

HISTORY OF THE WORCESTER DISTRICT
REGISTRY OF DEEDS

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF WORCESTER COUNTY

For the past several decades, the Worcester District Registry of Deeds has been recognized for its efficiency and courteous manner in which it serves the public. Additionally, it has existed, and currently exists as a self-sustaining function of the Commonwealth. On July 10, 1981 Worcester County and the Worcester District Registry of Deeds celebrated 250 years of continuous service to the people of the region. Since its formal inception in 1731, the Registry has known 15 registers, some of whom have served solely on an interim basis. Throughout the years, with the dutiful help of these registers, the Registry has evolved into a vital and stable office in Central Massachusetts government.

The origins of the Worcester County and the Registry of Deeds trace back to the early 1700's. During this time period, the public in Central Massachusetts suggested the creation of new county, one which would better serve their needs. However, the public did not effectively pursue any type of lobbying effort, and conversations of this nature were quietly dismissed.

Years later, the Commonwealth also recognized a need to create a county in Central Massachusetts. During the 18th Century, Worcester, a small town in its early years, was aligned to Middlesex County, which nominated Cambridge to host the County seat. The boundaries of Middlesex County encompassed other Central Massachusetts communities, among them

Westborough, Shrewsbury, and western and northern communities such as Leicester and Lancaster, and because of the large inclusion, residents of these towns felt an alienation from the processes of county government.

In 1728, Lancaster attempted to pressure the General Court (commonly called the State Legislature) into an enactment of legislation which would create a new county in the central part of the state. Lancaster's substantial influence and superior longevity supported this leading venture. The movement failed initially, but a successful one and several others would follow with proposals to subdivide Worcester County. Lancaster's prestigious role in local affairs allowed the town to generate momentum and support in the Legislature. Lancaster did not promote itself for the county seat at this time. Although Worcester would be awarded this honor in the future, at the time Worcester existed as a relatively young town with a population of only a few hundred and therefore, did not attempt to promote itself for the county seat. As author John Nelson's writes in his history of Worcester County, "It is not unlikely that Worcester citizens recognized their humble place in the scheme of political influence."

Moreover, while Worcester residents accepted their humble position in political matters, the General Court recognized the importance of Worcester's centrally geographic location. Additionally, the post roads converged in Worcester. Both the town's coveted setting and Judge Joseph Wilder, Lancaster's most persuasive orator, contributed to Worcester's obtainment of the county seat. Judge Joseph Wilder convinced the citizens of his town that if Lancaster was to be named shire town, then it could become a haven for undesirable elements. Criminals brought to trial would "naturally" bring with them such vices as gambling, drinking, fighting and racing horses in the village streets.

Thus, even though Worcester would later prosper as the county seat, no indication that the people of Lancaster regretted their earlier decision exists, possibly due to the Judge's powerful statements. On April 2, 1731, the General Court of the Commonwealth enacted legislation which provided the incorporation of Worcester County. The text of the act was published three days later and declared: "...Worcester, Lancaster, Westborough, Shrewsbury, Southborough, Leicester, Rutland and Lunenburg (all from Middlesex County), Mendon, Woodstock (later to be released to the State of Connecticut), Oxford, Sutton, Uxbridge and land granted to several petitioners of Medfield (all in Suffolk County), Brookfield (from the County of Hampshire), and the South town laid out to the Narragansett soldiers...and all lands lying within said townships with the inhabitants thereon, shall from and after the 10th day of July, 1731, be and remain one entire and distinct County by the name of Worcester, of which Worcester is to be the County or Shire town."

Currently, 13 of the towns mentioned above still remain as part of Worcester County. Another backstory contributed to Worcester's role as the shire town. In the campaign for shire town, Rutland was Worcester's chief competition. Some of the people of Rutland allegedly presumed that the General Court's deciding vote to recognize Worcester as shire town was secured due to a pint of whiskey bribe offering. Accusations were formed because for no apparent reason, members of the General Court became extremely aroused when considering Rutland for the county seat. However, the town's lack of close proximity from most towns in the proposed county and in hill country which meant wagon and horse rides experienced difficulty to arrive there was an inconvenience. Fortunately, the people of Central Massachusetts were spared the hindrance of traveling to Rutland because Worcester did win out— if only by questionable means which acquired that a solitary vote.

Worcester County, which covers approximately 1500 square miles, was the 10th county to be incorporated in Massachusetts. Established earlier were: Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Hampshire, Barnstable, Bristol, Plymouth, Dukes and Nantucket Counties. Worcester and other towns thrived after it became the county seat. In 1731, Worcester's county seat position led to the accumulation of greater populations and land valuations for Sutton, Lancaster, Mendon, Brookfield and Woodstock. Furthermore, the presence of the courthouse and county offices enabled Worcester to gain substantially in both respects, although in 1790, Worcester still trailed Sutton and Brookfield in size and wealth.

It is important to note that despite the fact that the towns' names, adopted more than 200 years ago, have not been modified, the boundaries of these respective towns have changed considerably. For example, in 1731, a town like Lancaster may have occupied the rank of wealthiest or largest community, but the town of Clinton originated when it drew its boundaries from within Lancaster's own boundaries. Evolutions, such as this one, throughout the years have accounted for reductions in land mass and population in many of the towns which were once prominent in the county.

By 1885, Worcester had surpassed all other cities and towns in the county relative to wealth and population. More than 150 years after it was designated shire town for the county, Worcester's population grew to 68,389 and its property values exceeded \$58 million. Fitchburg was second in the county with 15,375 residents and land values of \$13 million. After political feats and protests, Fitchburg had also become the home for county government in the Northern District.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COUNTY IS SUBDIVIDED

For several decades, frequent efforts to persuade the General Court to establish another county within Worcester County occurred. People living in places such as Lunenburg, Lancaster and Westminster, (originally called the South Town) argued that the prohibitive travel distance to Worcester cut them off from the rest of the county. Although travel problems would have existed in all locations of the potential designated shire town, the creation of another county merited consideration from the General Court.

The people on Beacon Hill listened, and attempts to gain the General Court's approval for creation of a second county in Central Massachusetts repeatedly resulted, and failed, from 1734 to 1874. The accumulation of failures led to an increase in the creativity and inspiration of the tactics. In other words, the petitioners called upon three of the greatest names in United States history— George Washington, Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln— to advance their legislation and help deliver the crucial votes.

The residents of Webster orchestrated the first scheme which involved a man of national importance. Their goal of the incorporation of the County of Webster followed closely after the death of statesman Daniel Webster. While sentiment favored the proponents, opponents and the Legislature defeated the plan. The second plot involved the public's memory of the first president. The argument stated that no patriotic member of the General Court could reject honorably a county which included Washington's name. The final move to create a new county surfaced in 1874. This time, Abraham Lincoln's legacy was summoned to supply the necessary votes. However, the General Court rejected the motion, and similar to the proposed Webster and Washington Counties, the proposed Lincoln County failed.

As travel revolutionized, distance and time became no longer valid arguments in the formation of a new county. In appeasement of the people from Northern Worcester County and their tireless work, some concessions were made during the 19th Century. On June 6, 1856, an act was passed which declared that three terms of the Common Pleas Court should be held annually in Fitchburg, and the town should be designated a half-shire.

Twenty-eight years later, this legislation advanced when the General Court decided Worcester County should be divided into two districts to serve only Registry of Deeds clients. One Registry office continued to function in Worcester and serve the majority of the county, while the other office was established in Fitchburg. This second Registry served Leominster, Lunenburg, Westminster and Ashburnham, as well as Fitchburg. Harvey B. Wilder retained his position as register of deeds for the Worcester District, and the governor appointed a register to supervise the Fitchburg Registry. However, in 1885, voters from the Northern District elected their own register of deeds, and the temporary appointment was replaced. The declaration of Fitchburg as a half-shire led to the construction of a courthouse. Thus, in 1844 when the Registry was created, it occupied part of the court building.

