

Record Groups GC

Governor's Council

Repository:
Massachusetts Archives
220 Morrissey Blvd
Boston, MA 02125

Reviewed 2020-08-11

Record Group List:

- [Governor's Council](#)

Record Group Descriptions and Related Series:

Record Group Number: GC3

Record Group Name: Governor's Council

Historical Note:

During the colonial period (1629-1686) certain members of the Court of Assistants (which functioned not only judicially but also legislatively as part of the General Court, constituting from 1644 its upper house, though without the formal title--see: Massachusetts. Court of Assistants. Agency history record) were chosen for life to function executively under the governor as a standing council, as defined in 1636 (Mass Recs 1: 167) and 1639 (1: 264)

In 1686, the 1629 charter having been revoked, the General Court ceased to function and governing power was in a crown-appointed Council and president (Thomas Dudley, 1686) and then governor (Edmund Andros, 1686-1689). After the deposition of Andros and a brief interim government by the Council for Safety of the People and Conservation of the Peace (Apr.-June 1689), charter government was reinstated: the governor, deputy governor, and assistants elected in 1686 (Mass Recs 5: 513) resumed office, the assistants as Council serving both as executive body under the governor and as upper house of the General Court.

From 1692, under the provincial charter, a Council of twenty-eight was elected annually from its membership by the General Court, again with dual legislative and executive roles. In Aug. 1774 it was displaced by councilors appointed by royal writ of mandamus to serve under Gov. Thomas Gage, until the British evacuated Boston in Mar. 1776. Meantime the General Court, discharged by Gage in Sept. 1774 and reconvening in July 1775 after an interim of three successive provincial congresses, elected its own Council to serve as its upper house and as executive body without governor.

Under the 1780 Constitution the Council (known variously as Executive Council or Governor's Council) serves as an advisory executive body presided over by the governor and assembled at his discretion (Const Pt 2, C 2, S 1, Art 4), consisting of the lieutenant

governor and originally nine chosen annually by the General Court from among those elected to serve either as senators or councilors (S 3, Art 2). Const Amend Art 13 (1840) provided for legislative election of councilors from the population at large, with a residence requirement of five years immediately preceding election. Amend Art 16 (1855) provided for popular election of councilors, one from each of eight districts. Election became biennial per Amend Art 64 (1918)

By its constitutional and statutory authority to advise the governor, the Council approves appointments of judicial and quasi-judicial officers (Const Pt 2, C 2, S 1, Art 9), notaries (Const Amend Art 4), and constitutional officers if vacancies occur when the legislature is not in session (Amend Art 17); also removal of justices of the peace and notaries (Amend Art 37). It approves the adjournment or prorogation of the General Court (Const Pt 2, S 1, Art 6), granting of pardons, including commutations and respites (Art 8), and warrants authorizing expenditures from the Treasury (Art 11); it also witnesses the governor's certification of state election results (MGLA c 54, s 116)

Over time the Council acquired additional statutory authority requiring its advice and consent for various gubernatorial and other executive appointments and the fixing of salaries thereof; also for various fiscal acts and contracts made by the executive branch. With a few exceptions, such authority was repealed by St 1964, c 740.

Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/145429255>

Related Series:

Transcripts of letters concerning the Governor's Council, 1774-1776

Identifier: GC3/55X
Extent: 1 volume
Arranged: Arranged chronologically.
Notes: Copied from the British State Paper Office by Robert lemon in 1852 pursuant to instructions by state secretary Amasa Walker.
Cover title: Letters & doings of the Council &c. between April 9, 1774 & April 21, 1776.

Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/80490059>

Petitions for appointment to the military, 1814

Identifier: GC3/211X
Extent: 2 document boxes
Arranged: Arranged chronologically thereunder alphabetically by county.
Notes: Formerly part of: Miscellaneous collection; box 88.

Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/122581603>

Executive records, 1650-1987

Identifier: GC3/327
Extent: 62 cubic feet (201 volumes)
Index 0.31 cubic feet (1 box)
Copies (series microfilm) 1.01 cubic feet (101 microfilm reels ; 35 mm.)
Copies (reading room microfilm) 36 microfilm reels ; 35 mm
Copies (1765-1766 transcript) 1 file folder
Copies (1686-1780 transcript) 12 cubic feet (24 boxes)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically by date of meeting.
Notes: Records in general are transcripts: v. 2-11 (1686-1747) from the British State Paper Office, 1846-1851. From 1689 (not in this series) to 1776, many draft originals are in: Massachusetts. Office of the Secretary of State. Massachusetts archives collection ((M-Ar)45X), v. 81-86. (For details and listing of additional Massachusetts archives collection holdings, 1650-1774, see finding aid below.) From 1776 source document (but with less complete text at least in earlier years) is: Massachusetts Council. Minutes ((M-Ar)329) (see that series for detailed description of contents). From 1780 records are signed by councilors.
Vol. 1-94 (1650-1881) bound as numbered (v. 74 in 2); thereafter bound annually only. Spine title: Council records.

