



In its first few years Jamestown was basically a lumber camp. There were many single young men, few families, and very few single young women. The women who were present, of any age or marital status must have been much appreciated for their work making and repairing work clothes for the men in the sawmill and woods.

Once churches were organized, starting in 1816, even the young men would have been expected to attend Sunday meetings formally dressed. Since ready-made clothing stores was not available at the time, the men had to rely on local seamstresses for their work clothes. *Sunday best*, or good clothes, were made by seamstresses and tailors.

Gilbert W. Hazeltine in his 1887 book, *Early History of the Town of Ellicott* recalls that the first tailor to settle in Jamestown was James Dinnin, "an Irishman." He appears in the 1820 census.

The fourth tailor Hazeltine mentions is Ira Couch whom he says arrived about 1828. He is listed in the 1830 federal census. Hazeltine says he was the first in town who "purchased a quantity of clothes and ready-made clothing, and was the first to advertise as a 'merchant-tailor.'" His shop was located near the southeast corner of Main and Fourth Streets. Like all local merchants, Couch must have taken advantage of the opening of the Erie Canal (1825) which made products from outside the area much more price competitive than in earlier years.

William Henry Proudfit was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1841, but he came to Jamestown at two years of age with his newly widowed mother. His father, a physician, had lived

and practiced here briefly. William quit school and went to work to support the family at age 15. He started as a clerk in Deforest Weld's dry goods store on Main Street.

By the 1850's North Main Street was becoming a district for men's stores which it continued to be the rest of the 19th century and well into the 20th.

Young Proudfit enlisted in the 112th Volunteers in 1862. At the end of the war, he returned to Jamestown and in partnership with another fatherless Civil War veteran, Richard A. Osmer, bought out the Andrews and Preston clothing store. This was in December, 1866. In the store, a bible had been kept signed by all the previous owners since the store had first opened in that location as Butler and Hall in 1850. Andrews and Preston were the fourth owners. How nice it would be to have that bible now.

In the early years Proudfit bought woolen cloth from Allen and Preston's woolen factory on Winsor Street and from George Hazeltine in North Warren. His tailors would do the cutting and send the pieces out to women in the village who would assemble the clothes at home. Custom made suits would be produced entirely by in store tailors.

Proudfit was an aggressive advertiser, although surprisingly, he never seems to have tried to capitalize on the coincidence of the fit between his name and his business. He did heavily advertise and identify with his address, 33 Main Street. He painted the exterior wall of the building with a big 33 and had it cast into the sidewalk in front of the store. He painted trees, stumps, and rocks with just the number 33 all up and down the lake.

The Proudfit store was the first retail store in Jamestown with electric lights, 1881.

In 1886, the year Jamestown became a city, the former Warren Road through Brooklyn Square was tacked on to Main Street and the whole street renumbered. Proudfit's store was now at 206 Main, since about 1907 206 North Main. Proudfit trademarked the number 33 and got permission from City Council to keep using the number 33. Even his phone number was 33.

Osmer died in 1880. Proudfit incorporated with others as Proudfit Clothing Company in 1903. He died August 31, 1927. The company went out of business about 1932 but soon thereafter Present Clothing Company moved in. Later Lipman's Men's Clothes occupied the location. In 1932 the Bank of Jamestown expanded and absorbed the address, but Lipman's continued on the north edge of the replaced or remodeled building until 1962. A men's clothing store had occupied that spot for 110 years.