

**The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**Committee of Fifteen  
Records, 1900-1901**

**Compiled by Melanie Yolles  
June 1984**

**Box list revised by Sandra Carpenter and Laura O'Keefe  
1992**

## SUMMARY

**Title:** Committee of Fifteen Records, 1900-1901

**Size:** Fourteen linear feet (31 ABs, 4 RCs)

**Source:** Unknown; gift, 1911

**Restrictions:** Microfilm must be used in lieu of originals. Two unfiled scrapbooks are available in the original.

**Historical note:** The Committee of Fifteen, a New York City citizens' group that advocated the elimination of vice (specifically prostitution and gambling), was founded in November 1900. Its members, chiefly prominent businessmen, hired a team of investigators who visited locations throughout the city where "vice" crimes allegedly took place, filing reports on each site. The Committee disbanded in December 1901, after evaluating the collected evidence.

**Description:** Correspondence, minutes, investigators' reports, and scrapbooks documenting the activities of the Committee of Fifteen. The bulk of material (boxes 4-31) consists of the affidavits or investigators' reports, arranged by police precinct and street address.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

The Committee of Fifteen was established on November 27, 1900 at a meeting of prominent New Yorkers concerned about the dramatic increase in vice, particularly gambling and "the social evil," prostitution, in New York City, and the unwillingness of the police to suppress it. The group called for the formation of a non-partisan citizens' committee to insure that the authorities fulfilled their legal duty to prevent and eradicate vice. The committee eventually selected was dominated by bankers, lawyers, and businessmen: William H. Baldwin, Jr. (chairman), Felix Adler, Joel B. Erhardt, Austen G. Fox, John S. Kennedy, George Foster Peabody, William J. O'Brien, Alexander E. Orr, George Haven Putnam, John Hansen Rhoades, Edwin R. A. Seligman, Jacob H. Schiff, Andrew J. Smith, Charles Sprague Smith, and Charles Stewart Smith.

The members adopted a plan to determine the causes and extent of gambling and prostitution in New York, to discover the persons responsible, and to reveal their findings and recommendations in a published report. They also promoted legislation that would make it easier to prosecute the offenders and simplify the administration of the vice laws. The committee hired a team of investigators that scoured the city's bars, pool halls, dance halls, "disorderly houses," and tenements during 1901, posing as clients to determine the locations where prostitution took place. The evidence was collected and evaluated by December 1901, when the committee disbanded. Its report, *The Social Evil With Special Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York*, was published in 1902.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records of the Committee of Fifteen contain the correspondence of its assistant secretary, George W. Morgan, with the public, committee members, New York State Assembly members, and the New York City Department of Health. The 258 letters to the Department of Health report the location of "disorderly houses." Other records of the committee's investigations include two notebooks containing entries for each location visited with a chronological log of visits made and actions taken against the various dwellings and businesses, typed lists of the locations visited and the types of violations found there, and 28 boxes of affidavits and reports made by the investigators. The amount of information for each location varies, but many of the report forms include the name of the investigator, his age and address, date of his visit, address of the building, description of activity at that site and investigator's action, amount of money paid, name, physical description, and ethnic background of the prostitute or others at the location, and general remarks. The reports are arranged by police precinct.

In addition, the collection contains 28 scrapbooks of press clippings about New York City politics, police, and vice (November 8, 1900-November 30, 1901), typed abstracts of the events of the day (for the same period), and a typescript of the defense testimony in the trial of police captain John D. Herlihy (1900-1901).

## CONTAINER LIST

<b>Box</b>	<b>Contents</b>
	<u>Correspondence</u>
1	Incoming correspondence, 1900-1901 (alphabetical) Outgoing correspondence, 1900-1901 (letter-press copybook)
2	Correspondence with the Department of Health, July-November 1901
	<u>Minutes, Notebooks, Abstracts, Typescript</u>
3	Meeting minutes, Dec. 10, 1900-June 12, 1901 Notebooks of actions taken against various locations Lists of locations investigated Abstracts of events of the day, Nov. 8, 1900-Nov. 30, 1901 Typescript of defense witness testimony in the case of John D. Herlihy, vols. 2 and 3
	<u>Affidavits/Investigators' Reports</u>
	Precinct
4	1: Beaver St.-William St. 2: 234 Broadway-18 West Broadway 5: James Slip-84 James St. Batavia St.-Cherry St. 90 James St.-Water St. 6: 12 Chatham Square-32 Mott St. 100 Mott St.-119 Mulberry St.
5	6: 9 Pell St.-34 Pell St. 7: 127 Cherry St.-23 Hamilton St. 19 Henry St.-19 Pike St. 9: 133 6th Ave.-West 10th St. & Greenwich Ave. 32 Charles St.-26 Perry St. 10: 186 Bowery-482 West Broadway
6	11: 104 Bowery St.-97 Elizabeth St. 115 Elizabeth St.-211 Elizabeth St. 227 Grand St.-181 Hester 183 Hester St.-116 Mott St. 118 Mott St.-126 Mott St.

