



June 2010

Volume 41, Number 2

Reading, Writing, & Photography: The Emmons Williams Collection

By Sarah Iles, Collection Manager

(The Museum would like to thank and acknowledge Mark Brinton, grandson of Emmons Williams, and his family for generously providing family history information and photographs for this article.)

Earlier this year the Museum received an astounding donation of a photography collection. The collection contained 260 photographs and a large number of negatives. All of the photographs were taken by Emmons Williams, a teacher in the Renton School District and an semi-professional photographer.

Emmons Williams

Born in Pocatello, Idaho in 1903, Emmons Nelson Williams grew up in a large family. His father George emigrated from England in the early 1880s, owned a general store, and later became caught up in gold prospecting. His mother Tilda, a Swedish immigrant, worked as a dressmaker to supplement the family's income and also took care of the family's fourteen children. (George was a widower with five young children when they married. Emmons was Tilda's third-born but second surviving child.)

As one of the older children and a male, Williams bore some responsibility to help the growing family make end's meat. He dropped out of school in the ninth grade and began working for the Union Pacific Railroad in Pocatello. For over ten years he worked as a clerk for the railroad. This career ended in 1931 when Williams quit in order to study education at Idaho State University. After receiving his Associate's degree he was qualified enough to begin teaching. Williams taught in Idaho while he continued at the University until he earned his Bachelor's degree.

After a string of teaching jobs throughout Idaho, Utah, and Washington, Emmons and his young family finally landed in Renton. Williams taught elementary school grades and worked at several schools in the Renton School District, including Bryn Mawr, Kennydale, Lakeridge, and Renton Park, throughout the rest of his teaching career.



*Emmons Williams
ca. 1933
Photo courtesy of Mark Brinton*



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Phone: 425-255-2330
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Hours:

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

**Admission: \$3 for adults
\$1 for children**

Always free to members and to the general public on the first Wednesday and third Saturday of the month.

Board Meetings: Please call the museum for time and location.



President's Message

By Laura Clawson, President

After seven years as a Trustee I am stepping down. It's been a time of growth for me as well as the Board. When I joined the Board in 2003, Steve Anderson was Museum Supervisor. The Century to Century exhibit was three years old. The Society had just been given the largest endowment in its history, the Charles L. Custer Endowment, which catapulted us into the big leagues. Storage was a major issue. The Board had started drafting the Museum Management Agreement between the Society and the City, and was discussing accreditation by the American Association of Museums.



Today is different.

Today Liz Stewart is the Museum Director. I was on the interview committee in 2006. Liz and two others ran a gauntlet of interviews with the City, Library Board, and Historical Society Board. Unsurprisingly, all selected her. I'm privileged to have worked with Liz, to have played a small part in her impressive ac-

complishments in four short years: Coal Car Reconstruction, Roxy Exhibit, Key Ingredients and Sustaining a City exhibits, and the Museum Master Plan. She has worked assiduously to promote and strengthen City and community partnerships. She brought us the amazing and talented Sarah Iles, with her many ties to the University of Washington. Liz has been the most visible change during my tenure.

Today we have a solid partnership with the City of Renton. We adopted the Museum Management Agreement, but our bond is held by the relationships we maintain with the City. The Board recognizes that city and community support is critical to having a responsive and relevant museum. The Board participates in community events and the museum is involved in many downtown events.

Today we are closer to accreditation, with rigorous museum standards, clarity of mission and purpose, and sound management and operations policies. In 2004 we crafted a mission statement and Steve Anderson's brief but oh, so comprehensive vision statement: Capture the Past, Educate the Present, and Inspire the Future. Last year Chair Theresa Clymer's Museum Committee wrote our Ethics Policy. We have revised the Collections Policy and adopted many others required by the AAM.

Today we have an Annex Building, purchased in 2008 for making exhibits and for overflow storage. Remodeling was funded by a grant from Rotary Club of Renton and by the Heritage Cultural Facilities Grant from 4Culture. Many volunteers contributed their expertise and labor: Bob Hunt, Briere & Associates Construction, Larry Sleeth, Dennis Frink, Rick Weiss, and Bob Green.

