INVENTORY OF THE

DARTMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS, TOWN RECORDS

IN THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WHALING MUSEUM LIBRARY

Content: Chiefly administrative, legal, and financial records of Dartmouth, Mass., town officials, 1674-1912.

Volume: 2 linear feet.

Provenance: Chiefly a gift of the Ohio Historical Society, 3 March 1981.

Restrictions: None.

Processed By: Barbara E. Austen.

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INTRODUCTION

The bulk of the records in this collection were given to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society on 3 March 1981 by the Ohio Historical Society, which removed these materials from its collection of Tucker Family Papers. Other records were given by William C. Taber in 1903 and by the Thomas Cook House and Museum, 13 July 1981.

HISTORICAL NOTE

In 1652, the territory of Dartmouth, Massachusetts, was purchased by Governor William Bradford and associates from the Indians Massasoit and his son, Wamsutta, and subsequently divided among thirty-six individuals. The territory, a quadrangular area measuring about fourteen miles on each side and intersected by three rivers, included the present towns of Dartmouth, Westport, New Bedford, Fairhaven, and Acushnet, Mass., as well as portions of Tiverton and Little Compton, R.I. Settlers to the area came from Plymouth, Duxbury, and Boston, Mass., and from neighboring towns in Rhode Island. In 1664, the territory was incorporated as a town which, in 1674, held its first documented town meeting. The natural divisions of the rivers led to the separation of the town of Dartmouth into three towns in 1787, namely Westport, Dartmouth, and New Bedford, which still included the towns of Fairhaven and Acushnet. The present town of Dartmouth covers an area of sixty-five square miles and has a population of 23,966.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Most of the records in this collection reflect the administrative, legal, and financial activities of various Dartmouth, Mass., town officials from 1674-1868. Among these materials, which are arranged in Sub-group 1 of the collection, are records of the selectmen, assessors, and tax collectors.

Town government in Dartmouth was similar to that in most New England towns established during the seventeenth century. Three selectmen, elected for a term of one to three years, were responsible for overseeing the general administration of the town including such matters as supplying and maintaining a militia, licensing innholders and retailers, constructing highways, and promoting public health. The multiple duties of the Dartmouth selectmen from 1674-1851 are reflected by minutes of town meetings; correspondence; petitions; recommendations to the Massachusetts General Court for liquor retailing licenses; bonds of support for illegitimate children; agreements; highway and school records; apprenticeship indentures; orders; committee reports; militia records; and volumes of memoranda.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

Taxes for state, county, and town governments were calculated by assessors, who made valuations on polls and real and personal property. Records of the Dartmouth assessors consist of a census of the town inhabitants in 1837 and 1840; tax tables, 1795-1805; volumes of valuations, 1809, ca. 1820-ca. 1840; and notices, certificates, correspondence, and similar material, 1755-1822.

Tax collectors or constables were responsible for collecting taxes from town residents named on lists compiled by the assessors. These lists, dating from 1744-1868, constitute the bulk of the tax collectors' records in this collection, with the most complete and largest number of lists covering the years 1766-1771 and 1828-1841. These volumes are supplemented by orders and bills and receipts of collectors and constables, 1781, 1823, 1847.

In addition to serving as tax collector when necessary, the constable was also responsible for maintaining peace and order, serving court writs and warrants, and warning inhabitants of town meetings. Dartmouth constables' records, 1738-1813, principally consist of orders from selectmen concerning warnings of town meetings and from assessors concerning collection of taxes.

Other town officials represented by records in this collection are town clerks, overseers of the poor, surveyors of highways and land, registrars of voters, and town treasurers. Town clerks recorded births, deaths, and marriages, and kept a record of the proceedings of the selectmen and town meetings. Marriage intentions, 1809-1825, comprise the records of the Dartmouth town clerk.

Overseers of the poor were elected to care for indigent persons, whether legal residents of the town or transients, by means of direct financial aid, "binding out" as apprentices, or employment at the local work house. In Dartmouth, the selectmen assumed these duties. Records of these officials in this collection, dating from ca. 1780-1841, consist of incoming and outgoing correspondence, notices, resolutions, agreements, promissory notes, and bills and receipts.

