



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

Guide to the City of Charlestown records

Finding aid prepared by Zachary Enright

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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|------------------------|--|
| Repository: | City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division |
| Title: | City of Charlestown records |
| Collection No.: | 1200.001 |
| Dates: | 1725-1874 |
| Quantity: | 12.0 Cubic feet (9 Boxes 3 Flat Boxes 153 Volumes 1 Publications Box) |

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Biographical/Historical note

The First Europeans settled in Charlestown in 1628. In 1629 the Massachusetts Bay Company sent Thomas Graves to present day Charlestown in order to lay out the town in 1629. His elliptical street plan can still be seen in City Square.

Throughout the pre-revolutionary period the town grew as a port and transportation center. On June 17, 1775 the Battle of Bunker Hill took place, actually occurring on Breed's Hill. After routing the American colonists the British troops burnt the oldest section of the town to the ground. The rebuilding of the town did not begin in earnest until the end of the war in 1781.

In the post revolutionary war period the town continued to grow as a port and transportation center. In 1800 the U.S. Navy opened the Navy Yard at Moulton's Point which attracted further maritime industry and became the largest employer for the next 150 years. In 1803 the Middlesex Canal opened connecting the Merrimack Valley with Boston Harbor; Charlestown was its southern terminus. In 1825 the first bridge was built linking Boston and Charlestown. Each of these developments increased the importance of Charlestown's maritime industry. In 1842 the city of Somerville was set off from Charlestown. The growth of the town led to its incorporation as a city in 1847.

In the late 19th century Charlestown saw an influx of Irish immigrants and by 1865 they made up one quarter of the town's population. In 1874 the City was annexed to the City of Boston.

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Scope and Contents note

The City of Charlestown records extend approximately 24 cubic feet and cover the period from 1725 – 1874. The records fall into two groups, Town records and City records. The town records are approximately 3 cubic feet and cover the period prior to Charlestown's incorporation as a city in 1842. These records are from the selectmen, including correspondence from John Hancock President of the Continental Congress, petitions and reports concerning the Rioting and Burning of the Ursuline Convent, Notifications and warrants relating to strangers in the town, and records pertaining to the militia; the City Clerk (Town Clerk) including writs and Warrants to Town Officers to be Sworn; and the Overseers of the Poor including Indentures and Correspondence. The City portion of the records dating after 1842 include records from the City Council; the City Clerk; the Police Department; the Assessors including Tax volumes covering 1791 – 1873; the Treasurer records include 20 volumes covering the accounts of the city; the Fire Department; the Mystic Water Board; and Publications including yearly Addresses by the Mayor 1847 – 1873, Municipal Register 1848 and several annual reports of the Library, School Department, and the Mystic Water Board.

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Arrangement note

While these records have been arranged by City Department much of the original order has been maintained. Much of the Selectmen records as well as the Overseers of the Poor records were originally interleaved into volumes and were removed in an earlier project. The original order of these records has been maintained.

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Restrictions

Conditions Governing Access note

The City of Charlestown records are open for research.

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Related Material

Complementary records of the City of Charlestown as well as other annexed towns are available through the Boston Public Library research Division. Records of other annexed towns are also available at the City of Boston Archives.

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Series I: Selectmen, 1725-1847 (3.0 Cubic feet)

The Selectmen series contains the earliest records of the Town of Charlestown. Including a letter signed by John Hancock, then president of the Continental Congress, denying compensation for the British burning the town after the Battle of Bunker Hill. The collection also contains documents related to the burning of the Ursuline convent.

| Box | Folder | |
|-----|--------|--|
| 1 | 1-8 | Applications for Appointments, 1791-1842 (8 Folders) |
| 1 | 9-29 | Applications and Recommendations for Licenses, 1728-1847 (21 Folders) |
| 1 | 30-35 | Ecclesiastical Matters, 1726-1845 (6 Folders) |
| 1 | 36-37 | Election Returns, 1847 (2 Folders) |
| 1 | 38-42 | Fire Department, 1724-1845 (19 Folders) |
| 2 | 1-14 | |
| 2 | 15-19 | General, 1742-1847 (5 Folders) |
| | | The General subseries is contained in 5 folders dating from 1742-1847. Records include Minutes, petitions, correspondence, reports, and other materials relating to the Selectmen meetings. |
| 2 | 20 | Hancock, John: Letter Denying Relief, 1777 (1 Folder) |
| 2 | 21-33 | Militia Returns, 1744-1846 (13 Folders) |
| 2 | 34-39 | Notifications, 1727-1792, undated (14 Folders) |
| 3 | 1-8 | |
| | | The Notifications subseries contains documents notifying the Charlestown government of the arrival of new residents to the town, these records date from 1727-1792. Also included are documents recording the history of residents' connection with the town recording from where they came originally and from where their parents and grandparents came. |

