

# Rainier Valley Heritage News



Volume 18, Issue 2

Spring 2009

## **Rainier Valley Historical Society 118<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting!**

**Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:00 a.m. to Noon  
Lions Club Charles Lamb Memorial Hall  
3712 South Ferdinand Street**

### **New Location!**

We will be meeting at the Lions Club Charles Lamb Memorial Hall, right next door to our office on Ferdinand Street. We're glad to have the opportunity to meet so close to our office and display window, even though parking may be slightly more difficult than it was at the old location. (There is a \$1 lot on Ferdinand Street just east of Rainier Avenue and a \$3 lot on Edmonds Street just west of Rainier where the Columbia City Farmers Market sets up on Wednesdays.) We will have volunteers stationed at the curb to assist with passenger drop-off and pick-up for your convenience.

### **The Program**

Shanna Stevenson, Washington Women's History Consortium Coordinator, will present "Women's Votes, Women's Voices," an informative and entertaining presentation that covers more than 50 years of political struggle by a fascinating array of women—Progressives, Populists, Prohibitionists, and others—to win the right to vote in Washington State. As Ms. Stevenson says, "Women in Washington were not *given* the right to vote. They *earned* it." The women's suffrage movement is also the subject of an exhibit at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma—now through September 27<sup>th</sup>. For more information about the exhibit, the Washington Women's History Consortium, and women's suffrage in Washington, visit [www.washingtonhistory.org](http://www.washingtonhistory.org).



### **Presentation by Mikala Woodward**

Our program also includes a presentation by RVHS Director Mikala Woodward about Rainier Valley women leaders. Our corner of Seattle did not produce any prominent leaders in the suffrage movement (that we know of, anyway—let us know if you've heard different!). But the women of the Rainier Valley have been active in public life in many other ways—from the Rainier Beach Women's Club, which founded the first kindergarten in Seattle in 1910, to Denise Gloster, who organized the first March for Youth to protest youth violence in 2008. Marion Southard Weiss used her social work training in volunteer public service with the Seattle Housing Authority, among other worthy causes. Ruby Chow defied stereotypes to emerge as a leader in the Chinese community and the world beyond. And Dawn Mason has worked tirelessly on behalf of women, minorities, and other marginalized members of our community. We are working on a window display to highlight these and other remarkable women—come check it out!

### **Additions to Archives**

As always, we will also show you some of the wonderful photos that have been donated to the collection since last year.

### **Official Business**

In addition to these presentations, we will be conducting some official business. We would like to get feedback from our membership about the future direction of the organization—please see the President's Message for more about these ideas, which came up at our Planning Retreat on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Plus, we will elect the new Board and vote on a minor change to our Bylaws to allow the Board to conduct some of its business by e-mail.

### **Buffet Lunch**

After the program, please join us for a buffet lunch and a chance to view our historic displays and chat with RVHS members and neighbors. Hope to see you all there! Bring a friend!

### President's Message

by Brian Fairchild

Our Planning Retreat last month was an intense, productive day. Many thanks to all the Board members who were able to make it, to Rainier House for letting us use their conference room, and to Andrea John Smith for facilitating! At the retreat we identified a number of major changes that have occurred in the Rainier Valley in the last five years, or are going to occur in the next five years. These include the opening of Sound Transit's light rail line along Martin Luther King Jr. Way, the construction of several new housing and retail developments throughout the Valley, and the arrival of thousands of new residents to the area.

Our challenge as a historical society is to continue to serve our original membership and audience, while actively reaching out to new arrivals and visitors from other parts of the city. We are excited about our new website as a vehicle for reaching new audiences and better serving all of our constituents, from teachers to homeowners, from developers to academics. The website launched on April 10<sup>th</sup>. With luck and good wi-fi karma, we should be able to give you all a glimpse of it at our Annual Meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Our Membership Committee also plans to launch a new membership campaign this year, aimed at people who have moved here in the last few years (and those to come), who did not grow up in the Rainier Valley and who may have no idea of the rich history of their new neighborhood. We believe our historic photographs and artifacts—along with the many stories we have collected over the years—are a powerful tool to connect these newcomers to the community, give them a sense of place, and encourage them to add their own stories to the ongoing history of the Rainier Valley.

