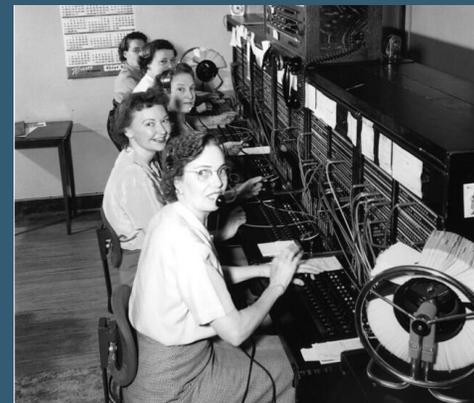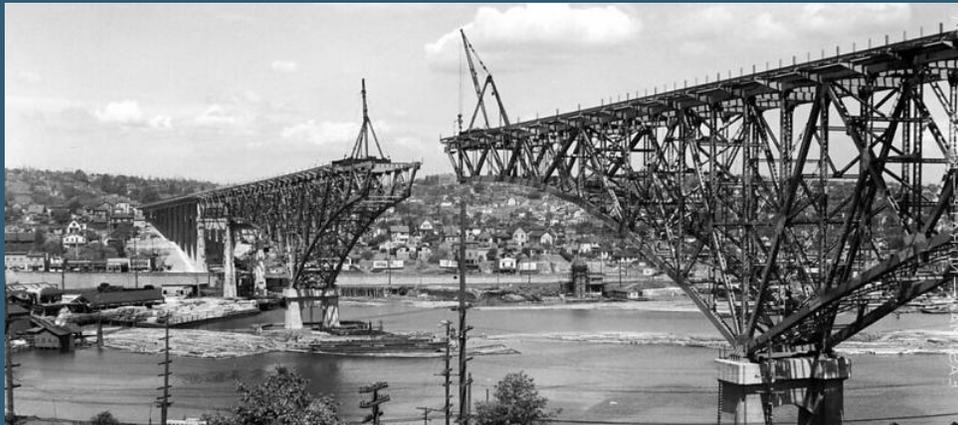# ALL ABOUT THE PHOTO ARCHIVES |

WHAT WE'LL COVER

- What kinds of photos are in the archives?

- How do I search for photos?

- How can I get copies?

WHAT IS THE SEATTLE MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES (SMA)?

SMA's holdings document the history, development, and activities of the agencies and elected officials of the City of Seattle.

(That is, records created by or received by City government.)

See our Introduction to the Archives course for more information if you're not familiar with SMA.

WHAT'S IN SMA'S PHOTO COLLECTIONS?

SMA's photos document the activities of Seattle's city government and the people who live here.

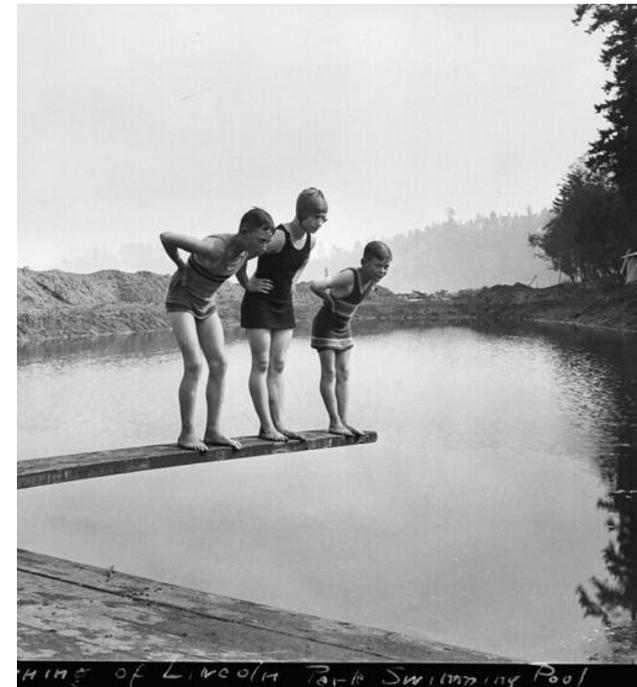Strengths of the photo collection include:

- Parks and recreation

- Capital improvements and infrastructure

- Elected and appointed officials

- Facilities and maintenance

- Community activities and events

- City employees at work

City Light images document the work of the electric utility, including many photos related to construction and operation of the hydroelectric dams.

