

EWU Students Learn Research Skills at Eastern Regional Branch

Contributed by Larry Cebula, Professor of History, Eastern Washington University and Assistant Digital Archivist, Washington State Archives

Eastern Washington University and the Eastern Regional Branch of the State Archives have cooperated on educational projects for years. This spring, however, ERB Archivist Lee Pierce and EWU Assistant Professor of History Joseph Lenti took the partnership to a new level.



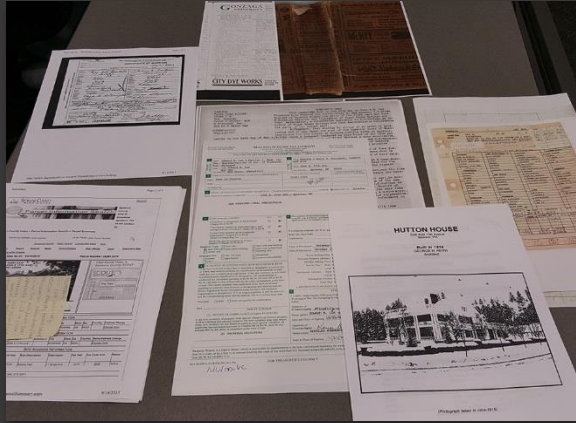
"I always give Joe's students a tour of the branch, and it is always a lot of fun," Pierce said. So when Lenti asked if this year he could assign all of his students in Historical Methods to not only tour the Archives, but to do research there, Pierce was all for it. Together the two developed a lesson plan that required students to complete a research project using the ERB holdings.

Students made appointments and Pierce tried to match the research interests of each with a record series in the archives. Even with the help of what Pierce termed his "brilliant EWU grad student workers" Anna Harbine and Allie Honican, it was a challenge to manage 15 students all doing research in a tight

timeframe. It also turned out to be a lot of fun. "Students ask really good questions," Pierce laughs.



Lenti described the resulting student presentations as "my proudest moment as a teacher." Students used the ERB holdings to explore a variety of topics: Irish-baiting policing in 1880s Colfax, Spokane cleanup after the Mt. St. Helens eruption, alcohol arrests in prohibition-era Spokane, and planning for the '74 Expo hosted in Spokane. "Most importantly, I think, was that they were clearly into it and enjoyed the research and presentation process." Lenti reported.



Encouraged by the success of the experiment, additional EWU professors are partnering with the Archives to include the ERB in their lesson plans. Learning from the “trial and error” of last spring, Pierce and Honican are working with the history professors to identify specific record series in advance. The Archives is making high-quality photocopies of these records, and foldering and boxing the copies exactly the same as the originals. Student

researchers will then have access to these “archival surrogates,” allowing for an authentic research experience, while not straining the Archives staff nearly as much.

The initial set of archival surrogates will focus on such topics as the court cases from the territorial period, prostitution in the 1890s, labor violence in turn-of-the-last-century Spokane, and prohibition and rum-running. "There is literally no end to the kinds of stories we can tell with the records we hold here," said Pierce.

Captions: First two photos include Graduate Intern, Allie Honican working on the collection and helping student, Sila interpret records.

Above: The contents of an archival surrogate box on May Arkwright and Levi Hutton highlights the variety of research materials available at the Easter Region Branch. Included are a property record card from an assessor's field notebook, a marriage certificate, pages from city directories, a historic register nomination, a sheriff's deed, and other records.