

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



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2018 Annual Report



CONNECT PRESERVE PARTNER INSPIRE



Photo: Junelle Lawry



In 1874, a 9 year old girl named Idabelle Sparks Haughey arrived at Vancouver Barracks with her mother and stepfather. Here, the family lived on Officers' Row for the next decade. Later in her life, Idabelle wrote that Vancouver Barracks was "one of the largest and finest Army Posts in the Country, situated on the banks of one of our greatest rivers, with scenery not to be surpassed anywhere." Well over 100 years later, I can't help but agree with Idabelle's assessment. Today, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site serves as an oasis in a quickly-expanding urban setting. Here, visitors can experience the same natural beauty that entranced Idabelle Haughey - the blue waters of the Columbia River, the tall trees and grassy fields, the spectacular view of Mount Hood - and they can also discover the fascinating, complicated, and sometimes difficult history on which our community was founded.

Idabelle Haughey also wrote that the community at Vancouver Barracks "was like one big family." That spirit lives on today through our visitors, staff, volunteers, partners, and in the kind words and actions of everyone who cares about this national park.

As you read through this Annual Report, I hope that you will feel as proud of this place as I do. In the last fiscal year, we made tremendous strides. I am so pleased to report that 2018 was a year filled with new events, innovative youth programs, game-changing historic preservation projects, and record-setting visitation. Together, we look back at a great year and look forward to the wonderful things that 2019 will bring.



Tracy Fortmann, Superintendent
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site



Connect

Photo: Junelle Lawry

In our busy, modern lives, it can be hard to find time and space to connect to the past. But these connections can foster a deeper understanding of current events and our place in the world. At Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, public programs and exhibits are designed with this in mind.

This year at our Visitor Center, we featured two temporary exhibits by Northwest artists. From November 2017 through the spring of 2018, “The River People” featured beautiful baskets, sally bags, woven wall hangings and quilts by Wasco Nation artist Pat Courtney Gold. From summer through the end of 2018, “Na Kanaka: A Contemporary Look at Hawaiians in the Fur Trade” brought new artwork by Hawaiian artist Amy Kapuanani Antonio-

Claussen to the Visitor Center. These moving pieces of art highlighted the little known stories of the Hawaiian men and women who worked the Pacific Northwest fur trade from 1811 to the 1860s.

Throughout the year, other programs brought the public to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site to explore the past and present. In May, the annual Children’s Cultural Parade brought thousands of local elementary school students to share their family’s stories at this historic site. In July, 34 new Americans received their citizenship at a naturalization ceremony hosted by the US Citizenship & Immigration Services at Pearson Air Museum, the 10th naturalization ceremony we have hosted at the park.



In partnership with the Oregon Museum of Science & Industry, two week-long summer camps brought young people to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site to learn about our region’s history. Campers slept inside the fort, played 19th century games, and shared the stories behind masks they created as part of a special ranger-led program.



This year’s new Little Learners program invited children ages 3 to 6 and their caregivers to a special series of programs designed with preschool-aged children in mind. Children learned about Fort Vancouver through stories, by looking at real artifacts from our museum collection, and doing hands-on crafts.



Historic weapons programs on the Parade Ground introduced visitors to the history of the US Army at Vancouver Barracks, and the change in weapons technology over time.



Preserving historic and archaeological resources is a core mission of the National Park Service. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes at Fort Vancouver to ensure that buildings, artifacts, and landscapes are cared for appropriately while also meeting the needs of visitors and tenants. During Fiscal Year 2018, much of the focus was on doing necessary design and archaeology work to move Vancouver Barracks towards the “public-service campus” envisioned in the Master Plan.

An interdisciplinary team of project and facility managers, contracting officers, architects, engineers, and cultural resource specialists worked on the design phase of several large-scale projects including utility upgrades throughout the site,

rehabilitation of Buildings 993 and 733, and updated parking areas, signage, and circulation. Archaeologists tested the areas where ground disturbance is slated to occur, analyzed the recovered artifacts, and wrote up their findings to inform the design process.

At the same time, smaller-scale projects continued, including the rehabilitation of Building 728 (a historic US Army Finance Office) for lease by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, upgrades to Building 733 (formerly a Hospital Storehouse) for use as flexible office space, the repainting of Building 786 (originally a Carpenter Shop), and reroofing of three other historic buildings.

Beyond Vancouver Barracks, park staff was also busy with preservation projects.

A new roof was put on the historic Headquarters Building at Pearson Field, and upgrades to HVAC systems throughout the complex mean that aircraft and other items at Pearson Air Museum will continue to have an environment that aids in their preservation.

Over the summer, park curators, with the assistance of a wonderful undergraduate intern from Central Michigan University, cataloged and rehoused museum collections, focusing on archaeological collections from the Cathlapotle site, as well as collections from the McLoughlin House in Oregon City and the Fort Vancouver Village.

Archaeological monitoring and excavations in the East Vancouver Barracks this year revealed underground features, like this brick structure.

In summer 2018, staff and volunteers moved the completed full-size replica of a 1912 Curtiss Pusher into Pearson Air Museum, where it has become part of the museum’s permanent exhibits.

