



## Notes from the Archive

### Seaver Center for Western History Research

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

**JUNE 2020**

Welcome to Notes from the Archive, a publication of the Seaver Center for Western History Research, a section of the History Department.  
If you are informed by what you read here, please share it with a friend or colleague.

The contents for this issue of the newsletter were conceived prior to the nationwide outrage and protests following the death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. It bears stating that historical artifacts such as those in the Seaver Center collections will continue to be studied and used to engage the public on matters about race, gender and equity.

Seaver Center collections have remained physically inaccessible to the public since mid-March. Information resources that could have filled gaps in research projects like dissertations and book manuscripts have become temporarily out of reach.

### THE RESEARCHER

However, we have an uptick of research requests from the museum itself. The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County moved swiftly to introduce a content-rich virtual museum visitor experience through [NHMLAC Connects](#). As like other sectors of the museum, the Seaver Center has pitched ideas into this pipeline. The following describe instances when archivists find images that tie in well to a developing story, and the research leads down blissful rabbit holes:

- the 1906 woman driver (in the Ralph Hamlin Collection)
- the 1926 semi-centennial for Custer's Battle of the Little Bighorn (in the William S. Hart Collection)

### THE COLLECTIONS

#### **Miss Arnold** by Betty Uyeda

The growth of a fad around 1900 – of a carriage called an automobile, powered by gasoline or electricity rather than horse -- was the man's domain. Before long, there were some indicators of the woman participating in this new sport, and the following image speaks to that.



GC-1342 Box 19ov

Miss Arnold was identified in a photo caption of an article in the Los Angeles Daily News several days following the 1906 summer Automobile Endurance Run from Los Angeles to Coronado. There were wives riding along, but Miss Arnold stood out because she was a lone autoist in her Tourist car. The caption stated she was "the only woman driver in the run."

Coming across the exuberant young woman's face in a scrapbook of the Ralph Hamlin Collection was attention grabbing. The same exact digitized article is available from a commercial database but fails to reveal her clear, smiling expression flushed with excitement. The scrapbook has managed to preserve an anonymous life and bring her into the view of a historical radar.

In this decade women's connection to cars was patriarchal. In example German businessman Emil Jellinek promoted a new car in 1901 by proudly naming the "Mercedes" in honor of his daughter. In 1908 he attempted to repeat his success with "Maja," the name of his younger daughter.

Who was Miss Arnold? The Los Angeles Herald newspaper also reported on the Run and revealed she was "Miss B. Arnold" of Long Beach. But contrary to the Times, this newspaper pointed out two other female drivers: Miss C.M. Roberts and Miss Manning Murphy.

A couple of weeks later Miss Arnold entered another endurance meet, the Southern California Reliability Contest, again driving a Tourist car. Miss Murphy was there too, with her Cadillac once again, according the Horseless Age magazine.

By August, "Miss Beth Arnold" of Los Angeles, was planning a trek to San Diego and Mexico despite bad conditions on the mountain grades. The revelation of her first name was found in Automobile Topics, The Only Weekly Published for Automobile Users. The final trace of her might have been in a 1920 Jewelers' Circular which announced "Miss Arnold, after several months' leave of absence, has returned to her place in Brock & Co.'s store." (I imagined that she took a long road trip somewhere.)

The federal census did not list "Beth Arnold," but there were plenty of Elizabeth Arnold's in Los Angeles. Was she the Elizabeth Arnold who married a surgeon in 1910 and became Mrs. Dr. C. Leroy Lowman? Was she the Elizabeth B. Arnold listed as a teacher in the 1902 and 1904 city directories? Or was she the California-born Elizabeth Arnold employed as a nurse in 1910?

Or was Miss Arnold the Irish-Canadian, single woman who immigrated in 1895 and found professional nursing work in 1900 at Dr. Channing's private asylum in Brookline, Massachusetts, but before long appeared in Los Angeles where she boasted in the Los Angeles Herald of her ability to make good wages being a grocery shopper for a number of families? Was it the same Canadian-born person who by 1910 was still single and working as a private nurse in the city? Was the same Miss Arnold employed at the high-end jewelry store on Seventh Street in 1920?

### **Bill Hart at 1926 Semi-Centennial for Custer's Battle of the Little Bighorn** by Kim Walters

Hollywood silent film legend William S. Hart saved thousands of photographic prints relating to his stage and film career, images of his friends, acquaintances, and his personal activities. In scanning and cataloging images from the William S. Hart Collection, my

interest was piqued regarding 48 photographs that were labeled "Custer Semi-Centennial." I was interested to discover that Hart was invited to attend the June, 1926 Custer Semi-Centennial celebrations in Montana. In Hart's autobiography he writes about his family's connections with Native people of the Dakotas and briefly mentions the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn. Towards the end of the autobiography he describes his attendance at the Semi-Centennial. The organizers of the event acknowledged that many of the veterans of the Indian wars, soldiers and Native Americans were aging, and many had died. They wanted to regale the public as to Custer's image of a hero as well as acknowledging the "burying of the hatchet."



"Bill Hart at exercises of June 25." E. A. Brininstool, photographer (P-075-14-

12f)

Hart appears in many of the images with Native American chiefs from the Lakota, Arapaho and Northern Cheyenne tribes, as well as with Brigadier General Edward S. Godfrey who was part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry under Captain Benteen, and Fitzhugh Lee who was in command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry from Fort Bliss, Texas. Approximately half of the images were taken by cowboy poet and author, E.A. Brininstool.

Read the whole story and view selected images at [Discoveries in the Seaver Center](#).

Through this research I have identified other online resources that are relevant to telling the story of the Semi-Centennial, such as the Montana Newspaper Project which provide first-hand accounts of the June 25-27, 1926 programs, <http://montananewspapers.org/search/advanced/>. The Digital Public Library of America also provides links to archives around the United States that have cataloged digital collections many of which are collected by the Montana State Historical Society <https://mhs.mt.gov/research/online> and the State Historical Society of North Dakota <https://www.history.nd.gov/archives/index.html>.

At this time because of COVID-19 Stay at Home restrictions the entire group of 48 Semi-Centennial images from the Seaver Center have yet to be available online but will be posted in the very near future.

However, to date 2,677 images from the Hart Collection relating to his more than 60 silent films are digitally available at <http://collections.nhm.org/seaver-center/>. Enter a Keyword by title of the film, actor or actress who appeared in a particular film and/or an action that might be taking place. Narrow your search by selecting the Collection Name: William S. Hart (1864-1946) Collection (1890s-1940s).



**Plan your research visit**

Call 213.763.3359 or  
Email [seavercenter@nhm.org](mailto:seavercenter@nhm.org)  
Currently closed until further notice

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## The Collections

[Search the Online Archive of California](#)

Over 370 general collections  
Over 290 photographic collections

## Digitized Collections

[Search over 34,000 images](#)

The collections are a part of the History Department of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.  
The Seaver Center opened in 1986 through a generous grant from the Seaver Institute.

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