



# Raising Kane

By Steve A. Anderson

## Foreword

Much like the coal resting beneath Renton today, the story of the William Kane and Obadiah Evans families has remained buried for nearly a century. Some believe it should stay that way, for it is a story involving personal tragedy, sickness, infant mortality, alcoholism and divorce. However, it also celebrates long-lived pioneers, the love of the out of doors, entrepreneurial businesswomen and strong ties between family members. When united, these elements uniquely illustrate life in early 20th century Renton - a city typified by heavy industry and an immigrant population of stay-at-home moms and blue-collar dads.

In 1998, two aging photograph albums containing nearly 500 images (and a small group of aging newspaper clippings and notes) of these two families were delivered to the Renton Historical Museum. Society members Ken and Ethel Klepach brought them to our doorstep on behalf of Donald Francis Kane, who had passed away in 1994. Since that time, and with a little luck, patience and help from our membership, we have unearthed the sad yet uplifting; extraordinary but tragic chronicle surrounding these two Renton families.

This story has been written in three parts. In order to understand who these Rentonians were and how their lives came together, please first read the chapter titled "The Irish," then "The Welsh," and finally "Union" which brings the story of each family together. - Author

## The Irish

William Kane<sup>1</sup> was born the sixth of eleven children to Irish immigrants Thomas and Mary Kane.<sup>2</sup> His parents likely abandoned their homeland along with millions of other countrymen during Ireland's dreadful potato famine of the late 1840s. In search of a new life in America, they probably stepped ashore onto the wharfs of Manhattan,<sup>3</sup> pausing briefly in the inner city slums of the eastern seaboard before migrating to St. Louis and finally to Allamakee County, Iowa, situated on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Well suited for settlement, the region was experiencing economic growth which had earned it the title of "sawmill capital of the nation."<sup>4</sup>

By the age of twenty, census records indicate that young William was living with an older sister in Minnesota.<sup>5</sup> Described as a laborer, he acquired skills in a new cutting edge technology called "electricity." Moving to

Tacoma by 1885, he found steady employment as a lineman for the Tacoma Light and Water Company.



William Kane in a posed studio photograph. Circa 1880.

In this job, it is believed that William brought the first electricity to many areas within greater Pierce County. With athletic ability that must have been formidable, he entered (and won) a greased-pole climbing contest at a lineman's picnic in the late 1880s.<sup>6</sup> A good-looking lad and a "snappy dresser," young Kane was known to have worn white "ice-cream" pants, black and white oxfords and a "Panama" hat during the summer time. His dapper attire, quick wit or perhaps his

athleticism caught the eye of seventeen-year-old Annie Mane Moabus<sup>7</sup> who just happened to be visiting her brother in Tacoma when the couple first met. Annie was the American-born daughter of immigrants William and Annie Moabus - who ran a German bakery in the Dalles, Oregon.<sup>8</sup> While the particulars of the Kane/Moabus courtship remain forever lost to time, in due course the couple eventually got engaged - exchanging wedding vows in July 1891.

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**Renton Historical Quarterly**

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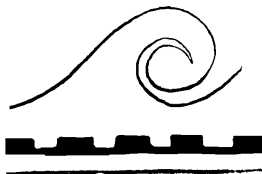
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*This quarterly publication is mailed to all members of the Renton Historical Society as a membership benefit. Manuscripts submitted for future articles about Renton history are welcomed from all sources. Authors are responsible for the accuracy and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

# President's Report

By Barb Horton, Co-President

Spring has sprung! The Renton Historical Society has made important strides over the winter months. We are proud to announce that the Budget Committee met and determined that we have enough revenue available to pay for two employees with Society funding. These two positions will be a Volunteer Coordinator and a Collections Manager. The Museum Supervisor, Steve Anderson, is tasked with drafting the job descriptions for these two positions and for organizing the interview team.

The Volunteer Coordinator will manage unpaid staff and the Collections Manager will coordinate the accession (the museum professions term for processing) of the artifacts that have been donated to the Society by the Charles Lewis Custer Estate and all other donated artifacts.

The Collections Manager will be responsible for managing the entire collection; with particular attention to the artifacts have been recently acquired through the bequest of the Custer Estate. Many of these artifacts are currently on display at the Museum and they are something to see! Please make a visit to view them soon. We anticipate great contributions to the Museum from these new positions.

Another important bit of news is that the Executive Managers of the City of Renton recently met to assess the storage requirements of the Museum. Through our partnership with the City of Renton, the Renton Historical Society anticipates important support for the long-term maintenance and storage of the Society's artifacts.

The most important message of all is that the Society has many opportunities for every member to contribute to the greater good of the organization through volunteerism. The Renton Historical Society can't operate without the support of its volunteers. We have volunteer opportunities that range from a few hours, to a recurring assignment. We are very willing to give you the opportunity to volunteer your time at a level that is comfortable for you.

We have volunteer opportunities that span many skill areas, including the well-known docents who operate the Museum or contribute their carpentry skills to exhibit construction. We also have many business assignments activities available, including finance management, investment management, auditing, project management, documentation development, early childhood education, administrative assistance, and artifact management. Some of these assignments require as few as two or three hours per quarter, or less.

The President of the United States called upon all of us to volunteer some of our free hours to the greater good of our communities and our country. The Renton Historical Society offers many opportunities for short-term assignments that can help you to contribute. Please call the Museum at 425-255-2330 to let us know of your interest and availability soon!

Sincerely,

Barb Horton, Co-President



*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.*

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The William Kane family in 1891 included: Francis (on his dad's lap), Annie Moabus Kane (wife), George (infant) and four year old Doris (seated). This cabinet photograph was taken in Swansea, Illinois by J. Chenhall at the Alexandria Studio

The newly-weds resided in both Tacoma and Seattle at various times over the next ten years. William, now experienced in his trade, was literally in the vanguard of pioneering electricians who built and then operated the earliest power generators and substations in the Puget Sound region. Some of these pioneering efforts include the Snoqualmie Falls Power House and substations sited in Issaquah, Seattle and Renton.<sup>9</sup> Two years after their marriage, the Kanes celebrated the birth of their first child, Dora Alice, who eventually went by the name "Doris."<sup>10</sup> Two years later, in 1895, their second child, Francis William, was born.<sup>11</sup> Around 1897, the Kanes boarded a train to the mid-west with Doris, Francis and a third child, George Earl, in tow.<sup>12</sup> There, they visited William's extended family. Pausing briefly in Swansea, Illinois the Kanes sat for a cabinet photograph at the Alexander Portrait Studio – the image captured William and Annie with dazed and somewhat saddened expression on their faces. Inadvertently, this portrait foreshadowed a string of tragedies that soon descended over the Kanes.

