



# NCRI Report

## Archaeology's 60th year at Fort Vancouver!

In 1947, 60 years ago, Louis Caywood initiated excavations at Fort Vancouver, and the next year the site was added to the National Park System as a National Monument. Caywood's excavations initially confirmed the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company archaeological site, but it was the identification of the architectural remains of the Powder Magazine that directly led to the relocation of the palisade remnants and building sites within the stockade.

Caywood continued excavation at Fort Vancouver for a number of years, producing a report in 1955 that discussed the attributes of the material culture, the structures, and other archaeological phenomena he had discovered.

Early work at Fort Vancouver mirrored studies throughout the U.S. and Canada that were defined by needs associated with historic site commemoration and development. Caywood's work in the 1940s and 1950s and that of his immediate successors in the 1960s: Paul Schumaker, John Combes, and Edward Larrabee, were geared to site development and interpretation and, by the late 1960s, to reconstruction. This phase culminated in the extensive work conducted by John J. Hoffman and Lester Ross in the 1970s, and in the later years, to the reconstruction of the palisade, bastion and many of the fort buildings.

Susan Kardas and Edward Larrabee's 1968 and 1969 excavations in the Fort Vancouver Village (also known as Kanaka Village), differed from that of the other projects conducted at Fort



*Louis Caywood excavating at Fort Vancouver in 1947.*

Vancouver during this time as they explored the material dimensions of the ethnic diversity of people living in the village. Notably, this preceded the late 1970s developments in the field of historical archaeology that led to more diverse and detailed research including greater attention to quantification and the scientific method and increased exploration of questions of anthropological interest.

Archaeological work for the NPS by Lester Ross, and cultural resources management research by David and Jennifer Chance, Susan Kardas, Bryn Thomas, and many other students and researchers in the 1970s and 1980s helped define the material culture of the fur trade. The site has also been well-served by the hard work of the Oregon Archaeological Society since the Sale Shop excavations in 1973.

Avocational archaeology continues to serve the site while training new interested researchers.

The current research program has taken the dream of National Park Service Regional Archaeologist Jim Thomson to heart, seeking to exploit the excitement of this ongoing archaeological program. Interpretation to the public has become a significant part of the joint Portland State University / Washington State University–Vancouver field school, including training in informal interpretation and participation in mock “kids” digs. Periodic special events that highlight archaeology have become routine in recent years. The Northwest Cultural Resources Institute seeks to continue and expand the partnerships and programs that have been built in the past six years.

## Announcements

Our Curator, **Theresa Langford**, and her husband **Scott**, had a lovely baby girl, Nora Katherine, on November 14, 2006.



Our Historian, **Greg Shine**, and his wife **Sara** recently had their own bundle of joy. Nathaniel Paynter was born December 30, 2006.



**Greg Shine** spearheaded the launch of a new online web feature highlighting the site's African American History. The new web feature, entitled "A Rich Legacy of African American History" highlights information and images that introduce the site's African American story to visitors.

Washington State University–Vancouver graduate student **Keri Conway** completed a public history internship research project for the park entitled, "The Christmas and New Year's Holidays at Fort Vancouver." Conway's study compiled primary and secondary source information about Christmas and New Year's celebrations to help inform the Park's special events, living history, and costumed interpretation programs.

# "Survey Cancelled Due to Flooding:" Mother Nature's Contribution to Submerged Site Survey

by Jacqueline Marcotte, NCRI Intern and PSU Student

Diving is one of the most awe-inspiring activities I've ever participated in. Combining diving with my first love, archaeology, is a rich experience—although not without its trials. This is especially true with the ongoing re-survey of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) waterfront, located on the Columbia River. This survey is being conducted as part of an internship program, and has been made possible through the help of several volunteers from PSU and WSU, as well as local volunteer divers.

The waterfront has three submerged sites: the Benoit Observation, the Quartermaster East, and a prehistoric site that has yet to be surveyed. The scope of this project includes setting up an underwater grid; recording historical and pre-contact artifacts and features; spatial analysis of artifacts; and determination of site location by Global Positioning System (GPS) of the Quartermaster East site.

