Northwest Cultural Resources Institute
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

NCRI Report

Civil War Era Quilts on Display in the McLoughlin House

by Heidi Pierson, NPS Museum Specialist

The McLoughlin House will opening this year with an exhibit of Civil War Era quilts from the private collection of Eileen Janke Trestain.

You may think that quilts are simply beautiful things to look at and be inspired by, but would you think of them as controversial? A complementary exhibit in the Barclay House will speak to quilt controversies that have emerged in the last few decades, and how they have changed how we look at Civil War history. What are the myths and realities of what quilts can tell us about their makers and the the people who used them?

It is certainly true that many quilts tell stories! Some may be made from scraps left over from clothing worn by the family, some may use appliqués to showcase favorite flowers, animals, or symbols of familial importance.

The quilts of the Civil War era are quite distinctive from quilts of just a decade before. Many of the iconic "American" quilt patterns came to popularity during this time period, such as the Log Cabin and its variations. As the Civil War approached women in the North were making and selling quilts to raise money for the anti-slavery movement. When the war began, Northern women worked with the newly formed Sanitary commission to raise funds for soldiers by selling homemade quilts. However, quilts were not only created for fundraising; women also created quilts to be used by soldiers during the war.

Two Civil War Era quilts in pristine condition on display in the McLoughlin House (under title). A lovely quilt from the Era with some interesting fabrics, including an American flag motif along the center line (above).

Meanwhile, Southern women were also sewing quilts to raise funds for their soldiers. This includes the Ladies Gunboat Association, or Ladies Defense Society, which was formed to raise money for boats to help the Southern cause.

The quilts in this collection mainly come from the North, and are excellent examples of the fabrics and patterns popular during the Civil War Era.

Lone Star quilt in vibrant colors with appliqués, from Massachutsets.

NCRI Director's Letter: Comets, Health, and Heritage

It has been a foggy month here at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, although we have had a few clear nights where the heavens could be observed. Light pollution in the cities makes the sky less visible and the distraction of our electronic gadgets makes it harder to find the time to look up at the sky. In the past, though, walks across the winter landscape on a cloudless night would have revealed bright wonders. While today we are buffered from the sky at night, in the past it was omnipresent. The emergence of something new in the heavens, like Donati's Comet in 1858, was an event worthy of remembrance. The notes of Post Surgeon Joseph Barnes (see Martin Adam's article in this issue) remind us of scientific interest in how the natural world, including celestial events, affected peoples' health and well-being. The first appearance of the comet made "everything quite visible" an hour before daybreak. We can imagine the excitement of the soldiers and local communities at the appearance of this short-term but brilliant visitor. Curiosity about the night sky and other natural phenomena are a signature of scientific inquiry, but also greatly influence art, philosophy, and other fields of the humanities.

In a similar way, we must recognize that there are many modern distractions that separate us from connecting with our history. Connecting to our past, however, is important in maintaining healthy communities and generating curiosity. The notion that the present is inherently tied to and influenced by the past is obvious for those of us that work in cultural resources. That understanding this connection allows us to move successfully into the future is less obvious, but inherent in the construction of community values based on heritage. Like the night sky, we must take the time to connect with our tangible past, revealed in archaeology, architecture, historic trees and landscapes. When you free yourself of distractions, the beauty and significance of a site become clear. In those moments of inspiration, whether as a child on a field trip exploring an unfamiliar blacksmith's shop, or as an adult standing at the doorway of a fur traders house in the Village, we reorient our lives, ignite curiosity about social processes and relationships, and then with clarity can move forward into the future. Our National Park Service sites are places where we can clearly see the heavens and connect meaningfully with our past. They are the comets that will always be visible if we search for them.

Doug Wilson

Detail of Donati's Comet October 5, 1858 by E. Weiss, from Bilderatlas der Sternenwelt (*Weiss 1888*).

