

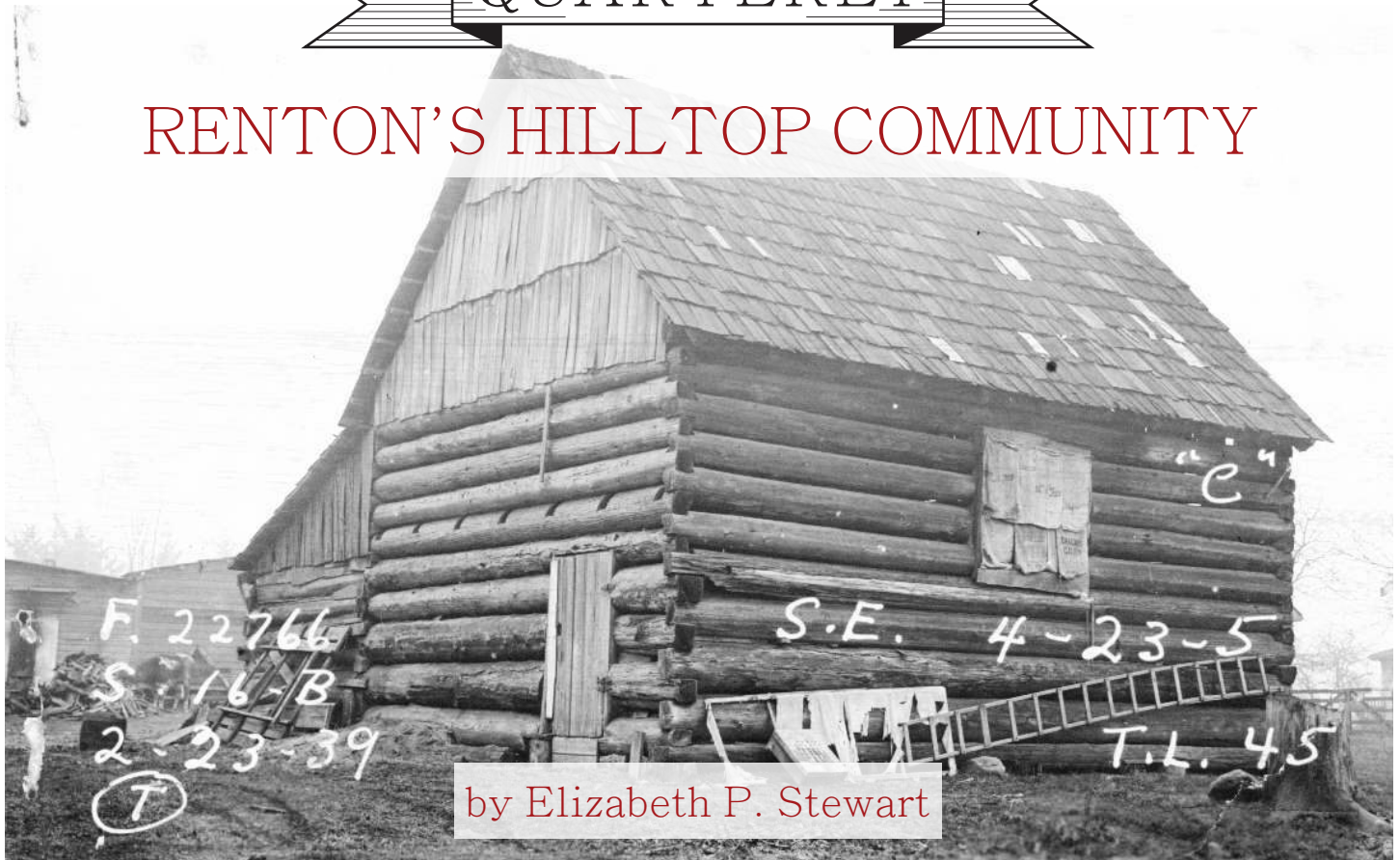
RENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Summer
June 2007

QUARTERLY

Volume 38
Number 2

RENTON'S HILLTOP COMMUNITY



by Elizabeth P. Stewart

Author's note: This article reflects research done to interpret the new Heritage Park, located at Union Avenue Northeast and Third Court Northeast. The Renton History Museum was called in to help the Heritage Park Task Force research the park property and its surrounding neighborhood, in order to capture its history for all those who will enjoy the park. Much more research remains to be done, and we will continue to collect whatever information, photographs, and memories people are willing to share. This

article, then, reflects just a glimpse of the history that has taken place on "Renton Hilltop." We look forward to including further information in future newsletters, as well as in the park itself.