CHAPTER THREE AND FOUR

THE WORCESTER REGISTRY IN ITS INFANCY AND WORCESTER REGISTRY (1731-1900)

In its beginning, Worcester County consisted of only 14 towns. Although the county now contains 55 cities and towns, its boundaries have not expanded vastly because the majority of the new towns grew solely from the original 14 towns. For example, state records indicate that Auburn originated as the South Parish of Worcester and became acknowledged as a separate entity in 1837. Charlton remained a part of Oxford before gaining its own identity in 1754. Gardner arose as an outgrowth of parts of Ashburnham, Templeton, Westminster and Winchendon. Ipswich Canada initially formed the latter, and later South Town emerged and finally became Westminster.

Since Worcester County's date of incorporation, it has been altered minimally in terms of territory. As settlements developed within the original 14 towns of Worcester County, the birth of newer towns resulted in a number of the older towns' loss of stature they had once commanded. For instance, the public once considered Lancaster as the most powerful development in the county, but by 1850, five other towns owed their origins either in whole or in part to Lancaster. These towns, Leominster, Clinton, Bolton, Harvard and Berlin, caused Lancaster to diminish into a smaller and less influential town in the county.

Many other regions throughout Massachusetts experienced the same evolutions as Worcester County, and thus, a need for properly recording land ownership and transfers occurred. The introduction to a book titled "Indian Deeds of Hampden County," further indicates this need in 1634 and states, "Noe person whatsoever shall buy any land of any Indean without leave from the court." In the same year, the General Court also insisted, "that every town should keep a record book showing the ownership and transfer of all lands and should furnish the General Court with a transcript of the same."

The General Court subsequently decided that the county in which the land was located, rather than the respective towns, held the responsibility for creation and attainment of all land records. Through this series of declarations, the registries of deeds became established in

Massachusetts. The General Court's insistence that land records should be kept and land registrations should be made a permanent part of government was a novel idea, a system unfamiliar to England. Land records for Worcester County were kept before the county itself was incorporated. Prior to 1731, Middlesex County retained possession for Deeds for Worcester. Deeds for Oxford, Sutton and Uxbridge were held in Suffolk County, and deeds for towns in the western part of what is currently Worcester County were recorded in Hampshire County.

The incorporation of Worcester County resulted in the Legislature's determination that stated freeholders of the county would elect a Register of Deeds and Conveyances on the first Thursday in September 1731. During the Colonial Period and up until 1715, clerks of courts served simultaneously as registers of deeds. However, on July 26, 1715, a law was adopted, and this law noted updated changes, "...in each county some person having a freehold within said county to the value of a least 10 pounds should be chosen by the people for the county register of deeds for the terms of five years..." The intentions of a greater advantage to landowners and people who were in a special class eligibility for public office existed, which, in present day, are violations of contemporary requisites and laws governing publicly elected officials. However, in earlier times, the success of men of distinction was evident compared with common people in civic affairs, and the first registers of deeds descended from wealthy families.

Nonetheless, in current times, campaigns for public office demonstrate difficulties regardless of monetary restrictions and/or the attachment of criteria. Fortunately, office seekers are no longer required to attain a level of financial superiority before declaring their intentions for office. Although the law which was adopted in 1715 stated that registers of deeds should be elected every five years, it did not prohibit registers from seeking posts as clerks of courts or other county, municipal or state offices. In fact, some of the county's earliest registers, such as John Chandler II and Timothy Paine, served in several other elective offices simultaneously. A renewal of this law in 1781 and in 1855 a revamping of the law followed, with changes that called for an election of Registers of Deeds every three years. The law was revised again, and presently, registers are elected to office every six years.

In the past, the earliest annual reports of the County Commissioners often failed to contain any mention of the work done by the Registry of Deeds. The most recent and detailed accounts begin in the year 1895 and offer minimal information. In that year, the Commissioners' report disclosed the Registry receipts totaled \$1,802.00 and expenditures amounted to \$2,459.00. Despite the lack of the office's recordings of the number of instruments, the figure could not have been a staggering amount because the office employed no more than a dozen people.

The salary of Register of Deeds Harvey B. Wilder was \$500.00 that year, and David Merriam, the register for the Northern District of Worcester County, was paid \$300.00. T.S. Johnson, the county clerk of courts, received a salary of \$5,000.00.

By 1896, salaries increased. Wilder's pay improved to \$3,000.00; revenues at the Registry improved to \$10,253.00. Nearly all expenditures that year, \$10,607.00, was devoted to salaries. Most non-salary expenses were attributable to stationery, books, binding services and similar items. It was unlikely for these expenses to exceed \$1,000.00 per year.

The Registry experienced minimal change during Wilder's last years in office. Receipts and expenditures remained constant and never rose or fell by more than a few hundred dollars each year. A notable change was one staff addition, Lizzie Barker, as assistant register of deeds in 1897. Evidence shows that she may have been the first woman to assume a position of such elevation in the registry. Her annual salary was \$1,200.00.

Another significant event during Wilder's last two years in office was the registry's movement into quarters at the new Court House among the clerk of courts, the grand jury and the commissioners. Occupancy in a new building positively influenced the registry's visibility and image. Until the start of the 20th Century, the Registry of Deeds was not considered an office that generated enthusiasm among the civic activists of Worcester County. In many parts of the country, the county clerk of courts assumed registries and Registers of Deeds, and in some states, the county clerk was considered as one of the more powerful and prestigious offices. When Daniel Kent became register of deeds in 1901, the office acquired stature for the first time.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REGISTRY UNDER DANIEL KENT

In a short period of time, Kent transformed the registry into a modern and efficient office. His initial year as register included an alteration which replaced the handwritten system of recording deeds with a typewritten system and demonstrated as both, "...a great improvement and convenience to the public..." and a space-saver. In 1900, 33 volumes of records were placed on shelves in the Registry. Despite the registry recording 1000 more instruments in 1905 than in 1900, only 24 were added over the next five years.

The typewritten system change also was a cost-effective method. During the first five-year period in which it was used, net savings totaled approximately \$1,800.00. Kent also adopted another innovative method of indexing and preserving records: the Emery Record Preserving Company's process of mounting plans. Although recording fees imposed upon the public were increased to offset the costs of this service, Kent claimed the public felt "it was worth it" and insisted "It's a good way to preserve records."

In 1905, Kent reported the completion of the card plan index, which started in 1904, and the index's storage in new metal cases in the Record Hall at the Court House. The index contained all plans filed since 1731 and included the names of owners, abutters, surveyors, streets and local names. Also in 1905, the Registry observed a banner year with figures that exceeded Registry records; its revenues were \$12,160.00, and it recorded 17,465 instruments. Throughout the entire decade, business rose sharply at the Registry of Deeds- a trend indicative of the nation's economy. Daniel Kent's report to the county commissioners in 1906, for example, attributed another gain in Registry receipts "to the healthy business conditions and the increase in the population of the county." Two years after, Kent remarked, "notwithstanding the business depression during the past year, work at the Registry has exceeded all past records." By the end of the decade, the Registry recorded more than 20,000 instruments — a first in history. Kent reported it cost an average of 88 cents to index each record, but the average receipt per instrument was 80 cents.

He also demonstrated a concern for preservation and protection of the records in his office. Thus, in 1908, the construction of a fireproof record room, or vault, took place and adjoined the Registry hall. Old record cases were placed in this room. Additionally, a large fireproof room in the basement of the Court House was built in order to store all old indexes and the cards which made the consolidated indexes. If the indexes in the Registry office were destroyed, these precautionary measures allowed for the reproduction of new ones.

