LAWS COLLECTION 1890-1926 2,044 items

DONOR BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Laws Collection was donated in 1977 by R.B. "Beverly" Laws, who retired in 1978 as Deputy Chief of Police after over 40 years with the Austin Police Department. He served as "self-appointed historian" of the force, and had previously donated historical records of the Police Department, including "call books" and ledgers to the Austin History Center. Nothing in the collection appears to have direct connection with Laws, and it is not known how he came to possess the records in this collection, the bulk of which are records of the City of Austin's Water, Power and Light Department.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The 2,044-item Laws Collection falls into three record groups: Records of the Water, Light and Power Department of the City of Austin, 1890-1926 (1,950 items); Records of Other City of Austin Functions, 1915, 1921-24 (69 items); and Personal Papers, 1921-25 (25 items). The first group documents the activities of the Water, Power and Light Department through correspondence, financial and legal documents, reports, and charts, prepared chiefly during the administrations of three of the department's commissioners when the city was governed under the commission form of government: E. C. Bartholomew (1908-18), Walter M. Eyres (1921-23), and Charles Needham Avery (1923-26). Correspondence (793 items) with the department's customers largely concerns service requests and billing, with the years 1923-25 most heavily represented. Rates for water and power, with costs of service as justification for increases, are documented 1909-20 and 1921-22 (58 items). Dealings with departmental personnel are documented primarily through five payroll summaries 1909-13 and correspondence 1921-23 (55 items). Successive efforts to improve the city's water supply are documented by correspondence and legal and financial documents, in particular concerning Sand Beach Reserve (1917-18), "the water question" 1921-22, and the resulting water purification plant 1923-25. Costs of providing power for the city are documented through correspondence and bids for lignite, especially 1921-22 (130 items), staff cost estimates for specific projects 1910-22 (8 items), and correspondence and financial records documenting the purchase and maintenance of new power generators 1921-24 (over 100 items). Correspondence with the San Antonio based Syndicate Power Company in 1922 discusses proposed bond financing of the city power supply (ll items).

The second group contains records of other city departments and functions, such as Oakwood Cemetery, Barton Springs as water supply and recreation, and tax valuation, chiefly 1921-24. Avery's involvement in professional water associations in 1924 (20 items) and Eyres' purchase of the Elgin Ice Plant 1922-23 (6 items) are included in the third group.

AGENCY CHRONOLOGY (of events relative to these records)

Until 1871, all water in Austin was supplied by private wells and public and private cisterns. After the City of Austin that year issued the first franchise for privately supplied water, a succession of private corporations attempted to provide water (Austin Water Co., City Water Co., and Austin Water Light and Power Co.), sewage disposal, and power, but numerous controversies and much dissatisfaction with service resulted in eventual city ownership of these utilities.

1890 - bond issue approved by voters to organize municipally owned Board of Public Works, and to finance the building of a water and light sytem, including a dam, reservoir, and distribution systems.

1890-93 - original Colorado River dam built; the resulting reservoir (McDonald Lake, later Lake Austin) provided water supply for gravity distribution system.

1894-95 - construction of power house begun and electric lines and moonlight towers installed.

1895 - electricity generated for light and power. Board of Public Works turned over sytem to City Council and Water and Light Commissioners who were elected by council from their number. John W. Maddox appointed Superintendent.

1896 - four Water and Light Commissioners elected directly by voters. A. C. Patterson appointed Superintendent.

1897 - first filtering trenches and water pumps built on north bank of Colorado River (near present location of YMCA).

1900 - dam failed and power house destroyed, interrupting water and electrical service for over a month.

1902 - city purchased site and equipment of former electric franchise on West 1st Street (adjacent to present location of Seaholm Plant).

1906- new steam generated electrical equipment installed

1908 - electric generating plant built on Colorado River on west bank of Shoal Creek. New water filtration wells dug between plant and river. Water pumps installed in basement of power plant for pumping into distribution system.



- 1909 Commission form of government installed in city, with each commissioner in charge of certain city functions. Water and Light Plant falls under Commissioner of Parks and Public Property. E. C. Bartholomew elected first Commissioner.
- 1911 contract for new dam let to City Water Works Co., a privately owned promoting company. Numerous problems arose and dam construction was abandoned in 1917 (Tom Miller Dam completed on same site in 1941).
- 1912-13 City Reservoir built north of city limits (near Lunatic Asylum).
- 1917 first sewage disposal plant built on Colorado River adjacent to Holly Street (replaced by Govalle Wastewater Treatment Plant in 1938).
- 1923 water settling tank built just north of power plant.
- 1924 construction began on water filtration plant just east of power plant.
- 1925 "Filter plant" (now Green Water Treatment Plant) began pumping water from the river, chemically treated for the first time
- 1926 charter amended to institute Council-Manager form of government, resulting in the creation of the position of City Manager, who subsequently hired all staff.

