

Rhag Cymru at Dyna

From Wales to Here: The life of Mary Ann Edwards Lewis

By Steve A. Anderson

Foreword

In November 2000, Charles Lewis Custer left a substantial estate to the Renton Historical Society. Among other things, this estate consisted of numerous artifacts and photographs relating to ancestors of the Custer and Lewis families. In accomplishing our mission to provide local history experiences to the general public, we now present a part of that ancestry, the life history of Charles' grandmother, Mary Ann (Edwards) Lewis.-SAA

Abergwili

With daffodils blossoming below her, seventy three-year-old Mary Ann Lewis soaked up the rare sunshine from the porch of her large Earlington home. It was April of 1927; the final spring of Mary Ann's long and productive life. Yet on that day, with the sun pouring down, the vista seemed to promise many more years of life and prosperity. As her garden was already planted and the family's chickens were enjoying an early morning romp through the yard, Mary Ann gazed in wonder at the beauty of that day. The blue sky, Mt. Rainier and the

truck farms of the Green River Valley all lay in splendid succession before her. The sounds of the chickens working through the shrubs below, brought back faded memories of an earlier time, a time she had viewed through the eyes of a four-year-old child in Abergwili, Wales.²

The Welsh town of Mary Ann Edwards's birth was nestled in the rural farmlands of the Tywi River Valley.³ There, dairy farms enhanced a natural setting that was, according to local folklore, the final resting place for King Arthur's wizard, Merlin the Magician.⁴ Mary Ann was born to William and Ann Edwards in July 1853,⁵ and probably learned of Merlin's fantastic adventures and King Arthur from a very early age.⁶ She likely grew accustomed to the sounds, smells and sights of agriculture as well. Her father William had inherited the mannerisms and skills of a farmer from his father,⁷ who had leased land and employed people to work it. Since their 145-acre farm was the eighth largest in the parish, the Edwards family had an elevated social status within the valley.⁸

Continued on page 4



The Lewis family home was located at 3303 Beacon Avenue South, which at the time of this image in 1922, was not yet part of Renton. Left to right: David T., Kathryn Lewis (granddaughter), Mary Ann and two guests - the Davis'

Masthead image: The Lewis family gathers before a garden full of flowers c. 1918 on Earlington Hill. Mary Ann Lewis, with her white hair, is seated on the far right and is looking down.



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Renton.
Ahead of the curve

President's Message

By Bob Hunt, President

Hi, There!

Some of you made it to the annual meeting and picnic, and we missed some others. The business parts we tried to keep short and sweet, mostly focused on those chores specifically assigned to the annual meeting. One of them was the end of her second term as president for Barbara Horton and the start of my first.

Let me introduce myself. I've been working with the board since January of 2002, first with the Custer Committee and then with the Museum Committee. I am a Systems Engineer at Boeing, which means I'm supposed to think about the whole of an effort rather than just the details. Those of you at the picnic might have met my wife Phyllis. We have two grown children, Chris who is married and living in Kent, and Jennifer, who is in the Army as a medic. Thankfully the only shots going on where she is in Oklahoma are the ones she is giving new recruits. We're members of the Methodist Church (myself since my folks moved here in '61, my wife since we were married in '78). We live in the Highlands, not too far from McKnight and Highlands Elementary.

The picnic itself was remarkably nice considering the nasty change in the weather over the course of the day. The food was plentiful and very good, Ted McLendon reigned as barbecue operator extraordinaire, Steve Anderson gave a wonderful talk on the matriarch of the Lewis family (see his story elsewhere in the quarterly), and the rain came down in torrents just as he started. Fortunately we had a covered area that seemed to be sufficient for the group.

Some of the other board business included the re-election of Vicky Persson to a new term on the board, the addition of Don Emmons to his first term and the election of the rest of the Executive Board to repeat terms (Bill Gaw as VP and Jennifer Sharp as Treasurer for one year terms and Derek Almo as Secretary for a two year term to re-establish a staggered E-Board). We saw off Ted McLendon and Allan Unbedacht (Allan couldn't attend) as departing Board members. We will miss them.

Barb Horton has left us with a cleaner operation, better documentation and an all-but-signed first-ever City/Society Agreement. It isn't everything we could hope for, but it's taken the better part of two years to hammer out and it gives us a solid base to work with for the future of the Museum. We will have opportunities in the future to make improvements as we break it in.

The only experience I bring that may truly be helpful in making the Society and the Museum better parts of our community is my skill at learning from my mistakes. Hence, if you find a good one don't be shy about pointing it out. I hope to talk with many of the volunteers and members this year and I'd like to hear from you what you want from both the Society and the Museum. If you need to contact me directly, my phone number is 235-4947 and my email address is kittenpah@comcast.net.

Thanks for letting me ramble on for my first effort. I hope to have useful things to talk about next quarter.

Your Fresh-Minted, Greenhorn President
Bob Hunt

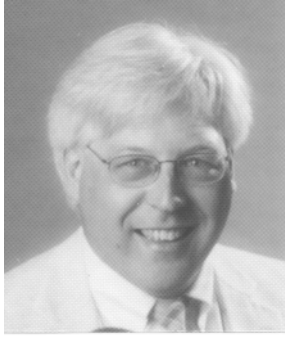
The Renton Historical Society Board meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., at either the Renton Community Center or the Renton Historical Museum. Please call the museum for meeting locations on the following dates: July 28th, August 25 and September 22.

Public hours for the Renton Historical Museum are Tuesday - 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.

Renton Museum Report

By Steve A. Anderson, Museum Supervisor

We are happy to bring you this year's *Renton Heritage 2003*, the annual report of the Renton Historical Society and this museum. The news it brings is upbeat, forward thinking and optimistic. This is in direct contrast to what has been happening in Washington State's museum community over the past four years or so. As reported in the *Business Journal* in January of this year by staff writer Carol Tice, "...as the region's newest museums grapple with budget shortfalls and staff cuts, another crop of still-unbuilt institutions is in the works — and the managers of those planned facilities are trying to avoid making the same mistakes."



Expansions and new buildings, a trend that started in the 1960s, really kicked into high gear in the latter 1990s, only to be slapped silly by the dot-com bubble bursting, 9/11 attacks, and a downturn in the economy and tourism nationwide. Here in the Puget Sound region, the cumulative effect has been devastating to many sites that just opened their doors, and to many smaller ones that have no reserve funds. The Museum of History and Industry, Wing Luke Museum (both Seattle) and the Le May Auto Museum (Tacoma) have

construction plans hanging in the balance; Experience Music Project (Seattle) and Museum of Glass (Tacoma) - over 300 personnel laid off and hours shortened; Bellevue Art Museum - closed indefinitely.

