



Leland Hotel/Haverty's Furniture Building

227 N. Tryon Street

*Dr. William H. Huffman
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The Leland Hotel building, later the home of Haverty's Furniture for many years, has been an important part of Charlotte's social, commercial and architectural scene since the turn of the century. Strategically located in the second block north of the Square on Tryon, the building is, in many ways, a microcosm of the development, growth and changes of Charlotte as a whole. The lot upon which the building stands was originally the home place of John March Springs (1834-1866) and his wife, Elizabeth Caroline Stafford Springs (1834-1919), who were married in the bride's home county of Cabarrus in 1855. ¹ The couple settled in Charlotte, where John, a native of the city, became a successful clothing dealer, ² and they built a fine house in the 200 block of North Tryon next to the Tryon Street M. E. Church and its parsonage about 1858. ³ When the guns of war sounded six years later, John Springs joined the 53rd North Carolina Infantry as a second lieutenant, and was later promoted to captain and Assistant Quartermaster of the regiment. The 53rd saw action in some of the heaviest fighting of the war, including Gettysburg, Spotsylvania and other battles, and sustained many casualties while earning numerous commendations. ⁴ Although he made it back from the war, John Springs suffered an untimely death about a year after hostilities were over in 1866. Elizabeth Springs, who was left with five small children

to raise, determinedly carried on with singular success, as related in the *Charlotte Observer* in 1919:

Mrs. Springs was a woman of exceptional strength of mind and character. She took up the burden of the care of a large family after her husband's death and throughout the years bravely faced the trials and troubles that people of the South endured in the days immediately following the war.

Her children, indeed, rise to call her blessed, for she was an unusual woman, a woman of fine mentality, of rare poise, ability, and phenomenal strength of character. ⁵

Of the four girls and one boy Mrs. Springs nurtured to adulthood, one of them, Cora, married one of Charlotte's well-known citizens, Wade Hampton Harris (1858-1935) in 1884. In 1879, Harris joined the *Charlotte Observer* as a reporter, and six years later started the *Charlotte News*, where he remained until returning to the Observer company in 1894. He served as *editor of the Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, the *Observer's* afternoon daily, until rejoining the *Observer* and becoming its editor-in-chief in 1912, a position he held until his death in 1935. ⁶

About 1895, Mrs. Springs began to lose her eyesight, and in the next several years she moved in with the Harrises at 210 N. Church Street, and plans were made to develop the home place for commercial property in the growing town. ⁷ Thus in March, 1899, Elizabeth Springs borrowed ten thousand dollars to use for construction of a three-story brick building on the site, and in November of that year she borrowed an additional three thousand to complete the project which was then underway. ⁸ Finished about spring, 1900, the handsome building was a worthy addition to Charlotte's growing commercial center in the town of 18,000. It was known as the Leland Hotel, which occupied the second and third floors (entry was through a central portal and up the stairs), and on the street level were four storefronts, two on either side of the hotel entrance.

The proprietor of the hotel was Henry Clay Williams (1853-1916), a Charlotte native who was as well-liked as he was well-known in the city. As a newspaper article of the time expressed it,

He was an apostle of good cheer as well as kindness. Cheerful, pleasant, sympathetic, he was a good companion, welcome in any gathering.

He loved little children, and their intuitive love for him was tribute supreme to the good that was within him.

Henry Williams was a true friend...He was known to everybody in Charlotte, being especially popular with the men uptown and by whom he will especially be missed. ⁹

No doubt H. C. Williams' personality and style contributed a great deal to the success of the Leland Hotel in turn-of-the-century Charlotte.

Although there is presently no direct proof, circumstantial evidence suggests that the architect of the building may have been [Charles Christian Hook](#) (1870-1938), one of the city's leading designers. C. C. Hook practiced architecture in the city from the 1890's, when he designed homes for the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (4 C's) in the new [streetcar](#) suburb of [Dilworth](#), until his death in 1938. From his drawing board came a number of fine structures, including the old city hall, the Charlotte Woman's Club and the James B. Duke mansion in [Myers Park](#). ¹⁰ It is evident that Henry Williams and C. C. Hook were close friends, since Hook was a witness to Williams' will, ¹¹ and also gave the information to the county Register of Deeds for Williams' death certificate. ¹² The architect and his wife were also in the official funeral party accompanying the hotelier's remains to Salisbury for burial. ¹³ Additionally, Hook's office was just down the street in the same block of North Tryon toward the Square from the Leland. ¹⁴

Over the years, the changes in the occupants of the storefronts and later, the building as a whole, reflected the changing character of Charlotte itself. In 1903, the first year all the stores appear to have been leased, a stroller coming from the Square along the sidewalk next to the as yet unpaved Tryon Street would first encounter J. Henry Hahn's ice cream and confectionery store. Next came Z. A. Hovis' undertaking parlor, then the Leland entrance, followed by the Singer Sewing Machine Company, and ending with W. M. Rhyne's grocery. Looking up, the stroller could see some guests of the Leland enjoying the sun on the balcony that stretched between the two bay windows on the second floor.