As we reach out to these new audiences, it will be more important than ever that we maintain a strong connection with our current members, whose stories are woven into our community's past, present, and future—and whose support has carried us through the last 118 years. We welcome your suggestions about how to best serve our members and our community. Bring your ideas to the Annual Meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, or send them to us directly.

Finally, Mikala has proposed that we hire an administrator to handle the day-to-day management of the organization, while she transitions to a grant-driven position managing projects and programs. This shift will hopefully allow us to expand our capacity as an organization, while making sure our basic administrative tasks are taken care of. We'll be hiring our new administrator in May—stay tuned!

### New RVHS Website Launched!

[www.rainiervalleyhistory.org](http://www.rainiervalleyhistory.org)

By the time you read this, the new RVHS website will be live and kicking. We are very excited about this, as we've been working toward it for ... longer than we'd like to think about, actually! When you go to the website, you will see:

- A cleaner, simpler design—created for us by long-time RVHS member Jon Frank!
- Easy-to-update News & Calendar features—so you can stay abreast of all of our events and volunteer opportunities!
- A totally searchable collection of stories and photographs—everything from the old site and more!
- Information and pictures for all our projects and programs!
- Slide show versions of our photo displays!
- A "Tell Your Story" feature where visitors can submit their own Rainier Valley memories and photos to the site!
- Quick Links to resources for researching your old house!

We want to thank the many, many people whose efforts combined over the years to get us to this point. Many, many thanks to Gloria Cauble, Mary Ann Schleer, Connie Cox, Jon Frank, Karen O'Brien, Tri Nguyen, all the folks at NPower who built the site for us, and of course 4Culture for footing the bulk of the bill. We want to give a special shout-out also to Sal Vacca whose generous donation allowed us to purchase baseball photos from other collections and to Dave Eskenazi for helping us put together the long-awaited Rainier Valley Baseball slide show. As they say, it takes a village.

**“Double Exposures” Gets Second Life**

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Mikala gave a slide show at the Southeast Senior Center, in conjunction with their display of our Double Exposures exhibit. The slide show, like the exhibit, featured historic photographs from our collection, paired with photos of the same locations taken in 2003 and 2004 by photographer Kerry Zimmerman. (Kerry has since moved to St. Louis and become a high school teacher—we miss you, Kerry!)

Recently we’ve added a few more “then & now” pairs, with the help of local photographer Joanne Petrina, whose “Rainier Valley Narrative” photographs have been featured at SeaTac Airport, Seattle City Hall, and the Columbia City Gallery, among other venues. Joanne has taken “Double Exposures” inside, with some “now” shots of interior images from our collection. These photos have allowed us to focus a little bit more on the changing faces of the Rainier Valley.



Grayson & Brown Hardware & Furniture Co., c. 1910. RVHS Photo



Buzz Anderson, J.B., Flo & Bull Stewart at Columbia City Fitness Center, 2008. Photo by Joanne Petrina

The small but appreciate audience at the Senior Center had lots of questions and memories of their own to share. Thanks so much to Yvonne for arranging this opportunity for us. If you’d like to schedule a historic slide show for your group or event, please contact us!



Grayson & Brown Interior, c. 1920. RVHS Photo



Bookworm Exchange owner Jim Holmes with two customers. Photo by Joanne Petrina

## **Segregation, Integration and Gentrification in Mount Baker:**

### **A Brief History of Race in One Seattle Neighborhood**

by Jesse Inman

*One reason we work so hard to document and preserve the history of the Rainier Valley is so that researchers can have primary sources to work with. Over the years we have helped historians and students dig up information about the Jewish community in South Seattle, a 100-year-old murder on Mercer Island, and the presence of cows in urban environments in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Spring 2008 we worked with Jesse Inman, a student at Western Washington University in Bellingham, who wanted to research the history of racial covenants in the Mount Baker neighborhood. Here are some excerpts from his paper.*

*[Continued from Winter 2009 Issue]*

#### **Mount Baker: "A Changing Neighborhood"**

[In the 1950s and '60s] a small but growing number of African-Americans were moving out of the Central District into South Seattle. The 1948 Supreme Court ruling *Shelley v. Kraemer* meant that housing segregation could no longer be legally enforced, and African-Americans could no longer be legally restricted to the Central District. Although many realtors outside of the Central District were reluctant to sell houses to African-Americans, active campaigns for neighborhood integration were occurring throughout the 1950s and '60s.

