

KRATTENMAKER O'CONNOR & INGBER P.C.

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September 10, 2020

CHARLES G. KRATTENMAKER, JR.
MARY WINSTANLEY O'CONNOR
KENNETH INGBER

OF COUNSEL: RAYMOND SAYEG

VIA EMAIL

Susan Chapnick, Chairperson
Conservation Commission for the
Town of Arlington
730 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476

Re: Request for Determination of Applicability – 1165-1167 Massachusetts Avenue,
and 0 Ryder Street, Arlington, MA (hereinafter referred to as the “RDA” and the
“Property”, respectively)

Dear Chairperson Chapnick:

This office represents 1165R Mass MA Property, LLC (the “Applicant”), in connection with the development of the Property pursuant to the Comprehensive Permit Regulations, so-called.

I write to follow up on the matters raised at the September 3, 2020 meeting of the Commission as to the Applicant’s RDA requests. Those requests include the following:

- ***Whether the Property constitutes an “Historic Mill Complex” as defined under 310 CMR 10.04, the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.***

As Attorney Douglas Heim, Town Counsel for the Town of Arlington, opines in his September 3, 2020 memorandum to the Commission on the River Protection Act “Historic Mill Complex” exemption standard, the Applicant: (a) must provide evidence that “the area at issue was developed and used as a mill complex, including interrelated buildings, parking areas, driveways and similar infrastructure before 1946”; (b) “need not establish that the entire area was encompassed by the footprint of a building or specifically a ‘mill’, but rather there must be sufficient evidence that the site’s buildings and related infrastructure served the purposes of working mills prior to 1946”; and (c) must establish that “the mill complex and all its related site area within the resource area . . . remained until at least August of 1996.”

Town counsel specifically notes that the mill complex need not be in “active use as a mill until August of 1996”. In support of this conclusion, he cites the language of the regulation and notes that the mills in many of the cities and towns specifically referenced in 310 CMR 10.04 “would have long been shuttered for mill purposes.” Thus, the only logical conclusion is that the mills need only have been working mills until 1946, so long as the buildings themselves have remained as of August, 1996.

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It is uncontroverted that the Property contained working mills prior to 1946. Documentation establishes the following:

- 1807 – Mill buildings were erected for turning and grinding edge tools by Gersham Cutter. Paul Dodge acquired the mills and subsequently sold the mills to Charles Schwamb, Dodge's apprentice, in 1848.
- 1850 – Charles and Jacob Schwamb moved their business operation to 1167 Massachusetts Avenue, formerly called the Dodge Mill, to make piano cases.
- 1853 – Charles and Jacob Schwamb were joined by Theodore, Peter and Frederick Schwamb, who operated a collaborative piano case business at 1165 Massachusetts Avenue.
- 1897 – The business was incorporated as the “Theodore Schwamb Company”.
- 1905 – the Theodore Schwamb Company erected another four-story brick mill building to meet increased demand for piano cases.
- Around the 1920's with the popularity of the radio and the decrease in piano sales, the Theodore Schwamb Company in 1928 turned to another kind of manufacturing work, specifically “Architectural Woodwork”. This included the manufacturing on the Property of door frames, baseboards and all other kinds of finished woodwork for homes and buildings.
- In 1931, the Theodore Schwamb Company was sold to the Nickerson Family, which continued the architectural woodworking business on the Property.
- In 1942, the Theodore Schwamb mill discontinued civilian work and during the period 1942-1945, the duration of World War II, produced mill work and cabinet work for military bases, Liberty ships and PT boats. After World War II ended, the company resumed its civilian architectural woodworking business.
- In 1971, the Theodore Schwamb mill closed its manufacturing operations and was purchased by John Mirak, the grandfather of Julia Mirak Kew, whose family continues to own the property.

Also enclosed is a plan dated July 16, 1956, titled “The Theodore Schwamb Co., Inc.”, which likewise definitely establishes the mill use subsequent to 1946.

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- *Whether the mill buildings utilized by the Schwamb family for their manufacturing business continued to exist on the Property as of August, 1996.*

The redevelopment proposed intends to: (a) retain and repurpose as housing the four-story mill building built in 1905; and (b) retain and repurpose for amenities space the one-story concrete and brick building, formerly the Engine Room built in 1906.

As detailed above, there is ample evidence to establish that the Property housed a "Historic Mill Complex" as defined in 310 CMR 10.04. Further, though the Applicant need only establish that the Property was a functioning mill through 1946, the Applicant has provided sufficient evidence to establish the Property was used for manufacturing until 1971.

A site visit and the photographs provided clearly establish that "the mill complex and all of its related site area within the resource area . . . remained until at least August of 1996." In fact, it remains to date. In her article, "Theodore Schwamb and the Era of the German Mills in Arlington, Arlington resident Grace Dingee, mill historian and a member of the Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, notes, "[t]he fact that such buildings (at 1165-1167 Massachusetts Avenue) still exist is to the credit of the Mirak family . . ."

The attached documents: (a) information obtained from the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System; (b) information as to the Theodore Schwamb mill; (c) the above-referenced article by Grace Dingee, mill historian and member of the Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust; and (d) a photograph from the above-referenced article by Ms. Dingee, establish that the former Theodore Schwamb Company included both 1165 and 1167 Massachusetts Avenue and support an RDA that the Property constitutes a Historic Mill Complex.

- *What land is to be included in the footprint of the "Historic Mill Complex".*

Bohler Engineering has marked up the plan to show the Property to be utilized for the proposed development. The plan indicates in red the areas the applicant maintains is as a matter of fact and law part of the Historic Mill Complex.

A suggestion has been made that a 1923 map which is undated, unrecorded and not stamped, establishes that the parking field could not have been utilized in connection with the mill use because Mill Brook split the area in question. That map is not dispositive of the issue.

With respect to the comment made that the parking field could not have been used in connection with the mill activities because the 1923 map shows the Mill Brook being split with an island in its center, the Applicant has found several subsequent plans, which were prepared by surveyors and recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, which clearly establish that

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even if the 1923 map were accurate, the condition (Mill Brook being split by an island), did not exist after 1927.

In the attached 1927 plan, Mill Brook is neither split nor is there an island on the plan. There is an obvious easement, perhaps a sewer easement, running on the north side of the Mill Brook. There also appears to be an entrance off what is now Ryder Street toward the mill complex.

The 1939 plan, which is attached, is not dispositive on this issue as the plan does not show Mill Brook to Ryder Street. The 1939 plan does clearly show the mill complex buildings and sewer easement.

The attached plan dated September 13, 1945 is critical in defining what the Applicant respectfully suggests the Commission may rely on to determine the footprint of the Historic Mill Complex. The plan shows the property line extending out to Ryder Street, which is clearly a driveway entrance to the mill complex. As such, it is to be considered interrelated to the mill use. Of importance, the plan shows the "Mill Brook Conduit" which is confined by stone walls as it still is today. The Applicant states that this is clear and definitive proof of Mill Brook's extent just before 1946 and clearly evidences the fact that Mill Brook was not split with an island in its center.

The Applicant states that based on the irrefutable evidence, even if Mill Brook was "split" as of 1923, as of September 13, 1945, and likely as of 1927, it was manipulated into its present "armored stone wall" configuration.

The enclosed current plan prepared by the Applicant's site civil engineer, Bohler Engineering, distinguishes the areas the Applicant asserts are part of the Historic Mill Complex (area in red) from area the Applicant believes is not included in the Historic Mill Complex as defined in the regulation (area in green).¹

Accordingly, the Applicant requests that the Commission act favorably on the pending RDAs.

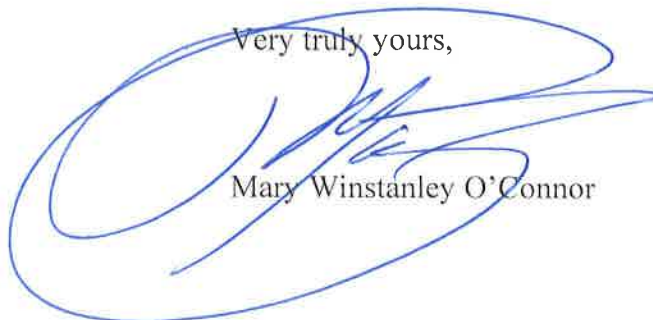
¹ The small area referred to as lot 8D or "0 Ryder Street" on the 2019 plan enclosed was initially part of the overall mill lot. Some years after the acquisition of the property by John Mirak, the area was divided and deeded to the neighboring landowner, who subsequently deeded it back to the Applicant. Given its location, directly abutting Mill Brook and the rear mill building (see plan 110 of 2019 enclosed), this area clearly was associated with the Historic Mill Complex use.

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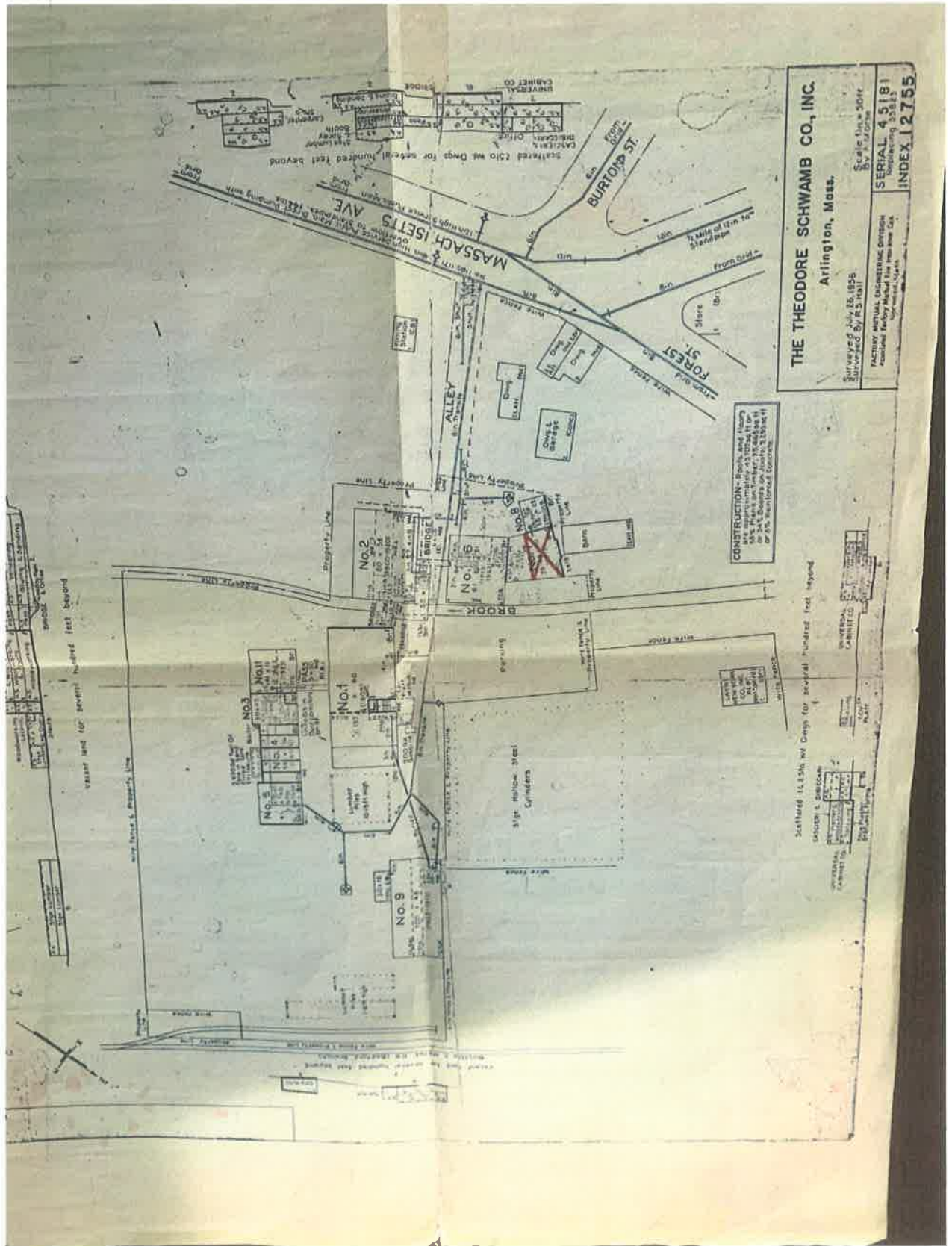
In advance, I thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mary Winstanley O'Connor', enclosed within a large, loopy blue oval scribble.

Mary Winstanley O'Connor

MWO/ccg
Enclosures
6926



THE THEODORE SCHWAMB CO., INC.
 Arlington, Mass.

Surveyed July 25, 1925
 Surveyed By R.S. Hall
 Scale 1 in. = 50 ft.
 SERIAL 45181
 INDEX 12755

CONSTRUCTION: Spans and Heavy
 Sills. Plans on this map are for
 a 10' x 10' building on a 12' x 12' lot
 or a 12' x 12' building on a 14' x 14' lot
 or a 14' x 14' building on a 16' x 16' lot

Scattered 14,126 sq Dmgs for several hundred feet beyond
 SECTION & SUBSECTION
 DISTRICT
 CITY



Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No: ARL.621
Historic Name: Schwamb, Theodore Piano Manufacturing Company
Common Name: Arlington Center Garage and Service Warehouse
Address: 1165 Massachusetts Ave

City/Town: Arlington
Village/Neighborhood: Arlington Heights
Local No: 319, 546
Year Constructed: r 1905
Architect(s):
Architectural Style(s): No style
Use(s): Abandoned or Vacant; Furniture Factory; Industrial Complex or District; Other Industrial; Warehouse
Significance: Architecture; Industry
Area(s):
Designation(s):
Building Materials(s): Wall: Aluminum Siding; Brick; Wood



The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on: Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 2:34: PM

ARL-621

FORM B - BUILDING

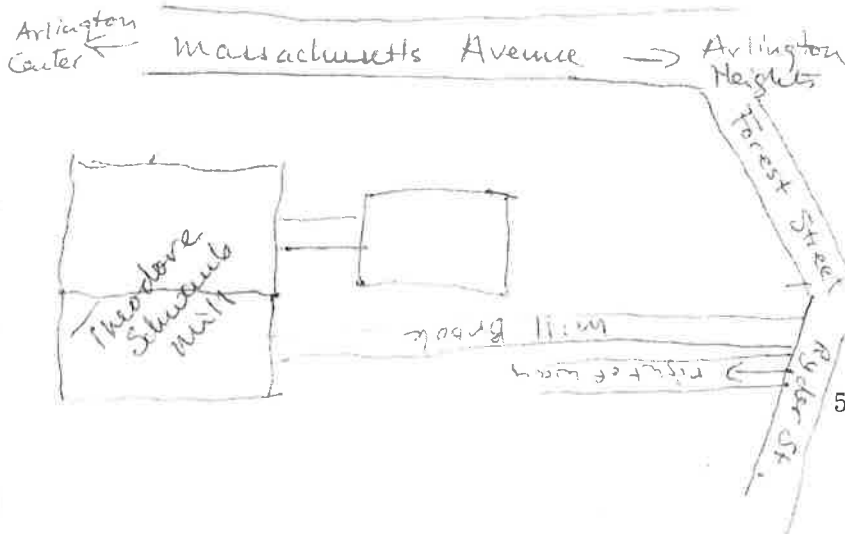
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
	319



Town Arlington
 Address 1165 Massachusetts Avenue
 Name Theodore Schwank Co.
 Present use None at present, but car lot surrounds most of building
 Present owner John Mirak
 Description:
 Date 1905 - latest + largest wing original date not known yet.
 Source Story of Arlington Source Material
 Style _____

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



Architect _____
 Exterior wall fabric brick/fred aluminum siding
 Outbuildings (describe) _____
 Other features _____

 Altered _____ Date _____
 Moved _____ Date _____

5. Lot size:
 One acre or less _____ Over one acre
 Approximate frontage 16' (right of way)
 Approximate distance of building from street
170'

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
USGS Quadrant _____
MHC Photo no. _____

6. Recorded by John Herzan
 Organization Arlington Hist. Commission
 Date June 5, 1973

(over)

JUN 27 1973

7. Original owner (if known) probably Gershom Cutter
 Original use turning and grinding edge tools
 Subsequent uses (if any) and dates _____

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Aboriginal | _____ | Conservation | _____ | Recreation | _____ |
| Agricultural | _____ | Education | _____ | Religion | _____ |
| Architectural | _____ | Exploration/
settlement | _____ | Science/
invention | _____ |
| The Arts | _____ | Industry | _____ | Social/
humanitarian | _____ |
| Commerce | _____ | Military | _____ | Transportation | _____ |
| Communication | _____ | Political | _____ | | |
| Community development | _____ | | | | |

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

see attachments.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

Story of Arlington, Source Material, Arlington Public Schools
 1940. " " "
 1959. " " "

Theodore Schwamb Company

Gershom Cutter, who died in 1807, probably erected a mill on this privilege for turning and grinding edge tools, where his son Aaron Cutter had a mill previous to 1817. Jefferson Cutter, son of Aaron, a wood-turner, operated this mill for years. The next owner was Paul Dodge.

