

STEILACOOM HISTORICAL



MUSEUM QUARTERLY

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WINTER FUN IN STEILACOOM

Homemade sleds hurling down Frederick Street to Union Avenue were part of the winter scene around the turn of the century when the above picture was taken with Union Avenue in the background. A bonfire near Rainier Avenue kept the sledders warm as they trudged back up the hill to Sequalish to begin another run. Bobsleds were also popular with runners at both ends and a connecting wooden plank in the middle. Eudocia Bair Leech remembers that her brother "Cub" or Howard Doering, the strongest boys would steer the bobsleds, sometimes ending in a snowbank, "but no one ever got hurt." The Bair children were the first to have purchased sleds, the venerable Flexible Flyer.

When the Frederick Street hill became bare, the children would troop to Main Street, starting at the Catholic Church and sliding down to Commercial. It was essential to have a look-out on Lafayette Street to watch for the street car as it came up the hill from Chambers Creek.

The Steilacoom Historical Museum Quarterly is issued quarterly as the official publication of the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association authorized by the Board of Directors. Mail correspondence to the Editor, Box 16, Steilacoom, WA 98399.

Joan Curtis, Bette Bradley—Editors

Tom McAvoy	President	Marianne Bull	Vice President
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

With this, my final message as President, there are a few people I would like to recognize for their contributions to our Museum Association. Don Rehburg, besides leaving the Board after four years of service, has for many years been the chairman for our annual Salmon Bake. Jack Sage, also leaving the Board after nearly three years, will continue as the Association's tour group chairman. Kathy Isacson is retiring as our Recording Secretary after four years of preparing the minutes of each Board meeting. Kathy Lykken has been doing an excellent job filling in the shoes of Charlie Buchanan as our Treasurer. Thanks to Bonnie Stucker, we have a fine scrapbook of all our Association's events over the years. If you're interested, the scrapbook is located in the Museum. Dorothea Karman does a wonderful job organizing the Docents for the Museum. Finally, Harold Hellyer, Gerry Evanson and lately Sherry Gimlett yearly donate a tremendous amount of time and effort to the Apple Squeeze with this year's Squeeze being the most successful ever. Thanks to all of you, as well as everyone else who donated their time and energy to make the Steilacoom Historical Museum Society the success it is.

Tom McAvoy

WANTED: A publicity chairman. Publicity is becoming more important all the time. A chairman is needed to send out information to statewide magazines, materials to the Tourism Department, brochures to Chamber of Commerces, etc, besides articles to local media and to promote the events of the Association. If you enjoy working with people and writing, please contact Joan Curtis, 584-8623, evenings.

TRISH LAUGHLIN—REGISTRAR/COLLECTIONS MANAGER

Trish Laughlin has been hired to fill the new position of Registrar/Collections Manager. The responsibilities include developing and implementing procedures for the management of all the museum collections and their preservation. Other duties will be working with Docent Chairman Dorothea Karman to develop educational training for docent volunteers and researching fund-raising proposals. Money has been allocated in the 1988 budget for the 20-hour a week job.

Trish's experience with historic preservation dates back to the early 1970's when she was instrumental in gaining recognition and placement on the National Registrar of the Nathaniel Orr Home, the Philip Keach Home and the Catholic Church. Her work continued on with the research for the establishment of the Historic District of Steilacoom and the list of homes—primary and secondary within the District. Trish was co-chairman with her husband Donn of a workshop "Historic Preservation in the Small Town" which initiated the emphasis of preservation within the town. She was coordinator of the Orr Home for many years, establishing standards which continue in effect today.

In the past six years the Association has been fortunate to receive two grants from the American Association of Museums to review existing collections management policies and procedures and access strengths and weaknesses under the Museum Assessment Program. After the MAP I, a major restoration of the Museum took place in the spring of 1983 under the direction of Curator Janda Volkmer. At the same time collection records were updated.

With the completion of MAP II last spring, a 31 page survey of the Association was submitted by Martha Stout, Registrar at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle. The guidelines will serve as a plan of action for the next few years to improve the management and care of the collections and to achieve a greater professionalism. The strongest directive stated throughout the entire survey was "The Association **must** hire a registrar or collections secretary to oversee the care and management of the collections."

The Association Board has taken the first step in strengthening the organization with the hiring of Trish Laughlin. She will be utilizing volunteers in the continuation of cataloging and assessing of the multitudinous number of artifacts in the Museum, Bair Store and storage shed on the Orr property. Congratulations, Trish.

