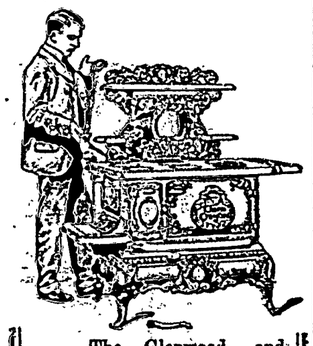
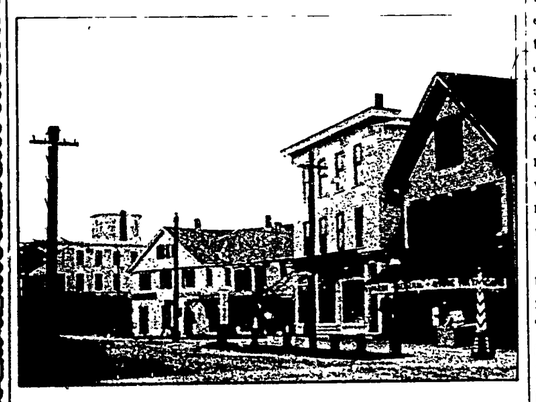


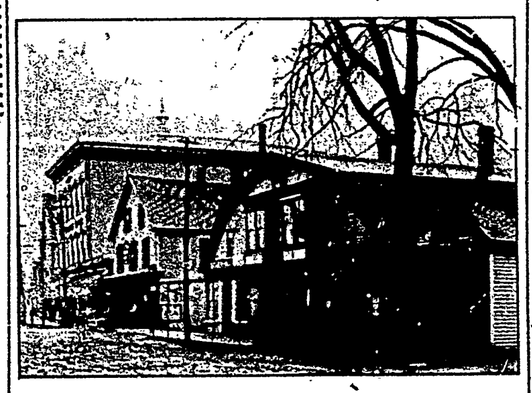
Early traders were Louis C. March who was the first town clerk, John W. Cookin and Jeremy Wingate. Mr. Duffer's history of Rochester has a brief sketch of early Farmington and records the following incident. About 1800 John Wingate, Esq., built a house and blacksmith shop where he carried on his trade. The shop stood on the corner of the street and the house on the Hiram Barker mansion was on a part of John Hamson's land back of the Roberts set. This was long noted as Wingate's Tavern where Squire Wingate dealt out justice and supplies for the hungry and thirsty. He was a staunch Federalist and a great admirer of General Washington. A branch of the Washington Benevolent Society held its meetings in a room which he had fitted up for the purpose. At one time a party of Democrats having imbibed rather freely, found this room and seeing the cabalistic letters W B S on the chairs, concluded they belonged to some accursed Federalist society. In their rage they were proceeding to demolish the chairs and hurl them through the windows, when the "Squire" suddenly appeared on the scene and persuaded them to desist by telling them all could see that W B S stood for Wingate's Best Seats.



WEST SIDE MAIN STREET, LOOKING SOUTH

In 1802 Lt. Anthony Peavey built a pound for which the town paid him $20. This old pound is still in very good condition, and is situated on the road running from the Lois Rand farm to the Ten Rod road.

From the time of its incorporation as a town Farmington progressed rapidly and the growth was a sure, healthy increase in population and wealth. In 1820 the village numbered fifteen frame dwellings, five stores, one mill, a tavern, and Mr. Elijah Badger was manufacturing shoes. Badger was the pioneer shoe manufacturer in this village that was destined to become the smartest shoe town in New Hampshire. We had attained some little eminence as a manufacturing centre before the war. That was in the days of brogans, before machinery had become perfected and when every farmer who would might take "stock" home and make it up. We are all prone to look back over the past and to speak of the good old days in a tone of regret, and who shall say that those carefree days before the war, when manufacturers did not worry over "orders," "specials" or any of the nerve-racking rush orders of today, were not the ideal days of our lives? Then every farm within a radius of a dozen miles was occupied and the owners were busy making shoes. All the ready money needed—and more—was thus earned and the farm was carried on at the same time.



EAST SIDE MAIN STREET, LOOKING NORTH.

But the rebellion changed all this and with the new condition of things the farmers were obliged to come into the village if they would continue in the shoe business. Our manufacturers, with few exceptions, had started on their own resources, which in most cases consisted of clear heads, strong bodies, plenty of determination and very little cash; and this change of conditions raised obstacles that men of less courage would have deemed insurmountable. Factories must be erected and filled with costly machinery, and few of our manufacturers were financially able to do this, but "where there's a will there's a way," and surely the business men of this village had the will.

So they set to work and by hook or crook secured the necessary backing. Factories were erected, unoccupied houses were converted into shops and filled with machinery, and in the place of a small country village comprising a few stores and dwellings strung along the main road, there sprang up a live, wide-awake hustling shoe town, full of life and filled with the busy hum of industry.

Save from the fact that Farmington has always been famous for its good housewives and fair women with mild dispositions, a second Rip Van Winkle might have climbed the wooded slopes of rugged old Caverly mountain, and after a snooze that would have been but a nap compared to the original's somnambulistic feat, looked down upon a scene as changed as the one that met the eye of Irving's hero. If the tooting of a dozen whistles had not molested this second Rip, his bump of curiosity would certainly have been aroused on waking, by the sight of huge volumes of smoke arising from a score of tall chimneys.

CENTRAL HOUSE, CENTRAL STREET

Dwellings were erected, new streets laid out and the demand for labor far exceeded the supply.

