National Park Service
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

2012 Superintendent's Annual Report

"*On the eve of our centennial, the employees of the National Park Service have imagined our second century of public service and charted a path to help us achieve that vision.*"

Reflecting on these words by Jon Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service, I have worked with park staff this year to identify *real* actions we can take here at Fort Vancouver to ready us for the future. In 2016 our agency will be 100 years old, and our mission is just as critical today as it was when the NPS was created: to preserve nationally significant special places in perpetuity, while allowing for responsible enjoyment of them by current generations.

A Call to Action is our vision for the future, and it focuses on four areas: connecting people to parks, advancing our educational mission, preserving special places, and enhancing professional excellence.

Every park has a role to play in this call. As your local national park, we will be answering with a strengthening of field-tested ideas from the past, and new, innovative approaches. Our beginning is reflected inside this report.

Fort Vancouver - this national park - has been a cherished part of this community since 1948. Its history is studied in Washington and Oregon schools. Tens of thousands of visitors attend special events here. A recent economic study found that visitors to this national park spent over $39 million at Fort Vancouver and in nearby communities, spending that supports 620 jobs in the area.

We are proud to welcome you to this unique site. This national park's future is very bright. As we embark on the next 100 years, we remain constant. We will continue to serve, for current and future Americans.

- *Tracy Fortmann, Superintendent*

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Engaging Youth with National Parks

In 2012, Fort Vancouver NHS continued to focus on engaging youth through visits, volunteering, and career development.

Our 100 youth volunteers enjoyed new training classes in life on the Oregon Trail, the transition between the Hudson's Bay Company and US Army, research, archaeology and museum collections, historic medicine, blacksmithing, beading, whittling, and more.

With redesigned education programs, visiting students on field trips participated in exciting new programs with hands-on activities. 2012's education programs showed students from across the metropolitan area that there is more than one side to history, and more than one way to learn it.

- **680,592 visitors***
- **6,500 students from Oregon and 5,000 students from Washington on field trips**
- **32 summer camps with 1,000 campers**
- **70 partner organizations**

We also continued our third year of free Blast to the Past Summer Education Camps, providing 27 free day or overnight camps to connect kids to history and science. Campers set up their own tents, played 1860s base ball, visited archaeological dig sites, ate dinner cooked over an open fire, created museum exhibits, and a whole lot more! Summer camps

at Fort Vancouver NHS inspire kids to learn about the landscapes, resources, science, and stories protected and preserved by the National Park Service.

OMSI™
Everyday Encounters with Science

The National Park Service also partnered with the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) to debut a week-long overnight camp titled *Fur to Fossil: Earth and People of the Northwest*.

At no cost to families, middle-schoolers spent two and half days at Fort Vancouver, focusing on cultural history and archaeology, and two and a half days at John Day Fossil Beds learning about natural history and paleontology.

To help facilitate the year's ambitious summer programming, the park looked to its youth volunteers, and to a natural resources class at Rosemary Anderson High School in Portland, Oregon, to hire four youth interns. For many, this constituted their first professional work experience and introduced them to national parks.

- **2,446,615 views of our webpages (www.nps.gov/fova)**
- **1,880 Facebook followers of Fort Vancouver (www.facebook.com/FtVancouver)**
- **1,469 people follow us on Twitter (@FtVancouverNPS)**
- **22,713 visitors to our Flickr site**
- **1,500 downloads of the Fort Vancouver Mobile app**

*Note: Annual visitation number is lower than actual visitation due to malfunctioning traffic counting equipment. The park and the NPS Public Use Statistics Office are implementing correcting actions in 2013 to ensure accurate visitor counts in future years.

Expanding Special Events and Programs

- **20,876** visitors attended cultural demonstrations, special events, and educational programs
- **351,696** visitors attended facilitated interpretive programs
- **53,000** hours were contributed to the park by 700 volunteers
- **90** Special Use Permits were approved

This year, we continued to offer popular programs like Junior Ranger Day, Soldiers' Bivouac, the Children's Cultural Parade, History in the Park, Vintage Base Ball, Campfires and Candlelight, Tales of the Engagé, Lantern Tours, Heritage Holidays, and Christmas at the Fort.

We also premiered new programs like Fur Trade Letters and Army Postcards: Connections through the Written Word. Visitors touched, wrote on, kept, and/or mailed reproductions of letters and postcards in the park's museum collection, while kids created crafts and messages of their own. Costumed interpreters performed scenes about undelivered letters and Army telegrams.

The transfer of the East and South Vancouver Barracks inspired military programs this year. A hands-on drumming program for kids complimented the park's weekend historic weapons firings, and summer walking tours of the East and South Barracks oriented the public to the park's newest addition. A new interpretive camp of 1890s Army Laundresses added working class women's experiences to Soldiers' Bivouac and Campfires and Candlelight, and community partnerships facilitated military history lectures and camps at events.

