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THE

New England Historic-Genealogical Society

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL COURT

OF MASSACHUSETTS:

BEING A

COUNTER REMONSTRANCE OF SAID SOCIETY

TO A

REMONSTRANCE OR "MEMORIAL OF THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL
SOCIETY" AGAINST THE PETITION OF THE FORMER FOR
A CHANGE IN ITS CORPORATE NAME.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY DAVID CLAPP,

1858.

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REMONSTRANCE.

*“The New England Historic-Genealogical Society” to the
Members of the General Court :*

THE undersigned respectfully represents, that “The New England Historic-Genealogical Society” was incorporated on the 18th of March, 1845, “for the purpose of collecting, preserving, and occasionally publishing, genealogical and historical matter, relating to early New England families, and for the establishment and maintenance of a cabinet.” Said act was accepted, and the Society is now in a flourishing condition, having about two hundred and fifty resident members.

Some months ago, the Society, by a unanimous vote, directed its Board of Directors to apply to the General Court for a change of its corporate name, to that of THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY.

Accordingly the Directors appointed the undersigned, being one of their number, to take charge of the matter. He therefore prepared a petition, which was presented to the Senate during the current session. That body referred it to the joint Standing Committee on Education.

As the undersigned did not anticipate objections from any quarter, the idea of opposition from the Massachusetts Historical Society, with many of whose members he has the pleasure of being acquainted, never crossed his imagination. He finds, however, that he was mistaken; for a “*Memorial*,” in the nature of a protest against the prayer of the petitioners, formally adopted by the Massachusetts Historical Society, and signed by a number of its members, of the highest character and standing in this community, has been printed and circulated among the members of the General Court; and he cannot permit it to pass unnoticed.

In the outset, the undersigned invites attention to the preamble of the Act of 1794, entitled "An Act to incorporate a Society by the name of *The Massachusetts Historical Society*," as important to a clear understanding of this case. It is as follows:

"Whereas the collection and preservation of materials for a *political and natural history of the United States* is a desirable object, and the institution of a Society for these purposes will be of public utility."

The act then proceeds to incorporate sundry gentlemen "for the purposes aforesaid."

By a subsequent provision, the number of members is limited to sixty. So recent as April 2d, 1857, an act passed authorizing the Society to elect "associate or corresponding members residing without the limits of this Commonwealth, or honorary members residing either within or without said limits," and to have "as many as one hundred resident members;" a privilege, by the way, of which, it is understood, the Society has not availed itself, to any appreciable extent.

It appears, then, that the Massachusetts Historical Society was created for collecting and preserving materials for a *political and natural history* of the United States.

The undersigned marvels that it did not put forth its energies to prevent the incorporation of the Natural History Society of Boston, that of Lynn, and sundry other Societies chartered to encourage and advance the study of Natural History, and the pursuit of historical investigations, as reprehensible infringements on its corporate rights.

The undersigned has been unable to discover any evidence of such opposition to those associations, trenching as they manifestly do upon the jurisdiction assumed by the Massachusetts Historical Society. Possibly it has abandoned the subject of Natural History, in order to give greater attention to the other subject contemplated in its act of incorporation, "the *political* history of the United States."

Are there not branches or departments of history, other than "*political*," to which a New England Historical Society may direct its inquiries, and publish the results, without interfering with the vested rights of the Massachusetts Historical Society?

No man can hesitate to give an affirmative answer, and to ask, in return, "Wherefore this interference with a sister society in pursuit only of its chartered rights?"

But suppose the response is in the negative. Will the opposition of the Massachusetts Historical Society to the application of the Petitioners for a change of name, or even its rejection by the General Court, be of any advantage to the Memorialists? Not in the least degree, in the judgment of the undersigned.

The "*Memorial*" states that the Society which the undersigned has the honor to represent, was incorporated by "the name of the Historic-Genealogical Society," and that "it proposes to be called the New England Historical and Genealogical Society," and then bases an argument against the petition founded on "these statements"!

At "these statements" the undersigned must be permitted to express his extreme astonishment, as they contain a serious error, on which error or mistake the Memorialists have constructed the most prominent of their arguments against the request of the Petitioners!

The corporate name of the Petitioners is, "The NEW ENGLAND Historic-Genealogical Society," and not "the Historic-Genealogical Society." Of course, an argument predicated on this fatal mistake is entirely fallacious. The words "NEW ENGLAND" are part and parcel of its corporate name. They will remain so, even if the General Court refuse the desired change; and therefore the present opposition to it, even if successful, must prove a barren victory.