William had lost a brother to a mining accident in 1893.<sup>13</sup> And though it had been a painful loss, the real misfortunes began in 1900 when four-year-old George lost his life to whooping cough.

Next, their fourth child, James Ernest,<sup>14</sup> born in 1898 succumbed to meningitis in 1902, which was the same year that a fifth baby, Edward James,<sup>15</sup> lived out his very short (two month long) life. Following this disastrous period, things seemed to be calming down as they welcomed their sixth child, Irene Eunice,<sup>16</sup> into the world in 1904.

Then in 1907, the Seattle Electric Company<sup>17</sup> transferred William to its substation in Renton. Commuting wasn't an option, so the Kanes packed up and moved into the company's power substation on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue at the foot of Renton Hill. They lived upstairs while the children played downstairs "around the bases of the transformers."<sup>18</sup> Besides functioning as their home, the structure served as a switching station where "the higher voltage lines were transformed down to a distribution voltage to serve the city of Renton."<sup>19</sup> Since 1898, the substation had served the needs of the Renton Coal Mine, the Denny-Renton Clay and Coal Company, Newcastle's coalmines and street lighting for the new City of Renton.

<sup>20</sup> Initially, life continued to level out as the Kanes began blending into the Renton community. This included William's participation in the creation of Renton's Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie #1722.<sup>21</sup> Doris and Francis entered Renton's school system, while Eunice remained healthy and alert. But harmonious living was not to be.



The Seattle Electric Company Snoqualmie Power Substation, home to the Kanes in 1907-11 still stands today at the foot of Renton Hill.

In April 1908, another devastating blow came as Annie (once again in labor) died in childbirth along with their seventh child.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, such loss of life typified this period as modern medicine lacked the ability to intervene when complications in childbirth, serious disease or sickness threatened. This period marks one of the great disparities of the Kane story. On the one hand, William was involved in bringing electrical power and light to the population of greater King County. On the other hand, he suffered intolerably in darkness and despair at the losses of his wife and children. Following her death,

little comforted William, and he never again remarried. While depression and alcoholism were likely paths for him to take, he instead chose to focus on his work, the community and his three surviving children. Nevertheless, this final calamity greatly disrupted the Kane's home life. At the time of her mother's death, Doris was attending Renton's Central School as a tenth grader. She now took on the role of homemaker—effectively ending her formal schooling. Similarly, Francis quit school after the eighth grade and began learning about electricity from his father – no doubt helping around the substation in any way he could. Four-year-old Eunice, on the other hand, became a handful as she had not yet begun her schooling.

In 1910, the White River power plant began operations - demanding larger transformers and additional power lines within the Renton substation. This effectively dislodged the Kanes who moved into a small house next door. Additional changes were in store for the family in 1911. Late in the year, Doris wed Robert Adams<sup>23</sup> and (with her sister Eunice) moved to Vancouver, Washington.<sup>24</sup> Now fully sixteen years old, Francis also moved out to establish a life for himself

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working as a power company lineman.<sup>25</sup> William's life also changed in significant ways. Gambling his future on the potential of electricity, he quit a secure company job and became Renton's first private electrical contractor. Buying a house on Renton Hill and living alone, he occasionally rented out the attached apartment. In 1917, World War I swept the nation into war and everyone's lives changed. Francis enlisted and, because of his experience with electricity and wiring, became a radio technician in the signal corps while in Europe.

## The Welsh

A genuine character and a true pioneer, Obadiah Evans<sup>26</sup> was a "contradictory upshot" of both the old and new worlds. Born in Wales, he had immigrated to America with his parents at a very young age and by 1870 was living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.<sup>27</sup> Becoming a naturalized citizen at the age of sixteen, he soon migrated west to Washington Territory and in 1882 began working for the Oregon Improvement Company. From a personal perspective, "Obie", as his friends knew him, was good with his hands and mechanically inclined. Taking a job as a coal mine hoist operator in Newcastle, which also required him to work with the mine's mules, Obadiah had found his niche. Inheriting a diminutive stature and stern demeanor from his parents, one senses from the images that this unyielding Welsh transplant possessed a light heart. On top of this, he had other possessions that helped to define his character. These included a pipe, which he continually had notched firmly between his teeth, a pair of overalls and a vest, jacket and hat, and occasionally a poke of tobacco tucked away in his cheek. He sometimes drank in excess, was known to sing songs and recite "ditties" and loved his family dearly. As an example of this, one "little ditty" was passed on to his grandsons and great-grandsons, much to the chagrin of the rest of the family:

*"My sweetheart's a mule, way down in the mine,  
I drive her with only one line.  
On a coal car I sit, and tobacco I spit,  
All over my sweetheart's behind."*

While working with the mules, machines and coal car hoists in Newcastle, Obadiah eventually met his real-life sweetheart in Irish-born Rachel Arnold Evans,<sup>28</sup> whom he married there in 1891. Rachel, though taller in stature but five years younger, shared her husband's foreign roots, immigrating to America in 1886 with her parents and twelve siblings. A year later she, along with the rest of her family, became naturalized American citizens. Rachel's maiden name was also Evans, allowing her to keep the same name once married to Obadiah. While not much is known about Rachel's personality, much can be drawn from surviving images of her. The photographs generally illustrate the warmth of a loving mother and a knowing smile, as if she's about to reveal a confidence. This kindness no doubt offset Obadiah's superficial demeanor with plenty of hugs and smiles - traits that she passed on to several of her daughters. While it is believed that some of Obadiah's family settled in Idaho and Newcastle, it is known that Rachel's family put down roots in eastern Oregon.

