



NCRI Report

Post Hospital Treasure: Photography Supplies

by Bob Cromwell, NPS Archaeologist



In May of 2012, NCRI Cultural Resources staff at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site were contacted by members of the Fort Vancouver National Trust (Trust), informing them of recent artifact discoveries in the ca. 1904 U.S. Army Post Hospital, located in the West Vancouver Barracks. The Trust acts as the property manager for the City of Vancouver for this site, and had sponsored an architectural analysis of the structure, which involved a team of architects and engineers probing elements of the structure that are generally inaccessible. One of these areas was the attic on the third floor, which was never finished. During the course of their evaluation, the architects

discovered a cache of early-20th century artifacts adjacent to a dormer window.

Through a cooperative agreement, the National Park Service (NPS) acts as the lead agency for all cultural resources issues within the Vancouver National Historic Reserve (VNHR). Therefore, NPS Archaeologist Bob Cromwell, conducted an initial survey of the newly discovered artifacts. The primary cache contained objects consistent with an early-20th century photographic development lab. These objects included: glass vials with paper labels; cardboard boxes for “PREMO FILM PACK” with expiration dates of 1907 and 1908; actual photographic negatives; and various



Curator Tessa Langford gathers artifacts in the Post Hospital attic (left). Empty packets of negative developer found in the Post Hospital attic (above)

photographic prints. The dozen or so photographic negatives with visible images on them all show a close up of a male face head on and in profile, with a soldier's name, rank, and unit designation.

With the City's permission, NPS Curator Tessa Langford, came back with Cromwell to recover as many of the diagnostic objects from this cache as possible. In addition to the previously observed photographic objects, various medicinal and alcohol bottles were recovered, as well as various early-20th century U.S. Army paper documents. The most interesting of these were the descriptive court-martial papers for a private, dated 1903. He was court-

Historical Fragment

Excerpt from a letter from Sister St. Henry (Dr. John McLoughlin's sister) to their uncle, Dr. Simon Fraser. Written at Ursulines Quebec May 11, 1835. The McLoughlin Empire and its Rulers. B.B. Barker, 1959, pp 210-211.

My Very Dear Uncle,
I am extremely sorry for the trouble and sadness which my nephew [John Jr.] gives you, but for heaven's sake, do not send him to Rivière du Loup. My uncle Alexander is too infirm to take care of the conduct of the young man. My mother can barely see to distinguish objects, she is unable to walk alone, besides her sensitiveness increases with the years, she would die of sadness, to see that child run wild in the country, for charity's sake, My dear Uncle, place this child at some estate of your vicinity, do not abandon him, I beg of you, he would fall from excesses to excesses, if he does not have a Master, you have been as a father to him, I beg of you to finish and crown your deed.

If it would happen that your son will come through Quebec, I will invite him to make the acquaintance of his cousins, he will find here with me two Novices, Saint Cecile and Saint Borgia, the first is the daughter of my sister Julie Michaud, the second one of the youngest of my sister Angele Dechene. They promise to be attractive subjects, they both have a sister in boarding school. I am awaiting some news from my brother David, I regret to see that from your letter, you do not expect my brother Jean [John] for a long time. I hoped that he would at least arrive next year. I pray Heaven that you may live many years and in this, my Mother, and my Niece are with me with all their hearts. I have the honor to be, with my profound respect
My Dear Uncle Your devoted
Affectionate Niece
Sister St. Henry

NCRI Director's Letter: Costumed Interpretation Fort Vancouver

It is still summer weather as I write this, although the days are shortening and the mornings are cool. We have finished our excavations at the public archaeology field school and Oregon Archaeological Society dig. At this time of year, I set aside my trowel and brush to put on the trappings of the costumed interpreter. I usually portray a historical person at the annual Campfires and Candlelight Event, a well-loved community program put on by the National Park Service in the early fall. More than 150 costumed interpreters, including yours truly, portray people of the past, including soldiers, fur traders, and many of the others who represent the myriad historic peoples who lived at Fort Vancouver in the 19th and 20th centuries. Playing a character in a living history event is an unusual experience for someone who traditionally focusses on broken crockery, beads, bottles, and the like. For one thing, the artifacts that archaeologists usually find in fragments magically transform into their “living” context. Every year it surprises me the many types and layers of clothing that a gentleman of the fur trade would wear and the ingenious ways of fastening it all together. I have found many buttons of different types digging at the fort, but physically experiencing how they all go together is a real treat—my thanks to the talented and knowledgeable fingers of the costume department, headed by textiles expert and author Eileen Trestain!

