

Seattle Justice Court Liquor Search Dockets, 1923-1944

Overview of the Collection

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Creator | Washington (State). Municipal Court (Seattle) |
| Title | Seattle Justice Court Liquor Search Dockets |
| Dates | 1923-1944 (inclusive) 1923 1944 1923-1932 (bulk) 1923 1932 |
| Quantity | 8 volumes |
| Collection Number | 5604-01 |
| Summary | Record of warrants issued by Justice Court to search for illegally possessed alcohol during Prohibition era. |
| Repository | Seattle Municipal Archives 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 archives@seattle.gov |
| Access Restrictions | Records are open to the public. |
| Languages | English |

Historical Note

State law in 1891 created a Municipal Court system that included a Justice Court and Police Court. The Justice Court was a “court of limited jurisdiction” under the purview of King County. (In contrast, the city of Seattle was the parent agency for the Police Court.) The justices of the peace on the bench of the Justice Court dealt with misdemeanors, traffic offenses, minor civil suits, and small claims, and also heard liquor-related cases during Prohibition. More serious cases were referred to the county’s Superior Court. In 1961, the Washington State Justice Court Act combined the Justice Court and the District Court into one entity, a change that was adopted by King County in 1962.

Prohibition in Washington State began in 1916, three years before the U.S. Constitution was amended to outlaw the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcohol on a national level. The state law was less draconian – county auditors were allowed to grant permits to import limited amounts of alcohol – but was still widely violated. Bootleggers and rumrunners did a thriving business supplying Washingtonians with illegal liquor, and many people built stills to manufacture their own. Until Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Seattle civic leaders cracked down on this activity to varying degrees.

Mayor Hiram Gill was among the more severe, establishing a widely criticized “Dry Squad” to raid businesses and homes suspected of violating the ban.

Content Description

Record of warrants issued by Justice Court to search for illegally possessed alcohol. Includes address of search, date, officer’s name, and description of seized liquor and equipment (if any). Volume 8 (Liquor Search Docket) and Volume 2 (Liquor Search Warrant Docket) also contain names of individuals who were targets of searches. Seized liquor varied from amounts as small as half a pint to thousands of bottles. Officers also seized stills, mash, funnels, and jugs.

Liquor Search Dockets from 1938 to 1942 are held by the King County Archives. In addition, the Puget Sound Branch of the Washington State Archives holds one Liquor Search Docket dated 1924-1926 and one journal listing liquor search warrants dated 1923-1925.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[Item and date], Seattle Justice Court Liquor Search Dockets, Record Series 5604-01. Volume [number], Page [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

Administrative Information

Related Materials

Record series 5602-01 (Docket Record of Liquor Cases, 1917-1926) and 5602-02 (Liquor Docket Index, 1916-1926) relate to liquor-related cases heard in Police Court during this era.

Detailed Description of the Collection

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

Seattle Justice Court Liquor Search Dockets, 1923-1944

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Volume | | |
| 1 | Liquor Search Docket | 1923/11-1925/03 |
| 2 | Liquor Search Docket | 1925/03-1926/09 |
| 3 | Liquor Search Docket | 1926/09-1927/07 |

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 4 | Liquor Search Docket | 1927/07-1929/01 |
| 2 | Liquor Search Warrant Docket | 1927/08-1928/11 |
| 5 | Liquor Search Docket | 1929/01-1931/01 |
| 6 | Liquor Search Docket | 1931/01-1932/10 |
| 8 | Liquor Search Docket | 1944/05-1944/05 |

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Alcoholic beverages--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Law enforcement--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Municipal courts--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Prohibition--Washington (State)--Seattle

Corporate Names :

Washington (State). Municipal Court (Seattle)

Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.)

Form or Genre Terms :

Court records--Washington (State)--Seattle

Finding aid prepared by Julie Kerksen
 2006