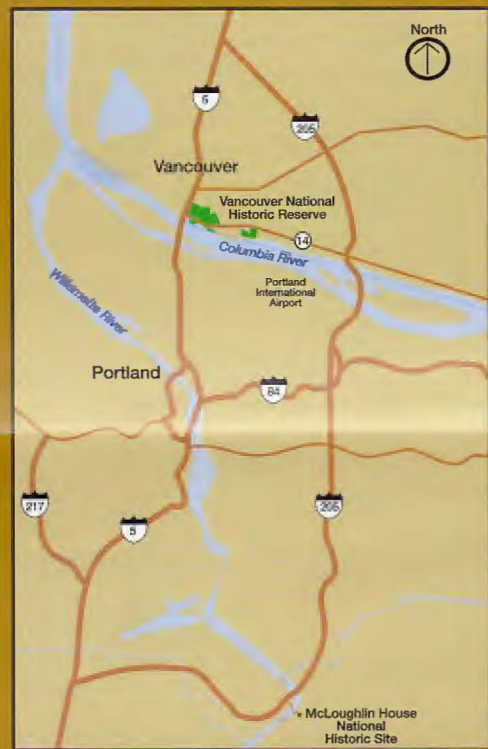


# Vancouver National Historic Reserve

Vancouver, Washington

National Park Service  
City of Vancouver  
United States Army  
State of Washington



## One Place across Time— Vancouver National Historic Reserve

The Vancouver area of southwestern Washington was an important site of 19th-century social, economic, political, and military activity in the Pacific Northwest. In recognition of its historical significance, the U.S. Congress in 1948 designated a portion of the area—Fort Vancouver—as a National Monument. In 1961, Fort Vancouver became a National Historic Site. Over the next half century, continuing efforts to preserve the area's other historic sites prompted Congress to establish the Vancouver National Historic Reserve in 1996.

The 366-acre reserve and its cultural resources represent an enduring legacy of one place across time. The site's main features include Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Vancouver Barracks and Officers Row, Pearson Field, and portions of the Columbia River waterfront. A nonprofit trust established in 1998 works with the National Park Service, State of Washington, City of Vancouver, and the U.S. Army to preserve, develop, and manage the reserve, as well as to make its history available and accessible to the public.

The Vancouver National Historic Reserve provides the opportunity for a fascinating look at the intertwining paths of native peoples, fur trappers, and settlers, military, industry, and aviation—a remarkable crossroads of human activity.



Chinook Traveling Lodge, 1845, by Paul Kane. Courtesy Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas  
Cover art—One Place across Time, watercolor by Evelyn Hicks.

## Crossroads

Vancouver's climate, location, and natural resources made it well suited to a variety of human endeavors. Explorer Meriwether Lewis found the area so appealing he declared it

"the only desirable situation for a settlement on the western side of the Rocky Mountains."

Located between the Coast and Cascade mountain ranges, Vancouver has a damp, yet hospitable, climate. Moderate weather, combined with an abundance of natural resources and fertile land, provided ample sustenance for native peoples and settlers and later supported major agricultural production. Vancouver's favorable location on the Columbia River—just east of the river's confluence with the Willamette and 100 miles inland from the Pacific—made it significant in Pacific Northwest history. One of the world's great waterways, the Columbia brought the area's earliest explorers inland and served as the region's primary route of exploration, travel, and trade and later provided for the needs of military and aviation operations. Here, near the meeting of rivers, the paths and pursuits of many peoples also met, influenced and supported by the region's natural wealth.

## ONE PLACE ACROSS TIME: The Stories of a Landscape

### Native Peoples

lived along the Columbia River for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. People now identified as Chinook—an inclusive name describing the peoples from any of several tribes in the area—claimed the Vancouver area and along the Columbia River as part of their territory, living a relatively peaceful existence hunting, gathering, and fishing. Late in the 18th century, outsiders in the form of sailors and traders arrived in the area, signaling changes that would forever alter their way of life.



