

STEILACOOM HISTORICAL MUSEUM QUARTERLY

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Cider Bee Stirs Old Historic Town

by Bernice E. Newell

This is a cider story, or it started to be, but in the course of its wanderings it came across so many other things that all will have to be gathered and put through the press to come out a brief history of the Parent-Teacher's Association of Steilacoom; quaint old Steilacoom, where the history of the state of Washington really began, and where are still so many reminders of the early days that a visit there always sets one romancing at a great rate.

It all began—the cider part of it—in October, when one of the members of the association at the regular meeting read a story of what "Elizabeth did" in the small town she called home, on her return from college. There were so many things that the Steilacoom women were fired with enthusiasm, and they said, "We will all be Elizabeths. What shall we do?"

(Continued on page 4)

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Front page photo: Ladies of Steilacoom squeeze apples at a cider bee in November of 1915. With the exception of Mrs. Nellie Chelius, second from the left, the women have not been identified. Can you help us?

President's Letter



The first showers of the fall season have begun. The rain is splashing against the skylights of my study as I write this quarterly greeting to you. I am feeling nostalgic about my youth in northern California where the years consisted of two seasons—one dry and one "rainy." Our summer in Steilacoom has been warm and dry, and now, suddenly, the rain has begun. It is a time to remember and appreciate the enjoyable and successful SHMA events of the past few months.

We should all be pleased with the success of Salmon Bake this year. After a couple of years of declining attendance and bad-luck weather, this year's event was a glorious success. The weather was perfect, the attendance was considerably higher, and the revenues were healthy. I'm amazed at the skill of our crew of hard-working volunteers who know their job and do it well every year. Shelly Shellabarger directed the event so that it seemed like just a family gathering at Sunnyside.

Salmon Bake is, of course, a fund-raiser for SHMA. It helps pay for the increasing expenses of maintaining the SHMA properties. But, more than the revenue it generates, Salmon Bake is a cultural community event. Families plan reunions for that annual weekend celebration. Former residents of Steilacoom

plan a visit to their old town that Sunday. The traditional menu has become an icon itself, never to be seriously altered.

I am very pleased, also, with our success in raising funds for the new Museum. Our special solicitation of Board members and selected other friends and supporters netted more than \$20,000. This met our goal and set the stage for a general solicitation early next year.

The next big event will be the Apple Squeeze in early October. Some of us miss the fun of bringing our own apples to crush in the individual machines. The taste of freshly squeezed apple juice continues to be a highlight of the event, except the Health Department no longer allows us to bring apples from our own mini-orchards. I invite all of you to attend the "Squeeze." Marianne Bull is organizing the activities again this year, so I am confident that it will be enjoyable. Hopefully, with your support, it will also prove to be another successful revenue source.

In my next letter to you I will discuss our new efforts to increase the membership of the Association as well as our plans for publicity and publications. I'm optimistic that our efforts will build on the foundation established over the years by many selfless and dedicated members. We aim for continuous quality improvement of your Association.

Have a happy autumn. I hope to see many of you at the annual membership dinner in December.

Bob Edington



On the Street Where You Live

In 1846 four war ships of the British Navy plied the waters of Puget Sound, using the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Nisqually as their base. One ship, the *Cormorant*, captained by George T. Gordon, was the first naval steam vessel to be seen on the Sound. Surveyor Robert Inskip named Cormorant Passage and Gordon Point for the ship and its captain. Gordon Point is listed on the maritime maps, but locally known as Saltar's Point.

Cider Bee Stirs Old Historic Town

(from page 1)

"Well," said one, "there is just a lot of fruit and garden stuff going to waste in Steilacoom every year. What if we undertake to save it and sell it and put it into a fund for something the school needs, and that will be good for the whole town?"

So Mrs. Dailey said she would pull a sack of carrots, and Mrs. Bailey a bushel of beets, and Mrs. Taylor some of the plums that are usually wasted after she has made all the plum butter and spiced plums she can possibly store away, and Mrs. Brown agreed to save from waste some of the pears that are never half used, and they began the fund. They soon found out what they were working for, and went at it with even greater enthusiasm.

The object of their desires is a moving picture machine for the school—a real machine, the latest improved Edison make, that will give the children of the school and the grownups of the town some of the best picture films made, and add to the pleasure of the social evenings in the community center. Such a machine will cost \$125, but the women of Steilacoom are just as determined as the women of Marblehead once were, on a different matter. The real inspiration came when a member said "cider." The very thing! Cider became the rage. The children begged to help, and the boys dropped their soccer football on a grand Friday afternoon and started to gather the apples. They worked like beavers, picking up the windfalls in the historic old orchards that are the joy of everybody who visits Steilacoom.

