

HISTORY OF CAMDEN, OHIO

1803-1955

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RUTH B. NEFF

History of Camden, Ohio

1803 - 1955

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Ruth B. Neff

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Approved by:

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If my work will help the reader to a fuller and more comprehensive view of, and a greater respect for our community and its people and achievements, I shall feel in a large measure repaid for my efforts.

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CHAPTER II

THE VILLAGE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT, 1818-1955

By 1818 a sufficient number of settlers had arrived from the South and the East that there had arisen a growing need for a town in Somers Township. Already, Eaton, ten miles north, was a small village, and the county seat with a new courthouse erected two years previously. But Eaton was too far away to be convenient for the people of Somers Township because travel was slow and hard. So in 1818 James Moore¹, James Black, and Isaac Sutton chose a spot in the valley of the Seven Mile Creek on the west side of the stream on the road leading from Eaton to Hamilton. On this site a village called Dover, later called Camden, was laid out. The location of the village seemed to be an ideal spot, both from a practical standpoint and from one of beauty. It was centrally located for the people of Somers Township. Too, the land on which the village was laid out was underlaid with gravel which later was discovered to be the richest bed of gravel in southwestern Ohio. Besides these advantages Seven Mile Creek had quite a strong fall and drainage was steady and rapid. All these things would help to make the village a healthful place in which to live. Mill wheels were already turning from the power produced by the Seven Mile, and it would be possible to have other mills operating from the same source of power.

¹ James Moore is sometimes referred to as William Moore. Probably his name was James William Moore.

The village, on a main road from Baton to Hamilton, had easy access to larger markets. Stage coaches going from Hamilton to Baton and on to points North and West would have to go through the village thus it was possible for news, goods, and people to be brought to the new town. Besides all the practical reasons for choosing the location, there was the one of beauty which must have been considered. The view up and down the valley from the eastern or western hills was and still is one of the finest in the country. Less than a mile westward from the village along Paint Creek was a very singular formation which became known locally as Devil's Backbone. The winding creek, the projecting promontories, the precipitous rocky wall, and the bottom lands covered with a dense growth of maples made a very attractive scene. Many of the trees have been cut away, but Backbone still retains its picturesque loveliness and it will never cease to be a favorite spot for admirers of nature and students of science.

James Moore is regarded as the founder of the town because he laid out the greater part of the plot. The lots west of Main Street were laid out by Moore, while Isaac Sutton laid out those on the east side, and James Black laid out the northern part.² The original plot of Dover is shown on Table I. Additions were made a few years later by Felix Marsh and Samuel Pottenger. Since 1940 some additions have been made to the town through the extension of North Main Street, North Second Street, and South Lafayette. A subdivision west of Camden was annexed as White's Plot in 1954.

The village of Dover was probably laid out as early as April or May of 1818, but was not recorded at that time. The following article is evidence

² History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 307.

that the town plat was not recorded immediately after the town came into existence:

To James Black, Isaac Sutton and James Moore,

Gentlemen, in consequence of the listor of Summers Township having produced no list for taxation of the town of Dover for which you are proprietors, as it is said of some of you, and in consequence of said listor declaring that he could not obtain a list or plat of said town from the reputed proprietors at the clerk's office, where a record of such plat by the statute is ordered to be made. We therefore refer you to an act entitled An Act providing for recording town plats passed the 14th of February, 1805, and require you to comply with the requisition therein made. You are also required to notify the appraiser and listor to appraise and list the lots and houses according to law in the town of Dover in the county aforesaid and previously furnishing them with a plat of said town. You are also required to pay the listor and appraiser for their services in the above and inform the listor that he is required to return a list, so made as above to this office, in ten weeks from the date hereof, in the above you fail not. Otherwise, we are in duty bound as commissioners for said county to proceed as the law directs.

A copy of the above was signed by the Commissioners and ordered to be sent and read by John Gentle, Constable, to the proprietors of Dover. The Constable was required to return the written notice to the board as proof of having complied with the order.³

The description of the plat of Dover as laid out by Moore, Black, and Sutton was recorded July 4, 1818. The recording reads as follows:

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting,
Know ye that we James Black, James Moore and Isaac Sutton
all of Preble County and State of Ohio haveing surveyed
and laid off a town in the county and state aforesaid on
Sections Number Nine and Ten in township No. Six in Range
No. Two, east, which town contains forty lots with two

³ "Commissioner's Journal," (Auditor's Office, Preble County Court House, Eaton, Ohio, June 3, 1818), p. 149.

streets running North nineteen degrees east from the crossing of the two main streets which are nearly at right angles, thence the course of said streets is South five degrees East. The streets are four rods, poles, wide. There are three allies as designated on the plat East of which are one rod wide with allies extending round said town. The breadth of the lots are four rods wide in front extending back eight rods, making eight rods in length as the annexed plat will more fully show. The town shall be known and called by the name of Dover.

The lots shall be numbered as follows: (to wit), Beginning at Fractional lot No. one in the point where the two streets cross and on the East Side of the main street near the middle of the town and numbered from south to north and from north to south alternately. The lots which lay on the south of the cross streets which runs eastward by and westward by shall be numbered as follows (to wit). Beginning at the south end of north and south street on the east side of said street and numbered northward by and southward alternately.

And we the said James Black James Moore and Isaac Sutton for ourselves our heirs executors and administrators do guarantee the aforesaid streets and allies to the citizens at large as public highways subject to the laws of the state of Ohio and future corporations and to be used for ever here after as such. In witness where-of we have been unto set our hands and seal this fourth day of July A. D. 1818.

Signed Seald & Delivered in presents of

Isaac Stephens
John Stephens, Jr.

James Black
James Moore⁴
Isaac Sutton

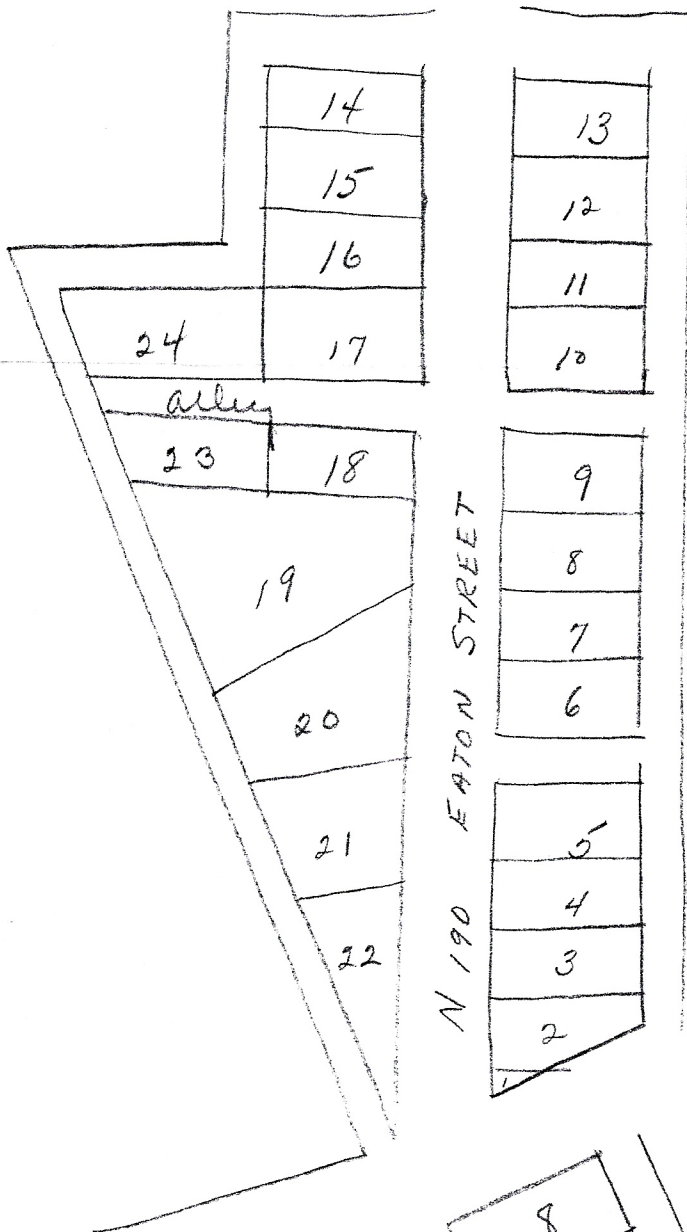
Six years after the village was started, on May 26, 1824, the first post office was established. The office was not given the name of Dover, but it was called Newcomb because the villagers discovered there was another town in Ohio by the name of Dover. The first Dover had a post office which had been started earlier than 1824; so the new little village changed the name to Newcomb in honor of George Newcomb of Montgomery County, who at that time was state senator from the district of which Preble County was a part.⁵

