

CHAPTER IV

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF CAMDEN, 1803-1955

The Village (Dover, Newcomb, then Camden) has always catered to the economic needs and necessities of a rural community. In the early years of the town many of the industries were dependent upon the agricultural products of the soil. Later, when the vast supply of gravel near the town was recognized, several new industries sprang up which proved to be the backbone of Camden's industrial life.

Preble County, in which Camden was settled, has always been a rural area. In 1870 Preble had 22,629 people with only one town whose population was more than a thousand. At that time, Eaton, the county seat and the largest town, had 1,754 people. Camden was next in size with 650.¹ Life in the villages wasn't too different from life in the country. Practically every family in the town kept livestock such as pigs or cows. Miss Ella McCord recalls when she was a youngster in Camden about 1870, that her task each evening was to get their cow which roamed all day along the Seven Mile Creek bank with cows belonging to other families, and bring her home to be milked. She remembered that their cow never wandered on to the main street; the animal was always "well-behaved" and stayed near the grazing land along the creek.²

¹ E. F. Morgan, Director of Preble County, Ohio for 1875 (Eaton, Ohio: Eaton Weekly Register Power Press Print, 1875), pp. 110-112.

² This information came from a letter written March 10, 1954 by Ella McCord, age 91, now living in Edgewater, Maryland.

Swine, too, ran loose. The Council of the village of Camden passed an ordinance on June 8, 1874 which stated that "all hogs in the Corporation be allowed to run at large but not without being rung."³

Farmers around Camden, like other pioneers, had few implements for field labor, and those they had were mostly clumsy and primitive. "As a rule, they were limited to a few hoes, a plow, a harrow, a scythe, a sickle, a rake or two, and a flail."⁴ If the early pioneer had a plow it usually was a wooden one pulled by oxen. Though the pioneer in many instances lacked a plow, he always had a harrow. This was often made from the crotch of a tree. The harrow was usually more useful to him than a plow, especially on land filled with roots and stumps.⁵ The haying and harvesting were done without the assistance of horse drawn implements. Hay, clover, and grains were cut with a sickle. After grain growing became an established part of Ohio farming, the cradle took the place of the sickle. The cradle was introduced as early as 1830 or perhaps earlier. An acre had been the daily coverage for a man with a sickle but with the cradle he could cut three or four acres of grain.⁶ The threshing was done with a flail by beating the grain on a hard packed clay floor of the barn. Sometimes the farmer did not use the flail but oxen or horses tramped it out. After threshing, the grain was separated from the chaff by throwing it before the wind or before a home-made fan.⁷

³ "Recorder's Book, 1872-1880", Council Room, Camden, Ohio, p. 75.

⁴ Robert Leslie Jones, "The Introduction of Farm Machinery into Ohio Prior to 1865", The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, Vol. LVIII (Columbus, Ohio: January, 1949), p. 1.

⁵ Henry Howe, Historical Collections of Ohio, 2 Vols. (Columbus: Henry Howe and Son, 1889), I, 104.

⁶ Francis P. Weisenburger, The Passing of the Frontier, 1825-1850, Carl Wittke (ed.), The History of the State of Ohio, 6 Vols. (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1941), III, 63.

⁷ Howe, op. cit., I, 104.

Around Camden the leading crop of the pioneer was corn. The climate and soil were well suited to this crop, besides it could be planted and gathered before the land was well cleared. It could be cultivated with only a hoe. Many an early crop was tended without any plow. "Squaw" was the common type. Camden's county, Preble, has always been among the top corn producing counties in the state. According to the statistics of 1850-59 only fourteen counties raised more than Preble. The census of 1860-69 revealed that just fifteen counties produced more, and in 1870-79 Preble still ranked sixteenth in the state.⁸

Wheat was generally grown around Camden throughout the Pioneer Period, but it was not so popular as corn because it was not so well adapted to the new land. Wheat was not usually grown until several crops of corn, rye, or buckwheat had been taken from the fields. The grain was then broadcast among the stumps and harrowed in. Wheat was a rather uncertain crop. Preble County gradually increased its acreage of wheat until that grain was grown almost as widely as corn. Only sixteen counties in the state raised more bushels of wheat than Preble from 1850-59. Within the next ten years only seven counties produced more, but from 1870-79 Preble only ranked twenty-third.⁹

The early settlers of Ohio grew flax almost as generally as corn. Every farm had its patch, a quarter acre or so, which was sown in March, harvested in June, and then planted in potatoes.¹⁰ It was produced first entirely for use in the home manufacture of clothing and household linens.

⁸ W. A. Lloyd, J. I. Falconer, and C. E. Thorne, The Agriculture of Ohio, Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin, No. 326 (Wooster, Ohio: The Experiment Station Press, 1918), pp. 38-39; 249-427.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Robert Leslie Jones, "Special Crops in Ohio Before 1850", The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, Vol. LIV (Columbus, Ohio: 1945), p. 130.

Mixed with wool it became "linsey-woolsey". Around Camden flax was an important crop grown by the early settlers, especially as a source for clothing. Before the pioneers could break up the land and grow flax for linen, nettles were hunted in the woods to be made into a material for underclothing. When Mr. George Hendricks¹¹ was a boy he often wore a nettle undershirt. This so irritated his back that he frequently had to lean against trees and rub his back to allay the irritation.¹² Coarse linens were replaced by cheap cotton by 1830 so that the cultivation of flax declined greatly. The only growers of flax for fiber in 1850 were "old matrons" who used it for making thread or towels, and a few farmers who sold it to paper mills for six or eight cents per pound. Other farmers, however, grew flax with the intention of selling the seed rather than the fiber. Flaxseed in Ohio was in fair demand before 1830 for shipping abroad, mainly to Ireland. Flaxseed production grew in importance after 1830, and especially in the late forties. The manufacture of linseed oil at Cincinnati was so well established by 1850 that there was a surplus to export. Dayton, also, crushed about 200,000 bushels of seed annually. In the late 1840's Preble County was the recognized center of the Ohio flaxseed industry. It produced between 15,000 and 20,000 bushels in 1845 and about 80,000 six years later.¹³

Flax, in 1857, was still a prominent staple in the county. In good seasons an acre produced ten bushels of seed. Farmers could depend upon it as a sure crop unless a drouth injured it. The flax plant was subject to no disease, it was grown with little labor and the seed alone was remunerative.¹⁴

¹¹ George Hendricks was born in the site of Camden in 1805. He was the first male child born in Preble County.

¹² Henry Howe, Historical Collections of Ohio, 2 Vols. (Cincinnati, Ohio: C. J. Krebbel and Co., 1902), II, 451.

¹³ Jones, "Special Crops in Ohio Before 1850," op. cit., pp. 130-131.

¹⁴ Eaton Weekly Register, op. cit., April 12, 1857.

Flax culture steadily decreased after the late 1850's but during the Civil War farmers renewed their interest in it. They thought it would make a cheap substitute for cotton which had been furnished by southern states. In 1870 the acreage reached sizable proportions, but after that year interest waned and flax was later replaced by other crops.¹⁵

Sorghum once held a very important place among the farm products around Camden. Molasses was a good substitute for sugar which could be bought at the stores if purchasing power were available. If molasses could be produced at home, the farmer's limited cash could be used to get articles which were impossible to grow or make. Preble ranked foremost in the state in 1862 in the culture of sorghum. In that year the county had made not less than 100,000 gallons of fine molasses. One man, John Poog, from Somers Township produced 1,411 gallons. A man named Swisher from Washington Township was the largest producer in the county with 2,400 gallons.¹⁶

Four hundred forty-five acres of sorghum were planted in Preble County in 1863.¹⁷ Evidently in that year many people were interested in the growth of sorghum. Applegate and Company of Cincinnati, Ohio published a book called Sorgo which sold for seventy-five cents. When the book was ready for sale an item appeared in a Preble County paper telling the people the publication they had been promised was now on the market. The book explained the mode of culture, time and manner of harvesting, mode of manufacturing, and the economical use which could be made of the cane after it had been pressed.¹⁸

To manage a farm successfully required an immense amount of labor. The farmer found it cheaper to provide for a large family than to hire laborers.

¹⁵ Philip D. Jordan, Ohio Comes of Age, 1873-1900, Carl Wittke, (ed.) The History of the State of Ohio, 6 Vols. (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1943), V. 75-76.

¹⁶ Eaton Weekly Register, op. cit., January 1, 1863.

¹⁷ Ibid., July 16, 1863.

¹⁸ Ibid., April 23, 1863.

A child was considered quite an asset and not a liability to the family. The farmer with six or eight strong, healthy sons and daughters possessed a distinct advantage over his childless neighbor. The children worked for their parents without compensation until they married, which was usually early.¹⁹ The family records of the early settlers around Camden prove that they must have held the same opinion that a large family was a source of economic prosperity. For one family to have several children was very common. John Pottenger had ten children; Robert Pottenger, seven; Samuel Fowlers, ten; John Bennetts, ten; James Barnets, 8; David Barnets, eleven; Philip Lewellens, thirteen,²⁰ and many, many more families of the same size could be named.

