

FORM B - BUILDING

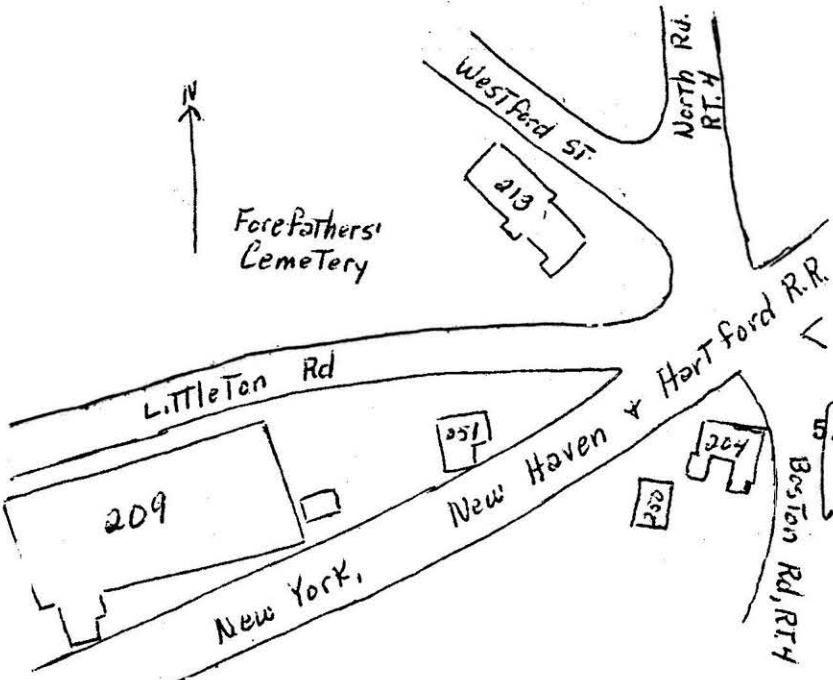
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
	209



town Chelmsford  
 address 28-34 Littleton Road  
 name Chelmsford Ginger Ale Co.  
 present use storehouse & office  
 present owner C.L.M. Realty Trust  
 description \_\_\_\_\_  
 date 1913  
 Source Lowell Courier-Citizen  
 style \_\_\_\_\_

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



Architect Edwin R. Clarke  
 Exterior wall fabric brick  
 Outbuildings (describe) at rear right  
 Other features For fire prevention reasons  
built of no wood. Consists of brick,  
steel, cement, asbestos & glass  
 Altered see attached Date 1940  
 Moved no Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. Lot size  
 One acre or less \_\_\_\_\_ Over one acre 1.68  
 Approximate frontage 490 ft.  
 Approximate distance of building from street  
ca 15 feet

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

6. Recorded by Jane B. Drury  
 Organization Chelmsford Hist. Commission  
 Date January 29, 1978

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) C. George Armstrong

Original use manufacture of ginger beer & ale

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates storehouse 1959 to present

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

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

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

The site of this brick building built in 1913 was first used for manufacturing in 1887, when John Byfield erected a machine shop for the manufacture of knitting machinery under the name of the Byfield Manufacturing Company. In 1893 the building burned down.

C. George Armstrong was born in Ontario in 1864 but came to Chelmsford to work for his future brother-in-law, John Byfield, as a salesman. He returned to Canada, married Mary Hallet of Sussex, and became the co-founder of the Sussex Ginger Ale Company.

In 1901 Armstrong and his partner, Simeon H. White, bought the ruins of the old Byfield Machine Shop and built a new building, the lower story brick with a second story of wood. The Sussex Mineral Spring Co. then began the manufacture of ginger ale and ginger beer here. The necessary pure water was obtained from a then never-failing spring on Robin's Hill and piped about 1/2 mile to the plant on Littleton Rd. In 1908 Armstrong became the sole owner, and the business was known as the Chelmsford Spring Co., later the Chelmsford Ginger Ale Co. The business grew rapidly, even internationally, and the building was expanded "all because of the reputation of a pure Chelmsford spring."

In the early morning of Nov. 20, 1912 the building was destroyed by fire at a cost of about \$30,000. Water pumped from the near-by mill pond was insufficient, smaller fires were started in near-by homes, and help from the Lowell fire department was required to prevent the spread of destruction into the center of the town.

Three weeks later, on Dec. 12, 1912 the bottling was resumed in the ell (the only part saved from the fire and torn down upon completion of the new building), offices were set up in the Odd Fellows' Building in the Center (#249) and the foundations of the new building begun. "There will be no fire in the new bottling works, for the building, which rises to 3 stories at its highest  
(Continued on attached sheet)

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

- Chelmsford Directory: 1898/9, 1915/16, 1922
- Lowell Sun: Sept. 22, 1937; June 23, 1976
- Lowell Courier-Citizen: Feb. 2, 1910; Oct. 14, 1913
- Lowell Daily Courier: Aug. 29, 1901; Dec. 16, 1903
- Diary of William Bentley, D.D. - Aug. 1793
- Jeanette Pepins - former employee
- Waters, "History of Chelmsford", 1917
- Chelmsford Assessors' records & real estate valuation lists
- Middlesex North Reg. Deeds: B.192, p.560; B.336, p.360; B.414, p.225; B.812, p.549; Reg. B.58, p. 373

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

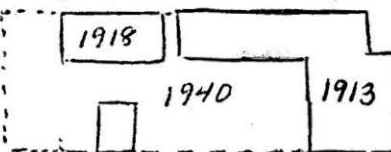
Community: Chelmsford	Form No: 209
Property Name: Chelmsford Ginger Ale Co.	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

3. Altered

1918 Garage (3 bays) built as a separate building; in 1940 included as part of the new addition.

1928 Office built as a separate building; in 1940 included as part of the new addition.



Chelmsford Ginger Ale sign above door to office  
1928

1940 Addition:

In 1940 the plant was expanded considerably. Two small houses built ca 1890 were removed. A third house, known as the "Railroad House" was demolished (but perhaps not until 1945). This old building stood just east of the addition. It dated back to the 17th century, when it was the home of the first minister, Rev. John Fiske. It was also the home of Rev. Ebenezer Bridge, 1742-1792); after his death in 1792 it was "dismantled & dispersed in the form of a right angle with hip roofs." At that time it stood in the present (1978) location of the gas station at 8 Littleton St. (#251) but was moved a few yards west when the railroad was put through in 1872. In 1885 the interior was remodelled and a wing added.

9. Historical Significance:

point, is constructed of steel, cement, asbestos, and glass. There will not be a stick of wood in it - except where absolutely necessary as to the interior finish."

In Oct. 1913 the bottling machinery was transferred to the new building and the old ell torn down. Excavation for the last section of the new building was done on the site of the former bottling department, parallel to the railroad tracks.

