



Champions of History - Mayor Royce Pollard



Champions of History

Leadership is often recognized only in hindsight. Yet leaders exist now, sometimes in unrecognized roles or unexpected places. They actively work to make this community better, and to promote the heritage that formed the Pacific Northwest into what it is today. This is the first in a series of publications celebrating those who champion the cause of history.

Mayor Royce Pollard

Royce Pollard has been the mayor of America's Vancouver for the past ten years. His public service is characterized by an unwavering support of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve and the

partnership that manages this nationally significant area. This site bulletin is a tribute to his leadership in the protection and promotion of Vancouver's heritage.

Commanding Vancouver Barracks

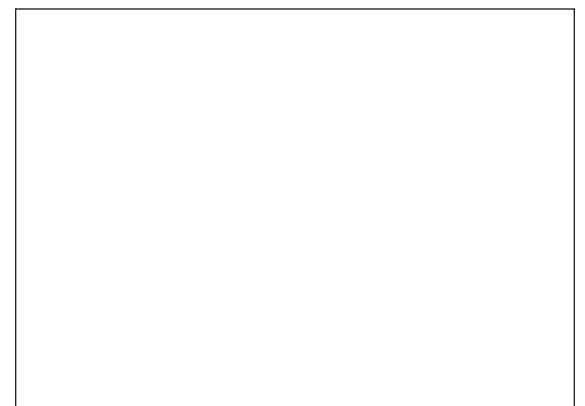
Royce Pollard's first assignment in the U.S. Army was to Fort Lewis, Washington. He had no idea then that the Pacific Northwest would figure so prominently in the years after his army career. Nearing retirement and stationed in South Korea, he tried to get a last assignment in the Pacific Northwest, close to his wife's family in Sequim, Washington. Though he was unable to get an assignment at Fort Lewis, he was offered the command of Vancouver Barracks. He accepted it sight unseen.

Back in the United States and on leave, Pollard and his son took a trip to Vancouver. They spent three days here to get a sense of the town. During that quick visit, he fell in love with the place. The Pollard family moved into the Hospital Steward's House in July of 1985 and lived there until late in 1988.

Pollard was interested in local history and Vancouver's role in regional development. Drawing on his academic training (he has a degree in History and Political Science from the University of Alabama and is a certified teacher) and an extreme fondness

for American history, he tried to do small things to reintroduce the community to its historical connection with the post.

"At noon we broadcast marching music at the Barracks for an hour," says Pollard. At the time, the City was starting up specific cultural programs relating to General George C. Marshall and other events celebrating its military heritage. Pollard offered to help, and promoted the Army's participation in community events like the Veteran's Day parade and the Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony at the post.



During his tenure as Commander of Vancouver Barracks, Pollard worked to reestablish a sense of Vancouver's noteworthy military history.

Serving the Public

After retirement, Pollard and his wife were faced with deciding where to settle. “The plan had been to buy my wife’s parents house in Sequim,” says Pollard, but they quickly decided that life on the Olympic Peninsula would be too quiet. He puts it quite simply: “We had made friends here, and decided to stay.”

Having moved 19 times during his military service, Pollard had never had an opportunity to be involved in local government. While community members pushed him to run for City Council, Pollard discussed the choice with his family. They agreed that he would participate, for only four to five years. “This was seventeen years ago!” Pollard says with a laugh, “I spent seven years as a City Councilmember, and have been Mayor for ten.”

As Mayor, one of Pollard’s top priorities was turning the downtown areas around. “The historic area was a sleepy little area... and downtown was in serious need of attention. It was the highest response

area for fire and police.” He decided that something had to be done. He embarked on a personal mission to invigorate the heart of Vancouver.



Royce Pollard has spent seventeen years in public service for “America’s Vancouver.”

Promoting Vancouver’s Heritage

Much of Pollard’s attention focused on the creation of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve. He became familiar with the other stories and peoples of Vancouver and the surrounding area, the amazing richness of the layers of history. “The federal government’s creation of the Reserve is a recognition of what we have to offer this region and the country,” says Pollard, “It gives us an opportunity to combine our various assets and capabilities to market to the world.”

His support of the National Park Service (NPS) as one of the key players is steadfast.



Pollard has been intimately involved in promoting special events which support the mission of the Historic Reserve, including the annual Nez Perce / Vancouver Barracks Reconciliation Ceremony.

“The NPS are the best interpreters in the world. The reenactments are as good a story as has been told.”

Twenty years from now, Pollard pictures a Historic Reserve connected to both the waterfront and downtown Vancouver, reuniting the city’s rich historical areas through walking trails and a singular landbridge. He pictures a self-sufficient historic area where facilities are used adaptively to bring revenue back to the site.

Perhaps most vividly, he pictures an entertaining and educational experience of history to offer several million visitors a year. He believes the Historic Reserve can offer something to everyone: “History buffs of all types, educators, kids.”

Pollard champions the importance of a community’s heritage. “I believe in history. It is the foundation of who we are and where we come from. It’s a part of the fabric of society. History provides us with a sense of worth and commitment.”

In the Army, everyone has a “dream sheet”, their top choices of places to which they would like to be transferred. “On my dream sheet [now] there is only one place,” Pollard says, “The best thing the Army did was send me here. I love this area.”