⁴ "Deeds, No. 3," (Recorder's Office, Preble County Court House, Eaton, Ohio), pp. 76-77.

⁵ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 307.

Figure 1

Map of Dover in 1818



Newcomb's first post office was located in the home of their post master, Ira E. Place, who lived on the southeast corner of Main and Cottage Streets.⁶ Mr. Place remained in office a long term of years—until 1836. For the first few months not much mail was handled. The postal receipts during the first quarter of 1824 were exactly three dollars and seventy-five cents. For several years the location of the post office changed whenever there was a change in post masters. In the 1840's the office which was by that time called Camden Post Office, was located where the Commercial Bank later stood.⁷ Later it was taken to Bohn's Drug Store. The room now occupied by a grocery store in the Barhart Building (now known as the Dearth Building) housed the post office for several years until it was moved to the Masonic Temple in 1928 where it still is.⁸

Since 1824 many changes have taken place in Camden's postal service. In 1911 the Camden office was designated as a Postal Savings Depository which became effective November tenth of that year. It provided a facility for depositing savings at interest with the security of the United States Government. An account could be opened and deposits made by anyone ten years or older if a patron of the local office.⁹ These Postal Savings' regulations still hold good except one does not have to be a patron of the local office since Camden has the only post office in Preble County where one can invest his money in postal savings. Parcel post, which went into effect January 1, 1913, was another great help to the people of Camden. The first few days

⁶ Preble County News, op. cit., October 26, 1916.

⁷ This location was on South Main Street where the First National Bank now stands.

⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., October 26, 1911.

very few packages were received or sent out but everyone who entered the office had something to say about the new system. Among the first callers to inquire concerning parcel post was a lady who asked to send a go-cart by mail.¹⁰ After the first week the local post master reported that he had been the target of much fun, but he hadn't been obliged to handle a coffin, a stove, or a load of bricks as a fellow employee had to do in another locality. The first Camden person to send a package by parcel post was Mrs. W. J. King, wife of Postmaster King. The package was sent to Eaton and was the first parcel to arrive in that town.¹¹ It was but a short time until packages were accepted as a regular part of each day's mail. Free delivery of mail in the town was another step of progress. Camden's paper carried a notice on July 6, 1916 that a neighboring town, Liberty, Indiana, had free delivery of mail once each day.¹² But it wasn't until July 1, 1917 that free delivery came to Camden.¹³ Congress passed a law in 1917 that permitted two villages in each Congressman's district to have free delivery within the town. West Alexandria and Camden were the two villages in Preble County. Mr. George Siselove was post master in Camden at that time, and since his health wasn't very good he chose to carry the village mail rather than stay inside the post office. The work proved too strenuous, and after two weeks he was unable to continue. Mr. Charles Fisher, on July 16, 1917, started to carry mail as a village carrier. The job required two complete deliveries each day, and he had to meet the evening train and distribute any mail that came to the business houses. Mr. Fisher continued to carry the mail for

¹⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., January 9, 1913.

¹¹ Preble County News, op. cit., January 9, 1913.

¹² Preble County News, op. cit., July 6, 1916.

¹³ Preble County News, op. cit., February 22, 1917.

twenty-three years at which time he retired and was replaced by James Neff.¹⁴ Mr. Fisher recalls how at first the towns people were not at all pleased to have their mail delivered. They preferred to call at the post office which was a central meeting place. But it wasn't long until people were very grateful for their new service and waited anxiously and eagerly for the "mail man".¹⁵ During his twenty-three years of mail delivery Mr. Fisher saw a gradual increase in the amount of first class mail and parcel post. The postal receipts increased as the town industries grew until in July, 1949 Camden became a Second Class Post Office.¹⁶ In November of the same year all Second Class Village Delivery Service was replaced with City Delivery. This meant the "city" carrier would be under Civil Service and would be entitled to an increase in salary.¹⁷ The present postmaster, H. C. Overholser, has held his office since 1932--a period of twenty-three years. This is a longer term than any previous postmaster in Camden.¹⁸

¹⁴ James Neff carried mail until 1946 at which time he became postal clerk. Clarence Shank was appointed substitute carrier and has carried the mail practically all the time since.

¹⁵ This information came from Charles Fisher, Camden, Ohio.

¹⁶ Camden was a Second Class Post Office for about eight months during 19 .

¹⁷ This information came from the local postmaster, H. C. Overholser, Camden, Ohio, March 6, 1954.

¹⁸ The following people have been postmasters of Camden: Ira K. Place, 1824-1836; Boyce Erdson, 1836-1848; J. H. Bohn, Sr., 1848-1852; Amos W. Toast, 1852-1856; John C. Campbell, 1856-1858; J. H. Bohn, Sr., 1858-1862; C. M. Rohrer, 1862-1866; Lurton D. Jones, 1866-1870; C. M. Rohrer, 1870-1878; Mrs. Mary Rohrer, 1878; Mrs. Olivia Brown, 1878-1886; Clinton Crafton, 1886-1887; Asel Pierce, 1887-1889; Oliver P. Brown, 1889-1894; Oscar D. Pocock, 1894-1898; Will S. Hornshell, 1898-1909; Walter King, 1909-1914; George Sizelove, 1914-1916; Sylvester Lockum, 1916-1921; Elmore J. Phares, 1921-1934; Harold G. Overholser, 1934—. The above names and dates, starting with Mrs. Olivia Brown, were found in the National Archives and Records Service of Washington, D. C.

