Archival Images in Community Oral Histories

Creating dynamic visual content for the St. Clair West Oral History Project website

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BACKGROUND

- Project began to celebrate the 2013 centenary of the St. Clair West streetcar

- 30+ hours of interviews with local residents were recorded by volunteers

- Website was planned for launch in May 2020 - no interviews during pandemic

WORKFLOW

1. Identify themes & keywords in oral histories
2. Search City Archives digital & physical assets
3. Create list of photos & video for clearance
4. Match images to audio, using editing software

OUTCOMES

- Website launched to community & partners:

  www.stclairwest-oralhistory.com

- 2,000 unique visitors in first month

- Feedback: "journey through time", "triggered childhood memories", "grateful"

- More offers to volunteer or be interviewed

SOUND AND VISION FOR ORAL HISTORIES

A new approach to activating archival audio

- **Accessibility** – combining visual imagery with transcripts makes audio content more accessible and engaging for diverse audiences.

- **Story-telling** - 11 main themes emerged - including transit, weather, childhood, urban development, local businesses and markets.

- **Effects of Pandemic** – monthly blog and social media posts helped locals "explore" their neighbourhood through interviews and images.

- **Community Preservation** – many interviewees have since passed away - long-term digital audio and website preservation is a priority, as well as community outreach and further interviews.

"There had been so much snow you could walk up the side of it to the garage roof!"
- Paul Hersenhoren

"The milkman delivered with the cream on the top of the bottle...
- Robert Wright

"We knew every nook and cranny and everywhere to hide and run and play... We were up in the morning and not home until the light came on."
- Craig Werden