

The Life and Legacy of Joseph Burnett

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

- **1820** Born on November 11, in Southborough, son of Charles Ripley Burnett, Jr. and Kesiah (Pond) Burnett.
- **1835** Began attending the Worcester Technical College and the Worcester College of Pharmacy.
- **1837** Graduates as a Doctor of Chemistry and enters the employ of Theodore Metcalf, Boston Apothecary.
- **1845** Becomes a full partner in Theodore Metcalf Company, manufacturing drug chemists of Boston.
- **1846** October 16th, manufactures and supplies the anesthetic used by Dr. W.T.G. Morton to perform the first painless surgical operation in the United States at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Morton insists on using his anesthetic exclusively.
- **1847** Creates the first liquid Vanilla extract commercially produced and sold in the U.S and later worldwide. He decides to concentrate on flavoring extracts, but he continues to sell personal & medicinal products, and forms the Joseph Burnett Company of Boston. In later years spices, food coloring, mixes and other food related products are marketed.
- **1847** Buys up acreage of two farms in Southborough to form Deerfoot Farms Company. Some accounts claim this occurred in 1850, but this date is used as it is imprinted on their bottles as "since 1847".
- **1847-1848** Meets and marries Josephine Cutter of Boston at the Church of the Advent in that city.
- **1849** Edward Burnett, first child of Joseph and Josephine is born in Boston. The Joseph Burnett

Company is thriving and they decide to build a stone mansion in Southborough (which still stands today).

- **1850** Moves into the completed stone mansion with a growing family. Deerfoot Farms Company is doing very well and expanding. *The shop, which later becomes the first St. Mark's Chapel, is where the stone was cut to build the great house.*
- **1854** Begins acquiring one of the earliest herds of Jersey cattle in the country.
- **1855** Joseph Burnett's extracts are known from "coast to coast" and are a best seller nationwide.
- **1858** Moves premises of Joseph Burnett Co. to larger facilities at 27 Central Street, Boston.
- **1859** Proposes an Episcopal Church in Southborough.
- **1860** St. Mark's Church in Southborough is formally chartered.
- **1862** The cornerstone is laid for St. Mark's Church.
- **1863** St. Mark's Church is consecrated. *The old stone shop on Deerfoot Road had been used as the original St. Mark's chapel.* Joseph Burnett Company extracts are sold overseas.
- **1865** Founds St. Mark's School in Southborough and is a trustee of the school until 1894.
- **1865-1866** President of the South Middlesex Agricultural Society.
- **1866** Harriet Marcella Burnett and her sister Elize Belle (Burnett), cousins of Joseph Burnett establish Fay School.
- **1870-1890** Deerfoot Farms Company becomes Southborough's leading employer.
- **1860-1894** Joseph Burnett is Senior Warden at St. Mark's Church.
- **1870** Joseph Burnett's recipe for sausages causes a demand among those who have sampled it. Deerfoot

Farms begins producing this sausage which will gradually become world famous.

- **1870** Edward Burnett becomes President of Deerfoot Farms Company.
- **1872** Deerfoot Farms begins selling its products to the Boston market.
- **1878-1879** Joseph Burnett is named president of the Boston Druggist Association.
- **1879** The first centrifugal cream separator is used in the U.S. by Deerfoot Farm. Today it is part of the Smithsonian collection.
- **1880** Deerfoot opens its first store/office in Boston and later opens stores in New York. The last stores in Boston & New York will close around 1929.
- **C. 1880** Deerfoot becomes one of the earliest dairies to bottle milk products in glass.
- **1883** Guernsey cows are imported.
- **1886** Edward Burnett becomes a U.S. Congressman for his district. Grover Cleveland makes Deerfoot Farm his presidential campaign headquarters at Deerfoot Farm in 1892. He also visits Edward Burnett at the farm as both of their wives are friends.
- **1886-1891** James Russell Lowell, romantic poet, critic, editor, and diplomat and Edward Burnett's father-in-law lives at the home of Edward and his (James R. Lowell's) daughter Mable at Deerfoot Farm.
- **1889-1890** Jos. Burnett guides construction of the new St. Mark's School on a hill north of the original sight.
- **1892** Robert Burnett becomes President of Deerfoot Farms Company. Edward has been a politician and will go on to help establish the famous Biltmore Estates Dairy owned by the Vanderbilt family as well as many other wealthy "gentlemen's" farms.

