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WILLIAM WILLIAMS: PIONEER PRINTER  
OF UTICA NEW YORK, 1787-1850

by

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Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia  
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WILLIAM WILLIAMS: PIONEER PRINTER OF UTICA, NEW YORK, 1787-1850

Paper Read before the Oneida Historical

Society of Utica, New York, February 12, 1951.

In 1800, when the boy William Williams migrated to Utica to serve as printer's apprentice, he found himself in a straggling village situated in a frontier region.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Utica had been incorporated as a village only two years before, and not long since had been little more than an Indian crossroads. When the young apprentice arrived, he walked along unpaved streets with boarded sidewalks. Actually there were but three roads, of which Genesee Street, where Williams was to settle, was a newly made causeway of bare logs with swamp and forest on both sides. The woods were celebrated as a hunting ground for squirrels, owls, and pigeons, but in the village itself there were less than two thousand inhabitants and ninety houses. Yet that small hamlet was shortly to become a printing center that could vie in production with the publishers' row of any great city.

Despite enormous difficulties, both in the manufacture and the distribution of books, this vigorous and vital printing activity was to manifest itself. The Canal would not be completed until 1825. Hence, to distribute newspapers, books, and pamphlets, colporteurs had to be sent out, and wagons and pack-horses hired.<sup>2</sup> The mails - and often the books, too - were carried in the pouch of the postrider, who announced his





arrival by the sounding of a long tin horn. The books themselves were printed on an old Ramage press with a short screw and lever, two pulls to the forme. While the printer's wife folded the sheets and stitched the pamphlets, his apprentice trampled pelts, cut wood, and made the fire in the printing office. Yet, for all these difficulties, there was an avid public for the books that rolled at length from the press with its worn and indifferent type; for the New England ancestors, as they moved west, had carried in one hand a Bible and in the other a spelling book. As the years passed, they would be eager for more and more books, and the hearty response to their demands, in Utica, would be owing in large measure to the activities of one great printer.

William Williams had been born in Framingham, Massachusetts, on October 12, 1787, the son of Susanna Dana and Thomas Williams of Roxbury.<sup>3</sup> His father had been one of the Roxbury minute men and had joined the Boston tea party, a man "distinguished for his suavity of manners, amiability of temper and exemplary piety."<sup>4</sup> With his father's family, young William had migrated to New Hartford, whence he removed to Utica. First as apprentice to William McClean, and later to his brother-in-law, Asahel Seward, who had in turn been apprenticed to Isaiah Thomas, the boy was to develop not only his "stiff handwriting at the printing office,"<sup>5</sup> but his versatile accomplishments in the trade. As a master printer he eventually set type, ran the hand press, worked as a practical bookbinder, manufactured paper, wrote editorials, and engraved notes and woodcuts to illustrate his letterpress.

By 1807, when Williams was twenty years old, his capabilities were rewarded when he was taken into partnership with Asahel Seward.<sup>6</sup> At the office, one door east of the Coffee House on Genesee Street, Williams



soon became the master of other apprentices and journeymen also, among them Henry Ivison,<sup>7</sup> destined to be the head of one of the largest school-book publishing houses in the world, and Thurlow Weed, who was to recall how Williams

put a composing stick in my hand, placed some copy before me, and in an encouraging way remarked that he would see what I could do. When he returned two or three hours afterwards, he read over the matter that I had been "setting up," and remarked kindly that I could go with the other boys to supper. I was therefore at work in the office and domiciled in the house of a gentleman ... who became and ever remained my warm friend, and for whose memory I cherish a grateful remembrance.<sup>8</sup>

The partnership between Seward and Williams terminated in 1824, with Seward's withdrawal,<sup>9</sup> but both before and after that date, Williams exhibited such a many-faceted skill in book production that Utica could boast itself one of the liveliest publishing centers in the state.

Williams' career, both in partnership under the firm name of Seward and Williams, and alone, ran along four different lines, all of them fused and integrated. He was a publisher of books; he was a newspaper proprietor; he was a bookseller; and finally, he was an active and productive citizen. The thread that unified these varied activities was, indeed, Williams' social consciousness as a citizen. Captain of a company of volunteers in the War of 1812, he was to become brigade major and then colonel on the staff of General Oliver Collins in 1813 during the Sacketts Harbor incident.<sup>10</sup> With Thurlow Weed, he left for the "front" in a sleigh and remained there most of the time until July 1814. Eighteen years later, when the village was stricken with an epidemic of cholera, Williams was still on hand to attend the sick "with such entire disregard of comfort and safety, that he narrowly escaped with his life having himself suffered an attack."<sup>11</sup>





