

Here, We're Inclined to Climb

FRANK SHAW recorded his look up the old Pike Street Hill Climb less than two months before Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman grabbed a shovel to break ground here for the grand stairway that Jean Sherrard shows us with his "now." So it is not so long ago that Uhlman shoveled (Jan. 17, 1977) and Shaw snapped (Nov. 22, 1976). Shaw always dated his negatives, and the roving photographer returned many times to this scene to track with his Hasselblad how this public work advanced.

The oldest built hill climb here was a trestle, down and up, which coal cars were winched between the Pike Street Coal Wharf and a narrow-gauged railroad that was run to the south end of Lake Union.

There the cars took on coal from scows that were alternately hauled and floated there from mines on the east side of Lake Washington. It was a difficult route, but it paid very well. In 1878 the entire operation was smartly replaced by a new railroad that ran around the south end of Lake Washington and thereby directly between the coal fields of Newcastle and a new coal wharf at the foot of King Street.

Panoramic photographs from the 1890s of Denny Hill show what appear to be steps near the top of this incline. Otherwise, buildings obscure the view. In 1912-13 a steep pedestrian trestle was built over the dangerous Railroad Avenue, and the trestle continued on high above these steps to connect the Pike Street Pier directly with the then 6-year-old Pike Place Public Market. The trestle was lost to the Alaskan Way Viaduct in the early 1950s, but not the steps.

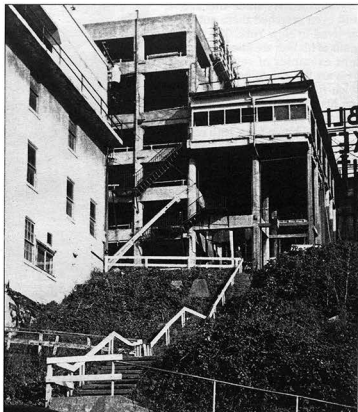
Shaw's photograph may make some readers downright nostalgic for the old public market and its rough surrounds. 🕒

Check out Paul Dorpat and Jean Sherrard's blog at www.pauldorpat.com.

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COURTESY OF FRANK SHAW

THEN: This is one of hundreds of images showing how Seattle changed between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s, recorded by Frank Shaw who lived in an apartment on Lower Queen Anne Hill. The Pike Place Public Market and the waterfront were two subjects he often visited.



JEAN SHERRARD

NOW: Jean Sherrard's "now" repeat of Shaw's Pike Street Hill Climb was photographed on a blustery day in May.

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