

ARCHIVES GAZETTE



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Message from the City Archivist

Posted on the Society of American Archivists' website is the following quote: "Historical memory is essential to the life and well-being of a people just as oxygen to an individual."

The partnership between archivist and historian works toward supplying society with that essential life element. But we are not the only partners in this. The arts also have an important role.

I recently attended a production of *All the Way*, a dramatization of Lyndon Johnson's "accidental" presidency following the Kennedy assassination. The play focuses on LBJ's successful, if heavy handed, maneuvering of the Civil Rights Act through Congress and on events leading to his election victory.

Signed on July 2, 1964, the landmark bill outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in facilities that served the general public (known as "public accommodations").

The drama focusses on LBJ and Martin Luther King, Jr., and weaves throughout most of the important players in this history: civil rights leaders from Roy Wilkins to Stokely Carmichael; key Senators from Hubert Humphrey to Strom Thurmond; southern governors Ross Barnett and George Wallace; FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover; the wives Corretta Scott King, Lady Bird Johnson, and Muriel Humphrey; and the murdered civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman.

As a historical document, the play is necessarily selective and incomplete. The tumultuous year of 1964 cannot be fully comprehended in three hours. But *All the Way* is a remarkable achievement in the breadth of what it is able to cover and convey, and the two main protagonists—LBJ and King—are portrayed in as much depth as a stage format allows. It is certainly evocative of the political landscape of the time, and it illuminates the complex motivations and actions, the crudities and the subtleties, the principles and corruptions, and the strengths and insecurities of the play's central figure—LBJ.

While the dialog was written by the author, Robert Schenkkan, much of it is adapted from archival sources such as speeches, FBI wire taps, sermons, and television news coverage; and the selection of dramatic scenes was drawn from careful analysis of texts such as Taylor Branch's Pulitzer Prize-winning history, *Parting the Water*.

In a recent interview, Schenkkan explained his motivations and feelings about the subject matter: "I'm very interested in the acquisition and use of Presidential power in American politics, and the moral

challenges inherent in that. I'm very interested in the necessity of compromise and negotiation in a representative democracy and the very difficult choices that one must make...."

Presidential power and the role of Congress is no less an issue today. In a sense, then, the play is a play for today. And when we speculate on what a similar play about today might look like in 50 years, we can imagine the beauty of the historical perspective and gain an even greater appreciation for the historical record and its ability to not only illuminate the past, but inform the present and hopefully speak to the future.

—Scott Cline

20 Years Ago: Domestic Partner Registration

From 1973 to 1994, City Council took incremental steps in broadening the coverage and definition of human rights. The definition of marital status and sexual orientation was expanded and the definition of family changed so that domestic partners of employees could receive benefits. These steps culminated in the passage of an ordinance authorizing domestic partner registration for both same sex and opposite sex couples, enabling unmarried couples to create an official record of their relationship.

By 1975, legislation was in place to prohibit employment and housing discrimination due to race, age, sex, color, creed, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation and political ideology. An effort to delete the words "sexual orientation" from the fair employment and open housing ordinances was defeated in 1978.



Mayor Norm Rice at rally against Initiative 35, November 1990. 2000.107, Museum of History and Industry.

In 1986, City Council passed legislation to broaden the definition of marital status and define sexual orientation. The Family Leave Ordinance, passed in August 1989, enabled City employees to take sick leave to care for their domestic partners, and in 1990 the City extended medical and dental benefits as well. Initiative 35, filed to repeal this law, was defeated in 1990.

(DPR *cont.*)

After completing a survey of gay and lesbian community members in the early 1990's, the Seattle Commission for Lesbians and Gays brought a draft proposal to Councilmember Sherry Harris for creation of a Domestic Partnership Registration (DPR) program in Seattle for all citizens, not just city employees. Councilmember Harris introduced the DPR legislation in 1994. After several public forums, it was passed unanimously in August. Requiring a \$25.00 registration fee, the registration did not impose any legal obligations or grant any benefits but was an important symbolic recognition of domestic partner relationships as well as the diversity of families, including unmarried heterosexual couples.

On Tuesday, September 6, 1994, the Seattle Commission for Lesbians and Gays greeted registrants with a notary public and a huge cake outside the City Clerk's office in the lobby of the Municipal Building's Fourth Avenue entrance. A line had formed before the building opened and by 9:30 AM, the Clerk's office had registered forty-four couples. Even after December 9, 2012, when same-sex couples could legally marry in Washington State, couples have continued to obtain domestic partner registrations. Over 900 couples have registered with the City since December 2012.



Domestic Partnership Registration, September 6, 1994
2000.107, Box 5, Museum of History and Industry



In Process: Supreme Court Briefs

The Seattle Municipal Archives holds a bound set of legal briefs filed in the Supreme Court of the State of Washington relating to the City of Seattle (Record Series 4404-01). Reviewing early cases, one gains a sense of what it might have been like to live in a city undergoing dramatic physical change, as many of the cases relate to pedestrian accidents due to street or sidewalk construction. Although not all are dated, what follows is a sampling of cases from 1899 or 1901, all from Volume Six.

