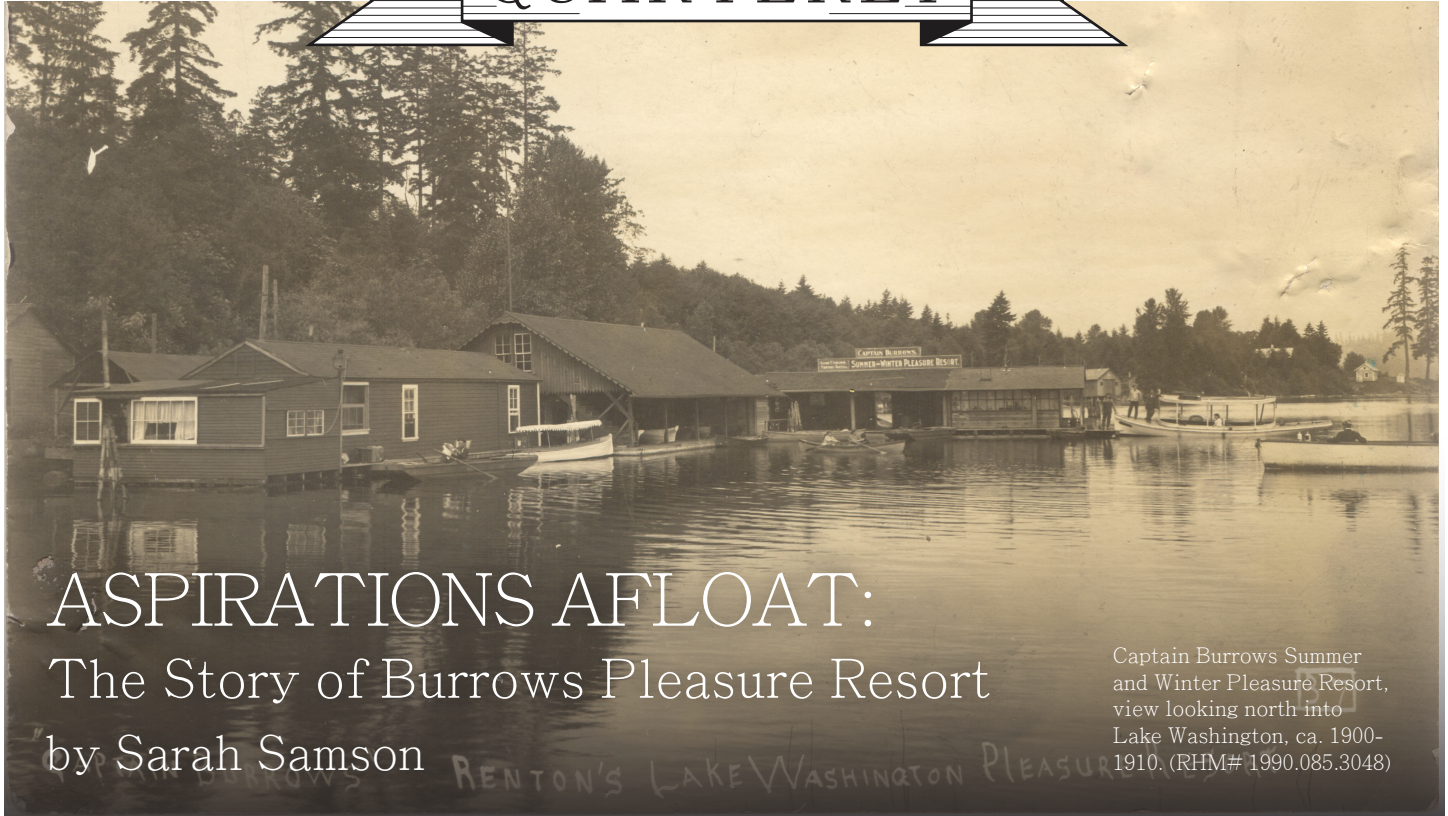


# RENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Winter  
December 2013

QUARTERLY

Volume 44  
Number 4



## ASPIRATIONS AFLOAT: The Story of Burrows Pleasure Resort by Sarah Samson

Captain Burrows Summer and Winter Pleasure Resort, view looking north into Lake Washington, ca. 1900-1910. (RHM# 1990.085.3048)

Ferry Fay Burrows came west to scout the Seattle/Renton area around 1895. He travelled with his father, Edwin R. Burrows, a former boat captain on Lake Michigan.<sup>1</sup> While boating Lake Washington, the Burrows spied a promising piece of property. On July 5, 1897, the younger Burrows, born in 1865, purchased a long, narrow strip of land that ended at the bank of Lake Washington just north of the Black River delta.<sup>2</sup> The sellers were Native Americans: “Tenas, or Little Bill, & wife.” The land was marshy and totaled between 2 and 2.5 acres.

