

**MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES AT COLUMBIA POINT**  
**220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston MA 02125**  
**(617) 727-2816**  
**Weekdays: 9-5 Saturday: 9-3**

**SUMMARY GUIDE TO HOLDINGS**

The Massachusetts Archives, acting on behalf of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, is responsible for securing, preserving, and managing for the public good those noncurrent records of state government deemed to have archival (permanent) value. Such records have been created since colonial times by the legislative, judicial, and executive branches--the latter including the governor, other constitutional officers, and state agencies and commissions. The following outline is intended as a suggestive but by no means exhaustive summary of agencies, document types, and topics encountered among the holdings of the Archives.

**RECORDS REFLECTING THE STRUCTURE OF STATE GOVERNMENT**

**--FOUNDATION DOCUMENTS: THE BASIS OF STATE GOVERNMENT**

Colonial charters, beginning with the Great Charter of 1629. Treaties, compacts, and agreements with Indian tribes and with other states. Proceedings of state constitutional conventions. Constitution of 1780 and amendments. State legal codes.

**--LEGISLATIVE RECORDS: THE BASIS OF STATE LAW**

Files of the General Court from the colonial (1629-1686), later intercharter (1689-1692), provincial (1692-1774), and Revolutionary (1775-1780) periods; of the Provincial Congress (1774-1775); and of the General Court from the Constitutional period (since 1780): Petitions, orders, reports, messages, bills. Unenacted legislation and enacted statutes and resolves. House and Senate dockets, roll calls, and journals. Committee and legislative commission hearing and background files.

**--STATE SECRETARY RECORDS: THE BASIS OF STATE RECORDKEEPING**

Administrative files. Initiative and referendum petitions. State and national election returns. State regulation files and register. Lobbyist registrations. Municipal home rule charters, acceptances of local option statutes. Notices of appointment, lists, qualifications (oaths of office) of state and local officials. Census registers, returns--state: 1855, 1865, 1915, 1971, 1975; federal: Massachusetts, 1790-1900, Maine, 1790-1810. Returns (reports) of town vital records, 1841-1910 (indexes to 1971); supplemented by transcripts (to 1850) and microforms. Returns of names changed in probate court. Corporate articles of organization (prior to 1851 see legislative records).

**--EXECUTIVE RECORDS: THE BASIS OF STATE SERVICES**

**GOVERNOR:** Executive correspondence, 1802-1925. Papers of individual governors--Foss (1911-1914); Peabody (1963-1965) and successors: correspondence, legal, legislative, personnel, press, and scheduling offices; subject files. Gubernatorial commissions, including judicial nominations, women's issues, and art. Gubernatorial spouses' files: Dukakis (1983-1991), Weld (1991-1997).

**COUNCIL:** Colonial (1629-1686), intercharter (1686-1692), provincial (1692-1774), and Revolutionary (1775-1780) periods: Executive records. (For Council legislative records see **LEGISLATIVE RECORDS** above.) Constitutional period (since 1780): Minutes, hearings, reports, approval files, treasury warrants.

**ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE:** Secretariat files, minutes. Affirmative action reports. Public employee retirement decisions and appeals. State agency self-survey, 1960. Town valuation lists (State Secretary). Distribution of revenue to municipalities. Council on the Arts and Humanities. Government Land Bank.

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS REGULATION:** Secretariat files, banking and insurance subject files. Public utilities regulation (railroads, gas and electric): minutes, hearings. Registration boards for professions and trades. Consumers' Council.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANPOWER AFFAIRS/LABOR:** Economic affairs secretariat, labor secretariat files. Industrial census, 1865, 1875. Annual statistics of manufacturers. Surveys of unemployment, minimum wage. Employment and training board of review decisions. Financial reports of labor unions. State mediation of labor disputes, labor relation case files. Governor's Office of Economic Development.

**EDUCATION:** Board of Education minutes. Admission files for schools of the blind and deaf (State Secretary). Board of Regents and other higher education agency program review and degree approval files. Dept. of Education litigation files. Council on Education. Board of Immigration and Americanization.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS:** Secretariat files. State topographical surveys, 1830-1842, 1884-1901. Interstate boundary dispute commissions. Massachusetts Geographic Board place name survey. Waterways, wetlands, harbor lands: surveys, licensing files. Coastal zone management. Hazardous waste facility siting. Toxics use reduction. Metropolitan District water supply: Quabbin Reservoir real estate takings, cemetery removals, construction. Metropolitan District Commission and predecessors: administration, real estate takings, waterworks and sewer construction and management, parks engineering. Agricultural marketing reports.

