

miners were allowed to trade with Indians. It was also stated that officials of the Hudson's Bay Company were seizing boats and canoes of miners for infringements on their declared rights.

Samuel McCaw, a merchant from Steilacoom, had \$2,000 worth of goods seized at Fort Langley. (Bonney p. 248)

During the week of June 14, 1858, five hundred former California gold miners arrived in Steilacoom on the steamer *Pacific* headed for the Fraser River. When they got to the gold fields, they encountered many obstacles. It is estimated there were 10,500 miners on the Fraser at the peak of the gold rush.

The river itself caused problems for potential gold miners because they were not knowledgeable about traveling on the Fraser River.

Urban Hicks describes obstacles his family party, including of his brother Tom, brother-in-law John Forbes, and father-in-law Mr. Hartsock, faced getting to the Fraser River gold mines. (Robert A. Bennett, *A Small World of Our Own*, p. 290 +)

"Our first night out of Whatcom we camped on quick sand and before getting afloat again we had to wade through treacherous sands in pitchy darkness with a roaring surf and a howling wind in our faces trying to get our canoe in deep water again. We got out of Whatcom and late in the evening arrived on a narrow beach with a small stream of cold water. We were only too tired to get ashore and rest...."

"Just at daylight next morning the old man and I were aroused by the shouts of the boys to hurry aboard. The tide had receded and the wind arose and the canoe was pounding on the rocks which it would have been impossible to survive.

"We rounded the rock and beached the boat in time to save it from sinking. The warm sun soon appeared and by evening we were alright. We pulled out and by evening entered the mouth of the Fraser River.



Internet photo

The Gold Rush Trail is shown in yellow in relationship to the Fraser River, Fort Langley, Hope, and Fort Victoria. Access was restricted by the British and Hudson Bay Company, but largely ignored by American adventurers.

"Another problem was that the Indians looked upon Americans as 'Boston men' and enemies to their race, while English or 'King George men' were regarded as friends. My brother Tom and I could talk the Chinook language pretty well, and they let us alone...."

"I bought a claim from a simple fellow who held a claim a short distance from us. I sold the claim for \$100 cash. They took out \$2,000. We did not take out much more for all our claims and I returned home at the (beginning) of winter with just about as much as it had cost me to come."

Though excitement was still high for newcomers, by July 1858 others who had been on the rush became discouraged. Kautz (p. 210) noted that many miners "have gone back to San Francisco again in the last steamers. The trail is not through yet from Whatcom and it is very uncertain whether it will be soon." A summary at the end of the chapter noted that the Fraser River gold rush caused a considerable amount of excitement with thousands of people coming and leaving the area.

The soldiers who had deserted from Fort Steilacoom, lured by the promise of gold, had fared even more poorly. They never reached the Fraser River and suffered army discipline for trying.

Returning "home"



Dean Andersen, tall man in back, lived in fort "cottages" at Western State Hospital when he was a child. His father, Albert Andersen, was business manager between 1933 and 1946. Dean brought this group of seniors to visit the fort buildings in May 2017. Joe Lewis, Carol Stout and Bill Arends hosted the group.

Fort Steilacoom

Lure of Gold on Fraser River

by Carol Stout

The March 26, 1858, *Puget Sound Herald* advertised a "Late and Important Announcement" from Victoria, Vancouver Island:

GOLD DISCOVERY CONFIRMED
RICH GOLD FIELDS FOUND ON FRAZER'S
AND THOMPSON'S RIVERS
Miners making from \$8 to \$50 a day
THE INDIANS FRIENDLY
People abandoning their Homes and
the Mills to go to the Mines

"By the arrival of this port yesterday of the schooner *Wild Pigeon*... we have been put in possession of late and highly interesting intelligence from the gold fields of Suswap County.

"Capt. Jones reports that the excitement relative to the gold fields lately discovered on Frazer's and Thompson rivers is very great.

"A large number of persons had returned to Victoria, Vancouver's Island, for provisions and implements for mining bringing large quantities of gold. They report the miners making from EIGHT to FIFTY dollars per day.

