberts Vance established her residence in the "Jacob Stealey Brick House" in 1934.³⁴

Amy Roberts Vance contributed to the cultural and social life of the Clarksburg community. She was first listed as a member of the Tuesday Club in 1910 and was president of the club 1916-17, 1943-44, 1944-45.³⁵ After she moved into the Stealey-Goff-Vance House, the Tuesday Club met regularly for its bimonthly meetings at 123 West Main Street. Mrs. Vance was a member of the Clarksburg Country Club, the Goff Plaza Garden Club, and a member of the board of directors of the Clarksburg Chapter of the American Red Cross. She was a founder of the Clarksburg Community Concert Association in 1933 and of the Clarksburg League for Service in 1934.³⁶ The annual membership tea of the Clarksburg Community Concert Association was held at her home which was open for meetings and social events of all organizations in which she was interested.

Mrs. Vance was elected to the board of directors of the Clarksburg Public Library in 1943³⁷; she was an associate director of the library board at the time of her death in 1967.³⁸ On a unit of shelving for magazines purchased with funds contributed to the library as a memorial to Mrs. Vance is the inscription: "In Memory of Amy Roberts Vance (Mrs. J. Carl) 1881-1967, Friend, Patron and Director (1943-1964) of the Clarksburg Public Library from her Friends and Admirers."³⁹

In 1967 Cyrus R. Vance offered to pay \$10,000 and John C. Vance, \$1000 of the \$35,000 assessed value of the brick house in which their mother had resided if the Harrison County Historical Society would purchase the house and lot. The historical society borrowed \$24,000, which was repaid in six months through public subscription, and purchased the property November 15, 1967, for a museum.⁴⁰

Downstairs in the east room the society installed cases to hold artifacts that illustrate the history of Harrison County. The hallway, the west parlor, and the dining room were furnished with nineteenth century furniture most of which was once owned by people well known in the history of the county. The kitchen was converted into an office, with shelves for a small library, filing cabinets and a compact kitchen unit.

A table in the hallway is the only piece of furniture owned by the society which stood in the house when Jacob Stealey lived there. The table was donated in 1974 by Frances Stealey Skinker at the time she was disposing of the house and furnishings of the John E. Stealey estate, 610 Milford Street. As soon as members of the society who are informed as to Clarksburg cabinet makers saw the table, they identified it as a John Hursey piece because tiger maple wood was used in the table. Hursey, who operated a cabinet shop on the northeast corner of West Pike and North Fourth Streets circa 1820, used tiger maple in a high percentage of the furniture he built.

The east room upstairs in 1980 is the meeting room of the Harrison County Historical Society. The west front room upstairs is called "The Jackson Room" because it contains pictures and artifacts associated with Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jackson. Also in the Jackson Room are specimens of pottery from all the potteries known to have existed in Harrison County. The room next the Jackson Room is decorated as a nineteenth century bedroom. The room on the second floor of the clapboard portion of the upstairs houses the tool collection owned by the Harrison County Historical Society.

