

# Renton Rockets On Rainier

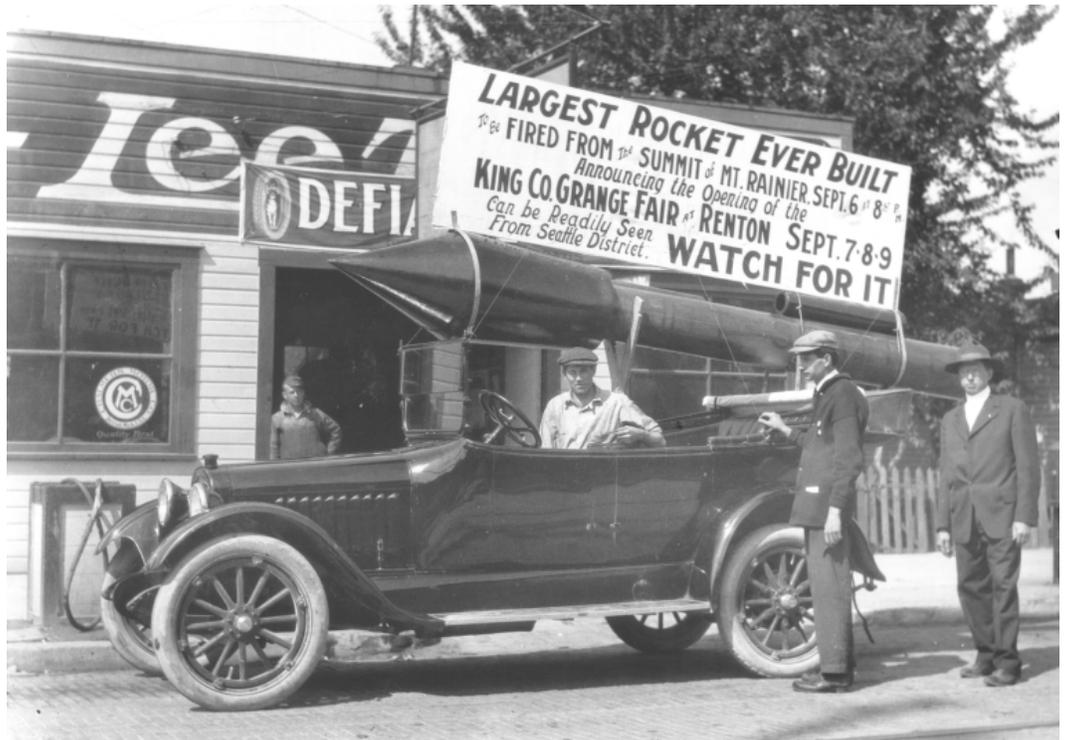
The Commercial Club Boosts the King County Grange Fair, 1916

By Allen Hitchings<sup>1</sup>

## Preface

Promoting Renton is not a new thing. In fact, as long as the city has been in existence, there have been civic-minded leaders who thrived on advocating Renton as the center of commerce and activity within the Puget Sound Region. "All Roads Lead to Renton," "Pittsburgh of the West," "Hub City," "Jet City USA" and "Town of Payrolls" were just a few of the slogans boosters used to paint Renton big . . . and place it decisively "Ahead of the Curve."

In 1916, this promotional zeal reached new heights as the Renton Commercial Club convinced several King County granges to hold their annual Grange Fair in Renton.<sup>2</sup> A new permanent committee called the "King County Grange Fair Association" was formed in due course to advertise Renton ". . . all over the county as a wide awake burg and also as a fine location for fairs, Chautauqua's, etc."<sup>3</sup> Planning for the September 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> event quickly swung into motion.



As event publicity chair Paul Houser stands to the right, the group's Chalmers, laden with a giant "rocket" was readied for a tour through Renton. This rocket never soared into the skies above Mt. Rainier, as it was discarded several miles out of town. This photo was taken in front of Lee's Tires, located on the corner of 3rd and Williams Avenues.

Paul Houser, Sr. was appointed chairman of the publicity and entertainment committee, which is of primary concern to the following story. Charged with these duties, Houser proposed a dangerous and outrageous stunt: send a group of men to Mt. Rainier's summit with a rocket, which would be ignited in celebration of the fair's opening. Remember - this was the Mt. Rainier of 1916, with few roads leading up to the base of the dormant volcano, and even fewer established trails to its summit. What follows is the paraphrased testimony of that 1916 trip by the Renton Commercial Club boosters up Mt. Rainier and the inevitable difficulties, predicaments and life threatening circumstances they encountered in their nearly fatal attempt to inaugurate Renton's first King County Grange Fair. - Editor



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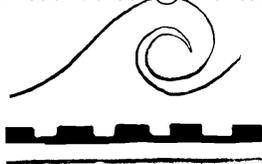
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*This quarterly publication is mailed to all members of the Renton Historical Society as a membership benefit. Manuscripts submitted for future articles about Renton history are welcomed from all sources. Authors are responsible for the accuracy and content of their submissions.*



# President's Report

By Barb Horton, Co-President

Summer is here and it's SO hot outside! It's really hard to think about what happened in April, May and June, when the thermometer has headed into the beyond! The great news is that the Museum had air-conditioning installed and the main museum gallery is now pleasantly temperature controlled, for all to visit and enjoy. People often go to movies to enjoy a bit of respite from the heat. Now, the Museum offers more engaging subject matter, plus a few hours of cool comfort besides!

In May, the Society held its annual meeting. The agenda included an annual overview to the membership by each officer, recognition awards for those who have served and election of new officers. The new officers are; Barbara Horton, President; Bill Gaw, Co-Vice President; Hai T. Do, Co-Vice President; and Derek Almo, Secretary. Returning to the Board is Jennifer Sharp, as Treasurer. Please welcome your new officers! This year, the Society presented a special recognition award to Daisy Ward, Museum Administrative Assistant, for her outstanding performance in acquiring the necessary computer skills to take full advantage of the Museum's new computing equipment. Daisy is a wonderful asset to the City and to the Society. Her ability to be flexible and tackle any job sets her apart from the crowd!

The Board also adopted a new revision of the By-Laws in this Annual Meeting. The By-Laws Committee collected the current By-Laws from heritage organizations around the State of Washington to learn the most up to date heritage management practices. The organizations that shared their By-Laws with us were the Whatcom County Historical Museum, Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle Art Museum, the Washington State Museum and the Museum of History and Industry. Many of the doctrines of these organizations made perfect sense and we adopted several of their practices.