The story of our town's rise is so different in almost every respect from other New England villages, that when properly told the history of its growth seems marvelous and is extremely interesting. Unlike so many settlements throughout New England and even the whole Union may well be included in the comparison we had no great natural advantages. Such water powers as Dover, Somersworth, Milton, or the towers in the Merrimac [illegible] village. [illegible] at Manchester [illegible] largest in New Hampshire.

[illegible] are today. [illegible] the country [illegible] advantage [illegible] graphical [illegible] with either of these but the [illegible] handicap to be considered [illegible] by the character and indomitable will possessed by our early manufacturers. They were for the most part natives of the village or had been raised on the hard and rocky farms of the nearby towns. Not one of them but had his full share of hardship and nearly all were on intimate terms with Old Man Poverty himself. From early boyhood they had labored on the farm, and what education they had was obtained during the winter terms of school in these rural districts. And when they were old enough to go out in the world and work it is more than likely that a good share of their earnings went to help the folks struggling for an existence at home.

But the hardships that the boy and youth passed through schooled him to meet and overcome obstacles that might seem insurmountable to the young man of today. That Elijah Badger made a failure of shoe manufacturing before the year was out did not in the least deter Mr. Martin L. Hayes from starting in 1837 to manufacture shoes for himself, and he was shortly followed by G. M. Herring. J. L. Roberts was among the early manufacturers and he was succeeded by his brothers, George E. and Henry L. Roberts. Alonzo Nute and his brother, Jeremy O., formed a partnership about this time and they were followed by Luther Wentworth, H. B. Edgerly, Israel Hayes, N. T. Kimball and John L. Pratts, John H. Hurd, C. W. Thurston, George A. and Edwin F. Jones, E. C. Kinnear, John M. Berry, John F. Cloutman, A. E. Putnam, D. W. Kimball and others.

JONES FACTORY, MAIN STREET.

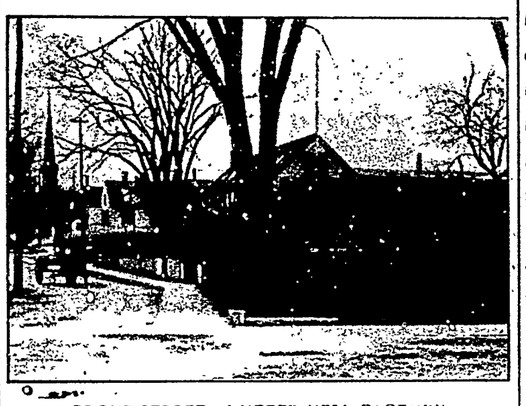
These manufacturers with hardly an exception were successful, and they labored early and late to achieve it. Perhaps no better description of our conditions as a community can be obtained than the following extract from the Boston Journal of June 15, 1859, evidently written by some sojourner in our village —

Farmington, N. H., June 14, 1859

Messrs. Editors: Supposing that a few facts from this locality would not go amiss, I am inclined to forward a few items. This village contains about three thousand inhabitants, principally engaged in shoe manufacturing. There are nine large establishments for this branch of business which turn out an extraordinary number of brogans in the course of a year. There is also a large sawmill in full operation.

Improvements are constantly being made in the surrounding lands; a number of new buildings are in course of erection, and with a continued run of the present activity in business, but a few years will elapse before Farmington will be ranked as one of the most thriving and prettiest villages in New Hampshire.

Like most places, however, which employ so much male help to the almost utter exclusion of females, the general society is exceedingly turbulent. Indeed, as a stranger coming into the place on Saturday evening, I thought I had happened into a strong community of roughs - one fight of the rough and tumble order, and a horse race, both almost directly in front of the hotel, being the first occurrences of note. Subsequent acquaintance, however, with the older and less migratory inhabitants has shown me the existence of a strata of society, if not exactly aristocratic, still quite creditable to a town of such democratic tendencies as Farmington.



GROVE STREET. NUTTER HEEL FACTORY

The place boasts of one hotel and that is kept by mine host Barnard, who is an excellent hotel conductor; he sets a neat, well-furnished table and keeps a number of good looking turnouts in the way of stylish carriages and fast horses.

There are two churches here in good circumstances, Baptist and Orthodox. The Baptist has for a preacher Rev. Mr. Cilley, and the Orthodox has Rev. Mr. Tappan; both men are worthy and possess the confidence and respect of all. There are fine choirs connected with these denominations, in one of which I recognized the pleasant face and sweet voice of Mrs. James E. Fernald, formerly Miss Laura Whitehouse, for a long time a resident teacher and singer in Dover, where she has a host of friends.

This communication is signed "Pocomus" and affords a fairly good idea of society as it existed in our village at that time. The revolution of business methods wrought by the war put an end to the excursion of females in the shoe business. Farmington did her full share in sending men to the front, and business felt severely the absence of so many fair laborers and manufacturers. However, the village did what shoe business it could under the circumstances.

But in spite of this adversity Farmington increased in population and continued to grow in importance as a shoe centre until 1875, the year of the great fire. Here is an account of that conflagration printed the Friday morning after its occurrence. This account is supposed to be from the pen of the Hon. John D. Lyman and is the most authentic account extant.

Friday morning, Feb. 12, 1875. Conflagration at Farmington. On Wednesday morning, a little before two o'clock, Farmington was visited by the most destructive fire ever in Strafford county. It broke out in the east part of the Eagle house, C. F. Nutter, proprietor. The fire [illegible] connected and the carriage house were soon [illegible]