



Guide to the William Arthur Reilly collection

0299.001

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Boston City Archives

201 Rivermoor St.
West Roxbury, MA 02132
archives@boston.gov

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

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Summary Information

Repository:	Boston City Archives
Creator:	Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969
Title:	William Arthur Reilly collection
ID:	0299.001
Date [inclusive]:	1925-1969, undated
Physical Description:	4.5 Cubic feet 4 record cartons, 1 photograph box
Language of the Material:	English

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Biographical / Historical

William Arthur Reilly, "Arthur" to his friends, was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts on March 6, 1903 to parents James and Katherine (Murphy) Reilly. He was educated in the Boston Public School system as well as at Boston College High School and graduated from Boston College in 1925. He married Kathryn McElroy in 1932 and together they had four children: William Arthur, Jr., James, John, and Harriet. He died at the age of 65 on April 3, 1969. During his career, William Arthur Reilly held many public service positions in Boston. When he was just twenty-six years old, in 1930, he was elected to the Boston School Committee. He was then elected to the chairman's position for the year 1932-1933, the youngest person to be elected to the position, and served on the committee until 1934. He did attempt to run for Mayor of Boston in 1933 but ended his campaign halfway through the race. In 1935, he was appointed to the Boston Finance Commission by, then, Mayor James Michael Curley. However, he resigned a year later over a disagreement with Mayor Curley and left to help Maurice J. Tobin with his campaign to win the mayor's race in 1937. On January 4, 1938, Reilly was appointed by Mayor Tobin to one of his most well-known positions in Boston government, as the Fire Commissioner of the Boston Fire Department; which he held until June 7, 1945. He was the Fire Commissioner during the famous Cocoanut Grove Fire which killed 492 people in December of 1942. He unsuccessfully ran for Mayor of Boston in 1945 and was defeated by his former mentor, James Michael Curley. While Commissioner, William Arthur Reilly was also nominated by Governor Maurice Tobin to serve as the chairman of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) but withdrew his name after the Executive Council refused to accept the nomination. In 1950, he was appointed to Traffic Commissioner of the City of Boston and held that position until December of 1957 when he was asked by Mayor John B. Hynes, to serve as the Director of Administrative Services; in this position, he earned the title "deputy mayor." He retired from public office in 1960 and continued to work as a treasurer and general manager of the Catholic publishing company McLaughlin & Reilly, started by his father, in downtown Boston.

Sources: American Catholic Who's Who: 1960-1961. Grosse Pointe, MI: Walter Romig, 1961. "W. Arthur Reilly, Ex-Deputy Mayor," obituary, Boston Globe, 4 Apr 1969.

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Scope and Contents

The William Arthur Riley collection consists of mostly paper documents that encompass nearly every aspect of Reilly's life in City of Boston government, starting with records from his time in the Boston School Committee, and ending with records from his tenure as Deputy Mayor under Mayor Hynes. The bulk of the records series consist of correspondence; however, there are photographs, and various department reports.

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Arrangement

This collection was previously, partially arranged by the Boston Public Library.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Boston City Archives

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Controlled Access Headings

- Photographs
- Municipal officials and employees
- Cocoanut Grove (Boston, Mass.) -- Fire, 1942
- Mayors -- Massachusetts -- Boston
- Mayors -- Election
- Boston (Mass.). Traffic & Parking Department
- Boston (Mass.). Fire Department
- Boston (Mass.). School Committee
- Curley, James Michael, 1874-1958
- Tobin, Maurice J., 1901-1953

Collection Inventory

School Committee records, 1930-1934

Title/Description	Instances	
Election materials, 1929	Box 1	Folder 1
General, 1930-1935	Box 1	Folder 2
Mayoral campaign materials, 1933	Box 1	Folder 3
	Box 4	Folder 1
Mayoral campaign newspaper clippings, 1933	Box 4	Folder 2
Newspaper clippings, 1930	Box 4	Folder 3
United Boston Unemployment Relief Campaign, 1932	Box 1	Folder 4

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Finance Commissioner records, 1935-1937

Title/Description	Instances	
Municipal Officers Association certificate of membership, circa 1930s	Box 1	Folder 6
Boston's City Finances of 1924-1934 and the Financial Outlook for 1935, 1935 February 27	Box 1	Folder 6

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Fire Commissioner records, 1938-1945