This survey will bring together local divers and archaeologists working toward a common goal of preserving and protecting submerged archaeological sites. Looting by the diving community is thought to have been profuse at this site, despite the difficult conditions presented by the Columbia River. The effort of bringing local divers and archaeologists together for a common cause is fostering awareness of our non-renewable historic resources, and hopefully reducing future damage done by looters. It will also provide a baseline condition to assess future damage.

We experienced looting first hand during the survey set-up, when a diver was discovered removing bottles from the site. This was just the beginning of our trials, as the first survey, replete with a large cadre of volunteers, was cancelled in November due to weather and the following semi-flood of the river. This continued for the next two

scheduled surveys. I would have to say that the two most important lessons I have learned so far are: (1) work takes 3-5 times longer to accomplish underwater, (2) the weather doesn't care that you have a survey to complete.

Recently however, the weather has taken pity on us, and we were able to start data collection on February 2, 2007. The latest dives at the site were a lesson on working in low visibility, very cold temperatures, and high currents. Investigation of the site has shown that aside from the deposition of silt, logs, leaves, and branches, the site has held up to flooding well and the bulk of the artifacts remain in their primary locations.

We are happy to announce the receipt of the Scholarly and Creative Activity Grant from Portland State University in the amount of \$1500. This money will help fund further research at the site.

This is a truly interesting archaeological survey, with a high volume of submerged artifacts throughout the three sites. It is incredible to swim along in the murky river, with artifacts from times past staring up at you from the river floor. Old pilings peek out at you from the depths, hinting at the HBC or U.S. Army wharf that once stood solidly in the water. I can't wait to get back in!



*Finally, a day in the water...*



# Faunal Analysis of the Sutler's Store Privy

Excavations conducted in February of 2004 associated with the redevelopment of the western portion of the U.S. Army's Vancouver Barracks uncovered a privy and a stockade associated with a mid-nineteenth century sutler store. A variety of artifacts were recovered, such as bottle glass, ceramic fragments, animal bone, metal artifacts and munitions. This store operated at what was then the U.S. Army's Columbia Barracks from ca. 1850 until sometime between 1859 and 1871. From 1852 until 1853 Elisha E. Camp operated this store in partnership with then Brevet Captain Ulysses S. Grant.

Sutlers were civilians that supplemented the military provisions allotted to soldiers through the sale of sundry items. Sutlers acted as both dry-goods dealers and grocers, and were subject to price controls and regulations by Army officers to prevent them from overcharging the soldiers. They carried a wide variety of goods, but their main trade was in foodstuffs.

In 2006, over 19,100 animal bones from the West Barracks dig were analyzed, with over 17,300 found in the privy. Differing layers allowed the privy artifacts to be

divided into six sub-groups for analysis. The types and quantities of the faunal remains associated with each of the levels could indicate changes in the diet, food preferences, shifts in butchering techniques, and waste disposal patterns.

One of the goals of this study was to determine whether food remains represent a residence (the sutler and his family) or a small restaurant. Animal bones from the latest occupation (over 8,800), found with large quantities of architectural debris suggestive of demolition, yielded some surprising results.

Beef was the most common meat identified (over 65%), but remains of mutton, pork, chicken, salmon, and sturgeon were also tossed into the privy. The size of the butchery cuts indicate that the majority of the meals at the sutler store were prepared for either individuals or small groups. By assigning a meat cut to each animal bone then ranking the meat cuts based on both preference and cost, we can assess changes in household consumption patterns and participation in larger regional economies, as well as changing attitudes towards different meats. Since meat consumption

reflects short term economic conditions of the consumer, unlike purchases of other domestic or personal goods, faunal patterns reflect economic conditions that can be used as a proxy for socioeconomic class. The underlying assumption in faunal studies is that preferred cuts of meat are more expensive, and that people with a greater access to economic resources will consume larger quantities of preferred cuts.

