

HISTORY
of
Hartford County
CONNECTICUT

1633-1928

Being a Study of the Makers of the First Constitution and
the Story of Their Lives, of Their Descendants
and of All Who Have Come

BY
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Volume I

Illustrated

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CHICAGO—HARTFORD—BOSTON
THE S. J. CLARKE PUBLISHING COMPANY

1928

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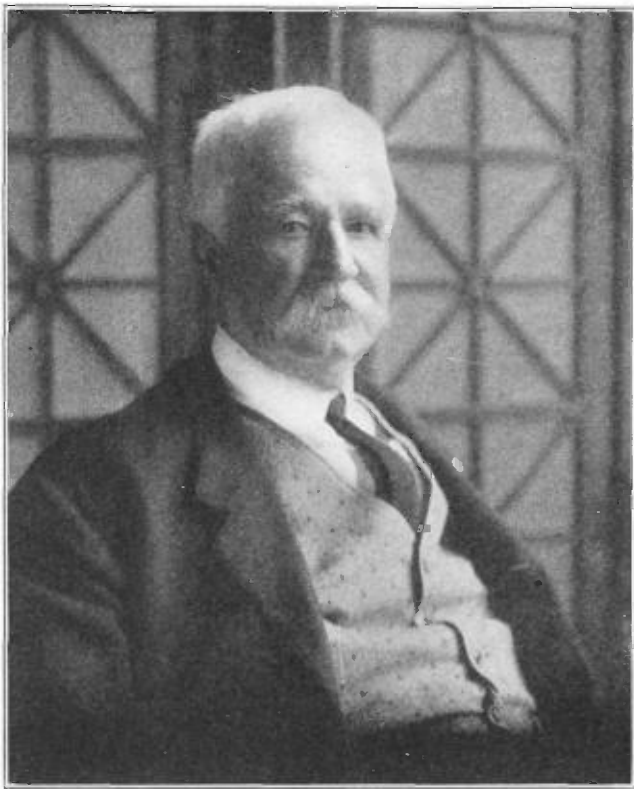


ply the humble but important item of cotton thread—a concern which by 1876 was to lead all others in the country. Ebenezer N. Kellogg had been the one to introduce the scouring of wool in 1841, and with Austin Dunham, D. P. Crosby and Ezra White had built a great industry with a plant in Windsor Locks. The first electro-plating had been done by Asa H. Williams and Simeon S. Rogers in a Hartford cellar in 1856. Nearly all the clocks in the country were made in this county. Steam heat with gravity return was being employed. The first galvanized water pipes were in use. Henry and J. F. Pitkin of East Hartford were making the first American watches in 1834 and Alonzo D. Phillips was the first to get a patent on friction matches. In 1837, George and John Abbe Burnham of East Hartford, in a shop near old South Green, made the first oilcloth.

Pliny Jewell in 1845 removed his primitive leather-beltting business from New Hampshire and began a plant on Trumbull Street near Little River which was to develop into the largest in the world by the time of the war. His four sons were associated with him—Pliny, Marshall, Lyman B. and Charles A., all of whom, as will be seen, were to be prominent in city and state affairs. And a little later, in 1863, the then most popular sewing machine was being made at the rate of 2,000 a day by G. F. Weed's company at present Capitol Avenue and Broad Street.

Some of the most important of the things these men of intense activity did are yet to be considered, but it must not be lost sight of that they were not too absorbed in their banking, insurance, railroading, manufacturing and commercial affairs to give heed to the town's requirements. To mention some of the requirements might give the impression that the men had been heedless previously, but to this it can be said that in the reforms they were now inaugurating they were ahead of most communities of their size.

