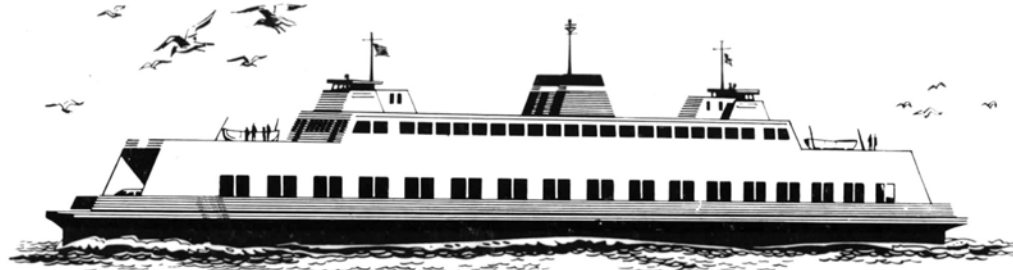


Guide to the Records of

Washington State Ferries



**Office of the Secretary of State
Division of Archives and Records Management
Olympia, Washington
April 2004**

Guide to the Records of
Washington State
Ferries

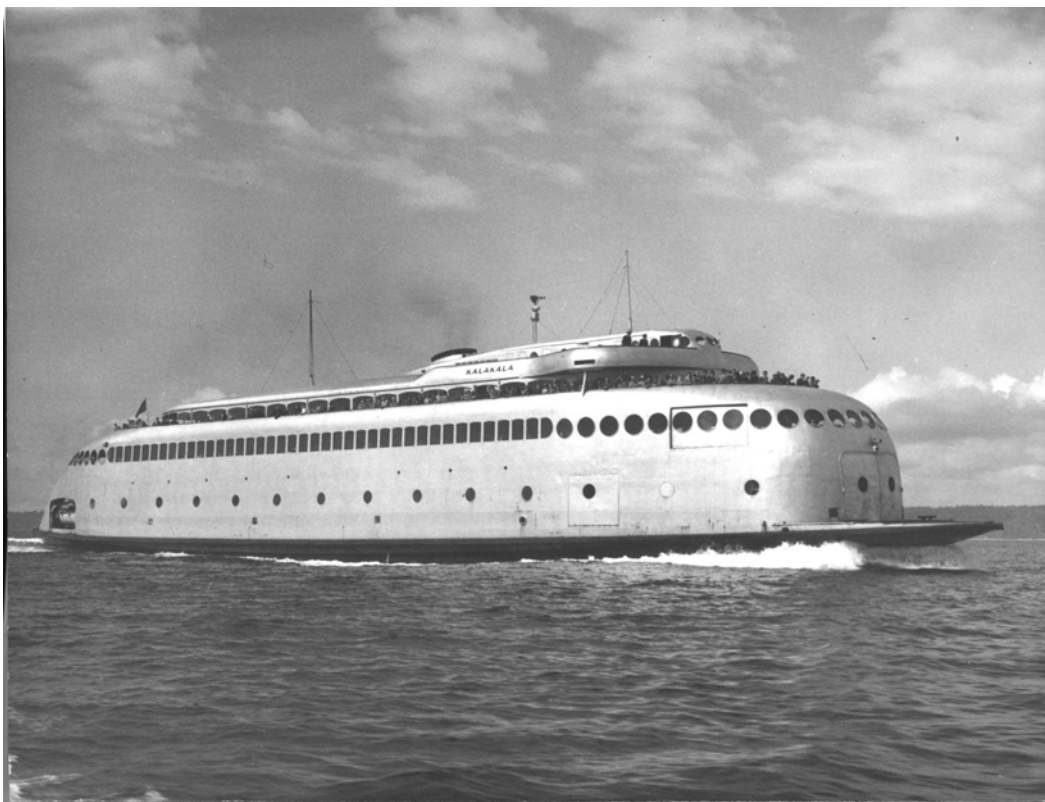
Compiled by
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Office of the Secretary of State
Division of Archives and Records Management
Olympia, Washington

April 2004

INDEX

History of Ferry System . . .	page 5
Scope and Content . . .	page 8
Note on Arrangement . . .	page 8
Ferry System Subject Files . . .	page 9
Files on Individual Ferries . . .	page 21



Kalakala

Washington State Ferries

Many small steamers (the so-called “Mosquito Fleet”) carried passengers on Puget Sound, on Lake Washington, and on various rivers, beginning in the 1850’s, but they were all privately owned until the state legislature in 1895 authorized counties to build and operate ferries. The side-wheeler King County of Kent began carrying people from the east shore of Lake Washington to Seattle. The first ferry built on Puget Sound specifically for cars was the Leschi, which began service on Lake Washington in 1914, joined a few months later by the Lincoln. This county ferry system was never profitable and was soon privatized. Some Lake Washington ferries continued to run even after the Lake Washington Floating Bridge was opened in 1940, and ferry service on the lake ended only with the last run of the Leschi in 1950.