Newcomers to Renton are surprised by the number of small neighborhoods (and some not-so-small), each with their own distinctive character and ways of doing things. One such neighborhood is the area that

Continued on page 5

Also In This Issue...



2 Renton Historical Society's Annual Meeting



3 Museum Report by Elizabeth P. Stewart, Director.



4 Board Report by Bob Hunt, President.



10 Collections Report by Sarah Samson, Curator.

RENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting is always a wonderful time to get caught up with old friends and maybe make some new ones, and this year's get-together was no exception! About 70 people enjoyed good food and good fellowship on Wednesday, June 6 at the Museum —there were even a few kids on hand and we'd like to encourage more to come next year!

Don and Larry's Catering provided delicious chicken and hamburgers hot off the grill. Once everyone was sufficiently full, Museum Director Liz Stewart opened the program with a brief welcome. President Bob Hunt then conducted a brief business meeting of the Historical Society. He thanked outgoing trustees Patty Law, Vicky Persson, and Jerrilyn Hadley for their outstanding service to the Board. Patty was responsible for the beautiful plantings that brighten up our new sign; she also chaired the Membership Committee. Vicky has done an excellent job recruiting new trustees over the years, as chair of the Nominations Committee. Jerrilyn has been a dynamic member of the Museum Operations Committee, providing invaluable insights as the Historical Society revised their By-Laws. All three will be much missed.

At the same time, the Historical Society approved its newest trustee, Robin Baches. Robin is a former flight attendant and the mother of a beautiful daughter, Athena, who attended the meeting with her mom. Robin also works part-time at the Burke Museum of Natural History, and brings to the Board expertise in events organizing and fundraising. We're excited to have her join us!

The high point of the evening was the presentation of the Volunteer and Custer Awards. Volunteer Awards



President Bob Hunt (center right) presents the Custer Award to Doug Kyes, Don Custer & Clark Petersen. Recipients Stan Greene & Carrie Bergquist were absent.

were presented by Dorota Rahn to Ernest Lees, Vivian Williams, and Bette Selygman for their outstanding service and commitment in 2006-2007. Dorota gave two Volunteer of the Year Awards—one to Marian Sutton and one to Carol Hawkins—for their work on special projects. The 2007 George W. and Annie Lewis Custer Award for Heritage Citizenship went to the team of dedicated volunteers who revised and reprinted Morda Slauson's book *Renton—From Coal to Jets*, making it available again after it had been so long out of print. Stan Greene, Carrie Bergquist, Clark Petersen, Don Custer, and Doug Kyes worked together to get this project done, revising the book's text, adding a timeline, index, and more photos, and getting the book listed with the Library of Congress. This group richly deserved the Custer Award for their contribution to the preservation of Renton's heritage.

Please plan to join us next year in June for the annual gathering of Renton's heritage community, and bring your family and prospective new members!

GLORIA NICHOLS (1925-2007)

Our long-time volunteer Gloria Nichols passed away at the beginning of April this year. Gloria was a regular Saturday greeter and she also served from time to time giving museum tours. With her passing we lost a charming lady who was also a very devoted supporter of our museum. Gloria participated in many of the volunteer field trips to other museums. She enjoyed learning new things and she especially liked

the company of other volunteers. She touched the hearts of many of us and we will remember her as one of the most gentle and understanding people, someone who served the museum with real pleasure.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY ELLA CONKLIN

Ella Conklin, a life-long resident of Renton, celebrated her 100th birthday on April 19th, at a special gathering held at the Evergreen Place Retirement in the Highlands. This lovely lady, who was born in Renton, and graduated from Renton High School, was the daughter of George Conklin, a pioneer educator in the Renton School District. Ella was associated for many years with Tom Dobson & Son, an

insurance company in downtown Renton, and is loved by all who know her. Ella is a long time member of our Renton Historical Society and we wish her a happy and healthy year.



MUSEUM REPORT

by Elizabeth P. Stewart,
Museum Director

This spring we've started some big exciting projects, restoring two pieces of old Renton. First, on April 3, Western Neon Inc. came to the museum's offsite storage and removed the Fey's Roxy Theatre neon sign in preparation for its refurbishment. This project is the culmination of a long planning and fundraising process for what has been called "the Mezzanine Project." With a generous grant from City Council, the Historical Society has contracted with Western Neon, a Seattle firm that has almost 50 years of experience making and restoring neon signs; they worked on the Rainier "R" hanging in the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) and the Tully "T" on top of the Tully Building. Their president, Jay Blazek, was very excited to see the condition of the sign—he pronounced it in "fantastic" shape! Once completed in midsummer, the neon sign will become the centerpiece of our main gallery, as part of a small exhibit about movie theatres, the Loop, and social life in Renton in the 1940s through the 1960s.

