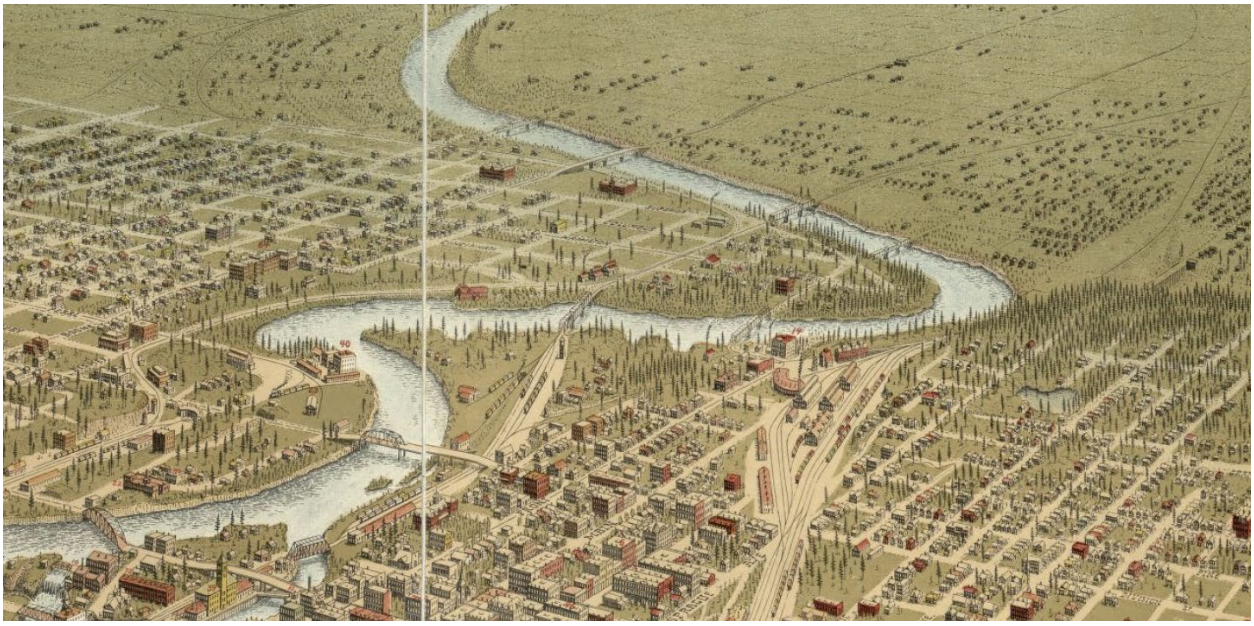
A People's History of the University District

By Larry Cebula



Caption: Detail from a 1905 "birds-eye" map of Spokane showing what would become the University District. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4284s.pm009780/?r=0.498,0.079,0.441,0.211,0

Introduction

Spokane's University District is a 770-acre tax-increment financing district, created to promote and support this part of the city. Tax-increment financing districts reinvest the property tax revenues from new development into various public improvements meant to increase the value of all properties in the district.[1] The seeds of the University District were planted in the 1980s, when Spokane leaders, worried about a slow economy and downtown blight, and perhaps hoping to recapture some of the energy and momentum of Expo 74 the decade before, began meeting to see if a coalition of universities, hospitals, and government could revive the eastern edges of downtown.

Yet the history of the University District is far older than that. Within the boundaries of the University District were Native villages and fur traders, pioneers and missionaries, capitalists, and laborers. Significant institutions such as Spokane's first railroad yard, the Northern Pacific, and the first college, Gonzaga, were founded within its borders. Italian and African-American neighborhoods prospered in the area, and worker's hotels, saloons, and brothels did a booming business for a time.

Today the University District is Spokane's most interesting and fastest changing area. Recent years have seen the completion of Martin Luther King Boulevard and the University District Gateway Bridge; the Catalyst Building, the Scott Morris Center for Energy Innovation, the Boxcar Apartments, Spokane's rapid transit City Line, the replacement of the historic East Trent Avenue Bridge, and continued efforts to clean and provide access to the Spokane River.
This report provides an overview of the history of Spokane's University District. The goal is not to repeat well-worn stories of Spokane's rich and powerful. The University District has long been a neighborhood of workers, with diverse ethnic communities and interesting individuals. These are the stories that will be told here.

The report has two main sections. The first is a narrative history of the district, from the earliest times to the present. The second section is a series of short historical vignettes of historically prominent or important places within the boundaries of the University District, from the ruins of Liberty Park to the Schade Brewery. These pieces are meant to stand on their own, as the

[1] Tax Increment Financing Districts, https://insights.cincinnati-oh.gov/stories/s/Tax-Increment-Financing-Districts/br22-px7q/.

seeds of social media posts or interpretive signs or tours, and there is a small amount of repetition between a few of them.

A note on terms. The University District as a formal designation did not exist for most of the period in this report, so I try instead to refer to then-contemporary designations such as “the Logan Neighborhood” or “the East End.” However sometimes there is a need to refer to the whole, and while I usually write “what would become the University Di\strict” or “the future University District” sometimes I refer to the University District for the sake of simplicity.
The sources of this report are many. The first section uses footnotes to document the sources of information. The vignettes of the second section each include a list of sources, as might be more useful when reused.

The images used in this report are credited in the captions. However, some of these images are under copyright and should not be published without permission of the owners.

--Larry Cebula, 2024
Professor of History, Eastern Washington University

1. Beginning: Natives and their River: 10,000 Before Present Era to 1800

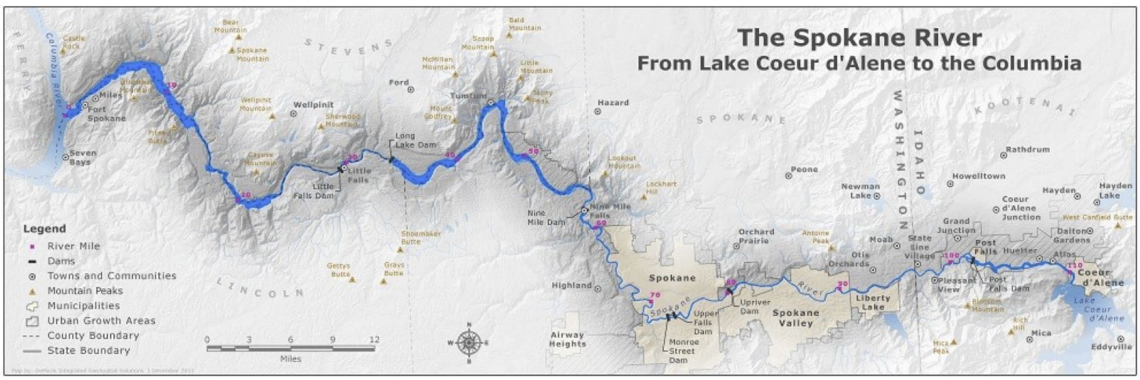
The Spokanes have a story about how their river was formed.

Once “a huge monster that lived both on land and in the water” and devoured all the fish and animals. “His claws were so strong that with one pull he could uproot the largest pine trees,” the Natives recalled, and “his breath was so bad that it killed people.” The monster’s thick skin could not be pierced by a spear or arrow, and so the people were afraid of him.

Then one day a girl out picking berries spotted the monster asleep on a hillside where today the Spokane flows into the Columbia River. She ran to tell the people. The village headman gave the order, "Gather up every cord and rope and every leather thong in all the tepees." Stealthily, they tied down the sleeping monster. Then the villagers attacked it all at once.

The monster jolted awake, howling in pain. The lashings broke away “as if they were made of grass.” The monster fled eastward to Lake Coeur d'Alene, tearing a deep channel in the earth as it howled and ran. Water flowed from the lake into the new channel. And so, the Spokane River was created.[2]

[2] Katharine Berry Judson, *Myths and Legends of the Pacific Northwest*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.



Caption: The twisting path of the Spokane River. Image courtesy Spokane River Keepers.

Geologists have an equally exciting story. The bedrock of the University District is basalt, crystallized lava that was laid down in the Miocene Epoch of the Tertiary Period, between about 25 million and 12 million years ago. Where the basalt cooled slowly and evenly it formed hexagonal columns. Where it cooled more quickly, usually at the exposed top of each layer, the rock is more jumbled. Layer after layer of frozen lava lies below our feet, a basalt layer cake.

A second geologic era then sculpted the landscape. The Ice Age Floods (or more properly the Missoula Floods) occurred between 15,000 and 13,000 years ago. During this cold period, sheets of ice worked their way down the Northern Rockies and formed a dam on what is today the Clark Fork River in western Montana. The waters of the northern Great Plains would rise and rise, forming a huge glacial lake across much of Montana, a body of water that was larger than Lakes Erie and Ontario combined.

Periodically, the rising pressure of the lake would burst through the ice dam, releasing a wall of water that would tear across eastern Washington on its way to the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. The water could be 400-600 feet deep and moved at perhaps 60 miles an hour. When powerful currents found cracks and faults in the basalt, huge sections of rock might be carried away, or deposits of gravel from the Rockies left behind. When they occurred, the floods also carried away most of the plants, animals,

and topsoil, leaving in the words of one geologist “a giant bathtub ring of mammoth fossils” in the region.[3]

Caption: An alarmed wooly mammoth notices the flood waters approaching in this detail from a mural at the Yakima Valley Museum. Image courtesy of https://bethzaiken.com/.

There was not one Ice Age Flood but many. Scientists debate how many times this flooding occurred but there were likely between 20 and 60 flooding events over 2000 years. The floods not only shaped the Spokane River and the distinct basalt cliffs around Spokane, but also laid down the layers of gravel that became the Rathdrum Prairie aquifer, which supplies our drinking water and cools and recharges the river in the hot summer months.[4]

The first Native peoples were already here when the floods occurred. The Spokanes have oral histories of how their leaders recognized the rumbling of the earth and led them to higher ground. “A flood came then and covered the land, destroying all except a few people,” reads one account. “The survivors banded together for safety, elected a leader, and multiplied. In time, the leader divided the people into small groups. They became the various tribes.”[5]

[3] DOE/Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. "An Ancient Bathtub Ring of Mammoth Fossils." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 8 May 2007. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070507090415.htm>.

[4] Weis, Paul L.; Newman, William L.; and U.S. Geological Survey, "Channeled scablands of eastern Washington: the geologic story of the Spokane flood" (1989). Publications from Special Collections. 6. http://dc.ewu.edu/spc_pubs/6

[5] Ruby, Robert H. (1970). The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun. University of Oklahoma Press.

Native Lifeways

The Spokanes have lived along the banks of the river for millennia. At the center of Spokane life was what anthropologists have called the seasonal round, a series of shifting habitations designed to take advantage of the region's seasonal bounty.

Winter villages were tucked into the river canyons to protect them from the often harsh winters of the Columbia Plateau. Peaceful Valley and Hangman Creek held such winter villages. People lived mostly from the dried food they had preserved during warmer months, edibles such as dried camas and berries and salmon and deer. Winter was a time of rest, for repairing and making tools, storytelling, and spiritual ceremonies.

Spring saw the winter villages breaking up as people traveled to harvest new plant foods such as bitterroot and (later in the season) camas roots. By summer, the salmon were beginning to arrive, multiple runs of many types such as Chinook and Sockeye.

Caption: With Indigenous knowledge, the Columbia Plateau could be a moveable feast, as seen in this chart of plant and animal foods and their seasons of harvest. Image courtesy of Nativeamericannetroots.net.

The swarms of salmon that ascended the Columbia River never arrived at the University District; they were blocked by Spokane Falls. The Spokanes had another story, this one about the creation of the falls. The salmon of the Columbia River were provided by Coyote, who freed the fish from two magical sisters who had held them at the mouth of the river. Coyote proceeded up the Columbia River, leading the salmon. At each village, he would ask for a bride, and give salmon in return. When he got to the Coeur d'Alenes, he was refused. And so, an angry Coyote created the falls, blocking the salmon from the ungrateful Coeur d'Alenes.[6]

[6] Barry G. Moses (Sulutsu), "What is the Name of Our River / stemʔ łu? skʷesc łu? qe ntx̣ʷetkʷ?," in Lindholdt, Paul J., editor. The Spokane River. University of Washington Press, 2018.

Spokanes harvested salmon all along the lower Spokane River and Latah Creek but also traveled north to the fishery at Kettle Falls on the Columbia River, where as many as 10,000 Natives from dozens of tribes would gather to fish and also trade and socialize.

Fall was a time to gather berries and hunt deer and other large animals in the mountains. The dried meat and berries provided some variety in the Native diet and the pelts provided clothing, leather bags, and teepee coverings. Most people went back to the winter village sites when the snow began to fly.

A Traditional Crossroads

What is today the University District was intersected by important Native trails, some deeply worn by generations of travelers. Trails followed both banks of the river, connecting the lands of the Coeur d'Alene to the east to the Spokane fisheries and winter villages in Peaceful Valley and along Hangman Creek. Other trails came down from the South Hill. Particularly important were trails to the north that connected the Spokane Country to the fishery at Kettle Falls, an intertribal gathering place that brought as many as 10,000 Natives together at the height of the fishing season. Cayuse, Palouse, Nez Perce, and other peoples would have traversed the University District on their way to Kettle Falls, trading with and visiting the Spokanes along the banks of the river as they passed through.

Intertribal relations on the Columbia Plateau were largely peaceful, a phenomenon often commented on by early white traders and explorers.[7]

[7] Cebula, Larry. *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850*. University of Nebraska Press, 2003, p. 34.

Caption: A party of unidentified Plateau Indians on horseback in 1908. Such elaborate feathered headdresses were not part of traditional Plateau culture but were adopted from Plains Indians in the 20th century. Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Around 1800, the Spokanes and their neighbors acquired horses, introduced from the Spanish settlements in the southwest. Horses revolutionized Native life, providing for expanded trade and a richer seasonal round. that sometimes even included summer buffalo hunts on the Great Plains. These trips to the buffalo country were not only economically profitable, but they were also a grand adventure. “The children would leave as children, but they’d come back as grown-ups,” explained one elder.[8] These journeys would have passed through the University District on their way into Idaho and across the Bitterroot Mountains.

2. Invasion: 1800-1880

Increased contact also brought Plateau Natives into a new disease environment with devastating smallpox epidemics in the 1780s and again in 1800. When Lewis and Clark floated down the Columbia River in 1805, they noted smallpox scars on the cheeks of many Natives. Lewis wrote that an epidemic likely accounted for “the number of remains of villages which we find deserted in this quarter.” These epidemics would not have

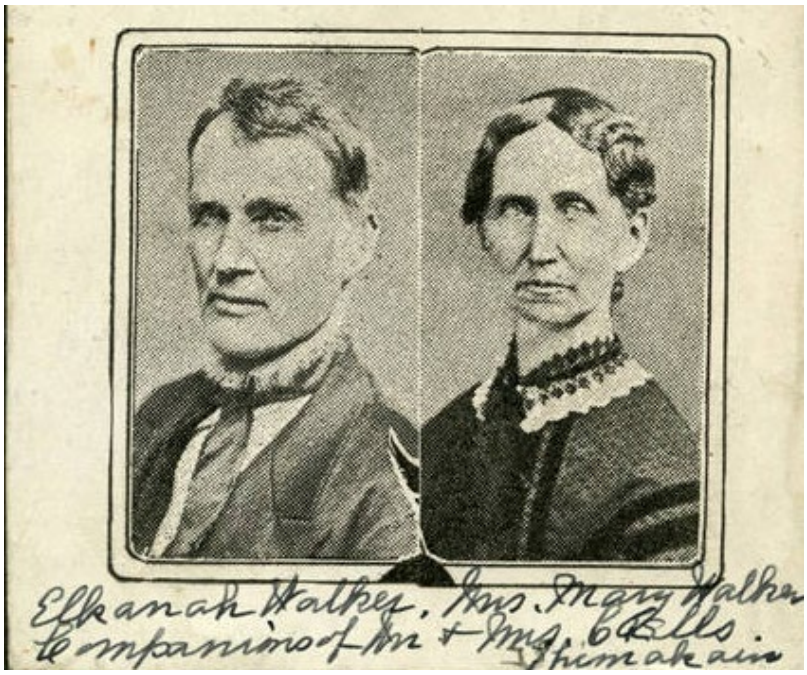
[8] Cebula, Larry. *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850*. University of Nebraska Press, 2003, p. 29.

spared the Spokanes. A single wave of smallpox would kill at least 30% of the population of a Native village, sometimes more.

