

Russell O. and Marion Langstaff Collection on the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association, 1940-2003

Overview of the Collection

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|----------------------------|--|
| Creator | Langstaff, Russell O., 1923-2013 Langstaff, Marion, 1926-2007 |
| Title | Russell O. and Marion Langstaff Collection on the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association |
| Dates | 1940-2003 (inclusive) 1940 2003 1940-1963 (bulk) 1940 1963 |
| Quantity | 1 box, (.42 cubic feet) |
| Collection Number | 2016.16 |
| Summary | Photographs, newsletters and other materials related to the Seattle- based Pacific Northwest Cycling Association and the club's various excursions |
| Repository | Museum of History & Industry, Sophie Frye Bass Library Sophie Frye Bass Library Museum of History & Industry P.O. Box 80816 Seattle, WA 98108 Telephone: 206-324-1126 Fax: 206-780-1533 library@mohai.org |
| Access Restrictions | The collection is open to the public by appointment. |
| Languages | English. |

Biographical Note

Russell O. Langstaff grew up in the Magnolia neighborhood of Seattle, graduating from Queen Anne High School. A teenaged Langstaff was one of the first members of the newly formed Pacific Northwest Cycling Association when the club was founded in 1940. Langstaff joined club members on local excursions until the outbreak of World War II, when he served in the Navy in the Pacific Theater. While there, he continued to receive the *PNCA Blowout* club newsletter, "even if it is sometimes a little old by the time it reaches me." In a letter written to the *Blowout* from Nagasaki, Japan in September 1945, Langstaff describes his work on a minesweeper for the previous fourteen months. Upon his return, Langstaff rejoined his friends at PNCA, and was one of seven members to make a 3-month trip to Europe in the summer of 1951.

At the first meeting of the club's fall season in September 1951, Russ Langstaff gave a slide presentation on the European trip. Present in the audience was new member Marion Ford, who had

recently moved to Seattle from Massachusetts, bringing her English 3-speed bike with her. Marion began joining in on hikes and bike trips, as well as club social events. She and Langstaff began dating, and the two were married the following spring. An announcement of the upcoming wedding in the March 1952 issue of the *Blowout* notes that "All PNCAers are invited."

Russell Langstaff had a long career as a warehouseman for the City of Seattle. The couple had three children, Charles, Beverly, and Ronald.

Content Description

The collections consists of photographs, newsletters, notebooks and reminiscences related to the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association and other bicycling clubs, as well as the concurrent rise of the American Youth Hostel movement. Photographs depict PNCA members on rides and hikes in Washington State and British Columbia. A selection of club newsletters from 1941 through 1963 paint a picture of a closely bonded group over many years, with notes on club business, lists of scheduled activities and events, reminiscences, and personal anecdotes. Two notebooks recounting longer PNCA European trips document the daily pleasures and mishaps of such adventures, and give a detailed accounting of the scrupulous budgeting of the group's expenses. A draft titled "The Blowout: Sixty Years with the PNCA and AYH" edited by member Helene Ryan in 1997, reproduces numerous newspaper articles and personal reminiscences documenting the early days of the bike club, including rides and trips, hosteling and other club news.

Historical Background

History of the PNCA, by Toni Sobieralski, originally published in the April 1944 issue of *The Blowout*

The Puget Sound Wheelmen, a handful of cyclists brought together in 1936 by the Olympic Games elimination race; the opening of youth hostels in Washington in 1938; the U. of W. Hostel Club organized in 1939 by Eylris Riste and Doris Koenig; the introduction in quantity of English and American lightweight bicycles to Seattle; a dealer-sponsored "century ride" in October 1939 and impromptu trips throughout the fall and winter by the group brought together on that ride; these are the elements from which the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association was formed. The name was a spur-of-the-moment choice, however. The group of lightweight owners who made those trips in 1939-40 decided to organize a bike-train excursion. Eugene Wilson, when contacting Great Northern publicity agents, to make an impression said he represented the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association. A week after the very successful bike-train trip, the name was officially adopted at an organization meeting which elected Wilson president.

The new club brought together the best riders of Seattle and the resulting ambitious trips scared many ordinary cyclists away. The PNCA became famous for the individual exploits of its members as well as its organized rides. Eugene Wilson was very ambitious and had a talent for getting people interested. The club grew rapidly, spreading through contacts made on trips to Tacoma, Port Angeles and Bremerton. Through the efforts of Toni Sobieralski, a similar cycling group in Portland decided to organize as a chapter of the PNCA and Bud Ware endeavored to form a branch in Eugene.

The Seattle Youth Hostel was the summer meeting place, and interesting contacts were made with visiting hostellers. Aluminous PNCA plates were made and a publication "The Handlebar," begun. National publicity was gained through affiliation with the L.A.W. [League of American Wheelmen]

and A.B.L.A. [Amateur Bicycle League of America], and a racing program started for those who were interested.

