

The first troops arrived on the 28th, consisting of fourteen privates and one musician. By October, 75 men and five officers were stationed at the fort. An old document relates that they were immediately “instructed at night drill and skirmishes.”

The quartermaster’s department paid the Puget Sound Agricultural Company \$50 a month rent for twenty acres of land and the buildings which, in time, were replaced with better ones. Eventually the fort consisted of four barracks, a hospital, ... building[s] for officers, a commissary, clothing storage and quartermaster’s stores.

No stockade enclosed the place, but the buildings were arranged in a hollow square for easy defense. The site was used as a fort until 1868. No traces now are to be seen of the first log huts, but some of the hospital officials [once] live[d] in cottages erected there in 1857 and 1858 facing the parade ground. Fireplaces in almost every room, exceedingly thick walls and traces in the upper stories of loop-holes for guns [?] are reminders of the exigencies of early days.

With the soldiers established at Heath’s farm, the Indians decided to produce the killers of Wallace. In anticipation of the promised 80 blankets, they turned over six men on September 5 to the officers at the new fort. The names of the prisoners, besides Quallahwot and Kussass, were Sturharnai, Talatarn, Whyesk and Quatthlinkyne.

Having delivered the culprits, the tribe stayed around to see what would happen. They lingered at Fort Nisqually, trading dried salmon, baskets and mats for three weeks while the prisoners languished in the improvised guard house.

Washington’s first trial

Territorial officials in Oregon City went into a huddle to determine the next course of action. It would have been simpler to send the Indians to a more populated place for trial, but



Indians gather at Fort Nisqually in 1845 painting by Henry James Warre, a British Army officer on a reconnaissance mission of the Oregon Territory.

the military commander suggested that a hearing in the presence of their people might have a salutary effect.

There was no Indian sub-agent for the district after Thornton’s abrupt retirement and it became necessary to find a champion for the Indians. Governor Lane selected David Stone, who had just settled on the Cowlitz River, at present-day Longview, and was living in a crowded hut with his brother’s family, their six children and another stray nephew. Stone had been admitted to the bar in Shelbyville, Indiana, and at the time of his appointment as defense counsel was 37 years old.

Judge William P. Bryant was appointed trial judge and Alonzo P. Skinner, who had come to Oregon three years earlier to practice law, was prosecuting attorney.

The court party journeyed by bateau, canoe and trail from the Columbia to Fort Steilacoom, camping along the way. They arrived at their destination September 30. Jurors also traveled long distances, in some instances 200 miles, for there were not enough settlers in the immediate vicinity to complete a panel. The clerk was the dead man’s brother, William Wallace, from Whidbey Island.

John R. Jackson was foreman of the grand jury, which completed its

work on Monday. Those who served with him were David Chambers, Marcel Bernier, Benjamin Saremer, Michael Cottonier, John Baptiste Charolafer, Gabriel Jones, John Bradley, Simon Plamondon, J. Bradley, Simon Plamondon, J. Baptiste Real, Samuel Hancock, George Brail, Isam Carrier, Oliver Duffany and Michael Simmons. The trial jury was headed by Thomas M. Chambers and included Peter G. Stuart, William Craig, John Sexton, Jonathan Burbee, John Ellenberge, Sidney Ford, Louis Plamondon, Hiram Stuart, James Porter, David Kindred and Nathan Hamlin.

By Tuesday night the latter group returned a verdict of death by hanging for Quallahwot and Kussass. The other prisoners were to go free. Judge Bryant stated in his report to the governor: “Those who were found guilty were clearly so. Three of the others were acquitted...it was quite evident they were guilty to a less degree, if guilty at all. As to the fourth...there was no evidence against him and all the witnesses swore that they did not see him during the affray or attack on Fort Nisqually. It is not improbable that he was a slave whom the guilty chiefs expected to place in their stead as a satisfaction for the Americans murdered.”

