

# ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle  
Seattle Municipal Archives

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Office of the City Clerk  
Legislative Department

## Message from the City Archivist

City Council elections by district is almost upon us. It is the source of entertaining research questions, but also presents very practical concerns about the preservation of the historical record.

The Archives has recently received requests asking: Have there ever been district elections in Seattle? When was the last one? When, if ever, was the last time every Council seat was up for election? When was the last time there was turnover of three sitting Council seats? Has there ever been more than three? There are many variations on these questions.

Election laws in Seattle have varied wildly over time. Answering one of the questions from above, Seattle employed a Ward system from the mid-1880s to 1910. The number of Wards ranged over time from three to 14. The number of Council Members at a given time has varied from as few as seven to as many as 25--the latter figure during the early 1890s when Seattle had a bicameral City Council. And terms of office have been variously one, two, three, or four years.

Answers to two other questions above are: The last election under the Ward system was in 1908. And in moving to at-large elections, every Council position was up for election in 1911, the last time that happen before 2015. (For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Council terms were one year, so every position was up for election every year.)

The 1946 City Charter (the base Charter in place today) established Council terms at four years with elections held every two years; this is the process we are most familiar with. I often use this almost 70-year period as the source for answering the other questions posed above.

In the 34 general elections since 1946, there have been six instances of three new CMs being elected; the last time was in November 2003. There have been eight instances of two new members; the last being November 2009. The 1997 election had a four member turnover.

These questions are fun to research and can fuel speculation about the upcoming election. However, for the Archives the more practical internal issues are around departures and arrivals.

When a Council Member leaves office, we need to ensure that all his/her records with enduring value are transferred to the Archives and organized, cataloged, and made available for research quickly. And when the new members and their staffs arrive, we need to ensure that they know what services we can provide them and to understand that they are creating records of value that will one day need to be included in the Archives.

The tasks related to documenting outgoing and incoming elected officials are critical for creating as complete a historical record as possible. There was no

*Message cont.*

Archives a hundred years ago to compile records related to the move from Wards to at-large elections and the individuals who served on Council at the time. As Seattle moves from at-large to district elections, the Archives is poised to ensure the historical record is served. —Scott Cline

## The Olmsted Digital Collection

Seattle has one of the best designed and best preserved park systems in the country, thanks largely to the work of the Olmsted Brothers firm of Brookline, Massachusetts, in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They left their imprint on Seattle's landscape with a series of parks linked by boulevards, creating many connected green spaces for citizens to enjoy.

In 1903, on the recommendation of the Board of Park Commissioners, City Council contracted with the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts to conduct a thorough survey of Seattle's park possibilities, and to submit a comprehensive plan that could be used to guide future work. This move was largely brought on by the public interest generated through the purchase of two large tracts, Woodland and Washington Parks, in 1900, and by the desire to prepare Seattle for the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition.

The Olmsted Brothers continued to work in Seattle for both private and public clients until 1936, when J. C. Olmsted made his last visit to the city to plan the Washington Park Arboretum. Over that 33-year period the firm would see more of its designs realized in the region: the campus of the University of Washington, the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (which would dictate the future of the U.W. campus), and the State Capitol plan.

A new digital collection brings together 261 items from various collections within the holdings of the Seattle Municipal Archives, including drawings, photographs, and correspondence, to facilitate research into the Olmsted's firm's influence on the

Seattle landscape. Searches can be filtered by media type, creator, park, and more.

[Explore!](#)

Volunteer Park  
Planting Plan,  
February 16, 1910.  
*Item 2328, Record Series  
5801-06, Seattle  
Municipal Archives*



## 58 Years Ago: Rapid Mass Transit

The April 6, 1957, edition of *Municipal News* looked into the question of whether plans for the soon-to-be-constructed Seattle-Tacoma-Everett Freeway should include provisions for a future mass transit system. The newsletter, published by the Municipal League, reported that the two questions needing to be considered were "whether the Seattle area will need a rapid mass transit system and whether the freeway is a logical route for such a system." The article noted that "inclusion of the requested provisions will save the residents of the Seattle metropolitan area many millions of dollars in acquisition and construction costs when a rapid transit system is built." The Municipal League highlighted the need for integrated planning between transit and highways, possibly including utilities as well. The two major obstacles to adding mass transit to the plan were money and time. The article noted that while up to 90% of the \$16 million price tag could be paid for with federal highway funds, "that would, of course, reduce the total of the federal funds that would be available for other projects in the state." The extra planning time involved was also seen as a negative, given that the freeway project had already been delayed for several years. In the end, mass transit was not built in coordination with Interstate 5.



