FORT VANCOUVER

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • WASHINGTON
MASTER PLAN

FORT VANCOUVER
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • WASHINGTON

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
RECOMMENDED

Raymond O. Mulvany
  Acting Regional Director, Western
  June 6, 1968

Edward A. Hummel
  Associate Director, Management and Programming
  January 7, 1969

J. E. N. Jensen
  Associate Director, Planning and Development
  January 7, 1969

APPROVED

Harthon L. Bill
  Acting Director
  January 7, 1969
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
   Purpose/1
   Objectives/1

THE REGION
   Access & Circulation/4
   Population Data/6
   Park & Recreation Facilities/7
   Surroundings & Existing Use/10
   Ownership of Adjoining Land/13
   Regional Analysis/15

THE RESOURCE
   Description/16
   Evaluation/23
   Factors Affecting Resources & Use/24
   Visitor Use/28

THE PLAN
   Reconstruction & Restoration/30
   Access & Circulation/30
   Interim Development/33
   Community Relations/33
   Interpretive Facilities/34
   Fee Collection/34
   Concession/34
   Land Acquisition/34
   Management Facilities/37
   Land Classification/37
   Priority of Needs/37

MAPS:
   Urban Vicinity Map/4
   Regional Map/5
   City Zoning Map/11
   Existing Land Use & Circulation/12
   Resource Base Map/21
   Historic Restoration Plan/31
   General Development/32
   Land Acquisition & Ownership/35
   Land Classification/36
INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site was established, in the words of the authorizing Act (62 Stat. 352) and the Senate Report on that legislation, "to preserve as a national monument the site of the original Hudson's Bay stockade (of Fort Vancouver) and sufficient surrounding land to preserve the historical features of the area" for "the benefit of the people of the United States." The Department of the Interior report on the legislation further stated that the lands so dedicated should fulfill "two essential requirements—the preservation of the historic stockade . . . and the preservation of the historic parade ground of the later United States Army Post." Clearly, then, the purpose of the park is to maintain in perpetuity the site of this primary early center of economic, cultural, and military development in the Pacific Northwest and to make clear to American citizens the important part played in the growth of the nation by the fur trade and other activities centered at Fort Vancouver.

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Historical

OBJECTIVES
To fulfill the stated purposes of the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, the National Park Service proposes:

Interpretive Theme: To interpret to the public, as the primary historical theme, the story of the fur trade and the Hudson's Bay Company in the Northwest country and the roles they played in the exploration, settlement, territorial sovereignty, and development of the Pacific Northwest; and to interpret, as the secondary historical theme, the story of Vancouver Barracks and the part played by the United States Army in opening the region to settlement.

Land Acquisition: To acquire for interpretive and preservation purposes as they become available, certain city, State and Federal lands contiguous to the present park boundaries to permit the Service to restore as completely as practicable the historic setting of the Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Vancouver in the year 1845, and to provide space necessary for appropriate visitor enjoyment.

Fort Vancouver from the southeast, 1845, drawn by Henry J. Warre.
Restrictive Uses: To eliminate the present Pearson Airpark aviation easement to allow restoration of Fort Vancouver and, as additional lands are acquired, to remove other intrusive or restrictive elements to permit full visitor use and enjoyment of the park.

Restoration: To restore the major fort structures as nearly as possible in the historic setting of the period to be interpreted, together with authentic interior furnishings; to restore attendant features such as roads and fences; and to provide illustrative examples of associated historic uses such as the orchard, garden, and some of the farming and manufacturing activities that were a part of fort operations. This objective includes examples of farm animals that were present during the historic period represented by the restoration.

Related Visitor Services: To develop the park resources to their full potential through the provision of attendant facilities for recreation purposes. The principal objective of these facilities will be to permit school classes, families, and other groups visiting the park at mid-day to enjoy a continuous stay without the necessity of leaving the area for lunch; and to provide for children's play activities as a part of the park visit.

Research: To continue present intensive historical and archeological research programs to produce the basic factual information necessary for the accurate restoration of Fort Vancouver and its setting, and for the interpretation of the site and its story.

Safety and Protection: To protect the historical and recreational resources of the historic site and provide for the safety of the park visitor and Government property.

Visitor Use and Development: In anticipation of heavy visitor use when restoration has been completed, to provide adequate parking facilities and roads which will have a minimum adverse impact upon the historic scene but still provide convenient access to the fort proper and to other major points of interest; and to provide sheltered lunching facilities and a children's play area which will permit uninterrupted visits and afford other types of visitor enjoyment appropriate to the location of the park in an urban setting.

Interpretation and Information: To develop imaginative programs, including interpretive demonstrations, pageants, and the re-creation of a living farm exhibit, to vividly portray the large size of Fort Vancouver and the importance of its activities in the development of the West; and, incidentally, to provide information concerning opportunities offered by other parks for enjoying additional historical and recreational values in the Pacific Northwest.

Museum Collections: To continue protection and use of existing park collections and to assemble and preserve additional artifacts relating to the Fort Vancouver and Vancouver Barracks stories for public display, for refurnishing restored structures, and for study and research purposes; to confine the scope of the collections to items directly related to the park interpretive themes.

Resource Management: To conserve and manage the historical resources in such a way as to present them to the public as an integrated, three-dimensional, living historical exhibit; and, as a related management objective, to provide such recreational opportunities as are consistent with the primary historical exhibit purposes of the park.
Fort Vancouver about 1845, from the general vicinity of the present visitor center. The National Park Service hopes to restore Fort Vancouver as closely as possible to the appearance of this scene. Oil painting, by an unknown artist, is now hanging in Yale University Library.
THE REGION

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is on the north bank of the Columbia River, within the corporate limits of the city of Vancouver, Clark County, Washington, and directly opposite the city of Portland.

For master planning purposes, the region within which the park is located is considered as comprising the Portland Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. The Bureau of the Budget has defined this statistical area as having a population whose activities form an integrated social and economic system. It includes Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties in Oregon, with Portland the major population center, plus several outlying urban communities; and Clark County, Washington, which includes the city of Vancouver.

The principal natural feature within the region is the famed Columbia River waterway and the lower section of the spectacular Columbia River Gorge. Several major mountain peaks are readily visible in the distance and lend a scenic backdrop to what is an otherwise metropolitan setting. These include Mount St. Helens and Mount Adams in Washington and Mount Hood in Oregon.

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The Columbia River waterway served as the principal transportation artery to and from the region during the early days of settlement. Then came the railroads, following the course of the Columbia along both shores, and with major lines extending into the region from the north and south as well. While several transcontinental passenger trains such as those of Northern Pacific and Union Pacific still serve the region, train passenger service is being reduced as it is elsewhere.

Components of the Interstate Highway System, feeding to major cities throughout the United States, serve the region. They include north-south Interstate 5 connecting Seattle, Vancouver, Portland, Los Angeles, and San Diego; and east-west Interstate 80N (formerly U.S. 30) following the length of the Columbia River Gorge and terminating at Portland.

The Portland International Airport is a major point of arrival and departure for both transcontinental and intercontinental air travel. Passenger traffic has more than doubled within the past four years, and exceeded two million in-and-out passengers in 1967. Extensive expansion of facilities is planned, probably at the present location but possibly by relocating somewhat farther south. Expansion will include facilities capable of handling the ultra-modern, super-sonic passenger aircraft.

The Pearson Airpark, operated by the City of Vancouver as a municipal airport, lies almost directly across the Columbia River from Portland International. It adjoins the present park boundary on the east and south. Only light private planes plus those of some Federal agencies use Pearson Airpark on a regular basis.

While present or future use of Portland International Airport will have little effect on park visitation, the noise created by low-flying jets during take-off will make it more difficult for the visitor to recapture the historic mood if airport facilities are expanded at the present location.

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is only a few blocks east of Interstate 5, while part of the lands proposed for acquisition adjoin the Interstate right-of-way. Primary access to the park from either north or south is from an interchange at Mill Plain Boulevard, about three blocks northwest. The park can also be reached from a secondary Interstate 5 exit via downtown Vancouver. In either case, however, directional signs are either inconspicuous or lacking, and it is difficult for one unfamiliar with the locality to find his way to the park.

