

STEILACOOM HISTORICAL



MUSEUM QUARTERLY

Volume 22, Number 1

Spring, 1993

Stephen Judson

1837-1925

Peter Judson, with his wife, Anna, and two sons, Stephen and John Paul, came from Prussia about 1845 destined for Galena, Illinois. They boarded a sailing vessel at Antwerp and after reaching New York, embarked on another vessel for New Orleans and there took a steamer for St. Louis. The family stayed in the Midwest until 1853 when Peter heard of the California gold mines. The family then started West, accompanied by their niece, Gertrude S. Muller, and John Neison, a blacksmith. Near Salt Lake City they overtook the Byles-Longmire party bound for Oregon. Hearing for the first time of the favorable land laws of the Pacific Northwest, the Judsons decided to join the wagon train. Gertrude and John walked most of the way across the country with John carrying a staff about eight feet long. The

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Front page photo: Mary W. (Gallagher) and Stephen Judson
All photos in this issue are from the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association collection.

President's Letter

As the Association begins its twenty-third year of operations, it seems to be an appropriate time to pause and reflect on previous accomplishments relative to the tasks ahead of us. To put it simply, we have grown—if not, metaphorically speaking, too big for our britches, then at least to the point that they're getting tight!

We've come a long way since the Association's founding in 1970 with one small room in the basement of Town Hall to our present status as owners of two properties, three facilities, and an extensive collection of artifacts. Also growing is the question of how we will continue to take care of it all.

Recognizing this, the Board is considering a goal setting retreat for this year to assess future needs and to seek solutions. We must look at finding a stable revenue base to supplement our annual fund raisers; we need to set up depreciation accounts for continuing maintenance and operation of our facilities; we would like to recruit new members (to take our place when we retire!); and I believe we need to begin to plan for permanent museum and administration space. Your suggestions are encouraged and most welcome.

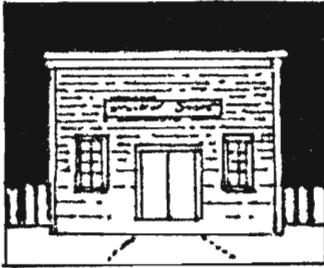
I am pleased to announce that the Board has taken care of two important items of business already this year. First, in

January we signed a ten year lease with the Town for the museum space in the basement of Town Hall, assuring us of our continued operation for the near future. Second, we have reached agreement with Rosa Kreger on lease terms for the restaurant operation in the Bair Store.

In closing, I want to thank you all for your ongoing support of the Association and to ask for your continued assistance this year.

Bob Volkmer

Wagon Shop Update



As spring begins, the next phase of the Wagon Shop is in the planning process. Volunteers will be needed to complete the staining of the exterior and prepare the front of the building for the laying of brick. The request is still out for old barn boards to be used as siding on the

interior of the building. There is sufficient on hand for the back, smaller room which will be the blacksmith shop, but not for the main, larger room. As soon as the wood can be found, many hands will be needed for completion.

It is not too late to contribute donations for a brick. Don't miss this opportunity to have your family name inscribed for the future. Give the gift of a brick for the wagon shop for a birthday, graduation, or as a memorial to a family member or a family who has lived in town. Bricks are \$50 to \$149. Send a check to SHMA, Box 88016, Steilacoom, WA 98388.

Calendar

Opening of the Orr Home.....	April 18
Special exhibit: Laundry in the "Good Ole Days"	
Spring Membership Meeting.....	May 5
Fourth of July Celebration	July 4
Annual Salmon Bake	July 25
Apple Squeeze	October 17
Christmas Dinner & Annual Membership Meeting .	December 4

