

More Tales *(from page 3)*

be receiving orders to return to the United States.

One of Casey's soldiers was Corporal Demorest. Corporal Demorest had been in the Army for some time and was nearing the end of his present enlistment. On April 8, 1861, the orders Lieutenant Casey had been expecting arrived and his detachment began preparations for departure from Fort Steilacoom. They were to board the steamship *Massachusetts*, travel to Port Townsend, and then on to San Francisco aboard the mail ship.

Some of the engineers were excited by the prospect of going to war, while others accepted the idea knowing there was nothing they could do about it. Corporal Demorest, however, did not want to go. His enlistment was about up and he wished to remain in Washington Territory. Demorest had two choices, He could desert from the Army or accept things that he could not change and remain on duty. Being an honorable man, he elected to remain. The detachment boarded the *Massachusetts*, and departed for Port Townsend.

The mail ship had not arrived in Port Townsend, so the soldiers were given a pass to town, provided that they must return to the ship for the night. Corporal Demorest went to town with the rest of the soldiers. Demorest was still unhappy over his dilemma and did what many others have done, got drunk. He returned to the ship, fell from the fore-castle to the gun deck and fractured his skull. His companions found him lying on the deck and took him below. He died during the night. He was buried the next day in the garrison cemetery at Port Townsend. Corporal Demorest's wish to remain in Washington Territory was fulfilled.

* * * *

The officers at Fort Steilacoom and the gentlemen from the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Nisqually



Fort Nisqually, painting by H. J. Warre

Lieutenants Kautz, McKibben, Shaaf and others were invited to attend the wedding of Edward Huggins and Letitia Work at Fort Nisqually in 1857.

attended each other's social events. Dinners, parties, and dances were often held at each of the forts. In October 1857 a special invitation was sent to the officers at Fort Steilacoom to attend the wedding of Mr. Edward Huggins and Miss Letitia Work at Fort Nisqually. Some of those officers invited were Lieutenants August Kautz, David McKibben, and Arthur Shaaf.

Lieutenant Shaaf had a reputation among the fort's officers and quite probably the gentlemen of Fort Nisqually as someone who liked his liquor. Lieutenant Shaaf was the mess officer at Fort Steilacoom, but was not terribly good at it. The officers complained about the quality of the food and felt their mess bills were too high. Shaaf was often reported as being on a "spree" or recovering from one, which perhaps explains the problems with the mess.

The officers drove to Fort Nisqually, located near today's DuPont, in the fort's ambulance. The ceremony was concluded and the party commenced. Punch and champagne were served. Shaaf and McKibben had consumed their share becoming quite inebriated.

Several guests from Victoria had been invited for the occasion, including Miss Maryann Reed. When the dancing and partying had ended, the officers, with Miss Reed, climbed into the ambulance for the drive back to Fort Steilacoom. During the trip Shaaf attempted to kiss Miss Reed but she refused him.

When they arrived at Fort Steilacoom, Lieutenant Shaaf insisted on escorting Maryann back to her accommodations in Steilacoom City. Shaaf and Maryann set off on horseback ahead of rest of the party, which included Mr. Sam McCaw. They quickly got lost in the woods. Shaaf was thrown or fell from his horse and landed behind a log. Shaaf was so embarrassed that he returned to the fort alone. Miss Reed was escorted to her rooming house by Mr. Sam McCaw, who, incidentally, had brought her to the wedding in the first place.

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More Tales of Old Fort Steilacoom

by Kenneth A. Morgan

The history of Fort Steilacoom is, in reality, the stories of those soldiers and officers who served at the fort during its nineteen years of existence. The spring 2009 issue of the Fort Steilacoom newsletter told some of those stories. Here are More Tales of Old Fort Steilacoom.

Lieutenants William Slaughter and John Nugen had several things in common. Both were graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, Slaughter in 1848 and Nugen in 1852. Both were assigned to the 4th Infantry. Both had served in California. Both were posted to Fort Steilacoom and played different but important roles in the 1855-56 Indian War.

Indians on both sides of the Cascades were unhappy with the treaties that were forced upon them by Governor Isaac Stevens. In the fall of 1855 a small group of hostiles attacked settlements along the White River. Acting Governor Charles Mason reacted by calling out the militia and requesting the soldiers at Forts Steilacoom and Vancouver take to the field in pursuit of the hostiles. Captain Maurice Maloney, commander at Fort Steilacoom, and Lieutenant Slaughter left with most of the soldiers; leaving Lieutenant Nugen behind with a small detachment to guard the fort.

With most of the soldiers gone from Fort Steilacoom, settlers from the Puyallup Valley fled their homes and sought protection at the fort. Nugen was besieged with the refugees, their livestock, and their



Fort Steilacoom Pioneer Cemetery

Lieutenants William Slaughter and John Nugen were originally buried in the cemetery at Fort Steilacoom, but later were moved to the Presidio in San Francisco where they still lie beside one another.

belongings. While things were difficult for Nugen, managing the confusion created by the influx, it was just as difficult for Slaughter in the field. His detachment had been in quest of the hostiles for several weeks without much success; they were tired and winter was coming on. By December they were camped on Brennan's Prairie near the White River. In the evening of December 4, 1855, they were attacked. Lieutenant Slaughter and two others were killed. Several soldiers were wounded.

