

ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle
Seattle Municipal Archives

Number 31 Spring 2010

Office of the City Clerk
Legislative Department

Message from the City Archivist

In this issue of the Gazette, my comments focus on the 25th Anniversary of the Seattle Municipal Archives, a milestone in its own respect, but more remarkable in the recognition of how far we have come during that time.

The Archives was established in 1985 with a two-year grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). I was hired as the project archivist and started work in March of that year. The project goal was to identify and acquire as many of the City's archival records as possible and produce a guide to the collection.

In 1988, the Archives published *A Guide to the Archives of the City of Seattle*, a description of the records managed by the Archives. The following year, the Archives received its first national recognition when the *Guide* was selected as the Society of American Archivists' winner of the C.F.W. Coker Prize "in recognition of works or activities of exceptional merit that advance the practice of archival description." A continuously updated version of the *Guide* is mounted on the Archives web site.

The Archives has always been organizationally located in the Office of the City Clerk. In 1985 the Clerk was a division of the Office of the Comptroller. A City Charter amendment passed by the voters in 1992 abolished the Comptroller and moved the Clerk and the Archives to the Legislative Department.

From 1985 to the summer of 1999, I was what is often referred to as a "lone arranger." That is, I was the only professional archivist in the house. During the decade or so following publication of the *Guide*, reference requests increased an average of 25 percent per year. This demand made it difficult to give adequate attention to all other core functions of the program. Using these reference statistics to show the public interest in the City's records, we asked City Council to fund a second professional archivist position. Council agreed and in the summer of 1999, we hired Anne Frantilla; she subsequently assumed the lion's share of reference.

Until 2003, the Archives office was physically located under the parking garage of the old Municipal Building. Without adequate space, the collection was divided between City Hall and the Puget Sound Regional Branch of the Washington State Archives. Half of the collection was housed at the Regional Archives, an arrangement that was vital to the Municipal Archives success. However, a split collection did not serve our researchers well. Construction of a new City Hall offered a solution. We asked for and received vault space with environmental controls, compact moveable shelving, and ample future growth space. During 2003 and 2004, we moved City archival records from the Regional Archives to City Hall. In addition, the University of Washington, which had collected City records prior to 1985, returned two large collections--the records of the Seattle Model City Program and the records of the Office of the Mayor.

Celebrate with us!



Events scheduled to celebrate the anniversary are:
March 16
1 pm
"Treasures in the City Archives"
City Archivist
Scott Cline

March 23
1 pm
Historian
Paul Dorpat

Both events are free and open to the public. They will be held in:
Bertha Knight Landes Room, Seattle City Hall.

Message (cont.)

In 2005, the City Council approved funding to ensure the preservation and availability of digital photography taken by City Agencies. This program also manages the historical photography collection. Photo archivists Julie Viggiano and Jeff Ware joined the staff in 2005. Julie Kerksen was hired in 2006 and now manages our processing activities. Over the years, the Archives has benefitted from the work of more than 80 work-study students, interns, volunteers, and grant-funded staff.

It is a kind of poetic coincidence that our 25th Anniversary finds the Archives in the early months of another two year NHPRC grant. This grant is designed to eliminate most of our textual records processing, cataloging, and indexing backlog. To help us with that task, we hired Janet Ness as Project Archivist; she will serve in that position through September 2011.

— *Scott Cline, City Archivist*

Recently Indexed Photographs

The Seattle Municipal Archives continues to catalog and index its sizable collection of Engineering Department photographs from the late 1950's to early 1960's. Included among these are Traffic Engineering Division pictures, document-

ing the City's efforts to improve traffic efficiency and safety.



Traffic Fatality Scoreboard. [at Westlake Avenue and Pine St.] December 18, 1958

Item 60320

*Seattle
Municipal
Archives*

To view more traffic engineering related images, go to the Municipal Archive [Photograph Index](#) and type one of the following index terms: TRAFFIC-CONTROL-DEVICES, TRAFFIC REGULATION, TRAFFIC-SIGNS-AND-SIGNALS, TRAFFIC-REGULATION, or TRAFFIC-SAFETY.



Traffic. Radar Speed Check [at Lake Washington Floating Bridge], May 13, 1959 *Item 61287, Seattle Municipal Archives*



Aurora Avenue. Reversible lane operation. North S from N 41st St., June 30, 1959
Item 61650, Seattle Municipal Archives



Making One-Way signs, September 25, 1958
Item 58985, Seattle Municipal Archives

64 Years Ago

After World War II, discussions began in earnest about pollution problems, especially water pollution. Lake Washington, the Duwamish, and Union Bay were all a focus of concern. The State Pollution Commission was urging construction of sewage disposal plants to treat sewage. Some were not convinced treatment was necessary, arguing that diverting sewer outfalls to the Sound would be adequate.

