

The Sutler's Store

Sutlers were licensed merchants who traveled with a particular regiment. After 1867 these franchised traders set up permanent stores at army posts.

The sutler's store was both the "Target" and the "Frederick and Nelson" for the frontier soldier, supplying necessities and luxuries. An officer could order canned oysters, ale, and even champagne. The soldiers could buy beer, whisky, tobacco, and canned fruit to vary the diet. Shoelaces, needles and thread, combs, and soap were also offered. Commonly the sutler extended credit as the soldiers' pay could be erratic.

Fort Steilacoom now has its own Sutler Store in Building 4, run by Marjorie Larsen, Carren Langston, and Wanda Nadal. New merchandise is being ordered now. An array of small 19th century cannons has been added.

The Sutler Store will be available during the open house on March 17. Be sure to look at Jerry Eckrom's book, *Remembered Drums: A History of the Puget Sound War*, which will be for sale. Raffle tickets will be sold for the crocheted Afghan done in greens and cream. This sutler's store does not stock strong spirits or tobacco!

Please call Marjorie Larsen at 588-6742 if you want to volunteer to help out at the Sutler Store this year.

Wanda Nadal

Around the Fort...

Heritage Council. Vikki Nelson and Patricia Morrison attended the Heritage Council meeting in Olympia February 8 and 9.

Illustrations. Carren Langston has drawn pictures showing pioneer and Fort Steilacoom life for the docent school presentations. Teachers can reproduce copies for children to color.

Jobs exchanged. Mary Metzler and Jack Langston have "exchanged" jobs on the Association Board of Directors. Jack was appointed 2nd Vice President and Mary will continue as a director, curator, and docent.

Teacher tours. Patricia Morrison and Vikki Nelson are organizing the Tacoma teachers tours of Fort Steilacoom scheduled for March 15 and 17.

Ft. Nisqually. Fort Nisqually hosted a tour for Association board members on February 21.

White River. A number of us visited the White River Museum in Auburn on March 7.

History Buff Alert!

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Washington. These tours are generally organized for Thursdays and include sites such as Fort Nisqually, the White River Historical Museum, and Fort Vancouver.

Patricia Morrison

LOOK AT YOUR MAILING LABEL!

Does 1991 appear above your name on the mailing label? If so, you have paid your membership dues for this year. If 1991 does not appear, won't you please take a moment to renew your membership in Historic Fort Steilacoom Association now?

Student and Senior Citizens . . . \$5.00
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Historic Fort Steilacoom Association
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Search for Art Leads to History

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One of the most confusing aspects about these letters is figuring out just who owned the letters. It is peculiar that drafts of sermons and possible drafts of letters, signed and unsigned, were also combined with a military report, poems and love letter. It's also odd that I have letters to and from the same person. I believe some of the answers to these questions remain in Steilacoom, but that more information is in Maryland and Syracuse, New York.



HISTORIC FORT STEILACOOM NEWSLETTER

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Fort Steilacoom, Washington

March, 1991

Fort Has Cannons!



Chuck Collier, Jack Langston, and Lyle Dunkin stand beside one of the Napoleon cannons in Priest Point Park in Olympia. Two of these 1860's cannons are now on long term loan to Fort Steilacoom.

Fort Steilacoom has added three cannons to its arsenal—two Napoleons from Olympia and a mountain howitzer from Hoods Canal. The hope of obtaining cannons of the Civil War era was considered to be improbable several years ago, but with the help of Steve Anderson a cannon was located at Union on Hoods Canal and two cannon barrels were located in Priest Point Park in Olympia. A cannon acquisition committee was quickly appointed to meet with the Olympia City Council and negotiate for the cannons. Steve, Lyle Hegsted, and Jack Langston presented a plan for restoration and display of the cannons which was accepted. The city of Olympia agreed to a twenty-five year renewable loan, giving Historic Fort Steilacoom Association first option to purchase.

The cannons were moved from Priest Point Park to Fort Steilacoom on February 2 by the Washington National Guard with special assistance from CWO Ron Longie, SFC James Burroughs, and John Murphy, Chairman of the Washington National Guard State Historical Society.

