



By 1910, Railroad Avenue already had many merchant shops and a 3-story block of stores. Electric streetcar service, begun in 1895, provided convenient transportation to the town's new business center. Map, Walker, 1910.

## South Hamilton's Business Center

### Part 4: Railroad Avenue

Grove Street, the original name for what is now Railroad Avenue, only ran from Main Street (now Bay Road) to Willow Street.<sup>5</sup> It was a narrow dirt road, which was not an accepted town way. Created soon after the Asbury Grove Camp-ground opened, in 1860, Grove Street provided a short cut to Asbury Grove from the Eastern Railroad depot.



Grove Street likely ran along boundary line between properties owned by Daniel C. Smith and John Trefry. Map, J. Hauck, 2015

The makeshift path to the Grove likely ran along the boundary line between properties then owned by Daniel C. Smith and John Trefry. In 1865, Smith owned the land on south side of the road back to Willow Street<sup>182</sup> and Trefry owned the land on north side.<sup>204</sup>

It is not surprising that some businesses soon opened on Grove Street, offering people going to the Asbury campground food and other supplies. Furthermore, those that came by their own wagons would occasionally need repairs by a wagonsmith.

In 1892, the town renamed Grove Street Railroad Avenue.<sup>40</sup> Town records do not indicate why the name was changed. The new street name was the way to the railroad depot, whereas the old name was the opposite way, i.e., toward Asbury Grove, in the West District.

In 1886, horse-drawn streetcar service came to Hamilton. The Naumkeag Street Railway extended its line, from Beverly, through Wenham, along Main Street\* and into Hamilton, where Main Street became Liberty Street.\* The rail line turned onto Grove Street, next onto Willow Street



**Electric streetcars**, in 1891, called rounders, passed through the business district until 1931.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society



**Streetcar tracks**, in 1908, lower right corner, were on the north side of Railroad Avenue until 1935.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.

and, then, along Asbury Street to reach a station at the front of the Asbury Grove Camp Ground. In 1895, electric streetcar service began.<sup>1</sup> (*Tracks ran along the north side of Railroad Avenue.*)

Use of the streetcar service to Asbury Grove increased steadily. With more people using the streetcar, the railroad spur to Asbury Grove was abandoned in 1901, after 30 years of service.<sup>1</sup>

In 1903, an indication of the increased traffic on Railroad Avenue was placing a streetlight near the Main Street corner.<sup>43</sup>

In 1910, to handle more traffic, the selectman granted a request of merchants, led by Norman Conrad, who owned a fish market on the street, to expand the width of the narrow dirt street (*road and sidewalks*) to 46 feet, from Main to Willow.<sup>46</sup> (*In 2020, the street per se is 30 ft. wide, from sidewalk to sidewalk.*)

The widening only was done on the south side, since there were streetcar tracks on the north side. The widening reduced the width of the south sidewalk, which upset the merchants.

In 1916, the town paved the dirt street with macadam.<sup>48</sup> 56 years later, 1972, it was hot-topped.<sup>66</sup>

Prior to 1931, Railroad Avenue did not have a public water supply. Water came from individual wells. In many instances, windmill powered wells pumped water into indoor and outdoor storage tanks.<sup>1</sup>

For fire protection of the businesses, the town laid, in 1931, a water pipeline, with four hydrants, along the street's south side. The water came from the railroad water tank and well, at the depot. The program resulted in a reduction in insurance rates.<sup>78</sup>

At the time, town bylaws did not have any restriction regarding parking near a fire hydrant. In 1948, the town established a bylaw prohibiting parking "Upon any street or highway within ten (10) feet of a fire hydrant." For Railroad Avenue, this resulted in a significant loss of parking space.

Town records do not indicate when the hydrants were removed. However, in a 1977 photo, no hydrants are shown along the street. Currently, hydrants are at the intersections of Railroad Avenue with Bay Road and Willow Street.

The town, in 1898, built a gravel sidewalk on Railroad Ave. from Main Street to the School House on the Railroad Avenue extension, and also alongside Willow Street to Asbury Street. (*Town Annual Reports do not mention if the Town purchased the land for the sidewalks.*)

With the sidewalks directly alongside the street, stone curbing was an essential safety precaution. In 1907, installation of curbing began.

\* In 1953, Main Street was renamed Bay Road.

+ Until 1890, the initial portion of the road in Hamilton, from the end of Main Street, in Wenham to Walnut Street, was called Liberty Street.





**Hannah Sullivan's store** on the corner of Main and Railroad. Behind it, on Railroad, in 1900, were: John Crosby's barn, Barker's store, and the 3-story Smith block. Railroad Avenue had a paved sidewalk and a streetlight, one of the town's first. Photo, courtesy Wenham Museum.

Before 1943, some Railroad Avenue property deeds included a provision for 5 feet in width of the granted premises along Railroad Avenue be always left open for use as a public sidewalk. These were, at first, dirt paths, but later they had a crushed stone surface.

In 1931, the town built a permanent sidewalk of tar-concrete construction on the north side of Railroad Avenue, from Main Street to Willow Street.<sup>78</sup> The same was done on the south side in 1935.<sup>56</sup>



**Metal bench**, in front of parking lot at corner of Willow Street and Railroad Avenue, was added in 2015. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

Streetcar service to Asbury Grove ended in 1931. Four years later, 1935, the town removed the tracks and installed new curbing. The 1932 Emergency Relief Act (E. R. A.) paid for removal of the tracks. Hamilton's highway funds paid for installing the curbstones.<sup>56</sup>

Removal of the rail tracks solved a parking problem.<sup>44</sup> The tracks were alongside the sidewalk on the north side of the street, and cars were allowed to park only next to the tracks, in effect, in the middle of the street.

Flooding, during spring, was a major problem for Railroad Avenue, due to the high water table. It was not until 1940, that the Highway Department installed drainage pipe.<sup>58</sup>

Railroad Avenue was further improved in 1949, when Hamilton's Highway Department laid an asphalt road, covered with a pea-stone finish.<sup>59</sup> In 1963, hot topping was applied for the first time.<sup>64</sup>

Railroad Avenue remained a two-way road until 1979, when it became a one-way street.<sup>67</sup> Recommendations to make this change began 30 years earlier.

Parking has long been a major problem for businesses on this street. In 1947, the town made a study of the traffic and parking conditions, from which recommendations were submitted to the selectmen. Little was done. More studies in following years had the same results.

A 1965 Zoning Bylaw required service establishments and retail businesses to provide one 300 sq. ft. parking space for each 100 sq. ft. of floor area, excluding basement storage areas. Further, off-street parking and loading spaces are to be on the same lot as the building, or, in the case of parking spaces, on other premises, within 200 ft. of the business.<sup>76</sup>



**Cleveland pear trees** were planted, in 2013, on both sides of the street. In 2015, a metal bench was placed in front of the post office.

Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.

In 2005, the town changed the bylaw to require businesses and professional offices to have 3 parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of floor space. Medical and dental offices are to have 4 parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of floor space.<sup>73</sup>

In effect, the bylaws required businesses to provide more parking places in an area in which there is no room for more parking places. Some years later, the town began allowing businesses, that did not have sufficient parking spaces on their property, to lease parking spaces at other locations in the general business area.

Besides parking, sewerage has been and is a major concern for merchants. Each merchant installed their own septic system, several at a very high cost.

In 2004, the selectmen appointed an Economic Development Committee charged with the "evaluation of the economic feasibility of developing and installing shared septic systems for some or all of the Hamilton downtown business district." The program's aim was to enhance land values and spur business.<sup>72</sup>

In 2006, the EDC reported the cost of a small wastewater treatment and disposal system along Railroad Avenue and the block south of Railroad Avenue, was very high.<sup>59</sup> The idea went dormant.

In 2015, the town placed a metal bench by the parking lot, and one in front of the post office. Two years earlier, 16 Cleveland

pear trees were planted on both sides of the street. Previously, 3 red Norway maples were planted.

Also in 2015, a bylaw amendment allowed mixed residential and businesses uses on a single property. With the amendment, property owners downtown can add apartments above their businesses. Opponents to the bylaw said it would increase traffic and safety issues, and hurt the downtown's "village character."<sup>310</sup>

Several buildings on Railroad Avenue, in 2016, are the original wood structures; however they all have had many changes. Original buildings are: 44 (*built 1891*), 34 (*built 1908*), 40 (*built 1908*), 31 (*built 1916*), 61 (*built 1920*), and 65 (*built 1920*).

During the past 155 years of its existence, more than 150 businesses have sought success along this street. These entrepreneurs opened their shops providing more than 80 different forms of customer service, most of which being eating establishments.



**Fifteen buildings** on Railroad Avenue, in 2015: include the one on the corner of Bay Road.

Map J. Hauck, 2015



From 1980 to 2020, business changes occurred more frequently than they had in any previous decade. In each of these decades, there were 15 to 20 changes.

Business changes on Railroad Avenue reflect changes in the town's culture from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Customers went to groceries before super markets; taverns before restaurants; lunchrooms before fast food. Newspapers and magazines before the Internet; and to repair shops before the throwaway age began.

While the following covers the history of businesses at each street number, it was not until 1936, that Hamilton assigned numbers to the town's properties.<sup>294</sup> Previously, owner's names were used to identify an address, e.g., Crosby's on Railroad.

## 22 Railroad Ave.

On Railroad Avenue, at 22 Railroad Ave., is Natural Dog, a pet supply store that opened in December 2019. Owner Dawn Price had been in the pet food industry for nearly 20 years. Price and Jeff Sirois, of Beverly, also own a Natural Dog store in Newburyport.

Previously, Carparts Distribution Center, a wholesale supplier of automotive parts, headquartered in Plaistaw, NH. Was here. It opened in 2013.

Prior to Carparts, James (*Bud*) K. Knowlton of Salisbury ran J & T Auto Parts. Opening in 1976,<sup>197</sup> he initially, leased the building for his business. (*The*

*awning over the front windows of Car parts still - 2015 - has " J & T Auto Parts."*)

Chebacco Realty Trust of Essex, in 1982, sold the property to J & T Auto,<sup>207</sup> which, in 1984, transferred it to Bud's wife, Carol A. Knowlton, a trustee of P.A.P.S. Realty Trust of Hamilton.<sup>199</sup> In 2013, Knowlton, then trustee of J&C Realty Trust, assigned the property to the Institution of Savings in Newburyport,<sup>64</sup> from whom Carparts Distribution leased the building.<sup>83</sup>

The ownership of properties on Railroad Avenue by realty trusts, rather than ownership by individuals is one of the major changes that have occurred during the 1900s. Created by the U.S. Congress in 1960, a commercial real estate investment trust is a company that owns and often operates income-producing real estate. Key benefits of such a trust are: owner privacy, avoiding lawsuits, ease of transfer, and sale price confidentiality.

Chebacco Realty Trust, in 1975, bought the property from Ralph J. Vitale of Hamilton.<sup>180</sup> Vitale had a produce market, Hamilton Fruit. In 1971, he acquired the business and property from Joseph Govoni of Beverly.<sup>179</sup>

The closing of the produce store at 22 Railroad Ave. was the tolling of the bell for the independent grocery business. There had been a grocery store at this location for more than 3 decades. Strong



**Natural Dog**, opened at 22 Railroad Ave., in December 2019. Photo, J. Hauck, 2019



**Carparts Distribution Center** opened at 22 Railroad Ave., in 2013 Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

competition from the IGA Supermarket and Harvest Market, at the nearby Hamilton shopping center, likely played a part in the short life of Vitale's store.

Govoni, for 12 years (1959 to 1971), had a produce business at 22 Railroad Ave. It was popularly known as the "green grocery." It was the end of an era for the Govoni family, which began in the grocery business in 1906, in Salem.<sup>18</sup> Govoni previously had his business at 34 Railroad Ave. (16 yrs.) and 40 Railroad Ave. (6 yrs.): a total of 34 years. He lived another 34 years, dying in April 2005, at 96.<sup>29</sup>

Jovial Joe had many loyal customers. His old-fashioned business approach provided charge accounts and delivery. Early each day, he went to Boston markets to buy produce and also to a bakery in Beverly, for Italian bread.<sup>29</sup>

Before Govoni, First National Stores had a grocery at 22 Railroad Ave. The company bought the property, in 1932, from Laura A. Knowles of Hamilton.<sup>68</sup> In 1937, her husband,

Chester, sold a narrow lot between his corner lot on Main Street to First National, enlarging the property to its current size, 45-ft. front and 60-ft. depth.<sup>245</sup>

First National Stores (*later known as Finast*) erected a brick building. An indication of a Mason erecting the building may

be the chalice relief near the front roof peak. This was the first regional grocery to open in Hamilton. Previously, a First National Store was in Smith block on Railroad Avenue.

By shopping at a First National Store, customers could buy their produce, meat and other groceries at one store, rather than going to a butcher, baker, grocer and produce shop.

For many years, Adrien Chénard was the store manager at 20 Railroad Ave.; he also took care of customers buying groceries, which were kept on the left side of the store. On the right side, his brother Leo handled customers buying meat.<sup>270</sup> In the center, fruit and produce were available.<sup>316</sup>

Grocery stores then operated differently than today's self-service markets. Clerks stood behind counters and in front of floor to ceiling shelves. Customers asked a clerk to give them the packaged food. To reach items on high shelves, the clerk used a pole with a hand-activated grabber on one end. Each item selected was placed on the counter and the clerk, using a pencil, wrote its cost on a paper bag. The clerk added the costs without using a cash register.

Before the First National Stores, Michael J. O'Keefe, born in Ireland, had a grocery at 20 Railroad Ave. He founded the chain of First National Stores.<sup>316</sup>



**Small grocery stores**, like First National Stores shown here, had shelves filled with canned and boxed products. Photo, Times Past,  
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1900.



**John Crosby's barn** was on Grove Street well before merchant shops were built.  
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1900.



A previous single-story building on the lot had two stores. On one side, for many years, Lester M. Whipple of Hamilton, who was a general contractor,<sup>316</sup> had an office, where he also had a coal sales business. He took orders for deliveries to be made from the Salem coal yard.<sup>283, 285</sup> Whipple bought the business from George

W. Pickering of Salem, who reportedly had the largest retail coal business north of Boston.<sup>286</sup>

On the other side, Frank L. Cushman of Hamilton had a clock and watch repair business.<sup>283</sup> One job that likely kept Cushman busy was repairing pocket watches: at the time, many men carried pocket watches that had been handed down from previous generations.

