

Tales of Fort (from page 3)

The sound of the shot alerted the post and McKanus was subdued and placed in the guard house awaiting the arrival of civil authorities. His bail was set at \$3,000. He was not able to post that sum, which was just a well since the community did not want him at large.

The outcome of Sergeant McKanus' trial is unknown. Mrs. McKanus survived her wound.

Fort Steilacoom was an active military post for nearly twenty years, so these are but a few of the tales from those days. There are many more, perhaps for another time.

SOURCES:

Kautz, August. The Journal of Lieutenant August Valentine Kautz.

Peck, William A., Jr., The Pig War, C. B. Coulter and B. Webber, editors.

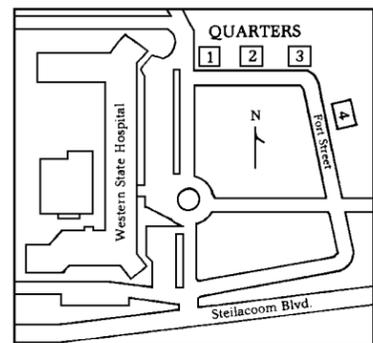
Alexander, Edward Porter, Fighting for the Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander, Gary W. Gallager, editor.

Raymond Baker demonstrates his black smithing trade at the Fort Steilacoom 160th celebration.

Soldiers from the 4th Infantry stand guard at the steps of Quarters 4 at the Fort Steilacoom Museum.



Synthia Santos watches as another reenactor spins at her wheel during the Fort Steilacoom 160th anniversary celebration.



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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Fort Steilacoom

Tales of Old Fort Steilacoom

by Kenneth A. Morgan

When walking around the remaining building of Fort Steilacoom it is easy to get a feeling of what things looked like when the fort was active. It is perhaps even easier to get that feeling when viewing the diorama so skillfully constructed by board member Robert Demorest. But these are only buildings filled with artifacts and displays. One forgets that the buildings were occupied by soldiers and their families who brought life to the fort. Most of these folks were ordinary people; then there were some extraordinary ones. They have special stories to tell.



Old Fort Steilacoom, as it looks today, has many tales to tell of its past.

Brevet Captain Delancy Floyd-Jones was a bit of a dandy. And like most dandies was somewhat full of himself. He claimed an aristocratic background, was proud of his family's lineage, and believed that small hands and feet were evidence of that heritage. Floyd-Jones had small hands and feet. Also, perhaps his hyphenated last name contributed to his feelings of superiority. Floyd-Jones was a good soldier despite his aloofness. Lieutenant August Kautz describes him as a man of good habits and beyond reproach in his personal conduct, but he had one personal trait that distinguished him from all others at Fort Steilacoom. Floyd-Jones changed his shirt every day.

In May 1853 Kautz and several of his soldiers were sent on a mission to visit the native villages on Puget Sound, primarily to "intimidate the Indians." Their vessels were loaded and were awaiting the change of the

tide on Steilacoom Creek in order to begin the mission. Captain Floyd-Jones decided to see the party off so he rode down to the creek. While crossing it he demonstrated his method of going through the water without getting his feet wet. He removed them from the stirrups and extended his legs along the horse's back. Perhaps the horse stumbled or Floyd-Jones lost his balance, either way Floyd-Jones ended up in the creek, greatly amusing those soldiers watching. Captain Floyd-Jones changed his shirt twice that day.

Winters a hundred and fifty years ago were much like those of today. The sky was overcast and gray, drizzle and rain occurred almost daily, and the hours of daylight were short. Occasionally it snowed. The

fort's residents delighted in the snowfall, and when accumulations permitted they took advantage of it. Sleighs were constructed from old packing crates and used to descend the slopes around the fort. Then, as today, the snow rarely lasted more than a day.

