GUIDE FOR TRANSCRIBERS OF MAINE VITAL RECORDS

by Marlene A. Groves © 2016
email: magroves1@myfairpoint.net

This guide should help potential transcribers when working on a transcription of the vital records found in original record volumes in Maine town and city offices. By utilizing the suggestions offered here, a transcriber can provide a manuscript for publication which will be of immense value to researchers of original records which can be difficult to read due to individual handwriting and sometimes poor microfilm quality.

Before beginning work on a transcription project of original Maine vital records, be sure to read this guide carefully and completely and check with someone in the Society, such as Roland Rhoades on the Publications Committee, to be sure no one else is already working on a project you might be interested in undertaking.

The FamilySearch.org website is now providing digital images of many of the microfilms of vital records for towns in Maine making it much easier to work on transcription projects from one's home. These images are available for viewing at no charge. One needs to merely sign in to their site with an email address and a password and search through their catalog for the records desired. When the film desired is located, if there is a camera icon to the right of the film number, digital images are available for viewing.

First of all, be sure to use a word processing program such as Word Perfect or MS Word for computer transcription work. **To make final work on your project easier on our end, please do not use a Mac.**

Formatting Suggestions:

Maine Genealogical Society's special publications books will be printed in its standard 6"x9" size. Set the computer page layout at 6"x9", with margins .75" overall which will give the appropriate text box size (4½"x7 ½") for final printing. If you are unable to set this page layout, then using the default setting of 8½"x11 with margins set at 2" left and right and 1.75" top and bottom will achieve the same resulting text box size.

A good standard font style and size is Times New Roman in 11 point, making it easy to read. Using a more stylish font is not necessary and can sometimes take up unnecessary space. To format the manuscript be sure to use full justification for all text since this tends to save space overall.

Other formatting which should be done by the transcriber are as follows. First, when you begin work on a particular volume of town records, add a chapter opener at the beginning of each section or original volume transcribed, centered on the page before the actual transcribed records, indicating what these particular records consist of. For instance, they could be:

BIRTHS AND DEATHS

1750 – 1850

This chapter opener should be dropped down about three hard returns from the top of the page with the data in a larger type style and in small caps, if desired, and in bold as above. Below that add an extra hard return before beginning the transcription. If there is something unusual to add relating to the arrangement of the records, i.e. the fact that several pages of indexed names precede the data, or town meeting records are

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

contained before the records appear but are not transcribed for this book, or any other unique reference to the data in the original volume of records or its arrangement, add this within brackets before the actual transcribed records and preferably in italics so researchers can see just what is contained and that it is added by the compiler. This is also a good place to add anything specifically related to the records themselves or any uniqueness to your arrangement of the records. This can relate to marriage intentions, for example, which may be condensed to save space. In other words, rather than write every word in every intention, you might enter after "Intentions between", just the names of each of the parties, their residences, the date of the intention and of the certificate, if given, followed by the name of the clerk if given. This way a great deal of redundant data does not need to appear throughout this entire section. Then a couple of hard returns below this bracketed information, if added, center the page number in the original volume, and begin the transcription of data a couple of hard returns below the page number. If the pages in the original volume are unnumbered, insert them within brackets, i.e. [1], [2], etc., so researchers are able to locate where the actual data can be located either on the microfilmed records or the original town volumes.

Also, be sure to add headers which will appear at the top of each continuing page of records for that particular volume. This header should be in the same font size (11pt) as the text, centered and in italics. At the same time set the position for page numbering, as "top outside alternating", left and right, in the same font size but not in italics. This way the page numbers will appear with the even numbers at the very left of the header on the left page and the odd numbers at the very right of the header on the right page. Do not put the page numbers centered at the bottom of pages since this wastes space. The only exception to this rule is the use of a "drop folio" on the first page of each individual "chapter" or volume of records. This suppresses the header on this page with the page number set to appear at the bottom and is common procedure for first pages in chapters or sections of a book. Check previous Special Publications books to see how this actually appears.

When transcribing paragraphs containing marriage intentions or marriages, it is preferred that the first paragraph be formatted with a hanging indent which automatically indents the second and all other lines with the first line starting at the left margin. Do not try to make a paragraph look like a hanging indent by inserting a hard return at the end of the first line and then adding a left tab for the beginning of the next lines. When a file is ultimately given to someone else to work on or is converted from Word to Word Perfect, for example, the tabs then may become embedded elsewhere within the text. If you do not know how to do a hanging indent, it is better to just start the beginning of the first line of the paragraph with a left tab. Using either of these methods eliminates the need for adding an extra hard return between records which wastes space.

