



Roosevelt Neighborhood Association Newsletter

Teri Butorac-Lee: Editor

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<http://rooseveltseattle.org>

The Reign of Seattle's Most Notorious Slumlord Could Be Coming to an End

By Rick Anderson Tue., Jan 7 2014 at 08:01AM

After 35 years of putting off repairs to many of his 50-some Roosevelt-neighborhood properties and fending off dozens of civil actions with repetitious court appeals, Hugh Sisley may have finally reached the pinnacle of his reigning Seattle slumlordship.

The 86-year-old is facing a record \$2 million fine that continues to increase at the rate of \$1,600 a day, plus 12 percent interest. And now, after years of foot-dragging of its own, City Hall is finally moving to collect the debt.

As officials launch a new initiative approved by the City Council to inspect every rental unit in town, City Attorney Pete Holmes is planning to recover what the stubborn rental king owes by confiscating prized Roosevelt properties held by the penny-pinching millionaire.

"We're currently deciding how to go about collecting those judgments, and foreclosing on the property is likely the best way," says John Schochet, Holmes' deputy chief of staff. "We have to decide what's best for the neighborhood. But of course, all he has to do is write us a check and that would be the end of it."

That doesn't appear likely—at least not for the foreseeable future. The \$2 million Sisley owes resulted from a single court case involving just two of his Roosevelt rental homes, one of which has been torn down. The case—which began as two separate housing-code violation cases in 2008 and 2009, was then combined into one large civil prosecution—has already endured a half-dozen court hearings, including a jury trial, followed by appeals. And though all wound up in favor of the city, Sisley is once again appealing the outcome.

"That's correct," says Jeff Grant, the Seattle attorney representing Sisley and his wife Martha in the long-running legal challenge. "The fines at issue are on appeal, which we are going to be arguing sometime in January. So far, he has not paid any fines or penalties, and that won't change until there's a final [court] decision."

Grant thinks the city is awaiting the outcome of the latest

appeal, but city officials indicate that since the judgment has been finalized repeatedly by the courts, it's time for Sisley to pay up after nearly five years of legal wrangling.

Code inspectors from the Department of Planning and Development found 42 violations at the two houses in question when they were operated as boarding homes in 2008 and 2009. Sisley charged up to a half-dozen renters \$500 monthly each for a bedroom and shared bathroom/living facilities at the homes, which were cited for lack of heat, faulty wiring, broken toilets and windows, unsafe conditions, and insect infestation.

Rather than making quick repairs, Sisley fended off inspectors and took the issues to court, a tactic he has used to delay repairs and paying fines at many of his other rental homes. (The city has amassed close to 200 code-enforcement cases relating to Sisley properties dating to the 1980s, according to Holmes' office. They include junk storage violations, emergency orders, and unfit vacant buildings subject to demolition; more than 25 of those cases required taking Sisley to court to force his compliance.)

The current case involving the two boarding homes (at 6317 15th Ave. N.E. and 6515 16th Ave. N.E.) ultimately led to onerous court judgments: \$247,000 in fines, costs, and penalties at one home and \$368,000 at the other, plus daily penalties for both properties. Sisley had claimed he

continued on page 2

RNA General Meeting
Tuesday February 25th
Calvary Christian Assembly
Roosevelt Neighborhood Identity
and Branding
& Bicycle Master Plan update

6:30-8:00pm Presentation
8:00pm Social Hour

Sisley continued from Pg 1

corrected the violations, but refused to allow inspectors inside the homes to confirm the work, so the city has continued to add daily fines as allowed by law.

As the clock continued to run, Sisley challenged the size of the fines and penalties, claiming the city's Municipal Court was bound by the same \$75,000 judgment limit of District Courts. He lost that too. "The appellate court's decision," city attorney Holmes said at the time, "reinforces the city's ability to make it more expensive to be a slumlord than to comply with the Seattle Municipal Code."

His deputy Schochet says the total Sisley owes has ballooned to \$2,100,645 as of last week. At the one home still standing, the continuing penalties click upward at \$600 per day; in the house that was demolished, the penalties came to \$1,000 a day for 1,034 days—the duration between the violation and the razing of the home in July 2012. The amount due also carries a 12 percent annual interest rate, Schochet says. Sisley's attorney Grant confirms the amount due by his client as "\$2 million and counting."

