

Walking Tour Credits

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Historical Photos: Renton Historical Society

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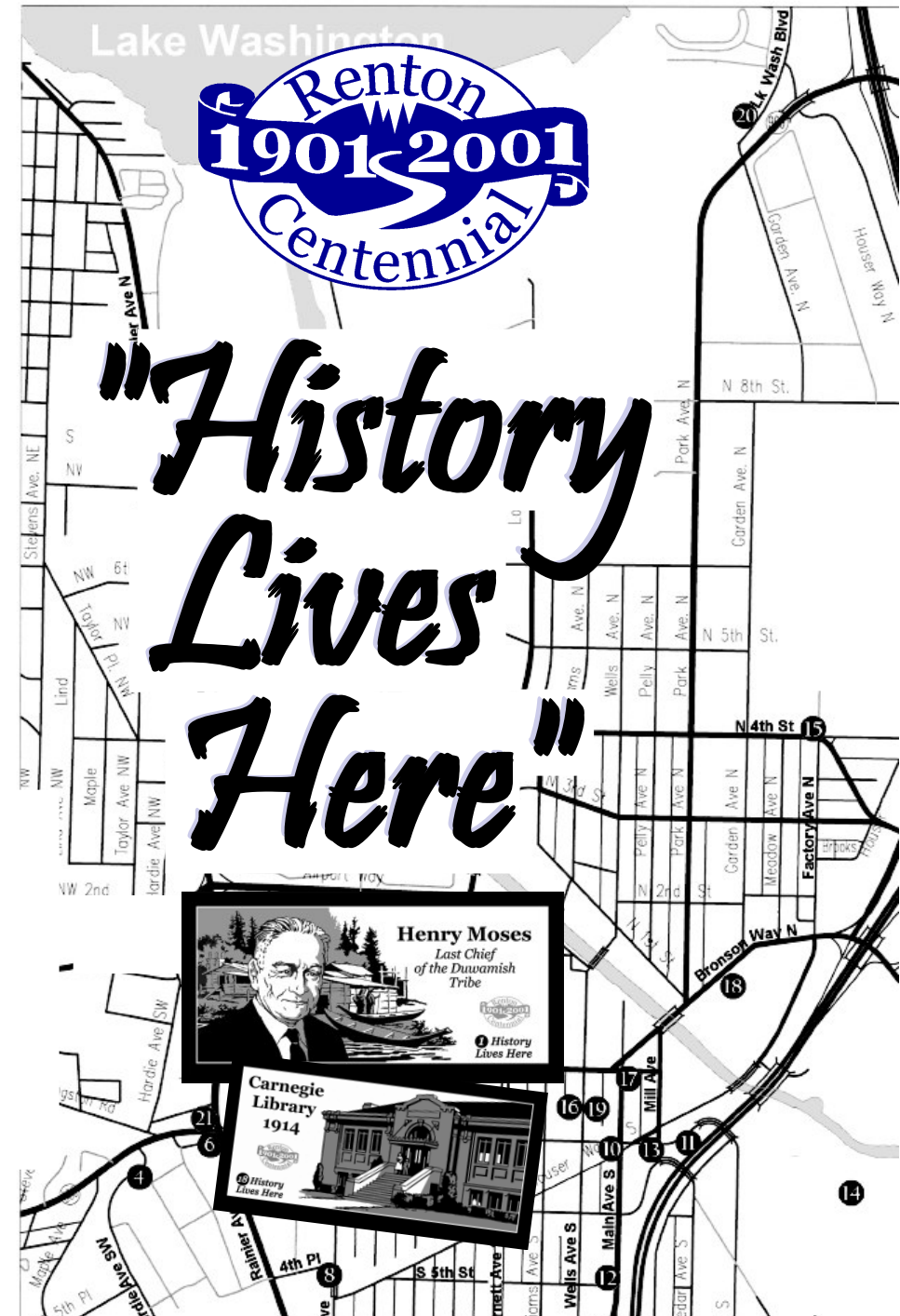
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City of Renton

1055 South Grady Way ● Renton, WA 98057 ● 425-430-6400

Renton History Museum

235 Mill Ave South ● Renton, WA 98057 ● 425-255-2330



Renton Centennial Marker Walking Tour

Renton Centennial Marker Walking Tour



"History Lives Here"

Renton's rich history and strong spirit were in the spotlight in 2001 as the City celebrated its Centennial – 100 years as a City. A yearlong program of special activities, exhibitions, performances, and festivities encouraged citizens to honor the past, celebrate the present, and imagine the future. This milestone celebration featured a full-scale historical theatre production, a 100-year birthday celebration, a parade float, collectible memorabilia, and several legacy projects.

