

City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

# **Guide to the City Census records**

Finding aid prepared by Zachary Enright This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

<b>Repository:</b>	City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division
Title:	City Census records
<b>Collection No.:</b>	0300.010
Dates:	1820-1855 with gaps
Quantity:	3.0 Cubic feet (3 record cartons)

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## **Historical note**

The first census of Boston was made in 1722 when Eneas Salter was hired during a smallpox outbreak. He found 10,567 people living in the Town of Boston. A census was again conducted in 1742 finding 16,382 residents. This census failed to count those living in the almshouse and workhouse as well as some extremely poor and some apprentices in order to "ease the quota of Boston from tax." The next census occurred in 1752 again due to an outbreak of smallpox. The census found 15,731 residents. In 1765 a census was taken by order of the General Court and found 15,520 inhabitants. The period between this time and the end of the Revolution saw stagnation or even decrease in the population though no census was taken. The first national census was taken in 1790 and subsequently every ten years. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts required censuses in order to apportion representatives to the state government through the first half of the 19th century including 1800, 1810, 1820, 1825, 1835, 1837, 1840, 1845, 1850, and 1855. After 1855 the National census was used to determine the population of the City of Boston.

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## Scope and Contents note

The City Census records span the years 1820-1855 and are divided into two series: Returns and Report. The collection includes returns for the city censuses of 1820, 1835, 1837, 1840, 1850, and 1855. The 1820 census returns include volumes for wards 5, 9, 11, and 12 only. These volumes list names, property ownership, buildings and livestock. The 1835 census returns include 12 volumes, one for each ward and South Boston, as well as a map for ward 4 and commentary. The 1837 census returns include 12 volumes, one for each ward 3 is in alphabetical order by name and ward 4 includes a map and commentary. The 1840 census returns includes 11 volumes for wards 1 and 3-12 and lists only the head of household. The census returns for ward 2 is missing. The 1850 census returns include 12 volumes, one for each ward. These volumes list registered voter head of households, age groupings, sex, ethnic group and foreign born or native. The 1855 census returns includes 24 volumes, 2 volumes for each ward, and lists registered voter head of households, age grouping born or native, and colored as well as including maps of the census area.

The City Census records also includes the "Report to the Committee of the City Council Appointed to Obtain the Census of Boston for the year 1845, Embracing collateral Facts and Statistical Researches, Illustrating the History and Condition of the Population, and Their Means of Progress and Prosperity." Written by Lemuel Shattuck in 1846, this volume contains statistics on population, manufacturing, occupations, health, as well as other topics. It includes maps of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and the wards of Boston. The census returns for the 1845 city census are missing and presumed destroyed.

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## **Restrictions**

#### **Conditions Governing Access note**

The Census records are open for research.

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#### Series I: Returns, 1820, 1835, 1837, 1840, 1850, 1855 (75 Volumes)

	1820 (4 volumes)
Box	
1	Ward 5
1	Ward 9
1	Ward 11
1	Ward 12
	1835 (12 volumes)
Box	
1	Ward 1
1	Ward 2

1	Ward 3
1	Ward 4
1	Ward 5
1	Ward 6
1	Ward 7
1	Ward 8
1	Ward 9
1	Ward 10
1	Ward 11
1	Ward 12

1837 (12 volumes)

Box

Ward 1	
Ward 2	
Ward 3	
Ward 4	
Ward 5	
Ward 6	
Ward 7	
Ward 8	
Ward 9	
Ward 10	
Ward 11	
Ward 12	
1840 (11 volumes)	

Box

DOX	
1	Ward 1
1	Ward 3
1	Ward 4
1	Ward 5
1	Ward 6
1	Ward 7
1	Ward 8
1	Ward 9
1	Ward 10
1	Ward 11
1	Ward 12

## 1850 (12 volumes)

Box

Ward 1
Ward 2
Ward 3
Ward 4
Ward 5

2	Ward 6
2	Ward 7
2	Ward 8
2	Ward 9
2	Ward 10
2	Ward 11
2	Ward 12
	1855 (24 volumes)
Box	
3	Ward 1 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 2 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 3 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 4 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 5 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 6 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 7 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 8 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 9 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 10 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 11 (2 volumes)
3	Ward 12 (2 volumes)

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## Series II: Report, 1846 (1 volume)

Box

1

"Report to the Committee of the City Council Appointed to Obtain the Census of Boston for the year 1845, Embracing Collateral Facts and Statistical Researches, Illustrating the History and Condition of the Population, and their Means of Progress and Prosperity", 1846 (1 volume)

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