



1880 – Crosby's dry goods store (7), now Connolly's Pharmacy, was next to Daniel C. Smith's house (2) and Norman Conrad's (1) house and across Main Street from John Merrill's grocery store (5) and railroad station (6). Behind her store was Daniel C. Smith's stable and a short distance up Main Street was Arthur C. Cummings' livery (4).

Map, J. Hauck, 2015.

History of

South Hamilton's Business Center

Part 2: Connolly's Corner



Connolly's Pharmacy has been the cornerstone of businesses on Railroad Avenue and Bay Road since 1946. Photo, Jack Hauck, 2014

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For more than 100 years, there has been a pharmacy at the corner of Bay Road and Railroad Avenue. The current, and the longest, has been Connolly's Pharmacy. The building is more than 140 years old.

In 1946, Florence E. Connolly of Lynn acquired the property (3,025 sq. ft.) and business.²⁶ She and her husband, Henry, who previously co-owned, for 16 years, a pharmacy in Lynn, wanted to have their own business.⁸

The Hamilton building had a 2-story annex on its south side, where there were two shops.

In the one next to the drug store, there was Hamilton Police station. It moved there in 1941, from the town hall. The station provided police coverage to the most thickly populated parts of town and business district. The office allowed an officer to discuss complaints and problems in private, and not on the street, as they had done previously. It also allowed an officer to be reached by telephone, without having to depend upon telephones of the businesses around the square.³² Edward Frederick (*Chief Southwick's former son-in-law*⁵⁴), was the Police Chief, and there were five other officers. The police station moved, in 1947, across Main Street to two rooms on the second floor of the Hamilton Hardware store building, the

former location of the American Legion.³³

Other businesses to have occupied the annex were: a barbershop, TV store, and a shoe store.⁸

When the Connolly's took over the business, it was more than just a pharmacy. It also had an ice cream and soda fountain, which were in the area that now is to the left of the front door. The ice cream was from Haines-Ce-Brook in Lynn.⁸

As was depicted in the Norman Rockwell painting, soda fountains once were popular places for young people. The Connolly's son, George, was, in the term of the time, the soda jerk; however, George and his cousin, who worked with him, referred to themselves as "fountain engineers." The 12-ft. long, granite-topped counter, with its 5 stools and fountain, was removed in 1959.⁸

Connollys continued to sell ice cream for several more years. One flavor, chocolate chip, was a particular favorite, having large chocolate chips. The ice cream was from Dionne's Ice Cream, in Lynn. Henry Dionne was Florence Connolly's brother.⁸

The business, when acquired, had a full liquor license. The Connollys continued selling beer, wine and other liquors until the early 1980s, when they decided not to renew their license.⁸

Another carryover from the former Conway drug store was Frank O'Connell. A registered pharmacist, he stayed on until retiring in 1957.⁸

Henry Connolly continued to run the pharmacy until 1973, when their son, George, took over the business. In 1999, his son, Chris, followed the family tradition.⁸

Since the Connollys arrived in 1946, many changes have been made to the building's exterior.

In 1973, George Connolly had a door built to connect one of the two shops in the annex and the drug store. It became a card and gift shop. Two years later, 1975, the other shop became part of the gift shop. The new shop had large windows on both sides of its entrance on Bay Road, and a sign hung above the door, "Connolly's Card Shop."⁸

A street-level door at the center of the building led to the second floor offices. Businesses to have occupied the second floor were: hairdresser, realtor, bookkeeper and a financial planner. The later was an original renter and stayed for 25 years.⁸

In 1991, the Connollys added, to the second floor, a large conference room.⁸

The drug store side of the enlarged building had an all-glass front and above the full length of the front, in large letters, was the name, "CONNOLLY'S PHARMACY INC." The display windows showed the full range of items available, in addition to Connolly's basic pharmacy products.

A single awning reached across the front of the building. Although it provided protection from the sun during summer months, the awning had to be retracted when there were strong winds.⁸

In 1989, there was another major alteration to the exterior. The Bay Road façade took on the appearance of four small shops having large bay windows with thick wood framing and solid panels below the

windows (*two of the four sections are the front of the drug store*). Individual, recessed entrances are between each shop. The building is a light slate-gray with cream trim. A low, flat-post railing runs above the large, street-level windows.

The entrance, which always had been on the corner of Bay Road and Railroad Avenue, was moved to the front of the building, on Bay Road. A major factor in this change was that strong winds often blew back the door when it was opened.⁸

In 1991, the building no longer had an awning. A switch to special glass windows that provide protection against the sun's ultraviolet rays eliminated the need for an awning.⁸

Still on the exterior of the store is a Rexall Drugs neon sign (*see 2014 picture*): it hangs at the front of the building, near the corner with Railroad Avenue.

