

RENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Fall
September 2018

QUARTERLY

Volume 49
Number 3



MURDERS MOST FOUL A Project by the RenTeens

RenTeens (L-R): Vanessa Pacheco-Altig, Althea Guanzon, Arvin Jex, Raven Klingele

Editor's Note: RenTeens is the Renton History Museum's youth advisory council. Every year they select and execute a project of their choice pertaining to Renton history. Projects over the past four years have included podcasts, blogs, and exhibits. This year the RenTeens worked diligently on exploring "murders most foul." Each student chose a historic Renton murder case to investigate. After hours of research, the students have become experts on their cases.

Their insight and creativity produced projects outside of the traditional realm of historical research. RenTeen Raven Klingele wrote, directed, and acted in a one-act play featured at Renton River Days. The three other students interpreted their murder cases through historical context, illustration, and personal letters. We are showcasing these students' work in this newsletter as a tribute to their historical curiosity. I hope you enjoy these final projects as much as the students enjoyed working on them.

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14 Donations, Memberships, & Memorials



After last year's fantastic event, the Renton Historical Society's annual fundraiser will again showcase *Renton Makers & Doers* with a very special Silent Auction. Explore locals' talents as you bid on their charming upcycled furniture and decor, specially made for our auction. One-of-a-kind gifts and home furnishings showcase Renton's handmade tradition. Dinner, Dessert Dash, raffle, and emcee Aunt Dottie and a special guest!

Reserve your tickets now! The fundraiser is Wednesday, September 26, 2018 at the Renton Senior Activity Center. Tickets are \$45 each. (<http://historymakingparty2018.brownpapertickets.com/>)

On
SEPTEMBER
 26
 doors open at
5:30 PM

GRANT WINNERS!

This summer the Renton History Museum was awarded a grant from the competitive Building 4Culture program, with the help of King County Councilmembers Reagan Dunn and Dave Upthegrove. 4Culture's capital grant program provides money for building improvements for heritage and arts organizations. This grant will enable us to update the signage on the front of our building—door canopy, monumental sign, and building letters—

with our new logo. Over 17,000 cars drive by the Museum every weekday, and we want the front of the building to reflect the exciting things happening inside. If you would like to donate to this effort, please contact Liz Stewart at estewart@rentonwa.gov or 425-255-2330.



RENTON RIVER DAYS

The Renton History Museum participates in the city's summer festival, Renton River Days, in our own special way: by offering free admission, hosting activities on our lawn, and offering history-based performances inside. This year playwrights Sabella Curtis and Raven Klingele used real Renton events as the jumping-off point for two compelling plays, one about three politically active Renton women in 1918 who petitioned city officials for better policing of

Prohibition, and another about a young Renton woman who took the law into her own hands against her harasser in 1937. We served 465 visitors during River Days, and the plays were a hit with visitors. Thanks to our talented actors, costumers, and playwrights!



MUSEUM REPORT

by Elizabeth P. Stewart,
Museum Director

“Ch-ch-changes / Turn and face the strange,” as David Bowie instructed us many years ago. Those of you who have followed us for some time will have noticed that staff changes and program innovations have become almost a constant for the Renton History Museum. In August we said farewell to Public Engagement Coordinator Kim Owens, who had been with us almost two years, and now we’re searching for our next talented staff member. Kim accomplished many important goals for the Museum, including the adoption of our Coast Salish curriculum as a core piece of the Renton School District’s instruction; it was also Kim who shepherded the 2017–2018 RenTeens as they developed the projects you’re reading in this month’s newsletter. And Kim was key to the success of our 2017 *Sorting Out Race* effort, organizing—with the help of numerous partner organizations—our largest calendar of exhibit-related events to date.

And soon it will be time to acquaint ourselves with a new Public Engagement Coordinator, someone with new ideas and fresh perspectives, different skills and complementary knowledge. On a staff as small as ours—two full-time and two part-time people—every player is vital. Yes, every new person is an adjustment (that’s where “turning to face the strange” comes in). But new hiring is an opportunity for all of us to learn more successful ways of doing things. Kim helped us launch a new approach to Renton River Days, bringing live performances based on primary sources to the gallery. One of her predecessors, Colleen Lenahan, led the effort to create a new logo and a style guide to go with it. Each new Public Engagement Coordinator and Office Aide over the past eight years has contributed something significant to the Museum’s growth and improvement. Each new relationship is also a chance to expand our network of friends.