The second project is the restoration of the coal car that used to sit outside the museum. Although it's actually from Black Diamond, the museum's coal car is exactly like the cars that were sealed up when the Renton mines closed, making this one a rare piece of mining history. The coal car has been in storage long enough that before we can exhibit it in the museum, it will have to have the wood and iron restored and be checked carefully for pests. During a recent visit to the Northwest Railway Museum in Snoqualmie, Sarah Iles and I toured their new state-of-the-art railroad car restoration facility. We talked to their staff about the possibility of a partnership between our two museums to restore the car and do some research into its construction and use. We'll be looking for funds to get this done, and then once it's conserved, we're hoping to find room for it adjacent to the updated coal mining exhibit.

We're planning for all these projects to come together over the next six months, so you'll have plenty of reasons to come visit our new exhibits. Although you may miss some of your old favorite objects in the gallery, we're hoping you agree that we're creating new favorites for the future!



Elizabeth P. Stewart
—
Director



Preparing the Roxy sign for transport to Seattle.



Western Neon's Jay Blazek demonstrates how metal letters will spell out "Fey's Roxy" when the sign is complete.

RENTON HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Sarah Iles
Graphic Design & Layout
Karl Hurst
City of Renton Print &
Mail Services

RENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bob Hunt, President
Sandra Meyer, Vice President
Elizabeth P. Stewart, Secretary
Paula Tran, Treasurer
Larry Sleeth, 2007
Robert Bonner, 2008
Kevin McQuiller, 2008
Ron Stroben, 2008
Susie Bressan, 2009
Laura Clawson, 2009
Doug Kyes, 200/
Martha Zwicker, 200/
Lynn Bohart, 2009
Robin Baches, 2010
Terrie Briere, City Liaison

MUSEUM STAFF

Elizabeth P. Stewart
Museum Director
Sarah Iles
Collection Manager
Dorota Rahn
Volunteer & Education
Coordinator
Daisy Ward
Administrative Assistant
Tom Monahan
Research Specialist
Pearl Jacobson
Registrar
Louise George
Secretary

RENTON HISTORY MUSEUM
235 MILL AVENUE S
RENTON, WA 98057

P (425) 255-2330
F (425) 255-1570

HOURS:
Tuesday - Saturday
10:00am - 4:00pm

ADMISSION:
\$3 (Adult)
\$1 (Child)



CULTURE

UPCOMING EVENTS



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, HUMANITY IS THE FIRST! EXHIBIT OPENING

July 23

10:30 am-11:30 pm

The Renton History Museum invites you to the opening of an exhibit of artwork by ESL students from the Renton Technical College. This exhibit shares the cultures of their home countries and the goals they hope to reach in the U.S.



RENTON RIVER DAYS

July 24-29

Join us at the Museum and our booth in Liberty Park to celebrate Renton's History during Renton River Days!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Bob Hunt, President

I managed to forestall having to submit this quarter's report until after our Annual Meeting. I had a chance to greet some of you, missed some others, and there were actually some that didn't attend! We had a brief business meeting where we bid farewell to three departing board members: Vicky Persson, Patty Law, and Jerrilynn Hadley. These ladies have served us very well. All of them have taken the job very seriously and have shown strength, integrity, and independence. While achieving consensus during discussion of issues facing the board is important, it is equally important that differences be aired and worked out. Sometimes we don't achieve consensus, but I think that having people on board who are willing to challenge our thinking is more important. That is especially true for me, as I can be pretty hardheaded and need some strong people to keep me thinking. I, the Board, and the Society will miss these ladies and I cannot recommend them too strongly to anyone who may wish to consider them for other volunteer positions.

We were pleased at the business meeting to also accept the extension to another term for Sandra Meyer as Vice President and Paula Tran as Treasurer. This is the beginning of the second and final term for each of these ladies, as our Bylaws require a two-term limit for Executive Board positions. I am half-way through my second term, so this is the beginning of my last year serving as your Board President. We also were happy that Larry Sleeth has agreed to serve at least another year while he leads the effort to renovate the sally port into a storage area in the lowest level of the old City Hall. The membership present voted to accept Robin Baches as a new Board member. I'm excited that she has chosen to offer her help on our board. Robin is a young mother, with quite a bit of family history in Renton. She also works for the Burke Museum, so she brings some practical knowledge of the operations side. Cheer her on if you meet her.

