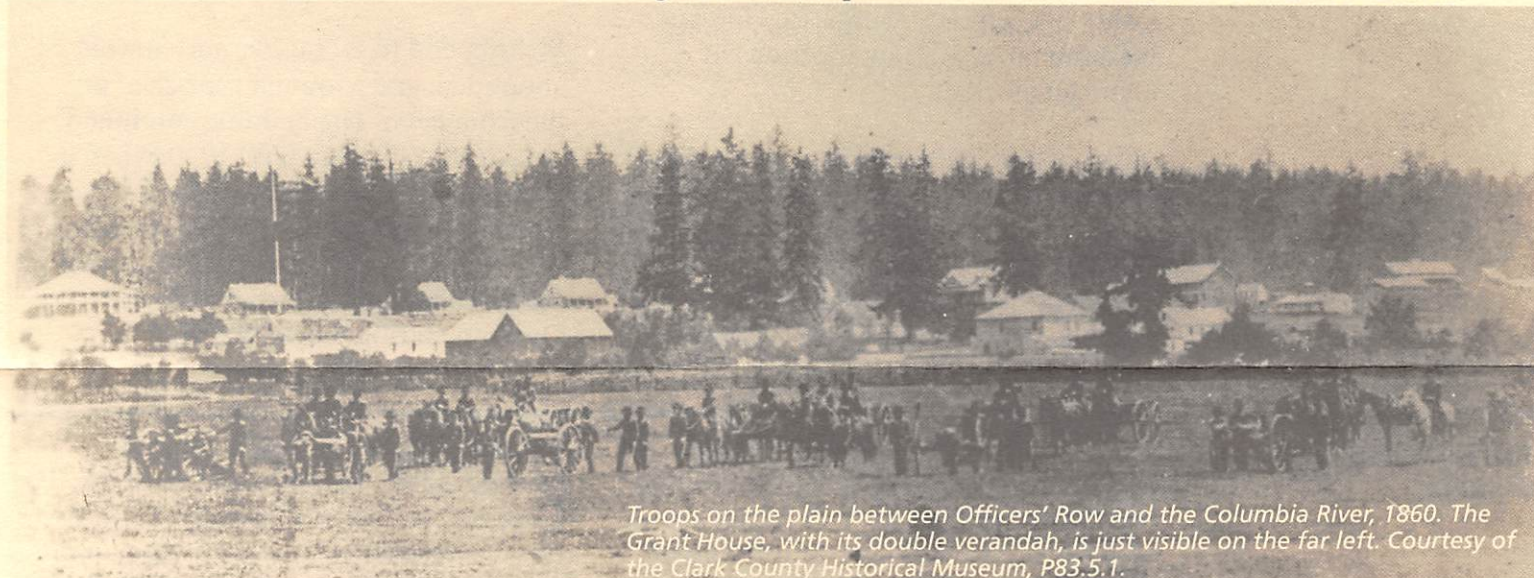




The Grant House: First Army Headquarters in the Northwest



Troops on the plain between Officers' Row and the Columbia River, 1860. The Grant House, with its double verandah, is just visible on the far left. Courtesy of the Clark County Historical Museum, P83.5.1.

Officers Row Overlooking the Columbia River

The United States Army arrived at Fort Vancouver, a Hudson's Bay Company fur trade depot, in 1849. The area had been established as American territory in 1846. Immediately upon arrival, nine buildings were constructed on the terrace above the north bank of the Columbia River, in the location of the current Parade Ground. The first building erected by Captain and Brevet* Major John S. Hatheway, and his company of 76 soldiers, served as both Headquarters and Commanding Officer's residence. That building, now known as the Grant House is the oldest standing building in Vancouver Barracks.

Headquarters Construction

The Grant House, built in 1849, is constructed of hand-hewn logs. Not long after the building was completed, it was faced with wood lap siding, as the cold and wet had a tendency to creep through the spaces created as the logs weathered and shrank. The siding may also have symbolically set the house apart from the other post structures, lending it a more finished look. The architectural style of the building, with its wraparound,

double verandah, has been characterized as reminiscent of a southern plantation house. Originally there were three rooms on the main floor and four rooms on the second floor.



The Grant House, probably during the 1870s or 1880s. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 24703.