Studying history is all about change over time, and some of our best projects have demonstrated that even painful change has improved us. Our current exhibit *I’m Going Through: Black Miners Arrive in King County* is about how new miners came to terms with White neighbors and co-workers. *On the Battlefield & On the Homefront* explores Renton’s first experience being involved with global events. And Sarah Samson’s project enumerating early 20th century American women who lost their citizenship shows how ordinary citizens dealt with the unintended consequences of new immigration law, and ultimately demanded it be changed. If there’s one thing we can all learn from history, it is that we all have the resiliency to roll with the changes, face what is new, and make the most of the opportunity.



Elizabeth P. Stewart
—
Director



Kim Owens at the opening of *Black & White* in 2017. Kim worked with us as an intern, cataloguing the Museum’s hat collection, before joining the staff as Public Engagement Coordinator.



2018 was the first time we hosted a student-authored and -directed play as part of Renton River Days. Raven Klingele’s project was part of the RenTeens’ initiative.

RENTON HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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Kim Owens
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Coordinator
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RENTON HISTORY MUSEUM
235 MILL AVENUE S
RENTON, WA 98057

P (425) 255-2330
F (425) 255-1570

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

ADMISSION:
\$5 (Adult)
\$2 (Child)



CULTURE

UPCOMING EVENTS



WASHINGTON AT WAR: THE EVERGREEN STATE IN WWI

October 11
6:00-7:00 pm

Participate in a WWI readers' theatre led by historian Lorraine McConaghy.



KNIT YOUR BIT
October 13
11:00 am-12:00 pm

Learn how to make WWI-era gear, contribute knitted goods to charity, or just relax and work on a private project.



TALES THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

October 27
11:00 am-12:00 pm

Join Anne Rutherford & Norm Breke for family-friendly spine-tingling tales!



STORYTELLER SONDRÁ SEGUNDO

November 17
11:00 am-12:00 pm

Join Haida storyteller Sondra Segundo for songs and stories in celebration of Native American Heritage Month.

PROGRAMMING REPORT

by Kim Owens, Public Engagement Coord.



Cast of *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, (L-R) Devan Malone, Carol Wieltsching, and Alice Bridgeforth. Costumes by Bridget Shew & Cathy Lim.



Cast of *The Trial of Marlene Collier*, (L-R) Arvin Jex, Raven Klingele, Lidia Ghebream, and Lauren Fawcett.



Kim Owens

Public Engagement
Coordinator

After one year and ten months as Public Engagement Coordinator I have decided to take on a new position as Program Director at the Seattle Architecture Foundation. I consider myself very fortunate to have been involved in so many different projects and surrounded by so many amazing people during my tenure at the Renton History Museum.

When I started at the Museum in October 2016, preparations for *Sorting Out Race* were underway. Stepping outside one's comfort zone is never easy and neither is talking about race. Those first six months were extremely challenging, but the personal growth I noticed in myself, our staff, and volunteers was energizing and the topic—contagious. I needed the extra energy because programming and staffing ten events and multiple tours in a brief eight week run was exhausting. If I had to do it all over again, however, I wouldn't change a thing.

Shortly after the run of *Sorting Out Race* I started focusing my energy on the Coast Salish Curriculum revision project. Abby Rhinehart, a UW Museology graduate student, assisted me with the project during the winter and spring quarters of 2017. Picking up where she left off meant continued consultations with the Duwamish Tribe, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Renton School District, and the Native Education Coordinator of the Eastside Native American Education Program. With their insight and experience the curriculum successfully hurdled meetings, evaluations, and a pilot program with the Renton School District. After a year and a half of work, the district signed a three year license agreement with the Museum this summer. As a result, every third grader enrolled in the Renton School District will learn the Museum's curriculum as part of their core.

Of all the projects I've had the opportunity to work on, I consider *Renton History Live!* to be the most rewarding on a personal level. The Museum knew it wanted to do something different for Renton River Days 2017 and someone threw out the idea of having historical re-enactors. Shortly after, I interviewed two new volunteers who just so happened to have experience in script writing and costuming. Combining the research skills and encyclopedic knowledge of the museum staff, the experience of volunteers, and theater skills I developed in high school and college created a fun, accessible peek into Renton history. The enthusiasm of the audience, the volunteers, and the staff led us to produce another show for 2018 Renton River Days. This year we had more actors and featured a student-written and -directed play. Knowing the level of talent at the museum, I look forward to what 2019 brings.