FOOTNOTES

1. Letter from Clarence E. Moran, West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer, Oct. 19, 1979. Date of entry in the National Register of Historic Places Sept. 25, 1979.
2. Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick, Vol. STE, (Records in the possession of Willis G. Tetrick, Jr., 7th Floor, Union National Center, Clarksburg, W. Va.)
Ibid.
Harrison County, Virginia (W. Va.), Deed Book, No. 2, pp. 83-4.
5. Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick, Vol. STE.
6. Ibid.
7. Harrison County, Virginia (W. Va.), Deed Book, No. 7, pp. 95-6.
8. Sometime between 1807 and 1932 the red brick used in constructing the house was painted gray.
9. Harrison County, Virginia (W. Va.), Will Book, No. 6, p. 10.
10. Panoramic photograph of Clarksburg ca. 1890 shows rear of Amy Roberts Vance House (Stealey-Goff-Vance House), Clarksburg, W.Va. Harrison County Historical Society.
11. Harrison County, Virginia (W. Va.), Deed Book, No. 21, p. 235.
12. Jacob Stealey spelled the name Edmond in his will. The son spelled his name Edmund.
13. Harrison County, Virginia (W. Va.), Deed Book, No. 23, p. 410.
14. Harrison County, Virginia (W. Va.), Will Book, No. 6, p. 10. Son Michael Kerns (1794-1822) was deceased at the time of the writing of the will. Sons Jacob, Jr. (1796-) and James (1798-1879), both of whom had moved to Tyler County, would each receive a bequest of \$1000. The three daughters Catherine Stealey Swearingen (1800-1829), Susannah Stealey Fowkes (1803-1829), and Elizabeth Stealey Fowkes (1808-1836), had died before Jacob Stealey wrote his will in 1840; none of their progeny was named in the will.
15. Harrison County Whig, Clarksburg, Virginia (W. Va.), September 5, 1840, (Obituary copied in Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick, Vol. STE).
16. Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg, W. Va., August 23, 1932.
17. Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick, Vol. STE.
18. John E. Stealey in correspondence with Dorothy Davis, December 27, 1979.
19. Edmund Kerns Stealey did not like the smells emanating from the tannery near the home of his father. So when Jacob told Edmund, "I'm going to leave you this property in my will", Edmund complained about it.
"Well, what would you like?" the father asked.
"I'd like a place like this out in the country somewhere," responded the son. Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg, W. Va., December 16, 1938.
20. John E. Stealey in correspondence with Dorothy Davis, December 19, 1979. The Edmund K. Stealey House was razed in 1939.
21. Harrison County, West Virginia, Deed Book, No. 63, pp. 490-1. The transaction was recorded in the Harrison County, West Virginia Deed Book, No. 63, pp. 490-1 on July 2, 1881.
22. Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick (Information supplied February 10, 1937, by Joe N. Stealey from the Edmund K. Stealey Family Bible in possession of Joe N. Stealey).
23. On November 14, 1877, one year before Mary R. Hornor married Nathan Goff on November 15, 1878 (Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick, Vol. GIK-GOI, information from Bible of Waldo P. Goff in possession of L. Harper Rogers on November 25, 1928), "as marriage portion and settlement" Nathan Goff "agreed to pay \$100,000 to be paid to her [Mary Hornor] after his [Nathan Goff's] demise. Nathan Goff died November 27, 1885. On January 4, 1886, Nathan Goff, Jr., executor of the Nathan Goff estate, paid the sum named in the agreement "in full of all demands by her against and in and to his estate." Harrison County, W. Va., Deed Book, No. 71, pp. 216-7.
24. Ibid., No. 71, pp. 243-4.
25. Catherine Osborn Goff in a conversation with Dorothy Davis December 18, 1979.
26. Harrison County, W. Va., Will Book, No. 8, p. 453.
27. Clarksburg City Directory for 1900-01, published by John B. Smith and W. E. Dawson, [Clarksburg, W. Va.]: Telegram Print, 1900, p. 138.
28. R. L. Polk & Co's Clarksburg Directory, 1907, Pittsburgh, Pa.: R. L. Polk & Co., 1907, p. 223.
29. Harrison County, W. Va., Will Book, No. 8, p. 453.
30. R. L. Polk & Co's Clarksburg Directory, 1909-10, Pittsburgh, Pa.: R. L. Polk & Co., 1909, p. 388; 1911, p. 335.
31. Ibid., 1919, p. 512; 1921, p. 766; 1923, p. 782; 1925, p. 545.
32. Ibid., 1927, p. 525; 1929, p. 491; 1931, p. 429.
33. Harrison County, W. Va., Deed Book, No. 445, pp. 77-83.
34. J. Carl and Amy Roberts Vance lived in the "Despard House," 457 West Pike Street, during the early years of their marriage. When their boys were young they moved to the New York City area, where Mr. Vance engaged in the insurance business. After the death of Mr. Vance in 1922, Amy Roberts Vance spent part of each year in Clarksburg, sometimes in the Bassel House, 150 West Main Street, and sometimes in the Ruhl House, 205 East Main Street. From 1931 to 1933 her permanent address was 303 Lee Avenue, where she resided with Emma K. Davis in the John J. Davis House. R. L. Polk & Co's Clarksburg Directory 1931, Pittsburgh, Pa.: R. L. Polk & Co., 1931, p. 482; 1933, p. 419.
35. Tuesday Club (Clarksburg, W. Va.) Yearbook, 1910, 1916-17, 1943-44, 1944-45, Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library -W. Va. History and Genealogy Collection.
36. Clarksburg Exponent, Clarksburg, W. Va., July 18, 1967.
37. Lynch, Lawrence R. History of Clarksburg Public Library, Clarksburg, W. Va.: 1946.
38. Sunday Exponent-Telegram, Clarksburg, W. Va., April 17, 1966.
39. Sunday Exponent-Telegram, Clarksburg, W. Va., April 16, 1972.
40. Harrison County, W. Va., Deed Book, No. 940, pp. 632-5.

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Lynch, Lawrence R. History of Clarksburg Public Library. Clarksburg, W. Va.: 1946. Pam., unpagued.

R. L. Polk & Co's Clarksburg (W. Va.) Directory, Pittsburgh, Pa.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1907, 1909-10, 1911, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1933.

Records of Genealogy, collected by W. Guy Tetrick. In the possession of Willis G. Tetrick, Jr., Union National Center, Clarksburg, W. Va.

Tuesday Club (Clarksburg, W. Va.) Yearbook, 1910, 1916-17, 1943-44, 1944-45. Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library. West Virginia History and Genealogy Collection.

Newspapers

Clarksburg Exponent, Clarksburg, W. Va.

Clarksburg Telegram, Clarksburg, W. Va.

Harrison County Whig, Clarksburg, Virginia (W. Va.)

Sunday Exponent-Telegram, Clarksburg, W. Va.

Correspondence

Clarence E. Moran, West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer.
John E. Stealey.

Interview

Mrs. Catherine Osborn Goff.