Museum Supervisor Steve Anderson recently hired the two new employees, Dorota Rahn and Catherine Richardson, which the RHS Board budgeted for earlier this year. For more information please look for details on these new hires in the Museum Report section towards the back of this publication.

The Renton City Council will soon be voting to develop a Museum Master Plan. Details of the outcome of this vote will be shared with you in the upcoming newsletter, but you can listen to the Council discussion of this proposal (planned for August 5th) which will be televised on Channel 21. Everything that the City Council is doing on your behalf is visible there! As always, we are deeply grateful to our volunteers! This community simply could not operate the "destination" museum without the large group of volunteers that support it. The Board, the Docents, the Community Volunteers, and our Volunteer Staff members are the engine of the organization. We have volunteer opportunities that span many skill areas, including the well-known docents who operate the Museum all the way to business people who can help the Society keep the finances on track. If you have questions about our volunteer opportunities, please contact the Museum at 425-255-2330. Thank you for your continued support!

Public hours for the Renton Historical Museum are Tuesday - Friday, 12:00 to 4:00pm Saturday, 10:00am to 4:00pm and by appointment for archival and photographic research purposes Wednesday through Fridays, 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Admission: \$3 per adult, \$1 per child (ages 8 - 16) and Renton Historical Society members are always free. Free days: first Wednesday and third Saturday of the month.

## **The Call**

On Sunday afternoon, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1916, Major E.S. Ingraham called me (Allen Hitchings).<sup>1</sup> “The Major,” as we called him, was noted for his explorations of the slopes, ridges, glaciers, and particularly the summit of Mt. Rainier. Wasting no words, he asked, “Would you like to climb Mt. Rainier—all expenses paid?” Without hesitation, I responded that I would. He had been asked to recruit a party of four capable climbers to lead a climb, the purpose for which was the setting off of fireworks from the summit, to celebrate the opening of a King County Grange Fair in Renton. Twelve Renton men<sup>2</sup> were to complete the party.<sup>3</sup> We assembled in Renton the next morning, which was Labor Day, and took off about 9 a.m. in three cars: a Studebaker, an Overland and a Chalmers.<sup>4</sup> For several weeks prior to the climb, an extremely large rocket had been fabricated and then driven around town, strapped to the top of the Chalmers. Though people were led to believe the rocket was real, in actuality it was only for advertising – and so it was ditched near the White River.



It is likely that the Renton leader chose a climbing route up the northeast side of Mt. Rainier because the distance was less. Yet, this road proved to be much poorer, eventually evolving into a trail that widened occasionally to allow for passing. In some places it seemed to be just part of the riverbed. The Ford was continually getting stuck in mud or stalled on hills. Then the road became very bumpy and the Overland broke down. At 7:30 p.m., we reached the entrance to Mt. Rainier National Park, where we spread our bedding on the ground. At 7 a.m. the next morning we set out once more, only to have the Studebaker soon run out of gas. The road became so steep that in places it took eight men pushing the Ford to make hilltops. Finally, we came to an extra long, steep hill that the car would not broach. A large amount of the load was placed in the Chalmers automobile, with the remainder being distributed between us to carry on our backs. Two miles farther, we came upon the Storbo Mining Camp – the end of the road. It was noon when we sat down to rest.



Here, after a good lunch, each of us shouldered a pack consisting of bedding, provisions, and fireworks (flares and small rockets), and then the long ascent began. The previous hard work, coupled with extra heavy packs had weakened us, so as the sun set, we stopped short of our intended camping spot. There, we leveled (as best we could) the ridge top of Mt. Ruth, placing us at about 6,000 feet elevation. Several of the Renton men hadn't brought enough bedding, including our fireworks expert Mr. McGee, who had only brought a 4' by 5' shawl. This being the case, John Lehman took him into his sleeping bag so he wouldn't freeze. The bitter cold, the hard rocky ground, and everyone's "significant concern" (that of rolling off the narrow ridge to their deaths) provided little rest for our party.

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## Change of Plans

At dawn, it was decided that Lehman, his brother Chris, and Ralph Bliss would carry only their sleeping outfits to the summit; all others would haul the fireworks, and then return to Mt. Ruth before dark. "The Major," being too old, would go only as far as his legs would carry him. We traveled along the sharp ridge a short distance;



The climbing party encountered both huge and small crevasses. The larger ones had to be hiked around, while the smaller ones posed real danger as they were sometimes invisible, covered by an inch or two of fresh snow.

then climbed down off the ridge, south onto the Emmons Glacier, and then started up its slope. Some of our party, many of whom lacked the stamina needed in the thin rarified air, began lagging behind. By 10 a.m. that morning, "The Major" called a conference. Things being as they were, he had come to the conclusion that our party would never reach the summit. He suggested that everyone return to Mt. Ruth and set off the fireworks from there. But John Lehman requested that he, his Seattle climbers and myself be allowed to try for the summit. "The Major" agreed to these terms, so watches were synchronized and the Renton men returned to Mt. Ruth with the remaining small rockets.

Our party was at about the 9,000-foot level at this time, roughly half way between the Storbo Base Camp and the summit. After ten hours of easy climbing, we had less than ten hours to make the most difficult half of the climb. Once we had attained the snow slope we set up a climbing pattern: climb for 15 minutes, rest for 15 minutes—gradually decreasing climb intervals to compensate for rarified air. To our left (south), the top of little Tahoma (11,000 feet) was higher than we were.

Ahead and due west was Willis Wall, and a little on its left (south) was Liberty Gap, one of Mt. Rainier's tripligate peaks, 300 feet lower than the 14,400 foot height of the crater rim of Columbia Crest. Behind us was Steamboat Prow, from the top of which Curtis Ridge ran easterly and slightly downward to Mt. Ruth. A little more climbing, and snow gradually changed to ice, so we roped together and John began to use an ice axe to cut steps.

## On The Glaciers

Soon we came to our first crevasse, a little one, which we went around. The slope became steeper, with more crevasses. Following "The Major's" earlier advice, John swung towards the Winthrop Glacier on our right. After a quarter mile of particularly dangerous, icy travel, we made the Winthrop. While we three rested, John went ahead to scout a passage between some big cornices that lay between an apparently clear route and us to the saddle between Columbia Crest and Liberty Gap. An hour later, at 4 p.m., he returned. Exhausted and with daylight fading quickly, we three favored returning to Mt. Ruth. But John persuaded us to keep on going. Only one crevasse, a long, wide one, gave us trouble. Luckily, we found a snow bridge. The north side of a mountain is always colder, as there is less sunlight, so the Winthrop Glacier was icier than Emmons Glacier.





