National Park Service

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

Washington, Oregon

2014 Superintendent's Annual Report

Greetings from your national park!

Oh, what a wonderful year it has been! I am fortunate to work side by side with capable, hard-working employees, exceedingly talented volunteers, and supportive partners. These annual reports are a wonderful time to reflect on our accomplishments, as well as prepare for the year ahead.

This year we increased curriculum-based educational programming. Providing free opportunities for young people is the heart of who we are and what we do! We also enhanced many of our special events and worked with partners to provide additional avenues for learning about this urban national park. We continued hosting those free events which are fast becoming signature events in the metro area, such as the Children's Cultural Parade, Soldiers' Bivouac, Get Outdoors Day, Brigade Encampment, and Christmas at Fort Vancouver. Campfires and Candlelight continues to bring the fur trade to life. This year we had over 7,000 visitors in attendance!

We have made important strides at Vancouver Barracks, including regular interpretive programs on the Parade Ground. Watching cannons fire and the 1st Oregon Cavalry doing drills is a thrill! We're moving forward on painting and roofing all of the buildings fronting the Parade Ground. You'll be seeing tremendous positive changes this year!

Pearson Air Museum is in fantastic hands with Manager Dr. Bob Cromwell. He is doing an outstanding job and visitation to the free museum is strong. In addition to other exhibits, we now have five airplanes including the newest loan, a 1929 TravelAir biplane, and a DH-4 Liberty coming in the near future.

We've entered an innovative partnership with local health care providers, the National Park Prescription Program, to encourage healthy, outdoor activities. Come out and take a walk with us! We'll see that you exercise your mind as well as your body. Relax and visit your national park—you're always welcome!

Tracy Fortmann, Superintendent

Telling the story of the fur trade

Today's sprawling city of Vancouver began here, at the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver. For our National Park Service staff and volunteers, exploring and sharing the story of our local heritage is a unique honor.

This year, we expanded many of our free public events, such as the fur trade era *Brigade Encampment* at *National Get Outdoors Day,* and introduced new events, like *Village and Barracks Come Alive!* to better share this fascinating history. More hands-on activities and demonstrations were added, often led by graduates or students of our innovative Dame and Engagé Schools, which teach young people history and public speaking, as well as early 19th century skills like fire starting, handcrafts, and cooking. Campfires & Candlelight is our largest living history event of the year and a signature community event. This event involved hundreds of volunteers , who brought the history of the site to life from the fur trade era of the 1840s to World War II.

Archaeological excavations, which took place during the summer of 2014 as part of our annual Public Archaeology Field School, also shed new light on the history of the fur trade. Students from Portland State University and Washington State University Vancouver worked with National Park Service archaeologists to discover thousands of artifacts from the house sites of Hudson's Bay Company employees Little Proulx, a French Canadian boatman, and William Kaulehelehe, a Hawaiian educator and minister.

Telling the story of the US Army

The story of the US Army at Vancouver Barracks is quintessentially American. It is a complex, multifaceted history of westward expansion, peace and war, industry and innovation. In the midst of the historic Army barracks, military history is an ever-present focus of our national park.

In 2014, a new partnership with the First Oregon Volunteer Cavalry brought the historic military post to life twice each month. Horses and uniformed cavalry reenactors from the First Oregon camped, paraded, and drilled on the site's Parade Ground, providing a fun and unique experience for the public. These demonstrations were enhanced by the park's existing historic weapons programs, during which National Park Service staff and volunteers fire historical weapons and discuss 19th century weapons technology.

Additionally, a new exhibit highlighting loaned artifacts from Gettysburg National Military Park helped visitors commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Civil War. New and existing living history partners added numerous military encampments to our Campfires & Candlelight event.

Archaeological excavations on the Parade Ground led to the identification of the post's iconic flagstaff, which stood from 1854 to 1879. This work has paved the way for the reconstruction of the flagstaff, which is part of a partnership project between the National Park Service, the Citizens Military Appreciation Committee, and the City of Vancouver.