What is even more profound in this attempt at temporal distortion is realizing how little I really know about how the actors of the past played out their lives. Luckily, we only have a few moments with each visitor as they walk through the timeline path. We only have time to espouse small vignettes in our reconstructed candlelit tableaux to convey what is really important. For my part this year, in the Hudson's Bay Company dispensary, it is about how different medicine was in the past, the role of the naturalist, and the apocalyptic “fever and ague” (probably malaria) that swept the lower Columbia River starting in 1830 and its effects on indigenous peoples. Others will talk about which Colonial power will dominate the west, the inherent status hierarchies of military men and British fur traders, and the ways of life of men, women and children. Regardless, being forced to play a role requires us to think outside of our usual subject matter—to physically clothe the past in modern dress, if only for a night. I find it stimulating and just a little disturbing. Through this sublime experiment in costumed interpretation, it becomes obvious that there are many ways to interpret the past and that our understanding of the past has many different faces. As scientists, curators, and historians, we try to find the relevance of cultural resources using different mechanisms—the written record, the archaeological artifact, the heirloom, the picture, and then we clothe it with our understanding of how it all went together in a narrative. Heritage sites like Fort Vancouver provide us a unique place to play out our historical experiments. Preserving these sites provides a stage in which to act out our perceptions of the social and political past and, in many different ways, better understand how the northwest has become the way it is.

Doug Wilson

Archaeological Testing in the East and South Barracks

by Bob Cromwell, NPS Archaeologist



Glynnis Irwin in foreground, digging shovel tests near the post-exchange. In the immediate background Jacqui Cheung and Liz Mastrangelo are digging in the shadows. Farther in the background Eric Gleason, Dana Holschuh and TJ Brown can be seen.

As you may be aware, the U.S. Army formally handed over the East and South Vancouver Barracks to the National Park Service (NPS) for inclusion into Fort Vancouver National Historic Site in May of 2012. The U.S. Army and the NPS have found that almost all of the underground infrastructure and utilities are beyond repair and will require complete replacement. The NPS has begun planning for these replacements, including the creation of plans for the new utility lines. At the same time the NPS is beginning consultation efforts with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and 25 federally recognized tribes.

As a part of this effort, the Cultural Resources Department at Fort Vancouver began the initial archaeological survey of the East and South Vancouver Barracks this past June. A team of four NPS archaeologists, lead by Bob Cromwell, and including Leslie O'Rourke, Jacqui Cheung, and Eric Gleason, had been working in the area for about three months. The team was joined by several

temporary employees, most of whom were former students and/or instructors in one of Fort Vancouver's public archaeology field schools over the past decade. These included: Meris Mullaley, TJ Brown, Glynnis Irwin, and Dana Holschuh. We were also lucky enough to be joined by a summer intern, Liz Mastrangelo, who is currently an undergraduate in Anthropology, at Reed College in Portland.

The project was greatly assisted by the NPS' Mid-West Archaeological Center, who sent Steven DeVore from Omaha, Nebraska, to conduct remote sensing surveys—using Ground Penetrating Radar and a Magnetometer—of much of the project area this past May. The results of these surveys have been used to help guide the placement of archaeological units.

