

STEILACOOM HISTORICAL



MUSEUM QUARTERLY

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The Museum Photo Collection

"A picture is worth 1,000 words" is aptly put when describing the extensive photographic collection of the Association. The collection not only documents the history of Steilacoom, but the evolution of photography—beginning with daguerreotypes of the 1840s, the ambrotypes and tintypes of the 1850s, glass negatives of the 1850-1900 period, the Eastman Brownie Kodak camera, developed in 1900, a movie of the demolition of the old jail in 1944 to color slides of Association events.

(continued on page 4)

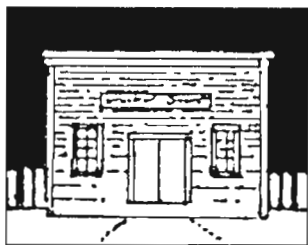
Brightman for the many hours she spent at the museum attending the daily operational tasks of the association. I do not know how many hours she expended, but it had to be an enormous amount, because she could usually be found working there.

I welcome Arline as our new president, Bill Smurro as vice-president and Marilyn Cullen as new board member. I look forward to working with them, our secretary, treasurer, and other board members and with most of you next year.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president.

Bob Volkmer

Wagon Shop Update



Progress is continuing. The interior walls of the wagon shop have been finished with lumber donated by Bobi and Jerry Craker. They were indeed generous, giving a second load of the rough sawn timber. Dave Hudson, assisted by Lyle Dunkin and the use of his shop, put the lumber to use. Dave and Jane Light cleaned and finished the floor.

One hundred and thirty-eight bricks have been inscribed. In the spring the bricks will be laid by Ken Fellows for the memorial walkway in front of the wagon shop. A wagon, which has been in the Scholes garage for many years, will be the first artifact to be placed in the shop.

It is not too late to order a brick: Don't miss the opportunity to have your family name inscribed on a brick. Or give a brick as a birthday present or as a memorial. Bricks are \$50 to \$149. Send a check to SHMA, Box 88016, Steilacoom, WA 98388.

Correction: In the fall *Quarterly* the article on Steilacoom incorrectly identified the mayor. In 1930, John T. McCutcheon was in office at the time of the dedication of the new Town Hall. Our thanks to Kathryn McCutcheon for calling.

Over 1,000 portraits, photos, glass negatives, and slides depict Steilacoom's history, beginning with the 1850s to the present. Within the total collection, there are four unique and individual collections.

Orr Collection: 1849-1895

The Association is greatly indebted to Bertha Orr for her continuing interest. She has donated daguerreotypes of Nathaniel Orr, his brother James and their sisters. These are displayed in highly decorated cases, hinged on one side, opening like a small book. Later photos include Nathaniel and Emma at the time of their wedding in 1868 in Victoria. Portraits of their sons, Glenn and Nathaniel, were taken in the 1890s. Invaluable interior shots of the wagon shop have assisted in the restoration of the building.

Bartlett Collection: 1860-1900

Laura Belle Downey Bartlett was the inveterate collector. Over 100 pictures portray the leaders of Steilacoom, their wives and children. These include William Downey, first mayor; John Latham, druggist; and Frank Clark, prominent attorney, and their families. Others represented are the Reverend Sloan, Presbyterian minister, the Wallaces, Goves, Prosch, Webb, as well as lesser known residents. The collection includes tintypes, etched plates mounted on wood used by the printer, and carte de visite, small photographs mounted on a card the size of a calling card. The majority of the collection is comprised of these carte de visite photos in vignette or full length. This type of photo, which was developed in the 1850s, quickly made photography available to the average American.

