

“Early the next morning Captain Maloney and a 30 member army arrived off shore in the Hudson’s Bay Company steamship *Beaver*. Leschi and his entourage lined the beach while Swan rowed out to the *Beaver*, convinced the army he was not in danger, then returned to shore. Maloney had but one canoe with the steamship, which would hold only five men. Landing five men at a time would be a great disadvantage....

“After a period of 36 hours, Leschi and his men quietly slipped away in the dark and returned up the Puyallup River to the warrior camp. The peace effort failed, but the excitement lingered for some time. The *Beaver* was compelled to return to Steilacoom to rethink the situation.” (Carpenter, *Tears of Internment*, pp. 49-51)

The *Beaver* continued to steam through island waterways from Fort Nisqually and the remaining outstations to Vancouver, British Columbia, carrying Puget Sound Agricultural Company crops and livestock until 1860. Thereafter, the *Beaver* navigated Canadian waters.

The federal troops at Fort Steilacoom were called eastward at the outbreak of the Civil War, leaving the Washington Territorial Militia in charge. After the war in 1868, the U.S. government decided that Fort Steilacoom was no longer needed and turned it over to the Territory for a mental institution.

As the number of Americans wanting land within this area increased, some of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company’s farms were closed. Finally, in 1869 the company rights were purchased by the United States Government and Fort Nisqually was closed the next year. Edward Huggins, the last person in charge of the fort, remained and homesteaded the site.

The *Beaver* was chartered to survey the B.C. coast from 1863 through 1870 then sold in 1874, after which she served at various times as a tug, tow and passenger ship. Steaming out of the Burrard Inlet harbor near Vancouver B.C. about 10 p.m. on



Courtesy of Beth Julian

After being sold by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1874, the *Beaver* served as a tug, tow and passenger boat earning the rank as “the most important ship in the history of Canada’s West Coast” (Pethick). Her story came to an end on the rocks at Prospect Point near Vancouver B.C. in 1888.

Thursday night, July 26, 1888, the old *Beaver* was carried onto the rocks where she remained until 1892. The steamer *Yosemite* passed too close, knocking the remains of the *Beaver* into her grave in the channel. (McCain, pp. 30-31)

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# Fort Steilacoom

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## S.S. Beaver

by Carol Neufeld Stout

The *Beaver*, the first Hudson’s Bay Company steam ship, played an important part in the development of the Puget Sound region during the time of the British company’s operations in the Pacific Northwest.

It began when George Simpson, Governor-in-Chief of the English company, urged officials to build a steam vessel to give an advantage over the American fur traders.

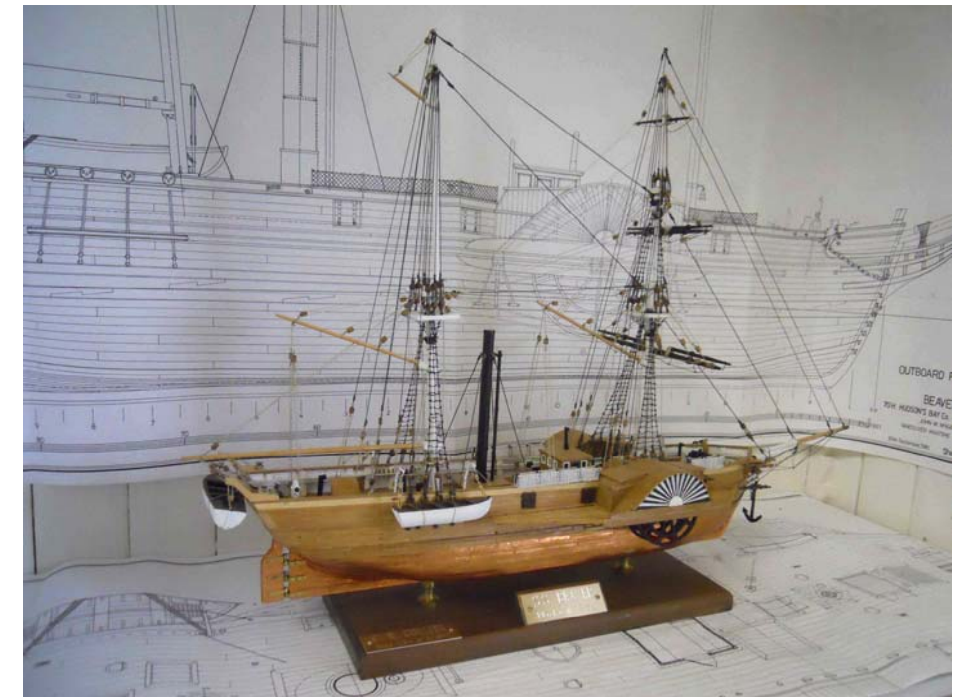
“We could look into every creek and cove and could ascend every stream...on the coast...A steam vessel would make us masters of the (fur) trade.” (Pethick p. 13)

After the 100 foot ship was built and launched, it sailed from Gravesend, England, on August 27, 1835, arriving at the mouth of the Columbia River on April 10, 1836. The ship continued up the inland waters, stopping at various ports, finally returning to Fort Nisqually, its southern anchorage. (Pethick p. 21)

The *Beaver* was first mentioned at Fort Nisqually in the “Journal of Occurrences,” Saturday, November 12, 1836.

