The Steilacoom Quilt had its origin in a small quilting class that expanded a personal interest into a Bicentennial project for the town. In 1974, the Steilacoom Community Club sponsored classes for persons interested in quilting and, with the nation's Bicentennial observance approaching, several of the women thought about
making an historical quilt. There was considerable interest and discussion of whether to make it depict national, state or local events. The decision was made to limit it to the history of Steilacoom.

In September, a small group got together to discuss the quilting project. During the Bicentennial, many quilts were made throughout the country and were featured in newspapers and magazines. At that time there were no guidelines, so the group made their own. A list of possible subjects was made up. During the fall, the material and colors for the background blocks were chosen. They also decided to use an old fashioned calico print in dark green for connecting strips, edges and backing—a logical choice to represent the Evergreen State. The size of the blocks had to be chosen. Someone suggested that they be large enough to permit detail. Since 36” material was used, 18” was selected to allow four blocks from a yard of goods. When contact was made with quilting classes and other townspeople, thirty women volunteered to make blocks. This would, indeed, be a large quilt.

The procedure for making the Steilacoom Quilt differed from most historical quilts. The usual method was for one or a few to design the blocks; then a select group of quilters would make the blocks, put it together and quilt it. The Steilacoom Quilt, however, had no single, master design. Instead, a list of subjects was made up and each of the Steilacoom women chose her subject from the list and was given a background block. It was up to her to design and make her block in whatever way was best for her. Some enlisted friends or members of the family to help in the designing. The women’s ages ranged from a high school student to senior citizens. Their ability varied from accomplished needlecrafters to some doing their first embroidery—each eager to have a part in this quilt which was to be a permanent part of Steilacoom’s historical heritage.

Plans were finalized in December, 1974. The time schedule called for the blocks to be finished by September, 1975, allowing nine
months for quilting and completing the project by July, 1976. The last block did not come in until late winter, 1976. Mary Speers and Clyda Gibson worked long hours to put the blocks together, attach the batt and the backing and baste it ready for quilting. The quilt was only about one-third quilted when Bicentennial time came; nevertheless, it was hung in the Town Hall for display with considerable pride.

Space was not immediately available to finish the quilting and by the time quilting began again, many were involved in other projects and the quilting was finished by a faithful few.

Twenty-seven of the blocks have a blue background—these are the historical blocks. The remaining three blocks are special designs on a white background. The first, in the center of the top row, is the beautifully embroidered logo of the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association done by Trish Laughlin. In the lower right hand corner is the second, the Washington State design for the nation’s Bicentennial, appliquéd and embroidered by Nellie Heimbecker. In the lower left hand corner is the third white block which depicts the national official Bicentennial design. Special permission was obtained to use this design and Pauline Hirschbeel chose this for her block. Pauline was not well and had been in and out of the hospital. She did finish the block just before her last hospital stay. In her memory, her friend, Evelyn Flemming, embroidered her name in black on the corner of the block.

A great deal of research went into the historic background of the various subjects. Carol Rideout made a trip to a museum in British Columbia as well as to local museums before choosing the Hudson Bay steamer The Beaver to depict 50 years of steamer travel past Steilacoom.

Fabric shops were haunted to try to find just the right fabric, print, and/or color to produce the desired effect. Some of the blocks have only a building on them so the quilters quilted in clouds, trees, shrubs, walks, and/or buildings.

The ways of depicting buildings were as varied as the persons making the blocks. Clyda Gibson used a pink and white striped material to fashion the board and batten Judson House which was pink with white trim. The clapboards on the Catholic Church were embroidered by Edna Flowers. Midge Bromgard hand-whipped on twill tape overlapping to resemble the clapboards on the Keach House. Minnie Tate machine-tucked material for the same effect on her house.

Two blocks had to be done over. Carole Tinsley’s finished block was accidently tossed into the washer with a load of blue jeans. A green felt tip pen was laid in the work basket where Edna Dyer
had her block, leaving a green smudge "too low to be covered as a cloud and too high for a mountain". She removed what had already been done and put it on another background piece. When persons had to turn over their block to be finished by another, it was hard. This happened on the railroad depot—a shadow piece and a light piece were interchanged, which does not make the design as clear as originally planned.

Fifty women helped in some way to make, put together and quilt this historic piece. Behind them are many friends and relatives who helped with designs and finding materials. Much of the work was done independently. The small steering committee coordinated the different steps. Never was there a meeting of all who worked on it. Individually or collectively, it was truly a community project.

