

ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle
Seattle Municipal Archives

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Office of the City Clerk
Legislative Department

Message from the City Archivist

A few years ago, our friends at HistoryLink made a compelling case that 1907 was a pivotal year in Seattle history. Via an article in *Seattle Metropolitan* and a travelling exhibit (on which we partnered) 1907 was identified as the year that Seattle “grew up” and “became a city.”

The evidence clearly supported the “became a city” claim. In or around 1907, the geographic size of the city doubled with the annexations of small towns on its perimeter; a wealth of businesses and institutions were established; the population was booming; and much more. The thesis is hard to argue against.

I want to suggest, however, that 1890, not 1907, might very well be the year that Seattle “grew up,” at least from a governance standpoint.

The year 1889 witnessed the Great Fire of Seattle and Washington statehood. The latter required Seattle to create its first home rule City Charter; the former dictated the shape that the Charter would take.

Prior to the Great Fire, Seattle government was largely a volunteer operation. Salaried employees were few - primarily police officers, the engineers in the volunteer fire companies, and the few City officials identified in the Charter. The Charter, approved by the Territorial Legislature, noted that the Mayor and Council members were not allowed to receive compensation.

The City’s inability to adequately respond to the Fire, the massive task of disaster recovery, and the accelerated population growth of the late 1880s, all demonstrated the need for a large and professional government. The Freeholders who drafted the 1890 Charter (a who’s who of Seattle business leaders) were profoundly influenced by these factors. The result was a progressive document that provided for a vastly larger and highly regulated City government.

The new Charter identified 13 departments of government, created seven regulatory boards and commissions, established a bicameral City Council, and greatly expanded the powers of the City. The specifics of the changes are too numerous to describe here, but the transformation in the form and feel of municipal government was from rural frontier to modern bureaucratic, from volunteer to professional.

One of my favorite records in the Archives is the original 1890 Charter. It is comprised of gorgeous calligraphy on vellum, bound in leather. Physically beautiful, it carries great symbolic importance as a talisman for the quantum shift in Seattle governance.

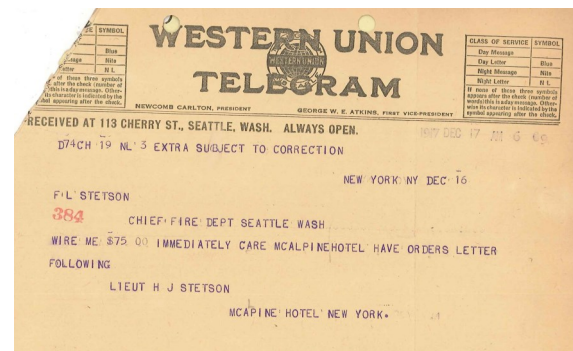
Governance under the provisions of the 1890 Charter was not always efficient. After only six years, a new Charter was adopted. While many of its details changed, the new document still recognized the reality of Seattle as a big, growing city, and the need for a large, professional government to run it.

Of course, a single year cannot be said to be THE year a municipality grows up. The events of 1890 and 1907 support arguments for the signal importance of those years, but so do events of other years. Municipal growth and maturation is a process, albeit a messy process with fits and starts, with moments of varying significance. Seattle, as are all cities and towns, is a work in progress.

97 Years Ago: World War I

Fire Chief Frank Stetson’s correspondence includes copies of letters to his son Horatio who served in World War I. On December 21, 1917, Chief Stetson wrote:

The Fire Department is running in the same old way. About 70 of the men have dropped out and joined the Military, and a few resign every day or so. There is an awful upheaval regarding the clean-up of the city. They have not yet impeached the Mayor. The Grand jury will take it up which meets soon. The City is still under quarantine and the ban will not be lifted until the clean-up is satisfactory to the commanding Officer at Camp Lewis. I have my doubts as to their impeaching Gill before the March election, they do then. He is some fighter. If you are sent to France soon keep us posed as to your whereabouts. You know your mother was very much opposed to your going and will be very anxious...to hear from you.”



