



Winter 2011

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Ed: This month we begin a series of articles about Washington's personalities from the Civil War period in our history. This first article is written by Alan Archambault in recognition of this anniversary year.

### **Washington and the American Civil War**

Although the Washington Territory was thousands of miles removed from the major battlefields of the American Civil War, there was a direct connection between the Pacific Northwest and many of the important leaders of both the Blue and the Gray. American soldiers first set foot in what would become Washington in 1805, when Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery, neared the end of their westward journey. However, it was not until 1849 that the first American soldiers of Company M, First United States Artillery arrived in the Oregon Territory, of which Washington was then a part. Fort Vancouver and Fort Steilacoom were established in 1849 and over the next decade a number of forts, blockhouses, and encampments were built to protect American citizens and interests in this region.

In 1853, the Washington Territory was created, giving the area north of the Columbia River its' own identity. Although the Army worked diligently to keep the peace between the Native Americans and the incoming settlers, it was perhaps inevitable that conflict would ensue. Throughout this period, a number of Army officers were posted to the various frontier out-

posts. Some of the officers had seen action in the Mexican-American War, while others were newly graduated from West Point. Their service in the Pacific Northwest and the friendships they formed in this then remote part of the country would certainly play a role in the Civil War that would engulf the nation in 1861.

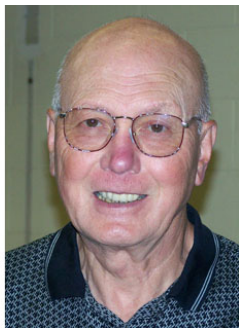
To commemorate the ongoing Sesquicentennial of the Civil War (2011-2015), several articles are planned for publication in the Banner which high light the services of Civil War leaders who served in the Washington Territory prior to the war. The first biography is that of a young Engineer officer who had to make a difficult choice in the spring of 1861.

### **Edward Porter Alexander**

On May 26, 1835 a male child was born to Adam Leopold Alexander and his wife Sara Gilbert. They would name the baby boy Edward Porter Alexander but he would be known to friends and family as "Porter." The Alexander's lived in Washington, Georgia, on a plantation called Fairfield. The elder Alexander was a graduate of Yale and was proficient in three languages (English, Greek, and Latin). Porter's mother attended a women's finishing school in New Haven, Connecticut before her marriage to Adam. The Alexander's provided a wonderful childhood to Porter and his seven siblings. Porter loved to hunt and fish and often played with the slave children on the plantation.

*Cont. on pg. 3*

## President's Report-Ian Larson



As I write this, the last major project to finish the work on the Museum is ongoing. A security system is being installed, and when completed, the Museum artifacts can be returned to the building from their storage location at the Logistics Center on

JBLM. Reconstitution of the galleries will then proceed. A limited opening of the Museum is planned for 14 February, 2012, and will feature opening the lobby and the Soldiers of the Pacific Northwest Gallery on the west wing of the first floor. The Cannon Shop will also reopen on 14 February. The remaining galleries will take a few more weeks to reconstitute, and the full opening of the facility will be announced at a later date. It has taken a long time, but the results will be worth the wait. The contractor has done a superb job of preserving the historic nature of the building's exterior and interior features, as well as insuring that the building will remain a unique asset to JBLM and the community for many years to come. Thanks to Myles Grant and your staff for your dedicated oversight of this project, and persistent focus despite bureaucratic obstacles that often needed to be overcome.

To commemorate the ongoing Sesquicentennial of the Civil War (2011-2015), *The Banner* will feature a series of articles highlighting Civil War leaders who served in the Washington Territory prior to the war. The first article is about the Confederate General Edward Porter Alexander, and is contributed by Alan Archambault, former Museum Director, former editor of *The Banner*, and longtime member of *The Friends*. As many of you know, Alan has retired from his position with the Center for Military History and has returned to the area. Thank you, Alan, and welcome back to the Northwest!

Thank you to those of you who have taken the opportunity to receive your copy of *The Banner* electronically. Besides saving us the cost of mailing, electronic distribution allows you to receive your copy of *The Banner* more quickly, and provides you with access to back issues on *The Friends* website ([www.fortlewismuseum.com](http://www.fortlewismuseum.com)). If you have

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## Director's Report-Myles Grant



We are making good progress toward getting our research libraries and archives operational and our museum re-opened to the public!