After the Bicentennial, the ladies who had worked on the quilt asked the Historical Museum Association to be guardians of the quilt, to care for it through its completion and to assume responsibility for its hanging for the people of Steilacoom. The Quilt will be placed in its permanent home in the Old Town Hall and viewed by the public, for the first time, at the Quilt Show on November 21.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The work volunteerism is not in the dictionary but it seems to be understood and it certainly makes many things go in Steilacoom. If we add to the word volunteer (a word that is in the dictionary) the suffix "ism", we have a noun with action.

Steilacoom does seem to understand the latter combination. Our town is not so large we have lost the realization that Steilacoom is us. We, however, need to remind ourselves that the Museum is one of Steilacoom's organizations that runs on volunteerism. It is essential in providing the facilities we want in the kind of community we want.

Whatever the individual disposition, there is still much work to be done and/or the load distributed over more of our members on our "event" functions and on the more continuing bases. We need offers of help by members who understand the "ism" suffix. We need help for curators and docents in the Orr Home and the Museum; and we need people to inventory our property and many types of skills to help maintain our real estate. And of course we need volunteers to make things go at our events such as the Apple Squeeze, the Annual Dinner, the Salmon Bake and the Ad Hoc style shows, lectures, quilts shows, etc.

OK, volunteers let's practice volunteerism.

Allen P. Forsyth
THE QUILT SHOW

The Historical Association’s Quilt Show and Thanksgiving at the Orr Home will be Saturday, November 21, from 10-4. The $2.00 ticket includes the Quilt Show at the Town Hall and entry to the Orr Home for refreshments.

This will be the first public showing of the completed Steilacoom Historical Bicentennial Quilt in its new home at the Town Hall.

Over 50 quilts will be displayed in three categories; Historical, Antique (fancy and utility), and Contemporary or Modern. Members or friends of the Association who have a quilt we could display please call Co-Chairmen Esther Spreen, 588-2632 or Wendy Herd, 584-0462 by November 14.

The Association is printing a book on the Bicentennial Quilt and a commemorative post card to be sold at the Quilt Show.

APPLE SQUEEZE—1981

The shorter days, the ripening of apples and the coolness of the air herald the coming of fall. The cooking of apple butter and the gearing up of the cider presses also indicate that special time of year. Fall and the Steilacoom Apple Squeeze are synonymous.

Squeezing will begin at 10 a.m. on Sunday, October 18 and continue until 4 p.m. Over 20 presses will be in operation—including Harold Hellyer’s which will be used to demonstrate the art of apple pressing for those who don’t have their own apples.

Everyone is invited to bring their apples and transform them into delicious cider. The best cider is made from a blend of apples. Old cider-makers aimed for a good balance between acidity and sweetness for the perfect combination. Pears may be blended with the apples to make an excellent cider.

The traditional apple “goodies” will be available for sale including apple butter on slices of freshly baked bread, cold and hot mulled cider by the glass, cider by the gallon, coffee, donuts, candied apples, apple pie and ice cream.

Added attractions will be horse-drawn carriage rides for the children and apple identification for those with unknown varieties of apples.

Additional apples will be needed for the making of cider which will be sold by the gallon. If you have apples which can be donated, please call Lynn Scholes, 588-8115. These should be picked up the week before the squeeze. Volunteers will be needed to run the presses, sell foodstuffs, bake bread or make apple butter. Call Allen Forsyth, 582-0986, and tell him you believe in volunteerism.
HOT TIME IN THE TOWN

The recent Street Fair, held in August, brought to mind former celebrations of the Town. Between 1951 and 1954, four centennials, were held in Steilacoom, paying tribute to the past. The 1952 celebration honored the descendents of the pioneer families and 100 hundred years of continuous United States Postal Service. The following Tacoma News Tribune article of August 14, 1952 described the festivities of that year.

"STEILACOOM (Special)—Centennial fever burns brightly as townsfolk prepare for the most ambitious birthday blowout in the history of this normally quiet little community.

Folks will start huffing and puffing at those Centennial birthday candles when the grand parade bursts forth in a splash of color and sound at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

The last spark won’t be snuffed out until tired, but happy participants have stuffed themselves with barbecued salmon and head for home Sunday night.

In the interim, Steilacoom will once again boast the pre-eminent title it held in bygone days: No 1 city in Pierce County.

