

Peacock and Moyer Building, 1894-2025

**A cornerstone architectural landmark located at Market and Main
in the heart of downtown Bloomsburg**

By Brad Cole

It's a cool building, I would say to myself when I was young and growing up in Bloomsburg. It was all the more interesting because my mom would tell me stories about my maternal great-grandfather, William S. Rishton, who had run a well-known and successful drug store at the corner entrance. While that was a significant part of my fascination with the building, the other was that I just liked how it looked.

Located on Market Square in the historic district of downtown Bloomsburg, the building was developed in 1894 by two of Bloomsburg's prominent businessmen, Clinton C. Peacock and Lucas N. Moyer.

1892 Building Planning Begins

A brief article about the planning of the building was published in the *Columbian* on March 4, 1892. It reads: "*L. N. Moyer and C. C. Peacock talk of erecting a three-story brick building on the corner of Main and Market streets in the spring. It will be a double building, and the first floor will be occupied by S. F. Peacock & Co., in its present location, and the adjoining room by J. Wesley Moyer as a stationery store.*"

As a point of clarification, James Wesley Moyer (1864-1924) was the only son of Lucas and Harriet [Eyer] Moyer. J. Wesley Moyer was a lifelong bachelor who managed his store for many years, selling stationery and newspapers from his first-floor retail space on the Moyer (West) side of the building.

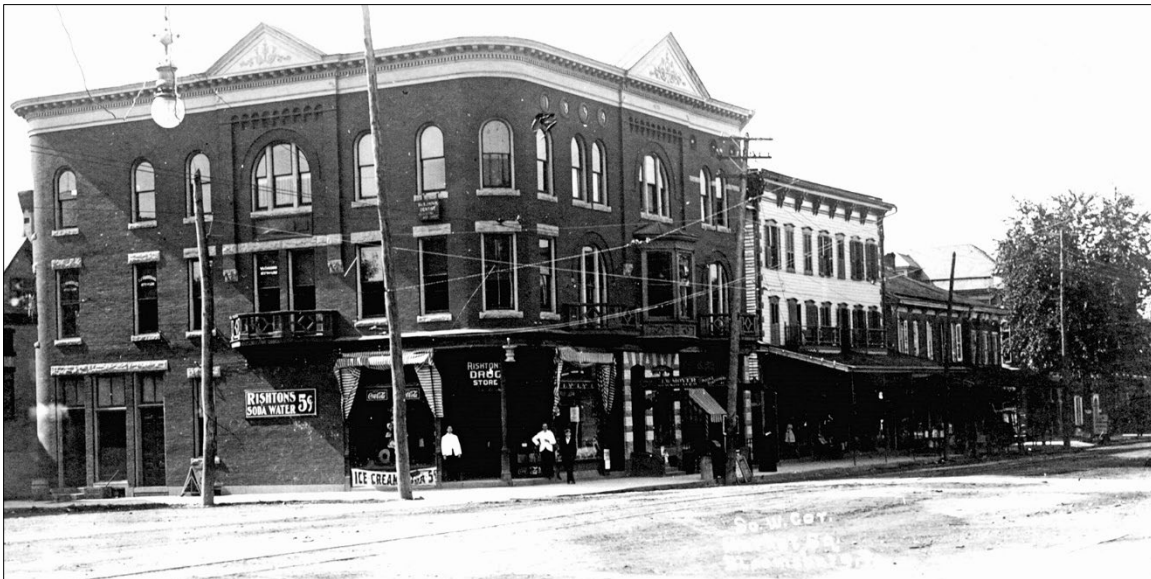
On the Peacock (East) side, the initial tenant was Clinton Peacock's younger brother, Sherman F. "S.F." Peacock's hardware store. The successor to Peacock was the Joseph G. "J.G." Wells Hardware store, which closed in 1902.

While the specific reasons for separate ownerships incorporating a shared façade are not known with certainty, a plausible explanation is that they have been and are expensive to maintain and preserve. That's the most likely reason why the Peacock and Moyer Building had two owners, who jointly shared the maintenance costs of the three-story, elaborate masonry structure. In any case, combining the two buildings into one certainly made for a much grander structure.

According to the Society of Architectural Historians, the architectural firm responsible for designing the building was Jacoby and Weishampel, based in Allentown. The principals were Lewis S. Jacoby and S. Addison Weishampel.

Designed for both retail and residential uses, the architecture is a little harder to pinpoint. However, research indicates that it is a likely mixture of Italian Renaissance / Colonial Revival / Beaux Arts / and Richardsonian Romanesque. All of these periods overlap to some degree and were current for 1892. For such a grand location, the swag on the frieze, the corbel table, pilasters, and decorative plaque under the Market Street third story Palladian windows, makes for a remarkable combination and edifice.

In any case, the building stands as a testament to Bloomsburg's diverse and vibrant economic and architectural past, contributing to the historical character of downtown.