There have been immense challenges due to the scope of the project, however, as we have moved forward, we have received a great deal of external assistance from the Training Division of DPTMS, the Plans and Operations Division of DPTMS, the 16th Combat Aviation Brigade, the 593rd Support Brigade, the I Corps tasking office and, of course, our stellar Friends volunteers, who have provided specialized equipment, resources and personnel to help us prepare our facility for reopening.

At present we are working toward a garrison command directed goal of a limited opening on Valentine's Day, 14 February, 2012, with the specified scope of having the museum lobby, gift store and one gallery operational for public access by that date. The gallery to be opened will be the first gallery in our museum's storyline - The Soldiers of the Early Pacific Northwest. This gallery serves as an introduction to the theme of the U.S. Army's service in the Pacific Northwest. The gallery provides a survey of some of the major historical events in which the U.S. Army played an active role from the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery to the American Lake Maneuvers of 1910, the latter of which influenced the decision to establish Camp Lewis and the former influenced the name of our installation. An additional purpose of this limited opening will be to showcase the newly renovated building in order to provide the public a glimpse of great benefits the stimulus funding we received provided us in terms of a renovated facility. Making this limited opening date is still contingent upon some administrative completion to the alarm system and funding and execution of a contract to start the phased move of the museum's artifacts back into the building in a timely enough manner to allow the museum staff to set up the displays in the lobby and Soldiers of the Pacific Northwest Gallery to meet the limited opening timeline.

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As a child, Porter decided he wanted to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. However, his father wanted him to have a career as an engineer. Fortunately, when Porter was 14 years old, his two older sisters were engaged to West Point graduates. One of the graduates, Jeremy Gilmer, of North Carolina, convinced Adam Alexander that Porter could go to West Point and also become an engineer if he graduated at the top of his class. With that conflict resolved, Porter prepared for his entrance to the Military Academy. Fortunately, the Alexander children had an excellent tutor in the employ of the family: a Miss Brackett, from the state of Massachusetts. During the winter of 1852-1853, Porter went to Savannah for lessons in French and drawing. Porter's father then sought the assistance of the Honorable Robert Toombs of Georgia to secure Porter's appointment to West Point. Toombs readily consented to assist Porter receive the desired appointment.



In June 1853, Porter Alexander entered the Military Academy with the mission to graduate at the top of his class and become an Army Engineer. Although young Porter had to endure the tragic death of his mother in 1855, he continued to study hard, often far into the night, and graduated third in his class of 38 cadets in 1857. As he had promised his father, he received a commission as a Second Lieutenant of Engineers. After a three month furlough, Porter returned to West Point as an Assistant Instructor of Military Engineering and Fencing.

Porter received his first active assignment in the fall of 1857 when he was selected to serve with an Engineer detachment with the Utah Expedition. This campaign was undertaken by the

Army when Brigham Young, the leader of the Mormon community in Utah refused to accept the appointment of a new territorial governor by President James Buchanan. The Army was ordered to send out an expedition to install the new governor and quell any resistance by the Mormons. During a winter pause in the campaign, the Mormons and the Federal Government reached a resolution and most of the troops were turned back. Porter Alexander and his detachment wintered at Fort Bridger, Wyoming. Although the expedition ended without conflict, Porter loved the adventure and the outdoor life of the west that he experienced on the Utah campaign. He hunted and fished whenever he had the opportunity and was enthralled with the various Plains Indian tribes he encountered.

Returning to West Point, Porter was put in charge of the Department of Fencing and Target Practice. In October 1859, he received a special duty assignment with Assistant Surgeon Albert James Myer, who was developing a system of signals for use by the Army. Alexander worked closely with Myer to refine and test the communication system that Myer had originally developed as a medical doctor for use with deaf and dumb patients. Alexander and Myer were successful in demonstrating the merits of the military signal system to Congressional Military Committees and Myer was appointed as the Signal Officer of the Army.

With his special duty tour at an end, Porter was ordered back to West Point. However, he obtained a sixty day furlough in order to marry Miss Betty Mason of King George County, Virginia. On his return to West Point, Alexander received orders to report to Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory. He was to replace Lieutenant Henry Robert who was on duty in the Washington Territory with an Engineer detachment.