Town surveyors were responsible for overseeing road repairs financed by a specific tax levied by the assessors and for recording land divisions, lot size, and configuration by means of plats and verbal descriptions. Records of the Dartmouth highway surveyors in this collection include surveys of proposed routes and assessments of fees for road repairs, 1717-1845. Land surveyors' records, dating from 1710-ca. 1850, principally consist of undated plats which appear to have been prepared between 1790-1827.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

Voting lists, notices, orders, and certificates comprise the registrars of voters' records, 1793-ca. 1825. The treasurer, who was responsible for the receipt and payment of town money, is represented by records which include lists of notes due, auditing committee notices, bills and receipts, and related material, 1780-ca. 1840. The town records conclude with a series containing financial memoranda, ca. 1790-1815, 1851, believed to have belonged to town officials.

Also included in this collection are records of various Bristol County, Mass., court officials, specifically, registrars of deeds, judges of probate, and justices of the Court of Common Pleas. These materials are arranged in Sub-group 2 of the collection. Deeds, 1755-1805, 1847-1851, and a petition to the Massachusetts legislature concerning the care of Dartmouth land records, 1847, constitute the records of the registrar of deeds. Estate records of the judges of probate include wills and inventories, guardianship records, a power of attorney certificate, and related records, 1705-1829, 1869, 1912. Records of the justices of the Court of Common Pleas, dating from 1777-1819, consist of cases, depositions and decisions, an appointment, bills, and lists of petit and grand jurors.

In addition, this collection contains materials relating to Ephraim Tripp (1753-1825), who served in several town offices including selectman in 1795, town clerk in 1809, and assessor. His papers in Sub-group 3, however, primarily reflect his personal affairs as a merchant and estate administrator. Of primary importance among these documents are fragments of diaries chronicling his service in the General Court of Massachusetts in 1810-1812. This material is supplemented by incoming and outgoing personal correspondence, 1765-1818; agreements, deeds, leases, and bonds, 1777, 1800-1830; estate records, 1768-1825, including records concerning the estates of Silas Gifford and Tripp's father, William Tripp; guardianship records, ca. 1780-1799; and financial records, 1737-1856, for Tripp and his son, James Tripp (b. 1794), including accounts, a cash book, bills and receipts, and memoranda.

Records in this collection seem to constitute some of the oldest extant manuscripts relating to the town affairs of Dartmouth, Mass. Researchers should note, however, that a substantial quantity of contemporaneous as well as more recent material may be found in the Dartmouth Town Offices, located in South Dartmouth, Mass. The town clerk's office has records of local births, deaths, and marriages which occurred from 1667 to the present; town meeting records, 1770 to date; records of street layouts from 1852 to date; and on going registrars of voters' records beginning in 1884.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

The assessors' office has records dating 1861 to the present. The tax collectors' records begin in 1915, when the office of the collector became a separate unit apart from the treasurer's office. School committee records, found at the office of the superintendent of schools in South Dartmouth, Mass., include minutes, lists of teachers' salaries, and records of the length of school years, dating from 1839 to the present. Microfilm copies of Dartmouth marriage and death records, 1667-1787; minutes of town meetings and an index, 1674-1787; as well as original manuscripts relating to selectmen, overseers of the poor, surveyors, and Ephraim Tripp, dating 1793-1823, are available at the New Bedford Free Public Library. A more complete list of these records can be found in the Collection File for Mss 53. Correspondence, a tax list, surveys, minutes, memoranda, and similar records for Dartmouth, Mass., ca. 1744-1815, are also contained in the following manuscript collections of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society: Mss 27: Smith Family Papers (Sub-group 1); Mss 36: Taber Family Papers (Sub-group 3); and Mss 51: Cummings Family Papers (Sub-group 2).

