

# Guide to the James F. Ahern Papers

MS 2086



compiled by Robert Bartels

February 2019

Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 2086

**TITLE:** James F. Ahern papers

**DATES:** 1954–2017

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 11.34 linear feet (42 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** The materials are in English

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of the personal papers of James F. Ahern, documenting his position as chief of police for New Haven, Connecticut.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2086>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.2086>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box  
f. folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Jennifer G. Ahern, 2018.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The papers are open for research.

Original audiovisual materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be played. Researchers must consult use copies, or if none exist must pay for a use copy, which is retained by the repository. Researchers wishing to obtain an additional copy of non-commercially produced items for their personal use should consult the ordering reproductions information on the Manuscripts and Archives web site.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

James F. Ahern Papers (MS 2086). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

James F. Ahern was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1932. Ahern first joined the New Haven Police Department as a patrolman in 1954, and in 1968 was appointed police chief. Ahern presided as police chief in 1970 during the May Day student protests at Yale University and the New Haven Black Panthers trial. Ahern was credited for his efforts to diffuse the tense situation surrounding the protests and ensure they did not become violent. After leaving the New Haven Police Department in 1970, Ahern became a critic of violent police tactics, authoring a book, *Police in Trouble: Our Frightening Crisis in Law Enforcement*. In 1970 Ahern served on the President's Commission on Campus Unrest (also known as the Scranton Commission), which investigated violent clashes between college students and police at Kent State University and Jackson State University. He also served as director of the Insurance Crime Prevention Institute in Westport, Connecticut until his retirement in 1982. Ahern died in 1986.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of the personal papers of James F. Ahern, documenting his position as chief of police for New Haven, Connecticut. Included are materials related to student and police activities during May Day 1970 at Yale University, wiretapping by the New Haven police, and Ahern's role as a member of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest in 1970. Also included are photographs of Ahern, posters, magazine articles authored by and concerning Ahern, audio and visual recordings of Ahern's media appearances, scrapbooks with speeches and news clippings, correspondence by Ahern and family, and Rolodex cards with names and contact information for Ahern's colleagues in police administration.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into seven groupings: New Haven Police Department, President's Commission on Campus Unrest, Speeches and writings, Scrapbooks and printed media, Correspondence, Photographs, and Audiovisual material.

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## Collection Contents

New Haven Police Department		
b. 1, f. 1	May Day reports	1970
b. 1, f. 2	Wiretapping case	1981-1984
b. 1, f. 3-5	Rolodex cards	circa 1970s
b. 2, f. 1-4	Rolodex cards	circa 1970s
b. 3, f. 1-2	Rolodex cards	circa 1970s
b. 3, f. 3	Address cards	circa 1970s
b. 3, f. 4	Business cards	circa 1970s
Post-retirement		
b. 13, f. 1	Certificate appointing James F. Ahern honorary lieutenant colonel in Rhode Island State Police	1981
b. 3, f. 5	Certificates	1978-1985
b. 3, f. 6	A survey of the political climate in New Haven, Connecticut	1971
b. 3, f. 7	Transcript of telephone conversation between James F. Ahern and Fred Cronan	1971
President's Commission on Campus Unrest		
b. 14	Certificate appointing James Ahern to the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, signed by United States Secretary of State William Rogers and President Richard Nixon	1970
b. 4, f. 1-3	Commission final report draft	1970
b. 4, f. 4	The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, bound copy	1970
Speeches and writings Includes speeches and written material by James F. Ahern documenting his views on policing and police reform.		
b. 4, f. 5	Book material for <i>Police in Trouble</i>	circa 1972
b. 5, f. 1-2	Book outline for <i>Police in Trouble</i>	circa 1972
b. 5, f. 3	Book review, <i>Cops and Rebels: A Study of Provocation</i>	1972
b. 5, f. 4	"Democratic Control and Professional Restraint", reprinted from <i>The Great Ideas Today</i> English	1972
b. 5, f. 5	Interview for director of the FBI	circa 1970s
b. 5, f. 6	Magazine articles	1971-1974

