WILLIAMSVILLE.

This village derived its name from William H. Williams, in early years the owner of the larger portion of its business interests. It doubtless owes its origin, and, in a large degree, its subsequent growth, to the natural advantages afforded by the stream upon which it is situated. The development of these advantages commenced at a very early date, as the natural result of their being more available than any other to the inhabitants of the village on the hill. The time and place of the erection of the first mill on the South Branch, and the circumstances connected therewith, are matters more of tradition than of definite knowledge; and the different stories are of so conflicting a nature as to seem to be entitled to but little credit. Referring to the town records we find that the first conveyance of mill property was made in 1790, in October of which year John Wheeler sold to Winslow & Jones, a grist mill and saw mill standing where Hovey's carding mill now does. This property frequently changed hands till it came into the possession, soon after 1800, of Wm. H. Williams, who built the first carding mill in 1810, and soon afterward conveyed it to John Robinson, from whom it passed to Hezekiah Robinson. The grist mill is not mentioned in the deeds given after 1800. The saw mill was owned at different times by John Robinson, John Rider and David Newman, and prior to 1830 the whole property came again into the hands of Wm. H. Williams, who retained it until his decease. It is now owned by S. M. Hovey, and operated by Isaac Hovey, who has had charge of the works for twenty-five years.

During the war of 1812–15 a small woolen factory was erected near the carding mill, by William H. Williams and Hezekiah Robinson, but was run but a few years, the venture not proving a successful one.

In April, 1794, Thomas and Darius Wheeler purchased of Abner Merrifield and Thomas Farr, for twelve pounds, the mill privilege now owned by H. H. Hoyt, together with

one and one-half acres of land, and built, during that or the following year, a fulling mill and an oil mill. These mills were sold by the Wheelers, in February, 1801, to Wm. H. Williams, who had previously operated them for a few years, and who soon established a reputation for doing first-class work in the cloth-dressing line, and received a large and remunerative patronage until home made cloth began to be superseded by the products of the factory. W. H. Williams continued the business until his decease, with the exception of a few years in which it was carried on by his son, George Williams, and others. He continued the oil making business till 1852, when it was discontinued on account of the difficulty attached to obtaining flax-seed. The mills were entirely swept away during the great freshet, September 23, 1815, but were immediately rebuilt. This property was purchased in 1874, by H. H. Hoyt, who put in, and now runs, a circular saw mill and other wood-working machinery.

A grist mill was built, near the site of the present mill, about the year 1786, by Ebenezer Morse. It was a small structure containing but a single run of stone, and was set upon the rocks, near the middle of the pond as it now is. It was run by Mr. Morse until his decease, in 1813, and was sold by his widow, in 1814, to Darius Norcross. From Norcross it passed to Samuel Dutton, Jr., in 1816; from Dutton to Wyman Richardson, in 1817; from Richardson to Roswell Ingram, in 1831; from Roswell to Samuel Ingram, in 1832; from Samuel Ingram's estate, through A.C. Robinson, James Eastman and Richmond Dunklee, in 1837, to Wm. H. Williams, who built the present mill in 1839, and retained its ownership till 1864, when it was purchased by D. B. & D. J. Lamson. From the Lamsons it passed to J. E. Benson, in 1865, and from Benson to S. W. Bowker, the present owner, in 1873. In 1874 the mill was thoroughly repaired at a large expense, and is now considered one of the best in this section of the state. Captain Ira Blashfield, who had tended this mill for several years previously, was killed March 1, 1855, by being drawn through the gearing attached to one of its wheels. In former years a saw mill was connected with this mill.

Amasa Lincoln came to this village in 1817 or 1818, and built, about that time, a small tannery in which he continued business till 1840. In the latter year, in company with his son, O. L. Lincoln, he built the upper or western section of the present structure. The property soon afterward passed into the hands of O. L. Lincoln, who became associated in business, in 1846, with Gilbert C. Brown, the new firm putting up the eastern section of the building the same year. The business was continued by the Lincolns and Goodwin, and Merrifield & Goodwin, from 1847 to 1852. Wm. L. Williams purchased the building in 1851, and sold the same, in 1855, to Amasa and John G. Wood, who carried on the business from the latter date till 1874. The building was purchased by O. L. & E. R. Lincoln, in December, 1874, and occupied by them for about a year and a half, but is not now in use. As a means of furnishing employment to several men, and a ready market for bark, wood and other products, this business has contributed largely to the prosperity of the village and its vicinity.

