

State Prison Records at the Archives of Michigan

Prisons have been around for as long as Michigan has been a state. The Archives of Michigan maintains records from Jackson, Ionia, and Marquette State Prisons.

Step One: Indexes

The Archives of Michigan holds numerous indexes to prisoner records, most organized alphabetically by name and a few organized by prison number. Typically, we recommend starting a search with the first index listed and proceeding through the indexes in terms of the approximate date of incarceration and prison(s).

The first two indexes are cards located in the Archives vault. If given a name to search, staff members can pull matching cards for researchers in the room. When reviewing these types of indexes, one should note a prisoner number as it is this piece of information that can lead to additional records.

Prison, Record Type	Record Group	Years Available
All Prisons, Prisoner Index Cards	94-196	1870 – 1987
Jackson, Marquette, and Ionia, Prisoner Index Cards, A – Z	83-86	1839 – 1987
Jackson, Index to Convict Register	64-50	1875 – 1960
Marquette, Indexes to Prisoner Registers	88-54	1879 – 1940
Department of Corrections, Identification Cards, 702 – 261046	2002-82	1939 – 1990
Ionia, Index to Register of Residents	80-27	1883 – 1940
Ionia, Alphabetical Register of Inmates	80-27	1919 – 1922, 1926 – 1935

Step Two: Prison Registries

Prison registries can contain a lot of information and are typically organized by prisoner number. You can usually get the prisoner number from an index card in one or more of the indexes listed in step one. If you are unsuccessful finding an index card but are confident that an individual served time in a state prison then you can leaf through pages in a register book. Prison numbers were assigned chronologically.

State Prison	Record Type	Years Available	Record Group
Jackson	Record of Prisoners, 7253 – 18653	1900 – 1926	64-50
Jackson	Record of Inmates	1925 – 1926	77-7
Jackson	Register of Criminal Sexual Psychopaths	1939 – 1955	64-50
Marquette	Inmate Record Books, 1 – 3762	1889 – 1925	76-97
Marquette	Inmate Photo Albums, 5 – 654	1889 – 1894	76-97
Marquette	Prisoner Data Sheets, 276 – 127288	1890 – 1970	88-54
Marquette	Description of Prisoners, 3763 - 6954	1925 – 1937	82-112
Marquette	Prisoner Registers, 30383 – 94989	1937 – 1957	87-138
Ionia	Description of Inmates	1874 – 1892	64-53
Ionia	Register of Residents, 1 – 103798	1888 – 1960	80-27
Ionia	Record of Prisoners, 3149 – 58740	1885 – 1944	64-53

Ionia	Photographic Record, 24392 – 27535	n.d.	64-53
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Step Three: Alternatives to Registries

When researching a person who happens to have gone into prison during a time period for which we do not have registries, you have alternatives. Registry records hold a lot of information, but if you are willing to dig around you can piece some of the same information together from different records. Even if you have found the individual in a registry, the volumes listed below might also be of interest to you depending on the individual's time in prison.

State Prison	Record Type	Years Available	Record Group
Jackson	Record of Commitment	1839 – 1937	64-50
Jackson	Record of Parole	1889 – 1904	64-50
Jackson	Journal of Transfers	1892 – 1896	56-27
Jackson	Record of Discharge by Expiration of Sentence	1857 – 1918	64-50
Jackson	Record of Punishment	1875	56-27
Jackson	Record of Punishment	1885 – 1928	64-50
Jackson	Record of Population	1885 – 1928	64-50
Jackson	Population Record	1857 – 1861	56-27
Jackson	Convict Identification	1875 – 1884	56-27
Jackson	Cash Received and Spent By Convicts	1839 – 1892	56-27
Jackson	Contracts and Bonds	1843 – 1852	64-50
Jackson	Word Attendance Record	1869 – 1873	56-27
Jackson	Receipts from Convict Labor	1895 – 1906	56-27
Marquette	Inmate Books, 1 – 3366	1879 – 1922	88-54
Marquette	Records related to prisoners	1905 – 1928	79-72
Marquette	Monthly report of parolees	1911 – 1926	82-112
Marquette	Record of Convicts	1922 – 1937	82-112
Marquette	Correspondence to Ombudsman	1979 – 1982	89-165
Department	Condensed Parole Report for Prisons at Ionia, Jackson, Detroit, and Marquette	1921 – 1926	55-32
Department	Minutes of the Prison Commission	1929 – 1934, 1937 – 1951	72-20
Ionia	Record of Discharge	1908 – 1921	64-53
Ionia	Record of Education	1911 – 1929	64-53

