

\$4.00 per month for his fourth enlistment and that he was attached to the company since November 1861.

Ordnance Sergeant Archbold reenlisted again on 7 July 1864 for a period of five years. This was his fifth enlistment in the Army. At this point in time Fort Steilacoom was garrisoned by Companies G and K of the 1st Washington Territory Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Archbold's reenlistment form was signed by "Captain E.H. Tucker, 1st Washington Territory Infantry, Commanding Post." At the time of this reenlistment Archbold was forty-five years old and probably the oldest soldier in the garrison.

With the end of the war in April 1865, the volunteer units were inactivated and regular Army troops returned to established posts like Fort Steilacoom. In October 1865, Company F, 14th Regiment United States Infantry arrived to garrison Fort Steilacoom and a year later, in October 1866, they were replaced by Company E, 2nd Regiment, United States Artillery. In 1868, the soldiers of Company E, 2nd Artillery Regiment were ordered to garrison the newly acquired territory in Alaska. Ordnance Sergeant Archbold had a major role in preparing the ordnance and equipment of the unit for shipment, by ship, to Alaska. Unfortunately, Archbold's vigorous efforts led to unexpected results. The following letter from Alden H. Steele, M.D., dated June 26, 1869, and addressed to Brevet Captain George Williams, Aid de Camp, Headquarters Department of the Columbia, Portland, Oregon, details Ordnance Sergeant Archbold's fate.

"Sir, I have the honor to return herewith, the letter of Commissioner, Chris C. Cox of the Pension office, in relation to the death of Ordnance Sargent (sic) William Archbold and referred to me by your office; and state that Ordnance Sargent William Archbold died at Fort Steilacoom, Wash Ter. April 24th 1868 while in discharge of his duties. He being at that time in charge of the Post; it having been evacuated by the troops



Nancy Covert with her friend Carol Stout at Fort Steilacoom. Nancy had just concluded her talk about Laura Belle Downey Bartlett, a Steilacoom legend.

ordered to Alaska two days previous. The sargent (sic) had been feeling sick for several days, but did not report on the 'Sick list,' as there was no person in the garrison, but himself, who had any knowledge of the Ordnance Stores, and it was necessary for him to attend to their package and shipment. He worked very hard at this time—as I subsequently learned—for a man of his age, and walked to town and back, a distance of nearly three miles each way—to attend to the last shipment before the steamer sailed. That night (April 22d /68) at about midnight, he was attacked with severe pain in his bowels on the right side and constipation, which was not relieved until death, on the 24th of April 1868. My diagnosis was intussuseption but was unable to verify it by a 'post morte' as I was under orders to report at headquarters immediately for annulment of contract and my instruments were all packed and enroute to my destination. In my opinion the disease which caused his death was occasioned by overexertion in the discharge of his duties of his station—when he should have been on the sick list and confined to bed."

Ordnance Sergeant Archbold was initially buried in the post cemetery

Nancy Covert

Nancy Covert, who passed away on January 3, 2017, was an enthusiastic supporter of Historic Fort Steilacoom over many years. She provided some speakers for programs and was also a presenter herself. Nancy took photos of our events and provided publicity to the *Suburban Times* as well as writing articles for the Fort newsletter.

She was a great "idea" person—the first "Mrs. Casey's Tea" was her idea and she helped out in the kitchen working with the serving girls. Her help in these and other ways has been appreciated. She will be remembered for all of this and the person she was. Thanks, Nancy.

at Fort Steilacoom, but following the deactivation of the post he was later re-interred at the Presidio Cemetery in San Francisco. His widow, Margaret, applied for a widow's pension in 1869 and was awarded a pension of \$8.00 per month. The claim states that she had been married to Ordnance Sergeant Archbold for ten years and that they had no children.

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William H. Archbold

The Ordnance Sergeant of Fort Steilacoom

Part 2

by Alan H. Archambault

In addition to his official duties as ordnance sergeant at Fort Steilacoom, Ordnance Sergeant Archbold was also engaged in non-official activities. Perhaps the most important of these activities was the construction of the Catholic chapel that was built on the post between 1855 and 1856. Although the chapel was not an Army authorized building, it was an important addition to the post. Most of the enlisted soldiers serving at Fort Steilacoom prior to the Civil War were immigrants from Ireland and various German states. Since Germany was not a united nation until 1870, many of the German soldiers listed their place of origin as Bavaria, Prussia, and so on. Almost all of the Irish born soldiers and a number of the soldiers from the German states were Roman Catholic.

