

# Boston in Print, Part Three: Cemeteries, Probate and Land Records, Other Sources

By Ann Smith Lainhart

For almost 400 years, a vast number of people have passed through Boston. Some have stayed only a few days or a few years, while others have lived in Boston for generations. Even those who stayed only a short time may have left records and these columns will help you find the records on your ancestors. This is the last installment of a three-part series of columns on researching people who lived in Boston. The first part covered vital records, town histories and guides, and church records, while the second part focused on town records and annexed lands. This column covers cemeteries, probate records, land records, Irish immigrants, and other sources.

## Cemeteries

While compiling the information for *Deaths in the Town of Boston, 1700-1799* (NEHGS, 1999), Robert Dunkle and I discovered additional material in manuscripts at the Rare Book Room in the Boston Public Library and at the Boston Parks Department that added to the published works. The companion set to *Deaths in the Town of Boston* is titled *Inscriptions and Records of the Old Cemeteries of Boston*, published in 2000 by NEHGS. This book contains the inscriptions of the four major cemeteries in Boston: Common or Central, Copp's, Granary, and King's Chapel, as well as Hawes and South burying grounds. Be sure to check this volume as well as these earlier published works:

*Gravestone Inscriptions and Records of Tomb Burials in the Granary Burying Ground, Boston, Mass.* (Salem, 1918).

*Gravestone Inscriptions and Records of Tomb Burials in the Central Burying Ground, Boston Common, and Inscriptions in The South Burying Ground, Boston* (Salem, 1817).

Bridgman, Thomas, *Memorials of The Dead in Boston; Containing Exact Transcripts of Inscriptions on the Sepulchral Monuments in the King's Chapel Burial Ground, In the City of Boston.* (Boston, 1853).

Bridgman, Thomas, *The Pilgrims of Boston and Their Descendants: With an Introduction by Hon. Edward Everett, LL.D., Also, Inscriptions from the Monuments in the Granary Burial Ground, Tremont Street.* (New York, 1856).

Wells, Charles Chauncey, *Boston's Copp's Hill Burying Ground Guide.* (Oak Park, IL, 2000)

Whitmore, William H., *The Graveyards of Boston. First Volume, Copp's Hill Epitaphs.* (Albany, 1878).

## Probate Records

Probate records prior to 1793 for the towns currently in Norfolk County are found in Suffolk County probate records. The only published Suffolk County probate records are those in the following book:

*Suffolk County Wills, Abstracts of the Earliest Wills Upon Record in the County of Suffolk, Massachusetts, From The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* (Baltimore, 1984).

From the introduction:

"The work primarily of William B. Trask, this long series of will abstracts appeared at intervals over a period of forty-five years in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*. Initiated by Samuel G. Drake in January 1848, the series was entrusted three years later to Mr. Trask, who continued it without interruption until 1866, then set it aside for ten years, returning to it in 1876 and carrying it forward for another two years. Sixteen years later, in 1894, Walter K. Watkins added the final installments. The series embodies abstracts of the earliest wills and inventories of Suffolk County, Massachusetts, representing, in substance, the first thirty years or so of the county's estate records."

## Land Records

Land records prior to 1731 for the current Worcester County towns of Mendon, Oxford, Sutton, and Uxbridge as well as those for Woodstock, Connecticut, are found in the Suffolk County land records. Pre-1793 land records for the towns currently in Norfolk County are in Suffolk County land records. Most of the seventeenth-century deeds for Suffolk County have been published:

*Suffolk Deeds*, 1629-1697 (Boston, 1880-1906), 14 volumes.

## **Irish Immigrants**

*The Search for Missing Friends, Irish Immigrant Advertisements Placed in the Boston Pilot* (NEHGS)

Vol. 1, 1831-1850, Ruth-Ann M. Harris & Donald M. Jacobs (1989)

Vol. 2, 1851-1853, Ruth-Ann M. Harris & B. Emer O'Keefe (1991)

Vol. 3, 1854-1856, Ruth-Ann M. Harris & B. Emer O'Keefe (1993)

Vol. 4, 1857-1860, Ruth-Ann M. Harris & B. Emer O'Keefe (1995)

Vol. 5, 1861-1865, B. Emer O'Keefe (1996)

Vol. 6, 1866-1870, B. Emer O'Keefe (1997)

Vol. 7, 1871-1876, B. Emer O'Keefe (1999)

Vol. 8, 1877-1920, B. Emer O'Keefe (1999)

From the introduction:

"The destruction of the potato crop four years in succession caused Ireland's population to decline from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851. While Ireland was emptying, Boston was filling with Irish immigrants, showing a ten-year increase of 105 percent. From 1846 to 1849, 100,000 Irish persons arrived in Boston. Most immigrants would expect to obtain their first employment through family networks of siblings, uncles, nephews and sons who had preceded them to America. Ireland was a society in which obligations and claims among kin were extremely powerful and disregarded only at the cost of severing family ties permanently. However, many immigrants would discover after arrival that it was not enough to know only the name of the town where they had last heard from their relative. America was a much larger country than the new arrivals could ever have imagined, and following the employment trail could easily take them hundreds of miles from where they had begun."

