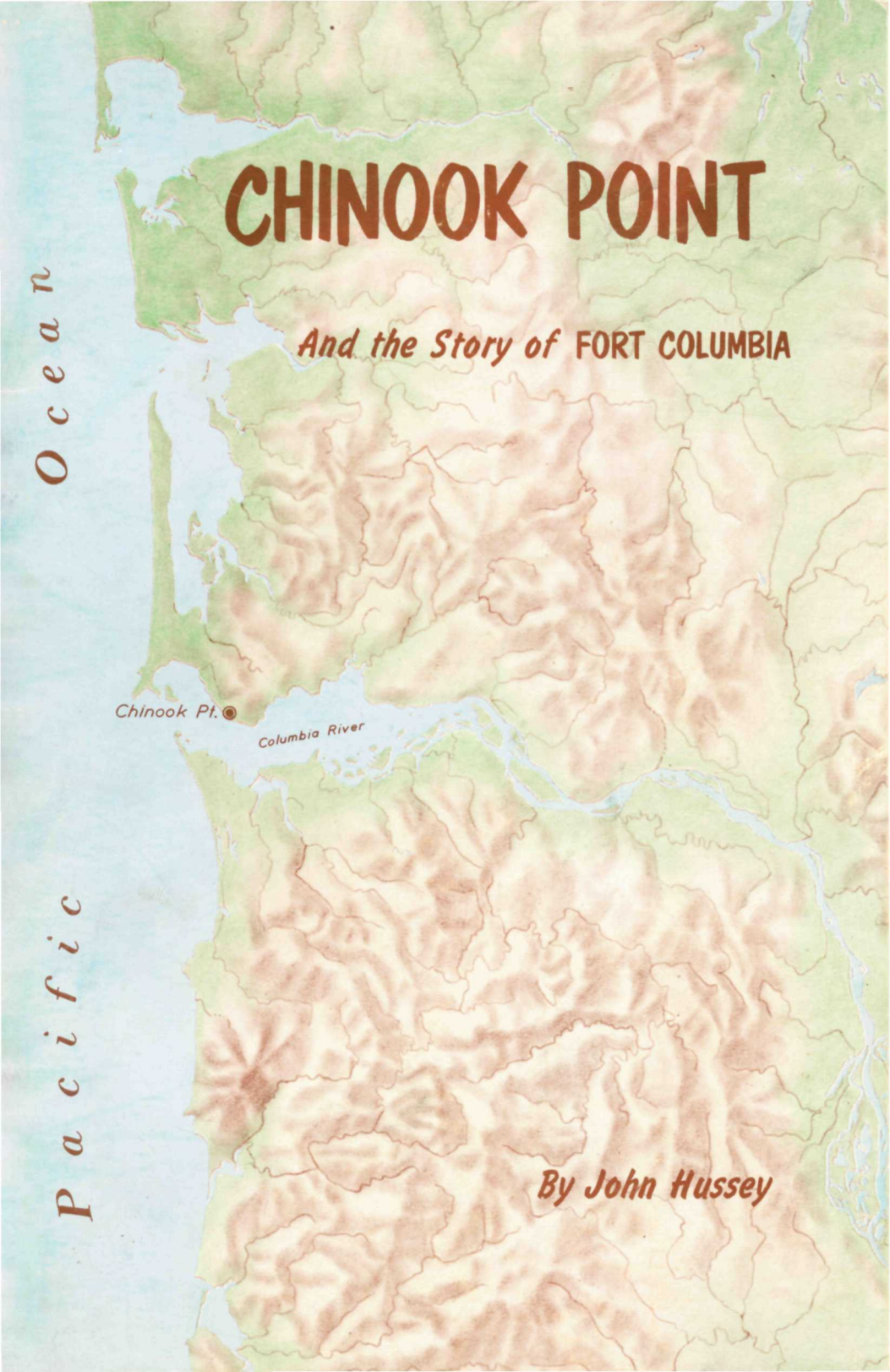


CHINOOK POINT

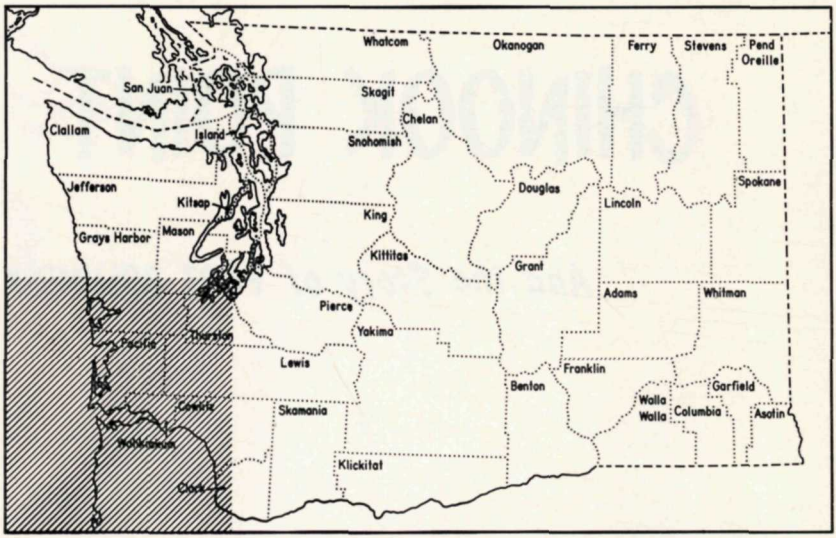
And the Story of FORT COLUMBIA

By John Hussey

CHINOOK POINT

And the Story of FORT COLUMBIA

By John Hussey



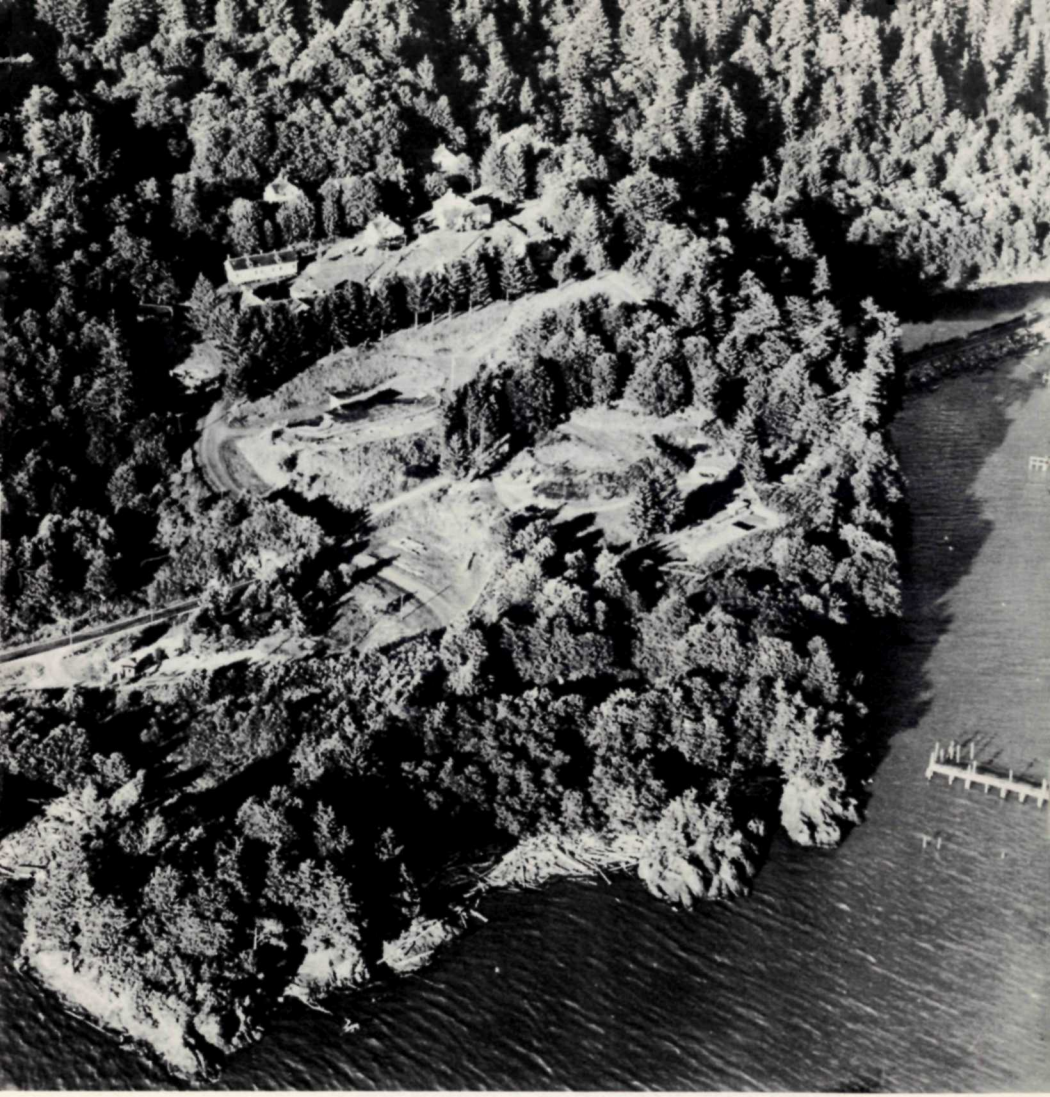
Location of the relief area on the cover is indicated on the above map of the State of Washington

The relief map used on the front and back cover and the state map above were especially prepared by Dr. John Sherman of the Cartographic Laboratory, Department of Geography, University of Washington.

STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON
JOHN R. VANDERZICHT, *Director*

FORT COLUMBIA is one of three fortifications built by the United States to guard the mouth of the Columbia River. Erected during the period when wars were fought only on the ground and on the sea, it was declared obsolete after World War II. In 1950 a large part of the Fort Columbia Military Reservation was transferred to the State of Washington to be preserved as an historic monument by the State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Virtually intact except for its armament, Fort Columbia remains in appearance a typical coast artillery post of the late 1890's and early 1900's. It is reminiscent of one of the great strategic concepts which long dominated American military planning—the idea that our harbors could be made safe from invasion by a system of massive fixed defenses.



—Courtesy Aero-Marine Photos, Tacoma

This aerial view shows Chinook Point, the prominent point of land closely associated with events of three centuries, from Gray's discovery of the Columbia in 1792 until World War II when modern coast artillery batteries was added to Fort Columbia's outdated gun installations. The picture shows some of the fort structures, built just before the turn of the century, with Highway 101 running beneath the point through a tunnel constructed originally for a narrow gauge railway. At lower right can be seen remnants of the long dock that served the fort in earlier days when all supplies were brought in by water.

CHINOOK POINT

And the Story of FORT COLUMBIA

By John Hussey

FORT COLUMBIA stands at Chinook Point on the north shore of the Columbia River opposite, and about six miles within, the stream's mouth. The point is a hilly spur jutting westward into the river between the towns of Megler and Chinook. It was named in 1792 by Lieut. W. R. Broughton, of Vancouver's exploring expedition, after a nearby Chinook Indian village.

Rising sharply to the north and east of Chinook Point is Scarboro Hill. This peak, about 840 feet high, is the most prominent natural feature of Fort Columbia Historical State Park. Standing at the western edge of a range of hills and presenting a bold face to the sea, it is a conspicuous landmark when seen from the mouth of the Columbia.

When first viewed by white men, the hill was even more noticeable than at present. In contrast with the densely wooded slopes of the adjoining range, the western and southwestern face of Scarboro Hill was largely bare, covered only with grass, ferns, and low shrubs. As late as 1858 the geographer George Davidson was able to say that "no other hill in this vicinity possesses this peculiar feature." In recent decades, however, the forest has blotted out much of the open space.

Scarboro Hill has been known by several names during the last century and a half. When the famed explorer and fur trader of the North West Company, Alexander Henry, climbed the peak in 1813, he noted in his journal that it was called "the Chinook Hill, or Red Patch." The latter name, he said, came from the fact that the grass and ferns on the face of the hill formed a reddish spot when seen from the sea during the fall and winter.

The term "Chinook Hill" was the one most commonly used during the 1840's; but in 1850 Captain James A. Scarborough moved permanently onto his land claim on the hill, and his name gradually became

---

The author, John Hussey, Ph. D., is a historian on the staff of the National Parks Service. He made the historicai study of Fort Columbia leading to its designation as an historic area worthy of preservation and interpretation by the State of Washington. He has made similar studies of Fort Vancouver, now a national monument, Fort Flagler and Fort Casey in Washington and a number of other historic sites in other western states.

Scarboro Hill, around 1910, showing the long dock in the foreground on which supplies for the fort were unloaded from river craft. Note that the hill behind the fort was still bare at this time, a characteristic that explorers and early mariners noted in their logs and journals.

attached to the peak. It is still known as "Scarborough Hill," or "Scarborough Head." The shortened version, "Scarboro Hill," appeared on a United States Coast Survey progress map as early as 1852, and in that form the name appears on official Government maps to this day.

Because Scarboro Hill and Chinook Point were such conspicuous features of the landscape, they long proved useful as bearing points for navigating the dangerous entrance of the Columbia River. As early as 1792 the British naval officer, Lieut. Broughton, found Chinook Point to be "a good leading mark for clearing the shoals that lie between it and Cape Disappointment." For nearly half a century thereafter most sailing directions for entering the river recommended using the bare patch on Chinook Hill as a guide.

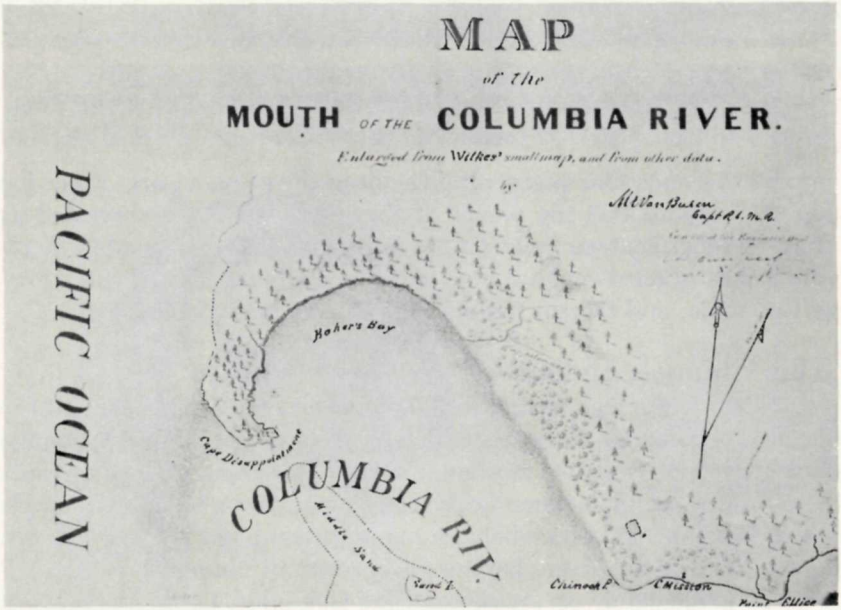
Not until the early 1850's, when the United States Coast Survey began to chart the river's mouth and when artificial aids to navigation were set in place, was Scarboro Hill discarded as a bearing mark. According to local tradition, however, fishermen continued for years to use the hill and, in particular, a beautiful hawthorn tree which grew upon its slopes from about 1848 to 1897, as guiding marks.

The Pageant of History

Beginning in 1775, when Europeans first saw the opening between Cape Disappointment and Point Adams and suspected that it might mark the mouth of a great river, a vast historical drama began to unfold in the region drained by the Columbia. First came the ex-

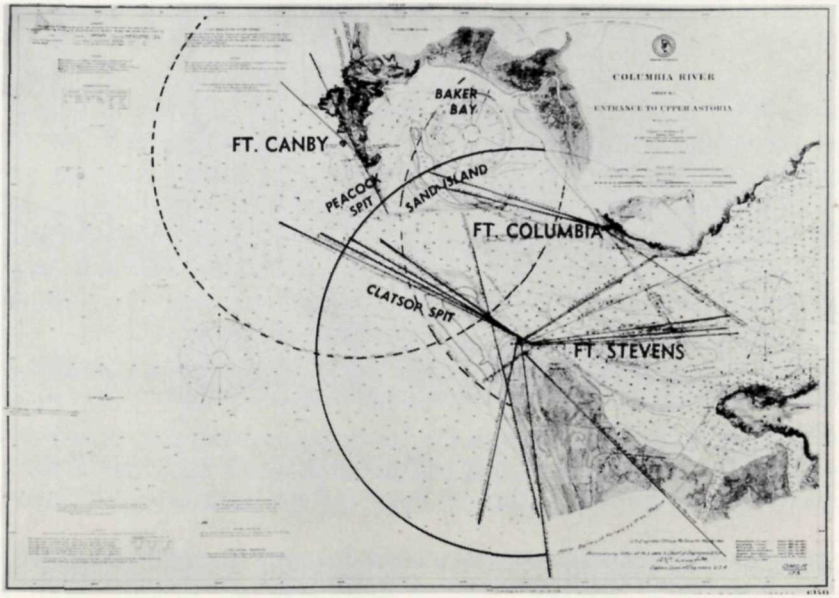
plorers—Gray, Vancouver, Lewis and Clark, and David Thompson. With them and in their paths came the maritime fur traders, who opened a brisk traffic with the natives. In 1811 the Pacific Fur Company established Fort Astoria and began the land-based fur trade of the lower Columbia area. Two years later they gave way to the Britishers of the North West Company, and the name of Fort Astoria was changed to Fort George. The North West Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. During the 1830's the missionaries arrived, mostly from the United States; and the next decade saw the large-scale influx of American settlers, a movement which was largely responsible for winning the Oregon Country for the United States.

