

The Life and Legacy of Joseph Burnett

A Summary of his life and family accomplishments by the Southborough Historical Society

(Revised July 30, 2010)



Deerfoot Farms in Southborough

1820—Joseph Burnett was born on November 11, in Southborough. The home where he was born, located on Gilmore Road, would later become the summer home and residence of Warner Oland, the Hollywood actor who is best known for playing Chinese detective Charlie Chan. Warner Oland is buried in Southborough.

1835-- Began attending the Worcester Technical College and the Worcester College of Pharmacy.

1837--Graduated as a Doctor of Chemistry and entered the employ of Theodore Metcalf Company- an Apothecary located on Tremont Row, Boston.

1845-- Became a full partner with Theodore Metcalf Company, manufacturing drug chemists of Boston. The company would be known as the Burnett & Metcalf Chemical Co. He operated the apothecary until he sold his partnership in 1855.

1846-- October 16th, he supplied the anesthetic used by Dr. William T. Morton to perform the first public painless surgical operation in the United States, at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Morton insisted on using his anesthetic exclusively. A monument commemorating this achievement is located in the Boston Common (The Good Samaritan Monument to Ether). Interestingly, Dr. Morton's name is omitted from the monument as there is still a controversy over who was the first to do painless surgery.

1847-- Created the first liquid Vanilla extract. Later he decided to concentrate on flavoring extracts and subsequently formed the Joseph Burnett Company of Boston (originally named Joseph Burnett & Company as he started in partnership with William G. Edmonds).

1847-- Bought up acreage of two farms in Southborough to form Deerfoot Farm Company (later Deerfoot Farms Company).

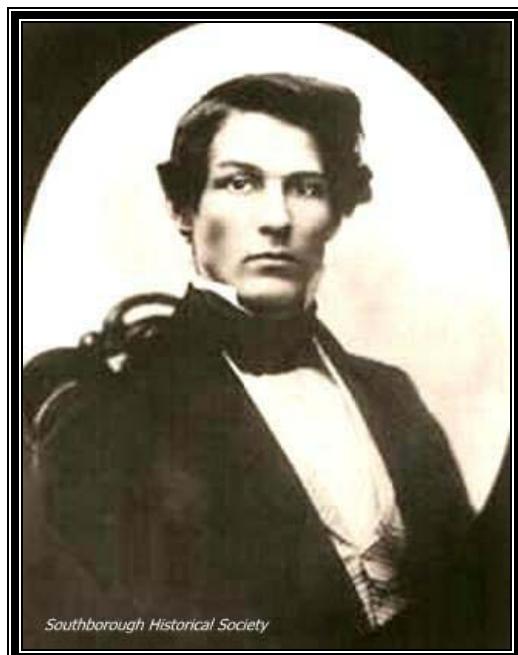
1847-1848-- Met and married Josephine Cutter of Boston at the Church of the Advent in that city.

1849-- Edward Burnett, first child of Joseph and Josephine, was born in Boston. The Joseph Burnett Company was thriving and they decided to build a stone mansion in Southborough (which still stands today at 84 Main Street).

1850-- Moved into the completed stone mansion with a growing family (some accounts say this happened in 1849). They eventually had 12 children. Deerfoot Farm Company was also doing very well and expanding.

1854-- Began acquiring one of the earliest herds of Jersey cattle in the country from the Taintor Importation.

1855-- He sold his 1/2 partnership in the Burnett & Metcalf Chemical Co. and went on his own. Burnett extracts would be known from “coast to coast” and become a best seller nationwide.



Joseph Burnett (~1850's)

1858—Moved the premises of Joseph Burnett Co. to a larger facility on 27 Central Street, Boston. As far as we have found to this day, they would eventually produce 33 extract flavorings, 7 different food colorings, 14 color pastes & tablets, 18 different spices, 11 ice cream & sherbet liquid mixes, 3 instant pudding flavors, vanilla beans and several other products.

1858--Introduced his best known medical product, Cocaine for the hair, he had developed in 1857. The company would produce a line of medical and personal care products as well.

1859—Joseph proposed building an Episcopal church in Southborough. Up to this time, the old stone shop on his estate had been used for worship services.

1860-- St. Mark's Church in Southborough was formally chartered and Joseph Burnett became Senior Warden of St. Mark's (1860-1894).

1862-- The cornerstone was laid for St. Mark's Church.

1863-- St. Mark's Church was consecrated.

1863--Joseph Burnett Company extracts were now sold overseas.

1865-- He founded St. Mark's Private School in Southborough and was a trustee until 1894.