The Engineering Department housed the City's photographic services unit, which served the rest of the City. Photos include not only images of engineering projects, but also elected officials, facilities, parks, and events.

SMA'S LARGEST PHOTO COLLECTIONS COME FROM SEATTLE CITY LIGHT AND THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT.

Other photo collections at SMA come from the Parks Department, Water Department, Seattle Center, Fire Department, and many more city agencies. There is lots to explore!

WHAT TYPES OF PHOTO MEDIA DOES SMA HAVE?

Negatives
Color & black and white
Small, medium, & large format
Acetate, nitrate, & safety film
Glass

Prints
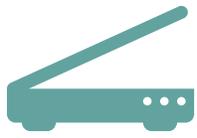Color & black and white
Resin coated
Silver gelatin

Slides
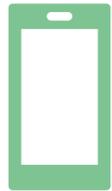Color & black and white
2.25" x 2.25"
Glass, glass lantern

Digital Image Files
.tiff, .jpg

WHAT ARE DIGITAL PHOTOS?

Physical photos that are scanned are called **Digitized Photos**

Born Digital photos were created on a digital camera or smartphone

Not all photos are available in digital form

THERE ARE TWO PLACES TO SEARCH FOR PHOTOS:

Digital Collections

- Describes photos individually

- Includes downloadable high-resolution files of digital images

- Best place to start a search for photos

Finding Aids

- Describes groups of records

- Contains descriptions, not the photos themselves

- Search here if you don't find what you're looking for in Digital Collections

Remember that SMA archivists are available to assist you!

SEARCHING FOR
RECORDS IN THE
SEATTLE MUNICIPAL
ARCHIVES

If you are not familiar with SMA's Digital Collections and Finding Aids sites, start with the Searching for Records course to learn the basics.

This course will dive a little deeper into search strategies specific to SMA's photo collections.

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Images are individually cataloged in Digital Collections. If a digital copy of the image is available, it will be included in the catalog record.