No major or dramatic incident in this stirring pageant occurred on the ground now within Fort Columbia Historical State Park. However, most of the chief actors in the drama at one time or another passed Chinook Point on their way up or down the river. Some of them even tramped the soil of Chinook Point and the peak behind it. Many



—Courtesy Bancroft Library, Berkeley, Calif.

This map was drawn more than a hundred years ago from data supplied by the United States Exploring Expedition, sent around the world in 1841 by the federal government, and commanded by Lieut. Charles Wilkes. On it Chinook Point, Point Ellice and other place names are listed. The small rectangle above Chinook Point may be the bare patch of open hillside that was used as a range marker by ships crossing the Columbia bar.



This retouched 1900 Corps of Engineer chart, showing arcs of fire and range of batteries in the three Columbia river forts, shows how the entrance was effectively guarded. Largest guns could fire five miles.

important events took place within sight of the present park. From the top of Scarboro Hill the scenes of these occurrences lie revealed as from no other vantage point on the lower river. Fort Columbia therefore makes an excellent base from which to study the history of the lower Columbia; and therein lies much of its historical significance.

The Chinook Indians

When white men first visited the lower Columbia they found the vicinity of Chinook Point occupied by Indians speaking a language which was "decidedly the most unpronounceable compound of gutterals ever formed for the communication of human thought." These people were the Chinooks, who inhabited the north bank of the river between Grays Bay and the ocean. During the spring and summer they generally lived immediately on the shore of the Columbia, but in the late fall and early winter most of them moved to the northern range of their territory, on Willapa Bay.

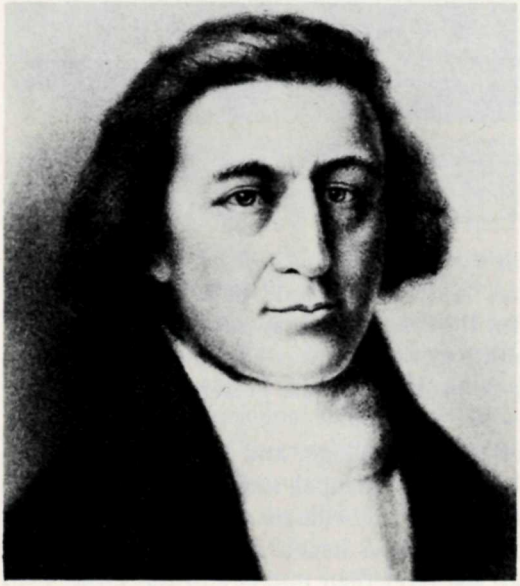
The Chinooks were a thick-set, muscular people, well-formed and slightly taller than most of their neighbors on the Northwest Coast. Their most conspicuous physical characteristic was the flattened head.

Almost at once after birth all children whose parents were not slaves were placed in cradles, and pressure was applied to the fronts of their heads by boards or pads. After about a year of such treatment, a head would be wedge-shaped, with the front forming a flat surface slanting back from the top of the nose to the crown. One witness reported that the children appeared to suffer no discomfort during this process, "although I have seen the eyes seemingly starting out of the sockets from the great pressure."

Chinook women wore skirts of shredded cedar bark, and both men and women wore fur capes during cold weather. Conical basketry caps, ornamented with knobs, were also used. During the winter, the Chinooks lived in large houses built of cedar planks. These structures were dismantled in the spring, and the planks were often carried by canoe to the places of summer residence, where they were used in the building of shed-like shelters.

The Chinooks were skillful seamen, and they frequently crossed the treacherous bar at the mouth of the Columbia in their large canoes hollowed from cedar logs. Fishing was their main source of livelihood, but they also hunted seals, elk, deer, and other animals.

Trading was the dominant theme in Chinook life. Situated as they were at the mouth of the Columbia, where the native routes of commerce along the coast met the great avenue of traffic into the interior,



A portrait of Capt. Robert Gray who discovered the Columbia River and Gray's Harbor while on a fur trading expedition ot the Northwest Coast in 1792. He named the river after his ship, which dropped anchor just off Chinook Point.

the Chinooks became the middlemen for much of the trade of the Pacific Northwest. Their language was the basis of the Chinook jargon, which probably, even before the coming of European traders, was the means of inter-tribal communication throughout a wide area.

Chinook Villages

When Captain Robert Gray entered the mouth of the Columbia River in May, 1792—the first white man known to have accomplished this feat—he found a large native village on the north bank of the stream "about five leagues from the entrance." This settlement was called "Chenooke" by the Indians. Gray drew a rough sketch of the river's entrance, and later this map was acquired by the British explor-

This drawing, from James Swan's book "Northwest Coast or Three Years on Shoalwater Bay", published in 1858, is entitled "Salmon fishing at Chenook." It shows Indians pulling in their nets on the beach just west of Chinook Point.

er, George Vancouver. With the chart in hand, Vancouver's assistant, Lieut. William R. Broughton, reached the same village in October of that year. From a map drawn by Broughton it is possible to fix the location of this settlement with precision. It was situated on the beach to the southeast of Chinook Point, between the present McGowan and Point Ellice.

Many later travelers visited this village, and from their writings it is clear that "Chenooke" was the principal settlement of the tribe. These visitors sometimes described the village as being at Chinook Point; but during the last century the beach near the present McGowan extended farther into the river than today, and the term "Chi-

nook Point" was occasionally applied to the entire bulging shoreline from Point Ellice on the south to perhaps as far as the present town of Chinook on the north. True, the Chinooks shifted the locations of their towns from time to time, particularly when the fleas and other insects became too troublesome; but there is no evidence that the village "Chenooke" was ever moved as far west as the present Chinook Point.

"Chenooke" became known as "Chinookville" during the 1850's. Still inhabited by Indians but with a generous proportion of whites, it developed into a prosperous fishing center. A Catholic mission and a Hudson's Bay Company trading post were situated there, and some of the earliest salmon canning in the Northwest was conducted in the neighborhood. For some years the settlement served as the county seat of Pacific County. The name Chinookville has disappeared from the map, and the site should not be confused with the modern Chinook, which is located north of Fort Columbia.

There were other native villages near Chinook Point. During at least the late 1830's and early 1840's there was a settlement near the mouth of the Chinook River, four miles north of the point. But rather strangely there is little evidence that any permanent Indian towns were located within the boundaries of the present Fort Columbia State Park. A map drawn by Sir Edward Belcher in 1839 shows a cluster of dwellings labeled "Chehalis Village" on the shore immediately north of Chinook Point, and another town, called "Klatzop Village," was pictured a mile farther north. Since "Chehalis" and "Clatsop" are both names of neighboring tribes, it seems likely that these two villages represented temporary settlements of visiting fishermen.

Chief Comcomly's Home

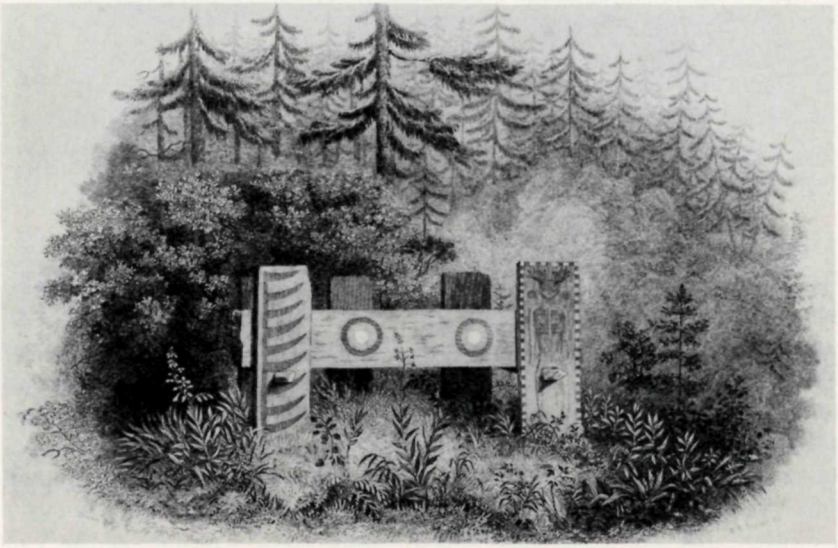
There is a widely accepted tradition to the effect that Chief Comcomly, a famed Chinook leader who held sway from about 1810 to 1830, maintained his "principal palace, or royal lodge," on the lower slopes of Scarboro Hill at Chinook Point. Unfortunately, this legend cannot be proved by the available historical record. In fact, the journals and narratives of travelers who visited Comcomly during his years of greatness appear to indicate that his residence was not at Chinook Point but at the principal Chinook village.

Undoubtedly Comcomly was the best-known Indian in the Columbia River area during the opening decades of the 19th century. He evidently first enters the written record in the journal kept by Charles Bishop, master of the trading vessel *Ruby*, which entered the river in 1795. Among the Chinook subchiefs who visited the ship Bishop listed

"Comcomally," a "little one Eyed man" who endeared himself to the crew and frequently slept in the captain's cabin. When Lewis and Clark were at the mouth of the Columbia during the winter of 1805-1806, "Comcom-mo-ley," to whom they gave a medal, was the second chief of the tribe. By the spring of 1811, when John Jacob Astor's ship, the *Tonquin,* reached the lower Columbia, Comcomly had become first chief of the Chinooks.