“This morning we were greatly surprised with the arrival of the Steamer BEAVER, Capt. Home on board of her....This vessel is from Mill Bank Sound, and has been much detained by the fogs coming hither....”(Section 3, p. 7)

The Hudson’s Bay Company succeeded in monopolizing the fur trade, but as the demand for furs decreased and need for food increased, the company established the Puget



Model of the Hudson’s Bay sail and steam powered side wheeler the S. S. *Beaver*, carefully constructed from authentic plans by Charles R. Collier. The *Beaver* was reconstructed a number of times during its long history.

Sound Agricultural Company. This subsidiary oversaw the raising of crops and livestock at Fort Nisqually with a system of outstations. (Crooks, *A Place Full of Life*)

The farms located in the 150,000 acres between the Puyallup and Nisqually rivers were operated by company employees. There were also several private farms run by retired employees or tenants. Joseph Heath, a gentleman tenant farmer from England, claimed 640 acres in the Steilacoom area. On 121 acres he raised cattle, sheep, wheat, peas and potatoes. (Anderson, *Farm*, p. 11)

Heath’s diary, beginning Wednesday, January 1, 1845, notes the importance of the steamer *Beaver* to his life and business operation. On Thursday, June 12, 1845, he wrote:

“Rode to the Fort (Nisqually) to learn particulars and make arrangements for getting my sheep marked & shorn. No hope of seeing Will (his brother) until autumn when he thinks he may take charge of the steamer (*Beaver*).” (Heath, p. 45)

The diary breaks Wednesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1845. It begins again Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1846, after the

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### President's Message



The last couple of months has once again brought us good events. On April 16<sup>th</sup> the fort hosted the Living History Swap Meet and Display. We had around ten vendors with items for sale and trade. Some of our vendors were repeat sellers from past years. We also had several fort members set up military displays. We had infantry displays from the Civil War to Desert Storm, a World War II combat camera man's display, and a display of military carpenters tools. Many items were sold, and the fort purchased some of them for display. We also obtained some loaner gear. Everyone had a good time. We are looking forward to next year's swap meet!

On April 29<sup>th</sup> the fort hosted its annual School Day. We had over 100 students from both local schools and home schooled children. The fort buildings remained open over the weekend for our Historic Fort Steilacoom Open House. On Saturday we had the Magic Lantern folks, which, as always, was a big hit. On Sunday we even had a celebrity guest, Michael Medved.



photo by Steve Dunkelberger

*A curious look at the mountain howitzer "Ben" during the Fort Steilacoom Open House on May 1, 2011.*

Fort Steilacoom was also represented at JBLM (Joint Base Lewis McChord) during the Armed Forces Day Celebration. Throughout the day, members of Fort Steilacoom and Company M talked with the public about the history of the fort. We also fired "Ben," the mountain howitzer, several times for the public.

Over the last few months the Board has been reworking one of our displays. We are still waiting for a coat. And the officer mannequin will have a new parade dress uniform. Look for further updates.

We are now on our summer hours. The fort buildings and Interpretive Center are open every Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. Bring your friends and invite them to join the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association. You might also take the opportunity to renew your own membership or send in your dues for this year, if you haven't already done so. Remember to give us your current e-mail address, too, so that we can send you information about special events. We also need volunteers to help with these events and to docent at the museum. If you need to reach the museum staff, call (253) 582-5838.

You can check our event calendar at our web site:

[www.historicfortsteilacoom.com](http://www.historicfortsteilacoom.com).

Lawrence Bateman

### S.S. Beaver (from page 1)

boundary between the United States and Canada was set at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Though the Hudson's Bay and Puget Sound Agricultural companies were now in the U.S., it was agreed that the British could continue operating the two companies. Heath notes on Sunday, October 25, 1846:

"...am not quite well—getting old. Thinking much of letters from home. Received a note in the evening to say Mr. Worth had arrived in the company's steamer (*Beaver*)." (Heath, p. 71)

"Monday 26<sup>th</sup>. Ploughing [sic.] and thrashing wheat. Rode to the Fort in the afternoon to call on Mr. Worth. Went on board the steamer (*Beaver*) and had a long chat with many of my old shipmates and (was) glad to see them, talking of 'Old Will.' Lay awake...thinking of him." (Heath, p. 71)

(Continued next page)

A discouraging factor is mentioned in the diary on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1846:

"...(Had) a visit from Dr. Tolmie, who came to inform me that the Oregon Territory had been given up to the Americans to the 49<sup>th</sup> degree of latitude. (This) put me out of spirits and out of temper, as I must now look out for a new place of settlement and have to commerce de nova, and which all the trouble and labor I have had is quite disheartening." (Heath, p. 73)

On Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1847, Heath had visitors.

