

Charles Prosch (continued from p. 1)

His son, Thomas, was 8 then. Thomas would later write that upon arrival at the Steilacoom landing, the family knew that they had been "had." Steilacoom was a poor and struggling place, though filled with fascinating people. The only reason that the paper did not go belly up is that Charles had free labor—his sons—to do work for him.

Charles did his best to "boom" Steilacoom, as newspapermen said then, by trumpeting news of gold to the north. And he showed great concern for his community—criticizing in print, for example, the drunken excesses of townspeople and the fort's soldiers. He befriended many of the officers.

But Steilacoom did not boom. Prosch's dreams led him to other places. He went to Olympia and tried to become a success there. That led to failure. His family ran a store. It extended credit to a logging camp that promptly failed. So Prosch and his sons had to take over and run the logging camp.

His father had been afraid to take a chance. Charles had taken so many chances—and failed so many times.

But there was a little boy who grew up around Fort Steilacoom. Likely he had listened as his father and the officers discussed the injustices of the Leschi case, and other abuses of good sense and government. Thomas Prosch grew up with a deep belief in

reform and good government, as well as something his father did not have—business sense. In 1873 he opened the *Tacoma Tribune* with his father. Two years later, they decided Seattle, with its then 1,700 or so residents, had a future. They entered the newspaper business there and bought land. In 1881 Thomas Prosch became majority owner of a new newspaper: the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Seattle boomed.

Because of his association with Thomas—not to mention wise investments in Seattle land—Charles Prosch ended his life in comfort.

He concludes his memoirs, oddly enough, with words written by someone else. This poem, "The Old Settler" by Francis Henry, must have meant a lot to him at age 84. These are the final stanzas:

I tried to get out of the country,
But poverty forced me to stay;
Until I became an old settler,
Then nothing could drive me away.

And now that I'm used to the climate,
I think that if man ever found
A spot to live easy and happy,
That Eden is on Puget Sound.

No longer the slave of ambition,
I laugh at the world and its shams,
As I think of my pleasant condition
Surrounded by acres of clams.

Bibliography:

Karolevitz, Robert F., *Newspapering in the Old West*, Superior Publishing Co., Seattle, WA, 1965.

Prosch, Charles, *Reminiscences of Washington Territory; Scenes, Incidents and Reflections of the Pioneer Period on Puget Sound*, 1904, reissue by Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, WA, 1969.

Prosch, Thomas W., *The Conkling-Prosch Family*, 1909.

Rescue (continued from page 5)

Georgiana Crew & Passengers

Captain Rowland
Mate: Duncan McEwen
Sailors: Benjamin & Richard Gibbs, Pan Tucker, (cook) Kanaka Tamaree, Sidney S. Ford, Jr., Isaac Brown, Asher Sargent, E. Nelson Sargent, Samuel D. Howe, Ambrose Jewell, Charles Weed, Daniel Shaw, Samuel H. Williams, James McAllister, John Thornton, Charles Hendricks, George A. Paige, John Remley, Jesse Ferguson, I. Colvin, James Hurd, William Mahard, S. Gideon, George Moore, J. Siedner, B. F. McDonald, E. Wright, Lewis, and Drydens.¹

Rescue Volunteers

(Partial listing) Edmund Sylvester, R. C. Fay, G. McRaferty, A. B. Moses, Mr. Dulack, Dr. Johnson, A. M. Poe, V. S. Davis, Theodore Dobosq, Hugh Crockett, Captain Lafayette Balch, Mate Mr. Williams, sailors Gray and Jack, ship carpenter Wilson.¹²

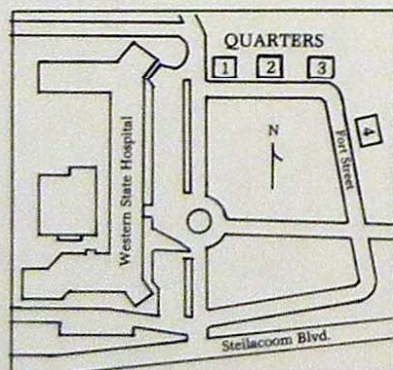
Fort Steilacoom Detachment

(Partial listing) Lieutenant V. John Dement, Murdy Fay, George ____¹²

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Charles Prosch—Follower of Dreams

By Walter Neary

It inspires the imagination to remember, as we stroll around the historic buildings of Fort Steilacoom, that the people who walked here before us shared the stirring emotions that make us human.

