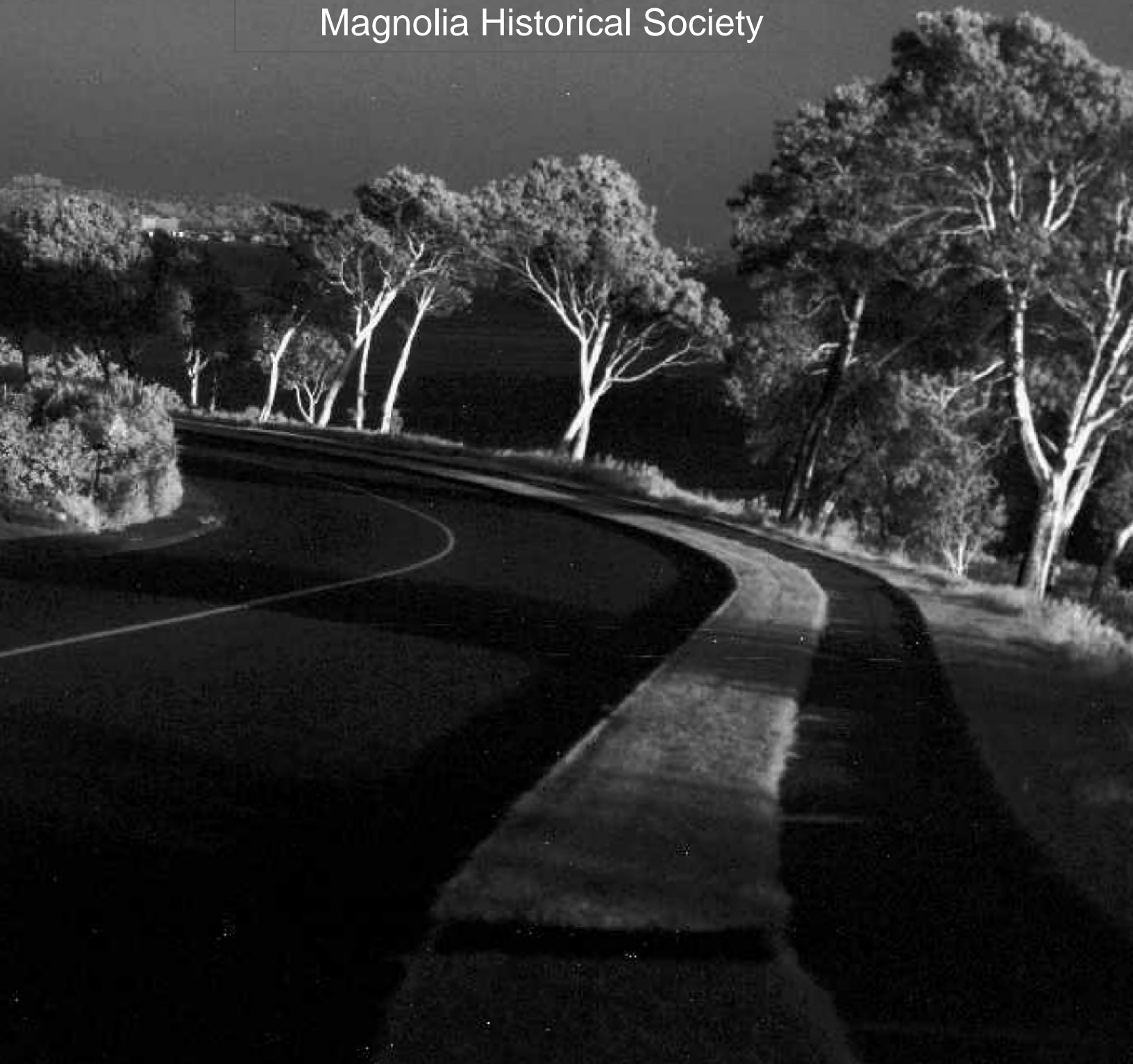


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Fort Lawton: Constant Place of Change

INTRODUCTION TO THE KIEHL COLLECTION GRANT
KING COUNTY LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE COMMISSION
by Sara W. Smith, Bainbridge Island, Washington, December 1997

In 1993, I had a conversation with my grandfather, Frederick Mann, about the work that he and my grandmother, Mia Mann, had done to create a collection of historic photographs documenting the natural and human history of what is now Discovery Park. Frederick Mann was involved in the movement to turn Fort Lawton into a park in the 1960s. Most of the images they collected came one by one from libraries, museums, magazines, newspapers and private collections.

