

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

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**"TO ARMS TO ARMS
The Town Clerks are coming"**

The Massachusetts Town Clerks Association has filed a bill, H-3953 which would **CLOSE VITAL RECORDS TO GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCHERS**. There is a well known axiom that states 'The price of Liberty is eternal vigilance'. The corollary for genealogists is, obviously, 'The price of access to vital records is eternal vigilance'.

It is imperative that you contact your State Senator and Representative, let him know your concern and ask him to oppose this extremely undesirable proposed legislation. A short, simply stated, polite, letter is the most effective communication and one that they appreciate. Long dissertations, harangues, threats and demands are counterproductive.

DO IT NOW! A hand written note is just as effective (probably more so) as an elaborately printed letter on elegant stationery. Don't put it off, the need is urgent and your support is crucial.

Also show your support for other legislation that will provide better access to vital records. By advocating endorsement of constructive legislation your opposition to undesirable proposals is strengthened. In this issue on page 2, is the report of Shirley Barnes, MGC Director, who is our specialist on Civil Records. Her report contains a detailed explanation of S-316 and your recommendation of it to your Senator will help achieve enactment.

Please join us in OPPOSING H-3953

and

join us in SUPPORTING S-316

**MGC
ANNUAL
MEETING
&
SEMINAR**

MAY 4, 1991

9:45 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
380 Trapelo Road
Waltham, MA

Program plans and arrangements have been completed, full details and pre-registration forms are included in this Spring issue of the newsletter.

The focus of the seminar will be the identification of records and resources that people have not been using and of which they should be made aware.

James Owens, Director of the National Archives - New England Region will present an update and summary of the records in the National Archives.

William Milhomme, Reference Supervisor, Massachusetts State Archives will present an overview of the Vital Records of the Commonwealth.

David c. Dearborn, Reference Librarian, NEHGS, will present a synopsis of various urban records including city directories.

Please return pre-registration forms by April 20th so we will be able to give an accurate count to the luncheon caterer. If you decide at the last moment to come to the seminar then you will have to go "off campus" to buy a lunch.

Please note: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is located adjacent to the National Archives facilities.

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WORCESTER COUNTY PROBATE RECORDS

advisory from
Shirley Pizziferri

I have been trying for some time to locate some reels of microfilm of the Worcester County probate records which I suspected existed somewhere because Salt Lake has copies, but for a long time I have been frustrated because no one seemed to know whether they existed or, if they did, where they might be. However, recently, whether because of my recent pressure on everyone I could think of, or simply due to the Worcester Courthouse's recent house cleaning, the films have been located. They were at the Courthouse, but Libby Bouvier of the S. J. C.'s Archives Department assured me by telephone that the Commonwealth would very much like to acquire them and make them available to researchers at the State Archives in Dorchester. These Worcester County Probate films are now at the Archives, in the Research Room, and are available for use. They include docket books and record books which, together with the published index, will enable anyone to put together a complete file. So anyone who is interested in Worcester County probates can now look forward to viewing these records for themselves.

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The man who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone he can blame it on.

Celibacy is not hereditary.

MASSACHUSETTS VITAL RECORDS

Legislative News for 1991

from: Shirley M. Barnes, Director, Civil Records, Massachusetts Genealogical Council

A hearing was held 12 March 1991 by the Committee on government regulations at the State House, Boston, chaired by Senator Thomas Norton (Fall River) and representative Michael A. Walsh (Agawam). Also present was Rep. John George (Dartmouth). No name plates were in view so others were not identified.

Attendees were Shirley Barnes; Scott Bartley, Archivist NEHGS; Bill Crozier, volunteer NEHGS; Sheila Fitzpatrick, V-P TIARA; Bill Kead, V-P MASSOG; Ralph Richardson, member MASSOG; David Robertson, volunteer NEHGS; Denise Surue, member TIARA; Neil Todd, chairman of volunteers NEHGS; Lisa Simonetti, Legislative Aide to Secretary of State Michael Joseph Connolly; Deputy Commissioner of Public Health Dr. Daniel Friedman.

Also heard that day were bills concerning automotive repairs and Public Utilities. We were fortunate that there were few automotive bills and few who wished to speak. Many attendees were interested in the public utilities questions, so we came after automotive.

