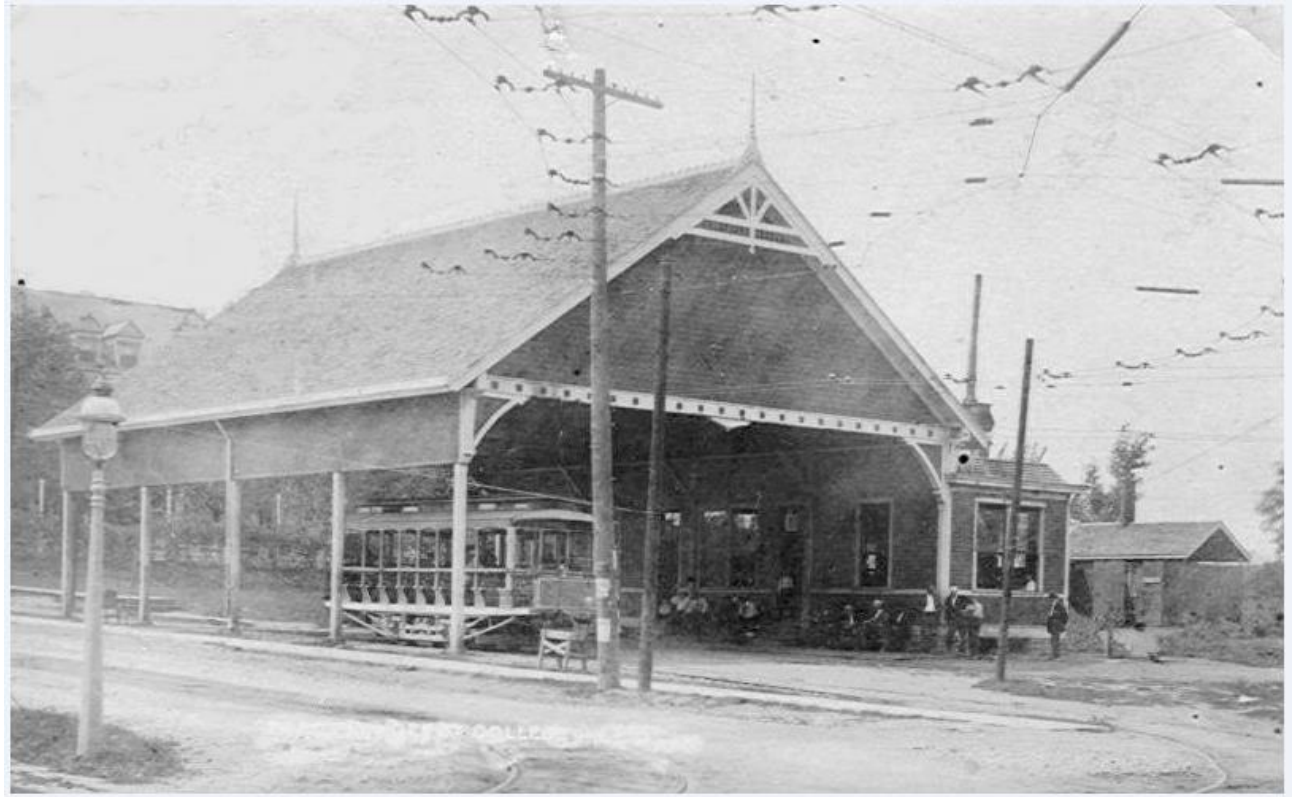


Henry L Hensler

A Life Along the Streetcar Line

1871 to 1942



The streetcar and interurban station at the northwest corner of Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road in College Hill, where Henry worked from about 1913 through 1922.

