



New York State Archives

**New York State Governor Executive Clemency and Pardon
Application Ledgers and Correspondence A0629**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	Article 18 of the 1777 State Constitution authorized the governor to grant pardons and reprieves. This power was continued in the constitutions of 1821 and 1846 and expanded to include commutations by Article 5 of the Constitution of 1894. This series consists of ledgers and correspondence maintained by the governor's office to track actions taken and decisions made regarding applications for executive clemency. These volumes document various types of clemency including pardons, commutations, and restorations of citizenship rights.
Title:	Executive clemency and pardon application ledgers and correspondence
Quantity:	13.5 cubic feet
Quantity:	41 volumes
Inclusive Date:	1849-1903
Series:	A0629

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Arrangement

Arranged by type of volume (case facts, indexes, letterbooks), then chronological.

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Administrative History

Article 18 of the 1777 State Constitution authorized the governor to grant pardons and reprieves. This power was continued in the constitutions of 1821 and 1846 and expanded to include commutations by Article 5 of the Constitution of 1894.

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Scope and Content Note

This series consists of ledgers and correspondence maintained by the governor's office to track actions taken and decisions made regarding applications for executive clemency. Although generally referred to as "pardon ledgers," these volumes actually document various types of clemency including pardons, commutations, and restorations of citizenship rights.

Volumes A, B, and C (the location of subsequent lettered volumes is unknown) contain entries providing the facts of each crime and a chronological listing of events related to pardon or clemency applications from 1849-1854. Information provided includes: name of convict; county; crime; date; term; prison; date each letter or other document received, from whom, and about what; date each action taken, e.g. wrote to district attorney for statement of case, wrote to warden of prison for statement of conduct and health; and disposition of case (if any), e.g. granted pardon (and conditions, if any), term expired, granted restoration, denied the application. Each of these volumes contains a roughly alphabetical name index.

Volumes 1-9 do not include chronological listings of events but provide basic facts about cases from 1857-1884, including: name of convict; county; crime; date convicted; term; prison; documents received, e.g. letter from district attorney, letter from prison superintendent, court minutes, letters and petitions from family and friends; disposition of case (if any), e.g. pardon granted and date and to whom writ sent, term expired and date, sentence commuted, pardon refused and date, died, conditions of pardon (rare) such as must leave state or must abstain from alcohol; and pardon number 1857-1858 only).

Volumes 10-14 provide background summaries of cases from 1883-1890. Information provided includes: date; name; county; crime; term; date sentence expires; prison; by whom application made (e.g. spouse, attorneys); narrative briefly describing the facts of the crime, mitigating circumstances, character of the convict, and health and behavior in prison; and disposition of the case. Each of these volumes contains a roughly alphabetical name index.

Volume 15, covering 1848-1854, consists of pages entitled "Commutations and Pardons Granted by the Governor During the Year 18[specified on each page]." On each page are columns for: name of convict; crime; sentence; date of sentence; date of pardon or commutation; where convicted (county); remarks, usually indicating disposition of the case, e.g. restoration of citizenship rights, and conditions of pardon.

Volumes 16-21, entitled "Applications for Pardon," are actually rough alphabetical name indexes to applications from about 1857-1886 (volumes 20 and 21 have no dates). Although the exact form and content vary from volume to volume, each index includes some or all of the following types of information: name of convict; date pardon or commutation granted or refused; term expired (sometimes with date); and book (A through N; these refer to a now fragmentary series of lettered volumes which comprise series A0626; they are not the same as the lettered volumes A, B, and C in this series) and page. Volume 19 also contains information on convicts released to provide military service during the Civil War, including: name and rank of convict; date and number of special order; arm of service (unit); remarks, e.g. "honorably," "to receive

promotion," "to accept commission in new regiment"; and on file with - usually "AG" (adjutant general) or name of an officer. Volume 20 has some names crossed out with red ink and annotated with "P" (pardon), "SE" (sentence expired), "SC" (sentence commuted).

Volume 22 is a daily calendar of the private secretary to the governor containing brief daily entries relating to activities concerning pardon applications. Entries concern such matters as: blank forms to be used in correspondence (samples attached to pages); clemency cases heard - name of convict, name of applicant for clemency; to whom restoration of citizenship forms sent; and extradition requests received - from whom, regarding whom.

Volumes 23-38 are letterpress copybooks of outgoing correspondence signed by the governor's private secretary or pardon clerk. The correspondence answers inquiries or conveys information concerning: status of particular pardon applications; procedures for applying for pardons or restorations of citizenship rights; pardons, commutations, and restorations granted or denied, and sometimes the reason; extraditions ("requisitions") requested of or by the governor; and miscellaneous appointments (volumes 23 and 24). Volumes 23 and 24 each have an alphabetical name index in the front. Correspondence is manuscript until October 1884 (volume 24), at which time typescript correspondence begins to appear. Manuscript and typescript letters are mixed in the remaining volumes, with typescript correspondence appearing with increasing frequency over the years.

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Related Information

Related Material

A0597Series A0597, Executive Clemency and Pardon Case Files, contains the documentation submitted during and generated by the clemency application and decision-making process.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Alphabetical name indexes are included in volumes A, B, C, 10-14, 23, and 24.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

Administrative Information

Processing Information

Volume 18 was previously filed as Volume 3 of series A0626, Executive Clemency Application Status Ledgers.

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Access Terms

- Pardon--New York (State)
- Criminals--Rehabilitation
- Letterpress copybooks
- Governors
- Indexes (reference sources)
- Executive power--New York (State)
- Criminals--New York (State)
- Letter books
- New York (State)
- Pardoning
- Clemency
- New York (State). Executive Department