Title/Description	Instances	
"Analysis of Public Opinion in Connection with the Cocoanut Grove Fire", 1942 December 12	Box 4	Folder 4
Board of Election Commissioners material, 1944-1945	Box 4	Folder 9
Boston statistics, circa 1940s	Box 4	Folder 10
Clubs and organizations - correspondence and notes, 1938-1945	Box 1	Folder 7-9
Cocoanut Grove Fire materials, 1942 November - December, 1944	Box 1	Folder 10
Committee for Civic Security, 1941 September - October	Box 1	Folder 11
Committee on Public Safety, 1940-1941	Box 1	Folder 12
Correspondence, 1940-1945	Box 1	Folder 13
Hatch Act, 1941	Box 1	Folder 14
Lists of city employees, 1944	Box 1	Folder 15
Maurice Tobin for Governor ward workers, 1944 November	Box 4	Folder 5
Maurice Tobin mayoral campaign materials, 1940-1941	Box 1	Folder 16-17
Mayor's Office press releases, 1945 February - March	Box 4	Folder 6
Metropolitan District Commission, 1945	Box 1	Folder 18
Newspaper clippings, 1938-1945	Box 4	Folder 7
Photographs, 1938-1942	Box 5	Folder 1
<u>Controlled Access Headings:</u>		
• Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969		
New England Fire Chiefs Convention, 1938 June		
Boston Common Fire Prevention Exhibit, 1938 October 9		
Elks Day for Crippled Children, 1938		
Paul Revere Chapter #46 Military Order of the Purple Heart, 1938 December 3		
Presentation of 25 Year Medals to Deputy Chiefs and Chief of Department, 1938 December 13		
Radio Broadcast, 1939		
Fireman's Ball, 1939 February 21		
Fireman's Ball, 1939 February 23		
Fireman's Ball, 1939 February 23		
Fireman's Ball, 1939 February 23		
Fireman's Ball, 1939 February 23		

Massachusetts National Youth Administration, 1939 December 4		
Massachusetts National Youth Administration, 1939 December 4		
Massachusetts National Youth Administration, 1939 December 4		
American Institute of Electrical Engineers Convention Meeting, 1940 May 21		
Community Fund, Boston City Hospital, 1941		
Fire Prevention Parade, 1941		
Civilian Auxiliary Fire Exhibition, Bunker Hill, 1941 June <u>Controlled Access Headings:</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969 • La Guardia, Fiorello H. (Fiorello Henry), 1882-1947 		
Civilian Auxiliary Fire Exhibition, Bunker Hill, 1941 June		
Charles River Shell Program, 1941 June 26		
Fireman's Ball, 1942 February 9		
Fireman's Ball, 1942 February 9		
Fireman's Ball, 1942 February 9		
Fireman's Ball, 1942 February 9		
I Am an American Day Parade, 1942 May 7		
[Chief Pope and Commissioner Riley], circa 1940s		
Boston Fire Department prize dogs, circa 1940s		
Boston Fire Department prize dogs, circa 1940s		
"Report Concerning the Cocoanut Grove Fire", 1942 November 28	Box 1	Folder 19
"Report of the Commission to Study the Department of Public Works", 1939 June 13	Box 4	Folder 8
Resignation letter and press release, 1945 May - June	Box 1	Folder 20

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Mayoral campaign records, 1944-1945

Title/Description	Instances	
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[William Arthur Reilly], circa 1920s	Box 5	Folder 2

Controlled Access Headings:

- Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969

Wm. Arthur Reilly, Nov 1945	Box 5	Folder 2
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General

"Credit line please - Daly, Boston"

Controlled Access Headings:

- Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969

Fire Commissioner William Arthur Reilly, circa 1940s	Box 5	Folder 2
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Controlled Access Headings:

- Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969

Campaign expenditures, 1945	Box 4	Folder 11
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Campaign literature, 1945	Box 4	Folder 12
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Correspondence, 1945 June - November	Box 1	Folder 22
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Endorsements, 1945	Box 1	Folder 23
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Form letters, 1945	Box 1	Folder 24
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Headquarter information, 1945	Box 1	Folder 25
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James Michael Curley cartoons, 1945	Box 4	Folder 13
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Lists of Boston newspapers, circa 1945	Box 1	Folder 26
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Newspaper clippings, 1945	Box 4	Folder 14-15
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Nomination papers, 1945	Box 4	Folder 16
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Opponent literature, 1945	Box 1	Folder 27
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Peoples Victory Forum Symposium, 1945 October - November	Box 1	Folder 28
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Photographs, 1945	Box 5	Folder 3
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Application for nomination papers, Boston City Hall, 1945

