

Horseback riding brings to my mind Lt. Kautz. I must tell you that as the senior bachelor officer, Lt. Kautz has been most kind as a chaperone to my daughters. A mother is naturally concerned about her daughters, but I must tell you that I feel I never need to worry when they are out riding with Lt. Kautz and some of the other young officers, for he knows this country, and is a most responsible man, and looks after my daughters kindly. My daughters have had many admirers; not all are acceptable young men. We are pleased that Abbie is now engaged to be married to Captain Hunt, a man of fine character, and we hope that Bessie will be as fortunate.

It has been a good life here among these tall trees and varied peoples. I hope that whenever the Col. is next called will be as satisfying.

I do hope that perhaps I may make your acquaintance again in the near future. Please feel welcome to come to tea at the Casey home, whenever you are near Fort Steilacoom.

Thank you for indulging me with your attention. Good evening.

### Membership Reminder

Your membership in Historic Fort Steilacoom is much appreciated. If you have not already done so, please send in your renewal form for 2005.

**Historic Fort Steilacoom**  
P.O. Box 88447  
Steilacoom, WA 98388

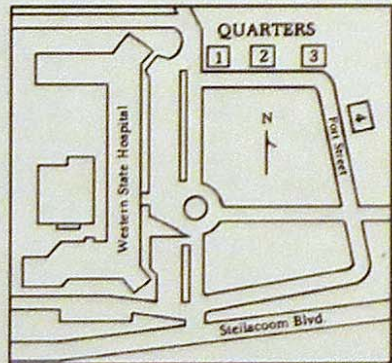


Photo courtesy of Nancy Keller-Scholz

Nancy Covert, in the role of Mrs. Dougherty, the Casey's housekeeper, prepared delicacies for the tea. Barbara Henderson, Autumn Wimberly, Keli Lynch, and Emelia Bevis, from Steilacoom High School, were servers.

### Event Schedule 2005:

**March 26** – Mike Vouri, "The Pig War," 1 p.m., Quarters 2.

**April 24** – John McPherson, "The Murder of Kanasket," 2 p.m., Qtrs. 2.

**May 28 & 29** – "Scenes of the Civil War," living history reenactment at Fort Steilacoom.

**May 29** – Dr. Ruby, "The Cayuse, the Whitmans, and the Courts," 2 p.m., Quarters 2. Book signing, too.

**June 26** – Georgianna Kautz, "Growing up on the Nisqually Indian Reservation," 2 p.m., Quarters 2.

**August 21** – Founders' Day Picnic, 2 p.m., Quarters 4. A pot-luck.

**October 9** – Annual Membership Meeting and program, 2 p.m., Qtrs. 2.

**December 10** – "Christmas at Fort Steilacoom," 4-8 p.m.

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

# Fort Steilacoom

Vol. XXII, No. 1

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Spring, 2005

## Mrs. Colonel Silas Casey III (Abigail Perry Casey) Hostess, Socialite and Mother

by Nancy Keller-Scholz

*It is November 17, 1859. Mrs. Casey comes in, takes off her cape, bonnet, and gloves, slowly, and puts them on a small table.<sup>1</sup>*

Good evening to all of you. I am Mrs. Colonel Silas Casey. My husband of 29 years, is the commanding officer of Fort Steilacoom, very near here. I trust you are all aware of the United States Army Fort. My husband has command of nearly 250 men there.

I have been here in Washington Territory since December of 1857, nearly two years now. The time has passed by quickly, for I keep busy. So many people come to Fort Steilacoom to visit, discuss business, and to rest from their travels. It seems to me that I have met nearly every judge, clergyman, newsman, and lawyer who reside in this territory. They come from many lands. There is Fr. Rossi, the Italian Catholic priest who visits us, and Dr. Tolmie, the Scotsman in charge of Fort Nisqually, and people from British Columbia from the North.

I have moved my home often as an officer's wife, yet this is the farthest I have ever been from my childhood home in Rhode Island. Sometimes I wonder how I was persuaded to engage in this military way of life, and I remember....

When I was young, my girl friends and I would attend grand balls and



Photo courtesy of Nancy Keller-Scholz

*As part of the Steilacoom Sesquicentennial lecture series in 2004, reenactors told the stories of women who were at Fort Steilacoom.*

parties; the young men from West Point were always eager to make our acquaintance, and we were so enamored of them in their handsome uniforms. Mother used to say we "were dazzled by the golden glint of their brass buttons." Of course, she knew that a military man must go where he is sent, and she feared that the Army would take her daughters away, or worse. I am sure that I was dazzled by Silas Casey's brilliant uniform and fine manners. I did not think of the uncertainties ahead in military life.

