

Tea with Mrs. Casey

Mrs. Casey endeavored to bring “society” to Fort Steilacoom with dinners, balls and teas. Her social circle included the wives of Fort Steilacoom’s officers, wives of prominent Steilacoom businessmen and the wives of the managers of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

Represented at the tea on February 10 will be her daughters Miss Abigail Pearce Casey and Miss Elizabeth Goodale Casey. Guests will include Mrs. Captain English, Mrs. Major Alvord, Mrs. James M. Bachelder, Mrs. Edward Huggins, Mrs. William Fraser Tolmie, and Miss Catherine Work.

Mrs. English arrived at Fort Steilacoom in 1859 with her husband Captain Thomas English and their children. Mrs. English was described as “being kind and pleasant, but having some undesirable traits of character.

Mrs. Emily Alvord was the wife of Major Benjamin Alvord, who was stationed at Fort Vancouver. Mr. Alvord was an Army paymaster and a renowned mathematician. He was also a botanist, an interest he had in common with Dr. William Tolmie.

Sarah Conklin Bachelder was from Mississippi. She married a sea captain from Maine. The Bachelder family arrived in Washington Territory in



Mrs. Casey and her guests come to tea at Fort Steilacoom on February 10.

the early 1850s. Captain Bachelder was a merchant, Justice of the Peace and Notary Public in Steilacoom and became the sutler at Fort Steilacoom.

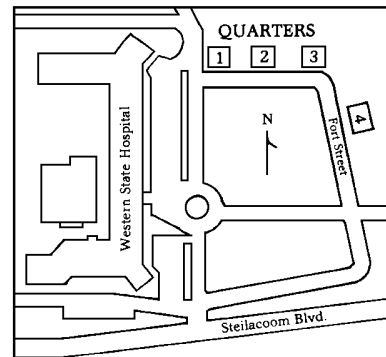
Letitia Work, the daughter of Hudson’s Bay Chief Factor John Work and his wife Josette, was born in the wilderness during a fur brigade journey in eastern Washington Territory, narrowly escaping capture by Blackfoot Indians. She married Edward Huggins in 1857. He was in charge of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company and later Fort Nisqually.

Letitia’s older sister, Jane Work, was born at Fort Colville, an Hudson’s Bay post. She married Dr. William F. Tolmie in 1850. He was born in Scotland and had studied medicine, finding employment with the Hudson’s Bay Company. He was Chief Trader when they married, later becoming the Chief Factor at Fort Nisqually.

The youngest sister, Catherine Work, was educated in the school for Hudson’s Bay Company dependants in Victoria. She often accompanied her father on visits to Fort Nisqually.

Historic Fort Steilacoom

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Thomas Lincoln – Fort Steilacoom’s Other Casey

by Kenneth A. Morgan

The fall of 1859 brought good news to Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs. Silas Casey. They had just learned that their son Lt. Thomas Casey and his family were being transferred from West Point to Fort Steilacoom.

Thomas Lincoln Casey graduated first in his class at the U. S. Military Academy in July 1852. He was assigned to the Corps of Engineers and took up his duties with a Company of Sappers, Miners, and Pontoniers at West Point. Soon he was appointed as Assistant Engineer in the construction of Fort Delaware and of harbor and river improvements in the Delaware River and Bay.

Thomas’s engineering abilities were recognized by the Army and he was appointed as Assistant Instructor of Practical Engineering at West Point. While serving at the Academy he met, fell in love with, and soon married Emma Weir, daughter of engineering professor Robert Walter Weir.

Thomas and Emma had four sons. Three were born at West Point: Thomas Lincoln, Jr., born in 1857, Robert in 1859, and Harry in 1861. A fourth son, Edward Pearce, was born in 1864 at Portland, Maine. Robert died as an infant and Harry died in a drowning accident while attending Yale. Thomas Jr., as had his father and grandfather, attended West Point. Edward attended Columbian School of Mines and Architecture.

Thomas and his young family arrived at Fort Steilacoom in November 1859 and took up residence in a newly constructed house immediately to the left of his parents’ home.



