

Building Fort Steilacoom

(continued from page 3)



August Valentine Kautz

During the two year project lumber, shingles and fences were also purchased from Crosbys at Tumwater; window sashes, doors, shingles and cedar lumber from Olympia; and several thousand feet of tongue and grove lumber, lath and pickets from the Puget Mill.⁷ The nearby Byrd Mill is also thought to have furnished framed windows and some millwork.

Lt. Col. Silas Casey replaced Maloney as commander of the fort in December 1857, quite a relief for Quartermaster Kautz. Casey briefly occupied the surgeon's quarters as he awaited the construction of his new residence. Kautz and Dr. Wirtz, who lived together in the quarters, were evicted during this waiting time. Wirtz was furious and thereafter refused to treat members of the Casey family, who were then obliged to call upon Dr. Tolmie of Fort Nisqually.

Work on the commander's quarters and office was slowed by rain and unpleasant weather, but as many as 13 carpenters were at work on this and other buildings in December. The commander's house was the first to be completed, allowing Dr. Wirtz to move back into his quarters—though he still remained

disgruntled and was eventually remanded to a court marshal hearing.⁸ Apparently, he decided to abide by his duties as he remained in the army.

By January 4, 1858, Companies "C" and "H" of the 9th Infantry were able to move into their wood framed barracks (J).⁹ Work stalled for a bit in February because of heavy snow, and in March and April men were quitting and heading for the Fraiser River gold fields in Canada. Those remaining struck for higher wages in May, forcing Kautz to "go down the Sound" and pick up other men to work. Chief Leschi's trials for allegedly murdering Moses and Miles at the beginning of the Indian War had also diverted Kautz's energy.

In his June report, Lt. Kautz stated that the Commanding Officer's Quarters, the Captain's Quarters, the Quartermaster's Office, and Commissary Store, Clothing Store, and Soldiers' Barracks were completed. The picket fence was under construction and the Chaplain's Quarters and five of the Officers' Quarters were yet to be finished.¹⁰ At that time he had up to 27 carpenters, a plasterer and a brickmaker and bricklayer at work. By September 1858, work was completed on over twenty buildings of various scales and complexity. When Col. Joseph Mansfield, the Inspector General, visited Fort Steilacoom in December 1858, he was impressed with the arrangement of the post. He described the location of various buildings within and outside of the picket fence. He reported that ten carpenters were still at work, that most of the buildings were new, and that three companies were properly quartered.¹¹

⁸ Reese, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁹ Neufeld, *op. cit.*, p. 5

¹⁰ Alan Archambault, "This Month in History, the Establishment of Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory."

¹¹ Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, "Brief Chronological History of

Kautz improved upon the previous building layout, organizing them in a defensive form around the edges of the central parade ground. The parade ground remains an open space today with the remnant of two officers quarters, the commanding officer's house and office, and the chaplain's quarters grouped around the north and east edges.

After completing his work at the fort, Kautz was transferred to Semiahmoo Bay where he undertook similar work.¹² During the Civil War he attained the rank of Major General. Afterward, he was mustered out of the service at Fort Vancouver Barracks and retired to the Seattle area with his second wife and family.

Closing of the fort in 1869

The Civil War turned the United States Army's attention away from the frontier stations. Because Fort Steilacoom was the largest military post on the Puget Sound, it remained in operation with volunteers serving to control general lawlessness.

The Fort's role was re-evaluated after the war. Due to its inland location, it was not useful for coastal defense and the Indian uprisings were no longer of major concern. Fort Steilacoom was officially abandoned on August 22, 1868. The last unit to be stationed at the fort was E Battery, 2nd Field Artillery, with five officers and 124 men commanded by Captain Charles H. Pierce. Elwood Evans secured the flag when it was lowered for the last time. The flag remained in the Evans family for some years. It is now again at Fort Steilacoom on display in the Interpretive Center.

Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory," citing Mansfield's 1858 report.

