

Fort Steilacoom

www.HistoricFortSteilacoom.org



In this edition...

**WOMEN'S WORK:
THEIR ROLE IN THE
FORT'S HISTORY**

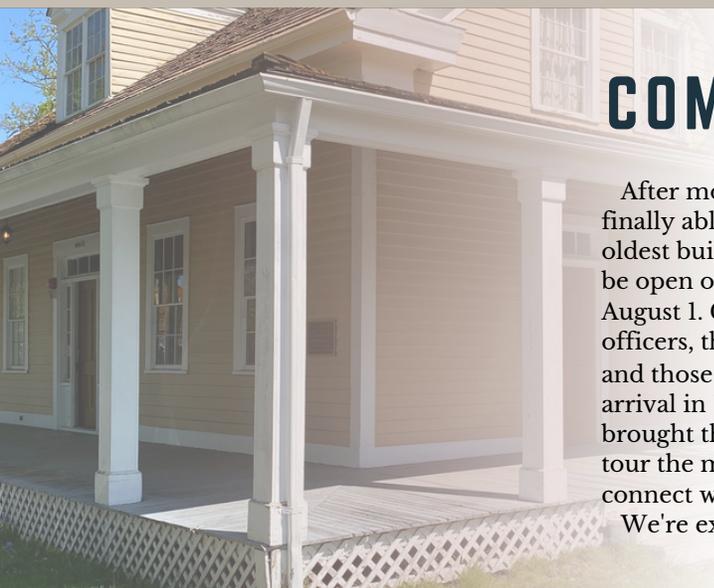
4

**THE IRISH AT FORT
STEILACOOM: PART
TWO OF THREE**

5

**A CAIRN, A BOULDER,
AND A ROCK: A TALE
FROM THE TREATY WARS**

7



COME VISIT IN PERSON AGAIN!

After more than a year of closure thanks to the global pandemic, we were finally able to reopen for tours on June 6, 2021. If you'd like to tour four of the oldest buildings dating from Washington's territorial period this summer, we'll be open one Sunday a month for the foreseeable future, the next Sunday being August 1. Guests of all ages can explore the military life of enlisted soldiers, officers, the families of soldiers, civilians that worked for the garrison and those that visited from the community. From the U.S. Army's arrival in 1849 until its departure in 1868, many soldiers and civilians brought the post to life with their daily tasks and calls to duty. As you tour the museum's buildings, museum interpreters will help you connect with those that came before us and their everyday lives.

We're excited to welcome you back to Fort Steilacoom again!



CLEANING HOUSE (AND GARDEN)

by Walter Neary



Hello friends. I hope you've been able to take advantage of better weather and a loosening of pandemic restrictions. We've been enjoying bringing the fort back to life, finally open for public tours again. Please come by and visit if you're in the area!

Much is going on behind the scenes as board members and others study the history and how we can best interpret it for the present and future. And there's hands-on things going on as well. I write this on the day before a couple of us will help clean gutters and begin repairs to the porch of Quarters 1. We're so happy to talk to you as a member of the Fort Steilacoom community. Today I'd like to talk to you about two volunteer opportunities.

Or to put it another way, *the fort needs you.*

Did that reference to volunteering send you to the next article? Oh well. People who like to volunteer at times are still reading. Thank you, and onward!

In the last issue, I reported on our big-picture thoughts about the future of the museum. Today, I'd love to bring your attention to two subjects for which we need help. And when I say "we" need help, I'm specifically referring to the four buildings that Augustus Kautz and crew built in 1858 and 1859. Those buildings need your help.

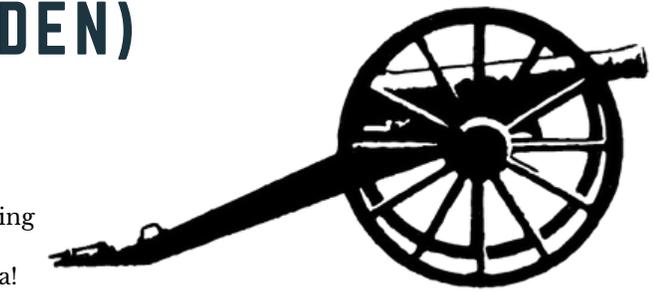
CLEANING HOUSE

Let's frame the challenge first. I don't know about you, but it seems like something in my house always needs cleaning. If I said to you, "Can you clean anything in your home/apartment/house/mansion right now?" you might say yes. There's got to be *something* that needs cleaning. And if there's nothing in your home that needs cleaning right now, you have my sincerest congratulations! But it still took some work to get there, I imagine. Someone had to do some cleaning. Let's further contemplate *why* you keep your home clean. I mean, there's hikes to take, videos to watch, Facebook to monitor. Why the heck spend time cleaning? I imagine you would say, "I clean because I live there. I take pride in my home!"

