

RENTON HISTORY MUSEUM

Fall
September 2025

QUARTERLY

Volume 56
Number 3

CHANGES COMING TO THE RENTON HISTORY MUSEUM



RHM 1988.100.2646

Baseball has always been more than a sport in Renton—it's a tradition that connects generations, strengthens community bonds, and teaches lessons that last a lifetime. In the spring of 1981, one Renton Little League team, the Hood Engineering Hustlers, proudly posed for their season photo. Wearing crisp blue-and-white uniforms and matching caps, the young athletes are captured smiling on a sunny afternoon, with their coaches standing proudly behind them. At their side is Coach C. L. VanValey, who helped guide the team through a season of camaraderie and competition.

But this photograph tells more than just the story of one season. Look closely at the background and you'll spot a piece of Renton's history: the city's former City Hall. Built in 1923. For decades, this building housed vital city services—including the police and fire departments—and stood as a symbol of civic life in Renton. Seeing it here, rising behind a group of young ballplayers, reminds us how closely tied Little League and community have always been.

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The Renton History Museum
Newsletter is going completely digital.
To stay in touch please scan this QR
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rentonhistorymuseum@rentonwa.gov



a day with un día con las aves the birds

Ciencia Comunitaria y el Audubon Navidad Conteo de Aves
Community Science & the Audubon Christmas Bird Count



A DAY WITH THE BIRDS IS HERE!

The Renton History Museum is delighted to announce the opening of A Day with the Birds / Un Día Con Las Aves, a traveling exhibition from Kauffman Museum that celebrates the history and impact of one of the world's most beloved citizen science projects—the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count.

Every winter since 1900, volunteers across the United States have bundled up, grabbed their binoculars, and headed outdoors to count the birds around them. What began as a simple idea by ornithologist Frank Chapman—to trade in the traditional holiday “side hunt,” where hunters competed to shoot the most birds, for a gentler competition of observation—has become the longest-running wildlife census in the country. Today, the Christmas Bird Count continues to shape our understanding of bird populations and migration patterns, providing invaluable data to scientists and conservationists.

This engaging exhibit—developed by the exhibits team at Kauffman Museum in North Newton, Kansas—invites visitors of all ages to explore the past, present, and future of the Christmas Bird Count. Through national and local stories, A Day with the Birds highlights how this remarkable project connects people across generations in the shared work of conservation. It reminds us that the strength of community science lies not just in professional researchers, but in everyday people who choose to look closely, record data carefully, and share what they see.

The exhibition also explores the role of organizations and individuals who shaped this movement. While the National Audubon Society advocated for birds on a national stage, countless small groups and individuals contributed to the effort at the local level.

One such story is that of the Ruth Sisters of Halstead, Kansas, who spent a winter's day counting every bird in sight and faithfully reporting their results. Their story, and many like it, illustrates how ordinary people—armed with nothing more than patience, curiosity, and a love for nature—built the foundation of community science.

Visitors will encounter not only stories of the past, but also insights into the present and future of birding. The exhibit showcases long-term trends in bird populations and encourages visitors to reflect on the ongoing importance of conservation. It also offers a gentle invitation: whether you are a seasoned birder with years of experience or someone who simply enjoys watching a robin on your lawn, your observations matter. Each bird counted, each note recorded, contributes to a much larger picture of how birds live, move, and survive in a changing world.

“The history and the future of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count are entirely dependent on the community scientists that take it upon themselves to take a stand for birds,” said Lorna Harder, lead curator for A Day With the Birds. “This exhibit gives us an opportunity to learn about the history of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the current state of community science, and to provide inspiration to the next generation of birders.”

By weaving together history, science, and personal stories, A Day with the Birds demonstrates that conservation is not the work of a few, but the legacy of many. It invites us to appreciate the beauty and diversity of bird life, while also reminding us that preserving these species requires our collective effort. As you explore this exhibit, you may find yourself inspired to take up binoculars, step outside, and become part of a tradition that has been shaping the story of birds—and the people who care for them—for more than a century.



THE SALMON ARE HERE!!

Each fall, as the leaves turn gold and the crisp air settles over Renton, a spectacular natural event unfolds along the Cedar River. Thousands of Pacific salmon begin their annual return from the ocean to the rivers where they were born, continuing a cycle that has sustained both ecosystems and communities for thousands of years. To help residents and visitors experience this remarkable migration, the Cedar River Salmon Journey invites everyone to come see the salmon up close—and learn more about their vital role in our region's environment.