From surviving documents it appears that Ordnance Sergeant Archbold was the driving force in the collection of donations and arranging for the construction of the Catholic chapel. Archbold appears to have been a well organized and active man in both his official and unofficial duties. He corresponded with Catholic Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet regarding the chapel and maintained the records of donations, listing the names and the amounts donated by the various individuals, both Catholic and non-Catholic.

Official Army documents indicate that Ordnance Sergeant Archbold was a trusted and competent non-



Alan H. Archambault

Typical belongings of an Ordnance Sergeant such as William H. Archbold.

commissioned officer and an honest, civic-minded, man. However, Father Louis Rossi, a Roman Catholic priest who arrived at Fort Steilacoom in 1856, had a very different impression of Ordnance Sergeant Archbold.

Father Rossi's adventures in the United States were vividly recounted in his book: *Six years on the West Coast of America 1856-1862* (Ye Galleon Press). Although Carol Stout selected passages from this book in her recent article on "The Catholic

Connection to Fort Steilacoom," portions related to Ordnance Sergeant Archbold bear repeating:

"This fort [Fort Steilacoom], like all the others built in this region protect the whites from the Indians —(but one might think about protecting the later from the whites)—consisted of several wooden buildings arranged in the shape of a 200-meter square, more or less, and surrounded by fences. The soldiers guarding them are almost all Catholic, and mostly

(Continued on page 3)

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President's Message



Who uses Old Fort Steilacoom? Many very worthwhile groups of people do.

First, we have the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association that preserves the remaining original buildings of the old officer's row of this significant antebellum Army post. The majority of our readers belong to the HFSA.

Next, we have four different groups of individuals that perform Living History. Two, the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry and Company C, 4th US Regular Infantry, are American Civil War reenactment units affiliated with the Washington Civil War Association. These two units can be seen performing nineteenth century army drill during the fall and winter months on the first Saturday and Sunday, respectfully, of each month. This is their "off season." During the summer months, they are each kept quite busy in holding Washington's secessionist forces at bay.

Two other Living History units focus primarily on Pacific Northwest history. Company A, 4th US Infantry,



Steilacoom High School students Ashley and Tanya Neufeld served tea at the well attended Mrs. Casey's Valentine Tea on February 11, 2017. The tea, Fancy Fair auction, and entertainment was enjoyed by 44 guests. Thank you to all who contributed to its success!

has expanded their extremely accurate impression to include the era of the regular army during the 1840's and 50's, in addition to also portraying those same soldiers during the American Civil War.

Lastly, we have Company M, 1st US Artillery, which was the first group of historians to associate themselves with Fort Steilacoom. They portray the original artillery company from the 1840's that was the first United States military organization assigned in 1849 to protect the lower Puget Sound region.

In addition to living history groups, Fort Steilacoom also hosts the Isaac Stevens Chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans and the hard-working Grave Concerns Association. The SUV is an association comprised of direct descendants of the original soldiers that fought for the Union in the American Civil War. The Grave Concerns Association is an organization dedicated to maintaining the original hospital cemetery that is located across Steilacoom Boulevard in Fort Steilacoom Park. They have done wonders in curating this cemetery, placing identities on many of

the anonymous burials located there.

As you can see, there is a lot going on here at Fort Steilacoom besides our special monthly presentations. In March, we will be treated to historian Erich Ebel explaining how we almost went to war with great Britain over the shooting of a pig, and HFSA will also be hosting several accomplished Living Historians from Tacoma's Fort Nisqually in a symposium of everything you might need to go totally Victorian. Be sure and check our website for these and a complete listing!

And also please remember to renew your membership in the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association by sending in your dues and the application form you recently received in the mail with our new brochure and a schedule of coming events for this year. You can also request membership forms for other family members and friends. Your membership donations help support the preservation of the fort and its mission to tell and show the public its important history.

Gideon Pete

Archbold (continued from page 1)
 Irish. With the help of civilians, they had built a little chapel for the celebration of the holy mysteries whenever a priest would visit them. The later had no quarters in the fort, but he lodged with a regimental sergeant major who, since he didn't belong to any company in the garrison, had a separate cabin with his old wife."

