

“amid loud cheering between citizens and soldiers” as one company of troops disembarked the steamer and another waited to board (PSH, 10/9/1862). There is no doubt that bitter feelings were held mutually between the Steilacoom community and Capt. Crowninshield, and the embattled captain must have quickened his step as he boarded the steamer. On the other hand, not all feelings were harsh towards all of the members of Co. E. Lt. Israel remained at the post to complete the transition of records and stores from his unit to that of the newly-arrived company. By the end of October, Israel had completed his work and was scheduled to depart Steilacoom on the 27<sup>th</sup> to rejoin his company at Benicia Barracks. The *Puget Sound Herald* offered a glowing review of Lt. Israel, warmly commending his “gentlemanly manner” and stating that “The volunteer service does not



Courtesy Steilacoom Historical Museum Assn.

### Lt. Newton Stiles Israel

possess a more faithful and worthy officer, nor more likely to win distinction, with fitting opportunity” (PSH, 10/23/1862, p.2). On Monday, Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Israel joined Lt. Col. Patten and Patten’s daughter aboard the steamer *Eliza Anderson* bringing to a close the service of the California Volunteers on the Puget Sound.

Company E’s 11 month service at Ft. Steilacoom illustrates the sharp learning curve experienced by many a volunteer service unit during the American Civil War. Untrained and inexperienced not only with the science of warfare, they were also unprepared for managing a full-fledged garrison and at times a hostile community. For a period going back 12 years before the war, the community of Steilacoom had developed a close relationship with a professional military organization only to be confronted in 1861 with an amateur and somewhat foreign group of troops. Furthermore, Co. E’s mission on the Sound was unclear and the duration of their service unknown. The company was left to fend for itself for six months before pay and command interest could

catch up. By then, irreparable harm had been done and only a transfer of men could restore local faith in the army. Company E did have its fair share of bad apples, particularly in the story of one Private Peter Kleinhoff (often reported as Kleinkopf) who later murdered a fellow soldier at Benicia, attempted to escape, and was eventually captured. Kleinhoff was sentenced to be shot to death and his sentence was carried out on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1863, making him the only California soldier to be executed in this manner during the Civil War. After its time at Steilacoom, Co. E saw additional service in California until late 1864 when the regiment and its companies were reorganized due to the expiration of its enlistments. The career of Capt. Crowninshield did not extend long after his departure from Ft. Steilacoom; while stationed at Benicia Barracks in December 1862, Crowninshield was dismissed from the service due to intemperance, an issue that may have played a significant role in the captain’s actions while on the Sound. Although no longer in the military service, Crowninshield continued to support the war effort as evidenced

by his raising funds for the Sanitary Commission later that June 1863 in Sacramento. For 50 cents, audience members could listen to the good captain expound on his thoughts regarding the war, specifically his thoughts regarding the program’s title, “Why has the war not been ended & what are the prospects” (SDU, 6/15/1863)? The California troops served only a brief time at Steilacoom, but their story is rich and deserves to be told. They were men who answered the call of their nation in a time of national crisis. They fought no pitched battles but gave up the comforts of home and hearth to maintain a secure watch over the very edge of the American continent.

ORs: *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*

PSH: *Puget Sound Herald*

SDU: *Sacramento Daily Union*

## Coming Events

### Sept. 27: Museum Day Live-Smithsonian

Fort Steilacoom will come alive as reenactors portray soldiers, officers, their wives and children. Open to the public from 10 to 4.

### Oct. 19: Annual Meeting

Following the election of board members and officers, Nancy Covert will talk about her new book, *American Lake Vignettes*. A book signing will follow.

### Nov. 16: Civil War Infantry

Alan Archambault will present his new book *Civil War Infantry* followed by a book signing. He will speak about the life of the soldiers using illustrations from his book

### Dec. 14: Christmas at Fort Steilacoom

Reenactors will present a period candle-light Christmas in the four officers’ quarters. The gift shop will be open. Tickets will be available at the fort’s Interpretive Center.

