



# OFFICERS' ROW

BY JAMES WAGNER AND JESSICA WALDEN

**O**n April 10, 1896, Vancouver's newspaper, *The Columbian*, suggested that Vancouver Barracks "resembled a city rather than a military barracks . . ." If indeed Vancouver Barracks did look like a neatly kept, well-managed city, then its famous little community of officers' houses, known as Officers' Row, was its most fashionable neighborhood.

From the late 1870s until the late 1930s Vancouver Barracks' Officers' Row was visited by presidents and ex-presidents of the United States, wealthy industrialists and some of the country's most famous military leaders. Most of these visitors had more than passing interest in the economic growth taking place in the Pacific Northwest. In early October 1879 residents of Officers' Row were busy preparing for the visit of former President Ulysses S. Grant, which took place October 16.

*Shortly before 6 P.M. the Lurline, piloting and closely following the St. Paul, approached the government wharf, the artillery under Lt. Comman, 21st Inf., firing a salute of 21 guns as the steamer landed. The troops from the garrison, five companies of the 21st Inf., with regimental band all under command of Captain Pollack, were drawn up in line of battle on the plain above the wharf while a full two hundred of our citizens with flaming torches formed a line from the troops to the boat. The members of the legislature stood in line on the gang plank. As soon as the steamer was made fast she was boarded by General Howard, accompanied by his staff. General H. A. Morrow and staff, Governor*

*Ferry and territorial officers, Mayor Sohns and the Citizens Committee on Arrangements, were all presented to the distinguished visitor.*

The mayor's speech:

*General—the humble individual who has the honor of addressing and welcoming you now in behalf of our town, had also the pleasure of landing with you and the old gallant 4th Infantry, 27 years ago at this spot. There is not an individual living who can look back through this space of time with more satisfaction than you. . . .*

Thus was former President Grant welcomed back to Officers' Row, some 27 years after he first arrived to serve as regimental quartermaster of the 4th Infantry. In the course of Grant's tour of Vancouver Barracks he was able to see firsthand how much the post had changed in over 25 years. While he may still have recognized some of the buildings on Officers' Row, he could not have avoided seeing that the old buildings were beginning to be replaced by better quality homes. Housing for the garrison's officers before the late 1860s and 1870s was anything but luxurious.

The history of Vancouver Barracks and Officers' Row began on or about May 15, 1849, when Companies L and M of the First United States Artillery, under the command of Brevet Major J. S. Hathaway, landed at the Hudson's Bay Company docks at Fort Vancouver. The United States Army came to take possession of the Oregon Territory for the United States government and remained in Vancouver.



Steeped in



History,



Rescued



from

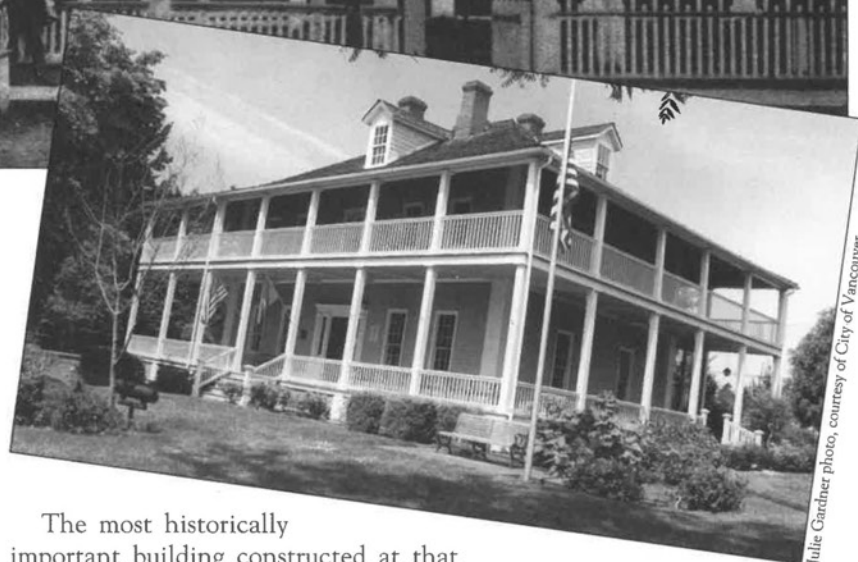


Oblivion



Major Hathaway made camp in a spot that had been cleared of trees. This temporary cantonment was called Camp Vancouver. (Camp Vancouver soon became a permanent army post by the name of Columbia Barracks. In 1853 the post's name was changed to Fort Vancouver and to Vancouver Barracks in 1879.) The day after his arrival, Major Hathaway had a tree cleared of its branches. The 13-year-old drummer boy, H. C. Morse, climbed the tree and raised the first United States flag to fly north of the Columbia River. The first occupants of Officers' Row lived in long rows of tents that were later replaced by crude barracks buildings.