To date, the team has completed over 120 shovel tests, and four larger (square meter) test units throughout the property; mostly along proposed utility corridors. The results of these excavations will help to guide the final utility

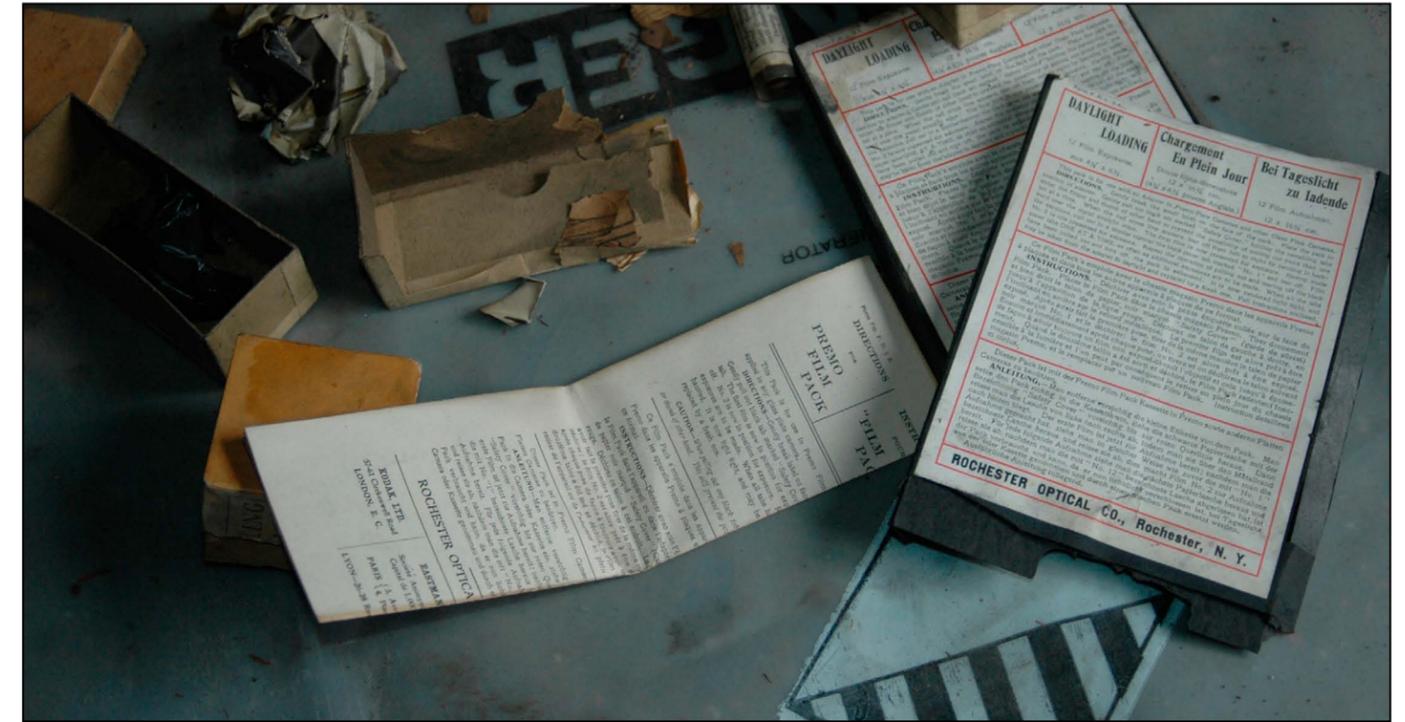
corridor routes, and will allow the NPS to attempt to direct such below-ground work away from significant archaeological deposits.

Initial results indicate the presence of several previously unrecorded, significant archaeological sites. It appears that the remains of at least two previously unknown Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) archaeological assemblages have been encountered, both in the East Barracks. In addition, several mid-to-late 19th century U.S. Army sites have been located, specifically the remains of an 1850s era Powder Magazine, several 1880s Barracks structures and their associated outbuildings, and several 1890s era Quartermaster's stables and other service structures in the South Barracks.

The project is taking a field work hiatus to catch up on the processing of the thousands of artifacts that have been collected to date, but is set to start again in the fall, to specifically complete some required work in and around the area of the HBC Cemetery.