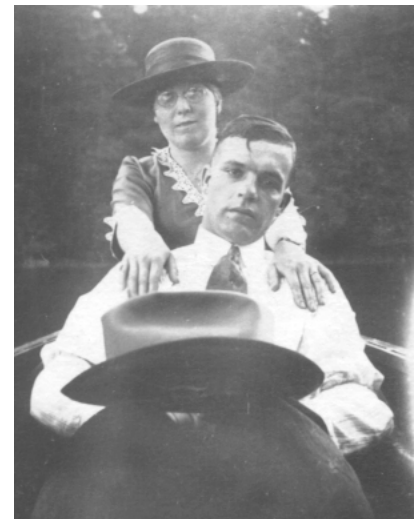


Obadiah and Rachel Evans in front of their home at 123 Factory Avenue. Circa 1925.

The Evans' first daughter, Ruby,<sup>29</sup> arrived just before they moved to Wellington on Vancouver Island, B.C., where her dad continued with his employment at the coal mines of Nanaimo. While living on Vancouver Island, Rachel bore their second and third children: Lena<sup>30</sup> and Hannah.<sup>31</sup> All the girls grew up and for all intent and purposes were Canadian citizens when, after fourteen years of working north of the border, the Evans Family returned to the Renton area in September 1907. Lena (10 years old) and Hannah (8 years old) both required naturalization proceedings before the family could move into a large house on Factory Avenue.<sup>32</sup> This would become the Evans' family



Obadiah Evans in his garden. Circa 1935.



Ruby Barrett (nee Evans) with a potential suitor. Ruby eventually married Ray Barrett and succeeded in the moving and storage business. Circa 1920.



Sisters Lena (left) and Hannah (right) inherited many traits from their mother Rachel Evans - including hugs and a close relationship.

home, which would eventually boast gardens, swings, chickens and a large fenced yard. Obadiah's niece, Laurins Evans and his brother "Uncle George" would also share this house with Rachel and Obadiah in due time.

By 1911, Obadiah had switched vocations and was working for the Renton Hardware Company. During the teens, the Evans girls developed interests in boys, the out-of-doors, traveling and photography. Obadiah's eldest daughter Ruby acquired her father's stern, straightforward (some would even say strict) personality. This apparently deprived her of opportunities in Renton's matrimonial lottery, as she remained single for an extended period of time, living in her parent's home for the rest of her life. On the other hand, Lena participated on the high school basketball team and was a star pupil. She eventually graduated from high school in 1913. She enjoyed camping, fishing and hunting and also pursued amateur photography from a very early time, taking her camera along on trips and outings. It is believed that Lena picked up the habit of "hugging" (everyone got a hug from Lena) from her mother. The Evans' third daughter, Hannah, turned into somewhat of a tomboy, preferring the wilds of the out-of-doors to the sophistication of society. As she grew older and wealthier, she gained a heightened influence and position within Renton (and later Kent) social circles. In some ways, this ran against Hannah's nature, for it was outwardly uncomfortable for her to assume the manners required of a grown woman more so than her sisters. Hannah also graduated from Renton High School and developed into an outgoing and generous soul, although alcoholism plagued her throughout her life.<sup>33</sup>

Then World War I embroiled the globe and all the eligible bachelors left Renton to go to fight the Hun.

## Union

While World War I took Renton's young men and placed them in unknown trenches across France and Belgium, many of them survived the ordeal and eventually returned. William Kane's son, Francis (who answered to both "Frank" and "Kaney"), returned to his job following an honorable discharge from the army around 1919, as an outside lineman with the Seattle Electric Company.

Upon his return, Francis began socializing with Obadiah Evans' daughters Ruby, Lena and Hannah - and their friends. He probably knew and was socially active with them prior to his enlistment in the army as the town's eligible bachelors were keenly aware of the potential "bridal pool" available at any given time. A thrill seeking adventurer who



Francis Kane as a lineman for the Seattle Electric Company. Circa 1925.



Lena Evans Kane during her courtship years with Francis Kane. The couple spent numerous days fishing and hiking on the Cedar River from 1919 to 1921.

knew no fear, Francis was known to climb to the top of railroad bridges where he would hurl himself off into the river. With their shared interests in the out of doors, this daredevil began his courtship with the photographer, Lena, around this time. The courtship included family gatherings, camping and fishing trips up the Cedar River, and swimming at Dixon's Beach (present day Coulon Park), all of which was captured in Lena's camera. Engagement followed courtship and that eventually led to a Kane/Evans union in 1921.<sup>34</sup> The purchase of a home in north Renton and the arrival of two boys, Bill<sup>35</sup> and Don,<sup>36</sup> seemingly marked an era of prosperity for the Kanes. Francis was already active in the Eagles Aerie and was beginning to participate within the American Legion chapter in Renton. Lena, like many women of that era, remained at home to rear her two boys.

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With his adult children well into their lives, William Kane focused on his electrical business. Driving a Model T pickup truck to various jobs in the area, times were good for the Kane Electric Shop as electrical appliances proliferated in the 1920s and '30s. William Kane ran his electrical business with "old fashion virtues" and according to his contemporaries was a "hard worker, strictly honest, genial and kind." His athleticism hardly waned as he aged, being referred to as "vigorous and diligent" in his pursuit of his trade into his early eighties.<sup>37</sup> And his skills remained in high demand – so much so that he owned a new Buick "for good" – in other words, he bought the latest model every few years.<sup>38</sup> Dr. Adolph Bronson became a steady customer who employed him whenever he had electrical needs at the hospital or at home. Each Christmas, William was employed in the placement of colored lights on a tall evergreen tree in the doctor's front yard. Once lit, it became a beacon that drew crowds of people from miles around.<sup>39</sup> While both Eunice (now married to Henry Hendricks) and Doris lived in Seattle, they frequently visited their father, the Evans and Adams family in Renton. Doris's children, Janet and Roberta often stayed with their grandfather in the electrical shop or traveled with him on wiring jobs up Maple Valley or in Kennydale. He taught them how to wire plugs and outlets, referring to them as "butterfingers" whenever they were awkward or dropped tools.<sup>40</sup>



Dr. Bronson's annual Christmas tree lighting during the 1930's was provided by Kane Electric, with William climbing the tree into his early 70's.