At the time of the first annual meeting, the PNCA numbered over 100 members, but "growing pains" came to a head at the meeting. Half the dues were going to national affiliations. The efforts involved in helping small chapters along, maintaining inter-city contacts, organizing races, recruiting new members and seeking publicity became a burden rather than a pleasure. Those members who thought the club should remain a source of recreation rather than a world-beating cycling organization elected Toni Sobieralski the new president. This brought about a split in the membership and Gene Wilson formed the Cascade Chapter and designated the original group the Seattle Chapter.

There followed a period of rivalry between the two groups. Although successful joint rides were held, the two chapters had separate programs, and since "The Handlebar" became the mouthpiece for the Cascade Chapter, the Seattle Chapter elected to start their own paper, "The Blowout," first edited by Rex Clark.

The unfortunate clash of ideas and the effects of the war halted the progress of the PNCA and membership began to dwindle, branches in other cities collapsed and finally the Cascade Chapter disappeared with the departure of Mr. Wilson for Seattle.

During the winter of 1942-43, even the Seattle Chapter nearly came to an end, when trip attendance dropped to a mere half dozen and interest was at a low ebb. But spring days came again and a sudden revival brought new and old members together to form the most enthusiastic group in the history of the PNCA. The percent of active participation and the extent of the program grew. New interests such as folk-dancing, ice-skating and hiking kept the members together when weather made cycling unattractive. When our old members come back from the armed forces, they will find the PNCA now stronger than ever, with a program dedicated to recreation, friendship and good fun through cycling and related activities.

Use of the Collection

Alternative Forms Available

View selections from the collection in digital format by clicking on the camera icons in the inventory below.

Restrictions on Use

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Preferred Citation

Russell O. and Marion Langstaff Collection on the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association, Museum of History & Industry, Seattle

Administrative Information

Russell O. and Marion Langstaff Collection on the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association, 1940-2003
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv50085>

Location of Collection

4a.1.7

Acquisition Information

Gift of the Russell O. Langstaff Estate; received in February 2106.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Photographs, 1940-1998

Photographs of Russell Langstaff and other members of the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association on various bicycling trips in Washington state and British Columbia.

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|---|------------|
| 1 | 2016.16.1: Group with bicycles at Snohomish train station [view] Handwritten on verso: PNCA 1940 - took train to Snohomish, biked around, and returned by train. Hardier souls would bike the entire way there and back. | 1940 |
| 1 | 2016.16.2: Russell Langstaff standing on sidewalk with his bicycle | 1941 |
| 2 | 2016.16.3.1: Five people on boat S.S. Atlanta at dock Handwritten on verso: S.S. Atlanta Seattle hostel 1947-1949 -- base for many PNCA meetings -- owned by 2 PNCA members, Rex Clark and Leigh Whitford | circa 1948 |
| 2 | 2016.16.4.1-.2: PNCA trip to Point No Point 2 photographs Two photographs of people with bicycles near the Point No Light lighthouse and ice cream stand. | 1941 |
| 2 | 2016.16.4.3-.7: PNCA trip to Mount Rainier 5 photographs Two of the photos show people carrying their bicycles while climbing rocky terrain. | 1941 |
| 2 | 2016.16.5: Two women and man with bicycles at gas station Handwritten on verso: PNCA Daffodil trip -- Spring 1947 | 1947 |
| 2 | 2016.16.6: PNCA San Juan Islands trip 6 photographs | 1947 |

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|--|------------------|
| | These six photographs depict young men and women and their bicycles near a bike trailer, on the boat "Waterbaby," and camping. | |
| 2 | 2016.16.7.1-.6: PNCA trip to Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia [view] 6 photographs | 1949 Summer |
| 2 | 2016.16.7.7-.8: PNCA Daffodil trip to Orting 2 photographs | 1949 March |
| 2 | 2016.16.7.9-.11: PNCA Vashon Island trip 3 photographs | 1949 Spring |
| 2 | 2016.16.8.1-.5: PNCA group pulling car in snow with rope, Glacier, Washington [view] 5 photographs Handwritten on verso of 2016.16.8.1: Glacier, WA, PNCA ski trip - Mt. Baker. Marooned due to frozen vehicles - 4 degree temp! | 1950 January 1 |
| 2 | 2016.16.8.6: Russell Langstaff and woman on tandem bicycle in Port Gamble | 1950 February 19 |
| 2 | 2016.16.8.7-.11: PNCA Victoria, Shawnigan Lake, Sidney, Mount Douglas trip 4 photographs | 1950 July 4 |
| 3 | 2016.16.9: Group photo of PNCA members, possibly at a reunion Photo of PNCA members taken about 50 years later than the rest of the photos in collection. Some identifications written on accompanying sheet: Russell and Marion Langstaff, Russ and Pat Nelson, Rex Clark, Marjorie Passler, Gwen and Toni Sobieralski, Joan Clark, Thelma Robison, Peggy Wortman. | circa 1998 |
| 4 | 2016.16.10: Photo album of PNCA trips [view] [view] 1 album with 20 photographs 3 x 5 in. Photographs of PNCA members on various outings, including a trip to Mount Rainier and a "pedal - paddle" trip from Lake Washington to Lake Sammamish and back. Named individuals include: Marjorie Palmer, Dick Wortman, John Hills, Toni and Gwen Sobieralski, Mrs. Reasoner. | circa 1950 |
| 5 | 2016.16.11: Album of negatives of PNCA trips | circa 1950 |