Correspondence from Box 4, Folder 4, Record Series 2801-01, Fire Chief’s Correspondence *Seattle Municipal Archives*

(WWI *cont.*)

On August 7, 1918 Chief Stetson wrote:

The Fire Department is very much crippled by reason of men going to war and taking up other employment where they get more pay. We are some fifty men short at the present time. Fortunately however we are not having any large fires but numerous small ones.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM		
ROSE W. E. ATKINS, VICE-PRESIDENT	NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT	BELVIDERE BROOKS, VICE-PRESIDENT
RECEIVERS No.	TIME FILED	CHECK
SEND the following Telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to		
NIGHT LETTER. Dec. 17, 1917.		
Lieutenant H J Stetson Signal Corps U S Army McAlpine Hotel, New York City.		
Have wired Seventy Five Dollars today.		
F L Stetson 3rd & Main Sts.		Frank L Stetson

Stetson wired his son money when he was in New York City and sent him, on request, his khaki uniform from his service on the Mexican border with the Washington National Guard.

Horatio Stetson was discharged from the Signal Corps, US Army on August 15, 1919.

Recently Processed: Councilmember Richard Conlin Subject Files

The records of Richard Conlin (Record Series 4621-02) are processed and available for research. Dating from 1993 to 2013, the subject files include correspondence, memoranda, reports, studies and other materials relating to policy and budget issues. Primarily reflecting Conlin's work as chair of committees and his personal interests, the records are good sources for research on neighborhood planning, parks development, environmental issues, food and hunger issues, solid waste reduction, and transportation. Other subjects include: waterfront development, urban forestry, State Route 520 planning, Northgate General Development and, and issues surrounding the Teen Dance Ordinance.

The Archives also holds Conlin's committee records, as well as many sources accessible through his website, captured on [Archive-It](#), including his blog, press releases and newsletter "Making it Work."



City Council President Richard Conlin at his swearing-in ceremony, January 4, 2010.

Item 170066, Seattle Municipal Archives



Councilmember Conlin speaking at the opening of the City Hall Plaza Farmers Market, June 23, 2009.

Item 166379, Seattle Municipal Archives

New *Seattle Voices*: Street Musicians in Public Places

On August 20, 1974, the Public Safety and Health Committee considered a petition from Jim Page for legislation permitting musicians to perform in parks and appropriate places on downtown streets. In Page's letter of June 11, 1974, requesting the change in legislation, he stated, "I make my living singing ballads, and have done so for many years, and I know better than to 'solicit' or 'panhandle' from my audience. My hat is quite visible on the ground, and there is nothing that needs to be said about it."

(Voices *cont.*)

Councilmember Revelle solicited comments from the Department of Licenses and Consumer Affairs, the Police Department, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Board of Public Works. Concerns expressed included impeding pedestrian traffic, soliciting contributions, use of objects such as tables, chairs, or carts, and limiting hours of activity.

Councilmember Revelle supported the petition and even suggested that "we Councilmembers might find street singing a new way to get our own points across and perhaps in a way that is just as politically effective." The petition was ultimately approved as Ordinance 102824; it was signed by City Council on September 16 and by the Mayor on September 20, 1974.

Visit the new "[Seattle Voices](#)" to listen to the committee meeting and hear Jim Page sing his song "Now's the Time for Talking" to City Council.

Seattle City Council NEWS RELEASE

1106 Seattle Municipal Building 600 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104
 Randy Revelle, Chairman August 13, 1974
 Public Safety & Health Committee
 Tel. 583-2359
 Further info: Hugh McIntosh, 583-2609 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Aug. 20 Hearing: Licensing Street Musicians)

Licensing of street musicians will be considered in a public hearing at 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 20 by the Seattle City Council Public Safety and Health Committee, according to Councilman Randy Revelle, chairman.