Thomas Lincoln Casey

They remained at Fort Steilacoom until 1861 when both Thomas and his father were called east to serve in the Civil War.

Lt. Casey was assigned to Fort Steilacoom and placed in charge of a detachment of engineers tasked with constructing a wagon road from Fort Vancouver to the Cowlitz River and surveying and selecting possible sites for military reservations in the Puget Sound region.

Lt. Casey’s engineering detachment consisted of soldiers posted at Forts Cascades, Steilacoom, and Vancouver. Because of the diverse locations of his men, Thomas spent much time traveling from one location to another, inspecting, checking on their welfare, and overseeing the tasks they were engaged in. The

soldiers were a rough lot. Drunkenness and fighting with infantry soldiers at the several forts were common. Unauthorized absences and violations of curfew occurred daily.

In March 1860 Thomas was ordered by General Harney, Department of Oregon Commander at Fort Vancouver, to lead a party of engineers and artificers in exploring, surveying, and opening a trail or wagon road from Fort Vancouver to a suitable location on the Cowlitz River. Congress had appropriated \$30,000 for a road from Fort Vancouver to Fort Steilacoom, and this was the beginning of the project. Three other unsuccessful attempts had been made, and this would be the fourth. It was hoped that the engineers would succeed where others had failed.

In early July 1860 engineers assembled at Fort Vancouver from the outlying forts and prepared to start their work on the road. Casey had gone on ahead with a small party to survey the route which would later be known as Old Highway 99 and then Interstate 5. The actual construction party, consisting of a mule train, five civilian employees, and 29 soldiers, was under the charge of Lt. Robert. Robert is remembered as the author of Robert’s Rules of Order. A base encampment was established on Salmon Creek, about six miles north of Fort Vancouver. The task ahead was a difficult one. William Peck, a soldier in the party, states, “And it seems to me if 14 men are to build a wagon road 100 miles in a country of the nature of what is in

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President's Message



Once the Christmas at the Fort event is safely tucked away for another year, the museum staff typically take a few weeks off for a much needed and well deserved

rest before hitting the campaign trail again. Not so this past year. Your Board of Directors and active volunteer personnel were all taken up in watching in horror as the much promised and touted re-roofing of Quarters #1 and 2 was postponed and put off until the recent abysmal winter weather finally made it impossible for the contractor to do the job.

As if this wasn't enough misery for everyone, we then had to look on in ever increasing dismay as water began to seriously pour, for the first time, into Quarters #4, the Interpretive Center.

It was then that the Board of Directors implemented a mass e-mail writing campaign to the Representatives of the 28th District (who oversee the area in which Fort Steilacoom is located) to implore them to insure that the integrity of the buildings that make up Fort Steilacoom would not be forgotten or pushed aside during this present Legislative session.

As of this writing it seems that our efforts along these lines have not been in vain, but are actually beginning to bear fruit. However, there is

an ancient saying that runs something like this: "On the plains of indecision lie the bones of countless thousands, who at the high of victory sat down to rest, and in resting died."

Now is not the time for us to rest. The remaining roofs (and perhaps even the first two "promised" roofs) are far from being "in the bag." Therefore, I am calling on all of you, and any of your friends that you might be able to bend to our cause, to e-mail, write, or call the Representatives of the 28th Legislative District and implore, or perhaps even insist, that they pass the needed restoration funding for Fort Steilacoom during this present legislative session. Their contact information is: **Senator Michael Carrell**, (253) 786-7654, carrell.michael@leg.wa.gov **Representative Tami Green**, (253) 786-7958, green.tami@leg.wa.gov **Representative Troy Kelley**, (253) 786-7890, kelly.troy@leg.wa.gov

Please, if you have never contacted anyone in your life, DO SO NOW! The current roofing project is only a start. The above Representatives of the 28th District, just like the ones in your own district as well, and most everyone else out there, have no idea of just how wonderful a treasure they have in Historic Fort Steilacoom. We need to enlighten them.

