

# ARCHIVES GAZETTE



City of Seattle  
Seattle Municipal Archives

Number 85 Fall 2023

Office of the City Clerk  
Legislative Department

## Out of the Archives

In addition to showing City of Seattle work and events, and scenes of city life, photographs in SMA's collections often include people. Some are city employees at work, and others are community members attending city events or simply out and about in Seattle. Occasionally notes with the original photo will identify people by name, but more frequently, they do not. We are always thrilled to hear from someone who recognizes a face or has more information to help point us in the right direction. For example, a recent tip allowed us to identify the person in [this photo](#) as Jerry Baker, founding member of the Cascade Bicycle Club.

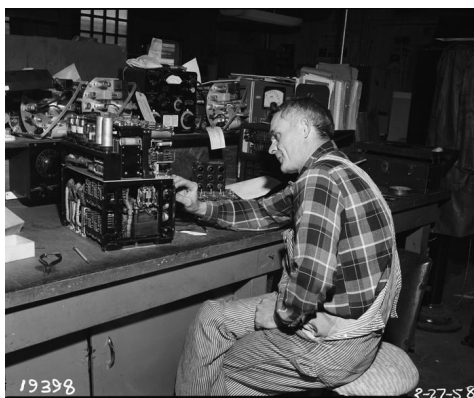
We've compiled a collection of photos with unidentified people in [an album on our Flickr site](#) and we encourage you to browse through and see if you recognize someone!



Department of Weights and Measures employees, circa 1920s. [Image 191697](#), Series 2705-03, SMA.



City Light employee, circa 1970-1980. [Image 190340](#), Series 1204-04, SMA.



Repairing a traffic signal, 1958. [Image 57190](#), Series 2613-07, SMA.

(Archives, cont'd)



Water Department employee, circa 1990. [Image 102245](#), Series 8200-14, SMA.

## Archives Month 2023

October is American Archives Month! This year's theme in Washington State is "Barchives: The History of Food and Drink in Washington State." Join us for a kickoff event on the morning of October 3<sup>rd</sup> in Seattle City Hall's first floor lobby area. We will have an exhibit on display and archivists on hand to answer questions about SMA.

October 11 is [#AskAnArchivist Day](#), and once again we'll be taking to [Instagram](#) to answer any and all questions

about archives and the work archivists do. We'll also be partnering with other Seattle-area government archives (King County Archives, National Archives at Seattle, Puget Sound Regional Archives, and Seattle Public Schools Archives) for an Ask An Archivist brown-bag webinar from noon to 1pm. Join us to learn about the public government records available in our area, and bring your questions! Registration is required, just email [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov).

Be sure to check out our [virtual collection on Restaurants, Cafes, and Taverns in Seattle](#), and follow us on [Instagram](#) to stay informed on other plans for the month, including a new online exhibit and a local history pub trivia night. More details coming soon!



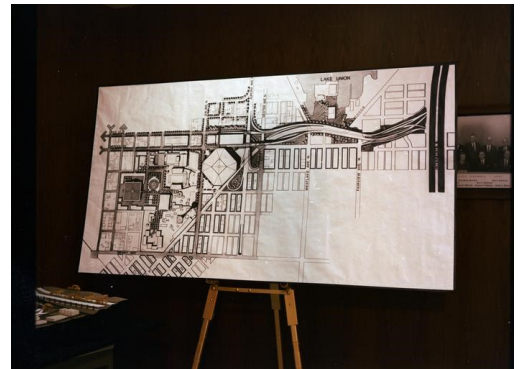
(Newly processed, cont'd)

An additional 30 boxes of materials have been added to **Transportation Director's Subject Files (Series 8100-03)**. The materials span the 2000s and document regional transportation projects and issues such as the Alaskan Way Viaduct, SR 520, and Sound Transit, and include materials such as reports, correspondence, studies, and budget records.