Published works which provide additional information about the organization of New England town government include CITIES IN THE WILDERNESS, by Carl Bridenbaugh (1966), and TOWN OFFICER, by I. Goodwin (1834). Sources for additional information on the history of Dartmouth, Mass., include THE HISTORY OF NEW BEDFORD AND ITS' VICINITY, 1602-1892, by Leonard Bolles Ellis (1892), and OUR COUNTY AND ITS' PEOPLE: A DESCRIPTIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD OF BRISTOL COUNTY MASSACHUSETTS (1899).

Sub-group 1. Dartmouth, Massachusetts, Town Records, 1674-1868. Selectmens' records; overseers of the poor's records; constables' records; town clerks' records; registrars of voters' records; treasurers' records; assessors' records; tax collectors' records; surveyors' records; financial memoranda. 15½ inches.

Sub-group 2. Bristol County Court Records, 1705-1869, 1912. Registrars of deeds' records; judges of probate's records; and justices of the Court of Common Pleas' records. 2 inches.

Sub-group 3. Ephraim Tripp Papers, 1765-1856. Incoming and outgoing personal correspondence; diaries; deeds and leases; bonds; estate records; guardianship records; and financial records. 2½ inches.

DESCRIPTION

Sub-group 1. Dartmouth, Massachusetts, Town Records, 1674-1868

Series A. Selectmen's Records, 1674-1851

Sub-series 1. Minutes, 1674-1682, 1725, ca. 1805-1813, 1851
Folder 1. 1674-1682
" 2. 1725, 1809-1813, 1851
" 3. Agendas, ca. 1805

Sub-series 2. Correspondence, 1795-1820
Folder 1. 1795, 1805-1820

Sub-series 3. Petitions, ca. 1770-1805
Folder 1. ca. 1770-1805

Sub-series 4. Recommendations for licensing, 1808-1823
Folder 1. 1808-1823

Sub-series 5. Bonds, 1785-1809
Folder 1. 1785-1809

Sub-series 6. Agreements, 1784, 1805, ca. 1825, 1850
Folder 1. 1784, 1805, ca. 1825, 1850

Sub-series 7. Highway records, 1717-1843
Folder 1. Petitions, 1798, 1804, 1822
" 2-3. Notices, 1717-1808
" 4. Articles of agreement, 1843

Sub-series 8. School records, ca. 1798-1844
Folder 1. Budgets, 1799-1806
" 2. Tax assessment for school, 1844
" 3. Lists of teachers, ca. 1798, ca. 1800; list of directors, 1806
" 4. Description of district divisions, ca. 1806, 1866; notices, 1800, ca. 1806; bill, 1835

Sub-series 9. Apprenticeship indentures, 1793-1804
Folder 1. 1793-1804

Sub-series 10. Orders, ca. 1790-1796
Folder 1. ca. 1790-1796

Sub-series 11. Committee reports, 1770, 1793-1814, 1843
Folder 1. 1770, 1793-1814, 1843

Sub-series 12. Militia records, ca. 1790-1823
Folder 1. ca. 1790-1823

Sub-series 13. Memoranda, 1798, 1804
Volume 1. 1798
" 2. 1804

Sub-group 1 (cont.)

Series B. Overseers of the Poor's Records, ca. 1780-1841

Sub-series 1. Correspondence, ca. 1780-1841
Folder 1-2. Incoming, 1791-1841
" 3-4. Outgoing, ca. 1780-1841

Sub-series 2. Notices, 1796-1805
Folder 1. 1796-1805

Sub-series 3. Resolutions and agreements, 1794-1806
Folder 1. Resolutions, 1794, 1806; agreements, 1794, 1797

Sub-series 4. Bills, receipts, and promissory notes, 1800-1825
Folder 1. 1800-1825

Series C. Constables' Records, 1738-1813

Folder 1-2. Orders from selectmen, 1738-1813
" 3. Orders from assessors, 1744-1799

Series D. Town Clerks' Records, 1809-1825

Folder 1. Marriage intentions, 1809-1825

Series E. Registrars of Voters' Records, 1793-ca. 1825

Folder 1. Notices, orders, and certificates, 1793-1820
" 2. Voting lists, 1809-ca. 1825