In October, trained naturalists will be spotted along several sites of the Cedar River. These friendly, knowledgeable guides will help visitors spot salmon in action and answer questions about their fascinating life cycle. Whether you're a longtime Renton resident or a first-time visitor, the Cedar River Salmon Journey is an inspiring opportunity to witness the resilience and beauty of nature right in the heart of the city.

You can find naturalists between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the following locations on select weekends this October:

Renton Library: October 18 & 25

Cedar River Park: October 18 & 25

(Schedule subject to change. Email recreation@rentonwa.gov for information.)

At each site, visitors can watch Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon swim upstream after traveling hundreds of miles through the Pacific Ocean, the Ballard Locks, and Lake Washington to return to the very streams where they were born. This incredible migration is one of the few in the world that passes through an urban area, giving Renton residents a rare chance to witness nature's resilience up close.

By the time the salmon reach the Cedar River in fall, they have transformed for the final stage of their lives—spawning. They dig nests, called redds, in the gravel beds of the river to lay and fertilize their eggs. Afterward, the adults die, their bodies enriching the river ecosystem and feeding birds, mammals, and even the surrounding forests. Through this process, each generation of salmon sustains the life that depends on them.

Salmon are central to the cultural and ecological fabric of the Pacific Northwest. They are vital to local ecosystems, economies, and especially to the Coast Salish peoples, who have long stewarded these lands and waters. Their traditional knowledge continues to inspire conservation efforts that connect human and environmental well-being.

Visitors to the Cedar River Salmon Journey will learn not only about the salmon life cycle but also about the challenges these fish face—from habitat loss and urban development to warming waters. The Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish Watershed supports a threatened run of Chinook salmon, alongside sockeye and coho. Conservationists, scientists, and volunteers work year-round to protect and restore these critical habitats.

For those who want to keep exploring, the Environmental Science Center offers year-round events and educational programs. Visit envsciencecenter.org/events to learn more about ways to get involved in conservation and community science.

MUSEUM REPORT

by Ava Jo Schuldt,

While we at the Museum are sad to see Elizabeth Stewart go, we are also stepping forward into a season of change and possibility. Elizabeth has been an important part of our story, and her departure marks the end of an era. At the same time, it also opens the door for new directions, and we are excited to share some updates with you about what lies ahead for the Museum and our community.

One of the most exciting changes on the horizon is the possibility of welcoming more traveling exhibits once our building repairs are complete. These temporary exhibits allow us to bring in fresh stories, voices, and collections from across the country and the world, giving visitors the chance to see something new and different each time they walk through our doors. Alongside these traveling exhibitions, we also hope to host pop-up installations created by local and youth artists. These smaller, short-term displays provide a platform for emerging talent right here in our own community, allowing young creators and local voices to share their work in a museum setting. Together, traveling exhibits and pop-up installations will ensure that visitors encounter both global perspectives and homegrown creativity whenever they step inside the Museum.

While the Museum building undergoes repairs, we are making a few temporary adjustments. One of these changes is a pause on our memberships. We know how important our members are to the life of the Museum, and we deeply value your support. Pausing memberships during this time will ensure that when we reopen fully, we can offer the best possible benefits and experiences without interruption. We hope you'll stay connected with us in the meantime as we work toward welcoming you back into a refreshed space.



Elizabeth P. Stewart
—
Retired Museum Manager



A Day with the Birds Exhibit

QUARTERLY
FALL
2025

RENTON HISTORY
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TEMP HOURS:
Thursday - Saturday
10:00am - 4:00pm

ADMISSION:
\$5 (Adult)
\$2 (Child)

**Renton
History
Museum**

Memberships have paused at this time. Please call the museum with any questions regarding Renton History that you may be interested in!


RENTON HISTORY
MUSEUM



Museum Report Cont.

Along with this pause, we will also be adjusting our hours of operation. New hours will allow us to manage the transition smoothly and make sure that we can continue to serve the community even while changes are on the way. Please check our website and social medias regularly for the most up-to-date information on when you can visit us. We remain committed to providing meaningful opportunities to connect with history, even in this period of transition.

