

In the 1820's Waldo P. Goff and his younger brother Nathan opened a general merchandising business in a building across from the Harrison County Courthouse on the north side of West Main Street in Clarksburg, Virginia (W.Va.). The two sold merchandise purchased in Baltimore or traded the goods for country products such as ginseng, feathers, deerskins, flax, wool, etc. The brothers became agents for Robert Garrett, a Baltimore agent, and dealt in merchandizing in Morgantown and Buckhannon. By 1839 the two Goffs had been so successful as merchants and were so engaged in other business endeavors that they had sold their store.¹

Waldo P. Goff, aged forty-two, was ready to marry. The ideal site for a house for his bride would be North Back Street since the Northwestern Turnpike, opened from Romney to Parkersburg a year earlier in 1838, had made the "back" street the thoroughfare of the town.² Goff purchased on February 14, 1839, for \$1,000 approximately four acres of land which lay on the north side of North Back Street³, soon to be renamed "Pike" Street, and made plans to erect a house similar to those he had seen in eastern Virginia when he served as a member of the Virginia State Senate from 1833 to 1837.

The red bricks for the walls of the house Goff built on his land in 1839 were laid atop a foundation of rectangular, 18-inch-thick cut stones which rose two feet above ground. Excavation was made for a narrow basement which ran across the entire width of the house in the back and was lined with stone laid up to meet that of the foundation for the rest of the house. The house was Georgian with a two-story central portion flanked by one-story wings. Four columns the height of the two-story section supported a wooden triangular entablature and gave the house a classical portico.⁴ Windows with panes six over six were installed on either side of the door of the portico with the same sized windows on the second floor directly above those downstairs plus an identical window on the second floor above the door to the house. The one-story rooms of the wings each had an interior chimney with a fireplace in the outside wall facing the central portion of the building and each had two windows, like those of the portico, facing south. A photograph made of the house in 1861 shows a walk of rectangular cut stones leading from West Pike Street to the house.⁵

A citizen of Clarksburg noted in a diary in 1850 that Waldo P. Goff had the first door bell in town and Luther Haymond, the second.⁶ The Waldo P. Goff house was chock-full in 1850, when the census-taker listed nine people as living in the house⁷ among whom were Harriet Moore Goff's mother Rachel Pindall Moore and Harriet M. Goff's brother Thaddeus W. Moore. Harriet Moore Goff's sister Delia, who had married Luther Haymond and lived a block away on the northwest corner of West Pike and North Sixth Streets, was in and out of the Waldo Goff house. Another sister of Mrs. Goff, Caroline Moore Jackson, so wanted to be near her sisters and mother that in 1865 her husband sold the Jackson house on East Pike Street and bought a small brick house which he enlarged and remodeled into the Jackson Mansion which stood in the 500 block just beyond the Luther Haymond house on the north side of West Pike Street.⁸

The war years 1861-1865 were difficult ones for the Waldo P. Goff family. Capt. Henry Clay Goff, one of the four Goff boys who enlisted in the U.S. Army, died in service; Lt. Nathan, Jr., another son captured by Confederate forces and sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, was exchanged for a Union prisoner after Waldo P. and Harriet Moore Goff traveled to Washington and personally asked President Lincoln for an exchange of prisoners so that their son could come home. Thomas M. and Charles J., the two remaining sons, served in the Union forces until the end of the war.⁹ Even though the families into which they married sympathized with different sides during the conflict, the Moore sisters let nothing interfere with their close personal relationship.¹⁰

Waldo P. Goff and his brother Nathan, after the Virginia legislature had passed a law permitting the purchase, after March 30, 1837, of forfeited lands in the counties rather than in Richmond, had bought vast acreage in Harrison and surrounding counties. Managing the land and the businesses in which the men had invested required office space. A small brick building flush with and facing West Pike Street was erected in the Goff lawn on what in 1981 is the corner of West Pike and North Fourth Streets for an office for Waldo P. Goff and another small brick building flush with and facing West Pike Street was built on the west side of what in 1981 is the lawn of Waldomore for an office for Nathan Goff, Sr.¹¹ Citizens gathered at the offices during political campaigns to organize torchlight parades and to march, lights in hand, around the lawn of the Waldo P. Goff residence.¹²

