



Featured History

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School

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FEATURED HISTORY

EARLY YEARS OF THE BRISCOE MEMORIAL SCHOOL

BY HILARY PITTENGER, ACTING CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS

From 1909 to 1970, the Briscoe Memorial School in Kent, Washington, operated as a boarding school, orphanage, and Catholic education center for boys around the Puget Sound region. Many of its years of operation were not happy ones – within the past decade, many reports have come to light of rampant verbal, physical, and sexual abuse of the boys in the care of this school dating all the way back to the 1940s. Survivors of this sad period continue to gather their strength and pursue legal reparations for the pain they have suffered.

However tarnished the name Briscoe is today, when the school was founded more than a century ago it was with the high intentions of making a safe institution where boys from troubled families could come to receive warm meals and a good education. Briscoe's fall from grace has been well-documented by other writers and newspapers, but its hope-filled founding



Briscoe students lined up in front of the school to take a photograph with Santa in 1925. L.W. Clark Collection, #PO-00828.

and the historical realities which made such a school possible and desired are often lost in the controversy. By examining this lesser-known period, it can become possible to gain a fuller insight into the later tragedies.

Continued on page 4



Exhibit Programs and Classes



Small Works, Big Presents: The Gift of Art

NOVEMBER 16 - DECEMBER 18, 2011

Small Works, Big Presents is an annual juried show and sale of small and mini artwork by regional contemporary artists. This year we have accepted both two and three dimensional art. Time to shop for that hard to buy for loved one!

Doug Simms, *Old Growth*, People's Choice winner, 2010

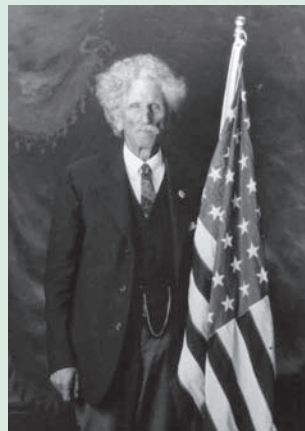
Lecture

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22

2 p.m.

The Civil War in Washington Territory

In this, the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, Dr. Lorraine McConaghy examines the war's scope and impact on Washington Territory. Lecture admission is free and brought to you by Humanities Washington.



Overnight Adventure

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 18

7 p.m. - 9 a.m.

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM!

Kids ages 8-12 can spend a night full of adventure in the museum that includes scavenger hunts, games and a movie. Reserve your spot today at www.wrvumuseum.org.



Gala Fundraiser

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29

6-11 p.m.

HALLOWEEN MASQUERADE BALL

The Halloween Ball is at the Muckleshoot Casino, Chinook Room. Enjoy a gourmet meal before you dance the night away at this costumed gala. All proceeds support museum educational programming. Buy your tickets today at www.wrvumuseum.org.

Event

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

Seatings at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

HOLIDAY TEA

'Tis the season for a festive holiday high tea at the museum with all the trimmings. Reserve your cup now at www.wrvumuseum.org.

Things To Do

BEAUTY IS A BEAST MATCHING GAME

Match the descriptions and hairstyles on the left to the correct picture of an old fashioned beauty tool on the right by drawing a line between your matches. *** Check your answers at the bottom of the page.

Hairstyles



Though many today associate this look with the bad hairstyles of the 1980's the perm was invented in the early 1900's. The first perms were created by wrapping chemically treated hair around curlers that were then attached to rods and wires that heated the hair to over 200 degrees!



Auburn High School Yearbook '68

This is a 1960's standing version of a handheld hair tool many of us use today. One of the very first home versions of this beauty device would be attached to a vacuum to create wind power!



WRVM collection PO 01582

In the early 1900's women who desired the "permed" look without the permanent effects preferred the "Marcel" curler. This two pronged metal rod would be heated on a hotplate and then woven in and out of the hair to create a wavy effect.

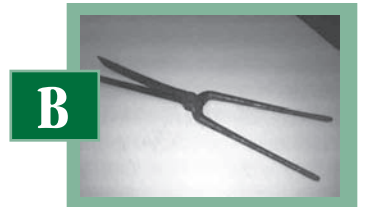


Many women today prefer to use a curling iron instead of these spiral curlers worn overnight by many in the 1930's-1960's to achieve a "ringlet" effect.