Oxen were the principal source of power on the farm of the early settlers. There seemed to be many advantages in using these animals. The initial cost was less than for horses, and, in general, steers were easily trained. The yoke with which they were worked could be made by any handy farmer and was therefore less expensive than the harness necessary for horses. If any accident befell the ox and he became unfit for work this did not prevent his being fattened and turned into beef. After the introduction of farm machinery, horses, which were faster moving than oxen, were found more desirable for team work on both the road and the farm.²¹

When the first settlers arrived in the territory around Camden, they found roaming through the woods a dark brindle colored ox with large and stately horns and only one eye. It was supposed he had strayed from Wayne's army on his march into the Indian country. Some settlers close to the village of Eaton caught and used the ox as common property among them. He was quite

19 Lloyd and others, op. cit., p. 82.

20 History of Preble County, Ohio, op. cit., pp. 299-303.

21 Howe, op. cit., I, 103.

valuable in hauling logs and in carrying grain to the mills. When he died the settlers largely turned out to help give him a burial suitable for a faithful ox.²²

Oxen were used as late as 1875 around Camden. Bernard Potterf²³ recalls when he was a boy that his father used oxen on their farm which lay about three miles north of Camden. Near the road, on their land, was a pond of water which always attracted the team when they were returning home. As soon as the animals were within sight or smelling distance of the water they started on a run and went straight to the pond. Mrs. Elizabeth Ecker recalls the familiar sight of yokes of oxen which came into Camden regularly when she was a child. During the winter months it was very common to see oxen hitched to sleds which were loaded with wood for the villagers.²⁴

Streams furnished another source of power to early Ohioans. The streams were used to turn the wheels of mills which changed the products of the soil into usable goods. Milling became a very significant industry in the early history of the state. One of the early mechanical industries was carding mills. Before such mills came into use pioneer women spent countless hours combing and cleaning baskets of wool before it could be spun upon the wool-wheel. Carding machines were introduced to Ohio at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1806 Cincinnati paper carried an advertisement of a carding mill which had been placed on Whitewater Creek.²⁵

As early as 1810 or 1812 John Stubbs, Sr. had a carding machine in Camden. It was located along the Seven Mile Creek south of Camden in connection

²² Howe, op. cit., II, 451.

²³ Bernard Potterf, now 81 years old, lives in Eaton, Ohio but was raised on a farm just north of Camden, Ohio. This information was received from Bernard Potterf, Eaton, Ohio, on Saturday, January 23, 1954.

²⁴ This information was received from Mrs. Elizabeth Ecker of Park Ave., Hamilton, Ohio. Elizabeth Ecker was born Elizabeth Acton on Main Street, Camden, Ohio in 1865. She lived in Camden until she was married.

²⁵ Utter, op. cit., p. 248. Utter's source was Liberty Hall, June 16, 1806.

with his saw mill. Until 1832 he did a great deal of work there. At a later date carding was carried on with horse power at Camden by Samuel Cornwell. Still later, from 1840 to 1850, the same business was conducted on Main Street of Camden by John and Amos Mills. From 1854-1860, Mr. Samuel Hibbard had such an establishment. As early as 1847, Mr. Hibbard also had a woolen factory in the village.²⁶

Gristmills were more widely distributed than any other type of pioneer manufacturing. These mills meant better food and more money to the community where they were built. They were very welcome and important to every neighborhood because improvised methods of grinding wheat and corn were both laborious and unsatisfactory.²⁷ If the mills were many miles distant, it became a stupendous task to replenish the meal and flour barrels because of poor roads and slow transportation.

As soon as settlers came to the Camden vicinity there was a need for mills to be erected. Much of the corn which was raised on the farms was consumed at home in the form of cornbread, mush, and hominy. Pounding corn into meal, if only for home use, was most unsatisfactory so a trip of many miles would be made to take corn to a mill. Wheat culture likewise encouraged the building of mills around Camden. Wheat flour was not only important to the housewife to make fine pies, cakes, and cookies, but it was a dependable source of income to the family. Surplus wheat which could not be consumed at home could be sold as flour. Enterprising men in the Camden area made use of the opportunities which awaited them. Farmers needed their grain ground; Seven Mile Creek had the power to turn the wheels. All that was left to do was to harness the stream to the mill.

²⁶ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 310.

²⁷ Utter, op. cit., p. 240.

The first mill which was within convenient distance of the early settlers around Camden was a "corn cracker" in Gasper Township about three miles north of town where the Seven Mile Creek Road now crosses over the stream. The establishment was owned by Gasper Potterf and was built before 1806, probably two years earlier. The first one in Somers Township was a grist-mill built by William Irwin in 1808 about a mile north of Camden on the east side of Seven Mile. This was in operation until 1825 when Matthew McClung erected a second one on the same site. David Barnett bought and finished the mill in 1835. After running the mill for a number of years he abandoned it and in 1850 constructed a three story brick building very close to the one started by McClung. It was provided with five runs of the best buhrs. This mill served the community until about 1880. The ruins of the building have been used the last several years as a shelter for tools.²⁸

Another well known mill was built by Major Robinson and his son, James, on the east side of Seven Mile at the edge of Camden. It was small, having but one run of stones. The mill passed into the hands of James Barnett and Sons in 1831, and they rebuilt it and put in three sets of buhr stones. This mill changed hands a number of times until in 1873 it was bought at an assignee's sale by John and Henry Brubaker. Thereafter it was known as the Brubaker Mill.²⁹

In 1816 a grist and saw mill was built northeast of Camden, on Paint Creek, by John Stubbs. Simultaneously with the above, a saw mill was built south of town upon the Seven Mile by John Stubbs, uncle of the man just mentioned. In 1834 he erected a good grist mill which was also just south of

²⁸ History of Preble County, Ohio, op. cit., pp. 309-310.

²⁹ R. E. Lowry, History of Preble County, Ohio (Indianapolis, Indiana: B. F. Bowen and Company, Inc., 1915), p. 294.

Camden. This mill had three runs of stones. Later it passed into the hands of James Barnett and William Whitesides who operated it on a very extensive scale as Barnett and Whitesides. The building was destroyed by fire in 1862, but it was replaced in 1866 by a larger and costlier one which in December, 1875 also burned. The new mill which was constructed in 1866 was a three story building, slate roofed, and cost about forty-five thousand dollars. From 1850 to 1871 the firm did a very fine business. During the Civil War and a few years afterwards it manufactured and shipped large quantities of flour. It was regarded as one of the strongest and biggest firms engaged in that business in southwestern Ohio. The continued shrinking of prices that followed the Civil War proved too great for them. "The depression that preceded the 1873 panic pulled the firm down and it failed for a large amount and, like the fall of a mighty oak, swept down a number of the smaller timber with it."³⁰

Another industry of great importance to the entire state as well as to Camden was the manufacture of barrels, tubs, and hogheads. Such shops were established close to flour mills, pork packing houses, and distilleries. Every year innumerable barrels were filled with flour, pork, and whiskey and sent to various parts of the world. Often times coopers were forced to work overtime to supply the demand.³¹ One of the early coopers in Camden was John Brennan who came from Baltimore in 1830.³² His cooper shop was in the back yard of his home, located on the east side of Main Street.³³ Camden had five

³⁰ Ibid., p. 294.

³¹ Utter, op. cit., p. 238.

³² History of Preble County, Ohio, op. cit., p. 308.

³³ This information was furnished by Miss Ella McCord, the granddaughter of John Brennan. Miss McCord, age 91, now resides in Edgewater, Maryland.

cooper shops in 1850 which annually employed a capital of \$10,000.00.³⁴ No doubt Mr. Brennan was one of the coopers of Camden at that time because in 1881 he was still living in the village. Another early cooper shop was located on the southwest corner of Hendricks and Liberty Streets. A Mr. Armstrong was one of the coopers who worked there.³⁵ In 1859 Joseph B. Acton, another cooper, came to Camden from Eaton.³⁶ He was to be superintendent over the shops of Barnett and Whitesides who were at that time doing a very flourishing business. They needed many barrels in which to ship their flour. These men owned two cooper shops³⁷ which could easily accommodate ten coopers. Besides, this same firm owned a stave factory. Just west of their shops were two ponds where hoops were soaked after the hoop poles had been split. Mr. Acton had charge of the Barnett and Whitesides' shops until the business failed. About 1875 Mr. Acton built his own small cooper shop on the east side of the Seven Mile very close to the big Barnett and Whitesides Mill.³⁸ Richard Acton, the son of Joseph B., worked in his father's shop when he was only eleven until he was about sixteen. Later he gave up the cooper's trade and followed a musical career.³⁹ Robert Williams, Henry Williams, James Brennan, and _____ Heller were other coopers who at one time worked at their trade in Camden.

Much of the farmer's extra wheat was marketed as flour, but his greatest problem was how to profitably dispose of his surplus corn. Generally the bulk of the corn which wasn't consumed at home was sold in the form of beef,

³⁴ Eaton Democrat, op. cit., July 16, 1850.

³⁵ This information came from Asa Wright, Camden, Ohio. Asa Wright is the grandson of Mr. Armstrong.

³⁶ A Biographical History of Preble County, Ohio, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1900), p. 515.

³⁷ The two cooper shops owned by Barnett and Whitesides were south of Camden very close to the house now owned by Robert Benson along Route 127.