# Fort Steilacoom

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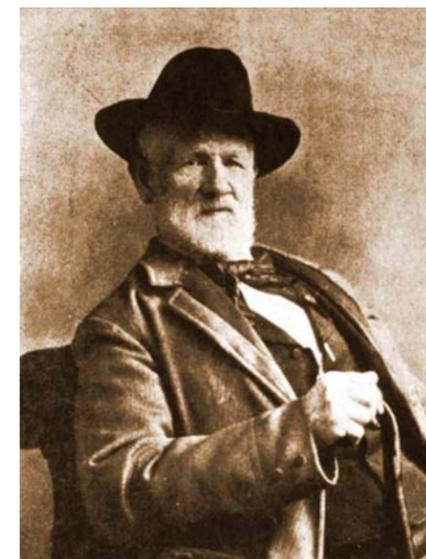
Autumn, 2014

## A California Company on the Sound

by John McPherson

Captain John C. Crowninshield must have felt a profound sense of relief as he boarded the steamer that would take his company of volunteers back to their home state of California. It was a dark October evening in 1862 that saw the departure of a disgruntled infantry company and its much-maligned commander, a man whose dreams of glory on the battlefield were dashed by what seemed like his company’s abandonment at a remote post on the Puget Sound. Newspaper editor Charles Prosch spoke for the Steilacoom community, offering the following, scathing farewell: “... none regret the departure of Crowninshield. He is deemed fit only for a lunatic asylum, and a feeling of relief is experienced at his leaving” (PSH, 10/9/1862, p. 2).

Raised in response to President Abraham Lincoln’s April 1861 call for troops to suppress the rebellion of the southern states, the Fourth Regiment of California Volunteer Infantry represented the patriotic fervor of men recruited from the mining districts of Northern California. Of note was the regiment’s first commander, Fort Steilacoom alumnus Col. Henry Judah. In September 1861, Company E of this regiment drew its manpower from Placer and Trinity counties, eventually concentrating its resources at Auburn, California, just north of Sacramento in October 1861. Appointed to command the new company was a man active in local democratic politics and one who had proven instrumental in crafting



Charles Prosch

a local political platform that broke with the pro-slavery wing of his own party. Captain John Crowninshield recruited men for his company before forming the entire company in San Francisco in mid-October with fellow officers 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Edward B. Blake and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Newton Israel. These California Volunteers fully expected to set sail from San Francisco for the seat of war in the East; others may have dreamed of an invasion of Texas via an overland march. Few expected to remain on the Pacific Coast during the momentous years of the Civil War.

Despite a flurry of confusing and often contradictory orders during the previous summer of 1861, the War Department solidified its plans to vacate the West Coast of Regular

Army troops by the fall of 1861. Local political leaders, alarmed at the exodus of the Regular Army, successfully petitioned the Lincoln Administration to maintain a military presence on the coast using volunteer troops in place of the departed Regulars. Washington Territory struggled in its recruiting efforts, taking nearly a year to fill out barely two companies of troops. In the meantime, troops were sorely needed to occupy the now vacated or soon-to-be-abandoned posts on both sides of the Cascades. At Fort Steilacoom, Captain Dickinson Woodruff awaited the arrival of a relief force that would free his two companies of 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regulars (D & F) to leave for San Francisco’s Presidio. He received news on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1861, that relief would be on the way in the form of Crowninshield’s Company E/4<sup>th</sup> California Volunteers. Co. E had left San Francisco on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, stopped briefly at Vancouver Barracks, and departed Vancouver Barracks on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Charles Prosch reported that Company E arrived at the Steilacoom Wharf on Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup>. Impressed by what he saw, he described the company of 85 men as being “fine-looking men, too, compared with the regulars whose places they fill. Twenty-five of them measure over six feet ... while all are above the medium height. Many of them are fresh from the California mines” (PSH, 11/21/1861, p. 2). No sooner had the volunteers arrived as the “remnants” of the Regulars departed. Captain Woodruff

(Continued on page 3)

## HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM ASSOCIATION

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### President's Message



Hello All!

I just wanted to share a couple of past events at the Fort and what is coming up. We have had some out of garrison events that involved members of the HFSA.

We again set up our booth at the Steilacoom 4<sup>th</sup> of July Street Fair and shared information about the history of Fort Steilacoom. Three of us Living Historians stood by the Fort Steilacoom booth in uniforms and had our pictures taken with the public. Bernie Bateman organized some brave souls to march in the DuPont parade in the morning and then moved over to march in the Steilacoom parade in the afternoon. Three cheers for those who marched!

