



NCRI Report

Significant Historical Items Find a New Home in the Fort Vancouver Collection

Fort Vancouver may be known for its archaeological collection, but the collection of historical objects curated here is also a treasure trove of information.

The fur trade era has been, since Fort Vancouver's inception as a national park in 1948, the main focus of the site's acquisition program. But with the creation of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve in 1996 and the resulting expansion in museum responsibilities, more themes have been added into the scope of the collection.

The local military and civilian stories that post-date the fur trade are equally significant, and the collection has begun to reflect underrepresented themes thanks to generous donors. A large collection of objects directly associated with the Historic Reserve was recently accessioned, of which the highlights include a pistol once owned by General O. O. Howard and one of the two bullets which wounded his arm.

Another small family collection included a uniform worn by a



General O.O. Howard's .38 caliber pistol and holster, with close-up of inscription on the pistol's handle tang. The bullet is rumored to have been one which injured Howard's arm during the Civil War.

bugler with the 19th Infantry, stationed at Vancouver Barracks just after the turn of the century.

Yet another example is an intricate quilt made by an officer's wife during her stay at the Vancouver post in the 1880s. Donations have included letters and photographs. They have been grand, as with the original daguerreotypes of John McLoughlin and his wife, and they have been subtle, like the patches once worn by an enrollee in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

In certain instances, the focus has been less on objects and more on collecting historical

knowledge from individuals still living. The park has funded, or been the lucky recipient of, several interviews taken by professional oral historians. They cover such diverse topics as wartime service, homefront experiences, and the resettlement of ancestors from Fort Vancouver to American Indian reservations.

What all these things have in common is that each is related directly to the history of the Historic Reserve, and each reminds us of why this place is considered special enough to be preserved as public land.

Announcements

Our curator, **Theresa Langford**, will be on maternity leave from October 27 through the end of January.

Heidi Pierson has been hired as a museum technician. Heidi will be working Monday through Friday, with Thursdays at the McLoughlin House. She will be concentrating on maintaining the pest monitoring and housekeeping activities, tackling the many objects awaiting cataloging, making mounts for items on display, and other miscellaneous projects.

It is time to fill out new **Volunteer Agreements** for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

The **Period Clothing** department has been hard at work reorganizing their workspace and cataloging, repairing, and updating the collection. These folks have also been sewing some beautiful new clothing to add to the collection. Upcoming issues of the newsletter will feature some of the new clothing that has been created over the past year.



Some characters from this year's Candlelight Tour.

Field School in Review: Inaugural Public History Program

This spring, the first Public History Field School was inaugurated at Fort Vancouver. The school is a partnership between Portland State University (PSU) and the National Park Service (NPS) through the Park's Northwest Cultural Resources Institute (NCRI). Throughout the spring, graduate students earned course credits in this exciting new program.

The upper-division course, available to graduate students in the PSU public history program, was designed to build on their introductory coursework by providing a focused, hands-on immersion into how history is promulgated by one of the leading stewards of the nation's history: the NPS.

For eleven weeks, these graduate students actively applied knowledge gained through group discussion, directed readings, research, practical exercises, peer review, and class instruction to crafting programs for the public.

With the guidance and support of Dr. William Lang, Professor of History at PSU, the course was designed by Greg Shine, the Park's Chief Ranger & Historian and an adjunct faculty member at PSU. Shine also served as the instructor.

"Greg Shine has crafted a program that provides students with a superior working knowledge of professional work opportunities in history outside of academia," said Dr. Doug Wilson, the Historic Reserve Archaeologist, Associate Professor at PSU, and Director of

the Northwest Cultural Resources Institute. "They have developed in-depth knowledge, via a case-study format, of how history-based programming is created and presented to the public at a unit of the national park system. They also received practical training one would not normally receive in the traditional history classroom setting."

The class culminated at the Park's annual Brigade Encampment event in June. "For their final project, the students developed an interpretive talk and presented it to the public," noted Shine. "Instead of sitting inside taking a traditional final exam, the students had a final presentation that the public could observe! We encouraged the public to visit and to see the future of historical interpretation, which is what these students and their programs represented."

"The historic site interpretation class at Fort Vancouver gave me a unique opportunity to see history being applied at a national park site," exclaimed Duane Barringer, a participating graduate student. "The HST 511 course introduces students to the NPS and how programs and interpretation are designed to be accurate and provocative. It is literally hands-on history and it was fun, too!"

