

MASTER PLAN
FOR PRESERVATION AND USE
OF
FORT CLATSOP NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Volume III, General Park Information
Section D, Natural History and Historical Background

Prepared by: (SGD) BURNBY M. BELL Date JUL 7 1961
Name

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ACCEPTED BY: _____ Date JUL 12 1961
Superintendent

July 12, 1961

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Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Four

From: Superintendent, Fort Clatsop

Subject: Master Plan Narrative, Volume III, Section D, Fort Clatsop

Revised draft of Master Plan narrative covering Natural History and Historical Background of Fort Clatsop National Memorial as requested in Mr. Maier's memorandum of June 1 is attached in triplicate.

Also attached is the copy of the old Fort Donelson Museum Prospectus furnished with Mr. Gale's memorandum of June 15.

(SGD) CHARLES L. PETERSON
Charles L. Peterson
Superintendent

Attachments (2)

In duplicate

VOLUME III

General Park Information

Section D - Natural History and Historical Background.

1. Natural History.

Clark's Diary - December 7, 1805 - "The situation is in the center of as we conceive a hunting country * * on a rise about 30 feet higher than the high tide level and thickly covered with lofty pine." Thus was the first description of the site selected by the explorers for their winter quarters put on record, and there has been little basic change over the years.

The immediate area of the fort site was cleared and some of it farmed, starting about 1850, but a vigorous second growth has grown up. This is chiefly Sitka spruce, with some Western hemlock, and a little Douglas fir and Western red cedar. All of these species are suitable for reforestation planting which will be necessary to restore the historic wilderness scene where needed. The alder growth does not require stimulation. Some wild crabapple and willows grow on the banks of the Lewis and Clark River. Sword ferns and elk-brake flourish in the wooded areas, with bracken in the open areas. Salal, huckleberry and salmonberry bushes, evergreen and wild blackberry vines are common, and there are excellent opportunities for berry picking in the summer.

The abundance of elk in the lowlands along the river was a prime factor in the decision of the commanders to locate here, and the Roosevelt elk, Columbia Blacktail deer and occasionally black bear are still

Natural History (cont'd)

fairly numerous in the vicinity at certain times of the year. Small animals such as squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, muskrat and mountain beaver are common. There are some native grouse and pheasant, many song birds, some wading birds and a plentiful supply of migratory waterfowl. None of these will be affected by the development, and it is unlikely that deer, elk or bear will be hampered in their wanderings into the Memorial area by the 4-foot high barbed wire fence which will enclose it. The fence is designed to keep out domestic animals such as cattle and horses, as well as to delineate the boundaries. No practical purpose would be served in attempting to introduce any wild game species, due to the smallness of the area.

The Memorial is bisected by the Lewis and Clark River, some 300 feet wide and navigable by small craft up to the size of tugs, which are used to haul booms of logs. Small pleasure craft use the waterway in limited numbers during the summer. There is no landing facility in the vicinity.

An area of some 21 acres on the east bank of the river has been acquired to preserve the undeveloped, historic scene. It is mostly tide-land meadow, protected by a dike, on which grazing cattle keep down the vegetation, with a river-bank fringe of willows, brush and small Sitka spruce, common to both sides of the river. No visitor access is planned for this area.

2. History

The Lewis and Clark party completed their westward pathfinding on arrival at the shores of the Pacific on the north side of the Columbia, November 14, 1805. Desiring to find a more sheltered area where the hunting was better, they examined the south shore of the river, and three weeks later found a suitable location for their winter quarters. The locale was two miles up a small stream now called the Lewis and Clerk River, where they built a small log fort and cabins, which they completed just before New Years Day, 1806, and named Fort Clatsop, after the friendly local Indian tribe.

Here they awaited the coming of spring, and the leaders engaged in map-making, they reviewed and worked on their journals, assessed the geography of the country they had explored, and determined on their return course and additional exploration. Hunting, salt-making, local exploration and equipment and clothing repair kept the personnel busy. On March 23, 1806, they presented the fort and its furnishings to Chief Comowool (Coboway) of the Clatsops and began their return trip.

In a few years the fort fell into ruin, but the site has been an object of interest to travellers and sight-seers beginning with the arrival of the Astorians in 1811, through the succeeding years.

The site was included in a donation land claim in 1850, and shortly thereafter the remains of the fort were obliterated by farming and clearing operations. The last remaining foundation log was pointed out to Mr. Harlan C. Smith, now of Santa Cruz, California, by

History (cont'd)

his mother, in the 1870's. She in turn had been shown the original site by her mother, the wife of Franklin Shane, who came to live there in 1852, when remnants of the original fort were still in evidence. Subsequently, in 1899 and 1900, identification of the site was made by Olin Wheeler, then compiling his "Trail of Lewis and Clark", and the Oregon Historical Society, which acquired and preserved the site area in 1901. Identification was based chiefly on the memory and depositions of Carlos Shane, resident there in 1851, and Preston Gillette, a neighbor, who had seen the remains of the fort in 1853. The site was marked by stakes, but unfortunately no survey notes were made, and over the years, the exact location became a matter of some conjecture, altho the general area was always accepted as the authentic one.

