

ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle
Seattle Municipal Archives

Number 34 Winter 2010

Office of the City Clerk
Legislative Department

Message from the City Archivist

A colleague recently steered me toward an online petition drive to rename a portion of First Avenue South to Ken Griffey, Jr. Way. And why not? One of my favorite work moments was serving as acting City Clerk in 2004 and signing the Ordinance that renamed part of South Atlantic Street to Edgar Martinez Drive South. However, these actions should be taken only after measured consideration.

Among the first records I worked with in the mid-1980s related changing the name of Empire Way to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, an eight-mile stretch in Seattle's south end.

Passions ran high in 1981 concerning the renaming proposal. More opposition letters than one would have hoped included racist rhetoric. Far more contain support for the honoring of a man whose life epitomized the struggle for justice in our society. These are evidence for the social historian.

More interesting from a policy perspective are the administrative and bureaucratic records generated by the name. The City's cost in making the change was estimated at over \$127,000 (approximately \$300,000 in 2009 dollars). Changes were wide-ranging and included producing new City maps; creating and replacing street signs at 120 intersections; changing data in records and information systems related to sewer cards, traffic signals, utility billing, zoning materials, and other records maintained by multiple City agencies; and a host of other costs.

Even more problematic was the cost to businesses along the Empire Way corridor. Those private costs included changes required to stationery, business cards, business vehicle signs, awnings, quasi-permanent advertising signs, business listings, etc.

A survey of the 1526 residents, property owners, and businesses seeking opinions on the proposed change elicited 478 responses; 69 percent opposed the change. The principal reasons were financial: the cost to the City and taxpayers, and the cost to businesses along the street.

I relate this not to justify opposition to naming a street for Ken Griffey, Jr.; I would like to see Griffey honored in some way, perhaps with his own street.

Rather, I want to illustrate how the archival record can address the complexity of issues that might not immediately come to mind when someone has a "good idea."

These records, and others associated with the name change, illustrate the power, value, and utility of the archival record. The City made the right decision regarding Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, even in the face of significant opposition. In the process it accumulated documentation that can assist planners and policy makers in making the right decisions in the future.

--Scott Cline

New Exhibit Space: Seattle Voices

The Seattle City Council has been making audio recordings of its proceedings, including committee meetings and public hearings, since 1971. Before that, selected meetings were recorded on audio tape, including public hearings, community meetings and certain committee proceedings. The new Seattle Voices page offers samples of audio material from selected events. Note that these samples are not intended to be a full representation of what happened at any meeting. They are provided to offer an idea of the range of viewpoints that might have been expressed and an idea of the quality of the audio recordings.

Audio holdings at the Seattle Municipal Archives provide a different perspective on the legislative process than can be gained from textual documents alone. Listening to audio recordings of meetings provides a personality to the meetings not found on paper; it allows individuals to come to life in a way not possible with textual documents; and it brings to life voices of individuals not documented anywhere else in the archives.



Public hearings are one of the ways the public communicates with its elected officials about issues of importance to them. Recordings of these meetings bring voices to light that are not documented elsewhere. This image is of Mrs. Pearl Warren, director of the Indian Center, addressing City Council during a hearing on the open housing ordinance on April 19, 1968. It forms part of the Municipal Archives exhibit on open housing.

Courtesy: Greg Gilbert / The Seattle Times.

Recently Published!

Seattle & the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia by Jeffrey Sanders (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010)

Jeffrey Sanders, assistant Professor of History at Washington State University, examines the rise of environmental activism in Seattle, linking it to larger issues of economic, racial, and gender equality. In addition to many photographs from the Seattle Municipal Archives, Sanders uses SMA's Model City Program records to discuss the origins of environmentalism in Seattle within the context of the efforts of civil rights activists and use of federal funds.

Digital Image Management Services

More than 300 photos of firehouse construction were added to the online Photograph Index in October and November. Stations represented are #21 (Greenwood), #13 (Mount Baker), #2 (Belltown), #17 (University District), #41 (Magnolia), #39 (Lake City), #35 (Crown Hill), and #33 (Rainier Beach).

Also, the Photo Archives is now including links to the best available historic scans in the Photo Index. In the past two months we have added almost 3,000 high resolution scans to catalog records. Customers can now download the images directly from the Index.

Total images available online = 130,704
Number of scanned historic images = 76,498



Engineering Department Office Party, December 1957
Item 56407, Seattle Municipal Archives



Mayor Clinton with the holiday entertainment, December 1960
Item 66111, Seattle Municipal Archives

Holidays of the past!



Seattle City Light Meter Division Holiday Party, December 1944
Item 19271, Seattle Municipal Archives

Newly Processed Collections

Several new Seattle City Light collections were processed in the past two months. Overall the records document the building and management of City Light's power generating and delivery system, including power exchanges and the formation of the regional power system. Some of the record series include:

City Light Superintendents' Correspondence dates from 1918 to 2006. It includes correspondence, interdepartmental memos, reports, financial records and subject files of the Superintendents. A substantial quantity of records relate to the raising of Ross Dam. There is also material relating to Puget Sound Power and Light and its purchase by the City, highlighting the rivalry between the power companies. (*Record Series 1200-13, 39.4 cubic feet.*) Additional Superintendent records are located at the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections.

