# HOUSES AND PROPERTY RESEARCH GUIDE

March 2025

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# **STARTING YOUR RESEARCH**

There are various sources that can be used to document the history of a building or property. With the exception of some well-known houses, businesses, buildings and properties, most do not have a ready-made history. It will therefore be necessary for you to spend some time searching available sources.

Detailed land and property information, especially required during a legal sale or environmental assessment will likely require the support of a professional, such as a solicitor or title searcher.

A general note to keep in mind for your research: over time, street names and lot numbers (with the creation of new subdivisions) may have changed.

Following are records you can use to trace the history of your house, and where these records are located. In this guide, Local History and Archives will be referred to as LHA.

# LAND REGISTRY RECORDS

Also referred to as Land Registration, Copybooks, Property Ownership Records.

These records detail the chain of ownership of a property by means of plan and lot number. The dates of new ownerships can be determined; however, the existence of any specific building is not shown.

Note: lot numbers could have changed over time with the creation of new subdivision.

**Dates**: At LHA, we have a limited date range. For Hamilton, the dates are around the 1840s-1890s, some other townships have earlier/later dates.. For any other dates, you will need to go to OnLand.ca. See below.

## <u>At LHA</u>

#### Copybooks on Microfilm:

Refer to the Copybooks Finding Aid, located on top of the microfilm cabinets in the Reading Room. To use it, search alphabetically by township and then chronologically by year within that township. The microfilm roll will be identified. Some portions are missing and will be identified directly on the microfilm box.

#### **Ontario Land Record Index Township Listings**

Location: two-drawer metal box on top of census cabinets in Reading Room

## At the Ontario Land Registry Office (OnLand)

Land registration records used to be available at the Ellen Fairclough Building, but most Land Registry Office (LRO) records in Ontario have been moved to a provincial portal called OnLand (onland.ca).

#### What is OnLand:

OnLand is Ontario's online portal for all Land Registry Offices (LRO) where you can search for historical books, documents and property title records in any LRO. For Hamilton, the LRO is Hamilton Wentworth (LRO 62). This includes the City of Hamilton, Town of Flamborough, Town of Dundas, Town of Ancaster, City of Stoney Creek, and the Township of Glanbrook.

Purchasing Parcel Registers will provide current and historic ownership, history of transfers, any liens on title, easements etc. Viewing documents (referred to as 'instruments') requires payment.

#### Searching on OnLand:

Link: <u>Homepage - Ontario Land Registry Access</u>

Select your Land registry Office.

Search by address, property PIN (preferred), or map. PIN will produce more accurate results. PIN can by found on Property Tax Assessments, Deeds, or Property Survey.

# TAX ASSESSMENT RECORDS

#### Also referred to as Assessment Records, Assessment Rolls, Land Assessment, Roll Books.

These records were created to assess properties for taxation purposes and included assessed property value and ownership information. These records can help to accurately date the construction of a building, reveal the original owner and sometimes a list of occupants. As with most historical documents, there may be gaps in records.

Notes:

- Prior to the construction of a building, a vacant lot is listed by lot number.
- Not all buildings are tax assessed. Public and institutional buildings, such as churches and schools, may not be found on tax assessment records. If they are used for a purpose other than their original use, such as a school that was converted into a house, it will be assessed only from the time it was converted.
- Several areas in Hamilton previously belonged to other jurisdictions. West Hamilton was originally part of Ancaster Township and east Hamilton and the mountain were originally part of Barton Township.
  - Since the amalgamation in 2000, the records of the new City of Hamilton are administered by the Office of the City Clerk.
- Lot numbers could have changed over time with the creation of new subdivision.

## At LHA

#### **Historical Documents on Microfilm**

The following is a list of municipalities in Hamilton-Wentworth and the available assessment records at LHA. For all other years, either check the City Records Collection (has years 1834-1899) or contact the City Clerk's Office (has years 1847-onwards).

Consult the Historical Documents on Microfilm Finding Aid to find the specific microfilm roll you need. Note: Some years are identified as missing. It's possible that more are missing without our knowledge. If you come across missing years, please let staff know so we can update this list.

Ancaster:	LHA: Ancaster Township - Assessment Rolls			
	1867, 1872, 1874-1876, 1879-1880, 1882-1885. 1886-1887, 1889,			
	1890-1894, 1896, 1898-1899			
Barton Township:	None available at LHA.			
	Note: Records prior to January 1, 1960 (date of annexation) are not			
	available. From January 1, 1960, contact the Office of the City Clerk			
Beverly Township:	1837 – 1944			
	missing: 1840, 1841, 1853, 1910-1911 1925, 1930			
Binbrook Township:	1854 – 1970			
	Missing: 1889-1892, 1941-1965			
Dundas:	1835 – 1942			
	Missing: some areas 1899-1923			
East Flamborough	1841 – 1960			
Township:	missing: 1845, 1851-1855, 1859, 1862, 1866-1867, 1871-1879, 1883-			
	1884, 1890-1891,1910-1911, 1954-1958			
Flamborough	None at LHA.			
Township:	Formed in 1973 with the amalgamation of Beverly Township, and			
	East & West Flamborough.			
Glanbrook:	None at LHA.			
	Formed in 1973 with the amalgamation of Glanford & Binbrook			
	Townships.			
Glanford:	1840 – 1957			
Hamilton:	1835-1899			
	Missing: 1850			
	Note: 1835-1847 are on roll #47			

The following are arranged by ward name or number.

To view historic ward boundary maps, please refer to the <u>City of Hamilton Ward Boundary Maps, 1813-1985</u> document to determine the ward in which your property was located. This document is also available in the Reading Room.

You can find the document at the end of this guide.

Stoney Creek:	Contact the Office of the City Clerk.
Waterdown:	1880-1959 Missing: 1883-1884, 1890-1891,1895, 1910- 1911, 1923-1926, 1954-1958
West Flamborough Township:	1861 – 1960:

Missing: 1862-1863, 1867-1868, 1872-1876,
1879, 1881-1883, 1892-1894, 1898-1900,
1905-1906, 1908, 1911, 1915-1920, 1923,
1925-1927, 1929-1932, 1934, 1936, 1943,
1946-1948,

## At the City of Hamilton

City Clerk's Office:

The City Clerk's Office has the original rolls and the microfilmed copies for 1847-1973.

City of Hamilton Property Inquiry Tool:

At time of writing, the Property Inquiry Tool was impacted in the cyber incident and had not yet been restored.

https://www.hamilton.ca/home-neighbourhood/property-taxes/understanding-property-tax/propertyinquiry

# **CITY DIRECTORIES**

City directories were created for salesmen, merchants, and others interested in contacting residents of an area and are a valuable research tool to trace individuals, families and businesses. Directories were published annually and provide an alphabetical listing of the adult residents, with their occupation and address, as well as an alphabetical listing of streets, with the occupant at each house number. The directories also include listings of businesses, institutions, churches, schools, social organizations, and municipal services.

HPL's collection of City Directories cover the City of Hamilton Directory from 1853 to 2010. Suburban directories are also available for Ancaster, Burlington, Dundas, Stoney Creek and Waterdown from 1957 to 2013. Earlier Hamilton directories include suburban areas and smaller townships and villages; please see the guide for townships and villages.

(link:

https://www.hpl.ca/sites/default/files/City%20Directory%20Listing%20outside%20of%20Hamilton\_aod a.pdf].

We are in the process of digitizing all the Hamilton City Directories in our collection. Fully searchable and downloadable digital copies for years 1853 – 1969 are available on <u>Internet Archive</u>. Earlier editions contain two sections:

- Alphabetical listing of streets that list the occupants at each address
- Alphabetical listing of surnames that list their address

Later editions include a 3<sup>rd</sup> section which matches a telephone number with a surname.

