Occurrences

The Journal of Northwest History

FORT NISQUALLY FOUNDATION

Volume XXXVI • Number 3 • Fall-Winter 2018

$5.00

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Cover photo:
Volunteer living historian Jim Weatherford gets a refreshing drink during 2017's soggy yet spirited "19th Century Christmas" at Fort Nisqually Living History Museum. Photo credit: Sydney Paulson.

FORT NISQUALLY FOUNDATION

ISSN #1520-5177
This magazine is published by the Fort Nisqually Foundation

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***Occurrences* is a benefit of membership for Fort Nisqually Foundation Members. Subscription-only rates are available on our website or in Fort Nisqually's Museum Store. Back issues are available upon request at the regular issue price plus tax and postage if necessary.**

The Editor welcomes comments and article submissions dealing with early Washington State history. Preference will be given to content related to the Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Nisqually and regional themes. Authors are responsible for the content and accuracy of their articles, and will be credited.

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Editor's Note:

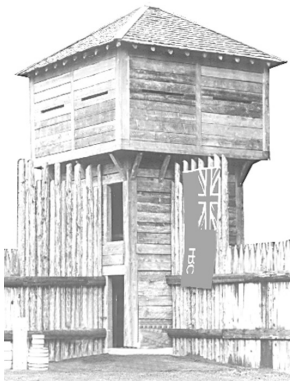
The theme of this issue is "cycles" as we see two young historians come into their own, an update from the museum once again illustrating how far we've come in professionalism, and how interest in the past continues to resonate with current projects, such as the Master Plan update for Swan Creek Park underway in 2018. What will you discover this cycle?

I hope you enjoy this issue, and please don't hesitate to drop me a line in the New Year!

~ The editor

Fort Foundation News

Greetings from the Fort Nisqually Foundation!



Fall has quickly given way to winter and 2018 is coming to a close. I'm still asking myself how it came to be December already. The Fort Nisqually Foundation board has been working diligently to wrap up 2018 books and prepare for 2019 and what it will hold.

Board News

We are spending a lot of our time as of late evaluating our long range goals and plans and how to best support Fort Nisqually Living History Museum as well as finding more ways to increase member benefits. We're also preparing to begin a capital campaign to deal with the Fort's aging Clerk's House and Sale Shop. It's a tall order!

I want to take a moment to welcome our newest board member Annika Bunney. Annika has been a long time Fort volunteer. You probably know her by her amazing bread baked in the Fort's outside bake oven at events. If you see her around thank her for joining the board and helping fundraise for the Foundation.

A Gift for the Future

As many of you know, former Board President Glenn Sutt passed away unexpectedly last year. His legacy will be with us in many ways for years to come. He thoughtfully included Fort Nisqually in his will. Thanks to his extremely generous gift of more than $450,000, the Foundation has established a new endowment named the Glenn Sutt Legacy to Fort Nisqually. This endowment is in addition to the Dr. Jerry Ramsey and Elaine Purdue Ramsey Fund to Fort Nisqually established in 1999.

These endowments are permanently invested funds that give us interest income to support the Foundation. We use these funds in framing our annual budget to fund preservation and programs of Fort Nisqually Living History Museum. Endowments give a stable income stream ensuring that this little museum we love remains a vital part of this community for generations to come. If you would like to donate to one of these funds or would like to include the Foundation in your estate planning please contact us at info@fortnisquallyfoundation.org. Additional information on planned giving will be available on our website in 2019.

New Fundraiser for 2019

We have a couple of changes coming for 2019. Our annual summer fundraiser Friday at the Fort is on hiatus for 2019. So what will we will be doing for a fundraiser? We will be focusing on a new fundraising opportunity where you eat out and support the Foundation at the same time. We are looking at dates in the fall. Although we are still in the planning stages of this event, I already know the best way for you to support us! Grab your friends and family and go out to dinner that night at one of our partner restaurants. Pretty simple. We will provide more details here in the next issue so keep your eyes open for updates.

Membership Event with a new Twist

Fun and Games at Annual Membership Meeting! Mark your calendars for Tuesday, **February 26, 2019**. We will be holding our annual report to the membership meeting. This is where the Foundation board reports back to you on all we have done on your behalf for Fort Nisqually LHM. This year, we are switching things up a bit and it won't be your typical report delivery. Much more fun, if you ask me. Pizza and (root) beer are the order of the day. Plan on audience involvement, a little trivia and games, and of course, prizes. Kids are welcome to participate, they're members too! Please do join us. It is our chance to meet you or catch up with you and an opportunity to acknowledge your commitment to the Foundation.

Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

The annual Burns Volunteer Appreciation dinner is scheduled for Saturday, January 19th. The Foundation partners with the museum for this event and hosts a silent auction and small live auction. We are looking for donations and you will be given a donation receipt for anything you give. Not sure what you can donate? Experience items, reenacting items (good condition, please), handmade items (knit muffatees, hats, sewn items), forged items, woven sashes, homemade items (baked goods, honey), artwork. If you have something to donate email us at info@fortnisquallyfoundation.org. All proceeds from the auctions go to support the work of the Fort guilds.

As we say good-bye to fall and welcome the change of seasons to winter, every member of the Fort Nisqually Foundation board wishes you and yours health and happiness this New Year!

Warmest regards,

Dana Repp,
Fort Nisqually Foundation, President

Museum Update

Fort Nisqually Living History Museum has a busy autumn

By FNLHM staff

Fort Nisqually Living History Museum had a very busy autumn season in 2018. Following a very successful Candlelight Tour, where the museum hosted over 1,100 guests, we began cleaning and preparing the museum for two other significant events. The first of these was the Western Regional Association for Living History, Farms, and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) Conference, hosted by the museum November 1-4, 2018. The conference had forty-seven registered attendees from the states of Washington, Oregon, California, and Montana. The theme for this conference was "Breaking the Mold: New Interpretation for New Audiences." During the conference, attendees heard sessions on museum best practices, participated in hands-on workshops to further their own skills, and visited area museums during field trips to gain a sense of what the local museum community has to offer. During the keynote address, Lath Carlson, Executive Director for the Living Computers Museum in Seattle, challenged attendees to provide the type of experience that transforms museum users to museum champions and stewards. By all indications, the attendees loved their experience at the conference and talk of the Fort hosting a national ALHFAM conference sometime in the future has been heard.

