

to permit us to go. The Indians did not know we had a team and ... thought we would have to go on foot to Fort Nisqually and [that] coming out of the house would be easy prey for them.... During the night the boys had sneaked out and carried a few necessary things to the wagon. There was an old cattle road leading to the prairie, and we decided to use this one. (p. 35)

"We left the house and walked through the crowd of Indians.... They turned their attention to looting the house.

"We walked quietly on ... looking to see if we were watched or followed. We re-crossed the creek and were where the boys had hidden the wagon and team. They placed a chain across the wagon box for the little ones to hold onto.... All those who were able to walk the twelve miles to Fort [Steilacoom] started on foot through the woods. The oxen were wild, so the boys had to put ropes on their horns and rode by their sides to keep them on the road.... Mother and the little ones were placed in the wagon.... (p. 36)

"We were seen from [Fort Steilacoom] and a government wagon came to meet us. After a short rest, we moved on slowly. The other team came at a brisk trot and we soon met. It was like meeting folks from the dead. (p. 38)

"... The boys in blue gathered around our wagon with a most fervent 'Thank God' and 'God bless you, madam. We thought you all dead.'

"So tight had been our grasp upon the chain across the box that the soldiers had to unclasp our hands from it. Our little bodies were so bruised and bleeding that we were not able to stand upon our feet. They lifted us from the wagon and smoothed us with kind hands and gentle words.... There were kind ladies who met us, and everything was done for our comfort.... We were assigned two stalls. (p. 38)

"What the children didn't know was that ... Chipwalen and George

followed their father, overtaking him the second evening near Vaughn's prairie where the company had encamped at that place. It was the nearest point to Leschi's stronghold. Stahi [or Stoki], a brother to Leschi, was guide to the company. Chipwalen warned them that Stahi was leading them into trouble, as he was a traitor.

"The Indians had ... placed three ambushes along the way, and as Father passed along the second ambush [they] fired ... killing Father instantly.... Chipwalen took to the woods with five bullet holes through his clothes. He arrived at our house just in time to save us. (p. 39) It was the terrible news he brought that caused our mother to scream and faint. (p. 40) George, a boy of seventeen ... volunteered to go for help. He arrived home a short time after Chipwalen to find us all prisoners. (p. 40)

"The dreaded Indian War was now upon us.... Mother was prostrated with ... grief. Search parties were sent out to find the murdered officers. Father was hidden away in the forks of a fallen tree, securely covered over. Father was brought to the fort and buried at that place.

"Mother was sick with fright and grief, and she laid upon a rude, uncomfortable bed; her little ones sat upon the ground around her, too stunned and frightened to move. Kind people would take us away and try to amuse us, but we soon found our way back and would sit silently beside her side until taken away.

"A terrible foreboding of evil hung upon us.... We heard many things we did not understand.... There was something dreadful wrong. (p. 41)

"One day there was quite a stir in the fort, and several ladies ... dressed and tidied us children up.... Others assisting our mother to dress. Then some gentlemen came in with one on each side of our mother led her toward the gate. We [were] led behind her [and] taken to the thing coming, an uncanny long object ... lying full

length on a horse.... On came the dreadful object.... The men brought a queer looking thing and set it down by the horse. Then it was carried into the fort.... They led Mother forward (p. 42) ... and that terrible fear kept pressing down.... Then in the kindest way possible they told us our father was dead and his body lay wrapped in that canvas.

"We understood. We did not cry.... They led us forward as we stood beside Mother and grasped her dress.... One awful moment we saw the face of our dearly beloved in death.... We broke forth into the wildest crying.... We cried until exhausted. It was several years before we recovered our natural composure.... Father was buried beside a beautiful lake near the fort. [He was later reburied in the Masonic cemetery in Tumwater.⁴]

"Our brother [George] and Chipwalen returned to their company to fight throughout the war, and, alas, our poor mother's troubles were scarcely begun." (p. 44)



McAllister was reburied in the Masonic Cemetery in Tumwater, WA.



⁴ Cordelia Hawk Putvin, *Ibid.*

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Reminiscence of Lt. James McAllister's Daughter Sarah McAllister Hartman

This is the story of 1st Lt. James McAllister (1812-1855) of the Puget Sound Rangers (aka Eaton Rangers) and his family, early settlers in the Nisqually Valley. In 1834 he married Charlotte Smith (1818-1865).

The McAllisters left Kentucky in late 1843 hoping to reach the Oregon country in early 1844. On the way a daughter became ill and was treated at the Whitman Mission where Marcus and Narcisa showed them much kindness.

The McAllisters and four other families followed the Columbia River to Sophies Island (Washougal) where they camped during the winter. In the spring they continued to the mouth of the Cowlitz River, following it northward. Here they made their first encounter with local Indians. While the men were off hunting, a roving band, seeing the women and children alone, began helping themselves to patchwork quilts and other useful items. But Charlotte could not bear to see her prized possessions carried away and pulled up a tent post, flailing it about chasing them off.¹

Hearing of this incident, the old Indian chief Synatco offered McAllister \$500 for the "white Squaw," but was told white men did not sell their wives. Synatco's son Leschi welcomed



Upon the invitation of Leschi, the McAllister family eventually made their home in the Nisqually Valley.