Do not under any circumstances use multi-spaces between data which can cause text to change position when sent to another computer for final formatting. Tabs should be used instead since they are more stable and can be more easily changed, if necessary. Tabs would generally only be used when family groupings may be transcribed to replicate data arranged in columns in the original record volumes. As will be seen elsewhere in this guide keeping data in columns is not necessary since separating data by the use of commas eliminates space problems with often lengthy data in columns. Also, do not add extra hard returns between records or pages, creating additional white space, since this wastes space, except for family birth records since this helps separate the families. But be sure there is that extra line between pages of records in the original volumes, i.e. an extra line at the end of a page and just before the number for the next page. Do not add an extra line after the page number in the original record volume and just before the actual data contained on that page in the volume.

The only time there needs to be a hard return separating individual records on a page would be when there are multiple intentions and marriages which do not relate to one another. A hard return between each would make it clearer to researchers that they are separate types of records. Otherwise, paragraphs for marriage intentions and/or marriages need not be separated since the beginning tab indent accomplishes this

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

as long as they are all the same type of record. Occasionally an intention of marriage can have the marriage record immediately following and it is fine to not separate those records with an extra hard return. But an extra hard return after these records would be preferable to keep them apart from other records whether intentions or marriages so the correct ones are together.

Transcription Contents and Arrangement:

Transcriptions should contain only vital records of births, deaths, marriage intentions and marriages along with those occasional records of creature marks, pew deeds, an occasional "warning out", town military lists or local censuses, occasional deeds or bills of sale, or anything of genealogical value to researchers. Town meeting records while of value are not generally transcribed.

Transcriptions should always be verbatim but they do not need to be in exactly the same format as used by the original record clerk. In other words, if the original records are in multi-columnar format especially when across two pages, it is far better to convert the data to "running-text" format (see below for explanation). Family registers were sometimes recorded in three columns (name, date of birth and occasionally date of death), so adding a comma to separate the data on one line is fine. Sometimes, a Clerk might add at the bottom of a marriage record on a separate line an attestation, such as: "Attest" on one line and "[his name] Town Clerk" on another. These lines can be added at the end of the original record on the same line as the actual record to save space for a large book or for a smaller project can be placed on a separate line. If the attestation follows several records of marriage or intentions, it should be added as a separate line below those records to indicate he is attesting to all of the previous records.

It is not necessary to transcribe headings from every page of an original volume of records, such as "Record of Births" or "Marriages", etc., since this will be indicated in the header you have inserted for each particular section or record volume so would be superfluous and consume space.

When transcribing records from columns which may not actually say "born" or "died", add this to the actual record date so there is no confusion on the part of a researcher. If a clerk has entered a location or "born" or "died" and then just inserted ditto marks below, do not transcribe the ditto marks which do not always appear in the proper places. Instead, add the data actually intended by the clerk, whether born, died, or a town name for example, for clarity. While the use of "b." or "d." is not wrong, it is more clear when the word is written out and there is less chance of a typographical mistake.

If a person's name, name of a town, or even a date is an obvious spelling error, do not correct it. Instead, following the obvious error, add [*sic*], using italics or not, whichever you prefer. This will tell researchers that the entry has been transcribed as originally recorded and is not a mistake on the part of the transcriber.

If a name or date is difficult to decipher due to illegibility, after your best transcription of the data add a question mark enclosing the difficult to decipher word or date and enclose all within brackets [xxxxx ?] or if it is impossible to read add [*illegible*]. If a record date, location or name is on the edge of a page which is worn away, add [*worn*] to represent the letters or words unreadable; if there is a blot on the page, insert [*blot*] in that spot. This way, researchers will know that the best transcription has been made of what is available from the original records.

If it appears that additional information has been added to the original volume in a different handwriting, add something like [*written in a different hand*] followed by the data; or, if data is added vertically on the side of the page, insert that information again indicating it is written vertically on the page.

If there is information entered in a column to the left of the actual records of birth, marriage intentions or marriages, such as a year or names of parties, do not forcibly make this information appear to the left of the record if the same information was actually entered within the record itself. Doing so is superfluous and tends to make the entire transcribed record look strange. A brief explanation at the beginning of that particular set of records can indicate something to the effect that the year or names of parties were also entered in the original volume to the left of the actual record but were not transcribed in this book since the

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

actual record already contains this information. If, however, there is information entered to the left of a record which is not found in the actual record or differs in any way, that should be indicated within brackets following the actual transcribed record.

