Department of Records

RECORDS : Archives
Philadelphia City Archives
3101 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Effective September 27, 2010

Hours of Operation
Hours: 8:30 AM-5:00 PM, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, with the exception of holidays. Holiday list:
Tuesday and Thursday - Closed
Telephone: 215-685-9401

The City Archives
The City Archives is the official historical memory of the City of Philadelphia. Within its 20,000 cubic feet of holdings may be found records that appeal to a very wide spectrum of interests.

You may access portions of the Archives online through PHILS.

Use of the Archives
As the official archives of the City and County of Philadelphia the City Archives is used by City officials to determine laws and precedent-making decisions of the past which may have an impact on the City Government’s actions and decisions of the present. The Archives makes available to its solicitors and other City officials, as well as to the public at large, records such as ordinances and other City Council records, City Solicitor’s opinions, rules and regulations, Mayor’s files, Charters, Minutes of Boards and Commissions, Historical Court Records; financial records of the Finance Department, City Controller and Sinking Fund Corporation records, and files of the Home Rule Charter Commission. For anyone trying to determine when a drive was opened in Fairmount Park, whether a City regulation was ever put into force, or the intent of the framers of the Home Rule Charter Acts should be their destination. Deeds and mortgages are also used extensively by searchers for the City's title insurance companies.

Types of Records Available
The City Archives is also a magnet for genealogical researchers. In fact, the most frequent users of the City Archives are patrons who are interested in their family history or who are professional genealogists doing research for others. The City Archives holds the earliest and longest continuous run of birth and death records of any political subdivision in the Commonwealth. Registrations of birth and death records begin on July 1, 1850 and continue to June 30, 1915. However, there are also a cubic foot of late registrations filed under an 1867 supplement to the vital statistics act which include births dating back to 1829, and an earlier form of death record known as a cemetery return which date from 1806 to June 30, 1860. The City Archives holds marriage records from July 1, 1850 to December 31, 1885 for which we issue certificates and copies of marriages from the Orphans Court Division that date from 1886 to 1915. It also holds naturalizations of the City and County Courts for the periods 1794-1804 and 1914-1930. Other records which would be of interest to genealogical researchers include Police roster and roll books for the period 1834-1925, deeds of Philadelphia County, 1683-1952; mortgages of Philadelphia County, 1736-1963; city directories, 1785-1930, 1935-1936; Department of Personnel, roster cards; and records of Blockley Almshouse and the County prisons.

A Valuable Resource for Research
Since its establishment by the Home Rule Charter in 1952 the City Archives has been a resource for graduate and undergraduate students, persons preparing doctoral dissertations and scholarly publications. Its holdings have been of especial interest to social historians. For persons doing research on the City’s under classes records of the Alms House and its successor, Philadelphia General Hospital, 1751-late 1940’s; of the County Prisons 1790-1948, and of the City and County criminal courts, 1790’s to 1874, are especially fertile fields for research. Records of county taxes, 1773-1851, may be used for determining the economic and class structure of the City and its surrounding districts, townships and boroughs. Tax records and land records are valuable sources for research on capital accumulation. Records of the City surveys, road records of the Court of Quarter Sessions, and records of the City Council’s Wettering Committee and of the City’s Water Department are invaluable for tracing the development of the City’s infrastructure. Minutes and files of the its Board of health and Health Department record efforts to control disease in an urban setting. The records of the City Planning Commission and of the Department of Licenses and Inspections, it’s efforts to control urban blight while the Recorders of the Department of Public Welfare (now Human Services) show the City’s efforts to deal with the human consequences of urban blight.

Other Available Resources
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http://www.phila.gov/records//Archives/Archives.html

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Court of Quarter Sessions, and records of the City Council's Watering Committee and of the City's Water Department are invaluable for tracing the development of the City's infrastructure. Minutes and files of the City Board of Health and Health Department record efforts to control disease in an urban setting. The records of the City Planning Commission and of the Department of Licenses and Inspections, it's efforts to control urban blight while the Records of the Department of Public Welfare (now Human Services) show the City's efforts to deal with the human consequences of urban blight.
Directions to the
Philadelphia City Archives

Important Telephone Numbers

General Information 215-685-9400
City Archives 215-685-9401

Directions from Western Pennsylvania

Take the Pennsylvania Turnpike to I-76/Valley Forge/Philadelphia (exit 326). Follow I-76 (Schuylkill Expressway) east to University City/30th Street Station (exit 345). Stay in the right lane and watch for signs indicating 30th Street; (exit 345).

At top of exit ramp, turn right onto Arch St. and follow the curve to left. Turn right at the second traffic light (30th and Market Streets) and travel one block to 3101 Market Street.

Directions from the East and Northeast

Take the New Jersey Turnpike South to Exit 4 (NJ-73). Take NJ-73 North to Betsy Ross Bridge/NJ-90, which is a left-hand exit. Cross the Betsy Ross Bridge and follow signs for I-95 South. Follow I-95 South to I-676 West. Follow I-676 West to the I-76 East exit (Philadelphia Intl Airport). Follow I-76 (Schuylkill Expressway) east to University City/30th Street Station (exit 345).

At top of exit ramp, turn right onto Arch St. and follow the curve to left. Turn right at the second traffic light (30th and Market Streets) and travel one block to 3101 Market Street.

Directions from the South

Take I-95 North, past Chester and Airport exits and take the exit to Center City/I-76 Schuylkill Expressway (Exit 13). Turn left onto S 26th Street. Take the ramp onto I-76 W. Follow I-76 west to South Street (Exit 346A); stay in the left lane for this exit. After exiting, turn left onto South Street. Stay in the right land and turn right onto 33rd Street. Turn right at the third traffic light (33rd and Market Streets) and travel two blocks to 3101 Market Street.

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Directions from the Philadelphia International Airport
Take the SEPTA Airport Line (Formerly R-1) train to 30th Street Station, then follow the directions below for train travelers. If driving, take I-95 North and follow directions for drivers coming from the south.

Directions from Amtrak and SEPTA trains
From 30th Street Station, walk along Market Street one block to 3101 Market Street. If taking the Market-Frankford Subway (Blue) or Subway-Surface (Green) line, on the Mezzanine Level follow the signs towards the 31st Street Exit.

Parking
There are two surface lots, one operated by the Philadelphia Parking Authority at 3101 Market Street, and a second lot, operated by Park America, directly across Market Street. Both lots charge a flat rate of $12.00 per business day (from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Metered parking kiosks, are located along the south end of Market Street and will accept quarters, dollar bills, and credit cards. Beware of signs that detail parking and meter regulations.

Public Transportation
SEPTA, the regional mass transit agency, operates busses, trolleys, subways and trains with stops at 30th Street Station and provides links with SEPTA’s regional rail lines including the Airport Shuttle. For more information, contact SEPTA at (215) 580-7800; www.septa.org or Amtrak at (800) 872-7245; www.amtrak.com.

Area Hotels
Three hotels are within walking distance of the Philadelphia Dept of Archives

- Sheraton University City, 36th and Chestnut Streets, (215) 387-8000
- Penn Tower Hotel, 399 South 34th St, (215) 387-8333
- The Inn at Penn (The Hilton), 36th and Sansom Street, (215) 222-0200

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