



Rainier Oregon Historical Museum

Established. 2015

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Number 1

Spring 2021

Rainier, Oregon City Hall Centennial

Dedicated April 13, 1921

100th Anniversary Celebration April 10, 2021



The city of Rainier and the Rainier Oregon Historical Museum will be holding a City Hall 100th Anniversary Celebration at the City Hall on Saturday April 10, 2020. It will start at 11:00 AM with a wide range of events. Included will be a history of the City Hall by ROHM President Kay Heflin, an overview of the Walking and Guided Tour by Alan Hulsopple, the future of the Rainier Oregon Historical Museum by ROHM Vice President Duane Bernard, remarks by Rainier’s Mayor Jerry Cole and a ribbon cutting. The walking and guided tour will start from the city hall after the ribbon cutting.

The Rainier’s City Hall

Compiled by Mike Clark

Rainier had a town hall on the south side of West C St. and west of West 3rd St. (across from the school). The town hall was built in 1891 and sold in 1909 when it became too small for its needs. A lot was purchased in hopes of building a new city hall where the council, the city library, city water office and fire department, could all be united under one roof. What follows is the story of the building of the City Hall and its first 100 years.



Building Rainier's New City Hall

The city council had a building lot on the south side of Hwy 30 and west of East 1st Street, but they did not have the plans nor funds to construct a new city hall. In the meantime, they conducted city business in the Masonic Hall. By 1913 the need for a new city hall became more urgent. The population was 2,000 compared to only 200 in 1889 when it consisted of 18 families and a number of bachelors. It was decided that a new building be erected as soon as the council could agree upon the plans and specifications and that it not exceed \$7,000. But, because the city was beset with so many other needs and problems, such as opening up and paving streets and getting sidewalks built, establishing a city water system and sewer facilities, the plans for a new city hall were tabled. The city did approve the purchase of a 26-inch bell for a fire bell tower that was later built on the southeast corner of the lot. The tower, that was used to alert fireman to a fire and to dry their hoses, was demolished in 1941. The fire bell was sold to the city of Warrenton for \$75. Recent attempts to find the bell have so far failed.

In the November 20, 1919, issue of the Rainier Review it was announced that there would be a banquet given on December 8 at the high school building to raise money for the library. Following the banquet, the Commercial Club called to order a meeting that turned into a discussion as to whether the City of Rainier should at that time build a city hall so that the library might have a dignified place and the City of Rainier a creditable building. The library at that time was paying rent for its facilities. A motion was made and carried that favored the building of a city hall by the city of Rainier. The next day the council approved adding a bond for the city hall along with the water bond that was scheduled for a December 31 vote. The following day after the election, the Rainier Review announced that the voters had agreed to the \$20,000 bond for the construction of the city hall.

In January 1920 the Portland architectural firm of Goodrich & Goodrich presented a plan for a one-story high mission-style building. But the members of the American Legion Post 31 spoke up and preferred to have a larger two-story city hall that included a public gathering hall on the second floor where they could hold meetings. Another bond election was held March 16, 1920, when an additional \$15,000 was approved to cover the cost of enlarging the building.

In the May 13, 1920, issue of the Rainier Review, it reported that the contract to build the city hall went to John W. Rice who said the work would begin on Monday May 17, and that he would erect the building at cost and likely save the city money. But the project ran into trouble as reported in the October 8, 1920, issue there wasn't enough money to finish the job. Blame was put on the architect who declared that the two-story building with a basement could be completed for \$28,500. Acting upon the architect's advice, \$35,000 in total bonds were agreed to by the voters. But an extra \$10,000 was now needed. So another bond for \$10,000 was put before the voters in early November, and this one too was approved.

City Hall Dedication April 13, 1921



It was reported in the April 15, 1921, issue of the Rainier Review that the dedication of the new Rainier City Hall was held on the evening of Wednesday April 13 under the auspices of the American Legion. The top floor of the City Hall, where the exercises were held, seated 300 people. But it was filled to full capacity, with all available standing room pressed into use. The opening address was made by Mayor J. G. McKay, representing the city of Rainier. He was followed by

Rev. H. H. Howe who spoke for post 31 of the American Legion and Rev. W. S. Gilbert, state commander of the American Legion Department of Oregon. There were readings by Mrs. E. Himebaugh and J. B. Long, vocal solos by Miss Joanna James and Errol V. Burns and a cornet solo by J. M. Jacin. Two sketches were presented by The American Legion, and music was furnished by the newly organized Legion orchestra. It was highly appreciated by the audience. With the completion of the city hall, it brought together under one roof a home for the Rainier Public Library, the Rainier Commercial Club, the American Legion, the Rainier Water board, the Fire Department and the Rainier City officials.

Finishing Touches in 1923

Though the building was completed, the outside still looked like a construction site at the time of the dedication; the building still needed to be painted, and there had been no landscaping.