Running-text format as referred to above simply means that all data has been transcribed in a single paragraph rather than in columns as contained in some original volumes of records. It can be nearly impossible to duplicate multi-columns in a transcription. Some early family records are entered in two or three columns on a page. This can also be found in more recent vital records volumes with several columns across two-pages. Transcribe all of the information and arrange it so as to be easily understood by researchers, but it does not need to be in the exact order as given in the record. For births and deaths you would most likely arrange the data as follows: individual's name, date of birth, location if other than town being transcribed, name of his or her parents and their occupation and place of birth, if given. For marriages you would likely use the following: name of groom (usually given first), residence, age, occupation and names of parents, if given, name of the bride, residence, and age, if given, as well as her parents' names and residence, if given. It would be helpful to indicate in an introductory paragraph just before the transcription, an explanation that these records in the original volume of records were entered across two pages in columns and then indicate the names of all of the columns, saying that the records have been transcribed for this book in running-text format. [**See example with transcription on following pages 6 and 9.**]

It is not necessary to always include every bit of punctuation or even to insert it when not used in the original records, since clerks were not consistent with the use or lack of use of punctuation. However, there are instances where it should be added, even if not seen in the original record volume, for clarity, such as after initials or even between some dates, like the day and year when following one another so there is no misunderstanding.

There may be instances when a name or location appears as though it was not be capitalized or a word might be capitalized which really does not need to be. In these instances one should use his or her own judgment. Generally standard words, not proper names or locations, do not need to be capitalized and would not harm the transcription if not done but names of people or locations probably should be for clarity.

If a letter has been omitted from a common word, it can be added to the word within brackets or [*sic*] can be added after the word. If this has been done continually, such as for "certificut given", the use of one [*sic*] for the first misspelling would be sufficient without adding it after every misspelled occasion thereafter. If an abbreviation was used by the clerk, be sure to transcribe it exactly as written – do not write it out in full. This would be for abbreviations of months such as Jan^{y}, Mar, the use of Mr or Mrs, and days when written as 1st, 2nd, or in some instances, 2^{d}, etc. In those instances where the clerk wrote anything in superscript, transcribe it exactly that way, i.e. dates as mentioned before, M^{r}, Jun^{r}, Octob^{r}, etc. This way if a researcher should go back to the original records and see that the transcription looks just as it was originally written by the clerk, more credibility will be given to the work done.

Be sure to always insert the page number from the original record book at the beginning of the transcription of that page, inserting it in the center of the page on a separate line before the beginning of the text. If no page number is indicated in the pages of the original volume of records, and this does happen often especially with marriage intentions and marriages, then designate numbers within brackets [ ] in the same center position, either counting from "1" if the first page has no number or from the position in the original record volume where numbers are not indicated. Sometimes this can occur after several pages containing numbers. At that point it would be best to indicate in a bracketed paragraph that pages from that point on contain no numbers so numbers within brackets have been added to assist the researcher in locating records. By providing page numbers in brackets when none exist, researchers can locate in the original record volumes the page desired by counting from a given point. If there are blank pages, missing pages, or errors in the numbering sequence, indicate this, centered within brackets, i.e. [*page xx is missing*], [*page xx is*

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

blank] or [*page numbering begins anew with xx*]. This way researchers will be aware that the transcriber did not miss something.

If there are vital records contained within other records such as town meeting records, be sure to indicate that only the vital records have been transcribed so that researchers will understand why there can be gaps in the page numbering indicated for the original records.

If there are several original record books being transcribed, they should be formatted into separate chapters, if you will, each with their own headings indicating the records contained in the original volumes, whether births and deaths, marriages, or other. [*See the formatting of individual chapters on the first page of this Guide.*] Then they can be more easily located in the original volumes by researchers either on microfilms or in the town/city office. If it is easier while transcribing, they could be saved in separate computer files since each file can be merged together into one large file when the project is completed. It is not critical, but seems logical to merge files in an arrangement beginning with births or family records which usually would be the town's first volume of records. Then marriage intentions and marriages would follow in chronological order if there should be more than one volume. If there should be a separate volume of deaths, it could be added after the marriage records.

Be sure to check the "widows/orphans" box at the beginning of your transcription, so that the computer will automatically prevent those first and last lines in paragraphs from being separated at the beginning or very bottom of pages.

For those transcribers who have their entire manuscript fully formatted and ready to submit in pdf format, they should be certain that there are no stray lines of data at the bottom of pages and either force them with a hard return to the following page or use line spacing to bring more than that one line together on the page. This would be most important if the file is in pdf format and not so easy to change. If it is submitted in word processing format, either MS Word or Word Perfect, that can be rectified by someone else much easier.

Be sure to not add any data you may have discovered from your own personal research. Your project should be only a transcription of the vital records of a town as found in their original books of record and not from someone else's transcription. If, however, other vital records are discovered in a local historical society, a local church or even in the town's office having genealogical value such as a minister's record book, church records of baptisms, marriages or deaths, then, by all means, be sure to include this data.