We also hosted Vancouver's National Get Outdoors Day (GO Day) on June 9. Over one hundred GO Days occurred simultaneously on public lands, but creativity and successful partnerships made Fort Vancouver's one of eight signature GO Days across the country. The National Park Service and its partners provided a fun day of learning about recreational outdoor activities on public lands. Fort Vancouver NHS served as the gateway to the great outdoors for the several thousand members of the public who attended. Tying the event to historical outdoor activities, GO Day at Fort Vancouver also featured the park's annual Brigade Encampment, a 60-person re-enactment of the return of fur trapping brigades.

Our final large-scale signature event of the fiscal year was our annual Campfires and Candlelight event, where costumed interpreters re-enact an evening in 1845 for the visiting public. This year's free event, powered by staff and 150 volunteers, brought 2,000 visitors to better understand the history and significance of this national park site.

Volunteer Wins Regional Award

This year, Dr. Brett Oppegaard of Washington State University Vancouver won the *2012 Regional George and Helen Hartzog Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service* for the 5,000 volunteer hours he has contributed to the Fort Vancouver Mobile Project.

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Post to Park: The East and South Barracks Transfer to the National Park Service

With the relinquishment of the East and South Vancouver Barracks by the U.S. Army, the National Park Service embraced the opportunity to preserve, interpret, and provide public access to 33 acres of historical barracks buildings, landscapes, and archaeological resources.

Envisioned in 1961 when Congress enlarged the boundaries of the site, the barracks transferred to the National Park Service in a moving ceremony this Memorial Day, May 28, 2012. The U.S. Army lowered the post flag and presented it to NPS Regional Director Chris Lenhertz and Superintendent Tracy Fortmann, who then instructed park rangers to raise the flag to symbolize the transfer.

Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler spoke at the event, as did the Regional Director and Brigadier General Alton Berry. General Berry noted his pride that the military history of the old post would be cared for and interpreted by the National Park Service in perpetuity.

Master Plan Completed

Anticipating the transfer, the National Park Service initiated a master plan for the barracks which was completed this year. With extensive public involvement, this plan establishes a comprehensive vision for the public use of the East and South Barracks.

The plan envisions the site becoming a dynamic, sustainable public service campus where the public can enjoy the multi-layered history of the area while the barracks are preserved and interpreted.

This vision will be accomplished through adaptive reuse of existing structures through long-term leases with public and non-profit agencies as well as private sector organizations. The plan envisions a mix of public offices and museum space, with non-profit and private sector offices, businesses, shops, and restaurants.

Caretaking of the Barracks

In partnership with the U.S. Army, the NPS has completed caretaking efforts to secure the buildings of the East and South Vancouver Barracks, and protect them while plans for reuse are developed and implemented.

The NPS has documented the architectural and historical significance of the buildings and their condition, the buildings have been secured to prevent damage from vandals and natural disasters, and adequate ventilation has been provided to the building interiors to prevent damage from moisture.

The NPS is also safeguarding the site by providing fire alarm and security services. The roof of the historic Auditorium was repaired and the integral gutter system was replaced. The attics of larger Barracks buildings have been mitigated for lead dust from indoor shooting ranges and were insulated. Planning is ongoing for utility replacement, road work, and environmental mitigation.

As part of this work, the NPS initiated archaeological testing to ensure that sites like the Hudson's Bay Company cemetery (now under the post), are not adversely impacted during future construction activities.

Public Access

An agreement was made with the Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) to keep the Vancouver Barracks Shopette and Barbershop on-site. This will allow local veterans and active-duty service men access to a PX at the post where the system was first established in the 1880s.

The NPS also assumed the Clark County Veterans' Memorial, the site of the annual Memorial Day and Veterans' Day ceremonies. We are in the process of establishing a partnership agreement with the Community Military Appreciation Committee, ensuring that the memorial is updated and that commemorative events continue.

This summer, the 11th Public Archaeology field school invited visitors to view excavations of the Village within the South Barracks, in an area that had not been open to the public for over 100 years.

Improvements at the McLoughlin House Unit in Oregon City, Oregon

In 2012, in partnership with the McLoughlin Memorial Association and with the assistance of dedicated volunteers, we provided tours and educational programs to the public at these historic homes. The programs included our popular Victorian Craft Demonstrations (ten per year on a variety of handcrafts) and Brown Bag Lecture Series.

To better implement the Historic Furnishings Report, multiple rooms in the McLoughlin House were rearranged to more accurately reflect the 1840s-1850s time period. In addition, items from the museum collection were conserved, including a sewing cabinet, couch, dining chairs, wardrobe, and melodeon. With conservation, the goal is not to restore a piece to pristine condition, but rather to counter deterioration and stabilize these special items.

We continued to provide support to the over-150-year-old structures. Among other things, the roof of the Barclay House was reshingled, repairs to the copper gutter system were made, and structural seismic braces were added to the roof frame. This will ensure their preservation for future generations.

Sharing Archaeology and Museum Collections

Museum Collection Open Houses, a program which takes place monthly from March through October, took visitors on behind-the-scenes tours inside our curation facility, where they learned about the history of this site through the lens of artifacts.

