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1892.]

CITY DOCUMENT.

[No. 18.]

FIRST REPORT  
OF THE  
RECORD COMMISSIONERS

RELATIVE TO THE

✓ EARLY TOWN RECORDS.

[Presented March 7, 1892.]



The Providence Press:  
SNOW & FARNHAM, CITY PRINTERS,  
37 Custom House Street.  
1892.

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## REPORT.

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TO THE HONORABLE THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY  
OF PROVIDENCE.

GENTLEMEN: In accordance with the joint resolution of the City Council, which was approved March 6, 1891, and which reads as follows, viz.:

*Resolved*, That Horatio Rogers, George M. Carpenter and Edward Field are appointed record commissioners, who shall serve without compensation, for the purpose of collecting and printing the early records of the town of Providence, and said commissioners are authorized to expend the sum of one thousand dollars for collecting and printing said records, said sum to be charged to the appropriation for printing," the undersigned respectfully submit a volume of the early records of the town of Providence, which they have caused to be printed. The report presented to your honorable body by the Joint Committee on Education recommending the passage of the foregoing resolution contains this clause: "On the completion of this volume the commissioners will be able to report much more definitely than can be estimated the probable extent and cost of the work, and the city council can better decide when and how far it is advisable to continue." The commis-

sioners therefore present for your consideration the following report and recommendations.

A brief review of the action taken by this town and city from time to time towards the preservation of its ancient records, will show that much consideration has been given to this subject. The earliest effort in this direction was made Aug. 12, 1678, when Daniel Abbott was elected town clerk, to succeed John Whipple, Jr. At this time Roger Williams and Daniel Abbott were appointed a committee "to take a list of what they received, and to give to ye sayd John Whipple a cleare and full discharge for the same."

This action was taken shortly after the Indian war [1675-76], when the town suffered so severely from its effects, and when the records passed through a severe ordeal. The original document, a copy of which is hereto annexed and marked "Appendix A," is preserved in the files of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and is among the manuscripts of the Foster papers, and from it is derived much information as to the extent and number of the earliest volumes of the town records. From it we also learn how much of the books yet remain intact, and what portions have been lost or effaced during the years that have elapsed since that time. The next account is embraced in a schedule found by the commissioners among a lot of loose papers in the store room at the city hall, and sheds much light on the condition and number of the records nearly ninety years later than the list previously mentioned. It is of peculiar value in many respects, especially in showing the advance and growth



of the town in the number of volumes of land transactions which had taken place during these years between the date of the previous list and the date of this schedule.

A copy of this document is annexed, marked "Appendix B." It is to be regretted that certain of the books and papers contained in these lists or schedules are not to be found in the possession of the city, having doubtless been lost, as too little care was exercised in the preservation of old papers in the early years of the town. The late John Howland, a man of intense fondness for antiquarian research in Rhode Island history, often lamented the recklessness with which the papers of the early settlers of Rhode Island had been destroyed. "From a quantity thrown into the street, which he gathered up and carried to his place of business, he recovered several original letters of Roger Williams," a fact painfully illustrating how little the value of these ancient papers and documents was regarded in years gone by.

June 6, 1796, a committee was appointed for the purpose of examining the town records and ascertaining "what record books it may be necessary to cause to be transcribed, indexed or otherwise amended, and that said committee make report of their proceedings herein at the next town meeting." "Appendix C." That committee reported June 23, 1796, recommending that the work be done, and a resolution was adopted in town meeting authorizing it. "Appendix D." The outcome of this action was the Book of Transcripts, so called, which has been used and referred to from that time to this, in place of the earliest books of

record, except, perhaps, by a comparative few who wished to examine the original records themselves. This volume is valuable in some respects, although its accuracy is questionable. Of it Judge Staples in his "Annals" says, "It would have been more valuable had the committee who superintended the work, and the clerk who performed it, been a little more careful and a little less anxious to compress it in one volume." The original books from which this transcript was made remained in their worn and mutilated condition for many years without any attempt being made to have them preserved. The inaccuracies of the transcript and the continued deterioration of the old volumes seems to have become a matter of serious consideration, and September 11, 1865, a committee was appointed by the common council "to examine the condition of the early records of the town of Providence to the year 1800; and the committee was authorized to employ a suitable person to transcribe and print the same, and to take such measures as might by them be deemed expedient for a proper preservation of the records," the sum of five hundred dollars being appropriated for this purpose, "Appendix E." November 13th, of that same year, a committee, slightly different in its composition from the previous one, was appointed "to examine the early records of the town of Providence prior to the year 1800, and report what in their opinion is the best manner of preserving the same, and in case they may deem it expedient to have them printed to report the probable expense thereof." "Appendix F."