Big Parade Scheduled

Saturday morning’s grand parade promises to be the biggest stunt Steilacoom has pulled since it outsmarted Olympia, Whidbey Island and that young upstart, Seattle, back in 1853 and got the first Protestant church north of the Columbia River.

Heading the marchers down bunting and pennant-lined streets will be Mayor Charles R. Buchanan and two of the town’s oldest and most revered citizens, Glenn Orr, 72, and Frank Runquist, 77. Both hail from families that came to Steilacoom back in the days when Lafayette Balch ruled the roost, and nearby Indians and soldiers from Ft. Steilacoom walked the town’s plank sidewalks on Saturday afternoons.

There will be gay floats (including one from the Tacoma Centennial Association), bands headed by high-stepping majorettes, disciplined drum and bugle corps marchers, and the equestrian might of the Pierce County Sheriff’s Posse.

Chowder Luncheon

When the clomp-clomp of the last horse has died away, everyone will be invited to a clam chowder luncheon in the town square.

The afternoon show will include tug o’wars by district firemen, a fiddlers’ contest, a tug o’war between married and single men, and a hog-calling contest for the women.

An Old-Timers Corner will provide a resting place for oldsters who want to swap yarns about the good old days.

For the historically minded there will be conducted tours of 25
Steilacoom landmarks and a hobby show in the library.

Saturday evening there will be square dancing on the town’s new tennis court.

Pace of the birthday celebration will slow somewhat Sunday morning when Steilacoom’s cherished memorial bell peals its message to churchgoers, calling them to come and honor the establishment of that first Protestant church in 1853.

The bell that rings in clarion tones will be the same one that called worshipers to hear that first frontier pastor, the Reverend John F. DeVore.

**Original Melodeon**

The original melodeon used in Mr. DeVore’s church will be played again at the service, courtesy The Washington State Historical Society.

Speeches will be made by Chapin Foster of the Historical Society, Dr. Clayton Rice of the Northwest Council of Churches, and the Reverend George Schubert of Oberlin Congregational Church.

After paying homage to one of Washington’s fondest historical memories, folks will drift out to Salter’s Point for a barbecued salmon dinner.

A parade of decorated boats—led by the MS James V. Bennett of McNeil Island—will journey to the point for the afternoon show: Daredevil races by the Tacoma Outboard Racing Association and demonstrations by Tacoma area Sea Scouts.”

(Editors’ Note: Pictures of the activities of the centennial celebrations would add to the Association’s picture collection. Please contact Joan Curtis, 584-8623, if you have pictures to donate or originals from which prints could be made.)

**ACQUISITIONS**

Marjorie Johnson has donated a unique bread crumber, apparently a commercial model. It was patented in 1898 and manufactured by the Goodell Co., Antrim, N.H.

Two braided rugs, given by Trish Laughlin, may be seen in the dining room of the Orr Home. The newly finished fir floor provides a perfect background for the rugs previously owned by Trish’s parents.

A wooden Bissel carpet sweeper, which is pictured in the 1897 Sears Catalogue, was recently given to the Association by Mike Wikstrom.

A 110 year-old cross-cut saw has been placed in the Museum by Karl E. Frederick. According to him, the vintage tool was used in building many pioneer homes in Washington Territory.
The Association wishes to thank Bertha Orr for her donation to further the restoration of the Orr Home. The money will be used toward caning the recently refinished dining room chairs.

Welcome to our new treasurer, Dorothy Essex. Dorothy, associated with North Pacific Bank, steps into the position vacated by Kathy Lykken who was promoted. Thank you, Kathy, for your conscientious work as treasurer. Good luck on your new job.

We don’t usually associate such stalwarts as Allen Forsyth, Harold Hellyer and Lynn Scholes with the cosmetic department of a major department store. But each of them spent two days in that heady atmosphere in Nordstrom’s at Northgate where they demonstrated cider making during the store’s recent Indian Summer Festival and publicized the forthcoming Apple Squeeze. Nancy Hellyer, who accompanied her husband, was much more at home than the men.

The Bair Drug & Hardware is offering a delightful new Steilacoom Sketch Book by Jeannette Gaul. The Gaul family are longtime town residents and Jeannette’s Sketch Book is a nice memory. A talented artist, Jeannette drew the sketches to be used for water colors or as a guide for other artists to copy and finish as they choose. Her book is also a souvenir, a gift for a friend, or for a child to color and learn some Steilacoom history.