The Chinook lived in harmony with the rhythms of time and terrain. From the Columbia's massive spring salmon runs to summer's bounty of roots and berries and the plentiful game hunted in fall and winter, the seasons determined Chinook activities. Still, it was the Columbia that proved central to their existence. Chinook not only used the river as a source of sustenance but as the primary conduit in their extensive trading system. Expert traders, they developed a vast trade network, both in terms of geography and trading partners. With the establishment of Fort Vancouver, Chinook routinely conducted business with the British Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), where many also were employed as laborers. Accounts



Above—Fishing on the Columbia, by Paul Kane. Courtesy Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas  
Left—Paiute Sarah Winnemucca (1844-1891), a prominent Indian rights activist, taught school for Indian children at Vancouver Barracks for two years, from 1880-1882. Courtesy Oregon Historical Society

from maritime explorers mention trade activity and other interactions with Chinook, as do the journals of Lewis and Clark.

While extensive settlement, commerce, and military activities in the Vancouver area during most of the 19th century had significant impact on the lives and cultures of native peoples, it was diseases introduced by whites—smallpox, measles, malaria, and influenza—that had the most profound and lasting effect.

### Exploration

The first non-native maritime exploration of the Pacific Northwest took place in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by British and American explorers. Driven by dreams of controlling trade between Europe and Asia by discovering a "Northwest Passage" across North America, England and the United States launched expeditions to the Northwest Coast. The region was first penetrated in May 1792 when Boston trader Capt. Robert Gray entered the mouth of the storied "Great River of the West" on his ship *Columbia Rediviva*, for which the river is named. Gray's foray a short distance up the river established a U.S. claim to the Oregon Country—a region that extended from present-day northern California to Alaska and to western Montana and Wyoming in the east.

After Gray's entry and brief exploration of the Columbia in May 1792, he gave British captain George Vancouver the simple chart he had made of the river. Vancouver had been exploring the Northwest Coast at the same time as Gray and later that year sent Lt. William Broughton to survey further up the river. On his mission, Broughton traveled 110 miles upriver and named Point Vancouver in honor of his captain.



Above—*Columbia Rediviva*, by Frederick S. Cozzens.  
Below—North America in Its Present Divisions, 1790, showing greater detail of the Northwest Coast and still portraying the "River of the West" as a direct route across the continent. Courtesy Oregon Historical Society



Thirteen years later, Lewis and Clark traveled down the river from the interior, documenting in their journals and maps the area's rich bounty and peaceful native peoples. These favorable reports, combined with competition for the region's resources, proved influential in establishing settlement patterns still evident today.

### Fur Trade & Commerce

Preceding the commercial ventures of whites, native peoples developed and implemented their own trade network in the Pacific Northwest, with trade centers located along the Columbia, including a major one at The Dalles. The Chinook people played a part in the exchange of furs for goods, both with the Hudson's Bay Company and other Euro-American traders.

Established by the HBC in 1825 as a fur-trading post and supply depot, Fort Vancouver's position on "the only navigable River to the interior from the Coast" made it a key player in the fur export business for more than two decades. The HBC's chief mission was to gain profits for its stockholders in England, although its operations in the region also provided a British claim to the territory. The talented and shrewd George Simpson served as governor of the company's North American operations, with the equally colorful Dr. John McLoughlin in charge of the HBC's vast Columbia Department headquartered at Fort Vancouver. Fueled by Europe's passion for fashion in the form of beaver hats and accessories, the company's some 35 fur outposts were responsible for trapping out the whole of the Pacific Northwest, western Canada, and southeastern Alaska. Groups of trappers serving on brigades

fanned out across the interior in search of beaver and other pelts. The HBC's demand for profits resulted in the creation of a trading empire that came at the expense of the region's natural resources and forever changed the face of the Pacific Northwest.

Although the region was largely spent of fur-bearing animals by the early 1840s, the HBC did not suffer financially, as it had already diversified its operations with other profitable ventures. By 1845, the HBC had more than 1,000 acres of land under cultivation and had also established several manufacturing industries at Fort Vancouver, including sawmilling, shipbuilding, and blacksmithing.



Above—Hat-making (c.1846-1850). Private Collection  
Below—Northeast corner of courtyard, Fort Vancouver, showing the chief factor's residence, 1860. Courtesy Royal Engineers Library, Kent, England

### Settlement

Major migration to the Oregon Country took place from the 1840s to the 1860s. Prompted by glowing reports of an abundance of natural resources, temperate climate, and peaceful Indians, thousands loaded wagons with supplies and dreams and set out west across the Oregon Trail in pursuit of "Eden." After an arduous journey of six months and 2,000 miles, many emigrants des-

Many Oregon Trail emigrants completed their journey down the Columbia River on HBC-chartered boats such as the *Calapooia* (shown here arriving at Fort Vancouver from The Dalles in 1845). Artist's conception by Evelyn Hicks.



lined for the Oregon Country found themselves at Fort Vancouver, which served as the first terminus of the Oregon Trail.