Telling the story of aviation

The 1937 landing of the world's first transpolar flight at Pearson Field, piloted by Russian aviator Valery Chkalov, is a landmark in the history of Vancouver. Each year, the park commemorates this event with a special ceremony at Pearson Air Museum. In 2014, we celebrated the 77th anniversary of the Chkalov landing with music from the Vancouver Community Concert Band, speeches from local and international dignitaries, and an interpretive vignette staged by National Park Service volunteers (*right*).

Many changes came to the museum this year, with the addition of Pearson Air Museum Manager Dr. Bob Cromwell, an avid aviation historian with a passion for interpreting the history of Pearson Field. Two aircraft - a 1949 Ryan Navion and a home built Pietenpol Aerial - were generously loaned for exhibit by local pilots, and a contract was initiated through Century Aviation, a local aircraft building firm, to reconstruct a historic DH-4 Liberty aircraft to be exhibited at the museum. A massive scale model of the World War I-era Spruce Mill that was once located on the museum site was built by a National Park Service volunteer and displayed in the museum. Through a National Park Service contract with a local painting firm, the exterior of the museum's main and historic hangars received a much-needed repainting.

In 2014, 18,958 people visited the museum, including 24 separate K-12 school groups.

Telling the story of the McLoughlin Family

The McLoughlin House unit of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, located in Oregon City, Oregon, tells the story one of the Northwest's most important historical figures: Dr. John McLoughlin, also known as the "Father of Oregon." Here, the National Park Service works in partnership with the McLoughlin Memorial Association to share the history of the house and its historic inhabitants. This year, in addition to guided tours led by a dedicated team of National Park Service volunteers, we partnered with Washington State University Vancouver to create an off-site learning opportunity in the form of a new digitized e-book focusing on the McLoughlin family.

This past winter, the National Park Service oversaw the repointing of the chimneys of the McLoughlin House and the neighboring Barclay House, and completed a cultural landscape inventory for the site's grounds. Included in the inventory was a conservation survey of elements of the McLoughlin Park. The fountain, graves, and numerous markers were assessed. This data will allow us to move ahead with future conservation plans.

The site's Victorian Cultural Demonstration program was as popular as ever, with new regulars joining the fun every month. Volunteer docents and partners from the McLoughlin Memorial Association, the Clackamas County Historical Society, and the City of Oregon City work with us to celebrate important milestones, as well as community events and programs throughout the year.

Connecting with Our Community

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Costumed volunteers at 1860s Base Ball

"The National Park Service is keeping the memory of Dr. McLoughlin and our rich heritage alive. Working together, we reach thousands. I just gave a tour to a family from Germany who came to visit us in Oregon City just because we are part of the national park!"

- Richard Matthews, President, McLoughlin Memorial Association

Volunteers build a model Curtiss Jenny aircraft.

"I love Christmas time at the Fort and the pretty clothes people wear. There are a ton of fun things to do for me and my sisters."

- Ashanti, age 10

"Cannons firing, ax throwing, and planes. I don't know of anyplace else with so much cool stuff to do."

- Quinton, age 12

"Working as a Ranger at Fort Vancouver has afforded me a unique and wonderful opportunity to interact with visitors from all over the world. It is a great joy to be able to see people make the connections that allow them to understand the history of this place, and put it in a context that personally touches them."

- Mike Twist, National Park Ranger, recipient of the 2014 Tourism Ambassador Award

National Park Rangers tell visitors about Fort Vancouver NHS at National Get Outdoors Day

"This partnership allows us to work in tandem with the National Park Service in creative and productive ways to bring programming to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. It helps us connect people to place through art and education, at the Confluence Land Bridge and all our sites."

- Colin Fogarty, Executive Director, Confluence Project

Costumed volunteers at the McLoughlin House

Engaging Youth and Families

The National Park Service is dedicated to fostering a sense of stewardship with new generations of park visitors. At Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, engaging youth in our community and throughout the Northwest is an integral part of our mission.

In 2014, the park continued to increase the number of free curriculum-based education programs available to students, as well as the number of students directly participating. Our structured programs brought more than 12,600 students to the site this year.

Through the park's first-ever Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Professional Development Opportunity, the park selected Karen Morley-Smith, a local educator, to review the park's curriculum-based education programming to adapt it to better meet Common Core and state standards and to structure it to be more relevant to the needs of students and classroom teachers. These exciting new programs will debut in the spring of 2015.