Fort Steilacoom consists of four large homes. Not one home...four homes, and no one lives in any of them. Imagine you had four homes to keep clean. Would it be as simple as cleaning your one home? Would it take the same amount of time? Probably not. So I call that framing the challenge.

Keeping four unoccupied buildings clean has been a challenge for some time. It was a challenge when I was on the board in the 1990s and it's a challenge to us more than 20 years later. That needs to change. I know a lot of you. The members of Historic Fort Steilacoom are bright people. The members of Historic Fort Steilacoom can figure this out. Later this summer or fall, we're going to convene a "summit" of people who have helped clean these buildings. We're going to come up with a sustainable solution to the problem of how to keep these buildings clean.

My guess (and this is just a guess; I could be completely off base) is that we're going to schedule regular gatherings far in advance where it's easy for both seasoned and new volunteers to come in and find clearly assigned tasks. But I could be wrong! There may be other solutions.



“ We're going to come up with a sustainable solution to the problem of how to keep these buildings clean. ”

This is where we need you. If you have cleaned the buildings before (or if you have cleaned any other buildings before), we really could use your insights. If you'd like to join us for a discussion of how to keep the buildings clean, or if you'd like to help clean those buildings, please just send me a note at info@historicfortsteilacoom.org. You know who you are. You hate dirt. You don't feel joy at seeing dead flies around windows. You prefer clean buildings. You want to help. Send us a quick note!

(continued on Page 3)



TRIVIA FROM THE FORT STEILACOOM ARCHIVES



Winters at Fort Steilacoom were often long and arduous, and soldiers would resort to creative ways to pass the time. On one occasion, Col. Silas Casey nearly contributed to the death of an orderly after attempting to recreate a boyhood experience. What activity was Casey undertaking? Answer on Page 5!

(continued from Page 2)

CLEANING GARDEN

Then there's the matter of your yard, if you have one. Those dang yards need care too. Fortunately, Fort Steilacoom has a wonderful mowing crew in the form of the maintenance staff of our landlord, Western State Hospital. We appreciate them, but any of you who've been to the fort know we have a garden around what we call (when we talk about the garden) "Mrs. Casey's house." We also call it the Colonel's house, or "Quarters 2."

For all we know, maybe Col. Casey loved a garden. But we always refer to it as Mrs. Casey's garden, which currently consists of one surviving rose from at least the 90s and a planting of boulders and swordtail ferns. There's generic shrubbery on either side of the porch. I had the pleasure of trimming this area last month with a weed-eater, and I remember wondering if we were doing full justice to Mrs. Casey on the grounds surrounding her home? I've talked to a number of people who seem to think, though I haven't seen primary sources, that Mrs. Casey might have planted flowers or something to remind her and soldiers of their home.

As with cleaning, the fort is as healthy as the people who invest in it. We need help designing and maintaining a garden around that building, so we will need people to plant, weed, and prune. We might add, say, roses to that space, and it's crazy easy to plant them. But roses have to be maintained. The only thing sadder than an empty plot of dirt is a garden of unkempt roses (or boulders and ferns) surrounded by weeds. If you love gardens and gardening, and might have energy to spare, once again, the fort could use your help. That garden is calling to you. Let us know through a quick note to info@historicfortsteilacoom.org.

Now let me be the first to say this message may not be for everyone. If you read this far, you're a caring person and thank you. Like all board presidents, I would usually have used a column to pen inspiring words about our volunteers and activities past, present, and future. But we need to be practical as we prepare for the coming years. And the fort needs help.

So thank you for your patience in reading through this. Not everyone is born to clean and garden, but some are. Hopefully, this message calls to you.

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JULY VIRTUAL EVENT FROM THE FORT

THE MYTH OF THE M-1855 RIFLE MUSKET: WEAPONS OF THE COEUR D'ALENE WAR OF 1858

Join us for a member's speaker series at **2 p.m. PST on Sunday, July 18, 2021**, as public historian Chris Fischer talks about the weapons of the 1858 Coeur d'Alene War in Washington Territory.

For years, historians believed the success of the Army during the Coeur d'Alene War of 1858 came from the use of the new model 1855 Springfield Rifle Musket. The leader of the campaign, Colonel George Wright, even credited the weaponry with military success.