“BASKETS WERE FULL & RUNNING OVER” WITH FISH Burrows purchased the property for \$100 and set about making a new life for his wife, Martha, and two young children, Edwin and Ruth. The Burrows began improving the property soon after purchasing it, first building a small cabin on pilings.<sup>3</sup> The land had just over 100 feet of beach access to Lake Washington.<sup>4</sup> This was where Burrows soon moored a houseboat and began building docks. “Captain Burrows Summer and Winter Pleasure Resort” was born.

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Board President.



8 Collections Report  
| by Sarah Samson,  
Collection Manager.

# Greetings from



## GREETINGS FROM RENTON! A JURIED PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW

There is still time to catch *Greetings From Renton!* and to vote for the People's Choice award. Voting will close at the end of the year and as we ring in 2014, the winning photos will become postcards available for purchase in the Museum! The photographers in our exhibit captured breathtaking sunsets, unique architecture, leafy trails, sunny beaches—all taken to capture the special essence of a place. Join us in celebrating photographic talent in Renton.

From  
SEPTEMBER  
10  
To  
FEBRUARY  
15

## GIVE THE GIFT OF HISTORY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

The holiday season is upon us. Are you still looking for the perfect gift for family and friends? Membership renewal letters have been sent out and each includes a Gift Membership form. Fill it out and give the gift of history! Membership benefits include free admission to the Museum and Museum programs, invitations to exhibit openings and other events, and mailings of our quarterly newsletter.



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## COORDINATING A NEW MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

Colleen Lenahan is the Museum's new Visitor Experience Coordinator, a position that oversees programs, events, educational outreach, and the volunteers who are key in delivering these great programs. Colleen has a Master's degree from the University of Washington Museology program, with a special certificate in Museum Audience Research. You may remember her as the curator of last spring's *Defining Spaces* exhibit, a "best of the City of Renton's

art" exhibit that was also her M.A. thesis project. Colleen is fluent in Spanish and in her spare time is a women's volleyball coach. We are delighted to have her join our team!



# MUSEUM REPORT

by Elizabeth P. Stewart,  
Museum Director

As we reach the end of another busy year, I've been thinking about all the friends and colleagues who pass through the life of a local history museum. This year we lost some important people in our community. One of the Museum's earliest and most influential volunteers, Rose Mary Greene, passed away in February, and Suzanne Thompson, an important Museum supporter and Renton volunteer, died suddenly in October. The passing of these friends is a reminder of the Museum's duty to preserve and document the stories that become the fabric of our city's history. It's also an indication of how ready we all have to be to change with circumstances so that we can maintain that mission.

In October our longtime Volunteer and Education Coordinator, Dorota Rahn, decided to step down from her position at the Museum. Dorota had been with us for eleven years as the heart and soul of the volunteer program and our educational outreach. She brought a new professionalism to her area of museum operations, instituting regular volunteer training and enrichment programs and a Volunteer Committee to oversee them. She was particularly interested in strengthening the Museum's educational programming and bringing it to more students. When the School District's third grade tours stopped in 2006, Dorota was instrumental in developing two classroom curricula to bring local history to teachers and students; she researched state standards, worked with consulting teachers and educational specialists, and researched, wrote, and tested two new curricula, one on Renton's coal mining industry and another on the Duwamish people. Over 1000 students have benefited from these curricula without cost to the students or the district.

Dorota made countless other accomplishments during her time with the Museum: wonderful fall and spring cultural events series, volunteer appreciation events and awards, engaging Renton River Days activities, and collaborations with District ESL programs. But those who knew her well will most remember her care and concern for the volunteers she worked with, as well as her determination to stick to the highest standards in education and volunteer management. She helped take the Renton History Museum closer to the excellence we strive for, and for that, we thank her.