A year later, Kent and his staff devoted themselves to re-indexing records from 1731 to 1840 because, "The present indexes are very incomplete and full of errors... Banks and private investors are insisting on more thorough examination of early titles. Private research of early

records is also becoming more frequent." By 1911, the Worcester District Registry of Deeds had established itself as one of the most efficient registries in Massachusetts; Kent wrote, "Various systems of handling instruments, indexing and keeping the records, which have been introduced by the present register, have become so complete that no new work in these lines was undertaken during the past year. The Worcester District Registry of Deeds is considered by those familiar with other Registries of Deeds as complete in its appointments and facilities for finding any record desired as any in the state."

For the next several years, work proceeded satisfactorily. Receipts were constant at approximately \$20,000.00 per year. Soon, the Registry projected itself as a leader in the returns of recorded documents to the public. As Kent stated, "Ordinarily, instruments are ready to be delivered in from 10 to 14 days from their receipt. No other registry in the state doing as large a business delivers its papers as promptly." In 1916, the Registry once again reached all-time highs in revenues and recorded instruments. An amount greater than \$23,000.00 was received during the year, and more than 28,000 instruments were handled. However, the First World War created an impact on property transactions. Although 1917 reported an increase in deed recordings, mortgages were down substantially. Both Kent and David Merriam, the Northern District register, spoke about the war's effect on local real estate business; Kent remarked, "This shows that the general falling off of business was owing to the peculiar financial conditions which we experienced during the past nine months. It is safe to assume if banks had continued to loan money on real estate, there would have been a fair amount of activity in new development and building."

Merriam's direct remarks noted, "It has often been said that real estate is the last thing to feel any unusual or extraordinary condition in the business world or the money market; doubtless this accounts for the fact that the war seems to have had no appreciable effect on the Registry business until the last few months." In 1917 and in 1918, noticeable impact on Registry business was well-known. Receipts decreased by \$3,000.00 in the first year and by another \$3,000.00 in the second year. Today, these numbers might receive the slightest concern, but during those years, these declines represented a loss of roughly 25 percent in revenues in only a two-year period. The Registry had never witnessed such drastic declines.

"The reason for the falling off can be easily explained," Kent announced. He reasoned that, "Savings banks have made no new loans and government restrictions on new buildings, together with the high cost of materials, tended to decrease the number of transactions in real estate." After 1919, the "war to end all wars" ceased, and as a result, the country regained its strength. For the first time in history, receipts surpassed \$30,000.00 and instruments recorded totaled 37,543 - an increase of about 75 percent over the previous year.

Prosperity abounded and the salaries of county employees increased immensely. Kent received a raise to \$5,044.00, a high wage for that period. Even after twenty years, the register of deeds earned only a few hundred dollars per year more than Kent's salary. Along with the register's salary, the clerk of courts also encountered rising wages. T.S. Johnson's salary increased to \$5,600.00, \$400.00 more than it was a quarter of a century earlier. Government suddenly discovered that registries of deeds across the state existed as vital offices.

Prosperity continued to be the prominent word in the Worcester Registry of Deeds. Receipts soared beyond \$44,000.00 and the number of instruments recorded beyond 38,000. (An increase in fees assessed the public for recordings accounted for, in a large part, the tremendous increase in receipts).

Work in the Registry just began to peak, but Kent approached retirement. Within ten years, the nation's economy, coupled with high unemployment figures, would become everyone's chief concern.

CHAPTER SIX

PROSPERITY-- THEN THE DEPRESSION

Two major events occurred throughout the years 1921-1930: Daniel Kent's retirement, and a severe decline in business resultant primarily due to the Stock Market crash in 1929 and the general unsteadiness of the economy. After serving admirably as register for 22 years, Kent announced his retirement at the end of 1922 near his 70th birthday. A day after New Year's Day, the commissioners dutifully recorded Kent's achievements. They acknowledged, "He found the Registry a small department...he leaves it a large department." In Kent's last summary report for the county, he wrote: "At that time [when Kent took over the Registry] the Registry was considered by those familiar with public records as one of the poorest in the state. The indexes were a nightmare to examiners and an endless labyrinth to the public. Work was in a dilapidated condition with no adequate system for carrying it on... I am leaving records which give the number of instruments received and copied daily during my 22 years; the names of the clerks who copied and compared each instrument during that time; a list of all employees, giving a monthly and yearly account of the work each did and the wages they were paid; and daily, monthly and yearly receipts."

The commissioners' final tribute to Kent went accordingly: "During his long term of 22 years of public service, he has not only kept pace with the constantly increasing volume of business but has introduced the typewritten records, the description indexes and has put the office generally on a high plane of efficiency and made it one of the best Registries in the Commonwealth. He has written books on the science of indexing and has become a recognized authority on that subject."

Kent advanced the Registry to previously unattained levels of efficiency. His successor, Chester S. Bavis, inherited the office which prevailed as a source of pride to the entire county and did nothing to discredit the Registry's reputation when he took over. Bavis' transition appears to have been a smooth one. Registry revenues topped \$50,000.00 for the first time in 1923 and within three years rose to \$62,000.00 - a figure that would not be attained again for many years. The Registry had become one of the more dynamic offices in Worcester County. When Bavis's salary was elevated to \$6,500.00 in 1925, he reigned as the highest paid official in county government.

Amid the euphoria, curious indicators surfaced. In 1917, Merriam remarked, "real estate is the last...to feel any unusual...condition in the business world," which indicated ominous signs which were presented through Registry statistics. The prediction of the Stock Market Crash of 1929, based solely upon evidence contained in local real estate figures, may have been too great a declaration to make, but indicators pointed to a dramatic sloughing off period for the immediate future.

In 1926, Bavis's fourth full year in office, receipts were down by almost \$7,000.00. The war years resulted in a decrease in revenues by \$6,000.00 during a two-year run, but business rebounded when the war ended. In the past, it was conceivable that 1926's losses may be made up within a short time span. However, the bad news lingered; during a five-year period, revenues fell by \$21,000.00 which equaled an approximate 33 percent drop. The number of instruments

recorded dropped from a high of 42,000 in 1925 to a low of 29,757 at the end of the decade. The severe dollar cutbacks of the Twenties were curtailed in 1930, but instrument recordings also dwindled to 21,246 in 1932. The low volume of documents during this time resembled to the small amount in 1910.

Furthermore, historians can recall the uneasiness of times. The Stock Market collapse, which was the forerunner of the Depression, followed the Roaring Twenties. Even when Franklin Roosevelt occupied the White House for the first time in 1932, 13 million Americans stood in the unemployment lines across the nation. The Thirties lacked the progression which other eras encountered. Through a period of great consternation, the nation struggled, and jobs existed as the prime worry at home, and threats of war remained the chief topic of conversation abroad. This period lent itself to expansion or games of chance, and real estate suffered through a lean period. In 1931, Registry receipts totaled \$46,736, and the number of instruments recorded amounted to 24,998. By 1939, receipts had increased by only \$4,000.00, and the Registry recorded 1000 instruments more than it did nine years earlier. In between 1931 and 1939, little deviation from these figures resulted.

Under Bavis, innovation lacked. The recording systems instituted by Kent functioned smoothly, and Bavis seemed content not to tamper with a successful system. Despite a few minor alterations to the Registry office (the addition of tables, the transfer of a few shelves, and the addition of lights), minute change appeared. In 1938, significant personnel changes occurred: Assistant Registers Lottie Hubbard and Esther Moore retired and E. Edwin Olund and Ralph Kendall replaced them. On Nov. 24, 1939, Chester Bavis died after serving 17 years as Register of Deeds in the Worcester office. Olund became interim register, Kendall retained his position as second assistant, and Norman French occupied the assistant register's chair. As a final tribute to Bavis, Olund wrote: "Endowed with patience and kindly understanding, he had endeared himself to all during his years of public service."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE START OF A NEW ERA

One of the longest tenures in Registry history began in 1940 with the election of Robert R. Gallagher. He would serve through four decades before passing away in 1972. John F. Mullan, Jr. and Edward Gariepy as assistant and second assistant respectively were his staff. During Gallagher's first full year in office, he effectuated improvement in the return time of real estate documents which were deposited for recording at the Registry. A quarter of a century earlier, Daniel Kent guaranteed return of deeds within 10 to 14 days. However, (Gallagher did not attribute the blame in lengthy return time either to Bavis or Olund) there was a halt in the process, and people received documents five to six weeks after they had been brought to the Court House. The new return time did not equal Kent's, but Gallagher reduced it to approximately three weeks. This accomplishment, Gallagher explained, succeeded because of coordination of the various departments' work.

