

Fort Vancouver
National Historic Site
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Vancouver, WA 98661



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2019 Annual Report



CONNECT PRESERVE PARTNER INSPIRE



Photo: Julie Padgett



What a year it's been! Fiscal Year 2019 - from October 2018 to September 2019 - saw us make great strides towards our goals at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

This past spring, we welcomed a new Chief of Interpretation & Education: Aaron Ochoa. Aaron brings with him 20 years of public service, including his work as an interpretive park ranger at Fort Vancouver from 2008 to 2015, military service with the Washington Army National Guard, and experience as an External Affairs Officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We are so pleased that he has re-joined our team. He's bringing a fresh perspective and new services and programs to our national park!

This year also brought significant improvements to Vancouver Barracks, including the completion of infrastructure upgrades, the rehabilitation of the historic Finance Office (Building 728), and design work for future improvements to the Post Headquarters (Building 991), the future multi-park museum facility (Building 405), and a proposed cultural center in the historic CCC Automotive Repair Shop (Building 410). Our shared dream of developing a vibrant national park focused on public service, learning, and recreation is coming to life before our eyes, thanks to dedicated National Park Service staff, our visitors and local community, and strong partners.

As we enter a new decade, one that will hopefully bring even more amazing changes to this national park, we hope you enjoy this look back at some of the highlights of 2019.



Tracy Fortmann, Superintendent
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site



Connect

Connection to the past is key to understanding the world at present. At Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, public events and hands-on programs encourage visitors from all ages and walks of life to form a deeper understanding of our local history and its ties to the wider world.

Little Learners programs, designed for kids ages 3 to 6 and their caregivers, introduced basic concepts of history and cultural resources to our youngest visitors. These curator-led programs feature real artifacts from our archaeological and historic museum collections, and promote our national park as a place of lifelong learning.

The Friends of Fort Vancouver, the park's non-profit support organization, hosted numerous talks with local authors and artists throughout the year, attracting

new audiences to our Visitor Center. From hosting public lectures with artists, novelists and historians, and hosting events like this year's Garden Party and Sweetheart Dance, the Friends of Fort Vancouver find new and innovative ways to bring fresh voices and first-time as well as repeat visitors to the park.

Our annual events also help visitors to this national park connect with the past. At Campfires & Candlelight, visitors learned from costumed interpreters about the history of our community, from the fur trade era to World War II. At our popular lantern tour series, visitors were transported back in time to witness a night at the fort in the 1840s. Visitors celebrated the holidays with us at Christmas at Fort Vancouver. These and many other events hosted by the National Park Service and our partners are what makes our national park a special and enduring place.



At Get Outdoors Day, an event co-hosted with the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service archaeologists shared artifacts with visitors.

Photo: Junelle Lawry



In partnership with Academia Duellatoria, we continued to offer a series of training programs in historic saber techniques. This program has trained dozens of volunteers who go on to demonstrate their skills at public events like Independence Day, Brigade Encampment, and Campfires & Candlelight.

Photo: Junelle Lawry



Archaeologist Amy Clearman, a student at Portland State University, offered a series of public lectures at the park this year on her research to locate the "first" Fort Vancouver, which stood from 1825 to 1829. She also led this year's Kids Dig program, which introduces kids ages 8 to 12 to the fascinating world of archaeology in a hands-on program.



Preserve



This year brought large-scale improvements to Vancouver Barracks, as rehabilitation of infrastructure and historic buildings continues.

Constructed between 1907 and 1930, all of the utility systems were well beyond their expected life span. Phase one of the project, completed in 2016, addressed only a limited area. The remaining 85% of water lines, hydrants, sewer lines, manholes, conduit, conductors, transformers, and fiber optic cable was replaced this year. The completion of this utilities upgrade supports existing tenants such as the US Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Army Air Force Exchange Service, and was a

crucial step in preparing the remaining buildings for reuse.

Building 728, a 1941 US Army finance office, was fully rehabilitated this year, including structural upgrades, fire suppression, modernization of the internal utility systems, and energy efficiency improvements. Limited site work was included, such as adding accessible parking. The building is now home to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We are pleased to welcome them to this historic campus.

This year also brought significant changes to the eastern portion of Vancouver Barracks, with a view to making circulation easier for vehicles and pedestrians while preserving the

historic feel of the post. Alvord Road, which bisects the eastern area, has been returned to a walking path, recalling its origin as an Indigenous and fur trade-era trail, later paved by the military. At the same time, new connections to East 5th Street and the park road will ensure that vehicles may still access all parts of the campus. It's a busy time, and we have appreciated our community's support as we work to preserve and reuse this special place!

The new Alvord path is a new pedestrian pathway through Vancouver Barracks. Its location is the same as documented paths used during pre-contact and fur trade eras.

The newly rehabilitated Building 728 provides a new office for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

New electrical and telecommunications lines were installed to Building 993, a historic Infantry Barracks dating to 1906, as part of utility upgrades in Vancouver Barracks.



Partner

This year, we were incredibly pleased to once again be awarded an Every Kid Outdoors grant from the National Park Foundation. This generous grant allows us to reimburse the transportation costs for Title I fourth grade classes coming to the park on educational field trips. During the 2018-2019 school year, we were able to reimburse transportation costs for over 4,000 students, and we expect to be able to cover a similar number of students with the additional funds awarded in fall 2019.