The British fort's existence was a boon to the beleaguered American arrivals. They were welcomed by Dr. John McLoughlin of the Hudson's Bay Company, even as HBC directors instructed him to prevent American settlement in the disputed territory. McLoughlin proved a merciful benefactor to the immigrants, providing them with crucial support in the form of provisions, equipment, and advice. In fact, Dr. John McLoughlin is regarded as the "Father of Oregon" for the significant role he played in aiding American settlers. Earlier, he assisted Methodist and Catholic missionaries who arrived in the 1830s.

The fort itself was a community—churches, stores, homes, a school, and more supported by a population of several hundred. Higher level clerks and managers resided within the fort pal-

Pencil sketch of the village at Fort Vancouver, unsigned. Courtesy Fort Vancouver National Historic Site



### Military

At the conclusion of the War of 1812, the U.S. and Great Britain established a policy of joint occupancy for the Oregon Country. In the years that followed, increasing settlement by American citizens laid claim to the region for the U.S., with continuing operations of the Hudson's Bay Company strengthening the British position. In 1846, however, the boundary with present-day Canada was peacefully established. As it reduced operations at Fort Vancouver, the HBC moved its headquarters to Vancouver Island in 1849 and, by 1860, had completely vacated the site, transferring it to the U.S. Army.



Soldiers in front of Officers Row, ca. 1898. A new army knapsack was invented and tested at Vancouver during this period. Courtesy Oregon Historical Society

In 1879, the site was renamed Vancouver Barracks—the Pacific Northwest's first U.S. Army post and headquarters of the Department of the Columbia, an army subdivision consisting of the state of Oregon and Washington and Idaho territories.

At the century's turn, many military personnel considered Vancouver one of the service's "most desirable duty stations," and it was here

Above, right—CCC seal. Courtesy Jim Riley Below—Officers Row, 1880s. Courtesy Clark County Museum



Vancouver PX, 1900. The U.S. Army's post exchange system originated at Vancouver Barracks. Courtesy Clark County Museum

Col. Henry A. Morrow inaugurated the U.S. Army post exchange—or PX system—in 1880. Set up as an alternative to the nearby saloons, the on-site "canteen" was a popular innovation soon replicated at posts throughout the west.

During WWI, Vancouver was an important recruitment center, and troop trains transported men and women for duty overseas. The site also was home to one of the world's largest sawmills, which prepared regionally abundant spruce for the manufacture of military aircraft. About 30,000 soldiers worked in the army-operated Spruce Production Division.

Between World Wars I and II, Vancouver was district headquarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Created by Congress in 1933 as a response to the Depression, the CCC employed young men on conservation projects that brought lasting changes to Pacific Northwest forests, creating a legacy that endures today.



### Aviation

The grassy expanse along the Columbia River that first attracted the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1820s drew attention from early aviators almost a century later. As the area's first military and civilian airfield—and one of the oldest airfields in the country—Vancouver Barracks and Pearson Field have been a pioneer in military and general aviation. The area was ideal for early aviators and was the site for a number of firsts, including regional air mail and regular passenger flights.

The cause of aviation was advanced admirably at Pearson by local civilian fliers who set records for speed, distance, and



View of Pearson Field, 1935. Photo by, and courtesy of, Dale Denny

altitude while moving the public's perception of aviation from the fantastic to the practical. The airfield gained its current name in 1925 in honor of Alexander Pearson, a local Army Air Corps test pilot who died in 1924 while flying a high-speed race plane, the Curtiss R-8, in preparation for the Pulitzer Air Races.

Russian transpolar flight landing, Pearson Field, June 20, 1937. Photo by, and courtesy of, Dale Denny



U.S. mail service, 1912. Courtesy Jim Riley

A memorable event that proved a harbinger of two decades of barnstorming aviation at the field was Silas Christofferson's spectacular flight from Portland to Vancouver Barracks in June 1912. A publicity stunt for the new Multnomah Hotel—which happened to coincide with Portland's Rose Festival—the self-taught airplane builder launched his bamboo-framed Curtiss Pusher from the hotel's roof and into the public's imagination.