In May, 1881, the Library Committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, in a communication to

Mayor William S. Hayward, called attention to the damaged condition of the early records, and urged upon the city council the importance of their preservation. In accordance with this recommendation a resolution was approved June 7, 1881, authorizing the recorder of deeds "to cause the first volume of the records of the town of Providence to be suitably rebound and the leaves to be inlaid in new paper, the expense to be paid from money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated." "Appendix G." In July, 1884, Mayor Thomas A. Doyle in a message to the city council, stated that "By a resolution of the city council, approved June 7, 1881, the recorder of deeds was authorized "to cause the first volume of the records of the town of Providence to be suitably rebound and the leaves to be inlaid in new paper, the expense to be paid from money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated. The work proposed in this resolution has never been accomplished, and very little progress has been made in regard to it." The city council again passed a resolution similar to those that had previously been adopted, instructing the "joint committee on printing to inquire into the matter of printing the first four books of the records of the town of Providence, with the probable cost thereof and all matters connected therewith, and to report thereon to either branch of the city council." "Appendix H." It will thus be seen that the matter of preserving the public records has had consideration by the authorities, and their value and importance have been many times acknowledged by resolutions, recommendations and special messages; but beyond the fact that a few

of the earliest books of record have been repaired and re-bound, no step whatever has been taken towards the only safe means of preserving permanently these priceless writings until the action of the city council in March last, in pursuance of several petitions presented by persons and societies interested in this matter.

The subject of preserving ancient records in print is one which has received most serious consideration by many of the states, cities, towns and parishes included in the thirteen original colonies. The city of Boston, in the year 1875, appointed a commission for this purpose, and upwards of twenty volumes of reports have been issued from their hands, bringing the printed records of that city up to the year 1800. The city of Worcester has also given pecuniary encouragement to the publication of their town records, and among the smaller towns and cities in New England having a similar object in view, are included Braintree, Cambridge, Danvers, Fall River, Salem, Amherst, Brookline, Dedham, and others that either have the subject under consideration, or have already placed their copies in the printers' hands.

The reason for this care in the preservation of records will be apparent, even upon a brief consideration. In the first place these records are highly important as furnishing evidence by deeds, lay-outs, wills and many other documents of the greatest consequence, in tracing and proving the ownership and descent of property, furnishing material for the history of the towns themselves, and preserving the records of the births, deaths and marriages.

The loss of this material, so extremely valuable if not priceless, would be deplorable, and yet while in many instances these records have withstood the ravages of time for more than two hundred and fifty years, they are to-day in greater danger of destruction than they were during that period of their existence when they were kept in the home or shop of their custodian without any unusual care on his part to guard their contents. In the report of the record commissioner of Massachusetts in 1885, it is stated that some of the public records "have resisted decay for more than two hundred and fifty years, but it is only too evident their powers of resistance are now in many cases nearly at an end, and that the time is not far distant when these records will have entirely disappeared. Perhaps if we had continued in the simple ways of our forefathers, the evil day might have been still further postponed."

With the modern equipments of public offices has come a new danger, although remote yet still liable to occur at any moment. Steam heat, gas, and electricity are a constant source of danger to public records. Steam heat seriously affects books and papers, and the danger of fire from gas and electricity is not an uncommon one; indeed, the probate office for the county of Suffolk, in the city of Boston, has been on fire within the past year from electric wires, but happily in the day time, when it was seasonably discovered. Public records of any character are constantly in danger of destruction, and a long list of such casualties could be enumerated. All the records in the registry of deeds for the county of Barnstable, Mass., were

destroyed by fire October 22, 1827, and all the probate records for the county of Cumberland, which although now in Maine was formerly a part of Massachusetts, were destroyed in the great Portland fire, July 4, 1866.

In our own state the records of all kinds of the town of North Kingstown were seriously injured, if indeed, not practically destroyed, in the same way in 1870, for their condition now is such that they are of little use. The old records of Newport were so badly damaged during the Revolution that they are well nigh valueless. During the Indian war [1675-6], the records of the town of Providence were in imminent danger of destruction. An attack was made on the town March 30, 1676, and thirty houses were destroyed, one of which says Staples "was the house of John Smith, the miller. Mr. Smith was at that time town clerk, and the records of the town were then in his possession. They were thrown from his burning house into the mill-pond to preserve them from the flames, and to the present day they bear plenary evidence of the two-fold dangers they escaped and the two-fold injury they suffered. After they were rescued from the mill-pond they were carried to Newport, and were not returned again to Providence until after the war was at an end."

The Proprietors' Records of Providence were consumed by fire in 1888, when the Aldrich House and other adjacent buildings in the city of Providence were burned.