Notes:

- Information in each directory was usually compiled the previous year. This means that data contained in a directory predates the directory's publication date by one year. For example, the directory for 1900 reflects the status of the site in 1899.
- Over time, Hamilton streets may have been renumbered.
- Information such as a spouse's name or a tenant's occupation can often be found in the surname listing.
- Only the occupant of the property is listed. This person may or may not be the owner. Women were seldom included in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century directories only single, working women, and widows.
- There is a key to all abbreviations and codes, and it is often near the front of each directory.

# **TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES**

Telephone directories from 1878-2005 are available on microfilm. Print copies dated 1950 to 2008-09 are available by request. 2012 and 2013 are available in the Reference Section of the Reading Room. These directories cover the Hamilton area; however, they can also include: Ancaster, Burlington, Caledonia, Dundas, Freelton, Grimsby, Lynden, Mount Hope, Smithville, Stoney Creek, Waterdown, West Lincoln, and Winona.

# **PLAN OF SUBDIVISION:**

#### What is it:

When a lot was divided into smaller parcels, a legal survey called a Plan of Subdivision would have been created and approved by the municipality. New streets, lot/parcel numbers, and other services will be shown on the plan. This also means that lot numbers could have changed over time with the creation of new subdivision.

#### What is it not:

Plans of Subdivision are sometimes referred to as surveys, not to be confused with Property Surveys/Surveyor's Real Property Report which are dimensioned plans of a single property.

Property Surveys are not stored at the Land Registry Office nor at the City. A lawyer, mortgage company, or a licensed professional surveyor may be able to obtain a survey for you by requesting them from the original vendor or surveyor who prepared the original Surveyor's Real Property Report (SRPR).

## At LHA

We have copies of Plans of Subdivision available by request, ranging from the 1830s-1960s. These are part of the City Records Collection, RG21 Series G.

You will need to know the Plan Number in order to request a Plan of Subdivision. If you don't already know your plan number, there are two ways of finding it.

- 1) Refer to the 'Subdivision Plans RG21 Series G' Finding Aid, located under 'Finding Aids -C' in the Reading Room. Use this to locate your specific plan, which are described by bounding streets.
- 2) Look up your address on OnLand, which should give you the Lot and Plan number under the 'Property Details' column. You do not need to purchase anything to get to this step.

## At the Ontario Land Registry Office (OnLand)

Digital copies can be purchased via OnLand. If copies are missing from LHA's holdings, they may be available here.

# At the City of Hamilton

The City of Hamilton's Building Department may have copies of Plans of Subdivision. An application fee is required to be paid at the time of the request.

Requests to retrieve property records require proof of ownership or a letter from the owner giving the requestor permission to access the plans for a property.

Applicants can make the Property Records Request:

- In person at City Hall, Third Floor, 71 Main Street West, Hamilton, during regular business hours
- Online: https://services.hamilton.ca/request-property-records

# **MAPS**

Note: There is a finding aid available, which describes most maps held by Local History and Archives. The finding aid is available online here: <u>https://lha.hpl.ca/articles/maps</u>

The following are examples of frequently referred to maps:

### **Fire Insurance Plans**

These plans are detailed large-scale maps that show shape, size, and exact location of individual buildings. These plans were prepared for insurance companies, who needed to know building sizes and construction materials, to determine the fire risk and therefore be able to quote insurance premiums to customers. Plans were updated frequently as buildings were burned, torn down, rebuilt, or new areas were developed. When minor corrections were necessary, revisions were printed and pasted over outdated sections. They are valuable for researching a building since they provide details about the construction materials, outbuildings, and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Online versions for 1898 and 1911 are available through McMaster's Lloyd Reeds Map Library.

The following editions are available at LHA:

Note: Fire Insurance Plans on microfiche are in the two-drawer metal box on top of census cabinets in the Reading Room.

LOCATION	DATE	REVISION	LOCATION
Ancaster	1885	1909	Microfiche
Burlington	1910		Microfiche
			912.713533 Un2 CESH Folio (by
Burlington	1924	1932	request)
			& Microfiche
Burlington	1971		912.713533 C161 CESH Folio (by
	1971		request)
Burlington Beach	1900	1911	Microfiche
Dundas	1905	1924	Microfiche
			912.713522 Un2 CESH Folio (by
Dundas	1951		request)
			& Microfiche
Grimsby	1914		Microfiche
Circle	4020		Map Cabinet II-3 (by request)
Grimsby	1928		& Microfiche
Hamilton	4000	1016	A dia se fisik s
Volume II & III	1898	1916	Microfiche
Hamilton	1027	1047	By request
(incomplete)	1927	1947	
Hamilton Block Index	1927		Microfiche
Hamilton Block Index	1933		Microfiche
Hamilton	4060		Microfiche
Volume II	1960		
Hamilton	1000		912.71352 Un2 CESH Folio (by request)
Volume III	1960		& Microfiche
Hamilton	1000		912.71352 Un2 CESH Folio (by request)
Volume IV	1960		& Microfiche
Hamilton	4060		912.71352 Un2 CESH Folio (by request)
Volume V	1960		& Microfiche
Hamilton	1000		912.71352 Un2 CESH Folio (by request)
Volume II	1962		& Microfiche
Hamilton	1004		912.71352 Un2 CESH Folio (by request)
Volume I	1964		& Microfiche
Hamilton	1004		Microfiche
Volume II	1964		

Stoney Creek	No date		Microfiche
Stoney Creek	1933		Microfiche
Waterdown	1885	1905	Microfiche
Waterdown	1939		Microfiche

## Bird's-Eye View, Pictorial, and Surveyor Maps

This type of map can show a building's location within its neighbourhood and within the City of Hamilton. They can also provide information about the layout of the city or town, and changes in street names over the course of time.

- 1842 Surveyor's map showing buildings
- 1854 From the Escarpment looking north
- 1859 From the Escarpment looking north
- 1876 From the Bay looking south
- 1883 From the Escarpment looking north
- 1893 From the Bay looking south
- 1909 From the Bay looking south
- 1921 Tyrell and Company
  - This is a large scale map printed on the glass wall in the Reading Room

More historical maps and Fire Insurance Plans are available at McMaster University in the Lloyd Reeds Map Collection. Additional information can be found on their website at: <a href="http://library.lib.mcmaster.ca/maps/mapinfo.htm">http://library.lib.mcmaster.ca/maps/mapinfo.htm</a>

# **HISTORICAL ATLASES**

Historical atlases were created to document counties across Ontario. They can show locations of structures and other details. Some buildings are also illustrated in the body of the atlas.

## At LHA

In the reading room, behind the WTL card catalogue.

There is no inventory or finding aid for these. As of writing time, they will be catalogued and moved to Canadiana, unless they are local.

## **McGill County Atlas Project**

Historical Atlases are available online at via McGill: <u>https://digital.library.mcgill.ca/countyatlas/searchmapframes.php</u>

# **HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS**

Old photographs can provide evidence of a building's original appearance, use, and setting. There may be a photograph of the building in one of many photograph collections. Finding aids are available in the Reading Room.

Some have been added online: www.lha.hpl.ca/photograph-collections- and here: www.

lha.hpl.ca/photograph-collections-d-z

Notes:

- If the building was known by a name, remember to also search under that heading.
- You can also check photographs of the street the building is located on to see if your building might be shown.
- •

# ADDITIONAL SOURCES AT HPL

## Hamilton Spectator Historical by ProQuest

HPL Members can access scanned copies of the Hamilton Spectator from Day One of its publication on July 15, 1846, to 2025 (new papers are added about 1-3 weeks after publication on an ongoing basis). Full-text, greyscale and colour images of feature articles, breaking stories, newspaper editorials, advertisements, cartoons, obituaries and classified ads are available.

Members will need a Hamilton Public Library card to access the site. Access is possible from any HPL Library branch or remotely from home with a HPL library card.