In 1848 Charles Schwamb came to this town and apprenticed himself to Paul F. Dodge. Later he went into business with Mr. Dodge. Two years later Peter Schwamb arrived and learned his trade of his brother Charles and Mr. Dodge. In 1853 Theodore and Jacob Schwamb entered into the partnership. In 1859 Frederick arrived and joined his brothers. This partnership dissolved in 1862.

Theodore Schwamb purchased the so-called Stephen Cutter mill buildings in 1871 and began the manufacture of piano cases. His business consisted of the manufacture of high grade pianos only, and therefore acquired a reputation of reliable and honest work. In 1885 the upright piano began to supersede the square so Mr. Schwamb installed machinery to enable him to produce cases in great numbers.

In 1897 the business was incorporated as the Theodore Schwamb Company with Theodore Schwamb as President, his son, Peter, Treasurer, and his nephew, Philip Eberhardt, Superintendent. In 1905 in order to meet demands of increased business the company erected a modern four-story brick building. A few years later the company gradually gave up the manufacture of upright cases and made an increasing number of grand cases. In the early days most of the employees were German cabinet makers. The company holds the remarkable record, in that since its incorporation it has never had a strike or shut-down on account of labor questions.

Theodore, Peter Schwamb and Philip Eberhardt are all dead and the mill has been divided into several small establishments although the estate of Philip Eberhardt still runs a section of the plant under the old name, Theodore Schwamb Company.

Charles Schwamb's Mill

In 1865 Charles and Frederick Schwamb purchased the Woodbridge Spice Mill on Lowell Street and began the manufacture of black walnut oval picture frames. Later Frederick moved to Chicago and Charles continued alone. Some years later Carl William joined his father in conducting the business and the name changed to Charles Schwamb and Son. This firm was well known throughout the country as reliable manufacturers of oval picture frames. The business became a very prosperous one, and these frames could be found in almost every American home.

About 1879 the use of oval frames went out of style and the square frames were used almost exclusively. Charles Schwamb then began the manufacture of straight mouldings and square frames. For a short time he turned out the mill work for the piano case business conducted by William P. Schwamb, son of Jacob. After the death of Charles in 1903 the business was conducted by his son, Carl William, and later taken over by his two sons, Clinton W. and Louis H. Schwamb

men and brought wealth to the town. Finally in 1885, the factory closed. All of the equipment was sold and moved away. More and more it seemed as though Arlington was not to be a manufacturing town.

Theodore Schwamb Company

There were five Schwamb brothers who came to this country from Germany.

In 1848 Charles Schwamb came to this town and apprenticed himself to Paul F. Dodge who was a wood-turner. He went into business with Mr. Dodge. Three years later Peter Schwamb arrived and learned his trade with his brother Charles and Mr. Dodge. In 1853 Theodore and Jacob Schwamb entered into the partnership. In 1858 Frederick arrived and joined his brothers. This partnership dissolved in 1862. In this year Theodore Schwamb began the manufacture of piano cases.

At first these cases were for the square pianos used in those days. Later the upright piano became popular, and so Mr. Schwamb had to install machinery to make these in great numbers.

In 1897 the business was known as the Theodore Schwamb Company with Theodore Schwamb as President, his son, Peter, Treasurer, and his nephew, Philip Eberhardt, Superintendent. In 1905 in order to meet demands of increased business the company erected a modern four-story brick building. A few years later the company gradually gave up the manufacture of upright cases and made only grand piano cases. In the early days most of the employees were German cabinet makers.

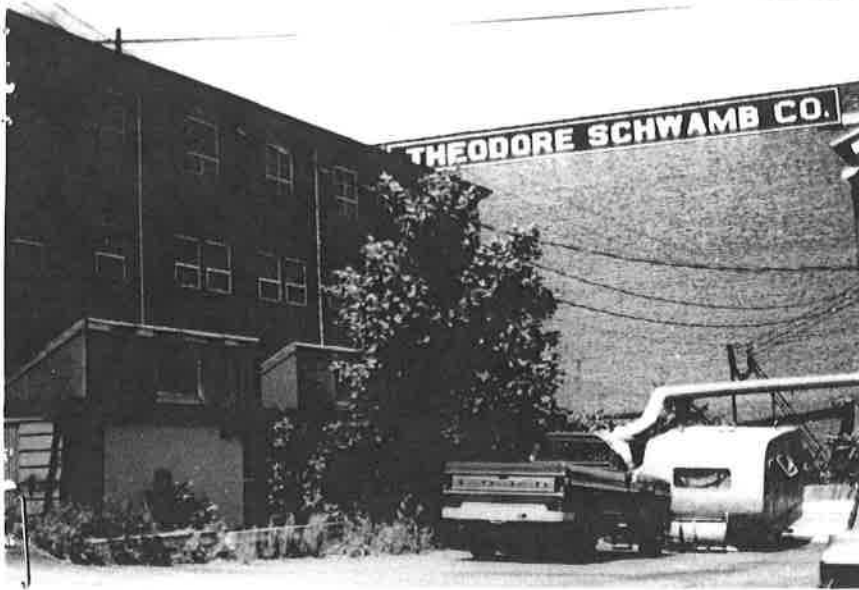
Around 1920, radios began to be very popular. As more and more of them were brought into the homes, fewer pianos were bought by families. For a time, the pianocase business was at a stand-still.

It was during these years that the Theodore Schwamb Company turned to another kind of wood-work called Architectural Woodwork. This means the door frames, base-boards, and all other kinds of finished woodwork in homes and buildings. As a matter of fact the woodwork at the Brackett School and High School was

FORM B - BUILDING

Area	Form no.
	546

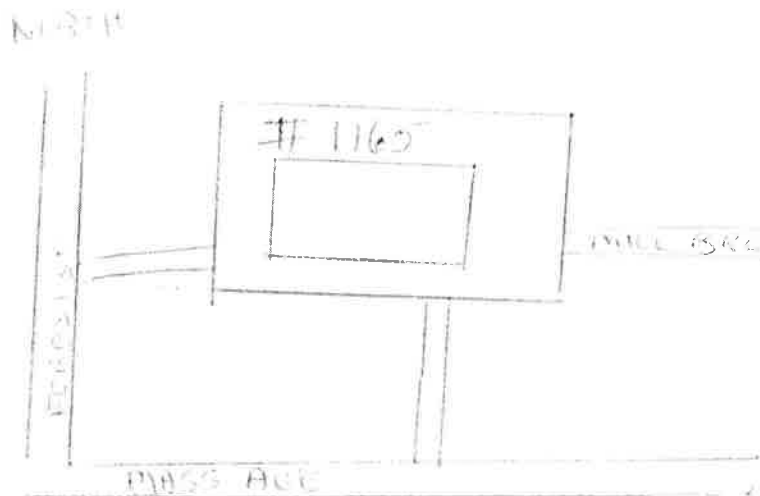
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
201 Washington Street Boston MA 02108



Arlington
1165 Massachusetts Avenue
Original Name Theodore Schwamb Co.
Original Factory
Present Storage
Ownership: Private individual
Private organization
Public
Original owner Theodore Schwamb Co.

Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings or geographical features. Indicate north.

DESCRIPTION:
Date 19th century
Source Parker's History of Arlington
Style Factory
Architect
Exterior wall fabric Brick
Outbuildings None
Major alterations (with dates) 20th century additions.
Moved No Date
Approx. acreage 22,572 sq ft
Setting Commercial



Recorded by P. & D. Hagar; M. Cohn
Organization Arl. Hist. Comm.
Date 1980

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

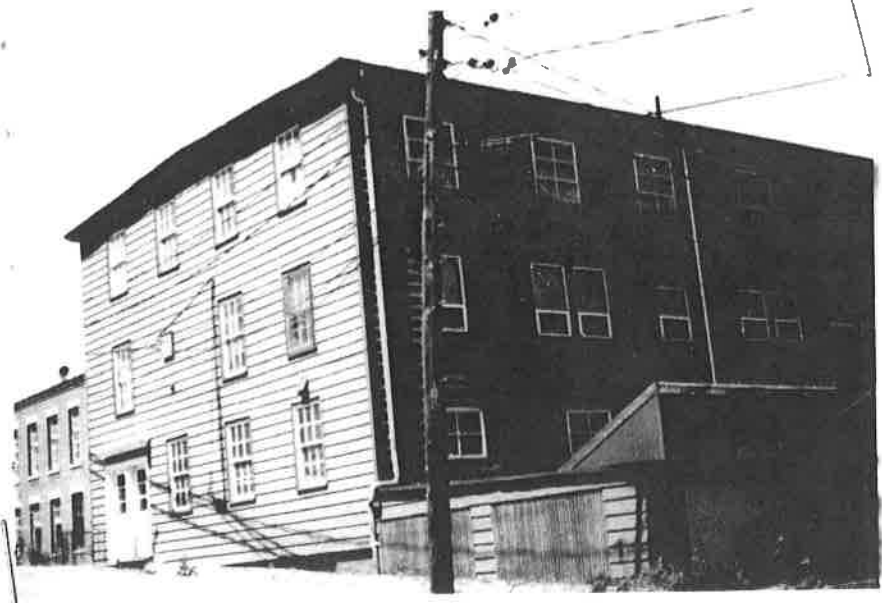
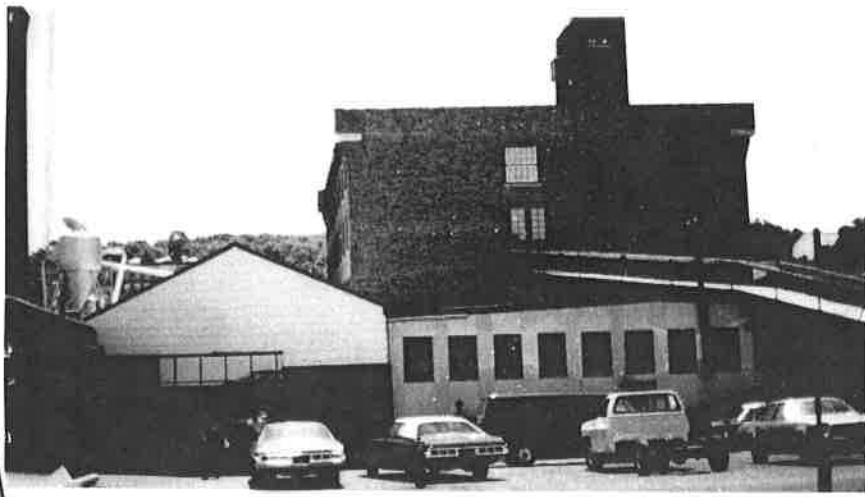
This large complex of well-built and carefully maintained mill buildings remains suitable for commercial or civic uses, although it is at present vacant or leased in small portions for business uses. Mills have stood at this site on the brook from the late 18th c.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Parker's History of Arlington

ASSESSORS RECORDS



THEODORE SCHWAMB MILL

Theodore Schwamb (1832-1902) immigrated to West Cambridge in 1853 to join his four brothers in the Paul Dodge woodworking mill. After Charles and Frederick left Dodge to form their own picture frame company, Theodore expanded his piano forte case business elsewhere along Mill Brook before buying the Dodge mill in 1871. Over the next three decades, his company added a railway siding, wood kiln, steam boiler, bridge and brick factory buildings, some of which still exist on the property. The Theodore Schwamb Company was incorporated in 1897, employed nearly 100 workers from many countries, and was one of Arlington's biggest concerns.

Theodore's son, Peter Schwamb, an MIT professor and director of the company, died in 1928, bringing an end to Schwamb family ownership. The Nickerson family acquired the Theodore Schwamb Company and operated it under the same name. They converted the factory from piano case making to the creation of interior woodwork for large buildings such as churches. The well-known firm of Cascieri di Biccari, specializing in wood carving, also operated from these buildings.

1800 Gershom Cutter IV builds a mill for grinding edge tools.

1830s Paul F. Dodge buys the mill and begins a business in wood-turning, sawing and piano hardware.

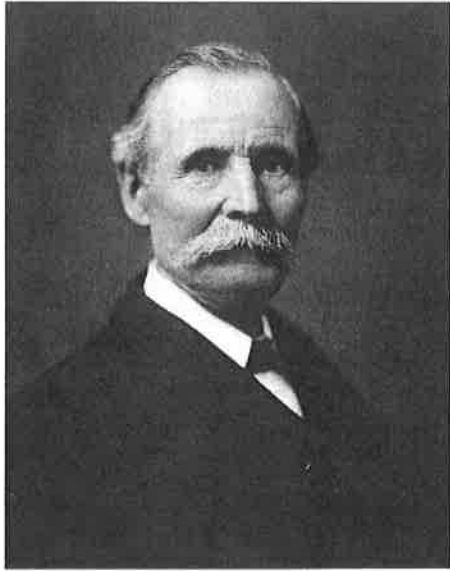
1848 Charles Schwamb begins his career in woodworking and soon enters into business with Paul Dodge. Over the next ten years, brothers Theodore, Peter, Jacob and Frederick Schwamb enter the partnership.

1871 Theodore Schwamb buys the Paul Dodge mill and expands the plant and workforce for his successful piano case business.

1931 The Theodore Schwamb Company is sold to the Nickerson family, and Cascieri di Biccari wood carvers rent some of the space.

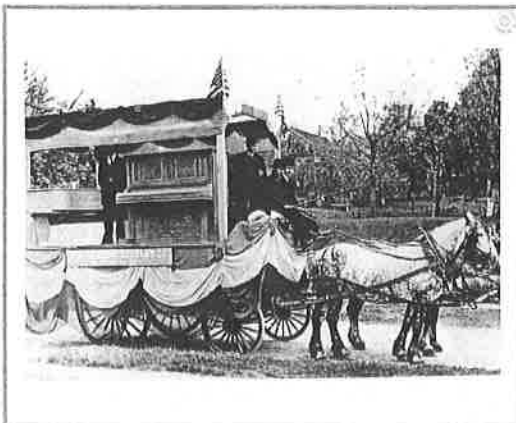
1972 The woodworking business at the mill is closed, and the site is acquired by John P. Mirak, who maintains and rehabilitates the former mill structures.

2018 Mirak Innovation Park (rental space for artists and small businesses)



Theodore Schwamb

Courtesy of the Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, Inc.



Pianos of the Theodore Schwamb Company on display during Arlington's Centennial Parade in 1907.

*Arlington Historical Photograph Collection.
Courtesy of Arlington Historical Society.*

TEXT VERSION:

THEODORE SCHWAMB & THE ERA OF THE GERMAN MILLS IN ARLINGTON

By Grace Dinglee, Mill Historian and Board Member

In 1838, Jacob Schwamb emigrated to Boston from Untenheim, Rhein Hessen, Germany. Jacob was the first of the Schwamb brothers to emigrate to the United States. By 1857, six of the seven Schwamb brothers had emigrated from Rhineland Pfalz to the United States.

In their heyday, nine separate mills, each with one or two backup mill ponds, dotted the Mill Brook Valley along Massachusetts Avenue from East Lexington *as* far as Mystic Street in Arlington. The water of the Mill Brook was used by each mill wheel in turn, and the water was then passed on to the next. After 1872 the mills were forced to gradually convert to steam when the Arlington Heights residential plan was laid out and the town dug a reservoir on Lowell Street, in anticipation of the professional class expected to populate the Heights. The influx was not realized because a prolonged recession cut demand and the Arlington Land Company went bankrupt within two years. Complaints were also lodged that the water was not clean. In 1898, Arlington applied to join the Metropolitan water system and in 1899, its petition was granted. Thus, the Heights were able to escape the fate of having the waters of the Great Meadows flow into their sinks.

