

First Settlers in Hamilton Township

In the early years, Hamilton Township included Madison and Marion Township. Madison Township section was formed to its present day area from Hamilton Township in 1810. Marion Township was taken from the northern tier of Hamilton Township in 1873, leaving the present day Hamilton Township Section. The Township contains a number of mounds, or earthworks. On the west bank of the Gahanna River, in Section Thirty-four, on an elevated piece of land, are the remains of an ancient fort, or ditch, which has been almost completely obliterated by the cultivation of the soil. Nearly a mile east of these, on the farm of Thomas M. Clark, are two mounds situated about a quarter of a mile apart, the larger of which is round, and the smaller, oblong. These mounds have been partially excavated to some extent, and implements and human bones have been discovered.

The first settler was, probably, John Dill, who came from Pennsylvania about 1800, and entered twelve hundred acres of land in the northwest part of the Township. He sold half of this tract to Michael Fisher. Mr. Dill became an early Justice of the Township. Mr. Fisher came from Virginia, and lived in the bend of the river, where he ran a sawmill. Mr. Thomas Morris was a surveyor and settled on the river in 1803. He was largely instrumental in the establishment of the Walnut Hill Church. He too, served as Justice of the Peace in the Township.

John Stambaugh and his family came into the Township from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1804. Mr. Stambaugh and his family were farmers in Section three of the Township. Settlers began coming to Hamilton Township and the names of Ferguson Morehead, David Spangler, Samuel Ramsey, George Williams, James Culbertson, John Huff, John Weatherington, William Rohr, Jacob Stoutzenbarger, Arthur O'Harra, Henry Hornbaker, Michael Stimmel, John Plum, John Lisle, Colonel Kilbourne, Frederick Stombaugh, Jacob Shook, and Joshua Betts were all settled in by 1834. Many of these early settlers have current roads named after them and still have family ties to the Township.

Two villages were laid out in Hamilton Township, they were Shadeville and Lockbourne. Colonel Kilbourne established Lockbourne in 1831, and

Shadeville was established by A.G. Hibbs in 1853. The Lockbourne Post Office was established in 1837 and continues today. The Shadeville Post Office was established in 1853 and operated for about ten years. Lockbourne and Shadeville were trading hubs in the area. These villages experienced much commerce with well established sawmills, Doctors, bars, gristmills, and stores.

Hamilton Township and the Ohio Erie Canal

Ohio became a State in 1803 and Hamilton Township became a Township in 1807. The Ohio Erie Canal was built between 1825 - 1847 in the Township. Ohio's canals were dug by hand across the state. The Ohio Erie Canal connected Cleveland to Portsmouth. The canals in Hamilton Township came across Rohr Road and Shook Road to Canal Road, then into Lockbourne. A feeder canal went to Shadeville and the Scioto River. Buckeye Lake is a man-made lake that was created to keep the canals full of water. That water traveled through Canal Winchester, Groveport, and southern Hamilton Township, before turning south toward Portsmouth. Many towns and roads were named after the canal and the commerce that it delivered. In 1855, the railroads began to become a more important means of transportation. The last sections of canals were abandoned in 1913. Canal beds can still be seen in and around Hamilton Township, with locks on Canal Road and the Village of Lockbourne. Locks were used to raise and lower the level of water in the canal to follow the terrain. The canal system was an important part of the development of the Village of Lockbourne and Hamilton Township.

Hamilton Township and the Inter-Urban Line.

The Inter-Urban or "Third Rail" was the next form of transportation that influenced the development of Hamilton Township. This local electric train was in use between 1880 and 1930, and went from Columbus, through Obetz, to Canal Winchester. Reese became a hub for the Inter-Urban train as a repair station, Reese was then known as "Reese Station" and the repair building still stands today. The Inter-Urban system followed Groveport Road from Columbus to Groveport. The Inter-Urban line went over the C. & O. tracks, north of Williams Road as Groveport Road was ground level and to the east of the overpass. The current bridge over the Big Walnut

Creek on Groveport Road has the same piers used by the “Third Rail”. The train bed and several other crossing piers still exist today, as seen on the south side of Groveport Road in Madison Township. A train station stood for many years in Obetz where Veterans Park is today. This village was known as “Obetz Junction”. Many people were hurt or killed as the center rail was electrically charged. If someone touched the center rail and a side rail a circuit was made and the person was electrocuted. This form of transportation was more for the movement of passengers than freight. One of the last cars to travel through Obetz and the Township was car number 703, and it has been refurbished and is on display at the Ohio Railroad Museum in Worthington.

Hamilton Township and the Railroad

Hamilton Township has two major railroad lines that pass through the township from 1910 to today. The Norfolk and Western and the Chesapeake and Ohio railroads run north and south through the township and beside each other in parts. The Steam Engine has been replaced by the current diesel engine, which travels the same tracks today. The Scioto Valley Railroad ran across the northern end of the Township from Columbus to Lancaster. These tracks have been taken over by current railroad companies. The current underpasses were built and drained to the Big Walnut Creek and were built by hand. Many early settlers came from Virginia and worked on the railroads. Reese was laid out by a Virginia settler named Francis Nau, which used Virginia towns, counties, or family names as street names. That is how we have streets with names of Fairfax, Roanoke, Drexel, Todd, and Lisle. “Reese” was named after Amor Rees, an early settler and farmer.