Between those two events, during years that called for less heroic but no less creative efforts, Williams served his community well. For its religious needs, he acted as elder of the First Presbyterian Church, instructor in the Bible Class, and superintendent of the Sunday School. To advance the educational demands of a growing frontier settlement, Williams served as president of the Western Education Society and director of the Utica Library. To give an impetus to other local community requirements, he became village trustee, a stirring member of the fire department, and delegate to political conventions at which he evinced his Federalist-Clintonian inclinations or his championship of anti-masonry. Incidentally, Williams was naturally on the reception committee that welcomed Lafayette to Utica, and "the unbuilt miry road which had recently been laid in front of the Williams house received the name of the distinguished French visitor."<sup>12</sup>

This vital and active public career was reflected in the books that bore the imprint of Seward and Williams and later of William Williams alone.<sup>13</sup> The printer's church interests naturally led him to undertake the publication of numerous religious works that could be used by local pastors and Sunday Schools. It was said that "when a stray clergyman turns up in Utica with a manuscript, he instinctively goes to William Williams."<sup>14</sup> The first edition of the Devereux Testament, so-called because Nicholas Devereux of Utica owned the stereotype plates from which the volume was printed, appeared under his imprint, along with several other Bibles and New Testaments. For the sermons delivered by the pastor of the First Church of Clinton or of Onondaga, or by the first president of Hamilton College, Williams was the most likely publisher, as well as for that pathetic Farewell sermon, to the First



Presbyterian Church on the occasion of the dismissal of their pastor, who had for some months, by the weakness of his voice, been unable to discharge the duties of his office. And to his list of Bibles and sermons, he added an assortment of plums for the benefit of clergy, from Discourses on the Temptations of Christ to a Defense of the Trinitarian System, from a Young Christians' Guide to a Brief History of the First Presbyterian Church ... in Utica, of which Williams was elder.

Just as he combined his church activities with his trade as publisher, Williams reflected his educational interests in the books that rolled from his press. From Noah Webster his firm purchased the right to publish the Elementary Spelling Book in the Western District of New York, and for many years that work not only afforded them an annual income of \$2000,<sup>15</sup> but at the same time supplied the schoolbook needs of a frontier settlement. Other books bearing the Williams imprint helped develop the community's educational enterprises also: Murray's English Reader, Hull's Spelling Book, the New England Primer, Thayer's Geography, a school Bible - the last in press because the "increasing demand, in this section of the country, and west of it, for the Testament as a School Book, has induced the proprietor to procure standing forms, of new letter, from the Cambridge stereotype edition."<sup>16</sup> Since he could not stereotype in Utica, Williams was not averse to spending months in Ohio to produce stereotype editions of his publications.<sup>17</sup> All these educational books, including the Hamilton College catalogues and, characteristically, the catalogue of the Utica School District Library, were "calculated to improve the minds and refine the taste of youth" at a period when schoolhouse and printing press had followed in the wake of farmer and pioneer.





Williams' publication of an Iroquois speller and a Hawaiian grammar bears direct evidence of how the printer combined his religious and educational interests. The spread of the Gospel among the Indian tribes led to the demand for books printed in Mohawk and Choctaw, and Williams served also as an accredited agent of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In this capacity he undertook the interesting task of printing the Missionary Herald in an edition for upstate New York. The December 1822 number contains a revealing statement regarding this Utica edition:

On account of difficulties and delays, which have been experienced in transporting our work to subscribers in the western part of New-York, and the adjacent regions, an agreement has been made with Mr. William Williams, of Utica, N. Y. to reprint, from sheets forwarded to him from Boston, so many copies, as shall be necessary to supply the counties, and other sections ... the work will generally come into the hands of our western subscribers sooner than it does at present, and, in most cases, with less expense of postage.<sup>18</sup>

Farther afield, the Hawaiian Mission Press profited from Williams' labors. It was in the office of Seward and Williams that Elisha Loomis, the missionary printer, met his wife, who folded in the bindery. When, in 1827, Loomis returned from the Sandwich Islands to get certain tracts printed more expertly than was possible in Honolulu, he wrote to Levi Chamberlain of the Hawaiian Mission about the arrangements he had made, adding, "I engaged Wm. Williams of Utica to print 20,000 copies of each [of two tracts]. The cost of paper, printing, and folding of these was \$200, but Mr. Williams had made a donation of the whole, to the Board."<sup>19</sup> Loomis' great-granddaughter visited Honolulu in 1936 and, mentioning the firm of Seward and Williams to the librarian of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, heard the response, "Oh, that must have been the Mr.