Congratulations to Aurora and Arthur Toth on a newly painted exterior to their home, the former Oberlin Congregational Church. The color, Glen Gray, is almost identical to the original paint Arthur uncovered during restoration.

For the sports-minded person the Bair Drug and Hardware Store will be open after the home games of the Steilacoom High School for light refreshments. Join your neighbors for an ice cream cone or a Green River.


Bonney’s History of Pierce County continues to be a popular item. The books are an excellent gift for those historically inclined or those with roots in the early days of Washington Territory. Call Lynn Scholes at 588-8115 for further information.
AN INVITATION TO A TEA

Docents of the Museum and the Orr Home will be honored at a tea on Saturday, October 24 at 2 p.m. at the Town Hall. This will be an opportunity to pay tribute to all those who work so diligently and faithfully through the year. Docents, currently serving, and those who have “retired” are invited to attend. Members who may be interested in learning about the program are welcome. To make reservations and for further information contact Janda Volkmer, 584-5114 or Marian Young, 588-0977.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

STEILACOOM APPLE SQUEEZE ........................................ Oct. 18
TEA FOR DOCENTS .............................................. Oct. 24
ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING ............................ Nov. 12
QUILT SHOW .................................................. Nov. 21
ANNUAL DINNER AND MEETING ...................... Dec. 5

NO TIME TO READ—We have often heard people urge as a reason for not taking a paper, that they “have no time to read it.” Such a remark has to us always appeared supremely foolish. What man but wishes to be kept informed as to events transpiring in the world; and who certainly can spare time from the hours generally spent in listening to idle gossip. Take the papers, and we assure you that, on your arrival home from the Post Office or from town, it will be welcome to your family and afford you satisfaction to see the interest they take in it. Your wife will have no desire to “run over” to her neighbor’s for a bit of scandal. Your girls will always find something to interest and instruct. The boys will come in for their share; and your friend, when he calls, will form a good opinion of your family upon seeing a well selected file of newspapers in your house. Take the papers, by all means, and you will never have cause to regret the small amount they may cost you, for ere long you will ascertain them to be a source of profits.

Puget Sound Herald, March 12, 1858

Andrew Holderreed, police chaplain with the Tacoma Police Department, is helping the Steilacoom Garden Club to graft old fruit scions onto a root stock at the Pioneer Orchard Park and Orr Orchard. Among the many apple scions are the following: Irish Peach, Cox’s Orange Pippin, Golden Russett, Spitzenberg, Yellow Waxen, 20 oz. Pippin, Northern Spy and Rhode Island Greening. The Sweet Summer Paradise, the historic apple tree in the Orr Orchard, has presented a challenge as there is little new wood to use for grafting.
Charles Wren, described by historians variously as "one of the most dangerous men in the (Washington) territory" and a "ruffian and a bully" literally lived in the eye of the hurricane during the earliest days of Steilacoom and Pierce County.

Memories of Wren were recently revived when the Museum Association became the recipient of his citizenship papers, granted on February 6, 1854, by the District Court which met in Steilacoom, then the seat of Pierce county government. This prized possession, given by Robert Stuber of Lacey, is now on display in the Museum.

The hand-written document is signed by G.B.C. Bowlin, clerk of the court. This may have been the first U.S. citizenship to be granted in newly-formed Washington Territory. Bowlin noted at the bottom of the document "As there is no official seal as yet provided, I hereto affix the adopted seal." It was a hand-drawn scalloped circle with the initials U.S.D.C. inscribed within it.

The new citizen prospered and by 1858 was one of the wealthiest men in the county and reputed to be worth $50,000. In 1861 he loaned the Steilacoom Masonic lodge three-sevenths of the sum needed to build its new lodge, described as "an imposing building for its time and town." Presumably he collected the three percent per month interest that he was accustomed to charge. In 1864 he was associated with such leading citizens as Sam McCaw, Philip Keach and E.R. Rogers in incorporating the Puget Sound & Columbia River Railroad Company.

The source of his wealth was highly suspect and according to Charles Prosch in his Reminiscences of Washington Territory was due to "...the remarkable breeding quality of his cows. Starting originally with two or three cows, in a very short five years he had a larger herd of cattle than any of his neighbors. While the cows of his neighbors came up minus calves, in the breeding season, Wren's prolific cows were reported to have two or three calves each."

