Northwest Cultural Resources Institute
Vancouver National Historic Reserve

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

NCRI Report

Introducing the Northwest Cultural Resources Institute: Why We're Here

The Northwest Cultural Resources Institute (NCRI) is a cooperative partnership based at the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, dedicated to facilitating research and educational activities relating to the cultural resources of the area.

The foundations of the NCRI include the archaeological collection, the archaeological resources remaining in situ, and the extant historic architecture. These cultural resources form an unparalleled opportunity for researchers, students, and members of the public to study within the fields of archaeology, history, curation and collections management, museum studies, preservation and conservation, and historic architecture.

Through place-based learning and working in the Reserve itself, participants have the opportunity to integrate their research topic with larger physical and social contexts.

The Reserve has been designated as the premier historical archaeological site in the Pacific Northwest. Over 50 years of excavations have resulted in an exceptional artifact collection of two million objects, spanning the Native American, Hudson's Bay Company, and U.S. Army occupations of the site.

The Reserve also includes over 60 historic structures representing various architectural styles, many of which are unique adaptations.

The mission of this vibrant partnership is accomplished through archaeological investigations and field schools, analysis of collections and archives, recording of oral histories, development of digital educational tools, the fostering and publication of research papers, lectures and demonstrations on related topics, programs that highlight related professions, and public outreach.

Announcements

David Hansen Retires
Curator David Hansen, who has been at Fort Vancouver since 1974, retired on August 2. David has 35 years of service with the federal government, and his expertise will be greatly missed. David has agreed to volunteer for special events and to help with cataloging objects at the McLoughlin House unit.

Fort Vancouver Curator Hired
Tessa Langford has been hired as the new park Curator, replacing David Hansen. Tessa has worked at the site as a Museum Technician since 1998.

Period Clothing and Library Move to Cultural Resources
The Cultural Resources Division now has responsibility for the period clothing program and the research library.

Scott Langford will continue as librarian, supervised by Doug Wilson. The library is expanding into a second room next door, to offer better access to the growing collection of books and research materials.

Eileen Trestain, a noted fabric historian and textile expert, has agreed to coordinate the period clothing program under the supervision of Tessa Langford. Eileen's crew of volunteers will be inventorying, cataloging, and labeling all the clothing. They will also be handling all loans of clothing. There are regular hours for the period clothing program now: Monday and Thursday from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm, as well as on special event days. Please see Eileen's letter on page 4.

Fifth Annual Archaeology Field School
The 5th annual field school began on June 14. This year they investigated the historic garden area, looking for evidence of beds and pathways as well as collecting pollen and phytolith samples for analysis. Analysis of the artifacts will be ongoing most of this year.

Investigations Highlight History of Vancouver Arsenal

Gary Bickford, Chief of Maintenance at Fort Vancouver, recently recreated the park's playground to be safer for children and accessible to children with disabilities. In preparation, archaeological testing and monitoring work was done at the site by Eric Gleason and Jacqueline Cheung. During historical research, they found that the U.S. Army had utilized the site for an Ordnance Reserve beginning in the late 1850s. The following is paraphrased from the report:

By 1869 several buildings had been constructed. Immediately prior to the beginning of the Civil War Vancouver was producing small arms ammunition. By 1874, the site was known as the Vancouver Arsenal. Considerable development occurred within the boundaries, including quarters for a commanding officer, a sergeant and laundresses, a barracks, an office, a barn, a guard-house, a magazine, two storehouses, two ordnance storehouses and a flagstaff. Major changes took place after it was turned over to the Quartermasters Department during the 1880s. Along the eastern boundary was the Headquarters building, and to the south of this cavalry stables, barracks, a mess house, wagon shed and gun shed as well as a guard-house and water closet.
During the first half of the 20th century much of the area previously occupied by the Arsenal became increasingly vacant. By 1936 the stables had been removed and a radio station and antennas had been constructed to the south of the project area. During WWII the project area was occupied by a portable band shell and a boxing ring, with much of the remaining area developed as a golf course.

A considerable amount of cultural material was recovered, a total of 1,141 artifacts. The archaeology revealed the presence of two historical features of interest. The first feature identified was a buried improved macadam road surface. The second feature was a dense discrete concentration of historical cultural debris. The historical debris in this feature dates from the early U. S. Army use of this area from ca. 1855 to the early 1860s. The narrow temporal range of the recovered artifacts and the concentrated nature of the feature is suggestive of a single disposal event, probably on the then existing ground surface.

