

HISTORY OF CAMDEN, OHIO

1803-1955

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1803 - 1955

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CHAPTER I

PIONEERS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS, 1803-1955

Camden is a beautiful, up-to-date little town in Ohio along the Seven Mile Creek at the intersection of U. S. Route 127 and State Route 725. It is located in a valley which once was covered with a mighty forest that afforded protection and an abundance of game to the tribes of Indians who roamed this region. The town is especially attractive as one enters from the north on to a street lined on both sides with wide spreading shade trees that form an arch overhead. Several of the modern, home-like looking dwellings one sees are the homes of descendants of the early pioneers who settled in this territory more than a hundred years ago. The beauty of the region, together with the rich, productive soil, attracted many settlers both from the South and the East to clear land and build homes. These pioneers were men who were tireless in energy, courageous, far-seeing, uncomplaining, willing to undergo hardships and dangers, and their wives were fit companions of these hardy men.

The first settlers to arrive was the David E. Hendricks family in 1803 and settled upon the site of what is now Camden. David Hendricks was born in 1765 in New Jersey. His father, a wealthy shipper, was a British sympathizer during the Revolutionary War. After the Battle of Trenton, since the patriots' cause was looking much brighter, many Tories, including David's father, sought safety in Canada. David, although just a boy, refused to follow his father in his flight to Canada. He stayed

with an uncle in New Jersey and remained true to the cause of the revolutionists. At the close of the war David found himself penniless because his father's large estate had been confiscated by the colonial government, and his patriotic uncle had spent his money in the cause of the colonies. Being of an adventurous nature David Hendricks decided to go West. He desired to have a part in quelling the evil feeling in the West which had resulted from the action of British emissaries keeping alive among the Indians the hatred which had grown out of the war. Young Hendricks made his way to Pittsburgh where he became acquainted with Lewis Wetzel, the famous Indian fighter. He then went down the Ohio to the settlement of Marietta in 1788 where he met Generals--McMahon and Josiah Harmer.¹

David Hendricks served as a soldier in the campaigns of General Arthur St. Clair and General Anthony Wayne against the Indians. Both generals and their men made many trips through the territory from Fort Hamilton at Hamilton, Ohio to Fort Jefferson which was about six miles south of what is now Greenville, Ohio. If they did not always travel through what is now Camden they were on trails not far to the east or the west of the village site. U. S. Route 127, which is the Main Street of Camden, is now marked with signs which bear the name "Anthony Wayne Parkway." A road just east of Camden has long been called Old Trace Road or Wayne's Trace.

Conclusive evidence that General Wayne and his men traveled east of town was discovered by a group of workmen in 1905 who were engaged in grading Wayne's Trace. On this road between West Elkton and Somerville

¹ History of Preble County, Ohio (Cleveland, Ohio: H. S. Williams and Bro., 1881), pp. 141-142.

the men unearthed an old corduroy road about four feet below the level of the road bed. The corduroy was about a quarter of a mile long. The timbers were of ~~Solid~~^{solid} ~~timber~~^{timber} ~~logs~~^{logs} (Preble County News Office, Camden, Ohio), June 1, 1905. after the ~~masses~~^{masses} ~~of~~^{of} ~~solid~~^{solid} ~~timber~~^{timber} ~~logs~~^{logs} ~~which~~^{which} ~~were~~^{were} ~~well~~^{well} ~~preserved~~^{preserved}. They were laid diagonally on an old bayonet. This corduroy road was evidently built over a swamp to enable the army to get its transport through. The bayonet probably belonged to General Wayne or his soldiers.²

General St. Clair and his army, in going northward from Fort Hamilton in 1791 to the disastrous battle field at Fort Recovery, followed the Seven Mile Creek. The Indians called this stream "Metatananee" which means pebbly bottom.³ The white men called it St. Clair Creek after the General. But in 1793 when General Wayne marched into the Indian country he crossed the stream and went up the east side. He cut a new trail because many of his men were superstitious, and he didn't want to take them over St. Clair's disastrous trail. General Wayne had crossed the stream just seven miles north of Fort Hamilton so he used the name Seven Mile Creek on his military map. The name St. Clair Creek was soon forgotten and replaced by the name of Seven Mile.⁴

David Hendricks was one of the most fearless of General Wayne's scouts. While stationed at Fort Greenville in 1793 General Wayne desired to send an important dispatch to Fort Washington which was seventy-five miles away. Hendricks volunteered his services even though he knew the

² Preble County News (Preble County News Office, Camden, Ohio), June 1, 1905.

³ Grace Carrol Buryan, Historical Facts on Preble County and Daughters of the American Revolution Society (Baton, Ohio, 1945), p. 44.

⁴ B. L. Morgan, Directory of Preble County, Ohio For 1875 (Baton, Ohio, 1875), p. 47.

country was full of hostile Indians and the chances of being captured overbalanced those of getting safely through. Day was just breaking as the young soldier left the fort and before the sun had gone down he had arrived at Fort Washington and delivered the important message.

It was during these campaigns with Generals St. Clair and Wayne that Hendricks discovered the beauty and fertility of the land around what is now Camden. He "found a land as fertile and as fair as heart could wish. The long, cool aisles of the forest led away into mazes of vernal green, where the swift deer bounded by unmolested and as yet unscared by the sound of the woodman's axe or sharp ring of the rifle. All about were displayed the lavish bounties of nature. The air was fragrant with the thousand odors of the woods in early spring. Underneath the giant oaks and sugar trees, the low-branched beeches, the walnuts and the chestnuts, and the sycamores, the ground was jeweled with strange and brilliant flowers."⁵

After the Treaty of Greenville, David Hendricks returned to Fort Hamilton. The next year, September 16, 1796, he married Roseanne Stockhouse. He lived in the vicinity of Hamilton until the land along the Seven Mile Creek, where Camden now stands, was surveyed and put on the market for sale. Immediately he bought three quarter sections, including the eastern part of the present town site of Camden. In 1803 he and his family moved to his newly acquired lands.⁶ Two years later on October 3, 1805, his son, George D. Hendricks, was born on the site that later became known as North Liberty Street in Camden.⁷ This was the first white male child to be born in Preble County.⁸

⁵ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶ Ibid., p. 143.

⁷ Camden Gazette (Preble County News Office, Camden, Ohio), May 31, 1900.

⁸ Morgan, op. cit., p. 49.

The Hendricks family left their farm at Camden in 1806 and moved to Eaton. Young Hendricks' life was filled with varied experiences. He was a soldier under General Sam Houston and with Colonel Sidney Johnson in the war between Texas and Mexico. After he returned to Eaton he served in the Ohio Legislature, was County Auditor, County Sheriff, Eaton Postmaster, and also devoted many years to school teaching. Colonel George D. Hendricks lived a long, active, and useful life. His death occurred at his home in Eaton on May 24, 1900 at the age of ninety-five after an extended illness.⁹

The name of Hendricks is still heard and seen every day in Camden but not as a family name. One of the main east and west streets bears the name Hendricks. This is a reminder to the citizens that the Hendricks family was the first to settle on the site of what is now Camden, and their son, George, was the first white male child to be born in Preble County.

Soon after the Hendricks came to this territory the Pottengers arrived in the township from Kentucky, having emigrated there from Maryland.¹⁰ John and Robert Pottenger located in section ten, near the site of what later was Camden, and a brother Dennis, located in section two.¹¹ When the Pottengers settled here the land was little more than a howling wilderness.¹²

"When the Pottengers moved into this part of the country, wolves, deer, opossums, foxes, and otter abounded in great numbers, as many as eleven otter were killed in one night.

⁹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., May 31, 1900.
¹⁰ Ibid., April 22, 1897.
¹¹ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 229.
¹² Camden Gazette, op. cit., April 22, 1897.

Deer were so tame that after cutting down a hackberry tree, while the men would be working on the body, the deer would be browsing on the top. Mr. John Pottenger remarked, 'They were as plenty as cattle are now.' A vegetable product called ramp grew upon bottom lands. Deer would collect in numbers and feed upon it.¹³

The Pottengers became recognized as the most influential, most wealthy, and largest land owners in Somers Township. They engaged in agriculture, in raising, buying and shipping livestock, in pork packing, in merchandising, and in milling.¹⁴ John also was a manufacturer of gun powder. This knowledge was of great help to him and to the men of the community. Gun powder was in great demand because with it their daily meat was obtained which sometimes constituted more than half of the living for themselves and their families.¹⁵

John Pottenger had a large family—eleven children. His first wife was Jane Gilney and his second Catherine Railsback.¹⁶ His eleven children were Thomas, William, John, Dennis, James, Reuben, Wilson, Ann, Elizabeth, Nancy, and Cynthia.¹⁷ In 1833 Thomas, the oldest son, married Eliza Robbins. Before they were married Thomas bought a farm and built a house which was far in advance of the other pioneers because it was brick. When it was completed it was one of the most comfortable homes in the country at that

¹³ Morgan, op. cit., p. 191.