The time of Fort Steilacoom being the best kept secret in Pierce County has come to an end. In 2007 we are going to put it on everyone's map. Let me leave you now with just how we plan to get noticed.

Besides gaining the ear of the powers that be, we have lined up a host of incredible speakers and events for the coming year:

February 10th will showcase Mrs. Casey's Tea.

March 3rd we will revisit last year's successful Civil War Swap Meet.

Later on we are going to fight the Puget Sound Indian Wars all over again. It seems that last year's role playing game left the Indigenous Tribes in control of the field. Perhaps the folks rolling the dice for the settlers and troops will fare

better this spring.

David Scroggins of Pony Soldier Mercantile will be presenting a detailed talk on the evolution of the McClellan saddle, and I am sure that he will have most of his extensive collection on display.

The Living History Immersion event that we tried last fall was such an overwhelming success that we are expanding it to two nights in September.

This is just a portion of the full calendar that we have planned. Included will also be the usual school assemblies and tours as well as a couple of conventions held for the general public. Be sure and keep an eye on our website for all the details.

That's about it for now. I have to get this off to the editor or else face company punishment. Hit those computer keys and pick up that phone. Now is no time to rest. Yours as always, *Gideon Pete*.

Membership Month

It's time to renew your annual membership in Historic Fort Steilacoom Association. Your membership dues help support the museum's maintenance and operation and keep alive an important chapter in the history of the Pacific Northwest through displays, tours and educational programs.

To renew, fill out the enclosed **Membership Form** and mail your check in the supplied envelope. Your mailing label on this newsletter shows your membership number followed by the latest year for which your dues are paid. For example, (301-06) indicates that member 301 has paid up for the year 2006.

For additional information or to inquire about your membership status, call (253) 582-5838.



Thomas Lincoln Casey took on the task of building the Library of Congress, but it was finished by his son, Edward Pearce Casey. Edward supervised the completion of the library's interior.

Congress deferred his application until the new Library was completed. Unfortunately, he died on March 25, 1896, at the age of 64, and did not see the finished library. When he started the project, Thomas predicted it would be finished February 28, 1897. Thomas's son, Edward Pearce Casey, by then a New York architect, was appointed to supervise finishing the library's interior.

Upon Thomas's death, Daniel Lamont, Secretary of War, said, "His absolute honesty, thorough devotion to public duty, and rugged force of character won for General Casey the supreme confidence of the country, and contributed in a marked degree to the high reputation of the corps of which he was a long and distinguished member."

Colonel Mackenzie, then acting Chief of Engineers, remembers Casey as a great man, saying, "He had a brusque way about him, but behind it all he had a good heart, as those who became intimate with him had frequent cause to know." Thomas Casey is interred in the Casey family cemetery in Saundertown, Rhode Island.

Thomas received many honors, both military and civilian, for his service to the country. He received two brevet promotions for his Civil War Service, was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati and the National Academy of Sciences, and was an officer in the French Legion of Honor. Fort Casey on Whidbey Island was named for him.



