



Elliott Farm: Dairy Hopes and Dreams

By Elizabeth P. Stewart

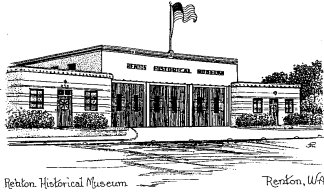
Right on the outskirts of Renton on Maple Valley Highway stands the last intact early dairy farm in the lower Cedar River Valley, the Elliott Farm. Although you wouldn't know it to look at the farm today, in its heyday it was one of the most progressive farms in the area, designed to reflect state-of-the-art standards of cleanliness and efficiency. R. J. Elliott constructed his farmhouse and outbuildings between 1906 and 1911; three generations of Elliotts ran the farm before selling their dairy herd in 1968. In 1990 the Elliott House and farm were designated landmarks by the King County Landmarks Commission. Since then it has been at the center of ongoing discussions about the importance of historic preservation to the residents of Renton and its surroundings.



Elliott Farmhouse, 1989.

Robert James (or R. J.) Elliott was born in 1869 on a dairy farm in Chesterville, Ontario, Canada. At age eleven he left school to work on his family's farm. Around 1880 he tried farming in Iowa, and in 1889 he moved to Seattle. The Great Seattle Fire provided him an opportunity to earn a stake in life; Elliott worked as a carpenter, cleaning up the fire debris and helping rebuild Pioneer Square.¹

Continued on page 4



Renton Historical Quarterly

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Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00am - 4:00pm

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: Please call the museum for time and location.



President's Message

By Bob Hunt, President

The feature article on the Elliot Farm comes at an interesting time. Renton's annexation plans include a stretch out the Maple Valley Highway clear out to the end of the old Aqua Barn Ranch. This means that the Elliot Farm will soon be a part of Renton. Interlocal agreements with the County can mean that the protection provided by the Historic Landmark designation will be continued, with Renton taking the lead. How that will occur or what department in the City will take ownership is not yet clear.

What does come to notice is the fact that the City does not have an historic preservation ordinance of its own. The firehouse that holds our museum is on the National Register of Historic Places, but there is no other legal restriction on what can be done to the structure or the property. Discussion during past administrations has always run up against the concern that historic preservation could impede business growth.

The lack of a law isn't only because of that, of course. If the citizens of Renton had wanted to initiate protections of heritage structures and had put some effort into that, it would have happened. Renton's history is filled with examples of the citizens leading the way. We could have done something in the past. We can still do something for the future.

Certainly many of the oldest structures that I've seen were also the least likely to be able to be sustained for a long time. Many early buildings in Renton were constructed for the short term, and only ended up lasting for more than a few decades because of flukes in development over time. An audit of buildings in the city core some years ago found there were no buildings left there that truly qualified as historic. That audit was of limited scope and stayed close to South Second and South Third.

Lande Feed's interesting old facility was built of the old 'box' style, which lent itself to fires and structural failure from the slightest rot, both of which finally contributed to its demise.

Armondo Pavone and Mr. and Mrs. Tim Searing took the old Melrose Bar and turned it into a wonderful example of preservation while building a successful business. The building, if you didn't know, was once a three-story hotel, but the upper floors were lost to fire many years ago. Some other buildings in that neighborhood have experienced some level of preservation of their original appearance while being updated to serve the businesses that occupied them.

If we are going to try to retain some of our history in the form of buildings, we need to look around and see what we have that we want to keep. We need to clearly determine why we would want to keep them. We need to understand the costs involved and find a way to support those costs over time. We need to create a preservation plan that works for the business community. Finally, we need to know what we're going to do with this preserved structure. It does no one any good to preserve any empty building, not even the building.

The Elliot Farm qualifies as historic, as outlined by the Landmarks Commission rules, for its representation of farming history and its unique structure. Is that enough for the community to do the work involved to try to preserve it? What would we want it to be in the future, since returning it to a dairy farm isn't practical? I've heard some interesting ideas. An estimate of what it would take to just restore the buildings to a useful condition is around \$2 million. That doesn't count trying to acquire it from the developer who owns the property and would as soon seen it dozed. If the farm isn't worth our energy, what is?

Renton Museum Report

By Elizabeth P. Stewart

Dear friends,

Summer is always a planning and regrouping time in the museum world. One day we are swamped with tourists and summer campers, and the next we have absolute quiet. It's a perfect time to clear up all the tasks that have been waiting since the beginning of the year.



Since July 31 our chief clearer-upper and problem-solver has been our new Collection Manager, Sarah Iles. She is a dedicated and conscientious addition to our staff, unfazed by such exciting collection finds as antique fire suppressors filled with hazardous chemicals. Check out her report in this quarterly.

