

Society Paper by George Y. Wellington 11/28/98

“What should be the aim, objective of this Society”

We are now on the commencement of the third year since this Society was organized and the principal part of the work of the first year was in the completion of our organization, until in the Spring of 1897 we succeeded in obtaining a Charter from the State, and organized under the same; the second year we met monthly and we had several very interesting papers read – some local, all historical. We have had one meeting this year at which one of our own members read a very interesting paper on Alexander Hamilton which was not only interesting but instructive. This evening it has fallen to my lot to read a paper on my opinion of what this Society should do and accomplish, and a dry subject it is. But it is written in order that it may bring out some discussion, so that I hope that all will not agree with me. Thus far this society in my opinion has been a success, the social part of it is the best most interesting, but I think to make our success complete, every member should do something to aid our work. I know that the Society is young – it should have been born 100 years ago. If it had what a font of interesting knowledge would have been in its possession, but as it is we must make up for the lost time, for our own benefit and for the benefit of those who 100 years hence will look back over our records. I have heard that a man was once asked to contribute some money in and of some good work, and he was not going to do anything for posterity had never done anything for him! I hope our members will not act on that idea, if those that have gone before did not form any Historical Society for us, we will do better than they for those to come after us, and deserve their thanks. First of all the Society should hold be gift as its own, and in trust for others, any old paper manuscripts, letters, diaries, books, pamphlets. Public Documents and Relics, and see that they are placed where there is no danger of their being destroyed by fire. At present the Trustees of the Public Library offer us room in their stack room. Now I would suggest that a few suitable boxes of proper size to fit the shelves, be furnished with lock and key and a chance place on a piece of cardboard outside to indicate the contents of each box, and who owns the papers and articles, it being understood that this historical collection pertains to the history of our Town. Having suggested a method of preserving this collection, I think it is incumbent on each and all of us to bring out from the garrets anything they can find and have them deposited in these boxes. But you may ask, what benefit can be gained from all this when shut up and away from parties interested? First if we have the material, we should utilize it, but it is the main point “to first catch the hare, before you can cook it.” So it is the most important point to get your material before you can analyze it.

We have made our annual fees low for the purpose of enlarging our membership, and they are high enough for our purpose, if we can utilize home talent, and do not spend our surplus in celebrations. We should save about \$75 each year, and in the course of 4 or 5 years we should have 4 or \$500 with due economy to employ some expert to look over our stock, discarding anything not useful, and make a digest of what is useful and connected with our Town's History. There is not an old family in this Town but what

some of its members have in their mind old stories and facts told by their grandparents, and it is their duty to write it down, even if they do not wish to read the paper they can present it to the Society to keep, or as part of a collection to be edited by some one, and read to the Society. For what I have said has reference to old papers, but we are making history every day. The very breakfast we are this morning has already gone into history. If anyone of us has recorded in his or her diary what their breakfast consisted of and if that diary should be unearthed 100 years ago, it would be quite interesting what blank had for breakfast 100 years ago. Unreadable, newspapers with important current events should be preserved, and above all the Town Reports made annually.

Just here I will ask that each and all of you search your houses and gather up all the Town Reports you can previous to the year 1890, and so far back as you can find such reports earlier in pamphlet or on sheets of paper, if possible we would like to obtain and have bound 4 or 5 sets of these for future use, as these reports contain much useful knowledge concerning the Town's history and progress. Also (unreadable) the names of taxpayers, reports of the School Committee, and of all the offices having charge of the Town's coffers (unreadable). It is important that under the auspices of the Society these reports should be preserved, and it is our duty to preserve them as a part of the Town's history from the settlement of Cambridge to the year 1900 from what historical facts we can obtain, and in order to do this in a systematic manner, I will name some subjects that are needed. First the ground on which this Town is located – how come we are a Town in possession of it? We all know that our Puritan forefathers either stole it or purchased it with trinkets from the all but annihilated tribe of Indians who occupied it when the first settlers came, then these large tracts of land were divided and subdivided until we see at the present day the numerous towns and cities within this State. Arlington has been no exception, and it would be a surprise to many of us to learn what changes have been made in our Town lives within the last 60 years. A friend of mine a short time since said to me, George, how many natives are there of Arlington 70 years old and older now living here? I replied I think you can count them on your fingers, "but," said I, Stephen you don't call yourself a native do you? Why? You were born in Charlestown, weren't you?" "Yes," said he "but I never lived anywhere but in this old place." And it was true, he had never moved, but he had lived in two towns! Now we would like a territorial history of Arlington and old West Cambridge, also parts of Cambridge and Charlestown, and we have a member of this Society who has made research and could give us an interesting paper. Mr. Blake gave us an interesting history of the Baptist Society. I hope he will write it up to date and give this Society a copy of it. We want a history of the first Congregational Parish from the time it was organized to this date. There should be some one of our members willing to write this. The Orthodox Congregational Parish should find its historian from among our members, though it is but about 55 years old. The Universalist Society was formed in 1840. I remember the time and the feeling there was about it then and there are members of