Agitation for a Chelmsford water department began as early as 1911, but the disastrous fire at the Chelmsford Spring Co. and the efforts of C. George Armstrong and others led to the establishment of the Chelmsford Center Water District in 1913. A reservoir tower was built on Robin's Hill, not far from the spring of the ginger ale company.

In 1931 the Chelmsford Ginger Ale, Inc. was bought out by Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc. at an estimated price of 6 million dollars. C. George Armstrong remained associated with the business as director of Canada Dry until he was stricken by a heart seizure in 1936. Canada Dry kept the Chelmsford bottling plant in operation until 1959. In 1978 Chelmsford Ginger Ale is still being bottled at the Canada Dry plant in Waltham.

## Chelmsford Ginger Ale Plant

Chelmsford Newsweekly, 1955:

### 1887. Byfield Manufacturing Company Being Built

A Business enterprise has just been inaugurated in this village which marks an epoch in its history. At intervals during the past 50 years there have been spasmodic ~~attempts~~ efforts to introduce some kind of manufacturing which not only would give employment to some of our own people who were not inclined to till the soil, but attract others to the town. The manufacture of straw goods was at one time agitated, and again hat of shoes was warmly advocated, but neither ever materialized.

Now, however, initial steps have been taken, with ample guarantee of fulfillment, to introduce the manufacture of machines for producing various classes of knit goods. The projector of the enterprise is the Byfield Manufacturing Company, now located on Market street in Lowell, and whose general manager is Mr. John Byfield, a well-known citizen of this town. Sufficient land for the purpose has been obtained of Deacon David Perham. It is admirably located in the southerly side of the Littleton road, a few rods west of the railroad station and two stories high, and constructed of brick. It is intended to begin work upon the foundation at once, and to have the machinery in running order by Jan. 1

Mr. Byfield now employs 22 men, and with additional room could double his force to advantage, as the present season he has been compelled to decline many orders for machines on account of inadequate facilities to complete them when wanted.

It is proper to state that Mr. Byfield's decision to locate here was largely influenced by the general and substantial encouragement pledged by our citizens, a mark of confidence which he highly appreciates. The railroad company will at once construct a spur track, which will deposit the building material where wanted and also greatly facilitate the shipment of the manufactured products.

The character and standing of the skilled mechanics employed in this establishment should speedily dispel the not unreasonable dislike which in a quiet agricultural community may be felt by some to the introduction of manufacturing, with which is often associated the advent of a class who constitute a numerical addition but no substantial benefit to the town. In the present instance there are satisfactory assurances that the prospective accession to our population is of a most worthy character.

The Byfield machine shop is making excellent progress, the weather having been favorable for building operations. The brick work of the first story is completed and the carpenters are laying the floor timbers for the second. The window frames are made by E. R. Marshall at his shop on South street.



Chelmsford Ginger Ale Plant

Reg. Book 68, pg. 95

5/31/1963 Transfer Certificate of Title 13048  
James J. Mawn & Mary E. Negri, Woburn  
owners, as Trustees of C.L.M.  
Realty Trust  
Plan - filed with Cert. 11381  
Subject to easements:  
1. John C. Bartlett to David  
Perham, 1865  
2. David Perham to Edwin E. Dutton,  
1884  
Lease - Albert S. Kahn, 10 years  
from May 31, 1963.

Book 58, pg. 373

7/21/1960 Original Certificate of Title 11381  
Leo Kahn, Cambridge, owner  
Plan - filed with this Cert.  
Subject to easements:  
1. John C. Bartlett to David  
Perham, 1865  
2. David Perham to Edwin E. Dutton,  
1884

Book 1443, Page 557

6/22/1959 Canada Dry Corporation, Delaware, to  
Leo Kahn, Malden  
land & buildings thereon  
Subject to rights of flowage:  
1. John C. Bartlett to David  
Perham, 1865  
2. David Perham to Edwin E. Dutton  
1884.

899, Page 544

11/ 2/1936 Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc., Virginia  
to Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc., Delaware  
4 parcels of land & buildings thereon  
1. 36,661.38 sq. ft.  
2. NW of M. Hutchins land  
3. by Old Colony Railroad  
4. by land of Fish

Book 812, Page 549

9/30/1931 Chelmsford Ginger Ale, Inc., Delaware  
to Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc., Virginia  
4 parcels of land & buildings thereon

502, Page 3

3/ 7/1913 C/ George Armstrong to  
MORTGAGE Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank  
\$8000  
land & buildings thereon

\*

Book 414, Page 225

1/ 8/1908 Simeon H. White, Sussex, New  
Brunswick, Canada, to  
C. George Armstrong  
land & buildings thereon  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  part

336, Page 360	9/18/1901	John & Harriet L. Byfield, Mangum, Oklahoma, to Simeon H. White & C. George Armstrong, Sussex, New Brunswick 36,661 sq. ft. land & buildings
305, Page 444	12/19/1894	George F. Stiles, Lowell, Assignee of Estate of John Byfield, to Harriet L. Byfield 36,661 sq. ft land
Book 192, Page 560	10/19/1887	David Perham to John Byfield \$500 36,661 sq. ft. land
* Book 738, Page 441	3/29/1926	C. George Armstrong to The Chelmsford Company 36,661.38 sq. ft. & buildings thereon

## Lowell Weekly Journal

Oct. 14, 1887

A business enterprise has just been inaugurated in this village which marks an epoch in its history. At intervals during the last fifty years there have been spasmodic efforts to introduce some kind of manufacturing which not only would give employment to some of our own people who were not inclined to till the soil, but attract others to the town. The manufacture of straw goods was at one time agitated, and again that of shoes was warmly advocated, but neither ever materialized.

Now, however, the initial steps have been taken, with ample guarantee of fulfillment, to introduce the manufacture of machines for producing various classes of knit goods. The projector of the enterprise is the Byfield Manufacturing company, now located on Market street, Lowell, and whose general manager is Mr. John Byfield, a well-known citizen of this town. Sufficient land for the purpose has been obtained of Deacon David Perham. It is admirably located on the southerly side of the Littleton road, a few rods west of the railroad station and near the track. The building is to be 40 feet wide, 100 feet long, two stories high, and constructed of brick. It is intended to begin work upon the foundation at once, and to have the machinery in running order by Jan. 1.

Mr. Byfield now employs 22 men, and with additional room could double his force to advantage, as the present season he has been compelled to decline many orders for machines on account of inadequate facilities to complete them when wanted.

It is proper to state that Mr. Byfield's decision to locate here was largely influenced by the general and substantial encouragement pledged by our citizens, a mark of confidence which he highly appreciates. The railroad company will at once construct a spur track, which will deposit the building material where wanted and also greatly facilitate the shipment of the manufactured products.

