

# ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle  
Seattle Municipal Archives

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Office of the City Clerk  
Legislative Department

## Message from the City Archivist

A 1983 cartoon by Jim Berry hangs on my office file cabinet. An elderly woman and a police officer are standing in front of the open door to a den or study; an impenetrable mound of papers fills the doorway and the interior room, and cascades into the hallway. The woman remarks: "One day last week, my husband went into his room of baseball statistics and just disappeared."

Many years ago when the archivists' position at *The Sporting News* was open, I imagined how wonderful it would be to disappear into the mass of sports news and records that made up the of archives for the nation's premier sports periodical. (For good reasons, I did not apply for the job.)

However, as all archivists know, we cannot go into the vault and simply disappear among our records. That would be a prescription for the archives being marginalized, or worse, closed down.

Archivists need to be political. This political profile is not electoral; it is institutional and strategic. We have many missions and multiple constituencies. In meeting our core responsibilities, we are cognizant that we must produce value for our user communities—our institutions and our outside constituents—or we will become irrelevant.

Providing the best possible access to evidence and information is the best way to give value. Our particular institutional settings will determine the level of access provided. In my case, public records must be open to everyone. But in all cases, access and use are (in my opinion) the most important functions.

Perhaps second in importance is educating our users and resource allocators about the work required to create meaningful access and the value added to the user because of that work. Education is political work.

Disappearing is not an option, as pleasant as it might sound at times.

Several years ago I asked *The Sporting News* archivist, who assuredly did not disappear among his records, to tell me the job was not as much fun as I imagined it might be. He answered, "I'm sorry, it is more fun than that."

I confess that government archives was not where I envisioned working when I entered the profession. And I cannot truthfully say that it is fun every day. But after 26 years, I can't imagine working in any other environment.

## New Digital Document Library Topic: NE 45th St. Viaduct

The NE 45th Street Viaduct construction began in 1938 to improve east-west routes in north Seattle. A variety of different funds were used over the years to build and maintain the viaduct. To coincide with the recent viaduct renovation, the Archives created a collection of digital documents to tell the viaduct's story from the 1930s to the present. Visit the [Digital Document Library](#) and take a look!



Construction of  
NE 45th St  
viaduct,  
April 1939.

Note that the  
future site of  
University Village  
is still farmland.

Item 38875,  
Seattle  
Municipal  
Archives

## City Archivist Wins SAA Posner Award

City Archivist Scott Cline was awarded the Society of American Archivists Fellows' Ernst Posner Award for the outstanding essay published during the preceding year in *American Archivist*. He was honored for his article "To the Limit of Our Integrity: Reflections on Archival Being" in *American Archivist* (vol. 72, no. 2).

The Award Committee noted that Cline's essay is "innovative and thought-provoking...a coherent and eloquently written piece on what it means to be an archivist in the world today. The four values proposed for archivists to inform how they do their work in a moral and ethical manner (faith, radical self-understanding, intention, and integrity) is a provocative invitation to engage in self-examination... The piece addresses the best parts of who we are as individuals as well as a profession."

## Archives Month in Seattle!

### October 26 Introduction to Research at SMA

1:30 pm (limit 25) and

**Tours of SMA** 11 am and 3 pm (limit 12)

RSVP to either or both: archives@Seattle.gov

### October 28 Seattle Archives Fair

10 am-3 pm Free Seattle Public Library, Level 10

Talk to archivists and check out their exhibits!

## Digital Image Management Services

In 2005 the Seattle Municipal Archives launched a new program, Digital Image Management Services, directed toward collecting digital photography from City agencies. Our purposes were many: to increase the availability of image files, reduce local network volume and traffic, help comply with city and state public records laws, support transparency in government, help reduce time spent on public disclosure requests, support vital City business functions that depend on visual images, and preserve the exciting photography being produced today.

Using outreach and education to train City employees on how to capture and describe photographs, and employing basic digital file transfer tools and using in-house database architecture, the Archives has collected more than 14,000 image files from 17 departments in the years since the program began. Experiences with not only managing and migrating, but also describing and providing access to the high volume of image files being transferred to the Archives provided many useful lessons for the future of the program.

This summer we released version 2.0 of the Digital Image Management Services program. File transfer is easier than ever with our web-

based image file submission form. Using the City's internal internet, employees can use the web form to upload several hundred photos at a time. Also, employees are able to apply item level description, dates, photographer information, and simple subject indexing so that when the photos reach the Archives they are already minimally processed and can be uploaded to the Photograph Index online.



