

EARLY HISOTRY OF JOHN AND ELIZABETH LOWRY RIGNEY
by Rose Rigney O'Donnell, daughter

John Rigney was born June 12th, 1815 on a farm near the village of Ballendrinnan, not far from the city of Thomastown, Kings Co., Ireland. His mothers name was Ann Purcell, fathers name John Rigney. They had a family of 9 children, Michael, William, John, Marcellia Mary, James, Edward and Ann. John left home in 1841, joined the police force in Armagh and on April 30th, 1847 bought a ticket at Londonderry for passage from Glasgow, Scotland to sail to New York on the ship Fanny. Passage money paid 14 pounds, 17 shilling, 6 pence. I have the receipt among the family records. At that time landing in New York, young men found work hard to find and "Uncle Sam" was calling for Volunteers for Mexico and on September 13, 1847 he joined the U.S. Army as a private in Company " M ", 1st Artillary under General David Twiggs' Brigade. Just as they landed in Vera-Cruze war with Mexico was called off and the soldiers returned to Barracks, on Governors Island. In the meantime he met Elizabeth Lowry, just over from Queens County, Ireland, (Abbeyliex).

They were married in Breoklyn New York on Sept. 30, 1848, by Rev. Father Bacon, Asst. Priest, in the Parish House. (I also have their Marriage certificate. In November 1848 a call for soldiers to come to the Pacific Coast and Company M. was ordered to the "Oregon Country". Mrs. Rigney was allowed to come with her husband as were also three other women whose husbands were in the same company. Among them was Mrs. Christofer Mahon and 3 children, Mrs. John Lacky and Mrs. John Moore. The S.S. Massachusetts brought them by way of Cape Horn. They stopped for supplies, fuel and so on going down the coast also coming up the West coast. They missed California as they were off their course and found themselves at the Sandwich Islands. After a short delay there, they headed direct for the Oregon coast and again delayed at the Mouth of the Columbia river but finally arrived at Vancouver, then Oregon on April 24, 1849. A nice long 6 months trip. In August '49 Caompanys' "H" and "I" were ordered to Puget Sound. At the request of Thomas Chambers, to protect the white settlers from the Indians. They landed at the mouth of Chambers Creek in the Sloop "Harpeoner" on the 28th of August 1849. They embarked and moved up over the hill and established FORT Steilacoom on the Paririe, the 640 acre farm known at that time as the Puget Sound Agricultural Association. where there were a few rough log cabins for shelter. "Uncle Sam" paid rent for the land for several years after the Fort was established. The soldiers soon set to work building quarters for the officers and men and their families and later on lumber was sent in Vessels alreday to build suitable homes and the necessary barracks.

In 1852 his 5 year enlistment having expired, he took ~~his~~ alloted Donation Land Claim of 640 acres north of the W.P. Dougherty claim and built a log cabin for the family. The Dougherty family home was only about one half mile away which was very much better to have near neighbors as compared to those who came in later.

The home had taken up in 1870 as a homestead as known as Rigney Hill South Tacoma

In 1870 he filed on 160 acres on the east side of his holdings as a homestead and built a new house and moved in in June 1873. The Donation claim where the family lived from 1852 to 1873 is what is now known as "Rigney" Hill, South Tacoma.

Ten children were born to them as follows--Jan 2, 1850 (Twins) John L. and Ann, in 1852 a boy James who passed away when only 9 days old while they were still at the fort. Eliza Jane was born July 5th 1853 after the family located on the donation claim. Other born there were George William, June 12, 1855, Mary Ellen Sept. 24, 1857 Thomas Henry Oct. 26, 1859 Marcella Catherine and Lucia Rose (twins) August 31, 1861 and Edward Michael Jan 13, 1867.

X - Mother passed away Nov. 22, 1899 in Steilacoom at the age of 66 and father on May 15, 1892 at Steilacoom. X After selling off most of the Donation and Homestead claims they moved to Steilacoom in Sept. 1880. They are buried in the Catholic Cemetery the "Old Part" which now joins on to Calvary Cemetery. The "Old Part" was the four acre plot deeded to the Catholic Bishop of Nisqually in the south-west corner of the donation claim in 1873.

In the late 70's father was awarded a Pension of \$12.00 per month from the Government as a Veteran of the Mexican War. He was very proud of his badge and wore it on all occasions.

Written at the top of this page
in pencil is "The homestead
taken up in 1873 as a homestead
is known as Rigney Hill, South Tacoma".