Today we have a solid, tested Endowment policy. Leadership from Sandra Meyer and Shane Klingenstein in holding to our policy enabled us to weather the worse economic downturn since the Great Depression.

Today we have a Museum Master Plan. Now. It is done. Pinch me! It is literally a dream come true, years in the making.

I have enjoyed serving on the Board of Trustees, doing my part, working with exceptional people. I was stretched beyond anything I thought I could do - the rewards have been equally astounding. I may be off the Board but I won't be far.

Renton Museum Report

By Elizabeth P. Stewart



This is an extraordinary year for Renton, history-wise, and the Museum is teaming up with other partners to help commemorate some true milestones in the life of our city.

In July Renton River Days celebrates its 25th anniversary—a quarter century of parades, rubber duckies, petting zoos, and community organizations working together to create an unforgettable summer festival. We're getting ready to bring a little bit of the festival into our main gallery this summer, in an exhibit that captures some of the high points of 25 years

of summer fun. Our Oral History Team is talking to some of those who've led Renton River Days over the years, and the River Days Board of Directors is sharing their photos and objects with us. You can see this exhibit at the Museum from July 20 through Labor Day.

In September Renton High School begins a school-year-long celebration of its 100th anniversary. The Friends of Renton High School is planning an ambitious calendar of events from September 2010 through graduation 2011, beginning with Homecoming on September 24. In conjunction with these centennial plans, the Museum is organizing an exhibit that we hope will capture the spirit and stick-to-itiveness of Renton High alums, students, teachers, and parents. We've been talking to sports players, choir singers, student magazine writers, and proud alums about their experiences at the high school. Principal Damien Pattenaude and school magazine advisor Derek Smith have been very helpful, and so have Friends of Renton High School co-chairs Terri Briere and Roxanne Hanson. We're still looking for the voices of your graduating class, sports team, or club, so don't be shy—help us make this exhibit really expressive of 100 years of Renton High! Enjoy this exhibit from September 21, 2010 through mid-June 2011.

Along with our annual exhibit of artwork by Renton Technical College's English as a Second Language program, these projects reflect our moves toward implementing our new Museum Master Plan. The Master Plan calls on the Renton History Museum to bring you—our members and visitors—into the process of doing history. While the Board and staff prepare to raise funds and make administrative changes and building improvements, we're not waiting to go forward with projects that reflect our community's needs and interests, ones that invite you to help us link the past with the present and the future.

Liz Stewart

The Renton History Museum is in the News...

Judy Dunn interviewed Director Liz Stewart about cultural organizations in South King County for the South King County Business Report...
http://www.pugetsoundpublishing.com/BRarchives/BR_1005.pdf

Susan Bressler wrote about the Museum's planned exhibit on the centennial of Renton High School in the Renton Reporter...
http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/south_king/ren/community/92978544.html

The Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street blog featured the Renton History Museum's Key Ingredients exhibit...
http://www.blog.museumonmainstreet.org/museum_on_main_street_blo/2010/03/teamwork-fuels-renton.html#trackback

Reading, Writing, and Photography continued from page 1

Passion for Photography

Williams received a Brownie camera when he was a boy and developed a life-long love of photography. His skill as a photographer grew and by the time he was teaching in Renton, Williams was able to combine his two loves: teaching and photography.

Williams' work was so interesting that he received two photo spreads in *Life Magazine* in 1955 and 1957. At the time, Williams was a teacher at Lak-eridge Elementary and both spreads featured his students. The 1955 spread, entitled "Through the Ringer: A teacher records an ordeal he created as fifth-graders get their report cards," featured Williams' students' comical facial reactions to the grades posted on their report cards. While the students sported both exuberant and distraught expressions, the article notes that Williams found the report card process to be harder on him than his students.

"Recess Time by the Teacher," the 1957 photo spread, features Williams' fourth-graders at play during their recess breaks. These photographs are very candid and display the exuberance of the children. The article notes that Williams started photographing the students at the beginning of the school year "to make sure they would behave...spontaneously."