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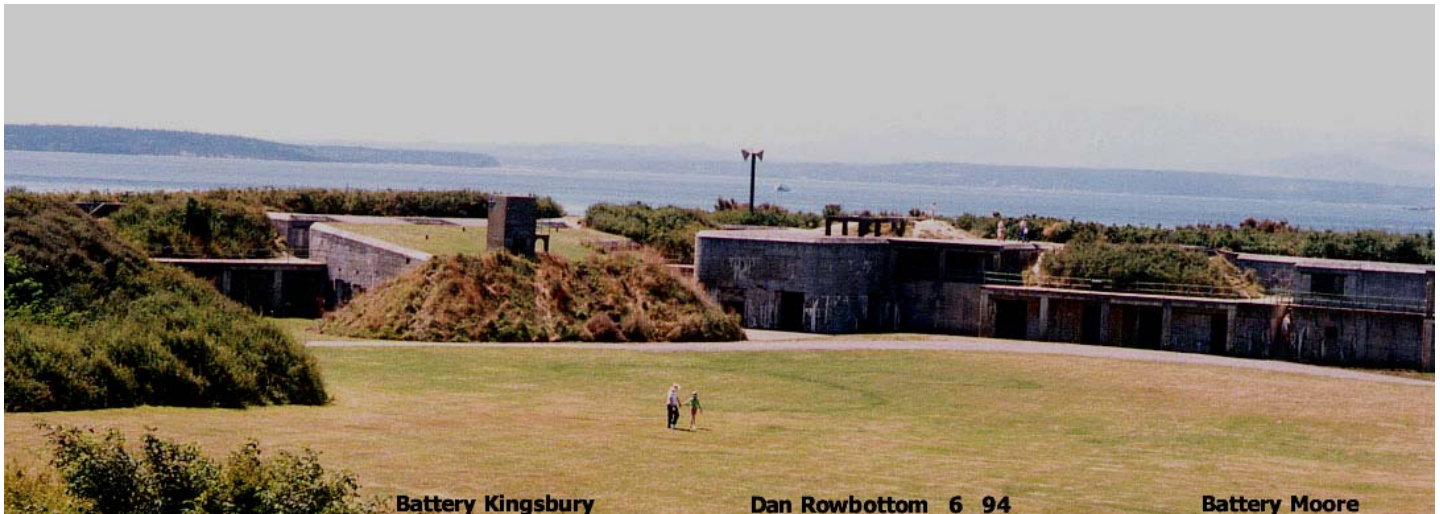
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Fort Casey on Whidby Island was named in honor of Thomas Lincoln Casey.

Thomas Casey (from page 1)
view, government must change our term of enlistment from 5 years to life, for it is rough and hilly.”

As construction of the wagon road progressed, additional camps were established on the South Fork of the Lewis River, the Kalama River, the Coweeman River, the Toutle River, and the Cowlitz. Casey’s surveying party had cached supplies at each of the camp sites. Supplies were also brought up from Fort Vancouver by mule.

In August, Lt. Robert was relieved by Lt. Alexander from Fort Steilacoom. Alexander would later resign his Army commission and join the Confederacy, serving as chief of Artillery at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Road work was difficult. Trees needed to be chopped down, rocks and boulders removed from the route, and lots of pick-and-shovel dirt removing and filling accomplished. The soldiers were often hungry, always filthy, and sometimes drunk. Some wandered off in search of gold. Many were injured in accidents or became ill, so by September they were happy to be ordered to Fort Steilacoom for the winter. Work was stopped, and the engineers rapidly covered the one hundred or so miles to Fort Steilacoom. Intermittent camps were made on the Skookumchuck River and near the Mima Mounds.

After settling in, Thomas began the second of his assignments at Fort Steilacoom, that of surveying Puget Sound for locations suitable for military occupation. He left the fort by boat to inspect the suitability of Point Defiance as the location of defenses to protect Olympia and Steilacoom City. Additional inspections were made and the location near today’s Fort Nisqually reconstruction was considered but not adopted for military use.

In December 1860 word arrived at Fort Steilacoom that Abraham Lincoln had been elected President. This news caused quite a stir amongst the officers and soldiers. Rumors of southern states withdrawing from the union were flying. Officers such as Lt. Alexander were debating where their loyalties lay. Thomas Casey changed his function at Fort Steilacoom from that of surveyor and road builder to that of military leader. He began training the engineers in skills they would need in case of war.

Lt. Casey, presumably with the assistance of his father, schooled his engineers in the fighting skills of infantrymen. He led them in bayonet exercises, maneuvering in formation, and rifle marksmanship. His major training emphasis, however, was on battlefield engineering.

Despite being in the middle of the winter rainy season, the area around

Fort Steilacoom soon resembled a fortified field camp. Casey instructed his men in the art of tracing out and digging field trenches and zigzag connecting trenches. He also taught them to construct field protective devices made of twigs, sticks, small poles, and vines.