The character and standing of the skilled mechanics employed in this establishment should speedily dispel the not unreasonable dislike which is a quite agricultural community may be felt by some to the introduction of manufacturing, with which is often associated the advent of a class who constitute a numerical addition but no substantial benefit to the town. In the present instance there are satisfactory assurances that the prospective accession to our population is of a most worthy character.

Nov. 22, 1889

It now seems quite probable that before next March the interests of the Byfield Manufacturing company will be transferred to some other locality, probably Boston. Mr. John Byfield, from whom the establishment derived its distinctive title, severed his connection with it about a year ago and has since conducted the business of manufacturing the garments known as jerseys, in the second story of the same building, under the name of the Beaver Knitting company. At the time of separation there were several important matters connected with the business upon which the parties in interest could not agree, and for a time it seemed that settlement could be effaced only through the agency of the courts; but we are informed that recently an understanding has been reached and that Mr. Byfield is to receive from the company the sum of \$3500 in round numbers, the land and buildings remaining in his possession. The company have four months in which to remove their machinery and vacate the premises.

## Chelmsford Ginger Ale Plant

### Lowell Weekly Journal:

May 12, 1899 - An auction sale of considerable interest to the Centre village is that of the Byfield property in Littleton street, being the machine shop site, which will be sold by George F. Stiles, Wednesday, May 24 at 4 p.m. The brick walls of the building which burned several years ago are still standing. A good business or residential location.

### Lowell Courier-Citizen:

June 17, 1910 - A large sign worded "Chelmsford Ginger Ale" has lately been placed across the Littleton street end of the Chelmsford Spring company's building.

Feb. 2, 1910 - An ell, 50x31 feet to be built of brick and facing on the railroad tracks, is in process of construction at the Chelmsford Spring Company. This addition when completed will contain a considerable part of the bottling machinery and will relieve the lower floor of the main for the demands of the steadily growing business.

March 13, 1911 - The big Atterbury delivery truck to be used by the Chelmsford Spring Co. is expected to arrive on Tuesday. The truck has a carrying capacity of 3 tons and is 50 h.p. Herbert A. Knowlton has been engaged to drive it.

April 13, 1911 - Work on the a garage for the Chelmsford Spring Co. was started this morning by Charles E. Parkhurst. When completed, the building will accommodate 4 machines, including the big truck.

May 19, 1911 - C. George Armstrong, proprietor of the Chelmsford Spring Co., met with a painful accident Thursday afternoon. While assisting in handling a barrel of sugar, the third finger of his right hand was caught in a chain hoist and the end of the finger crushed off. The injured member was dressed by Dr. Scoboria.

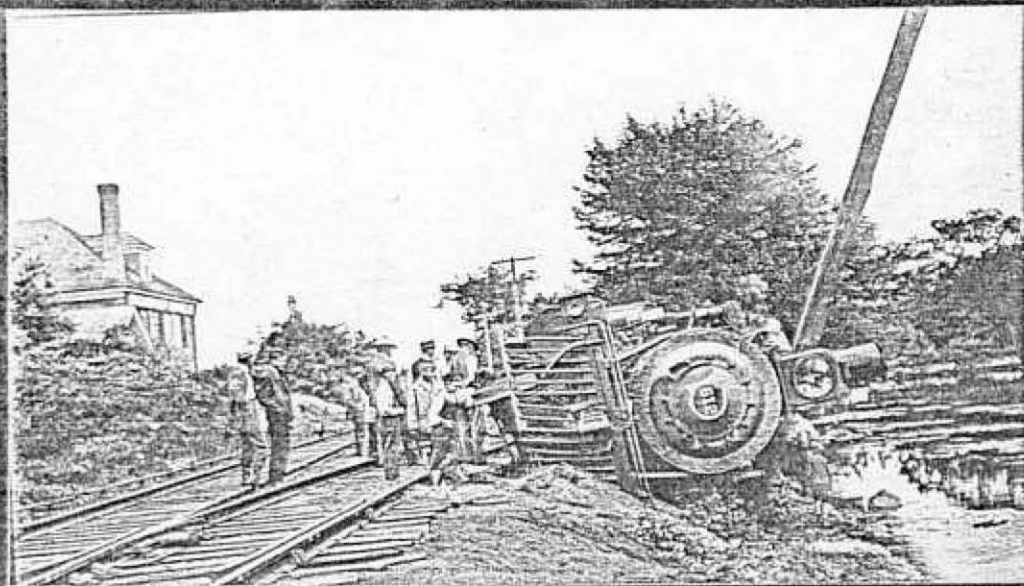
Aug. 8, 1911 - C. George Armstrong, proprietor of the Chelmsford Spring Company, left today to join his family at Sussex, N.B.





*Original postcard (undated) owned  
by Frederick Kilmartin - found under  
attic floorboards at 19 Billerica St.*

Train Wreck behind Chelmsford Ginger Ale Plant 1904-1911



## Lowell Courier-Citizen

Nov. 20, 1912 - But for the lack of wind and the fact that toofs of buildings were heavily coated with frost, the fire which destroyed the plant of the Chelmsford Spring Co., this morning, would have had far more reaching results in the village than it did. The extensive buildings at the grain mill of Swettser and Day were directly in the path of the cloud of red hot cinders. George W. Day saw to it that the main building at the Spring company burst  
when

into flames, his force of men looked after the roofs of his buildings and carefully patrolled the grounds. Several incipient fires, which might have easily proved disastrous, were discovered among the leaves and dried rubbish about the buildings and were quickly stamped out. That the colony of wooden buildings surrounded Central square escaped the dreaded calamity is due to the unusually favorable conditions. The roadway in front of the postoffice was liberally sprinkled with charred wood.

During the afternoon while clouds of steam and smoke rose from the ruins, C. George Armstrong, the proprietor, with a perseverance and grit which are characteristic of him, was making arrangements for a temporary structure to supplement the bottling department in the L that was saved from serious damage by the timely arrival of the Lowell department. The offices of the Spring Co. are, for the present, located on the second floor of the Odd Fellows building in Central square.

Nov. 20, 1912 - The plant of the Chelmsford Spring Co., manufacturers of ginger ale, etc., at Chelmsford Centre, was almost totally destroyed by fire yesterday morning. The loss is roughly estimated at \$30,000, with about \$13,000 insurance.

Only the speedy response of a portion of the Lowell fire department prevented the complete destruction of the plant. Engine 2 and hose 2 from the Branch street house, with extra men and extra lengths of hose, were at the fire before 7 A.M., about 30 minutes after it was discovered, and, by stationing the engine on the shores of the mill pond and pumping through two lines of hose 600 feet each in length, a sufficient volume of water was produced to keep the flames back from the L of the plant, which was saved.

