

# Out of the Archives

a newsletter from the Washington State Archives

October 2016



## Employee Spotlight

### Meet Brigid Clift

*This month's Employee Spotlight showcases Central Regional Branch Archivist, Brigid Clift.*

#### What is your role at the State Archives?

I'm the Regional Branch Archivist for the Central Branch. I manage the collection and the building as well as assist local government agencies with their records. I also provide access to the collection and conduct workshops, along with a few other jobs as needed.

#### Do you have any tips on how to efficiently search the Archives?

Yes, use your Archivist! I don't know of a researcher who knows the collection as well as the Archivist. We can sometimes find what you're looking for within a record you didn't even think about. We have a supportive executive team encouraging us to help customers, even if we don't have the record. I always tell students and researchers there are no dumb questions. You don't know until you ask.

#### If you could change anything about the Archives, what would it be?

I wish there was a law requiring agencies to transfer their records to the Archives within a certain timeframe. I truly feel it's easier on the researchers to have all the records centrally located.

#### Describe which technology has affected your job the most.

Indirectly, I feel that being able to convert microfilm to digital images has helped my customers the most. It has allowed agencies to put records online for the public to view without having to re-scan the record.



#### Before working at the Archives, what was the most interesting job you've ever had?

It's not that far off from what I'm doing now, but I was a "Land Title Officer" for 13 years. I wrote policies for a title company called Chicago Insurance Company. I used a lot of the same land and court records I maintain in this job.

#### What would people never guess you do in your role?

I spend a lot of time in attics and basements of city halls and courthouses with men in orange jumpsuits. Yes, the sheriff's trustees help haul a lot of records for me.

#### What legacy would you like to leave at the Archives?

I would like to leave knowing that all archival records from local government agencies have been transferred to the Archives. And that the most-used records were digitalized and available on the [Digital Archives](#).

#### What is the strangest thing you have ever discovered in your research?

Using the coroner records for a researcher from Spain, it showed three brothers immigrated to the United States and all three died within a month's time. The family thought it was a family disease but it was a family dispute!

#### What has been your favorite project at the State Archives?

I love the records that fall under the archival appraisal category, where I get to search for the historical records of an agency. This is where I found the Leavenworth committee that created the Bavarian Village.

#### If you could interview one Washingtonian, dead or alive, who would it be, and why?

I'd like to visit with Bonnie Dunbar, the former NASA astronaut from Sunnyside. I feel like she still had roots in Central Washington, and was even the Ellensburg Rodeo grand marshal in 1990.



#### If you could witness any historical event in Washington history, which would you want to see, and why?

The Roslyn Bank Robbery in 1892 by the McCarty Brothers. There is still speculation as to who committed the robbery.

#### Who is your personal hero?

My Mom. Just by watching her, I'd say her goal in life was to succeed in everything she tried—and she's not afraid to try anything. After a successful career and raising her family, she traveled all over the U.S. and is still active in many community organizations. In her late seventies she backpacked through Europe for three months visiting over 15 countries. In her eighties, she still drives her huge motorhome, pulling her car with the dog, Jake, and her cat, Piss Ant, heading south for each winter.

#### What is your biggest pet peeve?

Unorganized people who won't ask for help.

#### How would your friends describe you?

Loyal and ready to try anything.

#### If you had a talk show, what would it be called, who would be your first guest, and what would you most want to ask him or her?

It would be called "On the Ranch." I'd love to have ranchers from across the country talk about their successes and failures. I'd most want to know about the history of their families and the land that has been passed down for generations. A good example of my first interview would be the manager from the King Ranch in Texas.

#### What would be the title of your autobiography?

"Stock Show Mom" ([you'll have to google it](#)).

#### Tell about an embarrassing moment at work.

I didn't find out I was pregnant until two days before I started at the Archives. I let my boss know right away and he was really excited for me. I hadn't met him or my coworkers before, so I tried to play it cool having to go to the bathroom every half an hour. We'd just sit down for training and I'd make an excuse to use the bathroom. It wasn't until two months later, my co-worker's wife became pregnant and he called me out on morning sickness. It's either that or when my button flew off my pants onto the research table, when I was about four months along and should have been wearing maternity clothes.

#### Do you have an office nickname? What is it?

I don't have one at work, but at home it's "Crash." I am pretty clumsy and tend to hit my head a lot. I'm pretty sure I'm getting a helmet for Christmas this year.

#### What is a superpower you wish you had?

I wish I could hold an individual's personal item (like a comb or shirt) and be able to see what their life was like.



#### Tell about a time you took a huge leap of faith.

In my early twenties, a recently-made friend and I moved to Nashville on a whim. Not to sing, but just to see another part of the country. I'd never been out of Ellensburg and she'd never been out of Spokane, so we packed her car with a toaster, a phone (that you plugged in the wall) and clothes. We left on a Wednesday, got there on Friday, I had two jobs by Monday. One job was at a car dealership because I needed a car. I lived there over a year, visiting the sites, until my oldest brother sent me a one-way ticket home.