

Robert McCloskey  
Walking Tour  
of  
Hamilton  
Ohio



This booklet was prepared by Heritage Hall  
and the Robert McCloskey Museum

**Research & Copy**

Brandon Soale, Curator

**Editing**

David Belew

**Design**

Sam Ashworth

**Acknowledgements**

Dick Haid

The Heritage Hall Committee

Greater Hamilton

Convention & Visitors Bureau

The City of Hamilton

Triangle Sign

Photography

Don Armbruster

**Special Thanks**

to the McCloskey family

for the use of

Robert McCloskey's illustrations

**Resources**

George C. Cummins Collection

**Robert McCloskey Walking Tour  
Table of Contents**

Hamilton's Famous Author and Artist	2
Frederick G. Mueller Building & Heritage Hall	3
Soldiers and Sailors & Pioneers Monument	4
Butler County Courthouse	5
Paramount Theatre	6
Presbyterian Church	7
J.B. McCloskey's Photography Studio	8
Elite Bakery	8
Lane Public Library	9
YMCA	10
Lentil Park	11
513 Franklin Street Residence	12
552 Franklin Street Residence	12
210 South G Street Residence	12
212 South G Street Residence	12
Jackson Elementary	13
Adam's Elementary	13
Junior High School	13
Hamilton High School	14
Barber Shop	15
Colonel Carter's House	16
Tour Maps	Inside Back Cover

## Robert McCloskey — (1914-2003)

Robert McCloskey, famous writer and illustrator, was born in Hamilton, Ohio in 1914 and died at his Deer Isle, Maine home in 2003.

His classic children's books captivated generations of young readers and their parents and are still very popular.

Three of his books, *Lentil*, *Homer Price* and *Centerburg Tales*, were inspired by his early small-town Hamilton years.

In 1932 he won a scholarship to the Vesper George Art School in Boston, Massachusetts and moved to New York City to study at the National Academy of Design.

McCloskey's many honors include an Honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Miami University and the Living Legend Award by the Library of Congress.

### Robert McCloskey Publications

*Lentil* - 1940

*Make Way for Ducklings* -  
1941

*Homer Price* - 1943

*Blueberries for Sal* - 1948

*Centerburg Tales* - 1950

*One Day in May* - 1952

*Time of Wonder* - 1957

*Burt Dow: Deep Water Man*  
1963

### Awards & Degrees

National Academy

President's Award - 1936

Prix de Paris - 1939

Tiffany Foundation Prize -  
1936

Caldecott Award - 1942

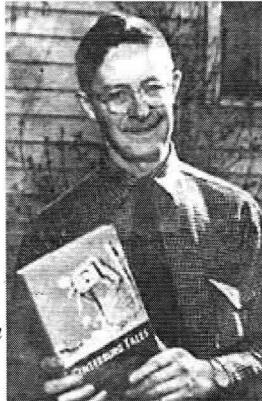
Caldecott Award - 1958

Honorary Doctor of Letters  
degree - Miami University  
1964

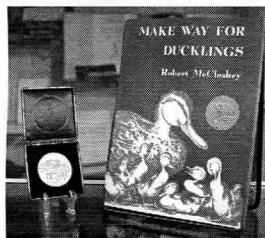
Honorary Doctor of Letters  
degree - Mount Holyoke  
College - 1967

Regina Medal - 1973

Library of Congress Living  
Legend Award - 2000



Cleveland Press,  
Nov. 2, 1954.



Robert McCloskey's 1942  
Caldecott Medal awarded for  
*Make Way for Ducklings*

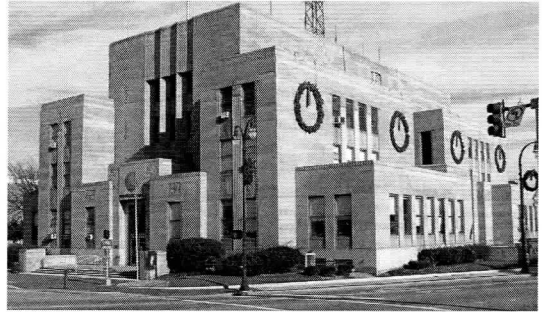
## Heritage Hall

### Frederick G. Mueller Building 20 High Street

1

One of only two Art Deco structures in the city, Hamilton's former Municipal Building was designed and built by Frederick Mueller in 1935 as a federal public works project during the Great Depression. Bas-relief carvings surround both the High Street and Monument Avenue entrances, depicting the growth of Hamilton from pioneer days to the city's industrial heritage. The carvings were designed by Robert McCloskey when he was only 19 years old.

