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Unexpected Accessions: Outreach Presentations Bring Digital Content and More

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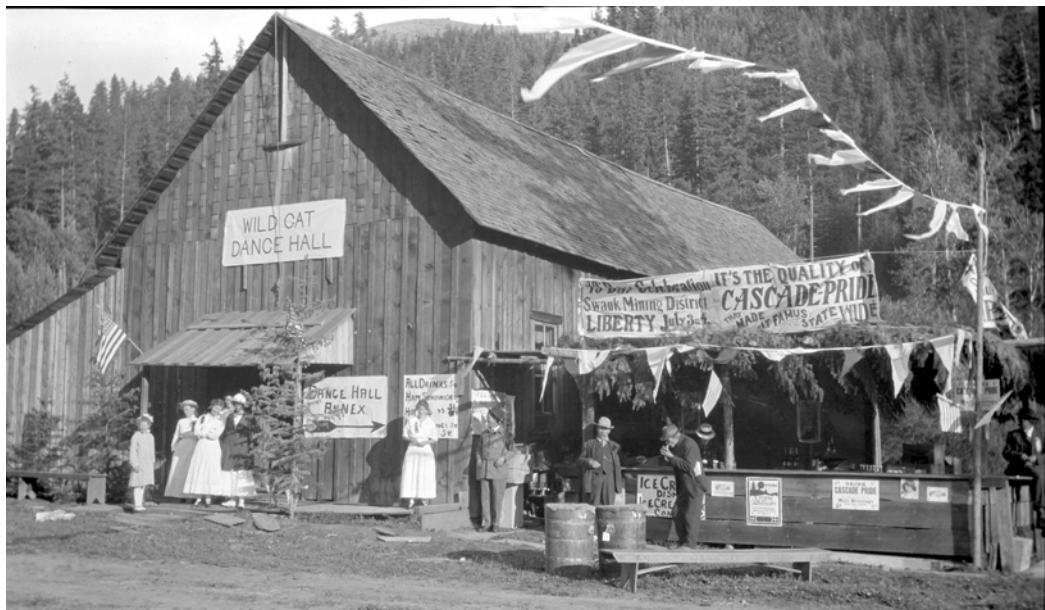
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Easy Access

Unexpected Accessions: Outreach Presentations Bring Digital Content and More

by M.R. Blackson, Central Washington University



Nicholson, John Allen and Engstrom, Wesley C., "Dance Hall" (2009).
John Allen Nicholson Pictures. [Paper 107](#).

The [Archives at Central Washington University](#) was established as the repository for official and unofficial records that document the history of the University. It therefore serves as a regional repository to house, preserve, and promote the unique cultural history of central Washington. This is the stated mission on the website, and the repository was established as the official University Archives in 2006.

In addition to housing university archives, CWU Archives and Special Collections have several strong regional history collections. As an extension of our mission, we teach students what an archives is and how to use its collections. So, CWU Archives and Special Collections have a dual role: maintaining the archives, but also teaching its use and the unique cultural heritage of the central Washington region.

In the spring of 2014, CWU Archives and Special Collections started hosting digital content on the university [ScholarWorks](#) site through Berkeley Electronic Press. The platform houses faculty and student scholarship as well as our growing digital collections. By utilizing digital content, CWU Archives and Special Collections are more accessible to a wider audience. Now when a patron calls or emails requesting copies of materials, if they are in the digital collections, we can simply send links to the files and the patron can download them.

Starting in the autumn of 2014, CWU Archives and Special Collections sought to increase



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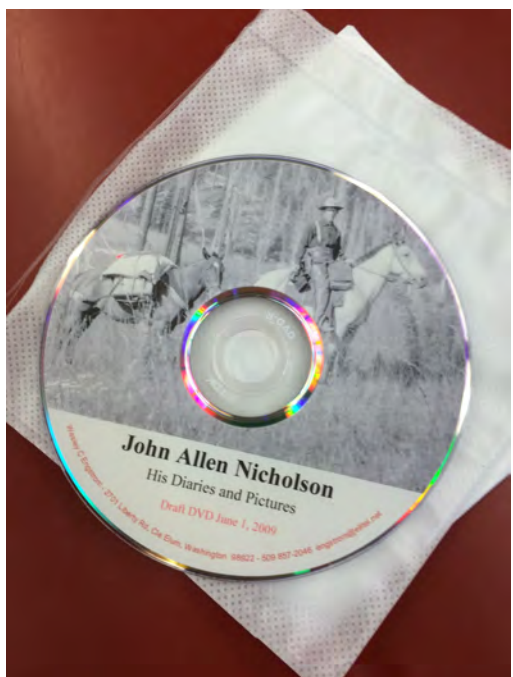
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its profile both on campus and in the greater central Washington community through a series of presentations about the history of buildings and departments on campus to students and alumni groups. These presentations have benefitted the archives in several ways. They have increased the number of patrons using both our physical collections and our digital collections. They have also brought in donations of funds and material related to the University and local history collections.