Fancy a brilliant autumn morning, a tingle in the air, Thanksgiving coming on, pumpkins yellow among the corn and a throng of merry makers in Dr. Taylor's back yard making delicious cider for the holiday feast, while Hiram Tuttle, a grand opera star, turned the cider press or poured in the shining apples and sang convivial arias from one opera after another.

Apples from the old home of Governor Wallace, down by the waterfront, and apples from the Chambers homestead, trees planted in 1853, where all the holidays of those early days were spent in one grand riot of the holidays of neighborliness and sociability. The Eisenbeis orchard, 50 years old, contributed its quota of shining globes, which were carried in wheelbarrows and buckets, in tubs and baskets. Tony, the Shetland pony, did

his share, pulling his go-cart loaded with apples day after day, and they were all stored in the barn of Dr. Taylor's place.

Then on Saturday morning the fun began. There was a cider bee. All the members of the Parent-Teachers' Association were there, in the Taylor orchard, where the old cider press has operated on a small scale for the family use every year. Men and women and children, babies in their buggies and the teachers in the schools took part in the fray. The apples were poured into the hopper, while someone turned the wheel, and they sank through and were squeezed mightily until every drop of juice left them and ran into the yawning earthenware jars that stood to catch the mellow stream.

Other donations to the fund for the real moving picture machine have been pickles, preserves, squashes, cabbages, onions, peaches, and those who have no produce have contributed cash. The Steilacoom boys are little Trojans, and have given up their play and worked with a will, and there is now nearly \$60 in the treasury for the coveted prize, and everybody feels sure it will be ready for a Christmas present for the school and the town.

The association has 11 members and the school has 80 children, which shows a pretty fair average of parents to each child.

It was organized in April, and it has already established a domestic science and manual training department, and by its influence secured a piano for the school. The cooking is all done by electricity, and the three teachers are as helpful and as interested as the children and the parents. They say, right out loud, that they are going to get so many more appliances and fixings that the old schoolhouse, twenty years old if a day, will be utterly unfit to house them and a brand new rural school will have to be provided. Then watch the Steilacoom P.T.A. live up to its privileges!

Reprinted from the *Tacoma Tribune*, November 21, 1915

1853 Census —The first census of Pierce County revealed a population of 513 persons with 276 voters. The residency requirement was three months in the territory and 15 days in the county (for males 21 years old).



Time Was . . .

Steilacoom's Monuments

Previously we have featured two monuments of Steilacoom's past—the Pierce County Courthouse and the Methodist Episcopal Church Bell. This issue continues to recognize the monuments which have been placed in town in commemoration of significant buildings, events and roads.

Washington State Historical Road No. 1 Byrds Mill Road

Washington State Historical Road No. 1 was established by the Washington State Legislature under the sponsorship of Steilacoom's Senator John T. McCutcheon. The marker was one of forty-nine erected in the 1930s and early 1940s by the Department of Highways to record historical sites in Washington. It was replaced by a stone monument at the junction of Union Avenue and Lafayette Street in 1988 as a kick-off for Steilacoom's celebration of Washington State's Centennial. The monument reads:

Established by Thurston County Oregon Territory Legislature in 1852 and reestablished by Washington State Legislature in 1941.

This military road afforded the only route of escape from the Puyallup Valley to Fort Steilacoom during the Indian War of 1855, and to the Pioneers was a highway of great importance.

Along this route in 1864 there was built the Russian-American Telegraph Line which was proposed to extend to Europe by way of Bering Strait and Asia.

Washington's first road started as a trail, traveled by the Indian people and the Hudson's Bay Company employees. With the arrival of the U.S. Army at Fort Steilacoom and the increasing number of settlers, it was used more often. When the commissioners of Thurston County met in Olympia in December 1852, Arthur Denny offered a resolution "that we hereby appoint three men to view and blaze a road from the city of Steilacoom to the town of Seattle." The road was designed



Davidson Collection

This original wooden marker of Washington State Historical Road No. 1 was replaced by a stone marker in 1988.

to start at Steilacoom, following present Steilacoom Boulevard, going east over Fern Hill to Puyallup and then north to Seattle.

Locally the road became known as "Byrd's Mill Road" as it connected the settlement of Steilacoom with the grist and lumber mills built by Andrew Byrd at the north end of Steilacoom Lake, extending east into the Puyallup Valley. The road became an important escape route for isolated settlers in the Puyallup Valley at the outbreak of hostilities in the Indian War of 1855-1856.

