

Hamilton M. Turner

Ref: "Randolph Township" by E. F. Warner in the *History of Montgomery County, Ohio*, W. H. Beers, 1882.

Salem, Ohio (Post Office: Clayton) was a thriving town during the mid-1800s in no small part due to the industrious nature of Hamilton M. Turner and his brothers who were keen businessmen as well as farmers. For example, the Turners provided funds for the construction of the Turner Opera House (now the Victoria Theatre) in Dayton.

Hamilton Turner was born in Pennsylvania in 1815. He was one of eight children born to John and Margaret (Wagoner) Turner who emigrated to Montgomery County in 1820. The father was held in high esteem in the community and was elected twice as county representative to the state legislature in 1827 and 1829. In 1830 he was elected Associate Judge to the common pleas court.

The youngest son, Hamilton M. helped his father on the farm until age 22 when he married Hannah Harbaugh with whom he had ten children. In 1839 he began a distilling business with his brother John. After a brief sojourn to Indiana in 1842 he returned to Salem and joined his brother and his associate Jacob Heck to form Turner, Heck and Co. They continued in business until 1848, when he withdrew from this business and formed a partnership with his two brothers, John and Joseph. It was at this time that they built a large, brick distillery along the banks of Wolf Creek. They ran the distillery along with a dry goods and grocery store in Salem until 1851 when he left the partnership and purchased the Engle Mill on the banks of the Stillwater River. During this period, Mr. Turner lived near his mill in the Harrisburg (Englewood) area.

Still fired with ambition, Hamilton Turner joined again with his brothers to build a flouring mill in Greenville in Darke County. This was converted to a distillery but destroyed by fire in 1844. It was rebuilt in ninety days! By 1861 the Turner partnership was dissolved, and Hamilton retained only the distillery business but operated a flouring and saw mill. He had accumulated enough wealth to build a substantial brick house and enjoy the remainder of his life. The old Turner warehouse at the corner of Talmadge and Salem stood until 1989 when the roof collapsed due to heavy snow and it had to be demolished. The house still stands.

Hamilton and Hannah's daughter Maria married William Rogers of Salem in 1860. Two daughters of this union survived into adulthood, Renna and Effie. Effie married Fred Horner. Their only daughter, Eleanor (Rogers) Horner was a beloved teacher at Clayton School until she married her own Mr. Rodgers and became Eleanor Rogers Horner Rodgers! She resided in the family home in Clayton until her death.

The society has many photos of the Turner and Rogers families thanks to donations from Ida Young. We also have the Harbaugh genealogy, Maria's wedding ring and other mementos. We cherish this part of Clayton history.