

The capture and imprisonment of Leschi greatly surprised the Indians, and in particular those east of the mountains who had been present at the pacification with Col. Wright ...Among the warlike tribes east of the Cascade mountains, the hanging of Leschi at this late day, would under the circumstances awaken strong feelings of distrust and dissatisfaction towards the Americans....

...With Leschi pardoned and free on the contrary, he might be most usefully employed as emissary to these Indians, to bring about the desired consummation....

I am Sir, Your very obedient serv't.

WILLIAM FRASER TOLMIE,

Chief Factor Hudson Bay Co.

Agent, Puget Sound Agricultural Co.

Nisqually, W. T.

An article in the last *Truth Teller* titled "Homicide" acknowledged Leschi's death, but called it an illegal act by the Thurston County sheriff.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> inst, a homicide was perpetuated by the sheriff of Thurston County, in the vicinity of Fort Steilacoom by hanging the Indian chief Leschi, under an order from the District Court....; the law requires that this process shall be served by the sheriff of the county in which it is ordered to take place, which by law must also be the county in which the crime was committed. As this occurred in Pierce County, the order to the sheriff of Thurston County was illegal on its face....

Leschi was hanged about 11 o'clock. A large posse was summoned in the county to assist at the execution. Very few beside the posse were present, and but few Indians. He was placed upon the scaffold and an opportunity given him to speak.

He stated in substance, that now he was going to die he wished to be at peace with all; that he felt no ill will towards the whites for what they had done to him. That among all people there always will be some who will lie; that there was one liar among the whites, and that he was not guilty of the offense for which he was to hang. He drew a parallel between his own ignominious death and that of Christ, and that he forgave all who were concerned in his death. That he did not wish to live any longer, that he had been confined for a long time and had been six times arraigned and was tired of life; that he wished to go to Heaven. He told his people, in their own tongue, not to think hard of the whites on account of his death, and always to remain at peace with them. He then made a short prayer, and on being asked if he was ready nodded assent. His hands and feet were then tied, the rope adjusted, the cap drawn over his face, and with some difficulty the plank was knocked away. He fell three or four feet, and after ten or fifteen minutes he ceased to struggle. He hung about an hour when he was cut down and his body taken to the reservation by the Indians....

...His course during the war seems to have been characterized by greater intelligence and humanity, than that of any of the other chiefs. He protested against killing women and children, and against pillaging and plundering the settlements. On several occasions during the war he had individual white men in his power, and his influence saved them from being killed by Kanaskut....

Leschi died manfully, without fear or faltering, had his last words calmly given, but put to shame, if they have any feelings, those who have persecuted him and sought his death.

In a legal point of view his case is the most remarkable on record. He is perhaps the first man ever arraigned by the civil courts for an act of war, of which, in truth, he was not guilty. Convicted finally, by a jury which had prejudiced him, all clemency was forestalled by the remonstrance of a prejudiced people, he was at last executed contrary to law. We sincerely hope it may never be cited as a precedent.

In the next issue of our Fort Steilacoom newsletter we will tell about Leschi's exoneration—over a hundred years later!

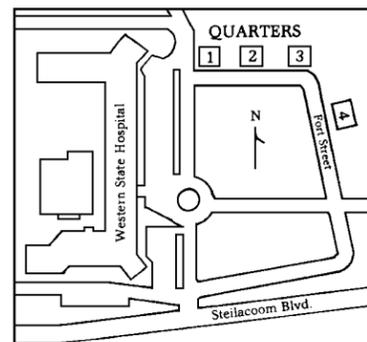
#### Source Notes:

Carpenter, Cecelia Svinth, *Leschi Last Chief of the Nisquallies* (Heritage Quest, Orting, WA, 1986).

Kautz, August Valentine, Diary

*Truth Teller*, February 25, 1858 (Steilacoom, W.T.)

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



# Fort Steilacoom

Vol. 24, No. 4

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Winter, 2007

## Truth Teller — The Last Issue

by Carol Neufeld Stout

The last issue of the *Truth Teller* was published on February 25, 1868, six days after Leschi was executed on a scaffold about a mile east of Fort Steilacoom. Colonel Casey, believing Leschi was innocent of shooting militia volunteer A. B. Moses, refused to allow the hanging at the fort.

Lt. August Kautz of Fort Steilacoom and Dr. William Frasier Tolmie, Chief factor of Hudson's Bay at Fort Nisqually, continued to strongly support Leschi's innocence. Kautz, under the pseudonym "Ann Onymous," was the editor of the *Truth Teller* and wrote much of the material. In his personal diary in 1858 he noted:

**Feb. 15** – I have been trying to write something more for the second edition of the *Truth Teller*, but my ideas do not flow readily.

