2016 ANNUAL MEETING
Celebrate RVHS at our annual meeting for members and friends!

You are invited to attend this year's Rainier Valley Historical Society Annual Meeting. There will be a presentation on the history of South End Seattle Community Organization (SESCO), with special guest speaker Rodney Herold, one of the early leaders of the organization. We will also have a display of the Franklin High School (Seattle) Hall of Fame inductees, on loan to us from the Franklin Alumni Association in honor of the centennial of the very first graduating class from FHS that attended Franklin for their entire high school careers. There will also be an overview of our monthly Dismantling Racism community forum, now in its second season. Lunch will be served after the program.

Saturday, May 7th, 2016
10:00am - 1:00pm
Rainier Arts Center
(formerly Rainier Valley Cultural Center)
3515 S Alaska Street, Seattle

9:30 am Doors Open

10:00 am Business Meeting:
• Board Elections
• Finance Report
• Projects & Collections Updates

10:30 am Program:
• SESCO presentation
• Introducing “Making The Cut - The Locks, The Lakes, and A Century of Change”
• Dismantling Racism series overview

11:30 am Lunch

The 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.

Thank you to 4Culture for supporting our work!
Making the Cut: The Locks, the Lakes and a Century of Change – Wetmore Slough

Nancy Dulaney

A commemoration of the Hiram Chittenden Locks in Ballard and the Lake Washington Ship Canal and its effects on the region’s landscape, economy, and people. Communities along the ship canal and around the lakes are researching their own stories and sharing them with the public.

This coming summer marks one century since the lowering of Lake Washington by about nine feet as the sluice gates on the east end of the newly completed Montlake Cut were opened in August 1916. The official dedication of the Ballard Locks and the eight mile long Lake Washington Ship Canal was celebrated on July 4, 1917, with the steamer Roosevelt leading 200 boats through the Cut. Southeast Seattle has its own special part in the story and this article focuses on Wetmore Slough as we ready ourselves for the centennial events ahead.

The Duwamish people were canoeing on Lake Washington, Lake Union and Lake Sammamish and the inland river systems long before Seattle’s pioneers arrived. By the 1860s larger European American shallow boats and barges passed from Lake Washington to Elliott Bay via the Black River at the south end of the lake, with some portage required as water levels demanded. The man-made creation of a connected waterway between Lake Washington, Lake Union and Puget Sound had been attempted in various fits and starts, agreements and disagreements, commencements and abandonments. By the 1870s, the U.S. Navy proposed a shipyard on Lake Washington and soon Seattle city planners and the surrounding coal and logging industries joined in the call to action.

In July of 1895 former Territorial Governor Eugene Semple started dredging the proposed two-mile south canal project with the financial backing of St. Louis investors, from the mouth of the Duwamish River through Beacon Hill just north of Spokane Street eastward to where Stan Sayres hydro pits are now, at Wetmore Slough. Earthen material removed was used as fill in Elliott Bay tideflats to create new real estate – think SODO and Harbor Island. Due to legal battles and financial problems the Lake Washington Waterway project was halted and by 1904 the northern location of the locks and ship canal, from Salmon Bay to Lake Washington, became favored and funded. The legacy left to Southeast Seattle was the future site of 1-5 exit 165A, Columbia Way, as Semple had washed away enough dirt on the west side of Beacon Hill to fill 140 acres of tide flats, leaving a sizable cut in the slope of the hill.

Wetmore slough as a place-name seems less prominent now, supplanting by Genesee (Park & Playfield) in more recent years. As to the slough’s namesake, Seymour Wetmore, his wife Ann and family homesteaded 160 acres just north of Columbia City along what later became Rainier Avenue and east to Lake Washington in about 1870. He and his sons Birdsey and Frank farmed the land and claimed to have produced 6-1/2 tons of well cured hay in 1876. Much of the land was at least seasonally inundated with water, particularly before the lowering of the lake, and locally referred to as beaver dam land or willow swamp. In the 1900s, Rainier Valley old-timer Judd Hines recalled trapping muskrat amongst the ducks and cattails as a young boy in his little boat in the slough near the trestle bridge (now Stan Sayres hydro pits) after the lake was lowered.