The two principal ferry companies on Puget Sound were the Kitsap Transportation Company, or “White Collar Line,” and the Puget Sound Navigation Company (PSNC), or “Black Ball Line.” Due to the growth of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Bremerton and to an increase in tourism, more and more people needed transportation across the Sound to Kitsap County and the Olympic Peninsula. Although all of the early ferries were originally for foot traffic, the growth of private automobile ownership caused the remodeling of many ferries, such as the PSNC’s Chippewa, in the 1920’s to enable them to carry cars. When the Golden Gate Bridge opened in San Francisco, the PSNC bought seventeen of the ferries which had been put out of business in the bay area, and rechristened them with northwest names, including Elwha, Enetai, Illahee, Kehloken, Klahanie, Klickitat, Malahat, Quinault, and Willapa.

The Puget Sound Navigation Company bought the Kitsap Transportation Company, which was plagued by labor strife, in 1935, and became the largest inland fleet in the world. In 1935 it purchased the burned-out Peralta from California, gave it a new, silver, streamlined, art deco superstructure, and renamed it the Kalakala (“flying bird”). The Kalakala served the , mostly on the Seattle to Bremerton run, for thirty-two years before being bought by a seafood processing company, towed to Alaska and used as a factory. In 1998, after twenty-eight years high and dry, she was purchased by a private foundation and towed back to Seattle to await restoration.

When the four-month-old Tacoma Narrows Bridge collapsed in 1940, the Highways Department began to run the ferries Croslie and Skansonia in its place. World War II greatly increased the traffic on Puget Sound, and the Puget Sound Navigation Company was able to buy six more ferries from California (including the City of Sacramento, the San Mateo, and the Shasta), make twenty-eight round trips per day between Seattle and Bremerton, and still lower fares by twenty-five per cent.

After the war there was great controversy when the PSNC tried to raise rates again, and the idea of state ownership was raised. Governor Langlie pushed legislation that would allow the state to sell bonds to buy the ferry system. Under pressure from his bankers, the owner reluctantly agreed to sell for \$4,944,499 after the state threatened to have the fleet condemned. Many people believed that the ferry system was a temporary form of

transportation which would soon be retired after the building of five bridges across Puget Sound.

In August of 1950, at Seattle's Seafair celebration, the Willapa, by then named the Bellingham, was set on fire by the Seafair Pirates as part of the festivities and described as the sacrificial burning of Neptune's barge. Four months later, the PSNC's shareholders agreed to sell all the routes except the one to Victoria, B.C., and the state took control on June 1, 1951. At sundown the ferries paused for one minute and lowered their Black Ball flags for the last time. The state now owned eighteen ferries, twenty terminals, and the destroyer escort Mitchell. The state expected to keep rates down and minimize labor problems, but was disappointed on both issues, due in part to a strong ferryworkers' union. Governor Langlie had hoped that ferries eventually would not have to charge fares at all, but the cost of running the system was higher than expected. Both maintenance of the ferries and the service provided by them improved, but they were not self-supporting as the legislation had originally stipulated. Starting in 1959, a fraction of the state's gasoline taxes was used to help support the ferry system, which is required to generate at least 60% of its operating expenses from fares.

There was also an obvious need for more and bigger ferries to serve the rapidly growing population of Puget Sound. The state bought two used ferries from Maryland, towed them 6,000 miles and rechristened them the Rhododendron and the Olympic. In 1954 the first ferry was built specifically for the Washington State Ferry System: the 310-foot Evergreen State. Built by the Puget Sound Bridge and Dredging Company, she carried 100 cars and 1,000 passengers. She was followed a few years later by the "Evergreen-State-class" Klahowya and Tillicum.

A 1962 report stated that most of the ferries in the fleet were too old and small to be useful and that new ferries were needed. The aging Leschi, like the Kalakala, was sold to Alaska to process seafood. In 1967, the state launched the Elwha, the Hyak, the Kaleetan, and the Yakima, big ferries for the time at 382 feet long, carrying 160 cars and 2,000 passengers. Funds were appropriated to complete the 40-car Hiyu.

In 1972, Todd Pacific Shipyards of Seattle built the Spokane and the Walla Walla; these "jumbo ferries" were the biggest ferries in the world. They carried 206 cars and 2,000 passengers.