A major improvement to the park this year was the renovation of the “picnic shelter,” located near the Visitor Center, now renamed the “Visitor Center Annex.” The Annex is an extremely popular element of this urban national park.

A high percentage of the over 14,000 students who visit the national park use the Annex for lunch, resting, or getting out of the weather while they finish educational activities. Members of the community also use this highly popular space for family gatherings, meetings, parties, and more.

With generous donations of time and materials by a local corporation (which wishes to remain anonymous) and the electrician’s union, as well as park funds and grant funding through The Fund for People in Parks, the Annex received a new roof, paint, furnishings, ADA/ABAAS compliant single doors, a kitchenette, bathroom, heaters, and glass doors. The Annex is now a welcoming, safe space for educational groups and other members of the public, in all weather!



We continued our successful partnership with Wind and Oar Boat School, once again hosting On the Water, a hands-on summer workshop. Middle school students rotated through various stations over five days, learning about the maritime heritage of Southwest Washington while applying science and math skills to building a simple skiff.

Photo: Peter Crim



The park hosted a summer bicycle safety camp for children, administered by the City of Vancouver Parks and Recreation and Bike Clark County. These camps gave children lessons on bicycle safety, maintenance, and riding techniques. Campers also received ranger-led tours of the national park and a special educational program on the connections between bicycles and early airplanes.

Photo: Jonathon Kraft



On July 3, 2019, 39 new citizens took the Oath of Allegiance at Pearson Air Museum’s Historic Hangar. As part of a long-term partnership with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, citizenship ceremonies have taken place at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site since 2010.



Inspire

National parks were created to be places for learning and inspiration, along with preservation. At Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, with our wide-ranging history and so many fascinating stories to tell, creating special experiences for our visitors, especially younger visitors, takes many forms. This year, we were very pleased to bring two wonderful, inspiring new exhibits to the park: one temporary and one permanent.

In August, a temporary exhibit of artwork by Nez Perce artist Kevin Peters debuted at the Visitor Center. Kevin, who worked as a national park ranger at Big Hole National Battlefield and Nez Perce National Historic Park, is also an accomplished and well-known artist, whose work includes paintings, beadwork and traditional regalia. Kevin's work mixes traditional and contemporary methods and aesthetics, and has been tremendously popular with visitors. The August opening of the exhibit was accompanied by



a talk given by the artist and a tipi raising, assisted by national park rangers and curators from Fort Vancouver and Nez Perce National Historical Park.

At Pearson Air Museum, an aircraft was added to the museum's permanent exhibits: a newly-refurbished 1918 Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny." The Jenny, which was restored by Century Aviation, has a paint scheme that replicates an aircraft that flew from Pearson Field in the early 1920s as a part of the Army Air Service's 321st Observation Squadron. This aircraft, alongside the park's recently-acquired replica 1912 Curtiss Pusher and restored 1925 DH-4 "Liberty" plane, helps to share the fascinating story of early aviation at Pearson Field.

The newly-refurbished 1918 Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" aircraft now on display at Pearson Air Museum joins the permanent collection of aircraft that represent early aviation at Pearson Field.

In August 2019, Nez Perce artist Kevin Peters and national park rangers and curators from Nez Perce National Historical Park demonstrated a tipi raising at a free, public event. This demonstration accompanied the opening of a new exhibit of Peters' artwork at the Visitor Center.

Fiscal Year 2019 by the Numbers



Photo: Vldn Taylor

1,018,214

visitors visited
Fort Vancouver
National Historic
Site

14,520

local students
visited the
national park on
field trips

2,500

visitors attended
Campfires &
Candlelight

792

volunteers
donated
32,711 hours

60,467

people were
accommodated
at 101 permitted
events

9,510

people followed
us on Facebook

4,000+

visitors attended
Christmas at
Fort Vancouver

3,880

visitors attended
the park's Historic
Weapons program

733

Lantern Tour
attendees

8,828

people followed
us on Twitter

8,836

people followed
us on Instagram

44,690

artifacts cataloged
and ongoing care
of a museum
collection of 2.9
million objects

Look Towards the Future

There is always so much to look forward to at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site! The coming year will bring major changes at the park's McLoughlin House, as one of Oregon's oldest homes receives much-needed rehabilitation work. At Vancouver Barracks, work will continue to transform this historic military post into a vibrant, multi-use, public service campus. At Fort Vancouver, innovative programs and events will introduce new generations to the history of our community.

In January 2020, we introduced a new park brochure. Park brochures are often the first way visitors learn about the park. Our former brochure served us since the 1980s, and was written before many significant changes to the national park, including the addition of Vancouver Barracks and the McLoughlin House Unit. This new brochure tells the vital story of this special place in a more complete way, and is an important reflection of the new ways we are telling the story of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

An exciting new chapter will take place at Pearson Air Museum. In fall of 2020, the museum will receive new permanent exhibits on the walls in the main gallery. These new exhibit panels will present Pearson Field's history in an engaging way for new generations of museum visitors.



Photo: Junelle Lawry