The next big event for the museum was the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Accreditation Site Visit. In 2013, Fort Nisqually took its first steps in becoming accredited by taking the Pledge of Excellence. This effort was renewed in 2016 as staff completed the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) Standards and Excellence Program. The bid for accreditation was furthered when the Core Documents were verified by AAM in 2017 and museum staff completed the Self Study in early 2018. All of this culminated in the final step, the Accreditation Site Visit, where a visiting committee comes in to review all the museum's operating practices and professional partnerships. It is no small task for a smaller museum to be accredited and the staff, volunteers and Fort Nisqually Foundation worked diligently to put our best foot forward in the process.

Our final event of the year, Christmas Regale, hosted over 900 guests! As winter approaches, we are looking forward to the end of a successful 2018. Thanks again to our staff and volunteers who make it all possible.

We'll see you in 2019!

Rick Keller-Scholz as Dr. Tolmie leads the toasts at the Yule Log at Christmas Regale 2018.

Research Revealed

Vernacular Variations on a French Theme: *Poteaux sur Sole* Versus *Poteaux en Terre* Architecture

By Josiah Pollock ~ Contributor

Fort Nisqually granary, from the back. Photo by Sydney Paulson, courtesy Fort Nisqually Living History Museum.

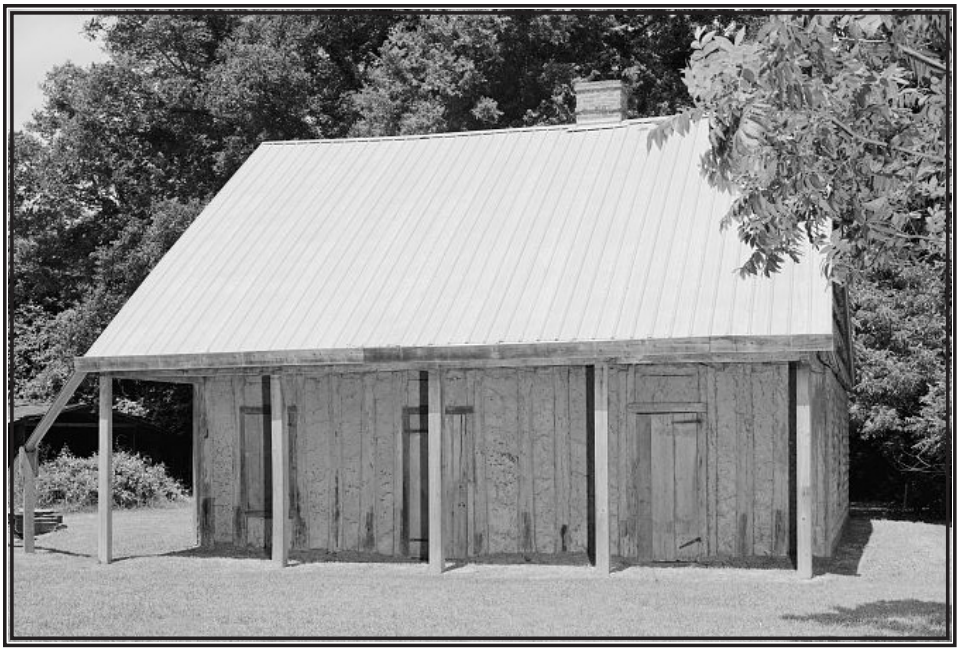
When French colonists arrived in the New World in 1608 they brought with them the vernacular styles of architecture which were commonly used in France. These early French styles morphed into something new as the influence of the New World effected how the architecture was carried out. Access to materials in North America was unrivaled in Europe, and in northern regions, architecture reflected the timbered surroundings as buildings could be built entirely from wood. In the southern regions of the United States (and more distinctly French – as in Louisiana) the architecture epitomized the surrounding regions. Here, more traditional earthfast buildings were seen as the regions were not as wood-rich and required another material for infill, usually brick and stone, or the *bousillage* fashion, a type of wattle and daub. Two distinctly French styles, *poteaux en terre* and *poteaux sur sole*, came into their own in the New World. With the same ancestry, both of these styles are very similar in the wood frame construction process, but differences in material make for varied use and durability.

Two buildings represent both these styles of French architecture in the 19th century. Interestingly enough, both buildings take claim as the longest standing structure for their region. These two buildings are the Granary at Fort Nisqually Living History Museum in Washington State and the Badin-Roque House at Cane River National Heritage Area in Louisiana.

The older of the two structures is the Badin-Roque House, built in the *poteaux en terre* style; the more traditional of the two styles. The house was built around 1820 by Creoles and is the only construction of this style still standing in Louisiana.[1] The house served as a private dwelling and then was sold twice to the local parish where it became part of a convent. Today it is on the National Register of Historic Places and is part of the Cane River National Heritage Area. The structure of the house is simple but appears unstable, a small box with evenly spaced windows and a central

doorway makes up the lower portion of the house. A very large roof which sits halfway on the house and halfway in front, gives the house a lopsided appearance. The size of the gabled roof, which is larger than the house, makes the structure look unstable and insecure under the weight of the roof, five slim posts under the overhang do not satisfy the viewer's questions on the strength of the structure holding up the roof. Materials used in construction are visible due to the nature of the vernacular architecture. In the case of the roof, the materials are partially to blame for the gigantic appearance. Each gabled end is clad in wooden shingles, while the rest of the structure is *bousillage*, except for the exterior walls which flank the front of the house – they have wooden siding, probably a later addition to the structure to protect the *bousillage*.