## Rockets Red Glare

We had to cut steps up to the saddle,<sup>5</sup> which we didn't reach until nearly 8 p.m. Darkness was falling with 300 feet of elevation yet to be made. At this point in the climb, your narrator came down with a violent case of mountain sickness, making matters far worse. I was so dizzy I couldn't stand. I wanted to vomit, but had nothing in my stomach. The others prompted me to leave the flares, but I kept crawling on hands and knees, and dragged the flares along with me. Then John came back to help. We were both close to absolute collapse. That morning John had several times dropped back to relieve a straggler of a pack. He had spent an hour scouting the route through crevasses while we three rested; yet, there he was, ready to take on extra work again. Luckily, my sickness was short lived. Helping one another, we reached a spot half way to the rim where a steam vent poured out warm air from below a couple of big rocks, keeping a small ledge dry. This is where we would spend the night.

In rapidly gathering darkness, we could clearly see the illumination of Seattle, Tacoma, Kent and Auburn's lights. We knew our flares could be widely seen. With only a few minutes to go until 8:30 p.m., John broke open the packet containing the flares. In the darkness he could not see his watch. Then the Renton men's fireworks skyrocketed off of Mt. Ruth below us, so he struck a match. It went out. A second went out- so did a third a fourth. The fourth caught and the flares burned for about 10 minutes, making the night sky as bright as day.<sup>6</sup>

## Snowbound

When the early morning light enabled us to see again, we found ourselves in a miserable condition: covered by several feet of fresh snow that was still coming down. Our sleeping bags had opened during the night, allowing snow to seep in, melt and freeze. Worse, we were on the very edge of the narrow ledge, falling snow weighing heavily on us, wedging us closer and closer to the edge of the very steep slope. It was terrifying.

"The Major" had told us not to attempt a descent through falling snow. The risk of falling into a hidden crevasse at higher elevations was great. The risk of becoming lost at lower elevations was even greater. So, at about 2 p.m., John decided we should try for the summit; where four of us, huddled close together, would have a much better chance to survive. Luckily, my sickness had worn off; also, there was a lull in the snowstorm. Helping each other, we stumbled upward through soft snow to a big warm rock at the crater's rim. As we rested, it started to snow again. While I kept fresh snow from covering the small portion of our gear we had taken to the rim, John turned westward to search for Chris and Ralph. He told them he did not think neither he nor I could stand another night in the icy bag. Then came one of the noblest offers imaginable—they offered to exchange sleeping facilities. While Chris followed the rim back to me, John and Ralph went down for our remaining gear. John's hands nearly froze because he hadn't put on gloves. The exchange of sleeping gear was difficult. My hands were so stiff I couldn't get my shoes off, so I crawled into Ralph's bag, headfirst and Chris managed to take them off.



The climbers who eventually reached the summit, spent the night there huddled around a steam vent, a factor that kept them alive.

*continued on page 6*

Somehow, night came and went. Though unspoken, we all realized that our second day on the mountain was a gift, with our lives now at the mercy of the elements. Simply put, we couldn't get down while it snowed and if we didn't get down that day, we were all doomed.

At half hour intervals one of us would peek out. Still, snow fell. Just after nine o'clock John called out, "blue sky-it's clear-now's our time!" Like emerging submarines we broke up through the snow. We discovered another steam vent, which helped us to thaw out a bit, though. John couldn't find his socks so put shoes on without, a very bad mistake. A couple of lemons, thawed over a steam jet, mixed with melted snow refreshed us.

At noon we started down. Progress was very slow as we were very tired, very stiff and had to prod with alpine stocks, much of the way, to guard against crevasses hidden by fresh snow. After a while, we came to a long, wide-open crevasse, partly hidden by a cornice.<sup>7</sup> I thought it was the one we crossed on a bridge on the way up. If it was, the bridge had fallen in. John's idea was to stay tied together, make a simultaneous run and jump over it. If one fell in, he said, the others could pull him out. I rebelled. Having had more athletic experience, I was positive none of us could jump that distance, even one by one, on level, firm ground. Jumping in unison, from a downhill run, in loose snow, with backpacks, in a tired condition, would be suicide. Luckily John conceded, for when we finally did get out of that area, we all realized none of us would have cleared the crevasse and all would have perished.

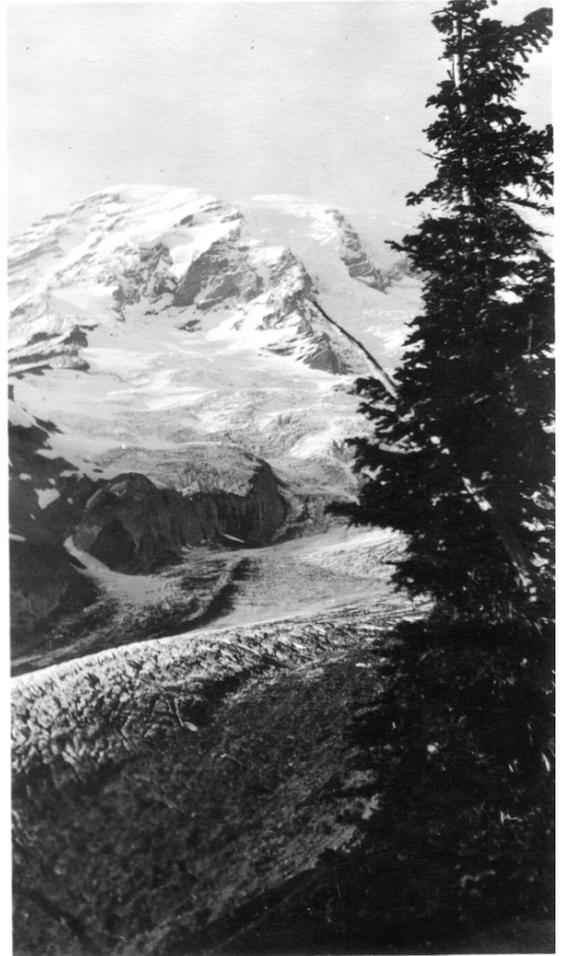
The 200-foot climb from the glacier up onto Steamboat Prow nearly finished us off. When we did reach its top, an almost unbelievable sight greeted us. There stood "The Major". He embraced each of us as he kept repeating, "God bless you boys, and God bless you! God bless you!" Tears filled all eyes. Although all others at Mt. Ruth had returned to Renton the morning after setting off the rockets, "The Major" spent all that day looking through field glasses for our return. At dusk he hiked down to Storbo Base Camp and phoned Seattle, Tacoma and the ranger at Paradise pleading for help to form a relief party.

