Problem:

Unprocessed, incomplete collection

Part of the Howard Clifford Photograph Collection was dismantled after it was donated to UW Special Collections in the 1970s. At that time, it was common to arrange items in subject files instead of keeping the collection together as a whole. This presents problems for researchers as they no longer have the context only a complete collection can provide.

In addition, no finding aid was available and most of the images were not available in an electronic format. As a result, a wealth of primary sources documenting subjects in Washington and Alaska from the 1930s through the 1960s was mostly inaccessible.

Solution:

Process reconstructed collection

Following industry standards and procedures, conduct archival processing to:

- Confirm that all items are returned to original collection from subject files
- Survey collection contents and create conceptual series for intellectual arrangement
- Research material and create detailed description for metadata-encoded finding aid
- Digitize images for online access
- Physically re-house materials for long-term preservation

Outcomes:

Research tools, digital images, safely preserved materials

- An item-level finding aid describing over 600 photographs and their negatives will be available on the UW Special Collections and the Northwest Digital Archives websites
- Digitized images from much of the collection will be available on the UW Libraries Digital Collections website
- Nearly 1,000 negatives and photographs, some of which were already deteriorating, will be preserved in acid-free containers

Impact:

Accessibility for researchers and Special Collections staff

- Researchers in the UW community and beyond will have access to information that gives context and meaning to their work
- Digitized images will be available to anyone with an Internet connection
- UW Special Collections staff will be able to fulfill reference and image reproduction requests more efficiently

Howard Clifford image courtesy of Tacoma Public Library Image Archives
Richards Studio Collection – D13556-1, 9551

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