To build in the *poteaux en terre* ("post in earth") style, wood is squared by notching the side of a fallen tree, then a broad axe is used to cut off the notched wood. This creates a flat side and the carpenter repeats the process until every side of the tree is squared. This method of squaring is used in all French timber-framing. Once the posts are squared, they are then placed in the ground and usually surrounded with rock or stone to fix the posts there.[2] Archeological studies have shown that this style of construction was widely used throughout Colonial America by all nationalities making claims to the New World.[3] The late date of the construction of Badin-Roque is probably the reason why the house is still standing. Many of the structures investigated in the archeological dig were built in the early days of colonialism, the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The Badin-Roque House also uses a French style of infill which is ancient in use but incorporates New World products in Louisiana, this is *bousillage*. Between the posts, small pieces of wood (or staves) would be fitted, and much like the mortice and tenon style used in *poteaux sur sole*, these would support the clay-like mud which would then be packed between each post.[4] In their article, "Louisiana Bousillage: The Migration and Evolution of a French Building Technique in North America," Laura Blokker and Heather Night claim that the Louisiana recipe for *bousillage* encompassed Native American practices of using Spanish Moss.[5] The moss fibers hold the clay together and wrap around the staves so that the wall is solid. Here another New World material is influencing the traditional practices of French architecture.



Badin-Roque House, Louisiana c. 1938, HABS: LA-1294-4, Historic American Building Survey, Works Progress Administration, photo courtesy *Library of Congress*

The *poteaux en terre* style of construction differs from *poteaux sur sole* ("post on sill") because of the number of posts used. In *poteaux en terre* numerous posts are placed into the ground at differing spaces, while in *poteaux sur sole* the posts are placed roughly every eight feet.[6] The building would then be framed around these posts in the traditional French fashion. It was material access which developed the *poteaux sur sole* method of construction adopted by the Hudson's Bay Company and scattered far and wide across Canada and the western United States. An example of this style is the historic 1850 Granary at Fort Nisqually Living History Museum. Built in the *poteaux sur sole* style, it is the only remaining structure of this construction built by the HBC in the Pacific Northwest.

Out of all the buildings in Fort Nisqually's complex, the Granary is the most humble; raised off the ground, its sill is set on wooden blocks and a small stair is required to enter the large double doors. At each side of the door placed in equal fashion from each other are two windows of six panes both of which are shuttered. Windows face directly across from each other on each side and two windows in the back face the two in the front – in total six windows let light into the building.

The Granary functioned as the main storage facility for grain grown at Fort Nisqually. Once the wheat, oats, and barley had been threshed and winnowed, the cleaned grain was placed into bags and stacked in the Granary awaiting shipment to Russian Alaska. Due to its agricultural purposes the Granary had to be built with the ability to withhold large amounts of weight. A bushel of grain weighs, depending on the crop, 30 to 60 pounds. Fort Nisqually grew 15 bushels per acre, making for a heavy harvest in a good year.[7] *Poteaux sur sole* was the best construction style for the strain which

the building would undergo. In his book *Building with Wood and Other Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Building in Central Canada*, John Rempel says,

> "During an enquiry conducted at Vancouver in the mid nineteenth century one witness, having been asked to compare the advantages of the 'American' balloon frame construction with those of the 'Hudson's Bay' or 'Canadian' style said the latter was much stronger and better adopted to carrying the heavy loads of fur [and grain] stored in company warehouses. The weight of the goods which would be stored in the Granary, dictated the construction style used to build it."[8]

Construction began on the Granary in August of 1850 and was built in the *poteaux sur sole*. A log would be squared, then a hole cut in each end, then cut so that the four sills sit together. Placed into the sill would be a post which has a tenon cut on each end and holds the two sills together. Prior to assembly, mortices are cut into two sides of the posts; corner posts have the mortice cut at an angle and center posts have the mortice cut on opposite sides. These mortices will hold the infill logs once all the posts have been placed. The infill pieces have a tenon cut on each end, and usually were about 8' long and squared so that the building fit together and could keep the weather out. In the case of the Granary, not all the pieces fit together because they were "recycled" wood, many of the timbers coming from previously existing buildings which had been dismantled for use elsewhere.[9] The *Journal of Occurrences*, the daily log from Fort Nisqually, supports this claim. The August 20, 1850 entry states, "Chalifoux and Trudelle at new Granary."[10] This is the first entry to mention the Granary. Typically when a building was constructed at Fort Nisqually, several entries prior would read employees are squaring wood in preparation to construct a new building. The Granary does not have these entries and restorations completed in 1984 revealed pieces of the original structure were from the 1840s and some dating to the 1830s.[11]

The design of the Granary fits that of the Badin-Roque House. Posts of squared timbers are set on a sill instead of the ground and then filled to create the walls of the building. The material used in the filling is how these buildings differ from each other.

Both buildings are rooted in French vernacular architecture, however the materials which were used in construction are what set these buildings apart. The Badin-Roque House is a product of Louisiana and the traditional French heritage found in the region. The more traditional *poteaux en terre* filled with a New World mixture of *bousillage* ties the building to its French heritage. The new recipe for infill incorporates the New World and shows how improved building materials would change the traditional techniques. The Granary is the finished product of these changed techniques. The availability of timber for the use of infill created the *poteaux sur sole* the large timber construction, enabled the building to carry heavier loads of goods popularizing the style amongst the Hudson's Bay Company who adopted it and spread the style across Canada and the Pacific Northwest. No matter how similar the construction style, the materials make the building.

Endnotes

1. Laura E. Blokker and Heather A. Knight, "Louisiana Bousillage: The Migration and Evolution of French Building Technique in North America," *Construction History* 28, no. 1 (2013), 34. Accessed December 5, 2017. http://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/43856026?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

2. Bonnie L. Gums "Earthfast (Pieux en Terre) Structures at Old Mobile," *Historical Archaeology* 36, no. 1 (2002), Accessed December 5, 2017. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616974?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

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4. Blokker and Knight, 37.