Shortly, we met a man coming up the slope to join "The Major". He and "The Major" took our packs. A couple of hundred yards from the camp we met the head ranger Tom O'Farrell, carrying a pot of hot coffee and heading a relief party of miners. They carried us into camp where we were taken out of our clothes, fed, almost drowned in coffee and put to bed.

While it was gratifying for us to read "thousands of watchers, in King, Pierce, and Thurston counties reported seeing the spectacle," the part describing the flight of the "huge' rocket gave us a chuckle. The stunt was not without cost, however. John's shoes had to be cut off with a razor and he later lost two toes to severe frostbite. Chris and I had suffered only slightly frost bitten hands, ears and feet. Ralph retained no damage whatsoever. So the next day (Saturday) Ralph drove us back to Renton in the Ford. On the way I asked each to give his innermost thought as we lay, silently under the snow. There were four identical answers: "I prayed."

### **Postscript**

For what it's worth, *The Renton Herald* reported the climbers' success on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1916 indicating that: "The illumination of Mt. Rainier by the fair committee proved a success for thousands of Seattle people watched the lights that flashed there Wednesday night, signaling the opening of the fair."<sup>8</sup> As the climbers froze and clawed their way to the top of Mt. Rainier, the fair featured a baseball game between Renton and rival O'Brien, a flying demonstration by famed aviator Fred Hubbard, an opening speech by Mayor Hughes, a stock show and fine demonstrations of needle arts by the ladies of the town. At the point that the summit party was huddled in starvation, clinging desperately to the crater's rim, cooking and canning contests were held, the pie baking competition ensued, poultry was judged, and ribbons were awarded. It just goes to show you that some folks will do just about anything to promote an idea or concept, even if it means potentially losing their lives in pursuit of that dream. *Editor*



## Get A Fair Button!

“Go and buy a button.  
A great big yellow button.  
It will only cost a dime.  
Guy Mac has got a thousand.  
And it surely will arouse ‘em  
If you get ‘em on in time.

The Grangers all will wear ‘em,  
The city folks will share ‘em  
To help the big Grange fair.  
For the sake of pigs and mutton  
Go get yourself a button  
And be a booster for the fair.”<sup>9</sup>



**King  
County  
Grange  
Fair  
1916**

<sup>1</sup> E.S. Ingraham was a retired teacher and I think was superintendent of Seattle's schools. He was also Boy Scout commissioner, and scoutmaster of troop #1, of which I was assistant scoutmaster.

<sup>2</sup> The known members of this climbing party include: Major E.S. Ingraham, Allan Hitchings, Mr. McGee, John Lehman, Christian Lehman, and Ralph Bliss. The group comprised of Renton men is unknown, although it is believed to have included: Paul Houser, Sr; Max Thome; Earl Belloir; Guy McPherson; O.N. Cochran, et al.

<sup>3</sup> This included an expert from the Hitt Fireworks Company, a Mr. McGee.

<sup>4</sup> These were the maker's names of three types of vehicles/cars used to transport the party to Mt. Rainier National Park.

<sup>5</sup> A low point between two higher points of elevation, like a saddle used on a horse.

<sup>6</sup> An unknown photographer took a picture of the Mt. Ruth display, probably from the Storbo Base Camp.

<sup>7</sup> A cornice is an overhang, usually of rock or ice. Hikers could and did walk out onto these naturally occurring formations not knowing there was nothing underneath them and inevitably fall to their deaths.

<sup>8</sup> *The Renton Herald*, 9/9/1916.

<sup>9</sup> Poem written in *The Renton Herald*, 8/4/1916.

## **PACCAR Steel Built the Twins Towers of the World Trade Center**

Recently Furman Carter brought into the Museum a copy of *PACCAR THE PURSUIT OF QUALITY* and as we thumbed through the pages we noted the following information.

Paccar won a \$22 million contract for the major part of the outside wall of the 110-story twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. The twin towers project was split into a number of small packages and bids were solicited from a large number of steel fabricators throughout the country. Pacific Car put together several small packages and won the award for 5,668 steel panels, weighing a total of 58,000 tons, making Pacific Car the largest among thirteen fabricators contributing steel for the towers.

“The tower construction was computer designed, and Pacific Car used as many computer-oriented controls as possible, including the production of 45,000 shop drawings. The thousands of steel panels, making up the bearing walls of the twin towers from the 9th to the 107th floor, ranged in thickness from a quarter inch to three inches and in weight from five to twenty-three tons. The steel columns and spandrels were fabricated into three-story panels, measuring ten by thirty-six feet. During the fabrication there was continued shifting from steel of one strength to another, with yield points ranging from 36,000 to 100,000 pounds per square inch, depending on such stress factors as the direction of prevailing winds.” (page 195).

Work began in late 1967 and the last of the steel panels was on its way to New York in July 1970, three months ahead of schedule.

The World Trade Center in New York represented the largest steel fabrication project undertaken by Pacific Car.

This book can be reviewed in the museum's Resource Library.



# Endowment Committee Report



The Endowment Committee met on the 24th of July with chairman Ken Becker presiding and committee members Naomi Mathisen, David Gilbert, Randy Rockhill and Steve Anderson, and Society Treasurer Jennifer Sharp, attending – members Pat Auten and Allan Unbedacht were excused. It was reported that the fund rested at \$194,643 on June 30th. Currently 43% resides in fixed income investments and 57% is resides within equity investments.

A fund drive will occur later this year and the committee will be developing plans to do that drive over the next few months. The Fund's various stocks and mutual fund investments were reviewed, all of the Endowment's mutual funds are judged at four or five stars (best class rating) using the Morning Star Mutual Fund rating system. The funds are currently invested in a diverse number of stocks, mutual funds and certificates of deposit. Discussion also ensued around growth versus income producing assets. It was decided to sell American Century Equity Growth holdings in favor of Meridian Growth, which is a small cap, growth mutual fund that owns small companies outside the technology fields.

Asset reallocations: a payment of about \$1,400 from the Endowment to the Society's general fund was paid this past quarter to help maintain the benefits of our life members. Payment of about \$2,121 has been transferred from the Society's general fund to the Endowment. This amount was received this past quarter in the form of memorials, bequests and life memberships. As there were no other investment decisions to make, the meeting adjourned. The committee will meet again on October 23rd.