Stephen Judson

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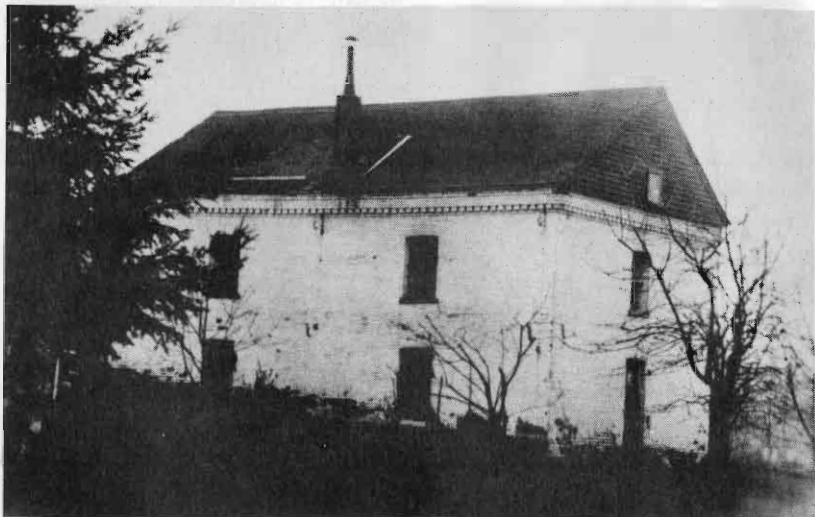
Judsons usually camped apart from the rest of the wagons as Peter's lack of skill in English seemed to embarrass him. Their decision to join the group made them a part of the first wagon train which crossed the mountains at Naches Pass, arriving on the Northwest coast in September, 1853.

The Judsons reached Commencement Bay in October, and Peter took up a claim of 321 acres. It later became one of the most valuable claims in the Northwest, embracing what is now practically the entire business section of Tacoma. Through the winter the father and two sons hastened the clearing of the land and built a house just about where Union Station now stands. In the local community they were considered to be well-to-do since they owned three yoke of oxen and had considerable cash.

In the autumn of 1855, Stephen Judson, then a youth of 18, heard a group of about twenty-five Indians in a pow-wow, and he went to see what it was all about. He found Indian friends with whom he had hunted and played, but they shunned him. As the dancing grew wilder, one of his friends moved close enough to give him a warning, saying, "Klat-a-wa! Klat-a-wa!" In the Chinook dialect that meant "Go hence! Get out!" and young Judson lost no time in obeying the warning. He hastened home, told his parents, and they made preparations to depart.

Loading their belongings on a scow, they started in the night for Steilacoom in a pouring rain. They slowly sailed with the tide, helping a little with poles and oars, reaching Swan and Riley's fishing camp about 10 o'clock. In the morning they proceeded to Steilacoom which, guarded by Fort Steilacoom, remained safe and comparatively undisturbed by the Indian warfare that followed. Peter Judson never returned to the Commencement Bay property, losing all rights to the claim. Instead, they moved to Steilacoom where there are still descendants of the family living today.

During 1858, Pierce County built its first brick jail at Steilacoom, the county seat. The bricks that were used were made by Peter Judson, who had started the local kiln, and



Old Territorial Jail in Steilacoom

Stephen was put to work hauling them to the building site. Shortly afterward, when the position of Sheriff was to be filled, Stephen, still a very young man, was elected and served for several years.

Stephen, though small of stature, was strong and hardy. On one occasion every prisoner in the jail broke out except one, Johnny Devine, who wore a ball and chain, and who had been locked in the jail kitchen by the departing prisoners. Johnny, in revenge, hastened to tell Judson who went into the woods alone looking for the missing men, some of whom were dangerous. After several hours he caught them all. The brick jail at Steilacoom, the best in the territory, was the catch-all for some of the worst of the Northwest's criminals, and many passed through Judson's hands.

A few months after Stephen Judson took office, the Vigilantes again appeared, becoming involved in what was known as the Byrd affair. A young man named Bates, supposed to be partly insane, shot and fatally wounded Andrew Byrd, a prominent and popular citizen. Bates' cow had been stolen, and one of Byrd's enemies told Bates that Byrd was the thief. The next



Mary Judson in her parlor, c. 1900

morning Bates found the cow's head on his gate post, and this inflamed him to the point that he started out to find Byrd. Both he and Byrd were the victims of a deliberate lie, since Byrd had nothing to do with the theft.

Byrd died in about twenty-four hours, and a mob gathered and marched to the jail where Bates was being held. Sheriff Judson was seized and taken to McCaw & Rogers' store where he was kept under guard. Judson, however, had blocked the front door of the jail which, for safety's sake, he had lined with boiler iron a short time before. The heavy door, five inches thick, was made of oak. The mob assaulted it again and again with a log battering ram, but the door refused to give. The

assailants finally abandoned the ram and tore the brick wall from around the door casing. The murderer was dragged from his cell and taken to an old barn where the thirty foot ram was hoisted to the loft, with the end protruding. From this, Bates was hanged in his irons. No attempt was made to punish the members of the mob.