The town of Newcomb did not remain unincorporated long. It was incorporated by an act of the Legislature, signed on February 10, 1831, by James Bell, Speaker of the House of Representatives and by Samuel Miller, Speaker of the Senate. The following is a copy of Section I of an act passed by the General Assembly of Ohio:

AN ACT

"Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio. That so much of the township of Somers, in the county of Preble, as is contained and designated in the town plat of in-lots and out-lots in the town of Newcombe, and recorded in the recorder's office, in the county of Preble, or so much of said township as is comprised within the following limits - Beginning at the mouth of Tribbit's branch on seven Mile Creek, and running with said creek to John Stubbs line; thence west with the alley separating James Moores lots from said Stubbs land and the school section so far as to include Alfred Lees lots; thence north to the north line of the lands of Squire Marsh, deceased; thence east along said line, until it strikes Tribbits branch; thence along said branch to its mouth, to the place of beginning, be and the same is hereby, created a town corporate, and shall hence-forth to be known and distinguished by the name of the town of Newcombe."19

In compliance with An Act the village officers were chosen. Ira K. Place who had been the first postmaster, was chosen in 1832 as the first mayor. Philip Riser was the second mayor and officiated from 1834-1836. Ira K. Place was elected mayor again in 1836 and served two years. Philip Riser was the first recorder, the officer which is now called clerk. James Alfred, Samuel Cornwell, George Benton, Eli De Moss, and Joseph Mitchell were trustees or councilmen. At the first meeting of these municipal officers, William Riser was appointed treasurer and Jonathan H. Potter marshal.²⁰ The same form of government has continued in Camden during these many years. The mayor,

¹⁹ "Record of Ordinances, 1884-1904," (Council Room, Camden, Ohio), p. 1. See Appendix I for the remainder of "An Act."

²⁰ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 313.

six Council Members, Clerk, and Treasurer are still the main officials.²¹ This group has passed ordinances and repealed ordinances, always doing what they thought was the best for the town. One of the latest laws was passed September 18, 1954, to prevent vandalism which had been quite rampant the previous months. This was not an entirely new ordinance in Camden because a "Curfew Law" had been passed as early as 1897 to prevent minors from loitering on the streets at night. The new statute was adopted to regulate the presence of persons in public streets and other places between 9:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. The ordinance declared "it unlawful for any person of any age to loiter, idle, wander, stroll, or play in, upon, or around the public streets, highways, roads, sidewalks, alleys, parks, public buildings, places of amusements and entertainment, or vacant lots within the village limits between 12:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m." The same provisions apply to any minors between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. If adults violate the law and are convicted they may be fined up to fifty dollars. If any minor is found guilty the Juvenile Court will dispose of the case according to the Juvenile Court Code of Ohio.²²

The name of the village was changed again in 1835. This time the name Newcomb was changed to that of Camden which was bestowed as a sort of memorial of Camden, South Carolina where a Revolutionary battle was fought. The name Camden has remained the official appellation ever since.²³

21 The 1955 town officials are as follows: Mayor, William Browning; Councilmen, Earl Shank, Harry Woodard, Elizabeth Gray, Walter Withrow, James Rheanis, Al Kiracofe; Clerk, William Wein; Treasurer, Nettie Ward.

22 Preble County News, op. cit., September 23, 1954.

23 History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 313.

The next few years the people of Camden were vitally and actively concerned with better means of transportation. The state had been building canals since 1825 to connect the Ohio River with Lake Erie and thereby provide a route to the eastern seaboard by way of the Erie Canal. Nevertheless, many of the interior villages, such as Camden, remained without transportation facilities. The long-sought better means of transportation in and out of Camden seemed closer in 1849 to being realized. That was the year the Eaton and Hamilton Railroad Company was organized under a Charter granted by the State Legislature to build a railroad from Eaton to Hamilton "by the most feasible route." The "most feasible route" was to follow the Seven Mile Creek through Camden.²⁴

The era of railroad building in Ohio had been launched in 1832 when the first railroad charter was granted to the Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad. The early thirties were an era of many fake starts and dreams. Between 1830-1837 sixty-nine charters were issued by the Ohio Legislature.

The vast majority of the railroads to which charters were granted never broke ground. Most of them withered for lack of capital; some lacked leadership of strong men; others were crushed by the Panic of 1837.²⁵ As the fever of railroad building swept over Ohio, each group felt that it was fighting for its life. If the railroad was built through their community it brought jobs, business, opportunities, and prosperity. David Barnett of Camden was one of those men who saw the opportunities that the railroad would bring to his community. It was his energy, push, and belief in the future good of the

²⁴ "Journal of the House of Representatives," op. cit., p. 655.

²⁵ The Story of Ohio's Railroads (The Railroads of Ohio, Ohio Sesqui-Centennial, 1803-1953), pp. 7-8.

road that was instrumental in the building and the completion of the Eaton and Hamilton Railroad through Camden.

The iron for the rails for the new railroad was imported from England. Charles Seymour, a civil engineer in the employment of the railroad company, communicated with his brother in England, Sir Digby Seymour, a member of Parliament. The iron was bought in England for about thirty dollars per ton, but when it reached its destination it was worth from sixty to sixty-five dollars for the same amount. It was carried to New Orleans as ballast by cotton vessels and from there was sent up the river to Cincinnati.²⁶ The railroad was finished and in operation in the spring of 1852. Its first trip occasioned great excitement in Camden and throngs were at the station to view the spectacle. A free ride to Hamilton was given of which many took advantage. The road was very rough without ballast and progress was so slow that some walked part of the way. The engine was about the size of a traction engine and was fired with wood.²⁷ The iron horse was an object of admiration and awe. It was also an unruly beast. It ate cordwood, and it spat sparks which fired crops, woods, and trestles.²⁸ In some parts of the state there were critics of the railroads who derailed trains and burned bridges. Camden never had anyone so destructive, but the older residents recall how one man of the village, an eccentric fellow, Benjamin Lamm, was very opposed to the trains going through Camden. He thought it was the "work of the devil." When the first train ran through town he stood by and shot at it.²⁹ His children, and perhaps while he still lived, he, too, realized that trains were not the "work of the devil," but were a real boom to Camden.

²⁶ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁷ Preble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

²⁸ The Story of Ohio's Railroads, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁹ This information came from Nell Jones, Camden, Ohio, February 2,

Dr. Burton Dunham, one of Camden's most outstanding physicians, was among the earliest directors of the Eaton and Hamilton Railroad. The first president was Cornelius Van Ausdal of Eaton. David Barnett of Camden became the fourth president and served for nine years.³⁰ The railroad in 1863 became the possession of the Cincinnati, Richmond, and Chicago Railroad Company³¹ and continued under that name until it was bought by the Pennsylvania line in 1890.³² That company has maintained a line through Camden ever since. Until the early part of the twentieth century most all travel and moving of freight in and out of Camden were done by trains but in the last twenty years automobiles, busses, and trucks have gradually replaced the work formerly done by them. Not a passenger train now stops in Camden unless it is flagged. Then it will only stop for Chicago passengers or those going equally as far.³³

Camden, by 1850, had grown to a busy little village. A local news writer who called himself Moses, in writing to the editor of the Eaton Democrat, gave an idea of the size of Camden at that time as well as the kind of business places within the village. His letter in part said:

"Our town is a dull place at present and will remain so unless a new man comes and takes hold of the 'Bellows which blown out.'

Camden contains a population of about 800³⁴, having 3 dry good stores, 3 groceries, 1 bakery, 2 taverns, 1 drug store, 3 physicians, 3 shoe shops, 3 tailoring establishments, 3 blacksmith shops, 2 saddlers, 1 carriage manufactory, one timer, one millner, and mantemaker, and five cooper shops, in which latter branch of business alone, a capital of \$10,000 is annually employed. There are near the town, 2 carding and fulling mills, five merchants, and seven saw mills all located on that well known stream called Seven Mile."³⁵

³⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

³¹ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 94.

³² Preble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

³³ E. A. Bousman is the present station agent. He came to Camden June 21, 1921 and has held the same position ever since.

³⁴ This figure is probably too high. According to the Preble County Directory of 1875, p. 170, Camden's population was listed as 650 as taken from the last General Census.