Warrants

| Box | Folder | |
|-----|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 3 | 9-28 | Elections, 1825-1847 (20 Folders) |
| 3 | 29 | Strangers, 1732-1794 (1 Folder) |

Series VI: Assessors, 1791-1873 (128 Volumes 1 Folder)

Volumes

| | |
|--|--|
| 1-11, 57-72, 152 | Valuation Books, 1791-1870 (28 Volumes) |
| 22-24, 28-37, 78-79, 83-84, 90 | Tax Books, 1802-1869 (19 Volumes) |
| 38-56, 73, 85- 89, 101- 105, 109 | Taking Books, 1828-1867 (31 Volumes) |
| 74-77, 80-82, 91-100, 117, 135 | Street Books, 1868-1873 (19 Volumes) |
| 106-108 | Assessor's List, 1865 (3 Volumes) |
| 110, 136 | Property Transfer Books, 1869-1872 (2 Volumes) |
| 111-116, 118-132 | Transfer Books, 1869-1873 (21 Volumes) |
| 133, 134 | Single Poll Tax Lists, 1871-1872 (2 Volumes) |
| 140 | Board of Assessors Minutes, 1868-1870 (1 Volume) |
| 142, 153 | Abatements, 1870, 1872 (2 Volumes) |
| 145 | Streets Renumbered, 1868 (1 Volume) |
| Box | Folder |
| 5 | 14a Unidentified, undated, 1857 (1 Folder) |

Series VII: Treasurer, 1825-1875 (5.0 Cubic feet) (8 Folders 21 Volumes)

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------|---|
| Box | Folder | |
| 5 | 15-35 | Bills and Receipts for Payment , 1714-1872 (31 Folders) |
| Volume | | |
| 151 | | Register of Bills Payable, 1826-1865 (1 Volume) |
| 12, 14, 15 | | Cash Books, 1848-1874 (3 Volumes) |
| 13, 16, 17, 19, 150 | | Ledgers, 1848-1874 (5 Volumes) |
| 18, 26, 139 | | Day Books, 1842-1871 (3 Volume) |
| 20 | | Water Sinking Fund: Account Book, 1871-1873 (1 Volume) |

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|-----------------|--|
| 25 | City Debt, 1858-1873 (1 Volume) |
| 27, 138, 148 | Schedule of Accounts and Claims Against the City, 1848-1866 (3 Volumes) |
| 137 | Deferred Roles Accounts Due from the City of Charlestown, undated (1 Volume) |
| 143, 144 | Mortgages, 1871-1872 (2 Volumes) |
| 149 | Register of Receipts, 1825-1847 (1 Volume) |

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Series VIII: Overseers of the Poor, 1726-1869 (147 Folders)

| Box | Folder | |
|-----|--------|---|
| 6 | 1-52 | Incoming Correspondence, 1726-1847 (142 Folders 1 Flat Box) |
| 7 | 1-52 | |
| Box | Folder | |
| 8 | 1-38 | |
| 8 | 39-43 | Indentures, 1727-1837, 1864, 1869 (5 Folders) |

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Series IX: Fire Department (1 Folder)

| Box | Folder | |
|-----|--------|----------------------------------|
| 8 | 44 | Roll of Members, 1862 (1 Folder) |

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Series X: Mystic Water Board

| Box | Folder | |
|-----|--------|------------------------------|
| 8 | 45-48 | Deeds, 1862-1871 (4 Folders) |

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Series XI: Publications, 1847-1874 (1 Publications Box 34 folders)

Publications

| | | |
|-----|--------|--|
| 37 | | City Documents, 1847 (1 Volume) |
| 37 | | Municipal Register, 1848 (1 Volume) |
| 37 | | Fire Department Annual Report, 1868 (1 Volume) |
| Box | Folder | |
| 9 | 1-14 | Mayoral Addresses, 1847-1873 (14 Folders) |
| 9 | 15-17 | Annual Statement of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Charlestown, 1864, 1867, 1874 (3 Folders) |
| 9 | 18 | Report of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Charlestown, 1864, 1865, 1867, 1871 (1 Folder) |
| 9 | 19 | Annual Reports of the Mystic Water Board, 1867, 1871 (1 folders) |

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| 9 | 20 | Annual report of the School Committee of the City of Charlestown, including the Second and third Semi-Annual Reports of the Superintendent of the Public Schools, for the Year 1867, 1867 (1 Folder) |
| 9 | 21 | Report of the Commissioners and Chief Engineer of the Charlestown Water Works, 1865 (1 Folder) |

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Series XII: Oversize Materials (3 Flat boxes)

The Oversize Materials Series contains oversize records removed from other series. Please refer to these boxes when removal slips are encountered.

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| Flatbox | |
| 10-12 | 1725-1874 |

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