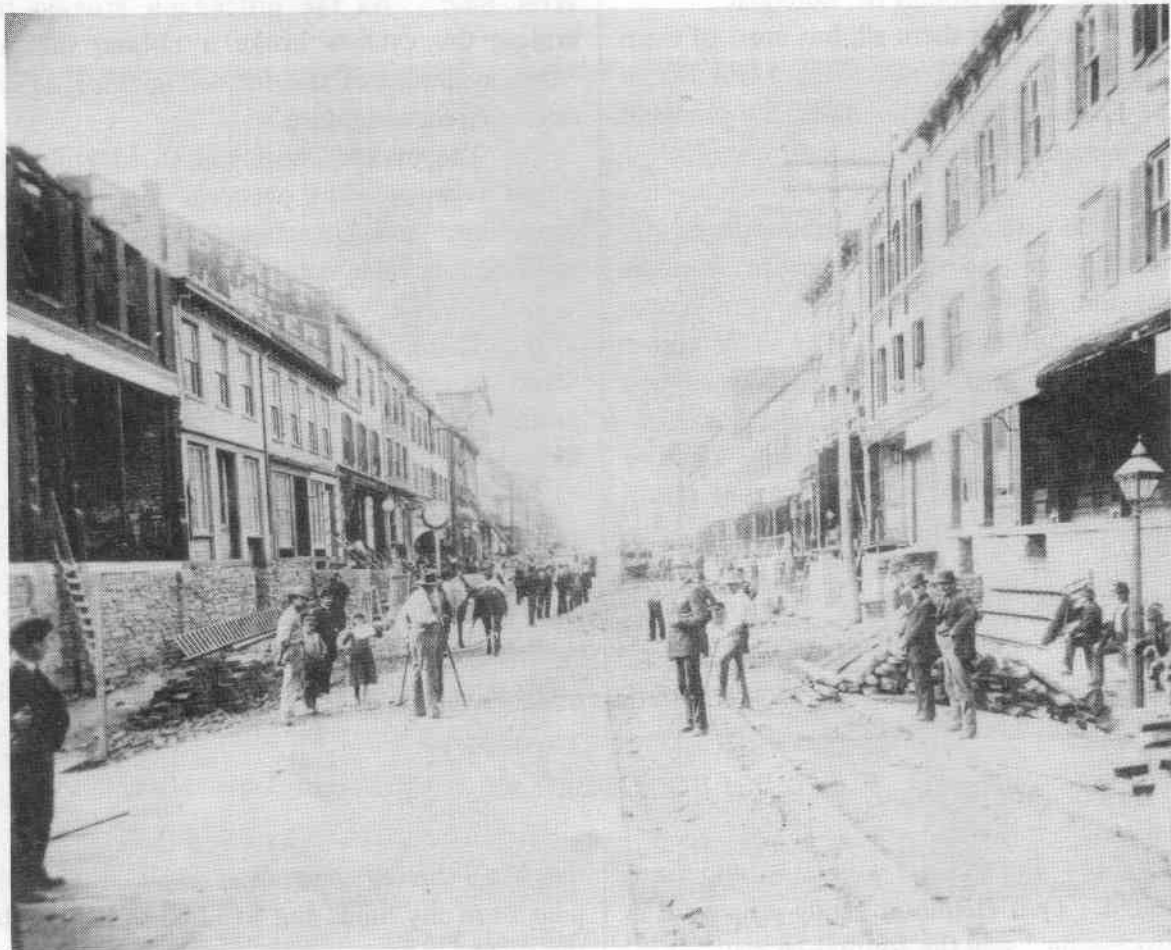




**ABOVE:** An 1839 sketch of Main Street, looking west from the bridge.  
**BELOW:** Same site in 1894 when major changes were underway. Buildings on Main Street were being raised. Sketch and photo from the George Cummins Collection.



## Recollections of an earlier Main Street

*From drug store kibitzers to cobbler and horseless carriage dealers*

"Prior to 1898, Main Street was unimproved, a dirt road," recalled Robert M. Sohngen, in his July 1936 speech during the community's celebration of completion of the thoroughfare's improvement.

"I remember my mother coming home one day from market disheveled and covered with mud. Her sidebar buggy had been upset and she was thrown into the street."

"In 1898 the street was paved with asphalt block," said Sohngen. "When the job was finished," he continued, the contractor "took all of his workmen over to Tony Warndorf's at Third and High streets, and bought champagne for the crowd. He left town next day, owing for everything except the champagne."

