THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

EARLY DAY COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS.

The first stock of goods offered for sale in Neenah, aside from that of Indian traders, was by Jones & Yale, in 1847. The store was kept for a while at the old mill house, opposite and near the grist mill, and afterward for a time in an old log block house not far from where the brick store of Mr. Geo. Christenson now stands on Main street. The volume of trade at that time, as the reader will readily guess, was very small, and such as it was made up largely of barter with the Indians, the exchange of calico, blankets, gunpowder and other articles for furs. Settlers were few and their wants the same, and for this class, aside from pork, flour, tea, nails, glass, and a small demand for the simplest varieties of dry goods, there was not much buying until the garments brought with them had totally disappeared, and until some products had been secured with which to get others Those who still survive those early days well remember how few, in comparison with to-
day, were the actual wants of men and women in those early times. That which to-day is considered an actual necessity, was then an almost unthought-of luxury.

The next business men to appear on the scene were JOHN AND HARVEY KIMBERLY.

They first came to Neenah in June, 1848, and in the autumn of that year took up their permanent residence here, and had much to do with shaping the course of events during those early years, as they built fine residences, and shortly became interested in both mercantile and manufacturing interests.

The Kimberly's brought a stock of goods west with them, and after concluding to locate at Neenah, they secured a portion of what was then called the Paddock building, erected that year by Benjamin Paddock, who died at Neenah in 1877, and into this building, or part of building, they moved their goods and opened a store.

At that time, what we now call the "upper end of town," was supposed to be the site of the business centre of the future city, and the four corners near the present track of the Chicago & Northwestern railroad, was considered the four most desirable corners in the entire plat.

J. & H. Kimberly were exceedingly anxious to secure a building lot at or near these corners, and urged Harvey Jones to sell them such lots as they wished, but Mr. Jones not wishing to dispose of the most eligible locations, refused, and would offer them nothing with which they were satisfied. Finally the Kimberly's began to cast about and thought that they might perhaps do better elsewhere, and they had at that time a most favorable opinion of Depere, which location they had seen while coming up the river. Mr. Curtis Reed, of Me-
nasha, just then interested in securing settlers, and particularly business energy and experience, as well as capital, made the Kimberly brothers exceedingly favorable offers, all of which becoming known to Mr. Jones, and he seeing that they were determined to have what they wanted, or nothing, finally concluded to give them choice of lots, and arrangements were soon perfected securing a location on which they shortly afterward built a brick store, (still standing) and residence lots as well. The large white house, still standing, and one-half of it now occupied by John R. Kimberly, was erected in 1849, and was then and for some years, the finest house in the county, and the admiration of all the early comers.

In 1849, Jones & Yale built what was for many years known as the

YALE BUILDING.

A part of this old frame is still standing, situated near the railroad track, on Wisconsin avenue, and latterly known as the Jensen House. To this building Jones & Yale removed their store, where it was kept for some time. The upper floor of this building was finished off as a hall, and religious services were held there for many years. It was also, at one time, used as a public school room. In the winter of 1849-50, J. & H. Kimberly built the

"BRICK STORE."

Still standing, and for several years occupied as a cooper shop, and owned by Clement & Stevens, of the Falcon Flour Mills. At the time of building, this was a most pretentious establishment, and for many years was the store of the place. This store was owned and conducted by J. & H. Kimberly until 1857, when J. A. Kimberly,
son of John R. Kimberly, and Havilah Babcock formed a partnership under the firm name of

KIMBERLY & BABCOCK.

They carried on the business in the brick store until the winter of 1863-4, when they moved to their present quarters, the brick block now known as Pettibone Block having just been completed by Wm. E. and J. R. Ford, and afterward sold to C. J. Pettibone, who at that time occupied the corner store, where the National Bank is now located.

Quite a number of stores were erected on Wisconsin avenue and on Main street from 1850 to 1856, including Smith’s block and Weeden’s Hotel. Then followed a very dull time in the city’s history, and up to 1863, when the Ford Bros. built the large brick block on the corner of Wisconsin avenue and Cedar street. There was no particular improvements on the street worthy especial mention. Smith’s block, a double brick store, still standing and now occupied by Wm. Kellett and Alex. Billstein & Co., was erected in 1855, by Edward Smith, and he and his brother Hiram occupied the corner for a long time as a general store. Alex. Billstein came to Neenah in 1856, and began business in the store which he still occupies, and where he has amassed a handsome fortune.

A VIEW OF WISCONSIN AVENUE IN 1856,

Which we present herewith, is copied from a daguerreotype taken that year, and will be readily recognized by all old settlers, and will bring to mind many names and incidents long since forgotten, and forms quite a striking contrast to the street scenes of to-day.

The view is taken looking up toward the lake, and from about opposite where Robert Hold’s furniture store
now stands. At that time there was little or nothing in the way of buildings on the north side of Wisconsin avenue west of Cedar street. As will be noticed, but few of the buildings shown in the picture are now in existence, and those mainly east of the Russell House, the business since those days having gradually worked west, and towards the Island, and stores built twenty-five years ago in what was then considered the most desirable locations, are now deserted for those situated where at that time no one wanted lots.

In addition to the above, the following parties, still here in trade, figured among the early day business men.

E. P. Marsh, who began business in 1858, in the building now occupied by Joe Kellett as a meat market, at one time was in the corner store under the old Dolson House, and in 1870, built the handsome brick store where he is now located.

Henry Wildfang was also in trade at an early day, commencing in 1856. In 1874 he built a fine brick store and is at this date located therein. W. P. Peckham and H. P. Leavens were also old timers, commencing in the hardware trade in 1858. Peckham is still in the same business, though at this time alone.

James Galigan, John Brown, C. W. Leavens, George Rogers, G. Christenson and E. Elwers were also early day traders, and are still in business. The present

NATIONAL BANK

Was established in 1861, Henry Hewitt, sr., President, and Robert Shiells, cashier, and is still under the same management.

Wm. Kellett, Krueger & Willard, Geo. E. Scott, S. F. Henry, Wildie & Gleason, A. Striddie, E. Newdeck and others are comparatively late day additions, and for
VIEW ON WISCONSIN AVENUE IN 1856. Looking Toward the Lake.

From Daguerreotype by J. F. HARRISON.
...on the way of building on the north side of William street west of Cedar street. It will be necessary to remove the building, and the other ...
further particulars the reader is referred to our condensed history of local transactions, and the Business Directory.

Returning to the subject of business in the early days, we find that for four or five years after the death of Harvey Jones, the outlook was, as an old settler has expressed it, "almighty blue." The fact of nearly all the real estate being in hopeless litigation, and no prospect of a settlement until the heirs of Jones should become of age, combined with the mismanagement of the estate by the administrators, prevented capital from locating upon and improving the water-power, and almost entirely put a stop to any further business enterprise in the village. Hundreds of men came here from the east, many of them with ample capital, and would endeavor to secure water-power privileges and other real estate, but when they learned the condition of affairs, few chose to take the chances on buying lands when no title could be given, and so it happened that while Oshkosh, Fond du Lac, Appleton and other points, with far less natural advantages, were being rapidly settled, Neenah was almost at a stand still, and things did look "almighty blue." As a proof that the above named circumstances were principally accountable for this deplorable condition of affairs, we have the well known fact that after the heirs all became of age, and the Jones estate was finally settled, and after Abigail Jones married Rev. Mr. Bassett and her portion of the property was placed in market, as well as more or less of that going to the other children, Neenah made a more substantial growth during the first five years succeeding, than for the whole fifteen preceding, confidence and security being fully restored, and the yearly sales of real estate three times that of the preceding years.