

Seattle Water Department Water Quality Scrapbook, 1956-1977

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Seattle (Wash.). Water Dept.
Title	Seattle Water Department Water Quality Scrapbook
Dates	1956-1977 (inclusive) 1956 1977
Quantity	0.2 cubic foot, (1 box)
Collection Number	8205-11
Summary	Contents of a scrapbook documenting efforts by the Seattle Water Department to monitor and improve water quality.
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

Historical Note

From 1854 until 1890, Seattle's water was provided by wells, springs and private water companies. A public waterworks was created by City Charter Amendment in 1875. However, Seattle was served primarily by small private water companies for the next decade and a half. In 1888, prompted by a tenfold population increase during the previous decade, Seattle's mayor and city council called for an election to decide if the city should own and operate its own water system.

Shortly before the election, the "Great Seattle Fire" of June 6, 1889, destroyed the entire 64-acre business district. A major contributor to the widespread destruction was the lack of water available from the patchwork of private water suppliers. The vote on establishing a municipally-owned water system was approved by a resounding 1,875 to 51 margin.

In 1890, a U.S. Supreme Court decision allowed municipalities to issue bonds secured by future revenues. Shortly thereafter, Seattle issued \$845,000 in bonds and purchased two private water companies -- the Spring Hill Water Company and the Union Water Company -- both of which pumped water from Lake Union and Lake Washington. In 1895, Seattle residents again voted to approve revenue bonds, this time to construct the Cedar River water system. Water first flowed from the Cedar River into Seattle's system on January 10, 1901. Water was diverted by a dam at Landsburg, and then was channeled into a newly-completed 28.57 mile pipeline. This pipeline carried water to the Volunteer

Park and Lincoln reservoirs on Capitol Hill in Seattle, which were also built at the time. This new system had a capacity of 23.5 million gallons per day.

The system was administered by the Superintendent of Water under the auspices of the Board of Public Works. In 1905 the Department of Lighting and Water Works was created. Five years later, the Water Department became a separate entity. In 1909, a second pipeline was added, providing an additional 45 million gallon per day capacity to meet the water needs of a fast-growing Seattle. The next water supply source was not added until 1964, when the South Fork of the Tolt River began supplying north Seattle and the Eastside. In 1987, the first ground water source was added to the system when two wells in the Highline Well Field began operation. A third well was added in 1990.

In 1997 the Water Department was consolidated with the utilities of the Engineering Department to form Seattle Public Utilities.

Content Description

Photographs and news clippings documenting efforts by the Seattle Water Department to monitor and improve water quality. News clippings cover topics such as pollutants, waterborne disease, rust in pipes, and reservoir lids. Photographs document signage, equipment, reservoirs, and tanks.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[Item and date], Seattle Water Department Water Quality Scrapbook, Record Series 8205-11. Box [number], Folder [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

Administrative Information

Processing Note

Because of the deterioration of the original scrapbook, the contents were removed and placed in folders. News clippings were photocopied and originals discarded.

Detailed Description of the Collection

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

8205-11: Seattle Water Department Water Quality Scrapbook, 1956-1977

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1	News Clippings	1964-1965

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/2	News Clippings	1975
1/3	News Clippings	1976
1/4	News Clippings - Reservoir Lid Proposal	1976
1/5	News Clippings	1977
1/6	Photos - Cedar River Watershed Fluoride Tanks and Riser	1969
1/7	Photos - Reservoirs: Maple Leaf, Volunteer Park	1956, n.d.
1/8	Photos - Tolt River Security Signage	1966
1/9	Photos - Water Quality Equipment	n.d.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Reservoirs--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Water quality--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Water utilities--Washington (State)--Seattle

Corporate Names :

Seattle (Wash.). Water Dept.

Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.)

Finding aid prepared by Julie Kerksen
 2007