On July 9, 1923, ladies from the Women's Club attended the council meeting and urged the fixing up of the city hall grounds. The councilmen were in good humor and voted to allow the ladies the sum of \$150 for the work. It was estimated that this sum would complete the grading of the grounds and put them in the best condition.



In August 1923 the winning bid of \$246 went to Fred Simons to paint the city hall. The paint had already been purchased when the hall was built, but the money at that time was not available for the work. The paint was a cream color, similar to what had been used on the schoolhouse.



The City Hall Guns 1920-1942

When Rainier's civic leaders learned in 1920 that the Ordinance Department was distributing artillery guns to cities and parks, they immediately applied for and were given four guns. All four were manufactured in the 1890s, two weighed 3,660 pounds each and were coming from Fort Warden in Washington state. The other two were smaller, at 829 pounds each, and were coming from the coast defenses of Puget Sound. The only stipulation was that Rainier had to pay for

the shipping. To cover that cost the Base Ball Boys held a "Big Guns Dance." The proceeds from the ticket sales were given to pay for the freight. The two larger guns made their way to the high school grounds, and the two smaller guns sat in front of the city hall guarding the front entrance. At the beginning of World War II, the four guns were ordered to be returned to be used as scrap in the building of "modern" weapons. So, on November 13, 1942, Army trucks arrived, loaded them up and hauled them away never to be seen again.

Big Events

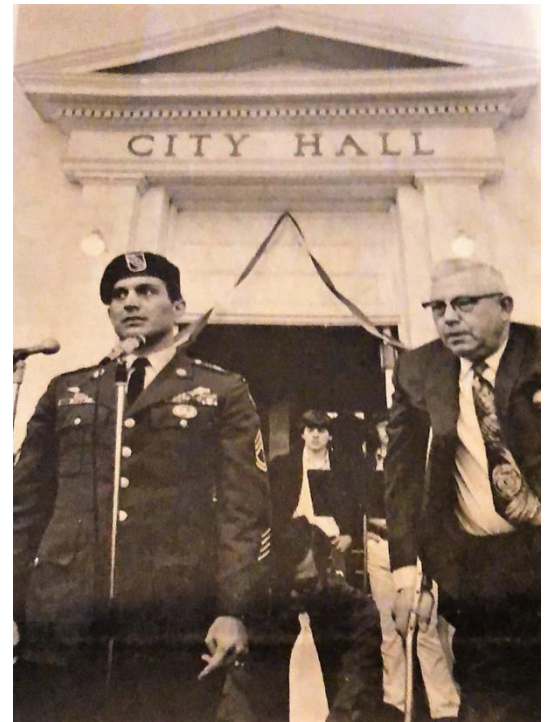


The City Hall was used over the years by organizations and clubs. One was the Columbia Square Dancers who used the top floor in the 1960s. Also, many memorable events took place at the City Hall. Two of these events happened in 1948 and 1973.

Gov. Thomas Dewey, the Republican candidate in the 1948 presidential election running against incumbent President Harry S. Truman, arrived in Rainier in the late afternoon on May 18, 1948. He gave a short speech from the steps of

city hall after an introduction by Mayor S. K. Fetter. He then rushed off to Saint Helens for dinner with invited guests and made another speech there at the high school. A very large crowd had turned out in Rainier, including several cars of people from Longview to hear him speak. He lost the election and never ran again for president.

On March 31, 1973, Army Sgt. Dennis Thompson, a green beret, returned home to Rainier after spending five horrendous years as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. His motorcade arrived at the front of the city hall to a red-carpet welcome by a large crowd that had gathered in the rain. In Mayor Charles Van Gorder's introduction of Thompson he said that "this community – your home – is happy to welcome you, Sgt. Thompson." Thompson said of the welcome "It was wonderful, for the first time I felt I was really home." Thompson later told of his confinement as a prisoner in local newspaper interviews and at public addresses, one of which was held at Lower Columbia College.



Fire Department's move from City Hall to new station in 1976

In the December 17, 1975, issue of the Rainier Review, it mentioned that Rainier's firefighters would soon be operating from a new cavernous fire station that was located on the east side of West 2nd St. between Hwy 30 and West C St. David Wellington worked for the Rainier Fire Department from 1974 until early 1978 when he moved to Hillsboro. He said that he was in with the big expansion when all of the new stations were built and new vehicles and equipment were purchased. It was pretty exciting.

He said, "When we moved into the new station, there were two engines at the city hall, a 56 Ford and a 67 Ford. There was also a mountain of equipment that filled those engine bays such as turnout equipment, airpicks, hose, and a great deal of new equipment that had been purchased for the new engines. There were also three new engines and three new tankers that had been purchased but were stored at various locations around the district."