¹⁴ Canton Gazette, op. cit.; April 22, 1897.

¹⁵ Morgan, op. cit., p. 191.

¹⁶ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 299.

¹⁷ "Record of Wills - C" (Probate Judge's Office, Court House, Eaton, Ohio), p. 464.

time. Thomas and Eliza were also the parents of a large family—eleven children. One of their sons, Cyrus, who was born near Camden on August 31, 1837, became a well known business man in the village. After serving three years in the 54th Ohio Infantry he returned to Camden and became a dry goods merchant.¹⁸ He sold out to C. E. Morlatt in 1877 and moved to Hamilton. Later he moved to Cincinnati where on November 17, 1915 he died.¹⁹

The sixth son of John Pottenger, Reuben, born August 16, 1818, was reared and died in the community of his nativity. He married Susannah Finley in February, 1842 and they raised a family of eight children, three girls and five boys. Reuben became one of the foremost business men of the town. He and his brother, Thomas, operated a dry goods store from 1863 until 1873 when it went into the hands of Cyrus Pottenger. "Uncle Reuben", as he was often called, lived a life of usefulness and thrift. When he died in Camden on December 23, 1896 he was seventy-eight years old.²⁰

The youngest son of John Pottenger, Wilson, who was born December 13, 1820, had very meager facilities for obtaining an education in his boyhood. He, with his elder brothers and classmates, secured the essential rudiments of reading, writing, spelling, geography, and arithmetic. He especially excelled in the latter subject which laid the foundation for his mechanical operations. After he was out of school he gave much praise to George D. Hendricks from whom he learned more and faster than from any

¹⁸ Cyrus Pottenger's Dry Goods Store was located in the building now occupied by Camden Hardware.

¹⁹ Proble County News, op. cit., November 25, 1915.

²⁰ Camden Gazette, op. cit., December 24, 1896.

And, as evidenced by the "on others" notes, OS

teacher. He was married February 18, 1847 to Ellen M. Reis, daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Reis of Riley, Ohio. They had three sons and one daughter. Wilson died on April 15, 1897 at his residence close to the old mill which he one time owned and operated.²¹

Robert Pottenger, the brother of John, married Fanny Gee in Kentucky. They had a large family, seven children, all of whom in 1825 moved to Indiana. Dennis, the other brother of John, married Sarah Gray of Kentucky, and after her death married Elizabeth Lowden of Butler County. Dennis had five children.²² John, a son of Elizabeth and Dennis, was born September 3, 1825 in Camden. He lived in the village until he was nineteen years old. After he left Camden he went to Warsaw, Indiana where he established the first drug store in that town. He died at his home in Hiawatha, Kansas.²³

It is quite evident why in the middle of the nineteenth century historians said that the Pottenger family had a larger representation in the locality than that of any other of the pioneers. The name Pottenger is still familiar and well remembered in Camden although only a few people still bear that name. * Dean Pottenger, a direct descendant of John Pottenger, resides on North Main Street in Camden. He is the director of a well known and popular dance band.²⁴

Another one of the earliest families to settle in the Camden vicinity was the Newtons who came about the same time as the Pottengers. The Newtons now probably have more descendants than any pioneer family around Camden. Their reunion has long been regarded as one of the largest

²¹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., April 22, 1897.

²² History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 299.

²³ Preble County News, op. cit., August 20, 1903.

²⁴ Dean Pottenger is the grandson of Daniel Pottenger. Daniel was the brother of Cyrus Pottenger. Both men were sons of Thomas, the oldest son of John Pottenger.

in the county. Thomas Newton came from England to America in 1775 at the age of twelve. After he settled in the Camden community he married a widow and they had two children, Isaac and Asa Newton. Asa Newton was born December 9, 1811. On October 29, 1833 he married Lydia Cook whose home was just east of Somerville. They made their home a few miles southwest of Camden on the farm now known as the Walter Steele farm.

The Newtons were the parents of ten children, five boys and five girls. Five of these children still have many descendants around Camden.

Lucy Newton, the oldest daughter of Lydia and Asa, married James Craig. George Craig, a local hardware dealer, is a grandson of this couple. Mary Jane Newton, the second daughter, married Joseph Craig, brother of James, her brother-in-law. This couple were the grandparents of August (Auggie) Craig, one time mayor of Camden, and Ernest Patterson, a well known local citizen. After the death of Joseph Craig, Mary Jane Newton Craig became the wife of Samuel Morrow. Isaac, Emma, Asa, James and Lucy were their children. Asa, a retired farmer and now eighty-six, resides in Camden. The Asa Morrow descendants alone are more than forty.

Robert Newton was the sixth child of Asa and Lydia. When Robert was six years old his father took him across the fields to see the first train that came through the country. The lad became so frightened at the snorting monster that he started running and didn't stop until he reached the safety of his home. Robert may not have liked the train but the Newton family found it a real asset as a source for ready cash. They cut wood from their farm and hauled it along the railroad tracks. Here the train stopped and picked up the fuel.²⁵

²⁵ The farm on which the Newton wood was stacked is now known as the Follmer farm.

When Robert Newton became grown he married Malinda Jones. Their descendants around Camden are numerous, too, as they were the parents of six children. Elliott, the oldest child, now a retired farmer and age eighty-three, married Katie Hoover. Bessie Coon, one of their three children, has been one of Camden's elementary teachers for twenty years. James, another son of Robert, married Emma Somers and they had one son, Orville, who is well known in the county. Lydia, one of Robert's daughters, died at the age of three. Another daughter, Mary, married David Mann. Amy, a twin daughter, died at three months. Sadie, the other twin, married Edward Thompson and their family of six are all married and living not far from Camden.

Elizabeth, the seventh child in the Asa Newton family, married Elliott Decker. They were the parents of Ella who married Frank Austin. She resided on the old homestead until her death as did her daughter, Ella.²⁶ Ella Austin's great-grandson still resides with their father, Walter Steele, on the home place where Asa Newton raised his family. This is the sixth generation that has resided on this farm without interruption.

Martha, the youngest daughter of Lydia and Asa, married Riley Goodwin. This couple had six children all of whom married and left several descendants. The ancestors of Thomas Newton around Camden are The Newtons, the Morrows, the Craigs, the Pattersons, the Marns, the Thompsons, the Goodwins, and the Austins. It is quite evident why the Newton Reunion is one of the largest in Preble County.²⁷

²⁶ Ella Austin's daughter married Page Wilson. Ella Wilson died young and Mrs. Austin raised her children. One of the daughters, Bessie Wilson, married Walter Steele. Bessie Steele died in 1952, on the farm of her ancestors.

²⁷ Bessie Coon, "History of the Newton Family" (Bessie Coon, Camden, Ohio).

Another early pioneer was Job Hale who came to the Ohio Country to join General St. Clair in the fight against the Indians. Hale was killed in 1792 at Fort St. Clair in a battle with the natives. He was returning to Hamilton from Fort Recovery after he and other soldiers had delivered horses to the men farther north. His wife, Hannah, had followed him from Kentucky on horseback with their two small children but stopped near Hamilton, at Fear Not Mill, to wait for Job's return. After her husband's death, the widow remarried in Hamilton but one of the Hale's daughters, Elizabeth, settled in Somers Township in 1832 after she married Peter Titsworth.²⁸

After more than a hundred years the Titsworths have three direct descendants living in Camden. Hannah, the daughter of Elizabeth and Peter Titsworth, on December 2, 1845, married James Francis Morlatt. Morlatt had come with his parents in 1830 to Somers Township from Warren County, Ohio. The young Morlatts lived on a farm near Camden until 1865 at which time they left, moved to the village, and resided there their lifetime. James Morlatt was a member of both branches of Odd Fellows. At the time of his death in 1894 he was the oldest living member of Western Star Lodge, No. 109. James and Hannah had seven children, two of whom died in infancy, but four daughters and one son lived to maturity.²⁹ A daughter, Ida, married Ernest Meeks from Richmond, Indiana. Another daughter, Helena, on December 21, 1869 married Albert Klopp.³⁰

²⁸ This information came from Nell Jones, 5. Main Street, Camden, Ohio. Miss Jones is a direct descendant of the Titsworths.

²⁹ Danlen Gazette, op. cit., August 2, 1894.

³⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., July 7, 1904.

