



Spring 2007 Newsletter

Upcoming Spring Meeting

May 1, 2007
2-4pm

NARA-Pacific Alaska Region
6125 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle

In our recent member survey, many of you expressed interest in programs about preservation. Your wish is our command! **Gary Menges**, Preservation Administrator at the University of Washington will present a two-part program. First, he will talk about "preservation in a nutshell," covering basic concepts we all need to know. Second, Gary will review recent preservation initiatives in the Northwest to provide a framework for a discussion on some possible new preservation initiatives.

Models for different kinds of programs we could implement locally include the [North Carolina Preservation Consortium](#), a statewide organization focused on preservation of cultural collections, and [Portals](#) in Portland, a disaster-planning network. Gary is looking for input on how to proceed with local initiatives, so this is a great chance to both learn and contribute! You may want to review the document "[Our Vision for Preservation in the Pacific Northwest](#)" before the meeting.

Need to contact Seattle Area Archivists?

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Visit us on the Web at www.historylink.org/saa

Note from the Chair

One of my favorite things about being an archivist is the cool “stuff” I find unexpectedly while processing collections. Whether it be a letter signed by Robert F. Kennedy, a petition complaining about cows roaming through Ballard, flyers claiming that various mainstream figures are communists, or a cool Seafair pin, these finds can make a work day feel like a scavenger hunt.

I've always tended to share these unearthed treasures with whomever happened to be nearby, but lately I've been doing so in a more formal way as well, by writing an “Archives Find of the Month” column for our departmental newsletter. Our archives is a small unit within a larger department that doesn't always have a good idea about what we do. Judging by the feedback I've gotten, sharing information about our “cool stuff” is making colleagues smile while at the same time letting them know that not everything we have is dusty and boring. One story – about letters written to the mayor by teenage girls excited about an upcoming Beatles concert – even resulted in a reference request by a colleague who was just curious about the original documents.

I've heard about other outreach tactics local organizations are using, from behind-the-scenes tours to curriculum development. All of us could use new ideas for reaching out to our constituents, whether it be colleagues, teachers, donors, History Day students, or administrators wielding budgeting power. If you're willing to share what you're doing along these lines in your organization, drop me a line at julie.kerssen@seattle.gov. I'll write up any responses I get for the next newsletter so we can all benefit from the group's collective wisdom and creativity!

Julie Kerssen
Seattle Municipal Archives

Steering Committee & Contact Information

Julie Kerssen, Chair
Seattle Municipal Archives

Julie Viggiano, Secretary
Seattle Municipal Archives

Patty McNamee, Vice Chair
NARA

Marjorie Reeves, Treasurer
Historian, UDC

Sara Nau, Member-at-Large
Starbucks Coffee Company

Repository News

News from the Seattle Municipal Archives

News from the Seattle Municipal Archives

We all know that February is Black History Month, but did you also know that April is National Fair Housing Month? Following a long and often painful journey, Congress passed the Federal Fair Housing Act on April 11, 1968. In celebration of this national milestone and its effect on Seattle's urban history, the SMA recently presented two speakers: Rev. Samuel McKinney, former pastor of Seattle's Mount Zion Baptist Church, and Dr. Quintard Taylor, specialist in African American history in the American West and Professor of American History at the University of Washington.

A witness to and participant in the open housing movement, Rev. McKinney shared stories with a City Hall audience on February 13th. He talked of how he and the members of his congregation had faced discrimination in Seattle's housing market before open housing legislation was passed. Neighborhoods outside the Central Area were effectively off-limits to African American homebuyers. Rev. McKinney also discussed other aspects of the civil rights area in Seattle.

Dr. Taylor went back to the earliest years of Seattle to describe the relative racial harmony of that time before describing how increasing racism led to housing discrimination and the spread of covenants restricting non-whites from buying homes. He discussed how the Central Area grew to contain the vast majority of the city's African Americans because they were not able to buy houses elsewhere. Dr. Taylor also introduced his website about African American history, www.blackpast.org.

In conjunction with these events, the Seattle Municipal Archives created an exhibit telling the story of the open housing movement in Seattle. This exhibit remains on view in the third floor lobby of City Hall.



Reverend Samuel McKinney, City Hall 2/13/2007

Also, The Seattle Municipal Archives recently completed a finding aid for a set of audits and reports relating to the alleged embezzlement of city funds around the turn of the last century. A 1907 audit discovered that over \$68,000 in city funds were missing. Also missing was the former Comptroller, John Riplinger, who served two terms from 1902 to 1906.

The city attempted to locate Riplinger using Pinkerton detectives. When he was eventually found in Honduras, the City Treasurer worked with the State Department to negotiate an extradition treaty. Within a month of the treaty's enactment, however, Riplinger "voluntarily" returned to Seattle, claiming the timing was coincidental. (Meanwhile, a "Lee Christmas" had offered to kidnap the fugitive for trial.)

Riplinger was charged with nine counts of larceny by embezzlement. The prosecutor decided to try the strongest charge first – a case where the state was able to prove both the delivery and the cashing of a check by Riplinger, and where a City Council member witnessed him carrying the cash out of the bank.

Riplinger's defense was based on the claim that the cashed check, while initially written to the city, was later offered as a personal loan. Riplinger could not account for why he had not come forth with this explanation two years before when he was first accused.

The jury deliberated for only 30 minutes before finding him not guilty. The prosecutor, stunned by the verdict, said he still planned to try the other eight counts, and threatened to prosecute Riplinger for perjury. However, he later dropped the charges, admitting, "there would be little hope of securing a conviction." Riplinger, in the free and clear, immediately made plans to return to his banana business in Honduras.

Seattle—NARA's Pacific Alaska Region

NARA accessioned over 320 cubic feet in the first three months of this year.

One set of records that might be of interest to many is a significant case file from the Records of the U. S. Attorneys Office, the case of D.B. Cooper who hijacked and extorted \$200,000 and then parachuted from the plane while flying over the Pacific Northwest some 35 years ago. A FBI report makes up over half of the case file.

Other accessions include files from the following departments:

- Records of the District Courts of the United States (Record Group 21)
- Records of the Bureau of Land Management (Record Group 49)
- Records of the Forest Service (Record Group 95)
- Records of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (Record Group 100)
- Records of the Bonneville Power Administration (Record Group 305)
- Records of the Federal Highway Administration (Record Group 406)
- Records of the Department of Energy (Record Group 434)