

NEW YORK CITY MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES
31 CHAMBERS ST., NEW YORK, NY 10007

Guide to the Lindbergh baby kidnapping closed case files, 1926-1936

Collection No. REC 0066

Original processing by a Municipal Archives archivist, 1981. Finding aid revised and standardized by staff archivist Alexandra Hilton and Nathalie Belkin, May 2019.

NYC Municipal Archives

Guide to the Lindbergh kidnapping closed case files, 1926-1936

Summary

Record Group: RG 063: Bronx County District Attorney

Title of the Collection: Lindbergh baby kidnapping closed case files

Creator(s): Bronx County District Attorney's Office

Date: 1926-1936 [bulk 1932-1934]

Abstract: On March 1, 1932, Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., son of the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh and his wife, Anne, was kidnapped from his crib at the Lindbergh's home in East Amwell, New Jersey. This collection comes from the Bronx District Attorney's office, which handled the extortion charge and took part in the extradition of accused kidnapper and murderer, Richard Hauptmann, and deals with the overall case. The papers cover the murder trial and consist of correspondence, reports and miscellaneous legal documents originated by the various agencies involved, such as the New York City Police Department, the New Jersey State Police and the New Jersey Attorney General.

Collection #: REC 0066

Extent: 1.5 cubic feet in 3 boxes

Language: English

Physical Location: Materials are stored onsite at 31 Chambers St.

Repository: New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Information Services, 31 Chambers St., New York, NY 10007

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Transferred from the Bronx County District Attorney's Office to the Municipal Archives in 1979 (Accession # 1979-013).

Access and Use: Collection is open for research. To preserve the condition of original records, patrons are requested to use access copies when available. Advance notice is required for using original material. Please contact research@records.nyc.gov to arrange access.

Existence and Location of Copies: This collection has been microfilmed. See microfilm rolls 1-3 (master negative nos. 6391-6393).

Preferred Citation: Identification of item, date; Lindbergh baby kidnapping closed case files, 1926-1936; REC 0066; Series name; box number; folder number; Municipal Archives, City of New York

Processing Note: This collection was originally processed and described by a Municipal Archives archivist in 1981. Updates and standardization of the finding aid were completed in May 2019 by staff archivist Alexandra Hilton.

Processing Information

These papers were received from the office of then-Queens County District Attorney Mario Merola on September 19, 1979. They were in fourteen legal size file folder envelopes. By the time they reached a staff processor in 1981, they had been rearranged, not entirely successfully, as part of a student intern project, and only seven (7) of the original envelopes remained to give some idea of the original order. They were marked as follows: "Lindbergh Old File S & B"; "Hauptmann D.J. Reports"; "Hauptmann 684-1934 Miscellaneous"; "Hauptmann Receipts"; "Hauptmann Reports, Letters, etc. Important"; "Statements Sept. 1934"; and "Translation of Letters Specimens of Writings."

Due to the disarray and loss of a part of the provenance, it was difficult deciding how to arrange the collection. However, after some study, the materials seemed to divide more or less naturally into two broad categories: Investigation and Judicial Proceedings. It appeared that imposing these somewhat arbitrary divisions might provide a useful format for research use into this complex case, even if it did not duplicate the typical case arrangement used by the originating office (hints of which are given in the 1940 Historical Records Survey for Bronx County). Following consultation with senior staff, permission was given to go ahead with this artificial plan of arrangement. Later, the third series of newspaper clippings were added.

Related Material

The State of New Jersey vs Bruno Richard Hauptmann trial transcripts, 1935. Coll. SOYHN003. New Jersey State Archives. <https://bit.ly/2Lq8RMe>

Original and photocopied transcripts from Hauptmann trial.

Arthur Koehler photograph albums on the Lindbergh kidnapping case and Hauptmann trial, 1932-1936. Coll. PKOE001. New Jersey State Archives. <https://bit.ly/2GLs31A>

One album showing wood evidence and one album showing handwriting evidence presented by Albert S. and Albert D. Osborn.

Department of Law and Safety copies of evidence photographs, 1935. Coll. SLCSP001. <https://bit.ly/2PFcjB9>

Copies of photographs of evidence used in the Hauptmann trial. Digital images available on New Jersey State Archives website.

