

Seattle City Light Gorge Dam Development Project Photograph Albums, 1948-1962

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Seattle City Light
Title	Seattle City Light Gorge Dam Development Project Photograph Albums
Dates	1948-1962 (inclusive) 1948 1962
Quantity	1.6 cubic ft., ((6 boxes))
Collection Number	1204-11
Summary	Photographs documenting the construction of a powerhouse and diversion dam at the Gorge Dam on the Skagit River.
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
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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.

Historical Background

The original Gorge Dam was the third dam built by Seattle City Light on the Skagit River. Construction of the dam involved building a railroad to transport materials from Rockport to the dam site. The railroad was completed between 1920 and 1922. The dam, finished in 1924, included a diverting weir near the mouth of Gorge Creek, an 11,000-foot tunnel through solid granite, a power house, and a transmission line.

Photographs in this series document a later project at Gorge Dam which began in 1948 and included a powerhouse and a diversion dam. The Gorge Plant Powerhouse was completed in 1951, and construction of the Diversion Dam began in February 1955. The Gorge Diversion Dam was built 2 ½ miles above Gorge Powerhouse. The Gorge Diversion Dam was designed to make more efficient use of the Skagit River water flowing down from Diablo Dam, about five miles up the river. It replaced the wood crib dam which had been diverting the river water into the Gorge Powerhouse tunnel since 1924. Gorge High Dam was dedicated in 1961 and completed in 1962.

Content Description

Photographs in this record series document construction of the Gorge development project from 1948 to 1962. Included are prints of the Gorge Diversion Dam, Gorge Tunnel and Intake, Gorge Surge Tank, Gorge High Dam, Gorge Powerhouse, and Newhalem Creek Intake and Ladder Creek Settling Tank. Negatives for almost all of the prints are available in the Archives in a separate series.

Many of the photographs are available in the [online photograph database](#); selected photographs are available as high-resolution images.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[Title of image, date. Item number.] Gorge Dam Development Project Photograph Albums, Record Series 1204-12. Box [number], Folder [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Photographs are arranged by facility or structure; within these groupings, photographs are organized by negative or print number. The subjects are:

Gorge Tunnel, Intake, and Tanks

Gorge Diversion Dam

Gorge High Dam

Gorge Powerhouse

Detailed Description of the Collection

Gorge Tunnel, Intake, and Tanks, 1949-1950

The Gorge Tunnel images date from 1949. The images are 3 1/2x 5" inches and are pasted on 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper with typed descriptions. Images include the mucking trestle, the cribs, workers, the elevator pit, the sluiceway, and all stages of the tunnel construction. Workers and equipment are also pictured in this series of GT negatives. The negative numbers range from SP-4-GT to SP-249-GT.

The Gorge Surge Tank images date from 1949 to 1950. Negative numbers range from SP-1-GST to SP-90-GST. Over 75 prints are included and are accompanied typewritten descriptions of all aspects of construction. The images of the Ladder Creek Settling Tank date from 1950; no negative numbers are available for these 15 images.

The 25 Newhalem Creek Intake images date primarily from 1949 to 1950. Included are images of the diamond drill, the penstock, the Newhalem Creek Tunnel, and people working in the tunnel. The negative numbers range from SP-1-NC to SP-19-NC.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
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Box/Folder		
1/1	Gorge Tunnel and Intake (Negative numbers 4-GT to 423-GT)	1949
1/2	Gorge Tunnel and Intake (Negative numbers 141-GT to 247-GT)	1949
1/3	Gorge Tunnel and Intake (Negative numbers 249-GT to 423-GT)	1949
1/4	Gorge Surge Tank and Skyline (Negative numbers 1-GST to 90-GST 1949-1950)	1949-1950
1/5	Ladder Creek Settling Tank	1950
1/6	Newhalem Creek Intake (Negative numbers 1-NC to 19-NC 1949-1950)	1950

Gorge Diversion Dam, 1948-1950

Prints of the Gorge Diversion Dam date from 1948 to 1950 and are composed of two series. The "G" negative numbers document early work on Gorge Diversion Dam, from November 1948 to April 1949.