The name Rexall (*king of all*) goes back to 1902, when Louis K. Liggett of Boston brought together forty independent drug stores to create a retailer's cooperative called United Drug Stores, which sold products under the Rexall name. In 1919, the cooperative established franchises, (*the first franchise system in the country*) owned by independent retail shops that carried the Rexall trade name and sold Rexall products.⁶

In 1980, Rexall came to an end when contracts with ten thousand Rexall druggists were cancelled. However, existing franchise retailers were able to keep the Rexall name,⁷ and as is the case of Connolly's, keep the Rexall sign.

The previous pharmacy owner, James H. Conway, was a Rexall franchisee. He bought the property and business, in 1937, from Chester H. Knowles,²⁵ also a Rexall franchisee.⁸ Conway served for many years on the town's school committee, including being its chairman.



In 1980, Connolly's Pharmacy entrance was on corner, the front had large glass windows. Next door, Connolly's card shop was in the street-level store. Photo, George Connolly.



1907, there was a pharmacy in the end store of the brick building to the left of Hannah Sullivan's dry goods store. Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.

Knowles, who retired in 1934, for many years, was Chief of the Hamilton Fire Department.²⁹ The fire station was at the other end of Railroad Avenue, on the corner of Willow Street.

Prior to moving to Hamilton in 1914, Knowles worked, for many years, as a pharmacist in Beverly. He formed a partnership with John H. Moore of Beverly, with whom he had worked as a pharmacist for several years. They bought the Horace E. Andrews drug business that was in the Smith block building on Railroad Avenue.³¹ The Smith block was a large three-story building with many stores and an event hall on the top floor.

Andrews, an apothecary, in 1897 opened the first pharmacy in Hamilton.¹ As an apothecary, Andrews formulated and dispensed medicines to doctors and patients, a role now served by a pharmacist. His store also sold tobacco and patent medicines. There also was a Hamilton library delivery station in Andrews's drug store,

In the mid to late 1800s, there were several apothecary shops in Wenham. Calvin B. Dodge opened the first Wenham apothecary, in 1862. His shop was at 151 Main St. In 1864, he sold his business to Benjamin F. Johnson, who, after a few years, moved the shop to 150 Main St.⁹ James H. Perkins, Jr.,^{1,10} for many years, ran an apothecary shop at 154 Main St.

Knowles' partnership with John H. Moore continued until Dec. 1, 1919, when Knowles purchased Moore's interest in the business.³¹ In 1920, Knowles' wife, Laura, bought the property on the corner of Main and Railroad from John Jones.²³ The Knowles pharmacy on Railroad Avenue moved to the new location.

The property Knowles bought from Jones had three lots: Lot A was where the store was; Lot B was a narrow section behind the store; and Lot C was where John Crosby had a barn.²⁴

Chester Knowles died Nov. 11, 1937. At the time, he was Chairman of the Public Library Trustees, a member of the Water Board, Treasurer of the Community Service and a member of many social and fraternal organizations. He was also a veteran of the Spanish American War.⁴⁰

In 1909, Perley G. Anderson of Hamilton rented the store on the corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue from Jones. When Anderson opened his pharmacy, there already was a pharmacy next door on Main Street, in the "brick block." Run by Henry Brown of Ipswich,¹ the pharmacy closed in 1909.⁴¹

Anderson, who served as a fire engineer and registrar for several years, was the father of Lawrence (Lonnie) E. Anderson. Lonnie was very active on many town committees and played a major roll in establishing the town's water system.

Jones made significant changes to the building during the time he owned it. Between 1908 and 1910, he installed large plate glass windows on the Main Street and Railroad Avenue sides (*see 1910 picture*). This change likely was influenced by the large glass plate windows on the recently built (1900) Appleton building (*aka, the brick block*), a short way back on Main Street.

Jones also installed a single, cantilevered awning above the windows and one of similar design above the window on Railroad Avenue,

By 1902, awnings had become very popular in Hamilton. To its bylaws, the town added that year: "No person shall place or maintain over any street or sidewalk any sign, awning, shade or other obstruction unless the same is safely and securely supported and not less than eight feet from the ground at its lowest part and such awning, for any other purpose without permission from the selectmen."⁵



1910 – Anderson's pharmacy on corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue. Steps at corner entrance were gone.
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.



1900 - Main Street, a new building (*left*), called the brick block, was built with four stores. Wood fence was gone.
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.

Another change, during the time Jones owned the property, was the removal of the store's entrance steps. The town's raising of the sidewalk level eliminated the need for steps. The entrance, however, remained on the corner.

This likely happened in 1908, when the town rebuilt the sidewalks along Main Street.³⁰ The 1910 picture appears to show the sidewalk was slightly tilted away from the building. Also, the street curbing was high.