Sometimes, however, the winter weather turned cold and remained cold long enough for the surrounding lakes and ponds to freeze over. During one of these cold snaps Colonel Casey decided he wanted to cut some ice from the little pond near the fort (Waughop Lake). Perhaps he was recalling his boyhood in Rhode Island where the cutting of ice from local ponds was commonplace. Whatever his reasons, the colonel, accompanied by his daughter Bessie, Miss Teen, the wife of Lieutenant E. Porter Alexander, and

(Continued on page 3)

HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

President.....Carol Neufeld Stout
 Past President C. Gideon Pete
 1st Vice Pres. Thomas A. Melberg
 2nd Vice Pres.....Robert Demorest
 SecretaryJoseph W. Lewis
 Treasurer Kenneth A. Morgan
 Directors: Bill Arends, Bernard Bateman, Lawrence Bateman, Steve Dunkelberger, Christine Finnigan, Nancy Keller-Scholz, Walter T. Neary, John McPherson, Laurie Sterling
 Editor & Publisher Orville H. Stout
 Telephone(253) 582-5838 or 756-3928
 Web Site www.historicfortsteilacoom.com

Publication funded in part by City of Lakewood Lodging Tax Grant.

President's Message



As I reflect on the three-day Fort Steilacoom 160th celebration, I can visualize the 100 school children who visited the Fort on Friday, May 8, and the estimated 300 people who came on Saturday and Sunday. Each person seemed genuinely interested in the flag raising ceremony, talking to the 4th Infantry soldiers and ladies who portrayed the Union Soldier and Aid Society, and viewing the four quarters and the Magic Lantern Show.

Visitors also learned about the soldiers' traveling gear and weapons. Thanks to John Roten, who set up the sibley tent and demonstrated the pack and weapons of a 4th Infantry soldier. Also, thanks to other members of the 4th U.S., including Bernie and Ann Mokowitz who organized the Education Day, and to Tom and Eileen Melberg, Chris and Debbie Keyes, Jimmy and Maria Holt, Brad Jones, Tom Allen, Carl Hicks and Erin Doree who participated.

Fort Steilacoom and other volunteers who assisted with visitors were Lawrence Bateman, Chuck Collier, Joe Lewis, Carol Stout, Gideon Pete, Ken Morgan, Marsha Sommer, Bill



Dignitaries review the troops during opening ceremonies celebrating Fort Steilacoom's 160th anniversary.

Arends, Bob Demorest, David Schmidt, and Jim and Jill Weatherford.

The 160th celebration at Fort Steilacoom Park was well received by the public. With the leadership of event director Gene Knight, event coordinator Shelley Butterfield, 4th Infantry field commander Bernie Bateman, treasurer Ken Morgan, and publicist John Strand, a variety of activities were provided. Visitors strolled through the Confederate and Union camps, viewed artillery and musket demonstrations, a ladies fashion show, a music demonstration, a working blacksmith, sutlers' stores, and Civil War skirmishes.

Following presentation of the Fort Lewis Color Guard, Ken Morgan, MC and commentator during battlefield demonstrations, introduced special guests during the event opening ceremony. Greetings were given by Major Lionberger of Fort Lewis; Mike Gregoire gave a message from his wife, Governor Chris Gregoire; Council member Matt Richardson of Sumner and Mayor Doug Richardson of Lakewood represented their respective cities; and Pastor Susan Elridge concluded with a prayer.

A big thank you to behind-the-scenes groups who helped make the event run smoothly: Western State

Hospital maintenance, security and plumbing crews and Chris Flowers for coordinating the Fort education event with the hospital; the city of Lakewood for providing the park and grounds keepers who assisted in set-up, tear down and clean up; the Lakewood Lodging Tax Grant for advertising funds; Mountain Mist sponsorship; Pierce County Security; the Explorers who directed traffic; Walter Neary, Laurie Sterling and gatekeepers Donna Preston, Synthia Santos, Jerry Eckrom, Nancy Covert, Patrick Neary, Grant Erickson, Curtis Kindsvogel, Chuck Collier and Joe Lewis.

A final Hurrah goes to the re-enactors for a job well performed and to everyone who worked long hours to make Fort Steilacoom's 160th so memorable!