Also in the "planning and regrouping" department, this summer the Board's Strategic Planning Committee and I have been revising the Strategic Plan. The current plan was approved by the Board six years ago, and with a new Director—me—it was time to take stock. It's satisfying to see how many of the goals set in 2000 have already been accomplished: completing a Museum Management Agreement with the City; reaching out to Renton's business community; hiring a professional staff; starting the process of museum accreditation with the American Association of Museums; and establishing PastPerfect as the collections cataloguing database. What a great basis for planning improvements in our mission to document, preserve, interpret, and educate!

Also in the planning department, Dorota has developed an exciting Fall calendar of programs for families and adults. If you haven't already been to one of these events, be sure to come to the next one—each speaker is not only a learning experience, but it's also fun to get together with others excited about Renton history!

All in all, we're heading into the fall with a spirit of renewed dedication to the work we do at the Museum, and we're looking for all of you to join us here. Come see our New Acquisition—the 1946 Puget Sound Championship football donated by Council Member Terri Briere—or participate in one of our Tuesday or Saturday events, volunteer your time on a Saturday, or just stop by and say hello. If you like what you see, don't forget to tell your friends!

Liz Stewart

For more information about Farm Preservation

Initiative 933 on the November ballot will affect state historic preservation regulations. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation is opposing the initiative; see <http://www.wa-trust.org/PDFs/I-933%20Article.pdf>.

Supporters' website is <http://www.propertyfairness.com/>.

Barn Again! is a national program that assists owners of historic barns with preservation.

<http://www.agriculture.com/ag/category.jhtml?categoryid=/templatedata/ag/category/data/agbarnagainchannel.xml>

The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation is a nonprofit dedicated to safeguarding the state's historic places through advocacy, education, stewardship, and community collaboration.

Visit <http://www.wa-trust.org/index.htm>.

Elliott Farm story continued from page 1

Like many pioneers, R. J. Elliott saw the fertile Cedar River valley as his chance for a successful livelihood. It was an ideal time for a young man to choose dairying in western Washington. In the early 1900s many were discovering that the region west of the Cascades was “an ideal climate for dairying.”² Beef cattle required plenty of land for ranging, but as one economist observed, “the farmer who has only a small capital and whose chief resource is his own labor...can economically invest his labor in an enterprise like dairying.”³ The Seattle area was also a growing market for dairy products. In 1902 the U.S. Census report for agriculture predicted that “the small relative quantity of dairy products manufactured in the Western division, and also the nearness of the mining centers of that division to local markets, assure...an unsurpassed market for the produce of the western dairymen.”⁴

In 1894 Elliott invested his earnings in an 80-acre land grant on the lower Cedar River, then about two miles southeast of Renton. He purchased the land with J. C. Newberry, Charles Burnett, and a third unknown man. Elliott leased and later bought an adjoining 143 acres from Peter Jarvis. By the late 1800s he owned 213 acres in Maple Valley and another 160 acres in Snohomish County. He raised funds to increase his holdings by cutting shake and shingle bolts from the cedar trees he cleared from his own land, and floating them down the river to a mill on Lake Washington.

Elliott plunged wholeheartedly into farming, according to the most up-to-date scientific principles. He designed and built a state-of-the-art milk barn, a hay barn with interior silo, a small feed house, a horse barn (later converted to a second milk barn), and a chicken house (later moved and converted to a milk house). R. J.’s grandson, A. George Elliott, Jr., later remembered with pride that R. J. patterned the buildings after the barns and farmhouses of his eastern Ontario childhood. On the inside the main barn incorporated such new ideas as concrete floors and lower walls designed to be easily hosed

off, running water, flyproof ventilators, and convenient feeding and watering systems. Elliott was even determined to electrify before commercial power was widely available. He installed a generator powered by a spring behind the house and stored the excess electricity in large glass batteries. In 1917 R. J. bought one of the first tractors in the area; R. J. drove the tractor over gravel roads at four miles an hour back and forth between his two farms forty miles apart.⁵



By 1911 Elliott decided to replace the small frame house he had built in 1894 with a much grander Craftsman-style house. Sons William Chapman and Andrew George, young teenagers by then, helped their father with the construction. Elliott’s craftsmanship helped ensure that the buildings lasted as long as they have. The farmhouse’s elegant design and innovative construction earned it a spread a 1921 Sunday *Seattle Times*, which described the home as “a model of city living in the country.”⁶ The house had electricity and spring water piped down from the ridge above. Every one of the nine rooms had nine- or ten-foot ceilings.