Mid-Nineteenth Century Celestial Observations at Vancouver Barracks

by Martin Adams, NPS Museum Technician

On the evening of September 9, 1858, Post Surgeon Joseph K. Barnes gazed into the heavens above Vancouver Barracks, then known as Fort Vancouver, and spotted a large comet blazing across Washington's night sky, noting in his weather observation journal, "Comet of first class visible in N.W. 10° above horizon at sundown." Barnes, who would later rise to meteoric heights himself as Surgeon General of the U.S. Army, witnessed what was known as Donati's Comet, one of the brightest comets to be seen in the 19th century. By October, he had submitted a more technical description of the event:

> The Comet – visible upon the evening of [September] 9th 10° above horizon in North West – increased in brilliancy and size throughout the month. Until the 15th it was also visible at 4 a.m. in the N.E. On the 30th the elevation at sundown was 50° length of coma 30°. The nucleus was on the horizon at 9 h. 11 m P.M. at which time the coma had increased in size & brilliancy, extending nearly 50° from west to N.W. with well marked curve in direction of the course of its flight.

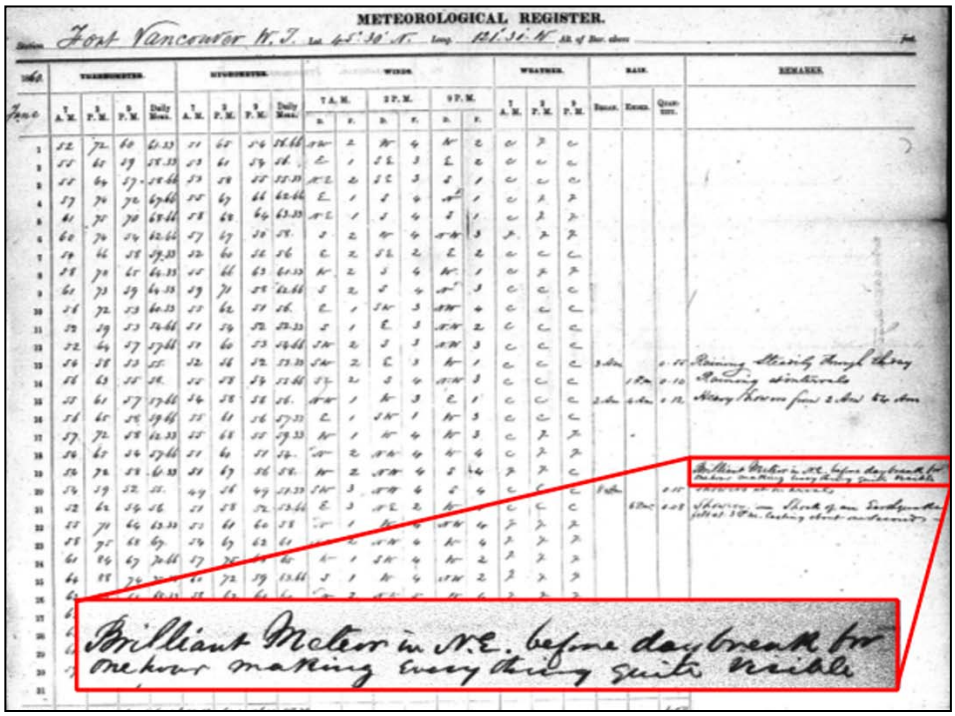
Donati's Comet, also known as the Great Comet of 1858, or by its formal designation C/1858 L1, is noteworthy because it was the first comet ever to be photographed. Named for Italian astronomer Giovanni Battista Donati, who first discovered it on June 2nd of that year in Florence, the comet was tracked across the skies by astronomers for ten months. One noted observer, then Senate hopeful Abraham Lincoln, reportedly sat for over an hour on the front porch of his hotel in Jonesboro, Illinois, on the eve of his third debate with Stephen Douglas, and "greatly admired this strange visitor." The comet was exceptionally bright and visible to the naked eye for many months. By October 16, Barnes noted that the comet was seen for the last time over the post, but it was still visible around the world until March 1859.

Drawing of the Great Comet of 1861 by E. Weiss, from Bilderatlas der Sternenwelt (*Weiss 1888*).