Marking special places and events in Renton history was just one of the legacy projects intended to educate citizens and visitors about Renton history.

"History Lives Here" is a self-guided tour of 22 markers highlighting historically significant places, people, and events in Renton (see map on the center page). A brief summary, along with historical photographs and pictures of related memorabilia, are included to help illustrate history. The 12-inch by 24-inch black granite markers portray everything from the Duwamish Indians, and the Four Cow Wide Tunnel, to the Triple XXX Barrel and Boeing.

Doug Kyes, a nationally recognized Renton artist, designed the markers. His interest in the preservation of local history and his desire to bring history to life prompted him to volunteer for the Centennial project.

For more information about Renton's vibrant and unique historical past, please visit the Renton Historical Museum at 235 Mill Avenue South.



Location:
On the Cedar River Trail near Nishiwaki Lane and North 6th Street (just south of the Boeing bridge)

22

The Boeing Airplane Company

The Boeing Airplane Company has been involved in the Renton community since 1922, when Boeing began using the northern end of Renton Field as the hub of the world's first international air mail service, ferrying mail between Puget Sound and Victoria, B.C. The connection strengthened on the eve of World War II with the construction of a major factory that produced 1,119 Boeing B-29 bombers for the war in the Pacific. In the 1950s, Boeing and Renton ushered in the Jet Age with the decision to build the world's first successful jetliner, the Boeing 707, at Renton. In 1960, the Renton plant began work on the Boeing 727, one of the most successful jetliners ever built. Boeing has relied on its employees and the Renton community to help it become the largest aerospace company in the world. In 2001, forty percent of the commercial jetliners in the air took form on the Renton assembly line.



Rutherford's Triple XXX Barrel 1930



Location:
A few yards north of the NW corner of Rainier Avenue South and South 3rd Street

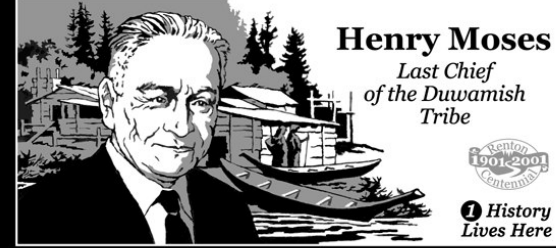
21

Rutherford's Triple XXX Barrel

The Renton Triple XXX was the first drive-in on the West Coast and its popularity soon spread throughout the region. Archie Rutherford and his two sons, Joel and Jerry, expanded the Renton Triple XXX success into a chain of restaurants throughout the Pacific Northwest. In the 1930's and 40's, the Triple XXX was "the" place to be in the area for many of the teens with cars. Hamburgers and fries were also available with the special root beer that was produced at the A.H. Rutherford and Sons Triple XXX plant. Root beer was 10 cents and a baby mug was free. Three generations of the Rutherford family worked at The Triple XXX drive-in. The remaining Triple XXX in Issaquah is designated as a historical landmark.



Henry Moses Last Chief of the Duwamish Tribe



Location:
NW corner of Lake Avenue South and South Tobin Street

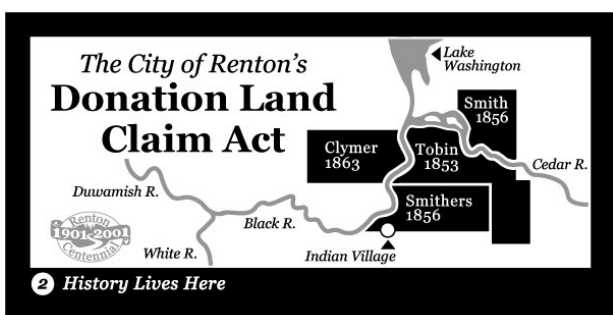
1

Henry Moses, last hereditary Chief of the Duwamish Tribe

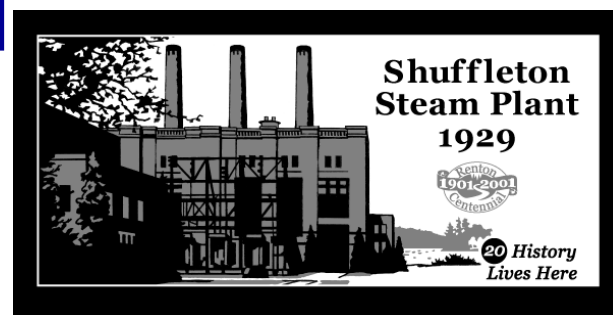
Renton's history began with land claims along the Black River where the Duwamish Indians had lived for hundreds of years. Chief Henry Moses was the last hereditary chief of the Duwamish tribe. His family faced many changes following the arrival of white settlers in the early 1850's. Chief Moses was born in 1900 in a