³⁵ Eaton Democrat (County Court House, Eaton, Ohio), July 16, 1850.

At the time Moses was writing Dan Payne was the town mayor. Perhaps Moses did not approve of Mayor Payne's policies.

According to Moses's letter, Camden in 1850 did not have a fire engine but it wasn't many years until they acquired one. Six years later Camden had a fire engine and with it came the problem of finding a building to house it. On April fourteenth of that year the town council met, and J. T. Francis reported the following:

To the Council of the Incorporated Village of Camden
your committee heretofore appointed to procure a shed for
fire engine bealeaf to report that duty attended to. I
procured the building of W. Oldham at 50 cpts per month
for one year from the first of March 1856.³⁶

The next year hooks and ladders were added to their fire equipment, and again came the task of finding a place to house them. John Sheller reported on May 7, 1857 at the council meeting that he had procured a place in Dan Payne's east shed.³⁷ Better fire fighting equipment was bought by the town in 1864 when a fire engine, hose, and hose carriage were purchased from the Dayton Fire Department for three hundred dollars.³⁸

In 1866 the fire fighters of Camden organized a fire company which was called "The Roarers,"

"composed of 50 stout, athletic young men who have gone into the organization not for the purpose of evading the Supervisor or to dodge working the roads, but to supply if possible, the much neglected and want of a concert of action, as was plain to be seen here on the morning of Easter Sunday, while the Cooper Shop of Mr. Brennan's was burning. We, the citizens of Camden, are most obliged to the men for taking it so calmly and thereby staying the progress of the fire. Had it been otherwise today you would have seen this town minus at least one-half a square. 'The Roarers' with Bob Conarroee as Captain and Chief Engineer; Henry L. Bohn, Nozzelman;

³⁶ "Recorder's Book for Camden Village, 1855-1862," (Council Room, Town Hall, Camden, Ohio), p. 11.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

Jones and Gillas, ax-men; Asbury Stephens, Secretary; and with the rest of the company working O.E. they will in a little while obviate all the difficulty we have mentioned."³⁹

Two years later the fire company was called the Deluge Fire Company.

On April 6, 1868 Robert Conarroe, an engineer of the company, reported that the Deluge Fire Company retained its organization with thirty men. The following report was read by Mr. Conarroe:

"I respectfully urge that the engine may be furnished with at least two hundred and fifty feet more hose. Our water box, as at present arranged, is a very cumbersome and unhandy affair to move - requiring several men to carry it, and instead of it being the first to the fire, as it should be, it is the last. I suggest the propriety of mounting it on two truck wheels in order that one or two men can run with it. You are well aware that it is impossible to carry it by hand and travel very fast with it. I think that the probable cost of mounting it and arranging it as it should be would be about twelve dollars."⁴⁰

The report was accepted and the fire company was authorized to mount the water box on two wheels. Camden was going to be a safer town in which to live, and therefore a more attractive place for people.

The Camden Fire Department was created January 14, 1895 with fifteen members. Each member was to receive one dollar per year and fifty cents for each test drill. A dollar was paid for each occasion of actual fire service and such additional sum as the council regarded as proper.⁴¹ That rate of pay was retained until 1954 when the firemen received an increase which permitted them to be paid one dollar for each test drill, two dollars for the first hour of an actual fire, and a dollar for each hour thereafter. In 1903 the number of firemen was raised to a minimum of twenty and a maximum of

³⁹ Eaton Weekly Register (Preble County Court House, Eaton, Ohio), April 12, 1866.

⁴⁰ "Recorder's Book, 1862-1872," op. cit., p. 81.

⁴¹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., January 17, 1895.

twenty-five.⁴² That number is still retained. The town is now equipped with modern fire fighting apparatus which consists of two pumpers which carry five-hundred gallons of water each for fires in the rural part of the township and a large truck which carries ladders and additional hose.

Things were looking brighter for the village of Camden in 1870 because their first street lights were installed in that year. Examples had been set by some neighboring cities. The city of Dayton in 1849 was manufacturing gas for lighting purposes from grease that had been collected from slaughter houses.⁴³ Columbus, in 1850, secured gas for lighting their city.⁴⁴ Camden's first street lights were gasoline. A motion was passed by members of the council on February 21, 1870 to have "placed at the N. E. corner of Main and Main Cross Street a street lamp, also one at N. W. corner of Main and Hendricks Street." J. W. Robinson's offer was accepted by the Council to put up the two streets lamps and furnish five gallons of gasoline and one tin can for \$33.75.⁴⁵ The town council and the townspeople must have felt quite satisfied with their two new street lamps because at the council meeting on March 21, 1870 the members passed another motion to buy six more lamps for the town. Mr. Robinson promised to furnish them for sixteen dollars each. At the same time an ordinance was passed to light the railroad crossing and the passenger platform. This was very helpful to people coming in or leaving on the evening train or the very early one.⁴⁶

The first lamplighter was Thomas E. Hallinger whose bid of thirty-six dollars for one year to light the eight lights was accepted. The street lights

⁴² Prairie County News, op. cit., August 20, 1903.
⁴³ Hancock, op. cit., p. 44.
⁴⁴ Roseboom, op. cit., p. 49.
⁴⁵ "Recorder's Book, 1862-1872," op. cit., p. 129.
⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 131.

Two-Three. That was in 1911. The house is now occupied with
modern fire lighting and modern plumbing and modern electric
hundred gallons of water each for live in the main part of the house and
a large tank which carries water and additional house.
The first house looking brighter for the village of London in 1911 because
the first street light was installed in that house. The house was built
by some neighboring owner. The city of London in 1911 was manufacturing
the first house built in London. The house was built in 1911. The house
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" The first electric light plant was in Grandmother Homsher's
barn (large brick house on W. Central Ave.) The power was
generated by a threshing machine and Jim Fisher was the engineer."
From Anna Homsher White, Aug. 15, 1956.

Probably furnished electricity to Homsher property only.

The first electric light plant was in Grandmother Homsher's
barn (large brick house on W. Central Ave.) The power was
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People found that the first electric light plant was in Grandmother Homsher's barn (large brick house on W. Central Ave.) The power was generated by a threshing machine and Jim Fisher was the engineer." From Anna Homsher White, Aug. 15, 1956.

were a source of joy to the council and to the people of Camden, but they too presented a problem. To find and to keep a man who was willing and reliable to light the lamps at a stipulated time, put them out each morning, keep them filled with gasoline, and keep the wicks trimmed was no easy task.⁴⁷

A new system of lighting houses and streets began to be used in the latter part of the 19th Century. Dayton was among the first cities to try the new system. The Brush Electric Light and Motor Company of Montgomery County was incorporated on February 25, 1882 to supply the citizens of Dayton and Montgomery County with electric lights and motive power for public and private use. Early in 1883 the name of the company was changed to the Dayton Electric Company. On February 16, 1883 the city streets of Dayton were lighted by electricity for the first time.⁴⁸

Camden citizens soon realized the great advantage of having their town lighted by electricity, but it was not until 1898 that the town had a plant. W. H. Pugh and E. S. Barheart from Oxford, Ohio came to Camden in 1897 and tried to organize a plant.⁴⁹ By 1898 a company had been formed under the name of Camden Electric Light Company. The same year, on May 9, an ordinance was passed granting the Camden Electric Light Company the privilege of erecting and maintaining poles and stringing wires in the village of Camden.⁵⁰ The following year in May a contract for erecting an electric light building was awarded to W. G. Hall. The building was brick and covered a ground space 40 x 45 feet. The plant was located north of the Camden Elevator.⁵¹ On August 12, 1899 the new electric light plant was put

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 141, 166, 169.