Recognized as leaders in crafting special events that draw youth and families, park staff fostered strong relationships with other agencies and organizations to serve mutual goals. For example, local university students helped lead the park's popular Kids Dig programs (above), which introduce youth to the basic scientific concepts of archaeology through hands-on work. Our Cultural Resources program was also the basis of the park's participation in Vancouver's STEM Fest.

Using youth to better engage young visitors is a strategy the park has found successful, and this is highlighted through the inclusion of students of the park's living history schools - the Young Engagé and Dame School - at most special events. Enrollees in these schools develop 19th century skills, and then demonstrate them to other children and families at special events throughout the year, such as National Get Outdoors Day. To date, over 150 young volunteers between the ages of 12 and 18 have graduated from this year-long program, and many have gone on to become active National Park Service volunteers.

Building Partnerships

Our partners, currently over 70 different groups, help this national park achieve a standard of excellence. We depend on our partners for everything from special events to reconstruction projects. This year's Campfires & Candlelight event, which saw over 7,000 visitors, was an outstanding success thanks to several volunteer living history groups that joined our Timeline of History. The Vancouver Community Concert Band has loaned their talents to several events this year, including commemoration of the Chkalov transpolar flight, a special event at Pearson Air Museum commemorating the anniversary of the start of World War I, and 1860s Base Ball.

Two partnerships have moved to a new level this year. The National Park Service first partnered with Confluence over a decade ago, but a new agreement this year brought their offices to the national park and ensures more educational opportunities for the public. Annual programs such as Gifts from Our Ancestors, and the development of new events and exhibits, offer ways to explore the natural and cultural history of the Columbia River system. Confluence is led by Executive Director Colin Fogarty, pictured below with Fort Vancouver NHS Superintendent Tracy Fortmann.

Another essential partner is the Community Military Appreciation Committee (CMAC). In addition to working together on Vancouver's annual Memorial Day event, this year we are partnering, along with the City of Vancouver, to reconstruct the garrison flagstaff and associated paths on the Vancouver Barracks Parade Ground. This effort will restore a powerful symbol to the military post and the community, and will create a new venue for visitors and special events.

Events at the National Park

In 2014, the park approved special park use permits that generated over 200 events and tours. It was a year of new opportunities. The staff at Visit Vancouver USA facilitated bi-weekly Fort Vancouver NHS shore excursion tours for American Empress cruise travelers. They also brought the 2014 International Society of Arboriculture Pacific Northwest Chapter's annual tree climbing competition to the park.

The park contributed to the safety of our community by providing training space for CRESA 911 and the Vancouver Police Department SWAT and Canine Units. Training space was also made available to the US Army Portland Recruiting Battalion for their Change of Command Ceremony. As always, it was exciting to see public turnout for annual military events, including Memorial Day & Soldier's Bivouac, and the annual Veteran's Day Parade.

Members of the community utilized park spaces to hold business meetings and retreats, birthday parties, baby showers, memorial services, family gatherings, weddings and church and business picnics. The Historic Hangar at Pearson Air Museum became the venue of choice for wedding receptions and other special occasions.

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The Museum Collection

2014 was an exciting year for Fort Vancouver NHS museum staff, who are responsible for the management and protection of the park's collection of over two million archaeological and historical artifacts. Curatorial staff created new exhibits throughout the park, managed donations and incoming and outgoing artifact loans, cataloged nearly 67,000 new artifacts into the collection, and served on regional and national committees.

The Museum Collection Open House program, which brings visitors behind-the-scenes into the park's curation facility, remained popular this year. In the spring of 2014, Assistant Curator Meagan Huff presented on this innovative program at the national conference of the American Alliance of Museums.