The improved office efficiency proved crucial since the real estate market showed significant advancement. For the first time in fifteen years, receipts at the Registry surpassed \$54,000.00 in both 1940 and 1941. Yet by 1942, the U.S. had involved itself in the war in Europe and the Pacific. Gallagher accepted a commission as lieutenant in the Naval Reserve and left the Registry for active duty. In his absence, Mullan ran the office. Despite the domination of

day-to-day living in the war, Registry records demonstrated that Americans at home could still devote some attention to the real estate market.

Mullan's report in 1943 read, "The year marked by a healthy real estate market, particularly in the field of medium-priced single homes... The lack of building, due to wartime material shortages, and rent control restrictions, did not have the drastic effect on the market many had predicted. They did serve, however, to limit speculation in multi-family dwellings and curb inflationary price rises." Interest remained moderate in single-family dwellings, and the annual rates of receipt and instrument recordings during the war years were \$48,000.00 and 26,000 respectively. When the war did end, and a return to normalcy prevailed in 1946, Registry statistics reflected the nation's optimism in its future.

Revenues, assisted by a boost in recording fees, soared to \$85,505.00, and the number of instruments recorded surpassed 40,000 in 1946. A year later, the latter figure declined slightly, but receipts rose to \$105,000.00. Expansion became prominent as the number of rooms needed to accommodate Registry customers, as well as the materials contained within it, increased. One somber event in an otherwise profitable year included the death of Assistant Register John F. Mullan, Jr. in April. Despite that event, in 1948, Gallagher introduced two new systems to the Registry: Microfilming all old record books and a reporting service for the assessors of several municipalities in the Worcester Registry district. The reporting service produced photostatic copies of land transfers from 1948 in the City of Worcester and the towns of Blackstone, Brookfield, North Brookfield, Phillipston, Sutton and Warren. The copies were submitted to the boards of assessors of these towns.

When the decade ended, Registry revenues surpassed \$100,000.00 for a third consecutive year, and thus, the office and the duty of recording land transactions embarked on a new era, one which would be devoid of crises and setbacks. A second assistant register, Phoebe Rocheleau who was appointed to replace John F. Mullan, Jr. in 1947, died January 29, 1950. Richard Sheridan replaced her, and Sheridan would continue to serve in that capacity and as interim register until 1972.

Microfilming became an integral function in the Registry during the Fifties. In 1950, a new photostat-microfilm department was constructed, and three years later, the job of microfilming all old registered land certificates completed. The Registry then set out to microfilm all bankruptcy indexes.

For a brief period in 1952, the Registry office relocated to the rear of the Court House while extensive repairs were rendered to the Registry of Deeds. While monies accrued by the Registry escalated annually, the office did not always show a profit. For example, in 1956, the Registry totaled \$184,000.00 in revenues, but the labor intensive budget absorbed over 90 percent of the total expenditures of \$205,000.00. From 1960 through 1969, the Registry functioned on the merits of earlier innovations. When Daniel Kent's pious devotion to detail, to the establishment of a superior indexing system, to the setting of precedents for preserving old records, was combined with Robert Gallagher's implementation of microfilm systems and Gallagher's own devotion to duty, the office settled into a comfortable period. Workers hardly idled, and receipts mounted annually and rose from \$216,000.00 in 1960 to nearly \$300,000.00 by 1969.

The war in Southeast Asia seemed to have had no negative impact on the real estate market in the United States. Americans were satisfied with their belief that United States' involvement in the conflict would be short-lived, and since this struggle took place in such a

remote location, risk should not become a factor in local real estate exchanges. However, a shift in attitudes developed throughout the years.

The real estate market, as reflected in Registry of Deeds statistics, often served as a barometer for social habits. Throughout a number of significant moments in history, the real estate business suffered through periods of decline. During World War I, the Stock Market Crash, the Depression, and World War II, the gains of real estate curtailed because of both war and unemployment. Although, throughout the conflict in Vietnam, the business of buying and selling homes in Worcester County remained steady. In 1965, when the national role in the war escalated, Registry revenues also grew to \$313,000.00, which was the greatest in the history of the office. The rest of the decade included subsequent, but they failed to exceed five percent. In 1968, Daniel Callahan, who was appointed assistant register in 1965, passed away. He was the third assistant to pass away while serving under Gallagher. By early 1972, the workload began to exceed staff capabilities. The Registry struggled to uphold the standard of a quick return time of deeds and other documents. Staff shortages remained partly responsible for the backlog of unrecorded data. Additionally, the Registry lacked computers which could have relieved the problem. Then, on April 22, 1972, Robert Gallagher passed away and problems multiplied. Such conditions emerged at the end of what was otherwise a solid tenure. As register in 1941, Gallagher inherited a job which demanded the reduction of the lengthy return time of recorded instruments which existed during the previous regime. Gallagher alleviated that problem within his first years in office and prevented it until the end of his career.

Gallagher wrote a letter to the county commissioners, two months before his passing, and explained, "several department heads were either ill or had resigned, new personnel was not yet familiar with the operations to make creditable contributions, and this all combined to create a tremendous backlog of work."

After Richard Sheridan assumed the post of interim register, he pointed out that no new staff additions had been made since 1953 (a period of 19 years), and that the Registry needed an increase in personnel in order to rectify the backlog problem. More than 13,000 documents had not been processed that year, and even strict attention and focus for an entire month left 13,000 instruments unprocessed. These conditions came to a halt after the election of Anthony J. Vigliotti as register of deeds in the autumn of 1972.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE REGISTRY ENTERS THE COMPUTER AGE

Personnel adjustments and the high volume of instruments brought to the Court House contributed to the lack of Registry attention to the multitude of records in early 1972. Receipts approached a half-million dollars, which led to a business boom. A remarkable total of greater than 55,000 documents were received in that year. In current times, that total equals less than 20 percent of recordings.

During the 1973-74 fiscal year (the County adopted an 18-month budget to conform with the federal government's fiscal year), John Shea Esq., former mayor of Worcester, retired from his position as assistant register. At this time, Register Vigliotti added two new assistant registers, first assistant John J. Mitchell, former chief counsel of the Massachusetts Public Defenders in Worcester, and P. Stephen Turo, the second assistant. Vigliotti initiated steps to deal effectively with high volumes of work. At the Register's request, the employees donated a weekend of work, which changed the hand-written and typed index card system. The Register

then led the Worcester Registry into the computer age with an automated system of indexing. Information became easily available to the public in a convenient and expeditious manner with less individual work for Registry employees. Less tedious work for the employees allowed for the completion of a higher number of tasks in less time, and the Registry advanced rapidly. Vigliotti also established an in house computer indexing system that printed indexes of records daily.

The initiation of a compact book system reduced the size and weight of the record books without the sacrifice of any space. The return time for recorded documents decreased to seven days from several months, which was impressive for the time. Nowadays, the return time is three to five days. During the 1974-75 fiscal year, Vigliotti instituted a new system of banking monies collected from instrument fees. In the past, all monies were deposited in non-interest bearing checking accounts, but now dollars could be deposited in a savings account, which provided the means for the Registry to return thousands of dollars in interest to the county treasurer on an annual basis.

