

**HOUSE NO. 2000: REPORT  
OF THE HOMESTEAD  
COMMISSION, JANUARY,  
1913**

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House No. 2000: Report of the Homestead Commission, January, 1913 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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OF THE HOMESTEAD  
COMMISSION, JANUARY,  
1913**





HOUSE

No. 2000

REPORT

OF

THE HOMESTEAD COMMISSION

MADE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 714 OF THE ACTS OF 1912.

JANUARY, 1913.

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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Boston, January 1, 1913.

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.*

In compliance with the provisions of Chapter 714 of the Acts of 1912, the Homestead Commission, created by Chapter 607 of the Acts of 1911, has the honor to submit the accompanying report and bills.

CHARLES F. GETTEMY, *Chairman.*  
HENRY STERLING, *Secretary.*  
WARREN DUNHAM FOSTER,  
AUGUSTUS L. THORNDIKE,  
CLEMENT F. COOGAN,  
KENYON L. BUTTERFIELD,  
EVA W. WHITE,

*The Homestead Commission.*

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the smooth operation of any business and for the protection of its interests.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It provides a detailed description of the procedures followed to ensure the reliability and validity of the information gathered.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the study and discusses the implications of the findings. It highlights the key trends and patterns observed and offers insights into the factors that influence the outcomes.

4. The fourth part of the document provides a summary of the main points and conclusions drawn from the research. It reiterates the significance of the findings and offers recommendations for further research and practical applications.

5. The fifth part of the document contains the references and bibliography, listing the sources of information used in the study. It provides a comprehensive list of the works consulted to support the analysis and conclusions.

6. The sixth part of the document includes the appendixes, which contain additional data and information that are not included in the main text. These appendices provide a more detailed view of the data and support the findings presented in the report.

7. The seventh part of the document contains the index, which provides a quick and easy way to locate specific information within the document. It lists the page numbers for each section and sub-section, allowing the reader to find the relevant information efficiently.

8. The eighth part of the document contains the glossary, which defines the key terms and concepts used throughout the report. It provides a clear and concise explanation of the terminology, ensuring that the reader has a common understanding of the language used.

9. The ninth part of the document contains the acknowledgments, where the author expresses their appreciation to the individuals and organizations that provided support and assistance during the course of the study. It is a way to recognize the contributions of others and show gratitude for their help.

10. The tenth part of the document contains the concluding remarks, where the author reflects on the overall experience of conducting the research and offers final thoughts on the importance of the study. It provides a sense of closure and a final message to the reader.



## REPORT.

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### INTRODUCTORY.

By the terms of Chapter 607 of the Acts of 1911 the Homestead Commission was instructed to "report . . . a bill or bills embodying a plan and the method of carrying it out, whereby, with the assistance of the Commonwealth, homesteads or small houses and plots of ground may be acquired by mechanics, laborers, and others in the suburbs of cities and towns."

In pursuance of these instructions the Commission reported a bill (H. 442, 1912), accompanied by a brief report (H. 441, 1912), in January, 1912. At about the same date the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics issued (Labor Bulletin, No. 88) a review of work done in other countries similar to that contemplated by the act creating the Commission.

The bill provided that part of the unclaimed deposits in savings banks which had been called into the State treasury by Chapter 590, Section 56, of the Acts of 1908, should be loaned to the Commission to undertake the work proposed in Chapter 607, Acts of 1911. The constitutionality of this proposition was questioned during the passage of the measure through the Legislature, and the bill was on May 6, 1912, submitted to the Supreme Court for an opinion. On May 28, 1912, the court made answer (H. 2339, 1912) that such use of those funds or of any public funds would be a private, and not a public use, and, therefore, it would be contrary to the provisions of the constitution.

Thereupon the General Court passed the following act (Chapter 714, Acts of 1912):

SECTION 1. The commission established by chapter six hundred and seven of the acts of the year nineteen hundred and eleven shall continue its investigation of the need of providing homesteads for the people of the commonwealth and its study of plans already in operation or contemplated elsewhere for housing wage-earners, and shall report to the legislature not later than the first Wednesday in January, nineteen hundred and thirteen, and may recommend

such legislation as in its judgment will tend to increase the supply of wholesome homes for the people. The commission may expend in prosecution of its work such sums, not exceeding in the aggregate two thousand dollars, as the governor and council may approve.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon its passage. [*Approved June 4, 1912.*]

This report deals only with "the need of providing homesteads for the people of the Commonwealth." In regard to the second part of its instructions, the Commission reports that in order to secure late and accurate data upon that point questions calculated to bring out the information desired were sent to United States Secretary of State, the Hon. Philander C. Knox, with the request that they be submitted for answers to diplomatic and consular officials in certain countries. On November 11, 1912, Secretary Knox notified the Commission that the questions had been forwarded as asked. From these replies, when received, with other information at hand, the Commission hopes later to submit a comprehensive, accurate, and detailed report on the activities of foreign governments in endeavoring to ensure a sufficient supply of healthful homes for their people.

It may be well to say in this connection that in no country has private enterprise been equal to the task of properly housing the inhabitants. The people have suffered on account of bad and insufficient housing facilities to the detriment of private health and public welfare. In nearly every country of standing among civilized nations the government has actively aided and encouraged the creation of a larger supply of good homes. Governments have found this work necessary for the protection and preservation of their subjects.

The Commission elected to study some of the effects of bad home conditions on child life. In Ward 24 (Dorchester) of the city of Boston there were living, in 1905, 2,732 children under five years of age, of whom 76 died, a mortality rate of 28 per thousand. In the State that year there were 267,325 children below the age of five years. Had the same rate of mortality prevailed, 7,485 children of that age would have died. Instead of that number, however, there were 14,055 deaths in the State among children under five years of age, or 6,570 more than would have occurred had the lower Dorchester rate of mortality been

maintained. Unfavorable environment before and after birth seems, therefore, to have been responsible for the sacrifice of 6,570 young children in Massachusetts in that year. The housing conditions generally throughout the Commonwealth ought to have been as good as, if not better than, those in Dorchester.

In a paper read before the Royal Statistical Society in London, February 17, 1901, Arthur Newsholme, M.D., declares that "infants form a very delicate index of the character and the environment of the individual, and a high infantile mortality may rightly be regarded as indicating unfavorable sanitary or social conditions."

The more crowded a community the greater the destitution; competition is more keen, and the struggle for existence is more feverish and exhausting. The crime, vice, illiteracy, filth, disease, and degradation engendered in slums will not however be dwelt upon in this report; it will not tell the cost to the individual and the Commonwealth — in terms of dollars and cents and lowered efficiency in citizenship. It is enough to consider only the effects of unwholesome homes upon little children. In the North End of Boston, in 1905, out of every thousand children under five years of age 85 died, while in other more favored parts of the city the death rates for children under five years of age were 28, 32, or 34 per thousand. The specific causes of this appalling difference in infant mortality between different sections of a single city may be in doubt. Crowding of population is not the sole reason for an excessive number of deaths, but in densely populated sections the sanitary and social conditions are usually bad and the infant mortality correspondingly high. Were families in such districts scattered over a larger area and housed in wholesome homes the excessive child mortality rate would be expected to decline.

#### INVESTIGATIONS OF TENEMENT-HOUSE CONDITIONS.

The need of some policy for lessening the evils resulting from congestion of population was first officially recognized in this country in 1856, when New York City appointed a tenement-house commission. Since this beginning of serious interest in the housing of wage-earners investigations of conditions in numerous cities have been made; tenements have been counted, the number of persons per room, per dwelling, and per acre has been ascer-