

The Last Days of the Romanovs

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Each summer for the past several years, the Junior Fellows Summer Interns program has unearthed hidden treasures amid noncataloged elements of the Copyright Office's historical deposits. Among the finds this year were two images of the family of Russian czar Nicholas II shortly before the family's execution in 1918 during the Russian Revolution. Ian Meyers, a student at Washington University in St. Louis, found the photos in a file labeled "miscellaneous/foreign."

With help from Senior Information Specialist **Frank Evina**, supervisor of the interns assigned to the Copyright Office, Meyers searched the Office's records for the registration numbers on the photos, discovering that Underwood & Underwood, a firm that sold images of current events, copyrighted 11 photos in 1921 of the "Last days of the Romanoffs." Seven were already available in the Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. Two others remain missing.

One of the newly discovered photos shows royal daughter Tatiana transporting sod on a stretcher with the aid of a soldier. A caption by Pierre Gilliard, a tutor staying with the family, explains that she was helping her family plant a garden at Tsarskoye Selo, the estate where the family was detained just after the revolution.

Russian Czar Nicholas II and his children in Tobolsk, western Siberia, August 1917.



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Romanov royal daughter transporting sod on a stretcher with the aid of a soldier.

"On the 13th day of May [1917]," he wrote, "the family decided to change the lawn, near the residence, into a kitchen garden. All were enthusiastic and everybody, family retinue, servants, and even several soldiers of the guard joined the work. ... In June, the results of their labor were clearly shown, for all kinds of vegetables had grown, including 500 cabbages."

The second photo shows the czar and his children in front of the house in Tobolsk, in western Siberia, where the family was taken in August 1917. The four figures to the left are the grand duchesses; the boyish figure in the center is the czarevitch, the imperial heir; and the figure on the far right is the czar. The family was later transported to Ekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains and executed there in July 1918.

"That the Library can now make these two photographs available to scholars and the public reflects the value of the Junior Fellows program and the copyright registration system," says Evina. ©