The next improvement, Sohngen said, came in 1908 when the Andrews Asphalt Paving Company "resurfaced Main Street with sheet asphalt."

The people along the street - not the street itself - dominated Sohngen's speech, including some family recollections.

He said "my father was born just around the corner on B Street, off of Main; my paternal grandfather ran a grocery store on

Main Street and served for a short time as the postmaster of Rossville; and I have lived in the First Ward all my life, so the old street holds many memories dear to my heart."

"No recounting of the color and flavor of the older Main Street days would be complete without looking in at Beeler's Drug Store (then on the northwest corner of Main and B streets) and seeing some of the citizens who would gather there to talk politics, medicine, literature, economics and philosophy with Doctor Sam and John L. Beeler," Sohngen said.

"The older men whom I remember at Beeler's were Dr. Roll; Dr. Mallory; Gov Hicks; John Reeder; Charles Campbell; Judge Harr; John L. Beeler, who could forecast the weather better than the United States Weather Bureau; Charles Durst, the jeweler, whose son Sidney, now in Cincinnati, is famed as a composer, organist and teacher; Charles Gath; and Dr. Walter Brown."

"Only last week one of Main Street's oldest merchants passed away," Sohngen noted. "Joseph Fromm lived in the First Ward all his 97 years. His meat market at 123 Main Street is well remembered, and he was a familiar figure sitting out in front on the sidewalk of his Main Street home before he died."

Sohngen said "others of the old Main Street merchants with whom it was a pleasure and a satisfaction to deal, were Harry Cass, the hardware man (I got my first bicycle there); Durst's jewelry store; Heinlein's and Boettinger's shoe stores; Mathias and A. Rothwell's for stoves."

"A. Winter's (the Wanamaker's of the First Ward); Sliphers; Bob

Both Phones.

Day and Night

### Webb & Hawthorn

### Undertakers & Embalmers

First Class Ambulance Service.

Careful attention given to patients to and from the hospital and trains.

### Office 130 Main Street

Hamilton, Ohio.

