

# Seattle Fire Department Chief's Correspondence, 1894-1951

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Seattle (Wash.). Fire Dept.
<b>Title</b>	Seattle Fire Department Chief's Correspondence
<b>Dates</b>	1894-1951 (inclusive) 1894 1951
<b>Quantity</b>	7.2 cubic feet, (19 boxes)
<b>Collection Number</b>	2801-01
<b>Summary</b>	Correspondence relating to Fire Department activities.
<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
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for processing this record series was provided through a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

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## Historical Note

The creation of the Seattle Fire Department (SFD) can be traced back to July 6th, 1876, when the all-volunteer Seattle Engine Company No.1 was organized by a meeting of citizens convinced of their growing town's need for a dedicated fire-suppression capability. The various fire companies that appeared in proceeding years were similarly equipped and administered on a private basis until 1883, when the City Charter was amended to create and fund equipment, but not staff, for a centralized municipal fire department. The first fire chief of this new volunteer organization, Gardner Kellogg, would also become the first chief of the professionalized department in 1889, as well as the first Fire Marshall in 1901. The volunteer-based system persisted into the late 1880s, when the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 destroyed over 30 city blocks and resulted in approximately \$12-16 million in damages. Under pressure from the insurance industry and its citizens, the city council acknowledged the inadequacy of a part-time force to meet the city's expanding need for fire protection. The council passed Ordinance No. 1212 in 1889, which reformed Seattle's seven volunteer companies into a paid, professional unit of 32 men organized into five district fire stations.

The decades following the birth of the professional SFD brought rapid increase in size and resources commensurate with Seattle's explosive growth rate; from an 1890 population of 42,000, the city's

inhabitants numbered over 237,000 by 1910. Prominent developments included the creation of a maritime fire unit with the deployment of the fireboat Snoqualmie in 1891; the complete transition from horse-drawn to motorized fire engines in 1924; and the development of firefighter-staffed, emergency response "aid cars" during the 1930s. The SFD also participated in the historic founding of the International Association of Fire Fighters in 1918; the department's Local 27 constituted one of the union's 218 charter members. While the rigors of the Great Depression necessitated the temporary dissolution of 14 of the SFD's 55 operational companies, recovery was hastened by the threat of new fire hazards posed by World War II-era industrialization. Associated incidents, such as the 1943 Frye Slaughterhouse fire caused by the crash of a B-29 bomber, would severely tax the department's limited resources during this time.

The postwar SFD experienced a wave of significant material and organizational changes, one of the first being the Local 27-sponsored institution of the 8-hour day and 48-hour week for firefighters in 1947. Other important developments included the installation of two-way radio communication in first-line vehicles in 1950, the 1958 upgrading of the aid car program with stretcher-bearing station wagons, and the 1959 adoption of a new Fire Code based upon national standards. Throughout this time, the SFD's institutional mandate continued to evolve beyond basic fire suppression. In 1970, the department's new Medic One program initiated the training and deployment of firefighters as first-response paramedic units throughout Seattle. In 1980, the specially trained and equipped Hazardous Materials Response Unit was deployed to respond to incidents involving dangerous chemicals, including fires, spills, and suspected drug labs. Some of the most consequential changes to the SFD at mid-century did not concern equipment but equality, as the department admitted its first African-American firefighter (Claude Harris) in 1959 and its first female firefighter (Bonnie Beers) in 1977. The ongoing commitment to the recruitment and training of under-utilized applicant pools substantially diversified the department's make-up; of the 49 firefighters enlisted in 1993, 9 were female and 11 of minority status.

As of 2010, the SFD contains 1,020 uniformed personnel organized into 5 Operational Battalions and one Medic Battalion, which are employed running 33 engine-equipped fire stations, 11 aid and medic teams, 4 fireboats, and a host of other emergency resources. Several specialized units are used for hazardous materials response, marine response, search and rescue, and other incidents requiring extraordinary expertise. Under the control of the Fire Marshall's Office, the SFD administers an array of fire prevention efforts, including Fire Code enforcement, inspection of building fire plans and safety systems, public education programs, and the regulation of hazardous materials storage and use. In addition, the department provides leadership and personnel to several regional incident response organizations, such as FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue Teams and the Puget Sound Marine Response Consortium.

## Content Description

Correspondence relating to Fire Department activities. Includes information on equipment needs and purchases, department budget, code violations, assessments of station sites, equipment and apparatus evaluations, and personnel matters. The first two boxes contain outgoing correspondence in bound volumes for the years 1894 to 1928. Outgoing and incoming correspondence overlaps with the volumes and dates from 1903 to 1951. Included is correspondence from Chief Stetson with his son Horatio, who served in World War I. The correspondence is arranged chronologically by Chief. The numbers associated with some of the files are from the Fire Department's filing system.