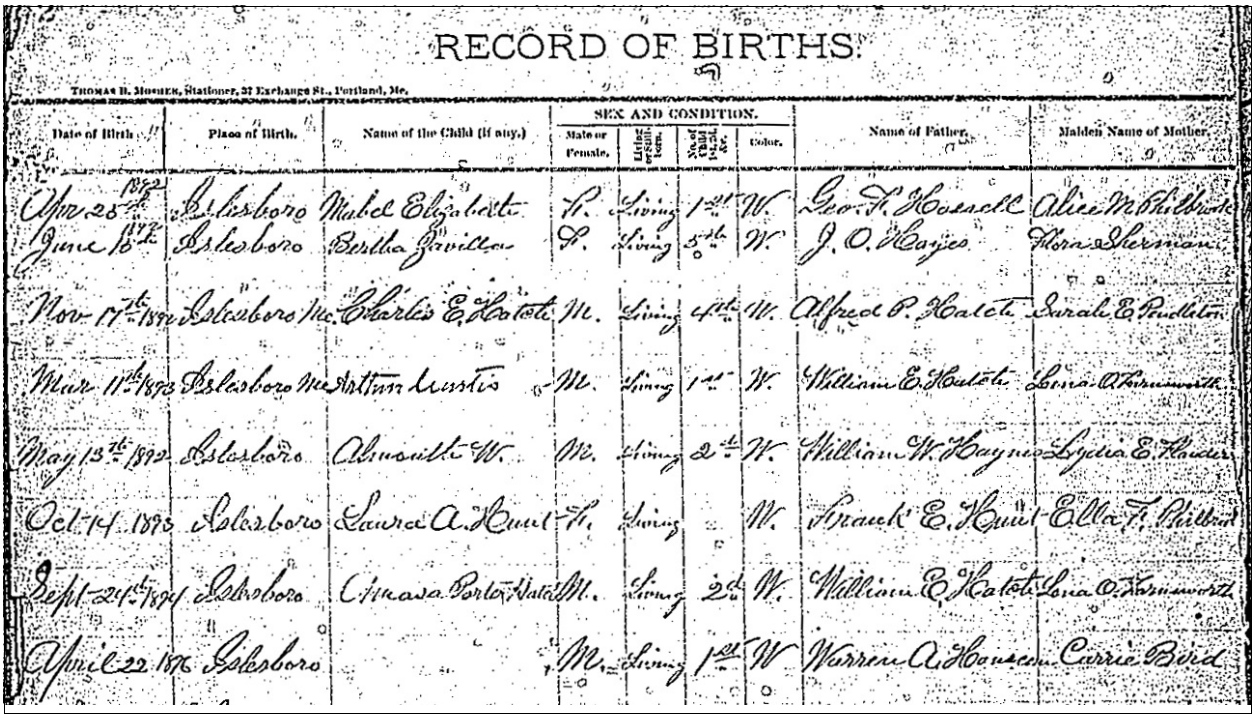
Finally, it is nice to include in an Introduction any knowledge found concerning a brief history of the town. At the same time an explanation can be given regarding any oddities discovered from the transcription process, such as condition of original volumes and whether they are all extant or not in the town office or wherever or just on microfilm, whether newly rebound and/or restored, what the spines may indicate if different from the data in the actual volumes, etc. Also, indicating if the original records are still in good condition, the clerks' handwriting especially good or bad, all tell researchers what they may expect when looking at the original volumes.

Before turning over your final transcription file to the appropriate individual at Maine Genealogical Society the transcriber(s) must be sure that everything has been fully proofed and not just read to catch typos. The text must be verified against the original record volumes so that no records on pages have been missed or transcribed incorrectly or misspelled, or even an original volume of records not transcribed and that appropriate formatting has been preset. If the transcriber should be providing the final text file in pdf format, then everything absolutely **must** be completed for submitting to the printer since it cannot be easily changed. This also means that in situations where family groupings continue from a right-hand page to a left-hand page (meaning it will appear when the printed page is turned, there should be an indication about the name of the family grouping on that new page so researchers will not be left in the dark. In this case, be sure to add within brackets something like: [John Smith family, continued]. This should be done at the very end of the project, after all proofing has been completed since anything added to the text would affect this aspect.

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

If a submitted transcription does not meet the necessary requirements, the publications committee will have no alternative but to return the project to the transcriber with instructions on how to rectify it so it may be completed before it can be sent to the printer. So, to save time all the way around, it will be best for transcribers to follow this Guide or to inquire of anyone on the Publications Committee if he or she has questions or difficulties in any way. The Publications Committee also reserves the right to reject any transcription which does not meet its requirements.

On the following pages the transcriptions below each of the images have been formatted for a 6"x9" text box in Times New Roman font size 11, which is the same font and size as this Guide.



RECORD OF BIRTHS.

THOMAS B. MOSHER, Stationer, 37 Exchange St., Portland, Me.

