

General Casey (from page 3)

worst thunder-storm Casey had ever witnessed. General Johnston's army had been advancing through the night, according to reports by his officer of the day who had heard the rumble of the rail cars as they came out from Richmond.

By 11 o'clock Casey's pickets reported the enemy approaching in force. He reinforced his rifle-pits and established a defensive line of five or six regiments supported by four artillery pieces. About twenty to one o'clock he was attacked in front and on both wings.

When asked the size of the attacking force, Casey responded, "I suppose, about 35,000 men." Next asked how large a force was your division, Casey responded, "Only 4,380 men."

The next logical question was, "How was it supposed that you with 4,000 men could stand there against 35,000 men?"

General Casey responded, "That I do not know. I was promised reinforcements, a brigade from General Keyes corps, but it did not come up." Casey's infantry and four artillery pieces fought for almost three hours before becoming surrounded and were forced to abandon their position. Casey's division lost 1,433 men killed, wounded, or missing. The enemy came down on General Keyes' corps and swept it away. Casey claimed that his division, by its obstinate resistance, saved that army. Others from General McClellan on down did not agree.

But one general did—Confederate General Hill. Hill said, "The division fought as well as I ever want to see men fight; and after it gave away we did not find anything else to fight. Any censure of General Casey would be very unjust."

Casey was asked his opinion on how General McClellan had conducted the peninsula campaign and did he think that Richmond could or should have been taken. Casey responded, "I am perfectly willing to say that he is a man of many talents, but does



Nancy Covert and news photographer at the restored Wallace tombstone monument in the settler's cemetery on the Western State Hospital grounds.

lack some of the qualities of a great general.... If he possessed those qualities we should have taken Richmond." The Committee, after hearing additional testimony, published its report.

Wallace Restored

On a cool, misty November morning in 1951 a solemn group of members from the Fraternal Order of Masons from Steilacoom Lodge No. 2 and Washington State Governor Lister gathered at the gravesite of the fraternal organization's first Master to dedicate a special plaque to the man who made his mark on his adopted homeland.

Early on a misty August morning in 2013, approximately 62 years later, a small group of Steilacoom residents, Western State Hospital personnel, and personnel from Premier Memorial of Tacoma gathered at that same site to restore it.

Wallace, who had served as defense attorney in the controversial Chief Leschi trial in 1858, and served as territorial governor and congressional delegate from Washington Territory before being appointed as Idaho's Territorial Governor and congressional delegate, had expected

to be appointed permanent governor of Idaho. That all changed when his close friend Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865.

Wallace was one of the late president's pall bearers, and after concluding his funeral duties he and his wife, Lucena, returned to Steilacoom, Washington's first incorporated town.

A few years after Wallace spoke to his fellow citizens in July 1865, the townspeople voted to make Wallace their first mayor. He served the waterfront community in that capacity from 1871-79. When he died he was buried at the pioneer gravesite on the grounds of what had become Washington State Hospital.

The contemporary "historic" occasion (restoration of the Wallace tombstone marker) occurred as a follow-up to a return of "William Wallace" in the persona of Idaho's foremost Wallace scholar, Attorney David LeRoy, former Idaho Lt. Governor and Attorney General.

Restoration and interest in the Wallace gravesite was promoted this past spring after Steilacoom's current mayor, Ron Lucas, met and spoke with David LeRoy during Historic Fort Steilacoom's Living History Day on April 20, 2013.