this Society that could write a good history of it. Then those in the Roman Catholic Church. We want the history for it done a good work for one of us when it located here, and I think I can get a history of this to go on our records. Another subject is the evolution of the Public School, if there is any one thing we should thank the early settlers of Mass. For it is, the establishing of the Public School in every settlement they made: unreadable they did more; when John Harvard established a college in Cambridge in 1636, he built better than he knew, and the influence of Harvard College today knows no bounds throughout the civilized World. Yet that college was located in our Town for it was not until as recent as 1807 that this Town was incorporated and separated itself from the mother Town, although the Parish was organized 75 years before, and its minister was a member of the college corporation. We had public schools in those old days and the old fashioned District School was in force until 1888, and since then great changes have been made for the improvement of the Public Schools, and for this purpose I have never found this town lacking in appropriating all the money that was needed to perfect our school system. I think among our members there is more than one that can give us a good paper on the Public School.

Another topic I would call your attention to is the industries of this Town from the earliest days of its first settlement until now farming in the most advanced methods has been the chief industry and now the fame of the Arlington Markets has spread all over this land, and one of our members has the reputation of being one of the leading Market Gardeners in this country. A paper on the history of the farming industry of this Town would be very acceptable. In manufacturing did it ever seem to any of you that our Town occupied a unreadable position? Over 100 years ago the only factory for the manufacture of cotton, wool and horse cards in the United States was located here, and Amos Whittemore was the inventor of the machine that made them, a machine that John Randolph of Roslindale said in Congress in 1809 that he would renew the patent to all eternity, "for it is the only machine which ever had a soul". The manufacture of these cards by Amos and William Whittemore and their descendants was carried on in this Town until 1865. Some one of the descendents should give us a history of the industry. The first factory for the manufacture of saws in the U. S. was started in this town in 1832 by William Welch and Charles Griffiths, the buildings they occupied are still standing on Grove Street. In 1832 Charles Reeves started the business of ice cutting in this Town, and James Fessenden, uncle of the President of this Society I think carries on the business to this day in Western Pennsylvania. Another new business of that time was Calico printing done by blocks, an industry started by James Schouler in 1832 in a factory since burned down in rear of what is now Mathew Rowe's store. Mr. Schouler was the father of the late Hon. John Schouler and William Schouler, Adjutant General during the War under Gov. John A. Andrews. The history of the first grist mill formerly the Cutter and now Fowle's Mill is well given in Cutters History of Arlington and it stands on the site of the first water mill erected in Cambridge Colony.

Pleasant Street as it now winds at the base of the hills back of our Town was just the horse path through the woods from Watertown for this mill in Menotomy. There are descendants of those who carried on these industries in this Society, and it would be a kind act if some of them would write up the history of these and file the papers with our Secretary to be read by them or by her at our meetings. Other subjects I might suggest the evolution of our fire department, the origin of our steam railroad (concerning this I will file a copy of the paper I read in Lexington). The origin of what is now the electric railroad to Boston, formerly the West Cambridge Horse Railroad, the burden of carrying which from 1862 to 1869 fell upon myself, and that at the time of the Civil War perhaps some day I will write out its history. Now perhaps you will say I have laid out a big contract for somebody, and we will suppose that we get the historical papers on the different subjects I have named, what can the Society do with them?