His wife of 20 years, Fannie Anne Woodward, and their three children—William, George, and Gladys Louise—settled into their new home. The children attended the nearby grade school, coincidentally called “Elliott School” after a Civil War soldier who’d lived there briefly. The boys helped on the farm and with the ongoing clearing of the land, greasing the skids for the cedar logs to be dragged to the sawmill. A. George Elliott, Jr., recalled that “when you’re raised on a dairy farm, there’s always something for boys to do.”⁷ The Elliott boys fed calves and cleaned up after them, later graduating to milking cows.

*Our records indicate this is the “Elliott family of Rainier Avenue,” yet two of the children have the same names as R. J. Elliott’s sons Will and George. Can you help us identify these children?
(#1997.073.4574)*

Paper hood that covered Elliott Dairy's milk bottle caps

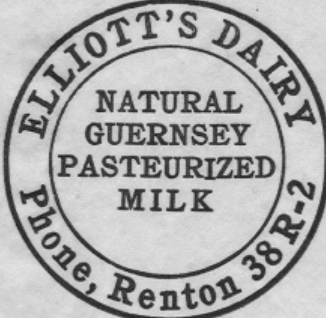
Business - Bulletin
87-150-48

**This Hood Protects Your Milk
from Dust**

This milk bottle is sealed from dust and pet animals
cannot contaminate it while it sits on your porch.

All long-lived
people are
**MILK
DRINKERS**
So are the best
ATHLETES

A
QUARTA DAY
for adults or
children.
Have you had
yours?



**HERD
TUBERCULIN
TESTED**

**WE INVITE
INSPECTION**

Milk is among the most important of human foods and is one of
the cheapest. A quart of milk equals in nourishment the follow-
ing foods: 12 ozs. Steak, 12.8 ozs. Pork Chops, 2 lbs. Chicken,
9.6 ozs. Ham, 3 lbs. Fish, 8 Eggs, 1 pint Oysters, 2 lbs. Bananas.
Why not economize by using more milk?

R. J. died in 1922, and his sons split the two farms between them. William took over the Snohomish Farm and George took responsibility for the main farm. Their mother, Fannie, remained in the old farmhouse with her sister, Minnie Blackburn, and Minnie's three daughters. Fannie was important to the farm in her own right. Born in Ireland, she and her parents and seven siblings immigrated to an 800-acre Kansas farm sometime in 1884. A year later both parents were dead, the house had burned, and an older brother, Andrew, was farming near Seattle. Fannie and sister Minnie came west to settle near Andy. Fannie attended the University of Washington for a year. Her grandson remembered her as "a strong-willed lady," who helped feed the family by raising a garden and keeping chickens, sometimes producing enough eggs to sell to customers on milk runs. Fannie died on the farm at the age of 85.⁸

Small farmers had to be entrepreneurial to make a living. After George took over operations, he kept two teams of horses, one for working the farm and the second to rent to the County for hauling gravel during road construction. The Elliott Farm kept mainly Guernsey cows with a few Holsteins. The Elliotts milked 40 to 70 cows twice a day; another 30 to 40 were young calves or beef cattle. The

milk was stored in cooled ten-gallon cans and then taken to the Seattle bottlers. During the Depression, George began bottling and delivering his own milk to Renton and surrounding areas. He distributed raw, or unpasteurized, milk until 1938, when he began pasteurizing on the farm. Elliott's Dairy advertised in 1933, "if you haven't tried Our Milk and Cream you're missing sunshine's Golden beam."⁹



Many dairy farmers delivered milk directly to homes, as Elliott's Dairy did. Here is Nelson's Dairy delivery cart in 1911, with driver Charlie Marshall standing. (#1966.025.0064)

By the 1950s small local dairy operations faced greater competition as the larger Seattle dairies reached out to south King County. Milk bottlers also began to move toward homogenization and paper cartons, changes in technology that would have been expensive for Elliott Farm. In 1951 George gave up the milk route and began supplying raw milk to the Smith Brothers Dairy in Kent. Small farms also faced other challenges. Regulations about the disposal of manure became more stringent, and as farming mechanized, providing feed for the cows became more expensive. The next generation of Elliotts, Robert and A. George Jr., operated the farm briefly after George Sr.'s retirement in 1962. George Sr. died in 1965 and the dairy herd was sold in 1968. After almost 100 years of continuous Elliott family ownership, in 1981 the Elliotts sold the farm to Maple Valley Associates.

A few years after the farm was sold, George Jr. recalled many of the changes that the Elliott Farm had seen in his 60-plus years. He believed that his generation of farmers had seen the greatest change in farming. "It was all basically the same up until I was a young one growing up," he remembered. Yet he was not nostalgic about life on the farm. Although "it was a good way of life," it was a hard way of life and times had changed. "I wouldn't want my grandkids to have to start out that way," he said in 1987.

DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT

As so often happens with family farms, changes in farming, the complexities of family finances, and rising real estate prices got the better of Elliott Farm. As Renton's population grew, land along Maple Valley Highway became more valuable. The Elliott Farm and its surroundings were rezoned for "intensive residential development." Maple Valley Land Associates had purchased the 140 acres left of the farm for multifamily housing and commercial development. Between 1972 and 1983 the farmhouse was rented to Richard Barrett, who saved much of the farmhouse's handcrafted woodwork. But by 1983 the home and its outbuildings, now owned by developers, sat vacant and unprotected from weather and vandalism, a process known among historic preservationists as "demolition by neglect."¹⁰

In October 1990 the King County Landmarks Commission unanimously designated about 15 ½ acres of the Elliott Farm and its buildings a King County Landmark, beginning a tug-of-war between preservationists and developers. Maple Valley Associates appeared to be working cooperatively with the county to include preservation of the farm buildings in its Master Plan. Because of the farm's significance, King County appropriated \$25,000 to stabilize the buildings, and a young couple, Wendy and Ken McCollim, led that effort. The McCollims had hoped to buy the farm in the early 1980s, but the price was out of their reach. Instead they became unpaid caretakers of the property for a couple years in the early 1990s, recruiting others to help shore up the buildings. They put up floodlights and boarded up windows to keep out vandals.¹¹ But the extent of the damage and neglect discouraged even the Elliott descendants about the possibility of preserving the farm in a cost-effective way. They believed that preserving the farm was "insensible" and they advocated "total demolition of the structures." "Let's use the money on something constructive!" they wrote in letters to the editors of the local papers.¹²

Caught between developers' desires for the land and the cost of preservation, the Elliott Farm continued to deteriorate. In 1995 the Cedarwood Group acquired the property through bankruptcy foreclosure, and they were determined to develop the acreage. The McCollims were evicted, and a boundary line adjustment was undertaken that reduced the protected land to 6 acres and put some of the outbuildings outside the landmark protection. In the winter of 1997 the roof of the hay barn collapsed under the weight of snow, and Cedarwood received permission from the Landmarks Commission to demolish the barn. It was the first of many requests to demolish some or all of the last vestiges of R. J. Elliott's once-thriving dairy farm.

CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE

The Elliott Farm is a classic example of the challenges facing those interested in preserving our farm heritage. There are numerous options available to help preservationists, but every solution requires creativity, vision, and determination. In the case of Elliott Farm, its separation from the Cedar River by busy Maple Valley Highway combined with encroaching condos seemed to spoil the sense of it as part of a historic landscape. The slow deterioration of the farmhouse and outbuildings exponentially increased the cost of preservation and restoration, and tended to scare off potential private buyers. So did the developers' high asking price.

At the same time, the Elliott Farm is one of the last reminders of the Renton area's agricultural past. County landmark status itself reflects an acknowledgment by a commission of preservation, architecture, and history experts that a site has intrinsic value because of its historic significance. First, the design of the barn and the farmhouse were so unique that the barn received a certificate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the model dairy barn west of Chicago. Second, the Elliott Farm represents the importance of the growth of dairying to the lower Cedar River Valley. R. J. Elliott's dairy was at one time surrounded by neighbors who also operated small dairy farms: the Nielsens, the Andersons, the Madsens, the Ortons, and the Veenhuizens. George Jr. remembered that it seemed as if "dairy farming was...the main livelihood for everybody in that area that lived off the land." As one of the earliest and the longest continuously operating farms in King County—in existence for 62 years—Elliott Farm symbolizes the importance of dairying in the Renton area.

History-minded citizens know about Renton's industrial past, but our farming heritage is quickly disappearing from memory as more and more land is developed for homes and businesses. This forgetting reflects a trend across the state; the American Farmland Trust estimates that Washington state has lost 81,000 acres of prime farmland in the past 20 years.¹³ In addition, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation listed the barns of Washington state on its "Most Endangered" list for 2006.¹⁴ Whether Elliott Farm ultimately survives—under the care of King County or perhaps the City of Renton—or not, its story reminds us how fragile our connection to the past can become without our active stewardship.