A second event topped Christofferson's achievement in world-class fashion 25 years later in June 1937. The world's first nonstop transpolar flight culminated with much fanfare at Vancouver as three Russian aviators landed at Pearson after mechanical problems forced them to divert from their original destination of San Francisco. With its 112-foot wingspan, the Russians' ANT-25 looked more like a giant glider than a single-engine propeller plane—and like no other at the field. The crew—Valeri Chkalov, Georgi Baidukov, and Alexander Belyakov—became Vancouver heroes and thrust Pearson Field into the international spotlight.

# Visiting the VANCOUVER NATIONAL HISTORIC RESERVE



## VANCOUVER NATIONAL HISTORIC RESERVE Visitor Information at Howard House

The 1879 O.O. Howard House provides information services for the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, introducing visitors to the history of an area that has remained in continued public use for the past 150 years. The exhibit "One Place across Time" illustrates the area's many historic uses, as well as the relationship between its various sites and the contributions of the many persons who lived and worked here. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, a Civil War recipient of the Medal of Honor, served as commanding officer at Vancouver from 1874 to 1880 and helped found Howard University in Washington, DC. The graceful residence in which he lived the last two years of his Northwest assignment was completed in 1879 and renovated for the historic reserve in 1998. Open daily, free. Information: 360-992-1820 or [www.vancouverhistoricreserve.org](http://www.vancouverhistoricreserve.org).