The civil rights community was divided about how best to challenge neighborhood segregation. Some favored an open housing ordinance, while others favored what Quintard Taylor described as "a campaign of public education with quiet attempts to locate 'pioneer' families in white neighborhoods."

With its large houses, its relatively close proximity to the Central District, and its increasingly affordable housing prices, Mount Baker became an attractive location for "pioneer" families hoping to leave the Central District. The result was that in the early 1960s African-Americans, slowly but surely, began to move into Mount Baker.

The Mount Baker Community reacted quickly. Headed by Allen Zoll, a small group of residents

working outside of the Mount Baker Community Club started meeting in 1962 to discuss the situation. They decided to seek the advice of the Seattle Civic Unity Committee ("CUC"), another group working on neighborhood integration. During the Second World War a number cities formed CUCs to promote racial unity in a time of war. In Seattle the CUC continued to be active in racial politics after the war and as early as 1948 began to oppose neighborhood segregation. After the Madrona campaign, the CUC began to work on preventing "white flight" or "panic selling" in newly integrated neighborhoods. This phenomenon of the 1960s and '70s occurred when white residents, fearful that new black neighbors would decrease property values, quickly sold their homes, flooding and essentially fulfilling their own prophesy.

Of principal concern to Zoll and his group was preventing panic selling. The group was worried that, if white residents quickly sold their property, Mount Baker would soon become an all-black neighborhood. As Zoll wrote to Louise P. Blackham,

[W]e have seen in one neighborhood after another what has become an unfortunate pattern. The pattern begins with one or several Negro families moving into a block, white residents flee and the neighborhood goes into a transition to an all Negro neighborhood very rapidly. Examples are in the Leschi area, in Madrona, and elsewhere.

The group, however, did not intend to maintain Mount Baker's status as an all-white neighborhood. Rather, they wanted to "maintain its present integrated status, to prevent the flight of white families as Negroes move in to the area, and to replace customary panic found in this situation with calm."

To achieve this, Zoll's group borrowed material from the CUC, such as the booklet *Your Home in a Changing Neighborhood*, *The Myths of Racial Integration*, and *The Last White Family on the Block*. The group also sent out a letter to the residents of Mount Baker urging them to stay calm and not to sell their property. The letter begins:

Dear Mount Baker Neighbor, Some of us have been discussing the changes that might occur in our community as minority families move in [...] We like it here and we plan to stay. We are sure you feel the same way too.

The letter then goes on to explain panic selling and the negative effects that it can have on a neighborhood.

What happens in a community when some minority families move in depends largely on the attitudes of and actions of those living there. If there is fear that property values go down, panic selling can flood the market with homes and make this fear come true [...] On the other hand, if we all feel that this will continue to be a fine neighborhood it will be and we can count on our new neighbors to help us make it so.

The letter also warns residents to watch out for less than scrupulous realtors who might attempt to exploit fear of minorities:

If you or your neighbors get calls from real estate salesmen trying to scare you into selling your home—in whatever way—take down their names or company and report the facts to one of the names underlined at the bottom of this letter. There will be no embarrassment to you—but we must not permit hopes for a “quick commission” to spread fear in our community.

The letter concludes by saying, “Together with our old and new neighbors we can continue to be a proud community.” Zoll reported to Blackham, “as far as we can tell, the letter was favorably received.”

Zoll and his group’s campaign represent a large change in Mount Baker politics. For one thing the group met outside of the Mount Baker Community Club and consistently referred to themselves as an “informal community group.” The group also promoted integration rather than opposing it as residents in Mount Baker had done in the past. The major purpose of the group was to allow for change to occur in Mount Baker, but to make sure the change was not too drastic. The group’s efforts seemed limited to a white audience and the focus is on “stay[ing] put”. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to make sure housing prices do not fall and that the Mount Baker neighborhood doesn’t change too dramatically.

By 1970 African-Americans had grown to thirty-five percent of Mount Baker’s population. Also, in the ‘70s, the Club [which had been taken over by younger, more progressive residents] also began working hard to revitalize Mount Baker. They opened the tour of homes, which brought in more funding for the Club. In 1975 they started the Mount Baker Housing Rehabilitation Program as a public non-profit, designed to give low interest loans to low-income Mount Baker residents for home improvement. This represents a

fairly marked change in attitude from the Hunter Tract policy of using restrictive clauses to demand upkeep.

