

The Eighteenth-Century Records
of the Boston
Overseers of the Poor



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THE ALMSHOUSE CENSUS AND INVENTORY

1756



The Almshouse census and inventory manuscripts are not part of the Overseers collection at the MHS though they were most certainly produced by or for the Overseers in 1756. The two transcribed documents that are here presented together are identified as “A List of Persons ... in the alms House” and “A List of Sundrys in the Alms House.” The documents are dated August 1756 and were likely drawn up then, and annotated later. While they may have been part of the vast Overseers Records held for decades by the City of Boston they became separated and appeared glued to the front leaf of volume one of the six volumes of children’s indentures that were the basis of Lawrence Towner’s study. When Towner did his research, the indenture records were in the City Clerk’s office at the Boston City Hall. Those records, and the attached Almshouse census and inventory, are now in the Manuscripts and Special Collections at the Boston Public Library. So far as we can determine, this is the only manuscript of its kind for the eighteenth-century Almshouse. Other eighteenth-century references to the Almshouse and Workhouse populations can be found in scattered references, mostly in the Boston Records, but the manuscript transcribed here is rare because of its identification of people, living arrangements, and inventory. There are no extant Almshouse admissions and discharge records for 1756 and so it is impossible to measure the lengths of stay of the occupants in this list. While there are comparable censuses for nineteenth-century Boston institutions, and for eighteenth-century institutions elsewhere in America, it is likely that this is the only glimpse we have into the eighteenth-century Boston Almshouse.

The Almshouse Census and Inventory, 1756



A List of Persons, Beds &c. in the alms House Augt. 1756

Room No. 1 vizt.	Beds	Ruggs & Blanketts	Prs. of Sheets	Shirts & shifts
1 Mary Odlin } 2 Sarah Battells } 3 Sarah Boleson }	3	6	3	6
No. 2				
4 Mary Whitehead } 5 Maratha Kingstone } 6 Sarah Bumstead }	3	6	3	6
No. 3				
7 Penelope George 8 Eliza. Coombs 9 Ester Warden <John Cushing> } gone to servis 10 Thos. Field } Children of 6 & 7 years Margaret Blake } 2 Children	3	6	3	10
No. 4				
11 <Martha Colton> Ann Tyley <Mary Blake> gone to Workhous 14 Mary Fleet & 2 Children 16 Martha Colton & Daughter	2	4	2	8
No. 5				
17 James Mellins } 18 David Osborne } Dead Ebenzr. Grater }	3	6	3	4
No. 6				
19 William Morto <John Dewen> gone } Phillip More 20 Thos. Bickford } <Robert Feathergill> } Dead 21 John Finley	5	10	5	8

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Room No. 7

22 Sarah Mead	}	7 in all				
23 <Sarah Green> Dead						
24 Sarah Peirce <Susanna Newcomb>			4	8	4	12
		<gone to Servis> Return'd again				
27 2 Children Sarah Wincot & Child						

No. 8

28 Hepsibeth Griffith <Mary Davis> Dead	}	4 womn. [&] 3 Childn. gone to Servis				
29 Sarah Richards child <Anna Mason>			4	8	4	14
32 3 Children						
34 Mrs Townsend / Sarah Boyles						

No. 9

35 Susanna Lynde & 36 Daugr. 11 Years Old	}				
37 Mary Brisco		4	8	4	12
38 Sarah Stover					
40 Sarah Harding & Child					
43 3 Children					

10

44 Eliza Skinner	}	Mary Gullion				
45 Kathn. Legg & Child		Buckleys & child 4 8 4 12				
46 <Sarah Rhoads>						
47 <Sarah Flyng> Dead						

11

Furniture of [J?] Davis

12

Mrs Garns				
48 Rebecca Reed	1	2	1	2

13

Movd. <Saml. Edy>	}				
49 Benja. Phillips		3	6	3	6
50 Saml. Marion					
Thos. Odel Lodges in the house only					
Ebenzr. Grater					

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No. 14

51 Hannah [Crehose?] & Sarah Roads						
52 Mary Crumpton No. 15 &	}	Susana Dix	Eddy Child 3	6	3	10
53 Mary Crumpton						
54 Eliza. Mccurde						
Eddy Joanna <Savage> & child						
55 <Margaret Buckly>						

No. 15

Dead <Owen Cunningham & Thos. Odell>	4	8	4	4
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No. 16