In 1974, in response to the energy crisis, some ferries were ordered to run at reduced speed and power during off-peak midday periods, to save fuel. The Department also encouraged people to take the ferries as foot passengers, and use busses, vanpools or bicycles. 1974 also saw state ferry service instituted on the Port Townsend-Keystone (Whidbey Island) route, previously privately operated. In 1979 ferry service had to be reinstituted over northern Hood Canal when the Hood Canal Bridge broke apart and sank in a storm.

In 1977, the state authorized the building of six more 100-car "Evergreen-State-class" ferries by the Marine Power and Equipment Company of Seattle. The first two, the

Issaquah and the Kittitas, began service in late 1980. The Kitsap, the Cathlamet, the Chelan, and the Sealth followed. They had the latest computer technology, but experienced various problems. “Disputes over contract administration and unusual public scrutiny of technical problems encountered during the vessel break-in periods, particularly with the Issaquah, led to adverse publicity and repeated investigations into all aspects of the \$106 million contract,” according to the Department of Transportation Biennial Report.

In the 1990’s, the Jumbo Mark II ferries Tacoma, Puyallup and Wenatchee were built by Todd Shipyards. They carried 218 cars and 2,500 passengers, but there was still a need for more ferries. It had been decades since the last cross-Sound bridge proposal had been abandoned, and the ferries were more popular than ever. Passenger-only ferries were reinstituted on Puget Sound in 1990, with the Kalama, the Skagit, and the Tyee, and later the Chinook and the Snohomish.

The Washington State Ferry System is the largest in the United States, with twenty-nine vessels on ten routes serving twenty terminals in eight counties. It carries more than 11 million vehicles and 26 million passengers a year.

Responsibility for the Washington State Ferries was originally shared by the Washington State Toll Bridge Authority and the Department of Highways. The new Department of Transportation took over responsibility in 1977.

Ferry name changes: Chetzemoka – formerly Golden Poppy
Enetai – formerly Santa Rosa
Illahee – formerly Lake Tahoe
Kalakala – formerly Peralta
Kehloken – formerly Golden State
Klahanie – formerly Golden Age
Klickitat – formerly Stockton
Nisqually – formerly Mendecino
Olympic – formerly Governor Nice
Quinault – formerly Redwood Empire
Rhododendron – formerly Governor O’Conor
Willapa – formerly Fresno

Sources: Building Washington by Paul Dorpat and Genevieve McCoy
Department of Highways Biennial Reports
Department of Transportation Biennial Reports
Pacific Work Boat, May 1959
www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The records in this collection document the operations of the Washington State Ferries. They consist mostly of correspondence and also include advertising, agreements, financial documents, legal documents, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, reports, statistics, and studies. Of particular interest are the files on particular ferries, which in some cases include blueprints, inspection and drydock records, or log books.

NOTE ON THE ARRANGEMENT

These records were transferred to the State Archives from the Toll Bridge Authority, the Department of Highways, and the Department of Transportation, on many occasions over the past thirty-five years. They were in no particular order.

The records have been separated into two sections, subject files and files on individual ferries. They have been put into alphabetical order and placed in acid-free folders and acid-free boxes.

SUBJECT FILES

Box 1	Acquisition Program	1970
	Acquisition Program	1970
	Acquisition Program	1970
	Acquisition Program	1970
	Acquisition Program	1975
	Advertising	1951-54
	Advertising	1952
	Advertising	1954-60
	Advertising	1955-61
	Advertising	1961-66
	Advertising	1967-68
	Advertising	1969-70
	Advertising	1971-72
	Advertising	1973-74
Box 2	Advertising	1973-75
	Advertising	1975
	Advertising	1975-77
	Advertising, Magazines, etc.	1951-53
	Advertising, Magazines, etc.	1953-54
	Advertising, Newspapers	1951-53
	Advertising, Newspapers	1953-54
	Advertising, Radio	1952
	Advertising, Radio	1952-54
	Advertising, Study	1957-66
	Advertising, Study	1976-77
	Advertising, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine	1961-66
	Advertising, Television	1952-54
	Advertising, Television	1955
	Advisory Committee	1970-73
	Advisory Committee	1974
	Advisory Committee	1975-76
	Alaska Service	1964-65
	Alaska Service	1965-66
Box 3	Alaska Service	1967-68
	Alaska Service	1967-68
	Alcoholic Beverages	1972-73
	Alcoholic Beverages	1974-75
	Alcoholic Beverages	1974-78
	Allyn and Company	1951
	Alternative Concepts	1972
	Anacortes – San Juan Islands – Sidney	1952-53
	Anacortes – San Juan Islands – Sidney	1954-60