Grant describes his client as a frugal businessman. Tales of his scrimping are legendary. One resident recalls often seeing Sisley reading a newspaper at a local barbershop. The barber told the resident that Sisley was too cheap to spend 25 cents for a newspaper, so he came in and read the shop's paper for free.

Sisley also earned a much less amiable reputation for hiring bouncers as rental managers. The most notorious was a swaggering neo-Nazi gun runner named Keith Gilbert, who managed Sisley's Roosevelt properties and enforced rental policies. Gilbert once did federal prison time for conspiring to dynamite a stage where Martin Luther King Jr. was scheduled to speak. He was sent back to the lockup after a 2005 bust for possession of illegal weapons, including two machine guns. He expressed remorse only at being separated from his pet Blondi, a snarling German shepherd he named in memory of a dog owned by Adolf Hitler.

Gilbert regularly brought civil-rights lawsuits against city inspectors for "invading" Sisley's properties; he also sued judges and once sued a Roosevelt neighborhood association when it attempted to create a commercial plan for the district. Sisley felt the rezoning plan would negatively affect his properties.

Thanks to light-rail expansion, Roosevelt Development Group, a partnership headed by developers Ed Hewson and Jon Breiner, now holds the leases to some of the more valuable Sisley properties in Roosevelt, and are working with Sisley, the city, and the neighborhood on how and what to build on them.

There is also the question of which Sisley properties would be foreclosed if the city moves to collect its \$2 million, possibly complicating Roosevelt development plans. As city attorney spokesperson Kimberly Mills says, they're seeking a "win-win" deal that's best for both the neighborhood and taxpayers. But what happens if it doesn't seem like a win to Sisley, a litigant who loves the lethargy of the appeals process?

At the festering intersection of 65th Avenue Northeast and Northeast 15th Street, in the shadow of historic, restored Roosevelt High School, three of Sisley's dilapidated properties sit in a row, drab gray and boarded-up remains of once fine homes fallen into great disrepair. They loom over the neighborhood as relics of good days gone sour, rotting monuments of the Sisley Rental Wars, circa 1980 to date.

Rick Anderson



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Thrive Proves Healthy Can Be Tasty.

Thrive is a combination store, juice bar, and cafe.

Founder Monica Kinsman opened Thrive in December 2008. The restaurant brags that its food is 100% gluten-free, 100% vegetarian, 100% dairy-free, 100% vegan, 95% organic, 95% raw! There are bulk foods, books, videos, and appliances for sale. To round out their offerings, Thrive also gives cooking classes

A typical breakfast offering is the Incan bowl. Its ingredients include almond milk, steamed quinoa, raisins, medjool dates, banana, strawberries, cinnamon, trail mix, goji berries, and shredded coconut.

Their flagship smoothie is the Coconutty, made with young Thai coconut, cashews, dates, pink Himalayan crystal salt, and ice. The Juggernaut is a typical salad served with crumbled Bella Burger, marinated kale, marinated mushrooms, and crunchy red cabbage, atop lemon tahini-drizzled steamed grains and a bed of spring greens, tossed in their special Juggernaut Sauce.

For a main course, try the stuffed peppers: sunflower seed pate tucked within red bell peppers and topped with our red pepper, jalapeno nacho dip, served on a bed of mixed greens in Lemon tahini.

Thrive proves that vegan cuisine can be delectable, and not just for true believers. The day I visited, the outdoor tables were full.

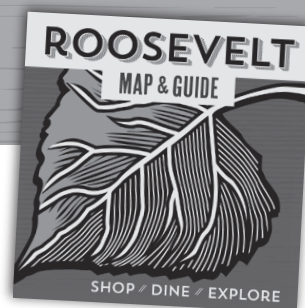
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A Personal Reflection on the Roosevelt Neighborhood Tree Lighting

It's already February, and most of us are back into our pre-holiday season routines, working on New Year's resolutions to get out and run, eat healthier, have less road rage...well, only some of us need to work on that I suppose.

By the end of January the holiday season usually seems like a blur, and we are focused on getting through the winter and into spring. The Second Annual Roosevelt Neighborhood Tree Lighting and Winter Celebration, however, left a lasting impression that stands out amongst last year's holiday festivities.