If you've followed the numbers, that leaves us two board members short. We will be scouting around for suitable victims, er... candidates. Our fundraising committee took a hit with the departures and we need some skills in that area, so we're looking for someone who has served in that capacity with a non-profit, someone who could hit the ground running. If you're interested, contact the Museum office for a Board of Trustees application. Thanks for being part of our Society, supporting the work that we do, and contributing your time and talents.



Bob Hunt
—
President



President Bob Hunt visits with some members during the Renton Historical Society Annual Meeting.

RENTON'S HILLTOP COMMUNITY



The home of James and Mamie Smith, 1939. The Smiths built this house in 1918, and then added a smoke house, chicken house, and a garage. (Photo courtesy of Puget Sound Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Bellevue Community College)

Continued from page 1

recently found itself with a new park at its center, Heritage Park. Arranged along Union Avenue and bordered by Sunset Highway to the north and Maplewood Golf Course to the south, this area has historically been one of Renton's predominantly African-American neighborhoods. Before homes and businesses closed the distance, this area was far enough away from having a recognizable connection to the city of Renton, yet it was not the city of Renton, yet it was not quite Kenndale either. It was sometimes called "Renton Hilltop" or simply "the country" by residents who began escaping what they saw as Seattle's urban ills—or those of the segregated South—in the 1920s and 1930s. These families found in Renton what Americans through history have been looking for: a chance to own their own property and raise their children surrounded by neighbors in the truest sense of the word.

In the 1890s this land on the crest of the hill was far enough away from geographical amenities like rivers and the lake that no one much cared who owned it. The earliest maps show that in 1892 much of the land was owned by Native Americans such as "Indian Ben," "Indian Tecumseh," and "Indian Bill Rogers." These men also show up in territorial censuses and the Talbot Mine payroll.¹ Some of this land

Cover photo:
First Honey Dew School
building, photo taken in 1939.
(RHM# 1967.012.0705)



Marcus Harding (#25) with a group of Newcastle miners, 1912. Many men lived on the hilltop and worked in the Newcastle or Issaquah mines. (RHM# 1983.076.1817, detail)

was also owned by the State of Washington for the benefit of schools. In April 1914 timber was harvested and sold to A. N. Fairchild, with the proceeds going to the school system.

Before 1910 African-American families had already begun purchasing property on the hilltop. James I. Smith seems to have been the first African American to arrive, sometime before 1910. Though he was surrounded by white farmers he must have found it a congenial place to live, because before long his brother Dougherty Smith purchased an adjoining five-acre parcel on the west side of Union near what is now Northeast Third Court. Both were born in Florida in the early 1880s, and both worked off and on for the coal mines. Dougherty Smith was a coal mine laborer for the Pacific Coast Coal Company around World War I. James was a mule driver in 1900—probably in the mines—and by 1920 he was a fireman on a stationary engine, a very responsible job that required ensuring the mine hoist could move men into the mine and coal out.

This area would become a popular spot for African Americans working in the Newcastle mines; it was situated right off what was then sometimes called the “Renton to Newcastle” or “Renton to Issaquah” Road (now Sunset Highway). Robert Hart was another African-American mine worker. He and his wife Minnie, their daughter Ethel, and Minnie’s parents lived on part of the property that is now Heritage Park. Robert was a fireman in the mines in 1910 and a coal mine laborer in 1930. In addition, Henry Williams was a coal miner, Samuel A. Franklin was a coal mine engineer, and

his son Samuel was a surface mine laborer; both Williams and Franklin owned their own property next door to one another.²

Many found working in the coal mines provided a good enough living to continually improve their properties on the Hilltop. James Smith, his wife Mamie, and their extended family started out in a one-story shingle house with an attic, but by 1939 he had added a garage, a brooder house for chickens, and a smoke house.³ For African Americans, however, coal mining was not a constant source of income; their ability to work depended on the mine operators’ need for labor and their willingness to incur the hostility of white workers by providing jobs to non-whites. African Americans’ inadvertent reputation as strikebreakers in towns like Roslyn and Franklin made some whites suspicious of working side-by-side with them. Because census records show that many African Americans described themselves as farmers or coal miners at different times, one can imagine that they would have gone back and forth between living off their land and working in the mines. James Smith was willing to spend money on constructing a chicken house and smoke house because of the extra income farming could provide when employment in the mines was uncertain.