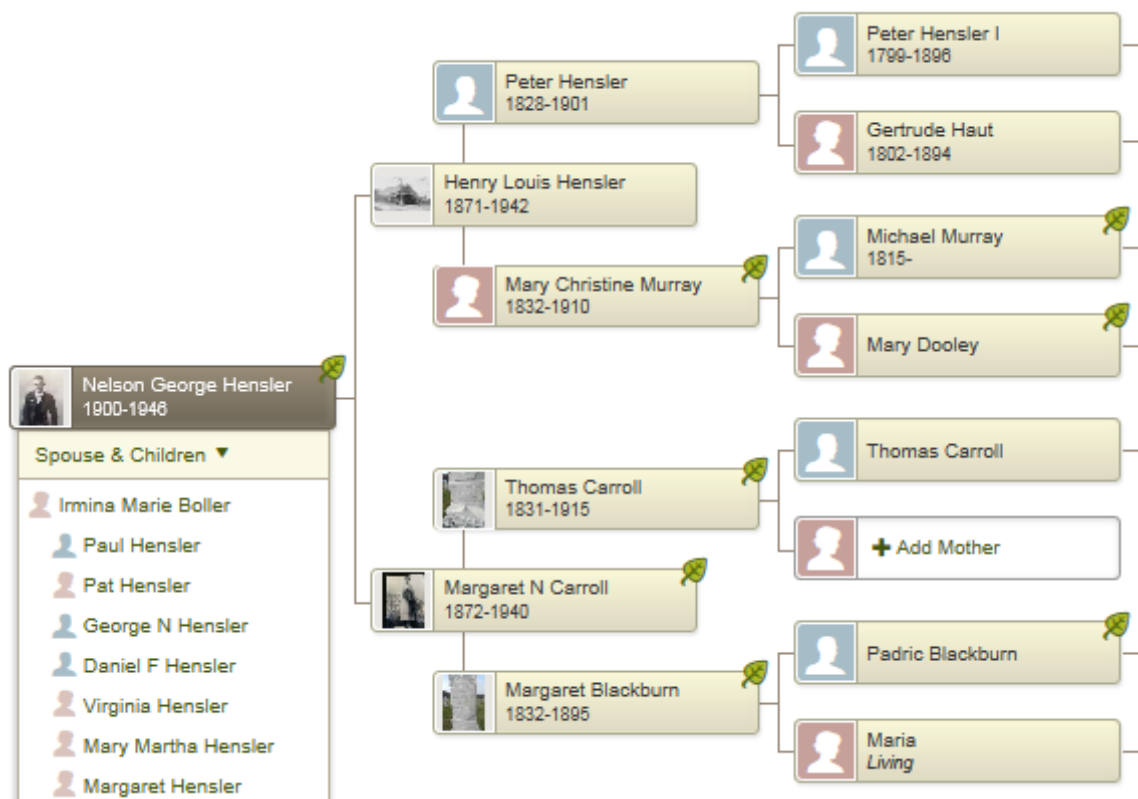
An illustrated Hensler family history for KeepGoingKeepLoving.com

The Corner Where Henry Worked

When we look back at the life of our great-grandfather Henry Louis Hensler, it is easy to see only a series of entries in old records: farmer, restaurant worker, ticket agent, father and grandfather. One discovery makes his life much more vivid. For nearly a decade, Henry worked at the streetcar and interurban station at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road in College Hill.

For a time, his son Nelson George Hensler, our grandfather, apparently worked there with him. Family research places Henry at this location from about 1913 through 1922, with father and son together around 1920.

The station stood on the northwest corner of the intersection, across from today's College Hill Coffee Shop. It was more than a neighborhood stop. It was a transportation gateway connecting Cincinnati with College Hill, Mt. Healthy, Hamilton and the wider electric railway system.



Original Hensler family chart showing Henry L. Hensler, his parents, spouse and children.

From Farmer to the Electric Railway

Henry was born in 1871 and married in 1898. His daughter Margaret was born in 1899 and his son Nelson in 1900. In the 1900 census, Henry and Thomas Carroll, with whom the family was living, were both listed as farmers. Ten years later, Henry and his children were living on North Bend Road with his sister Mary Hensler Westrich and her husband William Westrich.

By 1917 Henry had entered a very different world. The Cincinnati city directory identified him as operating a restaurant and serving as ticket agent for the Ohio Electric Railway Company at the northwest corner of Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road. The directory also identified this location as College Hill Station.