White people began showing up on the Plateau in the early 1800s, more a curiosity than a threat in those early days. Lewis and Clark passed by many miles to the south on the Snake and Columbia Rivers in 1805, but the Spokanes would have heard about the white visitors, trading stories, and perhaps a few American goods, with their Nez Perce friends to the south. The British fur trader and explorer David Thompson came down the Columbia in 1810 and established a fur trading post on the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers. He was followed by additional fur traders and then missionaries in the decades that followed. These visitors were objects of interest and the source of valuable trade goods for the Spokanes but did not fundamentally change their way of life.[9]

Christian missionaries would have a more lasting impact. In 1836 Elkanah Walker and Cushing Eells built a Protestant mission 25 miles northwest of Spokane Falls at a place called Tshimakain, near the present-day town of Ford, Washington. Jesuits established a Catholic mission a few years later among the Coeur d'Alenes, who were closely related to the Spokanes.[10] Spokane Indians were influenced by both Churches, causing the beginnings of a division among them, but most considered Christianity an addition to their existing beliefs and ceremonies and not a replacement.

[9] Cebula, Larry. *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850*. University of Nebraska Press, 2003, p. 45.
[10] Schaeffer, Claude. "The First Jesuit Mission to the Flathead, 1840-1850: A Study in Culture Conflicts." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1937): 227–50.



Caption: The missionaries Elkanah and Mary Walker produced the first book printed in the Washington Territory, but few Christian converts. Image courtesy Washington County Heritage Online. https://heritage.lib.pacificu.edu/s/wcho/item/52694

Wars and Rumors of War

The 1850s were a tumultuous era for the Spokane Indians. Gold was discovered in the Colville area to the north, leading to a rush of Anglo and Chinese miners into the region. When some of the American miners raped Native women, the miners were killed, and in the spring of 1858 Colonel Edward Steptoe rode north from Fort Walla Walla to extract revenge. His small force was thoroughly defeated by combined Native forces of Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, and Palouse Indians near the present-day town of Rosalia.

Caption: Detail from Nona Hengen's painting "The Horse Slaughter."

A second American expedition led by Colonel George Wright was dispatched in the fall of 1858. Wright's expedition was larger and better armed than Steptoe's, and Wright himself was far more ruthless. He defeated the Natives at Four Lakes and Spokane Plains, then turned east following the Spokane River through the University District. Along the way, he burned villages and caches of food and took Indians as prisoners. Wright hung any number of Indians with only a pretense of a trial. When his men captured 800 Spokane horses Wright ordered them killed, a bloody operation that required two days of shooting and clubbing the animals, while dismayed Spokane Indians watched from nearby hills. Piles of sun-bleached horse bones could be seen at the site in the Spokane Valley into the 20th century.

A significant event in Wright's campaign happened in what would become the University District. On September 7, 1858, a few days after the decisive battle of Spokane Plains, Wright's command was camped on the east bank of the Spokane, across the river from where No-Li Brewery is located. Nine Palouse Indians rode into camp to negotiate with the colonel. Two of the Indians were recognized, Polatkin, a leader in the two battles, and Jo-hout, thought to have been involved in killing two miners who had abused Indian

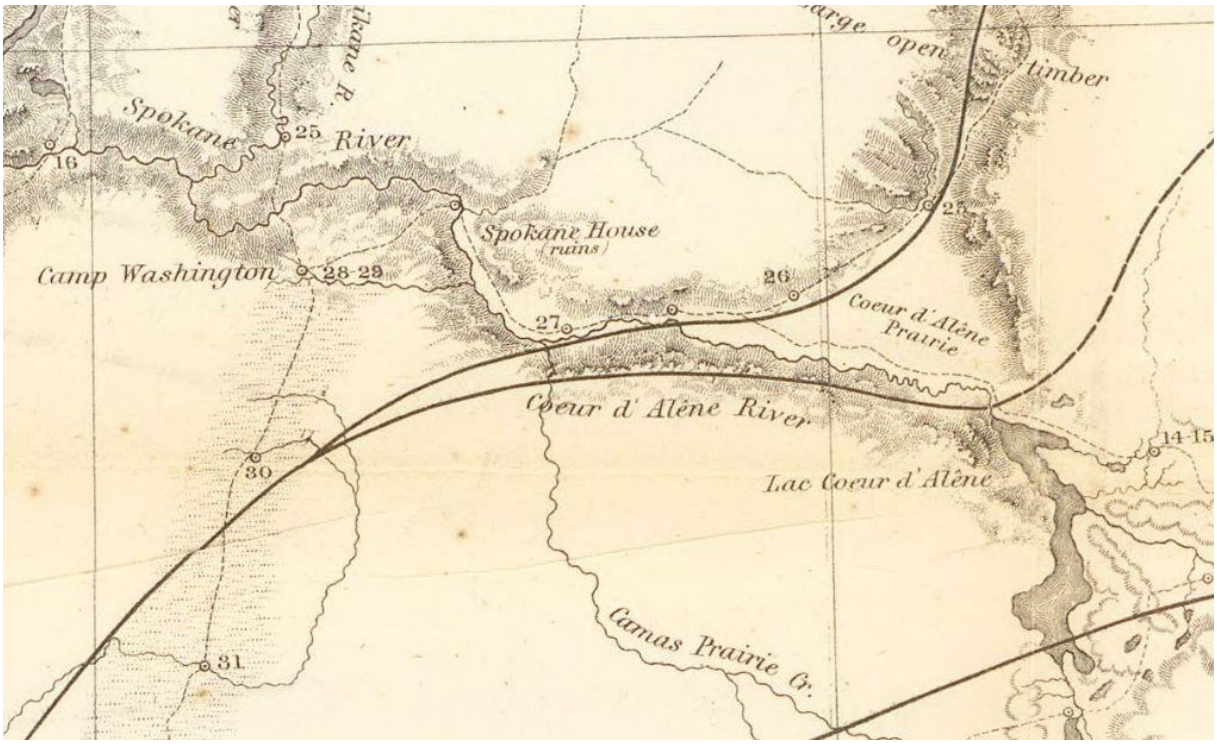
women near Fort Colville. Using a wagon and a tree as improvised gallows, Jo-hout was hung on the spot. Polatkin was kept as a hostage.[11]

Caption: The 1946 dedication of the monument to the horse slaughter was attended by members of the US military and of the Spokane Tribe, along with white pioneers. Image courtesy Nativeroots.net.

As significant as these military confrontations, was what happened a few years earlier. In 1852, the U.S. Congress ordered that a series of surveys be conducted to find the best route for a transcontinental railroad. In 1853 Major-General George McClellan surveyed a portion of the northern route which went from Puget Sound through the Spokane country. Railroads were the empire builders of the 19th century, a railroad promised settlers, commerce, and prosperity. Though the first railroad tracks would not

[11] Don Cutler. "Your Nations Shall Be Exterminated." Don Cutler - Accessed 3/21/2024. https://www.historynet.com/nations-exterminated/ . Though Cutler has Jo-hout being hanged at the camp in the University District, other sources suggest the hanging might have happened the next day further east.

reach Spokane for another three decades, speculators and would-be founders of cities began to look at the route as a source of investment.[12]



Caption: This detail from McLellan's 1853 survey of the region shows potential railroad routes through what would become Spokane.

Spokane Garry

A prominent and oft-misunderstood figure throughout this period was Slough-Keetcha, known to whites as Spokane Garry. Born in 1811, Garry experienced the entire first wave of white settlement, from the earliest fur traders to the arrival of the railroads.

As the fur trade pushed into the Columbia Plateau in the early 1800s, the difficulty of communication between the traders and the Natives was a source of frustration. The Hudson's Bay Company hit upon the idea of taking some Native children from the

[12] Goetzmann, W.H. Army Exploration in the American West. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

Plateau to be educated in one of their schools in Canada and bringing them back home when they had learned to read and write in English and pray to the Anglican god. A chief told the traders “We have given you our children, not our servants, or our slaves, but our own. We have given you our hearts -- our children are our hearts -- but bring them back to us before they become white men."[13] Garry spent 1825-31 mostly at the school in Red River, Manitoba.

When he returned, Garry had mastered many of the white man’s ways but missed some important life events for a Spokane Indian, such as the vision quest. He started a school and a church for Indians, but most had little interest and the effort only lasted a few years. He did not take part in combat during the 1858 battles as he was away on a hunting trip. White American history often presents him as a pious Christian missionary to his people, but he also took two wives for at least a time, a common practice among Plateau Indians but less so among Anglicans. At times a respected leader among his people, he was never a principal chief. Throughout his life, he was a powerful, if ultimately unsuccessful advocate for the right of the Spokanes to hold some of their traditional lands around the falls and Hangman Creek.

Garry lived a long (1811-1892) adventurous life, with buffalo hunts on the plains and taking part in a multi-tribal raiding party in California. But the rising tide of white settlement would sweep away his attempts to balance assimilation and tradition.

[13] Alexander Ross, Fur Hunters of the Far West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978).

Caption: The earliest photograph of Spokane Garry was captured at Fort Colville in 1860 by a surveying party. This was just two years after the devastating Wright campaign. Image courtesy of The Plateau People's Portal: https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/spokane-garry-fort-colville-ca-1860,

Garry had a small farm just east of Hillyard, a few miles outside the University District, to which he had gained legal title. In 1883 a neighbor poisoned Garry's dogs and chased away his family, seizing the property as his own. Garry brought the matter to authorities, and though he could get no one in Spokane to pay attention, the Department of Interior sent a special investigator who determined that a ring of white settlers had committed fraud. Despite this, Garry lost his case, and the farm was never recovered.[14]

Garry and his blind wife Nina lived out their final days at various campsites along the

[14] David K Beine, Whodunnit? The Continuing Case of Spokane Garry, (Street Press, 2020).

Spokane River, Hangman Creek, and finally at Indian Canyon. Perhaps Garry saw the flames of the Great Spokane Fire of 1889 from this camp. His death in 1892 marks the end of an era, yet was little noticed by white Spokanites, who were busy building one of the principal cities of the Pacific Northwest.[15]

Mapping the University District

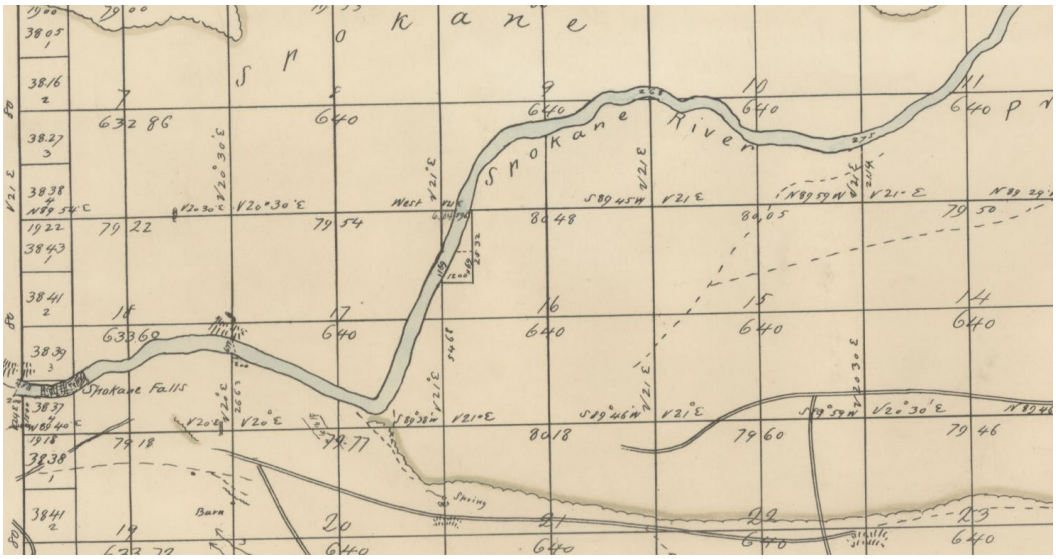
In this early period, what would become the University District is just out of focus in the historical documents, a place adjacent or a place passed through. The area comes better into view in the 1870s when the U.S. government surveyors arrived in the form of one James Tilton Sheets.

Sheets was an assistant surveyor for the General Land Office, whose task it was to measure and map every acre of ground in the federal domain, with little more than a transit, a compass, and 66-foot-long "surveyors' chains." It was the same toolkit carried by a young George Washington when he was a surveyor in Virginia a century before.

Sheets was an experienced professional, who would do similar work throughout the Washington Territory. His map, crude by modern standards, showed a landscape riven by the river gorge and basalt cliffs and outcroppings. If he was impressed by the beauty of the landscape, it did not make it into his laconic field notes. "Land level soil 3rd rate" he wrote at one point. On another day it was "Soil 3rd rate & rocky, timber pine."[16]

[15] Jim Kershner, "Chief Spokane Garry (ca. 1811-1892)," https://www.historylink.org/file/8713.

[16] Bureau of Land Management, "Land Status & Cadastral Survey Records, Willamette Meridian - Oregon and Washington States," https://www.blm.gov/or/landrecords/survey/ySrvy1.php



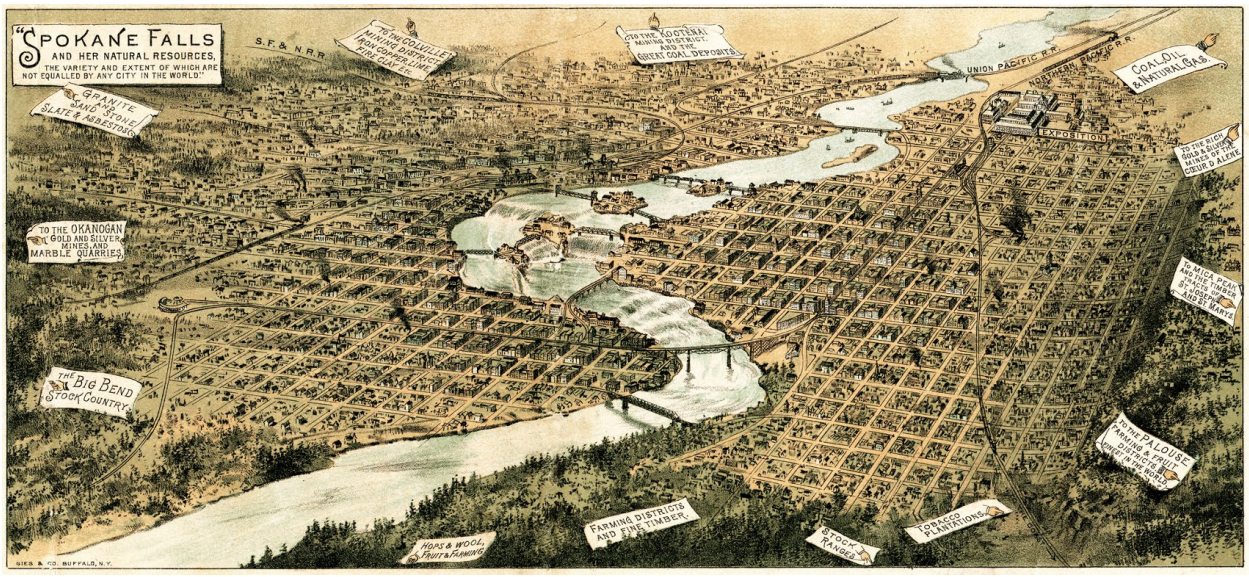
Caption: This detail from Sheet's 1874 survey of Spokane shows an extensive number of Native trails on the south bank of the river. Note the upper falls on the left. Image courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management.

Though there are no Indian villages on Sheets' map, the Natives show up in another way, through a dense network of trails they had created. Sheets recorded a series of trails, coming from Spokane Valley in the east and down from the South Hill. Other maps he did in the area show trails converging on the area around the falls from the North and the West. Spokane was a Native crossroads before whites began building their own roads, often along the routes laid out by centuries of Native use.

3. Boomtown: 1880-1910

Nineteenth-century Americans, particularly those who came west, were the most optimistic people in the world. Every new city was the "next Saint Louis," "a future rival to Chicago," or even "the Paris of the Great Plains." Some settlers went west to farm or labor in hopes of making a living, but many others came with the expectation of making a fortune, and the founding of new towns was instrumental to a quick fortune.

In the 19th century American West, the founding of cities was a major speculative activity, in some ways like investments in cryptocurrency today. A successful town founder would buy some acres of wilderness at a location, lay out a city and building lots, and go looking for settlers to validate his vision. An initial settlement could quickly build on itself, and building lots that had been purchased for pennies could in a few years sell for hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Successful examples were many, and the failures were quickly forgotten.



