

Menotomy Minutes



NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AUTUMN 2019



This detail of a Spy Pond panorama looking east features Elizabeth Island, and on the far shore an ice house, and the Wyman farm irrigation standpipe in today's Kelwyn Manor.

150 YEARS AGO: ARLINGTON'S FIRST DIRECTORY

Richard A. Duffy

In 2019, finding a “phone book” at the front door is often viewed as a nuisance. But in 1869 Arlington’s first residential and business directory was rather a status symbol. Although the town counted fewer than 3,200 inhabitants, it had grown 20% in population in each of the two preceding decades, and just two years earlier had “re-branded” itself from West Cambridge to Arlington—the visible signal of a community eager to embrace the future.

Arlington in 1869 was still a one-undertaker, one-bank (occupying a room in the railroad station), one-coal dealer town (yet it had three hotels). Its first public high school had been established just five years earlier, and the town’s public

drinking water system was a few years away. It seems a risky proposition for the publishers to have invested in Arlington, but the town lacked a local newspaper, which in the era was considered a competitor to directories. Still, to make the publication financially viable, Somerville, Arlington, and Belmont were combined into a single volume. (Cambridge already had its own). And it cost \$1.00 to purchase a copy—a sum approaching \$20.00 in today’s inflation-adjusted terms.

With no telephone customer data base to compile the directory, publishers Dudley & Greenough of Boston wrote in the preface to it: “The Towns have been canvassed by competent agents,” and went on to boast “The book is

(Continued on page 4)

WILLIAM L. CLARK & CO.,
Carriage Painters, Trimmers,
AND
HARNESS MANUFACTURERS.



A GOOD ASSORTMENT OF
BLANKETS, HALTERS AND CIRCINGLES.
REPAIRING PROMPTLY AND NEATLY EXECUTED.

Arlington Avenue, near Junction of Charlestown St.,
ARLINGTON, MASS.

Today the location of this business would be described as "Massachusetts Avenue, near junction of Broadway."

In This Issue

- ◆ 150 years ago: Arlington’s first directory
- ◆ President’s Message
- ◆ “A Revolution in the News” A Special Program by Joseph M. Adelman
- ◆ Town Day 2019
- ◆ AHS Cocktail Party
- ◆ Upcoming Lectures
- ◆ Leslie Wilcox installation

President's Corner

Hello Society Members,

In this issue of Menotomy Minutes, I want to highlight a special project that the Society has brought to successful conclusion: the restoration of the Federal Period sideboard that now resides in the parlor of the Jason Russell House. This fabulous piece of furniture was owned by Amos Whittemore, who purchased it in 1814 from master craftsman Abel Whitney, a cabinet maker in Cambridge. It came to us in 2017 as a gift from the Whittemore family, who had owned it for over two centuries.

Although the sideboard was beautiful when it was donated to us, it needed professional restoration. It had a loose leg, broken veneer, missing trim, and—perhaps worst of all—the original drawer pulls had been replaced with unattractive wooden knobs that were incorrect for its historical period. Masterwork Conservation of Arlington estimated \$3,400 for a comprehensive restoration.

The Society embarked on a fundraising campaign, winning a grant of \$1,000 from the Arlington Cultural Council. Arlington Coal & Lumber Company provided seed money for the individual-donor phase of the endeavor, which continued with a Mount Auburn Cemetery historic walking tour benefit, to two

generous individual gifts of \$1,200 and \$500, to a Facebook campaign which netted \$1,100 and reached our overall goal.

In August, the sideboard went to Masterworks Conservation, located at the Old Schwamb Mill, where conservator Melissa Carr brought it back to its period beauty. The piece was back at the Society in September, just in time for Town Day.

Great attention to detail went into the restoration process. Even the new drawer handles were thoughtfully aged to look to suggest the patina they would have acquired if they had been in place since 1814. The sideboard now looks majestic in its place of prominence in the Jason Russell House parlor.

Many Society members engaged in bringing this project to a successful conclusion, and I want to thank everybody who was involved. I urge all our members to stop by the Jason Russell House and admire this wonderful Society-wide project. A presentation by Melissa Carr on the challenges involved in restoring the Whittemore sideboard will be given at our members meeting on Sunday, January 26, 2020. I'm sure you'll be intrigued by the behind-the-scenes process to bring new life to this treasure of the Society.

