

STEILACOOM HISTORICAL



MUSEUM QUARTERLY

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Bittersweet Christmas

By
Edna Light Dyer

Several years ago Edna Dyer shared her family's experiences when they came to Steilacoom in 1929. This reprint is in memory of a gifted and gentle lady.

My husband, myself, and four small children landed in Steilacoom a week before Thanksgiving, 1929. We rented a sparsely furnished house called "Mattie" (the only one we could find) near what was called "Green's Beach," now called "Saltar's Point." My husband, Jim, reported for work the next day at the government penitentiary on McNeil Island.

He came home later saying he would have to work two weeks before having a day off. He also told me the warden, Mr. Squires, called him to his office and told him our hometown banks had closed their doors. We were broke. He also told me he had gotten cashier's checks to make the trip out here and would have to pay that money back. Cashier's checks weren't insured in those days. Jim went back to the island, and I was left alone with the children, strangers in a strange town.

(continued on page 4)

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Front page photo: Edna Light Dyer

Back page: Postcard mailed in 1911. Orr House collection

President's Letter

December is the last month of the year, and it also concludes my second term as president. Whenever one is involved in a volunteer organization, you appreciate so much the many hours of time members give to make the organization go. In addition, many have made special financial donations for the Wagon Shop and other Association projects. My special thanks to each of you. Also, I want to extend my appreciation to the Board of Directors. Each one of them has provided good counsel and leadership for the Museum Association. It has been a pleasure working with them.

A major project during the past two years has been the restoration of the Wagon Shop. Donations and grants now total over \$15,000. These funds have paid for Phase I of the restoration which included:

Taking the building down piece-by-piece and salvaging the lumber

Excavating, installing drainage, pouring foundation

Rebuilding structure with salvaged lumber, installing insulation and new roof

Constructing a false front and finishing the exterior with board and batten

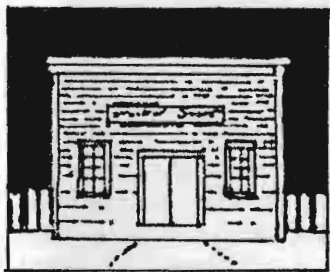
There is more to do. Phase II will include developing a working forge, woodworking display area, and display of our wagons and carriages. Work has progressed well, but there will be a need for more money to complete Phase II. The Board will be discussing fund raising efforts at the December meeting.

Several projects should be completed in December. After 22 years occupying the basement of Town Hall, the Museum Association has asked the Town for a formal agreement. We both have similar goals for historical education, and we have developed an excellent partnership preserving and presenting local history to 300 museum visitors each month. We hope that an agreement can be reached quickly. The other action that should be concluded in December is extending the lease of the Bair Store to Rosa Kreger. She has gained an excellent reputation for her fine food, and we hope that she will continue the operation.

Cheers! May each of you have a happy holiday season and good health in 1993.

John Watson, President

Wagon Shop Update



In the spirit of good will and public service, Mark Tinsley, with his brothers Bruce and Paul, has donated his time and equipment to grade around the wagon shop. The extra earth was moved to level off uneven areas in the orchard. The Tinsleys' large contribution is deeply appreciated by the Association.

The planning and construction phase of the wagon shop has been supervised by a hard working committee composed of John Korsmo, Lyle Dunkin, Bill Smurro, and Joan Curtis, assisted by Larry Wilkinson as a consultant.

The names of Norrie Pearson and Milt Davidson were left out of the fall *Quarterly* when listing those who stained the wagon shop. Excuse us.

Don't miss the opportunity to have your family name inscribed on a brick for the wagon shop. Give a gift of a brick for a Christmas or birthday gift. Bricks are \$50 to \$149. Send a check to SHMA, Box 88016, Steilacoom.

The Bair—Something New!

Every Friday night a special dinner selection is served from 5:30 to 9. Reservations are accepted. Call 588-9668. Winter hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays with the Friday special dinner. Weekends the Bair is the place for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea. Weekend hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The days were warm, foggy, dark, and depressing and lonely. The children and I knew no one in town and no one knew us. All we had in supplies were what we had left from our trip—very few. I had already ordered milk from Gaul's dairy to be delivered.

