ARCHIVES GAZETTE

Message from the City Archivist

I'm often asked what my favorite record is from the Archives. While I don't generally think of individual items when considering archival records, I do gravitate toward the first folder of the Don Sherwood Parks History Collection. It contains a single, untitled volume that we call *Seattle Cemetery Removal/Reburial Register*. It was produced by the Seattle Cemetery Commission in 1884.

Students of Seattle's early history know that Denny Park at Dexter and Denny Way was Seattle's first public park. David and Louisa Denny deeded the land to the City for park purposes. The Dennys had previously deeded the land to the town in 1864 for the purposes of a public cemetery. The 1884 deed required that the bodies in the cemetery be removed and reinterred in private cemeteries. A three-person Cemetery Commission was established to oversee that process.

The *Register* lists each cemetery lot, owner of the lot, who was buried in it, and the same information for the private cemeteries where the bodies were reinterred. Also included in the *Register* is an index of names, a map of the City Cemetery, and the hand written reports the Commission submitted to City Council.

The *Register* is the stuff of social history. It reflects Seattle's wide gap in economic strata, race relations, public health realities, and hints at socio-cultural groupings.

The names of lot owners and the deceased include many of the early Seattle pioneers and civic leaders: Denny, Terry, Horton, McGilvra, John Collins, L.V. Wyckoff, Gardner Kellogg. These names are juxtaposed with the entry for a Potter's Field, which the Commission noted contained the bodies of "Twenty-one Chinamen." We have no idea what their names were.

A total of 29 Chinese were reburied in the Wa Chong lot of the Masonic Cemetery. This occurred just two years after Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act that severely restricted Chinese immigration. And it was just two years before attempts all along the West Coast, including Seattle, to violently expel Chinese residents from cities and towns.

There are heartbreaking and all too common entries of infant mortality: Keezer (child), O.S. Root's Infant Child, D.T. Denny's child, Five Unknown Children. And death in childbirth: Mrs. S.E. Merrill and child. Regarding these and other entries, one wonders what diseases played a role in the deaths of the 221 bodies removed.
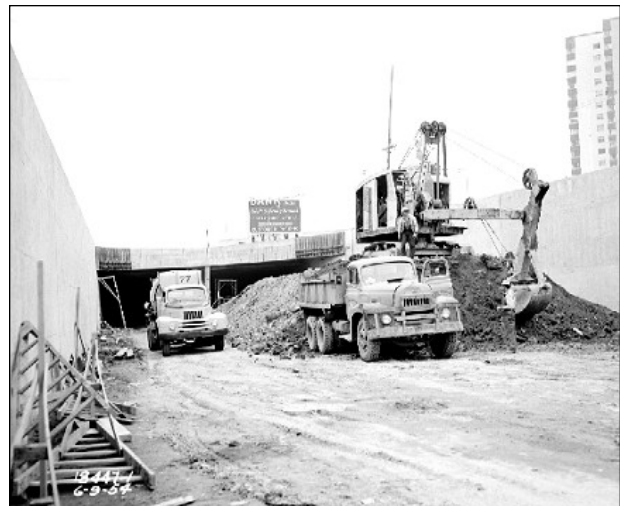
The deceased were removed to the Masonic Cemetery (many others besides the Chinese), the Odd Fellows Cemetery, the Catholic Cemetery, the "Free" Methodist Cemetery, and the new Washelli Cemetery in what would become Volunteer Park. This diversity highlights the probability of social, fraternal, and religious cohesion inherent in the choice of burial sites.

This thin volume is a gem. It tells a small piece of many individual and family stories and it points to several larger stories. Yet it is just one piece of a broader context. The *Register* cannot stand alone in telling these stories; it must be used in conjunction with additional research in many sources. That is the beauty and the fun of the historical process.

--Scott Cline, City Archivist

60 Years Ago: Battery Street Tunnel

Concrete being poured for the construction of the Battery Street Subway east of Fourth Avenue, June 9, 1954
Item 45731, Seattle Municipal Archives

In 1952, Ordinance 80819 authorized the construction of the Battery Street   Tunnel, or "vehicular   subway" as it was called in the Ordinance. It followed   authorization for a "depressed roadway on Battery Street" in 1949 when Ordinance 77749 authorized elevated roadways on Alaskan Way.

Battery Street Subway Handbook, 1952
Document 9096 , Published Document Collection, Seattle Municipal Archives

(Battery Street Tunnel *cont.)*

In 1952 a concerned citizen wrote to City Council with suggestions for ventilation and lighting. "I am not going to spend much time on this letter," A. J. Cheff wrote, "as the traffic situation in Seattle has been lamentable so long, one loses all courage." City Engineer R. W. Finke responded to his concerns by saying, "The ventilation system does take air from the surface at the sidewalk level and blow it into the subway vents in the center of the roadway to the surface again…." Finke pointed out that lights nearer the curb to light the roadway quickly become covered with dirt as evidenced in the Lakeway Tunnels. (Comptroller File 215896)