The Hamilton Township Fire Department

On March 31, 1944, the first recorded meeting of the department was called to order. Nominations and elections of officers to serve the Hamilton Township Volunteer Firemen’s Organization was recorded as follows:

President- J.E.Lewis

Vice President- Orin Peck

Treasurer- C.J. Hann

Secretary- E.P. Copley

Sergeant at Arms- L.D. Dowler

The organization then selected D.M. “Jack” Jones as Fire Chief. Chief Jones had the responsibility of building the fire department’s first trucks; a 1939 Dodge Pumper; 1939 Dodge Tanker; and a 1940 Ford Squad, which were in service in 1940 and taken over by the Township, October 9, 1944. The first fire station was located at 50 Obetz Avenue, which was constructed by Chief Jones and many of the firemen.

The fire department was funded in the early days by street fairs, homecomings, dances, and raffles. Many dedicated people have worked long and hard to start and maintain the fire department as we have it today. The Fire Station at 1460 Obetz Road was opened in 1957 because the department could not house all of its equipment in the Obetz Avenue site. The first levy was in 1959 and was assessed throughout the Township.

On June 8, 1960, the fire department employed its first fulltime firefighters; one each shift, 24 hours a day. Their duty shift was 24 hours on and 48 hours off, which is today’s standard for a firefighter’s work schedule. October 12, 1960, Chief Jones resigned for business reasons, and the Township Trustees appointed Ass’t Chief Paul Stimpfle as Chief.

Equipment was changed out and added during Chief Stimpfle’s tenure. Until more fulltime firefighters were added, the department operated with many dedicated volunteer firefighters. Chief Stimpfle added enough trained firefighters to have a fulltime Squad or Engine, in conjunction with the many volunteer firefighters.

Chief Stimpfle retired from the Fire Department in 1987, and the Township Trustees appointed Ass’t Chief Jerry Lupfer as Chief. During Chief Lupfer’s tenure the department continued to add fulltime manpower, as well as up-dating fire equipment. In 1990 the department started its first fulltime paramedic service. In 1993 Chief Lupfer wrote and received a Federal Grant for construction of a second fire station at 6410 Lockbourne Road. In 1997 the department added ladder service to Township. A second Federal Grant was received in 2003 for the purchase of a new fire engine.

The Hamilton Township Fire Department has had several “firsts” in Franklin County, they are:

- 1st to operate a Squad outside of the City of Columbus
- 1st to have and operate a disaster bus
- 1st to have a combination pumper/tanker

1st to have the “Jaws of Life” outside of Columbus
1st to use a Federal Grant to build a fire station

Today’s fire department consists of 20 fulltime firefighter and 22 part-time firefighters. The department is equipped with 3 engines, 1 ladder, 3 medics, 1 grass truck, 1 boat, 1 supply truck, 1 station truck, and 2 staff cars.

Total runs in 1960 were 122 and in 2006 were 2952. Today the fire department enjoys a relationship with the surrounding fire departments that allow each to cover for one another if the primary department is busy.

Hamilton Township Today

Hamilton Township encompasses 16.34 square miles with a nighttime population of 7,950 as of the last United States Census. The services that are provided are Fire, EMS, Police, and Road Maintenance. The Township has a mixture of housing, business, and commercial warehousing. It has two school districts, Hamilton Local and Groveport-Madison. Hamilton Local is the largest district servicing the Township. Hamilton Township has two villages, the Village of Lockbourne and the Village of Obetz. The Village of Obetz should become a “City” by the next Census.

Hamilton Township has many hard working citizens, which live in neighborhoods like Hamilton Meadows, Obetz, Lockbourne, Enchanted Acres, Shadeville, Reese, Walnut Heights, and Steeplechase. Many of these citizens work in one of our 69 warehouses that lay in the Alum Creek Drive corridor from 270 to the Rickenbacker Air Industrial Park. Thousands of people pass through Hamilton Township everyday on the Interstate 270 outer belt.

Family values are an important part of life in Hamilton Township with many churches and places of worship. Friday night football games, Little League baseball, and soccer leagues are well attended. The Columbus Crew Training facility and harness racing at Scioto Downs are located in our Township.

Hamilton Township is governed by the same form of government with the same number of Trustees and Clerk as it was in 1807. Today’s Trustees are Chairman Mr. Shannon Bush, Vice Chairman Mr. Chris Hann, and an open

seat due to the resignation of Jerry Hicks. The Township Trustees have been able to create a “Trash District” which has lowered the waste pick-up fees of all residences. They have also provided the residences with a top notch Fire Department and contracted with the Franklin County Sheriff for Police protection.

They have also created two Township Parks with modern, safe play areas. These parks are used by thousands of children each summer with organized baseball and soccer leagues. The Trustees have also demonstrated a mutual working relationship with other municipalities and county agencies.