SUBJECT FILES

Box 3	Anacortes Terminal	1951-61
	Anacortes Terminal	1951-64
	Anacortes to Sidney	1977
	Anacortes to Sidney	1977
	Anacortes to Sidney	1977
	Anacortes to Sidney	1977-78
	Anderson, H. I., Correspondence	1952-54
	Approaches, Survey of	1948
	Attorney General Opinions	1951-63
	Bainbridge-Seattle	1951-57
Box 4	Bainbridge-Seattle	1958-67
	Bellingham-Orcas Island	1951-61
	Bellingham-Orcas Island	1958-62
	Bellingham-Orcas Island	1958-62
	Bicycles	1974-75
	Black Ball Line	1959
	Bond Resolutions	1951-55
	Bremerton Study	1959-60
	Bremerton Terminal	1946-59
	Bremerton Terminal	1951-63
	Bremerton-Seattle	1958-69
	Bremerton-Seattle	1951-54
	Bremerton-Seattle	1951-58
	Bremerton-Seattle	1955-57
	Bremerton-Seattle	1958-64
	Bremerton-Seattle, Citizens' Groups	1955-58
	Bremerton-Seattle, Citizens' Groups	1958-63
	Brewster Ferry, State v. McKellar	1968
	Camano Island-Whidbey Island	1961-63
	Capital and Operational Needs Study	1975
Box 5	Capital Improvement Needs Study	1976
	Chambers of Commerce and Commercial	1957-58
	Chambers of Commerce and Commercial	1958-67
	Chief Kitsap Stampede	1961-62
	Civil Defense	1968-73
	Colman Terminal	1951-54
	Colman Terminal	1952
	Colman Terminal	1952
	Colman Terminal	1954-60
	Colman Terminal	1955-67
	Colman Terminal	1958-60
	Colman Terminal	1960-61

SUBJECT FILES

Box 5	Colman Terminal	1961-65
	Colman Terminal	1962-63
	Colman Terminal	1964-67
	Columbia Beach Terminal	1951-58
	Columbia Beach Terminal	1951-64
	Complaints	1952-60
Box 6	Complaints	1962-75
	Concessions	1972-76
	Concessions	1972-78
	Concessions	1973
	Concessions	1975-78
	Concessions	1975-78
	Consultants, Selection	1969-78
	Contract Provisions	1954
	Contracts and Agreements	1974-78
	Correspondence	1950
	Correspondence	1951
	Correspondence	1952
	Correspondence	1953-54
Box 7	Correspondence	1953-54
	Correspondence	1954-61
	Correspondence	1956-57
	Correspondence	1958-63
	Correspondence	1961-68
	Correspondence	1964
	Correspondence	1964-78
	Correspondence	1968-74
	Costs	1969-73
	Cross-Sound High-speed Passenger	1973
	Data on the Operations of	1962
	Decatur Island	1958
	Design	1946-64
	Destroyer Escort <u>D. E. Mitchell</u>	1953
	Diesel Electric Marine Propulsion Equip.	1948
	Disruption of Service due to Breakdowns	1953-64
	Eagle Harbor	1950-57
	Eagle Harbor	1962-64
	Edmonds-Kingston Route	1951-63
	Edmonds-Kingston Route	1977
	Edmonds-Kingston	1951-63
	Edmonds Terminal	1961-63

SUBJECT FILES

Box 8	Employees Retirement System	1955-61
	Entiat Ferry	1958
	Excursions	1971-73
	Fare Increases	1954-55
	Fare Increases	1978
	Fare Increases	1979
	Fauntleroy Terminal	1951-58
	Fauntleroy Terminal	1951-64
	Fauntleroy-Vashon Island Route	1951-63
	Ferry-Barge Concept	1975
	Ferry Users Protective Association	1956-57
	Films	1957-61
	Financial Status	1960-61
	Friday Harbor Terminal	1952-63
	Funds	1965-76
	Funds	1974
	Governor's Correspondence	1951-55
	Governor's Correspondence	1957-59
	Governor's Correspondence	1960-63
	Hanford Ferry	1937
	Hanson, H. C. Naval Architect	1952
	Harper Terminal	1951-61
	Hat Island Ferry	1967-72
	Highways Department	1951-72
	History	1954-77
	Hovercraft	1973-77
	Hydrofoil and Hovercraft	1961-67
	Hydrofoil and Hovercraft	1963-69
Box 9	Hydrofoil and Hovercraft	1968
	Hydrofoil and Hovercraft	1969-72
	Immigration	1961-62
	Improvement Fund	1962-63
	Improvement Study	1976
	Improvement Study	1976
	Informational Releases	1948-51
	Informational Releases	1952
	Informational Releases	1952-53
	Informational Releases	1953
	Informational Releases	1957-58
	Informational Releases	1958-59
	Informational Releases	1962
	Informational Releases	1965-68
	Informational Releases	1968-72