Two of the Kopp children, Marie Kopp Armstrong and Clay Kopp, are still living in Camden. Clay lives on Lafayette Street and has retired because of very poor eyesight. Marie, who is eighty-five years of age, lives alone on Central Avenue in the old Morlatt homestead, the home where James and Hannah moved into in 1865, when they came to Camden. The third Morlatt daughter, Jennie, never married. The son, Charles E. Morlatt, was one of the most influential business men of the town. He was a school teacher, merchant, grain dealer, and banker. His first wife was Mary Haldeman, and after her death he married Cora Storzsenbach. He left no descendants. The fourth daughter, Lillie Morlatt, married Dr. Charles Jones, a young physician of Camden. The Jones' youngest daughter, Nell Jones, returned to Camden in 1930 after having retired from her position in the library of Congress at Washington, D. C.³¹ Miss Jones now lives on South Main Street in what once was known as the Charles Morlatt property. If the Hales and Fitzwarths were as fine in character as one of their descendants, Nell Jones, the community was much better for their having come.

Many of the early settlers of Preble County were from the South, especially the Carolinas. A number of these were people who objected so seriously to slavery that they moved out because they could not live at peace with themselves in the slave states. "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory."³² No doubt, this part of Article VI of the Ordinance of the Northwest Territory, and, too, the stories of the fine farming and hunting region along the Seven Mile Creek prompted many families of the South to leave their states, where the soil was worn

³¹ This information came from an interview with Nell Jones, Camden, Ohio, on October 21, 1954.

³² Joseph T. Ferguson, Auditor of State, A Short History of Ohio Land Grants (1954), p. 15.

out and produced little, and came to Ohio. Several families from North and South Carolina came to Camden and its vicinity.

James Moore, a Revolutionary war patriot, came from North Carolina in 1804 and settled in Somers Township on section nine, the site of Camden. Mr. Moore is still remembered in town because it was he, in 1818, who helped to lay out the town.³³

A little later, 1805, Isaac Sutton, another of the founders of Camden, settled on the southwest quarter of section 10 in Somers Township. This also was on the site of Camden. Isaac Sutton must have been the true pioneer with a desire for always seeking the new because in 1826 he and his family moved on West to Indiana.³⁴

John Knight, born in Ireland in 1788, emigrated to America when quite young. He came to Preble County from South Carolina in 1807 and settled in section thirty-one of Somers Township where in 1854 he died. Being a Covenanter³⁵, his conscience probably would not let him remain in a state where human beings were bought and sold like cattle. His wife, Margaret Cook, was born in Virginia and came to Ohio in a very early day. They had five children, four sons and one daughter.³⁶

A native of South Carolina, John K. Steele, in 1810 settled in section seventeen of Somers Township about three miles southwest of the site of Camden. John Steele and his wife, Martha Wilson Steele, had a family of eight children. One of the sons, Samuel, has a descendant on the farm which for many years was known as the "Home-Grown Fruit Farm"

³³ Grace Carroll Ryan, Preble County Pioneers, In Covington Collection, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, (Eaton, Ohio, 1939), p. 18.

³⁴ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 300.

³⁵ A Covenanter was one who bound himself to establish and maintain the Presbyterian doctrine as the sole religion of the country.

³⁶ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 300.

which raised mainly peaches, plums, and apples. Samuel married Martha Hays in 1840 and they also had eight children. Joseph, one of the sons of Samuel and Martha, married Mary Jane Smith, and they had six children.³⁷ Joseph and his family worked hard in the orchards which made the name "Steele" synonymous with fruit growing. One visitor to Joe Steele's orchard in 1896 spoke of it as "a sight which could not be described." There were over twelve-hundred plum trees of which more than four hundred were heavily loaded with fruit. The Steeles anticipated a yield of no less than five hundred bushels.³⁸ Steeles were advertising in 1903 "large Niagra plums—a crop of two hundred bushels—; a good crop of Prince Engleberts; and in a few days Lombards would be ripe at the Home Grown Fruit Farm."³⁹ Joseph and Mary Jane Steele still have grandchildren living in the vicinity of Camden. A grandson now lives on the old fruit farm, but no longer is the farm producing fruit for market but it is just used for general farming.

John H. Bennett, born in Maysville, Kentucky, November 27, 1815, was the fourth child of a family of eleven children. He came to Preble County with his father, John Bennett, in 1818 when he was only three years old. During his boyhood much of the land of the county was still in a primitive condition. Large tracts of forest land were uncleared and the houses of pioneers were widely scattered. When his family arrived in Preble County there were no wagon roads. They found the way through the forest by the aid of blazed trees. Their nearest neighbor was eight miles away and Camden had only three log houses. Bears were found, deer were plentiful, and a few of the Aborigines were still left. The Indians were

³⁷ R. E. Lowry, History of Preble County, Ohio (Indianapolis, Indiana: B. L. Bowen and Company, Inc., 1915), pp. 640-641.

³⁸ Camden Gazette, op. cit., July 16, 1896.

³⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., July 30, 1903.

nightly visitors at his father's fireside. Ciled paper was used in place of glass and puncheon floors were in the log houses where corn meal was part of the every-day diet.⁴⁰ John H. Bennett, on August 16, 1840, married Eliza Macy of Preble County, daughter of Stephen and Mary Gardner Macy. August sixteenth was a memorable date in the life of Eliza Bennett. She was born August 16, 1826; married August 16, 1840; buried August 16, 1903; and lost a son on the same date.⁴¹ John H. Bennett died in Camden on September 17, 1903 at the age of eighty-nine.⁴²

John H. and Eliza Bennett had five children, four sons and one daughter.⁴³ Several of their descendants still live in Camden. Two sons, Dr. T. H. Bennett and W. G. Bennett who left Camden when they were very young, spent most of their lives in Indianapolis. A daughter, Mary, married W. C. Wilson.⁴⁴ Later Mary became the wife of James M. Barnet. Mary and James's son, E. O. Barnet, was secretary of the Camden Loan and Building Association for many years until his death in 1947. E. O. Barnet was also a well known tennis player and was active in the sport until he was past seventy years of age. Mr. E. O. Barnet's second wife, Mrs. Georgianna Patteson Barnet, a teacher in the West Elkton School, now makes her home in Camden. William, E. O. Barnet's only son, is Camden's Water Works Supervisor. He and his family are active citizens in church and community affairs. Rush Bennett, the youngest son of Eliza and John Bennett, married Anna Payne. They had three children, two sons and a

⁴⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., September 24, 1903.
⁴¹ Ibid., August 20, 1903.
⁴² Ibid., September 24, 1903.
⁴³ Ibid., August 20, 1903.
⁴⁴ Ibid., April 29, 1915.

daughter. Jessie Bennett Roberts, the daughter, has spent her entire life in Camden. She has been one of Camden's most active business women since she first opened a millinery shop in 1913 in the front part of her house. Her business has grown until now she owns and operates two stores; a shop with girls' and ladies' ready-to-wear and another store with dry goods and notions.⁴⁵

Another Southerner, Louis Loop, came in 1823 from Augusta County, Virginia to Ohio. He settled on section thirteen of Somers Township. His wife was Nancy Wilson. They had seven children: Lavina, Susannah, Wilson, Eliza, Julia, Robert, and Anderson. Anderson served in an Ohio regiment during the War of the Rebellion.⁴⁶

Daniel Lamm, born in North Carolina in 1808, came to Ohio in 1831 and settled on a farm in Somers Township. Daniel and his wife, Kessiah Elliott Lamm, had three children: Bethena, Benjamin, and Daniel.⁴⁷ Benjamin and his descendants are the "Lamms" that grew up and became well known around Camden. Benjamin was born October 23, 1832. He was married twice; first to Mary Stowe who was the mother of his three sons, and later to Julia A. Loop, daughter of Louis Loop. Benjamin lived east of Camden on a farm from 1863 until August 10, 1899, the date of his death. He was closely affiliated with the Methodist Church by being a steward and a class leader.⁴⁸ Benjamin's son, Wilbur, lived east of Camden until he moved to Camden where he operated a small machine shop on South Main Street in the building now owned by the American Legion. One of his specialities was

⁴⁵ This information came from an interview with Jessie Bennett Roberts, Camden, Ohio, on May 2, 1953.

⁴⁶ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 301.

⁴⁷ Ibid.,

⁴⁸ Camden Gazette, op. cit., August 10, 1899.

repairing, renting, and selling bicycles. None of the Wilbur Lamm descendants are now living in Camden, but all of the older residents can remember Mr. Lamm's children, especially Chester who never missed a religious service at the Methodist Church unless sickness prevented him from attending.

A region that was rich in soil, plentiful in wild game, and also prohibited slavery was very attractive to people who were finding it hard to eke out an existence on the worn out Piedmont farms, and at the same time finding it difficult to reconcile themselves to the injustices of slavery that were all around them. The settlers from the Carolinas and other Southern states found such an enticing region in or near the site of Camden.