Representative "Hasty" Evans (Wayland) spoke in favor of S-316. Leg. Aide Lisa Simonetti spoke for Secretary Connolly, in favor. Scott Bartley, Neil Todd and Shirley Barnes spoke in favor. Dr. D. Friedman spoke in favor of H-224, which is the refile of H-205 (1990) submitted by the Dept. of Public Health, which is not in favor of the birth records being transferred before they are 90 years old.

Also heard was Representative Mary Jeanette Murray (Cohasset) who spoke in favor of H-3953, submitted by Rep. Joseph Hermann (N. Andover) for the Mass. Town Clerks Association, and Representatives John F. Cox, (Lowell); Stephen M. Brewer (Barre) and M.J. Murray. This petition is the same as one filed several years ago by the Dept. of Public Health which **would close vital records** to genealogical and historical researchers. **THIS (H-3935) IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!**

H-3410 has been submitted by Representative Anthony Mandile (Waltham) to provide for a study commission to consider issuing of birth certificates for stillborn children, for whom a death certificate is issued. S. Barnes spoke in favor of the petition, as it would help the grieving process of parents so affected.

Letters to the Committee on Government Regulations Room 472, State House, Boston, MA 02133 NOW are very important, asking that they give favorable reports to S-316, and to E-3410.

Members of the committee: Senators Thomas Norton, Edward L. Burke, Frederick E. Berry, Paul Harold, W. Paul White, Nancy Sullivan, Charles E. Shannon. Representatives Michael P. Walsh, Albert Herren, Marc Pacheco, Daniel Ranieri, Thomas Petrolati, John George, Eric Turkington, Robert Deleo, Robert Howarth, David Lionett, David Peters.

Letters to your own State Senator and Representative asking for their support of S-316 before the Committee on Gov't. Regs. are also important.

20 March 1991, FACT SHEET on Senate 316

This bill would provide for the transfer of birth, death and marriage records and the indexes dated 1896 through 1920 from the Registry of Vital Statistics (150 Tremont St. Boston) to the Massachusetts State Archives.

1. The Vital records currently held by the Department of Public Health are part of the cornerstone of research on Massachusetts and her people, and need protection. Genealogists, interested in family history; social historians; other kinds of historians; archaeologists; anthropologists; and medical researchers are all concerned with the history of this state and use these records. If we are not to lose a part of the rich heritage of the Commonwealth and her people, we must do more to preserve these records.

2. The continuing deterioration of records is truly tragic. The Registry is located in the basement of 150 Tremont under a Burger King. There have been water pipe breaks and sewer pipe breaks into the area where the paper records are kept.

The sewer break this past year was the worst. The Registry was closed to all research for several weeks. Books had to be sent out for cleaning and repair. Damaged and out of circulation for a long time were birth records for 1920, Vols. 15-27; 1927 Vols. 86-98; 1969-1973 All Death records damaged were 1950 Vols. 1-87; 1962 Vols 61-80. In addition, large cockroaches invaded which were upsetting to employees and patrons. And since cockroaches eat paper, they were also a source of potential damage.

3. This bill will accelerate the transfer of records to archival protection beyond the every five year transfer plan provided for by Chapter 374 of the Acts of 13. Records transferred so far are only up through 1895. The records would continue to be automatically transferred every five years. The index books run on a five year basis. This transfer will free up shelf space which is needed at the Registry. The records have been microfilmed, so a microform copy could be retained at the Registry if necessary. Filmed copies are less subject to damage by water and are kept in closed files.

4. The current staff at the Registry of Vital Statistics will be more able to be concerned with requests for certificates for passports, jobs death benefits, and medical benefits. There can be a long wait as the certificates are made out by hand on special forms and with special ink. Staff is also required to supervise access to records by historians and genealogists, therefore transferring more records out would increase efficiency by decreasing the number of researchers, who are presently limited to 2 and a half hours per day, four days a week. The Archives are open every day including Saturday, allowing many more researchers to take advantage of the material.

5. This proposal has been discussed with Dr. Albert Whitaker, Archivist of the Commonwealth who said he was anxious to have more records preserved in the archives. There is nothing in this proposal which says the records must be transferred by Dec. 1991. It calls for a plan, and in the paragraph beginning with line 24 it simply says public access will be allowed until the records can be transferred.

6. The Department of Public Health has filed H-224, which is a refile of H-205 of 1990. This is

somewhat similar to S-316 but only includes marriage and death records through 1915. Another year has gone by, therefore the records for 1920 should be included. This will "free up" even more shelf space, as will including the birth records, and providing archival protection to the birth records. The 1920 Federal Census is to be opened to public research in March of 1991, another reason for accepting the date of 1920.