"Made a large batch of biscuit and cakes, taking nearly all day. John McLeod and Montgomery paid a New Years visit, left with eyes sparkling and not sitting very straight upon their horses." (Heath, p. 83)

McLeod, a Hudson's Bay employee, was a head shepherd in charge of a nearby farm at the edge of Wyatchee (Steilacoom) Lake. The barns and stables were on the side of the present day county road next to Gravelly Lake. (Anderson, C. Tale)

McLeod's first job with the company in December of 1838 was to chop wood for the *Beaver's* engine. He recalled: "The steamer would use 30 cords of wood in making the passage between Nisqually and Victoria." (Anderson, Crofter's Tale)

Heath again mentions mail from home on Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1847.

"...Had a visit from Dr. Tolmie...I lived in hope of my letters having been overlooked at Vancouver and that he would bring them with him...Shall be very uneasy until the ship arrives...Six long months to look forward to."

The *Beaver* was still in port on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. "The house was full of sailors from the steamer." (Heath, p. 84)

Joseph Heath, though in poor health, worked industriously on the farm with his Indian laborers. He built new structures, planted wheat, oats and peas, raised the cattle and sheep and struggled against poachers, wolves,

diseases and inclement weather. (Anderson, Steilacoom Farm, p. 12)

Heath's last diary entry on Friday, February 9, 1849, is brief.

"Dick cut up the pigs and salted them. (Am) unable to do anything myself, voice gone and myself very weak." (Heath, p. 169)

Dr. Tolmie moved him the next day to Fort Nisqually to provide for his medical needs. Heath died there on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1849.

During Heath's tenancy at Steilacoom, Americans had started to arrive in the area seeking land. Fort Nisqually assisted by providing food, livestock and equipment. "Even though the international agreement protected the HBC and PSAC, American settlers began to encroach upon company holdings." (Crooks, Puget Sound Agricultural Co., p. 2)

In order to solidify the American claims in the area south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, the government sent Captain Bennett Hill, 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery, Company M to look for a site for a U.S. Army post. On August 24, 1849, he rented the former Joseph Heath farm from the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. The fort was to play an important part in the protection and development of the area.

During the Indian War beginning in 1855, the army protected American settlers. The *S.S. Beaver* was borrowed from Hudson's Bay twice by the military in an effort to capture Leschi, the war chief of the allied warriors of the Nisqually, Puyallup and upper Duwamish tribes.

Leschi had refused to sign the Medicine Creek Treaty [though an "X" appeared after his name] because the reservation allotted to the tribe was not on land where they could continue hunting, fishing and shellfish gathering. (Carpenter, p. 22)

About the first of January 1856 Captain Maurice Maloney and his company were sent to capture Leschi at Seattle. According to H. H. Bancroft:

"For several weeks the citizens of Seattle have been uneasy, from the belief that the friendly Indians gathered near that place were being tampered

with by Leschi. About the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 1856, it was discovered that he was actually present at the reserve, making boasts of capturing the agent; and as the authorities very much desired to secure his arrest, (Major Erasmus) Keyes secured the loan of the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer *Beaver* and sent (Captain Maurice) Maloney and his company to seize and bring him to Fort Steilacoom. But as the *Beaver* approached the shore to effect a landing, Leschi drew up his forces in battle array to meet the troops, who could only land in squads of three or four from a small boat. Finding that it was not be safe to expose his men in such a manner, and having no cannon to disperse the Indians, Maloney was compelled to return to Steilacoom without accomplishing the object of the expedition." (Bancroft, p. 194)

The next army use of the *Beaver* by Captain Maloney and his company was at Fox Island where the friendly Indians were relocated for safety. During this time John Swan was the Indian Agent assigned to distribute food and supervise the camp. Leschi and his warriors paid him a visit on January 5, 1856.

"...Swan was known to be a friend of the Indian people and was trusted by Leschi. Leschi had come to talk about a peaceful solution to the war. Accompanied by 33 warriors, Leschi appeared in the waters of Hale Passage off John Swan's cabin. On shore excitement among the assembled Indians was high. Some feared Leschi, believing he had come to take some of them back to the battlefield with him. Agent Swan handled the situation calmly. He first dispatched a man to Steilacoom with the news, then settled down to hear Leschi's grievances. "Leschi asked that Simmons be replaced. He felt Simmons had betrayed the Nisquallies by promising them an adequate reservation then backed down on his promise....Leschi confided that his people were hungry and cold and that he was tired of fighting. He was ready to make peace...."

(Continued on page 4)