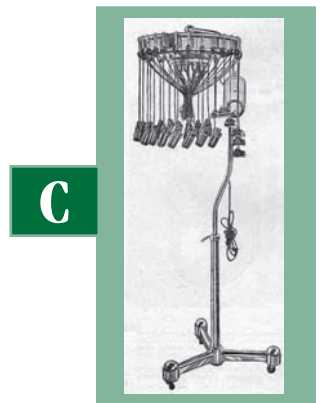
Beauty Trends



WRVM Collection



WRVM Collection



WRVM Collection

***Answers: 1) C, 2) D, 3) B, 4) A



Continued from page 1

EARLY YEARS OF THE BRISCOE MEMORIAL SCHOOL

BY HILARY PITTENGER, ACTING CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS



Patrick and Margaret Hayes settled in the O'Brien area in 1860. They later donated the land that was used to build Briscoe Memorial School. WRVM Collection, #PO-01799

The Briscoe Memorial School began as an act of charity. Elizabeth Briscoe gave a large sum of money to the local Diocese of Nisqually in memory of her son, Edwin Briscoe, who had passed away at the age of 29. The donation of large memorial funds to churches and religious organizations in the name of a deceased child was a common act in the late 1800s and early 1900s, particularly if the family had no other children to pass money down to, as in the Briscoe's case. Along with a river-side land donation from the Hayes family and a handful of other smaller monetary donations, the diocese was able to move forward with the building of the Briscoe Memorial School during the early 1900s.

Originally, the school was designated as a boarding school for orphans, but early on it became clear that the demand in the area for a boy's Catholic school was too great to restrict admission in that way. The Puget Sound was still a new and growing region, and relatively few Catholic institutions existed to serve the growing Catholic population that was migrating west.

At the turn of the 20th century, only one Catholic school existed in the Seattle area: the Holy Names Academy, an elite all-girls school. Families who wished to give their male children a Catholic education were required to send them out of state, if they could afford it. Many Catholic families hoped to give their children an education due to the unfriendly reception some Catholics received in predominantly Protestant towns. Rumors and prejudices abounded regarding Catholicism, especially concerning Catholic's loyalty to the United States – some people believed that Catholics could not be loyal to the Pope and also loyal to a nation's leaders.

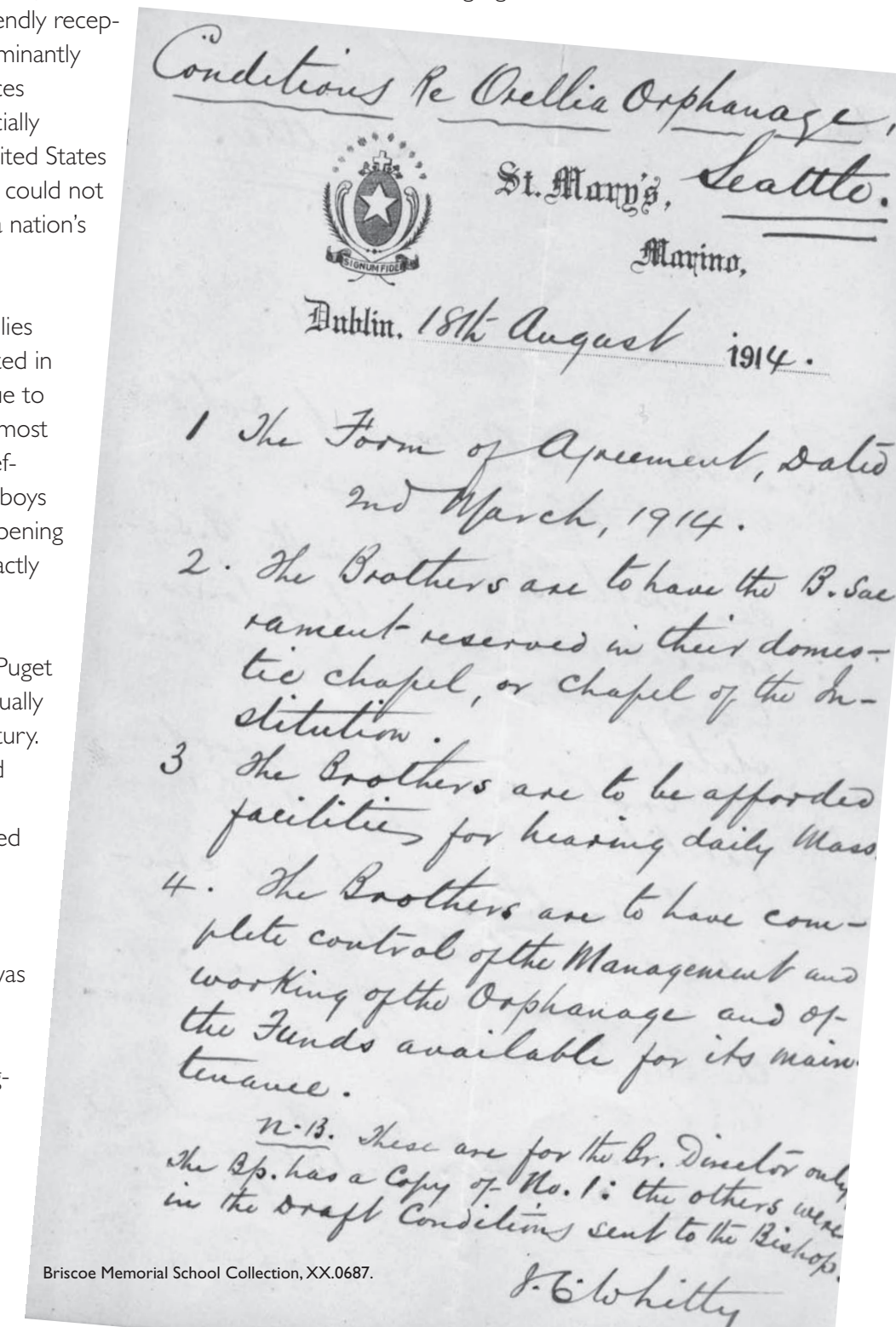
Because of these prejudices, many families preferred to have their children educated in a Catholicism-friendly environment. Due to the expense of this type of education, most middle- and lower-class families were effectively prohibited from sending their boys through Catholic education until the opening of Briscoe. A new boy's school was exactly what parishioners were hoping for.