The building now used by Wheeler & Morse, in the manufacture of butter tubs and kegs, was built by Ephraim Hall, Jr., and used by him for a number of years, partly as a carpenter's shop, and partly as a grist mill. It was purchased by John S. Emery, in 1845, and fitted up with machinery for making pails. In 1850 it came into the possession of Dana D. Dickinson, who added new machinery, and commenced the manufacture of tubs and kegs. Mr. Dickinson confinned the business till 1873, when he sold it to E. P. Wheeler and L. O. Morse, the present proprietors. About six thousand tubs and kegs are annually made at this shop.

In 1848, O. L., L. A. & E. R. Lincoln erected a large building near the present residence of Geo. T. Allen, and engaged in the manufacture of pails, employing, for a few years, from eight to twelve men. From the Lincolns the property passed to J. A. Merrifield, in 1851; from Merrifield to Gardner C. Hall, in 1852; and from Hall to A. H. Stearns, in 1853. During the great freshet of 1856, August 20, the building was carried away—the water at the

same time cutting through the Goodnow flat above—as were also several bridges, including the covered bridge then standing near the Bingham mill, at Pondville.

In 1854, W. R. Davenport purchased the premises just west of the present residence of F. J. Morse, on which a house and barn were then standing, constructed a shop and commenced the manufacture of bobbins. In 1856 Mr. Davenport was succeeded in the business by Lucius Halladay. In the early morning of June 29, 1857, the shop was discovered to be on fire, and, with the house and F. J. Morse's barn, was entirely consumed. The fire was thought to have been caused by friction created by machinery in motion. The shop was immediately rebuilt by Mr. Halladay, who conducted a successful business for several years. It is now unoccupied.

The saw mill now owned by D. D. Dickinson, was built by D. D. Dickinson and E. P. Wheeler, in 1859, to replace the one built by them in 1857, and which was carried away, July 13, 1859, during a heavy shower which swelled Baker Brook to a greater height than it was ever before remembered to have reached, sweeping off nearly every bridge on the brook, including the one near Dr. Blakeslee's, and doing a great amount of damage to private property. Mr. Dickinson obtained the entire control of this mill in 1866, and has since furnished a ready market for a large amount of oak and ash timber, by working it up into carriage stock and other salable lumber.

The manufacture of wagons and sleighs was commenced here, in 1858, by H. H. Hoyt, who built, the same year, the carriage shop now standing. Geo. W. Dickinson purchased an interest in the business in 1869, after which time, till 1872, it was conducted under the firm name of H. H. Hoyt & Co. Mr. Dickinson became sole proprietor in the latter year and has since continued the business. A large number of wagons and sleighs have been manufactured at this shop.

No sketch of the business enterprises of this village would be considered complete, by the older portion of its inhabitants, without the mention of the hatting business conducted by Isaac Cutler from about the year 1820 to 1833 or 1834.

It was commenced in the store building now occupied by O. L. Sherman, which was built by Mr. Cutler for the purpose, but sold to John R. Blake & Co., in 1824. It was afterward carried on in the tall, yellow house now occupied by Eli Tyler. Mr. Cutler is said to have been a skillful workman, and to have built up a large trade in silk and wool hats.

The manufacture of potash, though now foreign to this section, was a branch of industry of much importance at the commencement of the present century. It was almost the only business of a manufacturing nature engaged in by the inhabitants of the village on the hill. It was also carried on in this village for nearly fifty years, by Wm. H. Williams, in a long, low, rough-boarded building which stood nearly south of the present residence of Geo. B. Williams, and the appearance of which, together with that of the old red house opposite, is inseparably connected with every recollection of the village as it existed in former years.