rough board and batten shack on a one-acre site where Renton High School stands today. Henry was an outstanding athlete and played on the Renton High School basketball team. After the school won the state championship in 1916, his fellow players honored him by naming the team the "Indians." Chief Moses, known for his friendly attitude toward the white settlers, became a respected member of the community. Before his death in 1969, he witnessed jet airplanes take off from land once owned by his family.



Location:
 Piazza Park, South 3rd
 Street between Logan
 Avenue South and Burnett
 Avenue South, near stream
 headwaters,
 SE side



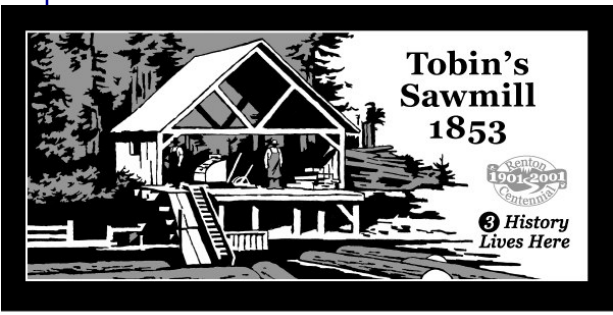
Location:
 South end of Lake
 Washington Blvd.,
 at the intersection with
 Garden Avenue North

2 The City of Renton's Donation Land Claim Act

The federal government passed the Donation Land Claim Act in 1850 in order to encourage settlement in Oregon Territory. It provided the means for a settler to establish a claim of 160 acres. When the first settlers arrived in what was to eventually become Renton, the Cedar River joined the Black River as it left Lake Washington. The rich land at the confluence of these rivers became the land claims of the first settlers: Henry Tobin, 1853; Erasmus Smithers, 1856; William Smith, 1856; and Christian Clymer, 1863.

3 Tobin's Sawmill - 1853

Henry Tobin, the first white settler in the Renton area, was originally from Maine. In 1853, Tobin and his wife Diana claimed a tract of 320 acres at the confluence of the Cedar and Black Rivers. The land proved richer than Tobin had imagined when Dr. R.H. Bigelow, working a neighboring claim, discovered a coal seam in 1853. Soon after, Tobin, Bigelow, and two other men, Obediah Eaton and Joseph Fanjoy, formed the Duwamish Coal Company. In 1854, Tobin, along with Eaton and Fanjoy, built a small sawmill on the Black River to provide a supply of timbers to shore up the mine tunnels. Warring Indians destroyed the sawmill in 1855. Tobin died in 1856 of unknown causes.



Location:
 NE corner of South Tobin
 Street and Rainier Avenue
 South

20 Shuffleton Steam Plant - 1929

In the fall of 1929, Puget Sound Power and Light Company began operating the first 40,000 kilowatt generator, the Shuffleton Plant. The plant's turbo-generators ran on "hog fuel" (waste wood fiber from sawmills) with its oil burning boilers to be used only during emergencies. Within a month of firing the boilers up for the first time, the Great Depression engulfed the nation and the plant was never completed as designed. Despite the Great Depression, Shuffleton was still needed as

people continued to buy electrical appliances, read under electric lights, and enjoy electric streetlights. In the early 1950's the plant was placed on stand-by, and by the 1970's, the crew thought every emergency run would be the plant's last. In 1989, Shuffleton was fired up for the last time during the severe winter storm called the "Arctic Express." The plant was demolished in 2001 to make way for a development at the south end of Lake Washington.





Location:
East side of Wells Avenue
South between South 2nd
Street and South 3rd Street



Location:
NW Corner of Hardie
Avenue Southwest and
Renton Center Way

19 Grand Theatre - 1916

The property on which the Grand Theatre was built was purchased by Frank Connelly. The theatre opened in 1916. Frank's wife, Marie, got the show underway promptly at 7:00 p.m. every Saturday night. She would walk down the aisle clothed in a silk dress and a fur coat, smile and wave at her friends, and begin to play the piano until the main event started. In the years between 1916 and 1925, all the popular movies of the era were shown at the Grand.