In 1912 the Oregon Historical Society improved and marked the accepted version of the site, and a bronze plaque was erected in 1928. Little was done in the way of further recognition until 1948, when the Clatsop County Historical Society requested the services of a National Park Service archeologist, whose report is on record. (See Archeology). As a result of a community effort in 1954-5, the area was cleared of brush and undergrowth, and a replica of the original structure, based on the Clark ground plan, was constructed, and dedicated on the occasion of the Lewis and Clark Sesqui-Centennial observance in August, 1955. United States Senator Richard L.

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History (cont'd)

Neuberger of Oregon became interested in making the area a National Memorial, with the result that the Fort Clatsop National Memorial bill was signed by the President May 29, 1958.

The journey of Lewis and Clark and their companions from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean and back again during 1804-6 is one of the best known and most dramatic events in the history of the United States, and one of the most significant. The American fur trade was directly and immediately stimulated to contest the exploitation of that resource with the British companies, with the resultant knowledge of the vast empire of northwest America, and consequent settling of the Oregon Territory by United States citizens. The ability, tact and calm determination of the two leaders has inspired generations of Americans and excited their imagination.

The over-all interpretive program is aimed at telling this story that belongs to history, and fortunately, several members of the expedition left written records in the form of diaries which can be studied and delineated in the Visitor Center display and in the field exhibits, in association with the appraisal of the expeditions' origination and accomplishments in the light of history.

Completed developments at the Memorial will provide a sequence pattern for visitor use. A single park entry will enable the visitor to learn the story at the Visitor Center before proceeding on foot to the field exhibits delineating the stay at Fort Clatsop

History (cont'd)

during the winter of 1805-6. The scene will be restored as authentically as possible, with the completion and furnishing of the Fort replica, as planned and approved in the Historic Structures Report and Furnishing Plan. This will serve as a "house museum" to show the conditions under which the members of the expedition lived and worked while here. An interpretive sign will give the basic information about the fort its elf, and an Audio repeating station will be installed to inform visitors when it is not feasible to have an interpreter on duty in the fort.

The self-guiding trails in the area, with interpretive signs, will be the "Trail to the Spring" (from the rear gate of the fort), a section of the "Trail to the Coast", and the "Trail to the Canoe Landing and Storage". At the latter site, an authentic dug-out canoe such as made by the expedition members, will be on display.

As a part of the Visitor Center, a small auditorium seating forty will provide facilities for audio-visual programs during inclement weather or when appropriate to tell the Lewis and Clark story to visiting groups, such as school classes.

The delineation of the story at the Visitor Center will be accomplished by use of cased exhibits, panels, a diorama and accompanying labels. The series will explain the background factors, the geo-political picture, the state of geographical knowledge of the Pacific Northwest at the time, the highlights of the expedition itself, the stay at Fort Clatsop, its final results and significance.

History (cont'd)

Dramatic presentation will make it all come alive to the visitor, whether or not they be students of history.

Museum exhibit subjects will consist of the following, with possible title changes:

1. Fort Clatsop National Memorial

Purpose: To relate the visitor and what he already knows, to the story which is to be told by the museum exhibits. Very often the visitor will only know that he is visiting a national memorial. This exhibit must tell him that the area relates to Lewis and Clark and that it has long been considered of historical importance. In other words, the exhibit related the present to the past, the known to the unknown.

2. The Great Unknown

Purpose: To explain how little was known of the Upper Missouri area and the interior of the Pacific Northwest prior to Lewis and Clark, and to show how and why Jefferson determined to penetrate this mystery.

3. Preparation

Purpose: To explain the leadership, personnel, and equipment of the expedition; to make clear that it was an official, military enterprise.

4. Expedition On Its Way

Purpose: To relate the progress and the trials of the exped-

History (cont'd)

ition up to and including the stay at Fort Mandan.

5. Up the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains

Purpose: To recount the journey by water up the Missouri and its tributaries to the head of navigation; to bring out the importance of the decision made at the forks of the Missouri; to make clear the importance of the meeting with the Shoshones and the obtaining of horses (Include map of this section of the route).

6. Across the Mountains to the Columbia

Purpose: To recount the story of the meeting with the Flatheads and the difficult traverse of the Lolo Trail (Include map of this section of the route). Should bring out the long-range results of the friendly relations with the Indians.

7. Navigating the Columbia

Purpose: To make clear the great contribution to geographical knowledge accomplished by their expedition by canoe voyage down the Columbia.

8. The Pacific Ocean is Reached

Purpose: To make clear that reaching the Pacific was considered by the explorers to be their chief goal; significance of achievement.

9. Building Fort Clatsop

Purpose: To explain selection of the site and to explain how much, or how little, is really known about the physical structure of the fort.

History (cont'd)

10. Winter at Fort Clatsop, I

Purpose: To explain the out-of-fort activities of the party at Fort Clatsop; hunting, exploration, trail to the coast, salt making; emphasis to be on hardships encountered.