None of this, however, reversed the draining down of the Great Meadows due to the reservoir. Gradually, the mill ponds lost their vital importance, were drained, filled in or left to grass over; and the great era of the mills was over. The last pond to go, Fowle's Pond near Mystic Street, was still visible in about 1955. Luckily, the town was able use the old mill areas for sports playing fields, particularly at the High School and at Buzzell field. Writing in 1924, Jacob Bitzer noted that, of the nine mills, only four were still running. Only two mills were prosperous enough to run full-time. These belonged to the frame maker and grandson of Charles Schwamb, Clinton W. Schwamb, and to the Theodore Schwamb Company, which at this time focused its business on wooden cases for grand pianos. Bucking the trend of the mills to shut down, these two would continue to work profitably for almost another 50 years, until 1969 and 1972, respectively.

When 17-year-old Karl Schwamb came from the southern Rhineland to apprentice at the sawing and wood-turning firm of Paul F. Dodge at 1175 Mass. Avenue, Yankee names dominated the town. There were Lockes, Winships, Robbinses and, above all, Cutters. The mill barns behind the Dodge house were known as the Stephen Cutter Mill, and the site of the new house built by Dodge came from the Cutter heirs. Similarly, if Karl had stayed in his hometown, Uнденheim, he would have belonged to an equally large clan of Schwambs. The Schwambs were as ubiquitous in Uнденheim as the Cutters were in Arlington. What both families shared was energy and a desire to have their own mills.

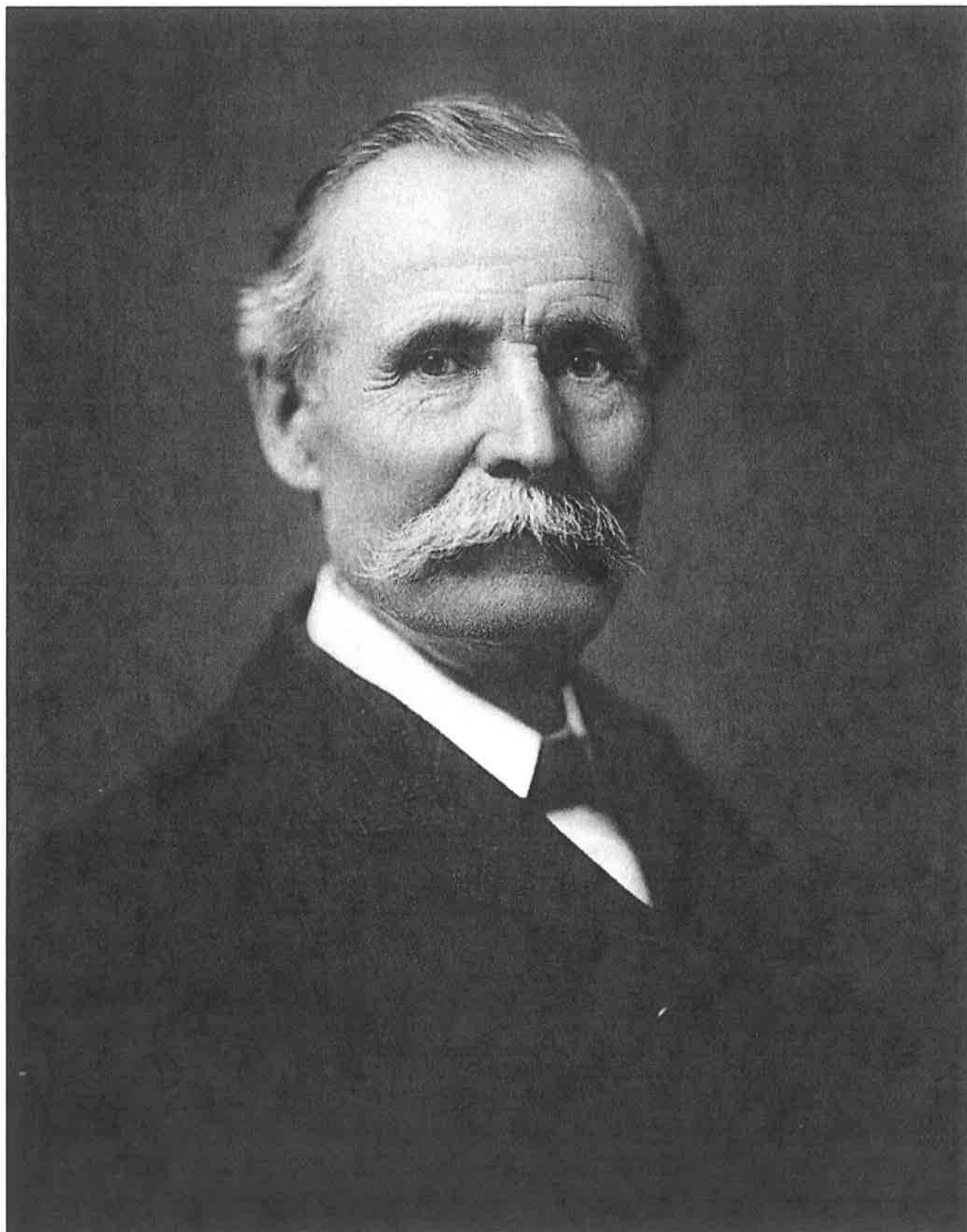
When he took on young Karl Schwamb as an apprentice, Dodge had suffered grievous personal losses: In 1836 he lost a son, age two months. In April, 1838, his wife, Maria Perry, died; and finally, his remaining infant son, age seven months, died in August of 1838. There is evidence that Dodge talked early to Charles about wanting to divest himself of the business. Half a century later, Karl Schwamb, renamed Charles Schwamb, consistently stated in his ads that his firm dated to 1850. This was likely the date when Dodge agreed to divestment. We know that the five Schwamb brothers' collaborative firm at this location began only in 1853, when the eldest brother, Jacob, was the first to join Charles in Arlington after several years of making piano cases for the firm of J.C. Lane in Leominster. Brother Peter had arrived in 1850 at age 20 to apprentice. In 1853, Theodore, then age 21, arrived from the vineyards he had tended for several years at his father's new, enlarged farm and public house in Kongemheim. He joined the elder brothers in a joint venture, which would last nine years until 1862. In 1857 the youngest and

last brother, Frederick, arrived in New York City from Le Havre on the ship, *Princeton*, accompanied by his fiancée, Thekla Breivogel. Five days later Thekla and Frederick were married in the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Boston's South End, an early Greek revival brick building with classic pediment, which Jacob co-founded and helped to dedicate on Christmas Day, 1847.

As the first German to arrive in 1838, Jacob maintained his connection with the Zion Lutheran Church he helped to found, often "supplying the pulpit" himself in the absence of the minister. By 1853, however, he had begun to think better of settling on the scantily filled lands and commercial wharves of narrow Boston Neck. He had already buried two wives due to illness. He had worked in several piano factories in Boston and after 1842 had lived during an unhappy time of recession when his nearest brother, Ludwig, arrived to apprentice in woodworking, was forced to work in a lead-paint factory and fell ill with typhoid fever as well as lead poisoning. After a return to Germany, Ludwig reappeared in Boston in 1849, but passed through quickly, as if shaking the dust of Boston from his feet. He headed west to do what he had always wanted to do, to farm — first in Indiana and later in Missouri.

Perhaps also, Jacob found Leominster too undeveloped for a boy from the Rheinland. His foray there could have influenced his decision to join his brothers at 1171 Massachusetts Avenue in West Cambridge, a name Arlington retained until 1867. This was a proper town, yet with large tracts of undivided land, particularly in the Heights. The terrain was rougher for farming here than on the fertile eastern plain. But it was attractive for residences and businesses. In the coming decades, the Schwambs bought several of these areas from their Yankee owners. Jacob remarried again after two years, in 1855, to Katherine Guething. The couple added five more children to Jacob's previous five; and the good Katherine had the grace to outlive Jacob by six years and, with two of her sons, to continue until her death in 1887 the piano-case and straight-molding business Jacob had established at 1033 Mass. Avenue. The story of Jacob's mill didn't end there either: Jacob's youngest sons, William and Edward, carried on a furniture repairing and refinishing business together at 1033 Massachusetts Avenue until 1903, the year of William's death. As late as 1926, *The Arlington Advocate* reported that Edward Schwamb was still running the furniture refinishing business in the same place. And a jolly side of Edward came out in his obituary in 1946 when he died at 84. He was characterized as a notable musician who led the music program for the town's Centennial Celebration in 1907 and was the leader of the Arlington Zouaves Band. The Zouave soldiers were originally Civil War regiments with colorful costumes meant to resemble Berber tribesmen. Naturally, the story of Jacob's offspring doesn't end with the childless Edward. It is included to show the endurance, even of the least known of the Schwamb Mills, and the love of making music that ran through the German population in general, and the Schwambs in particular.

The business that the brothers started in 1853 was called, "Charles Schwamb and Brothers." This underlined the role of Charles as organizer. Jacob pioneered by scouting territory and pinpointing piano production as a skill with a future: Now Charles saw strength in numbers for the immigrant brothers and launched the enterprise. The location at 1171 Mass. Avenue had an attractive house, two hams and a mill wheel. During the firm's nine years of operation, the younger brothers apprenticed, became journeymen and joined the partnership. After the partnership was dissolved in 1862, the brothers started three separate businesses. Jacob, ever the restless family member, located himself in West Medford to make organ-cases for home use, a product of Mason and Hamlin Company. At the end of his career, Jacob returned to Arlington at 1033 Mass. Avenue where he ran his own mill until his death in 1881.



Theodore Schwamb

Theodore set his course to acquire 1171 Mass Avenue. It is not clear why he first located for a few years at 1093 Mass. Avenue near Hobbs Mill. He was determined to continue in the piano-case business and his eye was on the original location. By 1871 he was back at the Dodge homestead and had also acquired the Stephen Cutter Mill behind the house. Here, the largest of the three German mills in Arlington grew, the firm of Theodore Schwamb Company destined to last one hundred ten years and to remain important as the first and central location. The brothers all worked and lived close to one another for the rest of their lives, lending a hand in crises, and investing heavily in locations near one another in the Heights section of Arlington.

Sometime around 1850, Charles met Jane Sophia Hinton in the Choir of the First Parish Congregational Church (now Unitarian Universalist) in Arlington Center. Jane had been born in Birmingham, England. In 1852, Charles married his Jane and became the only brother to marry a girl with a non-German name. In this large, close-knit German family, one hopes that Jane managed to understand some German. Although Charles continued to walk often to Boston to attend services in German at Zion Lutheran Church in the South End, he was eager to become American as soon as possible; and an English-speaking wife fitted this plan.

A tragic event occurred in the brothers' collaboration in 1858, when a younger brother, Peter, died on March 24. We do not know the cause, but he had married Clara Buecher, an immigrant from Graach, Rheinpreussen, only one year earlier and his first child, Peter, Jr., was only one-and-one-half months old at the time of his father's death, suggesting a sudden and unexpected event.

Two years later, in 1860, Theodore married Peter's widow and adopted Peter, Jr., showing a trait he would carry through his life—the instinct of a good administrator to bring people together for the greater good of the whole. Charles, who was imaginative as an innovator, did not have the same ability to integrate his personnel. In 1864, for instance, Charles and Frederick opened a niche business on Mill Lane just a short distance upstream from the Dodge location. The Woodbridge Spice Mill had come up for sale after a fire. Here Charles and Frederick installed their lathes and introduced a new technology directed at the thriving market clamoring for oval frames: The business was successful, yet Frederick remained only three years, leaving with his wife Thekla Breivogel for New York State, and ultimately for Blue Island, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. It was as if Charles instilled his spirit of adventure in others, but not in a manner that was to his own advantage.

The new wooden oval lathes offered technology capable of turning out perfect ovals of all sizes in large numbers, requiring skilled workmanship especially in the final contouring with a hand chisel on the double-axis lathe. The whole system was still powered by water. The enormous waterwheel, 18 feet in diameter was partially recessed under the basement floor, allowing for an "overshot" wheel, which channeled the water over the top. This was all going on, right under the feet of the workmen. Accustomed as we are to contemporary power sources, it is hard to believe this sophisticated shaping and carving was still deriving its energy from rough water flowing over a submerged wooden wheel. It had been so for thousands of years. But it seems somehow incongruous in the context of the burgeoning industrial age of the 1860s.

A similar example of Theodore's approach occurred in 1882. A plea came from Peter's nephew, Philip Eberhardt, in Guntersblum, Germany. Philip's mother, Katarina, was Theodore's sister, who died when Philip was only three. Philip suffered abuse from the husband of a kindly aunt, with whom he now lived. He begged his uncle in a letter to be allowed to come to the States. When Philip's ship arrived in New York, he was met by a Geunan customer of Theodore. But when he arrived in Providence on shipboard to Boston and could no longer hear German but only the "barbaric" English, he fell to weeping: "I was the most homesick boy you ever saw," he wrote many years later. "I laid my head on

the rail of the boat and cried my heart out. An old gentleman came and spoke to me but I cried all the harder until a young man who could speak German spoke to me and sort of straightened me out. I could not go into my stateroom but slept in one of the large chairs in the saloon. The next morning I arrived in Boston and was met by my sister and Mrs. Theodore Schwamb. On the following day, June 17th, I went to work and have been working ever since." For the first two years in Arlington, he remembered thinking that he would have returned immediately to Gettysburg if he could have. Nevertheless, he prospered at Theodore Schwamb, becoming superintendent of the entire plant in 1890, and then partner and director of the corporation in 1897. At Peter's retirement in 1924 Philip Eberhardt became president of the Theodore Schwamb Company. He continued to work there, even after the company was bought out by the Nickerson family in 1931, until the onset of his fatal illness shortly before his death in 1938.

Theodore's great talent for attracting and keeping talent was especially strong within his larger family. After Theodore's only son by Clara died at the age of two in 1866, Theodore set his hopes on his adopted son, Peter, Jr. Peter became, one might say, a perfect adopted son. He completed M.I.T. and rose there to become a professor of Mechanical Design and Mill Engineering, and head of the M.I.T. Mechanical Laboratories. Moreover, in Peter, Theodore had a son who could enhance his own profile in civic affairs, particularly in the 1890s, when Peter served on the committees to build two of Arlington's three most beautiful schools, the old High School on Academy Street, now the Senior Center; and the Cutter and Locke schools, placed at strategic intervals along Massachusetts Avenue as far as Park Avenue in the Heights. For the planning of the Locke, Peter was Committee Chairman. Presumably due to the really outstanding aesthetic of their architecture, and their solid construction, these schools were saved from the wrecker's ball and even though they were threatened at times in the years when school divestment was the fashion, the premise being that the school-age population would continue to decline. In 1899 also, Peter Schwamb, a long-time member of the Arlington Water Commission, was, in the words of William Cutter, "instrumental in having the town admitted into the Metropolitan water system." He remained active at Theodore Schwamb Company and joined in its incorporation as Treasurer in 1897. After Theodore's death in 1909, Peter took early retirement from M.I.T. and worked even more closely with the company until his own retirement in 1924.

While Theodore Schwamb built his company slowly, Charles leapt ahead quickly. From 1864 to 1879, Theodore's expansion was slower than Charles's. In 1878, for instance, when the bulk of the Mill owners were awarded damages for the drastic curtailment of the waters of the Sucker Brook due to the excavation of the Heights Reservoir, Theodore received \$6,024.16. Charles Schwamb, on the other hand, still riding the crest of the vastly popular oval frame business, received \$11,587.58. In 1875, *The Arlington Advocate* noted that Charles Schwamb had acquired "a snug fortune" in his business. In October of that year, he organized a surprise party among his thirty-five mill workers to welcome his twentyone-year-old son, Carl William, into his business as a partner. "The men in the establishment last Friday evening, despite the unfavorable state of the weather, marched in a body to the residence of Mr. Schwamb to congratulate the new firm." The "residence" was an impressive new mansard-roof house, which Charles had recently constructed at what is now 22 Fessenden Street. What Carl William, an artistic young man, thought of joining a dusty business (it was apparent later that his lungs were delicate), is a good question. But if he had to choose sawdust, rather than music, nevertheless, he remained a dutiful son and partner in the firm. He was the only son available at that time. When his only brother, Herbert Page, reached maturity 11 years later, he chose to go west to Denver. Within these limitations, Carl and his parents seemed to understand one another. He served as alternate organist, not only at the First Baptist Church where the family worshipped, but at various churches in the Heights and in Lexington. He was pianist for many years for the Sunday school of the First Baptist; and he designed music curriculum for the Arlington schools. Carl William died at the relatively early age, of 57 in 1912; yet for many decades thereafter a harpsichord stood on the third floor of the Mill as a reminder. In gratitude for Carl William's

contributions to the First Baptist Church in Arlington Center, the parish gave him an intricately carved square piano, an instrument which has been lovingly restored in the family of his granddaughter, Dorothy Sweet Raman, of Macomb, Illinois.