Meanwhile, in north Renton, Obadiah continued his employment as both a mine engineer and a carpenter while Rachel tended her garden, fruit and cherry trees, and rhododendrons.<sup>41</sup> Exhibiting the economy of a true Welshman whenever purchasing materials, Obie would fervently probe every lumberyard owner in Renton for their best "POB," or "Price On Back" discount. The Evans' were also known for their long auto trips in the 1920s, especially those involving car camping to Mt. Rainier, eastern Oregon and the beaches of the Pacific Ocean. Many trips were again captured on film through the lens of Lena's camera as she continued to hone her photographic skills. George Evans, now lodging at the Factory Avenue house, shared Obadiah's fondness for liquor, which was not unusual for either that period or the working class environment embracing the town.<sup>42</sup> When Prohibition officially came to Washington State in 1918, Obadiah frequently returned to Victoria for several days at a time in order to "wet his whistle" - a tradition he continued throughout the 1920s and early '30s.<sup>43</sup> While in Renton, his bootleg liquor often arrived in a fruit, vinegar or jam jar - cradled in the arms of a small child.



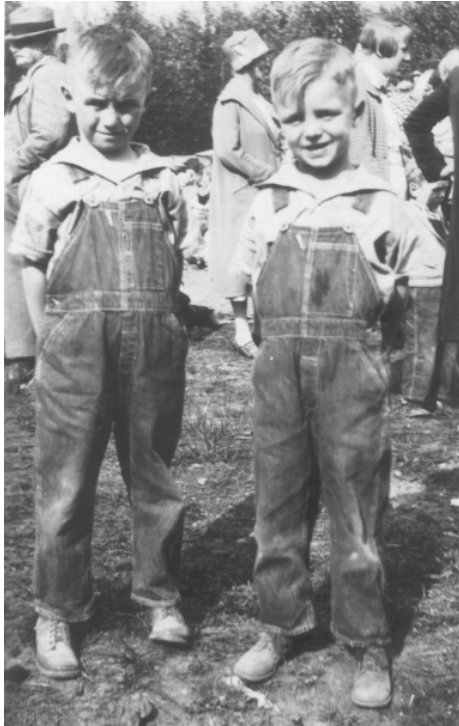
Lena and Francis Kane in better days. Circa 1927.

It is important to note that alcohol brought more sorrow than joy to both the Kanes and the Evans. For while no one can (or will) pinpoint when Francis began "drinking his lunches," his consumption of alcohol swelled with every new civic obligation. In another twist of irony, this period of time marked not only the height of Francis's public involvement (state president of Fraternal Order of the Eagles, Post Commander of the Legionnaires, volunteer fireman, City Councilman and pro tem Mayor of Renton), but also the acceleration of his descent as an alcoholic. Without a doubt, the social contacts, public engagements and numerous obligations, not to mention his job, kept Francis in drink and away from his family. As his consumption went unchecked, his marriage to Lena began to unravel.

Then the Great Depression descended across the land as hundreds lost their jobs and wages plummeted. With an absentee/alcoholic husband and two small boys to rear, Lena hit rock bottom. So, lacking marketable skills and an income, Lena courageously did the unthinkable for a woman of this era: she filed for divorce.<sup>44</sup>

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With her boys, Lena sought sanctuary at her folk's house until other arrangements could be made. Her boys often stayed with their grandparents, though she eventually lived in "a little shack" with blankets nailed up for room dividers. As a single mom with no visible means of support, Lena found life harsh. The Kane boys were old enough to understand their predicament. So, without their mother's knowledge, Bill and Don frequently stole milk from their neighbor's porches, poached salmon illegally from the Cedar River, and hunted down wild game with their guns - just so that they could eat. Additional assistance came in the form of food from other relatives and friends. Not one to remain disheartened, Lena began sewing for others, and with Hannah's help, established a sizeable client base. Working at first from her home and then through her own dress shop in Renton, Lena prospered as a businesswoman - so much so that by 1936, she was able to buy a brand new Chevrolet.<sup>45</sup> Again, irony arises in this story, for as Lena finally succeeded as a "self-made woman," her beloved mother Rachel died of an illness that had slowly depleted her spirit since 1933.



Bill Kane (left) and Don Kane (right) did what was necessary to get their mom through tough times. Shown here around 1933.

The loss must have affected Lena a great deal, for she turned over her business to Hannah and moved away to Edmonds. Though her son Bill had graduated from Renton High School, Don resented the move away from family and friends. In Edmonds, Lena, or "Lee" as her friends and family knew her, met Irv Hopper, an auto mechanic and dealer whom she eventually married.

From the Kane family's perspective, the divorce devastated Francis' sisters Doris and Eunice, who became alarmed with his alcoholism, declining health and increased isolation. Several futile attempts were made to get him into a rehabilitation program, but he continued to spiral downward.<sup>46</sup> Following the divorce, the north Renton home was sold and Francis eventually moved off to Riverton Heights (Foster/Tukwila area) where he remarried.<sup>47</sup> He helped his dad on occasion, especially with Dr. Bronson's tree, but was totally taken with drink by this time - and was rarely around. In 1947, Francis Kane's habitual affliction carried him to his death following a second career as a shipyard electrician.



Hannah Evans Cady never quite adapted to the ladylike ways of adulthood, although she achieved a level of financial success in life as a businesswoman. Circa 1936.

The 1940s witnessed the loss of both the William Kane, Sr. and his namesake, grandson Bill Kane within four months of each other. At the outbreak of World War II, Bill Kane and his stepfather joined the U.S. Navy. Bill took on the vocation of his grandfather Obadiah, becoming a diesel mechanic on board the destroyer Helena, which was the largest vessel in the Pacific fleet following Pearl Harbor. Bill's grandfather, William, now one of Renton's oldest pioneers at 82-year-old, fell down his back steps one day in 1941 and injured himself in a fall. Daughter Doris brought him and his dog "Tushie" to the Adams home in Seattle, where his health declined over the next two years. Then, after spending a lifetime bringing light to the world, William Kane passed away in Seattle just three months before his grandson's ship was involved in a sea battle, where he lost his life.