Nancy Covert

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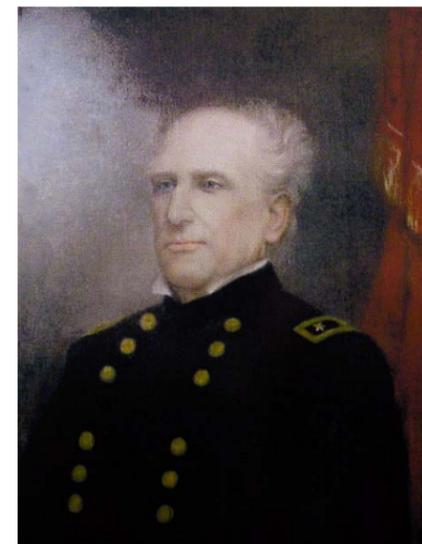
General Casey's Post Fair Oaks Service

by Kenneth A. Morgan

The Summer 2002 edition of the Fort Steilacoom Newsletter relates General Casey's experience as a division commander during the Battle of Fair Oaks, Virginia, May 31st 1862. His division was heavily engaged, had severe casualties, and as a result, he was relieved of command. It was to be his last field command. However, General Casey continued to provide valuable service to the war effort. This article relates that service.

Military commanders learn from their experiences and their mistakes. Fair Oaks was not Casey's first combat experience. He participated in several campaigns against Native Americans in the West and Florida. In the Mexican War he was a company commander and was wounded in the Battle of Chapultepec. But none of these prepared Casey, or other Army officers for that matter, for the style of combat that emerged during the American Civil War. These had been relatively small encounters when compared to those of the Civil War. Pre-war Army strength was around sixteen thousand; Civil War strength was in the hundreds of thousands. The pre-war Army consisted of well trained regulars, led by officers trained at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The Civil War Army was composed of volunteers and state militias commanded by officers often appointed by state politicians, or even elected by the men in the unit.

Such was the make-up of the division Casey led at Fair Oaks. When



General Silas Casey

his 12,000 men embarked for the James Peninsula, they were largely untrained. One regiment had not yet received their weapons. Only one of his officers was a West Point graduate, Colonel G. D. Bailey, chief of artillery.

Considering the state of training, equipment, and leadership, General Casey's division did the best it could at Fair Oaks. Casey had learned his first lesson—soldiers must be well trained and led by competent officers. That was not his only lesson, however. Other officers in the command, notably Generals Heintzelman, Sumner, Keyes, Casey's, corps commander, and even perhaps more importantly, General George McClellan, Army of the Potomac commander, had committed or omitted actions which both directly and indirectly resulted

in Casey's losses at Fair Oaks. General Casey would not forget these lessons.

Special Orders No. 189 of 23 June 1862 relieved General Casey from his division command and put him in command of the military supply depot at White House, Virginia. His duties were to protect the railroad and telegraph communications from the depot to the Army of the Potomac, insure the safety of supplies and their prompt delivery as needed, guard the public property there located, oversee the hospital, and return stragglers and malingerers to their regiments. He was to use convalescents from the hospital to accomplish these requirements. All-in-all a rather important assignment. But this did not last long. On 26 June personnel were evacuated and the depot set afire. General Casey was again without a job.

On 9 December 1861 the U.S. Senate resolved that a joint committee of three members of the Senate and four members of the House of Representatives be appointed to inquire into the conduct of the present war; that they have power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during the recess of either house of congress. The House of Representatives concurred the following day. Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio was elected chair and held the position until the committee was disbanded in 1865. The committee was known as The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.

On 6 January 1862 General Casey was called before the committee to

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President's Message



During the expansion period of the United States, the army built many forts across the frontier. These frontier forts were never

intended to be permanent and were abandoned after they were no longer needed. Many forts have met their end this way and fell into disrepair with the passage of time. Fort Steilacoom was no different and would possibly meet a similar fate after the army left it in 1868.

But Fort Steilacoom got a second chance in 1872 when it became a hospital (today's Western State). It saw many more years of use and the buildings were maintained—until again they were no longer needed and destined to be torn down. But four of those still remaining were granted a chance at life in the 1980s when they were restored to become a museum.

Over the past years we have placed new roofs on them, replaced the furnaces in buildings 1 and 2, and done some minor structural repairs. The last couple of years we started to collect funds for painting the

buildings, and with the help of the Nisqually Tribe and many of you, we were able to get two of them painted and are working toward the third.