Food remains from the sutler store reveal a highly ranked diet. This suggests that if the collection is from a family, they were of a higher economic class. However, if the meat cuts were from a restaurant as suggested in historic documents, then several questions are raised. Is the preference for highly ranked cuts of meat an assertion of individuality in a socially and politically controlled environment; a desire for soldiers to emulate those with higher social and/or economic standing; or simply a reflection on the quality of military food? Or some combination thereof? Further analysis of food stuffs will help to answer this question.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Vancouver National Historic Reserve is a partnership of the National Park Service, the City of Vancouver, the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the U.S. Army. It includes Fort Vancouver and its village, Vancouver Barracks and Officer's Row, Pearson Field and Air Museum, portions of the Columbia River waterfront, the Water Resources Education Center, and the McLoughlin House unit in Oregon City, Oregon.

#### Fort Vancouver National Historic Site & Vancouver National Historic Reserve

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#### Phone

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[www.nps.gov/fova](http://www.nps.gov/fova)

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## Under the Microscope: Ed Beechert

Edward Beechert has an extensive background in archaeology and academics and has been volunteering at Fort Vancouver since 1998. Ed has a dual Ph.D in economics and history from the University of California, Berkeley. Working at a number of different colleges and universities, Ed has taught economics, history, anthropology, archaeology, social science, and labor education.

For most of his career Ed worked for the University of Hawaii, teaching history and labor education. He has written three books on labor in Hawaii, including one on Honolulu Harbor for the University of South Carolina Maritime Historical Series. He is currently rewriting his book *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History*, published by the University of Hawaii Press. He has also written numerous articles.

Ed continues to contribute to the community through his volunteer work here at the Fort. He started off working on the excavation of the jail site, and has since done just about everything in the archaeology lab. He is one of our most valued volunteers!



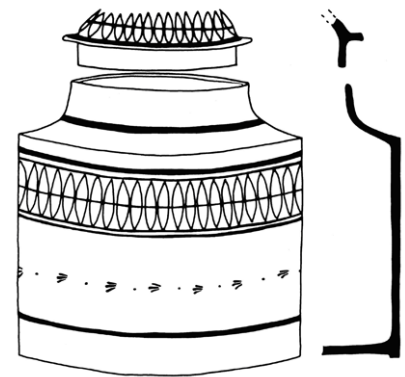
# The Tea Canister and the Plankhouse: Ceramics from the Station Camp Site

As part of the evolving research on the Station Camp archaeological site, Fort Vancouver Archaeologist Bob Cromwell has been completing research on the ceramics recovered from it. As has been briefly covered in past articles in the NCRI Report, in 2004-2005 NCRI staff participated in multi-month excavations at the Station Camp site on the north bank of the mouth of the Columbia River. The analysis of this site indicates that it was a seasonally-occupied Chinook encampment, complete with small plank structures. The Chinook Tribe identifies this site as their Middle Village. Later, it was a cannery town named McGowan. Most excitingly, although the portion of the site studied showed the use of traditional plankhouse construction, the majority of the artifacts were European-manufactured trade goods that date to the earliest contact period of ca. 1792-1820. In total, 293 ceramic sherds were recovered from the site.

These artifacts pre-date the Hudson's Bay Company and Fort Vancouver by nearly a generation, and it has been a wonderful challenge to learn the elements of this earlier material culture, especially as it relates to its use by the indigenous Chinook people of this very early contact period. As covered in the last edition of the NCRI Report, Spode manufactured ceramics dominate the ceramic assemblage of Fort Vancouver. These ceramics tend to be transfer print decorated white earthenware. As a point of difference, only three fragments of transfer print ceramics were recovered from the Station Camp site, and none of these can be identified as having been manufactured by the Spode firm. Indeed, the hallmark of this site is an English ceramic that defines the late-18th century, undecorated "cream colored" or creamware. These wares which represent over 66% of the assemblage, demonstrate the English potteries' attempt to produce a durable, white colored earthenware that would compete with the Chinese export

porcelains of the 18th century. To show that this ware was not entirely successful in this role, Chinese export porcelains are also present in this assemblage. These wares only represent approximately 16% of the assemblage, but their presence denotes their popularity in European trade during this time period. Their presence at this Chinook site indicates their popularity with the Chinook, too!

