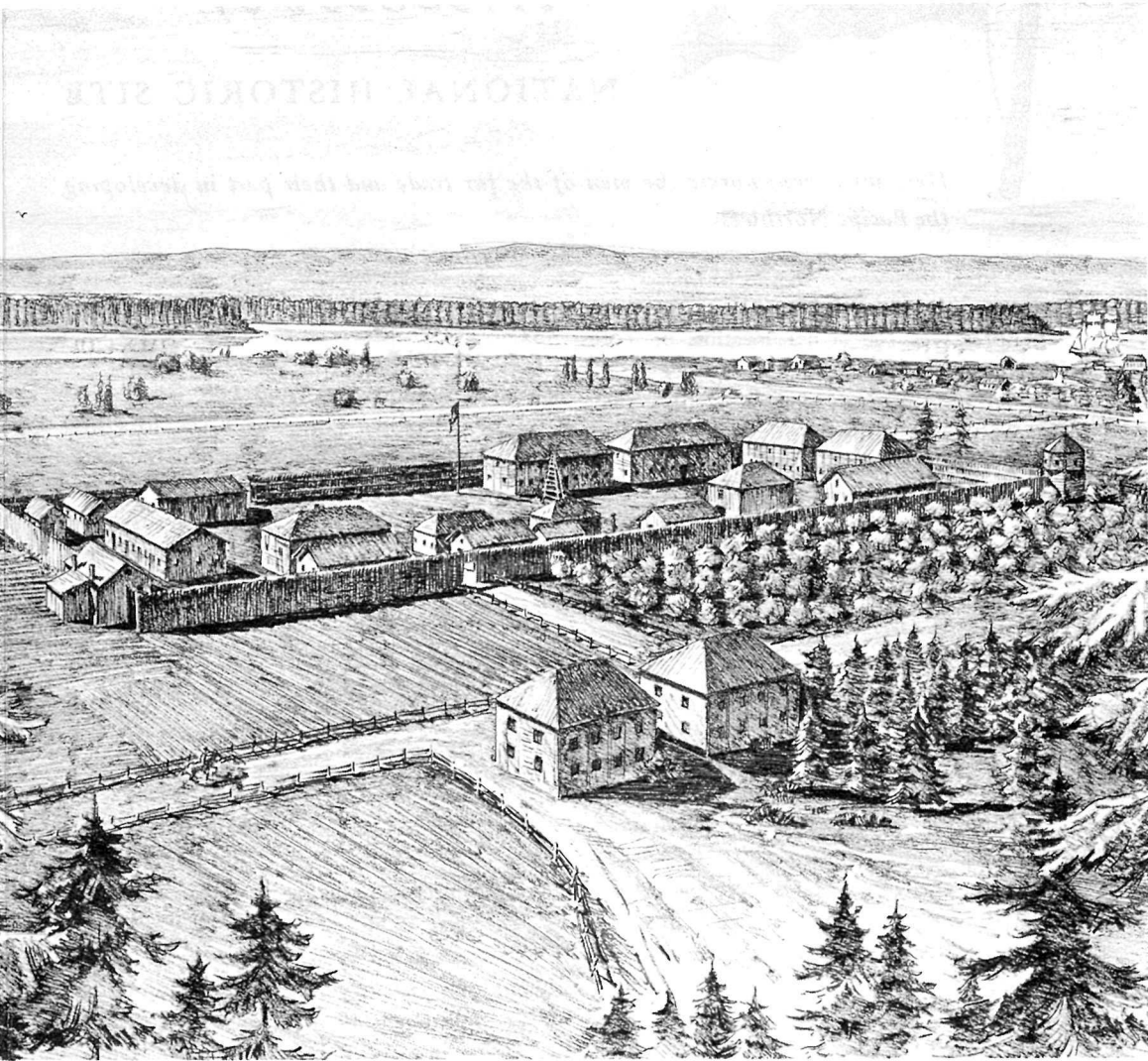


# *Fort Vancouver*

## NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



WASHINGTON



*Here we commemorate the men of the fur trade and their part in developing the Pacific Northwest.*

# Fort Vancouver

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

FORT VANCOUVER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves the actual location of Fort Vancouver, the nucleus of the early development of the Pacific Northwest. For two decades this stockaded fur-trading post was headquarters and depot for all activities of the Hudson's Bay Company west of the Rocky Mountains. As such, it was the economic, political, social, and cultural hub of an area now comprising British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and western Montana.