By 1977 the neighborhood’s image had successfully shifted. *Seattle Magazine* featured an article entitled “Mount Baker—There Was Nobody to Do It But Us,” written by Mount Baker resident Jane Pugel. The article describes Mount Baker as the “Elegant’ district that saved itself”, noting that, “only ten years ago city planners ‘wrote off’ Mount Baker as a central-city doomed to die off [...] it seemed a sad fate for a neighborhood once ranked one of the city’s most elegant.” The article goes on to describe how “one neighborhood made the rocky transition from the age of elegance to the age of today.”

Pugel’s article focuses on how the influx of young residents has transformed the neighborhood. She makes note of how young residents and black residents have helped to transform Mount Baker into a modern integrated neighborhood. Club member Betty Michelson is quoted saying,

In the 60s we knew we were in a crisis—caused by a big influx of minorities, rapid turnover of residents and school overcrowding, and plagued with racial problems [...] We saw that what we need to guide us through this period was a strong central organization of all of the residents black and white who could work together for the improvement of the neighborhood [...] Blacks and whites assumed leadership positions and everybody worked together.

The article also notes that this image of a successfully integrated neighborhood had made Mount Baker attractive property for young residents. Real estate agent Betty Jane Russell is quoted saying, “The people who are coming to Mount Baker, mostly young professional couples, are interested in social problems. The fact that it is a successfully integrated neighborhood is important to many of them.” “We wanted two things primarily,” new resident Gary Zarter is quoted as saying, “an older home and an integrated neighborhood in which to rear our children.” Ironically, racial integration, which for half a century Mount Baker had fought against, had become a selling point for the neighborhood.

*Thanks to Jesse for sharing his terrific paper with us and giving us permission to print these excerpts.*

**Treasurer’s Report**

Many thanks to those listed below for sending in their 2009 memberships, operating donations, endowment donations, and bequests since our last newsletter. Your support will ensure that RVHS achieves its current and future goals. Also provided for your review is the 2008 Treasurer’s Annual Report Summary. More details about 2008 financial matters will be provided at our Annual Meeting to be held on May 2, 2009.

*Correction to Winter 2009 Memberships: Ardath Karr should be listed as a Life Member, not a Columbia Pioneer. Helen Smith has been added to the Individual Membership list below (she was inadvertently omitted from the Winter 2009 list of members).*

**2008 TREASURER’S ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY**

<b>Operating Income</b>		<b>Operating Expense</b>	
Member Dues	\$3,800	Personnel	\$10,400
Sales and Fees	1,000	Collections	1,800
Interest	4,300	Publications	800
Annual Donations	6,800	Exhibits/Education	3,400
4Culture Sustained Support	9,000	Marketing/Membership	300
Project Grants	6,200	Facility	3,500
<b>Income Total</b>	<b>\$31,100</b>	Administration	1,900
		Office Remodel	1,000
		<b>Expense Total</b>	<b>23,100</b>

**Endowment Value 12/31/08: \$167,639.**

**Individual/Family**

**Memberships:**

- Herb Tsuchiya
- Mark Sherman
- Mark & Ann Halvorson
- Diana Vinh
- Laura Day
- Leonard Root
- Carolyn Gould
- Mikala Woodward
- John Brockhaus
- Marjorie Uhlman
- Sandra Scudder
- Nancy Hevly
- Billie McLaughlin
- Kirsten Olsen & Greg Stumph
- Ellen Barnhill
- Grover Haynes
- Mary Iszley
- Lorna Stone/Theo Mace
- Charles Woodruff
- Helen Smith
- June Vynne
- Reverend & Mrs. Younge
- Suzanne Todd
- Mr. & Mrs. Mike Buse
- Ann Melone & Boyd Pickrell
- Russ, Janet & Lola Battaglia
- Georgia Breindl