¹² Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Fort Steilacoom

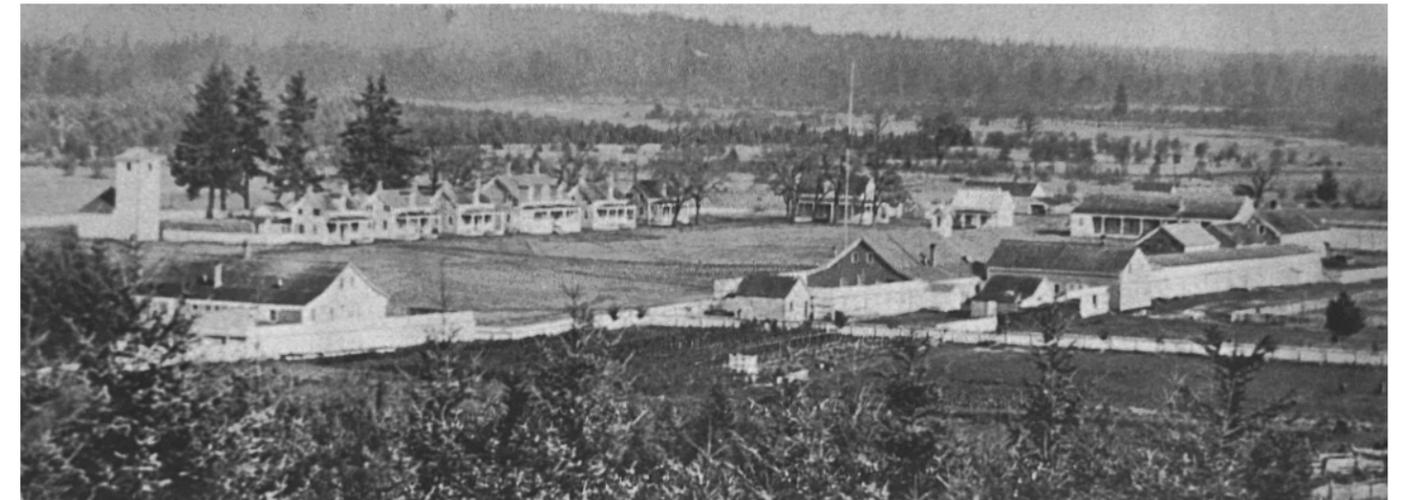
Vol. 29, No. 2

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Summer, 2012

Building Fort Steilacoom

by Orville H. Stout



Fort Steilacoom underwent major re-construction in 1857-1858. It is uncertain when this photograph was taken, but one of the barracks buildings is not shown and would have been in the open space in the left center foreground. When the mental hospital began using the fort, some buildings were moved and combined to form wards and others removed.

Part 2: Last Buildings 1857-1858

There were three major phases in the construction of Fort Steilacoom buildings. The first two were described in the last issue of the newsletter. A major reconstruction of the fort was undertaken after the Indian War of 1855-1856.

Indian War of 1855-1856

Governor Isaac Stevens forced a treaty upon the Indians of the Territory restricting them to reservations and depriving them of their traditional way of living. Resentment of this and other mistreatment erupted into conflict in 1855, the so called Indian War, led in the local area by Leschi of the Nisquallies. Ft. Steilacoom served as a refuge when, fearing an Indian

attack, settlers from the Puyallup valley fled there. The women and children were housed in the barracks with the soldiers taking up temporary quarters.

The war marked a defining point in the fort's regional role and physical development. The number of troops and militia stationed at the fort increased substantially as patrols operated out of this fort. Michael Connell and James McAllister, of Captain Eaton's Rangers, were killed on the southeast corner of Connell's Prairie shortly before the outbreak of the war. They were trying to visit Leschi's camp on a friendly mission. A. B. Moses and Joseph Miles were ambushed and killed on the edge of the prairie as they were expressed to

Fort Steilacoom. Leschi was later accused of the "murders."

At the end of the war, Leschi, betrayed by his nephew for a few blankets, was captured and held at the Fort Steilacoom guard house. The first trial in Steilacoom ended without a verdict. A second trial in Olympia pronounced him guilty even though Lt. Kautz and others came strongly to his defense. Col. Casey refused to allow the hanging to take place at the fort, so it was carried out in an oak grove between the fort and Byrd's Mill on February 19, 1858.

