

## Memorial Weekend

Thanks to the help of many volunteers and reenactors, the Memorial Weekend was a great success again this year, with hundreds of visitors getting a feel of American history as they experienced Union and Confederate camps and reenactment of Civil War battles at Fort Steilacoom Park on May 27-29. The event was jointly sponsored by the Washington Civil War Association and Historic Fort Steilacoom Association and also coincided with the season opening of the Fort Steilacoom Museum.

Chuck Mauer coordinated the Civil War camps and battles with the help of Ken Morgan, who also announced and commented on the battles. In addition to the huge Union and Confederate camps, civilians crowded into Steilacoom City and visitors and reenactors browsed through the many sutler's tents set up next to the battlefield. A special Memorial Day service was held honoring veterans of all of America's wars.

The ticket booth, Sutler's Store, and Fort Steilacoom Museum were manned by Historic Fort Steilacoom and Steilacoom Historical Museum Association volunteers. Many thanks go to Bo Cooper and the volunteers she recruited and coordinated, including: Charles Anderson, Bill and Jacquie Arends, Robert Harrison, Dave and Wendy Welch, John Hemp-hill, Steve Dunkelberger, Steve and Shirley Brown, Joan Curtis, Christine



*Confederate and Union troops clash at the Memorial weekend battlefield.*

Finningan, Marion Ball, Dave and Judy Hopkins, Dennis and Donna Quackenbush, Don Tempel, Jim and Phyllis Bell, Bonnie Roy, Marcia and Lee Smith, Cy Happy, Jerry Eckrom, John and Heather Thomas, Ebbe Sanden, Ron and Jan Lucas, Sandra Minter-Berry, Shirley Hainse, Lyle Dunkin, Chuck and Pat Collier, Jack Langston, Carol Starr, and Orville Stout. Walter Neary and his daughter Joanna organized the Sutler's Store. Alan Archambault set up an exhibit of his "Soldiers of Early America" drawings in Quarters 3 where he autographed copies of his newest illustrated book.

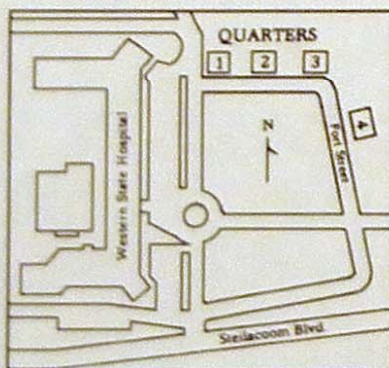
## Old Army Dam (from page 3)

This dam was constructed with a great cedar tree as a part of the dam retaining wall. Cedar logs were used to crib up, with cedar slabs placed in a vertical position along the entire inside of the dam. Remains of a rude spillway were also uncovered. Still back of this was found indications of another dam, but of a more crude nature. Who built this is a matter of conjecture. Remains of the old military dam have been hauled out. Old fashioned cut spikes and bolts can still be found in pieces of the cedar logs.

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Tacoma, WA  
Permit No. 660

## Historic Fort Steilacoom

P.O. Box 88447  
Steilacoom, WA 98388



# Fort Steilacoom

Vol. XVII, No. 2

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Summer, 2000

## Fort Steilacoom's Gettysburg Connection

by Kenneth A. Morgan

One hundred thirty-seven years ago this month on July 1<sup>st</sup> through the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1863, the greatest and most decisive battle of the Civil War was fought in a small Pennsylvania town named Gettysburg. Even though it took place a continent away, men from the Northwest, and particularly Fort Steilacoom, played important roles in that battle. Because the Army needed soldiers, it stripped the frontier forts. Both the 4<sup>th</sup> United States Infantry and parts of the 9<sup>th</sup> United States Infantry regiments left Fort Steilacoom for the seat of the war. Soldiers from California, Oregon, and Washington Territorial militias occupied the fort until the Civil War was over and Regulars could return.