³⁸ This information came from an interview March 30, 1954 with Mrs. Elizabeth Ecker, Park Avenue, Hamilton. Mrs. Ecker was the daughter of Joseph Acton.

³⁹ A Biographical History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 515.

pork, or whiskey.⁴⁰ Many cows were fattened on Ohio corn, then herded to eastern cities to be slaughtered. By 1825, 15,000 head of cattle from Ohio were driven over the mountains annually. This procedure continued until about 1850 when it was ended by the coming of the railroads.⁴¹ Fast trains, by 1851, were running between Cleveland and Cincinnati⁴² thus making the latter city a fine market where farmers around Camden could sell their stock. Cattle were driven to Cincinnati or taken down by wagons until 1852 when the Eaton and Hamilton Railroad was built. Soon after that a stock yard was erected near the Camden depot. Animals were either driven or hauled in wagons from the surrounding country to the yards, then they were shipped by rail to Cincinnati. Sometimes wagons would be lined up for two blocks, from Depot Street to Main, waiting their turn to unload.⁴³ Camden was well provided in 1877 with switches and pens for loading the \$250,000.00 worth of stock it shipped annually. It was a shipping center for the surrounding country which included the villages of Winchester, West Elkton, Morning Sun, and Fair Haven.⁴⁴

Many bushels of corn from the Camden area went to market in the shape of hogs. From Ohio were herded hogs by the hundred thousands. They were driven as far as New York and Baltimore. The driving of hogs declined with the improvement of the breed. Razorbacks, which were long legged and thin bodied, could endure long distance walking better than the improved breeds which were heavier.⁴⁵ Cincinnati became an excellent market for the Camden community since as early as 1833 it was an important meat packing center.

⁴⁰ Utter, op. cit., p. 152.

⁴¹ Weisenburger, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

⁴² Ibid., p. 115.

⁴³ Interview with Charles Fisher, Main Street, Camden, Ohio on February 28, 1954.

⁴⁴ Camden Herald, op. cit., September 7, 1877.

⁴⁵ Utter, op. cit., p. 156.

Cincinnati, in 1844, did about forty-three per cent of all the pork packing in Ohio and in 1851 about eighty per cent.⁴⁶ Preble County needed a close market because it was a great producer of hogs.

Benjamin Myers, a wide awake and enterprising business man of Camden, saw a financial opportunity in opening a pork packing plant in the village. Hogs could easily be driven into town to be slaughtered, and a railroad was there to ship out the barrels of meat. In 1850 Mr. Myers went into the pork packing business.⁴⁷ His packing house was located on South Main Street in a building which was later used as a grain elevator. During the early years of the Civil War, Mr. Myers did a very thriving business by selling pork to the South. In the winter of 1860, 17,000 hogs were packed in Camden.⁴⁸ Within the next three years his business must have increased because it is recorded he made a fortune but lost it all in 1863.⁴⁹ The extent of Camden's meat packing industry was recognized throughout the county. An article appeared in an Eaton paper in 1862 stating that pork cutting was in full blast in Camden, and that that town was a good hog market.⁵⁰ Mr. Myers shipped his barrels of pork to Cincinnati by train, and then sent them by boat down the Ohio River to the South. When Vicksburg fell in 1863 the Ohio River was thereafter controlled by the North. Supplies could no longer reach the South by the river. It was at this time that Mr. Myers lost heavily because he had a large quantity of pork enroute to the South but it never reached its destination. Because of the spoilage of meat and the loss of his main market, the

⁴⁶ Weisenburger, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴⁷ History of Preble County, Ohio, op. cit., p. 311.

⁴⁸ Eaton Weekly Register, op. cit., January 14, 1860.

⁴⁹ History of Preble County, Ohio, op. cit., p. 311.

⁵⁰ Eaton Weekly Register, op. cit., December 4, 1862.

fortune that he had amassed was soon gone. People who had invested in the business likewise lost heavily.⁵¹

Bricks were manufactured in southern Ohio during territorial days, and the industry became an important one throughout the state in the following decades. In 1853 a brick yard was started in Camden on North Main Street where the Presbyterian Church now stands. Franklin Pierce and Henry Wysong were the operators. They furnished and laid the bricks for the school house, located on the corner of Central and Lafayette Streets, which was built in 1853. This firm of masons in the same year erected the Drug Store of J. H. Bohn, Sr.⁵² Another brick yard and tile factory was established in 1878 on South Main Street.⁵³ It was carried on by J. B. Bertsch and S. L. Fry. They turned out about one hundred and fifty thousand bricks per year and about six thousand rods of tile of all sizes.⁵⁴ A few years later, probably around 1880, Mr. Robert Beasley operated a brick yard just west of town. The clay he used came from the Tucker farm which joined the Beasley land. Mr. Tucker's farm was hilly and the soil was clay which didn't make a desirable farming area. A pit was dug where water and clay were mixed together by a horse-drawn mixer. After the bricks were poured into the molds they were dried in the sun on a leveled off strip of land covered with sand. Later

⁵¹ Ben Myers was a very prominent citizen and business man of Camden for forty years. He was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1812 and died in Camden on September 24, 1890 at the age of 78. In 1851 he erected what is now known as the Odd Fellow's Building and the brick residence on South Main now owned by Nell Jones. He was a man of sterling worth and noted for his integrity and kindness. This information came from Genevieve White, Camden, Ohio, and a clipping from a newspaper which appeared at the time of Mr. Myer's death. The clipping had no name or date but was probably the Camden Gazette, September 24, 1890.

⁵² "Razing of Old School House," Preble County News, May 5, 1904.

⁵³ The brick yard was located where Neff & Fry Company now stands.

⁵⁴ History of Preble County, op. cit., p. 310.

they were baked in the kiln. Mr. Tucker received a commission from all bricks sold for furnishing the clay from his farm. From this yard came the bricks for the Town Hall, Methodist Church, Nonpareil, and the E. C. Eikenberry home.⁵⁵

As the various industries were developing and functioning in the village, the merchandising houses grew to meet the diverse needs of the community. When the village was laid out in 1818 James Black had the only general store and tavern.⁵⁶ During the town's growth, a number of general stores and other types, too, have opened and closed their doors. Many of those merchants are now merely names in the minds of people, but each one has helped in some way to affect the lives of the people around him.

Thirty-five years after the first store opened in Camden, 1853, the town was a thriving little village with a population of about four hundred with Amos M. Yoast as Mayor.⁵⁷ At this date the community was furnished their meal and flour by two well known mills, either Barnet and Whitesides or David Barnet's. The town then had a grocery and bakery owned by Thomas J. Longnecker. John Sponable kept a grocery and liquor store on the east side of Main Street, and the meat supply for the village was furnished by Joseph Danner, father of W. A. Danner. His business was carried on in the basement of the Oldham property, which later was known as the Newton Hardware Store. Several general stores were doing a good business. Isaac Craig, father of Attorney I. E. Craig, kept a dry goods and notion store where the Collet block now stands. Benjamin Myers, a well known merchant, was in the dry goods business in the building

⁵⁵ This information came from an interview with Agnes Tucker, October 10, 1953.

⁵⁶ History of Preble County, Ohio, op. cit., p. 309.

⁵⁷ Mr. Yoast was a tailor by trade. He lived on South Main Street in the John Selwick house.

which he erected.⁵⁸ It was at this time he was also extensively engaged in pork packing on South Main Street in a building which later became known as the Jumbo Elevator. Another well known merchant in this year was Clinton Chadwick who built the fine brick building on North Main Street now known as the Dearth Building. He continued in business until 1862. During his last twelve years as a merchant, William Pottenger was his partner and their store was known as William Pottenger and Company.⁵⁹ In an article commenting on the village of Camden, the Pottenger store was given the following write-up:

"... among various other advantages and conveniences--it is blessed with at least one store 'as is a store'. And that is Pottenger and Co.'s--a commodious brick edifice, deep one way and broad the other, spacious between floors, and so much of its space as is not required by the proprietors for their extensive and unrivaled stock of merchandise, is daily thronged with eager customers, intent upon procuring good wares and bargains. That the people in the vicinity know how to appreciate such an establishment at a point so convenient, is evidenced in the rapid extension of its business and the prosperity of the proprietors."⁶⁰

An idea of the kind and amount of merchandise that was in the Pottenger store is plainly revealed in the following advertisement:

WILLIAM POTTENGER AND COMPANY DEALERS IN DRY GOODS, GROCERIES,
CLOTHING, HARDWARE, QUEENSWARE, ETC.

CAMDEN, OHIO

Are now receiving their new and splendid stock of spring and summer goods, which they are offering at unusually low prices. Every variety of goods that it is usual to keep in a well appointed store, may be procured here.

Summer Silks

Beautiful brocades and plain dress silks--a large variety and sold cheap. Plain and figured silk tissues of a superior quality; fancy lawns; chambric and fancy ginghams; book, mull, Swiss and dotted muslins; plain, striped and cross-barred jaconets.

Silk Fringes and Laces

Swiss and jaconet edgings and insertions; pic-nic mits; kid finish, kid and silk gloves; hose of all colors; dress trimmings of all varieties.

⁵⁸ Ben Myers's store was on the south west corner of Main and Central Avenue where Duskey's Hardware Store is located.

⁵⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

⁶⁰ Eaton Weekly Register, op. cit., September 6, 1855.

