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**THEN:** In late 1855 the citizens of Seattle, with help from the crew of the Navy sloop-of-war *Decatur*, built a blockhouse on the knoll that was then still at the waterfront foot of Cherry Street. The sloop's physician, John Y. Taylor, drew this earliest rendering of the log construction.

## In a Good Offense, Defense

**L**ORRAINE MCCONAGHY, historian at Seattle's Museum of History & Industry (MOHAI), spent the summer of 2005 in "the other Washington" hoping to find treasures in the Navy's archives. The object of this ardor was the 117-foot Navy sloop-of-war, the *USS Decatur*, which 150 years earlier visited Seattle and stayed for nine months defending the village during the Treaty War.

The result is adventures all around — aboard the *Decatur*, inside the blockhouse, which the sailors helped the settlers complete, and in the village and woods behind it. All are wonderfully recounted in McConaghy's "Warship Under Sail, The *USS Decatur* in the Pacific West," a new book from the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest in association with the University of Washington Press.

John Y. Taylor, a Navy doctor on board, drew this detailed likeness of the blockhouse Fort *Decatur*, named for the warship. Until the historian uncovered it, the drawing was buried in the archives. One of the two oldest renderings of any part of Seattle, this sketch is totally new to us. The other, also drawn from the *Decatur*'s deck, is by Thomas Phelps, Taylor's friend and shipmate.

When the heavy boxes of microfilm, copied for her from Taylor's journals, first arrived in Seattle from Yale's Beinecke Library, McConaghy recalls, "I raced to the MOHAI library and my hands were shaking with such excitement that I could hardly thread the reader. But there were Taylor's drawings, right up on the screen, of Seattle (and much else). I laid my head in my hands and wept."

McConaghy says her book "allows us to see (pioneer) Seattle with completely new eyes." She is right. 

Check out Paul Dorpat and Jean Sherrard's blog at [www.pauldorpat.com](http://www.pauldorpat.com).

### Hear the author

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED to historian Lorraine McConaghy's lecture about her new book at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 18, at Horizon House, 900 University St.



JEAN SHERRARD

**NOW:** The "repeat" for Taylor's drawing was taken from the southeast corner of Colman Dock, a location that in 1855 was still in water deep enough for the *USS Decatur*. This view also shows two pioneer neighborhood landmarks: the smokestack of the Seattle Electric steam plant and the Smith Tower.