We also hosted our 11th annual Public Archaeology Field School under the direction of NPS Archaeologist Dr. Doug Wilson. The field school brought students from Portland State University and Washington State University Vancouver together to excavate in the Fort Vancouver Village and interpret their finds to the public. Students also spent a week in Astoria, Oregon, to conduct the first ever survey of Fort Astoria/ Fort George, the American post established in 1811 by John Jacob Astor that was sold to British fur traders during the War of 1812.

Our staff produced several publications, including:

- Middle Village, in *Columbia Magazine*
- The Decline and Fall of the Hudson's Bay Company Village at Fort Vancouver, in *Assoc. of Oregon Archaeologists Occasional Paper Series*
- The Trade Bead Assemblage from the Chinook Middle Village at the Station Camp Site, in *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers*
- Historical Archaeology at the Ferry House, Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve, as *NCRI Short Report No. 66*

Serving Parks and Partners

As a part of the National Park System, Fort Vancouver is connected to 398 other national parks and many partner organizations. From our partnerships with OMSI and Vancouver Parks & Rec for kids' summer camps, to our specialists who serve as adjunct faculty at PSU and WSUV, we are dedicated to joining with both our local community and sister agencies to further our shared mission. We are proud to consult with 26 American Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations.

Many of our staff also serve on regional or national NPS committees, offering the perspective of a vibrant, urban park with many overlapping stories. Currently, these assignments include:

- Partnership Advisory Committee
- Cultural Resources Advisory Committee
- Cultural Resources Emergency Response Team
- Civil War 150 Steering Committee
- Youth Engagement Team
- Museum Management Program Council
- Cultural Resources Academy

- **105,686** items were cataloged into the museum collection
- **463** visitors and researchers to the museum facility
- **6** museum exhibits

Awards and History Studies at Pearson Air Museum and Field

Pearson Air Museum is a part of the national park, and is one of the park's important resources in interpreting the aviation history of Vancouver Barracks. It is managed under agreement with the City of Vancouver, which has a sub-agreement with the Fort Vancouver National Trust to operate the museum. Since 1972, the western portion of the historical Pearson Field has been part of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

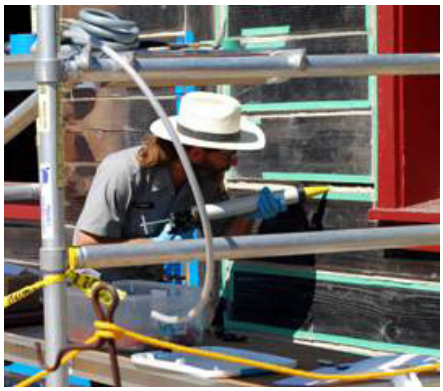
One of the successes of this partnership was the designation of Pearson Field as a Historic Aerospace Site by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. The NPS worked with City and Trust staff on the nomination, and provided key historical supporting documentation. Pearson Field now joins several other national park sites as a recipient of this designation.

The park also funded one of the region's leading historians and industrial archaeologists, Dr. Ward Tonsfeldt, to conduct research and write a history of the U.S. Army's Spruce Production Division at Vancouver Barracks during the World War I period. His research is documenting the importance of the Spruce Mill, which covered much of the park area including Pearson Field and Air Museum and created aviation-grade lumber for the war effort. This important project supports aviation history at the site and anticipates the upcoming centennial of WWI.

The history study will be completed this winter and is expected to guide the design of exhibits, interpretive materials, and programs at the park. The work will also help guide a future archaeological study of the Spruce Mill.

Related to the Spruce Mill project, this year a collection of personal papers documenting the life of Spruce Production Division soldier Peter Pederson was donated to the park's museum collection. Some of these materials were displayed in our *Sprucer Stories* exhibit this summer.

Extending the Life of Buildings



Our maintenance team oversaw several crucial preservation projects this year, including the painting and chinking of buildings inside the fort palisade. A new paint job on the Chief Factor's House ensures the protection of this iconic structure, while the re-chinking of the Carpenter Shop, Bake House, Counting House, and Fur Store ensure energy efficiency and preservation of these important visitor resources for many more years to come.

Chinking was a common 19th century building technique, using materials such as rope, clay and straw to seal cracks between the horizontal timbers of post-on-sill structures. Use of a modern equivalent reflects the appearance of historic chinking, but is more durable and protective of these timber-frame reconstructions.

Joining History & STEM for Mobile App

Through a groundbreaking digital humanities partnership known as the Fort Vancouver Mobile Project, the park released a series of free mobile apps for iPhone and Android that help visitors connect to the history of the park.

Additional modules are being added each year. Currently, modules on the Hawaiian community at Fort Vancouver and the artwork of the area done by Paul Kane are available. During 2012, the Public History Field School brought 23 WSUV students to the site for coursework in Digital Storytelling, to assist in developing media for a new module focusing on domestic life in the fort's Village.

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612 East Reserve Street
Vancouver, WA 98661

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