Laura A. Knowles, in 1920, bought the property from John Jones of Hamilton.<sup>287</sup> It stretched 100 ft. along Railroad Avenue, from Main Street. Chester Knowles owned a pharmacy on the corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue, 44 Main St. (*now Bay Road*), and which occupied the first 55 ft. along Railroad Avenue.<sup>67</sup>

Originally, a large barn and a windmill-powered well, owned by William Crosby of Hamilton, were on the lot behind the corner store. Until 1930, the well was the only source of water for extinguishing fires on the street.<sup>78</sup>

Crosby, an Irish immigrant (1856), leased the property, during the early 1900s, to Edward A. Lane of Hamilton, who had a wagon paint shop. Lane likely moved to Railroad Avenue following the 1910 fire that destroyed the Mill Street area, where he previously had his paint shop.<sup>33</sup> In the 1890s, James C. Daniels of Hamilton leased the barn. He also had a paint shop.<sup>02</sup>

Irishman Crosby was one many immigrants to own or work at shops on Railroad Avenue. They came from Germany, Ireland, Poland, England, Canada, and China. The decades surrounding 1900 were not only the industrial age, they also were the age of immigration. In 1920, more than a third of Americans were immigrants.<sup>298</sup>

Crosby acquired the property, in 1889, from Frank Seabury of Boston.<sup>246</sup> The prop-

erty was part of a larger site that stretched back from Liberty Street (*now Bay Road*) along Grove Street to what is now 40 Railroad Ave.<sup>182</sup>

The 2015 assessors map of the Railroad Avenue area shows 22 Railroad Ave. slightly on the adjoining property, 30 Railroad Ave. Other buildings on Railroad Avenue also are shown to stretch across adjoining property lines.<sup>211</sup>

These problems may be related to the starting points for all the Railroad Avenue properties were based on the point at which Grove Street began from the edge of Liberty Street. An 1883 deed, by which Charles Baker of Salem sold the property to John Trefry of Waltham, shows the land was bounded by the County Road, "by about six rods" (*a rod is 16 ft. 6 in.*) and goes on to list other dimensions using the word "about."<sup>197</sup> There is no mention of the County Road's width. It was not until 1908 that the state established the boundaries of the road.<sup>324</sup>

The 1906 deed,<sup>83</sup> for the estate of Crosby sold 22 Railroad Ave. to Hannah B. Crosby had a clause calling for 5 ft. on the Railroad Avenue side to be a right of way for a sidewalk. The same clause was part of the deeds for other Railroad Avenue properties. As late as 1969, the deed for selling the Jeremiah J. Carey property (*49 Railroad Ave.*) to John J. Wallace had the 5-ft. exclusion for a town sidewalk.<sup>148</sup>

### 30 Railroad Ave.

The building, which has two stores, is 68 ft. deep, longer than any other building on this side of the street. A narrow space separates it from the building at 22 Railroad Ave., but there is no space separating it from 30 Railroad Ave.

Through 2016, there have been more businesses, 19, at this location than any other store on Railroad Ave, 11 being involved with food service.

Gourmet Delights Catering opened at 30 Railroad Ave., in March 2016. Roxann and Louis Torelli, who began their catering business in 1997, previously had a store at 40 Asbury St.



**C. L. Nails (left) and Jumbo House (right)**  
were at 30 Railroad Ave. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

the start of 2015, two businesses were at 30 Railroad Ave.: the Chinese restaurant, Jumbo House, on the right side, and C. L. Nails Spa, on the left.

Jumbo House opened for the second time at 30 Railroad Ave., in 2011, in the store that now is Gourmet Delights Catering. The restaurant first was here from 2006 to 2008. It returned after being at 15 Walnut St., for 3 years. However, in September 2015, the restaurant again closed. The end of Jumbo House was the end of Chinese food on Railroad Avenue.

Prior to Jumbo re-opening, there were a couple of attempts at establishing upscale restaurants at 30 Railroad Ave. In 2003, Greg Leavitt of Danvers ran the Myopia Café. His restaurant, which opened at 4 p.m. for dinner, had only 6 tables, and a small bar with 6 stools, Entrees cost from \$16-24.<sup>21</sup> The Myopia Café closed in 2004.

Before the Myopia Café, Robert "Bow" Borsetti of Hamilton owned Dante's Restaurant. Featuring an Italian menu, it opened in 2000<sup>278</sup> and closed in 2002.<sup>251</sup>

Many people have opened lunchrooms in this building, including: Fuzzy's, Mickey's, Buz' and Bonnie's. These lunchrooms were gathering places for locals. In the mornings, people on their way to work stopped for breakfast or perhaps just a coffee and doughnut. Then at noon, the lunchroom served both shoppers and store workers on their lunch break. Prices were low and gossip was abundant.



**Paper Store**, built in 1937, for many years had a very popular lunchroom. Photo, Times Past.

Preceding C. L. Nails, which opened in June 2007,<sup>210</sup> was Making Faces, selling cosmetics. Owned by Annie Loomis of Portsmouth, Making Faces was here from 2006 to 2007.<sup>14</sup>

Simply Floral, owned by Ellen Duffy of Hamilton, preceded Making Faces. Prior to opening her florist shop, she managed a paper store and lunchroom that also was here, when the building had only one store. In 2006, Duffy moved her business to 54 Railroad Ave.<sup>278</sup>

In 2000, David Cutter, trustee of Railroad Cutter Realty Trust, bought the property from Margaret A. (Peggy) Crockett.<sup>106</sup> It is part of a larger property that also includes a 12,000-sq. ft. lot behind it, part of the former Earl E. Johnson property.



**Newspaper store** at 30 Railroad Ave., 1970,  
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society



Cutter converted what had been a single store into two stores. He also changed the front of the building, adding a half-circle window to the paneled wood area below the roof peak, business signs above both stores and a sign below the roof peak to recall the original business and when the building was erected: "1937 Paper Store." While there now are two stores in the building, it has only one street number, 22 Railroad Ave.

Dante's and Simply Floral were first to occupy the refurbished building.<sup>278</sup>

For the previous 20 years, Peggy Crockett owned the building and property.<sup>156</sup> She had a paper store and lunchroom, which her brother, Neil, began in 1957.

The paper store's business took on a startling new service in 1992. Despite the objections of some townspeople and nearby business owners, the town approved Peggy Crockett's opening of a gun store, in the paper store's basement.<sup>322,</sup>

<sup>253</sup> The first in Hamilton, it closed when she sold the property, in 2000.

Peggy Crockett acquired the building and property, in 1980, from her brother, Neil.<sup>156</sup> The deed lists the price as her "love and affection." Neil and his wife, Margaret, moved to Vermont. Peggy had been running the store since 1977.

From 1970 to 1977, Phil Hanson of Hamilton leased the building. He ran a paper store, in which there was a lunch counter. Business must have been good, since Hanson had two women working with him behind the counter. Patrons to Phil's place, of whom there were many, knew two things: there would be good food and a lot of good-natured kidding, and there might also be the latest gossip about the two towns.<sup>30</sup>

Before Hanson, Neil T. Crockett, who owned the Hamilton-Wenham News Agency, a newspaper distribution service, ran the shop.<sup>30</sup> Food service at 30 Railroad Ave. began in 1958, when Crockett added the lunch counter. Previously, this was a paper store that also sold cigarettes, candy and soda.<sup>30</sup>

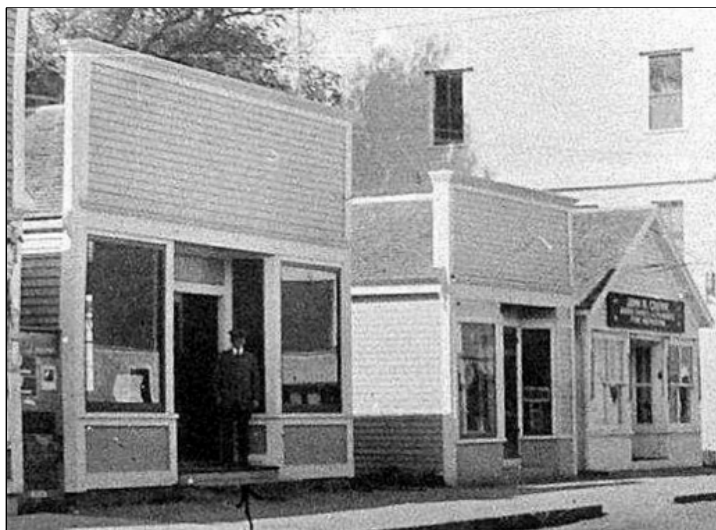
With the change to a lunchroom, the store became a favorite for local people for breakfast and lunch. Occasionally, Gen. George Patton IV had his morning coffee at Crockett's.<sup>30</sup>

Neil Crockett bought the business in 1957 from Samuel S. Conary, a Wenham selectman from 1931 to 1947.<sup>205</sup> Conary left the selectman's office, in 1947, to buy the paper store and property from Earl E. Johnson of Hamilton, for whom he had worked for many years.<sup>107</sup> Two years after

selling the property, Conary again was elected a Wenham selectman: he continued in the office until 1968.<sup>36</sup>

In 1937, Johnson razed the original building and erected the current building. He opened a store selling Boston and local newspapers, as well as candy, ice cream, tonic, magazines, and tobacco.<sup>203</sup>

For many people, a visit to the paper store on Railroad Avenue was a daily must. They knew when the morning and afternoon Boston newspapers would be dropped off. They would get the papers, perhaps have a coffee or cold tonic, and chit-chat with locals. Many pun-



**False fronts**, like those on the buildings at 34 and 40 Railroad Ave., common in early 1900s, gave the impression of a mercantile building. Photo, Hamilton Historic Society, 1917.

ditions were eager to tell things like they really were, or as years later, on his national radio program, Paul Harvey, would say, "And now you know the rest of the story."

Near the paper store's entrance, Johnson and subsequent owners kept a red, wood, wheelbarrow. Some people would sit on the wagon, when its sidewalls were removed, and read the day's paper; however, its main use was to cart bundles of the day's Boston newspapers from the train depot.<sup>30</sup>

Clarence Bland, an elderly man who worked on Ayer estate, was often sitting on the wagon in front of the paper store. Bland was a source of many "quirky tales" about days gone by in Hamilton. Along side of Bland was an old Bassett hound, called Walter and owned by the Ayers. Most people knew that a call to the Ayers' estate would bring a chauffeur to bring the old dog home.

Essential to the success of many Railroad Avenue retail businesses was high "foot traffic." The more foot traffic ... people walking along the street ... the more sales can be. People living in the surrounding houses use to take strolls along Railroad Avenue. Here, they could borrow a book at the library branch, enjoy an ice cream sundae, pickup a newspaper, meet a friend for breakfast or lunch, see the latest model Chevrolet, buy a birthday card, or get a few groceries.



**Red wheelbarrow**, front of 30 Railroad Ave., served as a bench for people having coffee.

Photo, Times Past.

Johnson's paper store also was the distribution center for newspapers to houses in Wenham and Hamilton. He hired boys to deliver papers to assigned routes.

Ed Haraden of Hamilton, who in 1965 would become Wenham's police chief, recalls going to the paper store to pickup papers for delivery. His route was from Hamilton Ave. to Asbury St., then Maple, Park and Asbury to the curve beyond the church. With money from his paper deliveries, he bought his first bicycle. The bike helped him deliver the papers faster.<sup>203</sup>

In 1936, Earl Johnson, who was Hamilton's Assistant Fire Chief, bought the property from Francis L. MacPherson of Salem.<sup>132</sup> He and his wife, Florence, lived in a house back of the stores.<sup>203</sup> They owned the large lot (90,214 sq. ft. acres) that is between properties along Linden Street, in Wenham, and Railroad Avenue.<sup>185</sup>

The original building at 30 Railroad Ave. (*built in 1908*) was a small, one-story structure, with a false front. Commercial buildings with false fronts were popular in the late 1800s and into 1900s. The vertical extension with a simple cornice, above the building's roofline, gave the impression of a larger commercial structure.

Larry Stone, who was a Hamilton Selectman from 1940 to 1973, said, in 1979, he remembered when the previous building was a "hot dog stand."<sup>29</sup>

In the 1890s, James B. Gibney of Wenham rented the building for his Hamilton Market, where he sold meats, vegetables, butter, lard, eggs, and canned goods.<sup>1</sup> At the time, Frederic Stanton had a market across the street and Sidney Gould had a market at the other end of Railroad Avenue on Willow Street.

Previous property owners included: Albert E. Allen of Beverly (1924),<sup>174</sup> James W. Goodridge of Hamilton, (1922-24),<sup>175</sup> George F. Pendexter of Hamilton (1921-22),<sup>176</sup> and John Crosby of Hamilton (1889-1920).<sup>102</sup>





**Dr. Leonard Nolan**, and his son, Dr. Leonard Nolan, Jr., were dentists at 34 Railroad Ave. 1973 to 1994. Photo, Times Past, 1990.



**Dentist, Dr. Lisa Murray** opened her office at 34 Railroad Ave., in 2001. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

### 34 Railroad Ave.

Since 1973, a dentist office has been at 34 Railroad Ave. The current (2020) dentist, Dr. Lisa J. Murray, opened in 2001. When she acquired the property, she lived in Beverly.<sup>110</sup>

Previous dentists at this location were: Dr. J. Peter St. Clair of Rowley (1997-2000);<sup>104</sup> Dr. Stanislav O. Tokarev of Rowley (1994-97);<sup>9</sup> and Dr. Leonard F. Nolan, Sr. of Danvers and Dr. Leonard F. Nolan, Jr. of Essex (1973-94).<sup>97</sup> All of them owned the property.

Dr. Nolan, Jr., in 1973, bought the property from Barbara S. (DeAngelis) Zakas of Beverly.<sup>203</sup> She did not have a business here: she bought it as an investment. She removed the building's false front and enlarged and recessed the front entrance.

In addition to business owners buying Railroad Avenue properties, there have been many people that bought properties as investments. They expected property values, along this busy street, to increase and that rents would cover taxes and maintenance costs.

DeAngelis bought the property from Joseph P. Govoni, in 1967.<sup>195</sup> From 1953

to 1967, Govoni, who had a grocery next door, leased the building.<sup>135, 195</sup>

Since 1938, he had a meat, fruit and vegetable store at 34 Railroad Ave.<sup>18</sup> For the first 5 years, he rented the property from Mary Crosby, before buying it from her in 1943.<sup>128</sup> Prior to opening his own business, Govoni worked at his parent's grocery, in Salem.<sup>31</sup>

A week after he opened his business, Sep. 22, 1938, the first major hurricane in New England since 1869 passed through Hamilton. Called the Yankee Clipper and also the Long Island Express, the storm fortunately did not damage Govoni's store, as it did several other stores on the other side of the street.<sup>31</sup>

This was the first of Govoni's three grocery stores on Railroad Avenue. In 1953, he moved next door to 40 Railroad Ave.,<sup>135</sup> and, in 1959, he moved to his last location, at 22 Railroad Ave.

John Crosby opened the first store at 34 Railroad Ave. In 1908, he built the single-story building. Like those at 30 and 40 Railroad Ave., the building had a false front and an entrance at the center and large windows on both sides of the front door.



**Hamilton House of Pizza** opened at 40 Railroad Ave. in 1984. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.

### 40 Railroad Ave.

Hamilton House of Pizza, owned by Stavros Kesaris of Burlington, opened in 1984. As of 2016, this is the longest current business on the street, having opened a year before the post office opened, across the street.

From 1978 to 1984, this was the Marconi Radio store.<sup>154, 162</sup> Phillip LoPiccolo of Gloucester, the owner, sold hi fi and stereo equipment. LoPiccolo sold the property to Kesaris<sup>162</sup> and moved his business to Beverly.<sup>290</sup> LoPiccolo bought from the property from Anthony Linares of Hamilton,<sup>154</sup> who had a pizza business. He opened Tony's Pizza House, in 1967.

It took a long time for the pizza to come to Railroad Avenue. Before the 1940s, pizza consumption was limited mostly to Italian neighborhoods in large cities. Widespread consumption came after World War II. American troops in Italy enjoyed eating pizza pie slices. By the 1960s, pizzerias were everywhere. Even Popeye the Sailor, when not eating his spinach, ate pizza.<sup>296</sup> In 1967, during the filming, in Hamilton, of scenes for the crime movie, the Thomas Crown Affair, Steve McQueen had a pizza at Linares' shop.<sup>270</sup>

Pizzerias originally were places where you went to eat a pizza. You would pop in for a quick meal. Then, people started ordering pizza by phone and picking them up



**Bricks forming "T"** are a reminder of Tony's Pizza House that was at 40 Railroad Ave. from 1967-78. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016.

to enjoy at home. Now, home delivery is very popular. There no longer is very much foot-traffic along Railroad Avenue that is important to many types of businesses, particularly retail establishments.

Linares, who bought the property from Barbara D. Zakas of Beverly,<sup>146</sup> made major changes to the building. He increased the footprint of the building with a 7-ft. extension, set back 3 ft. on the side next to 34 Railroad Ave., where there had been a right of way.<sup>127</sup> A brick front, with the entrance at corner, replaced the wood construction that had a center entrance. Linares also extended the length to 44 ft. The changes added about 200 sq. ft. A simulated Dutch roof façade replaced the false vertical front. Linares left a reminder of his refurbishing the building: in the brick facing on the recessed front wall, he placed dark bricks forming the letter "T."

