

**AN ALPHABETICAL ABSTRACT
OF THE RECORD OF BIRTHS,
IN THE TOWN OF DEDHAM,
MASSACHUSETTS, 1844-1890**

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An alphabetical abstract of the record of births, in the town of Dedham, Massachusetts, 1844-1890 by Don Gleason Hill

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DON GLEASON HILL

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OF THE
RECORD OF BIRTHS,
IN THE
TOWN OF DEDHAM,
MASSACHUSETTS,
1844-1890.

COMPILED BY
DON GLEASON HILL, Town Clerk.

DEDHAM, MASS.
OFFICE OF THE DEDHAM TRANSCRIBER,
1894.

1535225

INTRODUCTION.

AT the last Annual Town Meeting the town voted to print in the next annual town report an alphabetical abstract of the Births recorded in Dedham from the time the first volume of printed records (published 1886) ends, to 1890, in form similar to the methods adopted in Providence, R. I., and in Woburn, Mass., where they were published in the annual town reports.

Prior to 1844 the Town Clerk was simply required to keep a record of births of all persons within his town coming to his knowledge, and to specify in such record the date of each birth and the names of the parents. Parents were required to give notice to the clerks of all births of their children, and the same was required of every householder, but no other provision was made for collecting the facts. The first law passed which provided for anything approaching a complete system of registration was Chap. 159, of the Acts of 1844. This Act provided that the Record of Births should state in separate columns the date and place of birth, the name of the child (if it have any), the sex, name and surname of the parents, occupation of the father, residence of the parents, and date of record, and the School Committee were required to collect all these facts and make return to the Town Clerk, and the Secretary of the Commonwealth was required to furnish blank books of suitable quality and size to be used as Books of Record, and also suitable blank forms for returns.

Under Chapter 202 of the Acts of 1849, Town Clerks were authorized and required to obtain, record, and index the information concerning births, etc., now required by law. The General Statutes 1860 re-enacted these laws and also required that the Record of Births should contain the color of the child and parents' birthplace, and provided that parents and householders who neglected to give the Clerk such notice for the space of six months after the birth "shall forfeit a sum not exceeding five dollars," and this law is in

force to-day. By a Statute passed in 1880, physicians and midwives were required annually on or before the fifth day of each month to report to the Clerk a correct list of all children born in town during the month next preceding, at the birth of which they were present, stating place and date of birth and parents' names, and for neglecting to report such lists, a penalty was provided by the Act. This Statute was amended in 1883, requiring the physician's list to state all the facts required for a complete registration, and a fee of twenty-five cents for each birth so reported was provided for by the Act.

The first record book provided under the law of 1844 by the State was in three parts, blanks for births at the beginning or first section, marriages in the second, and deaths in the third. Since 1852, the Records of Births, Marriages and Deaths, have been kept in separate books. This first book was commenced by Richard Ellis at the close of his term of office as Town Clerk, and only the first ten births recorded therein appear in his hand.

Jonathan Holmes Cobb was elected Town Clerk in March, 1845, and held the office for thirty years, declining a re-election in 1875. During this period the Records appear in the hand of Mr. Cobb or in that of one of his sons. Mr. Cobb was born in Sharon, July 8, 1799, was graduated at Harvard 1817, a lawyer by profession, was editor for a time of the "Village Register," was one of the founders of the Dedham Institution for Savings, of which he was the first Secretary and Treasurer. He held the office of Register of Probate for Norfolk County from 1833 to 1879, and also acted for many years as a magistrate of the County. He died March 12, 1882.

Jonathan Holmes Cobb

About 1850.

March, 1875, Charles H. Farrington was elected Town Clerk, and held the office until 1880, when he declined a re-election, and the Record of Births beginning with January, 1875, through 1879, is in his handwriting, a clear record hand. Mr. Farrington was born in Dedham, Sept. 21, 1831. He was employed for a short time in the Registry of Probate, and for about twenty years in the Registry of Deeds, where he made the classified index of grantees from 1793 to 1855, and also prepared indexes of the County Commissioners' Records, and while he held the office of Town Clerk

he made an elaborate index in two folio volumes of the General Records of the town, and another of the Town Grants. He also held the office of Selectman.



About 1875.

In 1880 the present incumbent was elected Town Clerk, and again in 1881, but declined a re-election in 1882, and Mr. Farrington was again, at the March meeting, elected Town Clerk, but held the office only a few weeks, having died very suddenly, April 27, 1882, and I was appointed at first Clerk pro tem, and then re-elected by the Town, and have held the office from that time to the present. Mr. Farrington recorded no births during 1882, so that the entire record of births from 1880 to the present time has been made by the present Clerk. All the Records during my term have been made by careful copyists, and only the round record hand so easily read has been used upon the Records.

Many errors appear upon the Records, especially in the matter of names. A considerable number were brought to my notice by discrepancies which appeared in the record of different members of the same family. Parents and others giving the information do not seem to realize the importance of accuracy, and give only a portion of their name, giving it in different forms at different times. The name of one mother was found to have been entered in eight different ways. The spelling of foreign names has been a source of great trouble. As a general rule the different spellings, as they appear upon the Record, have been printed, except that the names and birth-places of the same parents have sometimes been printed uniform, but no changes have been made upon the original Records, except under the provisions of Chap. 365 of the Acts of 1892, which provided that—

“Whenever the records of any city or town do not contain the facts relating to a birth, death or marriage which occurred therein, or whenever such facts are not fully or correctly stated on such records, the clerk or registrar of such city or town may receive a deposition, under oath, containing such facts as are desired for record, and shall then file said deposition and record said facts in a book to be kept for that purpose, stating in addition thereto the name and residence of the deponent and the date of such record.”

