

Chapter 2: Background Information

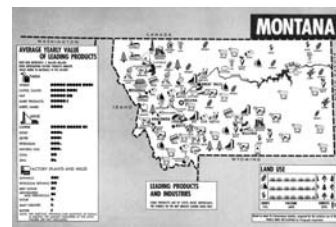
A Brief History of the Hamilton Area

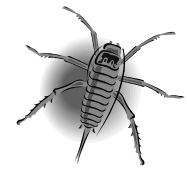
Originally the Bitterroot Valley was the home of the Salish (Flathead) and Pend d'Oreille Indians. It was claimed for the United States in 1788 in the Oregon Country Acquisition and explored by Lewis & Clark during their 1805/1806 expedition. The St. Mary's mission in Stevensville was the first permanent white settlement in Montana, founded by Jesuit priests in 1841.

In the 1880's, the copper mining magnate Marcus Daly came to the Bitterroot Valley in search of timber to supply his mines. He needed a mill to serve the timber operations and a town to serve the mill. He made the area his summer home and in 1887 acquired large tracts of land now known as the Bitterroot Stock Farm, which was dedicated to his hobby of breeding and racing thoroughbred horses.

Marcus Daly began development of an irrigation network that eventually gave rise to the "Big Ditch Boom" that ran from 1906 through 1915. Speculators from the East and Midwest fueled the grandiose irrigation and land development scheme, investing substantial sums to build the Big Ditch irrigation system. Slick salesmen with misleading literature who promised fertile land and a good climate for growing fruit trees fueled the subsequent "Apple Boom" that, in turn, brought many unsuspecting farmers to the region.

The Anaconda Copper Mining Lumber Company Mill closed down in 1915 after running out of easily accessible timber. By 1917 financial problems plagued the ditch builders and the boom went bust. The orchard farmers became disillusioned and many moved away. Although the economy went into decline, the town survived through farming and timber production. Truck gardens produced fruit, berries and vegetables, dairies were known for their butter and ice cream, and farmers grew celery, sugar beets and potatoes. The U.S. Forest Service employed others in their stewardship of thousands of acres of government owned timber land.





Hamilton's period of economic decline did not fully recover until 1927 when the Rocky Mountain Laboratory was established to research the cause of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Contrary to other parts of the nation, Hamilton enjoyed considerable growth during the Depression years of the 1930's until World War II.

From 1990 to 2000, Ravalli County (36,070 residents as of the 2000 Census) has undergone a period of unprecedented growth as some of the nation's population shifted from urban cities to the non-urban "New West" in search of a better quality of life. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, immigrants are drawn to the Hamilton area because of the clean air and water, the open space, and the recreational opportunities offered by the mountains and the water resources.

Jurisdictional and Planning Area

The town of Hamilton was incorporated in 1894 and was named after James Hamilton, the Daly employee who platted the town along the route of the Northern Pacific Railway in 1890.

Hamilton was a company town revolving around the activities of the large Anaconda Copper Mining Company lumber mill and the Bitterroot Stock Farm. Most of the residents worked for the Daly interests, lived in "company" homes and shopped in "company" stores. By the time Daly died in 1900, Hamilton was the commercial center of the Bitterroot Valley and the county seat of Ravalli County.

The City of Hamilton is located within the Bitterroot Valley, approximately 40 miles south of Missoula in southwest Montana. The City is the county seat for Ravalli County.

The City of Hamilton's jurisdictional area consists of 1.8 square miles of land area within the city limits. Its

anticipated planning area extends several miles in all directions beyond the city limits.

In general, the City is an urban community that has developed with a broad mix of land uses including housing, commercial, industrial, public, recreation and open space uses. Hamilton, to a large part, is built out within the existing city limits. The residentially zoned parcels located in the city limits are mostly infill projects. The existing commercial and industrial lands within city limits are available for new development primarily along Highway 93.



Map ②
depicts Hamilton's City Limits.

Physiography

Twenty-five percent (25%) of Hamilton is located on a gently sloping flood zone. Soils within the remainder of the City are good for crops and are also recommended for urban development.

Hamilton Community Characteristics

Total Population 3,705 persons

Households by Type and Presence of Children

Households with Children	420
<u>Households w/o Children</u>	<u>1,352</u>
Total Number of Households	1,772
Average Household Size	1.95 persons

Distribution of Household Size

1-person	843	47.6%
2-person	519	29.3%
3-person	184	10.4%
4-person	141	8.0%
5-person	55	3.0%
6-person	23	1.3%
<u>7+ person</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>0.4%</u>
	1,772	100%



All demographic data are taken from the 2000 Census.

Population by Race:

White	96%
Black	<1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%
Asian	1%
Other	2%
<hr/>	
	100%

Median Age (from the 2000 Census):

Male	39.1 years
Female	49.0 years

Median Annual Earnings

Male	\$25,795
Female	\$22,138

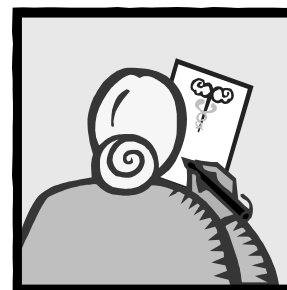
Education

Didn't graduate High School	<1%
High School graduate	78.1%
Bachelor degree or higher	21.9%

Employment. 95.4%

Historical Comparison of 10-Year Growth Rates:

Year	Hamilton		Ravalli County	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1960	2,475	---	12,341	---
1970	2,499	- 1%	14,409	+17%
1980	2,661	+9%	22,493	+56%
1990	2,737	+3%	25,010	+11%
2000	3,705	+35%	36,070	+44%



Hamilton's median age for women is 10 years older than the median age for men - a reflection of the fact that elderly women survive their spouses.

Trend spotting

In 1960, Hamilton's population was **20%** of the total Ravalli County population.

By 2000, that percentage had fallen to **10%**.