Change is an inevitable fact of history, but what never changes is the Renton History Museum's commitment to our mission of winning over new history-lovers every day!



Elizabeth P. Stewart  
—  
Director



Dorota at a 2011 Volunteer Luncheon.



Dorota's daughters enjoy a Renton River Days activity, 2012.

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## RENTON HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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

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**CULTURE**

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### MRS. MISTLETOE AND FRIENDS

December 14  
1:00-2:00pm

Celebrate the Winter Solstice with Mrs. Mistletoe and her friends and help Mrs. Mistletoe release the magic butterfly!



### GREETINGS FROM RENTON! OPEN HOUSE

February 11  
5:30-7:30pm

Take a last look at the work of these great Renton photographers before the exhibit comes down!



### DEEP ROOTS OPENING EVENT

February 25  
5:30-7:30pm

Join students and teachers from Renton High School in celebrating the culmination of their great work!

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Theresa Clymer, President

**A** BIG Thank You goes out to all of you in our community who were able to attend our 6th annual Dinner and Auction event held Oct. 9th at the Renton Senior Activity Center. There was a grand turnout and the evening was a success because of all your support and help in celebrating Renton's past and promising future. The Dinner Auction is our one major fundraiser during the year and your generous donations went a long way in supporting the Renton History Museum and its mission.

A very special thank you to our Master of Ceremonies, Don Custer, who acted as our emcee for the second year. It is always interesting to hear stories from members of pioneer families, and Don is able to share his many memories from days gone by. We so appreciate his continued dedication over the years.

The Historical Society was able to raise \$10,458.00 only through the hard work of many folks. Museum staff and Board of Trustees worked together to bring a delightful evening to our members and friends. We enjoyed a tasty dinner prepared by volunteer chefs Larry Sleeth and Don Persson. After cooking for our auction all six years Larry and Don are moving on. This being the final year for the chef team made the dinner especially meaningful.

The success of the night also depends on many people in the community who always are ready to pitch in and help. Thanks to Patricia Carroll for manning the bar and Brian Birmingham for taking photos. Thanks to the teams at Renton's Senior Center and the City Facilities Department for their assistance and the use of the building. Thanks to Service Linen Supply for their generous support. Thanks to Renton Youth Council for providing wonderful students to set up, clean up, and serve the meal, and thanks to the outstanding NHS Students from Hazen High School for all the support with the auction items.

The evening was only enhanced by the music provided by Jazz Horn and their leader Mike Simpson. Friends of Cedar River Watershed shared an informative presentation on the history of salmon and their incredible journey, thanks to Charlotte Spang and Keri Pravitz.

As we move forward into the next year, watch for new exhibits to come to the museum, and please plan on a visit soon, because learning happens here!



Theresa Clymer  
—  
President



Long-time board member and resident caterer Larry Sleeth receiving his going-away present, an apron with the Museum's logo. (Photo credit Brian Birmingham.)



Bidders surveying the available auction items.

Captain Burrows  
Summer and Winter  
Pleasure Resort, view  
looking south toward the  
Black River, ca. 1900-  
1910. (RHM# 41.0648)

## ASPIRATIONS AFLOAT: The Story of Burrows Pleasure Resort

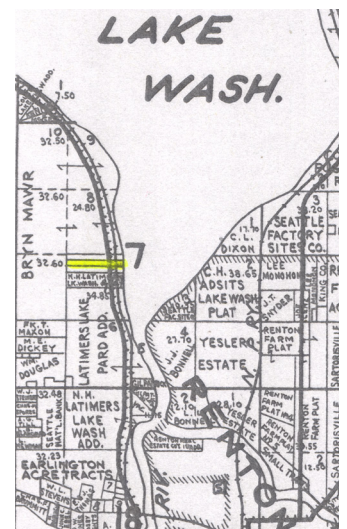


Continued from page 1

Shortly after, in 1899, Ferry and Martha welcomed their third and final child, a second daughter named Melba.