4 Black River School - 1854

The Black River School was the first school building in King County. The first term began in January, 1854. The school was located at the base of Earlington Hill on Christian Clymer's Homestead. The school was a small shack, 14 by 16 feet, built of rough lumber and cedar shakes. It stood a short distance west of the Black River. A crude mud and stone fireplace at one end of the building provided heat and rough board desks served the few children. Mats of cattails, made by the Indians, lined the walls to help keep out the wind. To attend school, some children had to cross the river via the fish traps set by the Indians or by using a rowboat pulled back and forth on a cable.



Location:
SW corner of South 3rd
Place and Rainier Avenue
South

5 Smithers' Homestead - 1856

As a young man from Virginia, Erasmus Smithers left home at the age of 19 and headed west in a wagon train pulled by three pair of oxen. When he arrived in the Puget Sound area in 1856, he found a job for himself and his oxen hauling the first logs to be cut at a mill on Bainbridge Island. Later he served in the territorial militia and eventually found his way to the Renton area. In 1857 he married Diana Tobin, the widow of Henry Tobin. Under the Donation Land Claim Act, Smithers pre-empted a 160-acre claim of land adjoining his wife's. Their combined claims totaled 480 acres, part of which eventually became the Smithers' dairy farm.



6 Black River Bridge - 1860

The Black River Bridge was built in 1860 to improve the postal route. It was also used by cattlemen east of the mountains to drive their herds to slaughterhouses in Seattle, and it eliminated the need for ferries across the river. The original bridge has been gone for a long time; however, the existing Black River Bridge, just north of West 7th on SW Monster Road, spans what remains of the original Black River.

**Black
River
Bridge
1860**

Renton
1901-2001
Centennial
6 History
Lives Here



Location:
SW corner of South 3rd
Street and Rainier Avenue
South

**Carnegie
Library
1914**

Renton
1901-2001
Centennial
18 History
Lives Here

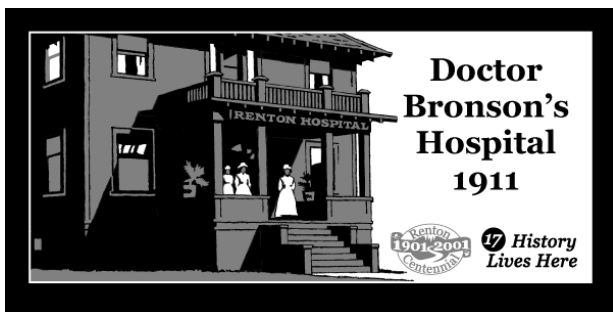


Marker Location:
within Liberty Park,
near the tennis courts,
1101 Bronson Way
North

18 Carnegie Library - 1914

Neva Bostwick moved to the Earlington neighborhood of Renton soon after it was platted in 1906. She was a serious student who had made extensive use of the Seattle Library. After moving to Renton, she discovered the town only had a small lending library. Residents did not think it was possible to build a library in a small coal-mining town of fewer than 4,000 people. Miss Bostwick, however, wrote to the Carnegie Foundation for information, learned how to apply for a grant, and received the necessary forms. A committee of interested citizens was formed and, after much research and consultation, a \$10,000 grant was received. The Carnegie Library was built in 1914 on land donated by Ignazio and Jennie Sartori. Carnegie Library was located near the existing downtown library, which was built in 1966 over the Cedar River.





Location:
SE corner of Main Avenue
South and South 2nd
Street

17 Doctor Bronson's Hospital - 1911

Dr. Adolph Bronson graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in San Francisco, California, in 1904. After working for a year as an intern, he came to Renton in 1905. Accidents in coal mines and logging camps were common at the time and his practice grew rapidly. By 1911, he needed more room and had a two-story hospital building constructed. Dr. Bronson's Hospital originally had 15 rooms and an operating room. It was enlarged to include a larger waiting room and a brick front in 1927. Dr. Bronson practiced for 30 years and owned the only General Hospital until the government-sponsored Renton General Hospital opened in 1943.