Volunteer Report

By Dorothea Rahn, Volunteer and Education Coordinator

- 1 Clarence Bagley, *History of King County* (Chicago, Seattle: S. J. Clarke, 1929), II:677.
- 2 Howard T. Lewis, *The Basic Industries of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford Co., 1925), 34.
- 3 Lewis, *Basic Industries*, 35.
- 4 U.S. Census, Department of the Interior, *Census Reports: Agriculture: Part I, Farms, Live Stock, and Animal Products* (Washington: United States Census Office, 1902), clxxiv.
- 5 Erin Younger and Tom Quackenbush, King County Landmark Nomination Form, 2 July 1990, p.7 (Renton History Museum vertical files).
- 6 Morda Slausen, *One Hundred Years on the Cedar* (Seattle: The Shorey Bookstore, 1971), 7.
- 7 A. George Elliott, Jr. oral history, 14 April 1987, Collection of the Renton History Museum. All quotes from A. George Elliott, Jr. are from this interview.
- 8 Bagley, *History of King County*, II:677.
- 9 Quoted in Irene Svete, "A Labor of Love," *Valley Daily News*, 5 April 1993, p.A1.
- 10 Bruce Rommel, "Kent man fights to save historic farmhouse," *Valley Daily News*, 6 June 1996, p.A3.
- 11 Svete, "Labor of Love," p.A1.
- 12 Joan Mansfield, "Elliott Family doesn't want 'Elliot Farm' preserved," letter to the editor, *Valley Daily News*, 5 September 1990, n.p.
- 13 American Farmland Trust, "Farming on the Edge: Listing of Loss by State," <http://www.farmland.org/resources/fote/states/allStates.asp/>, 4 September 2006.
- 14 Press release, "Washington's Historic Barns Listed Among the Most Endangered Historic Properties of 2006 by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation," 23 May 2006, <http://www.wa-trust.org/mostendangered/Press%20Releases/2006/06%20Most%20Release-Barns.pdf/>, 8 September 2006.



Another celebration of Renton River Days is behind us. Everything happened so quickly because we were very busy during that time. Literally nothing would be possible without our volunteers. They were helping with everything, from preparing hands-on activities for children and setting up the booth on Kid's Day, to teaching children how to make Native American headbands and vests, to serving the Poker Tour at the museum, to explaining the role of the museum in the community at the museum booth.

There are only a few museum staff members so we have to rely on volunteers to establish our presence at Renton River Days. I want to list the names of all volunteers who helped us this year because the amount of work they did and their devotion—in spite of very hot weather—was remarkable. Rachel Vdolek, Erina Hui, and Vivian Williams spent many hours preparing activities for children.

The same volunteers, joined by Shirley Phinney and Ila Hemm, helped about 200 children with different Native American activities at our booth on Kid's Day. The children were very proud of their Native American headbands and vests, and displayed them on the fair field. Jeff Feaster, Sandy Burkey, Clark Peterson, and again Ila Hemm, together with some Board members—President Bob Hunt, Vice President Sandra Myers, Kevin McQuiller, Laura Clawson, and past Trustee Clark Petersen—represented the Renton Historical Society at the booth.

Ernest Lees took care of Poker Tour players on Saturday. Our museum was one of the 35 businesses participating in this new initiative. We had 49 additional visitors on that weekend thanks to this new event. All together, 300 people visited our museum during Renton River Days week. They were greeted by volunteers Rachel Vdolek, Carol Hawkins, Marjorie Gould, Bette Zwicker, Gloria Nichols, Sandy Burkey, and Bettijane Tomkinson over the weekend.

Bea Mathewson, Margaret and Jeff Feaster, Helenanne Botham, and Nancy Fairman prepared and served coffee and donuts to the vendors at the festival every morning.

We thank everybody who was even in the smallest degree involved in helping make Renton River Days a success. Our museum definitely was visible thanks to their presence. The red color of our booth and new red tablecloths wouldn't have helped without volunteers available to talk to visitors. We would like to increase our participation at Renton River Days next year so we want to ask all of our volunteers to support us by donating your time and skills during this community event in 2007.

Gift Shop News

We've made two discoveries in our Gift Shop stock that you should know about. We have a few more limited edition Henry Ford School slates available at \$10.00 each. Steve Anderson lovingly constructed these from blackboards and building materials salvaged when the Henry Ford School was torn down in 2001. Each one has an image of the school screened at the top, and it makes a great kitchen or office chalkboard.

If you or someone you know is looking for a local high school yearbook, we may have just what you're looking for available for purchase. We have surplus RHS Ilahees for most years between 1942 and 1972 and even some RHS Duwamish yearbooks between 1910 and 1929. We also have a few Hazen and Lindbergh High School yearbooks for the 1970s. These were donated to us for fundraising purposes over the years—we maintain at least two of every yearbook in our library collection. Each yearbook is \$10.00.

Don't forget about our on-line gifts and books—check us out at www.rentonhistory.org!

Planned Giving Series Part 1: Charitable Giving 101

By Sandra Meyer, Endowment Chair

At the last annual Historical Society Annual Meeting in June, Society members were introduced to several ways they could give to the Endowment Fund for future Society needs. The Renton Historical Society is incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the state of Washington. As a nonprofit the Society and the Museum can accept many kinds of donations that also have financial and tax benefits for the donor. This is the first in a series of articles designed to communicate this information in a simple way. The following information was prepared by Planned Giving Services in Seattle, but was reduced and slightly modified for easier reading. If you have any questions regarding the specifics of the information provided below, contact your accountant or the Renton Historical Society's investment representative, Shane Klingenstein, toll-free at 1.888.891.8832.