My best regards, Stuart Brorson

“A Revolution in the News”

A special program by author and historian

Joseph M. Adelman

Saturday, November 3

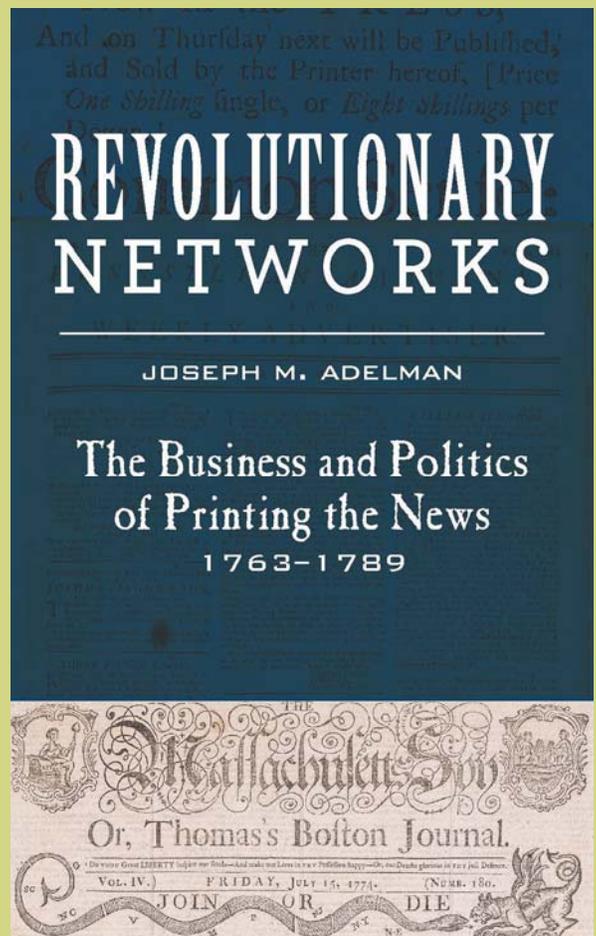
2:00 p.m.

Smith Museum at Jason Russell House

Admission free

During the American Revolution, printed material, including newspapers, pamphlets, almanacs, and broadsides, played a crucial role as a forum for public debate. In *Revolutionary Networks*, Joseph M. Adelman argues that printers—artisans who mingled with the elite but labored in a manual trade—used their commercial and political connections to directly shape Revolutionary political ideology and mass mobilization. Going into the printing offices of colonial America to explore how these documents were produced, Adelman shows how printers balanced their own political beliefs and interests alongside the commercial interests of their businesses, the customs of the printing trade, and the prevailing mood of their communities.

Joseph M. Adelman is an Associate Professor in the History Department at Framingham State University. A historian of media, communication, and politics in the Atlantic world, Revolutionary Networks is his first book, published in 2019 by the Johns Hopkins University Press.



- Town Day 2019 -

We were pleased to offer a variety of activities for Arlington Town Day. The Jason Russell House and Smith Museum were open to visitors free of charge, and we had a variety of demonstrations on the lawn.

Special thanks to the Menotomy Minutemen who offered musket firing demonstrations, cartridge making and

musket ball casting, corn husk doll making, and a variety of items for children to play with. We also hosted special presenter Nancy Bell and her "Spinning History" program as well as the Colonial washing demonstration by Nancy McCarthy. ❖



glassware), then of today's 48 Irving St.; and John P. Squire, famous for his fine pork products, whose mansion-house stands at today's 226 Massachusetts Ave., the nucleus of much of East Arlington's early 20th-century residential land development.