## Use of the Collection

## Preferred Citation

[Item and date], Seattle Fire Department Chief's Correspondence, Record Series 2801-01. 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.

#### 2801-01: Seattle Fire Department Chief's Correspondence, 1894-1951

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 1 April 1894 - March 1899 (Note: Oversize)	1894-1899
1/2	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 2 March 1899 - March 1904	1899-1904
1/3	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 3 April 1904 - January 1906	1904-1906
1/4	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 4 February 1906 - May 1908	1906-1908
1/5	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 5 June 1908 - July 1911	1908-1911
1/6	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 6 July 1911 - July 1913	1911-1913
1/7	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 7 June 1913 - October 1915	1913-1915
2/1	Chief's Outgoing Correspondence October 1915 - May 1918 Volume 8	1915-1918
2/2	Chief's Outgoing Correspondence May 1918 - October 1920 Volume 9	1918-1920

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/3	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 10	1920-1922
2/4	Fire Chief's Outgoing Correspondence. Volume 11	1922-1925
2/5	Chief's Outgoing Correspondence March 1925 - January 1928 Volume 12	1925-1928
3/1	Chief Cook - Personnel Correspondence	1903-1905
3/2	Chief Cook - Personnel Correspondence	1904-1905
3/3	Chief Cook - Personnel Correspondence	1904-1905
3/4	Chief Cook - Correspondence	1906
3/5	Chief Bringham - Correspondence	1907
3/6	Chief Bringham - Correspondence	1908
3/7	Chief Bringham - Correspondence	1909-1910
3/8	Chief Mantor - Correspondence	1908-1930
3/9	Chief Clark - Correspondence	1911
3/10	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1913-1914
3/11	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1913-1914
3/12	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1914-1915
3/13	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1915
4/1	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1916-1920
4/2	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1916-1917
4/3	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1916-1919
4/4	Horatio Stetson (Son of Chief Stetson)	1917-1919
4/5	Chief Stetson Correspondence	1918-1920

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
4/6	Chief Stetson - Correspondence	1916-1919
4/7	Chief Stetson - Correspondence	1917
4/8	Chief Stetson - Correspondence (January - November)	1918
4/9	Chief Stetson - Correspondence (April - November)	1918
4/10	Chief Stetson - Correspondence (May-August)	1918
4/11	Chief Stetson - Correspondence	1919
4/12	Chief Stetson - Correspondence (April-December)	1919
4/13	Chief Stetson - Correspondence	1917-1919
5/1	Chief Stetson Correspondence - January - February	1920
5/2	Chief Stetson Correspondence - March -April	1920
5/3	Chief Stetson Correspondence - April - May	1920
5/4	Chief Stetson Correspondence - June - July	1920
5/5	Chief Stetson Correspondence - May - December	1920
5/6	Chief Stetson Correspondence - May - December	1920
5/7	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1920-1921
5/8	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1920-1921
5/9	Chief Mantor Correspondence - Fireman's Drill School Course	1921
5/10	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1921
5/11	Chief Mantor Correspondence - May - August	1921
5/12	Chief Mantor Correspondence - September - December	1921
5/13	Chief Mantor Correspondence - September - December	1921

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
5/14	Chief Mantor Correspondence - Fire at 12th and Lucile	1921
5/15	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1921
6/1	Chief Mantor Correspondence - April - May	1922
6/2	Chief Mantor Correspondence - May - August	1922
6/3	Chief Mantor Correspondence - July - September	1922
6/4	Chief Mantor Correspondence - September - December	1922
6/5	Chief Mantor Correspondence - Fire Salvage and Patol Corps Proposal	1922
6/6	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1922-1923
6/7	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1922-1924
6/8	Chief Mantor Correspondence June - August	1923
6/9	Chief Mantor Correspondence - Requests for Information - August - October	1923
6/10	Chief Mantor Correspondence - Requests for Information - January - June	1923
7/1	Chief Mantor Correspondence - November - December	1923
7/2	Chief Mantor Correspondence - January - March	1924
7/3	Chief Mantor Correspondence - March - July	1924
7/4	Chief Mantor Correspondence - July - December	1924
7/5	Chief Mantor Correspondence - January - August	1925
8/1	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1925-1926
8/2	Chief Mantor Correspondence May - December	1926
8/3	Chief Mantor Correspondence - Fire Station Ravenna - Bryant	1926-1927