Post Hospital Treasures

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A few of the objects recovered from the Post Hospital attic.



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.

martialed for drunkenness on duty, and for being AWOL. His punishment included confinement to quarters in Legaspi, Phillippines, as well as an acceptance of transfer to the Post Hospital at Vancouver Barracks. A total of 156 objects were recovered for curation in the NPS museum collection. Some of the more fragile objects will be sent out for conservation, while the cellulose nitrate negatives will be scanned then destroyed to mitigate their flammability.

The Army units recorded on the various objects include the "Hospital Corps" and the U.S. 14th Infantry, which was at Vancouver Barracks in 1905-1906. The 1906 earthquake saw the 14th move to San Francisco to help impose law

and order during the aftermath. They came back to Vancouver Barracks in late 1906, before being rotated to the Philippines in early 1907. Judging from this history and other information on the recovered artifacts, it appears that this cache was deposited in the 1905-1906 period as expedient trash disposal while a photographic development laboratory was in use in this attic, developing photo identification images of individual soldiers. This discovery is an interesting and revealing look into the everyday lives of the many soldiers who lived at Vancouver Barracks in the early-20th century, as well as showing evidence of a new function in the Post Hospital building.

New Archaeological Finds at the McLoughlin House

by Beth Horton, NPS Archaeologist

Like other Willamette River terraces, the area that is now the McLoughlin House Unit of Fort Vancouver NHS was used by native peoples. The archaeological record shows a long history for this landscape prior to John McLoughlin's land claim, its use as a Public Square, and the 1909 relocation of the McLoughlin House. This past spring, NCRI archaeologists Beth Horton and Elaine Dorset recovered an ovate basalt biface (an edged tool sharpened on both sides) which adds to our knowledge of precontact peoples living above Willamette Falls in Oregon City.

Other stone tool materials previously recovered from this site include chert, jasper, chalcedony, basalt and obsidian flakes. However, pinpointing a manufacturing time frame for these materials can be difficult as flakes were commonly used as tools for thousands of years. Analysis of stone tools provides a wide range of technical information, such as their manufacturing methods. Yet tools can also reflect the subsistence strategies and settlement patterns of the people who made and used them.

Although the biface is missing its tip and base, we know it was unnotched, unstemmed, and unfluted. Small fractures along its sides suggest the biface was sharpened. When viewed from the base, its main axis 'twists' by about 10°, indicating the edges were retouched while the biface was hafted. Therefore, it was likely used with an atlatl for hunting and/or as a knife. Similarly-styled bifaces collected from radiocarbon-dated contexts suggest that the lands of the McLoughlin House Unit were occupied at least as early as the Merrybell Phase (2,550 to 1,750 before present).

During this time the Portland Basin saw population growth, intensified procurement and processing of root and fish foods, extensive use of plant and animal resources, an increased focus on collection and storage of food items, and the development of semi-sedentary to sedentary habitations. We know of at least four large village sites located on the west and east banks of the Willamette River. From



Excellent Biface recovered during testing: laboratory photo (left) and in the field (right).



"Mud Sisters" Elaine Dorset and Beth Horton during fieldwork for installation of an underground utility line on a rainy day in March. The historic McLoughlin House is visible in the background.

ethnographic sources, we know that native peoples followed seasonal rounds based upon resource availability, settling in peak family-oriented fishing locations during the summer. Typically villages were in close proximity to one another and contained less than 100 inhabitants, although larger villages have been documented in the historic literature. The remaining sites, including this one, appear to be more seasonally occupied, less permanent settlements, on the second and third terraces above the Willamette River. This newly recovered biface will help archaeologists piece together the spatial and temporal relationships between these villages and smaller campsites.

Announcements

Fort Vancouver has debuted two new exhibits this summer. The first of these exhibits, *From Fur to Fossil* in the Fort Vancouver Visitor Center, is based on a program developed as part of a summer youth camp provided by the National Park Service and the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. During this program campers from local Vancouver middle schools analyzed artifacts from the Fort Vancouver Museum Collection and wrote labels to accompany them in the exhibit. Thus allowing them to share their ideas about the artifacts they analyzed to the public.