Everywhere, the nation's estimated 16,000 museums are scrambling to restructure their funding bases, reinvent themselves, find their special niche in the community, appeal to wider audiences and bring in both visitor dollars and community donations. At the foundation of it all is the word "sustainability." This can be easily described as a museum board's ability to annually raise the funds necessary to pay for core activities like utilities, staffing, programming and serving the mission of the site. The fickle nature of most museum funding, whether private or public dollars, makes having mechanisms in place to offset times like these just good business. Fortunately, for us here in Renton we've invested the time, energy and fore thought to develop an endowment program that is both growing and funding just these kinds of core activities.

Make no mistake about it though - the challenges we face here in Renton remain numerous. As one of my museum colleagues stated recently, "...no one is out of the woods in this current economic environment!" A recent review of the artifact collections area has made us acutely aware of a great deal of work yet to be done. In the end, though, our membership and stakeholders of the museum are the ones that have and will pull us through any future projects and processes of change, and for that I'm very grateful.

For those of you who made it out to our picnic early in June, thanks for coming and I hope you enjoyed the presentations, food and fellowship we all enjoyed out there in the park. We hope to make this an annual function, mirroring the early Pioneer Picnics that populated the teens and 1920s, 30s, and early 40s.

And one final note: If you haven't already had the opportunity, please go to KCSnapshots.org to see over 500 images from the museum's collections. This completely searchable website features over 12,000 images from 12 King County heritage institutions. During 2001 a small army of volunteers here at the museum spent several hundred hours pulling these original images for use on this "online exhibit" which is hosted by the University of Washington. You can also get to the site by using a link from www.rentonhistory.org, which is the Renton Historical Society's official website.

We'd love to hear from you – so send us your comments and ideas.

Steve Anderson,
Museum Supervisor

Memberships

New Members

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Beth Ann Perry family
Paul Longville
Greg Aalto
D. Brooks Hoffman
Flora Katzer
Patricia Law
Robert & Agnes Ciota
Ellen J. Fromherz
Dorothy Nell Clay

New Benefactor

Jesse & Janice Tanner
Christopher Mehrens
Service Linen Supply
Don & Margaret Schumsky

New Business Benefactors

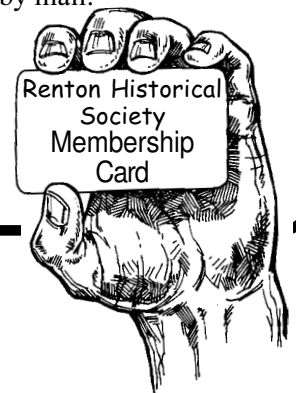
Jesse & Janice Tanner

New Life Members

Ted & Geri McLendon
Andee Jorgensen

Membership Dues

Please check to see if your 2004 dues are paid. One of the benefits of membership is having the Renton Historical Quarterly delivered to you. Memberships not paid by April will not receive the next issue by mail.



(Lewis Story Continued from page 1)

Carmarthenshire farms raised produce common to the area: livestock, including milk cows and sheep, grains, vegetables and, of course, chickens. Abergwili town, with the Black Ox Pub as its social center, was actually quite small. Mary Ann, who sometimes accompanied her mother on shopping trips, enjoyed seeing the calm waters of the Tywi River. Trips to the larger city of Carmarthen were also memorable. By the time she was four years old, Mary Ann had responsibilities, which likely included taking care of the family's small flock of chickens. When her brother John was born, Mary Ann's duties increased to helping care for him as well. Sundays were always a special time, however, as her father kept close to home and the whole family attended services at the local Presbyterian Church.

Just Memories

Though she may not have understood the discussions between her parents, the course of Mary Ann's life was significantly altered the day they announced their intention to immigrate to America.⁹ Mary Ann's mother, pregnant once again, probably expressed concern about traveling across the ocean in her delicate condition, especially with two small children.¹⁰ Over the course of the next two months they traveled with hundreds of other Welsh immigrants, also seeking a new life in America. While at sea, Ann Edwards gave birth. No records survived as to the nature or diagnosis of the circumstances but Ann and her newborn soon died.¹¹ Immediately following their arrival in New York, William was forced to bury his loved ones in foreign soil. Of Ann's personal possessions, he kept that which was closest to his wife: her wool paisley shawl.¹²



MaryAnn was believed to hve worked as a domestic servant while living in Pomeroy following her father's death. This tintype photo shows her (standing) with an apron - a highly unusual way to dress for standard protrait taking. We believe that these two worked together.

Coalport

The west-bound Pennsylvania & Ohio Railroad carrying the surviving Edwards family members stopped briefly in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, providing William with enough time to have portraits taken of his two small children. Disembarking at Cleveland, the Edwards family likely boarded a steam-powered riverboat for the next phase of their trip – ascending the mighty Ohio River to the docks of the coal-mining town of Pomeroy, Ohio.¹³ Once ashore, they eventually settled south of town, in an area known as Coalport.¹⁴ As the industrial heart of the area, Coalport was a far cry from pastoral Abergwili. Mary Ann soon discovered that the town was deserving of its name. Her shoes always needed cleaning as the very ground was black with soot and coal debris.

The reasoning behind William Edwards' decision to trade in his skill and background in agricultural for that of coal mining is yet another mystery that may never be solved. But, in fact, this is what he did, obtaining employment at the Pomeroy & Sons & Company coalmines.¹⁵ While this may seem to be a significant reduction in social status for the Edwards family, living in Coalport was by no means the lowest one might descend socially in this coal mining area. Farther south was a place known as Minersville, which was a "town" consisting of two ravines that served as open sewers. Each ravine had a title: Welshtown and Dutchtown. Both of them were crowded with gloomy, quickly thrown-together tenement housing and literally hundreds of recent immigrants from the "old country."

Numerous Welsh transplants lived in Coalport as well.¹⁶ This provided a comfortable measure of familiarity as many neighbors practiced the Welsh language, protestant religious beliefs and traditional customs. This situation also allowed William to rebuild his life, remarrying soon thereafter.¹⁷ Education was highly valued by Mary Ann later in her life. It is believed that she obtained schooling soon after coming to Coalport. In America, however, she found that the English language was the one spoken by her peers and teachers, giving her Welsh language a secondary position of importance.

As the family became more comfortable in their new home, Mary Ann's father apparently fared well financially. The family dined from expensive bone china and numerous opportunities were taken to photograph John and Mary Ann in Pomeroy's portrait studios. Their clothing also reflects a higher social standing than one might expect on a miner's wage.¹⁸ Mary Ann carried herself in a lady-like fashion all of her life, which leads one to believe that the Edwards family circulated within elevated social circles. But this relative calm was about to be broken.



This image is believed to be Mary Ann Lewis wedding photo, circa 1880.