Lieutenant Slaughter was respected by the soldiers at Fort Steilacoom as well as by the town-folk of Steilacoom. He had purchased several building lots in the

village and he and his new wife, Mary, operated a mess for the fort's officers there. His body was returned to Fort Steilacoom, where a well-attended funeral was held. Slaughter was buried with full Masonic honors at Fort Steilacoom. Mary returned to Port Huron, Michigan. She corresponded with many of her friends at the fort and particularly with John Nugen.

Lieutenant Nugen remained at Fort Steilacoom, but in the fall of 1857 he became ill with consumption, deteriorated rapidly, and died on October 22nd. Lieutenant August Kautz, who had been in the same West Point class as Nugen, took charge of the arrangements for his

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President's Message



Let me introduce myself. My name is Lawrence Bateman, and I just took over the position of president of the Fort Steilacoom Historical Association.

I have been an active Living Historian for the past 12+ years, and have been a member of the FSHA for almost as many years. Three years ago I joined the Board of Directors.

Over the past few years we have brought some new ideas and events to the fort. We will continue with these, to get the fort more recognition.

The fort was established as the first military presence on Puget Sound. Even with its short-lived history as a military post, we need the public to know that we are still here and what we are about.

One of the programs that we re-introduced this past year was the "Docent training day." Being a volunteer run museum, this program is open to all FSHS members who wish to volunteer as docents. This will be an annual training event. We have also established the Fort Steilacoom Living History Detachment,



Christmas at Fort Steilacoom 2008

CHRISTMAS

Of 1859

At Fort Steilacoom

December 12, 2009

4:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Historic Fort Steilacoom Museum

9601 Steilacoom Boulevard S.W., Lakewood, WA
 (on grounds of Western State Hospital)

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

Travel 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.

Information: (253) 582-5838 or web site www.historicfortsteilacoom.com

a group that portrays the soldiers of the fort from 1849 to 1868. The main focus are the years 1855-1860. It is a small group at this time. The FSLHD is always actively recruiting to increase its numbers.

We also have some really good lectures planned for 2010: Mrs. Casey's tea, the 1800s Army Surgeon, an 1800s lecture on Engineering, and step back in time with Lt. A. Kautz. Hope to see you at the fort's events in the next year.

Remember, the Fort is open the 1st Sunday (1-4 p.m.) of the month from Labor Day through May, then we are open every Sunday (1-4 p.m.) starting Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day in September. Times will be posted for special events. Our next big event will be "Christmas at the Fort 1859" on December 12 from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Come out and see the fort once again come to life!

Lawrence Bateman



Lt. John Nugen

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 funeral. Nugen was also buried at Fort Steilacoom. In going through Nugen's papers, Kautz found a letter to Mary Slaughter in which he proposed marriage. The letter was never mailed. Mary, having lost her husband and suitor, died in 1861, some say of a "broken heart." Kautz named his first son Nugen in honor of his friend and West Point classmate.

When Fort Steilacoom closed, the graves of those who died at the fort were moved to the Military Cemetery at the Presidio of San Francisco. Lieutenants Slaughter and Nugen are buried side-by-side, still serving in death as they did in life.

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Lieutenant Colonel Casey was on his way back to Fort Steilacoom after spending several months on furlough. This time he was bringing his wife Abby, his daughters Abby and Bessie, and his young son Ned. Also accompanying the Colonel were several recruits for his regiment, the 9th Infantry.

Lieutenant Kautz, the post quartermaster, had received a letter from the Colonel stating that Casey intended on moving into the house Kautz was sharing with Dr. Wirtz. They would be forced to find other quarters. Both were unhappy with



Models constructed by Robert Demorest

After Col. Casey's house was finished, Dr. Wirtz was able to return to his quarters, at left next to the hospital, but he still refused to attend to the Caseys.

the move, especially Dr. Wirtz. He became so angry over the eviction that he refused to provide medical treatment to the Casey family. Additionally, Casey requested five or six wagons meet the family at the wharf. The Caseys had lots of baggage with them.

Construction of the fort's buildings, including the new post headquarters (now called Quarters 2), which the Caseys would occupy, was progressing but not fast enough for the Colonel. Kautz had to remind Colonel Casey that perhaps the delays were in part caused by the Caseys, especially Mrs. Casey, placing extra demands on the workmen, many of whom were engaged in special duties relating the comfort of the family. Apparently, Mrs. Casey could be quite demanding.

Mrs. Casey had a particular demand that frustrated Lieutenant Kautz. As the post quartermaster he was responsible for all requisitions. Mrs. Casey wanted a bell. What she intended to do with it is not known, but what she wanted she usually got. Kautz refused to order one. She did not get her bell.

Not all of the delays were the fault of the workmen. The building required

special construction techniques as all the walls were interspaced with bricks, called nogging. Weather presented other construction problems. December 30, 1857, brought a violent storm to the area. Heavy rains flooded the creeks around the fort. The ground turned to mud. High winds blew the rafters from the partially completed roof of the house the Caseys were awaiting.

With the coming of spring, construction was finished on the new house. Lieutenant Kautz and Dr. Wirtz reoccupied their old house next to the fort's hospital. Dr. Wirtz, however, continued to refuse treatment to the Casey family.

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Tensions between the northern and southern states had been building for some time. By 1861 these tensions came to a head. The south was ready to secede. At Fort Steilacoom the soldiers of the 4th and 9th Infantry were sure that war would soon occur. So did the engineers of Lieutenant Thomas Casey's detachment. Lieutenant Casey was preparing the engineers for their wartime duties and was sure he would soon

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