Youth campers analyze artifacts from the Fort's collection and write labels for the From Fur to Fossil exhibit in the Visitor Center (above). Sprucer Stories in the Fur Store hallway (below).



The second exhibit, *Sprucer Stories: The Spruce Production Division at Vancouver Barracks*, which opened August 3rd in the Fort's reconstructed Fur Store, tells the stories of Spruce Mill soldiers stationed at Vancouver Barracks during World War I.

Current Research

Volunteers **Ike Bay, Dennis Torresdal, and Dave Stearns** recently assisted with an **assessment of iron objects** in the museum collection. All three are blacksmiths and members of the Fort Vancouver Trades Guild, and generously offered their time to improve the catalog records associated with blacksmithing tools and products. They went through 44 cabinets in the study collection, and recorded corrections or refinements to the objects' identification and description. When cataloging trade-specific tools, preforms, or broken and incomplete pieces, these kinds of focused analyses by specialists are an ideal approach.

Recent Theses

2012 Elaine C. Dorset
A Historical and Archaeological Study of the Nineteenth Century Hudson's Bay Company Garden at Fort Vancouver Focusing on Archaeological Field Methods and Microbotanical Analysis
Master of Arts in Anthropology
Portland State University

2011 Jeffery Marks
Defining a Unique Model of Public Engagement and Evaluating Its Implementation at the 2011 NPS Fort Vancouver Public Archaeology Field School
Master of Arts in Public Archaeology
University College London

2011 Meredith J. Mullaley
Rebuilding the Architectural History of the Fort Vancouver Village
Master of Arts in Anthropology
Portland State University

The exhibit combines archival documents, donated objects, and archaeologically recovered artifacts to give visitors a full picture of life at Vancouver Barracks during a period of great conflict, change, and opportunity.

Last spring, Fort Vancouver's Cultural Resources Division undertook an overhaul of its **website** in order to provide more information about its archaeological excavations, archives, and artifact collection to the public. New photo galleries, features, and a 2012 Field School blog have been added.

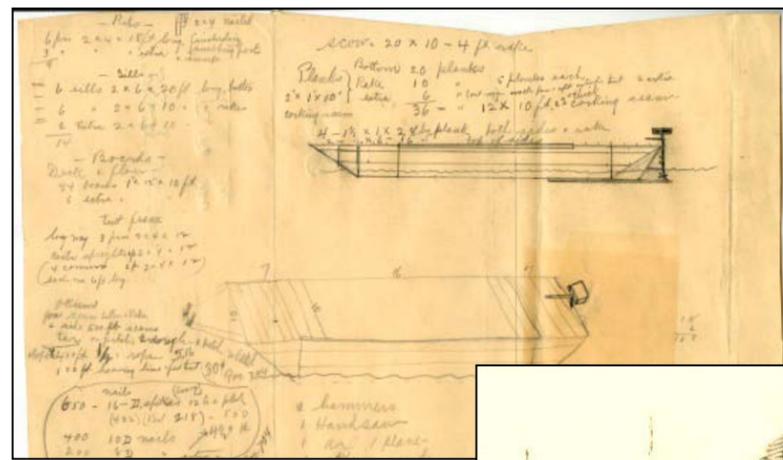
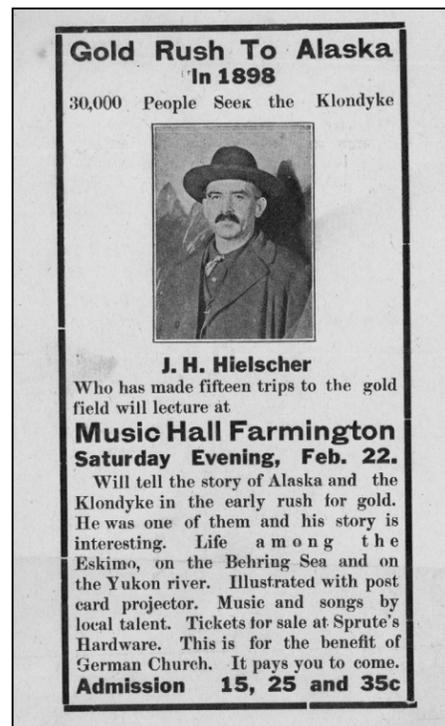
Also online, Fort Vancouver has introduced two new features to its **Facebook page: Wednesday Cultural Resources Pictures of the Week**, which share current staff archaeological and curatorial work, and **Friday Collections Close-Ups**, which share artifacts in the collection from multiple angles.

