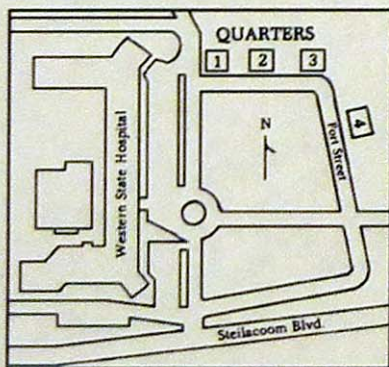


## Author Robert Ficken to be at Annual Meeting October 12

Members and guests at the Fort Steilacoom Annual Meeting, to be held in Quarters 2 at 2 p.m. on October 12, 2003, will hear from someone who has written the first comprehensive scholarly work about Washington Territory since 1890. Robert E. Ficken will reflect on writing the territorial history and sign copies of his book *Washington Territory*, which was published last year by WSU Press. *Washington Territory* is "must-reading" for anyone interested in the period that Fort Steilacoom was at its heyday, and copies will be available for sale and signing after the presentation.

Established in 1853, Washington remained a territory for 36 years, until admitted into the Union in 1889. This was an unusually long period of time for a territory to wait for statehood. Ficken writes that Washington Territory faced a number of hurdles. For one thing, it was split in two by a geographic barrier, the Cascade Range. And there was a severe lack of adequate transportation to the East. He writes that at first Western Washington was actually a satellite of San Francisco, and Eastern Washington functioned as a satellite of Portland.

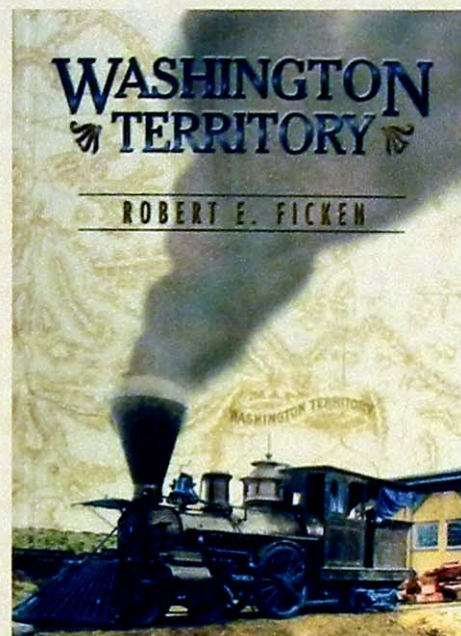
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That all changed, of course, when railroads finally were completed along the Columbia River and across the Cascades in the mid-1880s. Essentially, Washington statehood had to wait until the railroads unified the region, and so much of Ficken's book is about the area's transportation history.

A number of other scholars have produced school textbooks, while others have written excellent biographies of such figures as Chief Leschi, Isaac Stevens and William Winlock Miller. But there's really been only one other comprehensive history of the territory: H.H. Bancroft's *History of Washington, Idaho and Montana* (1890). Thus, Ficken faced extra challenges because he had to deal with the consequences of being the first person in more than a century to try to tie the history of the Territory together. The footnotes of his book clearly indicate he has been everywhere, reading everything from original letters to many of the early newspapers of the period.

The author of *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*, Carlos A. Schwantes, said, "I take my hat off to Ficken for the impressive digging he has done to make this new book possible."



Robert Ficken will sign copies of his book after his talk at the Annual Meeting on October 12.

Ficken, who lives in Issaquah, has written other books about the Pacific Northwest, including *Rufus Woods, the Columbia River, and the Building of Modern Washington* (WSU Press, 1995). He is a member of the Washington State Historical Society board of trustees and holds his PhD in history from the University of Washington.

Walter Neary

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# Fort Steilacoom

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## Major General John Fulton Reynolds

by Babs Weston

The somewhat mournful, even dour, figures in D. Gallon's recreation show no sign of joy or happiness. They are Catherine M. Hewitt and Brig. Gen. John Reynolds in the fall of 1861, before he reported to the Army of the Potomac. He had finally convinced her to accept an engagement ring in spite of what she considered overwhelming objections. But she made "The Last Promise," which was to wear his West Point ring until they met after the war. She never saw him again, alive.

Unlike a sprinkling of other Civil War officers (Grant, Casey, Pickett, Kautz, Stevens, etc.), John Reynolds had no connection with Puget Sound. After his 1841 West Point graduation, he served under Gen. Taylor in Mexico and was twice brevetted there for meritorious action (artillery). Earlier he had received high honors for his Quartermaster service, which he detested but excelled at and was finally able to escape. By 1860 the now Major General Reynolds was appointed commandant of the Corps of Cadets at West Point.

Reynolds had served briefly at several posts in the South and later in Oregon and at San Francisco. As things turned out, he and Kate Hewitt were on the same ship from California to New York in 1861, a journey that took four weeks, and they became good friends. As a recent convert to Catholicism, she



*The Last Promise*

was on her way to attend the Academy of Sacred Heart in Pennsylvania. For Reynolds, those were life-changing days. By his own words, for the first time ever he connected totally and wholeheartedly with a woman. They were enchanting, fulfilling weeks. He was 40, she 24.