In 1879, the market for oval frames collapsed as square frames became the fashion. To the array of modern equipment Charles already had — rotary planers, band saws, circular saws and jigsaws, boring machines used for dowelling, and common and eccentric turning lathes — he now installed a molding machine, capable of being set to finish any possible design for straight stock, and to fashion any contour a frame maker might want. An enlarged second floor was added to accommodate the long lengths of stock. Charles was also helped with orders subcontracted from his brother, Jacob, who had for several years been operating in his own Mill at 1033 Mass. Avenue next to the building that is today Stop and Shop Pharmacy. (Not until 1919 did this parcel go out of Schwamb hands, when it was sold to a manufacturer of electric repair parts, and carbon and metal brushes used in automobiles. *The Advocate* reported that “The building is of the olden time construction and the timbers are put together with wooden pins, heavy timbers being used and many of them, quite a contrast to the buildings of today”. In recent years, several nostalgic mill enthusiasts have looked for this treasure, only to leave again cursing the brick-cube apartment building which has replaced it.)

In the early 1890s, America experienced a severe economic panic, followed by a prolonged recession. It is therefore surprising to read that the Theodore Schwamb Company saw constant growth, both in the 1890s and in the first years of the new century. In 1898, the year after its incorporation, the Company was the largest single business in Arlington. Directors were Peter Schwamb, Treasurer, Philip Eberhardt, Clerk and Assistant Superintendent, and Jacob Bitzer, Head of the shop. New property was purchased behind the Mill in 1905. In the same year, a narrow-gauge spur railroad track was added, linking the firm to the railroad and enabling the company to receive and deliver almost in the manner of a private railroad. Among the new structures, the largest was the four-story brick building, which today still bears uppermost on its facade the words, THEODORE SCHWAMB CO., ready for the passers-by of the twenty-first century.

As the middle class began to upscale its musical tastes in the new century, the vogue for upright pianos gave way to the aspiration for a grand piano. Theodore Schwamb Co. followed the trend, which required not only skill but speed and coordination in gluing veneers to its fine hardwoods. As the new century dawned, however, the first generation seemed suddenly to have grown quite venerable. At Charles Schwamb and Son Co., the heir apparent, Carl William, was on a protracted stay in Denver to improve his health. At the Mill, shop superintendent, John Frederick Bitzer, oldest brother of Jacob Bitzer, carried on as he had for 36 years. One cannot see how much sales work could have been going on.

For Charles, by nature an energetic entrepreneur, looking back from the vantage of 1900 must have been daunting. Of the nine children born to him and to Jane Hinton, seven were dead. Two sons and a daughter died shortly after birth; but the unthinkable happened from 1884 to 1891. His four grown daughters, lovely young women if one may judge from their photos, all died, one after another in successive years. Evidence strongly suggests a family tendency to tuberculosis, though the only written evidence concerns their youngest daughter, Jennie Louise Schwamb Wyman, who had recently given birth to a daughter. Two weakening bouts of pneumonia are mentioned, one before and one after the baby's birth (the baby also died within a few months). When Charles Schwamb died in 1903 at the age of seventy-six, his faithful superintendent, John Frederick Bitzer, resigned immediately and joined his youngest brother, Jacob Bitzer, at Theodore Schwamb, where he remained for the rest of his professional life.

When Carl William returned from Denver he found the mill almost without business and he retired in 1905. This is the point at which the Schwamb energy sprang up again: his two sons, Clinton W., 26, and Louis, 19, suddenly acquired a frantic determination to save their Mill. In 1907, under the new name of "Clinton W. Schwamb and Co.," they hoisted the red, white and blue bunting to the Mill's facade for the Centennial Celebration of the town's independent status. Under the company's name were emblazoned the words, "OLDEST OVAL FRAMEMAKER IN NEW ENGLAND." The firm was old—the partners were young! Clinton and Louis were not shy about invoking antecedents, if it served their purpose. The entrepreneur knows how to pick himself up because risks involve falls, and entrepreneurship is risky. Over years of hard work, Clinton and Louis brought the Mill back to prosperity.

Clinton's son, Elmer Schwamb, was born in 1904. When talking to Patricia Fitzmaurice in earlier years, Elmer remembered how hard his father and uncle worked to save and restore the Mill; and how he himself entered the business in the 1920s, traveling the length the East Coast on sales trips. The Mill stayed profitable and Elmer even added a niche partnership called "Elwayne," involving his son Wayne for the production of specialty frames. In the end, it was the advent of molded plastic and the ever-worsening quality of lumber that forced Elmer Schwamb, after the death of his Uncle Louis, in 1967, and that of Clinton in 1968, to sell what was to become the Old Schwamb Mill.

The buyer had plans to raze the building and blacktop the lot for parking. But luckily Patricia Fitzmaurice, who was already an ardent preservationist, happened by on her bicycle one fall day and learned the plans. She saw the historic exterior, and even more surprising, the incredible array of period tools and machines within. With the help of a small group of concerned Arlingtonians, she started the process that would result in the creation of a working museum, the Old Schwamb Mill, now in operation for 35 years.

Theodore Schwamb died in 1909. The piano-case business began to lag with the increasing interest in recordings, and especially with the advent of the radio in the early 1920s. Peter Schwamb retired in favor of Philip Eberhardt in 1924 and died unexpectedly in 1928 in the midst of his family at his house at 33 Academy Street. When Philip Eberhardt sold the business to the Nickerson family in 1931, the company name of Theodore Schwamb was retained. A decision was made to switch products to high-end architectural woodworking. This was a felicitous decision, given the extensive interior areas available and the skills, particularly of Italian workers, in the area. During the next forty-plus years, the Theodore Schwamb Co. became known nationwide for large projects of interior wood paneling and woodcarving.

Their work included elaborate projects for Yale University in New Haven; for the Tryon Palace at New Bern, North Carolina; for the original John Hancock Building in Boston and at the Harvey Firestone Library at Princeton, N.J. The firm of Cascieri di Biccari (the late Archangelo Cascieri, Dean of the Boston Architectural Center and Adio di Biccari, Arlington sculptor) opened a studio at Theodore Schwamb. Over four decades, this firm produced a wealth of carving and sculpture, including the exquisite Cascieri carvings for Marsh Chapel at Boston University; and the di Biccari sculpture ensemble opposite West Street on the Boston Common. One photo, taken in Arlington at the Schwamb Studio in the 1950s, shows a giant sculpture of St. Clement. The ponderous saint lies prone on a truck, having made it through of the wide doors of the Schwamb's most attractive structure, a small, classic brick building with brick detail, a building still extant today at 1167 behind the old homestead. After arriving safely at his Brighton destination, St. Clement was hoisted to very top of the facade of St. John Seminary.

The fact that such buildings still exist is to the credit of the Mirak family, a long-time Arlington family whose firm has specialized since 1936 in dealerships and service of cars and trucks. Recently, the firm developed a residential complex in Arlington Center called "The Legacy." Robert Mirak recently commented that "when my father, John Mirak, purchased the property in the 1970s, some of his

colleagues suggested tearing down the buildings to make way for another dealership or a major shopping center. My father decided to keep the buildings and used the property to store excess auto inventory. In addition, he liked the looks of the buildings and especially the handsome red brick and the colonial windows. From that time to the present, my father and in succession, the family has upgraded the buildings. Inside, over the decades, we have upgraded floors and brickwork. Specifically, the original wood flooring, which was blackened by use, was cleaned, sanded and urethaned to a handsome finish. Also, a number of walls were sandblasted to remove the paint on the brick; the results were sparkling.”

At this Theodore Schwamb complex, it is gratifying to see how many small businesses have found a home: the Image Inn has run a photographic studio there since 1982, specializing in the rare skills and patience required by traditional techniques; the architectural firm of Rovinelli is upstairs at 1167; and there are many individual artists in residence at the large complex at 1165, as well as the new WorkBar, established in 2016.

The Charles Schwamb Mill at 17 Mill Lane did not grow as large as the Theodore Schwamb Company, and it was never as visible, either. But however much the market fluctuated, Charles Schwamb and his descendants never gave up making fine oval frames. Amidst the final commercial years of competition from inferior wood and plastics, the Mill continued this work, as it does today, thanks to the late Patricia Fitzmaurice and her supporters.

In the end, the Old Schwamb Mill can lay claim to having endured, both as living history and as a working Mill. All three brothers, Theodore and Charles and Jacob, could be proud that their generation of immigrants achieved so much that is still treasured in Arlington today.

TIMELINE of the Schwamb Mill & Mill Brook

1630 English Puritan colonists first settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1630 during the thirty years of the Great Migration. They brought with them, from England, the waterpower mill technology that was implemented on Mill Brook in Arlington for 235 years (after which a steam turbine replaced the water wheel). The Mill Brook, which drops more than 150 feet in two miles through Arlington, powered mills of various kinds at seven to nine mill sites. The brook has been called successively Vine Brook, Sucker Brook, and Mill Brook. According to one local historian (Edith Winn), the brook was a “mighty rushing river” at the end of the last ice age.

1637 The first mill on the Brook in Menotomy, or the Northwest Precinct of Cambridge (now Arlington), was the earliest water powered gristmill within the limits of colonial Cambridge. It was financed by Dr. Samuel Read of England and was established in 1637 by Captain George Cooke (b. c. 1610; d. Apr 1652) near the present day location of the Community Safety Building on Mystic Street in Arlington. Cooke’s Mill is now commemorated by a park, Cooke’s Hollow, and a bronze tablet.

1638 Edward Winship bought a three-acre estate at the easterly corner of Brattle and Mason Streets and extending through the Cambridge Common (in Cambridge). He was a Lieutenant of Militia in 1660, a Selectman for 14 years between 1637 and 1684, and a Representative in the General court for eight years. He died on 2 Dec 1688.

Cooke had sailed for New England in the ship Defence in 1635, at the age of 25. In Massachusetts, on 3 Mar 1636, he was admitted as a freeman. From there he became a representative in its Assembly, and Speaker in 1645. In addition, he had been appointed Captain of the Artillery Company in 1637 and once returned to Boston with nine Indians captured during an “excursion”.

1639 The Squaw Sachem (i.e. woman chief) of the Massachuset (<http://dickshovel.com/massa.html>) tribe ceded all the lands of her tribe, excepting her homestead (which was bounded on the east by the Mystic Lakes and on the south by Mill Brook), to the English Puritan settlers of Cambridge, for “twenty and one coates, ninten fathom of wampom, and three bushels of corne”. Three epidemics of European diseases and warfare with the Abenaki (<http://www.dickshovel.com/aben.html>) tribe from the north had greatly reduced the number of men in the Massachuset tribe. The survivors were too few to defend their land against the invaders from England and had little choice but to agree to the contract. The Squaw Sachem (whose name is unknown) died in 1658. The exchange of property is illustrated in two local WPA murals: *Purchase of Land from the Indians* by Aidan Lasell Ripley, 1934, in the Winchester MA Public Library, and *Purchase and Use of the Soil* by William A. Palmer, 1938, in the Arlington MA Post Office.

Many of the principal inhabitants of Wexford as well as several hundred females gathered around the great cross in the marketplace of Wexford in the hope that their defenseless condition would move George Cooke and his men to compassion. However, Cooke butchered all of them and filled the marketplace with their blood.

1645 Captain George Cooke abandoned his mill, returned to England, and joined Cromwell’s army as Colonel of a regiment of foot soldiers. Puritan “Roundheads” formed the backbone of Cromwell’s forces. On 11 Oct 1649, Cooke’s regiment captured the town of Wexford (in County Wexford, Ireland). Cooke became governor and “exacted bloody retribution against the defending Irish”. Houses and cabins, and stores of livestock and corn were all plundered and burnt. Cooke insisted that this was the only way to subdue the roving parties of Irish, by denying them sustenance and shelter in the region.

Dr. Lynch describes George Cooke, the commander of the Puritans in Wexford, as especially remarkable for his brutality and cruelty. Having given a security to the inhabitants of Wexford that they might reside in their own homes, “Cooke afterwards authorized Captain Bolton, before the extirpation of the stipulated day, to scour that county with his cavalry and plunder it. Then commenced an indiscriminate massacre of men, women, and children, by which not less than four thousand souls, young and old, were atrociously butchered.”

In 1652, General Cooke shut up 300 men and many infants in a house in the county of Wexford, and then setting fire to the house, all were burned in the flames. But Captain Gore, one of the officers under Cooke, succeeded in concealing on his horse, under his cloak, a little boy who had escaped out of the house. Cooke, discovering the fact, severely condemned the captain, and returning himself with the boy, hurled him into the flames.

In April 1652, Cooke and his mounted escort had a running fight with the troop of the Irish patriot, Captain Nash, on the road from Gowran to Loughlin. Both Cooke and Captain Nash were found dead after the battle.

Cooke’s mill in Menotomy was allowed to decay and eventually crumble away.

1670 Cooke’s daughter Mary, then living in England, sold her father’s 600-acre farm at Cambridge Farms (now Lexington) as well as the twenty acres of land in Menotomy (now Arlington) to John Rolfe of Nantucket. (Ref. 7, page 235.) Rolfe erected an entirely new waterpowered mill on the old site.

1681 John Rolfe died. His widow, Mary (Scullard) Rolfe, sold a fifth of the Cooke farm at Cambridge Farms, or 120 acres of land. She and her son Moses laid out the second Mill Brook watermill power system of pond, dam, mill, and mill race at what is now Mill Street in Arlington. They first built a dam but then waited several years before completing the entire mill raceway system.

1684 The third watermill power system of ponds, dam, mill, and mill race had been laid out before 1684, and a mill built by David Winship, at the Foot of the Rocks in the Menotomy section of Cambridge. This is the site of the present Old Schwamb Mill.

This third mill privilege, at the Foot of the Rocks, was willed to Joseph Winship (b. 21 Jun 1661; d. 18 Sep 1725; resided in Menotomy) by his father, Lt. Edward Winship, who had also built mills in Lexington at the edge of the Great Meadow. Evidence of a mill pond is still visible as a grassy park near Bow Street.

1688 Lieutenant Edward Winship died on 2 Dec 1688 and left to his son Joseph "a certain gristmill in Cambridge, with all and singular the dam, flooms, mill-pond", etc. This mill was on the site of what is now called The Old Schwamb Mill.

1704 William Cutter built a dam 18 feet high near his home at the present Mill Street, raised the level of the pond, and erected a sawmill.

1714 Moses Rolfe, a son of John Rolfe, sold 130 acres of Cooke's farm to John Cutter (a glazier b.1690), a son of William Cutter.

1718 Moses Rolfe sold 100 acres of the Cooke's Farm to his brother-in-law, William Cutter, husband of Moses Rolfe's sister.

1732 On 27 Dec 1732, the General Court designated the part of Cambridge on the west side of the Menotomy River (now called Alewife Brook) as the Second or Northwest Precinct of Cambridge. This was the beginning of the First Congregational Parish, the parish being simply the precinct in its religious relations.

After several changes of name the First Congregational Parish eventually evolved into the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington.

1775 On the first day of the American Revolution, Paul Revere and the British regulars all passed at a distance of about 200 yards from the Mill at the Foot of the Rocks on their way to Lexington and Concord. The British returned by the same route, fighting their way through Menotomy on their way back to Charlestown.

1807 In 1807, Menotomy (which was officially called the Northwest or Second Parish of Cambridge) became a separate town, West Cambridge.