Part of the attraction of this area was the possibility of living off the land. The Hilltop’s rural character allowed residents to make money by raising livestock, fruits, and vegetables and selling them, sometimes even as far away as Seattle. “Pop” Emmett Simms came to the area in the mid-1920s; he raised and sold vegetable from a horse-drawn wagon in the Highlands, but he was best known for his barbecue pit.⁴



First grade, Honey Dew School, 1957. 2nd row, center: Steven Shropshire; 3rd row, far right: Ethel Moore and Stanley Harris; 4th row, 2nd from right: David Smith; 5th row, far left: Jimmy McNeil. (Photo courtesy of Al and Candis Talley)

Audrey Weathers remembered how the neighbors exchanged food and services. “We pretty well raised everything,” she recalled, “We raised pigs, cows, chickens and that. Mrs Beaver...she had fruit trees. Mr. Hart, he did all the smoking. When you killed [a pig], he smoked [the meat].”⁵

The 1930s saw an increase in the numbers of African Americans living in this area of “the country.” Beginning in 1929, the Depression exacerbated urban tensions in Seattle, not to mention urban poverty. Many saw Renton’s countryside as an escape from these problems, yet still close enough to cities and towns that they could find employment. The Simms, the Franklins, and the Satterfields were three young families that relocated to Renton’s countryside, where they were able to buy their own land, something that would have been more difficult, if not impossible, in Seattle. “Mother” Irene Grayson and her husband Alfred also moved out in the mid-1930s at her insistence; after her husband and son lost their jobs, she wanted to live someplace where they could raise their own food. After four years of payments, the Graysons owned ten acres and a log cabin they built themselves. Mother Irene was well-known for the founding of one of the first African-American churches in the Highlands. She died in 1995, a day after her 107th birthday.⁶

Between 1940 and 1950, the African-American population in Washington state exploded from 7000 to 30,000, thanks to the World War II employment boom in ship and aircraft manufacture and steel production.⁷ Boeing Aircraft Company was one of the employers that recruited

African Americans in the South to live and work in Renton. Many lived in “the projects,” but those with enough money to purchase property chose the Hilltop. Audrey Weathers remembered that her parents and four brothers and sisters moved back and forth from their home in Seattle to their home on Union Avenue during the war, while her dad, Nathaniel Weathers, worked in the shipyards. As a child she and her friends watched Paccar test tanks on the hill north of Greenwood Cemetery. “They never said anything to us because we were just kids,” she recalled. “They used to leave big wheel tracks in the street and drive them up from there into the factory.... They used to shoot them off into some kind of hill.”⁸ Others who arrived in the 1940s included Al Talley and Clyde Coleman Barfield, who later would sell his property to the city to help make Heritage Park possible.

Clyde and Bernice Barfield arrived in the country in 1943. An employee of Howard S. Wright Construction Company for 35 years, Mr. Barfield was best remembered for his love of gardening. Neighbors recalled that Mr. Barfield was always willing to take anyone on a tour of his garden and no one walked away without some fresh vegetables. Mr. and Mrs. Barfield were both active in the Full Gospel Pentecostal Church.⁹

So much more of the story of this neighborhood remains to be told: What were the African-American coal miners lives like? Did the families who came here during the Depression have an easier time than in Seattle? What happened to the men when the World War II employment boom was

Continued on page 10



Entrance of the coal mine at Taylor, WA, 1903. (RHM# 1969.005.0532)



Brick produced at the Denny-Renton Clay & Coal Co. in Taylor, WA.

COLLECTIONS REPORT

by Sarah Iles,
Collection Manager



Sarah Iles

Collection Manager

On April 14, Liz Stewart, Benny Eisman (the museum’s exhibit intern) and I took a tour offered by the Cedar River Watershed Institute into the ghost town of Taylor, Washington. Taylor is located within the Cedar River Watershed and is accessible only by the tour offered by the Institute. Taylor was a company town that had both coal and clay mines. Denny-Renton Clay & Coal Co. had a large factory there that produced pipes and bricks.

Taylor got its start in the late 1800s when clay and coal were discovered on a homestead. The land was quickly sold to the Puget Sound Fire Clay Company which later turned into DennyRenton. The town prospered during the early 1900s and seemed to be on the road to success. By the late 1920s, however, the coal had run out, and the city was

under pressure to disband because it was now in the land designated for the Cedar River Watershed. In 1946 plans for dismantling the town were set in motion and by mid 1947 the town had all but disappeared.