SUBJECT FILES

Box 9	Informational Releases	1973-75
	Insurance Claims	1956-57
	Insurance Lay-up Returns	1953-55
	Insurance Liability	1962-69
Box 10	Insurance Marine Loss Record	1956-57
	Insurance Marine Loss Record	1963
	Insurance Policies	1943
	Insurance Policies	1944-51
	Insurance Survey	1954
	Interim Financing	1956
	Internal Reviews	1972-76
	Inventories and Appraisals	1951
	Inventories and Appraisals	1954-55
	Jetfoil	1977
	Jumboizing Ferries	1972
	King County Ferry District No.1	1948-50
	King County Ferry District No.1	1948-51
	Kingston Terminal	1951-64
	Kitsap County Transportation Company	1929
	Labor Agreements	1951-53
	Labor Dispute re Deferred Maintenance	1952-52
	Labor Issues	1950-58
	Landing Facilities	1970
	Leases and Agreements	1934-48
	Leases and Agreements	1934-48
	Leases and Agreements	1934-48
	Leases and Agreements	1934-48
Box 11	Leasing Ferries	1961-74
	Legal Issues	1976-78
	Legislation	1959
	Legislation	1963
	Legislation	1965
	Lofall-South Point Route	1951-60
	Lofall-South Point Route	1951-63
	Lofall-South Point Route	1952-53
	Lopez Island Terminal	1951-64
	Lopez Island Terminal	1951-65
	Maintenance	1951-57
	Management Recommendations	1961-62
	Management Recommendations	1962-63
	Management Recommendations	1963-68
	Management Survey	1961-62

SUBJECT FILES

Box 11 Manchester-Seattle Route	1951-52
Marine Commuter Corporation	1961-66
Marine Employee Commission	1951-54
Marine Employee Commission	1954
Marine Employee Commission	1955-61
Market Research Report	
Marketing Study	1976-77
Box 12 Masters, Seniority List	1969
McDowell, F. J., Correspondence	1953
Meyer, Job L. G.	
Mini-Ferries	1976-79
Miscellaneous	1956
Monthly Construction Reports	1976-79
Mukilteo-Columbia Beach Route	1951-55
Mukilteo-Columbia Beach Route	1951-65
Mukilteo-Columbia Beach Route	1956-64
Mukilteo-Columbia Beach Route	1974-75
Mukilteo-Columbia Beach Route	1975
Mukilteo Terminal	1951-64
National Ferryboat Operators' Association	1953-54
National Ferryboat Operators' Association	1953-61
New Ferries, Urban Mass Transportation	1969-79
News Releases	1967-71
News Releases	1967-71
Newspaper Clippings	1956-58
Newspaper Clippings	1974-77
Nickum, W. C., Marine Architect	1947-54
Nickum, W. C., Marine Architect	1952-53
Nordstrom, Carl J., Naval Architect	1951-58
Off-Peak Hours	1970-72
Operations on Puget Sound, Analysis	1948
Orcas Island Terminal	1951-56
Orcas Island Terminal	1951-59
Other States and Countries	1949-58
Box 13 Other States, California	1953-55
Other States, Hawaii	1959-61
Other States, Maryland	1942-54
Other States, New York	1947-56
Other States, Virginia	1950-56
Other States, Virginia	1953-56
Other States, Virginia	1956-57
Overloads	1951-70