- 133 Mott St.-137 Mott St.
- 7                    11: 141 Mott St.-162 Mott St.  
                          210 Mott St.-140 Mulberry St.  
                          143 Mulberry St.-169 Mulberry St.  
                          170 Mulberry St.-6 Spring St.
- 8                    12: 1 1/2-199 Allen St. (6 folders)
- 9                    12: Bayard, Broome, & Chrystie Sts.  
                          126-147 Chrystie St.  
                          165-230 Chrystie St.  
                          11-128 Delancey St.  
                          East Houston & Eldridge Sts.  
                          Elizabeth & Essex Sts.
- 10                   12: 14-199 Forsyth St.  
                          201-214 St., 117-144 Ludlow St.  
                          Norfolk, Orchard, & Rivington Sts.  
                          7-196 Stanton St.  
                          135-186 Suffolk St.
- 13: Attorney, Broome, Cannon, & Clinton Sts.  
                          Delancey, Goerck, Grand, Monroe, & Suffolk Sts.
- 11                   14: 219-250 E. 2nd St., 219-312 E. 3rd St.  
                          8-49 Avenue B, 20-100 Avenue C  
                          122-165 Attorney St.  
                          18-50 Clinton St.  
                          304-468 E. Houston St.  
                          Lewis & Pitt Sts.  
                          73-146 Ridge St.  
                          147-159 Ridge St.
- 12                   14: 60-124 Sheriff St., 175-188 Stanton St.  
                          225-259 Stanton St., Willet St.
- 15: 5-47 First Ave., 1-26 Second Ave.  
                          27-125 Second Ave.  
                          26-192 Second Ave., 21-99 Third Ave.
- 13                   15: 100-112 Third Ave., 87-135 Fourth Ave., Avenue A, East Broadway  
                          7-128 E. 1st St. (5 folders)
- 14                   15: 1-25 E. 2nd St.

Box

26-179 E. 2nd St.  
180-195 E. 2nd St., 5-16 E. 3rd St.  
18-230 E. 3rd St.  
52-95 E. 4th St.  
98-216 E. 4th St.

15                    15: 226-523 E. 5th St., 204-545 E. 6th St.  
                              E. 7th & 8th Sts.  
                              109-332 E. 9th St.  
                              81-377 E. 10th St.  
                              104-314 E. 11th St.  
                              130-528 E. 12th St.

16                    15: E. 13th St., E. 14th St.  
                              Bowery, E. Houston Sts.  
                              St. Mark's Place, Stuyvesant St.  
                              16: Fourth Ave., Fifth Ave., Sixth Ave., Broadway, West Broadway  
                              83-161 W. 3rd St.  
                              E. 4th St., W. 8th St., W. 9th St., E. 10th St., E. 11th St., E. 12th St.,  
                              E. 13th St.  
                              Bleecker, Bowery, Carmine, W. Houston, & McDougal Sts.

17                    16: Sullivan, Thompson, University, & Wooster Sts.  
                              17: 64-214 Seventh Ave.  
                              216-234 Seventh Ave., 144-294 Eighth Ave.  
                              320-338 Eighth Ave., Tenth Ave., W. 14th-W. 16th Sts.  
                              W. 17th-W. 21st Sts.  
                              W. 22nd-W. 25th Sts.  
                              W. 25th-W. 28th Sts.

18                    18: First Ave.-Lexington Ave.  
                              E. 14th St.-E. 17th St.  
                              E. 18th St.-E. 22nd St.  
                              E. 24th St.-E. 26th St.

19                    19: 460-703 Sixth Ave.  
                              283-563 Seventh Ave., 1391-1432 Broadway  
                              W. 15th St.-W. 23rd St.  
                              W. 24th St.-W. 28th St.  
                              E. 29th St., W. 29th St.  
                              W. 31st St.-W. 32nd St.

Box

- 20
- 19: W. 33rd St.-W. 36th St.  
W. 37th St.-W. 41st St.
- 20: 320-568 Seventh Ave., 354-416 Eighth Ave.  
418-600 Eighth Ave., Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh Aves.  
W. 27th St.- W. 31st. St.  
W. 32nd St.-W. 34th St.
- 21
- 20: W. 35th St.-W. 38th St.  
206-253 W. 39th St.  
257-444 W. 39th St.  
204-274 W. 40th St.  
W. 41st & W. 42nd Sts.
- 22
- 21: 502 Second Ave.  
338-625 Third Ave.  
150-239 E. 27th St.  
212 E. 29th St.  
203-350 E. 33rd St., 338 E. 34th St.  
152-158 E. 42nd St.
- 23
- 22: 455 W. 42nd St.  
156-328 W. 43rd St.  
311 W. 44th St.  
124-171 W. 45th St.  
202-234 W. 46th St.  
168-246 W. 47th St., 203-406 W. 48th St., 320 W. 49th St.  
250 W. 51st St., 101-102 W. 52nd St., 116-152 W. 53rd St.  
109-121 W. 56th St.  
335-361 W. 58th St.  
328-342 W. 59th St.
- 24
- 22: 755-1051 Sixth Ave.  
740-940 Seventh Ave.  
688-988 Eighth Ave.  
576 Tenth Ave.  
1544-1715 Broadway
- 24: 145-201 E. 43rd St., 234 E. 47th St.  
35 W. 43rd St., 40 W. 47th St.  
131-245 E. 51st St.  
103-342 E. 53rd St., 142E. 55th St., 214 E. 59th St.  
874 First Ave.  
986-1092 Second Ave.



