

# Seattle City Light Department History File, 1894-1972

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Seattle City Light
<b>Title</b>	Seattle City Light Department History File
<b>Dates</b>	1894-1972 (inclusive) 1894 1972
<b>Quantity</b>	1.2 cubic ft., (3 boxes)
<b>Collection Number</b>	1200-11
<b>Summary</b>	The Seattle City Light Department History File, 1894-1972, consists of correspondence, typed histories, reports, newspaper clippings, and pamphlets related to the history of Seattle City Light.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Seattle Municipal Archives</a> Seattle Municipal Archives Office of the City Clerk City of Seattle PO Box 94728 98124-4728 Seattle, WA Telephone: 206-233-7807 Fax: 206-386-9025 <a href="mailto:archives@seattle.gov">archives@seattle.gov</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Records are open to the public.
<b>Languages</b>	English

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## Historical Note

Seattle City Light provides electricity and electrical and conservation services to its public and private customers. It is the largest public utility in the Pacific Northwest. Public responsibility for electrical energy dates to 1890 with creation of the Department of Lighting and Water Works. In 1902, Seattle voters passed a bond issue to develop hydroelectric power on the Cedar River under the administration of the Water Department. Electricity from this development began to serve Seattle in 1905. A City Charter amendment in 1910 created the Lighting Department. Under the leadership of Superintendent James D. Ross, the department developed the Skagit River hydroelectric project, which began supplying power in 1924. Both public and private power were supplied to Seattle until 1951 when the City purchased the private electrical power supply operations, making the Lighting Department the sole supplier. The Boundary Project in northeastern Washington began operations in 1967 and supplied over half of City Light's power generation. By the early 21st century, approximately ten percent of City Light's income came from the sale of surplus energy to customers in the Northwest and Southwest with the remainder of City Light's financial support coming from customer revenue. The current name of the agency was adopted in 1978 when the Department was reorganized.

# Content Description

Correspondence, news clippings, brochures and pamphlets, reports, typescript histories, and photographs relating to departmental history. The major topics include Superintendent John D. Ross, the Cedar Falls power plant, public power, energy in the Pacific Northwest, and the Skagit River power project.

Histories include timelines detailing the department's history, biographies of superintendents, and discussions of hydroelectric power. Speech transcripts are also included, and some material appears to have been prepared for a 1946 "publicity book," which was to include information on specific dams and power plants, statistics and financial data, maps, employee information, and feature stories. Histories and publicity materials stress the low power rates enjoyed by Seattle's citizens. References to the agency as "Your City Light" also appear frequently; one history states, "...it all belongs to the people of Seattle! You, as a Seattle citizen, are one of the owners of City Light. You may well be proud of this progressive, flourishing enterprise built from its own earnings, to bring the many benefits of low cost hydroelectric power to a great city."

## Use of the Collection

### Preferred Citation

[Item and date], Seattle City Light Department History File, Record Series 1200-11. Box [number], Folder [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

## Administrative Information

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

### Seattle City Light Department History File, 1894-1972

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	Annual Report and Report on the Department of Lighting	1938-1942
1/2	Typed History Essays	1945-1960
1/3	City Light Newsletter	1952-1969
1/4	News Releases	1954

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
1/5	Pacific Northwest Power History, Pamphlets	1894-1959
1/6	Pacific Northwest Power History, Typed Essays	1948-1971
1/7	Pacific Northwest Power History, News Clippings	1952-1964
1/8	J.D. Ross, News Clippings	1930-1939
1/9	J.D. Ross, Typed Biographies	1940
1/10	J.D. Ross, Public Ownership, Newsletter	1934-1040
1/11	Pamphlets	1915-1937
1/12	Political Pamphlets and News Clippings	1930-1941
1/13	Consumer Pamphlets Series	1950
1/14	Pamphlets	1950-1970
1/15	Skagit River Project Reports	1920
1/16	Skagit River Project Typed Reports	1959-1963
1/17	Skagit River Project News Clippings	1959-1972
1/18	Cedar Falls History	1941-1965
1/19	Public Power News Clippings	1952-1966
2/1	Power Bill Political Pamphlets	1929-1935
2/2	Power Bill Typed Essays	1930-1943
2/3	News Clippings	1900-1921
2/4	News Clippings	1930-1937
2/5	News Clippings	1945
2/6	News Clippings	1952-1959

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
2/7	News Clippings, New York Times, Presenting Washington State	1959
2/8	News Clippings	1963-1969
2/9	News Clippings, Seattle Magazine	1969
2/10	News Clippings	1970-1971
2/11	Reports	1909-1933
2/12	Monthly Statements	1935-1939
2/13	Monthly Statements	1940-1949
2/14	Monthly Statements	1950-1955
2/15	Reading Log	1911-1913
2/16	Correspondence, Memo's, Estimates on Rates	1905-1920
2/17	Seafair Pamphlets	1960-1973
2/18	Greater Seattle Info	1961
2/19	Seafair News Clippings	1961-1965
2/20	Essay, Seattle City Light and Its Publics	undated
3/1	The Nature of Gravitation (by J.D. Ross)	1933
3/2	Correspondence, J.D. Ross	1909-1934
3/3	Newspaper Clippings, City Light	1923-1953
3/4	Monthly Condition of City Light Funds	1937-1944
3/5	J.D. Ross Biographical and Historical Information	undated
3/6	Davis Ranch History	undated
3/7	Skagit: Visiting Groups and Tours	undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
3/8	Skagit History: Pre City Light	undated
3/9	Skagit History	undated
3/10	Skagit History	undated
3/11	Skagit Railroad Historical Information	undated

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Electric power plants--Washington (State)--Cedar Falls

Electric power--Washington (State)--Seattle

Electric utilities--Washington (State)--Seattle

Hydroelectric power plans--Washington (State)

Water-power--Washington (State)

### Personal Names :

Ross, J. D. (James Delmage), 1872-1939

### Corporate Names :

Seattle City Light

Cedar Falls Power Plant (Wash.)

Seattle (Wash.). Dept. of Lighting

Seattle (Wash.). Dept. of Lighting and Water Works

Seattle (Wash.). Lighting Dept.

### Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.)--Politics and government

Skagit River (B.C. and Wash.)

### Form or Genre Terms :

Histories

Leaflets

Pamphlets

Photographic prints

Finding aid prepared by Shannon Lynch and Scott Cline  
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