5. Blokker and Knight, 41.

6. A. J. H. Richardson, "A Comparative Historical Study of Timber Building in Canada," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 15, no. 3 (1973), 78. Accessed December 5, 2017. http://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/1493428?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=4#page_scan_tab_contents

7. *The Journal of Occurrences at Fort Nisqually Commencing May 30th 1833; ending September 27th 1859*, Transcribed and edited by George Dickey, (Tacoma, WA: Fort Nisqually Historic Site, Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma, 1990), 280.

8. John I Rempel, *Building with Wood and Other Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Building in Central Canada*, (Toronto CND: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 20.

9. Bill Rhind, "Granary Restoration Throughout the Years," Metro Parks Tacoma, Spring 2013, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www.metroparkstacoma.org/fort-granary-throughout-years/.

10. *The Journal of Occurrences at Fort Nisqually*, 280.

11. Rhind.

Research Revealed

A Guide to Interpreting Early Puget Sound Clothing Referenes

By Elizabeth Korsmo ~ Contributor

Elizabeth Korsmo is a living history interpreter at Fort Nisqually Living History Museum and a talented researcher and seamstress. She recently completed her Masters in Museum Studies from the University of Washington, and shares with us selections from her capstone research project on mid-19th century clothing from the Puget Sound region, titled "A Guide to Interpreting Early Seattle Clothing".

Sources of Information

This study employed primary sources and select secondary sources related to Washington residents c.1851-1866, with a focus on persons associated with Seattle or living on Puget Sound. The primary sources included letters written by Catherine and David Blaine, newly-wed missionaries who arrived in Seattle in late 1854; the hand-written 'field book' kept by Arthur A. Denny from 1850-54, which included some of the earliest commercial records for Seattle; the published diaries of Mary Richardson Walker, Phoebe Goodell Judson, D. B. Ward, and George and Maria Belshaw; letters of the Ebey family; and in inventories of goods shipped to Ft. Nisqually, an outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company/ Puget Sound Agricultural Company, located in modern-day Dupont, Washington. Contemporary publications, including Olympia's Pioneer and Democrat, and Steilacoom's Puget Sound Courier, showed the news and advertisements available to Puget Sound residents in the 1850s and 1860s; national publications which reached Washington Territory, most famously Harper's, helped expand upon this information and establish if and to what extent fashion information was disseminated in the area.

First-hand retrospective accounts included reminiscences by Ezra Meeker, who crossed the trail in 1853 and founded Puyallup; a memoir of Eliza Chambers, who was born in Washington Territory in 1854; an undated interview with Louisa Boren Denny, who arrived in the Denny-Boren-Low party late in 1851 and become Seattle's first (white) bride; and an 1915 speech written by Louisa's daughter, Emily Inez Denny, about her childhood in Seattle.

A central secondary source was Emily Inez Denny's Blazing the Way; born in Seattle in 1854, she compiled her parents' and friends' stories into a history of Seattle, featuring short biographies of certain early residents. Her cousin, Robert Frye Watt, also wrote an account of the Denny party's overland travel and the founding of Seattle, which was published as Four Wagons West. Oral histories were written down in Centralia: The First Fifty Years, with each chapter focused on one person or family and written by a different high school student.

Garments Going West

The emigrants who arrived on Puget Sound in the 1850s and 1860s sometimes came with little more than the clothes on their backs. In October 1854, a year after arriving in Seattle from New York, Catharine Blaine wrote to her sister: "I have not had any dresses made since I left home, but I don't know when I shall have any to make. I expect I should now look rather rusty, or rather my clothes would, at home, but they are good enough here."[1] In an interview, Louisa Boren Denny remarked that "As for our clothes we brought what we could carry as well as a bed clothes with us."[2] A descendant described the family preparing for their westward journey by sewing "stout garments"[3] for the whole family, along with preparing a supply of household linens, blankets, and quilts. Not all of this effort and preparation made it to Oregon/Washington: those not fortunate enough to sail, found that the westward trails wore heavily on clothing.

Some articles of dress were intentionally traded. D. B. Ward mentions the Native peoples he encountered being very eager to trade food for clothing: "These potatoes were offered us by the Indians, who appeared anxious to trade for clothing and other belongings which seemed to strike their fancy".[4] The Denny party once traded a calico apron for peas.4 Maria Parson Belshaw's experience of this trade ran both ways, with her party buying "mockasens" [sic] with bread and trading clothes or bread for fresh fish.[5]

Other items were lost or abandoned—one Arthur and Mary Denny's daughters lost her shoes on the trail, leaving the two girls to take turns wearing their remaining pair.[6] At the Columbia River, the Dennys encountered a woman wearing stockings without shoes: her shoes had worn out, and she lost her moccasins overboard.[7] Elkanah Walker's experience driving cattle along the trail resulted in the loss of his

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wedding coat.[8] In a particularly sad moment, a pink sunbonnet was used to mark a child's grave.[9]

While Catharine Blaine's dresses may have lasted a year of more—their "rusty" appearance notwithstanding—the overlanders' clothing was well-worn, frequently dirty, and sometimes missing by time they reached Oregon. D. B. Ward observed that "having reached the end of our long and trying journey, we were footsore and weary, every thread and shred of our clothing begrimed and filled with the alkali dust of the plains..."[10] Ezra Meeker described the emigrants arriving the Dalles on the Columbia River as:

> *A motley crowd these people were...the dress and appearance of this assemblage were as varied as the human countenance and as unique as the great mountain scenery before them. Some were clad in scanty attire as soiled with the dust as their brows; others, while with better pretensions, lacked some portions of dress required in civilized life. Here a matronly dame with clean apparel would be without shoes, or there, perhaps, the husband without the hat or perhaps both shoes and hat absent; there the youngsters of all ages, making no pretensions to genteel clothing other than to cover their nakedness. An expert's ingenuity would be taxed to the utmost to discover either the texture or original colors of the clothing of either juvenile of adult, so prevailing was the patch work and so inground the particles of dust and sand from off the plains.*[11]