In another twist of fate, two different battles raged in the Pacific theatre on the day that young Bill lost his life. The other battle involved Bill's stepfather, Irv Hopper, whose ship was also sunk. In a heart stopping moment, Lee received two "missing-in-action" telegrams from the Navy on the same day - though her husband was later found to have survived. In earning a purple heart, William Kane's grandson also earned the distinction of being the first native-born Rentonite killed in the war.<sup>48</sup>



Lena Evans Kane as a successful business woman in Renton. Shortly after this image was taken, Lena moved to Edmonds. Circa 1936

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Following Rachel's death in 1936, Obadiah Evans continued living in his home while working as a carpenter and laborer for the City of Renton. He retired just four years later. At the King County Pioneer Association's annual meetings, Obie undoubtedly sang old ditties, spun tales and generally kept those in attendance spellbound. He also tended several hives of bees and maintained a garden. Then, in spite of his indulgences and after living a "hale and hearty" life of 91 years, Obadiah Evans passed away in 1951. His daughter Ruby eventually married Ray Barrett and succeeded in business beyond anyone's dreams, partnering in Barrett's Moving and Storage Company.<sup>49</sup>

After managing Lena's dress shop for several years, Hannah assumed the role of grocery store owner in Kent with her husband, Charles Cady. A family member recalled her visits in the 1950s, mentioning that Hannah always drove Chrysler New Yorkers, had a lot of money and would always bring gifts of oranges and cash for the children. She remained gracious in her success as a businesswoman, continuing to be outwardly generous to her friends and family her entire life, though never quite accepting the habits of a true "lady."

## Remembrance

Lena Evans Hopper, or "Grandma Lee" as her grandchildren knew her, lived a long and prosperous life.<sup>50</sup> Never one to just sit around, she invested her remaining time on earth in friends, art, traveling abroad and her grandchildren. She was instrumental in creating a hospital auxiliary in Edmonds, and later owned an apartment building that she populated with all her friends.

In retrospect, the Kane/Evans story is a study of contradiction and irony, darkness and light. While William Kane ascended utility poles and embraced a new technology, Obadiah Evans descended into the mines – investing his future in an old world power source (coal). All three Evans girls prospered in their business endeavors, at a time when that just was neither an expectation nor a popular role for women in society. Premature death of loved ones was balanced by the extended lives of spouses – William and Obadiah lived far beyond the standard life expectancy of the period. Most importantly, both the Kane family and the Evans family lineage survives today through Lena's descendants, and in the fading memories of other extended family members.

## Author's Note

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of those who made this story happen. First, for Donald Kane's donation of the photograph albums, for without them, the inquiries would not have taken place; next, to Charley McGarrigle, whose oral history highlighted a number of items within the story; also, to Jim Kane, Don's son, who allowed us to interview him during the summer of 2001; and, Society member Jean Green, who responded to our call for information with several interesting facts about the Kanes. Finally, I'd like to express an extended appreciation for family genealogist Roberta Adams Benedict, whose exhaustive research of the Kanes and Adams families is approaching the doctorate level of accomplishment. Mrs. Benedict also provided insight into the family ties by allowing for an oral history interview and by reviewing the photographs.

One final mystery remains unanswered in relationship to this story. Currently, no Kane, Evans or Moabus descendant lives in Renton. However, on a regular basis, unacknowledged to any family members, somewhere, sometime, an unidentified stranger continues to place flower arrangements on the Mt. Olivet Cemetery graves of William and Annie Kane.