From the East came many settlers. A number of events took place which attracted people from the eastern states to the Ohio country. The United States bought the Louisiana Territory in 1803. This purchase was of great benefit to the pioneers of Ohio in that it gave them an opportunity to market farm products, especially heavy freight, by water. The freight was at first carried mostly by types of flatboats. A little later boats were built which could be propelled against the stream, such as the keel-boats and larger with sails. When the barges were first introduced, they gave rise to high hopes for the future because they brought freight from New Orleans to Cincinnati for five or six cents a pound, which was much cheaper than shipment from the East by way of Pittsburgh.⁴⁹ This was quite an inducement for people to come West where they not only could raise plenty

⁴⁹ William T. Utter, The Frontier State, 1803-1825, Carl Witke, (ed.) The History of the State of Ohio, 6 Vols. (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1911), II, 173-185.

of crops, but had access by water to markets for their products. An event occurred in 1811 which opened a new era for the pioneers. This was the launching of the first steamboat on the Ohio River. The New Orleans⁵⁰, which was built purposely for the trip, on September 27, 1811, started at Pittsburgh with New Orleans as her destination. She reached New Orleans in good time and showed the people that their difficulties in getting their grains and meats to market, and then return from the same market with manufactured goods from the East, was about to disappear.⁵¹ Now with the coming of the steamboat, traveling was easier and opportunities were greater.

After the War of 1812, from the eastern seaboard states came a great western movement. So much of the American commerce was destroyed that many of the businesses in the seaboard states were so affected that people were out of work and in debt. Homes and business places were sold for what they could get, and people started West. Some of the soldiers who had come from the East to participate in the conflict remained within Ohio to become farmers after having been discharged in 1815 in Chillicothe. Other soldiers returned to their homes in the East to urge friends and relatives to join them in making an exodus to the western country. Within the next few years whole sections of the East became infected with the "Ohio fever."⁵²

Even though the steamboat opened a new era, the prosperity of Ohio was not noticeably changed until the opening of the canals. Not much

⁵⁰ The boat was sometimes referred to as the Orleans.
⁵¹ Utter, op. cit., p. 173.
⁵² Utter, op. cit., p. 119.

manufactured goods from the East reached the Ohio Valley by steamboat because the roundabout water trip via New Orleans proved too expensive for all but the bulkiest items. Neither did the steamboat solve all the section's marketing problems. Despite all of the efforts of the inventors, the bulk of navigation on the Mississippi's tributaries was still confined to the highwater periods.⁵³ Ethan Allen Brown, in his first inaugural address of December, 1819, diagnosed Ohio's most critical ailments as one of transportation. Brown was convinced that Ohio's problem could be remedied by the construction of Canals connecting Lake Erie and the Ohio River. The canal question in Ohio received attention after 1818 but it was not until February 4, 1825 that a law was enacted providing for "the Internal Improvement of the State of Ohio by Navigable Canals."⁵⁴ Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York, who had supervised the building of the Erie Canal, lifted the first spoonful of earth at Licking Summit near Newark. The canal in Ohio which affected Canton most was the Portsmouth and Erie Canal which ran through Dayton connecting it with Cincinnati. In 1829 this canal became a reality. During the first year of the canal's operation as many as seventy freight and passenger boats came to Dayton monthly. Exports included 27,121 barrels of flour, 7,378 barrels of whiskey, and 3,429 barrels of pork. For thirty years the canal was the source of vast progress and prosperity for the whole Miami Valley.⁵⁵ Ohio's two canals and their branches gave the state eight hundred miles of navigable waters. The system was finished in 1845. The Erie Canal and the Ohio Canals drew thousands of

⁵³ Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion, A History of the American Frontier (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 333.

⁵⁴ Utter, op. cit., p. 317.

⁵⁵ Glee R. Hancock, Seventy Years of Electricity (Dayton, Ohio: The Dayton Power and Light Company, December, 1953), p. 8.

settlers from the East to Ohio.⁵⁶ Several of these families who were attracted to the West settled near the site of what later became the village of Camden.

One of the early pioneer families of the East was that of Thomas Murray, who was born in 1779 in Ireland. He emigrated in 1806 to Philadelphia. In the same year he came to Preble County and settled in section twenty-eight of Somers Township. Thomas Murray and his wife, Martha Lowellen, had ten children. Three children; John, William, and Sarah A., all made their homes in Somers Township.⁵⁷ Sarah A. married Daniel Peters and they were the parents of Martha, Elizabeth, John, and Murray L. Peters. Martha married Thomas Williams. She died in Eaton in February, 1900 at the age of fifty-eight.⁵⁸ John and Murray Peters both committed suicide. Murray, the owner of a men's clothing store in Camden, took his own life in a Chicago hotel. John took his life in Camden's Fairmount Cemetery. Their deaths occurred in 1911 within a few months of each other. The father, Daniel, died the next year on July 29, 1912 at the age of eighty-seven. During the Civil War, Mr. Murray had been in the hundred days' service as a member of the Squirrel Hunters.⁵⁹ Elizabeth the daughter, was the last survivor of the Daniel Peters family. Elizabeth married Azel Pierce who was one of Camden's pioneer bankers, a doctor, and a prosperous farmer. "Lib" Pierce, as she was called by everyone, became known for her excellent memory, her Atheistic ideas, her fine collection of antiques, and her frugal way of living in spite of her accumulation of great wealth. At the time of her death she lived with her nephew, Homer Peters, a son

⁵⁶ Utter, op. cit., p. 62.

⁵⁷ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 301.

⁵⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., February 27, 1900.

⁵⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., August 1, 1912.

of Murray Peters, at Oxford, Ohio, who complied with her wish and had her body cremated. She passed away on December 28, 1953, after having lived to be one hundred and two years old. All of those years were spent in and near Camden except the last few years in Oxford when failing health made it impossible to care for herself.

Squire Marsh, a tailor by trade, left New Jersey and in 1809 settled on what is now Camden. Historians have recorded very little about Squire Marsh and his wife, but a monument erected in memory of the Squire Marsh family, one of the few monuments still standing in the old Camden cemetery on the hill, reveals a little of their history. Squire Marsh died in 1830 and his wife, Hetty, died ten years later. According to the monument, Hetty Marsh's mother, Hannah Dedell, was buried in 1830 in the old Camden cemetery. Other members of the immediate family of Squire and Hetty Marsh, too, are buried in this cemetery. Their names appear on the same monument.

Felix Marsh, who later proved to be one of the ablest lawyers that ever practiced in Preble County, came with his parents, Squire and Hetty Marsh, in 1809 to Camden. Felix had been born three years previously in Camden, New Jersey. When he was twenty years old he entered Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, where he studied for some time then studied law in Cincinnati.⁶⁰ When in school Felix showed marked aptitude. He especially gave evidence of his oratorical ability, which later made him particularly strong as a trial lawyer.⁶¹ He was admitted to the bar in 1834 and started his practice in Eaton, Ohio. It was there in November, 1836 that he married Rachel Bloomfield, daughter of Nathaniel and Esther Bloomfield.⁶² Soon afterwards he was elected prosecuting attorney of

⁶⁰ Lowry, op. cit., p. 194.

⁶¹ Biographical History of Preble County, Ohio (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1900), p. 551.

⁶² Preble County News, op. cit., December 17, 1906.

Preble County. He was elected Representative to the General Assembly of Ohio in 1848 and from 1856-1858 he was a state Senator.⁶³ He performed his duties most satisfactorily and he proved to be very acceptable to his constituency. Several bills were passed that were favorable to Camden during his term of office. Mr. Marsh presented the petition of William Magano, John H. Boyce, and J. C. McQuinston on February 2, 1849 "asking for a charter for a railroad from a point at or near Hamilton, Ohio to the state line between the States of Ohio and Indiana, on the best and most eligible route to Richmond, Indiana."⁶⁴ The bill, on March 15, 1849, was read for the third time and passed which granted the charter.⁶⁵ This was the charter for the railroad that later was built through Camden. Mr. Marsh, on February 21, 1849, was able to have passed a bill to establish a free turnpike road from Sugar Valley to Camden.⁶⁶ Felix Marsh died in December, 1872 after having practiced law for more than thirty years in Preble County.⁶⁷ Felix's will which had been made in January, 1869 was read after his death. He left one-half of his estate to his wife, Rachel, until her death, or her marriage. The rest was to be equally divided among their four children—Anania Elanora Hardy, wife of Theodore Hardy; Francis Jane Marsh; Felix M. Marsh; and William B. Marsh.⁶⁸

Felix M. Marsh was born May 15, 1843 in Eaton, Ohio. He was admitted to the bar in Washington, D. C., after finishing his studies at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. He later moved to Camden where he, too, practiced law

⁶³ W.A. Taylor, Ohio Statesmen and Hundred Year Book From 1788 to 1892 Inclusive (Columbus, Ohio: The Westgate Company, State Printers, 1892), pp. 356, 363.