Outreach

In addition to presentations this fall to City employees and to Seattle Central College students, SMA staff provided Seattle Public Library staff with an overview of resources and tools at SMA to an interested, lively and receptive audience.



Julie Kerssen presents on resources in the Seattle Municipal Archives to librarians from Seattle Public Library.

New Photographs

Negatives from 1997-2002, taken primarily by City photographers Erik Stuhaug and Ian Edelstein, are listed in the Subject Files index. Included are City activities such as Earth Day, inspection of the Tolt Watershed, and signing of a Clean Cities agreement. A complete list of image titles can be found [here](#); researchers will need to come to the Archives and request to view them. All images can be scanned on demand for \$8 per image.

As scanning of Engineering Department negatives works its way through 1963, images are appearing online of construction of the I-5 freeway.



Freeway progress along 6th Avenue from top of Municipal building, April 11, 1963

Item 173692, Seattle Municipal Archives



Construction of freeway overpass on James Street between 6th and 7th Avenues, April 25, 1963

Item 173714, Seattle Municipal Archives

YouTube and Flickr News

The Urban Forestry Moving Images collection (Record Series 8108-01) was digitized and cataloged by volunteer Rachel Price. Dating from 1988 to 1997, the collection includes Hi8 and VHS videotape regarding Seattle's stewardship of its urban trees and shrubs.

Included are a commemoration of Arbor Day in Seattle, with a Tree City Award presented to Norm Rice; a Global ReLeaf ceremony at Seattle Center's Flag Pavilion; Arborfest '89 activities; a celebration of Seattle Tilth's 10th anniversary; Seattle Engineering Department traffic circle tree planting; neighborhood tree planting activities; sidewalk tree damage mitigation; and a Heritage Tree dedication ceremony.



Dedication of Japanese Umbrella Pine at 172 23rd Ave, October 1996. Speakers include Charles Aker, Jan Drago and Arthur Lee Jacobson.

Item 3654, Seattle Municipal Archives



"Reduce Your Chills," 1987.

Item 3662, Seattle Municipal Archives.

The most popular item on YouTube in the past three months is a Seattle City Light public service announcement "Reduce Your Chills and Cut Your Bills" from 1987. Presented through Rap, it features the lyrics of Sir Mix-A-Lot and dancers from the Madrona Youth Theater.

Check out the SMA [YouTube](#) site and see what's new!

Seattle Municipal Archives

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archives@seattle.gov <http://www.seattle.gov/CityArchives>

(Flickr *cont.*)

Our "Seattle at Work Flickr" set looks at people working in a variety of jobs throughout over a century. City employees are documented in various roles, from judges to switchboard operators to sewer workers. Photos provide a look inside a 1920s fire station, a 1960s engineering office, and the Fremont Bridge operator's booth in 2001. Workers who worked for private businesses are also portrayed, including roles like cook, barber, teacher, and lumber mill worker. If you've ever wanted to see a photo of a broom winder at work – not to mention park rangers, secretaries, meter readers, mechanics, street painters, or many other occupations – take a look and see how Seattleites have earned their livings over the years.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/sets/72157606240490571/>

Most popular Flickr image: Railroad Avenue, 1934

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/14927825162/>



Interns and Volunteers

Cierra Cooper, a work study student from Seattle University, transitioned from a summer to a fall schedule.

Hailey Galper continues her internship from Seattle University working with video, photographic slides, and textual records.

Volunteer Kate Chmela continues to work on electronic records project.

Volunteer Maris Sovold is working with Woodland Park Zoo photographic materials.

New volunteer Jennifer Woodfield is starting with SMA this fall.

Upcoming Events

October 18 Seattle Home Movie Day 10 AM
Northwest Film Forum

October 23 Seattle Area Archivists joint meeting with
ARMA 2:30-4:30 Seattle City Hall, Bertha K Landes Room