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
8/4	Chief Mantor Correspondence - January - October	1927
8/5	Chief Mantor Correspondence - November - February	1927-1928
9/1	Chief Mantor Correspondence - March - May	1928
9/2	Chief Mantor Correspondence - June - September	1928
9/3	Chief Mantor Correspondence - September - December	1928
9/4	Chief Mantor Correspondence - January - March	1929
9/5	Chief Mantor Correspondence - April - June	1929
9/6	Chief Mantor Correspondence - May - July	1929
9/7	Chief Mantor Correspondence - August - October	1929
9/8	Chief Mantor Correspondence - October - November	1929
9/9	Chief Mantor Correspondence - December	1929
10/1	Chief Mantor Correspondence January - February	1930
10/2	Chief Mantor Correspondence - March	1930
10/3	Chief Mantor Correspondence - April - May	1930
10/4	Chief Mantor Correspondence - June	1930
10/5	Chief Mantor Correspondence - July	1930
10/6	Chief Mantor Correspondence - July	1930
10/7	Chief Mantor Correspondence - August - September	1930
10/8	Chief Mantor Correspondence - September	1930
10/9	Chief Mantor Correspondence - October - November	1930
10/10	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1930-1931

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
10/11	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1930-1931
10/12	Chief Mantor Correspondence	1930-1931
10/13	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
10/14	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
10/15	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
11/1	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
11/2	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
11/3	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
11/4	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931
11/5	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931-1932
11/6	Chief Laing Correspondence	1932
11/7	Chief Laing Correspondence	1932
11/8	Chief Laing Correspondence	1932
11/9	Chief Laing Correspondence	1932
11/10	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931-1932
11/11	Chief Laing Correspondence	1931-1932
11/12	Chief Corning Correspondence	1931-1936
12/1	Chief Corning Correspondence	1932
12/2	Chief Corning Correspondence	1932
12/3	Chief Corning Correspondence	1932-1933
12/4	Chief Corning Correspondence	1933



<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
12/5	Chief Corning Correspondence	1933-1934
12/6	Chief Corning Correspondence	1933
12/7	Chief Corning Correspondence	1933-1934
12/8	Chief Corning Correspondence	1933-1937
12/9	Chief Corning Correspondence	1934
12/10	Chief Corning Correspondence	1934
12/11	Chief Corning Correspondence	1934
12/12	Chief Corning Correspondence	1934-1935
12/13	Chief Corning Correspondence	1935
12/14	Chief Corning Correspondence	1935
12/15	Chief Corning Correspondence	1935
12/16	Chief Corning Correspondence	1935-1936
13/1	Chief Corning - Requests for information January - June	1936
13/2	Chief Corning Correspondence	1936
13/3	Chief Corning Correspondence	1936-1937
13/4	Chief Corning Correspondence	1937
13/5	Chief Corning Correspondence	1937
13/6	Chief Corning Correspondence January - June	1938
13/7	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence June - August	1938
13/8	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence June - October	1938
13/9	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence October - December	1938

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
13/10	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1938-1950
13/11	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - February	1939
13/12	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - March	1939
14/1	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence September - October	1939
14/2	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence October - December	1939
14/3	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence April - July	1939
14/4	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence July - August	1939
14/5	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence December - April	1939-1940
14/6	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence March - April	1940
14/7	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence April - June	1940
14/8	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence July - August	1940
14/9	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence August - December	1940
14/10	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence November - December	1940
14/11	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - February	1941
15/1	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence March - April	1941
15/2	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence April - May	1941
15/3	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence June - August	1941
15/4	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence August - December	1941
15/5	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence October - December	1941
15/6	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January	1942
15/7	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence March - June	1942

<b>Container(s)</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Dates</b>
15/8	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1941-1942
15/9	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1942
15/10	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1942-1943
16/1	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1943
16/2	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1943-1944
16/3	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1943-1944
16/4	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1944
16/5	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1944-1945
17/1	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence May - September	1945
17/2	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence June - December	1945
17/3	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - April	1946
17/4	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence March - May	1946
17/5	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence June - September	1946
17/6	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - April	1947
17/7	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - September	1947
18/1	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence August - December	1947
18/2	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - April	1948
18/3	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence March - July	1948
18/4	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence January - March	1949
18/5	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence May - June	1949
18/6	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence June - September	1949

Container(s)	Description	Dates
18/7	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence October - November	1949
19/1	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence November - January	1949-1950
19/2	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence May - August	1950
19/3	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence August - February	1950-1951
19/4	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1950-1951
19/5	Chief Fitzgerald Correspondence	1951

## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Fire extinction--Equipment and supplies--Washington (State)--Seattle

Fire fighters--Washington (State)--Seattle

World War, 1939-1945

### Personal Names :

Bringhurst, Harry W.

Clark, William H.

Cook, Ralph

Corning, Claude W.

Fitzgerald, William

Kellogg, Gardner

Laing, Robert L.

Mantor, George M.

Stetson, Frank L.

### Corporate Names :

Seattle (Wash.). Fire Dept.

### Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.)

Finding aid prepared by Anne Frantilla

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