**Feb. 17** – I managed to have ten pages ready for the *Truth Teller*. Tolmie wrote me a note by an Indian. He sent me the Pioneer and Democrat. The Pierce County resolutions were therein with all the signers.

**Feb 18** – I have finished my resume for the *Truth Teller* and...16 pages of foolscap. The sheriff of Thurston (County, Charles Granger) came today with a posse of 16 men to execute Leschi tomorrow.

**Feb 19** – An order was issued this morning (Friday) prohibiting any officer or soldier from leaving the garrison without permission from the commanding officer on account of the execution of Leschi....Leschi was accordingly taken out & executed about 11 o'clock. He died manfully.



*August V. Kautz was responsible for editing and writing much of the content for the Truth Teller.*

Kautz began the second issue of the *Truth Teller* with "A Page in Military History," a recap of the 1855-56 Indian war. Near the end of this long summary, Kautz writes of 1857:

The war still continues, and in consequence of some of Gov. Stevens measures, it has assumed a rather different character. The main feature of the present state of affairs, is the case of Leschi. This Indian, having with all his people, concluded terms with Col. Wright, Gov. Stevens refused to regard the truce. He offered a reward of five hundred dollars...and succeeded by treachery, in bringing him in. Having been previously indicted by the Grand Jury of Pierce County, for the murder of A. B. Moses on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, 1855, he was turned over to the civil authority and arraigned on that indictment. This occurred in November, 1856; the court failed to convict,

and he was retained in custody until March 1857, when he was tried at Olympia—Gov. Stevens' head-quarters—and there an easy conviction was obtained....Leschi was not sentenced to be hung until the 22d of January 1858....

On the 22d of January, 1858, the conflict with the people and the regulars was renewed with redoubled vigor. By the interference of the civil authority itself, Leschi was not executed on the day appointed. The charge was made, that the military had prevented his execution, and it offered a fine pretext for the renewal of hostilities.

Leschi since his arrest has been in charge of the guard at Fort Steilacoom, by request of the civil authority. The absurdity of supposing that the officers would lay a plot to prevent the execution of Leschi, does not seem to have occurred to them, when the thing might have been done in a much handsomer style by conniving at his escape from the guard-house. That they were gratified that Leschi was not hanged, they had a perfect right to be, for it proved to them, that they had friends in the enemy's camp.

Gov. McMullin [who had replaced Gov. Stevens] headed the mob, and at an indignation meeting held in Olympia on the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, denounced the officers of Fort Steilacoom in unmeasured terms; and said that if they had them there, they would hang them in the place of Leschi....

Other indignation meetings were held in Thurston and Pierce counties, urged on by the Governor.... Fresh measures were taken to accomplish the execution of Leschi.... The legislature changed the statutes so that the supreme court could be convened,

(Continued on page 2)

**HISTORIC FORT  
STEILACOOM  
ASSOCIATION**

President..... C. Gideon Pete  
 Past President .....Carol Neufeld Stout  
 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Pres. .... Thomas A. Melberg  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Pres. .... Robert Demorest  
 Secretary ..... Joseph W. Lewis  
 Treasurer ..... Kenneth A. Morgan  
 Directors: Bill Arends, Bernard Bateman,  
 Lawrence Bateman, Steve Dunkelberger,  
 Christine Finnigan, Walter T. Neary,  
 John McPherson, Laurie Sterling  
 Editor & Publisher ..... Orville H. Stout  
 Telephone ..... (253) 756-3928  
 Web Site ..... [www.fortsteilacoom.com](http://www.fortsteilacoom.com)

**President's Message**



A Marine stationed on Okinawa wrote the following poem. I submit it for your perusal in place of my usual ruminations, as I consider it most timely. Merry Christmas!  
*Gideon Pete*

**A Soldier's  
Night before Christmas**

**T**was the night before Christmas,  
 He lived all alone,  
 In a one bedroom house  
 Made of plaster and stone.  
**I** had come down the chimney  
 With presents to give,  
 To see who it was  
 That in this home did live.  
**I** looked all about,  
 A strange sight did I see,  
 No tinsel, no presents,  
 Not even a tree.  
**N**o stockings by mantle,  
 Just boots filled with sand,  
 On the wall were hung pictures  
 Of far distant lands.  
**A**long with medals and badges,  
 Awards of all kinds,  
 A sobering thought  
 Had just come to my mind.  
**T**his house was so different,  
 So dark and so dreary,  
 I found the home of a soldier,  
 Once I could see clearly.