On June 11th 1907 this Town will be 100 years old. June 11th 1807 is the date of the first Town Meeting ever held in this Town. By that date this Society should have collected through its members, historical lectures on such topics as I have named and other topics that when compiled into a book form and published at the time of the Town's Centennial anniversary would be in great demand especially if published under the auspices of this Society. What this Town did in the War of the Revolution is well stated in the book written by the late Samuel Abbot Smith, a book now out of print, copies of which would be in demand if a reprint was made, and I call would the attention of this Society to this matter, to see if in their opinion it can be arranged to republish Smith's account of West Cambridge in the Revolution.

Another subject in connection with this would be our Town in the War of the Rebellion. I think the work we did here in that war is not fully realized by the present generation, and someone versed in this matter should write the history of it for our Society. If we can get the history of our Town, on the various subjects herein named, written up by our members up to 1900, and compile the several papers in one book, we will have accomplished a good work, even for so young a society. As yet I have not called your attention to the *unreadable* individuals who used their influence for the benefit of this section, before and after it was separated from Cambridge. There are today documents of men who were foremost in by-gone days in their work for the welfare of this Town, and by your indulgence I will call to your attention some of them. First of all I will mention Wm Cutter, a freeman who lived here in 1638, but in 1653 returned to England. But his mother Elizabeth Cutter remained here with her brother Richard Cutter, and from them are descended the Cutter family. The mill site, now Fowle's Mill, was occupied as a mill as early as 1637 by Capt. Geo Cooke, he came to this country in 1635. He was chosen captain in 1637 for Newtown (now Cambridge) and was selectman in 1638 1642 and 1643. Speaker of the House of Deputies in 1645 and one of the earliest members of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery he returned to England late in 1645, and was reported to be slain in wars in Ireland in the year 1652.

Henry Dunster in 1648 was a leading citizen, President of the College in Winothaway ? or Menotomy Teels ?, owned lands near Cooke's mill in Charlestown, and it was in `1638 a road (now Pleasant Street) was laid out from Watertown Lane to Cooke's Mill in Menotomy. John Adams purchased in 1664 land where Pierce and Winn coal yard is and Russell Park, his old residence was in part town down in 1845 when the Lexington West Cambridge road was built. One of our members is a descendant and should give us an account of the Adams family. It would be very interesting. A history has been presented of the Cutter family, which for one nearly 300 years has been closely connected with our Town's history and this Society should have a copy of it. In a list of tax payers in Menotomy in 1688 we find names of families down to the present time, John Adams, Reverend, William Gershon, Nathaniel cutter, William Gershon, Joseph Russell, & William Jason Russell, John Wellington, (*unreadable*), Edward & Joseph Winship and Thomas Hall. In 1693 the Town of Cambridge granted Menotomy a quarter of an acre of land upon this common, near Jason Russell's house for the accommodation of a schoolhouse, and there was built the first school house in the Town. Among the dewcendants of the Russells there should be someone of our members to give a history of this family. To continue in the names of old families that have come down almost to the present time we find such other names besides those mentioned in 1739 such as Swan, Butterfield, Frost Dunster, Dickson, Prentice, Tellebrown, Locke, Robbins, Hill, Cooke and Whittemore. There are descendants from nearly all these families and someone in each might find it interesting to look back and write up a sketch concerning each of their families. It is not a very momentous undertaking when we once get interested in the work. For the first half of this century the leading and most progressive men were the Russells, Whittemore, Cutter, Peirces, Lockes and Wellingtons, but if was not until after 1830 that changes in the character of the Town unreadable marked: such as follows. In 1837 establishment of the Town Library and it is the first Public Library established in this State. In 1838 the old District School system was abolished by which in every School District we had a man and a woman teacher in each district throughout the year.

In 1846 the Town Railroad from Lexington into Boston was opened; in 1859 the Horse Railroad from here to Boston was opened; also in the same year the Town was lighted by gas. In 1872 the waterworks were connected and the Town had a water supply, and in 1896 the sewer system was introduced. I think I have given points for many subjects that from which there is some work for the members of this Society to do. Yet I bear in mind that under the auspices of this Society we should have lectures on New England History such as would interest the people of the Town, but our finances are not sufficient, but I would suggest this. Why not have that great historian John Fiske engage the Town Hall and have a suitable commission fee. And then perhaps Charles Francis Adams. I think that both would draw good houses, and to the profit of the Society, to bring it before the Public. I am glad of this opportunity to make all these

suggestions and hope the members will consider them and discuss them, and make other suggestions that will help this Society in its work.