



1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



2

---

---

---

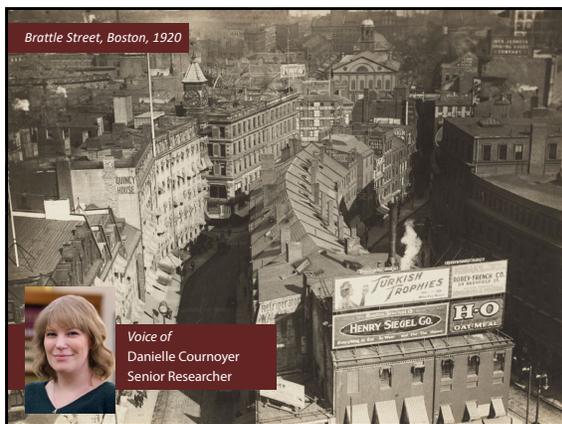
---

---

---

---

---



3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Historical Context: Massachusetts in the 20th Century

4

---

---

---

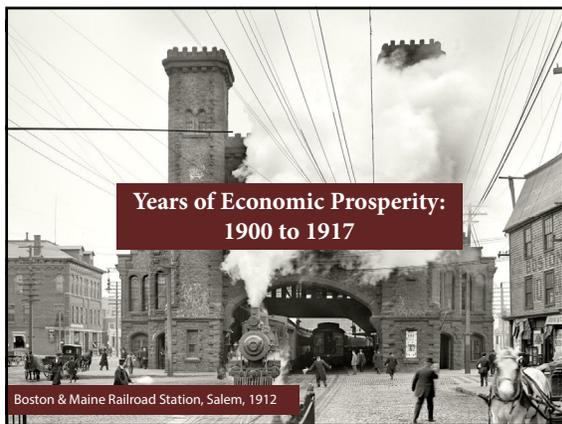
---

---

---

---

---



5

---

---

---

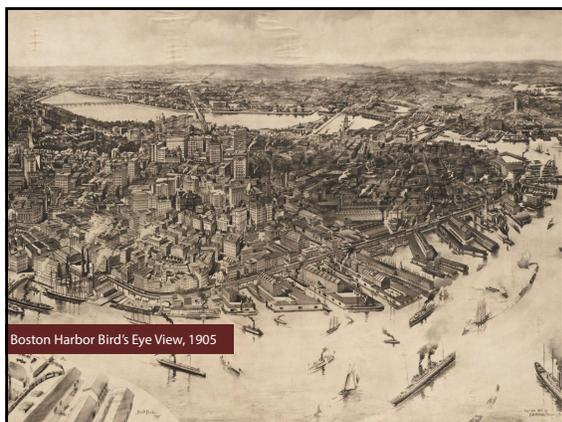
---

---

---

---

---



6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



7

---

---

---

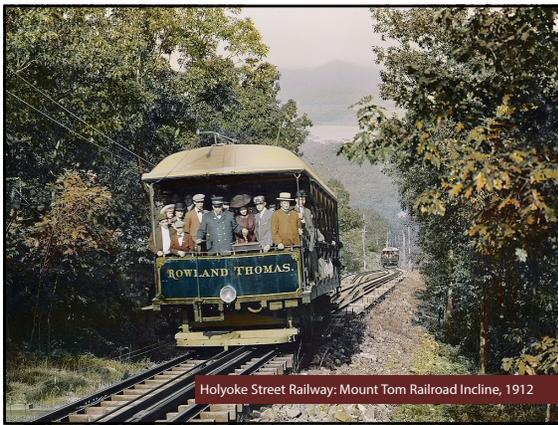
---

---

---

---

---



8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



9

---

---

---

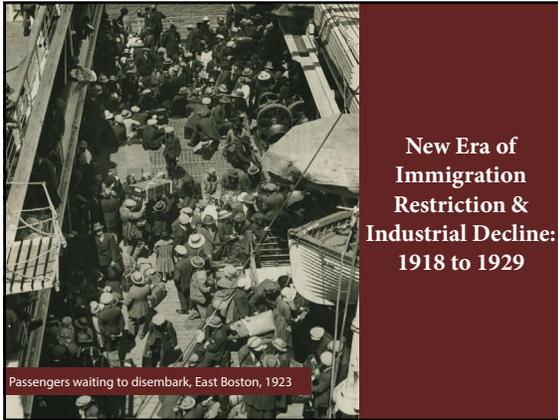
---

---

---

---

---



10

---

---

---

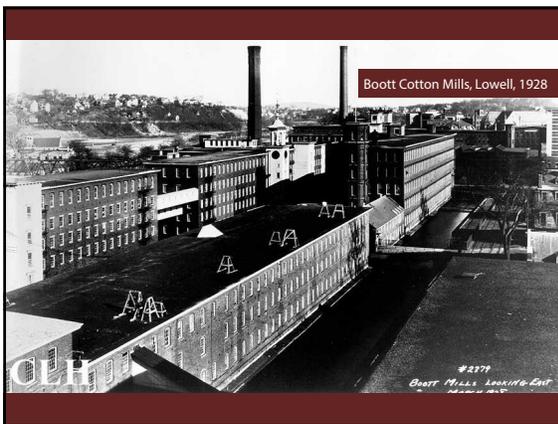
---

---

---

---

---



11

---

---

---

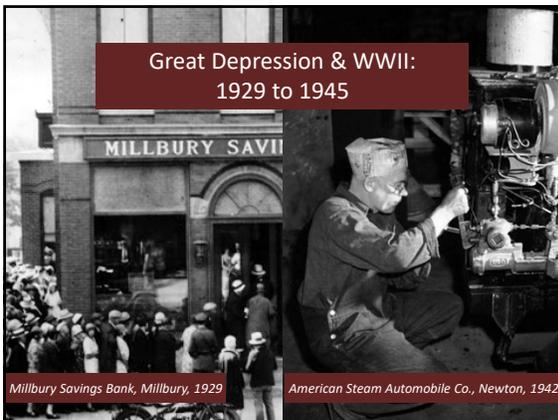
---

---

---

---

---



12

---

---

---

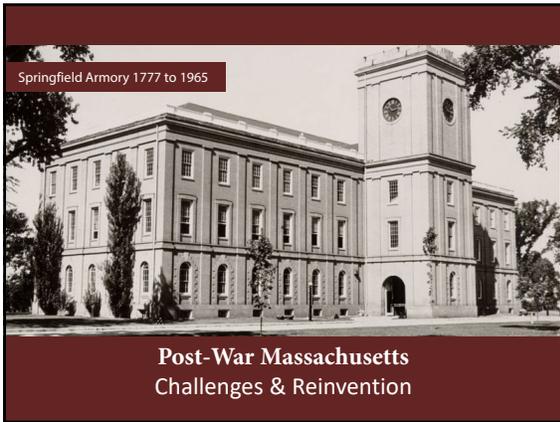
---

---

---

---

---



13

---

---

---

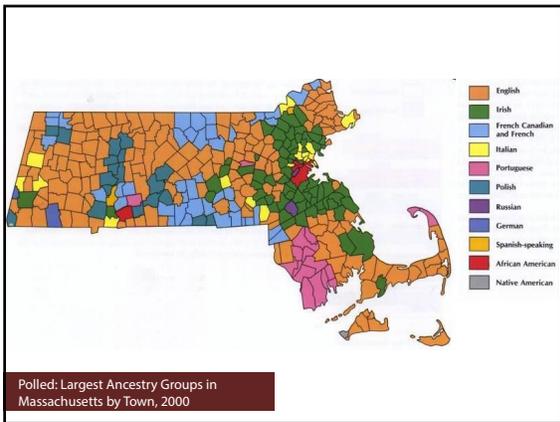
---

---

---

---

---



14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Massachusetts Civic Records

- Civic (government) records – including vital & probate records – act as the foundation in our research
- Often there are levels of bureaucracy to navigate
- Confidentiality rules limit accessed & can require court intervention
- Who created the original record?
  - Local, State, or Federal Government?




---

---

---

---

---

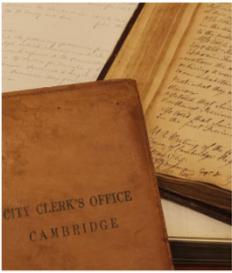
---

---

---

16

### Massachusetts Vital Records



- No time or legal restrictions for obtaining vital records for events that occurred in the State (exceptions for amended records)
- 20<sup>th</sup> century Mass Vital Records are maintained at two levels:
  - By the town clerk where the event occurred
  - Reported to the State where a second return is kept

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

17

### Vital Records at the Massachusetts Archives



- Original manuscripts of State vital records for 1841 to 1930
- Most of these records are digitized and available online at FamilySearch
- Quick reference links available on Archives website: [www.sec.state.ma.us/arc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc)
- Request certified copies for \$3
  - Online form submitted via mail or email: [archives@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:archives@sec.state.ma.us)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

