

Seattle Police Court Records, 1886-1956

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Washington (State). Municipal Court (Seattle)
Title	Seattle Police Court Records
Dates	1886-1956 (inclusive) 1886 1956
Quantity	311 volumes
Collection Number	5601
Summary	Dockets, logs, and indexes of cases heard in Seattle's Police Court.
Repository	Seattle Municipal Archives Seattle Municipal Archives Office of the City Clerk City of Seattle PO Box 94728 98124-4728 Seattle, WA Telephone: 206-233-7807 Fax: 206-386-9025 archives@seattle.gov
Access Restrictions	Records are open to the public.
Languages	English

Historical Note

Seattle's Police Court was the forerunner to the current Municipal Court. The first judicial officer for Seattle was appointed by the City Council in 1875 from among the King County Justices of the Peace serving the Seattle Precinct. In 1886, a charter amendment made each Seattle Precinct Justice a Police Justice with jurisdiction over ordinance violations. The 1890 Freeholders Charter officially established a Police Court in the city. This provision was repealed in 1892, after an 1891 state law created a Municipal Court system that included a Justice Court and Police Court.

The Police Court was a "court of limited jurisdiction" under the purview of the city of Seattle. (In contrast, the county was the parent agency for the Justice Court.) One of the justices of the peace in the Seattle Precinct was appointed to serve on the Police Court in addition to his duties on the Justice Court. The Police Court heard violations of state law that occurred within the city limits, as well as violations of City ordinances. It dealt with misdemeanors, traffic offenses, minor civil suits, and small claims, and also heard liquor-related cases during Prohibition.

The court was called by varying names over the years. Before 1891, it seems to generally have been known as the Police Court. From 1891 to 1897, it was called the Municipal Court, and then again was referred to as the Police Court until 1928, when it was once again called the Municipal Court. It retained that name from then on, except for 1954-1955, when it was called the Municipal Police Court.

The currently constituted Municipal Court was created in 1955 under Chapter 290 of the Washington State Laws. It has exclusive original jurisdiction over violations of all city ordinances, collects fines and

forfeitures relating thereto, and hears cases related to misdemeanor defined by State statute that occur within the City limits. Municipal judges are elected by the qualified electors of the City of Seattle.

Content Description

Court dockets, indexes, and case summaries relating to cases heard in the Police Court. Series are described more fully below.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[Item and date], [Title of collection], Record Series 5601-[XX]. Volume [number], Page [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

The Seattle Police Court Records are arranged into four series:

5601-01: Police Court Dockets, 1886-1956

5601-02: Police Court General Indexes, 1891-1956

5601-03: Minute Books, 1894-1911

5601-04: Police Judge's Journal, 1897-1920

Related Materials

Record series 5602-01 (Docket Record of Liquor Cases, 1917-1926) and 5602-02 (Liquor Docket Index, 1916-1926) relate to liquor-related cases heard in Police Court during the Prohibition era.

Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

5601-01: Police Court Dockets, 1886-1956

241 volumes

Summary of cases heard in Police Court involving violations of Seattle's criminal codes. Each case includes a docket number, date, defendant's name, offense, plea, costs, and disposition of the case. By the 1910s, witnesses, complainants, and bail were often also included. The earliest cases include a narrative account of the progression of the case, but in 1889 the courts started using forms for easier entry of information.

The first eight volumes overlap in time with the next eight, through October 14, 1890. The system changed from having two or more judges to one on October 15, 1890, and after this date, the volumes run sequentially until the end of the series. After 1926, the dockets are available only on microfilm. The first 15 microfilm reels do not correspond directly to volume numbers, but cases can be accessed by date. Volume 162 and volumes 178 through 223 were filmed one volume per reel and are numbered identically with the corresponding volume.

Some of the most common offenses listed in the early volumes are drunkenness, vagrancy, and disorderly conduct, with prostitution and fighting also making frequent appearances. Traffic violations appear on a large scale beginning in the 1920s. Some of the more unusual offenses include driving across a fire hose, using profane language, and “riding a horse in a public street at a fast rate of six miles an hour.”