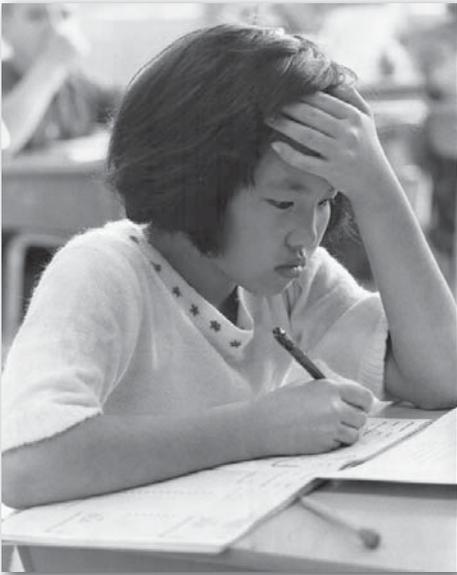


Above: Renton Park Elementary Faculty (Williams at center with bowtie) May 1968. Photo courtesy of Mark Brinton.

Williams photographed his students often, as is evidenced by the large collection of photographs now residing at the museum. Whether taken during tests, art class, or field trips, Williams had a knack for capturing the wonder in his students. His students let him move about them with his camera without editing their behavior and reactions. The resulting product is a remarkable collection of candid and real images of Renton elementary students.



Above: Crossing guard at Lakeridge Elementary School ca. 1950's RHM#2010.015.263



Above: Linda, n.d. RHM 2010.015.137



Above: Untitled, n.d. RHM #2010.015.203



Above: *That Question Is Really Crazy!*, n.d. RHM #2010.015.140



Above: Untitled, n.d. RHM #2010.015.115



Above: Untitled, n.d. RHM #2010.015.253



Above: *Freckles*, n.d. RHM #2010.015.198

Along with being published in *Life Magazine*, Williams also contributed photographs to other publications. The *Seattle Times*, *The American Biology Teacher*, and *The Reading Teacher* all used his work. Williams also showed and won awards for his photography at local and regional photography shows. Williams passed away on August 28, 1984 in Enumclaw.

¹ 1900 Federal Census for Pocatello, Idaho.

² *Emmons Williams Biography*, by Mark Brinton (2010).

³ 1920 Federal Census for Pocatello, Idaho; 1930 Federal Census for Pocatello, Idaho.

⁴ *Emmons Williams Biography*, by Mark Brinton (2010).

⁵ *Emmons Williams Biography*, by Mark Brinton (2010).

⁶ *Emmons Williams Biography*, by Mark Brinton (2010).

⁷ "Through the Ringer," *Life Magazine*, Feb. 28, 1955, pg. 106.

⁸ "Recess Time by the Teacher" *Life Magazine*, May 13, 1957, pg. 21.

⁹ <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=43745932>, Accessed May 11, 2010.

Was Emmons Williams your teacher?

While this collection contains striking photographs documenting student life in Renton, almost none of them are identified or accurately dated. If you recognize any of the photographs or if you think Williams may have photographed you, please contact the Museum. (Most of the photographs are believed to be of Lakeridge Elementary Students from the 1950s.)

Volunteer Report

By Dorota Rahn, Volunteer and Education Coordinator

Dear Museum members and volunteers,

In 2010 the Museum's Education Department started implementing the Coast Salish curriculum to the 4th graders in the Renton School District (RSD). A pilot project was run at the Renton Park Elementary in spring of 2009.

The Renton History Museum was awarded a grant from 4Culture in 2008 to design a curriculum about the lives of Coast Salish Native Americans, including Duwamish, in Central Puget Sound, before the arrival of White settlers. The museum also received funds from Sam's Club to finance the project.



The curriculum team worked on the task for about two years. Roger Fernandes, the Coast Salish artist and storyteller, whose work is occasionally exhibited at the Burke and Seattle Art Museums, was our senior consultant. Earline Bala, Native Advisor at the Renton School District, joined the team in the early stages.