The mountain howitzer, an 1860's reproduction, was donated by Russell Austin, Jr. of Seattle through arrangements made by Jack Langston. It is typical of those shown in pictures of the Fort Steilacoom magazine in 1858.

Carriages for the cannons are being built to original specifications by the Jeff Stafford Wheel and Carriage Company in Coatsville, Pennsylvania. The restored and mounted cannons will be displayed under a shelter to be built

just south of Quarters 4. They will be the featured attraction at a "Cannon Day" celebration planned for August 24 to commemorate the founding of Fort Steilacoom in 1849.

Jack C. Langston

Cannons Identified

The origin of the two Napoleon 12 pounder cannons leased by Historic Fort Steilacoom from the City of Olympia has been determined. Identification was made from markings on the barrels along with help from the book *Field Artillery Weapons of the Civil War*, by James C. Hazlett, Edwin Olmstead, and M. Hume Parks.

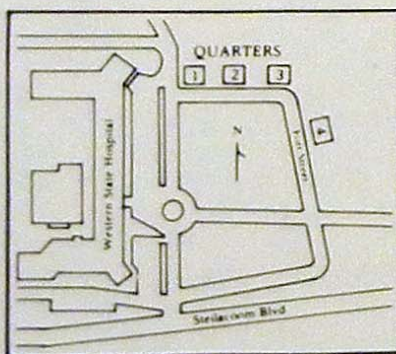
The most clearly marked gun was cast by the Revere Copper Company in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1863. The barrel, registry number 247, weighs 1220 lbs., bears the initials "T.J.R." of the ordinance officer, Thomas Jefferson (or Jackson) Rodman, and has the reception mark "U.S." in double line boxy letters with hatching and Maltese Crosses on the periods. It has hausses (flat areas) on the breech on top for the pendulum sight and on the bottom as a base plate. The cannon has a 4.62 inch bore, the same as when new indicating that it was probably used very little. This gun was one of 100 ordered by the North on August 26, 1863.

The second cannon was made by Henry N. Hooper & Company, also of Boston, Massachusetts. The markings on the barrel rim are very faint with some illegible or obliterated. It was cast in 1862 with a rimbase number of 80, though its U.S. Army registry number is 71. Hooper's rimbase or foundry numbers were nine units higher than the registry numbers assigned by the inspecting ordinance officers through registry number 105. Only the "T" in the initials of Thomas J. Rodman, the inspecting ordinance officer, is still readable. This cannon, weighing over 1220 lbs., has a five inch bore and a hausse seat on top of the

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President's Message

Happy New Year to all of you supporters of Fort Steilacoom!

So much has happened since our last newsletter, I hardly know where to begin. We have been progressing so quickly. Since the men have finished the reconstruction, we have turned our attention to researching life at the fort in the 1850's and 60's.

Steve Anderson, former site administrator at Fort Nisqually, was hired as a consultant and has pushed us forward at "warp speed!" His invaluable knowledge has helped the Board focus on our next major goal, the Interpretive Center, which will be in Quarters 4. It will require lots of research, fundraising, and involvement with other museums and history groups. The Interpretive Center will include a new audiovisual facility, pictorial exhibits, and artifacts such as cannons, rifles and period clothing. It is our vision to make the Interpretive Center an important resource for educating the public about early Northwest history.

We are planning some fun and exciting "Big" events this summer and fall, so we would appreciate anyone who would like to get involved! July 4th we'll be in downtown Steilacoom with one of our newly acquired cannons. In the fall we will be celebrating "Cannon Day." We are working on both projects now to insure that they will be unique and exciting days for history buffs and casual observers alike.

Fort Steilacoom was always like a large puzzle to me, but the pieces are falling into place as we work to reconstruct the past. I'm beginning to



A Civil War era cannon weighing 1220 lbs. is hoisted from its mount and onto the National Guard truck as Jack Langston and Vikki Nelson watch in approval.

