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WILLIAMS STATIONARY STORE  
112 West Main St.

1855-1977

One of the very few remaining commercial buildings in Grass Valley that was never burned out or rebuilt since the early 1850's is the Williams Stationary Store on Main Street. With the help of the present owners, Helen and Elton Williams, and of historian Lyle White, we can trace the stories of the merchants who operated the business during the span of 122 years.

According to Bean's History of Nevada County (1867), this was the first brick store building erected in Grass Valley. Henry Silvester and Abraham Salaman, Jewish pioneer merchants, built it in partnership in the latter part of 1854. However, the Grass Valley "Telegraph" of July 3, 1855 describes this historic building as follows: "Silvester's new fireproof building is now in progress of erection on Main St. and is rapidly approaching completion. The side and rear walls are of fieldstone, the front is to be of brick. This building, when completed, will form a very substantial fire wall against the progress of fire on that side of the street." Hence the building should date from 1855.

Fire was one of the most dreaded calamities of that period, and Grass Valley had its share. The worst fire occurred in September 1855. In one night over 300 buildings were swept away. In the business portion, only 2 structures escaped, one was Silvester and Salaman's new store and the other, a block of 3 stores just completed on Mill Street.

The Silvester store was operated as a grocery during this early period. In 1862 Salaman sold his interest in the building and the business to Silvester. At about this same time Henry Fuchs entered the picture. The Nevada County Mining Review of 1895 gives a brief resume of the store's history and of its proprietor: "A well-regulated grocery store, where goods can be purchased at the lowest prices for cash, is a prime necessity in every community. The grocery business of H.J. Fuchs, on Main Street, is one of the oldest established business houses in the city, having been conducted for many years by Henry Silvester. Mr. Fuchs is a native of Bavaria, Germany, and was born in 1838. He came to California in 1857, and a year later took up his residence in Grass Valley. He worked in wagon-making and mining for a year or so and afterwards engaged in the butcher business for a short period. He then entered the employ of H. Silvester as clerk, and remained in this position for thirty-three years. In 1894 he purchased the business of Mr. Silvester."

In 1897 the business again changed hands and C.W. Jenkin became the new proprietor, and the grocery now became a variety store selling candy, cigars, stationary and books.

Around the turn of the century Silvester returned to his home in London, England, and from there, in 1908, finally sold the building to another pioneer, Paul Wesley Michell. Mr. Michell and his brother, W.J. Michell, operated a thriving butcher business in the Centennial Market, so Mr. Jenkin continued to operate the variety

OLDEST ORIGINAL BRICK (& Stone) BUILDING IN GRASS VALLEY  
(Never burned out or rebuilt--very little alteration)  
SECOND OLDEST BRICK BUILDING IN NEVADA COUNTY  
112 West Main Street

Sear.

"The Brick Store of Silvester and Salaman, the first stone store in Grass Valley, which survived all the conflagrations, was built the same year (1854) as Adams & Co.'s brick building." (Bean's History of Nevada County, 1867.)

Henry Silvester and Abraham Salaman, Jewish Pioneer merchants in Grass Valley from 1850, built the building in partnership. In 1862, Salaman sold his interest in building and business to Silvester, who remained in business in this same location for many years. Around the turn of the century he returned to his home in London, England, and from there, in 1903, finally sold the building to another Pioneer, Paul Wesley Michell, whose sons, Leland and Clifton Michell, still own it today.

At present (1967) the building is occupied--as for many years--by Williams Stationery Store.



Elton and Helen Williams purchased the property in February, 1971 from Mrs. Leland Michell. They purchased the business on April 1, 1949 from Goldie and George Trezise.

LYLE L. WHITE  
310 Columbia Avenue  
Grass Valley, Cal. 95945

**Grass Valley store  
in continuous use  
since Gold Rush**

**Editor's Note:** Nevada County is rich in history, and local residents are concerned with its preservation. In an effort to present accurate and interesting history, members of the local Historical Landmarks commission have researched the origins of nearby structures and prepared a series of articles to be run on these pages.

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Grass Valley

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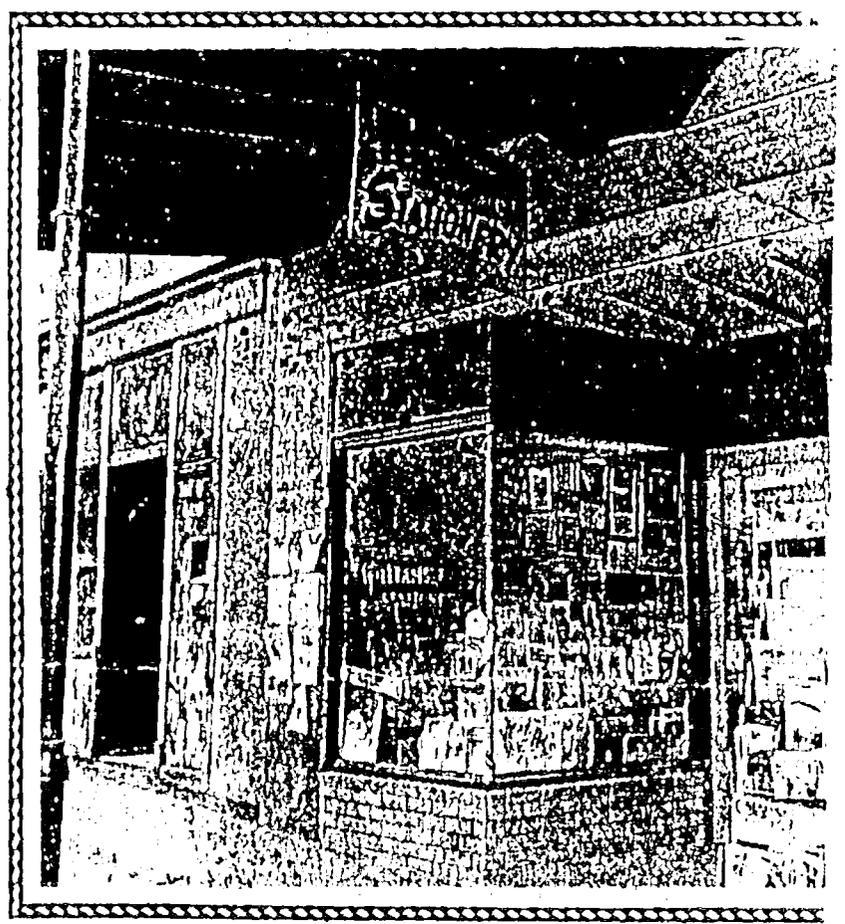
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Around the turn of the century Silvester returned to his home in London, England, and from there, in 1908, he finally sold the building to another pioneer, Paul Westley Michell. Mr. Michell and his brother, W. J. Michell, operated a thriving butcher business in the Centennial Market, so Mr. Jenkin continued to operate the variety store until 1902 when the Tresize brothers became the new proprietors. When Michell died, the ownership of the building passed into the hands of his sons, Clifton and Leland Michell. The Tresize Brothers continued to operate the business as a stationery store, also selling magazines, books and cards.



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The Nevada County Mining Review of 1895 gives a brief resume of the store's history

For 47 years the brothers faithfully served the community until finally in 1949 Floyd and Elton Williams purchased the business so the store became known as "Williams Brothers". It continued as a stationery store, just as it is today. In 1955 Elton Williams and his wife decided to buy out the business, and in 1971 they purchased the building as well. So, for the first time since 1862, both business and building were under the same ownership once more. Mr. Silvester would feel right at home if he were able to step through the door today as it has changed very little since the day it was built so long ago.