11. Winter at Fort Clatsop, II

Purpose: Diorama of the whale episode at Ecola to illustrate interest of Lewis and Clark in natural and scientific phenomena and in exploration.

12. Winter at Fort Clatsop, III

Purpose: To explain the daily routine of life at Fort Clatsop, with emphasis on the work accomplished by Lewis and Clark in the fields of mapping, preparing journals, and collecting scientific information.

13. Homeward Journey

Purpose: To make clear the homeward route and the significance of the exploration made.

14. The Aftermath

Purpose: To show what happened to the members of the expedition in later years and to show to what extent the records of the expedition were made public.

15. The Results

Purpose: To make clear the extent of the results, and the significance of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

An authentic Indian canoe of the type used locally will be given special display space in the patio of the Visitor Center.

3. Archeology

The general problem facing the archeologists who have excavated in the area in search of physical evidence of the original fort structure is the nature of the building itself. All logs except the pickets between the two rows of cabins were presumably above ground. Even the pickets were divided by gates at both ends, so there would be actually a maximum of some 15 feet of picket ends 50 feet apart to be found. Assuming that they might be originally buried in the ground as much as two to three feet, such evidence should still be findable, altho it must be remembered that this land was cleared and plowed and re-worked as farm land beginning in 1851.

Inasmuch as the very smallest and most inconsequential piece of metal constituted a valuable trade item to the Indians here and along the return route, nothing of this nature was left, and even the finding of the refuse dump would probably yield but meagre information.

In 1948 Louis Caywood, archeologist for the National Park Service, then on staff of Region Four, spent a week in excavating in the area, with resultant evidence of human occupation such as fire pits, burned stones, animal bones. His work was mostly in the area northeast of the present replica.

In December 1956, April 1957 and again in June 1961, Paul J.F. Schumacher, Region Four Archeologist, resumed the search for physical evidence of the fort. He did extensive trenching to the south, west and northwest of the replica, covering nearly an acre. In all, he

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Archeology (cont'd)

found some 24 fire-pits, scattered over the area at depths from one to 3 feet, but they had no special pattern. They might have been the campfires of the expedition while they built the fort, or the camp fires of natives. Other items found were pieces of crockery, hardware, nails and bricks, apparently from the old Smith residence, (built in 1872) or the Shane house (1851).

Further archeological search will be made when work is done on the fort replica. Before flooring is put in, excavation will be performed under the rooms of the cabins and in the parade ground. Also, when the pending construction of sewer and water lines are made to the south and west of the replica, further search will be made.

4. Status of Research.

The archeological research conducted by Paul Schumacher during period June 26-30, 1961, has not yet been documented. The Archeological Base Map will be completed after final search under the rooms of the fort replica has been made, as well as in the areas south and west of the replica, which will be done concurrently with construction work now projected.

Research on types of armament, equipment and clothing; the fort structure and furnishings has been continuous during the past year and will be carried on. All the primary sources concerning and written by members of the expedition are in constant use, as well as information of contemporary authority for authentication. Correspondence is constantly carried on with both institutions and individuals who may have

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Status of Research (cont'd)

valuable information or specimens of Lewis and Clark provenance.

5. Research Accomplished.

Archeological research so far accomplished is contained in "The Exploratory Excavation of Fort Clatsop", by Louis R. Caywood - Oregon Historical Quarterly, XLIX, September, 1948, 208; "Archeological Field Notes, Fort Clatsop, Astoria, Oregon" by Paul J.F. Schumacher, Archeologist, Region Four - Jan 23, 1957, Revised May 28, 1957. (Research of 6/26-30/1961 not yet compiled).

On the history of the area: The first serious attempt to identify the site was made by Olin D. Wheeler, in 1899, for his book "The Trail of Lewis and Clark, 1804-1904" (2 volumes, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904). He was completely satisfied with the identification of the present general area from the testimony of local historians and tradition. The Oregon Historical Society confirmed his opinion through more extensive research the following year and two living witnesses of the original fort remains directed placing of wooden stakes, but unfortunately the locale was not tied in with a survey point. (Proceedings of the Oregon Historical Society - 1900, 20,21.) (Oregon Historical Society Scrapbook, 2, page 42).

A very thorough treatise on the history of the site and buildings is contained in "Suggested Historical Area Report, Fort Clatsop Site, Oregon" by John A. Hussey, Regional Historian, NPS, Region Four, April 10, 1957. A less detailed study is contained in "Historic Building

Research Accomplished (cont'd)

Report and Furnishing Plan, Fort Clatsop" - Carl P. Russell, 1960, (under contract to NPS, Region Four).

Mr. Harlan C. Smith of Santa Cruz, California, resident on the Fort Clatsop site from 1872 to 1880, provided considerable information from a remarkable memory, and his story was taken down by tape recording and transcribed for the record on July 6, 1957; Dr. John Hussey and Mr. Paul Schumacher of Region Four conducted the interview. Copy is on file at Region Four headquarters.

6. Research Needed.

Aside from the pending further archeological research (see Archeology, page 12) there are no major projects considered necessary to complete knowledge of the Memorial area.

Bibliography to Accompany Analysis of Park Story (History)

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