Zakas acquired the property earlier in 1967 from Joseph Govoni.<sup>195</sup> He had moved his meat, fruit and vegetable business from next door, in order to get more space.<sup>31</sup> The building at 34 Railroad Ave. has 900 sq. ft. of floor space; the building at 40 Railroad Ave. has about 1,000 sq. ft.





**Joe Govoni's store** was like a street market with rows of wood crates and boxes filled with fresh vegetables and fruit.

Photo, H-W Chronicle, 1971

When Govoni sold the 34 Railroad Ave. property, in January 1967, there was a clause in the deed requiring the buyer not to open a food market for 10 years.<sup>195</sup>

The buyer, Barbara Zakas, sold the property the same month, to Anthony Linares of Beverly, for his pizza shop.<sup>146</sup>

Govoni likely made the stipulation about not selling to a grocery based on the completion he had from the First National Stores that was at 58 Railroad Ave. from 1914 to 1932. Ironically, in 1959, Govoni would buy 22 Railroad Ave. from First National Stores.

Govoni bought 40 Railroad Ave. in 1953, from Dantan W. Sawyer of Hamilton.<sup>135</sup> It had been vacant for two years. Sawyer, an architect, acquired it, in 1951, from Maimie G. and Alice M. MacDonald of Hamilton.<sup>233</sup>

The MacDonalds, in 1945, bought the property from Mary Crosby.<sup>127</sup> She inherited it from her husband, John. The Crosbys leased the store to various merchants.

Forest G. Shepperson of Hamilton, a barber, likely rented the building from the Crosbys, for several years.<sup>2, 44</sup> He immigrated from England.

In 1908, John Crosby built the single-story, single-store building. It was the same design as his building at 34 Railroad: a false front and an entrance at the center, with large windows on each side.



**40 Railroad Ave.**, at left., built in 1908, may first have been a barbershop.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society

#### **44 Railroad Ave.**

The building at 44 Railroad Ave., the oldest on Railroad Avenue, was erected, in 1892, next to the Smith block, which was built in 1891.

The first business at this location may have been E. F. Barker & Co. Electricians' Supplies.<sup>1</sup> The store's opening likely was a curiosity to many people. Just a decade earlier, the world's first electrical distribution system was introduced in New York City by Thomas A. Edison. The small station provided electricity to customers in a one square mile range.

Currently at 44 Railroad Ave., is a barbershop, Ward's Hair Co., owned by Arthur Ward of Groveland. It opened in Feb. 2016. The last Railroad Avenue barbershop in the late 1970s: Paul "Buster" Divencenzo's shop at 59 Railroad Ave.<sup>141</sup>

There has been a wide range of businesses at 44 Railroad Ave.

Preceding Ward's barbershop was Winfrey's Fudge & Chocolate, which opened in 2010 and closed in 2015. Stuart Winfrey of Rowley bought the property from David and Sarah Cutter.<sup>134</sup> They acquired it from Kathryn M. "Cathy" Jahns of Wenham, trustee of 44 Railroad Realty Trust.<sup>132</sup>



**Winfrey's Fudge & Chocolate**, opened in 2010 and closed in 2015. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015



**Ward's barber shop** opened in 2016, replacing Winfrey's chocolate store. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016

Jahns previously owned Angora's wool store, which she opened in 2003. She sold yarn, patterns, kits, buttons, needles and knitting supplies. Sharyn S. Alsberg of Beverly, sold the property to Jahns,<sup>123</sup> In 1999, Alsberg acquired it from Jonna Carter of Hamilton.<sup>105</sup>

From 1990 to 1999, Dr. John R. Low had his dentist office at 44 Railroad Ave. He leased the building from John Mack Carter, who was his father-in-law. He moved his communications business next door, to 40 Asbury St.

Jonna Carter Low, in March 1989, inherited the property from her father,<sup>171</sup> John Mack Carter. He an office for his business, Carter Communications. He bought the property from Dr. Harold D. Moses.<sup>164</sup>

A fixture on Railroad Avenue for more than three decades (1953-84) was Dr. Harold D. Moses, a dentist. The building, with his waiting room at the front and dentist chair at the back, had an attractive front: two large (5x5 panes) windows, and a lunette window below its peak. Dr. Moses had his dentist practice, he may have had the entrance moved from the center to the front right corner.

Like other business owners on Railroad Avenue, Dr. Moses served on town committees, including many years on the school committee, ending in 1974. He began his town service in 1959 on the Finance & Advisory Committee.<sup>329</sup>

Moses was the second dentist to open a practice on Railroad Avenue: Dr. John C. King, who lived on Walnut Road was the first, in 1917. Dr. King's office was open 2 days a week, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Smith Building.<sup>81, 316</sup>



**An early building** on Grove Street (now Railroad Avenue), 44 Railroad Ave., was built in 1892. Photo, courtesy Wenham Museum

Moses bought the property, in 1953, from Dantan W. Sawyer of Hamilton.<sup>164</sup> Sawyer, who was an architect,<sup>62</sup> acquired the property from Norman J. Tremblay formerly of Hamilton, in 1948.<sup>116</sup> Tremblay, a WW2 veteran, bought the property, in 1946, from Mary Crosby.<sup>187</sup> It had been owned by Mary and her husband, for nearly 60 years: John Crosby bought it in 1889 from Daniel C. Smith of Hamilton, who was a selectman.<sup>102</sup>

Tremblay leased the shop to Richard Johnson. He had a real estate and insurance office from 1949 to 1951. He moved to an office above Connolly's drug store, on the corner of Railroad Avenue and Main Street.<sup>260, 256</sup>

A strikingly odd businesses on Railroad Avenue opened about 1940. Ed-

mund Scahill, who lived on Union Street, leased 44 Railroad Ave., to sell caskets and gravestones. Scahill's business lasted only a couple years.<sup>263</sup>

Following Scahill's shop was a custom lamp business. It too lasted only a short time.<sup>256</sup> Around 1915, John Crowe of Hamilton had a cobbler's shop at what now is 44 Railroad Ave.<sup>81</sup> He likely opened his store after George Whitehouse closed his boot and shoe repair shop in the Smith block.

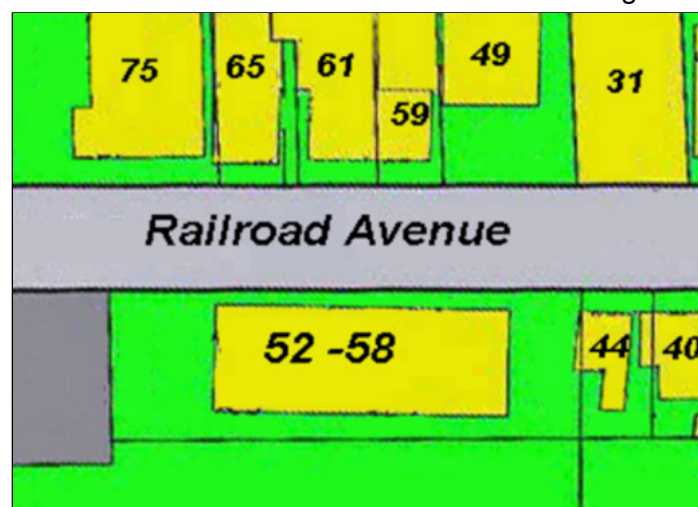
The open area (*about 18-ft. wide*) next to 44 Railroad Ave. is part of the 52-60 Railroad Ave. property. The west side of building at 44 Railroad Ave. is on the property line. This has always been an open area since the original building was built on the 52-60 Railroad Ave. property.

## 52-58 Railroad Ave.

Railroad Avenue was one of the early sites for a multi-story, multi-shop building. In 1891, the original building on this site had, on the street level, shops on both sides of a center doorway leading to the upper floors. Such buildings, once called blocks, allow businesses to share overhead costs and increase customer traffic.

The 1992 building, which originally had 4 street level shops, was erected on the foundation of the previous building. It replaced a single-story building with six stores. The present two-story building has two street level shops and a second floor with other businesses.<sup>268</sup>

There was a practical reason for keeping the previous foundation. A problem facing the building's construction was a town zoning law requiring one parking space for every 100 sq. ft. of office space. However, since the building was on the foundation built before the law, the stores on the first floor were exempt from the law. Only the second floor space had to comply with the parking law.<sup>28</sup>



**Open areas** are at both ends of 52-58 Railroad Ave. building. There is parking at the west end. The narrower east end, now vacant, has been used for storage, in the past.

Map, Hamilton Assessors' Office, 2013





**Smith block**, in 1891, had five street level shops and a center doorway leading to upper floors.  
Photo, 1893, courtesy Wenham Museum.



**Bookstein block**, built in 1934, replaced the Smith block destroyed by fire earlier in 1934.  
Photo, Times Past, 1989.



**Current building** at 52-58 Railroad Ave..  
Photo, J. Hauck, 2014



52-58 Railroad Ave. was built in 1992.

Photo J. Hauck, 2019

### Current Building

In 2012, David Cutter trustee of the 52-56 Railroad Cutter Realty Trust bought the property from John D. Lampe.<sup>91</sup>

In 1992, Lampe, trustee of the Railroad Avenue Realty, built the current two-story structure, with its shops on the street level and offices on the second floor.<sup>28</sup>

The front of the building has a dormer with a semi circular roofline, which is reminiscent of the semi circular motif that was on the front of the third floor of the original building on this site.

When Cutter purchased the property in 2012, businesses in the building were: Timeless Interiors at 52 Railroad Ave., the Singing Flower at 54 Railroad Ave. and Marybeth's Boutique at 56 Railroad Ave.; and, on the second floor, 60 Railroad Ave., Heritage Family Counseling.

In 2016, *Timeless Interiors* owners were Martha Gardner and Sheila Whalen. They began the florist business in October 2010, moving from Pride's Crossing. Both Gardner and Flaherty worked there from the start. Whalen died in 2013.<sup>261</sup>

The following year, in January 2014, with its new name, *Timeless Interiors and Gifts* expanded into what previously was The Singing Flower shop, 54 Railroad Ave. The owners added a new service in September 2015, bringing back The Singing Flower, run by Meggin Hunt of Hamilton, was a floral design service.<sup>261</sup>

Preceding Timeless Interiors was *Bay Road Bikes*, which transferred to the Lampe building from the brick block, 16 Bay Rd. The owners needed more space than they had at the previous location. Bay Road Bikes left 52 Railroad Ave., in 2009, moving to Beverly and became Pinnacle Bikes.<sup>6, 326, 275</sup>

Meggin Hunt's *The Singing Flower* opened, at 54 Railroad Ave., in 2009 and closed in 2013, moving to 300 at Main, in Wenham. Preceding Hunt's flower shop at 54 Railroad Ave. was the *Giggles* toy store,<sup>264</sup> that closed in 2011. Amy Oliver, who began the business in 2006, relocated to 281 Bay Rd.

Another business was a real estate office. Ella and Ted Johnson, who lived at Asbury Grove, ran it. They later moved the business to Bay Road.<sup>256, 263</sup>

*Simply Floral*, owned by Ellen Duffy, was at 54 Railroad from 2007 to 2008. Daily, she placed many beautiful flowers and plants on cart at front of her shop. This was the same cart that was kept in front of the paper store, at 30 Railroad Ave., for many years. Previously, Duffy had her shop at that location.



**Simply Floral** was at 54 Railroad from 2007 to 2008. Daily, the owner placed many flowers and plants on cart at front of her shop. The same cart that was kept in front of the paper store, at 30 Railroad Ave., for many years.

Photo, H-W Chronicle





**HW CAM Television**

Photo, J. Hauck, 2020

*North Shore Chiropractic Center*, Dr. Carl Engel, owner, had his practice at 54 Railroad Ave. from 1993 to 2007, when he moved to 161 Bay Rd. <sup>276</sup>

*T. M. Landscaping*, owned by Thomas J. Moulton, leased 54 Railroad Ave. from 2003 to 2004, from Engel. Moulton moved his business to 17 Bay Rd., in 2014. <sup>328</sup>

In 2020, the video supplier for Wenham and Hamilton, HW CAM, moved to 58 Railroad Ave. Previously, the Public Access television station was in the Hamilton-Wenham High School building, on Bay Rd.

In October 2015, *Whimsical Events and Designs*, an event design and planning company, moved to 58 Railroad Ave. The store, owned by Shannon Harvey of Danvers, sold party invitations, favors, balloons and specialty items. It also provides items for rent. A party room in the back hosts Mommy and Me events, and small children birthday parties.

*Marybeth's Boutique*, June Singer and Brenda Morrison owners, was at 58 Railroad Ave., from 1996 to 2014. The name Marybeth comes from the first names of the owners' mothers: Mary Singer and Beth Morrison. The business moved to 59 Railroad Ave. in 2015.

An early business, at 58 Railroad, was *Beverly Interiors*, owned by Dick Conrad. He moved (1994) from the brick block to 56 Railroad Ave., <sup>6</sup> where he stayed a year.

Heritage Family Counseling opened in 2016 on the second floor, which has the address of 60 Railroad Ave., Denise Hamel-Cassidy, the owner, began in the business 2001, at 225 Main St., Wenham. <sup>244</sup>

Since Cutter acquired the property, the following businesses have opened on the second floor (60 Railroad Ave.):

*Artcie Studio*, run by Erin Clark, opened in 2014, teaching fine art to children and adults. The business moved from 15 Walnut, where it was called the Hamilton-Wenham Art Center. <sup>20</sup>

*Hamilton-Wenham School of Dance*, opened in 2014, by Kathy Brunault.

*Crocker & Co.* marketing & advertising previously was on the second floor. Peter Crocker of Hamilton was the owner. He later moved to 15 Walnut.

### **Previous Building**

Fire destroyed 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, the Smith building in 1934. After being refurbished, the building re-opened as a two-story structure: there again were five stores on the street level and apartments on the second floor.

The attempt to draw merchants back to the Smith block was unsuccessful. The water-damaged and smoke permeated building was demolished.

In 1934, Max Bookstein of Hamilton built a single-story building on the foundation of the previous structure. It had 5 stores, 52, 54, 56, 58 and 60. (*Note: Address numbers at this building changed as stores were combined.*)

In appearance, it was similar to the original brick block building on Main Street. Bookstein's property, on the west end, included the small, vacant lot on which the American Express office stood, and also a narrow lot next to 44 Railroad Ave. <sup>82</sup>

During the first few years, a couple of the Bookstein stores, 54 and 56 Railroad Ave., were vacant.

A tailor shop was at the east end of the block, 52 Railroad Ave. Morris Koll and his wife, Fannie, both of Hamilton, ran the Hamilton Tailor. <sup>10</sup> The Kolls' tailor business lasted 30 years: the longest, by many years, to have been at the Bookstein block.



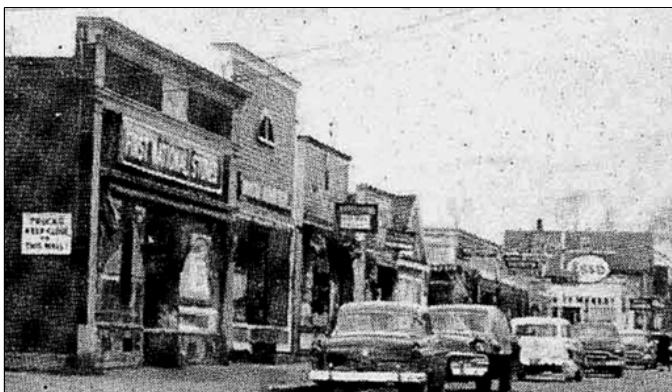
The large number of wealthy families living in the area, kept tailors, like the Kolls, busy. Not only did these sartorial specialists custom fit purchased garments for their clients, they also tailor made suits, dresses, shirts, blouses and coats from fabric their patrons selected.