The people of the 1850s felt fear. They dreamed. They wanted to succeed. They wanted their families to be proud of them. They suffered loss. They laughed. They cried. If the walls of the fort could speak, they could tell us countless stories of humanity—like the story of a frequent visitor to the fort, Charles Prosch.

Prosch was Steilacoom's first successful newspaper publisher. He published his memoirs in 1904. His recollections frequently are quoted in stories about the fort, Steilacoom and other pioneer communities. This article skips many of the stories often told by and about Prosch. This article focuses on him as an example of the people who packed up their dreams and came to Puget Sound.

Prosch was born June 25, 1820, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. His father, William Prosch, was a humble farmer. Someone told him that "out West" there was cheap land and the opportunity for riches. William set out to see for himself. He took Charles. His age at the time is unknown, but was apparently around 10 or 12. The father saw the West—then Illinois—as a place where it was expensive to buy food and supplies. He did not want to leave his small Pennsylvania farm.



Charles Prosch was ever the dreamer as he sought success in the West.

Young Charles saw something different. He saw the West as a place of excitement and opportunity. For unknown reasons, he separated from his father in St. Louis and had to make his way back to Pennsylvania by himself. He did so by way of New Orleans, led by his charm and wits.

Charles grew up to become a productive New York City printer, and to marry. The birth of his children coincided with the California Gold Rush. So he could not leave for California in 1849, as he longed to do. He finally did so in 1853, the year his last child and only daughter was born.

Charles got to San Francisco, where he dreamed of riches because printers earned the massive sum of

\$10 a day. He planned to save his wealth and return to Brooklyn in two years. But San Francisco proved to be an expensive place to live, and Charles could not save as much as he wanted. He became interested in civic affairs, and may have participated in the Vigilante Committee of 1856.

His family gave up on the idea of his return. The family came to California in 1856. The daughter, Emma, died soon after arrival. The father had only been around to hug his daughter for a few short months of her short life.

Charles then figured the thing to do was invest in land. His son would later write:

Mr. Prosch dreamed of the country. He thought that on the farm was the ideal life, and if he could only get on a suitable tract of land, with horses, cattle, pigs, poultry, fruit, vegetable and grain fields about him, how happy he'd be.

Charles bought property in Sonoma Valley, California. He could not run the farm. So he hired people to do so, and they promptly ran it into the ground.

At this time, the West was littered with printers who hoped to make their fortunes. They did this by becoming publishers in small towns, in the hope that the small town would become a great city. Prosch figured this was his path. He met up with Lafayette Balch, who spoke with confidence of Steilacoom's future. Prosch packed up his family in 1858 and headed north on a steamship.

(Continued on page 6)

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President's Message

What a great year this has been! In a consortium with the Steilacoom Tribal Museum and the Steilacoom Historical Museum, we produced a well attended series of six talks. Four of them were presented in Quarters 2.

Because of the enthusiastic reception, six more talks are being planned for this fall and winter. We are very grateful to the Washington Commission for the Humanities, which provides a slate of outstanding speakers for us to choose from—and then pays most of the expenses.

And a heartfelt thanks also to the Steilacoom Branch of Key Bank which arranged for Key Bank Corporation to completely underwrite the advertising and publicity expenses for the series with a \$500 grant.

If you were able to attend Christmas at the Fort, or the Memorial Weekend Civil War Reenactment, or the Inquiring Mind series, then you know just how enjoyable they were. Everyone who contributed to their success deserves to be recognized. But I know that all will agree that one person in particular deserves very special recognition: Barbara Smith.