Engineering records (series 2602-02) contain a report of a conference in Olympia with City Engineer Charles Wartelle, C. A. Crosser, Secretary of the Municipal League, Jack Taylor of the State Pollution Commission, and others. In his report, Mr. Crosser noted that City officials did not want to spend the necessary money for new sewage disposal plants until "it was conclusively proved whether or not sewage pollution of the Sound, the Duwamish River, and Lake Washington was actually injurious to human health and life." It was also stated that "At present the overflow of storm water swage from the northeast part of Seattle into Lake Washington is only released about ten hours a year during the winter months when there is no bathing in the lake." And "in general, the city's sewer lines are more than ample to take care of the average flow."

Newly Processed Collections

Several collections were recently processed, including: Seattle Office Of Economic Development Director's Records (1991-2001), Department of Fleets and Facilities Property Appraisals (1985-1997), Seattle Department of Finance Director's Records (1983-2001), Seattle Fire Department Records relating to preparation for the 1990 Goodwill Games (1987-1990), and Department of Community Development Block Grant Administration Files (1975-1986).

The Office of Economic Development Director's Records (13.6 cubic feet) date from 1991-2001. The Director's records include project files, fundraising files, subject files, correspondence, reports and other materials concerning programs for small business loans, low income neighborhood revitalization, and entrepreneurship assistance. Record Series 2100-02.

Property Appraisals from the Department of Fleets and Facilities (58 cubic feet) primarily focus on property under consideration for acquisition as part of the City's Open Space program. Property is located in all parts of the

city, including Queen Anne, the Duwamish, Pipers Creek, Thornton Creek, Longfellow Creek, as well as other creeks, the Kiwanas Ravine, and other ravines, the Arroyos Natural Area. Appraisals can provide information on the use of the land over time and its geographical context. The records include some environmental assessments. These can include results of soil testing and location of buried gas tanks, for example. Appraisals also include photographs. Record series 0206-01.



Northeasterly view of Thornton Creek.
From *Appraisal of Parcel 213.002, 9401 Sand Point Way NE*
p. 5.
0206-01. Box 54
Folder 5.

The Seattle Department of Finance Director's Records (6.4 cubic feet) consist of correspondence, subject files, financial reports, working papers, committee files, and related material concerning City taxes, budgets, investments, debt and other financial issues. Includes correspondence of City Treasurer, Lloyd Hara, which predates the creation of the Department of Finance. Also included are records of the Office of Management and Planning, a unit of the Executive Services Department, which Finance Director, Dwight Dively, headed from 1997 through 2000. OMP files concern finance, the Pike Place Market and other Public Development Authorities, as well as the Goals, Actions, Results and Measures (GARMS) of the Mayor's Office and City Council. Record Series 2700-01.

The Seattle Fire Department Records on the Goodwill Games (1.2 cubic feet) date from 1987-1990 and document security preparations for the 1990 Goodwill Games held in Seattle.



Newly Processed (cont.)

The Goodwill Games were established as an apolitical alternative to the Olympic Games after those events were boycotted during the Cold War.

The City of Seattle was partially responsible for fire protection and emergency medical services for the Games. The Seattle Fire Department took the lead for the City, and closely cooperated with other public safety and law enforcement agencies to plan for and respond to emergencies associated with the event.

These records include meeting minutes and correspondence relating to security and fire prevention planning, budget planning, and staffing. Notable are minutes and correspondence of the Joint Forces Coordinating Committee (JFCC), the Integrated Police Planning Group (IPPG), Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Coordinated Threat Assessment Group (CTAG). Records also include detailed Games schedules, as well as disaster planning documents for fire, earthquake, bombings, and other scenarios. Record Series 2810-04.

Flickr News

The latest set of images added to the SMA Flickr site focuses on disasters – landslides, earthquakes, fires, and floods. Commenters' favorites include a photo of a giant sinkhole that appeared in Ravenna in 1957, as well as images of the town of Moncton completely flooded by Rattlesnake Lake in 1915.



Moncton flooded by Rattlesnake Lake, 1915
Item 50681, Seattle Municipal Archives

Flicker (cont.)

Users continue to add information to the photos we post, researching locations and dates. One commenter identified a woman playing the guitar in a 1975 Pike Place Market image, stating: "This is Mariide,

who still (as of 2009) sometimes plays in the Market." A photo of a swimming instructor with two boys elicited this comment: "Tom taught swimming at W Greenlake beach for many years. He was my mother's teacher in the 30's and then taught me in the early 50's."



Woman playing guitar.
Corner Market Paint-In
April 12, 1975
Item 37075, Seattle Municipal Archives

Staff News

SMA welcomes our latest intern, Linnet Blumenthal. Linnet is in the archives graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and is focusing on arrangement and description of records during her directed fieldwork assignment with us. So far she has worked with City Council committee records as well as public information office records from the Seattle Fire Department.

Our newest volunteer is Stefan Hovland, an undergraduate history major at the University of Washington. His focus is motion picture film. He is viewing, cleaning, coring, canning, and cataloging films from Seattle City Light, Seattle Engineering, and Seattle Fire Department.

We're glad to have them both!

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 <http://www.seattle.gov/CityArchives>