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1890-1926
ARRANGEMENT
2,044 items
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GROUP I - WATER LIGHT AND POWER DEPARTMENT, CITY OF AUSTIN, 1890-1926
                                               Moved to AR 2018.052
           (1,950 items)
Records of the Department
  Correspondence, 1890-1926 (793 items)
     (includes telegrams and some attachments)
                                                           Boy 10
     Customer, 1895-1926 (634 items)
       1895-1906 (96 items)
1/1
                                             Annual reports 1 audit
1/2
       1910-16 (69 items)
1/3
       1921-22 (50 items)
1/4
       1923 (156 items)
1/5
       1924 (182 items)
1/6
       1925 (80 items)
1/7
       1926 (1 item)
                                                    Water + Light Commission
     General, 1890-1926 (109 items)
                                                       dem cend ten, 1900
electric plant, 1909
2/1
       1890-98 (23 items)
2/2
       1901-05, 1912, 1915 (28 items)
2/3
       1921-26 (58 items)
                                                                        DO+ 10
2/4 Personnel, 1921-1923 (50 items)
  Administration, 1896, 1909-26, n.d. (412 items)
  (also includes correspondence and printed material)
     Financial documents, 1896, 1908-26 (378 items)
2/5
       Vouchers, 1896 (10 items)
       Bookkeeping and ledger "discrepancies," 1908,1910 (5 items)
2/6
2/7
       Payrolls, 1909-13 (5 items)
       "Free service," institutions receiving, 1909-13, 1922 (7 items)
2/8
       Rates and cost of services, 1909-20 (19 items)
2/9
2/10
                                   1921-22 (39 items)
2/11
       Estimates, city projects, 1910-22 (8 items)
2/12
       Reports, 1911-23 (18 items)
       Receipts, sales to City of Austin, 1900-21 (112 items)
2/13
2/14
                 sales by City of Austin, 1926 (1 item)
2/15
       Statements and bills, City of Austin, 1921 (7 items)
2/16
       Insurance, 1921-25 (26 items)
       Customer meters,
2/17
         General bills, readings, receipts, 1922-24 (18 items)
         Water, receipts, readings, reports, 1903-06,1913-16, n.d.(37
2/18
2/19
         Power, receipts, readings, test cards, 1900-24 (55 items)
2/20
       Audit proposals and agreements, 1924,1926 (2 items)
2/21
       "Non-payment cut off orders," n.d. (9 items)
    Legal documents, 1911-24, n.d. (22 items)
2/22
      Depositions and affidavits, 1910-24 (8 items)
2/23
      Injunction, 1911 (1 item)
2/24
      Contracts and agreements, 1914-19, 1924 (11 items)
2/25
      Ordinances, 1903, 1923 (2 items)
    Literary productions, 1909-15 (12 items)
      Statistical reports, 1909-15 (11 items)
2/26
      "Report on the growth of water line and electric line in the
2/27
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City of Austin, 1909-1915, n.d. (1 item)

