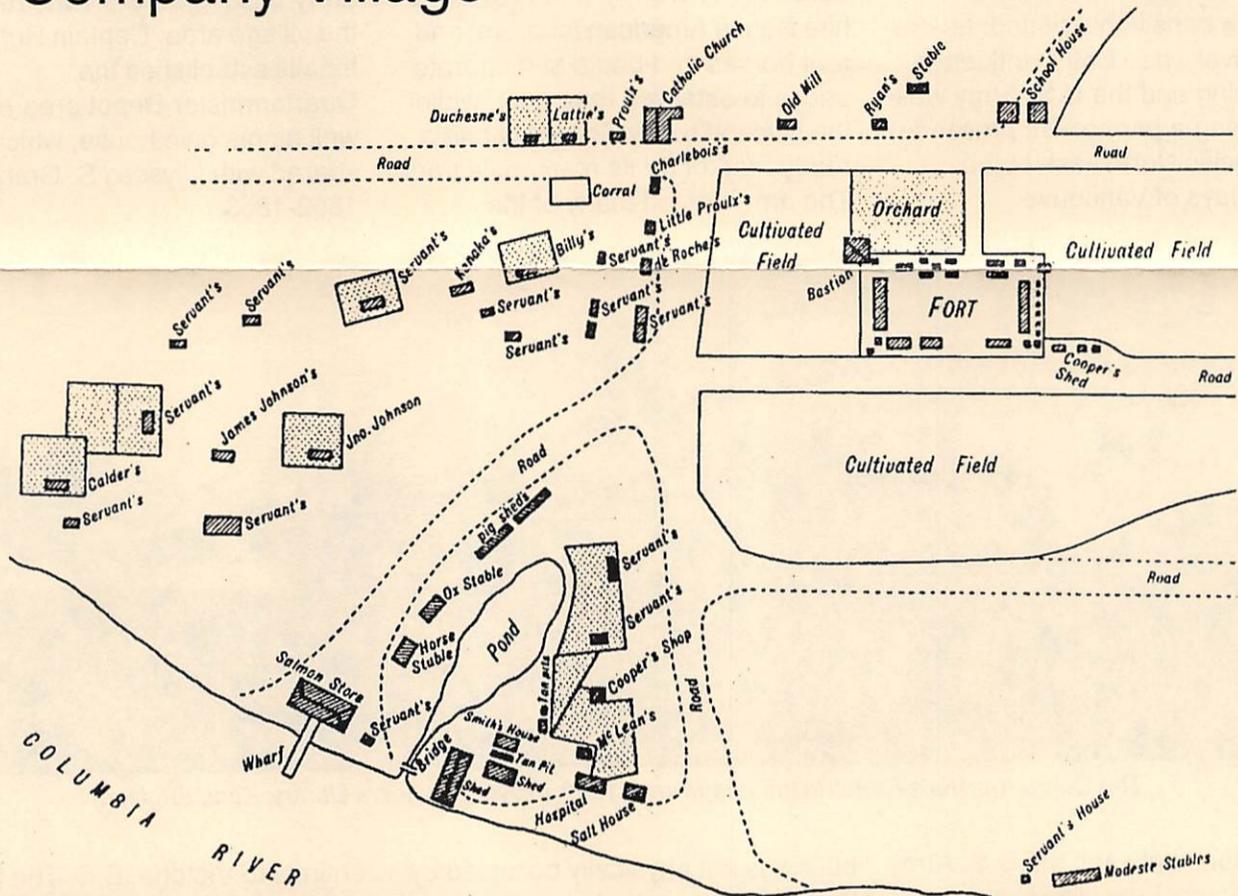


Fort Vancouver

National Historic Site
National Park Service
Vancouver National Historic Reserve

The Company Village



Detail of Company Village, based on Richard Covington map, c. 1846 (National Park Service)

For many years, Fort Vancouver was unique among fur trade posts in the Columbia Department in having a separate area designated for employee living quarters. Located west of the fort proper, the village was inhabited by the lower ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company employees and their families. It extended from present-day 5th Street

to the Columbia River. During peak seasons, the village contained upwards of 600 people in dwellings of varying conditions and styles. The village formed the necessary support system for Fort Vancouver in its role as an immense supply depot and farm that strove to be self-sufficient. Company employees, their wives, and children formed the backbone of

the Pacific Northwest fur trade while on brigade, and also provided the labor that allowed Fort Vancouver's operations to expand to an unprecedented scale. Its extensive operations included several hundred square miles of agricultural land – gardens, orchards, and pastures – a shipyard, distillery, tannery, sawmill, gristmill, and dairies.