The Fort was open to the public during the Fort Steilacoom Park Summer Fest on Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> of July. We brought in about 50 visitors.

A few members of the Association attended the DuPont Salmon Bake (held on the original grounds of Fort Nisqually) on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> of August. They even took "Ben" and fired a couple of canon rounds.



*The Parade Ground is set up for the Living History Day on July 12, 2014.*

August was also our annual Founders' Day Picnic. We had a fine time with great food and friends. There were 15 of us there. This marked the 165<sup>th</sup> year of Fort Steilacoom.

September 27<sup>th</sup> is Museum Day Live. The fort will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tours of the buildings will take place and visitors will get a chance to talk to Living Historians about the fort.

Remember our Annual Membership Meeting and program on October 19<sup>th</sup>. We will be having Association Board elections. We are looking for some fine folks to step up to fill these positions. After the short meeting Nancy Covert will talk about her new book *American Lake Vignettes*. She will tell about American Lake (Tacoma's playground), Lake City, Tillicum, Thornwood "Castle," and the establishment of Camp Murray, Fort Lewis and the V. A. Hospital. A book signing will follow.

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, Tracy's Painting began work on Quarters 4.

It has been a great year at the fort, and we only have a couple more events for the year. Let's see what fun, exciting events will be coming in 2015.

See you all on the Parade Ground!

*Lawrence Bateman*

### Donations

Sharon Kline, lifetime Fort Steilacoom member, recently donated three items to the museum. A child's bed designed to sleep two children, one at each end, was made low to the ground in case a child fell out.

An Overshot Lindsey Woolsey coverlet was made by a woman in Southern Indiana who carded and dyed the wool, spinning all of the yarn used. It was made on a four harness loom, producing two pieces that were sewn together.

The third item is a laundry dasher used to work clothes up and down in a tub.

no hoax. Butterfield was incarcerated but for only a short time. The incident, despite the seriousness of the accusations, must not have captured the attention of the community for long. Prosch delayed his reporting of the event for a full two weeks. Details of the affair appeared in print at the end of Major Patten's first full week on post. The *Herald* speculated as to Crowninshield's motivations, possibly that of intoxication, possibly that of mental illness. Prosch opined that Crowninshield was "a fool for the want of good sense" but also tempered this assessment by adding that "When perfectly sane, Capt. Crowninshield is regarded by citizens & soldiers alike as a very good man and is generally liked by all who encounter him."

By late May 1862, the whereabouts of the seven deserters and the missing quartermaster stocks were made public by an anonymous Pierce County citizen. In Prosch's May 22<sup>nd</sup> issue, the men responsible for the March break-in had opened a clothing store in Victoria and "were doing an extensive business while their stock of stolen goods lasted" (1862, p. 2). Furthermore, it was revealed that the thieves had auctioned eight muskets to Canadian bidders at the bargain price of one dollar each! On the other hand, a positive change had come about, most likely due to the influence of newly-arrived Major Patten.

In the same issue of the *Herald*, Lt. Newton Israel, acting quartermaster, had posted an advertisement requesting sealed proposals for 500 cords of oak wood and 1000 cords of pine or fir wood. He also requested bids for 400 pounds of fresh beef to be supplied each week. This ad also ran a week later with the addition of a request for 70 tons of "good, well-cured Timothy hay" as well as eight tons of "good oat straw" to be delivered at the garrison stables (PSH, 5/29/62, p. 2). Within two weeks, Lt. Israel reported that he had awarded the hay contract to Philip Keach at the price of \$15.45 per ton, a price that was considerably lower than a more recent transaction locally

where Mr. Keach had charged a local firm \$50 per ton. Prosch pointed this fact out rather dryly in his reporting as "Some difference in the two rates" (PSH, 6/12/1862, p. 2). Those who wished to provide bids to Lt. Israel now had to "submit unequivocal evidence of their loyalty to the United States Government" as a requirement for consideration. By the middle of June, Philip Keach had secured the contracts for the beef and wood contracts; he would be reimbursed for 500 cords of oak wood at the rate of \$5.49 per cord and fresh beef at the adjustable rate of 14, 15, and 16 cents per pound. The garrison had now seemingly rid itself of its undesirable elements, secured its supply stores, and now could maintain its supply of subsistence as it did before the departure of the Regulars.