When this work was begun it was found that there were about four hundred children who did not have any christian name upon the record. I took special pains to obtain as many of these names as possible, and have obtained the christian name in about one hundred and sixty cases.

Under the provisions of the above statute, I prepared a deposition blank in the following form:—

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

ss.
 PURSUANT to the provisions of Chap. 305, of the Acts of 1892, I
 of in the County of
 is said Commonwealth on oath depose and say that the christian name of the child of
 who was born in Dedham 18
 is Said christian name not having been
 entered in the record of the birth of said child on the Town Clerk's Register;
 And I further testify that I am* of said child.

.
 ss. 189 Subscribed and sworn to: Before me,
 Justice of the Peace.
 Filed 189

*State relationship to child.

This was used also to correct any other errors, either in dates or names, and 365 depositions have been procured, filed and recorded, and this has been done without any expense to the parties making the depositions. These have been obtained by personal application and by correspondence, and I caused a notice to be published three weeks in the Dedham Transcript, as follows:—

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

An Alphabetical Abstract of the Records of Births in Dedham, from 1844, when the printed volume ends, to and including 1896, has been made under the vote of the Town, and is now in the hands of the printer, to be published in the next Town Report. It is very desirable that all errors which appear in these Records should be properly corrected. Chapter 305 of the Acts of 1892 provides for the making and recording of depositions to correct errors, and the Clerk is prohibited from correcting the original Records except through these depositions. Several hundred such depositions have already been obtained by the Town Clerk. No fees will be charged for the making, filing or recording of these depositions. The Records can be seen at the Historical Building, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons, and all persons who are interested in any Birth Records from 1844 to 1896 are earnestly requested to call there at once and examine these Records before they are printed, that corrections may be properly made.

Dedham, Nov. 24, 1896.

DON GLEASON HILL, Town Clerk.

It was my desire so far as possible, that the errors which existed should be carefully corrected before this report was printed. I have taken pains to have all depositions made by those who would be best authorities in the matter. Appended to this introduction will be found a list of the names of those children the record of whose birth has been corrected by depositions, and the file number of these depositions (which number also shows the page of the record thereof). Other errors will be found printed, which might have been corrected if parties interested had responded to the invitation to examine the Records before they were printed. Some errors might have been corrected by me, but for the fact that the law of 1892 above mentioned prohibits me from amending or correcting the records. All errors which have not been corrected should be corrected in the manner prescribed by law. I can make no promises for my successors, but so long as I hold the office I shall be very glad to prepare and record all such depositions for the sake of accuracy in our Records, and without expense to the parties interested.

A word as to the matter of names. The whole community should be educated in this matter of accuracy in writing names. Let it begin in the schools. Children should be impressed throughout their whole school course with the importance of always writing their names correctly, and if they have more than one christian name they should write in full the name by which they are called, with the initial of the other christian name; that is, if the child's name is John G. Brown, it should be so written always, and never (even in the Kindergarten) Johnnie Brown. School Rules and Regulations should provide that all teachers should write the children's names in full upon all registers and reports, and require the children to sign their names in the same manner to all examination or other papers written by them.

During my term of office I have caused each year an Abstract of the Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths to be printed in the Town Report, and I have repeatedly called attention to these abstracts and requested that errors should be corrected.

It will be noticed that in a number of instances a child's birth is recorded in two successive years. When we were able to determine that both records were intended for the same child, and could ascertain which date was correct, we have printed only the correct record and omitted the other, but when the correct date was uncertain both records have been printed. Children who appeared to be illegitimate or stillborn have been omitted from the printed record. As the result of the laws passed since 1844, more pains than before that date has been taken in the collection of births. I have

obtained and recorded returns of the births of forty-seven children whose names did not appear upon our records, a list of which is appended to this Introduction, and I am confident that others still have never been recorded. If parents and physicians would make the returns which the law requires, (which returns I am sorry to say are seldom made), there would be fewer omissions and a less number of mistakes in our records.

A few statistics have been compiled which will be found interesting, and I hope not out of place in this report. It will be remembered that the record, the abstract of which is here printed, covers a period of nearly half a century, beginning in the middle of 1844 and ending with the close of 1890.

From the valuation of Dedham, 1844.

Number of poll tax payers born in United States, (estimated),	913
“ “ “ “ “ out of “ “ “	25
Whole number of poll tax payers in this valuation,	938

From the voting list, November election, 1844.

Number of voters born in United States, (estimated),	705
“ “ “ “ out of “ “ “	12
Whole number of voters on this list,	717

From the voting Register, November election, 1890.

Number of voters born in United States, (not in Dedham),	570
“ “ “ “ “ Dedham,	420
“ “ “ “ out of United States,	309
Whole number of voters on this list,	1559

From the Record of Births here printed, the following table is constructed, relating to the birthplace of parents:—

	Number.	Per Cent.
Both parents born out of United States,	3509	45—
“ “ “ in United States, (neither in Dedham),	1649	22+
“ “ “ “ U. S. (one in Dedham),	1061	15—
One parent born in U. S. (not in Dedham), the other out of U. S.	600	8+
Both parents born in Dedham,	524	4+
One parent born in Dedham, the other out of U. S.,	234	3+
Birthplace of one or both parents unknown,	191	3—
	7908	100

The estimates from the Valuation and Voting lists of 1844 may not be strictly accurate, but they are the best estimates that I could get from those familiar with the names, and I think they cannot be far out of the way. In my report to the town last year, I recommended that the births only be printed