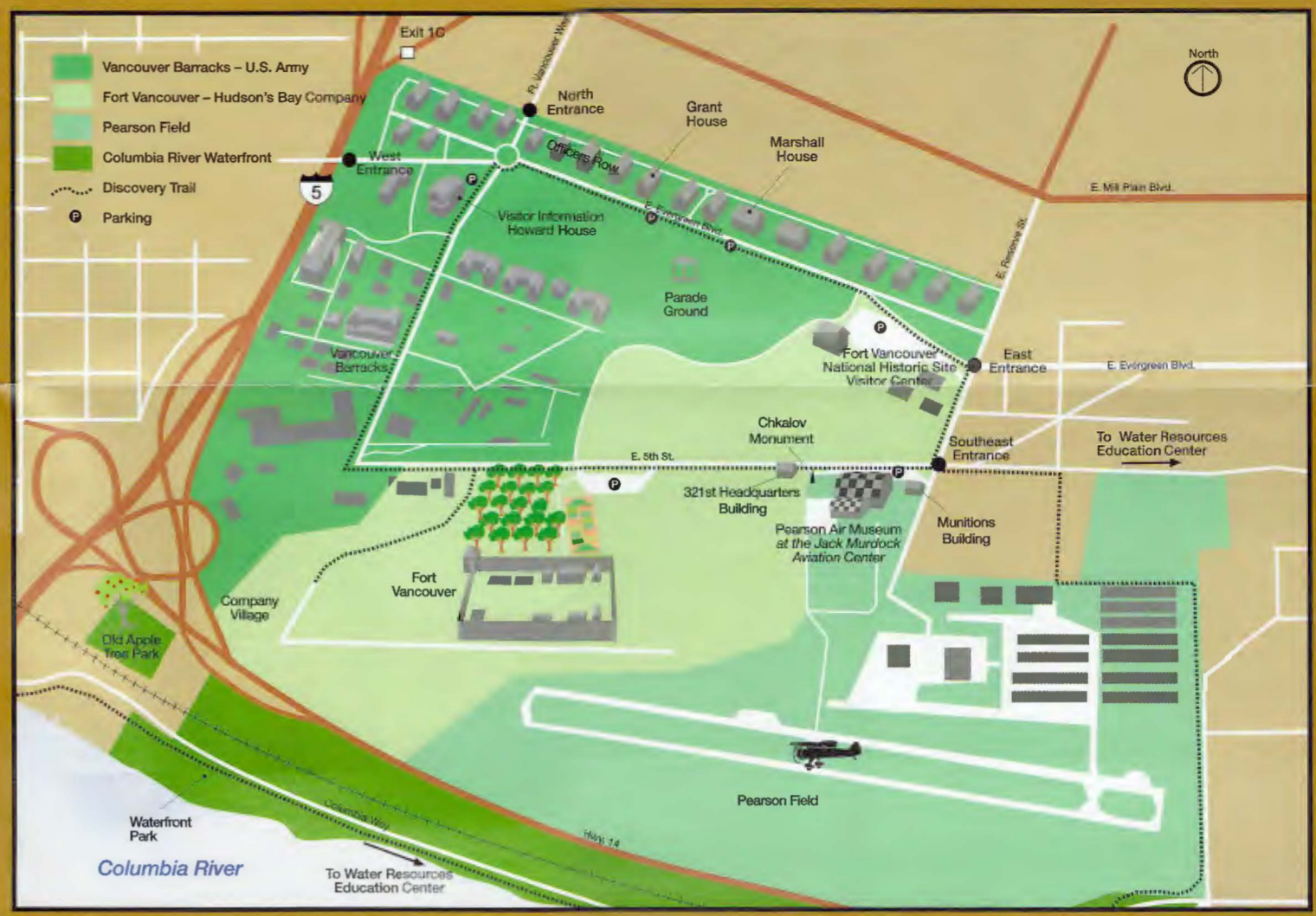
### IF YOU GO—

Vancouver National Historic Reserve is easily accessible from Interstate 5, just north of the Columbia River in Washington state, Exit 1C. Signage directs visitors the short distance from E. Mill Plain Blvd. to Fort Vancouver Way and the reserve's main entrance.

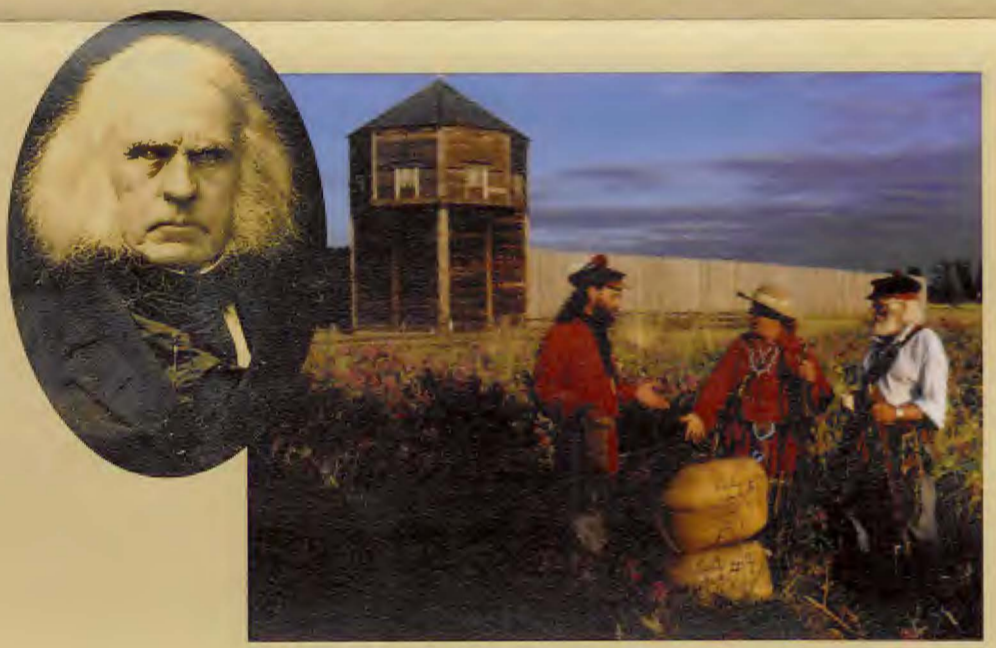
The reserve's various sites maintain different hours of operation. Visitors planning a walking tour are cautioned about uneven terrain, especially within Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. The Columbia River waterfront is located a short distance south of the upper reserve and is most easily accessible via motor vehicle.



Col. Thomas M. Anderson family, post commander's residence, c. 1895. Courtesy Clark County Museum



## UPPER RESERVE SITES



Above, left—Portrait of Dr. John McLoughlin, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver. Courtesy Oregon Historical Society. Above—Interpreters in period clothing evoke the HBC-era at Fort Vancouver.

## Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, Fort Vancouver served as the headquarters and supply depot of the British Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and its fur-trading operation west of the Rockies. The fort also was the cultural, economic, and political center of the Pacific Northwest and was considered by some the "New York of the Pacific."

Directing Fort Vancouver's vast scope of activity was Chief Factor John McLoughlin. An imposing figure in Pacific Northwest history, McLoughlin was known to local Indians as the "White-Headed Eagle" for his flowing mane of white hair. Dr. McLoughlin's residence in Oregon City is itself a National Historic Site.