At 58 Railroad Ave., there initially was a lunchroom that also had a couple of pool tables. Run by Soteris "Charlie" Apostolakos, this was the last of the 3 poolrooms to be on the street: previous to close were Waitt's, at the Smith block, and Witham's, at 65 Railroad Ave. In 1922, after shutting down his lunchroom and poolroom, Charlie "the Greek" worked at the Myopia Cafe in the brick block on Main Street. His brother-in-law, James Pappadoyiannis (*shortened to Pappas*), who bought it in 1920, died in 1922.<sup>298</sup>

At the west end, 60 Railroad Ave., there was an A&P grocery, which was the first national chain store to open in Hamilton. The A&P store, however, stayed here for less than 3 years. (*Note: In 2015, A&P, a former grocery industry leader, filed for bankruptcy and sold more than 100 stores.*)

As the depression of the 1930s came to an end, new businesses moved into the Bookstein block. The surge began following the purchase of the building, in 1936, by James MacLaren of Hamilton.

He already owned a garage across the street, 75 Railroad Ave., where he had a Chevrolet dealership, repaired vehicles



**First National Stores grocery, left to right, Conary's paper store, Govoni's market, Moses dentist, and Bookstein building with ESSO sign.**  
Photo, Postcard,

and sold appliances. His purchase of the Bookstein block, originally was only to be an investment. However, in 1937, MacLaren began displaying new Chevrolet models, where the A&P had been, 60 Railroad Ave.<sup>10</sup> Each year, MacLaren had a new model on display.<sup>263</sup>

Going down to MacLaren's Chevy dealership, when the new models were introduced, became a must trip for many people in the area. These "tire kickers" were not there to buy a new car, but to have something to talk about, perhaps at the nearby lunchroom or tavern.

Foot-traffic, important to the small businesses, picked up.

In 1937, Evelyn Tucker of Hamilton (*Prospect St.*) opened a bakery, the Hamilton Bake Shoppe, at the formerly vacant 54 Railroad Ave. The wonderful wafts of freshly baked doughnuts, breads, cakes and pies were a daily delight and temptation to passer-bys.

Also in 1937, a tavern opened in the formerly vacant 56 Railroad Ave. This was the first tavern to be on the street. The owner was Theodore "Teddy" Maione of Hamilton. This was quite a switch in vocation for him: previously, Teddy was a steamroller driver.<sup>260</sup> (*At Maione's, they served beer with a shot of whiskey, called a "steamroller."*)

Maione's was a very narrow tavern, with 3 booths and a bar. He mainly serving alco-



**Chittick Building**, as known in final years, built in 1934 by Max Bookstein, was razed in 1991.  
Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1977



**Bob Chittick's appliance store** was like an old fashion hardware shops. Along its aisles were wood boxes on shelves containing all kinds of nuts, screws, nails, tools, lighting fixtures, gloves, hats, and brackets. Hanging from the ceiling were chairs, baskets, and much more.

holic drinks and offered a limited variety of food, at low prices.<sup>260</sup> Maione's quickly became popular among the local laborers.

The Railroad Avenue tavern was one of two in the area. Nearby, on Main Street, in the "brick block," was the Myopia Café run by Soteris "Charlie" Apostolakos. Two taverns in close proximity and near the Wenham town line was not surprising, since Wenham was a "dry-town."

Both establishments, as taverns, had pouring licenses. According to Massachusetts law, a tavern is an establishment where "alcoholic beverages are sold, but not on Sunday, with or without food, and served to and drunk by patrons, in plain view of other patrons, and open to public view from the sidewalk." The 2 large windows, at the front Maione's, made its patrons viewable from the street.<sup>301</sup>

Neither establishment called itself a bar. Likely because of the negative connotation of the word "bar," a place where men went to drink alcohol, often in excess and often resulting in loud foul language, and occasionally fights.

On Aug. 14, 1945, when the end of WW2 was announced (*VJ Day*), Teddy Maione moved the jukebox out of his place and onto Railroad Avenue: there was dancing on the street.<sup>263</sup>

In 1934, at 58 Railroad Ave., next to Maione's, Francis Moynihan of Hamilton had a package store.<sup>55</sup> It was the first in Hamilton since the country repealed prohibition in 1933. Earlier that year, in January, Hamilton

voters legalized the sale of alcoholic beverages. However, voters only legalized wine and malt beverages by a narrow margin (142 to 123).<sup>55</sup> Nine years after the repeal of prohibition, in 1942, Hamilton voters approved, narrowly (394 to 361), the opening of establishments serving liquor beverages, of all types.<sup>313</sup>

Robert H. Chittick III, of Hamilton, initially bought the narrow store at 56 Railroad, and opened a farm supply business.<sup>257</sup>

Koll's tailor shop remained at 52 Railroad Ave. until 1965. A bicycle store owned by Robert Newell of Beverly quickly replaced Koll's.<sup>260</sup> He remained at 52 Railroad Ave., until 1977 when Newell moved his business to 20 Bay Rd.<sup>270</sup>

The bakery remained at 54 Railroad Ave. until 1961. Evelyn (*nee Tucker*) Spiers, who had married William Spiers of Topsfield in 1946, moved her bakery across the street to the larger store at 61 Railroad Ave..<sup>260</sup>

From doughnuts and cakes, 54 Railroad Ave. next offered feed, seed and fertilizer. (*Quite a change!*) Bob Chittick III expanded into the former bicycle shop from his store at 56 Railroad Ave.<sup>263</sup> Later, this primarily became a hardware and paint store. Chittick's son, Bob, also known as Winney, ran the business.<sup>263</sup>

The 1950s were the beginning of several decades of home construction in Wenham and Hamilton. With this boom came the need for local hardware stores.



**First National grocery** store was at 60 Railroad Ave. Photo, 1918, Hamilton Hist. Society



**At east end of Smith block** Horace Andrews ran Hamilton's apothecary.

Photo, 1893, courtesy Wenham Museum



**Streetcar tracks** on north side of Railroad Ave. turned right at Willow Street corner.

Photo, 1908, Hamilton Hist. Society



**On west end of Smith block** there was a single-story building, in which American Express had an office.

Photo, 1893, courtesy Wenham Museum



**Smith block and Gould's grocery** on corner of Willow St.

Photo, Hamilton Hist. Society



In 1965, used cars, not new cars, were on display at 60 Railroad Ave. The change came after Jim MacLaren died in a 1962 automobile accident.<sup>63</sup> His son, Robert, sold the Railroad Avenue property, in 1965, to Stephen D. Cardelli, trustee of the Hamilton-Wenham Realty Trust.<sup>85</sup>

General Motors did not renew the MacLaren Chevrolet dealership stating the Railroad Avenue location, which could only display one car, was too small.<sup>267</sup>

Cardelli opened the Hamilton-Wenham Motor Sales, a used car business.<sup>263</sup> A large ESSO sign, hanging at the front, was for the gasoline available across the street, 75 Railroad Ave., at Cardelli's garage that he also bought from MacLaren.

The 1970s and 80s were not good times for the Bookstein block. Stores were often vacant.

The bicycle shop, at 52 Railroad Ave., rode off in 1977, but Marguerite Verani of Ipswich quickly alit at the shop, where she opened the Hummingbird. Her shop offered jewelry, games, cookbooks, and belts. Following a fire, in 1981, a sign in the store's window read, "The Roasted Bird ...Will Re-open Soon."<sup>12</sup> That it did and remained open until April 1986.<sup>317</sup>

Bob Chittick continued his farm supply and hardware store at 54 and 56 Railroad Ave. However, with a decline in farming, the sale of feed, seed, and fertilizer greatly decreased.

Next door, at 58 Railroad Ave., Dr. John F. Lamont, Jr. had his optometrist office, from 1957 to 1968.<sup>304</sup> He moved his practice across the street to 19 Railroad Ave.<sup>270</sup> Dr. Lamont was a member of the town's Board of Health.

Following Dr. Lamont at 58 Railroad Ave. was the Massachusetts

State Welfare Dept. The welfare service moved its office from the town hall to the former Bookstein block.<sup>65</sup> Welfare Director, Bernard A. Cullen, needed more space.<sup>65</sup> The Hamilton Public Welfare office was here for just a few years.

About 1978, Bob Chittick expanded his presence in the Bookstein block: he opened an appliance store at 58 Railroad. This was the second appliance store to have been on the street. Previously, James MacLaren sold appliances (*radios and refrigerators*), across the street, at 75 Railroad Ave.<sup>10</sup>

Not only was Chittick very active on Railroad Avenue. He also was involved in town government: for 50 years, he was a member of the Board of Assessors; and for 40 years, a fire engineer. Until 1956, Hamilton's fire station was just around the corner of Railroad Ave., on Willow Street.

Cardelli closed his used car business in 1982. He leased 60 Railroad Ave. to the American Industrial Development Council's Educational Foundation, of Boston. AIDC, which remained here until 1987,<sup>320</sup> provided space to the local newspaper, the Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle. The Chittick building was an ideal location for the paper: it was in close contact with Hamilton and Wenham businesses. The newspaper had an office at 60 Railroad for 5 years, before leaving in 1987 for an office in Wenham.<sup>320</sup>

Cardelli remained the owner of the Bookstein block, until 1986 when he sold it to Bob Chittick.<sup>86</sup> Chittick, who had businesses at 54, 56 and 58 Railroad Ave., planned to expand the building with a one-story addition on the east end and a two-story addition on the west end. At the time, Chittick stored peat moss and yard equipment on the east-end lot; and parked vehicles on the west-end lot, next to the town parking lot.<sup>318</sup>

Later in 1986, the Hamilton Appeals Board voted against a variance needed for the Chittick project. Primary to the rejection was inadequate parking plans.<sup>319</sup>

Just a year later, 1987, Chittick sold the property to Stephen F. Bissell, trustee of H&S Realty Trust of Hamilton.<sup>88</sup> Bissell, who bought Chittick's farm supply and hardware store (*54 and 56 Railroad Ave.*) in 1985, planned to build a 3-story structure, with about 17,000 sq. ft. of office and store space.<sup>7</sup>

Bissell's plans did not take place. In 1889, he sold the property to CSB Cambridge Crossings of Boston.<sup>89</sup> The following year, CSB sold it to John D. Lampe, trustee of Railroad Avenue Realty.<sup>90</sup>

### Original Building

In 1934, fire destroyed the top floor of the original building.<sup>1, 186</sup> Fire departments of seven towns assisted in extinguishing the fire.<sup>43</sup> Firemen used water from the railroad water tank at the Hamilton depot to fight the fire, until a train cut the hose laid over the tracks.<sup>80</sup> At the time, Israel Cohen of Boston owned the property.<sup>186</sup>

Built in 1891,<sup>1</sup> the Smith block had 5 street-level shops. A center doorway lead to the upper two floors. Each shop had an entrance at its middle and large windows on both sides of the entrance.<sup>295</sup>

On the west end, that closest to Willow Street, Samuel A. Waitt had a poolroom. In addition to billiard tables, he sold various "temperance (*non-alcoholic*) drinks, cigars, tobacco, confectionery, crockery, glass, tin and woodenware."<sup>1</sup> He was the town auditor for many years.<sup>298</sup>

While a "poolroom" now is a place where pool is played, this was not so in the 19th century: it was a betting parlor for horse racing. A "pool" was money bet on a race and awarded to winners based on odds of a horse winning a race (*the poolroom owner took a cut on the money bet*). Between races, patrons played pool.

At the building's east end, Horace E. Andrews ran an apothecary, offering drugs, medicines and chemicals, toilet articles, toilet soaps, sponges, brushes, combs, perfumery, etc. There also was a soda fountain, and public telephone. Andrews was the town's first resident apothecary.<sup>1</sup>

A drugstore was not really a drugstore if it did not have a soda fountain. In the 1850's, when people not feeling well went

to the local drugstore for a remedy to cure what was ailing them. Standing behind a fountain counter, the druggist would concoct beverages, with ingredients such as caffeine and cocaine, along with herbs and flavorings.

In 1896, Hamilton's library established a book station in Andrews's drug store. The South Hamilton branch library remained at Andrew's store until 1912, when it was moved to the former Boston Store, in the brick block on Main Street.<sup>1</sup>

An original business in the Smith block was a men's clothing store run by Frank Miller of Hamilton.<sup>1</sup> Annual Town Reports, in the 1890s, have numerous references to the town's Poor Department paying Miller for boots and clothing for poor residents.

Heinrich Bernhardt, a barber, was another original business in the Smith block.<sup>1</sup> Previously, Bernhardt had his business in Wenham, on Main Street.<sup>314</sup>

In the early 1900s, apartments were on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. James MacLaren, who owned the auto repair garage across the street, lived on 2nd floor.<sup>81</sup>

Also on the second floor was the headquarters for the Hamilton and Wenham Brass Band. Frank R. Shaller, the president also tuned and repaired the schools' pianos and organ.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many towns had brass bands, largely of brass horns, and a small percussion section. They provided music for various events, and competed with bands from other towns.

Various organizations rented the third-floor assembly hall to hold minstrel shows, plays and dances.<sup>1</sup> On Sunday Jun. 23, 1893, the Women's Christian Temperance Union held a lecture. So that many could attend, churches did not hold their evening services.<sup>1</sup> That there was a poolroom on the first floor did not bother the WCTU, because Samuel Waitt did not allow people to drink alcoholic beverages in his poolroom.

An 1893 photo shows the name Hamilton was on a banner across the upper front. This photo also shows a barbed wire fence across the street, next to streetcar tracks: the fence kept cows off the tracks.

Other early businesses were: Furman A. Smith's boot shop; Joseph W. Hayes' jewelry store; John Melanson and Charles Peterson's carpenter shops, Sidney Gould's

Grocery; Oliver Kilham's grocery; Edward Gibney, a plumber; and George Whitehorse's boot & shoe repair shop.<sup>2, 303, 306</sup> Businesses, early in the 1900s, were:<sup>81</sup> First National Stores grocery (*moved to 22 Railroad Ave.*); Max Bookstein's butcher shop; and Warren N. Sawyer, plumber.<sup>2</sup>

In 1892, Daniel Smith sold the property to Edward Gibney of Hamilton.<sup>182</sup> Gibney likely put the name Hamilton on the building's front. Following Gibney's purchase, there were frequent new owners: Augustus Loring of Beverly (1894),<sup>183</sup> Sidney Gould of Hamilton (1895),<sup>184</sup> Furman A. Smith of Hamilton (1903),<sup>192</sup> Peter Pechilis of Ipswich (1914),<sup>207</sup> and Mark Kearns and other investors of Beverly (1915),<sup>199</sup> who held it for 17 years before selling it, in 1932, to Max Bookstein of Hamilton.<sup>311</sup>

#### **64 Railroad Ave.**

The parking lot, at the corner of Willow and Railroad, consists of portions of two former properties: a section that was part of the original Smith block lot on Railroad Avenue and a section that was part of the first fire engine property on Willow Street.

The first business in the section next to the Smith block property was an American Express Co. office, run by Arthur T. Trask. In 1891, the company leased the land and erected a building. The office, which offered express mail delivery, money orders, and traveler's checks, moved about 1900 to depot square.

James Pappas opened a lunchroom in the former Amex building. His brother-in-law, Charlie Appostolakos, worked in the lunchroom.<sup>316</sup> In 1934, the fire that destroyed the top floor of the Smith block also greatly damaged the Amex building and it was removed.<sup>43</sup>

The vacant lot, in the 1940s and 50s, was a new and used car lot, owned by James S. MacLaren.<sup>270</sup> It once again was vacant, in 1963, when the MacLaren Chevrolet dealership closed.<sup>62</sup>

Stephen Cardelli, who had a used car business in the former MacLaren store, also parked cars on the lot.

