

Watertown Free Public Library

123 Main Street

Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

Local History Collection

**Town of Watertown
School Committee records,
1790-1921 (inclusive)**

TW012

Summary

Collection name: Town of Watertown School Committee records, 1790-1921 (inclusive)

Collection number: TW012

Repository: Watertown Free Public Library (Watertown, Massachusetts)

Creator: Town of Watertown

Extent: 3.05 cubic feet (1 legal half document box, 5 oversize boxes and one legal size four-flap enclosure)

Language: English

Provenance: The immediate source of the loose papers and bound payrolls is unknown. The record book was purchased from Robert W. Lull of Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1921.

Processing information: This finding aid is adapted from existing catalog records. It was created by Caroline Littlewood in 2020 to unite records created and maintained by the Town of Watertown School Committee.

Conditions governing access: Collection is open for use in the Local History Room, Watertown Free Public Library.

Preferred citation: Town of Watertown School Committee records, TW012, Watertown Free Public Library Local History Collection, Watertown, Mass.

Historical Note

Watertown was one of the first towns in the Massachusetts Bay Colony to establish a public school. Town selectmen hired a schoolmaster to teach lessons and oversee all school related expenses until the establishment of a Committee to Manage the Schools in 1766. From this point on, Committee members took primary responsibility for the administration and maintenance of the town's schools. Each school district had its own independent committee, elected by and responsible for their district, until the construction of the town high school in 1853. At this time, a single School Committee managed and monitored school curriculum, properties, staff, and administration across the town, while also grappling with chronic truancy and a low graduation rate. In the early 1880s the town permitted the hire of a School Superintendent to manage school affairs.

Scope and Content Note

This collection documents the business and activities of the School Committee. It consists of loose papers, bound payrolls, and a record book kept by Reverend J. F. Lovering, who served as Chairman of the Watertown School Committee in 1877. The collection contains Committee meeting minutes, calls for town meetings (handwritten copies and print clippings), budgets, and correspondence, as well as school and district administrative records including personnel salaries and evaluations and records of school purchases and repairs. Loose papers discuss the East District School and East District School Committee (located in modern day Belmont). A bound volume labeled *Town Records - 1852* documents the activities of the Prudential Committee and the Middle District's transition to the "General System".

Five bound volumes contain school payrolls for most of the years between 1872 and 1921. The books begin with a breakdown of payments to principals, teachers, evening school staff, the superintendent, janitors, truant office staff, physicians, and nurses. Remaining pages list payments to individuals by month and school or staff position. Most entries include staff title (e.g. substitute teacher, nurse, etc.), name, street resident address, monthly payment amount, and pension deduction.

Container List

Box	Item description	Legacy call number (internal use only)
Box 1	Loose papers and correspondence	HIST 371.2 WAT 1790-1859
Bound volume	[Lovering] Record and memo book	HIST 379.1531 COM 1877
Bound volume	Town Records - 1852	None assigned
Box 2	School payroll, 1872-1881	HIST 371.10683 WAT 1872-1881
Box 3	School payroll, 1890-1898	HIST 371.10683 WAT 1890-1898
Box 4	School payroll, 1900-1909	HIST 371.10683 WAT 1900-1909
Box 5	School payroll, 1909-1915	HIST 371.10683 WAT 1909-1915
Box 6	School payroll, 1915-1921	HIST 371.10683 WAT 1915-1921

Related Materials

School Committee reports for the years 1849 to 1881 are digitized and available at <https://www.watertownlib.org/229/Local-History-Genealogy>.

Access Points

Corporate names:

Watertown Public Schools—School Committee

Subjects:

Education

Expenditures, public

Public schools

Schools—Administration

School management and organization

School buildings

Places:

Belmont (Mass.)

Watertown (Mass.)