Burrows Pleasure Resort is thought to be one of the earliest, if not the first, recreational business along Renton's waterfront. Though it was closest to Renton, the resort relied on attracting customers, mostly men, out from Seattle for a day or a weekend of relaxation. Seattleites travelled southeast on a streetcar that ran as far as Rainier Beach.<sup>5</sup> From there, Burrows collected his clients and brought them to the resort. Burrows served as a fishing guide, taking large groups of men out for a day's worth of fishing. At that time Lake Washington was a fisherman's paradise and filling several bushel baskets a day with fish was easy.<sup>6</sup> After returning from the lake, the men overnighted at the boathouse and then returned to Seattle the next day with their catch.

Burrows' wife, Martha Ann, was also an integral part of the business. Martha played the roles of hostess, housekeeper, and cook at the resort. With a steady stream of men in and out of the property, Martha took care to watch her children closely, especially daughters Ruth and Melba.



Captain Burrows land, highlighted in yellow. The land where the resort once stood now abuts Rainier Ave just south of NW 7th St. on the east side of Renton Airport, far south of present-day Lake Washington. (Map from Metsker's King County Atlas)



The original cabin Burrows built, ca. 1900. (RHM# 1994.068.3915)



Burrows family, ca. 1907. Left to right: Martha, Edwin, Melba (front), Ferry, Ruth. (RHM# 2000.017.5282)

