



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

Guide to the City Council Joint Committee on Alien Passengers records

Finding aid prepared by John McColgan and Kristen Swett
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Repository:	City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division
Title:	City Council Joint Committee on Alien Passengers records
Collection No.:	0140.011
Dates:	1847-1848
Quantity:	1.25 Cubic feet (3 document cases)

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Historical note

On 10 May 1847, the four members of the Board of Aldermen formed a committee to consider what further action, if any, was necessary to be adopted by the City government in relation to Alien passengers who may arrive in this port. On 13 May 1847, seven members of the Common Council joined the committee. The committee was formed in response to the overcrowded state of the House of Industry. The committee report of 21 May 1847 indicates that since November of 1846, 6377 alien passengers had arrived in Boston and of those 355 were sent to the House of Industry because of their poor health. They constituted one half of the total number of inmates at the institution and temporary wooden buildings had to be constructed to house all the inmates. The committee reported that the fever had assumed the character of an epidemic at the House of Industry and they recommended finding a separate location to house the sick and pauper alien passengers. They determined that Deer Island in Boston Harbor was the most suitable location to set up a hospital. The City Council passed an

order on 21 May 1847 authorizing the Joint Special Committee on Alien Passengers “to procure suitable accommodations...and to take all necessary measures for the support of foreign paupers, and that the expense... be charged to the money collected and paid into the Treasury according to the provisions of the Act of the Legislature of Massachusetts passed April 20th 1837, entitled ‘An Act relating to Alien passengers.’” The Committee hired officers and staff for the institution, ordered the construction of a new wooden building, determined a spot for the burial ground, and commissioned a sailing vessel to convey the sick and the discharged between the city and the island.

In June of 1847, the Committee set up a quarantine station about a half mile from the hospital and published new, stricter quarantine regulations. Under the new regulations, all ships were to stop at the quarantine station for inspection by the Port Physician and the Superintendent of Alien Passengers. The Superintendent collected the \$2.00 port entry fee for each passenger and secured bonds for each person deemed to be an “alien pauper.” If the Port Physician found any “malignant” diseases such as typhus, dysentery, etc., the sick would be sent to the hospital and the vessel would be quarantined for three days.

The Deer Island hospital admitted its first patients on 29 May 1847. The hospital population was highest in the initial months and then began to steadily decline. By the summer of 1848, the number of patients was down in the 100s. The epidemic was beginning to show signs of having run its course. By October of 1848, there were hardly any patients left and the Committee began to plan for the closure of the hospital. The Committee ordered an inventory of its property at the hospital in preparation for leaving the island. However, before the evacuation could take place, the City Council passed an order for the House of Industry to begin transferring inmates from its overcrowded facility in South Boston. The Joint Alien Passengers Committee, which had no jurisdiction over the House of Industry, finished its business on 27 December 1848.

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Scope and Contents note

The records of the Joint Committee on Alien Passengers span the years 1847-1848. Records of the Consulting Physicians from the 1830s which were found stored with the Alien Passenger Committee records were separated. The collection includes records not only created by the Committee but also submitted to the Committee by private citizens, the Inspector of Alien Passengers, the Port Physician, and the Resident Physician at the Deer Island Hospital. The Committee on Alien Passengers collection has been broken down into 4 series: Minute book of the Committee; Petitions and memorials; Inspector of Alien Passengers correspondence and reports; and Deer Island Hospital Administrative records.

The minute book details the actions of the Committee from its inception to its dissolution. The minute book includes summaries of the weekly updates regarding the Deer Island Hospital submitted by the Resident Physician. The petitions and memorials submitted to the City Council document the sentiments of citizens of Boston in regards to foreign paupers. The Inspector of Alien Passenger records include correspondence and reports regarding the collection of bonds for alien passengers. The Hospital administration records comprise a majority of the collection and include applications for employment, staff lists and correspondence, financial records, and weekly reports of the Hospital. The Resident Physician at the Hospital submitted weekly reports to the Committee which included lists of names of patients admitted to the hospital with disease and the number of individuals admitted, died, released, and remaining for the week.

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Series I: Minutes, 1847-1848 (1 volumes)

Box	Volume	
1	1	1847 May 10-1848 December 29

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Series II: Petitions and memorials, 1847 May-June (3 folders)

Box	Folder	
2	1	Memorial of Pelham Bonney et al. relating to foreign paupers, 1847 May
2	2	Anonymous to George E. Head relating to foreign paupers, 1847 May 12
2	3	Petitions, 1847 May-June

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Series III: Inspector of Alien Passengers records, 1847-1848 (12 folders)

Box	Folder	
2	4	City Council order relating to foreign paupers, 1847 June 21
2	5	Calvin Bailey to Committee relating to destitute emigrants, 1847 August
2	6	Record of proceedings of meeting in Faneuil Hall, 1847 November 12
2	7	Alien Passenger Act of 1848 - Orders, correspondence and copy of Act, 1848
2	8	"Form of certificate" of Port Physicians, 1847
2	9	City Council order relating to defects in existing laws and ordinances, 1848 June 19
2	10	Correspondence, 1848 March 9-1848 June 16
2	11	Inspector's correspondence and financial statements, 1847
2	12	Receipts, 1847 July 29-1847 December 9
2	13	Alien passengers reports, 1847 September 29-1847 November 30, 1848 January 4-29
2	14	List of bonded passenger ships, 1847-1848
2	15	Bills, 1847

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Series IV: Deer Island Hospital Administrative records, 1847-1848 (84 folders)

Box	Folder	
2	16-17	Applications for employment, 1847 May 24-1848 March 3 (2 folders)
2	18	Dr. J.V.C. Smith to Alderman Jones relating to Receiving house on Deer Island, 1847 August 2
2	19	John M. Moriarty, M.D. to Ezra Lincoln accepting appointment as Hospital Physician, 1847 December 11
2	20	Dr. Henry Clark to Committee relating to the condition of the hospital, 1847 December 27
2	21	Dr. Henry Clark to Committee thanking them for compensation, 1848 February 21
2	22	Description of duties of officers of Institution (draft), undated
2	23	Staff correspondence, 1847 November 29-1848 September 26
2	24	Correspondence and sub-committee reports, 1848 April 3-1848 December 27
2	25	Statement of persons employed on Deer Island with wages for month and week, 1847-1848

2	26	List of help employed and list of persons discharged, 1848 February 21
2	27	Schedule of property at Deer Island belonging to city, 1848 June 12
2	28	John Allen to Committee relating to having certain passengers discharged from quarantine, 1848 June
2	29	Sub-committee report, undated
2	30	Request for payment for burial services, 1848 February 22
2	31-32	Financial correspondence, 1848 March 27-1848 July 21 (2 folders) <u>No Folder #33</u>
Box	Folder	
2	34-49	Deer Island Hospital weekly reports, 1847 June 6, 1847 August 18-1847 November 24 (16 folders)
3	50-100	Deer Island Hospital weekly reports, 1847 December 1-1848 November 14 (51 folders)

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