⁶⁴ Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Ohio, 1848-1849, Vol. XLVII (Columbus: S. Medary, Printers, 1849), p. 208.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 655.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 389.

⁶⁷ Preble County News, op. cit., December 17, 1908.

⁶⁸ "Record of Wills—B" (Private Judge's Office, Court House, Eaton, Ohio), p. 796.

for years. He had five children: Eddie, of Camden; W. A. Marsh of Eaton; Ada of Camden; Frances of Indianapolis; and Maude of Chicago. When a family in the community had some member who was not very conventional in his behavior, Ada Marsh often quoted the following old saying which has much truth in it: "There are very few fruit trees but what have some rotten fruit on them." Felix M. Marsh died June 2, 1916 in Camden.⁶⁹

Some of the land once owned by Felix Marsh, the father of Felix M. Marsh, is now a part of the town of Camden. The Felix Marsh Addition is one of the main sections of Camden. To most people this part of town is known as North Liberty and North Lafayette Streets, but on the early maps it is called Felix Marsh Addition. "The Orchard" is another name commonly used for this same section. When Felix Marsh gave land to be used as part of the town of Camden, some of it was covered with fruit trees, and that is the part older residents often refer to as "The Orchard."

Samuel Fowler and his wife, Rachel Inman Fowler, came from New Jersey and in 1815^{settled} on section twenty-four. They were the parents of Benjamin, Samuel, Catherine, Rachel, Sarah, Vasti, Matilda, Franklin L., and Francis Marion. Samuel Fowler became a well-to-do farmer and at his death he left a part of his estate to each of his nine children with Benjamin and Catherine as executors.⁷⁰ Benjamin, the oldest son, left many descendants around Camden. He and his first wife, Jane Titsworth, who was the granddaughter of Job Hale, had four sons; George W., John T., Francis Marion, and James M., all of whom lived in and near Camden. By his second wife, Catherine A. Hanger, Benjamin had one son, Scott E. Fowler. All the Fowlers were

⁶⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., June 8, 1916. The quotation came from an interview with Jessie B. Roberts, Camden, Ohio.

⁷⁰ "Record of Villages—C", op. cit., p. 232.

prominent and successful business men identified with the commercial interests of the town.⁷¹ Benjamin lived until 1882⁷² and his second wife, "Aunt Katie", passed away February 23, 1908 in her sleep.⁷³

Another of the pioneer families, the Bealls, came in 1816 from Maryland. Charles Beall, at the age of twenty-two, and his parents, Thomas and Fanny, located in Somers Township. Charles married Sarah Orine and to them were born nine children. One of the sons, Alfred Uriah, became an itinerant Methodist minister for over forty years. He served Camden in 1857 and 1858 and in 1880 he became minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Springfield, Ohio.⁷⁴

John and Mary Mills came from York County, Pennsylvania and in 1818 settled on section nineteen of Somers Township. John Mills was one of the early justices of the peace and was quite a prominent man in the community. The following year Peter Shaefer, a son-in-law of Mills, came from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and settled close to the Mills family. Mr. Shaefer was a miller by trade and operated various mills around Camden. Among them were the Bruce Mill at Eaton, Casper Potter's in Casper Township, Jones' Mill in Somers, the McClung Mill north of Camden, and one built by himself on Seven Mile Creek south of Camden.⁷⁵ A son of Peter Shaefer, John Mills Shaefer, was born on April 9, 1820, three miles south of Camden. He was one time mayor of Camden, a member of Preble County Bar, and practiced law in Camden many years until his death. At the time of his death, August 16, 1896,

71 Preble County News, op. cit., September 26, 1907. George Fowler was the father of Anna Fowler Windate, Ben, and Curt Fowler; James was the father of Charles, William, and Marie Fowler; Scott married Jenny Pottenger who helped manage the Woodbine Hotel; Francis was the father of Ed and Eva Fowler; and John T. had one son, Otis.

72 "Record of Mills--B", op. cit., p. 79.

73 Preble County News, op. cit., February 27, 1908. In 1955 the name of Fowler in Camden became extinct but until the first quarter of the 20th century it was very prominent.

74 History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 301.

75 Ibid., p. 302.

he had five brothers and three sisters living.⁷⁶ Amos M. Shaefer, one brother of the attorney, left Camden in the 1870's to engage in a business as a contractor at Liberty, Indiana, where on May 2, 1907 he died.⁷⁷

Stephen Payne left New Jersey and first settled in Butler County where he married Sarah Potter. He came to Camden in 1818 about the time the town was laid out as Dover. He went into the business of tavern keeping which he followed for many years. After twenty-two years in Camden he left and four years later he died in Piqua. Stephen Payne's three sons, Moses, Daniel, and Jonathan, became residents of Camden and the vicinity.

Moses Payne spent only part of his life in Camden. He was living in Piqua, Ohio in 1841 when his son, Henry H. Payne, was born. After the death of his father, Stephen Payne, in 1844 Moses and his family returned to Camden with his mother, Sarah Payne, Moses left Camden in 1858 and went to live in Illinois where in 1863 he died. The son, Henry H. Payne, remained in Camden and became one of the leading citizens. He engaged in grain and livestock business. It has been said on good authority that he bought and shipped during his life more live stock than any other dealer in Preble County. He was president of the local firm of Payne and Eikenberry Company, dealers in all kinds of grain. Later he personally conducted a live stock, grain, and seed business. He was also a director of the First National Bank. The large spacious house just west of the Town Hall was the Henry Payne home which was the center of many social activities. Mr. Payne died March 12, 1913 at his home on West Central Avenue. He was survived by his widow, Lucy, and his two daughters, Cora Payne and Mrs. Howard Swope.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Camden Gazette, op. cit., August 20, 1896.

⁷⁷ Preble County News, May 9, 1907.

⁷⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., March 13, 1913.

Daniel Payne was born in Butler County but came to Camden in 1839 and remained there until his death thirty-nine years later. During the long term of years he resided in the village he was one of the most valuable citizens it had. It was very commonly remarked that Daniel Payne did more for Camden than any other man who ever resided there. He was a very active, energetic man, and was engaged in many industries, being a tailor, a clock merchant, a teamster, a hotel keeper, and a contractor. At one time he was extensively engaged in buying horses, and driving a stage coach across the country to the seaboard cities. He was one of the first who engaged in the business. He had two daughters, Laura Payne Tucker and Nora Payne Patty.⁷⁹

Jonathan Payne, the third son of Stephen and Sarah Payne, returned to Camden at the age of eighteen with his mother in 1844, after his father's death. Four years later he married Hannah Barnet, the daughter of David Barnet. While still a young man, Jonathan was a teamster between Camden and Cincinnati, but later he spent most of the remainder of his life on a farm east of Camden. The Jonathan Paynes had five children. Anna, a daughter, married Rush Bennett, the son of John Bennett (mentioned earlier) and they had three children, Jessie, Frank, and Azel. Frances Payne married John Gelwick and their son, Herman, still resides in Camden. Another daughter, Eva, married William Wendenhall. Alice became the wife of Tom McClain. Their daughter, Myrtle, is a retired teacher and lives in Hamilton, and a son, Forest, makes his home in New York City. Daniel, the only son of Jonathan Payne, married Minnie Wilson, and their only son died when still a young man. Jonathan Payne was eighty-five years old when he died on March 14, 1911 at his home on North Liberty Street in Camden.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 307.

⁸⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., June 25, 1911; March 16, 1911.

Among the early pioneers was the Pierce family. Augustine Pierce emigrated from England, his native country, when a young man and settled in Pennsylvania. There in 1815 he married Lois Ladd. They migrated to Camden five years later. He was a carpenter, and after they settled he followed that trade in addition to his occupation as a farmer. Augustine Pierce and his wife had two daughters and three sons. Their youngest son, Francis Augustus Pierce, was the ancestor of the Pierces that became known not only in the Camden community but throughout Preble County. Francis Pierce was born March 19, 1825. At the age of twenty-three, on November 2, 1848, he married Nancy Barnet, a daughter of David and Anna Pottenger Barnet. They had seven sons—Azel, Charles Warner, Emerson, William Henry, David, Thomas Paine, and James Francis. In youth and early manhood Francis Pierce learned to make and lay bricks. He followed the business of contractor and builder. His latter years were spent in agricultural pursuits. When he died he was one of the largest land owners in Preble County. He owned more than a thousand acres. Francis Pierce died August 26, 1900 at his home two and a half miles north of Camden. At his death he was survived by his wife, Nancy, and six sons; Azel, Charles, and James, all living near Camden; Thomas of Hamilton County; Emerson of California; and David of Hamilton. The funeral was held at the Pierce home. There was no service except the reading of the obituary by Mr. J. E. Morey of Hamilton. The following lines closed his obituary:

"More than the allotted three score years and ten were
span, ere ever the silver cord was loosed, or the golden bowl
was broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.
And so his existence may be summed up as that of every human
creature—born, lived, died."⁶¹

⁶¹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., August 30, 1900; September 6, 1900. The Pierce homestead was the first farm north of the Roadside Park just north of Camden. Azel Pierce was a doctor (although he practiced very little) and a banker. Jim Pierce lived on the home place. In addition to the regular farming he had a large maple grove and camp. David Pierce was one time Superintendent of Butler County Schools and later became a fine lawyer. Tom Pierce was Superintendent of Schools in Harrison, Ohio for over fifty years.