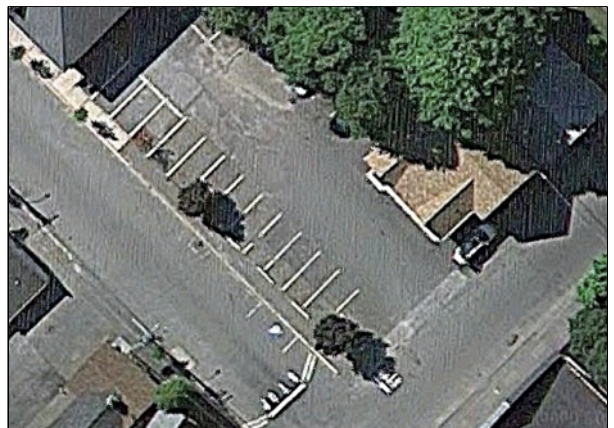
In 1949 Annual Town Report, James MacLaren was thanked for allowing the town to use his paved lot, alongside the unpaved fire engineers' parking area, for parking.<sup>59</sup> In 1955, the town paved the firemen's portion. firemen used it, when responding to alarms.<sup>62</sup>

Robert Chittick, during the years he had a farm supplies business in the Bookstein building, used the area as a parking lot for his customers.<sup>10</sup>

The other section of the parking lot was part of property Hamilton took, in 1919, by eminent domain (*cost, \$2,450*). It was owned by John Quigley, et al.<sup>50</sup> On the south side of the property, which the town had been leasing, the town remodeled, in 1921, the firehouse: the north side remained vacant.<sup>51</sup>

Hamilton's Fire Engineers, in 1921, made the vacant area into a small park.<sup>51</sup> The next year, they planted a purple barberry hedge on the Willow Street and Railroad Avenue sides of the lot.<sup>52</sup>

There is no record of when the town removed the hedge. However, in 1953, the town placed a bulletin board on the corner of the lot.<sup>61</sup> This was the fourth town bulletin board for posting voting lists, town warrants, and other official town postings.



**Public parking lot**, created by town in 1956, on what had been a small park next to the Willow Street fire house.  
Photo, Google Maps





**95 Railroad Ave., in 2015**, other than color change and larger shrubs, is much like it was in 1950. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

The selectmen took custody of the lots from the Board of Engineers, in 1956. The area became a public parking lot.<sup>200</sup> With 15 more parking spaces available for Railroad Avenue businesses.

However, in 1987, a possibility arose for a loss of the parking spaces. Steven F. Bissell of Beverly proposed a plan, to the town's Planning Board, to build affordable housing on the parking lot and also on the adjoining land owned by Robert McRae.<sup>69</sup> Bissell abandoned the plan, in 1988, after his option on McRae's property expired.<sup>70</sup>

In 2016, Railroad Avenue has 37 marked parking spaces, in addition to the 13 on the parking lot.

### **95 Railroad Ave.**

The last remnant of residential Railroad Avenue, before businesses began to crowd the street, is a Victorian style house. Built before 1890, it is at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Willow Street. The front entrance of the house faces the corner of Railroad Avenue and Willow Street. Large rhododendrons now are in the front corner. The house has a two-story, bay window facing onto Railroad Avenue.

At the back of the house, before a tavern was built close to it in 1950, there were exterior stairs from Railroad Avenue to the first floor. The stairs led to a doctor's office that was on the first floor.<sup>260</sup>

There were windows on the back, on both the first and second floor. The back entrance and windows were removed several years after the tavern was built.

From 1886 to 1931, streetcars riding along Railroad Avenue turned onto Willow Street at this corner. A streetcar garage was on Railroad Avenue, at what now (2016) is 75 Railroad Ave.,

the Anthony & Dodge public accounting business.

Among those who lived here were: John J. and Mary N. Crosby, the longest residents in the house, 44 years (1903 to 1947). John died in 1946. They emigrated from Canada, in 1881.<sup>298</sup> Frank and Stephen Cross, boarders at the house, in 1888.<sup>4</sup> They were carpenters. Around that time, carpenters were kept busy working on the cabins in Asbury Grove. Beginning in 1905, Albert C. (*Burt*) Holland boarded here for many years. He owned a barbershop next to what is now Connolly's drug store and where there now is a card and gift shop.<sup>33</sup> He sold the barbershop and became a successful Hamilton insurance broker. During WW1, Holland wrote the lyrics for several songs, including, in 1918, "When We March Into Old Berlin."<sup>99</sup>

Beginning in 1905, Albert C. (*Burt*) Holland boarded here. He owned a barbershop next to what is now Connolly's drug store.<sup>33</sup> He sold the barbershop and became a Hamilton insurance broker. During WW1, Holland wrote the lyrics for several songs, including, in 1918, "When We March Into Old Berlin."<sup>99</sup>

In the 1930s and 40s, 95 Railroad Ave. often had several boarders. They were local workers on estates, at town shops and on the railroad. A concern about building safety was based on the boarders using hot-plates to cook meals and the potential for fires.

Robert Timpani, Hamilton's Facilities Manager from 1997 to 2007, and his wife, Audrey, lived at the house for several years, while he worked for the town, principally caring for inside the town hall. He also was very involved in the 2002 refurbishing of the town hall, which included putting an eagle back on the tower's weathervane.<sup>273</sup>

In 1949, Teddy Maione closed his tavern at 56 Railroad Ave. and bought the property across the street, 95 Railroad Ave.,<sup>122</sup> The address became 85 Railroad Ave. Sydney A. Smith, who lived on Cutler Road, sold the property to Maione, where he built Maione's Restaurant, next to the house.<sup>260</sup>

The property had a 47-ft. frontage on Railroad Avenue, was 100-ft. deep, stretched 76-ft. out to Willow St., and ran 72-ft. along Willow.<sup>122</sup>

The house had been vacant for a couple of years. Bob and Mimi (*Maione*) Fanning lived at 95 Railroad Ave. from 1956 to 1959, when they moved to 122 Railroad Ave.<sup>260</sup>

Teddy and Mary Maione lived at 95 Railroad Ave., during summer months from 1959 to 1971, when he sold the property. Their primary residence was on Gregory Island Rd.<sup>260</sup>

Also living at 95 Railroad Ave., while Maione owned it, was Charlie "The Greek" Apostolakos.<sup>260</sup> He owned the Hunters Inn bar on Main Street, where the Black Cow is now (2016). Though competitors, Teddy and Charlie were good friends ... there were plenty of thirsty customers.<sup>260</sup>

Sydney Smith, in 1936, was a member of two significant town committees. One



**North side of Railroad Avenue, in 1900, from Main Street to Crosby property, at corner of Railroad and Willow (now 95 Railroad Ave.), was a single property owned by Lydia Rankins.**  
Map, Walker Lithograph & Publishing, 1910

committee was successful in changing the name of town-owned Central Park, on Main Street, to Cutler Park. The other committee successfully changed the name of Farms Road, on which Smith then lived, to Cutler Road.<sup>294</sup> Up until 1898, Farms Road was called Elm Street.

In 1947, Smith bought the property, as an investment, from Mary J. Crosby.<sup>126</sup> She and her husband, John J., bought the property in 1901.<sup>98</sup> John died in 1946.<sup>115</sup> They emigrated from Canada, in 1881.<sup>298</sup>

Previous owners of the 95 Railroad Ave. property were: Eliza A. Morris of Salem,<sup>95</sup> 1895 to 1901; Austin F. Brown of Hamilton,<sup>94</sup> 1889 to 1891; Daniel C. Smith of Hamilton (*no relation to Sydney A. Smith*).

When the Crosbys acquired the property at the west end of Railroad Avenue, Lydia E. Rankins owned all the adjoining land on the east end of Railroad Avenue out to Main Street. The Crosbys leased the land for cattle to graze.

In the late 1800s, the Rankins and Crosbys were like many other local families in that they were "land rich, but cash poor." They owned large areas that yielded little income.



**Weathervane Tavern**, 85 Railroad Ave., opened in 1980. It was built in 1950 and was Maione's Restaurant. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.

### 85 Railroad Ave.

The Weathervane Restaurant has been at 85 Railroad Ave. since Patriots Day 1980.

<sup>16</sup> Brothers Paul and Gary Thober, along with their father, Eugene, acquired it on Dec. 18, 1979, from Muslim M. Mustafa of Manchester. <sup>155</sup>

The Thobers significantly changed the previous exterior appearance of the building to resemble a small New England cottage. They covered the stucco exterior with rustic-red clapboards. Further, they built a narrow side section, where the original entrance was, and moved the entrance to the front of this section that serves as a waiting area for diners. With this addition, there is more space in the restaurant. <sup>274</sup>

Inside, the Weathervane has about 900 sq. ft. of space. There are pine and barnwood walls. The ceiling has exposed an-

tique wood beams that came from an old New England barn. <sup>274</sup>

There is a bar on a sidewall at back with 6 stools; three, 4-person booths are across from bar; in the front section, tables line both sidewalls and also are in the middle area. Restrooms are at the back.

A concrete block addition, behind the building, serves as the kitchen. The Thobers made major kitchen improvements in order for the restaurant to efficiently provide a wide range of grilled, baked and broiled meals and appetizers.

A cupola atop the building has a large, copper, soaring-eagle weathervane, from which the restaurant draws its name. Golden Eagle Coppersmiths, originally in Hampton Falls, NH, made it, and also the many copper items hanging from the walls inside the restaurant: these include the copper lighting sconces and a classic New England codfish. <sup>274</sup>

The previous owner, Mustafa, purchased the property in 1977, from Joseph R. Gates of Hamilton, <sup>52</sup> who, in 1971, bought the property from Theodore (*Teddy*) W. Maione of Hamilton. <sup>150</sup> Both Gates and Mustafa continued the bar business.

In 1949, Teddy Maione bought the property from Sydney A. Smith of Hamilton. <sup>122</sup> At the time, there was only a house, 95 Railroad Ave., on the property. <sup>260</sup> The following year, Maione built his restaurant alongside the house, and facing onto Railroad Avenue.



**Maione's Restaurant** previously was on other side of Railroad Avenue, in the Chittick building for 12 years. Photo, Gary Thurber.



**Maione's was a place** "where everybody knew everybody's name," a place where you'd hear the latest scuttlebutt about Wenham and Hamilton. Photo, Gary Thurber



The single-story, stucco-covered concrete-block building had a large window at the front and small windows on the side facing 75 Railroad Ave. The entrance was at the front left side of the building, facing a parking area. A large, lighted Budweiser beer sign hung above the front of the building.

The latest in telephone technology reached Railroad Avenue in 1951, when the telephone company placed a pay-phone booth in front of Maione's. Inside, there wasn't a pay phone. About 20 years later, with the widespread use of mobile telephones, it was removed.

Previously, Maione had a small restaurant across the street, at 56 Railroad Ave., in the Bookstein building. He opened it in 1937.<sup>260</sup> With his business becoming popular among locals, Maione needed more space than there was at the narrow store.

Maione's was a place, ala the Cheers television series, "where everybody new everybody's name." It was a place where you'd hear the latest scuttlebutt about Wenham and Hamilton.

An attraction at Maione's was a coin (*quarter*) operated pinball machine. Some players became very adept at controlling the ball with the flippers and shaking the machine without exceeding the "tilt" mechanism. Maione promptly awarded players reaching new high scores a carton of cigarettes.<sup>260</sup>

Another feature at Maione's was the evening's happy hour, when free or reduced price drinks were offered.

Teddy Maione was a short, stocky, easy-going man, very well liked by many townspeople and other locals. He opened his bar, in the morning, offering coffee and rolls. He still was there until closing, as required by law, at about 10 p.m.

While not offering many types of food, Maione's was known for its hamburgers, served both at lunch and supper times. Each morning, Teddy went across the street to Govoni's market to get fresh ground beef. He bought fresh rolls at the bakery just up the street.

Most men frequenting Maione's bar knew that when a light, at the back of the bar, was lit, there was to be no foul language or dirty jokes. The light was a sign that a woman, often Teddy's wife, Mary, was working in the kitchen.<sup>257</sup> Violating Teddy's obscenity law was a sure way to be asked to leave the premises.

Maione's daughter, Theresa (*Mimi*) and her husband James (*Bob*) Fanning, worked at the restaurant for 17 years, Bob as a bartender. Mimi recalled that women, for many years, seldom went to her dad's place, even though many worked just down the street, at the telephone exchange. This gradually changed following WW2.<sup>260</sup>

Mimi Fanning also was the Hamilton Town Clerk from 1990 to 2005, and an assistant to the Town Clerk, the previous two years.

Maione's health problems led to his selling the bar. Shortly after, he died in 1972 ... he was only 64.<sup>260</sup> Commemorating Teddy Maione, there is a plaque at the base of a tree in front of the Weathervane. Previously, it was across the street, in front of the parking lot.



**A plaque, commemorating** Teddy Maione is at the front of the Weathervane. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016



**75 Railroad Ave.**, until 2016, was the Anthony & Dodge public accounting business.

Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

### 75 Railroad Ave.

Several businesses leased space, in 2020, at 75 Railroad Ave. They were: a body massage service, Balasana, run by Bronwen Penniman; a chiropractor, Hamilton-Wenham Family Chiropractic, run by Dr. Gerald Gould; an art restoration service, Allied Conservation, co-founded by Timothy Neill and Sarah Luckom; a psychologist, Julia Taddonio; and a electrical contractor, Dennis Curran.

Seventy Railroad Realty Trust acquired the property in 2017. Trustees were Thomas B. Anthony and June L. Anthony. Bk. 35,779, p. 111.

The Anthony & Dodge public accounting business, in 2016, moved from 75 Railroad Ave. to 227 Willow St. Thomas B. Anthony and Albert W. Dodge purchased the Railroad Ave. property, in 1994, Joseph R. Gates, Jr.<sup>101</sup> Gates had been a client of accounting firm for many years.<sup>259</sup>

Extensive refurbishing converted the building, which had a false front and had been a welding shop and garage for trucks, into an office building with 14 offices, 2 conference rooms, a file room plus a computer-server room, and a lobby entrance. Windows and skylights also were installed. In 2014, more changes came, when two more offices were added, and a side door was converted to a window.<sup>249</sup>

The development of the Anthony and Dodge accounting firm was indicative of the importance accounting services for small-

and medium-size merchants had become. Local, state and national laws and regulations, regarding reporting business records, are well beyond what the merchants can handle, there are yearly changes in the laws, and the forms require more time to complete than merchants can fit into their already busy days.

In 1994, Thomas B. Anthony joined forces with Albert W. (Win) Dodge, both of Wenham, to form Anthony and Dodge, Inc. George F. Cherry, who had been a partner with the firm, retired in 1996. He moved his home in Marblehead to Cherryfield, ME. *(Note: He was not a member of a family from that town, rather it's named for the wild cherries that once grew throughout the area.)*

Dodge, who lives in Wenham, retired in 2012.<sup>249</sup> Prior to joining with Anthony, he had an accounting practice in Wenham, which he started in 1977. He began working for a CPA firm in Boston.<sup>259</sup>

Before moving to Railroad Avenue, Anthony and Cherry had an accounting service at the Willowdale Business Center on Willow Street. They moved there, in 1991, from 65 Railroad Ave. Four years earlier, in 1987, Anthony and Cherry formed a partnership and purchased the business of Richard H. Ireland, their former employer. The accounting firm, Smith. Ireland and Co., was at 65 Railroad Ave. for many years.<sup>265</sup>

The Gates welding business began in 1967, when Joseph R. Gates, Jr. and his father, Joseph R., Sr., bought the property. They parked their fleet of welding service trucks in the large garage.<sup>259</sup> A large door was on the front of the single-story building, which had an unpainted, wood board, false front.<sup>249</sup>

The Gates' business kept busy welding pipes in utility trenches, in the area. During the 1950s and 60s, there was a boom in housing in the Hamilton-Wenham area. The creation of many new streets required miles of buried utility lines.