1808 In 1808, Stephen Cutter constructed another sawmill on the pond at Mill Street.

1827 In 1827, Mary Cutter, the widow of Stephen Cutter, granted land abutting the Mill Pond to the Baptist Society "for the erection of a meeting house with the privilege of using so much of the mill pond as necessary for the ordinance of baptism." Sylvia Brazy was baptized on 3 June 1827.

1838 Jacob Schwamb emigrated to Boston from Untenheim, Rhein Hessen, Germany. Jacob was the first of the Schwamb brothers to immigrate to the United States. By 1857, six of the seven Schwamb brothers had emigrated from Rhineland Pfalz to the United States.

1846 The Lexington and West Cambridge Rail Road commenced service between Bedford, Lexington, Arlington (then called West Cambridge), and Boston.

1847 Charles Schwamb emigrated to Boston from Udenheim, Rhein Hessen, Germany to join his older brother Jacob in the burgeoning Boston piano industry.

1850 Charles and Jacob Schwamb moved to the Dodge Mill (built by Gershom Cutter) on Mill Brook (1167 Massachusetts Avenue) to make piano cases. They were joined by brothers Peter, Theodore, and Frederick.

1853 From 1853 to 1862, Charles, Jacob, Theodore, Peter, and Frederick Schwamb operated a collaborative piano-case business at 1165 Massachusetts Avenue in West Cambridge (now Arlington).

1858 Peter Schwamb died suddenly, leaving a widow and a two-month-old son, Peter Schwamb, Jr.

1860 Theodore Schwamb married the widow of his brother Peter. Theodore adopted Peter Jr. who would become a professor and Director of the Mechanical Laboratory at MIT and Treasurer of the Theodore Schwamb Company at 1165-1171 Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington.

After ownership of the Foot of the Rocks Mill property had descended through many generations, it was acquired by Henry Woodbridge for grinding spices. The mill was severely damaged by fire in 1860.

1861 The Woodbridge Spice Mill at the Foot of the Rocks was rebuilt on the old foundations circa 1861.

1862 Theodore Schwamb founded the Theodore Schwamb Mill to manufacture piano casings. The address later became 1165 Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington, Massachusetts.

Frederick shortly left for Chicago and the lumber business. Frederick and his wife (Thekla Breivogel) were living in New York State in 1871.

1864 Charles Schwamb and his youngest brother, Frederick, acquired the Woodbridge Spice Mill at the Foot of the Rocks. Using skills that they had developed in their native Germany and in their American apprenticeships, they converted the mill to woodworking, especially for making oval frames for portrait photographs. They installed shaft and pulley belt-driven machinery, including German eccentric faceplate lathes and a moulding machine. Four generations of descendants of Charles Schwamb operated the Mill until 1969.

Theodore Schwamb and Peter Schwamb acquired the Dodge Mill. Jacob Schwamb, the oldest of the Schwamb brothers, opened his own piano case business.

1865 The popularity of the oval portrait frame arose just after the Civil War along with the increasing accessibility of photography. Beginning then, the Old Schwamb Mill became the leading maker of hand-turned oval and circular portrait and mirror frames in the United States.

1867 In order to distinguish itself from its parent community and to honor its Civil War heroes, the town changed its name from West Cambridge to Arlington on 30 April 1867.

1869 A new three-story wing was added to the Old Schwamb Mill in 1869 to provide for a four-sided moulding machine on the first floor and finishing rooms above.

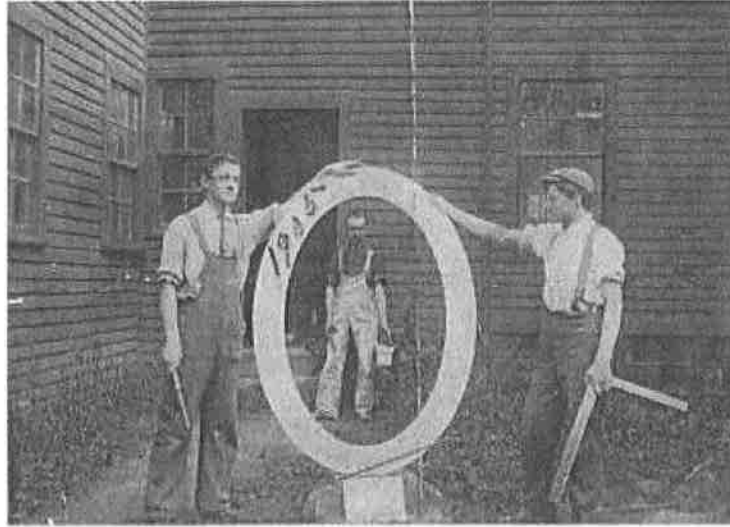
1872 The Town of Arlington took Mill Brook for a public water supply. The Charles Schwamb Mill at the Foot of the Rocks installed a steam engine in the cellar of the barn. A 40-foot-long underground drive shaft transmitted power to the Mill machinery.

1875 Charles's son Carl William (or "Will") was taken into partnership. Carl often played the organ at the First Baptist Church in Arlington. There is a report that Carl was the organist at the Follen Church (Unitarian) in Lexington.

1883 A two-story ell was added to the Mill in 1883 to provide a first-floor office and a shipping room above.

1888 A water turbine was added to the Charles Schwamb Mill at the Foot of the Rocks in 1888 to supplement the existing steam engine power.

1905 Carl's sons Clinton and Louis acquired the Mill property and business, which they named the Clinton W. Schwamb Company.



In the photo above, Clinton is on the left and Louis is on the right. The date "1905" was written by pencil on the print that was scanned, not written on the actual

*wooden
frame.*

1922 The Theodore Schwamb Mill included seven buildings and had about 100 employees.

1928 A nephew of Theodore Schwamb assumed ownership of the Theodore Schwamb Mill. He discontinued manufacture of piano casings and began to manufacture architectural woodwork.

1931 The Theodore Schwamb Mill was reorganized by Donald E. Nickerson, Donald A. Davis, and Alvin W. Davis.

1940 The Theodore Schwamb Mill added an ecclesiastical department which included Arcangelo Cascieri as resident sculptor.

1942-1945 For the duration of World War II, the Theodore Schwamb Mill discontinued all civilian work. It produced millwork and cabinet work for military bases, Liberty ships, and PT boats.

1954 The Clinton W. Schwamb Mill installed electric motors and sold its steam engine. The original 19th century shaft and pulley belt-driven system remained in place to transmit power to the individual machines throughout the Mill.

1969 Deaths of Clinton and Louis Schwamb, and the approaching retirement of Clinton's son Elmer, prompted Elmer Schwamb and Louis's widow to enter into a purchase and sale agreement with neighboring lumber terminal truckers to honor Clinton's promise to the truckers to provide additional truck access to their property. The plan of the truckers called for demolition of the three Mill buildings.

The Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, a nonprofit charitable educational trust, was formed by four Arlington Conservation Commission members:

Patricia C. Fitzmaurice (1923-2001)
Doris Atwater (now Bouwensch)
Rudolph Kass
David D. Wallace

The purpose of the Trust was — and is — to raise funds to save the Mill, to maintain the production of oval frames, and to exhibit the Mill's collections and traditions. This was apparently the first case of grassroots historic industrial preservation in America.

1970 On 16 Jan 1970, the Old Schwamb Mill was acquired by The Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust with contributed funds from two Boston foundations, a Cambridge bank, and several individual donors. The Trust appointed Patricia C. Fitzmaurice as Managing Trustee, a position which she held until her death on 15 Feb 2001.

During the years following the acquisition, frame makers working at the Mill included

- David Graf: Current woodturner
- David Hogan
- Walter Horak
- Ronald J. McLellan (15 May 1924-30 Dec 1995)
- Gordon E. Richardson (10 Aug 1902 – 23 Jan 1990)
- Gordon Whitermore.

After being acquired by the Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, the Old Schwamb Mill continued to manufacture museum-quality frames but relied on the additional income that it received from donors and appropriate tenants.

In the summer of 1970, the Old Schwamb Mill created a Craft Center which offered 10-week courses in:
Silver Jewelry Making taught by *H. Val Fay*
Printmaking taught by *Anthony Pilla*
Pottery and Ceramics taught by *Nadine Hurst*
Clay Sculpture and Pottery taught by *Lisa McLean*
Furniture Refinishing taught by *Bron M. Warsaskas*
Waste Conversion taught by *Richard Darling*

In the autumn, the Mill added courses in Life Drawing, Water Color Painting, Italic Lettering, Gold Leafing, Furniture Stenciling, Weaving, Leathercraft, and Basic Oil Painting.

Part of the second story of the Mill was rented to The Hart Viol Workshop. The proprietor, Richard Hart, manufactured Viols da Gamba, Vielles, Psalteries, Rebecs, Fiedels, and other Mediterranean and Renaissance string instruments.

Two potteries were started at the Mill: the Barn Potters, Cora Pucci and Kathy Ingoldsby; and the Mill-Race Pottery with Telle Bjork and Nadine Hurst.

1971 The Theodore Schwamb Mill closed. That property was acquired by another immigrant entrepreneur, John P. Mirak, partially for use by his automobile dealership and partially for lease to numerous small businesses.

The Old Schwamb Mill was listed in The National Register of Historic Places by the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior for the Mill's national historical significance.

1972 The Old Schwamb Mill held its first annual "barn sale." This fundraising event was continued for at least three years.

1975 The Old Schwamb Mill obtained the last remaining timbers from the "Washington Elm" (under which General George Washington assumed command of all colonial troops on 3 July 1775). The Mill manufactured for sale 75 spandrel frames using wood from the Washington Elm. Each frame contained a print showing Washington taking command of the Continental Army.

1976 At the request of the Commandant of the First Naval District, artisans from the Old Schwamb Mill made an oak jewel chest from timbers of the USS Constitution.

J. William Middendorf II, Secretary of the United States Navy, gave the chest to Queen Elizabeth II at the time of her bicentennial visit to Boston.

1979 Shaker Workshops became a tenant of the Old Schwamb Mill in May 1979. They occupied the westerly half of the first floor of the main Mill building.

The Mill offered classes in Design, Advance Calligraphy and Manuscript Illumination, Life Drawing, Painting, Silver Jewelry, Stained Glass, Pottery, Woodworking with Hand Tools, Woodworking in Miniature, and Researching Old Houses.

1981 Artisans of the Old Schwamb Mill produced 13 oval display cases as part of the renovation of the throne room in the Iolani Palace in Hawaii. The cases are being used to display the jewels which kings, queens, and emperors gave to the Hawaiian royalty during their travels covering a period of 15 years. Each case has an oval shape and has a royal crest at the top. The oval cases were carved out of seasoned poplar. The crests were carved out of maple from the town of Wellesley.

1983 In Dec 1983, Shaker Workshops expanded its operations. They established their office in the upper level of the barn and used the lower level of the barn for production. Their showroom remained in the main building of the Mill.

1985 Sometime in 1985, Shaker Workshops moved its production to Fitchburg and expanded its showroom at the Old Schwamb Mill to occupy both floors of the barn. By Jan 1986, they had moved completely out of the main Mill building.

1988 The Massachusetts Historical Commission gave a 25th Anniversary Preservation Award to Patricia C. FitzMaurice for her preservation activities in connection with the Old Schwamb Mill.

2000 On 17 May 2000, Patricia Fitzmaurice received the Ayer Award from the Bay State Historical League for being “a visionary preservationist who recognized the historical and educational value of the Old Schwamb Mill property in Arlington in 1969 and since then has worked tirelessly in leading efforts to fulfill its mission.”

Today The site of The Old Schwamb Mill is now the oldest continuously operating mill site in the United States. The earlier mills are either long gone or no longer operating.

Schwamb frames and mouldings are in every major art museum in the United States and are included in the collections of the White House, the Vatican, Buckingham Palace, the Palace of the Kings of Hawaii, and the collection of Queen Sylvia of Sweden.

[WORDPRESS.COM.](https://oldschwambmill.org)

Theodore Schwamb and the Era of the German Mills in Arlington



MIRIAM BITZER SWEENEY

Jacob Bitzer, as a young man. He came from Germany at the age of ten.

In 1924, retired shop superintendent and director of the Theodore Schwamb Mill, Jacob Bitzer, recognized that almost all of the second-generation German mill owners had passed away. After his mill career, Bitzer was extraordinarily active in civic affairs, as Town Moderator, and as a member of the Massachusetts General Court. He was instrumental in building the new high school on Massachusetts Avenue in 1914, and pushing through the Mystic Valley Parkway. When he looked back and realized how much of the mill era had already vanished, he composed a "History of the Mills along the Sucker Brook," for the Arlington Historical Society. "Sucker Brook" was an earlier name for Arlington's Mill Brook, which ran and still runs, sometimes underground, from the Great Meadows in East Lexington, to the Mystic Lakes on the Winchester border.

In their heyday nine separate mills, each with one or two backup mill ponds, dotted the Mill Brook Valley along Massachusetts Avenue from East Lexington as far as Mystic Street in Arlington. The water of the Mill Brook was used by each mill wheel in turn, and the water was then passed on to the next. After 1872 the mills were forced to gradually convert to steam when the Arlington Heights residential plan was laid out and the town dug a reservoir on Lowell Street, in anticipation of the professional class expected to populate the Heights. The influx was not realized because a prolonged

recession cut demand and the Arlington Land Company went bankrupt within two years. Complaints were also lodged that the water was not clean. In 1898, Arlington applied to join the Metropolitan water system and in 1899, its petition was granted. Thus, the Heights were able to escape the fate of having the waters of the Great Meadows flow into their sinks.

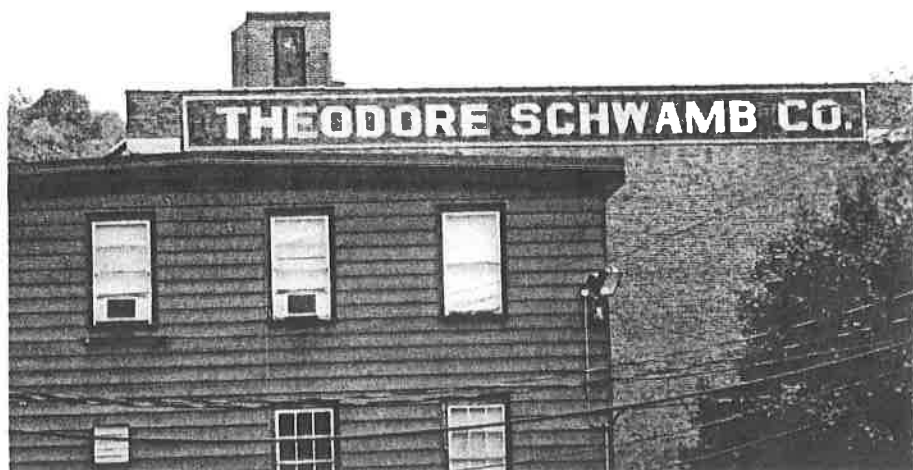
None of this, however, reversed the draining down of the Great Meadows due to the reservoir. Gradually, the mill ponds lost their vital importance, were drained, filled in or left to grass over; and the great era of the mills was over. The last pond to go, Fowle's Pond near Mystic Street, was still visible in about 1955. Luckily, the town was able use the old mill areas for sports playing fields, particularly at the High School and at Buzzell field. Writing in 1924, Jacob Bitzer noted that, of the nine mills, only four were still running. Only two mills were prosperous enough to run full-time. These belonged to the frame maker and grandson of Charles Schwamb, Clinton W. Schwamb, and to the Theodore Schwamb Company, which at this time focused its business on wooden cases for grand pianos. Bucking the trend of the mills to shut down, these two would continue to work profitably for almost another 50 years, until 1969 and 1972, respectively.

When 17-year-old Karl Schwamb came from the southern Rheinland to apprentice at the sawing and wood-turning firm of Paul F. Dodge at 1175 Mass. Avenue, Yankee names dominated the town. There were Lockes,

Winships, Robbinses and, above all, Cutters. The mill barns behind the Dodge house were known as the Stephen Cutter Mill, and the site of the new house built by Dodge came from the Cutter heirs. Similarly, if Karl had stayed in his hometown, Udenheim, he would have belonged to an equally large clan of Schwamb. The Schwamb were as ubiquitous in Udenheim as the Cutters were in Arlington.

What both families shared was energy and a desire to have their own mills.