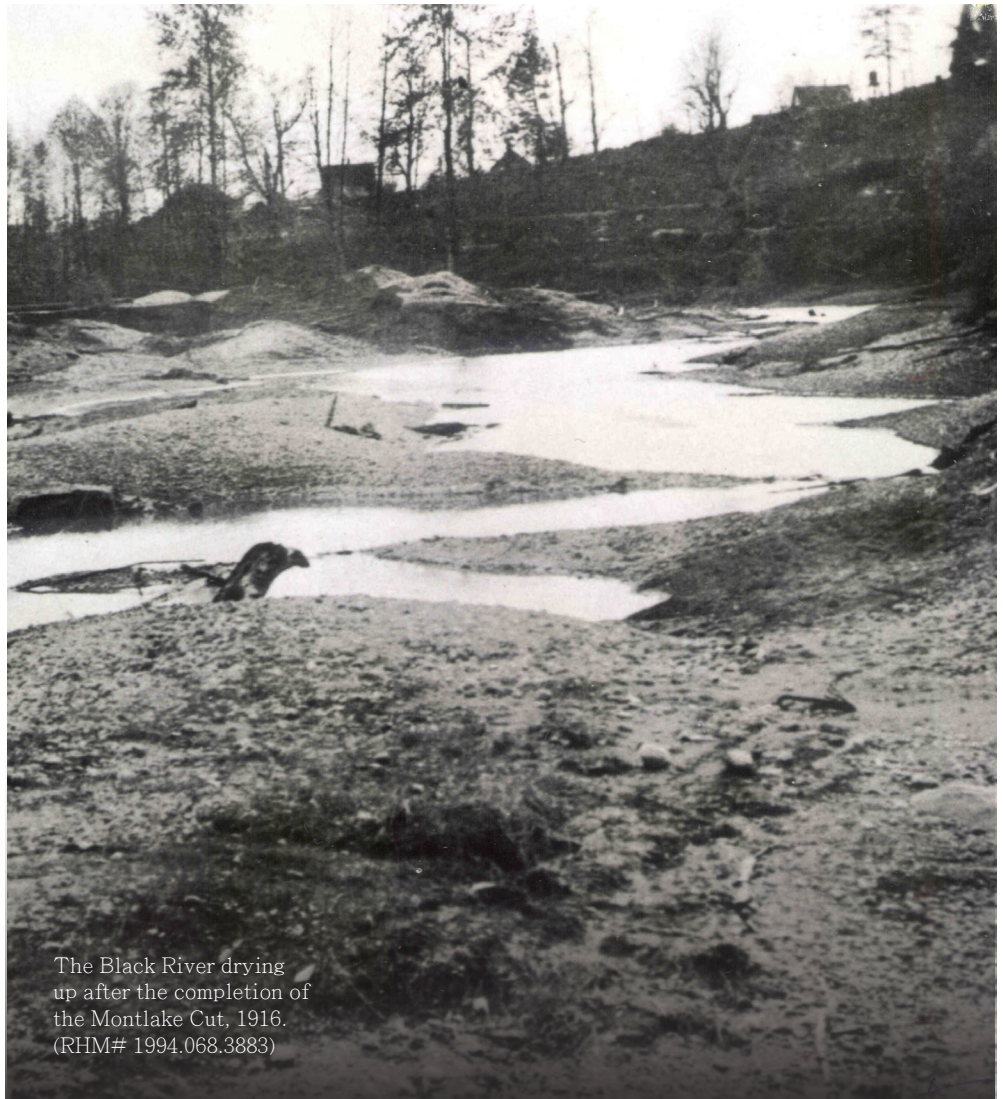


Captain Ferry Fay Burrows, ca. 1915. (RHM# 2000.017.5281)

Ruth remembered being required to stay at home under her mother's watchful eye. She and older brother Edwin were allowed to host parties at the resort, however.<sup>7</sup> Ruth remembered that

*in the summertime my hair wouldn't be dry all summer long because anytime I could just go jump in the lake. Then for parties and things like that, we had a good sized launch, and my brother and I used to give parties instead of running around. We would all get on the launch and maybe take – which was quite a thing at that time we thought – take a friend around Mercer Island and then we'd have taffy pulls at home because being in a houseboat we didn't have much of a place to run around in.<sup>8</sup>*

The resort was not the family's only source of income. Burrows also worked steadily as a boat Captain, running two steamboats, the *Minnie Mae* and the *Elfin*, up and down Lake Washington and the surrounding rivers.<sup>9</sup> Renton was uniquely positioned at the confluence of the Black and Cedar Rivers and Lake Washington; it had always been a hub for water transportation, first for the Duwamish and later



The Black River drying up after the completion of the Montlake Cut, 1916. (RHM# 1994.068.3883)

for white settlers involved in trading. By the 1890s steamers primarily moved logs for the local mills, and Burrows would often make a stop at the resort during trips so Martha could feed his crew.<sup>10</sup>

The local Duwamish Native Americans also frequented the area, even though most of them no longer lived on their ancestral lands. The Duwamish, as they had for generations, still fished salmon and harvested wapato from the Black River.<sup>11</sup> Ruth remembered that an

*Indian lady who used to live in Seattle someplace... would come down to the boathouse every fall and dig wapatoes, we'd call them Indian potatoes, and, oh, she would dig a half a dozen gunny sacks of wapatoes. The way they dug them, they just took off their shoes and stockings and got into the water. There was quite a patch of wapatoes right at the mouth of the river and they would get out on this sand bar.... And they would dig them with their feet and they'd float up to the top and they'd just take them and put them in their aprons, they'd throw their apron across their arm and make a kind of a sack of it and put the wapatoes in it.<sup>12</sup>*

The Burrows family lived and worked at the fishing resort for nearly twenty years before their lives changed forever.

#### A WATERFRONT FOREVER ALTERED

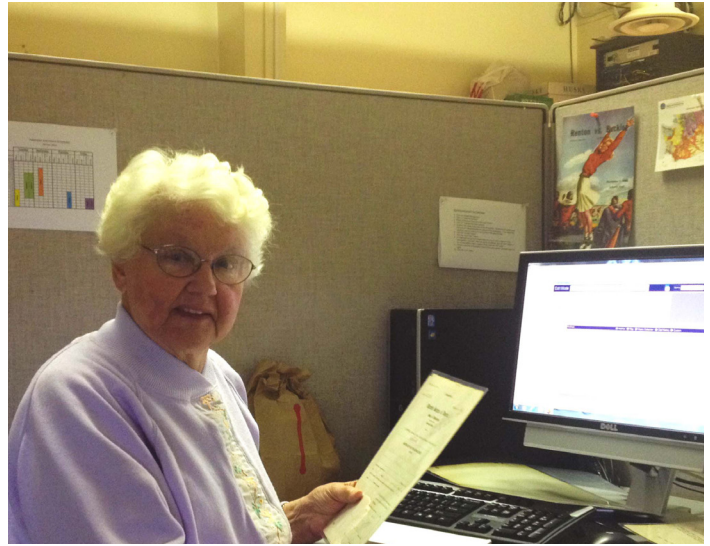
1916 was a pivotal year in the history of the Burrows family and in Renton. In the summer of that year the Montlake Cut was finished and the waters of Lake Union and Lake Washington finally met.<sup>13</sup> The engineering feat that was a boon for Seattle and shipping traffic resulted in devastating consequences further south in Renton. By fall, Lake Washington's water level dropped by almost nine feet resulting in the Black River completely drying up. Joe Moses, one of the last Duwamish living in the area at the time, sadly recalled the death of the Black River:

*That was quite a day for the white people at least. The waters just went down, down, until our landing and canoes stood dry and there was no Black River at all. There were pools, of course, and the struggling fish trapped in them. People came from miles around,*

Continued on page 10



Volunteer Jessical Kelly working with on-site artifacts.



Volunteer Pearl Jacobson working with the archives.

# COLLECTION REPORT

by Sarah Samson,  
Collection Manager



Sarah Samson  
—  
Collection Manager

**A**s I ready the Collections Department for my family leave, I am struck by how far it's come in the seven years I've been with the Museum. I started in August 2006 as the first full-time Collection Manager to work at the Museum. During that time we've accomplished a collections

move, two large-scale inventories, a complete reorganization of our accession documents, digitization of our oversized photographs, digitization of our cassettes and film, the rolling of our oversized textiles, and countless other smaller projects.

Interns, volunteers, and I have been diligently chipping away at the huge mountain that is our collections work. The changes are very visible, though only to those of us who frequent the storage areas. Boxes are now labeled with their contents; artifacts are tagged with their catalogue numbers; and most importantly, artifacts are safely housed either in custom-made boxes or in boxes with layers of ethafoam.

One of the more recent projects, a complete inventory of the on-site storage area, resulted in some particularly satisfying achievements. We found a few artifacts thought to be lost, we better wrapped breakable artifacts, and we removed the last few acidic boxes from the storage area. Most importantly, we also now know the exact



One example of the storage upgrades we've made in the past seven years.

storage location of every single artifact stored on-site. This project, funded by a grant from 4Culture, was completed by interns Seema Gajria, Clare Tally-Foos, and myself.

Our current focus is on cataloguing and photographing artifacts and archives and then re-housing them as needed. Now that we know where everything is, it is time to get it properly documented! Volunteer Jessica Kelly has been working on this facet of collections work for a few years now. Her task is tedious as she goes shelf to shelf, diligently documenting every single artifact. Intern Clare Tally-Foos is working on cataloguing and re-housing the dresses from our textile collection. Volunteer Pearl Jacobson has been working with the archives for several years. She is currently in the process of scanning every single document into our database and is also improving the archives organization and housing.

Of course, however, there is still much to be done. Our goals are many and they take time, money, and personnel to accomplish. But I think seven years is a good time to stop and take stock of the situation and admire the progress we've made. Huge thanks and congratulations are due to the many volunteers and University of Washington Museology interns who have made their mark while vastly improving the collections at the Renton History Museum, not to mention 4Culture for providing much-needed collections funding!



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August 16, 2013 - October 31, 2013

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Kevin Poole & Bryce Miller  
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Alice Stenstrom

## NEW MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AND BENEFITS

It goes without saying that the best benefit of being a member of the Renton Historical Society is securing the future of the Museum, but... We're just rolling out new member benefits that, depending on your membership level, may include a membership pin, exclusive behind-the-scenes events, discounts on site rentals, and free digital images. Join us today!

## IN-KIND DONATIONS

Don Persson  
Friends of the Cedar River Watershed  
Hazen High School  
National Honor Society  
Jazz Horn  
Larry Sleeth  
Renton Youth Council  
Service Linen Supply  
Wil Samson Design



Continued from page 7

*laughing and hollering and stuffing fish into gunny sacks.*<sup>14</sup>

The Burrows Pleasure Resort stood with its pilings exposed, the docks now far away from the water that was its livelihood. The salmon run ended and the ecology of the area quickly changed. Burrows tried to keep going by moving the docks out further into the lake, but it proved to be futile; the pleasure fishing business dried up along with the river.<sup>15</sup>