For well over a year, Barbara has been our volunteer Director of Public Relations. Additionally, she has been a deeply involved participant in all of

our educational and other programs. She has a superb attention to detail and seems to instinctively know when and where she needs to cover for lapses in our planning and follow-up. At every event she seems to be everywhere, attending to details and smoothing over the inevitable glitches.

Fortunately, she recently agreed to accept a position on your museum's Board of Directors. What better place for someone who is truly Fort Steilacoom's Volunteer of the Year! Thank you, Barb; we need your infectious energy.

Another very welcome and recent addition to our Board is Walt Neary, Editor of the *Lakewood Journal*. Not only is he enthusiastically learning to be one of our docents, but he is also researching the life and writings of Charles Prosch, the 1850s editor of Steilacoom's *Puget Sound Herald*. Walt is developing a portrayal of Prosch and will, perhaps, be taking it on the museum and library lecture circuit. What could be more appropriate than an editor portraying an editor!

Over the winter, Lyle Dunkin, Chuck Collier, and Jack Langston built the great looking display cases in the Quarters 4 Interpretive Center. Thanks to Museum Director Shea Munroe and Secretary Orville Stout, they are filled with attractive, highly informative displays of Company M of the 1st Artillery and the 4th and 9th Infantry. (And thanks to Alan Archambault, Director of the Fort Lewis Museum, for helping us get them ready for the Memorial Day opening.)

A warm thank you to a long time benefactor of Fort Steilacoom Museum, Mrs. Ellen Freckleton. She recently donated photos of Pierce County pioneers, a six-pound cannon ball, and local newspapers of the 1890s which, because of their contents, will be important additions to our research library.

We are pleased to report that Board member Bob Demorest is recovering nicely from a multiple bypass operation. At last report he was back at work in his shop, making scale models of the 25 buildings at the fort. They will be incorporated into an interpretive diorama, which will be installed in Quarters 4.

We are also pleased to announce that our Treasurer, Pauline Hainse, who passed the Certified Professional Accountants exam the first time she took it, (only 10% do) has now been designated a CPA. Nicely done, Pauline.

Vice President Ken Morgan (Colonel Silas Casey and commander of the Federal Troops during the Civil War reenactment) once again produced a splendid show for both the reenactors and the public over the Memorial Day weekend. Three years in a row. Well done!

Raymond J. Egan

Coming Events

Steilacoom Museum:

July 25: Band Concert
July 28: Salmon Bake, Sunnyside Beach, noon to 4 p.m.
August 1: Wine and Cheese Garden Party
October 6: Apple Squeeze

DuPont City & Museum:

September 29: "Ft. Steilacoom in the Eye of the Storm," presented by Raymond Egan, DuPont City Hall/Community Center, 2 p.m.