Date of Birth	Place of Birth.	Name of the Child (if any.)	SEX AND CONDITION. Male or Female.	Living or still born.	No. of Child 1st, 2d &c.	Color.	Name of Father.	Maiden Name of Mother.
Mar 28th 1872	Islesboro	Mabel Elizabeth	F.	Living	1st	W.	Geo. F. Hassell	Alice M. Philbrook
June 18th 1872	Islesboro	Bertha Lavilla	F.	Living	5th	W.	J. O. Hayes	Nora Sherman
Nov 17th 1872	Islesboro Me.	Charles E. Hatch	M.	Living	4th	W.	Alfred P. Hatch	Sarah E. Pendleton
Mar 11th 1873	Islesboro Me.	Arthur Lewis	M.	Living	1st	W.	William E. Hatch	Lora A. Farnsworth
May 13th 1873	Islesboro	Almouitte W.	M.	Living	2d	W.	William W. Haynes	Lydia E. Hawes
Oct 14 1873	Islesboro	Laura A. Hunt	F.	Living		W.	Frank E. Hunt	Ella F. Philbrook
Sept 24th 1874	Islesboro	Amasa Porter Hatch	M.	Living	2d	W.	William E. Hatch	Lora A. Farnsworth
April 22 1876	Islesboro		M.	Living	1st	W	Warren A. Hawes	Carrie Bird

Example of Family Register in columnar format (partial transcription follows with hanging indents used for first line and with explanation at beginning of transcription relating to original volume pages; data not arranged in exact order as in original image):

> [*The births in the original volume of records were in columnar format but for this transcription have been arranged with commas separating each column, with dates of birth being added at the end of each record. The columns in the original volume are entitled, from left to right,* "Date of Birth", "Place of Birth", "Name of the Child (if any)", "Sex and Condition" *under which are 4 sub-columns entitled "*Male or Female", "living or stillborn", "No. of Child 1st, 2d &c", "Color"*, and followed by the last two columns* "Name of Father", and "Name of Mother". *All births are in Islesboro and living births unless indicated otherwise.*]

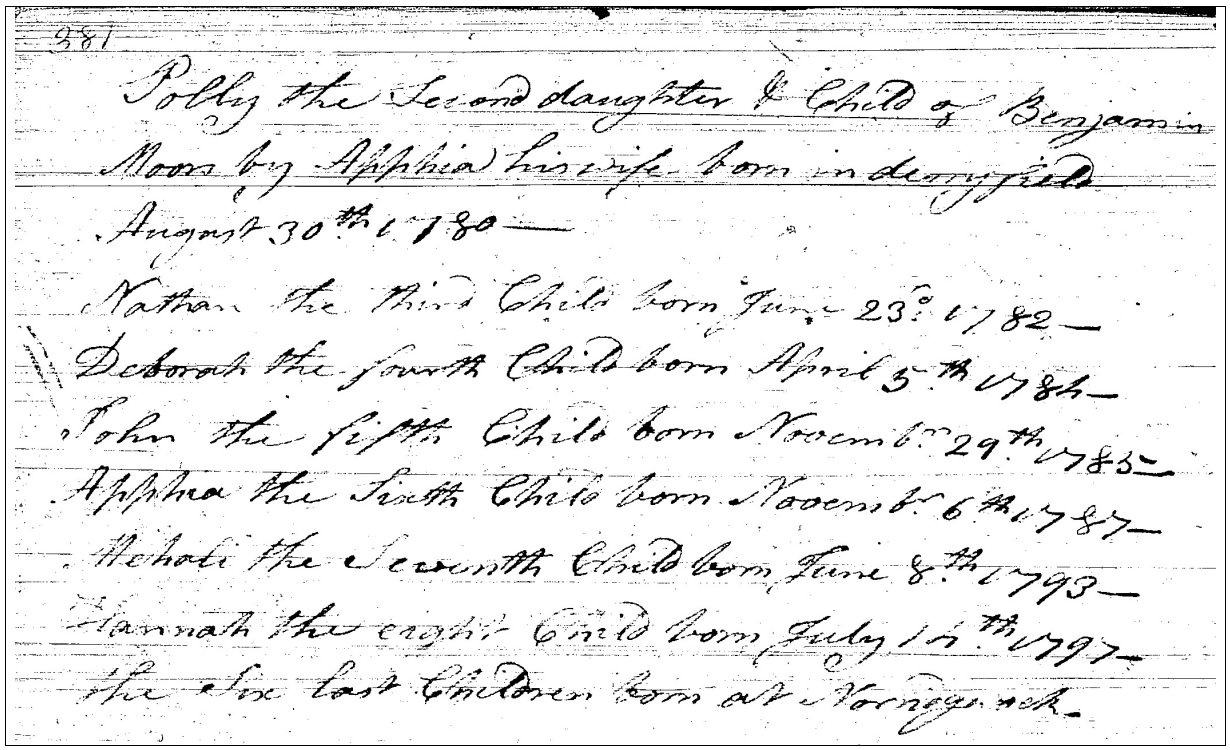
© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