Warnings of impending danger caused wide scale panic, and many left all their belongings as they hurried to the safety of Steilacoom and Fort Steilacoom over the road they had so often traveled leisurely with their oxen on the way to the mill. The same road that brought the refugees also carried the first American soldiers into battle against the Indian people. Gold prospectors used the route heading for the mines in eastern Washington.

The Russian-American Telegraph line was established and extended from California through Washington in 1864. It ran from Olympia across North Fort Lewis and down into Steilacoom where an office had been set up. From there the line followed the Military Road across the Puyallup River and down to the White River and to Seattle where service began on October 26, 1864.

As the communities of Puyallup and Sumner developed, there was no need to travel to the mill near Steilacoom. The road fell into disrepair. In 1939 a petition was sent to the legislature

"requesting the preservation of the old road's history by making it a state road...when it was one of the state's most important roads and the backbone of the roads of the Puget Sound area." By legislative action, Washington State Historical Road No. 1 was created, becoming part of the state highway system.

Formal dedications took place on October 8, 1941, at Steilacoom and Puyallup, with Governor Arthur B. Langlie presiding. Markers at each town were unveiled and small signs placed about a mile apart the length of the highway. The stone marker at Western State Hospital is one of the signs. Forty-seven years later on November 12, 1988, the wooden monument was replaced with the stone marker seen today.

Pioneer Fruit Still Flourishes

As the apples ripen on the trees around town one can think back to the early days of Steilacoom when the trees were first planted. Hugh Pattison, the first nurseryman of Pierce County, had large orchards near where Fern Hill is today. He advertised fruit trees for sale in the *Puget Sound Courier*, September 17, 1855. Early Steilacoom pioneers read the ad and purchased the young trees from Pattison. These included E. A. Light, T. M. Chambers, Abner Martin, John Rigney, Sherwood Bonney, Philip Keach, Sam McCaw, Miles J. West and Nathaniel Orr. Orr, who had had training in Oregon with Henderson Lewelling, Oregon's first nurseryman, later supplied many young fruit trees to Steilacoom's citizens.

The *Puget Sound Herald* of September 10, 1858, describes the young orchards in the Steilacoom area which had been recently planted. Among them Benjamin F. Dolbear's "...orchard of four hundred grafted trees, comprising a large variety, which give great promise; all of them having grown very rapidly, and being now in a flourishing condition. Some of them will probably bear next year." According to the *Herald*, Philip Keach had planted twenty acres with five hundred trees with the hope of planting 1,400 within the next year. Money seemed to be no concern as "Upon the orchard and surrounding ground Mr. Keach has already expended \$4,000, which is but a small proportion of the total amount he calculated to devote to its

improvement. All of this money, however, has not been expended for fruit trees alone; the tastes of the worthy proprietor leading him to add the ornamental to the useful on his farm, which he has embellished with a great variety of choice flowering plants and shrubs." Keach was later to sell this property, for the *Puget Sound Express* of August 21, 1873, has an advertisement describing the land bordering on the town with 800 bearing fruit trees containing a large amount of fruit.

Evidently, fruit trees were not only found in the orchards, but also on smaller pieces of land. The *Puget Sound Express* of October 29, 1874, carries the following ad: "House and Garden.—THE UNDERSIGNED OFFERS FOR sale a dwelling House and Fruit Garden and two lots, situated on Lafayette Street, City of Steilacoom. The garden contains 56 good, bearing apple trees, some pear, plum, and cherry trees, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, cabbages, potatoes, beans and onions. The produce of the garden to go to the buyer."

In addition to the orchards Nathaniel Orr planted around town, he had an extensive area devoted to fruit trees—apple, plum, cherry and pear—on his property at the corner of Main and Rainier. Many of the trees are still standing and bearing fruit today. Mrs. Ethel Scholes remembered that Mrs. Emma Orr, dressed in black, would make an annual inspection to the orchards near Saltar's Point in the early 1900s.

Old apple trees can still be viewed around town. They may be seen in the yards of Charles Keller, the Leech families, Bernice Scholes Kiefer, and many others. Such varieties as Waxen, Northern Spy, Wolf River, Hawley, Winter Banana, 20-Ounce and Greening are still producing.

A salute to those pioneers who planted the trees and cared for them that we may enjoy them today.