From about 1905 to 1912, the Mecklenburg Furniture Company occupied the spot where Hovis was, which had moved into the former Rhyne's grocery location. When the automobile began to come on the city scene in 1912, two of the stores were rented by tire companies: Diamond Rubber Co. of New York, and B. F. Goodrich. By 1917, two of the storefronts (227-229) were occupied by an auto company, Haynes, which by 1920 was taken over by American Motors, "distributors of Birch Autos and Vim Trucks." At the north end of the building was a Chinese laundry, Geo. Lum (1914-20). ¹⁵ Following the death of Mrs. Springs in 1919, the heirs decided to sell the building to the Burwell-Walker Co. (after 1921, the Burwell-Harris Co.), the local American Motors franchisee for \$100,080. ¹⁶ Armistead Burwell, Jr., president, and James P. Harris, vice-president, undertook extensive reconstruction of the building to convert it entirely to a Nash dealership. ¹⁷ The boom times of the Twenties were good

times as well for the automobile business, and in 1928, Burwell-Harris borrowed \$175,000 from Metropolitan Life Insurance to finance an expansion of their business, including the construction of a three-story addition to the building in the rear, which nearly doubled the floor space. ¹⁸ Unfortunately for them as for so many others, it was impossible to foresee the financial calamities of the impending Great Depression, and in June, 1932, Metropolitan foreclosed the loan and took possession of the property. ¹⁹ Although he lost ownership of the location, Burwell did not give up easily, and in August, 1932, he organized a new firm, Burwell Nash Co., which leased the premises until 1936. ²⁰



In that year, Haverty Furniture Company replaced the car dealership as the tenant, they having moved from their 7th Street location (occupied since 1928). Haverty's is a regional furniture chain, started in 1885, and based in Atlanta. In 1938, Clarence Haverty, president of the company, bought the property from Metropolitan through his companion real estate arm, Capital Realty and Investment Company of Georgia, and the next year sold it to the newly-incorporated Haverty Furniture of Charlotte.

During their operation from that location of over forty years, Haverty's made two alterations to the facade to modernize the building's appearance.

In the present renovation, the site is returning to recover some of its past while at the same time being adapted to a modern future which is once again appropriate for the times. The work will uncover and restore some of the original architectural features of the Leland Hotel and Nash dealership, and will house the law firm of Helms, Mulliss and Johnson and other offices.²² Thus the structure will continue to play an active role in the commercial and professional life of the city, while recapturing some of the flavor of a earlier era in the heart of Charlotte's city center.

NOTES

¹ N.C. Marriage Bonds, Grooms, "Springs, John M.", 22 August 1855.

² 1860 U.S. Census, Mecklenburg County, p. 120.

³ Deed Book 3, p. 856, 24 Nov. 1857.

⁴ Walter Clark, ed., *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina* (Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1901); III, pp. 255-61.

⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, Dec. 8, 1919, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1935, p. 1.

⁷ See note 5; Charlotte City Directories, 1900 ff.

⁸ Deed Book 133, p. 490, 6 March 1899; Deed Book 143, p. 38, 20 Nov. 1899.

⁹ *Charlotte News*, Aug. 21, 1916, p. 3.

¹⁰ Survey and Research Report, Seaboard Air Line Railroad, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, undated.

¹¹ Will Book V, p. 357, dated 20 Aug. 1916.

¹² Certificate of Death, Book 9, p. 909, 17 Dec. 1919.

¹³ See note 9.

¹⁴ Charlotte City Directory, 1897/8, p. 117.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1902-1920.

¹⁶ Deed Book 417, p. 378, 5 Jan. 1920; Record of Corporations, Book 6, p. 595.

¹⁷ Charlotte City Directory, 1921, p. 902.

¹⁸ Deed Book 684, p. 177, 27 March 1928.

¹⁹ Deed Book 818, p. 215, 17 June 1932.

²⁰ Record of Corporations, Book 13, p. 519; Charlotte City Directories, 1932-36.

²¹ Deed Book 944, p. 467, 28 March 1938; Deed Book 984, p. 143, 27 June 1939.

²² The partners of the law firm own the property as the 227 North Tryon Street Associates.