

1,800 was reported to have passed through Hamilton in 1830.

In a 12-month period in the mid 1820s, more than 40,000 hogs on their way to market crossed the Miami Bridge connecting Rossville and Hamilton. In November 1834, a Brookville newspaper noted more than 30,000 hogs, bound for Cincinnati slaughterhouses, had passed through that Indiana town in about three weeks.

By 1830, the trip was shortened for many Ohio farmers who were able to send pigs to market via the Miami-Erie Canal from Hamilton. In the 1850s, new railroads began hauling hogs.

## Hogs dominated early area economy

In 1840, there were 2.44 pigs for each of Butler County's 28,207 residents. That year Butler County boasted Ohio's largest swine population with 68,828, followed by bordering Warren County with 56,847 head.

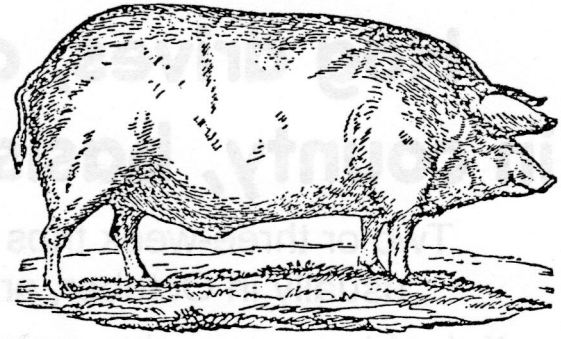
Add the neighboring Whitewater Valley in Indiana, and Hamilton sat in the middle of the nation's hog empire. In the decades before the Civil War (1861-1865), Ohio led the nation in hog production, followed by Indiana and Illinois.

Butler County hog raisers prospered because of their proximity to Cincinnati, and vice versa. By the mid 1820s, Cincinnati was known as "Porkopolis" because of the city's expanding pork-packing business.

More than 15,000 hogs were processed there in the winter of 1822-23. At the same time, smaller butcher markets developed in Hamilton and Dayton.

By the mid 1850s, Ohio slaughterhouses were handling more than 560,000 hogs annually with Cincinnati accounting for 80 percent of the output. From 1857 through 1860, the peak years, an average of 424,450 hogs was butchered each year in Cincinnati.

About 70 years earlier, pioneers had found the animals ideally suited for the frontier. Pigs required little attention. They roamed the woods and fields, foraged for the food they needed, and multiplied fast, usually producing two large litters annually.



The Miami Valley Hog as illustrated in The Farmer's Almanac of 1842

Frontier hogs, once turned loose, "were seldom seen by their owners and soon lost every evidence of domesticity," noted Robert Leslie Jones in his *History of Agriculture in Ohio*, published by Kent State University Press in 1983.

"Some boars developed tusks six or eight inches long and so were able not only to tree unwary farm boys, but also to defend themselves successfully against any enemies," Jones said. "Indeed, a herd of 20 or so shoats had nothing to fear from bears, panthers or wolves."

During fall roundups, farmers identified their free-wheeling pigs by earmarks, usually notches or slits in the ears placed there by the farmer.

By 1810 -- less than 20 years after the start of settlement in the area -- hogs were a source of rare profit for Miami Valley farmers.

At that time, the growing national demands for pork, ham, bacon, lard and other byproducts, encouraged Butler Countians to transport those items by flatboat down the Great Miami, Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans.

Hogs were one of two indirect ways to trade corn, an abundant Midwest product. Corn converted to hogs or whiskey was much easier -- and more profitable -- to transport than grain. In the 1815-1820 period, when corn sold for as little as seven cents a bushel, fattened pigs were bringing from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a pound.

In the 1840s, hog fat increased in value as lard replaced whale oil as lantern fuel. Lard also became a favored raw material for soap and lubricating products.