These images document work done by Cascade-Phillips Company. The images are 5 ½ x 7 inches and are mounted in a photograph album with descriptions, dates, and negative numbers.

The second series are “GDD” negatives and document the project from 1949 to 1950. Some prints from both series (primarily the GDD series), as well as a narrative history of the Gorge Diversion Dam project compiled from Project Engineer diaries, make up the unpublished volume “Gorge Diversion Dam: Record of Construction” which is included in this series. Also included in the album are “GT” series prints.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/7	Photograph Album (Negative numbers G20 to G65)	Nov. 1948-1949
2/1	Record of Construction 1 (Negative numbers SP-5-GDD to SP-30-GDD [not inclusive])	1948-1950
2/2	Record of Construction 2 (Negative numbers SP-12-GDD to SP-230-GDD [not inclusive])	1948-1950
2/3	Record of Construction 3 (Negative numbers SP-155-GDD to SP-334-GDD [not inclusive])	1949
2/4	Record of Construction 4 (Negative numbers SP-341-GDD to SP-487-GDD [not inclusive])	1949-1950

Gorge High Dam, 1948-1950

The largest number of images in the Gorge Project Photographs are of Gorge High Dam construction. Prints date from 1958 to 1959. The prints are pasted onto 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper, two to a page. In Box 3, prints are listed in numerical order and described. The prints number from GHD 5884 to 8379.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
<u>Photograph Inventory</u>		1959
Box/Folder		
3/1	Negative numbers SP-5884-GHD to SP-6530-GHD	
3/2	Negative numbers SP-6531-GHD to SP-6848-GHD	
3/3	Negative numbers SP 6848-GHD to SP-7390-GHD	
3/4	Negative numbers SP-7391-GHD to SP-8379-GHD	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	<u>Photographs</u>	1959
Box/Folder		
3/5	Negative numbers SP-5885-GHD to SP-5999-GHD	
3/6	Negative numbers SP-6000-GHD to SP-6099-GHD	
3/7	Negative numbers SP-6200-GHD to SP-6456-GHD	
4/1	Negative numbers SP-6457-GHD to SP-6600-GHD	
4/2	Negative numbers SP-6601-GHD to SP-6698-GHD	
4/3	Negative numbers SP-6699-GHD to SP-6848-GHD	
4/4	Negative numbers SP-6849-GHD to SP-7001-GHD	
4/5	Negative numbers SP-7002-GHD to SP-7099-GHD	
5/1	Negative numbers SP-7100-GHD to SP-7199-GHD	
5/2	Negative numbers SP-7200-GHD to SP-7298-GHD	
5/3	Negative numbers SP-7299-GHD to SP-7390-GHD	
5/4	Negative numbers SP-7391-GHD to SP-7541-GHD	
5/5	Negative numbers SP-7542-GHD to SP-7709-GHD	
6/1	Negative numbers SP-7714-GHD to SP-7903-GHD	
6/2	Negative numbers SP-7904-GHD to SP-8025-GHD	
6/3	Negative numbers SP-8026-GHD to SP-8148-GHD	
6/4	Negative numbers SP-8149-GHD to SP-8272-GHD	
6/5	Negative numbers SP-8273-GHD to SP-8379-GHD	

Gorge Powerhouse Photographs, 1956-1962

The images of the Gorge Powerhouse date from 1956 to 1962. The prints number from SP-857-GPH to SP-1-22-GPH. Descriptions are included with the images which tend to be very technical. Included are images of the generator, turbine, gages, scroll case, piping, and other equipment. Photographs also include workers and vehicles used to transport equipment.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
6/6	Negative numbers 857-GPH to 923-GPH	1956-1957
6/7	Negative numbers 924-GPH to 1022-GPH	1958-1962

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Dam construction--Washington (State)--Photographs

Dams--Washington (State)--Photographs

Diversion weirs--Washington (State)--Photographs

Corporate Names :

Seattle City Light

Form or Genre Terms :

Photograph albums

Photographic prints

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