An additional but secondary means of access is available from the east via Washington State 14 along the north shore of the Columbia River. This route serves the industrial section of Vancouver and bisects the park. Pleasure traffic on this route is light at present. However, it is indicated in A Proposed Program for Scenic Roads and Parkways, published in 1966 by the President’s Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty, as having been nominated by the State and by Federal agencies for study purposes as a scenic route.

The principal access routes and features serving the region are shown on the Regional Map and the Urban Vicinity Map. Those having a direct relationship to the park itself are shown on the Existing Land Use and Circulation Map.
Access to the park is possible by private plane to Pearson Airpark; by taxi, rental car, or city bus from train and bus terminals in Vancouver and Portland; or by the same means from Portland International Airport. The use of such public transportation facilities, however, is impractical, and city bus service may be discontinued. Virtually all park visitors arrive by private automobile or, in the case of school or other organized groups, by bus service arranged specifically by those groups.

Visitation totaled 90,000 persons in 1967, compared with 63,900 in 1963; 37,600 in 1960; and 9,161 in 1957.

Proposed Interstate 205, to bypass Portland and Vancouver on the east as shown on the Regional and Urban Vicinity maps is scheduled for construction with a completion date of 1972. Interchanges will be provided in the Vancouver vicinity, including one from 205 onto Mill Plain Boulevard. Mill Plain is a four-lane, divided east-west thoroughfare, which carries local traffic. Its western terminus is at a major interchange on Interstate 5. Another interchange on 205 will be provided at its crossing with State 14.

With continued population growth and development of Vancouver, East Evergreen Boulevard, which forms the north boundary of the park, may also be widened to a four-lane street. In any event, East Evergreen will not connect with Interstate 5 and, while it does intersect with State 14, the intersection is a considerable distance to the east. Access to the park would be quite inconvenient by that route, and Mill Plain will continue to provide the principal means of access from both the Interstate routes.

The proposed visitor viewpoint, looking south toward the fort site.
POPULATION DATA

Portland, the regional population center, is within 20 minutes driving time from Fort Vancouver via Interstate 5.

Census estimates for mid-1966 placed Portland's population at 384,000 and Vancouver's at 38,300. According to these estimates, the population of Portland has grown by just over 3 percent since 1960, while that of Vancouver has grown by some 18 percent.

Similar estimates place the regional population at 908,000, in comparison with a population of 821,897 in 1960 and 704,829 in 1950. Thus the regional rate of growth since 1960 has been about 10½ percent. This compares with a rate of slightly less than 10 percent for the Seattle- Everett Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, the only other such metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest.

Almost 80 percent of the region's resident population lives within the urbanized area. Like Vancouver, most of the growth in the Portland area has taken place in the urban fringes east of the central city. Favorable factors insure that this trend will continue.

Several State and Federal agencies, private industry, and research groups have made recent population forecasts which apply to the region. Consolidation of the studies to reflect a median forecast indicates that the region's population is expected to be in the range of 1,194,000 by 1980; 1,682,000 by the year 2000; and 2,600,000 by 2020 for a 40-year predicted growth of 118 percent. For Clark County, the same sources would indicate a population of about 146,000 by 1980; 206,600 by the year 2000; and in the range of 322,000 by 2020, a growth of 120 percent.

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is used predominantly by the local population within the region. Tourist use is primarily by California residents and, secondly, due to their interest in the story of Fort Vancouver, by Canadian residents. This is an interesting comparison with the out-of-state tourist pattern in the Oregon State Parks system, where visitation is predominantly from California, with Washington second.

While regional population growth, of itself, has had no appreciable physical effect on the park, resultant industrial and economic development has altered extensively the surrounding scene, both restricting historical restoration and making it more difficult for the visitor to visualize the historical setting. Intruding elements of this nature are discussed under Surroundings and Existing Use below.
PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Existing—No historical parks or sites in the entire Pacific Northwest compare in importance with Fort Vancouver for illustrating the role of the fur trade in the development of the western United States and Canada. There are, however, several parks that contain remains, sites, or reconstructions of lesser and subsidiary trading posts and which thus complement Fort Vancouver in presenting the fur-trade story. Among these are Fort Nisqually in Point Defiance Park, Tacoma, Washington; Fort Langley National Historical Park (Canadian) near Vancouver, B.C.; Spokane House State Park, near Spokane, Washington; and Fort Okanogan State Park, Washington. Champoeg State Park, Oregon, about 35 miles south of Fort Vancouver, includes the site of a Hudson’s Bay Company granary that was a part of the Fort Vancouver operation. McLoughlin House National Historic Site at Oregon City preserves the retirement home of Chief Factor John McLoughlin, who from 1825 to 1846 was in charge of Fort Vancouver. The museum of the Oregon Historical Society in Portland displays a number of artifacts associated with the Hudson’s Bay Company region in the Northwest and with Fort Vancouver. A small city park at Astoria, Oregon, preserves a portion of the site of Fort Astoria, later Fort George, the predecessor of Fort Vancouver as the fur emporium of the West. The old Covington House north of Vancouver also is related to Fort Vancouver. The structure was built by a retired Hudson’s Bay Company employee who took up land in Vancouver. A local landmark near the park is an apple tree which, according to legend, dates from Hudson’s Bay Company days.

By stimulating interest in the history of the Pacific Northwest fur trade, these parks encourage visitation to Fort Vancouver, long the key focal point for the industry west of the Rockies. Also they provide at Fort Vancouver the opportunity to direct visitors to other sites where the fur-trade story may be further unfolded.

The region lies almost midway between the Cascade Range and the Oregon coastline, and there is a wealth of opportunities for scenic and recreational enjoyment, both within the region itself and within easy driving distance from the metropolitan area.

There are three wilderness areas, numerous developed recreational sites, and many scenic trails and loop roads in the Gifford Pinchot and Mount Hood National Forests on the west flank of the Cascades. One of the Pacific Northwest’s major winter sports area is on Mount Hood.

In Oregon there are more than 30 State parks and at least two dozen county parks within easy driving distance from Portland.

The Portland Park Bureau has a highly developed and comprehensive City park system, ranging from a 3,600-acre natural and primitive area to community and neighborhood parks, offering a great variety of recreation facilities.

There are over 50 State, county, or commercial boat launching ramps on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, supplemented by marinas, commercial moorages, and private yacht clubs.

One launching ramp, located on a 6.5-acre tract of Fort Vancouver land, was developed and is managed by the City of Vancouver as William Broughton Park under a special use permit from the Service, terminating in 1973.

Clark County itself has relatively few non-urban developed recreation facilities. It has one State park, a county park, a botanical area, a privately-owned park, and some of the boating facilities on the shore of the Columbia described above.

The Vancouver city park system comprises approximately 265 acres in about 36 individual parks, including eight community centers. Fifteen parks incorporate sports areas or outdoor play areas. Many of the parks are small, with from less than one to four or five acres each. About eight are undeveloped. David Douglas, the largest, contains 68 acres. Located three miles east of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, it is predominantly a natural area.

The 11-acre General George C. Marshall Park is less than one-half mile north of Fort Vancouver, but across the four-lane, major thoroughfare of Mill Plain Boulevard. Present development includes 16 horseshoe courts, a non-regulation ball field, and a community center with indoor swimming pool.

The grounds of Hudson’s Bay Senior High School, located across Mill Plain directly opposite Fort Vancouver, now provide an extensive open space area. A portion of the school grounds lies south of Mill Plain and has a football field, track field, and two baseball diamonds. The school also has an indoor swimming
pool. Except for the athletic area, expansion of the physical plant will eventually utilize most of the present open space land.

Quarnberg Park is two blocks east of East Reserve Street, the eastern park boundary. It also is on the opposite side of Mill Plain Boulevard. This is a small park of about 1.4 acres with a non-regulation ball diamond.

Esther Short Park is three-fourths mile west of Fort Vancouver across Interstate 5. It is developed for playground activities and picnicking, and serves the southwest section of the city.

Facilities at William Broughton Park, mentioned above as being administered by the City under special use permit from the Service, consist of a concrete boat launching ramp, parking, and minor picnicking facilities.