7. The transfer of the records from the Registry to the State Archives puts them under Chapter 6, making them public records at the state and town and city levels. Marking a copy of a record "for genealogical purposes only" would allow a volunteer to make the copy and eliminate the need for special paper and ink.

8. Tourist/Researchers coming from out of state have been made unhappy with the limited number of hours and the complicated process to just see a marriage or birth record. This does not give a good impression of tourist opportunities.

9. Last year, The New England historic Genealogical Society made a written proposal to the Registry of Vital Statistics offering to make photocopies of the over 2 index volumes of birth, death and marriage records starting in 1896. This would be done on acid free paper and the volumes bound in serviceable library bindings. The originals would be repaired. All this at NO COST to the Registry, and without interrupting access during working hours. It would be done by volunteers at night and on weekends. No reply was ever received!

Since a set of these indexes, which are open to the public, would have been available at NEHGS, the demand for access at the Registry would have been reduced. This would lessen the number of people trying to do research in very limited hours, under crowded conditions.

10. With ever increasing interest in medical histories for cancer and genetic problems, people need to have easy access to their family records.

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There are three types of people: those who make it happen; those who watch it happen; and those who sit around and ask - "What the heck's happening?"

CONSTRUCTION AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES - NEW ENGLAND REGION

advisory from
JAMES K. OWENS, Director
National Archives - New England Region

This is to let you know that progress is being made on the plans for the addition to our facility. We expect construction to begin in May or June and to be completed by December of this year. Those of you who have used our resources are aware that we have needed additional space in our research room for a long time. The realization that the 192 federal census population schedules will be made available to the public in March, 12, caused us to accelerate the planning for this project. The addition will include a much larger microfilm reading room, a larger research room for the use of original records, a conference-meeting room, an audio-visual room, and space for small exhibits.

With the commencement of construction there will be some disruption to normal operations. The construction will not only include the addition to the building but will also include increasing the size of the current rest rooms and the lunch room and increasing the number of parking spaces. We are currently considering alternative plans so that we can keep our research room and microfilm reading room open to the public as long as possible. I will keep you informed and will send out a notice when the final plans are made.

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PLEASE WRITE!!!!

Please send news of your society/association to the Editor so that we can publicize what is happening in the genealogical community. We are your liaison with other societies & associations. We need your input. Please communicate. Tell us what you're doing, when and where you hold meetings, it doesn't have to be finely polished, cleverly composed or of world shaking significance - just the basic ingredients. We'll polish it up, correct spelling and grammar, after all that's why we're called "editors", that's our job.

MEET OUR MEMBERS

[This is the second in a series of articles on the associations who are members of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council.]

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE SOCIETY OF GENEALOGISTS

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council welcomes as a new institutional member the New Hampshire Society of Genealogists, Inc., P. O. Box 633, Exeter, NH 03833-0633. Founded in 1978, the NHSOG has recently experienced many organizational and directional changes, and has suddenly "taken off" as a rapidly-growing, dynamic organization. The Society has doubled its membership in the past eight months (now approaching 1000, over two-thirds of whom live outside New Hampshire), and has welcomed some thirty new Life Members in less than a year to join the two honorary ones previously on the roster. Among the many new members are nationally recognized genealogical scholars and writers, professional researchers, and those who simply enjoy tracing their ancestry.

Some Internal Changes

Originally conceived as an umbrella group extending over several county chapters around the state, this structure proved over time to be awkward as the state and county treasuries were separate, though dues were shared by both, while many people were "at-large" members, not affiliated with any chapter. The most difficult part was that each chapter charged a different amount for dues, and frequently held meetings that conflicted with each other. The cost of belonging to both a chapter and the state society was high, yet the state society received only \$5.00, not enough to accomplish anything. Finally, in 1990, the chapters which then existed were separated from the state society, becoming autonomous organizations. Delivered from this cumbersome structure, the NHSOG was then free to "grow and bloom." By-laws were brought up to date, and goals and programs brought into sharper focus. The Society's time had come.