*Nicholson, John Allen and Engstrom, Wesley C., "Bldg, Post Office Sign" (2009).
John Allen Nicholson Pictures. [Paper 200](#).*

One collection came to the archives through a contact made at an event for basketball alumni. While talking to a retired University photographer, I was told about a collection of photographs related to homesteading and gold mining on nearby Table Mountain. John Allen Nicholson had been a homesteader and gold miner in the early 1900s near the town of Liberty, Washington. A local amateur historian, Wes Engstrom, had already digitized a series of diaries detailing Nicholson's life on Table Mountain.



The gentleman telling me this story had no further details, but the name Wes Engstrom was familiar to me. CWU Archives and Special Collections already had a couple of books he had written about the area.

Armed with this information, I went to one of our local history experts and biggest advocates for our archives, Frederick Krueger, and asked what he knew about the collections. He not only knew about these diaries, but had copies of them on CD. In addition to the diaries, he had a collection of photographs taken by John Allen Nicholson digitized.

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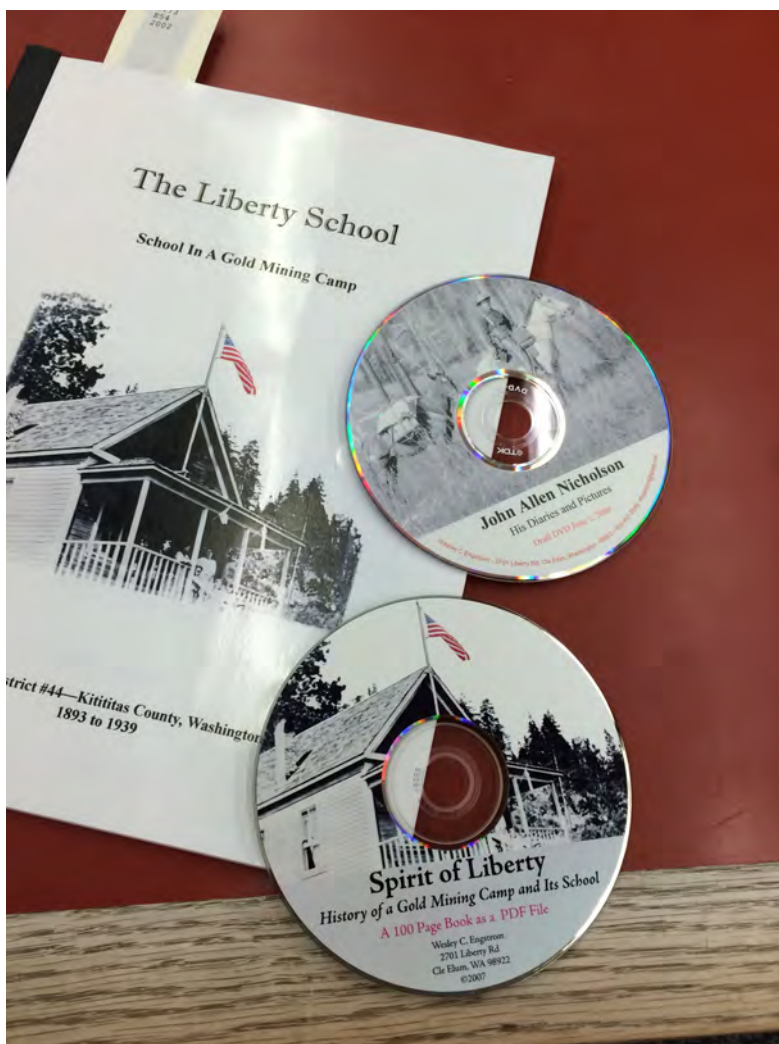
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I now had access to these collections related to local history, but I still needed to get permission from its owner to share them online. I got the contact information from Mr. Krueger and contacted Mr. Engstrom. He was happy to give permission to share the images and diaries online, because he feels history is important and society needs to remember the past.

The easy part was over. I assembled the files and metadata and upload them to our digital repository, ScholarWorks. Once that was completed the links to the collection were sent to Mr. Engstrom. He liked the display and the idea of our local history being made available to a worldwide audience so much that he contributed his local history book to CWU Archives and Special Collections' digital repository. So, outreach presentations to the greater University community indirectly led to a local author's addition to our digital repository.

Now, the book, [*Spirit of Liberty: History of a Gold Mining Camp and Its School*](#) is available in our Works by Local Authors Section of ScholarWorks free for anyone to download and read. The [*John Allen Nicholson Diaries*](#) and the [*John Allen Nicholson Photographs*](#) are also available free to view or read online. Since they went online in the summer of 2015, the photographs have been downloaded 462 times from 20 different countries and the diaries have been downloaded 33 times from 3 different countries.

Through our ScholarWorks site, CWU Archives and Special Collections can share primary documents with a worldwide audience. Increased access through the online collections helps promote the archives' mission and share the rich history of our region with a worldwide audience.



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