These small pictures may well have been taken by Anthony Carr, son of Job Carr, founder of Tacoma. Anthony, a photographer by trade, had served in the Civil War and came to Steilacoom in November, 1865. According to Hunt's *History of Tacoma*, "When he reached Steilacoom, he learned that Erastus Light had just bought a photographic outfit and was trying to learn how to use it by studying the instruction books that accompanied it, but with negative success. He was glad

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Joan Curtis, Bette Bradley—Editors

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Front page photo: John Bair with his mother Mary Hamm Bair and his sister Mary

Back page photo: An early day winter scene of the passenger ferry at Steilacoom dock about 1920

President's Letter

It is with relief and misgivings that I leave this office. The relief comes from no longer having the responsibilities of the office; the misgivings for not having done better. I have learned that the running of this association is more demanding and complex than I imagined, and that its operation is wholly dependent upon a dedicated membership willing to spend hours of time and effort on such matters as docenting, fund raisers and special projects. We will have an enormous amount of work to do next year in connection with our properties. Your new president and board will need a lot of our assistance. I am sure it shall be forthcoming.

I enjoyed working with the board this past year, and think it a very good board, one that possesses a good deal of imagination, perception and zeal. I thank each member. I consider we owe thanks to John Watson, Milt Davidson and Wolf Fletter for the services they rendered for us. I am also taking this occasion to thank Bette Bradley and Joan Curtis for their years of work getting this quarterly published. I believe it is incumbent upon us to acknowledge such effort. On behalf of the association, I thank Jan Jensen, Rosa Kreger and all those who helped at the Christmas dinner. I thought it one of the better ones. It was very pleasant and tasteful. I thank Arline

enough to take Carr in, and a fairly good business was established...." Carr later set up a studio in Tacoma.

Bair Collection: 1890-1904

John Bair, younger brother of W. L. Bair, druggist, came West looking for opportunities. Though he didn't strike it rich in Alaska or California, he did leave an invaluable legacy of glass negatives depicting Steilacoom in the period before the railroad came to town. It was the era of the electric street car, commercial buildings on Lafayette Street, and the promotion of tourism. Street and waterfront scenes, including Chambers Creek, as well as residences, bring the town into focus. Some of these pictures may be seen in the Town Hall.

John Bair died at the age of 50 in 1904 of Bright's disease. The Bair family does not know where he became interested in photography, but his hobby has gained him a place in Steilacoom's history.

Merrill Collection: 1970-1980

Lee Merrill, a professional photographer and photo finisher, was the Association's second president. His collection of pictures and color slides documents the activities and events of the first ten years. The restoration of the Bair Store, annual dinners, Salmon Bakes, and Apple Squeezes, and many more are pictured—making the history for tomorrow.

In addition to these collections, there are photo albums of early 1900s when the Brownie camera came into popularity, and hundreds of photos and copies documenting the 140 years of Steilacoom history which have been donated to the Association. The total is a collection to be justly proud of with its scope and variety.

☆ A very successful Apple Squeeze was held on October 17. Sales were brisk, the sun came out, and by the end of the day a \$7,821 profit was gained—an all time high. Congratulations to all who worked.



William D. Vaughn and wife, Caroline, 1907

William D. Vaughn

William D. Vaughn, an early Steilacoom resident for whom a nearby town and bay were named, left his home in West Virginia at the age of 15, going to Louisiana to work as a lumberjack. Four years later, deciding to go west, he was hired because of his skill as a marksman to provide game for a wagon train outbound on the Oregon Trail.

Reaching Oregon in October, 1851, he headed north, finding his first job at the Chambers mill in Steilacoom. Vaughn was a practical young man with both common sense and a wide range of skills, someone who would turn his hand to any job. When he had enough money to buy a scow, he went into business for himself, transporting cargo on Puget Sound.

In the early fifties, he settled a claim on Case Inlet where the town and bay were subsequently named for him. He took up

contracts to work in logging, construction, and mining until his skill as a marksman again was in demand. During the Indian Wars of 1856, he served in the 2nd Regiment of the Washington Volunteers, joining the company locally recruited in Steilacoom.

In the years following the war, Vaughn decided to try his luck in the gold fields of British Columbia, and he spent several years working a variety of small claims, returning periodically to Steilacoom. When he made money, he would use it to continue prospecting, but he never did make "the big strike." Instead, penniless, he returned permanently to Puget Sound.