He recalled that the police station entrance was to the left of the current one, going under the large front portico of the city hall. “You went through a weird little tunnel to enter the Police Station. What is now the front of the police station was all two large bay doors.

There was also an area called the fireman’s quarters on the second floor. For a long time, unmarried men would live there and respond to fires when not working. When the district started building, this area became a combination office, training room, storage area until the new station was finished. I think it later became the water office.”

City Hall renovations in 1978 and 2006

Over the years the city hall had several renovations. Two of which were notable. In the April 12, 1978, issue of the Rainier Review, it reported that the City Hall would start a three-stage renovation. The first stage included expansion of the clerk’s office by about six feet, addition of two restrooms and alterations to the Justice Court and City Council chambers. Also, there would be a new entrance into the east side of the building through the existing City Library entry. This entry, without stairs, would be especially helpful to the handicapped. A foyer would be just beyond the entry with a new door into the library. A hallway, from the foyer, would run down the south side of the city hall. The second stage called for the remodeling of the police department’s basement offices, while the third stage would make city hall’s third floor suitable to serve as a meeting room.

Another change came in August 2006 when the library was moved up to the top floor on the east side of the building. A room across the hallway from the library on the west side remained unfinished. The Rainier Oregon Historical Museum moved into this room in July 2017 after the city remodeled the space.

The City Hall today

In its 99th year the Rainier City Hall was affected by the world COVID-19 pandemic. The city, out of precaution, closed the city hall to the public from March to May in 2020, and again from November to the end of February 2021. As we celebrate the city hall’s 100th anniversary, we hope that the pandemic comes to an end and that we all can get back to a normal way of life.

References: Information was taken from city records and articles in the Rainier Oregon Review. Photos from the Mike Clark, Kay Heflin and museum collections.

President’s Report

By ROHM President Kay Heflin

Our museum is now open from noon until 4 p.m. every Saturday except major holidays. We had to be closed since mid-November, because of Columbia County’s Covid-19 extreme hazard status. 2020 was a difficult year after we had to cancel all our regular events, such as our booth at Rainier Days in the Park, the all-class picnic in July, our logging event in September and our Veterans event in November. We count on the revenue that we earn at these events. It has been a hard year for all of us. The one bright spot this past year was receiving a donation of land to construct a new museum on A Street, located just past the Rainier treatment plant. If you would like to donate to the new museum building fund, please send donations to ROHM, PO Box 762, Rainier Oregon, with a note on your check, “building fund.” So far, forty-seven of our members have donated to the new museum fund. We still have a long way to go.

One of our museum's most rewarding achievements in 2020, in spite of the coronavirus, was working with the Rainier Cemetery District and receiving a grant to pay for the repair and leveling of 34 headstones. What was even more amazing was the support of our members and the community when we asked for donations for the Rainier Cemetery Fund. Your contributions made it possible for us to give the Cemetery District an additional \$4,000 to be used for much needed improvements and equipment.

Our board members are so grateful to you for continuing to support your museum by renewing your membership and supporting our efforts to preserve the history of Rainier.

Plan to attend the 100-Year Anniversary of City Hall on Saturday, April 10, with opening ceremonies starting at 11 am

Currently, we are working with city hall to plan the 100-year Anniversary of city hall, which will be on Saturday, April 10, 2021. This event will be the kickoff for our Rainier Historical Walking Tours. There are five different walking tours throughout Rainier that our member Alan Hulsopple has created. Brochures showing each of the five tours with history and pictures of each location will be available. We will be conducting guided walking tours from 11:30 a.m. until we close at 4:00 p.m. During the opening ceremony starting on the front steps of Rainier City Hall at 11 a.m., prizes will be handed out to students who entered our City Hall coloring contest. Handouts of the history of city hall will be given to our visitors that day. Come join us and learn about the history of Rainier City Hall and celebrate its 100-year history. The Rainier Oregon Historical Museum is located on the 3rd floor of city hall, where there will be a display of pictures and history of City Hall. The coloring contest pictures submitted by Rainier students from pre-k through 6th grade will be displayed in the city chamber room along with history and pictures of city hall. If you would like to pre-register for our guided walking tours, to be conducted that day, you can contact our museum at rainiermuseum@hotmail.com or phone 360-751-7039.

ROHM Board Members

Board Secretary, Sherry Evans



Sherry is a retired teacher and Outdoor School Director from Rainier School District. She earned her bachelor of science degree in marketing, and later, her master's degree in education.

In 1985 she and her husband George moved to Rainier and raised three daughters. Now they currently love helping raise their grandchildren.