## 53 Years Ago: Anti-Freeway Sentiment

As part of a planned system of new highways in Seattle, city engineers plotted an east-west expressway called the Bay Freeway. It was to connect SR 520, Interstate 5, and SR 99 south of Lake Union roughly along Mercer Street. A bond issue was passed in 1960 to fund the project, and it was incorporated into the city's comprehensive plan.

Anti-freeway sentiment in the city grew throughout the 1960s and led to the cancellation of the R.H. Thomson Expressway in 1970, but the Bay Freeway was still a go. Plans approved that year included an elevated section that critics believed would wall off Lake Union from the rest of the city.



Display model of the Bay Freeway, April 18, 1970. [Image 192095](#), Series 2613-07, SMA.

[Letters](#) and [telegrams](#) came to the City Council from constituents expressing their opposition. Some had questions about the project's funding, but many just did not believe the freeway was desirable or necessary. Representative quotes included:

"I am totally opposed to the construction of the Bay Freeway. Freeways have amply proven themselves individually ugly, divisive to the aesthetic unity of a city, and generative to more cars than they can handle. Seattle freeways, especially, are eyesores."

"I am at a loss to understand how, in the face of mounting evidence against the desirability of further freeway-building in the city, the Council nevertheless is considering additional freeway construction... it's been demonstrated time and again that additional freeways do not relieve congestion. In fact, they tend to worsen it by attracting an even greater volume of traffic, which, in turn, raises further needs for more freeway building."

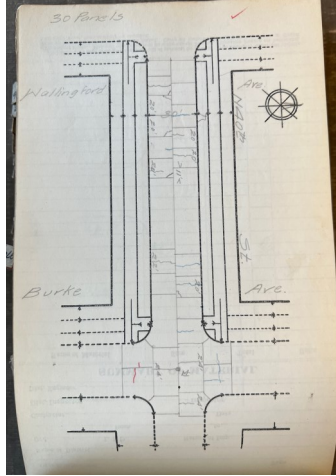
"[M]y main objection is the physical and artistic damage to the remains of a possibly lovely city, mine as well as yours."

After a lawsuit and a court judgment stopping the project, City Council put the project before voters in a February 1972 referendum. Fifty-five percent of Seattle voters were opposed to the plan, and the Bay Freeway was canceled.

## Newly Processed Collections

Three collections recently transferred to SMA from the SPU Engineering Records Vault are now processed and available for research.

Two volumes of **Pavement Crack Investigations (Series 2618-04)** document cracks in pavements on Seattle city streets between 1925 and 1930. Included are details about inspections and failures, as well as street diagrams showing cracks found by inspectors. A **Cost Estimation Brain Book (Series 2615-04)** lists costs of all aspects of city infrastructure construction circa 1940. Presumably used for estimating project budgets, it includes costs for materials as well as labor costs. An **Inspection and Permit Ledger (Series 2618-05)** covers 1915-1939 and itemizes inspector reports and permits issued by year. Beginning in 1930, truck traffic inspector tallies are also included, noting route inspections, vehicle impounds, and various types of traffic tickets.



Pavement crack diagram, N. 40th between Wallingford and Burke. Series 2618-04, SMA.

Also processed are **Lighting Design Lab Newsletters (Series 1212-01)** dating from Winter 1990 to Fall 2018. Opened in 1989, the Lighting Design Lab was created to further developments in energy efficiency, technology control, and to provide lighting quality for designers and users of lighting systems. The newsletters include event schedules, news updates regarding technology developments in associated fields, and schedules for classes that were taught at the lab or at other lab locations across the Pacific Northwest.



Lighting Design Lab Newsletter, Fall 2012. Series 1212-01, SMA.

**Reinvesting in Youth Records (Series 3620-06)** document the activities of a King County partnership between local governments, foundations, and community representatives intended

to reduce juvenile crime. The program aimed to promote the health of youth and families, increase the capacity of community based organizations that served at-risk youth, prevent juvenile involvement in the justice system, and save public monies. Materials span 2001-2009 and include program information, agreements and applications, and reports.