The mysterious desertion of Privates Robert Gray and Darius Remington in June 1862 may have contributed to a second, controversial arrest of a local citizen. Their stealing away aboard a Victoria-bound steamer surprised many as it seemed as though the desertion problem had been solved. Perhaps they had been influenced by the exhortations of a Philip Hansleman, a former soldier who had seen extensive military service both in the Regular Army and Oregon Volunteers. Hansleman lived just beyond the fence line of Fort Steilacoom as a private citizen but was known by Crowninshield and his officers as a man who "encouraged desertion and insubordination among the volunteers" (PSH, 6/26/1862, p. 2). Whether or not Gray and Remington's desertion was the last straw in a long line of complaints directed towards Hansleman is unclear, but it is known that Crowninshield ordered the arrest and confinement of Hansleman that same week.

The summer of 1862 passed uneventfully for the men of Company E. They fired a salute to celebrate the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday and observed the slow growth of a new company of volunteers in their midst. Sheriff Tucker, well-known to the men of

Co. E, eagerly recruited men for his Co. K of the First Washington Territory Volunteer Infantry. The company could muster only 20 men by late August. But, things appeared to pick up in early September with the arrival of nearly a dozen more men. What was clear to the men of Co. E was that they were the last of the Fourth Regiment of California Volunteers to remain in Washington Territory. Companies of the Fourth California Infantry had begun leaving the territory already, replaced by new companies of territorial volunteers. By autumn, Co. E fully expected to be at home in California. Unfortunately for the Californians at Ft. Steilacoom, their stay was extended due to the anemic growth of Company K. Fortunately, Special Orders No. 168, dated September 23, 1862, gave Co. E the news for which they had been waiting: they would not have to wait for Co. K to fill its rolls, another company would come to man the post (ORs, Vol. II, p. 132)! Co. E would be relieved by Co. G/1<sup>st</sup> Washington Territory Volunteers, an 80-man unit commanded by Captain Edward Barry, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. George E. Hall, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. J.R. Hardenburg, Jr.; however, prior to the departure of Co. E, the Army held a court of inquiry at Fort Steilacoom on September 25<sup>th</sup> to investigate the conduct of Co. E's officers. The court focused primarily on the conduct of Captain Crowninshield with an additional investigation of the actions taken by his lieutenants. In terms of action taken, the issues must have been settled with the news of an imminent command change. Not only would Crowninshield and his company depart within two weeks, so would Major Patten. Fort Steilacoom would receive shortly a new and admired post commander, Lt. Colonel Thomas C. English, formerly a captain with the Ninth Infantry before the war.

The arrival of Captain Barry's Co. G of the First W.T.V. at 9 o'clock on the evening of October 8, 1862, marked the end of Company E's service on the Sound. The Steilacoom wharf was a bustling place

## California Co. *(from page 1)*

marched aboard the steamer *Pacific* the 20 men of his Company F/9<sup>th</sup> and the 50 men of George Pickett's Company D/9<sup>th</sup>, Pickett having tendered his resignation at Fort Steilacoom the previous July 26<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately for post surgeon Dr. Hagar, the arrival of the *Pacific* did not coincide with orders for him to move with Woodruff's men. Dr. Hagar had sold off most of his belongings except for "wearing apparel...at a heavy sacrifice" in anticipation of a presumed transfer.

Company E's presence at Steilacoom was met initially with great enthusiasm. Charles Prosch of the *Puget Sound Herald* saw the changes at the fort as breaking in "upon the monotony which had so long existed in Steilacoom" (PSH, 11/21/1861, p. 2). The new company even contributed to the holiday scene that followed shortly after its arrival. The local press lauded the talents of musician Stephen F. Bigelow who had performed at area holiday balls: "He acquitted himself very creditably; eliciting shouts of laughter at his comic songs, and bursts of applause at his sentimental songs. As a vocalist and instrumental musician he is hard to match" (PSH, 1/9/1862, p. 2). Unfortunately, this era of good feelings would not last.