Displayed in the former Council Chambers is the large mural, "Founding of the Fortress," by local artist, Jack Willard. The painting, which is an idealized representation of the building of Fort Hamilton in 1791, was unveiled October 1, 1941 as part of the city and county sesquicentennial celebration. The building is now home to Heritage Hall and the Robert McCloskey Museum, Hamilton's BizTech Center and TV Hamilton.



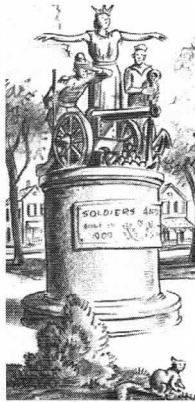
A view of Jack Willard's mural located inside the former council chambers.

## Soldiers, Sailors & Pioneers Monument 2

1 South Monument Street

This city landmark was dedicated to the memory of Butler County's pioneers and veterans. The cornerstone of the memorial was placed in 1902, and the dedication took place on July 4, 1906, on the 130th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was constructed at a cost of \$71,226 and was financed by a county-wide tax levy approved by voters in 1899. Each art glass window is unique, honoring the women of war. On the temple dome stands a 17-foot 3,500-pound bronze statue created by Rudolph Theim, a German native and Hamilton resident. Titled, "Victory, the Jewel of the Soul," representing a Civil War private nicknamed "Billy Yank" raising his cap in celebration of victory in the 4-year war. The sculpture was hoisted into place Dec. 1, 1904.

The monument also served as an inspiration to McCloskey who included a likeness to it in his book *Lentil* (page 19). The monument is open to the public as a museum, which includes memorabilia from past American conflicts.

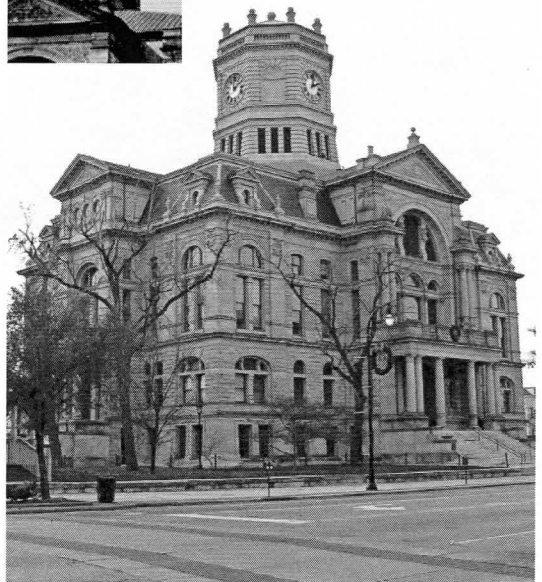


## Butler County Courthouse 3

101 High Street

Built between 1885 and 1889 the Courthouse is an outstanding example of Hamilton's rich architecture and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It has survived fire, flood, many storms, and other attacks from nature. The worst was the March 14, 1912 fire which caused the building's original 4-tiered onion-shaped cupola to collapse. Fortunately the fire did not destroy the building and the tower was restored.

In about 1920, lightning damage caused the tower to be modified once again, leaving the flat-roofed dome that exists today. Several nationally recognized restorations occurred in the 1980s and again in the 1990s. In *Lentil* McCloskey drew several representations of the original cupola, the first of which can be seen on page 20 (photo top right).



## Paramount Theatre 18 S. Second Street

4

The Paramount Theatre held its grand opening on Friday evening, March 6, 1931. The theatre quickly became the largest and most luxurious of several downtown movie theaters.

The Paramount Theater's last show was on Labor Day, September 5, 1960. The property was purchased by the Citizens Bank and the theatre was replaced by a 40-car parking lot next to its main office. McCloskey sketched the Paramount in his book *Centerburg Tales*. The image can be found on page 109.