In August, 1868, in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, which had been hauled piecemeal from Fort Steilacoom and set up in the town, Stephen Judson married Mary W. Gallagher, a daughter of George Gallagher, a tinsmith, who brought his family to the Northwest across the Isthmus to Olympia in 1852.

After buying a house on the corner of Main and Starling streets, Stephen went to San Francisco to buy furniture for their new home. Fifty years later it was the proud boast of Mrs. Judson that despite constant use, the horsehair stuffing in the chairs had to be replaced only once.

The Catholic Church was an important part of the Judson's family life. Their six children, two daughters and four sons, were baptized there, and the family assumed many caretaker duties. They rang the bell for services, lit fires to warm the church, and Mary was the church organist for almost fifty years. She claimed that she wore out three organs during that time.

Shortly after his term as sheriff, Stephen Judson began an extended political career. He was in the Territorial Legislature for four terms, the State Legislature for two terms, and was elected County Treasurer in 1896 for two terms. As a result of his political activity, he was known as the "War Horse" of the Democratic party in Pierce County. No convention, large or small, was complete without "Steve" Judson.

Judson also served at one time as a trustee of the nearby State Hospital for the Insane. The hospital figured in an incident late in Judson's life. As a resident of Steilacoom for sixty-three years, he stood up at a town meeting and staunchly defended keeping the name of the town when others wanted to change it because the Hospital for the Insane was known by the same name. He pronounced the proposal as the "greatest humbug"

he had ever heard of. After a fiery rebuttal by Judson, a motion was made by Fred Taylor, another pioneer, to retain the name of Steilacoom for the town, and both Judson and Taylor were greeted by a "rousing aye and no nays" as the motion passed.

Stephen Judson was 88 when he died in Steilacoom on October 25, 1925. He lived a life of usefulness and hard work, bringing honor to his name, his pioneer parents, and his descendants.

Bibliography

Herbert Hunt, *History of Tacoma, Vol. I*, 1916.

W. P. Bonney, *History of Pierce County Washington, Vol. I*, 1927.

Material was also gathered from newspapers of the day and reference files from the Northwest Room of the Tacoma Public Library.



Stephen Judson, Jr., Pierce County Engineer and Surveyor, and wife Edith (Walker), c. 1900

Within the Palisades

Journey into the mid-1800s with a visit to DuPont and the traveling historic exhibit, "Within the Palisades." To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Fort Nisqually, established by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1843, the exhibit will be at the DuPont Museum, March 27 through April 30. It will open on Saturdays and Sundays, 1-4 p.m. Sponsored by the Weyerhaeuser Company, the exhibit will tour the Puget Sound region in 1993 and Eastern Washington in 1994.

The display explores life on the frontier, the fort's role in the establishment of the U.S.-Canadian boundary line, its ties to England, why British spies visited the fort, Abraham Lincoln's role in the history, and the fort's officers' fondness for French wines.

To Fort Nisqually's clustered storehouses, barns, sheds, and dwellings came mid 1800 traders and fur brigades, and, from its busy anchorage, ships carried wool, tallow, leather, and butter to England, Chile, California (then part of Mexico), the independent kingdom of Hawaii, and the Russian colony of Alaska. Fort Nisqually was Puget Sound's first permanent non-native settlement.

During 1855 those storehouses were filled to capacity as a brigade of 200 horses arrived laden with packs of furs, the result of a year's trade of forts Colville, Walla Walla, Boise, Hall, Okanogan, Nez Perce, and the Snake country. The furs included 1,300 bear skins, 200 badger, 2,500 beaver, 12 silver, 80 cross silver and 334 red fox, 185 lynx, 1,500 marten, 575 mink, 8,000 musquash, 412 land otter, 580 wolf and 45 wolverine. Employees of the fort put the furs into large bales for shipment to Victoria.