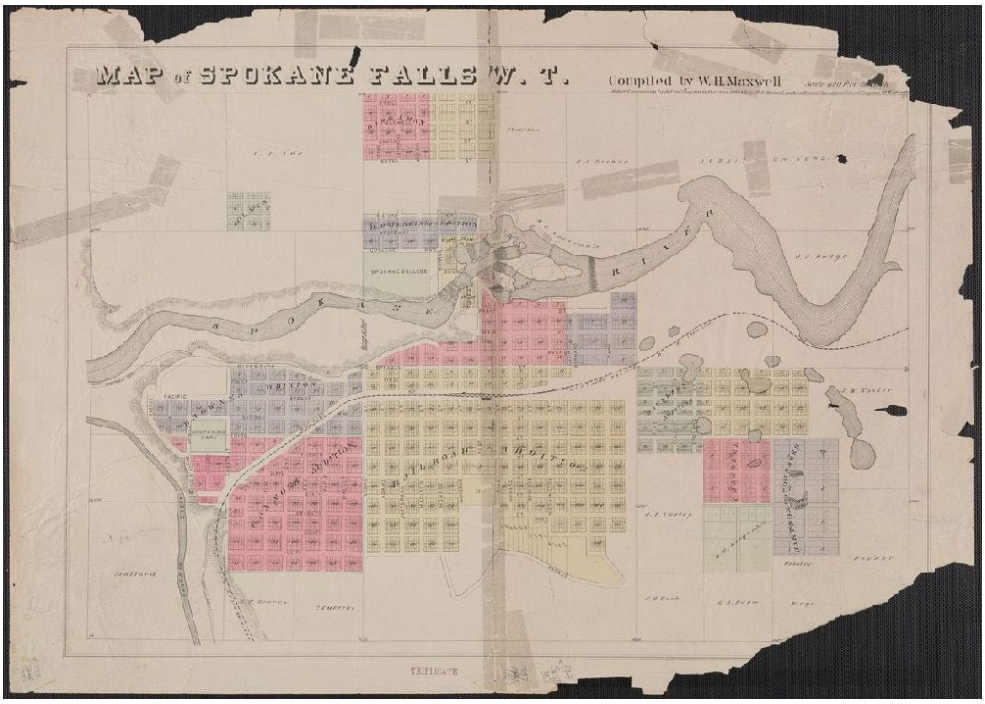
Caption: "Spokane Falls and Her Natural Resources" tells as much about Spokane's hopes as its reality in 1890. Image courtesy of the Wikimedia Foundation, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SpokaneMap1890GiesAndCompanyofBuffaloNew_York.jpg

Especially as the future routes of the railroads were laid out, speculators flocked along the routes, looking for a patch of unclaimed land with some special characteristics that could make for a great future city. This could be good farmland, abundant natural resources, a flat, buildable location, and most of all waterpower. Spokane had all these, except maybe the level ground, but the widespread use of dynamite by the 1880s could help with that.

In the 1860s and 70s, non-Native people began to settle in the Spokane region. By 1860 a small community of Metis people lived on Moran Prairie to the south. These were mixed-race French and Indians who had worked in the fur trade before taking up farming, and they found the land along the river too rocky for their purposes. In 1871 J. J. Downing and S. R. Scranton filed claims and built a sawmill at Spokane Falls. Early sawmills were built along rivers to harness the waterpower and use the river to float the logs to the mill. Two years later James Glover bought out their claim for $2,000. In 1874 the city of Spokane Falls was incorporated.

Spokane Falls grew quickly. The combination of rich farmlands and natural resources in every direction and the imminent arrival of the railroad made Spokane seem like a good bet for new settlers and businessmen. Yet what sealed the deal was the river. In the 19th century, rivers were sources of irrigation, transportation, and especially, power. Before the invention of the steam engine, all the work in the world was done by muscle (animal or human), wind, or falling water. Waterfalls were more than spectacles; they were places to locate lumber or flour mills that would harness the power of falling water to turn wheat into flour and trees into boards.

The Northern Pacific Railroad arrived in 1881, the Great Northern in 1891, and the SP&S in 1907. The population grew from 300 in 1880 to 20,000 by 1890 to over 100,000 people by 1909.



Caption: This 1883 Map of Spokane Falls, W.T. shows the new Northern Pacific railroad and the establishment of new housing "additions." The eastern portion shows what would become the University District. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

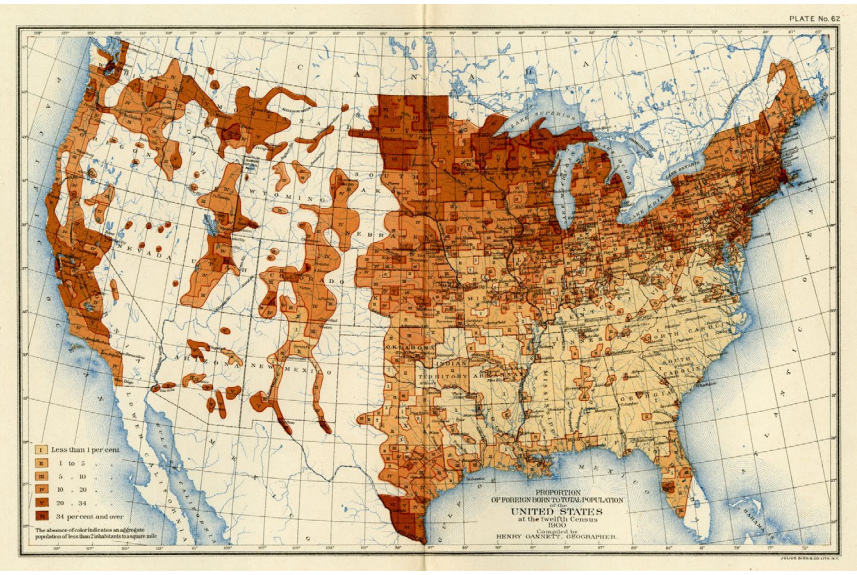
Spokane Falls, as the city was initially named, had its rivals along the railroad route. Most troublesome was Cheney, which from 1880-1886 captured the county seat. But by 1890 the rapid growth of Spokane Falls, fueled by wheat, timber, and mining, had surpassed any city in the Inland Northwest.

And yet, Spokane expected greater things still. In 1907 one booster described the city and its prospects:

Spokane has far more than cheap factory sites and a loyal spirit to offer investors who wish to place their capital in industrial enterprises. She points to the fact that she has been ordained by nature and by railroad builders to ever remain the metropolis of the great Inland Empire, with no rival within a radius of 400 miles. She is the focus of the commerce of this great domain which is yet in the infancy of development - a domain that contains the greatest wheat land in the world, the greatest fruit land on the

continent, the greatest pine belt in existence, and an almost unlimited mineral area of demonstrated richness. With its thousands of acres of raw land, much of which is still open to homestead entry, the "Spokane country" is destined to be the habitat of enough consumers to support ten times the number of factories she now possesses - to provide a market that has no equal west of Chicago.[17]

All those wheat fields and pine trees are of little use without labor to harvest their riches. The late 19th century was the great age of immigration to the United States. Open borders, abundant job opportunities, and cheap transportation via steamship lines brought immigrants by the tens of millions to the United States, until by 1900 fourteen percent of American residents were immigrants.



Caption: This 1900 map, “Proportion of Foreign Born to Total Population of the United States at the Twelfth Census 1900” shows how new Americans dispersed across the country. Note the high percentage of immigrants, often ⅓ or even higher, in the American West. Image courtesy of the Gilder-Lehrman Institute, https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/map-foreign-born-population-united-states-1900

[17]F.H. Gaston. “Spokane's Manufactories,” *The Coast* (1907), 14(5):326.

Where did Spokane's immigrants come from? Many were from northern Europe, especially the Scandinavian countries of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The railroads lured settlers from Europe and the Midwest with marketing campaigns that featured (and sometimes exaggerated) the fertile farmland for the taking along the railroad routes. Japanese immigrants arrived as well, along with many from China. While some arrived with their families, many were young men whose only capital was the labor they could offer in the timber camps or mining districts around Spokane.

4. The University District in Transition: 1910-1980

The character of what would become the University District comes into view in the early 20th century. Gonzaga and the Logan neighborhood on the north side of the river experienced a different history than what I am going to call the East End neighborhood on the south side of the river.

Gonzaga College

Some of the earliest white visitors to the Inland Northwest were missionaries. Catholic Jesuit missionaries arrived in the 1840s, and by the 1870s had built an extensive network of missions in the Northwest. The Jesuit Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions, the Italian priest Fr. Joseph Cataldo, had the idea to build one school for the advanced education of American Indians who had adopted the Catholic faith. The central location of Spokane Falls and its promising future made it a promising site for the school. In 1881 the Jesuits paid a thousand dollars for 320 acres on the north bank of the Spokane River for as Cataldo put it," Indian children, or even for white, if many should come to the country."

When the college opened in 1887 the seven students included no Indians. Instead, they were young white Catholic men from Spokane, Lewiston, and even Oregon and

California. Educating the children of white Catholic immigrants would become the mission of Gonzaga College.

Gonzaga College experienced the same heady growth as the city of Spokane. By 1900 there were almost 250 students and in 1912 the State of Washington granted it status as a university. A law school opened that year, and in 1948 Gonzaga University began the radical experiment of admitting women. A sister school, Holy Names Academy, was established a few years after Gonzaga to see to the education of Catholic women, and it eventually offered educational degrees before closing in 1969.

The Logan Neighborhood

Gonzaga University served as an anchor for the development of the surrounding neighborhoods. First platted in the 1880s, the Logan neighborhood was developed with wide streets and boulevard landscaping in imitation of the cities of Europe and the eastern United States. Gonzaga College, Gonzaga Preparatory School, and the Holy Names Academy served as a draw for the early immigrants to Logan, many of whom were Italian and Catholic. North Hamilton became the neighborhood's principal commercial avenue by 1900. In the early 20th century McGoldrick Lumber Company, on the bank of the Spokane River below the college, became the major employer in the neighborhood. St. Aloysius Cathedral "one of the most architecturally significant churches in the city" was built near the college in 1909.[18] Bounded by Euclid Avenue on the north, Trent Avenue on the south, the Spokane River to the east, and Division Street to the west, Logan is a large and diverse neighborhood.

The history of the Logan neighborhood is preserved in part in two National Register of Historic Places historic districts: Mission Avenue Historic District and Desmet Avenue Warehouse Historic District. Each highlights a different aspect of this mixed residential and industrial area.

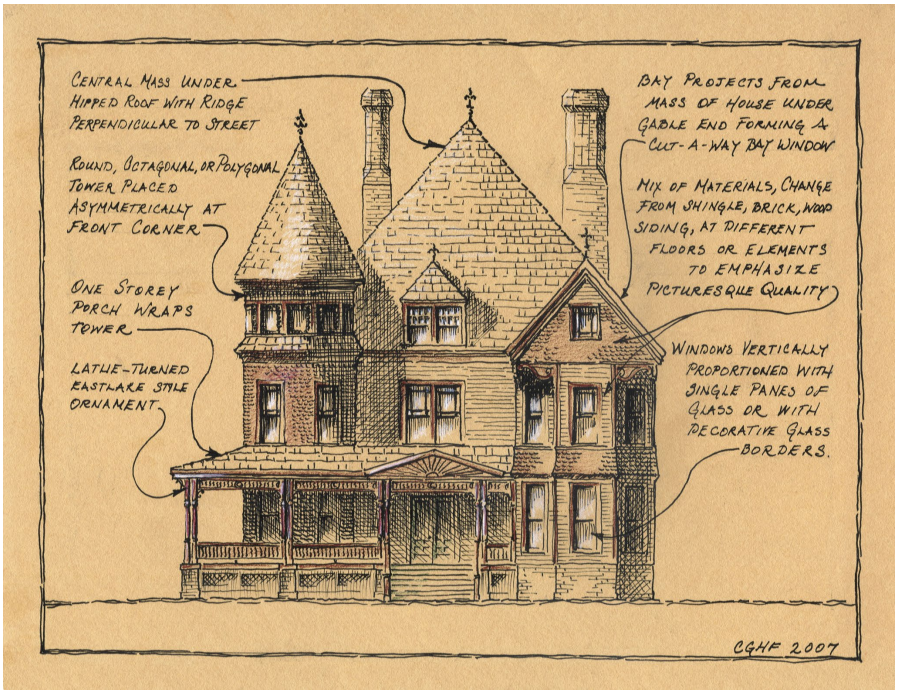
[18] "Mission Avenue Historic District," National Register Historic Places nomination (1978), https://properties.historicspokane.org/district/?DistrictID=26

Mission Avenue Historic District

The stately homes and wide, tree-lined boulevard of the Mission Avenue Historic District preserve a section of the residential character of the Logan neighborhood.
This historic district stretches for seven blocks along Mission Avenue, from Pearl Street to Hamilton Street. The neighborhood was platted in 1884 but many of the lots were bought up by Father Joseph Cataldo to build Gonzaga College. The Spokane Historic Preservation Office describes the district as “the most intact remnant of the city's first residential suburbs and includes a significant collection of late 19th and early 20th century houses located on one of the city's oldest landscaped boulevards.”

The first homes along Mission Avenue were built around 1890, and most of the contributing historical buildings in this district date between 1890 and 1910. “Facing the street on either side are a variety of Queen Anne, Four Square, Craftsman, and Bungalow style houses that reflect the substantial architecture of the period and the original suburban character of the area,” according to the 1978 National Historic Register nomination that established the historic district. Because the homes were constructed at about the same time, the street has an architectural “cohesion.”

Most of the 48 historic homes are Queen Anne, a fanciful style featuring asymmetrical facades, high-pitched roofs, wrap-around porches, and a “decorative excess” that could include such elements as circular turrets, triangular gables, projecting dormer windows, and various ornamentation. These blocks, along with Browne’s Addition, have the greatest concentration of Queen Anne houses. Most of Spokane’s historic homes are Craftsman homes, a style that evolved in part as a rejection of the excess of the Queen Anne style.



Caption: The distinctive elements of the Queen Anne style are on display along Mission Ave. Image courtesy Christine G. H. Franck, https://christinefranck.com/2012/02/14/queen-anne-style/

Desmet Avenue Warehouse Historic District

Very distinct from the Mission Avenue district, the Desmet Avenue Warehouse Historic District represents a different element of the neighborhood's character, its industrial roots. The district was created to recognize a row of six early commercial buildings constructed between 1904 and 1915, the most active period of building in early Spokane. They were located here for easy access to railroad transportation and, in 1997 when the historic district was recognized, represented one of the largest sets of commercial buildings that survived from this period.

Anchored on one end by the Burgans Furniture Warehouse building on the northeast corner of Division and Desmet, this compact historic district stretches along the north side of Desmet for two blocks. The 1997 National Historic Register nomination recognizes the “six commercial buildings constructed at the first half of the twentieth

century as warehouses and factories" as "one of the larger and most cohesive groupings of such structures remaining on the north side of the Spokane River."[19] "There are already in Spokane hundreds of manufacturing establishments, and with the continued and rapid growth of the city, there is room for hundreds more!" exclaimed the Great Northern Railway Company in 1900. These two blocks, which housed a furniture store, and warehouses for paint, hardware, and office supplies, helped fuel Spokane's growth. In 1904 an article in the Spokesman-Review noted that the city was "a-hum with hammering."

The most elaborate of the district buildings is the Burgans Furniture Warehouse building. It was originally constructed in 1905 by Parlin & Orendorff Company, purveyors of farm implements. A still-legible painted sign across the back (east side) of the building was preserved in the recent remodel. The 1997 nomination noted its "commercial architectural style with late nineteenth-century industrial influences" and "excellent" historic integrity.

In 2015 the Burgans Furniture Warehouse building was converted into short-stay apartments under the Ruby Suites name, with commercial spaces on the first floor.

[19] Desmet Avenue Warehouse Historic District (1997), pp. 7, 23. https://properties.historicspokane.org/district/?DistrictID=19

Caption: The “Parlin & Orendorff Co Farm Implements” sign from 1905 is still clearly visible across the back of the building. These painted commercial messages, known as “ghost signs,” owe their longevity to the use of lead paint. Image courtesy Waymarking.com.