Members of HFSA, I can only say that after nearly 160 years these fort buildings are getting tired and need some major work. Many of you may have heard that the fort has come into some money. Yes, thanks to the late Sen. Mike Carroll, who arranged a line on the state budget for \$250K for "Preservation of Ft. Steilacoom." I would like you to know that the HFSA Board is working on getting through the government "red tape" to get work started on giving our fort another chance at life for many more of you to enjoy. There is much work to be done (not just swinging a hammer) to get this going, and much more than just a couple of folks can handle. We are looking for volunteers to help where possible. Please let us know how you can help.

Now for some garrison activity. Over the last couple of months the fort has continued to host a number of groups. We have our regular groups, such as the 4th Infantry reenactors and Grave Concerns, using Quarters 2 for meetings, and have shared the buildings and history with both active duty military and the Historical League of Pierce County.

Recently we held our Founders' Day Picnic in Quarters 2. There were around 15 members in attendance sharing stories and great food. It was also a busy day at the museum with tours for the general public.

Not all of our activity happened at the garrison. We had companies in the field as well. When I refer to "companies" I am talking about members of our organization who represent the personages and units of the fort through Living History. Over the last couple of months, members of Companies A and C (4th Infantry) talked with the general public at the Fort Steilacoom Park Summer Fest. Company M (1st Artillery) attended both the English Camp event on San Juan Island and the Old Fort Townsend event in Port Townsend, WA. They talked

with the public about the U.S. involvement during the "Pig War," and fired off Ben (reproduction 12 lb mountain howitzer).

Company A members recently did an event on San Juan Island as well. On Labor Day weekend they walked (in full 1863 kit) onto the ferry at Anacortes, WA., disembarked at Friday Harbor, and marched down to American Camp. They spent all Saturday doing living history and returned home on Sunday.

Other garrison activities coming up this fall include four major events: The fort will come alive on **September 28** during Living History Day. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. reenactors will live and work as soldiers, officers, their wives and children. On **October 20** at 2 p.m. we will have our Annual Meeting in Quarters 2. Walter Neary will bring Herbert Hunt, an early editor of the *Tacoma News*, back to life through living history. On **November 17** at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2 we present "You Are There" in which a moderator from the present will interview historical persons from Fort Steilacoom's past. And **December 14** will feature a Candle Light Christmas of 1863 from 4 to 7:30 p.m., once again bringing the fort to life as it might have been during the Civil War.

Hope to see you all at the fort!

Lawrence Bateman

Donations



Thank you to Charlotte Medlock who donated two coverlets from the 1840-50s along with coverlet literature. The handmade items were from her grandmother who brought them to Tacoma in the 1890s.

General Casey (from page 1)

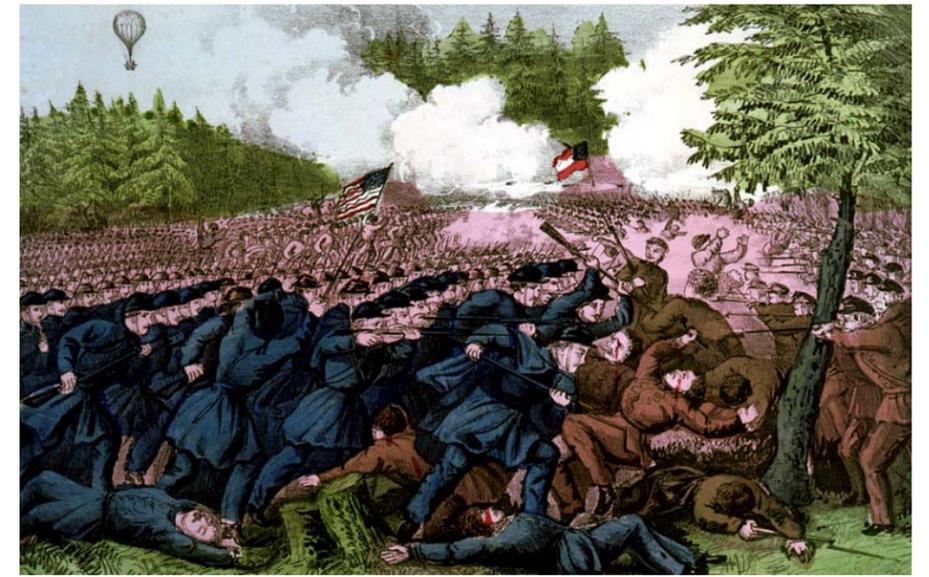
testify. He had lots to say. When Casey was asked his present position in the Army, he responded he was colonel of the 4th regular infantry and brigadier general of volunteers. As such, he was in command of all the volunteers in and around Washington, training the regiments as they reported in, and forming them into brigades, a present total of some 15,000 volunteers. He also stated he was erecting defensive fortifications throughout the city.

