

# Menotomy Minutes



NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2019



## President's Corner

Hello Historical Society Members,

Summer is upon us, when I share the last 12 months at the Society.

Further work on Jason Russell House restoration, supported by both the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund as well as Community Preservation Act funds from the Town of Arlington has focused on the rear section of the house, especially the foundation sill and the windows.

Funds from the Commonwealth's Office of Travel and Tourism paid for a new HVAC system in the Smith Museum, refurbished rest rooms, and general repairs and maintenance of the grounds.

We started to put portions of our collection onto the web. You can browse [arlingtonhistorical.org](http://arlingtonhistorical.org) to see many of the interesting items we have cataloged.

Here's our by-the-numbers story from July 2018 through June 2019:

- Total memberships: 254
- Membership income: \$13,075 (2018: \$12,605, 2017: \$10,295)
- Donation income: \$25,330 (2018: \$31,122.50, 2017: \$20,070)
- Number of 3rd graders who visited the Jason Russell House: 221 (2018: 309)
- Schools sending students to the Jason Russell House as part of our third-graders program: Dallin, Peirce, St. Agnes, Stratton, and Thompson.
- Visitors to the Jason Russell house (excluding the third-grade program): 642—including 70 from outside of Massachusetts. Seven different foreign countries, including places as distant as Chile and Japan, are represented. Finally, four of our 2018-2019 visitors are descendants of Jason Russell.
- Number of collection items cataloged in the database: 17,064 (2018: 16,151, 2017: 15,285)
- Number of collection items now available online: 4,561.

I wish you the best of health as you enjoy the summer season,  
Stuart Brorson, President



On June 24, a ceremony dedicated a Town of Arlington greenspace on Mill Lane as Mill Pond Park, in honor of Patricia Fitzmaurice (1923-2001), a visionary historic preservationist who served many years on the board and committees of the Arlington Historical Society.



On June 9, Society Trustee Rosemarie Smurzynski, a docent at Mount Auburn Cemetery, led a walking tour of the graves of prominent Arlingtonians. This was a benefit event for the successful fundraising to restore the 1813 Amos Whittemore mahogany sideboard, made by furniture craftsman Abel Whitney. It is on permanent display at the Jason Russell House.

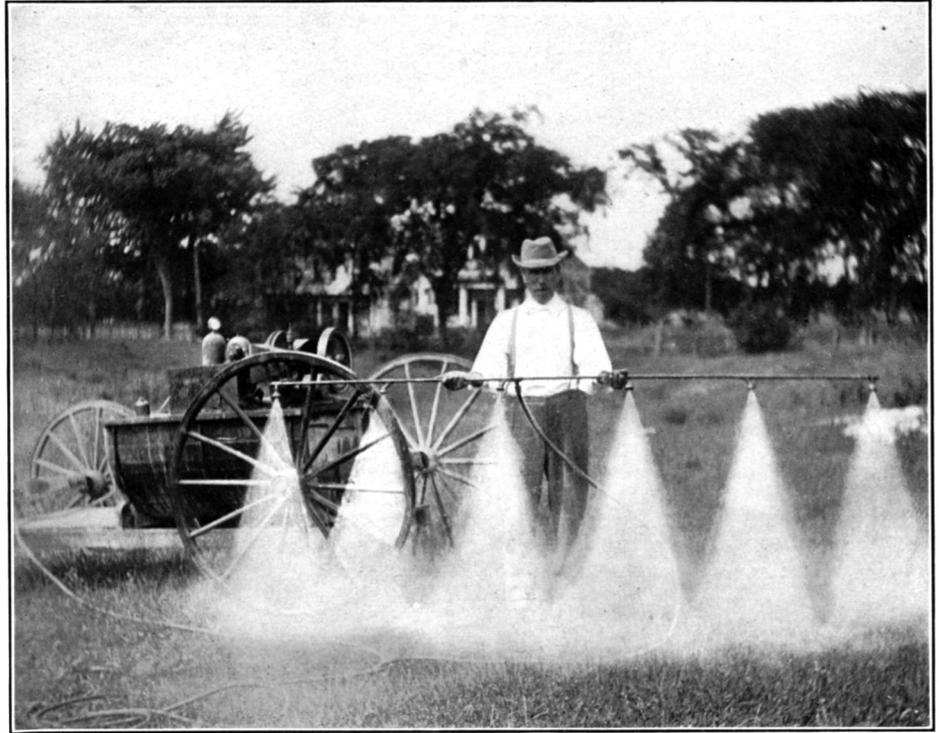
**Save the Date**

**Fall Fundraiser Cocktail Party**

**Friday, October 4, 2019 5:30—8:30**

# “The Beautiful Mist”

By Stuart Brorson



Products sold by the Frost Co. included colorfully named pulverized blue vitriol and scary-sounding Spracin.

Because it was an agricultural town well into the 1900s, Arlington had many businesses supporting agriculture. One of them was the Frost Insecticide Company, which flourished during the first half of the 20th century. It produced several varieties of insecticide (including something called “Arlington Oil”) as well as many different spraying machines used on fields and trees.

