Rainier Valley’s First History Maker Award

Rainier Valley Historical Society presented its first Rainier Valley History Maker award to Chuck Kusak, third generation owner of Kusak Cut Glass Works. Chuck received his award on October 20th at our 6th annual Founder’s Dinner. Chuck has admirably carried on the family traditions of philanthropy, business excellence, and community service his grandfather Anton Kusak started 104 years ago.

The Kusak glass legacy began with Chuck’s grandfather Anton Charles Kusak, who emigrated from a Moravia village in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Born March 21, 1890, Anton left home at the age of 13 to learn the glass engraving trade from the leading European glass designer. Anton quickly moved through the apprenticeship program and by the age of 19, Anton was the youngest journeymen in Europe. Anton wished for a new life outside the poor conditions of Moravia and set his ambitions toward France where he perfected his technique in engraving fine crystal. Eventually Anton joined one of his brothers in America, stopping in Boonton, New Jersey. He learned the largest producer of handmade glass was in Moundsville, West Virginia, where he landed his first glass-engraving job on US soil. Anton met his wife Marie in the large Moravian community in Moundsville. They came out west to Seattle seeking better environment conditions and to be closer to her family members. Anton and Marie sold their first piece of Kusak engraved crystal stemware on June 14, 1914; the rest is history.

Anton Kusak officially turned over the company leadership to his son and “pal” Tony in 1956. Chuck joined his father in business after college and when Tony retired in 1986, Chuck took over as third generation owner. Chuck successfully transformed the Kusak Cut Glass Works with modern technology and custom engraving; the fact that Kusak employees’ longevity averages 37 years, speaks highly of the Kusak family.

Kusak Cut Glass Works has withstood many challenges of the past 104 years and their presence in Rainier Valley will be dearly missed. Kusak’s retail store will be closing at the end of this year. It is their hope to retain the custom engraving division of the business.

Moravian-born Anton Kusak, Kusak Cut Glass Works founder, 1918, photo courtesy of Chuck Kusak

John Charles, Chuck Kusak and Donny Jones, RVHS Founder’s Dinner October 20, 2018

Rainier Valley Historical Society’s mission is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret the history and heritage of the Rainier Valley and its people, and to promote public involvement in and appreciation of its history and culture.

Our geographic boundaries are from Dearborn Street on the north to the city limits on the south, and from the I-5 freeway to Lake Washington.
Wetmore Community Farm Fall Fest!

By Nancy Dunaley

Rainier Valley’s Wetmore Community Farm coordinator, Kyla Rudnick of Alleycat Acres, had reason to celebrate this past October, and all the arrangements were made – pumpkins, chickens, mushrooms, herb bouquets. Friends, volunteers, and supporters came from far and wide. As a member of a local urban farm collective, Kyla has been working since 2015 to transform the previously undeveloped Wetmore Street Right of Way owned by Seattle Department of Transportation into a productive gardening and cultural space. She has overseen and managed the clearing of knotweed and trash as well as earth moving to create the Spokane Street entrance to the farm and garden beds, with some help from partner Stone Soup Gardens.

The development of this ¼ acre farm intends to provide community access to urban land use and food production as opposed to overgrown blackberries and bad behavior. Setting a good example is the adjacent Estelle Street P-Patch where immigrant Laotians have been gardening since the late 1980s. Here, in season, you will find edibles - think bitter melons, gourds, tomatoillos, chayotes, taro leaf, and mustard greens (did you know there are eight kinds?) Tall and vibrant magenta-colored amaranth and golden yellow sunflowers abound late summer. On the P-Patch, magenta-colored amaranth and golden yellow sunflowers abound late summer.

In November of 1890, Byron Young and his wife Jane plaatted The Byron Addition. Jane was a young girl when she arrived in Seattle in October 1853 by wagon train with her parents, Seymour and Anna Wetmore, and her younger brother, Birdsey. By 1869 the Wetmores, now numbering ten, were raising hay, hops, potatoes and cattle on their 160-acre donation farm and garden beds, with some help from partner Stone Soup Gardens.