This 'in-ground' dirt was less a refection on indifference and more a result of a losing battle to keep clean, as washing is frequently mentioned in the trail accounts. Maria Belshaw observed in her diary of May 28-29, 1853 that her party was "In camp and the women ruled and would wash."[12] Fifteen years earlier, Mary Walker and her traveling companions wore their nightgowns while doing laundry, so that their other clothes might be washed; without tubs, they had to "heat water, wash, boil, and rinse in the same kettle."[13] She even observed that the creek's hard water required a large amount of soap without cleaning the clothing well. Emily Denny related Mrs. Alexander's description of the Denny-Boren-Low party preparing to sail for Puget Sound, after their long overland journey; desiring their sunbonnets to be "clean and neat", the women washed and starched the garments, then ironed them on a cloth spread over the grass, as no ironing board was available.[14]

Nor was all clothing worn to shreds by the end of the journey. Some pieces were also put away for later use or re-use. Phoebe Goodell Judson wrote of re-uniting with her sister at the end of the trail—her twin, Mary, having traveled two years earlier with her husband. Upon meeting her sister's newborn "she [Mary] dressed him in robe that belonged to her little one who had been laid

away."[15] Phoebe herself had also saved fabric from her old dresses, eventually making curtains for her log house out of the "pink and blue lawn dresses of my girlhood days."[16] Louisa Boren reported that one of her trail dresses—a blue 'buckskin'--"lasted all the way and for an indefinite period after."[17] Additionally, as related by Meeker, garments could be patched and mended. Emily Denny related that after arriving at Alki Point, the first order of work for the women of her family was to fix the group's clothing:

> *Not since they had left Illinois the spring before, had they had the opportunity as now to mend and sew. They had no new material, but made over and freshened up what they had. In spare moments, the men turned shoe-makers and soled and patched the wellworn shoes. On Christmas Day every one appeared bright and gay in clothes that were clean and whole.*[18]

Style and Adaptation: Hoops, Tucks and Bloomers

Hoopskirts were available for sale on Puget Sound as early as November 12, 1858. On that day, the Pioneer and Democrat ran an advertisement for M. Louisson of Olympia, which announced that his store was selling "expansion hoop skirts". This fact was spelled out in bold, insinuating that his audience was familiar with the term, and would be sufficiently interested to justify the expense of the ad. Louisson and Co. had been running weekly ads in Pioneer and Democrat, and sometimes two in one issue; as the November 5 advertisement did not mention hoopskirts, it was possible that they first arrived on the Sound during that second week of November.

Merill J Mattes' book, *The Great Platte River Road: The Covered Wagon Mainline Via Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie*

"Buckskin" or "Buckskin"?

Elizabeth's research included parsing the terminology of the day. Since women's dresses were purchased as yardage, rather than as ready-made agrements, the materials available on Puget Sound informed what clothing appeared in the region. Common fabrics included cotten print, wool, silk, and linen, all fairly common textiles even today. One word that appears in the record of materials is "buckskin" for a dress. This word conjures a very different image in today's imagiantion than it's users originally intended in the 19th century.

The reference book *Textiles in America* describes buckskin as a "fine woolen cloth with a milled and dressed finish showing a distinctive twill" (six over, two under on the warp).[29]

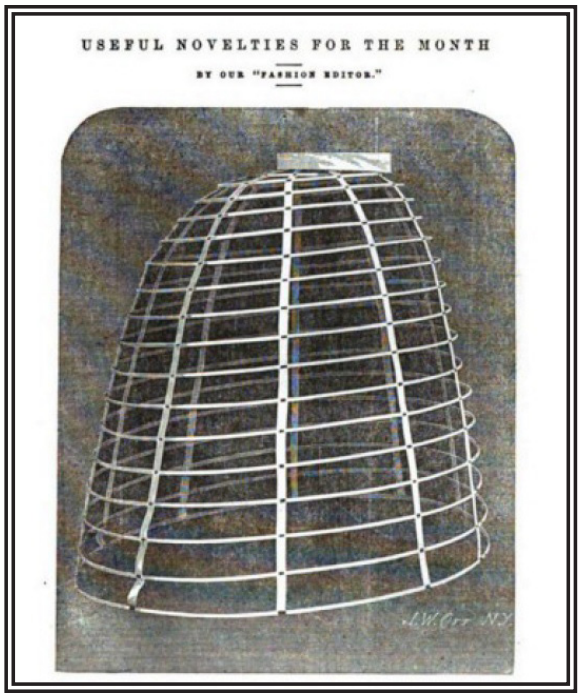
One of Louisa Boren Denny's two trail dresses was a "blue buckskin cloth"—apparently quite sturdy, she described it as "very thick with a pile something like velvet".[30] A possible buckskin shirt appears on G. W. Chadd's account with Arthur Denny: "Nov. 5th 1 pair of shoes // $1.50 1 pair of socks .40 // 1 flannel shirt 1.75 // 1 hickory shirt .75 // 1 buckskin 1.50".[31]

Left: Plains Indian buckskin dress with long fringe on the sleeves, 1996.

Right: Wool wrapper dress, mid-19th century, held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

argued that the bloomer costume (or "reform dress") was prevalent on the westward trails. The book featured a lengthy quotation from Ezra Meeker's *The Busy Life of Eighty-Fire Years of Ezra Meeker* regarding the wearing of bloomers on the trail. However, when compared with Meeker's earlier account in *Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound,*[19] it iwas not clear that the outfits he described were bloomer ensembles with trousers,[20] rather than regular dresses with skirts that had been shortened for use on the trail. The extract described his wagon train in 1852:

> *Of the fortitude of the women one cannot say too much. Embarrassed at the start by the follies of fashion (and long dresses which were quickly discarded and the bloomer donned), they soon rose to the occasion and cast false modesty aside. Could we but have had the camera (of course not then in existence) trained on one of those typical camps, what a picture there would be. Elderly matrons dressed almost like the little sprite miss of tender years of today. The younger women were rather shy of accepting the inevitable, but finally fell into the procession, and we had a community of women wearing bloomers without invidious comment, or, in fact, any comment at all. Some of them went barefoot, partly from choice and in some cases from necessity. The same could be said of the men, as shoe leather began to grind out from the sand and dry heat. Of all the fantastic costumes it is safe to say the like was never seen before. The scene beggars description. Patches became visible upon the clothing of preachers as well as laymen; the situations brooked no respecter of persons. The grandmother's cap was soon displaced by a handkerchief or perhaps a bit of cloth. Grandfather's high crowned hat disappeared as if by magic. Hatless and bootless men became a common sight. Bonnetless women were to be seen on all sides. They wore what they had left or could get, without question as to the fitness of things. Rich dresses were worn by some ladies because they had no others; the gentlemen drew upon their wardrobes until scarcely a fine unsoiled suit was left.*[21]