Speaking of our newsletter, another important change is that it will now be moving entirely online. This adjustment will make it easier for us to keep you informed in a timely and accessible way, while also helping us care for the environment. By going digital, we are reducing our paper use, saving trees, and ensuring that our communications are sustainable for the future. Most importantly, the online newsletter will help us reach a wider audience, making it simple for our community to stay connected with Museum news wherever they are.

Even as many things are changing, we want to assure you that some traditions remain strong. One of our most beloved is the annual lighting of the Museum tree. This event has long been a symbol of warmth, community, and celebration, and we are happy to share that it will continue. Lighting the tree together reminds us that while buildings may need repair and staff may come and go, the heart of the Museum is the people who gather here.

Transitions bring both challenges and opportunities, and we are grateful to have your support as we move through this moment of change. Though we say goodbye to Elizabeth Stewart with gratitude for her years of leadership, we step forward with anticipation for all that is ahead. From traveling exhibits and new hours, to digital newsletters and shining traditions, we remain committed to keeping the Museum a place where history, community, and discovery meet.



Baseball in Renton

Continued from page 1

This team portrait also bridges past and present in another way. Among the players photographed in 1981 are two individuals who went on to become current City of Renton employees. The values they learned on the field—teamwork, perseverance, and responsibility—clearly stayed with them, carrying into careers dedicated to public service. It’s a reminder that Little League has never just been about the games played, but about shaping the people who grow up to serve and strengthen their communities.

The setting of this photo also roots the story in a deeper history. Downtown Renton sits on the ancestral lands of the Duwamish people, near the historic confluence of the Cedar and Black Rivers. Baseball fields, playgrounds, and civic spaces here stand on ground that has long been a gathering place, making this cheerful snapshot of youth sports part of a much larger story of place and community.

By 1981, Little League had already grown into a nationwide tradition since its founding in 1938 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Renton was no exception—volunteers, families, and neighbors came together every spring to make sure kids had the chance to play ball, learn sportsmanship, and build friendships. That tradition continues today with Renton Little League, still fully volunteer-run and dedicated to carrying forward the same spirit that animated teams like the Hood Engineering Hustlers more than 40 years ago.

The Renton History Museum works to preserve moments like these, ensuring that the photos, stories, and artifacts of the past remain part of our collective memory. Just as Little League players step up to the plate to carry on the game, the museum safeguards the legacy of community life so future generations can look back and see not only who we were, but how we grew together. Can you guess who?

This 1981 photograph of the Hood Engineering Hustlers is more than a team picture—it’s a snapshot of Renton itself. It’s about kids and coaches, about a City Hall that once defined downtown, about the traditions of Little League, and about the way small moments of community pride can ripple forward for decades to come.

MUSEUM CHANGES

The Renton History Museum is in the midst of preparing for much-needed facility updates and repairs that will help protect the building while also enhancing the experience of every visitor who walks through our doors. At this stage, the project is still in the design and planning phases, which means that staff, architects, and city partners are carefully reviewing the building's needs and considering the best ways to carry out improvements without compromising the museum's historic character. These upgrades are being approached with great care, as the building itself is an important piece of Renton's history, and any updates must strike a balance between preservation and progress. The planning process is also giving us the opportunity to consider how improvements can create more welcoming, accessible, and flexible spaces for exhibitions, programs, and community events in the future.

While the exact timeline and scope of the project are still being determined, the museum is excited about the possibilities these changes will bring. Visitors can expect improvements that will make the museum easier to navigate, safer to enjoy, and better equipped to care for the collections that preserve Renton's rich past. We are also considering ways to use this time of planning to expand opportunities for community partnerships, ensuring that when the museum reopens after construction, it will be a place that feels even more connected to the people it serves.

Although there are many details yet to be finalized, we look forward to sharing more updates as the project develops. These renovations represent an investment not only in the building but also in the future of the museum as a vital resource for learning, storytelling, and community connection. We encourage our visitors and supporters to stay tuned for future announcements as the planning process continues to move forward..



MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Elenor Bertagni

The Nelson Family

Stephen Clymer

Sharon Clymer

Margaret Louise Blerkhalter

1928-2025

Dan Holmes

Sharon Clymer

ACKNOWLEDGING GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE MUSEUM FROM

Angeka Eng

Sharon L Clymer & Fammily

Robert F. Halstead & Dolores C. Halstead

PASSAGES

Eleanor Bertagni

Nancy Carlson

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