



Old photos on police Web site provide a peek at the city's past

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SALEM — A few years ago, Detective Sgt. Jim Page started going through some old black and white photos at the police station that date as far back as the 1950s.

He started noticing a few things.

"The gentlemen were very dapper," Page said. "Ladies were all dressed up, and gentlemen had suits and hats. ... There were buildings that are no longer there. And it was fun to look at some of the cars — back when cars were cars."

So Page started scanning the old photos and posting them online. Now they're available on the Police Department's Web site — www.salempd.org.

Most of them are old police photos of minor car accidents in the downtown, along Highland Avenue or in other high-profile spots around the city.

One photo from March 1957 shows a side-swiped '50s-era Chevy in the old Bridge/Washington street roundabout with signs for Salem Bowling and the A&P supermarket in the background. An August 1961 photo shows an overturned car underneath a billboard for Flit Roach and Ant Killer ("Kills insects fast! Bug-proofs for weeks").

"They're not there for the shock value," Page said. "I just like to remember Salem the way it was."

Page has also posted old Salem News police photos, including a shot from the 1980s of former Mayor Tony Salvo and Chief Robert St. Pierre posing in front of what looks like an "A-Team"-style police van. Another '80s picture shows current Chief Paul Tucker holding what appears to be a pump-action shotgun seized as evidence.

Page said he scanned in the old photos as a hobby during his free time at home or on weekends.

"Sometimes people will find stuff and give it to me — a retired police officer or the family of one of them — and I'll scan them in," Page said.

In the late 1970s, a flood at the old police station on Central Street destroyed a lot of old police photo equipment, negatives and prints.

Now, the surviving photos are immortalized on the Internet.

"It's just something I thought would be interesting to people that come to our Web site," Page said.

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Photos



An old police photo of Front and Central streets taken in 1952. Courtesy photo