In 1977, the Registry of Deeds received three contract awards which totaled \$242,000.00. The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) facilitated the grants and permitted the Registry to add 45 employees to the staff at no expense to the county. These additional employees assisted in efforts to preserve and restore old and valuable Registry records. The office has continued to function as a vital part of government. As the decade neared an end, the Registry recorded approximately 60,000 documents with revenues of \$500,000.00 to the county, and \$800,000.00 to the State via excise fees. Despite the Registry's readiness for the real estate boom of the 1980's with its advanced computer system, every employee was strained to the limit with the recordings of documents. Moreover, in 1980, the Registry recorded 53,436 documents. In 1985, 109,044 documents were recorded. In 1986, the recording of 154,723 occurred, and in 1987, recorded documents totaled 147,256. 1988 consisted of 125,124 recorded documents. Without the foresight and planning of Register Vigliotti, land records may not have thrived, and the Worcester Registry would have suffered the loss of confidence and respect which befell other Registries of Deeds. Despite this success in the 1980s, second assistant register Paul Mullan passed away. His replacement Stanley Kachinowicz would pass away as well, and thus, the position would remain unoccupied for many years.

The Registry began to use computer technology in 1974, and in 1976, the Worcester Registry in partnership with IBM developed an advanced computerized indexing system. The installation of Wang Computers in 1989 and an improved system that utilized Wang's Optical Scanning System for document imaging permitted the user to call up a picture of the document on the computer screen. Prior to the installation, one had to go to bound volumes in order to view the available recorded data and a copy of the document. The public benefitted and still benefits from these systems because both the public and users of the Registry records had and have more convenience and quicker access to a greater collection of information. Also, substantial cost savings and reduced time became feasible. The Land Track system, a Registry offered accessibility, permitted off site access to the Registry records, and more than 150 subscribers (attorneys, realtors, bankers, etc.) used this system and produced substantial additional revenues for the taxpayers of Worcester County.

In 1998, the Worcester District Registry of Deeds became an office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth after the abolishment of the County Government. Joseph McGuire Esq., former Judge of the Industrial Accident Board, was named second assistant register, a position that he held until his retirement in 2003. On June 2, 2003, the registry utilized a new ACS Inc

designed computer system, which electronically recorded documents and provided computerized indices, along with an easily accessible online search of documents dating back to 1965. With this new system, the registry no longer needed to produce paper books. Today, 50% of documents are recorded electronically, which makes the recording process even more user friendly.

CHAPTER NINE

WHAT IS THE REGISTRY OF DEEDS?

The Worcester District Registry of Deeds, otherwise known as the largest Registry district in Massachusetts, acquired jurisdiction over 55 cities and towns. The Registry has a size larger than the entire County of Middlesex, which numbers 54 cities and towns within its two districts. The Worcester Registry's progression has advanced since the 18th Century when officials from Middlesex and Hampden Counties heavily argued against the creation of a new county in Central Massachusetts.

In its earliest days, the Registry operated on a budget of only hundreds of dollars, and annual revenues for a dozen employees or less fell into this range.

Today, 20 employees work at the Registry, which not only operates on a budget of approximately 2 million dollars, but also generates 35 to 51 million dollars for the commonwealth. Unlike in 1731 when Worcester County numbered 14 towns, currently, these 55 cities and towns listed below are contained within the Worcester District:

ATHOL HOPEDALE ROYALSTON
AUBURN HUBBARDSTON RUTLAND
BARRE LANCASTER SHREWSBURY BERLIN LEICESTER SOUTHBOROUGH
BLACKSTONE BOLTON BOYLSTON
MENDON MILFORD MILLBURY
SOUTHBRIDGE SPENCER STERLING
BROOKFIELD CHARLTON CLINTON DOUGLAS DUDLEY
EAST BROOKFIELD
MILLVILLE
NEW BRAINTREE NORTHBOROUGH NORTHBRIDGE NORTH BROOKFIELD
OAKHAM
STURBRIDGE SUTTON TEMPLETON UPTON UXBRIDGE WARREN
GARDNER OXFORD WEBSTER GRAFTON PAXTON WESTBOROUGH
HARDWICK PETERSHAM WEST BOYLSTON
HARVARD PHILLIPSTON WEST BROOKFIELD
HOLDEN PRINCETON WINCHENDON
WORCESTER

As keeper of land ownership and real estate transactions, the Registry performs a vital service. Anyone wishing to document the history of ownership of a parcel of property can regard the Registry as an important source of information. The Registry of Deeds also permits Boards of Assessors throughout its district to determine current municipal records of ownership. Records at the Registry of Deeds have been arranged systematically for the convenience of its patrons as well as for the Registry's use. Three indexes enable the public and Registry employees to locate information with no difficulty. The Plan Index located in the Registry's main office contains an alphabetical listing of plan owners, plan names, location, and surveyors' names

which are kept in electronic indices and in electronic book form. Moreover, computerized indices refer to the plan book and page where a copy of the plan can be found. The Registry retains original plans within the public-accessible computer database, paper copies, and microfilm copies.

Additionally, land records are maintained in index form at the Registry. The index to these records allows patrons to locate information on those who convey property (grantors) and those who receive property (grantees). Similar in plan records, the alphabetical form of indices offers guidance to land record books and the pages of specific documents. The record books are found adjacent to the index, in the upper and lower vaults, and in electronic format within the Registry database. Paper and electronic indices in the Land Court department contain alphabetical listings of all present owners of registered land within the district. These indices contain certificate numbers, which make reference to owners' certificates, and reside in books within the Registry's computerized database. Since the earliest days of Worcester County government, the Registry's evolution has benefited the public immensely. Presently, all Registry of Deeds books, documents, plans, and other recorded information are microfilmed, scanned, data entered and securely stored in databases and storage facilities at offsite locations.

CHAPTER TEN

THE REGISTERS OF DEEDS

As mentioned earlier, in many counties across the United States, no elected official known as register of deeds exists. Instead, the clerk of courts assumes duties of such a figure. In the earliest days of state government, a similar situation existed in Massachusetts. During the incorporation of Worcester County 1731, a statement which specifically noted that a Registry of Deeds should be established was integrated. No statute prohibited clerks of courts, or any other office holder, from seeking the job of register of deeds. In fact, the county's first register of deeds held more than seven titles simultaneously.

JOHN CHANDLER II (1731- 1760)

The voters of Worcester County elected John Chandler II as the first register of deeds. He lived in the county during the 17th and 18th Centuries in a powerful and prestigious family. Although he did not settle in Worcester until the year he was elected register (1731), he became immersed completely in local politics.

Charles A. Chase, who served as county treasurer more than a century later, wrote of Chandler: "He was so closely associated with the affairs of the town and county for 31 years until his death that, to distinguish him from his father and son, I style him 'Worcester John.'" As a clerk of courts for 23 years, a judge for eight years, sheriff for 11 years, county treasurer for 26 years, register of deeds and probate for 30 years, and judge of probate for six years, Chandler is recognized as an early authority on county government and its principles. It seems unlikely he might have had time for anything else, but nevertheless, Chandler could not divorce himself from municipal matters. He served on the board of selectmen and as town treasurer from 1741 to 1752, frequently participated as town moderator at annual meetings, and served as a representative to the General Court for several years. Chandler's capability in each and every endeavor made him a respectable man who was worthy of the first register position. When he died August 7, 1762, he still retained his positions as sheriff, judge and probate judge.

TIMOTHY PAINE (1761-1774)

Timothy Paine succeeded his stepfather, John Chandler II, as register of deeds in 1761 and served in that capacity until 1775. Paine's involvement in government matters did not equate to his stepfather's, but Paine possessed numerous titles.

For ten years (1757-1767), he was register of probate and served as selectman and representative to the General Court. Paine held the title councilor to His Majesty in England from 1763 to 1768, but the colonists took opposition to his "stout loyalty to the King." Documents at the Worcester Historical Society indicate Paine endured significant pressure in 1774, which eventually caused him to relinquish his position as councilor. Accounts state that 3000 citizens of Worcester County arrived in Worcester before 7 a.m. on August 23 to demand Paine's resignation as councilor. Despite his loyalties to the king at this time, Paine received forgiveness and ran for the U.S. Congress with an endorsement from the "stout old rebel" Isaiah Thomas. Paine, a graduate of Harvard in 1748, ranked fifth in his class. He married his stepsister, Sarah Chandler. When he became holder of a large tract of land in 1767, on what is now known as Lincoln Street, his status as one of the largest real estate owners in Worcester carried on. Paine died in 1793 at the age of 63.

