



# **Guide to the Charles Street Jail records 8210.0018**

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Boston City Archives

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West Roxbury, MA 02132  
[archives@boston.gov](mailto:archives@boston.gov)

URL: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/archives-and-records-management>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Boston City Archives
<b>Creator:</b>	Suffolk County (Mass.). Jail
<b>Title:</b>	Charles Street Jail records
<b>ID:</b>	8210.001
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1862-1990
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6.5 Cubic feet 45 Volumes 1 Document Case
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English

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## Historical note

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The North Jail on Leverett Street (the Leverett Street Jail) was built in the 1820s and served as the lock-up for the City of Boston and Suffolk County. The Leverett Street Jail also served as the House of Correction for Suffolk County until 1833 when a new House of Correction was built in South Boston. As the City and County lock-up the Leverett Street Jail held inmates who were awaiting trial and also those who had been sentenced to the House of Correction and were waiting for transport there. The Leverett Street Jail continued in its roles as the city lock-up and the county lock-up until 1851 when it was finally replaced by a new jail on Charles Street known as the Charles Street Jail (aka: the Suffolk County Jail.) The Charles Street Jail continued to serve as the lock-up for both the City of Boston and Suffolk County until it was replaced in 1991 by the new Suffolk County Jail on Nashua Street. The Suffolk County Sheriff operated both the North Jail and Charles Street Jail.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The records in this collection encompass the years 1862-1990 and are varied in nature. There is one volume of personnel records and one volume containing statistics for the jail. A couple of logbooks document various occurrences at the Jail. These include deaths, cases of insanity, escapes, paupers, sentences, and punishments. A number of other logbooks document personal property transfers,

emergency contacts for inmates, as well as the daily population and guard schedule. The Daily Commitments span the period from 1924 through 1987 (with gaps) and record the daily movement of inmates into and out of the jail. There also are two volumes from 1875-1876 and 1878-1880 that also record inmates entering the jail. Criminal and Debtor Calendars for Charles Street Jail are in the custody of the Massachusetts Archives.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

Criminal Calendars, 1799-1988 and Debtors' Calendars, 1799-1943 are in the custody of the Massachusetts Archives.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Correctional institutions
- Jails
- Public institutions
- Prisoners

## Collection Inventory

### Daily Commitments, 1924-1987, with gaps

Date [inclusive]: 1924-1987, with gaps

Physical Description: 24 Volumes

#### Scope and Contents note

The Daily Commitments provide a record of the daily movement of every inmate into and out of the Charles Street Jail. The entries are in chronological order and marked with the time of the movement. For each entry the following information exists: date, time, destination or place from which the inmate(s) came, the reason for the move, name(s) of the inmate(s), the total number moved, and the total count of the jail's population at the time of the entry for both males and females.

Title/Description	Instances
1924 June – 1925 March <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1924 June – 1925 March	Volume 9
1927 May - 1929 May <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1927 May - 1929 May	Volumes 10-12
1931 September - 1933 March <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1931 September - 1933 March	Volumes 13-14
1934 August - 1935 June <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1934 August - 1935 June	Volume 15
1940 April - 1941 March <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1940 April - 1941 March	Volume 16
1947 May - 1948 November <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1947 May - 1948 November	Volumes 17-18
1949 September - 1950 July <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1949 September - 1950 July	Volume 19
1951 June - 1953 April <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1951 June - 1953 April	Volumes 20-21
1955 March - 1956 April <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1955 March - 1956 April	Volume 22
1962 March - 1965 March <u>Date [inclusive]</u> : 1962 March - 1965 March	Volumes 23-25
1966 March - 1967 April	Volume 26

<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1966 March - 1967 April	
1971 November - 1972 August	Volume 27
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1971 November - 1972 August	
1973 May - 1974 April	Volume 28
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1973 May - 1974 April	
1975 April - 1976 February	Volume 29
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1975 April - 1976 February	
1978 October - 1980 September	Volumes 30-31
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1978 October - 1980 September	
1986 May - 1987 February	Volume 32
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1986 May - 1987 February	

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## Daily Record of Inmates, 1875-1880

Date [inclusive]: 1875-1880

Physical Description: 2 Volumes

### Scope and Contents note

The Daily Record of Inmates provides documentation of the new inmates in the Jail for that particular date. These two volumes cover the periods of December 1875 through September 1876 and November 1878 through February 1880 respectively. The entries are in chronological order and include the date, the inmate's name, the institution or place from which the inmate came, the amount of any fine, the inmate's age, sentence, and offence. Sometimes, known relations of an inmate are listed to the left of the inmate's name.

Title/Description	Instances
1875 December - 1876 September	Volume 33
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1875 December - 1876 September	
1878 November - 1880 February	Volume 34
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1878 November - 1880 February	

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## Log Books

### Scope and Contents note

The series Log Books consists of a variety of records. Two of the volumes contain records for multiple types of occurrences within the Jail including paupers, escapes, punishments, deaths, and cases of insanity. There are two property logbooks, one for females and one for males. There are three volumes documenting both the daily

population of the Jail and the guard schedule. There is also one volume containing emergency contact information for inmates.

**Title/Description**

**Instances**

Occurrence Logs

Physical Description: 2 Volumes

**Scope and Contents note**

The first volume of occurrences records instances of paupers, sentences, escapes, punishments, and deaths. The record of paupers covers the dates 1864-1874 and contains date, time, signature, and a witness's signature. In addition, the following statement appears at the top of each page: "To the Keeper of the Commonwealth's Jail, in the County of Suffolk. Sir: I claim support of my Creditors as a Pauper, not being able to support myself in Jail."