The plant was an extensive one, all of brick. The main building was four stories in height, measuring 100 by 40 feet and the L was one and a half stories, considerably smaller in dimensions. The boiler house was a small brick L on the side of the main building adjoining the tracks of the N.Y., N.H. & H railroad. There is also a wooden garage for the automobile trucks, but it is at a considerable distance from the main plant and was not burned, although the intense heat of the fire scorched it and the machines were removed at an early hour to a safe place.

The fire made considerable spectacle, the flames roaring with untamed power until the arrival of the Lowell department, and the smoke rolling up in dense clouds. A brisk wind was blowing, which carried blazing embers over the whole district of the Centre village and endangered many houses, but the frosty morning made the roofs more or less immune because of the dampness.

### CHURCH BELL GIVES ALARM

Clarence Nichols, who lives just beyond the plant in the Littleton road, went out to his barn at about 6:35 o'clock and noticed smoke and unusual conditions at the mill, but gave it little thought because he supposed the fireman was there getting up the boiler fires. In a few moments he looked again and saw flames creeping up the window frames inside the boiler house. He summoned aid, sent a man to call the fireman of the plant and ran himself to ring the church bell in the Unitarian church nearby. The church was securely locked and Nichols could not break down the door unaided. He knew nothing about the interior of the church, so that he could break in by a basement window. He obtained assistance and, with a huge stake taken from a



passing farm wagon, ripped open the church door. As soon as the bell started sounding the village became aroused and plenty of help reached the fire. In the meantime someone had summoned Chief Ralph Adams of the fire department and the hand tub was pulled over to the edge of the pond and an endeavor was made to play a stream of water on the flames, which had now spread through the main building. The small extinguishers with which the department is provided were insufficient to do more than check the fire, which soon burst forth again in greater volume.

#### FIREMAN SCORCHED

The fireman of the plant was early at the scene and in his endeavor to reach the mill's own extinguisher had his eyebrows and eyelashes singed and was driven back before the intense heat. The fire had apparently started in the coal pocket where 40 tons of soft coal had been dumped a day or two ago and spontaneous combustion is believed to be the cause. Soon after 6:30 Chief ~~Hosmer-of-the-Lowell~~ Adams sent word to Chief Hosmer of the Lowell department that help was urgently needed and the Branch street house was called upon to respond to the emergency. That they were quick to respond is the testimony of the Chelmsford people, who declare that had the Lowell men not arrived in the nick of time the L of the building would also have been burned and perhaps still further spread of the flames resulted.

The hose lines were laid across the railroad tracks but, to give the morning mail train a clear path, a trench was dug between the ties and the lines of hose run across under the rails. By 7 O'clock the main roof fell in carrying with it a portion of the walls of the building and the first floor had also sunk so that it rested upon the tiers of crates of empty bottles in the basement. From that time on it was purely a fight from the outside and the water was poured upon a glistening mass of broken bottles which, heated as they were and melted into fantastic heaps gave forth dense clouds of steam.

#### AMONIA TANK BURNS

A 20 gallon tank of amonia under 100 pounds pressure burst with a loud explosion before the main building had been long afire and this spread the flames with amazing rapidity. Further explosions of gas tanks added to the spectacle and made the progress of the fire unmanageable. The garage did not burn although it almost boiled from the heat, the pitch rolling out of the wooden doors. The office furniture and safes were removed and the bottling machinery in the L were apparently not seriously damaged. The bottling works are in the L while the main building from cellar to roof was crowded with crates of the empty bottles which had been coming in from all parts of the country after the summer's business. These were destroyed as well as the building and effectually put a stop to immediate resumption of the bottling.

#### LOSS ABOUT \$30,000

C.G. Armstrong, the owner of the company and the plant was early on the scene and saw to it that all was done that was possible to save property. He was unable to arrive at a definite estimate of his loss but said that, including the buildings, it would undoubtedly amount to fully \$30,000 and his insurance he believed would not be more than \$13,000.

At noon the ruins of the plant were still burning beneath the piles of debris and the Lowell engine was still pouring water into the confused heap of glass. It was evident that it would be many hours before the superheated mass would be cooled enough to call it that the fire was out. Mr. Armstrong then made immediate plans to have the Lowell men properly fed and cared for and expressed himself, as did all others in authority at the fire, as under extreme obligation to the Lowell fire department. Assistant Chief Saunders succeeded Chief Hosmer in charge of the fire during the morning.

Nov. 21, 1912 - The "down town" office of the Chelmsford Spring Co., as their present location in the Odd Fellows block has been termed, is beginning to assume a business aspect. Telephone connection has been made and a sorting out and arranging of the contents of the old office, all of which were saved, is being forwarded rapidly. The debris at the factory site smouldered with considerable energy all day, and at dusk tonight again burst into flame. The power sprayer used by the moth department was requisitioned and will be used tonight for pumping water onto the mass of cases that are still burning in the cellar. A strange circumstance of the fire is, that the flooring on the second floor, fell in such a way as to, in a measure, check the heat and flames from entering the L containing the bottling machinery. The remainder of the second floor was entirely consumed.

Nov. 22, 1912 - Several loads of lumber arrived today at the ruins of the Chelmsford Spring Co., and work on the erection of a temporary structure will be pushed by Contractor Charles E. Parkhurst. The ruins still smouldered today, but the tremendous quantity of water that has been poured into the cellar is finally having effect.

Nov. 24, 1912 - The early morning discovery of another fire by Clarence G. Nickles, who was the first to see the fire that destroyed the Chelmsford Spring Company plant, prevented a blaze that would have, in all probability proved disastrous to the village. About 7:30, as Mr. Nickles was passing the house on Littleton street, until recently occupied by Charles Balser, he noticed smoke issuing from the cellar of the barn at the rear of the house. He found upon quick examination, a lively blaze going in the rubbish. The fire had communicated itself with a pig trough, which was partly consumed, and the building itself would have soon been ablaze. The fire was soon put out. As this building is on land adjoining that of the Chelmsford Spring Co., and the barn cellar is open on the side nearest it, it is presumed that sparks from the fire had been smouldering there. Close by the barn on the opposite side is what is known as the "Railroad Block," a large wooden building containing several tenements. A little later on the same day, Philip Donahoe, flagman at the Centre crossing, who occupies one of the tenements in the "Railroad Block," saw smoke issuing from the windows of his home and upon hurriedly investigating, found the straw matting on the floor in one of the rooms blazing merrily. This fire was also soon extinguished and, for the second time in one day, a catastrophe was averted.

Dec. 12, 1912 - The blowing of the whistle at the Chelmsford Spring Company at the noon hour on Tuesday, marked a lapse of just three weeks from the day it was last sounded, Nov. 19. The day following the plant was destroyed by fire. While the ruins were still burning, the proprietor, C. George Armstrong, was busy making plans for temporary accommodations, making use of the ell that was saved, and today the work of bottling was resumed.