- ★ The Apple Squeeze was featured in a recent edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*. Freelance writer William Boyd took pictures and spent the day enjoying the Squeeze. A well written article and a compliment to our town.
- ★ Ninety members and their guests attended a viewing of the Smithsonian traveling exhibit "The Magnificent Voyagers" on Saturday, November 7th. The exhibit runs through December 27 at the Washington State Historical Society Museum in Tacoma.
- ★ The delightful Christmas classic, the Nutcracker Ballet, has become a Steilacoom tradition. The special one hour production played to a full house on December 20 at the Steilacoom High School.
- ★ Eudocia Bair Leech has donated 100 glass negatives which were taken by her uncle John Bair during the 1890's and early 1900's. The pictures portray a Steilacoom before the advent of the railroad and the automobile. A real legacy of that time.
- ★ Contributions to the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association are tax deductible. Donations are welcome. Over \$600 will be needed to develop pictures from the glass negatives. Donations may be designated for a particular project or the general account.

SUCCESSFUL APPLE SQUEEZE

Beautiful weather and a bountiful crop of apples resulted in a successful and profitable Apple Squeeze. Over 800 gallons of cider, 900 caramelized apples, 1080 donuts, 960 pieces of pie, 50 loaves of bread and 20 gallons of apple butter and five gallons of ice cream were consumed. Over 550 jars of apple butter were sold and 350 groups went through the apple pressing process. A new original sweat shirt design proved popular with 325 shirts being sold.

A \$6,659 profit exceeds all past records for the Squeeze. Congratulations to committee chairmen Sherry Gimlett, Harold Hellyer, Dave and Judy Hopkins, Marianne and Tim Bull, Gloria Stevens, Jack Watson, Dave Langford, Janet Duris, John and Ann Bulger, Anna Zeigler, Linda Work, Joan Curtis, Mike and Jan Lange, Harold and Enid Roberts, Jenny Hollister, Mary Ann Ballew, Janine and Judie Davis, Beau and Dineke Beauchamp, Jack Sage, Tom McAvoy, Steve Grubb and all those who assisted. A special thanks to the press owners who worked so hard so all could enjoy fresh cider.



Photo by
Charles Buchanan

THE CHRITTON FAMILY by Esther Tombaugh Spreen

Editor's Note: The following article by a long-time society member, Esther Tombaugh Spreen, describes her families' involvement in publishing two genealogical books of the Chrittons, her mothers' family. The first was a 120 page pamphlet printed in 1976, and the second is a hard-cover book of 378 pages just published this fall. Publishing the books was a family affair; her daughter Nancy and son Alan worked with her. Esther and her husband, Christian, were both history buffs. He is the author of "A History of Steilacoom Masonic Lodge No 2." After his retirement, they traveled across the country attending history conferences and tracing her roots. (Of her work, Esther has said: "These people are real to me—they are part of my family—their story is never finished. Material is constantly being sent to me, and I have to give it back so other people can use it.")

To begin with, I do not enjoy writing. Words do not flow effortlessly from my pen. When I do write, I grope for the right words to express my thoughts.

Why, then, do I push myself to write up the history of some place, or some organization, or some family? I do have the ability to remember events in the proper sequence and to mentally put families on related charts. The need to share this information with other people is greater than my dislike of writing.

Additionally, I come from a large family which, as early as 1930, developed an interest in compiling family records. I was born in the same house that my father was, being the fifth generation of Chrittons to live in the close-knit community. My father admired the Chritton family very much and compiled a memorial album to them after my mother's death in 1958. My father had helped get material together for the Tombaugh history which was published by a cousin of his in Pennsylvania in 1930. Whenever he could, he included as much information about the related families as possible. Under the Chritton section, he listed all of my mother's family—birth date, death date, marriages, children, children's children, etc. This manuscript came to me after his death in 1967.

One time, one of my brothers said, "I really haven't kept up on all of our cousins' families and I wish I had." I said, "Oh, I have all of that. Dad had it written out. I'll see that you get a copy." Ha! Famous last words!

Nancy said she would type my father's manuscript, but decided it should be updated so she began corresponding with a second cousin in Nebraska who had access to the information that she needed. She continued working on this while they were stationed in Germany from 1970-1974. I can't exactly say when Nancy and I decided to compile the first book. On trips back to Illinois I worked with cousins there who still lived in the same community where our great-great-grandmother had lived. They had notebooks, clippings, letters, etc. Our Chritton book was published in 1976—to commemorate my grandparents' wedding year (1876) and our country's celebration of the Declaration of Independence (1776).

My grandfather was an only child and most of the first book were of his descendants. I continued to research. Two times when I was in Washington D.C., I spent time in the DAR genealogical library. The second time I found a copy of the consent form my great-grandmother's mother had written for her to marry William Chritton. That same trip, we did a courthouse record search in Illinois. Two years later we went to the Montgomery County Courthouse in Crawfordsville, Indiana, and I found the marriage records for my great-grandparents and for several of his brothers and sisters. Going on to Illinois, my cousins and Chris and I tramped through a number of small cemeteries looking for burial plots. The one that should have been most productive was in a sad state of neglect. We couldn't read the stones, and we didn't have any rubbing material with us.