Irish Linens

Bleached and brown domestiks; bed tickings; checks and cotton yarns; all of which are marked down very low.

Boots and Shoes

A large and extensive assortment for men, women, and children. The boot and shoe wearing public need only call to be suited in quality, style, and price.

Hats, Caps, and Millinery Goods

We invite the ladies to call and see our large and well selected stock of millinery goods comprising all the new styles of bonnets--silk, crepe, spider-web and cactus at all prices. A fine assortment of flowers, ribbons, bonnet silks, and satins of every description.

Clothing

Our assortment is large and full, embracing every article in the clothing line. Our goods are manufactured under our own superintendency; we can therefore warrant any article well made. A large assortment of clothes; linens, farmer's satin, ribbed, plain, black, and fancy cassimeres. We are prepared to make to order any garment at the shortest notice.

Carpets

All wool of every style, a large lot of domestic carpets, floor, and table oil cloths, etc.

Hardware Department

This part of our store is full and well selected: consisting of flat, bar, dandy tires, horse shoes, saddle trees, band, round, and square. All brands of steel; iron and brass topped axles and malleable castings.

Cooking and Parlor Stoves, of every pattern; improved cutting boxes and plows, and every article usually found in a well regulated Hardware Store.

QUEENSWARE

A large and varied assortment of plain and fancy stone, China, common stone, and Potter's ware.

Groceries

For superior quality and low price we cannot be surpassed. All kinds of country produce taken in exchange for goods. Call and see us. We will always be found ready to show goods at the old stand of Clinton Chadwick, Camden, Ohio.

Camden, May 24, 1855

N.B. Wanted, 20,000 bushels of corn; 20,000 pounds of wool; 8,000 bushels of oats, and all the flaxseed we can get, for which the highest price will be paid in cash.

W. P. & Co. 61

Many travelers in 1853 were entertained at the Preble House located on the southeast corner of Main and Hendrix Streets. This tavern had been built in 1846 by Stephen Payne and Pottenger. Daniel Payne was its proprietor in 1853 and remained so for fifteen years. Another tavern was kept in the John Manly house on East Central Avenue, and Chauncey Carroll had one on Main

Street. The stage coach was still running from Eaton to Hamilton, but it was soon superseded by the railroad which began operating the previous year. Benjamin Fornshell had a tin shop⁶² which was the first one in Camden, and he was at that time the only coppersmith in the county. Bohn's apothecary shop was a very essential as well as fascinating place in the village. The tall, beautiful bottles of spices, herbs, salts, and wines were delightful to behold. It was in 1853 that Mr. Bohn built the fine brick building⁶³ on South Main Street into which he moved his drug business and practiced there until his death twenty-two years later. The health of the town and the community was cared for by Dr. Lurton Dunham and Dr. Robert Homsher. Dr. Dunham had located in Camden in 1832, more than twenty years before. Dr. Homsher started his practice in the town in 1852 after he received his diploma.⁶⁴

Twenty-five years later or by the middle of the 1870's Camden could furnish all the necessary articles for a comfortable living, besides innumerable luxuries of life could be purchased in the village. Many and varied signs were seen along the Main Street and adjoining streets of Camden to attract the villagers as well as the countrymen who came into town to trade.

A few of the same names appeared on windows or on signs which had been seen twenty-five years previously, but many new names were replacing the old. Ben Myers no longer had a general store, but it had passed into the hands of Cyrus Pottenger. His well established general store was sure to be visited because he dealt in dry goods, notions, queensware, groceries, hats and caps, window shades, and wall paper. Farmers were attracted to the Pottenger Store because

⁶² Fornshell's tin shop was located between what is now George Craig's Hardware Store and the Town Hall.

⁶³ The building erected by Mr. Bohn is now occupied by the Jefferies Food Market.

⁶⁴ Proble County News, op. cit., May 5, 1904.

country produce would be taken in exchange for goods.⁶⁵ The following prices were listed by Pottenger as Camden's Retail Market:

Breakfast Bacon	14¢	Shoulder	10¢
Beef, fresh	12½¢	Potatoes	50¢
Beef, dried	18¢	Wheat	\$1.00
Butter	12½¢	Chicken	20¢
Eggs	12½¢	Lard	12½¢
Ham	14¢	Feathers	40¢
Sugar	14¢	Rags	2¢
Cheese	14¢	Hides, green	4¢ ⁶⁶

The red and white pole outside a small shop which contained one barber chair was a familiar sight in the village. It was not only a place to get a hair cut, but it was a wonderful place to gather all the latest news. That was a part of the barber's job to pass along the interesting happenings in the town. Willis Carter⁶⁷ and Frank Simpson were the village barbers in 1875. Two years later Carter was still barbering and advertised in the local paper in the following manner:

Willis Carter, Tonsorial Artist, South Main Street,
Camden, Ohio.
Hair Cutting and Dyeing a Specialty.
Ladies' and Children's Hair cut in any style.
Tobacco and cigars on Sale.⁶⁸

On South Main Street were two highly reputable Men's Clothing Shops. One was owned by Jacob Collet and the other by S. D. Thurston.⁶⁹ Both were merchant tailors, dealers in all kinds of ready made clothing for men, such as hats, caps, and trunks. In addition, they had a well selected stock of worsted and cassimeres of the latest novelities which were made to order in the best styles.⁷⁰ If gentlemen could not find suitable shirts at Collet's or at Thurston's possibly they found them at the Arcade, a shirt factory on

⁶⁵ Camden Herald, op. cit., June 16, 1877.

⁶⁶ Ibid., September 1, 1877.

⁶⁷ Willis Carter was a colored man.

⁶⁸ Camden Herald, op. cit., June 23, 1877.

⁶⁹ Thurston's Shop was located on the east side of Main Street where Butts live. Collet was on the west side of Main Street where Statzer's real estate office is. Mr. Collet built this building a few years after starting in business in 1855.

⁷⁰ Camden Herald, op. cit., September 1, 1877.

the northwest corner of Lafayette and Felix Streets--one square north of the school house. Mrs. S. J. Burkholter was the proprietor. She kept on hand all kinds of custom made shirts from the heaviest working to the finest white. The prices ranged from sixty cents to a dollar and half.⁷¹

Ladies could be outfitted at the "Emporium of Fashion in Millinery and Dress Making" which was Mollie William's establishment. Bonnets and hats in the latest design were bought there at the most reasonable prices. Dresses were made for the low price of from three to seven dollars. If the ladies were not suited in hats at Mollie William's, they may have tried Miss A. Guard, Milliner, opposite the Danser House.⁷² In addition to millinery, Miss Guard carried an elegant stock of goods, notions, and embroideries.⁷³ Mrs. Swann, on Cross Street two doors east of the Universalist Church,⁷⁴ might have been visited by the ladies. Her cutting and fitting was done perfectly on dresses, dolman, and dusters, and they were made in the most stylish ways for the least money. Mrs. Swann also made knife, box, side, or rose leaf pleating by the yard.⁷⁵

Boots and shoes were for sale at a number of places. Johnson's Old Reliable Store on Main Street was a fine place to buy them. Repair work there was "neatly executed by experienced workmen."⁷⁶ David Morris likewise had an excellent stock of boots and shoes for men, women, and children. Mr. Morris boasted of prices that could not be matched by any of his competitors.⁷⁷ P. J. Bohm on West Main Cross Street sold boots and shoes, too; and he did excellent repair work.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Ibid., September 29, 1877.

⁷² Danser House was a hotel on South Main Street where the Masonic Temple now stands.

⁷³ Camden Herald, op. cit., June 23, 1877.

⁷⁴ The Universalist Church, now the Brethren Church.

⁷⁵ Camden Herald, op. cit., June 23, 1877.

⁷⁶ Ibid., September 15, 1877--Johnson was located where Rodeffer's Insurance Office is now.

⁷⁷ Camden Herald, op. cit., July 21, 1877--Morris's Store was where Brower's Jewelry Store is now.

⁷⁸ Ibid., September 1, 1877.

Frank Davenport, watchmaker and jeweler, had a repair shop in David Morris's Shoe Store where he repaired watches, clocks, and jewelry. All of his work was warranted to give satisfaction or there was no charge. Fine watch work was his specialty. C. M. Rohrer also fixed watches, clocks, and jewelry. In addition to his repair work he sold stationery, school books, photograph albums, newspapers, periodicals, magazines, money purses, sewing machine needles, and noiseless slates in the Post Office News Room.⁷⁹

The Bohn Drug Store was still operating in the 1870's and held a very important place in the community. J. H. Bohn, Sr., died in 1875 but his son, J. H. L. Bohn carried on the business. The following advertisement appeared in the local paper:

J. H. Bohn, Camden, Ohio
Dealer in Drugs
Fine Toilet Soap,
Fancy Hair and Tooth Brushes,
Perfumery and Fancy Toilet Articles,
Pure Wine and Liquor for Medicinal Purposes,
Paints, Oils, Varnishes, and Dye Stuffs
also
Lamps, Lanterns, Burners, and Chimneys,
Letter Paper, Pens, Ink, Envelopes, Glass, Putty,
also
Finest Quality of Tea
Fancy and Plain Candies,
Finest Brands of Cigars and Tobacco,
Physicians' Prescriptions accurately compounded.