James Barnet and his wife, Anna, came to Camden in 1823. They had left Pennsylvania and settled in Butler County in 1803 where they stayed for twenty years. James Barnet was a miller, a weaver, and distiller, and a fine mechanic. During the war of 1812 he was a flour inspector. The James Barnets had eight children. After the family settled in Camden the name of Barnet was closely associated with the milling industry. In 1831 James Barnet and his sons built a grist mill just at the north edge of town. This mill changed hands several times but was last known as the Hubaker Mill. A son, David, finished a mill in 1835 which had been started earlier just two miles north of Camden. Fifteen years later he built at the same place a fine three story brick structure. The ruins of this grist mill still stand. The road is often referred to as Barnet's Mill Road. David Barnet married Ann Pottenger, the daughter of John Pottenger, who was among the very early settlers.⁸² David and Ann had eleven children; three of them and their descendants have been mentioned earlier in this paper. David Barnet was one of the most influential men in this section of the state. He was a large land owner, a township trustee, a county commissioner, and a member of the state legislature.⁸³ He was the instigator in the building of the Hamilton, Eaton, and Richmond turnpike and was very influential in the building of the Hamilton, Richmond, and Eaton Railroad. He served as President of the railroad for nine years, during which time he became widely known in Ohio.⁸⁴

Anna Place, his wife, and several children came to Camden in 1825 from New England. They located in the village where Mr. Place followed the trade

⁸² History of Preble County, op. cit., pp. 303; 310.
⁸³ Taylor, Hundred Year Book, op. cit., p. 349.
⁸⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., June 25, 1911.

of shoemaking. Ira K. Place, a grown son, became quite a prominent man locally. He served from 1824 until 1836 as the village's first postmaster. Another "first" place was given him when in 1832-1833 he became the first mayor of the town. Again he served as mayor during 1836-1837 and eleven years later, 1848-1849, he served another term.⁸⁵

Robert H. Brown came to the village in 1828 with his parents who were originally from Ireland. Robert married Margaret Wright whose parents were early settlers in Butler County. When Margaret was very young her father moved from Pennsylvania to southern Ohio and bought a farm, now covered by a portion of Cincinnati. Margaret Wright came to Camden with her brother-in-law, Bradbury. Robert Brown and Miss Wright were married in Centerville, Indiana. The wedding journey to Camden was made on horseback. At the wedding dinner one of the meats was a roasted pig with a big red apple in his mouth. Mrs. Brown claimed to have had the first cooking stove in Preble County. When there were no lucifer matches, the fire had to be kept over, borrowed from a neighbor, or struck from a flint. Mr. Brown kept the first village store in Camden, but later sold out and moved on a farm near Camden.⁸⁶ Margaret Brown lived in and around Camden until 1883 at which time her husband's death occurred. Then she went to Topeka, Kansas where she lived with her daughter. When Mrs. Brown died on October 25, 1900, she was ninety-seven. Her body was returned to Camden where she rests in Fairmount Cemetery.⁸⁷ Lucy Brown, the daughter of the Pioneers, Robert and Margaret, married W. A. Johnston who became Chief Justice. They made their home in Topeka, Kansas.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 308; 313.
⁸⁶ Camden Gazette, op. cit., May 1, 1899.
⁸⁷ Camden Gazette, op. cit., November 1, 1900.
⁸⁸ Camden Gazette, op. cit., November 29, 1900.

Eleanor, widow of Robert Jones, came to Camden in 1820 with her family from Maryland. She had six children; Alfred, Uriah, and Elizabeth Beall, and Mary, Susan, and George Jones. Alfred came earlier, in 1825, with his Uncle Thomas Beall, and Eleanor brought only the three children of her second husband, Robert Jones. In 1838 Susan married Dr. Lurton Dunham who had located in the village six years earlier. He was one of Camden's early and very prominent doctors. He practiced in the village thirty-five years at which time he retired. Two years previously he had taken Dr. J. S. Ferguson as a partner.⁸⁹ As soon as the son, George Jones, finished school he went to New Paris, Ohio where he learned the hatter's trade from his brother-in-law, Mr. William Reid. Upon completion of his apprenticeship, young Jones returned to Camden to follow his trade. On December 12, 1841 he married Isabel Dickey of Eaton, Ohio. Five sons blessed this marriage. One of the sons, Charles Jones, became not only a fine physician but one of Camden's civic leaders. Dr. Charles Jones built a house on North Main Street for his home and his office. In later years this house was known as the Shank house, but in 1953 it was torn down to make room for a new Mobil Gas Station. At the time of his death in 1892 Dr. Jones was the mayor of the village. Left to mourn his passing was the widow, Lillie Morlatt Jones, and three children, Hannah, Reynard, and Nell.⁹⁰ Nell, a resident of Camden, has been mentioned earlier in this paper. In addition to this descendant, Camden has another reminder of the pioneer Jones family. When Eleanor Jones came from Maryland she brought with her in a shoe a lilac bush which is still living. It now stands in the yard of the

⁸⁹ "Raising Old School House," Preble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

⁹⁰ Camden Gazette, op. cit., January 23, 1896.

Dr. McKinley home which was formerly the Dr. Lurton Dunham residence. When the new Dunham house was built, Mrs. Jones dug up the bush from the spot where she had first planted it and transplanted it to her daughter's yard where it still lives and blooms.⁹¹

John Brennan, a cooper by trade, came from Baltimore, Maryland in 1830.⁹² A man with such a trade found a welcome among the pioneers who needed barrels and kegs not only in which to store their fruits, vegetables, and meats, but they were the customary containers in stores for such articles as sugar, fish, and crackers. Barrels were also used when all kinds of farm produce was sold and shipped.

Benjamin Fornsshell and his wife, Lucellia, came to Camden in 1834 from Franklin County, Pennsylvania. They brought with them a family of six children; William, Joseph, Thomas, John, Matilda, and Arabella. Benjamin M., the youngest son, was born in Camden. Mr. Fornsshell was the first tinmer in the village and the only one until his son, Benjamin M., went into the same business. Mr. Fornsshell was also a coppersmith and the only one in Preble County at that time. He followed his trade actively until he was eighty-two years old.⁹³ After Mr. Fornsshell's death in 1879 his will was read. First he requested that all debts and funeral expenses be paid which included tomb stones for him and his deceased wife. To each of his six children (John was deceased) he left one dollar because previous advancements had been made. The rest of his estate was to be divided among his three grandchildren; William, son of Joseph; and Ellen and Anna, illegitimate children of his daughter, Arabella Will.⁹⁴

91 This information came from Nell Jones, Camden, Ohio.

92 History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 308.

93 Preble County News, op. cit., August 11, 1904.

94 "Record of Wills--B", op. cit., p. 501.

Joseph Fornshell, one of Benjamin's sons, lived in Camden seventy years. This was more consecutive years than any citizen had spent in the village up to this date. He knew Camden when it was but a wilderness. He saw with pride its development into one of the prettiest little towns in Ohio. Joseph learned the tinner's trade from his father. He and his father did the tin work in 1853 on the school building which was then being built. Young Fornshell in 1848 married Jeanette Seymour. He was in the patent medicine business in 1868 and 1869 and sold Gould's American Liniment. His compound had a large sale, and it gained a widespread reputation. In 1878 the Arlington Hotel (now known as Bon Haven) was built and owned by Joseph Fornshell. Nine years later the hotel burned, but he rebuilt it the following year. The Fornshells did not originally intend to go into the hotel business but began by accommodating a few close friends. They soon found the business growing upon them and ended by devoting themselves closely to it. Joseph Fornshell and his wife had two children. The daughter died in infancy, but the son, William S. Fornshell, became a prominent citizen of the town.⁹⁵ He was editor and publisher of the local paper, the Camden Gazette. He retired from the newspaper business in 1898 and became postmaster under President McKinley's appointment. When he died in 1912 at the age of sixty-two, his mother, Mrs. Joseph Fornshell, was still living.⁹⁶

Arabella Fornshell, a daughter of Benjamin, in 1864 married George C. Will. She died at her home October 23, 1899 on North Liberty Street.⁹⁷ Benjamin M., the youngest child of Benjamin Fornshell, had three children; Elmer, Effie, and Glen. Glen followed the trade of his father and grandfather.

