255# Tench Building (Script by Joanna Grey Talbot)

Did you know that the father of the keyboardist from Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers once owned a law office here? Built in 1886, the Tench Building has served many functions. For two decades it alternated between being a hotel and restaurant, serving passengers on the railroad that ran down the middle of Main Street. It also served as a plumbing office, gunsmith store, Chinese laundry, and Luther Blake’s Batteries. Blake had previously worked in the building when it was Wilson’s garage. He operated a battery business there from 1927 until his death in 1983.

Ultimately, the building was named for Dr. J. Dawkins Tench, whose dental surgery office was once located on the second floor. In 1949, Benjamin Tench opened a second business on the second floor, a law office. He went on to become a senior court judge for the 8th Judicial Circuit.

Benjamin Tench’s son, Benmont Tench III, was the keyboardist for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

Today the Tench Building is owned by the City of Gainesville. The Sweetwater Print Cooperative rents affordable studio spaces to artists. The first-floor gallery space showcases new exhibits each month during Artwalk Gainesville.