AN IMAGE'S CATALOG RECORD MAY CONTAIN MANY TYPES OF INFORMATION

IMAGE IDENTIFIER

DATE

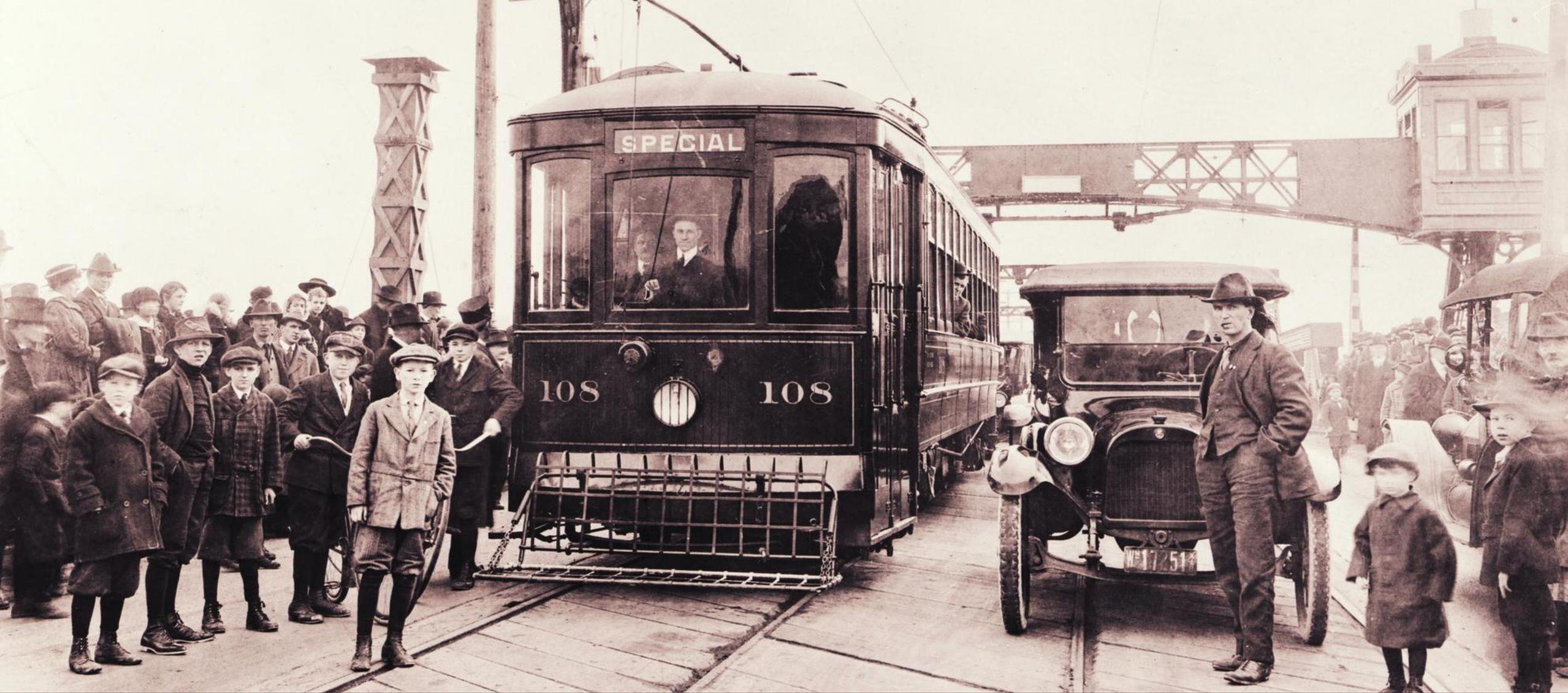SUBJECTS

LOCATION

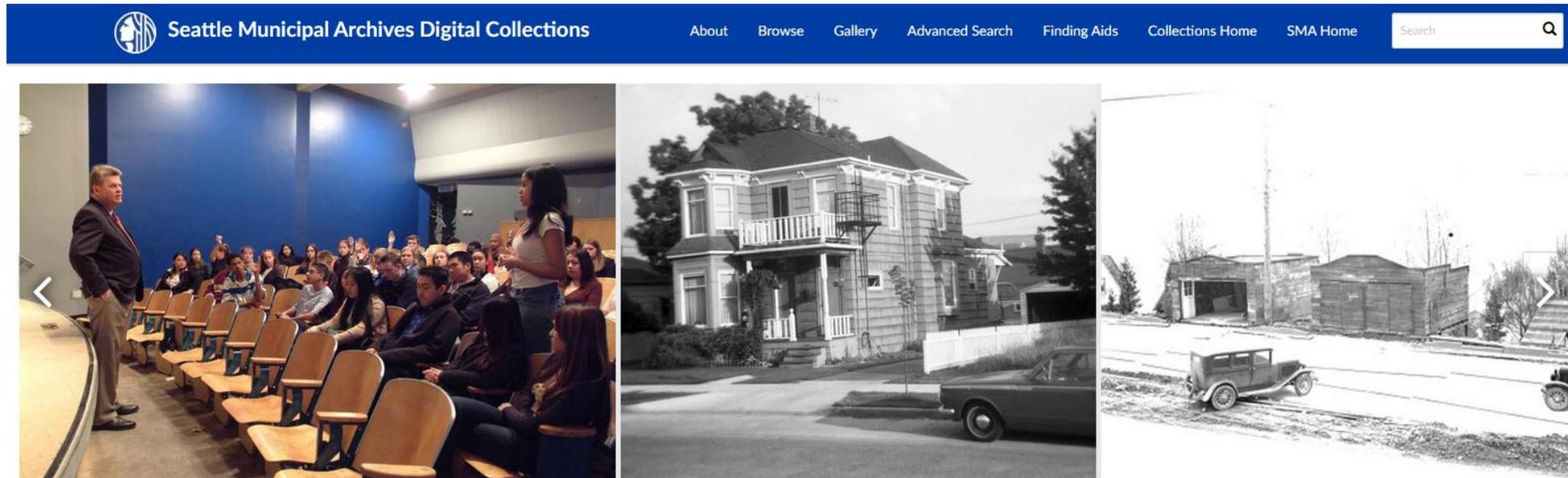PHOTOGRAPHER

MEDIA TYPE

DIGITAL FILE SIZE

RECORD SERIES

Select the image to look more closely at a catalog record

SEARCHING DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

There are two ways to search for a photo in Digital Collections: Basic Search and Advanced Search. Basic Search (shown here) will cast a wide net, and search results will include more than photos.
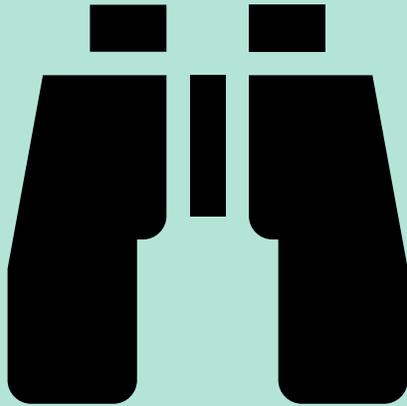
USE FILTERS TO NARROW YOUR RESULTS

Results can be narrowed to include only images by using the filters on the right side of the screen.

Further narrowing can be done by selecting dates, names, collections, subjects, and orientations.

Give it a try – go to **these search results** and first select "Image Records" on the right to remove other types. Then try the other links to narrow by date or collection.

ADVANCED SEARCH
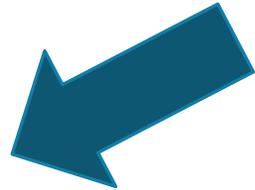
The advanced search form allows you to limit your search to images only, and also has options to search by date, subject, and other fields.

Use the share button to create a link to send a set of results to yourself or someone else.

HOW DO I GET COPIES OF DIGITAL PHOTOS?

DESCRIPTION
Smith Tower Construction Progress

DATE CREATED:
February 1913

SERIES:
2613-07: Engineering Department Negatives

ORIGINAL FORMAT:
Glass Plate Negative

BOX:
3