On August 10, 1860, Lieutenant Porter Alexander and his new wife boarded the steamer *Northern Light* in New York and set sail for their new assignment. On reaching Aspinwall, a seaport on the coast of Panama, they crossed the Isthmus of Panama and on August 19, boarded the

steamer *John L. Stephens*, bound for San Francisco. The Alexanders began the last leg of their journey on September 8, 1860 when they left San Francisco on the steamer *Cortes*. They arrived at Steilacoom City on September 20.

E. Porter Alexander, as he was often known, immediately reported to his superiors at Fort Steilacoom. At the time of his arrival the post commander was Lieutenant Colonel Silas Casey, of the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment. The commander of Company A, U.S. Army Engineers was Thomas Lincoln Casey, the son of the post commander. In addition to the thirty-six engineer troops assigned to Fort Steilacoom, were two companies of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Since the conflict with both the British and the Indians had recently ended, Alexander found that his new assignment gave him plenty of time to enjoy the Puget Sound area. He later commented: "The post was a very pleasant one, the woods and waters abounded in game and fish, the climate was mild and open, and the fall and winter passed rapidly." Although Alexander found his assignment on the Pacific Coast pleasant, he was concerned about the events occurring on the East Coast. He wrote, "It was a period of great anxiety to Southern officers whose native states, after debating the question of secession, began one after another to take the step." In February 1861, Alexander received the news that Georgia, his native state, had seceded from the Union. However, at the time that the news was received, there was still hope that the nation would settle the matter peaceably. In March, Alexander and the Engineers received orders to return to West Point. Since there was no regular ship service scheduled to stop at Steilacoom, the detachment arranged to take the Army owned ship *Massachusetts* to Port Townsend where they could be picked up by the ship that regularly ran between San Francisco and Vancouver Island.

On the afternoon of April 9, 1861, Lieutenant Alexander, his wife, and soldiers left Steilacoom on the *Massachusetts*. The day would have great significance to Alexander. He later wrote, "Four years later, to an hour, I saw Gen. Lee ride back

to his lines from Appomattox Court House, where he just surrendered his army." From Port Townsend, the Alexanders boarded the *Cortes* on April 12 and landed in San Francisco on April 20, 1861. Although Porter and his wife had hoped to catch a steamer scheduled to leave on May 1<sup>st</sup>, a messenger was waiting for them on the wharf in San Francisco. The message he carried relieved Alexander of duty with the Engineer Company and ordered him to report to Lieutenant James McPherson on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Harbor.

When he reported to Lieutenant McPherson, Alexander had already learned of the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter and that the war had begun. Alexander informed McPherson that he must resign his commission in the United States Army and go with his native state of Georgia. He also requested leave so that he could return home to await the acceptance of his resignation. McPherson explained to Alexander to reconsider his decision. McPherson told Alexander that the Army wanted to keep him in their Engineer Corps and that it could be arranged for him to stay on the West Coast for the duration of the conflict. In this way, he would not be forced to wage war on his native state. McPherson went on to present a very detailed and well-reasoned argument on why the South could not win a war against the Federal Government. He insisted that such a war would end in disaster for the South and the Southern people. Alexander politely listened to McPherson's discourse but replied that, "What you say is probably all true. But my situation is just this. My people are going to war. They are in deadly earnest, believing it to be for their liberty. If I do not bear my part, they will believe me to be a coward. And I shall not know whether I am or not. I have just got to go and stand my chances."

McPherson replied that he understood and added that, "In your situation I would probably feel the same way about it." McPherson approved the leave of absence and Alexander departed. On May 1, 1861, Alexander and his wife left San Francisco on the steamer *Golden Age*, crossed the Isthmus of Panama, and took the steamer *Cham-*

*pion* to New York City. On arriving in New York, Alexander and his wife realized that War Fever was sweeping the Northern states. While shopping on Canal Street, the news arrived that Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, a Northern hero, was killed in Alexandria, Virginia. Alexander realized that a resigned officer on his way to join the Confederacy, might easily run into trouble in New York. The Alexanders cut their shopping trip short and took the first train to Louisville. Since Kentucky was attempting to stay neutral, the Alexanders were able to cross through the state and make their way South. After reaching Georgia and leaving his wife at his father's home, Porter Alexander made his way to Richmond, the new capital of the Confederate States. On June 1, Alexander arrived in Richmond and soon received his commission as a captain of Confederate Engineers. Although valued as an Engineer officer, it was remembered that Alexander had experience in developing a military signal system. He was assigned to the command of General Pierre G.T. Beauregard with the mission to set up a Confederate Signal Corps.

