

# You Can Help Identify People and Structures in a 100 Year Old Photo



A reprint of the photo was displayed at Lunch With Books by Jeanne Finstein of Friends of Wheeling and our guest, Andy Fraenkel.

The reprint is now displayed on the window of the Wheeling Room behind the reference desk. If you recognize any of the men or buildings in the photo, please ask for a sticky tag at reference and identify the person or building for us. Your help will be greatly appreciated. Read about the effort to recreate the photo on the next page.





Photo Provided

This enormous panoramic photograph, showing 500-plus men assembled for a men's Bible class in Wheeling, was taken on Sunday, March 8, 1914. A re-creation of the historic panoramic shot is planned in the same spot along Bethany Pike at noon Saturday, March 8, exactly 100 years later.

## More Than 500 Christian Men Needed to Recreate 100-Year-Old Moment

By LINDA COMINS  
Life Editor

Are there 500 Christian men in Wheeling willing to make a visual statement of their faith?

No evangelization, neither testimonies nor declarations are required to participate in this one-time witness of faith. All that is required, organizer Ray Carney of Wheeling explained, is about an hour of the men's time to re-create a historic photograph taken a century ago in the Woodsdale area of Wheeling.

While looking through a photographic collection amassed by the late Wheeling resident Chip West, Carney came across a copy of an enormous panoramic photograph of 500 or more Christian men assembled for a men's Bible class. The sepia-tone photo was taken on Sunday, March 8, 1914.

Another print of the panoramic shot can be seen in Memorial Hall at Vance Memorial Presbyterian Church, where the men's Bible class originated. The original picture was donated by the late Elizabeth Ann Meek, a longtime Vance member whose father, Richard Meek, also was active in the church for many years.

After obtaining the unusual photo from West's collection, Carney said, "I had it hanging in my office for over a year. It just speaks to me."

Finally, after "listening" long

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— Ray Carney

enough, Carney came up with an idea and a plan. He has made arrangements to have another panoramic photograph taken, in the same spot, on Saturday, March 8, exactly 100 years after the original photo was created.

Now, all that he needs to make the project a reality are the subjects for the photo — and that's where the call goes out for 500 Christian men from the Wheeling area.

The original panoramic shot was staged along Bethany Pike, in a grassy area near the present-day Sheetz store, across from Vance Church. Several houses (many of which are gone now) and the old Woodsdale School (which was located on the site of the present-day Woodsdale Elementary School) are visible in the background of the century-old photo.

Carney said he has received permission to take the new photo in the same spot. Wheeling photographer Jim Thornton will shoot the panoramic image.

Members of North Wheeling's Faith Community Church, where Carney is an elder, are organizing

the project. Invitations are being extended to men from all area churches to participate in the historic event.

Men are being asked to meet at the Bethany Pike site at noon Saturday, March 8. A minister will say an opening prayer, then volunteers will begin lining up the participants. Organizers hope to have everyone lined up and the photo taken by 1 p.m. or 1:15 p.m., Carney said. For more information, call Carney at 304-281-8353. Copies of the new photo, also to be printed in sepia, will be available to order for purchase.

"If you're a man of faith, we'd like you to come and participate in a photo as a show of faith. It's 100 years to the day," he said. The hope is to send "a message to the wider area."

He commented, "It would be our opportunity to carry on what others have started in the Wheeling area by duplicating a spiritually historic event. It would also honor the rich spiritual heritage of our region."

Approximately 550 people posed for the original photo. Most

participants were adult males, although a few boys and a couple of small girls joined the assemblage. Three or four rows of well-dressed participants — standing, sitting or kneeling — were captured on film. Carney estimated that the rows extended for about 300 feet, nearly the length of a football field.

"That was a different time then," he commented, adding, "Are there still 500-plus men of faith in the Wheeling community to spare an hour of their time?"

The symbolic photo was taken two years after famed evangelist Billy Sunday's successful crusade in Wheeling. "There was a growth in all churches" in the city after the 1912 revival, and historians estimate that "about 9,000 people were brought to Christ during that six weeks" when Sunday visited Wheeling, Carney said. A wooden pulpit, from which Sunday preached in a large, temporary building erected specifically for the revival, is now displayed in First Presbyterian Church's history room in downtown Wheeling, he said.

In March 1914, when the Wheeling photo was taken, Sunday conducted revivals in Pennsylvania and in Steubenville, Carney said.

Even though the Bible class was affiliated with Vance Church, not all of the men in the old picture

were members of the congregation. Four years earlier, in 1910, Vance had a total membership of 242 (a figure that included women), Wheeling historian Jeanne Finstein said.

The 1910 census showed Wheeling with a population of 41,640 and that did not include Woodsdale, Elm Grove or Warwood, she said. The mayor of Wheeling in 1914 was Harvey L. Kirk.

"A Centennial Chronicle," a history of Vance Church written by the late David J. Judy, indicated the photo session marked the culmination of a competition, Finstein said. In 1914, Wheeling area churches conducted a Sunday school membership contest, which Vance won hands down.

Judy stated that "there were those who brought friends and relatives and even strangers (some off the street) so that the contest would be in favor of Vance." He added that many of the strangers and other members stayed for years in the class which, by 1928, was "the largest one of its kind, surpassed only by the Presbyterian Bible class of Pittsburgh." The class was named in honor of its leader, Alfred Paull (1854-1912), Finstein said.

Looking ahead to the re-creation of the historic shot, Carney said, "I have faith that 500 people will show up."

Local St. Baldrik's...