The fur resources of the Pacific Northwest were discovered by British seamen who visited the northwest coast and obtained valuable furs in trade with the Indians about the time of the American Revolution. Soon traders from several European countries, Canada, and the infant United States were competing on land and water for the riches thus revealed. After years of bitter contest, the Hudson's Bay Company, a British firm chartered in 1670, won a dominant position in the northwest fur trade.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

## First Fort Vancouver

In 1824 the company decided to move its western headquarters from Fort George, at the mouth of the Columbia River, to a site about 100 miles upstream, to where the State School for the Deaf, in Vancouver, Wash., now stands. The shift was made to strengthen British claims to the territory north of the Columbia and to be near lands more suitable for farming. The new post was named Fort Vancouver in honor of Capt. George Vancouver, the explorer.

## Second fort becomes fur-trade capital

In 1829, a new fort was built 1 mile west and closer to the river. From that time the post grew rapidly in size and importance. Between 1824 and 1846 Fort Vancouver was commanded by Chief Factor John McLoughlin. Of towering height and impressive appearance, he was known to the Indians as the "Whiteheaded Eagle." Under

his energetic leadership, the Hudson's Bay Company won a virtual monopoly of the fur trade in the Oregon country; and the firm's Columbia Department was expanded until it stretched from the Rockies to the Pacific, from Russian Alaska to Mexican California, with outposts on San Francisco Bay and in Hawaii.

Fort Vancouver was the nerve center of this vast commercial empire. From its warehouses went out the supplies for the many interior posts, for the fur brigades which ranged as far distant as present-day Utah and California, and for the vessels and forts which dominated the coastal trade well up the shoreline of Alaska. At Fort Vancouver each year the fur returns of the entire western trade were gathered for shipment to England.

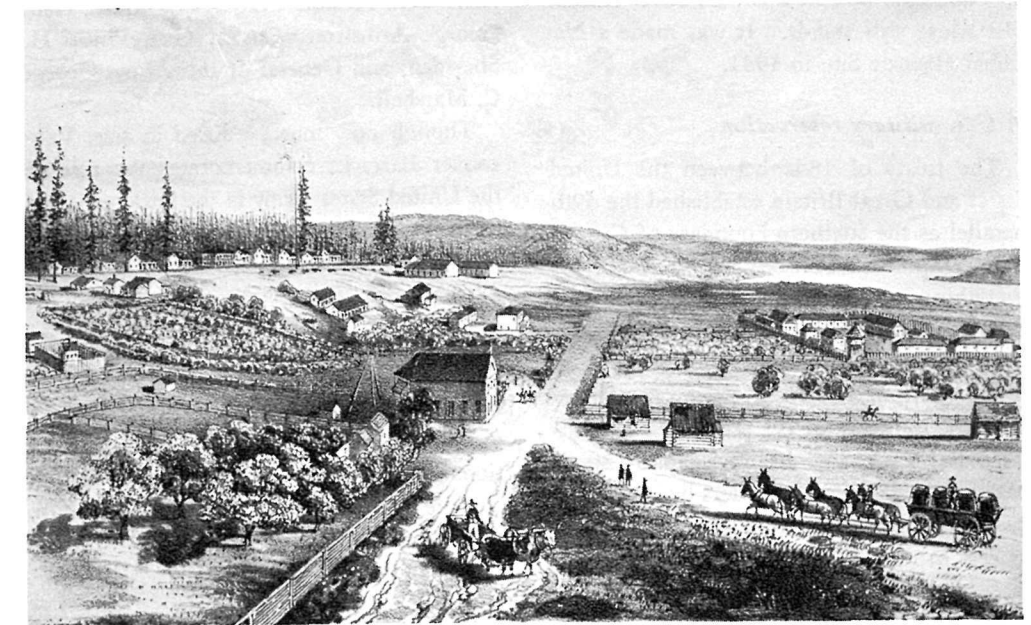
The fort was also the center for an important farming and manufacturing community. The company started an orchard near the fort; and its cultivated fields and pasture lands extended for miles along the north

bank of the Columbia. Lumber, pickled salmon, and other products of Fort Vancouver's mills, drying sheds, forges, and shops supplied not only the wants of the fur trade but also a brisk commerce with such distant places as the Hawaiian Islands, California, and the Russian settlements in Alaska. The farms and the busy shops and mills at Fort Vancouver marked the beginning of large-scale agriculture and industry in the Pacific Northwest.