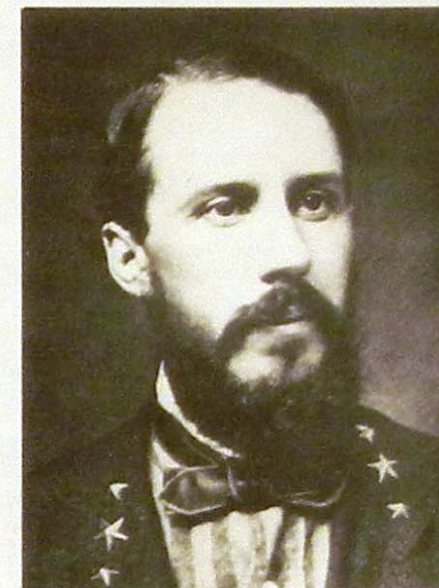
Enlisted soldiers were not allowed to leave the Army to join their native states in the rebellion, although many deserted the U.S. Army to fight for the South. Officers, on the other hand, could resign their U.S. Army commissions and accept appointments in the Confederate Army. Two of those officers were George Edward Pickett and Edward Porter Alexander. Pickett was posted at Fort Bellingham and Alexander was stationed at Fort Steilacoom.

In the summer of 1863 Pickett and Alexander were serving in James Longstreet's Corps, Army of Northern Virginia; Major General Pickett as a division commander and Colonel Alexander as a corps artillery commander.

After two days of unsuccessful attacks on both flanks of the Union lines, Confederate General Robert



George Edward Pickett



Edward Porter Alexander

E. Lee felt that the Union was weak in the center and ordered General Longstreet to prepare an attack. The former Northwest soldiers, Alexander and Pickett, were to play crucial roles in the battle.

Lee indicated the objective of the attack to be a copse of trees in the center of the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. The Federals were emplaced behind a low stone wall and had the advantage of being on higher ground. The Confederate lines were about a mile away on Seminary Ridge. Only open ground lay between.

Lee's plan called for a massive artillery barrage to weaken the Federal line prior to the advance of Longstreet's Infantry Corps. Colonel Alexander was in charge of the placement of that artillery. The

guns, about 150, were deployed on a 7,500 yard front from Oak Hill to the Peach Orchard. They were assembled into two grand batteries. One battery of seventy-five guns, positioned hub to hub, stretched northward from the Peach Orchard. The second battery was split into two sections. One section of thirty-five was further north on an 800 yard front, and still another group of twenty-six 300 yards beyond that. Other guns, including two long-range Whitworths, were placed at scattered locations along the front. Two dozen howitzers were held in reserve. The artillery was ready.

At one o'clock, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, a single Confederate gun sounded and a few seconds later another. The signal to commence the barrage had been given. All along the line 150 guns

(Continued on page 2)



## HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

President..... Walter T. Neary  
 Past President . Kenneth A. Morgan  
 Vice Pres. .... Christine Finnigan  
 Secretary ..... Orville H. Stout  
 Treasurer ..... Kenneth A. Morgan  
 Directors: Bill Arends, Authula Bo Cooper, Robert Demorest, Richard Densley, Court Fraley, Thomas Melberg, Carol Neufeld  
 Editor & Publisher . Orville H. Stout  
 Telephone..... (253) 756-3928  
 Web Site ..... [homel.gte.net/5white/Fort\\_Steilacoom.html](http://homel.gte.net/5white/Fort_Steilacoom.html)  
 E-mail: FortSteil@yahoo.com



*Courtesy Allison Hunt Douthitt*

### Henry Jackson Hunt

*Henry was a brother of Lewis Cass Hunt who had been stationed at Fort Steilacoom.*

**Gettysburg** (from page 1) erupted with flame and smoke, sending shot and shell toward the Union line. The most intensive bombardment of the war had begun. The Federal Artillery, commanded by General Henry Jackson Hunt, began to respond. General Hunt was a brother of another former Fort Steilacoom officer, Lewis Cass Hunt. The Confederate gunners worked their guns at a rapid pace—a well trained crew could get off three shots per minute—and soon the air was full of smoke.

Civil War artillery commanders needed to see their targets in order to judge the effectiveness of their shooting. The smoke from the firing obscured that vision, so the battery commanders did not know that most of their shots were long, falling behind the Federal lines, although some of the shots were effective. General Hunt gradually reduced his counter firing. He was saving his ammunition for the infantry advance he knew was coming. By not firing he was attempting to deceive the Confederates into thinking the Federal guns were being destroyed. The barrage continued for nearly two hours. Alexander was low on ammunition. It was time for the infantry to advance.