City Light lineworkers begin pilot program of arterial LED streetlights along 2nd Ave near Wall St. August 2, 2010  
Item 164512, Seattle Municipal Archives

## Clerk File Photographs

An ongoing project in the Archives is to scan and catalog photographs associated with Clerk/Comptroller Files (CFs). CFs are documents filed with the City Clerk and can include rezoning petitions, reports, complaints, and protests. The photographs and CFs link back and forth to each other; the photographs provide additional context and description to the CFs. Examples below are samples from the 1953 police chief search, and a complaint about a building permit for a house on Ravenna Boulevard.



Police Chief Applicants in 1953 included Lewis Graham, H.J. Lawrence, and Frank C. Ramon. Accompanying CF 220038.  
Items 75120, 75107, and 75114, Seattle Municipal Archives



Photograph submitted with letter from Vern Millman regarding building permit at 1857 Ravenna Blvd. Accompanying CF 225076. Item 75134, Seattle Municipal Archives.

Vern Millman wrote on August 5, 1954, "We question the justification for permitting living quarters to be built over an unsightly structure.... Also...we feel that at least the work should be

completed and the premises cleaned up in a reasonable time."

## Newly Processed Collections

With the NHPRC processing grant in full swing, collections continue to be arranged and described at a fast pace. Among the recently processed records are four series from the office of Mayor Paul Schell relating to the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle. These records complement the WTO Accountability Review Committee Documents assembled by the committee in record series 1802-K1, as well as WTO records in the subject files of Councilmembers Jim Compton, Peter Steinbrueck, and Nick Licata. The Legislative Department's Central Staff Analysts' Working Papers also hold related records. Selected documents and photographs are included in a [Digital Document Library](#) topic.

Mayor Schell's WTO Records (1999-2000) include reports created after the demonstrations as well as legal proceedings, chronologies, and the work of the review panels. (Record Series 5279-05, 0.4 cubic foot)

WTO Staff Files (1999) were compiled for public disclosure requests and materials documenting both the planning of the conference and the city's response to the demonstrations. (Record series 5279-06, 1.6 cubic feet)

WTO Citizen Correspondence (1999) includes correspondence sent to the Mayor during and after the WTO meeting and demonstrations. Dating from November 28 through December 29, 1999, the letters express both support and condemnation of the Mayor's and the Police Department's actions. Transcribed telephone messages are also included. (Record Series 5279-07, 4.0 cubic feet)

WTO Press Conference Videos (1998-2000) consist of VHS videotapes of press conferences held by Mayor Schell about the WTO meeting and demonstrations. (Record Series 5279-08)



WTO Demonstration, December 29, 1999.

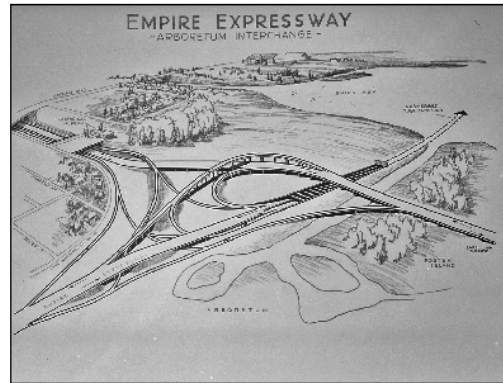
Item 19991129.01 #11, ImageBank 0207-01, Seattle Municipal Archives.

## 50 Years Ago in Seattle: Freeways and Fairs

Planning for the Empire Expressway and other rapid transit routes were progressing at a furious pace in 1960. In conjunction with planning for I-5 in the 1950s, additional north-south and east-west transportation routes were proposed. On March 8, 1960, voters approved an \$11 million omnibus highways bond issue for the R.H. Thomson Expressway (then the Empire Expressway), for an expressway route along Shilshole Avenue, for ramps to connect the Alaskan Way Viaduct to downtown Seattle, and for an extension of the Spokane Street viaduct westward to a connection with Harbor Avenue SW. At the same election, an additional bond issue of \$1,925,000 was approved to help finance design and construction of a Mercer Street connection between Aurora Avenue and the proposed I-5.

As soon as the proposition passed, an alternate route for the Empire Expressway was developed, taking more private property but less of the Arboretum. This route was endorsed by the University of Washington, the Museum of History and Industry,

and the Board of the Arboretum Foundation.



