

fort. During that same month the Snoqualmie Indians accused of killing Leander Wallace were tried there. This was the first U.S. Court convened north of the Columbia River.<sup>8</sup>

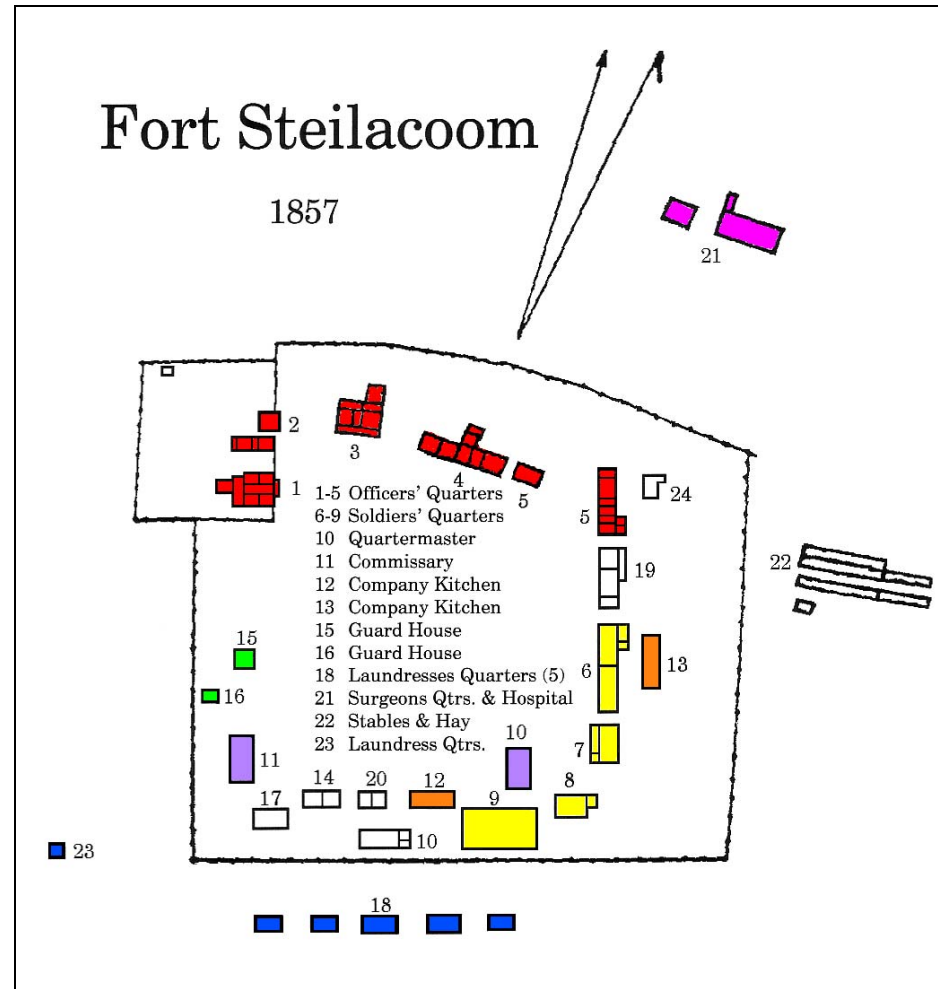
A listing of buildings converted to military use or newly constructed by the soldiers is described in the *Western State Hospital Cultural Landscape Assessment* done by Artifacts Architectural Consulting in 1980. Log buildings built prior to 1849 by Joseph Heath (red buildings on page 3) and converted to military use under the supervision of Second Lieutenant Grier Talmadge, acting Quartermaster, 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Artillery included: Two Officers' Quarters (A), the Adjutant's Office (B), Officers' Mess (C), and another log building of unknown use (H).

Log buildings modified or constructed for military use by the soldiers under the direction of Lt. Talmadge (see diagram on page 3) included six officers' quarters (A on his map), barracks (F, G, K) doubling as both living and kitchen space, a bakery (O), and hospital (D). Another building provided space for the blacksmith and carpenters (M) making and repairing tools and weapons associated with the fort's operation and development. The stable (P) for the horses was also of logs, and a log guard house (N) served as a jail up through the period of the Indian War.

Four log and frame buildings (L) served as quarters for laundresses who cleaned fort garments, bedding and other washable items. They were situated just outside and to the south of the fort's principal grouping. One of these later served as a boarding house for hired men working at the fort.