- **1893** Deerfoot Farms begins acquiring acreage that will eventually become "Little Deerfoot", where heifers are raised until they become milkers.
- **1894** The State begins takeover of prime Deerfoot farm land for the creation of a reservoir. The original farm buildings are razed and new farm buildings will be relocated further south on Deerfoot Road in 1897.
- **1894** Joseph dies as a result of a carriage accident.
- **1894** A new rented shop at 36 India Street, Boston is opened by the Joseph Burnett Company which moves from its Central Street location.
- **1897** The new farm buildings (Deerfoot Road), sausage and dairy plant (Newton Street) are opened.
- **1899** Robert Burnett is granted a patent for a "bowling pin" shaped milk bottle. Edward Burnett has also been granted several patents over several years for farm implements.
- **C.1900 (early)** Deerfoot has creameries in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. The cream is shipped to Southborough. There was also a creamery in Northborough, Mass.
- **C.1906** The Joseph Burnett Co. concentrates on its food related products and a few personal care products and stops producing most of its medical products.
- **1911** August 1, In-Bottle Pasteurization of milk begins. One of the few and most famous dairy to do so.
- **1922** The Joseph Burnett Company moves to its own factory at 437-447 D Street in South Boston.
- **1929** Deerfoot Farms Company (farm, dairy and pork business) is sold to General Ice Cream Corp. div of National Dairy Products (from 1934 a/k/a "Sealtest") and continues to operate in Southborough and Boston areas. There is also a meat distribution agent in New York City.
- **1933-1935** Deerfoot Farms Maid, a Guernsey cow from Deerfoot, accompanies Admiral Byrd, along with two

other Guernseys, to the South Pole. They are the first and only cows to visit Antarctica.

- **WWII**- Deerfoot Farms supplies its products to the allies and receives an "A" for achievement from the U.S. Government.
- **1946** Joseph Burnett Company is sold to American Home Foods, Inc. (Division of American Home Products Corporation). The Burnett name is used on the product until the 1960's (possibly later).
- **1947** The dairy operation is moved to Newton, Mass. to be closer to the Boston area market. In the bottle pasteurization ends. *The stone mansion and estate at 84 Main Street is sold to the Garfield's in 1947. Members of the family have lived in the home up until this year.*
- **1956** The meat (pork) processing business is sold to Hygrade Foods who continues to use the "Deerfoot" name.
- **1959** The dairy and its customer routes are sold off to United Farmers at the end of 1959. The farm property is sold in the mid-1960's.
- **1969** The Pork operation is sold to Idlewild Farms & L.B. Darling, but the Deerfoot Farms name continues to be used into 1970. This is the end of the active operation of Deerfoot Farms.

CHILDREN OF JOSEPH AND JOSEPHINE BURNETT

EDWARD, born 16 Mar. 1849 and died in 1925.

HARRY, born 1 Dec. (24 Nov., State Record) 1850, associated with his father in business after graduating at Harvard in 1873. He died in 1927.

ROBERT MANTON, born 12 November 1852, died: 1929.

WALDO, born 15 Jan. 1855, B.A. Oxford University 1878, Rector of -St. Mark's School, died: 1935.

JOSEPHINE, born 28 Dec. 1856, died, 1935.

ESTHER, born 7 July 1859, died, 1954.

RUTH, born 26 Aug. 1862, joined the Convent of the Sacred Heart,
Manhattanville, N. Y., died, 1942.

CHARLES CUTTER, BORN 28 Aug 1864, died, 1900.

RICHARD TORREY, born 4 Sep. 1866, died 17 Feb. 1867.

JOHN TORREY, born 23 Apr. 1868, died: 1929.

LOUISA, born 12 Jun. 1869, died: 1929.

ELINOR (ELLINOR), born 18 Jan. 1872, died: 1953.

