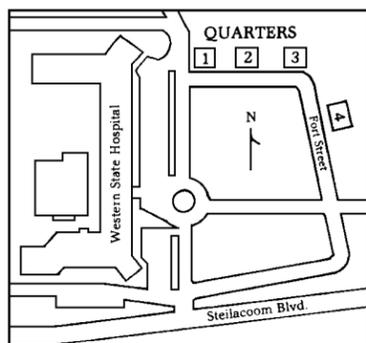


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Letter from a Civil War Soldier—1861

by Horatio Pitcher

The following letter was written during the Civil War by Horatio Pitcher to his parents, Horatio G. and Annie Pitcher. Horatio eventually settled in Iowa and was followed there by Daniel and Grace White, great-grandparents of Jackie Dock, a life member of Historic Fort Steilacoom. The letter was passed down through the family and eventually to Jackie.



Portion of letter written by Horatio Pitcher to his family from a Civil War camp in Virginia in 1861.

Horatio Pitcher¹

Horatio Pitcher was born in Monroe, Waldo Co. Maine, on January 23, 1839. He acquired his education in the public schools of Maine and in academies in Massachusetts and Maine. Before he had completed his studies he engaged as a clerk in a dry-goods store and later operated a general mercantile enterprise. He afterward turned his attention to the grocery business, following this line until 1861, when he enlisted in the First Regiment of the Second Volunteer Infantry.

When his regiment arrived in New York, measles broke out in the ranks and the men were sent as one to Long Island, where they camped for some time. They were later mustered into service at Willets Point, Long

Island, for a period of two years and were immediately sent to Falls Church, in Washington, Virginia, where they camped until the first battle of Bull Run, in which the regiment engaged with a heavy loss. It was then ordered to Alexandria and from there sent into camp at Fort Cocheran, assisting in the defense of Washington as part of W. T. Sherman's Brigade.

In 1862, when General McClellan moved the army from Alexandria by water to Fortress Monroe and then to Richmond, where he engaged in a seven-day battle, Mr. Pitcher's regiment took part in these activities and afterward went into camp on the James River.

Eventually a new regiment was formed in Bangor, Maine, and of this Mr. Pitcher served as quartermaster until August, 1862. In September of that year, when Washington was again threatened by the enemy, the

regiment was sent to build fortifications in front of the city and after this work was completed it was reorganized into a heavy artillery regiment, divided into twelve batteries of one hundred and eighty men each. They defended twelve miles of fortifications until the following spring and then Mr. Pitcher was ordered to Albany, New York, to buy horses for the army. He continued thus until the close of the war and was mustered out with a creditable military record at Bangor, Maine, in the spring of 1865.

After receiving his discharge, Mr. Pitcher opened a mercantile business in Savannah, Georgia, and after conducting this for a time moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where, in partnership with his brother, he resumed his former occupation until 1868 before finally settling in what is now Pitcher Township, Iowa, buying a section of land.

Dear Father and all the other friends at home -

Here we are treading the sacred soil of Virginia. Yesterday at about four o'clock P.M. orders came to the 2d Reg. to march. Our kettles were soon full of beef, boiling away as fast as hard pine could make it while the boys set at work repacking their knapsacks, throwing out such things as had collected there that wouldn't pay to lug. Before the aforesaid beef had half cooked, we were ordered to strike our tents.

Ninety government horses were on the ground to transport them, and at short notice we [were] all loaded and ready to move. As luck would have it, just then there set in one of the heaviest showers ever witnessed. I believe they have tougher storms here in the summer than they have in Maine. It rained and blew furiously, and here we were, poor soldiers with our tents struck, no place of shelter except under boards and in the cook houses, and perhaps a night's march before us. But no one complained. The boys will grumble sometimes about their grub, when they haven't anything else to do, but just set some work before them and they'll

go about it with as good grace as anybody.

In about an hour it cleared off and our line of march was formed and we were on our way. None of us privates knew where, but we marched, through Washington to Georgetown, over the Potomac on to the Sacred Soil of Virginia. And if anything makes it sacred, it was its adhesiveness, for it stuck most dreadfully.