MAN KILLED IN FOILING SUICIDE

by Vanessa Pacheco-Altig

This murder case follows the accidental shooting of Mr. George Seguin by Ms. Billie Campbell on September 3, 1935. Billie Campbell was distraught over the death of her son, Stadden Mackenroth (from a previous marriage) who had died a week earlier after drowning off the coast of Alaska. Campbell had been taking sedatives for anxiety and depression following this traumatic incident. The day of the shooting, Campbell and Seguin had gone to a day outing and had drunk alcohol, but were not intoxicated. When the couple got home, Campbell alleged to have taken one sleeping tablet, although Seguin had accused her of taking three. He then saw her with a .25-caliber automatic pistol, likely about to attempt suicide while being under the influence of the sedatives. Seguin wrestled her for the gun but she managed to gain control, aim the gun at herself, and pull the trigger. However, when the smoke cleared, it was Seguin, not Campbell, who was lying on the ground dead with a gunshot wound to the heart. Apparently the pistol had twisted at the last second, and Seguin had accidentally been shot; Campbell was unscathed. She was held without charge, absolved of all blame and instead was a material witness. "I don't think any woman was worthy of a love like his," Roy Seguin, brother of George Seguin, testified.

The use and prescription of opioids and sedatives in women has historically been higher than in men.¹ They are more likely to be prescribed painkillers at a higher dose and for a longer period of time. Additionally, these drugs have a higher chance of addicting women. This could be because these drugs chemically affect women's hormones more than men. Other reasons could be that women's stomachs are more acidic than men and absorb more, the drugs metabolize in women's liver slower than men, or women are more likely to suffer a relapse during menstruation due to the fluctuation of estrogen.²

Since ancient times, women with anxiety or other mental issues have been described as having female "hysteria." In the Middle Ages hysteria was usually only assigned to women. They believed hysteria was caused by a buildup of fluids in the uterus that needed to be extracted to cure the female patient.³ Another suspected "cause" in medieval times was the possession by a demonic figure such as the devil. Single women and the elderly were the most likely "victims" of possession. Common treatment up until the early 20th century was the encouragement of



Billie Campbell (*Seattle Times*, 3 Sep 1935, p.8)

sexual activity. Since 1952, the term "hysteria" has been dropped, but there are obvious lasting social implications associated with the use of this term.

Barbiturate prescriptions were at an increased level from the 1920s-1950s. They were mainly used as sedatives and hypnotics, therefore doctors at the time were quick to prescribe these drugs to Campbell as a sedative given her situation. Women are more likely to overdose on barbiturates than men, since they are prescribed these more often than men. This is because women are generally more likely to seek medical help regarding issues with depression and anxiety. Some side effects of barbiturates include reduced heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure. There is also the potential for high dependence and harmful effects on fetuses. While no longer prescribed as sedatives, they are still in use today as a central nervous system depressant.⁴

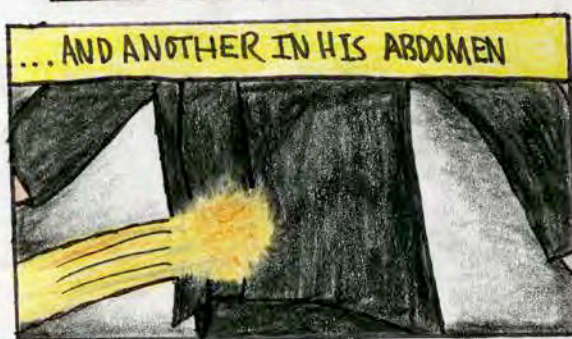
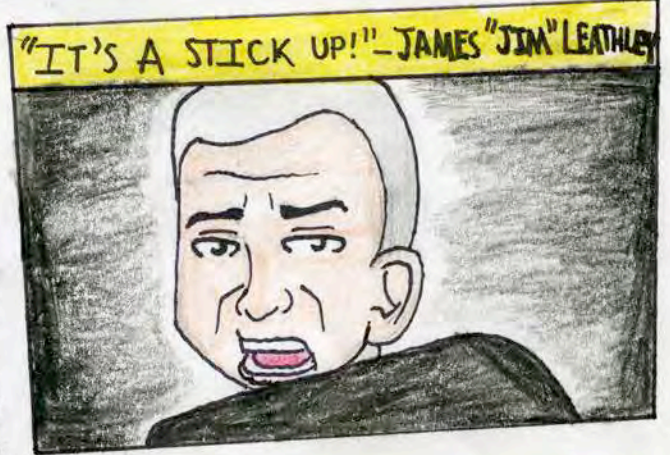
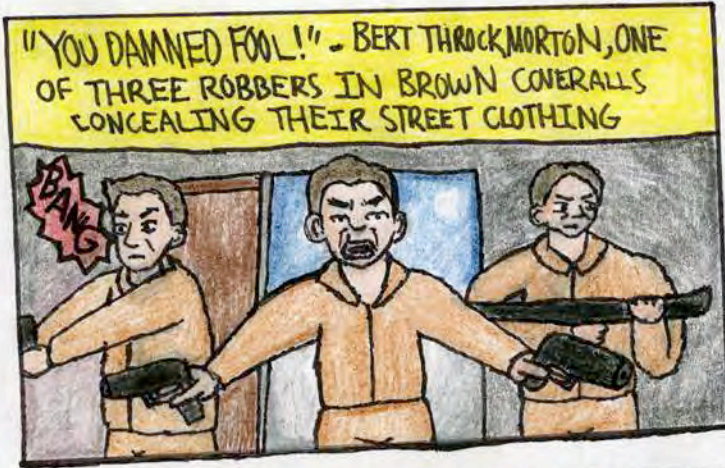
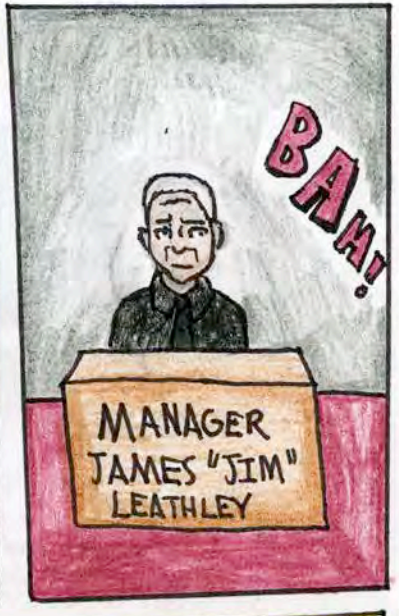
Today, mental health is treated much better than in the past. Perhaps, if Billie Campbell had gotten the help she needed in today's world, then maybe she wouldn't have been prescribed the sedatives, and ultimately been erratic enough to pull the trigger of her pistol. It is important to realize that if depression and other illnesses are not treated accordingly, then the individuals suffering from these may act out in ways, such as suicide.