During winter months, Gates also fixed broken snowplows.<sup>252</sup>

Gates Jr., bought the property from Stephen D. Cardelli,<sup>147</sup> who ran a car and truck repair garage. He sold gasoline: on the west side of the building, where there were two gasoline pumps.

Cardelli also owned the Hamilton-Wenham Motor Sales that was across the street, in what was called the Bookstein building (*now 52-56 Railroad Ave.*).<sup>263</sup> He purchased the two properties, in 1965, from Robert J. MacLaren,<sup>85</sup> who inherited them, in 1964, from his deceased father, who died in a car accident.<sup>267,</sup>

In addition to his Chevrolet dealership across the street, Jim MacLaren had a car repair garage at 75 Railroad Ave., where he also sold radios and refrigerators.<sup>10</sup> Michael "Mickey" Morrow of Hamilton, who worked for MacLaren for many years, ran the garage.<sup>263</sup>

Back then, vehicle repair and maintenance generally were simple services that did not take very long. Thus, while the car was being serviced at MacLaren's, the driver could pop across the street to the lunchroom, at the paper store, for coffee, a sandwich or soda pop.

MacLaren owned the 75 Railroad Ave. property for more than 20 years, having bought it in 1943 from Mary J. Crosby.<sup>129</sup> It

had a 75 ft. frontage on Railroad Ave. and was 100 ft. deep.<sup>115</sup> The property was land Mary Crosby acquired, in 1903, from Lydia E. Rankins.

Boston & Northern (*B&N*) Street Railway began leasing the property, in 1903, from John J. Crosby.<sup>282</sup> The building stands close to the property's boundary to 65 Railroad Ave., but there is a 24-ft. wide vacant area facing 85 Railroad Ave. The 75 Railroad Ave. building is 43-ft. wide front, which is much greater than many other buildings on the street. A mono-pitched roof extends the entire 89-ft. length of the building.

Why such a large building?

It was built to be a carbarn for its recently introduced electric streetcars. In 1911, the company became Bay State Street Railway.

At the building's front, there was an office that slightly extended beyond the side of building. The single-story structure had a broad roof, without interior post supports, since it had a truss design. The entire structure was wood.<sup>274</sup>

The Railroad Avenue car barn replaced a two-story electric-car barn in Wenham, which was on the corner of Main Street and Arbor Street, from 1885 to 1925. The use of horse-drawn street cars, which were kept and maintained in the Wenham car barn, ceased in 1898.<sup>9</sup>

At the Hamilton carbarn, electric powered streetcars entered directly from the street. Based on the width of the building, it likely had three bays. (*1910 Walker Lithograph & Publishing map indicates the building could hold up to twelve cars.*<sup>299</sup>)

B & N used the garage to store and maintain its streetcars, called "rounders." The name came from the cars not having to be turned around when making return trips: the seat backs, which pivoted at the base, simply were pushed back. Drivers could operate the cars from both ends.

Streetcar service, in South Hamilton, ended in in 1937.<sup>1, 9</sup> For the next 6 years, the large garage remained vacant.



**Original Gates building**, at 75 Railroad Ave., had a false front. Photo, Times Past





**Mariano Smith & Co.** opened a real estate office at 65 Railroad Ave., in 2019. Photo, J. Hauck, 2019

### 65 Railroad Ave.

Boston-based Mariano Smith & Co., in 2019, opened a real estate office at 65 Railroad Ave. Arcangelo Mariano and Chad Smith founded the company.

Previously, in 1993, Diana B. Campbell of Hamilton opened a law office at this property, the first law office on this section of Railroad Avenue. She and her husband, James W., purchased the property from Richard H. Ireland of Wenham.<sup>96</sup> Subsequently, their daughter, Lisa J. Campbell, joined the firm.

For the preceding 3 decades, an accounting firm had been at 65 Railroad Ave. In 1991, the previous tenants, Thomas B. Anthony and George F. Cherry, moved to the Willowdale Business Center on Willow Street. They were partners in the business with Ireland until he left, in 1986, to become the Chief Financial Officer for New England Biolabs, in Ipswich.<sup>265</sup>

On Dec. 31, 1986, shortly after joining New England Biolabs, Ireland had been a client of their firm. The international company acquired the property from Judith (*Judy*) H. Foley, widow of Edmund R. Smith of Wenham.<sup>168</sup> She married George G. Foley of Wenham after Edmund's death, in 1984.

After Smith died, Ireland acquired the firm and hired Thomas B. Anthony of Wenham and George F. Cherry of Marblehead as staff CPA's.<sup>247</sup> In 1987, Ireland sold the business and property to Anthony and Cherry.<sup>247</sup>

Ireland started with Smith in 1974. He previously had a position with a CPA firm in Annapolis, MD.<sup>247</sup> While visiting his widowed mother, who lived in Magnolia, Ireland met with Smith, a friend of his mother. Ireland told Smith he wanted to move back to the area. Smith said he could provide him with office space and pay him from client billings that Ireland brought to the practice. Ireland agreed.<sup>247</sup>

Ireland's office was in the front section of the building. His was in a small room he shared with a receptionist and four bookkeepers. Smith's office was in a back section of the building.<sup>265</sup>

Following Ireland's arrival, Smith's CPA business steadily grew. In 1980, Smith and Ireland formed a partnership: Smith, Ireland & Company.<sup>247</sup>



**65 Railroad**, built between 1903 and 1905, had a door at the center and large glass windows, on both sides. Photo: Times Past, 1985



**65 Railroad Ave.**, has 4 sections. The 2 front, one-story sections; a 2-story back section, that has an adjoining side section that contains a staircase to the second floor.  
Photo, Bing Maps

In 1982, to increase staff and office equipment, the company added a second floor, above the back section of the building. For access to the second floor, an enclosed stairway was built on the side of the building next to 61 Railroad Ave.<sup>265</sup>

A door is at the end of the narrow (11 ft. wide) alley between the two

buildings. The building has four sections. The two front, one-story sections are 20-ft. wide and 12-ft. long. The back section, 2-stories, is 42-ft. long, and 17-ft. wide.<sup>297</sup> A 20 ft. long by 8 ft. wide side section contains a staircase to the second floor.<sup>297</sup>

When Smith acquired the property, the building was 50-ft. long and 25 ft. wide.<sup>238</sup> A few years later, he added, at the back a one-story, 42 ft. long, 17 ft. wide extension.

Edmund Smith began his accounting business in 1960, when he purchased the property from Mabel M. Hall of Wenham.<sup>139</sup> Before opening his Hamilton accounting practice, Smith, living in Wenham, worked in Boston for the accounting firm of Tonne-son and Larsen on High Street.<sup>265</sup> He was 39, when he began his own practice: likely he had tired of making the daily train trip back and forth from Boston.

Mabel Hall sold Smith a portion of the property she bought, in 1940, from Effie B. Withman of Wenham.

65 Railroad Ave., has a frontage of 29 ft.; the west side goes straight back 100 ft.; however, on the east side, there is a 25-ft. long, 9 ft. wide cutout.<sup>139</sup> The property's shape changed, in 1955 when, at what is now 61 Railroad Ave., the telephone company built an extension to its building.<sup>238</sup>

The Witham property also included what is now 61 Railroad Ave.<sup>130</sup> Her brother-in-law, Frank Witham of Wenham, transferred the property to her, in 1937.<sup>181</sup> He obtained the property, in 1933, from the estate of his deceased brother, Charles.<sup>79</sup>

Charles E. C. Witham bought the property, in 1907, from Arthur C. Cummings of Hamilton.<sup>119</sup> A year earlier bought it from Norman J. Conrad of Hamilton,<sup>113, 209</sup> who, in 1903, acquired it from Lydia E. Rankins of Hamilton.<sup>112</sup> She bought it, in 1889, from John Trefry.<sup>103</sup>

The rapid turnover of this property, as well as others along the street possibly was a result of investors believing the new railroad service would increase the land's value. Based on sale prices listed in several property deeds, property values did not increase.

Businesses at 65 Railroad Ave., prior Smith's CPA practice, cover a broad range. In the 1950s, Larry Bennett of Beverly had a shoe and boot store, leasing the building from Mabel Hall. A story goes that Larry was a bookie. While helping a customer, his phone would ring and he'd go in the back room to take bets for races at Suffolk Downs.

In the 1930s and earlier, the streetcars passing close to their entrance hampered businesses on the north side of Railroad Avenue. Also, parking spaces were on the far side of the track.

In the 1920s, for a short time, a Chinese laundry was at what is now 65 Railroad Ave. For customers, there were two problems: the owner, Sing So Ho, spoke little English and he often mixed up clothes. (*A selectmen's comment in the 2008 Annual Town Report, which was said to be an ancient Chinese proverb, "May you find what you are looking for," certainly applied in the 1920s.*) Then one day, the Chinese laundry failed to open: the owner suddenly was gone.<sup>281</sup>

An early business at this location was Norman Conrad's fish market. He subsequently moved to Willow Street, across





**61 Railroad Ave.** became a 2-story building in 2014, but window and door in same places. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.



**61 Railroad Ave.**, before 2014, was a single-story building. Originally, like many other buildings, it had a false front. Photo, Charles Vorrias, 2013

from Gould's market and, later, to a Main Street property he owned, which was next to the Wenham town line.<sup>303</sup>

Judging from a 1905 photo, the first business at this site was a poolroom, run by Chester Witham of Wenham.

Early businesses, at this location, were in a single-story structure. Erected, between 1903 and 1905, by Norman J. Conrad, it like those at 30, 34 and 40 Railroad Ave. had a door at the center and, on both sides, large glass windows. However, it did not have a false front.

### **61 Railroad Ave.**

Hamilton Dentistry opened in 1998. In 2000, Dr. Charles Vorrias and his wife, Dr. Laura Vorrias, bought the business from Dr. Thomas W. Foley, also a dentist.<sup>108</sup> Dr. Foley acquired the property, in 1966, from Mabel Hall.<sup>143</sup> Thus, a dentist has been here for about 50 years.

In 2010, the Vorrias added a second floor to the building and redesigned the front of the building. The first floor entrance and interior also were remodeled.

The Vorrias are the latest of 9 dentists to be located on Railroad Avenue: 5 at 34 Railroad Ave., and 2 at 44 and 2 at 61 Railroad Ave. Currently, Dr. Lisa J. Murray, who began in 2001, currently is a dentist at 34 Railroad Ave.

Dr. Foley's office was in an office at the back of the building. Timothy Maciejowski, a lawyer, leased an office in the front. He left in the 1970s, moving his practice to Wenham. Prior to coming to 61 Railroad Ave., Maciejowski had an office at 75 Railroad.<sup>269</sup>

Before Dr. Foley's dentistry, there was Spiers' bakery at 61 Railroad Ave.<sup>263</sup> Evelyn Spiers, who previously had a bakery at 54 Railroad Ave., opened her business in 1961, and closed in 1965. This was the last of the bakeries on Railroad Ave.

61 Railroad, before 2014, was a single-story building. Like many other buildings, it had a false front. Dr. Foley's property was part (5,329 sq. ft.) of Hall's property (8,100 sq. ft.) that she bought, in 1940, from Effie B. Witham of Wenham.<sup>130</sup> It included what now are 65, 61 and 59 Railroad Ave.





**Telephone company** was at 61 Railroad Ave, from 1906 to 1960.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1955

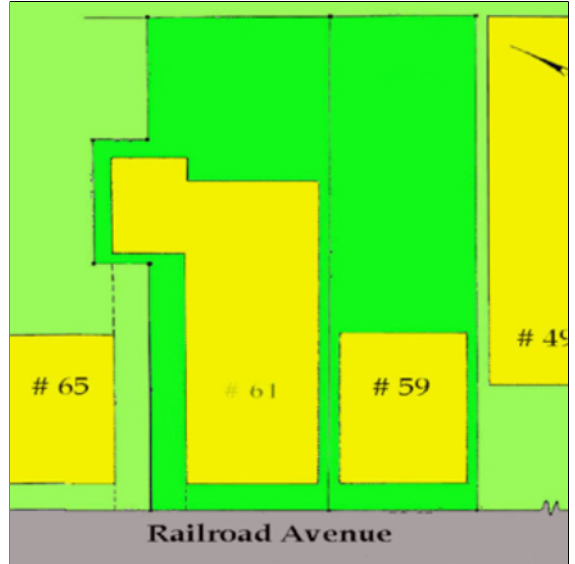
The single-story building was 20 ft. wide and 52 ft. deep on the east side. At the back, on the west side, it had a 12 x 19 ft. extension.<sup>238</sup> About 1905, Charles E. C. Witham of Wenham erected the original building that was "approximately" 20 ft. wide and 60 ft. deep.<sup>308</sup>

The telephone company expanded the size of the original building, in 1955, by adding a 12-ft. wide by 19-ft. long section at the rear left corner. Hall provided an incursion of 9 ft. x 25 ft. into her property, at 65 Railroad Ave., for building the telephone building's addition.<sup>130, 143</sup>

Until 1960, this was a telephone exchange. The New England Telephone and Telegraph began leasing the building, for 5-year periods, in 1906 from Witham. The rent was \$360/yr., or about 30¢/sq. ft.<sup>308</sup> As late as 1947, the rent was \$420.<sup>181</sup>

In 1960, the "dial tone" came to Hamilton and Wenham. New England Telephone and Telegraph moved to a new building at 145 Willow St., equipped for the new automated system, not requiring operators.<sup>309</sup>

The Railroad Avenue exchange was a beehive of operators, all women, quickly connecting callers by plugging and unplugging cords into a maze of holes on a switchboard. They answered caller questions and sometimes even gave the caller news about the place or person they wanted to reach.



**Telephone company** expanded the size of its building at 61 Railroad Ave., in 1955, by adding a 12-ft. wide by 19-ft. long section at the rear left corner, which required a 9 ft. x 25 ft. incursion into the property at 65 Railroad Ave.

Map, J. Hauck, 2015.

From 1933 to 1940, Effie B. Witham, widow of Charles E. C. Witham, owned the property, which also included what is now 65 Railroad Ave. The 2 lots, side by side, were the same size, 100-ft. deep and each with 40-ft. frontage on Railroad Avenue.<sup>130</sup> Her brother-in-law, Frank Witham of Wenham, transferred the property to her, in 1937.<sup>181</sup> He obtained the property in 1933 from the estate of his deceased brother, Charles.<sup>79</sup>

In 1932, the Railroad Ave. telephone exchange became, the emergency response center for Hamilton and Wenham. The Hamilton police station assumed this service, in 1960, when the telephone service switched to dial tones. The emergency number became HO8 (468)-4422.<sup>37</sup>

The need for an emergency response center became very apparent in 1910. Early that year, the Hamilton telephone exchange played a key role in fighting the town's first major fire. The blaze, on Mar. 25, destroyed just about every structure in the area of Mill, Willow, Asbury and Main streets. The exchange sent calls to other towns for help in containing the fire.<sup>1</sup>



**59 Railroad** had major refurbishing in 2015, both inside and out, before the MaryBeth Boutique moved in. Photo, J. Hauck. 2015

### 59 Railroad Ave.

59 Railroad Ave. was created in 1963, when the town of Hamilton designated it as a separate property from 61 Railroad Ave.<sup>64</sup> It has a 23.5 ft. frontage and is 100-ft. deep.

In January 2015, Marybeth's Boutique moved to 59 Railroad Ave. The business had been across the street, at 58 Railroad Ave., for 19 years.

David Cutter, trustee for 59 Railroad Cutter Realty Trust bought the property in August 2014 from 59 Railroad Cutter Realty Trust.<sup>114</sup> Cutter refurbished the building, inside and outside.<sup>278</sup>

59 Railroad Cutter Realty Trust held the property in 2000, when Laura Silva transferred the property to the Trust.<sup>109</sup> She and her husband, Arthur, also owned the Family Lounge in Beverly.