Mary Ann was eight years old when the Civil War broke out - hardly an age that would have drawn her attention to the issues contested in the great struggle. But while she may not have been aware that this part of Ohio was a vital link in the Underground Railroad,¹⁹ she must have sensed that something was horribly wrong in the world. The county where the Edwards family lived²⁰ was the only one within Ohio to experience military action during the war. Undoubtedly, Mary Ann witnessed militiamen patrolling the streets of Pomeroy and Coalport. The pageantry of a parade of Union troops as they marched through town was another likely memory. Late in the war, nearby

Over the course of the next ten years, the Lewis family also blended into Pomeroy's Welsh community and, to some extent, recreated the lives they'd had back home in Rhymney, Wales. It is not known if Mary Ann first befriended David's sisters, or was introduced to him in some other manner. Eventually, however, the two met and began a courtship that resulted in an 1879 marriage.²⁴

By the time 1883 came to a close, the Lewis family had grown with the arrival of two children, Annie and William. The boom and bust nature of the coal mining industry often left hundreds of miners out of work. This, aside from an adventurous spirit, is believed to be one of the motivating factors behind David Lewis's desire to leave Coalport. He had probably seen the "call for miners" leaflets posted on walls throughout the Pomeroy/Coalport area - increasing his curiosity about opportunities out west. So, with Mary Ann's blessing, he ventured out to Washington Territory to learn more and, hopefully, find better employment. Fate had other plans for this Welshman, however, for he soon returned to Ohio after being burned in a mining accident. But David Thomas Lewis had seen the future.

Buffington Island became a killing field as a Federalgunboat and detachment of cavalry clashed with Confederate raiders. For the most part, though, it would be the war's end and President Lincoln's assassination that would burn brightly in this young girl's memories. Along with her family, the eleven-year-old mourned with thousands who stood in line in Columbus, Ohio and witnessed the president's funeral train passing through town on 30 April 1865.²¹

With the war behind them, a closer, more personal devastation was yet to come. In 1867, as Mary Ann blossomed into a teenager, her father died unexpectedly. Further, brother John became estranged to the family - again without explanation. At this point in history, it is not clear what direction Mary Ann took with her life. As schooling generally ended by the eighth grade, she likely moved to Pomeroy, perhaps working as a domestic servant or living at home with her step-mother while entertaining suitors over the course of the next ten years. By 1870, Pomeroy had grown into the region's industrial center and many more Welsh immigrants were making the move to America.

Continued on page 4

One Mine for Another

One of those immigrants was fifteen-year-old David Thomas Lewis²² who stepped ashore at the Pomeroy docks in 1870 with his three younger sisters and parents. There is little doubt that David felt his lot in life was not going to improve over what he'd just left. In Wales, David had worked throughout the southern Welsh coalfields right along side his father since before his teenage years, and he had seen it all. Coal mining was hard and dangerous work, especially for small boys. Accidents were common, including severe cuts, broken or crushed fingers, fires, cave-ins and, occasionally, death. The mining machinery took its toll as well. Child miners occasionally got horribly mangled or fell into coal chutes where they'd be smothered to death.²³ From David's perspective, the Lewis family had transplanted themselves to an American version of what they had just left behind in Wales! True to form, after settling in, David and his father Benjamin sought and gained employment in the mines of Coalport - just as Mary Ann's father and thousands of Welsh miners had done before them.



The Black Diamond log cabin owned by John Mills and rented by the Lewis Family shortly after their arrival in 1885-86.

(Lewis Story Continued from page 5)



In 1916-17, Mary Ann had two grandchildren, shown here on left is Kathryn Lewis, and sitting on Mary Ann's lap is Charles Lewis Custer. The Custer-Lewis Collection has literally hundreds of such images.

Following his recovery, David was determined to return to the Pacific Northwest. San Francisco's Black Diamond Coal Company had finished the rail connections between Seattle's waterfront and the new coalfields of the Cedar and Green River watersheds. More employment leaflets had been pasted around the town and David was getting the itch to move. Refusing to be left behind yet again, Mary Ann (now pregnant with their third child Margaret), put her foot down and insisted that the entire family go with him. Following the birth of their third child Margaret in 1885, the Lewis family packed up their belongings, boarded an "immigrant train" and headed west once again. It took a little longer than a week before the family landed in Black Diamond. David obtained work at

various points with both the mining company and on the railroad. Within the mine he handled the blasting crews: on the railroad he was head of a section gang laying track. For living accommodations, the Lewis's rented a temporarily vacant log cabin owned by John Mills²⁷ who was just then leaving for California to collect his family. As statehood came to the territory in 1889, the Lewis's fourth child, Benjamin, was barely a year old. Upon the return of John Mills, the enlarged Lewis family moved into a company-owned house situated on a dead end dirt road at the outermost edge of town. This, according to family genealogist William Thorndale, made Mary Ann unhappy because "it was inconvenient for being the farthest in, the farthest from the road into the Diamond." One should know that a coal miner's depressed pay scale of that period did not permit many luxuries. One story related through William Thorndale tells it all:

"The saddest story of hard times was the Black Diamond communal Christmas party, where the children's presents or stockings were hung on a wire strung across the large room of the school house. The daughter of the mine's superintendent got dolls, and David T. and Mary Ann's children each got an orange."²

At right: The Lewis family circa 1892 during their "vagabond" period. This cabinet photography was taken in a Tacoma studio and shows, left to right (standing) David T., Annie, William; (front row): Benjamin, Mary Ann and Margaret.

This apparent poverty, Mary Ann's unhappiness, a work slow-down at the mine, David's adventurous spirit, or perhaps the couple's desire to get into agriculture could have led to their claiming of an 80 acre track of stump-riddled farmland near Chehalis in 1890.²⁹ A "shack" was erected on the property and the family spent one very cold and wet winter there. That spring, they retreated north to Lawson, where David obtained work as a foreman of the dynamite/blasting crew in the mine.³⁰ They remained in Lawson for the next three years.³¹ Then, the Depression of 1893 knocked the bottom out of the coal market once again. This resulted in the closure of numerous mines in the region - including Lawson's. The entire family packed it up once again and moved to Renton. Here, David found employment with the railroad doing track section gang work.

Vagabond Years

Over the course of the next ten years, the Lewis family would continue to displace themselves. They moved between Black Diamond, Lawson and Renton several times over. David even ventured a trip to Rock Springs, Wyoming, at one point, in search of work in its coalmines near the railroad tracks. Once there, "the



wind blew him back to Washington.” Often during the summer months of the late 1890s, the Lewis children supplemented the family’s income by picking hops in the Kent Valley. During at least one of these moves, Mary Ann left her eldest daughter Annie in Renton. She had gained employment as a domestic servant at the Bagley Mansion west of town. Aside from providing additional income, it allowed Annie to stay put in Renton, where she graduated from Central School in 1899, along with brother William.