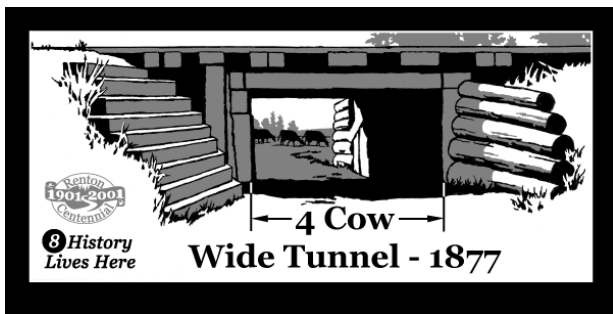


Location:
Benson Road South near
location of coal mine
entrance

7 Renton Coal Company - 1873

In 1873, Erasmus Smithers' exploration of streams where he found floats of coal paid off with the discovery of a coal seam. Smithers was short on cash, but backers with financial assistance were quick to come forward. One of these backers was Captain William Renton, one of the most successful businessmen in the territory. Renton and his partners were looking for a profitable venture involving the movement of timber or coal along a proposed independent railroad route. With Captain Renton's financial backing, Smithers, Thomas Morris, engineer for the railroad, and Charles Shattuck, president of the Seattle Coal Co. based in Newcastle, organized the Renton Coal Company. The mine entrance was on the North side of Renton Hill. The town, which incorporated in 1901, was named for Captain Renton to honor his financial contributions in the business venture.

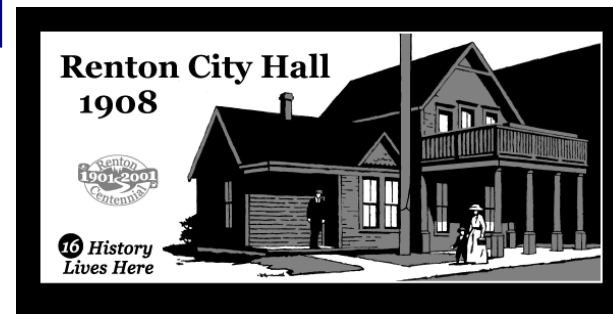




Location:
Shattuck Avenue South,
near the SW corner of
South 4th Place

8 Four Cow Wide Tunnel - 1877

One of Renton's original homesteaders, Erasmus Smithers, gave a portion of his property to the Seattle and Walla Walla Railroad with the stipulation that the railroad would construct a tunnel to allow his dairy cows to get from one area of his farm to the other. Unsure of the size needed for the tunnel, he instructed the railroad company to make the tunnel four cows wide.



Location:
West side of Wells
Avenue South between
South 2nd Street and
South 3rd Street

16 Renton City Hall - 1908

Renton was incorporated as a fourth class town on September 6, 1901. Renton's first Mayor was Dr. Abijah Ives Beach. The first town offices were opened in Tonkin's merchandise and grocery store and remained there until the town purchased property on Wells Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets in 1908.



City government functioned there for 50 years until all city offices, including the police department, were moved in 1968 to the building next to the Renton Public Library on Mill Avenue adjacent to the Cedar River. In 2000, City Hall moved to its present location at 1055 South Grady Way.



Location:
 NW corner of
 North 4th Street and
 Factory Avenue North



Location:
 SW corner of South 4th
 Street and Burnett
 Avenue South

15 Seattle Car and Manufacturing - 1908



A disastrous fire in the blacksmith shop and lumber yards of the Seattle Railroad Car and Manufacturing Company at Youngstown in 1907 turned out to be fortuitous for Renton. Following the disaster, the company's owner, William Pigott, decided to move his young company to the 120 acres of land he had purchased in north Renton. After the move to Renton, Pigott expanded manufacturing to include all types of railroad rolling stock needed for the logging industry. In 1917, the company merged with Towhy Car Shops of Portland, Oregon, and became Pacific Car and Foundry. During WWII, the plant produced a total of 926 Sherman tanks. In 1945, the company acquired Kenworth Motor Trucks and, in 1958, Peterbilt Motors. In 1972, Pacific Car & Foundry merged into PACCAR, Incorporated.

9 S&WW Railroad - 1877

Less than two months after Erasmus Smithers went public with his coal find, the town of Seattle learned that the Northern Pacific Railroad had selected Commencement Bay rather than Elliott Bay as the terminus of the transcontinental route. Stunned by the news, town leaders determined to start their own railroad, organized as the Seattle and Walla Walla Railroad (S&WW) of which Captain William Renton was a trustee. The founders felt that an independent railroad that could be used to transport timber or coal (both found in the Renton area) would be a successful endeavor. In February 1877, after a lengthy construction phase, the narrow-gauge track reached Renton. In March, a shiny new locomotive, the A.A. Denny, steamed out of Seattle to the Renton depot to a crowd of cheering onlookers. The depot was located at the foot of Mill Street, and was a crude structure supported by two huge fir stumps.