The **National Park Service** recently launched an updated version of the **Web Catalog**, a searchable online database featuring the agency's unparalleled museum collections. The scope of these collections encompasses natural history specimens, cultural objects, and archives, all tied to the nation's most special places. With the Web Catalog, visitors can do simple or advanced searches through catalog records, or browse **Collection Highlights**, curated sets of objects highlighted by park curators to represent a specific theme.

To experience the Web Catalog, go to: <http://museum.nps.gov> and follow the links

Material Culture Notes: The John H. Hielscher Archive at Klondike Gold Rush NHP in Seattle

by Lissa Kramer, NPS Museum Technician



Advertisement for a lecture by John H. Hielscher about his journeys to the Alaska gold fields (left). Hielscher's drawing of plans for building a scow, a type of boat used by Klondikers on inland waterways (above). Klondikers using scows on Lake Bennett to get to the gold fields. (right).



The Klondike Gold Rush literally changed the shape of northwestern United States and Canada. Gold rush stampeders rushing to "gateway" cities swelled and forever altered the waterfronts and business districts of Seattle, San Francisco, and Vancouver, British Columbia, as they prepared for their arduous journey to the "Great White North".

The physical landscape of Alaska and the Yukon Territory changed, too, as determined men and women probed the frozen dirt and rivers seeking first nuggets and then gold-rich quartz veins through ever more invasive methods of mining. From simple gold panning in the earliest days, mining in the Klondike and nearby regions instigated advancements in technology that spread around the world.

John H. Hielscher was one of the early Klondikers who not only bore witness to these events, but also made a significant contribution to the spectacle that was the Klondike Gold Rush. His descendants have donated his papers and photographs to Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park in Seattle (KLSE) to further the interpretive mission of the park: exploring the continuing legacy of this significant international historic event.

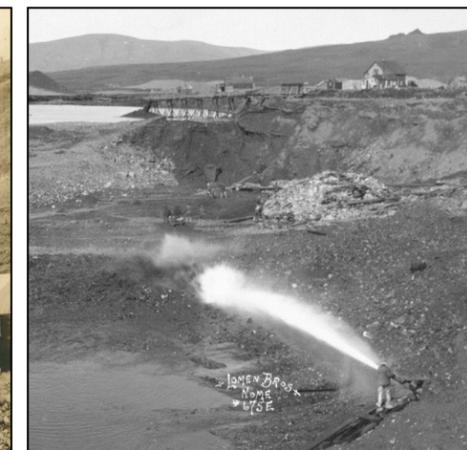
Hielscher made some fifteen trips to the gold fields over a span of two decades. He corresponded regularly with not only his wife, Leah, in Seattle, but also with many relatives—including his father in Minnesota, the Hielschers' home state. In addition to letters, John often sent draft manuscripts of a book series he hoped to publish.

His early book notes, numbering only a few pages, grew to drafts for some thirteen separate books of stories covering the entirety of Hielscher's exploits mining and running various businesses during the era of the great gold rushes. After his permanent return to "the lower 48," John continued to edit his manuscripts but never published them.

