

NUMERICAL KEY TO THE SITES

- 1. Colonial Shops** (49 Main St.). Site of the 1806 Bodman fulling, dyeing and dressing mill, sold in the late 1860s to H. L. James and left standing by the 1874 flood. In years since, a woolen mill, a blanket factory, a lumber yard, a crafts and pottery business, and now a variety of fine stores have been located here.
- 2. Graves Bros. Carriage Shop** (21 Main St., just east of center). This important business was established by Norman Graves in 1874, building and repairing horse-drawn carriages, sleighs, and heavy-duty dump carts until 1916, when the Graveses went into the automotive business. Gasoline engines brought about the selling of trucks, and the making of International truck bodies replaced the carriage business. The carriage and paint shops are in their original state, still in the Graves family, and still in working condition — the last of their kind in Williamsburg.
- 3. Helen E. James School** (Main and South Sts., in center). Mrs. James, a sister of Chicago merchant Marshall Field, married Williamsburg merchant Lyman D. James. She donated this school building to the town in 1914. It housed grades 1-12 until 1955, and now serves pre-school through Grade 3.
- 4. Williamsburg General Store** (12 Main St., in center). Site of a general store since 1808 and Post Office for many years. R. F. Burke and family were the proprietors for the longest time — from 1908 until 1973. Under the visionary ownership of the Majercik family since 1977, this store has become an attraction to patrons from far and wide.
- 5. Grange Hall** (8 Main St., in center). Built 1855, burned 1857, and rebuilt 1859; site of the first Center School from 1855 to 1925, when it was bought by the Patrons of Husbandry. They remodeled it in 1953, excavating the basement, lowering the top floor, and moving part of the old Methodist Episcopal Church to add a stage and kitchen to the rear. The finished Grange Community Hall has served with great versatility for many years.
- 6. Town Hall** (6 Main St., in center). Built in 1841, it served as the Town Hall until 1954. It is now one of the finest all-volunteer historic museums in Western Massachusetts, owned by the townspeople and curated by the Williamsburg Historical Society.
- 7. Anne T. Dunphy School** (off Main St. in village center). Named after a long-time principal (1918-55), it opened in 1955 at the rear of the Town Hall. Its gymnasium is named after Earl Tonet, a deeply respected coach.
- 8. Veterans' Memorial Park** (in center). In 1953 the Grange received the Sears Roebuck Award for creating the park as a community improvement project, after removing the Methodist Episcopal Church that had stood on this site since 1832 and been disbanded in 1944.
- 9. Williams House** (4 Main St., in center). Opened in 1812 by Gross Williams, burned and rebuilt in 1873. Exposed chestnut timbers and the original Rumford fireplace add to the enjoyment of meals served by the Majercik family. An electric trolley line ran between the front of the inn and Northampton from 1894 until 1926, using open cars in warm weather and closed ones in winter. Before the trolley era, passengers arrived by stagecoach, their arrival heralded by a bugle and much hubbub.
- 10. Florence Savings Bank building** (1 Main St., in center). Elisha Hubbard operated the Hampshire House tavern in this building from 1796 until 1851. It was later run by several other owners. Ironically, it was purchased by the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1891. It has also served as a post office, and Grange meetings were held here for a time.
- 11. Meekins Library** (2 Main St.). Built with a \$15,000 bequest from farmer Stephen Meekins for the benefit of the townspeople, this beautiful granite library opened in 1897.
- 12. Grist Mill Farm Museum** (1 Mill St.). Adams Flouring Mill, swept away with its proprietor in 1874, rebuilt in 1878 by Hiram Hall and operated as a grist mill until 1925. It was donated to the Williamsburg Historical Society in 1982 by J. Jackson Walter.
- 13. Site of Onslow Spelman button shop** (between the bridge and 3 Nash Hill Road). Spelman was one of the investors in the failed reservoir dam, and his factory was the first of many to be destroyed. His own small dam stood several hundred feet upstream; remnants of that dam and the canal leading from it to the factory can still be seen.
- 14. Bodman farmhouse** (8 Nash Hill Road) and tannery site (7 Nash Hill Road). Opposite the house stood Joseph Bodman's tannery, where he used horses to grind bark for tannin. Nearby was his cousin Samuel's tannery, which also housed Ephraim Whitman's press on which the mystical and locally famous "Oration on Death" of Manoa Bodman was printed. The Bodmans were prominent in Williamsburg for a hundred years.
- 15. Jesse Harlow Beals house** (11 E. Main St.). Spared by the Mill River flood, this house was later the home of America's first nationally known woman press photographer.