56 Sarah Rice	}	4	8	4	16
57 Mary Mortgaridge					
58 Abigail Lynch & 5 Children					

No. 17

64 Sarah <Livingston> Livett	}	3	6	3	6
65 Sarah Jones 92 yrs. old					
66 Mercy Ryland Margaret Clefton young man					

No. 18

67 Mary Ann Anderson	}	4	8	4	12
68 Jane Champion					
70 Margaret FitchGerald & Child					
72 2 Negro Women Hagar & Rachel					

No. 19

73 Rebecca Burnet	}	Edward McGowen	Mary McGowen 4	8	4	10
74 Ann Ashley						
75 <Eliza. Garnes>						
76 Eliza. Copp						
78 <Jane Thompson> a Child						
gone						

No. 20

79 Nathl. Gordon	}	Christopher Delve	5	10	5	10
80 John Hughes						
81 <Delve a Dutchman>						
82 Tho. Plaisted						
<Wm. Saymore> gone away Mrs. Dyer						

21

85 Mary Wyat & 2 Children				
86 Eliza. Gray	2	4	2	2

The Almshouse Census and Inventory, 1756



22					
87 Content Gordon	}	2	4	2	6
88 Mary Water<house>man & 2 Children					
Sepr. 4 Layd. 3 weeks					
No. 23					
91 Hannah Ivory	}	5	10	5	12
92 Eliza. Lewis					
93 Mary Harr all					
95 Mary ann Sack & 2 Children					
97 Phebe Randal					
No. 24					
98 Ann Hogg	}	4	8	4	10
99 Mary Higgens					
100 Jane Young					
104 Mary Linnington & 3 Children					
No. 25. & <26>					
Eddy & wife	1	2	1	2	
106 Macks Room the Hall & Chairs					
No. 27					
107 John Warrick	}	4	8	4	8
108 Thos. Dilla					
109 John Dinsdell					
110 Thos. Frazier					
No. 28					
111 Mary Monk	}	3	6	3	8
112 Susanna Jackson					
113 Mary Heath & 1 Child					
No. 29					
115 Benja. Storrer & susana his Wife	}	2	4	2	8
116 Eliza. Bill					
117 Abigail Dawson					
No. 30					
118 Thos. Mason	}	4	8	4	8
119 <John Mccollam>					
121 John Preston and Danl. Mondon					
No. 31					
123 Eliza. Peirce and Mary Thorn	2	4	2	4	

The Almshouse Census and Inventory, 1756



No. 32					
124 Desire Hawes	}	3	6	3	6
125 Sands Gibbon					
126 Christoph. Thornton					
No. 33					
127 Jane Taylor	}	3	6	3	12
128 Mary <Freeman> Shaw					
133 Eliza. Barger & 4 Children					

The Almshouse Census and Inventory, 1756



*a List of Sundrys in the Alms House
taken Augt. 1756*

In the Garrett vitz.	In the Grainery &c.
A Large Parcell Old Cloths	abt. 150 Bushell Rye
19 Trunks Some wth. herbs &c.	350 Bushell Corn
8 Qts. fish	<hr/>
3 Bushell Beans	In the Kitchen vitz.
a Desk wheel & Table	1 Large Copper
some Old Chairs & Cask	1 Brass Kettle
2 Case Drawers	1 Brass Ladle
4 Old Ditto	2 Do. Skimmers
7 Tables	5 Wood Trays
abt. 40 [Hopps l?]	2 Platters
a Clothiers Frame & Tools	4 Large Earthen Pans
2 New Beds	5 Do. Dishes
8 Old Ditto	7 Milk Potts
13 New Duffell Blanketts	2 Pitchers
2 New Pillows	1 Bell Meltle Mortar
1 Do. Old &c. &c.	Pewter unweighd
<hr/>	3 dishes
In the Meal Room viz	3 plates
a pr. steel yards	1 Bason
a pr. Scale Beams & Weights	1 porringer
a Meal Troth shovels &c.	2 Table
abt [1/2 ll.] Brown Sugar	1 Large Iron Slice
<hr/>	7 Trammells
In the Yard	2 pr. Dog / 1 pr. hand Irons
about 200 Cord Wood	3 Iron Candle Sticks
1 Cross cut Saw	1 Looking Glass
2 hand Saws	<hr/>
1 Wood Ax	In the Cellar vitz.
Betel & Wedges	about 90 Gall. Mollasses
4 Live Hogs	4 Barrells Pork wantg. 2 or 3 pieces
6 Beds wth. Covering for Four	1 Large Chest
	3 Smaller Do.
	part 2 Cask Pork
	2 Brs. Hogs Fatt
	a parcell Empty Cask
	2 Chests
	1 Grindstone
	1 hhd. Soap