**C**aptain Rufus Ingalls, Assistant Quartermaster General for the army's Pacific Division, arrived in Vancouver soon after Hathaway. Ingalls immediately began the planning and construction of a permanent army post on the site where the soldiers were camped. Work on the buildings went slowly because Ingalls could not hire enough men. Finally, he agreed to pay off-duty soldiers an extra dollar a day to do the construction work.



Julie Gardner photo, courtesy of City of Vancouver

The most historically important building constructed at that time was the log structure that was to be the post's headquarters building for a number of years. It also served as living quarters for the fort's commanding officer when the need arose. This building, which was named the Grant House shortly after former President Grant's 1879 visit, is by far the oldest building on Officers' Row. While the Grant House might not seem at all remarkable from a modern perspective, it is special for having survived through the winter rains and summer heat of 144 years. When the Grant House was new, Portland, Oregon, did not yet exist, and Oregon City was the largest town in the vicinity. Probably completed in early 1850, the Grant House was visited by a

*THE OLDEST surviving structure on Officers' Row, the U. S. Grant House was originally the post's headquarters and sometime living quarters for the commanding officer. Since its restoration, it has become the home of the Grant House Folk Art Center and Cafe.*



### A NEW RESIDENT ON OFFICERS' ROW

THE CENTER for Columbia River History (CCRH), has recently taken up residence in one of the 21 buildings comprising Officers' Row. The move puts the CCRH, created by the Washington State Historical Society in 1990, in the heart of the Vancouver historic district.

The new CCRH office is in the house across Evergreen Street from the O. O. Howard House, also known as the Officers' Club.

Of the Italianate architectural style, the building housing the CCRH was built in 1881. It overlooks a historical marker erected by WSHS in 1925. The marker celebrates five unique "firsts" associated with Vancouver, including "the first school in Washington," taught by John Ball at Vancouver in 1833.

CCRH director William L. Lang will share the new office with the Society's resource development officer, Jerry L. Dahlke. Dahlke will be working with the City of Vancouver and private sector, federal, state and local leaders on another first—the renovation and restoration of the Howard House as a major interpretive center and eventual permanent home for the Society's efforts in Vancouver.

large number of the United States Army's most famous officers. Among them were generals Winfield Scott, William S. Harney, Phillip Kearney, William T. Sherman, Phillip Sheridan, George McClellan, George Crook, E. O. C. Ord, O. O. Howard, Thomas Anderson, John Gibbon, Nelson Miles, George Pickett and, of course, U. S. Grant.

Colonel William Wing Loring, commander of the Mounted Rifles regiment, arrived in Vancouver in October 1849. For a brief time Loring was not only the commander of the new Fort Vancouver but also of all United States troops in the entire Oregon Territory. As Fort Vancouver's official commander, Colonel Loring may have been the first officer to live in the Grant House (or post headquarters building).

To the left of the main or south entrance were offices where most of the post's business was done. Beyond the offices were the private quarters of the commander. If a commander brought a wife and/or children with him to Vancouver, they were quartered upstairs.

The Grant House's appearance was altered with the addition of white exterior siding in 1854. This white siding, which cleverly hides the fact that the Grant House is a log cabin-like structure, was added "to lend gentility and make the commanding officer's home appear more like an officer's home at an eastern barracks." It seems that even then officers may have been self-conscious about the appearance and the livability of the housing along Officers' Row.

With the departure of Colonel Loring's regiment of Mounted Rifles, troops from the 4th United States Infantry were sent by ship from New York to San Francisco and eventually on to Vancouver to staff the fort. The regimental quartermaster for the 4th Infantry was Brevet Captain U. S. Grant. Sam Grant, as some of his friends called him, had a very rough trip to the Pacific Coast.

