

CapitalMark Bank – a new banking model for Oak Ridge in a historic bank building, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on September 24, 2012)

In the last Historically Speaking column the early history of the Hamilton National Bank, first bank in Oak Ridge that opened in September, 1943, with C. O. Carpenter of Knoxville serving as the Manager and Floyd F. Carringer, the Assistant Manager. A second branch, in the west end of town, opened on April 5, 1944.

The man in charge of these bank branches from April, 1944, until December, 1969, was James Hoyt Mason who arrived in Oak Ridge in April, 1944, at the time of the opening of the second, expansion, branch office. In his obituary, published in the August 17, 1982, edition of The Oak Ridger, the following details of the bank history are revealed.

Mason is quoted as saying, "When I realized there were 75,000 people here, and I didn't know even the names of the employees in the bank, I felt I might have made a mistake. But, if I had it to do over again, I would come right back here. "

The obituary continues, "He served as manager of the Hamilton National Bank branch office in Jackson Square and later was made manager and assistant vice-president of the downtown facility in 1959."

"After 25 years of service, Mr. Mason retired from the bank in 1969 when the Hamilton National Bank of Knoxville was taken over by First National Bank of Clinton. The bank was then renamed Hamilton First National Bank and Mr. Mason continued to serve as a consultant to the new organization until 1971.

"Mr. Mason was the last surviving charter member of the Oak Ridge Rotary Club formed in 1945. He was named to the board of commissioners of the Oak Ridge Utility District in November of 1954 and was named treasurer in May of 1955, and continued to serve on this board until June of 1971. He was also a board member of the Oak Ridge Hospital and was a member of the Elks Lodge.

So you see that Hoyt Mason was active in community organizations serving on several boards of directors. In his 27 year banking career in Oak Ridge Mason obviously contributed to the community in several ways. The Hamilton National Bank was also obviously a prominent feature in the Oak Ridge.

Before I transition from the Hamilton National Bank and the Hamilton First National Bank of Clinton's presence in Oak Ridge to the CapitalMark banking presence in Oak Ridge, let me spend just a bit of time with the contractor who has done the refurbishment of the building that housed the first bank in Oak Ridge.

I asked Stephen Whitson, President of H-S Whitson Construction Co., Inc., to share the impressions of his team regarding this historical structure and also the most significant things about this project for him and his company. Stephen provided the following:

"First, we are very excited to be included in this project. Realizing that this location was the first bank in Oak Ridge, we are honored to be a part of returning it back to its original use. It is not often that a contractor is selected to be a part of a team that is renovating a piece of history and returning it back to its original use.

"Throughout the construction, there has been a lot of emphasis placed upon keeping several original elements in place such as the flooring and vaults that were from the original construction. It was also

CapitalMark Bank – a new banking model for Oak Ridge in a historic bank building, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on September 24, 2012)

interesting to reveal where the Hamilton National Bank sign had been displayed originally. During construction, we also uncovered lumber that had been written on by one of the craftsman that built the facility.

“In addition to preserving the history of the original bank we were able to incorporate some of the oak flooring from the dormitories that are slated to be razed in the future. These materials are prominently displayed in the lobby and since they are a different species of wood, should be easy noted upon entering the lobby area.

“As you might imagine, there have been several challenges throughout the construction process. From structural changes to making sure that a nominal 70 year old building will meet the American Disability Act codes and the current energy code has make the project even more interesting.

“By far, the most enjoyable experience has been speaking with people who have stopped to reminisce of the days past and shared their stories with us. It was not uncommon to have several people a day drop by to learn more about the project and tell us about cashing their paychecks as well as other stories about the Jackson Square area.

My personal thanks go out to H. Stephen Whitson, President; Jeffery G. Wilkins, Vice-President; and George E. Cressler, Project Superintendent, for responding to my request to share their experience with *Historically Speaking* readers.

Finally, let me introduce you to the new banking model that is CapitalMark, the bank that is going into the space that served as the first bank in Oak Ridge. CapitalMark and David Bradshaw, Oak Ridge President, CapitalMark Bank & Trust, are taking serious the trust that is theirs for bringing to Oak Ridge a return of the historical banking heritage of the location of that first bank in Oak Ridge and at the same time bringing highly successful and modern banking experiences to modern day Oak Ridgers.

David arranged for me to meet with Stefanie D. Crow, CapitalMark Executive Vice President, Director of Marketing, Communications & Investor Relations and Kelly S. Spencer, Assistant Marketing and communications Director. We met at Dean's Restaurant and Bakery, located in what used to be the Jackson Square Pharmacy space. It is good to see these new businesses locating in Jackson Square!

It was with great pride that both Stefanie and Kelly shared with me the uniqueness of CapitalMark Bank & Trust. From the history of a small group of individuals determining approximately six years ago that banks could serve customers more effectively and then setting out to demonstrate just that, to the present state of the relatively new approach that is working well and now expanding from Chattanooga to Oak Ridge, they covered the history of the bank. The basic concept is called a “simple yet compelling vision.”

Their model for optimum customer banking experiences is one based on streamlining and a single location – one banker. For us that is David Bradshaw. The model is also one where the banker and team get to know the customer well and provide timely informed decisions at the local bank, not some far off distant “home office” or headquarters.

CapitalMark Bank – a new banking model for Oak Ridge in a historic bank building, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on September 24, 2012)

Such innovations as “remote capture” which means electronic deposits, courier service where the bank picks up or drops off transactions, are examples of the personalized service that forms the foundation of their banking model.

The last bullet point in their mission statement is, “Make a significant, positive impact in the communities we serve.” By their selection of the historical bank building in Jackson Square and doing an excellent renovation project as you saw described earlier in this article by the contractor hired to do that job, I believe CapitalMark and David are intent on quickly becoming a key element in the resurgence of Oak Ridge’s commercial environment.

Finally, David Bradshaw said, “CapitalMark Bank & Trust has found great success by locating in traditional downtown spaces in Chattanooga, Knoxville and Cleveland, and we feel our location in Jackson Square in Oak Ridge is a perfect addition that follows this approach. Banking is a relationship business, and we feel that we can build great relationships and get to know our clients best from a location that is accessible, comfortable, and central to the history of Oak Ridge and the surrounding communities.

“It has been wonderful meeting people who banked or worked in our space over the years and have come back to see how the renovation is progressing . The resurgence of Jackson Square as a destination for citizens who can work, dine, shop, see a play, visit the farmer's market and now bank all within walking distance is a throw-back to a time many people affectionately remember.

“We are looking forward to the city's upcoming renovation to the public spaces in the Square, as these improvements will only add to the attractiveness of the area to all. The recent crowds in Jackson Square during lunch and dinner are an indication of how vital this area can be to the community, and we look forward to even more growth in the future!”

Help me welcome this new business to historic Jackson Square!



The original vault door is still functional and required only minor adjustments to be again fully operational. David beams with pride as he shows off this fully functioning historical artifact

CapitalMark Bank – a new banking model for Oak Ridge in a historic bank building, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on September 24, 2012)



In the original bank vault, David found the following handwritten note: “NOTICE, in event you are locked in this vault follow these directions – 1. Remain calm at all times, 2. open emergency air vent by turning wheel on outside wall near door, 3. Open this bag and insert hose through open plug, 4. Breathe through hose and remain calm”