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The seek mean than become
  [includes correspondence, telegrams, bids, proposals, printed
  material, drawings, plans, orders, specifications, and contracts]
     General, 1893-1926 (286 items)
3/1
       1893-1911 (27 items)
3/2
       1914-17 (8 items)
3/3
       1921 (24 items)
3/4
         Southwest General Electric Co. (14 items)
3/5
       1922 (61 items)
3/6
         A.M. Lockett Co. (29 items)
3/7
         Allis-Chalmers Co. (11 items)
3/8
         Brooks-Fisher Co. (12 items)
3/9
         International Filter Co. (7 items)
3/10
         Refinite Filter Co. (8 items)
3/11
         Southwest General Electric Co. (7 items)
3/12
       1923 (26 items)
3/13
         A.M. Lockett Co. (12 items)
3/14
         Allis-Chalmers Co. (12 items)
3/15
         Brooks-Fisher Co. (8 items)
3/16
       1924-26 (20 items)
     Chemicals and oils, 1921-26 (44 items)
3/17
       General, 1921-26 (26 items)
3/18
       Selig Co., 1921-23 (9 items)
3/19
       Germo Mfg. Co., 1922 (9 items)
3/20 Automotive, 1922-27 (7 items)
3/21 Charts, drawings, and specifications, 1921, n.d. (5 items)
Records of Sections of the Department
  Water [Section], 1908-25, n.d. (219 items)
  [includes reports, correspondence, maps, and charts]
     Supply, 1908-18, 1921-25, n.d. (170 items)
4/1
       Test drilling, 1908 (72 items)
4/2
       Proposals for improving supply, 1910 (4 items)
4/3
       Concrete Filtering Trench, 1910-12 (7 items)
4/4
       Reservoir 1912-14, 1921 (21 items)
4/5
       Sand Beach Reserve, 1917, n.d. (6 items)
       "Progress report," 1917 (1 item)
4/6
4/7
       Request for water rights (Colorado River and Barton Springs),
        1918 (1 item)
       "Water question" (investigation into means for improving supply,
4/8
        1921-22 (35 items)
       "Filter plant" (water filtration plant construction), 1923-25
4/9
        (22 items)
4/10
       "Water supply pumping stations," [report], n.d. (1 item)
4/11 Consumption, 1911 (2 items)
     Distribution, 1910-12, 1921-23 (31 items)
4/12
       General, 1910-12, 1922-23 (6 items)
4/13
      Meter inventories, returns & testing, 1911, 1921-22 (8 items)
      Pitometer Water Waste Survey, 1921-23 (17 items)
4/15 Analyses, 1920-25 (14 items)
4/16 Wastewater, 1917, 1922 (2 items)
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Power and Light [Section], 1900-1926 (184 items)
  [includes correspondence, reports, bids, and charts]
5/1 Fuel supply, 1909-11 (5 items)
5/2
                  1921 (40 items)
5/3
                  1922 (67 items)
5/4
                  1923-26 (18 items)
5/5 Distribution, meter inventories, 1921 (10 items)
5/6 Electrical equipment for sale, 1921-22 (25 items)
5/7 Consumption by the University of Texas, 1922 (2 items)
5/8 Power, general, 1922 (3 items)
5/9 Electric bonds, negotiations, 1922 (11 items)
5/10 Street lights, 1924 (3 items)
GROUP II - CITY OF AUSTIN, OTHER FUNCTIONS, 1915,1921-24
          (69 items)
5/11 Barton Springs, 1921-25 (24 items)
5/12 Bonds, statement of, 1915 (1 item)
5/13 Cemetery, 1921-23 (24 items)
5/14 City Hospital's X-ray machine, 1922 (1 item)
5/15 Parks, general, 1921-23 (3 items)
5/16 Refuse disposal, 1924 (1 item)
5/17 Streets, 1913-22 (4 items)
5/18 Tax valuation, 1922-23 (9 items)
5/19 Letters to the Mayor's Office, 1926 (2 items)
GROUP III - PERSONAL PAPERS, 1921-25 (25 items)
     Walter M.Eyres Correspondence, 1921-23 (9 items)
5/20
       General, 1921-22 (3 items)
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Elgin Ice Plant, 1922-23 (6 items)

General, 1925 (3 items)

Charles Needham Avery Correspondence, 1924-25 (16 items)

Professional water associations, 1924-25 (13 items)

5/21

5/22

5/23



Transfered to other units of Austin History Center:

Constitution and By-Laws of The Welfare Council of Austin, n.d. Annual Report, Water, Light and Power Dept., 1918
Monthly report, Water Light and Power Dept, November 1925
Photographs, electrical equipment [1923?], 2 items

Separated:

Notarized survey by Grooms Lee, Travis County Surveyor, 1921
Receipts, Battery Service Co., Austin, 1921-22 (10 items)
Clipping, "Political map of the United States," [1895?]
Notarized affidavit, Ida May Deeg, 1924
Austin Storage Battery, guarantee and bid summary
Bankruptcy notice, Eugene Martin, 1912 (2 items)
Inquiry for McElroy & Brown, 1922
Duplicates of blank forms, "...I do not use my electric stove..."
1922 (14 items) [examples in Folder]

ARCHIVES COLLECTION AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Main entry: Laws, R.B. Title: Collection Call number: AR P.1

