



State Parks

Are Rich in History

By Albert Culverwell

State Parks Are Rich in History

BY ALBERT CULVERWELL

FOR MANY YEARS the state of Washington has provided opportunities for public recreation through its state parks. Each area is a center of relaxation for outdoor enthusiasts in the Northwest. Last year over three million people, including many out of state tourists, visited the state parks. Developing and maintaining these recreational resources is the job of the State Parks and Recreation Commission, a group of seven citizens appointed by the governor.

Since 1949 the Commission has been given the added responsibility of acquiring, preserving, marking, and maintaining historical areas in the state. The work embraces phases of history, geology, anthropology, and archeology, and is proving to be another inducement to the traveler to spend more time in our state.

To outline and help carry on this work, the State Parks and Recreation Commission in 1949 asked some of the state's leading historians, anthropologists, geologists, and foresters to serve on an Advisory Board on Historic Sites. Their assignment was to recommend to the Commission those historical sites having sufficient state significance to warrant their preservation and interpretation. The Board also advised the Commission on the marking of certain areas as historically important and has prepared suitable wording for such markers. The contribution of this fifteen-member Board in the screening and the research pertaining to the historical sites has been of tremendous value in formulating the historical work of the Commission. The use of such professional and interested people is somewhat unique among historical programs developed by state park organizations. Since July, 1953, the Commission has employed a full-time historian to implement the program of investigating, acquiring, improving, and marking of the historical sites. In addition to supervising all

historical work, he serves in a liaison capacity between the Commission and the Advisory Board.

The work follows a pattern which includes as a first step the acquisition of the site. The Commission attempts to acquire the property, wherever possible, but it is also successfully working under long-term lease agreements. Historic buildings are then preserved or restored in keeping with extensive research on original conditions. Where the property has no buildings, the Commission undertakes archeological work to study evidences of past life and possible location of structural foundations. This work is all preliminary to compilation of data and presentation of the material to the public. The Commission has erected interpretive markers to explain the various sites and in at least three areas is proceeding with construction and development of interpretive museums.

The most ambitious attempt of the Commission to restore buildings of historical significance is the work being done on Fort Simcoe. "Mool Mool" or "bubbling waters," the Yakima Indian name for the Fort Simcoe site, was a favorite camping and meeting ground of the tribes and bands of the Yakima nation. The fort was established by the War Department in 1856 to maintain troops and to prevent the recurrence of war between the whites and Indians. It became an Indian agency in 1859 and continued to be used in that capacity until 1924.

Today, only five of the fort buildings remain. An old blockhouse of pine logs hewn to form practically square timbers is the only remaining building constructed in the fall of 1856. This blockhouse was one of four erected to protect the soldiers while they constructed other buildings. Other original buildings are of modified colonial architectural style. The foundations of these buildings are of locally dressed rock, and fireplaces are lined with stones quarried near The Dalles. The sills of these houses are of hewn timbers; the outside walls and some of the interior walls are filled, between the studding, with

ALBERT CULVERWELL, formerly of Western Washington College of Education, is historian and director of research for the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Photos by courtesy of the Commission.

brick nogging. Interior walls of the houses are finished in boards or plaster. Major Robert S. Garnett, commandant and builder of the fort, originally intended to use planed and jointed boards on the interior walls. He found, however, that shrinkage made an unsightly wall needing constant repair. The papering of some of the walls was apparently done during the period when the fort was an Indian agency. Where some of the outside sills suffer from dry rot, the problem of restoration becomes extremely complicated. To restore the sill the studs and the brick work resting on the sill have to be removed as well as the board and batten exterior and boarded interior of the wall.

Basic in restoring this site was the question whether to restore buildings of the fort or of the agency period. After seeking advice from the Yakima Indians and the local historical society, the Commission chose to restore the old fort buildings of 1856-59 and to demolish those structures that would not be used in the development program. Every reasonable effort is being made to keep architectural plans, measurements, descriptions, and locations of all buildings to be razed.

In accordance with the terms of lease between the State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Yakima Indians, all parties concerned with the restoration must be in accord with the work. To recognize the interest of the Indians of the Yakima nation, the old agency warehouse will be remodeled as a museum to interpret the Indian history of the site.