In 1912, the 2,100 foot wooden trestle bridge was built crossing the mouth of Wetmore slough and continued to South Hudson Street, providing automobile travel along Lake Washington between Mt. Baker and Seward Park. This bridge fell into disrepair in the 1920s and in 1928 local Rainier District businessmen proposed to dredge a 200-foot wide, 2,000-foot long canal south from Lake Washington to Genesee Street to permit Columbia City to become a seaport town, welcoming ocean-going vessels to its (new) shores. The Improvement Club reasoned that dredging would be cheaper than obtaining fill dirt and the time was ripe for the sanitary improvement of the stagnant swamp which acted as a mosquito incubator. (Seattle Daily Times, 3/29/1928). For some reason or another, instead the wetlands continued to be filled with dirt but also with City garbage between about 1945 and 1963 much to the chagrin of neighboring residents. What had once been waterfront property had become a viewing area for rats and seagulls. It wasn’t until 1980-82 that many of the Genesee Park improvements we see today were completed.

continued on page 6
Honor Roll
Many thanks to our members and supporters who make our work possible! Below are those whose gifts we received between October 18, 2015 and April 1st, 2016. Contact us with any corrections or omissions: 206-723-1663 or director@rainiervalleyhistory.org.

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Jean Veldwyk
Laura Weese
Cathy Wickwire
Keith and Ann Wittse
Wyman Youth Trust
Judith Yarrow
Margaret Yellowwolf

Treasurer’s Annual Report 2015 Summary

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Building a Family Home

By Karen O'Brien, RVHS Collection Chair

Stuart’s father was no stranger to the Lakewood Seward Park neighborhood when the view lots went up for sale. Philip lived with his family on 44th Street, less than a mile away from where he’d spend the next 60 years of his life. At age 36, Philip was a promising attorney, moving up in the Navy reserve ranks, active in civic life, fraternal organizations, a faithful churchgoer and recent newlywed. He had courted Marion Southard since Broadway High School days, and when the timing was right, they were married in 1926. John Hittmann sold off a section of his property adjacent to his home to them for $325 in July of 1927. Frederick Stephen of Stephen & Brust drew architectural plans and contractor William Mangnum was hired as the builder. The price came in at $9,550 which Phil and Marion were not happy about. Whether they were able to “squeeze down” two thousand as noted in Phil’s diary is unclear; Stuart recalls his mother saying the house cost around $10,000. Phil’s father Charles wasn’t happy about it either. Phil writes, 

April 4, 1928 Drove dad to my new lot. He was still sick and very ugly in his life’s grievances. I went home with the usual heavy head after being close to his arguments. He is angry with us for buying and building the house. Cost too much he thinks, debt too great etc. etc. But we want a home and will have it.

By May, the house construction was well underway.

May 13, 1928 Marion & I went rowing and drove to our new home building. We are both excited over it. Although will take years to pay for it.

A 5-year loan was prepared. The house was completed in less than 3 months time.

Surviving The Great Depression

Phil and Marion christened their new home the day they moved in.

July 17, 1928 finished unpacking, lit fireplace for its baptism.

Family planning came next for the Weiss couple and Stuart was born the following May. Meanwhile, the eve of the great depression was upon the country. Phil writes in his “Depression Book,”

October 1929 the big crash in stocks hit the United States. The old worlds had been having “hard times” for 100 years. That’s why they came to America in great numbers. But for us, “hard times” are the exception. Monday June 5, 1933 - the depression is on in great swing. 1930-1933 have been increasingly hard but the billions of the Federal Government have sustained us. The RFC with loans to banks, R.R.’s etc have helped. The cities, counties and states are borrowed up to the ears. No one has optimism except those who get good long nights’ sleep, rest and relaxation. Gloom is widespread. Poverty, anxiety, suffering, deprivation, embarrassment, disappointment, and great financial losses stun and paralyze people. Pseudo bankers and savings & loan people have caused many to lose their savings. Franklin D. Roosevelt becomes President and optimism sets in.

F.D.R. was elected president in 1933 inheriting a shattered economy and the highest unemployment rate in America’s history. 25% of the working class was unemployed. Optimism sets in. Many put to work. C.C. camps take in many young men with dependents. A great battle is on!! From September 1933 - Feb. 22 1934: the nation has been saved apparently. F.D.R. considered a savior. Billions spent in C.W.A., C.W.S., P.W.A projects. Our neighbors have been given work. The dollar has been devalued and money has been more plentiful; the pain has been relieved a great deal. Russia and Japan not at war yet.