Carbon monoxide test, Battery Street Tunnel, July 16, 1954.
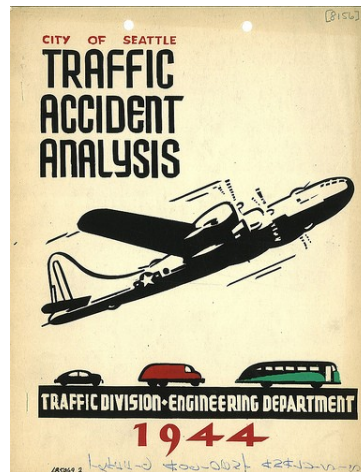*Item 45797, Seattle Municipal Archives*

Another citizen wrote to the Engineering Department in 1966 complaining about the lighting. "The Battery Street Tunnel is without a doubt one of the worst eyesores in this city. After driving thru [sic] tunnels in many cities of this country I find none as drab and poorly lighted as this one." By 1972 the tunnel was painted with a reflective surface in order to increase brightness inside.

Until 1969, a "subway tender" was on duty from 6:30 AM to 7 PM five days a week; their responsibility was to observe the movement of traffic and to manually turn on all exhaust fans twice daily. With the opening of I-5 and less traffic in the tunnel, the City Engineering automated the ventilation process. They also relocated an alarm system to the Fire Department and ensured that the Police Department had control of the lights at either end of the tunnel for traffic control.
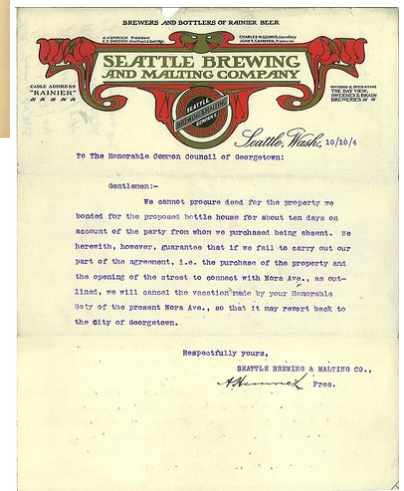*Engineering Department Subject Files (2602-02), 1/221, Seattle Municipal Archives*

Featured Collection: Ephemera

Ephemera collections are often infrequently used by researchers but can be a fun place to look for the unexpected. Most archives have hard-to-classify items that don't fit neatly into existing record series or collections. These items can be interesting as artifacts or may contain valuable information. Ephemera is where letterhead, business cards, bumper stickers and more end up. Many of these items are included in SMA's Flickr set "Cabinet of Curiosities."
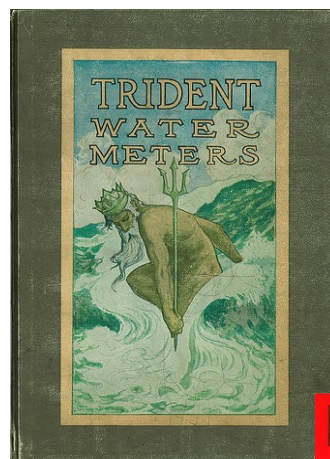

Some items in the Flickr set are cataloged outside of the Ephemera Collection but have interesting visual graphics, such as this cover of an Engineering report for 1944.

Items kept in the Ephemera collection may not have found a home elsewhere.

Water meter catalogs are not strictly within the collecting scope of the Archives but have secondary, as well as visual, value.

To see a folder list of all the types of items you can discover go to the collection description for Record Series 9900-01.

120 Years Ago: On the Tide Flats

On March 19, 1884, George Hill and Catherine Carrol Hill wrote a four-page petition to the Mayor and Common Council requesting that they be allowed to remain living "on the tide lands at the foot and in front of University Street" where they'd been for seven years. They were about sixty years old, the petitioners wrote, and "Catherine Carrol Hill is greatly afflicted with the Rheumatism…." George Hill was a longshoreman "but unable to earn much at his uncertain and unsteady trade, even when he can get employment and is able to work at it." The petitioners said they were notified their homes would be torn down and destroyed and that they should move their house-hold goods and other property.

The petitioners claimed "the same right to live in peace and the same opportunity to support and take care of themselves, as best they can, that is guaranteed to other well disposed citizens….. That said street is unimproved and unused between Front St and said tidelands, and the occupancy of said tide lands...is neither a nuisance to the public nor an obstruction to the highway."

An attached report of the Streets Committee dated April 4, 1884 stated that "said buildings have all been removed."

General File 991474
Record Series 1802-04, Seattle Municipal Archives

Photographs

Among the images recently processed and uploaded to the Archives website are a series of 54 photographs of houses from Seattle City Light Real Estate Services from about 1930-1931. No additional information was provided with the images; presumably the property was bought to be used for City Light purposes.