Much of the cultural and social life of the Oregon country also revolved about Fort Vancouver. Here were established the first school, the first circulating library, the first theater, and several of the earliest churches in the Northwest.

## Fort and village

At the height of its prosperity—about 1844 to 1846—Fort Vancouver was an extensive establishment. The fort proper measured about 732 feet by 325 feet. It was surrounded by a stockade of upright



*The fort from the northwest, about 1855. Drawn by Gustavus Sobon.*

logs; and a bastion at the northwest corner mounted seven or eight 3-pound guns. These defenses were never tested, since the nearby Indians were not hostile and the American settlers never acted upon occasional threats uttered during the period of tension before and after the boundary treaty of 1846.

Within the stockade were about 22 major buildings and several lesser structures. Among the former were four large storehouses, an Indian trade shop, a granary, an impressive residence for the chief factor, dwellings for other company officers and clerks, and a jail.

The lesser employees at Fort Vancouver—the tradesmen, artisans, boatmen, and laborers—for the most part had their homes in what was known as "the village," on the plain west and southwest of the stockade. It consisted of from 30 to 50 wooden dwellings, some ranged regularly along lanes and others

dotted "all over the plain for a mile." Near the village and extending to the river was a lagoon, around which were a number of other company buildings. These included the wharf, a storehouse for salmon, boatsheds, and a hospital.

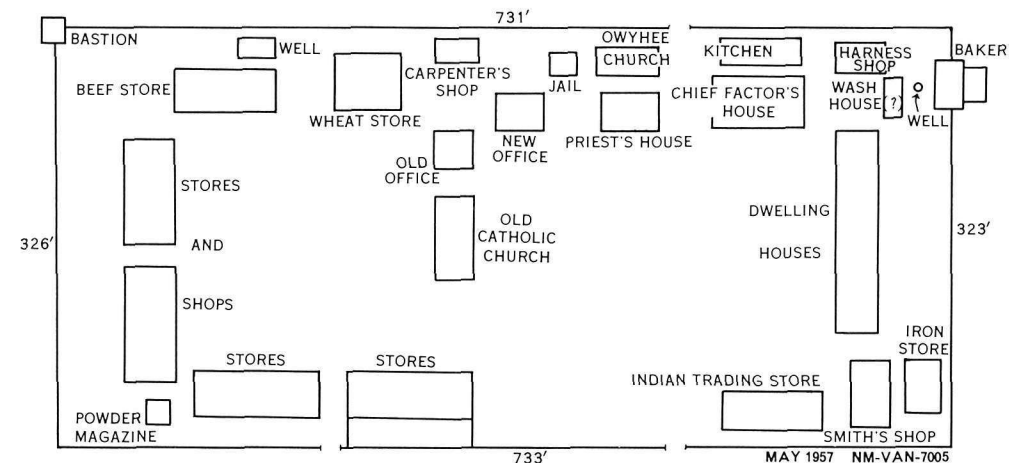
## American settlers

As American missionaries and settlers began to flow in ever-increasing numbers into the Oregon country, British-owned Fort Vancouver was of necessity their immediate goal. Here were the only adequate supplies of food, seed, and farm implements in the Northwest. Dr. McLoughlin's kind treatment of these pioneers helped to foster the growth of an American population in the region. Not without justice has he been called the "Father of Oregon."

When Dr. McLoughlin retired from the Hudson's Bay Company, he moved to Oregon

## PLAN OF FORT VANCOUVER

FROM A DRAWING BY  
LT. M. VAVASOUR, ROYAL ENGINEERS, 1845





City and later became a United States citizen. His house still stands. It was made a National Historic Site in 1941.

*A U.S. military reservation*

The treaty of 1846 between the United States and Great Britain established the 49th parallel as the southern boundary of Canada as a compromise between British desire for everything north of the Columbia River and the American goal expressed by the slogan, "54-40 or Fight." Fort Vancouver thus found itself in American territory. Thereafter the influence of the post and the Hudson's Bay Company declined rapidly south of the Canadian line. Settlers began to take over the land near Fort Vancouver; and to protect itself, the company welcomed the establishment here of a United States Army camp in 1849.

A short time later a military reservation was created around the old fur-trading post. The last factor of Fort Vancouver handed over the keys to the Army quartermaster in 1860. Six years later it was reported that all traces of the old stockade had been destroyed by a fire of unknown origin.

*Vancouver Barracks*

The Army post at Fort Vancouver continues active to this date. Known variously as Camp Vancouver, Columbia Barracks, Fort Vancouver, and Vancouver Barracks, it long served as military headquarters and supply point for the Pacific Northwest.