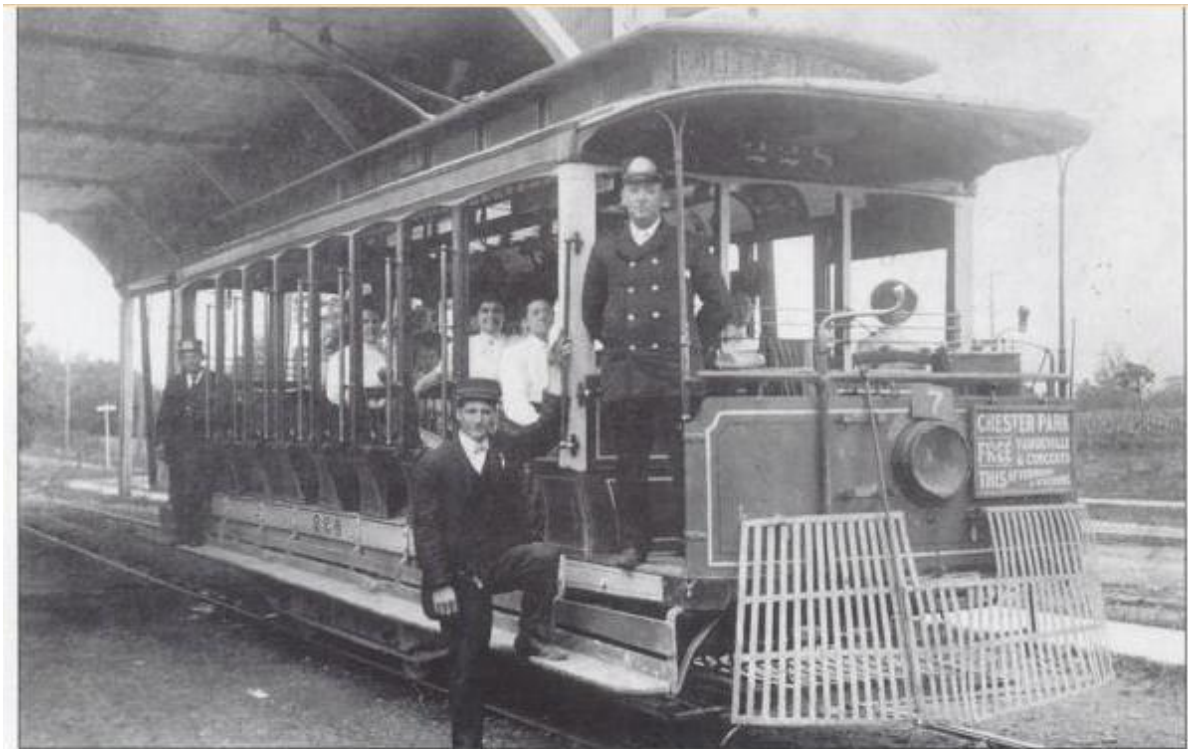
Hensler Carrie h 1414 Vine
 —O J phys flat 1, 125 W 9th
 Hensler Albert engraver h 2220 Park Av
 —Elizabeth saleslady rms 1630 Pullan Av
 —Forrest decorator h 1414 Vine
 —Franz clk 304 Main h 2224 Loth
 —Fred steamftr rms 631 E 3d
 —Henry L restaurant, also ticket agt Ohio
 Electric Ry Co n w c Hamilton Av and
 North Bend Rd C H
 —Margaret res Wm W Westrich's, s s North
 Bend Rd
 —Olga H with The John Shillito Co rms 1630
 Pullan Av
 —Oscar H clk P O h 228 Monitor Av S P
 [See also "Haensler"]

The 1917 Cincinnati directory entry identifying Henry L. Hensler as a restaurant operator and Ohio Electric Railway ticket agent at
 Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road.

A New Technology in Henry's Lifetime

Henry had been born into an America of walking, horses, wagons and steam railroads. By middle age, he was earning his living helping people travel on an electric railway. Overhead wires supplied power. Bells announced arrivals and departures. Passengers could travel farther and more often for work, shopping, family visits and recreation.

The family photograph from about 1905 shows an open streetcar beneath the station canopy. Passengers sat on open benches, the motorman stood at the front and the tracks ran directly through the intersection where Henry would later sell tickets.



Not all streetcars were enclosed. This "open summer car" at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road, c. 1905, advertised "free vaudeville and concerts at Chester Park." (Courtesy Earl Clark collection.)