- 16. Storefront at 1 E. Main St.** (now Hodgkins Realty). Gross Williams had been in the mercantile business for years here before T. M. Carter built a new store on the site. Mary Carter ran an apothecary shop in it for many years, then sold it to Carroll Jenkins.
- 17. Williamsburg Congregational Church** (4 No. Main St.). The original structure, built in 1836, was lifted in 1859 and the present first floor was added beneath it. Helen E. James donated the chapel, belfry and front parlors in 1897. Sunday School rooms and a kitchen were added in 1957.
- 18. Iron Hall** (1 North Main St.). So called because it was originally the home of the United Iron Workers' Union. It was also an early meeting place for Methodists and a boarding house for button workers. Today it is a residence for three families.
- 19. Longtime store site** (7 No. Main St., beside the fire station). First operated by Enoch James, succeeded for many years by his son Lyman D., then by H. A. Bisbee, Merrick & Hawlett, Bisbee Bros., John Ross, E. Robbins, and finally Tom and Harry Wells. It closed during the Depression of the 1930s and is now an apartment house.
- 20. Home of the town's first librarian** (8 No. Main St.). Deacon William Hawks served from 1876 until 1893, when his wife took over. At first the books were housed here.
- 21. 16 No. Main St.** Home of Dr. Thomas Meekins, the first native son to practice medicine in town (from 1828). It was also the home of Williamsburg's first newspaper and its last Civil War veteran, drummer boy Adelbert Bailey, who lived until 1932.
- 22. Hill Button Shop** (stone foundation on riverbank beside Buttonshop Road). Here Hiram, Henry and John Hill manufactured suspender buttons, button molds, broom handles and shaving boxes from 1861 until 1920. The building was removed before 1946.
- 23. Old Village Hill Cemetery** (on the right, where the road starts to rise steeply). No longer used, this historic plot was established as soon as the town was incorporated in 1771. The Bodman family donated the handsome wrought iron fence.
- 24. Village Hill Cemetery** (on the left, halfway up the hill). Burials here date back to 1850, with a great many in 1874 following the Mill River Disaster.
- 25. Site of Williamsburg's first store** (21 Village Hill Rd.). Asa White, one of the town's early leaders, operated a store here until 1812.
- 26. Site of first post office** (30 Village Hill Rd.). Thomas Mayhew lived here and was postmaster from 1814 until 1839.
- 27. Site of Williamsburg's First Meetinghouse** (31 Village Hill Road). A boulder marks the spot where Jonathan Warner erected this building, starting the work in 1779. It was completed in 1787 and used until 1836. The first school stood 20 rods north of here.
- 28. Dwight Tavern** (7 Old Goshen Road). Built in 1769, Williamsburg's first Town Meeting was convened here, at the very center of the district, on May 6, 1771.
- 29. The red brick schoolhouse** (67 Village Hill Rd.). In Searsville, known as the Hyde's District school, was built in 1844 with brick from the Hyde farm, on land given by Nathaniel Sears. It was discontinued in 1921.
- 30. The bridge in Searsville** (Schoolhouse Bridge) was built in 1761 on the Military Highway which had been laid out in 1754 through the center of the Three Mile Additional Grant. This bridge across the West Branch of the Mill River was the center of much industrial activity for nearly a century while water power remained important. It was over the Military Road that Lord Amherst led his invasion to take Fort Ticonderoga in 1759, and Gen. Burgoyne passed this way after the Convention of Saratoga in 1777.
- Along the river above the bridge were several mills: a sawmill, a grist mill, an axe and scythe factory, and one or more dressing and fulling mills which evolved into a woolen mill. Rufus Hyde, Jr. purchased land and water rights with buildings and a mill dam from the heirs of Josiah Dwight in 1799, and thereafter operated a shop with a trip-hammer.
 - Josiah Hannum, one of the most successful and industrious mechanics in town, manufactured axes for 35 years on Village Hill. At this location he joined Rufus, Jr. and his brother Stephen, blacksmithing and making axes, until the death of the latter in 1834.
 - About 1806, Stephen Graves started a mill for fulling and dyeing and dressing woolen cloth. Versel Abel also made woolen yarn, flannel and fulling cloth here before 1840.
 - Nathaniel Sears purchased land and water rights from Hyde and in 1819 began the business of custom dressing, fulling and dyeing, taking water from the east side of the Hyde dam. He built a house at the top of the hill that burned in 1940. His business grew, surviving several tragedies, until he sold out to Thomas Nash in 1862. The mill had been idle for several years when it was destroyed by fire on the night of July 4, 1890.
