

Department of Parks Works Progress Administration Recreation Project Reports, 1936-1940

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Seattle (Wash.). Dept. of Parks
Title	Department of Parks Works Progress Administration Recreation Project Reports
Dates	1936-1940 (inclusive) 1936 1940
Quantity	.8 cubic foot, (2 boxes)
Collection Number	5807-01
Summary	Weekly reports of WPA recreation programs, 1936-1940; include reports on Northern, Central, and Southern Division activities as well as city-wide programs.
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

The Department of Parks and Recreation maintains the City's parks, shorelines, and boulevards and administers community centers, public golf courses, and other athletic and cultural facilities. Seattle's first park was established in 1884 after David Denny donated land to the City for that purpose. At that time, a three-member park committee, with limited authority, was created to manage the nascent park system. A Board of Parks Commissioners was established in 1890 with control over all public parks and authority to appoint a Parks Superintendent. In 1896, the City Charter created the position of Superintendent of Streets, Sewers and Parks. The Parks Department became a separate entity in 1904. In 1926, a City Charter Amendment abolished the position of Superintendent, distributing its responsibilities between the Head Gardener and the Landscape Architect. A 1948 City Charter amendment required the Board of Park Commissioners to appoint a park superintendent to administer the department. In 1967, another City Charter Amendment reconstituted the Board as an advisory body

to the Mayor and City Council, changed the agency name to Department of Parks and Recreation, and placed fiscal and operational administration under the superintendent.

In 1902 the City hired the Olmsted Brothers, the country's premier landscape architectural firm, to design a parks and boulevards system. Although not all of the plan was implemented, the Olmsted legacy is evident in many of Seattle's parks and boulevards. The City acquired significant amounts of property for park purposes following the turn of the 20th Century, but in 1926 further acquisition was limited by a City Charter amendment that stipulated only money in the Park Fund could be used for that purpose. However, in the 1970s, the Forward Thrust Bond issue, along with federal grants and the Seattle Model City Program, supported the largest expansion of the Park system in Seattle history. These programs funded more than 70 new parks and park facilities. The Department manages over 6,000 acres of park land, 25 community centers, four municipal golf courses, the Aquarium, and many other recreational and athletic facilities.

Established in 1935, the WPA (Works Progress Administration; the name was later changed to Work Projects Administration) provided employment for out-of-work citizens who built highways, wrote and performed in plays, constructed buildings and bridges, created public artworks, planted trees, and participated in many other activities. The "Federal One" Project, consisting of the Federal Art Project, Federal Writers' Project, Federal Theatre Project, Federal Music Project, and Historical Records Survey, provided work opportunities to professionals in the arts and culture. State and local governments received federal WPA funds and engaged workers in a variety of projects, including construction, repair, and improvement of public buildings and facilities. This work relief program paid a salary of approximately \$40 per month and had employed over 8 million workers by the time it was dissolved in 1943.

Between 1934 and 1944, Seattle's Parks and Recreation Department received federal and state aid from the WPA, CWA (Civil Works Administration), and WERA (Washington Emergency Relief Administration). Many of Seattle's parks were improved by WPA workers, who participated in remodeling, painting, gardening, and construction projects. WPA engineers also surveyed and drafted plans for parks improvements. The WPA Division of Recreation and Education worked with the Parks Department on the staffing and supervision of several recreation centers throughout the city; the programs and classes were well-attended and included music, drama, dance, and sports.

Content Description

Statistical and narrative weekly reports of recreation programs led by staff employed through the WPA's Division of Recreation and Education. Reports include names of leaders, numbers participating in programs, and observations of regional supervisors. The city was divided into the Northern, Southern, and Central Divisions and city-wide recreation and music and drama. Also included are a catalogue of recreational activities and information relating to the YMCA and to personnel for the project.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[Item and date], Works Progress Administration Recreation Project Reports, Record Series 5807-01. Box [number], Folder [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

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

Works Progress Administration Recreation Project Reports, 1936-1940

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	Citywide Recreation	1936-1937
1/2	Citywide Recreation	1937
1/3	Citywide Recreation	1938
1/4	Citywide Recreation	1939
1/5	Citywide Recreation	1940
1/6	Music and Drama	1936-1937
1/7	Music and Drama	1937
1/8	Music and Drama	1937
1/9	Music and Drama	1938
1/10	Music and Drama	1939
1/11	Music and Drama	1940
1/12	Central Division Recreation	1937
1/13	Central Division Recreation	1937
1/14	Central Division Recreation	1938
1/15	Central Division Recreation	1939

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/16	Central Division Recreation: Queen Anne, Broadway, West Seattle	1936-1937
1/17	Northern Division Recreation	1937
1/18	Northern Division Recreation	1937
1/19	Northern Division Recreation	1938
1/20	Northern Division Recreation	1939
1/21	Northern Division Recreation: Ballard, Lincoln, Roosevelt	1936-1937
2/1]	South Division Recreation	1937
2/2	South Division Recreation	1937
2/3	South Division Recreation	1938
2/4	South Division Recreation	1939
2/5	South Division Recreation: Cleveland, Garfield, Franklin	1936-1937
2/6	YMCA	1936
2/7	Catalogue of Recreation Activities	1938
2/8	Personnel	1937
2/9	Personnel	1938-1939

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Recreation--Washington (State)--Seattle

Youth--Recreation--Washington (State)--Seattle

Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.)

Other Creators :

Corporate Names :

Seattle (Wash.). Dept. of Parks
(creator)

Finding aid prepared by Shannon B. Lynch
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