NATHAN BALDWIN (1775-1783)

Nathan Baldwin, the first elected register of deeds in 1775, served for a total of nine years. Baldwin spoke for local patriots during their battle with England and never lacked courage when the time came to speak out against the crown and in defense of civil liberties.

Born in 1720, Baldwin served as a selectman in Worcester in 1770 and as town clerk from 1775-1778. He earned a reputation as a writer and a companion to a number of the patriots. During the Revolution, Baldwin took on the assigned duty of writing to the Massachusetts General Court about residential protests against actions of the crown. However, Baldwin helped found the Political Society, a secret association of prominent men in Worcester who banded in opposition to the policies of the king in England.

Baldwin wrote numerous communications to the Legislature; one asked the General Court to "use your influence to obtain a law to put an end to that unchristian and impolitic practice of making slaves of the human species in this province."

Baldwin was married twice and had five children.

DANIEL CLAPP (1784-1816)

Daniel Clapp was register of deeds in the Worcester District for 32 years and surpassed Robert Gallagher's reign as longest in the history of the office. Born October 10, 1739, he was the son of John and Abigail (Estabrook) Clapp. His early years were spent in Rutland, and he served as a Rutland representative to the First Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774. Clapp also held the rank of colonel in the military. While living in Boston in 1757, he became a member of the singing choir connected with the religious Society of Church Green. Information extracted from "the Clapp Family in America" suggests that Daniel Clapp "was probably married but had no children." During the latter part of his life, Clapp resided in Worcester where he died in 1827. He was register of deeds from 1784 to 1816 and stepped down at the age of 77. Only Anthony J. Vigliotti surpasses Clapp's long period in office as Register of Deeds.

OLIVER FISKE (1816-1820)

For a mere five years, Oliver Fiske held the position as register of deeds but prevailed as one of the most distinguished men ever to hold the office.

Son of the Rev. Nathan Fiske of Brookfield, Fiske was born in Brookfield in 1762.

During the Revolution, he enlisted in the American Army when he was 18 years old. Upon leaving the military, Fiske studied medicine and played a prominent role as the president in the formation of the County Medical Society just prior to the end of the 18th Century.

In 1824, he obtained an MD from Harvard. Before the achievement of his MD, Fiske used his prominence as a Federalist and skills as a public speaker to boost his stature in local politics. He was elected treasurer in 1798 for the Town of Worcester and two years later became town clerk. In 1803, he was appointed a special justice of the Court of Common Pleas. Fiske also he served as a member of the Executive Council from 1813-1815 and he held the office of register of deeds from 1816-1821.

In addition to his involvement in the occupations previously mentioned, Fiske was a member of the American Academy of Arts of Sciences, an associate justice of the General Court of Sessions in 1807, and a corporator of the Worcester County Institution for Savings. The first savings bank chartered in Worcester County and in Massachusetts outside of Boston opened in 1824.

Fiske's retirement from an active role in politics in 1822 was mainly caused because of deafness. He devoted the majority of his last 15 years to agriculture. Fiske died in Boston on January 25, 1837.

ARTEMAS WARD (1821-1845)

Artemas Ward was register of deeds for a quarter of a century from 1821 to 1846. Although he descended from William Ward of Sudbury, and was a relative of General Artemas Ward, a local Colonial military hero and a respected county official, Ward's own lifestyle likely lacked notoriety. Born May 18, 1776 in Worcester, he was married first to Betsy Phillips of Milford in 1798 and, following her death, to Mary Anne Barber of Worcester in 1816. He had 13 children from both marriages. Ward died November 11, 1850, at the age of 74.

ALEXANDER H. WILDER (1846-1873)

Alexander H. Wilder became register of deeds after the retirement of Artemas Ward in 1846. Born July 20, 1804 in Lancaster to a well-known family, Wilder devoted his entire career to the Registry of Deeds. Upon his arrival in Worcester in 1823, he immediately went to work under the supervision of Ward. The following year, rheumatic fever left him crippled for life but did not keep him from fulfilling his duties in the Registry.

For 23 years, Wilder served as a clerk and assistant to Artemas Ward. He succeeded Ward as register and continued to win re-election until his death on December 12, 1874. His full association with the Registry of Deeds spanned 51 years- a true mark of dedication. Upon his death, the Spy, a Worcester newspaper of the day, remarked, "Probably no one who habitually transacts business with that office can remember the time when Mr. Wilder was not employed in it and the experience of very few goes back to the time of the register who preceded him." The Spy also labeled him as "a model official."

HARVEY B. WILDER (1873-1875) & (1877-1900)

Harvey B. Wilder, born October 12, 1836, was the son of Alexander Wilder and the county commissioners appointed him to fill the unexpired term of his father. In 1856, at the age

of 20, he became the chief clerk in the Registry. Similar his father, he devoted himself at an early age and for much of his life to the Registry of Deeds. He resigned the position in 1875 but victoriously ran for election in 1876. His entire career as register equaled that of his father's.

CHARLES A. CHASE (1876)

Charles Augustus Chase interrupted the 54-year reign of the Wilders as registers of deeds. He held the position for one year, between the time Harvey Wilder resigned and then won the election for the first time. Many remember Chase's service as county treasurer from 1865-1876. However, during his time, Chase embodied a high, political opinion and failed to enjoy the popular support of any parties. His retirement from politics in 1876 demonstrated his love for social affairs.

As a graduate of Harvard, where he ranked 17th in his class, Chase participated in societies, convivial clubs and organizations in Worcester. He helped promote the Worcester Lyceum and its lecture courses and entertained the majority of lecturers who came to Worcester. Chase also had an extreme interest in journalism; he lived for a period in Boston and worked on the staff of the Boston Daily Advertiser. In later years, he became part owner of the Worcester Evening Gazette. Chase died in 1911 at the age of 78.

DANIEL KENT (1901-1922)

In 1900, Daniel Kent was elected register of deeds and is remembered as an innovator and expert on land records and indexing systems. Born January 2, 1853, Kent graduated from Amherst College and rose immediately to the top of the local business world. In 1881, he partook in the establishment of the Lakeside Manufacturing Co. in Leicester, and in a short time, he became president of the company. As a resident of Leicester, he was chairman of the board of selectmen, chairman of the trustees of the public library, chairman of the Park Committee, secretary of the School Committee, and town moderator.

Kent also became a member of the Republican State Committee from the Third Senatorial District from 1892-1895 and served as secretary of the Republican State Committee and state conventions in 1894 and 1895. Kent published a book, "Land Records, a System of Indexing," in 1903. Kent's book is considered to be the first work ever written about that subject. All in all, Kent established of the Worcester District Registry of Deeds as one of the most efficient and professional registries in Massachusetts.

CHESTER S. BAVIS (1923-1939)

Chester Swan Bavis, a native of Calais, Maine, and a graduate of schools in that state, occupied the office of register of deeds for nearly two full decades before passing away on November 24, 1939 at the age of 57. The voters of Worcester County elected him, and he was the last of a long line of Republicans, Federalists, and Loyalists elected to the post. Born in Maine in 1882, Bavis graduated from Bowdoin College in 1906 and was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in 1910. After graduation from Bowdoin, Bavis' first professional job was as a ticket agent for the Metropolitan Steamship Co. in New York. Soon after, he made his way to Worcester, and in 1912, he obtained a position in the office of the clerk of courts. Four years later, he became assistant clerk of the Superior Court and six years later in 1922, following Daniel Kent's retirement, Bavis was elected to the first of three six-year terms as register of deeds. During his tenure as register, Bavis wrote two books: "The Making of a Citizen" and "Key to the Federal Income and Excess Profits Taxes."