Fort Nisqually claimed all lands between the Nisqually and Puyallup rivers and from Puget Sound to the Cascade Mountains. The area officially became part of the United States in 1846, but it stayed in British hands for another quarter century while the company gradually moved to Victoria. In addition to a glimpse into the exciting past of the fort, the exhibit will explore the future of the site.

Salmagundi

- ★ Spring cleaning came to the Bair Store early in March. The store was cleaned, refurbished, and ready for the season. Thanks to the following members who volunteered their time and elbow grease: Sandy Strother, Marilyn Seimens, Nancy Anderson, Cy Barnes, Bob Volkmer, Arline Brightman, Jane Light, Sue and Milt Davidson, Pat McCutchen, Patty and Alan Forsyth, Sue Killam, Helen Farley, Marge Johnson, Paul Menter, and Trish Laughlin.
- ★ The Orr Home will open on Sunday, April 18, with an exhibit "Laundry in the 'Good Ole Days,'" complete with scrubbing boards, wash tubs, and "receipts" for making soap. The home will be open every Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. until October 17. Members are admitted free.
- ★ Hats off to Alan Forsyth for his yeoman service of pruning the fruit trees at the Orr Orchard this winter. A labor intensive job, Alan also hauled the branches home before trucking them up to the Town collection area.
- ★ A Chinese willow on the Rainier property of the late Mrs. Sherman Ingels is being considered for inclusion in the *Washington Big Tree Program* booklet. The 52 foot tree with a circumference of 11 feet, 8 inches may be over 100 years old.
- ★ The lovely photography of Jackie Dock is on sale at the Museum. With an artist's eye, Jackie has chosen scenic spots to capture on film. Not to be missed.
- ★ The Association's photo collection has been augmented by the donations of negatives and pictures from Paul Rennard and Sally Taylor Sullivan, former residents of Steilacoom. The pictures span the years circa 1910 through the 1940s.
- ★ A new exhibit at the Museum features the 1880 bedroom set of Marian Young's grandparents, early Seattle residents. The set includes the bed, commode, night stand, and a dresser with a mirror and candle holders. Evening clothes of the

period were included. Jackie Dock has been mending, washing, and ironing these clothes for display.

- ★ Rosa Kreger begins her fourth year as manager of the Bair Store. Under her expert direction, seating space has been expanded. Because of the high quality of the food, the popular weekend breakfasts are either sold out or with standing room only, and the Friday night dinners have been most successful. Stop by the Bair and have a cup of coffee and dessert and wish Rosa well for the coming year.

A Doctor Wanted

On June 6, 1858, the editor of the *Puget Sound Herald* described a real need in the county.

It is a singular thing, but nevertheless true, that there is not in the whole of Pierce County a practicing physician. Dr. Tolmie of the Hudson's Bay Company and Dr. Webber of the firm of Balch and Webber are both occupied with other business and have not time to practice; and Dr. Wirtz of the Army, on account of his engagements at the garrison, positively refuses to attend to patients in civil life. We have a population of over 800 souls, exclusive of Indians; and, although our climate is comparatively healthy, there is a large amount of sickness. Any thoroughly educated physician, who is adept in surgery and mid-wifery, at the very least; and an intelligent medical friend of ours tells us that he thinks the practice of the county would be worth \$3,000. Don't all come at once; we want only one; but he must be both a well-bred physician and a well-bred gentleman. The people will not support any quack who has taken up "doctoring" as a trade, and who simply wishes to "make his pile."

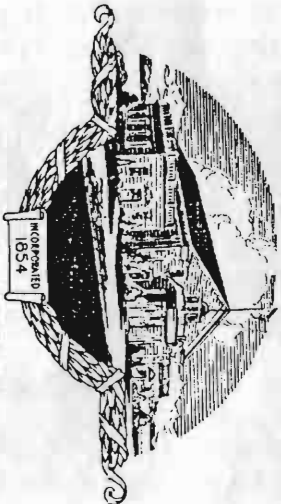
Garage Sale

Planned for August 7, 1993

Please save your items to donate for the sale.

Call 584-4133

Spring Membership Meeting



A Dessert Social

Town Hall

May 5, 1993, at 7 p.m.

Bring your favorite dessert to share, enjoy visiting with your neighbors, and participate in the discussion of goals and future directions of the Association. A financial report and an update of all activities will be included.



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