The next week I took my courage in hand and went to explain to our landlord why we wouldn't be able to pay him our next month's rent. At that time the government paid its guards a salary of \$119 a month. Guards were subject to call at any time. When there was a prison break, guards would be kept until the prisoner was accounted for.

Mr. Davies was our first good Samaritan. "I know what you mean," he said. "I just lost my sawmill. Don't worry about the rent. I'll wait." He paused and then asked me, "Do you need groceries? I'll introduce you to our grocers."

He took me to the store, introduced me to Jake and Nettie Smith and son Darold and also to Mr. Chelius, the butcher. Mr. Smith was my second good Samaritan. I bought as few groceries as I felt I could get along on. This was the first time we had ever been in debt. I was frightened—Mr. Davies' loan, the rent, a grocery bill, and to pay back the cashier's checks!

Through December I worried about the children's Christmas. Our Christmases had always been special gifts with a bountiful table surrounded by family and friends. Vir-Nadean, the oldest, and James and Jan, the twins, were in school. Betty, three years old, was home with me. I decided to make the three girls string puppets. I made two apiece, fastening heads, hands, knees, and feet with string to cross slats, so they could work them. I used an apple box to make a stage with cardboard furniture and pull curtains.

I searched through every pocket, purse, and dish for a dime, and finally found one in an old vest pocket of my husband's. I went to Bair's Drug and Hardware store, run by Docia and Bill Leech, and bought James a colored, bouncy rubber ball.

When Mr. Salzer, the janitor, went for a Christmas tree for the school, he took James with him. He also got us a lovely tree and brought it to our door. He was our third good Samaritan. We sat it in a bucket of sand, and I braced it with boards. The children spent hours stringing popcorn and making colored paper chains to garland the tree. They thought it was beautiful.

We had a lovely stone fireplace. We had never had one before. On Christmas Eve we sat in front of the blaze, and I told

them the Christmas story, then finished reading the book *Heidi* I had started reading a few days before. The children hung their stockings, said their prayers, and went to bed. I put a popcorn ball, an apple, and a small sack of candy in each stocking, then wrapped their presents and put them under the tree.

On Christmas day the children were delighted with their puppets and spent the day putting on shows. Jim surprised us by coming home on the three o'clock boat. We had our dinner of baked chicken, dressing, mashed potatoes, yeast rolls, carrot and apple salad, and pumpkin pie—all on credit.

After dinner we took a walk through the town of Steilacoom. The air smelled of salt breeze and wood smoke. It was warm for December. The clouds hung low, lacy and soft, caught and tangled in the green tree tops on the mountains and islands. Our feet went clippety-clop on the wooden sidewalks. Little riverlets of water ran down the side of the walks along the streets. Small birds flitted in the underbrush. Sometimes a tree frog croaked.

We walked to the dock, the water lapping against the pilings. The dock was bare—no restaurant, no buildings, no parked or running cars. Barnacles and anemones clung to the pilings under the water. Starfish and small crabs lay on the sand. Strange creatures to us. The seagulls screamed and dived at us, and small boats came and went. Little hills with their homes and orchards, housing 750 people, sloped to the dock. There was a comforting quietness to the town. We were charmed.

Two lonely people, living in past memories, worrying about the future, knowing we had a depression to fare. We took our children and slowly returned home.

Congratulations

Best wishes to Katherine and Charles Buchanan who celebrated their 65th anniversary in September. They have lived in Steilacoom and served their community for over 50 years. Katherine has taken leadership roles in the school and the Oberlin Congregational Church. Charlie has served as mayor, councilman, planning commission member, and treasurer. He has also been chair of the building committee and almost every committee at Oberlin. The Charles R. Buchanan Park was dedicated in 1989 in appreciation for his service.

Charlie was honored at the Annual Dinner in 1986 for his many years as treasurer and financial advisor to the Association. Steilacoom has been most fortunate for the dedication and service the Buchanans have given.