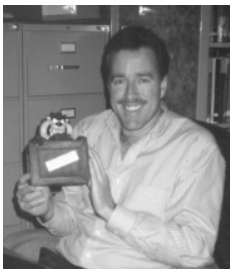
- <sup>1</sup> William "Bill" Kane: b. 11/4/1859, Clinton, Allamakee County, Iowa – d. 3/16/1943, 83 years, Renton, Washington. Cerebral hemorrhages, senility, sclerosis of the liver, stroke.
- <sup>2</sup> It is believed that the original Irish spelling of Thomas's name was Keane; Mary's maiden name was either Durkin or Durgin, depending on the source.
- <sup>3</sup> Dates of arrival determine where immigrants coming to America came ashore. During this period, 1840s-50s, the arrival location was at the wharfs of Manhattan Island, New York.
- <sup>4</sup> This information is credited to the Clinton, Iowa Chamber of Commerce Website, and www.clintonia.com/cmhist.cfm
- <sup>5</sup> The Census Records of 1880 indicate that William lived with his sister Agnes (Kane) Coniff in Minnesota, near Lansing, Iowa during this time – and is referred to as a laborer. Citation found by Roberta Adams Benedict.
- <sup>6</sup> For his efforts, William won a clock, which is now in the possession of Roberta Adams Benedict.
- <sup>7</sup> Annie Moabus (Moabus) Kane: b. 5/22/1874, Chicago, Illinois, d. 4/11/1908, Renton, Washington of postpartum hemorrhaging – she died in childbirth.
- <sup>8</sup> Roberta Adams Benedict has mined the following information on the Moabus Family: William Moabus was from Germany, while Annie Cantwell Moabus was an immigrant from England. William was one of the first bakers in Oregon and the family had migrated from Washington to Washington State, but then crossed the Columbia River to the Dalles. Many of Annie's brothers were drowned or were in various accidents – so the cemetery is full of grave markers with that name. One had moved to Tacoma, which Annie was visiting when she met William Kane. William Moabus eventually separated from his wife and sold newspapers – dying at approximately 80 years old.
- <sup>9</sup> Besides helping in building these powerhouses, William's family would eventually live in them as well.
- <sup>10</sup> Dora "Doris" Alice (Kane) Adams: b. 1/18/1893, Seattle; d. 9/13/1959, Seattle-66 years. Married Robert Adams 8/14/1911.
- <sup>11</sup> Francis William Kane: b. 8/8/1895, Tacoma; d. 8/31/1947, Riverton Heights-52 years. Married Lena Evans 3/3/1921.
- <sup>12</sup> George Earl Kane: b. late 1896, Seattle; d. 7/11/1900, Washington – 4 years. Died of Whooping cough and hemorrhage.
- <sup>13</sup> Kane family genealogist Roberta Adams Benedict documented the record of his burial in Seattle's Calvary Cemetery in 1893.
- <sup>14</sup> James Ernest Kane: b. 5/12/1898, Tacoma; d. 7/27/1902, Washington – 4 years. Meningitis.
- <sup>15</sup> Edward James Kane: b. 12/8/1902, Seattle; d. 2/25/1903, Washington – 2 months. Inflammation of the brain.
- <sup>16</sup> Irene Eunice (Kane) Hendricks: b. 1/4/1904, Seattle; d. 7/1975. Married Henry Hendricks, 8/4/1925.
- <sup>17</sup> A company that eventually became Puget Sound Energy.
- <sup>18</sup> Oral History by Charles McGarrigle, April 9, 1985. Renton Historical Society Collections.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> On November 30, 1907, in pursuance to a petition signed by 79 citizens, the Renton Aerie No. 1722, Fraternal Order of Eagles, was instituted.
- <sup>22</sup> "Baby Kane" their seventh child, is also buried with Annie at Olivet Cemetery in Renton.
- <sup>23</sup> See "The Echoes of Place: Renton's John Adams Family", Renton Historical Quarterly, Volume 30, Number 1, February 1999.
- <sup>24</sup> Eunice eventually graduated from high school in Vancouver, Washington and moved back to Renton.
- <sup>25</sup> Upon a complete review of the graduation records of Renton High School for 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914, no record of Francis Kane's graduation can be found. Therefore, he must have finished after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and started working for Seattle Electric Company.
- <sup>26</sup> Obadiah "Obie" Evans: b. 4/1860, Wales; d. 12/7/1951, Renton, Washington. 91 years. To Newcastle, 1882. Naturalized in 1876.
- <sup>27</sup> The Evans family is recorded as living there in the census records of that year.
- <sup>28</sup> Rachel Arnold Evans: b. 4/20/1865, Ireland; d. 3/17/1936, Renton, Washington. After three years illness. Immigrated to US in 1886, naturalized in 1887. Rachel's maiden name was also Evans, allowing her to not have to change her name upon marriage to Obadiah.
- <sup>29</sup> Ruby (Evans) Barrett – b. 1892, Newcastle, d. late 1970s – early 1980s.
- <sup>30</sup> Lena (Evans) Kane/Hopper: b. 11/8/1897, Nanaimo, VI; d. 4/8/1990, Bothell, Washington. Married Francis Kane, divorced 1931. Married Irv E. Hopper, 1940.
- <sup>31</sup> Hannah (Evans) Cady – b. 1899, Nanaimo, VI – d. Unknown.
- <sup>32</sup> This house, located at 123 Factory Avenue still stands today, and is located right behind the Texaco Gas Station on Bronson Way. I became known as the Barrett House after Obie's death.
- <sup>33</sup> Hannah Evans Cady died of alcohol related diseases.
- <sup>34</sup> The Francis Kanes were married on March 3, 1921 and divorced in 1931.
- <sup>35</sup> William "Bill" Kane – b. 1/1922, Renton – d. 1943, Destroyer Helena, Pacific Ocean.
- <sup>36</sup> Donald Kane – b. 4/9/1923, Renton – d. 1994.
- <sup>37</sup> Information taken from an obituary from unidentified newspaper clipping dated March 1943.
- <sup>38</sup> "On occasion Mother (Doris Kane Adams) and Dad (Robert Adams) borrowed the Buick if we were going to Portland. He bought Eunice a new Buick, probably around 1922; it was a coupe or roadster." Citation by Janet Adams Wilkie.
- <sup>39</sup> William actually climbed that tree until he reached 70. And though he retired from the business in 1941 at the age of 82, he stayed involved with the "Bronson Christmas Tree" ritual his entire life.
- <sup>40</sup> Citation by Janet Adams Wilkie.
- <sup>41</sup> Obadiah's occupation in the 1929 Renton phone book indicates "engineer" although it is known that he also did contract carpentry work at this time. One of Rachel's rhodies is still growing in front of the house at 123 Factory Avenue and is now nearly two stories high.
- <sup>42</sup> So much so that he eventually killed himself by falling out of the Evans' second story window, believing he was going into the bathroom.
- <sup>43</sup> He also brought a number of friends and relatives, including the Kanes at a later date.
- <sup>44</sup> Being marked as a divorced woman in the 1930s was akin to that person's death. It bore a great deal more significance/stigma than it does in today's society.
- <sup>45</sup> Bill Kane ended up taking the car for joy ride, and in the end crashed it into a bridge.
- <sup>46</sup> Email received from Renton Historical Society member Jean Green, dated 8/23/01 in response to an inquiry about the Kane family.
- <sup>47</sup> This marriage also failed sometime in the mid-1940s.
- <sup>48</sup> See Renton Chronicle article "First Renton Boy On Casualty List" dated July 29, 1943.
- <sup>49</sup> When Ruby Evans Barrett died, she left this world well off, leaving Don Kane about \$45,000.
- <sup>50</sup> Lena lived to be 93 years old.



# Renton Historical Quarterly

## Endowment Fund Report

The Endowment Committee met on April 24th with chairman Ken Becker



Endowment Committee Chair Ken Becker accepted a token of appreciation for his 3 years of service to the endowment program.

presiding and committee members Pat Auten, Naomi Mathisen, Allan Unbedacht and Steve Anderson attending. Member Randy Rockhill was excused. It was announced that Dave Gilbert, a project manage-

ment professional from Boeing was appointed as a member of the committee. It was reported that the fund rested to \$202,642 on March 31st. Currently 38% resides in fixed income investments and 62% resides within equity investments. As a part of action approved at the last meeting, a portion of the fund was invested in Puget Energy Incorporated stock. As a regular part of the meeting, the Fund's various stocks and mutual fund investments were reviewed, with the mutual funds judged using the Morning Star Mutual Fund rating system.

It was reported that approximately \$3,000 was recently transferred from the Society to the Endowment Fund. Discussion ensued regarding a fund drive and the committee will look at developing plans to do that drive in September/October of this year. Discussion also ensued relating to the policy governing the endowment's management. It was recommended that the committee be comprised of no less than three and no more than seven members, with staggered terms. Changes within the policy will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for approval. As there were no other investment decisions to make, the meeting adjourned. The committee will meet again on the 24th of July. 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. 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.

