

The upstairs of the building was once family living space and bedrooms. It now houses exhibits including a barracks with double decker bunks (sleeping 4 soldiers, head to feet position), checkers table, clothing and accouterments. There is also a “Suds Room” illustrating how fort washer women did laundry. In the real days of the fort, the washer women did this in a row of small houses along the south side of the fort. Another small exhibit is on the upper landing of the stairway.



Quarters 1 is named after Major Ragan, a married officer who was stationed at the fort. The interior of the quarters is furnished in the style of a family living in the 1850s.

The downstairs room on the left is a sitting area set up for sewing, reading and writing. There is a table and chairs around it in the center and a comfortable fireplace, common in each room as there was no central heating in those days.



Step down into the kitchen at the back, added later when women came to the fort and wanted to prepare their own meals. The kitchen is complete with a wood stove, dry sink (no running water), and a table laden with baking items. The wall behind has wooden pegs hung with various herbs used as spices.

Adjacent to the right of the kitchen is a formal dining room table set with period dinner ware under a hanging candle chandelier.

Step up into the formal parlor with its Empire sofa and low padded chairs to accommodate ladies in their blossoming skirts. A table is in the center of the room between the sofa and warm fireplace, and a melodeon is in a corner ready to fill the room with joyous music at Christmas time as family and guests watch the lighting of candles on the Christmas tree in a far corner of the room.

From here we reenter the main entry hall and climb the central staircase to the bedrooms. On the right is a child's bedroom, complete

with single bed and a chamber pot tucked underneath. At the foot of the bed is a ceramic hot water bottle to ward off the chill of a winter's night as the light from the shallow fireplace slowly went out. Near the water bottle is a hide-away hole in the floor which was probably covered with a small, braided rug.

At the left of the stairs is mother and father's bedroom which has a spool bed slung underneath the mattress with rope—no springs in those days. A heavy chiffonier dresser, wash stand and basin were added conveniences, though you may have had to break the ice in the basin on a cold winter morning.

Other features of the fort include the flag and pole on the parade ground and the two cannon housed in a modern-day shelter about where the fort magazine once stood. The brass Napoleon cannons, cast in the 1860s during the Civil War, are on loan from the city of Olympia. The

carriages, funded from donations, are replicas commissioned by Historic Fort Steilacoom Association in 1991.

Reenactors portraying former Fort officers, their wives, enlisted men, Fort Nisqually officials, and Steilacoom townspeople may occasionally be seen in and around the quarters. Two living history events are coming soon. On Saturday, July 14, 2018, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Living Historians will show the fort buildings and answer questions about the U.S. Army during its occupation of Fort Steilacoom.

And on Saturday, September 22, 2018, Fort Steilacoom will participate in the national event “Museum Day Live—Smithsonian. The fort will again come alive as Living Historians live and work as soldiers, officers, their wives, children and friends. Open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Special invitation to students, home schoolers, and scouts.

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Touring Historic Fort Steilacoom

by Carol E. Stout



When the present-day traveler drives west on Steilacoom Boulevard past 87th Street toward the town of Steilacoom and Western State Hospital, the scenery suddenly changes. The businesses lining the street end and a tunnel of black locust trees frames the road.

On the left are the baseball and soccer fields of Fort Steilacoom Park. On the right are the buildings of Western State Hospital, bordered by a gray cobblestone wall. At 35 miles per hour, further details of the landscape rush by the occupants of the car.

If the driver turns right at the stop light at the hospital entrance and continues east on Fort Street adjacent to Steilacoom Boulevard, the remains of the fort are visible. A closer inspection reveals the parade

ground with a sign announcing: Fort Steilacoom 1849-1868.

Around the sign are trees planted during and after the hospital superintendency of Dr. John Waughop. The decorative grove includes black locust, bitter pecan, American chestnut, vesuvius plum, European white birch, Alaska yellow cedar, and sycamore maple.¹

Lining Fort Street to the east and north of the parade ground are four renovated Fort Steilacoom officers' quarters. Quarters 4 is surrounded by an English oak, incense cedar, white eastern pine, Austrian pine, Sitka spruce and white oak.² The building was once used as a chapel

¹ “Trees of Western State Hospital,” a Centennial Project of WSH, 1989.

² *Ibid.*

and chaplain's quarters. This building now houses the Fort's Interpretive Center. Here a visitor may purchase replicated historic items, books and gifts; view a history of the fort in the Chapel Theatre; and see artifacts in the display area. The centerpiece of the Interpretive Center is a diorama, constructed by Robert Demorest, of the fort as it looked in about 1860. The diorama includes vignettes depicting events that could have happened in 1858: Chief Leschi being led to the guard house, Father Rossi in the doorway of the Immaculate Conception Church, Mrs. Casey receiving guests from Steilacoom. Various military units are seen on the parade ground, including the 4th and 9th Infantry who served there.