Among the many men who served at the Vancouver army post and went on to greater

fame were President Ulysses S. Grant, Gen. George Armstrong Custer, Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, and General of the Army, George C. Marshall.

Though now much reduced in size, Vancouver Barracks commemorates the role of the United States Army in the settlement and development of the American frontier.

*The historic site*

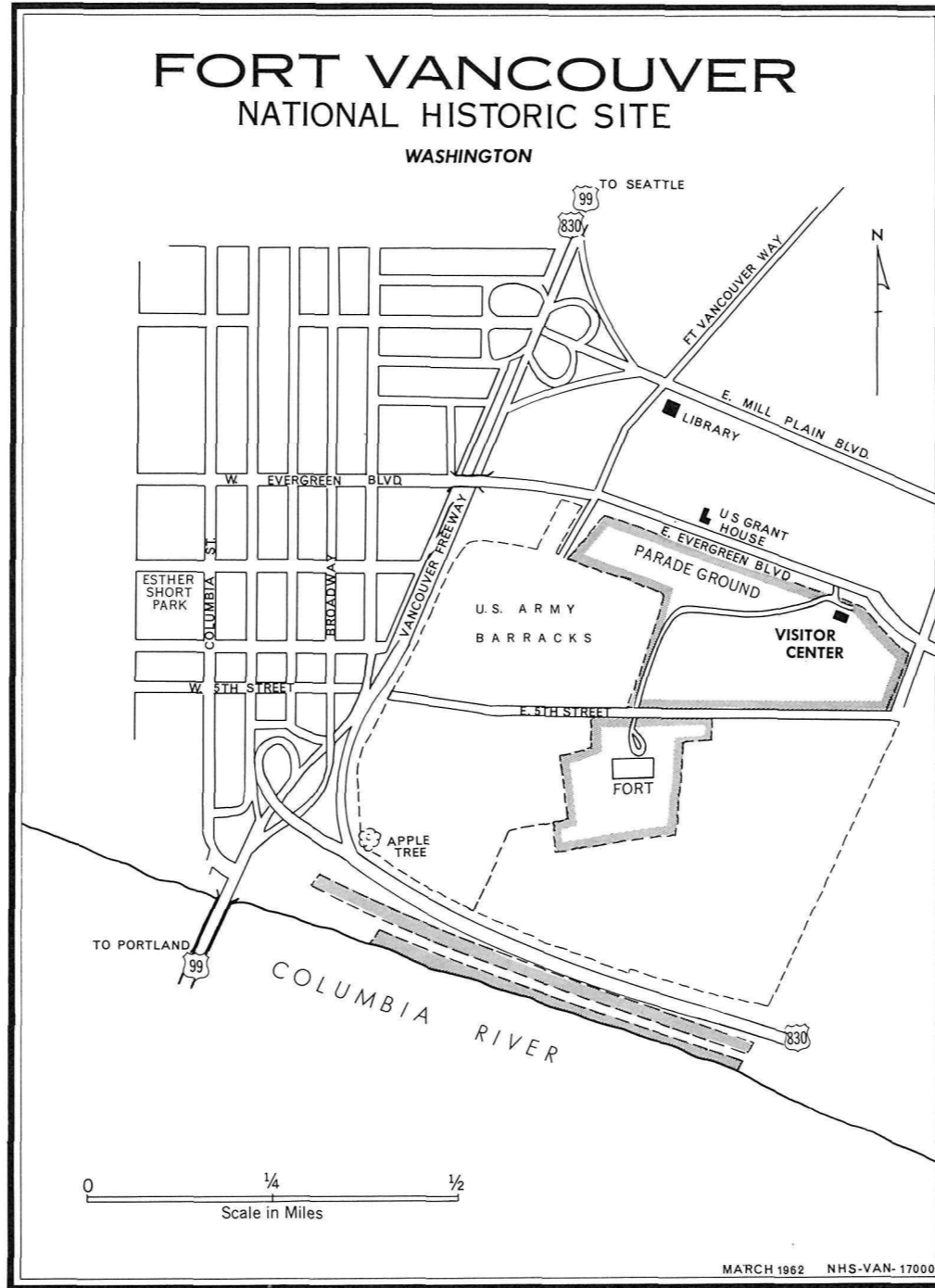
The National Historic Site was authorized by an act of Congress in 1948. It is within the city of Vancouver, Wash. The visitor center and some of the building locations marked out on the actual site of the old fort are open to the public daily from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

*Administration*

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Vancouver, Wash., is in immediate charge.