It was wonderful to see the community celebrate and be together, braving the frigid cold and enjoying cups of hot cocoa to warm their hands.

Six local choirs and musicians, and five local members of the Roosevelt Neighborhood came to sing and share words of inspiration; reminding us that more important than anything, the holidays serve to bring us together; to share a moment to sing, dance, and reflect together. Families came to see their students sing with the Roosevelt High School and Eckstein Middle School choirs, and when the Total Experience Gospel choir started singing, I looked around to see a crowd of more than three hundred people smiling and dancing to the music.

The Calvary Christian Church and New Discovery Kids choirs lifted everyone's spirits, and crowd favorite, the Tuba Quartet led by Terry Paananen, played throughout the entire evening. The message of the night from all of the wonderful speakers was to go out and care for your

neighbors and your neighborhood, and pay mind to the things that are truly important to us.

The Roosevelt Neighborhood certainly came together that night, and showed what a wonderful area it is to be a part; whether you live, work, shop or go to school here.

So now, in February, when life has returned to the hectic daily frustrations and summer seems a long way off, I find myself reflecting on the holidays and understanding the message of season in a new light. Perhaps the reason we gather each year to celebrate the holidays is to serve as a reminder for the rest of the year; to carry on the message of community and giving after we have slipped back into the daily shuffle of life.

-Kristina Kielbon

Events Coordinator at Ten Thousand Villages Seattle



Thinking of selling your home?



Ellen Hastings

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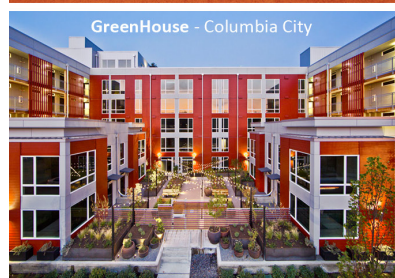
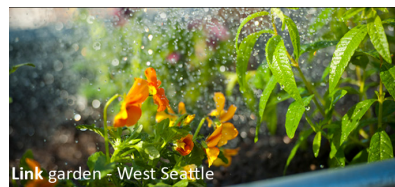
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The Anatomy of a Wine Tasting

By Frank Michiels

Eight Bells Winery is what is referred to as a "boutique winery", a connotation of something special, something unique. At the risk of sounding too serious, at Eight Bells Winery, the partners do strive to create something unique and special in every bottle we produce. Although Eight Bells' wines are often described as a great value (low price ratio to quality), even the inexpensive wines are not cheap. So maybe, it might be good to understand what the winemakers are striving for stylistically so you can form your own idea of whether your investment in a bottle of Eight Bells wine is well placed. The most important judge of a wine is the consumer; and the consumer's opinion is expressed best based on a repeat purchase. No words necessary.

Before discussing the wine itself, a mention of the type of glass selected is worthwhile. Of course, if you're out on a beach watching the sunset and the choice is either pour it into some paper cups or guzzle it straight out of the bottle, there is no bad choice. Just make sure you don't miss the sunset.

But if you do have the choice, good glassware truly does make a difference. At the least, a good wine should be served in clear, fairly thin stemware to be given a chance

to show off its attributes.

Getting to the wine, it is so much more than simply tasting the wine. First of all, there is the appearance. A winemaker puts much effort into extracting as much color out of a red grape as possible and then into preserving this color in the wine. In addition, the wine should be clear and bright, even if very deep and dark. There should be no haze or dullness to the wine. The depth of the color can be appreciated by holding the wine against a white backdrop and the clarity can be seen by holding it up against a light. These attributes are equally important in a white wine, especially the clarity of the wine.

The next important aspect of a wine is the fragrance. Hopefully, there is no initial off-odor. If so, you are dealing with a flawed wine. Without getting into the multitude of descriptors used, let it be said anyone can at least appreciate an alluring aroma, especially if it is complex and continues to develop. Personally, this is the most telling point of a good wine and at Eight Bells, we emphasize this aspect.

Having noted its color and fragrance, it's time to move on to the actual tasting. But even this is broken down into components. As the wine enters your mouth, you should try to be aware of the various sensations you get from the front of your mouth, through the middle and on to the back. Typically, sweet sensations will be first, with bitter, acidic and astringent sensations coming from the sides and the back. Then there will be a more general sensation called mouth-feel, which relates more to the weight or richness of the wine, whether it is full-bodied or watery. And finally, the finish, which is the perception that lingers in the mouth after the wine has been swallowed. A good wine will stay with you for many seconds.