In the meantime, my son Alan had become interested in genealogy and spent hours at readers going over microfilm he would get on loan from the LDS library. He also subscribed to a magazine, *The Genealogical Helper*. Through a lead in that, he contacted a Chritton (Critten) descendant and a Drake descendant who gave him leads on early lines, some going back to the 1300's and 1400's. Also, through one of them, he was given the name of a woman in California who was seeking information on the Chritton lines. She turned out to be the granddaughter of my great-grandfather's brother, Charles. She had done quite a bit of research and was a big help. Also, a big break came through an advertisement in an Omaha paper. I don't recall how we made contact, but that family was a big part of our book.

Each time I got more information, prior to 1982, I would write "updates" and send them along with orders for the book. In 1982, my first cousins had a reunion in Nebraska. I made up copies of the

additional material and also, on a large map of the United States, I traced our ancestry in the United States, using a different color for each line.

Finally in the winter of 1985-86, we began putting together all the information we had. Copies of the first manuscript were made, and each family who had sent material was sent the sections pertaining to them for approval, correction, and return to us for rewriting.

Originally the material was written to correct and be a supplement to the 1976 book. We realized that the most sensible thing would be to make the new book complete in itself, so sections had to be rewritten. Alan, who had done so much work on the ancestry, wrote the material in the two appendices. My part was compiling the descendants of Christopher and Eura (Drake) Chritton, my great-great-grandparents. Nancy did all of the typing—over and over again!

After I finished the final writing, I made 3 x 5 cards for each of the nearly 4,000 names in the main index. The appendices have a separate index. When the typed manuscript finally went to the printer, I felt like one does after having had houseguests leave after a lengthy stay. I wandered around the house for a few days, picking up and putting down. We were anxious to see the finished product. It was similar to the opening night of a new play—would it be acceptable or not!

The finished book was some eight months later than we had originally planned, but some family matters took precedence. I feel that I have fulfilled my obligation to the many who sent information to me over the years, and have no plans to continue with updated versions.

THE GENEALOGY SOCIETY OF PIERCE COUNTY

Anyone interested in tracing their family line of descent would be welcomed by the local society. The meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Steilacoom Community Center. They have a short business meeting followed by a speaker.

Nellie Heimbecker, acting president, explained that the members are endeavoring to trace their own family lineage; however, they help each other by exchanging information. Anyone interested please call Nellie at 588-8376.

Commencement Bay—named by Charles Wilkes in 1841 as the site where he began charting the inland waters of Puget Sound.

ANNUAL DINNER

Lighted Christmas trees, candles, greens and gold balls set the scene for the annual dinner held recently at the Steilacoom Community Center. Members enjoyed the music and entertainment of the Studio Choir of the Steilacoom High School under the direction of Rick Weatherly as they savored the dinner which was topped off by the traditional plum pudding.

At a short business meeting the following officers were elected for 1988: Marianne Bull, president; Jenny Hollister, vice president and trustees Judie Davis and Steve Grubb. Members continuing on the board are Sherry Gimlett, Carol Neufeld, Harold Roberts and Jack Watson, trustees Kathy Lykken, treasurer; Tom McAvoy, past president and Joan Curtis, director. Ruth Alvord was appointed secretary replacing Kathy Isacson. The Association wishes to thank Jack Sage, Don Rehburg and Kathy for their assistance and efforts.

Linda Knowlton was dinner coordinator for the 18th annual Christmas dinner, with Anna Zeigler in charge of meal preparation and Janine and Judie Davis chairing the decorations. Assisting the chairmen were the following committee heads: Genny Sumner, Patty Forsyth, Jenny Hollister, Gloria Wing, Tom McAvoy, Janet Duris, Dave Langford, Susan Scholes, Judy Tiemann, Nancy Woodford, Janis Lange, Rosa Kreger, Nancy Montgomery, Judy Hopkins, Dave Knowlton, Bob Davis and Joan Curtis.

FAMILY HISTORIES NEEDED FOR HERITAGE GUIDE

The Heritage League of Pierce County has established the publication of a heritage guide as one of its projects to commemorate the 1989 Washington State Centennial. The work will include a historical chronology, bibliography, summaries of community histories and a section on heritage organizations and historic sites.

Of greatest importance, one section will be a compilation of family histories. Every family residing in Pierce County is invited to submit a 500 word history. Each historical summary can include a photograph of the family. There is no cost and the family need not be old time residents of the County to see the history included in the publication. For those who are interested, but need assistance in writing the history, help is available.

The Heritage League plans to have the publication available by early 1989. Proceeds from its sale will go into a special fund to aid local authors and organizations with their own publication efforts.

Those ready to submit family histories, or those who want more information on the project, can write to the Heritage League of Pierce County at P.O. Box 110903, Tacoma, WA 98411.