Sherry grew up in Kelso, WA, and she didn't know much about Rainier, except it meant crossing the big bridge and visiting her family's friends from church, the Tolleshaugs. After marrying George, she became more connected to Rainier as it was his home through elementary school. Sherry wasn't very interested in history as a youth. But a few special events through the years have encouraged that interest. One was a project in middle school about the native tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

Another two events were a visit to the Gettysburg battlefields and a visit to colonial Williamsburg while living on the historically much older east coast for two years. More recently, she worked on a history grant to try to list all the elementary schools of the Rainier area on a commemorative granite bench for the local school district. Research for this project brought her in contact with the ROHM board members who were very helpful in the unexpectedly, difficult task of identifying the various schools from long ago.

From this contact she ended up joining ROHM and volunteering to be board secretary. During this time, she has enjoyed the people, the projects, and the progress of the Rainier Oregon Historical Museum.

Note of thanks from the Rainier Cemetery District

The Rainier Cemetery District Board of Directors, Sexton, and bookkeeper, want to give a huge THANK YOU to all those who made donations towards the repair of the 34 headstones located in Woodbine and Knights of Pythias cemeteries. You have made a huge impact on the safety and appearance of two of our oldest cemeteries. We truly appreciate the interest you have all shown in our communities' history!

Good News for ROHM

Duane Bernard, our Vice President, was excited to report that at our February 10 board meeting he was able to announce we had received an anonymous, matching donation towards our building fund for the amount of \$100,000. Now we hope this will inspire other members, as well as non-members, to step up and help us meet this family's very generous donation. When we accumulate \$100,000, they will write the check for another \$100,000. PLEASE HELP by sending your donations to ROHM Building Fund, PO Box 672, Rainier OR 97048, or you can donate or sign a pledge at the 100th Anniversary of the Rainier City Hall to be held on Saturday, April 10, 2021, beginning at 11:00 a.m. A table for this purpose will be set up in the hallway on the 2nd floor.

OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

(12/10/20-3/11/21)

We have 214 memberships* now.

Marcia Bonnell
Doris Hale
Rebecca Leone
Charles Rosebraugh
Joy Shadden
Emily M. Wilson **

LIFE MEMBERS

Mike Avent
Lawrence (Buzz) and Alice Beck
Harold & Elaine Davis
Carol Girt
William and Mary Harrison

HONORARY MEMBERS

Steve & Jan Oliva
Carl Pellham
Columbia County Museum Association
Vernonia Pioneer Museum Association

* Memberships can be an individual member, a couple, or a family

** The museum is grateful for Emily M. Wilson's monetary donation and donation of several copies of her book "From Boats to Board Feet: The Wilson Family of the Pacific Coast."

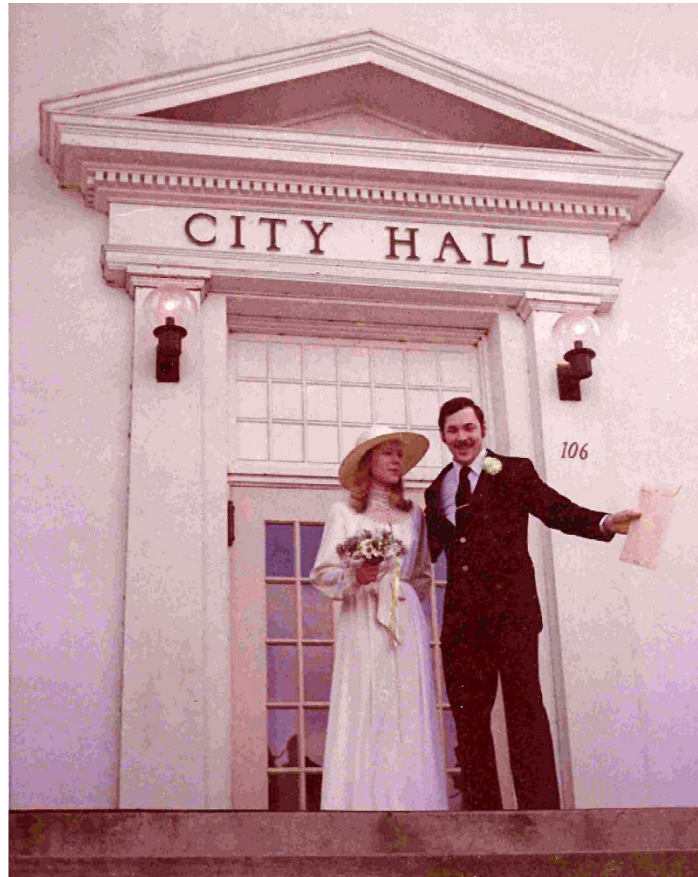
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ROHM Historian and newsletter editor Mike Clark: clarkmikew@aol.com

This issue was produced by ROHM President Kay Heflin, newsletter editor Mike Clark, and assistant editor and proofreader Martha Van Natta.



A lot of happy occasions took place at Rainier City Hall over the last 100 years. One was when Mary Iba got married to Mark Counts on March 17, 1979. They've been happily married ever since.

Rainier Oregon Historical Museum

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