1865-1866—Joseph was president of the South Middlesex Agricultural Society.

1866-- Elize Belle Burnett Fay and her sister, Harriet Marcella Burnett (daughters of Joel Burnett and cousins of Joseph Burnett), established a day school for boys and girls (Fay School in Southborough). The school received financial support from both Joseph Burnett and Sylvester Fay (husband of Eliza Belle Burnett).

1870-1890-- Deerfoot Farms Company became Southborough's leading employer.

1870-- Joseph Burnett's recipe for sausages caused a demand among those who had sampled them. Deerfoot Farms began producing and selling them on a commercial basis. Their sausage would gradually become world famous. They would also produce bacon, ham, frankfurters, lard, and other pork products

c.1870's--Edward Burnett took part in creating the Boston Terrier breed by mating his female English Bulldog (Gyp or Kate) to Robert Hooper's White English Terrier/English Bulldog mix (Hooper's Judge).

1871-- Edward Burnett, after graduating from Harvard, became president of Deerfoot Farms Company. Joseph continued as president of the Joseph Burnett Company until his death.

1872—Deerfoot Farms began selling its products to the Boston market.

1878-1879-- Joseph Burnett was president of the Boston Druggist Association. He had been a member (as were his sons) of corporate boards and other societies, too numerous to mention.

1879-- Deerfoot was the first dairy to use a centrifugal separator commercially. This cream separator is now in the collection of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

C.1880-- Deerfoot Farm became one of the earliest dairies to bottle milk & cream products in glass. This was a great convenience and provided a sterile package in which to sell their milk.

1881-- Deerfoot opened its first store/office in Boston. It closed in 1929 after having been at several other Boston locations.

1883-- Guernsey cows were imported.

1886-- Edward Burnett elected as a U.S. Representative and served from 1887-1889.

1886-1891-- James Russell Lowell, American romantic poet and Edward Burnett's father-in-law, lived at Deerfoot Farm.

1889-189-- Joseph Burnett guided construction of the new St. Mark's School on a hill north of the original sight, where it is today.

1892-- During Grover Cleveland's presidential campaign of 1892, Deerfoot Farm was made his campaign headquarters for New England. The Clevelands even came to Southborough and stayed at Edward's home for two days and one night. (The Clevelands also came to visit, at least one other time, in 1889).

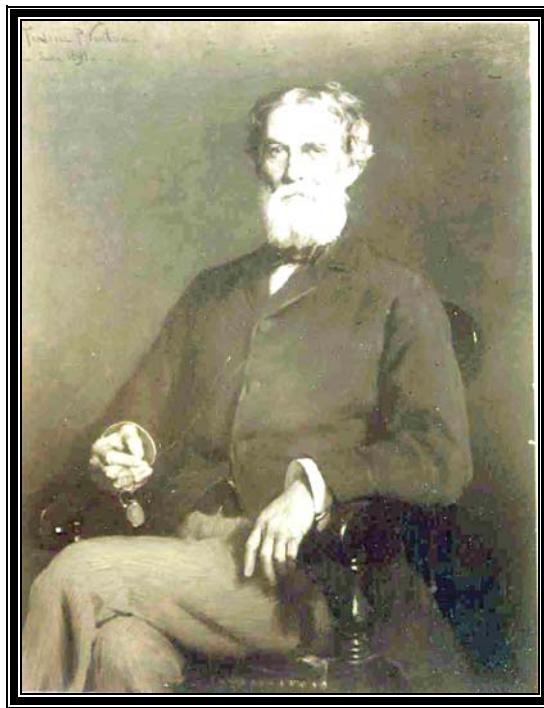
c. 1892--Robert Burnett became Deerfoot president as Edward Burnett left to pursue his passion for farm architecture and cattle breeding for wealthy gentlemen farmers (including the farm at the famous Biltmore Estate in North Carolina).

1893-- Deerfoot began acquiring acreage which would eventually become “Little Deerfoot”, where heifers were raised until they became milkers. The property was across the Boston & Worcester Turnpike (Rte.9).

1894-- The State began takeover of prime Deerfoot farm land for the creation of a reservoir. The original farm buildings were raised. New farm buildings were relocated further south on Deerfoot Road in 1897(see below). Robert Burnett managed to reduce the land taken by the state to only 20 acres.

1894--The Joseph Burnett Company moved to 36 India Street, Boston.

1894-- Joseph died as a result of a carriage accident. He is buried in the family graveyard behind St. Mark’s Church.