"Useful Novelties for the Month" - Hoopskirt design from Peterson's Magazine***, December 1858.***

It was possible that these women shortened their skirts and sewed matching trousers while on the trail; however, the shortage of fabric and garments later in the quotation calls into question where the material for such an endeavor was acquired. With the Dennys as an example, time to sew was apparently also limited. Moreover, Meeker's earlier *Reminiscences* made no mention of bloomer dress being adopted. Instead, he wrote of dresses being shortened with tucks for trail use, which were abandoned when the wearer resumed normal life: "...no more tucks in the dresses if the ladies, compelled first by the exigencies if travel and now to be parted with under the inexorable law of custom or fashion..."[22] The closest he come to it is describing his wife in her shortened skirts as "a little lady in almost bloomer dress."[23] Taken together, it would appear that Meeker's 1916 account used "bloomer" to indicate shortened skirts, rather than a full reform dress with non-constricting bodice, short skirt and visible trousers.

The other primary sources cited in *The Great Platte River Road* proved similarly inconclusive about the presence of dress-and-trouser bloomer ensembles. The unnamed source who commented in 1853 that "all the women who cross the plains dress in that style [bloomerism]", appears to have been Benjamin Alvord, quoted in Bradford Ripley Alden's letter of April 6, 1853: "He [Benjamin Alvord] told a queer story of Bloomerism at table yesterday. He said, 'Bloomerism has done wonders for Oregon— all the women emigrants, who cross the plains, dress in that style'..."[24] With no further explanation, the passage could have intended 'bloomerism' to encompass either 'shortened skirts' or 'short dresses with trousers'. Julia Holmes' experience on Pike Peak was also quoted by Mattes, but the extract dealt with the comfort and utility of her ensemble, rather than describing its make-up. The only explicit reference to womens' trousers outfits came from John Bonnet, who referred to "ugly women in breeches" in some capacity at Council Bluffs.[25] The original manuscript, Bonnet's 1861 "Daily Journal Across the Plains", was not available for context, as it resides in an unnamed private collection. Taken together, the evidence which seemed to have suggested that trouser-wearing ladies were ubiquitous on the trail may actually have indicated that they shortened their skirts, and may or may not have added a bifurcated garment below that. Other than John Bonnet, those who wrote about "bloomers" did not specify the presence of trousers, nor did they the term. Meanwhile, contemporary usages of "bloomer" most often

seemed to indicate the person wearing the costume, or else the costume itself, and occasionally a shortened dress reminiscent of a bloomer costume, as in Meeker's *Pioneer Reminiscences*.[26]

One person in Washington Territory unambiguously did wear the bloomer costume. She did not, however, cross the trail. Catharine Blaine had worn the bloomer cotume in Seneca Falls, New York before departing for Oregon/Washington. Before her wedding and impending move to the Pacific coast, she wrote to her fiance about her clothing choices:

> *If we go, shall you wish to have me exchange my present convenient dress for the long skirts? If we remain here I think it will be best perhaps that [I] should, but circumstances alter cases. In that new country we can hardly suppose that the same degree of odium attaches to it there as here and I think it will commend itself to the inhabitants. Besides this, an exchange will demand extra labor now when time is limited.*[27]

Lithograph print, "The Bloomer Costume" by N. Iv es, 1851, courtesy the Library of Congress online digital archive.

David Blaine's response, if he wrote one, was not included in the collected letters. Catharine apparently adopted a hybrid approach, noting on one occasion in Seattle that "fortunately I had worn that green delaine one and so had a long skirt." Another time, she wrote "I had on my black delaine and for two fingers up my pantalettes were so thickly covered with mud you could not have guessed what color they were, and my dress clear above the knees was badly dirtied."[28] The "pantalettes" could have been an undergarment (also known as drawers) rather than a visible trouser of black delaine, but the specification of long skirts on her green delaine clearly indicates a mixture of long and short skirts in her wardrobe. A contemporary photograph of Catherine did not capture her hemline. Her surviving dress had a skirt 39 inches long at the center front; unless she had unusually long legs, this dress was unlikely to have been part of a bloomer costume. Unlike the other examples, Catharine Blaine's adopted reform dress as a lifestyle choice, rather than a temporary convenience on the trail. Like the characters satirized in contemporary novels, her clothing reflected her sociopolitical beliefs and social network: she wore reform dress and subscribed to magazines which promoted it, signed the Seneca Falls declaration as an early proponent of women's rights, condemned slavery, advocated temperance, and kept a vegetarian diet.

Endnotes:

1. David, and Catharine Blaine. *Letters and Papers of Rev. David E. Blaine and His Wife Catharine; Seattle, 1853-1856, Oregon, 1856-1862.* (Seattle: Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Methodist Church, 1963): 112.

2. "Interview with Mrs. D. T. Denny." (Transcript. Museum of History and Industry. The Denny Family Papers.)

3. Roberta Frye Watt, *Four Wagons West: The Story of Seattle*. (Portland, Ore.: Binfords & Mort, 1931): 2

4. A.A. Denny field book, August 1 entry, paraphrased in Roberta Frye Watt, *Four Wagons West: The Story of Seattle.* (Portland, Ore.: Binfords & Mort, 1931): 22.

5. Belshaw, Mariah , Michael L. Tate, and George Belshaw. *Crossing the Plains to Oregon in 1853.* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 2000): 94, 110.