Though it might seem peculiar for a surgeon to report astronomical and weather observations, this is not uncommon. Nineteenth century physicians recognized that a relationship existed between illness and changing weather conditions. In 1818, Army Surgeon General Joseph Lovell mandated that the personal duties assigned to Army surgeons included the observation and recording of meteorological events, and that the surgeon "shall keep a diary of the weather in the form and manner prescribed, noting everything of importance relating to the medical topography of his station, the climate, complaints prevailed in the vicinity &c." The surgeon's weather diary took the form of a monthly "meteorological register," with itemized columns for temperature, precipitation, cloud cover, wind direction, and any other notable remarks. The instructions published in 1844 reminded observers to "examine the heavens at the latest observation, whether there be any Aurora or shooting stars [and] any great numbers of luminous meteors visible."

Barnes' sighting of Donati's Comet was not the first celestial observation made at the post. Though weather reports by the U.S. Army at Fort Vancouver began as early as December 1849, the first celestial observation noted in the meteorological register was on August 22, 1853, when Post Surgeon Bernard Byrne "observed [a comet] this evening in the N.W." Byrne continued to note daily observations of the comet through the end of August.

Celestial Observations



*Meteorological Register for Fort Vancouver, June 1860, noting the sighting of a meteor in the morning sky (June 19th). The bottom right corner of the page denotes the surgeon making the observation, in this case Asst. Surgeon Anthony Heger. The highlighted entry reads, "Brilliant Meteor in N.E. before daybreak for one hour making everything quite visible," most likely a reference to Comet C/1860 M1. **

On June 19, 1860, Assistant Surgeon Anthony Heger wrote, "Brilliant Meteor in N.E. before daybreak for one hour making everything quite visible." This sighting was probably not a meteor, as the duration of a true meteor is usually measured in tenths of a second. Instead, this most likely refers to Comet C/1860 M1, which was visible until June 22.

Assistant Surgeon Joseph B. Brown, who had arrived only three days earlier for duty at the post, noted the following entry for July 1, 1861: "Comet visible at Sunset above 45° in N.W." This comet, named the "Great Comet of 1861," or C/1861 J1, was reported to have six tails, although this view is most likely due to the Earth's orbit passing within the comet's tail, giving the appearance of streams of cometary material converging towards a distant nucleus. Brown continued to note its presence every day in the register, until finally remarking, "Comet disappearance," on July 19.

On August 23, 1862, Assistant Surgeon Anthony Heger, who had returned to Fort Vancouver from Fort Steilacoom, most likely made a sighting of the Swift-Tuttle Comet (109P/Swift-Tuttle), when he wrote, "Comet (Small Size) about 70° above horizon in N.W. from north to south." Although cloud cover was minimal during the late summer of 1862, Heger did not make any further notations of the comet until the September 1 entry, which reads, "Comet obscured by Moon & cloudy weather."

No further celestial observations were noted at Vancouver Barracks after Heger's last entry in September 1862, and by 1870 the duty of recording meteorological conditions for the U.S. Army was transferred to the Signal Corps. The Army Surgeon General did continue to receive weather reports from post surgeons at approximately fifty Army posts by the 1890s, including Vancouver Barracks, but by that time the form used to record the data had changed so that only temperature and precipitation observations were made.

**Climatological Records of the Weather Bureau, 1819-1892*. National Archives and Records Administration. Publication #T907C, Microfilm Roll #537.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Fort Vancouver National Site is a partnership of the National Park Service, the City of Vancouver, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Army. It includes Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Vancouver Barracks and Officers 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.