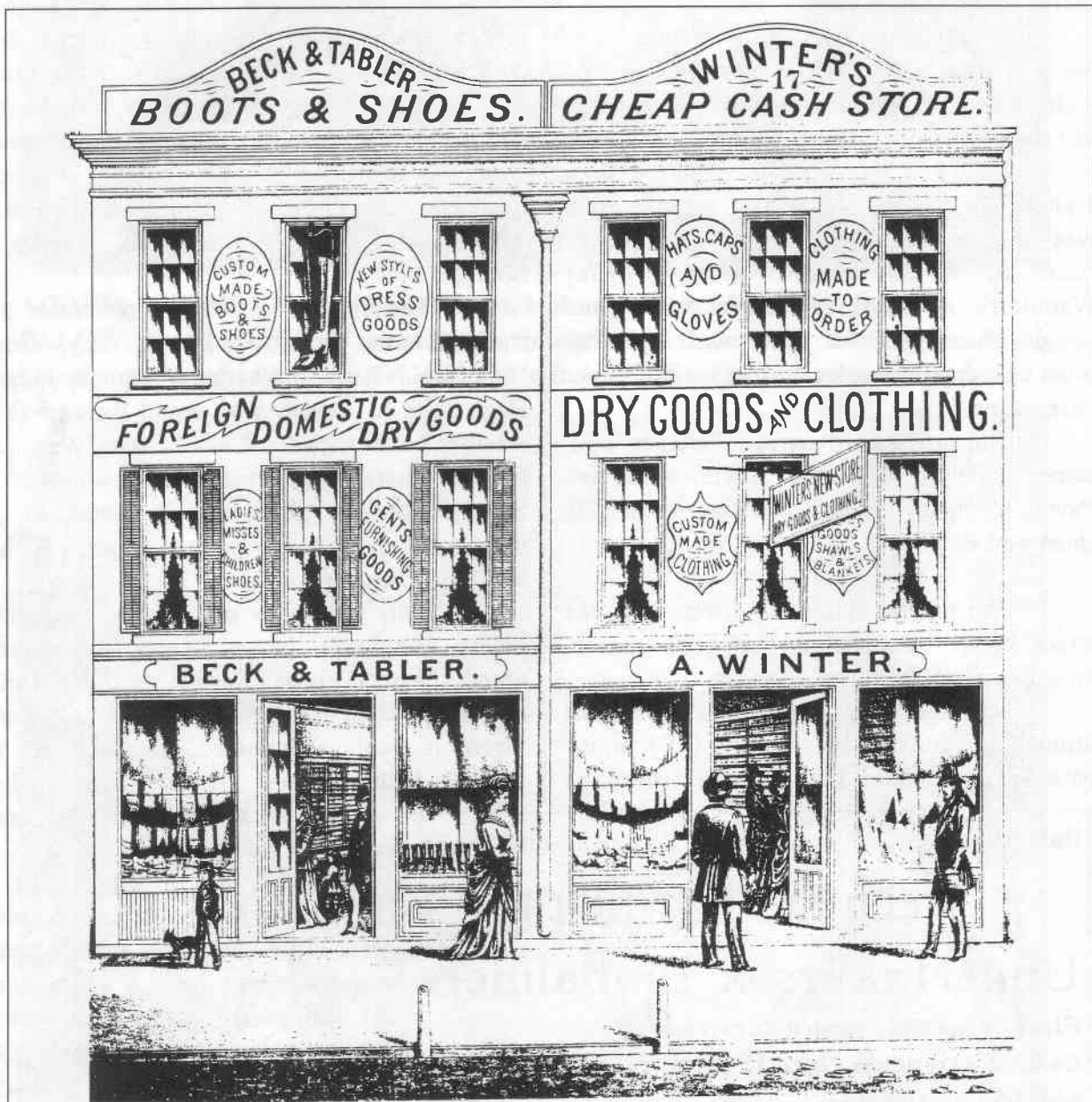
Republican-News, October 1911

Brereton for confectionaries; Kennedy's; Pete Hester's for Sweet Caporal cigarettes; Kaefer's barber shop, where they knew the news of the day before it happened, and where William Jennings Bryan stopped for a haircut," continued Sohngen.

"John Brodt, the cobbler; Fuhrman's bakery; A. Duersch for coal; Ermsting's; Miller's drug store; Charlie and John Schmitt

for horseless carriages; Krucker, the village blacksmith; Carthwright's for Mason's beer; and Dick and John's for Uncle Peter Schwab's Pure Gold," a Hamilton-brewed beer.

"Main Street call well be proud of its only financial institution," Sohngen said. "The West Side Building and Loan Association was the first building association in Ohio to receive a federal charter."



"Winter's Cheap Cash Store, dry goods, clothing, gents furnishing goods, clothing made to order," said the caption under this illustration in the 1875 Butler County Atlas. A. Winter was located at 17 Main Street, according to the atlas. Next door was Beck & Tabler. The 1904 city directory lists Winter & Co., "dealers in dry goods, notions and men's furnishing goods" at 21 and 23 Main Street, operated by Joseph A. Winter, who resided at 35 North C Street.

# Timepiece for West Side silent

*Champion whistle served many purposes - from day-to-day routine to air raid warnings and celebration of end of World War II*

The "Voice of Champion," silent for almost 25 years, once served as a timepiece for the community as well as workers at the paper company. A brass steam-powered whistle, positioned atop the mill, announced the time seven times each day - at 7 a.m., 11:55 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m., 4 p.m., 4:55 p.m. and 5 p.m. - "until sometime in the early '70s," according to Larry Anderson, Champion's superintendent of utilities in 1994.

"It was manually operated," said Anderson, who explained "that a man stood and watched the clock" to sound the whistle at the correct time.

Another veteran employee, Ron Baker, who believes he had that responsibility, said the last time it sounded on its daily schedule was in 1970.

The Champion whistle - which was heard again during the Hamilton mill's 100th anniversary observance in April 1994 - continued in limited service until April 1992, according to Bob Claypool, manager of utilities at the mill.

During its final years, it was used for tornado warnings. Its coded blasts were related to various mill operations, Claypool explained. It was last used for a warning about 1991, Claypool said.

Through the 1950s, the Champion whistle was part of a Hamilton industrial chorus which included similar steam-driven signals at other plants.

Hamilton factory whistles announced shift changes, lunch breaks and other work routines. They also served the surrounding community in various ways.

For some Hamiltonians, the whistles were wakeup calls or convenient times to check the accuracy of a watch or a kitchen clock. For others, including boys and girls out of the sight of a parent, they were commands to go home for lunch or dinner.

But Wednesday afternoon Feb. 21, 1968, mill workers and city residents heard too much of the "Voice of Champion." That day the 1 p.m. blast continued for about 10 minutes when a valve stuck.

The Champion whistle also served the tense community in the early years of World War II when it was feared that German and Japanese planes could bomb American cities, including Hamilton.