The foregoing parks and open spaces are shown on the Existing Land Use and Circulation map.

Proposed—New areas are being added to the Federal, State, and local park and recreation systems in and near the region each year. Emphasis in the State program is being given to acquisition and development of State parks to serve future needs. Increased attention is being paid to the needs of urbanized areas, including northwest Oregon. Present State Park policy is oriented toward “functional” parks for active recreation.

The counties bordering the Willamette River are to acquire, develop, and maintain areas along the river under the newly-authorized Willamette River Greenway System, with State and Federal financial assistance and coordination.

The Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department of the Clark County-Vancouver Regional Planning Commission have prepared a comprehensive park and recreation plan for Vancouver and environs. The plan includes two regional parks; six community parks; and about 37 neighborhood parks. These new parks will have the normal city park developments including outdoor play areas and athletic or sports areas.

Some of the present Vancouver city park sites that are too small for useful development are being held as “trading stock” for acquisition of city greenbelt lands which also will be developed for general recreation purposes with play areas.

David Douglas Park will remain primarily for passive recreation, but proposed development also includes children’s play areas, picnic facilities, and a replica in miniature of Fort Vancouver.

Proposals at Marshall include a totlot with play equipment, screens, benches, and shelters for pre-school and primary school age children, game areas, and a senior citizens’ area.
Ground plan of Fort Vancouver, 1845, based upon map drawn by M. Vavasour.
SURROUNDINGS AND EXISTING USE

The location of the park on a former U.S. Army post has proven a fortunate circumstance in preserving a sense of historic integrity and open space in the immediate surroundings.

To date, these former Army lands have not been used for industrial purposes, to which the waterfront and adjacent area lends itself. Rather, they have been used for housing of Government employees, a high school, a community college, Veterans' hospital, library, public utility district headquarters, a city community park and recreation center, an airport, and city street purposes. A small part is still used by the Army. Otherwise, the general environment is that of an almost completely developed urban complex.

To the west, on lands within the proposed ultimate park boundary, is what remains of Vancouver Military Barracks, owned by the U.S. Army. Immediately west of the Army land is Interstate 5, with its easily visible, elevated ramp and major bridge crossing of the Columbia. To the west, just across Interstate 5, is the Vancouver central business district.

Just across East Evergreen Boulevard, to the north of the park, are old Army residences known as Officer's Row, now occupied by Veterans Administration personnel.

To the east of the park on the opposite side of East Reserve Street are inexpensive, medium density residential developments. Both light and heavy manufacturing are located along the river front to the east and west.
Potential Approaches to Fort Vancouver after Completion of I-205:

- **JD Major Approach**
- **Minor Approach**

- Proposed Widening to 4 lanes
- Existing Main Approach
- Existing Main Entrance
- Existing National Historic Site

Legend:
- U.S. Army
- S.P. & S. (leased to City - Vancouver Municipal Airport)
- State Highway Department
- Heavy Industry
- Light Industry
- Vancouver School District
- Athletic Fields (football, track, 2 baseball fields, swimming pool)
- U.S. Veterans Administration
- County Public Utility District
- State Land
- U.S. Coast Guard
- City Land (municipal airport)
- City Park (softball field, pool, horseshoe courts)
- City Park (picnic area, playground)
- City Park (non-regulation ball diamond)
- City Land (leased to Bureau of Public Roads)

Existing Land Use & Circulation:

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

North

Scale: 0 500 1000 2000 Feet

February 1968
OWNERSHIP OF ADJOINING LAND

**Federal**—U.S. Army—in use by organized reserve corps. U.S. Coast Guard—actively used as Coast Guard headquarters. Veterans Administration—used for major hospital facilities; a substantial portion of the lands, plus a small detached parcel, are maintained as open space.

**State**—State of Washington—one parcel is the location of Clark Community College. A second parcel is held by the State Highway Department. It includes the right-of-way for State Route 14 and a larger portion used for the storage of highway construction materials.

**Local**—Clark County Public Utility District—used as P.U.D. headquarters. City of Vancouver—Pearson Airpark with hangars and runways; city also owns East Fifth Street through the park and a parcel on East Reserve Street adjoining park headquarters. Vancouver School District—senior high school buildings and grounds.

**Private**—Seattle, Portland, and Spokane Railway—not actively used at present, but is under lease to City of Vancouver for airport purposes. Lease is revocable at will by S.P.&S. A 100-foot right of way on which the railroad is located is a part of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, with Congressional grant to the railroad for its operation.

**Gilmore Steel Corporation**—Former Vancouver Shipyards. In major use for manufacture of steel, wood, and aluminum products.

While the immediate surroundings still retain a feeling of openness, existing land uses have introduced several seriously restrictive and intrusive elements, both physical and legal. These elements disrupt the historical scene or prevent its re-creation.

One of the most intrusive elements in the scene is that of vehicle traffic passing quite close to the fort site on State Highway 14. Just beyond the highway and paralleling it is the high embankment of the S.P.&S. Railroad which blocks any view of the river except for its far side. And beyond the railroad embankment is a paralleling city street serving the riverfront industrial area. Thus the once-intimate relationship between the fort and the river no longer exists today, or at least it is much more difficult to comprehend.
Another physical barrier is the SP&S railroad spur, which extends in a semi-circle along the present west boundary of the park. A siding and coal tipple is located at the end of the spur adjacent to the present park boundary on the north.

Of particular importance to park development are certain adjoining tracts on which incompatible uses exist. The river front strip owned by the State Highway Department and directly fronting the park demonstrates the type of adverse use and damage to the historical scene which may occur if not in the control of the Service. Except for State Highway 14, this land has so far been used only for the storage of huge piles of construction materials.

The dominant adverse use is posed by Pearson Airpark. The present avigation easement constitutes an adverse legal factor which effectively prevents any further restoration of the Hudson’s Bay Company post. Physical facilities in the form of hangars and runways are intrusive elements and, to a lesser degree than the easement, prevent historical restoration.

East 5th Street occupies the site of the historic Hudson’s Bay Company road. In its present form, it separates two important segments of the park and is a safety hazard to visitor traffic.
An important legal factor concerns this street; when parts of the Army post were declared surplus, through streets with significant amounts of traffic like East Fifth were deeded to the city under reversionary clause. The clause provides that title can be recaptured if not used for street purposes by the city.

Potential adverse uses now exist on lands that are essential to park protection and scenic preservation. The U.S. Coast Guard headquarters, located on the river front in direct view from the fort site, may be moved to another location in the Portland area within the next two to three years. The land may then become available to the Service, or open to adverse development if not acquired.

Another potential adverse use is presented by East Reserve Street on the eastern park boundary. Street widening is under consideration and, if the parcel adjoining the park administrative headquarters is not acquired, resultant widening will place street traffic just outside employee residence windows.

Trends in Land Use—The current trend in land use on adjoining properties is a factor that further justifies their early acquisition. The trend, as is graphically shown on the City Zoning Map, is predominately one of increasing industrial development expanding toward or encroaching on the park. To a lesser extent, the trend toward continued commercial development will have a similar effect. With some exceptions, most of the commercial expansion will be physically separated from the park by existing Interstate 5.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS
The primary attribute of the park in the land use pattern is that of a large open space in an urban complex of 38,000 population and the opportunities it provides for public use and enjoyment in this important setting. Its importance in this role will be further enhanced by improved access, the demands of continued population growth and urbanization, and acquisition of additional adjoining lands.

The tremendous number and diversity of recreational opportunities generally available to the region's residents have little influence on the actual use of the park, since the day-to-day visitors are principally those with historical interests. Such interest is increasing in the region. Because the park is the largest open space with a waterfront location in the city, it is an ideal site for community gatherings like the annual Fourth of July observances.
THE RESOURCE

DESCRIPTION
Vegetation: Most of the park area is in grass which is maintained in meadow or lawn condition. The few clumps of oak and Douglas-fir that are scattered throughout the gently sloping grassy areas are all that remain of the original forest setting now largely taken over by exotic species of ornamental trees, flowering shrubs, and herbaceous plants.

A small fruit orchard, a re-creation of an historic feature, is adjacent to the fort site.

History: Fort Vancouver National Historic Site commemorates the enormous influence of the fur trade in the exploration, settlement, and development of the Pacific Slope and in the expansion of the national boundaries to include the present Pacific Northwest. It is classified principally under The Fur Trade, a subtheme of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Theme XV, Westward Expansion and the Extension of the National Boundaries to the Pacific, 1830-1898. The agricultural phase of the fort’s history was considered so important that the site is also classified under Theme XVIIA, Agriculture and the Farmer’s Frontier.

The park also illustrates, as a minor theme, the part played by the United States Army in the opening of the West and in the development of the Nation into a world power. These lesser historical values are classified under Theme XIII, Political and Military Affairs, 1830-1860, and Theme XXI, Political and Military Affairs after 1865.

Fort Vancouver was the nucleus of the early development of the Pacific Northwest. For two decades, from 1825 to about 1846, this stockaded fur-trading post-headquarters and depot for the Hudson’s Bay Company west of the Rocky Mountains was the economic, political, social, and cultural hub of an area now comprising British Columbia (Canada), Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and western Montana. It was the most important settlement from Mexican California on the south to Russian Alaska on the north.

The fur resources of the Pacific Northwest were discovered by British seamen who visited the northwest coast and obtained valuable pelts in trade with the Indians about the time of the American Revolution. Soon traders from the fledgling United States, Canada, and several European countries were competing on land and sea for the riches thus uncovered.

Stimulated by the reports of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which had crossed the continent and descended the Columbia River to its mouth in 1804-1806, the New York merchant John Jacob Astor established a series of fur-trading posts in the Columbia basin beginning in 1811. Meanwhile, the North West Company of Montreal had opened posts in the present British Columbia and had expanded into the Columbia drainage area, taking over the Astor interests in 1813. The North West Company reigned supreme in the Pacific Northwest until 1821, when it was absorbed by the Hudson’s Bay Company, a British firm whose operations then extended across the continent from Hudson’s Bay to the Pacific Ocean.

In 1824 the Hudson’s Bay Company decided to move its western headquarters from Fort George, at the mouth of the Columbia River, to a site about 100 miles upstream. This shift was made to strengthen British claims to the territory north of the Columbia River and to be on lands better suited for farming, since one objective of the firm’s management was to make its posts as independent as possible of imported foodstuffs. The new post, constructed during the winter of 1824-1825, was named Fort Vancouver in honor of Captain George Vancouver, the British explorer. Five years later, in 1829, the fort was moved about one mile southwest to a more convenient location closer to the Columbia River. This second site, within the present City of Vancouver, Washington, is preserved by Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. The new post grew rapidly in size and importance.

Fort Vancouver was the headquarters of Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor of the Company’s Columbia Department from 1824 to 1846. Of towering height and impressive appearance, he maintained a firm control over the Indians of his vast domain as well as over a small army of employees scattered from the Rockies to the Pacific and from Alaska to California. The Columbia Department maintained trading outposts on San Francisco Bay and in Honolulu.

Under McLoughlin’s energetic leadership, the Hudson’s Bay Company won a virtual monopoly of the fur trade in the Oregon Country. Although by international agreement this large area was open to trade and settlement by citizens of both the United States and Great Britain though under the government of
neither, the British firm by vigorous trade methods eliminated most of its foreign rivals on land and along the coast. Thus for at least a decade, and longer in certain areas, the history of the Oregon Country and the Hudson’s Bay Company activities centering about Fort Vancouver were almost identical.

Fort Vancouver was the nerve center of this vast commercial empire. Its warehouses received the annual shipments of trade goods and supplies from London and then distributed them to the many interior posts, to the fur brigades which ranged as far as present-day Utah and California, and to the vessels and forts which dominated the coastal trade far up the coast of Alaska. Each year the fur returns of the entire western trade were gathered at Fort Vancouver for shipment to England. The key to Vancouver’s importance was its strategic position on the great Columbia River, which was navigable to this point by ocean-going vessels and which provided a route of water access to the interior.

The fort was also the center for an important farming and manufacturing community. The company’s cultivated fields and pasturelands extended for miles along the north bank of the river. The crops produced by these fields, as well as by the fort’s orchard and garden, demonstrated the agricultural possibilities of the Oregon Country and attracted the attention of potential independent farmers. Lumber, axes, flour, pickled salmon, barrels, boats, and other products of Fort Vancouver’s mills, drying sheds, forges, and shops supplied not only the wants of the fur trade but also a brisk commerce with such distant places as the Hawaiian Islands, South America, California, and the Russian settlements in Alaska. These activities marked the beginning of large-scale agricultural and industrial development in the Pacific Northwest.

Drawing of Fort Vancouver from the Railroad report. The village area to be excavated is in the right foreground.
in addition, much of the cultural and social life of the Oregon Country revolved about Fort Vancouver. Here were established the first school, the first theater, and several of the earliest churches in the Northwest.

Beginning in the early 1830's, as American missionaries and settlers started to flow into the Oregon Country in ever-increasing numbers, British-owned Fort Vancouver was of necessity their immediate goal. Here was the only reliable source of information about the country, here was the only source of emergency shelter and transportation, and here were the only adequate supplies of food, seed, and farm implements in the Northwest. Company policy, directed toward obtaining a Columbia River boundary between Canada and the United States west of the Rockies, did not favor encouragement and assistance of American immigration, but Dr. McLoughlin through humanity and necessity welcomed most settlers. His kind treatment of these pioneers helped foster the growth of an American population in the region. It was not until well into the 1840's that the independent farmers and settlers were sufficiently established to carry on without the economic assistance of the Hudson's Bay Company. Not without justice was McLoughlin later called the "Father of Oregon."

Due to the growth of this American population and because of the increasingly bitter dispute between Great Britain and the United States over the boundary question, the Hudson's Bay Company began to shift some of its depot activities from Fort Vancouver to Fort Victoria, in present British Columbia, as early
as 1843-1845. When the Treaty of 1846 established the boundary at the 49th parallel, Fort Vancouver found itself on United States soil, and the administrative shift to Victoria was accelerated. By 1849 the post had been reduced to a subordinate trading and supply center for the region south of the boundary, and in 1860 it was finally abandoned. A few years later a fire destroyed all remaining above-ground evidence of the old fur-trade emporium of the Northwest.

In 1849 the United States Army established its first Pacific Northwest military post on the hill immediately north of Fort Vancouver, and a short time later the old post was encompassed within a military reservation. Vancouver Barracks, as the new installation was known throughout most of its history, developed into the primary military center of the Pacific Northwest. In a day when rivers were the main transportation arteries, the same factors which had made Fort Vancouver such a strategic location for the fur trade attracted the attention of the Army.

As headquarters for the Columbia Department, Fort Vancouver was the command and supply center for the Pacific Northwest. From here troops were sent to engage in nearly all the Indian Wars of the region. During World War I the post was the site of a spruce lumber mill operated by the Third Spruce Production Division. After serving as a training and staging area during the second World War, the post was deactivated, and in 1946 most of the military reservation was declared surplus.

Appearance During Historic Period: At the height of its prosperity and extent—from about 1836 to 1846—the Hudson’s Bay Company post at Fort Vancouver was an impressive establishment. The fort proper was situated on an extensive plain about a quarter of a mile north of the Columbia River. Enclosed by a 16-foot-high stockade, it measured about 732 feet by 325 feet, as large as five football fields laid side by side. After the spring of 1845 a bastion stood at the northwest corner of the stockade and mounted six or eight 3-pound cannon.

Within the stockade were 24 major buildings and several lesser structures, nearly all constructed of heavy squared timbers. Among the more important buildings were four large storehouses, an Indian trade shop, a granary, an impressive residence for the chief factor, dwellings for other company officers and clerks, a church, a powder magazine, and a jail. There were also offices, a blacksmith shop, and a bakery, while a cooper shop was located just outside the walls.

The lesser employees at Fort Vancouver—the tradesmen, artisans, boatmen, and laborers—lived mainly in what was known as “the village,” on the plain west and southwest of the stockade. This settlement consisted of from 30 to 50 wooden dwellings, some ranged along lanes and others dotted “all over the plain for a mile.” Near the village and extending to the river was a lagoon, around which were a number of other Company buildings, with a wharf on the riverbank. The buildings included a large salmon storehouse, boatsheds, and a hospital. Between the lagoon and the village were barns and shelters for pigs, oxen, and horses.
The visitor center diorama depicting the arrival of the Whitman Party at Fort Vancouver.

Surrounding the fort and its outbuildings, the river-bank plain, about half a mile deep and several miles long, was a sea of cultivated fields and pastures. Across the plain and up the slope north of it ran several well-defined roads leading to the sawmills and grist mills up the river, to the wharf, and to several large forest openings or “plains” to the northward where the Company maintained additional farms. The fields were neatly fenced, and scattered about over them were barns, sheds, and other farm structures. Capping the sloping hill north of the fort was a dense coniferous forest.

**Historic Physical Remains Today:** After fire destroyed all visible vestiges of the fort during the 1860’s, the exact location of the stockade gradually became forgotten. However, archeological excavations conducted by the National Park Service uncovered remains of the palisade posts and foundations of most of the buildings within the walls. The exact locations of all four stockade walls, the blockhouse, and the main structures have been marked out on the surface of the ground by asphalt topping. The only fort structure found intact during the excavations was the stone-lined well in the northeast corner. The top of the well has been restored, and the structure has been exposed for visitor observation.

During 1966 the National Park Service reconstructed the north stockade wall, the north gate, and about 32 feet of the east stockade. This work was as accurate a reproduction of the original as was possible on the basis of the historical information available.

The present park boundaries encompass only a small portion of the once-vast agricultural establishment that surrounded the fort. The larger part of the fort orchard site is on park lands, and to the extent that boundaries permit the orchard has been re-established. The varieties of fruit trees are those mentioned in historical accounts or those varieties known to have been available during the historic period.

Also within existing boundaries is the site of about half of “the village.” Here, however, the exact locations of individual structures are known only from rather diagramatic historic maps and have not been determined exactly by archeological investigations.

Northeast of the fort site, on the hillside sloping up from the river plain, the existing boundaries include the sites of a row of cultivated Company fields and the locations of the main fort barns. Archeological excavations have confirmed the general location of the barns, but little was revealed as to the exact sites and sizes of the structures.

The present park also includes the Vancouver Barracks parade ground, thus preserving an important feature of the military post.
Comparison of Scene During Historic Times and at Present: At the present time a visitor standing on the brow of the hill directly north of the Fort Vancouver site can observe a rather significant remnant of the scene familiar to Hudson's Bay Company employees. His eye travels downward across a sodded slope, over paved Fifth Street which occupies the location of an old fort road, past the partly-restored stockade and out over the grass runways and open fields of Pearson Airpark, then across the grassy embankment of the S.P.&S. Railroad, finally resting on a glimpse of the Columbia River and its tree-lined south shore. If the field of view is kept narrow and if a few modern intrusions, such as automobiles on State Highway 14, are overlooked, one can recapture in the mind's eye, if only fleetingly, the fort and its setting as revealed by early paintings and drawings. In particular, the important relationship between the fort and the river is clearly revealed.

On the other hand, if the eye strays only a short distance to the left or right, the scene is irrevocably shattered. To the east are the rows of parked aircraft and three lines of modern hangars of Pearson Airpark. These now extend nearly to the east end of the restored north stockade.

Beyond the airport on the riverbank rise the tall water tank and boxy outline of a new multi-story manufacturing plant. To the west the immediate foreground and the middle distance are occupied by a large number of substantial Vancouver Barracks structures, still being used by various Army reserve units. In the distance, beyond the old military reservation boundaries, rise the ironwork of the highway bridge across the Columbia and the interchange ramps of an elevated freeway, Interstate 5.

In summary, the historic scene at present is narrowly circumscribed and has been severely altered. What remains, beyond the small area within the present park, exists only because a large part of the airport is still open field and because the Army land contains a number of large trees which help to screen out buildings, the freeway, and the bridge. And even this remnant of the original scene is in imminent danger. If the uses of the airport and Army lands should change to industrial, the site of Fort Vancouver would be deprived of the setting which enables the visitor to understand the post's strategic location near the river and its importance as an agricultural establishment.
Archeology: No sites related to aboriginal culture have as yet been discovered within the park boundaries. Archeological excavations for evidence of the Hudson’s Bay period were conducted by the National Park Service in 1947, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1961, and 1966. This work resulted in uncovering remains and determining the exact locations (and in most cases the dimensions) of the stockade and the major structures within it; and the general locations of the Company’s barns have been confirmed.

A large number of artifacts from the Hudson’s Bay period were recovered during these excavations. Such items as locks, hinges, nails, keys, and window glass throw much light upon the physical structure of the Company buildings. Other items, such as bottles, pieces of dinnerware, clay pipes, inkwells, trap parts, axe heads, and buttons illustrate the cultural, social, and industrial life at the fort.

The historical archeological excavations have been recorded by six reports, copies of which are on file at the park and in the Regional Office. Thousands of the excavated artifacts are stored at the park, where they are now being identified, classified, catalogued, and related to the field notes.
Recreation: The primary recreation resource of the park results from its open, natural character. This resource is well-recognized by Vancouver residents and organizations, who use it for the annual Fourth of July observances, in which large numbers of people participate; "rock-and-roll" jazz sessions; the originating point for civic parades; bicycling, horseback riding, and running.

While these uses have no relationship to the park's historical importance, they are either infrequent or are of little consequence, and have not detracted from the preservation and public enjoyment of the fort.

The second, more limited recreation resource is boating and related activities on the river frontage lands within the park. As pointed out in a previous section, the City of Vancouver has developed this resource to a minor extent.

The park also has a potential for forms of outdoor recreation use that would definitely contribute to visitor appreciation and enjoyment of the historic resources. These potential uses include picnicking and outdoor play, both as adjuncts to historical resource use.

EVALUATION

History—The primary resource which the park possesses is, of course, historical. Its national significance in illustrating an important segment of American history is recognized and established by reason of its inclusion in the National Park System.

As the center of all Hudson’s Bay Company activities west of the Rocky Mountains, as the "cradle of civilization" in the Pacific Northwest, as the western terminus of the Oregon Trail, and finally as the location of the U.S. Army's Pacific Northwest headquarters, Fort Vancouver is the best site to illustrate and interpret such broad themes in American history as the fur trade, expansion of the national boundaries to the Pacific, the western military frontier, and agricultural developments in the Northwest corner of the country. The site was for more than 20 years the home and headquarters of Chief Factor John McLoughlin, the "Father of Oregon," who was nationally significant in the history of the United States. The site, still surrounded by an appreciable amount of open land as it was in historic times and still reasonably open to the Columbia River, possesses integrity.

The significance of the Fort Vancouver site has twice been considered by the Advisory Board and twice found to be of national importance.

Archeology—The archeological resource of the park is secondary in importance only to history. Actually, it may well be considered to be an integral part of the historical resource, for the knowledge necessary to accurately restore Fort Vancouver and its setting, and for correct interpretation, depends upon continued archeological research.

Recreation—As an area of desirable and useable open space in an urban community, the present park has major local recreational significance.
FACTORS AFFECTING RESOURCES AND USE

Legal Factors

Legal and Legislative History—Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is located on land which was part of the United States military reservation established around Fort Vancouver in October 1850. This reservation, reduced in conformity with a Congressional Act of 1853 to 640 acres, was subject only to the claims of the Hudson's Bay Company as guaranteed by the Treaty of 1846. These claims were extinguished by international negotiation in 1869. The reservation is thus considered as having been created from the public domain. Exclusive Federal jurisdiction over the land was recognized by Section 1, Art. 25 of the Constitution of the State of Washington and an act of the State Legislature approved February 24, 1891.

As early as 1915 the War Department designated the site of the Hudson’s Bay Company fort as a “National Monument” under authority of the Antiquities Act, but evidently the recognition was soon withdrawn or allowed to lapse. During the 1920’s and 1930’s local citizens, historical societies, the City of Vancouver, and other agencies attempted to obtain Congressional authority and appropriations for restoring the fort stockade. Two laws (43 Stat. 1113 in 1925; and 52 Stat. 195 in 1938) authorizing reconstruction were actually passed, but no action resulted, seemingly because no funds were granted.

The opportunity for decisive action did not come until 1946, when a large part of the Vancouver Barracks Military Reservation was declared surplus to the needs of the Army. State and local historical organizations pressed vigorously for legislation to obtain a national monument or historical park to preserve the fort site. In 1946 officials of the National Park Service studied the area and reported that, to properly preserve the historical values, nearly all of the reservation between the Evergreen Highway and the Columbia River would be required for park purposes.

However, the City of Vancouver desired to make a local airport of the former Pearson Field on the reservation, and on March 14, 1947, by a quit-claim deed from the War Assets Administration it acquired a transfer in perpetuity of all of the reservation lands south of the Evergreen Highway not retained by the Army or held by the War Assets Administration for possible transfer to the National Park Service. A reversionary clause in the deed provides that ownership will revert to the Federal Government if the land ceases to be used for airport purposes; but subsequent legislation permits the city to sell all or part of the land if the proceeds are to be used for airport purposes.

The legislative drive to establish a national monument at Fort Vancouver was culminated by the Act of June 19, 1948 (62 Stat. 532), authorizing the establishment of Fort Vancouver National Monument with a total area as established or as enlarged not to exceed 90 acres. Enlargement within the 90 acres was restricted to lands acquired through surplus Federal property procedures or through donation.

Prior to the enactment of this bill the National Park Service agreed that the City of Vancouver could have an avigation easement over the old fort site proper. This agreement was a necessary pre-requisite to the release of the site by the War Assets Administration.

Pursuant to the Act and this agreement, the WAA transferred administration of 53,453 acres of the old military reservation to the Department of the Interior by a letter dated May 19, 1949. This land was in two sections: Parcel 1, 8.156 acres, situated south of Fifth Street and containing most of the site of the Fort Vancouver stockade; and Parcel 3, 45.297 acres, situated between Fifth Street and East Evergreen Boulevard and containing the greater part of the Vancouver Barracks parade ground.

In accepting this transfer on May 24, 1949, the Department of the Interior agreed to the terms of the avigation easement in favor of the City of Vancouver. This easement gave the City the right of free and unobstructed passage of aircraft over the entire 8.156 acres of Parcel 1. In addition, the Service was prohibited from placing any buildings or other structures above ground level, and visitors were specifically forbidden to enter that portion of the monument.

During the Korean War a portion of Parcel 3 containing 2.75 acres of land and several barracks buildings was taken back by the Army, and in 1951 the National Park Service agreed to let the Army use Tract “G” at the western end of the parade ground for organized reserve corps purposes under terms of a revocable use permit. The 2.75 acres have never been returned to the national monument. Thus the combined areas of Parcels 1 and 3 was 50.703 acres.

This arrangement was formalized by a Park Service-Army agreement reached in December 1953, and by
a Service letter of April 15, 1954, which permitted the Army continued occupancy and use of Tract “G.” However, the Service can terminate the use permit at any time, and hence it constitutes no barrier to park development and use.

As a part of this arrangement, the Department of the Army by a self-executing letter dated December 16, 1953, transferred to the National Park Service a tract of 9.21 acres known as Parcel 2. This land was south of Fifth Street and contained the remainder of the stockade site. The total land under National Park Service administration after this acquisition was 59.917 acres, as then measured.

The principal sites which the park was designed to protect—the fort location and the parade ground—having been acquired, the Secretary of the Interior, by a Departmental Order of June 30, 1954, officially established Fort Vancouver National Monument.

Several years later the General Services Administration desired to dispose of the very narrow riverfront section of the former military reservation lying between the City of Vancouver’s Kaiser Access Road (Columbia Way) and the Columbia River. The City of Vancouver wished to obtain this property, but it could not give assurance that structures would not be built on it which would interfere with the historic scene as viewed from the fort site and the monument visitor center. Therefore the Service exercised its prior rights, as a Federal agency, to the surplus property and acquired this river tract of about 6.5 acres by transfer from GSA on December 4, 1957 (accepted by the Department, January 15, 1958). The National Park Service, in turn, issued a permit to the City for use of the property as a public park and boat launching ramp. As extended, this waterfront use permit will continue until 1973.

Along with the river tract, the General Services Administration asked the Service to take over administration of the 100-foot-wide Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway right-of-way which runs across the old military reservation directly north of the Kaiser Access Road. It was felt that as the Federal agency controlling the nearest land to this government-owned strip, the National Park Service was the logical organization to retain custody. The Service saw the desirability of maintaining control over this strategic parcel in order to protect as much as possible the historic scene and to prevent future disposal to an owner unsympathetic to the scenic requirements of a historical park. Also, taking the very long view, it was realized that it would be desirable to acquire the land should S.P.&S. Railway ever relinquish its rights to use the easement over the parcel. Thus the Service accepted the Railroad Tract of about 8.3 acres on January 15, 1958. These two acquisitions brought the total acreage of the monument to 74.623 acres, as then measured.

From the very first planning at Fort Vancouver, the Service had realized that more land would be necessary to protect the fort setting than the 90 acres to which the monument was limited by the authorizing legislation. In 1954 the Service made definite recommendations for proposed ultimate boundaries, and on January 26, 1955, Secretary McKay approved this proposal “as a general planning objective.” Shortly thereafter the Service suggested new legislation to authorize an enlargement to permit eventual accomplishment of these boundary recommendations.

This move was successful, and on June 30, 1961, the President approved an Act of Congress (75 Stat. 196) which permitted the Secretary to revise the boundaries to include not more than 130 “additional acres.” Thus a total land area of 220 acres is authorized. The Act also authorized the Secretary to acquire “in such manner as he may consider to be in the public interest” the non-Federal lands within the revised boundaries. This clause removed the earlier prohibition on the purchase of lands. The new law also permitted heads of executive departments involved to transfer surplus lands needed for the park directly to the Secretary of the Interior. It also changed the name of the area to Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

With the easing of the area limitations, the Service was able to acquire from the Department of the Army by a self-executing letter of May 14, 1963, a parcel of 14.5 acres lying west and southwest of the Hudson’s Bay Company fort site. This area includes about half of the site of “the village” which was associated with the old fort. This tract was subject to several easements, largely for water lines. The only one which seriously restricts Service use of the land is an Army Aircraft Taxiway easement giving unobstructed access over a designated one-acre route from Army property on the north across the tract to Pearson Airpark on the southeast. With the acquisition of this parcel, the total area of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site was—and still is—89.123 acres.
The existence of the avigation easement over all of the Hudson's Bay fort site (Parcel 1) so hampered interpretation of this important historical resource that the National Park Service has attempted for some years to obtain modification. An opportunity came in about 1961 when it was discovered that the June 1959 edition of the FAA regulations for small airports defined avigation easements at the ends of runways in such a manner as would free at least part of the site from the very restrictive provisions hitherto existing. On February 27, 1962, the City of Vancouver and the Secretary of the Interior signed an agreement reducing the easement to the limits of the 1959 regulations.

As a result of this accord the Service was able to rebuild the north and part of the east walls of the old fort stockade in 1966. Also, by fencing the limits of the avigation easement, visitors can be permitted on the north portion of the fort site.

Summary of Legal Factors Relating to Planning

Limitations on Land Use—Avigation easement to City of Vancouver prohibits reconstruction of additional stockade sections or of structures within or adjoining the stockade; also prohibits visitor access to most of fort site.

Army aircraft taxiway easement on part of old "village" site restricts erection of structures, fences, signs, and other developments in that part of area.

S.P.&S. Railroad use permit, extended and confirmed by Secretary of the Interior on December 4, 1954, prevents removal of railroad embankment and opening view from fort site to the Columbia River.

The Clark County P.U.D. has an easement to bring utilities to the visitor center, residences, and utility area until 1977.

Limitations on Land Acquisition—The Act of June 30, 1961, limits the total area of the national historic site to 220 acres.

Other Commitments—A use permit to the City of Vancouver gives the City use of the waterfront strip for park and recreation purposes until 1973.

A Service commitment permits the Portland Area Boy Scouts to anchor a barge and boats off the riverfront section if they elect to do so.
The Federal Government has exclusive legislative jurisdiction over all lands within present boundaries.

Type of Jurisdiction

Climate and Topography
The climate is influenced by Pacific Ocean currents and is quite mild and wet. Temperatures of zero to minus five degrees have occurred, but are exceedingly rare. There are very few days with temperatures over 100 degrees. Typical summer weather is between 70 and 80 degrees, with usual winter temperatures from about 40 to 55. The area receives some snowfall in December and January, but there have been years with little or none whatever.

Prevailing winds during the summer are from the northwest, averaging 8 to 9 miles per hour. Prevailing winter winds are from the southeast, with an average velocity of about eight miles per hour. However, high winds do occur, and at least one heavy fall blow from the southwest can usually be expected, which will vary from 60 to as much as 120 miles per hour.

There are long periods of wet weather. Statistics for the 30-year period 1929 through 1958 show that the mean number of days with precipitation of over one-tenth inch was 97, requiring the use of shelters for outdoor facilities. In contrast, the months of July and August are so dry that irrigation is required to maintain lawns and gardens.

The climate, however, does not materially influence total park visitation or its pattern of use. Most visitation is during the spring and fall, while visits by students during the school year are largely independent of weather conditions.

The topography of the park is formed by the flood plain of the Columbia River. The area slopes gently from the north to the river, with elevations from 102 feet m.s.l. at the north to 24 feet m.s.l. at the river.

The site of Fort Vancouver lies on the first narrow flood plain of the Columbia. The terrain quickly begins a short rise to the second, or Mill Plain. From the rising ground above, the visitor can view the entire scene, including the far side of the Columbia River.

The history of seismicity in Oregon shows that the Portland-Vancouver area receives an earthquake of the magnitude of 5 on the Richter scale on the average of once each five years. Any tall masonry structures, such as chimneys, therefore need to be constructed with this in mind.

Soils
The flood plain and the rising ground behind it consist of a fairly uniform gravelly loam 12 inches or more in depth over alluvial gravel. Surface runoff is quickly absorbed, making irrigation necessary for the maintenance of healthy vegetation.
VISITOR USE
Most visitation is on weekends during the spring and fall months. About 80 percent of visitors are family groups. School groups, consisting of students in the fourth grade and up, from within a 50-mile radius of Vancouver, compose about 10 percent of the visitors. These groups range in size from approximately 30 to 150 students who visit the park during the school year as a part of the school curriculum.

The present pattern of visitor use is quite simple. The focal point for the park visit is the interpretive exhibit in the visitor center. Slide shows are available to the public on weekends, but guided tours are offered to the general visitor at any time. Comparatively few people visit the fort site. At present, the interest there is not sufficient to attract the average visitor.

School groups are given a conducted tour through the public portion of the visitor center. The tour includes a slide show. The average length of stay for school groups is 45 minutes unless they visit the fort site, in which case it is about 1½ hours.

The groups arrive between 9:00 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. Those that have scheduled their visit to include the lunch hour need lunch facilities. They are encouraged to use the city parks for this purpose. There is no existing or proposed sheltered outdoor picnic area within the immediate vicinity, however, and during inclement weather the groups are permitted to lunch in the visitor center lobby or at the sheltered entrance. Of the 283 school groups who visited the park in 1967, 25 groups lunched in the area. A considerably greater number, perhaps a majority, also would have
done so had sheltered picnic area space been available. This facility should accommodate up to 150 children.

At the present time, the length of stay necessary for the casual visitor to absorb the park story does not require lunching to ensure an uninterrupted visit. If the major fort structures were restored, however, he would almost certainly spend the greater part of the day in the park. In that event, the availability of lunch facilities would greatly enhance his park experience.

The annual Fourth of July observances, staged by local service clubs, attract crowds of up to 20,000. Activities conducted as a part of these annual observances are:

- Band concerts, including "rock and roll" bands
- Cannon firing
- Speakers
- Fireworks displays
- Water fights by the Vancouver Fire Department
- Food concessions (set up on East Fifth Street)
- Parades for "Miss Washington" contest, which are made up on the parade grounds

The park also receives incidental recreation use, both passive and active, by neighborhood residents including walking, sunbathing, practice golfing, horseback riding, and cross country running.

Still other incidental uses include National Guard and Reserve Corps parades and artillery problems; Bureau of Public Roads field survey crew training; and art classes.

According to present forecasts, park visitation is expected to reach 123,000 by 1970. This forecast is based on present development only; with major restoration, a significant increase in visitation could be expected.

The estimated carrying capacity of the park with full development and restoration would be about 1,000 persons at any one time, exclusive of special events.
THE PLAN

The historical importance of Fort Vancouver and its location in an urban environment close to a major interstate tourist route presents the opportunity to reveal to a large number of people, through extensive reconstruction, restoration, and interpretation, the significant story of early settlement in the Northwest.

RECONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION

The General Development Plan indicates those elements of the historic area, within the proposed boundary, which should be reconstructed or restored in order to achieve the objective of re-creating a representative and significant segment of the original historic scene.

The accomplishment of this objective will require the reconstruction of the remaining three log walls of the stockade, the squared-timber octagonal blockhouse, and about 23 major squared-timber or frame buildings within the stockade. The interiors of certain key fort structures—such as the blockhouse, the Chief Factor’s residence, the trade shop, at least one fur warehouse, the Bachelors’ Quarters, the office, the bakery, the blacksmith’s shop, carpenter’s shop, jail, and powder magazine—will be reconstructed in whole or in part, and representative rooms will be refurnished. The interiors of several other structures will be adapted for interpretive uses—exhibits, audiovisual rooms, children’s play area, and storage. Others will be used for visitor facilities such as rest rooms and lunch room.

Outside the stockade, several key structures in the village will be reconstructed, as will such auxiliary structures as the cooper’s sheds, fences, barns, and sheds. Historic roads, the garden, the orchard, and some cultivated fields will be restored.

Related to restoration of the man-made scene will be an approximate re-creation of the original surrounding forest environment which has virtually been eliminated since historic times. This will require restoring native Douglas-fir and maintaining the land in a meadow condition, except those areas used for a specific purpose. The reforestation will preserve significant views into and within the historic area and screen out surrounding land uses.

The historic cultivated fields shown for restoration will be put into crops that require a minimum of cultivation and maintenance. One important element of the historic area has not been shown for restoration—the historic waterfront development. The possibility of eliminating the existing land uses that impede restoration between the fort and the river is so remote that inclusion of this area in the restoration plan has not been considered at this time. Future changes in land use, especially relinquishment of the S.P.&S. Railway, would have to take place before this area could be considered for restoration. The historic link between Fort Vancouver and the river is a very important part of the historic picture, and every advantage should be taken to restore it if the opportunity ever presents itself. Meanwhile, the waterfront strip will be landscaped in keeping with the historic scene to the extent practicable and in keeping with conforming recreation uses.

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

A two-way road will provide access as far as the reconstructed fort. This road will be routed around the perimeter of the site, thereby leaving the main part of the historic area free of automobiles.

The main approach to the area will continue to be on Fort Vancouver Way, but the main entrance to the site will be moved from East Evergreen Boulevard to McLoughlin Road. This will allow traffic approaching on Fort Vancouver Way to proceed directly through the East Evergreen intersection. This is especially desirable if East Evergreen is widened to four lanes. Entering the site from McLoughlin Road will afford the visitor an initial panoramic view of the historic area with the river in the background. A parking overlook is proposed at this point. Since McLoughlin Road is a city street, cooperation with the city will be necessary for modification of a portion of the road as shown on the General Development Plan.

Parking will be provided south of the fort at the end of the access road. In this location, the fort itself will completely screen the parked cars from important vantage points in the historic area, including the overlook.

An interpretive vehicular transit system is proposed from the fort to other features in the historic area. This is necessary due to the distance involved between the various features. It will also enhance the visitor’s total experience to see the site from changing angles and perspectives as he moves through the area. The proposed route will form a loop beginning and ending at the south entrance to the fort and will follow the major system of historic roads. The restored system

30
of historic roads will also be used as foot paths for those who wish to walk through the area.

East 5th Street between East Reserve Street and McLoughlin Road is proposed for restoration as an historic road.

A picnic area, with shelter and sanitation facilities, should be provided away from the main historic area to accommodate school groups who have scheduled their trips during the lunch hour and as a convenience to other visitors. The best location is in a grove of trees east of the cemetery on land currently used by the Army as a barracks area. If it appears that acquisition of this land should not be feasible soon after reconstruction of the fort, a temporary picnic area should be located near the parking area at the fort.

As a convenience to visitors with small children, it is recommended that a supervised area for youngsters be provided, allowing parents more freedom to explore the area. However, rather than providing a conventional play area, it is proposed that one of the historic buildings in the fort (possibly the schoolhouse) be devoted to games and craft activities related to the history of the area and that interpretive story sessions be provided specifically oriented to small children as part of the total interpretive program. Linked to this could be an outdoor play area equipped with play equipment designed to relate to the historic period.

Providing an area in the fort specifically reserved for small children and designed to be compatible with the historic nature of the area would do much to enliven the visitors' experience by re-creating children's activities of the period, still maintaining the historical integrity of the area. As side benefits, it would be more convenient for the visitor, it would offer protection from the elements at a low cost through utilization of a restored building, and it would be easier to maintain and protect than in some other location outside the fort. There is sufficient space within the stockade to accommodate this proposal without interfering with other activities. This supervised play area would be operated by the park staff.

To help provide for day-to-day urban recreation uses, a ball field and play field are proposed outside the Fort stockade just to the west.

**INTERIM DEVELOPMENT**

There is an immediate need for a sheltered lunch area for school groups and a small parking area close to the fort site.

It is proposed that an open shelter lunch area be attached to the east end of the visitor center where it will be out of sight but close to the facilities of the visitor center, including the comfort station. After completion of the ultimate picnic area, this structure could be walled in and utilized for expansion of the headquarters.

The interim parking area at the fort site should be located along the east boundary adjacent to the airpark hangers. With additional screening along East 5th Street, this would be the least intrusive location to maintain the present view from the visitor center to the fort site.

Also, a program of clean-up, grading, and planting is needed along the river front.

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Incidental and special uses by the local community not specifically related to the history of the area will continue to be allowed as long as they are compatible with the primary purpose of preservation and maintenance of the historic scene.

Portable staging and seating will be provided at the fort for local groups who may want to utilize the background of the fort for production of plays and pageants. Also, consideration should be given to hiring local theater groups to provide historic dramatization as part of the interpretive program.

Use of the area for Fourth of July celebrations (except fireworks which would endanger the restored fort) and for assembly of civic parades will continue to be allowed. However, more cooperation should be sought from the local community for cleanup and traffic control.

No special facilities, either temporary or permanent, should be provided for these activities. The parade ground will continue to be made available for parking for these special yearly events only, but the condition of the turf should be improved.

Local residents will continue to have free access throughout the area for activities such as walking, bicycling, horseback riding, and sports.
INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

After reconstruction of the fort, it is anticipated that visitors will tend to bypass the existing visitor center or, if not, they will have made an extra unnecessary stop because of the distance between the visitor center and the fort; therefore, it is proposed that the main interpretive facilities be moved from the existing visitor center to the fort and incorporated into the reconstructed buildings. The existing visitor center would then be strictly for administration and storage of the area's large archeological collections.

Along the tour route will be a number of interpretive stops where visitors will be able to explore the various features in more detail. Stops will include the farm buildings, the orchard, and the garden, where historic methods of farming will be demonstrated and such long-disappeared features as oxen and Red River carts may be observed. Other stops will be at marked and interpreted historic sites such as the village, the mill, and the school houses.

It is proposed that a living farm exhibit composed of various farm animals of the period be located in the reconstructed barns and farm yard, with the restored fenced fields used for grazing.

To further enhance the historic character of the area, it is proposed that certain manufacturing activities such as blacksmithing, baking, and cask making be revived as live demonstrations of the daily activities of the period, with the products made available for purchase.

FEE COLLECTION

A fee is proposed for entrance into the fort, and would include use of the special tour vehicle. Visitors will have free access to the remainder of the site.

CONCESSION

With the number of activities proposed, it would be well to consider a concession operation. The location of Fort Vancouver in a large urban area suggests that this could be economically feasible. The concessioner could operate the special manufacturing demonstrations and sell the products along with other items in one of the historic stores in the fort. In addition, he could have a small lunch area in one of the restored buildings, and could operate the special transportation system. Special care would have to be taken with concession contracts and their implementation to insure that historical and aesthetic integrity is maintained.

LAND ACQUISITION

Acquisition of additional land is needed for restoration, development of visitor facilities, and to provide a proper setting and buffer between the restored area and existing and potential adverse surrounding land uses.

The land acquisition map shows the recommended boundary and the individual parcels that would have to be acquired and the priority of acquisition. The total acreage, including land within the existing boundary, is within the maximum of 220 acres allowable under current legislation.

Elimination of the existing upper runway avigation easement could precede acquisition of the airpark, allowing reconstruction of the fort to begin. However, early acquisition of the airpark land, Tract (01-106), is the most critical need in terms of restoration of the historic scene and development of visitor facilities. It is indicated as priority 1 on the Land Acquisition and Ownership map.

Tract (01-102), indicated as priority 2a, is needed for restoration of the historic scene by eliminating existing Army buildings for development of a picnic area and for preservation of the site of the fur-trade cemetery and the sites of several Hudson's Bay Company structures.

Tract (01-104), priority 2b, is needed for restoration of a portion of the historic village area and for further restoration of the historic setting through elimination of existing structures and control of the land use.

Tract (01-103), shown as priority 3, is needed to allow restoration of East 5th Street to a historic road and to eliminate an existing hazard to visitors. This street has received very little use between McLoughlin Road and East Reserve since it was blocked off at the expressway.

Tract (01-107), priority 4, is needed to control the land use between the fort and the highway right-of-way. Currently this area is used for fill dirt storage by the Highway Department.

Tract (01-110), shown as priority 5, is an important segment of the riverfront. It is required to prevent the construction of any high-rise or otherwise incompatible developments in the historic scene; also, should future land use changes permit historic restoration along the riverfront, this parcel contains the sites
of several key features and would be urgently required for interpretive purposes.

Tract (01-100), priority 6, is needed to provide land use control adjacent to the existing Park Service residential area.

This program would complete the historic setting to the extent possible under current legislation.

Control over all the land down to the river would be desirable, allowing full restoration of the historic area between Fort Vancouver and the river. However, the intervening land uses are so firmly established that it is unrealistic to plan on acquiring them at this time.

MANAGEMENT FACILITIES
Implementation of the plan will require additional staffing and maintenance facilities.

No additional staff housing is proposed beyond that which currently exists because of Fort Vancouver’s proximity to adequate housing in the community.

It is proposed that as many of the maintenance functions as possible be contracted. However, expansion of the park maintenance program can be expected. Additional maintenance facilities will be located between the headquarters and the existing residential area.

LAND CLASSIFICATION
The land classification plan delineates potential land classification within the recommended boundary. It can serve as a guide to a course of action for conservation and use of the land. A brief narrative explaining the land classification appears on that plan.

PRIORITY OF NEEDS
The important projects proposed in the objectives and the plan will be carried out in the following order of priority:

1. Acquire airpark land and eliminate existing avigation easement.
2. Acquire remaining lands within proposed park boundary as they become available and in general order of priority shown on Land Acquisition and Ownership map.
3. Construct interim sheltered lunch area and fort site parking.
4. Conduct further historical, architectural, and archaeological research at fort site.
5. Restore major fort structures.
6. Construct access road to fort; construct permanent picnic area with shelter and sanitation facilities or temporary one at fort site.
7. Develop ball field and play field in open area west of fort.
8. Further restore historic features surrounding fort.
9. Inaugurate tour system.

School group visiting the site of old Fort Vancouver.
MASTER PLAN STUDY TEAM

Daniel F. Burroughs
Team Captain
Chief, Portland Field Office

Dr. John A. Hussey
Regional Historian
Western Regional Office

John Ochsner
Landscape Architect, DCSSC

Eliot Davis
Superintendent
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—The Nation's principal natural resource agency—works to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.