The first book included a series of questions and answers which dealt with the law and process of naturalization. Bavis worked as both a writer of his two books and as a director of the Independent Co-Operative Bank in Worcester for several years. He was married to Mertle Ball and had four daughters.

E. EDWIN OLUND (1939-1940)

E. Edwin Olund worked as assistant register in 1938 and, upon Bavis 's death in November 1939, obtained the title of interim register. He maintained this position until the election of 1940.

ROBERT R. GALLAGHER (1941-1972)

Robert R. Gallagher had served Worcester County and its patrons for more than 30 years until he succumbed to a heart attack on April 22, 1972, at the age of 68. When he was elected register of deeds for the first of six six-year terms in 1940, Gallagher became the first Democrat ever voted into that office. Six years earlier, he became the first Democrat ever to seek that office. However, he lost a closely contested race to Chester Bavis by a mere 3000 votes. More than 135,000 ballots were cast in that election.

Gallagher graduated from Holy Cross College in 1927 and from Boston University Law School in 1930. He became admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in 1930. Eight years after, Gov. Charles Hurley appointed him a public administrator, and Gallagher held that position until his election to the Registry of Deeds two years later. During World War II, he served in the Pacific for 34 months, and when the war ended, he left the service with the rank of lieutenant. In 1949, he was elected president of the Massachusetts Registers of Deeds Association and held that position for several terms.

Mr. Gallagher is credited with the modernization of the office and its land recording systems. The use of microfilm to record all indices, past and present, was introduced as work demands reached and maintained a steady level for more than 30 years. Beginning with the end of World War II, the Registry annually recorded greater than 40,000 instruments and often exceeded 50,000.

RICHARD F. SHERIDAN (1972)

After Robert Gallagher's death, Richard F. Sheridan served as interim register until a special election in the autumn of 1972 resulted in the election of Anthony J. Vigliotti. A resident of Blackstone, Sheridan was appointed second assistant register of deeds in 1953 after serving previously as a principal clerk in the Worcester District Registry of Deeds. He was first employed at the Court House in 1941.

ANTHONY J. VIGLIOTTI (1972-present)

Anthony J. Vigliotti, born November 5, 1942, and a native of Worcester, was elected Register of Deeds in a special election held nearly seven months after Mr. Gallagher's death in 1972. A near two-to-one margin in 1976 resulted in his re-election, and he currently is serving in his sixth term. Former president of the Massachusetts Register of Deeds Association and former vice-president of the Massachusetts Association of County Officials, he has been active in Worcester civic affairs. Mr. Vigliotti served on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Clerks, Recorders, and County Officials and chaired its Land Records Committee. In 1980, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention and held the position of a

regional coordinator for the Carter for President Committee in 1976. In September 1978 he was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for secretary of state in Massachusetts. He is a former president of the Worcester County Bar Association and currently serves as its Secretary Treasurer.

During Register Vigliotti's term, the following improvements were made to modernize the Worcester District Registry of Deeds:

- Modern technological computer system installed;

- 2010 Electronic recording of documents instituted- now 50% of documents E/R;

- Documents instantly returned to walk-in customers;

- Mailed documents returned in one day;

- Elimination of record and plan books and the electronic scanning of plans, documents into a computer database;

- Offsite security storage of registry books, plans, documents, and computerized information;

- Reduction in staffing from 59 employees to 22 employees;

- Institution of interest bearing checking accounts under county government;

- Partnership with Worcester public schools for public access to registry information via computer, Internet, and smartphones;

- Development of the commonwealth room providing programs for lawyers, consumers, courts, state agencies, and non-profits

- Publication of Consumer Information Booklets;

- Guide to Worcester District Registry of Deeds;

- Twenty most asked questions about the Registry of Deeds; History of the Worcester Registry of Deeds.

The computer system, which he introduced in the Worcester Registry, has since been copied in several other Registry offices throughout Massachusetts.

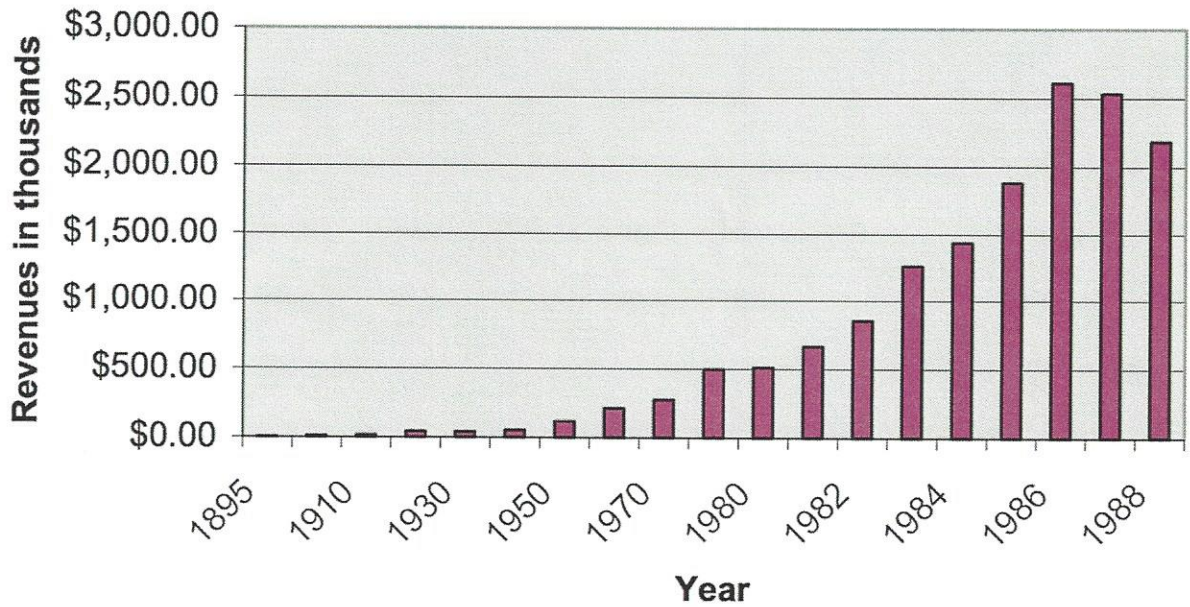
Mr. Vigliotti graduated from Gage Street Elementary School, and North High School. He received an Associate of the Arts degree from Worcester Junior College, AB degree in government from Clark University, a Juris Doctorate from Suffolk University School of Law and a Masters in Criminal Justice from Anna Maria College. Mr. Vigliotti has three sons, Joseph J. Vigliotti, John Kennedy Vigliotti, and Stephen A. Vigliotti.

Jan 2, 2019, Register Vigliotti will retire from the Worcester Registry of Deeds after serving as register 46 years, the longest tenure to date in Massachusetts history.