Along with the historical development, the site will have picnic facilities, a parking area, and a comfort station. The park grounds will be

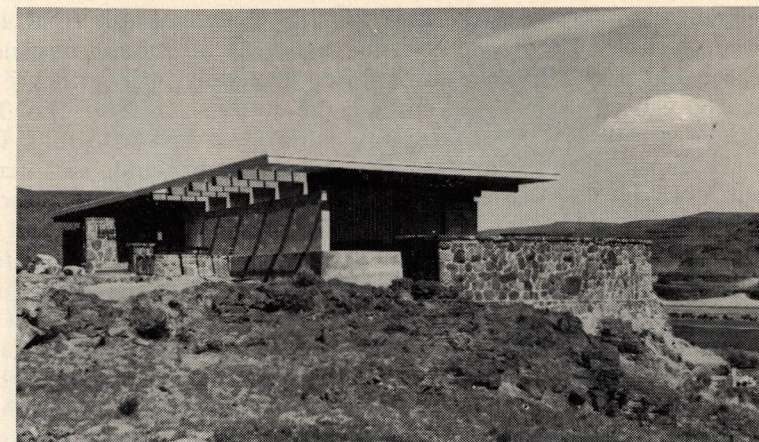
carefully separated from the historical exhibit. The Indian concessions and the museum also will be separate from the fort buildings. By keeping the historic exhibit distinct within the park, the visitor will be under no pressure to purchase materials for sale.

Other projects not so extensive but equally as important in presenting the history of the state of Washington are the restorations of St. Paul's Mission, located north of Kettle Falls, and the John R. Jackson house, built in 1845 near Chelalis. Jackson House is particularly noted as the meeting place of the United States District Court for some time after 1850. Much of the restoration work at St. Paul's Mission was done by a local group with money furnished by the Commission. The extent to which a historical development may be carried is often determined by local interest and the coöperation between such groups and the State Parks.

BUT THE historical program of the State Parks and Recreation Commission includes more than the restoration of historic buildings. The construction and development of interpretive museums is equally worthy of recognition.

At Ginkgo State Park, near Vantage, a modern museum building was completed in 1952. The State Parks owns approximately 6,000 acres in the area around Vantage, containing a petrified forest unsurpassed in number of species of trees. Specimens of more than 200 different trees, including the Ginkgo, fir, oak, pine, maple, elm, sycamore, and walnut have been discovered. The museum houses over 2,500 specimens of petrified wood found in the area. Recently completed displays in drawings and type material depict the

Ginkgo State
Park Museum



fascinating story of how the trees in this area became petrified. It tells of the forest which once flourished in central Washington; of lava coming from fissures in the earth, blocking the flow of rivers and transforming the area into a swampy basin; of the succeeding lava flows over millions of years covering the ancient swamps and forests; and of the inundated logs gradually becoming petrified by the action of chemicals in the lava and water. During the later stages of these lava flows, earth upheavals formed the Cascade range, the barrier against the moisture laden winds from the west. Thus the region became arid, and trees that required the more humid climate soon died.

Worthy of considerable recognition is the interpretive museum which was opened June 27 at Fort Columbia near Chinook at the mouth of the Columbia River. Like the museum at the Ginkgo Petrified Forest, the Fort Columbia museum interprets the history of the region and of the local area in picture, object, and type matter. Relics on display have been carefully selected to augment the story.

Fort Columbia is a particularly appropriate site for such a museum. The Columbia River served as a doorway to the early Pacific Northwest. The maritime explorers, Gray and Vancouver, came first, and then by land came Lewis and Clark, David Thompson, and another member of the North West Company, Alexander Henry. Later, David Douglas, the botanist, visited the area. Many important historical events took place either here or within view of Chinook Point and Scarborough Hill, land now within Fort Columbia Historical State Park. The area is equally important as the home of the Chinook Indians, and museum displays emphasize the Indian background.

ANOTHER PHASE of the historical program is the archeological work financially supported by the State Parks. The work at old Fort Spokane (1812), the fur trading post of the Pacific Fur Company, located near the confluence of the Spokane and the Little Spokane rivers nine miles northwest of Spokane, was unusual in the number of agencies associated with the dig. Begun in the summer of 1950 as a joint effort of the State Parks and Recreation Commission and the National Park Service, it was finally completed last summer with the coöperation of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington. Local support, led by the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, was also strong.

It will be remembered that in 1810 the North West Company established a small temporary post in the area. Undoubtedly an important reason for the selection of this site for trade purposes was that the area had long been used by the Indians as a rendezvous and camp site. In 1812, Fort Spokane was built by John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company in close proximity to the North West Company's Spokane House. After the War of 1812, the North West Company took over the Pacific Fur Company's interests in the Northwest and changed the name of Fort Spokane to Spokane House. The original Spokane House was abandoned, and today we have no evidence of where this first settlement was located. In 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company acquired the interests of the North West Company resulting in the removal of the trading post in 1826 from Fort Spokane to Fort Colville at Kettle Falls on the Columbia River.