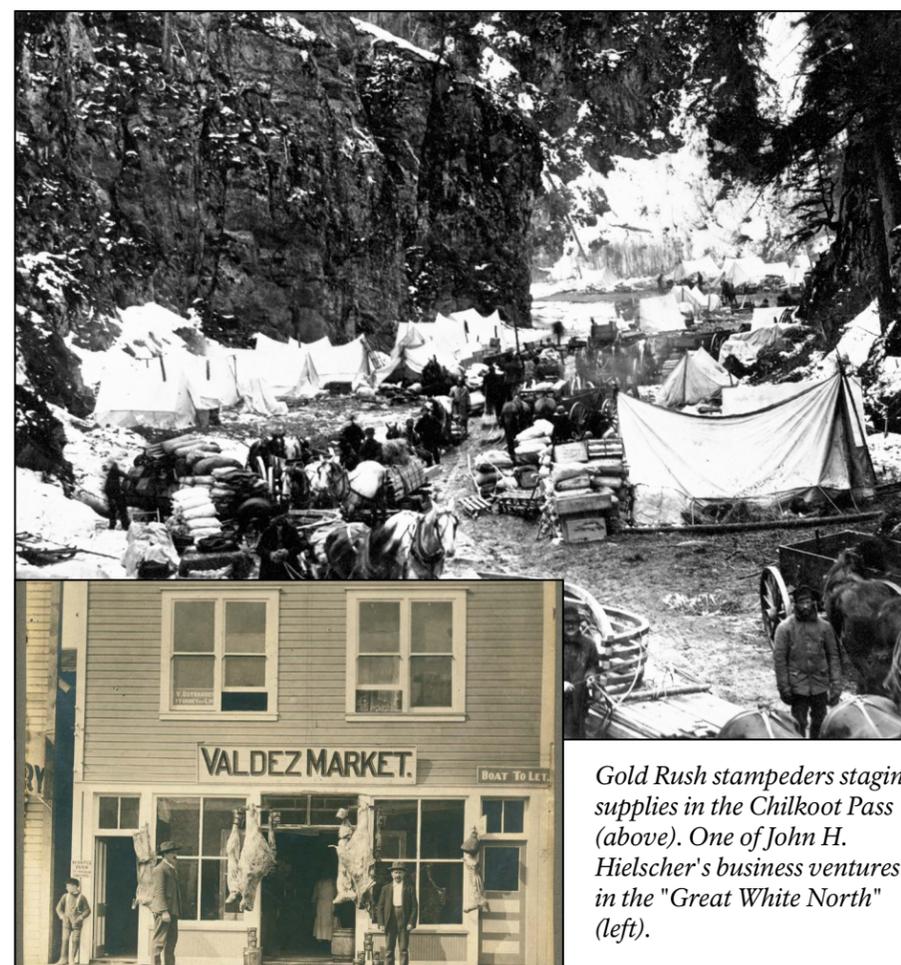
KLSE staff and volunteers are processing the Hielscher archive, which will allow researchers access to this important collection. Hielscher's business papers, personal correspondence, and manuscripts detail much about northern life during the Klondike, Fairbanks, and Nome gold rushes. His stories provide a first-person account of the gold rush events of the late-nineteenth century, which electrified the nation and led to

Material Culture Notes: John H. Hielscher Archive

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John H. Hielscher and others at George Carmack's operation, One at Discovery on Bonanza Creek (left). Changing the shape of the land through advancements in technology, this image illustrates the impact of hydraulic mining (above).



the settlement of a remote, northern corner of the world.