Members can access ProQuest online at <u>https://www.hpl.ca/hpl-online/magazines-and-newspapers.</u>

## **Other Local Newspapers**

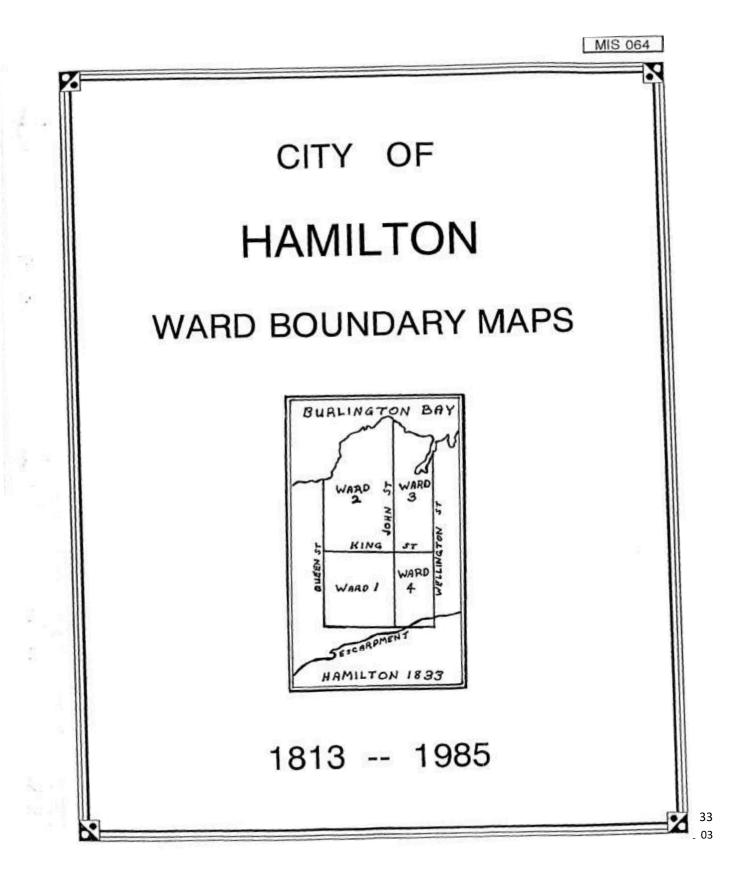
A full list of Hamilton newspapers available through Local History and Archives can be found online at LHA <u>https://lha.hpl.ca/articles/newspapers</u>.

## **Researching People Research Guide**

To obtain more information about the people associated with the building, refer to the **People Research Guide**.

# **APPENDIX A: 1813-1985 WARD BOUNDARIES**

Note: this is a separate document that has been copied for convenience into this research guide.



#### City of Hamilton Ward Boundary Maps 1813 - 1985

This publication contains ward maps for Hamilton from the earliest (1813) to the present, along with a description of the process leading to incorporation as a town. Over the years, as the city grew, the ward boundaries underwent many realignments. These maps will particularly aid researchers using the census records for the city of Hamilton. For more information, you may wish to refer to the Hamilton Spectator clipping file in Special Colletions.

For their assistance, we wish to thank City of Hamilton, Assessment Department

Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections

Prepared by Beatrice Kingdon

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#### ISBN 1-55075-555-2

A Genealogical Reference Listing

#### City of Hamilton Ward Boundary Maps 1813 - 1985

efficient system of Municipal Government. For this purpose an Act was passed on the 9th of June, 1846, to alter and amend the Act incorporating the town of Hamilton and to erect the same into a city. The inhabitants within certain limits fixed by this Act were constituted a body politic in fact and in name, by and under the name of the City of Hamilton.

The boundaries of the city were fixed as follows: "That the City of Hamilton shall consist of all that part of the District of Gore which lies within the following limits, that is to say: Commencing on the northeast corner of lot number twelve (Emerald Street) in the township of Barton, on the waters of Burlington Bay, thence following the line between the said lots number twelve and number eleven in a southerly direction to the rear of the third concession of the said township of Barton; thence along said concession westerly to the intersection of the line between lots numbers twenty and twenty-one of the said township; thence in a northerly direction following the said line between the said lots numbers twenty and twenty-one until it reaches the marsh at the head of Burlington Bay; thence along the southerly and easterly margin of said marsh to the waters of Burlington Bay to the place of beginning, including the several road allowances along the said boundary and the harbour in front of said Town.

The city was divided into five wards, named St. George, St. Patrick, St. Lawrence, St. Andrew and St. Mary.

This Act was superseded by the General Municipal Act of 1849, which extended the city limits eastward to Wentworth Street. The boundaries then were: on the east, Wentworth Street; on the south, Aberdeen Avenue; on the west, Paradise Road, and on the north, Coote's Paradise and Burlington Bay. By this Act the City of Hamilton exercises jurisdiction over that portion of the Township of Barton comprised in lots eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and twenty in the first, second and third concessions and the Broken Front.

The next change was that of the Proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, which fixes the city limits as follows:

All and singular that certain parcel or tract of land in the said Township of Barton lying to the west of the road allowance between lots numbers eight and nine (Sherman Ave.), and extending from the brow of the mountain to the waters of Burlington Bay, and westward to the present city limits, and including the said road allowance between numbers eight and nine and also parts of lots thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and of the road allowance between lots numbers eighteen and nineteen in

OGS Hamilton Branch

3

#### City of Hamilton Ward Boundary Maps 1813 - 1985

In 1791, Mr. Angustus Jones, P.L.S., completed the survey of the Township of Barton, and prepared a map showing the lots, the names of the owners, and the concessions. The map has the date of the 25th of October, 1791. From the records of the Crown Lands Department at Toronto, we glean the following facts concerning the land now within the present city limits. North of the base line, which is now called Burlington Street, is the "Broken Front"; from this base line southward to Barton Street is the first Concession; from Barton Street to Main Street the second Concession; from Main Street to Aberdeen Avenue, the third Concession. On the east, Sherman Avenue is the side road between lots 8 and 9; Wentworth Street, between lots 10 and 11; Wellington Street, between lots 12 and 13; James Street, between lots 14 and 15; Queen Street, between lots 16 and 17; Dundurn Street, between lots 18 and 19; Paradise Road, between lots 20 and 21. The lots are numbered from east to west, the Concessions from north to south.

Mr. George Hamilton, after whom the city was named, purchased from David Springer lot 14 in the Third Concession of Barton, and from John Askin, Sr., that portion of lot 14 in the Second Concession lying between Main and King Streets. King Street followed the Indian Trail and was the principal road leading from Niagara to Dundas and Ancaster. Main Street was the original road allowance between the Second and Third Concessions. That portion of lot 14 in the Second Concession lying between Main and King Streets was the portion first surveyed. It was divided into four blocks, and these were again divided into eight lots each, four facing King Street and four facing Main Street, with an alley between them, running east and west. This was the germ of the City of Hamilton.

As the Northerly and Southerly boundaries of these lots were surveyed to run parallel with Main Street, a gore was left on the south side of King Street. This gore was afterwards given as a Public Park, with the understanding that a similar portion on the north side of King Street should be given for the same purpose. This, however, was never done and the gore remains as originally given.

An act was passed on the 22nd of March, 1816, forming the Gore District out of portions of the Home and Niagara Districts, and conferring upon it all the rights and privileges pertaining to the other districts of the Province. The town of Hamilton was selected as the district town.

On the 19th of March, 1823, an act was passed providing for the construction of a navigable canal to connect Burlington Bay with Lake Ontario. This canal gave a decided impulse to the progress of Hamilton. Prior to its construction Ancaster and Dundas Barton Township.