Though nature is slowly reclaiming the land where the town once stood, there is still ample evidence of human habitation. The picture below shows a brick found on the tour bearing the stamp “Renton.” At least three other types of bricks were present at the site along with some structural remains. Sadly, it is these remains of human habitation that make the site vulnerable. While we were at the site, we saw fresh evidence that someone had been illegally digging at the site. It is illegal to excavate archaeological sites in Washington state without a permit from the State Archaeologist’s Office. Information needs to be recorded about where artifacts are found (in situ) in order to understand them in the context of the site as a whole. Much, if not all, of this valuable information can be lost if individual people remove artifacts.

Hopefully archaeology will one day be done at the site so we can all better understand what the lives of the people at Taylor were like. Until that time, we are all responsible for making sure that there will be history left to for the archaeologists to find. For more information on protecting archaeological sites and preventing looting in Washington, visit the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation site stewardship web page at: www.dahp.wa.gov/pages/Archaeology/Stewardship.htm.

MUSEUM RECEIVES CAP GRANT

The museum is excited to announce that it has received a Collections Assessment Program (CAP) Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The grant provides funding to have a preservation architect and a conservator assess both the museum's historic building and collections. The site

visits by these professionals will result in a report that will provide the museum with their expertise and recommendations for how the museum can improve and plan for the future. The report will also be used a valuable tool when applying for further grants. The site visits are scheduled for the fall of this year.

COLLECTION SNAPSHOT

This tricycle has been a resident of Renton since the late 1930s. The children of Richard and Margaret Clarke, who lived on Renton Hill, played with and enjoyed this tricycle for many years. This fun and valuable piece of Renton's history was donated earlier this year by Richard K. Clarke, Jr.



MEMORIAL DONATIONS

February 2007 - May 2007

Patty Adderson
Robert G. Shanks

Ann J. Belmondo
John & Eleanor Bertagni
Judy Zanga
Bob & Rosie Prandi
Rosemary McCaffrey
Joan Artus Cain & Bob Aliment
C. Floyd Hughes
Janet & Bill Belmondo
Robert & Margaret Wicks
Beth & Mike Potoshnik
Rachel Thomas
Gerry, Carole & Marilyn Edlund

Mario Belmondo
Janet & Bill Belmondo

Emery "Bob" Benson
Roy & Norma Fournier
Bob & Marilyn Ragle

Maxine Fullerton Benson
Roy & Norma Fournier
Bob & Marilyn Ragle

Mae Boldan
Daisy Ward

Conrad Chambers
Gloria Duffey

Dale Church
Merna Lasco

Gene Church
Merna Lasco

Lena Church
Merna Lasco

John D. Cline
Dale & Patricia Gieseking

Earl Clymer
Vicki & Tom Utterstrom

Olive Corey
Dolores Hendricks
Janet Henckle

Ray Cotton
Pythian Sisters
Rhododendron #30

James Duffey
Louise George

Mary Fowler
Pythian Sisters
Rhododendron #30

Edna Garrett
Robert & Gilda Youngquist

Aaron Goodwin
Richard & Patricia Sell

Daisy Goodwin
Richard & Patricia Sell

Eva Goodwin
Richard & Patricia Sell

Lorraine Goodwin
Richard & Patricia Sell

Harry R. Hart
Wendell & Cleo Forgaard

Jean Hansen Hazelton
Marilyn Tharp Clise

Henry L. Herrick
Carrie & Greg Bergquist
Dan & Gloria Cartwright

Leo Lasco
Merna Lasco

Josephine Mathewson
Joe & Loretta Starkovich
Greg & Carrie Bergquist
Bea Mathewson
Renette Saba
Mark & Barbara Santos-Johnson
Terri & Dennis Higashiyama

Marie McDonald
Pythian Sisters
Rhododendron #30

Blanche Newberry
Pythian Sisters
Rhododendron #30

Dr. Bob Newman
Lorraine & Don Custer

Jean Newman
Lorraine & Don Custer

Gloria Reckling Nichols
George & Frances Subic
Bea Mathewson
Jack Morrison
Dorota Rahn
Louise George
Daisy Ward
Roy & Norma Fournier
Charles R. Petersen

Emery Potoshnik
Mike & Beth Potoshnik
Debbie, George & Kari Blomberg
George & Frances Subic
Arlene & Al Bergemann
Vaneta Anderson

Peggy Potoshnik
Arlene & Al Bergemann
Vaneta Anderson
Donna & Otto Gabrowsky
M. & A. Zarbok