Work was also started today on the foundations of the new building and its construction will be rushed as fast as the weather and arrival of material will permit. The new building will be L shaped, 265 feet long by 40 feet wide, with one ell on the westerly side, 100 by 40 feet and another ell paralleling the track on the east. The main building will be three stories high with a basement and the buildings will all be lighted from above by a monitor roof. It is intended that these buildings will be as fireproof as it is possible to make them and no wood will be used in the construction except where it is absolutely necessary as in the interior finish. The roof will be steel trussed and covered with corrugated asbestos. The building itself will be constructed of brick, steel, cement and asbestos. When completed, the westerly ell will come within 15 feet of the street line on Littleton street. Except for the part near the railroad track, the site of the old building will be abandoned and the filling in of the cellar is now being carried on. The plans for the new building are so arranged that, should occasion require, their size may be doubled.



March 10, 1913 - The activities today at the new building being erected for the Chelmsford Spring Company were prolonged well into the night. The cause for the long hours of labor was the laying of the cement floor in a section of the building beyond where the side walls have already been raised. It is necessary in laying a floor of this particular kind to continue the work without stopping until it has been completed, and the rattle of the cement mixer and the rumble of the barrows continued without interruption from 7 AM to 10 PM. The architect, Edwin R. Clarke, gave a personal supervision to this stage of the work.

March 16, 1913 - Work on the new building of the Chelmsford Spring Company was checked by the storm this afternoon. The brick walls are beginning to rise on the Littleton street end of the building and the structural steel work to be put in.

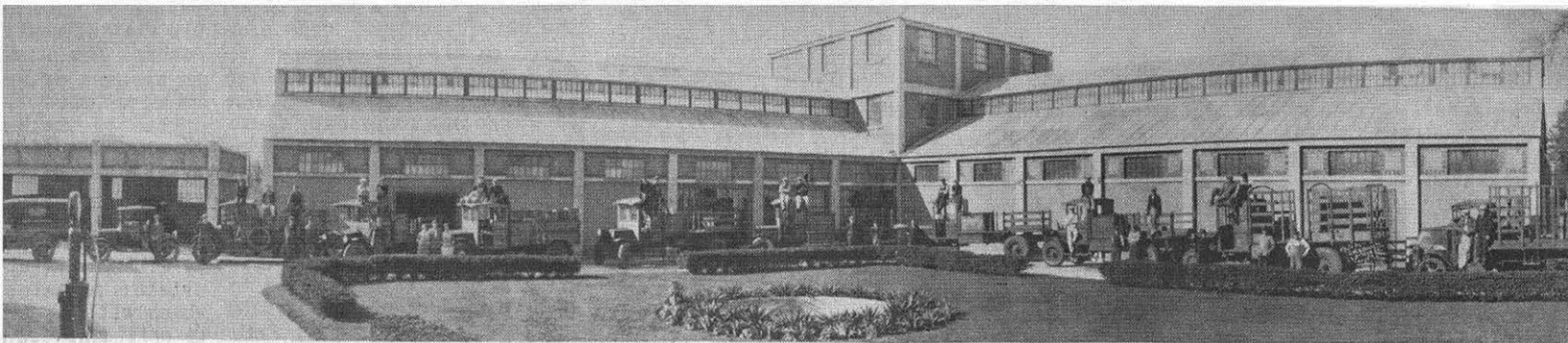
June 6, 1913 - After a 24 hour stretch of labor, the last cement floor was completed on the third story of the new building being erected for the Chelmsford Spring Company. C. George Armstrong the proprietor, was an active participant in the proceedings. The asbestos roof has been put on the ell fronting Littleton street.

#### July 23, 1913 - Some Modern Industries

The Chelmsford Spring Co., is another industry that has had a remarkable growth. It was burned out a few months ago, but saved enough of its operating ~~growth~~ plant to resume operations within a few days, and it will enter its new building in the middle of August. There will be no fire in the new bottling works, for the building, which rises to three stories in its highest point, is constructed of steel, cement, asbestos, and glass. There will not be a stick of wood in it.

Mr. Armstrong (C. G. ) had lived and worked in Chelmsford in the days of the Beaver Knitting mill. Then he went elsewhere, and in the course of the years, became interested in the Sussex Mineral Spring Co. of New Brunswick. He returned to Chelmsford one day literally to carbonate and bottle the famous spring that gushes from the side of Robin Hill. At first his plant was a branch of the Sussex Co., but ere long Chelmsford ginger ale was standing on its own merits. It had created a demand of its own, and was established as a distinct industry. Today the company bottles a variety of Chelmsford spring temperance drinks, and ships them far and wide, even beyond the limits of this country. There is no limit to which it may grow in the future; and all because of the reputation of a pure Chelmsford spring.

Oct. 14, 1913 - The small brick building containing the bottling machinery at the Chelmsford Spring Company, the only part saved when the plant was destroyed by fire last November, has been torn down and the machinery transferred to permanent quarters in the new building. Most of the excavating has been done for the last section of the new building, which will parallel the railroad tracks and cover the former site of the bottling department. The ground plans for this building took in the "big rock," so it is being blasted to get it out of the way. Upon digging around it, it was found to extend as far under ground as above. The office of the company is temporarily arranged on the second floor of the corner section of the building, but when all is completed, will be located on the first floor.



1923: Chelmsford Ginger Ale plant, personnel, and vehicles used in distributing the beverage.

Chelmsford Newsweekly, 1955:

### Chelmsford Ginger Ale Co.

The Chelmsford Ginger Ale Co., Inc. was established in 1901 by its president (Christopher) George Armstrong, born in St. Mary's, Ontario, 1864. He served in the Canadian forces during the Riel rebellion (1885) in the Canadian west and later went to Australia for a year to rebuild his health. He returned to Canada by way of the Suez Canal, thus completing a circling of the globe.

Meanwhile his sister, S. Jennie Armstrong, had married Mr. John Byfield of the Byfield Manufacturing Company in Chelmsford and Mr. Armstrong became a salesman for its products. After his subsequent marriage to Miss Mary Hendricks Hallett of Sussex, New Brunswick, grand-daughter of the Rev. John Parkhurst of Chelmsford, Mr. Armstrong opened a millinery store in Goderich, Ont. After the store was burned, we went to Sussex again and there formed a ginger ale company with his brother-in-law, S. H. White. The Sussex Ginger Ale Company is still in existence and does a large business throughout the maritime provinces.

Mr. Armstrong wished to return to New England, however, and became interested in the possibility of organizing a ginger ale company in Chelmsford where he found an abundance of pure spring water available from Robin's Hill and a building ready for his use in the old Byfield plant which was then empty. At first Chelmsford Spring Company was connected with the Sussex company, but it soon became independent. It made ginger ale, and ginger beer which was sold in stone bottles imported from England. This latter product had to be given up eventually, for the opaque stone bottles became illegal and the ginger beer's keeping qualities were impaired by being bottled in any other container then available.

