

WHEN HOWELLS FIRST ARRIVED in Hamilton, most of the townspeople lived in “small one-story wooden houses, with here and there a brick house of two stories, and here and there a lingering log-cabin.” You can see a log home in Monument Park today (2). This is also the location of the Ohio Bicentennial Historical Marker recognizing Howells (1).

HOWELLS’S FATHER edited the *Hamilton Intelligencer*, a Whig paper. In the newspaper offices, young Howells developed his love for the

printed word. The building housing the *Intelligencer* (6) was located on the corner of Third and Basin (now Court) Streets.

DURING THE HOWELLS FAMILY’S eight-year stay in Hamilton, they lived in three homes: the Thomas house on lot 51 on the south side of Ludlow between Front and Water (now Monument) Streets (4), the Smith house on lots 149 and 150 near the northwest corner of Dayton and Second Streets (later the site of Mercy Hospital) (8), and the Falconer house on the corner of Third and High Streets on the site of the First National Bank (7).

SEE PLAQUES honoring Howells on the west side of the First National Bank of Southwest Ohio and on the northeast side of the High Street/Main Street Bridge. The former plaque refers to the Falconer House (7).

IN HIS LETTER to the 1891 Hamilton Centennial Commission, Howells wrote of his “proud affection for the old place, which was the home of my happiest years, and which I have never ceased to revisit in the dreams of long exile.” He said, “I knew it when the log-cabins still basked in the deep cornfields about it.” Howells recalled that “the Justice on the Court House was so high above the earth that her head pressed the clouds”; for him, “Everything was on the grandest scale.” He remembered that summer days “were each a week long.” From the courthouse lawn, he also witnessed the sad spectacle of the removal of the Wyandottes to a reservation. In a 1912 fire, a sculpted female figure of Justice toppled to the ground and shattered. Whether this was the same sculpture that Howells knew resists proof, but, today, a hand from Justice is in the showcase of the Butler County Courthouse on the second floor (5).

WHILE NOW IT MAY BE DIFFICULT to imagine that Hamilton once had a port within the center of the city, Howells knew it as the “Canal-Basin.” Packets and other craft followed the canal system to the heart of town, where they would unload their cargo. Long after Howells lived here, the city filled in the Basin (12).

HOWELLS REMINISCED ABOUT the “grist-mills on the river and canal, cotton-factories and saw-mills on the Hydraulic, iron-founderies [sic] by the Commons, breweries on the river-bank, and not too many school-houses.” In his day, Hamilton had a lively open marketplace with “long rows of market-wagons, stretching on either side of High Street in the dim light of the summer dawn...” (3).