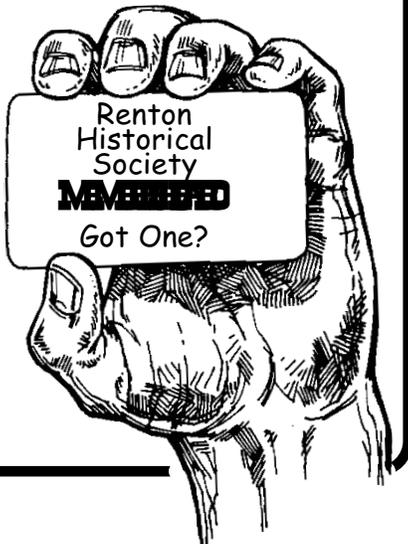
All memorials, life membership dues and directed gifts go toward the fund's working capital. Only the interest generated by these invested funds will be used as sustained support to the Renton Historical Society. Please call 425/255-2330 for more information, or email at [saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us](mailto:saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us) for more information regarding including the Renton Historical Society in your living will or bequest.

## E-Mail?

We are continuing to update our electronic files, please e-mail a note to us, telling us that you're wired. Please e-mail your response to

[dward@ci.renton.wa.us](mailto:dward@ci.renton.wa.us)  
and we'll get you added to our list.

Members currently on this list are getting occasional updates and information about Society and Museum activities that you can only get if we know your email address, so, please get that to us any way you can - even pony express!



# *Nicknames of Old Rentonites*

Girls – The boys had a lot of nicknames for them, but not printable. At old Sartori School in early thirties, there were three girls with the same first names of Lois. So the first grade teacher gave them nicknames.

Lois Bennett was called “Beachie”

Lois Noel was called “Noelie”

Lois Swanson was called Swamie”

Ex-Mayor, Earl Clymer, was called “Speed” by his classmates.

## **Renton Hill**

Baggie	Ty
Comates	Postie
Mitch	Viddie
Mudhen	Ronk
Putt	Hoggs
Chink	Turk
Perch	Tiger
Corry	Chi
Blo	Bunny
Toots	Geromino
Chuck	Chic
Young Blo	Gete

## **South Renton**

Brick	Red
Digger	Trusty
Cap	Garbie
Smashie	Lefty
Hawk	Peasoup
Nig	Birdseed
Scrappy	Bearbait
Scoot	Bull
Ziggy	Tuts
Slug	Ace
Skunk	Greyhound
Vook	Gub
Rollie	Twin
Fruity	Speed
Trapper	Swede
Tiny	Slick
Musso	Thirsty
Dutch	Greek
Ape	Nibs
Peanuts	Scottie

## **North Renton**

Baldy	Gumbo
Cougar	Strawhat
Gus	Yogs
Rondi	Squeaky
Zeke	Finn
Chink	Pritch
Fudgo	Cirky
Roughhouse	Scottie
Stilts	Hank
Yora	Baloney
Bud	Hab
Rusty	Vik
Stretch	Coop
Hoss	Snoose
Frenchie	Rosie
Corky	Ike
Duck	Beerhead
Baron	Rick
Weasel	Stonk
Mooso	Fish
Horse	Cirky
Roughhouse	
Scottie	Stilts
Hank	Yora
Baloney	Bud
Hab	Rusty
Vik	Stretch
Coop	Hoss
Snoose	Frenchie
Rosie	Corky
Ike	

## **Notes Received**



**6/15/02**

I learned a lot about Renton River Days from the display at the Renton Public Library. The display is very attractive, too. Love those rubber duckies. Sincerely, Kathleen

## **From 3rd Graders**

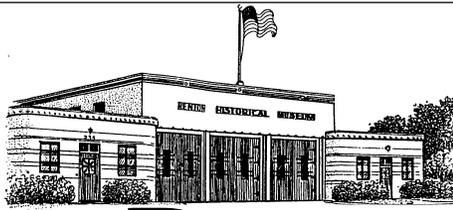
Dear Museum Volunteers, Thank you for teaching us about Renton’s history. I learned that a lady was a coach! The best part was the Century to Century part of the museum. Thank you for taking the time to teach my class.

Dear Museum Volunteers, Thank you for teaching us about Renton’s History. I learned that they brought horses into the coal mines. I liked the house. I didn’t know that 8 year olds could build fires. It was amazing!

Dear Museum Volunteers, Thank you for teaching us about Renton’s history. I learned that coal miners made a lot of money. I loved the flight simulator. I’m looking forward to seeing you again!

Dear Museum Volunteers, Thank you for teaching us about Renton’s history. I learned that when you are 10 years old, you could have a mining job at the front of the mine to hold the mine carts. I like the museum.

# Renton Museum Report



By Steve A. Anderson, Museum Supervisor

Having just returned from a family vacation in southern Idaho, I cannot resist using an Oregon Trail analogy to describe the mileage that has been covered by the Renton Museum over the past six months. During our road trip going and coming, my family experienced many of the benchmarks along the Oregon Trail that the intrepid pioneers faced during their last 400 miles of that rutted, dust-laden trail. Names like "Farewell Bend," "Deadman's Pass," "Taylor's Ferry," "Lone Pine Valley," and "Flagstaff Hill" highlighted the pioneer's progress during that last section of their 2,000 trek across the country. The many unmarked graves (and sad events) lost to time undoubtedly left an impression on those pioneers as well.



And so it is with the life of a museum. Milestones are reached, disappointments are experienced, battles are won while others are lost, all of which highlights a museum's growth and level of prosperity. The Renton Museum has encountered a number of these milestones recently, the most significant of which I'll relate below:

We learned recently that Renton's centennial exhibit "Century to Century" will be receiving an **American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Certificate of Commendation** this coming September. The AASLH Annual Awards Program, now in its 57th year, is the most prestigious national recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of local, state, and regional history. Awards for 2002 represented 70 organizations and individuals from the United States. The awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout America. "Century to Century" met that criteria. As this is a first significant milestone for Renton's history museum, it clearly registers an increase in community service and sets the bar for future endeavors. Because of this award and the significance of this exhibit, the board has decided to let it remain in the north gallery for an additional year, now to be closed in December 2003.