When he took on young Karl Schwamb as an apprentice, Dodge had suffered grievous personal losses: In 1836 he lost a son, age two months. In April, 1838, his wife, Maria Perry, died; and finally, his remaining infant son, age seven months, died in August of 1838. There is evidence that Dodge talked early to Charles about wanting to divest himself of the business. Half a century later, Karl Schwamb, renamed Charles Schwamb, consistently stated in his ads that his firm dated to 1850. This was likely the date when Dodge agreed to divestment. We know that the five Schwamb brothers' collaborative firm at this location began only in 1853, when the eldest brother, Jacob, was the first to join Charles in Arlington after several years of making piano cases for the firm of J.C. Lane in Leominster. Brother Peter had arrived in 1850 at age 20 to apprentice. In 1853, Theodore, then age 21, arrived from the vineyards he had tended for several years at his father's new, enlarged farm and public house in Köngernheim. He joined the elder brothers in a joint venture, which would last nine years until 1862. In 1857,



Today the Theodore Schwamb Mill complex houses a variety of small businesses

the youngest and last brother, Frederick, arrived in New York City from Le Havre on the ship, *Princeton*, accompanied by his fiancée, Thekla Breivogel. Five days later Thekla and Frederick were married in the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Boston's South End, an early Greek revival brick building with classic pediment, which Jacob co-founded and helped to dedicate on Christmas Day, 1847.

As the first German to arrive in 1838, Jacob maintained his connection with the Zion Lutheran Church he helped to found, often "supplying the pulpit" himself in the absence of the minister. By 1853, however, he had begun to think better of settling on the scantily filled lands and commercial wharves of narrow Boston Neck. He had already buried two wives due to illness. He had worked in several piano factories in Boston and after 1842 had lived during an unhappy time of recession when his nearest brother, Ludwig, arrived to apprentice in woodworking, was forced to work in a lead-paint factory and fell ill with typhoid fever as well as lead poisoning. After a return to Germany, Ludwig reappeared in Boston in 1849, but passed through quickly, as if shaking the dust of Boston from his feet. He headed west to do what he had always wanted to do, to farm – first in Indiana and later in Missouri.

Perhaps also, Jacob found Leominster too undeveloped for a boy from the Rheinland. His foray there could have influenced his decision to join his brothers at 1171 Massachusetts Avenue in West Cambridge, a name Arlington retained until 1867. This was a proper town, yet with large tracts of undivided land, particularly in the Heights. The terrain was rougher for farming here than on the fertile eastern plain. But it was attractive for residences and businesses. In the coming decades, the Schwamb bought several of these areas from their Yankee owners. Jacob remarried again after two years, in 1855, to Katherine Guething. The couple added five more children to Jacob's previous five; and the good Katherine had the grace to outlive Jacob by six years and, with two of her sons, to continue until her death in 1887 the piano-case and straight-molding business Jacob had established at 1033 Massachusetts Avenue. The story of Jacob's mill didn't end there either: Jacob's youngest sons, William and Edward, carried on a furniture repairing and refinishing business together at 1033 Massachusetts Avenue until 1903, the year of William's death. As late as 1926, *The Advocate* reported that Edward Schwamb was still running the furniture refinishing business in the same place. And a jolly side of Edward came out in his obituary in 1946 when he died at 84. He was characterized as a notable musi-

cian who led the music program for the town's Centennial Celebration in 1907 and was the leader of the Arlington Zouaves Band. The Zouave soldiers were originally Civil War regiments with colorful costumes meant to resemble Berber tribesmen. Naturally, the story of Jacob's offspring doesn't end with the childless Edward. It is included to show the endurance, even of the least known of the Schwamb Mills, and the love of making music that ran through the German population in general, and the Schwamb in particular.

The business that the brothers started in 1853 was called, "Charles Schwamb and Brothers." This underlined the role of Charles as organizer. Jacob pioneered by scouting territory and pinpointing piano production as a skill with a future: Now Charles saw strength in numbers for the immigrant brothers and launched the enterprise. The location at 1171 Mass. Avenue had an attractive house, two barns and a mill wheel. During the firm's nine years of operation, the younger brothers apprenticed, became journeymen and joined the partnership.

After the partnership was dissolved in 1862, the brothers started three separate businesses. Jacob, ever the restless family member, located himself in West Medford to make organ-cases for home use, a product of Mason and Hamlin Company. At the end of his career, Jacob returned to Arlington at 1033 Mass. Avenue where he ran his own mill until his death in 1881.

Theodore set his course to acquire 1171 Mass Avenue. It is not clear why he first located for a few years at 1093 Mass. Avenue near Hobbs Mill. He was determined to continue in the piano-case business and his eye was on the original location. By 1871 he was back at the Dodge homestead and had also acquired the Stephen Cutter Mill behind the house. Here, the largest of the three German mills in Arlington grew, the firm of Theodore Schwamb Company destined to last one hundred ten years and to remain important as the first and central location. The brothers all worked and lived close to one another for the rest of their lives, lending a hand in crises, and investing heavily in locations near one another in the Heights section of Arlington.

Sometime around 1850, Charles met Jane Sophia Hinton in the Choir of the First Parish Congregational Church (now Unitarian Universalist) in Arlington Center. Jane had been born in Birmingham, England. In 1852, Charles married his Jane and became the only brother to marry a girl with a

Peter Schwamb, Jr., during his years as Professor of Machine Design and Mill Engineering at M.I.T.



non-German name. In this large, close-knit German family, one hopes that Jane managed to understand some German. Although Charles continued to walk often to Boston to attend services in German at Zion Lutheran Church in the South End, he was eager to become American as soon as possible; and an English-speaking wife fitted this plan.

A tragic event occurred in the brothers' collaboration in 1858, when a younger brother, Peter, died on March 24. We do not know the cause, but he had married Clara Buecher, an immigrant from Graach, Rheinpreussen, only one year earlier and his first child, Peter, Jr., was only one-and-one-half months old at the time of his father's death, suggesting a sudden and unexpected event. Two years later, in 1860, Theodore married Peter's widow and adopted Peter, Jr., showing a trait he would carry through his life – the instinct of a good administrator to bring people together for the greater good of the whole. Charles, who was imaginative as an innovator, did not have the same ability to integrate his personnel. In 1864, for instance, Charles and Frederick opened a niche business on Mill Lane just a short distance upstream from the Dodge location. The Woodbridge Spice Mill had come up for sale after a fire. Here Charles and Frederick installed their lathes and introduced a new technology directed at the thriving market clamoring for oval frames: The business was successful, yet Frederick remained only three years, leaving with his wife Thekla Breivogel for New York State, and ultimately for Blue Island, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. It was as if Charles instilled his spirit of adventure in others, but not in a manner that was to his own advantage.

The new wooden oval lathes offered technology capable of turning out perfect ovals of all sizes in large numbers, requiring skilled workmanship

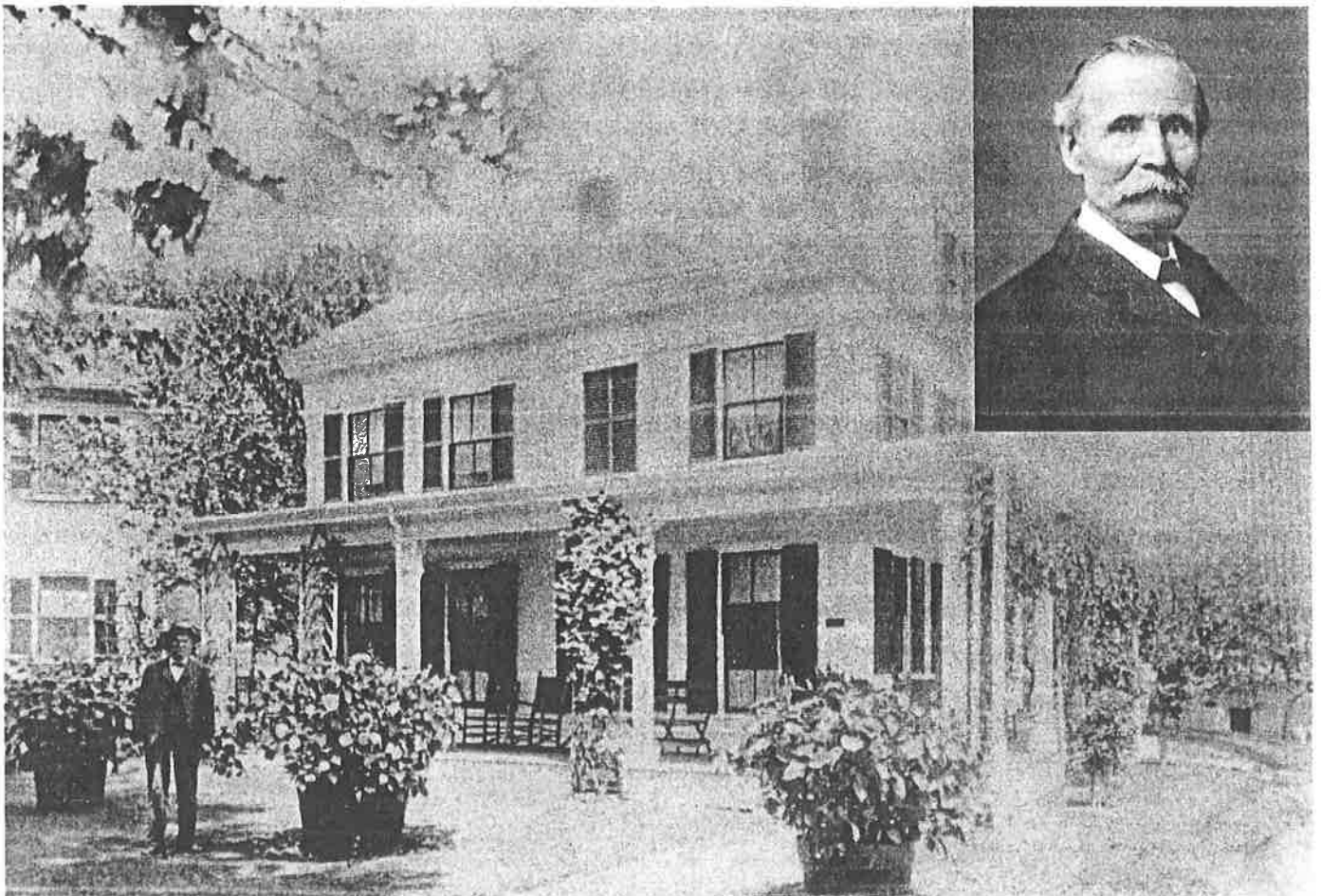
especially in the final contouring with a hand chisel on the double-axis lathe. The whole system was still powered by water. The enormous waterwheel, 18 feet in diameter was partially recessed under the basement floor, allowing for an "overshot" wheel, which channeled the water over the top. This was all going on, right under the feet of the workmen. Accustomed as we are to contemporary power sources, it is hard to believe this sophisticated shaping and carving was still deriving its energy from rough water flowing over a submerged wooden wheel. It had been so for thousands of years. But it seems somehow incongruous in the context of the burgeoning industrial age of the 1860s.

A similar example of Theodore's approach occurred in 1882. A plea came from Peter's nephew, Philip Eberhardt, in Guntersblum, Germany. Philip's mother, Katarina, was Theodore's sister, who died when Philip was only three. Philip suffered abuse from the husband of a kindly aunt, with whom he now lived. He begged his uncle in a letter to be allowed to come to the States. When Philip's ship arrived in New York, he was met by a German

customer of Theodore. But when he arrived in Providence on shipboard to Boston and could no longer hear German but only the "barbaric" English, he fell to weeping: "I was the most homesick boy you ever saw," he wrote many years later. "I laid my head on the rail of the boat and cried my heart out. An old gentleman came and spoke to me but I cried all the harder until a young man who could speak German spoke to me and sort of straightened me out. I could not go into my stateroom but slept in one of the large chairs in the saloon. The next morning I arrived in Boston and was met by my sister and Mrs. Theodore Schwamb. On the following day, June 17th, I went to work and have been working ever since." For the first two years in Arlington, he remembered thinking that he would have returned immediately to Germany if he could have. Nevertheless, he prospered at Theodore Schwamb, becoming superintendent of the entire plant in 1890, and then partner and director of the corporation in 1897. At Peter's retirement in 1924 Philip Eberhardt became president of the Theodore Schwamb Company. He continued to work there, even after the company was bought out by the Nickerson

family in 1931, until the onset of his fatal illness shortly before his death in 1938.

Theodore's great talent for attracting and keeping talent was especially strong within his larger family. After Theodore's only son by Clara died at the age of two in 1866, Theodore set his hopes on his adopted son, Peter, Jr. Peter became, one might say, a perfect adopted son. He completed M.I.T. and rose there to become a professor of Mechanical Design and Mill Engineering, and head of the M.I.T. Mechanical Laboratories. Moreover, in Peter, Theodore had a son who could enhance his own profile in civic affairs, particularly in the 1890s, when Peter served on the committees to build two of Arlington's three most beautiful schools, the old High School on Academy Street, now the Senior Center; and the Cutter and Locke schools, placed at strategic intervals along Massachusetts Avenue as far as Park Avenue in the Heights. For the planning of the Locke, Peter was Committee Chairman. Presumably due to the really outstanding aesthetic of their architecture, and their solid construction, these schools were saved from the wrecker's ball and have found a second life in new incarnations,



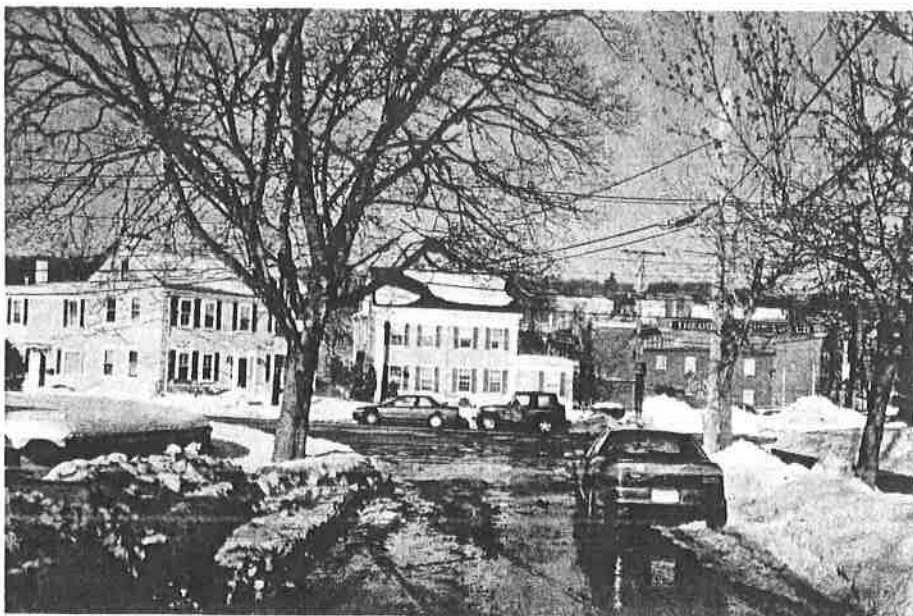
The Theodore Schwamb (formerly Dodge) homestead at 1171 Mass. Ave., about 1905. Theodore stands at left, bottom. Portrait of Theodore inset upper right. The showy landscaping reflects his early love of his father's vineyards in Germany.

even though they were threatened at times in the years when school divestment was the fashion, the premise being that the school-age population would continue to decline. In 1899 also, Peter Schwamb, a long-time member of the Arlington Water Commission, was, in the words of William Cutter, “instrumental in having the town admitted into the Metropolitan water system.” He remained active at Theodore Schwamb Company and joined in its incorporation as Treasurer in 1897.

After Theodore’s death in 1909, Peter took early retirement from M.I.T. and worked even more closely with the company until his own retirement in 1924.

