

## PROCLAMATION OF RECOGNITION AND COMMEMORATION

**WHEREAS**, the city of Shelby has a rich and storied industrial heritage, a legacy deeply intertwined with the innovation and craftsmanship of bicycle manufacturing; and

**WHEREAS**, we gather today to commemorate a significant milestone, the **100th Anniversary of the Shelby Cycle Company**, recognizing its formal establishment and the beginning of its production of complete bicycles in **1925**; and

**WHEREAS**, the foundations of this remarkable enterprise were laid with the formation of the **Shelby Cycle Frame Builders in 1921**, founded by A. D. Meiselbach, who was drawn to Shelby by the quality seamless tubing from the Ohio Seamless Tube Co. and the promise of factory space; and

**WHEREAS**, facing early financial challenges, the company's future was secured by the critical financial backing and leadership of **Joseph A. Seltzer** in 1924, who became its president; and

**WHEREAS**, the unwavering tenacity of factory superintendent **Leon A. Smith** and 18 dedicated employees was instrumental in keeping the factory operational and turning a profit, paving the way for the company's transformation into the Shelby Cycle Company in 1925, thereby commencing the assembly of complete bicycles; and

**WHEREAS**, the Shelby Cycle Company swiftly gained national and international recognition, notably with the introduction of "**The Whippet**" bicycle at a bicycle trade show in New York in January 1927; and

**WHEREAS**, this iconic name became synonymous with excellence due to the extraordinary feats of **transcontinental cyclist Clarence "Whippet" Wagner**, who, in 1927, shattered his own record by riding a Shelby Whippet 3,169 miles from Newport Beach to Atlantic City in a remarkable 20 days and 17 hours, after having trained in Shelby; and

**WHEREAS**, the "Whippet" name, originally proposed by salesman George Evans in honor of the nimble racing dog, also became a source of local pride, famously adopted by the Shelby High School basketball team in 1927-28 and the track team in 1929, and solidified in football lore when a sports writer noted players ran "like whippets"; and

**WHEREAS**, under the astute leadership of presidents such as **John Stroock Seltzer** and **H. Clyde Brokaw**, and through the inventive genius of **Leon A. Smith**, the company experienced substantial growth, expanding to 180,000 square feet, employing 250 people, and producing an impressive 500 bicycles a day by 1935; and

**WHEREAS**, by 1937, the Shelby Cycle Company emerged as a national leader, responsible for one-third of Ohio's bicycle output, manufacturing over 200,000 custom-built bicycles annually with 400 employees working three shifts, day and night; and

**WHEREAS**, Leon A. Smith's pioneering inventions significantly enhanced riding comfort and manufacturing efficiency, including the "**ShockEase**" **shock-absorbing steering fork in 1940** and later, innovative machines for wheel assembly and tire mounting; and

**WHEREAS**, during **World War II**, the Shelby Cycle Company demonstrated remarkable adaptability and patriotic duty, pivoting from bicycle production to defense contracts, producing vital war materials such as rangefinder telescope tubes for tanks, gun shells, and **222,000 sub-caliber airplane rockets for the U.S. Navy**, meeting extreme accuracy requirements and even completing contracts after the war's end; and

**WHEREAS**, following the war, the company resumed full bicycle production, securing contracts with major national retailers including Western Auto Stores, Gamble Stores, and Sears Roebuck; and

**WHEREAS**, despite its enduring success, the company faced increasing competition, leading to its sale in **1953** following Leon Smith's retirement, with operations eventually moving out of Shelby by the end of that year, and the beloved Shelby name ultimately ceasing to be used in bicycle manufacturing within a decade.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, Steven L. Schag, Mayor of the City of Shelby, do hereby proclaim July 7, 2025** as a day to honor and reflect upon the remarkable legacy of the **Shelby Cycle Company** and its profound impact on our community's heritage and the national bicycle industry, celebrating the **100th anniversary of its formal establishment**. Let us forever remember the ingenuity, dedication, and entrepreneurial spirit that defined this pivotal chapter in Shelby's history.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF: I** have set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Shelby to be affixed this 7<sup>th</sup> day of June, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-five.

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Steven L. Schag  
Mayor