This year we accepted numerous donations of historic artifacts from members of the community. This postcard showing the Vancouver Barracks baseball team posing with the nationally famous House of David baseball team in the 1920s was among the year’s donations to our museum collection.



Partner

This national park, like so many others, depends on a myriad of wonderful partners. Our many partnerships are vital to the work we do, and help our community connect to the site in new ways.

Over three days in April, the park hosted the 2018 Camporee of the Fort Vancouver District of the Cascade Pacific Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Days were filled with educational activities that tied scouting skills to the history of the site, including orienteering, fire-building, language lessons in Chinuk Wawa, and native plant and animal identification. Participants also provided service hours to the national park and earned a Scout Ranger patch.

Another successful partnership activity was a Stargazer Camp hosted by the City of Vancouver Parks and Recreation in August. Overnight campers were treated to a unique stargazing experience from inside the fort walls, with members of the Rose City Astronomers and Vancouver Sidewalk Astronomers on hand to provide guidance and the use of their telescopes.

We were fortunate to once again receive an Open Outdoors for Kids (formerly Every Kid in a Park) grant from the National Park Foundation. Although entrance fees are always waived for educational groups, these funds allow us to reimburse Title I schools for the costs of transportation for 4th grade field trips. This year, grant funds covered over 4,000 students!



In February, the annual 1940s-themed Sweetheart Dance at Pearson Air Museum served as a popular fundraiser for the nonprofit Friends of Fort Vancouver, a group that supports the educational mission of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.



In summer 2018, the annual Canoe Journey brought tribes back to Fort Vancouver.



Celebrating the centennial of airmail service, in May three Stearman Speedmail biplanes landed at Pearson Field during a re-enactment of the 1,200 mile route along the West Coast. The US Postal Service provided a mobile post office where commemorative envelopes and postcards were franked by hand with a special stamp created for this event, before being loaded on the planes and sent north.



Photo: Beth Harrington

National parks are undeniably inspirational places. As caretakers of this national park, it is our duty to encourage curiosity about the stories we tell and the place we protect.

In April 2018, renowned author and naturalist Jack Nisbet, in partnership with our staff, offered an outdoor class for high school students from Benson High School. These students learned about the story of David Douglas, a naturalist who visited Fort Vancouver in the 1830s, and analyzed archaeological artifacts with the park's curator and chief of interpretation.

In May, park curators worked with middle school students at Vancouver's iTech Preparatory Middle School on a virtual museum of archaeological artifacts as part of the school's Fort Vancouver Virtual Reality project (FVvr). Students got hands-on experience as they created digital 3D scans of artifacts from our museum collection, and wrote about each artifact they studied. The project culminated in a presentation given

by the students at Pearson Air Museum and in the creation of a virtual online museum.

May also saw the premiere of a new Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) documentary, part of the popular "Oregon Experience" series, featuring Fort Vancouver. Through the winter and spring, Fort Vancouver NHS staff and volunteers worked with OPB film crews and producers to create a fantastic short film that brought the story of Fort Vancouver to new audiences. The film was screened at downtown Vancouver's Kiggins Theater on May 16 to a crowd that filled the theater. OPB reported that the documentary's television premiere on May 26 received among the highest ratings for the initial airing of an "Oregon Experience" program (76,000 viewers in Oregon alone), and earned the highest ratings of all public television stations nationwide on that night.

Volunteers from Fort Vancouver National Historic Site served as the cast of characters in OPB's documentary on Fort Vancouver.

Chief of Interpretation Bob Cromwell works with students from Benson High School as they analyze archaeological artifacts from our museum collection.

2018 by the Numbers



Photo: Junelle Lawry

1,108,907

visitors visited
Fort Vancouver
National Historic
Site

22,103

local students
visited the
national park on
educational field
trips

5,000+

visitors attended
Campfires &
Candlelight

921

volunteers
donated
41,978 hours

84,055

people were
accommodated
at 109 permitted
events

83,859

artifacts
cataloged
and museum
collections
totaling 3.1 million
items

4,000+

visitors attended
National Get
Outdoors Day

8,469

visitors attended
the park's
Historic Weapons
Programs

697

Lantern Tour
attendees

8,476

people followed
us on Twitter

8,464

people followed
us on Instagram

9,067

people followed
us on Facebook

Look Towards the Future

In summer 2019, a restored Curtiss JN-4 “Jenny” aircraft, painted to replicate one that flew with the 321st Observation Squadron in the early 1920s, will become part of the permanent exhibits at Pearson Air Museum.

Exciting changes are coming to the historic McLoughlin House in Oregon City! We have been procuring historically accurate reproduction draperies, wallpaper, and carpet to improve the authenticity of the house and the experience for visitors.

The City of Vancouver has been awarded a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant from the Federal Highways Administration. NPS and City staff are working together to ensure upgrades to East 5th Street as it bisects the park, as well as a new main parking area for visitors within the southern portion of Vancouver Barracks.

The park has received funding for design of a museum facility to be housed in a modern, brick building within Vancouver Barracks. The envisioned facility will preserve collections from numerous national parks and partners, expanding Fort Vancouver’s role as a cultural resources center.

Finally, we are working on a new park brochure and film! 2019 is shaping up to be another wonderful year at your national park!



Photo: Junelle Lawry