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES:** Secretariat files, public welfare subject files. Immigration: passenger and ship lists, 1848-1891; naturalization returns, 1885-1931. Almshouses: registers, case histories. Public assistance: relief registers, abstract of audit; research and evaluation. Public health: state hospital, tuberculosis sanatorium registers, case files; rate setting hearings; drug rehabilitation. Mental health: state hospital case files; forensic mental health; planning. Mental retardation: state school administration, case files. Youth services: State Primary School, state reform and industrial school registers and case files; boarding out, indenture, adoption records. Office for Children.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** Secretariat files. Renditions/extraditions (State Secretary). Corrections: prison records, Parole Board (Health and Human Services). Pardon files (Council). Committee on Criminal Justice. State Police (Sacco-Vanzetti investigative files). Medical examiner files. Civil defense (World War II). **MILITARY:** French and Indian Wars, Revolution, Shays' Rebellion, War of 1812, Civil War, Spanish-American War: recruitment, enlistment, muster roll, pay, pension records; hospital and state military agent records (Civil War). Board of War (Revolution). Adjutant General, Commissary General, Quartermaster General, Surgeon General.

**TRANSPORTATION AND CONSTRUCTION:** Secretariat files. State House and other state buildings: plans and contracts (Administration and Finance). Cambridge Bridge Commission. Government Center Commission. Public Works Commission hearings. Mystic River Bridge Authority. Massachusetts Port Authority. Metropolitan Transit/Massachusetts Bay Transportation authorities trustee, director, general manager files.

#### --TREASURER RECORDS: THE BASIS OF STATE FINANCE

18th-19th centuries: Treasurer's journals, ledgers, blotters, cashbooks, warrants, surety bonds, correspondence. Governmental and military (esp. Revolution and Shays' Rebellion) expense accounts, orders, payrolls. Fiscal paper: loan certificates, notes, lottery tickets, and related ledgers. Bounty, railroad and building loan accounts. Tax records (including sheriffs, assessors). 20th century: Correspondence. Arts Lottery. Massachusetts Cultural Council.

#### --ATTORNEY GENERAL RECORDS: THE BASIS OF STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Investigative files. Opinions. Victim witness program. Charitable corporation filings. Also: State Ethics Commission designation lists.

#### --COURT RECORDS: THE BASIS OF STATE LAW INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

Land Court registration decrees. **JUDICIAL ARCHIVES** (administered by the Supreme Judicial Court; serviced by the Massachusetts Archives): Supreme Judicial Court and predecessors. Superior and district courts by county, including probate and naturalization records.

## **SPECIAL COLONIAL AND EARLY STATE MATERIALS TO 1800**

Many early documents (including legislative, administrative, land, financial, and military) are found in the 328-volume **MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES COLLECTION**, which also contains papers of the pre-Revolutionary governor Thomas Hutchinson. To supplement these, contemporary records from governmental archives in Great Britain and France were transcribed in the 1840s.

The **EASTERN LANDS** papers document settlement of public lands in the District of Maine and its separation from Massachusetts as a state in 1820. Included are legal, survey, and financial records of the General Court, legislative commissions, and the Land Office.

Archives of the **PLYMOUTH COLONY**, 1620-1691, held by the Plymouth County Commissioners, were transcribed, 1818-1857. Included are legislative, court, financial, and vital records; deeds and wills.

All the above contain documents relating to **INDIAN AFFAIRS**, including military, trading, and census records. The Archives also holds 19th-century records of the Guardians of Indians.

**WITCHCRAFT** records in the Massachusetts Archives Collection include depositions, examinations, warrants, and other court documents.

## **OTHER HISTORICAL RESOURCE FILES**

Historic sites and structures in Massachusetts are documented in records of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (part of the state secretary's office): compliance files of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places and tax certification program files.

Files of the Massachusetts Historical Records Survey conducted by the Work Projects/Works Progress administrations, 1936-1942, are supplemented by those of the American Portraits Survey and the Black Historical Records Survey. The Massachusetts Archives itself conducted a Historic Documents Inventory Survey in 1974 and a National Historical Publications and Records Commission Survey in 1981.