18



**Boston Vital Records  
1904 to 1930**

- After 1904, Boston Vital Records inconsistently recorded in both Register and Certificate formats
- Boston Death Records
  - Before 1904: Register
  - 1904 to 1914: Certificate
  - 1915 to 1918: Register
  - 1919 to 1920: Certificate
  - 1921 to 1930: Register (Not Digitized)
- Boston Birth & Marriage Records
  - Before 1918: Register
  - 1919: Certificate
  - 1920: Register
  - 1921 to 1930: Register (Not Digitized)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

22

**Yet to be digitized:  
Vital Records 1926 to 1930**

- Every 5 years vital records over 90 years old transferred from the *Registry of Vital Records & Statistics* to the *State Archives*
- Two different branches of State government:
  - Registry under the Department of Health
  - Archives under the Secretary of Commonwealth's Office
- In late-2022 (delayed by the pandemic) records for 1926 to 1930 were moved to the Archives
- The process of digitation (just completed for 1921 to 1925 in 2021) will begin again for this new batch of records

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

23

**Registry of Vital Records & Statistics**

- Maintains State Vital Records for 1931 to present
- Offers only certified copies of records for purchase:
  - In person: \$20
  - By mail: \$32
  - Online/Phone: \$51
- Visit the research room to view and transcribe records (photos prohibited)
  - Appointment needed




Office located:  
150 Mt. Vernon St.  
Dorchester, MA

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

24

### Amended Records

- A “\*” in the Vital Record Index indicates an amended or corrected record
  - Corresponding citation is for the amended volume
- All records amended after 1931 are held at the Registry of Vital Records & Statistics
- Records amended before 1931 (vols. 1 to 86) are open and can be accessed at the Massachusetts Archives
- Common amendments for birth certificates:
  - Adding a father’s information
  - Spelling corrections
  - Adoptions

25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

INDEX TO BIRTHS IN MASSACHUSETTS 1941-1945				
Name	Town	Year	Vol.	Page
Cushman Albert	Boston	1942	25	195
Anna Adams *	"	1944	33	613
Harriette *	"	1941	12	64
Arline *	"	1941	9	69
Arthur Lawrence	Eggs	1941	76	206
Bertie Russell	Clinton	1941	48	145
Bonnie Lee *	Weymouth	1944	83	130
Earl Herbert	Boston	1942	454	806
Cherrie	Wareham	1943	140	336
Caroline Ann	Westfield	1943	147	77
Daniel Albert	Boston	1942	18	91
David Alan	Plymouth	1942	121	62

**Reminder:** the original copy of a record created *after* 1925 which was later amended - is *restricted*  
 Only those named on the record can access it without a court order

26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Massachusetts State Archives

27

---

---

---

---

---

---

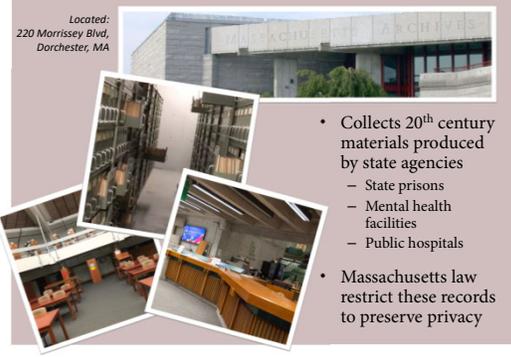
---

---

---

---

Located:  
220 Morrissey Blvd,  
Dorchester, MA



- Collects 20<sup>th</sup> century materials produced by state agencies
  - State prisons
  - Mental health facilities
  - Public hospitals
- Massachusetts law restricts these records to preserve privacy

28

---

---

---

---

---

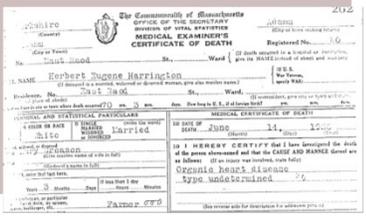
---

---

---

### Medical Examiner Records 1885 – 1960

- Noted on a death certificate if an individual was seen by the Medical Examiner after their death
- May provide information as to circumstances of a person's life and death
- Provide death record to the Reference Archivist and they will send you the Medical Examiner's corresponding return