This figural tobacco pipe (above left) has a molded woman's head framed with flower petals. The Scovills & Co. backstamp on the reverse side of a Sanders-style U.S. Army button (above right) dates it from 1840 to 1850.

The archival and archaeological findings associated with the play structure project combined with the findings of previous field work show that some of the earliest deposits associated with the U.S. Army's use of the Ordnance Reserve/Arsenal area are to be found within this area.

Excavating the ca. 1850-1865 Sutler's Store

The City of Vancouver is redeveloping the twelve historic U.S. Army buildings within the "West Barracks" area of Vancouver Barracks. During the redevelopment process, the National Park Service monitored excavations to ensure that significant archaeological deposits were not destroyed.

During the winter of 2003-2004, a new water pipe was installed in the middle of Hatheway Road, in front of the ca. 1904 Artillery Barracks. As the contractor's machinery was excavating a trench down the middle of the road, large deposits of mid-19th century artifacts were encountered. The archaeological monitor requested that the machine be shut down, and NPS archaeologists Doug Wilson and Robert Cromwell were consulted.

The deposits were deemed to be intact and significant, and based upon historic maps from the 1850s period, the artifacts seemed to be most likely associated with a ca. 1850-1865 U.S. Army Sutler's Store that was in this location. (Sutlers were civilian contractors, who were licensed by the U.S. Army to provision troops with fresh food, uniforms, and daily goods). A full-scale archaeological excavation ensued, to recover significant deposits that would have been destroyed by the installation of this pipe.

Leslie O'Rourke excavates at the site of the Sutler's Store in West Vancouver Barracks.

Period sketches show that this Sutler's Store was surrounded by a stockade fence, much as the HBC Fort Vancouver was, but at a much smaller scale. Limited historic research has revealed a tantalizing tale that this Sutler's Store was established by a civilian named Elijah Camp, who partnered with none other than the Captain of the Quartermaster's Corps, Ulysses S. Grant.

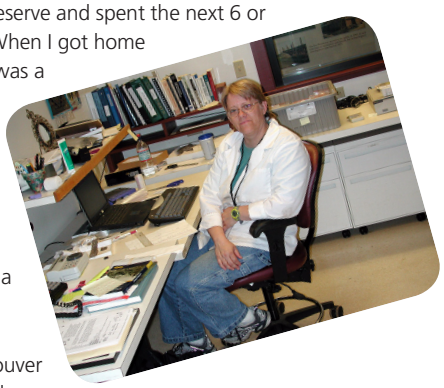
The archaeology of this location revealed the remnants of two wood stockade walls (as per the historic sketch), tens of thousands of ca. 1850-1860 period artifacts, and a privy that exceeded 4 ft. in depth, which was filled with the marvelous trappings of daily Sutler's Store operations.

Under the Microscope: Rebecca Rickard

I was born in Tuscon, Arizona, May 29, 1959. When I was four, my father, who was in the Air Force, got transferred to upstate New York, where my family lived for the next fourteen years. In 1977, my parents decided they wanted to retire in Colorado, so we loaded up the U-Haul and moved to Colorado Springs, where I lived off and on for about 25 years. I moved to Camas, WA, after my divorce. That marriage produced four wonderful children, two boys and two girls, who now range in age from 16 to 22.

I first became interested in archaeology when I was about eight years old. When I was growing up, we only got two TV channels. I watched alot of National Geographic shows, and alot of those were about archaeology. I like history and earth sciences, and I figured the best way to learn about history was to touch history through archaeology.

When I went to college in my youth, I just did the general ed. thing, with the intention of going to a university and majoring in anthropology. But alas, I was a mediocre student at best and the university decided that I was not cut out to attend their prestigious institution. So I packed it in and went home where the call of the military was irresistible. I joined the Army Reserve and spent the next 6 or 7 months in training and the next 12 years serving my country. When I got home from training, I got married and in the course of that marriage I was a stay at home mom, and my education took the back burner. I am now at a point in my life where I can finally finish my education. I attended Clark College, taking the anthropology classes I would need to transfer to WSU - V, where I will attend starting in August of this year. My education goals include at least getting my Bachelor's degree, and if my eyesight and health hold up, getting a Master's. I doubt I'll be up to going for a Doctorate, as I'll probably be rather old by then.



Becki has worked in the Cultural Resources division at Fort Vancouver since April 2004, first as a work study student, then as a seasonal Museum Aide cataloging Fort Colvile artifacts.

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The Vancouver National Historic Reserve is a partnership of the National Park Service, the City of Vancouver, the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the U.S. Army. It includes Fort Vancouver and its village, Vancouver Barracks and Officer's Row, Pearson Field and Air Museum, portions of the Columbia River waterfront, the Water Resources Education Center, and the McLoughlin House unit in Oregon City, Oregon.