Now Mary Ann’s children were growing up and in many ways moving out of her sphere of influence. But she remained exceedingly protective of them *and* her family’s reputation – even to the extreme in some cases. For instance, she forbade her youngest son Benjamin from marrying a woman whose father was labeled as “disreputable.” When her oldest son William decided to give amateur boxing a try at a cigar-filled gathering referred to as a “smoker,” Mary Ann was infuriated because the event had been splashed all over the sports page of a Seattle newspaper. When a proposal of marriage was being made towards her twenty-one year old daughter Annie – she investigated the suitor. In that particular case, George Washington Custer made the cut. And why? Well, for starters he was upwardly mobile; came from a family of good standing; was a long-time resident of Renton; had a high school diploma and had a skill. Returning from the Klondike Gold Rush in 1900, George had made his intentions known early on.³² By September 1902 George and Annie Lewis had received Mary Ann’s blessing and so vows were exchanged. By 1905, the Lewises had moved into Renton proper for the last time.



The entire Lewis Clan in the front yard of George and Annie Custer's house at 201 Wells Avenue in Renton, circa 1916. Left to right: (front row) Kathryn Lewis, Charles Custer; (kneeling) William and Edna Jane Lewis, Annie Custer, Margaret Lewis and Mary Ann Lewis; (standing) David T. Lewis and Benjamin Lewis.

(Continued on page 8)

Earlington

It is possible that either Annie's association with the Bagley Mansion or her father's employment with the railroads gave the Lewises advance information concerning future plans for a new community being considered for the hill just west of Renton. It was initially christened "Earlington Heights" in honor of A.J. Earling, President of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad,³³ and the development's backers promised "the richest soil in Western Washington." Great plans were being laid for this next "industrial center" of the region. The Black River, located at the foot of the hill, was to be dredged and eventually turned into a ship canal - making Earlington Heights "the most important fresh water harbor on the Pacific Coast." The Jones-Thompson Investment Company was opening a coalmine there. If this wasn't enticement enough, residential lots measuring forty feet wide and one hundred feet deep could be had for a mere fifty-dollar down payment. One need only raise the ten-dollar per month mortgage payment to stay on the land. David and Mary Ann Lewis (realizing the potential investment, employment and farming benefits of this new development) wanted to buy a lot, but probably lacked the funds.³⁴

At this point, Mary Ann might have wished she had brought a little of Merlin's conjuring skills from Abergwili. For even if they could manage to front the money for the land, the developers failed to reveal that a serious amount of clearing was needed before any house could be built there. Also, there was a chance that the big industrial plans for Earlington Heights might never actually happen (which they didn't). A form of magic did take place, however, as the Lewis's new son-in-law George Custer, bought two southern facing lots on Beacon Avenue shortly after it was platted in the summer of 1907. Then, he either gifted or sublet one of the lots to the Lewises for their home. George also proved to be an accomplished contractor/carpenter and helped David transform the lot.

By 1908 David and George had built a house in a fashion that Mary Ann had always dreamed of. It was a large, southern facing, two-story structure with a view, a porch, an outdoor privy, a large fenced yard, and, eventually, . . . chickens! Within the year, Mary Ann's pugilist son William had married one of John Mills's daughters - Edna Jane, in Seattle. The Lewis's two youngest children, Ben and Margaret, lived at home.³⁵

Within these new surroundings, Mary Ann got into a comfortable rhythm. Housework, cleaning, gardening and tending the chickens took place in the morning. On these occasions, she wore one set of clothing. By the afternoon, however, her social calendar took over. These duties required "more formal" attire for Mary Ann. Whether it was receiving guests, working in the Ladies Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church, or in Seattle as part of the Earlington-Renton Auxiliary of the Orthopedic Guild, Mary Ann dressed the part of the lady.³⁶

A devout member of the Presbyterian Church of Renton, Mary Ann busied herself in other church activities as well, and her friendships in Renton grew. By 1916, she also took care of her grandchildren - whom she treasured. Reportedly, she paid one of them cash to read *Pilgrim's Progress* - reflecting her passion for education and proper breeding. For guests who stayed the night, the Lewis's Earlington house provided warmth on the first floor only. This meant that in the winter one would have to move quickly getting in and out of bed for it could get very cold upstairs!

Twilight

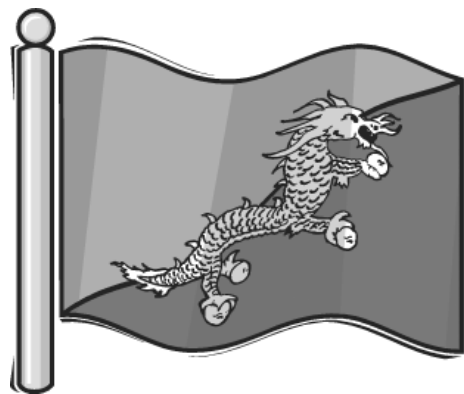
About a month after the daffodils came up in 1927, Mary Ann passed away at her Earlington home. Reportedly, she suffered little, leaving this world following an illness of only a few short hours.³⁷ At her funeral service within Renton's new Presbyterian Church, friends and family filled the pews to capacity. Many of those present spoke about Mary Ann, attesting to her kindness, friendship, Christian values and loving nature. She was laid to rest at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, once again joining a number of Welsh immigrants who had gone before her.

Postscript

Mary Ann's husband, David T. Lewis, lived for another ten years, passing away in 1936. They had three grandchildren: Charles Lewis Custer, only child of Annie and George, who remained single and lived in Renton his whole life; and Kathleen (Lewis) Siefert and Bill Ann (Lewis) Thorndale,³⁸ daughters of Edward and Edna Jane Lewis who both eventually married, had four children between them and lived in various cities in the western half of the United States and Canada. Mary Ann's youngest children Benjamin and Margaret Lewis remained single their entire lives.

Author's Note

I would like to extend my thanks to William Thorndale for his contributions of Lewis family oral history about the "Diamond" and information relating to his great-grandfather David T. Lewis. I also wish to thank Donald Ward Custer, former Mayor of Renton, who has provided literally hours of personal insight to the museum's staff regarding the Custer-Lewis Collection. This story has come from that collection, and future projects will germinate and blossom from it as well. It should be noted that on 6 June 2004 at this year's Renton Historical Society Picnic, the author gave a Power Point presentation of this story at the Riverview Park in Renton, Washington.



