

ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle
Seattle Municipal Archives

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Office of the City Clerk
Legislative Department

Out of the Archives

A search into the history of the Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company and its operation of Seattle's electric streetcar system unearthed some fascinating materials in SMA's records, including one gem of a letter. In June 1918, Mayor Ole Hanson submitted to the City Council a strongly-worded letter denouncing the actions of the Boston-based company, which owed the city over \$850,000 and had asked city officials for debt relief. In the letter Hanson likens the firm to Kaiser Wilhelm and accuses its president of willful negligence. He writes: "The public in Seattle, of course, know that this company rests under a cloud; a cloud of attempted repudiation; a cloud of criminal and indecent past...a cloud of shame and disgrace and debauchery; a cloud of incompetence and ignorance of fundamental honesty."

Later that year, Seattle bought Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power and began running its own municipal transportation system. The letter has been transcribed in full on HistoryLink.org.



Mayor of Seattle Ole Hanson is pictured on the first municipal streetcar to cross the new University Bridge, 1919.

[Item 12660](#),
Record Series
2625-10.

69 Years Ago: The Seattle Police Department Rehabilitation Project

The Seattle Police Department established a "Rehabilitation Project" in 1948 with 32 acres of land provided by the Seattle Police Athletic Association. The Project was intended to provide residential treatment for men with multiple alcohol-related arrests. Six more acres were purchased, and an additional nineteen were leased from Northern Pacific Railroad. Within ten years, the Project was proven to be successful, proof cited as a 50% reduction in the number of arrests for intoxication in the Seattle area. The property was not large enough and attempts to relocate it to a larger space were met with community opposition.

The Police Department applied to the State Land Commission to purchase a 640 acre section near Issaquah in 1951 but neighboring residents protested, stating it would decrease their property values. (cont. p. 2)

Newly processed: Councilmember Nick Licata Records

Newly processed are paper and electronic records, including moving images, from Councilmember Nick Licata ([Record Group 4650](#)). Licata was elected to five terms on City Council from 1998 to 2015, and served as Council President from 2006 to 2007.

Primary issues covered during Licata's 18-year tenure were civil rights, parks and recreation, transportation, cultural events and resources, and social welfare concerns. The city's police reform efforts are also addressed in detail within the records, as is marijuana legalization, affordable housing, homelessness, paid sick leave, and minimum wage legislation. His Subject Files (4650-02), comprised of 81.6 cubic feet (204 boxes) and 23,554 digital files (6.31 GB), hold correspondence, memoranda, staff reports, and notes regarding these issues and many others.



City Council to begin meeting on minimum wage

No Comments ([Leave Comment](#))

The City Council has formed a special committee to consider increasing the minimum wage in Seattle. It's called the Select Committee on Minimum Wage and Income Inequality, and it will begin meeting next week.



Councilmember Licata's records also include his city website pages and social media accounts. This capture is from March 2014.

Additional record series cover the many committees Licata chaired: Culture, Arts, and Parks (4650-03); Neighborhoods, Arts, and Civil Rights (4650-05); Public Safety, Governmental Relations, and Arts (4650-06); Special Committee on Pedestrian Safety (4650-07); Housing, Human Services, Health, and Culture (4650-08); and Finance and Culture (4650-11), among others. (cont. p. 2)

Licata, cont.

Licata's Moving Image Collection (4650-12) contains both analog and digital recordings collected by his office. Included are recordings about the Poet Populist program and recordings related to his City Council committees. Also included are Words' Worth Poetry Readings, for which poetry was read at Licata's committee meetings related to the arts. An itemized listing of the videos can be found in the [moving image database](#), and several have been uploaded to [SMA's YouTube Channel](#).



Seattle poet Frances McCue reads her poem *What's Dangerous About Plumbing* at the Words' Worth Poetry Reading, Seattle City Council Culture, Arts & Parks Committee meeting, May 26, 1999.
[Item 5726](#), Record Series 4650-12.

Seattle's First Woman Mayor

In 1926, Bertha Knight Landes became Seattle's first woman mayor, making Seattle the first major U.S. city to have a female mayor. She served a single two-year term.

First elected to City Council in 1922, Landes supported city planning and zoning, improved public health and safety programs, and promoted social concerns such as hospitals and recreation programs.