6. As Lenora was four years old at this time, and Louisa Catherine was seven, and both girls apparently managed to wear the same pair of shoes, it seems likely Lenora lost hers and Louisa shared. Louisa, mother of Roberta Frye Watt, was apparently the source of this story. Watt, *Four Wagons West: The Story of Seattle*, 20.

7. Watt, *Four Wagons West: The Story of Seattle*, 26.

8. McKee, Ruth Karr. *Mary Richardson Walker : Her Book.*

(Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1945), 151.

9. Scene observed by an anonymous future resident of Seattle, recounted in Watt, *Four Wagons West: The Story of Seattle*, 12.

10. D. B. Ward, *Across the Plains in 1853*. (Seattle, WA: Washington State Library, 1911): 53.

11. Ezra Meeker, *Pioneer reminiscences of Puget Sound : The tragedy of Leschi : An account of the coming of the first Americans and the establishment of their institutions ; their encounters with the native race ; the first treaties with the Indians and the war that followed ; seven years of the life of Isaac I. Stevens in Washington Territory ; cruise of the author on Puget Sound fifty years ago ; Nisqually House and the Hudson Bay Company …* (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford Stationery and Print, 1905): 19

12. Belshaw, M., Michael L. Tate, and George Belshaw. *Crossing the Plains to Oregon in 1853*, 91.

13. Ruth Karr. *McKee Mary Richardson Walker: Her Book*, 143.

14. Watt and Gustin. *Four Wagons West: The Story of Seattle*, 35

15. Phoebe Judson, *A Pioneer's Search for an Ideal Home: A Book of Personal Memoirs*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska-Press, 1984): 75.

16. Judson, *A Pioneer's Search for an Ideal Home*, 117

17. "Interview with Mrs. D. T. Denny." Transcript. Museum of History and Industry. The Denny Family Papers.

18. Emily Inez Denny. *Blazing the Way; Or, True Stories, Songs and Sketches of Puget Sound and Other Pioneers.* (Seattle: Rainier Printing Company, 1909): 47

19. Meeker, *Pioneer reminiscences of Puget Sound*, 71.

20. Ezra Meeker. *The Busy Life of Eighty-Five Years of Ezra Meeker*. (Seattle, Wash: Ezra Meeker, 1916): 35.

21. Meeker, *Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound,* 123.

22. Meeker, *Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound* 78-79.

23. "Letters of Bradford Ripley Alden." *California Historical Society Quarterly,* Volume XXVIII September 1949: 202

24. Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road: The Covered Wagon Mainline via Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969): 68.

25. For example: Fred Folio's 1855 novel *A Book For the Times,* Lucy Boston refers to the independent female character constantly as a 'bloomer', ie "As before observed, our Bloomer was a woman of striking good sense..." (page 155); twice the term is used to refer to the "bloomer costume" as a whole. The 1857 *Third Annual Report of the Michigan Historical Society* discusses Chippewa women's dress, in which a woman is described as wearing "the short skirt, ala bloomer...the females of all the Indians we have seen, invariably wear the Bloomer skirt and pants." It is the skirt, or the wearer, or the entire ensemble that is a "bloomer," not the pants alone.

26. David, and Catharine Blaine. *Letters and Papers of Rev. David E. Blaine and His Wife Catharine; Seattle, 1853-1856, Oregon, 1856-1862,* 39

27. David, and Catharine Blaine, *Letters and Papers* 107.

28. David, and Catharine Blaine. *Letters and Papers*,123-4.

29. Florence Montgomery, *Textiles in America, 1650-1870* (New York: Norton. 1984): 181

30. "Interview with Mrs. D. T. Denny." (Transcript. Museum of History and Industry. The Denny Family Papers.)

31. Arthur A. Denny, Field Book. (Diary. 1850-1854. University of Washington Special Collections. Arthur Armstrong Denny Papers. Accession no. 2343-003):45.

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Advertisement for P. Keach & Co., Steilacom, W.T., February 4, 1854 edition of the Pioneer and Democrat ***newspaper published in Olympia.***

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Around the Sound

What's in a Name?
John Swan and Swan Creek Park

By Claire Keller-Scholz ~ MPT Art, Culture, & Heritage Administrator

Park History

On the border between southeast Tacoma and the Puyallup Tribal Reservation is a 373 acre park named for the creek that runs through it. Swan Creek Park is going through the midst of a Master Plan update process this year, and the public had questions about the origins of the name. Most of the written history of the park focuses in the 1930s and '40s, when the city built housing for war workers in the greenspace along the south east edge of Tacoma. The Salishan neighborhood extended into what is now Swan Creek Park, with 1,600 units of housing built by 1943. The houses were never intended to be permanent residences, and in the mid-1950s many of them were pulled down.

But how did the creek get its name? A rumor recently emerged that the park was named for an "Indian Agent" who interned Native Americans during the 1850s Treaty Wars. There was a man named John Swan who was put in charge of Fox Island when it was used to confine non-combatant native peoples during the period in question, but he was not the man for whom the park is named. Research indicates that Swan Creek was named for John and Jane Swan, Puyallup tribal members who lived nearby the land feature in the 1890s.

John Swan on the Puget Sound

When the question first arose about the park name, initial research revealed one unavoidable fact: "John Swan" is a very common name.

In 1860, census records reveal two men named John Swan in the Tacoma/Pierce County area. One was from New York and one was a teamster from England. A Scottish John M. Swan also made his home in Thurston County around this time, settling in Tumwater and building up a community there.

In the 1870 federal census there are four John Swans in four counties: John Swan from Alaska, age 23, made his home in Jefferson County; 28-year old John Swan from Sweden lived in Oysterville, Pacific County; New York John Swan (age 49 and now listing his occupation as "logger") in Pierce; and John M. Swan in Thurston County, the 47 year old Scotsman's precinct is listed as "Olympia Town".[1]

Over the next several decades, immigration continues to bring new settlers to Washington Territory, and "John Swan" from Finland soon appears in state-wide records, along with "John Swan" from Pennsylvania, "John Swank" from Indiana, "John Swane" from Illinois, "John Swanson" from Wales, "John Swanson" from Sweden, and "John Swanberg" of Washington Territory (age 7 in 1885).