ENDNOTES

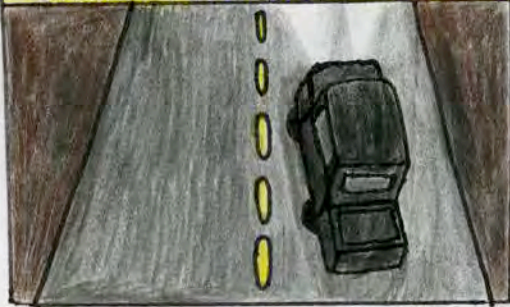
- 1 Taylor Prewitt, *Take Some Pills for Your Hysteria, Lady: America's Long History of Drugging Women Up* (The Vice Guide To Mental Health, 2015).
- 2 López-Muñoz, Francisco, et al. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, *Dove Medical Press*, Dec. 2005, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PM
- 3 "Hysteria." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 12 May 2018, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hysteria.
- 4 Jacobson, Roni. "Psychotropic Drugs Affect Men and Women Differently." *Scientific American*, 1 Jul 2014, www.scientificamerican.com/article/psychotropic-drugs-affect-men-and-women-differently/.

DIE ROBBED

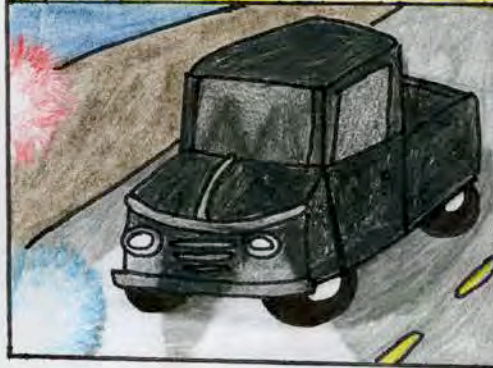
A comic by Althea Guanzon



SIMULTANEOUSLY, TRUCK DRIVER ERNEST SMOTHERS DROVE WITH HIS FIANCÉ ALICE TRAVERSO JUST EAST OF RENTON ON SUNSET HIGHWAY



SMOTHERS INADVERTENTLY DROVE HIS AUTOMOBILE INTO A "POLICE TRAP" SET FOR ROBBERS



"DUCK HONEY!" - SMOTHER'S LAST WORDS TO HIS FIANCÉ ALICE TRAVERSO



SHERIFF DEPUTY ROBERT E. GRAHAM UNINTENTIONALLY SHOT SMOTHERS WHEN HE FIRED AT HIS AUTOMOBILE WHEN HE THOUGHT IT WAS INTENDED FOR THE ROBBERY OF THE LIQUOR STORE



CORONER OTTO H. MITTERSTADT ANNOUNCED INQUEST AS SOON AS WITNESS MISS TRAVERSO WAS ABLE TO TESTIFY A DAY AFTER THE CRIME SCENE