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Volume		
No number	City Docket	1886/08-1888/04
A1	City Docket	1888/04-1888/12
No number	City Docket	1888/12-1889/05
H	City Docket	1889/05-1889/10
No number	City Docket	1889/10-1890/01
No number	Justice Court	1890/01-1890/05
4	City Docket	1890/05-1890/08
No number	City Docket	1890/08-1890/10
6	City Docket	1887/01-1888/08
7	City Docket	1888/08-1889/04
No number	City Docket	1889/04-1889/09
4	Police Docket	1889/09-1889/12
5	Justice Docket	1889/12-1890/04
6	Justice Court	1890/04-1890/06
7	Justice Court	1890/06-1890/09

Container(s)	Description	Dates
8	Justice Court	1890/09-1890/10
1	Police Court Criminal Docket	1890/10-1890/11
2	Police Court Criminal Docket	1890/11-1890/12
3	Police Court Criminal Docket	1890/12-1891/02
4	Police Court Criminal Docket	1891/02-1891/02
1	Municipal Court Docket	1891/03-1891/06
2	Municipal Court Docket	1891/06-1891/09
3	Municipal Court Docket	1891/09-1891/12
4	Municipal Court Docket	1891/12-1892/03
5	Justice Docket	1892/03-1892/06
6	Justice Docket	1892/07-1892/10
7	Justice Docket	1892/10-1892/12
H	Municipal Court Docket	1893/01-1893/01
K	Municipal Court Docket	1893/05-1893/08
No number	Municipal Court Docket	1893/08-1893/12
L	Municipal Court Docket	1893/12-1894/05
No number	Municipal Court Docket	1894/05-1894/10
No number	Municipal Court Docket	1894/10-1895/03
16	Municipal Court Docket	1895/03-1895/11
17	Municipal Court Docket	1895/11-1896/11
18	Municipal Court Docket	1896/11-1897/07

Container(s)	Description	Dates
19	Police Court Criminal Docket	1897/07-1898/02
20	Police Court Criminal Docket	1898/03-1898/07
21	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1898/07-1898/12
22	Justice Dockets	1898/12-1899/05
23	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1899/05-1899/10
24	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1899/10-1900/03
25	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1900/03-1900/07
26	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1900/07-1900/11
27	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1900/11-1901/03
28	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1901/03-1901/07
29	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1901/07-1901/11
30	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1901/11-1902/04
31	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1902/04-1902/09
32	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1902/09-1903/01
33	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1903/01-1903/06
34	Police Court Criminal Dockets	1903/06-1903/11
35	Police Court Docket	1903/10-1904/05
36	Police Court Docket	1904/05-1904/10
37	Police Court Docket	1904/10-1905/03
38	Police Court Docket	1905/03-1905/07
39	Police Court Docket	1905/07-1905/12

Container(s)	Description	Dates
40	Police Court Docket	1905/12-1906/04
41	Police Court Docket	1906/04-1906/08
42	Police Court Docket	1906/08-1906/12
43	Police Court Docket	1906/12-1907/04
44	Police Court Docket	1907/04-1907/07
45	Police Court Docket	1907/07-1907/10
46	Police Court Docket	1907/10-1908/01
47	Police Court Docket	1908/01-1908/05
48	Police Court Docket	1908/05-1908/08
49	Police Court Docket	1908/08-1908/11
50	Police Court Docket	1908/11-1909/02
51	Police Court Docket	1909/02-1909/06
52	Police Court Docket	1909/06-1909/09
53	Police Court Docket	1909/09-1909/12
54	Police Court Docket	1909/12-1910/04
55	Police Court Docket	1910/04-1910/07
56	Police Court Docket	1910/07-1910/10
57	Police Court Docket	1910/10-1910/12
58	Police Court Docket	1910/12-1911/01
59	Police Court Docket	1911/01-1911/03
60	Police Court Docket	1911/03-1911/06