Williams who did so much for the Mission by printing free of charge a large number of its pamphlets!"

Once the basic needs of school and church had been supplied, Williams could branch out into the publication of more general instructional works that would be useful in a pioneer region. For the tradesman, he undertook a Domestic manufacturer's assistant, and family directory in the arts of weaving and dyeing, or an Artist and tradesman's guide. For the legal requirements of the community, he published a report of a case in chancery or a judge's opinion on a local trial. Nor did Williams neglect the lighter side of his trade. For the children, he produced juveniles, such as Mrs. Sherwood's History of little Henry; for the musical, his imprint appeared upon a variety of Ganuts, Preceptors for fife and violin, and Flute Melodies, as well as the Musica Sacra of Thomas Hastings, who had come to Utica in 1797 to lead the church music and had written the hymn, "Rock of Ages," there. For the literary, Williams undertook such intriguing titles as Escalala: an American Tale; Purraul of Lum Sing; or, the missionary & the mountain chiefs: by an officer of the Madras army; and the Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell in an edition which would "have the preference to preceding editions, it being printed from a copy lately received from India, with corrections and additions by the Rev. Samuel Newell."<sup>20</sup>

None of the works bearing the Williams imprint indicates so clearly his interest in the local citizenry as the books he published for various county societies. He was the perfect candidate for issuing addresses delivered before the Oneida Agricultural Society and the Utica Temperance Society, or the tracts of the Tract Society of the Oneida Association. To him, the Oneida Medical Society, the Maternal Association of Utica,





the Oneida Bible Society, the Oneida Institute of Science and Industry, and the Western Education Society naturally turned when they wished a publisher for their reports and discourses.

Still other works of purely local interest rolled from the Williams press. When Alexander B. Johnson, the Utica banker, delivered an Independence Day oration in the village, or when John Sherman wrote a description of Trenton Falls in Oneida County, Williams, as a matter of course, published their effusions. To Maynard's Speech on the bill for the construction of the Chenango canal and Beach's Considerations on the great Canal, this prolific and versatile publisher added his own Tourist's Map of the State of New York as well as his Stage, Canal, and Steamboat Register. Of all these local works, the most interesting both from the historical and the antiquarian points of view, is the Utica Directory of 1817, the first directory of the village as well as the first book bearing the name of Williams alone as printer. Included in the Directory, with its street addresses and Utica census, is an almanac. By 1817, Williams had had copious experience in the publication of almanacs, for the imprint of Seward and Williams had appeared on the Farmers' Calendar; or, Utica Almanack for many years, and later on, Williams was to issue Williams' Calendar; or, the Utica Almanack. Like most of the almanacs published by upstate New York printers, Williams' offered "a great variety of useful and entertaining pieces," including instructions for whitewashing fruit trees, anecdotes on rustic shrewdness, and versified warnings to the drunkard to "spurn the treacherous bowl," advice from which the thrifty citizenry doubtless profited.

They profited also from Williams' political views, which might be reflected in such a work as Bernard's Light on Masonry, appearing at a



time when popular indignation rose high after the abduction of William Morgan.<sup>21</sup> A far more satisfactory medium, for the dissemination of news as well as of political opinion, was, however, the newspaper, and of this William Williams was well aware. In his Farmers' Calendar he had announced that the word NEWS was derived from the four cardinal points of the compass marked with the letters N. E. W. S.,<sup>22</sup> and in his experience as newspaper proprietor he had and would continue to have ample opportunity to apply the great powers of a free press. In all his activities, Williams worked with a large hand. By far the most prolific publisher outside the largest cities, he could boast an annual output of from six to twenty titles, in four years issuing fifty-one books and pamphlets, and after 1821 publishing one hundred thirty works, ranging from a Welsh hymn book to tracts in Choctaw. This same generous "whole-sale" spirit Williams evinced in his proprietorship of newspapers.<sup>23</sup> Between 1814 and 1834, his name was connected with seven periodicals, from the Utica Club to The Elucidator, in all of which he could write editorials on canals or railroads or slavery, on the colonization of free blacks in Haiti or the People's Party vs. the Regency. Perhaps the most interesting of the newspapers with which he was associated was The Patrol, which later became the Clintonian Patriot, & Patrol. The first issue of January 5, 1815, contains a statement of purpose and policy:

Various considerations have induced the Publishers to undertake the publication of a newspaper.