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

Fort Vancouver and Film

by Tessa Langford, NPS Curator

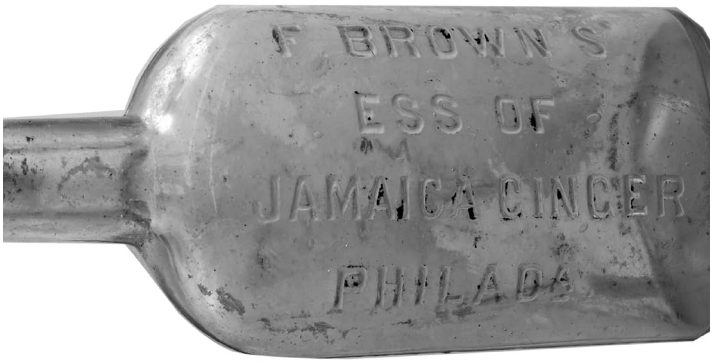
Curators and archaeologists may be focused on the past, but those of us around here also enjoy pop culture. And, truth be told, we're fans of random trivia, which often leads to spirited discussions over lunch.

We hope you enjoy our more serious articles in the NCRI Report. For a change, though, we thought it would be fun to include a more light-hearted feature - one that connects items in our museum collection to films. We'll be expanding this idea for a web feature in the near future, and welcome submissions.

Jamaica Ginger Bottle & *Water for Elephants*

Jamaica Ginger, also known as "Jake," was advertised as a digestive aid and in some versions contained 70-80% pure alcohol by weight. During Prohibition, the recipe was modified to help it pass inspections by the Department of Agriculture. The new formula added a plasticizer called tri-o-tolyl phosphate, later discovered to be a neurotoxin. Heavy users could develop partial paralysis in their hands, feet, and legs – a condition known as "Jake Leg."

The character of Camel in the film *Water for Elephants* (based on Sara Gruen's 2006 novel) is afflicted with this condition, a dangerous state of affairs on a circus train where charity is not acceptable. After hiding in hero Jacob's room for some time, Camel is discovered and "red-lighted," or thrown off the moving train.

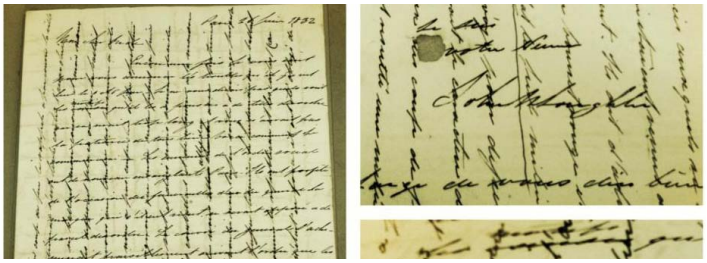


McLoughlin Letter & *Les Misérables*

John McLoughlin, Jr., the son of Fort Vancouver's Chief Factor, was sent to stay with his uncle, David McLoughlin, in France after misbehaving in the New World. John was in Paris during the summer of 1832, and was a first-hand witness to the "June Rebellion," a violent, anti-monarchy, street uprising that inspired Victor Hugo's masterpiece, *Les Misérables*, as well as a number of films based on the book, including the recent musical version. In a letter to another family member, he describes the violence that erupted during the funeral procession of General Lamarque, a hero among republican Parisians:

> The enemies of the social order have again bloodied Paris… The events show to what point one can trust the promises of anarchists… I do not know how to write about the excesses to which people stooped… All at once a mass of madmen threw themselves on the nearby police forces and disarmed them… while the people were fighting my cousin and I visited the different places where people were fighting most, we have seen people fall next to us but that has not kept us from being spectators… I am of the opinion that one should shoot them all [the captured revolutionaries] for if one pardons them, they will begin again.

Young McLoughlin's anti-revolutionary stance may have been influenced by his uncle who was employed as a physician in the court of the French king, Louis Philippe.



Machine Gunner's Helmet & *War Horse*

The opening scene of this World War I period film, released in 2011, shows a British cavalry squadron overcome by German machine gun fire, a disturbing reminder of what happens when opposing armies use vastly different technologies. Hand in hand with rapid advances in wartime technology, however, was a look to the past for inspiration: soldiers during WWI sometimes wore steel armor that mimicked medieval forerunners.