Container(s)	Description	Dates
61	Police Court Docket	1911/06-1911/10
62	Police Court Docket	1911/10-1911/12
63	Police Court Docket	1911/12-1912/03
64	Police Court Docket	1912/03-1912/07
65	Police Court Docket	1912/07-1912/10
66	Police Court Docket	1912/10-1913/01
67	Police Court Docket	1913/01-1913/04
68	Police Court Docket	1913/04-1913/06
69	Police Court Docket	1913/06-1913/08
70	Police Court Docket	1913/08-1913/10
71	Police Court Docket	1913/10-1913/11
72	Police Court Docket	1913/11-1914/01
73	Police Court Docket	1914/01-1914/03
74	Police Court Docket	1914/03-1914/05
75	Police Court Docket	1914/05-1914/07
76	Police Court Docket	1917/07-1914/10
77	Police Court Docket	1914/10-1914/12
78	Police Court Docket	1914/02-1914/02
79	Police Court Docket	1915/02-1915/05
80	Police Court Docket	1915/05-1915/07
81	Police Court Docket	1915/07-1915/11

Container(s)	Description	Dates
82	Police Court Docket	1915/11-1916/03
83	Police Court Docket	1916/03-1916/05
84	Police Court Docket	1916/05-1916/10
85	Police Court Docket	1916/10-1917/01
86	Police Court Docket	1917/01-1917/05
87	Police Court Docket	1917/05-1917/08
88	Police Court Docket	1917/08-1917/10
89	Police Court Docket	1917/10-1918/01
90	Police Court Docket	1918/01-1918/04
91	Police Court Docket	1918/04-1918/06
92	Police Court Docket	1918/06-1918/09
93	Police Court Docket	1918/09-1918/11
94	Police Court Docket	1918/11-1919/01
95	Police Court Docket	1919/01-1919/03
96	Police Court Docket	1919/03-1919/05
97	Police Court Docket	1919/05-1919/07
98	Police Court Docket	1919/07-1919/09
99	Police Court Docket	1919/09-1919/11
100	Police Court Docket	1919/11-1919/12
101	Police Court Docket	1919/12-1920/01
102	Police Court Docket	1920/01-1920/03

Container(s)	Description	Dates
103	Police Court Docket	1920/03-1920/04
104	Police Court Docket	1920/04-1920/06
105	Police Court Docket	1920/06-1920/07
106	Police Court Docket	1920/07-1920/09
107	Police Court Docket	1920/09-1920/10
108	Police Court Docket	1920/10-1920/12
109	Police Court Docket	1920/12-1921/01
110	Police Court Docket	1921/01-1921/03
111	Police Court Docket	1921/03-1921/04
112	Police Court Docket	1921/04-1921/06
113	Police Court Docket	1921/06-1921/08
114	Police Court Docket	1921/08-1921/09
115	Police Court Docket	1921/09-1921/12
116	Police Court Docket	1921/11-1922/01
117	Police Court Docket	1922/01-1922/03
118	Police Court Docket	1922/03-1922/04
119	Police Court Docket	1922/04-1922/06
120	Police Court Docket	1922/06-1922/07
121	Police Court Docket	1922/07-1922/09
122	Police Court Docket	1922/09-1922/10
123	Police Court Docket	1922/10-1922/12

Container(s)	Description	Dates
124	Police Court Docket	1922/12-1923/01
125	Police Court Docket	1923/01-1923/03
126	Police Court Docket	1923/03-1923/04
127	Police Court Docket	1923/04-1923/05
128	Police Court Docket	1923/05-1923/06
129	Police Court Docket	1923/06-1923/08
130	Police Court Docket	1923/08-1923/09
131	Police Court Docket	1923/09-1923/10
132	Police Court Docket	1923/10-1923/10
133	Police Court Docket	1923/10-1923/11
134	Police Court Docket	1923/11-1923/12
135	Police Court Docket	1923/12-1924/02
136	Police Court Docket	1924/02-1924/03
137	Police Court Docket	1924/03-1924/04
138	Police Court Docket	1924/04-1924/05
139	Police Court Docket	1924/05-1924/06
140	Police Court Docket	1924/06-1924/07
141	Police Court Docket	1924/07-1924/09
142	Police Court Docket	1924/09-1924/09
143	Police Court Docket	1924/09-1924/11
144	Police Court Docket	1924/11-1924/12

