

# In The Garden of Eden

A Kennydale Story  
By Steve A. Anderson

In the Beginning, there was no Kennydale.



Above: Native American site, c. 1890

What did exist was only a barren, heavily scarred wasteland that stretched out to meet present-day Mercer Island. As the glaciers receded, archaeologists assert that the Shu-Bahl-tu-Ahbsh or "Drying House People" moved into the area near present day May Creek. Several longhouses occupied the beaches a short distance to the south of the creek, along with numerous drying racks and smoke houses used to cure fish – thus giving rise to their name. According to scholars who have studied the Duwamish culture, Native American habitation existed in this area for over 10,000 years prior to any contact with the outside world. The Native Americans living here developed a culture that coincided with nature - harvesting the prodigious sockeye salmon and smelt runs. They also developed a religion and culture that focused on the natural flora and fauna. This helped them put their world in perspective.

Several thousand years later, on the morning of 26 January 1700, Ah-YAH-hos, the earthquake monster of Duwamish mythology who lives beneath the waters of Lake Washington, awoke and shook the earth violently for several minutes. The People didn't know what to make of it. That now documented nine plus magnitude-subducting quake sank shore lands throughout the region and created the land now known as Mercer Island. The event lowered the shoreline just west of the area we now call Kennydale. The fully forested tableland was instantly submerged - where it remains to this day.<sup>1</sup> The arrival of Euro-American explorer/traders in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century set the stage for significant technological changes that both improved and complicated the lives of the Shu-Bahl-tu-Ahbsh People. These changes culminated in the Indian Wars of the 1850s. The treaties that preceded this conflict ultimately removed most Native Americans from the land of their forefathers. Several Indian families held on but were marginalized by the influx of newcomers, industry and development that began in the early 1860s.



Above: Coleman Port in Kennydale, c. 1970





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**Admission:**

\$3 for adults

\$1 for children

Always free to members and to the general public on the first Wednesday and third Saturday of the month.

**Board Meetings:**

July 27 6:00pm

August 24 6:00pm

September 28 6:00pm

Please call the museum for location.

# President's Message

By Bob Hunt, President

It's summer! Our annual Society Membership meeting went off very nicely. We had great attendance, interesting people to talk to; a short and efficient business meeting and Steve got to tell another story. You may have noticed some changes in the main gallery if you haven't been in the museum for a while. In addition to the Renton at War exhibits, we've torn down the old display in the middle of the gallery and put up a coal mining exhibit, and we've loaned the Howard Cooper fire truck back to the city to be kept in station 12, in the Highlands. That gives us some space to seat people for events like this.

I've been writing about where we have been as a Society and where we are going. The efforts to put us in solid financial shape for the long term are started, but we've a long way to go if we don't want to find ourselves stumbling just as our vision starts to make good. But what does that vision look like? Why do we contribute our time, efforts and financial support to the Renton Historical Society and the Renton History Museum? How do we want this vision to shape itself for the next 10, 20 or 30 years, or even a century from now? We start with the vision I wrote about last quarter:

Capture the Past, Educate the Present, Inspire the Future

To whom does this vision belong? We've written it as the vision of the Society as it relates to our support of the Museum. The vision, then, is the vision of a Historical Museum, one located in and serving Renton. As much a part of this city as its streets, schools, churches, libraries and most importantly its people.

Renton has always struck me as a practical, yet visionary city. We have been fortunate to have had citizens leading our community who recognized that the choices we make are ones we will live with for a long time to come. Our parks large and small, our libraries and public buildings and the institutions that we have are the work of others who came before (some who are still here making a difference). This is a city that grows more carefully and thoughtfully than just about anyplace that I have been, and it somehow keeps a small town feel in the shadow of the biggest city in the state. And that is a good thing.

The Museum is here because of a vision some of those people held to preserve a thread of the story of a changing city. I think the words we've put together echo that vision very well. How do we plan to achieve that vision in the future? We've made an excellent start to a process that should last as long as the city exists. How do we reflect the care and thoughtfulness that helped build this town in our own plans to advance this Museum, in other words, to advance this vision?

Here are some quick thoughts. You can agree with them, argue with them or make up your own. Let me know how you feel.

Capture the Past: Gather information, stories, artifacts with some meaning and put them in context. Store them in a way that allows us to retrieve them long into the future and understand their meaning.

Educate the Present: Make our resources accessible to our community, not just to look at but to tell stories that explain this town and the changes it has seen. This cannot be passive, we must find ways to place it out where people find it easily, maybe even unexpectedly.

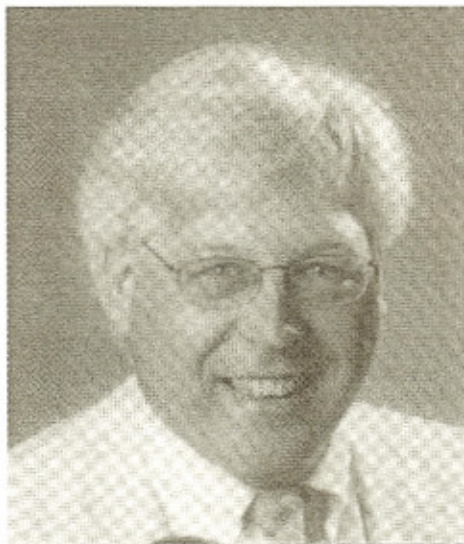
Inspire the Future: Use our energies and resources to show the continuity of the past with today in such a way that we understand the character of this community and what we need to do to for the future to maintain and grow that care and thoughtfulness.

We'll talk next issue on how we might support this work with practical action. Think about what you would do to make a better Museum to meet these goals.



## Renton Museum Report

During my entire life, I had never spent a Memorial Day weekend at a cemetery. I guess it was the combination of not having my dearly departed relatives buried even remotely close enough to visit their gravesites on that weekend, and well, I just never had the opportunity to attend.



That is until this past Memorial Day. My son David is in Boy Scouts and his troop formed the honor and color guard for the flag ceremony they conducted at a cemetery in the Auburn area. So, I went with him, first to the practice session, where they also spent a few hours cleaning tombstones and placing American flags on veterans' graves – then to the actual ceremony the next day.