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Washington’s Yesterdays¹

by Lucile McDonald

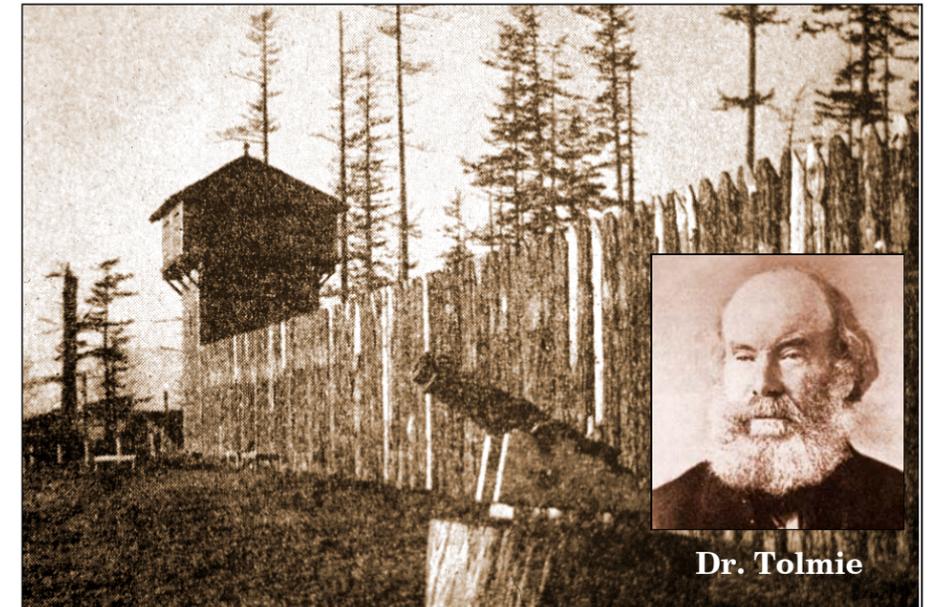
Lucile Saunders McDonald (1898-1992) was a Pacific Northwest journalist, historian and author, contributing the extracted information in this article to the Seattle Times Magazine and later published in her book Washington’s Yesterdays reproduced with the newspaper’s permission.

Shots at Fort Nisqually

In the spring of 1849 [Patkanim] took a large band of warriors to Fort Nisqually, supposedly to settle a dispute between his tribe and the Nisquallys. Dr. Tolmie and his staff observed that a much larger number of Snoqualmies were arriving than usually came on a trading expedition and inquired the reason. He was told that Lahalet, a Nisqually chief married to the daughter of a Snoqualmie chief, had been beating his wife and that her tribe intended to look into the matter. They insisted they meant no harm to the whites.

With this assurance Patkanim was invited inside the fort to smoke the pipe of peace. Dr. Tolmie took the precaution of placing two armed men, Thibeault and Gohome, at the gate with orders to let no other Indians in. He took his gun and went out to quiet the employees at the fort who were greatly in fear of the enemy. Tolmie just had talked with him when he heard a shot.

¹ Lucile McDonald, *Washington’s Yesterdays 1775-1853*, Binsfords & Mort, Publishers, Portland, Oregon, 1953, pp. 78-87.



Dr. Tolmie

An American settler, Leander Wallace, was killed at Fort Nisqually in 1849 resulting in the establishment of Fort Steilacoom.

Dr. Tolmie reported, “A good many shots then followed, the gate closed, we took to the bastions, but our people taking time getting armed (the affair being rather sudden) by the time they were at their stations, most of the enemy were out of shot, running away at full speed across the plain to their canoes.”

Patkanim escaped before the gate was closed and before anyone at the fort realized he was gone. Dr. Tolmie explained that the Americans did not respond fast enough to the call of “All hands come in and shut the gate.” He added, “They perhaps thought themselves secure as they were Americans and did not belong to the fort.”

Appeal to Governor Lane

Two hours after the attack Dr. Tolmie sent an express messenger to Fort Vancouver with news of the affray. The same courier carried an appeal from Michael Simmons to the new territorial governor, General Joseph Lane, asking him to provide protection for the Americans on Puget Sound, who had no means of defense against the Indians.

Lane’s complete military staff at Oregon City consisted of eight riflemen under Lieutenant G. W. Hawkins. The governor equipped five of them with arms and ammunition and set out at once for Nisqually. On arriving at Simmons’ home at New Market, Lane received word that two

(Continued on page 3)

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President's Message



Welcome to a brand-new year for Historic Fort Steilacoom, and what a year it is going to be!

This year of 2019 marks the 170th anniversary of the 1849 founding of Fort Steilacoom in the old Washington Territory, and we have an entire year's worth of extra special activities scheduled to commemorate this major historic event in Washington State's history.

We started it all off in January with a splendid presentation by long time HFSA member Ken Morgan. He illumined for us the sometimes-convoluted history of the joint British and American Boundary Commission which evolved from the Oregon treaty of 1846. This commission resulted in an almost thirty year journey to establish the Washington-Canadian border that we recognize today.

In just two weeks, at 2 p.m. on March 17th, noted author, Jerry Eckrom, will examine the very first Euro-American settlement of this property that became Fort Steilacoom. He will tell us of a group of settlers from Canada's Red River Country who were lured here by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and



Paintings by Steve Anderson

Joseph Thomas Heath established a farm on Hudson's Bay property which later became the site of Fort Steilacoom.

also of Joseph Heath who struggled to raise up a successful farm, toiling for their Puget Sound Agricultural Company.

With the 1843 opening, over the Cascade Mountains, of the northern branch of the Oregon Trail, more and more Euro-Americans poured into this lower region of Puget's Sound. The fragile balance that had existed with the indigenous population was eroding, and settlers clamored for protection through a strong presence by the US Army. This Spring issue of the HFSA Newsletter contains an excellent overview of the Leander Wallace affair. It was the final spark that resulted in the arrival of Companies L and M of the First U.S. Artillery to secure tranquility for American immigrants to the Pacific Northwest.