"SMOTHERS DEATH BY SHERIFF GRAHAM TO "DISABLE" HIS CAR, IS UNREASONABLE TO COVER FOR CHIEF STEWART" -CORONER HARLAN CALAHAN



IN A VERDICT TO REPRESENT SMOTHER'S FAMILY AFTER HIS DEATH, ATTORNEY STEVE MORRISSEY CONSIDERS SHERIFF GRAHAM NOT A REGULAR TRAINED OFFICER AND CALLS THE OFFICIALS "NEGLIGENT"



AS A TESTIMONIAL, SMOTHER'S PARENTS AND FIANCÉ ASK FOR \$33,000 FOR THE MURDER OF ERNEST SMOTHERS



TWO DAYS AFTER LEATHLEY'S DEATH, THE STATE PATROL AND SHERIFF BEGAN THE HUNT FOR THE ROBBERS OF SATURDAY NIGHT



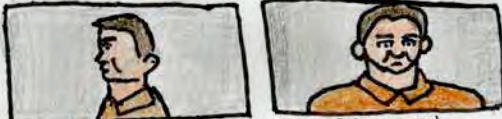
JULY 8TH 1940: SEATTLE TRANSIT COMPANY EMPLOYEE THOMAS F. NEWTON'S HOME WAS INVESTIGATED BECAUSE STATE PATROLMAN ROBERT F. GARNER WAS SHOT HERE



JAMES MORTIMER DAWSON WAS IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE ROBBERS WHO HAS BEEN CHARGED OF LEATHLEY'S MURDER BY RENTON JUSTICE COURT IN JULY 1940 AND SERVED A TEN YEAR TERM IN NORTH DAKOTA STATE PRISON

JULY 23TH 1940: DAWSON WAS ARRESTED AND PLEADED GUILTY OF HIS MURDER ON LEATHLEY

GUILTY OF MURDER



JAMES MORTIMER DAWSON



MARTIN J. GARNER WAS ANOTHER ONE OF THE ROBBERS, BUT WAS KILLED BY POLICE IN JULY 6, 1940 AFTER AN ATTEMPT TO FLEE AWAY IN SPOKANE



PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWN BY WITNESSES INDICATED THAT DAWSON SHOT LEATHLEY WITH GARNER ACCOMPANYING HIM



MORE EVIDENCE INCLUDED WEAPON CARTRIDGES FOUND IN THE RENTON LIQUOR STORE, AND THE HOUSE IN SPOKANE WHERE DAWSON AND GARNER WERE FOUND



NOVEMBER 1ST 1943: A FIRST DEGREE MURDER TRIAL WAS HELD FOR THREE WEEKS AT SUPERIOR JUDGE CHESTER A. BATCHELOR'S COURT WITH 70 WITNESSES, AND DAWSON AS AN ACCUSED DEFENDANT



BERT E. THROCKMORTON WAS ARRESTED IN PORTLAND MEANWHILE BY DETECTIVE LIEUT RICHARD F. MAHONEY, PLEADED GUILTY, AND SENTENCE FOR FIRST DEGREE OF LEATHLEY



DAWSON WAS RETURNED TO SEATTLE BY OFFICERS AFTER HIS TEN YEAR SENTENCE IN NORTH DAKOTA



KILLED SO MANY OF HIS WIVES HE CAN'T REMEMBER ALL THE DETAILS

by Arvin Jex

Editor's Note: Imagine, if you will, a life of loneliness, of insecurity, of dependence. It is women like this whom notorious serial killer James P. Watson—dubbed “Bluebeard” by the newspapers who covered his crimes—preyed upon in the early 20th century. The nickname “Bluebeard” comes from a French fairy tale recorded by Charles Perrault and published in 1697. In the tale a wealthy gentleman murders multiple wives. Watson was not the first Bluebeard, and will sadly not be the last.

During the late 1910s, changing one's name, life story, and location was exceptionally easy. But what drove him to become the most prolific (and least documented) bigamist/wife murderer of the century?

To explore Watson's modus operandi, RenTeen Arvin Jex turned to the tradition of letter writing, one of Bluebeard's favorite techniques, as a way to let the story unfold. Be wary of what you are about to read, as Bluebeard was notorious for having his wives sign blank papers, their ultimate use only to be discovered long after the women's disappearance.

Suitor Seeking Bride WIDOWS ACCEPTABLE

Gentleman, neat in appearance, courteous disposition, well connected in a business way, has a nice bank account, as well as a nice roll of government war bonds, would be pleased to correspond with refined young lady or widow; object matrimony. This advertisement is in good faith and all answers will be treated with every respect.

-H. L. Gordon, Tacoma Hotel,
Tacoma, Wash.