Prior to Marybeth's Boutique, Clipper Cottage, a dog-grooming salon, leased the building. Owned by Bridit McKeough, it began in 1992 and closed in 2013.

Preceding the Clipper Cottage was Art's Camera. Run by Arthur Silva, it opened in 1980 and closed in 1989.<sup>35</sup> The Silvas acquired the property in 1979 from Paul P. Divencenzo of Beverly.<sup>216</sup>



**59 Railroad** before 2015 refurbishing. Photo, J. Hauck, 2014

"Buster" Divencenzo ran a barbershop, which he opened in 1961. Working with him was John S. Halliday, who began as an apprentice. He became a master barber in 1973. A year later, 1974, with many customers coming to his shop, Divencenzo hired his nephew, Ronald J. Fortunato, to be the shop's third barber. The shop often was open until 10 pm.<sup>267</sup>

Halliday stayed with Divencenzo until 1970, when he went to Danvers to open his own barbershop. In 1975, he returned to the Railroad Avenue area and opened a barbershop, in the old fire company building on Willow Street, John's Barber Shop,<sup>267</sup> which in 2020, remains open.

"Buster" Divencenzo's barbershop followed Eddie Hall's.<sup>327</sup> He bought the property, in 1961, from Eddie's sister, Mabel Hall.<sup>141</sup>

Hall was a Wenham police officer from 1936 to 1953 and chief until 1965. When an emergency call came from Wenham, Eddie would grab his gun belt and police hat, which hung on a coat rack, and race off, leaving his customer sitting in the chair. The customer would come back later to have Hall finish.<sup>263</sup>

Times had changed. A trip to the barber no longer was a time of leisure. Men no longer took a walk to the barber's. There was a steady stream of walk-ins: appointments were the exception

The barbershops of the 1920s, 30s and 40s were much different than they are now. They were masculine refuges. While a customer sat on the chair, other men, waiting their turn, sat on chairs lined along a wall. They voiced their concerns about life, engaged in discussions about national and local issues. The barber would add comments from previous patrons.

Prior to the hair cutting, most often there was a hot towel wrapped around the face, which was followed by a shave, using a straightedge razor. A leather strap, hung from the back of the chair, was for sharpening the razor. Each customer had his personal lathering mug stored on a shelf, and each with the owner's name.

The final touches were a gentle shaving of hair from the back of the neck, a light dusting of scented talcum, followed by an application, to the hair, of ointment having a light smell of musk and rum. After rising from the chair, came a whisking of any clip-pings from the shoulders.

At the back of his shop, Hall had a boxing ring, where he gave young boys lessons.<sup>316</sup> Later, this an art studio where Hall painted local scenes.<sup>263</sup>

In 1940, Mabel Hall obtained the property from Effie B. Witham of Wenham,<sup>130</sup> who received it from her husband,

Charles E. C. Witham of Wenham, and

her parents, in 1933.<sup>181</sup> The single-story building had a false front.

In the late 1930s, there also was a bakery here. The owner hired a young girl, Jennie M. Ross of Hamilton, to pull a cart around the two towns from which she sold doughnuts, a nickel each. The owner paid Jennie a couple of cents. These were the depression years, so even a couple of pennies were important.<sup>257</sup>

The small bakery, daily making hundreds of loaves of bread, was long a fixture of urban neighborhoods. Such shops, equipped with one or more large ovens, also make pies and pastries. The proprietors often were immigrants that were bakers before coming to America.

Sometime after 1924, Charles Witham built the current small (600 sq. ft.), single-story building. It replaced a 2-story building that fire destroyed on Mar. 13, 1924.

The Hamilton and Wenham Grange #297 owned the previous building.<sup>1</sup> Besides the Grange using the second floor for its meetings, dances were held and movies shown every Thursday evening.

<sup>316</sup> Access to the second floor was by an enclosed stairway on the east side of the building.<sup>283</sup>

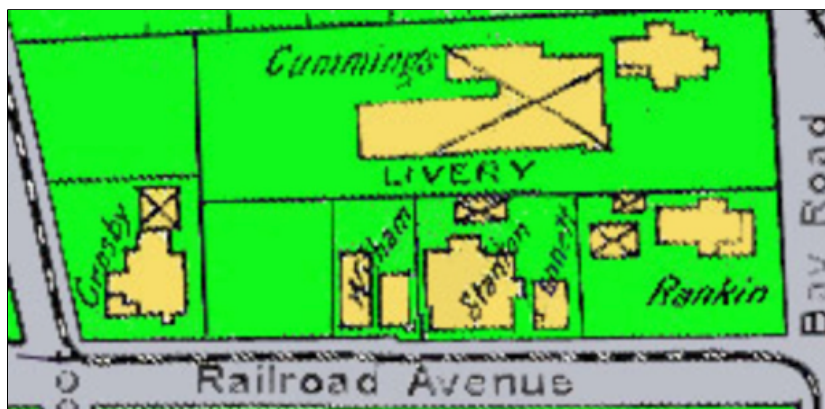
Prior to the fire, Daniel W. Kimball had a lunchroom in a street-level store. Locals called it the "palm lunchroom:" behind each of the store's two glass plate windows there was a palm tree.<sup>283, 34, 316</sup>

In 1913, The Hamilton library, then in the town hall, opened a branch library in Kimball's lunchroom. Open Tuesdays and Saturdays,<sup>65</sup> the branch library, on a high traffic street, became very popular. Often, it annually had more visitors than the main library, in the town hall. To meet the need for more space, the Hamilton library established, in 1919, a reading room in the store next to the "palm restaurant."<sup>29, 9</sup>



**Hall's barbershop** (left), 59 Railroad Ave., originally had a false front, as did #61, and #43/#41. (Car is a 1939 Dodge)  
Photo, J. Govoni, 1940.





**Stanton building** became the Grange building in 1916. In street level stores, there was a library branch and a restaurant. A fire, in 1924, destroyed the building. Map, Walker Lithograph & Publishing, 1910

The reading room had "walls painted a soft green with cherry dado (*wainscot*) and electric fixtures, light oak furniture. Shelving and furnishings were of the latest design."

The reading room was open two afternoons and evenings every week, alternating with afternoons and evenings at the main library.<sup>29</sup>

Circulation figures of the branch library usually exceeded those of the main library, by a ratio of three to one. Reasons for this were: the shift of the center of population to South Hamilton from Hamilton Center, the older part of town;

The branch library was easily accessible in the business center; and it was near the post office. The 1924 fire destroyed the all the library books. The fire may have fire originated in the kitchen of the "palm lunchroom." A loud explosion was heard before the fire was reported.<sup>34, 283</sup>

The Hamilton-Wenham Grange #297 obtained the building, in 1916, from Raymond K. Tarr of Wenham.<sup>196</sup> The Grange was a member of the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. George C. Donaldson of Hamilton was the Master, at the time. A fraternal organization, founded in 1867, the Grange "encourages families to band together to promote the economic and political well- being of the community and agriculture."

Tarr bought the building and property, in 1916, from Frederick Stanton of Wenham.

At the time of the sale, Stanton had two mortgages on the property, one was a second mortgage to Tarr.<sup>217</sup>

1916, for Stanton, was the culmination of several years of financial frustration. The year began with renewed plans of success, when William L. Wood of Beverly sold Stanton all the stock and goods in the grocery and bakery business that were in Railroad Avenue,

building. Stanton also acquired from Wood a horse, wagon and a sleigh with a box on it, which Wood previously acquired from a bankruptcy auction.<sup>235</sup>

However, just five months later, Stanton declared bankruptcy. Wood reclaimed everything he had sold to Stanton.<sup>236</sup> This was not Stanton's first bankruptcy.

In 1913, Stanton bought the Railroad Ave. property for the second time, from his wife, Melvina.<sup>224</sup> She obtained it, in 1910, from Charles E. Beard of Wenham.<sup>223</sup> Earlier in 1910, at a public auction, Beard procured the property.<sup>234</sup>

On May 21, 1910, Frederick Stanton declared bankruptcy and lost the property.<sup>234</sup> Stanton likely built the large, two-story building about 1904. Based on the 1910 Walker Lithograph & Publishing map,<sup>299</sup> the building had a frontage of about 80 ft. and was about 50 ft. wide.

Stanton ran a meat delivery business, making daily deliveries to customers in Hamilton and Wenham. He likely leased space for the grocery and bakery. In a large barn at the back of the property, he stored his delivery wagon and horse.<sup>299</sup>

In 1903, Stanton bought the property, on which there were no buildings, from Lydia E. Rankins.<sup>111</sup> She acquired it, in 1899, from John Trefry.<sup>103</sup> She and her mother, Abbie, lived in the house.



**U. S. Post Office** moved to 49 Railroad Ave., in 1985. Previously, it was in the brick block building on Bay Road. Photo, J. Hauck, 2016

#### 49 Railroad Ave.

In 1985, this became the location of the South Hamilton U. S. Post Office. The U. S. Postal Service acquired the property in 1982.<sup>158</sup> The South Hamilton Post Office previously was in the brick block on Bay Road (16 Bay Rd.).<sup>270</sup>

This was the first time the post office owned a space in Hamilton. Nationwide, the Postal Service owns about 25% of its 32,000 spaces.

The first Postmaster, at 49 Railroad Ave., was Stephen J. D'Arcy, who lived on Maple Street.<sup>280</sup>

Unlike other buildings on the street, the post office sits back from the sidewalk. It stands 28 ft. from the curb, of which 18 ft. are a brick-block patio. The town, in 2015, placed a metal bench, on the sidewalk, facing the post office.

Previously, this was a metal building (about 3,300 sq. ft.). It was an auto body repair shop, owned and run by John (Jock) J. Wallace, who lived on Rust Street.

The Post Office refurbished the building, in 1985.<sup>270</sup> There was another expansion, in 1988, when the Post Office added an ell at the back. Two years later, 1990, the Post Office built another section to the ell, bring

ing the total area to about 5,700 sq. ft.

Built in 1955,<sup>297</sup> Wallace's garage had large doors at both the front and back. Vehicles entered the garage through the back door. On both interior sides, there were areas for making vehicle repairs.<sup>263</sup> There also was a small building (1,200 sq. ft.) attached to the back of the garage.<sup>24</sup>

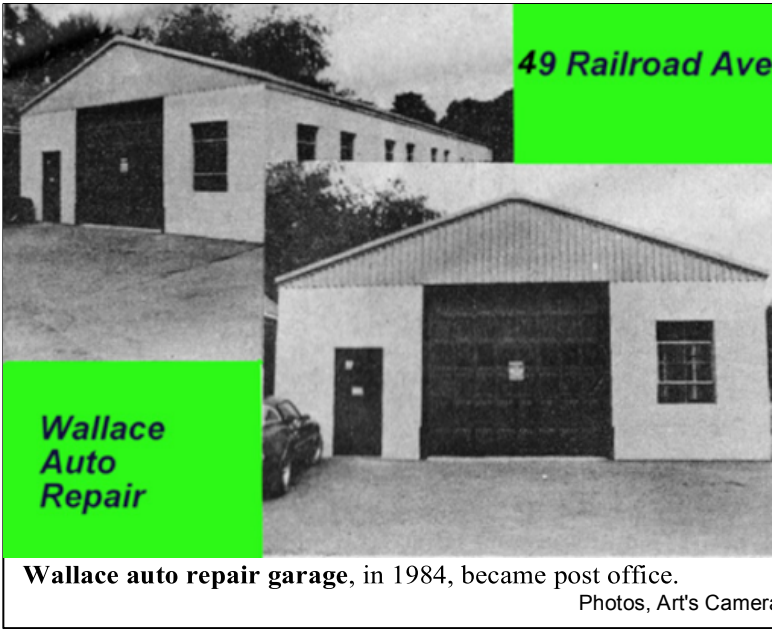
The large property (47-ft. frontage, 222-ft. deep on east side, and 128 ft. wide at the back) sold to the Post Office included the Railroad Avenue property Wallace bought from Jeremiah "Jer-

ry" J. Carey, in 1969,<sup>148</sup> and a portion of the property, at the back of his land, which he bought, in 1963, from Shell Oil Co. (former Arthur C. Cummings property).<sup>142</sup>

The back lot provided an area for parking disabled cars that Wallace picked up using a tow truck he owned.<sup>263</sup> In 1981, Wallace bought an easement, over a lot behind his property from Gilbert L. Steward.<sup>244</sup> This brought the total size of his property to 23,360 sq. ft.<sup>24</sup> Wallace acquired the easement in preparation to selling his property to the Post Office, which wanted another access to the property from Cummings Avenue.

Prior to selling the property to Wallace, Carey leased the property during the 20 years he owned it. He had, for many years, a barbershop on the adjoining property, 31 Railroad Ave.

A single-story wood building was at 49 Railroad Ave., prior to Wallace's garage,<sup>295</sup> Allen H. Bennett of Beverly likely erected the building, sometime before 1910. (A 1910 Walker Lithograph & Publishing map of Railroad Avenue map shows a building at this location.)<sup>299</sup>



In 1949, Carey bought the 49 Railroad Ave. property from the estate of Anna M.

who purchased it, in 1889, from John Trefry of Waltham.<sup>103</sup>



**Office condominium**, at corner of Bay Road and Railroad Avenue, has four units: 31, 25, 19 and 15 Railroad Ave. Photo, Bing, 2014

### Depot Square Common Condominium

31, 25, 19 and 15 Railroad are units of the Depot Square Common Condominium on the corner of Railroad and Bay Road.

As is the case with a residential condominium, a business condominium own

(Gamboa) Kidder of Lynn.<sup>120</sup> She inherited the property (1931) from the estate of her mother, Angelica

M. Gamboa of Hamilton.<sup>120</sup> She, too, had inherited the property, in 1927, from her mother. Mary E. Gamboa of Hamilton, having bought the property in 1915 from Beverly National Bank. The Gamboas leased the property during the 34 years they owned it.

In 1913, Allen H. Bennett sold the property to the Beverly National Bank,<sup>201</sup> where he was a cashier. Bennett bought the property, in 1908, from Lydia E. Rankins,<sup>5, 121</sup>

er purchases a unit, along with a share of common areas. As a unit owner, the business can benefit with property value gains.

The owner pays a monthly fee for the building's external maintenance, landscaping, snow removal, common area care, and property management. Each owner has to follow the rules and regulations of the condominium.

Beverly National Bank, in 1986, considered a similar plan for the property. It is unlikely the bank considered erecting a bank at its property on Railroad Avenue.

However, about three-quarters of a century later, in 1986, Beverly National Bank built a bank at 31 Railroad Ave. The bank also owned 31 Railroad Ave. However, in 1988, the bank decided not to continue with the project.





**31 Railroad Ave.**, in 2015, is Hamilton Veterinarian Clinic.  
Two windows, on side, remain from former bank building.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society, 1990

### 31 Railroad Ave.

Dr. Scott Pett, DVM, opened the Hamilton Veterinary Clinic in 2005. (*Yes, the veterinarian's name is Dr. Pett.*) He bought the unit (#2, 1,500 sq. ft.) at the end of the previous year from Dr. William V. Hobbie of Wenham.<sup>125</sup>

Hobbie also had a veterinary business, Hamilton Wenham Vet Clinic (*and no, he*



**31 Railroad Ave.**, in 2015, is Hamilton Veterinarian Clinic.  
Two windows, on side, remain from former bank building.