Reynolds had a remarkable service record, and in 1863 President Lincoln offered him command of the Army of the Potomac, which he refused. (When the same offer was made later to U. S. Grant, the president deleted most of his overall-control demands.)

### Author's note:

About five years ago I entered the annual Gettysburg raffle and, to my astonishment, won a large print of Dale Gallon's painting, *The Last Promise*. It soon arrived: a huge, heavy, framed and crated picture. My apartment is totally out of wall space, so I couldn't keep it, but decided the Fort Steilacoom Historical people would know what to do with it.

Before long a major story about this very picture appeared in one of my Civil War magazines, and I was impressed all over again at my astonishing good fortune. The article was "The Girl He Left Behind." Perhaps some of you noticed it. The entire story was a sad surprise in great detail, with the promise of a forthcoming book on General Reynolds (by Kalina Anderson). Weeks later, after considerable time spent in phone calls, e-mails, et. al., I gave up trying to reach the author, who was about to disclose more historical facts on the general's life and deeper meanings of the painting, which now hangs over the fireplace in the library of Quarters 2 at Fort Steilacoom.

I decided to use a combination of the magazine story line with my own Civil War books to put together a few paragraphs for the quarterly newsletter. Now, if you ever see an announcement of a new Reynolds book, you'll recognize the title of the painting and its background.

(Continued on page 3)



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President's Message

As you read these words, the year's events at the Fort are still continuing. I urge you to come to the Annual Meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> in quarters 2 and the December 13<sup>th</sup> Christmas at Fort Steilacoom. Robert Ficken, author of *Washington Territory*, will speak at the October meeting. At the Christmas event you will see and hear Col. Casey and his family entertaining visitors, bachelor officers and their partners dancing, soldiers patrolling and musicians playing. In addition, children may make period Christmas decorations.

This year has been filled with exciting activities, and the number of visitors coming to Fort Steilacoom has increased. Students from Steilacoom schools, Clover Park, Bainbridge Island, and elsewhere have toured the quarters, dressed in period clothes, and crafted toys. Sunday visitors have traveled from all over the area, and even as far as Texas and New Jersey to see the museum and its displays.

The Civil War Reenactment at Fort Steilacoom Park on the Memorial weekend in May was well attended by visitors from far and near, too, and over forty new members joined Historic Fort Steilacoom Association during the event. In addition, our organization was represented at the Town of Steilacoom 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration with our booth, where many



The new display in Quarters 3 was put together by Craig G. Pete, using items from his personal collection.

bottles of water and pop were sold to the hot, weary public.

The Founders Day picnic in August was enjoyed by all who attended, and over twenty visitors also came to see the museum that day.

You are invited to come and view the interesting new display in the bachelor officers' quarters. Craig Pete, a re-enactor and recently appointed board member, has set up a tent and uniformed "soldier" along with two showcases of artifacts in a previously "off limits" area there.

THANK YOU to the hard-working board members whose names are listed in this newsletter, to Chuck Collier, our maintenance director, and to each person who has helped with events, clean up days, publicity, or in any other way. Their efforts have made the year a success.

Remember to come to the Annual Meeting with Washington state history author, Robert Ficken, on October 12 at 2 p., in Quarter 2.

Carol E. Neufeld



Cause of Casey's Death

The following letter was sent to Col. Thomas S. Casey on the death of his father, Silas Casey, who had once been the commander of Fort Steilacoom:

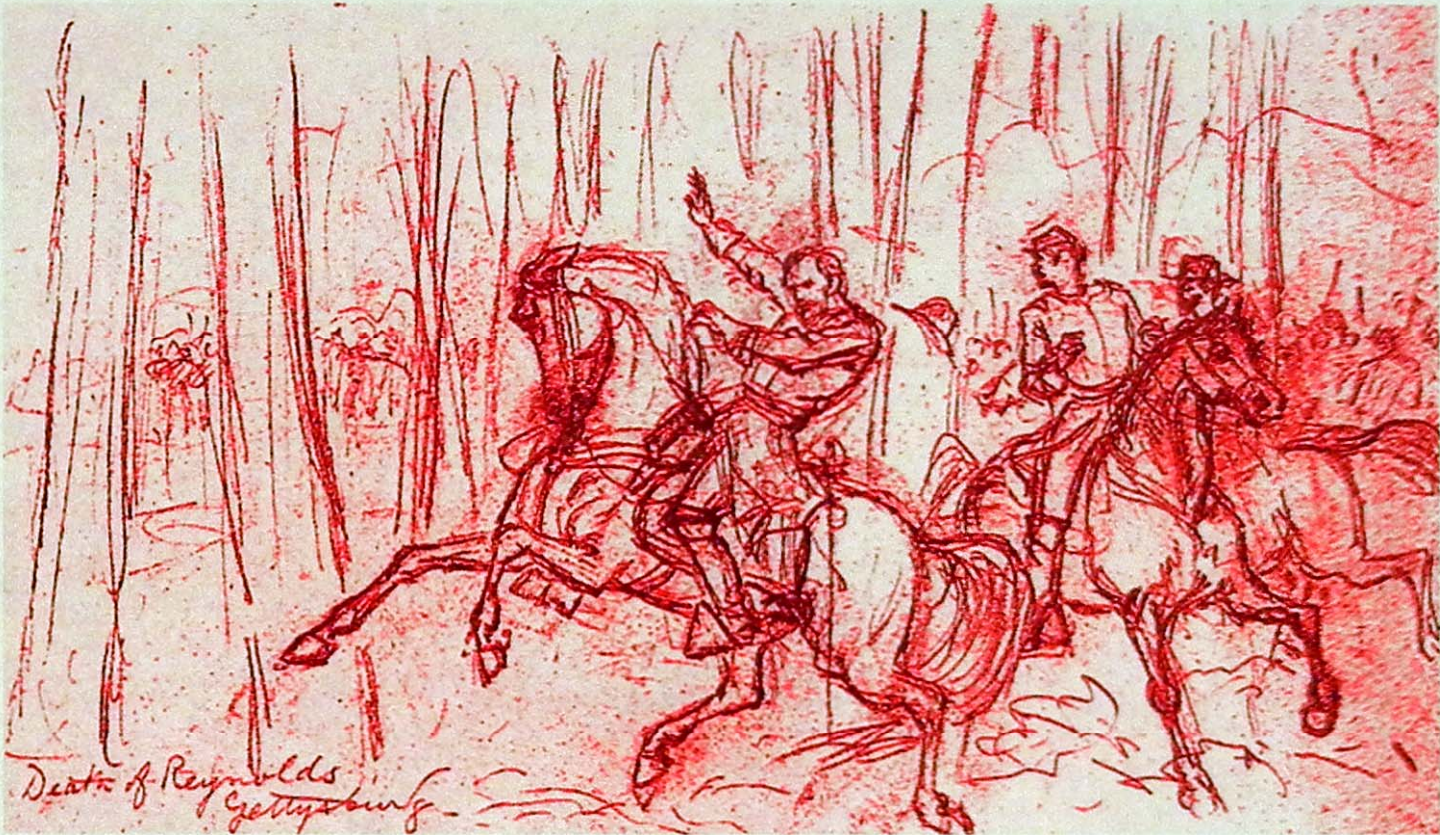
Brooklyn N.Y. Feb. 14, 1882  
Col. Thos S. Casey

Dear Sir,

To your note of the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. I reply that the immediate cause of Gen. Silas Casey's death Jan 22d 1882 was general destruction of the vital forces due to failure of the digestive functions, and the remote cause was impairment of the digestive organs by sickness and hardship in the service in former years.

Hoping that this statement will furnish the requested information, I remain  
Yours Truly  
Verranious Morse, MD

By the way, it is the son, Thomas S. Casey, for whom Fort Casey in Washington State is named.



Maj. Gen. John Reynolds, rushing to assist John Buford's beleaguered dismounted cavalry at Gettysburg, was mortally wounded by a stray bullet. He was the most senior officer to die at Gettysburg, where he is honored today with a large statue.

John Reynolds (from page 1)

On June 25, 1863, General Reynolds was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps (left wing) of that Army to contest the Confederate invasion into Pennsylvania, land already so familiar to him. Reynolds was eager to protect his home state, where he had been born in Lancaster into a large (13 children) and warm family in 1820. Although his family was very close, as an adult he never told his two sisters in Philadelphia about Kate, possibly concerned about his staunchly Presbyterian relatives.

So Reynolds led his 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, including the famed Iron Brigade, north on that blistering July day toward Gettysburg. It was he who chose the high ground (Cemetery Ridge and Hill) as the pivotal defense area which, indeed, it became. He and his officers, slightly in advance of the marching men, hurried to the assistance of John Buford's beleaguered dismounted cavalry. Reynolds shouted, "Forward, for God's sake, forward," and at that moment he was mortally hit by a bullet to the head. For some time it was assumed to be a shot by a Reb sharpshooter, but more recently the decision has leaned toward simply a stray bullet. Will we ever know for sure.

John Reynolds was the most senior officer to die at Gettysburg, and the most highly regarded Union officer.

Kate collapsed when told the battle news. She had left the convent and still had his ring on a cord around her neck. She saw Reynolds' gathered family at the Philadelphia funeral service, but did not identify herself. His two sisters were dumbfounded when they were notified of the Catholic medal and lady's ring on a chain under his uniform. Kate herself subsequently disappeared completely and was never heard from again, but



there were rumors that she spent time in Europe.

Maj. Gen. John Reynolds was a brilliant soldier, and highly praised by all who knew him. He is buried in the family plot in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and honored with a large statue at Gettysburg.

That, in a nutshell, is the story behind the melancholy scene in the painting which hangs in the quarters at Fort Steilacoom.