Series F. Treasurers' Records, 1778-ca. 1840

Folder 1-2. Lists of notes due, 1802-ca. 1840
" 3. Bills, 1780-1807, ca. 1820
" 4. Receipts, 1778, 1809, ca. 1820-1824
" 5. Promissory notes, 1800-1827
" 6. Auditing committee notices, 1803
Volume 1-2. Memoranda, 1797-1800, 1808-1823

Series G. Assessors' Records, 1755-1840

Sub-series 1. Census of inhabitants, 1837, 1840
Folder 1. 1837, 1840

Sub-series 2. Tax tables, 1795-1805
Folder 1. 1795-1805

Sub-series 3. Valuations, 1809, ca. 1820- ca. 1840
Folder 1. 1809, ca. 1820
Volume 1. ca. 1825
" 2. ca. 1828
" 3. ca. 1829
" 4. ca. 1839
" 5. ca. 1840

Sub-group 1, Series G (cont.)

Sub-series 4. Notices, 1797-1812
Folder 1. 1797-1812

Sub-series 5. Certificates, 1786, 1805, 1810
Folder 1. 1786, 1805, 1810

Sub-series 6. Orders and appointments, 1755, 1798, 1822
Folder 1. Orders, 1755, 1798, 1822; appointment, 1798

Sub-series 7. Correspondence, 1780
Folder 2. 1780

Sub-series 8. Bills, 1799
Folder 1. 1799

Series H. Tax Collectors' Records, 1744-1868

Sub-series 1. Tax lists, 1744-1868

Folder	1.	1744	Acushnet
"	2.	1747	"
"	3.	1749	"
Volume	1.	1750	"
"	2.	1757	
"	3.	1762	
"	4.	1763	Acushnet.
"	5.	1766	
"	6.	1768	
"	7-9.	1769	
"	10.	1770	
"	11-12.	1771	
Folder	4.	1795, 1797, 1806, 1813	
Volume	13.	1824	
"	14-15.	1828	
"	16-17.	1829	
"	18-19.	1831	
"	20-21.	1832	
"	22-23.	1833	
"	24-25.	1834	
"	26-27.	1835	
"	28-29.	1836	
"	30.	1837	
"	31-32.	1838	
"	33-34.	1839	
"	35-36.	1841	
"	37.	1855	
Folder	5.	1868	

Sub-series 2. Orders, 1781, 1847
Folder 1. 1781, 1847

Sub-series 3. Bills and receipts, 1781, 1823
Folder 1. 1781, 1823

Sub-group 1 (cont.)

Series I. Surveyors' Records, 1710-ca. 1850

Sub-series 1. Surveyor of highways' records, 1717-1845

Folder 1. Surveys, 1717, 1731; order, 1789
" 2. Assessments, 1790-1845

Sub-series 2. Land surveyors' records, 1710-ca. 1850

Folder 1. 1710-1714
" 2. 1715-1719
" 3. 1725, 1742, 1753-1771
" 4. 1760-1794
" 5. 1795
" 6-10. ca. 1795
" 11. 1796-ca. 1800
" 12. 1805-ca. 1815
" 13. ca. 1820-1823
" 14. 1825-1827
" 15-16. ca. 1827
" 17. 1828-1829
" 18. ca. 1830-1845
" 19. ca. 1850

Series J. Financial Memoranda, ca. 1790-1815, 1851

Folder 1. ca. 1790-1815
" 2. 1851

Sub-group 2. Bristol County Court Records, 1705-1869, 1912

Series A. Registrars of Deeds' Records, 1755-1805, 1847-1857

Folder 1. Deeds, 1755-1794
" 2. Deeds, ca. 1795-1805, 1847-1851
" 3. Petition, 1857

Series B. Judges of Probate's Records, 1705-1869, 1912

Folder 1-2. Wills and inventories, 1705-1829, 1869, 1912
" 3. Guardinaship records, 1822-1823; power of attorney certificate, 1849; "schedule of creditors," ca. 1850; legal opinions, ca. 1860
" 4. Settlement of account, 1780; receipts, 1797, 1819

Sub-group 2 (cont.)