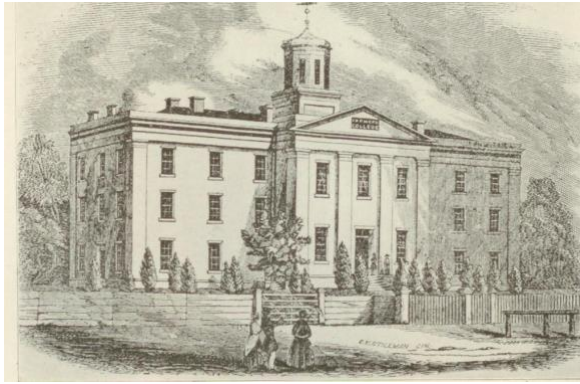
About 1905, an open streetcar beneath the station structure at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road. This photograph appeared in the original Henry Hensler family document.

Hamilton and North Bend was an important transfer point between Cincinnati's urban streetcars and the electric interurban system extending north. Henry was not simply selling a short ride through the neighborhood. He was helping people enter a network that connected once-separate communities to Cincinnati and to one another.

Why College Hill Is Called College Hill

Long before Henry sold a railway ticket there, the community was known as Pleasant Hill. In 1813 and 1814, William Cary purchased 491 acres north of Cincinnati along what is now Hamilton Avenue. His son Freeman G. Cary established Pleasant Hill Academy for boys in 1833. The school grew into an agricultural institution chartered in 1846 as Farmers' College of Hamilton County.

The name reflected both the school's agricultural purpose and the support of local farmers who helped finance it. Farmers' College became such an important landmark that the surrounding community gradually became known as College Hill. The name was literal: there really was a college on the hill.

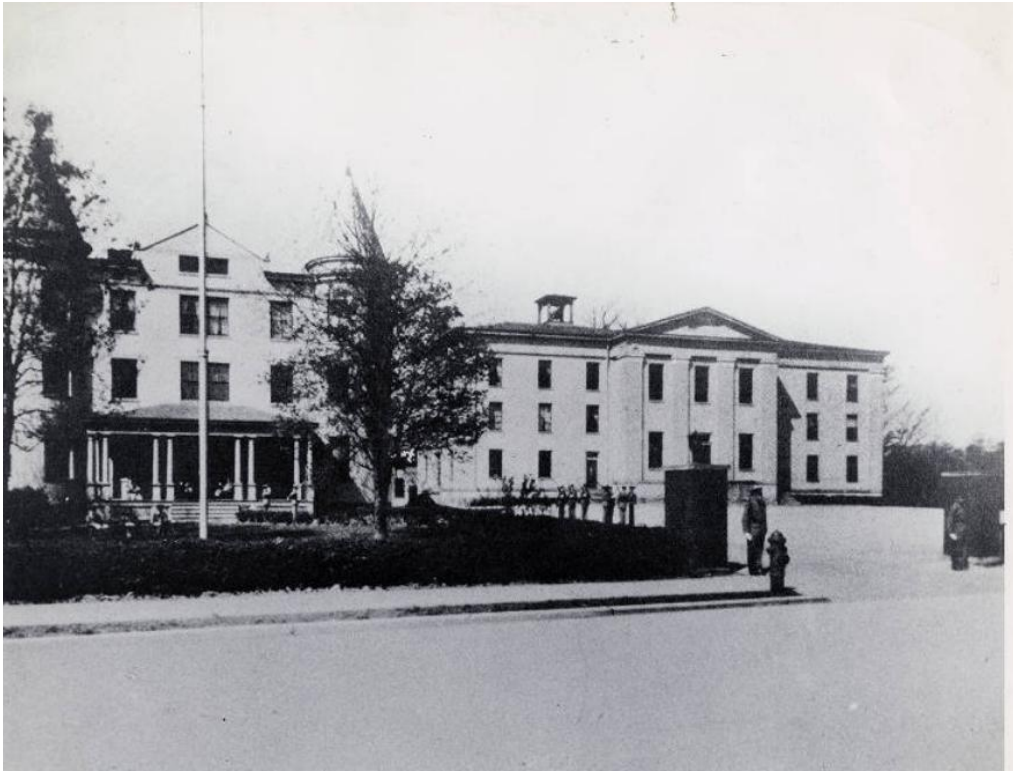


Farmers' College, drawn by C. K. Stillman, 1847 to 1848.