By early February 1862 the men of Company E had cause for concern. The absence of the paymaster for three months had strained both the patience and financial resources of the Californians. Prosch noted that they were "not over well pleased with being placed in garrison here, instead of going East, as they supposed they would when they enlisted ... the stock of money they brought with them was long since exhausted and the men now feel the want of it for purchase of such necessaries as are not included in their rations .... A growing discontent, we learn, is manifesting itself" (PSH, 2/13/1862, p. 2). Perhaps to distract themselves from the lack of pay or to add a bit of color to the cold, drizzly grey days of February, the officers of Steila-



*Courtesy Steilacoom Historical Museum Assn.*

## **Capt. Egbert H. Tucker**

coom hatched a devious scheme intended to arouse the passions of the sleepy town. On Tuesday, February 11, the citizens of Steilacoom witnessed the arrest of Pierce County Sheriff Egbert H. Tucker by Lt. Blake and two soldiers armed with muskets and fixed bayonets. A crowd of onlookers gathered, aghast at the scene. Tucker and Blake informed the growing mob that the arrest had been ordered by Territorial Governor Turney and that Tucker was to be confined at the Fort Steilacoom guardhouse until the following March, the earliest point at which a hearing could be convened. The charges were strange, accusing Tucker of refusing to obey a court summons related to a tax dispute involving the Puget Sound Agricultural Cooperative at Fort Nisqually. Stranger still, the sleigh carrying away Tucker, Blake, and the two soldiers traveled not in the direction of Steilacoom, but Nisqually instead. Sympathetic citizens offered to pay for Tucker's release; local attorney Frank Clark offered legal services on-the-spot. As Tucker and party moved south, the crowd got ugly suggesting "the organization of military companies" to break Tucker out of jail "by force of arms." Furthermore, some threatened to tar and feather the territorial governor! (PSH, 2/13/1862, p. 2)

Within a week of Tucker's arrest, the hoax was revealed and the truth of the matter exposed. In pursuit of two Company E soldiers who had deserted the post the previous Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Blake and two soldiers encountered Sheriff Tucker in town. At some point in their discussion, this ad hoc cabal concocted its scheme. In fact, it was Sheriff Tucker himself who suggested that he be escorted into town as a prisoner under guard. Prosch reported that "A hearty laugh all round followed the explanation of the sell" (PSH, 2/20/1862, p. 2). On the other hand, despite the humor of the situation, what was revealed was a growing problem at the "Station." The absence of the paymaster began to manifest itself in two ways: an increasing number of soldier desertions and the theft of military property.

Local reporting noted two serious break-ins and subsequent thefts on the grounds of Fort Steilacoom in late March 1862. The Quartermaster supply building containing the fort's store of soldier's clothing was "forcibly entered at night, and articles to the value of about a thousand dollars stolen" (PSH, 3/27/1862, p. 2). In response, iron bars were affixed to the windows and all building entrances were secured. Despite these efforts, the building was broken into a second time on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The officers of Company E conducted an investigation but failed to discover the perpetrators of the burglaries. This did not deter the local press in its efforts to conduct a bit of investigative journalism. Prosch's inquiries must have ruffled the feathers of the local command. In a verbose commentary titled "The Late Robberies" in the April 3, 1862, issue of the *Herald*, Prosch revealed evidence of a brewing, negative turn in sentiment towards that of the California Volunteers. Prosch responded at great length to the accusations articulated in an anonymous letter written under the pseudonym, "Volunteer." The letter charged Prosch with making remarks "calculated to leave unpleasant reflections on the minds of

your readers, to the prejudice of the volunteers quartered at this garrison” (p. 2). “Volunteer” went on further to suggest that “There seems to be a deep-rooted prejudice in the minds of the citizens of this place against the U.S. soldiers, the reason for which we cannot understand.” Prosch defended his findings by laying out a case much like that of a courtroom attorney. His three examples of circumstantial evidence placed the blame squarely on that of the Station’s soldiers themselves. His first example involved that of a soldier who had been robbed of \$25 from his trousers left behind in the barracks during the short span of a roll call. His second case speculated on the recent mugging of civilian John Phillips, a crime in which Phillips had felt that he had been targeted shortly after a recent visit on post. Finally, Prosch examined the details of the recent burglaries, noting that the crimes occurred at night and while guards were on duty. The fact that the crimes were not observed by the guards left Prosch incredulous, as even ladders had been used. He concluded that “It is not reasonable to suppose that this place, known to be closed against all but soldiers, should be entered and robbed by other than soldiers.” According to Prosch, the thefts were an inside job.

