WILDWOOD STATION: HISTORIC PASSENGER SHELTER
by Karen O'Brien

Editor's Note: RVHS board member Karen O'Brien has been working with SDOT on a renovation for the bus shelter at Rainier Avenue and South Wildwood Lane, which will include signage of historical information. The following article is part of her research for the project.

A Trolley Stop Along the Seattle, Rainier Valley Railway

Wildwood Station dates to the early years in Washington State's history when the first privately owned electric rail service carried passenger streetcars and freight trains along Rainier Avenue from Seattle to Renton. In 1889, a principal landholder J. K. Edmiston ventured in the railway business with the intent to attract buyers to his platted lots in the small town of Columbia. 1890 marked the first year of operating Rainier Avenue Electric Railway, when track was laid from Seattle's waterfront, up Washington to Jackson Street, and south along Rainier Avenue to Columbia. Streetcar stops along the route dotted nearly every block in Rainier Valley and named by its cross street. What started out as forested wilderness eventually became the suburban neighborhoods of Rainier Valley today.

As the railway route extended further south along Rainier Avenue from the city center, so did its rail name and ownership. In 1891, service to Rainier Beach and Taylor's Mill, one of the major sawmills on Lake Washington, was added and the line was renamed Seattle and Rainier Beach Railway. Edmiston was inadequate at operating the franchise, and with the ensuing "panic" of 1893, he was voted out by bondholders and W.J. Grambs stepped in as manager. Then, creditor Frank Osgood, by court order, bought the railway for less than the original purchase. Under judicious management of Osgood, the line extended 5 miles to Renton along the scenic route of Lake Washington to the mouth of the Black River. In 1896, the completed line, Seattle, Renton and Southern Railway ran 12 miles in length, making it the longest electric rail route in the state and one of the longest in the world. In 1912, the line went bankrupt, and the rail name changed again under new ownership and

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Collections Update

Recent additions:

Scan of photograph, "Air View of "The Uplands," and postcard to Dr. E. E. Duveau, donated by Alan B. Phillips.

Photograph of Fred A. Ernst, F. H. Rowe, and Frank B. Twist with bomb shovel at Hitt's Fireworks in 1942, donated by Jeff Miller.

Chair from Frank Orrico's barber shop on Atlantic Street, donated by Dean Orrico.

Political signs used on the overpass next to Franklin high School during the last presidential election, donated by Patricia Nauman.

Hammer used by Tony LaSalle in his shoemaking business, donated by Mike LaSalle.

A collection of hats, fox fur, and hat ornaments from the early 20th century through the 1960s, donated by Robert Connell.

Alan B. Phillips brings his memories to RVHS

In April RVHS was contacted by Al Phillips, wanting to share some of his historic photos and stories with us. He was born in 1919 to Charles and Clara Phillips in Seattle, grew up in the Lakewood/Seward Park neighborhood on Brandon Street with five older sisters, and attended Whitworth and Franklin High School. After serving in the 41st Infantry Division in WWII he lived briefly in Holly Park with his wife and young children, soon to purchase their family home in Burien, where Al still lives.

Al first loaned RVHS a postcard promoting The Uplands (circa 1930) as well as a photograph book of black and white photos for scanning. Board member Nancy Dulaney met with Al to talk about his Rainier Valley history and will be recording an oral history with him soon.

Hammer used by Tony LaSalle in his shoemaking business, donated by Mike LaSalle.

A collection of hats, fox fur, and hat ornaments from the early 20th century through the 1960s, donated by Robert Connell.

2nd Annual Founder’s Dinner

You are invited to join RVHS as we recognize founder Buzz Anderson at our annual fundraising dinner and auction. The dinner will be at Our Lady of Mount Virgin Parish Hall again this year, and will feature the culinary talents of Chef Douglas Chiechi. You can purchase tickets online through our website using PayPal (rainiervalleyhistory.org), or you can mail a check to our office at 3710 S Ferdinand, Seattle, WA 98118.

Early Bird tickets are $40 per person. After October 1st tickets will be $50 per person. We anticipate selling out the event, so buy your tickets as soon as you can if you want to be able to come!

We are also looking for sponsors for the dinner through the purchase of advertisements in the dinner program and donations of products or services for the raffle and live auction. If you can buy an ad or donate an item to the raffle or auction, contact us by phone (206-723-1663) or email, info@rainiervalleyhistory.org.
management. Problems continued with the last operating line, Seattle, Rainier Valley Railway under the superintendent W. R. Crawford. Disputes over fare increases, transfer issues between rail lines, and an inflated valuation plagued the railway. The Seattle, Rainier Valley Railway line was the last in the city to be privately owned, yet an agreed upon purchase price never happened for municipal ownership. Increased automobile usage and less timber freight on the line reduced railway revenue. Unpaved portions between the track and the road bed created a hazard for motorists. An agreement on who was responsible for paving between the tracks could not be reached between Seattle's city council and then owner, Walter Brown. These unresolved issues and motorist lawsuits contributed to council revoking Brown's 1934 application for franchise renewal. Rainier Avenue rail transportation ended on January 1, 1937 and petroleum powered bus service began the very next day.