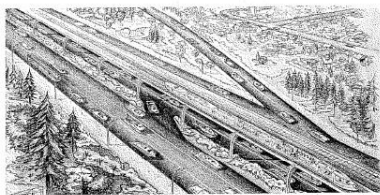
### Rapid Mass Transit Provisions on Freeway

THE PUBLIC HEARING on the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett Freeway to be held in Seattle in the near future may be highlighted by demands of various city officials that right-of-way and design provisions for rapid mass transit be included on the traffic facility.

Inclusion of the requested provisions will save the residents of the Seattle metropolitan area many millions of dollars in acquisition and construction costs when a rapid transit system is built. The Seattle Transit System has, for several years, been urging the Toll Bridge Authority to include the mass transit features on the freeway. More recently, the Seattle Planning Commission, in a report titled "Planning for Thoroughfares," urged consideration of transit provisions on the freeway. Emphasis is placed on the movement of people as opposed to the movement of automobiles.

**Objections to the Proposal**  
Two major objections to the mass transit provisions are imminent. First, the additional cost of the proposal is estimated at about \$18 million. It is possible that the federal highway funds could be used to pay up to 90 per cent of this cost, but that would, of course, reduce the total of the federal funds that would be available for other projects in the state. If the project, with the transit provisions included, were approved, the remaining 10 per cent would still have to be raised either on the local or state level.

The second objection to the proposal is based on the time which would be needed to make proper determinations of the transit provisions that will be required. The freeway, which has been



The artist's sketch illustrates one of several types of mass transit facility that might be used along the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett Freeway.

held up for several years already, is considered a "crash" project by the Highway Department. It is, therefore, unlikely that the project will be held up unless some pretty convincing evidence can be produced by the proponents of mass transportation.

**Integrated Planning Needed**  
If it is determined, now or at a later time, that transit right-of-way is desirable or necessary along the freeway route, failure to include it will involve excessive and unnecessary cost burdens on the community in the eventual construction of a metropolitan rapid mass transit system. Integrated, advance planning would have given answers on the type of coordination that might be achieved between mass transit and highway construction. Probably this type of planning should also study the possibility of including utility and other right-of-way provisions as well.

With the tremendously increasing

cost of providing the public works needed in urban areas, no possibility should be overlooked for multiple use, and therefore reduced costs.

**Where We Stand**  
A committee appointed by Mayor Clinton and headed by City Engineer Ray Morse is now studying the problem. The two principal questions under consideration are whether the Seattle area will need a rapid mass transit system and whether the freeway is a logical route for such a system. If the questions are answered in the affirmative, a delay will have to be requested in the construction of the freeway.

Until recently it was thought that nothing could be done on the facility for two years pending the acquisition of right-of-way. However, federal legislation which makes funds available for the interstate system also gives the state the right of entry before condemnation proceedings have been adjudicated.

## New Accession: Victor Steinbrueck Park

The Seattle Municipal Archives recently accessioned photographs and logbook from Peter Steinbrueck relating to the design, creation and installation of two 50-foot totem poles at Victor Steinbrueck Park (Record Series 5801-09). [Images](#) recently uploaded in the image database include scans of the polaroids in this collection. Logbooks kept by Victor Steinbrueck date from November 1982 to August 1983 and chronicle the project's progress, conversations with the artists, his trips to Bainbridge Island where the carving took place, and detailed notes on costs and design details, as well as paint samples for the totem poles.

Artists  
Jim Bender  
and Mike  
Watanabe  
begin rough  
carving of  
pole #1,  
April 29,  
1983  
[Item 175488](#),  
Seattle  
Municipal  
Archives



Jim Bender working on totem pole, April 29, 1983  
[Item 175529](#), Seattle Municipal Archives



(Park cont.)



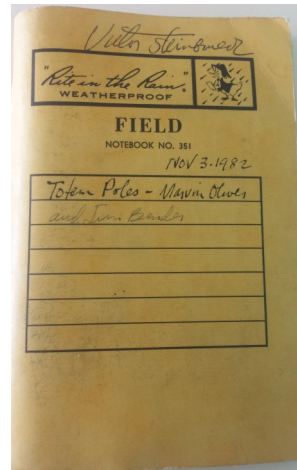
Marvin Oliver talks to press after totem poles installed in park. 1984 [Item 175600](#), *Seattle Municipal Archives*

Located on the site of the Washington State National Guard Armory, the park property was purchased in 1968 and transferred to the Parks Department in 1970. Landscaped as Market Park until 1982, it was renamed Victor Steinbrueck Park in 1985.