Our consultants included two 3rd grade teachers at Renton Park Elementary, Cindy Pickens and Carolyn Stephens; Theresa Clymer, retired social studies specialist at the RSD; Fumi Suto, Ph.D. candidate in Education at the University of Washington (UW); and Irene Bloom, student of the Museum Studies Certificate Program at UW. Two museum docents, Carol Hawkins and Cindy Ensley, shared their expertise and helped while working on the curriculum. The project also received support from Cecile Hansen, the chairwoman of the Duwamish Tribe.

In the curriculum students are encouraged to use critical thinking and inquiry process to learn about the life of the Coast Salish Native People. To achieve this goal the curriculum kit includes seven replicas of Coast Salish objects such as cedar bark hat, rope, and gathering basket; clam basket made of whites; cattail mat, and two models of river and salt water cedar canoes. The replicas were made by two Duwamish artists: Mary Lou Slaughter, a Master Basket Weaver, and Michael Halady, a Master Carver.

Museum outreach docents take the Coast Salish Cultural Education kit to 4th grade classrooms and lead students through the activities. Students have an opportunity to handle the replicas and use secondary sources such as photographs and drawings to research the objects. Following the inquiry process students present their findings in front of the classroom. Museum docents make corrections or reinforce the findings using slides.

This part of the curriculum ends with a presentation in which docents talk about the latest research on the native tribes in the Puget Sound region and about their traditions and beliefs. Students also have a chance to make, out of paper, Coast Salish objects such as canoes and longhouses, hats and vests decorated with Coast Salish designs, weave a mat, and make a sea shell necklace.

A vital part of the Coast Salish culture is storytelling. Fourth graders can listen to the stories from Puget Salish Tribes on Roger Fernandes's CD, *Teachings of the First People*. In addition, elementary students in the Renton School District have an opportunity to listen to Roger telling stories in person, thanks to the grant awarded by the Muckleshoot Charity Fund to the Renton History Museum.

So far museum outreach docents have implemented the curriculum in two elementary schools: Hazelwood and Benson Hill. We are still scheduled to visit Lakeridge, Renton Park, and Tiffany Park Elementary schools before the end of this school year. The museum will continue introducing elementary students to the Coast Salish culture in coming years.

Docents and staff have enjoyed being part of this exciting educational opportunity in which students have the chance to reach a deeper understanding of Coast Salish culture in many different ways. Museum members, volunteers, and teachers who are interested in participating are welcome to contact me by email at drahn@rentonwa.gov or by phone at 425-255-2330.

From the Collections Department...

By: Sarah Iles, Collection Manager



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Kathleen & Jim Crabtree	Elaine Wells
Maxine Gamba	Gerald & Mary Marsh
Dennis & Kathleen Stremick	Bettijane & Jerry Shepard
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denotes former Society Life Member



denotes former Society member

(February 15 - March 31)

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Bradley 

Matthew Bouthillier

Alma Knowle

Frances Link

Steve Maxwell

 **Rena McMillan**

Rosabelle (Rosie)

Morris 

 **Jack Neal**

Mary Jo Rouse

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Rosemary Grassi

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Vera (Hughes) 

Toman

Memorial Contributions (Over \$100)

Roy Fournier

*The Fournier Family: Norma, Gary, Criss, Mondy, Kathleen, Wyatt,
Dylan, and Malia*

Rosalie Zobbi Tinnell

Rosemarie Fliseck

Rentonians Remembered

Lillian Ahlers

Sharon & Ron Clymer

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Lucotch

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Steve Maxwell

*Greg & Carrie Bergquist; Wendell &
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*Jack Morrison; Ivona Little; Dorlene
Bressan; Mary Sutter; Hazelle DuBois*