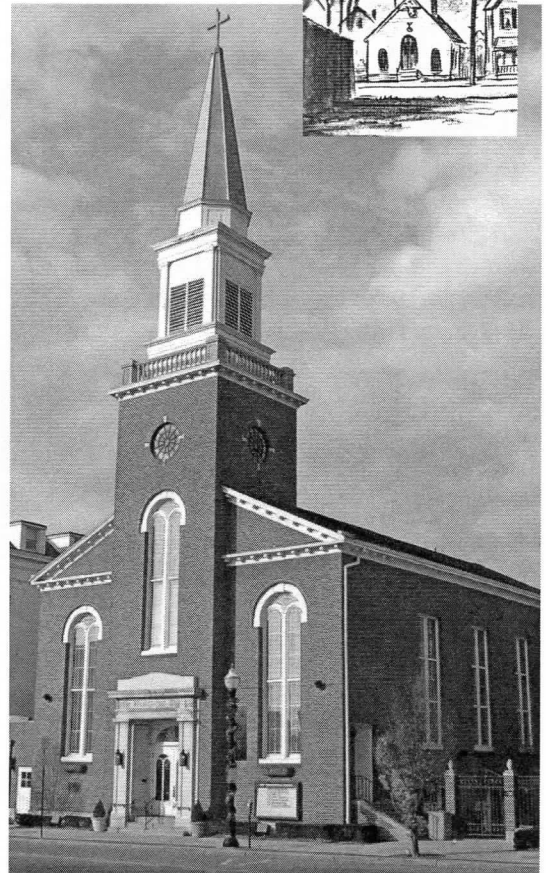
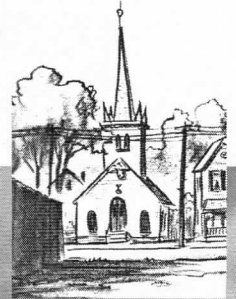


## The Presbyterian Church 19 S. Front Street

5

Fort Hamilton was built in 1791, and in the fall of 1798 a group of Yankee Calvinists began to worship in the fort's mess hall. That group constituted the beginning of the Presbyterian church of Hamilton. In 1835 the present Courthouse Square location was purchased, and in 1838 the first house of worship was dedicated on that site. This building was later torn down and the present church built in 1855. Since that time the church building has continually been repaired and improved.

Robert McCloskey included a similar building in his book *Lentil*. The illustration can be found on page 6.



## J.B. McCloskey's Photography Studio 239 High Street

6

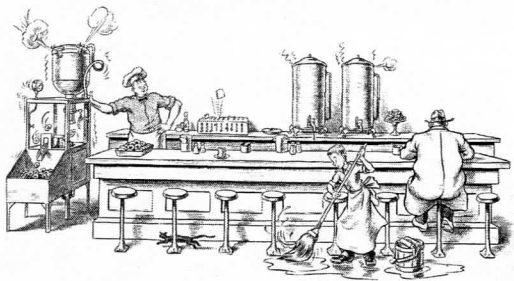
J.B. McCloskey was the grandfather of Robert McCloskey. In 1914, he moved his artist and photographic studios from Millville to this location. J.B. McCloskey worked from the 239 High Street studio until 1917. Today Ryan's Tavern, an authentic Irish Pub, has incorporated the address into 235 High Street.



## Elite Bakery 212 High Street

7

The "Elite Bakery and Confectionary" was one of the most modern and luxurious confectionary and ice cream parlors of the period. It occupied the 212 High Street location as early as the 1890's. McCloskey remembered a donut machine in the bakery and used the idea in his book *Homer Price*.



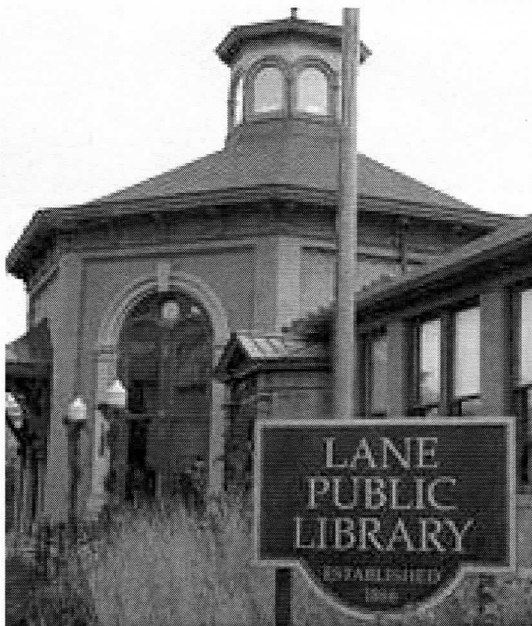
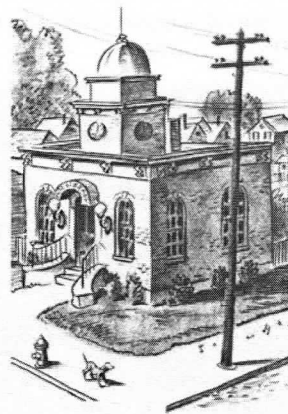
8

## Lane Public Library 300 North Third Street

8

The Hamilton Lane Library, with an octagonal main room, was built in 1866 by Clark Lane, a prominent industrialist and philanthropist. Equipped with 3,000 books the library operated at Lane's expense until he turned it over to the city of Hamilton as a gift in 1868. It was the first free public library west of the Alleghenies.

