

Seattle Post Office Photographs and Other Material, 1889-1962

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Seattle Post Office
Title	Seattle Post Office Photographs and Other Material
Dates	1889-1962 (inclusive) 1889 1962
Quantity	1.5 cubic feet, (4 boxes, including 231 photographs)
Collection Number	1972.5319 (collection)
Summary	Photographs of employees, building construction and events, as well as albums and early records from Seattle and other post offices.
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.
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

The first United States Post Office in Seattle--and the first in King County--opened in 1853 in pioneer Arthur A. Denny's log cabin home on Front Street (now First Avenue) and Marion Street, with Denny named the first postmaster. Previously, all mail for Seattle and Alki was delivered once a week by canoe from Olympia. The first post office consisted, as Denny's daughter Louisa Denny Frye later recalled, of a desk with small cubbyholes where the 30 year old Denny sorted the first small batches of mail to come directly to Seattle.

The Seattle Post Office lacked a permanent address for its first fifty years, moving from one location to another. From 1890 to 1899, the Post Office occupied a building on Columbia Street between Second and Third Avenues, constructed after the fire of 1889. Later it was in the nearby Boston Block, and later, in the Arlington Hotel Building at First and University. The first permanent home of the Seattle Post Office was the Beaux-Arts inspired building constructed between 1903 and 1909 at Third Avenue and Union Street. Also known as the Federal Building, this ornate structure originally also housed the United States Federal Court and Department of Customs, though the Post Office soon outgrew its space and took over the entire building. This building, which had become too cramped and had also

begun to deteriorate, was demolished in 1958 and replaced by the modern three-story facility still used today.

Content Description

Photographs comprise the bulk of the Seattle Post Office collection. Three groups of photographs portray postal employees: individual portraits from the late 19th century and group portraits of employees of various Seattle stations, taken in 1935 and 1952. Another series of 113 photographs documents the construction (1903-1909), from groundbreaking to completion, of the classical post office building that stood at Third Avenue and Union Street until its demolition in 1958. Other photographs depict a 1950 letter carriers convention, and the Terminal Annex on Jackson Street.

The collection also includes three albums: one volume of employee signatures, probably given as a retirement gift; an album of newspaper clippings documenting the early days of air mail service; and an album of photographs and clippings related to the Retired Letter Carriers Club and the associated Ladies Social Club for wives of retired letter carriers.

Post office papers includes early records from the Seattle and Olympia post offices, an account book from Wagner, Oregon, and post office ephemera.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

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Alternative Forms Available

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

Preferred Citation

Seattle Post Office photographs and other material, Museum of History & Industry, Seattle

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Arranged in 3 series:

- Photographs
- Papers
- Albums

Location of Collection

2b.1.4-5

Acquisition Information

Source: United States Post Office, Seattle (James J. Symbol, Postmaster) on February 5, 1972.

Separated Materials

These materials are part of a donation that also included a number of artifacts. These artifacts are cataloged and stored separately by MOHAI's Collections Department.

Detailed Description of the Collection

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

Photographs, circa 1890s-1956

231 photographs

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Employees		
Box/Folder		
1/1	1-4: Employee portraits 4 photographs Roberts & Kautz , Seattle (photographer) Individual portraits of employees mounted on cardboard; identifications written on verso.	circa 1890s
1/2-4	4-38: Employee portraits 34 photographs Individual portraits of employees mounted on cardboard; identifications written on verso.	circa 1890s
4/1-2	39-51: Employee groups by station 13 photographs 8" x 19.5" Groups of employees of individual Seattle stations: Ballard, Columbia, Georgetown, Greenlake, Main Station, Queen Anne, University, and Stations "B," "F" (Fremont), "I" (Interbay) and "W" (West Seattle). Also includes 2 group photographs of Postmaster George E. Starr and supervisors. Identifications are written on verso of each photograph, though not all individuals are identified.	1935 August-September

