

# ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle  
Seattle Municipal Archives

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Office of the City Clerk  
Legislative Department

## Out of the Archives

The 2024 Northwest Archivists (NWA) Annual Meeting was held in May in Spokane, WA, exploring the theme Seeking Balance: Sustainability and Adaptation. Three archivists from SMA attended and presented at the conference.

City Archivist Anne Frantilla participated on a panel presenting about Sustainable Outreach, sharing strategies for using exhibits, presentations, events, and public programs to maintain a continuous outreach presence. Photo Archivist Jules Irick presented on Collaborative Disaster Response Networks, specifically the [Seattle Heritage Emergency Response Network \(SHERN\)](#), discussing how such networks can support member organizations and facilitate partnerships. The presentation also touched on developing and implementing disaster preparedness programs at the institutional level.



A hands-on station during the AV102 workshop at NWA 2024.  
Photo courtesy Libby Hopfauf.

Audiovisual archivist Libby Hopfauf co-led AV102, a hands-on workshop on A/V preservation geared towards those who are unfamiliar with audiovisual materials and ready to learn practical applications of best practices and workflows. Participants rotated between stations set up for film, video, and audio to learn various methods and techniques, including physical repair, digital preservation, physical storage, and condition assessments. Libby also served on the conference's program committee and organized its 5th annual Archival Screening Night, featuring film and video from archival collections including news footage, performances, documentaries, experimental films, and more.

## Seattle Gay News Exhibit @ SPL

An opening celebration on June 27, 2024 welcomed the exhibit "Seattle Gay News Celebrates 50 Years!" at the Seattle Public Library. Created by the University of Washington Libraries, the exhibit will be at SPL through August 25, 2024. The exhibit documents the history of the newspaper through headlines, page displays, and cutouts.

Through a multi-year commitment from many individuals and institutions, digital copies of SGN are available through Washington State Library's [Washington Digital Newspapers site](#). Former City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen and City Archivist Anne Frantilla brought together hundreds of boxes from storage facilities, collating them into sets for interested repositories with the help of many volunteers and additional personnel at SPL. Staff member Rick McKinnon and former publisher Angela Cragin were key to this effort. Jessica Albano, UW Libraries News Librarian, coordinated the microfilming of each issue and Shawn Schollmeyer, Washington Digital Newspapers coordinator for the Washington State Library, ensured digital copies were available to all. SGN Editor Renee Raketty, Mayor Harrell, and Tom Rasmussen attended the celebration as well. Seattle Channel captured the event in "[Half a century of pride: Seattle Gay News celebrates milestone.](#)"



Seattle Gay News exhibit at Seattle Public Library.  
Photo courtesy Anne Frantilla.

*Newly processed, cont'd.*

## Newly Processed Collections

Now available for research are **Pike Plaza Redevelopment Project Building Survey Records (Record Series 1628-06)**, containing materials related to the urban renewal project that would have replaced the Market with a high rise hotel and office buildings. Included are reports with condition summaries and recommendations relating to structural, mechanical, architectural, and electrical systems of Market buildings, as well as legal and narrative descriptions, surveys, and cost estimates for repair and demolition.

Also recently processed are two series from the Department of Neighborhoods. **The People's Academy for Community Engagement (PACE) Records (Record Series 5751-14)** contain records from a leadership training program designed and operated by



People's Academy for Community Engagement (PACE) event, circa 2012.  
Box 1, Folder 4, Record Series 5751-14.

the Department of Neighborhoods to strengthen and enhance involvement in community organizing efforts in Seattle. Records cover background and planning information for the program and include materials from various PACE sessions. **Community Engagement Coordinator Records (Record Series 5751-13)** document the work of DON coordinators who work with Seattle residents to build relationships in their



neighborhoods and increase civic participation. The majority of records date from 2000-2014 and include materials from various conferences and training sessions, as well as information about neighborhood and City initiatives. Also included are photos and negatives from events and activities sponsored by the Department of Neighborhoods.