Diplomacy Maintains Peace

Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin deBonneville was Post Commander from September 1852 to May 1855, living and working in the Grant House. Colonel deBonneville was a French-born officer and a renowned explorer of the American West, having conducted a fur trading expedition, financed by John Jacob Astor, to the Pacific Northwest in the 1830s.

Vancouver post when the U. S. Army, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Catholic Church were uneasily occupying the same site. DeBonneville, who had recently been confirmed as a Catholic at Vancouver, maintained a good relationship with both the "Honourable Company" and the Church. Father J. B. A. Brouillet, of St. James Cathedral, and the Colonel became close friends, and deBonneville was supportive of the improvement and extension of the mission facilities.

After serving in the Mexican-American War, he took over command of the

"Grant Slept Here": Truth or Fiction?

Brevet* Captain Ulysses S. Grant was posted here with the 4th Infantry in 1852. However, he was not the Commanding Officer, and did not live in the Grant House. He was assigned to the Quartermaster's



Grant in the field, 1860s. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Depot, near the Columbia River (which no longer exists), and maintained his residence there.

It is of historical note that the road in front of Officers' Row, now known as Evergreen Boulevard, was named Grant Avenue for many years. The house continues to be called the "Grant House" as a tribute to the role that the stately old building and Ulysses S. Grant both played in the earliest history of Vancouver Barracks.

The Post Grows in Size and Importance

After the Civil War, military activities in the West increased in order to resolve conflicts between American Indians and settlers. Vancouver Barracks became the Headquarters of the Department of the Columbia, which encompassed Oregon, Washington, Alaska and portions of Idaho territories.

At the beginning of this period, the Grant House continued as the residence of the Post Commander. In 1886, the Department Commander was moved from what is now known as the O. O. Howard House to the residence now known as the Marshall House, and the Post Commander moved

into the now vacant O. O. Howard House. The Grant House was then used as quarters for commissioned officers, with the Officers' Mess and Club on the main floor.

Well-tended trees, bushes and flowers abounded, and a fountain splashed on the front lawn. The building continued as the Officers' Club until 1930, when it was used as Non-Commissioned Officer Bachelor Quarters. By 1937 the building was the Post Library, and current evidence indicates it again served as Bachelor Quarters during World War II.

The Soldiers Legacy Endures

After World War II, in the late 1940s, part of Vancouver Barracks was declared surplus by the U.S. Army. The buildings of Officers' Row declined and the Grant House was empty for several years. In 1948 the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver and a portion of Vancouver Barracks were established as part of the National Park System. However, Officers' Row was owned by the Veterans Administration (VA) at that time, so preservation of the historic officers' quarters came later.

Also in 1948, the Soroptimist Club established the Grant House Museum. The Soroptimist Club was founded in 1921 to provide women with opportunities and training in business and management. The Soroptimist's Museum occupied the Grant House until the 1980s, training women in historical preservation and artifact conservation, and interpreting the history of Officers' Row to the public. During that time, the VA donated the house to the Vancouver School District.

The 150-Year-Old Grant House Today

In 1974 the VA announced that the buildings on Officers' Row were too expensive to heat and maintain, and declared them surplus. State and local officials, in cooperation with the VA, successfully applied to have Officers' Row added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1980 the City of Vancouver officially declared its intent to acquire all of Officers' Row. The Grant House was deeded to the city by the Vancouver School District, the Marshall House was traded by its owner for another piece of property, and the remaining real estate (19 structures) was purchased from the VA for \$1. The city then embarked on an eight year, \$11 million dollar restoration project to repair, preserve and protect the public's legacy. The funds were obtained from government agencies, municipal bonds, interest and early lease income.

The Grant House is now the home of The Restaurant at the Historic Reserve, where patrons can view the original wood-sided walls and historic photographs. This brings the Grant House full circle back to its most long-lived function, that of dining and camaraderie in the distinctive neighborhood of Officers' Row.



The north side of the Grant House, showing the original log walls on the second floor. Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 67480.

* "Brevet" indicates a promotion received in the absence of a formally-authorized position, and was most often awarded in the field. Brevetted officers generally did not receive an increase in pay, and reverted back to their previous rank when the specific event which prompted the promotion (the Civil War for example), was over. The practice rarely occurs today as heroism and bravery in the field are usually recognized through the presentation of medals.

For further information, please visit the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Visitor Center at 1501 E. Evergreen Boulevard, or call (360) 816-6230.

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