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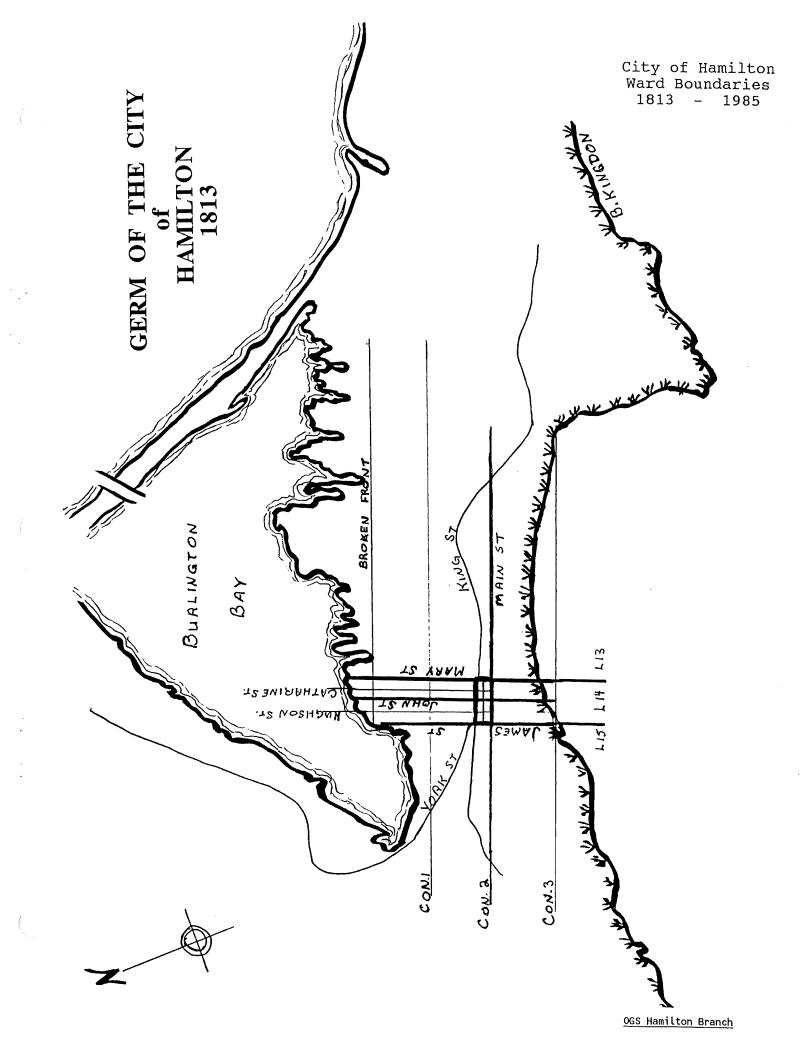
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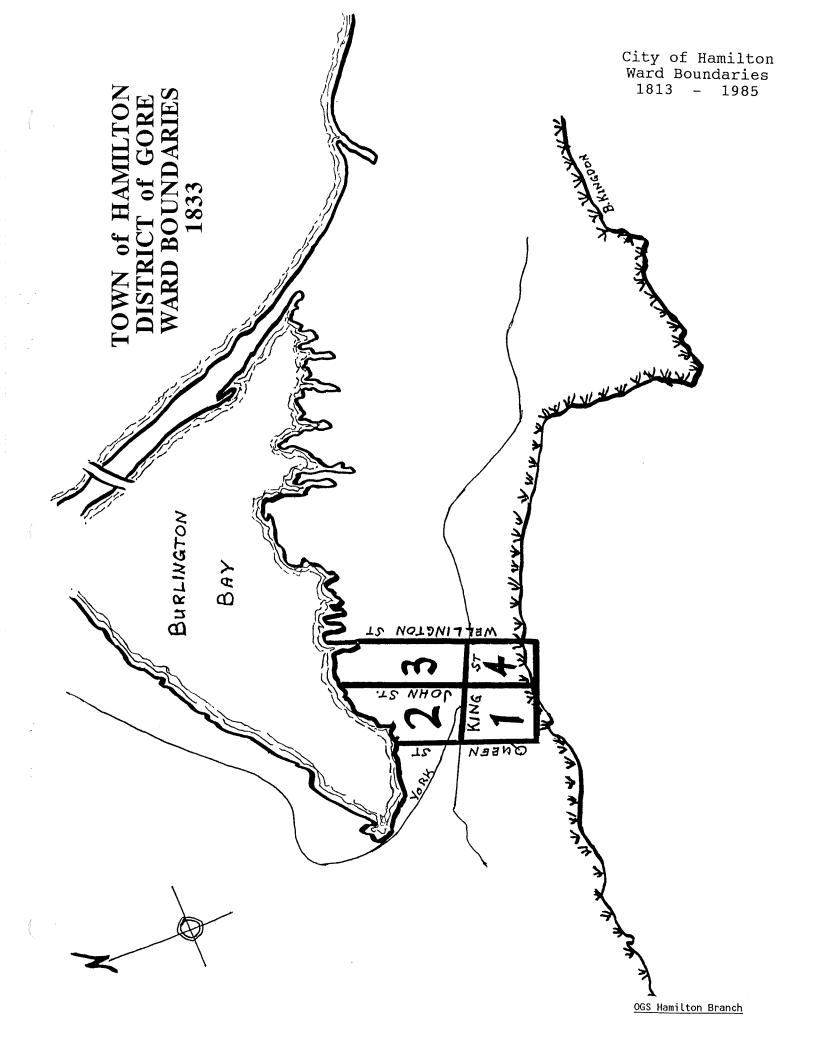
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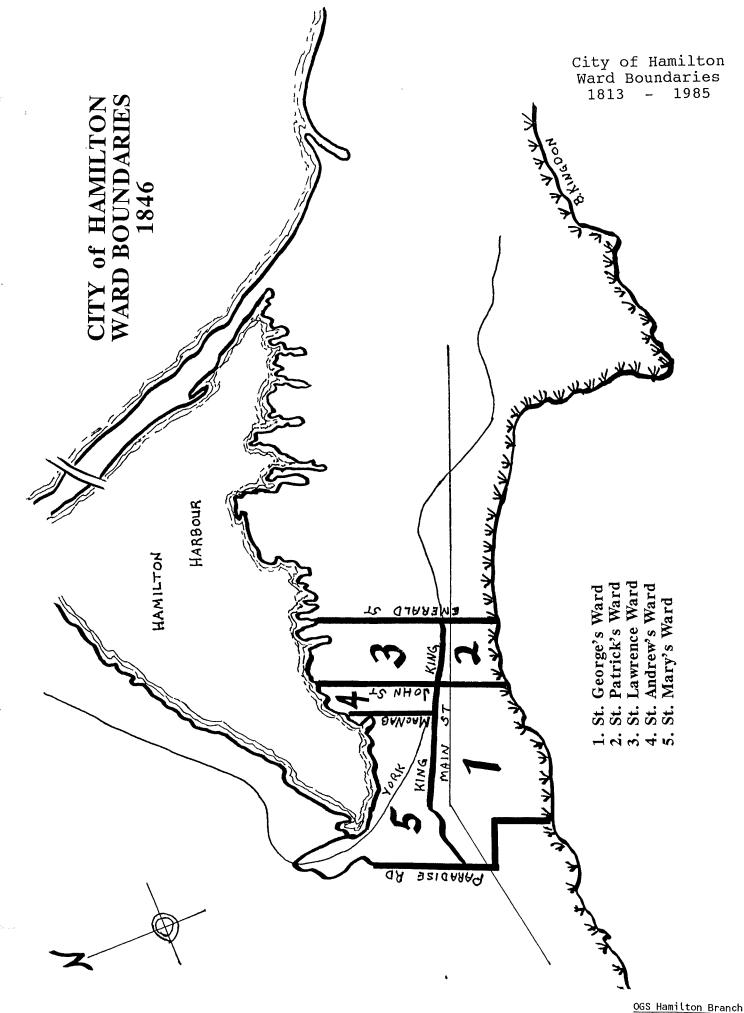
The final annexation to the City of Hamilton came 9th of July, 1969, expropriating 3,371 acres in the area of Highway 403 and Upper Horning Road, in the south west corner of the city.

The purchase of water lots from the Hamilton Harbour Commissioners, and the inclusion of Burlington Bay (not previously included), have brought Hamilton to a respectable 34,842 acres.

Those sections of the above narrative, in italics, are excerpted from the article "The City of Hamilton" by J.H. Smith, published in 1915, Vol. 6, Papers and Records of the Wentworth Historical Society.

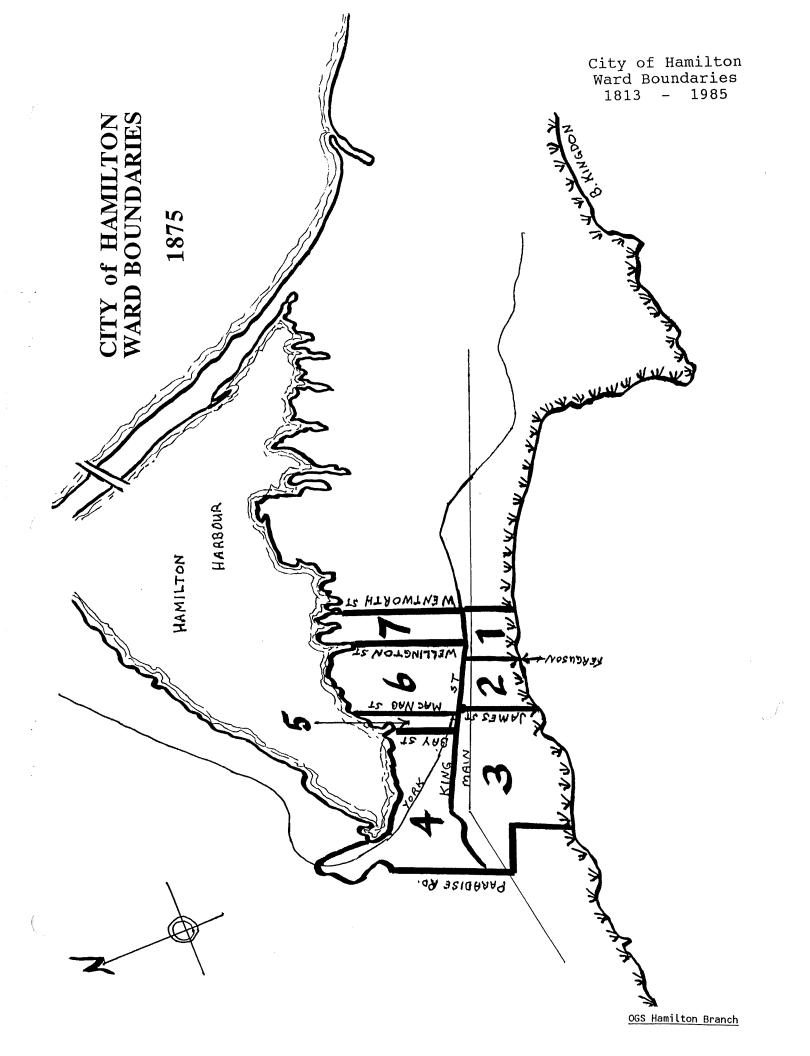


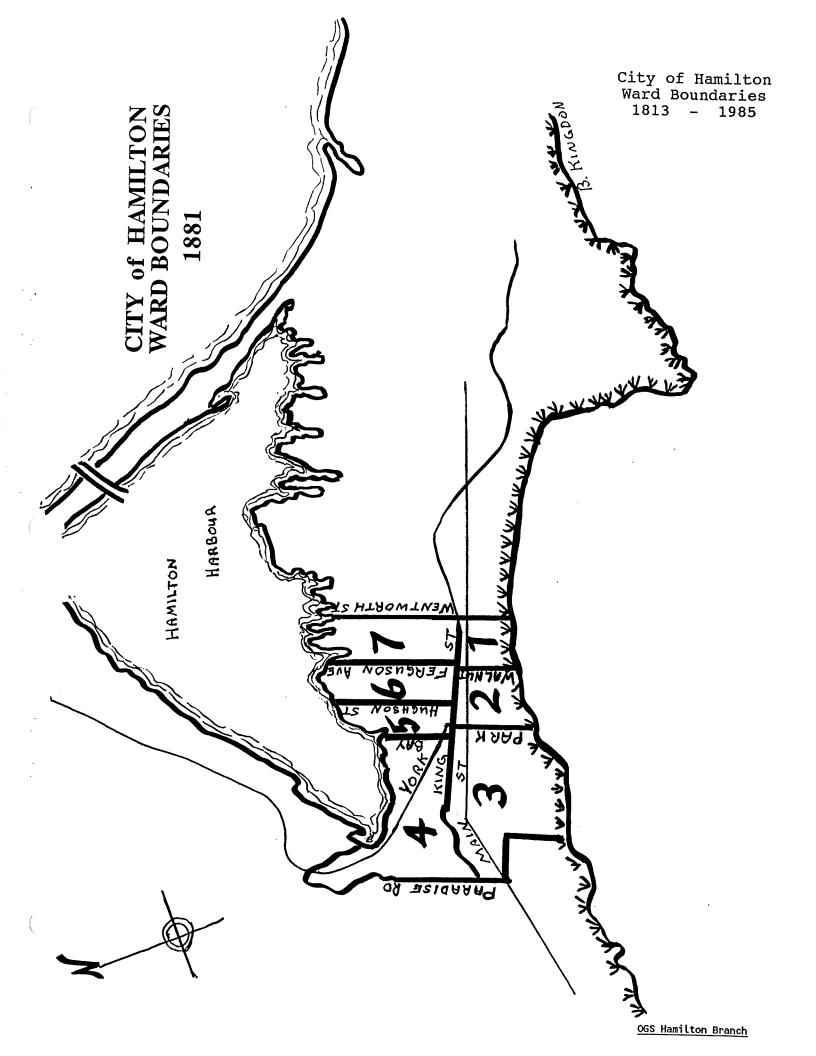


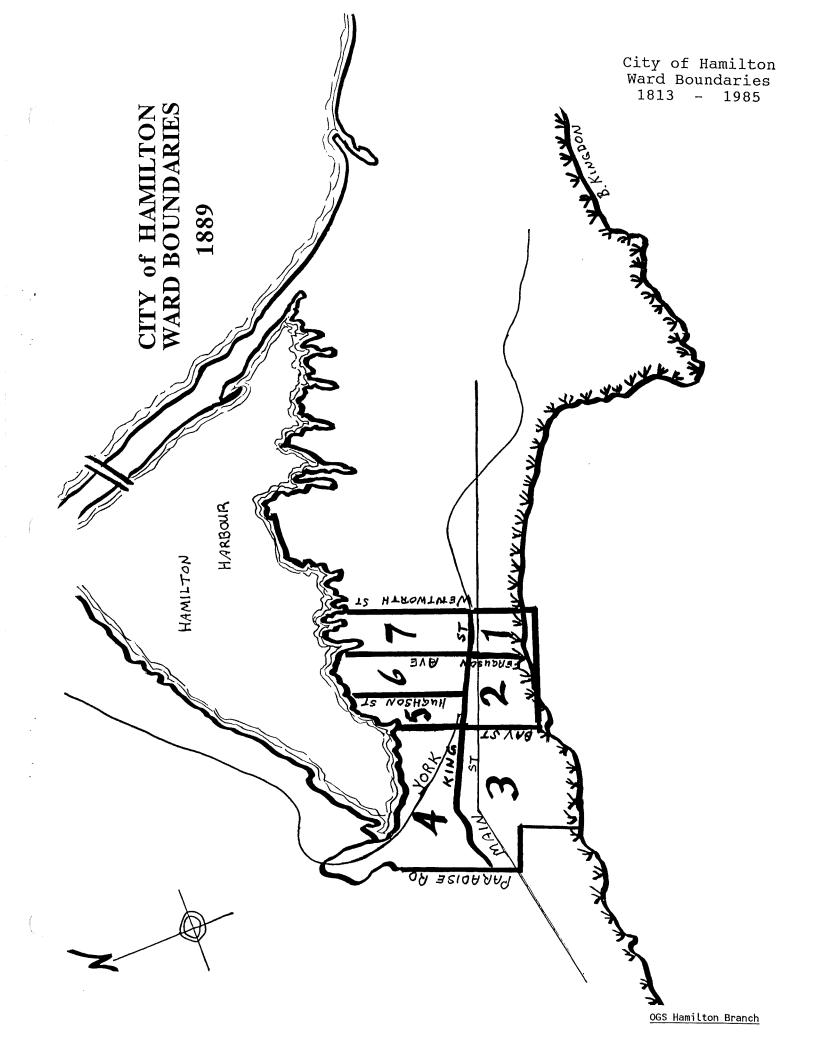


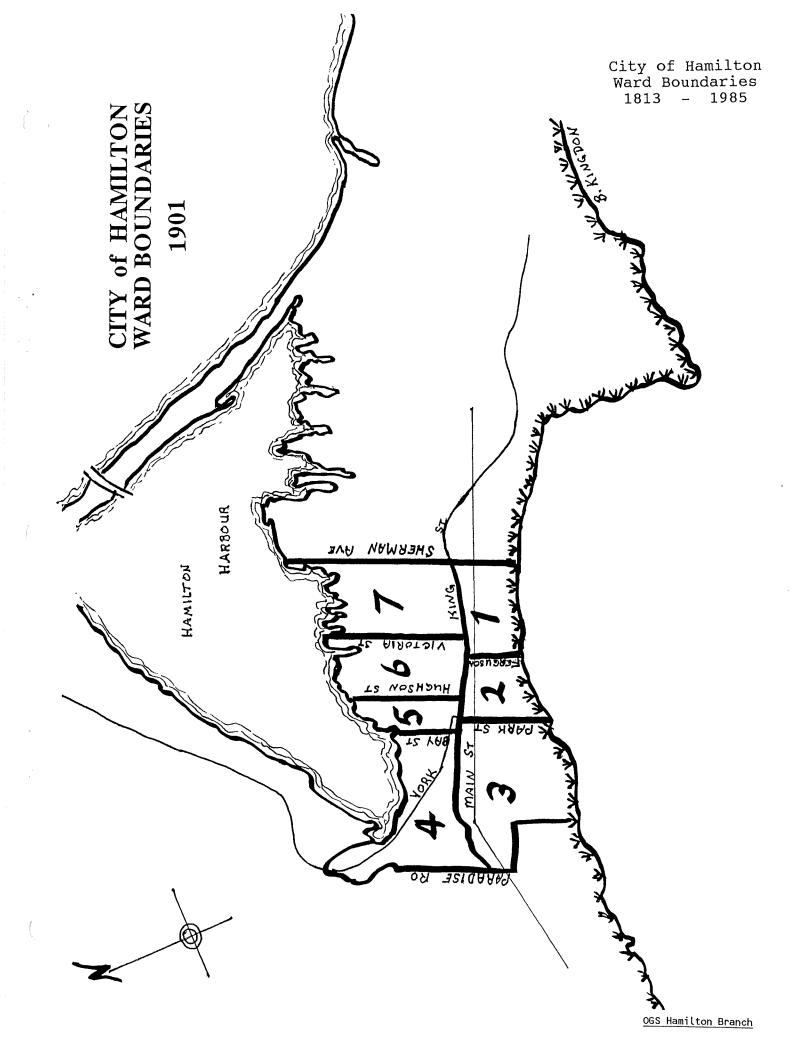
First Street Numbers Given In 1853 City of Hamilton Ward Boundaries 1813 - 1985 39 8 Tisdale V. H., fancy bter Ŕ Springer O., attorner, Odd Fellows' hall. CITT OF HAMILTON