Fischer, who has spent years researching the antebellum period of American history, will address Historic Fort Steilacoom Association members on this topic. This presentation will include a quick synopsis of why the Coeur d'Alene campaign was undertaken, its relationship to the Yakima War, and a brief synopsis of the arms used in the early part of the 1850s. Fischer will also discuss how the failures of the Yakima War were corrected during the subsequent Coeur d'Alene War and how the new weapons contributed to success. This campaign resulted in the battles of Four Lakes and Spokane Plain.

Members of the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association will receive the Zoom link to the presentation prior to the event. Individual memberships are \$15 to \$20. To become a member visit historicfortsteilacoom.org/membership.

VISIT THE FORT STEILACOOM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION'S WEBSITE AT HISTORICFORTSTEILACOOM.ORG/EVENTS



Image from the presentation, "Women's Work in Washington Territory."

A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE. OR EASY.

by Erich R. Ebel

March was Women's History Month, and virtual activities put on by Historic Fort Steilacoom did not disappoint. Three separate events featured talks about the role of women at the fort and in society during that period in Washington's territorial history.

The first, "Airing Your Dirty Laundry," featured historical interpreter and museum professional Peggy Barchi presenting on the daily grind that army laundresses endured and the skills it took to be one. The second, titled "In Her Shoes: Tracing the Footsteps of Pierce County Women in the mid-1800s" presented by public historian Claire Keller-Scholz, highlighted the women and girls who lived in the Puget Sound area around 1850. The third brought Tacoma Historical Society curator Elizabeth Korsmo to present "Women's Work in Washington Territory."

If there is one takeaway from these interesting and well-researched presentations, it's this: life for women in the mid-19th century was neither glamorous nor pampered. As hard as men worked building structures, clearing trails, tilling the land, fighting in battles, and generally keeping themselves and their families alive, women worked just as hard at accomplishing their own responsibilities.

In Korsmo's presentation, she mentions the "Four C's" of women's work: cooking, cleaning, childcare, and clothing. These were the cornerstones of the daily grind faced by most, if not all women of that time.

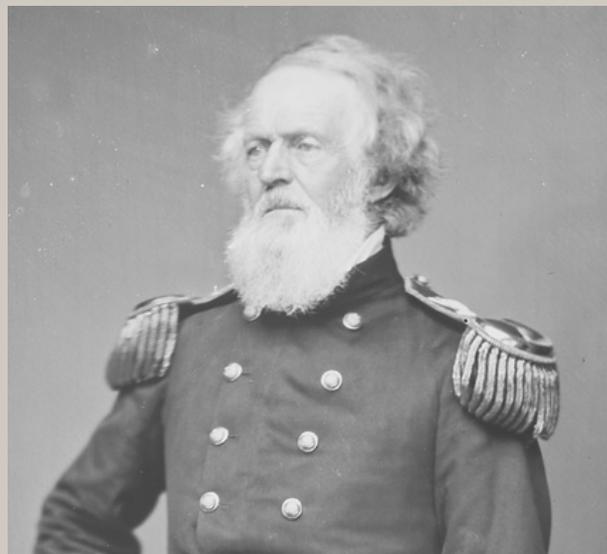
The average woman's day would begin by waking up and getting herself washed and dressed. She'd throw back the sheets and covers to air out the bed, then proceed to the kitchen to get started on breakfast. First, there are the ashes to clean out in the stove or fireplace. Next, she'd make a fire and get the dining area ready by putting out a clean tablecloth and setting the table. After making breakfast for the family, she'd clear the table, wash the dishes, and return to the bedrooms to clean them.

(continued on Page 6)

THE INSPECTIONS OF GENERAL MANSFIELD

By John McPherson

Surgeon Wirtz's tiff with the wife of Fort Steilacoom's post commander must have captured the attention of the Inspector General, Col. Joseph F.K. Mansfield, as he arrived at the Station prior to Christmas 1858. Indeed, a row such as this one was not uncommon on frontier posts. The isolation, close working conditions, and unique culture of the frontier army all contributed to the occasional emotional flare-up between very fallible humans. Mansfield had entertained and remarked on poor behavior at two posts prior to his visit to Steilacoom, but the Casey-Wirtz showdown required a closer study. If the U.S. Army was to be a modern, efficient, and healthy organization moving into the 1860s, Col. Mansfield's inspection report of 1858 intended to identify and rectify any deficiencies.



Col. Mansfield inspected Fort Steilacoom twice during the 1850s. Our visitors today see but one version of the "station" and it is a version that bears only a passing resemblance to its historic profile. Dedicated volunteers over the years have performed yeoman work to convey the period "look" of these structures. The diorama in the HFSA museum has come the closest to capturing the fort as it once was. Modern intrusions have altered greatly the scene that once defined this historic site. It is only through one's imagination that one can attempt to reconstruct the whirl of activity that at one time defined antebellum Fort Steilacoom. But why rely solely on one's imagination?