The evolution of the Desmet Avenue Warehouse Historic District since 1997 is a reminder that historic designation provides recognition but not protection for historic buildings. Historic commercial buildings “have been greatly undervalued” the 1997 nomination noted, and so it would be with these. Between 2000 and 2010, most of the contributing buildings on the west block of the district were torn down and replaced with surface parking. The buildings of the east block of the district remain, at least for now.

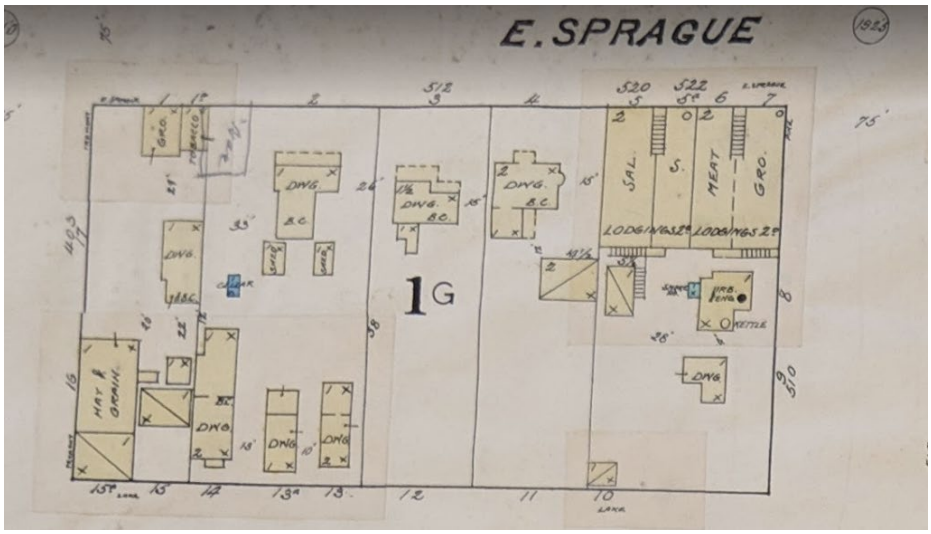
The East End Neighborhood

The portion of the University District south of the Spokane River lacks a recognized name like that of the Logan neighborhood. It features what was called the Riverpoint Campus (now the WSU Health Sciences Spokane campus), a slice of the East Central District, a jumble of businesses, homes, and manufacturing, and landmarks as diverse as the Schade Brewery building, Dick’s Hamburgers, and the more recent University

District Gateway Bridge. Historically it was sometimes called the “East End” neighborhood.

To walk through this area today is to pass by mostly commercial development such as warehouses, trucking companies, some stores, commercial services, even a pet groomer, and a winery. Yet scattered confusingly amidst this 20th-century commercial landscape are some historic homes and apartment buildings. Welcome to the East End, arguably Spokane’s first residential neighborhood.

An 1890 map of Spokane’s fledgling neighborhoods shows that real estate developers were already creating neighborhoods in the area. “Additions” was the legal term, which means newly-created parts of the city, sometimes modestly named after the developer himself. Railroad Addition (east of Division Street and north of Main), Chandler’s Addition, Saunder’s Addition, and Nosler’s Addition were all platted at this time, just months after the 1889 fire. Detailed maps of the neighborhood show a scattering of modest homes and boarding houses, with a few saloons, grocery stores, and other businesses.



Caption: This detail from an 1890 fire map of Spokane shows how this block off Sprague already included two grocery stores, a meat market, a saloon, and numerous dwellings. Image courtesy of the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture.

In the 1900s the East End continued development as a mixed-use neighborhood, but with industrial uses eventually predominating. Residential buildings such as the Kensington Court Apartments (1903) were constructed, but industrial development began to dominate. A turning point was when the Northern Pacific Railroad moved its rail yards and repair facilities from Sprague to Spokane Falls in 1890. The sprawling facilities occupied most of the ground where the Washington State University Health Sciences Spokane campus now stands. A birds-eye view map of Spokane from 1905 shows the dramatic change brought by the railroad.

Caption: This detail from a 1905 birds-eye map of Spokane shows an East End in transition. The Northern Pacific Railroad yards dominate the northern part of the district, while to the south it remains a neighborhood of small houses and apartment blocks. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

The mid-20th century saw a continued swing towards commercial and industrial uses of the East End, yet it was also a neighborhood where families lived, and children played. The arrival of the automobile reshaped the East End in the 20th century as it was bisected by new highways. First was the Sunset Highway, later Route 10, which passed

along Sprague Avenue on its way from Seattle to the Idaho state line. Designated as a state highway in 1915, for 50 years it was the main east-west route across the state. The steady stream of cars gave vitality to the business district that grew up along Sprague. Further to the east in the Valley, motor court motels and fast-food restaurants popped up alongside the road.[20]

After World War Two, America's car culture grew even more prominent. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 planned a nationwide network of controlled-access, multilane highways. In Spokane, three routes were considered: one over the South Hill, one well north of the Spokane River, and the last slicing through downtown and the East Central neighborhood. As happened in nearly every city in America, engineers chose the route that cut through the poorest part of town and where the most people of color lived.

Interstate 90 was devastating for the East End and East Central. The neighborhood was cut in half, a thousand homes were leveled, many businesses were destroyed, and most of historic Liberty Park was lost. The loss of many local residents as well as the loss of traffic on the Sunset Highway was a death blow to most of the businesses along Sprague. No exit was provided for the East Central neighborhood. "The freeway divided the neighborhood," recalled resident Ivan Bush, "I don't know that the neighborhood completely rebounded from that."[21] Another resident remembered: "The area where we grew up was a real neighborhood. Now it is just fast-food restaurants and the freeway."[22]

[20] Chuck Flood, *Washington's Sunset Highway* (Arcadia Publishing, 2014).

[21] Spokane Regional Health District's Neighborhoods Matter Program, & Frank Oesterheld, "Ivan Bush, Resident Since 1978," Spokane Historical, accessed March 31, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/469.

[22] Spokane Regional Health District's Neighborhoods Matter Program, & Frank Oesterheld, "Debbie Takami, Resident Since the 1960s," Spokane Historical, accessed March 31, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/470.

Caption: The construction of I-90 through Spokane. Image courtesy of the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture.

Today the East End may be the most rapidly transforming portion of the University District. The completion of Martin Luther King Boulevard, the Ben Burr Trail, and the University District Gateway Bridge are changing the character of the neighborhood. On the south side of the railroad tracks, Eastern Washington University's Catalyst Building rises alongside the modern Boxcar Apartments. In 2019, the City of Spokane completed a targeted investment strategy of street beautification and improvements along Sprague Avenue from Division Avenue to Stone Street. Improvements that included bus stops, street trees, crosswalks, and improved lighting have brought an influx of new businesses to the area.

5. The Rise of the University District

The University District Development Association was created in 2009 as part of a strategy to improve an area that had fallen on hard times.

Spokane's boom period of growth was as brief as it was dramatic. After growing from 150 residents in 1880 to 104,000 in 1910, growth came to a standstill. Between 1910 and 1920 the town did not grow at all. Prohibition and then the Great Depression hit the University District especially hard, with the Schade Brewery sometimes used as a soup kitchen for the poor. A decline in regional mining hurt Spokane, as did increasing mechanization on the farms of the Palouse, resulting in fewer workers wintering in the town. The Second World War gave the town only a temporary boost. The construction of Interstate 90, completed in 1967, removed many historic buildings while encouraging the shift of residents and shops away from the city center.

Directly relevant to the history of the University District was something that happened just outside of its borders--Expo 74. Beginning in the 1960s, a group of Spokane civic leaders, calling themselves Spokane Unlimited, cast about for ideas to revive the town. They hit on the idea of a new urban park that would highlight the river and the falls that first attracted white settlers to Spokane.

By the 1960s Spokane had turned its back on the river, which was hardly visible from most of downtown due to the two-story elevated railroad tracks that ran through downtown. King Cole, who had been hired as the first leader of Spokane Unlimited, was frustrated by "those damn tracks" and the general lack of access to the river. Worse, many in Spokane did not see the loss of the river as a problem. When Senator Warren Magnuson, a strong proponent of Expo, tried to get a look at the falls by standing on the Monroe Street Bridge, a police officer told him to move along. "The river's not for looking at," he said.[23]

The answer to Spokane's decline was a party, or rather a fair. With Expo 74, Spokane would be the smallest city ever to host an official world's fair. The true purpose however was the long-term effect. Spokane would use a world's fair to move the railroad tracks, to clear the decrepit factories, flop houses, and tenements around the river, and be left,

[23] J. William T. Youngs, *The Fair and Falls: Spokane's Expo 74 Transforming an American Environment* (Cheney, Eastern Washington University Press, 1996) p. 158.

once the fair was finished, with a huge urban park that restored access to and highlighted the river. And it would do so in no small part with other people's money, leveraging the fair to access state and federal funds.

Expo 74 was both an enormous success yet not enough to stem Spokane's economic decline. By the 1980s many community leaders were worried that Spokane's momentum had stalled, and they looked at the area east of downtown as a part of Spokane with a lot of potential for improvement. Indeed, Expo might have made the east end of town worse in some ways, removing the railroads and providing nothing in their place.

The idea of a University District came from a group called Momentum '87, whose leaders included Paul Redmond of Washington Water Power, Bill Cowles of Cowles Publishing, Mike Murphy of Central Pre-Mix, and Dave Clack of Old National Bank.[24] At roughly the same time that Momentum '87 was meeting, the state was encouraging public universities to establish branch campuses in cities that lacked a public university presence. Eastern Washington University had been offering classes at a downtown location since the early 1970s. The idea was hatched to build a joint campus, with Eastern Washington University and Washington State University as partners, to offer graduate education and programs in the health sciences.[25]

[24] Terren Roloff, "The History of the WSU Spokane Campus," *WSU Spokane Magazine*,
[25] Ibid.

Caption: This 2004 drawing of what the then-named Riverpoint campus might look like included sweeping stone archways over a light rail line. Image courtesy of the University District.

In 1992, the Joint Center for Higher Education produced a masterplan for the Riverpoint Campus. Progress was rapid. The Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI) building opened in 1994, the Phase One building in 1996, and the Health Sciences Building in 2002.

A 2004 University District Strategic Masterplan listed some of the strengths of the district that would shape future development. These include a location near downtown, partnership with growing institutions of higher education, proximity to and partnerships with healthcare institutions, recreational opportunities such as the Centennial Trail, the diversity of the neighborhood, the existence of undeveloped land, and the existence of historic buildings such as the Jensen-Byrd Warehouse that could be renovated to provide “authenticity” to the campus experience.[26]

[26] University District Strategic Masterplan, 2004, p. Iv. https://www.spokaneudistrict.org/uploads/publication/files/object/UNIVERSITY_DISTRICT_Master_Plan-1.pdf.

Places of the University District

Most people identify with local history through the power of place. A familiar old building, a favorite park, a certain view of a river can make powerful connections between people and their surroundings. Historic places can give a community a sense of itself.

Yet that history must be presented. The English naturalist Thomas Henry Huxley once wrote, “To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or seaside stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall.” A historic site does not tell its own story, we have to do that for it. What follows is my attempt to flip some of the historic works of art so that their faces are no longer turned to the wall. What follows are some “place stories,” short introductions to some of the historic sites of the University District. Some like the Schade Brewery are prominent and to an extent well-known. Others, such as the bathhouse in Mission Park, are obscure today but important.

These stories are intentionally brief, most falling within the 3-5 paragraphs recommended by social media gurus. Each has 1-2 illustrations and a few sources at the end for the curious to further explore. It is hoped that these stories may one day become the basis of tours of the University District.

Contents:

10. When the Spokane River Was Full of Logs: The McGoldrick Lumber Company
11. When the Spokane River Was Full of Suds: Cascade Laundry Company
12. The Yellowstone Trail and the Sunset Highway
13. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company
14. Ghosts of the University District
15. Spokane Union Pacific Railroad Bridge
16. Bing Crosby House Museum
17. Kensington Court / Albert Apartments
18. The Ice Trade and the University District
19. The Jensen-Byrd Building

1883: The Railroad and the College

Caption: Gonzaga's College Hall under construction. Image courtesy SpokaneTalk.

In 1883 two institutions came to Spokane that would shape what would become the University District: The Northern Pacific Railroad and Gonzaga College.

Spokane was surveyed as a potential route for a transcontinental railroad as early as the 1850s, one of several possible routes explored by the United States with the Pacific Railroad Surveys of 1853-1856. Led by Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens, the Northern Pacific survey traced a potential route from St. Paul, Minnesota to the Puget Sound. Though Congress ultimately decided to back a more central route for the first transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869, the northern route that passed through Spokane was hardly forgotten. James Glover and other early settlers founded the city of Spokane in anticipation that eventually a railroad would be built through the city, ensuring their prosperity.

The Northern Pacific Railroad arrived in Spokane in 1881, and the route was completed two years later in 1883 when President Ulysses S. Grant drove home the final spike in Gold Creek, Montana. Grant and railroad president Henry Villard then boarded a train to

visit the towns along the route to Seattle. The *Spokane Falls Review* predicted a "momentous occasion," but when the dignitaries arrived, Villard blew off the greeting party with a brusque apology. Grant spoke for 30 minutes and continued to Seattle. Still, spirits were high. "After years of patient waiting … the great Northwest has direct and rapid communication with the vast centers of wealth and population east of the mountains," one newspaper proclaimed.

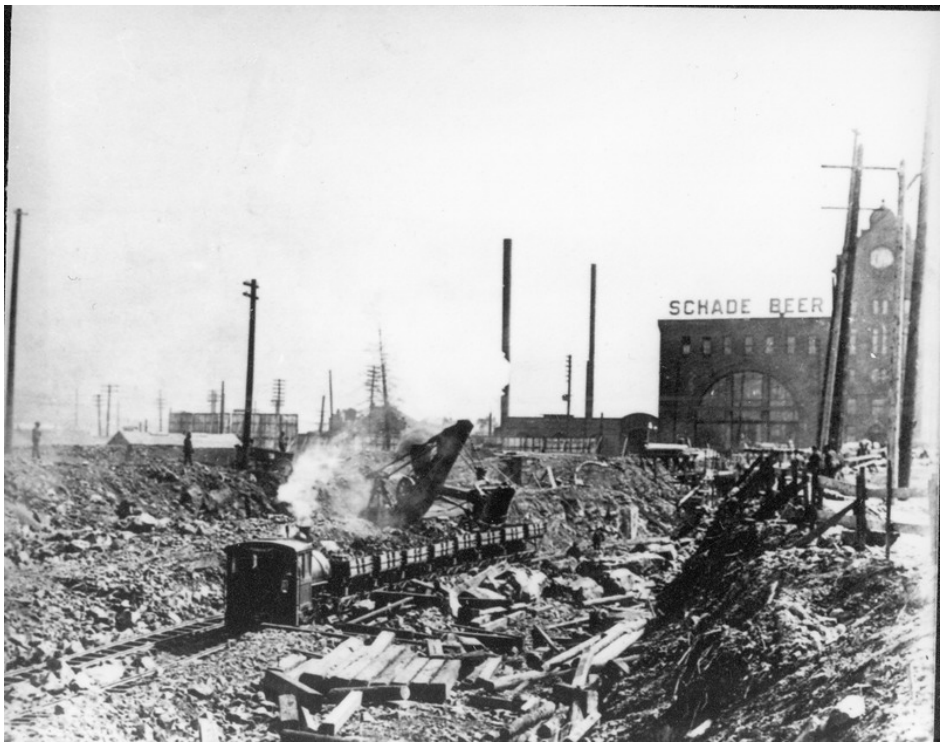
Caption: A Northern Pacific train leaves a station in eastern Washington in the 1880s. Image courtesy City of Harrington.

1883 was also the year that the first cornerstone was laid for Gonzaga College. The college was conceived by Father Joseph Cataldo, the Italian missionary and Jesuit Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions. Cataldo wanted to "build a large school for Indian children, or even for white, if many should come to the country." When the college opened in 1887 the first class consisted of seven students, who came from as near as Spokane Falls and as far away as California. None of them, however, were Native Americans, the Jesuit fathers had decided instead to focus on educating the children of white Catholic immigrants.

Caption: Gonzaga students and faculty in 1892. Image courtesy Gonzaga University Archives.

The Northern Pacific Railroad and Gonzaga College prospered along with the city, and both soon gained competitors. The Great Northern Railroad arrived in 1891 and the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railroad in 1907. By 1917 Spokane had no less than seven transcontinental railroad connections and was arguably the largest transportation center in the Pacific Northwest.