Col. Casey was but a Second Lieutenant in the Army when we married. I remember my excitement at getting married on my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday; it was such a beautiful, sunny day, with all of our family in attendance, and so many good friends. We had a lovely ball at my home. Our first move was to Sackett's Harbor, New York, and then, of course, I began to have children. I am sure you know of the complications of life with infants and little children. I will not tire you with those details. How difficult it is to pick up and move

(Continued on page 2)

<sup>1</sup>©N.L. Keller-Scholz, Nov. 16, 2004.



## HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

President ..... Carol Neufeld Stout  
 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Pres. .... Thomas A. Melberg  
 Secretary ..... Orville H. Stout  
 Treasurer ..... Kenneth A. Morgan  
 Directors: Bill Arends, Robert Demorest,  
 Steve Dunkelberger, Christine Finnigan,  
 Walter T. Neary, Gene Knight, Craig G.  
 Pete, Laurie Sterling  
 Editor & Publisher ..... Orville H. Stout  
 Telephone ..... (253) 756-3928  
 Web Site ..... [www.fortsteilacoom.com](http://www.fortsteilacoom.com)

### President's Message



**G**reetings to all members and friends of Historic Fort Steilacoom. The 2005 year began with two well received events. Mrs. Casey's Tea was held on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Thirty-five guests were entertained by Mrs. Casey (Nancy Keller-Scholz) her daughters Bessie (Kelli McGowan), and Abbie (Jennifer Lind), Mrs. Casey's friends who attended were Mrs. Tolmie (Midori Hanus), Mrs. Huggins (Barbara Smith), Mrs. Maloney (Eileen Melberg), Mrs. Alfred Plummer (Jill Weatherford), and Catherine Work (Sarah Polluck).

The ladies talked about events of the 1850s as the guests listened. The guests were escorted to their places by an enlisted soldier of the period, Craig Pete. Tea and cakes were prepared by Mrs. Dougherty (Nancy Covert) and served by Steilacoom High School students Barbara Henderson, Autumn Wimberly, Keli Lynch, and Emelia Bevis. Many thanks to Nancy Keller-Scholz, Eileen Melberg, and Nancy Covert who planned this new event, and to Rick Keller-Scholz and Boy Scout Troop #238 who set up and cleaned before and after the tea.

Two of the ladies involved in Mrs. Casey's Tea also reenacted "Women of Fort Steilacoom" for the Town of Steilacoom's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. (See picture on page 1). Eileen Melberg and Laurie Sterling organized the



Photo courtesy Nancy Keller-Scholz

*Reenactors who participated in Mrs. Casey's Tea were (L-R) Kelli McGowan, Nancy Keller-Scholz, Jennifer Lind, Barbara Smith, Eileen Melberg, Sarah Pollock, Midori Hanus, and Jill Weatherford.*

program. Nancy Keller-Scholz portrayed Mrs. Casey, Judy Bridges was Kitty Kautz, Karen Haas spoke as Elizabeth Rigney, Jane Isch personified Mrs. Dougherty, and Sandy Burwell became Mrs. Slaughter. Board member Tom Melberg, in the persona of Capt. Maurice Maloney, escorted each of the ladies to the stage.

You are invited to attend the remaining lectures and events in Quarters 2 at Fort Steilacoom during 2005. Mike Vouri will speak about the "Pig War," Saturday, March 26 at 1 p.m. John McPherson will present "The Murder of Kanasket" on Sunday, April 24, at 2 p.m. Dr. Ruby will discuss "The Cayuse, the Whitmans, and the Courts," Sunday, May 29, and Georgianna Kautz will talk about "Growing up on the Nisqually Indian Reservation, Sunday, June 26, both at 2 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Also on May 28 and 29, reenactors will present "Scenes of the Civil War" on the parade ground at Fort Steilacoom, which is in front of the four remaining officers' quarters.

Two area scout troops will be working on projects at the fort.

Andrew Dale Zemke of Boy Scout Troop #238 presented a vita and possible Eagle Scout projects to the Board. He will coordinate with Charles Collier, the fort's maintenance Supervisor, and Board member Ken Morgan. Chris Long, Unit Commissioner for Steilacoom Boy Scout Troop #71 has suggested that a gardening project could be undertaken around fort buildings.

Thank you to all volunteers who keep the fort running smoothly.

Carol Neufeld Stout

**Mrs. Silas Casey** (from page 1) your home every few years, and to bring the little children and babies always to a new home. My friend, Mrs. Burt, whom I met there in New York, would say, "I have cast my lot with a soldier, and where he was, was home to me." And so it was.

Col. Casey had many assignments during our early years of marriage. I always feared for him when he left for duty, and rejoiced when he arrived home again. He was called to fight Indians on the far frontiers of Michigan, and even Florida. I moved with him when it was safe, and when there

were good living quarters available, but often I stayed in New England, close to my mother and my sisters. As I kept having children, my family helped me greatly. My three sisters have always been my dearest friends. They have been with me through joy and sorrow, especially the somber time of losing our little Frederick. He was born in March, our second child, when we were living back in Newport. He was a frail little thing since birth, but he was so bright and happy, we never expected to lose him to the fever he acquired at ten months old. Hannah, Ann and Catherine were my lifeblood as we buried him and I grieved for him....