The state of Maine has committed to print their early probate records, including all the wills from 1640 to 1760, and the deeds of York county, from 1642 to

1699. The early deeds of Suffolk County, Mass., have been similarly treated. In this connection is presented the following abstract from the report on the dangers to which public records are exposed and the proper method of preserving them, made by the committee of the council of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, at the meeting of the society held in Boston Jan. 2, 1889: "Some of our ancient towns," says the report, "have lost all their records by fire, and the same is true of many parishes. Indeed, the loss from this cause alone of town, county or church record is in the aggregate little short of appalling. Under these circumstances it is almost criminal negligence to allow any book of record to exist only in a single copy. Its life then hangs by a single thread. Now what is the remedy for this state of affairs? It is not far to seek, but is made manifest to every thinking man. Not even the crumbling of the paper, the corrosion or fading of the ink, not even a sweeping conflagration can utterly destroy records whose custodians have taken proper means to preserve them. How can this be done? In one way only. Simply by the multiplication of copies. The invention of the art of printing has made great changes in the modern world. In no direction has the advance been greater than in this. Copies, instead of being made toilsomely and laboriously by hand, can now be produced almost with the quickness of thought; and the great reduction in the cost of printing of late years has placed it in the power of every town and parish, however poor and feeble, to put into imperishable form its records, at least the earliest of them. And the work cannot

be begun too soon. Nor is this all. The greater use made of stereotyping now-a-days, for even newspapers are printed from stereotype plates, has given us an additional safeguard. The printed volumes, being widely distributed, could not all be destroyed by fire, and being subject to different atmospheric conditions, could not all crumble to pieces at once. Some would certainly survive. But even if they should not, the stereotype plates would remain. From them other copies could be printed at the mere cost of press-work and paper. This would forever set at rest all fear of a total loss of records, a fate which hangs over most town and county records to-day.

“Where an ancient town has remained intact from its first settlement until now, the necessity of preserving in print records of such great historical value is readily apparent. Yet where other towns have been, in more modern times, set off from an ancient town, the need becomes still more evident. The safety of the records and the convenience of the public alike require it. Some towns have been repeatedly sub-divided. In one instance some seventeen or eighteen towns have been, in whole or in part, formed from the territory granted by the general court to the original town. And other instances equally striking can doubtless be cited. Although the newer municipalities have a history in common with the older towns of which they once formed a part, their records are defective, inasmuch as they extend back only to the time of separation, the books prior to that date remaining in the hands of the clerk of the parent town. This works serious inconvenience. Matters are continually com-



ing up which necessitates reference to the earlier records, and they are not at hand. Each new town should have a complete set of the records, prior to separation of the original town of which it then formed a part. They belong as much to it as to the other. A new town should not be forced to see such invaluable documents placed beyond its control and in the keeping of officials not responsible to it, subjected to all the vicissitudes and dangers which records are continually running. Now the art of printing enables us to obviate all these difficulties. It solves the problem completely. When once the records are in type extra copies can be had merely for the cost of press-work and paper, and each is an exact duplicate of the other. No copyist's errors need be feared where the work is done with such mechanical accuracy. A printed copy is vastly superior to any manuscript copy that can possibly be made.

“ But it must not for a moment be supposed that the people who live in any given town are the only persons interested in its records or concerned for the preservation of them. All of our towns, both ancient and modern, have contributed no small portion of their population to build up and develop the other parts of our rapidly growing country. There is hardly a remote corner of any one of the states and territories of the West where representatives of our New England families are not to be found. They naturally feel a peculiar pride in the place of their birth, and the children of these exiles should be encouraged to keep constantly in mind the home of their fathers. The publication of these records, therefore, interest a

much larger number of people than are to be found within the limits of any single town, and these printed volumes reach more readers than we can easily imagine."

In the preparation of the volume which is herewith submitted and accompanies this report, the commissioners have devoted much personal attention. The commissioners met for organization April 25, 1891, and Horatio Rogers was made chairman, and Edward Field secretary. The work authorized under the resolution was at once commenced, and it was determined that the book known as the "First Book" should be printed. This book was evidently the first one used for records by the early settlers, for in it were recorded the earliest orders and votes of the town meetings, though it seems to have been discarded for this purpose after a time, and then to have been solely used for the enrollment of deeds, lay-outs of lands and other instruments.

The transcribing of this book and the other clerical work of the commission were intrusted to Miss Huldah D. Sheldon, her services in recording offices for a number of years past peculiarly fitting her for the work in hand.

The commissioners desire to testify to the interest she has manifested, the care with which she has investigated the many perplexing questions involved in copying, and to the general excellence of the work which she has performed. The course pursued in this respect has been to cause to be made a manuscript copy of the original, preserving the orthography, punctuation, and in fact every feature so far as

practicable that appears in connection with the recorded matter in the book. Upon the completion of this work the commissioners together examined the written copy and compared it with the book called the Book of Transcripts, made by order of the town council in the year 1800, as well as with the original record. The proof sheets as received from the printer's hands were carefully corrected from the original record, or, where such record was defective, from the Book of Transcripts, so called. The pagination of the original has been preserved by placing each of its page numbers in a bold faced type, as the leaves are now arranged in the printed book, in brackets, in that part of the printed page where each page of the original begins; the pagination of the printed book, however, is the one referred to in the index. The types from which the book has been printed have all been stereotyped for the many advantages which are derived from this course. In the first place fewer copies need be printed, as subsequent editions can be struck off at any time when needed, which effects a saving in many particulars. The stereotype plates can be easily corrected if errors are found, which will obviate a list of "errata," so often met with in publications of a similar nature.

