



Ellen's father, George Chapman, began the Flett Dairy in 1903 and sold it in 1910 to Robert Portman.

"He was working at that time in the Northern Pacific car shops where they repaired railway cars. My mother had a cow and knew how to milk it, but he didn't. It intrigued him to think that there would be an industry he could get into if he knew how to milk a cow. He learned and then proceeded to get one more cow."

Soon George Chapman quit his job at the Northern Pacific repair shop and devoted his full time to the dairy. The business became a large enterprise with many cows, several employees and buildings. The dairy was sold in 1910 to Robert Portman.

Ellen had vivid memories of her childhood in the Flett community. She especially recalled learning at the McGeary School on the Flett prairie. "The teacher usually got there early to build a fire in the large stove in the corner of the room. We bought our own books and pencils and paper. Nothing was furnished except the large Webster's dictionary." Though she liked school, she also enjoyed recess. "It was such a joy, because we could play on the school ground."

For seventh and eighth grades, Ellen left Flett and attended Park Lodge School, over by what is now Lakewood Town Center. Then she attended Lincoln High School before going on to Bellingham Normal. After two years of teacher training, she taught six years in three two-room schools. Because she was the

teacher of the upper grades, she was also the principal.

Ellen remembered her duties as principal, which were very clearly outlined by the school board. "I handled any community or school discipline. I handed in a report of the complete school year to the courthouse."

When Ellen Chapman married A. W. Freckleton, she resigned her teaching position and moved to Tacoma for four years. But then her father, who was living alone in the Flett house, wanted company. So in 1941 the Freckletons moved back to the house in which she had been born. "I lived with my father until his death, taking care of this old house."

When Ellen died at the age of 99 on November 11, 2001, her daughter, Beth Julian, took the responsibility of caring for the Flett home and family history. Beth has donated a number of items from the Flett estate to Historic Fort Steilacoom, including a melodian made in the 1850s by the George A. Price Company of Buffalo, New York. John and Ellen Flett acquired the instru-

ment from a church for their home where the music was enjoyed by them and later generations of the family. A most recent gift to the fort museum is the crib Beth's grandmother Annie Chapman slept in after her birth in 1864.



Daughter Beth and granddaughter Christine Julian are embraced by Ellen Freckleton. Photo taken in 1988.

(Photos in this article are courtesy of Beth and Gerald Julian.)

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Ellen Chapman Freckleton A Guardian of History

by Carol Neufeld Stout

Ellen Chapman Freckleton, the granddaughter of John Flett, an 1841 settler of Pierce County, was the guardian of the Flett home and family history. Ellen lived in the house her grandfather Flett had built in 1889 on section 26 of the Bradley Donation Claim. This area, five miles east of Steilacoom, became known as the Flett community after John and Ellen Flett. The home, which once sat at the corner of Custer Road and Bridgeport Way, was moved down the block to make room for the service station now there. But Ellen still maintained the pioneer house and its many items of historic interest. The Flett home is on the Washington State list of historic sites.

Though Ellen did not know her maternal grandfather John Flett, she had heard stories about him from her grandmother, Ellen Flett. And she read accounts of her grandfather's activities in Bonney's *History of Pierce County, Washington*, the *Tacoma Weekly Ledger*, and documents the family has preserved.

Ellen knew that John Flett "was a self-made man. His education was possibly only a year or two. His father worked for the Hudson Bay Company, so he became a Hudson Bay man, too. He came west with a group that arrived in 1841 at Fort Nisqually."

One of the documents Ellen preserved is Flett's account of the 2,000 mile trip from Canada to the Oregon



Courtesy Beth & Gerald Julian 2012

The Flett home, near the intersection of Bridgeport Way and Custer Road, is a recognized historic site in Lakewood. It was moved from its original site on the corner, but Flett Creek still bubbles along behind.

Territory. It tells how he traveled under the direction of the Hudson Bay Company. He left from Selkirk's settlement in the Canadian Red River Valley on the 4th of June 1841 and arrived at the Bay's Fort Nisqually in November 1841.

Because the Hudson Bay Company was unable to furnish the horses, barns, or fields promised to the settlers, John Flett went to Forest Grove, Oregon, in June 1842. He took a donation claim which he farmed until 1859.