Donor: R.B. "Beverly" Laws

Donor number: 77115 Date donated: 1977-78

Location: Archives stacks and Oversize Volume Collection

Size: 50 linear feet

Inventory date: October 1993 (rev.) Prepared by: Tim Wilder

Box/Folder	Arrangement	
LEDGERS	Boares	Final report of
6	Department of Public Works Letter books (12 volumes) June 1890 - Nov. 1892 Nov. 1892 - Aug. 1893 Aug. 1893 - Nov. 1894 Nov. 1894 - Feb. 1896	Final report of Board of Public Works. 1895 - box 10. Board of Public Work.
7	June 1896 - May 1897 Jan. 1898 - Nov. 1898 Aug. 1900 - May 1901	tower (town here's)
8 Note 7030 V	May 1901 - Sept. 1902 Sept. 1902 - Dec. 1903 Jan. 1904 - June 1905	460×10
9	June 1905 - Mar. 1907	

Minutes of Board Meetings (1 volume) Jan. 8, 1896 - Mar. 25, 1897

Mar. 1907 - July 1909

Inspection Division moved to AR 1991 OF Lists of licensed plumbers (1 volume) box 35

boy 12

Traffic Division (Public Safety Dept)
Boat permits (1 volume)

Street, Sewer, Bridge Department (1 volume) - moved

Jan. 30, 1913 - July 1926

to AR. 1991.014

Plumbing Inspections (1 volume) - moved to

1941-45

AR. 1991.014

11

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Dam Construction
                          Record of Payment (1 volume)
                               June 1890 - Aug. 1895
                          Progress Report (1 volume)
                               Aug. 15, 1981 - May 1, 1892
                          Cement Tests (1 volume)
                               1891-94
                          Engineer's Letter book (1 volume)
                               Aug. 1, 1893 - June 14, 1895
                          Dam Data (1 volume)
                               1893-95
                          Inventory of Powerhouse (1 volume)
                               May 1, 1899
               Police Department
12
                    Mileage record of police cars (1 volume)
                          Nov. 1933 - Aug. 1936
                    Dog Pound Record (2 volumes)
                         Mar. 1942 - May 1947
                          Mar. 1947 - Dec. 1950
                    Stock Pound Book (1 volume)
                         May 1943 - Aug. 1947
13
                    Accident Reports (13 volumes)
                          Nov. 5, 1941 - Nov. 22, 1942
                          Dec. 1, 1942 - Dec. 31, 1943
                          Jan. 1, 1947 - June 30, 1947
14
                          July 1, 1947 - Dec. 31, 1947
                          Jan. 1, 1948 - May 31, 1948
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                          June 1, 1948 - Oct. 31, 1948
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                          Jan. 1, 1950 - May 31, 1950
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                          Nov. 1, 1950 - Dec. 31, 1950
                          Jan. 1, 1951 - May 31, 1951
                     Police Calls (119 volumes)
                     bol Jan. 1, 1879 - Dec. 13, 1883
                          Nov. 23, 1885 - Dec. 10, 1885
19
                      /Dec. 10, 1883 - Feb 12, 1886
                      VDec 10, 1883 - Oct 11 1884 - Reports of Quarantine (Small
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21	Jan. 10, 1906 - May 23, 1907 May 23, 1907 - Oct. 17, 1908
22	Nov. 3, 1908 - Aug. 31, 1909 Mar. 7, 1910 - Sept. 13, 1910 Sept. 13, 1910 - Oct. 6, 1911
23	Oct. 6, 1911 - July 4, 1912 July 4, 1912 - Mar. 8, 1913 Mar. 8, 1913 - Jan. 21, 1914
24	Jan. 27, 1914 - Apr. 12, 1915 Apr. 13, 1915 - Feb. 3, 1916 Feb. 2, 1916 - Oct. 1, 1916 Oct. 2, 1916 - Dec. 31, 1917
25	Jan. 2, 1918 - Oct. 31, 1918 June 24, 1919 - May 3, 1920 May 4, 1920 - Sept. 27, 1920 Sept. 27, 1920 - Mar. 9, 1921
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47		May 5, 1942 - Aug. 30, 1942 Aug. 30, 1942 - Jan. 8, 1943