Criticism may be directed towards the appearance of the printed pages of the volume submitted, but appearance was not the end which the commissioners sought to attain. It is not within the power of any one to decide which of the several matters appearing in old records is of the most value; what may be valuable for a certain purpose to one may be of little or no value to another, and *vice versa*; and therefore it is

important that each item, mark or figure contained in the original should be reproduced or represented. Nothing has been omitted or garbled, and the recorded volume has been as faithfully and accurately reproduced in type as the most painstaking care the commissioners were possessed of would enable them to do it. The cost of the books and the amount of time and labor required for their preparation make them too valuable for an indiscriminate distribution. The commissioners would recommend that they be gratuitously distributed by a method similar to that pursued by the city of Boston. A blank form of request such as is there used, a copy of which is herewith submitted, "Appendix I," might be used, and such persons as apply to a member of the city council or to the commissioners should be given a copy of the book, and their names kept on record for subsequent volumes, should the city council see fit to have them issued.

Public libraries and similar institutions in this and neighboring states should, of course, be furnished with copies when desired. The indiscriminate free distribution of public documents, too often pursued, wastes many copies, for experience has shown that in a short time the book thus distributed is considered of little value, and sooner or later is thrown aside and finds its way into the junk shop and the pulp mill. The course adopted by the city of Boston has been found to work well, and the commissioners are informed that their volumes have seldom been found out of the hands of those who received them or of those who were entitled to them.

The commissioners have examined the ancient books, papers and documents relating to the town of Providence in the possession of the city, and submit a statement of their number, kind and condition, which is as follows :

1. The First Book town of Providence.
2. The Old Burnt Book or Book with the Brass Clasps.
3. An ancient book of miscellaneous records in two volumes as now arranged.

These volumes are included in the Book of Transcripts, heretofore referred to, inaccurately transcribed and unreliable, and contain all of the earliest measures adopted by the town, besides a vast amount of information of the greatest value. By authority of the city council they have been bound and inlaid in heavy paper, and are now in the custody of the recorder of deeds.

Vol. 1. Town Council Records, 1692-1714, containing seventy-two pages.

Vol. 2. Town Council Records, 1715-1732, containing seventy-eight pages.

Vol. 1. Town Meeting Records, 1692-1715, containing one hundred and two pages.

Vol. 2. Town Meeting Records, 1716-1721, containing sixty-two pages.

These volumes are rapidly becoming worn and mutilated, the edges of the leaves being broken and torn by handling for many years, and each day only adds to their liability to destruction. Save the fact that they were cheaply bound many years ago, nothing has ever been done to preserve them.

Will Book 1 [so called,] 1670-1716, containing two hundred and eighty pages.

This book is in the custody of the clerk of the Municipal Court, and is the first book now known to be in existence which was particularly used for recording documents relating to the estates of the first inhabitants of the town. There was a book of an earlier date than this, and it is mentioned in the schedule of 1678 "Appendix A," but as no reference is made to it in the schedule of 1755 "Appendix B," the book was evidently lost or destroyed between those dates. This book has been repaired from time to time, and is in as good condition as these many years of usage would leave it.

In addition to the books of record, there are stored in cupboards in a room in the city hall a large number of papers and documents, tied up in bundles and partly classified, dating back as far as 1678. These papers contain information of great value, which would be gladly welcomed by our citizens could they be privileged to examine their contents. Included in these papers are depositions, indentures, documents relating to the Revolutionary war, tax-lists, a mass of records relating to the colonial monetary system, and many other varieties of records too numerous to particularize.

The effort to preserve ancient records already existing in their proper depositories should not be the sole aim of a commission of this kind. There are to-day stored and packed away in attics, old chests, trunks and boxes, papers and documents as valuable as the old records themselves, which shed light on the history and development of this town and city.

These are not particularly valued by those in whose hands they are, but if it were known that there was competent authority to exercise a watchful care over such matters, the present owners and custodians would often gladly transfer them to such an authority that they might forever be secure against destruction. Indeed, the influence of this commission has already been felt in this respect, and there have been placed in their hands a number of original documents and papers bearing date from 1642 to 1774, consisting of wills, deeds, agreements and other writings which have been handed down through six generations to the present donor, Miss Ann Elizabeth Arnold, of Pawtuxet. Such gifts as these add additional links to the chain of evidence which surround our early history, and appreciation should insure their careful preservation and perpetuation.

In consideration of the value of the papers, books and documents herein referred to, and after giving the subject attentive investigation, the commissioners would make the following recommendations: That the work already inaugurated be continued until the early records of Providence are placed beyond the possibility of destruction. A small appropriation from time to time will accomplish this object, and the cost to the city will hardly be apparent. The amount required for the whole work cannot be satisfactorily estimated, but by pursuing the course herein recommended the city council will be informed of the cost and nature of the work from time to time as it progresses, and can continue or discontinue the same in its discretion.