Across the street is the house of its designer and builder, Clark Lane, now known as the Lane-Hooven House. McCloskey borrowed many of Lane Library's subtle details for his own Alto Library in *Lentil*.

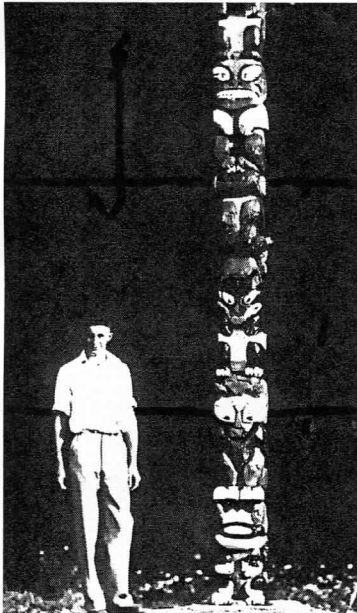


9



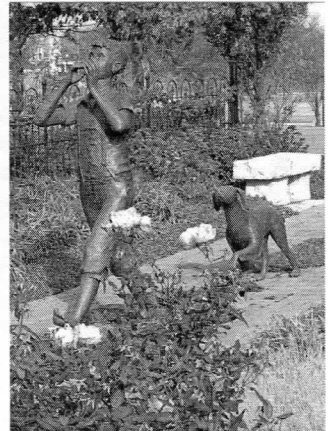
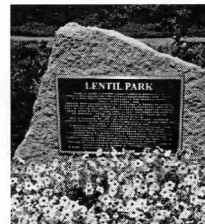
Second & Market Streets

Dedicated in 1914, the YMCA building is a Second Renaissance Revival design with Egyptian detailing. As a teenager Robert McCloskey worked at the North Second Street location and the YMCA's Camp Campbell Gard, north of Hamilton. McCloskey first showed an interest in art through sculpture. During his high school years he taught an airplane modeling and a soap carving class at the YMCA. While a counselor at Camp Campbell Gard McCloskey carved a totem pole which led to a commission to produce sculpture for what is now the Frederick G. Mueller Building. Today the totem pole stands in the Mueller Building as a part of Heritage Hall.



High and Riverfront Plaza

This lovely little park was established, and is maintained, by the Hamilton Community Foundation on land owned by the city. It was one of the Foundation's 50th Anniversary Legacy gifts to the city. The park is a tribute to Robert McCloskey and his first book, *Lentil*, which reflects his Hamilton childhood. The statue titled, "Lentil and His Dog" was created by internationally renowned sculptor, Nancy Schön of Boston. Mrs. Schön was also the artist for the famous "Mrs. Mallard and her 8 Ducklings" sculpture in the Boston Public Garden; this was inspired by another McCloskey book, *Make Way for Ducklings*, which won him his first Caldecott Medal.



## 513 Franklin Street

11

Robert's grandfather, John B. McCloskey's home at 513 Franklin Street. J.B. McCloskey also had a house in Millville. He continued to paint pictures of local interest and still life from his Franklin Street home for the next 15 years. J.B. McCloskey was very sympathetic to his grandson's interests, providing him with brushes and paints. Robert inherited his grandfather's interest in painting and it soon manifested itself into sculpture and wood carving.

## 552 Franklin Street

12

After they were married in October 1913, Robert McCloskey's father and mother, Howard H and Mabel M. Wismeyer McCloskey, moved to 552 Franklin. Their son was born September 14, 1914.

## 210 South G Street

13

In 1920, Howard and Mabel McCloskey moved to this address, where they remained for the rest of their lives.

