



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
STATE ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

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Government Records Information Leaflet No. 5 Law Enforcement Records

Police departments and sheriffs' offices throughout Minnesota contain numerous records that have significant historical value. This leaflet identifies some of the most valuable series of law enforcement records. Records listed on this sheet that no longer have administrative value to the departments may be eligible for transfer to the State Archives in the Minnesota Historical Society. Transfer of such records to any other historical agency, public library, or museum is allowed with the permission of the State Archives. Because some of these records contain information that may be private or confidential according to state or federal regulations, it is imperative that these records be maintained and stored only where appropriate usage can be guaranteed.

JAIL REGISTERS: Chronological record of individuals committed to the county or municipal jail; sometimes called record of arrests, or police docket of arrests. They include arrest and discharge information, name of prisoner and occasionally biographical data, name of officer making the arrest, and the nature of the crime, charges, and sentence.

ANNUAL REPORTS: Textual and statistical summaries of departmental and divisional activities, personnel and budget, kinds of tasks performed and services rendered, and general operational activities in the department. Submitted to the mayor, city council, or county board of commissioners.

SUBJECT FILES: Correspondence, brochures, and reports of special projects of the department, such as special security programs, Project Identification, drug enforcement and education programs, community service clinics, and officer training and education programs.

DAILY LOG OF ACTIVITIES: Some departments maintained log books that contain brief entries of events that occurred during the day. These are usually dated before 1950 and may have historical value. These logs should not be confused with contemporary radio logs or trip logs that have no permanent value.

BCA REPORTS: Annual reports of local law enforcement activities compiled by the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and returned to the local department. The BCA does not maintain copies of these reports.

TRAMPS LODGED REGISTERS: Chronological record of transients lodged in the jail or elsewhere under police supervision, usually before 1950.

RELIEF ASSOCIATION RECORDS: Minutes, annual reports, and summary financial records of police relief, retirement, and benefit associations. Occasionally these records are retained in the department offices. When they are no longer needed, the State Archives should be contacted.

HOMICIDE CASE FILES: Files relating to the investigation of homicides. These files must be retained in the department permanently, either in original paper or on microfilm of archival quality. The State Archives can provide additional information on the requirements for producing archival quality microfilm.

Some law enforcement agencies also have custody of various records of defunct *MUNICIPAL, JUSTICE of the PEACE, or POLICE COURTS*. These docket books, also known as civil or criminal dockets, may be eligible for transfer to the State Archives.

The sheriff, whose salary used to consist of service fees, originally had authority to take the records with him when he left office. Therefore, many early sheriffs' records are still in private possession. Questions about such records should be referred to the State Archives.

The preservation and orderly disposition of law enforcement records are governed by Minnesota Statutes 138.17, Subdivision 1. No law enforcement records of any kind may be destroyed or removed from agency custody without signed authorization by the Records Disposition Panel as constituted by this statute. Further information and forms on which to request permission to destroy records on a onetime basis or to transfer noncurrent records to the State Archives are available from the State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, at the address and phone number shown above.