

The story of the West Hamilton community

How It Started

Well: —

It started in 1796 when it was part of an 800-acre Crown grant to Jemima, Sarah, and Mary Johnson, daughters of Lieutenant Brant Johnson.

In that year these three girls sold "West Hamilton" to John MacKay. He, in turn, sold to Marks Binkley in 1803. In 1805 John Binkley inherited the property, which he sold to Samuel Bamberger in 1806. This was to stay in the Bamberger family for the next one hundred years.

Samuel built a log house on his farm lane. Said house is still in use as a private home, having been moved just west of its original site on Bamberger's Lane—to Eleven Holmes Ave. Bamberger's Lane is now Emerson St.

Samuel later built the Half Way House (hotel) where the Canadian Martyrs' School now stands (38 Emerson St.). This was a waiting place for travelers who rode the steam dummy (train) going to Hamilton or Dundas. A short time later, this line was electrified and we had one-hour radial service.

William Bamberger, grandson of Samuel, built a very nice brick house which he called "Huntingford" at the corner of the Stone Road (Main St.) and Bamberger's Lane (Emerson St.). Today this building is Swackhammer and Hilts Funeral Home, 1341 Main St. West.

Our First Residents

Geo. Austin, Jack Austin, Vern. Bessey, Henry Brown, Wellington Buckley, Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Jarman, C. L. Mapes, James Nutt, Henry Rader, and Geo. Tindale.

Our First Stores

Mrs. Cowan opened our first store in a small building on Broadway between Royal Ave. and Ward Avenue. After only a few months she sold out to Mr. Wellington Buckley. In 1908 in a small cottage in what is now 49 Royal Avenue (south side) Mr. Buckley opened his grocery store. In conjunction with this venture he was also our post master, a position he held until his retirement. This cottage is now the home of Miss Scidmore.

In 1912, Mr. Buckley built a new brick store and apartment on the corner of Royal and Emerson St. and continued in business until the early twenties. At this time he retired and sold out to Ed. Stroud. After changing hands three or four times, the property was finally acquired by the Austins in March 1929, who operated the store until 1970 when they sold to Mr. M.



This photograph taken about 1914 shows Emerson Street looking north from just south of Royal Avenue. On the right is Jones' Dry Goods, on the left St. Margaret's Church. Both buildings are still in use, as is one of the two houses visible further down the street.

Kline.

At this time (1912), West Hamilton had about one hundred homes. And Robert Jones, a Welshman who was a boyhood chum of David Lloyd George, built and operated a dry-goods store. Mrs. Jones, being a milliner, made many a fine hat by hand for the local belles. Mrs. Jones also worked in the post office, a position she held until her death in 1961 in her ninety-third year.

Mr. Jones went overseas in the First War with the 129th Battalion, returning in nineteen-sixteen. Upon his return, he was appointed post master, a position he held until his death in 1944 age eighty-three, whereupon his son Stanley Jones was appointed post master, a position he still retains.

Other Stores of That Period

Mrs. Gemmel Groceries and Candy, at the corner of Emerson and Willowcrest - the home of Mr. Roest.

Hodge's Bake Shop at 131 Emerson St., now the home of Mr. Robt. Moss.

Rader's (Groceries), noted for his homemade sausage, at 39 Royal Ave., now the home of Mr. N. Abbey, and at that time Mr. Rader used to pasture his cow right where the Gospel Church now stands.

Hemingway's Butcher Store at 113 Emerson St. opened in 1913 and was the family store for nearly forty years, "Dick Hemingway" being our Spectator reporter for quite some time. The

store was finally taken over by Gord. Aglor, who learned his trade as a boy, while working for Mr. Hemingway.

Churches

Binkley United Church during the 1800 period was built on Stone Road (Main St. West) where the school now stands.

St. Margaret's Church built in 1909. The first Anglican church was built at a cost of \$500.00 on the corner of Royal Ave. and Emerson Street. Bishop du Moulin officially opened the church on December the Fifth, nineteen hundred and nine.

West Hamilton Gospel Church was started as a mission in July nineteen hundred and fifteen in Buckley's Hall, which was built next to Buckley's store at 131 Emerson St. After some months they purchased lot number forty-two on the north side of Royal Ave. and erected their own place of worship. Around 1934 or 1935 Buckley's Hall was moved to 47 Royal Ave. and turned into apartments now owned by Mrs. Dale.

Canadian Martyrs' Church and School was built in 1949 with Father Noonan in charge. After a few years, the splendid edifice we see was erected with Father Bianchi in charge. The buildings now occupy the site of the old Half-Way House (hotel) - the south-west corner of Emerson and Main Street West.

Schools

Our first school was the one-room Binkley School, which was built in 1882 on the north side of the old Stone Road (Main Street) just about opposite Rifle Range Road, on the site of the present school.

In 1922 a new four-room school was built (Princess Elizabeth School) on property on Bowman Street purchased from Richard Stroud. The cost of the building at that time was sixty-five thousand dollars.

Rifle Ranges 1902

The rifle range was the western limits of West Hamilton in those days. The range was in operation from 1902 until the 1920s. There were only two superintendents, 1902 to 1905 Charles Pritchard, 1905 to 1920 Alf Dummer. It was here that the "boys" in the First World War were taught how to use rifle, bayonet, and machine gun, plus trench warfare. Many marched from the city to practice, then marched back again. Some of the time they were brought up by train.

During World War One, West Hamilton is reputed to have had the highest enlistment rate of soldiers per population of any community in Canada.

Sports

West Hamilton can boast of two sports heroes: "Whitey" (Stewart Frid), pole vaulting champion, who represented Canada at the British Empire Games in Australia in 1934; and Russ Jackson, the great quarterback of the Ottawa Rough Riders.

Annexation

came Jan. 1, 1930, and here we are today - West Hamilton.

(This article was written by Stanley Jones on the basis of personal recollection, consultation with other long-time residents, and research.)



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