



Foundation Document Overview

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

Washington, Oregon



Contact Information

For more information about the *Fort Vancouver National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: fova_superintendent@nps.gov or (360) 816-6230 or write to: Superintendent, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, 612 E. Reserve St. Vancouver, WA 98661

Purpose



FORT VANCOUVER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves and interprets nationally significant resources associated with the western headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trade empire, the settlement of the Oregon Country, and the U.S. Army's post and headquarters, while promoting public understanding and appreciation for the individuals and diverse communities who forged this multilayered history.



Significance

Significance statements express why Fort Vancouver National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Fort Vancouver, strategically located on the Columbia River, was the site of the Hudson's Bay Company's administrative headquarters and supply depot west of the Rocky Mountains. The fort served as the central hub of the company's trading network in the Pacific Northwest, greatly influencing the region's economic development and settlement as well as prompting cultural change for Europeans and American Indians.
- Known as the "New York of the Pacific," Fort Vancouver played a pivotal role in advancing settlement in the Oregon Country, a movement that drastically impacted American Indian life and culture in the region. The fort's chief factor, John McLoughlin, provided immigrants arriving on the Oregon Trail with much-needed food, supplies, and other assistance; his actions bolstered American influence on the Northwest.
- As the first U.S. Army post in the Pacific Northwest, Vancouver Barracks took military actions relating to land and labor disputes during pivotal moments in America's western expansion, often at the expense of American Indians. The post's importance continued into the 20th century as it became the Pacific Northwest's center for defense and home of the Army Air Corps and Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression.



Significance



- Fort Vancouver National Historic Site's extensive collection of American Indian, fur trade, and U.S. Army material culture, which encompasses archeological artifacts, historic objects, and archival documents, directly contributed to the park's establishment and showcases global trade networks, technological change, and cultural contact over the past two centuries.
- By virtue of its preservation, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site offers a rich overlay of historic structures, reconstructions, intact archeological sites, cultural landscapes, and historic views that allows visitors an authentic experience of place-based learning and understanding of the region's history in the heart of a metropolitan area.
- The confluence of European and Canadian traders, Native Hawaiians, and indigenous peoples from across the North American continent gave rise to a unique, multicultural community at Fort Vancouver and created complex connections between the fort and communities across the globe. Descendants of these early community members have enduring cultural and spiritual connections to the fort site.
- The McLoughlin House not only honors the "Father of Oregon," but also stands as a testament to some of the earliest preservation efforts in the American West. A grassroots movement led to the creation of the McLoughlin Memorial Association, drove the house's 1909 relocation to a public park established by John McLoughlin in 1851, and resulted in the site's designation as the first national historic site west of the Rocky Mountains.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Hudson's Bay Company Fort and Village Site and Associated Cultural Landscape**
- **Hudson's Bay Company Cemetery**
- **Vancouver Barracks and Associated Cultural Landscape**
- **Columbia River Waterfront**
- **McLoughlin House Unit**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Archeological Research and Knowledge**
- **Spirit of Collaboration**

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Urban Green Space and Recreation**



Description

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site preserves the site of historic fur trade and military features in current-day Vancouver, Washington. Established in 1825 on the north bank of the Columbia River along traditional American Indian travel and trade routes, Fort Vancouver acted as the hub of Hudson's Bay Company activity and developed into an important trade and cultural exchange center. After the Hudson's Bay Company abandoned Fort Vancouver in the 1860s, the nearby U.S. Army's Columbia Barracks quickly grew to encompass the fort site. Eventually known as the Vancouver Barracks, Fort Vancouver served as the army's regional headquarters throughout the late 19th century and 20th century and grew to include Pearson Field, a military air field that was the landing site for the first transpolar flight, and the regional headquarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s.

The concept of place is core to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, enabling visitors to better understand more than 200 years of Pacific Northwest settlement and development through first-hand experience of the two park units. At the Fort Vancouver site, visitors can experience cultural demonstrations of 1840s lifeways at the reconstructed Hudson's Bay Company fort, learn more about one of the largest multicultural fur trading villages in the Pacific Northwest, enjoy urban green space on the Vancouver Barracks campus, and view historic aircraft at Pearson Air Museum. The McLoughlin House Unit in Oregon City, Oregon, centers on the 19th century home of Dr. John McLoughlin, a chief factor of Fort Vancouver who is often described as the "Father of Oregon" because of his assistance to homesteaders during western migration.

Being an urban national park in the Vancouver/Portland metropolitan area allows Fort Vancouver National Historic Site employees to partner with numerous private and public groups for the protection and interpretation of the area's rich historic resources. The National Park Service, working through Fort Vancouver National Historic Site staff, is a legislated partner in the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, a 366-acre area designated by Congress with the shared vision of preservation, education, and public use. The reserve's four legislated partners (the National Park Service, the U.S. Army, the State of Washington, and the City of Vancouver, Washington) cooperatively administer their respective adjacent historic venues under a management plan that also allows each entity to manage its resources according to its own missions, policies, and regulations.

Fort Vancouver, Vancouver, Washington



McLoughlin House Unit, Oregon City, Oregon