A steel machine gunner's helmet found during excavations at Fort Vancouver illustrates this phenomenon even more obviously. It was designed by Bashford Dean, an officer in the ordnance department who also happened to be a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He designed several experimental helmets based on examples in the arms and armor collection. One of them, a U.S. Army Model 8 helmet likely manufactured by the Ford Motor Company in 1918, somehow made its way here.

Our thanks to reporter Tom Vogt, who first featured this connection in a January 2012 article for The Columbian!

Fort Vancouver and Film

Reliquary & *Black Robe*

Our museum collection contains a Roman Catholic reliquary given to Dr. John McLoughlin by Pope Gregory XVI, along with a medal and papal bull declaring him a Knight of St. Gregory. The reliquary contains bone fragments from two of Canada's most important martyrs: Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lallement. Though Brébeuf and Lallement do not appear in this film by name, the timing and location overlap.

In the early 17th century, several Jesuit priests traveled to Québec to establish missions among the native peoples. Black Robe follows the fictional Father Laforgue as he leads an expedition to re-establish contact with a mission in the Huron Nation. After arriving in 1634, he finds that a smallpox epidemic has decimated the Huron, and the missionaries are either dead or dying. In an epilogue, the collapse of the Huron Nation and their defeat by the Iroquois is related.

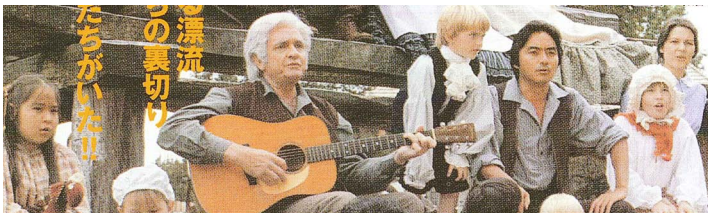
The real life history of Jesuit missionaries Brébeuf and Lallement intertwines with this script. Brébeuf sailed to Québec in 1625 and established the mission Sainte-Marie among the Hurons. Lallement became his assistant in 1648. The Jesuits were often blamed by indigenous peoples for epidemics and other disasters, and Brébeuf's tenure was punctuated by controversy and some violence. During a war between the Iroquois and Huron, Iroquois warriors captured Brébeuf and Lallement (along with six other priests), brought them to the nearby mission of St. Ignace, and tortured and killed them.

John McLoughlin and Johnny Cash

This doesn't actually tie to an artifact in the museum collection, but it is too good to leave out. In 1832, the Hojun-maru, a pottery and rice laden Japanese ship, and its 14-man crew left the port of Toba, bound for Edo. Disabled by a storm on the way, the vessel drifted for over a year, and eventually three survivors washed up in Makah territory (the northwest tip of today's Washington State). After hearing about the Japanese being held as prisoners of the tribe, John McLoughlin sent a party to bring them to Fort Vancouver.

After spending some time at Fort Vancouver, the three men, Otokichi, Iwakichi, and Kyukichi, were sent home the long eastern way, on British and American ships. Though they arrived off the coast of Japan in 1837, Seclusion Laws forbade them from setting foot on shore, and all spent the remainder of their lives abroad.

The saga of the three sailors has been commemorated in several books and in at least one film: Kairei, released in the early 1980s. Johnny Cash stars as Dr. John McLoughlin in the film. Yes, that Johnny Cash. He sings a gospel song and plays the guitar while surrounded by fur traders and Japanese sailors. Memorable.



Material Culture Notes: The Ulmer Collection

by Meagan Huff, NPS Museum Technician

Francis Edgar Ulmer after his promotion to sergeant, ca. 1912 (left). Ulmer and his fellow soldiers train at Camp Bonneville, north of Vancouver Barracks, ca. 1912. Ulmer is on the far right (above). Ulmer and his comrades in their barracks in the Philippines. Ulmer is seated on the far left (right).

While many of us have trunks holding collections of family heirlooms stored away or on display in our homes, this summer the descendants of Francis Edgar Ulmer donated his trunk and collection of photographs, letters, and souvenirs to the Fort Vancouver museum collection, where it will be preserved and allow Ulmer's story to be shared with our Pacific Northwest community.