Jack Neal

*Annie White & Family; Bob & Roberta
Logue; George & Frances Subic*

Lucy Pratt Ozbolt

Gene & Linda Aitken

Doug Pritchard

Jack & Lois Gannon

William Richter

*Jack & Lois Gannon; Connie Kerr
Baker*

Robert Scoll

Richard Lucotch

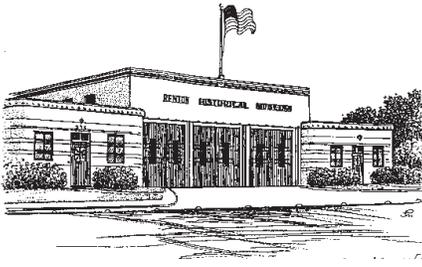
Rosalie Zobbi Tinnell

Flora Katzer

Mary Monahan

Williams

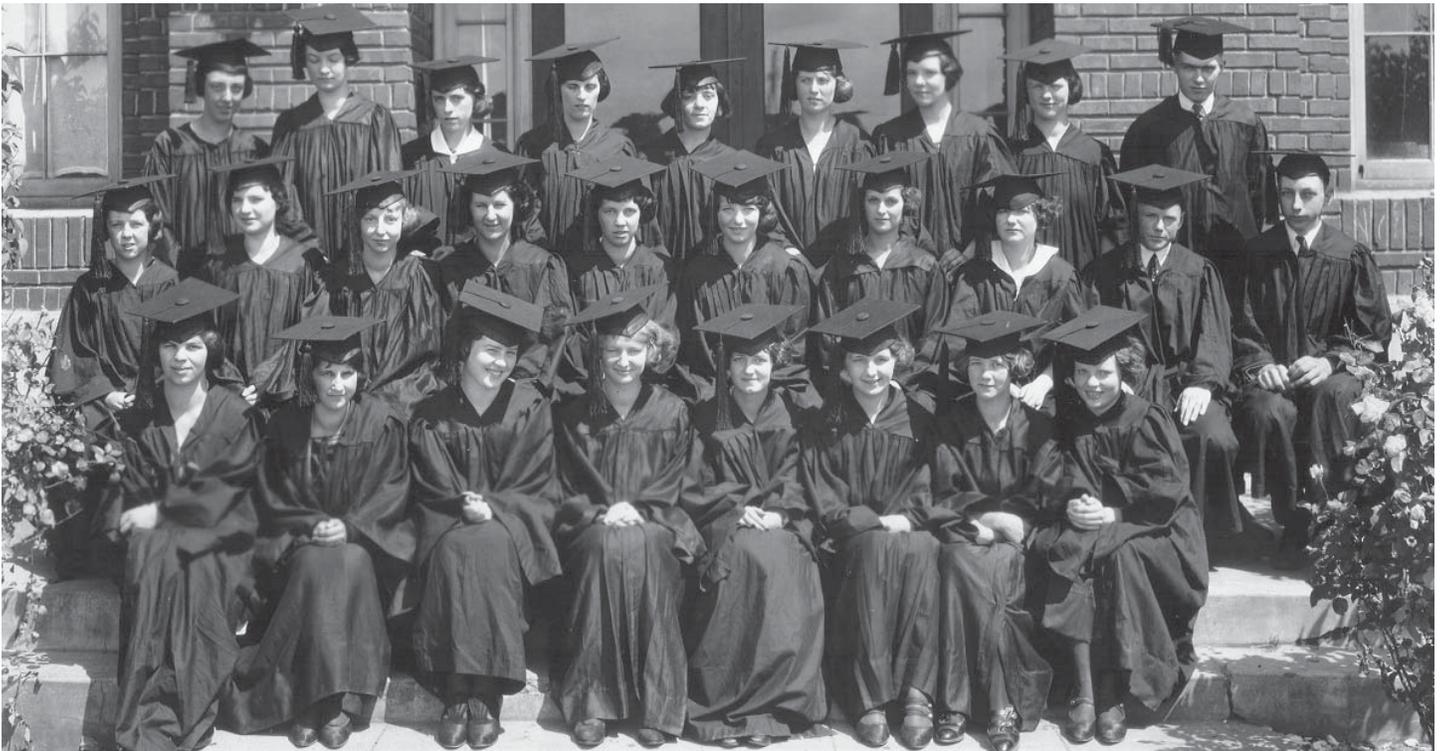
Doris Beedle



Renton History Museum
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Renton, WA 98057

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In Hindsight...



Above: Renton Senior High School Class of 1923 (#1987.113.2509). According to donor Caroline Greeley, the Class of 1923 was the first RHS graduating class to wear cap and gown. Share your RHS memories in our Renton High centennial exhibit! (See inside.)