

# William R. Bainbridge Collection on Submarine Cable Laying Operations, 1927-1946

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Bainbridge, William R.
<b>Title</b>	William R. Bainbridge Collection on Submarine Cable Laying Operations
<b>Dates</b>	1927-1946 (inclusive) 1927 1946
<b>Quantity</b>	1 box, (.21 cubic feet)
<b>Collection Number</b>	2011.73 (accession)
<b>Summary</b>	Materials documenting Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company submarine cable laying operations between Alki Point in Seattle and Restoration Point on Bainbridge Island
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Museum of History &amp; Industry, Sophie Frye Bass Library</a> Sophie Frye Bass Library Museum of History & Industry P.O. Box 80816 Seattle, WA 98108 Telephone: 206-324-1126 Fax: 206-780-1533 <a href="mailto:library@mohai.org">library@mohai.org</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	The collection is open to the public by appointment.
<b>Languages</b>	English.

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## Biographical Note

William Bainbridge was born in Nebraska where he met and married his wife Lillian. Shortly after their marriage they moved to Seattle where they had two children and lived for the remainder of their lives. William Bainbridge was a long time employee of Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company and served as Supervisor of Cable Methods during the submarine cable laying project in 1928. He retired from the company in 1946 and died in 1967.

## Content Description

The collection consists of photographs, typewritten reports and memos documenting a Puget Sound submarine cable laying project completed by Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1928. The materials were collected and compiled by William R. Bainbridge and include blueprints, nautical charts and mechanical specifications that give detailed descriptions of vessels, cable specifications and barge equipment. Sixty photographs depict the cable laying operations, shorelines, barge interior, tugboats and various people employed by Pacific Telegraph and Telephone at the time. An additional report

includes a detailed log of a cable repair and splicing operation between Alki Point and Restoration Point in 1936.

## Historical Background

The Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company began operations in Seattle in 1883 with 90 subscribers and two female switchboard operators who handled all calls. The Sunset Company rapidly expanded to provide service throughout Washington and merged with the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1917. During this time, other independent telephone companies were also establishing competitive businesses throughout the Northwest. By 1924, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company had acquired most of their competitor's territory along the Pacific Coast. Headquartered in San Francisco, the company served customers in California, Nevada, Washington and Oregon. On July 1, 1961, the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company split and Pacific Northwest Bell was established. The new company's first major job was to build an advanced telephone system to serve the Seattle World's Fair, scheduled to open in April 1962.

In the early 1920s, demands on the telephone line infrastructure increased rapidly in the Puget Sound area. By 1926, 100,000 dial telephones had been installed in Seattle residences and businesses. The Seattle (Alki Point) to Bainbridge Island (Restoration Point) submarine cable laying project was part of the Seattle to Bremerton telephone connection route. On April 14, 1928, the 128-foot steam barge Telephone II departed Alki Drummond Dock at 7:37 am and began laying submarine cable. Assisted by two tugboats, the barge arrived at Restoration Point on Bainbridge Island at 9:13am. In 1 hour 36 minutes running time, the crew laid 16,010 feet of cable. Since the surveyed distance between the two points is approximately 16,000 feet, this indicated a nearly perfect submarine cable lay.

On July 14, 1936, the cable abruptly failed on the same Seattle-Bremerton submarine toll route, 1,350 feet from Alki Point at a depth of 250 feet. During emergency repair operations, the cable was spliced at several points and re-laid, with all circuits operating and normal again by July 20.

## Use of the Collection

### Alternative Forms Available

Click [here](#) to view five photographs from the collection in digital format.

### Restrictions on Use

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### Preferred Citation

William R. Bainbridge Collection on Submarine Cable Laying Operations, Museum of History & Industry, Seattle

# Administrative Information

## Location of Collection

3a.4.8

## Acquisition Information

Gift of Bill Everett, William R. Bainbridge's grandson, September 23, 2011.

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## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Submarine cables--Washington (State)--Seattle

Telecommunication cables--Washington (State)--Seattle

Telephone industry--Washington (State)--Seattle

### Corporate Names :

Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company

### Geographical Names :

United States--Washington (State)--Seattle

### Form or Genre Terms :

Blueprints

Photographs

Finding aid prepared by Sue Terrible  
2012



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