Rishton's Drug Store in the Peacock-Moyer building, c.1905

Clinton C. Peacock and Lucas N. Moyer

Clinton Peacock (1858-1935) was an attorney, real estate investor, and industrialist who helped organize and finance the Magee Carpet Company. Lucas Moyer (1840-1916) was the eldest of the three Moyer Brothers, who comprised Moyer Brothers, a longtime successful retail and wholesale pharmacy and drug business. The Moyer name is still well remembered by longtime residents. Lucas Moyer was the druggist member of the firm, which also included John L. Moyer and William S. Moyer. Both Peacock and Moyer played central roles in the building of the Town of Bloomsburg.

The Rishton Drug Store Years

William Sloan “W.S.” Rishton operated his store out of the first floor of the Peacock side for three decades.

I randomly came across a *Morning Press* article from September 1, 1920, which reports on the sale of the “Ikeler Building” to William S. Rishton. That caught my attention because I had assumed William S. Rishton purchased the Peacock half (East side) of the Peacock and Moyer Building when he relocated his drug store from the Ent Building (demolished to make way for the Farmers National Bank Building around 1940) in 1902. However, Rishton must have occupied the property initially as a tenant, purchasing it in 1920. He ran his drug store in that location from 1920 to 1931, just shy of three decades.

Research indicates that Clinton C. Peacock sold his interest in the Building to Fred T. Ikeler at some point, and then William S. Rishton bought it from Ikeler’s estate in 1920.

Another *Morning Press* article from November 1931 mentions in the final paragraph that “*Mr. Rishton, who disposed of the building he has owned for twelve or thirteen years...*” So, if he purchased the property in 1920 and disposed of his ownership interest in late 1931, that is approximately twelve years, which accurately fits.

Ownership History of the Peacock Side

A brief chronology of the numerous past owners of the Peacock side of the building is as follows, which I confirmed by visiting the Columbia County Courthouse office of records to review the chain of title.

Upon the death of Fred Ikeler in August 1919, the property was transferred into an estate managed by his brother Frank Ikeler.

The property was auctioned by the Ikeler estate and purchased by William S. Rishton on September 30, 1920. The price paid by Rishton was \$19,700 (approximately equivalent to \$315,000 in today’s dollars). That occurred eighteen years after he had taken occupancy as a tenant with his drugstore.

Rishton relinquished ownership of the property on October 28, 1931. He closed his drug store after serving Bloomsburg as a pharmacist for nearly four decades, from 1892 until then.

Rishton transferred his ownership interest that year to George J. Wiedenman, who, with his partner Orangeville native Fred W. Conner, opened an appliance store on the first floor called Wiedenman & Conner.

Fred Conner died in November of 1941, and George Wiedenman continued the business. Interestingly, in 1950, Wiedenman transferred the ownership structure to an entity named Wiedenman & Company, Inc., and Harry L. Magee became a partner in the property.

Then, in 1956, a merchant known for the Dixie Shop, Jack W. Sloan, purchased the property. It appears that in 1959, Jack Sloan transferred his interest in the property to his wife, Madeline T. Sloan.

From 1956 until 1977, Thompson F. “Trader Tom” Gingher ran the T.F. Gingher Appliance Store in the first-floor retail space as a tenant. Tom Gingher purchased the business from George J. Wiedenman upon Mr. Wiedenman’s retirement in 1956. I speculate that the Sloans owned the property and rented it to Gingher during that period.



*The Peacock-Moyer
building in 2025*

Enrico “Rick” Venditti became the next owner in 1977. He operated Venditti’s Travel Service. That business was initially Columbia Travel Service, which became Lloyd’s Travel Service and then Venditti’s. Venditti sold the property in 1987 to an entity called M&H Realty.

Next came optometrist William Johnson, who purchased the property from M&H Realty in 1994.

Local Realtor (and former member of Bloomsburg’s Town Council) Vince DeMelfi purchased the Peacock side in August 2008. The building is currently home to Cats in Bloom, a cat adoption operation.

The Moyer Side

The Moyer side of the building has also had several owners over the years. At the time of this writing, another sale is in process but has not been completed.

Bloomsburg Then and Now

Looking back, the Town of Bloomsburg was a somewhat different place at the end of the late 1800s when Messrs. Peacock and Moyer undertook the construction of the building named for them.

The Second Industrial Revolution was underway, and Bloomsburg was growing and prospering with an emergent manufacturing and agricultural industry. It was the county seat, featuring the courthouse and associated legal professionals, including judges and attorneys.

Bloomsburg appears to have been a relatively close-knit community, where most residents knew one another. The population of Bloomsburg in 1890 was slightly less than 4,000.

From 1869 until 1916, Commonwealth-Bloomsburg University was a Normal School. During that period, the institution was officially designated as the Bloomsburg Literary Institute and State Normal School for the Sixth District of Pennsylvania. Student enrollment was a fraction of what it is today, and the school mainly served students who lived nearby.

Today, the Town of Bloomsburg is undoubtedly a different place. It was a town with a college and is now referred to as a “college town.” Bloomsburg’s industrial base is all but gone, and commercial properties are primarily owned by student housing landlords, many of whom reside out of town. This makes it all the more imperative for cooperation and concentrated effort to keep the Town of Bloomsburg a place that remembers and appreciates its history for generations to come.

In closing, future and continued preservation of the Peacock and Moyer Building will ensure a part of architectural history remains a proud presence on Main Street in downtown Bloomsburg for generations to come.