2

Mabel Elizabeth Howell, 1st child, dau of Geo F. and Alice M. (Philbrook) Howell, born Apr 25th 1892

Bertha Zavilla Hayes, 5th child, dau of J. O. and Flora (Sherman) Hayes, born June 15th 1892

Charles E. Hatch, 4th child, son of Alfred P. and Sarah E. (Pendleton) Hatch, born Nov 17th 1892


381

Polly the Second daughter & Child of Benjamin Moors by Apphia his wife born in Derryfield August 30th 1780—

Nathan the third Child born June 23d 1782—

Deborah the fourth Child born April 5th 1784—

John the fifth Child born Novemb.r 29th 1785—

Apphia the Sixth Child born Novemb.r 6th 1787—

Mehali the Seventh Child born June 8th 1793—

Hannah the eight.h Child born July 14th 1797—

the six last Children born at Norridgewock—

Example of family register format not in columns (transcription follows with hanging indent used for first line):

381

Polly the second daughter & child of Benjamin Moors by Apphia his wife born in Derryfield August 30th 1780

Nathan the third child born June 23d 1782

Deborah the fourth child born April 5th 1784

John the fifth child born Novembr 29th 1785

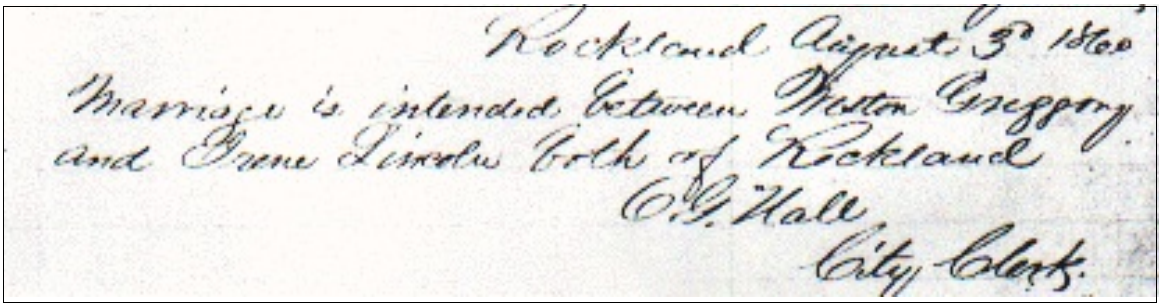
Apphia the sixth child born Novembr 6th 1787

Mehali the seventh child born June 8th 1793

Hannah the eight[h] child born July 14th 1797

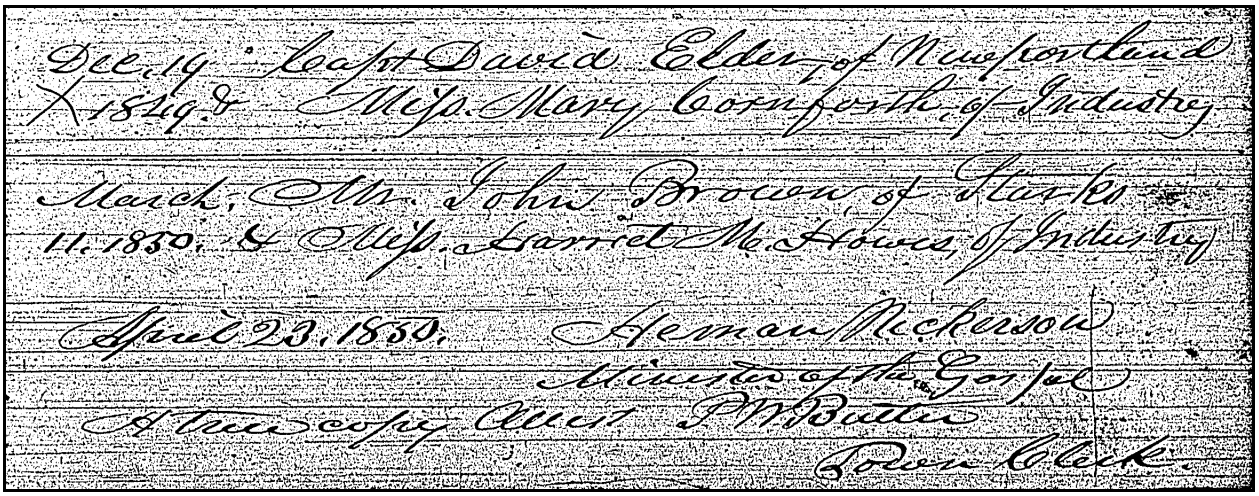
The six last children born at Norridgewock

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves


Rockland August 3d 1860
Marriage is intended between Weston Greggory
and Irene Lincoln both of Rockland
O. G. Hall
City Clerk.