Footnotes

- 1 In the Welsh language: *Rhag* (From) *Cymru* (Wales) *At* (towards) *Dyna* (here)
- 2 The old world spelling of Abergwili is "Abergwyly" - but for the sake of this article, we'll use the current spelling - "Abergwili," which means from WELSH *aber* 'mouth' and the river name *Gwili*, itself derived from a personal name meaning 'happy, gentle'.
- 3 The spelling of the river that runs through the valley varies, depending on the source. One such spelling is "Towy", which is probably how it is pronounced.
- 4 Abergwili, Wales features a cave, within which the sleeping Arthurian wizard is reputed to be laid.
- 5 Mary Ann Edwards was born on July 22nd, 1853 at Gelly Glyd, Abergwili, County of Carmarthenshire, Wales.
- 6 It is said that a person can visit Merlin's Hill near Abergwili, where a cave holding the sleeping Merlin is reputed to be, and hear the moaning of a man cursing his folly of love.
- 7 Mary Ann's grandfather, Edward Edwards worked a 145-acre farm in Abergwili in 1851, and so it is likely that her father worked there as well.
- 8 This elevated social status is something that Mary Ann grew accustomed to early on and retained throughout the rest of her life.
- 9 No one is certain about their decision-making process, but it is known that the Edwards family did not own the land, and William was not in line to inherit it - a credible reason for immigrating to America, the land of opportunity.
- 10 Family oral traditions indicate that the Edwards had a third child by this time, a boy named David, although no other documentation proving that has been found a the time of this writing.
- 11 The Lewis Family's oral traditions documenting this event differ: some say a boy was born, some say a girl - but in the end, all say the baby died soon after being born. Thereafter, the child was cited in official records as "Unknown."
- 12 This shawl, along with the family's traveling trunk, was passed down to Mary Ann, and then through Annie Lewis Custer. The shawl is now a part of the Custer-Lewis Collection held at the Renton History Museum.
- 13 Pomeroy's history dates back to 1806 when the first resident arrived at what is now Kerris Run. In 1830, its namesake, Samuel Willys Pomeroy, arrived in the village and claimed the area a good and healthy place to live. Pomeroy and his son-in-law established the coal and salt mines that would turn the village into a prosperous industrial town by 1870.
- 14 "Coalport was established one mile below the corporation line. Here the company have laid out a town and been at great expense to prepare everything necessary for mining and exporting coal; the railways are so constructed that the loaded car descending to the river draws up the empty one."
- 15 The mines of Coalport are nearly two miles below the main village of Pomeroy. Here horizontal shafts are run into the hill, at an elevation of more than one hundred feet above the riverbed. The coal is carried out in cars on railways, and successively emptied from the cars on one grade to that below, and so on until the last cars in turn empty into the boats on the river, by which it is carried to market. The mining is conducted in a systematic manner, and most of those employed are natives of Wales, familiar with mining from youth. Citation from: Meigs County, Ohio, reprinted from Henry Howe's "Historical Collections of Ohio" and other sources.
- 16 Although not as many as inhabited Welshtown.
- 17 We have not been able to establish the name of the new "Mrs. Edwards."
- 18 Although it is not stated as such within this story, after studying these images, the museum's staff believes that William Edwards possibly worked in an administrative or supervisory role within the mine company - though we have no evidence, other than the apparent presence of wealth, to back up that statement.
- 19 The Underground Railroad provided safe houses for runaway slaves fleeing to the north. Meigs County, and Pomeroy had a number of safe houses for just this purpose.
- 20 Meigs County, Ohio.
- 21 Many years following her death, Benjamin and Margaret Lewis were interviewed and recalled their mother. Within that discussion, Ben mentioned that his she "...saw Mr. Lincoln's Train..." a reference, we hypothesize to mean the passing of his funeral train in 1865, since she didn't mention actually seeing the President in person.
- 22 David Thomas Lewis, born March 2nd, 1855 in Rhymney, Monmouthshire, Wales. Died October 20th, 1935 in Earlington, King County, Washington.
- 23 It should also be noted that clouds of coal dust fill the mines and sorting breakers and were inhaled by the boys, laying the foundations for asthma and miners' consumption, or "black lung."
- 24 David Thomas Lewis married Mary Ann Edwards in Pomeroy, Ohio in 1879. Family historian William Thorndale relates that Mary Ann always felt that she'd "married down" in terms of social status, although David Lewis turned out to be a faithful provider for the family.
- 25 Margaret Lewis was born in 1885. These "immigrant trains" were reportedly like rolling campgrounds, with a small potbellied stove in one corner of the car used for preparing meals. It probably took several weeks for the train to make its way to the Renton/Seattle area from Pomeroy/Columbus.
- 26 The town of Black Diamond was one of many Pacific Northwest coal-mining communities heavily populated with Welsh immigrants.
- 27 John Xerxes Mills, Jr., was the son of John Xerxes Mills and Sarah R. Lear. Born 12 August 1850 in Clarksville, Pike County, Missouri and Married 7 February 1878 in Nortonville, Contra Costa County, California, to Elizabeth Ann Lewis. Died 18 September 1920 in Black Diamond, King County, Washington and buried in the Black Diamond cemetery. Mills' daughter Edna Jane married Mary Ann Edward's oldest sons, William Edward Lewis in 1908.
- 28 William Thorndale to Steve Anderson, 25 April 2004.
- 29 In an email, William Thorndale related the following: "I always took the farm near Chehalis down in Lewis County to be David T.'s 'midlife crisis.' It started poorly when uncle Ben fell in the little spring on the property and apparently dislodged some rocks, causing the spring to dry up."
- 30 This job was typically called the "fire boss."
- 31 The town of Lawson was located in the Cascade foothills just north of Black Diamond.
- 32 George Washington Custer was born in 1879 in Newcastle, Washington Territory. His father, Charles Sumner Custer died in Renton in 1889. George went to the Klondike Gold Rush looking for construction work; not dig for gold. He was 23 when he and Annie married.
- 33 This was the same railroad that had just purchased a right-of-way around the base of the hill.
- 34 Prices of the lots on Earlington Hill ranged from \$200 to \$700 for residential lots. It is probable that George Custer paid about \$350 for the piece of land that the Lewis's eventually owned, a historically documented value in 1910.
- 35 Ben worked in Seattle at one of the newspapers while Margaret worked in Renton at the hospital as a secretary/receptionist, and occasionally a "stand in" nurse.
- 36 From interviews with her children, and observing photographs of her, it is clear that Mary Ann made a conscious effort to dress well.
- 37 From *The Renton Chronicle*, 26 May 1927.
- 38 Bill Ann preferred using the name "Wilma" as she got older.

Recipe from the Museum Archives

Welsh Cakes

- 1 ½ cups flour
- 1 1/3 cups raisins
- 4 Tbsp. Butter
- 4 Tbsp. Sugar
- 4 Tbsp. Milk
- ¼ tsp. salt

Mix all ingredients.

Grease skillet.

Fry until golden brown.

Eat with syrup or plain.

They're good cold too.

Pamela Joe Sepstrup - Renton

The Museum Would Not Exist Without Volunteers **By Dorota Rahn, Volunteer Coordinator**

Some of you are not only members of the society but volunteers for the museum as well. However, there are about 10 times more members than volunteers so you probably don't know everybody who volunteers at the museum.