The storehouse (E) was the only fully wood-frame building constructed during this period. In 1857 the building's use was changed to the ordnance sergeant's quarters and clothing room. At that time, an addition was attached to the east side.

<sup>8</sup> HFSA, *loc. cit.*



#### Buildings added 1854-1857

Between 1854 and 1857 a number of new wood frame buildings were added to the fort (see 1857 diagram above). These included a quartermaster's residence, company kitchens, a hospital and surgeon's quarters. The hospital had 3 ward rooms, 6 iron bedsteads, kitchen, messroom, dispensary and a storeroom. In 1857 it was under the direction of Asst. Army Surgeon Dr. Horace Wirtz. He was assisted by a steward, 2 nurses, a cook and a matron.<sup>9</sup>

A new blacksmith and carpenter shop replaced the former, but was destroyed by fire about ten years later on January 19, 1886. Four enlisted soldiers' barracks were also built. During the 1857-1858 con-

struction, one of these barracks was converted into building "K" for Company "C," 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Two wood frame guard houses provided facilities for soldiers guarding the fort.

New stables and hay shed also replaced the previous log building for the horses. Kautz later built a granary next to the stables. A new commissary building erected in this period served the fort. It was moved next to the horse stable in 1883 by what became Western State Hospital. The older log bakery was also replaced by a wood frame building during this time and stood until 1885 when it was torn down, again by Western State Hospital. Two more laundress buildings of wood frame construction were added during the period prior to Kautz's reconstruction of the fort.

(To be continued in next issue.)

<sup>9</sup>Gary F. Reese, *A Documentary History of Fort Steilacoom, Washington*, p. 117 (Mansfield, report of 1858).

# Fort Steilacoom

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## Building Fort Steilacoom

by Orville H. Stout

### Part 1: First Fort Buildings

Fort Steilacoom played a major role in the legal, social and economic development of Western Washington. The first trial ever held in the Puget Sound area convened at Fort Steilacoom in 1849. Soldiers at the fort aided the economy as consumers of goods and providers of "cash money." They built roads to connect the community, reaching to Bellingham, Walla Walla, and Vancouver. The fort was a social center of the area, and settlers went there to seek refuge during the Indian War or to see the army doctor in medical emergencies.

There were three major phases in the construction of Fort Steilacoom buildings, the first when the Army took over a tenant farm owned by the Hudson Bay Company. Shortly after that additional log buildings and a few wood frame ones were erected. And between 1857 and 1858 more permanent buildings were constructed.

These buildings continued to be used by Western State Hospital after the fort closed in 1868. Over time the fort buildings were remodeled for hospital use or torn down as they were no longer useful until only four remained. Today those four buildings are the core of Historic Fort Steilacoom. This is the first in a series of articles telling this story.

#### Hudson Bay farms

The ground on which Fort Steilacoom was to stand was first occupied by a settler from the Red River Colony in Manitoba, Canada, lured



Fort Steilacoom between 1849 and 1854 included Heath's log buildings and those erected by the soldiers on the farm rented from the Hudson Bay Company.

there in 1841 by the Hudson Bay Company with the promise of livestock, seed and implements. But the Company fell short on its promises, and the glacial deposit of rocks made the soil unsuitable for cultivation. Not long after building a crude cabin of logs, the tenant farmer, along with others who also came to establish farms near there, left—some for the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Joseph Thomas Heath was the next to occupy the cabin in December 1844. He noted in his diary that "the winds from the four quarters of Heaven had free admission to the cabin."<sup>1</sup> He set about lining his new

home with cedar bark to keep warm and built a bed, table and two stools.<sup>2</sup>

Heath, an Englishman dispossessed by his family because of gambling debts, had arrived on a ship captained by his brother and became a tenant farmer of the Hudson Bay Company subsidiary, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. He leased 640 acres and, as per agreement, received a share of farm animals, seeds, and other necessary provisions from Dr. Tolmie of Fort Nisqually, six miles to the south.

Heath soon constructed three log buildings and a corral. In 1845 he

(Continued on page 3)

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Heath, edited by Lucille MacDonald, *Memories of Nisqually*, Ye Galleon Press, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> *Fort Nisqually, A documented history of Indian and British Interaction.*

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**President's Message**



Our last year ended well with the Christmas at the Fort celebration. We had around 30 reenactors and 200 public. This was a great event, and fun was had by all.