Among the most prominent of these considerations, are the growing wealth of the village and its vicinity, the increased importance of its local situation, arising from the peculiar state of political affairs, and the advantages which will necessarily arise to the community from a more





frequent communication of the occurrences of public transactions than the present sources of information afford.<sup>24</sup>

Important news was promised, along with biographical sketches of distinguished characters; the proprietors would not be unmindful of agricultural and manufacturing interests, nor would they "neglect the muses." Party politics would be excluded. "We choose rather to extinguish than fan the coals of political contention."

Yet political affairs themselves were not excluded. In the Patriot & Patrol, distributed by one Mr. Parkhurst and other postriders, subscribers could find, for example, a strikingly prophetic article on the Power of Russia, along with news of the death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, and the "Latest" from France, carried via a New York communication nearly three weeks old.<sup>25</sup>

When the Patriot & Patrol was abandoned, the Utica Sentinel took its place, and there, too, "the interesting crisis of our public affairs"<sup>26</sup> could be reflected, as well as in the anti-masonic Elucidator, which Williams undertook in 1830. Indeed, when the latter was transferred to Williams, the Oneida Observer announced that the "Messrs. Northway & Porter, finding that the Sentinel and Elucidator, like the Kilkenny cats, were in a fair way to destroy each other, if both were longer kept in their possession, have transferred their half of the latter establishment to Mr. Wm. Williams."<sup>27</sup>

In all these newspapers, William Williams found the opportunity not only for grinding his political axe and advancing the public welfare according to his lights, but also for the more practical advertising of his own wares. Williams was not only the public-spirited citizen who plied a trade as printer-publisher and newspaper proprietor, but he was



also the bookseller of 60 Genesee Street. By 1820, his bookselling establishment was the largest in the state west of Albany. As the years passed, Genesee Street,<sup>28</sup> with its mantuamaker's establishment, its Utica Fashionable Clothing Emporium, its Looking-Glass Factory, its Yellow Store, and Peale's Utica Museum, became notable for the stand at No. 60. The bookstore<sup>29</sup> on the ground floor was topped by a bindery, where ladies stitched and thousands of sheepskins or bark tanned skins were piled high, along with tons of sizing. On the third story the printing office flourished, and there apprentices might be seen pushing the hand roller over the forms on the press, washing the rollers, or carrying wood and water. The activity on the second and third stories was matched by that on the ground floor, where the bookstore offered its varied attractions. There, Williams, the proprietor, a figure of noble presence and winning manners, his clear dark eye beaming upon his patrons,<sup>30</sup> might be seen extending the hospitality of his establishment to those who came in search of books.

The needs of almost every profession could be met at No. 60 Genesee Street.<sup>31</sup> If Montgomery Bartlett wandered there in quest of suitable reading matter for his Young Ladies School on Bleecker Street, or if the Rev. William Weeks wished to find texts for the Clinton Grammar School of which he was in charge, the search was sure to be rewarded at No. 60. For the Utica Academy or the Clinton Liberal Institute or Hamilton College, William Williams offered a variety of schoolbooks and instructional works, and had on hand such quantities of each that none need go without. His bookstore housed 10,000 copies of a School Testament, 8,000 of Murray's English Grammar, 2,000 of Thayer's Geography, 2,000 American Preceptors, as well as hundreds of copies of Starkweather's Arithmetic. There were,





in addition, Greek Lexicons, or Crabb's English Synonymes, The Cabinet History of England, Scotland, and Ireland, or Familiar Lectures on Botany by Mrs. Almira H. Lincoln, Vice-President of the Troy Female Seminary. From Peter Parley's Geography to Gillie's History of Ancient Greece, books were available for all who would teach and all who would learn, at prices ranging from a few cents up to \$24 for a nine-volume Universal History.

Williams catered to the legal profession as well, and there is little doubt that such Utica lawyers as William Maynard, Ezekiel Bacon, or Samuel Beardsley were on hand when a case of new law books arrived at No. 60. There they could browse to their hearts' content, thumbing the leaves of Starkie on Evidence, or Jeremy's Equity, of Hoffman's Legal Outlines or a set of the Revised Laws of New York.

For the physicians of Utica - Alexander Coventry or William Watson - indeed for the entire Medical Society of Oneida, the proprietor offered an assortment of works on Remittent or Intermittent Diseases, on Practical Obstetrics, or Diseases of the Skin, not to omit one important item entitled Bell on the Teeth, with plates.