McAllister to make their home in the Nisqually Valley, which they eventually did.²

The following excerpts about the family and the Indian War are from a story by McAllister's daughter Sarah.³

"On March 15, [1846], there was great rejoicing. A son [James Benton McAllister, Jr.] was born to [the family], the first white child born [north of the Columbia River in

² *Ibid.*

³ Sarah McAllister (Mrs. David Hartman), unpublished manuscript copied by Peggy Bal, 2004. [Another source says that Mary Jane McAllister married David Hartman].

Washington, a section of the greater Oregon Territory].

"My father, James McAllister [Sr.], on Leschi's advice, moved to the Nisqually Valley where the soil was rich and fertile.... Father selected his farm at the junction of Shononsdawb [or Skonadaub] and Squauid creeks [later Medicine and McAllister creeks]. The farm was situated upon the council grounds of the Nisqually tribes. The old chief Suyonnatco [or Synatco] politely relinquished it to Father. (p. 4)

"It was there where we fought; it was there where we were held captives; it was there we witnessed so many wild scenes, once our happy home, broken, never to come together again....

(Continued on page 2)

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President's Message



Fort Steilacoom's summer season has been busy with projects, tours, and programs.

The Board of Directors and members have continued to look to the future to improve our visitor's knowledge of past Fort life.

Major projects for this year have been the completion of Quarters 3 renovation from state funds granted through the efforts of the late Senator Michael Carrell, the opening of the fort's Research Center, the restructuring of exhibits in showcases gifted by the Fort Lewis Military Museum, the repainting of the cannon carriages, and the beginning of a memorial garden around Quarters 2 with funds donated for that purpose in memory of Lou Lyle, a former fort docent. The garden is being planned by Maria Burdett and work done as an Eagle Scout project. Help for projects at the fort is always needed. If you are available, go to info@historicfortsteilacoom.org.

A fort committee, spearheaded by Joe Lewis, has launched a Fort Steilacoom TV ad campaign with Comcast. Spot ads began appearing

in August, in limited broadcast zones, on the Discovery Channel, National Geographic Channel, History Channel, and Travel Channel.

On August 17 many hospital employees came to visit the four fort buildings for the first time as an organized tour.

Fort Steilacoom, in conjunction with the Smithsonian Museum, will present **Museum Day Live** on Saturday, September 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The fort will come alive as reenactors live and work as soldiers, officers, their wives, children and friends. There will be special activities for students, home schoolers, and scouts.

Alan Archambault will present **"The U.S. Army—from Fort Steilacoom to Camp Lewis** on Sunday, October 16, at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2. He will tell how the purchase of land for Camp Lewis by citizens has affected Pierce County, the region and world events.

The program will briefly be preceded by Fort Steilacoom Association's Annual Meeting and election of Board members. The Nominating Committee has recommended Gideon Pete for President, Loran Bures for 2nd Vice President, Joseph Lewis for Secretary, and Lawrence Bateman, Bill Arends, and Bernard Bateman for Director positions. Carol Stout will continue on the Board as Past President.

The committee has also recommended the appointment of Orville Stout, Alan Archambault, Joe Miller, and John McPherson to the Honorary Board.

On Sunday, November 20, Karen Meador will show slides and tell about the **Fort Steilacoom to Bellingham Road**, still traveled today, that was constructed under the supervision of the U.S. Army in the 1850s. The program will begin at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2.

And of course, remember to bring the family and friends to the candlelight **Christmas at Fort Steilacoom** on Saturday, December 10 between 4 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets will be available at the fort during the event.

Carol Stout

McAllister *(from page 1)*

"Our house was in the opening in the heaviest woods.... While Father was building the house, we lived in two stumps covered with a roof. (p. 7) My present house is but a short distance from the stump house, now dug up to make room for the plow.

"After coming to the Nisqually valley, we were quite prosperous; so fertile was the soil that we raised the third crop of wheat without plowing the ground. Vegetables grew to be of wondrous size, potatoes from eight to ten pounds were not uncommon.... We soon had an orchard that bore fruit. We were now in Indian territory. (p. 8)

"My mother took three [Indian] girls to train as servants. Mrs. Momoedich, her sister, Satco, and bright little Yncaquecibut (the scullery maid). We found them quick to learn, willing to work and honest; and when trouble arose, they were faithful unto death. We also had the man Momoedich and a boy Chipwalen [or Clifwhalen]. That noble boy gave his life to protect our family.