## **NONTEXTUAL MATERIALS**

--**PHOTOGRAPHS:** Senate presidents and House speakers of the General Court. Governors' activities: Foss, Peabody, King, Dukakis. Reformatory for Women at Framingham: inmate files; activities and buildings of other state institutions. Massachusetts boundary markers. Metropolitan Water Supply Commission: Quabbin Reservoir real estate takings and cemeteries. Dept. of Public Works: aerial; contract; construction, maintenance, public relations. Division of Waterways: harbor and river projects. Metropolitan District Commission: aerial survey mapping; waterworks and sewer construction; parks engineering; reservations and facilities. Massachusetts Port Authority: Boston Harbor dredging and pier construction.

--**MAPS AND PLANS:** Eastern Lands (Maine, 17th-18th centuries). Maps collected in France: state, national, continental. Maps and plans deposited with the state secretary. Parks engineering (Metropolitan District Commission). Waterways. State planning land use maps. State aid highway construction maps. Town plans (state map--1794, 1830). Building inspection plans (Public Safety). Mental hospital, correctional facility building plans.

--**PAINTINGS:** New England birds by L.A. Fuertes.

--**AUDIO/AUDIOVISUALS:** Governors' press conferences, public service announcements (Peabody, King, Dukakis). Governor's Economic Development Conference. Lieutenant governor's Blueprint 2000 hearings. State secretary's public service announcements: election procedures, securities sales. Council on the Arts and Humanities: Massachusetts folklife interviews. Consumer Affairs videos. Dept. of Public Works: Construction, maintenance, and public relations films. Revolutionary War Bicentennial Commission.

--**ARTIFACTS:** Objects related to events in Massachusetts history, including Revolutionary currency, Revere engraving plates; guns, drums, and military accoutrements; time capsules; commemorative items.

## **OTHER STATE RECORDS**

The Archives often has detailed information on records available through the office creating them--nonarchival record series, current files of series already held at the Archives, and other archival series not yet transferred, including those of the following agencies: **CAMPAIGN FINANCE. ELDER AFFAIRS. ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**--Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit; Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Dept. of Environmental Protection: water supply, water pollution, waste water management; Dept. of Environmental Management: forests and parks. **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**--Dept. of Social Services: foster home/adoption case files. **MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION. TRANSPORTATION AND CONSTRUCTION**--Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.

## **LOCAL RECORDS**

In addition to vital records, charters, valuation lists, and other local governmental materials noted above as state records, the Archives has records of the Essex, Hampden, Middlesex, and Worcester county commissioners, record books of the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds (1689-Feb. 1800), the debtors/criminal calendars of the Suffolk County (Charles Street) Jail, case files of the Middlesex County Training School, and files of the Boston Housing Authority. The Archives also monitors and maintains generic and some specific descriptions of holdings of municipal clerks; local conservation, historic district, and historical commissions; sheriffs; and registers of deeds.

## **PRIVATE RECORDS**

Although only incidentally acquired by the Archives, privately created collections include personal papers of governors Oliver Ames and Eugene Foss; miscellaneous military documents; architectural plans; and photographs relating to wars and other historical events, and of state officials and institutions.

## **GUIDES**

*Subject Guide to Records in the Massachusetts Archives*, Mar. 1996. Index by Library of Congress subject heading to record series descriptions in the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). Copies available on request.

List of holdings by agency, with agency code/name, record series no./title, span dates, and reference to RLIN series description. RLIN record series descriptions and related agency histories are available in printout form or by search of the RLIN database online by agency, series title/title keyword, or topic. Available for consultation onsite.

Specialized guides to materials relating to the built environment, Eastern Lands, family history, social welfare; colonial and Revolutionary records; John Adams and George Washington documents. Available for consultation onsite, and in most cases printed for distribution on request.

## **FINDING AIDS**

Lists of file folder headings or container contents accompany many series descriptions. There are also card files and/or databases indexing parts of the Massachusetts Archives Collection and holdings of photographs, maps and plans, architectural/building inspection plans, and gubernatorial correspondence.

## **PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIALS**

Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colony documents. State acts and resolves and legal codes. House/Senate journals. Annual reports of state agencies. Town vital records to 1850. Indexes to military records. City directories. American, New England, and Massachusetts history titles.