(continued on Page 10)

THE IRISH AT FORT STEILACOOM: PART 2 OF 3

by Alan H. Archambault

STARVATION AND IMMIGRATION

The blight that devastated Irish potato crops in 1845 was to continue for the next seven years, but would have consequences that would last far longer. During this time, the blight would account for ruining up to three quarters of Irish potato crops. This resulted in widespread famine among the tenant-farmers of Ireland. It is estimated that between 1845 and 1852, one million men, women, and children died of starvation or diseases brought on by malnutrition. Tragically, the British government and the ruling class took an indifferent view of the famine. In spite of the food crisis in Ireland, exports of Irish commodities such as livestock, fish, honey, peas, and beans continued from Anglo-Irish estates throughout the Potato Famine. Although some people in Britain attempted to send aid, it was the United States that probably did the most to help the starving Irish people.

Rather than face starvation in Ireland, approximately one million Irish found ways to immigrate to other countries. For many, the obvious choice was the United States. Prior to the "Great Hunger," many Irish had

already immigrated to the United States or Canada. However, the vast majority were of Protestant, Scots-Irish descent. The Irish Catholics were a small population in America prior to the 1840s, but this was about to change.

As the Potato Famine ravished Ireland, ships began to arrive in the ports of New York, Boston and Philadelphia bringing the starving, oppressed people from Ireland. Although arriving in a land full of promise, most of the arriving Irish immigrants were from rural areas and did not have the skills or education to immediately adjust to life in American cities. Most were illiterate and some did not speak English. This led to widespread prejudice against the Irish who were arriving by the tens of thousands. Many Americans feared the new immigrants because of their Catholic religion and "clannish ways."

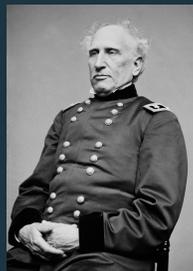
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TRIVIA ANSWER FROM THE FORT STEILACOOM ARCHIVES

Colonel Silas Casey, his daughter, Bessie, Miss Teen (the wife of Lieutenant E. Porter Alexander), and an orderly had set out for a nearby lake (now Waughop) because Casey had wanted to cut ice as he did growing up in Rhode Island. The orderly fell through the ice and was only rescued when Miss Teen grabbed an oar and thrust it into his hands.

He was able to stay above water until more soldiers arrived with ropes and hauled him back on land. According to the article in the Spring 2009 edition of the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association's newsletter, Casey never did get his ice.



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BOOK REVIEW — WHERE THE MASHSEL MEETS THE NISQUALLY: THE MASHSEL MASSACRE OF 1856

by *Walter Neary*

We're all guilty of reducing complex matters to simple thoughts that are easy to grab hold of in our minds. In fact, we're so guilty of this, you might call it an innocent act of human nature. It comes easy. For example, if you say "American Revolution" to me, I don't first think of the web of Enlightenment philosophies, socio-economic-political dynamics of nations, and internal workings of the colonies and their armies. I think of George Washington crossing the Delaware River.

Consider the Puget Sound Treaty Wars, also known as the Puget Sound Indian Wars. If you ask the average person about this period, chances are they're going to say one thing: "Fort Steilacoom."

Er. Wait. That's what we *wish* for here at the Fort, isn't it? Actually, what the average person is probably going to say is "Leschi." His story is one of tragedy; the hero with a fatal flaw exploited by the enemy, and tragic stories go back a long way in our storytelling culture. He is the tragic, doomed hero whose saga plucks deep strings within our souls.

If someone said, "I'm going to make a movie about the Puget Sound Treaty Wars," then anyone who ever attended Washington schools and heard the story of Leschi is naturally going to assume the movie will be about Leschi. We are enthralled by stories of the tragic hero who gives their life to die for the cause, whether it's Luke Skywalker or Black Widow from the Avengers. And someone should make that movie. The territorial "justice" system legally lynched Leschi, and that's something on which we need to reflect. There is, however, one casualty in our efforts to simplify things to understand them. We miss some of the story.

That's a long way of saying, five paragraphs into a book review, that one can really appreciate "*Where the Mashsel Meets the Nisqually: The Mashsel Massacre of 1856*." I should add, by the way, there is a strong connection between the events of this book and Fort Steilacoom. You will have to read this article a bit more to find it, but I promise it's there.

