

Coming Events at Fort Steilacoom:

Inquiring Mind Series

In cooperation with the Washington Commission for the Humanities, Historic Fort Steilacoom and the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association will again be bringing you a series of outstanding speakers and programs which will be presented at Fort Steilacoom in Quarters 2 at 7:30 p.m.

November 14, 1996: *The Shuttle Passes: A Creative Response to the Industrial Revolution* by Theresa Trebon. The Industrial Revolution initiated a period of intense change for every aspect of American society. It redefined how people worked, where they lived, how their children were educated, and how they experienced family and community. Theresa explores these changes by examining the history of handweaving, the first craft to be mechanized. (HFSA)

January 9, 1997: *Wrestling with English* by Keo Capastany. As citizens of a nation of immigrants, Americans need to have an understanding of why they cannot understand some foreign-born Americans. This humorous and provocative presentation creates an awareness of the problems of learning, interpretation and translating languages. (HFSA)

February 27, 1997: *Subs & Shells, Bombs & Balloons: the Pacific Northwest in World War II* by Robert

Carriker. During World War II the U.S. government interned 70,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry. Boeing was making airplanes outside of Seattle, Grand Coulee was producing huge amounts of electricity, and Northwest shipyards were building new ships. Carriker tells the little-known story of Japanese attacks on the Pacific Northwest, including the launching of 6,000 balloon bombs. (SHMA)

April 24, 1997: *Vladivostok: Ruler of the East* by Bill Richardson. Outside of Russia, little is known about Vladivostok, the country's principal city on the Pacific Rim, and one with a remarkably rich, cosmopolitan history. It was and is a city of wealthy merchants, of sailors and soldiers, of writers and poets, of scientists and explorers. Richardson uses slides to illustrate the social, cultural, and economic history of the city. (SHMA)

Holiday Attractions

December 14, 1996: (Saturday) *Christmas at Fort Steilacoom*, 12-4 p.m. Travel back in time through a historic re-creation of Christmas as it was celebrated at Fort Steilacoom in 1859. Activities include tours of the holiday-decorated museum, dramatic portrayals of local pioneers, appearances by Father Christmas, story-

telling, and hands-on ornament making for the kids. Admission: \$3 Adult, \$1 children 12 & under, or \$5 per family.

Christmas with the Caseys, 7-9 p.m. Spend an evening with Lt. Col. Silas Casey and his wife Abigail as they entertain friends from far and near in a traditional Yuletide celebration. Meet local pioneers from 1859, sample Victorian delicacies, and share in the candlelight and camaraderie of the Museum at this annual fundraising event. Tickets \$12 per person. Check or money order to HFSA, P.O. Box 88447, Steilacoom, WA 98388.

For more information on these two Christmas events at Fort Steilacoom call (206) 756-3928.

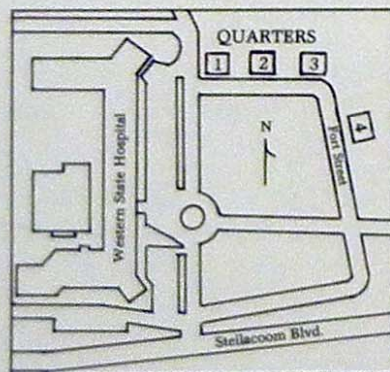
Magic Lantern Show

February 2, 1997: Joe and Alice Koch will present their popular magic lantern show in Fort Steilacoom's Quarters 2 at 1:30 p.m. using original lantern equipment and slides of the period.

HFSA Annual Meeting

October 13, 1996: 1 p.m., Quarters 2. Dr. Michael Allen will be the featured speaker with *Let 'er Buck! - The Origins and Evolution of North American and Pacific Northwest Rodeo*. Guests are welcome.

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What Ever Became of Fort Steilacoom?

