

James Maynsen. Maynsen, or Minson, took a claim north of Murty Fahy in Spanaway.

Peter Ranquest. Ranquest, or Runquist, became a blacksmith in the town of Steilacoom.

William Savage. Savage established a farm south of American Lake. He held many positions in county and state government.

Theopholis Seal. Seal established south of Savage on the south side of American Lake.

John Withiel. Withiel took out a donation claim in Spanaway north of Fahy and Minson.

John Lackey. Lackey took out a claim on the south shore of American Lake. This may be the same claim as the one Huggins associated with the Halls.

Frederick Meyer. Meyer's name does not appear on the 1850 census; however, he is listed in the monthly reports for the fort in 1851 as being returned to duty after having deserted. Meyer established a claim on the north side of the Nisqually River near the mouth.

George Barr. Barr was employed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1850s as a carpenter and built the large house now known as the Chief Factor's House at the reconstructed Fort Nisqually.

Hugh Hunter & Robert Buchanan. These two men established a claim together in the Spanaway area. In 1853 Hunter became deranged from a drinking bout and stabbed Buchanan to death, severely wounded an Indian named Wilcut, and strangled an Indian boy. Upon sobering up and discovering what he had done, Hunter then shot himself with a rifle.

What's So Important about Fort Steilacoom?

Fort Steilacoom played a major role in the legal, social, and economic development of Western Washington. The first trial ever held in the Puget Sound area convened at Fort Steilacoom in 1849. Soldiers at the fort aided the economy as consumers of goods and providers of "cash money." The fort was the social mecca of the area, and settlers also went there to see the Army doctor in medical emergencies.

During the Civil War, the garrison was greatly reduced. By 1868 the U. S. Government decided American settlers no longer faced danger and abandoned Fort Steilacoom. The buildings and grounds were deeded to the Territory for a mental hospital which occupies the site today.

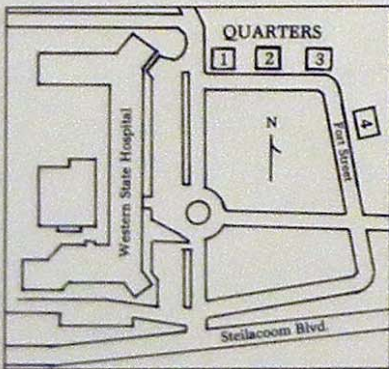
Membership Renewal

April is membership renewal month for the many friends and supporters of Historic Fort Steilacoom Association. We are updating our membership file and have enclosed a new membership card. Please check volunteer activities in which you are interested and note your special skills or experience on the back and return in the self-addressed envelope along with your dues payment.



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Join the opening day fun on April 12!



Fort Steilacoom

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Company M

The 1st Artillery Regiment in the Oregon Territory
and at Fort Steilacoom, 1849-1853

by George Dickey¹

On 24 August, 1849, the following entry was made in the *Journal of Occurrences at Fort Nisqually*, a Hudson's Bay Company trading post that had been established by that British firm on Puget Sound in 1833:

Smoky. Rode to Steilacoom this morning in company with Major Hatheway and Captain Hill in order that they might judge for themselves as to whether Steilacoom or Sequelitchew would form the best winter quarters for the troops. Steilacoom received the preference on account of the number of buildings already erected there....

With these few words in the fort's daily journal, Dr. William Fraser Tolmie announced the change of control over vast lands surrounding Puget Sound. No longer as the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company is he the undisputed lord of this vast domain. The United States Government has arrived with enough force to occupy its newly acquired territory of Oregon. The garrison established at Steilacoom would eventually become Fort Steilacoom and for the next twenty years will serve as the military headquarters for the Army on Puget Sound.

The Events

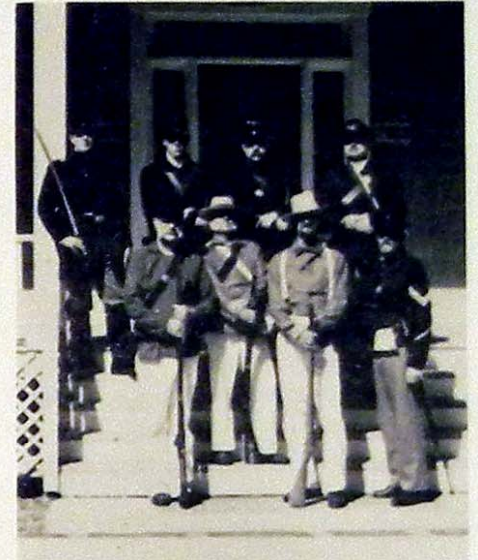
In 1846 the joint occupancy of the Oregon Territory by the United States and Great Britain ended, and the United States prepared to formally take control of the portion

of the territory south of the 49th parallel. A regiment of Mounted Rifles was raised at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, with orders to move overland and take control of the territory. Before the regiment was ready to march, war broke out with Mexico, and the regiment was diverted to that front. The Mexican War fully occupied the nation's attention for the next two years, and it was not until 1848 that the federal government would turn its attention once again to the Oregon Territory. The Oregon country at that time encompassed the current states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and parts of Montana and Utah.