The book, by Bethel School District teacher Abbi Wonacott, illuminates an incident that should attract as much or more attention than Leschi's story simply because there are so many more characters—somewhere between 8 and 30 people died.

One challenge, of course, is that we have only limited written documentation about these people and no images of them. By contrast, we know a lot about Leschi. We've seen his face. Lots of people reflected in writing about him and the Treaty Wars. The Mashsel Massacre, sometimes called the Maxon Massacre, is usually referred to in passing or with only a few paragraphs about the controversy.

But hold on a second. Up to 30 people died? Isn't that a story?

(continued on Page 9)

A WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE. OR EASY.

(continued from Page 4)

Far beyond just picking up what was lying around the room, that chore involved moving and covering furniture with a drop cloth in order to sweep and dust. After cleaning out the bedroom fireplaces (if there were any), she'd shake out the drop cloths and put them away, empty out the chamber pots, fluff up the mattress made of horsehair, straw, and feathers, make the beds again, and proceed to the day's tasks. Those might include a deep scrubbing of one room or another, washing and mending clothing and other fabric items, ironing (especially of soldiers' uniforms), long-term food preparation, or any number of other grueling but necessary jobs. Then, of course, everything is paused while she makes lunch or dinner for the family. And now imagine she's doing all of this while tending to a handful

of needy, attention-seeking children. Then there are the women who had to do double duty, either by choice or because their husbands passed away.

I don't know about the other men reading this, but I admire anyone who can endure a regimen like that. In fact, if given the choice, I might even *prefer* raising a barn and fighting battles to the kind of labor that women of the 19th century undertook. But that's sort of the point, isn't it? They weren't given the choice...and yet they persevered. And for that, they should be celebrated and recognized.

There is so much more to learn from watching the three presentations. The Historic Fort Steilacoom Association's board is currently setting up video channels where people will be able to view them all and really immerse themselves in the daily life of a Washington territorial resident. In the meantime, be sure to keep an eye on HistoricFortSteilacoom.org for the latest updates.

THE IRISH AT FORT STEILACOOM: PART 2 OF 3

(continued from Page 5)

Politicians, eager to capitalize on popular issues, formed the “Know Nothing Party,” whose main focus was anti-immigration, and particularly anti-Catholic. Facing unexpected discrimination and prejudice, most Irish immigrants found it difficult to find work and acceptance in the United States. The vast majority of Irish men found work as laborers while the women sought employment as maids or laundresses. As the Irish population grew in American cities, signs began appearing stating, “No Irish Need Apply.” Although not starving, most of the immigrants were not thriving either.

THE MILITARY OPTION

One way of finding employment and acceptance for young Irish men was to join the United States Army. Since the military did not offer outstanding pay or accommodations, Army recruiters often had a difficult time finding recruits among the existing American population. However, the influx of new immigrants seeking to establish themselves in a new country offered the recruiters fresh opportunities. Recruiting offices were soon established in port cities in order to appeal to the newly arrived immigrants. In addition to the Irish, men from various German states were arriving in the United States, primarily due to political upheaval in Europe. They were likely candidates for the recruiters as well.

By the time the United States went to war with Mexico in 1846, it is estimated that two thirds of the soldiers in the Regular United States Army were foreign born. Since the immigrants were used to hardship and needed employment, most of the new recruits made good soldiers. However, prejudice and ill treatment followed them to some degree in military service. Some officers and noncommissioned officers treated the immigrant soldiers with contempt. During the Mexican-American War, this resulted in a number of desertions among the Irish and German recruits. A number even deserted to the enemy, who appealed to their mutual Roman Catholic faith. The Mexican Army formed an artillery unit comprised of American deserters. Since many were Irish, it became known as the “San Patricio (Saint Patrick) Battalion.” Fortunately, some American Army officers recognized the prejudices and injustices that resulted in the desertion of immigrant soldiers. These progressive leaders encouraged changes that allowed for more acceptance and fair treatment for US Army soldiers born in foreign lands.

Following the Mexican-American War, the United States Army resumed its mission of establishing American dominance in the western territories. In 1848, two companies of the 1st US Artillery Regiment were reorganized and recruited in New York. They were destined to serve at garrison posts in the newly acquired Oregon Territory. Among the soldiers assigned to the task were a number of Irish immigrants who would bring a touch of the “Emerald Isle” to the Pacific Northwest.

Look for Part Three in the HFSA Fall Newsletter!



Anti-immigrant cartoon from the 1850s depicting an Irish and German immigrant.