COUNTY DATA

FIGURE 1

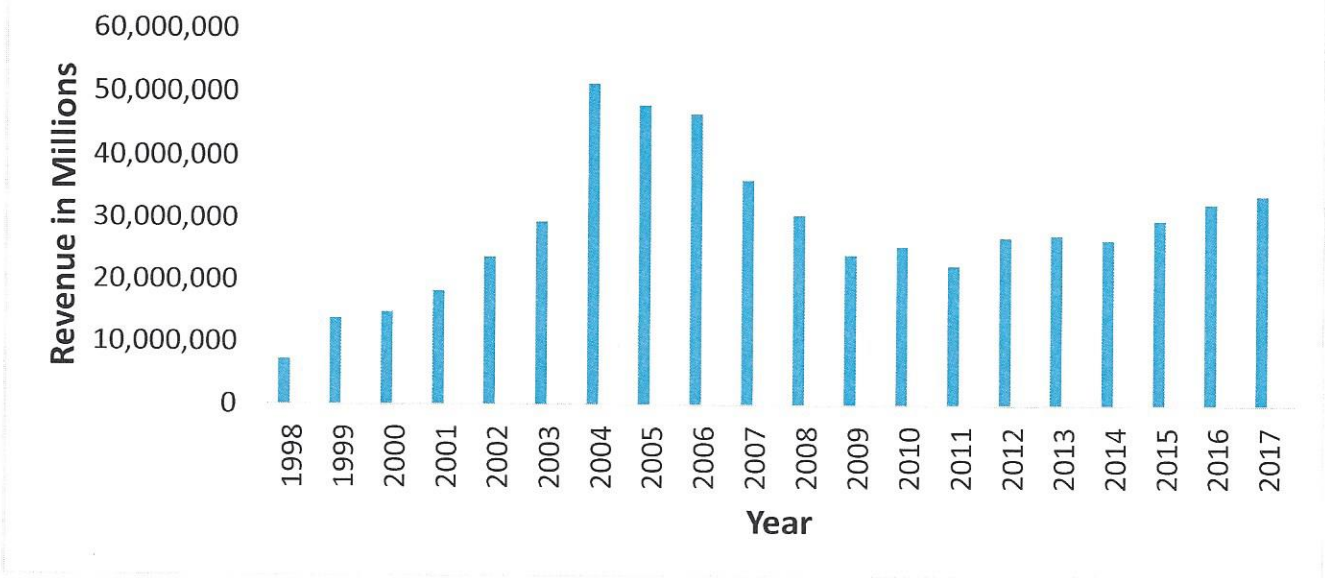
Worcester District Registry Revenues
(Figure 1)



As evidenced by the graph above, the Registry has consistently and exponentially improved itself financially throughout history. In some instances, increased recording fees, rather than by increased document recordings, caused the increased revenues. However, the only extended declines in revenues came prior to and during the Depression and the housing booms of the 1980s. The mentioned figures reflect those revenues which directly went to the County Treasurer. The Registry also collects State Excise fees. When a person's interest in realty is conveyed and exceeds one hundred dollars (\$100.00), a state excise tax is imposed. These amounts are not included in this graph.

FIGURE 2

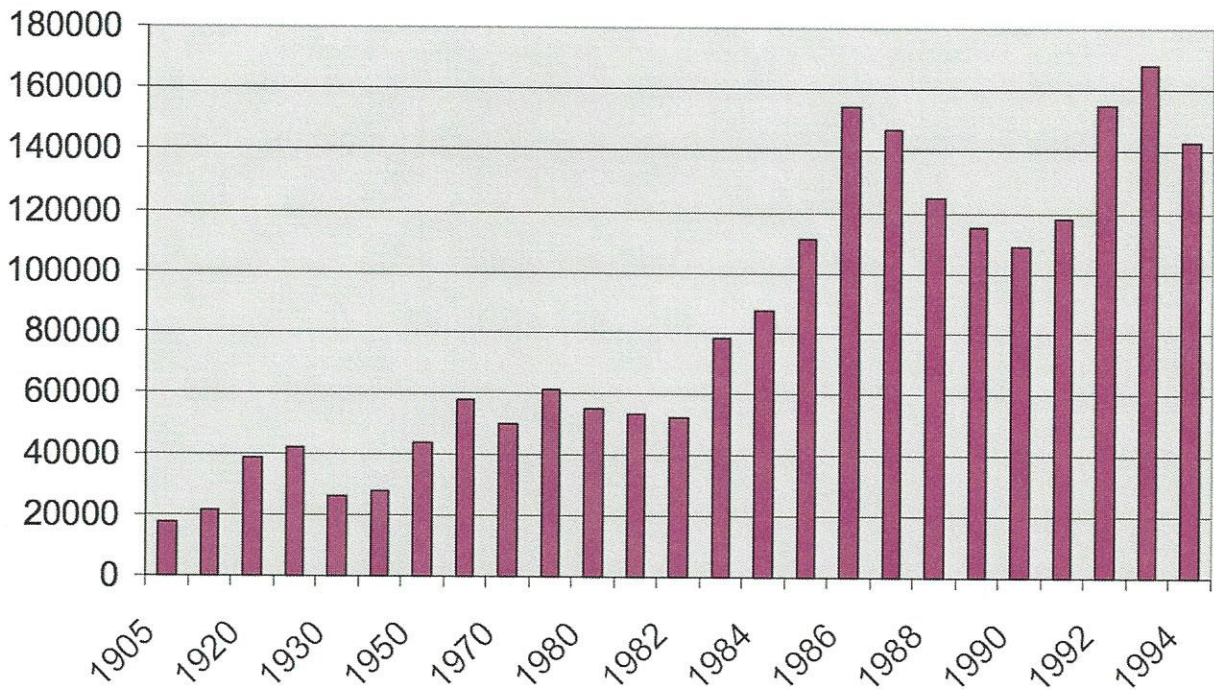
Registry of Deeds Revenues Post Abolition of County (Figure 2) **



** Secretary of the Commonwealth began 7/1/1998.

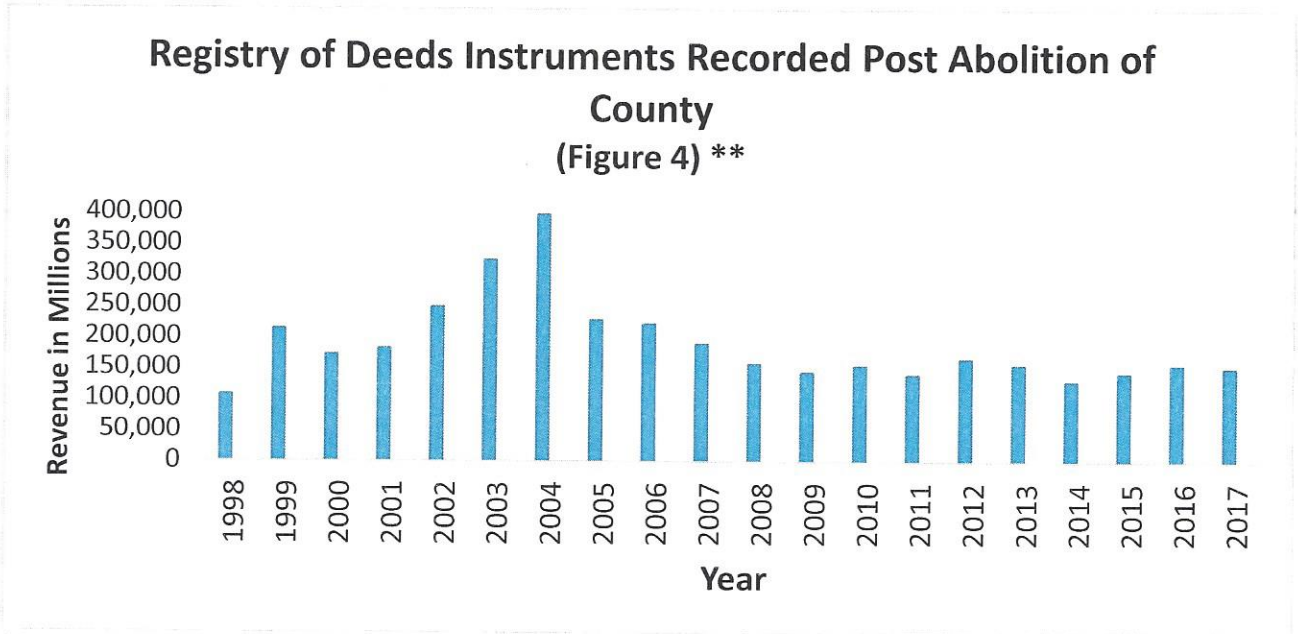
FIGURE 3

Instruments Recorded (Figure III)



As with Registry of Deeds revenues, instrument recordings tailed off during the Depression and after the housing boom of the 1980s. However, for the past two decades the figure regularly has exceeded 100,000 instruments.

FIGURE 4



** Secretary of the Commonwealth began 7/1/1998.