

S. C. **Hawley** of the Harrison **Williams** defense team  
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2015

Seth Cotton (S. C.) **Hawley** (1810 – 1884) seems to have been in Buffalo (Erie County) NY at the right time to be part of Harrison **Williams**' defense team in 1851. He was a first cousin of Alpheus Fenn **Hawley** of Jamestown (Chautauqua County) NY. The defense was not successful, and Harrison **Williams** (also known as William **Harrison**) was returned to slavery. The next year, Chautauqua County voters were successful in electing A. F. **Hawley** as the new sheriff of that county.

Excerpts from the obituary of A. F. **Hawley**'s cousin are as follows: "Seth C. **Hawley**, the venerable Chief Clerk of the Police Department of this city, died at 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon, at his residence, at One Hundred and Fifty Fifth street (sic) and Western Boulevard. He had been in somewhat precarious health for several years, but when he returned to his duties in September last, after a three months' vacation, he was apparently stronger and felt better than for many months.

"He was on duty at Police Headquarters on election day, and the day following was his last appearance at the desk which he had occupied for nearly a quarter of a century. On his way home he took cold, which rapidly developed into pneumonia. Yesterday morning his physicians gave up all hope, and he passed away in the afternoon, surrounded by his family. His widow is over 70 years of age, and the children were making preparations for celebrating tomorrow the golden wedding of their parents.

"Mr. **Hawley** was born at Glens Falls, Warren County, in this State, on Feb 10, 1810. His ancestors were English people, who had settled in Connecticut in 1718. His parents were in moderate circumstances, and gave him the advantages of a fair education. He studied law in the office of the late Judge **Hand** (father of the present Judge of that name) in Albany, and practiced law there for two years, when he moved to Buffalo, and was successful in establishing a good practice.

"During the attempted annexation of Canada, which gave rise to what is known as the "Patriot war," and which convulsed the upper part of the State and the borders of Canada, young Mr. **Hawley** raised a company for the patriot army and was brevetted a Major for his services. "Subsequently he became the editor of the *Buffalo Express* - at that time the most influential Whig paper in that part of the State. He served two terms in the State Assembly, and while there made the acquaintance of the late Thurlow **Weed**, which ripened into a lifetime friendship. He was also the intimate friend of William H. **Seward**, Horace **Greeley**, Daniel **Webster**, Silas **Wright**, Horatio **Seymour**, and other celebrated men. "After leaving the profession of journalism, Mr. **Hawley** entered into the business of railroad building. Several sections of the New York Central Railroad and of the Illinois Central Railroad were built by Mr. **Hawley** and the syndicate which he represented. His specialty was bridge building.

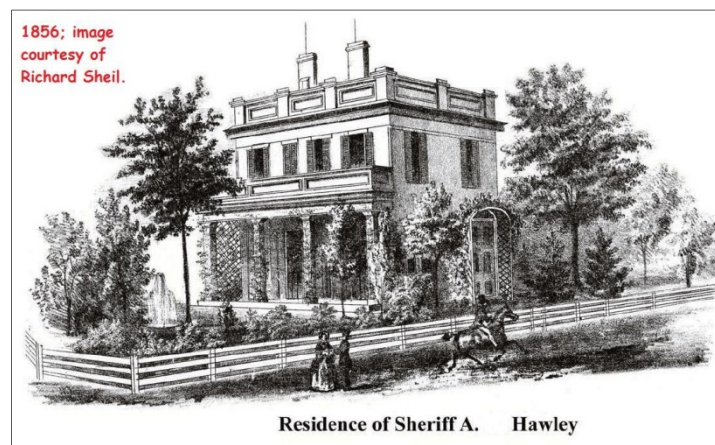
"When the Quarantine Commission was established by the State Legislature, in 1857, Mr. **Hawley** became the Secretary of the commission. The residents of Staten Island, on which the Quarantine station was established, rose up in arms against the Commissioners. They burned the buildings which had been erected at Seguin's Point, and a section of the Metropolitan Police,

then recently organized, was sent to Staten Island under the command of Superintendent **Walling**, then holding the rank of Captain, to suppress the riot. Then followed what has been since known as the "Sepoy war," which, however, ended in a victory for the Commissioners. This success was greatly due to the valuable counsel and ready expedients of Secretary **Hawley**. "Mr. **Hawley** was appointed a clerk in the Police Department on May 26, 1860, and on June 25 following succeeded George W. **Embree** as Chief Clerk, a position which he filled continuously during the many changes of administration until his death. During the war, at the special request of Mr. **Seward**, the Secretary of State, he was granted three months' leave of absence and was appointed United States Consul at Nassau, New Providence.

"This neutral port was the headquarters of the rebel blockade runners. Mr. **Seward's** object in sending Mr. **Hawley** there was to break up the business of blockade running, and in this he succeeded to a certain extent. On his return he resumed his duties at Police Headquarters, and, in addition, acted as Mr. **Seward's** secret and confidential agent, in which capacity he visited the rebel prisoners at Fort Lafayette and in the forts in Boston Harbor, secured much valuable information from them, and procured the discharge of many of them upon taking the "ironclad" oath of allegiance to the United States.

"In 1864 he drafted the amendments to the Metropolitan law and secured their passage. Much of what is good in the present police system is due to Mr. **Hawley's** exertions. The rules and regulations now in force in the department were drawn up by him. He was considered to a great extent the brains of the department, and his place will be hard to fill. He was a man of even temper, a profound thinker and rare conversationalist, full of humor and drollery.

"Kind and charitable in the extreme, he was often imposed upon. None will regret his death more than his immediate subordinates in the department. In politics he was originally a Whig, but became a Republican when the party was organized, in 1856, and he never swerved from his allegiance to the party. He was a great admirer of **Seward**, and he lost his voice while stumping the State for his friend in his last campaign for Governor and it never regained its full strength. He has died comparatively poor, and leaves a widow, two sons, (one of whom is married,) and an unmarried daughter."



Probably the A. F. **Hawley** home in Jamestown.