The sudden population growth in the Puget Sound region and the Diocese of Nisqually didn't stop with the turning of the century. As more and more Catholics relocated west, the Diocese found itself with too many projects on its hands. Help needed to be found.

The Christian Brothers

The first decade of the 20th century was a time of transition for the Diocese of Nisqually. In 1903, the see of the Diocese changed from Vancouver, Washington, to Seattle. This move prompted many other changes – in 1905, construction on a new cathedral in Seattle began, and in 1907 the name of the

district was formally changed to the Diocese of Seattle. With all of the new changes, the Diocese had little time and energy to spend managing a boarding school, even an already built one. So, in 1914 the management of the Briscoe School was handed over to a Roman Catholic monastic order, the Congregation of Christian Brothers.



Briscoe Memorial School Collection, XX.0687.



The Congregation of Christian Brothers was a monastic order founded in Ireland in the early 1800s. All of the members of the Christian Brothers were considered to be lay brothers, a term used to denote those who have taken the vows of their particular monastic order, but not received the full ordination required to become a priest. This distinction served the Christian Brothers well, because their focus was not on personal religious training or on moving up through the ecclesiastical ranks, but instead on providing education, especially Catholic education, to children and youth, mainly through private Catholic schools and orphanages.

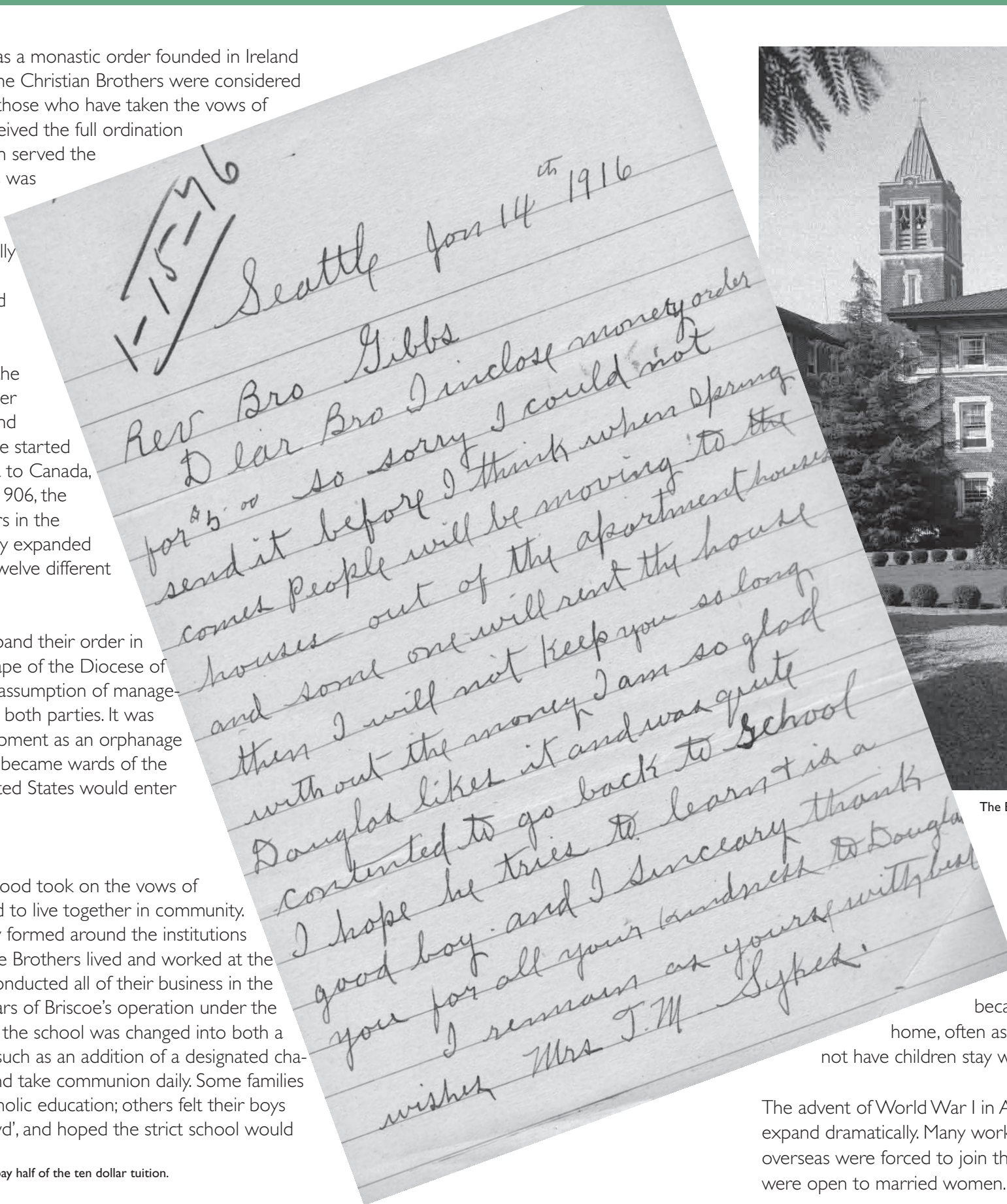