A CAIRN, A BOULDER, AND A ROCK: A TALE FROM THE TREATY WARS, PART 1

By Gideon Pete

Kamiakin—a strong leader among the Yakama, Palouse, and Klickitat nations in what is now southeastern Washington—held to a fixed principle of resisting all encroachment by the Euro-American settlers who were pouring into that area throughout the 1850s. He had witnessed the fate imposed upon his brethren in the Willamette Valley, anticipated the same for his own people, and would do what he could to avoid it. The Treaty of Walla Walla offered by Washington’s Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens left Kamiakin little option but to sell his tribe’s ancestral lands. This, coupled with an ever-increasing incursion of gold miners trampling the area, pushed him to go to war.

On the western side of the Cascades, Klickitat Chief Kanaskut witnessed how Leschi, a strong spokesman for the Nisqually, was spurned by Stevens and the other whites present when he spoke out against the bad deal being offered to his people. Kanaskut, who was present at the signing of the Medicine Creek Treaty, related that story to Kamiakin and now reflected with jealousy on Stevens’ treaty at Walla Walla.

(continued on Page 8)



Cairn in Pierce County marking the site of the 1855 Battle of Connell's Prairie.

A CAIRN, A BOULDER, AND A ROCK

(continued from Page 7)

Kamiakin had opposed that treaty when it was first offered, but compared to Medicine Creek, Walla Walla was a treasure. At Walla Walla, Stevens' arbitrary and headstrong line had been tempered over the course of a two-week negotiation by General Joel Palmer, who was then the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon Territory.



*Portrait of Kamiakin by Gustav Sohon, 1855.
Courtesy Washington State Historical Society collection.*

In 1855, a group of miners had been ambushed and killed east of the Cascade Mountains. Indian Subagent Andrew Bolon was sent to investigate and was also killed. This prompted a retaliatory attack against the Yakama who were responsible by Captain Granville O. Haller of the 4th Infantry. Haller's troops were repulsed in a running battle and eventually fell back to the safety of The Dalles. The Army then decided on a two-pronged attack between Major Gabriel Rains leaving from The Dalles, and Captain Maurice Maloney heading east from Fort Steilacoom. The recent success on the part of the Klickitat and Yakama, coupled with the promise of horses and cattle, versus the threat of extinction if they failed, likely influenced Puget Sound Indians to take advantage of the absence of troops at Fort Steilacoom who had started for the Cascades. On October 28, 1855, a band of Muckleshoot Indians fell upon the settlers of the White River, killing nine in all—four men, three women, and two children. This was one of the first overtly hostile acts leading up to the Puget Sound War.

The governors of both the Washington and Oregon Territories called upon Raines to provide a considerable force of volunteers. Washington's volunteers mustered in under Maloney, but Oregon's refused to do the same,

opting instead to enter the field with Rains under their own command. While war was breaking out between the Indians and the whites, another battle was quickly developing between the citizen volunteers and the regulars of the U.S. Army. This new conflict fixed the thought in the mind of Department of the Pacific Commanding General John E. Wool that the difficulties within the two territories lay with the settlers themselves, as opposed to solely with the Indians.



*Portrait of Leschi by Raphael Coombs, 1894.
Courtesy Washington State Historical Society collection.*

Difficulties with the Oregon volunteers soon escalated to the point where Rains was delayed beyond the time of his appointment to link up with Maloney, who was then recalled from the Naches Pass by an express detachment out of Fort Steilacoom. This seven-man party was ambushed on its way back to Fort Steilacoom at Connell's Prairie, known to the Indians as *tədałkʷəlt* (or the anglicization, Tenalquot), resulting in the deaths of A. Benton Moses and Joseph Miles. This happened only days after the White River Massacre. All of this occurred under the office of Territorial Secretary Charles Mason, serving as acting governor on behalf of Isaac Stevens, who had been on an expedition to the east, continuing to treat with the Indians. Upon his return, Stevens began organizing a volunteer militia and planning his own campaigns. In 1856, both the governor's command and the military's took to the field in separate columns, each pursuing a separate policy against their common foe.

At the same time, the opposition of the various Indian tribes had suffered terribly in the field under the harshest winter weather seen in years. The Indians would have gladly sued for peace at that time, if it were felt they could have done so with any assurance of safety to themselves.

Look for Part Two in the HFSA Fall Newsletter!