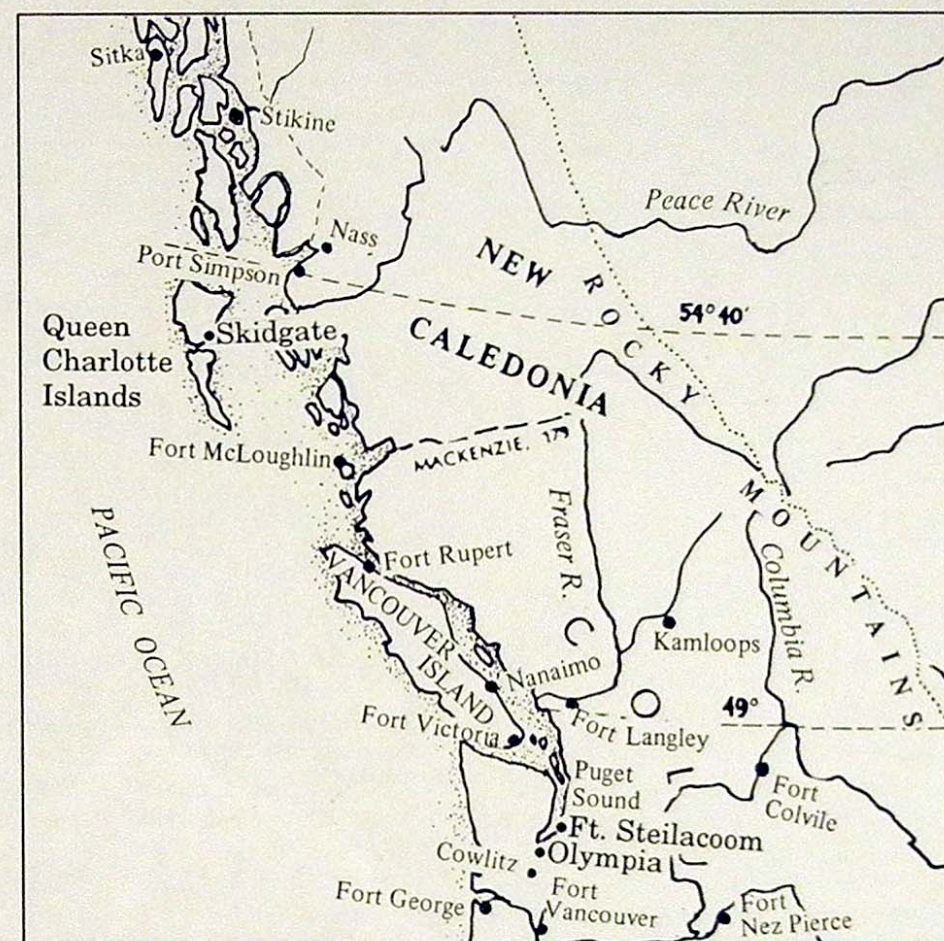
October 4 & 5: Archaeology & Historic Site Tour beginning at Northwest Landing, 9:30 a.m.

October 5 & 6: Ft. Nisqually site open 2-5 p.m.; DuPont Museum open 1-4 p.m.

October 6: Descendants of Fort Nisqually Employees Association Meeting, DuPont City Hall, 11 a.m.

Pierce College:

August 8, 9, 10: "A Place of Firsts," a historical pageant of the Steilacoom area, college amphitheatre, 8:00 p.m.



Captain Hill then details a corporal and five men under the command of Lieutenant John Dement, First Artillery, to sail with Balch. Lieutenant Dement is given, by Collector Moses, a letter of credit for the purchase of blankets, shirts, muslin, and tobacco at Hudson Bay's Fort Simpson.⁹

Fort Simpson

December 19, 1851: Captain Balch sails on the *Demaris Cove*, stopping first at Fort Simpson where he stays for three days to bend a new sail for the ship. Accompanying Balch are the soldiers of the Fort Steilacoom detachment and Olympia volunteers sent to assist in the rescue.¹⁰

Purchased for the ransom of each enslaved man are five blankets, two shirts, two pounds of tobacco, and one bolt of muslin. Hudson's Bay also provides a suit of clothes for each rescued man.¹¹

Queen Charlotte Island

Some Days Later: The *Demaris Cove* arrives on the east side of Queen Charlotte Island, anchors, and the Haidas are contacted. The "slaves" are gathered from the various parts of the island, and the trade of the ransom items is made for the crew and passengers of the *Georgiana* without incident.

Olympia

January 31, 1852: Finally, after seven weeks, the Haidas give up their captives and a long, torturous ordeal comes to an end. The happy rescuers and grateful prisoners sail for more friendly shores. They arrive in Olympia with Captain Balch proudly flying a rescue flag.

Epilogue

Payment for those involved in the rescue was made years later through the intervention of Simpson B. Moses,

Samuel D. Howe, Lafayette Balch, and Columbus Lancaster.