Though the order was founded in Ireland, the Christian Brothers were active in many other countries. Throughout the 1800s, schools and missions run by the Christian Brothers were started all over the Commonwealth, from Australia to Canada, with varying amounts of success. Finally, in 1906, the Brothers established their first headquarters in the United States in New York City. They quickly expanded from there, eventually opening schools in twelve different states, including Washington.

The desire of the Christian Brothers to expand their order in America coupled with the changing landscape of the Diocese of Seattle made the Christian Brother's 1914 assumption of management duties at Briscoe an ideal solution for both parties. It was especially important to the school's development as an orphanage and a placement location for children who became wards of the state, because later that same year, the United States would enter World War I.

Running the School

All men who joined the Christian Brotherhood took on the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and agreed to live together in community. Christian Brotherhood communities usually formed around the institutions they ran, and Briscoe was no exception. The Brothers lived and worked at the school, ate every meal in the school, and conducted all of their business in the school. Correspondence from the early years of Briscoe's operation under the Christian Brothers show some of the ways the school was changed into both a working monastery and a working school, such as an addition of a designated chapel where the Brothers could hear mass and take communion daily. Some families simply wanted their children to have a Catholic education; others felt their boys were falling in with the 'wrong sort of crowd', and hoped the strict school would

A 1916 letter from a distraught parent who was only able to pay half of the ten dollar tuition. Briscoe Memorial School Collection, XX.0687.