As my son and his troop conducted their service project, I watched as various people showed up. These folks came armed with large bouquets of flowers, balloons, battery powered grass clippers, towels, various cleaners, and a mission to make their loved one's gravesite shine. Some merely brushed

away loose grass and worked a wetted rag over the polished marble – others spent up to an hour of elbow grease honoring the dead. When done, each spent a small bit of time contemplating, perhaps remembering and reminiscing with another family that was there – and then they'd leave – balloons bouncing in the wind, flags fluttering and the marble tombstones gleaming from what little sun was showing that day.

I walked around the cemetery, looking at some of the graves. Standard texts included "Beloved Father" or "Beloved Mother", perhaps an engraved image of someone fishing, camping, hiking... a mountain scene with deer. Occasionally there was an image of the actual person buried there. There were the graves of children. There were graves of veterans killed in all wars – the flags marked them well. Some had brief descriptions of the person buried beneath, including personal traits or interests. Of course, almost all I saw had dates of birth and death – almost, because some folks (who were still alive) had their names on the tombstone and birth dates only. That was just a tad creepy for me.

Then I remembered the old jokes about "museums" being similar to "mausoleums." I attempted to reconcile that comment with what I was viewing. All I saw within the cemetery were the factual remains of a person – along with their actual remains. One burial site dating to 1893 simply stated "Father of Dora, Husband to Florence". It had the fellow's name, years of birth and death, and a nice carved rose above it all. This fellow lived a long and healthy life – some 80 years. And while nice to know, I suspect that he was much more than just "beloved" husband and dad. While I couldn't expect to find anything more on him within the confines of the cemetery's walls, I was sure a museum or archive somewhere would offer much more if that information had been saved and shared by the surviving family members.

Some have chosen to do that here at the Renton History Museum within our family history archives. We're continually working to make sense of the past. Struggling through that process, we learn about the periods of time, the circumstances of place and people. We also learn a bit about ourselves. As we con-

tinue our processing of past collections, I'm amazed by the breadth and depth of material we continue to uncover. I know there are some museums out there that have the feeling of a mausoleum – once something comes in the door, the tag/label goes on and it stays in the display forever static – kind of like a burial of an individual. But that is not how a progressive and viable heritage institution should be. It should be a moving, living organism that is constantly evolving to keep up with society's changing expectations. Even cemeteries do that to a degree – the newer sections having flat grave markers that provide for easy maintenance – verses the older sections that have above ground monuments and pillars at almost every turn.

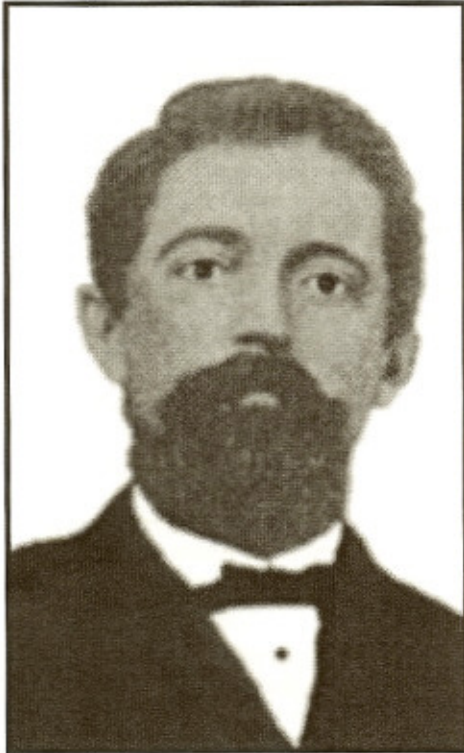
Now I'm not advocating flattening our museum to make maintenance easier – no. But changing it to reflect new ideas and histories is a goal I do embrace. Making it a place where one can find out more than just a birth and death date is also a goal – albeit one that will take more time to bring to fruition – but doable all the same.

So, I've now visited a cemetery on Memorial Day and I learned something. Next time I see my dad, I'm going to thank him for his service to our country in WW II – you do the same for the veteran or civil servant (police/fire) in your life.

Steve Anderson



Kennydale Story continued from page 1



James Coleman

Coal discoveries in the Newcastle and Renton areas spelled money for Seattle's industrialists. One pioneer family, the Sullivans, homesteaded the area previously occupied by the "Drying House People" just south of May Creek. In 1875, James and Clara Colman bought the Sullivan homestead and began their lives on what would become "lower Kennydale." Colman hailed from Connecticut, where he had been involved in government and politics. Only one acre had been cleared of trees. In what became the Colmans' "promised land", they began the task of carving out a life from the vast forest next to the lake.

Two years later, a Seattle industrialist named James Colman (no relation whatsoever) brought his Seattle & Walla Walla Railroad spur through the area. By doing this, the industrialist established a direct rail link between the mines at Newcastle and the bunkers of Seattle's waterfront (think Colman Dock, Colman Pier, Colman Building, etc.). Though somewhat indirect, the rail or "car" line did open up the eastern and southern shore of Lake Washington for further development.

Within ten years, the Connecticut Colmans were enjoying new, albeit distant, neighbors. You see, most folks were acquiring huge tracks of acreage – sometimes through less-than-legal means. Like many other aspects of frontier life, the claiming of public land through illegal transactions was a common occurrence at that time. It was also something that Connecticut's James Colman would not stand for as a county commissioner in 1882. In what proved to be his undoing, Colman aggressively pursued legal action against those he believed were breaking the law. In one case against an illegal land grab on Mercer Island, Colman proceeded with another man to Seattle via rowboat to provide testimony in a case against the defendant, George M. Miller.<sup>2</sup> Colman and his rowing partner never made it. Their bodies were found shot to death a month

later. Though Miller was tried three times, a conviction could never be reached: however, Kennydale's Colman Point is named after this martyr to public service.<sup>3</sup>

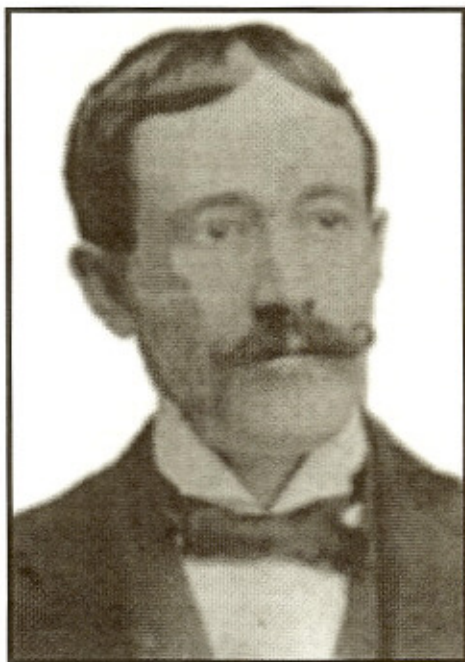
It was about this time that the Culver and Beil Families established themselves on the flanks of the hill. These folks were loggers, and darn good ones at that! Between 1885 and 1910, they (along with a good many competitors) helped to log off much of what we now call Kennydale. These family-owned companies were usually small with three or four men using a team of oxen and, if lucky, a steam donkey. They ran things frugally, utilizing "skid roads" down to the lake. There, they log-boomed the trees together and moved them to awaiting mills in Seattle.

