

# Dating a 100-year-old Photograph – A teachable moment

Contributed by Larry Cebula, Professor of History, EWU and Assistant Digital Archivist



Caption: Convoy of Cars parked along Riverside Avenue displaying old City Flag, Spokane City Historic Preservation Office - Photographs, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives.

The Washington State Archives holds tens of thousands of historic photographs. Many have excellent provenance—we know when and where the photographs were taken, who is in them, what agency held them before they were archived with us. Other times, not so much.

Recently, Allie Honican, an EWU graduate student employee, brought this photograph to the attention of Assistant Digital Archivist Larry Cebula. A wonderful image, full of interesting details, it also had barely any information attached. The image is part of the Spokane Historic Preservation Office collection at the Digital Archives, and is dated “1900-1930.” No

identification is made for the people in the photograph, or what obviously ceremonial event was taking place. (You can zoom in on the photograph at the Washington State Archives, Digital Archives [here](#).)

They noticed, however, that the photograph includes many details that should allow historians to narrow down the date range. The location is obvious to any Spokane native—they are in front of the Spokesman-Review newspaper offices on Riverside Avenue. What else could we find out about the image?

Cebula shared the photograph on social media and the Internet Detective squad got to work. A friend with a strong knowledge of clothing styles thought the image must be from the teens or early 20s. An automotive historian noticed that the automobile headlights were a mix of electric and carbide lanterns (towards the rear of the caravan), a combination that would have only been seen in the early 1910s. Another found a webpage with [a history of the official Spokane flags](#), which revealed that the flag draped over an automobile in the

PAGES

# Spokane Daily Chronicle

NO. 310.

SPOKANE, WASH., FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1912.

## BOLD AFFIRMS STANDARD OIL CONTR SUM TO ROOSEVELT CAMPAIGN THROU

Miss Spokane and Her Party Leaving City to Christen Mountain Peak



### BEAUTIFUL MOUNT SPOKANE, RENAMED AND CHRISTENED BY MISS SPOKANE, NOW A REALITY

Governor, Mayor and Civic  
Officials Witness the Cer-  
emony.

"You, our mountain, have been a  
true friend to Spokane. Our art this  
day can not be more than a weak re-  
cognition of our love for you.  
"You shall have the best we have to

spring and will be known henceforth  
as Mount Spokane.  
The American flag was planted by  
Governor Hay the new municipal flag-  
on eight by 12 reproduction, furnished  
by the Spokane Ad club, was unfurled  
and permanently mounted by Mayor W.  
J. Hindley, the floral reproduction  
made by the Armstrong company be-  
ing placed at its base, and with three  
cheers and a tiger Beautiful Mount  
Spokane started on its new career.

### INCENDIARY FIRE WRECKS HOME OF J. J. TURRISH

Series of Robberies and Ar-  
son Attempts Ends in De-  
structive Blaze.

Fire, bearing every indication of in-  
cendiarism, broke out in the attic of

### WORK TO HALT IN MEMORY OF BOOTH

Four Hours' Cessation of  
Employment and Prayer  
Is Army Order.

Starting at noon Thursday, August  
22, and lasting for four hours, all Sal-  
vation Army members of Spokane will  
drop their work and engage in prayer  
in memory of the late General William  
Booth, whose funeral takes place on  
the corresponding hour in London.  
Services in Spokane will be held at  
the Salvation Army Rescue home, 3715  
Chandler street, at the Salvation Arm-  
Industrial corps headquarters, 91801  
Howard street, and at the Salvation

### ADJUTANT RON TO RETUR

New Leader Name  
Work of Salvati  
in Spokane.

Word has been receiv-  
announcing the appointing  
Adjutant Andrew Ronney of P  
as commander of the Spokane  
of the Salvation Army. Mr  
his wife will arrive next  
take charge of the Spokane  
Adjutant Ronney takes  
Staff Captain Gale, who  
on account of poor health  
known in Spokane, having  
before going to Portland  
Gale and his family will  
take for a rest.

### BEECHER B. RA IS GIVEN

Paymaster. Often  
for Political Act  
vanced to Lieut.

WASHINGTON, A. H.  
Taft sent to the senate to  
ination of Major Beecher  
S. A. to be deputy paym  
with the rank of lieutenant  
Major Ray's alleged pol  
in 1908 and other of his  
the army have been at  
congressional investigati  
Mr Taft also sent to a  
nominations of Lewis K.  
naval officer of customs  
go district.

### REFUSE TO ALI

center of this photograph was not used after 1912.

The hero of the hour, however, was our own sharp-eyed Benjamin Helle, archivist for the Olympia branch of the State Archives. With a probable date range of the early teens in mind, Helle zoomed in on the lead car and recognized Governor Marion E. Hay sitting in the center. From there he identified Francis Cook as the man behind the wheel. Helle knew that Cook was instrumental in the creation of Mount Spokane State Park around this time. A bit more sleuthing and he came up with this front page of the Spokane Chronicle newspaper for August 23, 1912. "Winner, winner, chicken dinner!" Helle crowed.

Cebula, who holds a joint appointment in the History Department at Eastern Washington University, decided that this was a teachable moment for his students. With the help of archivist Lee Pierce and EWU graduate student worker Logan Camporelle, he brought some students to the Eastern Region Branch, along with poster-sized print of the photograph. The students used city directories to look up the businesses seen in the background, finding what dates

the Crescent Hotel, The Vogue, Graves Music Company and Grandma's Kitchen were in business in those locations.

The "solving a mystery" aspect of the assignment drew the students in, even as they learned the nuts-and-bolts of doing local history research. They worked in teams to create a timeline for each business, and found that the photograph could only have been taken in 1912 or 1913. From there Cebula led them through some of the online resources and they were able to pin down the exact date as well. "At first we didn't think we'd be able to find out anything," one student said, "but it was a lot of fun when we did!"



Camporelle added the background information to the image in the online user comments, and Digital Archivist Debbie Bahn will soon amend the record description to include the names and exact dates. That is one photograph fully accounted for--a few thousands or tens of thousands to go!