In addition to the impressive operations that took place at Vancouver, the fort was amazing in the number and diversity of people who interacted here. In fact, the fort community of approximately 600—about 350 employees and their families—represented the largest Euro-American settlement on the West Coast at the time. The population of French Canadians, Iroquois, Scots, English, Americans, Orkney Islanders, local Indians, and Kanakas (Hawaiians) communicated via Chinook Jargon, a mixture of words derived from the traders' various languages.

Today, visitors can step back in time to experience the activities and surroundings of the HBC-period as interpreters in period clothing

conduct the business of daily life at the fort. Living history demonstrations illustrate in vibrant fashion the 1840s-era workings of the blacksmith and carpenter shops, kitchen, and bakehouse. Call ahead for dates and times.

Fifty years of archaeological investigations in the 20th-century have provided the blueprint for the reconstruction of the stockade, bastion, chief factor's house, and other structures at their original locations and for the replanting of some of the fort's extensive gardens and orchards. While the approximately 1.5 million items recovered from the area make Fort Vancouver an unparalleled source of HBC material, many artifacts also reflect the presence of the site's other inhabitants—native peoples and the military. The National Park Service's public archaeology program offers a variety of opportunities to unearth the site's rich history, including classes, tours, lectures, and "Kids Digs."

In addition to the ongoing living history demonstrations and archaeology-related offerings, a number of events and activities celebrate Fort Vancouver and HBC history throughout the year, including Queen Victoria's birthday, a brigade encampment, candlelight tour, and traditional HBC Christmas. The fort visitor center introduces visitors to the HBC story through exhibits and audio-visual presentations.

Open daily. Information: 360-696-7655.



Above—Artifacts recovered from Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Left—Archaeological excavation within Fort Vancouver palisade.

Below—An interpreter demonstrates 1840s wood-working techniques in the fort's carpenter shop.



## Vancouver Barracks

THE U.S. ARMY arrived at Vancouver in 1849 to ensure the orderly settlement of the Oregon Territory, gradually becoming the army's principal administrative center in the Pacific Northwest.

After the 1846 treaty with Great Britain set the boundary with present-day Canada, the U.S. established a military reservation on a bluff overlooking the Hudson's Bay Company stockade. Part of a plan to erect military posts along the route settlers were following from the Mississippi to the Columbia, the army's vantage point also served to trumpet U.S. control of the area. The army operated alongside the British for a little over a decade, until the HBC moved the last of its operations to British Columbia in 1860. By that time, the army had erected barracks and other structures in the area and added new roads.

Many African Americans served at Vancouver Barracks, among them, members of infantry and cavalry regiments, known as Buffalo Soldiers. The barracks was a mobilization and training center for Philippine-bound units during the Spanish-American War and mustered troops to protect American interests and citizens during the Klondike gold rush.

During the Spanish-American War and both world wars, Vancouver Barracks played an important role as a recruitment and training center, with troop trains transporting men and women for duty overseas during WWI. Vancouver remained as military headquarters of the Pacific Northwest until WWI, when it became a significant instrument in the war industry, producing material for airplanes. Between



## LOWER RESERVE SITES



## The Columbia River Waterfront

THE COLUMBIA RIVER is a vital element to the many stories of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve. This force of nature was central to the existence of native peoples, brought foreign explorers inland in search of empire and profits, and provided for the needs of military and industry.

The reserve contains portions of the Columbia River waterfront—Waterfront Park in the west and Marine Park in the east—separated by a private business park, the former site of the WWII-era Kaiser Shipyard. Access to the area is gained via E. 5th St. and Grand Blvd.



Nez Perce tribal members plant a tree at Vancouver Barracks as part of a memorial ceremony. The ceremony honors the members of Chief Redheart's band who were brought to Vancouver from Idaho by U.S. Army troops in 1877, under the command of Gen. O.O. Howard. Part of a forced relocation effort, the 33 Nez Perce were held for more than eight months. Vancouver Barracks was a central command post during the Northwest Indian conflicts of the 1850s to 1870s.

the world wars, Vancouver was active in voluntary military training programs, including the Citizens Military Training Camps, a national civilian program for youth, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Today, Vancouver Barracks is a location for the Washington National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve units. Originally 640 acres, the site now encompasses more than 55 acres, which includes the 42 historic buildings of Vancouver Barracks. Visitors enjoy guided walking tours of the grounds and buildings, and events include an annual observance of the U.S. Army's arrival at the site.

Visitors, including school groups, enjoy guided tours of Vancouver Barracks.

