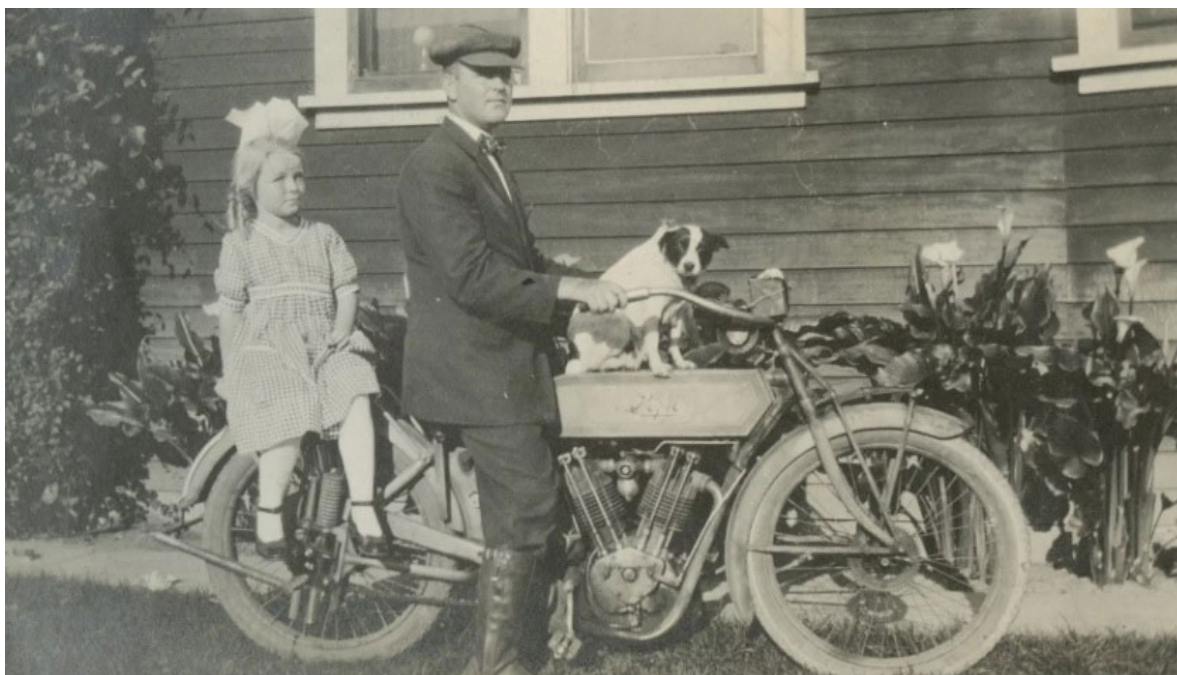


# UNI receives grant to turn old photos into interactive exhibit

by Radio Iowa Contributor | Sep 6, 2023 | Education, News



*A Fortepan image from Iowa Falls in 1920.*

An archival photography project at the University of Northern Iowa has landed a federal grant to help its users see the big picture. The Fortepan Project will use the grant to develop an augmented reality app called Mainstreet 360. It will let users interact with the archive's 160 years of photographs as if standing where they were taken.

Fortepan founder Bettina Fabos, a UNI professor of Interactive Digital Studies, says the app will help Iowans engage with their local history and become a part of its telling. "This is one great way of helping people interpret their own local history and really appreciating change over time," Fabos says. "By looking at how vibrant a community was 50 years ago, maybe it's incentive to bring it back."

Fabos says that the goal of the app, and Fortepan, is to unite Iowans through engaging with their shared local histories. "You can search across a whole bunch of collections and get the story of a place through photographs that belong to lots of different people," she says. "It's like we're building the experience collectively." The app is expected to be rolled out by spring, with the grant's second year devoted to outreach in libraries and schools in — and beyond — Iowa.

The \$149,000 grant is from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Fortepan is the name of a black-and-white negative film that was popular for decades during the last century.

*(By Grant Winterer, Iowa Public Radio)*

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