I. OUTRIGHT GIFT OF CASH, STOCK, OR SECURITIES

Gifts of cash or publicly traded securities are the most common gifts received by nonprofits. Larger gifts are frequently made with publicly-traded securities because the donor derives two tax benefits:

- A deduction for the fair market value of the securities, provided the donor has owned them for more than a year.
- No tax on the capital gain.

Most securities are now transferred electronically from the donor's brokerage account to one maintained by the charity. The Historical Society has already established a brokerage account to receive gifts of securities.

Gifts of Stock:

Stocks may be mailed or hand-delivered to the Society, or transferred by a broker into the Society's account. Each method has different implications for the value of the gift, because the transfer is not complete until received by the nonprofit. Consult with your accountant or broker to discuss the various options.

II. CHARITABLE BEQUESTS

Bequests are the most common charitable gifts; more money is given through bequests than all other charitable giving combined. Many who could afford to give generously during life hesitate to do so because they fear their circumstances might change in the future, or they simply don't want to lose control of their money. Virtually everyone has a greater capacity to give at death than during life. Bequests are also the most cost-effective of all gifts. Bequests can be expended immediately or invested in the endowment, and they require relatively little stewardship activity.

Beneficiaries are allowed an unlimited estate tax charitable deduction. For donors whose estates are large enough to be subject to the estate tax, a charitable bequest can significantly reduce estate taxes otherwise due. In 2006, the maximum federal estate tax rate is 46 percent (applicable to taxable estates in excess of \$2,000,000). There is also a state estate tax, and when the two are combined, the total estate tax rate for high net worth individuals could be approximately 55 percent. If such a person were to leave a charitable bequest of \$100,000, estate taxes would be reduced by \$55,000. Thus, the net cost to heirs of a \$100,000 bequest would be only \$45,000.

In the next quarterly we will cover how retirement funds and life insurance can play a role in planned giving.

From the Collections Department

By Sarah Iles, Collection Manager

I would like to begin my first report to you by saying that I am very glad to be back as a part of the Renton History Museum! Some of you may remember that I have worked for the museum in the past, first as an intern in 2004, and later as a volunteer (2004-2005) working on my thesis project. My thesis work focused on a portion of the Charles L. Custer bequest from 2000.

For those of you that don't know me, I was born and raised in South Dakota. I received a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from the University of South Dakota. After finishing that in 2002, I came out west to Seattle to pursue my graduate degree at the University of Washington. It was during this time that I began working at the Renton History Museum. After the completion of my thesis project, I graduated with a Master of Arts in Museology in June 2005.



After nearly two months of working, two volunteers and I have begun to make significant strides in cleaning up the backlog that developed while the Collection Manger position was vacant. Our plan is to keep working on this so

that the collection is in a state for interns to begin working in January. The sizable Custer-Lewis Collection is still in need of much work and at least one of the interns will be focusing solely on that.

Hazardous Collections

After beginning my new job, I began to reacquaint myself with the collection by perusing the boxes of objects the museum has shelved in its storage area. In doing so, I have made some spine-tingling discoveries! When people commonly think of museum collections, they rarely think of them as a dangerous thing. However, many items that were donated in the past are now known to contain hazardous materials.

I have come across three different hazardous materials. The first was an asbestos fire-fighting suit. Asbestos was commonly used in the past as a fire-retardant, but is now known to cause several types of cancer. The second hazardous object I discovered was a medical device that contained mercury. The object had broken sometime in the past, spilling all its mercury into the bottom of the box. Mercury is extremely hazardous to humans and even breathing its vapors is dangerous. The third object was an old fire suppression system that was filled with carbon tetrachloride, a chemical often used in the past in fire extinguishing systems. Carbon tetrachloride has since been discovered to be damaging to the central nervous system, liver, and kidneys.

Because of the direct danger to staff, volunteers, and visitors, all of these hazardous materials were taken out of the museum and properly disposed of.

The Renton History Museum is not alone in possessing hazardous collections. Most museums across the country currently have or had in the past hazardous collections on their shelves. Fortunately, there is a large body of literature in the museum community that pertains specifically to hazardous collections and how museums should handle them in order to keep their building safe for everyone involved.

Work is continuing in the collections area, and we probably have taken care of any hazardous materials. If we do find more, however, we are now well-equipped to handle these collections in a correct and safe manner.