Nicholas J. Puhich
Mike & Beth Potoshnik
Richard & Louise Major
Snookie Hendricks

Elinor Cline Riedlinger
Patricia Hardie Borek
Robert & Gilda Youngquist
John D. & Charlotte Cline

Adrian Rowe
George & Frances Subic
Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Berniece Schwartz
Gloria Nichols

Virginia Secrest
Richard & Patricia Sell

Bruce Shuman
Gloria Nichols

Don Shuman
Gloria Duffey

Jesse H. Tanner
Joe & Loretta Starkovich

William G. Thomas
Rachel Thomas

Jack Wood
Renton High School Class of 1944
Mario & Victor Tonda
The Burrows Family

Erma Zanga
Janet & Bill Belmondo

Joe Zanga
Janet & Bill Belmondo

MEMORIAL DONATIONS OF \$100 OR MORE

Gloria Reckling Nichols
Ralph & Gertrude Shafar
Raymond & Lisa Graham & family

Jesse H. Tanner
Lloyd Hoshide (with Boeing Matching Gift)

Josephine Mathewson
Jim & Char Baker
Doug & Sonja Keyes
Renton Historical Society Board

Pyoung Su & Robert George Bonner, Sr.
Renton Historical Society Board

DONATIONS TO THE MEZZANINE PROJECT

(COAL MINING & ROXY THEATRE EXHIBITS)

Glenn H. Anderson (Boeing Gift Matching Program)
John & Katherine Connell
Gerald & Carole Edlund
Richard Hoyt
Noah Katka
Cynthia Mack
Ralph & Peggy Owen
David Pickett (United Technologies Matching Fund)
Dennis & Kathleen Stremick
George & Jean Ziegenfuss

DONATIONS TO THE MEZZANINE PROJECT OF \$100 OR MORE

Barbara Haugan George

DONATIONS

Avanti Baruah Bergquist
Barbara Krohn
Joyce Lindstrom
Noah Katka
Ellen Sandbo

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Cat's Eye Group

RHS OLD TIMER ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Renton High School Old Timer Alumni Association met for their annual banquet at the Renton Holiday Inn on Sunday, May 20th. There were 176 Renton High graduates from classes 1928 through 1946. Jack Gannon, Chairman of the Association, served as Master of Ceremonies.

PACCAR Sherman tanks
being tested near the Hilltop,
1940s. (RHM# 2000.127.0967)



over? What were the children's experiences in Honeydew and other schools? What kinds of businesses did the residents of the Hilltop start? We look forward to continuing this research, with the help of those who live there!

ENDNOTES

- 1 The territorial censuses for 1887 and 1889 list two Tecumseh families living in Renton, and "Indian Rodgers" is listed on the payroll of the Talbot Mine in 1881, along with "Indian Joe," "Indian Jack," and "Indian Bill." Scrapbook #54, Talbot Mine Company ledger book, 1880-1881 ("Mining Ephemera" box), p.120, Renton History Museum.
- 2 1910 U.S. Census, Cedar River Precinct, www.ancestry.com. Kennydale was another convenient spot for African American coal miners and their families. Marcus Harding, born in British Guiana, worked in coal mines in Newcastle and Roslyn, and ultimately gave part of his Kennydale property for the construction of the Full Gospel Pentecostal Missionary Church. "Marcus M. Harding, A Coal Miner," in "Renton Hilltop 20th Year Celebration, 1974-1994," program, Collection of Mrs. Lavelle Weathers Swanigan (copy in

vertical files, Renton History Museum).

- 3 Property Record files, Puget Sound Regional branch of the Washington State Archives, Bellevue Community College, Bellevue, WA.
- 4 "Emmett Simms," in "Renton Hilltop 20th Year Celebration, 1974-1994," program, Collection of Mrs. Leona Williams (copy in vertical files, Renton History Museum).
- 5 Audrey Weathers Oral History, 7 Mar 2002, RHM# 2002.067.003.
- 6 Jan Hinman, "Irene Grayson: From Hard Times to Good," *Renton Record-Chronicle*, 21 May 1982; "In Remembrance of Mother Grayson," in "Renton Hilltop 20th Year Celebration, 1974-1994," program, Collection of Mrs. Lavelle Weathers Swanigan (copy in vertical files, Renton History Museum).
- 7 Esther Hall Mumford, "Washington's African American Communities," chapter in *Peoples of Washington: Perspectives on Culture Diversity*, Sid White and S. E. Solberg, eds. (Pullman, WA: Washington State University, 1989), 77.
- 8 Audrey Weathers Oral History, 7 Mar 2002, RHM# 2002.067.003.
- 9 Obituary, Clyde C. Barfield, *South King County Journal*, 3 May 2002; Mrs. Leona Williams Oral History, 13 Nov 2006, RHM# 2006.059.005.