Ballard Rising event, circa 2000.  
Box 6, Folder 5, Series 5751-13

Also processed is a **Street Grade Notebook (Record Series 2618-06)** from the Department of Engineering. The notebook records grades of streets in Seattle, organized from most level to steepest. The book is undated but estimated to have been created in the 1920s. Each page notes a specific grade (e.g., 1.35%) and then lists any street sections with that grade. The steepest street section recorded in the notebook was 3.98% on Terry Avenue from Terrace to Alder.

## 19 Years Ago: Goat Banquet

"Goats to Munch on Invasive Plants at York Park!" was the headline of a [2005 media advisory](#) from the Department of Parks and Recreation. The text went on to explain that the goats' lunch would help clear ground for a new park on the site of a former City Light substation. The park, located between Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and Rainier Avenue, was in an area that the York Park Task Force referred to as "Chubby and Tubby Heights."



Goats clearing brush in South Park, August 19, 2003.  
[Image 141888](#), Record Series 0207-01, SMA.

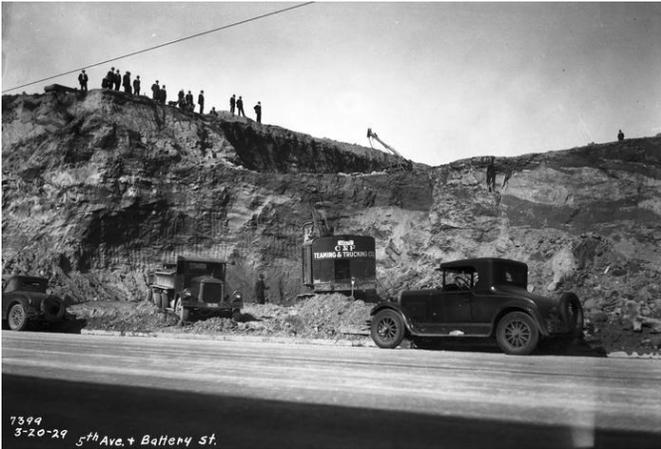
Parks Department communications manager Dewey Potter knew the local media loved stories about goats at work, so when she heard rumors of the planned event, she reached out to the task force to offer help with publicity. (The media advisory described the task force as "an eclectic community support group comprising an architect, a bus driver, a nurse, a librarian, a craftsperson, a Snoqualmie elder, and a senior marketing consultant-dilettante-artist-activist of immense dedication but uncertain temper.")

The goats' feast was to include "the spring temptations presented by invasive plants, especially Himalayan blackberries." Since more than one goat would be needed to clear the site, the group hired Goat Busters to bring in three critters to do the chomping. The initial plan had been to use "our neighborhood pal Wile E. Goat, a most handsome Nubian-Alpine cross," but he preferred to dine without other goats around, so he was relegated to the role of mascot.

## Recently Processed Photos

SMA photograph holdings include hundreds of nitrate negatives, particularly in our older, industrial collections such as the Seattle Engineering Department and Seattle City Light collections. Nitrate negatives are a type of photographic film used predominantly from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. These negatives are invaluable for their historical content, but because they can become unstable as they degrade, they also present a level of risk that must be carefully managed.

Early in the digitization process at SMA, nitrate negatives were scanned to the output standards of the time (late 1990s) for the purpose of access, not preservation. This practice resulted in low-quality images that do not meet current preservation standards. Because nitrate negatives are at a high risk for degradation, even though they are stored at below freezing temps, SMA is committed to ensuring accessibility to high quality images for future use.



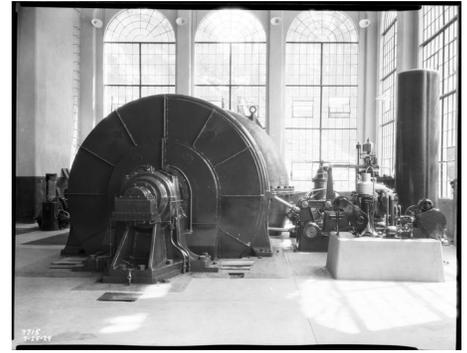
Denny regrade, 5th Ave and Battery St., March 20, 1929.  
[Image 3317](#), Series 2613-07.

