

## **GEHR Watershed Minute #38**

### **Williamstown: (221 words)**

In 1992, Congress designated 4.5 miles of the 6.5 mile long Squankum Branch in Monroe Township as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Squankum Branch drains a 7.5 square mile watershed that includes most of Williamstown.

The first settlement now known as Williamstown was called "Squankum", an Indian name meaning, "Place of Evil Ghosts". It is thought that the "Evil Ghosts" referred to the numerous mosquitoes found in the area.

Squankum was first settled in 1737, and the lands there were first owned by Richard Penn and then by Deacon Israel Williams. By 1839, Squankum had grown to include 10 businesses and 40 dwellings, a few farms, and a church.

A continual increase in population caused a new post office to be established in 1842. The name of Squankum had already been designated to a settlement further north, so the name Williamstown was selected for the post office and subsequently the town.

Local sand was good and plentiful, so the glass industry was a major aspect in the growth of the town into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Williamstown Foundry produced a wide variety of iron products from 1919 to 1969. Two canneries which preserve fruits and vegetables are another important industry for Williamstown.

As of 2000, Williamstown had a population of 11,812 people and 4,484 households.