But the Culvers and Beils weren't the only ones pursuing their American dream. Henry Jones, a Black American coal miner, had been drawn to the Pacific Northwest in the 1880s. Once here, he worked in the coalmines of Franklin as a strikebreaker and then at Newcastle along with other blacks drawn from the south. By the turn-of-the-century, Jones had left Newcastle, bought land in Kennydale, and settled on acreage. The Jones paid \$9.10 taxes on 21 acres of land in 1920.<sup>4</sup> In 1901, he worked at the Denny-Renton Brick Works and later with Gladding McBean. Along with other black miners, Jones also helped establish the Black Baptist Church of Kennydale, which flourished until the early 1940s.



Culver Family in Kennydale , 1905





Clarence D. Hillman

## The Developer

On the surface of things, one might think that the arrival of the Hillman Investment Company to the Seattle area in 1896 was a good thing. Clarence D. Hillman was a “sharp operator” (as some have called him) and a prominent real estate developer who had made millions. He also possessed years of experience getting land development deals off the ground.

Continuing with this story’s Biblical metaphor, one cannot be sure if Hillman represents a devilish “snake in the tree of life” or simply a “snake oil” salesman taking advantage of earnest, hard working, yet trusting, people. Unfortunately, C.D. Hillman was a conniving, disreputable and fraudulent con artist who knew and used his talents to optimal effect. He had developed an unethical style of marketing real estate - which had made him rich, several times over. For instance, he promoted and sold “tillable” acreage that was under water most of the year. He openly lied when it benefited his pocketbook and, in general, he worked marginal deals for his clients to his best financial gain. Everywhere he did business, in Seattle, Rainier Valley, Pacific/Algona, and northward to Everett, Hillman practiced this con game. He was constantly being sued and brought to court on charges of impropriety and land swindling. Even so, he continued to sell land.

By 1904, Hillman’s grip was tightly coiled around the lakefront property surrounding Colman Point, just southwest of Newcastle.<sup>5</sup> The area was still scantily populated, hilly, somewhat cleared in large tracts but in other places still dense with trees. It had little in the way of roads and it was full of ravines. Primary access was by way of the railroad spur previously mentioned - or by boat. Having already established a *Garden of Eden* just south of Seattle, Hillman named his new venture “*Lake Washington Garden of Eden Tracts*” because of the rich soil he purportedly discovered there.

It is not known if Hillman approached Harry Patterson or visa-versa. But one thing was for sure; regular transportation to and from this new venture was sorely needed. So Patterson established a water taxi service between Rainier Beach and the *Lake Washington Garden of Eden*. Utilizing two boats, *Rambler*, and later *Valdez*, Patterson became a fixture on Lake Washington.<sup>6</sup> Another vessel, *Fortuna*, was also well known and made several trips a day around Mercer Island. Hillman built a dock at the foot of the hill so that eager buyers could be brought to and paraded around his new venture.

In August 1904, Hillman’s spin-meisters ran a promotional piece in a Seattle paper claiming: “Millions of brook trout nearly a foot long run up May Creek in this Garden of Eden. Here a person can purchase a four room cottage and five acres of fine land on Lake Washington for \$775, \$25 down and \$10 a month, with a fine view of the mountains and a car line close by.”<sup>7</sup> Amenities began to appear. A weather-boarded, four-room school-house opened there in September 1904.<sup>8</sup> An early resident recalled: “Those who went to this first school remember that the floorboards were so full of knotholes that they served very well as wastebaskets for all scraps.”<sup>9</sup>



Above: Logging in Kennydale, c. 1890



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Hillman marketed his new property relentlessly. Both he and Frank Kenny, his top salesman, whipped prospective clients into buying frenzies by hiring actors to show up and "outbid" each other for the prime lots. And the *Lake Washington Garden of Eden* lots sold like pancakes. Sales began to slow, so on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1906 Hillman chartered a train and packed it with prospective clients. Using the car line mentioned above, he seduced them into buying by promising "Five Acres and a Cow and a Half".<sup>10</sup> By the end of the promotional push, approximately one hundred individuals had succumbed to Hillman's influences. Practically no one got their "Cow and a Half."



At each small farmhouse, chickens were raised, vegetables grown and strawberries picked. A small business district sprang up around that area designated as a railroad station. As for Hillman's *Lake Washington Garden of Eden* branding idea: the U.S. Postmaster refused to allow a post office to be sited there because the title contained too many words. To solve that small problem, in 1906, he changed the location's name to match his wife's maiden and brother-in-law's last name of "Kenny." From that point on, it was Kennydale.<sup>11</sup>

Timber, however, remained the primary industry of the area. And though it lacked in roads and basic services, Kennydale possessed the advantage of elevation. Up until 1916, the Cedar River flooded annually and at times threatened to bring devastation to entire Renton populace as the dam upstream seemed to be about to burst. Long time resident Gwen Kinne remembered: "... I particularly remember one time [in 1911] when it was feared that the dam on the river would break. The whistle blew many times and sent us scurrying . . . to the hill above Kennydale."<sup>12</sup>

Clarence D. Hillman successfully subdivided and sold eight *Lake Washington Garden of Eden* tracts before a soured Everett land deal finally caught up with him in 1912. Charged and convicted of mail fraud, he spent eighteen months in a Washington State prison - after which he moved south and restarted his con game in California never to be seen here again.

## Getting Around

As previously mentioned, Hillman often sold lots "site unseen" by his clients. When the buyers finally arrived in the area, they found only dirt trails, many with tall stumps positioned in the direct center of the thoroughfare. One could walk a distance quicker than by horse or wagon.

George Colman's Stanley Steamer made its Kennydale debut in 1911. As related by Pauline Kirkman: "Until the time of good roads and automobiles, folks used the train or the boats on the lake for travel. [Aside from these,] the only way to get to Renton then was to travel about a mile and a half up the hill to the east until you found the first road heading south. This connected to another long, winding dirt road, which finally ended up in Renton. The total distance was about five miles."<sup>13</sup>

The high railroad trestle east of the old school was built around 1877. "Fred Turner who grew up there remembers the boys liked to dare each other to walk that trestle, always wondering what they'd do if they were caught in the middle by a train."<sup>14</sup> In that sense, it was considered



Above: Kennydale's first post office, 1907



somewhat of a rite of passage for Kennydale's teenage boys to take the risk. Turner's father had come to work for Peterson Logging where he ran a donkey engine. He also sold dynamite. In those days there was no limit on buying or selling explosives. Everyone needed dynamite to remove the huge stumps. Later Turner sold lots and then the lumber to build houses on the lots.<sup>15</sup>

Around 1918, the first "road" along the lakeshore appeared. It was the era of Prohibition where the law of the land forbade the creation or consumption of alcohol. As one might guess, illegal bootlegging operations sprang up everywhere - especially in Kennydale. The remoteness and sparsely inhabited nature of the place gave it a unique, almost isolated, feeling. Being heavily overgrown with brush and trees, and having clean water made it optimal for whiskey distilling.

Art Wood remembered: "They had stills up along May Creek . . . you could walk out on that great big wooden trestle at night and look down the canyon and see little old charcoal fires twinkling from all the different stills going. *There were a lot of stills.* On boat houses [along the lake] by Kennydale and over by the mouth (of May Creek) they'd run [the booze] down [into the water] in gunny sacks - their beer [gin, whiskey, etc.,] with a rope on so when they wanted it, they'd pull it up. When [government revenue agents] raided, they couldn't find it and it was kept cool in the lake."<sup>16</sup>

The lake had also become a natural building site for saw and shake mills. Many had sprung up around the early teens, but by the 1920s, there were several substantial mills dotting the shoreline from north Renton up through May Creek. The area had also become a natural swimming hole for both Renton and Kennydale residents. Log booms littered the lake into the 1980s. The last of the mills arrived in the 1940s as Barbee Mill, run by the Cugini family. This mill just recently closed.



*Patterson's boat provided access to Kennydale, 1910.*



In 1926, the Horace Rogers family built what could be called Kennydale's only bona fide roaring twenties mansion. The picturesque 5½-acre estate featured a huge house with pillared porch and sweeping views of Lake Washington. The site resided on Lake Washington Boulevard until 1970, when it was demolished to make way for new residences to be used by the Griffin Home Society.

During the Depression, things were hard for most everyone. Kennydale seemed to beckon those hardest hit, and those who prospered. Stories about hobo camps are woven into early Kennydale history. One resident remembered: "...when I was about ten years old we were picking blackcaps and wild blackberries at the foot of the hill toward Kennydale and we stopped to get a drink at a lively, crystal clear little spring, as we knew it was the best water in the whole wide world. There was a grove of trees to the left of the road on the beach of Lake Washington and there we saw three men squatted around a campfire, and they were cooking something in tin cans, which they stirred from time to time. We watched for quite awhile . . ."<sup>17</sup>

*Kennydale story continued on page 8*

*Left: Steam Donkeys like this helped to clear many trees in Kennydale, c. 1890*





Above: Graduation class of 1906 - Kennydale School

## War & Recovery

During the Great Depression, in 1939, the Kennydale School Board decided that it was time to construct a fire-proof school building. Works Progress Administration (WPA) money paid for materials and labor, with dedication occurring that same year. The school-house was very near the railroad tracks. So near, in fact, that the rumbling approach and departure of the train was a daily excitement within the classrooms. In 1942, the Renton School District began their massive reorganization to increase efficiency in operations. Kennydale School District #147, founded September 12, 1904, and consisting of 209 students and seven teachers, was effectively folded into the Renton District's operations by popular vote. The town of Kennydale, however, remained distinct, completely outside Renton City limits. In 1948, additional classrooms were added to the Kennydale School. Again, in 1970, a completely new Elementary school was built, and the older structure razed.<sup>18</sup>

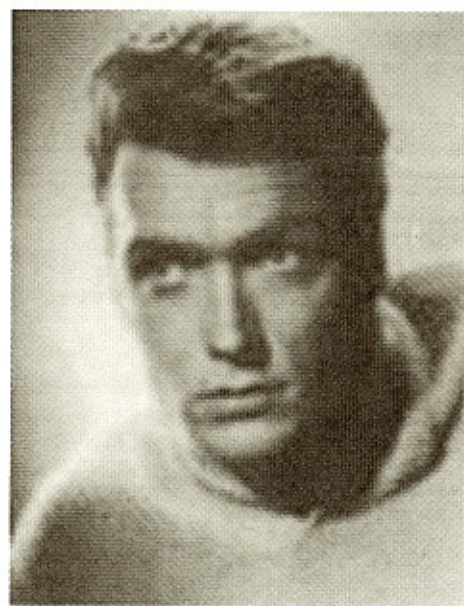
Shortly following World War II, several Kennydale boosters purchased a surplus barge from the Navy in Bremerton. This item was moved to Lake Washington, dragged up the hill to its present location where it became a neighborhood icon: Kennydale Hall.<sup>19</sup>

## Annexation Wars

When the federal highway program started laying pavement in the 1950s, Kennydale remained isolated by its geography. The highway construction opened up an area that was already being "discovered." One such person was a future movie star named Clint Eastwood who briefly worked at Kennydale beach as a lifeguard in the late 1950s. Kennydale now had an "upper" and "lower" area - labels that demark those neighborhoods today.

As Renton's commercial airline industry took off, Kennydale offered a "close in" option for aerospace workers' housing. With I-405 now providing easy access, the lakefront properties and the beautiful views contained within Kennydale made it highly desirable. Growth came in leaps and bounds. But the prosperity brought problems. Basic services such as police, fire, roads and utilities were insufficient. For example, Kennydale's small, cash-strapped, all-volunteer fire department wasn't able to keep residents safe.

Rumors of annexation to Renton began to spread.



Right: Clint Eastwood was a lifeguard at Kennydale Beach in the late 1950's.





Above: The Kennydale Fire Department, c. 1940

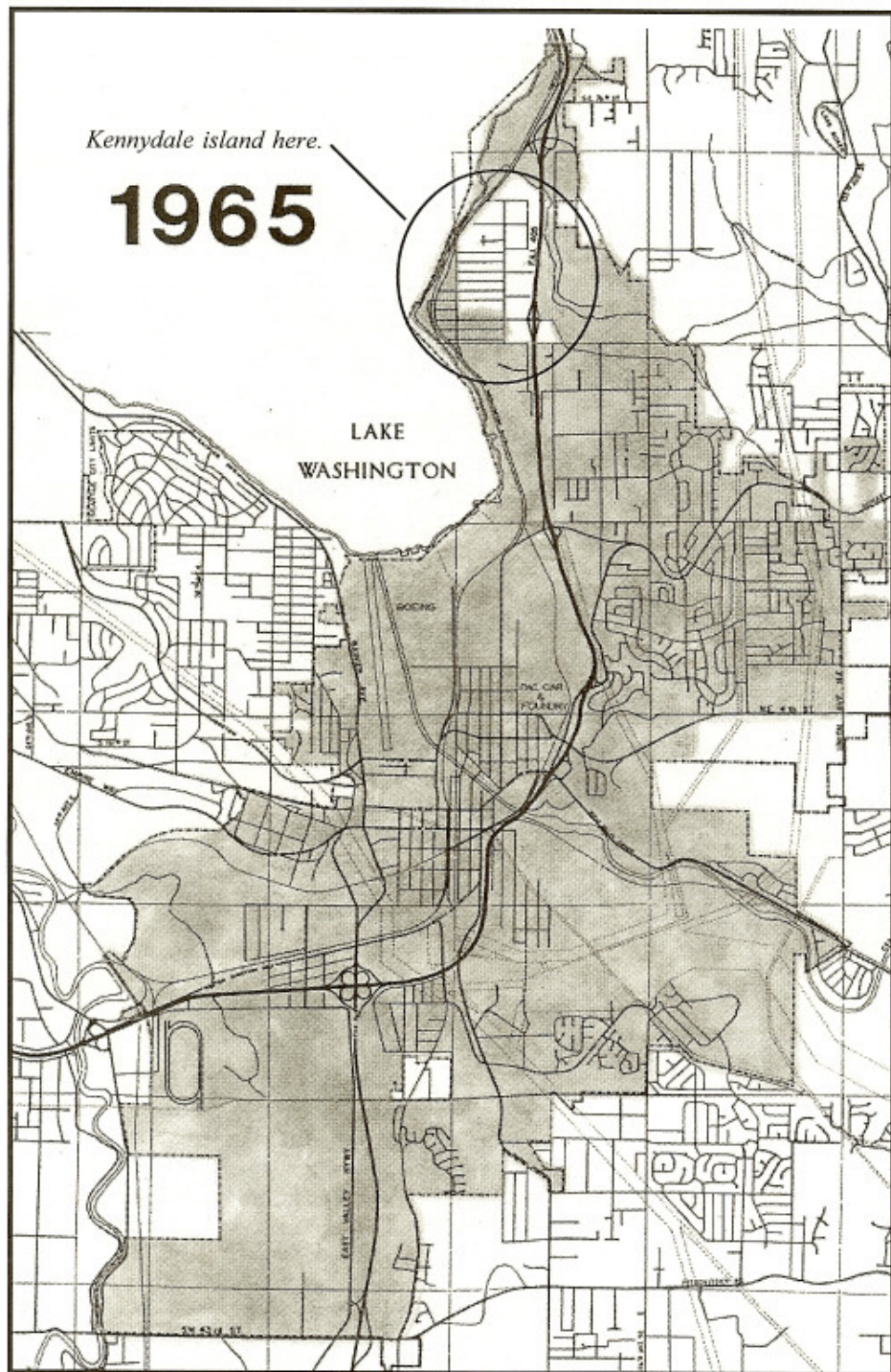
As it turns out, Kennydale's residents began petitioning the City of Renton for annexation sometime around 1958-59. Renton's council members unanimously decided in favor of the addition to the north; however, just before the annexation was to take place, a significant number of Kennydale people filed to remove their names from one of the petitions. Annexation, it seems, was viewed as a threat by some. While many in Kennydale felt it would benefit the area, a concentrated group got cold feet and fought it – fearing increased taxes and the loss of autonomy/identity that Kennydale had enjoyed for so many decades. This anti-annexation movement took the council members by surprise – but they continued with the annexation proceedings anyway. The “anti-annexers” filed a restraining order with the hopes of defeating the City's processes. This incident was just one of many “bumpy” annexations that eventually led to legal action and a court case.

In another incident, another section of Kennydale residents simultaneously petitioned both Bellevue and Renton for annexation. This was viewed by both city councils as a ploy to force the county to develop a marina in the disputed area. While relations were amicable at the start, the “Annexation War” between the two cities heated up a month after the petitions were filed. At stake were some very valuable waterfront properties, and a possible marina. While relations between the two councils became heated – it was Renton who pre-empted Bellevue by accepting the petition first – which became law the next day. It is this reason alone that the northernmost section of Kennydale belongs to Renton today and not Bellevue.

Kennydale's “anti-annexers” group successfully delayed annexation for nearly ten years. The “Kennydale Island” (the unincorporated space) became a sore point with council members and the city at large. By 1969, with their delaying tactics all spent, the “island” was finally assimilated into Renton's city limits. Other smaller sections of Kennydale would be folded into the city during the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

*Kennydale story continued on page 10*





Above: This Renton annexation map shows the "Kennydale Island" that existed for 10 years.

## Epilogue

The growth of Kennydale over the past thirty years has been phenomenal. Land values in lower Kennydale's waterfront and view areas have skyrocketed on an annual basis. In 1992, Kennydale resident Mike Lowry won the election and would be our State's Governor until 1996.<sup>20</sup> The area continues to thrive in both uniqueness and identity, maintaining one of the oldest and most active neighborhood associations within the city. In 2005, the old Kennydale School from the 1970s will be razed to make room for a newer building designed to meet the education needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Above it all, Kennydale truly remains a "Garden of Eden" for many of its old and new residents.

- 1 George Miller had publicly threatened to kill Colman if he ever pursued the case against him.
- 2 Coleman Point is the prominent landmass jutting towards Mercer Island in lower Kennydale.
- 3 "Kennydale Days" by Pauline Kirkman - (Mrs. James Kirkman), circa 1985, hereafter cited as Kirkman's Kennydale.
- 4 By that time Newcastle was one of the region's leading coal producers
- 5 The *Valdez* was a 40-foot long steamboat, which would accommodate 25 to 30 passengers. One of Patterson's routes took him up the east shore of the lake about a mile and a half to Belt Line Shingle Mill, across to Mercer Island, around the end and up the west side, stopping wherever a flag indicated a waiting passenger. Taken from "Kennydale Days" by Pauline Kirkman, circa 1985 in the Kennydale files of the Renton History Museum.
- 6 Kirkman's Kennydale.
- 7 The Hazelwood School was in operation around 1915. It was incorporated into Kennydale's school district sometime before 1939.
- 8 Kirkman's Kennydale.
- 9 As far as is now known, Mrs. Kate Lawrence Atherly was the only one who, by being very persistent got both the cow and calf with her land. "They Came, They Saw, They Stayed: When Pioneers Reached Kennydale", *Renton News Record*, 7/31/ 1952.
- 10 Kirkman's Kennydale. Opinion is divided on who Kennydale was named after. Some say it was Clarence Hillman's wife. Others insist that it was his brother-in-law who was also his head salesman, Frank Kenny.
- 11 "Recollections of a Cola Miner's Daughter", by Gwen Love Kinne, first published in the *Renton Historical Quarterly*, May 1975.
- 12 Kirkman's Kennydale
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 "Art Wood's Story of Growing Up in Renton", from an interview with Lorraine McConaghy, first published in the *Renton Historical Quarterly*, February 1991.
- 16 "More Remembrances of Early North Renton", by Dail Butler Laughery, first published in the *Renton Historical Quarterly*, November 1973.
- 17 Now in 2005, that school is to be razed to make room for a new building.
- 18 Note dated 1986 from John G. DuBois, Living Memorial Association of Kennydale, in the Kennydale files of the Renton History Museum.
- 19 Democrat Michael "Mike" Edward Lowry was born March 8, 1939 and served as the twentieth governor of Washington from 1993 to 1997. Lowry was born and raised in St. John, Washington, and graduated from Washington State University in 1962. He had a brief career working for the Washington State Senate and as a lobbyist for Group Health before being elected to the King County Council in 1975. He was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1978, where he served until 1989. He twice ran unsuccessfully for the United States Senate; once in 1983 to replace Democrat Scoop Jackson, and once in 1988 against incumbent Republican Slade Gorton. He was elected governor in 1992. Source: <http://mike-lowry.biography.ms/>.



### 3rd Grade School Tours

By Dorota Rahn, Volunteer Coordinator

The Renton History Museum, in cooperation with the Renton School District, has been giving tours to third grade students for over 20 years. This year was very special because we made changes in the logistics and curriculum of the museum tour. Teachers received materials to prepare students in advance for the visit at the museum. Docents were trained in giving a full tour of the museum to each group of students instead of presenting just one of the stations. In other words, each docent was assigned to one group of third graders and gave them a tour of all the curriculum exhibits.

Students were given some hands-on activities ranging from touching cedar bark and coal, drilling wood, using washboards, and beating a rug. They got to experience how Rentonians worked 100 years ago. Two third grade teachers from Renton Park Elementary commented that "...the experience for the children has been wonderful. They especially loved the hands-on (activities) at each station. The docents were excellent in sharing their knowledge about Renton's history."

Part of the project, in the amount of \$7,200, was financed by the grant awarded to our museum by 4Culture's 2004 Heritage Cultural Education Program distributing a small part of the King County Lodging Tax funds among cultural organizations. Some of the expenses, such as printing curriculum materials, bus transportation, hands-on supplies, etc., were covered by the Renton School District, Parent Teacher Association, and our museum. Fourteen docents volunteered 78 hours by giving tours to 1,000 third graders.

We are currently in the process of assessing the program's effectiveness. The tour guides accepted the implemented changes. A majority of them liked giving a whole museum tour to one group of students only as they were able to build a rapport with them. It allowed docents to be more effective in interpreting Renton history. Thank you to everybody involved in the Third Grade Social Studies Curriculum Project this year. However, our work is not finished yet, as we plan on making constant improvements to this redesigned program.

### The Obituary Connection

By Janene Sestak



In the fall of 2004, Renton History Museum office manager Daisy Ward came up with the idea of keying in data found within the Museum's obituary collection. This is important information to those doing genealogical research, public research requests, and general historical information gathering. I became involved in this project in early 2005 and have logged in excess of one hundred obituaries from the year 2000. Many precious hours have been dedicated to typing these articles accurately.

Entering data into the Museum's Past Perfect program on the computer has become quite a challenging task. I consider the information dealt with as being sacred, honorable and valuable to Renton residents and their families. A considerable amount of personal information is contained within each obit. These portray the dignity and love generously given by the families of those who have died within this growing and thriving city called Renton. Each meaningful word about a person's achievements and affiliations is typed carefully with respect. Personally, it amazes me how abundant God's mercy is towards every life He gives.

If there is one most exciting aspect about researching family history in Renton, it is this: every resident is somehow connected with society as a whole. This means everyone can find an important part of his or her life in a collection of articles saved in our obit files. If you have an obituary that we do not have, would you please submit it to our office? Daisy Ward said, "The obituaries the museum collects must be of a Renton resident for at least 50 years, or of a native Renton family, or of a professional with a prominent affiliation with Renton." Many obituaries now in our possession need to be typed into the system. Daisy once again notes: "Hundreds of them have been saved back to the 1930s. It takes an afternoon to do about six, and I have a five-hour day. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to work on them last week!" Daisy continued on to enthusiastically say, "You get family connections with the names you hear all the time at the museum. This could involve a current member or a donor of the museum."

Steve Anderson, the director of the museum, has been working with the museum's photograph collection in an attempt to identify people – with some success. In addition to this, the "search tool" on the computer helps to search out subjects and names. In the same way, the married and the maiden names and any other names of a person can be entered into the "people" section at one time. This provides excellent coverage for one wishing to conduct a thorough search of the collection.

Everyone is encouraged to access his or her Renton ancestry here, even if distant relatives are being searched for. The Renton History Museum has a collection of about 150 family histories. You can now visualize how much effort this project takes! If you can spare an hour or two, you are invited to participate as a data entry volunteer. Rediscover the rich ancestry of Renton residents who influenced the city's future by shaping and directing its course. Come visit us and we will help link you to further insights about your past.



## Historical Society Awards Presented

At the 38th Annual Meeting of the Renton Historical Society, held at the Renton History Museum on June 14, numerous individuals were recognized for their contributions to local history, the Renton History Museum and the Society.

**Teri Katzer**, representing the Talbot Hill Neighborhood Association, received the 2005 *George W. & Annie Lewis Custer Heritage Citizenship Award* for the tireless efforts of the Talbot Hill Neighborhood Association, which brought greater awareness of Talbot Hill and Renton heritage through the development and implementation of the Talbot Hill Coal Car Sign Project. The Association developed project funding, gathered oral histories from long time residents, motivated their neighbors into action and brought the project to a complete and successful realization.

A special award was presented to **Sarah Iles** for her continued support over the past year as a Master of Arts candidate in Museum Studies at the University of Washington. Her year culminated in the creation of the Society's first donor database and the inventory and cataloging of the George W. Custer materials and archives as found within the Society's Custer-Lewis Collection. The Trustees of the Renton Historical Society and the Museum staff wished to recognize Ms. Iles' significant contributions and show our appreciation for her accomplishments while working here towards graduation and a career in museum work.

Outgoing Society Trustee **Bill Gaw**, Treasurer **Jennifer Sharp** and Endowment Chairman **Ken Becker** were also recognized for their many contributions over the years. Gaw's light-hearted perspective as its Vice President these past four years brought dry wit, perseverance and continual encouragement that helped to find common ground on difficult issues. Sharp brought a heightened sense of credibility, accountability, professionalism and personal enthusiasm to the office and prudently managed Society financial assets with order and understanding. She accommodated Board of Trustees and Museum staff alike, and exhibited the interpersonal skills essential in a viable nonprofit setting. Becker's role in the creation, reformation and astonishing growth of the George W. & Annie Lewis Custer Endowment Program helped to shepherd the fledgling \$65,000 fund in 1997 to over \$1,400,000 during the past eight years. Becker brought a rational, prudent and common sense approach to investing Society funds and exhibited leadership and fiscal responsibility in his work on the Board of Trustees and with the Endowment Committee.

**Arthur Allen** was recognized as *Volunteer of the Year* for an uncompromising and Herculean effort in scanning, loading and organizing over 11,000 images of Museum's photographic database and for working tirelessly throughout the year, assisting the staff while amassing over 880+ hours of volunteer time to benefit the Society's and Renton History Museum's mission to wrest intellectual control from the many historical photographs now in our collection.



Continued on page 13



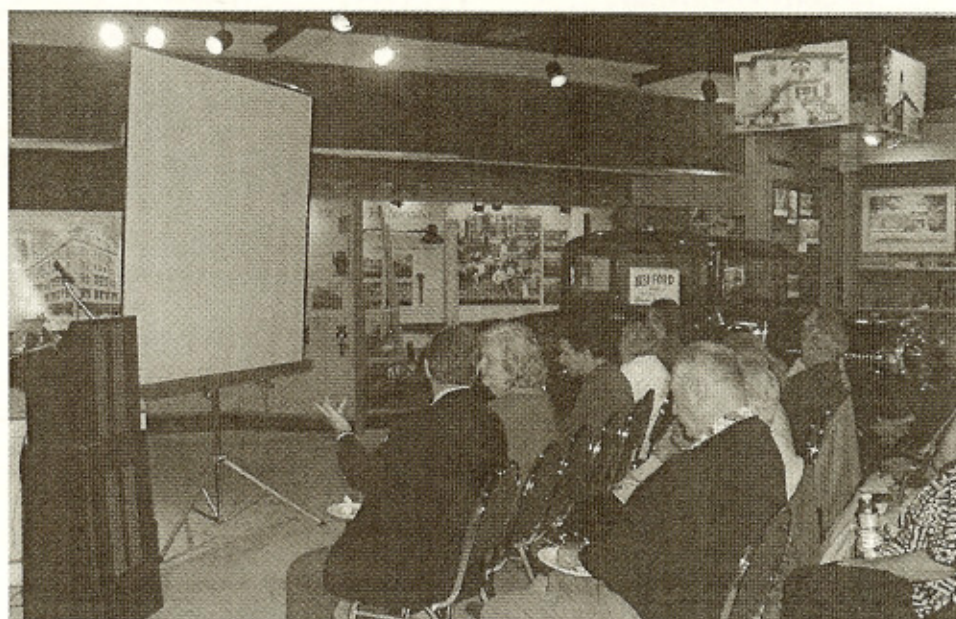


Nancy Fairman received *The Volunteer Coordinator Mentor Award* for always being available and providing valuable insights and continuous support to the Renton History Museum's Volunteer Coordinator in a very kind and encouraging way. Rose Camerini received *The Most Consistent Greeter Award* for tirelessly greeting visitors at the Renton History Museum on a regular basis and not skipping a single month over many years of service. Mary Postishek received *The Most Supportive Greeter Award* for her always accepting last minute greeting assignments and helping to have the Renton History Museum open during regular hours on Saturdays. Janene Sestak was presented with *The Most Enthusiastic Volunteer Award* for eagerness, an uplifting attitude, and enthusiasm in learning about every aspect of

museum work and for continuously striving to do it in the best possible way. Frank Sutter obtained *The Most Captivating Tour Guide Award* for actively engaging preschoolers to third graders during the Renton History Museum tours by making them interesting, interactive and funny. Marilyn Behar received *Museum Support Award* for her efforts over

the past ten years in bringing individuals into the Renton History Museum setting, providing skills and learning experiences to individuals in an effort to help them learn job skills and obtain meaningful employment. Simona Castro was given *The Spit and Polish Award* for her weekly cleaning assignment these past three years of the Howard Cooper Fire Engine and the Model A Ford of the Renton History Museum and for keeping them bright and clean.

The Renton Historical Society meets annually during the first part of June. For more information, please contact the Renton History Museum at 425/255-2330 or contact Museum Director Steve Anderson at [saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us](mailto:saanderson@ci.renton.wa.us).