General James Longstreet commanded the Confederate I Corps. It consisted of three divisions, one of which was commanded by George

Pickett. The Confederates spent most of the morning getting themselves organized in the woods behind Seminary Ridge. The brigades and divisions took a long time to form into battlelines. The temperature had risen to the high 80's, so everyone was uncomfortable as well as nervous about the pending advance. Many anticipated their death. They were all in position by 11 o'clock. It was quiet in the ranks. Some soldiers were reading their Bibles, others praying or reading letters from home. All contemplated their fate. Around 3 o'clock the Confederate artillery fell silent. Alexander felt they had done their job and it was time to step off. He sent a message to Pickett, who was in conference with Longstreet. General Pickett asked, "General, shall I advance?" Longstreet did not reply, only bowed his head in silence. Pickett saluted, saying, "I shall lead my division forward, sir," and gave Longstreet a note to be delivered to his fiancée, Sallie.

As the Confederates emerged from the woodline, they were spotted from Little Roundtop. The cry "Here they come" flashed though the Federal line. Battalion by battalion, brigade by brigade, division by division, colors standing erect in the breeze,

they advanced. There were nearly 13,000. Across the open field they came, arms at the shoulder, marching at 110 steps per minute toward their goal, the copse of trees in the Union center. Some brigades were marching at the oblique, others straight ahead. The Rebel yell could be heard all along the line.

As they approached the Emmitsburg road, the Federal artillery began its firing from Little Roundtop, Cemetery Hill, and Cemetery Ridge. General Hunt had saved his ammunition and now a hundred or more guns delivered their deadly messages. As they got closer the Union infantry began firing volley after volley into the advancing Confederates. Soldiers were falling by the hundreds. Sergeants and junior officers encouraged their men, closing the gaps left by the killed and wounded. Along Cemetery Ridge Union artillerymen changed from exploding shell to canister and then double canister. Each gun sent hundreds of steel balls into the Rebel infantry. They did not stop. The precise formations were broken up, but the men clustered around their colors and officers. Some had enough and began running to the rear.

The two lines fired continuously into each other. Federal reserves filled gaps in the Union line. Confederate soldiers penetrated the federal lines only to be killed, wounded or captured. The attack had been stopped. It had lasted less than an hour. The battered Confederates fell back to Seminary Ridge, but only one in three returned. Pickett's division was no more. The Confederate hope of bringing the war to the North were dashed.

Many say that Gettysburg was the Confederacy's finest hour; others say that it was the turning point of the Civil War. We at Fort Steilacoom remember our Gettysburg connection.

### Reference:

Albert A. Nofi, *The Gettysburg Campaign June and July 1863*, Gallery Books, New York, 1986.

## Old Army Dam is Unearthed

*The following article was printed in the Tacoma Sunday Ledger, December 29, 1929.*

### Excavations at Steilacoom Hospital reveal Interesting Relics

Old parts of the former water supply system possibly dating back for a great many years are being unearthed at the Western hospital, Steilacoom, where work is now under way on a new water plant. Parts of a dam known to have been built by the United States army engineers in the early days of 1850 have been uncovered and show a fine state of preservation. Back of this are indications of another dam. There is no telling by whom or when this was built, but possibly by Indians several hundred years ago, those who have examined the place believe.

The discovery of the old water system is the result of the work of Dr. Charles Taylor, superintendent of the hospital, who some time ago started the work to insure a purer and larger supply of water for the institution. The water used at the hospital comes from a number of springs which are the headwaters or flow into Chambers creek. For years these springs have supplied the hospital and in early days furnished water to the old Fort Steilacoom military post. The springs are located in a ravine just back of the hospital.

It was found by Dr. Taylor that a large amount of water was coming out from the bank below the dam. This dam, which is built of concrete, is constructed just the opposite way in which the present day concrete dams are laid out. Instead of the convex side of the dam being built against the pressure side of the water or up stream, it is the oppo-



*The Tacoma Sunday Ledger*

*The arrow in the upper picture points to the location of the old dam built by the military. A huge cedar stump forms the backing of one end of this dam. In the center the arrow at the right points to where indications of still an earlier dam was located, while the two arrows point to the military damsite. The lower view shows John Taylor, son of Dr. Charles Taylor, examining an old iron bolt that held a section of the military dam logs.*

site. The wing sides of the dam are tapered down thin. The pipe which was placed in this dam to convey water to a lower dam or reservoir below, where it is pumped to the tanks on the hill at the hospital, was found to be so high at the point of water exit to be practically useless. An investigation by Dr. Taylor led him to believe that the water flow from below the dam was caused

by leakage from stored water, and this has been proven by the results of work underway.

When the dam was drained, the flow of water from the spring below ceased, but springs above were unearthed until now there is a fine flow of water.

In working about the dam the remains of another dam was uncovered.

*(Continued on page 4)*