The commissioners herewith present a statement of the expenditures made from the appropriation placed at their disposal by the foregoing resolution of the city council :

Amount paid H. D. Sheldon for transcribing First Book, . . . . .	\$36 00
Amount paid H. D. Sheldon for transcribing Second Book or book with Brass Clasps, . . . . .	78 00
Amount paid H. D. Sheldon for transcribing First Book or Town Meeting Records, . . . . .	90 00
Amount paid H. D. Sheldon for transcribing First Book of Town Council Records, . . . . .	56 00
Amount paid Snow & Farnham for printing 500 copies First book, including electro- type plates, . . . . .	383 64
Amount paid Snow & Farnham for printing application blanks, . . . . .	3 50
Amount paid Akerman Co. for binding 500 copies First Book, . . . . .	76 75
Amount paid J. C. Thompson for cuts for First Book, . . . . .	6 84
Amount paid sundry persons for stationery, index cards, etc., . . . . .	16 18
Amount paid H. D. Sheldon for preparing index for First Book, . . . . .	139 00
Amount paid H. D. Sheldon for listing old papers and type writing, . . . . .	69 00
Amount paid G. H. Richter & Co. for use of type writer, . . . . .	16 00
Total expenditures, . . . . .	<u>\$970 91</u>



## RECAPITULATION.

Amount of appropriation by City Council,	
March 6, 1891, . . . . .	\$1,000 00
Amount of expenditures as above stated,	970 91
	<hr/>
Balance on hand, . . . . .	29 09

The Commissioners would respectfully recommend the passage of the accompanying resolution.

Respectfully submitted,

HORATIO ROGERS,  
G. M. CARPENTER,  
EDWARD FIELD,

*Record Commissioners.*

March 7, 1892.

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No. 138. Resolution Appropriating a Further Sum of \$1,500 for the Collecting and Printing of the Early Records.

[Approved April 2, 1892.]

RESOLVED, That the First Volume of the Early Records of the Town of Providence already printed and such volumes as may be hereafter printed be distributed in accordance with the recommendation of the Record Commissioners; and that the sum of fifteen hundred dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated for the purpose of continuing the collecting and printing of said records, said sum to be charged to the appropriation for printing.

## APPENDIX A.

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Book VII. Collections R. I. Hist. Society. Page 103.

### Early Attempts at Rhode Island History.

#### THE ORIGINAL RECORDS OF THE TOWN OF PROVIDENCE-

Where as the Towne of providence did upon ye : 12th : of August : 1678 : at a Towne meeting upon Ajoinement, order and Appoynt mr. Roger Williams, and Daniell Abbott, Clerke, to receive of John Whipple junr the former Towne Clerke, the Townes Bookes, and recordes belonging to the Towne now in ye handes of the sayd John Whipple, and to take a List of what they Receive, and to give ye sayd John Whipple a cleare and full Disscharge for the same, the which wee have Done, Vizt

- Impri The Towne old Booke : Containeing of : 70 : leaves, and one not wrott upon, . . . . .
- [Item]. The longe Booke with parchment Covers Cheifely Consisting of recordes of Deedes, and of landes, Containeing of : 69 : leaves, and 7 peces of leaves all wrott upon, besides two leaues pinned to an other, . . . . .
- “ The Booke with Brass Clapses, Containeing of : 164 pages wrott upon besides fower leaves wrott upon which are not paged, as also : 18 : leaues wrott upon at that end of ye Book where the Alphabett is, . . . . .
- “ Papers of Generall Assemblys Acts to ye number of : 24 : Each of them haveng the seale of ye Collony affixed, the seales being all of them in Good Condition nott defaced, saueing one which is an Assemblys Acts beareing date may ye : 4 : 166- . . . . .

- “ The new Booke, for ye entry of Towne Acts and orders, with eight pages wrott upon besides part of the ninth wrott upon, . . . .
- “ The new Booke for ye entry of land euidences, with nine pages wrott upon, and part of ye tenth page wrott upon, . . . .
- “ The new Book for ye entry of ye Towne Counsells Acts, there being part of one page of ye sayd Booke wrott upon. . . .
- “ A small paper Book Containeing the Enrolement of wills . . . .
- “ Courts Acts sewed to geather, in ye manner of : 2 : Books, As also seuerall Courts Acts made up in roules to the number of : 18 : with noe scales Afixed, . . . .
- “ Seuerall Coppies of William ffeildes and William Carpenters papers . . . .
- “ A Deed of Gift from Richard Waterman to his Grand Children the Children of Resolved Waterman [Deceased] . . . .
- “ The old Deed called the Town Euidence . . . .
- “ The Deed of Confirmation from Cussuckunsh, and nenekelah with Richard Smith junr Testimony pinned thereto,
- “ The deed of Confirmation Scattupp, and Quequa-gonnett. . . .
- “ The deed of Confirmation from Caujanaquant, being alsoe subscribed Aiaquaomitt. the three Deedes of Confirmations being all indorsed with Testimonys on the back sides . . . .
- “ The Deed in parchment from mr. Roger Williams to the Towne of providence . . . .
- “ The inuentory of the Estate of John Clawson, Ass alsoe an account in a paper by Thomas olney senr of ye Disspossession of John Clawsons : Goodes, . . . .
- “ The Indenture of Daniell Comstock . . . .