"All our servants remained faithful to us; guarding, feeding and protecting us whilst we were held captives by the Indians. They planned our escape and helped us away. (p. 8)

"So far, we had lived in peace with the Indians, but now we saw runners wearing 'war paint', but it didn't alarm us in the least as it was worn quite frequently on tribal business. History tells us the Indian War was brought on by whites taking their land, but old settlers know better; one among the many causes was the treatment their women received. A man, perhaps with a wife in the east, would come here and marry an Indian girl or woman. According to the white man's law, it was not legal. Those women and girls thought themselves as legally married as their white sisters. [However, when men and soldiers left the area, their Indian wives went back to their families, much to their disgrace.] The Indians grew to mistrust and hate all

newcomers, but were still kind to all the old settlers.... (p. 21)

"At last they told us 'we cannot stand much more imposition, and if it is not stopped, we will have to go to the woods' – meaning go to war.... They now began to hold war dances and, as our home was built on the council grounds (p. 22), we received the full benefit of it all. You ask, 'were you not afraid?' Yes, we were, but we knew that the time had not yet come to strike. (p. 23)

"Some people thought the Indians would fight and others thought they wouldn't. Among the latter was my father, so great was his confidence in them. For fear of getting our servants in trouble, we sent them to a place of safety, which they did, all except Chipwalen. He refused, saying 'I have lived with the whites and I will die with them.' And he did, never leaving us until death claimed him.

"Knowing of the strong friendship between Leshi and Father, the whites appealed to him to carry a peace commission (p. 28) to Leschi for him to sign. The whites offered and Father accepted the commission as first lieutenant in the Puget Sound Volunteers. Still, he didn't think the Indians would fight. He remarked one day, 'I could come and drive those Indians like sheep; they will not hurt anything.' Then he went away, leaving Mother in care of the oldest brother, George, and Chipwalen....

"We were now living in the new house, but this fortified one stood about fifty feet away. Mother had held the northern Indians at bay here, ... and thinking to defend herself and family, she now moved into it again.

"After Father was gone, Mother became alarmed for his safety and sent Chipwalen and George to overtake him. She told Chipwalen to stay by his side day and night and see no harm befell him as she feared he had too much confidence in the Indians. He said, 'I will follow him as his shadow and will do as you tell me.'

"Mother was alone with we younger children, the oldest boy being twelve years old. At this time the Indians shot our stock. Mother was a brave woman. She cleaned all the guns and got the ammunition ready, but didn't move into the other house.... She, like Father, didn't think the Indians would fight, as they had been so kind and gentle. (p. 27)

"The scenes about home were getting worse, and the Indians more insolent. They knew Mother was a brave woman and would defend herself, if necessary. They had seen her tried, and were afraid of her. (p. 28)

"One morning in October I was awakened by a ... piercing scream and heavy fall. We all ran into the sitting room. As we entered we saw Chipwalen and his sisters ... lift our mother from the floor. They placed her on a chair and bathed her white face with water.... Indians now began to appear. They went from room to room. The house and yard was full.... It was estimated at 800.

"Then we heard the death wail outside. What did that mean? Some Indian ladies entered and went over ... to Mother and began to soothe her. Chipwalen and his sisters turned on the crowd of Indians and began to drive them out.... Friendly hands now took charge of us, but we were not allowed to go to Mother. (p. 28)

"An old lady ... told us to dress ourselves ... and [then] we were taken into the front room and told to sit on the stairs. Chipwalen came ... bidding us 'good morning' and said, 'Do not be frightened. You shall be taken care of.'

"... Outside we saw brother George at the barn gate.... Chipwalen hurried out ... slowly treading his way to brother.... At length the pack of Indians loosened and the boys came in. Mother and we children sat on the stairs.... The boys cleared the room of all but guards ... and now we knew we were prisoners in our own home. The boys smuggled guns in behind the door. (p. 29)

"Soon we noticed a stir among the Indians and we saw our older sister and brother-in-law coming to us. (p. 30) They advanced bravely. As they approached, the Indians [gave] them the peace sign. Sister and her husband entered the gate where Chipwalen and his sister met them.... They came in, greeting we little ones most tenderly.... A horror we little ones could feel but did not know what was kept from us.... Sister stood by Mother, softly stroking her hair.... They came to us on the stairs. It was a great relief to have Mother with us. Sister was very kind, but she would not allow us to talk to Mother.... Thus time wore on and night came. (p. 31)

"It was a relief to us as Indians are afraid of the dark and we knew it.... The slave women put we children into the trundle bed, clothes, shoes and all. Faint as hope was, we encouraged it by planning to escape, and the 800 Indians were ... planning our destruction.... We fell asleep and then, after waking, went back to the stairs. (p. 32)

"It was a chilly October morning and we had no fire nearer than the kitchen. We were taken to the kitchen to eat, but we couldn't [as] we [had seen] so many terrifying scenes, but the fire felt good.... (p. 32)

"The two youngest boys ... slipped out to look for a team of some kind to try to make our escape with. The boys returned early in the evening with the joyful news they had found a wild, half broken yoke of oxen.... We still sat on the stairs and watched those terrifying scenes outside....

"The long confinement on the stairs was very hard on us.... Night came again.... Food was brought to us ... but we could not eat. We were all taken to Mother's room.... We had a warm supper as on the night before.... At last morning came.... (p. 34)

"The Indians were not idle. They were planning our destruction with fright.... The long day passed and night came again. We could not eat.... (p. 35) The boys again talked with the Indians, trying to get them