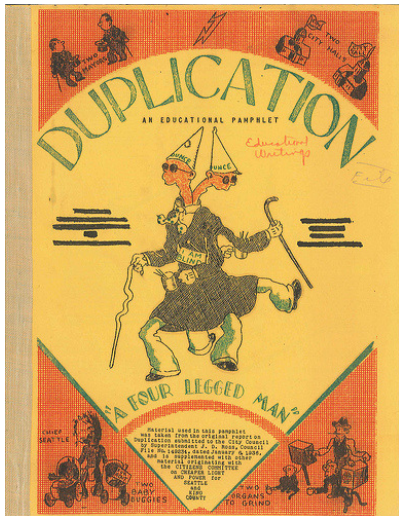
The **City Light Power Management** records (1908-1986) include records of the Power Management Branch including correspondence, memos, reports, statistics, agreements, subject files, legal files and technical data concerning the production, sale and delivery of electric power to customers in Seattle. The record series contains the earliest City Light records in the SMA. Included are materials reflecting changing attitudes toward electricity use. Records from the 1930s and 1940s include promotional materials on using electricity for cooking and other household purposes. Also in this series are records on the home front during World War II, and on the Georgetown and Lake Union Steam plant. (Record Series 1206-04, 6.8 cubic feet.)

The **Skagit Management** records (1949-1997) and the **Skagit Hydroelectric Project** records (1908-1975) both document SCL's work in the Skagit. The Skagit Management records contain information on facilities for workers at the project, including school buses and a swimming pool. (Record Series 1209-01, 2.8 cubic feet.) The Project records contain very early records of the Skagit project, and includes maps and photographs. (Record Series 1206-12, 2 cubic feet.)

Photographs and moving images from City Light are also available in the Archives. More than 1500 negatives are available online under the record series 1204-01, City Light Negatives: <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/phot1.htm> Many City Light films are cataloged in the moving images database and many are also available digitally, thanks to funding from City Light in 2007.

75 Years Ago: Fire Bug in Seattle

Arsonist Bruce Driscoll was arrested by the Seattle Police Department on May 3, 1935 and questioned by Fire Department detectives and inspectors. He confessed on May 5th, stating that he was "in



"A Four-Legged Man," circa 1950. The booklet is an argument for public ownership of all power systems in Seattle, instead of the duplication of public and private power systems. Found in folder "Duplication, 1936," City Light Superintendent Records (Record Series 1200-13), Seattle Municipal Archives.

Robert Bruce Driscoll -- The Pacific Coast Fire Bug

Bruce Driscoll, 1935. Seattle Fire Department Central Files 2801-03

destitute circumstances" and sore at the world in general." On May 28, 1935 Bruce Driscoll was sentenced to 5-10 years at Walla Walla prison for arson.

Driscoll confessed to setting a long list of fires over a four-year period. Included were a fire at Albers Brothers Milling Company in 1931; a fire at Washington Iron works on February 22, 1932; and at Seattle Baseball Park on July 5, 1932. He set more than 140 fires with a loss of more than \$75,000. Many of his original notes left as warnings are in the Archives as well as the list of fires to which Driscoll confessed. The poster above was reprinted "Courtesy of the Northwestern Mutual Fire Association" giving credit to the Seattle Fire Department.

Biographical information is also available in the file. Born in Spokane, Washington, Driscoll was the eldest of seven children. He ran away from home at age 16 and traveled to Texas, California and Oregon before coming back to Washington. One of his employers in Oregon, where Driscoll worked as a stenographer, commented that his partner frequently remarked that Driscoll "was on the borderline between genius and insanity." He worked in various logging camps before becoming unemployed. At the time of his arrest he was living in a "shacktown colony" on the tide flats.

From our Users....

City of Seattle employees use the Archives in many different ways:

"The Municipal Archives [is] often my first search for a research project."
(Seattle Public Utilities)

"The Seattle Municipal Archives are an invaluable resource for my work."
(Department of Neighborhoods)

"Records of City departments, such as Engineering and Parks are especially valuable to our research; photographs and maps, as well as textual documents have been extremely useful."
(Law Department)

Flickr News

Flickr commenters continue to provide us with more information about the people and places depicted in our photographs. An image of a swimming instructor with two small boys prompted someone to write that the man had "taught swimming at West Green Lake beach for many years. He was my mother's teacher in the 30s and then taught me in the early 50s."



First Avenue Project, November 1981
Item 37903, Seattle Municipal Archives

Another user identified a policeman in a 1981 photo as "Frank Ottersbach, one of the longest serving members of the SPD and a great guy!"

On another photo, this one of an unnamed man with a birdcage, a user commented:

"This man was called "Fergie." He was the manager of a rather run-down apartment building on First Ave. in Belltown. I think the building was on the N.E. corner of 1st Ave. and Bell St. The bird was a myna bird, which he loved. Fergie had no legs from the knees down, yet managed to do a good job of keeping an eye on the goings on in the building. The Chinese lady who lived next to him actually owned the building, but didn't want anyone living there to know it. I was a foot beat officer in the area for 25 years and am now retired. Fergie was a very nice guy and I enjoyed talking to him over the years."

Kudos to our Volunteers and Interns!

Michael Barkin, a 2009 graduate of the University of Washington Information Management graduate program, recently completed several months of volunteer work with the Seattle Municipal Archives. He worked with photographs from Mayor Rice and the Comptroller Files. We wish him well as he begins new work with Google as a visual Data Specialist.

SMA has many new volunteers and interns beginning as this year ends. We will feature them in future *Gazettes!*

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 August through November was of First Avenue in 1975:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/4948398055/>



Pedestrians on First Avenue, 1975
Item 35977, Pike Place Market Visual Images and Audiotapes (Record Series 1628-02), Seattle Municipal Archives.

Upcoming Events

Seattle Area Archivists Meeting Dec. 3, 2010 1 pm

Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle, 910 Marion Street

ACKHO Meeting Jan. 25, 2011 9:30 am

Nordic Heritage Museum, 3014 NW 67th St.

The Pacific Northwest Historians Guild Conference

March 5, 2011, Museum of History & Industry

Pacific Waterways: Connecting Local, Regional, and Global Histories

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