The 1869 directory lists the occupations many workplaces of the adult inhabitants and it appears that the vast majority were employed in Arlington. Many are described simply as "laborer," a generic category frequently seen in census listings. But the directory often takes us deeper into their livelihoods by specifying their places of employment and even their individual roles. Thus, we can understand the nature of their jobs and how they likely came to them, such as the fellow-German immigrant employees of Charles Schwamb, with job-titles such as foreman, picture-frame maker, polisher, and turner. Or Robert Gardine, an apron and skirt printer at the calico factory of another native of Scotland, Robert Schouler. At today's 97 Mystic St. lived John Davis, who worked as a miller at the Samuel A. Fowle mills on the site of today's Cusack Terrace apartments, at a street junction that no longer exists: "Water, corner of Summer Street." Unfortunately, we're not sure in what, if anything, Davis specialized as a miller, but we know from the directory that Fowle's mills ground "grain & meal and feed of all kinds . . . drugs, herbs, tartars, paints, lac dye, pumice stone, etc." Fowle's fame as manufacturer of the brand-named Arlington Wheat Meal lay ahead.

The next appearance of the Somerville, Arlington and Belmont directory was in 1871, published by Greenough, Jones & Co. There were far fewer Arlington advertisements than in the 1869 directory, suggesting that some local businesses did not find it worthwhile to purchase space, because it was not perceived to have driven business to them, or perhaps they assumed that owners of the first volume still had it on their shelves. The following directory would not appear until 1883 (Arlington and Belmont), then not again until 1890. An additional 22 hardcover Arlington directories by different publishers followed at irregular intervals until 1940, after which this type of product gave way to what today's readers remember, but which tomorrow's readers likely will not, as the modern "phone book." ❖

At Robbins Library, Arlington's directories from 1869 through 1940 are full-image digitized and available in flipbook view on line. Visit robbinslibrary.org and follow the Local History Room link for 24/7 home access to the Internet Archive, which also contains Arlington High School yearbooks (1927-present); the Arlington High School magazine, The Clarion (1897-1931); Town of Arlington Annual Reports (1842-present); and True Lists of Persons

R. SPEATMAN,
Enamel and Grain Military Boots,
BALMORAL, CONGRESS AND BUCKLE
GAITERS,
 And all kinds of Boots and Shoes made to order,
 and kept constantly on hand.
 Basement of Town House, ARLINGTON.
 All kinds of Repairing done at Short Notice.

JOHN LAWRENCE,
HOUSE PAINTER, GRAINER
AND GLAZIER,
 ARLINGTON AVE., near the Depot
 (Opposite Post Office.)
ARLINGTON.
 OUTSIDE WINDOWS and HOT-BED SASH.
 Particular attention given to green-house glazing.
 All orders promptly attended to.

Above: Arlington had retail tenants, such as Speatman, in its original town hall because there was not enough municipal business to otherwise support the building. Lawrence's glazing business was essential in a town famed for its early-season produce in the Boston market.

Below: Advertisements for two Boston businesses of prominent Arlingtonians.

59 Causeway and 43 & 45 Lancaster Streets,
 BOSTON.

SQUIRE & CO.,
 DEALERS IN



PORK, LARD, HAMS,
Pigs' Feet, Tripe,
SAUSAGES, SAUSAGE SKINS, ETC.,
 Nos. 45 and 47 North Street, corner Blackstone,
 BOSTON.

HOMER, CALDWELL & CO.,
 IMPORTERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF

CROCKERY.
 DEALERS IN

Glass Ware & Paper Hangings,
 52 & 54 Union and 39 & 41 Friend Sts.,
 W. F. HOMER, } T. G. CALDWELL, } BOSTON. } H. H. HOMER, } G. W. LANE. }

(1921-present). It is hoped to make available in 2020 a searchable digitized version of the historical Arlington Advocate. ❖

❖ AHS Cocktail Party ❖

Thanks to all who made the “Evening in Arlington” cocktail Party a success. This is our fifth year holding this fundraising social event. The party was organized by Stuart Brorson with help from Patsy Kraemer, Susan Lum, Billy Lyons, George Parsons, Colleen Cunningham and Rosemarie Smurzynski. Board members contributed hor d'Oeuvers, with additional food donated by Menotomy Grill. The party included a “cork pull” wine raffle, creative decorations, a slide show of historic images, and speeches recounting the successful past few years, particularly our receiving grants to better carry out our mission to preserve and interpret the Jason Russell House and our collections. Catherine Bartlett-Hirani, Linda Cohn, Doris Birmingham, Peter Howard, Alan Jones, Eliza Burden, Richard Duffy, and Chuck Kraemer donated items for the silent auction. ❖