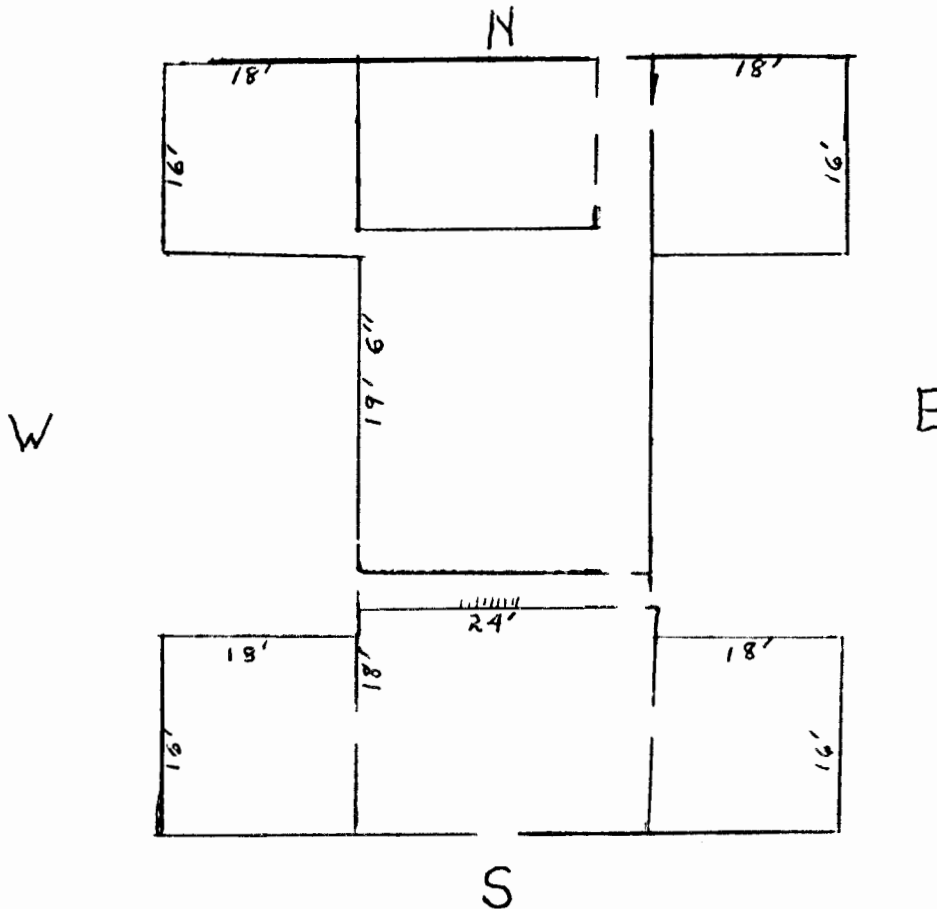
Waldo P. Goff died September 17, 1881, without having made a will. His four surviving children, Nathan Goff, Jr., Charles J. Goff, May Goff, and Hattie Goff agreed July 12, 1881, to "apportion among themselves without resort to legal proceedings" the Waldo P. Goff estate giving their mother (Harriet Moore Goff) for her dower the "home-place 'or mansion house' of said Waldo P. Goff on Pike Street including the two brick offices on said street" plus several other pieces of property in the town.¹³

In 1897 the grounds of the mansion house were whittled down.¹⁴ Nathan Goff, Jr., in order to speed the development of land he owned north of Elk Creek, offered to build a bridge across the creek and to secure the land as a gift to the City of Clarksburg if the city would extend North Fourth Street to the new bridge. In March 1897 Harriet Moore Goff, her three living children, and Richard T. Lowndes agreed to remove the buildings standing thereon and to convey to the city land for a street running northeast from Pike Street to the new bridge over Elk Creek.¹⁵ In agreements made in April 1897 and in December 1898 May Goff Lowndes, who had married her cousin Richard Tasker Lowndes in 1896, bought out the other heirs of the Waldo P. Goff mansion house in legal arrangements which stipulated that May Lowndes' ownership "is subject to the life estate of Harriet Moore Goff as shown by deed duly of record."¹⁶

