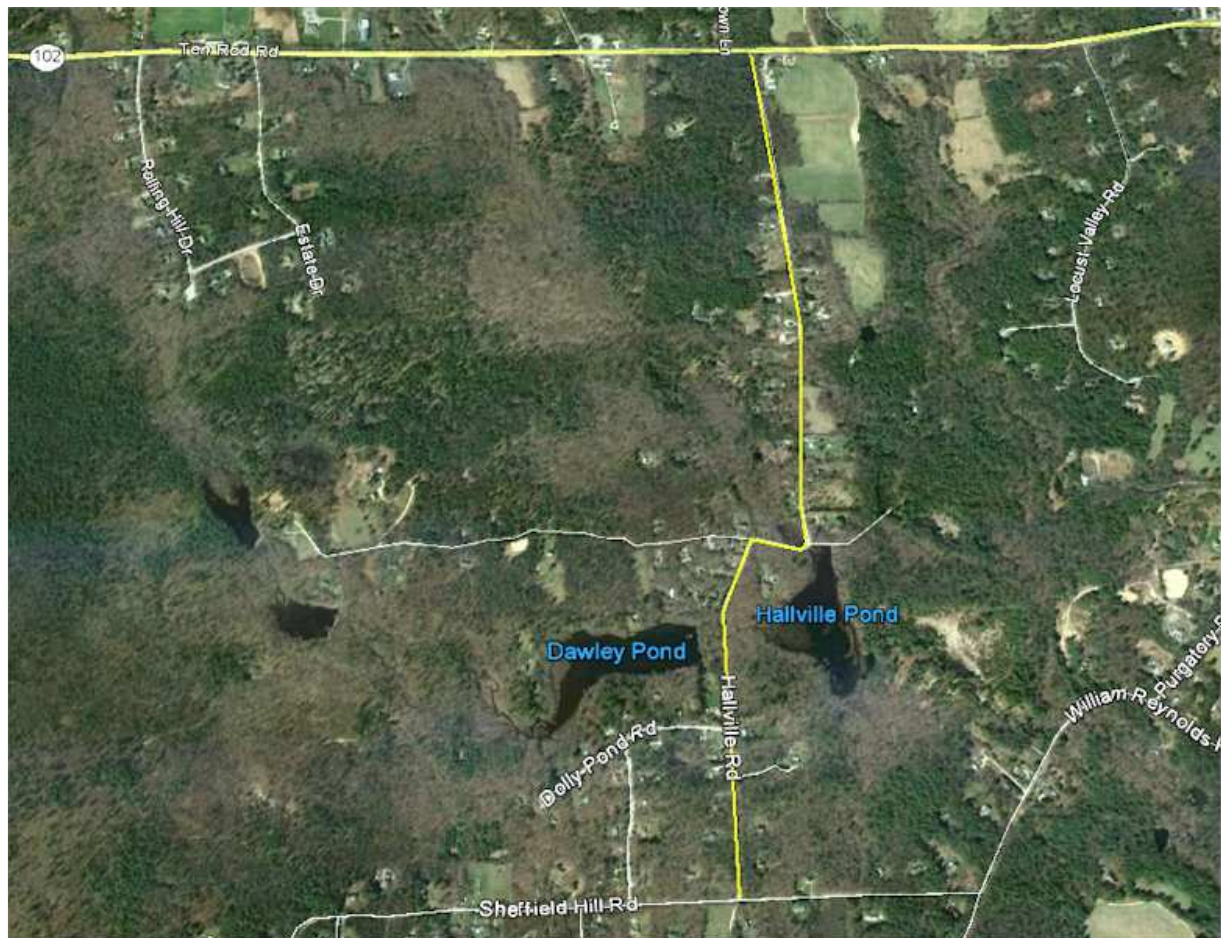


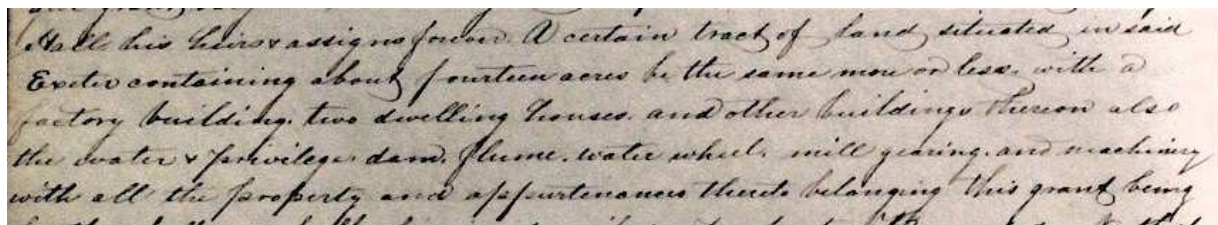
How Hallville Road Got Its Name

The present day Hallville Road runs mostly straight for about 1.4 miles between the Ten Rod Road at its north end to Sheffield Hill Road at the south end. Satellite imagery clearly shows the road making two peculiar and sharp right angle turns near its midpoint, hinting about activities in earlier days that eventually gave the road its name.