Frederick Noll sought to recover \$400 in damages for personal injuries caused by falling on Main Street. Noll had been drinking at the Monogram Saloon and one other place. He met three soldiers who asked him for a loan; when he refused, one of the soldiers drew a knife and Noll fled, falling where the street and sidewalk was under construction.

Margaret Jordan sought to receive an unspecified amount for injuries obtained while walking to her grocery near the corner of Tenth and Main. "On the evening of her injury, she started to go to the grocery, accompanied by her two children. On approaching the broken place she cautioned the children to be careful, and then moved ahead of her children to guide them, and while doing so fell into a hole in the walk. It was so dark that she could not distinguish the hole from the mud."

Burns W. Beall sought to recover about \$12,000 in damages for personal injuries sustained in 1899. Beall was walking near the corner of Second Avenue South and Washington Street when a hot water boiler exploded underneath the sidewalk, "hurling him into the air to a great height and inflicting injuries about his head, hips, groin and legs, and a great shock to his nervous system."

Other early briefs relate to bonds, compensation for property, and franchises.

New *Seattle Voices*: Bicycle Registration

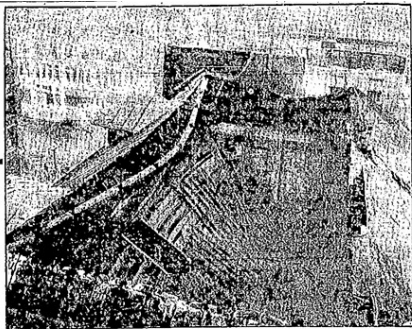
Bicycle registration surfaced in the 1970s as a means of reducing theft and encouraging bicycle inspection. Running into issues of enforcement that promised to cost the City money, Councilmember Michael Hildt proposed to end mandatory bicycle registration in 1978. Listen to his comments [here](#).



Grand Opera House Fire: 97 Years Ago

On January 20, 1917, the Grand Opera House's janitor, George Matsu, discovered a fire burning in the middle of the theatre's balcony and called in a fire alarm. The fire spread quickly and engulfed the entire building, collapsing the dome less than 45 minutes after the blaze was discovered. Battalion Chief Fred Gilham was killed when the roof collapsed on him. Eight other firefighters, along with a policeman, were seriously injured with burns and broken bones. Guests at the hotel next door were evacuated because of the danger of the fire spreading. Within two days, the City Council charged its Public Safety Committee with making an investigation of the disaster and of relevant city laws and how they were enforced. Resolution 5497 stated that "the recent fire in the Grand Opera House, with its fatal results, shows the necessity for strict building regulations and efficient enforcement thereof as well as honest inspection, especially in relation to places of amusement where large numbers of people gather day and night." The investigation was to be undertaken so that

"the chances of a recurrence of such fires may be lessened or prevented." The committee found that the theatre had been declared unsafe several times in the years prior to the fire, but also that it was no more unsafe than other buildings constructed in the same period, before the fire and building codes were improved. In the end no blame or responsibility was assigned.



Collapsed roof of Grand Theatre after yesterday's fatal fire—as seen from the Alaska Building.

GRAND THEATRE LOST IN "FATAL FIVE MINUTES"

"CRASH!"

DOWN went the roof of the Grand Theatre, sacrificing the life of one of the bravest men who ever fought fires in Seattle, injuring seven other members of the fire department, and causing the loss of thousands of dollars.

All because of a "slow" alarm—the fire department wasn't notified quickly enough.

The "Fatal Five Minutes!"

Had the Aero Fire Alarm been installed, Seattle's pioneer theatre would be standing intact today.

In a matter of seconds after the first outburst of flame the Aero would have sounded its gong and turned in its alarm automatically to fire headquarters.

One shudders to think of eventualities had the fire occurred the previous evening, with the theatre filled with patrons.

The Grand fire is an example of the well-nigh criminal carelessness and negligence of many property owners. At the time it burned three lives were being lost in Portland in a hotel fire—equally unnecessary.

A few years ago the National Board of Underwriters sent a special committee of twenty experts to investigate the conflagration hazards of Seattle. The committee cited the buildings on several blocks and gave warning that those blocks were conflagration breeders should fire start under unfavorable conditions.

The Grand belonged to the old type of non-fire-resistant construction such as the buildings cited. Many of those buildings are still in practically the same condition as they were years ago, and simply that such nearer the fatal day, unless preventive measures are taken such as installing the Aero Fire Alarm.

One of the engineers of national reputation who was with the underwriters' committee was W. M. Johnson, later in charge of fire prevention at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Mr. Johnson installed the Aero Alarm throughout the Exposition buildings, and later wrote:

"The Record of the Aero Alarm at the Exposition would lead me to select it as one of the most important features of a system of fire prevention for any property, private, institutional or industrial."

Will city officials of Seattle be doing their duty if they fail to require the installation of the Aero Alarm in other buildings, just as hazardous as The Grand, and which may not only cause loss of human life, but which may endanger the entire city?