b. 5, f. 7	<i>Meet the Press</i> interview transcript	1970
b. 5, f. 8	Speeches	1969–1971
b. 5, f. 9-10	Speeches Includes a speech by Ahern about the 1970 Kent State shootings.	1971
<p>Scrapbooks and printed media</p> <p>Scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings, articles, and photographs related to James Ahern and the New Haven Police Department, documenting Ahern's work as a police officer and police reform activist.</p>		
b. 6, f. 1-12	Ahern, James F., scrapbook	1968–1970
b. 7, f. 1-10	Ahern, James F., scrapbook	1970–1971
b. 8, f. 1	The Grapevine Press	1958–1959
b. 8, f. 2-11	Insurance Crime Prevention Institute (ICPI) scrapbook	1971
b. 9, f. 1	Magazine articles about James Ahern	1959–1982
b. 9, f. 2-3	Magazines about police and crime prevention	1970–2006
b. 12, f. 1	Nadjari, Maurice, articles and press release	1975–1976
b. 9, f. 4-7	News clippings about James Ahern and policing	1972
b. 10, f. 1-3	News clippings about James Ahern and policing	1972–1974
b. 10, f. 4	Newspaper articles on James Ahern and policing	circa 1960s-1980s
b. 10, f. 5	Scrapbook with photographs	1971–1983
b. 10, f. 6	Unbound articles and newspaper clippings	1967–1972
<p>Correspondence</p>		
b. 10, f. 7	Ahern, Jennifer, and Steve Curtin, concerning James Ahern research project	2015–2017
b. 11, f. 1	Barry, Raymond J.	1985
b. 11, f. 2	Brunner, Thomas W.	1985
b. 11, f. 3	City of New Haven Board of Aldermen	1986
b. 11, f. 4	Conway, William S.	1973
b. 11, f. 5	Hait, William N.	1986
b. 11, f. 6	Harness, Wendall C.	1983
b. 11, f. 7	Hartnett, Donald E.	1986
b. 11, f. 8	Herot, Frederick C.	1983
b. 11, f. 9	James, Jennifer	1975

b. 11, f. 10	Lee, Richard	1985-1987
b. 11, f. 11	McLaughlin, Marilou	1987
b. 11, f. 12	O'Connor, Thom	1986
b. 11, f. 13	Thier, Samuel O.	1986
b. 11, f. 14	Unidentified correspondent	1983
Photographs		
b. 12, f. 2	"33 Rookie Cops Train Hard to Combat Crime in the Elm City"	circa 1954
b. 11, f. 15	Ahern, James F.	circa 1960s-1970s
b. 13, f. 2-4	Ahern, James F. Includes a portrait and a signed group photograph of President's Commission on Campus Unrest.  A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	circa 1970s
b. 14	New Haven and Yale Common Ground poster A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	circa 1970s-1980s
Audiovisual material		
Original audiovisual materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be played. Researchers must consult use copies, or if none exist must pay for a use copy, which is retained by the repository. Researchers wishing to obtain an additional copy of non-commercially produced items for their personal use should consult the ordering reproductions information on the Manuscripts and Archives web site.		
Cassette tape titles were recorded by processing staff directly from media label information, when present.		
b. 15	Tape 1, Johnny Carson <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i>	circa 1970s-1980s
b. 16	Tape 2, Face the State (CT) <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i>	circa 1970s-1980s
b. 17	Tape 3, ICPI, Johnny Carson, Lee Leonard, Q&A <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i>	circa 1970s-1980s
b. 18	Tape 4, Practice speech, Bill Boggs <i>Midday Live</i> <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i>	circa 1970s-1980s
b. 19	Tape 5, ICPI, Bill Boggs <i>Midday Live</i> <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i>	circa 1970s-1980s
b. 20	Chapter 1, tape 1, and chapter 6, tape 6 <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s

b. 21	Chapter 1, tape 2 final, and chapter 1, tape 3 final <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 22	Tape 2 <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 23	Tape 6, first tape <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 24	Tape 6, second tape <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 25	Carefree, Arizona speech, December 10, 11, and 12 <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 26	Instructions <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 27	Junior ? speech <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 28	Public Affairs Broadcast Group copy of program number 218 <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 29	Statement of Richard ? <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	1974
b. 30	Unidentified tape <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 31	Unidentified tape <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 32	Unidentified tape <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 33	Unidentified tape <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 34	Westport <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	1974
b. 35	WNHC news <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	1971
b. 36	WNHC news <i>1 Audiocassette</i>	1971
b. 37	Conversation between James F. Ahern and Frank Kelly <i>1 Microcassette</i>	1971
b. 38	District Attorney tape <i>1 Microcassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 39	Telephone conversation 6/16 (A.M.) between Fred Cronan and James Ahern re insurance coverage, City of New Haven, side 2 <i>1 Microcassette</i>	circa 1970s



b. 40	Telephone conversation 6/16 (A.M.) between Fred Cronan and James Ahern re insurance coverage, City of New Haven, side 2 <i>1 Microcassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 41	Wagner tape <i>1 Microcassette</i>	circa 1970s
b. 42	Wagner tape <i>1 Microcassette</i>	circa 1970s

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Campus police  
Police patrol -- Surveillance operations  
Student protesters