On June 6th, during our Annual Potluck, I tried to express appreciation from the museum staff to our volunteers and I mentioned them by name and by kind of work they do for us. One of the volunteers approached me after the picnic and said he had no idea that we have so many volunteers and that they do such a variety of jobs in the museum because he only knows his volunteering assignments. His view of the world is limited, compared to the full list of activities which are performed by volunteers.

That's right, nobody knows about the tremendous work done by volunteers, unless we speak it out very clearly and loudly. In most cases they volunteer their time, skills, and experience and do not talk about it. However, the value of their work is so great that we want them and others to know they are appreciated very much and that the museum wouldn't exist without them as it would not exist without the financial support of the society members.

It is difficult to decide how to measure volunteers' involvement in the museum. How do we measure their excitement, passion, and loyalty? We can measure the time they spend working for the museum, but it doesn't represent a whole picture. Somebody can spend one or two hours a month at the museum on a very regular basis so we know we can count on this person every month. Another volunteer works on a project for a dozen of hours at a time and may or may not come back. We need them both, as our needs vary a lot.

There are volunteers who work for the museum for over 100 hours a year. Some of them have volunteered since 1984. Stan Greene leads the group. Louise George, Pearl Jacobson, Bea Mathewson, and Laura Crawford are in this group as well. Laura, who is the current Curator, volunteered at the museum before being offered a paid position.

I will accomplish nothing as a volunteer coordinator without the involvement of the Volunteer Committee. In case of difficult issues I always ask Nancy Fairman for advice. She and Ila, Sarah Jane, and Shirley make decisions concerning volunteer activities. They organize functions and other events. Nancy usually buys groceries and party utensils. Ila Hemm does the same whenever she can fit extra activities between her international and domestic travels. Sarah Jane Hisey and Shirley Phinney are devoted to help in every way either by buying or preparing dishes, decorating, and cleaning for different museum events. In general, everybody does everything to make things happen. Cynthia Mack helped me the most when I started working as a volunteer coordinator. As a former volunteer coordinator, she shared all possible information, including the existence of the volunteer committee, so my work could be easier and more efficient. In addition to regular volunteer committee matters, Bea Mathewson and Margaret Feaster are vital in running the coffee shop for vendors



Arthur Allen, one of the young volunteers.

participating in Renton River Days.

There are volunteers who greet visitors at the museum on a regular basis. The museum's existence would be jeopardized without their support. Paid staff doesn't work on Saturdays but there are volunteer greeters at the museum on that day to make sure visitors can enjoy the place. The names of the most devoted volunteers are, in alphabetical order, Helenanne Botham, Dorlene Bressan, Eileen Button, Rose Camerini, Inez Edlich, Don Emmons, Marjorie Gould, Carol Hawkins, John Hightower, Charlotte Jasper, Betty Laviolette, Bill Loken, Key McQueen, Gloria Nichols, Mary Postishek, Margaret Sebelist, and Mary Sutter.

Another big activity at the museum is the education of the public. We have volunteers who serve as tour guides through out the year. An especially intense time is every spring when 3rd graders from all elementary schools in Renton come every day for three weeks for the tour. Special thanks for their hard work to Diane Burrows, Don Emmons, Velma Evans, Nancy Fairman, Margaret Feaster, Stan Greene, Diane Gustaveson, Carol Hawkins, Ila Hemm, John Hightower, Sarah Jane Hisey, Bill Loken, Maryann Mason, John Painter, Shirley Phinney, Janene Sestak, Lorraine Swisher, and Frank Sutter.



Steve Anderson presents Volunteer of the Year Award to Pearl Jacobson.



Volunteers at the potluck (left to right) Margaret Feaster, Mary Postishek, Gloria Nichols and her daughter, Lisa and Nancy Fairman.

There are a few teenagers who devote their time during the summer to help at the museum. They are particularly active during Renton River Days. Nick Straub, Andy Lai, and Calvin Yee ran the museum booth on Kids Day during Renton River Days last year. Shana Straub helped many times in organizing documents and participated in Renton River Days two years ago. Jeremy Webb and Trista Beldin also helped the museum. We are glad to have them here and see that a young generation of potential volunteers is getting involved in preserving heritage.

I mentioned so many names of volunteers and so many tasks they are performing at the museum but instead I could just say that 63 volunteers served over 2550 hours at the museum in 2003. It means on average one volunteer worked 40.5 hours last year. It also translates to the amount of \$41,000 at the federally established rate of \$16.05.

There are many things I can't include in this short note. All stuff that makes working at the museum exciting and important, and fun. The volunteers skills, experience, and knowledge are priceless. There is no way to measure it except to feel it by heart so the museum staff does. There is also no way to show proper gratitude except to say a simple thank you. **THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!**

P.S. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Dorota Rahn, at 425-255-2330 or by e-mail at drhan@ci.renton.wa.us.

A few volunteers perform special assignments. Marian Sutton transcribes oral histories. Sheila Mottern does very extensive historical research. Marla Valverde helps with docent trainings.

We are proud to announce we have a group of younger volunteers for whom it is usually difficult to find time to volunteer in their busy days. Jason Seth, Rinku Lakhpat, Arthur Allen, Chris Noel and his mom Jeanne are crucial to registering information about artifacts in the museum database. Thanks to them the museum staff will be able to enforce "intellectual control" of the artifacts and serve clients from the Renton community better. Janene Sestak joined us in April and she has already become important part of the volunteer team. Annelise Henry helps to keep the museum exhibits clean.



Volunteers and members of the RHM&S (left to right) Doug Kyes, Sonja Kyes and Don Jacobson.

Carpenters Needed

We are looking for several volunteers who'd like to do some exhibit work within the museum. If you are a carpenter, builder and someone who like to paint – we just might have a fun volunteer position for you. Several projects are in the works, so if this sounds like something you'd like to try, please call Dorota Rahn, Volunteer Coordinator at the museum, 425/255-1570.

From Collections

By **Laura Crawford, Curator/Collections Manager**

Over the past year, many generous individuals have donated items which have been added to the Museum's permanent collections. The staff at the Museum wish to thank the following individuals for their contributions of historical items and photographic images – your efforts are invaluable in helping us preserve Renton's history!