⁹⁵ Preble County News, op. cit., August 11, 1904.
⁹⁶ Preble County News, op. cit., December 5, 1912.
⁹⁷ Camden Gazette, op. cit., October 26, 1899.

Mrs. Lora Shuey, one of Camden's oldest residents, recalls when she was a small child how she helped carry the tin cans during the canning season to Fornshell's tin shop to be soldered. Glen Fornshell continued in the hardware business until 1943, the year of his death.

Clinton Chadwick, son of Samuel and Jerusha Chadwick, came in 1834 to Camden. Originally he came from Morris County, New Jersey, where in 1818 he was born in Hamilton County. Clinton Chadwick was one of Camden's active and influential citizens. He had a general store on the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue in 1834, which carried on an extensive trade for twenty-eight years. During his last twelve years as a merchant William Pottenger was his partner.⁹⁸

Nathaniel Wilbur Carroll arrived in Camden in 1838. He was born in 1813 in Dudley, Massachusetts. Nathaniel married Olivia, the daughter of Thomas and Elisabeth Rees of Butler County who had come from Delaware in 1827. He was one of the leading citizens of the village and was prominent in many important works.⁹⁹ Beginning in 1840 he carried on a clock business and made quite a good sized fortune. Later he invested part of his fortune in Barnett's Mill which he managed for several years.¹⁰⁰ He was a member of the State Board of Education in 1859, and later of the State Board of Public Works. He also was one of the directors of the Hamilton and Eaton Railroad. After Mr. Carroll's death, which occurred November 18, 1862, Mrs. Carroll remained in Camden.¹⁰¹ She was among those instrumental in getting the Universalist Church organized in Camden in 1868. It was at

⁹⁸ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 310.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 309.

¹⁰⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., August 18, 1933.

¹⁰¹ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 309.

the residence of Mrs. Carroll¹⁰² that a meeting was held for their first church organization. Olivia Carroll became one of the first members of the Universalist Church.¹⁰³

J. H. Bohn, born in Pennsylvania in 1803, came from that state to Ohio and located in Camden at the age of thirty-nine. He married Henrietta George in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania and in this town five children were born to them. Here he started a drug store of his own in 1824 which he conducted successfully for four years. At the end of this time he decided to seek his fortune farther west. After having prevailed upon his brother to accompany him, he left his drugstore in competent hands and the two started on horseback to Springfield, Illinois. By the time they reached Terre Haute, Indiana, their impressions of the country toward which they were making their way underwent a complete change, and they abandoned their westward journey. They returned to Elizabethtown where Mr. Bohn resumed his place in the drug store. He sold this store in 1833 and started west again, but he did not have so distant a point in mind. He came to Preble County where he remained until the spring of 1834 with his father-in-law on a farm. He then returned to Elizabethtown and repurchased his drug store and stayed in business eight more years. At that time, 1842, he and his family came to Camden where he bought property and opened a drug store which he continued to manage until 1875, the year of his death.¹⁰⁴ The large three-story brick building on South Main Street, inscribed with the name "Bohn" at the top, was erected by J. H. Bohn in 1853 to house his drug store.¹⁰⁵ The store continued there after Mr. Bohn's death. The son,

102 Mrs. Carroll lived on West Central Avenue in the house once known as the Woodbine, but now known as the Donohoe Apartment House.

103 History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 306.

104 Lowy, op. cit., pp. 789-790.

105 This building is still owned by the grandchildren of J. H. L. Bohn. It is rented by Jeffries' Market. Mrs. Lora Shuey, the granddaughter of J. H. Bohn, recalls the fun she had, when a child, sliding down the long winding banisters in that big building.

John H. L. Bohn, managed the store for his father's estate for a year then he bought the other heir's interests in 1876 and conducted the popular old store as full owner for more than forty years. After J. H. L. Bohn's death in 1921 the drug store was sold but it remained in the same building until the early part of the thirties at which time it was moved to another location.

Of the five children of John H. and Henrietta Bohn two died at an early age. Caroline lived to be only five years old, but Michael George died on July 14, 1910 after he was grown. P. J. Bohn, a resident of Camden many years, was connected with the sale and repair of boots and shoes. John H. L. Bohn was highly respected and widely known because of his competent and conscientious services as a pharmacist for so many years. Sarah Rebecca Bohn, a talented musician, married Dr. J. S. Ferguson, a very able physician.¹⁰⁶ He came to Camden in 1865 as a partner with Dr. Lurton Dunham. Dr. Ferguson not only served the community as a physician for more than thirty years, but he was active in public affairs until his death. At the time of his death, 1912, the doctor was President of Camden's Loan and Building Association (a position he had held for thirty-one years); a director of the First National Bank; and was an active member of the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰⁷ Dr. and Mrs. Ferguson's two children are still living. Their daughter, Lora, married Frank S. Shuey, a young school teacher who later became a leading lawyer of Preble County. Mrs. Shuey still resides in the Ferguson home on North Main Street where she and Mr. Shuey made their home until his death in June, 1953. The Ferguson's son, John, is a retired minister-emeritus of the Irvington Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Lowry, op. cit., p. 789.

¹⁰⁷ Preble County News, op. cit., October 3, 1912.

¹⁰⁸ John Ferguson was installed as minister of the Irvington Presbyterian Church, June 26, 1930. To commemorate his twenty-fifth

From Lancaster County, Pennsylvania came Franklin L. Raikes and in 1844 he settled in Somers Township. He was a saddler by trade. He married the only child of William Darby of Washington, the publisher of Darby Geographical Dictionary. Mr. Darby was also surveyor of Louisiana, was a captain in General Jackson's army at New Orleans, and was one time connected with the Treasury Department at Washington. After Franklin Raikes came to Ohio he actively engaged in politics in behalf of Henry Clay. He was a strong advocate of the Common school system and was always identified with the interests of the school. Mr. and Mrs. Raikes were the parents of seven children.¹⁰⁹

After Franklin Raikes's father's death in 1823 his mother, Frances Stiner Raikes, married Moses Whitson who was born in 1790 in Pennsylvania. The Whitsons left Pennsylvania and in 1847 settled in Camden. They had three children. One of their sons, M. T. Whitson, married Eliza J. Loop, the

anniversary at the church, the following tribute appeared in The Irvington Presbyteria, June 25, 1955:

"The man I have in mind is a minister of about seventy-five years of age. He came to our community approximately twenty-five years ago and for more than nineteen years was pastor of one of our churches. He is now pastor emeritus. But he continues spreading goodness. He calls upon the sick. He brings peace unto the dying. He comforts the bereaved. He counsels those in trouble. He continues to baptize the babies. I speak with conviction when I say he is the most loved man in our community.

He calls upon anyone sick or distressed whom he thinks he can help. His visits bring sunshine into hearts all clouded with despair. He always finds something to praise in a person. He is sparing with criticism or blame.

He shares his worldly goods. It is a common thing to see him walking by carrying a gift of food or flowers for some unfortunate person. His greatest gift is the gift of himself. To be with him is a tonic."

¹⁰⁹ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 304.

daughter of Louis Loop.¹¹⁰ Eliza Jane Whitson spent her entire life in and near Camden except the last three years of her life which were spent with her daughter in Hamilton. She lived a long life and saw many changes before she died in 1913 at the age of eighty. She was survived by her husband and a daughter, Mrs. Milo Harris, and a son, Charles Whitson of Chicago.¹¹¹

Another pioneer from Pennsylvania was Jacob Sterzenbach who was born December 9, 1829 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.¹¹² He came to Ohio in 1831 with his parents who journeyed westward with a horse and jolt wagon. They brought with them some bedding and a few hundred dollars which was invested in a home in Somerville, Ohio. The father engaged in manufacturing barrels and other things along that line. Jacob, during his boyhood, worked at the cooper's trade in his father's shop. Later he devoted his time to farming, raising both grain and stock.¹¹³ On April 25, 1850 Jacob Sterzenbach was married to Rexel Frederika Houk who was born May 17, 1829 in Stuttgart, Germany. She had come with her parents to Pennsylvania in 1832, but shortly afterward they settled in Somerville.¹¹⁴ Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Sterzenbach lost two children in infancy, but four lived to maturity. Caroline was the wife of Adrian Mettler, a farmer of the Camden community. Samuel married Cora Campbell, and they had three sons, Carl, Louis, and Norman. Margaret married Irvin Reedy of Eaton. Mary Irene (known as "Reeney") married George Pottenger of Camden. George and "Reeney" Pottenger had one son, Dean, who now lives on Main Street in the house occupied by his

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 305.