Phil's law work declined during the depression as much as 30 percent. His first bankruptcy was tried in 1929, and his other cases were estate, wills, personal injury, and the like. His income from the Navy reserve did not increase until WWII. Marion’s position at King County Juvenile Court was terminated once she was married woman, leaving the family without the second income. Stuart said his uncle Pierre, helped them survive the wrath of the Great Depression. Phil’s bank loan was not paid off and in 1932, there was no chance of a refinance. “If it wasn’t for uncle Pierre coming up with the money, we wouldn’t have had a roof over our heads.” Pierre was top in car sales and was more fortunate than others during the economy failure. Phil finished paying off the loan to his brother and kept the home until 1960. Then, as the Weiss’ grew older, they decided a one level house was needed and built a contemporary home across the street.
Stuart Weiss Visits His Family Home - 5300 Hudson Street Reunion

By Karen O’Brien

Little did we know, two of our lifetime members have something exceptional in common; Daphne Dejanikus is raising her family in the home Stuart Weiss grew up in. 5300 Hudson is a beautiful colonial house with sweeping views high above Seward Park. Stuart’s parents, Philip and Marion Weiss, had the home built in 1928 shortly after they married. Our most recent donation from Stuart included Phil’s diaries where he wrote nightly in front of the fireplace. Having all this remarkable history spurred the impulse to connect the past with the present and arrange a nostalgic homecoming for Stuart. The reunion took place April 2nd joining two families and neighbors as part of this living history moment. With a room full of attentive listeners, Stuart shared stories from his impeccable memory about his childhood; a pleasure for all of us to hear the “walls talk” that Saturday morning.

Did you find a bucket of sand in the attic?

Standing in his old bedroom on the upper floor, Stuart remembered what he was doing on December 7, 1941. “I was out looking for a little fir tree to put in my room for Christmas.” When Pearl Harbor was attacked, civil defense units were formed quickly to protect the neighborhoods. “The fire warden told us about the threat of incendiary bombs. They were magnesium bombs and if you put water on them, they would explode more. He said to have a bucket of sand available to put the fire out.” Stuart put his bucket of sand in the attic, through a hatch door inside his bedroom closet. “If the roof caught on fire, I could go in the attic and throw the sand on the bomb.” A great deal for a young boy of 12 1/2 to think about. The bedroom now belonging to Elizabeth, he asked whether the bucket was still up there. Daphne didn’t remember a bucket when they moved in, most likely removed with new insulation.

What’s changed in the home?

Stuart noticed the Mahogany molding was painted over, the china cabinets were the same put in by his dad, the kitchen was remodeled, the windows looked different to him, and some reconfiguration to the master bedroom was done. His bedroom looked the same and showed us where he and his brother Robin slept. Stuart helped build the detached garage in 1949 and pointed

(continued on page 6)
Think back to yesteryear’s visionaries and just imagine, if Columbia City was a port of call for the cruise ships of today!

On May 7, 2016, RVHS will hold its 123rd Annual Meeting and an expanded version of the Wetmore Slough story will be presented. Please contact us if you have any related information or materials you would like to share.

Wetmore Slough Trestle Bridge, 1913. Courtesy of SMA, 29548

(above) Philip, Stuart and Marion Weiss in yard. Phil wrote often in his dairy about the joy of fatherhood. Aug. 4, 1929 Marion and I cared for our little millionaire boy. He is a wonder to us. Nov. 23, 1929 He loves to be played with as standing on his head, feet & raising himself up. He’s a knockout!! Happy, good natured, business like - like Marion.

(left) 5300 Hudson Street homeowners since 1998, Elizabeth, Daphne, Julian and Henry. Phil and Marion Weiss were the homeowners 1928-1960

Support RVHS!

May 3 together we can make an impact give big

4th Annual Founder’s Dinner

Save the date! The 2016 Founder’s Dinner will be October 15th, at Our Lady of Mount Virgin Church, starting at 5:30pm. Tickets are available now on our website.

The Tarantellas, performing Italian songs at the 2015 Founder’s Dinner.
Collections Update
Some Recent additions:
A group of photos from Columbia City, including the one in the photo to the right. The wording on the back of the photo says, "Columbia Grade School. 1st row, l to r: 2, Calvin Jackson, Shirley Dahlgren. 2nd row: 3, Joe Vangel, Kathleen Crawford, Roy Tschabold, Theodora Skowronek. 3rd: Johnny Barrow, 4, Shelly Dahlgren, 6, Kenneth Middlebrow. 4th: 2, Jerry Plumb, Jack McCloud, 5, Miss Adams." Donated by Theodosia Skowronek Nassar.

The sign that was outside of the Silver Fork for many decades. Donated by Safeway, and collected by RVHS board member Joan Heagney.

group of Columbia School students, accession #2015.015.0032

Rainier Valley Heritage News
Editor and Layout .......................................................... Virginia Wright

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E-mail..........................................................office@rainiervalleyhistory.org
Website..........................................................www.rainiervalleyhistory.org
Office Hours..................................................Tuesday 1:00pm - 4:00pm
..................................................Friday & Sunday 10:00am - 1:00pm
RVHS Executive Director.............................................. Virginia Wright

Auxiliary aids and assistance are provided upon request to persons with disabilities.

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

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