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Artist's rendition of reconstructed tea canister by  
Jacqueline Cheung

## Historical Fragment

**Manumission Document from U.S. Army Fort Vancouver, quoted in Fred Lockley, "Some Documentary Records of Slavery in Oregon," Oregon Historical Quarterly 17 (June 1916), 108.**

Mommia Travers, a black woman, aged about forty-five, bought be me from Issac Burbayge, in April 1849, I have this day given her freedom unconditionally, and she is in all respects free to go and do as may seem to her most to her advantage, without let or hindrance from me, my agents, heirs or assigns. Witness my hand and seal, at Vancouver, May 5th, 1851.  
Llewellyn Jones, Captain U.S.A.

The above named woman, Mommia, is an honest and perfectly conscientious woman and deserves kind and good treatment at the hands of every one.  
Llewellyn Jones, Captain U.S.A. Recorded, July 29th, 1857 [sic?]

## NCRI Director's Letter

Save the date! As part of our seventh annual field school at the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, we plan to celebrate the 60th anniversary of archaeology at Fort Vancouver. On Thursday, July 26, we will hold a special version of the annual lecture series that will commemorate 60 years of digging in the dirt at the Fort and Village. If you have ever excavated or worked in the laboratory at Fort Vancouver or have friends and relatives who have worked at the site, you are invited to this special reunion. We will be sending out announcements soon, so please, if you know of anyone who has worked at the site and should be especially invited to this gala event, please let us know at the NCRI!

I am happy to report that this year's field school will highlight the search for the military history of Fort Vancouver. Work will explore the barracks, Officers' quarters, and laundry quarters of the first phase of military buildup at the site (ca. 1849 to 1877). This period from just prior to until just after the American Civil War encompasses a tremendous time of change in the Pacific Northwest. The military had a major role in the changes that occurred here, including their central role in the Indian Wars and the development of the territory's infrastructure. Our excavations will explore the nature of this early Victorian-era army on the frontier. Beth Horton plans to use the results in her Ph.D. dissertation at Washington State University!

An exciting new program that will run concurrently with the field school will invite elementary school teachers over three consecutive weeks to learn more about how historical archaeology can be used to teach history, math, and science curricula. Our plan is to introduce the educators to the science of archaeology and stimulate new curricula development that integrates the heritage of this special place with the needs of today's young people in the classroom. We think this is a winning combination of history, science, and mathematics with archaeology!

Doug Wilson

## Current Research

### Martin Adams

Martin Adams is examining insect remains from the Station Camp site. He is looking at the proportion and taxonomic distribution of insects inside and outside of one of the house features, as well as above and below a layer of diatomaceous earth. As a result of this project, he is becoming increasingly interested in insects introduced from Europe into the Pacific Northwest during the late-18th and early-19th centuries. It is generally thought that these insects were first introduced into the eastern U.S., then were brought west with people and animals during westward expansion. One such insect is *Otiorhynchus rugostriatus* (the rough strawberry root weevil), a flightless beetle which has been found at Station Camp and whose presence at this site may pre-date all other records in the U.S. The earliest record of this insect in America was in New York in 1891, and it was not previously recorded in the Northwest until 1911.

### Elaine Dorset

The archaeology project focusing on the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Garden is ongoing in the Cultural Resources Division at Ft. Vancouver. Volunteers (bless them) have nearly completed the analysis of artifacts, and results are pending on analysis of pollen and phytoliths—silicate bodies formed in the cellular structure of plants that remain in the soil long after the plant has decayed. Macrobotanical (seeds, leaves, roots, etc.) identification will begin shortly. There is much more information to come on this project as analysis results are generated. Please see future newsletter issues for more pieces of the puzzle.

### Meris Mullaley

Fort Vancouver's 1825-1860 employee village has been the subject of archaeological explorations since 1968. The most recent project was conducted in the 2001-2003 field school seasons. Meris is working on a comparative analysis of the remote sensing data with the data from shovel tests and larger excavations. This analysis has the potential to clarify the layout of the village and provide more meaningful patterns in these datasets. This information will help guide future archaeological projects in the village.