“ The Bond of Joshua Winsor and James Ashton, as also the Award of Arbitration upon a defferance betweene ye sayd Winsor, and James Ashton, . . . . .

“ As also seuerall papers wherein was the Comittys Act, to ye number of: 15: Delivered by mr. Williams to John Whipple the former Clerke

“ As also a roule of papers, being most of them bills, some of them being Answered and some of them reffered . . . . .

“ As also seuerall other papers. All the rest of the Towne Recordes not here perticularized with a linning Bagg in which they are In Closed .

. . . . . We whose names are here under subscribed, being impowered by an order of this Towne as before sayd, have this Twenty third day of August: 1678 Receiued of John Whipple Junr the former Towne Clerke, all the sayd Books, papers, parchments, and writeings herein before mentioned and perticularized, which belong to ye Towne, And Doe thereof in the Townes behalfe fully, clearly, and absolutely, Acquitt and Disscharge the sayd John Whipple Junr of and from all papers that Conserne this Towne,

In wittness whereof wee doe here unto sett our handes the day and yeare aboue sayd: .

[Signed]

ROGER WILLIAMS

DANIELL ABBOTT Clerke.

Memorandum, the wordes Twenty Third were enterlined before these presents were Delivered as wittness our handes . . . . .

[Signed]

ROGER WILLIAMS

DANIELL ABBOTT Clerke. .

## APPENDIX B.

An Acco<sup>t</sup> continued of the Books of Records & Papers. on file found in y<sup>e</sup> Office of Richard Waterman Esq<sup>r</sup> Late Town Clerk of the Town of Providence Deccas.<sup>d</sup> and D<sup>d</sup> to Nich<sup>o</sup> Tillinghast the present Town Clerk of said Town by Dan<sup>l</sup> Abbott Esq<sup>r</sup> Elisha Brown Merch.<sup>t</sup> and George Taylor Esq.<sup>r</sup> a Committee appointd at a Town Meeting of S<sup>d</sup>. Town Specially Called by Warrant: and held on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> April 1755. vizt

1 Town Old Book many of the Leaues schorcht and partly burnt

2 The Long Book parchment Couer with many leaues torn and partly lost

3 The Book with brass Clasps. sundry Leaues torn out and others Defaced

The Books of Deeds & Land Euidences N<sup>o</sup> 1 begun. 1677-

Do No 2 begun 1705. Do No 3 with a Loose platt therein begun 1717

Do 4 begun 1719 Do 5 begun 1720 Do No 6 .-1723

Do 7 begun 1725/6 Do 8 begun 1728/9 Do 9 1731

Do 10 begun 1735/6 Do small No 10 Do No 11 1741.

Do No 12 1746

a book with a blue paper Couer something shattered begun 1692

The Town Book of Acts and orders with a parchment Couer

Two Paper Schedules relating to Town Affairs somewhat shattered

Two Books & a shattered Schedule of Town Council affairs with sundry Loose papers in one of them

A Small Sticht Schedule of Town Meeting Affairs begun 1717/8

Book for Registring Marriages, Births &c

Town Meeting Book with a Cloth Couer begun June 7. 1725 with some Loose papers in it pinn<sup>d</sup>

The Town Council book No 2 begun 1716. Do No 3 begun 1726

Do No 4. 1741 with a bundle of Coppys of Letters Administration

Do No 5 with Tho<sup>s</sup> Waterman's Will and Inuentory [Loose]

Do begun Aug<sup>st</sup> 1743. with sundry Loose papers therein

A small blue Couer<sup>d</sup> paper Schedule of Town Council Affairs

A Colony Law Book

A Draught of House Lotts at Pawtuxet made 1752

A Copy of the platt of Wesconaug Land

a plan & papers relating to the back Street, in Providence

A plan and papers of Pawtuxet Highway

A Deed of the Land where the Goal, and Courthouse Stands

Do of the Highway and Training Field

A Plan of Highway a Cross Watermans Marsh

A Plan of Highway from Power's Lane Southward

Schedules of the Acts of Assembly in Number . . 135

Ten Bundles of Mortgages Deeds of the seueral Banks

Eleuen Small Bundles Do of the Eighth Bank

Six Bundles Do of the Ninth Bank

One Book of Mortgage Deeds of the third Bank

seueral Loose Deeds of the Ninth Bank

Thomas Patey's Deed. and Sundry papers belonging to the same

Return of a Landing place at Ruttenburgh with Inuentory's and other papers in a bundle

Return of a Highway. Potters & Bakers

West Riuer, Thurbers Highway plan thereof. by Burrows  
Bridge so Called

Platt of a Thatch Bed and papers relating thereto Jos  
Brown & Co plan of the Road to Pawtuxet

an Old Rate Bill  
 five Baggs of Old papers  
 1 Bundle Deeds. and returns of Highways  
 The Jury Box  
 Copsy of the Receipt giuen to the Committee  
 6 } x a bundle of Bonds  
    } x a bundle of  
    } x 2 Bundles of Jndentures

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### APPENDIX C.