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|---|-------|
| | 13 negatives 1.75 x 2.75 in. Handwritten entry on first page indicates subjects as "Victoria trip / Mt. Douglas Hostel / Port Townsend trip." Relocated from accession 2015.97. | |

Newsletters and other printed materials, 1941-2003

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|--|---------------------|
| Folder | | |
| 7-11 | 2016.16.13-.17: "The Blowout," bulletin of the Seattle Chapter of the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association 98 issues Bulletin includes listings for various events, such as meetings, programs, and rides; accounts of past trips; member news; advertisements; and other articles. | 1941-1963 |
| 12 | 2016.16.18: "The P.N.C.A. Handlebar," newsletter of the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association 4 issues Similar content to "The Blowout," but covering all chapters of the PNCA, and including youth hostel news. | 1941-1942 |
| 13 | 2016.16.19: "League of American Wheelmen Bulletin" 12 issues Publication of national bicycling organization based in Chicago. | 1942-1943 |
| 14 | 2016.16.20: Miscellaneous printed materials 5 pages These materials includes American Youth Hostel accommodation information, including lists of hostels in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, and a copy of the Bicycle Trailer Agreement of the PNCA | circa 1941-1953 |
| 15 | 2016.16.21: Newspaper clippings 4 clippings | 1961; 1975; 2003 |

Notebooks

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Folder | | |

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|---|-------|
| 16 | <p>2016.16.22: Notebook for American Youth Hostel group trip to Europe</p> <p>Notebook comprised of hole-punched tissue paper pages bound in brown cardboard covers with brass-colored paper fasteners. A note in front states that this is a copy of Rex Clark's notes and bookkeeping for this group trip of twelve members. Entries begin on July 13, 1948 from Rotterdam, Holland, and end in late August back in Rotterdam, with the group departing for home on the ship <i>Vollendam</i> on September 1. The entries recount the group's activities--biking, hiking, and riding trains and buses across Holland, Belgium, France, and Switzerland. Each day's entry consists of short notes on the day's activities, and may include the number of miles bicycled and comments on the quality of the terrain ("Good bike paths in Holland, OK in Belgium (narrow),") name and quality of accommodation for the night, notes on sights seen and other happenings ("Five of group slept out because couldn't find Hostel in the dark"), and an accounting of expenses for the day.</p> | 1948 |
| 16 | <p>2016.16.23: Russell Langstaff notebook for Pacific Northwest Cycling Association group trip to Europe</p> <p>Notebook comprised of hole-punched pages bound in brown cardboard covers with brass-colored paper fasteners. On the cover is written "Europe 1951" and "Russell O. Langstaff."</p> <p>Notebook includes daily entries beginning in Seattle on June 9th, 1951 and ending September 9 in Missoula, Montana, with "a beautiful ride back to Seattle." The short daily entries recount a group of six driving cross-country from Seattle to New York, and then flying to Luxembourg. From there, the group traveled by train to London, where they picked up bicycles. They rode their bicycles and took trains around England before taking a day boat to Holland. They bicycled, hitchhiked and took trains and buses around Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Italy and Germany before returning by plane to New York. The short entries give information about mode of travel, sights seen, accommodation, and other observations.</p> | 1951 |

Reminiscences

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|--|-------|
| Folder | | |
| 17 | <p>2016.16.24: Draft of <i>The Blowout: Sixty Years with the PNCA and AYH</i> by Helene Ryan</p> | 1997 |

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| | Photocopied pages include photographs, newspaper articles, excerpts from newsletters, and original text | |
| 18 | 2016.16.25: Mary May Hesketh PNCA reminiscence 3 pages | circa 1980s |
| 18 | 2016.16.26: Russell Langstaff letter to "Jean" 1 page | circa 1987 |
| 18 | 2016.16.27: Russell Langstaff list of bicycling trips in the 1940s and 1950s 1 page | 1997 |

Realia

| Container(s) | Description | Dates |
|--------------|--|------------|
| Folder | | |
| 6 | 2016.16.12: PNCA patch with bicycle logo [view] Round cloth patch removed from cover of binder. White patch with blue border and "P.N.C.A. Seattle" in blue letters, with bicycle logo with bike frame formed from the red letters "PNCA," and yellow wheels. | circa 1950 |

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Bicycle touring

Clubs--Washington (State)--Seattle

Cycling--Washington (State)--Seattle

Corporate Names :

American Youth Hostels, Inc.

Geographical Names :

United States--Washington (State)--Seattle

Form or Genre Terms :

Newsletters

Photographs

Other Creators :

Corporate Names :

Pacific Northwest Cycling Association
(creator)

Finding aid prepared by Jody Hendrickson
2016

Russell O. and Marion Langstaff Collection on the Pacific Northwest Cycling Association, 1940-2003
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