February 2nd, 1919

I am going to be open and frank with you from the start and will ask you to be the same with me. I will not tell you anything that is not true and will make my motive plain, so as to be clearly understood. My position is such as to admit of me making a good home for some good woman, one who wishes to make home what it should be and appreciate the same. I am in the 30s, have brown hair, blue eyes and fair complexion; weight, 150; am five feet, seven inches tall.

I believe in the better and elevating things in life. I am neat in appearance and well respected, having the confidence and friendship of many good people of means and influence. Pleased to say I have a kind, considerate, affectionate nature, and would appreciate the same

in a companion, Have several thousand dollars in money and own quite a little property, as well as having money loaned out on first mortgage, from which I receive a good interest.

After a few months I am going to take quite a vacation and will visit several countries, including New Zealand, Australia and the beautiful city of Honolulu in Hawaii. I may also visit Japan. After my vacation I will either take over management of a prosperous little town in California or take up another line of business I am familiar with.

I wish to make it plain that I am a gentleman and will show you every respect due a lady. Excuse me using the typewriter, as I have a little machine I take with me when away on a business trip.

April 4th, 1919

Dear Cameron Baker,

I think it's so wonderful to be married again. Harvey has made my life a million times better. He's taking me to see the Grand Canyon! Isn't that just grand? Oh, but that's not all. We'll be visiting Mexico for a while after that. He can speak a bit of the language, so it will be an absolutely perfect trip.

Also, friend, I apologize profusely for being so rude, but I won't be able to visit you anytime

soon. After the trip, Harvey will be quite busy, and needs me to come around with him. Perhaps I'll be able to visit you next year! But for now, I will simply continue to write to you.

I am also sorry for the short letter. I have to get ready to leave soon, and want to mail this soon. I'm still getting used to the typewriter.

Your friend,

Nina Lee Deloney

'BLUEBEARD' WEDS 20 WOMEN

December 10th, 1919

My dearest brother Lloyd,

How have you been faring? I do hope you've been treated well so far at the railroad. It sounds like such heavy labor! They ought to pay you very well. Knowing how strong you are, I'm sure you are really doing most of the work for them. Remember the time when you were only sixteen, and you hugged me and suddenly picked me up off my feet? I knew then, even though you used to cling to me like a baby, that you were very strong and could take care of yourself. Still, never let your guard down! Don't be content with the lowest they will pay you. Make sure your boss knows how important you are.

But I suppose I lecture you too much about that, anyway. You were good enough to listen to my rambling even at the wedding. Thank you for the dress, by the way, it's just marvelous. I'm wearing it right now, as I write. I suppose it doubles as a Christmas present, doesn't it? You

clever rascal.

Things have been going fabulously with Albert. He's a wonderful fellow. He bought a new hundred-dollar dress the other day! Can you believe it? But aside from that, just last week, we were going out for a stroll in the town; we were going grocery shopping, but taking our time, you see. The whole time through, I was telling him all about wonderful you all are, and perhaps how we should visit you sometime. He was very patient in listening to my incessant rambling, and soon suggested we take trip out somewhere. It was a wonderful idea! But when he asked me where we ought to go, I wasn't sure. Where do you think we should go, Lloyd? There are too many choices, I can't decide for myself. You'll have to choose for me.

Write back soon so I know where I'm going!

Your sister,

Alice M. Ludwigson

January 18th, 1920

My dear friend Jennifer,

I must say, I never thought I'd be able to marry again. After all, I already have my own child from a different husband. Men don't often enjoy dealing with children that aren't their own. Who would want to marry me? Well, this wonderful man named Watson, of course. He's been so good to me thus far, and is really good with Samuel, though I think the boy's still taking some time to warm up to the man. I'm impressed more each day by how kind and gentle Watson can be. What he sees in me, I'm not so

sure, but I do hope I can be good to him in return.

Also, I'll have to say that you were a bit too worried about putting myself out on those newspaper ads for the lonely singles. It's how he found me, after all! And it all worked out, didn't it?

Pardon the typed letter, I'm trying to practice using it. I shall write again soon.

Sincerely,

Gertrude Wilson



March 9th, 1920

From: Kathryn Andrew

To: Detective Parson

I am having worries about my husband Walter that I'd like to ask your assistance for. I've been married to him for a few months now. He is a very nice man when he is around, always speaking so kindly and spending so much time with me. But I am starting to have some suspicions about him. You see, every once in a while he goes off for long periods of time, sometimes almost a week. He tells me that he works for a secret agency that makes him go on these long missions, and where to he cannot tell me. Now, I hope I do not sound too unreasonable in saying that I believe his disappearances are less innocent than he makes them out to be. I cannot say for certain, and I hope more than anything that I am in fact wrong, but I fear he may be seeing another woman. I request that you find this out for me, and put my anxieties to rest.