[We went] up Arlington Heights and took the road for Fairfax Courthouse. We were interrupted in our march as often as every ten minutes by sentinels, and a long confab always followed before we could resume our march. You may be a little surprised, but it is fact, when I tell you that it was daylight when we arrived at this place, which is only twelve miles from Washington. We camped in the meeting house and took a short nap, and then set about pitching our tents.

Now, something about the place and the surroundings. We are within five miles of Fairfax Courthouse, and are the most advanced on that place of any troops. We are with the Connecticut Brigade whose tents are pitched in the rear of us about one mile. Their picket guard is thrown out towards Fairfax Courthouse about four miles from here, and can hear the drums of the enemy beat. ...This place seems more like [the North East] than any one we have stopped at. We are encamped near Three Corners....There is no business here now. The stores are all shut up. The people that remain here have taken the oath of allegiance—others have moved away or joined the Southern Army. The Rebel Army at Fairfax Courthouse number at this time not far either way from ten thousand. More Federal troops will join us soon, and thus you may

(Continued on page 3)

¹ From *History of Cherokee County*, Vol. 2 (Published 1914).

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President's Message



Since the last time I reported in the newsletter there have been some excellent programs. At the July meeting I retold the story of Lt. A. V. Kautz's July 1857 climb of Mt. Rainier to John McPherson and John Roten, who portrayed fellow soldiers. Kautz was accompanied by the post surgeon from Bellingham, an Indian guide and four soldiers. Thirty people attended this event.

At our September annual Living History Day were reenactors from Ft. Nisqually, the Washington Civil War Association, and our volunteers who brought the Fort to life. Thanks to all who helped. There were about 95 visitors.

If you have not seen the museum in the past year, come to see the displays that have been added.

A brief annual meeting will be held **October 16** at 2 p.m. in quarters 2. **Ken Morgan**, in the persona of Col. Silas Casey, will share with us the experiences of Casey's military career.

November 13 in Quarters 2 at 2 p.m. **Alan Archambault** will present an illustrated talk showing uniforms

and weapons of soldiers who served at Fort Steilacoom.

December 10 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. visitors may tour the candlelit buildings during **Christmas at the Fort**. Adults \$5, Child \$3, Family \$10.

This brings my report to an end. We are looking forward to seeing you at Fort Steilacoom.

Lawrence Bateman

New Website

Go see our new website at: www.historicfortsteilacoom.org.

Note that the address has changed from .com to .org. We now also have an e-mail address where you can send us messages and get a reply back. The e-mail address is: info@historicfortsteilacoom.org.

The new website was developed by our web master **Stephen Neufeld**, who incorporated the history written by **John McPherson**, which was in the previous website. Stephen will keep the new site up-to-date with our coming events and photos of past events. Your comments and suggestions about the site are welcome and may be directed to our new e-mail address.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Historic Fort Steilacoom Association will be held on October 16 at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2. The slate of candidates for the Board of Directors submitted by the Nominating Committee include: President: **Lawrence Bateman**
 1st V. President: **Thomas Melberg**
 2nd V. President: **Robert Demorest**
 Secretary: **Joseph W. Lewis**
 Treasurer: **Kenneth A. Morgan**
 3 Directors 2011-214:

Bill Arends, C. Gideon Pete, and Alan Archambault. Other nominations will be invited from the membership at the meeting.

Following the brief business meeting, **Kenneth Morgan** will present a well researched program about the life and military career of Silas Casey, former commander of Fort Steilacoom.

Donations

Recent donations to the fort include books on the Oregon Trail from **Bill Arends** and Civil War books from **Joe Lewis**. A period rocking chair and English plate from **Mary Ellen Hopper**. An antique rocking chair with a flowered needlepoint pad from **Bonnie Westmark**. **Beth Julian** gifted three tablecloths. **Kenneth Morgan** donated a TV set for video presentations.

Living History

About 95 visitors attended the Living History Day on September 16. Reenactors demonstrated life of the period and plotted the site of an officer's house prior to construction.



Mark Silas Tackitt displays the banjo he played during Living History Day in September.



Synthia Santos displays hand made items at Living History Day.



Marsha Sommer demonstrates spinning thread on her wheel.

