



City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division

Guide to the Town of Boston records

Finding aid prepared by Zachary Enright

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Repository:	City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division
Title:	Town of Boston records
Collection No.:	1000.001
Dates:	1634-1821 (Bulk, 1693-1821)
Quantity:	4.5 Cubic feet (1 document case, 1 flat box, 42 volumes and 2 microfilm reels)

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Biographical/Historical note

The settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Company on the peninsula formed at the mouth of the Charles River, known as Shawmut by the Indians and Trimountain by the inhabitants of Charlestown was established as Boston by an order of the General Court passed on 7 Sep 1630 (old style). The General Court during the four or five years after the settlement included in the boundaries of Boston the islands in the harbor, Muddy River (now Brookline), Winnisimet (now Chelsea), Mount Wollaston and the lands east of the Neponset River later incorporated as the Town of Braintree and now constituting the towns of Braintree, Randolph and Quincy.

The name of “selectmen” first appears in the records in 1643. Boston operated as a town with a Board of

Selectmen until 1822. On 23 Feb 1822, the Massachusetts Legislature passed an “Act Establishing the City of Boston.” The act was accepted by the inhabitants on 4 Mar 1822.

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Scope and Contents note

The Town of Boston records extend 4 cubic feet and cover a period shortly after the founding of the town until its incorporation as a city, 1634 – 1822. The Record group contains primarily volumes from the Assessors 1785 – 1820; the Treasurer, including account books related to Brooker Fund and Smith Fund for a “school for the instruction of the people of Colour”, and city accounts generally; and the By-laws and town orders from 1786, 1801, and 1818. Other volumes included are Permits to build timber buildings 1707-1729, lists of sales of cattle and horses, lists of immigrants, and Port Receipts. The papers making up .25 cubic feet consist primarily of papers of the selectmen including papers and correspondence signed by John Hancock, President Thomas Jefferson, Paul Revere, and Robert Treat Paine. The papers cover a period from 1768 – 1810 and cover a variety of topics including the embargo on Spain and Portugal, and newspapers from 1768 and 1795.

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Series I: Selectmen, 1634-1813 (5 Folders 1 Flat Box 2 Volumes)

Box	Folder	
1	1	Hancock, John: Receipt for Work on Quarantine House on Rainsford Island, 1771 (1 Folder)
1	2	President Thomas Jefferson: Correspondence concerning Embargo of Spain and Portugal, 1808 (1 Folder)
1	3	Paine, Robert Treat: Correspondence, 1809 (1 Folder)
1	4	Minutes: Table of Contents vol.19, 1800-1810 (1 Folder)
1	5	Donation Committee Account Book 1774, undated (1 Folder)
2		Return of the French Neutrals, January 1761, 1761 (1 Folder)
2		Report of Committee respecting French People, undated (1 Folder)
2		Petition of Nomination for Constable, 1812 (1 Folder)
2		Petition Objecting to Sewer Repairs, 7 June 1813 (1 Folder)
Volume		
1		Allowances Permits to Build Timber Buildings, 1707-1729 (1 Volume)
2		Town Book, 1634-1660 (1 Volume)

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Series II: Assessors

Volume

3 Taking Book without the Neck, 1820 (1 Volume)

Box Volumes

3	4, 5	Taking Book Ward 5 and 6, 1785 (2 Volumes)
3	27-30	Taking Books, Wards 2, 4, 5, and 9, 1786 (4 Volumes)
Volumes		
6-10		Assessors' Ward Books, 1795 (5 Volumes)

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Series III: Treasurer

Volume

11		Brooker Fund Account Book, 1789-1821 (1 Volume)
12		Smith Fund, 1817-1820 (1 Volume)
13		Receipt Book for Witnesses in Justices' Quarterly Bills from July 1, 1821 to June 20, 1822, 1821-1822 (1 Volume)
14		Journal Account Book, 1785-1790 (1 Volume)
Volumes		
15-19		Ledger, 1785-1821 (5 Volumes)
Volume		
20		Journal, 1811-1813 (1 Volume)

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Series IV: Overseers of the Poor

Drawer

38-011		Indentures, 1734-1805 (2 Microfilm)
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Series V: Newspapers, 1768, 1795 (1 Folder)

The Newspapers series contains two newspapers, Boston Chronicle and Columbian Centinel.

Box

1		Boston Chronicle, 1768 May 2-9
1		Columbian Centinel, 1795 January 31

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Series VI: Town Clerk

The By-Laws and Town Orders of the Town of Boston, 1786, 1801, 1818 (3 Volumes)

The volumes from 1801 and 1818 also contain "Together with Rules and Orders passed by the Selectmen, the rules and Regulations of the Board of Health also the Sundry laws of the Commonwealth and other important information pertaining to the town of Boston."

Volumes

21-23 1786, 1801, 1818

Volume

24 Cattle Book, 1693 (1 Volume)

25 Immigrants, 1763-1769 (1 Volume)

26 Port Receipts, 1773-1775 (1 Volume)

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