**T**he soldier lay sleeping,  
 Silent and alone,  
 Curled up on the floor,  
 In this one bedroom home.

**H**is face was so gentle,  
 But the room in disorder,  
 Not how I pictured,  
 A United States soldier.

**W**as this the hero  
 Of whom I'd just read?  
 Curled up on a poncho,  
 The floor for a bed?

**I** realized the families  
 That I'll visit tonight,  
 Owed their lives to these soldiers  
 Who were willing to fight.

**S**oon round the world,  
 The children would play,  
 And grownups would celebrate  
 A bright Christmas day.

**T**hey all enjoyed freedom  
 Each month of the year,  
 Because of the soldiers,  
 Like the one lying here.

**I** couldn't help wonder  
 How many lay alone,  
 On a cold Christmas eve  
 In a land far from home?

**T**he very thought  
 Brought a tear to my eye,  
 I dropped to my knees  
 And started to cry.

**T**he soldier awakened  
 And I heard a rough voice,  
 "Santa don't cry,  
 This life is my choice;

**I** fight for freedom,  
 I don't ask for more,  
 My life is my God,  
 My country my corps."

**T**he soldier rolled over  
 And drifted to sleep,  
 I couldn't but help  
 To continue to weep.

**I** kept watch for hours,  
 So silent and still,  
 And both of us shivered  
 From the cold evening's chill.

**I** just couldn't leave,  
 On that cold and dark night,  
 This guardian of honor  
 So willing to fight.

**T**hen the soldier rolled over  
 With a voice soft and pure,  
 Said "Carry on, Santa,  
 Christmas Day is secure."

**O**ne look at the clock  
 And I knew he was right.  
 "Merry Christmas, my friend,  
 and to all a good night!"



Photo by Jacqueline Dock  
*Civilians from the Steilacoom area visit the Sutler's store during the recent Immersion Event.*

**Truth Teller** (from page 1)

and Leschi hanged immediately after the sentence. The court, it was thought, would be an effective engine against the troops....The court simply contented itself with again sentencing Leschi to be hung on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February....  
 In a satirical vein, Kautz reports his version of the public meetings held in Olympia and Steilacoom on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of January relative to the "Leschi affair." The article is titled "Gas-Works at Steilacoom." He lashes out at the signers of the resolutions coming from the January 26<sup>th</sup> gathering in Olympia:  
 (Continued on page 4)

others can aver, that Leschi at the time of the attack on Moses and party was many miles distant on a journey to the Yakama Valley.

Since the termination of hostilities and the return of the Nooscoops, Puyallups and Nisqually Indians to their homes, they have been freely questioned by the Indian Agents and various other white men as to the incidents of the war; the result being, as far as I know, and I have inquired widely of both races, that of the people in general, all who have concerned themselves in the matter, are fully satisfied that Leschi, being absent, took no part in the ambush of Moses and party; and is consequently innocent of the crime charged against him.

Having recently assisted Lieut. A. V. Kautz in measuring the wagon road from where in Connell's prairie, Mr. Rabbeson and party met the Indians, to the point of attack, and thence by a round about Indian trail, partly through timbered land and a swamp impassable for horsemen, back to the point of commencement, I became satisfied and careful examination of the...[unreadable] ground and accompanying explanatory declarations, will convince any one that it was impossible for the supposed Leschi with whom Mr. Rabbeson and his comrades conversed on meeting the Indians, to have, after their departure at a brisk gallop, mounted his horse and by going double the distance over a much worse road, to have intercepted and fired on the party where poor Moses was mortally wounded.

The Indian version of this unhappy affair, is as follows: They say that the ambush was planned by some Green river Indians, who being on the lookout at an elevated slope on Tinalquot or Connell's prairie, saw the travelers emerging from the woods to the eastward, and immediately thereupon, crossed through timber and swamp to the point selected for the attack; the wagon road toward Tinalquot, they induced the ablest men to unite with them; while the women and children, old men and boys, kept on their route, meeting the party of whites at the edge of the prairie where the parley took place.

Mr. Kautz's plat, and accompanying affidavit, to the truth of which if

required, I can testify, prove to a demonstration that admitting the possibility of Leschi's having been seen and spoken with at the edge of the prairie, it was impossible for him to have likewise been with the attacking party of Indians at the swamp. No proof therefore, remains of his guilt, and if innocent, his release should follow as equally a matter of humanity, justice, and good policy....