Major construction 1857-1858

After the end of the Indian War, Fort Steilacoom was to experience a third major period of building. Recovering from his arduous climb

(Continued on page 3)

⁷ Neufeld, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

President..... Lawrence Bateman
 Past President Carol Neufeld Stout
 1st Vice Pres. Thomas A. Melberg
 2nd Vice Pres..... Vacant
 Secretary Joseph W. Lewis
 Treasurer Kenneth A. Morgan
 Directors: Alan Archambault, Bill Arends, Bernard Bateman, Steve Dunkelberger, Christine M. Colyar, Nancy Keller-Scholz, Walter T. Neary, C. Gideon Pete, John Roten
 Editor & Publisher Orville H. Stout
 Telephone(253) 582-5838 or 756-3928
 Web Site: www.historicfortsteilacoom.org
 Web Master:.....Stephen Neufeld
 e-mail:....info@historicfortsteilacoom.org

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

President's Message



Thank you to all of our volunteers. You have made our programs and projects succeed. Many visitors have attended our programs. In

March, Nancy Covert told of Laura Belle Downey Bartlett who came over the Naches Pass to Steilacoom with her family in 1853.

Guests viewed and purchased goods at the April Military Swap Meet. In May reenactors interpreted life at the Fort in the 1850s and 1860s. In June, Kathleen Benoun gave an overview of the history of psychiatric hospitals in America.

Come on July 8th at 2 p.m. when John Roten will talk about the "Pig War" dispute in the San Juan Islands.

Volunteers are now needed for the Fort Steilacoom Living History Detachment. The Detachment is a group of history enthusiasts who recreate the life of the infantry soldier as seen in the Regular Army that was posted in the Pacific Northwest during the 1850s & 60s. We participate in local living history events to educate the public about Fort Steilacoom and the soldiers of the frontier army.



Historic Fort Steilacoom Living History Detachment

The HFSLHD is looking for individuals to recreate the Frontier Soldier of the Infantry. To be a member, the applicant must be at least 18 years old. Authenticity is our main focus, so all new recruits must be willing to follow the unit's authenticity standards. At some events the unit marches into the encampment, so recruits must also be fit enough to march several miles with full kit. Recruits who would like more information, can contact us at:

roguehistorians@comcast.net

Lawrence Bateman

Painting Donations

We are progressing toward our goal of raising money to repaint the Fort Steilacoom buildings, but still have a way to go before the work can begin. Time and our Western Washington weather have not been kind to the buildings and the paint applied in the 1980s is flaking off, exposing the structures to the deteriorating effects of the elements. Your continued contributions to preserve these historic structures is much appreciated. Please mail a donation to Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, P.O. Box 88447, Steilacoom, WA 98388.

We are grateful to the following organizations and individuals for their donations to the painting fund as of this time: Nisqually Indian Tribe (grant), Beverly Bills family Herbert and Jean Swanson, Peggy



Example of flaked-off paint.

Bal, John and Kristen McPherson, Joan Shalikhavilli, Paul Timmerman, Nancy Hellyer, Patty Forsyth, John and Janet Fogle, Jerry and Mary McKain, Donald Simpson, Donald F. Johnson, Jay Keyes, Bernard and Margit Bateman, Kenneth Morgan, Orville and Carol Stout, Lakewood Historical Society, Michael G. Harris, Patricia Collier, Lou Dunkin, Carol L. Starr, Mark and Midori Hanus, Joseph Lewis, Hays Wilcoxon Nichols, DuPont Historical Society, Daniel Still, Beth Julian and Sharon L. Kline.

By preserving the past, we prepare for the future.



Kathleen Benoun

On June 10 Kathleen Benoun, librarian at Western State Hospital, presented a history of psychiatric hospitals in America to a full audience at the fort.