Be sure to look in on our brand new website to see all the amazing activity that is planned for this coming year, and to view loads of photographs from last December's "Christmas at the Fort" celebration.

I'll watch for you at the Fort!

Gideon

Joseph Heath farm

Jerry Eckrom, historian and author, will talk about Joseph Heath, a tenant farmer of the Hudson's Bay Company, on Sunday, March 17, 2019, at 2 p.m. in Quarters 2 of Fort Steilacoom.

A trove of material survives the operations of the HBC's farming subsidiary, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. One such record was a journal kept by Heath from 1845 to 1849 which is rich in personal details.

Alongside details of sheep farming and crop production, comes wildlife encounters, observations of Native Americans, terrifying forest fires, and frontier hardships. The journal also details Heath's mounting health issues leading to his untimely death in 1849, a lonely man whose family in England had abandoned him.

His passing intersected with the U.S. Army's search for a place to build Fort Steilacoom. The fort played a significant role in the settlement of Washington Territory, beginning with its construction in 1849 and until it closed after the Civil War in 1868.

Come join us for this presentation!

Yesterdays (from page 1)
 companies of artillerymen had just debarked at Fort Vancouver. Knowing that this force would be available to deal with any trouble that might arise, he decided to turn back. He wrote Dr. Tolmie on May 17 explaining the situation and asking that the Hudson's Bay Company meanwhile refrain from selling powder and ball to the Indians.

Governor Lane also told Dr. Tolmie that the American government intended to fortify Puget Sound.

Arrival of the troops was an important event at Fort Vancouver. The soldiers were brought by the United States Steamer *Massachusetts* and were six months en route from New York by way of Cape Horn.

The *Massachusetts* remained in the Pacific Northwest several years. She was an unusual looking vessel of 750 tons registry, equipped with both sails and a propeller. She entered Honolulu harbor on a calm day without the help of canvas, causing astonished Hawaiians to rush to the beaches to see the phenomenon.

The vessel carried 161 officers and men of the First Regiment, U. S. Artillery Companies M and L, commanded by Brevet Major J. S. Hathaway.

On arriving at the mouth of the Columbia May 8, the vessel was piloted to Astoria, thence up river to Fort Vancouver, where it dropped anchor and fired a salute. The fort and the Hudson's Bay Company bark *Columbia* fired answering guns. The next day the soldiers went ashore and pitched tents on the river bank, later moving to higher ground. Some eventually were sent to Puget Sound to establish Fort Steilacoom.

A reward of 80 blankets was offered for the killers

The troops of the *Massachusetts* were augmented in October by arrival of nearly 500 mounted rifleman. At their start from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 645 privates were enrolled but a number deserted to go to the gold fields. The regiment arrived at Vancouver ragged and in some in-



Sketch of early Fort Steilacoom in about 1850 by William Birch Murtrie.

stances barefoot. No room existed for the soldiers with Major Hathaway's company, so they were quartered in Oregon City hotels and structures temporarily vacated by settlers. Bedlam ruled in the town due to gambling games, much drinking and quarreling. The unhappy citizens breathed a sigh of relief when in April the soldiers moved into barracks constructed in Vancouver. A year later the main part of the regiment was transferred south.

J. Quinn Thornton, newly appointed Indian sub-agent for the northern half of Oregon Territory, took over the investigation. He arrived at Fort Nisqually on August 7 and summoned representatives of the Skagits, Suquamish, Nisqually, Clallams, Skykomish and other tribes to a meeting. On August 21 he gave gifts of blankets and baize to the principal chiefs and offered to pay a reward of eighty blankets to the Indians if the killers were in custody within three weeks.

The Indian sub-agent charged his purchases and expenses at Fort Nisqually against Governor Lane, chief Indian agent for Oregon, and departed two days later. The governor was angry upon hearing Thornton had offered a reward, saying that it held out inducements to the Indians to commit murder by way of specu-

lation. He predicted they might go so far as to kill an American, await the offer of a large reward and deliver some of their slaves as the guilty parties, for whom they would receive ten times the amount they were worth.

Lane had intended to visit Puget Sound after arrival of the troops and demand the murderers, but political matters interfered. His sharp criticism of Thornton's action led to the latter's resignation.

Founding of Fort Steilacoom

The military, soon after arriving on the Columbia River, sought a site for a fort to protect Puget Sound. Major Hathaway, district commander, Captain Hill and several other officers on August 23 looked at property on Steilacoom Creek which belonged to the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, the intention being to rent accommodations for the time being.

A company [tenant], Joseph T. Heath, had started a tidy farm where Western State Hospital stands [today]. Before his five-year term of service expired, he died in February, 1849.

Settlement of the estate was just over when the military contingent arrived. Heath's several rough log buildings stood empty and the officers saw they offered desirable shelter.