¹¹¹ Preble County News, op. cit., November 13, 1913.

¹¹² Preble County News, op. cit., July 28, 1904.

¹¹³ Biographical History of Preble County, op. cit., pp. 489-491.

¹¹⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., July 28, 1904.

parents when they were living. Dean is a fine musician. He plays both piano and organ, gives piano lessons, and has a very popular dance band.

Jacob Sterzenbach and his wife spent all their married life on a farm southeast of Camden except for the three years before Mr. Sterzenbach's death. They moved to Camden in 1901 where they purchased property. Mr. Sterzenbach apparently was in good health when he dropped dead as he was about to procure some honey from a stand of bees near the house.¹¹⁵ After her husband's death, Mrs. Sterzenbach lived with her daughter and her husband, the George Pottengers, until she succumbed on April 1, 1913 at the age of eighty-three.¹¹⁶

From Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1847 came another prominent family, the Neffs. Elizabeth Herr was born on December 15, 1813 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. She married Daniel Neff on August 26, 1834 who was from the same state. They were the parents of nine children. The first seven were born in Lancaster County: Suzan Ann, Sarah, John Wesley, Amanda, Adam Clark, Salome, and Martha. Two more boys were born in Preble County, Ohio: Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. Sarah died in infancy on August 21, 1837 and Martha died on March 6, 1864 when she was only seventeen years old.¹¹⁷ Four of the Neff children spent most of their life in and around Camden. Amanda married Orlando Wilson, the son of William Wilson, Jr. They lived most of their life on a farm east of Camden, then later retired and moved to town. Adam Clark had a grocery store and bakery in the village for many years. Daniel Webster was a well known huckster. John Wesley married Ruth Wilson, a sister of Orlando Wilson. They were the parents of two sons,

¹¹⁵ Preble County News, op. cit., July 28, 1904.

¹¹⁶ Preble County News, op. cit., April 10, 1913.

¹¹⁷ Neff Family Bible (This Bible is at the home of Ruth Neff Petree, 21 Forestdale Pk., Calumet City, Illinois).

Will and Fred. John Wesley and his wife left Camden in 1896 to accept a position in the U. S. Treasury Department of Washington D. C.¹¹⁸ Upon retirement, he and Mrs. Neff returned to Camden. After his wife's death he made his home with his son, Fred, and family. Two of Fred's sons, Harry and Jim, reside in Camden; another son, Cecil, lives in Eaton; and the two daughters, Helen Schomaker and Ruth Petree, have their homes in Calumet City, Illinois.

Another of the pioneer families which has left many descendants was the Kennedy family. David Kennedy, a typical pioneer, came from New Jersey and in 1796 settled in Cincinnati. He owned the first ferry boat which crossed the Ohio River at Cincinnati. When an accident befell his boat in 1855 he was drowned.¹¹⁹ Benjamin P. Kennedy, a son of David, was born on November 24, 1813 near Pleasant Ridge, Hamilton County, Ohio. He married Ann Baxter on February 12, 1835. They had six children but one died in infancy. His wife died in 1849 leaving him the care of the small children. The following year he married a widow, Mrs. Sarah Frazee White, who had two small children, Lydia and James. The Kennedy's moved to Preble County in the early 1850's and located on a farm at the edge of Camden. Benjamin became a very successful farmer and financier. At the time of his death, August 18, 1896, he was nearly eighty-three years of age.¹²⁰ Jane Kennedy, the oldest daughter, married John Pottenger.¹²¹ Andrew J. (known as Jack) on October 23, 1863 married Sarah Elisabeth Frazee. He died in Camden on July 6, 1900 at the age of sixty-three.¹²² Wilson, on November 17, 1864, married Anna Frazee, a sister of Sarah. They had four children.¹²³ Martha Kennedy, who was only two years old when her mother died, never married.

118 Camden Gazette, op. cit., November 26, 1896.

119 History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 302.

120 Camden Gazette, op. cit., August 20, 1896; August 27, 1896.

121 Preble County News, op. cit., October 3, 1912.

122 Camden Gazette, op. cit., July 12, 1900.

123 Preble County News, op. cit., April 1, 1915.

In her later life she made her home, until her death in November, 1903, with her nephew, John White.¹²⁴ Eliza Kennedy, the third daughter, married James White who was her step-brother but no blood relation. They had eight children: Nell, Addie, Charles, John, Sarah, Martha, Frank, and Grace.¹²⁵ The last child died when only seven months old.

Only one of James White's children, Frank, is still living, but there are many of his descendants living in or near Camden. Nell, the oldest child, married Charles McFall to whom were born two sons. Ralph McFall is the owner and operator of a fine furniture store in Eaton, Ohio, and John and his wife live in Florida. Addie, the second daughter, married Frank Eikenberry who for many years was owner of the Eikenberry Furniture Store in Camden. They had no children. Charles, the oldest son, married Tura Ridenour from College Corner. For many years they were merchants in a well stocked department store on the corner of Main and Central Avenue. They had two daughters, Genevieve and Mary Elizabeth. Genevieve has been a teacher in the Camden Schools for the last twenty-five years. Mary Elizabeth married Dr. Richard Miller of Lima, Ohio, but the Millers now reside in Paden City, West Virginia. John, the second son, married Blanche Miles. They had a son and two daughters. Kenneth, the oldest child of John White, is a draftsman at Gwynne's in Camden. Jeanette married Chester Elum of Millersburg, Ohio. Irene died in infancy. Sarah, the fifth child of the White family, never married. She spent most of her life close to Camden with the exception of a few years she worked in Elder's at Dayton, until her death in 1954. Martha, the sixth in the James White family, became the wife of Fred Neff of Camden.

¹²⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., November 12, 1903.

¹²⁵ Camden Gazette, op. cit., July 11, 1901.

They had five children; Cecil, Ruth, Harry, Helen, and James, all of whom have been mentioned in connection with the Neff descendants. Frank, the youngest son of the Whites, married Anna Homsher, the daughter of Dr. G. W. Homsher.¹²⁶ They live on North Main Street where they raise flowers for cut bouquets. Mr. and Mrs. White both have been closely associated with the Presbyterian Church where they have always taken a very active part, especially with the music.

Camden was very fortunate in 1854 to have a fine tailor, Jacob Collet, come to the village. Mr. Collett was born in Germany in 1834 and came to this country at the age of fourteen. He located in Cincinnati where he learned the art of coat making. When he was twenty years old he left Cincinnati and located in Camden. During the next ten years he was employed as a tailor with Amos Yost, Clint Chadwick, and Benjamin Myers. He started a business of his own on Main Street in 1864 in the S. F. Shellenbarger property. Four years later his business had grown to such proportions that he erected the building now known as the Duckwall property.¹²⁷ These

¹²⁶ Dr. G. W. Homsher was the son of another Camden physician, Dr. Robert Homsher. Robert Homsher came to Camden in 1852 and started practicing medicine in the village. He was a deeply religious man and served the Camden Presbyterian Church as Elder for thirty-four years. He has been remembered as a very prominent physician. When Lillie Morlett Jones was a young girl Dr. Homsher was the family physician for the Morletts. Nell Jones has heard her mother, Lillie, say that "so great was the faith in Dr. Homsher that she believed her family thought he could almost raise the dead."

Dr. G. W. Homsher, like his father, was also a prominent doctor and citizen of Camden. He maintained a keen interest in public affairs throughout his life. He served on the Board of Education for many years. At the time of his death, 1926, he had been president of the Camden Loan and Building Association for fourteen years in addition to the several years he had been one of the directors. He organized the Preble County Health Department and in January, 1920 he became the first Health Commissioner for the county. This office he held until his death.

This information came from Mrs. Frank White, North Main Street, Camden, Ohio, June 25, 1955.

¹²⁷ This property is located on the west side of Main Street and it's occupied by Evelyn's Beauty Parlor and Statzer's Realty Office.

quarters were soon inadequate and in 1882 he erected the building on South Main Street which is still known as the Collet Building. Mr. Collet's son, Jacob, learned the tailoring trade and in 1890 the firm became known as J. Collet and Son. More than one hundred years after Mr. Collet, the pioneer, came to Camden, a very fine men's clothing store is still owned and operated by his only grandson, Burdette Collet. This store has never been out of the Collet family since it started.¹²⁸

The pioneers of the Camden area had courage and vision to plan and build for the future. They laid the foundations which made possible the many privileges and opportunities that future generations enjoyed. This same pioneering spirit is still evidenced in the way some people are meeting the problems of the present day.

¹²⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., April 9, 1914.