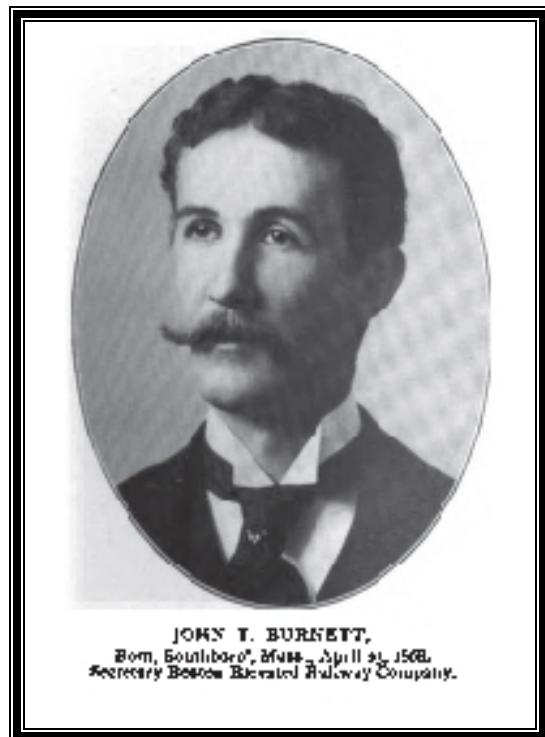
1897-- New and larger farm buildings were built, including a large hay barn with cow sheds, 4 farm houses, a worker’s boarding house and stables on Deerfoot Road. A sausage factory and a new dairy located on Newton Street were also opened. The barn and cow sheds were advanced and a model for the agricultural industry. They were likely designed by Edward Burnett.

1897--A Store/Office was also opened in New York City. The final Store/Office was closed in 1929 and M. Kraus & Bros. became their agent for the pork side of the business and did so until 1970 (see 1929 below).

1897--Crystal Pond began supplying water to the farm. Ice continued to be cut from the reservoir up until around WWII. An ice making plant was installed at the

dairy/sausage plant, with water supplied by artesian wells.

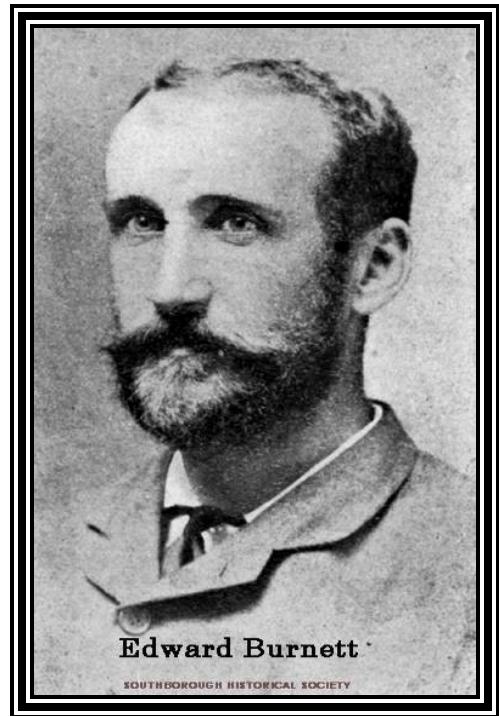
1906—John T. Burnett, another son of Joseph, became president of the Joseph Burnett Company. From the date of their father's death until 1906, Robert Burnett had been president. John T. died in 1929, the same year as his brother Robert.



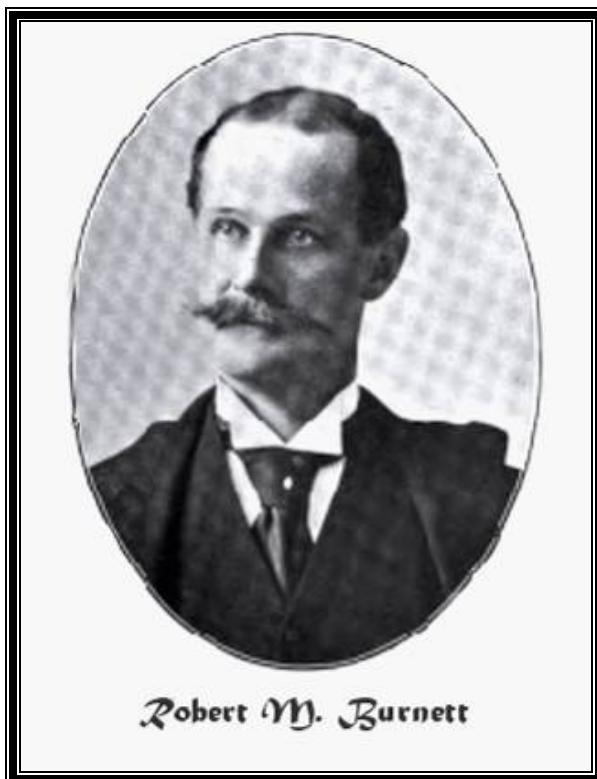
1911-- Deerfoot began pasteurizing its milk inside the bottle, the most famous of the few dairies to do so. By this time, Deerfoot, along with milk from its own herd of approximately 150 milkers, bought milk from 129 local area dairies. At its peak, Deerfoot owned between 900 -1,000 acres of land in Southborough. The process required a special style bottle with a metal cap to prevent contamination and deterioration by the brine solution used in heating.