⁴⁸ Hancock, op. cit., p. 27.

⁴⁹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., February 25, 1897.

⁵⁰ "Record of Ordinances, 1883-1904" (Council Room, Town Hall, Camden, Ohio), p. 145.

⁵¹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., May 4, 1899.

into operation. The machinery consisted of a first class dynamo with an Atlas engine of fifty-three horse power.⁵²

The first lighting improvement for the town which was passed by the council was the wiring and equipping for electricity the new brick Town Hall which had been built four years previously.⁵³ At the first council meeting in January, 1903 W. C. Hall presented his plan to wire and equip the Town Hall for not more than \$175.00 and to furnish lights at twelve and a half cents per thousand watts.⁵⁴ When the Council met on January 26, they agreed to accept Hall's proposition for lighting the Town Hall, but they didn't have a quorum present at the meeting. Only four members could be rounded up, but five were necessary. Bad weather prevented Dr. J. S. Ferguson, a council member, from leaving his home so W. C. Hall evolved a scheme. The operator at the telephone exchange put the council body in connection with the Ferguson home. The Mayor called the Council to order. Necessary business was taken care of and the ordinance was read and passed with the doctor voting over the telephone.⁵⁵

About a year later the partnership of the Camden Electric Light Company dissolved and on September 15, 1904, the plant and all its stock was sold at public auction. E. C. Eikenberry of Camden bought it for \$3,000.00.⁵⁶ E. C. Eikenberry, H. H. Payne, and W. C. Hall formed a new company but they were all entrenched in other businesses and none had time to give the plant their personal attention. Consequently, on February 6, 1908, Charles Houston

⁵² Camden Gazette, op. cit., August 17, 1899.

⁵³ "Record of Ordinances, 1883-1904," op. cit., p. 110.

⁵⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., January 15, 1903.

⁵⁵ Preble County News, op. cit., January 29, 1903.

⁵⁶ Preble County News, op. cit., August 18, 1904; December 22, 1904.

became sole owner and proprietor of the Camden Electric Light Company.⁵⁷ It was through the efforts of the next owner that the local council discarded the gasoline street lamps and replaced them with electric ones. Mr. Houston was given a franchise in 1910 to light the streets.⁵⁸ Shortly after he bought the light plant Palmer Morris acquired an interest in it. It was during the time the plant was owned by Houston and Morris that the machinery was moved to the Barnet Mill building on the east side of Seven Mile. Palmer Morris purchased the interest from his partner on August 17, 1912 and became sole owner of the Electric Light and Milling Company.⁵⁹ As more people began to use electricity there became a demand for better service. The service had not been reliable and the community was pleased when Robert Ashe, a representative of a Richmond light and power company, purchased in December, 1915 the franchise and equipment of the Camden Electric Light Company from Palmer Morris. For many years the local business men had longed for a day as well as a night current. The local plant was abandoned, but Morris retained the building known as Barnet's Mill. Mr. Ashe was given a twenty-five year franchise in January, 1916 for erecting poles and wires upon the streets and alleys and a ten year franchise for lighting streets and regulating the price of the current used in the village. This company was known as the Liberty Light and Power Company.⁶⁰ The power and service provided by this company was very satisfactory and it served the Camden community until 1934 when its franchise was bought by the Dayton Power and Light Company.⁶¹ D. P. and L. has furnished power to Camden and most of the surrounding country ever since.

⁵⁷ Freble County News, op. cit., February 6, 1908.
⁵⁸ Freble County News, op. cit., August 22, 1912; December 23, 1915.
⁵⁹ Freble County News, op. cit., August 22, 1912.
⁶⁰ Freble County News, op. cit., December 23, 1915.
⁶¹ Freble County News, op. cit., December 20, 1934.

Another public service that came to many towns in the late nineteenth century was when the telephone became a reality. The Camden residents heard of the convenience of the telephone from their neighboring cities. As early as 1878 Dayton, Ohio had an exchange, called the Dayton Bell Telephone Exchange. It was installed over the business house of Kiefaber and Brother Fruit Store at 118 East Third Street in Dayton. Their first directory consisted of a single sheet and included ten parties.⁶²

Camden's first telephone was installed in Charles Morlatt's store, probably in the early part of 1881. This was the only telephone in town for sometime and was connected with one telephone in Eaton. It was removed from the store in the fall of 1881 and taken to J. A. Huffman's office.⁶³ The following spring, April, 1882, Mr. John Huffman and his corps of workmen finished setting the poles for the Eaton, Camden, and Hamilton Telephone Company. They immediately commenced to place the wire along the line. A Camden news reporter writing to an Eaton paper wrote that "telephone poles were on almost every road running from our town. What is now needed is a line running to Liberty, Indiana or to Oxford, taking in Fairhaven or Morning-sun."⁶⁴ For a number of years Camden must have continued with the same arrangement to have one telephone in Camden connected with only one in Eaton and the messages were delivered from the one center. Arrangements were made in 1899 by the telephone company whereby Camden could talk to leading business firms of Eaton by direct wire. The Camden Office was in Lee Danzer's Jewelry Store.⁶⁵ At about this same time another telephone was installed in Mr. Sylvester May's store⁶⁶ or the same phone was moved there. Mr. Samuel Morton who lived three

⁶² Hancock, op. cit., p. 17.

⁶³ Camden Gazette, op. cit., October 3, 1881.

⁶⁴ Eaton Weekly Register, op. cit., April 27, 1882.

⁶⁵ Camden Gazette, op. cit., March 2, 1899.

⁶⁶ Mr. May's store was in the Duckwall Building.

miles west of Camden built a line from his farm to Mr. May's store. Through this Camden phone Mr. Morton was able to talk to Eaton.⁶⁷

Mr. Morton's interest in telephone service grew. An ordinance was passed in May, 1900 by the town Council that granted Samuel Morton, L. D. Lesh, and C. F. Brooke the right to build, erect, and maintain a system of poles, lines, and an exchange for a telephone service in Camden. The company which these men and other stockholders organized was known as the Camden Telephone Company. Samuel Morton was the president. The service charge for each patron in the village was not to exceed one dollar per month for a residence nor two dollars per month for an office or business room.⁶⁸ E. A. Newman of Bryan, Ohio, who was connected with the Northern Construction Company, had charge of the building of the Camden Exchange.⁶⁹ It was finished and in operation on September 23, 1901. When the exchange opened twenty-five telephones had been installed. The second floor of the Collet Building housed the exchange until 1907 when they moved to their newly purchased building on the northeast corner of Main and Central Avenues.⁷⁰ When the exchange opened Eva Fowler was the night operator. During the summers of 1902 and 1903, before her graduation, Arlie Morton (now Mrs. John Hart) worked in the exchange.⁷¹ The Camden Telephone Company by 1903 had extended its lines in all directions. On the west side of town, lines had gone as far as seven miles.⁷² The following year a direct line had been built to College Corner. Two-hundred-fifty subscribers had phones by 1905 and there were enough orders to run it over

⁶⁷ This information came from Mrs. Arlie Hart, March 10, 1955. Mrs. Hart is the daughter of Samuel Morton.

⁶⁸ "Record of Ordinances, 1883-1904," op. cit., p. 179.

⁶⁹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., August 2, 1900.