As settlers flocked to the region, city fathers encouraged the founding of universities and colleges as well. Over in Cheney the citizens, who at that time were competing with Spokane Falls to become the leading city of the Inland Northwest, changed the name of their town from Willow Springs to Cheney to flatter railroad executive Benjamin Pierce Cheney, who promptly gave the town $10,000 and a crate of books for the Benjamin P. Cheney Academy. The state took over the facility in 1890 and it grew into Eastern Washington University. Whitworth College, originally located in Tacoma, moved to Spokane in 1914.



Caption: Digging tracks for the Chicago Milwaukee Railroad in Spokane on East Trent in what would become the University District. Schade Brewery in the background. Courtesy Spokane Public Library Digital Collections.

The Great Northern and Gonzaga University are not only two of the oldest institutions in Spokane but also two of the most enduring and remain important parts of the fabric of the city today.

Sources:

Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad, “Spokane, Washington: The Imperial City,” https://m.bnsf.com/news-media/railtalk/heritage/spokane.html

Cheney Historical Museum, Benjamin P. Cheney Academy,” https://www.cheneymuseum.org/1882-benjamin-p-cheney-academy/

David Wilma, “First train arrives at Spokane Falls on June 25, 1881,” HistoryLink, https://www.historylink.org/File/5137

Gonzaga University, “Gonzaga's History,” https://www.gonzaga.edu/about/our-mission-jesuit-values/gonzagas-history

Schade Brewery

Caption: The Schade Brewery, constructed in 1903, remains one of the most distinctive commercial buildings in Spokane.

Spokane was a workingman's town in its early years, and that was doubly true of what would become the University District. Where the Riverpoint campus stands today was an area of train yards, warehouses, boarding hotels, and some very thirsty men. In an era before mechanical refrigeration, beer had to be made locally, and Spokane had a half-dozen or more breweries in the early 1900s.

The Schade Brewery was one of Spokane's largest beer-makers and for a time one of its most successful. Built in 1903 by Bernhard Schade, former brewmaster at another local brewery, the New York Brewery, and designed by architect Lewis Stritesky, the elaborate five-story building was as much of an advertisement for the beer as a place to make it. By 1907 the Schade brewery was pumping out 100,000 barrels of beer a year.

Spokane, surrounded by wheat and inhabited by workers, was a city of breweries. The Schade competed with Henco, Burke, Galland-Burke Brewing, Golden Age Brewing, and so many more. Beer not locally consumed might be sent by rail to nearby towns, many of which had their own breweries as well. Blessed with clean water and surrounded by endless fields of wheat, Spokane was a beer-lover's paradise.

The party ended in 1916 when Washington State adopted prohibition, four years before national prohibition in 1920. Beer breweries tried to avoid looming Prohibition portrayed beer as a healthful alternative to whiskey and other "ardent spirits," but the public wasn't having it, and beer was banned along with whiskey. Like many breweries, Schade tried to stay in business by shifting production to soda pop. And like many breweries, it failed. Production was suspended in 1918 and Bernhardt Schade committed suicide in 1921.

Caption: A 1906 advertisement for the Palouse Brewing Company portrayed beer as a healthful and respectable drink, suitable even for children. Note the disreputable whiskey drinkers outside by the fence. The attempt by breweries to distinguish themselves from sellers of distilled spirits failed and Washington adopted statewide prohibition. Image courtesy of the Washington Rural Heritage Project.

The building was abandoned and fell into disrepair. Hobos who rode the rails through Spokane found the old Schade Brewery a convenient base while in Spokane. When the Great Depression struck in 1929, as many as 1,000 homeless men found refuge in the building and on the grounds. In 1932, the *Spokesman-Review* noted that the building was “now useful as a home for unemployed single men,” calling it the “East Trent Billet” but it was more widely known as “Hotel de Gink.”

Prohibition was abolished in 1933, and Spokane’s breweries roared back to life. The Schade building was purchased by Golden Age Brewing, and later by Bohemia Brewing and then Atlantic Brewing. Under one name or another, beer was brewed on this site until 1959.

In the decades since brewing ceased, the Schade Brewery has been used as a warehouse, antique store, restaurant, and credit union. In 1994 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Today the building has been renovated for office and retail space.

Caption: Brew Men of Schade Brewing Co.: Image Courtesy of the Brooks Collection, Northwest Room, Spokane Public Libraries.

Sources:

Spokane Historic Preservation Office, “Schade Brewery,” https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=1929

Jim Kershner, “Near Nature, Near Beer,” Spokesman-Review, Nov. 20, 2005, https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2005/nov/20/near-nature-near-beer/

Zachary Wnek, “Schade Brewery,” Spokane Historical, accessed March 10, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/152

Spokane's Lost Park

Caption: Liberty Park in 1908. Source: Spokane Public Library Digital Collections.

At the southeastern edge of the University District, south of the intersection of Arthur and 3rd streets, are some striking man-made rock features, pillars of mortared basalt, and formerly elaborate stone walls. Bisected by the interstate highway and occasionally littered with trash, it takes historical knowledge and imagination to recognize these remnants once part of Spokane's grandest pleasuring ground, Liberty Park.

In the 1880s and 1890s, residential developments spread in all directions from Spokane's downtown core, including to the east. The eastern part of the city got its park when a wealthy businessman, F. Lewis Clark, donated the land to the city. The site, a mix of basalt cliffs and hidden glades, was ideal.

Designed by Kirtland Cutter and redesigned by the renowned Olmsted Brothers, Liberty Park was a gem. In the decades that followed, Liberty Park was improved with a wading pool, an arboretum, a golf course, and a clubhouse for the Spokane Country Club. At its height in the early 1900s, Liberty Park was easily the equal of Manito Park on the South Hill.

The decline of Liberty Park followed that of the East Central neighborhood of which it was a part. In the 1890s and early 1900s, streetcars and later automobiles opened the South Hill and other parts of the city for residential development, and East Central became a more solidly working-class and commercial district. City investment shifted away from Liberty Park.

Two final blows sealed the fate of Liberty Park. In the 1930s the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a branch of the federal government, produced maps of American cities, grading residential neighborhoods from “best” to “hazardous” using racist criteria.

“This is the ‘melting pot’ of Spokane, and is extremely heterogeneous,” the report explained. Despite being next to Liberty Park, “proximity to largest negro concentration of the city precludes higher grading.” The area was graded as “hazardous.”

These “redlining” maps produced a self-fulfilling prophecy of urban blight. Banks would not loan money to buy homes or make home equity loans in these neighborhoods. Families lost the ability to take loans for home improvements or to send children to college. Those who could afford it moved away, and those who could not were trapped in sometimes generational poverty.

The decline of East Central and nearby neighborhoods set the stage for the next phase, the arrival of Interstate 90. As in most cities, highway planners put the route through the poorest sections of town, where the property was the least expensive and the residents had little political power. The highway ran right through what had been Liberty Park. The remainder north of the highway were abandoned.

Caption: The remains of the Liberty Park Promenade, captured by a photographer in 2007. Image courtesy of Flickr user jmgphotos.

In recent years, the city has reinvested in what remains of Liberty Park, adding playgrounds and a disc golf course, and a remodeled branch of the Spokane Public Library. Some sections of the old park, cut off by roads and highway ramps, are abandoned except for the rock remains of what was once part of the crown jewels of Spokane.

Sources:

Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America, Spokane Area D10, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/WA/Spokane/area_descriptions/D10#loc=13/47.668/-117.3898

Nathan Brand, "Kiss of Death: The Rise and Fall of Liberty Park" (Video). The Inlander, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQfTvGBSkJ4&ab_channel=theinlander

National Park Service, “Liberty Park: Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site,” https://www.nps.gov/places/liberty-park.htm

Tracy L. Rebstock, “Making Way for the Freeway: Liberty Park,” Spokane Historical, accessed March 9, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/114

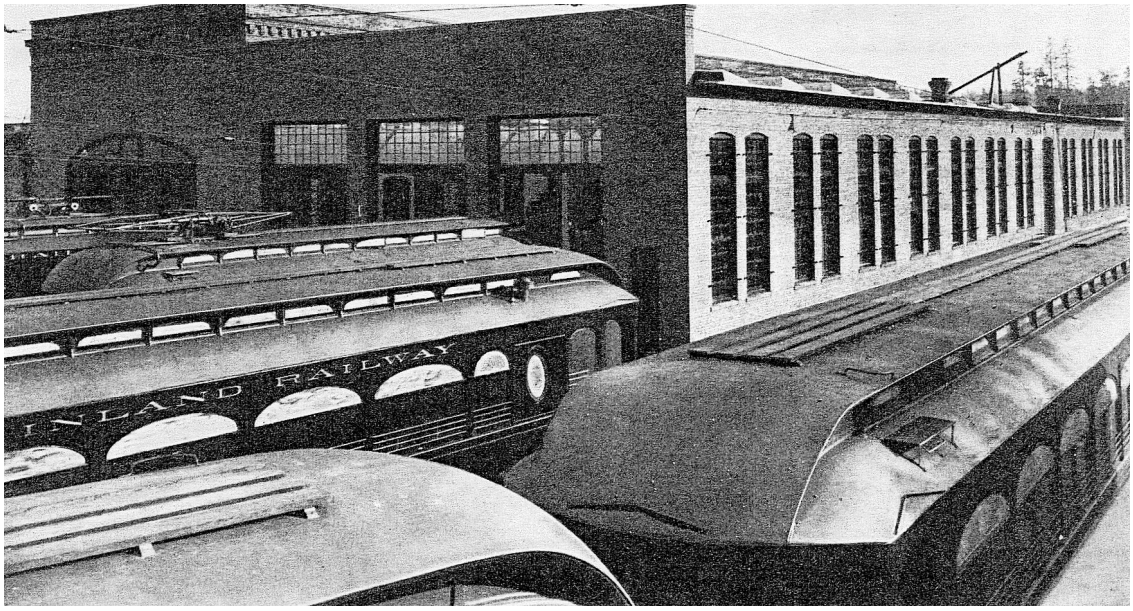
The McKinstry Building and Spokane's Age of Light Rail

Caption: Color postcard of Spokane & Inland Empire No. 8 trolley. One hundred years ago, Spokanites could ride similar cars all over the city and to Cheney, Medical Lake, and Coeur d'Alene. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Spokane's most rapid period of growth was from 1890-1910 when the population exploded from just under 20,000 souls to more than 100,000. Trolley car lines not only served this growth, but they also guided it. Business tycoons such as Jay P. Graves would buy undeveloped land at the edges of the city, map out streets and building lots, and lay tracks for trolley cars to provide transportation. What had been vacant land became building lots, and then homes. Compared to the expense and effort of owning horses and carriages, trolleys provided fast, reliable, inexpensive transportation to a growing city. The most prominent physical reminder of that era of Spokane history is right in the University District: The McKinstry Building, originally known as the Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad Car Facility.

Nestled on a bend of the Spokane River south of Trent Avenue, the Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad Car Facility (as it was originally known) is the largest and most prominent remnant of this age of light rail. Designed by Spokane architect Albert Held, it was built out in stages beginning in 1907. The facility consisted of a series of “car barns” where trolleys were stored and worked on, a blacksmith shop for repair, a boiler room to power the facility, and storage.

At their height, Spokane’s Trolleys were the circulatory system of a thriving city. Neighborhoods were organized around their trolley stops, platted with deep narrow lots to provide shorter walking distances to the street cars. Neighborhood groceries and taverns popped up beside the streetcar stops. To encourage the use of the system on weekends, the Spokane Railway Car Company developed Natatorium Park, an amusement park along the Spokane River. Trolley cars connected Spokane neighborhoods to Cheney, Medical Lake, and Coeur d’Alene.



Caption: Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad Car facilities in the 1910s or 1920s. Image courtesy Stephen Day Architecture.

The decline of urban streetcars across the United States began with the arrival of the automobile. Around 1910, autos began to arrive in large numbers in Spokane. By 1913

the “Spokane Automobile Guide and Directory,” which listed every Spokane car owner, ran for 48 pages. By 1924 the price of a Ford Model T was around $300. Some new car owners became early rideshare drivers, cruising the trolley stops and offering rides to the waiting passengers for a nickel rather than the dime charged by the trolley. Ridership plummeted, and the trolley companies began to fail.

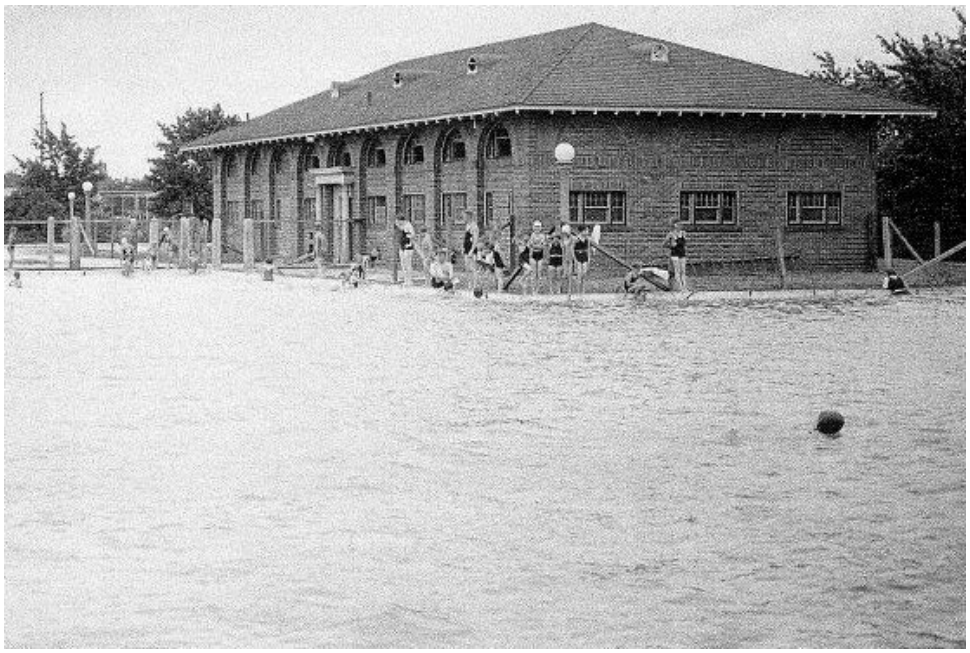
Spokane’s trolley cars ceased operation in the 1930s. In 1936, Spokane’s last streetcar was burned in a “ceremonial cremation” before a crowd of 10,000 spectators. Gasoline-powered cars and buses replaced street cars, whose embedded steel tracks were paved over and forgotten.

What happened to this building? The former Spokane and Inland Empire Railroad Car Facility experienced several transitions. It was used by the Great Northern Railroad as a repair facility, and then by several trucking companies over the years. In 2011 McKinstry, a national architectural firm, remodeled the building into high-tech offices. Today it is home to the Eastern Washington University Nursing and the University of Washington School of Medicine/Gonzaga University Health Partnership programs.

Sources:

Stephen Day Architecture, Spokane Historic Register Nomination “Spokane & Inland Empire Railroad Car Facility,” 2010.
https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=1945
John Fahey, *Shaping Spokane: Jay P. Graves and His Times* (University of Washington Press, 1994).
Jim Kershner, “Spokane's last electric trolley meets a fiery end on August 31, 1936,” HistoryLink, https://historylink.org/File/8088
Chas. V. Mutschler, Clyde L. Parent, and Wilmer H. Siegert, Spokane's Street Railways: An Illustrated History (Spokane: Inland Empire Railway Historical Society, 1986).

Spokane Public Bath House



Caption: Swimmers at the Spokane Public Bath House, 1933. Courtesy Spokane Parks and Recreation.

The Spokane Public Bath House was part of a national movement. Built in 1914, and designed by Spokane architect Harold C. Whitehouse, public bath houses like this one were a reform of the Progressive Era, meant to protect public health in an era when not every home had indoor plumbing or a bathroom. Bathhouses were part of a broader movement that saw an explosion of amenities meant to improve public health, as well as the moral character of city residents. Public parks, libraries, museums, and playgrounds were established during this era. "The city-dweller has become a citizen," proclaimed reformer Frederic C. Howe, "His social sense is being organized and his demands upon the government have been rapidly increasing."

Public baths were part of the Progressive effort to spread what they sometimes called “the gospel of cleanliness” among the foreign immigrants in America’s rapidly expanding cities. The manager of one such bath in Philadelphia said, “The object is not only to promote bathing facilities, but to elevate taste and morals." Public baths were thought to

reduce juvenile delinquents, promote sobriety, and increase religious faith. "The greatest civilizing power that can be brought to bear on these uncivilized Europeans crowding into our cities lies in the public bath," thundered one advocate.