The Utica pastors, whether they served the First Presbyterian Church, like Samuel C. Aikin, or the Universalist Society, like John Samuel Thompson; whether they represented the Oneida Bible Society or the Tabernacle Baptist Church, found on the shelves of 60 Genesee Street enough Bibles and Testaments to answer the needs of their flocks, and surely one of them picked up a copy of the Antidote to the Miseries of Human Life which sold at the nominal price of thirty-one cents.

For so small a village, Utica could boast a comparatively large number of musicians, and for them, too, the bookstore of William Williams



had many attractions. William Whitely, who made musical instruments, and George Dutton, who ran a music store in Utica, doubtless enjoyed browsing among the Musical Readers and Instrumental Preceptors on hand, while Ebenezer Leach, who taught flute playing, could examine the hundreds of Flute and Fife Preceptors on the shelves. The Oneida Musical Society need wander no farther afield for its supplies, for Williams could offer 3,000 Gamuts for singing schools, along with hundreds of copies of the Musica Sacra.

Nor were the ladies and children neglected. For the latter, No. 60 Genesee Street had assembled 10,000 assorted toy and picture books, as well as 5,000 chapbooks, while the ladies could enjoy such varied works as Rob Roy, Manners, a Novel, Godwin's Mandeville, or Tales of Wonder, of Humour and of Sentiment, by Anne and Annabella Plumptre. The titles alone were enticing: Rosabella, or a Mother's Marriage; Sea Serpent; the Bower of Spring; the Balance of Comfort, or Old Maid and Married Woman. And, of course, no shelves would have been complete without being graced with Lord Byron's Siege of Corinth, Moore's Lalla Rookh, and Cooper's Novels.

For all his varied customers, William Williams offered astute techniques of salesmanship. He was, as he advertised, "constantly receiving new supplies of Books, Stationary [sic], &c. which would enable him to supply orders for Books and articles in his line, in general use, with facility and on good terms."<sup>32</sup> The terms were good indeed. Library companies, merchants and town libraries were offered special inducements. Bible Societies were furnished with Bibles at sixty-four cents a copy, and the initials of the Society were marked on the same, gratis. When books were received from New York or Baltimore, they were offered for





sale "on as reasonable terms as they could be had elsewhere in the state."<sup>33</sup> Books in quantities were of course sold wholesale, and besides advertising his wares in the newspapers of which he was proprietor, Williams also issued catalogues in pamphlet form "for gratuitous distribution."<sup>34</sup> He purchased books with the same acumen he used in selling them, a fact to which one of his letters to the Philadelphia firm of McCarty and Davis<sup>35</sup> bears witness:

Far be it from me to blame you for doing as well as you can with your own books, but at the same time, if you do not furnish them to me on as good terms as your neighbors, it will be for my interest to trade with them, and thereby you might fail in disposing of some of your books ... I shall never wish you to take an article of me that is not good, that is that will not sell, for the goodness of a book with book sellers depends upon its sale, and what may be good at Utica is not of course good at Philadelphia.

Another letter to the same concern<sup>36</sup> indicates the unusual difficulties Williams occasionally faced in shipping his books from the comparatively remote location of Utica:

Your letter of inquiry respecting the Box of Books was duly received. Business having called me to this City [Albany] I have enquired of my Agent here, and find the vessel containing two boxes from me for yourselves and Grigg ran aground near Hudson and was there frozen in. The weather is now so mild that there is reason to hope they will get afloat soon. The accident has no doubt produced a serious disappointment to you, and is much regretted on my part, as these delays, from whatever cause, are calculated to prejudice you against dealing with a person at so remote a distance.

I trust you will make all due allowance for an accident entirely beyond my control.

In addition to handling books and shipping them to remote distances, Williams was the agent for a variety of periodical works, from the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews to Niles' Weekly Register, from the



North American Review to the Library of Useful Knowledge, soliciting in their behalf the "patronage of an enlightened and liberal public."<sup>37</sup> There were few aspects of his trade as bookseller that Williams had not mastered.

Besides the many thousands of books that flowed in and out of No. 60 Genesee Street, there were numerous other attractions for the public.<sup>38</sup> Williams kept on hand a supply of 12,000 Holland Quills, selling at from twelve shillings to \$40 a thousand, along with hundreds of reams of foolscap writing paper priced at from \$3.25 to \$6 a ream. He offered a variety of fine and common wafers, as well as fancy and billet papers. There was, indeed, little that No. 60 did not keep on hand, from tinted paper albums, "elegantly bound," to clean linen rags from Rome and Hamburg. To complete his services, Williams also acted as agent for the New York type and stereotype founders, William Hagar & Company, and for the patent printing presses of Robert Hoe & Company. He kept constantly on sale, at reduced prices, news and book ink, and, besides the kegs of printing ink, his extensive stock included a general assortment of small fancy and job type, cuts and ornaments, brass rules, composing sticks, and chases.