National parks are ideal sites for programs like this, and we hope that more NPS units are able to partner in a similar fashion with academia in the future. The Field School is scheduled to resume again in the spring of 2007.

Foundations of the Fort: Coral Mortar

The Powder Magazine, Fort Vancouver's only brick building, was constructed using mortar made from coral that had been processed into lime. Coral arrived at Fort Vancouver on the biannual ships from London, via Hawai'i. These supply ships carried manufactured goods from the British Isles and raw materials, such as coral and hardwoods, from Hawai'i. Coral was used for making lime in Hawai'i as far back as 1798, though its use increased with the influx of missionaries in the mid-1800s. Coral served as a substitute for limestone and was processed and burned in pits dug into the ground. The lack of high temperature kilns accounts for the fact that much of the coral was

not completely broken down, and identifiable fragments remained in the finished mortar.



Coral recovered from the Powder Magazine excavations in 2004.

Michael Lummio and Dr. Brian Tissot of the Program in Environmental Science and Regional Planning at Washington State University, Vancouver analyzed coral from the 2004 Powder Magazine excavation. Their paper, *Abundance and Distribution of Coral and Coral Mortar in the Powder Magazine at Fort Vancouver, WA circa 1832*, explores the distribution of coral

genera in the Powder Magazine foundation and their relative abundance. Coral fragments were separated from mortar, identified by genus, and weighed. Their results were generally consistent with a live Hawaiian reef. The majority of samples were *Porites* (98.5% by weight). This was followed by *Pocillopora* (0.08% by weight), which they felt was not as abundant as expected—this may have been due to intentional harvesting, weathering, or the genera's inability to withstand the mortar making process. Lummio and Tissot suggest the coral was harvested and processed without consideration of species, and further suggest that no single species was preferred for the making of mortar.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Vancouver National Historic Reserve is a partnership of the National Park Service, the City of Vancouver, the Washington State Department 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

360 816-6230

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.

Under the Microscope: Brent Campbell

I may never be able to properly explain why, but for as long as I can remember I have loved to learn about days long past. Throughout school, history was my favorite subject, and it was not until two years ago, when I took my first course in anthropology, that I began to consider archaeology as an option. Since then, I could no longer be content with reading about events and people. I longed to unearth pieces of such stories myself, to hold them in my hand, and to help arrange them into a coherent picture.

Through summer field school I was able to learn skills integral to the field of archaeology, and by volunteering I have been able to continue learning and applying the skills I have learned. Fort Vancouver has also shown me a glimpse of the rich history of the place where I have lived most of my life; it has shown me some of the best people I have ever met; and finally, it has shown me that archaeology is something I could love doing for the rest of my life. I may have come to Fort Vancouver to learn how to dig perfectly square holes, but these are the reasons why I keep coming back.



Brent Campbell attended field school this past summer and put in 125 volunteer hours before going back to school at the University of Washington.

Dr. McLoughlin Grew a Garden...

Searching for Meaning and Purpose of a Formal Garden in the Wilderness

Your first thought may be that Dr. McLoughlin, Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver and the most powerful man in the Pacific Northwest during the mid 19th century, was in touch with his feminine side. This may be true, but Dr. McLoughlin rarely referred to the garden in his written correspondence, so his thoughts on the subject remain his alone. Fortunately, other historical documents inspire the possibility that the Doctor's garden had meaning and purpose well beyond sniffing roses. These documents indicate that it also provided medicinal herbs, nutritious fruits and vegetables, was a display of colonial power, and brought a sense of home to those living so far from their own.

Suspecting that the garden was extremely important to the success of the Hudson's Bay Company's activities in the region, a team of archaeologists spent the past two summers searching for it's

archaeological evidence. The 23 member team was comprised of Portland State and Washington State University students, and led by Dr. Doug Wilson, Vancouver National Historic Reserve Archaeologist.

One of the excavation areas was continued from 2005. This year, at a depth of about 6 ft., it was determined that what was hoped to be a Company well was most likely a World War I dry well that had later been filled with mid-20th century trash. Nearby, a hard, compacted surface, was explored further and found to be rather extensive. As the "well" is post-Hudson's Bay Company, the story of this hard surface is unclear at this time.