At the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) on July 21, 1861, Captain Alexander discovered, through his spyglass, that the Union forces were flanking the Confederate positions. He immediately sent a message to Colonel Nathan Evans, of South Carolina: "Look to your left, you are turned." Reacting to this warning, Evans was able to meet the Union threat to his left flank and avoid a disaster. Alexander's performance at the first major battle of the war earned him the respect of his commanders. He was soon assigned to the staff of General James Longstreet, First Corps, Army of Northern Virginia, where he served primarily as an artillery officer. Porter Alexander's talent and experience as an engineer allowed him to be an excellent judge of terrain which resulted in his uncanny ability to place artillery in strategic positions. During the Seven Days Battles, in 1862, Alexander became the first Confederate officer to go aloft in an observation balloon. Although he had a natural fear of heights, he was able to gather valuable informa-

tion on Union troop movements. Alexander rose quickly in rank, becoming a major in April, 1862 and colonel in July of the same year. At the battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia in December 1862, Alexander's excellent placement of Confederate artillery resulted in a disaster for the attacking Union forces.

Porter Alexander's most famous assignment came during the Army of Northern Virginia's second invasion of the North. On the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Alexander commanded the massive artillery bombardment intended to soften the Union line prior to Pickett's Charge. It is estimated that each of the 170 Confederate cannons fired between 130 and 150 rounds into the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. However, many of the rounds hit the area behind Union lines and the damage to the Union positions was minimal. Union artillery and infantry repulsed the assault, inflicting horrific casualties on the Confederates.

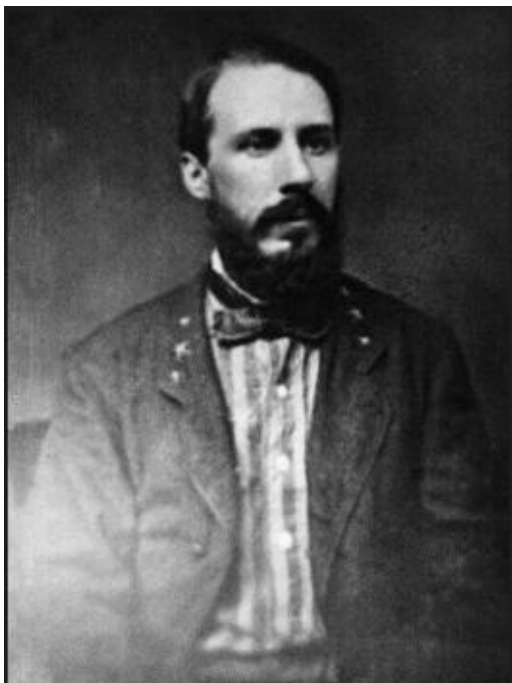
As Confederate hopes for victory faltered, Alexander was promoted to general in March 1864, at the age of 28. On June 30, 1864, while serving at Elliott's Salient at Petersburg, Virginia, Porter is hit in the left shoulder by a rifle ball. He returned home to Georgia to recover. After he returned to Petersburg, the siege was finally broken when Union troops breached the Confederate lines in early April 1865. Retreating to Appomattox Court House with the broken Army of Northern Virginia, Alexander proposes to General Lee that the Confederate soldiers could continue to conduct a guerilla war against the Federals. General Lee believed the South had suffered enough and that only peace will heal the wounds. Alexander's respect for his commander led him to agree.

Following the Confederate surrender, Alexander considers a position with the Brazilian Army but eventually decides to return to his plantation in Georgia. He accepted a position as a mathematics professor at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Several years later, Alexander accepted an executive position with the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railroad. His per-

formance led to a position as president of the Savannah and Memphis Railroad Company. Becoming a good friend of President Grover Cleveland, Alexander was appointed boundary arbitrator between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. For two years Alexander supervises the surveying of boundaries between the countries and completes a thorough report which successfully establishes the permanent boundaries.