The exact extent of Comcomly's domain is a matter of doubt. According to some of his descendants, he was the principal chief "of the confederacy of all the tribes of the lower Columbia," except the Clatsops, between the Cascade Mountains and Cape Disappointment. Most other estimates were more moderate. For example, David Douglas, the botanist, who knew Comcomly well in 1825, described him simply as "chief of the Chenook, on the north side of the river."

Comcomly's influence went beyond his own band of Chinooks. He was tied by marriage to a number of neighboring tribes, and his residence at the mouth of the river enabled him to play middleman in the commerce between the interior groups and the American and British traders at Astoria and in trading vessels. Comcomly's fame really began



Comcomly, the great chief of the Chinooks whose tribal headquarters was on or near Chinook Point, was honored by whites and Indians alike, and when he died at an advanced age a "tomb" was prepared for him on the Oregon side near Astoria.

The old chief's skull, flattened in the manner characteristic of his tribe, is on display in the museum of the Clatsop County Historical Society in Astoria.

with the arrival of the Astorians. His relations with the members of Astor's Pacific Fur Company got off to a good start. On April 7, 1811, two of the partners in the firm, Duncan McDougal and David Stuart, were dumped into the Columbia when their canoe upset a short distance off the Chinook village. Comcomly rescued them and escorted them back to the *Tonquin* with much ceremony.

After the establishment of the fur-trading post at Astoria, Comcomly proved very useful to the new project, even though his hard bargaining did bring upon his head the ire of some of the partners. On several occasions it was suspected that he was plotting treachery against the post, but no actual attack was made. After one of his numerous daughters married McDougal, Astor's principal representative on the Pacific, the old chief was more than ever inclined to support the enterprise.

Comcomly was dismayed when his American friends transferred Astoria to the North West Company in 1813. He soon became adjusted to the new order, however, and supported the Canadian firm and its successor, the Hudson's Bay Company, as loyally as he had the Astorians.

The famed old chief died in or about 1830 and was buried on the south side of the Columbia, on the hillside behind the fur-trading post. In the fall of 1835, Dr. Meredith Gairdner, a physician in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company and a scientist of some note, secretly exhumed Comcomly's skull and sent it to a friend in England. For years it was on display at the Royal Naval Hospital near Plymouth. In 1952 it was returned to the museum of the Clatsop County Historical Society in Astoria.

Indian Legends

Although Comcomly's residence and the principal Chinook village were not located within the boundaries of the present Fort Columbia State Park, Chinook Point and Scarboro Hill were too conspicuous in the natural scene not to have played a part in the life of the aboriginal inhabitants of the neighborhood. Chinook Point was called "Nose-to-ilse" by the Chinooks. Scarboro Hill was used as a lookout and signal station. From its heights the canoes of approaching Indians, friends or foes, could be spied at great distances.

Both landmarks figured rather prominently in Chinook mythology. One legend, perhaps not entirely of Indian origin, tells how Scarboro Hill got its bald patch. An Indian woman, so goes the story, went to

the top of the hill to watch for her lover, who had crossed the river in his canoe. She found her view blocked by the dense forest which covered the peak. In desperation she called upon the spirits for assistance. They sent a wind which leveled the trees on the south slope and opened a vista to the sea and the Oregon shore.

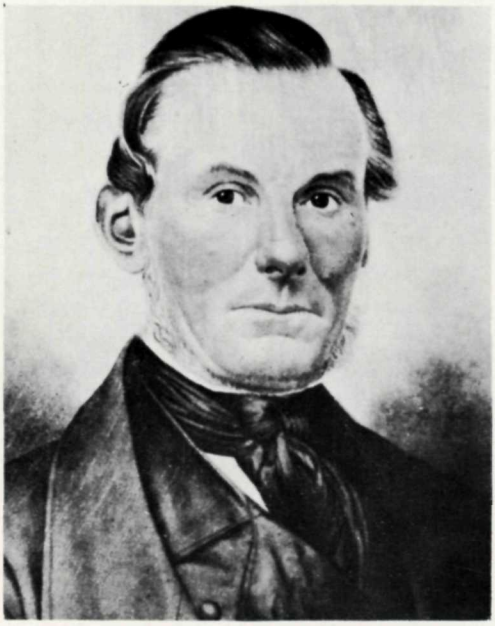
Another legend seems better founded on fact. It is said that during Comcomly's reign other tribes about the mouth of the Columbia became jealous of the power he exerted and several times threatened war, but the Chinook chief always frightened them off by vivid descriptions of the overwhelming force he could bring into the field against them. He would point to a large rock on the top of Scarboro Hill and say, "As long as that rock remains in place no one shall question the power of me or my people!"

The rock did stay atop the hill during the life of Comcomly and that of his son, Chenamus; but shortly thereafter a group of Clatsops, assisted by some Tillamooks, stealthily climbed to the summit and rolled the rock into the gully behind the peak. This loss of their legendary symbol of power weighed heavily on the Chinooks, whose way of life was already disintegrating under the impact of the white man's civilization.

The Discoverers

Bruno de Heceta, exploring the Northwest Coast for Spain in 1775, was the first man known to have seen the entrance at the mouth of the Columbia River. He was unable to enter the opening, which he named "la Bahia de la Asumpcion" or "Entrade de Ezeta," but he believed it to be the mouth of "some great river" or strait. He must have seen Scarboro Hill, but it cannot be identified on his map of the entrance. The English seaman, Captain John Meares, was off the opening in 1788, but he failed to enter far enough to recognize it as a river mouth. The name, "Cape Disappointment," which he gave to the north headland has survived to the present day.

The first vessel known to have entered the mouth of the river was the American ship *Columbia,* commanded by Robert Gray of Boston. Crossing the bar on May 11, 1792, the *Columbia* ascended the estuary as far as the Chinook village, between the present McGowan and Point Ellice. After some trade with the natives, Gray moved the ship a short distance upstream to the vicinity of Grays Bay. From there the vessel was slowly moved back down the river to the anchorage off Chinook. On May 18 an unsuccesful attempt to leave the river was made, and Gray was forced to return to the vicinity of the native village. The new

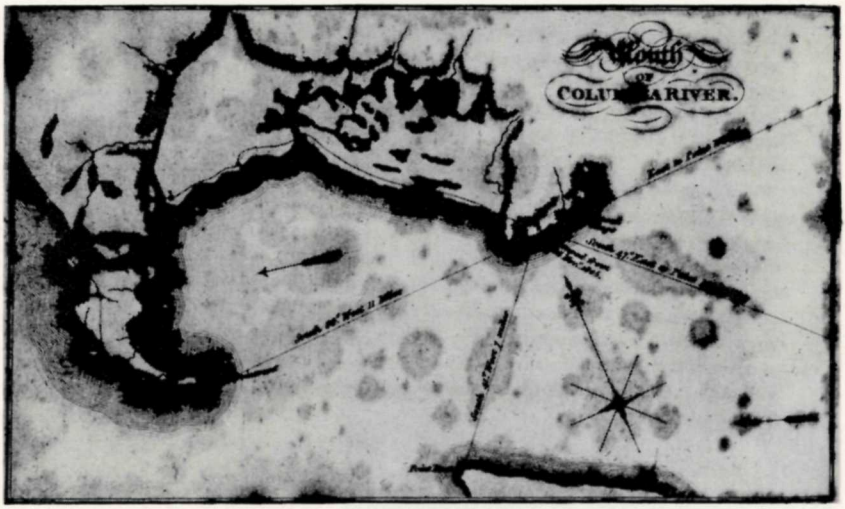


Captain James Allan Scarborough, retired Hudson's Bay Company employe, settled at Chinook Point under a donation land claim.

anchorage apparently was off the present Chinook Point. Two days later the *Columbia* stood out to sea. Henceforth the "Great River of the West" carried the name of this gallant little ship. Her visit was the cornerstone of the American claim to the Oregon Country.

Hearing of Gray's discovery, Captain George Vancouver, the English explorer, determined to investigate the matter. His larger ship, the *Discovery*, was unable to cross the bar, but the armed brig *Chatham*, under Lieut. William R. Broughton, entered the stream. After two nights spent near Cape Disappointment, the *Chatham* anchored off the Chinook village on October 21, 1792. Broughton landed at the then deserted settlement, explored the river's south shore, and then moved his vessel a short distance above Point Ellice. From this latter point he set out in small boats to conduct further explorations of the lower Columbia. Although Broughton evidently did not set foot on the present Chinook Point, he did depict the headland on his charts. He named it "Village Point" or "Chenoke Point," which last it still bears.