Francis Edgar Ulmer (called Edgar by his family and friends) was born in 1893 in Merchantville, New Jersey. Though his initial ambition seems to have been to become a teacher, in 1910 he graduated from Peekskill Military Academy in New York. The next year, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the 21st Infantry, Company A. It was the start of a long military career that would bring him around the world and to Vancouver, Washington.

In 1912, Ulmer's unit likely passed through Vancouver Barracks on their way to the Philippines, where many troops from Vancouver Barracks served. With the Philippine Insurrection of 1898-1902 long over, the 21st Infantry performed guard duties from their post at Ludlow Barracks. The year 1912 also brought Ulmer two promotions: first to corporal in March of 1912, then a promotion to sergeant in September.

Ulmer returned to Vancouver Barracks in the fall of 1912, and married his wife, Betty, in 1913. He was discharged in 1914, and moved to Texas, where the couple welcomed their first son, Francis Edgar, Jr. During this time, he earned a Second Grade Teacher's Certificate.

Ulmer's break from the Army didn't last long, though, and in 1916, he re-enlisted with the 21st Infantry and returned to Vancouver Barracks. Along with the rest of the 21st, he transferred to Camp Kearny near San Diego, California, where the unit patrolled the U.S./Mexico border against Pancho Villa's revolutionaries. In the winter of that year, Ulmer requested to take the examination to become a Sergeant Schoolmaster for the Quartermaster Corps at Camp Kearny, but whether or not he was successful is unknown. The Ulmers, now with two sons, remained in California until 1921. By that time, Ulmer had transferred to the 32nd Infantry and ranked as a Battalion Sergeant Major.

In 1921, the Ulmers returned to Vancouver Barracks for a third time, where Ulmer served with the 32nd and, perhaps, the 59th Infantry. During this time, Vancouver Barracks was seen as a highly desirable duty station, and the Ulmers' interest in returning

Material Culture Notes: Ulmer Collection

IDENTIFICATION CARD
OFFICERS' RESERVE CORPS
ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

Francis E. Ulmer
(Name.)

Captain, 0-167123
(Grade.) (Org MP-Res r.)

Address Hq. 96th Div., U.S.A.,
Room 323 New P.O.Building,
Portland, Oregon.

I CERTIFY that the above-named officer is enrolled in the Officers' Reserve Corps for the calendar year indicated.

192 (Signature of Corps Area Adjutant.)

192 (Signature of Corps Area Adjutant.)

Officer in Charge Org Res

192

Francis E. Ulmer
(Signature of Reserve Officer.)

IMPORTANT

card will be forwarded for visé on the first of anuary to the corps area commander having istrative jurisdiction.

Ulmer and the 21st Infantry, Company A, in 1912. Ulmer is seated in the center (top). Ulmer's identification card, used by him when he was part of the Officer's Reserve Corps at Portland, Oregon, ca. 1922-1925 (center). Ulmer in his dress uniform with medals, including a World War I Victory Medal (left). Ulmer's World War I-era round aluminum dog tag (right).

seems understandable. A 1924 account written by a lieutenant stationed at the Barracks describes the post as "modern in every way, [it] is provided with an excellent gymnasium and athletic field, tennis courts, hand-ball courts, and a splendid golf course. In addition a service club and a picture show are maintained for the enlisted men." In the later 1920s, Ulmer joined the Army Reserves, serving as an officer in Portland, Oregon.

With the exception of a brief return to active duty at Fort Leavenworth during World War II, the Ulmers remained in Vancouver for the rest of their lives. In 1933, Francis Edgar, Jr., appears in records as a Private in the 7th Infantry at Vancouver Barracks. Younger son Julian served in the Citizens Military Training Camp at Camp Bonneville just north of Vancouver Barracks.

Francis Edgar Ulmer's story, as told through the artifacts that he collected and kept over the years, shows the importance of Vancouver Barracks to the geopolitics of the early 20th century. However, Vancouver was not just an important place for the army; it was also an important place to the people who lived here, like the Ulmers who returned again and again to this historic post along the Columbia River.