Shortly after Alexander returned home from Central America, in October 1899, his wife of forty years, Betty passed away. Together they raised five children, three boys and two girls. Two years later, Porter Alexander married Mary Mason, the niece of his late wife. Mary proved to be a devoted wife and caregiver, always referring to her husband as, "the General." In 1902, E. Porter Alexander was invited to speak at the Centennial of West Point. On June 9, he delivered a stirring speech in the presence of President Teddy Roosevelt, General Longstreet and other dignitaries.

E. Porter Alexander soon retired to spend time with his wife and children. Following several minor strokes he lapsed into a coma and passed away quietly on April 28, 1910 in Savannah. He was buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Augusta, Georgia.



#### References:

Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative by Edward Porter Alexander. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.

Edward Porter Alexander by Maury Klein. Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1971

The Civil War Dictionary by Mark M. Boatner III. New York, David McKay Company, Inc, 1959

#### Presidents Report (Cont)

a computer with access to the Internet and have not yet opted for electronic receipt of *The Banner*, I encourage you to consider doing so. Contact Paul Knoop, our editor ([pknoop@earthlink.net](mailto:pknoop@earthlink.net), 253- 279-2598) to make it happen. Of course, we will continue mailing *The Banner* to those who do not have Internet access or choose to receive their copy by mail.

Our next Brunch meeting is on 29 January 2012 at Patriots Landing. Command Sergeant Major Daniel K. Verbeke, the I Corps (Rear) CSM, will be our program speaker. CSM Verbeke will update us on JBLM activities and will answer questions we might have concerning JBLM and the Army. It should be an interesting program (and football fans, not to worry -- the Brunch date is a week before the Super Bowl.) Please mark your calendars and plan to join us.

As 2011 begins, we wish a "Happy New Year" to you and your loved ones, and also thank you for providing such loyal and continued support to the Museum and to *The Friends*.

**Ian Larson, President**

#### Directors Report (Cont)

After the Valentine's Day limited opening, the museum and gift store will be open to the public in a very limited fashion as we prepare the other galleries and work toward the goal of a grand reopening in the late summer of 2012.

Again, a big thank you to our museum volunteers and others who have helped move this project forward and I hope to see you all on Valentine's Day.

**Myles Grant, Director**

**FRIENDS OF THE FORT LEWIS MILITARY MUSEUM  
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2012**

Place: Patriots Landing  
Time: 1145-1230 Social Hour  
1230-1330 Brunch  
1330-1412 Program

Program: Our guest speaker will be CSM Dan Verbeke, I Corps (Rear) Command Sergeant Major. He will provide an update JBLM and other activities at Lewis as well as other major Army activities of interest to the Pacific Northwest.



Please return your reservation form and check by Thursday, January 26 2012. Last minute reservations may be made by calling Paul Knoop at (253) 279-2598.

Return this form to LTC (Ret) Donald A Simpson, 6615 79th Street W  
Lakewood WA 98499. Make checks payable to "The Friends".  
Cost of Brunch for members and Guests: \$16.00 each.

Number of Reservations: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

**Residents of Patriot's Landing do not need to make payment for the meal, but should make reservations for seating.**

**The Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum  
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The *Banner* is printed four times a year and is mailed to all members of The Friends of Fort Lewis Museum. Articles may be submitted to the Editor or left with the Director of the Fort Lewis Museum. The Friends assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or other materials submitted for publication.

Editor.....Paul Knoop  
 Assistant Editor.....Don Simpson

**Reminder:** Annual membership dues are now due if you are not a Life or Honorary member.

**Help Us Defend Our  
Military Heritage-  
Please Continue to be a  
Friend of the Fort Lewis  
Military Museum**

**ANNUAL DUES**

*Individual*.....\$ 10  
*Family*.....\$ 15  
*Sustaining*.....\$ 25  
*Benefactor*.....\$ 50

(Please make checks payable to *The Friends* and send to Fort Lewis Military Museum, P.O. Box 331001, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA 98433-1001.)

***Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum  
PO Box 331001  
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