- 31. Around 1828, Levi Hitchcock** developed a ten-foot, overshot water wheel below the confluence of the two small streams flowing down from Hyde and Walcott Hills. Meekins Brook was at one time diverted northward to augment this water supply. Here Father George Holmes later ran a woodworking shop, making furniture and boys' sleds.
- 32. Rufus Hyde, Sr.** plied his trade as a manufacturer of scythes and axes till about 1795 in a shop on the foundations just below the stone bridge leading to the farmhouse (now Horizons Camp) which was the Hyde family home for 120 years. Brick was made here from early times, and used in most early houses throughout the town. The farmhouse was later the home of early feminist, Temperance leader, politician, and country hostess Mrs. Fannie Clary, the first woman to be nominated by a political party for statewide office in Massachusetts.
- 33. At Nichols Rd.**, along the river above Old Goshen Rd. was the shop of B. K. Baker, Edge Tool Maker, started in 1835 and sold making axes. By 1860 S. K. Wait operated a gristmill here. Levi Bradford, a later owner, was convicted of burning the mill in 1878. Levi's son Gilbert last used this power to manufacture barrels beside his blacksmith shop, continuing until after 1900.
- 34. Levi Hitchcock** built, in 1831, a water power with a dam above and a mill below the bridge at the end of Old Goshen Rd. He made axes, and later added chisels and cutlery to his line. The shop was then used by Marcus Way & Son for the manufacture of button molds around 1860, and still later Hitchcock's nephew Levi Bradford operated a sawmill, to which his son Gilbert succeeded.
- 35. Williamsburg Blacksmiths shop** (Buttonshop Rd. and Route 9). Site of the first factory erected in the village. Many others have followed on this site, several of which have been destroyed by fire. During the war of 1812 a cotton factory was built and operated here by Prince and Phineas Williams, nephews of Gross Williams. A factory has been in operation here most of the time since. Proprietors have been many, and the products quite various. Isaac Gere bought the property in 1822 to manufacture broadcloth with his brother Edward. William E. Thayer operated here before 1854 and for many years afterward. The Tiley family has carried on the manufacture of classic American decorative hardware here from 1923 to the present.
- 36. Petticoat Hill School site** (near the jog in the road where an old road from Gere Hill used to intersect it). Petticoat Hill was an early population center, with enough households at one time to send 60 pupils to this school.
- 37. Ritt Tavern site** (at the crest of Petticoat Hill). A stagecoach inn dating to 1771, when an early Boston Post Road ran west from Leeds via South Street, Unquomoonk Road, and other old roads, long since dissued.
- 38. Petticoat Hill Reservation** (on the left, 150 yards above the Williams House). 55 acres given by Martha Winslow Nash to the Trustees of Reservations in 1906, in memory of her husband Edward W. Nash. The hilltop offers views of Williamsburg center and beyond when the leaves are off the trees.
- 39. Home of Elanathan Graves** (26 South St.). On one of several early Graves farms along South Street. The first house was built by Elanathan Graves Sr. in 1792, and the present one by his son Elanathan Jr., whose wife Lydia Pomeroy Graves invented the cloth-covered wood button. Their son-in-law, manufacturer Samuel Williston, parlayed that idea into a fortune; he later founded Williston Academy. Son Daniel Collins Graves drove his milk wagon heroically before the raging waters of the failed reservoir in 1874, warning mill workers and saving many lives in Skinnerville and Haydenville.
- 40. Scrub Hill School** (88 South St.). Another of Williamsburg's 12 district schoolhouses, this was built in 1841 and closed in 1909. It is now a home.
- 41. Old oak tree** (a short walk along Mr. Baccot's road off South St.). Perhaps the oldest and largest red oak in Massachusetts, it is in the late autumn of its years, so visit it soon.
- 42. Devil's Den** (off Old Goshen Road, on West Branch of Mill River at the Goshen line). Natural rocky gorge with many pools and cascades, given to the Boy Scouts by Louis Cranson and long used as a campsite.
- 43. Site of Briar Hill Schoolhouse** (near 30 Briar Hill Rd.). The building burned after closing in 1919.
- 44. North Street schoolhouse** (intersection of Conway and Ashfield Roads). Part of the old structure remains, in use as a home. It was discontinued as a school in 1921.
- 45. Ruins of Williamsburg Reservoir Company Dam** (1/4 mile north of Judd Lane). Built in 1865 to provide a steady flow for water-powered factories downstream, the dam burst on May 16, 1874. In the ensuing Mill River Disaster, three of Williamsburg's four villages and the downstream village of Leeds were devastated, with the loss of at least 138 lives (counts varied) and more than a million dollars in damage to homes, factories, roads, dams, bridges and other property. This was the worst industrial/engineering catastrophe in North American history until the terrible Johnstown Flood of 1889. Both ends of the dam, which was several hundred feet long and forty feet high in the center, are still clearly visible, as is the spillway at its west end. When full (as it was when the dam failed), the reservoir covered a hundred acres to an average depth of 22 feet and held 96 million cubic feet of water.