Empire Expressway Bridge Design, Arboretum Interchange, 1960  
Item 63320, Seattle Municipal Archives

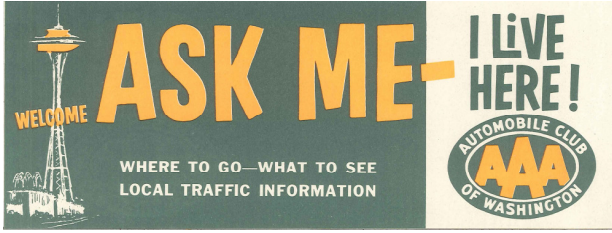
However, the plans were met with serious citizen opposition. By 1970, after many public hearings and many different drawings of the routes, the Empire Expressway/R.H. Thomson was no longer viable due to citizen opposition, and by 1972 the Bay Freeway (connecting I-5 to the waterfront) was defeated by voters in a 1972 election. Ramps from the "Arboretum Exchange" built to connect with the non-existent Empire Expressway/R.H. Thomson still exist, leading nowhere.

## Century 21

The countdown for the World's Fair was also underway in 1960. In a letter to the Board of Public Works, Superintendent of Buildings Fred B. McCoy gave his opinion on what was to become Seattle's most well-known landmark, "a 550-foot tower on the Civic Center site, to be used for restaurant purposes." In addition to questions regarding financing and using a private company to construct the structure, McCoy was concerned about "what happens if the City is obliged to take over the building because of failure on the part of the lessee to make the project pay. We would then be stuck with a 550-foot high 'white elephant.'" [Letter to Board of Public Works from Red B. McCoy, November 15, 1960, Office of the Mayor (52010-01), Box 4, Folder 17]

On October 17, 1960, Joseph Gandy, president of Century 21 Exposition, Inc., sent a letter to both Mayor Clinton and City Council President David Levine, urging them to approve the construction, as "time is precious if we are to see to it that this tower is actually constructed and in operation during the Exposition." Gandy wrote that the proposed tower "while of tremendous excitement, interest, and value to the Exposition, would nonetheless be a permanent civic center fixture, and would in my opinion become one of the greatest tourist attractions in any metropolitan civic center area." [Letter from Gandy to Mayor Clinton, October 17, 1960, Office of the Mayor (5210-01), Box 4, Folder 17]





Bumper sticker. Box 4, Folder 16, Office of the Mayor (5210-01) .

For additional resources on both transportation planning in the 1960s and Century 21, please contact SMA staff at [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov).

## Flickr News

The interactive nature of our Flickr page has the advantage of allowing us to collect new and corrected information about our images. Commenters often point out interesting details in our photos and give more information



Broadway looking north from about Thomas, March 24, 1934  
Item 8760, Seattle Municipal Archives

about the place or event depicted. Several times we have had users point out that the location or date we had for a photo was incorrect, while also supplying the correct information.

In some cases, users have helped us to pinpoint previously unidentified locations in images. For example, a photo of a street scene was labeled simply “light poles and power lines”

with no indication as to where it was taken. Commenters used shadows, a streetcar number, business names, and a church tower to identify the

street as Broadway on Capitol Hill. In another case, an image was labeled on the sleeve simply as “Beach, 1910.” We asked for help in determining the location both on our Flickr page and on the Vintage



English Bay Bathhouse, Vancouver, 1910.  
Item 52042, Seattle Municipal Archives

Seattle blog. In both virtual locations, commenters proposed identifications for the beach and de-

## Flickr News (cont.)

In the end, it was determined that the photo had been taken at English Bay beach in Vancouver, BC, and the match was confirmed by comparing our photo against other contemporary photos of that location. Mystery solved!

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/4621572025/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/4017399792/>

## Did you know...

The Seattle Municipal Archives has over 120,000 photographs, both scanned negatives and born digital, available online for searching and downloading?

The most popular image on the Seattle Municipal Archives Flickr site for June through August was of Gas Works Park:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/4840938901/>



Gas Works Park before it was a park, May 1971.  
Item 77122, Seattle Municipal Archives

## Upcoming Events

- October 28 Seattle Archives Fair 9 am - 3 pm  
Seattle Public Library Level 10 Free
- November 3-5 Pacific Northwest History [Conference](#)  
Spokane, Washington
- November 8 [Day of Jubilation](#) 9 am - 4 pm  
Capitol Building, Olympia

## Seattle Municipal Archives

600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 3, PO Box 94728  
Seattle, WA 98124-4728  
206 233-7807 or 206 684-8353  
[archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov) <http://www.seattle.gov/CityArchives>