Container(s)	Description	Dates
145	Police Court Docket	1924/12-1925/01
146	Police Court Docket	1925/01-1925/02
147	Police Court Docket	1925/02-1925/03
148	Police Court Docket	1925/03-1925/04
149	Police Court Docket	1925/04-1925/06
150	Police Court Docket	1925/06-1925/07
151	Police Court Docket	1925/07-1925/04
152	Police Court Docket	1925/04-1925/10
153	Police Court Docket	1925/10-1925/10
154	Police Court Docket	1925/10-1925/11
155	Police Court Docket	1925/11-1925/12
156	Police Court Docket	1925/12-1926/01
157	Police Court Docket	1926/01-1926/02
Reel		
1	Police Court Dockets	1926/02-1926/08
2	Police Court Dockets	1926/08-1926/12
3	Police Court Dockets	1926/12-1927/05
5	Police Court Dockets	1927/10-1928/04
6	Police Court Dockets	1928/04-1928/11
7	Police Court Dockets	1928/11-1929/07
8	Police Court Dockets	1929/07-1930/03

Container(s)	Description	Dates
9	Police Court Dockets	1930/03-1930/11
10	Police Court Dockets	1930/11-1931/11
11	Police Court Dockets	1931/08-1932/05
12	Police Court Dockets	1932/05-1933/03
13	Police Court Dockets	1933/03-1933/12
14	Police Court Dockets	1933/12-1934/06
15	Police Court Dockets	1934/09-1935/03
162	Police Court Docket	1927/04-1927/08
178	Police Court Docket	1934/11-1935/03
179	Police Court Docket	1935/03-1935/12
180	Police Court Docket	1935/12-1936/08
181	Police Court Docket	1936/08-1937/04
182	Police Court Docket	1937/04-1937/11
183	Police Court Docket	1937/11-1938/07
184	Police Court Docket	1938/07-1939/03
185	Police Court Docket	1939/03-1940/02
186	Police Court Docket	1940/02-1940/12
187	Police Court Docket	1940/12-1941/08
188	Police Court Docket	1941/08-1942/03
189	Police Court Docket	1942/03-1942/08
190	Police Court Docket	1942/08-1943/01

Container(s)	Description	Dates
191	Police Court Docket	1943/01-1943/06
192	Police Court Docket	1943/06-1943/11
193	Police Court Docket	1943/11-1944/05
194	Police Court Docket	1944/05-1944/10
195	Police Court Docket	1944/10-1945/02
196	Police Court Docket	1945/02-1945/06
197	Police Court Docket	1945/06-1945/10
198	Police Court Docket	1945/10-1946/02
199	Police Court Docket	1946/02-1946/06
200	Police Court Docket	1946/06-1946/11
201	Police Court Docket	1946/11-1947/04
202	Police Court Docket	1947/04-1947/09
203	Police Court Docket	1947/09-1948/01
204	Police Court Docket	1948/01-1948/06
205	Police Court Docket	1948/06-1948/12
206	Police Court Docket	1948/12-1949/05
207	Police Court Docket	1949/05-1949/10
208	Police Court Docket	1949/10-1950/04
209	Police Court Docket	1950/04-1950/09
210	Police Court Docket	1950/09-1951/02
211	Police Court Docket	1951/02-1951/06

Container(s)	Description	Dates
212	Police Court Docket	1951/06-1951/11
213	Police Court Docket	1951/11-1952/03
214	Police Court Docket	1952/03-1952/09
215	Police Court Docket	1952/09-1953/02
216	Police Court Docket	1953/02-1953/07
217	Police Court Docket	1953/07-1954/01
218	Police Court Docket	1954/01-1954/07
219	Police Court Docket	1954/07-1955/01
220	Police Court Docket	1955/01-1955/07
221	Police Court Docket	1955/07-1956/01
222	Police Court Docket	1956/01-1956/07
223	Police Court Docket	1956/07-1956/12

5601-02: Police Court General Indexes, 1891-1956

36 volumes

Indexes to the Police Court Dockets (5601-01) list the defendant's name, the volume or docket number in which the case appears, and the page number of the volume. (The first volume lists only the defendant's name and case number.) Each volume indexes between 3 and 21 dockets; within each index volume defendants are organized by first letter of their last name and then listed in order of their case number.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Volume		
No number	General Index Municipal Court	1891-1892
No number	General Index Municipal Court	1893-1902
X	General Index	1902-1907

