

THE PELHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

and

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for
The Pelham Historical Society**

Are pleased to present to you in CD-ROM format materials from the William Thomas Hayes Historical Collection. The Hayes Historical Collection is an eclectic collection of historical materials assembled over a lifetime by Mr. Hayes.

Attorney Hayes is a life long resident of the Town of Pelham. He was educated in the Pelham School system and graduated from Kimball Union Academy, Dartmouth College and the University of Virginia School of Law.

He co-authored “Reflections, A Pictorial History of Pelham” and has served the Pelham Historical Society as President and a Member of the Board of Directors for a number of years.

These materials made their way into the Hayes Collection because they all shed, in one way or another, information on the long and varied History of Pelham, New Hampshire.

The publication of the Hayes Collection materials in CD-ROM format is an ongoing project of the Pelham Historical Society. All proceeds from the sale of Hayes Collection CD-ROMs are used to support the Pelham Historical Society building, museum, library and programs.

Please visit the Pelham Historical Society online bookstore to learn what other materials are available for your reading and research pleasure.

VOLUME 4

Congregational Church Records

1751-1885

The Town of Pelham was first settled in 1720-21. During that time frame the western one third of present day Pelham was included in the Town of Dunstable, Massachusetts, which had been incorporated in 1673 by the Great and General Court of Colonial Massachusetts. The eastern two thirds of Pelham during that time frame were part of Dracut, Massachusetts, which had been incorporated by Colonial Massachusetts in 1701.

In 1731-2, all of Old Dunstable, Massachusetts located east of the Merrimack River, including the western one third of Pelham, was separated from Old Dunstable and became a part of the newly incorporated Town of Nottingham, Massachusetts. The eastern two thirds continued to be a part of Dracut, Massachusetts. In 1741, by Royal Decree of the King of England, all of present day Pelham was determined to be in the British Colony of New Hampshire, not Massachusetts. From the date of that decree until July 5, 1746, the western one third of present day Pelham was governed as part of Nottingham District, New Hampshire. The Nottingham District included all of Nottingham, Massachusetts declared to be in New Hampshire by the King's decree. The District, although not technically a town, was governed by a Board of Selectmen and slate of other Town Officers until July 5, 1746.

From the 1741 royal decree date until July 5, 1746, the eastern two thirds of present day Pelham were governed as part of the combined Dracut/Methuen District of Colonial New Hampshire. This combined District was made up of the portions of Dracut and Methuen, Massachusetts found to be in New Hampshire by the King's decree. Although technically not an incorporated town, it was governed by a Board of Selectmen and a slate of other Town Officers until July 5, 1746.

On July 5, 1746, a portion of the Nottingham District and a portion of the Dracut/Methuen District were combined to create the newly incorporated Town of Pelham, New Hampshire. It was named Pelham by Royal Governor Benning Wentworth in honor of Henry Pelham, who was, on that date, the Prime Minister of England.

The vital records for the western one third of present day Pelham from 1721 until the 1731-2 incorporation date of Nottingham, Massachusetts, were recorded, if at all, with the town officials of Old Dunstable, Massachusetts. From 1731-2 until July 5, 1746, vital events were recorded, if at all, with the Town of Nottingham, Massachusetts. Genealogists should be aware that better records of Nottingham, Massachusetts vital events were kept by the Reverend Nathaniel Merrill than the Town of Nottingham, Massachusetts. The Vital Records of Hudson, New Hampshire (formerly a part of Old Dunstable, Massachusetts, Nottingham, Massachusetts, and Nottingham District, New Hampshire and Nottingham West, New Hampshire), from 1734 until 1985 were assembled by Gerald Q. Nash et al and published by Heritage Books, Inc in 1997. This book incorporates the Reverend Nathaniel Merrill records. Early vital records of Dunstable, Massachusetts to the year 1850 were gathered and published under the auspices of the New England Historic Genealogy Society and are generally available in both paper and magnetic formats. This publication includes Pelham vitals for the western one third of Pelham for the period 1722 to the incorporation of Nottingham, Massachusetts 1731-2.

The vital records for the eastern two thirds of present day Pelham from 1720 until the 1741 Royal Decree date were maintained by the Town of Dracut, Massachusetts. From 1741 until July 5, 1746, the records for that part of Pelham were recorded by the officials of the Dracut/Methuen District. The vital records of Dracut and Methuen, Massachusetts to the year 1850 have been published under the auspices of the New England Historic Genealogy Society. They are generally available in both paper and magnetic formats. The Dracut publication includes Pelham vitals for the eastern two thirds of Pelham from 1720 to 1741.

Many of the vital records of the Dracut/Methuen District (1741-1746) were assembled and published by Edgar Gilbert in his "History of Salem New Hampshire" in 1907. A 1993 facsimile reprint is available in paperback from Heritage Books. Most of Salem, New Hampshire was once a part of Methuen, Massachusetts. Methuen, until its 1726 incorporation date, was originally a part of Haverhill, Massachusetts.

As news traveled slowly during this time period, some Town Clerks recorded vital events after they lost jurisdiction to do so. In other instances Town Clerks played catch up by recording vital events that occurred before they obtained jurisdiction over the area in question. Genealogists and historians: Do not treat any of the above dates as absolutes.

From July 5, 1746 forward the responsibility for maintaining vital records of Pelham residents fell to the officials of the Town of Pelham. The primary sources of vital information for the Town of Pelham, from July 5, 1746 forward, are the following:

- 1. Town Clerk Records recorded alphabetically by family unit from 1743 until 1865.**
- 2. The Pelham Town Reports from 1888 until the present.**
- 3. Pelham Congregational Church Records from 1751 until 1785.**
- 4. Pelham Gravestones until the year 1906.**

All of the above sources are contained in the Hayes Historical Collection and will be published in CD-ROM format as volunteer time permits.

IN THIS VOLUME of the William Thomas Hayes Historical Collection, the Pelham Historical Society offers scanned copies of a typed transcript of vital records recorded by the Congregational Church from 1751 until 1885. With minor, temporary exceptions, the Congregational Church was the only church in Pelham during this time frame.

While in most years it was the only church in Pelham, not everyone in Pelham was affiliated with this church. Notwithstanding, the Congregational Church Records are an important source of information for genealogists and historians.

The Church records include marriages, baptisms, deaths, admissions and dismissals. Each category is submitted in alphabetical order.

Genealogists and historians need to be constantly reminded that original records and copies of original records can and often do contain errors. Every transcription leaves open the possibility for new errors. For that reason, to the extent possible, all CD-ROMs created from the Hayes Historical Collection will include scanned originals, rather than hand written or typed transcriptions.