A second activity that you should know about relates to the Renton Historical Museum's participation in **Crossing Organizational Boundaries**, a project funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) out of Washington, D.C. The project's intent is to place 12,000 photographic images on the web in a searchable database that would be accessible to anyone with a computer and Internet access. The University of Washington, Museum of History and Industry and ten smaller sites within King County are participating in the project, with Renton's share being 400 of our best photographic images that the museum can produce. A number of volunteers have provided the time and energy to help select, copy worksheets and type "metadata" or information about each image, onto worksheets so that other members

of the project team will not have to expend time researching or writing information about the images selected from our collection. We have been careful to select only original photographs that have valid information, and ones that vary in terms of subject matter. Factories, businesses, home life, portraits, cats and dogs, automobiles, famous and not so famous made it into the project. This project marks the first time that the Renton Museum will exhibit a portion of its collection on the Internet - available on a University of Washington web page sometime in December 2003. More on this as it develops.

A third significant event took place this past month: we've recently hired our first volunteer coordinator and curator/collections manager. Since becoming director of this museum in 1993, we've negotiated many of the duties and responsibilities of this museum utilizing unpaid staff (volunteers), with Daisy Ward, Tom Monahan and myself warming seats as the only paid personnel. Please now welcome *Dorota Rahn*, our "VC" or volunteer coordinator, and *Catherine Richardson*, our Curator, or collections manager, who's first major job will be the sorting and processing of the Charles Custer estate artifacts, ephemera and other materials. The hiring of these two very capable individuals will vault the museum to new levels of community participation and professionalism at our site. Their presence will make the fulfillment of our mission to collect, preserve and interpret Renton's past more attainable.

The fourth significant benchmarking activity that I have to relate is currently under discussion, and has yet to sprout wings. But for the sake of consistency, it should be brought into light at this time. In May 2002, I received a request from the 7th floor of City Hall, to help develop a "scope of work" to be presented to the City Council for approval. This preliminary document would call for the funding of a planning specialist, an

*continued on page 11*

*continued from page 10*

architect actually, who would study the current museum's spaces, personnel and activities and then make five, ten, fifteen and twenty year projections on what form Renton's history museum might take in that future time. This is the first major push by the city to explore the workings within this museum's operation and to prepare a study of this nature, a study that would identify needs and wants such as: larger exhibit and work spaces for a growing collection; full time personnel to handle the numerous requests for information or curatorial needs; personnel to handle a growing educational outreach or public dimension component; additional classroom and presentation/programming spaces; new patron services such as a larger museum gift shop or food services area; new long term and more numerous short term exhibits and the staff to support them; a new site for a much larger museum building; environmentally friendly storage facilities to keep our growing large object and photographic collections safe for future generations; and the defining of a relationship between the growing Renton Historical Society and the City of Renton. The process may include more than this, and it is too early to define exactly what the recommendations are or what they'll cost. But it is a good thing that the City of Renton is taking this action at this time, for the benefits that the study will produce will not be felt for awhile, perhaps in time for the city's 125th anniversary celebration in 2026.

Certainly the preparations we have taken over the past nine years have placed this museum in a superb position to look to the future with optimism and pride, two words that epitomize Renton's past, present and future. And there's more to come. Until next time...



# Awards Presented!

During the annual meeting of the Renton Historical Society's membership on May 23rd, several individuals were recognized by the Board of Trustees of the Renton Historical Society for their contributions to the mission of the Society.

### **Distinction in Heritage Service Awards**

This award is presented to individuals who have provided invaluable services to the board, museum and community in their work on the board. This year's recipients included:

**Homer Venishnick** was recognized for his role as a board trustee and his commitment to the Society's goals - especially his leadership and vision relative to the Centennial Trolley Project.

**Marleen Mandt** was recognized for her commitment and leadership in her work on the Custer House Committee and as a Board Trustee.

**Nancy Fairman** was recognized for her commitment and leadership as Board Secretary and Trustee.

**Pat Auten** was recognized for her commitment and leadership in her work in advancing the goals and mission of the Renton Historical Society, first as a trustee and then as one of its co-presidents.

### **Special Achievement Award**

**Daisy Ward** was recognized with this special award for a staff member in recognition of her advancement in technical skills and overall development in management of the Society's membership and donor registers.

### **Volunteer of the Year 2001**

This year, **Nancy Fairman** and **Marian Sutton** were presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award in recognition of their team effort while making significant contributions in collecting and transcribing oral histories from Rentonians during the course of the past three years. These two ladies have accounted for over a dozen important interviews and transcriptions that can now be read at the Renton Historical Museum. They continue on in their work and are ready to accept the challenge of recording more of the memories from Renton's citizens. Congrats on a wonderful contribution to the museum's archives.



Marcia Sutton and Nancy Fairman

### **George W. and Annie Lewis Custer Heritage Citizenship Award**



Don Custer receives award from Steve Anderson

This first annual award, given for the first time in 2001, is to be given to a citizen who is functioning outside the Society's business while accomplishing the Society's goals and mission. This year's recipient is Don Custer, who, in the role of chairman of the Renton Centennial Celebration provided leadership and balance to the city celebration of its past and for directing the highlighting of Renton's history and bringing that history to life for all of Renton's citizens.

# A Renton High School Mystery!

By Ethel Telban

Calling all former students of *old* Renton High School! Do you remember



seeing two larger-than-life statues that stood at the front of the old auditorium? “The Discus Thrower” or “Discobolus” was one of them and “Diana the Huntress” was the other. Does anyone know the source of these two famous works of art? Were they a gift of a graduating class? Or, did a Renton citizen donate them to the school?

**Jane Lawrence**, Class of 1926, remembers seeing them, as did **Andrew Gigli**, **Ethel Telban**, and **Benton Williams**, all Class of 1932 alumni. But the statues were never seen again after the new high school opened in January 1932. At the Renton High School Alumni Banquet (classes 1926 to 1941) held at the **Holiday Inn Select** this past May, Reunion Chairman **Harold Bruce** tried once again to seek information about this mystery but nothing new was forthcoming. However, alumni

**Benton Williams** later reflected on the question and wrote the following:

*The Junior High School years are a confusing time for teenagers, and I was no exception. I can barely recall significant events in those hectic times when puberty was taking its hold and when girls became “ga-ga” over boys who had little interest in anything other than sports and dirty cords. However, one incident is significant, I suppose because it had an element of sexual suggestion in it.*

*Our Junior-Senior High School was a three-story brick rectangular prism type of building. Sometime during these years of the Great Depression a benevolent citizen bequeathed to the school two replicas of Greek Sculptor; one was the famous discus thrower by Praxiteles, a larger than life figure without adornments of any kind, except those that came naturally. This imposing piece of art was placed in the main hallway where the passing*



*students could be observed pointing and giggling.*

*In no time at all, our Language Arts teacher, who was regarded by many as a spinster-type of lady, became a “campaign of one” to ask that the physical adornment be removed. It so happened that our formidable coach was teaching Ancient History, particularly the famous Greek Sculptors, and opposed the disfigurement of the statue.*

*One can imagine the imbroglio that might have occurred in teachers’ meetings over this affair. Subsequently, some mysterious person wielding a chisel in the off hours must have neutered the discus thrower. A Metal Shop teacher fashioning a brass maple leaf for the appropriate location might have accomplished the final outcome of this incident, but as for that, my memory seems to have failed me.*

After so many years, all 70 of them, where oh where is the discus thrower?