Container(s)	Description	Dates
4/3-6	52-72: Employee groups by station 21 photographs 8" x 19.5" Groups of employees of individual Seattle stations: Ballard, Broadway, Columbia, Georgetown, Greenwood, Jackson, Lake City, Magnolia, Main, Northgate, Terminal Station, Queen Anne, Richland Highlands, Riverton Heights, University, Wallingford, West Seattle, and White Center. Also includes photographs of employees at the North Garage, and 3 copies of a photograph of Postmaster George E. Starr and supervisors. Identifications are written on verso of each photograph, though not all individuals are identified.	1956 June - September
1/5	73-77: Employee groups [view] 5 photographs Includes employees of the Motor Vehicle Unit outside the U.S. Post Office garage and a group of employees who received the "safe-driving award" in 1940. Identifications of individuals written on verso or on separate sheets of paper.	1933-1949
	National Association of Letter Carriers Convention, Seattle Photographs of the 37th biennial convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers, which took place in Seattle.	1950 September
Box/Folder		
1/6	78: Group on dock and boarding the ferry <i>Kalakala</i> [view]	1950 September
1/6	79: Ferry <i>Kalakala</i> passing under Fremont bridge Lawrence Barrett , Seattle (photographer) Copy negative on file	1950 September
1/6	80-81: People arriving for Grand Ball	1950 September
1/6	82: Group seated at tables in hall	1950 September
1/6	83: Group of letter carriers	1950 September
1/7	84-92: National Association of Letter Carriers parade during convention 9 photographs	1950 September

Buildings

Box/Folder

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/8-19	<p>93-205: Construction of the U.S. Courthouse, Custom House and Post Office building[view] [view] 113 photographs</p> <p>This series of photographs documents the years-long construction of the ornate classical building on the southeast corner of Third Avenue and Union Street in Seattle, which housed the Post Office and well as the United State Federal Court and the Department of Customs. Officially named the U.S. Courthouse, Custom House and Post Office building, it was also referred to as the Federal Building. Many of the photographs are mounted on linen backing, and most are perforated with two holes along the left edge, suggesting they have been removed from an album.</p> <p>The first images document the vacant corner prior to the beginning of construction, after the two-story Plummer Block was lifted and moved two blocks north to Pine Street, where it became the Hotel Federal. Approximately one or two photographs per month document all stages of the construction, which include the regrade of Third Avenue in 1907, unanticipated in the building planning and requiring the addition of wide steps to connect the building with the sidewalk four feet below. Beginning in January 1908, some of the photographs document work on the building's interior, including 1909 images of finished rooms.</p>	1903 December-1909 May
1/20	<p>206-207: Interior of U.S. Courthouse, Custom House and Post Office building Pierson & Co. (photographer)</p>	1909
	Terminal Annex	
Box/Folder		
1/21	<p>People working in the Terminal Annex building 3 photographs</p> <p>These photographs are mounted on construction paper and are accompanied by typed captions indicating that the photographs were used to document congestion in various parts of the building, with employees working in close quarters with each other and with office equipment.</p>	1949 February
1/21	<p>211-212: Exterior of Terminal Annex Caption: "Terminal Annex, Seattle, Wash. Taken Oct. 31, 1955, by Frank Allyn, Training Officer, who retained negative."</p>	1955 October 31
Miscellaneous		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/22	213: Crow sitting on mailbox Written on verso: "Glossy print courtesy of PI [<i>Seattle Post-Intelligencer</i>] (Beth McKinnon). Crow was stealing letters from mail box. This photo caught him red handed."	circa 1953

Papers

Container(s)	Description	Dates
History		
Box/Folder		
2/1	"Brief History of the National Federation of Post Office Clerks" by Fred McGee 1 page	undated

Seattle Post Office

Box/Folder		
2/2	National Association of Letter Carriers, Seattle Branch souvenir booklet 2 copies Booklet containing photographs of Seattle letter carriers, listing names, home state and appointment dates.	1901
2/3	Calls for proposals for airplane service between Seattle and Victoria, B.C. Includes calls for proposals, proposal cover letters, correspondence and clippings	1923, 1928-1929
2/4	Mail schedules 4 items Schedule of "Arrival and Departure of Princial Mails" (1917); train mail and air mail schedules (1930); and a map showing air mail transit hours between Seattle and other principal cities (1931).	1917, 1930, 1931