Grant arrived at Columbia Barracks aboard the steamship *Columbia* on Sep-

tember 20, 1852. It was his very good fortune to find his old friend and West Point classmate, Captain Rufus Ingalls, still at Columbia Barracks. Ingalls immediately arranged for his friend to move into the comfortable two-story house he shared with another officer.

Historians differ widely in their interpretations of Ulysses S. Grant's 15-month stay at Columbia Barracks. Some contend he was extremely unhappy during his time in the Pacific Northwest, while others claim he wanted to settle permanently in Vancouver. If Grant was indeed unhappy at Columbia Barracks, most of his unhappiness was caused by the separation from his family and not by a dislike for his surroundings or his companions at the post. The opportunity to find out whether Grant would have settled permanently in the Pacific Northwest was lost when all his business ventures in the region failed to raise the money he would have used to bring his family west.

The large two-story house he shared with Rufus Ingalls was comfortable, to say the least. Grant himself wrote, "The house I am living in is probably the best one in Oregon." He described it as being a tall house having porches, upstairs and down, on three sides. He also said these porches kept a person from missing the splendid view. Indeed, the house probably had a picturesque view of the Columbia River and, on a clear day, even Mount Hood.

Captain Grant probably took part in many a friendly gathering at the headquarters building that now bears his name. Officers frequently gathered in the Grant House's formal parlor to play cards and smoke. It is not hard to visualize U. S. Grant adding his pipe or cigar smoke to that which filled the room. After a brief tour of duty, Grant left the Army and returned to his home back East, not to revisit Vancouver Barracks until 1879.

Before the Civil War began, Colonel George Wright commanded the Army's Department of Oregon from his headquarters at Fort Vancouver. He was so good at making do with only a few soldiers and very little equipment that he was made a brigadier general of volunteers and put in



charge of the whole Pacific Division. With all the United States Army's resources going to the war effort back East, Wright had no means to improve housing on the Row. It was 1867 before the Army built two new houses on Officers' Row.

The second oldest houses on Officers' Row are also the two smallest (situated on the northeast corner of Evergreen Boulevard and Fort Vancouver Way). They were built in 1867. Architecturally, the two are the simplest and least ornamental of all the houses on the Row. The main portion of both houses is rectangular in shape, and each has a sloping gabled roof as well as a service entrance in the rear. There is a veranda-style porch across the front of each, and a smaller porch extends out from the side. These are the only single-chimney dwellings on Officers' Row. Smoke from several connecting fireplaces is released through each house's central chimney. The only difference between the two houses is that one has a

railing all the way around the roof of the porches. This railing was added purely for decoration and is the only purely decorative addition visible in these two houses. Both are considered to be of the Classical style of architecture.

Despite the fact that these two houses are considered the plainest, smallest and most ordinary-looking houses on Officers' Row, they must have been considered the best available quarters when new. Many officers of the post-Civil War United States Army lived in much less comfortable quarters.

One can easily imagine how grand the accommodations on Officers' Row looked to any of the officers who may have stayed at Fort Vancouver during the late 1860s. Even bunking in the drafty log barracks might have seemed more comfortable than sleeping in tents or out in the open night after night during the

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*SOME OF the  
meticulously refurbished  
houses on Officers' Row  
now contain office units for  
business use. Others, such  
as this large structure,  
function as residential  
dwellings.*



Julie Gardner photo, courtesy of City of Vancouver



*BUILT IN 1886, the spacious Marshall House was named for General George C. Marshall, who occupied the home in the mid 1930s. The building is now open for public tours, business meetings and private receptions.*

course of field operations.

The January 1, 1879, issue of the *Vancouver Independent* newspaper declared, "General Howard's new house, which is undoubtedly the finest dwelling north of the Columbia River, is about ready to be occupied." General Howard's new house was built at Vancouver Barracks as a home for the commander of the Department of the Columbia.

General Howard was anxious that his departmental headquarters be at the same post where the bulk of his troops were stationed. This meant moving the headquarters of the Department of the Columbia from Portland, Oregon, to Vancouver. However, General Howard, a war hero, would not move to Vancouver unless the army built a suitable house for him at Vancouver Barracks. In 1878 the army apparently agreed with his plan to move his headquarters. Construction of a new home for the department commander caused quite a flurry of activity at Vancouver Barracks during the latter part of the year.