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#### TOWN MEETING RECORDS.

BOOK 7, PAGE 371. JUNE 6, 1796.

RESOLVED: That Moses Brown, Zephaniah Andrews and Benjamin Reynolds be and they are hereby appointed a Committee for the purpose of examining the Town Records and ascertaining what Record Books it may be necessary to cause to be transcribed, indexed or otherwise amended and that said Committee make Report of their Proceedings herein at the next Town Meeting.

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### APPENDIX D.

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#### TOWN MEETING RECORDS.

BOOK 7, PAGE 375. JUNE 23, 1796.

WHEREAS the Committee appointed on the sixth Instant to examine the Town Records have submitted the following Report thereon to Wit—

Agreeable to Appointment We have examined the Antient Records in the Town Clerk's Office and it is our Opinion,

that it is necessary the three first Books be transcribed in a Book or Books for the purpose and that an Index or Indexes be made to the same, and that several other Books appear to require Indexes to be made and some others to be amended : and it appears to us proper that a Committee be appointed to have the same done in the most legible Manner and to compare and see that the Transcripts be fairly and accurately made.

which is submitted by	Moses Brown
Providence June 22d 1796	Zep <sup>h</sup> Andrews
	Benj <sup>a</sup> Reynolds

And said Report being duly consider'd it is thereupon Resolved that the same be received and that Mess<sup>rs</sup> Jabez Bowen, Moses Brown, Zephaniah Andrews, Benjamin Reynolds & the Town Clerk be and they hereby are appointed a Committee for the purpose of procuring such of the Town Records to be transcribed as have become defaced or illegible, that they procure suitable Blank Books for that purpose and agree with an Amanuensis on such Terms and Conditions as the Nature of his Service may require.

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## APPENDIX E.

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### PROCEEDINGS OF COMMON COUNCIL.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1865. BOOK 11, PAGE 297.

RESOLVED :—That Messrs. Coggeshall, Paine and Stone with such as the Board of Aldermen may add, be and they are hereby appointed to examine the condition of the early Records of the Town of Providence to the year 1800.

That said Committee be and they are hereby authorized to employ a suitable person to transcribe and print the same, and to take such other measures as may by them be deemed expedient, for a proper preservation of said Records.



RESOLVED :— that the sum of five hundred dollars be, and the same is hereby appropriated for this purpose to be paid from any monies not otherwise appropriated.

[Concurred & Alderman Barker added]

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CITY COUNCIL AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1865. JOURNAL 10, PAGE 161.

A Resolution appointing a joint special committee to cause the early Records of the town to be transcribed and printed came from Common Council.

Read and Concurred. Ald. Barker added.

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CITY COUNCIL RECORDS.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1865. BOOK 5. PAGE 314.

No. 11.

RESOLVED :— That Messrs Coggeshall, Paine, and Stone, with Alderman Barker be and they are hereby appointed a committee to examine the condition of the early Records of the Town of Providence, to the year 1800: That said Committee be and they are hereby authorized to employ a suitable person to transcribe and print the same and to take such other measures as may by them be deemed expedient, for a proper preservation of said Records.

RESOLVED :— That the sum of five hundred dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated for this purpose ; to be paid from any moneys not otherwise appropriated. Passed September 11, 1865.

[Returned by the Mayor to the Common Council, October 9, 1865, without approval.]

## APPENDIX F.

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### CITY COUNCIL RECORDS.

BOOK 5. PAGE 326.

No. 10.

RESOLVED : - That Messrs. Coggeshall, Thomas, Sweet and Harris with Alderman Barker be appointed a committee to examine the early records of the Town of Providence, prior to the year 1800, and to report what in their opinion, is the best manner of preserving the same and in case they may deem it expedient to have them printed, to report the probable expense thereof.

Passed November 13, 1865.

Approved the same day.

THOS. A. DOYLE, *Mayor.*

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## APPENDIX G.

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### IN CITY COUNCIL.

No. 219. Message of the Mayor relative to the First Book of Records of the Town of Providence.

[Presented May 19, 1881.]

CITY OF PROVIDENCE,  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, CITY HALL,  
May 19, 1881.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL :

A communication from the library committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, a copy of which is herewith transmitted, calls attention to the condition of a most valuable relic of the early days of the town of Providence, the loss of which would be greatly deplored by all.

The damaged state of these records, the natural result of age and former usage, is such as to justify the desire of the Historical Society, that more than ordinary pains be taken to restore so far as possible, and preserve them for future generations. I therefore recommend the passage of the accompanying resolution.