These devices were called fascines, bundles of sticks used to support trench walls; gabions, hollow woven baskets filled with soil used in place of dug trenches or to protect cannons; sap rollers, large gabions filled with fascines rolled along the ground to protect the engineers as they worked on trenches; and sap fagots, pointed sticks to anchor gabions and fascines to the ground or to join them together.

Gathering all the materials to construct these devices was difficult and filling them was dirty, particularly in the rainy season, but Casey admonished and encouraged the men in their work, as he felt they would soon be doing it at war.

The tired and dirty soldiers apparently weren’t tired or dirty enough, often finding ways to get into trouble. One, “Uncle” Mark Supplee was fond of whisky and shared his fondness with others. Supplee’s second home was the post guardhouse, where he was sentenced to twenty days confinement for his transgressions.

Thomas and Emma Casey had a house servant, Maria Dougherty.

When the Caseys awoke they expected to find their breakfast prepared for them. One morning it was not and Emma set out to find out why. She went looking for Maria and found her in bed with John Maher, one of Thomas's engineers. When Thomas asked if they were married, Maher replied they were not, and he had no intention of making it so. Maher was placed in the guard house to think it over. Several days later the wedding was performed by a Catholic priest, presumably Father Louis Rossi, and celebrated by the soldiers' consumption of quantities of rum.

This was not the only Fort Steilacoom wedding involving Thomas. Around the time he arrived at the fort in November, his sister Abby Pearce Casey wed Captain Lewis Cass Hunt. Hunt graduated from West Point in 1847 and was assigned to the Fourth Infantry at Fort Steilacoom. He was related to Secretary of State Lewis Cass who was often busy with his duties in the San Juan Islands.

All the Caseys, Thomas and his family along with his father Silas and family, left Fort Steilacoom upon the outbreak of the Civil War. Silas was assigned to Washington City where he became the chief trainer of new soldiers and a division commander at the Battle of Seven Pines. Thomas was assigned to Fort Monroe, serving for a time under General Butler.

Later, Thomas, now a captain, was sent to Maine where he was in charge of the construction of permanent fortifications along the coast. He oversaw the completion of Fort Knox on the Penobscot River. Fort Knox is thought by many to be the ultimate example of stone masonry construction. Other Maine engineering projects Thomas worked on are Forts Gorges and Scammel. In December 1864 he participated in the first expedition to Fort Fisher, North Carolina.

At the conclusion of the Civil War, Thomas, a brevet colonel, was



Thomas Casey was assigned the task of completing the long neglected monument to George Washington in the nation's capitol.

assigned to the Office of the Chief of Engineers where he worked on construction of fortifications until 1877. He then was placed in charge of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, District of Columbia. It is in this capacity that Thomas achieved his greatest fame.

Some of his early projects included the Washington Aqueduct, and the State, War, and Navy Department buildings (now known as the Eisenhower Executive Office Building). His work was especially appreciated by Congress as his construction costs were consistently under budget. His estimates for construction were relied on by Congress and his funding requests were honored.

A great eyesore stood on the banks of a marshy river in Washington City. It was the unfinished monument to George Washington. Work had been abandoned twenty years earlier. In response to the 1876 centennial, Congress, on the insistence of President Hayes, directed its completion. Thomas was to take charge.

The first task was to evaluate the monument's present construction.

Thomas found it lacking in support so he reinforced the foundation. The old foundation was undermined, expanded in depth by 13 ½ feet, and increased in area 2 ½ times. Most engineers doubted that such a massive structure could be built, but now Thomas believed it could. When the base was finished, staging and hoists were erected to complete the shaft. Construction continued from 1879 to 1884 when Thomas personally set the capstone, which was made of a most precious 19th century material—aluminum. A seldom seen stone tablet inside the monument commemorates Thomas Casey's work.

Casey was advanced to Brigadier General and appointed Chief of Engineers in 1888. He held the post until 1895.

In 1886 Congress approved the construction of a new building to house its library. General Thomas Casey, by Congressional decree, was to be in charge. Designed by Washington architects John Smithmeyer and Paul Pelz, it was designed in the Italian Renaissance style. Casey anticipated retirement from the Army, but