1919 Boston Police Strike Project: Researching the Men Behind the Strike

A crowd-fueled research project co-sponsored by the University of Massachusetts Boston and the Boston Police Department Records Center & Archives

Jessica Holden | BLC Networking Day | May 22, 2019
bpstrike@live.umb.edu | blogs.umb.edu/bpstrike1919
The Boston Police Strike

September 9-13, 1919

1,142 strikers

Protested long hours and poor working conditions

All lost their jobs

“Police vote to strike tonight, walkout at 5:45 p.m. rollcall,” The Boston Post, September 9, 1919
Who were these men?
What became of them?
The Project

Collaboration between a university archives, municipal archives, and local community members

Learn what happened to each of the 1,142 police officers who took part in the 1919 strike

Create a searchable online research database and a biographical profile of each officer
The Project Admin Team

PROJECT INITIATORS AND DEVELOPERS
Joanne Riley, then University Archivist and Curator of Special Collections, now Interim Dean of University Libraries, UMass Boston
Margaret Sullivan, Records Manager & Archivist, Boston Police Department Records Center & Archives

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS
Patty Brutomesso, Archival Collections Project Manager, UMass Boston
Andrew Elder, Interim University Archivest and Curator of Special Collections, UMass Boston

Carolyn Goldstein, Public History and Community Archives Program Manager, UMass Boston
Jessica Holden, Reference Archivist, UMass Boston

Caroline Littlewood, started as graduate assistant, then hired as Public History and Volunteer Research Coordinator for the project
Kayla Skillin, Archivist for Records Management, started as volunteer researcher, joined core project team representing the City of Boston Archives
The Volunteer Researchers

~30 active volunteers to date

Local genealogists, librarians, archivists, and historians

Retired police officers

Strikers’ descendants

Students (UMass Boston and Stonehill College)

Interested members of the public

The Irish Ancestral Research Association members piloting the research process through its many iterations
The Worksheet

Developed by Joanne Riley, tested by project team and volunteer researchers over the course of 2.5 years

Many iterations

Potential model for other biographical research projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA ITEM</th>
<th>HYPERLINK</th>
<th>ORIGINAL SOURCE</th>
<th>SPECIFIC INFO</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL CLUES</th>
<th>RELIABILITY: Which other data in the worksheet confirms that this is the same striker?</th>
<th>NOTES, DOUBTS, QUESTIONS: If row is not applicable, explain why here.</th>
<th>DATA FOR TRANSFER (This column is for Level 3 admin use only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Boston Police Department Duty Card</strong></td>
<td><img src="http://www.hastie10152.org/30%20cards/115612.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Boston Police Department Archives, Administrative Records.</td>
<td>Data points for the BP Strike project from this source.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> Shaughnessy, Frank J.</td>
<td><strong>Duty in 1919:</strong> 14</td>
<td><strong>Date of first apt.:</strong> 11/12/1906</td>
<td>The duty card data was provided by the project staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. 1919 address from &quot;Officials and Employees, City of Boston: 1919&quot;</strong></td>
<td><img src="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QfB2h7B0sV09Ut7Fta3wv3ps4Zr3v28/view?usp=sharing" alt="Image" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication:</strong> &quot;Officials and employees of the City of Boston and county of Suffolk with their residences, compensation, etc., City of Boston MLA, 1919.**</td>
<td><strong>1919 Address:</strong> 85 Arlington St. 1919 Ward: 26</td>
<td></td>
<td>This info was pre-loaded by project staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BPSTRIKE WORKSHEET PROGRESS

Number of worksheets

Worksheet Status

- # Started
- # Reviewed
- # Closed
- Data Entry
- Bio Written

Data for December 2018 to September 2019.
The Online Training Course

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) developed to train volunteer researchers

Free and open to the public

Walks users through the research process, step by step

Video tutorials, screenshots, quizzes
Graduate Student Research

HIST 625: Public history course

Pilot project: students wrote first striker profiles

Teamwork: interactive map, public commemorations since the strike, interviewed descendants of strikers

End of semester presentations

Riot on Boston Common during the police strike, 1919. Courtesy Boston Public Library, Print Department, Leslie Jones Collection.
The Project Website

Searchable database

Profiles and photographs

Timelines

Map

Descendants’ stories

Public commemorations

The 1919 Boston Police Strike Project

About the 1919 Boston Police Strike Project

The 1919 Boston Police Strike Project aims to document and preserve the stories of the more than 1,300 police officers who were involved in this highly influential labor strike which had lasting effects in the City of Boston and across the United States.

By September 9, 2019 – the centennial of the strike – we plan to have compiled a biographical encyclopedia documenting each of the officers who went out on strike, for the benefit of researchers, historians, students and others, including family members of the strikers.

The project is a collaboration between the Boston Police Department Archives, the University of Massachusetts Boston and a group of wonderful

Four of the more than 1,300 men who went out on strike on Sept. 9, 1919.
(Source: Tappen, G. Arthur, The...
Key Takeaways

Collaboration across institutions

Volunteers are the heart of the project

Free resources

Involve graduate students

In-person meet-ups build connections

Officers involved in the 1919 Boston Police Strike
Next Steps

Talk with us about partnership opportunities!

Contribute 1919/strike-related photographs, documents, exhibit materials from your library or archival collections

Join us at the public commemorative event on Saturday, September 7, 2019 at UMass Boston
Four of the more than 1,100 men who went out on strike on Sept. 9, 1919.
Source: Tappen, G. Arthur. The officers and the men, the stations without and within of the Boston Police (1901)