Not content with being merely a printer-publisher-newspaper proprietor-and-bookseller, William Williams was also an engraver, and had associated himself with the firm of Balch and Stiles, who issued maps and bank notes for Utica and some western banks. Under the firm name of Balch, Stiles & Company, they advertised that they would "receive and execute orders for Bank Bill and other kinds of engraving, on the shortest notice,"<sup>39</sup> together with copper plate printing of every description. In 1831, orders for all but the bank bill engraving were executed at No. 60





Genesee Street. Just the year before, Williams had also opened a commission paper warehouse in Utica, where he offered to "receive on sale, and make liberal advances on consignments of merchantable Printing, Writing, and Wrapping Paper ... Bonnet Board, and Press Papers."<sup>40</sup>

It may have been that William Williams had too many irons in the literary fire, although in those days before specialization and division of labor, it was more or less customary for a printer in a small community to publish books, sell them, and own a newspaper in which he could advertise them. It may have been that the Panic of 1837 was already casting its shadows before, or it may have been a combination of Williams' many-faceted career and the fore-warning of national economic depression. At any rate, by 1833, Williams was suffering financial reverses which could be attributed to a few more specific causes.<sup>41</sup> He had been endorsing notes for others;<sup>42</sup> his anti-masonic Elucidator detracted from his revenues; and an edition of the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, begun years before in connection with J. and E. Parker of Philadelphia, brought a heavy loss to its publishers. In 1834, there were two sheriff's sales of Williams' stock, after which his creditors ran the business under his name, retaining him as manager, until 1836.

In that year, Williams removed to Tonawanda to take charge of some lumber interests for his friends, but anxiety about his Utica book business continued to pursue him, as a privately owned letter, dated Tonawanda, May 9, 1837, indicates:

I would close the store [in Utica] at once, were it not that my binder and clerk would have to seek other employ, and the establishment could not readily be resuscitated [sic]. If the Tracys would have paid me one half of the real value of Musica Sacra copyright I should have sold my lease and given up the idea of again going into the Bookselling business.



As it is, I cannot but hope a way may be opened by which I can consistently resume it. Unless this can be done as early as next fall it will be economy to shut up at once, for ... the broken assortment now on hand will not defray expenses.<sup>43</sup>

In 1840, all his Utica affairs were closed out by his creditors; the famous bookstore and printing house of No. 60 Genesee Street were disposed of; and the stirring activities of the celebrated Utica printer-publisher-bookseller had become annals for the historian.

The next year, Williams was thrown from the top of a stage coach when it overturned,<sup>44</sup> and as a result of the injuries he sustained, he suffered from a mental disorder. Early in that year he had written pathetically, "I now pay \$2 a week for my board ... have no money worth naming."<sup>45</sup> After that accident he failed constantly and was completely separated from society. On June 10, 1850, in his sixty-third year, he died in Utica, where he had returned.

By that year, the population of the village had increased to over 17,000. The Utica and Schenectady Railroad Company had long since been incorporated, and the Chenango Canal completed. There is no doubt that the community owed a great part of its development, not only to those who had come with axe and plow, but to the printer whose tool had been the composing stick. It was the printer, who, with books and newsprint, had advanced the communication of ideas, without which no other form of communication was possible. And it was one printer, in particular, one whose social consciousness had motivated his every undertaking, who had cleared the ground and planted the seed for the expansion of a small community. Thurlow Weed wrote, after the death of William Williams, that "as a citizen, he was public spirited beyond his means; his counsel, his





exertions, and his purse were ever at the service of any enterprise calculated to benefit the place."<sup>46</sup> The place - and the nation, too - were benefited by William Williams, the master printer, who, armed with type and composing stick, had paid a larger debt than he owned not only to his trade, but to his country.