Apple Facts

- 🍏 Apple trees are members of the rose family.
- 🍏 The average American eats 15.7 pounds of apples annually.
- 🍏 Washington and New York states produce 1/5 of all the apples grown in the world.

First Wagon Train to Cross the Cascades - 1853

The first wagon train to come over the Cascade Mountains arrived in the Nisqually/Steilacoom area in the fall of 1853. The journey had started at Council Bluffs, Iowa, and on to St. Joseph, Missouri, in May. Along the way pioneers from Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky had joined the trek west, electing James Longmire wagon master.

The hearty pioneers with their wagons crossed the Missouri River on May 10, 1853, and followed the established Oregon Trail across the Rocky Mountains and westward into the Grande Ronde Valley. There they met Nelson Sargent of Olympia who had come to meet his family. He said a new road, a shorter route, had been built over the Cascade Mountains to the Puget Sound area. He agreed to guide them. However, unbeknownst to him the road crew had discontinued its work and only a short portion on the west side had been completed.

Sargent went ahead to scout the trail. The wagon train left the Oregon Trail and headed north to Fort Walla Walla. They made a flatboat out of driftwood and ferried their goods across the Columbia River. A marker dedicated on October 8, 1913, by the Washington State Historical Society tells succinctly the trials experienced by that first wagon train.

The travelers, led by James Longmire, left Ft. Walla Walla and reached the Cascade foothills *September 15, 1853. While seeking a way through the forest, brush and rocky lands, the party forded the Naches River 68 times. The Greenwater River 16 times, and the White River seven times.*

At the summit, they reached a treacherous cliff which today is know as Summit Hill. A sheer drop of 30 feet, flanked by steep cliffs looming skyward, the pioneers were faced with the choice of going back or fighting their way down the precipitous slope.

The group lowered their 36 wagons by rope. Two wagons were lost. Horses were led down through a circuitous slit in the wall of the mountains.

When the wagon train arrived at Clover Creek on the Nisqually Plain, the party had completed a trip as difficult as any group of pioneers who had come west, and they had the distinction of being the first group to come directly across the Cascade Mountains into the Puget Sound country. Some families

settled on the prairie, while others established the towns of Sumner and Puyallup. The E. A. Light, Peter Judson, and William Downey families came to Steilacoom and quickly took leadership roles in the new town. Descendants Bruce Judson and Ken Light and his sister Joyce LaBelle, present citizens of Steilacoom, have a proud and rich heritage.

Salmagundi

- ☆ The Apple Squeeze is one week early this year, which is just right, with the good warm weather the NW has had. Sunday, October 5 is the day with all the usual activities, good food, cider, and entertainment. Don't miss the fun!!!
 - ☆ The Pierce County Heritage Foundation sponsored a special exhibit at the Puyallup Fair. Cities and historical organizations took part in depicting the history of the county during the past 150 years. Shelly Shellabarger set up Steilacoom's display and members Pat and Brad Randall, George Phillips, Joan and Boyd Curtis, Marcia and Leo Smith, Joan Shalikashvili, and Ann and Bob Edington worked at the booth.
 - ☆ The Old-fashioned Summer Social was a big success, according to chair Pat Randall. A warm summer day and an enthusiastic group played croquet, checkers, and bocce ball while enjoying a box lunch with cookies and watermelon for desert. Brad and Pat had made special buttons for the event. Thanks to committee members Sue Johns, Barb Kurtz, Sherry Pasquier, and Gloria Wing.
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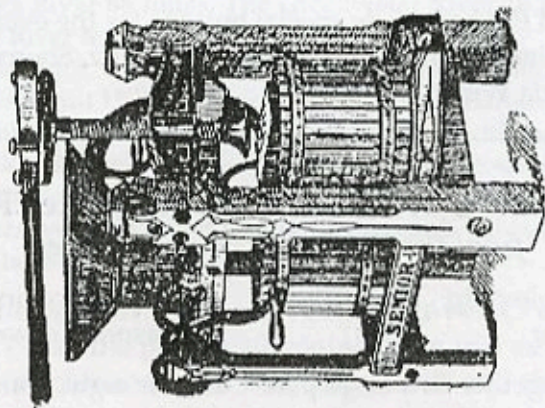
The Famous Steilacoom Apple Butter Recipe *from the Kitchen of Nancy Hellyer*

14 cups apple pulp
7 cups sugar

4 teaspoons cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cloves

Mix well together in a large pan. Cook for eight hours in a 250 degree oven, stirring occasionally.

Steilacoom Apple Squeeze



Sunday, October 5



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