

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
PAST AND PRESENT

A NARRATIVE OF LARGER
EVENTS AND IMPORTANT
CHANGES IN THE VILLAGE
PRECINCT AND TOWN FROM

1637 TO 1907

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MIDDLESEX AQUEDUCT COMPANY

THOUGH Middlesex Aqueduct Company can claim, and prove by its old record book, that a company to supply dwellings with water for domestic purposes existed in what is now Arlington *one hundred and eight years ago*, the significance is weakened when it has to be admitted that the "corporation" consisted of the members of a single firm and that only the dwellings owned and occupied by themselves or their tenants were benefited by taking advantage of the general law, passed in 1799, under which rights were obtained and privileges enjoyed.

An item picked here and a brief record found elsewhere, makes it certain that William Whittemore & Co., as a corporation, and "Square" Whittemore, as an individual stockholder, made up the original "Middlesex Water Company." It is also true that under the same name and from the identical spring, the legal successors of the original corporation are now supplying water to at least two dozen families on Massachusetts avenue and Pleasant street.

A single paragraph will dispose of the early history of this company. William Whittemore & Co. built at a convenient distance from the house of the senior partner, in the year 1799, a large brick reservoir fifteen feet in diameter, twelve feet deep, and connected it by means of a conduit made of pump logs with a large spring on the land of Nehemiah Cutter, east of Highland avenue and not far from the line of the Henry J. Locke farm, the spring and twelve rods square of land being secured under the act. The height of this spring above the level of the avenue gave a good pressure at Mr. Whittemore's house, and he built a fountain in the front yard. The Whittemore people were the only users of this spring water until 1829.

Nov. 30, 1829, Mr. Whittemore sold two shares of his stock to Deacon Ephraim Cutter, one share to William Cotting, retaining fourteen shares. The record of this meeting reads, "Voted, that the aqueduct be repaired as soon as may be and a lead pipe substituted for wooden pump logs rotted out." To

repair the spring house cost \$15.61; the laying of new pipe, \$683.06.

May 7, 1832, the names of Thomas H. and George C. Russell appear as holders of stock.

June 25, 1832, the following petition was presented to the selectmen:

The undersigned respectfully petition for the right to lay a water pipe from the dwelling of William Whittemore, passing the hay scales, crossing ground between burying ground and meetinghouse, straight to the house of Jesse Bucknam, then to the house of Ammi Cutter.

WILLIAM WHITTEMORE,
EPH. CUTTER,
WILLIAM CUTTING.

The minute on the records of the selectmen is:

“Permit granted, provided petitioners do not interfere with public travel.” The records of the water company show that later John Jarvis became a member and that the pipe was extended to the Lane homestead. Jesse P. Pattee having purchased the Cotting Bakery and other buildings of the Cotting estate, appears as a shareholder in June, 1837, and at intervals thereafter the names of John Fillebrown, John R. Daniels, John Schouler, Lewis P. Bartlett, Nathan Robbins, Abel G. Peck, Benjamin Poland and Thomas Ramsdell appear on the record as holders of stock and water takers.

After some years a reducing of the water supply all along the line led to an investigation. It was found that in several places the roots of trees had gripped the water pipe with a force sufficient to nearly close it. Iron pipes were then substituted.

At a meeting of the corporation held July 20, 1880, it was voted to increase the number of shareholders to forty-three, to relay the main pipe with galvanized iron, and to petition the legislature for right to take land. The first propositions were carried out. On the last, the petitioners were given leave to withdraw.

At the present time there are twenty-five shareholders and twenty-four families are supplied by the corporation.