- 46. High Ridge** (east of the old reservoir bed, near the Conway line). At 1464 feet, the highest elevation on a straight line to Boston. The High Street Walking Club placed a plaque here in 1926, in honor of member and Hampshire Gazette editor Edward C. Gere.
- 47. Nash Hill School** (117 Nash Hill Road). Another of Williamsburg's district schools (1786-1917). Helen Field James taught here for \$1.50 per month. It is preserved as a schoolhouse museum by the Historical Society. This hilltop was settled by the Nash family before 1770.
- 48. Site of Pomeroy-Waite Tavern** (on the old road to Hatfield, now beneath the Mountain Street Reservoir). Later known as the Cleveland Tavern.
- 49. Mountain Street Schoolhouse** (90 Mountain St.). It was built on skids and moved around to be convenient to the largest number of pupils, before settling down in its present location. Several additions have made it a comfortable home.
- 50. Mountain Street Cemetery** (set back from the road near 53 Mountain Street). This is the oldest burying ground in Haydenville. Williams Warren was the first to be laid to rest here, on March 12, 1762.
- 51. Site of Joshua Warner's Tavern** (near the intersection of Mountain St. and North Farms Rd.). This tavern operated from 1772 until 1784.
- 52. Site of Ezra Clark Tavern** (206 Main St., near the Northampton line). Built in 1783, it was later a stopping place for soldiers of the War of 1812. It closed in 1861, became a private home, and burned to the ground in 1866.
- 53. Site of Ames District School** (Myrtle St.) After standing empty for some time where Ames Field is today, the school was torn down in 1958.
- 54. Site of W. H. Hayden Foundry** (between Route 9 and the river, near the old railroad bed). Established in 1824, operated by a series of owners, destroyed by the Mill River flood, and never rebuilt. A pen factory was once located here. Boland and Graves later purchased the property, where they manufactured tinware and stoves.
- 55. Site of a three-story hotel** (now the Sunoco station). The hotel was operated by E. G. Brown, then by Luther Loomis & Son, from 1844 until it was razed in 1939.
- 56. Haydenville Congregational Church** (143 Main St.). Greek Revival style, with a 150 foot spire when built in 1851 (later shortened to 110 feet for fear of lightning strikes). The rear addition served as a morgue after the Mill River Disaster in 1874.
- 57. Old Parsonage** (2 High St.). Built in 1859; now a private residence.
- 58. High Street Cemetery**. Given to the town in 1853 by Joel and Josiah Hayden, whose father had been buried there in 1847.
- 59. Former Maple Street School** (5 Maple St.). Just around the corner from an earlier school on Dansereau Road.
- 60. Childs Funeral Home** (14 Kingsley Avenue). A former pearl button factory owned over the years by several proprietors. It closed as a manufactory in 1946.
- 61. Site of Fairfield Tavern** (near the intersection of Hatfield Road and Main Street). Built in 1752 as the town's first frame building, in which one room served as the first public school. (Nowadays, taverns must be at least 500' from a public school.) In 1777, General Burgoyne's party dined under a spreading oak tree here, on the way to Boston after the Saratoga confrontation. The tavern closed in 1802, and its environs have been so altered in later years that its exact location can no longer be determined.
- 62. Brassworks site and building** (132 Main St.). Haydenville's first factory, a cotton mill, was built here by Daniel and David Hayden in 1809. Around 1820 Joel Hayden, James Congdon and others began manufacturing power looms and other machinery in it, and in 1828 they enlarged and partly converted it to the manufacture of buttons. The building burned in 1832 and was replaced in 1833, and was then wholly devoted to button-making until 1848. In 1851 Joel Hayden and partners began the production of brass plumbing fixtures. This business was very successful and grew rapidly, gaining a national reputation, but its plant was entirely lost in the Mill River Disaster of 1874. The Brassworks was rebuilt in 1876 and resumed operations under a series of managements. It closed in 1954. Today the renovated building houses a charter school, a creative arts center, and several studios and professional offices.
- 63. Josiah and Joel Hayden mansions** (127 and 129 Main St.). The Hayden brothers are credited with underwriting the industrial, cultural and religious beginnings of the village that bears their name. Joel Hayden, an outspoken abolitionist, served the State of Massachusetts as Lieutenant Governor from 1863 to 1866.
