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Art Appreciation in the Washington State Archives Collections
This month: Broadview Dairy, an Oil Painting by Carl Funseth-Spokane

Art is visual language, telling humanity's story in every corner of the world. Even before the written word, artists depicted life on cave walls, stone, and papyrus. In our own modern times, safely stored within our vaults, are photographic collections. They include images of fine art pieces; of times gone by, of ways of living that have changed and evolved with the growth of our state. Let's take a look at one depiction from Spokane, Washington. This image is taken from a photograph of the original oil painting.

source: <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Record/View/D8BCD43543F2A063F76346432761EBEA>



Broadview Dairy Company, built in 1910

The artist interpreted a likely past moment in his painting of the building that still stands today. This realistic piece is well balanced with most of the action happening in the bottom half of the painting. The warm masonry highlights a late morning, or possibly early afternoon, as the sun hits the building, casting a shadow on the third floor. Possibly, the building is facing east or south. It looks like it just finished raining; soft brushstrokes depict the reflection of the milk buggies, men, and horses in the dirt streets. The carts are being prepared for a day of delivering dairy products to the town. Or are they just returning?

Two ladies walk on the sidewalk in their pretty, long dresses. They probably aren't too eager to step out into the mud. Perhaps they are older girls heading to school, or they work in the dairy office and are taking a break. There are buildings in the background that appear quite tall in the distance and the lovely house in the background looks well taken care of. The sky has opened up post-storm as the clouds blow briskly behind the building on the other side of town. What time of year do you think it is?

Funseth's painting is a beautiful example of how artists capture what they see and interpret history in their own unique manner. The benefit is that this can help preserve Washington State history in a dynamic manner. Capturing what-was in art helps us imagine how life was lived before cars, computers, or grocery stores. Start your research at the Washington State Archives and share what you learn from the past in your own exciting way!