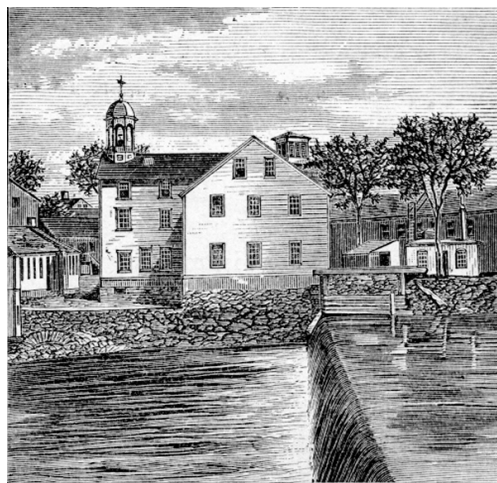
Roads acquire names for many reasons and some derive from the localities they approach. Such is the story with this one. Hallville was a tiny village like nearby Fisherville and Lawtonville that also took their names from principal residents. In this case it was the Hall family that occupied the area in the middle years of the nineteenth century. The patriarch, Dutee J. Hall (c1797-1864), attracted by business opportunities offered by the hilly Exeter topography, purchased in 1835 with his brother

Slocum Hall (c1794-1873) 14 acres of land and a mill for \$1,200 that originally had been built and operated for many years by Beriah Brown. In 1849 Dutee bought out his brother's half ownership for \$2,000. The deed for that transaction describes "A certain tract of land situated in said Exeter containing about fourteen acres be the same more or less, with a factory building, two dwelling houses, and other buildings thereon also the water & privileges, dam, flume, water wheel, mill gearing, and machinery with all the property and appurtenances thereof belonging this grant..."

A photograph of a handwritten deed document. The text is written in cursive and matches the typed text above, describing a tract of land in Exeter with a factory, dwellings, and water rights.

Remnants of that mill still persist on private property at the north end of Hallville Pond.

In the early nineteenth century, small manufacturing businesses presented new ways for earning a living. Where a stream and valley provided the right situation for creating a pond with sufficient height at the outlet to turn a water wheel, mills were constructed throughout the countryside. Samuel



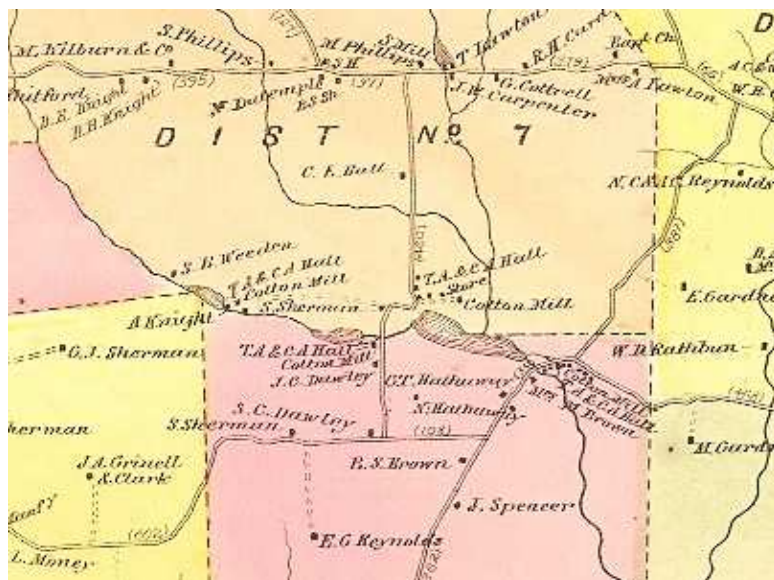
Slater, an immigrant from England, had been the first to establish a successful water-powered cotton mill in Pawtucket in 1790 (illustrated at left). By 1812 there were 38 cotton mills in the State, including one in Exeter. The number grew to 116 by 1831 and to 153 by 1860. This spot in Exeter provided just the right configuration of features to support several mills – a reliable source of water (Sodom brook) draining Casey Hill to the west and a drop of over one hundred feet in elevation

across a distance of about half a mile. Proximity to the Ten Rod Road added the bonus of a major transportation route for shipping products to population centers.