"When a Poet Dies"

Betty Fukuyama, a widely published poet, former resident of Steilacoom, and long time member of the Association, died last summer. She taught poetry at Fort Steilacoom Community College (Pierce College), was a founder of the Washington Poet's Association, serving as president for several years. She was president of the Tacoma Writers' Club and an active participant in the Northwest Writers' Conference.

Betty was best known in Steilacoom as the wife of Pastor Tom Fukuyama of Oberlin Congregational Church. The family lived in what is now called the "Old Parsonage" on the corner of Pacific and Lafayette. Betty's many poems written over the years included:

The Sanctuary Plymouth Church, Seattle

Bird forms soar in glass
by oval walls, white-stuccoed.
New England ceiling beams
deviated west
radiate
over the polished wooden cross
casting shadow.

Light flowing
through beaks wings, tails
illuminates panels and pew,
the spindly potted dogwood angling toward that flawless
altar.

Edna Dyer was also a published poet. A few years ago her poems, which had first appeared in national magazines, were collected and printed in the book *Bits of Colored Glass*. She wrote, "Whether bitter or sweet each poem is a moment from my life."

Silver Birch in Winter

Though pine and fir upon the hill
Are dressed green for deepening chill,
The silver birch tree stands undaunted
Bare of leaves—winter—haunted.
From tinselled twigs close interlaced
Against the sky, a web is traced
To snare a new moon frosted white
Upon a star-flung crystal night.

Hoarfrost

Star-silvered soft, it comes at night
With picture patterns brushed in white
And bracken laces crystal-swirled
Make tinsel glitter of my world.
With sun and creeping heat of day
Each frozen gleam will steal away.
This beauty etched on every leaf
Will leave my garden limp with grief,
And summer loveliness be lost
In sharp swift beauty of hoarfrost.

In Memory

Of those who through the years have served the Association

Bill Herd

Wallace Cullen

Betty Fukuyama

Philip Burrows

Edna Dyer

Helen Andrews

Donald Oars

The Association has a special card that can be used when a Memory Gift is made. It can be a monetary gift to the Association or a contribution to purchase an inscribed brick to be part of the walkway to be installed next year on the Orr Property.

From the Museum

Just in time for Christmas the museum has a new gift certificate. It could be used for a gift of membership for family or a friend or someone away from town who will enjoy receiving the *Quarterly*. Other suggested uses are gifts at the Bair Store or a copy of *Town on the Sound: Stories of Steilacoom*.

A group of about twenty museum docents and tour guides had a tour on November 17. They went to view the new permanent display at the Washington State Historical Museum and later went to lunch at the Point Defiance Boathouse.

Museum Hours

December: 1-4 p.m., Friday, Saturday, Sunday

January: Closed

February: 1-4 p.m., Friday, Saturday, Sunday

The Holiday Season—1942

Charlie Mann, editor of the Lakewood Log for two decades, gave his own unique literary style and perspective to the Steilacoom/Lakewood scene. The holiday season of 1942 is depicted with his pen.

December, 1942—a whole year had gone by with America at war. The grim reality of living day to day, listening to Edward R. Morrow's "This Is London," going without as rationing continued, and waiting for news of loved ones seemed to go on and on.

The Second Front in Africa had opened in mid November much to the delight of Editor Charlie Mann who wrote, "Eisenhower-Clark-Beardwood, Three Former Tacoma Boys Running the Whole Africa War."

The ladies of Steilacoom were informed "Uncle Sam Needs Your Discarded Stockings." They were asked to bring their worn and discarded stockings to Galloways (the grocery store where the Forge is today), Bair's Store and the school house. The nylon stockings would be used for military purposes and the silk for making powder bags. Women were urged to help the war effort in other ways. A welding class for women was offered at the Clover Park High School from 2-6 p.m. to prepare them for work in the shipyards.

Postmistress Eudocia Leech cautioned everyone to mail their Christmas packages early as indications were the volume would surpass all records. Free mailing privileges granted to all members of the armed forces had raised mailing 30%. A survey of 1,000 service men from 48 states had given the following list in order of preference of what they wanted for Christmas: waterproof watches, cigarettes, pen and pencil sets, leather wallets, framed photographs, pocket Bibles, shirts and socks, sun glasses (except those in Alaska), very small phonographs, warm slippers, pipes, books and flash lights.