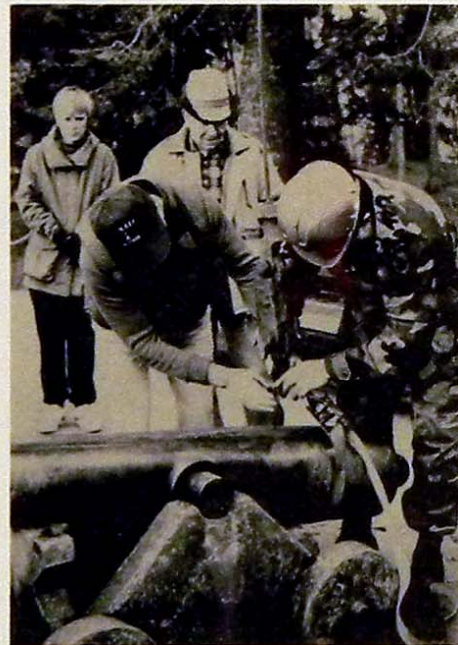
Cannon Fund Help

Our "cannon fund" is short the amount of money needed to cover the freight for the carriages ordered from Coatsville, Pennsylvania. Your help is needed. I am requesting each member of the Association to contribute at least five dollars (\$5) toward the \$1,900 which will be required to get the three carriages to Fort Steilacoom. Any additional money collected will be used to build the cannon shelter. It is very important to our image as a frontier fort to have these cannons on display where they can be seen by everyone. Please give to this fund by sending your contribution to Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, Cannon Fund, P.O. Box 94095, Fort Steilacoom, WA 98494.

Jack C. Langston
 Ch., Cannon Committee

see the faces and hear the voices of the people who called Fort Steilacoom their home. Please feel free to join this adventure of bringing Fort Steilacoom to life.

Vikki Nelson



CWO Ron Longie and Bob Weir strap the brass cannon, tarnished green from its long exposure to the elements, to the hoist.

Cannons Identified

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 breech for a pendulum sight but no lower base plate. This gun was ordered on September 8, 1862, and accepted by Rodman on December 2 of the same year.

Hooper made 370 and Revere 461 of the 1,157 bronze Napoleons cast for the Union Army during the Civil War.

Charles R. Collier



"Grandmother M.," Mary Metzler, will soon be enchanting primary school children with stories about everyday life at the fort.

Interpretive Center Planned

Now that the four buildings at Fort Steilacoom have been fully restored, the Association is focusing its efforts on developing the Interpretive Center in Quarters 4. A storage room is being converted into a small "theater" where visitors will be able to view slide, video, and motion picture programs interpreting the history of the fort. Grants have been received from the Gottfried and Mary Fuchs Foundation, the Forest Foundation, and the Burlington Northern Foundation to purchase audiovisual equipment for the theater and for program production.

Steve Anderson has been retained as a consultant to assist in obtaining additional grant funds needed for Interpretive Center programs and exhibits. He will also prepare an outline of the exhibit storyline, create preliminary exhibit designs, do a cost analysis per exhibit, and establish contact with exhibit designers.

The Interpretive Center will become the "core" of the fort complex, orienting visitors to the site and its role in the history of Washington Territory and the Pacific Northwest. The Center also includes the Sutler's Store and Association offices. It will serve as an introduction to exhibits in Quarters 1, 2, and 3. Quarters 1 is being furnished to represent the home of a married officer. Quarters 2 will be used for



Carol Starr, dressed as the Irish laundress "Catherine Williams," will demonstrate life at Fort Steilacoom to fourth graders.

Docents to Visit Schools

Students in some Clover Park School District's second, third, and fourth grades will experience a "time warp" this spring when they are visited by 1850's characters, "Grandmother M." (Mary Metzler), and an Irish laundress, "Catherine Williams" (Carol Starr). Prior to the visits, teachers will receive an educational packet containing Fort Steilacoom brochures, a historical time line, recipes, toy patterns, pictures for coloring, and a bibliography.