Even preceding Broughton's visit and continuing into the 1830's, American and British fur-trading vessels entered the Columbia to traffic with the natives. For the most part the records of their visits are fragmentary and do not throw much light upon occurrences at Chinook



—*Courtesy Library of Congress*

This Lewis and Clark map, by a set of four bearings, locates exactly the site of the explorers' camp on the beach near Chinook Point in 1805. This map is from the English edition of the original American "History of the Expedition" published in 1814. The map also shows, by dotted lines, the route Lewis and Clark took on foot from Chinook Point to Cape Disappointment and the ocean beach. This was prior to their crossing to the Oregon side where they established a winter camp.

Point. It is known, however, that the Chinook village was one of the favorite points of trade, and some of the earliest commercial salmon fishing on the Columbia was conducted by these traders in the vicinity of the settlement. The journals and reminiscences of these seamen occasionally mention Chinook Point, chiefly as a bearing point for anchorages or as a navigating mark.

Lewis and Clark at Chinook Point

On their way to the sea after their famous overland journey, Lewis and Clark reached the vicinity of Chinook Point in November, 1805. Prevented by severe storms from rounding Point Ellice, the expedition was forced to camp for several days on the rugged shore above that promontory. Informed by scouts that a beautiful sand beach lay a short distance downstream, the men pushed their way around Point Ellice in great haste on November 15. Passing the Chinook village, which was deserted at that season of the year, they went on a short distance and camped on the highest spot they could find along the marshy beach. Their maps and descriptions clearly show that this camp was at or very close to the present McGowan.

At daylight on November 18, William Clark set out from the camp with 11 companions to walk to the ocean. After following the beach for a distance which he estimated to have been about a mile, he came "to a point of rocks about 40 feet high, from the top of which the hill Side is open and assend (s) with a Steep assent to the tops of the mountains." A more succinct description of Chinook Point than this one in Clark's journal would be difficult to imagine. The projection appears on the maps prepared by the explorers, but it is not named. Patrick Gass, a member of the company, called it "Point Open-Slope" in his diary.

Clark and his companions crossed the present Fort Columbia site again on November 20, on their return to camp from Cape Disappointment. Five days later, after carving their names on nearby trees, the members of the expedition left for the south shore of the Columbia to find a satisfactory site for a winter camp.

Six years after Lewis and Clark another famous explorer visited Chinook Point. Having completed the first exploration of the main branch of the Columbia River, the North West Company's geographer, David Thompson, reached Astoria during the summer of 1811. On July 18, with several companions, he crossed to the Chinook village for a day of sight-seeing. After examining the Indian dwellings he climbed a nearby peak, which could have been none other than Scarboro Hill. "We went up a green hill," he wrote in his journal, "where we gratified ourselves with an extension (sic) view of the Oceon and the Coast South'd." On his map he designated Chinook Point as "Pt. Komkomle."

James A. Scarborough's Donation Land Claim

Although the main current of history appears to have passed by Chinook Point during the years of joint occupation of the Oregon Country by the United States and Great Britain, there was at least one person upon whom the inherent values and beauties of the spot were not lost. James Allan Scarborough was born in Ilford, County Essex, England, in 1805. He entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1829 and first crossed the bar of the Columbia in May, 1830, as second mate and boatswain of that firm's ill-fated *Isabella.* For the next 20 years he was continuously employed by the company on the Pacific Coast, serving as first mate of the *Lama* and the *Beaver* and as master of the famous schooner *Cadboro* and the *Mary Dare.*

Scarborough married Ann Elizabeth, a Chinook Indian, at Fort Vancouver on October 30, 1843. And it was evidently about the same time that he decided to establish a farm. The spot he chose was Chinook Point and the sunny, open slope of the hill behind it. In an

affidavit attached to his land papers, the captain later stated that he first went on the property December 1, 1843. Local tradition gives 1844 as the year of settlement, but the United States Land Office recognized May 1, 1846, as the official date of occupation.

At any rate, the farm was well established by 1848. During June of that year a visitor to the lower Columbia noted in his diary: "Capt. Scarborough has a fine clearing which runs up on to the hill. His Indian wife cultivates the land."

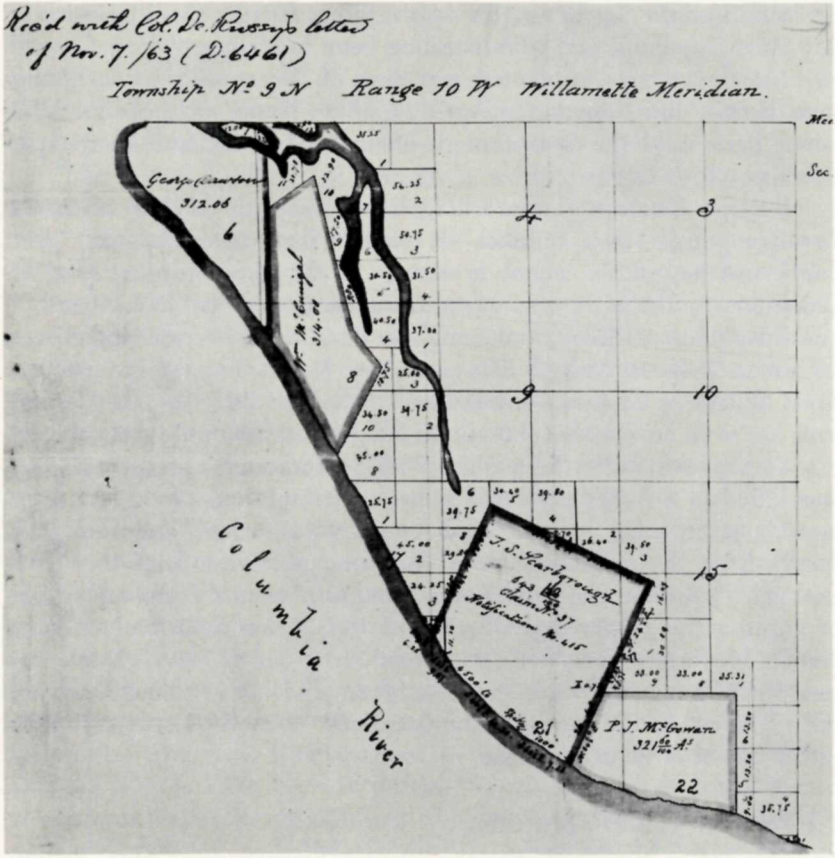
In 1850 Congress passed the Donation Land Law, which provided that a grant of 640 acres of land would be given to each married couple who fulfilled certain requirements. Under this law, James and Ann Scarborough filed for the land upon which they had built their home. As finally patented, the claim consisted of 643 acres. The property extended for about a mile along the north bank of the Columbia River and included all of Chinook Point and most of Scarboro Hill.

Captain Scarborough announced in July of 1850 that after 20 years in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company he was going to retire. That same month, evidently, he acted on his word and moved permanently to his claim, where he devoted himself to farming, to commercial salmon fishing, and to piloting mail steamers over the Columbia River bar. He soon won the respect of his neighbors, who long remembered him as a vociferous advocate of the "majesty of law." He was somewhat deaf and never hesitated to speak his mind freely—and loudly—whenever the occasion seemed to require it.

A visitor who crossed Scarborough's property in 1853 noted that the captain "had a fine farm, with excellent fruit trees, and a large herd of cattle." According to tradition, the family residence was on the lower slopes of the hill, about where Battery Ord stands today.

Scarborough was particularly fond of plants, and he set out many ornamental and useful trees and shrubs on his property. One old settler later recalled that "perhaps" the captain introduced the mission rose, as well as Shanghai chickens, into the lower Columbia region. Residents of the neighborhood became highly indignant, it is said, when the Army in 1897 cut down a beautiful hawthorn tree planted by Scarborough. Many hawthorns flourishing today in nearby communities are believed to have been started by cuttings from this well-known tree.

Ann Scarborough died in 1852, and two and a half years later, on February 4, 1855, the captain himself passed away quite suddenly. He died intestate, survived by two of his four sons. According to a seemingly well-authenticated story, Scarborough had a deep distrust of Americans. Shortly before his death he confided the hiding place of



—*Courtesy National Archives, Washington D. C.*

This map, showing the Scarborough donation land claim, the adjacent P. J. McGowan claim and others, was prepared by the War Department at the time the Army was negotiating for the purchase of Chinook Point in 1863.

his valuables to an Indian serving woman, telling her to disclose it only to an Englishman. True to her trust, the woman refused to divulge any information about the property to local authorities until some former "King George" men were called in to take charge of the estate. This circumstance gave rise to a rumor that a large treasure, "in gold ingots," was hidden on the property, and as late as 1932 people were still searching for it.

Scarborough was buried on his claim. A party digging for the supposed treasure in 1928 reported finding "the grave of an Indian chief." Probably the body was that of the captain.

Shortly after Scarborough's death, James Birnie, an old Hudson's Bay Company employee who had long been in charge of Fort George (Fort Astoria), was appointed guardian of the captain's two young sons, Edwin and Robert. On April 23, 1856, Birnie, on behalf of the minor heirs, sold the Scarborough Donation Land Claim to Rocque Ducheney for $1,250.