Gas rationing went into effect on December 1. Under the heading "Gas Rationing Is Here—And How!! Helpful Hints to Hitchhikers," Editor Mann wrote. Rationing led to the following announcement by the popular Lakewood Terrace:

Christmas Dinner as usual—tho we may be short of butter, sugar and other supplies. Due to conditions beyond our control, there will be no Christmas Eve Celebration at the Terrace this year.

Other items on the list of rationed goods included sugar, coffee, and rubber.

The Steilacoom Council stated early in December that there would be "No outdoor lighting at Christmas of ANY KIND, and all windows through which Christmas trees indoors will shine must have shades tightly drawn." The Council at the same time went on record, "Steilacoom officially will refuse to bother celebrating December 7 with a Pearl Harbor Day challenge to our Civilian Defence machinery, preferring to forget the worst insult America has ever received in its long history." The dimout also eliminated the annual gigantic outdoor Christmas tree on the Western State Hospital grounds, including the candle wreaths and illuminated signs.

News of the Steilacoom servicemen during the month of December reported that Jim Lester was stationed in the West Indies and promoted to corporal, Kenneth Gaul was stationed at Camp White, Oregon, and Lee Merrill was in Oahu. Marjorie Bailey and Lynn Scholes were married in Las Vegas after he graduated from flying school in California where he was commissioned as a pilot.

At the December meeting the Steilacoom Book Club reviewed *The Robe* by Lloyd Douglass, while films played at the Lakewood Theatre were *Talk of the Town* with Jean Arthur, Cary Grant, and Ronald Coleman and *Calling Dr. Gillespie* with Lionel Barrymore.

Across the water at McNeil Island Prison, the first prison-built war vessel had been completed. One of three to be built for the Army, the diesel tug would be on duty in Alaska.

Members of the Steilacoom Garden Club departed from their usual custom of having a formal Christmas party to meet at the Town Hall to make Christmas wreaths for the hospital at Fort Lewis. Pupils of Steilacoom, under the direction of their teachers, responded to the urgent call for Christmas tree decorations for the pleasure of the servicemen.

As Christmas came closer, *The Log* advertized glass tree ornaments 30¢ for a box of 12, Christmas cards 25¢ for 25, dolls for 15¢ to \$3.99, and bedroom slippers 59¢ to 98¢.

As the year came to the end, Steilacoom merchants wished the residents a better year in 1943.

The Christmas Season Begins

"The Magic of Christmas" came alive with silvery tinsel, greens, wrapped packages, and candlelight at the recent annual Christmas dinner. Members enjoyed an excellent baron of beef dinner which concluded with the traditional plum puddings presented to "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" played by the Lakes High Concert Orchestra.

Florine Fowler and Bob Anderson were recipients of the Lee Merrill Fellows Award given for service to the Association over the years. A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Herb Hunt as a founder of the Association in 1970.

During the short business meeting the following officers were elected for 1993: Bob Volkmer, President; Arline Brightman, Vice President; and Sandy Strother, Dave Hudson and Doug Wing, Trustees. The Association thanked Judie Davis for her services as Past President and Nancy Hellyer for her work on the Board.

Linda Evanson and Jane Jensen coordinated the dinner, assisted by the following committee heads: Patty Ann Forsyth, Milt Davidson, Dee Burdue, Pat Ness, Sue Davidson, Gloria Wing, Marge Erickson, Hank and Pat Brown, Wolf and Maria Fletter, Janet Duris, Judie Davis, Lenore Rogers, John and Peggy Hemphill, Jennie Sumner, Jan Abrams, Lennie Butler, Alice Watson, and Joan Curtis.

Salamagundi

- ★ Christmas shopping at the Bair Store is a popular activity during December. Gift items are plentiful, including stocking stuffers, apple butter, salmon sauce, stationery, and various publications, especially *Town on the Sound: Stories of Steilacoom*.
- ★ Special thanks to Jim Lester for his dedication the past five years mowing the orchard grass at the Orr Home. It is a big job, and he has done it well. Thank you, Jim.
- ★ Does anyone have a riding mower they would be willing to donate to the Association? The current one has seen its day. Please contact the Museum at 584-4133. It would be tax deductible.
- ★ Hosts are still needed for Steilacoom Dines Out scheduled for March 13 and March 20. Please contact Joan Curtis, 584-8623, or Marianne Bull, 584-9410, for further information.

