

**Mary Slaughter** (from page 1)

Governor Stevens' reservation system made many Indians unhappy. Klickitats, Yakimas, and Walla Wallas gave the most trouble to the settlers. Hostilities escalated in the fall of 1855 when settlers were slain. Fort Steilacoom was the only fort on Puget Sound. It became headquarters and base of operations for the regular army forces in Puget Sound. Acting Governor Mason sent troops east to punish the Yakima Indians for murdering American citizens. Civilians and the military realized that war was inevitable. Settlers were ambushed by Indians and the military was sent to stop them.

After many skirmishes, while near the Green and White rivers on Brannan's Prairie, Lt. Slaughter was killed on December 5, 1855. His body was sent to Seattle. Mary stayed at Steilacoom until her brother Fred came for her and her



*Lt. William Slaughter and Mary Wells were married in 1852. Lt. Slaughter was killed during the Indian War in 1855 and Mary returned to the East where she died in 1862.*

servant. They took the train back to Ft. Huron. Mary corresponded with Lt. Nugen and others before her

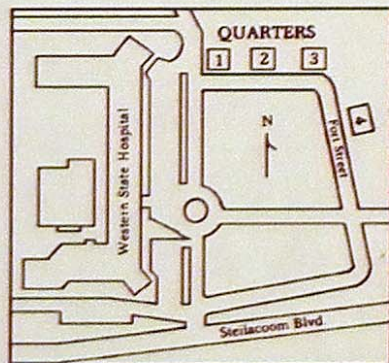
death in January 1862 when she was just 30 years old.



## Christmas at Fort Steilacoom, December 10

**Historic Fort Steilacoom**

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Steilacoom, WA 98388



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# Fort Steilacoom

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## Mary Wells Slaughter

By Sandy Burwell

Mary Wells Slaughter was the daughter of John and Jane Wells. She had two younger siblings named Fred and Carrie. In 1837 they moved to Fort Gratiot/Point Huron. Mary's family built a store and sawmill there.

The fort was where the social gatherings were held. On weekends the fort had many parties, dancing, teas, lantern parties, private readings, and church on Sunday. Mary met Lt. Slaughter at a dance. From the minute they met they were smitten with one another. Twenty-three months later, after an enjoyable courtship of partying, picnicking, etc., they were married on May 24, 1852, in the Episcopal Church.

On June 8, 1852, Fort Gratiot became inactive and the company was transferred to Ft. Hamilton, NY. Lt. Slaughter and Mary had a delightful time in New York City in June.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry formed on Governor's Island, NY, then was transferred to the Northwest and Fort Vancouver. The regiment and their families sailed on board the *Ohio*, which was uncomfortably crowded. Ulysses S. Grant and Phil Sheridan were part of the same regiment as Lt. William Slaughter.

Eight days later they reached Panama. It was the wet season on the Isthmus. From the *Ohio* they traveled on the Panama Railroad to the Chagres River where they were put on boats called bateaux. Panama was 25 miles away. Soldiers marched and passengers rode on mules.

Cholera broke out that year, and it hit many people who had traveled on



*Sandy Burwell portrays Mary Slaughter.*

the *Ohio*. This delayed the crossing of the Isthmus. Many soldiers and passengers stayed in Cruces while the rest marched to Panama. A third of the people died of cholera. After reaching Panama they were quarantined on Flamingo Island for three weeks. During the cholera, Grant took care of the men. Lt. Slaughter was one whom he cared for. Grant

was well liked by both the passengers and soldiers.

The soldiers and their families took the ship *Golden Gate* six weeks later to San Francisco and stayed in Benicia Barracks for a few weeks. In San Francisco the Slaughters visited friends and took part in social events. It was a time of rest and recreation, fun and games.

Following this they went to Ft. Vancouver in the Oregon Territory. The Slaughters stayed there until February 1853 when they were sent to Fort Steilacoom.

Fort Steilacoom had been established in 1849. By 1854 it was a viable community. Lt. Slaughter was "an entrepreneur," platting lands, selling lots, and laying out towns. The Slaughters owned a rooming house, feeding soldiers and housing soldiers who needed accommodations. Their house was adjacent, and their store was part of their home. Mary's experience in her father's store and sawmill came in handy. She had an active social life with both the military and civilians.

