



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

## Guide to the Fire Department records

### Fire records

Finding aid prepared by Kristen Swett  
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

---

<b>Repository:</b>	City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division
<b>Title:</b>	Fire records
<b>Collection No.:</b>	0500.007
<b>Dates:</b>	1880 May-1967 December
<b>Quantity:</b>	13.0 Linear feet (54 volumes)

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS      SERIES LIST

[Historical note](#)

[Series I: Fire records](#)

[Scope and Contents note](#)

[Administrative Information](#)

---

### 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 Chief Engineer serves as the Executive Officer of the Commissioner and directs the work of the members of the Department.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## Scope and Contents note

This series consists of oversized chronological log books of fire alarms received and responded to by the Boston Fire Department from 1880-1967. The location and existence of earlier volumes is unknown at this time. These log books may have been in use as early as 1852 when the fire alarm telegraph system was officially accepted by the City. It is believed that the department no longer recorded fire alarms in this format after 1967. The information recorded in the logs over time include the location of the fire, time alarm received, from whom alarm received, false alarms, description of the building, owner of building, occupant of building, type of building, causes and origin of fire, commander of force, companies responding, feet of hose used, number of district chiefs present, property destroyed, insurance, alarms, extent of fire or no fire, amount of damage to building, how extinguished and remarks. Much of the information recorded in these volumes is included in the annual reports of the Fire Department.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

---

## Administrative Information

### Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The fire logs were transferred from the Boston Fire Department to the City of Boston Archives on January 12, 2010, March 22, 2010 and August 23, 2010.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

---

---

### Series I: Fire records, 1880-1967 (54 volumes)

#### Volume

1	1880 May-1894 January
2	1894 February-1902 January
3	1902 February-1908 January
3a	1908 February-December 1912
4	1913-1915
5	1916-1919
6	1920-1922
7	1923-1924
8	1925-1926
9	1927-1928
10	1929-1930

11	1931-1932
12	1933-1934
13	1935
14	1936
15	1937
16	1938
17	1939
18	1940
19	1941
20	1942
21	1943
22	1944
23	1945
24	1946
25	1947
26	1948
27	1949
28	1950
29	1951
30	1952
31	1953
32	1954
33	1955
34	1956
35	1957
36	1958
37	1959
38-39	1960
40-41	1961
42-43	1962
44-45	1963
46-47	1964
48-49	1965
50-51	1966
52-53	1967

[Return to the Series List](#)