While it might seem that the attitudes of the Steilacoom community may have turned against the California Volunteers, it is also apparent from a study of Prosch’s reporting that he sympathized with their dire financial plight. He observed that by the end of April 1862, the soldiers of the fort would have gone six months without pay. Further investigations also showed that the soldiers had “very just and very reasonable complaints” (PSH, 4/10/1862, p. 2). Creditable evidence of the hardships encountered by the Volunteers could be found in the subsistence stores as many were “totally exhausted, while others are unfit for use by age. Some of the meats are tainted, and of the

other meats they are on short allowance.” In fact, the men had spent their last few dollars on meals in town to supplement their ration shortages. Most interestingly, it is what is missing from the *Herald* during this time that may best explain these shortages. Pre-Civil War issues often featured boilerplate advertisements for Army beef, wood, and grain contracts. These ads requested that area suppliers provide competitive bids for these items, items that were to be supplied to the post on a weekly basis over the course of several months. These ads were curiously absent from the fourth page of the *Herald* during the first few months of Company E’s duty on post. Did the new officers not know what to do? Had the post’s change in command come so rapidly as to leave the new volunteer leadership floundering?

By the end of April 1862, 14 men had deserted from the post, half of which had done so that month in a boat stolen from local resident Joe Butterfield. Speculation at the time was that these seven men may have been responsible for the March robberies. That same month, one deserter escaped for but a short time. Private Thomas O’Connor (reported as Tom Conner) had evaded capture in the Steilacoom area for nearly two weeks but was discovered to be hiding in Madden’s stable. Said to be a “bad man,” three rounds were fired on him by a search party before O’Connor gave up and was arrested (PSH, 4/17/1862, p. 2). The events of March and April had taken their toll on the patience of Company E’s officers, most notably that of Captain Crowninshield.

Unbeknownst to Capt. Crowninshield was the impending arrival of a new post commander, Maj. George W. Patten. Word of the robberies and desertions on post must have convinced Department Commander George Wright of the need for an experienced officer on the scene. In his April 10<sup>th</sup> instructions to Patten, Wright ordered the major to “make a critical examination of the condi-

tion of the command, and particularly of the staff departments, not only their present condition, but examine the amounts of money and property in the different departments from the moment Capt. Woodruff, Ninth Infantry, was relieved up to the time you assume command” (OR, Vol. I, p. 1011). Patten also had clear instructions to relieve at once any officers who had not “faithfully performed their duties.” Major Patten’s arrival at Steilacoom would nearly coincide, not providentially, with that of the paymaster. On Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, Steilacoom’s “bulwarks of liberty” (PSH, 5/1/1862, p. 2) would receive four month’s worth of back pay for the previous six months. Despite not being the full amount, the men of Company E accepted the situation well as Prosch reported there was a “total absence of the drunken brawls and hideous noises which have heretofore followed in the footsteps of the paymaster.”

Patten’s nighttime arrival on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1862, was followed shortly by the angry demand of local citizen Joe Butterfield—with warrant in hand—for the arrest of Capt. Crowninshield under the charge of false imprisonment. At the height of the robbery and desertion investigations, an obviously frustrated, if not slightly inebriated, Crowninshield levied a series of charges against Butterfield while drinking in a Steilacoom saloon. He accused Butterfield of aiding and abetting army deserters, allowing them easy access to Butterfield’s boat, and for committing treason in doing so. This April 19<sup>th</sup> outburst culminated not only in Crowninshield’s threat to “hang poor Joe like any Secesh” but also the forcible arrest of Butterfield by a file of armed soldiers (PSH, 5/8/1862, p. 2). Butterfield was hauled to the corner of Main and Balch streets when Butterfield refused to go any further. A crowd formed around the party, but remembering the earlier Tucker scheme, encouraged Butterfield to spend a night in the guardhouse for “novelty’s sake”; however, this was