BERTHA K. LANDES
1926-1927... NON PARTISAN

Mayor Bertha Knight Landes, undated.
[Item 12285](#), Record Series 2613-07.

Landes left is one of using city government for civic betterment.

Stop by and see our new exhibit on Mayor Landes in the 3rd Floor Clerk's Office lobby, and read more about her and other pioneering women in Seattle city government on the [SMA website!](#)

She continued this work as Mayor, encouraging the use of professional expertise in many areas, such as hiring by merit through a strengthened Civil Service Commission. She also supported public ownership of utilities. She countered the dominant business perspective with one that included caring for the City's moral, social and physical environment. The legacy

Rehabilitation Project, cont.

In 1954, \$75,000-\$100,000 enabled the facility to care for 972 people annually. Staffed primarily by policemen, the inhabitants of the Rehabilitation Project were primarily in their forties or older with at least five convictions in Police Court for drunkenness. The men grew vegetables, some of which went to the city jail, and cared for about 500 pigs, which were sold. The men also worked in a carpenter shop, and did some welding, plumbing and cooking. Alcoholic Anonymous came out twice a week; if the residents needed medical care they went to the hospital in the jail.

On February 27, 1961, Chief of Police Ramon proposed to the Finance Committee that the Police Rehabilitation Project and the police positions associated

with it be abolished, as well as the Police Reserve and its program, for budgetary reasons. Ramon stated prisoners charged with vagrancy based on drunkenness had been sentenced to the county jail since 1955. Ramon also expressed concern that the condemnation of property for I-5 might include the property occupied by the

Rehabilitation Project. In addition, the State of Washington created a Division of Alcoholism in 1957 to study and provide

treatment and rehabilitation for alcoholism, Ramon cited. City Council approved the budget cuts on March 27, 1961, and established a committee to study possibilities for treating alcoholics.

Many people wrote in objecting to the closure, many citing a study by J. K. Jackson. One person likened it to closing Harborview Hospital. Others in opposition included a doctor at Firland Sanatorium, a doctor at Group Health, and the Executive Director of the Seattle Committee on Alcoholism. Seattle resident Eva Gruber wrote, "We seem able to provide nothing but the best for our Zoo, boat moorages and such, but people who suffer certainly are equally important" (*CF 242187*).

At a meeting of the Mayor's Committee on Alcoholic Rehabilitation on May 10, 1961, City Councilman J D Braman stated the "City of Seattle was not set up as a welfare organization."

Clerk Files 242187, 231939, 225977, 225638, 224103, Record Series 1801-02. Office of the Mayor Records, 5210-01 Box 5 Folder 17. Municipal News, Record Series 9905-01, Vol 48 no 32, 1958.



KING-TV's Inquiry program featured the Rehabilitation Farm in September, 1958. Panel participants included Sgt Roscoe Burr, far right, superintendent of the Police Department farm. *Municipal News, Vol 48 No 32, September 13, 1958, p. 130.*

Mystery in the Archives

A recent question about an arrest record in 1940s Seattle had us delving into SMA's Police Court Dockets ([5601-01](#)), a collection of 241 volumes listing cases brought before the Municipal Police Court during the years 1886-1956. Information contained within the volumes is brief, often just listing a name, offense, plea, costs, and judgement. Yet even such basic details can give clues to a larger story.

While browsing the dockets, our researcher noticed the letters "BT" assigned to several names, and wondered what it meant. The volumes themselves gave no indication as to the meaning. Searches in past and present legal dictionaries gave a few possibilities, but none of them seemed quite right.

38251p	CITY OF SEATTLE, vs. Irene Cantrell	Defendant Plaintiff	Complaint filed in writing dis person BT
38749p	CITY OF SEATTLE, vs. Marjorie Denny	Defendant Plaintiff	Complaint filed in writing Ord 16046 sec 16 BT
4060p	CITY OF SEATTLE, vs. Annarida Romero	Defendant Plaintiff	Complaint filed in writing dis conduct BT
2483a	CITY OF SEATTLE, vs. Martha Davis	Defendant Plaintiff	Complaint filed in writing dis conduct BT

Seattle Police Court Docket, March 1943. Record Series 5601-01.