Ionia	Record of Conduct and Punishment	1919 – 1922	64-53
Ionia	Record of Commitment, 1680 – 3834	1880 – 1900	64-53
Ionia	Record of Parole, 1 – 5097	1921 – 1928	64-53
Ionia	Family History, 13698 – 19846	c. 1925	64-53
Ionia	Record of Parole Convicts	1947 – 1950	80-27
Ionia	Monthly Record of Time Credited to Residents by Forman	1949 – 1953	80-27
Ionia	List of Parolees Inducted or Enlisted and Rejected for Military	1942 – 1943	80-27
Ionia	Receipts for Prisoners involving Rioters from Wayne County Jail	1967	80-27
Ionia	Residence Grievance Forms	1972 – 1974	80-27

Step Four: Prison Environment

In the steps one through three, you looked for information about a specific person. If you are interested in going beyond a person's individual records, we have a number of records that give detail about the what the prison might have looked like, what operations were run from the prisons, and what policies might have been in play at different time periods. While these records are not going to identify individual people, they can help paint a picture of what it was like to be a prisoner in different time periods.

The list below focuses on subject files from different wardens, architectural drawings, and photographs. The Archives also holds numerous collections from the executive office, administrative services, and prison industries within the Department of Corrections that may hold additional information of interest. Please contact staff at the Archives of Michigan for assistance in researching these collections.

Jackson	Staff Photographs	n.d.	78-8
Jackson	Architectural Drawings, Amory	1911 – 1996	2011-54
Jackson	<i>The Spectator</i> , In-house newspaper	1933 – 1971, with date gaps	2011-54
Jackson	<i>Jackson Citizen Patriot</i> , In-house newspaper	1944 – 1950, 1952	2011-54

Jackson	Subject Files of the Warden	1893, 1934, 1937, 1948 – 1973	79-36
Jackson	Subject Files related to 1952 Prison Riot	1952 – 1977	78-8
Jackson	Warden's Subject Files	1955 – 1979	86-17
Marquette	Architectural Drawings	1886, 1893	
Marquette	Subject Files of the Warden	1938 – 1973	79-72
Marquette	Director's Subject Files	1974 – 1975	83-92
Ionia	Roster of Employees	1935 – 1942, 1949 – 1950	80-27
Ionia	Still Photographic Prints	1881, c.1924 – 1927 1953, 1959, c.1970	80-27
Ionia	Still Photographic Negatives	c.1951, 1968 – 1974	80-27
Ionia	Warden Correspondence	1940 – 1976	80-27
Ionia	Warden's Subject Files	1985 – 1986	90-167
Dunes	Subject Files	1977 – 1991	92-209
Florence Crane	Warden's Subject Files	1985 – 1991	93-115
Robert Cotton	Warden's Subject Files	1985 – 1992	95-74
Robert Cotton	General Correspondence	1992	95-182
Handlon	Administrative Subject Files	1991 – 1992	96-133

Additional State Agencies

Corrections	Use of prison labor for Conservation projects	1965-1981	83-43
Governor's Office	Corrections material from legal division	1983-1990	98-98
DNR	Reports of conservation and Corrections work camps	1967-1973	81-74
Corrections Commission	Minutes and agendas	1972-1980, 1981-1992	94-356