Rocque Ducheney was a long-time employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. For a number of years he had served as the "very polite and hospitable" agent in charge of the firm's trading post at Chinookville. His wife was Mary Rondeau, said to have been a granddaughter of Chief Comcomly. In later years she was sometimes known as "Princess Mary." She must have been a remarkable woman, since as late as 1899 her son-in-law insisted he had "to stand guard over her even now with a shotgun to keep away her numerous suitors."

Several years after he acquired the Scarborough claim, Ducheney was killed in a fight between a salmon packing company and a fishermen's group. He was survived by his wife and six children. The family lived at or near Chinookville, some distance from the Scarborough Donation Claim, and was "neither able nor disposed" to use or improve the property. By the end of 1863 it was described as being "untenable and unproductive." About that time Mary Ducheney married Solomon B. Preble. Seemingly she and her husband had very little interest in the land at Chinook Point and were in a receptive mood for an offer to purchase.

Columbia River Defenses

In 1845 it appeared that the United States and Great Britain might go to war over the Oregon Country, which had been open to settlement by the citizens of both countries under a joint occupation agreement. In order to be prepared for any eventuality, the British government sent Lieutenants Henry J. Warre and Mervyn Vavasour from Canada to make a military reconnaissance of the disputed area. The two officers examined the mouth of the Columbia during the winter of 1845-1846 to plan for its defense. They recommended Cape Disappointment and Tongue Point as sites for permanent batteries. Chinook Point was among the locations they believed might serve "for temporary purposes." As matters developed, the international controversy was settled by treaty during 1846, and the Oregon Country south of the 49th parallel became United States territory.

Soon after the close of the Mexican War, the United States took measures for the defense of the vast new territory acquired in the

West as a result of that conflict and of the Oregon Treaty of 1846. Boards of engineers were sent to the Pacific Coast to select sites for fortifications. One result of such surveys was an executive order in 1852 setting aside lands on Cape Disappointment and Point Adams, at the mouth of the Columbia River, for military purposes.

The actual building of defensive works proved to be quite a different matter. The lack of adequate appropriations caused delay after delay. Finally, on February 20, 1862, Congress appropriated $100,000 to begin permanent defensive works at the mouth of the Columbia. It is sometimes said that fear of Confederate cruisers, particularly the *Alabama*, induced the War Department to hurry the building of these forts, but correspondence of the time proves that on the part of the officers in the Northwest, at least, a "foreign war" was the threat which loomed largest on the horizon.

During the summer of 1862 officers of the Corps of Engineers were sent to the mouth of the river to prepare a plan for the defenses. They selected Cape Disappointment, Point Ellen (near Point Adams on the south shore of the Columbia), and Chinook Point as the three most suitable sites for permanent fortifications, and their recommendations were sent to Washington for approval.

Meanwhile, the War Department authorized Colonel Rene Edward de Russy, chief Engineer officer at San Francisco, to proceed with the construction of "temporary" defenses at the entrance to the Columbia. This task was assigned to Captain George Henry Elliot, and on July 4, 1863, he was ordered to go at once to the scene of operations. Cape Disappointment was considered the most important defensive position and had the further advantage of being already owned by the Government. The first works, therefore, were to be constructed there. Colonel de Russy proceeded with plans to purchase the sites on Point Ellen and Chinook Point. As it turned out, it was decided to erect the second set of fortifications not on Point Ellen but on Point Adams, where the Government already owned some land and where additional property was acquired in August, 1863. The problem of obtaining the site for the third fort was not solved so promptly.

Purchase of Scarborough Claim

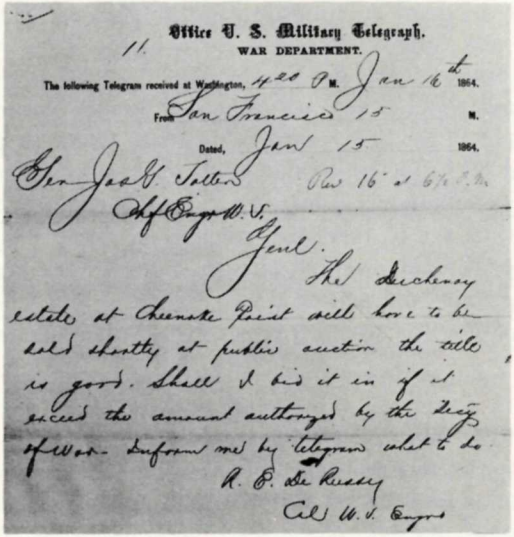
Colonel de Russy opened negotiations with the heirs of Rocque Ducheney during the summer of 1863 for the purchase of the Chinook Point property, but he found himself blocked by legal questions related to the settlement of the Ducheney estate and by Mrs. Ducheney's

disinclination to settle on a price. Finally, the local probate court gave permission for the sale, and on March 7, 1864, at a public auction conducted in Chinookville, Captain Elliot purchased the entire Scarborough claim on behalf of the United States for $2,000. At the same time and for an additional $1,000, Mary Ducheney and her newly acquired second husband, Solomon B. Preble, signed a quit-claim deed renouncing all their interest in the property.

The deed of transfer was signed on May 24, 1864, but payment could not be made without the prior approval of the Secretary of War. This requirement caused a delay of about two years, and it was not until March 13, 1867, that the transaction was finally completed and the deed recorded.

Chinook Point Reservation, 1864-1896

In the meantime, the Engineers concentrated their efforts on completing the works already started nearer the river's mouth. The defenses at Cape Disappointment were turned over to garrison troops in April, 1864; and one year later Fort Stevens, on Point Adams, Oregon, was ready for occupancy by line forces. Colonel de Russy had planned to move his construction equipment from Point Adams to Chinook Point, but the long delay in completing the Scarborough claim purchase caused an indefinite postponement of the work.



Office U. S. Military Telegraph.
WAR DEPARTMENT.

The following Telegram received at Washington, 4:20 P. M. Jan 16th 1864.
From San Francisco 15 M.
Dated, Jan 15 1864.

Gen Jas B. Fry
Asst Engr U.S.

Genl.

The Ducheney estate at Cheenoke Point will have to be sold shortly at public auction the title is good. Shall I bid it in if it exceed the amount authorized by the Sec of War. Inform me by telegram what to do

R. P. De Russy
Col U.S. Engrs

Telegram dated 1864 asking permission to bid on the "Duchenay estate at Cheenoke Point" which the Army wanted for a fort site.

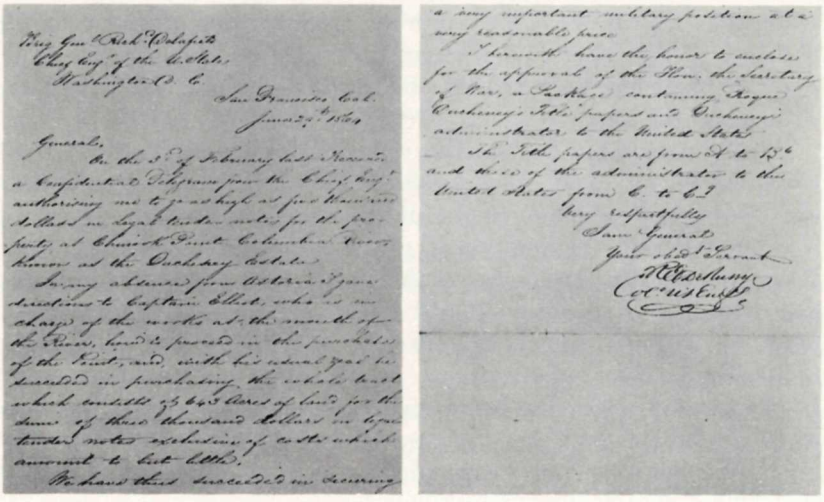
—*Courtesy, The National Archives, Washington, D. C.*

By the time the title was settled, the War Department evidently had changed its mind concerning the urgency of the need for fortifications on Chinook Point, for apparently no further action was taken upon the subject until about 1895. For three decades the Scarborough claim lay largely deserted and neglected. A very loose watch was kept over it by the troops at Cape Disappointment and Fort Stevens.

In 1869 the military authorities learned that squatters were occupying the Chinook Point reservation, and the commander at Cape Disappointment was ordered to evict them. The principal squatter was found to be Mary, the widow of Rocque Ducheney. Her second husband had died, and in June, 1867, she had married John C. Kelly, a fisherman. The officer in charge at Cape Disappointment reported that the Kellys "still cling to this land as home, living there during the fishing season, and when they cannot find any other place."

Two years later Kelly declined an opportunity to occupy the land under an agreement with the Government. He had by then left the tract and was living elsewhere. "The Scarborough claim is now unoccupied," reported the commander of Fort Stevens in October, 1871. During the next year the property was leased to a nearby resident for two years at an annual rental of one dollar.

This letter dated June 29, 1864, from Col. R. E. de Russy to Brig. Gen. Richard Dalafieto, chief of engineers, reports, somewhat exultantly, that the Army had been able to buy the Scarborough claim of 643 acres at Chinook Point for $3,000. De Russy had been authorized to bid as high as $5,000 for the land.