Mr. and Mrs. Lowndes made plans to remodel the mansion house which in 1897 consisted of a two-story central portion with two one-story wings in the front of the house and two one-story wings in the back of the house. The front door of the house led into a room with a chimney and fireplace opposite the front door. Doors in the east and west walls of the room led to parlors in the front one-story wings. A door to the east of the fireplace in the reception room opened into a narrow hallway which ran across the entire central portion of the house. The hall contained in the center the stairway to the upstairs and at the ends doors to porches on either side of the house, the porch on the west attached to the back of the front west wing and the one on the east extending from the front east wing to the back east wing.

A door in the east back wall of the hall led to the dining room of the mansion and a door in the back wall of the dining room, and opposite the door from the hall, led to a small hallway with one door on the left to steps to the basement; a second door on the left to a storage-pantry room; and a door on the right to the kitchen in the back east wing of the house. A door at the end of the small hallway was the back door of the house leading to the out-of-doors. A door in the west wall of the dining room led to the back west room of the house which was a downstairs bedroom.¹⁷

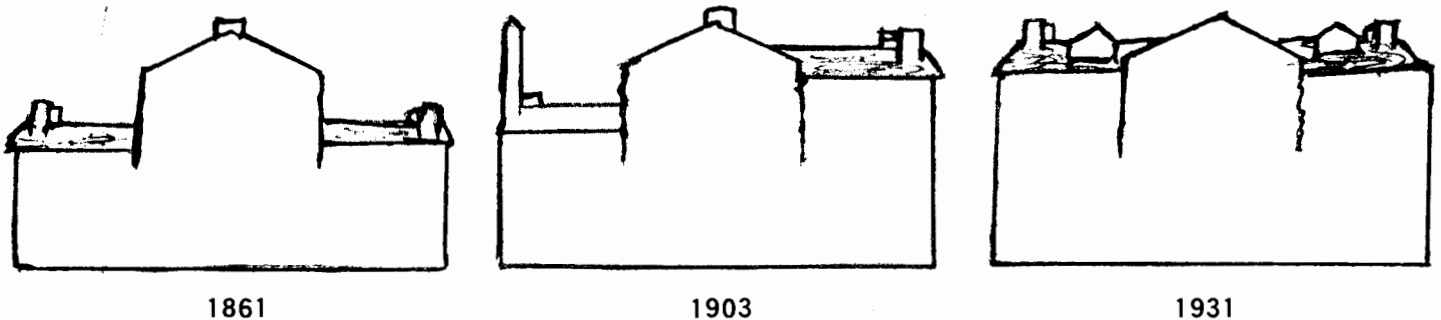
The division of space in the downstairs of the Waldo P. Goff mansion is shown in the sketch below:



First, the Lowndeses extended the brick wall of the front wing on the east to meet the east wall of the wing in the back thus enclosing the porch on the east. They added a second floor to the entire eastern portion of the house to the same height as the second floor of the central portion of the house. The six over six windows in the old portion of the house were replaced with ten over plain glass to match those in the new addition. A photograph of a postcard postmarked "1903" shows the house with the second floor added to the east wing and the west wing still one-story in height.¹⁸ Since no one interviewed in 1981 remembers when the second story of the west wing was not in place, remodeling the west portion must have occurred soon after 1903. Neither does anyone remember when the brick walls were painted gray.