Charles A. and Anne Morrow Lindbergh baby kidnapping scrapbooks, 1932-1935. Coll. 1629. Special Collections Library, Pennsylvania State University. <https://libraries.psu.edu/findingaids/1629.htm>

Collection consists of two scrapbooks of unidentified newspaper clippings about the kidnapping and murder of Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., and of the investigation, trial, conviction, and execution of Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

Charles A. Lindbergh and family papers, 1808-1987. Catalog ID 001735174. Minnesota Historical Society. <https://bit.ly/2ZNUtAU>

Correspondence, genealogical records, legal and financial papers, interviews, speeches, diaries, and other materials from several generations of the Lindbergh family.

Biographical/Historical Note

On March 1, 1932, Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., son of the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh and his wife, Anne, was kidnapped from his crib at the Lindbergh's home in East Amwell, New Jersey. A truck driver found the 20-month-old's body more than two months later, on May 12, off to the side of a nearby road.

A two and a half year investigation was conducted by many of the nation's major law enforcement agencies. This effort culminated in the identification and arrest of Richard Hauptmann, otherwise known as Bruno Richard Hauptmann, or by his alias, Karl Pellmier, on, or about, September 20, 1934, near his home in the Bronx. Some of the ransom money was found on Hauptmann, which he claimed he was taking care of for a friend named Isidor Fisch. The arrest itself reflected a collaboration between officers of the New Jersey State Police, the New York City Police, and the United States Department of Justice.

Following Hauptmann's arrest, there was a formal filing of the relatively minor charge of extortion (Section 851, New York Penal Law, Subdivision 5) by the Bronx District Attorney's office, within whose jurisdiction the crime of passing the ransom money occurred. It was widely assumed at the time that the more serious charges of kidnapping and murder, which were being pursued by the State of New Jersey where the crimes had taken place, would take precedence over the extortion charge, as did happen.

After being indicted by a grand jury on September 26, 1934 (indictment no. 684-1934) and going through a series of legal maneuvers relating to the extradition request of New Jersey, Hauptmann was extradited on October 19. The legal proceedings in the Bronx courts were formally adjourned until the outcome of the more severe court action in the Hunterdon County Court House at Flemington, New Jersey was handed down. The active involvement of the Bronx DA's Office was confined almost entirely to the pre-1935 period, with subsequent activity (not documented within this collection), including an official full-time presence at the Flemington trial and participation in the various re-investigations of key issues, and items of evidence connected with the Bronx.

On February 13, 1935, following a 32-day trial, Hauptmann was found guilty and sentenced to be executed by electric chair. The indictment from the Bronx DA against Hauptmann was dropped. Despite significant negative public response to the verdict and dramatic, sustained efforts on the part of Governor Hoffman of New Jersey to reverse the verdict, or save Hauptmann's life, the judgment was carried out fourteen months later on April 3, 1936, following several stays of execution.

Sources

Cahill, Richard T. Jr. *Hauptmann's Ladder: A Step-by-Step Analysis of the Lindbergh Kidnapping*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2014.

Scaduto, Anthony. *Scapegoat: The Lonesome Death of Bruno Richard Hauptmann*. New York: Putnam, 1976.

Waller, George. *Kidnap: The Story of the Lindbergh Case*. New York: Dial Press, 1961.

Scope and Content Note

The material in this collection dates from 1926-1936, with the bulk of the material falling between early March 1932 and late October 1934. This period began with the kidnapping of twenty-month-old Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. on March 1, 1932, was punctuated by the arrest of Bruno Richard Hauptmann on September 20, 1934 for extortion, and ended with the extradition of Hauptmann to New Jersey on October 19, 1934. However, the papers deal with the overall case, including the murder trial and consist of correspondence, reports and miscellaneous legal documents originated by the various agencies involved, such as the New York City Police Department, the New Jersey State Police, the New Jersey Attorney General. After the passing of the “Lindbergh Law” in June 1932 that made kidnapping a federal offense, the Department of Justice’s Division or Bureau of Investigation (not known as the FBI until July 1935) also became involved, making this a high profile, two-state and multi-agency case.

Those documents before 1932 are primarily background materials, or items of evidence relating to some of the many suspects who came under investigation during the case, including Hauptmann’s enigmatic friend Isidor Fisch. The only document post 1934 is a copy of the short but trenchant April 1936 dismissal of the long-pending extortion indictment against Hauptmann, as the result of his execution by the State of New Jersey on April 3, 1936.

The principal person in the DA’s Office responsible for the handling of the case over the entire period appears to have been Edward F. Breslin (1899-1970), one of the eighteen Assistant District Attorneys then employed in that office. Although the two District Attorneys who held office during this period, Charles B. McLaughlin (1929-1933) and Samuel F. Foley (1933-1949), occasionally took the stage for public announcements and court appearances. The papers seem to reflect much of Breslin’s day to day work, including draft questions, working notes, and doodles.