In 1912, the original Chelmsford ginger ale plant was destroyed by fire, but it was immediately rebuilt. Other plants were later established in Boston and in Shrewsbury, and the local plant enlarged. In 1928 the business was sold to Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc., which still operates it and which still includes Chelmsford ginger ale as one of its products.

Mr. Armstrong continued to take part in the business as a director of the Canada Dry company until his death in 1936. During the last years of his life, Mr. Armstrong broadened his interests to include ownership of a large farm, Armont, in West Campton, N.H. There he found relaxation and great satisfaction in his fine herds of cattle and Angora goats, the beautiful woodlands with their sugar maple trees, the vegetable garden and splendid orchard. He constructed by the roadside a stoppingplace for motorists where they might see what has been called the finest view to be found of the foothills of the White Mountains. His daughter, Miss Beatrice Armstrong, is now the resident owner of this property.

Mrs. Armstrong died in Chelmsford in 1936, and very shortly after, Mr. Armstrong was stricken by a heart seizure. Mr. & Mrs. Armstrong had three children, all of whom are now living: Mrs. H. C. Cubberley of San Diego, California; and the Misses Winifred and Beatrice Armstrong of West Campton.

## The Lowell Sun

Wed., Sept. 22, 1937

Has Withstood Rigors of Time for 270 Years

(Picture of Railroad House)

The Railroad House" at Chelmsford Center, built in 1677 as a parsonage for Rev. Thomas Fiske on the site of the present railroad station, used for years as a "garrison house" for five families in the latter years of the 17th century when the danger of Indian attacks ever were present, and still later moved out Littleton road to make way for the railroad station, and then used as a tenement house, is to be torn down to make way for an addition to the ginger ale plant.

The structure known as the "railroad house," situated on Littleton street, Chelmsford Center, which is to be torn down to permit the enlargement of the Chelmsford Ginger Ale company plant, will deprive the town of one of its most historic buildings. According to the "History of Chelmsford," compiled by the late Rev. Wilson Waters, former rector of All Saints church, the house was built in 1677, for Rev. Thomas Clarke, second minister in the town of Chelmsford.

Records show that the town agreed, at the time of Rev. Mr. Clarke's coming, "to pay 60 pounds in money towards the purchase of Corsers land lying in Chelmsford." The house provided was of ample proportions, being 40 by 20 feet, two stories in height, with an ell 16 feet square for a kitchen.

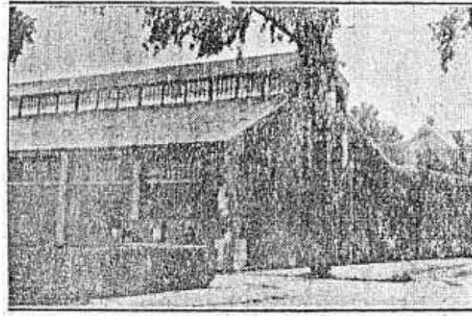
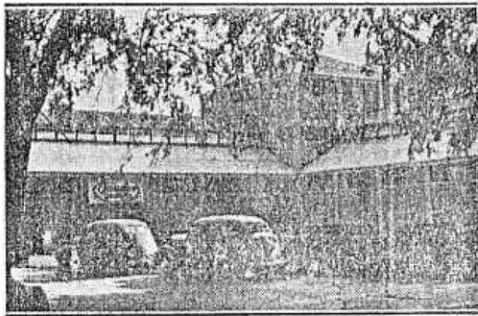
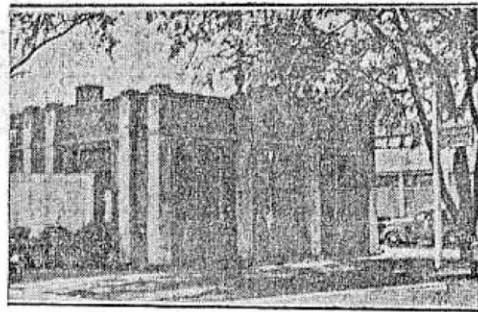
There is good reason to believe that the house was the parsonage later occupied by his successors in the ministry, Rev. Sampson Stoddard and Rev. Ebenezer Bridge. At that time, the building stood upon the site of the present passenger depot, and was removed to the present location in Littleton street when the railroad was put through the village in 1872. The house has been enlarge by the addition of a wing which faces Littleton street, the old part facing east corresponding in width and height to the house built for Mr. Clarke, although now somewhat longer.

When the house was remodelled about 53 years ago, the walls of one room were found to be lined with planks. According to records, five families were assigned to Mr. Thomas Clarke's house, besides his own. The explanation is that these five families were to resort to his house for safety, in case of Indian attack. This fact explains the object of the plank lining found in the walls of the old house, and supports the belief that it is the identical house built by the town for Mr. Clarke 260 years ago. In addition to the old house, which stands beside the old depot, two cottages located between it and the present ginger ale plant also will be razed to make way for the new structure.



## Several Chelmsford Landmarks to Be

# Demolished to Make Way for Modern Plant



With the exception of the large building in the right background, all the buildings shown above together with the fountain, pool and hedge, will be removed to comply with the expansion plans of the Canada Dry Co. at its Chelmsford branch. The building at the extreme left, remodelled some 30

years ago, was built in 1677 by the Town of Chelmsford as the home for Rev. Thomas Clarke, the second minister in the town. The Chelmsford Ginger Ale Co. was founded by the late C. George Armstrong, who erected the plant buildings as they now stand and controlled all the property shown in the picture.

Plans for extensive alterations and additions in the Chelmsford Ginger Ale plant in Littleton street, now owned by the Canada Dry Co., of New York, are rapidly being put in shape it is understood and will within a short time be offered to contractors for bids. For some time the rapid growth of the business has called for more space and the contemplated move will make it possible to double the output.

Sweeping changes in the present plant will be made, according to plans, calling for the removal of the grass plot, fountain and hedge between the double entrance, the razing of the present brick office building, two cottages and what is known as the "Railroad block." All space so cleared will be covered with plant buildings, the office to be located at the east end, paralleling the railroad tracks. A brick wall will be built along the entire length of the Littleton street side and the new entrance will be at the east end of the property along the line of the railroad land. The holdings of the company are from the railroad line to the property of Herbert H. Fish in Littleton street.

By the removal of the so-called "Railroad block," the town will lose one of its most historic buildings. According to the late Rev. Wilson Waters, D. D., in his history of Chelmsford, the building was presumably built by the town in 1677 as the home for Rev. Thomas Clarke, the second minister in the town of Chelmsford, and as a parsonage was probably occupied later by his successors in the ministry, Rev. Samson Stoddard and Rev. Ebenezer Bridge.