Freeman G. Cary, founder of Pleasant Hill Academy, painted by Robert Duncanson in 1856.

One of the college's students from 1848 to 1850 was Benjamin Harrison, who later became the twenty-third president of the United States. Farmers' College operated until 1885, after which the campus became Belmont College and later the Ohio Military Institute.



The Ohio Military Institute in 1936, on the former Farmers College and Belmont College grounds.

Farmers College and the Underground Railroad

Before the Civil War, College Hill became an important abolitionist community and a stopping place on the Underground Railroad. Many sons of abolitionists attended Farmers' College, and local historical research indicates that some students assisted abolitionists living on the hill as they helped freedom seekers travel north.

The work involved a network of families, teachers, students and sympathetic homes rather than one single hiding place. Professor Joseph G. Wilson and his family, for example, provided food, clothing and shelter. Wilson reportedly collected clothing from students and helped devise disguises for people moving toward freedom. Accounts of the Escape of the 28 also connect the Carys, Farmers' College and Dr. Robert Bishop with the College Hill network.

That history gives Hamilton Avenue a meaning that predates Henry's streetcars by generations. Before electric cars carried passengers north along the avenue, freedom seekers were already moving north through this general corridor for a profoundly different reason.

By Henry's time the form of movement had changed, but the road was still connecting Cincinnati with communities to the north. His station stood within a neighborhood whose identity had been shaped by education, reform and travel.

College Hill Mt Healthy and the Northern Corridor

Hamilton Avenue was the natural north-south spine connecting Cincinnati with College Hill, North College Hill, Mt. Healthy and Hamilton. Electric transportation made it practical for people to live farther from the city while traveling regularly for work, shopping and social life.

Mt. Healthy, originally called Mt. Pleasant, grew along this road roughly midway between Cincinnati and Fort Hamilton. A passenger buying a ticket at Henry's station could continue north along the corridor toward Mt. Healthy and beyond. The railway helped turn a chain of separate settlements into a connected metropolitan region.



South Main Street in Mt. Healthy in 1916. Streetcar tracks are visible in the snow along the same northern corridor served from Henrys College Hill station. Courtesy of Third Century Mt. Healthy.

A Ticket to Chester Park

Streetcars did not merely change where Cincinnatians could work. They changed where ordinary families could play. Chester Park, near Spring Grove and Mitchell avenues, grew from a nineteenth-century horse-racing track into a major recreation and amusement destination.

The Cincinnati Street Railway Company acquired the park with a clear business logic: give people somewhere exciting to go and they would ride the streetcars to get there. Chester Park offered theaters, concerts, bicycle competitions, amusement rides, dining and other entertainment. Dedicated summer routes carried crowds to the park.



Chester Park postcard included in the original Henry Hensler family document.



Historic Cincinnati streetcar advertising free vaudeville and concerts at Chester Park.

Henry therefore worked in a transportation system that carried people not only to jobs and shops, but also toward a new world of affordable leisure. A ticket from his window might begin a commute, a family visit or a summer excursion to Chester Park.

A Father and Son Behind the Counter

Perhaps the most personal part of the story comes around 1920. Henry was approaching fifty and Nelson was about twenty. The family evidence places them together, apparently living at or near their workplace at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road.

We should not invent their conversations, but we can picture the setting: electric cars arriving beneath the station roof, passengers stepping aboard, tickets being sold, bells ringing and cars departing north toward Mt. Healthy or south toward Cincinnati. Somewhere in that daily activity were Henry and Nelson, a father and his twenty-year-old son, working together.

The Streetcars Disappeared but the Corner Remained

Eventually Henry's streetcar chapter ended. The old station vanished, the intersection changed and the streetcars themselves disappeared. Yet Hamilton and North Bend remained one of College Hill's defining crossroads.