Eventually, a *Seattle Times* article from July 14, 1943, provided a lead. A woman named Bertha Minton was contesting a compulsory blood test given to her after her arrest on July 5th. Could BT stand for blood test? Checking the volumes again, we found a Bertha Minton arrested in July of 1943, with the BT notation after her name. Browsing through the docket volumes, we noticed that all the BT notations we found were written next to a woman's name. Occasionally, an "refer health" note was added.

Woman Held For Blood Test Despite Writ

Mrs. Bertha Minton, 35-year-old wife of a Navy warrant machinist, was in the King County Jail today at the request of the Seattle Police Department, although her attorney obtained a writ of habeas corpus for her release late yesterday afternoon.

E. K. Marohn, attorney for Mrs. Minton, said police have no legal right to pick up women and hold them without bail for blood tests. Mrs. Minton was arrested July 5 and given blood tests.

The Seattle Times, July 14, 1943, p. 2

department and are subsequently placed in quarantine if infected."

It does seem likely that the "BT" notations in the court dockets stands for blood test. We found Bertha Minton listed again in November 1943, arrested and held in jail for a similar offense. A "BT" is again noted next to her name.

A look at the Seattle-King County Health Department's Venereal Disease Reports ([3204-02](#)) confirmed that department's attempt to curb what it considered an outbreak of disease by working with the Police Department to arrest "loose women" and subject them to blood tests. A report from August 1943 states, "What happens to the venereal disease trend in the future depends largely on how many promiscuous women are arrested by the police

Recently Processed Photographs

Many more images from the Neighborhood Architecture Photographs and Surveys ([Series 1629-02](#)) are now available to view in SMA's online photo database. Created as a visual inventory of Seattle's unique urban design and architecture, the most recent additions show scenes of Ballard in 1975.



Elks Club, 5301 Leary Ave. NW, 1975. [Item 181234](#), Record Series 1629-02.



Building group, NW Market St. and 22nd Ave. [Item 181713](#), Record Series 1629-02.

Interns and Volunteers

SMA's team of volunteers continues to work on projects of all types, including scanning and cataloging photos, indexing records, adding items to our digital collections, and processing records from departments such as City Light, Parks, and Neighborhoods. Many thanks to Kelli Yakabu, Staci Crouch, Skyler Burger, Kat Lewis, and Hanna Rosen for their continued work to make our collections accessible.

Meanwhile Rachel Mahre and Jenn LaScala, our two work-study students, continue to take on special projects in addition to tasks that assist with the day-to-day functioning of the archives. SMA is better able to serve our researchers because of their help.

YouTube and Flickr News

One of the newest images featured on [SMA's Flickr page](#) is a 1975 photo of the buildings at 607 Westlake Ave N., from the Historic Building Survey Photograph Collection (Record Series 1629-01).



Auto showroom, 607 Westlake Avenue North, circa 1975.
[Item 179806](#), Record Series 1629-01.

Quickly garnering over 100 views on the day it was posted, one of the more popular videos recently added to [SMA's YouTube](#) channel features aerial footage over Portage Bay and Husky Stadium, circa 1958.



Aerial of Portage Bay, Montlake Cut, University of Washington, circa 1958.
[Item 55](#), Record Series 1204-05, *Seattle Municipal Archives*.

New videos are added on a regular basis. Be sure to check often, or subscribe and receive updates when new videos are added!

Seattle Municipal Archives

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Seattle's "Trashy" History

Did you know that incinerators on Seattle's garbage dumps used to cloud the sky with smoke? Or that cesspools formed around elementary schools, and waste oil was dumped in the city sewers? SMA recently teamed up with the Seattle Channel to tell the story of how Seattle has worked to manage its trash, and evolved to become a city known for progressive, clean, and innovative solutions. Check it out on the Seattle Channel's [CityStream website](#).



76 Years ago: Green Lake Tree Lighting



A group of trees illuminate Green Lake in celebration of the 1941 holiday season. [Item 18803](#), Record Series 1204-01.

Upcoming Events

- Nov 28 [AKCHO Membership Meeting](#): Treasuring Oral Histories. 10:30am-12:30pm, Renton History Museum
- Dec 5 [Telling the Story of Al Smith](#). MOHAI, 7pm