There was success just northwest of the garden, in a trench dug to search for the Post's root cellars. This trench contained disturbed sediment to a depth of about 5 ft., with a well-defined boundary change to undisturbed sediments, indicating an intentional hole. This disturbed area, probably the eastern wall of a root cellar, contained 19th century artifacts. This

feature is probably the eastern wall of one of the root cellars.

The remaining trenches in the garden did not provide definitive evidence of the garden. Several had been disturbed by later use of the landscape. It is hoped that analysis of botanical remains in the sediments will indicate what plants were grown in the garden, and where. This will help us to understand the meaning and purpose of this 19th century formal garden in the North American wilderness.



The Fort Vancouver replica garden during springtime.

Historical Fragment

History of the Oregon Territory and British North-American Fur Trade by John Dunn, 1844

Though they [the officer's wives] generally dress after the English fashion, according as they see it used by the English wives of the superior officers, yet they retain one peculiarity - the leggin or gaiter, which is made (now that the tanned deerskin has been superseded) of the finest, and most gaudy colored cloth, beautifully ornamented with beads.

The lower classes of the Company's servants marry native women, from the tribes of the upper country... These too, imitate, in costume, the dress of the officer's wives, as much as they can; but from their necessities of position, which exposes them more to [undecipherable] and drudgery, they retain the mocassin, in place of adopting the low-quartered shoe.

NCRI Director's Letter

It has been a busy year at the NCRI with the archaeological and public history field schools behind us and with continuing laboratory work, archiving, collections management, and report writing in process.

The Confluence Project land bridge is rising like a phoenix from the southern edge of the Hudson's Bay Company Village. This 40-ft. wide pedestrian structure, designed by Jones and Jones architects with input from Maya Lin, will reconnect the Village to the Columbia River, celebrating the long history of this site and the dramatic changes to the landscape and to human culture that have occurred over the past 200 years. From this historical vantage, we look expectantly towards 2007, which, incidentally, is the 60th anniversary of archaeological excavations at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Our 6th annual archaeological field school, reported by Elaine Dorset above, represents just the most recent phase of fieldwork at this premier historical archaeological site. NPS archaeologist Louis Caywood initially excavated in 1947, the first year of excavations at Fort Vancouver and one year prior to its inclusion in the National Park system. Caywood excavated a number of trenches and smaller units prior to his excavation of the Powder Magazine site, generally confirming the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company archaeological site. It was the identification of the architectural remains of the Magazine, however, that directly led to the relocation of the remnants of the palisades and building sites. This discovery was crucial to the success of Caywood's excavation program and has served as the lynchpin of all subsequent archaeological work. Caywood's report is available on our newly redesigned website at <http://www.nps.gov/fova>. In celebration of Caywood's achievements, the NCRI is planning to complete the report on the latest (2004) excavations of the Magazine site in preparation for its reconstruction in the near future. As a preview to this, Heidi Pierson in this issue reports on the incredible volunteer effort of Washington State University Vancouver Professor Brian Tissot and his extraordinary graduate student, Michael Lummio, who have characterized the Hawaiian coral that formed the Magazine's foundation. Stay tuned for further news on the celebrations for 2007!

Doug Wilson

Current Research

Greg Shine

A research article published in the latest issue of *Oregon Historical Quarterly* sheds new light on the activities and experiences of African American soldiers – known as Buffalo Soldiers – once stationed at Vancouver Barracks.

The article, entitled *Respite from War: Buffalo Soldiers at Vancouver Barracks, 1899-1900*, is a detailed account of the men and activities of the 24th U.S. Infantry's Company B, an African American unit stationed at the Vancouver post.

This record of the soldiers' lives and activities at Vancouver Barracks provides, for the first time, a detailed glimpse of a largely unknown aspect of Pacific Northwest history during the volatile Jim Crow era.

In addition, their story fosters a connection to place at Fort Vancouver NHS and the Reserve, especially for African Americans.

Jacqueline Marcotte

A student at Portland State University, and experienced diver, Jacqui is planning a career in underwater archaeology. As a part of an independent study course for Dr. Doug Wilson, she will be conducting a reconnaissance of the Park's underwater archaeological sites. She will be resurveying sites that have not been looked at since the mid-1980s. Jacqui will incorporate the local diving club and members of the PSU Anthropology Club to assist her and is educating them about preserving local resources.