Workers' Corner, 1945 November

Ladies' Meeting, Hotel Statler, 1945

Reilly for Mayor, Women's Reception, Hotel Bradford, 1945
November

Businessmen Luncheon, Hotel Statler, 1945

Businessmen Luncheon, Hotel Statler, 1945

Businessmen Luncheon, Hotel Statler, 1945

Businessmen Luncheon, Hotel Statler, 1945

Factory visit, 1945

Plymouth Raincoat Co., 1945		
Factory visit, 1945		
[Reilly family], circa 1945		
Wm. Arthur Reilly, 1945		
Honored at Afternoon Tea, 1945		
Canadian Club Committee, 1945		
Representative Frances V. Matera endorsement, 1945		
Boston City Councillors William F. Hurley and Isadore H. Muchnick endorsements, 1945 November		
Boston City Councillors William F. Hurley and Isadore H. Muchnick endorsements, 1945 November		
Boston College Alumni, Boston residents, 1945 October		
Boston College Graduates Support Reilly, 1945		
Owen Gallagher, Henry Shattuck, Hon. Jacob Kaplan, 1945		
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Veterans Organization, 1945		
Veterans, 1945		
Women's Organization, 1945		
Canadian Organization, 1945 November		
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Business and Industrial Organization, 1945 November		
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Speech material, 1945	Box 1	Folder 36
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Speeches, 1945 September 12 - October 15	Box 1	Folder 38
Speeches, 1945 October 19 - 1945 November 2	Box 2	Folder 1

Statistics, circa 1945	Box 2	Folder 2
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Ward workers, 1945	Box 4	Folder 21

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Traffic Commissioner records, 1950-1957

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Annual Report of the Boston Traffic Commission, 1957 January 15	Box 2	Folder 4
Boston City Planning Board Capital Improvement Program, 1955-1960, 1955 January	Box 2	Folder 5
Boston City Planning Board Capital Improvement Program, 1957-1962, 1957 January 7	Box 2	Folder 6
Boston Traffic Accident Survey, 1957	Box 2	Folder 7
Boston Traffic Commission personnel, 1956-1957	Box 2	Folder 8
Boston traffic photographs in newspapers, 1956	Box 2	Folder 9
Christmas Festival Committee, 1955, 1957	Box 2	Folder 10
Citizens' Traffic Committee, 1953 October 6	Box 2	Folder 11
Correspondence, 1952-1957	Box 2	Folder 12-13
Department reports, 1950-1957	Box 2	Folder 14
Massachusetts Acts and Resolves, 1953, 1957	Box 2	Folder 15
Mayor John B. Hynes mayoral campaign, 1955-1956	Box 2	Folder 16
Mayor John B. Hynes mayoral campaign newspaper clippings, 1955 September 28 - December 14	Box 4	Folder 22
Mayor's Committee for Halloween Safety, 1957	Box 2	Folder 17
New England Commercial Vehicle Safety Seminar, 1957 June 5	Box 2	Folder 18
Newspaper clippings, 1950-1957	Box 2	Folder 19
	Box 4	Folder 23
"New York's Traffic Mess", 1955 July	Box 2	Folder 20
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Basilica Vaticana Di San Pietro model, Filene's, 1952 May 19		

South Boston installation, 1952 August		
Dedication of plaque commemorating birthplace of Royal Arcanum, 1952 September 3		
[Traffic Commission of Boston building], 1953 November		
Highway Safety Associates Banquet, 1953 December		
Driver Education Training Institute graduation, 1954 March 26		
Boston Rotary Club, 1956 July		
Public Improvement Commission, Public Works Department, 1956		
[William Arthur Reilly at meeting], circa 1950s		
Opening of Fire Headquarters Building, Southampton Street, circa 1950s		
Proposals to City Auditor, circa 1950s	Box 2	Folder 21
Reference articles and clippings, 1950-1957	Box 2	Folder 22-23
"A Report on Boston Traffic," Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 1957 October - November	Box 2	Folder 24
Signal light photographs, 1951 May 17 - 1952 February 6, undated	Box 5	Folder 6
New signal lights, Columbia Road at Edward Everett Square, 1951 May 17		
New signal lights, Columbia Road at St. Kevin's Church, Upham's Corner, Dorchester, 1951 May 17		
New traffic signals, Columbia Road at Seaver Street, 1951 May 17		
Mayor Hynes places new signal lights in operation, Charles Street center gate, Boston Common to Public Garden, 1951 May 21		
<u>Controlled Access Headings:</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hynes, John B., 1897-1970 		
Mayor Hynes at center gate, Boston Common to Public Garden, 1951 May 21		
<u>Controlled Access Headings:</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hynes, John B., 1897-1970 		
Traffic light at Parker and Ruggles Streets blessed and placed in operation, 1951 May 26		
Pleasant Street and Savin Hill Avenue, 1951 July 16		
Lights turned on, Minot Street and Neponset Avenue, Dorchester, 1951 July 16		