Father Rossi was incorrect about the rank of Ordnance Sergeant Archbold, but correct in that he was not assigned to a particular company on the post. Mrs. Archbold may have appeared older to Father Rossi since most of the military personnel on Fort Steilacoom were young. According to the census records, the average soldier was in his mid-twenties as were their spouses, who sometimes served as washerwomen. Rossi goes on to give his impression of Ordnance Sergeant Archbold:

"This man (Sergeant Archbold), who claimed to be a Catholic but wasn't even a Christian (since there is no Christianity without a sense of charity), had given himself airs and thought himself important enough to be able to judge the bishop and the priests...on all matters pertaining to religion. As far as the chapel is concerned, he exerted an absolute despotism. And that's not all. There was something infernal in his way of speaking and interpreting things. He had succeeded in gaining such influence over the garrison's soldiers that they took everything he said as the revealed truth."

It is interesting that Father Rossi does not mention the Ordnance Sergeant's important role in the building of the chapel. Recognizing his work on building the chapel, Archbold's "depotism" over the use of the chapel can be better understood, if not justified. Archbold's criticism of the bishop and priests probably stems from the fact that although the chapel had been built through private solicitations, the church did not agree to assign a full time priest to the chapel. Father Rossi went on to question Ordnance Sergeant Archbold's ethics and

motivations:

"When he wasn't busy at his work, you'd see him at home seated in an armchair, the *Lives of the Saints* in his hand, his spectacles perched on his nose as if he were in deep contemplation before the throne of the Lord. It was one of the methods he used to maintain the influence he had over the soldiers, who were usually uneducated. When they went to see him, he would take off his spectacles and gravely give them a sermon about the life of the Saint he happened to be reading, or on controversial points regarding the non-Catholics.... The only goal of all this was to exploit the pocket books of these poor devils.... Since the soldiers only received their pay every three months, they often had need of money in the interim and it was this fellow that they had to appeal in order to tide themselves over...for a consideration never less than fifty or sixty percent interest."

Rossi touches on several facts of life for military personnel stationed on the Western frontier during the nineteenth century and some facts about the role of noncommissioned officers in general. As previously mentioned, most of the personnel at Fort Steilacoom, and throughout the antebellum United States Army, were immigrants, primarily from Ireland and Germany. The majority of these men were young and illiterate. The Army provided a way for them to earn a living while they adapted to life in their adopted country. In spite of the fact that Army pay was low and they were only paid every three months, for many of these men it was the first time in their lives that they were ever paid cash money for their services. Needless to say, like soldiers throughout history, many were penniless long before the next pay day. It was not unusual for older noncommissioned officers, who were higher paid and much wiser with their money, to lend young soldiers money at high rates. At a time when commercial "payday loan" services were unavailable, the soldier had few options to get additional money to

tide him over to the next payday, except through his higher ranking noncommissioned officer.

Although Ordnance Sergeant Archbold's interest rates of fifty or sixty percent may appear high, it must be remembered that the risk of the soldier deserting and never repaying the loan was also high. Since the noncommissioned officer could not officially report the failure to repay the loan to the commissioned officers, the loan and its collection was entirely unofficial and subject to risk on the part of the lender. It is also interesting to note that no documents have been found that indicate that the soldiers ever complained to higher authorities about Archbold's loan services. Throughout his military career, Ordnance Sergeant Archbold's superiors seemed to think he was a trustworthy and capable soldier. Perhaps the contradiction in Archbold's conduct and motivations can be explained in the differing viewpoints between that of a soldier and a priest.

On 6 July 1859 Ordnance Sergeant Archbold reached the end of his third enlistment and immediately reenlisted at Fort Steilacoom for a period of five years. The reenlistment form is signed by "Silas Casey, Lt. Col. 9th Infantry, Commanding Post." Captain Maurice Maloney, 4th Infantry Regiment, attested to Archbold's character as good.

Following the start of the Civil War in April 1861, the regular Army troops posted to Fort Steilacoom were either sent east to fight or to other posts on the West Coast. However, Ordnance Sergeant Archbold remained at Fort Steilacoom to maintain the ordnance stores and account for the Army property on the post. In many ways Archbold provided much needed continuity and accountability for valuable government property during a period of change and turmoil. Surviving muster forms for Company E, 4th Regiment California Volunteers, for January to August 1862, lists Ordnance Sergeant Archbold on their muster rolls and states that he was entitled to an additional