In 1919 Burrows purchased land in North Renton on Factory Street. He demolished a shack on the property and built a new single-story home that was nearly 1000 sq. ft. and moved in with Martha.<sup>16</sup> All three Burrows children were married and out of the house by this point, with Edwin and Ruth living in Renton and Melba over in Bremerton. As he moved inland, Burrows appears to have also moved his business interests away from the water; by 1920 was a manager at a garage with son Edwin also working there as a mechanic.<sup>17</sup>

#### POSTSCRIPT

Ferry Burrows died in 1925 at the age of 59.<sup>18</sup> Martha stayed in their home on Factory Street and by 1930 daughter Ruth and her family (husband Joe Venishnick and their four children) had moved in with her.<sup>19</sup> In 1934 Martha married the widower John E. (Jack) Hayes, her daughter Melba's father-in-law.<sup>20</sup> Martha moved in with Jack (a father of five) and finished out her life enjoying her involvement in church and fraternal organizations along with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.<sup>21</sup> Son Edwin went on to serve as Mayor during Renton's explosive and tumultuous growth during WWII. Descendants of the Burrows family still live in the area today.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Homer Venishnick Oral History, 29 June 1989 , p.1 (Oral History Collection, Renton History Museum).
- 2 Warranty Deed, Tenas to Ferry F. Burrows, 5 July 1897 (RHM# 1994.020.004). Tenas may have been a member of the Moses family; a "Tenis Moses" is listed in the 1880 Territorial Census for Renton.
- 3 Lucile McDonald, "Memories of Early Years in Renton," *Seattle Times*, 25 December 1955, "Lake Washington Past and Present" supplement, p.10.
- 4 Homer Venishnick Oral History, 29 June 1989 , p.1.
- 5 Ruth Burrows Venishnick Oral History, 26 April 1978, p.1 (Oral History Collection, Renton History Museum).
- 6 Homer Venishnick Oral History, 29 June 1989 , p.2.
- 7 Ruth Burrows Venishnick Oral History, 26 April 1978, pp.2-3.
- 8 Ruth Burrows Venishnick Oral History, 26 April 1978, pp.2-3.
- 9 Beatrice Hayes, *The Burrows and Hayes Family Tree*, self-published, November 1997 (Jack Hayes Family History file, Renton History Museum), p.12.
- 10 Lucile McDonald, "Memories of Early Years in Renton," *Seattle Times*, 25 December 1955, "Lake Washington Past and Present" supplement, p.10.
- 11 Wapato is an edible potato-like plant that grew underwater along the banks of the Black River.
- 12 Ruth Burrows Venishnick Oral History, 26 April 1978, p.3.
- 13 Jennifer Ott, "Montlake Cut (Seattle)," 30 December 2012, HistoryLink, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=10221](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=10221); accessed 25 October 2013.
- 14 David M. Buerge, *Renton: Where Water Took Wing*, (Chatsworth, California: Windsor Publications, 1989), 42.
- 15 Lucile McDonald, "Memories of Early Years in Renton," *Seattle Times*, 25 December 1955, "Lake Washington Past and Present" supplement, p.10.
- 16 Property Record Card (Burrows Family History file, Renton History Museum).
- 17 1920 Federal Census.
- 18 Burrows, Ferry F., Washington State Death Records, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/>, accessed 25 October 2013.
- 19 1930 Federal Census.
- 20 Hayes, John E. and Martha Ann Burrows, Kitsap County Auditor, Marriage Records, 1860-2006, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/>, accessed 25 October 2013.
- 21 "Mrs. John E. Hayes of Renton Dies," unidentified newspaper clipping (Obituary Collection, Renton History Museum).



Burrows Resort left high and dry after the lowering of Lake Washington, 1916. (RHM# 1994.068.3918)



## DEEP ROOTS: STUDENTS EXPLORE RENTON FAMILIES

The Museum's fourth collaboration with Renton High School takes center stage in February 2014. Sophomore Honors English students, under the direction of teachers Derek Smith and Brea Lawson, visited the Museum three times in October to learn and prepare for this exhibit. *Deep Roots* compares Renton High sophomores' family experiences to those of Renton's historic families. The exhibit features photographs from the Museum's collection as well as the students' own family portraits. Join us as students weave together the stories of today with the stories of the past!

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**FEBRUARY**  
 25  
 To  
**MAY**  
 26

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



Teacher Maple Howard painting ornaments with her second graders, ca. 1956 (RHM# 1994.037.3789)