- 64. Haydenville Library** (136 Main St.). This was given to the town in 1900 by Anna Hayden, in memory of her brother Charles Hayden. It still serves the public.
- 65. Hillside Orchards** (4 S. Main St.). Some 3,000 apple trees covering the hill here once produced as many as 40,000 bushels of fruit a year. The orchard was planted by the Miller family, who first propagated the Baldwin apple. The old trees were cut down in the 1970s.
- 66. Hampshire Lodge of Masons** (1 So. Main St.). In 1876 Cyrus Miller, grandson of William John Miller, built this hall to replace one destroyed by the Mill River Disaster. It was given to the Masons in 1890.
- 67. Former George Ames Tin Shop** (9 So. Main St.); later Sheehan's store. An earlier store here was destroyed in the 1874 flood; this building replaced it.
- 68. Site of Chauncy Rice's Boot & Shoe Shop** (13 So. Main St., at corner of Bridge St.). Rice's daughter, serving as a Christian missionary, was slain in China during the Boxer Rebellion.
- 69. Haydenville Fire Station & Williamsburg Police Department** (16 So. Main St.). In past days the site of the Littleville & Morton Store, C. D. Walte's Store (1865), the Williamsburg Savings Bank, and the town offices (1954-87).
- 70. Site of the Hayden Cotton Mill** (40 S. Main St.). Built in 1847 and run by Hayden and Sanders until the dam which supplied its water power was destroyed by the Mill River Disaster. The Nonotuck (later Corticelli) Silk Company bought the building in 1886. In the 1940s the Noble Manufacturing Co. bought it to manufacture guns. It burned in 1962.
- 71. Site of Haydenville Gas Works** (South Main St., on the riverbank at the bridge). Established by the Haydens, it was lost in the Mill River Disaster and never rebuilt.
- 72. American Legion Hall** (Bridge St.). Built in 1905 by the Haydenville Club. It was later purchased by the town and named the Gerald E. Larkin American Legion Post, dedicated to the memory of the first hometown boy to lose his life during WWI.
- 73. Town Office Building** (141 Main St.). Built in 1859 as a high school and public meeting hall, it was later enlarged to serve as Haydenville's principal school. A plaque on the front lawn identifies Haydenville residents who died in the Mill River Disaster.
- 74. Skinnerville District School site** (87 Main St.). Skinnerville was a busy little factory village of many families until the flood of 1874 demolished it. Afterward, without the mill, the village's distinct identity gradually diminished.
- 75. Site of an early factory and the Unquomoonk Silk Mill** (Main St., Skinnerville). In 1832 Goodell and Lewis manufactured bibs, stocks, spoons, harness trimmings and faucets in a small mill here; other products replaced these under subsequent owners. William Skinner bought the site in 1854 and three years later built an 80-foot-long, three-story building in which he manufactured silk thread. The mill and the land it had stood on were washed away in the Mill River Disaster, and Skinner moved the business to Holyoke.
- 76. Site of Mill River Electric Co. power plant** (Main St., near Kellogg Road). Chartered in 1902, this coal-fired steam generator plant provided electricity to the town center. It was purchased by Northampton Electric Co. in 1933. The remains of its coal storage bins are still visible in some seasons beside the old railroad bed in back. William Skinner's mansion stood on this site before the Mill River Disaster.
- 77. Site of New York, New Haven & Hartford RR depot**, unburnable, and freight house (now Lashway Logging, on Route 9). An active passenger and freight line from about 1870 until 1962. Conceived as a vital link to wider markets for the town's factories, it had barely begun to operate when most of them were wiped out by the 1874 flood.
- 78. Site of Bisbee's grain store** (corner of Route 9 and Depot Rd.; now Harlow & Barretta Roofing). An important supplier to local farmers until it closed in 1962.

Original east boundary of Williamsburg. In 1771 the "district" of Williamsburg was created from the western part of Hatfield, with this line as its east boundary, and in 1775 Williamsburg became a Town. But the 1771 act of the Provincial legislature had also "annexed" to Williamsburg a list of individual property owners whose homes and farms lay east of the line, still geographically in Hatfield. The resulting ambiguity in their status must eventually have proved too cumbersome and annoying for the affected landowners and the two towns. In March 1845, at Williamsburg's request, the state legislature clarified matters, creating a new town boundary roughly along the ridgehine of Horse Mountain and placing those landowners and most of their property definitely in Williamsburg.



PLACES OF HISTORICAL INTEREST
IN THE TOWN OF
WILLIAMSBURG, MASSACHUSETTS
INCLUDING THE VILLAGES OF HAYDENVILLE, SKINNERVILLE AND SEARSVILLE