Archeological work at the site was made more difficult because no ground plan or drawing of the trading post was available. Writers of the period and later historians have given ample



Fort Simcoe

reference to Fort Spokane and the life there. From such records it was possible to create a reasonable mental picture of the fort. The site had once been part of a farm, and the cultivation of the land tended to destroy surface evidence and disturb much underground material which might have contributed information to our knowledge of the old fort. Evidence of three stockades, however, was found, indicating changes made upon the original Pacific Fur Company stockade. What is believed to be the remains of Jaco Finlay were found at one corner of the Hudson's Bay Company stockade. Records reveal that Finlay requested that he be buried under a bastion of the old fort. In addition, numerous artifacts indicative of the white and Indian life at the site were unearthed.

With the archeological work complete, a program of interpretation was begun. Logs set on concrete forms approximately 12 inches above the ground were placed as accurately as possible in positions where evidence of the stockades was found. These logs are to be painted, with each trading company active in control of the site represented by a different color. By this log painting plan, the visitor will be able to observe the stockade of each company and see changes made upon the original Pacific Fur Company stockade. Where a stockade wall was a part of another company's fortification, the logs will be painted with the colors of each company. A large interpretive sign explains the historical importance of the site, and small signs note points of interest adjacent to and within the stockade.

At some future date, a caretaker's house may be required at the Spokane House site. If this development is made, a small museum may also be constructed to display the materials found there. In the meantime, the material found at the site is being housed in the museum of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society in Spokane.

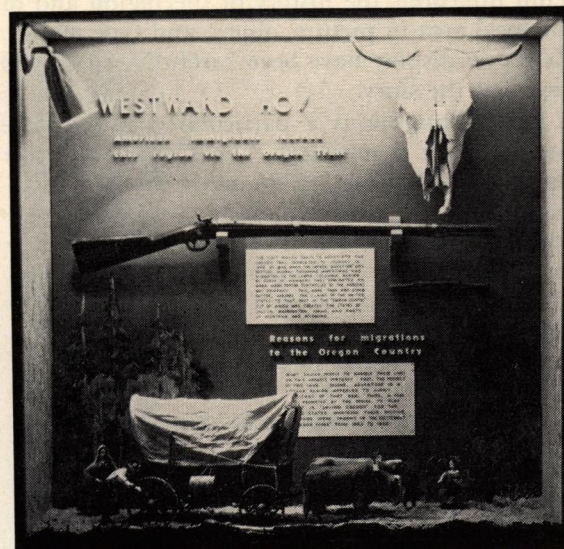
The State Parks Commission acquired in 1950 a portion of the site of Old Man House, known as the largest Indian dwelling on Puget Sound. Originally the home of Chief Sealh (Seattle), this site is located on Pacific Beach near Suquamish. Archeologists from the University of Washington, financed by the State Parks, in 1951 unearthed evidence of this primitive multi-family dwelling. Many of the house posts, split with elkhorn wedges and stone hammers, have been discovered. The excavation showed that the house was not rectangular in shape as was formerly believed, and that the building varied in

width from 40 feet to 60 feet. Such details on house construction and the artifacts found which give evidence of the culture of the inhabitants of Old Man House made this dig exceptionally worthwhile. Plans for interpreting the site include an interpretive marker, which has already been constructed, and the landscaping and development of the area just above the site. From this spot visitors will be able to view what now remains of this early housing project.

Digging at Fort Okanogan (1811), trading post of the Pacific Fur Company, in the summer of 1952 revealed new facts on this first American post within the area of the present state of Washington. Historians had long believed that this American post did not have a stockade, but evidence of a stockade approximately 120 feet square was found. Although the construction date of this stockade has not been determined, it is believed that it must have been later than 1813 when the post was taken over by the North West Company, a British organization. There is a need for additional archeological work to verify this find definitely; if this evidence is substantiated, it will add an important feature to the story of this early American post.