While Theodore Schwamb built his company slowly, Charles leapt ahead quickly. From 1864 to 1879, Theodore’s expansion was slower than Charles’s. In 1878, for instance, when the bulk of the Mill owners were awarded damages for the drastic curtailment of the waters of the Sucker Brook due to the excavation of the Heights Reservoir, Theodore received \$6,024.16. Charles Schwamb, on the other hand, still riding the crest of the vastly popular oval frame business, received \$11, 587.58. In 1875, *The Arlington Advocate* noted that Charles Schwamb had acquired “a snug fortune” in his business. In October of that year, he organized a surprise party among his thirty-five mill workers to welcome his twenty-one-year-old son, Carl William, into his business as a partner. “The men in the establishment last Friday evening, despite the unfavorable state of the weather, marched in a body to the residence of Mr. Schwamb to congratulate the new firm.” The “residence” was an impressive new mansard-roof house, which Charles had recently constructed at what is now 22 Fessenden Street. What Carl William, an artistic young man, thought of joining a dusty business (it was apparent later that his lungs were delicate), is a good question.

But if he had to choose sawdust, rather than music, nevertheless, he remained a dutiful son and partner in the firm. He was the only son available at that time. When his only brother, Herbert Page, reached maturity 11 years later, he chose to go west to Denver. Within these limitations, Carl and his parents seemed to understand one another. He served as alternate organist, not only at the First Baptist Church where the family worshipped, but at various churches in the Heights and in Lexington. He was pianist for many years for the Sunday school of the First Baptist; and he designed music curriculum for the Arlington schools. Carl William died at the relatively early age, of 57 in 1912; yet for many decades thereafter a harpsichord stood on the third floor of the Mill as a reminder. In gratitude for Carl



In the middle : The Theodore Schwamb house as it looks today, without wrap-around porch. The photo shows the whole ensemble of historic buildings. Right to left: Former Theodore Schwamb Company Mill buildings, 1165-1167 Mass. Avenue (mid-19th/early 20th century) Theodore Schwamb house, 1171 Mass. Ave.; (c. 1845); and the Kimball Farmer house, 1173 Mass. Ave. (c. 1828).

William’s contributions to the First Baptist Church in Arlington Center, the parish gave him an intricately carved square piano, an instrument which has been lovingly restored in the family of his granddaughter, Dorothy Sweet Forman, of Macomb, Illinois.

In 1879, the market for oval frames collapsed as square frames became the fashion. To the array of modern equipment Charles already had — rotary planers, band saws, circular saws and jigsaws, boring machines used for dowelling, and common and eccentric turning lathes — he now installed a molding machine, capable of being set to finish any possible design for straight stock, and to fashion any contour a frame maker might want. An enlarged second floor was added to accommodate the long lengths of stock. Charles was also helped with orders subcontracted from his brother, Jacob, who had for several years been operating in his own Mill at 1033 Mass. Avenue next to the building that is today Stop and Shop Pharmacy. (Not until 1919 did this parcel go out of Schwamb hands, when it was sold to a manufacturer of electric repair parts, and carbon and metal brushes used in automobiles.

The Advocate reported that “The building is of the olden time construction and the timbers are put together with wooden pins, heavy timbers being used and many of them, quite a contrast to the buildings of today”. In recent years, several nostalgic mill enthusiasts have looked for this treasure, only to leave again cursing the brick-cube apartment building which

has replaced it.)

In the early 1890s, America experienced a severe economic panic, followed by a prolonged recession. It is therefore surprising to read that the Theodore Schwamb Company saw constant growth, both in the 1890s and in the first years of the new century. In 1898, the year after its incorporation, the Company was the largest single business in Arlington. Directors were Peter Schwamb, Treasurer, Philip Eberhardt, Clerk and Assistant Superintendent, and Jacob Bitzer, Head of the shop. New property was purchased behind the Mill in 1905. In the same year, a narrow-gauge spur railroad track was added, linking the firm to the railroad and enabling the company to receive and deliver almost in the manner of a private railroad.

Among the new structures, the largest was the four-story brick building, which today still bears uppermost on its facade the words, THEODORE SCHWAMB CO., ready for the passers-by of the twenty-first century.

As the middle class began to upscale its musical tastes in the new century, the vogue for upright pianos gave way to the aspiration for a grand piano. Theodore Schwamb Co. followed the trend, which required not only skill but speed and coordination in gluing veneers to its fine hardwoods. As the new century dawned, however, the first generation seemed suddenly to have grown quite venerable. At Charles Schwamb and Son Co., the heir apparent, Carl William, was on a protracted stay in Denver to improve his health. At the Mill,

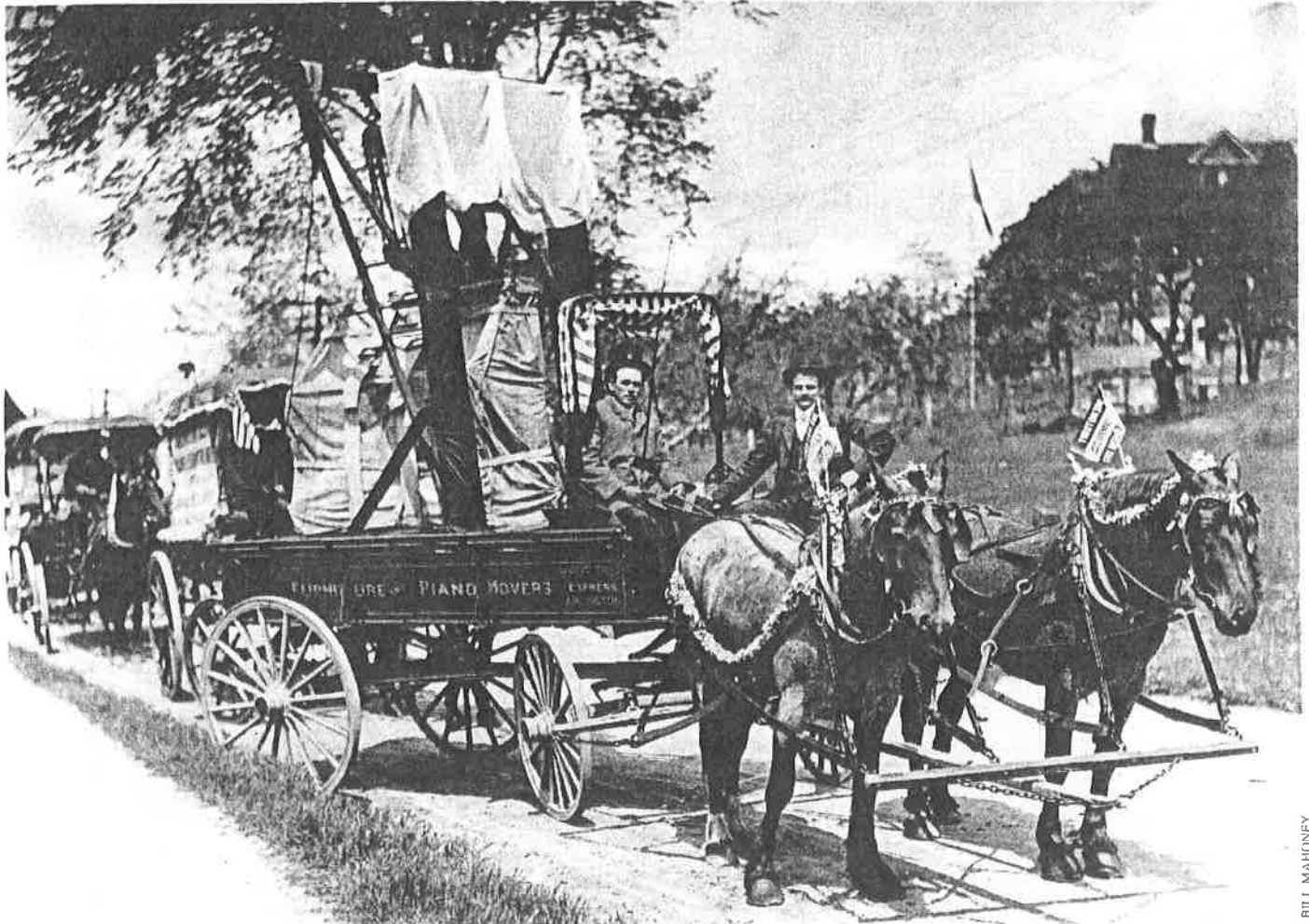
shop superintendent, John Frederick Bitzer, oldest brother of Jacob Bitzer, carried on as he had for 36 years. One cannot see how much sales work could have been going on.

For Charles, by nature an energetic entrepreneur, looking back from the vantage of 1900 must have been daunting. Of the nine children born to him and to Jane Hinton, seven were dead. Two sons and a daughter died shortly after birth; but the unthinkable happened from 1884 to 1891. His four grown daughters, lovely young women if one may judge from their photos, all died, one after another in successive years. Evidence strongly suggests a family tendency to tuberculosis, though the only written evidence concerns their youngest daughter, Jennie Louise Schwamb Wyman, who had recently given birth to a daughter. Two weakening bouts of pneumonia are mentioned, one before and one after the baby's birth (the baby also died within a few months). When Charles Schwamb died in 1903 at the age of seventy-six, his faithful superintendent, John

Frederick Bitzer, resigned immediately and joined his youngest brother, Jacob Bitzer, at Theodore Schwamb, where he remained for the rest of his professional life.

When Carl William returned from Denver he found the mill almost without business and he retired in 1905. This is the point at which the Schwamb energy sprang up again: his two sons, Clinton W., 26, and Louis, 19, suddenly acquired a frantic determination to save their Mill. In 1907 under the new name of "Clinton W. Schwamb and Co.," they hoisted the red, white and blue bunting to the Mill's facade for the Centennial Celebration of the town's independent status. Under the company's name were emblazoned the words, "OLDEST OVAL FRAMEMAKER IN NEW ENGLAND." The firm was old – the partners were young! Clinton and Louis were not shy about invoking antecedents, if it served their purpose. The entrepreneur knows how to pick himself up because risks involve falls, and entrepreneurship is risky. Over years of hard work, Clinton

and Louis brought the Mill back to prosperity. Clinton's son, Elmer Schwamb, was born in 1904 and is now 100 years old. He is living with his son, Wayne, in Fulton, Missouri. When talking to Patricia Fitzmaurice in earlier years, Elmer remembered how hard his father and uncle worked to save and restore the Mill; and how he himself entered the business in the 1920s, traveling the length the East Coast on sales trips. The Mill stayed profitable and Elmer even added a niche partnership called "Elwayne" involving his son Wayne for the production of specialty frames. In the end, it was the advent of molded plastic and the ever-worsening quality of lumber that forced Elmer Schwamb, after the death of his Uncle Louis, in 1967, and of Clinton in 1968, to sell what was to become the Old Schwamb Mill. The buyer had plans to raze the building and blacktop the lot for parking. But luckily Patricia Fitzmaurice, who was already an ardent preservationist, happened by on her bicycle one fall day and learned the plans. She saw the historic exterior, and even more surprising, the incredible array of period tools



June 1, 1907: The Wood Bros. Piano Movers' Express wagon is in line on Lowell Street in Arlington Heights waiting to take part in the Centennial Parade, probably the biggest parade in the history of the town. "It looks like an upright piano is on the back with a derrick on the hitch", wrote Leonard Collins in *The Advocate* in 1971. "The driver is a gentleman known as Joe Forest. His partner is Mr. Wood, the owner of the business."



The Zion Evangelical German Lutheran Church in Boston's South End, as it looks today. This Greek Revival brick building opened its doors on Christmas Day, 1847. Jacob Schwamb was a co-founder of the church. It is on Shawmut Avenue at Waltham Street and predates the graceful row houses of the era of the residential squares. The building was a Syrian restaurant when the area had a middle-eastern population, but has been used only for storage since at least the 1970s. Notice the church-like double entrance and the long windows, now partially boarded up.

and machines within. With the help of a small group of concerned Arlingtonians, she started the process that would result in the creation of a working museum, the Old Schwamb Mill, now in operation for thirty-five years.

Theodore Schwamb died in 1909. The piano-case business began to lag with the increasing interest in recordings, and especially with the advent of the radio in the early 1920s. Peter Schwamb retired in favor of Philip Eberhardt in 1924 and died unexpectedly in 1928 in the midst of his family at his house at 33 Academy Street. When Philip Eberhardt sold the business to the Nickerson family in 1931, the company name of Theodore Schwamb was retained. A decision was made to switch products to high-end architectural woodworking. This was a felicitous decision, given the extensive interior areas available and the skills, particularly of Italian workers, in the area. During the next forty-plus years, the Theodore Schwamb Co. became known nationwide for large projects of interior wood paneling and woodcarving.

Their work included elaborate projects for Yale University in New Haven; for the Tryon Palace at New Bern, North Carolina; for the original John Hancock Building in Boston and at the Harvey Firestone Library at Princeton, N.J.

The firm of Cascieri di Biccari (the late Archangelo Cascieri, Dean of the Boston Architectural Center and Adio di Biccari, Arlington sculptor) opened a studio at Theodore

Schwamb. Over four decades, this firm produced a wealth of carving and sculpture, including the exquisite Cascieri carvings for Marsh Chapel at Boston University; and the di Biccari sculpture ensemble opposite West Street on the Boston Common. One photo, taken in Arlington at the Schwamb Studio in the 1950s, shows a giant sculpture of St. Clement. The ponderous saint lies prone on a truck, having made it through of the wide doors of the Schwamb's' most attractive structure, a small, classic brick building with brick detail, a building still extant today at 1167 behind the old homestead. After arriving safely at his Brighton destination, St. Clement was hoisted to very top of the facade of St. John Seminary.

The fact that such buildings still exist is to the credit of the Mirak family, a long-time Arlington family whose firm has specialized since 1936 in dealerships and service of cars and trucks.

Recently, the firm developed a residential complex in Arlington Center called "The Legacy." Robert Mirak recently commented that "when my father, John Mirak, purchased the property in the 1970s, some of his colleagues suggested tearing down the buildings to make way for another dealership or a major shopping center. My father decided to keep the buildings and used the property to store excess auto inventory. In addition, he liked the looks of the buildings and especially the handsome red brick and the colonial windows. From that time to the present, my father and in succession, the family has upgraded the buildings. Inside,

over the decades, we have upgraded floors and brickwork. Specifically, the original wood flooring, which was blackened by use, was cleaned, sanded and urethaned to a handsome finish. Also, a number of walls were sandblasted to remove the paint on the brick; the results were sparkling."

At this Theodore Schwamb complex, it is gratifying to see how many small businesses have found a home: the Image Inn has run a photographic studio there since 1982, specializing in the rare skills and patience required by traditional techniques; the architectural firm of Rovinelli is upstairs at 1167; and there are many individual artists in residence at the large complex at 1165.

The Charles Schwamb Mill at 17 Mill Lane did not grow as large as the Theodore Schwamb Company, and it was never as visible, either. But however much the market fluctuated, Charles Schwamb and his descendants never gave up making fine oval frames. Amidst the final commercial years of competition from inferior wood and plastics, the Mill continued this work, as it does today, thanks to the late Patricia Fitzmaurice and her supporters. In the end, the Old Schwamb Mill can lay claim to having endured, both as living history and as a working Mill. All three brothers, Theodore and Charles and Jacob, could be proud that their generation of immigrants achieved so much that is still treasured in Arlington today.

By Grace Dingee, Mill Historian

even though they were threatened at times in the years when school divestment was the fashion, the premise being that the school-age population would continue to decline. In 1899 also, Peter Schwamb, a long-time member of the Arlington Water Commission, was, in the words of William Cutter, “instrumental in having the town admitted into the Metropolitan water system.” He remained active at Theodore Schwamb Company and joined in its incorporation as Treasurer in 1897.

After Theodore’s death in 1909, Peter took early retirement from M.I.T. and worked even more closely with the company until his own retirement in 1924.

While Theodore Schwamb built his company slowly, Charles leapt ahead quickly. From 1864 to 1879, Theodore’s expansion was slower than Charles’s. In 1878, for instance, when the bulk of the Mill owners were awarded damages for the drastic curtailment of the waters of the Sucker Brook due to the excavation of the Heights Reservoir, Theodore received \$6,024.16. Charles Schwamb, on the other hand, still riding the crest of the vastly popular oval frame business, received \$11,587.58. In 1875, *The Arlington Advocate* noted that Charles Schwamb had acquired “a snug fortune” in his business. In October of that year, he organized a surprise party among his thirty-five mill workers to welcome his twenty-one-year-old son, Carl William, into his business as a partner. “The men in the establishment last Friday evening, despite the unfavorable state of the weather, marched in a body to the residence of Mr. Schwamb to congratulate the new firm.” The “residence” was an impressive new mansard-roof house, which Charles had recently constructed at what is now 22 Fessenden Street. What Carl William, an artistic young man, thought of joining a dusty business (it was apparent later that his lungs were delicate), is a good question.