*Julie Gardner photo, courtesy of City of Vancouver*

Howard's new house was a very stylish two-story house with spacious rooms. The house was much more luxurious than the houses of most high-ranking officers. After former President and Mrs. Grant's triumphant arrival at Vancouver on the night of October 16, 1879, they were given a splendid reception in this very house. A year later, President and Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes and Will-



iam T. Sherman were guests in General Howard's home. President Hayes was the first incumbent president to visit the West Coast and the first of four incumbent presidents—including Taft, Harding and Franklin Roosevelt—to visit Vancouver.

The architectural history of this particular house is something of a mystery. Many changes and/or additions were made during the time it served as the noncommissioned officers' club. These changes have tended to obscure its original style, which was most likely Classical.

The Howard House later became the home of Vancouver Barracks' long-time commander, Colonel Thomas M. Anderson. Under Anderson's command, Officers' Row became a fashionable and socially active community. Colonel Anderson, who became the first United States Army general to command troops in the Philippine War seems to have been as comfortable functioning in Vancouver society as he was commanding his troops in the field.

Anderson continued the practice of encouraging the officers and enlisted men of Vancouver Barracks to become involved in local cultural activities. He also continued an established tradition of holding Sunday afternoon concerts at the post's bandstand. In fact, these concerts were attended by a large number of civilians who came regularly to hear the 14th Infantry Band play. By the late 1870s a number of officers from Vancouver Barracks became involved in amateur theatricals, public speaking engagements and concerts.

Important visitors from the worlds of politics and big business descended on the Pacific Northwest in the 1880s and early 1890s. A number of these prominent guests stopped at Vancouver Barracks while in the area. Partly because of this, the army decided it was time to replace the old officers' housing at Vancouver Barracks with new, livable, and even fashionable, housing. These new houses were built in a variety of architectural styles, including Folk Victorian, Second Empire, Neoclassical and Queen Anne.

The importance of Vancouver Barracks as a headquarters from which to explore and exploit the Pacific Northwest was

made apparent when a budget-conscious United States Army built a spacious 8,236-square-foot home for the commander of the Department of the Columbia. Finished in 1886, what is now called the Marshall House was the most fashionable home on Officers' Row. Built in the ornate Queen Anne style of architecture, it has irregularly sized sections or wings covered by a large, sloping, cone-shaped roof. The roof is supported by columns somewhat like the Doric columns of ancient Greece. The house also features a turret-like windowed column at one corner.

**T**he Marshall House was named after its most famous occupant, General George C. Marshall. During his Vancouver Barracks stay Marshall entertained his share of important visitors. Among the most historically significant were three weary Soviet fliers who, by landing in Vancouver on June 20, 1937, completed the first transpolar flight. Realizing how exhausted these men were after 63 hours of non-stop flying, The general whisked them away to comfortable rooms at the Marshall House.

During World War II, military activity at Vancouver Barracks slowed almost to a stop and Officers' Row became practically deserted. Subsequently, the army turned over the houses to another government agency. The once-proud little community was no longer important. Sadly, the Row's 21 houses suffered from neglect and outright abuse for many years.

In recent years the people of Vancouver took on the task of renovating Officers' Row. With aid from Clark County citizens and of the State of Washington, the City of Vancouver remodeled the desperately run-down structures. This ten-million-dollar restoration project will help ensure that the historical contribution made by Vancouver Barracks and its Officers' Row will not be forgotten.

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*James R. Wagner is an author and researcher from Ridgefield, Washington. Jessica Walden, a native Washingtonian, is a writer and co-publisher of the regional cue sports newspaper, Cue Ball Gazette.*

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The Magazine of Northwest History

A quarterly publication of the  
Washington State Historical Society

VOLUME EIGHT, NUMBER THREE

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♻️ PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

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THE MAGAZINE OF NORTHWEST HISTORY ■ FALL 1994

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FRONT COVER: "The Inspector," a watercolor pencil drawing by Dyanne Locati of her father, Joe J. Locati, inspecting Walla Walla Sweets for disease. The drawing is based on a photo in the March 1972 issue of *American Vegetable Grower*. Joe Locati was the first Italian-American to serve as a federal/state district horticultural inspector in the Pacific Northwest. (Courtesy of Joe J. Locati) BACK COVER: "Basket of Sweets." (Courtesy of Dyanne Locati)