Volunteer Janet Ness has been hard at work re-scanning boxes of nitrate negatives to current standards. So far this year, Janet has updated hundreds of catalog records with new, high-quality scans. See the newly updated scans and records [here](#).



Second Ave S. Extension at Jackson St., April 18, 1929.  
[Image 3378](#), Series 2613-07.

Recently processed, cont'd.



Cedar River Powerhouse,  
July 25, 1929.  
[Image 3536](#), Series 2613-07.

## Diversity in Local History Grant

SMA received a [Diversity in Local History Grant](#) from the Washington State Historical Society to fund the "Raising up Community Voices" project and complete ten "Seattle Voices" exhibits. Over \$13,000 in grant funds will support an intern to research and develop virtual exhibits centered around audio recordings in our collections, prioritizing the voices of underrepresented communities. Topics include the City's intersection with the federal Weed & Seed Program, establishment of the American Indian Women's Service League, and creation of a community center in the Chinatown-International District. The intern will also create a more in-depth online exhibit expanding on one of the topics. Work on this project is expected to begin this fall.



The Archives' existing audio exhibit series "Seattle Voices" was created to raise awareness about archival recordings as a valuable resource, and to elevate community members who participated in Seattle's democratic process. The addition of new speakers, known and previously unknown, will enable the City's history to be retold in a more representative manner and with a richer texture. Previous "[Seattle Voices](#)" and other exhibits are available on SMA's website. The Diversity in Local History program is funded by the Washington State Legislature.

## Volunteers

Several college and graduate school students have been volunteering at SMA on their summer breaks this year. Lee Gray has been working on updates to our digital document libraries as well as processing and scanning a neighborhood architecture photo series; Johnny Bassett is at work on an exhibit project examining the city's approach to mental health and substance use, and Bella Swan has been processing civil rights case files and City Light personnel photos.

Meanwhile our ongoing volunteers Janet Ness, Vanessa Granger, Ilias Bowen-Sicalides, Debbie Isley, and Jillian Johnston Zillig continue their work on wide-ranging projects including processing Central Staff records, audio transcription, cataloging published documents, description of Engineering Department negatives, and photo scanning. Our volunteers do an amazing amount behind the scenes to help make our records more accessible!

## YouTube and Flickr News

A popular photo recently posted to Flickr shows swimmers enjoying a sunny day at an unnamed beach, possibly (according to a Flickr follower) Lake Washington. [Let us know](#) if you recognize the location!



[Image 205591](#), estimated 1970s. Series 5802-09, SMA.

Recently posted to our YouTube Channel is a series of short videos documenting the construction of the Tolt Dam in the early 1960s. The footage shows aerial and ground-level views of the dam taking shape across the backdrop of the Cascade foothills.



Tolt Dam construction, circa 1960s.  
[Event 16115](#), Record Series 3902-01, SMA.

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## SMA in the News

A [new HistoryLink article](#) explores the story of Robert Bruce Driscoll, Seattle's "first serial arsonist." Materials held in [a file on the fire investigation](#) from SMA's Fire Department Central Files provided source material for the article.

Photos from SMA's collections continue to illustrate news stories from various sources, including: a [Literary Hub story](#) on the 1999 WTO protests; a [story in the South Seattle Emerald](#) about the history of Juneteenth; a [Real Change article](#) on the removal of a longtime Seattle newsstand; and articles from local news agencies reporting on the recent death of former mayor Charles Royer, such as [this one](#) from the Seattle Times.



Mayor Royer at his desk on January 23, 1978.  
[Image 207957](#), Series 2613-07, SMA.

## 40 Years Ago: Olympian Debbie Armstrong



Not long after winning gold in the giant slalom at the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics, celebrated alpine skier Debbie Armstrong was honored by her hometown on March 7, 1984 with a parade through downtown Seattle and a visit to City Council. Cheering her on are councilmembers Norm Rice and Jeanette Williams.

[Image 170694](#), Series 4693-11, SMA.

## Upcoming Events

Aug 15-17 [SAA Annual Meeting](#), Chicago.

Oct 18-19 [Pacific Northwest History Conference](#), Portland.