Subsequently, an accidental gunshot would crippled Vaughn to the extent that he had to give up hard work, and he started a gunsmith shop in Steilacoom, later owning the Pioneer Livery Stable. Settling in Steilacoom, Vaughn was married in February, 1884, to Caroline Johnson who had come to the Northwest from Sweden. They resided in town until their deaths in the 1920s.

Vaughn was a central figure in one of the pockets of "frontier justice" that occurred in the early days, a lynching that he later described in his 1893 reminiscences for *The Tacoma Daily Ledger*. His account follows.

I was living five miles from Steilacoom on my ranch at the time of the murder of Andrew Byrd. Mr. Berry, who had bought part of my place, came one evening about sundown and told me that Byrd had been shot, and J. B. Bates was guilty of the dastardly deed. I tried to organize a company to go and hang Bates that night, but they would do nothing until morning.

We all went to town the next morning, and I called to see Byrd. He was still living, but was very weak. They would not allow me to speak to him, but to look at him strengthened the desire to see his slayer meet his just reward.

I left the room with tears in my eyes, for he had always been a good friend to me. I had bought cattle and lumber of him and had bought feed at his mill. I would sometimes tell him I did not have the money to pay for it, but he always said that made

no difference, that I could have a thousand dollars worth if I wanted it.

The more I thought of his untimely end, the worse I felt about it, and I started out to get men to help swing Bates up. I found twenty men who agreed to hang him if Byrd died, but I wanted to string him up then, for it was plain that his intentions were to kill Byrd on the spot.

Byrd died at ten o'clock that night, and the next morning we adjourned to an old stable that stood near the jail. We took a big piece of timber, which we used for a battering ram, and tried the jail door, but we could not gain access.

Steve Judson was then the sheriff, and he braced the door on the inside. Philip Keach had taken a new ax up with him, and Thomas Headly took the ax and began to chop the door, but the door was so full of spikes that nothing was made by that effort. I then took the ax and placed it on the bolt which locked the door and told Headly to strike the ax with a sledge hammer, which he did, and the bolt was cut in two. I took the casing for a pry and broke it open. The door fell out toward the men, and Philip Keach had his arm slightly hurt.

H. D. Montgomery made a rush to go in past the sheriff, but he pushed him back. I then caught the sheriff by the arm and dragged him out of the door, down the steps to the ground, and B. Dolbear got him by the arm, and we held him, and the others rushed inside the jail.

I was going to let the sheriff go, but the men told us to hold on to him and take him down town, for they meant to hang Bates. While we were at work trying to get into the jail, two lawyers were on hand, and they told us we would have to suffer for it. While we kept the sheriff down town, the other men strung Bates up. Bates was hung in the morning, and when I left town after dinner time, his body was still hanging. Thus ended the life of one of the cowardly dastardly fiends of crime which infested this coast a few years ago.

William D. Vaughn, Steilacoom, Washington. "Crossed the plains in 1851 after working as a hunter," *Tacoma Sunday Ledger*, February 17, 1893.

Volunteers Preserve History

A small museum doesn't have too many opportunities to build a photo collection. The Steilacoom Historical Association has been fortunate to have a core of volunteers who in past years have been helping to preserve our photos. Added to this, the generous donations of the townspeople have resulted in an extensive pictorial history of Steilacoom.

The beginning of our collection actually predated our Museum Association by several years. In 1963, as part of the 75th anniversary of Washington statehood, a citizens' committee was formed to select pictures of Steilacoom that could be enlarged and displayed in the Town Hall. The committee was headed by Clyde and Clenda Davidson. The donated pictures were carefully screened and selections made with most of the research being done by Clenda Davidson.