Example of marriage intention record (transcription follows with use of hanging indent format:)

Rockland August 3d, 1860 Marriage is intended between Weston Greggory
and Irene Lincoln both of Rockland O. G. Hall City Clerk


Dec 19. Capt David Elder of Newportland
1849. & Miss. Mary Cornforth of Industry.
March. Mr. John Brown of Starks
11. 1850. & Miss. Harriet M. Howes of Industry
April 23. 1850. Heman Nickerson
Minister of the Gospel
A true copy Attest P. W. Butler
Town Clerk.

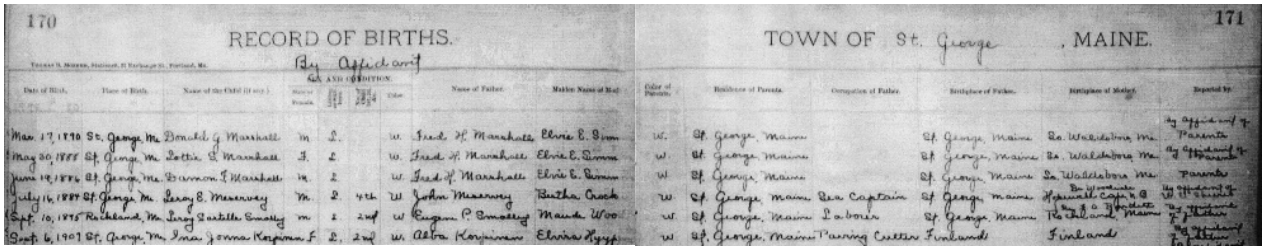
Example of two marriage records with transcription following showing format which saves space and the use of hanging indents. These should be separated from other marriage records by an extra hard return after the attestation by the Town Clerk to avoid confusion between records.

Dec 19, 1849 Capt David Elder of Newportland & Miss Mary Cornforth of Industry

March 11, 1850 Mr John Brown of Starks & Miss Harriet M. Howes of Industry

April 23, 1850 Heman Nickerson Minister of the Gospel A true copy Attest P. W. Butler Town Clerk

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves


170

RECORD OF BIRTHS.

By Affidavit

TOWN OF St. George, MAINE.

171

Example of birth records across a 2-page spread (partial transcription follows, in running-text format:)

170–171
Donald G. Marshall, born Mar 17, 1890, son of Fred H. Marshall, born St George, Maine, and Elvie E. Simmons, born So Waldoboro, Me
Lottie S. Marshall, born May 30, 1888, dau of Fred H. Marshall, born St George, Maine, and Elvie E. Simmons, born So Waldoboro, Me
Damon F. Marshall, born June 19, 1886, son of Fred H. Marshall, born St George, Maine, and Elvie E. Simmons, born So Waldoboro, Me

Page 2.

Record Of Births

A. Names that begin with A. Births — Date.

	Month	A.D.
William, son of James & Martha Allen, born	Jan'y 5	1756
Love, wife of William Allen, born	May 3	1756
William Jun., son of William & Love Allen born	April 16	1780
Bartlett, son of do — do — born	Aug 25	1781
Freeman, son of do — do — born	June 19	1783
Debby — daughter of do — do — born	Feb'y 13	1785
Jane, daughter of do — do — born	June 12	1787

Example of birth records in columns in original record volume (partial transcription follows, with commas separating records and "do" changed to names of parents as actually intended by clerk. The original records have the beginning letter of the alphabet indicated for the surname followed by "Birth" and "Date").