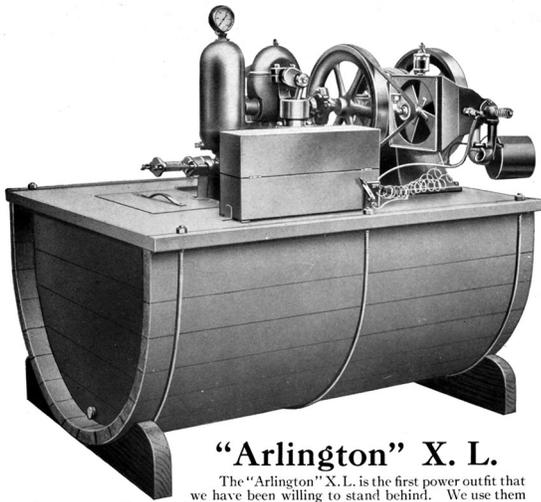
In 1909 the company built the large brick building currently numbered 22 Mill St., which today serves as medical offices. Compare the photograph of the building in the vintage promotional literature to a contemporary photo below. The

structures shown in the old photo have been heavily modified – including addition of windows to the brick building. But the majestic London plane tree in front of the building still stands today.

We have many interesting artifacts from the Frost Insecticide Company thanks to Society life-member Bill Mahoney. Bill spent a long time acquiring items related to Arlington’s history at antique stores, eBay and other sources. He donated his wonderful collection to the Society a couple of years ago. The volume of materials he donated is so large that we are still working to organize and catalog it all. Society



An ancillary Frost Co. business in this structure (which outlived the insecticide company itself) was the Arlington Storage Co. In 1913 it advertised: “kept free of insects by fumigating twice per year.” The Frost Company’s storage business led to major additions to the side and rear of its original structure. The plane tree is a remarkable survivor of an intense road traffic environment.

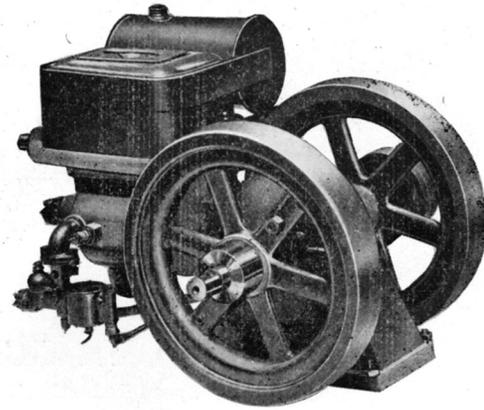


### “Arlington” X. L.

The “Arlington” X. L. is the first power outfit that we have been willing to stand behind. We use them in our own orchards and do our spraying with one man at one-half the operating expense and more efficiency.

Power spray outfits in the past have not been adapted to New England conditions. They have been too heavy for uneven and soft ground, and have been too expensive for the average grower. This power outfit fills all requirements.

### ARLINGTON X. L. ENGINE



The ARLINGTON X. L. ENGINE is the natural evolution and combination of the single cylinder, horizontal valve-in-the-head, hopper cooled, enclosed crank case type with throttling governor.

In 1909, the Frost Co. won first prize at the New England Fruit Show in Massachusetts Horticultural Hall, for its exhibit of spraying equipment. After it exited the equipment business, the Frost Co. continued as a distributor of insecticides and fertilizers into the early 1960s.

volunteer Colleen Cunningham recently cataloged the materials in Bill's collection from Frost Insecticide, and brought them to my attention.

The Frost Insecticide collection includes two catalogs (1915 and 1922) sporting photos of interesting spraying machines, as well as photos of workers spraying clouds of toxic insecticides on plants. Some examples are shown on these pages. I normally cringe when I see unprotected workers spraying poisonous chemicals (including lead and arsenic) into the air, but the one

photo shown below extolling the “beautiful mist” of deadly insecticide makes me chuckle and shudder at the same time. I can't imagine modern insecticide manufacturers advertising their products in such an innocent and carefree way. We've come a long way since an airborne toxic mist could be considered “beautiful”! ❖



This photograph, taken in the orchard of W. E. Hayward, Temple, N. H., shows the beautiful mist the “Arlington” X. L. gives with its 200 lbs. pressure.



The **Arlington X. L. Sprayer** is capable of supplying two guns as you will note. The photograph shown here was taken Farmers' Week at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass., where this machine performed satisfactory in every way.

Harold L. Frost, president of Frost Insecticide, owned extensive fruit orchards in Littleton, Mass., which frequently served as another of the “catalogue models” for his own line of products. Harold L. Frost received his B.S. degree in 1895 from Massachusetts Agricultural College, the predecessor of today's flagship state university, UMass Amherst. He founded Frost Insecticide Co. in 1906.

# 2019-2020 AHS Election

On May 28, the Society held its annual election.

Sincere thanks are offered for the service of former board members Doris Birmingham, Angela Olszweski, and Christine Bird (Clerk of the Society); as well as to Bob Fredieu of the Nominating Committee.

This season's listing of Society officers, directors and trustees is at right. George Parsons returns to the board after three years as a trustee, to serve as director in charge of membership. Rosemarie Smurzynski, previously first vice president, was elected a trustee. Christine Cronin-Tocci, Elaine Ropi, and Bob Tosi are first-time board members. Doreen Stevens was elected a new member of the Nominating Committee.

The Society is fortunate to have a great mix of talents and tenures to devote their volunteer energies to keep it such a dynamic organization.

## OFFICERS

President – Stuart Brorson  
Vice President – Pamela Meister  
Vice President – Patsy Kraemer  
Treasurer – Alan Jones  
Clerk – Christine Cronin-Tocci  
Membership Director – George Parsons

## DIRECTORS

Linda Cohn • Paul Fennelly  
William Lyons • Elaine Ropi • Bob Tosi

## TRUSTEES

Peter Howard • Rosemarie Smurzynski  
Al Stevens

## 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.



June 21, 1919: One hundred years ago, this sign at the corner of Pleasant Street celebrated the return of soldiers and sailors from World War I. (Robbins Library collection.)

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

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE