

courtesy of Frederick Mann

This building was both home and office for civil engineer Ambrose Kiehl as he supervised the first clearing of the Fort Lawton site.

Standing Before the Fort

The engineer supervised the building of Magnolia's Fort Lawton from a shack.

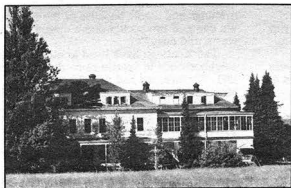
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In 1896, Ambrose Kiehl — a civil engineer, photographer, musician and family man from Port Townsend — was hired by the Army to survey and clear the new Fort Lawton site and supervise construction of its buildings.

The first structure was the two-story board-and-batten shack shown here. The design is Spartan even by military standards, but it was meant to be only a temporary residence/office for Kiehl's early work on the fort.

Here the family, Isabella and Ambrose (left and right, flanking their daughters Laura and Lorena), pose for a photographer who was probably Ambrose himself, running into the scene after setting a time-delayed shutter on one of his many cameras.

Behind Isabella and supporting the bicycle is the



The now-abandoned camp hospital stands north of the field where the Kiehl home once stood.

building's one oddity, the squat, windowless addition extending from the west side. Kiehl prepared his blueprints and then exposed them to the sun by opening the trap door. Solar energy was required because the fort lacked electricity (although it did have a telephone, as evinced by the pole on the right).

The date is probably 1899. The summer before, 97 of Magnolia's 700 acres donated by citizens for the fort had been cleared. The first seven buildings were completed in 1900.

Eventually, 25 main post buildings were set about an oval parade ground. One of the first constructed was the camp's hospital, visible in its present dilapidated state in the "now" photo.

After 1910, the Army lost interest in the fort and, in 1938, offered it to the city for \$1. The city declined, but in any case the military might soon have taken it back. During World War II, 450 new buildings were speedily erected to make Fort Lawton the sixth-largest point of embarkation for troops in the U.S.

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