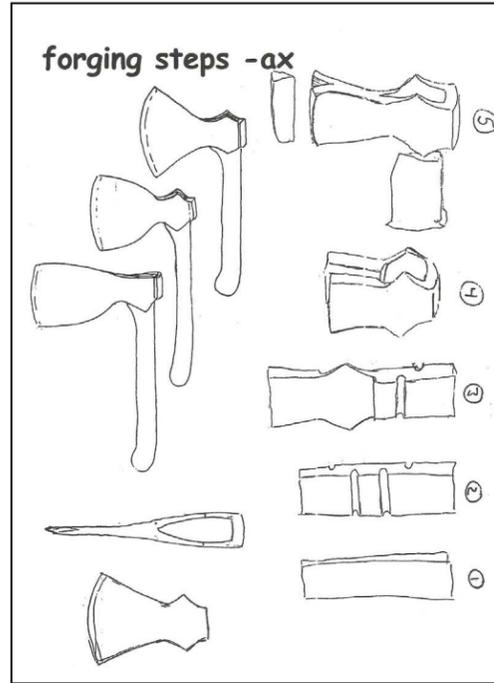
In one manuscript, Hielscher reveals that his good friend, neighbor, and sometime-employer, George Carmack told Hielscher that Carmack's native wife, Kate, found the first gold nuggets after breakfast one morning while Carmack was taking a nap. (Carmack's second wife later went on to publish an account of George Carmack's discovery of the Klondike with no mention of Kate.)

His papers also reveal how the real money was not to be found in the frozen ground, but in providing services to the ballooning populations of mining camps. Hielscher not only mined several claims, but provided meat through his markets at Fairbanks and Valdez, provided cold storage across Alaska for food for dog teams, farmed, and ran outposts near Holy Cross on the Yukon River.

Gold Rush stampeders staging supplies in the Chilkoot Pass (above). One of John H. Hielscher's business ventures in the "Great White North" (left).

Hewing Hatchets

by Ike Bay, NPS Volunteer Blacksmith and Cultural Resources VIP



Line drawings by Peter Ross, retired Master of the Blacksmith Shop at Colonial Williamsburg, VA and a frequent demonstrator At Fort Vancouver.

It is well known from historical sources and from artifacts in the museum that large numbers of trade axes were made at Fort Vancouver. They were made in a variety of sizes, from small belt axes up to larger “felling” types that required two hands to operate.

Less well known is the manufacture and use of hewing hatchets. There are five artifacts in the Fort Vancouver collection (FOVA Catalog #s 30654, 30647, 8932, 8933, 45931) that represent this type. There are other, incomplete artifacts that may also be of this hatchet type—these include cut off blade sections and poll addition pre-forms—but these are not as easy to classify as the ones listed above.

Hewing hatchets came in a variety of styles and sizes and some of their forms date back to the medieval period. They get their names from regions—such as Kent Pattern—or specific trades such as Wheeler’s, Boat Builders, Carpenters, et cetera. The references listed below will give you an idea of the wide variety of these tools used by trained craftsmen practicing a trade. At Fort Vancouver during the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) era, using a hatchet to shape wood was



This is a "Kent" style hewing hatchet that experienced a material failure during manufacture. From the Fort Vancouver Museum Collection: Catalog number FOVA 8933.

common in many trades and should not be considered an indicator of crude workmanship. In manufacture, form and function these hatchets were very different from general axe type tools. They are not general-purpose utilitarian tools like the trade axe.

The cutting edge of hewing hatchets are sharpened in the standard “V” or chisel bevel, similar to a broad axe. Compared to trade axes, these tools are a more refined product with pronounced ears or lugs on the front and back of the eye. The sequence drawing shows how the iron is moved from the eye walls to form the lugs. It also gives the eye itself more definition. The poll above the eye is pronounced and in the case of the artifacts in the collection, three of four show that material was added to build up the poll. It is unknown at this time if the add-on is iron or steel.

All of the artifacts looked at had experienced production difficulties, meaning there were no examples of a finished hatchet. It was common for hatchets of this type to have a filed or bright finish. When you consider the number of trades practiced at the Fort during the fur trade era, it is easy to understand the Fort’s blacksmith shop filling this need.

For more information see:
Tools for the Trades and Crafts.
Ken Roberts Publishing Co. 1976

Smiths Key. Published by the Early American Industries Association. 1973

The Woodwright’s Guide, Working Wood with Wedge and Edge. Roy Underhill, UNC Press. 2008



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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A partner in the
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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 knife handle.

This mystery object is from the Fort Vancouver Village.