Successful Apple Squeeze

A sunny day, a large crowd, the Old Time Fiddlers playing on the corner, large pumpkins on display and the whirl of the presses contributed to a most successful Apple Squeeze.

The largest pumpkin weighed in at 525 pounds. It had been grown by Ron Nelson of Grapeview, Washington. Many others were in the 300 to 400 pound range. Proceeds from the Squeeze were \$6,588.99 and will go toward the continued preservation and conservation of the properties.

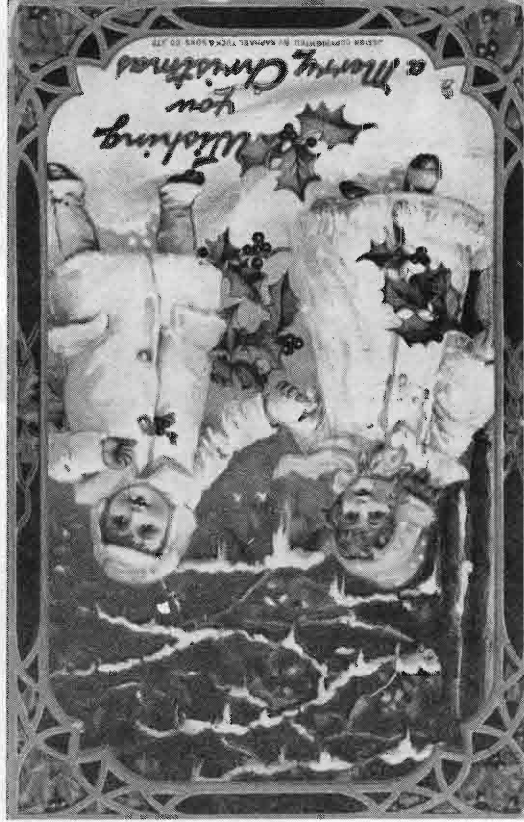
The Squeeze would not be possible without the pressmen who labor hard and long. Twenty-four presses were manned by the following people: Milt Davidson and Tom Teevin, Dick Duguay, Gerry Evanson, Rick Gamas, Joe Ghilarducci, Ellie and Art Froney, Chris and Ann Gorde, Don Johnson, Gary and Sally Lodholme, Ed Mudge, Glen Nigh, Robert Nohle, George Rybolt, Chuck Schwab, Keith Sutherland, Ron Tracy, Nancy Hellyer, Paul Clinton, Jerry Stevenson, Bill Horn, Darrel Verbeck, Bob Sullivan, and Lattice McCoy. Thank you for all your work this year and for all the previous years.

Thanks, also, to the 125 members who sold pies, made cider on Vashon Island, hauled pulp to the truck, sold the many items available, took money, contacted the pressmen, planned and made the contacts, contacted the newspapers and radio stations, set up, cleaned up, weighed pumpkins, and all the other functions so important that go into making an Apple squeeze.

The Daughters of the Pioneers of the State of Washington

The historic Keach Home, 1858, in Steilacoom was shown this year on the cover of the annual booklet put out by "the Daughters" in Steilacoom, Chapter #10. For their November meeting, thirteen ladies from the membership were the guests of present day owners Milt and Sue Davidson. Sue showed the ladies through the home and later commented that they had particularly enjoyed her display of quilts.

The Steilacoom chapter was organized on March 7, 1938, by thirty-four ladies, all of whom had pioneer ancestry. Their names—Rigney, Henly, Bradley, Judson, Sears, Gaul, Hatcher, Flett—and many more are all part of Steilacoom's history. The membership lists about sixty ladies who are working to carry out the chapter's goal which is "to perpetuate the memory and spirit of the pioneers of Washington."



Stellacoom Historical
Museum Association
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