

# ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle  
Seattle Municipal Archives

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Office of the City Clerk  
Legislative Department

## Message from the City Archivist

(The following remarks were composed on September 19, 2011)

I am relaxing at Adam's Coffee Bar in the Gilboa hills overlooking Israel's Harod Valley near the Jordanian border drinking what may be the best cup of coffee I have ever tasted. The day is dry, clear, and 95 degrees. I am sitting a few feet from a ski lift and watching a skier navigate a 400 yard course on a hillside that has not seen snow since the Ice Age.

Two years ago I wrote a couple of messages from Israel about layers of history and how we relate to history in a non-linear fashion. My current experience, at the resort the locals simply call "Ski," is less philosophical; it raises more practical concerns.

The only snow covered ski resort accessible to Israelis is Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights; its window for skiing is short -- January through March. To satisfy a desire for year-round skiing and snowboarding, some enterprising entrepreneur developed "Ski" which consists of three short, straight, barely undulating runs that are blanketed with a white synthetic blanket whose material properties emulate the minimal friction between ski and snow.

"Ski" hardly rises to the experience of Whistler, Vail, or even Snoqualmie. The runs are short with no turns, moguls, or trees; nor are they very steep. But it is a fascinating place. The ideal, of course, would be a lot of snow and long, exhilarating runs. But that is not an option below sea level near the Jordan River. The challenge was to create something that works well enough in the face of a particular reality.

This recent trip to Israel came on the heels of the SAA meeting in Chicago. I always come away from SAA energized, but also feeling an odd dichotomous disconnect. Archivists around the country are engaged in so many creative projects to address the challenges of the records universe. And yet, so many also bemoan the overwhelming burden of work we face. It is then that I think about something David Bearman said a few years ago.

Addressing a group of Australian archivists, Bearman concluded his remarks about electronic records management by suggesting that we should not be paralyzed by the many problems inherent in dealing with the universe of digital records. He argued that archivists just need to do something; and although it may not be perfect, it is better than doing nothing. His comment maps to all of our work.

There is no question that archivists are confronted by huge workloads and are pulled in many directions by competing interests. Our responses and solutions do not (and I would argue cannot) always reflect best practice. Sometimes we need to engage in "good enough" practice in the service of the historical record and the common good. "Good enough" and still professional.

We work with the resources we have to extract the best available results. A reasonable goal is to be able to ski in 95 degree weather.

--Scott Cline, City Archivist

## New Digital Document Library: Seattle's Century 21

Seattle busied itself before the 1962 world's fair by burying wiring on fair grounds and beautifying the city. During the fair, a principal controversy arose from the perceived 'housing crunch' expected during the fair, as millions of tourists would descend upon the city and rapidly fill up existing hotels and motels. Unless extraordinary action was taken, many felt, fair visitors would be turned away without accommodation, damaging the Exposition's reputation. As the City Council took steps to respond, such as permitting the use of docked 'marine vessels' as temporary lodgings, certain residential hotel owners sought to exploit the housing shortage. With little warning, these landlords converted their buildings, which often housed people who had resided there for years, from monthly to daily rentals. Thus, prices were raised significantly,



Artist's rendering of interior of prototype of Travel Trailer., forming part of request for permission for motel trailers during the Fair. Item No. 76969, Comptroller File 244930. Comptroller Files (Record Series 1802-01), Seattle Municipal Archives

(Seattle's Century 21 cont.)



Removing last utility pole on Fair Grounds, October 1961  
Item 165678, Seattle Municipal Archives

effectively pricing out long-term residents in favor of the more lucrative tourist trade. Understandably angered by their 'eviction,' many wrote emotional letters to the Mayor, City Council, and the Seattle press. Though the actual numbers of residents evicted remains unclear, public indignation ignited a heated debate over what the municipal government should do in response.

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## What's New in Photos

Images on Century 21 from the Seattle City Light negatives collection were scanned and new images were added to the Parks Forward Thrust series.

The Century 21 images include taking down utility poles on fair grounds and putting wires underground, as well as construction and opening of utilities pavilion.



Space Needle construction, November 1961  
Item 165649, Seattle Municipal Archives

(What's New in Photos cont.)



Century 21 from top of Grosvenor House, October 1961  
Item 165664, Seattle Municipal Archives



Installation of Electric Pavilion Mural, April 1962  
Item 165730, Seattle Municipal Archives

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## Newly Processed Collections

Among the many records recently processed through the NHPRC grant are several from the Parks Department. Primarily from the 1970s and 1980s, the records show the city's changing role in fostering the arts. One of the individuals appearing in these records, although not a principal creator, is John Chambless, formerly a controversial philosophy professor at the University of Washington and one of the organizers of the Sky River Rock Festival. Over 100 cubic feet of Parks records were processed; only a selection is featured here.

Newly Processed (cont.)

**Open Space Acquisition Records, Record Series 5804-10** (1957-1998, 57.8 cubic feet)

Property appraisals, correspondence, maps, photographs, inspection reports, purchase agreements, closing negotiations and checklists concerning the acquisition of greenbelt property throughout Seattle. Greenbelts acquired included slopes near Queen Anne, Magnolia and Capitol Hill and land near the Duwamish River. Most of the acquisitions date from 1990 to 1998.

**Performing and Visual Arts Program Records, Record Series 5807-14** (1976-1990, 1.8 cubic feet)

Records of the Performing and Visual Arts section (until 1979 known as the Cultural Arts Section), including correspondence, memos, program histories, reports, budgets, concession agreements, photographs and subject files concerning music, dance and theater performances, as well as arts instruction programs. Also documented is the unit's management of the Bathhouse Theatre, Madrona Dance Studio, Poncho Theatre, Pratt Fine Arts Studio and Seward Park Art Studios following their renovation or construction using Forward Thrust funds. Documented also is the 1982 transition to operation of the Parks' cultural facilities by the program's advisory councils.