BOOK REVIEW — WHERE THE MASHSEL MEETS THE NISQUALLY: THE MASHSEL MASSACRE OF 1856

(continued from Page 6)

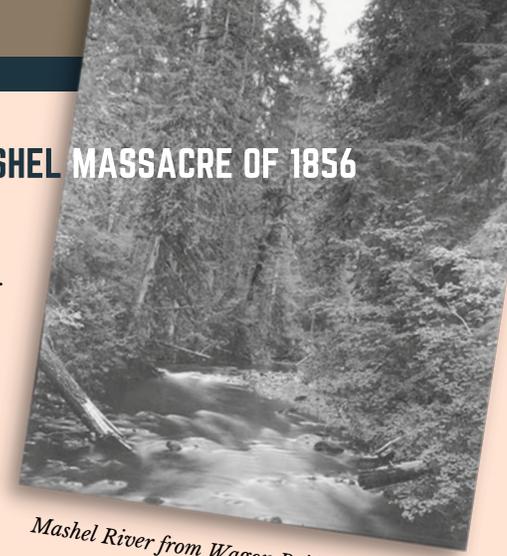
The 37-page book was published by the school district in 2008, and I'll just admit right now, I mean to share this review because you may have trouble finding the book for sale. However, I do know it can be reserved through the Pierce County Library System. And Wonacott does have a blog with info from the book at earlyeatonvillewashington.com.

The book is based on what happened when Captain Hamilton J. G. Maxon and nearly 60 other territorial volunteers were called by Governor Isaac Stevens to patrol in Washington and keep an eye on the Hudson's Bay Company employees who seemed to be getting along so suspiciously well with natives. The civilians also went looking for horse thieves, a capital offense for sure. In so doing, Maxon led his men near the confluence of the Mashel and Nisqually Rivers in the spring of 1856. The official version is that they spotted troublemakers, took fire, and killed eight including a leader of the native army.

The Pioneer and Democrat newspaper—the party organ that Gov. Stevens hoped would be the first draft of history—wrote, “Eight hostiles were killed, in all, during the excursion, three were taken prisoners, and of course the women and children were sent into the settlements unharmed.”

There is a vastly different story detailed in the Nisqually Tribe's oral tradition, that Maxon and his nearly 60 volunteers fired into and murdered children, women, and elderly men. The oral tradition is extensive as to where the attacks took place, how people tried to flee, and how their bodies fell everywhere including into the water where they stayed for days. Wonacott's account is printed in the blog at earlyeatonvillewashington.com/p/mashel-massacre-1856.html.

So suddenly we have a conflict...who do we believe? How do we decide? I promised you a connection to Fort Steilacoom, and here it is: Kautz! Wonacott dives deep into the motivations of our Augustus Kautz, who supervised construction of Fort Steilacoom's surviving buildings. He chronicled the tale, and he got it from eyewitnesses.



Mashel River from Wagon Bridge looking east, near Eatonville, August 18, 1899.

“ I had visited this spot, and camped nearby with a small detachment of troops, searching for Indians who had hidden away in these forests, completely demoralized and nearly starving. A family of two or three men, and quite a number of women and children, had camped in the fork of the Mishawl and Nesqually, about two miles from this prairie, and were making fish-traps to catch salmon. When we fell in with them, we learned that the Washington Territory volunteers had been before us, and with their immensely superior force had killed the most of them without regard to age or sex. Our own little command in that expedition captured about thirty of these poor, half-starved, ignorant creatures, and no act of barbarity was perpetrated by us to mar the memory of that success. ”

Later on, claims of as many of 30 innocent deaths were taken up by two Anglo champions of the Nisqually, James Wickersham and Ezra Meeker. Though they quote an Anglo eyewitness, it's unclear why the witness would and could have been there. Wonacott goes deep into reviewing the preponderance of evidence that a massacre took place.

This book documents an aspect of the Treaty Wars that is such an important element in the history of our fort. And it also calls us to wonder...do we give enough attention to all the tragic aspects of the war, more than even Leschi's compelling story? Do we abandon parts of the story in our heads because we think they fit as just natural, routine elements?

In the [Washington Historical Quarterly of January 1914](#), W.J. Trimble wrote candidly that bad things were done on all sides and that regrettable atrocities were committed by “bad” men. History in that era was starting—starting—to apply context to the Treaty Wars, yet he shared this:

“Indian attacks deterred packers, freighters, and stage owners, thereby raising freights, delaying mails, making supplies more scarce and costly, impeding immigration, and hindering the investment of capital,—in a word, checking prosperity in a way to which no civilized community would submit. The men who went out to find and to kill Indians who were thus damaging the communities, were not always nice men; but they often showed self-denial in leaving good-paying employments, and they endured great privations and did a necessary work for civilization.”

So you have to wonder why is this is not a tale oft told? Is it because, without a lot of details to humanize the Mashel dead, without photographs of the children, without the names of the women, it was all just part of the “necessary work for civilization?”