Olympia Post Office

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
2/5	Arrivals and departures registers Records of arrivals and departures of mail by type of carrier: horse and cart, steamboat or railroad.	1889-1893
2/6-7	Employees Includes letter carrier applications and letters of recommendation; appointment of Postmaster Val A. Milroy; reports of Letter Carrier Service; and oaths and bonds of letter carriers and Postmaster Val Milroy.	1890-1893
2/8-9	Financial records Includes vouchers and reports on various types of delivery and sales; receipts for rent, utilities, salaries and purchases; and correspondence. Includes correspondence from the Post Office Department Salary and Allowance Division regarding salary, rent and other expenses; from the Office of the Auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office Department regarding collection of money from former Postmaster J.G. Kennedy; from Postmaster Milroy regarding funds for improvement of post office facilities, and other correspondence.	1889-1893
Wagner, Oregon Post Office		
Box/Folder		
2/10	Account book of quarterly returns	1894-1897
Ephemera		
Box/Folder		
2/11	U.S. Postal Service booklet of general information for the public Cover stamped "Ellensburg, WA. 98926"	1904
2/12	Material distributed by or available at post offices Includes Registered Mail envelopes, a poster announcing the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, a list of providers of produce, and a letter from the National Recovery Administration about the Code of Fair Competition (1934).	1934; 1940 ; undated
2/12	Banquet programs	1928; 1941

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	Clippings	
Box/Folder		
2/14	"The G.P.O. Museum" by Pamela Steelcroft, published in the <i>Strand Magazine</i> , London Article clipped and mailed to Postmaster George Starr by Louis Nash, King County Auditor, with the inscription "Something for you scrapbook"	1897 September
2/14	The <i>Bundy Recorder</i> free speech edition. The <i>Bundy Recorder</i> was the "official organ of the Seattle P.O. Clerks Union."	1909 August
Box/Folder		
2/15	Miscellaneous Includes a New Year's card from Seattle Post Office to the Universal Postal Union (1909); two letters of recognition; and an announcement about excursions to Saratoga Lake for employees.	1893; 1909; undated

Albums

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box		
3	229: Seattle Post Office employee signature album Titled on cover "Post Office Employes [sic]," this album consists of pages each signed by a postal employee, most indicating the employee's appointment date and position, and the current date. Signature dates range from 1895-1914, with groups at 1895-1899, 1903-1906 and 1914. The first page of the album is printed with a message to Postmaster Griffith Davies, indicating that this album was assembled in honor of his retirement. Inscription in album: "For your archive, This book belonged to my father, James W. Scott, who was one of the "original boys" --way back when. I'm hoping you will enjoy having it. Sincerely, Norma Scott Drimmel, May 2, 1949."	1894-1914
3	230: Ladies of the Retired Letter Carriers Social Club album The front of the album consists of photographs of members of the Ladies Social Club (who were wives of retired letter carriers)	1945-1962

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	and clippings about Club events, many by Club secretary Clara Newell. The album includes a list of charter members at the Club's founding in 1945. The back half of album consists of clippings about and photographs of members of Retired Letter Carriers Club of Seattle, as well as clippings about Seattle Post Office history.	
3	231: "History of Air Mail" clippings album Album apparently assembled by Seattle Post Office. Title on cover: "History of Air Mail - Clippings - Seattle Post Office"	1920-1940

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Post offices--Washington (State)--Seattle

Post office buildings--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs

Postal service employees--Washington (State)--Seattle--Photographs

Personal Names :

Starr, George E.--Photographs

Corporate Names :

Seattle Post Office--Photographs

Olympia Post Office

Geographical Names :

United States--Washington (State)--Seattle

Form or Genre Terms :

Albums

Ephemera

Photographic prints

Scrapbooks

Finding aid prepared by Jody Hendrickson
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