Wildwood Lane Bus Shelter
Once lined by first-growth forest, Wildwood Lane's transit stop on Rainier Avenue between S. Austin and S. Holden hosts a passenger shelter as it did over 120 years ago. Real estate developer S. L. Bowman owned 40 acres near the Seattle and Rainier Beach Railway line between Othello and Kenyon streets as recorded in 1893. Bowman platted his land into .5, 1, 2, and 5 acre tracts. His plat map, recorded as "Wildwood" with the King County auditor's office in 1903, shows an unnamed 18' wide and 330' long pedestrian walkway from Rainier Avenue to the County Road (now Seward Park Avenue). The map indicates Bowman deeded and dedicated this path for parkway purposes. The walkway exists today, about 6' wide with adjacent homes dating to 1903, 1904 and 1908. Don Sherwood remarks in the Seattle Parks History files that in 1907, the Parks Board owned the walkway "Wildwood Lane" which was brick paved and lined with planted trees. Later, the Parks Department complained of maintaining the parkway and transferred its ownership to the Engineering Department in 1954. An area marked as a 37.5' easement on the 1903 map identifies where the passenger shelter platform sits today.

Although the construction date of the Wildwood Station brick passenger shelter is unknown, it likely nears the 1907 reference to the brick paved Wildwood Lane. There are photographs of an earlier passenger shelter, a gazebo type wooden structure with a thatched roof and "Wildwood" lettering dating to 1900 and 1915. This gazebo shelter connected to a wood planked walkway led streetcar passengers up the lane toward Lake Washington. Lots were already developed along the County Road (Seward Park Avenue) where Wildwood Lane ends, suggesting the gazebo shelter was built earlier than 1900. A short distance north of the walkway was Jurgen Matthiesen's large tract of waterfront property where his family homes, an orchard, and later the Twin Firs Hotel, an elegant lake-front resort were located. The circa 1896 Seattle, Renton & Southern Railway promotional brochure highlighted Wildwood Station as the Twin Firs Hotel stop. Philanthropist Caroline Rosenberg Kline Galland's 10 acre residence, adjacent to Matthiesen's was across from Wildwood Lane. At Caroline's time of death in 1907, she bequeathed her property as a home for the Jewish aged. Streetcar passengers walking south at the crest of Wildwood Lane were known to have lived in the Pritchard Beach neighborhood.

The brick passenger shelter you see today has served as a Metro bus transit stop since 1937. It measures 12' by 18' and is set on a poured concrete slab supported by four brick columns, each measuring roughly two square feet. The columns are
**A Summer of Festivals**

In August, RVHS marched in the Heritage Parade and talked to people about local history as they stopped by our information table during the Seattle Summer Streets celebration that same day. We also collaborated once again with Lakewood Seward Park Community Club on the historically inspired pie-eating contest.

The following day, RVHS talked to visitors at a booth at the Othello International Music & Arts Festival about the history of the Valley. Visitors were very interested in the displays of photographs by Denis Law and the related newspaper articles, mostly from the 1970s.

The first week in September, RVHS brought historical materials and photographs about Garlic Gulch and the Italian-American community to the Second Annual San Gennaro Festival in Georgetown.

**“Wildwood Station” continued from page 3**

Capped with concrete and an arch shaped roof with cedar shake shingles rests on top. Concrete benches span the width between the columns on each side of the structure for seating. In 1994, the roof was replaced by a collaborative community effort of the Rainier Chamber of Commerce, Rainier Rotary Club, Rainier Valley Historical Society and Southeast Effective Development. Currently, this historic Wildwood Station passenger shelter is in need of restorative care. Thanks to its current owner, Seattle Department of Transportation, a renovation plan is underway. The restoration plan includes replacing the concrete floor, LED lighting installation, pressure washing, trim work, garbage can service, and historic signage. The work began last month and will be complete by November, 2014.

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**Rainier Valley Heritage News**

Editor and Layout ................................................................. Virginia Wright

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Thank you, 4Culture!

RVHS was awarded a grant in the amount of $3,100, for our 2014-15 Heritage Project, "Stories of Hebesha Women: Illuminating the Immigration of Ethiopians and Eritreans into Rainier Valley Through Oral Histories." The interviews for this project will be conducted by the daughters of the women interviewees, and will be recorded, compiled, and supplemented by RVHS.

Additionally, RVHS was awarded $4,840 in support through 4Culture’s Collections Care grant program, which will be used to support the work cataloguing, securing and protecting the objects and artifacts in our extensive collection: Collections Inventory & Digitization of Obsolete Media.

NOTE: There are opportunities for involvement by volunteers on both of these grant-supported projects. Connect with Executive Director Virginia Wright, director@rainiervalleyhistory.org, if you want to find out how you can get involved.

New Volunteer Coordinator

We are very pleased to announce that we have a new Volunteer Coordinator. Emily Lee is a resident of Columbia City with a passion for local history, and excellent organizational and people skills. If you have interest in working on any of our many volunteer opportunities, send Emily an email:

volunteers@rainiervalleyhistory.org.
Support History

If you haven’t joined the Rainier Valley Historical Society this year, we urge you to do so now. 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
P.O. Box 18143
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Books and memberships can also be purchased on our website: www.rainiervalleyhistory.org.

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