

*Abbie Francis Barton*  
*Wife of*  
*Thomas Hail Barton*

Abbie Francis Congdon was born January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1848 in North Kingstown, Washington County, Rhode Island to Eleazer Slocum and Sarah Gardiner Congdon. She had been the eldest of seven, followed by Mary Elizabeth (1852-1907), George Edgar (1853-1915), Jennison E. (1855-1913), Charles H. (1885-1915), Williams Holmes (1863-1937), and Alfred Bertrude (1868-1913). By 1860, Eleazer had established himself as a farmer, with an estate valued at \$4,000 in Cranston, RI. This had been where Abbie spent her childhood and learned to read and write at the Providence Conference Summary, Musical Institute.

On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1871 Abbie Barton began a new chapter of her life in tying the knot with Thomas Hail Barton, born January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1830. This was Thomas' second marriage, following the death of his newborn daughter, Alice Barton on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1870 and first wife Josephine F. Barton on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1870. For Abbie, this meant moving a few miles up North to Providence, Rhode Island. Thomas spent the day as a bookkeeper at the Third National Bank, while Abbie kept busy keeping house.

Over the years, Thomas and Abbie remained deeply committed to one another; making an occasion of their wedding anniversaries. Thomas gifted Abbie a diamond ring in 1881 on their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with Abbie giving him a gold watch. On their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary both went on a trip to a Burgundy cottage. In between dinners with the Barton brothers, clambakes, and trips to Providence Plantation, New London, Westerly, and Plymouth, Abbie and Thomas lead a fulfilled life together.

Fast forward a few years later, Abbie finds herself on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1895, worrying over Thomas's deteriorating health, following the diagnosis of paralysis in August:

*“Sorrowful heart, my dearest is so sick”. - A.F.B*

Five months later on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1896, Abbie's dearly loved husband passed-away in Providence:

*“My dearest, my Thomas went home at 9 o'clock tonight”- A.F.B*

Mary Elizabeth, younger by four years, would prove to be a trusted confidant and a likely shoulder to lean on following Thomas's death in 1896. Sadly, within ten years Mary would pass away, leaving a broken-hearted Abbie to express:

*“My dear sister. I can give no present to you this year. Oh that I had you to speak to. I miss you Lissie. I miss you.” - A.F.B 1906*

With the passing of her beloved father in 1908 at the age of 85, Abbie relocated to be with her mother and youngest brother Alfred on Old Natick Avenue in Cranston, R.I. Alfred had followed in his father's occupational footsteps to be farmer. For an unknown reason Alfred was never to marry. Abbie maintained a close relationship with Alfred, affectionately calling him Bert, until he died in 1913.

*“Oh dear brother Bert this year to plain for you. Oh how I miss him (Thomas) but I miss you just the same, even more and so on every year.” - A.F.B 1914*

The year 1913 had been unimaginably difficult for Abbie with the loss of Bert and her mother. Nevertheless, until 1920 Abbie makes every effort to maintain a relationship with key family members such as sibling William Holmes Congdon, niece Jennie Stanton, nephews William Jr, and Harold. All of these individuals undoubtedly provided emotional, spiritual, and financial support to Abbie. The next few years were spent in the companionship of Agnes Cocks, a housekeeper from England and George Brooke, hired-man for the farm.

Abbie Francis Barton passed away, alone in Cranston, Rhode Island on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1930 at the age of 82. She had survived the Civil War; received letters from her nephew drafted into World War I, and witnessed the beginning of the Great Depression. On February 27, 1889, Thomas Hale Barton had gifted \$155.00 to the commissioners of the North Burial Ground, an amount to be used towards preservation and maintenance of the Barton burial lot. Abbie is buried at the North Burial Ground in Providence, R.I.- Lot 1922- Section 22.



*(Photograph by my cousin, Soumia, who accompanied me to the cemetery on Oct. 13, 2012)*

Abbie Francis Barton's journal has withstood the test of 142 years to ensure this reserved, but *remarkable* soul will always be remembered.

- Sangeetha R. Ganesan  
October 17, 2012

*Author's Note:*

On a whim, I purchased Abbie's journal on Etsy from a lady who came by it in an Estate sale. The rest is history...

Sources: Abbie's Journal (1870-1920), Ancestry.com, Barton database, and visit to North Burial Ground in Providence, RI.