

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Manuscript Collections

<p>Name of collection:</p> <p>Boston, Mass. Papers, 1634-1893</p>	<p>Location:</p> <p>Mss. boxes "B" Octavo volumes "B" Folio volumes "B" Oversize mss. boxes "B"</p>
<p>Size of collection:</p> <p>3 mss. boxes; 2 octavo volumes; 4 folio volumes; 2 oversize folders, 28 items</p>	<p>N.U.C.M.C. number:</p> <p>N.A.</p>
<p>Finding aids:</p> <p>See accompanying list of finding aids</p>	
<p>Source of collection:</p> <p>Gifts of Shubael Bell, 1818; Ogden Codman, 1939; Elizabeth Harris, 1937; Charles H. Taylor, 1931, 1934; Isaiah Thomas, 1818; Frederick Tuckerman, 1923; Worcester Society of Natural History, 1932; several items purchased from Goodspeed's Bookshop, 1922</p>	
<p>Collection Description:</p> <p>The holdings of this miscellaneous collection are detailed in the accompanying contents list. There is correspondence ranging from 1739 to 1893; a topographical description, 1817, of the city; local government documents of the period 1634 to 1862; deeds; tax and census information, 1657-1840, including marriage banns, 1817-1828, and a record of newspaper obituaries, 1826-1831. There are various business and banking items, including receipts. Many documents relate to early railroads, especially the Boston and Worcester and the Boston and Albany Railroads. There are records pertaining to the Boston Massacre, 1770, the Boston Tea Party, 1773, and a list of Boston Loyalists in 1775. There are also various records, both historical and legal, dealing with the social development of the city.</p> <p>See Contents List.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">21 October 1974 rev. 26 July 1978 rev. 22 January 1979 rev. 29 April 1980 rev. 24 August 1982</p>	

Boston, Mass. Papers, 1634-1893

List of Finding Aids

Ledyard Bill's History of the Bill Family (New York: n.p., 1867) documents the family ownership of Spectacle Island; the Bostonian Society Publications, Second Series, vol. 3 (1919) reproduces the Shubael Bell "Letterbook on Boston's topography"; Samuel Drake's research notes in this collection were apparently used for his History and Antiquities of Boston (Boston: Luther Stevens, 1856); Kate Ryan's memoirs, Old Boston Museum Days (Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1915), recall R.M. Field and the history of the Museum; Spectacle Island's history is described in Edward Rowe Snow's The Islands of Boston Harbor (Andover: Andover Press, 1935); and Walter Muir Whitehill refers to the descriptions by Shubael Bell in his Topographical History of Boston (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1959).

Boston, Mass. Papers, 1634-1893

Contents List

Manuscript Boxes

Box 1:

- Folder #1 1657-1795 Tax and Census Records
Includes a list of the inhabitants of Boston, 1695; a list of the town's free male blacks, 1719; and a list of the Loyalists residing in Boston, 1775
- Folder #2 1660-1891 Business and Financial Documents
Records of various financial transactions involving individuals or institutions of the city. Includes indentures, bills of lading, and other shipping documents; three letters of 1828 regarding plans for the construction of the Boston and Albany Railroad; and a list of the pewholders at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1840
- Folder #3 1667-1862 Local Government Documents
This folder contains surveys, including the earliest known plat for land in Boston, prepared in 1667 by Elisha Hutchinson (1641-1717) for a purchase of land by Theodore Atkinson (1612-1701). There are also nine supporting documents, compiled at the beginning of the twentieth century, which provide information on various aspects of the plat.
Other items in this folder are petitions, including four in 1773 protesting the importation of tea to Boston; warrants; town meeting records for the years 1755 and 1760; two documents of 1768 and 1780 on the problem of poor relief in Boston; minutes of evidence taken after the Boston Massacre in 1770; two items dealing with the refurbishment of Boston Common during the 1790s; brief histories of Roxbury and Fort Hill compiled during the nineteenth century; a record of militia proceedings, 1816; and an 1862 petition from the Boston Board of Trade to the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation regarding the defenses of Boston Harbor during the Civil War
- Folder #4 1736-1861 Miscellaneous Receipts
Mainly records of payment, but also includes military permits of the Revolutionary War and assessments on church pews
- Folder #5 1739-1893 Correspondence
These miscellaneous letters reflect the political, humanitarian, social, financial, legal, and historical aspects of life in Boston. They include the following items: W. Minot (-) to a Colonel Harris (-) arguing against the installation of a water closet for the tenants of Union Block, undated; Bonia Hammond (-) to the Rev. Mr. Thomas Prince (1687-1758) describing a survey of Prince's land, 14 July 1739; James Gordon (1693-1770) to Lt. William Martin (-) describing the recent death of Dr. William Douglas (1695-1752); William Bant (1759-1780) to Lt. Martyn (-) concerning the first play produced in the city, 15 September 1759;

Box 1:

Folder #5 (continued)