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site &
Vancouver National Historic Reserve
612 East Reserve Street
Vancouver, WA 98661

Phone
360 696-7655
Website
www.nps.gov/fova

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Field School in Review: the Powder Magazine

From June 15th to July 30th 2004, five professional and twenty student archaeologists unearthed the rock and mortar foundations of the ca. 1832 Powder Magazine, the only brick building at Fort Vancouver. Analysis was carried out by cultural resources volunteers and with the efforts of research assistant from Portland State University (Janna Tuck), a work-study student from Clark College (Rebecca Rickard), three student interns (Erin Dunbar, Sara K. Williams, and Logan Hunt). Analysis of the artifacts is nearly complete, and data entry and analysis are ongoing.

The powder magazine was a crucial part of the Hudson's Bay Company headquarters and supply depot. The Spring 1844 inventory lists over 14,000 Lbs. (6.35 metric tons) of gun powder in 158 barrels and kegs. The Powder Magazine was essential to secure these large amounts of gun powder prior to their dissemination to the subsidiary forts, the fur brigades, and through sales to employees, missionaries, Native Americans, and American settlers. Historical accounts first note the presence of a Powder Magazine at Fort Vancouver in 1832.

The 2004 Powder Magazine field school was a partnership between the National Park Service, Portland State University and Washington State University—Vancouver. The school has been funded through a generous donation by the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust, and grants from the National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share Program and the North Coast and Cascades Research Learning Network.

Students sort artifacts by material type while in the field (top). A close up of the original Powder Magazine foundation shows the stone and coral mortar used in its construction.

Historical Fragment

Edward Chambreau Papers 1845-1902
Reed College Library

... late in the fall of 1848 I got into a serious row with one of the Companys officers. I was over powered, put irons and confined in the Jail. Chrismas night 1848 when every one in the Fort was having a good time, I heard some thing fall on the floor… I found what proved to be two bran new files… I think in about four hours I was intirely loose from lè chenne. I waited for old Bruse the Jailer who brought my brackfast… I struck him on the side of the head. I puled him in and I took his coat and cap put it on and started across the Fort for the Gate… a freind was waiting… we hurried to the River where there was a kanoe ready… We started down the Columbia River. it began to get day night and when we turned to go up the Willemutt River we sawn a boat start from Vancouver… [He] said its an Hudson Bay boat what will you do, dont you think you had better hide under the Blankets flat in the kenoe... they were gaining on us very fast, and the only thing there was to do was to get ready for the fight.

Period Clothing Coordinator's Letter

Dear Volunteers:

In a move intended to improve overall quality and condition of the Period Clothing department, the collection room is undergoing some changes. The ladies' and gentlemens' clothing are now in separate rooms, and the dressing rooms have been switched. In addition, the period clothing collection has expanded and includes Civil War era civilian and military items for use during appropriate events.

The Period Clothing Program now has regular hours (please see the announcement on page 2). Period Clothing volunteers will be on hand to assist you in choosing appropriate clothing, and to prepare the new loan forms for checking items in and out. Please plan ahead to visit during open hours.

Right now, twenty volunteers work for the Period Clothing Program. We are cataloging and photographing the clothing and textile items used for living history at Fort Vancouver and the McLoughlin House. We are always open to more volunteers, as many hands make the work load light. Please call if you are interested in becoming one of the Period Clothing staff.

As part of our planned upgrade, we will be forming a support group for the Period Clothing Program. If you have an interest in sewing, knitting, embroidery, or other textile arts, you are invited to join us. We also held a five-session class this fall on sewing reproduction clothing, and plan to offer additional classes in the future. If you are interested in volunteering, need clothing fit, or simply want more information about the Period Clothing Program, please call me at (360) 891-0783.

Eileen Trestain

Current Research

Erin Dunbar
Undergraduate at Washington State University Vancouver, graduated in June, 2005.
An Archaeological Investigation of a Cooper Shop at Fort Vancouver:
Historic records indicate that the HBC at Fort Vancouver had a cooper's shop near the southeast corner of the stockade and north of Lower Mill Road ca. 1841-1853, but the function of two other structures adjacent to the cooperage is unknown. The purpose of this project was to determine if the type and distribution of artifacts from excavations in 1985, 2001-2002, and 2004 indicate a cooper's shop and/or other activities.

