



# Boston's Record

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Boston City Archives



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Fall 2006

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Michael Rush

It has been over a year since the last newsletter went out to the Friends of Boston City Archives, and there have been many changes with both the City of Boston Archives and the Friends. At the Archives, work on designing and preparing for the new facility continues (see John McColgan's update for details) and a new project archivist, Zachary Enright, is working on the remainder of the Desegregation-era records (see his progress report). The Friends are happy to introduce a new treasurer, Jim O'Brien, who fills an important void in our leadership.

The City of Boston Archives may have a permanent home to look forward to, but the Archives staff still lack sufficient resources to properly collect, preserve, and provide access to Boston's historical records. The need for an active Friends of Boston City Archives – for its leadership, support, and advocacy – remains as urgent as ever.

If you care about the future of the City of Boston's Archives, please consider becoming involved with the leadership of the Friends. Our new treasurer will help put our finances in order, and former Archives staff member Sheila Spalding will continue to serve as secretary. However, this will be my last term as president, so there is a great opportunity for someone to share their enthusiasm and vision with the Friends. I've enjoyed greatly my three years as president

of the Friends and encourage you to add your voice to the many people who care deeply about the City of Boston Archives.

If you are interested in serving as president or vice president of the Friends of Boston City Archives, please feel free to contact:

Michael.rush@yale.edu, or

John.Mccolgan@cityofboston.gov

Terms for officers of the Friends begin at the annual meeting in December. This year a special election will be held at a meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup> in the Piemonte Room of Boston City Hall.

Another way in which you can support the Friends is to renew your membership (a form is included in this newsletter).

However you choose to support the mission of the Friends of Boston City Archives, please know that your help is both vitally important and greatly appreciated.

## OFFICERS

**President:** Michael Rush,  
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library,  
Yale University

**Vice-President:** Rev. Carney Gavin  
Archives for Historical Documentation

**Treasurer:** Jim O'Brien,  
Fast Tax, Inc.

**Secretary:** Sheila Spalding,  
Children's Hospital Archives

## **FALL MEETING**

Please join us in electing a new president at the Friends fall meeting on September 25, 2006 at 5:30 p.m. in the Piemonte Room of Boston City Hall.

Please RSVP to  
John.Mccolgan@cityofboston.gov or  
(617) 364-8679.

## **PLANNING FOR A NEW HOME FOR BOSTON CITY ARCHIVES**

by John McColgan, Deputy Archivist

Within a year of its establishment in 1988 the City of Boston Archives was assigned the closed Hemenway School building in Hyde Park as an “interim repository”. An “interim repository” it has remained for eighteen years as the city’s archivists use improvisation and ingenuity to store and protect records against the formidable challenges of inadequate space and environment. At long last, however, plans are underway for a permanent facility that can meet the city’s archives storage and research needs for years to come.

The new Archives will be located on Rivermoor Street, West Roxbury, just off VFW Parkway near Millennium Park. In late 2004 the city purchased this 140,000 square foot building from Keyspan, to house both the City Archives headquarters and Boston Public Library’s off-site storage. To undertake renovation design the City has contracted with FCHM-S Architects, whose design team includes Marvin Shenkler and Michelle Pacifico, respectively the environmental and archival consultants for the National Archives facility project in College Park, MD.

Because of the size of the project and the City’s budget constraints, a comprehensive

retrofit of the building may need to be phased out over a period of some years. However, from the start there will be more than adequate climate controlled space into which the entire holdings of the current Hemenway facility can be relocated.

Staff has been busy preparing for the move, which is expected some time in 2007. All Hemenway holdings have been freshly inventoried. Accurate details are required for all records in order to identify space and equipment needs at Rivermoor and develop specifications for the relocation contract bid. Total holdings at the Hemenway are calculated at over 13,000 linear feet comprising cartons, document cases, bound volumes, plans and drawings both rolled and in flat files, microfilm, video and audio tape, photographs and artifacts. Once safely moved into Rivermoor, these collections are expected to be quickly augmented by archives still retained in City departments. At Rivermoor the upgrade of accommodation quality and the expansion of storage capacity will enable the City Archives to service a greater number of City departments more effectively and more comprehensively, and help to establish archives and records management as an integral function of Boston municipal government.

## **NHPRC Grant II: The Desegregation-era Records Collection**

by Zachery Enright, Project Archivist

Judge W. Arthur Garrity’s ruling on June 21, 1974 in the case of Tallulah Morgan v. James Hennigan was neither the beginning nor the end of the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools. The slow wheels of government and public opinion had begun to turn nearly a decade before when the state passed the Racial Imbalance Law requiring  
*(continued next page)*

## **NHPRC Grant II: The Desegregation-era Records Collection** (*continued*)

local school committees to develop desegregation plans. The federal government would remain involved with the Boston Public Schools for many years to come, Judge Garrity issuing his final orders in 1985 and the United States Federal District Court of Massachusetts issuing its final judgment in 1994. The events surrounding the court's involvement in the desegregation of the schools are well known and the city of Boston continues to bear the burden of this legacy.

Scholarship surrounding school desegregation has primarily focused on those years preceding court involvement and the tumultuous events following. Detailed examinations of the impact of issues such as race, ethnicity, class, and local politics have led to a better understanding of the events surrounding school desegregation and the people's reaction to it. Continued scholarship in this area will be deeply indebted to Sheila Spalding's completion of the processing of the first part of the City of Boston Archive's Desegregation-Era Records Project in 2004. Currently work continues on the second part of the National Historic Publications and Records Commission Grant. A finding aid for the Citywide Parents Council Records was completed earlier this summer and will be available on the Archive's Web site this fall. The processing of the Department of Implementation Records is ongoing and will be completed this winter.

Unlike the previous records collection processed two years ago, the current collection focuses primarily on the years after Judge Garrity's final orders. The Citywide Parents Council (CPC) Records primarily represent those years between

1985 and 2002. This era was marked by drastic and rapid decreases in budget and staffing as the court no longer ensured their funding. Totalling over 30 cubic feet the collection documents the CPC post court involvement and contains many interesting items including buttons, audio cassettes, photographs, and video cassettes of CPC's Public Access television program.

The Department of Implementation Records, currently being processed, represents a larger span of time extending from the late 1970's until 2001. Estimated to be approximately sixty to seventy cubic feet when the processing is complete; the collection contains the court orders related to the Morgan v. Hennigan case as well as those records pertaining to the McLaughlin v. Boston School Committee case which led to the end of the use of race in assigning students to their schools. The collection documents the Department of Implementation as it struggles with the early years of the desegregation process through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as it becomes a well established part of the Boston Public School system.

Each of these collections focus on a time period in which the issue of desegregation was beginning to fade from the public eye but was still very real for the students and parents of Boston. The collections are a treasure trove not only to those interested in Boston Public Schools desegregation specifically, but to those interested in the State's interaction with issues such as race, as well as those interested in the point of intersection between the people and their government. These issues, as well as many more as yet to be seen, ensure that these collections will see a lot of use today and well into the future.

**THE FRIENDS OF THE BOSTON CITY ARCHIVES  
Preserving Boston's Municipal History**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Anyone with an interest in archives, history, genealogy, or simply a love of Boston is invited to join us.

**Membership Categories:(circle one)**

**Senior/Youth/Student - \$5.00**

**Individual - 20.00**

**Institution or Group - \$100.00**

**Advocate - \$500.00**

**Benefactor - \$1000.00**

**Capitol Contributor - \$5000.00**

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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please make checks payable to:**

**The Friends of the Boston City Archives  
P.O. Box 275  
Boston, MA 02137**