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### State Prison Records

- Prison information is open upon an individual's death, but medical & mental health info is redacted
- Request a prison inmate case file by providing proof of death
- Case files often contain in-depth family histories
- The years available depend on the prison. Examples:
  - State Prison at Charlestown (1910-1941)
  - Men's Reformatory at Concord (1884-1939)
  - Prison for Women at Framingham (1913-1973)
  - State Prison Colony at Norfolk (1927-1955)



30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**State Hospital Records**

- The Massachusetts Archives maintains records of State facilities that are no longer in operation
- Many State Hospitals opened in the 1800s & did not close until the 1990s
- The regulations ruling the access of Hospital records—no matter their age—are tight
- To learn more about process of unsealing records, contact the Reference Archivist



31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Have questions?  
Contact the knowledgeable  
Mass State Archive  
reference team!  
[archives@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:archives@sec.state.ma.us)

32

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Massachusetts  
Court Records**

33

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Divorce Records

- 1887 to 1922: Divorces overseen by Mass. Superior Court
- After 1922, Probate & Family Courts also granted jurisdiction— have since heard most divorces in the state
- Probate & Family Courts are broken up into 14 divisions
- Each division keeps own Divorce index:
  - Statewide index (1952 to today) available at *Registry of Vital Records and Statistics*
  - Which Court & Docket Number
- Contact courthouse where divorce occurred to request copies




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

34

### Probate Records

- Where to look for 20<sup>th</sup> century MA probate records varies from county to county
- Depending on the record's age, probate may be at the Supreme Judicial Court Archives or still at Probate & Family Court where originally filed




---

---

---

---

---

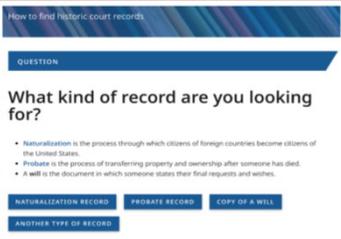
---

---

---

35

### Online Search Tools:



1) Mass.gov – historic court record “decision tree”  
[www.mass.gov/decision-tree/how-to-find-historic-court-records](http://www.mass.gov/decision-tree/how-to-find-historic-court-records)

---

---

---

---

---

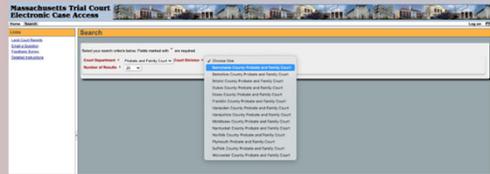
---

---

---

36

**Online Search Tools:**



2) Massachusetts Trial Court Electronic Case Look-Up  
[www.masscourts.org](http://www.masscourts.org)

37

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Naturalization Records at the Supreme Judicial Court Archives**

- Naturalizations records for anyone naturalized in State Superior Courts after 26 September 1906
- Majority of Superior Court naturalizations for 1906–1945 available on FamilySearch
  - Not text searchable, use indexes to locate petitions
  - Does not include Suffolk or Dukes counties



38

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Naturalization Records at the Supreme Judicial Court Archives**

- Naturalization records filed after 1945 have not been digitized
  - Use online index to locate petition number
  - Contact Judicial Archivist to get full record
- Declaration of Intent & Petition for Naturalization may include:
  - Name, address, occupation, date and place of birth of the applicant
  - Information regarding arrival in the US
  - Marital status & names of children, with their dates and places of birth
- Prior to 1922, married women were included on their husband's petition
- No statewide index to naturalization records at the Judicial Archives
  - Each court was responsible for indexing its own records

39

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Mass.gov quick links to FamilySearch naturalizations:**  
[www.mass.gov/info-details/find-out-which-historic-naturalization-records-are-available-online](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-out-which-historic-naturalization-records-are-available-online)

**Find out which historic naturalization records are available online**

You can access post-1906 state Superior Court naturalization record holdings by county on FamilySearch.org. If the historic naturalization record you're looking for isn't here, please see the links in the sidebar for more information on how to get other records from the judicial archives.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Barnstable County
- Berkshire County
- Bristol County
- Essex County
- Franklin County
- Hampshire County
- Middlesex County
- Norfolk County
- Suffolk County
- Plymouth County
- Worcester County

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

40

Need more help finding a record?  
 Contact the Supreme Judicial  
 Court Archivist:  
[archives@jud.state.ma.us](mailto:archives@jud.state.ma.us)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