## Pearson Field Jack Murdock Aviation Center

ONE OF THE OLDEST operating airfields in the United States, Pearson Field is notable as the site of several historic aviation firsts, including the June 1937 landing of the world's first nonstop transpolar flight. A monument to the flight's Russian crew stands outside the Jack Murdock Aviation Center, the first such tribute to Soviet achievement in the U.S.

Named for local philanthropist and Tektronix founder Jack Murdock, the 23,500-square-foot aviation center at Pearson Field includes a museum, education center, and restoration workshop. The center's black-and-yellow check-

Silas Christofferson's 1912 take-off from Portland's Multnomah Hotel. Courtesy Oregon Historical Society



## Officers Row

THE 21 STately Victorian homes lining the north side of the Parade Ground were built between 1849 and 1906 for the U.S. Army officers who served the local post and the Department of the Columbia. The garrison was said to be "the prettiest occupied by any military post in the United States," and most officers and their families who lived at Vancouver found it a pleasing station. Officers who served here include Philip Sheridan, Omar Bradley, Ulysses S. Grant, Benjamin Bonneville, and George C. Marshall.

Information: 360-992-1820.

Grant House was the first house built on Officers Row (1849-1950), making it the oldest building at Vancouver Barracks and one of the oldest in the Pacific Northwest. Ulysses S. Grant was stationed at Vancouver as a quartermaster from 1852 to 1853, and although he never lived in it, routine duties often brought him to the home later named in his honor. Grant House is open to the public.

## Kaiser Shipyard Tower Overlook

allows visitors to view the remnants of the WWII shipways that sent Baby Flat Tops, Liberty Ships, LSTs, Attack Transports, and Troop Transports into the mighty Columbia and on their way overseas. Now the site of a private business park, it was here industrialist Henry Kaiser began building a massive shipyard in January 1942, on the site of a former dairy farm. The Kaiser story, including that of the thousands of men and women who worked in round-the-clock shifts to produce ships for service in WWII, unfolds in the interpretive panels of the Tower Overlook.

Right—Ship launch at Vancouver shipyard. Courtesy Louis Leo

## Water Resources Education Center

is a state-of-the-art facility that teaches visitors of all ages about the importance of water, conservation, and the Columbia River ecosystem through a variety of special events programming and engaging features, from an interactive exhibit hall, multimedia theater, and computer game room to the 350-gallon sturgeon aquarium, water sciences laboratory, and wetlands overlook. Information: 360-696-8478.

Right—A Water Resources Education Center class takes students to the Columbia River shore.

## Old Apple Tree Park

honors the "great-grandfather" of Washington's renowned apple industry. Early in the 19th century, seeds were sent from London to Fort Vancouver for the purpose of planting an apple tree. The result of that mission—a remarkable old tree that still bears fruit—is located in a park just southwest of the fort. The first Saturday of each October, visitors enjoy the Old Apple Tree Festival, a celebration of the pioneer era.



Visitors enjoy seeing vintage aircraft up close at Pearson Field.

board roof is reminiscent of those common at army airfields during the 1920s-1930s, when pilots often needed visual guides to help them find the airfield in bad weather. Today, the city of Vancouver operates a general aviation airport at Pearson.

The Jack Murdock Aviation Center explores Pearson Field's colorful past, as well as the science of flight and aviation history in general. Visitors enjoy attractions including vintage aircraft, interpretive displays, hands-on demonstrations, and theater presentations. In addition, Pearson hosts a number of events, including historical reenactments, concerts, dances, and a biplane fly-in.

Admission. Information: 360-694-7026.



Marshall House, Officers Row. Courtesy Cliff Barbour

Marshall House was built in 1886 and later named for George C. Marshall, commanding officer at Vancouver from 1936 to 1938. Marshall, who later became army chief of staff to President Franklin Roosevelt and also served as Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, is said to have regarded his years at Vancouver as among the happiest of his life. Perhaps best known for authoring the Marshall Plan, an economic recovery program for war-torn Europe, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. Marshall House is open week days to the public.



Discovery Trail is an inviting urban trail that is part of a paved, four-mile scenic path connecting downtown Vancouver with the shops, restaurants, natural and historic sites of the Columbia River waterfront and upper reserve. Few places in America offer so many historic and scenic attractions in such close proximity as Discovery Trail, which no doubt helped Vancouver earn its title as one of America's most "walkable" cities.