As the city prepared for the worst, the Champion whistle sounded the start and finish of a 15-minute dimout on the West Side during Hamilton's first air raid alert Sunday evening, Aug. 2, 1942.

The first city-wide dimout Sunday night, Oct. 4, 1942, utilized six factory whistles (Champion, Ford Motor Company, Shuler & Benninghofen, Economy Pump, Estate Stove and Black-Clawson) to alert the community.

By late 1943, the the threat of enemy bombs falling on Hamilton had ended and the whistles were no longer needed for civilian defense. But twice in 1945 the "Voice of Champion" joined a prolonged concert of industrial whistles and church bells in proclaiming V-E Day (Victory in Europe) Tuesday, May 8, and V-J Day (Victory over Japan) Tuesday, Aug. 14.

Two versions of the origin of the Champion whistle appeared in employee publications in 1954 and 1968.

"Actually, nobody knows how long men have sent a flow of steam through those steel vocal chords to make her sound off," reported the June 1954 edition of The Log. That article said it dated back to the early 1930s. But some Champion retirees and former neighbors to the North B Street mill believe there may have been an earlier whistle, and the one reportedly acquired in the 1930s was a replacement.

"She was a ship's whistle before being sent to Hamilton," said the 1954 Log article. "Herb Randall relates that Bill Wolff located the whistle at a ship salvage dealer in New Jersey," an anonymous writer explained.

A slightly different history was reported in a 1968 Chips article, based on the recollections of two Champion retirees, Charlie Moyers and Clyde Norcross.

That that article said in 1931 Herb Randall asked Clarence Bartlett to select a whistle to signal shift changes.

Bartlett, a native of Chilo on the Ohio River, went to his hometown and listened to steamboats on the river.

He selected a sound and "one like it was ordered to be positioned on top of the power plant," the article said.



**Hamilton's first gasoline-powered taxi is shown in 1912 in front of 417 Main Street. At the wheel of the 1912 Ford is Thad Hoffman, a partner with Reuben Hoffman in Hamilton Taxi.**

## Forest Hills and Oak Park part of Ellis Potter legacy

Forest Hills was a subdivision annexed to Hamilton in 1929. The Journal-News 50th anniversary edition in 1936 described it as "that section west of South D Street and both sides of New London Pike and included Oak Park and the municipal golf course" (Potter's).

A 1930 plat book placed it south of New London Road, including Maplewood Road, Elmwood Drive and Oakwood Road.

Other sources place Forest Hills south of New London Road, and the Oak Park subdivision north of the same road in the Crescent Road area.

Park View was the name given an area west and south of Washington Boulevard between New London and Millville Avenue.

Forest Park and Oak Park - both up-scale subdivisions - were developed by Ellis M. Potter, who donated the adjoining land for a golf course. His 1925 contribution of 100

acres became the basis for Hamilton's first municipal golf course. Potter Park Golf Course officially opened May 26, 1927.

Potter - a successful Cincinnati and New York businessman - was "a man who never forgot his boyhood home and endeavored to create for it an atmosphere of confidence, faith and development," noted an obituary after his death in 1929 in New York.

In the 1890s, the Hamilton native had invested in land at the west end of Main Street with plans to develop industry there.

About the same time, Potter bought a Main Street horsecar line, which he planned to convert to an electric system.

When his proposal didn't excite city leaders, Potter issued an ultimatum - grant the trolley franchise or he would build the proposed factory in New York. After receiving no response, he moved to New York City.


This Old Hollander ad appeared in the Dec. 2, 1933, edition of the Journal.

The Hamilton Brewing Co. - boasting of its "wooden shoe brewmaster" and "wooden shoe formula" - had reopened the former Mason Brewery on South C Street as prohibition came to a gradual end that year.

Beer sales became legal again in April 1933, although federal prohibition continued until ratification of the 21st Amendment Dec. 5, 1933.

**INTRODUCING**

**"OLD HOLLANDER"**



**A REAL BEER**

**BREWED IN HAMILTON BY A WOODEN SHOE BREW MASTER UNDER THE WOODEN SHOE FORMULA**

*You've Tried All the Rest—Now Drink the Best*

**SOLD IN DRAUGHT ONLY**

*It's Distinctive Flavor Cannot Be Copied*

**THE HAMILTON BREWING COMPANY**

365 SOUTH "C" ST. PHONE 351

**JOHN J. WALSH**

PHONE 4910-351 LOCAL AGENT