"Grandmother M." will focus on the lower grades in a storytelling setting, sharing facts about everyday life at the fort and showing games, toys, and handicrafts of the 1850's.

"Catherine Williams" will take a historical approach in her fourth grade presentations, carrying copies of old maps, pictures of the fort, and such props as soldier's long underwear and homemade soap in her large "washer-woman" basket.

Carol Starr

meetings, community oriented programs, and changing displays. A room will be set up to represent Col. and Mrs. Casey's parlor. Quarters 3 will be recreated as the unmarried officers' billet, house a display of military weapons and accoutrements, and contain the original billiard table used by Col. Casey and officers at Fort Steilacoom.



In character as "Mary Slaughter," Patricia Morrison shows visitors the married officers' quarters at Fort Steilacoom.

History Buff Alert!

As we begin to crystalize planning for the Interpretive Center, our ability to document artifacts and accounts of past life at the fort will depend on many hours of painstaking research. The era 1849 to 1861 will be of particular interest as the regular army troops were absent from the fort after 1861 due to the opening of the Civil War and Fort Steilacoom was abandoned after 1868.

Patricia Morrison has been working to organize documents and information we have accumulated over the years. Many individuals carry oral histories and information about in their heads, and we are making a concerted effort to put this information into a documented form. Yes, Patricia has a hand-held recorder and will travel to anyone willing to share pertinent information.

If you enjoy history, or geneology, if you are interested in learning more about military protocols or the social customs of the pioneer period, join us at Fort Steilacoom! Enthusiasm is more important than background. You don't have to be a history major or a museum curator to make a significant contribution to this project. Also consider joining us as we tour other historic sites and museums in

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Search for Art Leads to History

by Esther Schooler

Esther Schooler received a BFA in painting from Syracuse University and is currently completing an MFA degree in Mixed Media at the University of Michigan. In 1986 she was awarded a full scholarship to the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Selected recent exhibitions include group shows at Aquinas College Gallery, Grand Rapids, Michigan, MCC Fine Arts Gallery, Flint, Michigan, and Rackham Gallery, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her work has been exhibited in the Northeast and is included in private collections. Currently she is the Assistant Director for the New York State Summer School of Arts/School of Visual Arts where she teaches painting and drawing. Before she returned to Syracuse for her education, she was a professional actress, Equity member in New York City.

Syracuse, New York, is the kind of place where fancy fashion stores last about ten minutes. In the 19th century it was a major port on the Erie Canal, soon to be the next New York City; but when the trains came the canal dried up.

I was an undergraduate studying painting at Syracuse University in 1985. I had returned to school after working in New York City as a professional actress. At the time my art had little to do with acting or theater. I created artwork using artifacts and memories from other people's dreams. I reassembled history with the mystery of chance.

The best repository for cultural leftovers was the State Street Antique Store. Four inches of dust and crusty lights made it difficult to see the papers, books, and junk nobody wanted but me. On a Tuesday morning in late November, I found an old map book dated 1839. The leather was eaten away, stained and dry. When I picked it up, soft, brown flakes floated to the ground. Pages slipped cockeyed in the binding. Someone had scribbled his name on the backs of the maps. They were beautiful maps; washed with shades of pink, greens, and blue; small intimate calligraphic marks; black lines delicately etched...perfect to rip up for my artwork.

As I flipped through the book, I noticed some old letters on moldy blue paper. The date was 1858 and signed, "Yours most affectionately Geo M. Berry." I had to have them. I had no idea what they were worth, and I didn't have much money. But without this book, Picasso dreams would die on South State Street. As nonchalantly as I could, I asked the clerk, "How much do you want?" He looked at me sideways, snatched the book, flipped the pages, fingered the letters, snapped it shut and said, "Two bucks."

I didn't go home right away. I went to my studio, closed the door and opened the book. Carefully I took out the letters but didn't know where to begin. I put them back. I hadn't realized there were so many; fifteen to twenty by at least three different authors. I brought them out again, noticing the blue was the same color as the bluebooks students take tests in. Maybe I made a mistake. I opened one which had the clearest hand writing. It began with:

For several days past, the people of Olympia and of Pierce County have been in a state of excitement, the consequence of the approximation and developments of the day appointed by the court for the execution of Indian Chief Leschi.