I have five children now, and little Frederick in Heaven. My eldest is Thomas, he is a fine young man now. He teaches Engineering at the Military Academy. He has a lovely wife named Emma, and two young sons. Our son, Silas, is also in the States, attending the Naval Academy. Here with us at Fort Steilacoom are our daughters, Abbie and Bessie, and our son, Edward, whom we call Ned.

I do miss my family, but we are able to send and receive letters quite regularly, so I am able to get the news from home.

Yes, I have become accustomed to my life here in Washington Territory.

When Col. Casey first brought us out here, oh, what a frightful journey! First we must sail on the ship, for an eternity, always moving, up and down, back and forth, until we never want to see the sea again! Then, after several weeks of endless water, we finally reached the Isthmus of Panama—the railway journey was not any smoother—bumping, jerking and jostling along for one whole day and one whole night. When we were exhausted from that, we got back onto another ship with all our belongings, and sailed, and sailed, and sailed, again. Oh, I'm sure that Ned would tell it differently, for he was but seven years old and to him it was all a great adventure as long as his mother and father were nearby. But, myself and the girls spent most of our time in our room, trying to

distract ourselves from that never ending rolling and pitching of the ship. These days at Fort Steilacoom, quite often the captains of the little steamers which ply these waters up and down the Sound invite us to dine on their ships. But I never attended their dinners, for when I set foot upon this land, I resolved never to dine aboard ship again.

When we first arrived here at Fort Steilacoom, it was winter, mid-December. As our house had not yet been built, we were obliged to take the living quarters formerly occupied by Lieutenant Kautz and Dr. Wirtz. The Col. and all of us were quite embarrassed at having to take over their quarters, and so the Col. made sure that the house was repaired as we waited for the new house to be finished. Lt. Kautz was very gracious at the time of our arrival, and has remained an exemplary officer in every way. Dr. Wirtz, however, was very much annoyed at being displaced, and he has treated us coldly since that time. Why, since last year, he has refused to see any of my family. If our family needs the assistance of a doctor, we are required to call for Dr. Tolmie to come up from Nisqually. I do not think Dr. Wirtz is a man of bad character, rather, his bad behavior is due to his love of liquor. In this untamed wilderness, liquor is often a man's counsel and comfort. I am eternally thankful to God that Col. Casey is not a drinking man. Neither is our friend Dr. Tolmie, nor Lt. Kautz. We are grateful for such friends.

This is all part of Army life, so as we moved in I decided that we really must have some time to get acquainted with the other officers and their families. In that regard, as soon as we were settled into our quarters, my daughters and I began to plan some socials. My daughters, Abbie who was just 19 years old at the time, and Bessie, just 13 years then, were so lonely for their friends whom they had gone to school with back in Rhode Island. But the girls needed some occupations. Writing invitations and preparing helped to

occupy their time until they met some of the other young ladies. We had our first dinner party in February, and Abbie and Bessie sang for all of our guests. Some of the officers sang along. Soon we had regular sewing circles, and literary society meetings going for the ladies, and balls and dinner parties for the officers and their wives.

Now that they are older, Abbie and Bessie have been of great assistance to me. It seems that the sea voyage and this damp climate have weakened my constitution so, that sometimes I am confined to my bed for several days. My daughters have carried on for me, hosting the visitors who come always to the Fort. And so we have made many friends here...the ladies of the fort were initially less than cordial to us, but as time went on, and as hardships called us to rely on each other, friendships began to take root. I think of poor Mrs. Maloney who last year was gravely ill after suffering a miscarriage. She was so grateful for Abbie and Bessie and I being at her bedside during those days. Oh, you need not worry, she gradually regained her strength and seems in good health now.

I count among my friends here: Mrs. English, Mrs. Alvord and Mrs. Batchelder, and the ladies of Nisqually, Mrs. Tolmie and Mrs. Huggins. You *do* know Fort Nisqually, don't you? It is just 7 miles south of here. Mrs. Tolmie and Mrs. Huggins have the most interesting friends and relatives from Victoria. We meet them whenever they give a ball, and we invite them to our balls and dinners also. We also have the Tolmie's to dinner quite often, for the Col. enjoys Dr. Tolmie's company.

I have heard that when we were newly arrived, the officers were grumbling about the ladies taking over their calendar with so many entertainments. Yet, I noticed that never did the men decline these invitations to a theatrical production, or a ball, or a dinner party, or a picnic, or horseback riding.

(Continued on page 4)