Diorama of Fort Steilacoom, created by Robert Demorest, shows the layout and construction of the final fort after 1858. Soldiers of Company M, the 4th Infantry, and the 9th Infantry are on the parade ground, and vignettes tell other activities about the fort. The diagram below identifies the buildings.

Building Fort Steilacoom

(continued from page 1)

of Mount Rainier in July 1857, Lt. August Valentine Kautz, the fort quartermaster, waited for authorization to begin construction.

While he waited he made repairs to existing buildings and installed a ram jet at the artesian spring, which fed Garrison Creek, to pump water up from the gulch between the Sound and the fort to a holding tank constructed of brick, and lined on the outside with planks. A water wagon was filled from the tank then pulled by horse to each building where the water was dispensed in buckets.

Brick for the tank, and for use in the new buildings, was fired in a kiln built at the fort by Stephen Judson of Steilacoom, who hauled clay from a hillside a considerable distance away.¹ During the kiln's period of operation, it produced nearly 100,000 bricks.² Its location is unknown today.

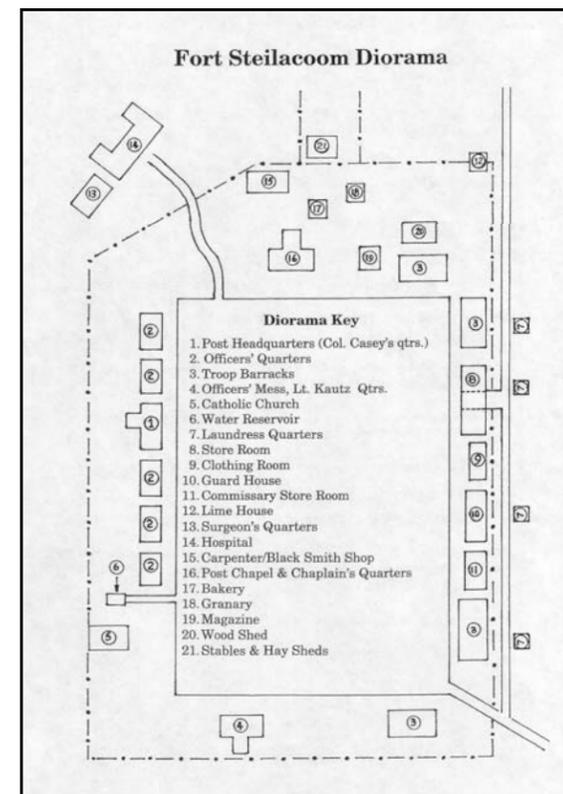
Kautz was plagued all summer by differences with his commanding officer, Major Maurice Maloney. Because he was in charge of the

reconstruction, Kautz issued work orders to the crew, but Maloney, as commander, consistently gave conflicting orders. In his diary Kautz complained of Maloney, "...He is consistently interfering with my duty directing the men and I never know what they are doing."³

In spite of differences with Maloney and hardships obtaining materials and carpenters, work on the reconstruction of older building and other minor projects continued throughout the summer.

Kautz finally received a letter from Col. Swords in October 1857 authorizing the construction of new buildings using standard army plans. An initial deposit of \$7,000 was made at the Treasury office in San Francisco. Kautz set out to purchase lumber from the Chambers mill in Steilacoom, from Meigs at Port Madison, and Balch and Webber at Sequalitychew.⁴

A region-wide wood shortage, however, hampered his efforts to



start construction. In November 1857 Kautz wrote in his diary, "I have difficulty in keeping the men employed, as I have not lumber sufficient to keep them all at work..."⁵ Some of the lumber was also of poor quality, leading Kautz to complain to Webber that "it was very badly sawed with few pieces of the same thickness or of one thickness throughout."⁶

³ August V. Kautz, edited by Gary F. Reese, *The Northwest Journals of August V. Kautz*, p. 71.

⁴ Neufeld, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁵ Kautz, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹ Carol E. Neufeld, "Reconstruction of Fort Steilacoom, 1857-1858," Fort Steilacoom newsletter, Spring 2001, p. 5.

² Artifacts Architectural Consulting, *op. cit.*, p. 108.