

## Chapter 2

# THE GROWTH OF HAMILTON

As the United States emerged from the economic depression that followed the Civil War, opportunities for new businesses began to develop in the rapidly expanding midwestern states. Due to the increasing distances between manufacturing facilities and the consumers in need of products, the centralization of industrial production in the Northeast was no longer as efficient as it had been before the War. Also, as the economy improved and the frontier towns in the West grew, the need for low-cost, semi-durable goods like wood type and other printing supplies offered a multitude of opportunities for men of drive and business acumen.

*Receipts from the early days of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company.*



*A rendering of the Hamilton Katz Holly Wood Type Company factory, circa 1882.*

It was into this rich economic environment that Ed Hamilton's wood type manufacturing business was born.

In the 1880s, when Hamilton invented the process for manufacturing Holly Wood Type, all wood type was being manufactured in the East. But as newspapers began popping up in towns west of the Mississippi and the need for type grew, the time and expense required to get good, usable type from the manufacturers in the East became a serious problem for printers. Holly Wood Type was the perfect solution to the problem.

Possessing only limited, first-hand experience in running a business, Ed and Etta Hamilton did their best to keep up with the rising demand for their type, recording orders on the wall alongside the bench in the shop attached to the back of Ed's mother's house. The shop doubled as a nursery

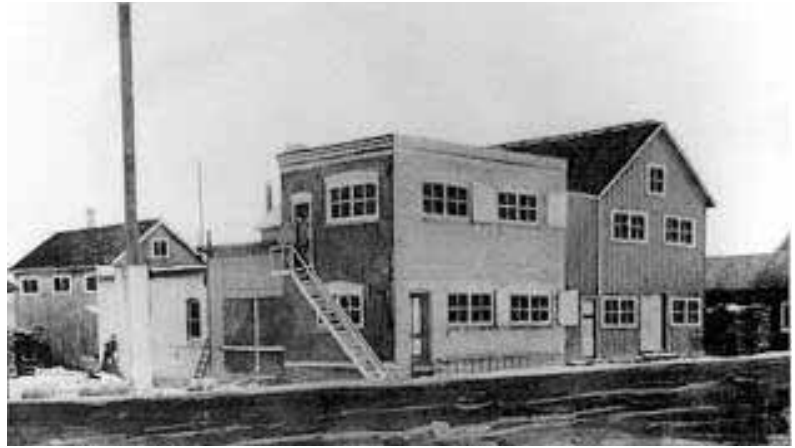
## A HISTORY IN HEADLINES

when their first child, Grace, was born. They soon realized that such an improvised system of tracking and delivering orders was not going to work, so they bought and studied a book on bookkeeping. In later years, Ed recalled he and Etta had no idea how to ship their type to their customers. The Hamiltons ended up relying on the assistance of the local railroad and express agent, who showed Ed how to fill out the necessary papers to ship and receive payment for his type.

Ed Hamilton made frequent trips from Two Rivers to Milwaukee in search of new type orders and ideas that would appeal to his printing customers. On one such trip Ed met with Henry Katz, a friend of the principal owners of the chair and pail factory where Ed had once worked. Katz was intrigued by the plans and business prospects of the young man with a case full of wood type samples. After checking with some of his contacts in Two Rivers, Katz suggested to the young type-maker that he might benefit from selling a portion of his business to raise capital. Although leery of taking on a partner, Ed recognized that he needed money to expand, and after some negotiation, sold half the interest in J.E. Hamilton Hollywood Type Co. to Katz's son Max.

The money raised by the sale of a share of his business to Max Katz allowed Hamilton to build his first factory.

According to Two Rivers' legend, the move into the new factory - actually a barn with an office built into the corner of the lower floor - was



accomplished using a goat wagon borrowed from one of Ed's neighbors. A 'hands-on' manager for his entire career, Ed walked alongside the cart, steadying the top-heavy load of stencils, woodcutting tools, foot-powered scroll saw and office supplies.

Katz retired from the business after a few years, selling his interest to William Baker, a part owner of a defunct sash and door company in Two Rivers. Ed had been interested in the empty sash and door factory for some time, and used his connections with Baker to buy the plant. The old sash and door factory remains part of the Fisher Hamilton Scientific facility to this day.

Demand for wood type and related materials in the United States continued to grow and its increased production capacity allowed Hamilton to grow along with it. World events combined with the astounding growth of the newspaper industry to

*Expanded Hamilton  
Manufacturing  
Company plant at the  
turn of the century.*