Box

- 24: 672-1128 Third Ave.  
397-411 Lexington Ave.  
347 Park Ave.
- 25: 41-339 E. 59th St.  
314-342 E. 62nd St.  
330 E. 73rd St., 400-416 E. 74th St., 348 E. 77th St.  
1358-1400 Avenue A  
1310 First Ave.  
1121-1498 Second Ave.  
1015-1283 Third Ave.
- 25 26: 301-349 W. 59th St.  
23-41 W. 60th St., 100 W. 61st St., 238-246 W. 62nd St.  
17-227 W. 63rd St.  
19-56 W. 65th St., 155 W. 66th St.  
103 W. 74th St., 164-202 W. 78th St.  
147 W. 82nd St.  
48-151 Amsterdam Ave.  
1931-1978 Broadway  
3 Boulevard
- 28: E. 81st-E. 88th Sts.  
E. 91st-E. 92nd Sts.  
1519-1735 Second Ave.  
1389-1505 Third Ave.  
1081 Park Ave.
- 26 29: 202-212 E. 97th St.  
213-232 E. 97th St.  
234 E. 97th St.  
150-210 E. 98th St.  
203 E. 99th St., 228-232 E. 100th St., 152-215 E. 103rd St.  
222 E. 102nd St.  
201-230 E. 106th St., 209-235 E. 107th St., 161-235 E. 108th St.  
218-334 E. 109th St.
- 27 29: 87-344 E. 110th St.  
222-348 E. 111th St.  
246-356 E. 112th St.  
244-357 E. 113th St.  
60-349 E. 114th St.  
177-308 E. 115th St., 317 E. 118th St.

Box  
28

29: 2030-2084 First Ave.  
2155-2218 Second Ave.  
1751-1982 Third Ave.  
2009-2103 Third Ave.  
115th St. & Third Ave.  
1501-1869 Lexington Ave.  
Park Ave. betw. 110th & 116th St.  
1759 Madison Ave.  
1410 Fifth Ave.

29

30: 176 W. 95th St., 101 W. 100th St., 73 W. 104th St.  
74-139 W. 108th St.  
106-112 W. 109th St.  
W. 110th St.  
953-981 Columbus Ave.  
803-809 Amsterdam Ave.  
2832-2839 Broadway  
31: 2062-2670 Eighth Ave.  
St. Nicholas Ave. betw. 115th & 140th Sts., Convent Ave. betw.  
140th & 141st Sts.  
2840-2874 Broadway

29

31: W. 119th St., W. 120th St., W. 124th St.  
118-256 W. 125th St.  
W. 126th St., W. 129th St.

30

32: 52-343 E. 117th St.  
74-159 E. 118th St.  
112-234 E. 119th St.  
124 E. 120th St., 247-347 E. 121st St.  
331 E. 122nd St., 221 E. 123rd St., 151-242 E. 124th St.  
100-312 E. 125th St.  
156-227 E. 126th St.  
164-208 E. 127th St.  
218-220 E. 128th St.  
Sylvan Place  
2306-2433 Second Ave.  
2141-2396 Third Ave.  
1650-1805 Park Ave.  
1841 Madison Ave.

Box  
31

- 33: Eighth Ave. betw. 145th & 153rd Sts.
- 35: 538 W. 134th St., 470-551 E. 135th St., 466-472 E. 136th St.  
673-679 E. 147th St.  
Third Ave. betw. 142nd & 145th Sts.  
Lincoln Ave.  
St. Ann's Ave.  
500-640 Southern Blvd.  
Willis Ave.
- 36: 2969-3165 Third Ave.

Brooklyn:

- 45: Union St., Hamilton Ave., Sackett St.
- 46: 64-77 Flatbush Ave.
- 49: Concord, Court, Smith & State Sts.
- 50: Adams, Heigh, & Nassau Sts.

(no precincts given:)

- Bushwick, Columbia, & Cook Sts.
- De Kalb, Fulton, & Grand Sts.
- Hamilton & High Sts.
- 73-95 Nassau St.
- Middleton & Pearl Sts.
- Seigel & Throop Sts.

[Queens]

Long Island City: Young & Gale Sts.

"Court Squad Precinct"

"Odds & Ends: Indefinite Suggestions, etc. Attended to."

Scrapbooks of Newspaper Clippings (28 vols.)

- 32 8 Nov 1900- 3 Jan 1901
  - 33 1 Mar 1901-31 May 1901
  - 34 1 Jun 1901-10 Sep 1901
  - 35 10 Sep 1901-30 Nov 1901
- unboxed Clippings of political cartoons, 11 Nov. 1900-23 Nov. 1901 (2 vols.).  
*Not microfilmed.*