## Board of Trustees Activity

The Renton Historical Society has been busy so far this year. Trustees Edie Mae Lawyer and Sue Jahnke resigned. Derek Almo was appointed to



The Board of Trustees includes (left to right): Allan Unbedacht, Ted McLenadon, Bill Gaw, Pat Auten and Barb Horton (seated), Derek Almo, Jennifer Sharp, Marleen Mandt, Naomi Mathisen and Nancy Fairman. Not pictured: Terrie Briere, Homer Venishnick, Russ Price and Marge Richter.

fill Sue's position. The following people will be joining various committees: Dave Gilbert, Endowment; Sean Marinella and Eric Black, Membership; Hai Do, Strategic Planning; and Bob Hunt, Custer Committee. We welcome them and look forward to their contributions. Several trustees and museum staff members participated in the annual Chamber of Commerce Business Expo in March. The Society also participated in Rotary Caper. The Board hosted a

reception for new Society members in January. A dishwasher has been donated to the Museum and funds authorized to install it in the kitchen. Everyone who has worked in the museum kitchen greatly appreciate this gift!

The Board and the City have been discussing the possibility of constructing a combination storage mezzanine above the mining exhibit. The old Roxy Theater sign could also be incorporated into this project. Unfortunately the City decided that it cannot help at this time. It has promised to review the storage needs at the Museum. Currently, the City allows the Museum to use the old police evidence room at the old City Hall.

The Board approved the 2002 budget, which includes a part time Museum Volunteer Coordinator, and a Curator/Collections Manager. Volunteers have done this work in the past, but the jobs are just too much for volunteers now. Museum Supervisor Steve Anderson will be preparing job descriptions.

The Board is continuing to work through the Custer Estate. This has been a huge undertaking and Board members have chosen to move slowly and carefully toward any final decisions. There have been some very interesting artifacts found among the thousands of objects in the home.

The Society's Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 23rd. The Board encourages all members to attend.

Nancy Fairman, Secretary

What's New

## Gift Shop

New books for sale: *TOWARD THE SETTING SUN, Pioneer Girls Traveling the Overland Trails*; *HEART OF THE TRAIL, The Stories of Eight Wagon Train Women*; *OUTLAW TALES OF WASHINGTON, True Stories of Washington's Most Nefarious Crooks, Culprits, and Cutthroats*; *TRAVELING THE LEWIS & CLARK TRAIL*; *OFF THE BEATEN PATH, A Guide to Unique Places*; *IT HAPPENED IN WASHINGTON*; *MORE THAN PETTICOATS, Remarkable Washington Women*; *PACIFIC NORTHWEST LIGHT-HOUSES*. One autographed hardbound copy of *COAL TO JETS* is for sale for \$50. The book was printed in 1976 celebrating Renton's Diamond Jubilee. We also have a supply of *RENTON - THE FIRST 100 YEARS 1901-2001*, which sells for \$5. Henry Ford School Slates are on sale for \$20 (tax included) and you can have a piece of your old school - perhaps even the blackboard you learned to write on.

VISA and Mastercard accepted.

Society members receive a 10% discount on all purchases.

## Grange Fair 1916

The staff of Renton Historical Museum is researching an article on the 1916 Renton Grange Fair which was held September 14-16, 1916. We are also looking for information about the planning leading up to the fair by the Renton Commercial Club, which preceded the Renton Chamber of Commerce. Anyone who has any material (photographs, advertisements, buttons etc.) relating to this event, should contact Steve Anderson at 425.255.2330 or [saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us](mailto:saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us).

# Rentonians



denotes former Society Life Member

denotes former Society member



# Remembered

**Ray Jon Aliment**

*Jennie Bozzello*

**Larry Bozzello**

*Jennie Bozzello*

**Dorothy Bruce**

*Harold Bruce*

**Virginia Shook Busato**

*Hazelle DuBois*

**Violet Carter**

*Louise George; Florence Delaurenti;  
Greg & Carrie Bergquist;  
Bea Mathewson*

**Sean Chambers**

*Florence Delaurenti; Louise George;  
Gloria Duffey*

**Wallace "Wally" Clarke**

*Rose Camerini*

**Vern Church**

*Geraldine Church*

**Elizabeth Swales DuBois**

*Hazelle DuBois*

**John K. Dobson**

*Wyman & Vicki Dobson*

**Emilio N. Favro**

*William & Matilda Jones*

**Diane Jean Ford**

*Florence Poli Murray*

**Aaron Goodwin**

*Lorraine Goodwin*

**Emerick Kauzlarich**

*Bill & Betty Richards*

**Mary Frances Kossert**

*Shirley Skagen-Llewellyn*

**James G. Murray**

*Florence Poli Murray*

**Edward R. McCaffrey**

*Kelly McCaffrey-Campbell*

**H. E. McLean**

*Judy Hastings*

**Jim Natucci**

*Bill & Betty Richards*

**Maxwell D. Nicholls, DVM**

*Bill & Betty Richards*

**Evelyn O'Donin**

*Madeline Donckers*

**Gail Marie Potoshnik**

*Beth & Mike Potoshnik*

**Nick Puhich**

*Bill & Betty Richards*

**Ellen Raub**

*Mae Boldan*

**Lillian Sauve**

*Fred & Pauline Carpine*

**Nelma Jean Sebenick**

*Mae Boldan*

**Elsie Seel**

*Mae Boldan*

**Rudy Starkovich**

*Alex & Dorothy Johnson;  
Bill & Betty Richards*

**Vincent "Gil" Stewart**

*Don & Carmel Camerini; Fred & Pauline  
Carpine; Bob & Marge Wicks; Wayne &  
Janet Wicks; Lila Campen & family;  
Diane Campen Beyers & family*

**Inez M. Tasa**

*Paul & Lila Houser*

**Elina Bressan Taylor**

*Mary Breda*

**Trudy Whitehead**

*Mae Boldan*

## Recently Departed Members and Volunteers

Violet M. Carter - Volunteer

Sean Chambers

Wally Clarke

Jennie E. Gambini

Maxine E. Gleason

James R. Greggs

Steven Haworth

Wendell Holms

Fred Q. Price

Joe Rutkowski

Vincent "Gil" Stewart

Richard L. Tasca

Charles D. Thomas

Glenn E. Wickham

## General Fund Contributors

Mari Beattie

John Belmondo

Carrie Bergquist

Daniel & Laura Clawson

Axel & Dorothy Johnson

Saramae Landers

Elizabeth Laviolette

Michael & Cynthia Mack

Kay McQueen

June Morrow

Judith Peters

Harvey Sandahl, Jr.