Brig Gen'l Richd Delafield
Chief Engr of the U. States
Washington D. C.

San Francisco, Cal.
June 29th 1864

General,

On the 3rd of February last I received a confidential Telegram from the Chief Engr authorizing me to go as high as five thousand dollars in Legal Tender notes for the property at Chinook Point Columbia River known as the Ducheney Estate.

Having absented from Astoria I gave instructions to Captain Elliot, who is in charge of the works at the mouth of the River, how to proceed in the purchase of the Point, and with his usual zeal he succeeded in purchasing the whole tract which contains 643 Acres of land for the sum of three thousand Dollars in legal tender notes, exclusive of costs which amount to but little.

We have thus succeeded in securing a very important military position at a very reasonable price.

I herewith have the honor to enclose for the approval of the Hon. the Secretary of War, a Package containing Rocque Ducheney's Title papers and Ducheney's administrator to the United States.

No. 1 Title papers are from 1 to 15 and those of the administrator to the United States from 6 to 13

Very respectfully
Your General
Obdt Servant
R E de Russy
Col. U.S. Engrs

Guns for Chinook Point, 1896-1900

After letting the forts at the mouth of the Columbia lie neglected and practically abandoned for many years, the War Department, about 1895, determined to modernize and strengthen them. Among other major features, the plans called for the installation of facilities for mining the river entrance and for the erection of the long-contemplated batteries at Chinook Point. As a result, an intensive construction program was carried out at Fort Stevens, at Fort Canby (on Cape Disappointment), and at Chinook Point during the period from about 1896 to about 1904. When the project was completed, the fortifications at the entrance to the Columbia had assumed approximately the form they maintained until World War II.

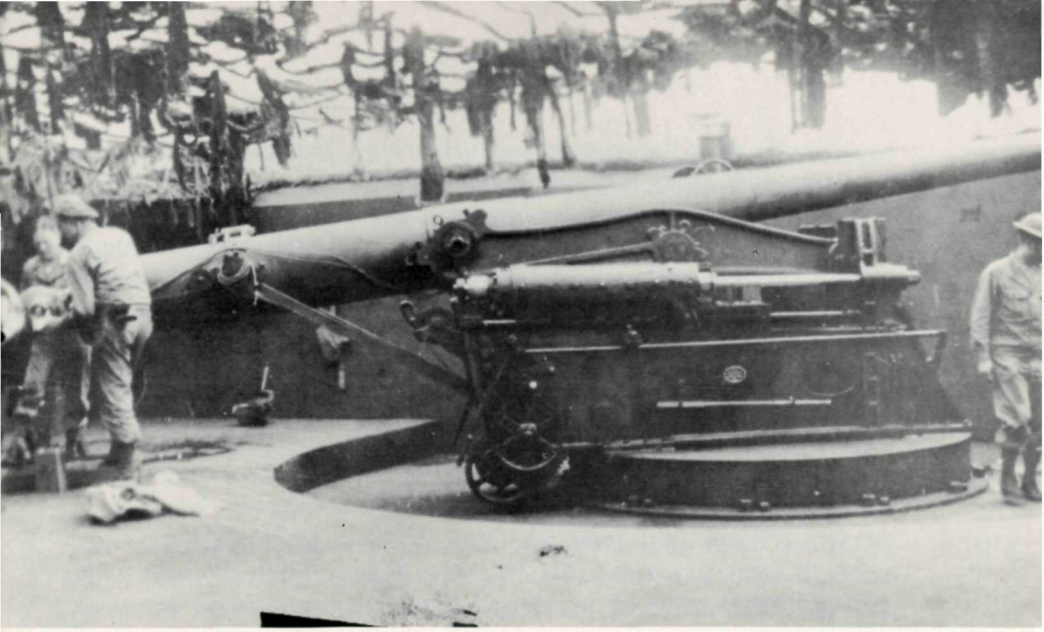
The first project authorized for Chinook Point was an 8-inch gun battery. Money was appropriated for this purpose on June 6, 1896; and plans were drawn during the fall of that year. In November a concrete mining casemate was added to the Chinook Point project.

Before the construction of the fortifications could begin, a wharf, cement plant, railroad, quarters for the work crews, offices, and other preliminary structures had to be erected.

Excavation for a battery of two guns was started during March, 1897, on the slope of Scarboro Hill at an elevation of about 100 feet. The major concrete work was finished in September. The rock for the concrete was taken from Coffin Rock, near the mouth of the Cowlitz River, and floated down the Columbia on barges. By April 25, 1898, two 8-inch rifles with disappearing carriages, L. F. Model 1896, were mounted. A third emplacement, for one 8-inch rifle, was started in August, 1897, and completed in May, 1898. It stood a short distance southeast of the other two emplacements. Its gun was on hand by June 30, 1898, but the experimental carriage, Model 1894, had not yet reached the site.

This line of three 8-inch rifles was later known as "Battery Ord." It was named for Lieut. Jules Garesche Ord, 6th U. S. Infantry, who was killed in action at San Juan Hill in Cuba, July 1, 1898. According to family tradition, he stopped to give a wounded Spainard a drink of water, and the Spaniard shot him. After the armament of this battery was removed during World War I, the southern emplacement was filled with dirt. Its remains may be seen today near the former commanding officer's quarters.

By July 16, 1898, the work contemplated in the first allotments for Chinook Point had been finished; and on that day the Engineers turned the emplacements, the ordnance, and the concrete mining



One of the eight-inch disappearing guns which guarded the entrance ot the Columbia River at Fort Columbia from 1896 through World War II.

casemate over to the commander of Fort Stevens. Eleven men of Company M, 3rd Artillery, were sent over from the latter post on July 15, 1898, to guard the new fortifications. They were the first troops to staff the future Fort Columbia. They were quartered in the bunk house and carpenter shop left by the construction crews.

Additional fortifications were built on Chinook Point during the next two years. Battery Crenshaw, consisting of three 3-inch rapid-fire guns, was constructed low on the south side of the point. It was turned over to the Artillery on June 28, 1900. Almost adjoining it to the northwest was Battery Murphy, completed on June 29, 1900. It contained two 6-inch, disappearing-type guns.

Garrison Housing, 1899-1906

Meanwhile, preparations were being made to garrison the new post. In order to assure an adequate water supply, 86 additional acres adjoining the northeast corner of the Scarborough claim were acquired in 1899. The principal buildings needed to house a garrison were erected on the hillside above the batteries. Completed by the end of 1902, these structures included a large barracks, one single and one double set of officers' quarters, one double set of non-commissioned officers' quarters, a hospital, a guard house, and an administration building. All were of frame construction.

Shortly after the completion of this work, the post was inspected by Army authorities. The new buildings, reported the Inspector General, were "complete and commodious," but he noted the absence of recreational facilities, so important in an isolated and uneventful station. This shortcoming was partially remedied by the addition of a gymnasium in 1906.

Another important step in the development of the new post was the assignment of a name. Formerly known simply as "Chinook Point," the new installation, by order of the President, was officially designated "Fort Columbia" on July 13, 1899.

Fort Columbia, 1903-1939

From 1898 until 1903 only a small caretaker detachment was maintained at Fort Columbia. The first regular garrison arrived June 23, 1903. It consisted of one officer and 23 men of the 33rd Company, Coast Artillery, from Fort Canby, Washington. The rest of the company followed on June 30; and the next day, July 1, 1903, the headquarters of the new post were officially established. The first commanding officer was Captain Brooke Payne.

Officers row at Fort Columbia around 1910 when the fir trees along either side of the street were still small. Barracks (now museum) at left. Commanding officer's house at right.

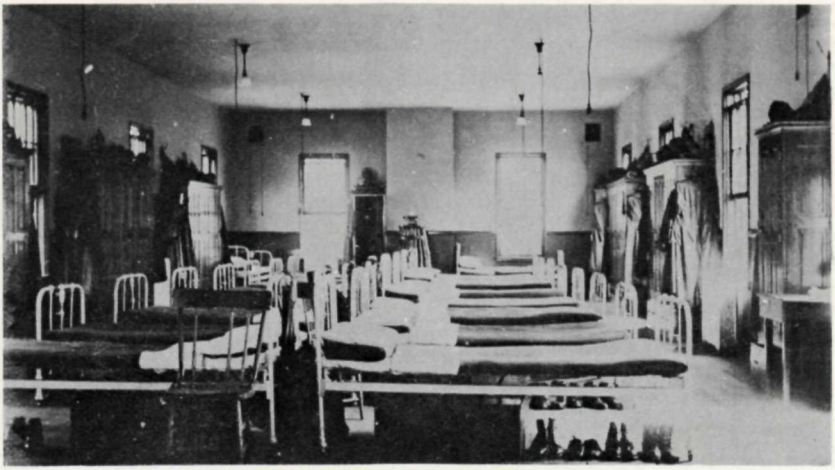
Until World War I the garrison at Fort Columbia generally numbered about four officers and 100 men. The outbreak of hostilities in 1917 resulted in a considerable expansion of the forces stationed at the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia. The Coast Artillery units of the Oregon National Guard were mobilized there. Fort Columbia shared in the increased activity, and its facilities were renovated and

modernized. However, the war actually brought about a decrease in its defensive strength, since its three 8-inch guns were removed for service on railroad mounts overseas.