One collection that came to their attention was quite large and of special interest. It became known as the Kiehl Collection. H. Ambrose Kiehl, CE (civil engineer), had been engaged by the US Army in the 1890s to assist in the development of Fort Lawton. Kiehl was also an able and avid early-day photo enthusiast and while doing engineering work for the Army amassed some 1,000 photographs that he took between 1890 and 1917. During this period Kiehl and his family lived on the grounds that much later became Discovery Park but which at the time was a forested wilderness on the outskirts of the city. These images document the clearing of the West Point area, the development of the Fort, family life in the Northwest, gold rush activities in Seattle and many images of Kiehl's engineering work at forts, dams and bridges throughout the Northwest and Alaska. This collection, accompanied by excellent records, was clearly a great boon in the effort to document the park.

The collection was made known to the Manns in the late 1970s. Since that time, Mann had been making copy negatives and prints of those images from the collection that he found particularly interesting and pertinent to the park. In conversations with Laura Kiehl, he had suggested that, after suitable duplication and preservation for the purposes of Discovery Park, the original collection should be placed in the Special Collections Division of the University of Washington Libraries where it would receive proper care and also be available for public study and enjoyment. Laura Kiehl enthusiastically endorsed this idea.

Collage of H. Ambrose Kiehl memorabilia and pictures, many of which you can spot in the next pages. Collage assembled by Mrs. Helen Gunn, Laura Kiehl and F. M. Mann. N section, Kiehl Collection, UW Special Collections.



*Kiehl beginning his survey
of Fort Lawton in 1900.*
UW Special Collections
#Kiehl 3x3-294.

By 1993, when I spoke to my grandfather and grandmother about the photographs, much work had already been done but much remained to be done. It was at this point that a few of us decided that King County might be willing to support this documentary effort in order to help get the fragile and deteriorating negatives into the care of a library as soon as possible.

In 1994, I wrote for a Special Projects Grant from the King County Landmarks and Heritage Commission, a fund supported by hotel/motel tax revenues. We were fortunate enough to receive \$7,500 to preserve the collection. The grant was intended to cover the costs of making prints that would be available at the Discovery Park Visitor Center, copy negatives that would be available at the City Archivist's negative collection, and written historical documentation to accompany images where available. Because not all of the Kiehl photos were pertinent to Discovery Park, we selected approximately 500.

Over the last few years we have been working to do this. Between November 1995 and May 1996, I worked in photographer Rod Slemmons' dark room to make 8x10 prints from the original negatives and then 4x5 negatives from those prints. When I moved out of town in May 1996, Rod and Fred Mann continued the work to make the 8x10 prints and negatives. It was then decided, because of the requirements of a hanging-file system that had already been planned to house the Discovery Park photo collection, that 4x5 prints of the Kiehl images were better suited to the needs of the Visitors Center at Discovery Park.

What we have ended up with at the end of these few years of work is: 1) 4x5 prints for the Discovery Park Visitor Center; 2) 4x5 negatives of these prints for the City Archivist; 3) written documentation for many of these images and reference to Kiehl's journals for further information; and 4) 8x10 prints that will accompany the original collection of negatives, photo albums, journals, and equipment to Suzallo Library.

The public now has access to an amazing collection of images documenting one history of the Pacific Northwest. It is accessible in three locations: Allen Library, Special Collections at the University of Washington, Discovery Park, and the City of Seattle Archives. Those approximately 400 images that were not covered under the grant (i.e., did not feature content directly related to Discovery Park) are still accessible in print form through Kiehl's photo albums at Allen Library. Allen will house the entire Kiehl collection, including all original negatives and photo albums.



The Kiehl survey crew (above) and logging crew (below). UW Special Collections #Kiehl M101, #Kiehl 5x7-30.