Amusingly primitive conditions as to water and fires have been referred to. Horace Bushnell first voiced and then in 1847 preached public sentiment from his pulpit, taking "Prosperity Our Duty" for his subject. These underground cisterns, of which there were then twenty-one, had been reinforced for a time by a piping (or logging) system, of distressing incompleteness. Logs with two-inch holes bored through them lengthwise brought



HON. MORGAN GARDNER BULKELEY

President of the Aetna Life Insurance Company, Hartford. Mayor, 1880-1888; Governor, 1889-1893; United States Senator, 1895-1911



AETNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, HARTFORD
Wadsworth Atheneum on the right

the water from Cedar Hill and vicinity down under Park River and along Pearl and Main streets with side branches for those whose well water was unsatisfactory. This system was abandoned before 1850. Somehow talk of a water supply never had been popular since the Hartford Aqueduct Company was organized in 1797—and stopped. How the wonderful Enfield canal and reservoir proposition had died has been told. In 1851 Joseph Trumbull was among those who felt something must be done at once. He was grandson of Jonathan Trumbull, had served as president of the Hartford Bank and had just finished his term as governor. He with Calvin Day, E. K. Root, Thomas Belknap and others incorporated as a private company and began arranging for a pumping station. The people, feeling that this was too great a trust for a private concern or for management by the Common Council, secured in place of this charter an enactment giving custody and power to a board of commissioners, subject in certain particulars to the council. (Later, when the board was doing a large business and some tried to have the power vested in the council, there was protest by the “best and most intelligent citizens”—to quote R. D. Hubbard—and the proposition was laughed out of court.) The first board consisted of Ezra Clark, Jr., E. K. Root, E. M. Reed, Daniel Phillips and Hiram Bissell. The preparations made by the private company were approved and pushed. The board’s first report to the council was so caustic that the council refused to accept it—but 500 copies were published the next year; for, after seven years Doctor Bushnell’s adjurations had had effect. Water in 1855 was pumped from the Connecticut to an artificial reservoir on the top of Lord’s Hill where now are the tennis courts of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company.

The intervening years had been full of trouble, if not grafting. There was great waste, much expense, and at best only a week’s supply could be stored. The wranglings continued monotonously after 1860 and courts were resorted to, to culminate, however, in the purchase of eighty acres in West Hartford and the damming of Trout Brook for the first of the present remarkable chain of reservoirs. There were still more battles, in Legislature and Common Council, so it was not till July, 1865, that the water began to flow cityward. The reservoir was five miles

from the city's center, 260 feet above low water, covering thirty-two acres and holding 145,000,000 gallons. Fortunately the pumping station was not dismantled; it had to be resorted to several times before 1900. In less than a year after the first dam was built and before the second was completed, a heavy rain carried both of them away. Other reservoirs were added in 1869, 1875, 1879 and 1884, which brings the subject down to the modern well supported, well regulated and highly meritorious progress. Meters began to be introduced in the early '80s.

The night patrol early in the century, previously referred to, was supported in large part by the insurance men, and the Hartford Fire provided a salvage service. In 1820 when the "watch" was increased to five men to walk nightly, at \$1 a night, this company paid so much of the bill that no tax was called for, till 1822. One of the statements of loss approved by the company about this time reveals how particular the claimants had to be. It is the statement of Joseph Wheeler of Hartford:

32 squares glass broke paid for setting and mending frames	\$ 4.50
1 Bed Stead sides and end pieces gone and rope	2.00
1 silk umbrella (new) lost	5.00
1 sett castors cost 12 dolls. damage done, say	4.00
1 salt cellar broke, 1.50, 2 or 3 Tumblers broke	2.00
Damage done paint on house, Barn etc.	18.00
	<hr/>
	35.50
Deduct Umbrella	5.00
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	30.50
Clock key lost	.50
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	31.00

Policy 794. Paid in full, Dec. 7, 1819.

A more serious memorandum, and one giving a glimpse of the reading of the day, is as follows:

1,000 President's Tour at \$1.25	\$1,250
500 Memoirs of Jackson	625
800 Labourne's Campaigns at \$2.25	1,800
5 Setts Scott's Bible	160
500 Uncle Sam in Search after His Lost honor at 50c	250