Next asked his opinion of the efficiency, health, and discipline of his troops, Casey stated that they were raw troops, some of the regiments were in very good order, and are very efficient, and in general can be made superior to the regulars as the regulars were prone to drunkenness.

Casey was most concerned, however, with the quality of the officers, stating: "You do not get the right kind of men for officers always. The officers sometimes are very improper for their station, and it takes time to instruct them. Often there are men in the ranks better fitted to command than the officers themselves. This is a great difficulty in the whole Army."

Casey was a member of a congressionally approved board charged with weeding out improper persons, but they could only be found by trying. He had sat on some twenty or thirty cases. Casey testified, "What we want is time to get the right kind of officers and to discipline the men. When we have done that we need not fear the world."

He was also quite critical with the quality of the arms being furnished to the regiments. Some were well armed, but others only had the old flint-lock muskets which had been changed to percussion. Others had old Belgian and Austrian rifles. All being inferior to the Springfield rifle. General Casey's testimony was to prove correct during the Battle of Fair Oaks that spring. Casey was again called by the committee on 5 March 1863, this time to explain his



Lithograph by Currier & Ives "Battle of Fair Oaks"

Perceived failures at the battle of Fair Oaks resulted in General Casey's transfer to other duties. He later gave testimony to a Congressional Committee.

connection with the Army of the Potomac's (AoP) peninsula campaign. After stating his current assignment, General Casey was asked to relate, without any questioning, the incidents of the campaign which appeared to him to be important, and the causes of its failure which he may be able to point out.

Casey said he had been with the AoP from March to June. His first observation was the quartermaster's department was not sufficiently well conducted. The eight regiment division left Alexandria late in the day and traveled through the night in a severe snow storm. His camp was established near Newport News, but it took about twelve days for proper transportation to arrive. Therefore, the men had to pack their provisions from the depot to camp. This delay greatly hampered the advancement of the division. Reports were received 4 May that the enemy was near. Casey was ordered to pursue. General Sumner ordered Casey to leave everything behind—tents, blankets, knapsacks, etc. The enemy had evacuated. He planned to send back for his equipment, but was ordered by Sumner to push on. The division was without blankets and knapsacks for several weeks. It was raining

terribly during that time, so many of the men became ill as a result of their exposure. Medicines, especially quinine, despite Casey's efforts, were unavailable. Casey said he was never in a more sickly country.

As the AoP advanced up the peninsula, General Casey reported difficulty getting provisions; the men often going twenty-four hours without them. He characterizes the march as one of movement, counter-movement and no movement at all. He was ordered several times to change the marching order of his brigades, detaching them to other divisions. Casey's division was leading General Keyes' corps when they crossed the Chickahominy River. They were advancing, driving the enemy toward Seven Pines (Fair Oaks). His division was pushing forward like a wedge with no support on either flank into the presence of a strong enemy force. Casey established himself in a defensive position by constructing rifle-pits, abatis, and other structures. Contrary to his advice and opinion, Casey was ordered forward to within six miles of Richmond. For two nights his pickets were attacked, with losses, but they held.

Casey was attacked on the morning of 31 May, after a night of the