Contributions to the General Fund

Boeing Gift Matching Program
Bill Collins; Basil Simpson

Contributions

\$100 AND OVER

Renton High School Class of
1946 - 60th Reunion
Kenworth Employees AYD Club

Contributor to The Building Fund

\$1000 AND OVER

Ila Hemm

In-Kind Contributors

Cat's Eye Group
Website services

Pritchard Design
Flyer design

PCC Natural Markets, Issaquah
Renton River Days

Thriftway Renton
Renton River Days

Safeway Renton
Renton River Days

Cugini Florists
Renton River Days

Faull-Stokes Mortuary
Flag

Obituaries

New Members

Sheree Dreewes
 Larry O. Gahlhaff
 Shaari Steedman
 Marty & Marilyn Hemmann
 Robert & Rena Cann
 Wendell & Cleo Forgaard
 Susie Bressan
 Doris (Martin) Beedle
 Kevin McPherson
 Mike Battin
 Nei Bin Yu
 Greg & Sandra Taylor
 Charlaine Molina

New Benefactor Members

Terry & Dennis Higashiyama

Membership

2006 Membership Rates

Student/Teacher/Senior	\$12
Senior Citizen Couple	\$20
Single	\$20
Family	\$30
Patron Benefactor	\$100
Life Membership	\$500

**One time fee. Lifetime Memberships will be transferred to the living spouse.*

denotes former Society Life Member



denotes former Society member



June

Helen B. Fisk
Mildred Hammond
Palmer 'Bud' Heieren
Teresa Tarella Henry
Peggy M. Nault
Ann Steiert
Lillian H. Torseth
Vivian A. Townsend
Velma Vukonich

July

Lewis A. Argano
Barbara J. Baze
George E. Bell
Blaine Colman
William Demchuck
Maria Breda Gatti
Eli E. Hepokoski
Bardolph J. McConnell Jr.
Carl Merklin
Donald H. Murdoch
Harold Sagmo
Amelia M. Slye
Jennie L. Tonkin
Vivian Cedarholm Townsend
Kathleen L. Trimm

August

Fred V. Ainardi
Madeline Arrigoni
Richard A. Atherton
Emma Paglia Barrett
Ed Bright
Lily Anna Colwell-Nelson
J. A. Downs
Cornelius 'Pete' Fagen
Linda Meyers Gibson
Laurette Atkinson McKelvey
Larry R. Polley
Douglas A. Schreiner
Larry Shockley
Cora C. Upshaw
EveLynn Barrick Zgolinski

September 1 – 12th

LaVerne Oughton Barnett
Barbara Anne McSpadden Hensley
Maxine Isham
Jack Jones
Michael P. Rockey

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 (\$100) _____
 Corporate (\$100) _____
 Life (\$500) *One Time Only (partially tax deductible)* _____
 General Fund Donation _____
 Endowment Fund Donation _____
 In Memory of: _____

Total enclosed: _____

Rentonians

Remembered

LEWIS A. ARGANO (1904-2006)

Lewis Argano, long-time teacher, principal, and school administrator, passed away on July 26. Born in Italy, nine-year-old Luigi came over in 1913 on the Isle de France with his parents and siblings. Lewis's father Joseph brought the family to Newcastle where he joined other family members in the mines. When the union was broken in 1920, the Arganos settled in Renton, where Lewis's father became a successful shoe store-owner and landlord. Lewis worked for the Renton School District for 40 years; he was married to Theresa Merlino Argano for 63 years before her death in 1997. He was best-known for his nearly perfect attendance record at Renton Rotary and for single-handedly continuing Theresa's tradition of serving big Italian dinners to friends. He will be much missed by those who remember his gentle sense of humor.

Lewis Argano

Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Rose Camerini; Louis & Pamela Barei; Louise Bertozzi; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Carmel & Don Camerini; John & Eleanor Bertagni; Renton High School Class of 1944; Lynn & Steve Anderson; Catherine Rutkowski; Rachel Thomas

LaVerne Barnett

Louise George; Daisy Ward

Knute Beckstrom

Wendell & Cleo Forgaard

Lloyd Beckstrom

Wendell & Cleo Forgaard

Myrtle A. Beckstrom

Wendell & Cleo Forgaard

Virginia Busato

Jim & Fran Bourasa

Tim Chinn

Hazelle DuBois

Willy Demchuck

Don & Gloria Cartwright

Cornelius "Pete"

Fagen

Wendell & Cleo Forgaard; Richard & Corinne Luctoch

Dr. Dean M. Forgaard

Wendell & Cleo Forgaard

Louise Goe

Lila M. Campen

Aaron Goodwin

John & Joyce Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Eva Goodwin

John & Joyce Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Lorraine Goodwin

John & Joyce Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Mildred Orehek

Hammond

Louise George

Teresa Henry

Lloyd & Fumiko Hoshide; Victor Tonda; Mario Tonda

Eric Jorgensen

Lillian D. Rosenstrom

Laurette Atkinson

McKelvey

Louise George

Donald H. Murdock

Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Nita Nickels

The Rose Turner Service Guild

Earl E. Perry

Don & Pearl Jacobson

Marjorie Richter

Lila M. Campen

Michael Rockey

Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Jeanne Tonda; Mario Tonda; Victor Tonda; Marjorie Popovich; Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Virginia Secrest