Madeleine B. Stern

New York City



## NOTES

1. For Utica during this period, see A Bibliography of the History and Life of Utica (Utica, 1932), 5, 139, 229 (Courtesy Alice C. Dodge, Utica Public Library); W. Freeman Galpin, Central New York (New York, [1941]), II, 327; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, Thurlow Weed, Wizard of the Lobby (Boston, 1947), 8; [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," Albany Evening Journal, June 12, 1850; "William Williams," DAB.
2. For early methods of printing and book distribution, see A Bibliography ... of Utica, op. cit., 139; The Centennial History of Chautauqua County (Jamestown, N. Y., 1904), II, 96; Harriet A. Weed, ed., Autobiography of Thurlow Weed (Boston, 1883), I, 22; John Camp Williams, An Oneida County Printer, William Williams (New York, 1906), xxii-xxiii.
3. For Williams' early life and apprenticeship as a printer, see M. M. Bagg, ed., Memorial History of Utica, N. Y. (Syracuse, 1892), 76; Milton W. Hamilton, The Country Printer New York State, 1785-1830 (New York, 1936), 308; Hon. Ellis H. Roberts, "Chief of Our Early Printers," Utica Daily Press, January 12, 1907, (Courtesy Alice C. Dodge, Utica Public Library); [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," op. cit.; George Huntington Williams, "The Genealogy of Thomas Williams of New Hartford, Oneida County, N. Y.," The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register (Boston, 1880), XXXIV, 72; John Camp Williams, op. cit., 13-14; "William Williams," DAB.
4. Utica Patriot, & Patrol, August 5, 1817, p. 3.
5. Hamilton, op. cit., 34.
6. For the Seward-Williams partnership, see Henry J. Cookinham, History of Oneida County New York (Chicago, 1912), I, 283; Roberts, op. cit.; [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," op. cit.; John Camp Williams, op. cit., 25.
7. Bagg, ed., Memorial History of Utica, op. cit., 164-5; James C. Derby, Fifty Years among Authors, Books and Publishers (New York, 1884), 50-1. Williams found an Auburn opening for Ivison and purchased his first stock for him.
8. Harriet A. Weed, ed., Autobiography of Thurlow Weed, op. cit., I, 25-6.
9. Bagg, op. cit., 76.





10. For Williams' activities in the War of 1812, the cholera epidemic, and his general services to the community, see Bagg, op. cit., 77; M. M. Bagg, The Pioneers of Utica (Utica, 1877), 165-6; A Bibliography ... of Utica, op. cit., 75; Franklin B. Hough, American Biographical Notes (Albany, 1875), 429; Roberts, op. cit.; Daniel E. Wager, Our County and Its People a Descriptive Work on Oneida County New York (Boston, 1896), 301; Harriet A. Weed, ed., Autobiography of Thurlow Weed, op. cit., I, 26; [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," op. cit.; George Huntington Williams, "The Genealogy of Thomas Williams of New Hartford," op. cit., 72; John Camp Williams, op. cit., xxiv-xxv; "William Williams," DAB.
11. [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," op. cit.
12. Elizabeth Dunbar, Talcott Williams (n.p., c. 1936), 19.
13. For the books published by Seward and Williams, and William Williams, in various fields, see, besides the works themselves, Advertisements of Williams' publications in Utica Patriot, & Patrol, January 21, 1818, p. 3, and September 2, 1817, p. 3; Bagg, The Pioneers of Utica, op. cit., 165; A Bibliography ... of Utica, op. cit., 204 ff; Cookinham, op. cit., I, 283; Joseph Gavit's additions to Utica imprints (Courtesy Laura A. Greene, New York State Library); E. B. O'Callaghan, A List of Editions of the Holy Scriptures ... Printed in America Previous to 1860 (Albany, 1861), passim; Roberts, op. cit.; Alexander J. Wall, A List of New York Almanacs 1694-1850 (New York, 1921), passim (Copy at New York Historical Society contains Joseph Gavit's additions); J. C. Williams, op. cit., xviii-xix and passim; Rev. John Wright, Early Bibles of America (New York, 1894), 364.
14. Dunbar, op. cit., 19.
15. Bagg, Memorial History of Utica, op. cit., 76; Hamilton, op. cit., 78.
16. Utica Patriot, & Patrol, September 2, 1817, p. 3.
17. Dunbar, op. cit., 20.
18. The Missionary Herald XVIII:12 (December 1822), 400. See also Dunbar, op. cit., 19. For this phase of Williams' activities, the writer is indebted to information from Mary A. Walker, Librarian, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.
19. Information from Albertine Loomis, Detroit, Michigan, great-granddaughter of Elisha Loomis. For this phase of Williams' activities, the writer is also indebted to Robert E. Moody of Rushville, N. Y. See also Howard M. Ballou and George R. Carter, "The History of the Hawaiian Mission Press," Papers of the Hawaiian Historical Society (Honolulu, 1908), No. 14, p. 26. Williams bequeathed this interest to his son, the Rev. S. Wells Williams, who went to China as a missionary printer.