Customs Collector Moses first submitted the \$11,017.01 bill for the rescue to Secretary of the Treasury, Thomas Corwin. This request was refused. Next, Samuel D. Howe, one of the captives, and Lafayette Balch, one of the rescuers, supported a memorial to the Legislative Assembly of Washington that the expenses incurred be paid by the U.S. Government. Columbus Lancaster, Washington State's first delegate to Congress, successfully engineered the memorial so that \$15,000 was appropriated on the 4th of August 1855.¹¹

Finally, Lafayette Balch was paid \$5,000, Hudson's Bay was paid for the goods, and each volunteer received \$166.¹²

Endnotes

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2. *History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon & Washington*, Vol. 1. Portland, Or.: North Pacific History Co., 1889, p. 345.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

4. Snowden, Clinton A., *History of Washington*, Vol. III. New York: The Century History Co., 1909, pp. 138-9.

5. *History of the Pacific Northwest*, op. cit., p. 345.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Beardsley, Arthur, S., *The Bench and Bar of Washington: The First Fifty Years 1849-1900*. Unpublished.

9. Crockett, Hugh, "Wrecked Gold Miners," *Tacoma Sunday Ledger*, January 8, 1893, Vol. XI, No. 8.

10. Bonney, W. P., *History of Pierce County Washington*, Vol. I. Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1927, p. 67.

11. *History of the Pacific Northwest*, op. cit., p. 67.

12. Crockett, loc. cit.

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Third Annual Civil War Reenactment

The Civil War Reenactment and opening day for Fort Steilacoom Museum proved to be a great success for the third year of the annual event sponsored by the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association and the Washington Civil War Association. Over 300 reenactors participated in the three day event over the Memorial Day weekend.

In addition to the daily battles at Fort Steilacoom Park, hundreds of visitors wandered through the Union, Confederate, and civilian camps and purchased souvenirs from the many sutlers. Those weary of foot climbed aboard several wagons drawn by horses and mules for a grand tour of the four encampments before alighting at the battlefield to view the columns of soldiers clad in blue or gray engage in military tactics as cavalry charged through amid the volley of gunfire and boom of cannon.

Between battles, many visited the Fort Steilacoom officers' quarters and museum complex where the history of Company M of the First Artillery and the 4th and 9th Infantry Divisions is shown in two newly completed exhibits. While there, the visitors shopped in the Sutler's Store and were guided on tours by docents in period dress. Children were entertained by stories told by Jayne Isch and hands-on activities led by Anna Fitzgerald while the "older folk" listened attentively to talks and dramatic first-person interpretations of Mark Twain and pioneer Willis Boatman. Jerry Eckrom, noted area historian, author, and president of the South Puget Sound Civil War Roundtable, transformed himself, and his audience, with Twain's tale of "A Private History of a Campaign that Failed: Mark Twain's Adventures in the Civil War." Willis Boatman was personified by Raymond Egan with "My Fort Steilacoom," a "first hand" 1850-60 account of the surrounding community as seen through the eyes of a man who was there.



Special historical talks were also presented by Les Eldridge and Bill Innes. Eldridge's illustrated recountment of "The Wilkes Expedition: Six Months at Steilacoom in 1841," was well received. Innes, a member of the South Puget Sound Civil War Roundtable, highlighted some of the famous figures of the Civil War who passed through the Northwest in his theme, "The Northwest Connection: Casey, Kautz, Winthrop, etc."

As a special feature, Juanita Leisch flew in from Virginia, sans misplaced luggage, to present a seminar on how to create Civil War period clothing without spending a fortune: "Age, Economics and Eccentricities." Juanita, a nationally acclaimed authority on Civil War era clothing and culture, gladly autographed personal copies of her books *Who Wore What: Women's Wear, 1861-65* and *An Introduction to Civil War Civilians*. Her luggage never did arrive.