Therefore, many Irish turned to the *Boston Pilot* and placed advertisements to try and locate their missing relatives and friends. Almost all of these entries identify specific places in Ireland where they came from. While the persons inquiring and those being looked for can be from all over the country, many are from Boston or passed through Boston as these examples show:

Of EDWARD TIERNEY, native of Newtown, parish of Burriscarra, co. Mayo, who landed in Boston in the Spring of 1848. He left Boston in May, 1849, for Vermont in company with Martin Foy and Patrick Coulter, and not heard from since. Any information respecting him will be thankfully received by his brother, THOMAS TIERNEY, Hopkinton, Massachusetts.

Of PATRICK KELLY, a native of Dublin, who came to this country in June, 1849 - landed in Boston - when last heard from was at No. 63 Atkinson street, Boston. Any information respecting him will be thankfully received by JOHN QUIN, care of S.S. Thompson, Lancaster, N.H.

TIMOTHY B. MURPHY and son, JOHN ENGLAND MURPHY, left Pittsburgh 11th April, 1846. He was a mathematical teacher. When last heard of was in Glenburine, 5 miles from Kingston, Upper Canada, teaching school. The Boy is going on 15 years old. Any information respecting them will be thankfully received by his wife & younger son. Direct to MARGARET H. MURPHY, No. 15 Belmont street, Boston, Ms.

Of JOHN CLEARY, and his brothers, THOMAS, MICHAEL or WILLIAM CLEARY, natives of Ballyphilip, co. Tipperary - emigrated to this country in 1849 - supposed to be in Boston. Any information respecting them will be thankfully received by their brother, PATRICK CLEARY, Conshocken, Montgomery County, Pa.

## **Articles on Boston Families**

If you are researching a family that lived in Boston, I recommend reading the following articles from *The New*

*England Historical and Genealogical Register*. They will give you ideas on how to use many of the records I have mentioned in these columns. Seeing how someone else approached a family problem may help you solve your own.

Carney, John B. In Search of **Fayerweather**: The Fayerweather Family of Boston," *NEHGR*, 144 (1990):3.

Cook, Wendell B., "William **Badlam**, Ship Master of Boston and Weymouth and Some of His Descendants," *NEHGR*, 141 (1987):3.

Fiske, Jane Fletcher, The **Sawdy** Family of Boston, Rhode Island, and Points West," *NEHGR*, 148 (1994):141.

Lainhart, Ann Smith, Descendants of Paix **Cazneau**," *NEHGR*, 142 (1988):126.

Rasmussen, James A., "Edward **Raynsford** of Boston: English Ancestry and American Descendants," *NEHGR*, 139 (1985):225.

Varney, George W., "Thomas **Varney** of Boston and Some of His Descendants," *NEHGR*, 149(1995):3.

Woodworth-Barnes, Esther, "Descendants of Ellis **Callender** of Boston," *NEHGR*, 144(1990):195.

### Other Sources

Lainhart, Ann Smith, *First Boston City Directory (1789), Including Extensive Annotations by John Haven Dexter (1791-1876)* (Boston, 1989).

For this publication, John Haven Dexter annotated the first Boston City Directory of 1789 with information he found in newspapers, later city directories, and from personal knowledge. Much of this information might be difficult to find now such as the nicknames of the various members of the Amory family: "Newbury-street John," "English Tom," "Cuba Jonathan," and "Good Jonathan."

Robert J. Dunkle and Ann Smith Lainhart, *John Haven Dexter's Memoranda of the Town of Boston in the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Boston, 1997).

John Haven Dexter was about twelve years old when he moved to Boston and was apprenticed to the editor of the *Columbian Centinel*. He retired from active business life in 1833 and spent his later years compiling facts about persons and localities in Boston until his death in 1876. This book features transcriptions from three of his collections relating to Boston that were donated to NEHGS.