WILLIAM S. HAYWARD, *Mayor*.

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#### COMMUNICATION.

PROVIDENCE, May 2, 1881.

TO HIS HONOR THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE :

SIR: The library committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society having recently learned of the condition of the earliest book of records of the town of Providence, feel it to be their duty to call your attention to its character and condition, and to state what in their judgment is necessary to be done in order to preserve it. This book contains, beside its records of titles and transfers of real estate, the original agreement under which the second comers to the settlement joined the first proprietors and were by them admitted to become inhabitants. It was the establishment of a government, a pure democracy, wherein men bound themselves to be obedient to the majority of masters of families only in civil things. The entire separation of church from state was made, and perfect religious liberty guaranteed. This document, written by the hand of Roger Williams, the founder of this state, stands at the top of the first page of this book and bears the signatures of thirteen of the second comers.

As to its present condition, it is entirely removed from its binding, it now having no covers whatever. Its leaves are misplaced, ragged and torn. Its first and most valuable leaf is torn entirely asunder. The name of one of the signers has been torn apart, and is now illegible, and some words have been torn from the edges in sundry places.

It has seemed to us that unless immediate measures are taken to preserve this unique and precious volume from further ruin, that it will soon be among the things of the past. Hereon Roger Williams, with his own hand, wrote the doctrine of religious liberty, a principle which has since become the corner-stone of every civilized government on earth, but which, when he wrote it, was a thing unknown to men. This, we say, deserves preservation at our hands.

Our remedy is, that each of these precious leaves be inlaid in paper of the strongest and most durable texture by a workman cunning in this art, of whom there are several in this country. Every irregular edge and every letter to be carefully preserved as now, and then that the volume be strongly, even elegantly bound. This can all be done without removing the volume from the city hall, where it now is, to be kept over night, and at a cost which is small as compared to the intrinsic worth of the precious relic.

Thus will be preserved to our remotest posterity this memento of the wisdom and foresight of our ancestors.

SIDNEY S. RIDER,	}	<i>Library Committee</i>
HORATIO ROGERS,		<i>Rhode Island</i>
THOMAS DURFEE,		<i>Historical Society.</i>

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No. 220. Resolution relative to the First Book of Records of the Town of Providence.

[Approved June 7, 1881.]

RESOLVED, That the recorder of deeds be hereby authorized to cause the first volume of the records of the town of Providence to be suitably re-bound and the leaves to be inlaid in new paper, the expense to be paid from money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated.

## APPENDIX H.

No. 352. Message of the Mayor relative to Printing the first four Records of the Town of Providence.

[Presented July 2, 1884.]

CITY OF PROVIDENCE,  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, CITY HALL,  
July 2, 1884.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL :

By a resolution of the city council, approved June 7, 1881, the recorder of deeds was authorized "to cause the first volume of the records of the town of Providence to be suitably re-bound and the leaves to be inlaid in new paper, the expense to be paid from money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated."

The work proposed in the resolution has never been accomplished, and very little progress has been made in regards to it. Some other course must be adopted in order to preserve the record contained, not only in the first book, but in three other books, two of which are in the office of the recorder of deeds, and one in the office of the clerk of the municipal court.

The work of preserving, by printing, the early records of Suffolk county, Massachusetts, has been for some time in progress, and I recommend that a similar course be pursued in regard to the first four books of the records of the town of Providence.

I therefore suggest that this matter, the importance of which to future generations can hardly be estimated, be referred to the committee on printing, to inquire into and report thereon.

THOMAS A. DOYLE, *Mayor*.

No. 353. Resolution Instructing the Joint Committee on Printing to report upon the matter of Printing the first four Books of Records of the Town of Providence.

[Approved July 5, 1884.]

RESOLVED, That the joint committee on printing be and they are hereby instructed to inquire into the matter of printing the first four books of records of the town of Providence, with the probable cost thereof, and all matters connected therewith, and to report thereon to either branch of the city council.

## APPENDIX I.

BOSTON, . . . . 189

TO THE RECORD COMMISSIONERS :

GENTLEMEN :

I hereby apply for the volumes of your Reports hitherto published, and ask to be put on the list for future issues.

Applicant, . . . . .

Address, . . . . .

BOSTON, . . . . 189

I hereby certify that I believe the above application should be granted.

*Member of City Council.*

CITY HALL, . . . . 189

TO THE CITY MESSENGER :

DEAR SIR :

Please comply with the above request.

Yours very truly,

*For the Record Commissioners.*







1892.]

CITY DOCUMENT.

[No. 1.]

FIRST REPORT

OF THE

RECORD COMMISSIONERS

RELATIVE TO THE

EARLY TOWN RECORDS.

[Presented March 7, 1892.]



The Providence Press:  
SNOW & FARNHAM, CITY PRINTERS,  
37 Custom House Street.  
1892.

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72

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



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