SUBJECT FILES

Box 13 Pamphlets, Flyers and Maps	1953-74
Pamphlets, Flyers and Maps	1957-61
Passenger Only Ferries	1964-65
Passenger Only Ferries	1977-78
Passenger Only Ferries, Vashon Island	1972-76
Passengers, Walk-on	1963-66
Personnel	1953
Personnel	1954-56
Personnel, Hair and Beards	1970-72
Petitions	1956-67
Petitions	1958-63
Piers 50 and 51	1957-58
Point Defiance-Talequah Route	1957-60
Point Defiance Terminal	1953-54
Point White-Bremerton Route	1955-58
Policies and Procedures	1970-77
Box 14 Pollution Control	1969-79
Pollution Control	1973-74
Port Angeles Terminal	1955-60
Port Angeles-Victoria Route	1956-58
Port Hadlock Ferry Landing	1955
<u>Port Orchard Independent</u>	1954-57
Port Townsend-Keystone Route	1951-66
Port Townsend-Keystone Route	1971-72
Port Townsend-Keystone Route	1972-74
Port-Townsend-Keystone Route	1973-74
Port-Townsend-Keystone Route	1974
Port-Townsend-Keystone Terminals	1974-76
Progress Reports	1951-52
Progress Reports	1951-54
Progress Reports	1953
Progress Reports	1954-58
Progress Reports	1959-62
Progress Reports	1962-66
Box 15 Proposed Changes	1972
Proposed Ferries	1948
Proposed Ferry, 100-car, Design Study	
Publicity	1955-56
Publicity	1955-57
Publicity	1958-61
Publicity	1958-64
Publicity	1959-63

SUBJECT FILES

Box 15	Publicity	1981
	Puget Island Ferry	1966-71
	Puget Island-Westport (Oregon) Ferry	1956
	Puget Island-Westport (Oregon) Ferry	1973-78
	Puget Sound Navigation Company	1947
	Puget Sound Navigation Company	1947-48
	Puget Sound Navigation Company	1950-52
	Puget Sound Navigation Company, Agreem.	1948
	Puget Sound Navigation Company, Analysis	1948
	Puget Sound Navigation Company, Appraisal	1948
	Puget Sound Regional Transit Plan	1964-66
	Puget Sounders, Inc.	1951-67
	Purchase by State	1948
	Purchase by State	1948
	Purchase by State	1948
Box 1	Purchase by State	1951
	Purchase by State	1951
	Purchasing	1957-59
	Rate Increase Study	1965
	Rate Increase Study	1966-68
	Real Estate	1951
	Refinancing	1953
	Refinancing	1954
	Refinancing	1954
	Refinancing	1954-55
	Refinancing	1954-55
	Refinancing	1954-55
	Refinancing	1954-55
	Refinancing	1954-55
	Refinancing	1954-55
Box 17	Refinancing	1954-55
	Refinancing	1955
	Refinancing	1955
	Refinancing	1955
	Refinancing	1955
	Refinancing	1955
	Refinancing	1955
	Refinancing	1955-63
	Refinancing	1956-57
	Reorganization of State Government	1965
	Repair and Maintenance	1955-58

SUBJECT FILES

Box 17	Repair and Maintenance, Puget Sound Bridg.	1953-57
	Repair and Maintenance, Todd Corporation	1951-52
	Repair and Maintenance, Todd Corporation	1953-54
	Repair and Maintenance, Todd Corporation	1954-55
	Repair and Maintenance, Todd Corporation	1956-57
	Rosellini, Governor, Request for Support	1960
	Routes, Mileage	1956-59
	Rules and Regulations	1953-54
	Ruof, Richard, State Representative	1958-60
	Ruof, Richard, State Representative	1960
Box 18	Sale of Property and Equipment	1952-55
	San Juan Islands	1951-58
	San Juan Islands, Bridges and Ferries	1958
	San Juan Islands, Ferry Study	1975
	San Juan Islands, Land-use Study	1972
	San Juan Islands, Pig War National Park	1965-72
	San Juan Islands, Route	1972-73
	San Juan Islands, Study	1951-52
	San Juan Islands, Study	1957
	San Juan Islands, Study	1973
	San Juan Islands, Study	1975-76
	San Juan Islands, Terminals, Study	1974-75
	San Juan Islands, Toll Bridges	1956-58
	Schedules	1963-74
	Schedules	1972-74
	Scuba Diving Agreements	1978
	Senior Citizen Rates	1972-78
	Service and Repair Parts	1947
	Service and Repair Parts	1947
Box 19	Service and Repair Parts	1947
	Shaw Island Terminal	1951-53
	Sidney, B. C. Terminal	1952-57
	Sidney, B. C., Terminal	1958-59
	Sidney, B. C., Terminal	1959-63
	Smoking	1975-79
	Southworth Terminal	1957-62
	Spare Parts	1938-39
	Speer, Paul D., Finance Consultant	1955-57
	Statewide Transportation Plan	1978-79
	Strike	1974
	Strike	1980
	Suquamish-Indianola Route	1951-52