And if so...what does that say about civilization?

THE INSPECTIONS OF GENERAL MANSFIELD

(continued from Page 4)

Mansfield's reports, one recorded in 1854 and another in 1858 offer the student of history a valuable "place-in-time" portrait of the fort at two distinct moments in time.

As is the case with any fixed military garrison, Fort Steilacoom was government property. It was paid for using revenues collected and disbursed by the Federal government. These Federal expenditures required approval, oversight, and documentation. Congress passed budgets to fund the government's activities. The War Department's budget reflected requests that began at the local level as well as items that originated with the General of the Army and/or the Secretary of War. In addition to the purchase of uniforms, equipment, armaments, and ammunition, the War Department established fixed posts to serve the strategic interests of the U.S. In the case of Fort Steilacoom, this post sought to advance U.S. hegemony and sovereignty over the Puget Sound region beginning in 1849.

Once proposed, agreements were made, contracts were signed, and the post was established. With a garrison in full operation, the War Department needed to justify its ongoing outlay of budgeted resources. To continue receiving financial support from Congress, the War Department needed to show good faith as a responsible steward of Federal investment. To do so, the Secretary of War employed both a flurry of strict regulations as well as a system of regulators within the army system. In addition to the record-keeping of officers and enlisted men detailed to managing quartermaster, commissary, ordnance, medical, and financial inventories, the U.S. Army also hosted an in-house, omnibus regulatory agency, the office of the Inspector General.

Joseph F.K. Mansfield, Col., U.S. Army, emerged in the 1850s as an activist Inspector General at time of great transition within the War Department's regulatory apparatus. His entry into the inspection realm occurred amid a power struggle between Secretary of War Jefferson Davis and General of the Army Winfield Scott (Clary & Whitehorne, 1987, p. 191). As it turned out, Mansfield "*proved in fact to be his own man, and a good one*" (Ibid., p. 191). His background was that of an engineer; his previous assignments had focused his efforts on coastal defensive works. It was his combat record in the U.S.-Mexican War that distinguished Mansfield from other engineers earning Mansfield brevet rank honors. His conduct at Monterrey and Buena Vista brought him to the attention of fellow soldier, Jefferson Davis. Davis' own military experience & training would play a key role in Mansfield's selection. Secretary Davis sought to remold the U.S. Army on the French model and upgrade its equipage and armament in an era of rapid industrial change. Davis needed an inspector general who could honestly and critically evaluate the army's combat readiness. On the other hand, the Inspectors General themselves sought to better define their role, a role that was unclear and not defined precisely in the Army Regulations. The revisions to the Army Regulations of 1855 and 1857 "*neglected to establish the place of the inspectors general in the U.S. Army, in peace and in war*" (Ibid, p. 201). It was in this decade of uncertainty and lack of clarity that Mansfield found himself writing his own job description.

As Inspector General, Mansfield was tasked with inspecting and evaluating the performance and disbursement of public funds at army posts across the nation and its territories. His reports were essentially snapshots in time. He was to provide candid observations on the conditions at each post and to also provide contemporary drawings of each fort's footprint upon the landscape. At each visit Mansfield inspected the books, the storehouses, and the facilities on post. He also conducted interviews with officers and enlisted men. His early reports were quite straightforward and somewhat dull. His work later in the 1850s was far more insightful.

Look for Part Two in the HFSA Fall Newsletter!

DITOR'S PILOGUE

The connection between Fort Steilacoom and the events on San Juan Island in 1859 are well documented, and most readers of this newsletter need no refresher. The Pig War, a bloodless conflict between the United States and Great Britain, was "won" by American forces thanks to the reinforcement of troops and supplies sent from Fort Steilacoom. In fact, I've done a number of public presentations on the Pig War and the major players involved, as it's a fascinating chapter in Washington's territorial history that tends to captivate those aware of it.

But I'd never had the opportunity to visit San Juan Island until last month, when I spent three days exploring American Camp, English Camp, Lime Kiln State Park, Roche Harbor, and other historic locations of interest. As you no doubt know, it is one thing to read about historical events, people, and places—but another, much more intimate thing entirely to walk where these events occurred, touch the things that these people may have touched, and see the sights they must have seen. Seeing the view from Robert's Redoubt at American Camp, for example, is the only way to appreciate why he selected that tactically advantageous position. If you are a fan of state history and how Fort Steilacoom is connected to it, you owe it to yourself to make the trip to San Juan Island to appreciate it in full. It's definitely a bucket list-worthy adventure. In the meantime, [watch the recent HFSA presentation on the Pig War here.](#)

American Camp on San Juan Island.