The unknown writer was at the trial and summed up the compelling evidence to acquit Leschi. He talked about the Indian Wars, the contradictory evidence about Leschi's placement at the scene of the crime, and finally the state of affairs concerning the sheriff.

About noon on the 22nd the sheriff was arrested by virtue of a warrant issued by the U.S. Commissioner on the charge of selling liquor to Indians and during the process of the charge, the time named in the death warrant for the execution expired. Leschi was not hung.

What I wanted to know was, "What happened to Leschi?" The search began in the Syracuse University Library. I had never heard of Steilacoom, and in the beginning could not decipher the writing well enough to know whether the abbreviation referred to New York, New Jersey or what. It was Washington Territory. In the instant a day turns to night, I had skipped breakfast, lunch, and dinner searching bits of history. I couldn't get out of the library, and when I did I couldn't shut up. Professors would

come to the studio to discuss my paintings and end up listening to revisionist history. Berry became a close friend, a relative, a quasi-symbol of obsessive proportions. But then I knew nothing about him but his name and his dream. In the absence of fact his dream became a myth tangled in my art.

Over the last six years the development of my artwork has paralleled my research. I've traveled to Connecticut, Indiana, and California visiting rare book and manuscript collections to piece together the lives of the men who spent at least part of their lives in Steilacoom. Since I had never been there, I invented an imaginary landscape from the color of the letters. Pictures were difficult to come by. Few books available to me had pictures of Steilacoom and usually were of the same image. Lieutenant August Kautz and Col. Silas Casey were military men whose portraits were in the National Archives, but Leschi remained a mystery. George M. Berry was even more elusive. Little by little real evidence turned the imaginary landscape from color to black and white. Every now and then a Xeroxed picture would arrive in the mail or a history book would have an old map. The more I found the more I wanted to know, and as an undergraduate putting myself through school I knew I wouldn't be able to get to Steilacoom until after I graduated. I bugged people constantly, particularly if they had been anywhere in the state of Washington. There seemed to be less and less I could do through the mail.

In 1989 I enrolled as a graduate student at the University of Michigan School of Art. Immediately I submitted a grant proposal to the graduate school, but was turned down. In the meantime I committed myself to creating a body of artwork based on the letters and continued my correspondence with distant libraries and historical associations. Last year I wrote another proposal, this time to the School of Art.

Two weeks after I submitted my proposal I was on my way to Steilacoom. I passed signs for the places in my letters; Tacoma, Olympia, Puyallup. My imaginary landscape disappeared. I didn't recognize a thing. I wanted to see Steilacoom and at the same time I wanted the road trip to last forever. The road snaked up the tallest forest of pine trees I'd ever seen. In the distance was a little speck of blue. I thought it

Search for Art Leads to History

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was sky. I wondered if these were the trees the men in my letters had fallen out of during skirmishes. I passed a sign that said "Steilacoom," and at that very instant I drew in a breath. The blue sky was actually the Puget Sound. Steilacoom was below me.

Finally I was able to see what I had wondered about for the past six years. Since the trip was financed by the School of Art at the University of Michigan, I had a specific purpose to photograph the site for my artwork. I thought it poetic that my first visit was only to see the place described by someone else's imagination. While I was generously toured by Vikki Nelson and Mary Metzler when I arrived, the guides who were with me for six years were Col. Silas Casey, Lieutenant August Kautz, Leschi, and Rev. George M. Berry. The letters I have are from and about these men. Other men whom the letters address are Reverends Durbin and Tearne. John T. Wolf was also recorded, but only in name for his was the name scrawled all over the map book. Some of the papers are actually drafts of sermons, but the most interesting are the letters that relate events surrounding the Indian Wars of 1855 and the controversy about Leschi.

There is a love letter from Berry, but it is unclear who it was for. He had two wives and two children by the second wife, but I am not convinced that the letter was for either women. Berry was not a prominent person in the Steilacoom community, and according to Kautz, not entirely well liked.