Remodeling the west wing consisted of adding a second floor to the two rooms which made up the two west wings. The porch on the west was torn away. French windows were installed to open to the west from the dining room. The second floor of the front west wing housed a bedroom and a bathroom. A second bathroom was placed in the second floor of the back west wing. Instead of the three bedrooms in the upstairs of the original house, the remodeled house had nine rooms and two bathrooms upstairs.¹⁹ Sometime after 1900 May Goff Lowndes gave the mansion house the name "Waldomore" in honor of her father Waldo P. Goff and her mother Harriet L. Moore Goff.²⁰

Photographs made in 1861, 1903, and 1931 showed the changes in the shape of the front of the building:



Richard T. Lowndes died July 23, 1930; May Goff Lowndes died August 3, 1930. Mrs. Lowndes, in her will, directed that Waldomore be given to the City of Clarksburg. She gave the entire lawn to Pike Street to the city. She set the northern boundary as along the north end of the small building behind Waldomore, a building which Mrs. Lowndes had used as a laundry.²¹

The key to Waldomore was turned over to the Clarksburg Public Library Board January 10, 1931. The board asked Carleton C. Wood of the Edward J. Wood and Son architectural firm to draw up plans for remodeling the house into a library. The sketches he gave the board on April 2, 1931, called for setting the front door forward in order to form a small vestibule with swinging doors into what would be the main reading room of the library. The chimney in the center of the house was taken out "through the roof" of the house and the mantel from the reception room moved to the north wall of what had been the dining room. Both walls of the hallway were removed and the staircase moved to the east side of what would be the main reading room. The parlors were converted into reading rooms; the downstairs bedroom, into stacks; the kitchen, into an office. A restroom was installed near the staircase in part of the porch the Lowndeses had enclosed. Upstairs partitions were taken out of the central portion of the house to open up the area into a large room to be the same size as the one downstairs. The bathroom was removed from the front west wing making the upstairs west wing one room for library stacks.²² The work was completed on June 2, 1931, for a cost of \$9,924.22. The library was moved; and the facility was formally opened to the public on June 25, 1931.²³

Shortly after it gained control of Waldomore, the library board was besieged with requests by community groups to use the lawn, which had been graded and planted by Mr. Lowndes, for band concerts and other public gatherings. The board refused all requests. They voted "that no part of the library grounds should be used by the public for any other than library purposes. . ." ²⁴ and were commended by the Clarksburg Exponent, June 9, 1931, in an article which read in part: "It is therefore very encouraging, very refreshing and very satisfying to learn that the library board is going to maintain that beauty spot [Waldomore lawn] as it is and as the soul of the lady who gave it intended. . ." ²⁵

The decision by the board as to use of the grounds followed directions in Mrs. Lowndes' will: "[Waldomore is] to be used as a public library and museum and no other purpose. . . [and if the city should attempt] to convert it to other uses, this property shall revert to my legal heirs." ²⁶ Again in the 1970's when it built in 1975 a new building for the Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, the library board was restricted by Mrs. Lowndes' will as to the use of Waldomore.

The board decided that the second floor of Waldomore would house the genealogical and the West Virginia collections of the library. The board hoped that the first floor of Waldomore could be decorated chiefly in the style of the eighteenth century and used for cultural and educational programs such as concerts, lectures, etc.

The major project of the Harrison County Bicentennial Commission was the renovation of Waldomore for which the commission reserved \$25,000. With permission of the library board, the Bicentennial Commission and the Clarksburg-Harrison Cultural Foundation appointed a committee of more than twenty citizens to discuss plans for the renovation. They hired Carleton C. Wood, Jr., of WYK Associates to draw plans; they gave Mr. Wood explicit instructions to retain the architectural integrity of the building.

The plans accepted by the library board called for removing the rug and finishing the original floors of the downstairs, installing restrooms in the room Mrs. Lowndes had used as a pantry, installing a facility for serving food at receptions in the back east wing which had been Mrs. Lowndes' kitchen. Plans called for the ground between the west wings of the house to be covered with a brick patio raised to the level of the first brick of the walls of the house, a door to be cut in the south wall of the back west wing, and a staircase built to the second floor. This would be the entrance used by the public with the staircase used from 1931-1980 to be a fire exit. The elevator installed by the Lowndeses in the east wall of their dining room would be re-activated. If a patron needed to use the elevator, a bell installed at the door leading to the second floor could summons an operator.