It was no coincidence that Spokane's first bath house was placed in Mission Park. The park was established in 1912 to serve the rapidly growing and working-class Logan neighborhood with its many immigrant families. The park would include wading and swimming pools and a bathhouse. "The Spokane Public Bath House contained showers and changing rooms. Two swimming pools, one for males and one for females, were located outside to the west and north of the building. To swim, people would have to shower first. In this way, the first public swimming pools encouraged personal hygiene in addition to exercise and recreation provided by the swimming pools and aligned with the ideas of the Progressive Era," writes historian Renee Cebula.

The Spokane Bath House was a grand structure for its time. Built in an Italian Renaissance style, it featured broad roof eaves supported by fancy brackets over huge arching windows. Elegant landscaping included trees, manicured lawns, and even handball courts.

The urgent need for public bathhouses faded in the United States in the 1920s and 30s, as indoor plumbing became more common and as the nation retreated from the lofty goals of the Progressive Era. Witter Pool was built at Mission Park in 1960 to replace the aging older pools, and the Spokane Bath House was converted to a storage area for the park. The once-grand arches of the building are bricked up, but deeply carved over the columned doorway the words "SPOKANE PVBLIC BATH" remind us of its history.

Caption: Photograph courtesy Spokane Office of Historic Preservation

Sources:

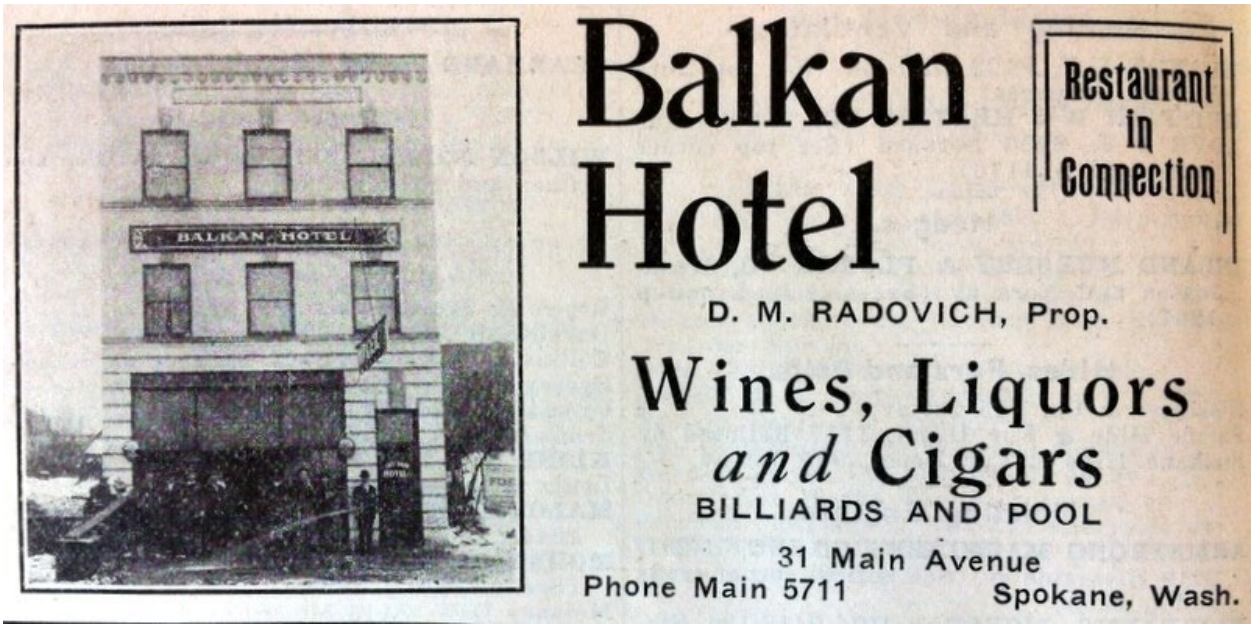
Erin Blakemore, “Public Baths Were Meant to Uplift the Poor” JSTOR Daily, September 9, 2017, https://daily.jstor.org/public-baths-were-meant-to-uplift-the-poor/

Renee Cebula, “Spokane Public Bath House,” Spokane Historical, accessed March 9, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/233.

David Glassberg, “The Design of Reform: The Public Bath Movement in America.” https://journals.ku.edu/amsj/article/download/2244/2203

Linda Yeomans, “Historic Register Nomination for the Spokane Public Bath House,” Spokane Historic Preservation Office, https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=2046

The University District as a Workingman's Neighborhood: The Balkan Hotel



Caption: The three-story Balkan Hotel was one of the first buildings on this block of East Main, as can be seen in this advertisement in the 1909 Spokane City Directory.

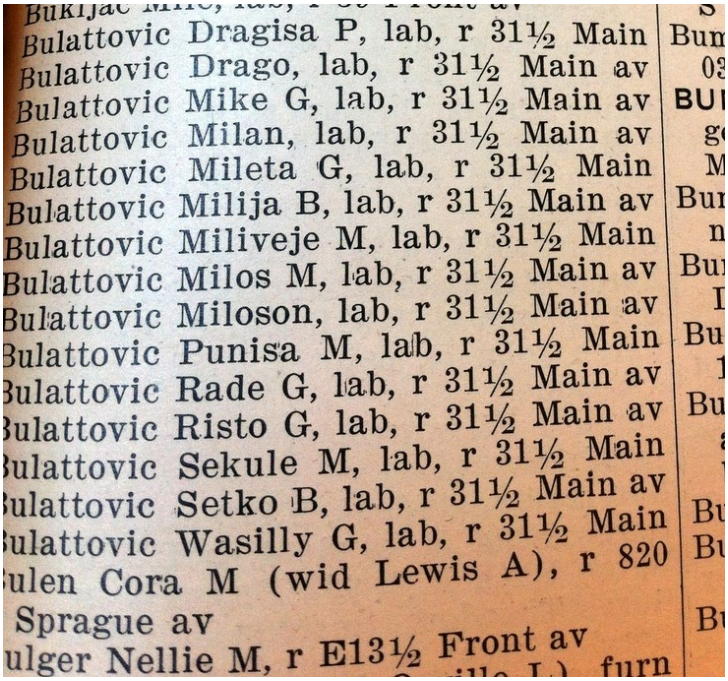
The tenements and SRO (single room occupancy) hotels that once housed the working men of the University District are mostly gone now, but just a block west of the district boundary a notable example still stands: The Balkan Hotel.

Built in 1909 as a Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel, The Balkan was typical of this kind of structure. SROs provided basic rooms for laborers. The small rooms of the Balkan provided a bed and perhaps a dresser. The bathroom was down the hall. A small window provided what air conditioning there was, though interior rooms might lack even this amenity. The Balkan was owned by R. W. Smith and built by the Pettifer Construction Company, formed in 1908 by J. A. and C. W. Pettifer with architect C. E. Wentzel, a draftsman for the Washington Water Power Company.

The first floor had a combined saloon, billiards hall, and restaurant, everything a working man might need on most days. In early Spokane, saloons were more than places to get a drink. Many catered to specific ethnic clientele in this age of immigration. Swedes

might gather in one establishment, Finns in another. A saloon was a place for immigrants to socialize in their language, read months-old newspapers from their homes, perhaps sing songs or debate politics as the evening wore on.

So it was in the Balkan, where the bulk of residents were from Montenegro. The proprietor was Daniel Radovich, another Balkan. The immigrants might have been recruited by Bernhard Schade, they all worked at his brewery and the brewer even paid for the wiring when the building was constructed. The early nineteenth century was the height of immigrants coming to Spokane, when the population of the city grew by 6000%, fueled by economic booms in railroads, mining, lumber, and agriculture. There was a Balkan-Serbian Benevolent Society in the neighborhood as well as a Balkan grocer.



Caption: A bunch of Bulattovics. The 1910 Spokane city directory listed fifteen men of the surname Bulattovic living in the Balkan hotel, all of them laborers.

Spokane's small Montenegrin neighborhood folded in 1916, when the hotel closed, perhaps in response to statewide prohibition. The original residents moved away, though the building continued to operate as a workingman's hotel under different names

until 1955. In its later years, it was operated by the Salvation Army to provide shelter for the poor.

The Balkan Hotel was placed on the Spokane Historic Register in November 2001.

Sources:

Renee Cebula, “The Balkan Hotel,” Spokane Historical, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/232

“Balkan Hotel,” Spokane Historic Register, 2001. https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=1724

Jack and Dan's Tavern: Deep Roots in the Logan Neighborhood

Caption: The building that houses Jack and Dan's has held many businesses; its history is a microcosm of the Gonzaga/Logan neighborhood. Image courtesy of the Gonzaga Bulletin.

Jack and Dan's is one of Spokane's most iconic businesses. Over the past century, this simple brick commercial building has been home to pharmacies, taverns, a meat market, and more. Like many historic commercial buildings, it has seen substantial changes to its front facade.

As the Logan and Gonzaga College neighborhoods grew after 1900, they needed a commercial corridor to serve the residents. One and two-story brick buildings began to pop up along Hamilton Street. In 1909 this red brick building was constructed by the Pioneer Educational Society, the real-estate development arm of the Jesuits in the Pacific Northwest. It is believed that the building was designed by the noted team of Spokane architects Herman Preusse and Julius A. Zittel, who between them designed much of the Gonzaga campus and many other Spokane landmarks. If you look up to the second story you can see a brickwork pattern of Christian crosses, a motif they used in other buildings around Gonzaga.

A series of drug stores operated in one part of the building from 1909 into the 1930s. The upstairs was occupied by small apartments, typical of commercial development in that period. Another part of the first floor was occupied by the butcher shop J. J. Sontag Meats. Peter Sontag, who first came to town as a young baggage clerk for the railroad, lived upstairs.

Prohibition began in Washington in 1916 and became national in 1920 with the 18th Amendment. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Spokane and the nation were thirsty and Snappy Beer Parlor opened in this building in 1934. Snappy's even offered delivery of a "bucket of suds" by motorcycle.

In 1934 the *Spokesman-Review* noted that 362 permits to sell beer had been issued in Spokane that year. "Snappy titles are favored," by the new beer parlors, it was reported, among them the Silver Streak, Silver Moon, Silver Inn, Silver Pheasant, Gold Coin, Golden State, New Deal, Happy Time, Brown Derby, Bright Spot, Nose Bag, Jug Inn, Ivan's Dog House, The Cat and the Fiddle, Davy Jones Locker, and the Snappy Beer Parlor.

The tavern officially became Jack and Dan's in 1975, though half the building continued as a pharmacy until 2004 when the tavern expanded to claim the entire first floor. In 2006, the building was placed on the Spokane Register of Historic places.

In the historical register nomination form, the building is described as “an example of commercial evolution.” The original building was set back from the street. Various renovations brought the ground floor out to street level to provide more space, bricked up windows that were no longer in use, reopened some of them, and created a beer garden in the back. Historic preservationists call such changes “adaptive reuse.” The National Trust for Historic Preservation states that “repurposing a building that has outlived its original function … can preserve architectural and cultural heritage.”

Today Jack and Dan’s is a classic neighborhood watering hole. In a 2013 article in the Spokesman-Review, owner Jeff Condill said “I could pretty much put a name to everyone who comes in here between 11 a.m. and 9 p.m.”

Sources:

Jim Kolva, “Historic Register Nomination for the Snappy Beer Parlor,” Spokane Historic Preservation Office, https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=1964

Nicole Oswald, “Jack and Dan's named historical landmark,” The Gonzaga Bulletin, Mar 8, 2006, https://www.gonzagabulletin.com/jack-and-dans-named-historical-landmark/article_03909eb4-63e7-5a63-a11d-6d32b5e7681b.html

Haley Somolinos, “New Year, New Building: 5 Adaptive Reuse Projects for Historic Buildings,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, January 3, 2023, https://savingplaces.org/stories/new-year-new-building-6-adaptive-reuse-projects-for-historic-buildings

Dick's Hamburgers, a Midcentury Icon

Dick's Hamburgers, on the southern boundary of the University District, is one of Spokane's iconic businesses. But did you know that it is an architectural icon as well?

The explosion of American car culture after the Second World War remade American society in many ways, from how we lived and worked to how we ate. Drive-in restaurants proliferated in the 1950s and 60s. In 1965 Dick's Hamburgers opened, and a love affair was born.

The striking midcentury design of Dick's was the brainchild of Spokane architect Douglas Durkoop. Dick's is a rare surviving example of "Googie" architecture, an over-the-top midcentury style that used bold colors, sweeping lines, and expansive glass walls. The cuisine at Dick's was another mid-century innovation popularly known as "fast food," featuring a standardized limited menu, disposable packaging, and often drive-up ordering and delivery.

Caption: The bright colors and midcentury design of Dick's echoed another restaurant chain that was expanding in the postwar period, namely McDonalds.

Spokane architect Douglas Durkoop designed the building and the small apartment that stands in the parking lot behind the restaurant. An interesting historical detail was that for a brief time, Dick's was called the Panda Restaurant, which explains the panda bear on the iconic sign.

The initial co-owner of Dick's was "Honest" Abe Miller, a WW2 veteran who had owned an earlier Spokane hamburger stand named Kirks. He named Dick's after his oldest son, and in its early days, running the restaurant was a family affair. Like other fast-food restaurants, Miller operated on the principle that it was "better to make 2 cents each on a thousand hamburgers than a dollar each on only a few burgers." Abe continued to oversee the restaurant for 42 years until months before his death in 2007 at 92.

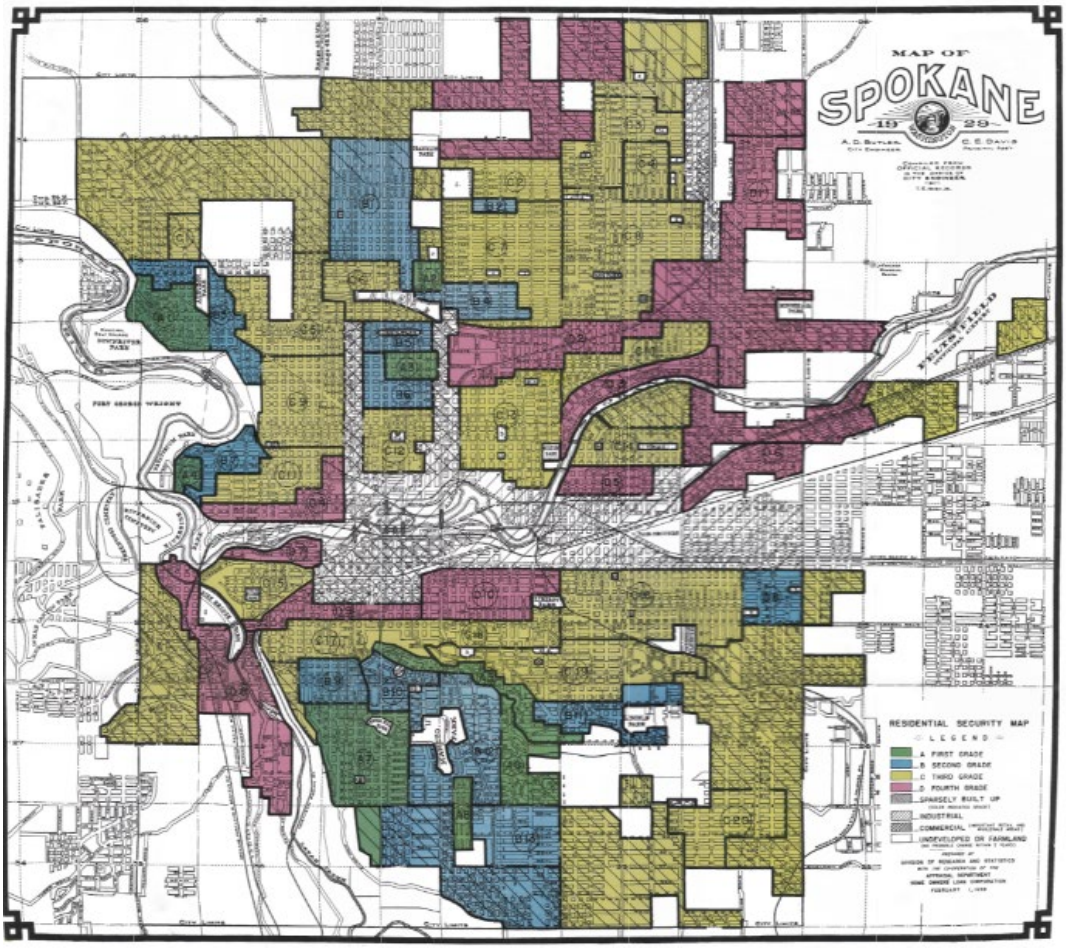
Caption: The flat roof, long panes of glass and bright colors mark Dick's Hamburgers as an example of Googie design, perhaps the only such building in Spokane. Image courtesy of 97RockOnline.com.