Underwater Archaeology at English Camp, San Juan Island NHP

by Beth Horton, NPS Archaeologist

This past summer, marine archaeologists assisted archaeologist Beth Horton with initiating a survey of the waterfront at English Camp at San Juan Island National Historical Park. The park commemorates historic events that occurred on the island associated with the peaceful resolution of the Oregon Territory boundary dispute between Great Britain and the United States, and the so-called "Pig War" (1859 to 1872), during which possession of the San Juan Islands was in question.

During the conflict American and British troops were dispatched to the island. Americans established Camp San Juan (American Camp) on the south side of the island, while the British Royal Marines garrisoned on the north side (English Camp), and the 12-year joint military occupation proved peaceful and amicable for both nations.

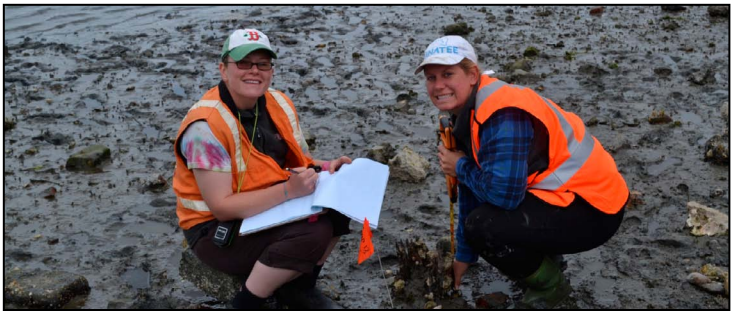
Unlike their American counterparts, the British were well supplied from Victoria and quite comfortable at their post. Soon after their arrival in 1860, a T-shaped wharf and pier were constructed on the east side of Garrison Bay. Not only was the wharf used for offloading supplies, but served as a location for recreational activities as well. During the 1866 British observance of the Queen's birthday, one game included walking 15 feet along a greasy pole extending over the bay from the wharf to snag a bunch of evergreens resting on a stick 3 feet high to win a $3 prize. Celebrants "witnessed several men who attempted the perilous journey take an involuntary header into the briny deep!"

The wharf and pier were comprised of wood piles and rock ramps and stacks (columns) once held in place by wooden cribbing, portions of which are visible during sub-tides. These historic resources can provide valuable information on construction techniques for mid-19th century maritime structures. However, the English Camp wharf and pier are located within a dynamic marine environment highly susceptible to climate change.

This project is creating a site condition baseline to assess impacts to these structures, such as active wave erosion and shipworm damage to the wooden cribbing and dock piles. In addition, through partnering with park staff, we aim to develop not only stabilization strategies for these resources, but interpretation programs to help raise awareness in the local community of these historic resources, often hidden just below the water's surface.

The HMS Boxer*, a steam gunboat veteran of the Second Opium War in China, docks at the English Camp wharf (ca. 1869-1871). Three columns of stacked wood log cribbing were filled with rocks to support the decking leading to a storehouse on the waterfront. A second smaller boat is visible just offshore from the Commissary pier.*

NPS Archaeologist Beth Horton records the location of the central wharf support using a global positioning system. The tip of the remnants of the deepest wharf pier is also visible although the wooden cribbing has long eroded away.



Working in the sub-tidal zone, Marine Archaeologists Morgan Mackenzie and Jeanette Hayman document the remnants of a rarely seen wooden support pile near the Commissary pier. The jagged look of the pile is caused by shipworms eating the wood.

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The Northwest Cultural Resources Institute is a cooperative partnership based at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, dedicated to fostering cultural resources research, education, and stewardship in the Pacific Northwest. The NCRI brings together National Park Service staff, university professors, and subject matter experts to facilitate research and training, provide expertise, and support other innovative educational endeavors using national parks as laboratories.

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MYSTERY ARTIFACT

Last issue's mystery object was a trade ring.

Time for a change of pace! These are extreme close-ups of an artifact that would otherwise be easily recognizable—a full photo of the artifact will be featured in the next NCRI Report.