

# Fort Nisqually Restored

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Fort Nisqually in process of restoration. The large building is the factor's house (1853). The other three, left to right, are the store, the granary (1843) and the blacksmith shop. Replicas of four more buildings have since been added. (Photo J. R. Eyerman.)

**F**ORT Nisqually, the old Hudson's Bay Company's trading post founded on Puget Sound in 1833, has been rededicated as a free pioneer museum by the City of Tacoma. The fort has been completely reconstructed of squared logs, whip-sawed lumber, and rough cedar shakes with genuine regard for pioneer craftsmanship. It now stands on an eminence in Point Defiance Park, overlooking Puget Sound's Nisqually Reach, the Olympic Mountains, and the new Tacoma Narrows bridge. (See *The Beaver*, September 1934 "Fort Nisqually Lives Again.")

The original site of the fort, on Nisqually prairie fifteen miles distant, had passed into the hands of the Du Pont Powder Company. Their program of expansion in 1933 threatened the destruction of the only remaining buildings, the factor's house (1853), and the granary (1843), which were the oldest standing buildings in the State of Washington.

The Tacoma Young Men's Business Club obtained the buildings. To reconstruct the historic old fort, they enlisted the aid of the Tacoma Park Board, who donated the new site, and the various unemployment relief agencies, who supplied the necessary labour. An architect was employed, and all available records of the original fort's construction searched. The log palisades, bastions, and the various buildings have been authentically reconstructed and grouped about the original granary and factor's residence.

The Young Men's Business Club embarked upon an ambitious program to publicize the restored Fort Nisqually. Newspapers all over the United States and Canada gave generously of their space, carrying feature articles about the project. The Postal Department permitted the use of a special cachet announcing the opening of the fort. A caretaker versed in northwest history was installed. The results have been gratifying. As many as twenty-five hundred automobiles a day have visited the fort. The register bears the names of tourists from every Canadian province, Australia, India, the British Isles, and each of the United States and its territories.

A group of women, the daughters, granddaughters, and great granddaughters of the pioneers who had settled in the vicinity of Fort Nisqually became interested in the restoration. They believed that the children of today's mechanical age should be made to realize the incessant toil and hardships endured by the pioneers in wresting an existence from the virgin territory. To this end, they gave freely of their family heirlooms, which will be used to furnish the various buildings.

When their dream is realized, the store will be equipped with trade goods as though waiting for the brigades of fur-laden pack horses from the rich newly tapped Cascade territory between the Fraser and Columbia rivers. The old blacksmith shop will be equipped with



Inside the northwest corner of the fort. On the left is the store.

a forge, leather bellows, anvil, tools, and other equipment as it was when the original wrought-iron hardware, some of which has been incorporated in the restored buildings, was hand forged. Similarly, the bakery, with its dough raising troughs, brick ovens, and bread turning paddles will be restored.

The complete restoration of Fort Nisqually is a vision that will take many years to achieve. A great forward step has been made. And with it an appeal is addressed to anyone interested in contributing relics, contemporary letters, or historically valuable information concerning the operation of the fort.

At the impressive program dedicating Fort Nisqually as a pioneer museum, a spirited talk was given by W. P. Bonney, who was born some eighty years ago in the vicinity of the fort. Mr. Bonney, who is secretary of the Washington State Historical Society, voiced again his plea that an effort should be made to unearth the missing volumes of Fort Nisqually's *Journal of*

*Occurrences*. These journals, which record the day-to-day happenings of the fort since its foundation, are complete, except for the books covering the period between May 31, 1839, and January 20, 1846.

These missing volumes, when recovered, will be of great assistance in completing the history of Washington State. For the people of Puget Sound look upon Fort Nisqually as a monument to their pioneer forefathers, and as a memorial to the beloved Dr. William Tolmie of the Hudson's Bay Company. It was he who gladly received and fed the weary settlers, exhausted from their long overland trek to Fort Nisqually and the Promised Land. He extended willing credit to them for the purchase of supplies and equipment for their primitive farms hewn from the wilderness. And in payment he allowed them a fair and generous price for their produce. Restored, Fort Nisqually will be another link in the firm bond of mutual friendship between the United States and Canada.

Dedication of the reconstructed fort as a museum of the City of Tacoma included a flag raising ceremony. (W.P.A. photo.)