The mercantile business was commenced here, in 1814, by Wm. H. Williams and David W. Sanborn, in the old red house which was torn down in 1868 to make room for the present residence of Geo. B. Williams. The first store was built, in 1815, by Williams & Sanborn, who continued business till 1820, when Sanborn retired. Huntington Fitch was admitted in 1826, and retired in 1829. The store and goods were entirely destroyed by fire, October 8, 1829, the loss being estimated at ten thousand dollars. The store was rebuilt by W. H. Williams, the following year, and the business continued by him till 1838, when his son, Wm. L. Williams, was received as a partner. W. L. Williams retired from the business in 1844, but returned in 1849, purchased the entire stock of his father, and traded till 1851, when he was succeeded by H. F. Houghton and Lucius Walker. Mr. Houghton retired from the business in 1855, and John D. Blake was received as a partner about a year thereafter. Walker & Blake closed out their stock in the spring of 1857, after which time, till 1868, the store was unoccupied. Amherst Morse commenced trade in June, 1868, and continued till 1875. Since the latter date the building has not been occupied for purposes of trade.

The store now occupied by O. L. Sherman was opened in January, 1824, by John R. Blake, C. H. Cune and Francis Goodhue, of Brattleboro, who continued in business, under different firm names, with Jason Duncan, Jr., as agent, till the spring of 1838. Henry Wheelock and John A. Merrifield were the next to occupy the store, commencing in 1839, and continuing two or three years. H. N. Miller and George Clark commenced trade about 1844. The firm of Miller & Clark was succeeded in 1847 by that of Miller & Ward, the interest of Clark being purchased by Abel S. Ward. Miller & Ward were succeeded, in 1851, by Martin Perry and G. L. Howe, who continued together for a few years, when Perry sold his interest to S. H. Sherman, who in turn sold to O. L. Sherman, in 1855. Howe & Sherman traded together for ten years. The whole business then passed to O. L. Sherman, who has since continued it.

Abel S. Ward opened a store, in 1846, in his dwelling house, then standing on the site of the present residence of F. J. Morse. The building and goods were entirely consumed by fire, April 7, 1847.

The main portion of the hotel in this village was built by Ebenezer Morse for a private residence. It was first opened as a public house by David Reed, in 1815 or 1816. The property passed from Mr. Reed to Emory and Asa Wheelock, in 1829, and was occupied from 1829 to '35 and from 1837 to '39, by Henry Wheelock; from 1835 to '37, by Geo. A. Morse; from 1839 to '46, by Luke A. Wright; from 1846 to '51, by Clark Adams and Samuel Hall; from 1851 to '56, by Richmond Dunklee; from 1856 to '58, by A. L. Howard; from 1858 to '60, by Fred Thompson; from 1860 to '70, by Lucius Halladay; from 1870 to '72, by H. E. Harris; S. W. Bowker has been proprietor and occupant since 1872. The owners of the property, since 1835, have been as follows: Henry Wheelock, Aaron C. Robinson, Marshall Newton, Clark Adams, Caroline Dunklee, Dr. C. S. Blakeslee, L. Halladay and S. W. Bowker.

Chas. K. Field came to this village in March, 1826,

engaged in the practice of law, remained two years and then removed to Wilmington. Returning in 1855, he remained till 1861, when he sold out to Kittredge Haskins, and removed to Brattleboro. Hon. Hoyt H. Wheeler, late of the Vermont Supreme Court, and the newly appointed U. S. District Judge for this state, commenced the study of law with Mr. Field, in this village.

Mr. Haskins remained here in the practice of his profession till September, 1862, when he enlisted, and entered the army. In the fall of 1863 he removed to Brattleboro.

Geo. W. Davenport opened a law office here in May, 1865, and remained till January, 1867.

Dr. Simon Taylor, son of Rev. Hezekiah Taylor, was the first physician to settle in this immediate vicinity. He commenced practice here in 1813, and died in 1818. Dr. James Cutler came here about 1817, but remained only a few years. Dr. Sewall Foster came the same year, and remained till 1823, when he removed to Shefford, P. Q., where he became highly distinguished as a physician, and received many political honors. Dr. John Wilson settled in this village about the year 1820, and remained till 1835, when he sold out to Dr. Orville P. Gilman, and removed to Brattleboro. Dr. Gilman remained but a short time. Dr. Elihu Halladay practiced here from about 1833 to 1838. Dr. C. S. Blakeslee became established here in May of the latter year, and soon built up, and now retains, an extensive and successful practice. Dr. H. B. Chapin came here in 1856, and remained in this village and vicinity about fifteen years. Dr. Geo. H. Harvey located here in 1873, and Dr. John Heard in 1874, both of whom now remain.