His neighbors were convinced that Wren's active lariat and hot branding iron had a lot more to do with the increase of his herd than the fecundity of his cows. But his reputation as a bully and the power of his money combined to suppress any forceful action. Over a 20-year period he came before various courts in matters which appeared to have stemmed from his unorthodox stock raising methods. Almost invariably, the courts found for him.

He first appears, as a plaintiff, on February 8, 1849, in the first suit to be heard by newly-appointed Judge Thomas M. Chambers, first justice of the peace in Pierce county.

Wren claimed John and Walter Ross had broken into his home,
committed assault and battery and threatened to kill him. Chambers entered judgments of $10 and $30.12½ against the Rosses. Although the record does not state, it is probable that the two men were early victims of Wren’s branding iron.

Two years later Ross appeared in one of the first civil cases to reach the Territorial Supreme Court. The litigation involved J.R. Meeker, brother of Ezra Meeker. Wren had sued to collect on a promissory note. Meeker countersued, alleging that Wren had slaughtered, sold and consumer “for his own benefit” 23 head of cattle worth $70 per head. Meeker’s suit was dismissed on a point of law, though Wren’s reputation was such that Meeker probably had a valid claim.

Wren’s first significant mention in history was in May, 1849, when Leander C. Wallace was killed by Snoqualmie and Skewahamish Indians attacking Fort Nisqually.

According to Walter Ross, clerk at the fort, Wren was directly responsible for the firing on both sides that resulted in the death of Wallace, an American.

Ross wrote that Wren had seized an Indian’s gun and struck a chief in the head with its butt. Another Indian, incensed by this act, fired the first shot and the battle was on. Wallace, caught outside the stockade, fell.

The death of an American led directly to the establishment of Fort Steilacoom a few months later with the arrival of Captain Bennett Hill and M Company of the First Artillery Regiment in August, 1849.

A few years later at the height of the 1855-56 Indian Wars, Wren became the center of a cause celebree. He and other former Hudson’s Bay Company employees who had married women with Indian blood were suspected of aiding the natives.

Early in March, 1860, 20 such supposed sympathizers, including Wren were directed to report to Steilacoom to remove them from contact with the hostiles. However, Wren and several others returned to their claims. Five of the returnees, including Wren, were then taken to Fort Steilacoom and Colonel Silas Casey, commander, was ordered to keep them in close confinement. Governor Isaac I. Stevens, who had directe the confinement, wrote to Casey that “The conduct of ... Wren has been especially bad.”

On April 2, John M. Chapman, one of Steilacoom’s founders, informed the governor that W.H. Wallace and Frank Clark, Steilacoom lawyers, were seeking a writ of habeas corpus to free the prisoners.

To circumvent this action and remove Wren from the jurisdiction of the civil courts, Governor Stevens declared martial law in Pierce county. This act ultimately resulted in the arrest of the Chief Justice
of the territory and generated a controversy that continued for many years.

Before Wren could be tried by court martial, the governor's proclamation was rescinded and Wren was turned over to civil authorities. He was discharged after a hearing before the U.S. commissioner at Steilacoom.

This was not the last of Wren's court appearances. In 1864 he swore a complaint that Charles McDaniel and others had by "force of arms" stolen between two and three thousand dollars from him. A grand jury dismissed the charges.

A few years before Wren and McDaniel had wagered heavily on several horse races. The *Puget Sound Herald* reported "We learn that on Sunday next, the 21st inst., there will be a race between Charley Wren's sorrel colt "Fair Rosamond" and Charley McDaniel's sorrel horse, for $200 aside, single dash of half a mile, catch weights. Much sport is expected."

McDaniel's horse won by two lengths in 53 seconds carrying 132 pounds. The rivals then scheduled a second race with another $200 bet, though Wren was to race an Oregon colt this time. The newspaper failed to report the results.

This activity may have resulted in hard feelings and led to Wren's charges against McDaniel.

According to Herbert Hunt's *Washington, West of the Cascades,* McDaniel was responsible for departure of Wren forever from the territory. Wren's and McDaniel's illegal activities were frequently directed against each other. McDaniel and his friends tied Wren to a tree and horswhipped him. They then suggested he leave the country. Wren went to Victoria where he was again employed by the Hudson's Bay Company until his death in 1873 at the age of 45.

(In 1870 McDaniel was to be waylaid by Steilacoom vigilantes near Gravelly Lake and subsequently shot and killed when he fled from a Steilacoom saloon where he had taken refuge from the mob.)