DIRECTORT. KING STREET, CONTINUED k Co., \* s d g. "t'ummines J., & Co., crockery. f Bank British North America. In Illighter A., crocker) ... Кст А.К Т. 15 Core Bank Teahan J., travellershor imas J., Canada house Monroe Win., whitewas . shoemal JOIIN STREET, UPPER, CONTINUED tilo CITT OF HAMILTON DIRECTORT. 58 Teahan J.
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64 Johnson D.
65 Almono Wi
68 Oliver W.
70 Prattor J.
72 Newburr J. ight T., stone cutter. 564 Newcombe J., mason. anstone J., carpenter carpenter. , painter. Hutchison J., hatter. lfeat market 61 Hayward ( 68 Vanstoned) 65 Wright T. 67 Hutchison 99 Baker T. Hayward J 38

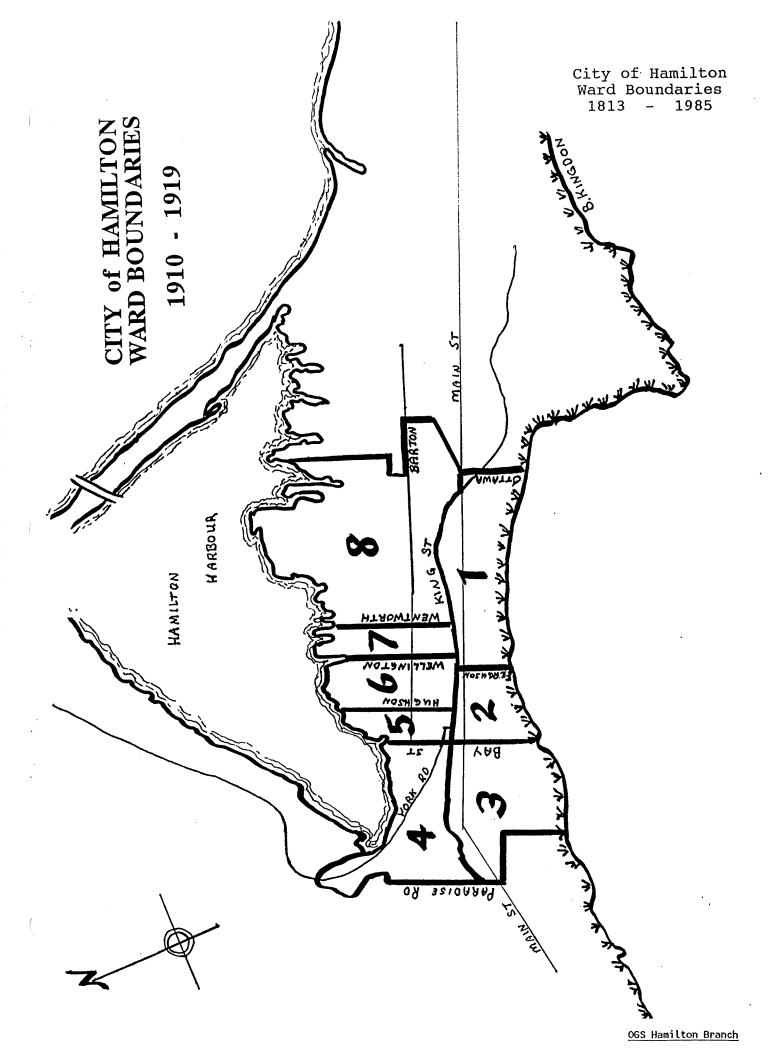
Hamilton when its first directory was compiled