#### Lined With Plank.

According to Mr. Waters, "the building originally stood on the site of the present passenger depot and was removed to its present location upon Littleton road, when the railroad was put through the village in 1872. The house has been enlarged by the addition of a wing facing upon Littleton road. The old part facing east corresponds in width and height to the house built for Mr. Clarke, although now somewhat longer. When the house was remodelled between 25 and 30 years ago, the walls of one room were found lined with plank.

In the "Settlement of the Garrison in the Wt. Regiment of Middx. March 1691-2," five families were assigned to Mr. Thomas Clarke's house, besides his own. The meaning of this is that these families were to resort to his house for safety, in case of Indian attack. This fact explains the object of the plank lining found in the walls of the house and supports the belief that it is the identical house built by the town for Rev. Mr. Clarke 260 years ago." It seems that the minister did not find 30 of



# From Chelmsford's bubbling springs

By DEAN JOHNSON

It was made with clear water from springs at Robin's Hill and came in thick stoneware bottles from England. Local residents swore by its taste.

It was Chelmsford Ginger Ale, and it was actually bottled in Chelmsford at one time. It is still being bottled today by Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc. in Waltham.

The man behind Chelmsford Ginger Ale is George C. Armstrong. Armstrong was born in St. Mary's, Ontario, in 1864. He came to Chelmsford originally to work as a salesman for his brother-in-law, Mr. John Byfield, but he returned to Canada when he married Miss Mary Hallet of Sussex, New Brunswick. Eventually, Mr. Armstrong co-founded the Susex, Ginger Ale Company.

**THE URGE** to return to New England became too great, though, and he began to entertain the idea of establishing a ginger ale company in Chelmsford.

Why Chelmsford? First, Chelmsford had some pure natural springs on Robin's Hill, a perfect source of water for the beverages Armstrong had in mind. Second, the old Byfield plant, which still stands just outside of Chelmsford Center on Route 110, was empty and an ideal place to begin operations.

The Chelmsford Ginger Ale Company, Inc. became a reality in 1901 and originally made both ginger ale and ginger beer. The ginger beer was stored in stone bottles that were imported from England. Mr. Henry Ericson, a lifelong resident of Chelmsford, remembers how potent the ginger beer used to be. "If you weren't careful when you released the clamp on the top of the bottle, the stopper could put your eye out!"

The stone bottles were eventually declared illegal, and since the beer just would not "keep" as well in any other sort of container, production of the lively ginger beer came to a halt about the time the original Chelmsford Ginger Ale plant burnt to the ground in 1912. The plant was immediately rebuilt, but it no longer made the ginger beer. The stoneware bottles, however, occasionally surface in antique shops or old cellars and have become curios and collectors' items in the Merrimack Valley.

**WHAT WAS C. George Armstrong like?** Henry Ericson, who worked for him during the summer of 1918, remembers the founder of the Chelmsford Ginger Ale Company as "a good man, a great man." He was a quiet Unitarian, very much aware



## Antique bottle

... and mug recall the days when the best gingerale around was bottled right here in Chelmsford.

of his civic pride and duties.

Armstrong headed the commission that put a town water system in Chelmsford. He also put in the town's first concrete sidewalk so that Reverend Wilson Waters' spring treks to his Episcopal Church wouldn't be quite so messy. Portions of that sidewalk are still used today at the intersection of Chelmsford Street and Billerica Road in Chelmsford.

During the First World War, Armstrong asked Evan Adams if he was having a hard time getting sugar for Adams' grocery store. When Adams responded that yes, in-

deed, sugar was scarce, Armstrong provided him with two barrels of the stuff that weighed in at nearly 700 pounds. He always had a soft spot for New England and even had a little hideaway in New Hampshire. As Ericson described it, "He bought a whole town up there ... church and all!"

**THE CHELMSFORD** Ginger Ale Company was bought out by Canada Dry at an estimated price of \$6 million in 1928. Canada Dry did not officially begin bottling Chelmsford Ginger Ale until 1930, and Armstrong remained associated with the business as director of Canada Dry until he was stricken by a heart seizure in 1936.

Canada Dry kept the Chelmsford bottling plant in operation until 1959. It was then moved to Waltham, where the ginger ale is still being made. Ms. Jeanette Pepin worked for Canada Dry in the Chelmsford plant and is still employed by them today. She mentioned that Chelmsford Ginger Ale is no longer made with pure spring water. But she also said that the filtering system in use by Canada Dry removes all the impurities from the water and makes it "just as clear as any water you could use."

# Business growth strong in Chelmsford

Lowell Sun June 26, 1977

CHELMSFORD — Chelmsford Ginger Ale is not made in Chelmsford any more, but in Waltham.

Then again, Canada Dry Ginger Ale (of which the Chelmsford brand is a subsidiary) is not made in Canada either.

Although the brand name that made it familiar across the country in the depression years is gone, it has been replaced — literally, in the renovation of the old ginger ale plant for a van line company recently.