NOTE:

SUBJECT TERMS:
COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
CONSTRUCTION
DOWNTOWN

DOWNLOAD AS original ⌄ ⬇

Use the download link in the catalog record – choose "original" for highest resolution.

If you need a higher resolution scan than what is available on the site, we can usually rescan the item. Contact us at archives@seattle.gov with your specifications.

HOW DO I FIND PHOTOS THAT AREN'T SCANNED?

While over 135,000 SMA photos are available to view online, many have not yet been scanned.

Photo collections that are not digitized can be discovered through **Finding Aids** and viewed in our research room.

WHAT ARE FINDING AIDS?

Finding aids are guides that allow users to discover, understand, and access archival collections. They describe the creation, arrangement, content, and context of archival materials.

The Finding Aids site contains descriptions of records. Think of it as kind of like a library catalog that can point you to records of interest.

You can learn more about finding aids in our Searching for Records course.

FINDING AIDS CAN HELP YOU DISCOVER…

Undigitized photo collections

Some physical photo collections have been described but are not scanned. Description may be a summary only, or it may include folder titles or negative sleeve information.
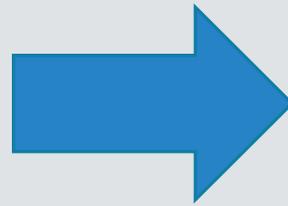
Partially digitized photo collections

Some collections are partially scanned and available in Digital Collections. The remaining unscanned photos are discoverable through Finding Aids.