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

The mission of the Renton Historical Society and Museum is not limited to accepting and preserving the many items of memorabilia and photographic images generously donated by our members and the general public. Museum Mission requires we seek out and engage in activities which will enhance and complement the existing Collections for future generations. Since June 2003, the following objects have been added to the Museum's permanent Collections:

- Wooden school desk similar to one used in Renton Elementary Schools c.1900.
- Native American trade beads (props for Duwammish exhibit)
- Ladies Auxiliary to Carpenters and Joiners porcelain cup and saucer
- Deed for Lot in Renton
- Commemorative playing cards picturing planes manufactured by Boeing Airplane Company.
- Seattle District Council of Carpenters pin
- Assorted 1980's toys to fill-out Century-to-Century Exhibit.
- 4 Native American (Salish) gathering or berry baskets to complement Duwammish exhibit and collections.
- 2 PACCAR and Gladding McBean employee ID badges
- Pre-WWII 16" Table Globe inscribed "Property of School District # 403 Renton, Washington."
- Early version of Japanese Arisaka Rifle Bayonette.
- 1938 Calendar from the Renton Grocery
- Argonot Café Menu with Renton Boeing Plant B-29 cover illustration.
- WWI canvas ammunition belt, 1915.
- Book entitled "The Coal Miner's Pocketbook: Principles, Rules, Formulas and Tables," 1916.
- Set of 4 Pokemon gold gaming cards collector series
- Large assortment of International Order of Oddfellows IOOF regalia and ceremonial artifacts, sashes, tunics, pendants, headwear.
- Triple XXX brand handled cup/mug.
- Hazen High School cheerleader sweater, c.1987
- Program for Thanksgiving Day Renton High School Football Game, 1949
- Bartender's local Union No. 596 pin
- Commemorative videotape package covering 50 years of Boeing history
- Springfield rifle, demilled, 1903.
- City of Renton councilman badge.

NEED TO ACQUIRE

Museum staff are continually seeking to expand and/or complement the Collections by acquiring items which represent current places, people, or events in Renton history. If you or anyone you know have items of interest pertaining to the following, please contact the Museum.

- Hazen, Liberty and Renton High School memorabilia, uniforms, awards, and photographs –
- Any Renton businesses (1990 – present)
- Women's and Men's costume jewelry and personal adornment items (1970's to present)
- Photographic images of events and sites 'around town,' (1980 – present)
- WWI Artifacts - 1903 or 1908 US Bayonnette, personal Army items.

OUR OTHER "ASSETS:"

While preserving material artifacts are an important part of the Museum's mission, much of the work that goes on 'behind the scenes' would not be possible without the contributions of Museum volunteers:

Arthur Allen, who has tirelessly scanned over 3800 photographic images from the Museum's photo archives into the Collections Management database over the past eight months...

University of Washington intern Sarah Iles who helped establish the donor records in the Museum's database earlier this year, and catalogued the early jewelry collection. Sarah is planning to return this October to continue volunteering in the Collections Area...

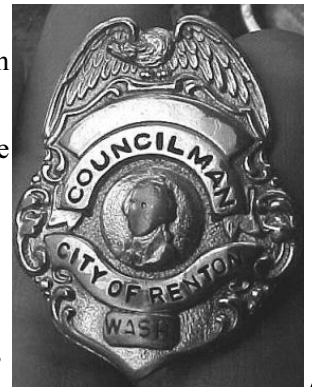
Pearl Jacobsen who has faithfully administered the registrar function each Wednesday and helped keep current on accessioning – and congratulations as "Volunteer of the Year"...

and last – but certainly not least - **Jean and Chris Noel** who have helped set up new catalog records for many of the 'unknown' or unidentified photographic images 'found in collections' over the past several months.

Mystery Badge

The badge pictured below, which we recently acquired on Ebay, was worn by members of the Renton City Council. It is unique because we had no record of anything of this kind being issued to anyone but police officers. Unfortunately, the seller had no idea what time period this would have been issued in. If anyone knows when these badges

would have been used, or has any others like this one, please call Tom or Steve at the museum and let us know.



Volunteer of the Year Award: 2004

Also at the picnic, Museum Director Steve Anderson recognized Pearl Jacobson for her significant contributions as the museum's registrar, being awarded the Volunteer of the Year 2004. Pearl's involvement with the museum dates back to the middle 1990s when she volunteered to do manual entry of objects and photographs. Since that time, she's learned to work with the museum's collections management software and data base – assisting in getting the collections into the 21st Century. Pearl brings an uplifting spirit to the office with her work and kept the museum's collections in line with professional registration standards. Never one to try something new, she plows through collections with determination and purpose and is a valuable team member of the staff. Thanks Pearl for all you do for us and the citizens of Renton!



Pearl Jacobson

The George W. and Annie Lewis Custer Heritage Citizenship Award



Steve Anderson presents Clark Petersen with his award.

This year, just prior to the annual Renton Historical Society picnic held at Riverside Park in early June, the Board of Trustees recognized the contributions to local history by Clark Petersen, recently retired City of Renton Library Director. Since starting with the City in the 1960s, Clark has brought a sustained "heart and soul" heritage effort to promoting Renton's history for all of its citizens through his position with the City. He has also provided resources to the city's museum staff, programs and facilities, thereby increasing professionalism during the past 10 years. He has freely given of himself, his expertise and his time to the board and staff far above and beyond his official capacity and provided leadership in heritage issues as a citizen of Renton to the benefit of all. As he was to be out of town for the picnic, he was given the award by outgoing president Barbara Horton at his own retirement party, which was attended by hundreds of well wishers. Thanks Clark, for all you've done to preserve and promote the history of this city.



Right: Barb Horton makes a presentation at Clark's retirement party.

Obituaries

Tom F Ater
 Virginia Bailey
 Ivel Barton, Jr.
 Mary Boggs
 Jo I. Bosley
 Robert R. Brown
 Sharon R. Buchanan-Robinett
 Frank "Gene" E. Cooper (MEMBER)
 Arvey J. Creek (MEMBER)
 Della M. Danielson
 Gary Ray Eide
 Walter W. Eixenberger
 William J. Flynn (LIFE MEMBER)
 Delmore J.J. George (MEMBER)
 Andrew Gigli (MEMBER)
 Michael J. Girias, Jr.
 M. Maxine Grubescic
 Jeanne A. Hamel
 Martha L. Hayes
 Iline Holmes

Verne L. Ingram
 Debra L. Jay
 R. Roger Johnson
 Bernice Evelyn Jorgensen (MEMBER)
 Leroy Kelly
 Alyene Vander Leest
 Benjamin Lewis
 Phyllis E. McGerry
 L. Wayne Miller
 Estelle Joanne Newton
 Helen L. Pasich
 Jack W. Powell
 Mary M. Ravert
 Evelyn Rosenstrom (LIFE MEMBER)
 Frances A. Sandman
 Agnes E. Shane
 Diana May Galiano Shuman
 T. L. "Bob" Stevens
 Teresa Tonelli (LIFE MEMBER)
 Edward L. Ware, Jr.