Hopefully, this has made some sense to you. But if not, come visit us on any Saturday at the winery where we have free tastings from 11 AM to 4 PM. My partners and I would be only too happy to step you through the tasting process.

In final, wine should not be so mysterious and you need not rely on someone else's opinion. The definition of a good wine is quite simple, it is a wine you like and don't let anyone tell you different.

Hope to see you at the winery!



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Mountain Climbing for the Rest of Us

Whenever we travel, whether sailing, or using some other means of conveyance, we try to keep up our daily exercise.

This usually means walking, which is a great way to explore the sights and keep moving at the same time. Sometimes we have felt that a simple walk just wasn't enough, that we wanted to do something a bit more interesting or exciting. Well, how about climbing a mountain? Sounds a bit strenuous, right? But actually there are several places right here in the northwest where you can climb a mountain with little gear and with no more preparation than that required by your daily constitutional.

For instance, when we took the train down to Portland for New Year's, we discovered you can climb a mountain there without leaving the city limits. All you need to do is head east from downtown Portland and walk about five miles, gradually going uphill.

You will soon find yourself at the top of Mount Tabor, an extinct volcano, now a park in the Rose City. Paths wind up on both the north and south sides of the park, through tall evergreen trees and past two reservoirs to what was once the crater. Now it is a grass-covered mound where you can find walkers, runners, bikers, frisbees, strollers and dogs. You can also climb to the peak by ascending a series of stairs, which is what we did, although it might be easier to go up one of the paths. I'm not sure how many steps there are – I just know I was a bit breathless when I lost count upwards of 175.

Our multi-week sail north late last summer found us in several anchorages and marinas on San Juan Island. There we discovered a couple of mountains easily accessible, after a brief dinghy ride, from where we had dropped anchor. Both walks are also fairly close to Friday Harbor, so can be reached by car or bike.

When we were anchored in Griffin Bay on the southeast side of the island, near American Camp (it was Griffin's pig that started the Pig War of 1859 – look it up) we discovered Mt. Finlayson. You reach the "summit" of this mountain, really just a big hill, by taking a fairly moderate climb through a forest of pine trees, past three lagoons, and walking along a ridgetop prairie. On a clear day, such as we had, you will be rewarded with spectacular views of

the islands and waters of Haro Strait, all the way to Victoria on Vancouver Island, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Olympic peninsula. If the views aren't enough, you also spot many types of interesting flora and fauna, including perhaps an eagle or two. The majesty of those birds never ceases to enthrall me, even if they are raptors.

When we went to visit English Camp on the northwest side of the island (if you've already looked up the Pig War and American Camp, you will know this is the other side of the story), we anchored in Garrison Bay. From there we were able to stroll up Mt. Young, also called Young Hill, which rises from the parking lot of the camp. Reaching the top we found, as with Mt. Finlayson, panoramic views of the surrounding waters, the Olympic Peninsula, and the Canadian Gulf Islands.

When the British inhabited the English camp, they must have figured they couldn't let the Americans corner the market on the view. Regardless of the number of times we experienced the views, each time was a breathtaking fresh perspective and a great reward for our mountain climbing exercise.

Sally King



Sound Transit light rail construction

The Roosevelt light rail station site is very active now. Sound Transit's contractor is busy:

- Building the walls and support system that will hold back the earth as the underground station is excavated.
- Building a treatment system for construction site water
- Injecting grout at the south and north ends of the site (NE 67th St and NE 65th St) to stabilize the ground for the tunnel boring machines
- Replacing underground water, sewer and storm water facilities near the station site
- Building the green plywood wall around the construction site.

Visit www.soundtransit.org/northlink and click on the Flickr link at the bottom of the page.

Construction work affecting travel lanes on NE 65th St and 12th Ave NE will continue until spring 2014.

Want to stay up-to-date on the latest news about Roosevelt Station? Sign up for e-mail updates at www.soundtransit.org/subscribe.

For more information, contact Ellen Blair at northlink@soundtransit.org or 206-398-5300.