



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

Guide to the Charles Street Jail records

Finding aid prepared by Patrick T. Collins

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Repository:	City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division
Title:	Charles Street Jail records
Collection No.:	8210.001
Dates:	1862-1990
Quantity:	6.5 Cubic feet (45 Volumes 1 Document Case)

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Biographical/Historical note

The North Jail on Leverett Street (the Leverett Street Jail) was built in the 1820s and served as the lock-up for the City of Boston and Suffolk County. The Leverett Street Jail also served as the House of Correction for Suffolk County until 1833 when a new House of Correction was built in South Boston. As the City and County lock-up the Leverett Street Jail held inmates who were awaiting trial and also those who had been sentenced to the House of Correction and were waiting for transport there. The Leverett Street Jail continued in its roles as the city lock-up and the county lock-up until 1851 when it was finally replaced by a new jail on Charles Street known as the Charles Street Jail (aka: the Suffolk County Jail.) The Charles Street Jail continued to serve as the lock-up for

both the City of Boston and Suffolk County until it was replaced in 1991 by the new Suffolk County Jail on Nashua Street. The Suffolk County Sheriff operated both the North Jail and Charles Street Jail.

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Scope and Contents note

The records in this collection encompass the years 1862-1990 and are varied in nature. There is one volume of personnel records and one volume containing statistics for the jail. A couple of logbooks document various occurrences at the Jail. These include deaths, cases of insanity, escapes, paupers, sentences, and punishments. A number of other logbooks document personal property transfers, emergency contacts for inmates, as well as the daily population and guard schedule. The bulk of the collection consists of Criminal Calendars and Daily Commitments. The Calendars cover the years 1967 through 1988 (with gaps) and are a record of inmate commitments to the jail. The Daily Commitments span the period from 1924 through 1987 (with gaps) and record the daily movement of inmates into and out of the jail. In addition, there are two volumes from 1875-1876 and 1878-1880 that also record inmates entering the jail.

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Series I: Criminal Calendar, 1967-1988, with gaps (8 Volumes)

The Criminal Calendar documents the commitment of each inmate into the Charles Street Jail. There are eight volumes that cover the years 1967 through 1988. Gaps appear from 1968-May 1974, November 1976-March 1979, March 1980-February 1981, November 1983-November 1984, and September 1985-February 1988. The entries are in chronological order and there is no index. Each entry records the same information for every inmate. This information includes: inmate's number, name, amount of bail, place of birth, residence, color, age, sex, height, occupation, date of commitment, offence, sentencing authority, sentence, date discharged, the manner of discharge, and the number of days spent in the jail.

Volume

1	1967 January - December
2	1974 June – 1975 September
3	1975 October – 1976 October
4	1979 March – 1980 March
5	1981 February – 1982 August
6	1982 August – 1983 November
7	1984 November – 1985 September
8	1988 February – October

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Series II: Daily Commitments, 1924-1987, with gaps (24 Volumes)

The Daily Commitments provide a record of the daily movement of every inmate into and out of the Charles Street Jail. The entries are in chronological order and marked with the time of the movement. For each entry the following information exists: date, time, destination or place from which the inmate(s) came, the reason for the move, name(s) of the inmate(s), the total number

moved, and the total count of the jail's population at the time of the entry for both males and females.

Volume	
9	1924 June – 1925 March
Volumes	
10-12	1927 May - 1929 May
13-14	1931 September - 1933 March
Volume	
15	1934 August - 1935 June
16	1940 April - 1941 March
Volumes	
17-18	1947 May - 1948 November
Volume	
19	1949 September - 1950 July
Volumes	
20-21	1951 June - 1953 April
Volume	
22	1955 March - 1956 April
Volumes	
23-25	1962 March - 1965 March
Volume	
26	1966 March - 1967 April
27	1971 November - 1972 August
28	1973 May - 1974 April
29	1975 April - 1976 February
Volumes	
30-31	1978 October - 1980 September
Volume	
32	1986 May - 1987 February

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Series III: Daily Record of Inmates, 1875-1880 (2 Volumes)

The Daily Record of Inmates provides documentation of the new inmates in the Jail for that particular date. These two volumes cover the periods of December 1875 through September 1876 and November 1878 through February 1880 respectively. The entries are in chronological order and include the date, the inmate's name, the institution or place from which the inmate came, the amount of any fine, the inmate's age, sentence, and offence. Sometimes, known relations of an inmate are listed to the left of the inmate's name.

Volume	
33	1875 December - 1876 September
34	1878 November - 1880 February

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Series IV: Log Books

The series Log Books consists of a variety of records. Two of the volumes contain records for multiple types of occurrences within the Jail including paupers, escapes, punishments, deaths, and cases of insanity. There are two property logbooks, one for females and one for males. There are three volumes documenting both the daily population of the Jail and the guard schedule. There is also one volume containing emergency contact information for inmates.