Series C. Justices of the Court of Common Pleas' Records, 1777-1819

Sub-series 1. Cases, 1777-1819
Folder 1. Barber vs. Gifford, 1777; Bedon vs. Brownell, 1798; Buffington complaint, 1808, 1813; Chase vs. Chase, 1794-1795
" 2. Gifford vs. Gifford, 1819; Howland vs. Shearman, 1802
" 3. Mott vs. Anthony, 1802
" 4-5. Reynolds vs. Baker, 1809
" 6. Ross vs. Smith, 1795; Russell vs. Russell, 1805; Shearman vs. Anthony, 1807-1809; Town of Dartmouth vs. Thomas White, et. al., 1817
" 7-8. Tripp vs. Howland, 1801
" 9. Wait vs. Stratton, 1786; Wilcox vs. Howland, 1790

Sub-series 2. Depositions and decisions, ca. 1800, 1808
Folder 1. Deposition, 1808; jury decision, ca. 1800

Sub-series 3. Appointment, 1814
Folder 1. Oliver Alden as Notary Public, 1814

Sub-series 4. Bills, 1800-1811
Folder 1. 1800-1811

Sub-series 5. Lists, ca. 1800
Folder 1. Petit jurors, ca. 1800; grand jurors, ca. 1800

Sub-group 3. Ephraim Tripp Papers, 1765-1856

Series A. Correspondence, 1765-1828

Folder 1-2. Incoming, 1765-1828
" 3. Outgoing, 1792

Series B. Diaries, 1810-1812

Folder 1. 1810-1812

Series C. Agreements, 1800-1830

Folder 1. 1800-1830

Series D. Deeds and Leases, ca. 1800-1815

Folder 1. Deeds, ca. 1880, 1885; leases, 1809, 1815

Series E. Bonds, 1777, 1800-1816

Folder 1. 1777, 1800-1816

Sub-group 3 (cont.)

Series F. Estate Records, 1768-1825

Sub-series 1. Elisha Fish, 1814-1815
Folder 1. 1814-1815

Sub-series 2. Silas Gifford, 1768-1802
Folder 1-3. 1768-1802

Sub-series 3. Shearman and Tripp, 1796-1825
Folder 1. Grizzel Shearman, 1796; Ephraim Tripp, 1825; Esther Tripp, 1807

Sub-series 4. William Tripp, 1815-1822
Folder 1-5. 1815-1822

Series G. Guardianship Records, ca. 1780-1799

Folder 1. Paul and Lydia Russell, ca. 1780-1799

Series H. Financial Records, 1737-1856

Sub-series 1. Accounts, 1789-ca. 1802, 1821
Folder 1. 1789-ca. 1802, 1821

Sub-series 2. Cash book, 1806-1820
Volume 1. 1806-1820

Sub-series 3. Bills and receipts, 1737-1856
Folder 1. 1737-1804
" 2. 1808-1825
" 3. 1828, 1856