Come to the Renton Historical Museum and see two recently installed small facsimiles of *DIANA THE HUNTRESS* and *THE DISCUS THROWER* in the ‘teens’/20s section of *Century to Century*, Renton’s Centennial exhibit.

If you have information about the two original pieces of sculpture that graced the High School for a time, please call the Museum at 425.255.2330 or Ethel Telban at 206.772.3904.

# *Volunteer Corner*

*By Dorota Rahn, Volunteer Coordinator*

Welcome Dorota!

Dear Volunteers: First of all I would like to thank all of you for your hard work and constant involvement in the Renton Historical Museum. The Museum wouldn't exist without you. I had an honor to be chosen by Steve Anderson, Cynthia Mack, and Ila Hemm as a Volunteer Coordinator at the beginning of July. I want to continue a great work of Cynthia helping volunteers to perform their duties at the Museum. Everybody will probably miss Cynthia. However, I promise to do my best to make the transition and your work as smooth as possible. There are a few of you I had opportunity to talk to during my first week at the Museum. For those with whom I still didn't meet I want to share some information about myself. I came from Poland to the U.S. in 1992. I graduated with MBA in marketing at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. My family moved to Washington state two years ago and we hope this is a place where we finally can start putting our roots. My husband Rick, our five years old daughter Natalie and I love it here. We like to hike, bike, camp, and admire the beautiful outdoors.



In my professional career I worked for several companies and institutions. However, I decided I want to take part in working for a community helping to preserve history and art. I graduated in the Museum Collection Management and Interpretation Program at the University of Washington in June this year. My dream was to work for a museum and this dream may be fulfilled thanks to you. I am very excited and hope I can join you in efforts to make the Renton Historical Museum even more inviting and professional place than it currently is.

Thank you again for your past and future engagement in the Museum. Your hard work is really appreciated. As I am new to the Renton Historical Museum volunteers I would like to ask you to share with me your suggestions, concerns, requests, and complaints. I am here to help you and make you satisfied with your work. I am planning to meet personally with everybody by October this year. I am available at the Museum from Monday through Thursday from 9:30am to 2:30pm. You can call me at 425.255.2330.

## ***Volunteer Newsletter Ideas***

The name of a Volunteer Newsletter used by Cynthia Mack was Renton Historian. I want to check if anybody has different suggestions or do you want to keep the old name. For now I just simply want to call it the Renton Historical Museum and Society Volunteer Newsletter. I plan on revising the name in the fall. In the meantime, please feel free to share your ideas with regard to the newsletter's name and subjects you want to have covered. It's your newsletter so you should decide about it. Side Note: A "Big thank you" to Nancy, Marjorie Gould, Mary Postishek, Betty Laviolette, Cecilia Major, Dorlene Bressen, Don Emmons, Brian Velez, Carol Hawkins, Bea Mathewson, Stan Greene and Bill Collins for greeting visitors and opening the Museum in July. If I missed anybody please let me know. Please write your suggestions down on the piece of paper and leave with anybody in the office or call Dorota at 425-255-1570. Thank you.

## ***New Collection Manager***

Our new Collection Manager/Curator, Catherine Richardson, was hired this past month – more on her in the next edition. Anyone interested in helping with this aspect of museum work?

# Rentonians

Memorials shown were received from those noted in reduced print from April 16 to July 16, 2002



denotes former Society Life Member

denotes former Society member



# Remembered

**Dorothy Bruce**  
Harold Bruce



**James Greggs, Jr.**  
Mildred Faull, Laurette McKelvey



**Everette L. Webb**  
Beth & Mike Potoshnik

**Fred Burkhalter**  
Beth & Mike Potoshnik;  
Josephine Potter



**Adolph Gruhn**  
Zena Cochran

**Lois White**  
Louise George; Vivian Burmester;  
Louise Bertozzi



**Wallace "Wally" Clarke**  
Zena Cochran; Lois & Jack Gannon



**William and Annie Kane**  
Anonymous

**Mary Cecchini Delaurenti**  
Louise George; Florence Delaurenti;  
Gloria Duffey; Evelyn Rosenstrom;  
Homer & Bunny Venishnick; Mr. &  
Mrs. George Gambini; Carmel & Don  
Camerini; Mario & Victor Tonda;  
Greg & Carrie Bergquist; Angeline  
Delaurenti; Ethel Telban; Robert &  
Gilda Youngquist; Floyd Hughes;  
Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Rose Gigli;  
Bruce & Sarah Hisey; Martha Kingen

**Victor LaFranchi**  
Mary Breda

**Michael Miller**  
Louise George & Florence Delaurenti;  
Grubestic-Righi family; Beth & Mike  
Potoshnik; Madeline Donckers; Martha  
Kingen

**Harvey Delaurenti**  
Florence Delaurenti & Louise  
George; Madeline Donckers; Beth &  
Mike Potoshnik; Mario & Victor  
Tonda; Renton High School Class of  
1940; The Angelo Bressan family;  
Jack Morrison; Harold Bruce;  
Martha Kingen

**Eva Moreland**  
Betty & Bill Richards

**Maxwell D. Nicholls, DVM**  
Frank & Tillie Purcell

**Opal Roach O'Brien**  
Louise George

**Louie Delaurenti**  
Martha Kingen



**Jack Priebe**  
Margaret Priebe

**Jackie Farrington Foster**  
Zena Cochran

**Josephine Scoll**  
Mario & Victor Tonda

**Lorna Galvin**  
Mr. & Mrs. H. F. Mathewson

**Ruth Setterman**  
Ethel Telban

**Ken Gerber**  
Mike & Sue Moeller

**Mike Girias, Sr.**  
Louise George; Paul & Lila Houser;  
Rose Camerini

**Aaron Goodwin**  
Lorraine Goodwin



**Eva Goodwin**  
Charles Goodwin; John & Joyce Peterson



**Thomas Trimm**  
Florence, Tom & Linda Morris; Nesika  
Chapter OES Past Matrons Club; Rose  
Paglia; Berniece Schwartz; Carmel &  
Don Camerini; Florence Delaurenti;  
Beth & Mike Potoshnik, Mr. & Mrs.  
Bert Custer; Nesika Chapter #54 OES;  
Evelyn & Gordon Kuder, Pauline  
Kirkman; E. Jane Lawrence