OLD CHELMSFORD GINGER ALE PLANT

...now being renovated





CANADA DRY  
GINGER ALE  
*Incorporated*

63



**1677 Railroad House - Demolished by Chelmsford Ginger Ale in 1937 to make room for expansion**

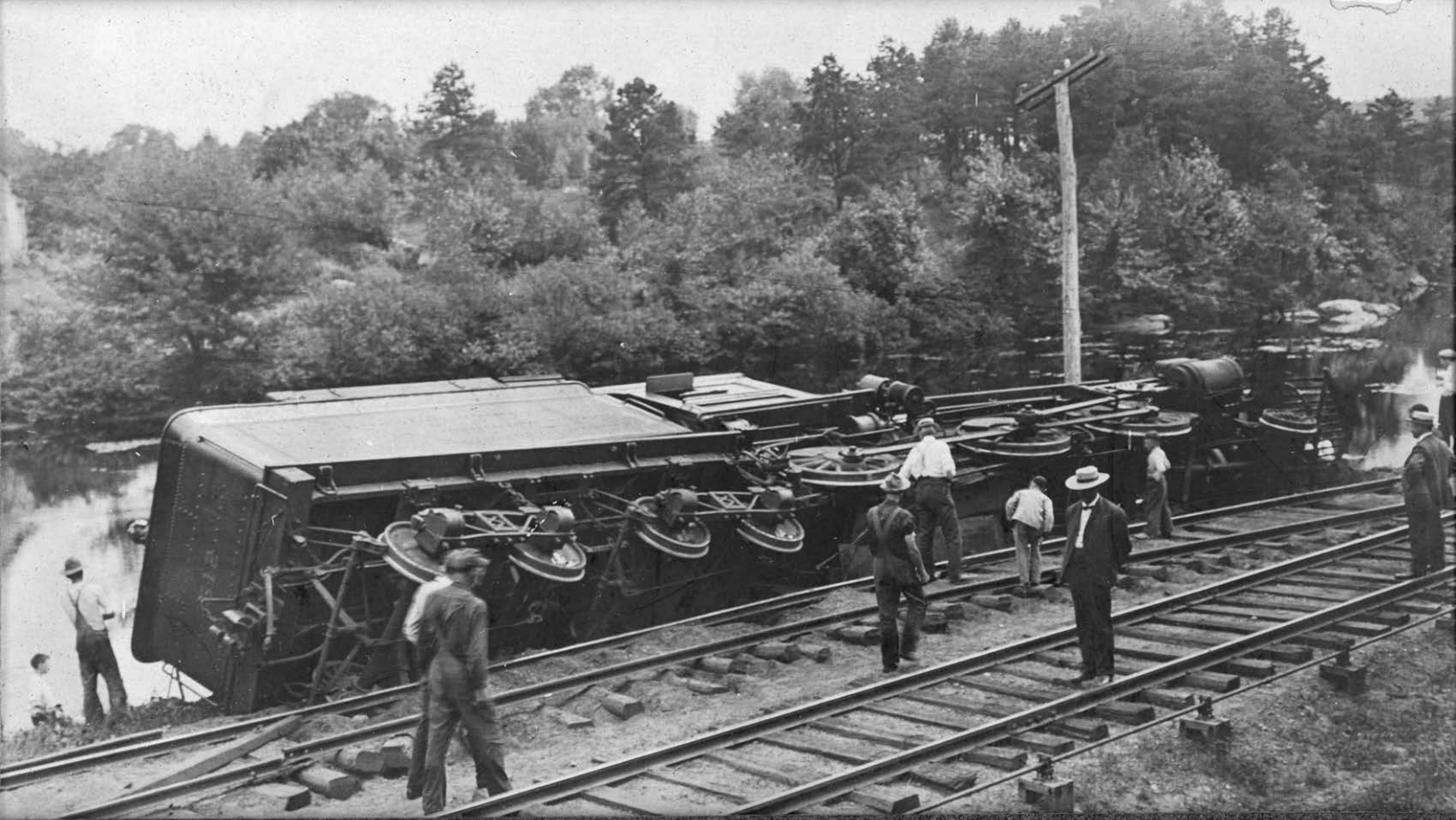


**1677 Railroad House - Demolished in 1937 to make way for Ginger Ale Co. expansion**



**1677 Railroad House - demolished in 1937**





**Locomotive wreck behind Chelmsford Ginger Ale Company, c. 1904-1911**



**Locomotive wreck behind Chelmsford Ginger Ale Company, c. 1904-1911**



**Chelmsford Gingerale Plant c 1923**



**Chelmsford Ginger Ale Company photo (proof copy) 5/14/1923**





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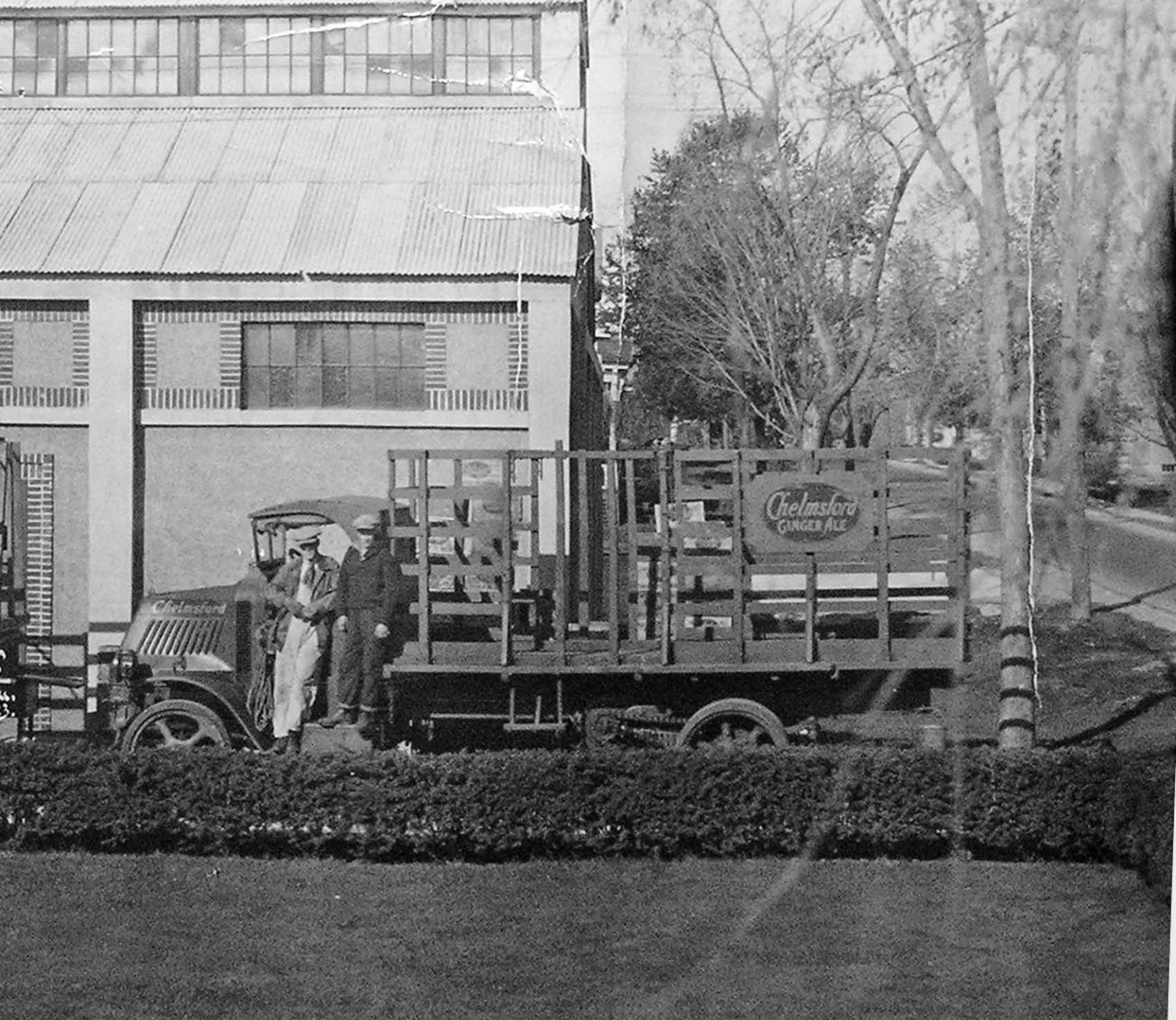




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Chelmsford  
GINGER ALE