At this time Camden not only had J. H. Bohn's Drug Store, but J. L. Doll was a Pharmaceutist and dealer in drugs. He advertised in the same paper and with a very similar advertisement as Mr. Bohn.⁸⁰

All kinds of buggies, carriages, and wagons were manufactured on North Main Street by Mr. Stephen Bertsch who came to Camden in 1876 and remained there

⁷⁹ Ibid., The Post Office News room was located in the room now occupied by Shank's Variety Store.

⁸⁰ Camden Harald, op. cit., September 1, 1877.

the remainder of his life. Mr. Bertsch did very fine wood work of all kinds and was known especially for his very excellent paint jobs on buggies and carriages.⁸¹

Building supplies were purchased from Joseph Loop on East Cross Street, one square from the depot.⁸² He had pine lumber, moulding, doors, sash, shingles, blinds, lath, and other material. If any decorating were needed, O. P. Brown's shop on North Main Street was visited. Mr. Brown was a painter (house, sign, and carriage), grainer, glazier, and paper hanger.

Another business on South Main that was quite necessary to the town but one that no one wanted to patronize was J. A. Mitchell's, the undertaker.⁸³ He not only rendered burial service, but he manufactured furniture, coffins, metallic cases, and furnished on short notice shrouds or other garments for corpses. His wife, Mary, was very helpful in the business, and she continued the business for a number of years after her husband's death.⁸⁴

Many farmers came to the village to see the newest things in agricultural implements. J. M. Shaafer kept a shop on Main Street where were sold grain and seeds, Buckeye Reapers, Sweepstake Threshers, Monitor Steam Engines, hay rakes, plows, cultivators, church, school house and farm bells, well and cistern pumps, and Fish Brother Farm and Spring Wagons.⁸⁵

The village drayman had no shop, but he was a very useful figure and was as essential to the village as the shop owners. David Whitcomb was doing dray work in 1877. When visitors in the village arrived or left, the drayman was always notified to haul the suitcase or trunk to the depot. In fact, he

⁸¹ Ibid., September 29, 1877. Mr. Bertsch's shop was located just south of the Ford Garage.

⁸² Mr. Loop's place of business was located where Clara Yost's house now stands.

⁸³ The Mitchells had their place of business in the building now occupied by Caskey for furniture storage.

⁸⁴ Camden Herald, op. cit., June 16, 1877.

⁸⁵ Ibid., September 29, 1877.

was "ready to haul anything from a bandbox to a house." Mr. Whitcomb had a light wagon and took passengers to any part of the country, with which he was perfectly acquainted for twenty miles around Camden.⁸⁶

In every rural community blacksmithing was quite necessary, and the shops were an integral part of every town. The clanging of the iron, the roaring of the fire, the smell of burning hoops, and the smithy's black leather apron were all familiar sounds, smells, and sights. For many years Camden had at least two or three blacksmiths, but in 1875 there were McGriff and Pottle; B. F. Williams; F. Brown; C. Watt; F. McShane; Alfred Pottle; and Alfred McGriff.⁸⁷ In 1877 McShane and Brown were working together and they used the following advertisement:

"McShane and Brown
Blacksmiths
East Cross Street
Camden, Ohio
Horse Shoeing and Plow Laying a Specialty

All kinds of farm implements repaired at lowest rates. None but experienced hands employed at this shop."⁸⁸

In that same year McGriff had a blacksmith shop. Horse shoeing and laying plows were his specialty. All "interfering, banging, forging, and clicking were prevented" or there was no charge.⁸⁹ B. F. Williams was not only doing all kinds of blacksmithing, but he and Mr. Patterson were dealers in agricultural implements such as sulky plows, cultivators, reapers, and mowers.⁹⁰

Another familiar sight in every village was the harness shop, and Camden was no exception. Irvin Anderson and his family came to Camden in 1874

⁸⁶ Ibid., November 24, 1877.

⁸⁷ Morgan, op. cit., p. 172.

⁸⁸ Camden Herald, op. cit., June 23, 1877.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., September 29, 1877.

and opened a harness shop on North Main Street.⁹¹ In addition to his leather work he was an amateur musician and played the alto horn in the village band. During slack hours he practiced in the back of his store. Evidently he was more successful with his horn than with his harness because the rumors lingered in Camden that he fled to Caledonia, Ohio to escape his leather bills. The title of "Cap" was bestowed upon Mr. Anderson.⁹² No doubt this was given him because he was extremely fond of telling his experiences from the Civil War. Mrs. Lora Shuey recalls how she, as a youngster, and other children stood outside the harness shop and listened eagerly to the lively stories Mr. Anderson related.⁹³ Two years after the Andersons arrived in Camden, 1876, their third child, Sherwood, was born. It was he who made the Anderson name famous. The villagers have been proud to claim Sherwood Anderson as a native son although the boy who grew to be a nationally known writer had but a few memories of his birthplace because in 1880 the family left Camden.⁹⁴

Twenty-five years is a short time, but in that period many changes can and have appeared in a town's history. By 1902 in Camden some old businesses had dissolved and new ones had taken their places, but both old and new ones were trying to serve and please the rural population from which their trade came. The old names such as Ben Myers, Chadwick, and Pottenger were no longer seen, but were replaced by others whose stores were not called general stores but were known as Department Stores. Charles White and Frank Eikenberry were doing a fine business in such a store. They had been in business since 1893 and had been partners since 1895,⁹⁵ known as White and Eikenberry.⁹⁶ Their

⁹¹ The Anderson Shop was located where the Building and Loan Building now stands.

⁹² Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson (William Shane Associates, Inc., 1951), p. 12.

⁹³ Mrs. Lora Shuey, N. Main St., a native of Camden, Ohio, is now eighty-five. She was born and reared in Camden.

⁹⁴ Irving Howe, op. cit., p. 12.

⁹⁵ Camden Gazette, op. cit., April 4, 1895.

⁹⁶ Charles White was one of Camden's most prominent citizens. He first entered the merchandising business in 1886 when the store was conducted

cheap sales were a great attraction and often eight or ten clerks were kept busy handling trade on those special days.⁹⁷ E. J. Phares was another well known name that was connected with a thriving department store. He started in business in 1887 and in 1895 moved to the building now known as the Dearth Building. There he carried general merchandise such as shoes, dry goods, carpets, wall paper, millinery, and groceries.⁹⁸ The following prices are examples of a typical Cheap Sale:

Comfort calico - 5¢ and up
All other calico - 3½¢ to 5¢
Best heavy linen - 9¢
Good canned corn - ¼ for 25¢
3 pairs ladies' seamless hose - 25¢
¼ pairs men's heavy socks - 25¢

E. J. Phares - Department Store
Terms Cash - Camden, Ohio⁹⁹

In 1902 H. C. Williams still had a grocery store and was yet advertising as "The Old Reliable Grocer." Of his thirty years in business, the year 1902 had been his best with the exception of 1893. He advertised as

by Ben Myers. The business later passed to the ownership of Aaron Ridenour. Charles White and Frank Eikenberry took it over in 1893 and conducted it for fourteen years under the firm name of White and Eikenberry. After several years Mr. Eikenberry disposed of his share to Frank B. White. In 1912 Charles White purchased his brother's interest and after that it was known as the C. F. White Department Store. Charles White was a very progressive business man. His store was known for miles around for its complete stock and high quality of merchandise. The White Store did much toward bringing to Camden the outside shopping support which the town enjoyed. At Christmas time, the store was a place of delight, especially for children to visit. The upper floor was one large Toyland. A few days before Christmas Santa Claus always appeared to welcome and to treat each customer with candy and an orange. Mr. White was suddenly taken in death in April, 1919. His wife, Tura Ridenour White, continued to manage the store until she sold it in the 1930's. The White Department Store, located at the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue, was a familiar business landmark for many years. Preble County News, op. cit., May 1, 1919.

⁹⁷ Ibid., January 8, 1903.

⁹⁸ Camden Gazette, op. cit., November 14, 1895; Preble County News, op. cit., August 27, 1914; January 8, 1903.

⁹⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., September 24, 1903.

1905

1905

SPRING ANNOUNCEMENT.



WE have been devoting the time since holidays--in getting ready for Spring business--and can truthfully say we have never shown such a great variety of seasonable merchandise as this year: Dry Goods, Millinery, Carpets, Matings, Wall Paper, Shoes, Ladies' Ready-to-wear garments, etc. We are still endeavoring by this, to keep in touch with the time

and selling goods at the least possible margin to further increase on business.

■ Visit our store. Look through and see what we are doing, whether you buy or not. You are always welcome.



Very
Respectfully
Yours.