"The Indians in that section of Country, heretofore regarded as unfriendly, have manifested great friendship for the whites and no acts of hostility have been committed thus far. They are no doubt intimidated by the presence of so large a body of miners.

"It is estimated that some three hundred people have left Vancouver Island and the lower part of the sound within the last ten days.



Internet photo

The lure of gold brought thousands to the Fraser River in Canada in the mid 1800s. That temptation also extended to some soldiers at Fort Steilacoom.

"The hands employed in the various mills are leaving, and there is a scarcity of help at the present time. It is said that about sixty have already left. Parties are also preparing to leave this place for the mines.

"Later: Since the above published in our Extra, we have been allowed the perusal of a business letter from a gentleman of reliability. He says:

'I have just returned from Fort Langley, on Frazer's river, and am about to return to the mines with a supply of 'tom irons' and tools for mining.... Tell your friends to come soon, if at all; as the river will rise, and they cannot get up.'

"Still later: From a gentleman who has since arrived from Bellingham

Bay we learn that much excitement prevails. All the hands employed in the coal mine of Bellingham Bay Company have left, and operations are suspended. The people leaving in numbers for Frazer's river. It is apprehended that a large number of desertions will take place from Fort Bellingham."

The *Puget Sound Herald*, edited by Charles Prosch, recorded the progress of the gold mining on the Fraser River as follows in the April 2, 1858 paper:

Highly Important
FROM THE GOLD DIGGINGS!
Large Receipts of Gold by the Hudson
Bay Co.
DESERTIONS FROM THE ARMY

(Continued on page 3)

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Publication funded in part by City of Lakewood Lodging Tax Grant.

President’s Message



GOLD!
GOLD! GOLD!
 This month’s Historic Fort Steilacoom newsletter is all about **GOLD!**

Everyone was all a buzz about the new gold strike on the Fraser River back in the 1850’s. Gold will do that to a people. Did you know that there is a gold rush at Historic Fort Steilacoom that is still going on today? Yesiree! Each of you can easily get in on it.

The Historic Fort Steilacoom Association has partnered with both Fred Meyer and Amazon to bring a lot of yellow gold to our beloved Fort. We are signed onto the Shopper’s Reward programs offered by each of these excellent outlets. Sign up, and you will find that getting lots of gold from them, is a whole lot easier than it would have been, back in the day, to have to trek up to the Fraser River during the mid-nineteenth century.

Fred Meyer is giving away 2.6 million dollars each year, to non-profits in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, based on where their customers tell them to give. Tell



Maria Burdett created a natural memorial garden around Quarters 2 in honor of long time volunteer Emmalou Lyle.

them to give it all to the HFSA. Here is how it works: Sign up for the community rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to Historic Fort Steilacoom Association at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. You can search for us by name, or much easier, by our non-profit number 83514. Then, every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, you are helping the HFSA earn a donation. It is just that easy! Once you have linked your Rewards Card to us, you never have to do anything again. If you do not already have a Rewards Card, they are available at the Customer Service counter of any Fred Meyers store.

It is just as simple, to also send us Gold! Gold! Gold! from our Amazon Smile link. Every item available for purchase on www.amazon.com is also available on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) at the exact same price. You will see eligible products marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on their product detail pages. You can search on AmazonSmile for the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, but much simpler is to simply enter our own unique link: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/91-1240261>. When you click on this link, you will avoid having to search among one million different

charities to find us, but will automatically be asked if you want to support Historic Fort Steilacoom. The good news is that once signed up to support the HFSA, 0.5% of your purchase will automatically be sent to us at absolutely no cost to you! You do not ever have to enter our Rewards number again. Just be sure to shop at smile.amazon.com instead of amazon.com. Both sites have the exact same items to purchase, but only smile.amazon.com will give us the Gold!