## Donations

**Mezzanine Project**  
*Gladys Walker*

**\$100 AND OVER**  
*Dennis & Kathleen Stremick*

**Endowment**

**New Members**  
*Gene & Judy Craig*  
*Diana Ford*  
*William L. Huntington*  
*Eric Nordin*  
*Art Pozner*  
*Bill Zobbie*

**New Patron Benefactor**  
*Barbara George*



# Obituaries

## March

- Frances Bisiack "Fannie" Potosnik
- Arlene J. Bosley
- June Hogan Carpine
- James L. Carriveau
- Charlene Hemphill Dickey
- Lea F. Hanson
- Barbara Medgard
- Dan R. Miles
- Leila G. Milosevich
- Ted Pfeifle
- Jeannette H. Ragan
- Alice Saunders
- Betty Terry
- Rosalee M. Walker
- Lewis M. "Red" Weyant

## April

- Evelyn E. Allyn
- France M. Callaghan
- Ray G. Chavey
- Jack Colombi, Sr.
- John D. Fawcett
- Betty Gieldseth
- Ethel G. Jones
- Frank Jacques
- Emma Livermore
- Angelina Miller
- Nela Miller
- Lucille Plano Puhich
- Shirley Webb

## May

- Edwina Brunette
- Mary Omack Copeland
- William S. Lewis

# Mary Postishek Remembered



I have a sad message to share with our volunteer community and the Society's membership. Mary Postishek, one of our long time volunteers, passed away on June 17. Her main task was greeting visitors at the museum. She was very accommodating in accepting last minute assignments and helping to have the Renton History Museum open during regular hours on Saturdays.

I was always fond of her and liked talking to her. Besides, Mary saved me from coming to the museum on some Saturdays when I had trouble finding a second greeter. Last time we hosted her on Valentine's Day. She was already in the nursing home, and friends made sure she came to the museum on that day. I was very happy to see her. A few days later she had a stroke and never really recovered. I visited her at the Talbot Center for Rehabilitation a few times. Last time was on Friday morning. I brought her a Special 2005 Certificate for the Most Supportive Greeter and some flowers. We wanted to thank her for her dedication to the Renton History Museum. Unfortunately, this last time Mary was unconscious. I didn't know she passed away the next day.

It makes me sad to know that she is no longer with us. I still remember the way she pronounced my name, slightly changing it. I remember her complaints about her eyes, as her vision got worse. I remember she walked down the steep hill to the museum on the days of the greeting assignments because she was afraid to drive. Usually other greeters drove her back home but sometimes she had to walk up the hill. I remember she turned 90 last fall. And I remember she didn't like the idea of staying in the nursing home and always talked about coming back to her house. I remember she was a wonderful lady and I will never forget her.

Thank you Mary for being with us and making such wonderful contributions to the city's history.

*Dorota Rahn*  
Volunteer Coordinator

## 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/Teacher Individual(\$12) \_\_\_\_\_
- Senior Individual (\$12) \_\_\_\_\_
- Individual (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_
- Senior Couple(\$20) \_\_\_\_\_
- Family (\$30) \_\_\_\_\_
- Patron Benefactor (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_
- Business (\$40+) \_\_\_\_\_
- Corporate (\$1000+) \_\_\_\_\_
- Life (\$1000) *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

**Ann Repvoz Basset**  
*Christine Grubestic*

**Charles Bisiack**  
*Christine Grubestic*

**Dorothy C. Bruce**   
*Harold Bruce*

**Carol Dobson Buettner**  
*Lila Houser*

**June Carpine**   
*Fred Carpine Family*

**Victory Anthony Carpine**   
*Beth & Mike Potoshnik*

**Jack Columbi**  
*Louie & Pam Barei; Al & Shirley  
Armstrong*

**Mary Omack Copeland**  
*Mike & Beth Potoshnik*

**Virginia Deleon**  
*Fred Carpine Family*

**Charlene Church  
Hemphill Dickey**  
*Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Greg &  
Carrie Bergquist; Jim & Fran  
Bourasa*

**John D. Fawcett**  
*Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Renton  
High School Class of 1940*

**Bernadine Gebenini**  
*Ron & Barbara Dengel*

**Betty Gieldseth**   
*Margaret Sebelist; Inez Peterson;  
Bert & Evy Nord; Ethel Swanson*

**Aaron Goodwin**   
*Richard & Patricia Sell*

**Daisy Goodwin**  
*Richard & Patricia Sell*


**Eva Goodwin**   
*Richard & Patricia Sell*

**Lorraine Goodwin**   
*Florence Delaurenti; Richard &  
Patricia Sell*

**Robin Goodwin**  
*Richard & Patricia Sell*

**Gladys Williams Hiatt**  
*Evelyn Johnson*

**Bill Lewis**  
*Renton High School Class of 1940;  
Mike & Beth Potoshnik*


**Emma Livermore**   
*Bea Mathewson*

**Dora Menagli**  
*Marth Kingen*

**Nela (Belmondo) Miller**  
*Louise George; Vivian Burmester;  
Robert & Gild Youngquist*


**Arnt Olson**  
*Mario Tonda*

**Postishek Family**  
*Mr. & Mrs. Richard Moore*

**Lucille Plano Puhich**   
*Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Corrine &  
Dick Lucotch; Louise George;  
Renton High School Class of 1940;  
Madeline Donckers; Catherine  
Rutkowski; Christine Grubestic and  
Sharon MacNamara; Harold Bruce;  
Rena Crosariol Beck; Don &  
Carmel Camerini; Anne Butko*

**Frances Bisiack Potocnik**   
*Bert & Evelyn Nord; Mary Kell;  
Joellyn Richter; Don & Donna  
Bisiack; Dick Bisiack; James  
Muletta*

**Jackie Sherritt**  
*George & Lillian Poff*

**Barbara Shinpoch**   
*Louise George; George & Lillian  
Poff; Rachel Thomas; Calvin &  
Willis Roberts; Jim & Fran  
Bourasa; Jerry & Barbara Shellan;  
Scott & Gaye McClellan; Terri &  
Rick Scappini; Lee & Judy Baker;  
Greg & Carrie Bergquist; Sharon  
Brown; Don & Carmel Camerini*

**Bob Smothers**  
*Mildred Thurston*

**Betty Terry**  
*Hazelle DuBois*



# Centennial Snapshot



*Caption: As Renton River Days celebrates it's 20th Anniversary, it is fun to show Liberty Park in 1919-20 during a summer gathering of Rentonites. This event is probably the gathering following the 4th of July Parade which was held annually for many years during this era. The grandstand rests under the shadow of Renton Hill which can be seen in the background to the left.*



**Renton History Museum**  
235 Mill Avenue South  
Renton, WA 98055

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