March 12th, 1920

From: Detective Parson

To: Detective James

I've been doing some research on this Walter Andrew guy after talking to Mrs. Andrew directly. So apparently, Andrews had been disappearing on the same days that the bank robberies downtown are happening. Suspicious, isn't it? I think we just might have found our guy. I'd like to follow this fellow around for a bit and see what he's up to, sometime soon.



March 20th, 1920

The following is a transcript of an interview between Mrs. Kathryn Andrew and Detectives Parson and James, with stenographer Mrs. Alexander present. Extraneous dialogue has been removed.

Detective James: Let's talk about the suspect.

Detective Parson: Mrs. Andrew, what do you know about your husband's work?

Mrs. Andrew: He works for the government as some agent. He says he can't tell me much else.

Parson: Nothing else? Not where he goes?

Andrew: I haven't the foggiest clue. Far away, I suppose, with how long he's gone.

Parson: But you've written that you might fear infidelity.

Andrew: That's right. That is my main concern.

Parson: Seems possible.

James: Ask about the bank.

Parson: Alright. Mrs. Andrew, what does Mr. Andrew do when he returns home after one of his long absences?

Andrew: Well, he'll greet me, we'll hug and kiss... He'll put his things away, and usually has some present for me, like some fruit or knick-knack.

Parson: I see. Does he ever bring money with him?

Andrew: When he returns or when he leaves?

Parson: When he comes back.

Andrew: When he comes back, no. Though I don't often check his luggage. That would be rather invasive. I see him

take a few dollars with him when he leaves, though.

James: Interesting. The dates are still suspicious.

Parson: I'll say. Mrs. Andrew, where was your husband on February 12?

Andrew: Out, I'm not sure where.

Parson: When had he left?

Andrew: The day before.

James: Bank robbers don't rob alone. Does he have friends?

Parson: Yes, does your husband have a lot of friends?

Andrew: Oh, sure he does. I haven't met any of them, really... He travels around so much, he says they're far away.

Parson: He says.

Andrew: He says. Now, I'm suspicious myself, because I expect him to be honest, but he's barely made any mention of women friends, as if he'd only have male friends.

James: Makes sense.

Parson: I'm convinced we ought to continue this investigation and see for ourselves.

Andrew: How do you mean?

Parson: We'd like to follow the man around a bit, Mrs. Andrew. See what he's up to on a daily basis while he's gone. We can put your worries to rest. Would that be alright with you?

Andrew: Oh, more than anything, yes.

James: Wonderful. I think that'll be all for now. Contact us anytime you need.

End of transcript



March 25th, 1920

To: Detective James
From: Detective Peterson

Thank heavens we saved Kathryn Andrew from that Bluebeard fellow. Our alleged bank robber turned out not to rob banks, but lives. Who would've suspected that that quiet and reserved man had married dozens of wives and killed nine of them? I suspect we will be connecting more deaths to this man in the days to come. When doing your investigations, remember he took many names, including Albert, Harvey, Walter, Watson, and the like. We will have the trial soon, and I am sure it will be short.

April 3rd, 1920

To: Detective Peterson
From: Detective James

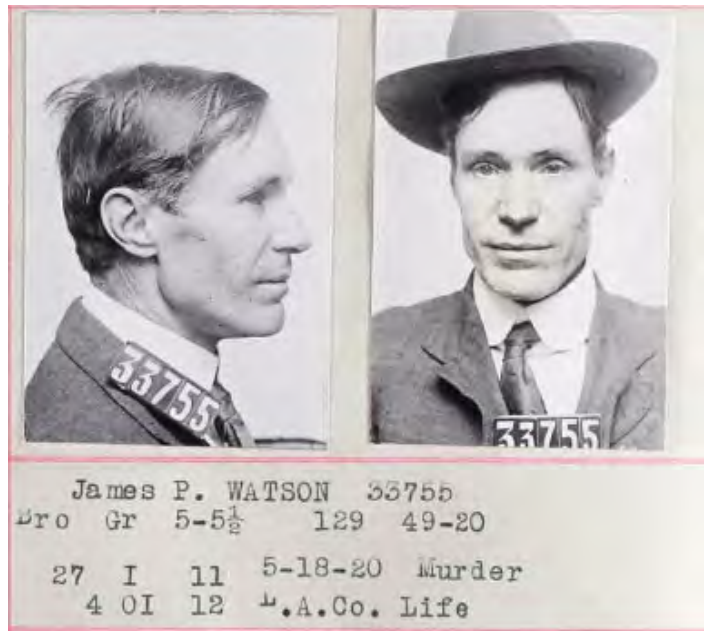
Oh, good lord. That Bluebeard Watson fellow we caught a while ago for bigamy and murder—You know what he did? Remember all those letters we collected from his victims' friends and family, which all seemed strangely shallow? Well, the victims didn't write them. He did. What a madman! Clever, I'll say, but terrifying. I found a bunch of papers among the stuff we confiscated from him. They all had signatures of his wives at the bottom, but the rest was blank. He'd typewrite the letters and send them off later. Not a single one of those letters was written by an actual lady herself!

