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Some Lincoln buildings have a long, twisted history. Let's look at two that served common tenants.

In 1871, Harvey H. Hardy opened a furniture store in the 800 block of O Street. It was an instantaneous success, and the store moved to larger quarters several times while Hardy was twice elected Lincoln's mayor. The retail store's last move was to two adjacent buildings at 1314 O St. in 1893.

Meanwhile, in 1920, a three-story masonry building was constructed for William and Charles Cadwallader's Lincoln Hide & Fur Company at 335 N. Eighth St., the southwest corner of Eighth and R streets. This was shared by Nebraska Secretary of State Thomas Perkins Kennard's Western Glass & Paint Co., which he had formed in 1890.

When Lincoln Hide & Fur and Western Glass & Paint moved out, the building was purchased by Hardy Furniture, which, in 1927, added three floors at a reported cost of \$40,000.

In 1919, H.E. Sidles built a new six-story, 117,822 square-foot masonry building at 245 N. 13th St., the southwest corner of 13th and Q streets, for the Nebraska Buick Co. as well as KFOR and KFAB radio stations.

In 1943, Western Electric Co., a supplier to the Bell System/AT&T, leased both the Eighth Street building and the 13th Street building, which had briefly housed United States military troops before they were moved into the just-completed structure, which would become the University of Nebraska's Love Library after the war.

Western Electric's primary output was supplying U.S. troops with signal corps equipment. At the end of World War II, Western Electric gave its 1,200 Lincoln employees two days' holiday with pay and told them not to report back to work until specifically requested. When Western Electric's Hawthorne, Ill., facility could not keep up with production demands, two-thirds of the original Lincoln employees were kept on.

In 1947, the Sidles family sold the 13th Street building to the Bennett Martin group for \$360,000, and the Martins in turn sold it to Western Electric in 1950 for \$500,000 while the Eighth Street building was purchased by W.F. Day Co.

In 1956, Western Electric purchased a large parcel of land southwest of Omaha near Millard and announced plans to build a huge new facility to build dial telephones and telephone cable, employing 4,000 workers. Lincoln was not even considered for the facility as Western Electric's policy was to not build anywhere they would employ 2 percent of the host city's population and because Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph was considered a competitor to AT&T/Bell, which had a regional headquarters in Omaha.

The two Lincoln plants, which again had been threatened with closure during a 1949 business slowdown, were now doomed, and with the opening of the Omaha plant in 1958, Western Electric's Lincoln presence ended.

In 1964 with Gold's Department Store selling to Younkers, the Eighth Street building, which Gold's had been using as a warehouse, closed.

Today, the completely renovated building is home to the Haydon Art Center and the Hardy Building Apartments.

The 13th Street building, empty for a time, was considered as a home for Nebraska Book Company's wholesale division until engineers announced the building, constructed for automobiles, would not support the concentrated weight of books.

Most Lincolniters remember its next reincarnation as the Gunny's Building, which housed Chesterfield, Bottomsly & Potts Restaurant on the lower level, Oscar's Lounge on the mezzanine and a vast array of retail shops from Maurice's to Habitat on the street level, while the upper floors were ramped as a parking garage.

Today, the amazingly resilient building has again been beautifully and colorfully renovated as the National Research Corporation's offices, with parking facilities built in.

*Historian Jim McKee, who still writes with a fountain pen, invites comments or questions. Write to him in care of the Journal Star or at [jim@leebooksellers.com](mailto:jim@leebooksellers.com).*