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	50	Feb. 3, 1945 - May 25, 1945 May 25, 1945 - Aug. 27, 1945 Aug. 27, 1945 - Dec. 4, 1945
	51	Dec. 5, 1945 - Mar. 9, 1946 June 2, 1946 - Aug. 8, 1946 Jan. 7, 1947 - Mar. 28, 1947
	52	Mar. 28, 1947 - May 31, 1947 Dec. 20, 1947 - Feb. 22, 1948 Feb. 22, 1948 - Mar. 19, 1948
	53	Mar. 19, 1948 - May 8, 1948 May 8, 1948 - June 28, 1948
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	61 - NON POX 11	Sept. 12, 1950 - Nov. 12, 1950 Nov. 12, 1950 - Jan. 16, 1951
	62 - NOU box 12	Jan. 15, 1951 - Mar. 20, 1951 Mar. 20, 1951 - May 21, 1951

boxmarked misc

Record of Arrests (1 volume) Feb. 22, 1955 - Sept. 7, 1955

Air Raid Wardens (1 volume) 1942

Mayor's Office

Cases Tried in Mayors Court (1874)

1874

box

Mayor's Court Record Dec 25, 1104 -

OVERSIZE LEDGERS - Stored in Archives Oversize Volume Collection

Corporation Court

Minutes (5 volumes)

Dec. 25, 1904 - July 17, 1906 - Mayor's Court of Austin

July 1906 - June 1907 /

June 12, 1907 - Aug. 24, 1908 -

Aug. 1908 - Aug. 1909 🗸

Nov. 3, 1930 - Nov. 27, 1933

see also

Boord

Department of Public Works

Water, Light & Power Commision Minutes (1 volume)

1897-1900

16 2018.053

Finance Department

Warrant Receipt Book (2 volumes)

1886-90 ~

1984-98 1894-1898

Ordinances

Special acts of legislature and city ordinances regards to property (1 volume)

1839 - 73

Police Department

Classification of Arrests (1 volume) + Fines Collected 1911-1912 1910-12 Pound Records 1910

Police Courts Record of Prisoners (3 volumes)

 \searrow Sept. 1, 1884 - Feb. 16, 1886

Apr. 1, 1886 - July 31, 1890

May 1, 1896 - Sept. 1, 1902

Record of Arrests (12 volumes)

Jan. 1, 1876 - Jan. 1, 1878

- Oct. 21, 1879 - May 30, 1885 🗸

June Lan. 1, 1885 - May 30, 1891

June 1, 1891 - Aug. 31, 1898

Sept. 2, 1898 - Aug. 30, 1905 -

Sept. 1, 1905 - Dec. 29, 1910 < Jan. 1, 1911 - Dec. 31, 1914 /

Jan. 2, 1915 - Aug. 25, 1919 -

Paily Report of Officer in charge of Chain Grang July 17, 1885 - June 15, 1888

Police Calls

Dec 1, 890 -

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Aug. 28, 1919 - Mar. 28, 1924 ~
          Aug. 28, 1924 - Feb. 28, 1928 ~
          Mar. 7, 1928 - Oct. 31, 1930
          Nov. 30, 1933 - Dec. 31, 1935
     Prison Register (18 volumes)
          May 1, 1886 - June 17, 1888
          June 18, 1888 - Nov. 13, 1892 🗸
          Aug. 1, 1890 - Apr. 30, 1896 🗸
          Nov. 20, 1892 - May 17, 1899 🗸
          May 18, 1899 - July 5, 1909
          July 20, 1909 - Aug. 20, 1909
          May 21, 1926 - Jan. 27, 1932 ~
          Jan. 27, 1932 - June 10, 1935 ✓
          June 11, 1935 - June 30, 1937
          July 1, 1937 - June 5, 1939 🗸
          June 5, 1939 - Jan. 14, 1941
          Jan. 14, 1941 - Sept. 6, 1942 V
Sept. 6, 1942 - Jan. 18, 1945 V
          Jan. 13, 1945 - Dec. 14, 1946
          Dec. 15, 1946 - June 19, 1948 ~
          June 19, 1948 - Dec. 3, 1949 -
          Nov. 27, 1949 - July 17, 1952 ~
          July 18, 1952 - Feb. 22, 1955 \nearrow
Real Estate Transfers (6 volumes)
     1918
     1919~
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MISSING ITEMS

1921 ~ 1923 ~

1924 × 1925 ×

Hospital Department
Cash report (1 volume)
Mar. 19, 1928 - Nov. 18, 1928

Police Department
Marshall's Day book (1 volume)
1933 - Dec. 1935
Traffic reports (1 volume)
Jan. 1, 1950 - May 31, 1950

Real Estate Transfers (2 volumes) 1916 1917