# Material Culture Notes:

## NAILS



The most common type of fastener used during the 1800s for wooden construction was the nail. Manufactured from either iron or yellow metal, nails come in a wide variety of styles and sizes. Nail shape and size is determined by function; historically, some of these functions can be gleaned from the corresponding terminology (i.e. boat, chair, shingling, and sheathing nails), while others are more difficult to puzzle out (i.e. clout or dog nails).

Archaeologically, nails can tell us about the history of building and repair in one individual building, or changes over time at a specific site. The variety of nails used by the Hudson's Bay Company at this site sometimes presents challenges during analysis. That said, there are a number of clues for identifying the difference between wrought and cut nails in particular.

Understanding the processes used to manufacture nails makes it much easier to distinguish between them. There are three main areas of the nail we examine: head, shaft, and tip. By looking at these attributes, as well as the character of the metal—wrought metal has a distinctive grain—we can identify what types of nails are recovered during excavation.

Wrought nails are manufactured from square, rectangular or round nail rods (usually iron), and have a tapered tip produced by compression (hammering). Such nails were produced by hand and/or machine; and both types are known to occur at Fort Vancouver. Cut sheet nails are manufactured by cutting nail blanks from flat nail sheets (also usually iron). Nail blanks have two tapered edges resulting from the cutting process, and no additional tip formation is needed for the finished nail. Nail shank thickness is uniform from head to tip, except for those portions of the shank which are altered during the heading process by gripping, wedging or crimping.

The nail is a fascinating artifact, far from being boring and rusty, nails are varied and informative, and have many interesting things to tell us about the past.

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## *The Tea Canister and the Longhouse*

Turning back to the English manufactured cream colored wares, Cromwell analyzed the assemblage from a minimum number of vessels (mnv) perspective, identifying no less than 28 undecorated creamware vessels, and 16 decorated creamware vessels.

The presence of so many ceramic vessels indicates a demand for these foreign objects in Chinookan society, even though their fragmented presence in the archaeological record indicates their relative fragility.

The decorated creamware vessels all had hand-applied decorative elements, consisting of green, brown, and blue lines, geometric patterns, and plant decorations. Most excitingly, the remains of a very distinctive “tea caddy” or tea canister were identified in the “F block” house remains. This tall (approximately 8 in. tall), lidded, cylindrical vessel is quite ornate, with olive hand-applied sprigs and intersecting ovals surrounding its body. These canisters were meant to hold expensive tea leaves until they were ready for use, and this expense was likely applied to the tea canisters also. Ceramic tea canisters had a relatively short popularity span, of ca. 1760-1820, Recent research indicates that lidded, cylindrical tea canisters such as this one were manufactured in the ca. 1785-1805 period, and a recent trip to Colonial Williamsburg revealed a similarly shaped canister with a slip decorated date of 1792 right on its body!

The presence at Station Camp of this tea canister at the F block household may be an indicator of the high social status of the occupants of this house. It is likely that this vessel was as highly prized by its European owners as its Chinookan ones, and it seems likely that it would have demanded a relatively high trade price, from all perspectives. The Station Camp tea canister is one of the most unique fur trade era objects that the NCRI has ever worked with, and it's presence at Station Camp is emblematic of the importance and distinctive nature of the site.



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Fort Vancouver National Historic Site**  
 612 East Reserve Street  
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A partner in the  
 Vancouver National Historic Reserve

## EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

This is the official newsletter of the Northwest Cultural Resources Institute. The NCRI is a cooperative partnership dedicated to facilitating research and educational activities relating to archaeology, history, curation, and historic architecture at the Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

**Director of the NCRI, Archaeologist**  
 Dr. Douglas Wilson

**Archaeologist**  
 Dr. Robert Cromwell

**Curator, Editor of the NCRI Report**  
 Theresa Langford, M.A.

**Historian**  
 Gregory Shine, M.A.

**Museum Technician**  
 Heidi Pierson

**Archaeological Technicians**  
 Eric Gleason and Jacqueline Cheung

**Research Assistant**  
 Scott Langford

## MYSTERY ARTIFACT

This artifact was found during excavations of the employee village in 1969. It is a metal object—probably a copper alloy—conical with threading on the inside of one end, and a small incised band near the tip.

The mystery artifact in the last issue was a sickle bar mower blade guard.