The Briscoe Memorial School building, c. 1925. L.W. Clark Collection, #PO-02601.

keep them out of trouble. Another group of boys came from single-parent households in which the father or mother was unable to keep the child at home because they needed to work away from the home, often as domestic workers or loggers who could not have children stay with them on their job sites.

The advent of World War I in America made this last group of boys expand dramatically. Many working class women whose husbands were overseas were forced to join the workforce at a time few occupations were open to married women. In some cases, sending children away

to schools or to relatives to be boarded was the only way a single mother or father could afford to support them. The ten dollar monthly fee for their room and board at the Briscoe School was far from free, but it was the most affordable rate of nearly any children's boarding service in the region. Children came from every corner of the state to stay at the Briscoe School, a testament to the growing need for out-of-home childcare during this period in Washington's history.



Orphans and children in government custody made up another significant portion of the student population at Briscoe. In these cases, it was the state that paid the tuition fees of the students rather than the families, and this more reliable source of income was a boon to the school. Impoverished parents were sometimes unable to send the monthly fee for the care of their child, so having a steady set of payments from the government ensured that no matter the economic situation, some money would always be forthcoming to pay for the most vital of expenses, like food and clothing.

The Christian Brothers continued to operate the school throughout World War I and after, until the closing of the school in 1970.

Early Students

Part of our inspiration for this article is derived from four large binders of original letters written to the School on behalf of many different boys. Some letters are from parents, asking if the School can care for their child during a hard financial time, others are from religious, usually Catholic, organizations seeking a space for orphans that have come to their notice. Many are from parents or more often a single parent seeking information on the wellbeing of his or her son. The reality of hardships suffered by these families is clear.

The Museum's collection of over 400 letters date from 1912 to 1928. Many describe the hardships experienced by the working class parents of children at the school. The following letter, including its spelling mistakes, exemplifies the type commonly received by the school's managers.

Dear Freind,

In closed you will Find the some of \$10.00 for Cliff and care. I would of sent for Clifford to come over for xmas, only I knew that I had to work all day and I thought he would enjoy him self much better with the boys. and I do hope that he did enjoy his xmas and New year.

It didn't seem like xmas to me by haveing to work.

How did Clifford like his toy. Was it any ways near what he thought he would like. you know one can tell better what a Child likes the best when they are with them.

This is the first xmas that he has been away from me. and you dont know how I missed him

Well I will close wishing you all a happy New Year.

Yours Truly,

Mrs. B—



Bound volumes of Briscoe Memorial School correspondence, 1912 to 1928, WRVM collection.

Mrs. B. wrote this letter from Spokane, Washington, in 1915. A train ticket home for her son Clifford to spend the holidays with her would have cost approximately four dollars, a hefty sum for the time. For comparison, four dollars in 1915 could buy you a 56-piece china dinner set, four baseball mitts, or a portable camera. Mrs. B. would go on to write many letters to the school regarding Clifford over the course of 1915, each inquiring after her boy and apologizing for not being able to see him due to work.

Not every child was so lucky. Some letters, such as those from churches or organizations that placed children in the Briscoe School, were cold and business-like. This letter from Everett, Washington, wastes no words. (page 9, top)

No other letters concerning the mysterious 'Brize boy' in this letter were saved. Despite the harsh tone of the letter, it does prove that someone was concerned about the welfare of this child. There is no way of knowing exactly how many children went without any inquiries after their health or needs during their stay at the Briscoe Memorial School.



The Briscoe grounds were kept up right until the school's closing in 1970, when this shot was taken. Photo taken by Bill Stedler, Museum # 02536E.

Dear Brother:

I wish to know the whereabouts of that Brize boy who was in your home from Everett. Let me know why he left and if he is to return.

Thanking you I remain,

Yours sinc. Rev. O—

Aftermath

The Briscoe Memorial School closed its doors in 1970. In its 69 years of existence, the school had seen over 7,000 boys walk through its doors. It may never be known how many of these students experienced traumatic abuse while in residence – official reports and surveys of abuse in Catholic institutions only look back to 1950; lawsuits have been filed regarding Briscoe specifically that allege abuse as far back as the 1940s. Whether or not abuse occurred before that time is a mystery almost entirely lost with a generation of Briscoe graduates that is rapidly disappearing.

