



Fort Vancouver
National Historic Site

2021

Annual Report



CONNECT PRESERVE PARTNER INSPIRE





Like 2020 before it, 2021 was a year full of challenges. Still, as the COVID-19 pandemic persisted, our staff, volunteers, and partners came together to provide educational opportunities both at the park and online. Huge strides were made in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of several park buildings. New exhibits and public programs inspired the public to connect with our park's many fascinating stories and resources. I am so proud of the work we have done this year, and I am happy to share it with you in this year's annual report.

One of our focuses this year, which you will read more about in this report, was accessibility. We are dedicated to making sure that our national park is welcoming and accessible to all of our visitors. This year, two projects - an accessible virtual tour produced as part of the local Mobility Matters conference and the new audio description of our park brochure - and partnerships with Portland State University and the Washington State School for the Blind helped us to achieve those goals. Our park was also made more accessible and inviting through the successful creation of new parking areas, and the launch of rehabilitation projects targeting historic buildings in Vancouver Barracks.

While we work to make our park more accessible, we are also working to make the stories we tell more inclusive and relevant to our visitors. This year we received a new Women's History Resource Guide through a National Park Foundation Grant, and we are in the final stages of receiving a Traditional Use Study and Reindigenization Plan. These documents will help guide staff and volunteers as they share the important stories of this site.

I am excited to share with you our wonderful accomplishments over the last year, and our vision for the future of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy A. Fortmann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Fortmann, Superintendent
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site



NPS Photo

Connect

Throughout the pandemic, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site has provided an excellent place for people in our community to connect with the outdoors, with history, and with each other.

Beginning in fall 2021, we introduced a virtual field trip program that reached students from across the country. This program included videos, classroom activities, and the opportunity for a live virtual session with a park ranger.

Over the summer we also introduced a new outdoor exhibit, website, and walking tours focusing on the 1880s at Vancouver Barracks. This suite of resources introduced visitors to the stories of Chinese workers, enlisted men, laundresses, and Indigenous peoples incarcerated at Vancouver

Barracks during the Sheepeater War, and a historic visit by Nez Perce Chief Joseph.

In 2019, our national park received a new “unigrid” brochure that more accurately and inclusively introduces visitors to Fort Vancouver, Vancouver Barracks, and Pearson Air Museum. In October 2021, park staff participated in the UniDescription project, working with a team to create detailed audio descriptions of this brochure, which can now be accessed from the UniD app or our park website. This project allows blind and low vision visitors to interact with our brochure and better plan their visit.

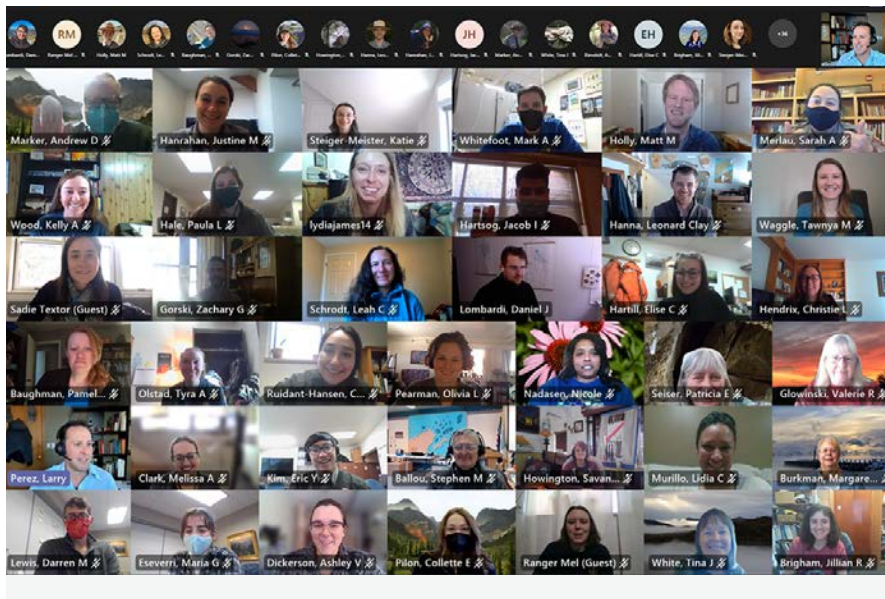


Fort Vancouver National Historic Site offered recurring ranger-led programs in the Fort Stockade and Village in 2021.