John & Joyce Peterson; Charles Goodwin

Laura Shook

Jim & Fran Bourasa

William G. Thomas

Rachel Thomas

Bernice Forgaard

Turner

Wendell & Cleo Forgaard

Velma Vukonich

Beth & Mike Potoshnik

Con Wiehoff

John & Joyce Peterson; Charles Goodwin

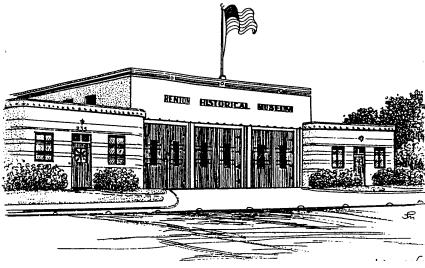
Memorials made
through the
Renton Community
Foundation

Louise Hannah

Jim & Joy Poff

Marjorie Richter

*Doug & Sonja Kyes
Piazza Renton*

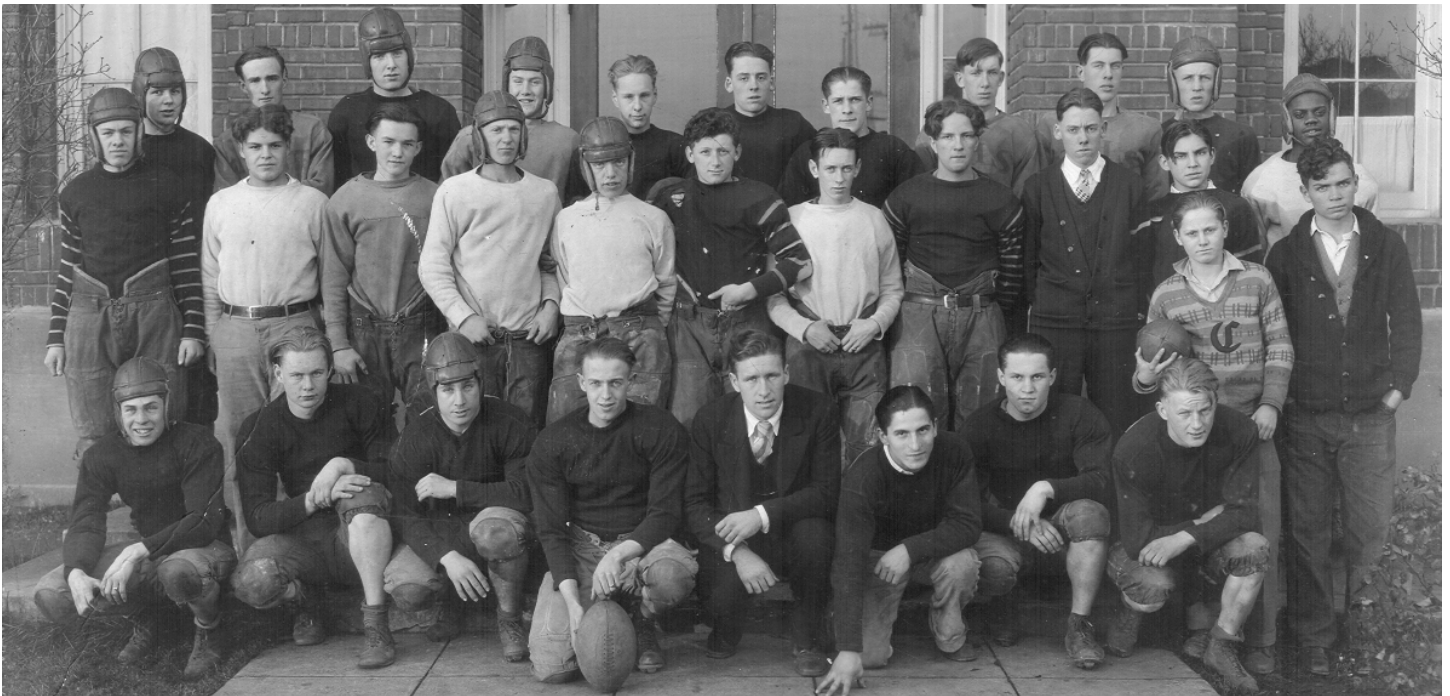


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235 Mill Avenue South
Renton, WA 98057

Centennial Snapshot

Renton High School football team with Coach Perry H. Mitchell, 1930s. (Note the leather football helmets!)
(#1989.051.2771)



Come see our "New Acquisitions" exhibit!