SUBJECT FILES

Box 19	Swendsen, H. G., Correspondence	1953-54
	Tacoma Narrows – see Washington State Toll Bridge Authority Collection, “Tacoma Narrows Bridge, Ferry”	
	Talequah Terminal	1951-62
	Tariff Adjustments	1976
	Tariff Adjustments	1977-78
	Tariffs	1966-69
	Tariffs	1966-71
	Tariffs	1970-74
	Terminals	1951-63
	Terminals	1951-75
	Terminals	1954-56
	Terminals	1982
	Terminals	1985
Box 20	Terminals, Bids	1957
	Thank-you Letters	1975-84
	Three-Year Report	1978-79
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1973-74
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1975
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1975
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1976
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1976
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1977
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1977
	Toll Bridge Authority Meetings, Info for	1977
	Toll Collection	1969-70
	Toll Collection	1971
Box 21	Toll Collection, Charge Accounts	1963-74
	Tourguide Installations	1964-68
	Traffic	1970-75
	Traffic and Earnings Report	1951
	Traffic Projections	1970
	Traffic Statistics	1947-52
	Traffic Statistics	1953-67
	Traffic Statistics	1958-65
	Traffic Statistics, Easter	1952-58
	Traffic Statistics, Fourth of July	1952-59
	Traffic Statistics, Memorial Day	1952-59
	Traffic Statistics, Mother’s Day	1953-59
	Traffic Statistics, Thanksgiving	1952-57
	Traffic Statistics, Washington’s Birthday	1952-58
	Trident Base	1973-77

SUBJECT FILES

Box 21	Truck Rate Review	1970-75
	Tudor Engineering Co.	1969-74
	Tudor Engineering Co.	1969-76
	Tudor Engineering Co.	1973-76
	United States Army	1952-72
	United States Bureau of Outdoor Recreation	1963
	United States Coast Guard	1952-54
	United States Coast Guard	1952-65
	United States Coast Guard	1957
	United States Navy	1952-64
	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1955
	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1955-57
	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1957
	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1957-60
Box 22	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1957-62
	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1960-62
	United States v. Toll Bridge Authority	1960-64
	Vashon Island Bus Service	1977-78
	Vashon Terminal	1952-63
	Vessel Allocations	1955-74
	Victoria Terminal	1957
	Warren and Parks v. Toll Bridge Authority	1953-54
	Wastewater	1970-71
	Wastewater	1975
	Westport (Washington)-Ocean Shores	1969-72
	Whidbey Island-Camano Island	1963
	Winslow Auto Transfer Span	1951-53
	Winslow-Seattle Route	1951-64
	Winslow Terminal	1951-53
	Winslow Terminal	1951-61
	Winslow Terminal	1954-66

FERRY FILES

Box 22	<u>Chetzemoka</u>	1953-54
	<u>Chetzemoka</u>	1972
	<u>Chinook</u>	1951-54
	<u>Chippewa</u>	1953-54
	<u>Chippewa</u>	1953-54
	<u>Chippewa</u>	1957
	<u>City of Seattle</u>	1970
	<u>City of Tacoma</u> – see Washington State Toll Bridge Authority collection, “Tacoma Narrows Bridge, Ferry”	
	<u>Crosline</u> – see Washington State Toll Bridge Authority collection, “Tacoma Narrows Bridge, Ferry”	
	<u>Defiance</u> – see Washington State Toll Bridge Authority collection, “Tacoma Narrows Bridge, Ferry”	
	<u>Elwha</u>	1967
	<u>Elwha</u>	1972
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1963-65
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1965
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1965
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1965-69
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1965-69
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1966
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1966
Box 23	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1966
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1966
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1966
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1966-67
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1967
	<u>Elwha, Hyak, Kaleetan, Yakima</u>	1968
	<u>Enetai</u>	1957
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1952-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1952-60
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54



Elwha

FERRY FILES

Box 24	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-54
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-55
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-55
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-55
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1953-55
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954
Box 25	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954-55
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1954-57
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1957
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1957
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1961
	<u>Evergreen State</u>	1972
	<u>Evergreen State</u> Class	1953-57
	<u>Evergreen State</u> Class	1957
	<u>Evergreen State</u> Class	1957
	<u>Evergreen State</u> Class, Diesel Engines	1957
	<u>Fresno</u>	1940
	<u>Hiyu</u>	1963-65
	<u>Hiyu</u>	1965-67
	<u>Hiyu</u>	1966-67
	<u>Hiyu</u>	1967
	<u>Hiyu</u>	1967-68
	<u>Hiyu</u>	1972
	<u>Hyak</u>	1967-70
	<u>Hyak</u>	1972
	<u>Illahee</u>	1957
	<u>Illahee</u>	1972
	<u>Illahee, Klickitat</u>	1959
	<u>Illahee, Klickitat, Nisqually, Quinault</u>	1947
	<u>Illahee, Klickitat, Nisqually, Quinault</u>	1956-58
	<u>Illahee, Klickitat, Nisqually, Quinault</u>	1956-58
	<u>Illahee, Klickitat, Nisqually, Quinault</u>	1957