DEDICATED DOCENTS

Under the capable leadership of Dorothea Karman, the Museum docents have contributed over 400 hours to keep the doors open for the thousands of visitors coming to Steilacoom. Dorothea has organized the schedule so most docents work on a specific day each month with substitutes filling in as needed. Several meetings throughout the year have added interest and knowledge to the group. Those serving at the Museum are:

Mark & George Abrams	Margaret Merrill
Wanja Birkey	Louise Norberg
Marge Brock	Jack Sage
Midge Bromgard	Jean Skamser
Frances Byford	Evelyn Smith
Joan Curtis	Esther Spreen
Jackie & Jerry Dock	Bonnie Stucker
Edna Dyer	Frances Swanson
Ray Fletcher	Heather Thomas
Patty Forsyth	Ruth Tinney
Nellie Heimbecker	Jean White
Alice Henly	Alice Wulf
Janda Volkmer	Rosemary York
Sara Lint	

Those serving at the Orr Home include:

Joan Curtis	Sara Lint
Janine Davis	Margaret Merrill
Jackie & Jerry Dock	Mary Myers
Patty Forsyth	Lenore Rogers
Nellie Heimbecker	Mary Speers
Jenny Hollister	Sandy Strother
Jan & Mike Lange	Jean White
Trish Laughlin	Rosemary York

Members who enjoy meeting and working with people and who would like to learn about the history of Steilacoom may contact Dorothea Karman, 588-8008, for information about the docents at the Museum, or Joan Curtis, 584-8623, about the Orr Home.

PUGET SOUND HERALD, January 6, 1860

"MILITARY BALL— The bulwarks of E. Company, Capt. Judah, on Monday night, 2nd inst. gave a ball in their quarters at Fort Steilacoom. We acknowledge the receipt of an invitation."

THE OLD AND THE NEW YEAR

(This article was printed in the *Puget Sound Herald*, December 29, 1859)

"Within forty-eight hours after the issue of this number of the *Herald*, the year 1860 will have been fully inaugurated. While renewing with genial warmth the pledge of old friendships, then let us welcome, thrice welcome, the Happy New Year.

"A more appropriate time would not be presented than this, perhaps to which to take a hasty retrospective view of our town and Territory. Retracing our steps but a little more than twelve months, we find Steilacoom a village boasting some seventy buildings of all descriptions, with a population far from sufficient to require or occupy that number of tenements. What a change has been wrought in a single year! Extreme torpidity has given way to the most lively activity in all branches of business and labor; in workshops where men were wont to meet only to dissipate time in worse than idleness, now is constantly heard the saw, the hammer and the jack-plane, doing good service in building up a town of fair proportion. The result of their work is seen in the large number of new, beautiful and substantial edifices which meet the eye in all directions. No less than forty-eight structures of various kinds, for dwellings, stores, and other purposes, have been added to our thriving town.

"But our population—what of that? Why, the increase of inhabitants has largely outstripped that of the buildings. Our population has quadrupled in number, while the augmentation steadily continues; and few, if any have come here without immediately finding profitable employment. Buildings that were tenantless before, have since, and are still, crowded to excess with strangers who have cast their lot with us. Still they come, and still they will continue to come; until our people shall be forced to complain of being crowded. With the increase of buildings and inhabitants, there has been a corresponding increase of business, without creating more than a healthy, competition. Business is far from being overdone.

"With an early spring and favorable season to succeed it, followed by abundant harvest, such as the people of our fertile country can with certainty usually calculate upon, the coming year promises to yield a rich reward to the industry of the husbandman, Everything looks propitious and encouraging for the future, then let none despond."

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MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS AND HOLIDAY SEASONS PAST

by Jessie Welfringer

Fifty years or more ago Charlie and Mamie Green would invite many families on New Year's Eve to their big white home near the steps that go over the railroad to Saltar's Point. Charlie would play his mouth organ, someone the organ, maybe there would be a fiddle, cornet or accordion and one or another would call the square dance. Just before midnight, Charlie would dance his Irish jig while playing his mouth organ or jew's harp, then to the tables everyone would go to load plates of food.

Twenty-five or thirty years ago there would be a community sing at the historical road monument near the dock on Christmas Eve. Sometime during the holiday week families would visit all the friends in one evening to see their trees.

Ten or so years ago, hanging of the greens at church was a custom. Families would gather on a Sunday afternoon before Christmas and make ropes of cedar and holly wreaths and decorate the tree, then punch, cookies and popcorn balls would taste good and the children went home with candy canes.

Reprinted from *The Quarterly*, December, 1972.

Front Page Picture: L. to R. Florence Gamble Elder, young Eudocia Bair Leech, Stella Westcott. Young sledders are Neil Henly, Dyke Rigney, and Alvie Armstrong.

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