"They have turned Mr. Berry out of the chaplaincy at Steilacoom which is certainly wrong, and I should have opposed it.

Originally from Maryland he was sent to Washington Territory as a missionary for the Methodist Church. He preached in three different districts for a year each before he landed in Steilacoom. He was there for three years and for one of them was appointed the Chaplain to the U.S. Army. He spent another three years in Washington before returning to Maryland where he died in 1891. I have found some evidence that he was embroiled in a religious problem while he was east, but have not yet finished the research in that area to come to a definitive conclusion.

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Letter To A Special Friend

George M. Berry, an army chaplain at Fort Steilacoom in the 1850's, wrote the following letter to his fiancée 133 years ago. The letter was rediscovered by Esther Schooler in November, 1985, while browsing through an old book in a bookstore in Syracuse, New York.

Fort Steilacoom March 10th, 1858

My Dearest Friend,

The time of my coming to you to claim you mine for ever ... [is] nigh. The first steamer for San Francisco in May is the one upon which I am to embark [sic] so as to leave that city on the 20th of the same month for New York—God indicated by his opening providences—I shall probably arrive in Shippensburg about the 17th or 18th of June.

In the building of new quarters the question arose: what kind of a house shall we erect for the chaplain? The solution of the question brought Col Casey to consult me and involved another, "Are you going to be married?" This developed my intention of visiting the states for you, and after some days of thought and consultation the Col thought I had better go before Conference and offered to give me leave of absence four months. I accepted believing that it is the will of God. The arrangement will require us to return leaving New York for this Coast on the Steamer of the 5th of July. Several reasons seem to make it duty to return as early as possible. I leave no one in my place during my absence & it is needful that I attend the next session of our annual Conference & the regulations of the army do not allow the Commander of a Post to give a Chaplain a leave of absence for a longer period than four months.

I trust we can be in New York in time for the first Steamer in July. Could I obtain a draft I had intended to send you a present but the paymaster being absent I cannot obtain one to send and must consent to bring it.

After remaining a few days in Shippensburg it is proposed to take you, if agreeable to yourself, to Baltimore, to Washington and down into Charles County Md to see our friends and relations. But this plan is on the condition that it meet your approval. It has been five years since I saw my sisters and brother and although I shall have but a day or two to remain with them, yet, I greatly desire the joy of meeting them. They are among those I love second only to yourself. The Lord blesses me when I place you before all other earthly beings and I therefore think we are following the drawings of his will.

There are five ladies belonging to the station all married but the Col's two daughters who have been here about three months. The oldest leads our singing on Sabbaths at Church although a non professor [sic]. We ride on horse back often and during the winter the weather has been delightful. Since I wrote you there was a snow of 10 inches and a freeze, the cold being 12 degrees above zero, the coldest I have ever known over here.

We will commit ourselves and all our interests into the hands of God. He still be our portion and the strength of our hearts for ever. He declares: he that trusts in the Lord shall be as mount Zion which cannot be moved and as the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about them that fear him. Why should we fear, then? "We will not fear." but give ourselves more than ever to his holy work. I rejoice when I reflect that God has put it into your heart to accompany me out and become a helper in his vinyard. His mercies are ever multiplying and exhaustless. They constrain me to love him with all my heart, mind and strength.

His mercies close me round
forever be his name adored

You will please remember me in the kindest manner to your parents and please say to them that there was not time to wait for an answer to my note to them therefore I hope they will pardon me for coming under the circumstances.

I think of taking the liberty of writing to your bro David informing him of my intention, and of calling upon him, if my time allows. I shall probably be able to visit Oakland and see your bro Wm.

I would like to put my sentiments on paper but cannot and therefore might as well close. I have no emblem of my love that I can send. I can say no more than that you live in my every feeling and in the every pulsation of my heart. May heaven's holy presence abide with and dwell in your dear soul for Jesus sake.

I expect to write again by the next Steamer.

Yours most affectionately
Geo M Berry