Following World War I the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia were reduced to a state of almost complete inactivity. Only one company was maintained at Fort Stevens in Oregon, and from it small caretaker details were drawn for Fort Canby and Fort Columbia. For a number of years one sergeant and one or two other enlisted men constituted the sole force at these latter posts, and their duties were not arduous. It is reported that they had plenty of time to keep cows and sell milk to neighboring fishermen.

General Douglas MacArthur recommended "partial disposal" of Fort Columbia during a Government economy drive in 1931, but no action was taken. The quiet of the post was broken only for about two weeks each summer, when National Guard units manned Battery Murphy for training purposes.

Interior of main barracks (museum building) showing arrangement of beds and lockers in large second floor room.



Fort Columbia in World War II

Unsettled world conditions resulted in increased War Department appropriations in 1939, and the garrison at Fort Stevens, headquarters of the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia, was increased. On September 16, 1940, the 249th Coast Artillery Regiment of the Oregon National Guard was ordered into active service and, after a period of training,

was employed to further strengthen the Columbia River defenses. Battery B, 249th Coast Artillery, was sent to Fort Canby on February 21, 1941, and a detachment from that unit took over guard duty at Fort Columbia. About the same time construction of barracks to house additional troops at Fort Columbia was begun, and the old buildings of 1902 vintage were rehabilitated.

On March 17, 1941, Battery D, 249th Coast Artillery, went to Fort Columbia from Fort Stevens, thus activating the post. Battery Murphy was activated on the same day. In September Battery D was replaced by Battery C, 18th Coast Artillery. This unit was at the post on December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked the United States.

The declaration of war greatly increased military activity in the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia. Among other measures, the mine fields at the river entrance were put in a state of readiness. Improvements made in the mine control equipment at Fort Columbia during the war included a new gas-proof and splinter-proof casemate and modern mine control communication facilities.

Long before World War II the War Department realized that the armament of the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia was out-moded, and planning boards had worked out projects for the installation of weapons capable of coping with modern naval craft. Under the impetus of war, these plans were put into effect.

Fort Columbia served as a summer time National Guard encampment for many years. Here a group of Guardsmen are shown camped, around 1912, behind Battery Ord with barracks and officers' houses in the background.

Picture at the dedication of Fort Columbia State Park on June 17, 1951, when a group of Pacific County young people staged a pageant, using the platform of Battery Ord for a stage.

A field day was held at Fort Columbia shortly after the State Parks Commission took over the property and numerous Pacific County men helped clean up the long deserted area. Here three workers are shown digging out Battery Crenshaw. Both photos on this page by J. M. McClelland Jr., vice chairman of the Parks Commission, who directed the planning and initial development of Fort Columbia Historical State Park.

At Fort Columbia the principal result of this program was the installation of Battery 246 on Scarboro Hill between Battery Murphy and Battery Ord. It was to consist of two 6-inch, long-range, rapid-fire rifles mounted on barbette carriages. Begun in 1942, this battery was never completed. In connection with these improved defenses, a detached tract of 40 acres was added to the Fort Columbia Military Reservation in 1941.

Throughout its history Fort Columbia never fired a shot "in anger." No events outside the normal routine of training and garrison life appear to have occurred, except upon the night of June 21, 1942. About midnight on that day a Japanese submarine fired nine shells which fell harmlessly at Fort Stevens, Oregon. This event has been termed the only bombardment by a foreign craft of a fortification within the continental limits of the United States since the War of 1812. Observers at Fort Columbia saw the flashes and estimated the range of the enemy, but the fire was not returned. It was later explained that the submarine kept out of range of the armament then existing in the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia.

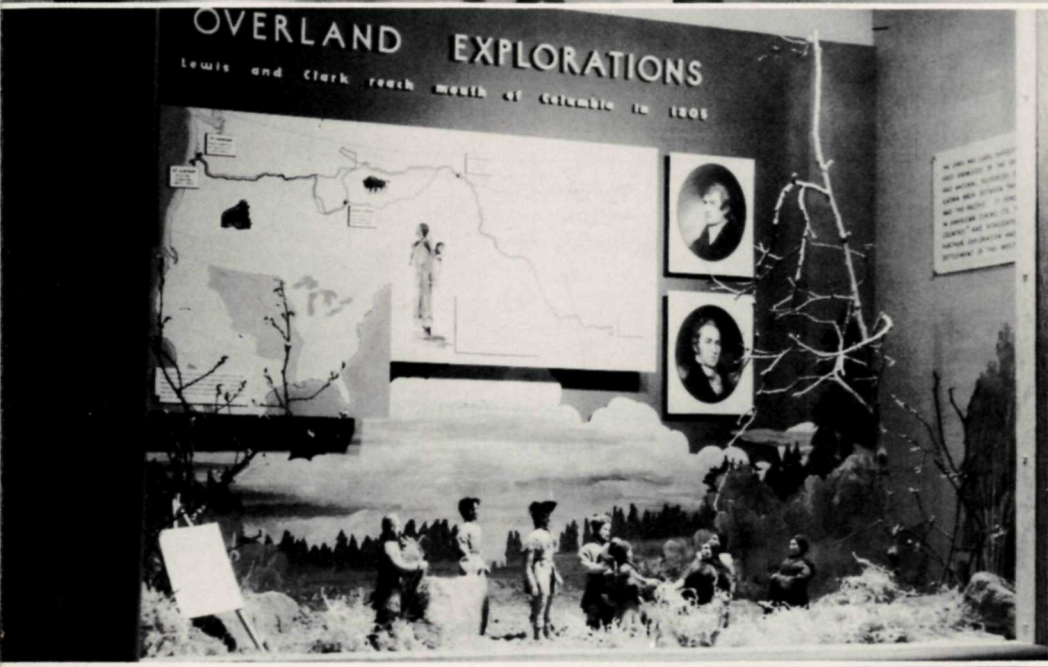
By July 7, 1945, the war had progressed so favorably that the removal of the Columbia River mine field was ordered. Several batteries were inactivated about the same time, and the garrisons of the forts were reduced.

Abandoned by Army — Becomes State Park

On March 28, 1947, the three forts of the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia were listed as surplus by the War Department. Fort Columbia was stripped of its armament, and on March 31, 1948, it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the War Assets Administration. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission applied for the property for historical monument purposes on August 26, 1948. After an investigation by the National Park Service, the property was determined to be suitable for use as an historical monument, and on May 12, 1950, a major portion of the reservation was transferred to the State of Washington. A ceremony of dedication was held June 17, 1951, and the old military post became Fort Columbia Historical State Park.

ABOVE PHOTO: The Regional History room of the Fort Columbia Museum.

LOWER PHOTOS: Exhibit on the Lewis and Clark expedition is one of many such displays portraying the history of the area. Dioramas such as the one shown on this page assist in "telling the story."


OVERLAND EXPLORATIONS
Lewis and Clark reach mouth of Columbia in 1805

PUBLICATIONS ON OTHER HISTORICAL AND GEOLOGICAL AREAS WITHIN THE STATE PARK SYSTEM

J. M. McClelland Jr., *Lewis and Clark in the Fort Columbia Area,* The Tribune Press, Ilwaco, Washington, 1955.

C. Frank Brockman, *The Dry Falls, Compared With the Famous Waterfalls of the World,* Longview Publishing Co., Longview, Washington, 1953.

C. Frank Brockman, *The Story of the Petrified Forest,* North Pacific Bank Note Company, Tacoma, Washington, 1952.

Albert Culverwell, *Stronghold in the Yakima Country,* The Republic Press, Yakima, Washington, 1957.


Pacific Ocean
STATE PARK
McCLEARY
OLYMPIA
LAKE SYLVIA STATE PARK
ELMA
TUMWATER
ABERDEEN
MONTESANO
Grays Harbor
HOQUIAM
MILLERSYLVANIA STATE PARK
Westport
TWIN HARBORS STATE PARK
TENIN
CENTRALIA
RAYMOND
BUSH PACIFIC PIONEER STATE PARK
SOUTH BEND
RAINBOW FALLS STATE PARK
CHEHALIS
ONAL
PE ELL
Willapa Bay
Ocean Park
WINLOCK
TOLED
Long Beach
Seaview
ILWACO
Naselle
Chinook
FORT COLUMBIA STATE PARK
Megler
Columbia River
Skamokawa
CASTLE ROCK
Cathlamet
ASTORIA
WARRENTON
LONGVIEW
KELSO
RAINIER
KAL
SEASIDE
VERNONIA
ST HELENS
HILLSBORO
FOREST GROVE
BEAVERTON
N