April 4th, 1920

To: Detective James
From: Detective Peterson

Ah. I see. Well, I was hoping for a letter from my friend staying in Georgia, but now I think if I read it now, I won't be able to sleep at night.

By the way, let's stop typewriting our correspondences, Howard. I think I'll be more comfortable with handwritten letters.



Editor's Note: Moving from one town to the next and assuming different names was one way Bluebeard was able to woo and marry at least 20 women (though some estimates go as high as 45). Miss Alice Marian Ludvigson, a Renton resident, was taken in by his charms and ultimately lost her life, along with at least eight other women from the western United States and Canada. Ludvigson's parents operated the Superior Hotel on Wells near Third in Renton. After the death of her mother, Ludvigson was left to take care of her siblings and help operate the hotel, where she met her murderer.

About six months after Alice's disappearance, James P. Watson was arrested in California on charges of bigamy in April 1920. One of his wives, Kathryn Andrew, suspected an affair and hired a private detective. The detective found a suitcase full of jewelry, blank pages with signatures, and marriage certificates; he reported Watson to the police. Soon after, a body was discovered at Plum Station (near Seattle) and Watson, fearing it was the remains of one of his dead wives, confessed to everything to strike a bargain with the prosecutor.

During his questioning Watson was reported to show little remorse. He explained he often advertised for wives through newspapers and chose women with money to wed. Many women were seduced by the promise of companionship, a home, money, and trips around the world. Once married, he would find excuses to have them sign blank pieces of paper which he would use after their disappearance to continue to correspond with family to relieve suspicion. Watson did not kill all of his wives; it is believed he sent some to Mexico as part of a sex trafficking ring.

Watson received a life sentence and was incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison. He remained there until 1939 when he died of pneumonia.

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BABY BOOMERS, LET YOUR STUFF GO!

The *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and *Forbes*, among many others, have all observed that as they downsize in retirement Baby Boomers are having trouble finding takers for all their stuff. “This is an IKEA and Target generation,” says Mary Kay Buysse, executive director of the National Association of Senior Move Managers. “They don’t have the emotional connection to things that earlier generations did.”

If you are tempted to put everything in your attic, garage, or in a dumpster, remember the Museum. Like your kids and grandkids, we *are* short on space, but we are actively collecting post-WWII photos, letters, diaries, and other ephemera (a fancy museum word meaning “paper stuff”) that help explain the Renton experience, especially in the 1950s through the 2000s. Your donations help researchers, genealogists, and students, and they are used in

exhibits and publications. Here’s our current wishlist:

- Photos of “Cruising the Renton Loop”
- Photos, posters, handbills, programs, ticket stubs from performances by local bands and musicians (The Eligibles, RedAx, the Gene Aitken Septet, and others)
- Photos from the Renton Aire Faire (before Renton River Days)
- Diaries and letters written by WWII servicemembers, nurses, or defense workers
- Diaries and letters written by Vietnam-era servicemembers
- Photos, minutes, or other items relating to activities of Renton chapters of active civic or political groups, like the National Organization of Women, NAACP, Civil Air Patrol, Republican or Democratic Party, or labor union locals

Switchboards to Selfies

A Look Back At How We Connect



“So many cards and letters that I don't know which to answer next.”

-Margaret Lewis, 1919

The need to communicate is central to our identity as human beings, but how has communication changed as technology continues to evolve over time? From quills to typewriters, from switchboards to smartphones, from handwritten letters to Facebook, as our communication technology changes, so do our messages. Exchanging ideas has never been faster or easier, but can we even hear each other through all the noise? *Switchboards to Selfies* uses Renton artifacts to explore this national and global story.

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NOVEMBER
20
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APRIL
27

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



Mystery Mattie, ca. 1905. Do you recognize these early Kenndale residents? We know the bride's (3rd from left) name is Mattie but we have been unable to uncover her last name. Possible names include: Mattie Jancko, Mattie C. Corum, Mattie A. Scott, Mattie LaRose, Mattie Crowell, Mattie McDaniels, Mattie Corrigan, or Mattie Edith Brazee.
(RHM# 2014.026.085)