John Swan, farmer, laborer and logger from New York, disappears from the census record after 1870. John M. Swan, Scottish, continues to build his community in the Olympia area and becomes a prominent local figure. (He dies in Walla Walla in 1904).

It is not until 1887 that John Swan the "half-breed" appears on census rolls. On the King County census that year, "John Swann" born Washington Territory age 49 is enumerated from the "Indian Reservation" precinct. He is listed alongside other native peoples and officially marked "Indian half-breed" in the "race" category. "Jane Swan" is listed next to him. He next appears in the 1889 Pierce County census, listed as "John Swan" from Washington Territory, both he and his wife noted as "Indian half breeds". Their professions are noted as "farmer" and "housewife" and the boxes checked indicate they were both considered "citizens of U.S. over 21 years of age" though no age was listed for them. These notes suggest they were trying to assimilate into white culture, though they hadn't received formal English education.

An 1892 census of Pierce County lists also lists John Swan and Jane Swan as a farmer and his wife. This time they are recorded as aged 53 and 50 respectively, with the same particulars describing them as Native American and illiterate, yet considered U.S. citizens per census standards.

The only other John Swan who appears in the Pierce County section of the 1892 census is a John Swan of Finland (a 32-year old sailor), though there are several other "Swansons" and variations on the name from elsewhere.

John Swan and Fox Island

The New York John Swan who settled in Washington Territory staked a claim on McNeil Island, and operated a small trading store along what is now Ruston Way. He and a partner had a fishing business there, and frequently hired Puyallup Indians for short-term labor projects.[2]

In the 1850s, Governor Isaac Stevens sought to formally clear the way for new settlers and wrote treaties to confine the native peoples to reservations. In late 1855, violence erupted as a band of Native American warriors resisted the treaty agreements for their fundamental inadequacies, and Chief Leschi led a desperate effort to save his peoples' way of life. White settlers and soldiers were killed, as were Native American warriors and families. While the skirmishes were going on, the governor ordered the U.S army to round up non-combatant "friendly Indians" from the Medicine Creek treaty tribes and move them to a reservation "for their own protection" from riled up settlers. Over 800 men, women, and children were confined on the island , and although they were promised provisions, clothes, blankets, food and tools to farm the land there, illness and deprivation were prevalent over the 11-month period of internment.[3]

John Swan had a positive relationship with the Puyallup, and Territorial Indian Agent Michael T. Simmons asked Swan act as manager of Fox Island and oversee operations there. Thus, the entrepreneurial settler stepped into a "sub-Indian agent" role from November 1855-February 1856 during the war. Swan advocated on behalf of the Native Americans as best he could, continually requesting additional resources to care for them and was in communication with U.S. Army commander Colonel Casey of Fort Steilacoom regarding leniency. At Swan's request, Dr. William F. Tolmie of Fort Nisqually visited the island several times in order to bring medicines and treat the ill.[4]

In January 1856, Leschi came over to the island and "captured" Swan. The band had come to ask Swan to help them, and talk to the U.S. Army on their behalf. A few days later Leschi, his men, and some of the interned Native Americans had fled, leaving Swan unharmed. After Leschi was captured and put on trial for the murder of a man during the conflict, Swan testified on the chief's behalf, protesting his innocence of the charges laid against him. After two trials and a lengthy appeals process, Leschi was sentenced to death, despite the protests of Swan and prominent members of the community including Colonel Casey of Fort Steilacoom, and William F. Tolmie of Fort Nisqually.[5]

John Swan appears in local court records in the 1870s in matters related to property disputes, but he does not have any official involvement with the native peoples again.

Swan Creek

Pierce County records indicate that John Swan of Steilacoom and McNeil Island died in 1879, but research has yet to reveal what, if any, connection he has to John Swan of Washington Territory, "half-breed" tribal member.

Maps of the Puyallup Reservation do not provide names for all the small tributary creeks that flow into the Puyallup River and the Tacoma harbor of Commencement Bay, but they do indicate the locations of allotments from the 1890s.[6] The allotment map from 1892 shows the claims belonging to John Swan, located near the present location of the creek for which today's park is named. Although property records regarding the ultimate distribution of this land are still to be found, it presents a strong case for the source of the name "Swan Creek".

John and Jane Swan are buried in the Puyallup Tribal Cemetery, not far from the final resting place of Chief Leschi. John's headstone bears the death date of 1905. His wife Jane passed away in 1923.

Research into the lives of John and Jane Swan is on-going, and additional articles are planned on the fascinating story of the many John Swans of Washington Territory. Stay tuned!

Endnotes

1. The 1854 Pierce County census has John Swan, farmer age 35, from "NY" (New York). This same John Swan (Farmer from New York) appears in the 1857 Pierce County census age 38. In the 1860 census, John Swan from New York is a laborer, age 36. In 1871, Mason County census records show John Swan from New York, age 44, working as a lumberman. "John Swan,"1870, U.S. Federal Census, Pierce County, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, http://digitalarchives.wa.gov.

4. Herbert Hunt, *Tacoma: It's History and its Builders, A Half-Century of Activity* (Tacoma: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916), 34.

3. Cecilia Svinth Carpenter, *Tears of Internment: The Indian History of Fox Island and the Puget Sound Indian War* (Tacoma, WA: Tahoma Research Service, 1996)

4. The *Pioneer and Democrat* account of the trial of Leschi includes transcriptions of the court testimonies. John Swan describes Leschi's visit to the island, and testifies that "[he] was in [Leschi's] power there 36 hours- and was not tied." (per the March 27, 1857 edition of the newspaper).

5. SuAnn M. Reddick and Cary C. Collins. "Medicine Creek to Fox Island: Cadastral Scams and Contested Domains." *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, vol. 106, no. 3, 2005, pp. 374–397. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20615557.

6. Allotments were individual claims distributed to certain members of the Native American tribes during periods when Reservations were broken up by the U.S. government.

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