

Dr. Jehial Abbott
Hallo! A good day to you.

Guide 2
Well, if it isn't Dr. Jehial Abbott himself?!?

Dr. Jehial Abbott
Indeed, it is I, your humble servant.

Abbott briskly touches his hat / head in greeting

Guide 2
We were hoping you could share some memories from your life and time with us?

Dr. Jehial Abbott
Certainly! I was born on the 3rd of September 1795, in Tolland, Connecticut, to John Abbot and Temperance Baker. The youngest of their five children I was, with three older sisters and a brother. I was married to my first wife, Olivia Barnard, in May of 1824. By 1825 we awaited our first child, but alas neither she nor our daughter, bearing her namesake, survived...

Guide 2
We are sorry to hear that...

Dr. Jehial Abbott
Sadly, losses such as these were not uncommon in our time...
It was most certainly a great disappointment... But in time I took another wife, the brickly Miss Sophia McMahon, in the year of 1827 who remained by my side for 45 years and bore our six children, now all resting here with us in our final layout.... Oh, but we lived during quite a time in history I dare say! The Farmington Canal opened in my thirty fourth year, Slavery was abolished when I was 53, and Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation fifteen years later...

Guide 1
It really was an eventful time in our country during your life!

Dr. Jehial Abbott
What a great time to be an American... especially once my associates, Lemuel Shattuck, of Boston, Nathaniel Banks, Jr., of Waltham, and I, of Westfield, were appointed by Governor Briggs to prepare and report to the General Court a plan for a Sanitary Survey for the State. My colleagues and I were entrusted to ascertain the causes which favorably or unfavorably affect the health of the state's inhabitants. Happily, our recommendations were embraced. We were indeed in need of cleaning up!

Guide 2
What do you mean by cleaning up?

Dr. Jehial Abbott

Well, lets just say the standards of hygiene at the time were, well, different from what they are now....

Guide 1

Because you all did not have running water and indoor plumbing?

Dr. Jehial Abbott

Eh....That was part of it... But you should know that Europeans thought much differently about hygiene prior to and during colonial times and the colonists brought these ideas on hygiene, or the lack there of, with them to the Americas.

Guide 1

Such as?

Dr. Jehial Abbott

It was generally believed that washing too often removed important oils from the skin that would leave a person vulnerable to disease. In New England's cool climate, settlers were likely to bathe just once a year for a "Spring cleaning". Mind you, bathing was also a lot of work to set up; it took a few hours to get the water warmed and lugged to the bathing vessel... Not to mention it was a family affair with each taking their turn using the same water. The water would get very murky throughout this course. You are familiar with the phrase, "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater"? This was in fact a warning to be taken literally!

Guide 2

Seriously?

Dr. Jehial Abbott

Quite! European colonists ideas on being clean wasn't closely associated with water in early times. Many thought that submerging their whole body in water was unhealthy, and believed nudity was immodest. Bathhouses did exist but were thought of as medicinal, or a place for wealthy people to relax. Normal people kept "clean" by changing the white linens under their clothes. The cleaner and whiter the linens, the cleaner the person—or so the thinking went. Once in awhile the hands and face may be washed as well...

Guide 1

If it was that complicated and rare to bathe, what about doing laundry?

Dr. Jehial Abbott

Hmmmm... Well, it was customary to carry a lavender-scented handkerchief one would bring to their nose to hide the stench... I believe you have gotten the idea...

Guide 2

Ummm, yea....(looking a bit repulsed)

Dr. Jehial Abbott

Oh dear, you look a bit queasy... But I am not poked up, for I felt similarly - not to mention the tribespeople of the Patuxet nation who attempted to encourage colonists to consider associating cleanliness more closely with water by example and blunt suggestion since their arrival. Of course their lack of hygiene was more than just a smelly inconvenience to the local Tribes. These unwashed colonists passed along germs to which Native Americans had no prior exposure, nor immunity...

Guide 1

No wonder European diseases wiped out countless Native Americans....