Alki Saloon 1881



10 History Lives Here



Location:
SW corner of South 3rd
Street and Main Avenue
South

10 Alki Saloon - 1881

Built in 1881, the Alki Saloon was typical of the saloons in early Renton. Generally, saloons were the domain of working men. They would work all week at mines, mills, and logging camps, and on Saturday nights they would head for town to have some fun and refreshments at the saloon.

11 First Church in Renton, First Presbyterian Church - 1885

Reverend George Whitworth was called the father of Presbyterianism in Washington. He founded at least 20 churches, including Renton's first. The First Presbyterian Church was organized in the home of David Parker on December 13, 1885. Churchgoers later built the original church structure, a white frame building with a steeple and bell that overlooked the town. As the city grew and the building became inadequate, a brick church was built in 1924, and an even larger church was constructed in 1960.

First Church in Renton First Presbyterian Church 1885



11 History Lives Here



Location:
In the middle of the
pathway leading to Renton
Hill, near the corner of
Mill Avenue South and
Renton Avenue South

Renton Clay Works 1901



14 History Lives Here



Location:
Across the river from
the Renton Community
Center, along the Cedar
River Trail.

14 Renton Clay Works - 1901

In 1901 two California entrepreneurs, James Doyle and J.R. Miller, discovered that the shale overlaying the Renton mine's coal seams produced a high-quality clay. Tests indicated the material would make excellent brick, and with Seattle investor, E.J. Mathews, the men organized the Renton Clay Works. They developed a plant on the south bank of the Cedar River that would eventually become the largest producer of paving brick in the world. In addition, the Renton plant specialized in fire brick, terra-cotta, and decorative terra-cotta. In 1905, the plant was purchased by Denny Fire Brick Company and the entire company was renamed the Denny-Renton Clay & Coal Company.



Snoqualmie Falls Power Co. Substation 1898



13 History Lives Here



Location:
SW corner of South 3rd
Street and Mill Avenue
South

13 Snoqualmie Falls Power Company Substation - 1898

In 1896 the Seattle and Rainier Beach Railway (S&RB), an electric streetcar line beginning in Seattle, reached Main Street in Renton. The advent of the S&RB introduced Renton to a new technology – the electric power plant. By 1898, the Seattle Electric Company had completed the world's first underground hydroelectric generating facility at Snoqualmie Falls. A year later the power from its generators was sent to Seattle via the Snoqualmie Falls Power Company Substation. Built at 3rd and Mill, it was the town's first brick building. Although at the time most of the power was used to run the S&RB, eventually it supplied power to the mines.