⁷⁰ This building has continued to be the Telephone Building and it still houses the exchange.

⁷¹ This information came from Arlie Morton Hart, Camden, Ohio, on March 10, 1955.

⁷² Preble County News, op. cit., March 19, 1903; April 30, 1903.

the three hundred mark.⁷³ The Camden Telephone Company changed hands in the late 1920's and again in 1931 when the facilities were purchased by the present owner. The name of the company remained the same until 1935 when it was reorganized under the name of Ohio United Telephone Corporation. At this time the company was feeling the full effects of the nation-wide economic depression and the number of telephone subscribers had dropped from a previous high of 350 telephones to a low of 232. The company once more was reorganized in 1941 and given the name of Ohio Telephone Service Company. By this time the number of telephones in service in Camden had risen to 371. This telephone company has continued to expand and improve its facilities through the years.⁷⁴ The number of telephones subscribers on the Camden exchange now stands at 683.⁷⁵

Several Camden women have served the public long and well as local telephone operators. Among those who have been remembered for their many years at the switchboard are Jessie Withrow Helton, Anna Price, Olive Silvers, Glenna Simpson, and Orma Witherby. Jessie Helton worked thirty-two years as an operator. Anna Price remained in the same work until 1937 when she retired because of poor health after nineteen years of service. Olive Silvers went into other employment in 1946 after having been employed at the exchange for twenty-four years. When she first started working she was paid six dollars a month for answering emergency calls at night and keeping the exchange clean. Orma Witherby and Glenna Simpson in 1952 retired. Orma had worked intermittently since 1918. She recalled that her starting wage was fifteen cents an hour and only one operator was on duty at a time.

⁷³ Preble County News, op. cit., June 9, 1904; June 15, 1905.

⁷⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., April 3, 1952.

⁷⁵ This information came from the manager of the Camden Exchange, Mrs. Lucille Kenworthy on June 24, 1955.

Glenna first worked for a brief time in 1904, and shortly after that she left. She returned to the exchange in 1932 and worked almost continuously until her retirement.

Another attractive feature in the town and one that has been a great help to the citizens is the Camden Loan and Building Association which was organized in 1881. At the first organizational meeting the following officers were elected: Dr. J. S. Ferguson, President; Joseph Loop, Vice-President; J. A. Huffman, Secretary; Theodore Johnson, Treasurer; J. M. Shaefer, Solicitor. During its seventy-four years the Camden L. and B. Association has had only five presidents. Dr. Ferguson continued in the same office for thirty-one years, until 1912, the year of his death.⁷⁶ He has been succeeded by Dr. G. W. Homsher, R. T. Acton, Thomas Donohoe, and Russell E. Ulrich. Mr. Ulrich has served since 1951 when the death of Tom Donohoe occurred.⁷⁷ The writer isn't exactly certain but feels quite sure that Oliver Brown followed J. A. Huffman as secretary. Mr. Brown was serving in 1894 and continued until 1903 when he was dismissed because a discrepancy was found in the bookkeeping and the secretary was guilty of misappropriation of funds. After Mr. Brown was dismissed, E. O. Barnet was elected as secretary⁷⁸, a position he held for forty-three years.⁷⁹

During the depression when many Loan and Building Associations closed their doors and depositors lost heavily, Camden's rode the storm without anyone losing a penny. It has not only been a safe place for saving money but it has been paying a dividend from four to five per cent annually. By using a plan

⁷⁶ Preble County News, op. cit., October 3, 1912.

⁷⁷ The Board of Directors of the Camden Loan and Building Association in 1955 are: Russell Ulrich, Dwight Donohoe, Herman Gelwick, Mark Koller, Harry Neff, Kenneth White, and Sec. Robert Shade.

⁷⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., October 8, 1903.

⁷⁹ Secretaries that have succeeded E. O. Barnet have been Sam Seaton, William Eikenberry, and the present one, Robert Shade.

of putting from a quarter to five dollars weekly in savings or a stipulated amount as a payment on property many families have developed a regular plan of saving which has brought comfort and security to them.

A bank is an asset to any community and Camden has been fortunate in having had a good bank for a number of years. After three years of service the Camden Bank, a branch of Hillsboro, Ohio banking house crashed in 1893. Its failure caused financial loss to hundreds in the southern part of the country.⁸⁰ After this failure a group of well-to-do Camden citizens signed a certificate of partnership on December 27, 1894 to transact business in Ohio under the name of Commercial Bank. Henry Payne, Daniel S. Prugh, Reuben C. Prugh, Albert C. Prugh, Francis A. Pierce, Mary E. Pierce, Azel Pierce, Eby C. Eikenberry, and Ellen Iroton were the directors. H. H. Payne was the first president of the bank; R. C. Prugh, vice-president; and Azel Pierce, Cashier. The bank had a capital stock of \$50,000.00, and each stockholder had an individual responsibility of \$200,000.00.⁸¹ The Commercial Bank⁸² proved very satisfactory but it became inadequate for a growing community, so to meet the demands of the time the Commercial Bank, a private institution, in 1906 ceased to exist. It was replaced by a First National Bank of Camden, the first and only institution of its kind in Preble County outside of Eaton. The comptroller of currency on July 6, 1906 authorized its establishment with a capital stock of \$50,000.00. The new bank acquired by outright purchase the fixtures of the old bank, and took over its deposits and business. O. M. Baker, a Hamilton capitalist and head of the Pythian Order in Ohio, became the

⁸⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., August 16, 1933.

⁸¹ Camden Gazette, op. cit., January 10, 1895; January 17, 1895.

⁸² The Commercial Bank was located in the same building as the First National Bank now occupies except it used only the south half of the room.

new bank's first president; Dr. J. S. Ferguson, a wealthy retired practitioner, vice president; and Asel Merce, cashier of the old Commercial Bank, continued in like capacity.⁸³ The Camden First National Bank continued to grow and thrive, and serve not only Camden but many neighboring towns.

In 1927 the bank received a moral as well as a financial shock, but it did not prove disastrous. It was discovered that the assistant cashier had cleverly juggled figures in the books over a number of years until he had embezzled more than \$20,000.00 of other people's money. During the depression of the 1930's the bank did not even close its doors except when a Bank Moratorium was called by President Roosevelt.

During the years this bank has existed it has made one change in its name. The First National Bank of Camden was reorganized in December, 1934 under the present name of First National Bank in Camden. The capital of the bank was increased in March, 1949 from \$50,000.00 to \$75,000.00⁸⁴

A bank seems to be a necessary institution in every town, but a newspaper is almost as indispensable. Many towns in early Ohio had newspapers of their own. Camden depended mainly upon Eaton papers until 1877 when the first local newspaper was published on June second. Will R. Hartpence, the editor and proprietor, published the paper under the name Camden Herald.⁸⁵ Hartpence was very outspoken and quite fearless in attacking those issues which he thought were wrong. He was an especially strong advocate for temperance. Not only was he outspoken against issues but against people whom he thought needed reprimanding. The following item is an example of one of the editor's comments that caused his columns to be called spicy:

⁸³ Preble County News, op. cit., June 14, 1906; July 19, 1906.

⁸⁴ This information came from the assistant cashier, Herschel Brown on July 16, 1954. Other officers of the bank are: Howard Pattison, cashier; Dr. B. L. Otto, president; and R. E. Ulrich, vice-president.

⁸⁵ Camden Herald, Preble County News Office, Camden, Ohio, June 2, 1877.

