

Title Petitions for Poor Relief in the Town of Sturbridge, Town Records
Author Town of Sturbridge
Date 1810

One of the principal duties of the selectmen, the elected officials who governed New England towns on a day-to-day basis, was to provide care for the town's poor. They frequently received letters which were formal requests for assistance or reimbursement for supplies and care already given to poor individuals.

A selection of letters to the Sturbridge Town Selectmen requesting poor relief and reimbursement.

Sturbridge March 29, 1810

To the Selectmen of Sturbridge,—Gentlemen.

I take the Liberty of making some observations with regard to my situation and that of my children, Which I wish you as fathers of the town to take into consideration. As my children are very young at present, I know it may be difficult to obtain places for them, and have therefore thought whether if the Selectmen would provide a room for me and them, for the present, they and I might not produce as little expense to the town as in any other way, if I applied myself to their support, all I was able, with the addition of what it would cost to put said children out. All which is submitted for consideration.

Peggy Pike

Sturbridge March the 30th 1816

To the Selectmen of the town of Sturbridge

Gentlemen

The Complaint of Joseph Benson Humbly Sheweth and informs that by Reason of Bodily Infirmary for many years past and not being Able to procure the means of my Subsistance I am become poor & unable to provide for my Self and Wife I therefore pray s[ai]d town to make provision for us Both in futer [future] who am In Duty bound Ever pray

Joseph Benson, X His Mark

The Selectmen

Sturbridge Nov 5th 1827

Messrs Select Men of Sturbridge

Whereas my aged Mother being left alone last spring and nobody appearing to take care of her, it appeared like duty to take her to my house for the present hoping that some way might be agreed on for her support but no assistance being offer'd me I am now I think by duty led to cast her upon your care the which I do; and shall from the above date expect a reward thro your hands from that source from whence her maintainance must eventually come.

Messrs. S[elect] Men of Sturbridge I am yours &c Servant Walter Lyon

Gentlemen Selectmen or Overseers of the Poor for the town of Sturbridge,

This is to give you notice that a boy by the name of John Buxton is at my house in needy circumstances, I wish you Gentlemen to remove him or provide for his support immediately.

Cromwell Bullard
Sturbridge July 16th 1828

To the Selectmen of Sturbridge—

Gent. In consequence of long & distressing sickness in my family I find myself under the necessity of calling on the town of Sturbridge for some assistance. You will please therefore to furnish me such reliefs, as you may deem proper under my present distressing circumstances—

William Prichard

Jany 5 1830

To the Overseers of the Poor for the town of Sturbridge, Gentlemen,

This is to notify you that Lydia Hobbs is at my house, unable to work and without the means of support. She has not been able to work much for several years, the year past she has been wholly on expense, but now her property is nearly or quite all gone, which makes it necessary for her to have support from the town. Therefore you will please to attend to the matter quickly, as I shall expect pay from the town after this week for the time she stays with me. But as I do not want her under any consideration, nor cannot have her at my house at any rate I wish to have her taken away immediately.

Respectfully,

Josiah Hobbs 2d

Sturbridge Dec. 26th 1839

Source

Town Records of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, Poor Relief, Old Sturbridge Village Research Library. Edited by Old Sturbridge Village.

Copyright: *Old Sturbridge Inc.*