It is all just that simple. I realize that at first glance all this information will make some folks say, “Sheesh!” but it is all a one-time deal. It only takes five minutes to link your shopping to Historic Fort Steilacoom, and then you never have to do anything ever again, except shop. We are already getting a lot of “color” from our present claims with Amazon and Fred Meyer, but now we can really hit The Mother Lode if each of you will take the few minutes to sign up. You already shop for stuff anyway, so why not kick a few dollars to the Fort that we all love, each time you do?

Thanks for all your support, and don’t forget to come out and see our New Displays!

Gideon

Gold (continued from page 1)

“By the arrival of the Steamer *Sea Bird*...we are placed in possession of intelligence repeating the lately discovered gold fields on the Frazer and Thopmson rivers fully confirming the previous reports from gentlemen who came as passengers in the *Sea Bird*. We learned that the Hudson Bay Company of Victoria has received within the last month about one hundred and ten pounds of gold dust from the Indians. This was obtained merely from the surface diggings without the aid of anything more than the rude articles – such as pans and willow baskets possessed by the Indians....

“Numerous desertions have taken place from military posts on the lower part of the sound.

“Parties are arriving daily on sailing vessels from San Francisco bound to the mines.

“**The New Gold Mines** – We understand there is considerable stir in San Francisco regarding the Frazer River gold mines, and we may safely anticipate quite a rush...during the coming season. The *Columbia* brought several miners from that locality and they are probably the advanced guard of a...greater immigration.”

Many people from the Steilacoom area left to search for gold, and Lieutenant Kautz had difficulty getting carpenters to work on the new buildings under construction at Fort Steilacoom. (Kautz diary p. 166) On March 22, 1858, Kautz commented: “The *Wild Pigeon* arrived from down the Sound with news of the great excitement about the gold discoveries up Frazer River.” (Kautz p. 172)

The lure of gold also proved too much temptation for some of the soldiers at Fort Steilacoom. W. P. Bonney recorded the consequences of that: (Bonney Vol. 1, pp. 247-248)

“Desertions at Fort Steilacoom in the early part of April (1858) gave the officers something to think about. At least seven soldiers took French leave after the appearance of the previous week’s issue of the *Herald*



Internet photo

The Fraser River in British Columbia, Canada, is in very rugged country and presented many obstacles to gold seekers, in addition to those imposed by the British and the Hudson Bay Company.

telling of the Fraser River gold strike.

“Lieutenant Schaaf of Company C, Fourth Infantry, captured two of these men about twelve miles distant from the Fort; while a detail of men were pursuing five deserters from Company A, who had apparently set out down the Sound.

“During the week of April 16, 1858, a court martial was held for the Fort Steilacoom soldiers who deserted to go to the gold rush on the Fraser River. It was presided over by Capt. D. A. Russell, of the Fourth Infantry. Members of the court were: Captain Maurice Maloney, Lieutenant Bates, Lieutenant Kautz, Lieutenant Shaaff, all of the Fourth Infantry; and Lieutenant Reynolds, of the Ninth Infantry. The judge advocate was Dr. H. R. Wirtz.

“The following men were given forty-nine lashes on the bare back, their heads were shaved, and they were drummed out of the army for desertion on Monday, May 31, 1858: James A. Morris and James Wallace, of Company “H”, Ninth Infantry; Patrick Wren, Bonnar, and Timothy Malloy of Company “C”, Fourth Infantry. Patrick Murphy was sentenced to serve six months with ball and

chain and have \$7.00 of his monthly pay of \$11.00 retained. Francis Stine was likewise given a ball and chain sentence, but only for three months, with a like reduction in his pay. Three of the men tried were returned to duty.”

During the time the soldiers were serving their sentences, they were put on work detail during the day and kept in the fort guard house at night.

Problems were involved going to the gold mines on the Fraser River in the canyon near Hope, just north of Lillooet, Canada. First, this was under the jurisdiction of England and Governor Douglas decreed that entry must be made via Victoria rather than overland. Thousands still came by the Okanagan and Whatcom trails overland.

Further restrictions (Bonney p. 253) included policies of the Hudson’s Bay Company that no goods could be shipped into the territory that were not bought from the company; no guns or ammunition could be carried into the mines that were not imported from the United Kingdom and no