E. J. Phares.

having the best goods on the market at the lowest price, and that he not only paid the highest price for country produce, but his dealings were square with honest weight and measure.¹⁰⁰

Another store that was familiar before 1902 was J. H. Bohn's Drug Store. Mr. Bohn had retained a good business and in 1902 he planned to remodel and enlarge his quarters. As in previous years Mr. Bohn felt it paid to advertise. One item which he highly recommended was Arnica's Salve for ulcers, wounds, and piles. The Bohns had competition because F. H. Whittaker was a druggist with a good, steady business. Two items that Mr. Whittaker promoted were Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets, and Foley's Honey and Tar to prevent pneumonia.¹⁰¹

Jacob Collet was one of the earlier merchants who retained a store in 1902, but it was now called Collet and Son. By this time the store had been on the east side of Main Street for nearly twenty years in the brick building which in 1884 Mr. Collet had constructed. Another clothing store had opened up across the street by M. L. Peters. Both stores carried a fine line of materials and clothes for men and boys.¹⁰²

Camden was proud to have an attractive jewelry store which was owned and operated by Lee Danser.¹⁰³ He carried a very good stock of clocks, watches, and 1847 Roger Brothers Silver. Another addition to the town was two shoe stores to replace some earlier ones. W. H. Douglas's Shoe Store had been in town for three years and was well patronized. S. E. Shellenberger also had

¹⁰⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., January 8, 1903.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., April 3, 1952.

¹⁰³ Mr. Danser's store was then on the east side of Main Street where Jessie Robert's Store is located. In 1924 Mr. Danser moved a few doors north in the building now occupied by Rodeffer's Insurance. Here he remained until his death in 1948.

SUGGEST CLOTHING

is but another name for

SCHLOSS CLOTHING.

THAT'S the kind we handle. It is the "kind that helps you on in the world" and is ever "considerate of your pocket-book."

"Clothes don't make the man, but good clothes have secured many a good position," said a railroad president recently. If you have \$25 and want a job, it is better to spend \$20 for clothes, \$4 for shoes and the rest for a shave and a hair cut and a clean collar, and walk to the place than to go with the money in the pockets of a dingy suit."

The above argument is all right, but you need not pay as much as \$20 for clothes that will give you a prosperous, well-kept appearance, when you can come here and walk off with a snappy suit like that shown in the picture



♦ ♦ AT SO LITTLE A PRICE AS \$10 ♦ ♦ ♦

We have other styles at other prices, all possessing the same characteristic of honest quality which Schloss Bros. & Co. inject into all of their clothing. See us for your suit to order and your Gent's Furnishings. Our line of Boys and Children's clothing are up-to-date in material and cut.

"Drop in and let's talk it over."

M. L. PETERS,

Outfitter to the People

CAMDEN, OHIO.

1905

Suits For Young Men!



These Young Fellows from 15 to 20 years of age know far better than their parents what they want in Clothing. Bring the Big Boy here and turn him loose in our Clothing stock. Let him make his own selections.....

He Can't Go Wrong

among the Suits of his size. The Fall styles are very handsome and there is not a poor value in the entire line. We know exactly what the Big Boy wants in Clothes and we can satisfy his every desire. Boys' Suits at.....

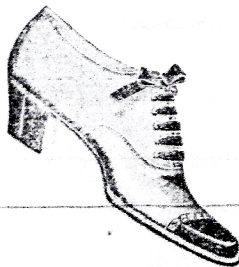
\$7.50, \$10, \$12.50

or up to \$16.50.

If you want him to go that high.....

Collett & Son Clothiers To Men and Boys

1904



LADIES'
\$1.50 to \$2.50
OXFORDS
Only \$1.²⁵

Misses' and
Children's at
Corresponding
Reductions.



We have a
Few Broken
Sizes of Women's
\$1.50, \$2.00, \$2.50
and \$3.00 Shoes

For \$1.³⁵

It will Pay
You to Investigate
This Proposition.

Douglas

"The Shoe Man."

Camden, - Ohio.

1900

a shoe store which enjoyed the prosperous condition of the country.

No longer was seen the sign of Andersons Harness Shop because he had left town in 1880, but W. S. May had long taken his place. Mr. May had been in business for fourteen years and declared 1902 was one of his best years. "My harness will make your horse glad", was Mr. May's advertising slogan for his collars, pads, halters, haines, robes, blankets, fly nets, dusters, and other accessories.¹⁰⁴

In addition to Fornshell's Tin Shop, W. A. Newton had a well-equipped hardware store with guns, ammunition, mail boxes, cutlery, cream separators, and other kinds of hardware. A. A. Case's meat market supplied the town with fresh meat. C. C. Heaton had a grocery on North Main across from the Post Office. W. W. Duckwall had been in business a little more than five years and 1902 was a very successful year for his cigar store and confectionery.¹⁰⁵

Mr. W. E. McChristie's business of taking pictures and enlarging and mounting old family pictures by photography did a thriving business. He carried on an extensive business, both by express and through the post office. His work was found in nearly every state of the Union. Some very fine artists came to town to work in "The Nonpareil."¹⁰⁶ for Mr. McChristie.

A new industry known as the South Side Lumber Company owned by R. T. Acton was established in 1902 in Camden. It furnished lumber and building supplies for the community. At the close of the year 1902 Mr. Acton expressed gratification over his business which was much better than he had anticipated.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Preble County News, op. cit., January 8, 1903.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "The Nonpareil" was the name given to the large brick structure on the northwest corner of Main and Hendrix Streets. It was built by McChristie but is now owned by Brownlee Borradaile.

¹⁰⁷ Preble County News, op. cit., January 8, 1903.

Another very welcome industry was added to the town in the same year under the name of The Enterprise Packing Company. The company was made up of leading business men and incorporated under the laws of Ohio. Mr. J. E. McCord solicited citizens for subscriptions for stock, and in two days he had five thousand dollars. A large and commodious tomato canning factory and warehouse were erected on land owned by James White just south of town.¹⁰⁸ During September and October of the first year over \$30,000.00 worth of business was transacted. More than two hundred acres of tomatoes had been contracted at seven dollars per ton. The growers received in cash more than five thousand dollars. During the canning season, the pay roll amounted to more than two thousand dollars per month all of which went to Camden people. The ladies of the community turned out enmasse to help handle the product. The output was nearly 300,000 cans of tomatoes of the best quality.¹⁰⁹ Before the second season started many improvements had been made in the factory. Three thousand dollars was spent on interior improvements such as a new boiler of one hundred fifty horsepower and an overhead conveyor for moving cans from processor to ware room. Also a one story ware room was erected north of the old store house to give the plant more storage space. Buckets and places for seventy peelers were arranged. It was strictly a home enterprise for over one hundred citizens of Camden and Somers Township.¹¹⁰

Another industry came in the early 1900's to Camden. The Four Tobacco Company began business in 1901 in the Payne Elevator building.¹¹¹ These quarters

¹⁰⁸ This factory was built on the west of the railroad about one hundred yards south of the railroad crossing at the south edge of Camden.

¹⁰⁹ Preble County News, op. cit., January 8, 1903.

¹¹⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., August 2, 1903. The canning factory was operated until fire destroyed the building on June 20, 1928. The ware house still stands.

¹¹¹ The Payne Elevator building was located just west of the railroad at the intersection of Depot Street and Central Avenue.

were soon abandoned because in 1902 a large and commodious brick ware house was erected on the east side of the town near the railroad. This company employed from eight to forty-five people during the season. In 1902 more than eight-hundred cases of tobacco were handled.¹¹² This ware house was closed for a few years then opened again in the late twenties at which time several women were given work to stem tobacco. The ware house is now the property of Neff and Fry Company which bought it in 1942 to manufacture practice bombs for defense.

Soon after 1900 life was considerably revolutionized by the automobile. The phenomenal expansion of the industry changed the mercantilistic interests of communities and Camden experienced the same trend as other towns. Blacksmith shops were replaced by garages; buggy and carriage shops were not so popular as the automobile show rooms; gasoline stations took the place of hitching racks; and easier and faster transportation caused small department stores and shoe stores to close because they could not meet the competition of the larger cities.

The first automobile agency in Camden was in 1907 and was owned by Robert Duvall and Edgar Fornshell. Their garage and show room was on South Main Street just wouth of the Printing Office.¹¹³ They sold the Lambert which had a two cylinder motor with friction drive. Dr. Holiday from West Elkton bought their first car, and John Johnson, west of Camden, bought the second one. Before Duvall and Fornshell opened their sales room and garage in Camden there were a few cars in town. Nby and Charles Eckenberry together

¹¹² Preble County News, op. cit., January 8, 1903.

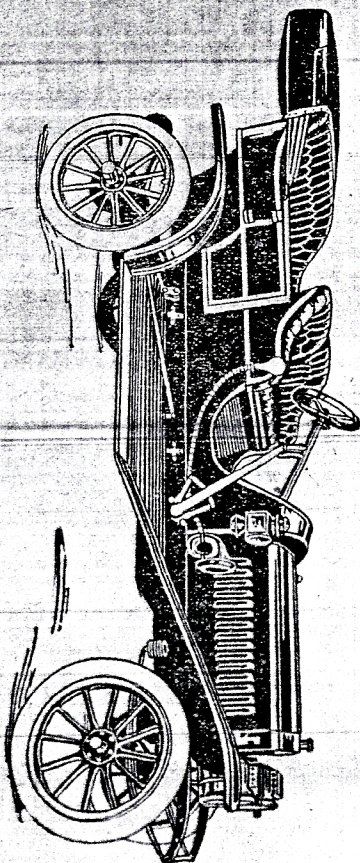
¹¹³ This large building is now owned by Bessie Coon.

THE LAMBERT!

The Famous Friction Drive Car.

Simplicity of Transmission.