4703 Fletcher. April 24, 1931. 6 rooms. Concrete basement. *Item 172133, Seattle Municipal Archives*
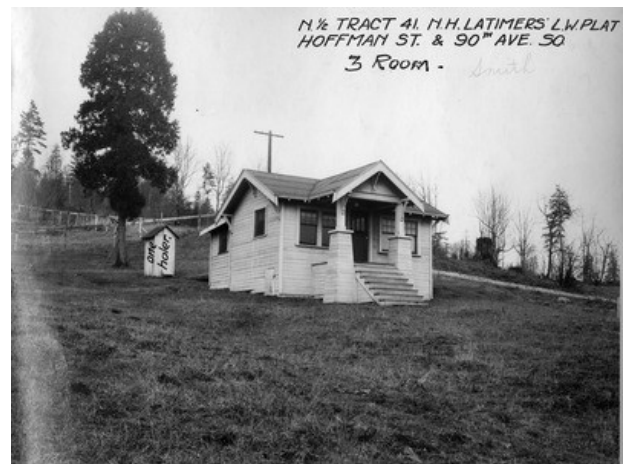
(Photographs *cont.*)

Chicken shed opposite 5330 Creston St.

Item 172142, Seattle Municipal Archives

Smith House, Hoffman St and 90th Ave S. 3 Room (and one-holer) *Item 172126, Seattle Municipal Archives*
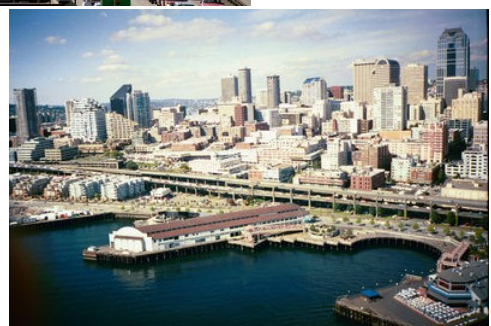
Also being uploaded are images from Mayor Nickels' term. <u>Recent additions</u> include the Mayor with international visitors, at "Clean and Green" events around the City, and at other groundbreaking and celebratory events. Aerial photographs of the Alaskan Way Viaduct are included as well.

Aerial shots of the viaduct from 2001.

Items and 172318 and 172307 Seattle Municipal Archives
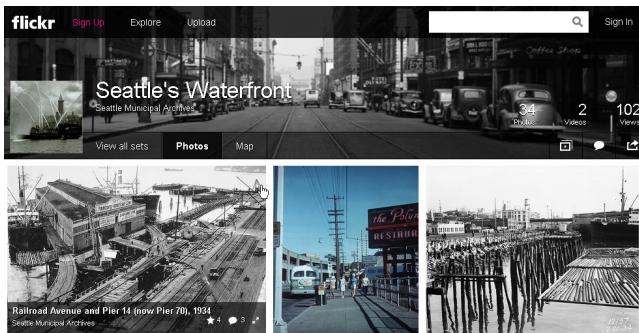
Preserving the City's Website

The City of Seattle launched its first web interface during the week of February 1, 1995. Since then, the City has gone through three web addresses; the website has been awarded the "Best of the Web City Portal Award" twice, in 2006 and 2011.

The Seattle Municipal Archives began archiving City and City-related websites using Archive-It in July 2012. Official City of Seattle websites and related social media sites make up the bulk of the collection. Captured four times a year, among the seattle.gov pages are numerous city department sites, sites for city services, and sites for Seattle visitors, residents and businesses. Also included are many city department and elected official's blogs, Twitter feeds, as well as Flickr and Facebook pages. The record series number is 5202-01. To view the websites go to: https://www.archive-it.org/collections/3241

Flickr News

Take a break from Bertha news to look back on the central waterfront's earlier days. Our Seattle's Waterfront set on Flickr (http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/sets/72157633512897548/) has views of piers, boats, waterfront businesses, and the now-defunct

trolley. There's even a film clip (and the whole film is available on our YouTube site). Take a look to see what has (and hasn't) changed on the waterfront.

Most popular Flickr image (January-March):
Edison School cooking class, 1955
http://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/12838646183

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

Most Popular Image:

Interns and Volunteers

Corrina Johnson, undergraduate student from Seattle University, finished a productive quarter of interning with the Archives. She processed audio recordings from 2003 to 2007, scanned images of Discovery Park, and processed City Council Committee as well as Model City records. We're grateful for her good work.

Valerie Vega, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, is completing an internship with SMA. She is processing audio recordings from the 1970s, learning about records management, and processing Legislative Department Central Staff records. Valerie has also cataloged photographic prints and is continuing to process the recently acquired Discovery Park photo collection.

Lauren Welch from the UW Information School is volunteering at the Archives; her current work includes processing videotape from the Woodland Park Zoo, processing Neighborhood Matching Fund grant records, and scanning City Light negatives.

Another volunteer, Kate Chmela, is currently working on processing parks construction files, and will be working on a project relating to electronic records.

Upcoming Events
- Pacific Northwest History Conference "Citizenships in the Pacific Northwest" April 3-5, 2014 - Vancouver, Washington
- AKCHO Annual Awards Program, April 22, 2014 Museum of History and Industry 6 PM with assistance from 4Culture
- Northwest Archivists Conference "Moving Forward: Reaching New Audiences with the Past" Spokane, Washington May 29-31