Carol Neufeld Stout

Coming Events

August 16: Founder's Day potluck picnic, 2 p.m. Quarters 4.

September 13: Tom Melberg, in the persona of Capt. Bennett Hill, tells of the founding of the fort, Quarters 2, 2 p.m.

October 17-18: Living History Days. See re-enactors beginning at 10 a.m.

Tales of Fort (from page 1)

an orderly set out for the pond. The orderly believed the ice was strong enough to support his weight. He walked out to where the pond was the deepest to begin cutting when the ice gave away. Miss Teen, realizing that he may well drown, grabbed an oar, walked over the ice and pushed it into the hands of the struggling orderly. Meanwhile, Bessie Casey ran back to the fort to get help. The oar worked to keep the orderly safe. Soldiers from the fort brought ropes and soon had the soaked orderly on solid ground. Colonel Casey never got his ice.

The original fort buildings were left over from the Hudson's Bay Company farm operated by Joseph Heath. They were made of logs and by 1857 were no longer usable by the Army. The rebuilding of Fort Steilacoom, to the plan as shown in Bob's diorama, was authorized. Lieutenant August Kautz, the post quartermaster, was in charge of the construction project. Kautz complained that he never had enough building materials, which seems rather strange considering the abundance of wood in the area. He traveled from sawmill to sawmill throughout Puget Sound demanding quality materials, but most importantly, boards cut to a standard size.

His greatest problem, though, was bricks. He needed lots of them for all the foundations, nogging, chimneys, and fireplaces – post headquarters alone (today's Quarters 4) had eleven of them. Colonel Casey had taken an eleven month leave in 1857, so the fort was under the command of Captain Maurice Maloney. Kautz and Maloney did not get along due to Maloney's tendency to issue orders to Kautz's subordinates without telling him, thus bypassing the chain of command.

Captain Maloney had ordered the establishment of a brick works and the hiring of civilians to do the manufacturing. Manufacturing of



Jane Isch plays melodian in Quarters 2. Bricks used as "nogging" were fired at the fort and were a source of contention between Kautz and Maloney.

bricks was underway, but Kautz and Maloney couldn't agree on how many bricks would be needed. At some point, believing that enough bricks had been made. Maloney fired the brick makers. Kautz protested that there were forty thousand unfired bricks on hand and he had no way of firing them as the brick kiln had not been completed. Kautz appealed to higher authority, but Maloney was upheld.

Colonel Casey returned from leave, brick making was resumed, and construction on the fort buildings was completed.

In February 2001 a small earthquake occurred in the Puget Sound basin. Several of the restored chimneys toppled, but none of those constructed with Kautz's bricks fell. A few of the original fort bricks were salvaged during the fort's restoration and are for sale in the sutler store. Buy a brick; make Lieutenant Kautz happy.

Daily life at Fort Steilacoom was usually one of familiar routine. Soldiers were engaged in fatigue details, drills, and parades. Families were involved with normal household tasks. Children attended Steilacoom schools. In the words of Lieu-

tenant Kautz "nothing of note happened today." However, on some days something of note did happen.

Sunday, January 13, 1861, was one of those days. Orderly Sergeant (First Sergeant) McKanus was well liked by the officers and soldiers of Company H, 9th Infantry. He was a good soldier with long service which was recognized by his promotion to his position as the senior soldier in Company H. McKanus did have one fault, however. He was a wife abuser. He was exceedingly jealous of her and had been so probably all though their marriage. Stories about them circulated throughout the post. Among them was the rumor that McKanus had demanded his wife seek a divorce and then live with him as his mistress. The demand was supposedly being made at pistol point.

This Sunday was a particularly bad one for Mrs. McKanus. She had fled, seeking refuge, to the home of Lieutenant McKibben. When McKanus learned of her whereabouts, he ran to the McKibbens', his Colt pistol in his hand. His wife answered the knock at the door and when she appeared McKanus discharged his Colt striking her in the breast.

(Concluded on page 4)