Sources:

Connie L. Godak, "Dick's Hamburger's founder called 'Honest Abe,'" *Spokesman-Review*, May 24, 2007, https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2007/may/24/dicks-hamburgers-founder-called-honest-abe/.

Diana Painter, "Historic Property Report--Dicks Hamburgers," Midcentury Spokane Survey, 2017. http://midcenturyspokane.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Edited-Dicks-Hamburgers-11-23.pdf

Mapping Inequality in Spokane



Caption: This 1934 redlining map of Spokane, along with the notes for each neighborhood, can be viewed at the Mapping Inequality website.

In 1933, as a part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created. Its purpose was to refinance homes whose mortgages were in default due to the Great Depression. The idea was to save the homes of working families until the economy improved. Then came the maps, and things took a turn.

Between 1935 and 1940, the HOLC created what would become redlining maps for every major city in America, including Spokane. These color-coded maps ranked every Spokane neighborhood for creditworthiness. The best neighborhoods were colored

green for “best.” The next category was blue, for “still desirable.” But woe to the homeowner whose neighborhood was shaded yellow on the map, which stood for “definitely declining,” or red, which meant simply “hazardous.”

The neighborhoods that would become the University District did not fare well in the HOLC ratings. Map area C13, which took in the Logan neighborhood, was colored in yellow for “definitely declining.” The “clarifying remarks” provided with the map offer a window into the thinking of the mapmakers. “This is an old Catholic community,” it reads, and “its population is intensely loyal.” Yet it was downgraded for the “infiltration of lodging houses and lower income group,” “proximity to lower grade area,” and the “predominance of old dwellings of outmoded sizes and architectural design.”

Trent Avenue east of the Spokane River, D5 on the map, was a hazardous red. “A low-grade workingman's district,” the report declared. It warned of the “infiltration of lower classes” including “mill workers & laborers” and “negroes.” Some dirt roads and “odors from stockyards and packing houses” were also noted.

Caption: This 1957 Spokane advertisement for a building lot in a “restricted neighborhood” used the usual codewords for a neighborhood with property covenants that prohibited people of color from living there. Such restrictions were made illegal with the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Image courtesy of the Google News Archive.

All the residential areas that would become part of the University District were graded red or yellow. The north bank of the Spokane River stretching east from Mission Park (D3) had “much natural charm” but too many boarding houses so was rated hazardous for investment. The facing south bank C14 was “definitely declining” due to stockyard odors and the fact that “infiltration of the lower class is a possibility.” D10, on the south boundary of the University District, was “hazardous” due to its “proximity to largest negro concentration of the city” and “foreign-born families,” mostly Italian.

This 1934 map did more than rate neighborhoods, it determined their future for decades to come. Bankers and realtors used these maps for the practice of “redlining”—marking off neighborhoods where bankers would not lend money and realtors would steer their clients away from. Homeowners in the redlined neighborhoods could not obtain home equity loans to improve their properties or send children to college. “Hazardous” and “definitely declining” ratings became self-fulfilling prophecies.

The long shadow of redlining has at least partially lifted in recent decades. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed redlining in the United States, though banks continued the practice informally for decades. Even today, the Spokane neighborhoods that were redlined have higher poverty rates, lower property values, less tree cover, and less access to grocery stores or medical care.

Sources:

Website: Mapping Inequality: REDLINING IN NEW DEAL AMERICA
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/
Daniel Aaronson, et. al. (2021). "The Effects of the 1930s HOLC "Redlining" Maps". American Economic Journal: Economic Policy. 13 (4): 355–392.
Federal Reserve History, “Redlining,”
https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/redlining

When the Spokane River Was Full of Logs: The McGoldrick Lumber Company

Caption: Log jams like this were a common sight a hundred years ago. Note Gonzaga College in the background. Image courtesy of eBay: https://www.ebay.com/itm/115678805839

The very first industrial operation in Spokane was a sawmill. S.R. Scranton and J.J. Downing, Spokane's first white settlers, built a sawmill by the falls in 1871. Purchased by James Glover two years later, what became the Spokane Lumber Company operated for almost 70 years in what is now Riverfront Park.

Perhaps the biggest outfit, however, was the McGoldrick Lumber Company. James P. McGoldrick arrived in town in 1906 and bought a small mill near the Gonzaga campus. Soon his mill stretched for 60 acres and was one of Spokane's largest employers. McGoldrick made sure that each of his employees owned a home, many in the Logan neighborhood.

McGoldrick also dabbled in politics. In 1922 McGoldrick Lumber sent a letter to the House Committee on Ways and Means asking them to lift national Prohibition. "It is not

a good law," the company stated, and "for one who abuses the privilege of drinking alcohol there are a hundred who do not." Though McGoldrick claimed to be representing the views of "90% of my business acquaintances" the letter was not effective, as Prohibition remained in force until 1933.

In 1945, a huge fire consumed most of the lumber mill. "Flames Sweep McGoldrick Mill!" screamed the front-page headline in the *Spokesman-Review*, which reported that the blaze had ignited a firestorm that threatened nearby homes. "Two brick smokestacks, towering at least 200 feet into the air, crumpled to the ground under the terrific heat," the report went on. Every fireman in town answered the call, along with 150 sailors who were in Spokane and many volunteers, but nothing could be done. The mill was a total loss and never reopened.

The land once occupied by Spokane's largest employer was eventually purchased by Gonzaga University. The small pond alongside the river, now known as Lake Arthur, was formerly the mill pond for the sawmill. Its restoration into a natural area was led by Father Dussault of Gonzaga University, who raised money to turn Lake Arthur into a park with landscaping and a fountain. Today it is the focus of the Lake Arthur Enhancement Project, which seeks to further restore the health and biodiversity of the lake.

Caption: Today Lake Arthur is a teaching tool for Gonzaga students studying history, biology, and environmental studies. Image courtesy Gonzaga University.

Sources:

Tony and Suzanne Bamonte, *The McGoldrick Lumber Co Story: 1900-1952* (Spokane: Tornado Creek Publications, 2006).

McGoldrick Lumber Company of Spokane letter to Senator Miles Poindexter regarding prohibition, January 24, 1922, University of Washington Archives, https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/pioneerlife/id/19266/

“Flames Sweep McGoldrick Mill,” The Spokesman-Review, Fri, Aug 10, 1945 ·Page 1.

Gonzaga University, “Lake Arthur: Stories through Time,” October 01, 2020, https://www.gonzaga.edu/news-events/stories/2020/10/1/gonzagas-lake-arthur-through-time

When the Spokane River Was Full of Suds: Cascade Laundry Company

Commercial laundries like the Cascade Laundry Company were once quite common in Spokane. In an era before convenient home electric washing machines and dryers, most homemakers who could afford it sent their laundry out to be done. Steam laundries would boil linens, sheets and tablecloths and bleach or dye them back to snow-white hues that could not be achieved at home.

Cascade Laundry was one of the earliest commercial laundries in Spokane and one of the largest. Pearl Laundry, Ideal Laundry, Consolidated Laundry, and Spokane Steam laundry all lined the banks of the Spokane River at various locations. There were also a dozen or more smaller Chinese-run laundries. The laundries were major employers for young women who worked long hours under dangerous conditions for a few dollars a week. A Seattle newspaper described them as “girls without any family support and many widows with babies to feed and clothe.” The same was true in Spokane, where laundry workers attempted to organize a union and went on strike in 1910 and 1911.

Caption: Early photograph of the Cascade Laundry with delivery trucks. Image courtesy of David Birge.

Laundries were located along the river as both a source of fresh water and a place to dump the soapy waste produced by the laundering process. As laundries reached their

peak in the mid-20th century, the Spokane River often foamed, especially when the water went over the falls.

Laundries were hardly the only ones dumping their waste products into the river. Spokane's sewers emptied into the river until the first wastewater treatment plant opened in 1958, with "overflow events" common until the last decade. Other industries such as slaughterhouses and paint factories sometimes found the river a convenient dumping ground.

The original Cascade Laundry opened in 1892 in the downtown area. In 1913 a new building was constructed on Sprague, although most laundries were moving upstream in this era to find cleaner water. Designed by notable Spokane architect Loren L. Rand, the new building featured two stories, with washing on the first floor and folding and ironing on the second. It also included a number of safety improvements for the women working inside.

The era of the steam laundry came to an end after the Second World War. "By 1940, 60 percent of homes with electricity had a washing machine. In the late 1950s, self-service laundromats became popular," writes Jesse Tinsley in the *Spokesman-Review*. Labor troubles and environmental regulations also worked against the industry.

Cascade Laundry ceased operation in the 1960s, but the building continued to be used. Over the years it has housed trucking companies, bus lines, a school bus company, and an auto body repair shop. In 1998, the building was remodeled as part of a development called Riverwalk, part of a transition from a place of industry to a home for shops, restaurants, and offices. Today it is best known as the home of NoLi Brewery and Bangkok Thai Restaurant.

Sources:

"Mutual Laundry Increases Wage." Seattle Union Record. April 28, 1917.

Jim Kolva, “Cascade Laundry Company,” Spokane Register Historic Nomination, 2008.

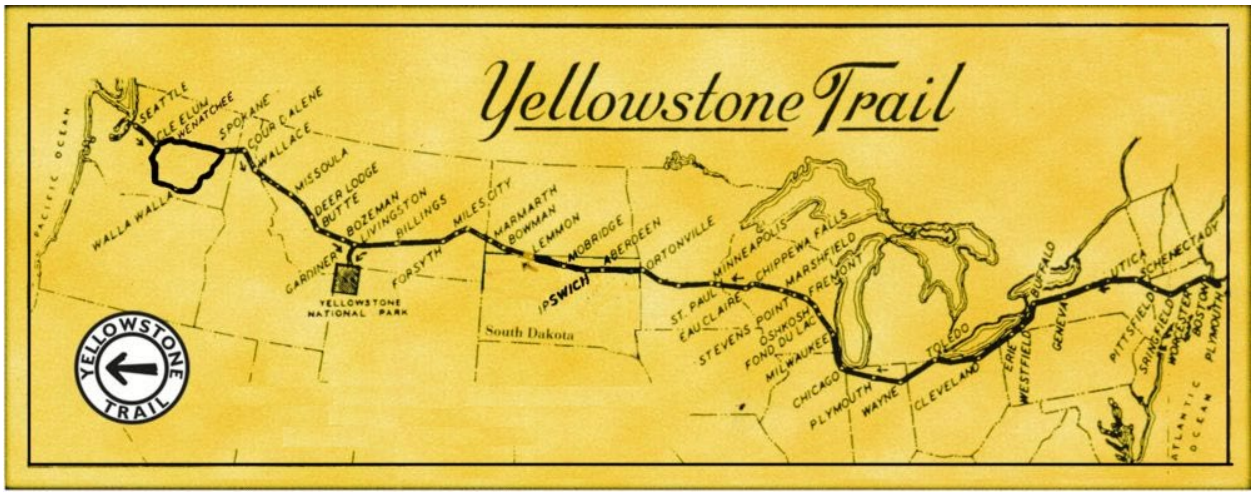
Jesse Tinsley, “Then and Now: Spokane Steam Laundry,” *Spokesman-Review*, Jan. 14, 2019, https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2019/jan/14/then-and-now-spokane-steam-laundry/

The Yellowstone Trail and the Sunset Highway

Today the University District is bordered on the south by the hulking concrete barrier of Interstate 90. But it is also intersected by two older pieces of automotive history, the Yellowstone Highway and the Sunset Highway.

Wealthy Americans began buying automobiles by 1910, but they were frustrating to own. Yes, they were expensive and finicky to operate, but a bigger problem was that it was difficult to go anywhere past the city limits of your town. Rural roads were largely unimproved dirt paths, in terrible condition and difficult to navigate. There were no recognized routes, reliable road maps, or directional signs.

The Yellowstone Trail was part of a national movement by automobile owners and chambers of commerce to establish some maintained long-distance touring routes. A route was laid out--on paper at least--from Seattle to Plymouth, Massachusetts. In Spokane, the Yellowstone trail came into town along Hangman Creek and followed Sprague Avenue across the city before crossing Spokane Valley and ascending the Bitterroot Mountains of Idaho. “Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound” was the motto of the Yellowstone Trail Association.

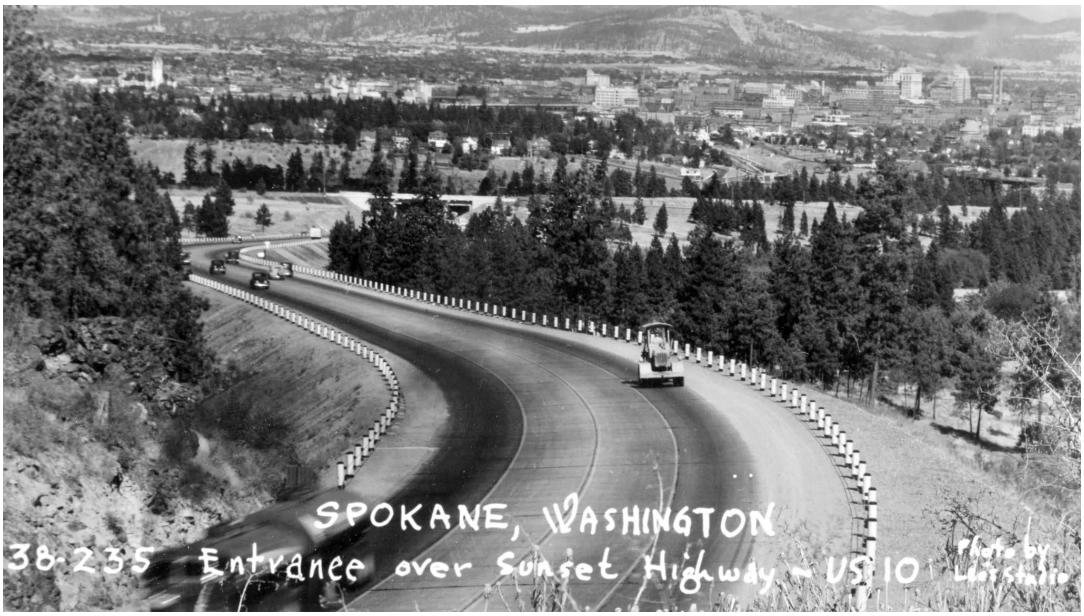


Caption: Promotional map of the Yellowstone Trail. Image courtesy by JRidge at English Wikipedia, CC BY 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15816247

Spokanites were enthusiastic proponents of the road. A 1915 article in the *Spokesman-Review* included a map of the route, which it assured readers “is now practically complete” and well-marked by “guide stones bearing the insignia of the trail, a black arrow on a yellow stone.” Travelers on the trail who passed through Spokane were nearly always worth an article in the newspaper, and yellow and black arrows led motorists through town.

The trail was rough in the early years, but as the Spokesman-Review explained, the idea was to mark out a route and pressure local governments to improve the road. The plan worked. In Washington, much of the Yellowstone route quickly became the Sunset Highway, the first official route across the state. In 1925, it was added to the federal highway system as Route 10.

From 1925 until the completion of Interstate 90, the Sunset Highway was the primary automotive transportation route across the state. East Sprague through the University District saw thousands of cars a day. The heyday of the Sunset Highway ended with the completion of Interstate 90 in 1965.



Caption: View of Spokane from the Sunset Highway. Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Sources:

Cory Carpenter, “The Yellowstone Trail,” Spokane Historical, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/463

Jennifer Ott, “Sunset Highway,” HistoryLink, 2013, www.historylink.org/File/10383.

“Yellowstone Trail, one of Two Great Highways from East to Spokane,” *Spokesman-Review,* Sun, Jan 24, 1915 ·Page 40.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber Building

What does it take for a building to be recognized as historic? It doesn't take a grand mansion or a pioneer's cabin to be included on the Spokane Historic Register. The register recognizes buildings based on five categories: 1) a property associated with important historic events, 2) a property associated with significant people, 3) a property that has distinctive historic characteristics, 4) a property likely to yield important information about history (usually an archeological site), and 5) "A property that represents the culture and heritage of the city of Spokane in ways not adequately addressed in the other criteria."