The papers also include official memoranda, correspondence and personal notes of DA staff members; investigative reports of the several agencies involved; correspondence to and from these agencies; legal documents tracing the various court appearances and legal maneuvers that went on in the New York courts in relation to the extradition issue; statements of innumerable witnesses; exhibits and items of evidence, some original but mainly in the form of copies and receipts for transference to the New Jersey State Police or Attorney General; material relating to other significant suspects, notably Hauptmann’s cohort, Isidor Fisch; testimony and statements of “expert” witnesses on handwriting; various investigative leads; a few photographs; and some published and semi-published materials.

Documents which may be of particular importance are the Hauptmann-Fisch correspondence papers (between Hauptmann and Isidor Fisch, as well as between Hauptmann and Fisch’s family after the latter’s death); copies of Hauptmann’s payroll records from March and April 1932, plus affidavits; receipts listing specific items of evidence or potential evidence transmitted to New Jersey (most, or all, of which appears not to have been returned); and

certain discrete items, such as the 1933 statement of handwriting expert, Albert H. Hamilton asserting that one Manning Strawl was the kidnapper.

The folder headings are generally by document type rather than functional activities. No correspondence file was created because many of the investigative reports, even items of evidence, were in the form of letters or memoranda and there was insufficient additional volume to justify the creation of a new folder and risk possible consequent confusion.

In the Judicial Proceedings section, an early Grand Jury (The People vs. John Doe, Paril, 1932) looking into the circumstances of the passing of ransom money in a Bronx cemetery, seems to have been called partly because there were some questions about the role of Bronx resident Dr. J. F. "Jafsie" Condon, who acted as Lindbergh's intermediary in the passing of the ransom money. There was also some implied criticism of the police conduct of the investigation. So, although this grand jury and the September 1934 grand jury, which indicted Hauptmann, could be considered part of the investigative phase of the case, they fit more appropriately into the Judicial Proceedings series of this arrangement.

The placing of the Hauptmann arraignment of September 27, 1934 (folder 25) after the Grand Jury and Indictment (folder 24) is dictated solely by the dates; i.e., the indictment is dated September 26. Although an arraignment usually precedes a charge, the reverse is not so unusual as to be abnormal.

The several legal documents in folder 26 have instead arbitrarily been classified as "Pre-trial motions, etc." to distinguish them from the various moves and countermoves connected with the extradition process although that may be sufficiently clear from the title of the latter documents, i.e., "The People of the State of New York ex. rel. Bruno Richard Hauptmann vs. John Hanley, Sheriff of Bronx County and the Warden of the County Jail of Bronx County."

The materials in Folder 32, (witness statements and testimonies from several different cases, none related to the Lindbergh-Hauptmann case and all dated during October 1934) were transmitted to the Municipal Archives by mistake.

The overall importance of this collection is dependent partly upon the availability of related and similar documents in other repositories, mainly the originals of those many carbon copies, photostats, and other reproductions, which make up a sizeable portion of this collection. With the opening of the case papers held by the New Jersey authorities in 1981, and the easing of access to the relevant investigative files of the NYPD and the FBI, the relative informational value of this small collection may be lessened. However, its evidential value, illustrating the workings of a Bronx County District Attorney's office in the context of a crime of national or international importance, gives it a uniqueness well justifying its retention.

Many of these documents are not originals but have been retained because of the relative scarcity of hitherto available/accessible material, as well as because they illustrate the role of a New York City connected agency in a complicated interstate legal-criminal matter. Although a

case would typically be considered closed after the passage of more than forty-five years, the periodic publication of articles and books critical of the verdict, and the repeated attempts of Hauptmann's widow to reopen the case gave it an extended life. It wasn't until October 1981 that the Governor of New Jersey formally declared the hitherto closed papers held by his state agencies to be open to scholars and other interested parties.

Arrangement

The records are divided into three series:

[Series I: Investigation, 1926-1934](#)

[Series II: Judicial proceedings, 1926-1934](#)

[Series III: Clippings, 1926-1936](#)

The sequence of the folder arrangement within each series is based on the processing archivist's idea of the priority of the documents in a typical criminal-legal proceeding. Within the file folders, the arrangement is chronological except where an alphabetical arrangement is more meaningful, i.e., the witness statements in folders 6-11, with consolidated statements at the end. Likewise, undated material is placed at the end of a folder or sequence of dated folders.