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President's Message



Well, it took a little while, but summer has finally arrived, and what a beautiful summer it is shaping up to

be! Historic Fort Steilacoom has gone into full swing with the museum now being open every single Sunday from 1 to 4 through Labor Day. This makes it easier than ever before to come on down and spend a relaxing afternoon at the Fort.

Besides Sundays, we have three extra special days coming up where the Fort volunteers will be very active. Those days are July 4th, July 14th, and September 22nd.

Wednesday, July 4th, we will be setting up in front of the Town Hall in Steilacoom to help that town with their annual Fourth of July celebration. The fourth of July in Steilacoom is a little slice of Norman Rockwell's America. Everyone that wants to participate is welcome to join in their parade through town, there is lots to eat, and scads of little booths selling everything imaginable. One of those booths will be staffed by the HFSA. Come on down and say "Howdy!"



Harlene and her daughter Charlene Couteau, cousins of August Valentine Kautz, visited Fort Steilacoom for a special tour in May. Harlene's husband Chuck is at the right. All three visitors are West Point graduates.

One week later, on Saturday, July 14th, the Fort will have an Open House hosted by our very own Living Historians. We now have the privilege of showcasing half a dozen men, who are the cream of the crop, when it comes to accurate portrayal of the Old Army as it existed in the early days of the Pacific Northwest. They are accurately outfitted for all the different eras of the lifespan of Fort Steilacoom's history, 1849 through 1869. This would be a super time for you to be able to closely examine the uniforms, arms, and accoutrements that existed when Fort Steilacoom was an active Post.

Entering into Fall, the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association will once again host its annual event, Smithsonian Day Live, on Saturday, September 22nd from 10 to 4. This is a free, Living History occasion, with every building open to view. Come and see uniformed soldiers and officers carrying out their daily routines at the Fort, accompanied by their wives, and friends from the surrounding area. We extend a special invitation to students, homeschoolers, and scouts, to experience Fort Steilacoom as it might have looked while it was an active military Post.

See you at the Fort!

Gideon

Kautz cousins visit fort

The Couteau family pictured above, along with Harlene's brother Hal Nelson and friends Kent and Ingrid Troy, visited Fort Steilacoom recently to follow August Valentine Kautz's footsteps and see the remaining four buildings he was in charge of building in 1857-58.

August Kautz and one of his brothers both came from Germany. Hal, Harlene and Charlene are descended from the brother. That's why they are cousins of August.

Harlene's husband and Charlene's dad Chuck Couteau are all West Point grads—Chuck in 1981, Harlene in 1982 and Charlene in 2016. Kent Troy and Chuck were classmates at West Point. Kent lives in Lakewood and Charlene is currently stationed at JBLM.

August Kautz was born in Germany in 1928 and came to America as an infant, settling in Ohio with his parents and sibling. He joined the Army and served in the Mexican War, afterward receiving an appointment to West Point and graduating in 1852. He served in Oregon where he was wounded in an encounter with Indians and later transferred to Fort Steilacoom. He was a general during the Civil War and retired to Seattle. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery.

Tour of Fort (continued from p.1

In the north section of Fort Street are Quarters 3, 2, and 1. **Quarters 3**, named after bachelor Lieutenant Schaff, is furnished as an "unaccompanied" officer's quarters at the left. It is a replicated officer's bedroom and parlor combination with a bed, chest, desk, table with checker board, clothing and other accouterments. A billiard table that is believed to have been used by officers is in a back room along with a display of tools of the time.

The front room to the right has been converted into a replica of a sutler's store by Lawrence Bateman. Items on sale to the soldiers line the shelves. A weight scale is on the counter and a small desk nearby was used to keep track of inventory and what the soldiers bought on credit, as they were paid only about every four months by the Army, owing much of it to the sutler.

A new display in an upstairs room represents the fort hospital, which was actually a separate building at the northeast corner of the fort as shown in the fort diorama. Tricia Bures and John Roten have been working to complete the exhibit. Fred Welcher has donated medical instruments and various period items which are on display in an Interpretive Center showcase.

Quarters 2, named after Colonel Casey, an important Fort commander, is used for various public educational programs and meetings. It was once two rooms with an exterior troop entrance in the front and the Commanding Officer's office in the back.

The right wing of the first floor has a family parlor in the front room and behind contains a Research Center library with an impressive collection of Civil War books and other local historical materials. Arrangements to use the Research Center can be made by contacting 2nd Vice President Loran Bures at (360) 786-9451 or loran.suvvw@gmail.com.

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