Photo, J. Hauck, 2015

*was not a hobby breeder*). He began in 1992, having bought the unit from Depot Square Common Condominium<sup>9</sup> In 1991, 86 Bay Road Realty Trust bought the 31 Railroad Ave., property, from Beverly National Corp. (BNC),<sup>211</sup> a holding company. In 1988, BNC acquired Beverly National Bank (BNB). Two years earlier, 1986, BNB bought the property from the Winer Hamilton Trust.<sup>165</sup>

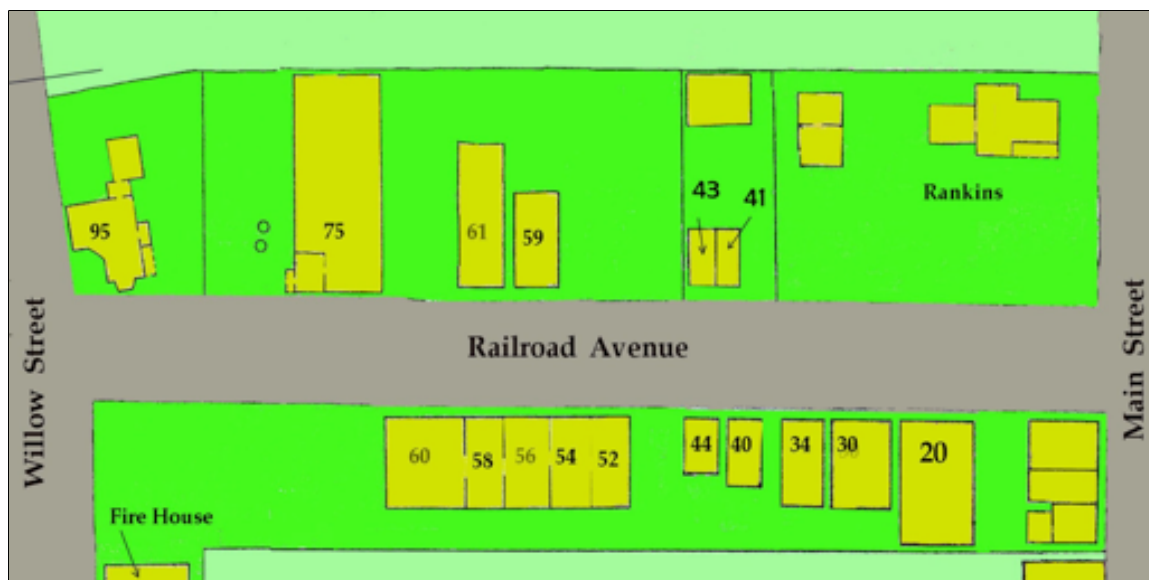
In 1987, 86 Bay Road Realty Trust formed Depot Square Common Condominium. At the time, the condominium property included only 25, 19 and 15 Railroad Ave.<sup>210</sup>

In 1986, after building with an addition at the back, BNB opened a bank branch. It had a drive-up window on the east side. This was Hamilton's first bank.

Prior to BNB occupying the building, it had two shops. At the center, there were doors to each business, which had a large window in the front.

The door on the left opened to Silas Campbell's electrical repair shop. Sy, who, it seemed, always had a cigar in his mouth, moved here from the brick block building on Railroad Ave., in 1976. His wife, Brenda, sold knick knacks at the shop.<sup>263</sup>

In 2014, Robert A. (Mac) MacRae closed his shoe repair business on Willow Street, just around the corner from Railroad Avenue. His closing was the end of what had once been a broad area of craftsmen with shops on and near Railroad Avenue, who served the needs of the area's wealthy landowners.



**1929 map** showed 5 businesses on the north side of Railroad Avenue, including #s 43 and 41, which later became #31. Private homes, Rankins and Crosby (#95), were at ends of the street. In 1924, the Grange building, which was between #59 and #43, burned. Map, Sanborn Fire Insurance.

There were: Campbell's electrical repair, Cushman's clock repair, Peterson's carpentry, Whitehouse's shoe repair and several car repair shops.

Now (2016), only one craftsman shop exists in the Railroad Avenue area: Allied Restoration, at the corner of Willow Street and Railroad Avenue. Sarah Blanding restores various forms of art.

Before Sy Campbell was at 31 Railroad Ave., there was Metro Mower, owned and operated by Paul Watson. He sold lawn mowers and accessories and provided mower repair services.

The door next to Campbell's electrical repair shop opened to a barbershop, owned by Jerry Carey, an Ipswich resident. Saturdays were children's days for haircuts. When done cutting their hair, Carey often gave the child a nickel, which many of them used to go across the street to buy candy at the paper store.<sup>263</sup>

In a 1998 locally televised program, Francis A. Newell, who was born in Hamilton in 1908, mentioned several other early businesses that were at 31 Railroad Ave., including a butcher shop, owned by Walter Hush Cullen; followed by a men's and boy's clothing store owned run by Michael Arm

strong; and then a tailor shop run by Joseph Kate's.<sup>316</sup>

The open area alongside the two shops, now a driveway into a parking lot, often was used as a shortcut for those going, on foot, north on Bay Road.<sup>263</sup>

Little information exists that mentions when the first building was erected in this area. Benjamin Winer of Beverly bought the property, in 1927, from Lydia E. Rankins.<sup>172</sup> It was a portion of the property she acquired, in 1889, from John Trefry.<sup>103</sup>

Although the 1927 Rankins to Winer deed does not mention any buildings being on the Railroad Avenue property,<sup>172</sup> the mortgage given to Winer, by Beverly Savings Bank, to acquire the property, mentions buildings.<sup>172</sup>

A 1910 Walker Lithograph & Publishing map of Railroad Avenue shows a single building (A. Bennett), in the area.<sup>299</sup> The detailed and very accurate 1929 Sanborn Insurance Co. map (above) shows a building with two addresses (#41 and #43) in the area that is now 31 Railroad Ave.<sup>295</sup> Town records do not indicate when 41 and 43 Railroad Ave. became 31 Railroad Ave.



**25 Railroad Ave.,** People's United Bank (*right*) opened in 2011. Family Medicine, 15 Railroad Ave. (*left*) opened in 1994 at the Depot Square Common Condominium. Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.

**25 Railroad Ave. (Unit #1, 2,388 sq. ft.)** has been the site of a bank since 1992, when Beverly National Bank, moved from 31 Railroad Ave. to this location, which was built in 1991.<sup>289</sup>

In 2009, Danversbank acquired Beverly National Bank, which claimed to be the country's oldest bank, having begun in 1802. Next, in 2011, the People's United Bank bought Danversbank.<sup>32</sup>

Beverly National Bank acquired the property from Winer Hamilton Trust, in 1986.<sup>165</sup> Ownership of the property by the Winer family began in 1927, when Benjamin and Jacob Winer of Beverly acquired it from Lydia E. Rankins.<sup>172</sup> It had 160 ft. frontage along Main Street and 100 ft. frontage along Railroad Avenue.

On the property, there was the Rankins' (*Lydia, and Eli and their children*) 2- story house and two barns,<sup>1</sup> A wood fence was around the property.

Lydia Rankins, who acquired the property in 1889 from John Trefry of Hamilton,<sup>103</sup> was one of the earliest merchants on Railroad Avenue: an 1888 Hamilton directory lists her as a dressmaker.<sup>17</sup>

**19 Railroad Ave.,** built in 1962, became part of Family Medicine Associates, located at 15 Railroad Ave., in 2003. Dr. Hugh M. Taylor bought the unit,<sup>222</sup> and had it remodeled, switching the entrance from Bay

Road. The former separate unit was combined with the building behind it, which was occupied by Family Medicine Associates.

The previous business, Bay Road Cleaners, owned by Carlo G. and Nancy L. Bianchi of Hamilton, was the first business to purchase the unit (#3, 2,612 sq. ft.).<sup>250</sup> They bought it, in March 1992, from the 86 Bay Road Realty Trust,<sup>93</sup> and opened Bay Road Cleaners, the following month, April. The Bianchis moved their business from Ipswich, where

they began in 1957. Bianchi retired in 2003 and closed his cleaners business.<sup>222</sup>

The store faced onto Bay Road, but the low stonewall alongside the street did not have an opening. To reach the front entrance, customers parked behind the building and used a walkway on the side. When the building was redesigned in 2003, a walkway was built from Bay Road.

86 Bay Road Realty Trust bought the property from Mad Hatter Realty Trust, of which Sally Steward was the trustee.<sup>227</sup> Later in 1992, the 86 Bay Road Realty Trust placed the property in the Depot Square Common Condominium.<sup>92</sup>

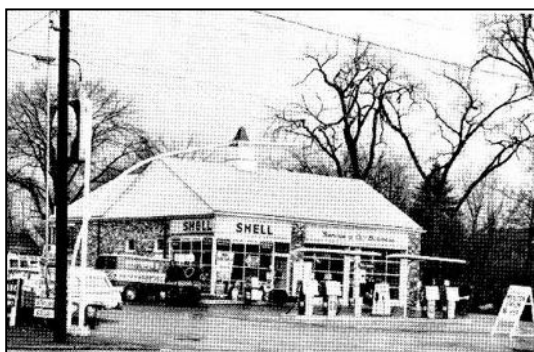
From 1984 to 1988, the Fox 'n Fern Restaurant, owned by Paul and Susan Duserick of Wenham was at 86 Bay Rd. They previously owned Hunters' Inn restaurant at 26 Bay Rd.

The Fox 'n Fern had two dining rooms, a bar and a reception area. One dining room was an atrium, which had been a greenhouse, on the side of the building when it previously was a florist shop. The other dining room, called the Polo Room, had photos, paintings and memorabilia from the Myopia Polo Club.<sup>31</sup>

Before the Fox 'n Fern, the Depot Flower Gallery, owned by Lillian A. Miller of Hamilton, was briefly at 86 Bay Rd. In 1980, Miller converted a former Shell service station



# How 86 Bay Rd. Became 15 Railroad Ave.



**86 Bay Rd.**, a Shell Gas Station, in 1980, was replaced by the Depot Flower Gallery.

Photo, Hamilton Historical Society.



**Fox 'n Fern restaurant** opened in 1983, replacing the Depot Flower Gallery.

Photo, Steven Cook, 1989



**19 Railroad Ave.** became part of 15 Railroad Ave. in 2003.

Photo, J. Hauck, 2015.



**Bay Road Cleaners** opened in 1992 at 19 Railroad Ave.

Photo, Arthur Crosbie, 1993

into her florist shop. She built a greenhouse on the south side of the building.<sup>64</sup> Also working at the florist shop was Eileen T. Crockett of Hamilton.<sup>279</sup>

The Fox 'n Fern, as did the previous Depot Flower Gallery, leased the property from Sally J. Steward. She received the property from her father, Gilbert L. Steward, Jr. of Wenham.<sup>226</sup> He bought the property, in 1979, from Shell Oil. In the 1979 deed, Shell included a clause that for 20 years no gasoline station could be at the Bay Road location.<sup>221</sup>

Shell opened its service station at 86 Bay Rd. in 1963. A. Merrill Cummings was the operator.<sup>62, 303</sup> (*The "A." was for Arthur: not wanting to be confused with his father, also Arthur, he was called Merrill.*) In 1964, Merrill Cummings retired as Hamilton's fire chief, a position he had held for more than thirty years (*he began in 1932*).

Shell Oil acquired the property, in 1962, from Merrill Cummings.<sup>219</sup> He inherited it, in 1948, from his mother Elizabeth B. Cummings, widow of Arthur C. Cummings,<sup>218</sup> who died in 1936. Elizabeth, Merrill's mother, lived next door to the station.<sup>263</sup>

The Cummings property had a 119-ft. frontage on Main Street and was 390 ft. deep, on its north side and 268 ft. on its south side.<sup>206</sup> In 1928, the town built Cummings Street off of Willow Street.<sup>77</sup>

Before becoming a Shell station, Arthur Cummings had a small gas station building

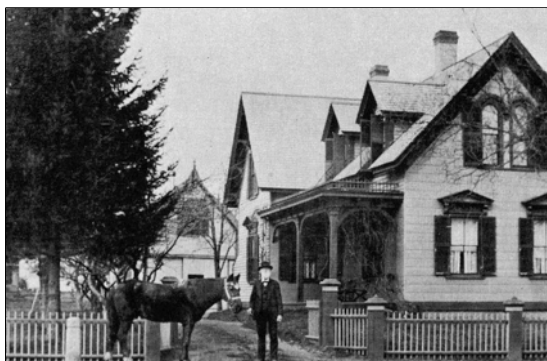
that stood beside the Cummings home and in front of a large barn. A 1935 photo shows there were two pumps and the attendants wore white shirts, ties, uniforms and service caps,<sup>282</sup> Beginning in 1920, Cummings also operated a taxi car service from the station. Previously, he had a horse and carriage livery service at the barn on the Main Street property.<sup>305</sup>

Cummings came to Hamilton, in 1890, as the train depot baggage master. In 1897, he bought Elmer E. Clark's carriage business and dwelling at 86 Main St. and continued operating a commercial livery and boarding stable.<sup>1</sup>

At the start of 1992, the area behind Bianchi's cleaners, now 15 Railroad Ave., was vacant back to 31 Railroad Ave., which at the time was the Beverly National Bank building.<sup>222</sup>

**15 Railroad Ave.** was built in 1993, as part of the Depot Square Common Condominium. Later that year, Beverly Hospital was the first business to purchase the unit (#4, 2,500 sq. ft.).

The following year, 1994, Dr. Hugh M. Taylor bought the unit from Beverly Hospital.<sup>100</sup> He began Family Medicine Associates, a group medicine practice, where independent physicians share the facility, expenses, and support staff and equipment. In 2016, FMA had doctors specializing in family medicine, addiction medicine, internal medicine, geriatrics and dermatology.



**Eli Rankins** in front of his house, at corner of Main and Railroad. A large barn was beside the house and another barn at the back of property.

Photo, Courtesy of Wenham Museum, 1891



**A common**, at corner of Bay Road and Railroad Avenue, is an attractive open green.

Photo, J. Hauck, 2015



Quite a change from the first doctors in Hamilton that were general practitioners serving as family doctors. In a 1990 local tv program, Frank Newhall recalled, from the 1920, his family doctor, Dr. John Corcoran, charging \$2 for an office visit and \$3 for a home visit.<sup>316</sup>

**The Common**, at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Bay Road, provides an important element of the design for the Depot Square Common Condominium. The town square, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was a place where people came to buy household goods, clothing, and food. Workshops belonging to the blacksmith, cooper, merchants and shoemaker were often around the common. Later, with the arrival of railroad service, some commons became squares having a green around which were various shops.

The Common has an eclectic collection of trees. At the front corner of Bay Road and Railroad Avenue, stands a Norway Red Maple. A weeping cherry is behind the maple. At the back edge of the Common, next to the entrance driveway on Railroad Avenue, there is another red maple. Also, at the back edge is a tall, Norway spruce tree.

Not to be overlooked at the Depot Square Common Condominium is that it has 44 parking spaces.

### The Future

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, various developments in technology have affected the types of businesses to open on Railroad Avenue. First there was the automobile, followed by the telephone, radios, television, and computers.

What will Railroad Avenue be like in 2050? 2099?

What new technologies will affect the types of businesses in the future?

How will digitalization change how small businesses run and the space they require?

Will more business-to-business offices move to this street, replacing consumer merchants?

Will brick and mortar bank be needed? Will there still be a post office?

Will the current separate septic systems be replaced by a single system?

Might Railroad Avenue become an area of affordable housing?

Might another business condominium be built that combines several existing properties and has ample parking?

What will be the lasting effects of the 2020 Covid virus?

Two things that must be addressed, if the area is to remain a business center, are parking and sewerage

*Updated Dec. 15, 2020*



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- 251 - Robert Borsetti
- 252 - Peter Britton
- 253 - Betty Chagnon
- 254 - Daniel J. Connolly
- 255 - George Connolly
- 256 - Emily Cook
- 257 - Robert Cronin
- 258 - Butch Crosbie
- 259 - Albert W. (*Win*) Dodge
- 260 - Mimi (*Maione*) Fanning
- 261 - Martha Gardner
- 262 - Paul Govoni
- 263 - Edward Haraden
- 264 - Meggin Hunt
- 265 - Richard H. Ireland
- 266 - Annette Janes
- 267 - John Halliday
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