An example of the first category is this modest commercial building, originally constructed in 1925 to house the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

Caption: Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in 1925. Image courtesy of the Spokane Historic Preservation Office.

This small building tells a big story about Spokane's transition from a town where people got around by horse and trolley to a place where automobiles ruled the streets and connected far-flung communities.

Spokane's first automobile arrived in 1899. A trickle of additional autos arrived in the first decade of the 1900s, but it was not until 1908 that automobile ownership began to take off when Henry Ford introduced the Model T, the first low-priced automobile. The Model T opened car ownership to the working class. The numbers tell the story. There were 9,000 registered vehicles in the State of Washington in 1910, 137,000 in 1921, and 460,000 in 1934.[27]

Automobile owners became a new voting bloc, organizing "good roads" associations and demanding improved highways that would make touring by car easier. The Sunset Highway, opened in 1915, was the first highway across Washington and went right down Sprague Avenue. What better place for a tire store? Goodyear Tire and Rubber opened in 1925.

In the 1920s car tires, made of vulcanized rubber, lasted no more than 1,000 miles. So business was good. "Balloon" tires, wide and inflated to a comparatively low pressure, were invented in 1922 and Goodyear was a pioneer. Though fast wearing these tires provide more shock absorption on the punishing roads of that era. In 1931, DuPont patented the first synthetic rubber tires, which would last much longer.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber moved away from this location in 1937. Brick buildings are adaptable, and 123 East Sprague has been home to an electrical supply company, a carpet store, a motorcycle shop, and an adult bookstore.

Sources:

Jim Kolva, "Historic Register Nomination for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Store & Warehouse," Spokane Historic Preservation Office, https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=2062.

[27] Jim Kolva, "Goodyear Tire and Rubber Store and Warehouse," Historical Register Nomination, 2014.

Kate Sullivan, “This Day in History: Firestone unveils the balloon tire,” Hemmings Motor News, https://www.hemmings.com/stories/2013/04/05/this-day-in-history-firestone-unveils-the-balloon-tire.

Ghosts of the University District

You have seen these ghosts. They live high on the side of old brick buildings, most often on shaded or north-facing sides, protected from the sun and weather. Faded painted signs advertise century-old wares to consumers long since dead. “Smoke Henry George Cigars.” “Steam Heated Rooms.” “Drink Coca Cola.”

From the early 1800s well into the 20th century, American cities were richly decorated with painted advertising signs on the sides and backs of most commercial buildings. In an age before broadcast media and when not everyone read newspapers, a painted sign on a building was an effective way to reach a large audience. Sign painters, called “wall monkeys,” hung from ropes with their brushes and pots of paint and created often elaborate advertisements. The paint in those days included heavy amounts of lead, which made it glossy and durable and is the reason some of these signs are still visible a hundred years later. They are called ghost signs.

The greatest collection of ghost signs in the University district is along West Main Street. The Henry George Cigar sign on the east side of 27 West Main is the most striking. George was a popular economist and reformer of the late 1800s. So popular that when one cigar manufacturer wanted to introduce a new brand, they simply stole his name and likeness, as was perfectly legal at that time. The brand was a hit, and many dozens of Henry George Cigar ghost signs still exist across the United States.

Caption: Henry George Cigar sign courtesy Frank Oesterheld.

The Henry George sign reminds us that this was a workingman's neighborhood. If you turn around, you will see another reminder, a painted advertisement for the Globe Hotel.

Caption: Globe Hotel courtesy of Lindsey Porter.

The Globe was a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel built in 1908 with private, semi-furnished rooms for working-class laborers. But as this sign indicates, the Globe also wanted to market itself as something a little fancier, touting its "steam heat" and "hot and cold water in every room."

Across Main Avenue are two ghost signs that compete with the Henry George and the Globe. At the top of a wall is an advertisement for a hotel, the name of which has worn away. It offered steam heat, and prices that began at 50 cents a night compared to the Globe's 75 cents. Below that is an advertisement for "La Azora Cigars, Very Mild." A contrast from the cheap Henry George cigars, La Azora was a premium brand from Dominica.

Caption: La Azora image courtesy Flickr user Paul Sableman.

The next time you find yourself in the presence of old brick buildings, look up. There may be advertising ghosts from a hundred years ago with stories to tell.

Sources:

Frank Oesterheld, “Henry George Cigars,” Spokane Historical, accessed April 1, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/342.

Lacey Sipos, “The Globe Hotel,” Spokane Historical, accessed April 1, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/324.

Spokane Union Pacific Railroad Bridge

Most of the railroad infrastructure that once dominated the southern part of the University District is long gone. The tracks have been torn up, the Northern Pacific rail yard has become the Riverpoint Campus, and the railroad tunnel that once ran underneath the Schade Brewery has been filled in. One of the most prominent reminders of the era of railroads is the Spokane Union Pacific Railroad Bridge, locally known as Iron Bridge.

Caption: Closed to rail traffic in 1973, the Spokane Union Pacific Railroad Bridge was converted to a path for pedestrians and bicyclists in 2012. Image courtesy of Larry Cebula.

Built in 1903 or 1904 to replace an older wooden bridge at this location, Iron Bridge is the oldest surviving span across the Spokane River. It is also one of only two lattice truss bridges remaining in Washington State. It was part of the Oregon Railroad & Navigation route from Portland, Oregon to northern Idaho. The O.R. & N. Co. was incorporated in 1879 in Portland, Oregon as a consolidation of several smaller railroads and steamship companies and was itself eventually absorbed by the Union Pacific.

The railroad tracks were pulled up in 1973, part of the big relocation of downtown railroads for Expo 74. It was abandoned and forgotten until 2012 when it was converted to a pedestrian bridge.

Caption: The oldest surviving bridge over the Spokane River. Image courtesy of HistoricBridges.org.

For 70 years, Iron Bridge witnessed the clank and clamor of steam and then diesel-powered locomotives. Today it is a popular recreational path, connecting to the Centennial Trail. Its stillness is only broken by the occasional kayaker or waterfowl gliding beneath its iron trusses.

Sources:

Edward Kamholz, “Oregon Railway & Navigation Company,” Oregon Encyclopedia, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_railroad_and_navigation_company/

Iron Bridge (Spokane Union Pacific Railroad Bridge), Historic Bridges, https://historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=washington/spokaneironbridge/

The Bing Crosby House Museum

Quick, what is the most successful musical act of all time? Most Americans might think, incorrectly, of Elvis Presley or perhaps the Beatles. But anyone from Spokane knows the right answer: Our own Bing Crosby.

Bing Crosby has the most songs to hit #1 on the Billboard Charts, 38 compared to 24 for the Beatles and 18 for Elvis. Bing had an incredible 368 records that hit the charts between 1927 and 1962. White Christmas alone charted 20 different times. He appeared in over 100 films, was nominated for an Oscar three times, and won once. He was a pioneer investor in television broadcasting and financed the invention of magnetic recording tape.

Caption: Crosby appeared as a ukulele-playing Gonzaga student in a 1957 television broadcast to promote Ford Motor Company's newest automobile, the Edsel. Image courtesy of the Wikimedia Foundation.

Born in 1903, Harry Lillis Crosby was the fourth of seven children in his Irish-American family. The Crosby family moved to Spokane when Bing was only a few months old. He had a quintessential Spokane childhood. Bing attended St. Aloysius Catholic church and Gonzaga High School, graduating in 1920. He and his brothers would swim in the Spokane River amid the floating logs of McGoldrick and other timber companies. And then there was the music.

Spokane was what people called a show town. There were over two dozen theaters downtown, from the very proper plays at the fancy houses to the racy burlesque shows of The Comique to even more scandalous venues where ladies of the evening entertained customers in curtained booths. Musical acts were always a part of the mix in these theaters, and young Bing had ample opportunity to hone his chops. He began his studies at Gonzaga College and joined a musical troupe of fellow students called the Musicaladers. Bing soon dropped out of college to make music.

As ambitious as he was talented, Crosby was not long for Spokane. In 1925 he left town to pursue his career as a crooner and actor.

As famous as he became, Bing Crosby did not forget Spokane. He became one of the largest philanthropic donors and fundraisers for Gonzaga University. In 1957 The Crosby Library opened, and today a statue of the famous crooner stands near the center of campus.

Caption: Crosby at a 1951 fundraiser for Gonzaga. Image courtesy Gonzaga University Archives and Special Collections.

The Gonzaga Alumni Association bought the Crosby house in 1980 and it served as their offices for many years. Today the Crosby House is in a museum, which according to its website “houses over 200 Crosby items including gold records, trophies, awards, and his Oscar for Going My Way.” The Gonzaga University Archives and Special Collections holds thousands more Crosby papers and artifacts, including a collection of his trademark pipes and several of the toupees that the balding Crosby was required by his motion picture contract to wear when appearing in public.

Sources:

Research Guide: Bing Crosby and Gonzaga University, https://researchguides.gonzaga.edu/Crosb, yGonzaga

Gonzaga University, Bing Crosby House Museum, https://www.gonzaga.edu/student-life/arts-culture/crosby-museum

Gonzaga University, “Legacy of Bing Crosby Alive and Well Here,” https://www.gonzaga.edu/news-events/stories/2019/12/5/legacy-of-bing-crosby-alive-and-well-here

Kensington Court/Albert Apartments

The southern portion of the University District, sometimes called the East End, is unique in Spokane for its extensive intermixing of residential and industrial spaces. Historic apartments and single-family homes stand next to steel-sided warehouses and green yards abut parking lots. An example of this is the Albert Apartments, which were originally named Kensington Court.

Caption: The Albert Apartments are a rare survivor from an era where the East End was more of a residential neighborhood. Photograph courtesy of the Spokane Historic Preservation Office.

Spokane was expanding outwards from its downtown core when the apartments were built in 1903. The colonial-revival style was popular at the time. Kensington Court was nothing like the barebones single-room occupancy hotels inhabited by single laborers at the time. Built with middle-class families in mind, the 15 apartments featured marble terrazzo-tiled bathrooms, fine hardwoods, and lavish brass fittings on the doors and windows. Kensington Court was one of 15 apartment buildings erected in the Saunder's Addition neighborhood and the only one remaining.

In 1931 Albert Commelini, a colorful Spokane businessman, bought Kensington Court and modestly renamed it Albert Apartments, after himself. Some of the units were

remodeled and divided into smaller units. Commelini was a man with his hands in many businesses, including restaurants, real estate, and especially bootlegging. The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 deprived him of his most lucrative endeavor, and he lost his namesake apartments in 1940.

Caption: Albert Commellini with some of his grocery delivery trucks. Like many of Commellini's businesses, grocery delivery made a convenient cover for bootlegging. Photo courtesy of the Albert Commellini Estate.

Over the decades since, Albert Apartments have had various owners, including Japanese-American businessman Roy Hirata who owned and managed them for 40 years. The 2001 nomination for the Spokane Historic Register, states that the building "possesses all five qualities of historic integrity: location, design, materials, workmanship, and association." Today a row of trees shades the well-maintained apartment building, a reminder of a neighborhood that no longer exists.

Sources:

Linda Yeomans, “Albert Apartments,” Spokane Historic Preservation Office, https://properties.historicspokane.org/property/?PropertyID=1714

KSPS, “Albert Commellini, Bootlegger King,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1BweyXj9BY

The Ice Trade and the University District

In an era before mechanical refrigeration, blocks of ice, preserved under an insulating blanket of sawdust, were a vital commodity. Ice wagons delivered blocks of the stuff to homes and restaurants, where it was placed in ice boxes (the predecessor of the refrigerator) to keep a family's milk cold and lettuce crisp. In the hot weather, ice was used commercially for transporting and storing sensitive crops like strawberries and tomatoes. In the University District, the Pacific Fruit & Produce Company building, and the Schade Brewery would have been large consumers of ice in the day. But where did it come from?

The ice used in the University District was harvested from ponds and lakes across the region. When they froze thick enough, crews of men with special saws and horse-drawn sleds cut huge rectangular blocks of ice. These were stored under sawdust, which was also abundant due to the active timber industry. Insulated railroad cars would carry the heavy blocks into town where they would be hauled into warehouses via block and tackle and cut up and delivered to consumers. Similar ice-harvesting operations took place every winter along the tier of northern states.

By the 1890s, numerous businesses relied on the year-round availability of ice, including creameries, breweries, and restaurants. In 1909 the *Spokane Press* fretted that a mild winter meant that not enough ice was being harvested for the coming year. "While some local ice dealers express concern over the ice situation, others declare that the cutting of ice from every available lake is rapidly becoming history anyway" due to the invention of mechanical ice-making machines, powered by electricity.

Caption: Ice deliveries were once a common sight in Spokane and other American cities. Image courtesy of Mental Floss magazine.

The *Press* was correct. “In 1921 there were 5000 mechanical refrigerators manufactured in the United States,” writes historian Nicolle Southwick. “Ten years later, over one million were produced. By the end of the 1930s the mechanical refrigerator was a common appliance in middle-class America, ending the need for the iceman.”

You can still see remnants of the old ice business a few places downtown, where hoists jut from the sides of buildings, once used to lift blocks of ice from railroad cars or delivery wagons.

Caption: The steel beam jutting out from the top of this building along Trent Alley near the University District once held a pulley to haul blocks of ice from wagons. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Sources:

“Natural Ice Falls Short,” Spokane Press, February 16, 1909, p. 5, col. 5.

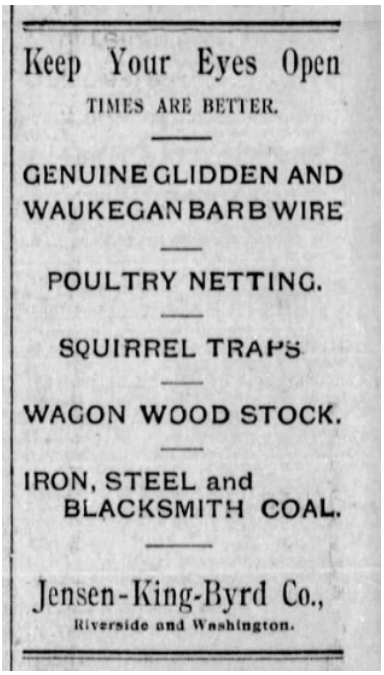
Nicolle Southwick, “Ice Harvesting- local and global,” Spokane Historical, accessed May 2, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/620 .

The Jensen-Byrd Building

The then-named Riverpoint Campus occupied what was once the railyard and warehouse district of Spokane. Nearly all historic warehouses are gone, but one remains, the Jensen Byrd Warehouse.

Caption: The historic Jensen-Byrd warehouse dominates the skyline of Spokane's East End. Image courtesy of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.

"At 200,000 square feet and six stories in height, the formidable brick structure stands as the county's second largest historic warehouse and one of the largest historic buildings in downtown Spokane," wrote the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.



The warehouse was constructed in 1909 and designed by Minnesota architect Marshall Wells. The eastern annex was built in 1946 and the Pine Street wing in 1973.

The hardware company, still in existence, is one of the oldest businesses in the region. Oliver C. Jensen opened a hardware store in Sprague, Washington in 1883. In 1895 a fire tore through Sprague and burned down his business, and he and his partners decided to rebuild Spokane.

In 1935, E.F. Byrd looked back at the start of the business in an interview with the *Spokesman-Review*: "In the early days it was not unusual for us to sell $3000 worth of horseshoe nails on Monday morning… We sold about 4800 kegs of nails annually. That was the nucleus of our business, at first. Then, of course, followed by buggy wheels and vehicle repairs." Soon the hardware company was selling all kinds of hardware. An 1896 advertisement offers customers everything from barbed wire to squirrel traps, poultry netting to coal.

The company is still in business as Jensen Distribution Services, though it relocated to West Plains in the 1980s. Jensen-Byrd is currently owned by Washington State University.

Sources:

"Most Endangered Places, 2012," Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, https://preservewa.org/most_endangered/jensen-byrd-building/

Jesse Tinsley, “Then and Now: Jensen-Byrd Hardware,” Spokesman-Review, https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/mar/05/then-and-now-jensen-byrd-hardware

Zachary Wnek, “Jensen-Byrd Warehouse,” Spokane Historical, accessed April 27, 2024, https://spokanehistorical.org/items/show/166.