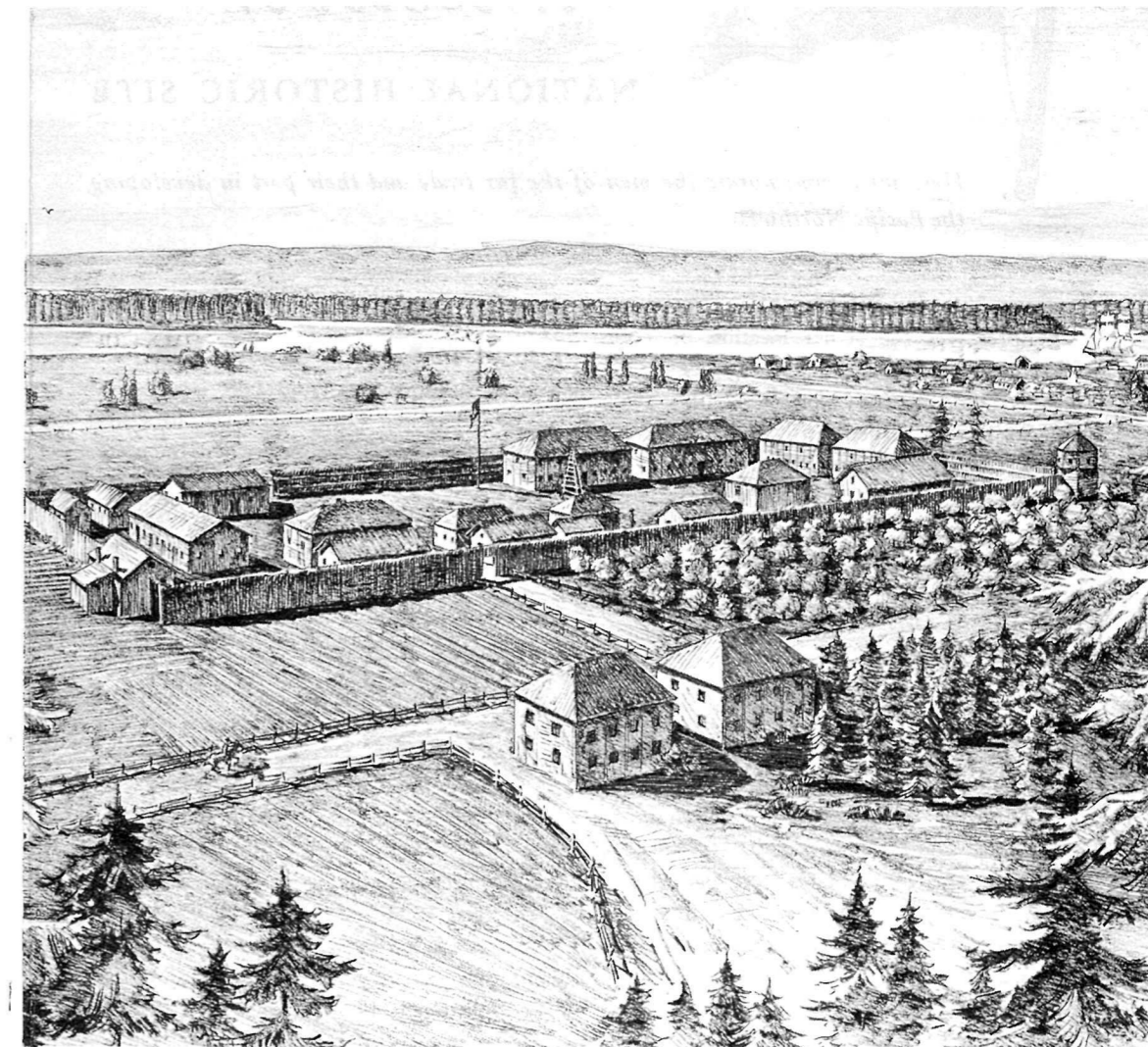
*Mission 66*

MISSION 66, a 10-year conservation, development, and improvement program of the National Park System, is scheduled for completion in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service. The MISSION 66 program at Fort Vancouver has built a visitor center and improved the roads, parking areas, and utilities. The program has also increased the staff of interpretive and protective personnel.



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Cover: Fort Vancouver, 1845—an artist's conception.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