School District No. 6, of which this village is now a part, was formed Sept. 7, 1790, but embraced, as originally constituted, none of the territory on the north side of the Branch. The territory embraced within the present village limits, and on which, as late as 1812 or 1813, only four houses were standing—the old house of Wm. H. Williams, the red house previously alluded to, the hotel building, and a house on the Chester Perry farm—was originally attached, a portion to district No. 3, and a portion to the parish district.

Changes were made in the boundaries of the district from time to time, and prior to 1820 it assumed very nearly its present proportions. The first school house stood on the east side of the road leading to Dummerston Hill, about twenty rods south of where J. A. Merrifield now lives. The second school house was built, in 1836, in the woods, on the west side of the brook, near where the road leading to the cemetery separates from the river road to Brattleboro. The present commodious and convenient school building was erected in 1861.

The meeting house in this village was built in 1834 and 1835, under the direction of a society representing different denominations, and was dedicated December 17, 1835, by the Methodists and Universalists. It was controlled by these two denominations, one-half the time each, respectively, till 1868, when it became wholly the property of the latter. As originally built it was set up some six or seven feet from the ground, on brick walls, with the intention of having the basement finished off for a town house. In 1870 it was lowered several feet, moved further back from the road, and otherwise remodeled.

In the matter of postal facilities this section of the town was tributary to Newfane Hill, so long as an office was kept there. Upon the removal of the office to Fayetteville, active measures were taken to secure the establishment of one in this village, which were soon successful. It is said that the inhabitants of the hill felt none of their losses more keenly than that of their post office. As expressive of this feeling, it is related of one of the older inhabitants, that, when he heard of the removal, he remarked that he would never take a letter from the new office, even though one should come for him covered with seven black seals. The Williamsville post office was established May 20, 1826, with Chas. K. Field as postmaster, and was first kept in the building now occupied by Geo. W. Dickinson as a residence. For a number of years after the establishment of the office the mail was received here but once a week, and was carried, for some time, by Jonathan Wood, of Dover, who went down Friday

and back Saturday, in a kind of wide seated gig, carrying occasional passengers. It was afterward carried, for several years, by Daniel Brown, of Dover. A mail route was then established between Bellows Falls and Wilmington, and a coach passed through this village, carrying the mail, twice a week, each way. This route was continued for some time after 1850, the mail being carried, for several years, by Ransom King. Since its discontinuance a coach has run between this place and Brattleboro, carrying the mail,—at first semi-weekly, and afterward tri-weekly and daily. A daily mail was established by the Government, at this place, April 25, 1872, but had been maintained by private contributions for several years previously. The following is a list of the persons who have been postmasters at this office, together with the respective dates of their appointment:

Charles K. Field,	appointed	P. M.	May 20, 1826.
Jason Duncan, Jr.,	"	"	November 30, 1826.
Charles W. Joy,	"	"	April 16, 1838.
Horatio N. Miller,	"	"	June 28, 1847.
John A. Merrifield,	"	"	July 9, 1851.
Henry F. Houghton,	"	"	August 27, 1853.
Oscar L. Sherman,	"	"	October 18, 1856.
Gardner L. Howe,	"	"	July 20, 1861.
Charles E. Park,	"	"	September 13, 1865,

who is the present incumbent.

March 25, 1833, after repeated attempts, as shown by the records of several previous meetings, the town voted to hold its town meetings thereafter at Williamsville and Fayetteville, one year in each place, alternately.

At the time that arrangements were being made to remove the shire from Newfane Hill to some place more convenient of access, strong efforts were made by the inhabitants of the south part of the town to secure its location in this village. The interest taken in the matter is best shown by a subscription paper, now in existence, on which was pledged the sum of nearly four thousand dollars for the purpose of aiding in the erection of suitable buildings, should Williamsville have been selected as the site of the new shire.