



## **Biography of George A. Frost, Gleason Archer's benefactor and Trustee**

George A. Frost was born in 1857 in Massachusetts to George and Almira Frost, born in Connecticut and Maine respectively.<sup>1</sup> He was the youngest of three children in a family of two daughters and one son.<sup>2</sup> In August of 1850, his parents and oldest sister, Melissa, who was born earlier that year, were living in Roxbury, Mass.<sup>3</sup> By 1870, the family, which by that time also included George and his other older sister, Adeline (b. about 1856), was living in Newton, Mass.<sup>4</sup> By 1880, the family was still living in Newton, at 310 Highland Street, and 23-year-old George was working for his father's business, which the census lists as a "ladies furnishings" business.<sup>5</sup> George's father had been involved in sales since as early as 1850, when the census lists him as a dry goods merchant; by 1870 he was a "dealer in factory goods."<sup>6</sup>

The "factory goods" and "ladies furnishings" businesses mentioned in the 1870 and 1880 censuses probably refer to George Frost and Company of Boston, a company presumably started by the elder George Frost. The company was in existence by at least 1876, when it was located on Devonshire Street in Boston, although that year the company's storeroom was damaged by fire, and it is unclear if the company stayed at that location.<sup>7</sup> In 1878 it began manufacturing the "Gentlemen's Boston Garter," a sock supporter that had been recently patented by F. Barton Brown that proved to be a successful endeavor for the company.<sup>8</sup> By 1891, the company was incorporated and became known as the George Frost Company.<sup>9</sup> During the 1890s and early 1900s the company became very successful and expanded its production facilities to include several locations in Boston, as well as mills in New Jersey and Connecticut.<sup>10</sup> The George Frost Company's trademark products were its "Boston Garter" and "Velvet Grip" Hose Supporters.<sup>11</sup>

By 1900, George A. Frost was still working for the George Frost Company, although it is unclear whether or not he owned the company by that point.<sup>12</sup> By that time,

---

<sup>1</sup> United States Census 1870, Massachusetts, Middlesex, Newton, Page 189.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census 1870, Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> United States Census 1850, Massachusetts, Norfolk, Roxbury, Page 34.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census 1870, Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> United States Census 1880, Massachusetts, Middlesex, Newton, Enumeration District 475, Page 34.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census 1850, Ibid.; U.S. Census 1970, Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Fire Record, *The Boston Daily Globe*. August 4, 1876, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Stone, Orra. *History of Massachusetts Industries*. Vol. 2. Boston: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1930, p. 1446. Note: The elder George Frost probably started his own company prior to 1878, given that by that time he had been involved in manufacturing and sales for at least 40 years, and it is likely that F. Barton Brown would have chosen an established, well-known company to manufacture his newly patented product.

<sup>9</sup> Stone, Orra, Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, Orra, Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Stone, Orra, Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> United States Census 1900, Massachusetts, Middlesex, Newton, Enumeration District 899, Sheets 3 and 4.



he was living at 170 Chestnut Street in Newton with his wife, Louise (b. 1860), two daughters, Eleanor (b. 1883) and Lois (b. 1890), and niece, Margery Phelps (b. 1882), who was the daughter of his sister, Melissa.<sup>13</sup> The George Frost Company was evidently very successful, as the family had three live-in servants, Mary, Kate and Bridgette.<sup>14</sup>

In the summer of 1903, George A. Frost was vacationing at a cottage on Cape Cod when he met, by chance, Gleason L. Archer.<sup>15</sup> Archer, who had been injured while working at a hotel on Cape Cod, was on his way to the railroad station to make the trip into Massachusetts General Hospital when the stagecoach he was riding in stopped to pick up another passenger: George A. Frost.<sup>16</sup> Although Archer was in pain and paid little attention to Frost, Frost struck up a conversation with him, and, as Archer wrote in his book, *Building a School*, “such was the magnetism of the man, that before we had reached the railroad station I had told him much of my story...”<sup>17</sup> Archer’s “story” was that he desired to be a lawyer, but was having trouble funding a legal education.<sup>18</sup> After that conversation (Archer doesn’t give much detail about the specific events that followed), George Frost became Archer’s benefactor, funding his medical treatment and later his law education at Boston University.<sup>19</sup> In the summer of 1906, Frost got Archer a job with the law firm of Carver and Blodgett, located at 28 State Street in Boston.<sup>20</sup>

