

**TOWN OF ARLINGTON**  
**PAST AND PRESENT**

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

**1637 TO 1907**

BY  
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Arlington's second water company was started by wealthy residents along the line of Pleasant street, to supply their new and full plumbed dwellings with required water by an easier method than pumping the same into tanks, who secured the enactment of the following:

## ACTS OF 1855, CHAPTER 13.

*An Act to incorporate the Spy Pond Water Company.*

SECTION 1. John Schouler, Edward Chapman, Abel G. Peck, their associates and successors, are hereby made a corporation by the name of the Spy Pond Water Company, in West Cambridge, for the purpose of furnishing the inhabitants of said town an abundant supply of soft water, by raising the water of Spy Pond by steam power into a reservoir and conducting the same by pipes to the residences of the inhabitants in said town and for this purpose they shall have all the powers and privileges, and be subject to all the duties and liabilities and restrictions set forth in the forty-fourth chapter of the Revised Statutes.

SECTION 2. The capital stock of said corporation shall not exceed \$50,000 and the same may be invested and held in such real and personal estate as shall be necessary and convenient for carrying on the business of the said corporation; and no shares in the capital stock of the said company shall be issued for a less sum or amount to be actually paid in on each, than the par value of the shares which shall be first issued.

Approved by Governor, Feb. 7, 1855.

The plan was to pump water into a standpipe erected on the high land on the westerly side of Pleasant street, but the company acquired no land or other privileges under the act.

In 1867 this company, by act of the legislature, changed its name to Arlington Lake Water Company, and the act authorized "completion of organization wherever the same may be now defective," etc. See Chapter 40, Acts 1867.

Chapter 245, Acts of 1871, empowered this company to take waters of Sucker Brook and its tributaries, etc., and to sell its rights to the town of Arlington under specified conditions of Chapter 93, Acts of 1870.

At a town meeting held Aug. 16, 1871, ninety-six to thirteen, citizens voted to accept the offer of Arlington Lake Water Company to sell all rights, without any conditions annexed, for \$388. The motion also included an appropriation of \$120,000 to build a reservoir, lay water pipes, etc., and provided for the issue of water bonds.

The sequel of these preliminary steps, extending from 1855 to 1872, was the establishment of public water works in the latter year. The town records contain reports of numerous meetings prior to that of Aug. 16, 1871, when the vote to purchase rights of Arlington Lake Water Company was passed. They show by inference that the taking of the waters of "Sucker Brook" was vigorously opposed by some of the wealthier citizens, also that other sources of supply were suggested.

The reservoir created by building a dam to retain the waters of the brook had a storage capacity of 77,000,000 gallons and the normal flow of the stream was 720 gallons per minute. A fatal mistake was made in not removing the soil at the bottom of the inclosed space before the gates were closed and the reservoir filled. When the water was let on it flowed into twelve miles of main pipe, the largest being twelve inches in diameter.

During construction complications requiring legislative action occurred; soon after the system was inaugurated suits for damages were instituted, so that in 1878 the sum total of water bonds issued amounted to \$300,000.

This great increase in cost over estimates presented by original promoters was less an occasion of dissatisfaction than the quality of the water furnished and a scarcity in the dry season when naturally the larger quantity was desired. Again, none of the elevated residential sections could be supplied, as this system relied on gravity for distribution.

To meet the first objection, all sorts of devices of filtration and elimination were tried, with but temporary relief.

To meet the demands of residents on high land, May 28, 1894, the town voted to establish a high service plant and authorized the issue of bonds to the amount of \$92,000 to build standpipe, furnish pumps, etc. The water to supply these pumps was obtained from driven wells in the territory opposite the railroad station at East Lexington. The standpipe was erected at the apex of Arlington Heights.

In this enterprise the town was again unfortunate, the water developing an undesirable quantity of iron, and Nov. 2, 1898, the town voted to abandon its local water works and become a part

of the Metropolitan system. The application was granted by the Commissioners, Jan. 31, 1899.

In 1873 Arlington Five Cent Savings Bank purchased the land and buildings on the corner of Pleasant street, and there erected the brick block which is the business place of the three banks — First National, Savings Bank, Arlington Coöperative. In 1874 the building was ready for occupancy. Up to this time the center railroad station, then located east of Town Hall, had furnished its place of business, its officers sharing with the local coal dealer (J. Winslow Peirce, who was also station agent) the single room the depot afforded. Under these conditions it is not strange that the depot became a social and political center, where the visitor was likely to meet citizens interested in town affairs at almost any time during the day and was sure to find a number present each evening.

Bethel Lodge No. 12, I. O. O. F., leased the entire third story and fitted it for lodge uses, vacating Menotomy Hall which had been headquarters since being reinstated in 1866. More details regarding this lodge will be found in the section devoted to societies.

In 1873 the selectmen commenced operations on a plan to widen, straighten and change the grade of Massachusetts avenue, laid out originally from Alewife Brook to Water street "six rods wide," but which had been encroached upon by abutters almost its entire length. No "grade" had ever been established and from Lake street to the center railroad crossing there were a succession of knolls of considerable size which made surface draining impossible.

The highest of these "humps" was in front of the Arlington House, from which the ground fell off nearly to the level of the cellar under Swan's Block and then rose abruptly to the grade of the steam railroad. The work at this point had progressed to the extent of lowering the grade from the junction at Broadway to Medford street, when an injunction from the Superior Court, procured by Nathan Robbins and others, stopped operations. Twenty years later, and at an expense of thousands of dollars more than it would originally have cost, Massachusetts avenue