**Theatre Program Records, Record Series 5807-15** (1969-1999, 0.8 cubic foot)

Records of the Department's Performing and Visual Arts section, including correspondence, memos, grant files, schedules, flyers, press releases, reports and fact sheets, concerning operations of two theatre programs sponsored and supported by the City of Seattle.

**Pratt Fine Arts Center Records, Record Series 5810-01** (1976-1982, 1.4 cubic feet)

Correspondence, service contracts, block grant materials, recreation services survey, and attendance reports for a fine arts program established in 1978 to serve the City's central area.

**Golf Records, Record Series 5807-13** (1966-2008, 8.4 cubic feet)

Records of the Department's Superintendent, Director of Citywide Services, Golf Manager and other staff concerning management and operations of the City's golf programs and courses at Jackson Park, Jefferson Park and West Seattle, as well as the development and operation of the Interbay Golf Center.

**Municipal Golf of Seattle Records, Record Series 5807-17** (1994-2003, 1.0 cubic foot)

Agendas, minutes, financial records, and briefing materials of the board of a non-profit corporation which contracted with the City of Seattle to operate its municipal golf courses from 1995 to 2002.

**Municipal Golf Course Plans & Drawings, Record Series 5807-18** (1940-2009, over 59 drawings)

Over 59 architectural plans and drawings for municipal golf courses. The primary architect was John Steidel, based in Kennewick, Washington, but additional architects include Thiel, Khun Associates, Hogan, Ivory and Associates, and Jones & Jones.

## Archives Month!

Celebrate archives around the Puget Sound in October with the theme of "Fairs and Festivals." Come and explore what is in your local archives.

Wednesday October 5, 2011 - 10 am-3 pm - Free  
Archives Fair, Seattle Public Library, Central Branch, 10th floor

Wednesday October 5, 2011 - 12:00 PM - Free  
Paula Becker "Burying the Treasure:  
Collecting Materials for Future Fairs and Festivals"

Wednesday October 26, 2011 - 1:30 PM - Free  
SMA Workshop and Tour, Seattle City Hall, Room 370  
RSVP to archives@seattle.gov

## 72 Years Ago: Waterfront Traffic

In 1939, the Propeller Club of the United States, Port of Seattle (whose goal was "to promote, further and support an American Merchant Marine"), submitted a report to the Mayor and City Council about traffic on the waterfront. "The situation with respect to waterfront traffic has become serious to the point of crisis... The use of the waterfront as a traffic 'bypass' is gravely harming our most vital industry—shipping," club president Carl J. Nordstrom wrote. Through traffic was diverted from downtown to the waterfront, harming shipping activities. The city engineer, C. L. Wartelle, responded in a letter to the Public Safety committee stating that three improvements would improve traffic on Alaskan Way as well as in the downtown district: rehabilitation of the street railway, completion of the Lake Washington Bridge and installation of parking meters.



Several photographs were submitted with the Propeller Club report illustrating both traffic conditions on Alaskan Way and signs directing vehicles to Alaskan Way.

Source: Report of Propeller Club, Reports and Studies, 1802-D9, CF 162733, 11/9.

## Sources Cited

Research in the Archives by Professor Jeff Sanders appeared recently in his article "Animal Trouble and Urban Anxiety: Human-animal Interaction in Post-Earth Day Seattle," which appeared in the *Journal of Environmental History* (April 2011).

Images from the Archives were used in information kiosks at Hiawatha Park and unveiled for the centennial anniversary of the opening of the

## Flickr News

Historic photos of Seattle's downtown skyline always garner interest on our Flickr site, as people seem to enjoy seeing snapshots of the city's development and noting the differences from today's urban landscape. Commenters have also helped us date photos based on buildings that are missing or under construction. Check out our "[Skylines and City Views](#)" photo set to see how downtown has grown!

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/sets/72157621955149796/>



Waterfront and downtown skyline, 1975  
*Item 73014, Seattle Municipal Archives*

Check us out on [Flickr](#) and add your own knowledge and memories!

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/>

## New "Seattle Voices" Audio: Medical Waste

The newest addition to the "Seattle Voices" audio exhibit space is an excerpt from a Planning and Regional Affairs public hearing on medical waste incineration. The hearing was held on November 29, 1994, and included members of the community, various non-profit groups, the medical and legal profession and others concerned about the health implications of incinerating medical waste.

Listen to it here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/CityArchives/Exhibits/voices.htm>

## Kudos to our Volunteers and Interns!

We welcome Amanda Allpress, a student at San Jose State's library program, as an intern through November. She is assisting with processing, photographic work, and audio. Also, Alexander Kwok, an undergraduate from Seattle University, joins the Archives for the fall as a volunteer. Jonathan King continues his volunteer work with us, processing and assisting with new Digital Document Library additions; see the new set on Century 21!

## Did you know...

The Seattle Municipal Archives has almost 140,000 photographs, both scanned negatives and born digital, available online for searching and downloading?

One of the most popular images on the Seattle Municipal Archives Flickr site for July through August 2011 was of the Space Needle and Fun Forest from 2004.



*Check out comments on this photo and other favorites:*

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/>

## Upcoming Events

October 5, *Wednesday Archives Fair*, 10-3 Free  
Seattle Public Library, 10th Floor  
October 26, 2011 *SMA Workshop and Tour*, Seattle City Hall 370 1:30 PM Free RSVP [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov)  
October 20, Thursday *History Café: Haunted Seattle*  
7:30 pm Roy Street Coffee and Tea, 700 Broadway East

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