Dutee ran the mill with the help of his two sons, Thomas A. (1828-1914) and Christopher A. (1829-1897), until his death when the business passed

to them. A tax bill for April 1864 lists the production of 320 units of cotton yarn valued at \$272 and subject to a 3% excise tax of \$8.16. May was more productive with 999 units worth \$750 and a tax of \$22.50. Another bill from December 1865 reveals that the sons had switched to manufacturing a more lucrative product (kind not listed). Two hundred fifty units were worth \$1,384, but the tax rate was only 1%, costing them just \$13.84. These taxes were incurred because of the Internal Revenue Act passed by Congress on July 1, 1862, primarily to pay for Civil War expenses. Before the War, many Rhode Island mills spun thread and wove a courser fabric called “kersey” that was made in part from cotton grown on Southern plantations. Kersey then was shipped back south as material for slave clothing.

Besides cotton, some mills spun woolen yarn or ground locally grown corn. About a quarter mile southwest of the Halls, J.C. Dawley erected a grist mill which he later sold to the Hall brothers in 1860. They changed it into a warp factory and operated it for another 14 years. Records indicate other mills and factories in the area passed through several owners until eventually ending up with the Halls. One mill located in nearby Fisherville, just down stream and to the east of Hallville, manufactured warps, jeans, and check flannel.



This 1870 map of Exeter published in The Beers Atlas shows four cotton mills belonging to T.A & C.A. Hall that were in production for various periods. In order from west to east, Sodom Mill (1814-1871, 57 years), Dawley Mill (1854-1874, 20 years), Hallville Mill (1814-1872, 58 years), and Fisherville Mill (1833-1873, 40 years).

Mill work could be very dangerous. The story of one horrible accident preserved in the historical record concerns a William Whitney who “went over a drum” in Dutee Hall’s mill. According to Dr. William Sweet who

attended the victim, *“one arm was broken, both badly damaged, both thighs broken, and both legs below the knees broken short off. Two doctors got there before me, and had just finished sawing off one arm. I fixed up what was left of him in about six hours, and could just as well have saved his arm.”* Somehow Whitney recovered from this mangling, but had to turn to peddling for a living because mill work was impossible with only one arm.

The Hall brothers also kept a post office and store at Hallville for a while around 1860 which suggests a fairly significant level of activity in the neighborhood. However, the late 1860s probably marked the peak of their manufacturing empire. The original mill purchased by their father burned, was rebuilt, and then burned again in 1872. In Fisherville their factory burned in 1871 and the mill in 1873. Causes of the fires are lost to history. Economic instability brought on by the Panic of 1873 may have been the final blow. By 1875 the brothers were out of the manufacturing business altogether. Thomas Hall still lived with his wife Mary and children Frederick, Stephen, and Sarah in Exeter, but had changed his occupation to “Agent” according to census records. By 1880 the family had moved to Hopkinton and he was now a “Supr of Cotton Mill” putting his knowledge to work without being the owner. In 1910 Thomas and Mary were retired and living in Pawtucket. Christopher Hall, with wife Harriet and daughters Carrie and Susie, had moved to the village of Usquepaug in South Kingstown by 1875 and listed his occupation as “Merchant.” Five years later he worked as a “Broker” and lived in Providence. Land records suggest that he may have practiced real estate law as well.



Most traces of the mill buildings are long gone. Water channels and stone foundations persist – artifacts that nature has not yet reclaimed completely. Pictured here is the original stone and earth dam at the site of Dawley’s grist mill, later owned by the Hall brothers. A modern concrete structure now regulates water flow.

For about forty years (c1835-1875) the Halls prospered in their little section of town. It now becomes obvious that the sharp bends in Hallville Road were necessary to prevent a plunge into Hallville pond by diverting traffic around the pond created to supply power to a mill. No descendants of Thomas and Christopher remained in town after their departure so the local historical cemeteries contain no burial markers inscribed with the Hall name. In fact, the family plot lies in North Kingstown off the Post Road near Wickford. Besides an old one-room schoolhouse and the 1870 Beers map showing "Hall Dist No 7," the most prominent remains of their legacy a century and a half later is the rural road that bears their name.



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