"Dick Francis traded a mare to Ben Williams the other day for a spring wagon, valued at \$10.00, thinking at the time that he had soaked Ben. Ben didn't squeal, though, but turned around and sold the mare for \$50.65; and now he thinks the joke is on Dick."⁸⁶

Mr. Hartpence gained many friends during his short stay of less than three years in Canyon, but he also gained enemies with his plain spoken words. His "freedom of the press" was undoubtedly the reason for the brief publication of his paper. In his final issue he stated that only a few of the business men of Canyon had felt it necessary to support his paper. He praised Jacob Collet for the substantial and continuous support he had given The Herald and said if there had been ten such "Jacobs" in Canyon he could have had a weekly paper second to none.⁸⁷

Soon after the suspended publication of The Herald two Canyon men, E. M. and L. E. Kennedy, started the Canyon Gazette. The first issue appeared January 15, 1886. L. E. Kennedy retired from the firm on July 10 of the same year. E. M. Kennedy continued in the business until 1888 when he sold to C. H. Kane. In 1889 William E. Farnshell and son, Marvin, became owners and publishers. Both men were prominent Republican politicians. The paper continued to be called the Canyon Gazette until 1902 when it ceased publication. W. E. McChristie in April, 1902 established the Preble County News which is still being published.⁸⁸ Again in 1909 the paper changed owners. This time Earl H. Irvin became publisher with Roy Simpson as manager and editor.⁸⁹ Mr. Simpson secured entire control of the Preble County News

⁸⁶ Canyon Herald, op. cit., June 21, 1877.

⁸⁷ Canyon Herald, op. cit., November 27, 1879. Mr. Hartpence moved his plant to Milton, Indiana. He died in 1925 in Los Angeles, California at the age of 90. His wife had died in Canyon and was buried in Fairmount Cemetery, Canyon.

⁸⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., April 3, 1952.

⁸⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., May 13, 1909.

on May 1, 1914 by purchasing it from Irvin,⁹⁰ and this he held until 1950, the time of his death. Since that time the paper has been published by the Ray Simpson family; Glenna, his wife; Harry, his son; and Louise, his daughter. All the papers from the Camden Herald to and including the Preble County News have been Republican but none of the publishers or editors have been so frank and outspoken as Camden's first publisher, Will Hartpence.

Camden's new Opera House and City Hall was completed in 1889 at a cost of fifteen thousand dollars. The opening of the new building with an opera on the night of May 11, 1889 was a notable social event in Camden.

The Olio Club⁹¹ presented the opening attraction entitled "My Partner." The building was the pride of Camden as the following article which appeared on the programs issued sixty-six years ago signifies:

"The citizens of Camden are much elated over the vast improvements recently made in their little city, but nothing has been named by them with greater eclat than the new Grand Opera House and City Hall.

To say it is complete in every detail, is placing it mild. In fact, there is not a theatre in the State in a town the size of Camden that can compare with it. It is centrally located, a beautiful brick structure with fire-stone finish, mansard roof and a model of modern architecture.

The seating capacity, including auditorium and gallery, is over 600. The ceiling is elaborately frescoed, the work of able painters, and the scenery of the best and finest finish of any little opera house anywhere....

The stage is complete—that expresses it all—and has a depth of thirty-one feet. The green room and dressing rooms are all under the stage, and commodiously lighted with gas. Hot and cold water is furnished all rooms, which like the whole building are heated by the hot air system."⁹²

Besides housing the fire department and being a meeting place for the town Council, the City Hall was used as a center for all activities such as

⁹⁰ Ibid., May 7, 1914.

⁹¹ The Olio Club was a local dramatic club.

⁹² Preble County News, op. cit., March 9, 1933.

home talent entertainments, road shows, dancers, and basketball games. As home talent shows and dramatic troupers became less popular the City Hall became less and less used as a center for such meetings. In the late twenties, the second floor of the building was condemned by the State Fire Marshall as a place for public gatherings until an outside fire escape was added. Since the village had very little money available for such improvements and since there was not much demand for the use of the hall as a public gathering place, until 1933 the building remained closed. The previous year several young men who were without work and with very little money organized a social club, the Camden Progressive Club, to have some place to spend their time. After a few meetings they began to plan something for the betterment of the town. With this in mind they met with the Council and made plans to remodel the City Hall to make it useable for basketball games and other recreation.⁹³ The club members donated their labor, many local citizens gave a little money, and the village appropriated the funds that were available. With this cooperation the old stage was torn out which increased the floor space, a new floor was laid, the interior was redecorated, a new furnace was installed, and the fire escape was built to meet the specifications of the Fire Marshall. Again the Town Hall was the pride of Camden and especially proud were the boys of the Progressive Club.⁹⁴

To celebrate the re-opening of the hall the Club sponsored a dance. Michael Bauer and his orchestra and entertainers furnished the music. The popular band attracted a large crowd. Over four hundred people attended the dance. One hundred-seventy couples were on the dancing floor and the others

⁹³ This information came from Harry Neff, Camden, Ohio, who was one of the organizers of the Progressive Club.

⁹⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., March 2, 1933.

were spectators. This was the largest and most outstanding social affair that Camden had enjoyed for several years.⁹⁵

After the City Hall was reopened a local minister, Rev. J. L. Jones, paid the following tribute to the Progressive Club:

"Among the chaos of depression, when every avenue of life is at the lowest ebb, when all things seem at a standstill, life still can be buoyant and egressive. The accomplishments in life, even in such times as these, are still possible though only when creative young manhood decides to accomplish its purpose. Such is the reason for the fine piece of work that the Progressive Men of Camden have done in remodelling the Town Hall."⁹⁶

One convenience that the community enjoyed in Camden at an earlier time was the Camden Sanitarium, which no longer exists. The first such institution was opened in 1912 in the Arlington Hotel on South Main Street.⁹⁷ This sanitarium was used for the treatment of rheumatism. The physicians in charge were Dr. W. E. Pryor and Dr. D. W. McQueen who were assisted by Miss Sarah Pottenger. The sanitarium gained the attention of many in the middle West because of its success in numerous cases. They used the water obtained from the old gas wells which contained special medicinal value. The following information appeared in a pamphlet which circulated to advertise the local health spot:

"Our Mineral Water

Is heavily charged with the following salts: Sodiums, Magnesiums, potassiums, iron and sulphur, as well as the following gases: Hydrogen, sulphide, and carbon dioxide.

Our Treatment

There is no stated course of treatment. We try to bear in mind that each case is an individual into itself and treated accordingly.

⁹⁵ Ibid., March 30, 1933.

⁹⁶ Ibid., March 23, 1933.

⁹⁷ The Arlington Hotel is now called Bon Haven. It was built in 1878 by Joseph Fornshell. Proble County News, op. cit., August 11, 1904.

Rates

Rates are from \$14.00 per week up, which includes board, room, and treatment. If nurses are required the patient should bring one, and a rate of \$1.50 per day will be charged them and in all cases they will occupy the room with the patient.

Friends accompanying the patients will be charged the same rates as the nurse and under the same conditions. All bills are due at the end of each week and upon leaving.

We do not publish testimonials, but upon request can furnish positive proof from people who have taken our treatment, that it is all that we claim for it."⁹⁸

The sanitarium had to be moved to another location when Mrs. Frank Heater purchased the Arlington Hotel in 1913. Miss Sarah Pottenger and Dr. D. T. McQueen purchased the Mrs. Sallie Pottenger property on North Main Street in May of the same year.⁹⁹ A great program of remodeling made the house into a first class hospital equipped with steam heat, a commodious lobby, sun parlor, up-to-date bathroom, and modern operating room. The new sanitarium was made into a general hospital except in cases of contagious diseases. Dr. McQueen was in charge but any doctor was welcome to use the institution.¹⁰⁰ Miss Pottenger had to close the sanitarium in 1919 because her age and her health would not permit her to continue the work.