By Steve Dunkelberger

We are often asked "What ever became of Fort Steilacoom." The fort lived on, but it's mission changed dramatically. It would no longer be a military outpost and safe haven for settlers in times of unrest; it would be an "asylum" for those with mental afflictions. The barracks would become wards and some of the officers' quarters residences for the doctors. Most of the fort buildings would eventually be torn down as the brick structures of Western State Hospital took their place. But four of the quarters would remain in use through the 1960s when they began to fall into disrepair. In 1983 they were "rescued" and restored by a group of citizens concerned with the fort's historic significance, and are now open to the public as a museum complex. (Editor)



The hospital band assembles in front of an old Fort Steilacoom barracks converted to a ward for patients.

Few branches of state government can trace their roots to a single person. The state mental health system can: Archibald Pelton. He wandered out of the wilderness in 1808—dazed and in shock, the lone survivor of an Indian attack and suffering what modern doctors would call post traumatic stress disorder. He became the first documented "insane" person in the Northwest.

Edward Moore was found on a Seattle beach shortly afterward. A hotel owner kept him in a vacant room for several weeks, but his health never improved. The innkeeper later sent Moore to Dr. M. P. Burns of Steilacoom, with the understanding that the people of King County would ask the Washington

Territorial Legislature to foot the bill for this "lunatic pauper." The Legislature voted down the idea because it would be too expensive if requests started rushing in.

After the state militia left Fort Steilacoom in 1868, the state bought the former farmland and twenty-five buildings for \$850. The fort cost the military \$200,000 to build just ten years before. The land became what is now Western State Hospital.

Exactly twenty-one mental patients moved into the military barracks on August 19, 1871. The hospital opened with contracted labor at a cost of 91 cents per day. Superintendents came and went during the early years as allegations of poor conditions sparked a series of investigations.

John Waughop served as the superintendent after the investigations, and the nearby lake still bears his name. He served from 1880 to 1897 and watched the formal opening of the permanent hospital on December 12, 1887. It must have been some party. Governor Eugene Semple came up from Olympia by boat. The party opened with the "asylum band" playing Wagner's grand march "Tanhauser." A one-act play called *My Turn Next* followed. Then things got interesting. The stage cleared for a night of good ole' fashion dancing. The party ended shortly after six the next morning.

A patient farm area started up around 1900. It had chickens, cows and other farm animals to help cut food costs. The farm operated well into the 1960s.

Continued on page 3

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President's Message

Once again your museum has scheduled a number of exciting Fall and Winter family activities. For the second year, we are joining with the Steilacoom Historical Society in offering an Inquiring Mind speaker series in Quarters 2. So far, five talks have been scheduled. Please see page 4 for the topics, times and dates.

Four of the speakers are provided by the Washington Commission for the Humanities, which subsidizes most of the cost of bringing them to your museum. The Commission pays for the speakers' travel and related expenses, and the museums pay for the publicity and refreshment costs out of their coffers. (Very limited coffers, I might add. To help cover some of the costs of the series, your museum Board is considering asking for a nominal contribution of a \$1.00. In the past, we just placed a donation jar by the refreshment table—and hoped for the best.)

The fifth activity is brought to us by long-time supporters and members of your museum, Joe and Alice Koch. They'll be presenting their immensely popular magic lantern show. We'll be their 231st show. Now, that's popular!

Last December's afternoon "Christmas at the Fort" and "Evening with Col. and Mrs. Casey" proved so successful that we are enthusiastically doing it again—with improvements and addi-

tions. So, mark Saturday, December 14th on your calendar. Bring your children and grandchildren in the afternoon, and then come back in the evening to mingle with Col. and Mrs. Casey, Father Rossi, Charles Prosch (editor of Steilacoom's newspaper, the *Puget Sound Herald*), and a host of guests from Steilacoom City and surrounding towns and villages. There'll be singing by the Pierce College Chamber choir, and caroling, and a tour of the officers' quarters—all by romantic candlelight.

Speaking of candlelight: last year we illuminated the buildings with lanterns generously loaned to us by the folks at Fort Nisqually. This year, we'll have our own, thanks to Lyle Dunkin, Chuck Collier, and Jack Langston. Perhaps even as you're reading this, they're busily making the historically authentic lanterns we'll use to delight the guests at Christmas at Colonel Casey's.