On 1 May, 1849, Snoqualmie Indians staged what has been referred to historically as a raid on the HBC fort at Nisqually on Puget Sound. An American settler, Leander C. Wallace, had been killed and another named Lewis seriously wounded. Earlier, Governor Lane had promised troops to protect the settlers in that area as soon as they were available. It would be August before transportation was made available for the transfer of one of the artillery companies to Puget Sound. Company M was loaded on board the Bark *Harpooner* for the trip to Fort Nisqually, where they arrived on August 23rd.

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¹Excerpts from full text funded by a grant from the Washington Commission for the Humanities.



Company M and the Ninth Infantry Regiment reenactment groups bring Fort Steilacoom back to life.

Fort Opens April 12

Cannon firing demonstrations, music of the period, recreation of a surgical field station, a Civil War film, tours, Sutler's Store and refreshments are featured in the season opening of Fort Steilacoom on Sunday, April 12, from 1 to 4 p.m. The opening is a commemoration of the 131st anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War with events jointly sponsored by the A. V. Kautz Chapter of the South Puget Sound Civil War Round Table and Historic Fort Steilacoom Association. The event is open to the public and will be great fun for the entire family. Fort Steilacoom will also be open Sundays from 1-4 p.m., except on Easter, during the spring.

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President's Message

Hurray! Spring is here and time to get ready for our 1992 events. We at the fort had a brief time in January and February to relax after a very busy December. The cannon carriages arriving on the 23rd of December had us as anxious as new parents, but truly was a great gift for all of us. Jack Langston could breathe a sigh of relief. Thanks for all your effort and work Jack, Arnold and Lyle.

In March we started planning our events for this year. April 12th, Sunday, will be our opening day, and we'll be displaying our three "complete" cannons. There will be other cannon also on display from other groups and a chance to see how they were loaded and fired. There will also be a display of surgical instruments of the period and other events that the whole family will enjoy.

Slowly, we are putting together some research, but would like to have anyone who is interested in our area history help sort out the lives of the soldiers and families.

We will again be in Steilacoom for the July 4th celebration, which was such a fun time for us last year.

"Cannon Day" will be Saturday, August 22, and will be bigger and better than last year, so be sure to mark your calendar! We will need lots of volunteers for this event, so please join us.

Marjorie Larsen and Wanda Nadal will be going off our Board this month and will be greatly missed. Marjorie, Wanda, and Karen Langston have spent so much time and energy in ordering and keeping our gift store operating. Thanks, gang.

I want to also thank Steve Anderson, who has helped to keep us going in the right direction, for all the extra time he has donated. Good luck with your new job, Steve!

One last thank you to everyone on the Board for being patient and flexible during our "learning years."

Hope to see all of you on our special opening day, April 12th!

Vikki Nelson

Sewing Group Active

The Ladies of the Fort sewing group continues to meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in Quarters 4. During our last meeting a replica of an 1850s dinner dress was completed. It is now on display in Quarters 4. Work is in progress on a green and black striped taffeta evening dress. Christine Finnigan shared her research and a design for period aprons and Randi made a child's jacket for her son. She has also made a young girl's dress from one of her own period gowns.

Dave Emmick, a local Civil War reenactor, shared some of his extensive knowledge of period uniforms at our April 1st meeting. He discussed construction and demonstrated methods of making a "sack" coat.

Join us at our next meeting on Wednesday, May 6. See you there!

Shea Munroe

Docents Needed

Volunteer docents are needed at the fort for one Sunday per month between 1 and 4 p.m. Contact Vikki Nelson at 581-4506.

Join 4th Infantry Regiment

Sign up for some fun with history. Enlist in the 4th Infantry Regiment, a Fort Steilacoom living history reenactment group now forming under the command of "Captain" Jack Langston. The regiment will learn to perform the military arts of the 1860s including cannon drill and firing, and will show and demonstrate weapons, uniforms, and life of the soldier of the Civil War period. In addition to soldiers, the regiment needs a blacksmith, stable and horsemen, sutler and store clerks, priest or minister, surgeon and nurse, artillery men and "powder monkeys," laundress and cooks, native Americans, and soldier and officer wives and children. There is an activity for everyone. Make it a family affair and enlist together!

Enlist now by returning the enclosed enlistment form and questionnaire. For additional information call Jack Langston, (206) 584-2722.

Leschi Tried Again!