By 1910, Frost was president of the George Frost Company and was still living at 170 Chestnut Street in Newton with his wife and two daughters, who were both single.<sup>21</sup> Eleanor and Lois Frost moved out sometime between 1910 and 1920, presumably because they both married.<sup>22</sup> By 1923, the George Frost Company was located at 551 Tremont Street in Boston.<sup>23</sup> Frost and his wife lived at 170 Chestnut Street until at least 1930, by which point he had retired.<sup>24</sup> He evidently retired with a great deal of wealth, since in 1930 he employed four servants, including a cook and a gardener.<sup>25</sup> Frost’s home, built in 1880, still stands today, and in 2006 its value was assessed at over \$1.8

---

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census 1900, *Ibid.*, U.S. Census 1880, *Ibid.* Note: Margery Phelps is presumed to be the daughter of George A. Frost’s sister, Melissa, because the 1880 census lists Melissa, and her husband, George Phelps, as living with her parents. Incidentally, George Phelps was one of the designers of the “Velvet Grip” Hose Supporter made by the George Frost Company, according to Orra Stone’s account of the company.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census 1900, *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Archer, Gleason L. *Building a School*. Boston: Gleason L. Archer, 1919, pp. 34-35.

<sup>16</sup> Archer, Gleason L., *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Archer, Gleason L., *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>18</sup> Archer, Gleason L., *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Archer, Gleason L., *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> Archer, Gleason L., *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> United States Census 1910, Massachusetts, Middlesex, Newton, Enumeration District 965, Sheet 10A.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census 1910, *Ibid.*; United States Census 1920, Massachusetts, Middlesex, Newton, Enumeration District 367, Sheet 8A.

<sup>23</sup> *The Boston Register and Business Directory: 1923*, Vol. 87. Boston: Sampson & Murdock Co., 1923, p. 664. Note: The George Frost Co. is listed under the “Hose Supporters” category in the 1923 Boston business directory.

<sup>24</sup> United States Census 1930, Massachusetts, Middlesex, Newton, Enumeration District 9-372, Sheet 6B.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Census 1930, *Ibid.*



SUFFOLK  
UNIVERSITY

## Biography of George Frost

Moakley Archive and Institute

[www.suffolk.edu/moakley](http://www.suffolk.edu/moakley)

archives@suffolk.edu

million, although work has most likely been done on it since he lived there.<sup>26</sup> Although no record has been found past 1930, Frost probably lived in that home until his death in 1936.<sup>27</sup> The George Frost Company remained in business through at least the late 1940s and at some point expanded to include offices in Shirley, Mass., but its ultimate fate is unclear.<sup>28</sup>

George Frost was a significant figure in Suffolk Law School's history, as he provided the financial support that Gleason Archer needed to become a lawyer and later to start his own law school.<sup>29</sup> He served on the Suffolk Law School Board of Trustees beginning in 1919 and was "the school's foremost backer until his death in 1936."<sup>30</sup>

Copyright Information: Suffolk University, ©2006.

---

<sup>26</sup> City of Newton Property Summary for 170 Chestnut Street, West Newton, MA, <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/assessors2003/RecordCard.asp?id=32045+0013>. Note: It is unclear if George Frost built (or commissioned the building of) the home at 170 Chestnut Street that he lived in for at least 30 years. The home was built in 1880, and the Frost family was living on Highland Street at that time, but the younger George Frost could have had the house built for himself while he was still living with his parents. Since 1890 census records are unavailable, the earliest record found with Frost living at that address is the 1900 census.

<sup>27</sup> Suffolk Law Alumni Directory, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1936, p. 9. Note: A list of the members of the 1936-1937 Board of Trustees in the 1936 Alumni Directory includes George Frost with the note, "Deceased, 1936."

<sup>28</sup> Business Notes, *New York Times*, February 7, 1947, p. 30, and February 19, 1947, p. 36.

<sup>29</sup> Robbins, David L. *A History of Suffolk University: 1906-1996*. Boston: Suffolk University, 1996, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Robbins, David L., *Ibid.*, p. 23.