Key Terms

Names

Bronx County District Attorney's Office
Fisch, Isidor Srul, 1905-1934
Hauptmann, Bruno Richard, 1899-1936
Lindbergh, Anne Morrow, 1906-2001
Lindbergh, Charles A. (Charles Augustus), 1902-1974
Lindbergh, Charles Augustus, 1930-1932
United States Bureau of Investigation
United States. Department of Justice. Division of Investigation
United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation

Places

Bronx County (N.Y.)
Bronx (New York, N.Y.)
East Amwell (N.J.: Township)
New York (N.Y.)
New York (N.Y.) -- Politics and government -- 1898-1951
United States -- Politics and government -- 20th century

Subjects

Fathers of murder victims
Indictments
Infanticide
Kidnapping
Mothers of murder victims
Municipal government -- Records and correspondence
Ransom
Trials (Homicide)

Material Types

Clippings (information artifacts)
Correspondence
Forensic photographs
Judicial records
Letters (correspondence)
Maps
Official reports
Open reel audiotapes
Photographic prints
Transcripts

Container List

Series I: Investigation

Date(s): 1926-1934

Size (Extent): 1 cubic foot (in 2 boxes)

Access: See microfilm rolls 1-2 (master negative nos. 6391-6392).

Location: 31 Chambers St., Shelf 13663-13664

Box	Folder	Title	Date	Roll
1	1	Investigative Reports: Miscellaneous Suspects	1927, 1931, 1934	1
1	2	Investigative Reports: Bruno Richard Hauptmann	1934 September 19-30	1
1	3	Investigative Reports: Bruno Richard Hauptmann	1934 October 1-4, December 4	1
1	4	Investigative Reports: Bruno Richard Hauptmann	1934	1
1	5	Statements of Suspects: Bruno Richard Hauptmann	1934 September 26	1
1	6	Statements of Witnesses: Barr-Frederiksen	1932, 1934	1
1	7	Statements of Witnesses: Galambos-Henkel	1934	1
1	8	Statements of Witnesses: Kassens-Lyle	1934	1
1	9	Statements of Witnesses: Mueller-Muller	1934	1
1	10	Statements of Witnesses: Perrone-Tarko	1934	1
1	11	Statements of Witnesses: Various	1934	1
1	12	Evidence: Isidor Fisch	1926-1930, 1933-1934	1
1	13	Evidence: Hauptmann and General	1931-1934	1
2	14	Evidence: Transmittal Documents and Receipts	1932 May, 1934 September-December	2
2	15	Evidence: Materials on Handwriting	1932-1934	2
2	16	Staff Notes, Documents and Communications	1932-1934	2
2	17	Staff Notes, Documents and Communications	circa 1932-1934	2
2	18	Investigative Leads	1932 March-1934 November	2
2	19	Photographs	1926-1931	2
2	20	Press Releases and Published Materials	1932 March-1934 September	2

Series II: Judicial proceedings

Date(s): 1926-1934

Size (Extent): 0.5 cubic feet (in 1 box)

Access: See microfilm rolls 2-3 (master negative nos. 6392-6393).

Location: 31 Chambers St., Shelf 13664-13665

Box	Folder	Title	Date	Roll
2	21	Testimony	1932 May-1934 September	2
2	22	Letter Exhibits 1-8 and Miscellaneous Evidence	1926, 1933-1934	2
3	23	Legal Documents: Bronx Grand Jury	1932 June-1933 February	3
3	24	Legal Documents: Bronx Grand Jury	1934 September 21-26	3
3	25	Legal Documents: Hauptmann Arraignment	1934 September 27	3
3	26	Legal Documents: Pre-Trial Motions, etc.	1934 October 3-5	3
3	27	Legal Documents: New Jersey Indictment	1934 October 8	3
3	28	Legal Documents: Extradition issues	1934 October 9-16	3
3	29	Legal Documents: Extradition Issues	1934 October 15-19	3
3	30	Legal Documents: Dismissal of Bronx Indictment	1936 April	3
3	31	Staff Notes, Documents, and Communications	1934 September-December	3
3	32	Bronx District Attorney Papers from Miscellaneous Case Files (unrelated to Lindbergh-Hauptmann case)	1934 October	3

Series III: Clippings

Date(s): circa 1926-1936

Size (Extent): 1 folder (in 1 box)

Access: See microfilm roll 3 (master negative nos. 6393).

Location: 31 Chambers St., Shelf 13665

Box	Folder	Title	Date	Roll
3	33	News clippings, miscellaneous	circa 1926-1936	3