

**HISTORY OF THE BUREAU OF  
STATISTICS OF LABOR OF  
MASSACHUSETTS, AND OF  
LABOR LEGISLATION IN THAT  
STATE FROM 1833 TO 1876**

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History of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor of Massachusetts, and of Labor Legislation in That State from 1833 to 1876 by Chas. F. Pidgin

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PREPARED FOR THE BUREAU, AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CENTENNIAL  
EXHIBITION AT PHILADELPHIA IN 1876,

BY CHAS. F. PIDGIN.



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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OFFICE OF BUREAU OF STATISTICS OF LABOR,  
33 FENNER SQUARE, BOSTON, April 16, 1876.

SIR:—I have the honor to transmit, in accordance with a request of a special committee of the governor's council, dated July 27, 1875, a History of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor of Massachusetts, as a contribution to the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia. The matter herewith presented, as was also suggested, forms part of the Seventh Annual Report of this Bureau.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CARROLL D. WRIGHT, *Chief.*

To His Excellency ALEXANDER H. RICE, *Governor of Massachusetts.*

HISTORY  
OF THE  
BUREAU OF STATISTICS OF LABOR,  
AND OF  
LABOR LEGISLATION IN MASSACHUSETTS.

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I.—INTRODUCTION.

The design of this volume is to give a compendious narrative of the work of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics upon the subject of Labor, for the seven years commencing with May, 1869, and closing with May of the present year, 1876. The work has been undertaken for two reasons. The following letter supplies the principal one, and is in itself a sufficient authorization for what has been done:—

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }  
Boston, July 27, 1876. }

*To the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor.*

SIR:—The special committee of the executive council, to whom was referred the matter of the representation of the State at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, desire to call your attention to the importance of preparing an elaborate, and in some degree historical, report of the work of your department, which shall serve for presentation at the Exhibition, as well as for your next annual report.

Respectfully,

HORATIO G. KNIGHT,  
SETH TURNER,  
EDW. H. DUNN,  
*Committee.*

The other reason for preparing a history of the bureau is found in the fact that its reports are out of print, and have been so generally called for, that it is impossible for the

bureau to supply a complete set of the volumes issued. The reports having been supplied only to those desiring them, and never having been placed on sale, there seemed to be no way of satisfying the requests of those wishing a complete set of the reports until the action of the above committee was taken. Their suggestion opened the way for bringing the work of this bureau to the attention of the whole country, and also for presenting the results of its investigations in a concise form for the use of individuals, libraries and governments. Possessing the opportunity of satisfying the demands of all interested in our work, we have aimed to merit the advantages conferred by following implicitly the suggestions of the committee of the governor's council. We do not contemplate a critical review of what has been done, nor do we intend to say more should have been done, or better done. Our aim has been to codify the results of the seven years' investigations, and present their pith in a compact manner. In fact, as far as possible, to give an exact and full presentation of seven reports in one. In all cases where practicable, the language of the reports themselves is given, rather than a rewritten presentation of their meaning.

To properly judge of the work of this bureau, a knowledge of the causes which led to its organization, its scope and power as fixed by law, its manner of working is indispensable, and much labor has been expended to look up and arrange the information which follows concerning labor legislation in Massachusetts and foreign countries previous to and since the establishment of this bureau, the provisions of the organic law creating it, as regards money and breadth of action, and the subsidiary details explaining its manner of working and the obstacles it has encountered. If the information thus supplied leads to a better comprehension of the bureau's work, it will, for that reason, possess a value beyond its historic worth.

The decennial census and industrial statistics for 1875 having formed a special branch of the bureau's work for eighteen months, a full description of the undertaking from its inception to its practical fulfillment is hereinafter given. By the provisions of the law authorizing the bureau to take the census and gather the industrial statistics, the resulting



volumes are practically reports of statistics of labor, and the facts obtained really form part of the bureau work, and properly have a place in its history.

We have not deemed it inappropriate to present a few facts in relation to the future work of the bureau; not by suggesting new plans of action, but by showing how much more can be done with the facts already in possession of the department. The gathering of facts is a comparatively easy business; but their proper tabulation and application require time and thought, and the statistician should use both freely before issuing reports upon which are based the arguments or assertions of workmen, students, political economists or statesmen. With this brief explanation of our underlying purposes, we begin the work before us.

## II.—LABOR LEGISLATION FROM 1833 TO 1863.

The following summary of laws passed by the Massachusetts legislature includes those which relate to or affect labor. This presentation of labor legislation for a period of thirty years, 1833-1863, is taken from the first report of this bureau:—

“Nothing specific is found in the volumes which cover the period prior to 1831.

“Governor Lincoln’s address, January 8, 1833, appeals to the legislature for an equal participation of creditors in the effects of bankrupts, and for mitigation of imprisonment. He refers to having fully and repeatedly submitted his views to previous legislatures.