Returning to Pierce County, Washington Territory, he took up three different claims. The first was in South Prairie on land that now includes Orting. Another was near Sumner on part of the original Woolery claim, and the third was on Section 26 of the old Bradley Donation Claim.

"My grandfather worked for a while as an Indian agent for the United States government on the Puyallup Reservation," Ellen recalled. "Grandpa taught blacksmithing and

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President's Message



Since my last report, we have had Company M in the field. Members of Historic Fort Steilacoom supported the Armed Forces

Day event at JBLM (Joint Base Lewis McChord). The company spoke to members and families of the present army about the role of the US Army in the 1800s in the Pacific Northwest. They also fired the reproduction Howitzer throughout the day. Other Living History Historians of HFSA supported the event in other time periods to talk with the public about the role of the US Armed Services around the world.

On June 15th John McPherson presented a lecture on the role of Fort Steilacoom during the Civil War. Many problems were faced by the territorial government during that time to man the posts left vacant by the regular army. It was necessary to recruit men for the 1st Regiment Territorial Volunteers and move these companies throughout the territory. Due to budget cuts and the fact that the fort did not serve a strategic purpose any longer, it was shut down in 1868. If you missed



On April 6 Beth Julian shared the story of her great grandfather, John Flett, who came to Fort Nisqually from the Red River Valley in Canada in 1841. After some years in Oregon, he eventually settled in Pierce County. Beth used a Power Point slide presentation, photos, maps and memorabilia to tell her family story.

this lecture, no problem. It was recorded on DVD by Orville Stout and can be signed out in the fort library.

A couple of future events for the fort: July 4th (Friday), Steilacoom Street Fair. Members of HFSA will be manning the booth in front of City Hall. We will also have Living Historians in period attire.

July 12th (Saturday) will be an open house at the fort in conjunction with the Fort Steilacoom Park Summer Fest. The fort buildings will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Keep checking on the website for updates and events.

Fort Steilacoom is always looking for volunteers to help out at events or the museum. If you wish to help out, please contact us. We are now working on our summer hours: Every Sunday 1-4 p.m. until Labor Day.

One last item. October will be our Annual Meeting where we elect new officers. Start thinking about being a board member. People like you keep this historic association going.

Lawrence Bateman
 "In treue fest"



On June 15 John McPherson gave an in-depth talk about the American Civil War as it affected California, Oregon and Washington territories and the San Juan Islands. At that time Fort Steilacoom was manned by the 1st Regiment Territorial Volunteers.

John will be submitting newsletter articles more particularly about Fort Steilacoom's role. Watch for coming issues.

Ellen Freckleton (from page 1)



John Flett

Ellen's grandfather first came from the Canadian Red River Valley to the area in 1841. He left for Oregon the next year, but returned in 1859 to Pierce County.



Ellen Monro Flett

Grandmother Monro came from Canada with her parents to Fort Vancouver in 1842, later marrying John Flett. Their daughter Anna married George Chapman.



Anna, Ellen & George Chapman

Anna Flett and George Chapman were married in 1895. Ellen was born in 1902. She married Adam Freckleton in 1936.



The Flett family home as it appeared in 1892. The home was built in 1889.

farming to the boys and grandma taught sewing and cooking to the girls."

Grandma Flett, following the voyagers route through Canada, came with her family in 1842 to Fort Vancouver, just a year after her

future husband traveled the same path. Ellen remembered her grandmother talking about this experience. "She told me that she was only six and it was the most terrifying experience of her life. At one point in the

trip she was placed on a horse that was jumping and turning so much that she feared she would fall off. When they got to the upper region of the Columbia River, they traveled on a barge under a tarpaulin. She recalled peeking out at the steep cliffs on the Columbia."

A first memory of Ellen's life was of her father, George Chapman, and the Flett Dairy where they lived. "I remember the dining room table, which was the social meeting place of the day. The driver of the milk wagon and the boys who helped on the place, and my own family sat around the dining room table. We talked about what had happened during the day. The boys always had a funny story, so it was a really fun time."

George Chapman, Ellen's father, met her mother, Anna Flett, when he worked as a carpenter on the Flett house. "After the home was completed, he went away to work at other places, but he came back occasionally to see my mother. They were married in 1895."

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