The Bicentennial Commission authorized that the first phase of the renovation project be carried out. On November 14, 1977, Ulysses Buffington, chairman of the commission, reported to the library board that restrooms on the first and second floors of Waldomore had been installed at a cost of \$25,749 paid by the commission and that in winding up its affairs the commission had decided that the \$8,000 remaining in the treasury would be donated for furnishings for Waldomore.

Ulysses Buffington, president of the Clarksburg-Harrison Cultural Foundation, appeared before the Clarksburg City Council and the Harrison County Court to ask each body to appropriate funds for matching should the Historic Preservation Unit for the West Virginia Department of Culture and History approve the application for funds for the restoration. The council and the court each voted \$30,000 toward the renovation. February 1, 1979, the West Virginia Department of Culture and History awarded \$53,690 from the United States Department of Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, acting under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Then the library board, on the advice of City Attorney Laban White, voted that no further phases of the work be authorized until the legality of the use of the building be determined. The board hired legal counsel who petitioned the Harrison County Circuit Court for declaratory judgment as to whether the projected plans for the use of the building were allowed under the terms of Mrs. Lowndes' will.

September 17, 1979, the circuit court ruled that the library board could make the first floor of Waldomore into a center for cultural and educational programs such as lectures, musical concerts, art exhibits, but that no events involving physical exercises, or that no social events such as card parties could be held in the building. No commercial groups, no religious groups, no private groups may use the building for meetings. No admission may ever be charged for an event held in Waldomore. The court agreed that the library board could construct a new entrance and could build a ramp leading to the entrance for the use of handicapped persons without violating the spirit of the Lowndes will.

Work began in earnest. During the delay in construction inflation had caused costs to increase. December 26, 1979, the West Virginia Department of Culture and History awarded a supplementary grant of \$15,195 for the project. The contract for the work was given at a cost of \$122,861 which with the sum of \$25,749 paid for Phase 1 will make the total cost of the renovation approximately \$150,000.

"It has been five years of work, worry, decisions, problems," said Ulysses Buffington when he was interviewed January 23, 1981. "Without the work of many and especially of William Lear of the Cultural Foundation, the late Mrs. Curtin of the library board, Clarksburg-Harrison Librarian Merle Moore, and the executive committee of the larger committee on renovation, we could not have completed the project. Members of the executive committee are Margaret Criswell, Dr. Robert Davis, William Lear, Jack Skinner, Robert Stemple, Dr. Robert S. Wilson, Carleton C. Wood, Jr., and I.

"Workmen are hanging the chandeliers today. We hope to set in the central room one hundred chairs for members attending the general meeting of the Clarksburg-Harrison Cultural Foundation this week. We want the members to see the finished rooms. And we want them to see bare windows, bare floors, and bare walls to elicit ideas for financing rugs, draperies, and furniture."²⁷

Mr. Buffington said that the piano purchased in 1976 by the Clarksburg-Harrison Cultural Foundation will stand in the central room of the first floor. The committee hopes to furnish the front east room as a dining room and the front west room as a parlor.

The committee on renovation of Waldomore will suggest that the library board appoint a citizens' advisory committee to review applications of persons and agencies who wish to use Waldomore and to draw up proposals of policy for use of the building and then make recommendations to the library board. "Persons named to the committee," said Mr. Buffington, "should be those interested in historic preservation."²⁸

FOOTNOTES

1. Dorothy Davis, History of Harrison County, p. 200.
2. The first daily line of stages running from Parkersburg to Romney started June 17, 1840, Henry Haymond, History of Harrison County, p. 269.
3. Harrison County, Va. (W.Va.), Deed Book No. 27, pp. 34-5.
4. The portico is large enough that when front porches were popular late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, the Goffs placed rocking chairs and other porch furniture on the portico each summer. A trellis a few feet from the west side of the portico, on which grew vines, shaded those sitting on the west side of the portico, photograph of Waldomore ca. 1905, Harrison County Historical Society.
5. Photograph of Waldomore, 1861, Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, (reproduced in Davis, History of Harrison County, p. 449).
6. Henry Haymond, p. 269.
7. The census lists "Sept. 24, 1850, Waldo P. Goff, gentlemen, age 53; Harriet, 34; Henry Clay, 9; Nathan, 7; Thomas M., 5; Charles J., 3; Mary [May], 1; Rachel Moore, 56; Thaddeus W. Moore, 22", Tetrick, W. Guy, Census Returns of Harrison County (West) Virginia, copied from the original federal census records in the census bureau, Washington, D.C., p. 96. Waldo P. and Harriet Moore Goff had nine children. Gay, the eldest and the only one not born in Waldomore, must have died before 1850, Lawrence R. Lynch, History of Clarksburg Public Library, p. 24.
8. Florrie Jackson Needham in a conversation with Dorothy Davis in 1974; Harrison County, Va. (W.Va.) Deed Book No. 48, p. 397.
9. H. H. Hardesty and Co., Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, Illustrated . . . Maps and Histories of Harrison and Marion Counties, West Virginia, p. 331.
10. Florrie Jackson Needham. The Goffs and Haymonds stayed with the Union. The Jacksons sympathized with the Confederacy.
11. Harrison County, Va. (W.Va.), Deed Book No. 69, pp. 356-8.
12. Catherine Osborn Goff in a conversation with Dorothy Davis, January 1981.
13. Harrison County, Va. (W.Va.), Deed Book No. 69, pp. 356-8.
14. The three acres W. P. Goff bought in 1839 extended north from the 1981 western edge of the lawn of Waldomore to Elk Creek, east on West Pike Street to the western wall of the 1981 Waldo Complex Building, north from the Waldo site to Hewes Avenue, thence east to present-day Third Street, north to Elk Creek and west along Elk Creek to the line marking the western boundary of the land.
15. Harrison County, Va. (W.Va.) Deed Book No. 100, p. 430.
16. May Goff Lowndes paid Hattie Goff \$2,000 for a ¼ interest and Nathan Goff, Jr., \$4,000 for a ½ interest in the mansion house, Ibid., 106, pp. 59, 63-5. Harriet Moore Goff died on July 19, 1904.
17. Blueprints drawn by Edward J. Wood and Son, architects, Clarksburg, W.Va., March 1931, in the possession of WYK Associates, 205 Washington Avenue, Clarksburg, W.Va.
18. Harrison County Historical Society.
19. Blueprints drawn by Edward J. Wood and Son, March 1931.
20. Lawrence R. Lynch, History of Clarksburg Public Library, pp. 22-3.
21. Ibid., p. 23. Two other small cottages stand behind Waldomore in 1981. At times the buildings have been used for housing for the caretaker of the library; at other times they have been used for storage.
22. Blueprints drawn by Edward J. Wood and Son, March 1931.
23. Lawrence R. Lynch, p. 31.
24. Ibid., p. 32.
25. Ibid., p. 33.
26. Ibid., p. 32.
27. Ulysses Buffington, during an interview with Dorothy Davis, January 23, 1981.
28. Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blueprints for remodeling Waldomore drawn by Edward J. Wood and Son, architects, Clarksburg, W.Va., March 1931.
- Davis, Dorothy. History of Harrison County, West Virginia. American Association of University Women, Clarksburg, West Virginia, 1970. [Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1970]
- Hardesty, H. H. and Co., Publisher. Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia, Illustrated. . . Maps and Histories of Harrison and Marion Counties, West Virginia. . . Chicago and Toledo: 1883.
- Harrison County, Va. (W.Va.), Clarksburg, West Virginia. Deed Book, Nos. 27, 69, 100, 106.
- Haymond, Henry. History of Harrison County [West Virginia] . . . from the Early Days of Northwestern Virginia to the Present. Morgantown, W.Va.: Acme Publishing Company [c1910]
- Lynch, Lawrence R. History of Clarksburg Public Library. Clarksburg, W.Va.: pam., unpagged, publisher lacking, 1946.
- Tetrick, W. Guy. Census Returns of Harrison County (West) Virginia, 1850. In the possession of Willis G. Tetrick, Jr., Clarksburg, West Virginia.
- Interviews:
 Ulysses Buffington
 Catherine Osborn Goff
 Florrie Jackson Needham