20. Utica Patriot, & Patrol, February 10, 1818, p. 3.
21. Williams was, in fact, accused by his opponents of "reaping a rich reward from the printing and selling of Anti-masonic books." See Oneida Observer, February 23, 1830.
22. In The Farmers' Calendar, or Utica Almanack, For ... 1825.
23. For the newspapers and periodicals published by Williams, see, besides the papers themselves, Bagg, Memorial History of Utica, op. cit., 477 ff; Bibliography ... of Utica, op. cit., 38, 41; Clarence S. Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers 1690-1820 (Worcester, 1947), I, 748-50, 752; [S. W. Durant], History of Oneida County, New York (Philadelphia, 1878), 302; Hamilton, op. cit., 149, 308; Wager, op. cit., 353; J. C. Williams, op. cit., 97.
24. The Patrol, January 5, 1815, p. 2.
25. See Utica Patriot, & Patrol, January 13, 1818, p. 2-3.
26. The Patrol, December 25, 1815, p. 1.
27. Oneida Observer, February 23, 1830.
28. For the establishments on Genesee Street, see Utica Directory for 1828.
29. J. C. Williams, op. cit., 153-4. The copy of a statement of real estate owned by William Williams, dated February 27, 1834 (Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. E. Frank Evans of Rome, N. Y.), indicates that by that date Williams also owned a bindery on Main and First Street. In the statement the inventory of his bindery is given as \$10,772; of his printing office as \$7,422; of his store as \$22, 982.
30. Williams is described in Bagg, The Pioneers of Utica, op. cit., 166-7.
31. For the books sold at 60 Genesee Street, see Williams' advertisements in Utica Patriot, & Patrol, September 2, 1817, p. 3; January 6, 1818, p. 3; January 21, 1818, p. 3; February 10, 1818, p. 3; April 7, 1818, p. 3; April 14, 1818, p. 3; April 20, 1819, p. 1; and in The Elucidator, February 16, 1830, p. 3; July 20, 1830, p. 4; September 7, 1830, p. 4; September 11, 1830, p. 3.
32. The Elucidator, July 20, 1830, p. 4. For Williams' selling techniques, inducements to buyers, and his agencies, see also Utica Patriot, & Patrol, January 6, 1818, p. 3; April 14, 1818, p. 3; October 27, 1818, p. 2; Utica Sentinel, December 28, 1824, p. 1.
33. Utica Patriot, & Patrol, January 6, 1818, p. 3.
34. Ibid., October 27, 1818, p. 2.



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35. William Williams to McCarty & Davis, Philadelphia, June 26, 1818. In McCarty-Davis Collection, IV, 572, American Antiquarian Society. For this letter, as well as for numerous other aids in the preparation of this paper, the writer is indebted to Dr. Clarence S. Brigham.
36. William Williams to McCarty & Davis, Albany, January 26, 1825. In McCarty-Davis Collection, IX, 470, American Antiquarian Society (Courtesy Dr. Clarence S. Brigham):
37. The Elucidator, February 16, 1830, p. 3.
38. For Williams' trade in paper, type, and ink, see Utica Patriot, & Patrol, January 6, 1818, p. 3; The Elucidator, February 16, 1830, p. 3; April 20, 1830, p. 4; July 20, 1830, p. 4; August 23, 1831, p. 4.
39. The Elucidator, April 12, 1831, p. 4.
40. Ibid., February 16, 1830, p. 3.
41. For Williams' financial reverses, decline, and death, see Bagg, The Pioneers of Utica, op. cit., 165; Cookinham, op. cit., I, 283; Roberts, op. cit.; [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," op. cit.; George Huntington Williams, op. cit., 72; John Camp Williams, op. cit., 156, 159; "William Williams", DAB.
42. For example, Pell & Brother, and Collins & Hannay. See William Williams to Henry Huntington, Utica, March 6, 1834, letter owned by Mr. and Mrs. E. Frank Evans of Rome, N. Y.
43. William Williams to Henry Huntington, Tonawanda, May 9, 1837, letter owned by Mr. and Mrs. E. Frank Evans of Rome, N. Y.
44. A letter from William Williams to Henry Huntington, Buffalo, April 14, 1841 (Courtesy Mr. and Mrs. E. Frank Evans) describes the accident in detail: "... we went over with great force. I was thrown through the window ... I was so much stunded [sic] as not to be able to know where I was ..."
45. Roberts, op. cit.
46. [Thurlow Weed], "Death of Col. William Williams," op. cit.

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