Occurrence Logs (2 Volumes)

The first volume of occurrences records instances of paupers, sentences, escapes, punishments, and deaths. The record of paupers covers the dates 1864-1874 and contains date, time, signature, and a witness's signature. In addition, the following statement appears at the top of each page: "To the Keeper of the Commonwealth's Jail, in the County of Suffolk. Sir: I claim support of my Creditors as a Pauper, not being able to support myself in Jail."

The record of sentences covers 1864-1868 and contains jail number, name, offence, date, prison, and length of sentence. The record of escapes spans the dates 1861-1893 and contains jail number, name, offence, a brief description of the escape, its resolution, and the date. The record of punishments dates from 1864 to 1880 contains jail number, name, the offence that resulted in the punishment, as well as the date and type/length of the punishment. The record of deaths covers 1862-1893 and contains jail number, name, disease, length of sickness and the inmate's date of death. All of the entries in each record are in chronological order with no index.

The second volume of occurrences also records deaths and escapes as well as cases of insane inmates. The records of deaths and escapes contain the same information as the records in the previous volume. They differ only in the dates covered. The death records cover 1884-1945 and duplicate records for the years 1884-1893. The escape records begin where the previous volume ends and cover the dates 1893-1954. The insane records cover the years 1884-1944 and contain the year, jail number, name, offence, the institution the inmate was sent to, the date sent and the authority under which s/he was sent.

Volume

35	1861 - 1893
36	1884 - 1954

Property Log Books (2 Volumes)

There are two property log books, one for females and one for males. The Female Property Log Book covers the period of August 1945 through July 1951. The entries are in chronological order with names and dates and some signatures indicating receipt of property from the property officer on duty at that time. The Property Log Book [Males] spans the period of March 1938 through March 1947. This volume contains the same information as the female log book in the same strict chronological order. The male volume also contained an amount of correspondence from inmates to the Jail requesting release of their property to certain individuals. Most of this correspondence was removed and placed in archival folders; however, some was found glued into the volume and thus was left in place. There is no index to either of these volumes.

Box Folder

1	1-2	[Male], 1938 March - 1947 March
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Volume

37

Volume

38

Female, 1945 August - 1951 July

Daily Population and Guard Schedule (3 Volumes)

The Daily Population and Guard Schedule consists of three volumes covering the years 1903 through 1930. The records for the Daily Population have one page for every month within each year. These pages provide daily information including the date, the number of debtors, witnesses, and criminals in the jail, the number of males, the number of females, and the total, as well as the number of commitments and discharges for that day, and a space for some remarks. The records of the Guard Schedule also have one page for every month within each year. These records also offer daily information concerning the guard schedule including the date, the names of guards for the first, second, and outer office watch, and who had day duty on Sundays. There is also a space for remarks, which often has notes about various happenings at the jail for that date.

Volume

39

1903 April - 1912 February

40

1912 March - 1921 March

41

1921 April - 1930 April

Emergency Notification (1 Volume)

The Emergency Notification log lists the inmate's name, the name of the contact, and the contact's address in chronological order for the period of July 1951 through June 1959. The same contact names appear multiple times for many different inmates. These contacts may be attorneys and/or public defenders. Often a third name (only a surname) appears as well. This name appears to be that of the person who bailed the inmate out of jail. This third name is usually one of three names that appear regularly as the third name. These three names are most likely the names of bail bonds men.

Volume

42

1951 July – 1959 June

[Return to the Series List](#)**Series V: Personnel Records (1 Volume)**

The Personnel Records consist of one volume of Payroll records that document the wages of the employees of the Charles Street Jail as well as the payroll budget for the Jail. These records cover the dates April 1925 through March 1929. Entries are in chronological order and include the name of the employee and his/her rank or position. Also included is the amount to be paid to each employee from the payroll, the amount in deductions from each employee, and the net difference. In addition, there is a section for pensions that the Jail pays to retired employees. The section marked "subdivisions" lists the various positions within the Jail, the number of persons employed at each position, and the annual amount in the budget for that position.

Volume

43

Payroll, 1925 April - 1929 March

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Series VI: Statistics (1 Volume)

The Statistics records document general totals for all the inmates in the Jail for each day between April 1927 and June 1935. There is one page of statistics for Commitments and one for Discharges for each month within these dates. The information is also broken down between males and females. The information for both males and females includes the date, the total number for that day, place of birth or “nativity,” race, social condition, and the reason for their incarceration. These categories are further sub-divided into more specific types.

Volume

44

1927 April - 1935 June

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