## Recently Departed Rentonians & Society Members

Harvey J. Delaurenti  
Frances (Frank) X. Hayes  
Celia Jones  
Clyde C. Barfield  
Faye Gibson  
Eva M. Karren  
Deane L. Peterson  
Harry B. Morrison  
Alice Smith Forrester Davis  
Ethel Glockner  
Mary Flavia Johnson  
Mary Cecchini Delaurenti  
Michael F. Miller  
Sylvia Meyenburg  
Opal O'Brien  
Josephine Scoll  
Victor LaFranchi  
Mike Girias, Sr.  
Ruth Setterman  
Lorna Galvin  
Evelyn Agren  
Frederick Stewart  
Fred Burkhalter  
Kenneth Gerber  
Edna Klepach  
Gladys Bergesen  
Roxie Goetz  
Everette Webb  
Thomas W. Trimm

# Welcome and Thanks...

### New Members

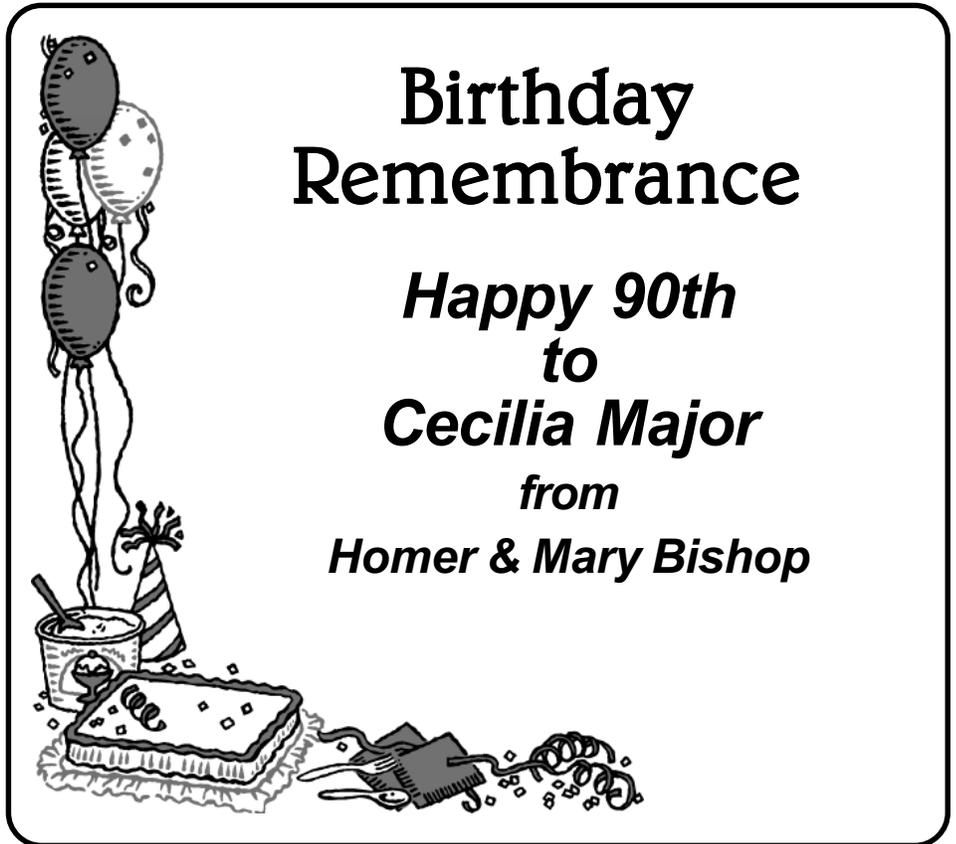
Byron & Connie Banes  
 Barbara Betts  
 Shirley Blayden family  
 Leo E. & Yvonne Carey  
 Larry & Jeannie Crook  
 Victoria Hart  
 Dale & Ann Hazen  
 Floyd & June Hewitt  
 Tom & Linda Morris  
 Joyce Nakashima  
 Vicky & Don Persson

### Donations

Edward & Miyoko Delanty  
 Alvin Muhonen  
 Richard Peterson  
 Greg & Carrie Bergquist

### In-Kind Contribution

Cat's Eye Group



## Join the Renton Historical Society Today!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City:State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ + 4 ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Please make checks payable to the Renton Historical Society.**

VISA/MASTERCARD # \_\_\_\_\_ Ex.Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share your e-mail address with us: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me a volunteer application form. (32/1)

Mail To: Membership Secretary, Renton Historical Society  
235 Mill Avenue South, Renton, Washington 98055-2133

Please Choose Membership Category & Any Donation You Wish To Make:

Student Individual(\$8+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Individual (\$8+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Individual (\$10+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Couple(\$12+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Family (\$15+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Benefactor (\$50+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Business (\$40+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate (\$1000+) = \_\_\_\_\_

Life (\$250+) \_\_\_\_\_

*One Time Only*

General Fund Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Endowment Fund Donation \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

# *Centennial Snapshot*

The Renton Historical Museum staff is currently processing the images from the albums of the Guitteau family (Lucey, Florence and Olive), who came to Renton about 1911 and lived at 129 Meadow Avenue north. The collection contains roughly 1,300 images of north Renton and other places around town. Shown here are some of the neighborhood friends lounging in the Guitteau front yard, with daughter "Florence Guitteau Storey" right in the middle of the group. If you knew the Guitteau family members, or are related, we'd very much appreciate

help identifying people in these albums, as they are some of the earliest we have in the collection.

The Museum staff is also processing a 1963 inventory of homes and businesses here in Renton that was conducted by the City of Renton. The inventory includes over 400 structures, front and back images and a brief description of each building. Each images is being assigned a serial number and will occupy the #07001 – 07808 section of the photograph collection.



This photograph shows several Renton gals having fun in the middle of the summer, 1913. From left to right: Bess, Nell, Florence Guitteau, Sylvia and Grace Aiken. If you know any of these girls full names, please contact the museum.



Renton Historical Society  
235 Mill Avenue South  
Renton, WA 98055