Despite all of this, we can know that the original founders of the Briscoe School intended for the school to be a positive place, and had

loving motivations behind their support of the school: a grieving mother, memorializing her son; a generous couple, supporting their church; a church district, trying to better serve their changing community; a monastic order, hoping to continue their mission of service and education.

Today, the Briscoe grounds exist as a ten-acre public park. In this new incarnation, they serve as a place for happy memories, full of picnic tables, shady trees, and long grassy stretches close to the Green River – a place much closer to the original vision for the turn-of-the-century Briscoe School than the tragic reality of later years.



By Patricia Cosgrove

Maps And Over-Sized Photographs
TOO BIG TO SCAN

Local professional photographer, Seth Campbell and our volunteer photo scanner Dave Payn, have paired up to create digital images of the oversized items in our archive—both volunteering their time. These approximately 225 maps, 50 posters and 230 photographs are just too large to fit on the bed of our scanner, leaving them inaccessible for most uses. This project began as a way to record our collection of portfolio-size images taken by noted nature photographer George Kinkade, an Auburn resident.

Dave delivers batches of originals to Seth, who takes digital images of each on his professional grade, oversized photo-stand. After about one year of work, this pair has completed over half of the project—making these artifacts available for use by the museum, researchers and our on-line following.

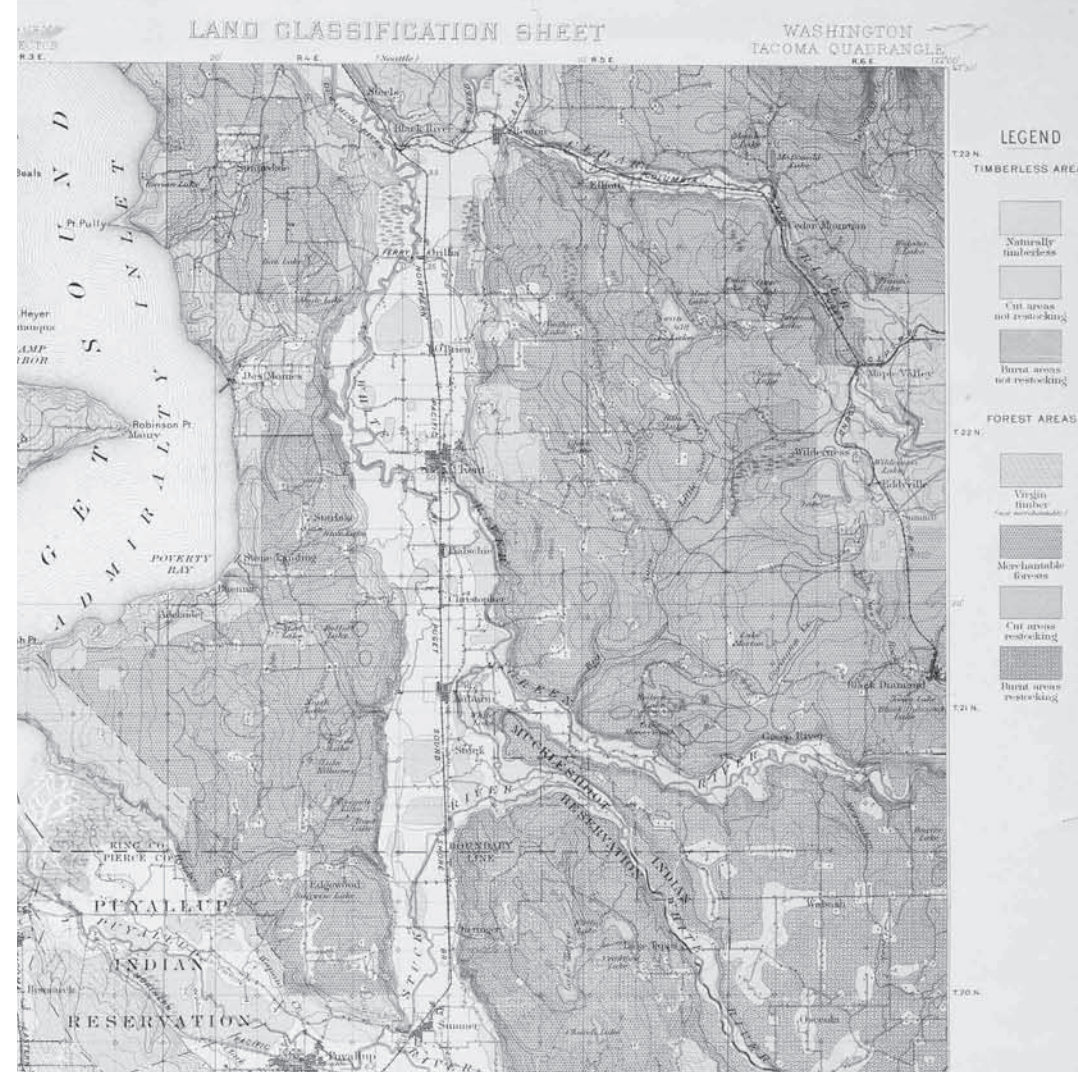
A Sampling of Their Scans-

left: *Orientele* by George Kinkade, photograph. PO# 04950HR

below: O'Brien Baseball Team, 1920s.
L to R: Emmett Cochran, John Hoban, Lew Lyback, George Root, Jack Ritter, Claude Burke, Chuck Moriarity, George Sharkey, Tim O'Brien, John Cochran, Ward Greene, and batboy Cecil Petty. Photograph by Kent photographer L.W. Clark, PO# 03979A

upper right: 1894-5 Land Classification Sheet, details kinds of merchantable timber. This map is very important as it is one of the earliest records of the ecology of the Puget Sound region. MP# 0033A