Students of Judith Orr's Hudtloff Jr. High School class vigorously prosecuted and defended "Chief" Leschi, leader of the Nisqually, who was accused of the murder of Joseph Miles and Benton Moses in an ambush near Connell's Prairie during the Indian War of 1855-56. The mock trial took place on February 18, 1992, in Quarters 2 at Fort Steilacoom, but this time the jury found Leschi innocent. A video tape of the students' trial is available.

Company M (continued from page 1)

Major Hatheway, the detachment's commander, had journeyed overland to Nisqually and met the troops when they arrived there. The following morning he, Captain Hill, and Doctor Tolmie rode out to look for a location for an army post. The site selected was a company-owned farm recently left vacated by the death of its sharecropper, an Englishman named Joseph Heath. On the 24th the bark *Harpooner* moved up to the mouth of the creek near the fort site and began unloading. The post founded at Heath's old farm site was named Fort Steilacoom. The United States Army assumed residence on that site following a formal agreement to pay the Hudson's Bay Company a sum of \$50 per month rent.

Heath's farm buildings were not adequate for the army's needs, and work was started on additional facilities. Post quartermaster Lt. Tallmadge was able to hire local settlers to assist in the construction—which included a commissary store house, a company store house, two officers' quarters, a hospital, a guard house, and a bakery at the cost of slightly more than \$3,000.

Life was far from dull at Fort Steilacoom during the first months of its existence. In September the Snoqualmies came to Fort Steilacoom to settle for the hostilities they demonstrated at Fort Nisqually earlier in the spring. Six Indians were arrested and held for trial for their part in the settlers' deaths. Early in October the Territorial Judiciary arrived to conduct a trial. Two of the Indians were found guilty of the murder of Leander Wallace and were hung, the rest being released. In December General Percifer Smith, Commander of the Army, Pacific Division, arrived on an inspection tour.

Company M was to remain at Fort Steilacoom for the rest of its tour in the territory. In April of 1851, part of the company was sent to Columbia Barracks to garrison that post after

the departure of the Rifle Regiment to California (L Company was now garrisoned at Astoria). In September of that year, Company L returned to Vancouver from Astoria, and a detachment of Company M was sent to man a fort that had been constructed at The Dalles, further up the Columbia. In February of 1853, Captain Hill turned Fort Steilacoom over to the 4th Infantry and returned to Vancouver.

The enlistment of most of the artillery company's men had run out by 1853, and so the unit was deactivated. At that point, Company M was down to just 39 enlisted men. The remaining enlisted men transferred to the 4th Infantry, with the officers and NCOs returning to the East Coast to rebuild the companies. Company L was then sent to Fort Sumpter, in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina and was present there during the siege and surrender of that fort to the Confederacy at the start of the Civil War. Company M was designated as field artillery and sent to the Texas frontier. When General Hardy surrendered the Federal forces in Texas to the Confederacy, Company M made a run for Brownsville and escaped by ship, the only artillery unit stationed in the south to escape with all of its equipment.

Conclusion

Company M of the 1st Artillery established the first American presence in the Puget Sound region. Theirs was the first effort to make the former Heath farm more than just an agricultural pursuit, and because of their efforts the newly formed and truly American towns of Steilacoom, Olympia, and that small cluster of families on Elliott Bay flourished—bolstered, no doubt, by this new and very real umbrella of protection they received from the Federal Government.

The Men of Company M

Many of the enlisted men remained in the area when their enlistments

expired. The following are those that we know stayed for at least a period of time in the Pierce County area.

James Hall and Robert Hall. Edward Huggins writings about early settlers states that the Halls established a homestead on the south shore of American Lake. The Halls returned to the east in 1853.

John Rigney. Rigney established a farm on a land claim north of Steilacoom along Leach Creek. He became a large land owner in Pierce County.

William Gregg. Gregg went to work for the Hudson's Bay Company on his release from the army, working as manager on several of their farms. When that company sold its holdings to the U. S. Government in the late 1860s, Gregg filed claim on the company farm where he was working. The farm, near Roy, remained in his family until acquired by Fort Lewis in 1918. Gregg married an Indian woman.

Christopher Mahen. Mahen filed claim on a large ranch along Clover Creek in Spanaway. His ranch marked the end of the Naches Pass Trail, and settlers entering the territory by that route camped near his house while locating claims of their own.

George Brown. Brown took out a donation claim along Clover Creek near the current Tacoma Sportsman Club.

Michael Connell. Connell settled near Auburn on Connell's Prairie. Connell was killed with James McAllister while on a scouting mission during the Indian Wars.

Murty Faley. Faley, or Fahy, took out a donation claim along Clover Creek near the east boundary of the present McChord Air Force Base.

Henry John. John, or Jahn, established a farm in Spanaway next to Mahen.

August Knecht. Knecht, or Knight as he Anglicized the name, took out a claim in Steilacoom on the east side of the lake.

(continued on page 4)