Sub-series 4. Memoranda, 1781-1827
Folder 1. 1781-1791, 1815-1816, 1822-1827

ADDED ENTRIES

Actions and defenses--Mass.--Bristol County
Actions and defenses--Mass.--Bristol County--Cases
Alcohol--Law and legislation--Mass.--Dartmouth
Alcoholic beverage control SEE Alcohol--Law and legislation; Liquor laws
Appraisal SEE Assessment
Apprentices--Mass.--Dartmouth
Assessment--Mass.--Dartmouth
Budgets--School SEE School budgets
Charities--Mass.--Dartmouth
Cities and towns--Surveying SEE Surveying
Civil procedure--Mass--Bristol County
Civil suits SEE Civil procedure
Commissioners of deeds--Mass.--Dartmouth
Constables--Mass.--Dartmouth
County courts--Mass.--Bristol County
Court of common pleas SEE Small claims court
Court records--Mass.--Bristol County
Courts--Mass.--Bristol County
Courts of probate SEE Probate courts
Dartmouth, Mass.--Census
Dartmouth, Mass.--Officials and employees
Dartmouth, Mass.--Politics and government
Dartmouth, Mass.--Poor
Dartmouth, Mass.--Population
Dartmouth, Mass.--Schools
Dartmouth, Mass.--Voting registers
Dartmouth, Mass., Town Records
Deeds--Mass.--Dartmouth
Defense (Law) SEE Actions and defenses
Diaries--Dartmouth, Mass.--1810-1812
Education--Mass.--Dartmouth--Finance
Elections--Mass.--Dartmouth
Finance, Public--Mass.--Dartmouth
Franchise SEE Elections
Gifford, Silas, 1715-ca. 1800
Judiciary SEE Courts
Land surveying SEE Surveying
Land tax SEE Real property tax
Land use--Taxation SEE Real property tax
Law--Mass.--Bristol County--Cases
Law, Liquor SEE Liquor laws
Leases--Mass.--Dartmouth
License system--Mass.--Dartmouth
Liquor laws--Mass.--Dartmouth
Liquor license system SEE License system
Litigation SEE Actions and defenses
Local administration SEE Local government
Local elections--Mass.--Dartmouth
Local government--Mass.--Dartmouth
Local taxation--Mass.--Dartmouth
Massachusetts--Militia
Massachusetts. County Court. (Bristol County)
Municipal officials and employees--Mass.--Dartmouth

ADDED ENTRIES (cont.)

Outdoor relief SEE Public welfare
Personal actions SEE Actions and defenses
Poll-tax--Mass.--Acushnet
Poll-tax--Mass.--Dartmouth
Polls SEE Elections
Poor--Mass.--Dartmouth
Poor relief SEE Public welfare
Probate courts--Mass.--Bristol County
Probate records--Mass.--Bristol County
Public assistance SEE Public welfare
Public charities SEE Public welfare
Public finance SEE Finance, Public
Public records--Mass.--Dartmouth
Public relief SEE Public welfare
Public schools--Finance SEE Education--Finance
Public welfare--Mass.--Dartmouth
Real estate tax SEE Real property tax
Real property--Taxation SEE Real property tax
Real property tax--Mass.--Dartmouth
Registers of births, etc.--Mass.--Dartmouth
Registrars of deeds SEE Commissioners of deeds
Registration of voters SEE Voters, Registration of
Relief (Aid) SEE Public welfare
Road surveying SEE Roads--Surveying
Roads--Mass.--Dartmouth
Roads--Mass.--Dartmouth--Maintenance and repair
Roads--Mass.--Dartmouth--Surveying
School budgets--Mass.--Dartmouth
School districts--Mass.--Dartmouth
School employees--Mass.--Dartmouth
School finance SEE Education--Finance
School management and organization--Mass.--Dartmouth
School personnel SEE School employees
School taxes SEE Education--Finance
Schools--Finance SEE Education--Finance
Schools--Mass.--Dartmouth--Records and correspondence
Selectmen--Mass.--Dartmouth
Small causes courts SEE Small claims court
Small claims court--Mass.--Bristol County
Small-debts courts SEE Small claims court
Social welfare SEE Public welfare
Surveying--Mass.--Dartmouth
Surveyors--Mass.--Dartmouth
Tax assessment SEE Assessment
Tax collection--Mass.--Dartmouth
Tax delinquency SEE Tax collection
Taxation--Mass.--Acushnet--Lists
Taxation--Mass.--Dartmouth
Taxation--Mass.--Dartmouth--Lists
Taxation--Mass.--Dartmouth--Rates and tables
Taxation, State

ADDED ENTRIES (cont.)

Taxation of personal property--Mass.--Acushnet
Taxation of personal property--Mass.--Dartmouth
Taxation of real property SEE Real property tax
Taxes, Collection of SEE Tax collection
Taxes, School SEE Education--Finance
Teachers--Mass.--Dartmouth
Town clerks--Mass.--Dartmouth
Town-meeting SEE Local government
Town treasurers--Mass.--Dartmouth
Treasurers, Town SEE Town treasurers
Tripp, Ephraim, 1753-1825
Voters, Registration of--Mass.--Dartmouth
Voting--Mass.--Dartmouth
Welfare SEE Public welfare
Welfare work SEE Public welfare
Wills--Mass.--Dartmouth