Silver Sponsor



Bronze Sponsors



**Krattenmaker O'Connor
& Ingber P.C.**
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
One McKinley Square,
Fifth Floor
Boston, MA 02109
Phone: (617) 523-1010
www.koilaw.com



Parsons Group, LLC

In Vitro Diagnostics Consulting

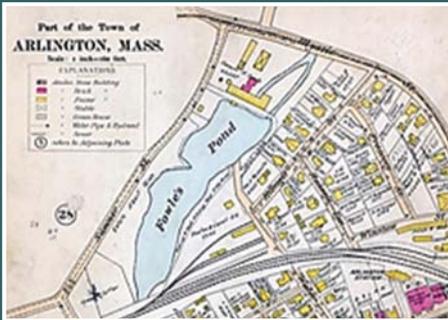
George Parsons, Ph.D.
Managing Director



23 Brewster Road
Arlington, MA 02476
ghparsons@msn.com
1 617 823 7259

Upcoming Lectures

Our regular location for our Tuesday 7:30 p.m. programs will be the Masonic Temple, 19 Academy Street (disabled access is at rear).



Tuesday, October 29

THE STORYING OF OUR PLACE: THE ECOLOGICAL FORCES THAT SHAPED AND CONTINUE TO SHAPE OUR COMMUNITY

Bill Reed of Regenesis Group

Tracing histories and mapping places often begins and ends with human activities. Yet these places were shaping themselves before humans existed. Discover a methodology of discerning the timeless patterns of nature that make each place truly unique.



Tuesday, November 19

A WOMAN'S JOURNEY

Elaine Shea

As bride in the 1960s, I read "How to Be a Good Wife." In the 1980s I began Arlington's First Step Group, helping women in circumstances much different from mine, to NOT to be an abused wife. What a journey for me as a woman – tradition to freedom!



Leslie Wilcox installation

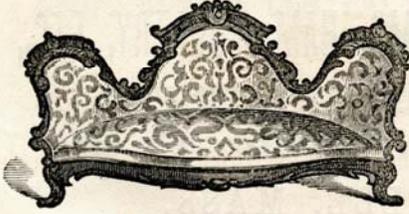
You may have noticed that the crabapple tree near the entry to the museum is "dressed" in a gown. This is an exciting opportunity presented to the Society by Arlington Public Art. Representatives approached us with the idea of installing some of Leslie Wilcox's sculptural "garments" on the Jason Russell House grounds. We are still working with Cecily Miller, Curator of Arlington Public Arts, and artist Leslie Wilcox to collaborate on a larger installation, but were able to install one of the pieces in time for our cocktail party on October 4.

The photos below show some of Wilcox's work in other installations. Her work has been exhibited with great success in other historic landscapes, such as Forest Hills Cemetery in Jamaica Plain, Chesterwood in Western, MA, as well as the grounds of local museums such as the DeCordova and Fuller. She studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and Kent State University, OH. We look forward to the cooperative effort between two organizations and the opportunity to feature public art on our grounds. ❖



MATTRESSES & UPHOLSTERY WORK

Done neatly and to order at the shortest notice.



Old Mattresses Refitted

In a Superior Manner by

S. A. FAIRWEATHER,
Arlington Avenue,
OPP. CENTRAL DEPOT.

This advertisement from the 1869 Arlington directory depicts a trendy settee. Mattress refurbishing was a common service that is virtually unknown to modern U.S. consumers.

Contact Us

Office Hours:
Tues-Thurs 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

7 Jason Street
Arlington, MA 02476-6410

(781) 648-4300
contact@arlingtonhistorical.org

Visit us on the web at
www.arlingtonhistorical.org



Menotomy Minutes

Editor: Richard A. Duffy

Layout: Elisabeth Carr-Jones

Contributors: Stuart Brorson,
Sara Lundberg, Carolyn Parsons

The Arlington Historical Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

The jaunty cupola of Arlington's first town hall, built in 1853 on the site of today's Uncle Sam Plaza.



Arlington Historical Society
7 Jason Street
Arlington, MA 02476-6410