## New Members

Derek & Sherri Almo

Ric & Theresa Anderson

John & Margie Conkle

Hai Thi Do

Judith Richards Ford

David Gilbert

Bob Hunt

Dick Karnes

Michael Marinella

Mike & Cathy O'Brien

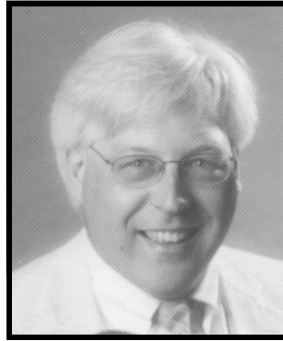
Lowell & Irene Friend-Reistad

Ruth Veenhuizen

Sunny & Margie Wickham family

# Renton Museum Report

By Steve A. Anderson, Museum Supervisor



Perhaps it is because I have two small boys, or perhaps it is the beauty of the imagery. Whatever the cause, their voices are forever silent, yet they are still speaking to me. I am, of course, referring to the hundreds of images contained within the Kane and Evans family photographs albums, a sampling of which were used to illustrate the lead article in this publication. Many of the images involve the Kane's two boys from infancy to their early teen years. These albums were delivered to the museum in 1998 and are only now getting organized for the very first time. Ever wondered what happens when a collection like this is comes through our doors? Well, here's how this business went down.

When these albums first arrived, they presented a number of challenges for Stan Greene, our archivist, and myself. First, the mass of images (500+) were unidentified, a mixture of people and places, some taken in Renton and others on the other side of the globe. Images of war were mixed with those of babies – and there were many recognizable scenes around Renton. There was something compelling about that anonymity - an unknown element that drew me in and demanded that I apply myself to find out what made them so compelling. And yet, the time wasn't there to deal with it at that moment, so the collection was shelved until the summer of 2000. At that point, an evaluation of the collection took off. And so it began.

The albums themselves were literally falling apart – a symptom of their age and obvious use over the last century. The photographs that were glued on each page were also in an unstable environment – acquiring harmful acids from the adjoining pages and glue while exhibiting stains from inserted newspaper clippings and other highly acidic papers/cards and ephemera that were interleaved between the pages of each book. We made the difficult choice to remove the images for further conservation and identification. After completely photocopying each album, we began the painstaking task of carefully freeing the prints. After 3½ weeks of that activity, we began the sorting and identification. Using text provided on several of the images and within the newspaper clippings, we began connecting names to faces by photocopying each image onto one of the museum's photographic work sheets. After a preliminary sort, we had 418 usable prints – many in very good condition – but still containing anonymous faces and places of long ago Renton.

Our next challenge was to garner community help in photo identification. We began with our volunteers. Several of them knew the Kanes or Evans's, but we needed more in the way of family history to make a go of it. Then, Charlie McGarrigle stopped by one day. He had actually worked with Francis Kane in the 1920s, and knew Obadiah Evans. A combination of interview and photo identification got us underway – and Charlie's oral history interview from 1985 didn't hurt either as it generated a lot of information relative to the story. Since we had no members named Kane or Evans, we then solicited the membership for information through this publication and the local papers - and did we get help! Merely by chance, Jim Kane, the son of the donor happened to be visiting Renton and saw a copy of the *RHQ* in the lobby of an attorney

his wife was consulting. As Jim waited for her to finish business, he flipped through the edition and found an image of his great-great-grandfather, William Kane, shown on the back page. He called the museum and we immediately arranged for an oral history interview that day. Jim's contributions were critical to get us off the ball and begin the long process of photo-identification. Our next big break came when Roberta Benedict (whose mother happened to be Doris Kane) called and agreed to visit, look at the images and do an oral history interview. With these critical interviews in place, I began to piece the known and assumed facts together and, atypical of the kinds of "immigration" stories that are usually dealt with in these pages, I decided to follow this family through to its present day descendants. Beginning with William Kane and ending with his daughter-in-law's successful life was not in the plan, but it just worked out that way, as it seemed a natural ending for the story.

We continue to work with the Kane/Evans photographs, which have now been reduced to about 193 images total – the best of the lot, which Lena Evans can be proud of, for she took some very nice photographs. We intend to develop a Power Point presentation titled "Gramma Lee's Picture Book" in the near future utilizing this set of images – and to make the program available for public presentation sometime this coming fall.

On other museum news, we continue to wade through the Custer Estate (that has an equally massive photograph collection). We will also be hiring two part time employees this coming spring. The two jobs will relate to the management of the volunteers and the curation of the artifact collections.

I trust the Kane/Evans story also spoke to you. Please let us know what you thought of it and thanks again for your support.

# Centennial Snapshot

Mrs. Ray Barrett



This photograph was taken around 1910 and shows a Renton Family that was only marginally associated with the Kane and Evans families – but not in the way you might think. The woman standing on the far right is the future Mrs. Ray Barrett, who was married sometime in the 1920s. This name was, of course, identical to that shared by the Ruby Evans mentioned in this story when she married Ray sometime in the 1940s. During the research phase of this article, we found several images of the woman shown here and identified as Mrs. Ruby Barrett. Knowing what we know now about Ruby Evans Barrett, we can state that this is not she. Also during the

research, we learned that Ray Barrett married the woman shown above first, whom we believe is named Elizabeth and that at some point in their marriage, Ray ended his marriage with Elizabeth and began dating Ruby Evans. We believe that this photograph shows Elizabeth's family: a father, mother and several siblings. Can you help us identify them? What was Elizabeth's maiden name, or her father's occupation? We received such great help from the membership on getting the Kane/Evans story done and would again appreciate your help on this image. Please send any information to Steve Anderson at the museum. Thanks again for all your help and support! This image is currently uncataloged.

## 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+) = \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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