But if he had to choose sawdust, rather than music, nevertheless, he remained a dutiful son and partner in the firm. He was the only son available at that time. When his only brother, Herbert Page, reached maturity 11 years later, he chose to go west to Denver. Within these limitations, Carl and his parents seemed to understand one another. He served as alternate organist, not only at the First Baptist Church where the family worshipped, but at various churches in the Heights and in Lexington. He was pianist for many years for the Sunday school of the First Baptist; and he designed music curriculum for the Arlington schools. Carl William died at the relatively early age, of 57 in 1912; yet for many decades thereafter a harpsichord stood on the third floor of the Mill as a reminder. In gratitude for Carl



In the middle : The Theodore Schwamb house as it looks today, without wrap-around porch. The photo shows the whole ensemble of historic buildings. Right to left: Former Theodore Schwamb Company Mill buildings, 1165-1167 Mass. Avenue (mid-19th/early 20th century) Theodore Schwamb house, 1171 Mass. Ave.; (c. 1845); and the Kimball Farmer house, 1173 Mass Ave. (c. 1828).

William’s contributions to the First Baptist Church in Arlington Center, the parish gave him an intricately carved square piano, an instrument which has been lovingly restored in the family of his granddaughter, Dorothy Sweet Forman, of Macomb, Illinois.

In 1879, the market for oval frames collapsed as square frames became the fashion. To the array of modern equipment Charles already had — rotary planers, band saws, circular saws and jigsaws, boring machines used for dowelling, and common and eccentric turning lathes — he now installed a molding machine, capable of being set to finish any possible design for straight stock, and to fashion any contour a frame maker might want. An enlarged second floor was added to accommodate the long lengths of stock. Charles was also helped with orders subcontracted from his brother, Jacob, who had for several years been operating in his own Mill at 1033 Mass. Avenue next to the building that is today Stop and Shop Pharmacy. (Not until 1919 did this parcel go out of Schwamb hands, when it was sold to a manufacturer of electric repair parts, and carbon and metal brushes used in automobiles.

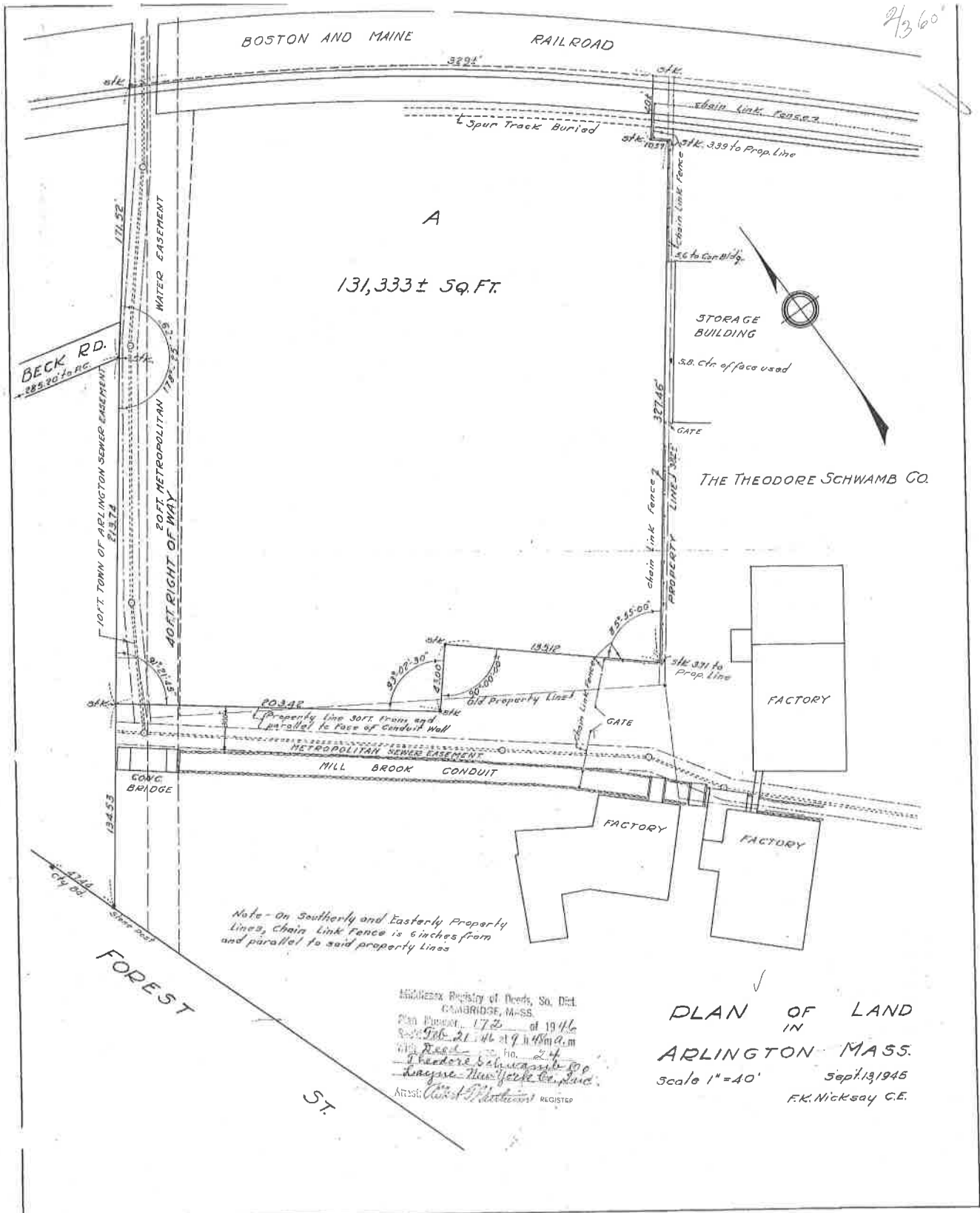
The Advocate reported that “The building is of the olden time construction and the timbers are put together with wooden pins, heavy timbers being used and many of them, quite a contrast to the buildings of today”. In recent years, several nostalgic mill enthusiasts have looked for this treasure, only to leave again cursing the brick-cube apartment building which

has replaced it.)

In the early 1890s, America experienced a severe economic panic, followed by a prolonged recession. It is therefore surprising to read that the Theodore Schwamb Company saw constant growth, both in the 1890s and in the first years of the new century. In 1898, the year after its incorporation, the Company was the largest single business in Arlington. Directors were Peter Schwamb, Treasurer, Philip Eberhardt, Clerk and Assistant Superintendent, and Jacob Bitzer, Head of the shop. New property was purchased behind the Mill in 1905. In the same year, a narrow-gauge spur railroad track was added, linking the firm to the railroad and enabling the company to receive and deliver almost in the manner of a private railroad. Among the new structures, the largest was the four-story brick building, which today still bears uppermost on its facade the words, THEODORE SCHWAMB CO., ready for the passers-by of the twenty-first century.

As the middle class began to upscale its musical tastes in the new century, the vogue for upright pianos gave way to the aspiration for a grand piano. Theodore Schwamb Co. followed the trend, which required not only skill but speed and coordination in gluing veneers to its fine hardwoods. As the new century dawned, however, the first generation seemed suddenly to have grown quite venerable. At Charles Schwamb and Son Co., the heir apparent, Carl William, was on a protracted stay in Denver to improve his health. At the Mill,

2/3/60



A
 131,333 ± sq. ft.

THE THEODORE SCHWAMB CO.

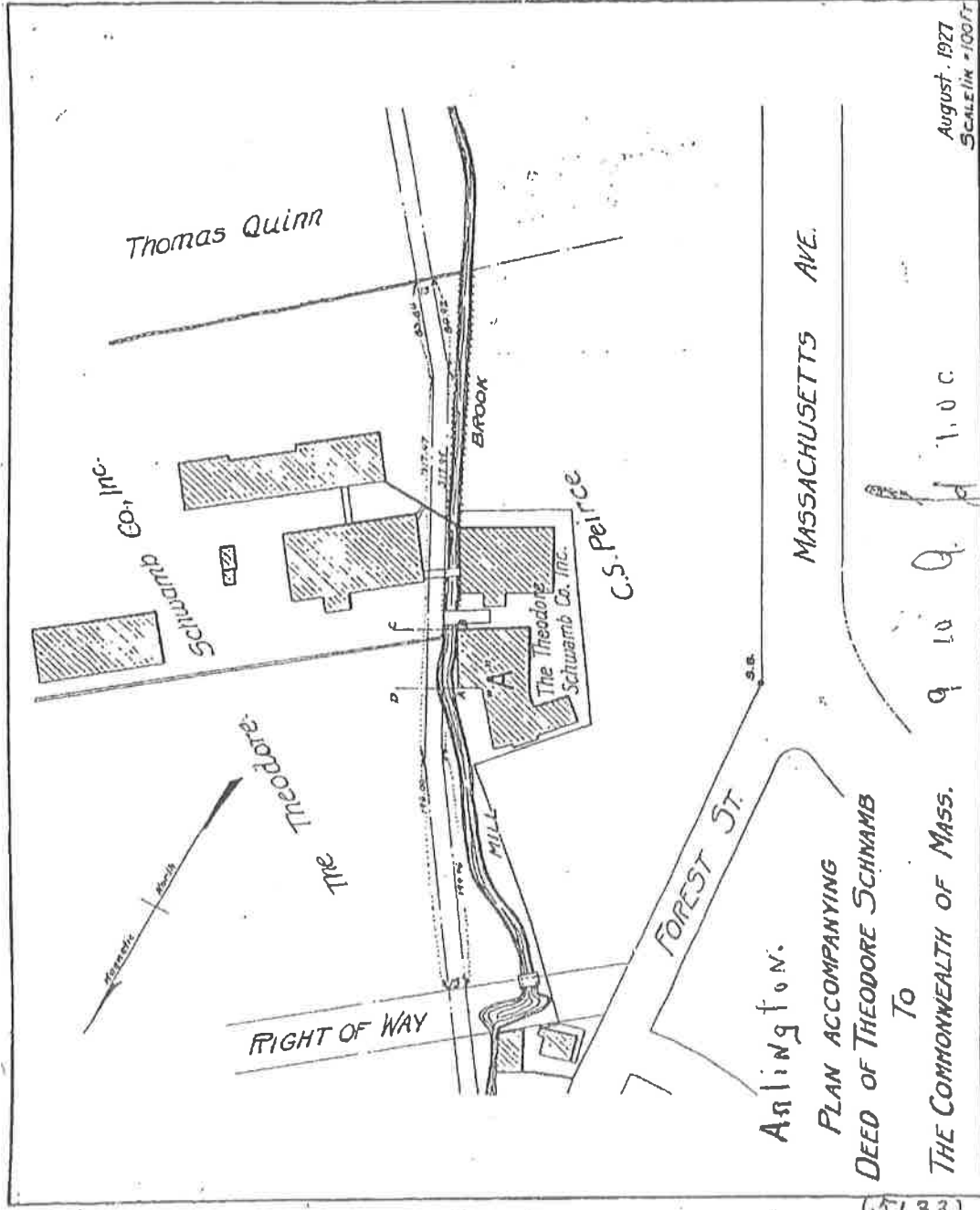
Note - On Southerly and Easterly Property Lines, chain link fence is 6 inches from and parallel to said property lines

Middlesex Registry of Deeds, So. Dist.
 CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
 Plan Number 172 of 1946
 Registered Feb. 21, 1946 at 9:45 a.m.
 With Deed No. 24
 Theodore Schwamb Co.
 Engineers - New York Co., N.Y.
 Attest: [Signature] REGISTER

PLAN OF LAND
 IN
 ARLINGTON MASS.
 Scale 1"=40' Sept. 13, 1945
 F.K. Nicksay C.E.

192 of 1946

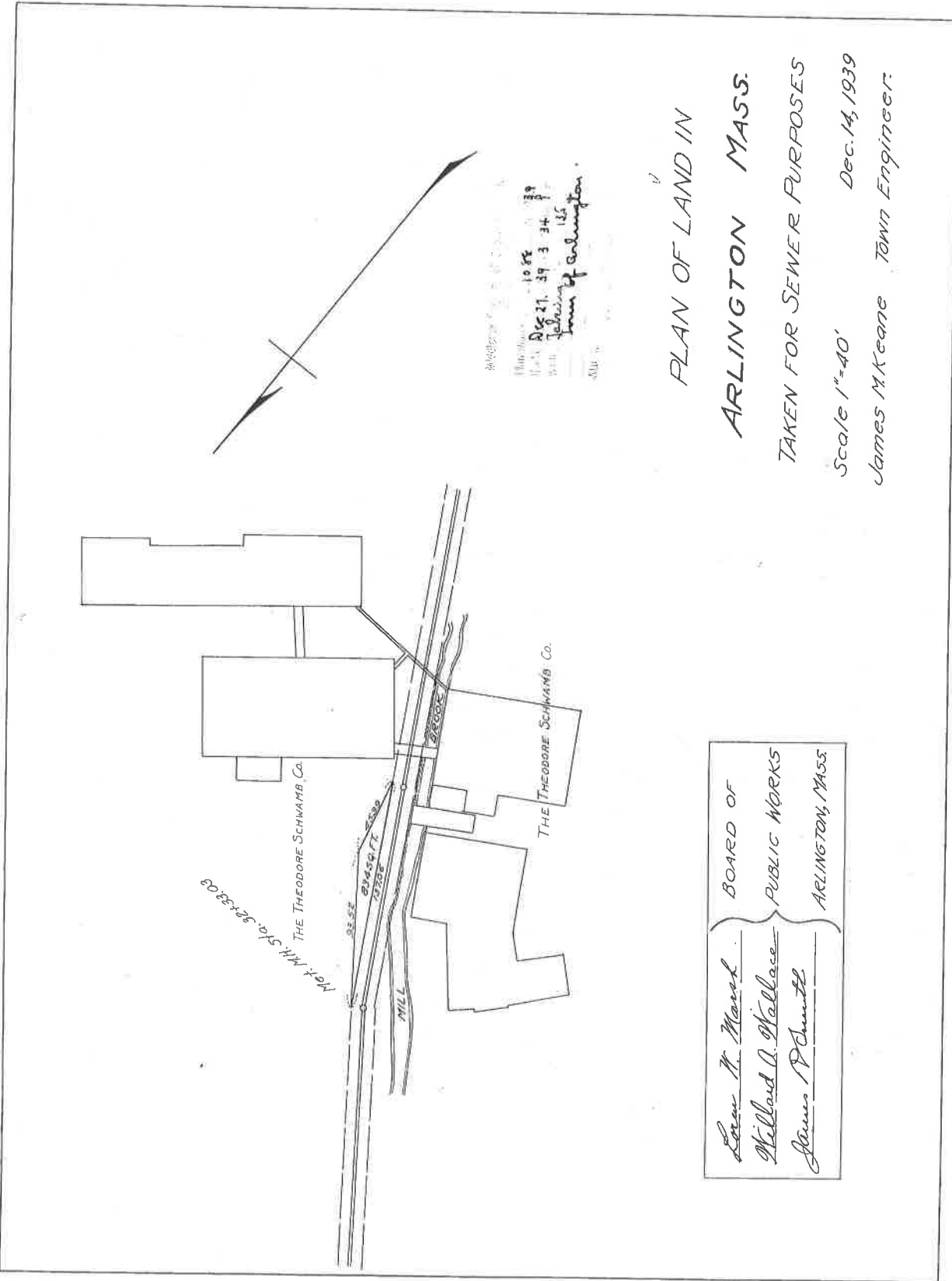
5133/75



August, 1927
SCALE IN = 100 FT.
M.S.D. No. 7502

1.00

(5133)



Map No.	1088
Block	21, 39, 3, 34
Sheet	135
Town of Arlington	

PLAN OF LAND IN
ARLINGTON MASS.

TAKEN FOR SEWER PURPOSES
 Scale 1"=40'
 James M. Keane Town Engineer
 Dec. 14, 1939

Lawrence M. Marsh
 Willard A. Wallace
 James P. Schmitt

BOARD OF
 PUBLIC WORKS
 ARLINGTON, MASS.