1922—The Joseph Burnett Company relocates to its final address, 437-447 D Street in South Boston. The property was sold in 1947 and is currently a beautifully restored condominium.

1925-- Edward Burnett died. He is buried in the family graveyard behind St. Mark's Church.



1929--Robert Burnett died. He is buried in the family graveyard behind St. Mark's Church.



Both Edward and Robert had patents registered with the U. S. Patent Office.

1929-- General Ice Cream Corp. division of National Dairy Products a/k/a Sealtest purchased Deerfoot. The Joseph Burnett estate, however, remained under Burnett family ownership. By the time of this purchase, Deerfoot Farms was one of the major suppliers of milk products in the Boston and Eastern Massachusetts' markets.

1929-- M. Kraus & Bros., NY handled their pork distribution in New York City until 1970.

1933-1935-- A cow from Deerfoot, "Deerfoot Farm Maid", went to the South Pole and back with Admiral Byrd. Along with two other cows from two other dairies, she was one of the first and only cows to go to the South Pole.

1934-- By this year, Deerfoot Farm sausage was one of the biggest radio advertisers in the nation.

1940-1945-- Deerfoot supplied pork products to the allies during WWII and was recognized by the government and presented with the Achievement "A" Award, with White Star, for outstanding production.

1942-- Deerfoot sausages were featured on the Thanksgiving and Christmas menus at the White House. They were also on the menus of hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, railroads, airlines and vacation resorts worldwide.

1944—The pork processing plant expanded when Albert Lewis became general manager.

1944--Wellesley Farms property (Fillmore Farms at the Charles H. Jones estate in the Wellesley Farms section of Weston) was leased, possibly to get closer to the Boston market, until around 1952.

1945—The Joseph Burnett Company celebrated its 100th Anniversary. They probably incorrectly dated the founding of the company to the year Joseph Burnett became a registered pharmacist, making it appear they were in business longer than they actually were.

1946—The Joseph Burnett Company was sold to American Home Foods, Inc., a subsidiary of American Home Products Corporation.

1947--Deerfoot's 100th Anniversary. The dairy operation moved to Newton, Mass and 'In-Bottle' pasteurization ended. The farm and sausage plant remained in Southborough.

1947--The great stone house at 84 Main Street was sold to the Garfield family.

1950 --Deerfoot purchased Nourse Farm property in Bolton, Mass. It was used to graze their cattle. The property was sold in 1955.

1956 --Hygrade Food Products purchased the meat processing operation. The Deerfoot Farms Company name continued to be used.

1959—The dairy operation closed on December 31st and was sold to United Farmer's Cooperative.

c. 1965-- The farm acreage in Southborough was sold and the barn and cow sheds razed (including those of 'Little Deerfoot'). The boarding house and 1 farmhouse had burned in prior years. The 3 remaining farm houses and the stable/milk depot on Deerfoot Road became private homes.

1969--Deerfoot Farms Company ended when the meat processing plant was closed. Hygrade Foods sold the meat processing facility to L. B. Darling, division of Idlewild Farms. The Deerfoot Farms Company name was no longer used. The plant was raised during the 1990's and replaced by a modern medical facility.

c. 1960's-1980's—The Joseph Burnett Company had been sold several times over the years since 1945 and their brand of products are longer in existence.

The Daylight Home of
JOSEPH BURNETT COMPANY
437-447 D St., Boston, Massachusetts



Manufacturers of
Burnett's Flavoring Extracts,
Spices, Food Colors, Etc.

Visitors cordially welcomed

Since 1847 Burnett's Extracts have been
the "Essence of Economy"

The final location of the Joseph Burnett Company factory under Burnett ownership and how it appears today (below).





The two sides of the business are illustrated in this seal.