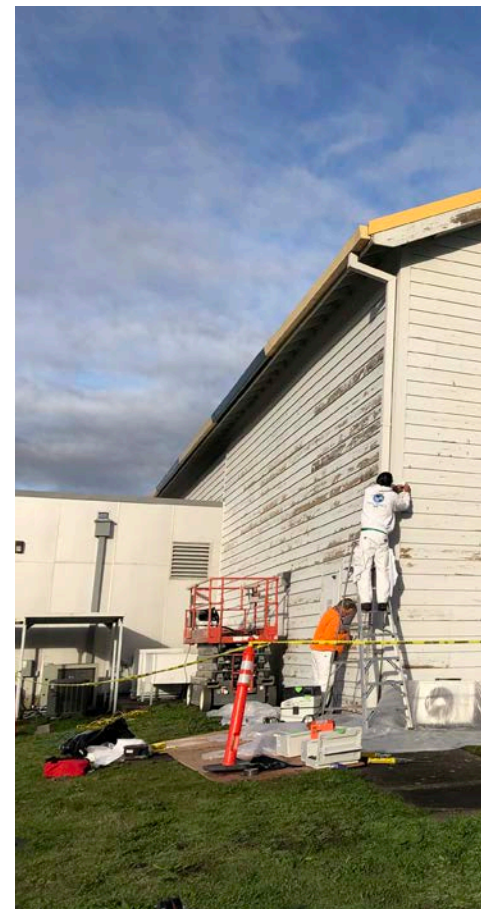
New ranger-led programs in the village bring light to the experiences of people from around the world who settled in the Fort Vancouver Village. Ranger-led programs in the village include indoor and outdoor experiences, including flint and steel demonstrations, historic games, facilitated discussions, and interactive trading activities.



Cultural demonstrations at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site followed COVID-19 procedures from the NPS Office of Public Health, using CDC guidance. From baking sea biscuits to sparking a flint and steel kit, visitors to cultural demonstrations at Fort Vancouver leave with a lasting memory of this place.



Staff at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site collaborated with parks across the country through virtual trainings and workshops. The image to the left is the class photo from the Interpreting Climate Change course, with participants from dozens of National Park Service sites. Employees from the Interpretation Division at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site attended this virtual training.



Preserve

Historic preservation is central to our mission at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. This year, we made huge strides towards preserving historic buildings and museum collections at the national park.

The national park was proud to receive funding from the Great American Outdoors Act for the rehabilitation of Building 993, a large double infantry barracks building at Vancouver Barracks. In 2021, design work and compliance were completed for this project, and a contractor was selected.

Meanwhile, rehabilitation was completed on two other buildings at Vancouver Barracks, known as

Buildings 733 and 722. These newly rehabilitated buildings will provide comfortable and efficient office space for park administration and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The adaptive reuse of these century-old buildings represents a sustainable approach to preservation that also preserves the historic ambiance of Vancouver Barracks for national park visitors and stakeholders.

In 2021, we were also able to leverage funding to replace roofs on five buildings at the national park and refresh external painting on Building 721, the Vancouver Barracks Auditorium. Environmental cleanup around three other Vancouver Barracks buildings was also completed. Also in Vancouver Barracks, a new



parking lot was completed to serve tenants working in rehabilitated barracks buildings, including staff from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the US Forest Service. This new parking lot is a great improvement to safety, accessibility, and circulation.

The national park's archaeology and museum programs were also busy in 2021. A Public Archaeology Field School, presented in partnership with Portland State University and Washington State University Vancouver, explored the Columbia River waterfront. The park accepted eight new donations to the museum collection, and cataloged over 95,000 archaeological artifacts!

National Park Service Archaeologist Dr. Doug Wilson taught university students the principles of excavation during the 2021 Public Archaeology Field School.

PEARSON PAINTING PROJECT: Painting was done on exterior of PAM buildings. New floors were also added.

This painting of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, which once hung in Fort Vancouver's St. James Mission, was donated to the national park's museum collection. This monumental painting will help the park share the unique story of the mission at Fort Vancouver and the faith of many of the fort's employees.



Partner

Partnership began in 2019, delayed due to the pandemic but work continued. National park staff advised the production on costume design, characters, and other historical aspects. In 2020, Columbia Dance filmed a short video trailer at the fort (featured in 2020 annual report). Finally in December 2021, they were able to invite an audience to watch. Production features characters representing different cultural and social groups of Fort Vancouver, including French Canadian voyageurs and the families of the Chief Factor's House.

In February, we partnered with Portland State University's Visually Impaired Learner and Orientation & Mobility program for their annual Mobility Matters conference. Fort

Vancouver staff worked alongside teachers and students from the Washington State School for the Blind to produce a unique and inclusive virtual tour of Fort Vancouver.

Our accessibility-focused partnership with Portland State University continued into the summer. In July, students from the Orientation & Mobility program used the tactile maps created for Mobility Matters and visited the fort under blindfold and low vision simulation (above). Students discussed aspects of travel and access at the park and deepened their knowledge of safe mobility techniques in community spaces. This partnership has also helped national park staff better understand the capabilities of blind and low vision visitors, and explore how we can make our site more welcoming.



For the first time, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site launched ranger-led walking tours along the McLoughlin Promenade in Oregon City, Oregon. Walking tours begin at the McLoughlin House. Visitors enjoy views of the Willamette River and Willamette Falls while learning about lampreys, their cultural importance, and the impact that climate change has on this native species.



Friends of Fort Vancouver continued to offer safe, unique experiences for park visitors during the pandemic. Hosted outdoors at the Visitor Center, basketry demonstrations led by Columbia River Basketry Guild offered valuable learning experiences for visitors of all ages.



Park rangers at Fort Vancouver worked with City of Vancouver leadership as well as staff in the Urban Forestry Dept, Friends of Trees, and Arborscape Tree Care to salvage 14 root sucker trees from the oldest apple tree in the Pacific Northwest. These pieces of living history at Fort Vancouver were transplanted into the park apple orchard. The Old Apple Tree lives on through these suckers!



Inspire

2021 saw the completion of large-scale projects that will directly benefit our visitors and partners at Pearson Air Museum. In the museum's Main Hangar gallery, brand new exhibits replaced aging and outdated exhibit panels. These new exhibit panels tell the story of Pearson Field, one of the oldest continuously-operating airfields in the United States, in a vibrant and inclusive way designed to inspire 21st century visitors. Encircling the large space of the Main Hangar, the story begins at the turn of the last century with the dawn of flight, continues to tell the stories of the Spruce Production Division and World War I at Vancouver Barracks, the Golden Age of Aviation in the 1920s and 30s, and discusses the many men and women who flew from this historic airfield. These new exhibit panels, which also include interactive elements, complement the historic and replica aircraft in the center of the gallery. We are so excited to share these new exhibits with our visitors!



Also at Pearson Air Museum, new flooring was installed in both the Main Hangar and the Historic Hangar. The Historic Hangar is a popular space for park events and permitted events, including weddings, birthdays, and other celebrations.

We were also happy to receive a completed Women's History Resource Guide and two contractor-led trainings. This resource guide was funded by a Women in Parks grant from the National Park Foundation, and discusses the history of women at Fort Vancouver and makes recommendations for interpreting women's stories. In November 2021, SJR Research, the guide's authors, led two training sessions for park staff and volunteers based on this guide. The park will continue to make strides in the interpretation of women's history with park-led training sessions and distribution of this resource guide to park staff and volunteers in spring 2022.

Park Ranger leads an interpretive tour in the Fur Store at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. In 2021, regularly scheduled ranger-led tours gave visitors new perspectives on the history of this important site.

Students visiting Pearson Air Museum on a field trip interact with new exhibit panels that tell the story of Pearson Field. Photo credit: Lindy Shugart

Fiscal Year 2021 by the Numbers



809,525

visitors visited
Fort Vancouver
National Historic
Site

2,000+

students
connected
with the park
through virtual
programming.

3,403

views on the Fort
Vancouver NHS
section of the new
NPS App

\$60,000

received in grant
funding through
park partners

198

oak trees
propagated from
acorns

28

trees planted last
year



300

volunteers
donated over
11,000 hours

267

cubic yards
of yard debris
greencycled
after the 2021
winter storm

11K

people followed
us on Facebook

9K

people followed
us on Twitter

9K

people followed
us on Instagram

44,690

artifacts cataloged
and ongoing care
of a museum
collection of 2.9
million objects

Look Towards the Future

Since portions of Vancouver Barracks transferred to the National Park Service in 2021, we have been working steadily toward the vision of a sustainable and vibrant campus focused on public service. We were fortunate this year to receive funding through the Great American Outdoors Act to rehabilitate Building 993 and associated parking areas. This project will wrap up in early 2023, and this historic infantry barracks will be ready for its next phase of life as leased office space.

Another major project continuing into next year is the creation of a new main visitor parking lot and improvements to East 5th Street - including repaving, new sidewalks, reoriented parking spaces, and bicycle and pedestrian routes - and associated landscaping, lighting, and signage. This project is partially funded by a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant and is a collaboration between the City of Vancouver, the Western Federal Lands Highway Division, and the National Park Service.

We are very much looking forward to receiving a Traditional Use Study and Reindigenization Plan in Spring 2022. Facilitated by two professors at Portland State University, this plan brings together American Indian and Native Hawaiian perspectives on the landscape that is now Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, its natural and cultural resources, and the histories preserved and shared here. Through recommendations developed over years of discussion, it will inform the management of this complex colonial site, which has meaning to so many different communities.

As always, next year is shaping up to be a busy and rewarding one. We appreciate your support and look forward to welcoming you to your national park.





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