Bob Cromwell

Bob Cromwell recently completed a report on the archaeologically recovered ceramic sherds from the North West Company's site of Fort Spokane (ca. 1810-1826). The artifact collection is now housed at the Burke Museum in Seattle. The results of his analysis show an assemblage of mostly Chinese Export Porcelains, with lesser amounts of British creamwares and pearlwares, and provide interesting new data on the earliest Euro-American ceramics imported into the Pacific Northwest. Bob hopes to eventually synthesize these data into a journal article, perhaps comparing the assemblage with the artifacts recovered at the Station Camp site two years ago.

Material Culture Notes: Window Glass

Window glass has earned the title of "Tedious Artifact" among the students and volunteers who are tasked with analyzing it. In tedium it falls second perhaps only to charcoal and clinkers. But this unloved artifact is actually brimming with diagnostic potential, as long as it is considered in a group with its fellows.

For 19th century Fort Vancouver, window glass was an English import that arrived on yearly supply ships. Historical accounts describe the creative packing method: panes were stuck together using molasses, sent to the destination post, then the molasses was melted off (and probably consumed). The glass brought in by the Hudson's Bay Company was predominantly "crown glass". This type of flat glass was manufactured by gathering 10-14 pounds of molten glass at the end of a blow pipe, then forming this blob into a pear-shape. After it had been flattened slightly, the glass was attached to a metal rod and spun in front of an open flame. Through centrifugal force, gradually the glass expanded into a flat, circular disk of relatively uniform thickness which was then cut into small panes.

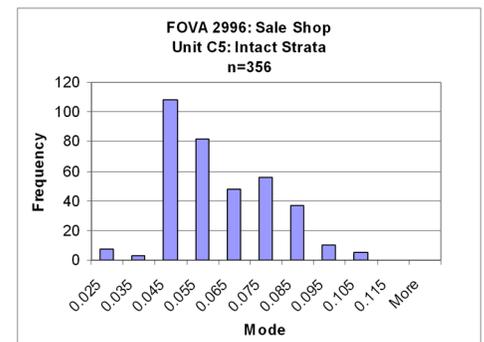
Large amounts of window glass have been found archaeologically, in virtually every excavation that has taken place on the site. It was not until the 1970s, however, that its potential as a dating tool was realized. Archaeologists David and Jennifer Chance, after their excavations in the Village, first hypothesized that window panes in the Pacific Northwest increased in thickness over time. This idea was later tested, upheld, and refined by Karl Roenke.

The process of analysis consists of measuring the thickness of each fragment of glass in thousands of an inch, then translating these data into graphs that show the distribution of thicknesses. The primary mode, or range of thickness in which the greatest number of fragments fall, will point to the manufacture date of the pane, and thus bring one very close to

the date of the building which held it. Later additions to the structure should also show up as a secondary mode. By comparing window glass sherds from many different Pacific Northwest archaeological sites, the researchers came up with the following suggested age ranges for the different modes of window glass thickness:

Manufacture Date	Thickness
1810-1825	0.055
1820-1835	0.055
1830-1840	0.045
1835-1845	0.045-0.055
1845-1855	0.065
1850-1865	0.075
1855-1885	0.085
1870-1900	0.095
1900-1915	0.105

Here is a real-life example from one of the units excavated at the Sale Shop site. A total of 356 sherds were measured, then these measurement data were plotted with a distribution graph:



The primary mode (the tallest bar on the graph) is the thickness range of 0.045, which corresponds to the period 1830-1845. This is what would be expected at this location, reflecting the initial construction of the warehouse.

Window glass, the most unappreciated of materials, is one of the best reminders that archaeology is not only about individual artifacts, but about patterns of variation in an archaeological assemblage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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

A partner in the
 Vancouver National Historic Reserve

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

This is the official newsletter 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.

Director of the NCRI, Archaeologist
 Dr. Douglas Wilson

Archaeologist
 Dr. Robert Cromwell

Curator, Editor of the NCRI Report
 Theresa Langford, M.A.

Historian
 Gregory Shine, M.A.

Museum Technician
 Heidi Pierson

Archaeological Technicians
 Eric Gleason and Jacqueline Cheung

Research Assistant
 Scott Langford

MYSTERY ARTIFACT

The mystery artifact in the last issue was a **POCKET INKWELL**.

This artifact was recovered during excavations of Fort Colvile—a subsidiary HBC post—during the 1970s.



Side View



Top View