### Indian War 1855-1856

Fort Steilacoom played an active role in assisting and helping emigrants as they came into the territory. As more and more emigrants came into Washington, Oregon and California, the Indians, who had been most helpful early on, became upset at the white settlers taking their homes and hunting grounds, as well as bringing sickness to their people.

(Continued on page 4)



## HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

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### President's Message



In preparing this initial column as the new president of the HFSA, I truly did not know where to begin. I am as excited as a child at Christmas time about all that

the museum has accomplished this past year and about all of the great things that are lining up for 2006.

In the end, I decided to keep things simple and to begin with the obvious question, "Who is this new face and what has become of our beloved Carol?"

After 13 years of faithful service, Carol has decided to step back and take a less active role in the Association. Just when her lessened activity will begin remains to be seen, as both Orville and herself have been working daily in helping to make my transition to this office as seamless as possible. The "behind the scenes" effort that goes on to successfully promote an organization like the HFSA is often times staggering.

As for myself, I have been known to many of the current board members for more years than some of us would like to admit, having been active with them in the local re-enacting community since the Bi-Centennial of 1976. Although I was one of the charter members of HFSA's own historic Company M, I was unable to help participate in the Herculean effort of the restoration

of the fort's surviving buildings (1985-1990). I can fully appreciate the level of activity and commitment that our volunteers put into bringing Officer's Row to its present condition, having worked during that time frame to complete a Victorian building of my own. Since then I have served as Associate Director of Pioneer Arizona Living History Museum, which is located just north of Phoenix, as well as performing docent work at Point Defiance Park's Fort Nisqually and our own Fort Steilacoom. I look forward to doing everything I can in the coming year in working with the Board of Directors to make Fort Steilacoom everything it can be.

I wish all of you a very merry Christmas and all the best for 2006.

Craig G. Pete



Mrs. Abigail Casey, portrayed by Nancy Keller-Scholz, invites you to a tea on February 5, 2006.

### Mrs. Casey's Tea

Ladies of the Territory are cordially invited to attend an afternoon Tea with Mrs. Colonel Silas Casey and her daughters Abigail and Elizabeth, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006.

The tea will be held at the Casey home, Quarters 2, at Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory.

Please arrive by 2 o'clock p.m.

so that you will have plenty of time for socializing.

Please, also, do reply no later than January 20,

as Mrs. Casey's housekeeper

will need time to prepare the refreshments.

### Notation:

In 1859 Mrs. Colonel Silas Casey was the wife of the Commanding Officer of Fort Steilacoom. Because Mrs. Casey was from Rhode Island, this was a "lonely outpost" for her, and she enjoyed hosting social events for women of her social status. We hope you will enjoy her hospitality as you learn something of her world here in the Northwest in 1859.

The tea will include re-enactors from Fort Steilacoom and Fort Nisqually, period foods to sample, and a small favor to take home.

Students from Steilacoom High School, dressed in period clothing, will be servers.

The cost of the Tea is \$15.00 per person, the proceeds to benefit the Fort Steilacoom Museum. Please RSVP no later than January 20, 2006. Space is limited, so a prompt reply is recommended.

Please send your check made out to Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, P.O. Box 88447, Steilacoom, WA 98388. Call (253) 582-5838 for information.

# CHRISTMAS

of 1859

## AT FORT STEILACOOM



Saturday Evening  
**December 10, 2005**  
 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

### Historic Fort Steilacoom Museum

9601 Steilacoom Boulevard S.W.

(on grounds of Western State Hospital)

\$4.00 for adult / \$2.00 for child or \$8.00 per family

**T**ravel back in time to Fort Steilacoom as it might have been at Christmas in 1859. Tour the candle and lantern lit quarters of Lt. Col. Silas Casey and soldiers of the fort and their families and guests engaged in Christmas merry making, conversation of the time, tree trimming, dancing to the tunes of a fiddler, and caroling. Special activities for children include hands-on ornament making. And the Sutler's Store has a good stock of books, toys, and souvenir items for your Christmas gift shopping.

Information (253) 582-5838