

JOSEPH PURINGTON & HIS RECORD LOAD

By Ellen Knight

“Few places are more interesting than the great markets into which are poured and out of which goes such a large part of the food supply of the city and its suburbs,” the *Boston Globe* stated in 1894. At Faneuil Hall, “the farmers are the first arrivals. They start cityward about the time city people start to bed, intent on reaching the square in time to secure advantageous positions....

“Frequently the farmers come into town in the evening, starting by dusk from Arlington, Winchester and Lexington. Every Sunday night there is a crowd of them camped out in the square. Business begins very early Monday mornings, and more buying and selling goes on then than at any other day.”¹

There was competition not only for the best positions but also for the largest loads.

The *Spectator* of April 30 1886, reported that “The largest load of vegetables of the kind ever delivered in Boston Market on a single wagon, was sent from this town [Winchester] early Monday morning. Two hundred and one bushels of spinach and dandelions, weighing about two and a half tons, were loaded and driven to the city, from the farm of one of the most successful of our market gardeners [Joseph Purington].”



At the age of 19, Joseph Purington² (1933-1915) arrived in Winchester. He first worked at the Daniel Wyman Locke farm. Later he went into the market garden business with Loring Emerson but subsequently leased the Emerson farm and carried on alone. In 1878, he purchased an extensive estate at 161 Cambridge Street (at the intersection with Wildwood) and continued to farm with his three sons (two of whom acquired the Locke farm where their father first worked).

Purington’s load in 1886 was a deliberate attempt to break the record for carrying the most at one time shared by neighbors in Belmont and Arlington. “The interest was so great that a large crowd gathered to see the start, and some followed it almost to the finish,” The *Spectator* reported.

“It was a sight well worth seeing and looked more like a house moving down the street.... A large crowd welcomed the safe arrival of the monster at the market, and amid congratulations from friends, the record was declared broken and a prize awarded.

“It may be some time before a load of this kind will be moved again, yet any one of my readers who desire to see large quantities of all kinds of vegetables, both in the field and in the preparation for market, will visit the farm of Purington and Jones on the west side of town. Their trip, I assume them, will be of interest and worth remembering. There, all kinds of garden vegetables can be obtained in their season, and of a kind and quality unsurpassed anywhere.”



Left to right: unidentified, Thomas Little, George W. Purington (1863-1945) who became a produce merchant working at the Boston Produce Market, Charles H. Purington (1861-1912), Walter S. Purington (1858-1921), Edward Russell, and Joseph Purington (1833-1915)

¹ “Markets of this City,” *The Boston Globe*, July 18, 1894.

² The name has been spelled Purrington as well as Purington in local sources.