“The volume of state documents for 1831 contains the report of a special commission appointed by Governor Lincoln; this report was presented by him to the legislature June 1, 1831; it provides for an equal distribution of assets, and by one of its sections proposes to abolish imprisonment for any debt of less than fifty dollars.

“March 12, 1833, an Act of incorporation was granted to the South Reading Mechanic and Agricultural Institution, ‘for encouragement to agriculture and the mechanic arts, and for relieving the distresses of unfortunate mechanics and their families.’

“March 19, 1833, an Act was approved by the governor, releasing civil officers from suit in case of the escape of a debtor from prison.

- ✓ "February 28, 1834.—Worcester County Manual Labor High School incorporated.
- ✓ "March 6, 1834.—Berkshire County Manual Labor High School incorporated.
- "March 31, 1834.—Act abolishing imprisonment for debt approved.
- ✓ "Chap. 245, vol. 13, Laws of Massachusetts, 1834 to 1836.—An Act to provide for the better instruction of youth employed in manufacturing establishments. This Act requires three months' schooling each year; employer fined fifty dollars for violating. *App. April 16, 1836.*
- "The address of Governor Davis to the legislature of 1835 (House Doc., No. 3), deplors the low repute of the state militia, and states that it is probably the bitter fruit of unsatisfactory laws.
- "Chap. 107, vol. 14, Laws of Massachusetts, 1837-38.—An Act to provide for the better instruction of youth in manufacturing establishments. This Act provides for the release of the employer from the penalty, in case he is provided with a sworn certificate of attendance at school.
- "Chap. 58, Laws of 1839, incorporates the Charlestown Mechanics' Union Charitable Association, with the powers set forth in the 44th chapter of the Revised Statutes.
- ✓ "Chap. 54, Laws of 1841.—Danvers Mechanic Institute incorporated.
- ✓ "Chap. 49, Laws of 1843.—Boston Society for the Diffusion of Information among Emigrants incorporated.
- "Chap. 169, Acts of 1845.—Brook Farm Phalanx incorporated, 'for the purpose of promoting education, agricultural knowledge and habits of manual and mechanical industry.' Powers and liabilities set forth in the 38th and 44th chapters of the Revised Statutes.
- ✓ "Chap. 171, Acts of 1845.—An Act to obtain statistical information in relation to certain branches of industry.
- ✓ "Chap. 99, Acts of 1845.—Act granting one-half of a township in Maine, six miles square, to the Worcester County Manual Labor High School.
- ✓ "Chap. 220, Acts of 1849.—An Act defining and repealing sections of previous Acts concerning the employment of children.
- ✓ "Chap. 294, Acts of 1850.—Cities and towns authorized to make all needful provisions concerning truants and children not attending school.
- "Chap. 66, Acts of 1850.—An Act incorporating the Worcester County Mechanics' Association; 'purpose to promote moral and intellectual improvement, perfect the mechanic arts, and for charitable purposes.'

" Chap. 343, Acts of 1851.—An Act to secure to mechanics and laborers their payment for labor by a lien on real estate.

" Chap. 240, Acts of 1852, 'requires all persons having children under their control to send them to school three months each year.'

" Chap. 307, Acts of 1852.—Extension of the principles of the lien law.

" Chap. 313, Acts of 1852.—An Act to incorporate the Suffolk Mutual Loan and Accumulating Fund Association; 'object of the association to loan funds to those contributors who wish to purchase homesteads.'

" Chap. 238, Acts of 1852.—General truant law.

" Chap. 343, Acts of 1853.—City truant law.

" Chap. 392, Acts of 1854.—An Act to incorporate the Model Lodging House Association.

" Chap. 309, Acts of 1855, requires school committees to report violations of the law of May, 1852, to the treasurers of their towns and cities.

" Chap. 379, Acts of 1855, amends the Act of May, 1849, concerning children.

" Chap. 18, Acts of 1855.—Act incorporating an industrial school for girls. Lucretia O. Everett and others.

" Chap. 444, Acts of 1855.—An Act abolishing imprisonment for debt, except in cases of fraud.

" Chap. 431, Acts of 1855.—Amendment to lien law.

" Chap. 231, Acts of 1855.—Extension of the lien law to ships and vessels.

" Chap. 141, Acts of 1857, consolidates the Acts concerning imprisonment for debt and the punishment of fraudulent debtors.

" Chap. 50, Acts of 1857, requires the insurance commissioners to report annually the conduct and condition of the loan fund associations.

" Chap. 83, Acts of 1858, requires eighteen weeks' schooling.

" Chap. 55, Acts of 1858.—Amendment to lien law.

" Chap. 188, Acts of 1859.—School committees required to give notice to treasurers of violations of the Act of 1852; treasurer fined if he fails to comply.

" Chap. 186, Acts of 1863.—An Act to provide for the reception of a grant of Congress, and to create a fund for the promotion of education in agriculture and the mechanic arts."

The preceding summary shows secured legislation, but gives no indication of the causes which led to the passage of the various laws. It is difficult to trace the origin and course of