Model B==2	.	.	\$2,000
Model 19	.	.	1,750
Lambert 30	.	.	1,250
Model A==3	.	.	875
Model A==1	.	.	800



LAMBERT 30.

Simple and Easy to Operate. Less Machinery and More Power.

Sole agents for
Preble County,
Demonstration by
Appointment.

Duvall & Fornshell.

PHONE No. 165

Garage in South
Main Street
Camden, Ohio

owned the first car in Camden. It was an Oldsmobile. Another of the early car owners was Dr. J. W. Combs¹¹⁴ who owned an International which was a one cylinder car with a chain drive and a steering rod. Dr. Coombs's car was so noisy that it frightened all the animals as he went through the country calling on patients.¹¹⁵ Olive Silvers recalls that 1908 was her first encounter with an automobile. She was a first grader on her way to a country school about three miles west of Camden. When she saw the strange bright red object coming toward her down the road it so frightened her that she jumped over the fence and hid until it passed.¹¹⁶

It was such agencies as Duvall and Fornsshell and other similar ones that caused Ernest Bertsch to convert the Bertsch Buggy, Carriage, and Wagon Shop, which had been popular since his father established himself in business as a wagon maker in 1876, into a body painting shop for cars. Blacksmith shops that had at one time been an integral part of the town life soon were replaced by garages to administer to the needs of cars. Camden in 1955 has no blacksmith shops, but it does have two automobile agencies and a garage with completely competent mechanics connected with each. William Matt has operated the Ford Agency and Garage on North Main Street since July, 1927, and Brownlee Borradaile since 1940 has had the Chevrolet Agency in Camden.¹¹⁷

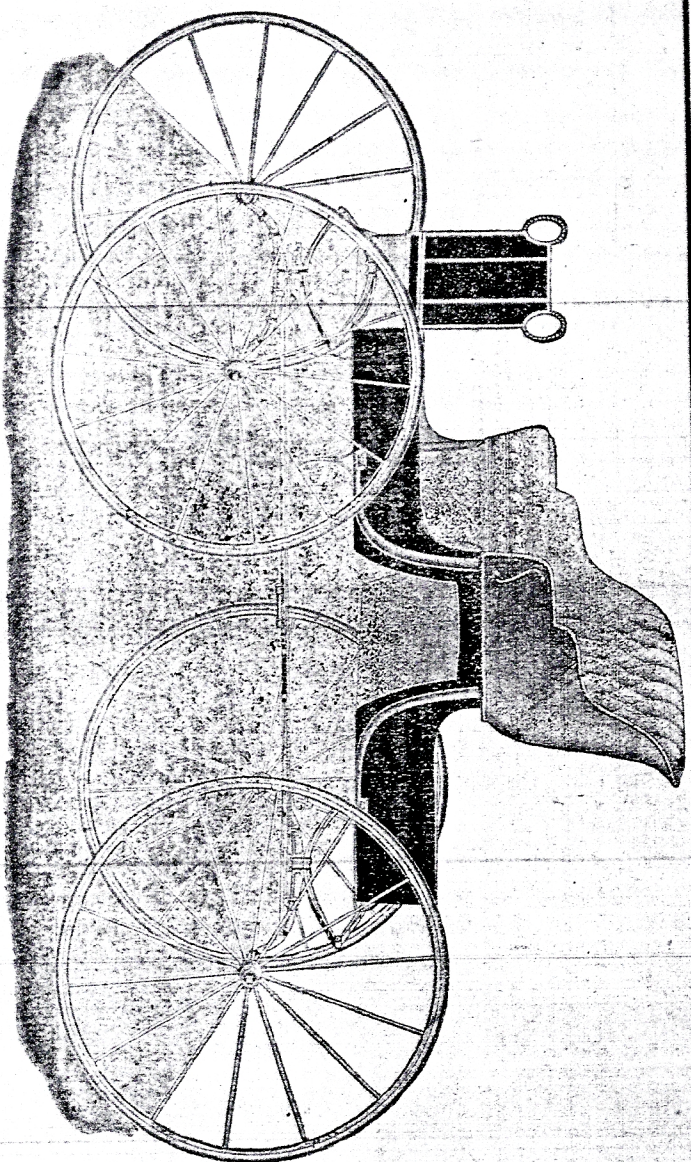
¹¹⁴ Dr. J. W. Coombs was one of Camden's most beloved and outstanding physicians. He came to Camden in 1900 from Van Wert County, Ohio, as a young man and remained in the village for more than forty-one years. He served the community night and day both for pay and without pay. For several years he rode horse back or walked over poor roads during all kinds of weather. Hospitals were far away and Dr. Coombs performed many operations by lamp light. He performed a major operation at his office by lamp light upon a child with a fractured pelvis after the child had been hit by a truck. He also performed what is believed to have been the first Caesarian operation in Camden, in the year 1904. The community lost a faithful servant when he died in 1942. His oldest daughter, Vera Iber, is a doctor in Hamilton; his oldest son, James, is an eye specialist in Chicago; the second daughter, Dorothy Witter, is on the faculty in Hamilton; and the youngest son, Steve, is also in the teaching profession. Preble County News, op. cit., August 24, 1942.

¹¹⁵ This information came from an interview with Robert Duvall, Camden, Ohio, on December 10, 1954.

¹¹⁶ This information came from Olive Silvers, S. Second St., Camden, Ohio, on November 30, 1954.

¹¹⁷ Preble County News, op. cit., April 3, 1952; October 15, 1914.

Buggies, Phaetons, Carriages, Runabouts



OUR SPECIALTY

The New Auto Buggy

A Full Line of these Latest Buggies.

Fine Carriage Painting

Repairing of All Kinds
Neatly Executed.

Rubber Tires Put On
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See me
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Phone 92

I can and
will save you
money.

In addition to the auto sales rooms, there is now the F. W. D. Distributors, a wholesale boat concern. This is one of Camden's most recently opened business firms. The sales room is owned by Faye DeCamp and operated by him and his son, Max. Faye, who has always been an avid fisherman, first saw these boats in Wichita, Kansas, when he was visiting one of his sons. The boats attracted him because they were all aluminum and he believed them to be light and durable. Since he was near retirement age, he thought an agency for the distribution of these boats would be a remunerative as well as interesting business to enter, especially since a conservation lake was in the process of being constructed at Oxford, Ohio.

Faye purchased and remodeled in 1953 the McCord Building on South Main Street where his business is now located. April 1, 1955, he retired as a rural mail carrier after thirty-five years of service. Since that time he has spent full time in selling and distributing Blue Star aluminum boats to dealers all over Ohio and Indiana. He also has distributorship in Ohio for Wilma Peg trailers; Molsclaw trailers in eleven southwestern counties of Ohio; and oars, paddles, cushions, Atwood Marine hardware and Phoenix Marine Hardware in unrestricted territories in Ohio and Indiana. During the few months that F.W.D. Distributors have been in full time operation their business has increased more than the owner had anticipated. Dealers have been established in all major cities in Ohio with the exception of Dayton, and in all large cities in Indiana including Indianapolis. The community is proud to have this new enterprise in Camden and hopes the sales of F.W.D. Distributors continue to increase.¹¹⁸

During the last fifty years people in Camden have seen the rise of new industries which are the result of events that transpired some 600,000 years ago.

¹¹⁸ This information was furnished by Faye DeCamp, South Lafayette Street, Camden, Ohio, June 2, 1955.

During this period geologists declare that a great river drained the waters of southwestern Ohio. The present site of Camden was on one of the principal tributaries of this river. A valley was formed and when the glaciers came, particularly the Wisconsin Glacier, about 35,000 years ago, it filled this valley with mineral and rock fragments, known now as aggregates or gravel. The existence of this great quantity of gravel, one hundred fifty to one hundred eighty feet in depth, made this village a natural center for the manufacture of cement and concrete products.¹¹⁹ The first men to recognize the possibilities of the nearly inexhaustible and plenteous supply of raw material around Camden was John C. Snider and J. C. Love. Their industry, which was launched in 1907, was known as the Camden Concrete Works. A location was chosen just one block north of the depot to have access to good shipping facilities. The company manufactured cement bricks and blocks.¹²⁰ Mr. Love sold out his interest in 1910,¹²¹ but John Snider continued in the business until his death. The plant was purchased in 1935 by the late Oscar Keller, but after his death the business was bought by his son, Hugh Keller, in 1945 who stills operates the plant.¹²² It is now known as the Concrete Pipe and Tile Company. This concern regularly employs nine or ten men who manufacture concrete tile up to twenty-seven inch size and reinforced concrete tile up to forty-eight inch size. It is the only concrete pipe and tile manufacturing establishment in Preble County, and it not only furnishes their product to inhabitants of the local county but also to people in Darke, Montgomery, Warren, Butler, and Hamilton counties as well as to counties in Indiana.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Forward, Vol. XVII (Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Power and Light Company), December, 1950, p. 6.

¹²⁰ Preble County News, op. cit., April 18, 1907.

¹²¹ Ibid., September 15, 1910.

¹²² Preble County News, op. cit., Golden Jubilee Edition, April 3, 1952.

¹²³ This information came from Mrs. Hugh Keller, N. Main St., Camden, Ohio, on May 5, 1955.