The Board of Directors

Headed by New Hampshire genealogists George F. Sanborn Jr., President, and Duncan D. Chaplin

III, Vice-President, the Board includes many dedicated and hard-working people with a strong commitment to Granite State genealogy: Mary Wright, Membership Chairman; Constance Granger, Treasurer; Elva Reeg, Recording Secretary; Lorraine Brooks, Registrar; Helen Merrill, Corresponding Secretary; Roberta Terrill, Publicity Chairman; Charlotte Freeman, Vital Records Coordinator; William Copeley, Librarian; Melinde Sanborn, Publications Committee Chairman; George Letourneau, Legislative Affairs Chairman; and Pauline Oesterlin, Auditor. Quarterly Board meetings monitor progress and make plans for the Society's future.

Family Register - A Fund of Information

Lorraine Brooks, the Registrar, oversees the Family Register. Designed to eventually record everyone known to have resided in New Hampshire from the earliest permanent settlement in 1623 to approximately 1910, the Family Register collects data submitted by members concerning individuals and families for the files. In addition, one may ask the Registrar to search the files for any information she might have concerning any specific individual. There is a fee of \$1.00 charged per inquiry. Searches for families or groups are not carried out. The Registrar will accept family group sheets for people after 1910, but they will not be transcribed or copied. The inquirer will be sent the name and address of the compiler so that he or she may be contacted directly. After release of the 1920 census in 1992 it is expected that this 1910 date will be extended to 1920.

Vital Records Volunteers

Since 1979 the Society has staffed the search room at the state Bureau of Vital Records in Concord, keeping the records open for public access. Coordinator Charlotte Freeman and some thirty volunteers representing our Society retrieve and refile vital records cards for researchers who come in to do their own research. All records prior to 1901 are available for inspection, while records of deaths, marriages and divorces from 1901-1937, inclusive, and a brides' index to marriages from 1901-1947, are also available. Non-certified copies of the cards can be made there for 50¢ each. Other records not mentioned above are restricted, but are available under certain conditions to specified individuals. Inquiries for those

must be directed in writing or in person to department of Health staff at the Bureau of Vital Records. This service of the Society has been recognized nationwide as innovative and a tangible example of cooperation between state agencies and the genealogical community to everyone's mutual satisfaction.

Library Collection

The Society has a small but growing collection of research materials currently on deposit at the excellent genealogical library of the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord. Inter filed with the NHHS collection, this growing number of books and materials attempts to fill in gaps in the NHHS collection, and add new and timely research aids so that the NHHS can purchase additional materials it might otherwise not have been able to buy. Books sent for review in the NHSOG publications constitute the largest source of these library acquisitions. In the capable hands of William Copeley, who is also the New Hampshire Historical Society's Librarian, the collection is well cared for.

Semi-Annual Programs are Very Popular

Vice-President Duncan D. Chaplin III is the tireless program chairman of the Society. The two semi-annual general membership meetings, traditionally held in Concord on the last Saturday in March and the last Saturday in September, are popular all-day events featuring lectures by recognized genealogists and special guests, as well as sessions and workshops for beginning, intermediate and advanced genealogists. Open to members and non-members alike, the small fee attempts to cover costs of the event. Exhibitors and vendors with displays of out-of-print books and current titles for sale, computer hardware and software for genealogists, as well as antique photograph restoration and preservation, all add interest to an exciting day. A short business meeting precedes the day's program, at which brief reports are read, and any votes taken which may be required by the Society's by-laws. Known as the Spring Meeting and the Fall Meeting, these events are proving to be highly popular, attracting people from hundreds of miles away.

Publications are a Priority

Recognizing that, for most members, the only benefit to joining such an organization is the receipt of worthwhile publications, NHSOG stands committed to excellence in genealogical publishing. In addition to an attractive quarterly Newsletter, containing Society business, announcements, advertising, news, and genealogical queries, edited by Jane Bramwell, all members also receive the quarterly journal, **The New Hampshire Genealogical Record**. Resuming publication with the July 1990 issue, taking up where its predecessor of the same name had left off in 1910 in the middle of volume 7, the Record is edited by New Hampshire genealogist George F. Sanborn Jr., currently the Society's President. Featuring compiled genealogies, source materials, book reviews and more, the Record is indexed in the **Genealogical Periodical Annual Index (GPAI)**, and in the **Periodical Source Index (PERSI)**, and is a significant addition to American genealogical literature. Subscriptions to the Record alone are available as well for libraries and institutions at \$20.00 per year. A program of Special Publications is planned for the future. As a first effort, President Sanborn would like to see an up-to-date inventory of all church records in the state, showing denomination, types of records, periods covered, and current location. Volunteers to work on a particular town or city are now being sought. Another future project might be a 1790 census project similar to those underway in Maine and Vermont whereby authoritative and complete genealogical sketches, with biographical data, are published for all families enumerated in the first federal census. Such a project would comprise many volumes, and take many years, but it would be a permanent reference series on New Hampshire at a critical time period. The Society's legacy to the future will be the publications it leaves behind. They must be second to none. Publications Committee Chairman Melinde Lutz Sanborn, author and genealogist, capably oversees this critical aspect of the Society's activities and services.