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2	General Index	1907-1910
3	General Index	1910-1911
4	General Index	1911-1914
5	General Index	1914-1917
6	General Index	1917-1919
7	General Index	1919-1921
8	General Index	1921-1923
9	General Index	1923
10	General Index	1923-1925
11	General Index	1925
12	General Index	1925-1926
13	General Index	1926-1927
14	General Index	1927-1928
15	General Index	1928-1929
16	General Index	1929-1931
17	General Index	1931-1933
18	General Index	1933-1934
19	General Index	1934-1936
20	General Index	1936-1938
21	General Index	1938-1941
22	General Index	1941-1942

Container(s)	Description	Dates
23	General Index	1942-1943
24	General Index	1944-1945
25	General Index	1945-1946
26	General Index	1946-1947
27	General Index	1947-1949
28	General Index	1949-1951
29	General Index	1951
30	General Index	1952
31	General Index	1953
32	General Index	1954
33	General Index	1955
34	General Index	1956

5601-03: Minute Books, 1894-1911

15 volumes

This series contains summary information of cases heard in Police Court and corresponds to the Police Court Dockets (5601-01). It was probably used to compute the final costs related to the cases. Includes date, case number corresponding to Police Court Docket case number, name of defendant, offense, names of attorneys, names of witnesses, plea, and judgment. Cases that were continued for two or more days have listings for each day they came before the judge. This record was compiled by the clerk of the court.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Volume		
1	Minute Book	1894/05-1894/12
2	Minute Book, Municipal Court	1894/12-1895/09
3	Minute Book, Municipal Court	1895/11-1897/04

Container(s)	Description	Dates
4	Minute Book, Municipal Court	1897/04-1898/07
5	Minute Book, Municipal Court	1898/07-1899/09
6	Minute Book, Police Court	1899/09-1900/08
7	Minute Book, Police Court	1900/08-1901/07
8	Minute Book, Police Court	1901/07-1902/10
9	Minute Book, Police Court	1902/11-1904/06
10	Minute Book, Police Court	1904/06-1906/01
11	Minute Book, Police Court	1906/01-1907/03
12	Minute Book, Police Court	1907/03-1908/02
13	Minute Book, Police Court	1908/02-1909/04
14	Minute Book, Police Court	1909/04-1910/08
15	Minute Book, Police Court	1910/08-1911/02

5601-04: Police Judge's Journal, 1897-1920

19 volumes

This is a log of cases heard in Police Court and corresponds to the Police Court Dockets (5601-01). It includes summary information: date, name of defendant, offense, bail, plea, names of prosecution witnesses, and judgment. Beginning with Volume 5, the entries include a "sheet number" which corresponds to the "blotter number" in the Police Court Dockets. The Police Judge's Journal does not include case numbers as found in the Dockets. This series appears to be a daily record maintained by the Judge during the course of hearings and trials. Cases that were continued for two or more days have listings for each day they came before the judge.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Volume		
No number	Municipal Judge's Docket	1897/03-1898/01
No number	Police Judge's Docket	1898/01-1898/10

Container(s)	Description	Dates
No number	Police Judge's Docket	1898/10-1899/10
No number	Police Judge's Journal	1899/10-1901/01
No number	Police Judge's Journal	1901/01-1902/08
No number	Police Judge's Journal	1902/08-1904/08
No number	Police Judge's Journal	1904/08-1906/08
No number	Police Judge's Journal	1906/08-1907/11
2	Police Judge's Journal	1907/11-1908/12
3	Police Judge's Journal	1908/12-1910/03
4	Police Judge's Journal	1910/03-1911/03
5	Police Judge's Journal	1911/03-1912/11
6	Police Judge's Journal	1912/11-1914/02
7	Police Judge's Journal	1914/02-1915/05
8	Police Judge's Journal	1915/05-1917/01
9	Police Judge's Journal	1917/01-1918/06
10	Police Judge's Journal	1918/06-1919/08
11	Police Judge's Journal	1919/08-1920/05
12	Police Judge's Journal	1920/05-1920/07

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Crime--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Law enforcement--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Municipal courts--Washington (State)--Seattle

Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Court records--Washington (State)--Seattle

Finding aid prepared by Julie Kerksen
2006