



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

Guide to the Fire Department records

Fire Commissioner records

Finding aid prepared by Gretchen Carney

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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Repository:	City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division
Title:	Fire Commissioner records
Collection No.:	0500.013
Dates:	1873-1954 with gaps
Quantity:	15.0 Cubic feet

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Historical note

The origins of the Boston Fire Department date back to 1678 with the establishment of the first engine company and the receipt of the first hand fire engine in North America. The Board of Fire Wards was established on February 1, 1711. Prominent men were chosen as Fire Wards and were responsible for the operation and maintenance of the equipment assigned to their ward. Chapter 52 of the Acts of 1825, "An Act Establishing a Fire Department in the City of Boston and an Ordinance for the preventing and extinguishing of fires and establishing a fire department" went into full operation in April of 1826. With this legislation, the Board of Fire Wards was dissolved. All records and property belonging to the city were transferred to the Chief Engineer in May of 1826. By the reorganization in 1837, the Fire Department changed from a partially volunteer to a paid fire department. On June 16, 1851, the City Council passed an order to erect a system of telegraphic fire alarms and the first

regular alarm on the new system was received on April 29, 1852. On January 1, 1859, two new steam engines were put in service replacing two hand engines.

On October 24, 1873, the City Council passed an ordinance creating a Board of Fire Commissioners to oversee the department. Section 9 of Chapter 449 of the Acts of 1895, an act to amend the City Charter, abolished the Board of Fire Commissioners and placed the Department under the charge of one Fire Commissioner. The change to a single Fire Commissioner took effect on July 1, 1895. The Chief Engineer serves as the Executive Officer of the Commissioner and directs the work of the members of the Department.

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Scope and Contents note

This collection consists of chronological bound volumes of the proceedings of the mostly daily meetings of the Board of Fire Commissioners, as well as the proceedings of what later became a single Fire Commissioner. The Board of Fire Commissioners was abolished and replaced by a single Fire Commissioner on July 1, 1895. The minutes record the actions of the Board of Fire Commissioners and the single Fire Commissioner on issues involving personnel, supplies, equipment, etc.

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Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The Board of Fire Commissioners/Fire Commissioner Records were transferred from the Boston Fire Department to the City of Boston Archives on March 14, 2012.

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Series I: Records of the Board of Fire Commissioners, 1873-1895 with gaps

Box	
1	1873 November 1-1877 December 19
2	1877 December 20-1881 November 28 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1879 December 5-1880 April 30 and 1881 February 2-1881 May 1.
3	1881 November 29-1884 November 22 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1884 January 1-1884 March 30 and 1884 April 19-1884 July 31.
4	1884 November 24-1888 June 13
5	1888 August 1-1891 July 18 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1888 June 14-1888 July 31 and 1889 June 2-1889 July 28.
6	1891 July 20-1895 January 15 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1892 August 31-1892 November 30 and 1894 July 18-1894 October 15.

Series II: Records of the Fire Commissioner, 1895-1954 with gaps**Box**

7	1895 January 16-1899 September 12
8	1899 September 13-1905 April 15
10	1911 February 27-1915 December 23
9	1907 April 17-1911 February 1911 with gaps Volume is missing for 1907 April 11-1907 October 7.
11	1915 December 24-1920 May 27 with gaps Volume is missing for 1920 February 13-1920 May 27.
12	1920 May 28-1923 September 21 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1922 July 23-1922 November 19 and 1923 June 14-1923 September 21.
13	1925 July 17-1932 September 1 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1927 June 16-1928 May 1.
14	1932 September 2-1941 January 7
15	1948 February 25-1954 February 12 with gaps Volumes are missing for 1949 May 3-1950 May 6.