Central School - 1892



12 History Lives Here



Location:
NW corner of South 5th
Street and Main Avenue
South

12 Central School - 1892

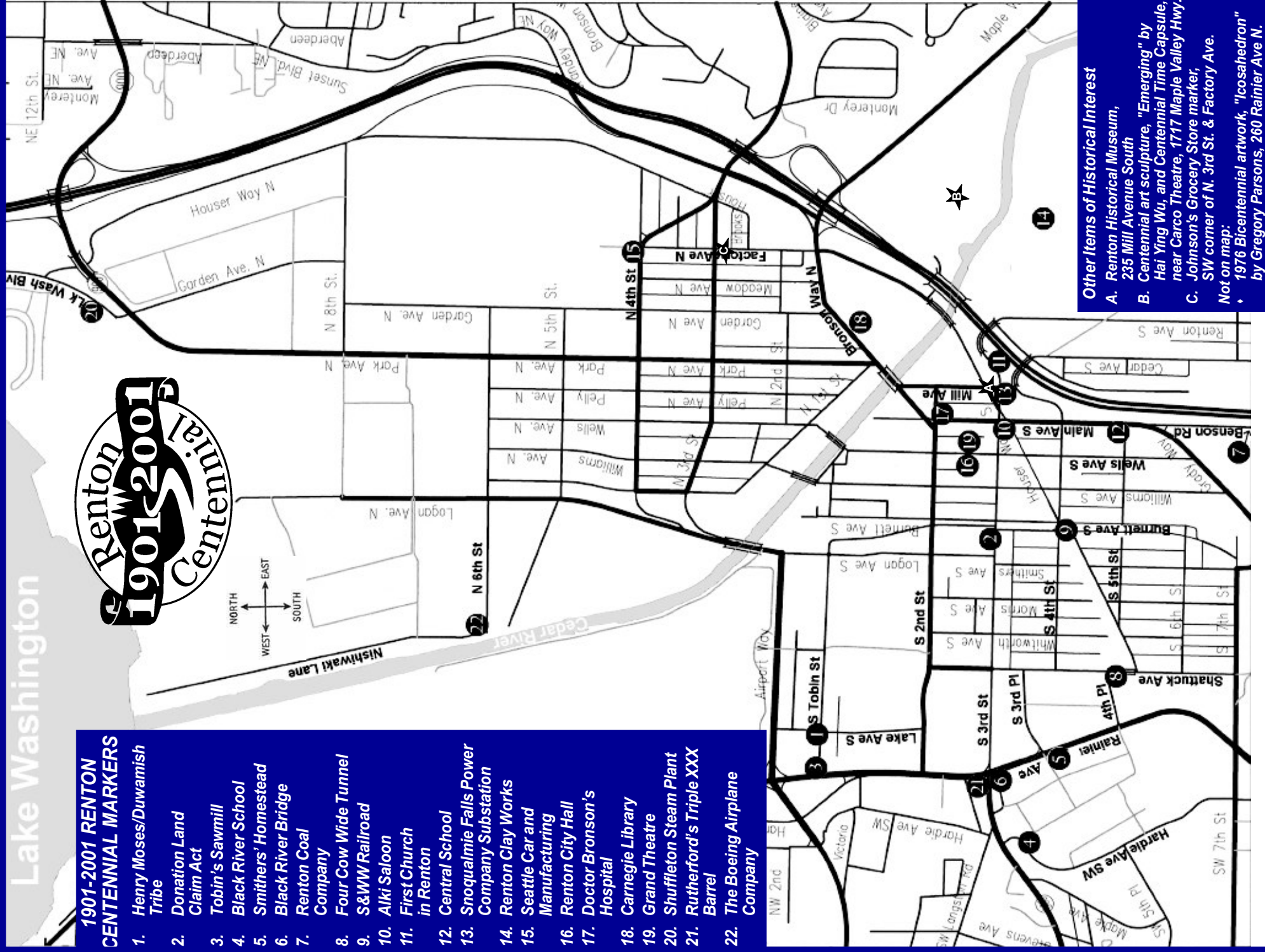
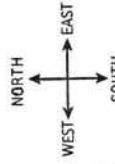
By the 1890's, the school population had outgrown a one-room school built in 1871 on the NE corner of South 4th and Main Street. In 1892, an elegant two-story, seven-room building with a concrete foundation and a bell tower was built on 5th Avenue between Wells Avenue and Main Street. Many citizens thought the school was far too large and would never be used. Despite their predictions, 110 students attended the first year. The school's first principal was George Conklin whose salary in 1899 was \$80 a month. He taught the school's first high school classes, and the first high school class graduated in 1904.



Lake Washington

1901-2001 RENTON CENTENNIAL MARKERS

1. Henry Moses/Duwamish Tribe
2. Donation Land Claim Act
3. Tobin's Sawmill
4. Black River School
5. Smithers' Homestead
6. Black River Bridge
7. Renton Coal Company
8. Four Cow Wide Tunnel
9. S&WW Railroad
10. Alki Saloon
11. First Church in Renton
12. Central School
13. Snoqualmie Falls Power Company Substation
14. Renton Clay Works
15. Seattle Car and Manufacturing
16. Renton City Hall
17. Doctor Bronson's Hospital
18. Carnegie Library
19. Grand Theatre
20. Shuffleton Steam Plant
21. Rutherford's Triple XXX Barrel
22. The Boeing Airplane Company



Other Items of Historical Interest

- A. Renton Historical Museum, 235 Mill Avenue South
 - B. Centennial art sculpture, "Emerging" by Hai Ying Wu, and Centennial Time Capsule, near Carco Theatre, 1717 Maple Valley Hwy.
 - C. Johnson's Grocery Store marker, SW corner of N. 3rd St. & Factory Ave.
- Not on map:
- 1976 Bicentennial artwork, "Icosahedron" by Gregory Parsons, 260 Rainer Ave N.