## 212 South G Street

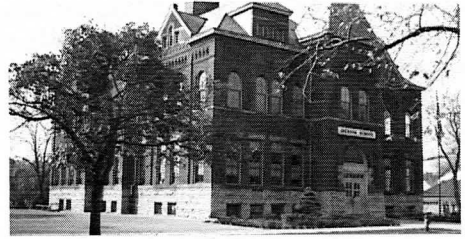
14

In 1920, John B. McCloskey, Howards's father, purchased the house at this address. John was born on a farm near Reily, April 10, 1857, the son of Joseph and Margaret McCloskey. His family included some of the early pioneers of Millville. Before John McCloskey's death in 1951 he made his home with Howard and Mabel. He died at age 93.

## Jackson Elementary

15

The Jackson Elementary schoolhouse was located on the south side of Park Avenue, opposite Sherman Avenue. McCloskey attended 1st grade at Jackson Elementary, formerly called the Columbian School.



## Adams Elementary

16

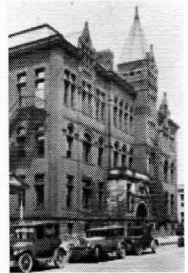
Adams School (formerly Miami School) is a 2-1/2 story brick building built in 1902. It is located on the north-east corner of South C Street and Ross Avenue. Robert McCloskey attended grades 2-7 at Adams Elementary. The building survives today as the home of Partners in Prime, a nonresidential wellness center for fitness, socializing, education and more.



## Junior High School

17

The Junior High School, formerly known as Central High School, was located on the northwest corner of South Second St. and Ludlow Avenue. Robert McCloskey attended 8th grade at the Junior High School in 1928. Max Reutti was employed as architect and superintendent for the construction of the building. The J.F. Bender Brothers Co. began work on the schoolhouse in 1891 and by the following year Hamilton's new high school was already in use.





## Hamilton High School

18

The former Hamilton High School was located at the southwest corner of North Sixth Street and Dayton Street. McCloskey attended grades 9-12, graduated in class of 1932. Construction on the building began July, 1 1914, and was finished in August of 1915. Architects Frank L. Packard and Frederick G. Mueller designed the building. The Hamilton High School building stood for 66 years until finally demolished in 1981. While a student at Hamilton High McCloskey illustrated the Hamilton High School annual and worked on the George Washington Bicentennial Calendar for the American History Club of Hamilton High School. After graduation McCloskey accepted a scholarship to the Vesper George Art School in Boston. As a professional artist, McCloskey moved to New York and entered the National Academy of Design, where he exhibited his work and was given the President's Award.



McCloskey's freshman class photo

Senior photo 1932



## Barber Shop

116 Main Street

19

For many the image of the local barbershop comes from great American artists like Norman Rockwell. These images are not only a quaint symbol of small-town Americana, but have some historical foundation. The former Brisbon's Barber Shop located at 116 Main Street was the inspiration for two of McCloskey's books, *Homer Price* (page 96-97) and *Centerburg Tales* (page 86).