National Park Service museum collections are cared for in perpetuity on behalf othe American people, and we are dedicated to sharing these fascinating objects with the public. Small "pop-up" exhibits integrated park collections into many public programs and events, allowing the public to make deeper connections to the history of the site through the artifacts that have been found here archaeologically, or donated or loaned by members of the community. Curatorial and archaeological staff also participated in community events like the annual Archaeology Roadshow at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

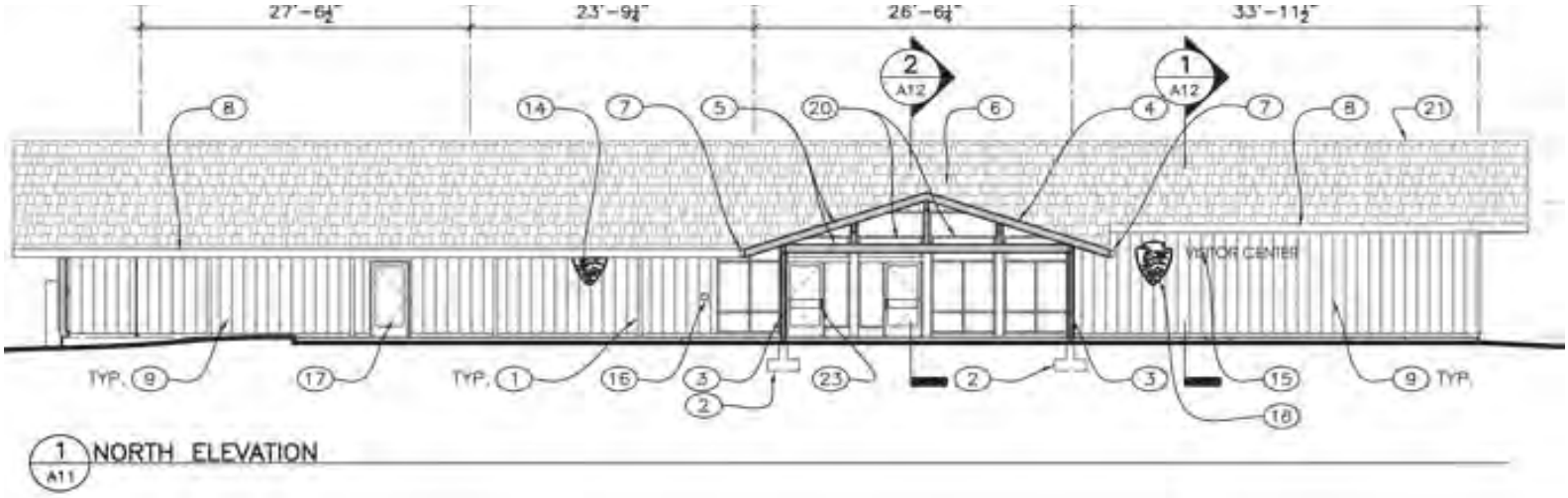
Cultural resources specialists at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site also provided guidance and carried out projects for several parks nationwide, including San Juan Islands National Historic Park, Lewis and Clark National Historic Park, Virgin Islands National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and North Cascades National Park.

Looking Towards the Future

2015 is bringing some critical improvements to the national park. Funding has been secured by the National Park Service for several major renovation projects to historic Vancouver Barracks. In 2015, work will begin to perform a complete rehabilitation to one of the large barracks buildings along the Parade Ground. Once complete, this building will serve as the headquarters of the U.S. Forest Service's Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and another modern building in the south barracks will become the Region 6 radio dispatch center. In addition, the remaining two large double barracks fronting the Parade Ground will receive a full restoration of the exterior envelope, including new roofs and paint.

Over the summer, a contract was awarded to DSL Builders of Salem, Oregon, to rehabilitate the Fort Vancouver NHS Visitor Center (design below). The interior will be completely redesigned to allow for increased accessibility and educational opportunities. The rehabilitation is scheduled to begin in mid-November 2014, and the Visitor Center will reopen by late 2015, providing a vibrant central "home" for the national park and the adjoining City properties that make up the National Historic Reserve.

In 2016, the National Park Service will be celebrating 100 years of service - protecting public lands, preserving and interpreting history, and sharing the natural and cultural wonders of this country with millions of visitors nationwide. Leading up to and during this exciting time, we look forward to bringing new stories, programs, and events to our visitors, and helping our community connect to our place in the agency that has been called "America's best idea."



2014 By the Numbers

692,397 visitors visited Fort Vancouver National Historic Site
12,607 local students visited the national park on field trips
7,000 visitors attended Campfires & Candlelight
6,500 visitors attended National Get Outdoors Day
4,578 visitors attended the park's Historic Weapons program
4,365 people followed us on Facebook, 3,520 followed us on Twitter

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