By the early 2000s, major businesses at the intersection had closed and the prominent property had become vacant. A former Kroger building was demolished in 2014 as the City of Cincinnati and community leaders assembled land for redevelopment. Residents wanted more than another isolated building. They wanted to restore an active neighborhood center.

That long effort became known as College Hill Station. The redevelopment transformed long-vacant land at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road into a mixed-use district with housing, street-level retail, parking and streetscape improvements. Its principal development, HaNoBe at Linden Square, took its name from Hamilton and North Bend.

The name College Hill Station creates a striking bookend. Around 1920, Henry and Nelson worked at a busy electric railway station at this corner. A century later, the community revived the same intersection as a place for people to live, shop, meet and connect with the larger city - and again called it College Hill Station.

The Same Corner Across Two Centuries

Period	The corner	What it connected
Before the Civil War	Farmers College and abolitionist College Hill	Education and routes north toward freedom
About 1913 to 1922	Henry and Nelson at the electric railway station	Cincinnati College Hill Mt Healthy and Hamilton
Today	College Hill Station and HaNoBe at Linden Square	Homes shops transit and neighborhood life

Henry's Later Years

By 1930 Henry was living in Cheviot with his daughter Margaret and her husband Harry Dehmer. He remained with them in 1940 and died in 1942, at about seventy years old.



Harry and Margaret Dehmer. Henry lived with his daughter's family in Cheviot during his later years.

Henry Hensler's Timeline

1871	Henry L. Hensler is born.
1898	Henry marries.
1899	Daughter Margaret G. is born.
1900	Son Nelson is born. Henry and Thomas Carroll are listed as farmers.
1910	Henry lives on North Bend Road with his sister Mary Hensler Westrich and her husband William. Nelson and Margaret are also in the household.
About 1913 to 1922	Henry works at the College Hill streetcar and interurban station at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road.
1917	The Cincinnati directory lists Henry as a restaurant operator and Ohio Electric Railway ticket agent at the northwest corner of Hamilton and North Bend.
About 1920	Henry and Nelson are together at or near their workplace at Hamilton and North Bend.
1930	Henry lives in Cheviot with Harry and Margaret Dehmer.
1940	Henry is still living with the Dehmer family.
1942	Henry dies.

Henry's Place in the Larger Story

Stand at Hamilton Avenue and North Bend Road today and imagine peeling back the layers of time. First came the early countryside north of Cincinnati. Then came Freeman Cary's school and Farmers' College, which helped give College Hill its name. Before the Civil War, abolitionist families, professors and students helped make the hill part of the Underground Railroad.

Then came the electric railway. By 1917 Henry L. Hensler was selling tickets at Hamilton and North Bend. A few years later, his son Nelson was apparently working beside him. The tracks connected College Hill south

toward Cincinnati and north toward Mt. Healthy and Hamilton, while the larger streetcar system opened recreational destinations such as Chester Park.

The streetcars eventually disappeared, but the corner endured. Today College Hill Station has brought new life to Hamilton and North Bend. The buildings are different, yet the purpose of the corner remains surprisingly familiar: a place where people live, meet, shop, travel and connect with the larger city.

That gives Henry's descendants something unusual in family history. We do not merely have his name on a census form or an occupation listed beside it. We know the corner where he stood. When we stand there today, we are standing at a place that connects nearly two centuries of College Hill history.

Henry Hensler's story is therefore more than the story of one ancestor. It is a small window into how College Hill itself grew, connected, changed and kept moving forward.

Sources and Image Credits

- Hensler family document, Great Grandfather Henry L Hensler, including the station photograph, family chart, 1917 directory clipping, 1905 streetcar photograph, Chester Park postcard, Dehmer photograph and family timeline.
- Williams Cincinnati Directory, 1917, Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library digital collection.
- Cincinnati Sites and Stories, Farmers College, Hamilton Avenue Road to Freedom research. Historical images of Farmers College, Freeman G. Cary and the Ohio Military Institute.
- Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library Digital Library, Historic Cincinnati Streetcar exhibit. Photograph of streetcar 1250 advertising Chester Park.
- Third Century Mt. Healthy, About Mount Healthy. Historic 1916 South Main Street photograph.
- The Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority, College Hill Station project page.
- Pennrose, HaNoBe at Linden Square portfolio page.