Memorials Over \$100
 Arvey Creek (MEMBER)
 Clark Petersen
 Bernice Jorgensen (MEMBER)
 Constance Benjamin

Contributions

General Fund Contributions Under \$100

Barbara George
 Dan Foley
 Dr. Christopher Mehrens
 Olga Munro
 Bob & Pat O'Dell
 Vernon & Jonelle Petermeyer
 Pythia Sisters
 Rhododendron Temple #30
 Robert & Agnes Ciotta
\$100 & Over
 Marjorie Lott

Archival Preservation Contributions

The Rotary Club of Renton
 Bill Gaw

Boeing Matching Gift Fund

Lloyd Hoshide
 Glenn H. Anderson

United way Matching Gift Fund

Greg Berquist
 John Thompson

Join the Renton Historical Society Today!

Name: _____
 Membership Level: _____
 Business Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City:State: _____ Zip: _____ + 4 (_____)

Please make checks payable to the Renton Historical Society.

VISA/MASTERCARD # _____ Ex.Date: _____

Your Signature: _____

- Please share your e-mail address with us: _____
- Please send me a volunteer application form. (32/1)

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

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

- Student Individual(\$8+) = _____
- Senior Individual (\$8+) = _____
- Individual (\$10+) = _____
- Senior Couple(\$12+) = _____
- Family (\$15+) = _____
- Benefactor (\$50+) = _____
- Business (\$40+) = _____
- Corporate (\$1000+) = _____
- Life (\$250+) _____
One Time Only
- General Fund Donation _____
- Endowment Fund Donation _____
 In Memory of: _____

Total enclosed: _____

Rentonians Remembered



denotes former Society Life Member



denotes former Society member

Ray Jon Aliment
Jennie Bozzello

J. Deane Arndt
Greg & Carrie Bergquist

Gene Ballestrasse
Frank & Dorothy Caniparoli; Katie Gilligan

Larry Bozzello
Jennie Bozzello

Dorothy Bruce
Harold Bruce

Virginia Shook Busato
Hazelle DuBois

Clifford C. Chamberlin
Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Dale Church
Merna Lasco

Gene Church
Merna Lasco

Lena Church
Merna Lasco

Gene Cooper
Mervin & Grayce Thomas; Mike & Beth Potoshnik; Anita Russell Jones; Alex & Bertha Russell; Homer & June Dolen; Jim & Judy Barei; Anne Butko & family; Ron & Sharon Clymer

Arvey Creek
Melvin Simpson; Roberta Daniel; Roy & Norma Fournier

Ira Leona Creek
Roy & Norma Fournier

Betty Cuykendall
Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Elizabeth Swales DuBois
Hazelle DuBois

William J. Flynn
Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Katie Gilligan

Andrew Gigli
Zelima Vidmar; Mildred Faull

Arville Whitehall Gilmore
Renton High School Class of 1940

Michael J. Girias, Jr.
Greg & Carrie Bergquist

Aaron Goodwin
John & Joyce Goodwin Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Eva Goodwin
John & Joyce Goodwin Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Daisy Goodwin
Charles Goodwin

Lorraine Goodwin
Anita Burkett; John & Joyce Goodwin Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Ermo Gregoris
Frank & Dorothy Caniparoli; Ninfa Gregoris & family

George Grubisic
Anne Butko & family

Maxine Grubisic
Grubisic/Righi/MacNamara family

“Stretch” Grubisic
Grubisic/Righi/MacNamara family

Dr. Leo Heye
Louie & Pam Barei

Joseph S. Howard
Pearl Wolf

Velma Howard Jarrell
Pearl Wolf

R. Roger Johnson
Mr. and Mrs. Woody Clare; Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Bernice Edward Jorgensen
Patricia Baker; The Edwards family (Jeanne, Susan, Steve, Craig); Janice & Alvin Metz; Catherine Rutkowski; Zena Cochran; Zelima S. Vidmar; Jack & Elaine Connell

Leo Lasco
Merna Lasco

Narda Lemert
Anne Butko & family

Phyllis E. McGerry
Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Shirley Nightingale
The Rose Turner Service Guild

George A. Pasco, Jr
Louise George; Catherine Rutkowski; Carmel & Don Camerini; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Lila Houser

Marcella Quintinskie
Katie Gilligan

Albert Rosenstrom
Lillian Rosenstrom

Evelyn Rosenstrom
Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Lillian Rosenstrom; Vivian Lovegren; Tom & Loretta Merrill; Toshi Fujikado; Chuck & Nancy Barr; A. J. Low, Jr.; Richard Lucotch

Reino Rosenstrom
Lillian Rosenstrom

Diana Galiano Shuman
Gloria Duffey; Homer & June Dolen

Teresa Busato Tonelli
Louise George; Mr. & Mrs. Roy Malmassari; Berniece Jones Schwartz; Mr. & Mrs. Frank Caniparoli; Dolores & Robert Nielsen & family; Wanda Capelaro & family; Cindy Ballestrasse; Bruna Ballestrasse; Edith Ballestrasse; Olga Lewis; Criss Barrett; Juanita Sheets; Katie Gilligan; Ninfa Gregoris & family

Rosanne Westphal
Anne Butko & family

Centennial Snapshot



This image of Florence Guitteau was taken around 1920. The Guitteau Family came to Renton via Wisconsin, Minnesota and Seattle, around 1910. The family consisted of Josephine, their mother, and three daughters, Florence, Lucy and Olive. They lived at 129 Meadow Avenue in north Renton, along with numerous cats, whose names ranged from “Tom” to “Blackie”, “Scat”, etc.. Florence became a teacher and was on the first faculty of the new Renton High School when it opened in 1911. When World War II broke out, Florence made it her business to get involved in whatever way she could, creating literally thousands of scrap books that were sent to injured soldiers in hospitals in England. Later in the war, she began Renton’s first clothing drive for orphans of England and Europe – sending literally hundreds, if not thousands of pounds of pre-fabricated or newly made children’s clothing to the many orphanages in Belgium and France. For these efforts, Florence was awarded a medal from Edward V, King of England – a medal that was recently discovered in a Renton home and donated to the Renton Historical Society by Gary Freilinger (along with numerous other Guitteau objects, photographs and ephemera of that era.)

Following the war, Florence moved around to a number of City of Seattle and King County school systems, and eventually married Roy Storey, another Renton pioneer. Sometime in the late 1940s, the Storeys moved to Cordova Alaska, but kept their ties with friends in Renton. Eventually they returned and Florence helped to start the Renton Historical Society in 1970. She is considered one of its founding members.

The Guitteau Family Collections currently consists of over 1,500 images of Renton, primarily north Renton, from the period of 1910 through the 1960s. If you know of the Guitteaus, or have any affiliation with either Florence, Lucie, Olive or Josephine, we’d like to hear from you.



Renton Historical Museum
235 Mill Avenue South
Renton, WA 98055

“This medal, called the Meritorious Service Award, was presented to Florence Guitteau by King Edward V of England for her service in providing clothing for orphans and literally thousands of scrapbooks for wounded soldiers recovering in the hospitals of England and Europe following World War II.”