FERRY FILES

Box 26	<u>Illahee</u> , <u>Klickitat</u> , <u>Nisqually</u> , <u>Quinault</u>	1957-59
	<u>Illahee</u> , <u>Klickitat</u> , <u>Nisqually</u> , <u>Quinault</u>	1957-59
	<u>Illahee</u> , <u>Klickitat</u> , <u>Nisqually</u> , <u>Quinault</u>	1958
	<u>Iroquois</u>	1970
	<u>Kalakala</u>	1926-2004
	<u>Kalakala</u>	1941-42
	<u>Kalakala</u>	1951-56
	<u>Kalakala</u>	1953-54
	<u>Kalakala</u>	1956-58
	<u>Kaleetan</u>	1967-76
	<u>Kaleetan</u>	1972
	<u>Kehloken</u>	1972
	<u>Klahanie</u>	1952-54
	<u>Klahanie</u>	1972
	<u>Klahowya</u>	
	<u>Klahowya</u>	1958-59
	<u>Klahowya</u>	1972
	<u>Klickitat</u>	1972
	<u>Kulshan</u>	1972
	<u>Kulshan</u>	1972
	<u>Lake Tahoe</u>	1940
	<u>Leschi</u>	1946
	<u>Mendocino</u>	1927-58
	<u>Nisqually</u>	1953-54
	<u>Nisqually</u>	1957-72
	<u>Nisqually</u>	1972
	<u>Olympic</u>	1936-42
Box 27	<u>Olympic</u>	1936-42
Box 28	<u>Olympic</u>	1936-42
Box 29	<u>Olympic</u>	1936-42
	<u>Olympic</u>	
	<u>Olympic</u>	1953-54
	<u>Olympic</u>	1954
	<u>Olympic</u>	1957-67
	<u>Olympic</u>	1972
	<u>Olympic</u>	1976
	<u>Olympic</u>	1977
	<u>Olympic</u>	1977
	<u>Olympic</u>	1978
	<u>Olympic</u>	1978
	<u>Olympic</u>	1979-80

FERRY FILES

Box 29	<u>Olympic</u>	1979-80
	<u>Olympic</u>	1982
	<u>Olympic</u>	1983
	<u>Olympic</u>	1984
	<u>Olympic</u>	1984
	<u>Olympic</u>	1986
	<u>Olympic</u>	1986-87
	<u>Olympic</u>	1986-87
	<u>Olympic</u>	1988
	<u>Olympic</u>	1988
	<u>Olympic</u>	1988
	<u>Olympic</u>	1990
Box 30	<u>Olympic</u>	1992
	<u>Olympic</u>	1992-93
	<u>Quinalt</u>	1946
	<u>Quinalt</u>	1972
	<u>Redwood Empire</u>	1940
	<u>Rhododendron</u>	1946-47
	<u>Rhododendron</u>	1953-54
	<u>Rhododendron</u>	1954
	<u>Rhododendron</u>	1957
	<u>Rhododendron</u>	1972
	<u>Rosario</u>	1953
	<u>San Mateo</u>	1954
	<u>San Mateo</u>	1957-72
	<u>San Mateo and Shasta</u>	1955
	<u>Santa Rosa</u>	1940
	<u>Shasta</u>	1957
	<u>Skansonia</u> – see Washington State Toll Bridge Authority collection, “Tacoma Narrows Bridge, Ferry”	
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1970-71
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1970-71
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1970-71
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1970-71
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1971
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1971
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972
Box 31	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972-73



Rhododendron

FERRY FILES

Box 31	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1972-76
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1973
	<u>Spokane, Walla Walla</u>	1973-75
	<u>Stockton</u>	1941
	<u>Tillikum</u>	1958-59
	<u>Tillikum</u>	1972
	<u>Tyee</u>	1984-87
Box 32	<u>Tyee, Plans and Specs</u>	1985-86
	<u>Tyee, Plans and Specs</u>	1984-2002
	<u>Vashon</u>	1954
	<u>Vashon</u>	1972
	<u>Walla Walla</u>	1976
	<u>Willapa</u>	
	<u>Willapa</u>	1955
	<u>Yakima</u>	1967
	<u>Yakima</u>	1972
Box 33	<u>Tyee, Plans and Specs (rolled-up)</u>	1985-90