How to Join

Membership is open to all. New annual rates recently passed by the membership are \$20.00 for an individual, \$30.00 for a household, and \$400.00 for Life Membership. Each category includes one copy of each of our quarterly publications, the

Newsletter and The New Hampshire Genealogical Record. Members may submit one free query for each issue of the Newsletter; additional queries are \$1.00 each, as are queries submitted by non-members. These go to Mrs. Susan S. Leach, Queries Editor, 55 Cat Path, Gilford, NH 03246. To join, please write to the New Hampshire Society of Genealogists, c/o Membership Chairman, P. O. Box 633, Exeter, NH 03833-0633. Annual subscriptions for libraries and institutions to the Record only may be had by sending \$20.00 to the above address, c/o Record Editor. All checks and money orders should be made payable to "N.H. Society of Genealogists." There is a \$5.00 annual surcharge to anyone outside the U.S. postal system to cover additional postal expenses.

Future Plans are Taking Shape

With all these activities underway, what future plans does the Society have beyond those outlined above? "We need three things," says Society President Sanborn. "They are: money, people willing to pitch in and help, and a permanent home." Currently the Society has no headquarters or office. "I hope that someday we will have a home for the Society where we can have our library books, office space, and a meeting place," says Sanborn. Perhaps some generous soul will leave us a house to be a permanent home for the Society and our library." In the meantime, donations of money, time and library materials are welcomed, as are new members and returning members who may have dropped out over the years. Come to the meetings, and read the publications. You will see that the New Hampshire Society of Genealogists is in the vanguard of state genealogical societies. There is much work to be done, and the Society welcomes everyone's help and support.

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Anglo-American Relations:

"Half of the misunderstandings between Britain and America are due to the fact that neither will regard the other as what it is, in an important sense of the word, a foreign country. Each thinks of the other as a part of itself which has somehow gone off the lines [astray], what would have been pardonable in a foreigner is blame worthy in a cousin." Sir John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir), 1875-1940, Scottish writer and Canadian diplomat.

CACHE OF CIVIL WAR PHOTOS FOUND

An article by Libbie Payne in the March 2, 1991 issue of the Boston Globe described a recent find of what may be one of the largest collections of Civil War photographs in the United States, probably between 10,000 and 20,000. The photographs were discovered in an old chest in the attic of the Medford Historical Society. The discovery has been kept secret for over a year and the Society hopes to obtain funding to finance the preservation, restoration and security of the collection so it can be available to researchers and the public.

The Globe article stated:

"Many of the smaller photographs, called carte-de-visite, were found in individual envelopes, each marked with the subject's name and alphabetically arranged. A carte-de-visite was a wallet-sized portrait often used as a calling card. Many soldiers had them taken prior to leaving for service.

The larger photographs were not as well stored nor cataloged.

The collection's discovery raises many questions for scholars, not the least its origins. Was it a part of the Grand Army of the Republic's holdings kept in the former armory in Medford, where the cooperative bank now stands? Was it part of the estate of a Medford abolitionist and Union Army colonel, George Luther Stearns, who at one time funded John Brown's antislavery efforts?

Hundreds of the envelopes bear the name: "Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States." Founded by the Union soldiers who served as pallbearers for Lincoln, the group gathered and collated photographs and other memorabilia of the Civil War. Much of their photographic collection is held at Carlisle.

The identity of the photographers of the major battle scenes is another mystery. Were they among the 20 groups of photographers Mathew Brady sent to the battlefields? Or perhaps Alexander Gardner or A. J. Russell, who later gained recognition for their photographs of the West?"

MGC

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QUOTABLE QUOTES

If you want to be seen - stand up
If you want to be heard - speak up
If you want to be appreciated - sit down & shut up

Happiness is when you meet your husband's old
girl friend and she's fatter than you.

When you see the light at the end of the tunnel, it
means there's a train headed your way.

New bride: "I'm making my favorite thing for din-
ner tonight - reservations!"

MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

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Mass. Divorce Records: Where to Find Them, by Roger Joslyn, 50¢

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