41

**Naturalization Records at the National Archives**

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES**  
BOSTON

- 27 September 1906: All US naturalizations transferred from State to Federal Courts
- *The Northeast Regional Branch of the National Archives in Waltham* houses naturalization filed at Massachusetts Federal Courts
  - U.S. District Court (1790-1991)
  - U.S. Circuit Court (1845-1911)
- [boston.archives@nara.gov](mailto:boston.archives@nara.gov)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

42

## Massachusetts Land Records

- Maintained at local level – 21 registry districts
- Registries of Deeds record & maintain every land transaction in each county/district
- Access most 20<sup>th</sup>-century land records online!  
[masslandrecords.com](http://masslandrecords.com)

43

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Massachusetts Land Records

44

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Click on  
"view images" tab  
to see an image of  
the deed

45

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



46

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Massachusetts National Guard**

- Massachusetts Archives
  - Service records of all Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard personnel discharged *before 1940*
  - Contact the Reference Archivist: [archives@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:archives@sec.state.ma.us)
- The Military Records Branch in Milton
  - Service records of all discharged Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard personnel (1947 to present)
  - [www.massnationalguard.org](http://www.massnationalguard.org)
    - phone: (508) 422-1993
    - email: [militaryrecords@mass.gov](mailto:militaryrecords@mass.gov)



47

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)**

- Repository of military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased 20th century veterans from all services
- Records from Spanish American War to 2000
- Submit record requests online: [vetrecs.archives.gov](http://vetrecs.archives.gov)



48

---

---

---

---

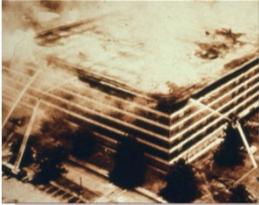
---

---

---

---

**National Personnel Records Center Fire  
12 July 1973**



- Destroyed 1/3 of its 52 million military personnel files
- There were no duplicate copies of destroyed records and they had not been microfilmed
- Difficult to determine what records were lost
  - No index of records made prior to the fire & many records were on loan to the VA

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

49

**National Personnel Records Center Fire  
12 July 1973**

- Losses to Federal military records collection included:
  - Army: 80% record loss for personnel discharged 1 November 1912 to 1 January 1960
  - Air Force: 75% record loss for personnel discharged 25 September 1947 to 1 January 1964
    - names alphabetically after Hubbard, James E.
  - U.S. Army Reserve personnel: some late 1950s to 1964




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

50

**Useful Resources:  
*Finding your Ancestors at Home***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

51

### Massachusetts Newspapers

- Newspapers offer a wealth of information about your Massachusetts ancestors & their community
- About 4,500 newspaper titles have been published in Massachusetts over the last 300 years
- Advancements in printing & communication technologies in late 19<sup>th</sup> century led to a boom of local newspapers being published daily in Massachusetts



52

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Massachusetts Newspapers

- 20th century Massachusetts newspapers can include genealogical details such as:
  - Birth, Death, & Marriage Announcements
  - School announcements
  - Probate & Court proceedings
  - Town Meeting Minutes
  - Property Sales
  - Military enlistments & news
  - Everyday comings & goings



53

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Where to Find 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Mass. Newspapers

- Many historic Massachusetts newspapers digitized & available online
- No central online repository for searching Massachusetts newspapers
- Check with your local library for microfilms of smaller local newspapers
- Popular large national databases:
  - Newspapers.com
  - Genealogybank.com
  - Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
- Useful summary of Massachusetts newspapers accessible online available at: [theancestorhunt.com/blog/massachusetts-online-historical-newspapers-summary](http://theancestorhunt.com/blog/massachusetts-online-historical-newspapers-summary)



54

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---











67

---

---

---

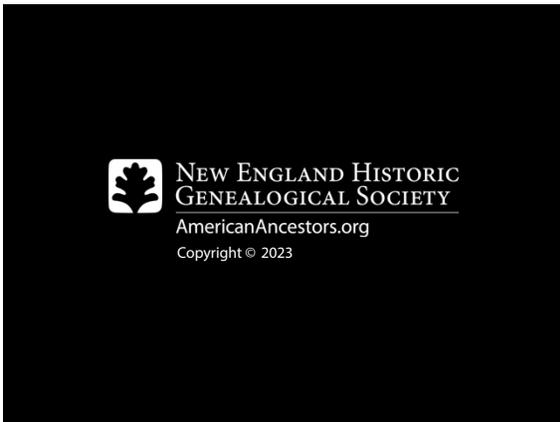
---

---

---

---

---



68

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---