Lights turned on, Minot Street and Neponset Avenue, Dorchester, 1951 July 16		
Lights, Wachusett and Walk Hill Streets, 1951 August 9		
Lights, Hemenway Street and Westland Avenue, 1951 August 9		
Traffic lights, Walnut Avenue and Seaver Street, circa 1951		
Kneeland and Tyler Streets, 1951 September 14		
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Presentation Church, Brighton, 1951 September 17		
Cambridge and Warren Streets, Brighton, 1951 September 17		
Traffic lights at Quincy, Townshend, and Warren Streets, 1951 October 29		
[Traffic lights at Quincy, Townshend, and Warren Streets], 1951 October 29		
Lights turned on [at unknown location], 1952 February 6		
Traffic lights at 1970 Commonwealth Avenue, 1952 January 14		
[West Street and Central Avenue], circa 1951-1952		
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[Traffic signal at unknown location], circa 1951-1952		
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Some Facts about the Boston Traffic Commission and Its Work, 19547 December 7	Box 2	Folder 26
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Director of Administrative Services records, 1957-1960

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Architectural competition for new City Hall, 1958-1959	Box 2	Folder 30
Boston Parks - Recreation Association of Baseball Leagues, 1958	Box 2	Folder 31
Boston Public Library, Examining Committee and Friends of the Library, 1957-1958	Box 2	Folder 32

Boston Sanatorium disaster plan, 1958 November	Box 2	Folder 33
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Citizens' Committee - Zeckendorf Plan, 1958	Box 2	Folder 36
City of Boston alphabetical list of positions, 1958	Box 2	Folder 37
City of Boston pay schedule, 1957-1959	Box 2	Folder 38
"City Record", 1957-1958	Box 2	Folder 39
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts: Protection of the Public During and After Severe Storms, 1957 January 17	Box 2	Folder 42
Conference of Business and Civic Organizations, 1956-1957	Box 2	Folder 43
Departments heads meetings, 1958-1959	Box 2	Folder 44-45
[Department heads meeting], 1959 January 26	Box 5	Folder 7
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"The Fund for the Republic", 1959 February	Box 2	Folder 50
Gabriel Piemonte for Mayor material, 1959	Box 2	Folder 51
Gabriel Piemonte for Mayor newspaper clippings, 1959	Box 2	Folder 52
"Government Center - Boston," Adams report, 1959 September	Box 4	Folder 26
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Government Center Commission: Space Requirements Report, 1959 August 24	Box 4	Folder 27
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John Powers for Mayor material, 1959	Box 2	Folder 57
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View looking north to street level entrance of The Merchants National Bank of Boston; Prudential tower shown at rear, 1958 October	Box 5	Folder 8
Proposed interior view of The Merchants National Bank of Boston Building, 1958 October	Box 5	Folder 8
View looking west across ice skating area toward Plaza Level entrance to The Merchants National Bank of Boston, 1958 October	Box 5	Folder 8
Proposed location of the new Merchants National Bank of Boston building in The Prudential Center, 1958 October	Box 5	Folder 8
Miscellaneous desk notes, 1957-1959	Box 3	Folder 4
"Northeastern News", 1959 February 5	Box 3	Folder 5
Neighborhood Rehabilitation Committee, 1958	Box 3	Folder 6
New City Hall, Becker survey, 1959	Box 4	Folder 29
Newspaper clippings, 1957-1959	Box 3	Folder 7
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Ordinances of the City of Boston Passed in the Municipal Years 1947-1958 [Document 43-1958], 1959 January 2	Box 3	Folder 8
Personnel quotas, 1958-1959	Box 4	Folder 31
Photographs, 1958-1959	Box 5	Folder 9
Swearing-in, 1957 December 1		
<u>Controlled Access Headings:</u>		
• Hynes, John B., 1897-1970		
City of Boston Youth of the Year Awards, 1958		
Louise Morgan Show, 1958 June 12		
Dedication of Jamaica Plain Post Office, 1958 October 23		
<u>Controlled Access Headings:</u>		
• Jamaica Plain (Boston, Mass.)		
• United States Postal Service		
City of Boston Municipal Employees Conference, 1958 November 20		
City of Boston Municipal Employees Conference panel, 1958 November 20		
Boarding jet plane for U.S. Conference of Mayors, Los Angeles, 1959 July 10		