A Diversity of Peoples

The village was the heart of the diverse population living in the area of the fort. Not only did the Hudson's Bay Company purposefully hire a diverse workforce, but the fur trade, as an industry, offered opportunities to many different types of people. Employment and Catholic Church records, two of the main sources for estimating the diversity of the village population, note French-Canadian, Scottish, Irish, Hawaiian, Iroquois, and people from over 30 different regional Native American groups. As the number of marriages *à la façon du pays* (contracted without clergy) increased, they gave rise to the *Métis*, a culture of mixed European

and Native heritage. Dwellings in the village were arrayed along broad lanes, and there is some evidence that they were arranged into ethnic "neighborhoods". As the amount of furs in the area decreased, and immigration and settlement expanded, the population of the village shows a gradual shift from a fur trade economy, based on waterways and French-Canadian *voyageurs*, to land-based mercantile activities. During this period the number of Hawaiians working as contract laborers grew steadily. By the early 1850s the area came to be known as Kanaka Village, adopting a Hawaiian word for person.



Native Americans near Fort Vancouver, Henry Warre, c. 1845 (National Archives of Canada)

Period of Transition: the U.S. Army Arrives

Kanaka Village is significant to regional history beyond its existence in the fur trade era. It was also the site of the transitional period: an era of upheaval when British influence was waning and the U.S. Army was establishing a permanent presence in the Pacific Northwest. In the earliest days of Vancouver

Barracks, the U.S. Army and the Hudson's Bay Company coexisted amicably. The army was allowed to hire Native American laborers, and rent horses and boats at moderate prices to establish their post, while the Hudson's Bay Company had a ready market for its mercantile trade. The army rented many of the

buildings in the village for housing and storage. In 1850, several new army buildings were constructed in the village area. Captain Rufus Ingalls established the Quartermaster Depot area here, as well as his own house, which he shared with Ulysses S. Grant in 1852-1853.



The Quartermaster's Ranch in the village area, 1860 (Royal Engineers Library, Kent, England)

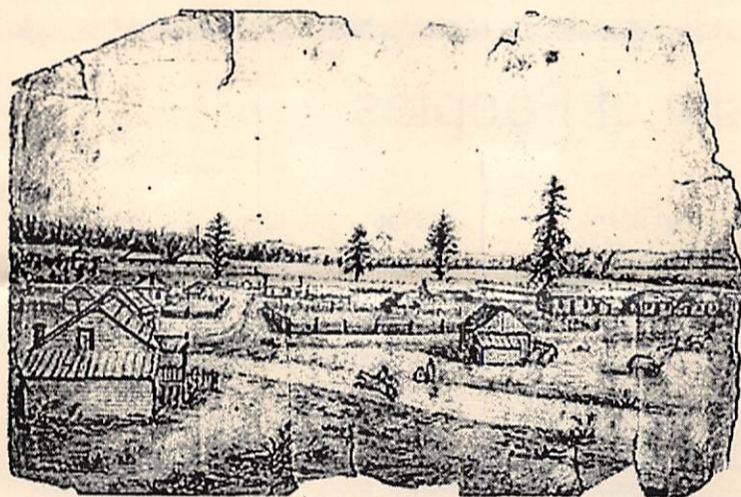
The relations between the U.S. Army and Fort Vancouver steadily deteriorated during the latter half of the 1850s, as each became increasingly aggressive in protecting their land claims. The Company was concerned with maintaining their ownership of areas south of the 49th parallel. The army, on the other hand, came to view land and

buildings not physically occupied by the Company as their own. Matters came to a head when the army destroyed several Company buildings in the village area as they cleared land for a drill ground. With the regional fur trade in decline and relations with the U.S. Army worsening, the Hudson's Bay Company decided to withdraw

entirely to Victoria, B.C. The fort was vacated in June of 1860. The army temporarily occupied some of the buildings but by 1866 fire had removed all above-ground traces of Fort Vancouver and its village. Kanaka Village is the place of a fascinating, overlapping history: the shift of nations in this area and the birth of official American control.

Sharing the Story of the Village

Because of the astounding diversity of Fort Vancouver's population, Kanaka Village holds great potential for enhancing the visitor's experience. As park personnel strive to continually diversify historical interpretation to include multiple perspectives of the history that occurred here, it is fortunate that this area can serve as a background, allowing visitors a connection with the actual physical space of the village. Excavations and analyses of the material culture from the village area can fill in gaps in the historical record. Since many of the employees and their families were illiterate, archaeology can compensate for the lack of first-hand accounts of village life and social organization. The village is a site that allows the inclusion of the lower classes, the less-educated, and



The north end of the village area, from an unsigned sketch c. 1851 (National Park Service)

non-British ethnicities into the story. The National Park Service is engaged in discussion with local Hawaiian and Native American communities as the site's program incorporates the area of the village and its inhabitants. Kanaka Village is the location of some of the most compelling aspects of the story of

Fort Vancouver and Vancouver Barracks. Its demography and social history represent the true context of the regional fur trade industry and political transitions. The resources here remain an integral part of the National Park Service's duty to protect and share this historic site.