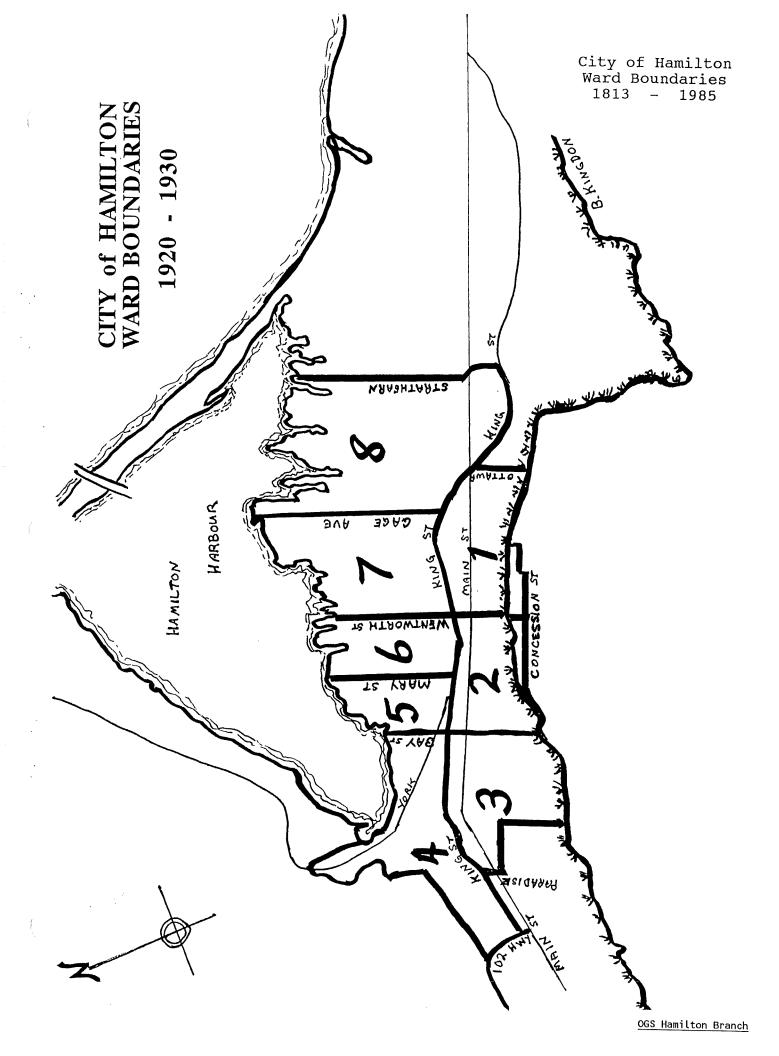


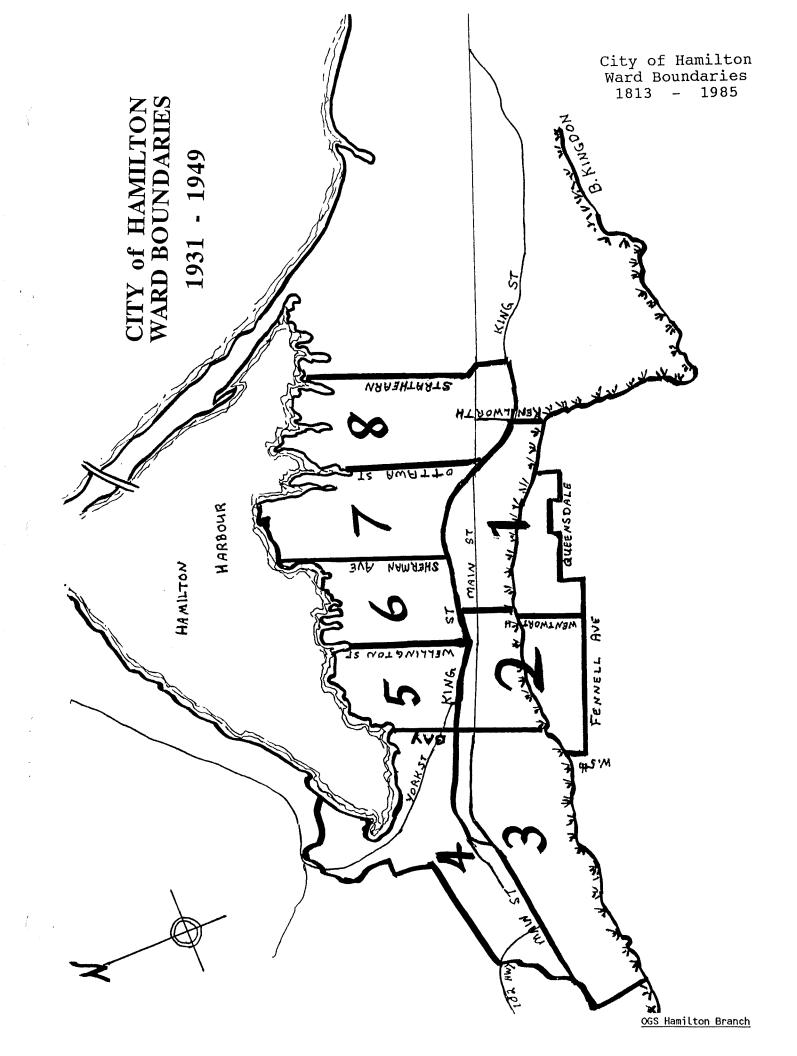


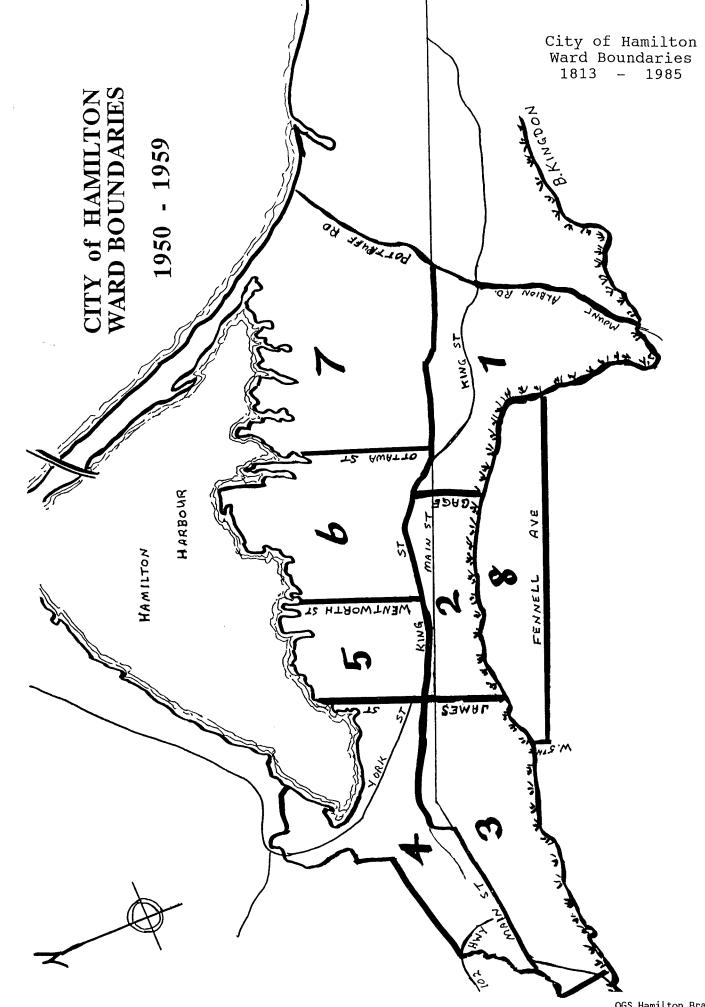






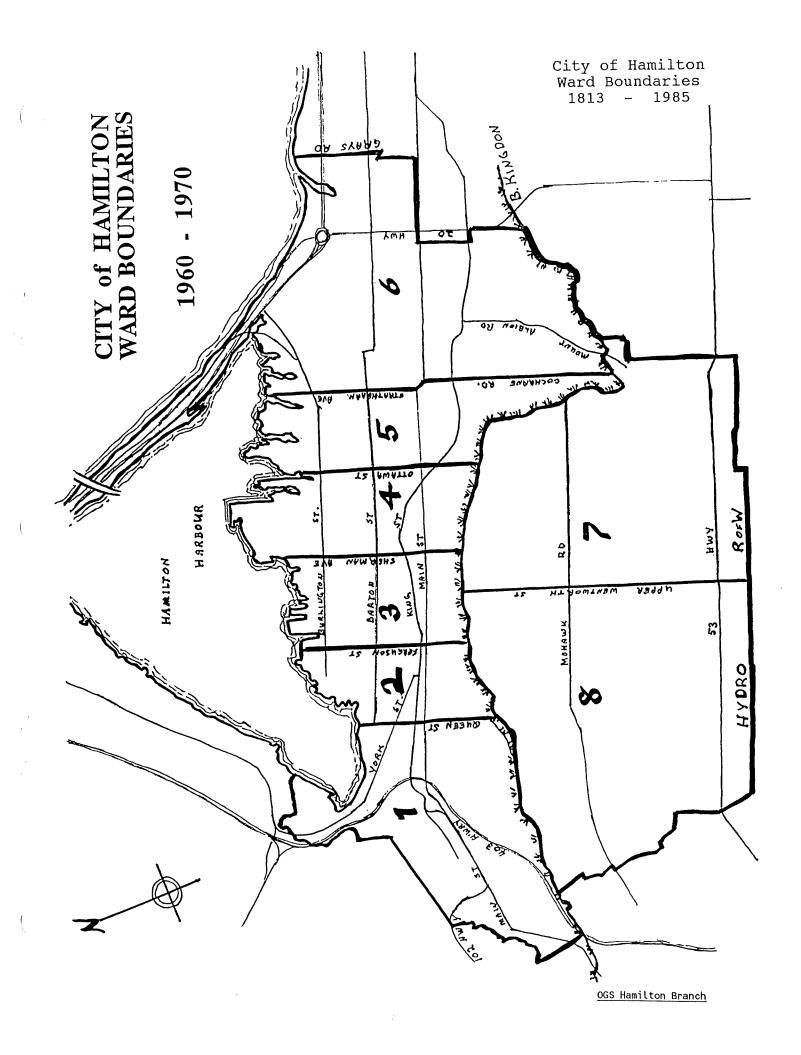


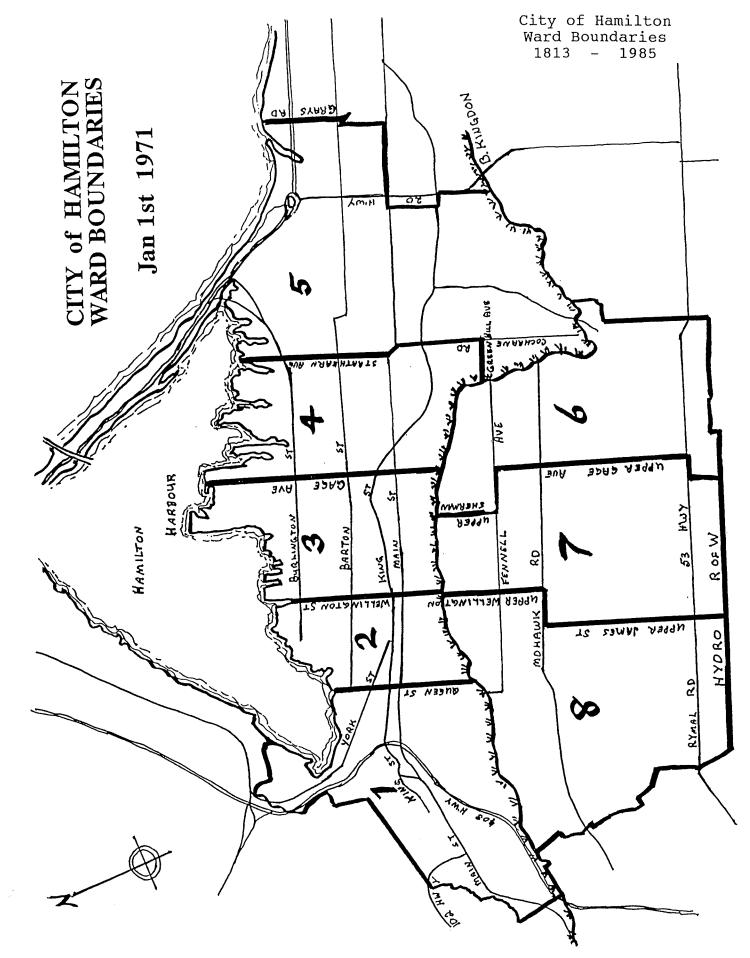