This generous, talented, and hard-working trio spent almost a full decade restoring the fort. And for the last several years they've done our painting and building maintenance, built display cases and exhibit stands and anything else that needed to be done. Most recently, along with Brad Randall and Loren Gilbert, they also built the sets for this summer's pageant about Steilacoom at Pierce College, *A Place of Firsts*. When you see these gentlemen, please tell them how much you appreciate the legacy they've created for all of us and our community's children and grandchildren.

As you will note elsewhere, our Annual Meeting is Sunday, October 14th in Quarters 2 at 1:00 p.m. Please do join us for a charming talk on cowboys and rodeos and a chance to see the new exhibits in the Interpretive Center. The Kochs will be there, and you'll have a chance to chat with them about the Magic Lantern show. Of course, everyone is welcome. Bring someone who isn't a member and maybe they'll join.

As we end our calendar year, this newsletter offers a great opportunity for me to again publicly thank the

members of our Board of Directors. Director Shea Munroe has performed yeoman (yeolady?) service all year—often at great personal sacrifice. She's our planner, docent trainer, costume director, seamstress and anything else we need for her to do.

Barbara Smith, our public relations director—as always—is everywhere and does everything from arranging displays to writing brochures.

Orville Stout, our secretary, media specialist, publisher, printer, photographer...you can't say enough about a man with that many talents, who makes so many contributions.

Ken Morgan, our vice-president, does a magnificent job of planning and directing the three day Civil War encampment over the Memorial Day weekend and our Christmas programs in Colonel Casey's home. I won't even mention all the school programs he does or the many reenactments he attends all over the U.S.

Pauline Hainse, as treasurer, is our "unsung heroine." Not only is she appreciated when she's passing out a check, but also for all the other contributions she makes, being one of the first to volunteer for committees and whatever else needs to be done.

Anna Fitzgerald commutes from Olympia to make our meetings and run our school outreach programs. She pleads for volunteers—like you, kind reader—to help her. We have more requests for school appearances than she can fulfill.

Bo Cooper runs our Inquiring Mind program—when she's not producing a highly successful pageant that managed to get the Lakewood, Steilacoom, Native American and other communities involved in a celebration of our local history.

Carol Neufeld manages our library and research center and would be pleased to accept any books and materials you have which pertain to the fort's time period. If in doubt about what you have and you'd like to donate it, call Carol. She'd be delighted to work with you.

And if you are interested in joining a reenactor's group, call Tom Melberg

and he'll tell you all about reenacting with Company M or the 4th Infantry.

Our talented and skilled model-maker Robert Demorest has devoted many months to creating a diorama of Fort Steilacoom. Most of the detailed scale models of the quarters and other buildings are on temporary display in Quarters 4, and you can see them when you come to the Annual Meeting.

Walter Neary, our newest member, is quickly becoming our liaison between the museum and the community and city of Lakewood. He brings a thoughtful, welcome reporter's observation to our meetings.

And to outgoing Board members Ardie and Ron Herbel: thank you for your many contributions and your kind willingness to continue volunteering.

To all, my deep appreciation. It's a privilege to work with such fine people in such a vital part of our community—your museum.

Raymond J. Egan

Nominations

The Nominations Committee proposes the following candidates for officers and Board members:

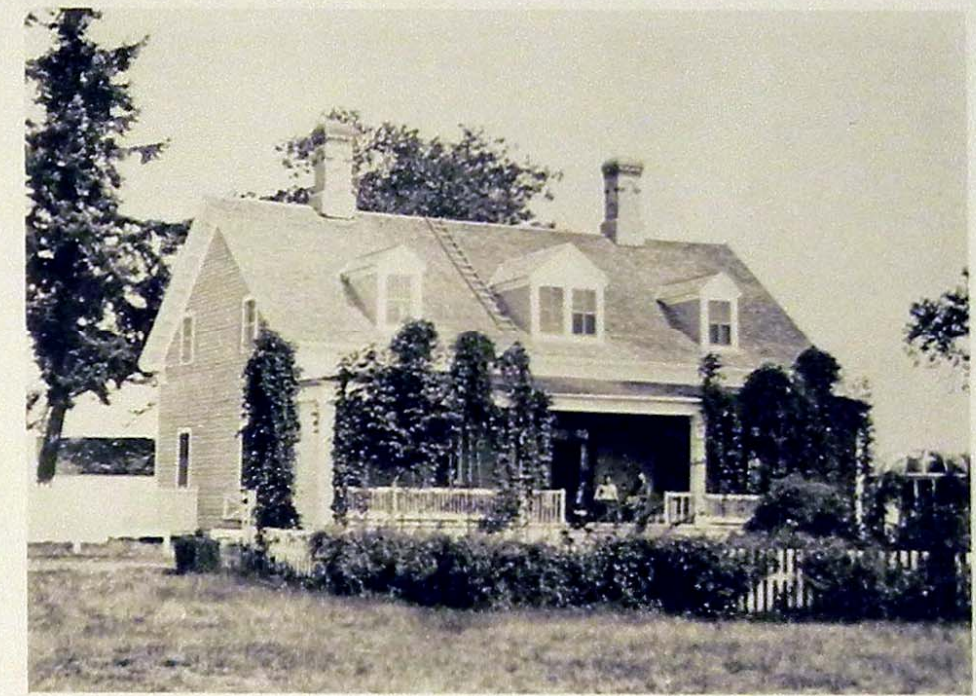
President: Raymond Egan
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2nd Vice President: Shea Munroe
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Treasurer: Pauline Hainse
Director: Thomas Melberg (1999)
Director: Vacant (1999)
Director: Vacant (1999)

What Ever Became... (from page 1)

The farm even had a bit of fame. Steilacoom Prilly Ormsby Blossom, a farm cow from 1921 to 1938, set a world record for milk production with 258,210 pounds of milk and 19,558 pounds of butter fat.

The hospital also had a laundry, blacksmith shop, carpentry area and a bakery.

"Our Store" started in 1926 as a way to help the patients get things



Col. Casey's quarters at Fort Steilacoom was used as a residence for doctors from 1871 until the 1950s. Oftentimes it was the home of the hospital superintendent.

they needed. A patient, Ed Spillane, operated the store, which had only a few shelves in the administration building. It later moved to the auditorium. Profits from the store went to put radios in the wards so that invalid patients could enjoy music.

Employees during those years either stayed at the hospital or took the train line from Tacoma to an area around what is now the paper mill on Chambers Creek. No one drove to work because there weren't very many roads around Lakewood. Or maybe they didn't have anything to hit. That changed in 1916 when patients and staff built the 1,737 foot cobblestone fence along Steilacoom Boulevard. Cars have been slamming into it ever since.

By the time the United States entered World War I, the hospital had 1,414 patients—about half eventually returned to society. The hospital took on more patients as then Camp Lewis needed mental treatment for some of its soldiers. The mentally ill population grew around the state. During the late "teens" and early 1920s, mental hospitals battled overcrowd-

ing. The state then banned what many called "red lightning" or the act of bringing someone to the state solely for mental treatments.

The Depression hit. Budget cuts followed and forced many staffers to work with almost no support and for as little as \$35 a month.

Another war came. World War II created low morale among the staff as they constantly trained for what many considered an eminent chemical attack by the Japanese. The hospital became the first aid station for the area and also housed the blood bank. Patients harvested food in nearby Puyallup because the area suffered a shortage of farm hands, as many of them went off to war.

Coincidentally, electro-shock therapy replaced giving patients insulin shock as the treatment of choice in 1941. Shock treatments were, in turn, replaced by lobotomies in 1947. It was the rage. In 1947, thirteen patients underwent the process where doctors puncture part of the brain. The procedure became very popular, as 138 lobotomies were done in October of 1950 alone.