Marvin Oliver is currently Professor of American Indian Studies and Art at the University of Washington. One of the Northwest Coast's foremost contemporary sculptors and printmakers, he works in many mediums. James Bender is also a well known Northwest artist, known for his totem poles, masks, and jewelry.

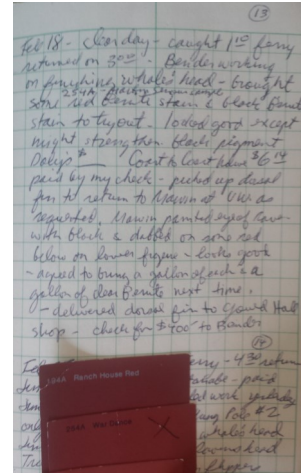


Totem pole #2 unloaded from truck on viaduct, 1984. [Item 175588](#), *Seattle Municipal Archives*



Logbook cover and sample page, 1982-1983

Record Series 5801-09, Seattle Municipal Archives



## New *Seattle Voices*: Condominiums

By the late 1970s, apartment vacancy rates in some parts of Seattle stood below 1%. Spurred by this burgeoning housing crisis, the Urban Development & Housing Committee of the Seattle City Council held a public hearing on May 17, 1978, to listen to testimonies about the condominiumization of apartment buildings, the reduction in the availability of rentals, and the displacement of tenants without the economic means to buy.

As a result of this hearing, [Ordinance 107500](#) was passed by the Full Council on July 17, 1978, "declaring a Housing Emergency and imposing a moratorium on the conversion of certain rental units to condominiums, and providing penalties for violations."

The recording of the hearing contains statements from members of local and state government, citizens, social advocates, and industry members. Listen to some of those [voices](#) here: <http://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/exhibits-and-education/seattle-voices/condo-conversions>

Work on this new *Seattle Voices* exhibit was done by volunteer Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman.



Oxford apartment, First Avenue, September 1976. [Item 37860](#), Record Series 1628-02, *Seattle Municipal Archives*

## YouTube and Flickr News

SMA's YouTube channel has over 115 videos and over 200 subscribers. One of the most popular items is Part 1 of "Seattle: Picture of a Young City." Created in 1976 by the Seattle Engineering Department, the film depicts notable events and public works construction in Seattle history through still and moving images.



Spokane Street construction, 1928  
[Item 434](#), *Seattle Municipal Archives*

The most popular Flickr image in the past three months is of I-5 construction downtown near James Street, 1963.



Freeway construction from top of Municipal Building, 1963  
[Item 173890](#), *Seattle Municipal Archives*

### 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>

## 49 Years Ago: Fair Rent Committee

A Fair Rent Committee formed in 1966 to review disputed rental increases. By 1967 the number of complaints received had diminished and Committee began meeting less frequently. In 1966 and 1967 the Committee looked into rent increases, evictions and hazardous conditions. After the Jackson Street Community Council requested a representative from the Central Area be on the committee, "since excessive rentals for inadequate and even substandard dwelling units are prevalent in the Central Area," Yoshito Fujii, President of the Japanese Hotel and Apartment Association joined the Committee. Other Committee members included Charles M. Carroll, Walter E. Berg, Hazel K Bloss, Donald C. Haas and Reverend George H. McCleave.

After complaints came in that eviction notices were given when residents registered complaints, the Committee stated that from that point on, records of those cases would be made public. (1802-C3 2/11)

## Interns and Volunteers

Work study student Cierra Cooper ended her stint with SMA for this school year and is now interning in Councilmember Licata's office.

Volunteer Maris Sovold continues working on an inventory of Woodland Park Zoo photographs.

Johanna Kiciman continues volunteering and broadened her scope from digital audio files to research for exhibits and administrative histories.

Hailey Galper is processing textual records and preparing to graduate from Seattle University.

Our newest volunteer Alicia Schofield is processing LID records and cataloging publications.

Jessica Jones continues work she began last year on Seattle City Light videotape which includes appraisal, cataloging, indexing and digitizing. Check for her new additions to SMA's [YouTube](#) site.

Jennifer Woodfield is continuing her work with the digital photograph collection.

Volunteer Rosemary Carroll finished up work on moving images of Mayor Nickels Press conferences from Seattle Channel.

Libby Hopfauf is making steady progress on digital audio files of City Council meetings.

## Upcoming Events

June 16 Seattle Area Archivists Meeting 2:00-4:30 PM

Dearborn House - 1117 Minor Ave, Seattle 98101

June 25 "History on the Rocks—The Rise of Craft Distilleries"  
MOHAI 6-8 PM

November 18-21 - Association of Moving Images Conference  
Portland