Janna Tuck
Graduate at Portland State University.
Management Report: Recommendations for Piper-cub Fly-in Event at Pearson Airfield:
This report summarizes the results of enhanced archaeological survey and testing conducted at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site (FOVA) and the Pearson Air Field, Vancouver, Washington. This project was designed to define the boundaries of sensitive archaeological deposits south of the Lower Mill Road fenceline in order to prevent damage by the planned Piper-cub Fly-in event at Pearson Air Field.

Sara K. Williams
Undergraduate at Washington State University, Vancouver, graduated in June, 2005.
Fort Vancouver Powder Magazine: Showing How Collection Bias Effects The Archaeological Interpretation of a Site:
This project compared assemblages from excavations of the Powder Magazine in 1972 by Hoffman & Ross to the 2004 field school excavations. This analysis indicates that artifact size and distribution are important factors for interpreting the history of the building and how the building was constructed.

Ivan Sergejev
Undergraduate at Portland State University, graduated in June, 2005.
Powder Magazine GIS Project:
This project involved digitization of excavation drawings and maps into the ArcMap 8.0 GIS program in order to produce a detailed map of the Powder Magazine foundation. Tables with excavation information and metadata about each layer were created.

Material Culture Notes:
Spode Ceramics

The jewels of the archaeological collection are the Spode ceramics, dishes and other utilitarian items made by the Spode Company of England and imported, after a journey of 17,000 miles by sailing ship, to Fort Vancouver.

Josiah Spode opened his Staffordshire pottery in 1776, and quickly became known for innovation in ceramic manufacture. He pioneered the use of steam power for machinery in a pottery, perfected the transfer printing process, and refined recipes for bone china. After only two years, he opened a London retail outlet and assigned its management to his son. In 1806 Spode was named the "Potter and English Porcelain Manufacturer to His Royal Highness." Soon after, he introduced stone china and feldspar porcelain.

In 1797, Josiah Spode II, his son William Spode, and an experienced assistant, William Copeland, entered into a partnership. The Spode and Copeland families were entertwined in a series of partnerships over the next several decades.

In 1835, W.T. Copeland became lord mayor of London. Soon after, his company entered into an exclusive agreement to supply ceramic tableware and toiletware to the Hudson's Bay Company. Presumably, Spode ceramics began to reach North America soon after. Since Fort Vancouver was the supply depot for the entire Columbia Department, all of the outgoing orders and incoming goods were funneled through this post on their way to one of the two dozen subsidiary posts. In the early 1850s, tariffs on the importation of British goods seem to have stemmed the flow of Spode ceramics to Fort Vancouver and other posts in the United States. The Spode monopoly in the Oregon Territory was replaced by American and French ceramics, supplied by both the Hudson's Bay Company and American merchants.

Invariably, the type of ceramic supplied to the Hudson's Bay Company was white earthenware decorated with transfer printed designs in one of several standard colors. The transfer printing process transfers a design engraved on a copper plate to the ceramic piece via pigment on a special kind of paper. After glazing and firing, the pigment, a metallic oxide in an oil base, transforms through heat into the desired color. For example, the typical bright blue color is made from cobalt, which is black prior to firing.

The enormous quantities excavated from Fort Vancouver comprise the world's largest collection of recovered Spode ceramics. Over 20,000 pieces are curated in the storage facility at the Fur Store. They are in a variety of colors, including blue and red/pink (the two most common colors, comprising 80% of the Spode ceramics) as well as green, brown, black, and mulberry. There is also flow blue, a bleeding of the pigment that was originally a manufacturing mistake but later became a popular effect. Over two dozen patterns are represented.

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A partner in the
Vancouver National Historic Reserve

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

This is the official report of the Northwest Cultural Resources Institute. The NCRI is a cooperative partnership dedicated to facilitating research and educational activities relating to archaeology, history, curation, and historic architecture at the Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

Historic Reserve Archaeologist
Dr. Douglas Wilson

Fort Vancouver Archaeologist
Robert Cromwell

Curator
Tessa Langford

Museum Technicians
Doug Magedanz
Danielle Gembala

Archaeological Technicians
Heidi Pierson
Eric Gleason
Jacqueline Cheung

Librarian
Scott Langford

MYSTERY ARTIFACT

Fort Vancouver curates archaeological collections from other fur trade sites as part of its research center function. One of these collections is Fort Colvile, an 1825-1871 Hudson's Bay Company post near Kettle Falls, Washington (now under Lake Roosevelt most of the time). After the HBC abandoned the post, the land was used as a ranch by the family of former Chief Trader Angus McDonald. Heidi Pierson and Becki Rickard have been cataloging materials from the site this year, and chose this issue's mystery object. Identification will be given in the next issue!