When the museum opened in 1970, the interest in collecting was continued with a photo display of the town and its people. At that time, Bonnie Stucker volunteered to care for the photos, a task she continued for many years. She recalls that the Association had about 150 pictures in the collection. Janda Volkmer, curator at that time, worked with Bonnie in building up the collection. In the following years, many additional photographic donations were made to the Association.

When the *Quarterly* editors published the book *Town on the Sound* in 1988, all of the photos were gathered together to select pictures for the publication. This task led to further cataloging of the collection. Following publication of the book, Carol Neufeld took care of the photos for several years, setting up a file, having negatives made, and using her librarian background to help in the preservation effort. Meanwhile, Curator Trish Laughlin was receiving many donations from the members.

In the spring of 1993, Orville Stout, publisher of the Steilacoom book and the *Quarterly*, volunteered to prepare a computerized master index of the Association's photo collection. This offer was the impetus for your editors to begin organizing and identifying the collection last summer.

Gary Reese was approached for suggestions regarding the historical divisions to be used for the photos. He suggested the following dates geared to the growth and development of the town and the Museum Association: 1854-1880, 1880-1914, 1914-1970, 1970-present.

The editors have taken on the cataloging of the first three divisions. The last period, the era of the Museum Association, will be done by Jackie Dock who has volunteered to join the project. We estimate that we will have over a thousand photos in our initial inventory.

The Editors: Bette Bradley and Joan Curtis

Waiting for Christmas

"Waiting for Christmas" was the theme for the recent annual Christmas membership dinner at the Steilacoom Community Center. Father Christmas, a life-sized soft sculpture fashioned by Jean Dyer Swanson, set the scene. The tables were festive with greens, lanterns and small Santas. Chairman Jan Jensen was assisted by Rosa Kreger, who catered the delicious dinner. Representatives from the Even Song Chamber sang a rendition of holiday music.

A brief meeting was held before the dinner. The following officers and board members were elected: Arline Brightman, President; Bill Smurro, Vice-President; and Jane Light and Marilyn Cullen, three-year board members. The Association expressed its appreciation to outgoing officials John Watson, Past President; Bob Volkmer, President; and Milt Davidson, board member. Margaret Merrill presented "The Lee Merrill Fellows" award to Don Rehburg and Mike McMullin for their work and dedication to the Association.

☆ The Orr Home will be closed during the winter months, opening again on April 9. The Museum will be closed during the month of January, opening in February on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 10-4 p.m.

☆ Membership applications are available at the Bair Store. Now may be the time to renew your membership or give a membership to a friend or neighbor.

Steilacoom Dines Out

Fine dining will again be featured in Steilacoom homes on Saturday, March 12 and 19. The special evening will enable host families to entertain fellow members using a specific theme. The popular event of 1992 has been extended to two evenings, enabling a choice and also the opportunity for a host couple to go to another home to enjoy someone else's hospitality.

The following ten couples have extended an invitation to dine at their homes: Sue and Bob LaFraugh, Hank and Pat Brown assisted by Pat and Oscar Jordan, Jon and Judie Davis assisted by Maria and Wolf Fletter, Bill and Pat Smurro, Jane and Ken Light assisted by Bernice Kieffer and Susan Small, and Joan and Boyd Curtis assisted by Sandy and Ed Strother. Two more homes are being sought to join in these exciting evenings. Please call Marianne Bull at 584-9412 for further information.

Invitations will be mailed to the membership three to four weeks before the dinners. Members will be able to choose the home and theme of their choice for an evening of fine dining and good company. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, socialize with your friends, and raise money for the Orr property preservation. The committee consists of Sue Davidson, Jenny Hollister, Sandy Strother, Marianne Bull and Joan Curtis.

In Memory

Of those who through the years have served the Association

Don Andrews	Robert Forrest
Katherine Buchanan	Alfred Fry
John Bulger	Laura Harris
Russell Doering	Robert Speers
Ray Fletcher	Frances Swanson

Marian Young

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 on the Orr property.

Happy New Year!



Steilacoom Historical
Museum Association
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Steilacoom Dock, 1920