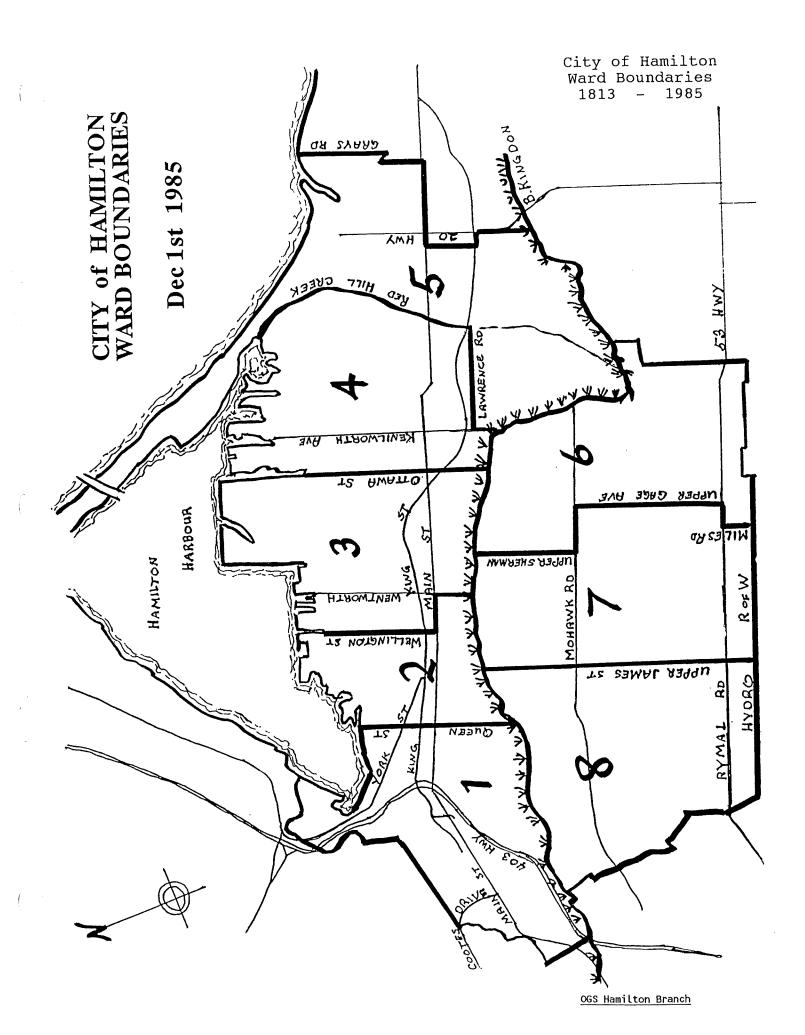


1. State

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City of Hamilton Ward Boundaries 1813 - 1985



**City of Hamilton** 

Planning Department February 1969