This unaccountable error deprives the "*Memorial*" of all vitality; for if the name "New England Historic-Genealogical Society" now jars the sensibilities of the "Massachusetts Historical Society," it will unavoidably continue to do so, for its corporate name is almost identical with that which the Petitioners solicit, and the Memorialists so much fear.

What is the difference? Merely the addition of the syllable "*al*" to the word "*Historic*," and the insertion of the conjunction "*and*" after it!

These minute alterations are all that the Petitioners ask, and they will doubtless continue to ask for the change until it is granted, as they have a perfect right to do.

It is said in the "Memorial" that "the word *Historic* has occasioned many inconveniences to both Societies." The undersigned was not aware of it. But the word "*Historical*," which seems to be one of ominous import, will not multiply them. Again "not a little trouble has been caused to our Secretaries and Librarian," say the Memorialists, "in making the rightful discrimination and distribution" of contributions addressed from a distance. It may be so; but the undersigned is entirely satisfied that the President of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society, so extensively known as an accomplished and devoted antiquary, has cheerfully put up with more trouble by reason of matter addressed to him (commencing at a period considerably anterior to the formation of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society), yet intended for the Massachusetts Historical Society, than its legal or acting Librarian and other officers have encountered during their respective terms of official existence. He did not complain; on the contrary, he was gratified at the opportunity of putting all such matter on its proper destination, without suggesting that the beneficiary change its corporate name.

As the Remonstrants have appended to their Memorial a catalogue of the works published by the Massachusetts Historical Society, the undersigned submits a statement in regard to the volumes issued by the New England Historic-Genealogical Society, without the least apprehension that the latter will suffer, in this regard, by any fair comparison with its more ancient co-laborer.

"The Historical Society" was instituted in the year 1790.
 "The Massachusetts Historical Society" was incorporated in 1784.

Volume I. of the Massachusetts Historical Society's Collections was issued (in pamphlet form) in 1792. To the year 1838—46 years—the Society had issued 27 volumes, but had asked and received some pecuniary assistance from the State.

From 1838 to 1846—8 years—the Society issued but a single volume. Meantime there was an activity in the historical field, *outside and independent* of the Massachusetts Historical Society, which had been growing up for many years, and which that Society entirely disregarded. In 1844, a few individuals, including some able historical writers, came to the conclusion, that as a

vast amount of historical documents, lying in MS., was fast going to destruction, the united efforts of an organization was indispensably necessary to rescue them from such fate. This was a principal incentive to the formation of a new Society. THE NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC-GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY was the result.

From 1792 to 1858—66 years—the Massachusetts Historical Society has printed 33 volumes, in 8vo., each averaging not above, we think, 320 pages. These pages do not average above 1000 ems each; hence a volume contains about 320,000 ems.

The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, published under the authority of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society, averages above 400 pages to the volume, and more than 1800 ems to the page; and hence a volume contains more than 720,000 ems, or more than double the amount of matter contained in a volume of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Again. Their volumes are made up of a large proportion of matter from works already in print; works of sufficient importance, in almost every instance, to require new editions in separate volumes, independent of their having been reprinted in those Collections, and at no very distant day.

Again. On a comparison of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society with the New England Historical and Genealogical Register, it will be seen that the latter is made up of original documents, the decaying records of towns, parishes, original letters, burying-ground inscriptions, &c. &c.; and that one volume of the Register contains as much matter as two and a quarter volumes of the Massachusetts Historical Society's Collections; or that the thirty-three volumes of the Collections now published are not more than equal, in amount of matter, to fourteen and two-thirds volumes of said Register. Hence it is obvious that the Massachusetts Historical Society has not, in sixty-six years, published, in reality, four volumes more than the New England Historic-Genealogical Society has done in eleven years.

Now, if the matter reprinted in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society be subtracted from what may be considered original, the amount of their published matter will fall far short of matter published in the New England Historical and Genealogical Register.



So much for the publications of the respective Societies—the former of which are so formidably displayed in the “Memorial” of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

The Petitioners ask for the proposed change, because—

1st. The desired name is in better taste, and more euphonious than their corporate title.

2d. Because it corresponds with the title of the Periodical issued by the Society.

3d. It is the name by which the Society is generally designated and known.

In conclusion, the undersigned must be indulged the remark, that he and the Society he represents entertain the kindest wishes for the prosperity of the Massachusetts Historical Society, as the pioneer in the great work of associated historical labor in the Commonwealth. They rejoice in its augmented resources and its reviving activity. All this they can sincerely feel and freely avow, and yet maintain the position that they do not ask for any thing which will impair the usefulness or confound the interests of either Society.

All which is respectfully submitted, in behalf of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society, by

FRANCIS BRINLEY.

Boston, Feb. 22, 1858.