Just two years later Camden was fortunate to have another sanitarium that opened. Mrs. Opal Fudge (now Mrs. Ed Travis) was ready on May 1, 1921 to receive patients in her small hospital.¹⁰¹ Hers was used primarily by Dr. McQueen for surgical cases and their recovery. The second floor of the house was used for the patients. There were three rooms and an operating room. Mrs. Fudge continued to operate her sanitarium until February 7, 1926 at which time she closed it because Dr. McQueen became so afflicted with

⁹⁸ The Camden Sanitarium, Camden, Ohio, (no date and no publisher), (Nell Jones, Camden, Ohio).

⁹⁹ This property was located just south of the Presbyterian Church.

¹⁰⁰ Freble County News, op. cit., May 22, 1913; September 11, 1913.

¹⁰¹ Mrs. Fudge's hospital was just north of the Main Funeral Home on North Main Street. She bought the property on July 24, 1920 and converted it into a small hospital.

muscular dystrophy that he was no longer able to operate.¹⁰²

The greatest improvements to the village were made during the depression of the 1930's through P. W. A., Public Works Administration, which had been created in 1933 by the national government to stimulate business recovery. Preble County was awarded relief work projects in 1934 amounting to \$60,000.00.¹⁰³ Through these P. W. A. projects Camden constructed a municipal water works system, installed a sanitary sewerage system, and put in concrete curbs and gutters on Central Avenue, Mount Auburn, and on the hills within the corporation on Sugar Valley Road and the Liberty and Camden Pike.¹⁰⁴

The federal loan and grant to finance Camden's waterworks was signed by Franklin Roosevelt. The government issued an outright grant to the village corporation in a sum of \$22,500.00 and extended a revenue mortgage bond issue against the system for \$29,500.00. When the town received the grant it was stipulated that only local labor should be employed except the engineers and necessary skilled labor.¹⁰⁵ Before the town secured the federal grant a Board of Public Affairs composed of Tom Donohoe, Dr. T. E. Jackson, and M. V. Bryson¹⁰⁶ was appointed by Mayor Oscar Taylor. It was under their direction and the engineer, W. S. Herr of Portsmouth, Ohio, that the water system was installed.¹⁰⁷

At the same time the water system was under construction, Peter Cardone, Preble County relief director, cooperated with Camden in securing federal aid for the installation of a sanitary sewerage system. This improvement was also constructed under F. E. R. A., Federal Emergency Relief Act.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² This information came from Opal Fudge Travis, Camden, Ohio, on March 12, 1955.

¹⁰³ Preble County News, op. cit., October 25, 1934.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., November 22, 1934; January 31, 1935.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., August 23, 1934.

¹⁰⁶ Donohoe was the owner of the lumber yard; Jackson was a Veterinarian; Bryson was the druggist.

¹⁰⁷ Preble County News, op. cit., September 20, 1934.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.,

This act in 1933 had provided funds upon which Ohio drew heavily to meet the relief burden by facilitating work relief as distinct from the "dole" which destroyed the self respect of the citizen.¹⁰⁹ In Camden's project, the corporation paid for the materials from mortgage revenue bonds, which was only approximately thirty per cent of the total construction cost. The balance came as a federal relief grant.¹¹⁰

After the water and sewerage systems were installed the depression made it impossible for many families to enjoy the conveniences. But as prosperity returned more and more people modernized their homes with plumbing. Now, twenty years later, the majority of the houses in town are connected with the municipal water and sewerage systems. As a consequence insurance rates have decreased, the town is a safer place to live, it's a more healthful town to be in, and living in Camden is certainly easier and more pleasant.

As one approaches the village the first thing that attracts the eye is the two-hundred forty foot tower that looms above everything else. At night it's possible to see its lights from certain points at a distance of at least six miles in spite of the fact that Camden nestles in a valley. This is Orville Wood's tower for his amateur radio station. It's the highest one in the county, and the highest one for an amateur radio station in the state. This Elmer-Lex tower is equipped with an electronic eye to control the clearance lights. The steel structure was erected in 1949 at a cost of \$1,275.00 for installation alone. Despite the height of the tower, it stands solidly because it has been mounted on a concrete base eleven feet deep. On top of

109 Roseboom and Weisenburger, op. cit., p. 366.

110 Preble County News, op. cit., September 20, 1934.

this lofty tower is an anemometer which is an instrument for measuring the velocity of the wind. The wind's speed is then registered in the Wood's home near-by. No other such instrument is in operation in Probble County.

Mr. Woods is the only ham operator in Camden and among the few in the entire county. He has had his license since 1941. W8VYE is his call number which is also used as his car license number. Ham operators are permitted this privilege in case an emergency arises, and they need to be identified immediately and quickly. Lately Orville has been so busy with his bulk oil plant that he has had very little time to devote to this hobby but on several occasions since he started operating he has contacted Germany and one time he talked with Tokyo. He is an amateur as a radio operator, but he had had more than thirty years of experience with radio. He started selling them when he was only fifteen, before he graduated from high school. Among the first radios he sold was a Vestinghouse to the Eikenberry Brothers Seed Store so they could hear the Chicago market quotations each morning. Radios at that time weren't strong enough to get such a distance as Chicago. Orville built up the amplifier to make it possible to get the station clearly.¹¹¹

Occasionally motorists are attracted to Camden not only by the red lights on top of the tower but by an arc of a huge searchlight. This, too, belongs to Orville Woods. He bought three sixty-inch reflectors in 1950, each with eight hundred million candle power to rent out for particular occasions when attention is being called to some place or event such as an opening of a new business, a street fair, or a town celebration. The large lights have not only been used locally but have been taken to Indianapolis, Indiana many times and have gone as far as Huntington, West Virginia.¹¹²

¹¹¹ This information came from Orville Wood, Camden, Ohio, during an interview March 18, 1955.

¹¹² Ibid.

The most recent project for the improvement of the village is the building of a municipal park for additional recreational facilities. This is not the first time such a plan has been considered but the park is closer to a reality than ever before. This park, which is being laid out in the north end of town on the lots where the municipal pumping station is located, is referred to as the Camden Waterworks Park although it has not been officially named. Since Mayor William Browning was the first to suggest the idea perhaps it will become known as the "Browning Park." William Barnet, another very interested party in the project, has already built a wading pool for children. Various organizations and individuals are cooperating by giving money or their time. Several trees have been planted. The children of Camden Elementary School planted two of them, a sweet gum and a maple.¹¹³ Several organizations have promised to help build picnic tables and outdoor furnaces.

If James Moore, James Black, and Isaac Sutton could return to Camden to see the village one hundred thirty-seven years after it had been laid out, at first glance they might think there had been little progress. The town with only 1200 population has not really grown tremendously in number, but on closer scrutiny the founders could see that the townspeople have practically all the advantages and conveniences of their neighbors in larger towns and cities, and still they enjoy the peace, quietness, and friendliness of a small town.

¹¹³ The children of the first six grades planted their trees on Arbor Day, April 29, 1955. In observance of the day, the children participated in an exercise which consisted of appropriate singing and speaking in addition to the planting of the trees.