Charles R. Neff and Marlo B. Faye were two other pioneers in the manufacture of concrete products in Camden. Both men resigned their positions as rural mail carriers in the early spring of 1916 and organized a partnership known as the Neff and Fry Company for the manufacture of "The Interlocking Cement Stave Silo". At that time the farm silo was the main product manufactured. Leading farmers and stockmen welcomed the new concrete stave silo to replace the old wood type.¹²⁴ Later on the company was incorporated and after World War I, C. Rodney Neff, son of Charles Neff, came into the business and carried on the work with his father and other members of the company until February 8, 1950 when C. Rodney passed away. The company in 1920 branched out into the industrial field where silos and bins were built for the storage of coal, sand, gravel, and grain. Such jobs were erected in all parts of the United States, and in parts of Canada, Mexico, and South America. During World War II, Neff and Fry manufactured one hundred pound concrete practice bombs used by the U. S. Air Force in training bombardiers at various airfields.¹²⁵ This company, now under the presidency of Lee Neff, C. Rodney Neff's son, internationally known for its cement storage bins has outstanding local recognition in the construction of cement silos and burial vaults.

The L. G. Townsley and Company is another of Camden's leading industries that is engaged in contracting and in the manufacture of concrete blocks and flue liners. Both eight and twelve inch concrete blocks are made by a handralic and vibrator machine. This company had its beginning in 1928 by the late Edward Slover. Mr. Slover operated the industry until his death. Lloyd Townsley became the owner in September, 1938, having assisted Mr. Slover from 1928 until 1930 at which time he went East to engage in construction work.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Pretle County News, op. cit., January 13, 1916; February 24, 1916; March 2, 1916.

¹²⁵ Ibid., April 3, 1952.

¹²⁶ Ibid., April 3, 1952.

The White Gravel Company, located in the southwest section of Camden, was established here in 1928 and has supplied local industries and highways with gravel for the last twenty-seven years. The gravel pit is located on ground producing the finest source of gravel in Ohio. Russell E. Ulrich is the manager of the White Gravel Company and has been in complete charge since its establishment. The company deals in quality washed sand and gravel. It operates daily to supply industries and highways over a radius of fifteen miles. Several of Camden's industries are quite dependent upon this supply. Before the White Gravel Company started operating, gravel was furnished for highways, Neff, and Frye, and other industries by men with teams and wagons who hauled from the creek bed. Already enough gravel has been excavated by the White Gravel Company to form a pit or lake more than a third of a mile long, eight-hundred feet wide and about sixty feet deep.¹²⁷

Camden Ready-Mix, Inc. is one of Camden's young industries and like several others is very dependent upon the gravel source in this locality. The firm was incorporated in December, 1947. During the early part of 1948 the structure was completed and the firm was ready for business with Don Howard as its manager. Mr. Howard has continued in this capacity ever since. This industry is located very near the White Gravel Company from which it gets the gravel for the ready mix. Camden is very pleased to have such an industry that is ready and willing to serve the community with its four trucks anywhere within a radius of twenty miles.¹²⁸

Another young industry is J. H. Gwynne, Inc. which has grown during the last twenty years to one of Camden's leading industries. July 5, 1935 Joe H. Gwynne started manufacturing in Edward Slover's garage special scales known as

¹²⁷ This information came from Russell Ulrich, Sugar Valley Road, Camden, Ohio, on March 1, 1954.

¹²⁸ Preble County News, op. cit., April 3, 1952.

batchers for use in concrete paving. During 1937 Mr. Gwynne first rented, then finally bought the building known as the Eikenberry Seed Store¹²⁹ for his work. The business increased until it was necessary for more space. They expanded in 1944 to the McCord Building on the corner of South Main Street and Hendrick. During World War II all of the production was centered on equipment for air bases throughout the world. The company was associated with Wright Field Wind Tunnel Unit and manufactured special research equipment. Gwynnes have been an affiliate of Construction Machinery Company of Waterloo, Iowa since 1937 in the manufacture of construction equipment. Starting in 1948 Gwynnes also produced concrete products for about four years. They made and marketed concrete floor and roof slabs known as Flexicrete. This product was an outgrowth of the manufacture of special production equipment for making the slabs. These fire resistant floor and roof materials were marketed throughout Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. A few years ago the company bought land just north of Camden along U. S. Highway 127. Here they built their new plant and in August, 1953 they moved their equipment. At present they employ between thirty and forty men to produce scales, batchers, and storage bins.¹³⁰

A new industry made its appearance in the latter part of 1950 in Camden. The Atlas Plywood Corporation of Boston purchased Brownlee Borradaile's implement show room just north of Camden on U. S. Highway 127. This company manufactures and assembles shipping containers made of corrugated paper reinforced with wooden frames. The company located in this vicinity to serve its customers better who have done business with the Plywood Corporation for many

¹²⁹ The Eikenberry Seed Store was the second building east of the Masonic Temple. This seed store was first owned by Charles and Eby Eikenberry then later Eby Eikenberry was the sole owner.

¹³⁰ This information came from Kenneth White, Vice-President and Sales Manager of J. H. Gwynnes, Inc., April 10, 1954.

years such as Frigidaire at Dayton and the American Central and the Rex Manufacturing Companies of Connersville, Indiana. The local plant employs an average of eighty men and women each day. This industry has been of real value to the community.¹³¹

Despite the fact that several new industries and new mercantile interests have sprung up during the last fifty years. Camden still maintains several businesses that have served the community continuously nearly fifty years or longer. Collet's, Camden's only men's clothing store, is the oldest business firm under the same family ownership not only in Camden but in Preble County.¹³² Burdette Collet, the present owner and proprietor, is the third generation to carry on the clothing business. The Collets have always carried a very good line of merchandise. The town has been fortunate in having such a store in a small community.

The Superior Hardware Store, located on West Central Avenue, is another of Camden's oldest establishments. The store now owned by George S. Craig was started in 1868 by B. M. Fornshell. Mr. Fornshell had a tin shop in 1853 and continued in this work until the Civil War. During the war he closed the shop to fight for the union. Upon his return to Camden he started a hardware store where the Superior Hardware Store is located. Glen Fornshell was taken into the business in 1910, and it became known as B. M. Fornshell and Son. Glen took over the store after his father's death in 1918 and continued until his demise. At that time George Craig inherited the property and business. In 1944 Craig reopened the store and changed the name to Superior Hardware, using the slogan, "Just what the Name Implies—Always to a Product, Never to a Price."

¹³¹ Preble County News, op. cit., April 3, 1952.

¹³² This information came from Burdette Collet, Camden, Ohio, on December 1, 1954.

With the exception of a few years this location has been the site for a hardware store since 1868.¹³³

The Bailey and Son Store which features general groceries and men's work shoes and work clothes had its beginning in the 1870's. It was first owned by Robert Williams and later became the property of his son, Henry Williams, who operated it until his death. Harvey Bailey and son, Clarence, purchased it in 1919 from F. L. Travis who had bought it about two years previously from the Williams' estate. The store has maintained the same location on South Main Street during these eighty or more years.¹³⁴

The South Side Lumber Company which was started in 1902 by the late R. T. Acton is still Camden's main supply of lumber and building materials. It was bought from Mr. Acton in 1911 by the late and beloved Thomas Donohoe who conducted the business until his death. The lumber yard, since 1951, has been in charge of Dwight Donohoe, a son of Tom Donohoe.¹³⁵

The Duskey family has been connected with the hardware business for forty-eight years. R. R. (Dick) Duskey operated a hardware store from March, 1907 until his death nineteen years later. The Camden Hardware Company was established in 1926 by Robert Duskey, a son of the late Dick Duskey, in the same building on the corner of Central Avenue and Second Street where his father had kept store. The Camden Hardware Company, now located on the corner of Main and Central Avenue, is considered the largest and best equipped hardware company in Preble County, besides being distributors for Philgas, a well known bottled gas.¹³⁶

133 Preble County News, op. cit., April 13, 1944; April 3, 1952.

134 Ibid., April 3, 1952.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

Shank's Variety Store on South Main Street has been another leading concern in Camden for over forty years. The store was established by the late Jacob Shank in 1911 as Shank's 5, 10, and 25¢ Store.¹³⁷ It now handles many items worth more than a dollar and some worth more than that. After the death of Mrs. Jacob Shank in 1950, the store has been operated by the sons, Earl and Clarence Shank, who have been connected with the store more than twenty-five years.

Another well established business, the Jessie B. Roberts Store, in August, 1913 had its beginning. Mrs. Roberts first had a millinery store in the front room of her house on South Main Street. She purchased the property just north of her house in 1923 from Mr. Danser. The following year Mr. Danser moved his jewelry store to another building and Mrs. Roberts moved to the room she now occupies. During the forty-two years that Mrs. Roberts has been in business she has gradually increased the items in her store until now she operates a business which could be classified as a small department store.

Although one hundred thirty-seven years have elapsed since the first store was started to serve the village and rural community, the number of business houses and industrial plants have not increased extensively. The town has not grown into a large industrial center but still must be regarded as a rural district. However, it has had enterprising men and women over the years who have continued their establishments. Others have kept abreast of the times by founding new businesses and industries which have enabled them to offer opportunities for employment to many of the citizens.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibid., October 19, 1911.

¹³⁸ For a list of all the business places in Camden in 1955 see Appendix No. II.