The Rescue of Enslaved *Georgiana* Passengers and Crew: A True Historical Drama

By Carol Neufeld

Cast in order of Appearance:

Captain Rowland of the sloop "Georgiana"
Crew & Passengers of the "Georgiana"
Haida Indians of Queen Charlotte Island
Capt. Lafayette Balch of the "Demaris Cove"
Simpson B. Moses, U.S. Customs Collector
Capt. Bennett Hill, 1st Artillery, Ft. Steilacoom
Gov. John Work, Chief Factor Hudson's Bay Co.
Lt. John Dement & detachment, Ft. Steilacoom
Volunteers in Rescuing Party
Samuel D. Howe, captive & member of
Washington House of Representatives
Columbus Lancaster, Washington's first
delegate to U.S. Congress

Prologue:

The schooner *Georgiana* while enroute from Steilacoom to the gold fields in Canada anchors November 19th, 1851, at night in the Skidgate Channel, Queen Charlotte Islands. Her crew of five and twenty-two passengers are captured and made slaves of the fierce, war-like Haida Indians, who hold them for ransom.¹

Queen Charlotte Island East Side

November 25, 1851: Captain Rowland of the *Georgiana* writes of the plight of the group.

"I was cast away on latitude fifty-two degrees, fifty-two minutes on the east side of the Island on the 9th of this month (November) in a heavy gale of wind from the southeast, with twenty-two passengers and five crew from Olympia, November the 3rd, and have succeeded in getting on shore. The Indians have robbed us of everything necessary and some of the clothing on our bodies, and we are left without one blanket or shirt to shift. Consequently, we are in a most wretched and deplorable condition; therefore, we, all of us, do earnestly pray you if there is possible means to

render us any assistance, to send it as quick as possible."²

The note is given to a passing canoeist.

December 1, 1851: Captain Lafayette Balch of the schooner *Demaris Cove* arrives in Gold Harbor where he arranged to meet Captain Rowland of the *Georgiana*. He discovers the fate of those on board the ship, and then intercepts Captain Rowland's note from someone on a passing canoe. He is unable to help the captives because of hostile acts of the Indians. He leaves the Island to return to Port Steilacoom.³

December 6, 1851: The crew and passengers live in a cedar plank house with their Haida captors for 18 days before they convince the Indians to send a delegation to arrange for their ransom. The captives are cold because they have few clothes; hungry because they have little food; and tired because they work to provide wood and water for the camp.

Then on December 6, the Haida's provide a canoe with seven paddlers for Samuel D. Howe, Mr. McEwen, one sailor and the Kanaka cook to travel to Fort Simpson. Captain McNeil, the person in charge, provides the delegation with food and clothes in exchange for the work of guarding the fort at night. No help is given for the captives remaining with the Haidas.⁴

Olympia

December 11, 1851: Captain Balch arrives in Olympia with Captain Rowland's letter of November 25. He delivers it to U.S. Customs Collector Simpson B. Moses with a note of his own that reads:

"I am in hopes you will take steps for their relief. They will undoubtedly remain on the island until they

are ransomed or taken by force. I do not think the Indians will take their lives, (the) object being plunder."⁵

Fort Steilacoom

December 12, 1851: Morning. Captain Bennett H. Hill, First Artillery, U.S. Army commanding officer at Fort Steilacoom asks John Work, a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company for help from Fort Simpson. Work, who is at the time visiting nearby Fort Nisqually, replies in part:

"Should the unfortunate passengers and crew be able to reach Fort Simpson, I have no doubt Dr. Kennedy will render them every assistance in his power; but the difficulty will be for them to get there."⁶

He elaborates that the shortest distance from the east side of the Island to the north, which borders on the mainland, is thirty miles. Besides, the navigation is dangerous even for the skilled Indians with their canoes.

"Allow me to suggest that the only plan I see...would be to send some of the vessels now in the Sound, well manned and armed (with) some person on board acquainted with the coast."⁷

Steilacoom, Washington Territory

December 12, 1851: Evening. Because there is no government vessel nearer than San Francisco, S. B. Moses, Customs Collector at Olympia, hastens to Steilacoom to consult with Captain Balch and Captain Hill.

Some Days Later: After correspondence with Captain Hill, Collector Moses charts the schooner *Demaris Cove*, mounted with four pieces of cannon, provisioned with twenty men and a surgeon to sail immediately for the east side of Queen Charlotte Island.⁸