



Boston's Record

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Boston City Archives



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Michael Rush

The past year marked continued activity on the part of the Friends of Boston City Archives. We offered two very successful lectures, a panel discussion entitled, "Busing Recollections—Archival Collections," that featured William Bulger, Charles Willie, David Finnigan, and Robert Dentler, and a lecture on Rainsford Island by the Friends' own Elizabeth Carella. We also welcomed the news that Boston City Archives will finally be relocated to a new facility. Members of the Friends toured 201 Rivermoor Street in West Roxbury, which the City Archives will share with the Boston Public Library. Currently the Friends are supporting the efforts of the City Archives staff to ensure that the renovation of their new building will result in a suitable, long-term home.

FALL MEETING

The Friends' Spring Lecture will feature Jim Vrabel, who will discuss his book, *When in Boston: A Timeline & Almanac*. The talk will be held in the Piemonte Room of City Hall on April 26 at 6 PM. Copies of *When in Boston* will be available for purchase and signing.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP to Sheila Spalding at Sheila.Spalding@cityofboston.gov or (617) 364-8679.

OFFICERS

The following officers were elected at the Dec. 2005 meeting of the Friends.

President: Michael Rush,
Massachusetts Historical Society

Vice-President: Carney Gavin
Archives for Historical Documentation

Treasurer: Mary McMillen,
Harvard University and Boston City
Archives

Secretary: Sheila Spalding,
Boston City Archives

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please consider renewing your membership to the Friends of Boston City Archives. In order to effectively promote and support the mission of Boston City Archives, we depend on membership dues. Your renewed membership will enable Friends to continue offering interesting lectures, keep members abreast of projects underway at City Archives, and serve as effective advocates for the preservation of Boston's municipal records. Please show your support for the Friends of Boston City Archives by returning the enclosed membership form.

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: The Desegregation-era Records Collection

by Sheila R. Spalding, Project Archivist

One year ago I reported on the progress of the Desegregation –era Records Project. I am delighted to report that in spite of a few setbacks, the project is completed and has exceeded its goals – more extant records were located; the finding aid has been catalogued and published; and several public forums have drawn attention to the project, gaining the Archives local media attention in both *The Boston Globe* and *The Boston Herald*.

Consultant Archivist Nancy Kougeas has located several hundred feet of extant desegregation related records. Her investigating led us to over 300 cubic feet of records from the Citywide Parents Council, stored in the basement of the Boston Latin Academy building. We have applied for a follow-up grant to process these, and other records. Nancy also learned that the records of the Boston Public Schools Safety Services Department, documenting the climate inside the schools, were destroyed years ago in the absence of a professional archivist/record manager for the school department. To learn more about Nancy’s work on the Desegregation-era Records Project, listen to her presentation titled, *Before the Trail Runs Cold: the Efforts and Adventures of Seeking 30-year old Records*, on the City Archives website events page: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/archivesandrecords/desegregation/events.asp>.

As Project Archivist, I was responsible for overseeing processing of the records and creating finding aids to assist researchers in using the collection. I completed processing, with the help of part-time processor Gail O’Hare Barry, and Nancy Kougeas. Due to the large quantity of

records and a few unexpected setbacks in processing, we had to apply for a no-cost extension to the grant. We divided the remaining series among ourselves and processed accordingly. Although the quantity was rather large, many records were duplicates or identical drafts of published reports, which we were able to dispose of and reduce the overall collection size to a half of its original footage. Once processing was complete, I synthesized the information we recorded into a series of finding aids, which I encoded using a markup language called Encoded Archival Description (EAD). EAD is similar to HTML and allows for the standardization, online delivery, and searchability of finding aids. For example, if you perform a Google search for “Morgan v. Hennigan,” the results will include a link to that finding aid. Another advantage of encoding the finding aids in EAD is that an archivist can catalog and shared them via a National Union Catalog (NUCMC), maintained by the Library of Congress (LC). Most university libraries subscribe to NUCMC catalog, which provides a central access point to thousands of finding aids across the world. Researchers now have several ways to find and access the guides to the Desegregation-era Records Collection.

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

Public Programming on the Desegregation-era Records Project led to local media coverage of our work, increasing visibility of the Archives and Records Center. On March 27, 2004, Nancy Kougeas and John McColgan publicized the project at the Organization of American Historians meeting held at the Boston Public Library. On May 18, at the Bostonian Society, Friends hosted a thought-provoking forum titled, *Busing Recollections and Archival Collections: Historical Perspectives and Documentary Sources of the Desegregation Era*. Participants included: court-appointed Desegregation Expert, Robert A. Dentler; former School Committeeman David I. Finnegan; court- appointed Master Charles V. Willie; and teacher Mary Ellen Smith (Moderator). Anand Vaishnav, a reporter from the Boston Globe who was present in the audience that evening, ran a story on June 20, 2004 titled, *At Busing Forum, Old Wounds On Display*. The dialogue that ensued between Anand and Archives staff led to another article published in the Globe on June 20, 2004 titled, *Forcing School Busing Out of the Box: 30 Years After First Buses Rolled, Records Unearthed*. On August 8, 2004 *The Boston Herald* ran an article by Kevin Rothstein titled, *Bus Docs Will Make Boston History*. At the Society of American Archivists 2004 Annual Meeting in Boston, John McColgan, Nancy Kougeas and I shared our project with colleagues and heard two distinguished guests; Herbert Gleason and Hon. Julian T. Houston also present their insights. To hear and learn more about the speakers, visit our website events page. Finally, in November of 2004, archives staff collaborated with Stonehill College for another well-attended forum on the desegregation era.

The collection is processed; the finding aids are complete; extant records have been located and an exhibit will be forthcoming. The City Archives and Records Center now faces a greater challenge – planning for the new facility. NHPRC Advisory Committee members for this project have graciously accepted a new charge. In the words of NHPRC Director for State Programs, Richard Cameron:

“attention should now be focused on developing an appropriate program statement and design specifications for a new or redesigned facility at Rivermoor...it seems appropriate at this juncture to change the charge of the NHPRC Advisory Committee so that it can focus on advising you and the City on developing an archival facility that can meet the City’s present and future needs. The committee would continue to be responsible for evaluating the records management and archival services provided by the City Archives to the Boston City Schools.”

The Desegregation-era Records Project has culminated in a very exciting time for the City Archives. We are grateful to the Friends of the Boston City Archives and to the devoted NHPRC Advisory Committee for their efforts and support in advocating for the archives of this great city. Soon we will all reap the benefits of these endeavors.

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**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

Name: _____

Address: _____

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State _____ **Zip Code** _____

Telephone: _____ **Fax:** _____

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Please make checks payable to:

**The Friends of the Boston City Archives
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