I have known Leschi since 1843, as a well disposed, peaceable Indian, of superior ability, respected by his tribe and often referred to as an arbitrator in their disputes. Towards the whites he and his deceased brother, Quyeimal, were from our first settlement here in 1833, remarkably friendly, and in early years they on several occasions rendered valuable assistance in repressing thefts of horses and cattle on the part of other Indians. Col. M. T. Simmons, who was present, remembers how readily in 1849 the two chiefs volunteered their aid when we were in trouble here with the Snoqualimi. Leschi, I have learned, both from whites and Indians, who were present, at the treaty making at Medicine creek in the winter of 1854 '55, protested vehemently there, against the reservation originally appointed for the Nisquallies at Seilseilootzin on Nisqually bay.

I do not remember having had any conversation with Leschi specially on this subject till July 1855, when one Sunday morning, accompanied by another head man of the tribe, he came to state his grievances and ask my advice. He complained that he was kept in continual apprehension and uneasiness, on account of reports brought to him by Indians from Olympia, of his being obnoxious to the Agents there, and of their intention soon to incarcerate, and perhaps hang him. He and his companion then talked with great emphasis, of the unsuitableness of the reservation intended for them, and a passing Indian approaching to listen, they reproached him in bitter terms for having failed at Medicine creek to support their protest...

In August and September '55, I saw Leschi several times, and could perceive that the threatening reports from Olympia still concerned him much....Having notice from Indians, that next day a party of whites were coming to seize them, [Leschi and Quyeimal] fled in the night, leaving their families behind; and next day when Capt. Eaton and the rangers reached their place of residence, the families were still concealed in the woods close by....He [Leschi] seemed to have lingered in uncertainty till the last, and to have gone off at length, under the strong impulse of fear for his personal safety. He maintains, and I have heard it from others, whilst he was yet at large, that Quyeimal and himself intended going direct from Nisqually to the Yakama country, where they had numerous relatives, but were induced to remain at Green river by the threats of Kynaskut and Kutsap, chiefs there, to follow and assassinate them, if they persisted in going on....

My own belief, however, has always been, that neither Leschi nor Quyeimal would have taken up arms, unless virtually driven from their homes, as they were, indeed the latter had already commenced plowing their fields for fall wheat, when frightened into running away....

In the summer of '56, Leschi with the other chiefs made peace with Colonel Wright in command of the regulars in the Yakama Valley after which general pacification, and as the Indians phrase it, "laying aside of guns and angry feelings" they lived for sometime in friendly intercourse with the soldiers. In the fall of '56, the Nisquallies returned home, and were placed on a reservation much more to their liking, than that originally fixed upon. In October, Leschi came, and, as I was the first white man he ventured to meet, he desired me to acquaint the Americans, that if they needed that assurance, he would cut off his right hand in proof of his intention never to fight them again. He expressed his willingness to surrender to Colonel Casey commanding at Fort Steilacoom, but that officer considered it most prudent that Leschi should for a time remain in the woods as prejudice ran high against him. Soon after, tempted by a large reward, Sluggia entrapped Leschi by treacherous promises of complete reconciliation with the Olympia white chiefs, and he was soon after imprisoned on the charge which led to his condemnation.

much....Having notice from Indians, that next day a party of whites were coming to seize them, [Leschi and Quyeimal] fled in the night, leaving their families behind; and next day when Capt. Eaton and the rangers reached their place of residence, the families were still concealed in the woods close by....He [Leschi] seemed to have lingered in uncertainty till the last, and to have gone off at length, under the strong impulse of fear for his personal safety. He maintains, and I have heard it from others, whilst he was yet at large, that Quyeimal and himself intended going direct from Nisqually to the Yakama country, where they had numerous relatives, but were induced to remain at Green river by the threats of Kynaskut and Kutsap, chiefs there, to follow and assassinate them, if they persisted in going on....

# CHRISTMAS

*of 1860*

## AT FORT STEILACOOM



Saturday Evening

**December 8, 2007**

4:00 to 7:30 p.m.

**Historic Fort Steilacoom Museum**

9601 Steilacoom Boulevard S.W.

(on grounds of Western State Hospital)

\$5.00 for adult / \$3.00 for child or \$10.00 per family

**T**ravel back in time to Fort Steilacoom as it might have been at Christmas in 1860. 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 gift shop has a good stock of books, toys, and souvenir items for your Christmas shopping..

*Information: (253) 582-5838*

**Truth Teller** (from page 2)

...With the exception of 5 persons who have always been considered gentlemen and responsible men, we do not find the name of a single old and respectable settler or of any decent man who has property or interests in the county. It will be recollected that there are in all, 80 signers; the number of votes polled in the county amount to about 200, leaving a large majority on the side of common sense that speaks well for this County.