You NEED the Aero Alarm for Safety, for peace-of-mind, to protect human lives and to bring down your insurance rates. Write or phone us for an estimate on your building, and Don't Delay!

AERO ALARM COMPANY

General Offices, 208 Columbia St.

SEATTLE, U. S. A.

F. J. Martin, Pres.

Phone Elliott 527.

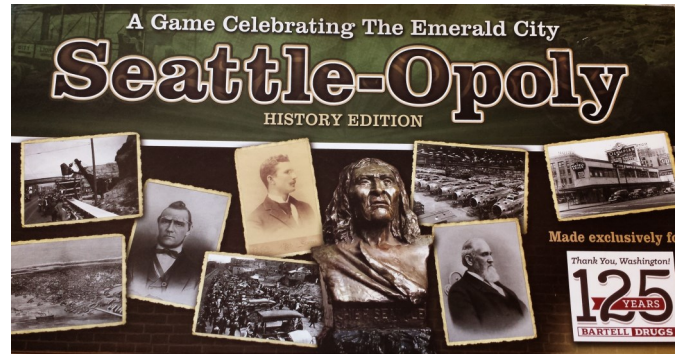
(Opera House cont.)

Defective wiring was assumed to be the cause.

Proving that anything can and will be used for advertising purposes, the Aero Alarm Company ran a large ad in the Seattle Times the very next day, claiming that had their alarm been installed, "Seattle's pioneer theatre would be standing intact today."

Seattle-opoly: Local History in a Game!

Bartell Drugs commissioned a History Edition of *Seattle-opoly*—the Monopoly-like board game that steeps players in local history while buying property, collecting city blocks, and winning Keys to the city. *Seattle-opoly* commemorates the 125th anniversary of Seattle's Bartell Drugs, the oldest family-owned drugstore chain in the United States.



Several images from the Seattle Municipal Archives photograph collection appear on the game board, including the [1925 Volunteer Park Water Tower](#) and the [1921 Lake Washington Canal Locks panoramic](#). Also featured are photographs of the [Washington Park Arboretum](#), [Denny Park](#), [Century 21](#), [a vintage City Light underground service vehicle](#), [Harbor Island shipyards](#), and [construction on Queen Anne](#).

SMA's photograph collection also includes several images of Bartell Drugs dating from [1914-2002](#) taken in the context of City work such as paving or widening streets. More on the history of the Bartell family and store can be found on [HistoryLink](#).



Newsstand, SE Corner of Twelfth and Union with Bartell Drugs store window in background, May 10, 1946
Item 40563, Seattle Municipal Archives

YouTube and Flickr News

With funding this fall from City Light, University of Washington iSchool student Jessica Jones is appraising, cataloging, and digitizing Seattle City Light videotape from the 1980s. Among the videos processed and uploaded to YouTube are footage of a square dance at Boundary Dam in 1986, a public service announcement about the Columbia River Basin Irrigation project, and the utility's first "video bulletin" for City employees from 1988.



Square Dance at Boundary Dam, 1986.
Item 3327, Seattle Municipal Archives

Stay tuned to the Seattle Municipal Archives [YouTube](#) channel as more videos become available.

The most popular Flickr image in the past three months is of a safety island at Westlake and Olive in 1938.



Seattle Municipal Archives

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Fifteenth Anniversary of WTO

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle in November and December 1999 inspired one of the largest political protests ever seen in Seattle. Protesters focused on issues including: workers' rights, sustainable economies, and environmental and social issues.

Researchers interested in sources at the Seattle Municipal Archives can start with the Digital Document Library (DDL): [World Trade Organization Protests in Seattle](#). The DDL contains digital copies of documents, a selection of images, and a link to the WTO Accountability Review Committee website which includes a helpful timeline. Researchers can also use the [Document Catalog](#) created for the Review Committee which indexes over 13,500 items. Additional records exist in Mayor Schell's records as well as Councilmembers Licata, Compton and Steinbrueck's Subject Files.



WTO Protestors with banner, November 29, 1999. *Record Series 0700-02, Image-Bank Negatives, Sheet 19991129.01 #11, Seattle Municipal Archives*

Interns and Volunteers

Cierra Cooper, a work study student from Seattle University, continues her good work at SMA.

Volunteer Maris Sovold is working on an inventory of Woodland Park Zoo photographic materials.

Jennifer Woodfield started volunteering with SMA this fall and is working with photographs and published documents.

Ian Pollack also began volunteering this fall. He is focusing on digital projects.

Newly-arrived volunteer Rosemary Carroll is working on Parks Department records and moving images.

Volunteer Kate Chmela ended her work on various electronic records projects; SMA staff are grateful for assistance over several months.

Upcoming Events

December 18, History Café "A Place at the Table,"

MOHAI Café 6:30-8:30 PM

January 8, ARMA Seattle Chapter—Records Management Training, 8 AM, City of Bellevue

May 27-30 Northwest Archivists Conference/Western Round-up
Denver, Colorado