lower right: Mountain lake scene by George Kinkade, photograph, PO# 04991HR



GOOD NEWS!

Critters
at Farm



This fall we have several new residents at the Mary Olson Farm: Holo II, a 36 year-old Hackney pony; Mocha, a 14 year-old miniature horse; and Mr. B, a 15 year-old Shetland pony. All three are retired 4-H ponies who taught many children the art of driving pony carts. Soon to follow are year-old heifers Libby the Jersey and Henrietta the Milking Shorthorn, sponsored by the Auburn Soroptimists in memory of Libby and Henry Dykstra.

Generosity

Years ago Mountain View Cemetery Manager, Craig Hudson showed us photos of antique funerary items he had seen at a conference. Sometime later we made a cold call to their owner, Jerry Kayser, of Kayser Chapel and Crematorium in Moses Lake. Right then and there he agreed to lend this collection enabling the creation of our exhibit DEAD, Unearthing the Shift in Funerary Practices from Home to Mortuary. Mountain View Cemetery then sponsored the exhibit, which is open through November 6, 2011.





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Ordinary People, Extraordinary History



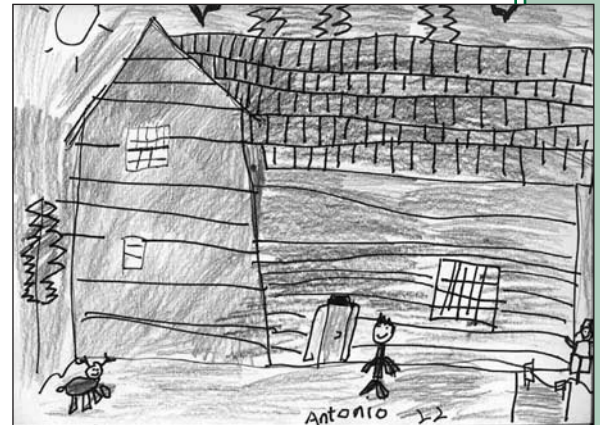
Farm Update...



**About 1000 Auburn
 School** District first-grade
 students will tour the farm

this month to learn about where their food
 comes from, followed by about 1000 six-
 graders studying stream ecology—timed so
 they can see salmon spawning!

We are proud of the Auburn School Dist-
 rict's participation in this field trip program, which is made possible in part by
 donations from the Auburn Rotary and King Conservation District. If you know of
 groups that wish to tour the Farm, reservations can be made by contacting Rachael
 Burrum at (253) 288-7439 or rburrum@auburnwa.gov.



White River Journal is edited by Patricia Cosgrove, designed by Jan Hoy Design
 White River Valley Museum | 918 H Street SE | Auburn, WA, 98002 | Tel. 253.288.7433 | Fax 253.931.3098 | wrvmuseum.org
 Open 12 noon to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday, and by appointment for group tours and research.
 Admission is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children and seniors. Wednesdays and 4th Sundays are free for everyone.

4
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