These names may thus be conveniently analyzed:—4 notorious thieves; 2 jail-birds, who have served out their times in penitentiaries; 1 deserter from the army, who has had his head shaved, received *fifty lashes* and been drummed out of service; 10 discharged soldiers, (some dishonorably) the remainder having passed most of their time in the guard-house; 2 persons who have enticed away deserters, and are not allowed to come on the military reserve; 4 beach-combers and wreckers; 3 discharged employees of the Quartermaster's Department, discharged for utter worthlessness, and who, consequently are very indignant; 4 natural-born idiots; 8 young boys, who of course are not responsible; 2 persons who are about to leave the country for the country's good. This beautiful lot comprises exactly one-half of the signers.

The remainder are not quite so bad: of these, 10 have come out like men and acknowledged their regret at having been guilty of such a shameful wrong.....

The statements of three who recanted their participation in the Steilacoom meetings are addressed to the public:

I was present at the meeting, held in the Church, at Steilacoom on the 22d day of January last, and was one of the committee appointed to draft resolutions.

At the time, I was laboring under much excitement. Since then, I have reflected upon the action of that meeting, and it is a subject of sincere regret with me, that I had anything to do with the meeting or the action.

WM. R. DOWNEY.

The undersigned begs leave to say to the public, that in signing the documents recently in circulation, relating to the "Leschi affairs," he was laboring under a great deal of excitement, and did not take time to consider whether the parties implicated were really guilty or not; but that he has had ample time since for reflection, and has come to the conclusion that he did wrong, and takes this method of making a retraction.

MASON F. GUESS.

In justice to the persons unjustly censured in the resolutions passed at the mass meeting held, at Steilacoom, Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>, we deem it our duty, and a right due the persons wrongfully accused, to state that our names were placed upon those resolutions (not by ourselves) through FALSE and DISHONORABLE representations to us, of their contents; and that we shall in future, entertain the opinion expressed in the resolutions, of the person who misled us, instead of the individuals named in said resolutions.

SOLOMON HOLMAN,  
JOSEPH HARVEY.

MESSRS TILTON and MASON, of Olympia, have also, sent to the *Pioneer and Democrat* a letter acknowledging that they were in error in supposing that the officers of Fort Steilacoom had acted in any improper manner in relation of the non-execution of Leschi.

Frank Clark, Leschi's attorney, made a final statement in the second *Truth Teller*:

Often, while attending to my usual business, my mind involuntarily reverts, to my action as one of the Counsel for the Indian Leschi; and also to the abuse, to which my having acted as Attorney for the Indian, has subjected me.

After much thought upon the subject, I am convinced, that I have done nothing in the premises, unprofessional, or that my duty did not demand; and entertain the opinion, that finally, I will not suffer, for having watched the interests of the prisoner to the "Bitter end."

As to the "mass meetings!" held in Olympia and Steilacoom, I regret

very much, that gentlemen of my acquaintance were present, and lent an influence that procured the publication of such resolutions as appeared in the *Pioneer and Democrat*; because, I believe them, at the time to have acted, as they thought just and honorable, but, they were misled by the inflammatory statements of persons, who, from ignorance and some other less excusable cause, spoke and acted unjustly.

Of the slanderous effusions of the *Pioneer*, I have formed this judgment—In common with all other citizens, I must take my turn and receive this harmless fire. It never has done any person any serious harm, and it is impossible for it to do so; because, every body, *any body* is above and beyond its treacherous attacks.

Respectfully,

FRANK CLARK.

Dr. Tolmie, Chief Factor for Hudson's Bay at Fort Nisqually, was well acquainted with Leschi, who had worked for the company as a horse tender on the Yelm Prairie farm southeast of Olympia. After being accused of killing Col. A. B. Moses, Leschi fled to the Cascade Mountains, but returned in the fall of 1856 to make peace with the authorities. As there was a \$500 reward for his capture, dead or alive, he first went to his friend Dr. Tolmie. Tolmie advised Leschi to remain hiding in the woods as sentiment of the whites was against him.

On January 12, 1858, Tolmie wrote an open letter to Governor McMullin. The letter was published in the *Truth Teller* on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

To His Excellency, Fayette McMullin,  
Governor, Washington Territory,  
Olympia, W.T.

SIR—Agreeably to your intimation, that applications, either for, or against the Indian Leschi should be made in writing, I now address you in his behalf.

I have long had a thorough conviction of Leschi's innocence of the death of the late Col. A. B. Moses, that opinion being based on the following facts.

At a Court Martial, held at Steilacoom on Indian prisoners in the spring of '56, whilst the war was still going on, and Leschi at large it came out as Lieut. Kautz, myself and