Textual collections with photos

Some textual collections include photographs. These photos are discoverable at the folder level (e.g., *photographs* is included in the folder title).

All photograph series are described in Finding Aids at the series level.

Where images have been scanned from that series, they will be linked from the series record.

Associated Digital Objects

View 5804-04 online

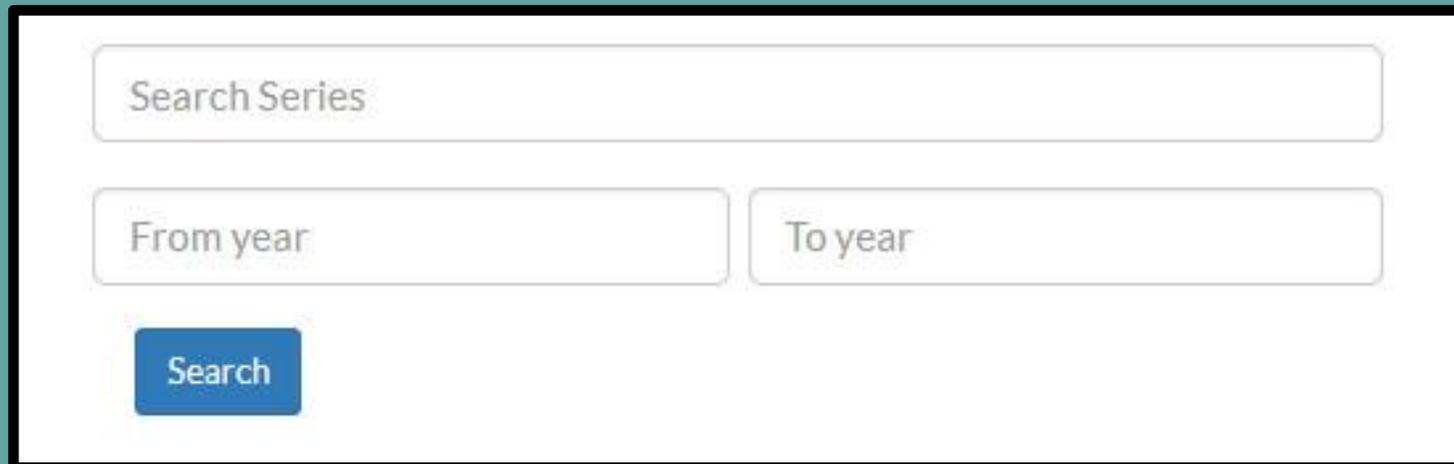There may also be a list of folder titles of unscanned images.

For example, the Forward Thrust Photograph Collection has almost 1500 photos online and searchable in Digital Collections – but many more unscanned images are listed in the folder titles.

Click the image to see the catalog record. In the record, look for list of folders on the right, as well as the Associated Digital Objects link to scanned images in Digital Collections.

The Engineering Department Negatives (Record Series 2613-07) is a wide-ranging collection that covers projects, people, and events across the city.

To search unscanned negatives in this series, go to the series record and use the search box on the right.

For general searches on the Finding Aids site, try terms like "photographs," "negatives," and "slides" along with your topic to find collections and folders with photographic images.

Don't hesitate to contact an archivist if you're not finding what you're looking for!

If your Finding Aids search leads you to unscanned photos that you'd like to see, contact us at **archives@seattle.gov** and we will work with you to provide access.

USE OF SMA PHOTOS

The majority of our photos are public record and are free for use. There is no fee for using these photos.

Occasionally, the copyright will belong to an entity outside of the City. When this is the case, it is noted in the Notes field of the catalog record. The user is responsible for obtaining permission from the copyright holder.

We ask that our photos are cited "*Courtesy of the Seattle Municipal Archives*" and that the image identifier is included.

SMA STAFF ARE HERE TO HELP!

If you have questions or don't find what you're looking for, contact us at archives@seattle.gov. We can check unscanned and unprocessed items and answer any questions about accessing and using SMA photos.