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

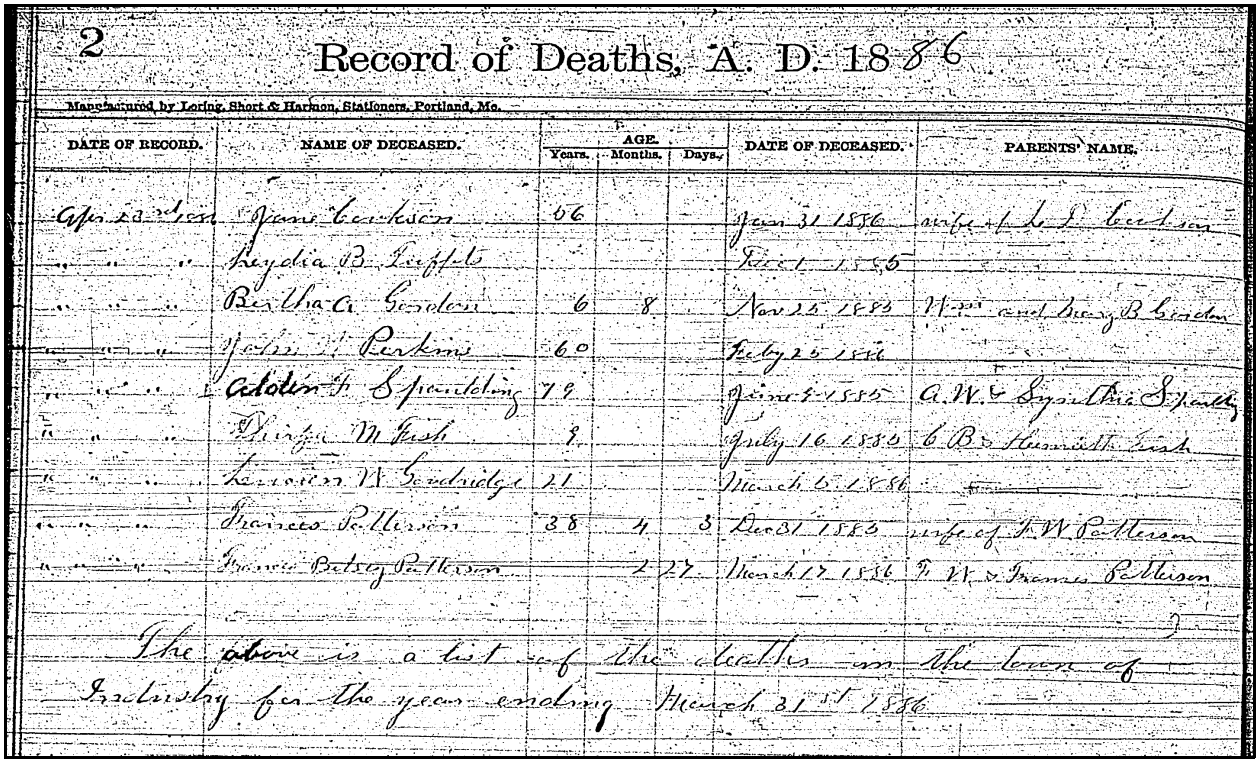
RECORD OF BIRTHS

[*Years contained in original volume would be shown here after title.*]

[*The original records are in columnar format and each page has the beginning letter of the alphabet indicated for the surname followed by "Birth" and "Date", none of which have been transcribed here. In instances where the clerk has inserted "do" under the names of the parents, the full names of the parents have been transcribed for clarity as would have been the intent of the clerk.*]

2

William, son of James & Martha Allen, born Jany 5, 1756
Love, wife of William Allen, born May 3, 1756
William Jnr, son of William & Love Allen born April 16, 1780
Bartlett, son of William & Love Allen, born Aug 25, 1781
Truman, son of William & Love Allen, born June 19, 1783



2 Record of Deaths, A. D. 1886

Manufactured by Loring, Short & Harmon, Stationers, Portland, Me.

DATE OF RECORD.	NAME OF DECEASED.	AGE. Years.	Months.	Days.	DATE OF DECEASED.	PARENTS' NAME.
Apr 28 1886	Jane Cookson	66			Jan 31 1886	wife of L J Cookson
" " "	Zeydia B. Leffels				Dec 1 1885	
" " "	Bertha A Gordon	6	8		Nov 25 1885	Wm and Mary B Gordon
" " "	John T. Perkins	60			Feby 25 1886	
" " "	Adolin F. Spaulding	79			June 1 1885	A.W. & Syntha Ann Spaulding
" " "	Virgie M Fish	9			July 16 1885	G B & Hannah M Fish
" " "	Lorenzo W Goodridge	21			March 6 1886	
" " "	Frances S. Allerson	38	4	3	Dec 31 1885	wife of F W Allerson
" " "	Frances Betsy Allerson		1	27	March 17 1886	F. W. & Frances Allerson

The above is a list of the deaths in the town of Industry for the year ending March 31 st 1886

Example of death records in columnar format, partial transcription follows using commas to separate data.

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves

[*The records in this volume are in columnar format with column headings as follows:* "Date of Record", "Name of Deceased"; "Age", *with sub-headings* "Years", "Months", "Days"; "Date of Deceased" *and* "Parents' Name". *The data has not been transcribed exactly in the same format to make it more easily read by researchers but all data is there.*]

2

Record of Deaths 1886

Jane Cookson, died Jan 31, 1886, age 56, wife of L. F. Cookson, recorded Apr 23rd 1886

Lydia B. Tuffets, died Jan. 1, 1885, [no age or parents given], recorded Apr 23rd 1886

Bertha A. Gordon, died Nov. 25, 1885, age 6 yrs, 8 mos, child of Wm and Mary B. Gordon

© 2016 Marlene A. Groves