



A recent 'sun-soaked deluge' photo triggers a backward search for its historic counterpart

COURTESY DAN KERLEE

THEN: Samuel McKnight's early 1890s panorama of Lake Union looks north and captures much of the area included in Seattle's 17-square-mile annexation in 1891, when the city limits were pushed north from McGraw Street to 85th Street.

THIS WEEK'S Now & Then is perhaps the only occasion in the 34 years of this weekly feature that the "now" photo came before the "then," in a way.

After Jean Sherrard photographed his rain-drenched Lake Union scene recently, I kept it on my desk as a challenge to find a historical shot that matched it, or nearly so. Through the help of Ron Edge, we found it. Ron let us know that a mutual friend, public historian and collector Dan Kerlee, had earlier shared with him the photo that became this week's "then." Pioneer photographer Samuel McKnight recorded his shot in the early 1890s within a soft shout of Jean's storm-soaked shot. It will do nicely.

Here's Jean recollection: "On a spring evening, driving north on I-5 from downtown, I found myself in a torrent — a quantity and quality of rainfall that occurs in the tropics, but rarely in Seattle. Buckets, cats and dogs, and Noah's flood were the metaphors that came to mind. The windshield wipers pushed through liquid an inch thick, and everyone in their right mind had slowed to a crawl. Then, minutes before setting behind Queen Anne, the sun broke through the downpour, slicing away a few lower-lying clouds. I exited at Lakeview Drive and splashed up to a viewpoint overlooking the freeway. Like most natives, I don't carry an umbrella, so I held a cardboard box over my head to protect my camera while I snapped a dozen shots of the city north and south, captur-



JEAN SHERRARD

NOW: The atmospheric splendor of Jean Sherrard's photo was made with no plans but to get off the hydroplaning freeway and snap it.

ing Seattle in one of its rarer incarnations, under a sun-soaked deluge."

Samuel F. McKnight, the photographer of this fortuitous early scene, operated a studio here for a few years before and after the city's Great Fire of 1889. His surviving work is not large. This print looks north-northwest across Lake Union, which only recently had been divested of its surrounding forest.

On this southeast corner of the lake, the line of Louisa and David Denny's electric trolley to Brooklyn (University District) and Ravenna Park passes between the homes on Eastlake Avenue, bottom left, and a park/beer garden landscaped

with a swimming beach and a screen of shade trees growing beside it. This park, with its windmill and tower, was opened in 1886 as a lure to what was then the terminus of the horse-drawn Seattle Street Railway.

The little bay beyond the trees has since been mostly filled in. The ships of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, were long parked here, and the Lake Union Dry Docks, off-camera to the left, has been at work since 1919. Fremont and Ballard, upper left, are mottled with smoke and steam from their mills. ■

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