Likely part of the town's new sidewalk program in 1908 was the removal of the wood panel fence that previously was along the side of Main Street and stretching back into Wenham (see 1891 picture).

John Jones acquired the property in 1908 from Arthur Cummings,²⁴ who also owned a very successful livery stable, a short distance north on Main on Street. Earlier in 1908, Cummings purchased the property (\$2,400) from the estate of Hannah B. Sullivan (*she never married*).²¹

Hannah Sullivan, prior to her death in 1908,⁴² acquired the property in 1906 from the estate of William Crosby,²⁰ who died in 1904.³⁹ William Crosby purchased the property in 1889.¹⁹

Hannah, who was born in England, began working in the dry goods store about 1884. The shop carried cloth, fabrics, fancy goods, laces, ribbons, and

thread, and also offered soft drinks, candy, fruit, and cigars.¹

Photos from the 1890s show a row of trees along both sides of Main Street, in this area. In Hamilton, George L. von Meyer planted, at his own expense, many of the trees (*Rock Maples: A 10-year-old tree, typically is about 16 ft. tall, and ultimately can reach 100 ft.*).⁵

In 1902, the state legislature passed an act requiring every town to elect a Tree Warden, who would have the care of shade trees on the highways. Otis F. Brown was Hamilton's first Tree Warden.⁵

The establishing of the Tree Warden position was for a noble cause, i.e., preserving the rural atmosphere. However, while trees, such as the Rock Maple, normally live a great many years, covering nearly all the area above their roots with concrete sidewalks and asphalt roads destined the trees to not last very long. By 1946, there no longer was a tree in front of the Bay Road pharmacy building.⁸

Sometime after 1891, a two-story addition, with two street-level shops, was erected next to the building on the corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue. There was room for the building, since the William Crosby property had a frontage of 60-ft. on Main Street, and the dry-goods building was only 24 ft. wide.



1891 – Dry goods store, owned by William Crosby, was on corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue. In 1909, it would become, for the first time, a pharmacy run by Perley Anderson.

Photo, courtesy of Wenham Museum.

A 1900 photo is the first to show the existence of the building and its two shops.³⁴ A 1907 photo shows Albert (*Bert*) Holland of Hamilton had his barbershop in the annex.³⁵

The two shops shared a center entrance. Each shop had an awning over its window. A tree and a utility pole were directly in front. On the south side, there was a narrow strip of land separating the building from the new brick block building.

The introduction of streetcar service along the County Road (*then Main Street and now Bay Road*), in 1885, and earlier, in 1862, the building of a railroad station fostered the growth of commerce and building of new stores in this part of Hamilton and the creation of new jobs.

The workers found a close place to live at the building of the corner of the County Road and Grove Street (*now Railroad Avenue*). Several rooms, on the second floor, generally were rented to men working at businesses in the area. In 1888, Charles and Joseph Abbott, railroad employees, roomed there.²

Up to when the two-story annex was built, William Crosby's dry goods store was the only business on the west side of Main Street (*see map on pg. 1*). On the east, there was the B & M Railroad Station; also a two-story building, in which on the street level Lester Libby had a real estate and insurance business and Charles Holmes had a lunchroom.³⁶

In 1891, the building's owner, William Crosby, made several changes. As shown in a photo taken by Benjamin H. Conant, Crosby enclosed the front porch, added a large glass window, and placed an awning above the window.⁹

The 1891 photo⁹ also shows a street lamp at the corner of Liberty (*Main*) Street and Rail Road Avenue. William Crosby most likely erected the light, since the town did not begin placing lights on Main Street until 1902.⁵

Before Crosby purchased the property, in 1889 from Frank Seabury of Boston.¹⁹ Seabury purchased the property the previous year, 1888, from Daniel G. Smith of Hamilton.¹⁸ Both these transactions mention buildings on the lot, and that it had a frontage on the County Road of about 60 ft.

Smith purchased the property, in 1886, from Lester E. Libby of Hamilton,¹⁷ who had acquired it in 1884 from Charles Baker.²⁸

No records have been found indicating when William Crosby opened his store. However, Janice Pulsifer, in her book *Changing Times*, wrote that in 1884, "Hannah's" store had a waiting area for users of the Naumkeag streetcar.¹ The waiting room likely closed in 1931, when the streetcar service ended. (*NOTE: In her book, Changing Times, ¹ Janice G. Pulsifer men-*

tions Hannah Crosby with regard to the dry goods store; however, a death document⁴² and deed documents^{20, 21} only refer to a Hannah B. Sullivan with regard to this property.)

The previous property owner, Charles Baker of Salem, acquired it in 1864 from Joseph Andrews of Boston.³⁷ The deed indicates there were houses on the property, but not their location.

Jack E. Hauck, updated Mar. 1, 2020

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