## Recently Processed Photos

This year, nearly 800 images in **Department of Parks and Recreation Digital Photographs (Record Series 5802-15)** have been cataloged and added to our [Digital Collections site](#), bringing the current total to more than 2,000 images available for use.

Covering the last two decades, and featuring Parks facilities all over the city, the photos in this collection show opening and groundbreaking ceremonies with public officials, public art, walkways and trails, community centers, playgrounds and courts, skate parks, viewpoints, and gardens.



International Children's Park reopening, March 3, 2012.  
[Item 205026](#), Series 5802-15, SMA.



*Above:* Delridge Skate Park opening day, September 17, 2011, [Item 204909](#)  
*Left:* Public art in Marra Desimone Park, February 2, 2022, [Item 204195](#)  
Series 5802-15, SMA.

Images from **Department of Parks and Recreation Slides (Series 5802-09)** covering the 1940s through the 1980s are also being processed this year. Browse for fun images of roller skating at Green Lake, bike riding and Seattle residents engaged in various states of play and sport.

Jerry Baker, founding member of Cascade Bicycle Club, rides a penny farthing bicycle, circa 1980.  
[Image 204332](#), Series 5802-09, SMA.



*(Recently processed, cont'd)*

Roller skating at Green Lake, circa 1980.  
[Item 204179](#), Series 5802-09, SMA.



Youth playing games in an unidentified playfield, circa 1980.  
[Item 204985](#), Series 5802-09, SMA.

## Volunteers

SMA recently hosted Stanford student Novia Liu, who spent her summer break volunteering in the archives. She worked on numerous projects, including scanning and cataloging historic slides of downtown Seattle (including the image below), indexing City-related state supreme court briefs, cataloging document transcriptions, and doing lots and lots of reshelving.

We enjoyed having her in the office and wish her the best back at school!



Aerial view of the Central Business District with the Kingdome, circa 1985.  
[Image 205761](#), Series 1629-01, SMA.

## YouTube and Flickr News

This circa 1950 photo showing 5th Avenue in downtown Seattle, full of traffic and brimming with theater marquee, was recently posted to [SMA's Flickr site](#) and has been popular with followers.



[Item 205599](#), Series 1204-01, SMA.

Recently posted to [SMA's YouTube channel](#) is a 1983 documentary on the evolution of Seattle's street trees. *The Reforestation of Seattle* was produced by the WA Department of Natural Resources and the City of Seattle, and includes images of parks and public spaces, streets and traffic, and residential neighborhoods. Also posted is a series of raw footage from the documentary.



[The Reforestation of Seattle](#), Event 443, Record Series 2613-09, SMA.

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## SMA in the News

A post on the [SDOT blog](#) about the new Portal Porch public space at 1st & Battery includes information about the history of the project and the decommissioning of the Battery Street Tunnel. An Engineering Department photo from SMA showing the construction of the tunnel was used to illustrate the article. The 1st & Battery Portal Porch opened on August 25.



Battery Street Tunnel under construction, April 9, 1953.

[Image 44265](#), Series 2613-07, SMA.

Other images from SMA's collections were used to illustrate news stories such as a [KIRO story](#) on the I-5 Ship Canal Bridge; a [GeekWire story](#) on studying Pacific Northwest earthquakes; and a [story in the South Seattle Emerald](#) on the South End community's feelings about Seafair.

## 50 Years Ago: Discovery Park Opening Day



Discovery Park officially opened to the public on October 28, 1973.

Attending were Senator Henry Jackson (seen speaking here), Mayor Wes Uhlman, former Mayor J. D. Braman, and about 300 members of the public.

[Image 195979](#), Series 2613-07, SMA.

## Upcoming Events

- Oct 3 Archives Month Kick-Off.** Seattle City Hall 1st floor lobby, 10am-noon.
- Oct 11 Ask An Archivist Webinar.** Virtual, noon-1pm. Email [archives@seattle.gov](mailto:archives@seattle.gov) to register.
- Nov 15 History Café: The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library.** MOHAI, 6:30-8pm. Registration [here](#).