The new year started out with Ms. Casey's Tea in February. This was once again a great hit, and I do believe it was sold out once again.

The historic association has some great events planned for this year. We are having some good guest speakers, so keep an eye on the web site [www.historicfortsteilacoom.org](http://www.historicfortsteilacoom.org) for dates.

To end this report on a sad note: A good friend of Fort Steilacoom, and a personal friend, Robert "Bob" Demorest passed away in February. Bob was an avid miniature war gamer and reenactor. Bob built the diorama of Fort Steilacoom on display in the museum, and was an active member in the Association. Personally, I will miss gaming on Thursday evenings at Bob's house. Civil War and Napoleonic were his favorites. He will be missed by all.

Lawrence Bateman



**Robert "Bob" Demorest**  
 Model maker and reenactor



**Misses Casey Valentine Tea**  
 Cassie, Anna and Nona

The Valentine Tea, hosted by Abigail (Cassie Young) and Elizabeth (Nona Nelson) Casey was enjoyed by over 30 guests who were served tea and cakes by young girls and entertained by ladies of the Territory on February 18. There was also a "Fancy Fair" silent auction and a spinning demonstration by Marsha Sommer.



**Nancy Covert & Laura Belle**

For the March 11 program, Nancy Covert portrayed Laura Belle Downey Bartlett, a remarkable woman of Steilacoom in the last century—author, musician, playwright, mining engineer and more.

Robert Demorest, a retired civil service illustrator, model maker and training aids designer, built the model of the 1858 Fort Steilacoom. He was also a reenactor and on the Fort Board of Directors until he passed away in February 2012.

The 7 foot by 9 foot diorama of the fort contains 29 buildings built to scale and is quite impressive in its scope and attention to detail. The four remaining buildings of the original fort are easily recognized, and now visitors can get a view of the barracks, magazine, hospital and surgeon's quarters, blacksmith shop, granary, commissary, guardhouse and all other structures that were at the fort between 1857 and its closing in 1868.

Along with the buildings, Demorest designed vignettes depicting events that could have been happening in 1858: Leschi being led to the guardhouse, Mrs. Casey receiving guests, soldiers of various units on the parade ground, and more.

Bob built a number of models for Fort Lewis that were used in strategic and tactical planning. One was a complete German village. He also built architectural models for the Army, including one for a new building at the Yakima Firing Range in the 1970s.

**First Fort Buildings** (from p. 1) added a dairy barn constructed from cedar planks and had a second barn underway. A third barn and a granary were built the following year.<sup>1</sup> In all he is known to have built eight structures and fenced 320 acres of land.<sup>1</sup>

The prairie provided excellent grazing and a place to plant many acres of wheat and grow crops of potatoes and "pease" with the help of local Steilacoom Indians who camped nearby. Heath's flock of sheep had increased to about 600 by the summer of 1845 and by 1847 he had 68 cattle, 10 oxen and 18 horses.<sup>1</sup> His cows produced butter, shipped in kegs to the Company. The animals also provided beef, mutton and wool. Half of his profits went to the Company as rent.

Joseph Heath kept a daily journal describing his work, hardships and longing for letters from home—and despondency in not receiving them. After a protracted illness in the winter of 1849, Heath died and the farm was again abandoned.