Aside from the historical value, and perhaps most important to me, the grant has given me the opportunity to work with my grandfather and grandmother, two people whose interest in the history of Washington State and the City of Seattle has affected me deeply and helped determine the shape of my own career and interests. It has been an invaluable experience.



Inside of first Kiehl Fort House, Kiehl office.
UW Special Collections
#Kiehl M189b.

H. AMBROSE KIEHL AND FAMILY

Text courtesy of Discovery Park Archive and Fred/Mia Mann

All of the photographs in this section were taken by Mr. H. Ambrose Kiehl between 1890 and 1917. The Collection contains many images that primarily illustrate everyday family life at the beginning of the twentieth century, and might be typical of those found in many family albums of that period, except that these were taken on the grounds that became Discovery Park. Kiehl was perhaps more prolific than most early-day photo enthusiasts. His Collection contains some 1,000 images, most of which he processed

himself. Many were taken using the newly-introduced Eastman Flexible roll film, although he also used the same gelatin dry plates (glass) that he used to more seriously record the engineering projects he was engaged in. Fortunately for us, he kept a detailed photo notebook in which he meticulously recorded the subject, the location and the date of each of some 950 of the photographs he took.

Kiehl was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1865. He received his training as a civil engineer at Ohio State University in the 1880s. After graduating he “went West,” first to San Francisco and then to Puget Sound, where he opened an engineering office called Kiehl and Hogg

H. Ambrose Kiehl, prolific reader, planner and designer of Fort Lawton.
UW Special Collections
#Kiehl 4x5-153.





New barracks. The timber from the Fort was never sold or milled but used as fuel at the Fort.
UW Special Collections
#Kiehl 6x8-10.

in Port Townsend. Port Townsend probably appealed to him because, at that time, it held promise of becoming one of the major cities on the Sound. There he met and married Louisa Jean Stockland, whose parents had emigrated from the Shetland Islands in 1857 and had taken out a Donation Claim in the Chimacum Valley, where they farmed. They later established a residence in Port Townsend. The first of the two Kiehl children, Laura Adele Kiehl, was born in Port Townsend in 1892. The second, Lorena Miriam Kiehl, was born in Seattle in 1895.

A decision had been made as part of a plan for national defense to construct a military post on Magnolia Bluff near Seattle. The Quartermaster General of the US Army sent Captain W. W. Robinson, Jr. to Seattle to serve as the constructing quartermaster to work with the City in assembling the land and start the process of constructing the post. One of his first moves was to employ Kiehl to survey the land, supervise clearing and grading, lay out road and building locations and, with Robinson, supervise construction of the new post later to be named Fort Lawton.

The first building to be built was a temporary office and residence for the engineer. The Kiehls, not so fondly, called it “the shack.” They lived there for only two or three years until the first officers’ quarters were completed in 1899. Even though a civilian, Kiehl was able to move his family into the new quarters until it was needed by the Army. This was grand living for the Kiehls. Although lighted by kerosene lamps, it actually had a bathroom, running water, a kitchen and central heating. Kiehl also started building a new house at 421 West Galer Street that became the family home in 1905.



Kiehl's field office.
UW Special Collections
#Kiehl 3x3-418.

This page is not part of
the preview



There were lots of family pictures, all posed for humor, by Ambrose Kiehl. UW Special Collections #Kiehl 4x5-189.

scattered Collection. By that time, Laura Kiehl was confined to a wheel chair and was too weak to rummage through basements and attics to find her father's records and plate negatives.

Laura's own story is of interest. She graduated from the University of Washington in 1916 with the intention of becoming a stockbroker. She may have been Seattle's first female stockbroker, because, as she said, "None of the male-dominated brokerage firms in Seattle would have anything to do with a woman, so I opened my own office—in Smith Tower." She was proud to report that, "I got all my clients out of the stock market before the crash of 1929."

Before she died, Laura very generously loaned her father's collection to the Manns with the understanding that it would be made available to the public at Discovery Park for enjoyment and study. She was also very pleased, and in full agreement with the plan that, after suitable duplication for Park purposes, the original collection would be placed in the Special Collections Division of the University of Washington Libraries where it would also be available for public study.

Laura Kiehl begins rifle practice in the remote area of the Fort. UW Special Collections #Kiehl 3x3-275.