Letter 1861 (from page 1)
 expect something from this section in the way of action.

Our health as a general thing is quite good. The sick, numbering about forty, were left at Meridian Hill in care of Dr. Allen. There are only a very few who are dangerously sick. The most of them have the colic and dysentery. My own health is first rate. I never enjoyed better.

The day before we left the Hill we had some considerable sport. A runaway slave had been staying with the Reg. about a week, enjoying the felicity of freedom, however, with the fear of being caught. He made himself useful about the camp by taking care of the horses and drawing water, and the boys had become quite attached to him. But trouble was brewing. His master, who lives in Virginia about six miles from the Camp having heard that his Sambo was with us, went to Gen'l Mansfield, took the oath of Allegiance, got a pass, and, with another man, came in search of his "nigger." But Sambo wasn't so easily caught among eight hundred men from Maine, especially when they had been laying still for a month and needed a little excitement.

It soon spread over the camp that they were in search of Darkey and he was hustled in the loft of one of

the cookhouses. They commenced the search at the Light Infantry tents. The boys would gather round the boxes in their tents and make believe he was concealed inside. Then the slave driver would come round and, thinking he had him sure, would jump for the box and carefully open it. Sold again. Oh, no "nigger" there. One of the boys rolled himself up in half a dozen blankets and stowed away in rather an obscure place. When they came to him, they were sure of their prize. So they began unrolling carefully, so he wouldn't escape, when out jumped a real white man and grinned in their faces. When they came to the cook

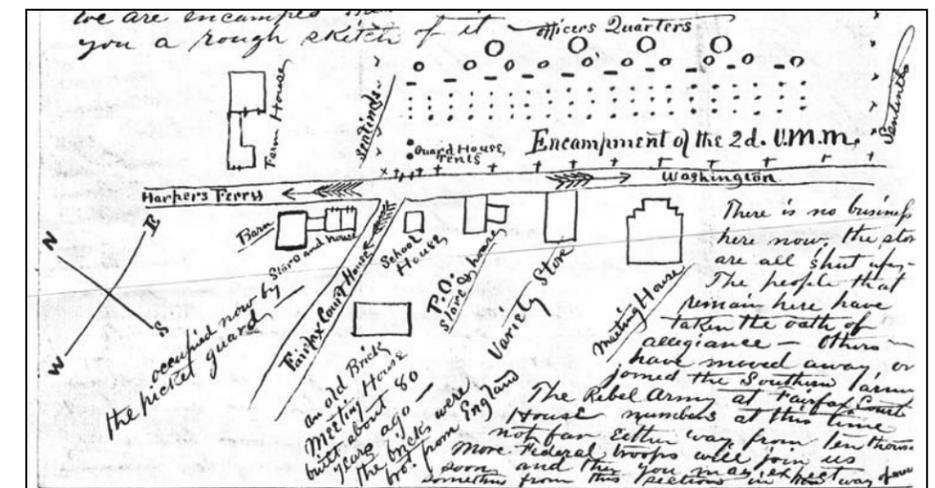
house where [the darkey] was, [he] wasn't "dar." They received about the same treatment all along the lines that they did at the right, and were compelled at last to go away without their Sambo.

Quite a sad affair occurred at the hill last week. The [?] were on guard and about daybreak Mr. Babcock, one of their members, out for sport, challenged one of McKinney's boys whose beat joined his. McKinney replied, "A secessionist." When Babcock, whose gun was not loaded, brought it to his shoulder . . . McKinney, thinking he had his own gun, fired. It was loaded, he having accidentally shifted with someone during the night. The charge went in his [Babcock's] leg just above the knee and shattered the bone in a shocking manner. The leg had to be amputated. Babcock is doing well now. McKinney is a son of old McKinney who used to live up by our house. He feels dreadfully about it, but one was as much to blame as the other.

Please direct your letters as you have done. Washington D.C., Care Capt. Bartlett, 2d Maine V.M. Write the Maine out in full, as the Mass. V.M. get some of our letters. Give my regards to all and believe me to be your aff. Son.

Horatio

P.S. I think I have rec. all the papers you have sent.



The regiment camped at a small town about 5 miles from Fairfax, Virginia.