**Business Memberships:**

- Harbor Properties Investors LLC
- Windermere Real Estate

**Sponsor Memberships:**

- Betty Peterson

**Patron Memberships:**

- Suzanne Hittman

**Columbia Pioneers:**

- Clarajane Goux
- Mr. and Mrs. Darrell Anderson
- Bernice Durall

**Life Memberships:**

- Dorothy Kribs

**Endowment Fund:**

- James Creevey in memory of Charles “Bud” Creevey
- Carolyn Gould
- Nancy Hevly

**Operating Fund:**

- Ardath Karr
- Marilyn & Richard Tilbury
- Mary K. O’Brien
- Diana Vinh
- Laura Day
- Mikala Woodward
- Brian Fairchild
- Washington Legislative Arts Foundation
- Nancy Hevly
- Billie McLaughlin
- Kirsten Olsen & Greg Stumph
- Bernice Sisson
- Jean Veldyke Properties
- Grover Haynes
- Mary Iszley
- Ruth Barrett
- Daniel Lane

**Additions to Archives**

Our collections volunteers Jean Bates, Gladys Rash, and Anna Bergman have been busy cataloging some giant collections that came in at the end of 2008—thank you, thank you, thank you! But we’re almost done with those projects, and we welcome new donations of historic photographs, documents, and artifacts. If you prefer to keep the originals of your photographs and documents, we would be happy to make a copy of them and return the originals to you. Please note that donations of historical materials to our archives have been slow this year—call or e-mail us for more information about donating to our collection.

09.002: Linda Zbigley donated a collection of photographs and memorabilia from Rainier Beach High School’s early years. She has been filling us in on life as a teenager in the early ‘60s—some great stories!

**Bridge Over Genessee**

For many years we’ve been hoping to find a photograph of the bridge that used to connect 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue across Genessee Street. (We’re told 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue was meant to be an arterial route to Lake Washington for Lakewood residents—that’s why it’s so much wider than the other avenues around it.) We have two photographs that were taken *from* the bridge before and during a Genessee paving project in 1909, but none that show the bridge itself. Until now, that is.

Last month while searching for something else entirely, we came across these 1914 photos on the Seattle Municipal Archives website.



We’d love to hear from anyone who knows or remembers anything about this bridge—we don’t even know when they took it down!

**Collections Update**

Our Collections Committee has been meeting irregularly on Saturdays to go through the dozens of boxes of records in our off-site storage location. These include records from the Rainier Chamber of Commerce, Columbia Congregational Church, Emerson School PTA, and Jefferson Women’s Improvement Club. The idea is to cull out duplicates and other items we don’t need, re-house the records in archival boxes, and create detailed inventories of the contents of each box. We have been able to use money from an old 4Culture grant to purchase new shelving that makes much more efficient use of space. Many thanks to Stephen Hultberg for moving help and for donating and cutting the particle board shelves—that saved us a bundle on shipping!

Contact Chelsea Cannon Rodriguez if you’d like to get involved in this project:

chelseabricannon@msn.com

Please note: We still are in need of a new storage space! If you know of a secure, dry space (200 sq. ft. or so) near our office in Columbia City that someone might be willing to donate or subsidize in the name of community history, please let us know!

**Rainier Valley Heritage News**

*Published quarterly and mailed to all our members and friends*

Editor ..... Teresa A. Anderson  
 Design and layout ..... Teresa A. Anderson

**Rainier Valley Historical Society**

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 RVHS Director ..... Mikala Woodward

\*The Rainier Valley Historical Society office, exhibits, and events are located at 3710 South Ferdinand Street, an accessible facility. Auxiliary aids and assistance are provided upon request to persons with disabilities.



**CULTURE**  
 KING COUNTY LODGING TAX

**Thanks to  
 King County  
 for their  
 operating support**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

If you haven't joined the Rainier Valley Historical Society this year, we urge you to do so now.

**MEMBER**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City / State / ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ / Email \_\_\_\_\_

**DUES SCHEDULE**

- Lifetime Member \$150
- Patron \$100
- Sponsor \$50
- Organization / Business Member \$50
- Individual / Family (per household) \$20

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

I'd like to volunteer for:

- Collections Committee
- Education Committee
- Membership Committee
- Oral History Commerce
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**DONATIONS**

Your tax-deductible donations are encouraged to support the RVHS. We have IRS 501(c)(3) tax deductible status.

Operating Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Endowment Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Rainier Valley Food Stories Cookbook**

Books are \$18.00, including tax.  
To have your order mailed to you, add \$2.00.

**Total cookbook order: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**



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