FLOYD HUGHES HONORED

The Renton Lions Club holds an annual banquet to honor the Renton Pioneers, and this is always an outstanding event. This year, Floyd Hughes, Sr. was honored with Lions Club Medal of Merit for his decades of service to the Club and the Renton Community. Floyd is an active 99-year-

old gentleman. He and his wife owned and operated the Renton Clothing Store on 3rd Street for more than thirty years, and he also led the Downtown Merchants Association. Our congratulations to Floyd for this very special honor.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

The museum is seeking the donation of one nearly-new sewing machine to assist in the proper storage of textiles and clothing, and the creation of exhibit materials.

We are also looking for a donor willing to adopt the Museum's planter box around our new sign. The

donor may do the work of planting and maintaining the planter themselves, or may donate plants and flowers (about \$200 twice a year, in the spring and fall). All donations are tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated! For more details call 425.255.2330 or email info@rentonhistory.org.

VOLUNTEER REPORT

by Dorota Rahn,
Volunteer & Education
Coordinator



Dorota Rahn
—
Volunteer &
Education
Coordinator

I would like to reflect for a moment on the contributions of the Renton History Museum volunteers. There are about fifty of them, although the exact number constantly changes, as some end their services and new ones join. But numbers are only one way of looking at volunteering. Another way is to look at particular people and at what they do for the museum. They have such a variety of different personalities. Some of our volunteers are shy, some are very outgoing, some are successfully retired, others are in search of a regular job. They all have

one thing in common: they are trying to make a difference in our community and are looking for meaningful ways of doing it. Our museum is usually only one of the many places they volunteer. We are very fortunate that our volunteers choose our museum to invest their experience, skills, and time. They do an incredible job in supporting museum operations.

At this year's Annual Meeting we recognized five of them for their special contributions. Carol Hawkins and Marian Sutton

received Volunteer of the Year Awards. Carol has volunteered with the Renton History Museum for many years as a tour guide, greeter, and staffer of the museum booth during Renton River Days. She generously shares her historical expertise during docent training. She is always here when we need her. Carol also worked for two years on the Kenndale Elementary School photo project so that future generations will know the names of those represented in class photos from the 1950s almost to the present. Marian Sutton also received a Volunteer of the Year Award. She has spent countless hours making accurate on-the-spot transcriptions of oral histories, using her skills as a court reporter. Too humble to record her hours for many years, when she recently began putting her time on the volunteer timesheet, we realized what an extraordinary commitment of time and energy she has made. Not only does she type interviews with Rentonians, she personally visits them afterwards to correct mistakes, and brings the final version of the interview to their homes. The history of people living in Renton will not be forgotten thanks to her efforts and those of the rest of the Oral History Team.

Ernest Lees, Betty Seligman, and Vivian Williams also received 2007 Award Certificates. Ernest has proved many times that we can count on him. He is a devoted greeter and ambassador of our museum. He tirelessly represents the museum during the annual Poker Tour. Betty Seligman joined us in a big way last year. She immediately started supporting our office on a weekly basis. We appreciate her professionalism and respect for other people. And last but not least is Vivian Williams. She helped prepare activities and served many hours at the museum booth during Renton River Days last year. She was very enthusiastic and professional. Her support was very important to the success of the event.

All of our other volunteers also deserve mentioning. We will take time to present them in the Quarterly Newsletter in the future. We thank all of them for their service!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please select a membership level:

BASIC MEMBERSHIPS

- Individual \$30
- Student/Senior \$20
- Family \$40

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIPS

- Benefactor \$75
- Patron \$150
- Business/Corporate \$175
- Life membership \$750

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation!
Your donations help us provide new exhibits and exciting programs.

Donation: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Visa or MC #: _____

Exp. date: _____ CVV code: _____

Signature: _____

Please make checks payable to Renton Historical Society.

Renton History Museum
235 Mill Avenue South
Renton, WA 98057

Phone: 425.255.2330
Fax: 425.255.1570
rentonhistory.org

RENTON HISTORY MUSEUM
235 Mill Ave. S
Renton, WA 98057

IN HINDSIGHT...



Harvey Delaurenti with Mike's Place 4th of July float, 1937. This float won second prize in the parade that year.
(RHM #1966.028.0441)