Boston Fire Club to Aaron Blaney (1745-1824) giving notice of a meeting, 6 January 1779; the Boston Humane Society to the Hon. Samuel Baker (-1795) soliciting new membership, 21 July 1789; the First Church Singers to Enoch Huse (1753-1817), notice of a meeting, 15 March 1813; anonymous letter to the editor of the Boston Patriot commenting on satire in newspapers, July 1814; Charles Hayden, Jr. (-), City Auditor, to Harrison Gray Otis (1765-1848) on city finances, 25 December 1848; circular letter of the Boston Young Men's Society, 25 February 1833; John Reid (-) to Francis Bassett (-) enclosing notices for depositions in a libel suit, 20 April 1833; a petition regarding the re-naming of Blackstone Street, c.1834; W.H. Whitmore (-1900) to Mr. Garrison (-) describing work being performed for the Bostonian Society and accompanied by a notice on the first annual meeting of the Society, c.1881; and a series of miscellaneous reminiscences on early nineteenth century Boston which appeared in the Boston Transcript, August-September 1893

- Folder #6 1809-1811 Record Book of the Charles River Sewer Commission
- Folder #7 1817-1828 Various Banns of Marriage Recorded in Boston
- Folder #8 1817-1853 Record Book of Persons' Weights
- Folder #9 1842-1852 Papers of the Chauncy Hall School, Boston, including progress reports and a petition for vacation time.

Box 2:

- Folder #1 1826-1831 Record of Obituaries which appeared in Boston Newspapers
- Folder #2 1833-1860 Boston and Worcester Railroads
Records of various business transactions, as well as legal contracts and documents
- Folder #3 1838 Boston Banks
Records of the Commercial and Market Banks; copy of a petition of Boston merchants to the United States Congress in favor of legal tender treasury notes.
- Folder #4 1853-1878 Boston Museum Papers
Mainly incoming correspondence of R.M. Field (-), manager of this popular Boston theater
- Folder #5 c.1856 Samuel Gardner Drake (1798-1875) Historical Notes of Boston
Research compiled by a leading nineteenth century scholar of local Massachusetts history
- Folder #6 1870-1872 Claim of Melvin Lord (1791-1876) against the Boston and Lowell Railroad
Documents relating to the case

Box 3:

Folders #1-9 Boston and Albany Railroad, 1826-1829

Includes a printed copy of a circular letter sent by a Massachusetts state legislative committee consisting of Abner Phelps (1779-1873), George W. Adams (1801-1829), and Emory Washburn (1800-1877). The circular solicited opinions on the feasibility of constructing a railroad line between Boston and the Hudson River. There are approximately 115 replies, mainly from local selectmen, addressed to Phelps. The letters contain insights into the principal occupations and products of towns along the projected route, estimations of potential passenger traffic, and other support likely to be given the contemplated railroad. The box is arranged by county.

Oversize Folders:

Oversize folder #1 1658-1733 Cotton Hill Papers

A collection of deeds and other legal documents concerning this estate of John Hull (1624-1683) on the east side of Beacon Hill. For more information on these documents, see the supplementary typescript filed with this finding aid.

Oversize folder #2 1667-1777

Includes four deeds to land on Spectacle Island in Boston Harbor owned by the Bill and Henshaw families. There are also three indentures and one commission.

Octavo Volumes:

Octavo volume #1 1817 Letterbook of Shubael Bell (1766-1819), Deputy Sheriff and Prison Keeper of Suffolk County
Extracts from letters written by Shubael Bell to an unidentified ex-Loyalist living in exile in Smyrna, Turkey, describing the topography of Boston. The volume, which includes some engravings, describes various buildings, streets, bridges, public improvements, fortifications, churches, and institutions serving the city. There is an especially detailed letter on Christ's Church (the "Old North") of which Bell was Senior Warden. Dispersed among these descriptive passages are Bell's commentary on the estrangement that arose between the Church of England and the American Episcopal Church during the Revolutionary War, his thoughts on recent Anglo-American hostilities, and his reaction to the early influx of Irish immigrants.

Octavo volume #2 1858-1870 Boston and Worcester Railroad
Boston and Albany Railroad

Account book and memorandum of materials purchased for sleeping cars.

Folio Volumes:

Folio volume #1 1634-1660 Early Town Records

A copy, made in 1816, of the first volume of town records.
Includes proceedings of town meetings

Folio volume #2 1780 Tax Books

Valuations of town, county, and state taxes for wards 1-12; also, book
of additional taxes and abatements, 1800

Folio volume #3 1810-1815 Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees of the Second
Social Library in Boston

Folio volume #4 1811-1817 Miscellaneous Volume

Proceedings of the Association of Citizens to Erect a Monument
in Honor of George Washington (1732-1799), with a list of sub-
scribers from ward #11 to the monument fund; a list of citizens
willing to patrol the same ward during 1817; a biography of John
Rodgers (1727-1811), with a copy of a letter written to Rodgers
by Washington.