The record of sentences covers 1864-1868 and contains jail number, name, offence, date, prison, and length of sentence. The record of escapes spans the dates 1861-1893 and contains jail number, name, offence, a brief description of the escape, its resolution, and the date. The record of punishments dates from 1864 to 1880 contains jail number, name, the offence that resulted in the punishment, as well as the date and type/length of the punishment. The record of deaths covers 1862-1893 and contains jail number, name, disease, length of sickness and the inmate's date of death. All of the entries in each record are in chronological order with no index.

The second volume of occurrences also records deaths and escapes as well as cases of insane inmates. The records of deaths and escapes contain the same information as the records in the previous volume. They differ only in the dates covered. The death records cover 1884-1945 and duplicate records for the years 1884-1893. The escape records begin where the previous volume ends and cover the dates 1893-1954. The insane records cover the years 1884-1944 and contain the year, jail number, name, offence, the institution the inmate was sent to, the date sent and the authority under which s/he was sent.

1861 - 1893

Volume 35

Date [inclusive]: 1861 - 1893

1884 - 1954

Volume 36

Date [inclusive]: 1884 - 1954

Property Log Books

Physical Description: 2 Volumes

## Scope and Contents note

There are two property log books, one for females and one for males. The Female Property Log Book covers the period of August 1945 through July 1951. The entries are in chronological order with names and dates and some signatures indicating receipt of property from the property officer on duty at that time. The Property Log Book [Males] spans the period of March 1938 through March 1947. This volume contains the same information as the female log book in the same strict chronological order. The male volume also contained an amount of correspondence from inmates to the Jail requesting release of their property to certain individuals. Most of this correspondence was removed and placed in archival folders; however, some was found glued into the volume and thus was left in place. There is no index to either of these volumes.

[Male], 1938 March - 1947 March <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1938 March - 1947 March	Box 1 Volume 37	Folder 1-2
Female, 1945 August - 1951 July <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1945 August - 1951 July	Volume 38	

### Daily Population and Guard Schedule

Physical Description: 3 Volumes

## Scope and Contents note

The Daily Population and Guard Schedule consists of three volumes covering the years 1903 through 1930. The records for the Daily Population have one page for every month within each year. These pages provide daily information including the date, the number of debtors, witnesses, and criminals in the jail, the number of males, the number of females, and the total, as well as the number of commitments and discharges for that day, and a space for some remarks. The records of the Guard Schedule also have one page for every month within each year. These records also offer daily information concerning the guard schedule including the date, the names of guards for the first, second, and outer office watch, and who had day duty on Sundays. There is also a space for remarks, which often has notes about various happenings at the jail for that date.

1903 April - 1912 February <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1903 April - 1912 February	Volume 39
1912 March - 1921 March <u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1912 March - 1921 March	Volume 40
1921 April - 1930 April	Volume 41

Date [inclusive]: 1921 April - 1930 April

Emergency Notification

Physical Description: 1 Volume

**Scope and Contents note**

The Emergency Notification log lists the inmate's name, the name of the contact, and the contact's address in chronological order for the period of July 1951 through June 1959. The same contact names appear multiple times for many different inmates. These contacts may be attorneys and/or public defenders. Often a third name (only a surname) appears as well. This name appears to be that of the person who bailed the inmate out of jail. This third name is usually one of three names that appear regularly as the third name. These three names are most likely the names of bail bonds men.

1951 July – 1959 June

Volume 42

Date [inclusive]: 1951 July – 1959 June

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**Personnel Records**

Physical Description: 1 Volume

**Scope and Contents note**

The Personnel Records consist of one volume of Payroll records that document the wages of the employees of the Charles Street Jail as well as the payroll budget for the Jail. These records cover the dates April 1925 through March 1929. Entries are in chronological order and include the name of the employee and his/her rank or position. Also included is the amount to be paid to each employee from the payroll, the amount in deductions from each employee, and the net difference. In addition, there is a section for pensions that the Jail pays to retired employees. The section marked "subdivisions" lists the various positions within the Jail, the number of persons employed at each position, and the annual amount in the budget for that position.

Title/Description	Instances
Payroll, 1925 April - 1929 Marcch	Volume 43
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1925 April - 1929 Marcch	

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**Statistics**

Physical Description: 1 Volume

**Scope and Contents note**

The Statistics records document general totals for all the inmates in the Jail for each day between April 1927 and June 1935. There is one page of statistics for Commitments and one for Discharges for each month within these

dates. The information is also broken down between males and females. The information for both males and females includes the date, the total number for that day, place of birth or "nativity," race, social condition, and the reason for their incarceration. These categories are further sub-divided into more specific types.

Title/Description	Instances
1927 April - 1935 June	Volume 44
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1927 April - 1935 June	

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## Warrant Book

Physical Description: 1 Volume

### Scope and Contents note

This series has one volume that contains a record of warrants issued for inmates in the Charles Street Jail. This Warrant Book is arranged alphabetically with each year, month, and day. All of the entries are also in chronological order. The same information is present for each entry and includes inmate name, the warrant number, the date received, the cause for the warrant, and the disposition of the warrant. This volume is not open for research due to CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) exemptions G. L. c. 6, § 172.

Title/Description	Instances
1984 December – 1990 July	Volume 45
<u>Date [inclusive]:</u> 1984 December – 1990 July	

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