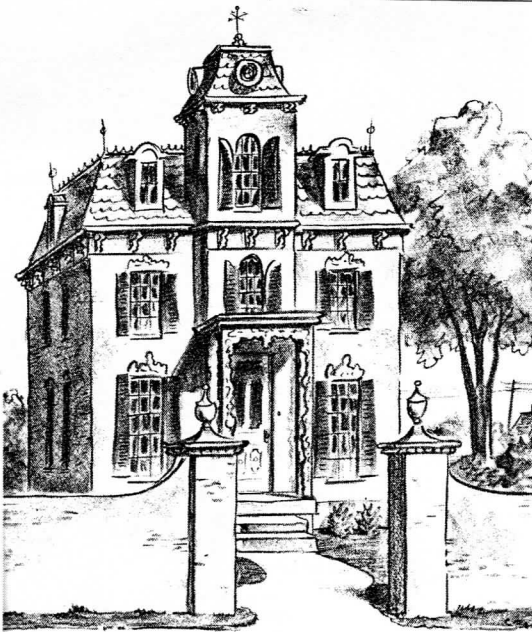


## Colonel Carter's House

404 Ross Avenue

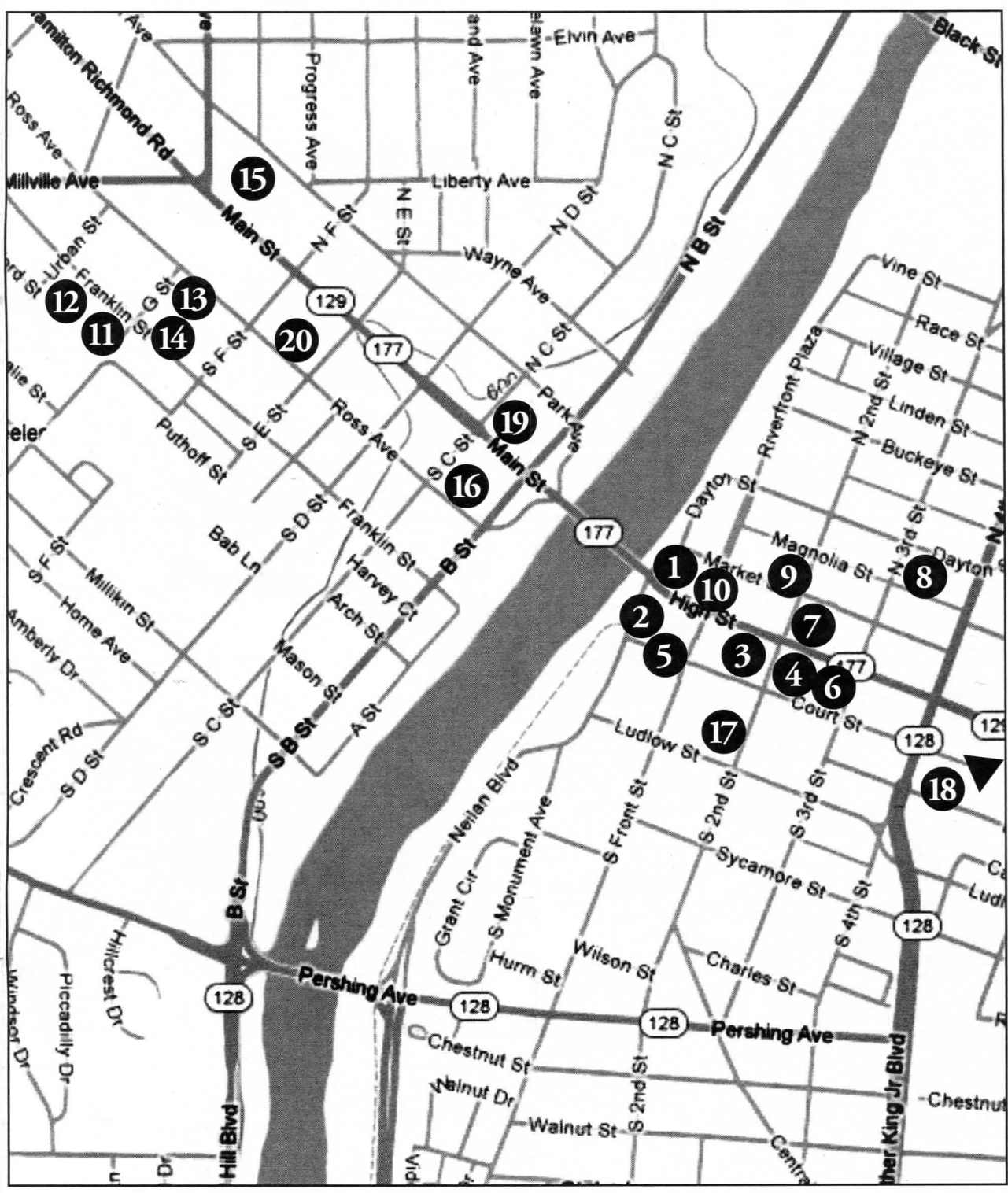
20

The residence which stands at 404 Ross Avenue served as the inspiration for another of McCloskey's illustrations. It can be found in the book *Lentil* on page 15 & 16 as "the finest house in Alto, which belonged to the great Colonel Carter." McCloskey altered the structure slightly. The home was built in 1859 by Daniel Rumble, a hardware merchant, and later became the home of George K. Shaffer, a prominent coal and grain dealer. This fine home was also the first building in Hamilton to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



# Walking Tour Map Inside





15

12

13

11

14

20

19

16

1

10

9

8

2

7

5

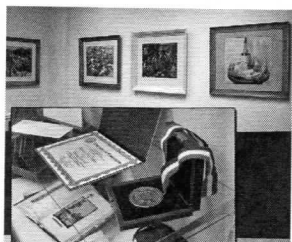
3

4

6

17

18



## Robert McCloskey Museum at Heritage Hall



**Heritage Hall  
20 High Street  
Hamilton, Ohio**