Additional Description; <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/77947985>

Council pardon files, 1784-2002

Restrictions: Correspondence: Evaluative information restricted by statutory provision; for conditions of access consult repository; MGLA c 4, s 7, c 26 (c) and c 66A

Identifier: GC3/328
Extent: 154.64 cubic feet (36 record center cartons and 315 document boxes)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically by year or year span, thereunder alphabetically by petitioner.

Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/79089639>

Minutes, 1776-1986

Identifier: GC3/329
Extent: 22.65 cubic feet (17 record center cartons and 4 document boxes)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically.

Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/78544105>

Council files, 1784-1983

Identifier: GC3/378
Extent: 89.82 cubic feet (2 record center cartons and 250 document boxes)
1830-1843 (petitions from selected files): 0.35 cubic ft. (1 doc. box)
Arranged: In two subseries:
(1) Files; arranged chronologically
(2) Correspondence, 1953-1960; arranged alphabetically by state agency, thereunder chronologically in reverse order.
Notes: Boxes numbered: 0-249.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/81121455>

Files of inactive pardons and pardons not granted, 1785-2001

Restrictions: Correspondence: Evaluative information restricted by statutory provision; for conditions of access consult repository; MGLA c 4, s 7, c 26 (c) and c 66A

Identifier: GC3/771
Extent: 91.21 cubic feet (67 record center cartons and 23 document boxes)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically by varying spans, thereunder alphabetically by petitioner.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/79458493>

Treasury warrants, 1764-1824

Identifier: GC3/772X
Extent: 4.55 cubic feet (14 document boxes)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically.
Notes: Holdings incomplete pending further processing.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/82111927>

Finance Committee reports on securities, bonds, and notes in the State Treasury, 1890-1910

Identifier: GC3/773X
Extent: 3.75 cubic feet (3 record center cartons)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/122556537>

Special reports and hearing transcripts, 1913-1973

Identifier: GC3/774
Extent: 2.12 cubic feet (1 record center carton and 3 document boxes)
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/122560351>

Registers listing Treasury warrants, 1837-1934

Identifier: GC3/776
Extent: 1.98 cubic feet (4 volumes in 1 document box and 28 volumes)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically by year.
Notes: Registers for 1847 to 1893 missing.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/122505879>

Petitions and reports on formation of companies, 1812-1814

Identifier: GC3/1040X
Extent: Partial record center cartons
Arranged: Arranged chronologically, thereunder alphabetically by municipality.
Notes: Formerly part of Miscellaneous collection; box 88.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/180705296>

Standardization of Salaries Committee reports, 1916-1917

Identifier: GC3/1392X
Extent: 0.17 cubic feet (1 document box)
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/122560465>

Legislative records, 1689-1837

Identifier: GC3/1701X
Extent: 17.41 cubic feet (67 volumes and 1 box)
Copies (series) 0.43 cubic feet (43 microfilm reels; 35 mm.)
Copies (reading room) 40 microfilm reels; 35 mm
Indexes (volumes 6-7) 0.8 cubic feet (ca. 8500 cards; in 8 boxes)
Finding aids contents (volumes 6-12, 15) 0.39 cubic feet (1 box)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically by date of General Court session.
Notes: Records in general are transcripts, some from British State Paper Office made in the 1840s (see finding aid below). To 1776 many draft originals are in: Massachusetts. Office of the Secretary of State. Massachusetts archives collection ((M-Ar)45X), v. 81-86. (For details see finding aid below. Vol. 70, p. 157-158 includes draft minutes of the Council for Safety of the People and Conservation of the Peace, May 11, 1689. Additional Massachusetts archives collection holdings not yet determined.) From Oct. 1780 source document is: Massachusetts. Office of the Secretary of State. Senate journal ((M-Ar)531)
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/81483226>

Council records on the northeastern boundary of Maine, 1842

Identifier: GC3/1703X
Extent: 1 file folder (partial document box)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically.
Notes: Formerly part of state secretary's: Miscellaneous collection.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/122609930>

Divorce files, 1774-1788

Identifier: GC3/1710X
Extent: 0.35 cubic feet (1 document box)
Arranged: Arranged chronologically.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/84507178>

Petitions and reports on Rearrangement of the 8th Division

Identifier: GC3/1919X
Extent: 1 document box

Judicial records, 1686-1780

Identifier: GC3/2057X
Extent: For current extent consult index database
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/84584635>

Correspondence relating to Indian and military affairs at Machias, 1776-1783

Identifier: GC3/2402X
Extent: Contained in SC1/45X, volume 144.
Additional Description: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/79456095>

Andros Land Warrant, 1687-1688

Identifier: GC3/2518X
Extent: 1 volume.

[Back to Top](#)