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A creek ran through, flowing south to provide community access to urban land use and food production as opposed to overgrown blackberries and bad behavior. Setting a good example is the adjacent Estelle Street P-Patch where immigrant Laotians have been gardening since the late 1980s. Here, in season, you will find edibles - think bitter melons, gourds, tomatoillos, chayotes, taro leaf, and mustard greens (did you know there are eight kinds?) Tall and vibrant magenta-colored amaranth and golden yellow sunflowers abound late summer. On the P-Patch, magenta-colored amaranth and golden yellow sunflowers abound late summer.

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Collections Committee Update:

RVHS thanks the following donors for items added to the archives

Ray Aker: Vicuna silk top hat, circa 1900, owned by his grandfather T. G. Hitt of Hitt Fireworks, perfumed bottle, copper block print with Hitt Fireworks ad, Hitt Fireworks retail items, PSRA photograph of Esmyl Garage.

Merce Anderson: aerial photography of S. Oregon Street and 48th, family home of Herbert O. F. Anderson.

Rosemary Boyd: voltage testers, circa 1940s, owned by her father Marvin Dietl.


Thank you for Supporting the 6th Annual Founder’s Dinner

Thanks to everyone who attended our 6th Annual Founder’s Dinner, honoring Buzz Anderson’s RVHS legacy. Dean Anderson gave a heart-filled toast to his dad to start the evening and we heard from Shirley Peringer, Buzz’s sister; tell the story how she named her baby brother, “baby Buzzer.”

The lively evening included strolling musicians The Tarantellas, raffle baskets, silent and live auction items, and an Italian dinner bar none. We had 140 people in attendance to enjoy Douglass Chiechi’s Italian family style dinner, served by volunteers from Seattle Academy, Cleveland High School and Holy Names Academy. Our fundraising efforts raised a record high of over $35,000, thanks to many individuals and businesses who donated generously to the event. The featured “ask” project raised enough funds to restore the Rainier Jeweler neon 1940s electric clock.

RVHS presented its First Annual History Maker award to Chuck Kusak, business owner of Kusak Cut Glass Works where he received a City of Seattle Proclamation from Mayor Durkan stating October 20, 2018, as Chuck Kusak day. We look forward to announcing next year’s recipient soon.


Marc Ellen Hamel: photographs and newspaper clippings of parents Glen and Sylvia Anderson Hamel of Lakewood neighborhood; and photograph Almquist Grocer at 50th and Alaska Street.


Consider a Legacy Donation to RVHS in Your Estate Planning

A bequest is an easy, practical way to make a meaningful contribution to the Rainier Valley Historical Society without affecting your current finances. Through a bequest in your will or a provision in your living trust, you may name the Society as a beneficiary of a specific dollar amount or piece of property, a percentage of your estate, or part or all of what remains of the estate after other bequests are carried out.

An example of some simple bequest language:

“I hereby bequeath [the sum of _____dollars ($) or ___ percent (%) of the residuary estate, and remainder of my estate], to the Rainier Valley Historical Society, a non-profit corporation in Seattle, Washington, for its general purposes.”

You may use this language if you intend to designate your bequest to the Society’s general usage. A bequest of this kind offers the most flexibility and will allow us to use your gift where it is most needed. You may also choose to contribute to our endowment, or to support a particular program or activity.

If you would like to discuss a possible bequest of research or archival materials to the collections, we urge you to contact us to discuss how to transfer the materials into our care.
Support History

If you haven’t joined the Rainier Valley Historical Society this year, we urge you to do so now. RVHS is a 501(c)(3) organization. All membership dues and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law. Please fill in this form and mail it with a check to:

Rainier Valley Historical Society  
PO Box 18143  
Seattle, WA 98118

Books and memberships can also be purchased on our website: www.rainiervalleyhistory.org.

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**Book Order**

Please send me *Images of America: Rainier Valley*.

- Each book in-state is $29.00 (includes King Co. sales tax/shipping).
- Each additional book in-state is $24.00 (includes King Co. tax/shipping).
- Each book out-of-state is $27.00 (includes shipping).

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Donation in honor/memory of (please circle one):

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*If you provide us with an address, we will be happy to send an acknowledgement of your gift.

Please fill in this form and mail it with a check to:

Rainier Valley Historical Society  
PO Box 18143  
Seattle, WA 98118