Boarding jet plane for U.S. Conference of Mayors, Los Angeles, 1959 July 10		
Municipal Employees Conference, Sheraton Plaza, 1959 November		
Municipal Employees Conference, 1959 November		
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Public Safety Commission, 1957-1959	Box 3	Folder 10
Real Property Department, 1958	Box 3	Folder 11
Report to the City of Boston: Preliminary Estimate of the Cost of a New City Hall, 1958 February - May	Box 3	Folder 12
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Traffic Department, 1958-1959	Box 3	Folder 17
Urban renewal brochure materials, 1958-1959	Box 3	Folder 18
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[Prudential Center], 1958	Box 5	Folder 10
[Jordan Marsh Company], 1958	Box 5	Folder 10
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The American Sugar Refinery, Plants 14 and 15, 1959 June 30	Box 5	Folder 10
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[International Shoe Machine Corporation], Soldiers Field Road, 1959	Box 5	Folder 10
[WHDH Radio Television], Morrissey Boulevard, 1959	Box 5	Folder 10
[The Boston Globe], 1959	Box 5	Folder 10
[The Boston Globe], 1959	Box 5	Folder 10
[Boston Herald Traveler], 1959	Box 5	Folder 10
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New building of the Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, 1959	Box 5	Folder 10
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Volunteer Citizens' Committee, 1958	Box 3	Folder 20
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Boston City Hall (new) newspaper clippings, 1966-1967	Box 4	Folder 34
Boston College alumni, 1945	Box 3	Folder 26
Boston Historical Committee: Back Bay Preliminary Report, 1964 December 14	Box 3	Folder 27
Cambridge Historic Districts, 1962-1964	Box 3	Folder 28
Charles Hurley for Governor campaign, 1936-1937	Box 3	Folder 36
Governor Charles F. Hurley State House reception, circa 1936-1937	Box 5	Folder 11
<u>Digital Object: Governor Charles F. Hurley State House reception: circa 1936-1937</u>		

Controlled Access Headings:

- Reilly, William Arthur, 1903-1969
- Mansfield, Frederick W., 1877-1968
- Roosevelt, James, 1907-1991
- Hurley, Charles Francis, 1893-1946

- Kelly, Francis E. , 1903-1982

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Correspondence, 1925-1967	Box 3	Folder 30
"Dedication of the City of Boston War Memorial Auditorium", 1965 February 21-24	Box 3	Folder 31
Election and campaign literature, 1934-1944, 1963, 1967, 1969	Box 3 Box 4	Folder 32-34 Folder 35
Evacuation Day program, 1925 March 17	Box 4	Folder 36
Friendship Dinner to James M. Curley, 1934 January 27	Box 3	Folder 35
Government Center newspaper clippings, 1961-1963	Box 4	Folder 37
"Historical Report: Old City Hall", 1969 October	Box 3	Folder 37
John Collins for Mayor materials, 1959-1960	Box 3	Folder 38
John Collins for Mayor newspaper clippings, 1959	Box 4	Folder 38
Joseph Ward for Governor material, 1960	Box 4	Folder 39
Massachusetts Historic Districts, 1964 March	Box 3	Folder 39
Mayor John Collins materials, 1960-1965	Box 3	Folder 40
Miscellaneous speech materials, 1925-1932	Box 3	Folder 41
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Newspaper clippings, 1947-1948	Box 4	Folder 40
Newspaper clippings, Boston statistics, 1935-1945	Box 4	Folder 41
Parade of the Boston Fire Department, undated	Box 4	Folder 42
Plan E for Boston Committee, 1946-1947	Box 3	Folder 43
Senator John Powers materials, 1955-1960	Box 3	Folder 44
"The Story of James Michael Curley", 1949	Box 3	Folder 45
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