**Establishment of Fort Steilacoom**

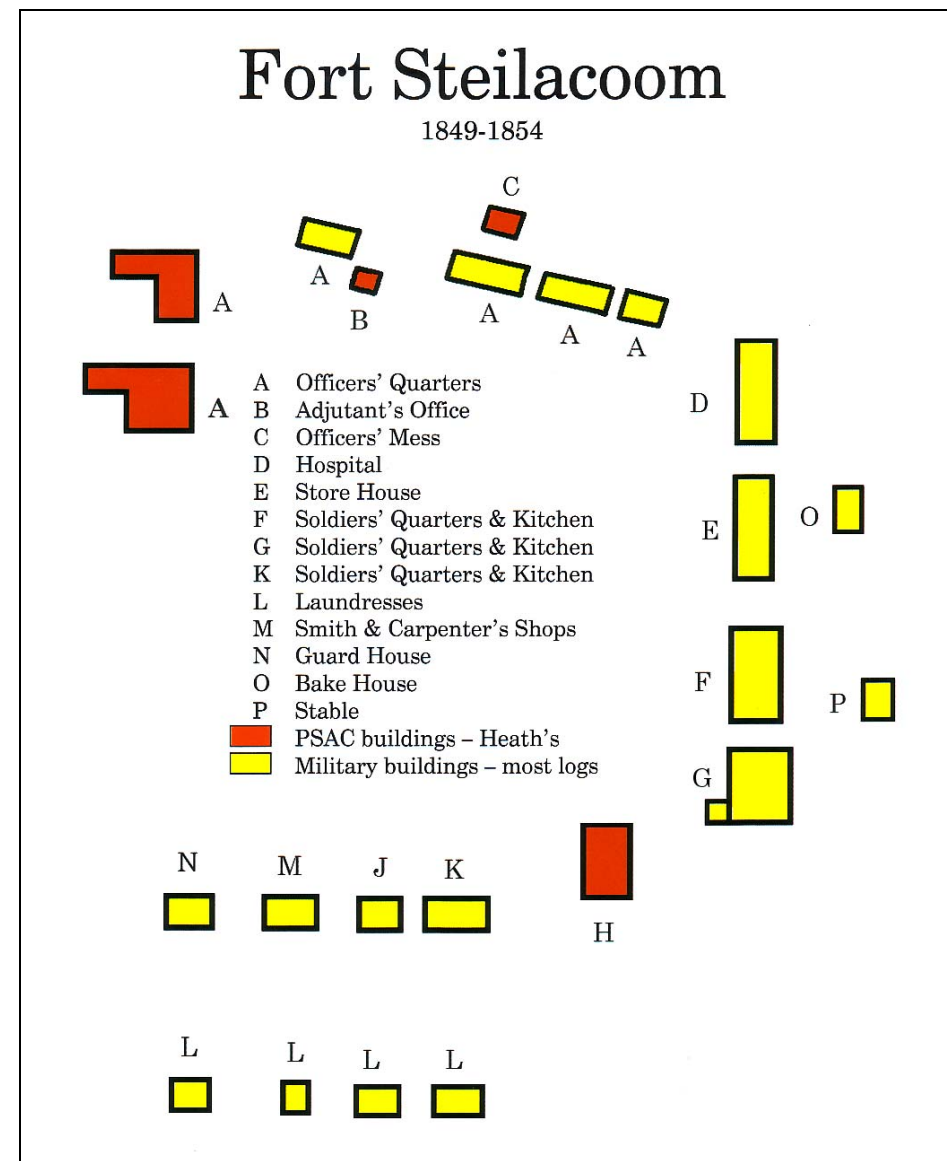
Indians of the Snoqualmie tribe had gathered at Fort Nisqually, a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company. During an altercation between the Snoqualmie and local Indians, Leander Wallace, an American settler, was killed. Using this incident as a reason, though the primary purpose was to establish an American military presence in the region, the U.S. Army sent a contingent from the Vancouver post above the Columbia River to the Puget Sound.

Major John S. Hathaway, commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> Military District, and Captain Bennett N. Hill of the First Artillery and a company of 23 men and a bugler arrived in August 1849. Dr. Tolmie of Fort Nisqually directed them to the site of the Heath farm.

<sup>3</sup> Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *WSH Cultural Landscape Assessment*, 1980, pp. 15, 66.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Loc. cit.*



Hathaway and Hill were favorably impressed with the potential for a fort there because of the existing buildings, fresh water springs and nearness to the Sound. The open expanse of prairie around the farm also provided excellent lines of sight for defense. Hathaway and Hill arranged to rent the land and buildings from the Puget Sound Agricultural Company for \$50 per month for twenty years.<sup>6</sup>

**Fort buildings 1849-1854**

Fort Steilacoom developed its first buildings on the site of Heath's farm

<sup>6</sup> Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *WSH Cultural Landscape Assessment*, 1980, p. 16.

from 1849 to 1854. In the beginning his barns were used as barracks and the house became headquarters for the officers. Several log buildings were rapidly put together by a series of work crews while they undertook the remodeling of the original farm buildings for military use and constructed two officers' quarters, a company storehouse, a guard house, commissary and bakehouse at a cost of \$3,000.<sup>7</sup> They also determined the initial layout of the fort and parade ground. By October there were 75 enlisted men and five officers at the

<sup>7</sup> HFSA, "Brief Chronological History of Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory."