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Overview of the Records

Repository: New York State Archives
Summary: This series consists of case files of Sing Sing Prison inmates sentenced to electrocution. Included are warrants of execution; investigation reports (personal and criminal history); receipts for, and replies to, notice of appeal (if filed); correspondence regarding writing and visiting privileges with the inmate; Sing Sing admission forms, including medical examination and psychologists' examination reports; certifications of execution of death sentence, including post-mortem reports; and outgoing reports with detailed information on the remains of the executed inmate.
Creator: Sing Sing Prison
Title: Case files of inmates sentenced to electrocution
Quantity: 19 cubic feet
Inclusive Date: 1939-1963
Series: B0145

Arrangement

Chronological by date of execution.

Scope and Content Note

Records concerning condemned inmates include warrants of execution; investigation reports (personal and criminal history); receipts for notice of appeal (if filed); FBI records of past offenses; Sing Sing admission forms; admission medical examination reports; psychologists’ examination reports; and certifications of execution of death sentence, including post-mortem reports.
Each case file contains a number of reports and forms that are usually filed in order as follows: 1) the warrant of execution contains the name of the court where the defendant was tried, date, name of judge and court, name of defendant and known aliases, charge, date and place of sentencing, sentence, scheduled date of execution, place, date warrant was issued, and the signatures of the presiding judge and court clerk; 2) an investigation report contains the case number, investigator's name, supervisor's name, record officer's name, defendant's name, known aliases, codefendants' names, offense, plea, trial, indicted for, indictment number, date filed, date of conviction, date of sentence, previous court record (date, offense, court, disposition), abstract of complaint and indictment, description of offense by investigator, mitigating and aggravating circumstances, attitude of complainant, analysis of defendant's environment (personal history, education and early life, family and neighborhood, industrial history), analysis of personality (physical and mental, character and conduct), and synopsis; 3) a receipt for a notice of appeal if any were filed, along with accompanying correspondence notifying appropriate officials that an appeal has been filed; 4) correspondence regarding writing and visiting privileges with the condemned inmate (in some instances, noticeably in the later case files, letters to the inmate are included); 5) a record of past offenses, provided by the FBI; 6) Sing Sing admission form consisting of a front and side view photograph of the inmate, name, number, color, sex, fingerprints, prisoner's signature and address, age, birthdate, height, weight, physical characteristics, birthplace, nationality, citizenship status, occupation, marks, habits or peculiarities, parole data (crime, county, court, judge, sentenced, received, jail time, term, criminal act), codefendant(s), and preview record; 7) a reviewing blotter page that largely duplicates previously described information; and 8) a detailed report of medical examination upon admission.

In cases where the inmate was a naturalized citizen, an alien convict report may be included in the files. This record was provided by the Commissioner of Immigration's office and contains the correct name of the prisoner, alias, inmate number, sex, color, marital status, children, birthdate, birthplace, date entered U.S., place of entry, how entered, crime convicted of, court, place, sentence, previous crime and sentences, documents of identity, relatives in U.S. and other countries, and remarks. Many case files also contain a report of a psychologist's examination conducted at Sing Sing. These reports provide the inmate number, date of admission, name, date of examination, examiner, inmate's age, mental age, IQ, school grades completed, scholastic achievement, educational age, test results (language, alphabetical, classification, type, educational examination, school limit capacity), comments on text findings (army alpha standard, performance level, work capacity), impression, outlook, and suggestions.

All files contain certification of the execution of the death sentence, containing the name and inmate number of the inmate executed, date of death, time, cause, physician's signature, a list of witnesses attending the execution, and a post-mortem report stating the condition of the vital organs at the time of death. In addition to the post-mortem, the majority of the files contain an outgoing report containing detailed information on the remains of the executed inmate. Finally, the files contain applications for removal of the inmate's body to the place of burial. These were usually filed by the funeral home making the burial arrangements. The application contains the name of the undertaker, city permit number, place of business, inmate's name, death date, site,
present location of body, person requesting the funeral home to retrieve the body, address, relationship to deceased, and site where remains will be removed to.

In addition to these records, a number of other documents may be found in the case file including a record of the names, addresses, and relationships of people allowed to visit the condemned man and those who actually did visit the prison and when; correspondence to and from the warden of Sing Sing concerning the attendance of executions; and notifications to prisoners that their appeals have failed and they will be executed.

Related Information

Related Material

21832 Series 21832, Inmate Execution Files, contains case files for inmates executed for capital crimes, most of whom were executed at Sing Sing Prison.

Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Folder list is available at the repository.

Use of Records

Access Restrictions

Restricted; Records exempted from disclosure by specific statutes have been identified and filed separately.

Items Online

Case files of inmates sentenced to electrocution, 1939-1963
Access Terms

- Prisoners
- Electrocution
- Correctional institutions
- Ossining (N.Y.)
- Prisons
- Case files
- New York (State)
- Executing
- Capital punishment
- Ossining Correctional Facility
- Sing Sing Correctional Facility
- New York (State). Department of Correctional Services
- New York (State). Department of Correction