Dr. Jehial Abbott

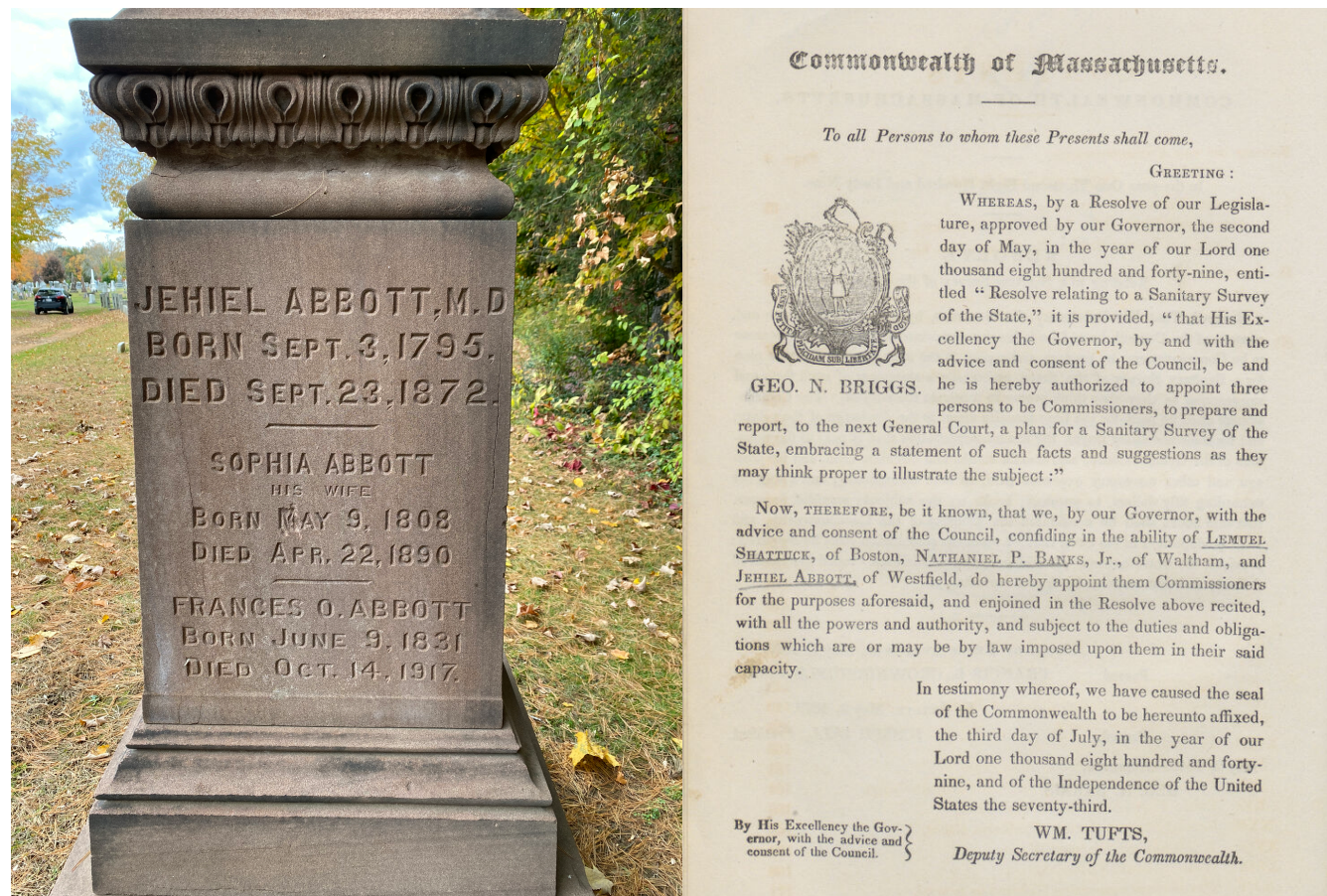
Fortunately we were appointed by the state to confront these foul and dangerous misconceptions. Through our research we found that every year within the Commonwealth thousands of lives were lost which might have been saved, and tens of thousands of cases of sickness occurred, which might have been prevented with good hygiene. We discovered that the sanitary movement goes back to great antiquity. Public health had long been understood to be fundamental to protection from contagious diseases and general health by the Jews, Greeks, Spartans and Romans. Regrettably, the cause of public health received a fatal check when Rome fell. What was previously known perished with little trace. Henceforth, European sanitary regulations ceased to exist for centuries. It was a blessing my colleagues and I took up this rank matter and created the 'Report of a General Plan for the Promotion of the Public and Personal Health of Massachusetts,' in 1850. It is hailed as the foundational document epitomizing the development of the public health movement in the United States.

Guide 1 & 2

We are very, very grateful!

Dr. Jehial Abbott

Your welcome!



Works Cited

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