

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT NO. 1. ANNUAL  
REPORT OF THE VITAL STATISTICS OF  
MASSACHUSETTS, BRITISH, MARRIAGES,  
DIVORCES AND DEATHS. FOR THE YEAR  
ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1938**

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**FREDERIC W. COOK & ARTHUR J. HASSETT**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS

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ANNUAL REPORT

ON THE

**VITAL STATISTICS OF MASSACHUSETTS**

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DIVORCES AND DEATHS

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1938

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PREPARED BY  
FREDERIC W. COOK  
THE SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

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EDITED BY  
ARTHUR J. HASSETT  
STATE REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS





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# LETTER OF SUBMITTAL

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,

*Office of the Secretary,*

*Division of Vital Statistics, Boston, April 1, 1939.*

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

I have the honor to submit herewith, as required by Chapter 46, section 21, and Chapter 208, section 47, of the General Laws, the ninety-seventh annual report on statistics of births, marriages, divorces, and deaths in Massachusetts, for the calendar year 1938 in two parts: Part I, Mortality Statistics; Part II, Statistics of Births, Marriages and Divorces. The fact that deaths are reported monthly while births, marriages, and statistics of divorce are not required to be reported until March, April and May of the year following that in which the events occur, makes possible the availability of the mortality report earlier than the report of births, marriages, and divorces. Hence the presentation in two parts in one volume.

The editorial review and the method of presentation of the statistical data were prepared by Arthur J. Hassett, State Registrar, in charge of the Division of Vital Statistics. The statistical tables were prepared under the direction of Elizabeth M. Canty, statistician of the division. The exhibition of tabular results is restricted to such as are plainly of practical utility within the meaning of the statute by authority of which the tables are prepared.

Respectfully submitted,

FREDERIC W. COOK,

*Secretary of the Commonwealth.*

## Editorial Review of the Vital Statistics of Massachusetts, 1938

BY ARTHUR J. HASSETT, STATE REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS.

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### INTRODUCTION

#### *History.*

**Death Registration.**—Massachusetts, the first colony to recognize the importance of the registration of vital statistics, required as early as 1639 the registration of births, marriages and deaths; in 1840 statutes required that copies should be filed with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. In 1880 the registration area for deaths recognized by the United States Bureau of the Census, i.e., the States, and cities in other States, effectively enforcing satisfactory registration laws of all deaths registered, included but two States, Massachusetts and New Jersey, the District of Columbia, and a number of cities in non-registration States.

During the period 1841 to 1938 inclusive, 3,752,619 deaths have been reported, filed, and tabulated in the Division of Vital Statistics.

The original records are on file in the cities and towns in which they occurred, and in the city and town given as the residence of the deceased at the time of death, and copies are also on file at the State House.

**Purpose.**—Death registration often gives the first intimation of pestilential disease, permitting health officers to attack epidemics in their incipiency. It serves as evidence in the inheritance of property and in the settlement of life insurance. It is useful in preventing crime through the restriction placed upon the disposal of dead human bodies, and insures a permanent and uniform record of the death of each individual for all purposes.