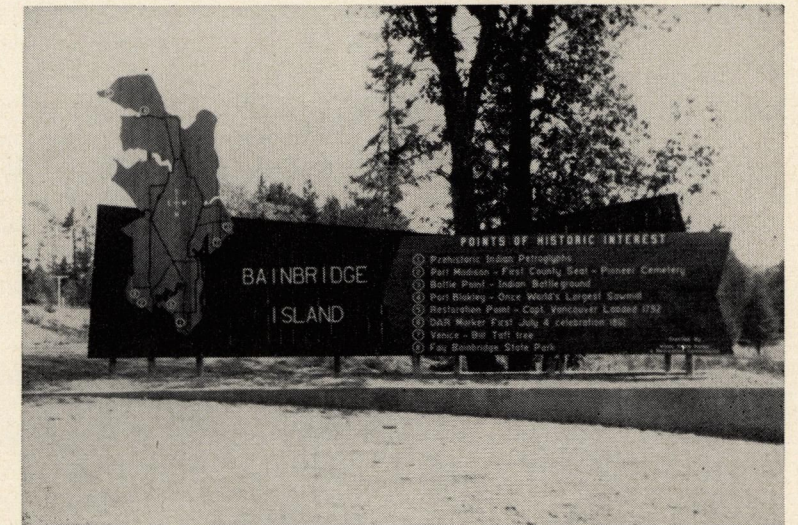
Archeological exploration at the Hudson's Bay Company post, approximately a mile away from the American post, and also known as Fort Okanogan, confirmed information already known to historians. The location of buildings and the bastions erected originally in 1816 by the North West Company were found to be much as available records revealed.

Display at Fort Columbia Museum



PACIFIC NORTHWEST QUARTERLY

Marker
on
Bainbridge
Island



Future developments at these sites will be concerned with the new evidence at the American post and an over-all historical interpretation of the area. The development of a "vista point" on the Chief Joseph Dam highway to overlook the entire area around the two fort sites is now in progress. In addition, coin operated binoculars may be installed to focus on the several points of interest, including the American post, the Hudson's Bay Company post, and points on the Columbia River once crossed by fur traders and early pioneers.

To better interpret the history of the Dry Falls area of central Washington, two short tape recordings have been made. These recordings are played intermittently during each day. One tells the geological story of how, during the Ice Age, a glacier covered the plateau west of the Grand Coulee and blocked the Columbia River. The overflow from the lake formed by this ice-dam caused two prehistoric waterfalls greater than any now known. After much erosion, at the point of Dry Falls, the water ceased flowing when the ice-dam melted, and today we have the sculptured evidence of a once powerful river. The second recording describes the numerous points of interest visible from the vista point. This recording also informs the listener of the various recreational facilities available in Washington state parks. Interpretive displays telling the geological story and locating numerous points of interest on a large photograph of the area are planned for location at the vista point in this state park.

A SYSTEM of highway markers is another feature of the historical program. In 1953 the State Parks Commission, through the cooperation of Bainbridge Island and Kitsap County historical groups, erected on Bainbridge Island the first area marker of its kind in the state. This marker, 32 feet long and 14 feet high, consists of an outline map on which seven important historical sites are indicated. These include such points of interest as Indian petroglyphs, a pioneer cemetery, Indian battleground, Restoration Point, and Fay-Bainbridge State Park. All sites are marked by signs so that the visitor on tour will not miss them. Area markers are also being considered for Whidbey Island and the Walla Walla Valley. The erection of such markers would inform the tourist, as he enters the area, of the interesting historical sites and their location.

In 1952 the State Parks recognized the Monticello Convention site by placing a large highway marker on land adjacent to State Highway 12 between U.S. Highway 99 and Longview. This land, a gift to the state, is located close to the old Hudson's Bay Priest House where the Monticello Convention was held on November 25, 1852. Here pioneers met a second time to petition Congress to create a new territory north of the Columbia River. These pioneers were requesting that 32,000 square miles of the 340,000 square miles then comprising Oregon be set aside as a new territory. This marker, the largest the State Parks has erected, is approximately 40 feet long and 10 feet high and is built in three sections. One tells the story of the Convention, the

second records the growth of the Oregon territory, and the third lists the names of the 44 citizens who signed the memorial.

Another activity is the marking of the graves of persons important in the history of the state. To date, three graves have been recognized by markers: Chief Sealth (Seattle), 1786-1866, famous Puget Sound Indian, buried in the memorial cemetery at Suquamish; Ranald MacDonald, 1824-1894, son of a Hudson's Bay Company factor and one of the few white men to live in Japan previous to opening of that country to Occidentals, buried in a little cemetery on Toroda Creek near Old Toroda; and William Henson Wallace, 1811-1879, captain of volunteers in the Indian Wars of 1855-57, a Washington territorial delegate to Congress in 1861, and fourth territorial governor, buried in the Steilacoom cemetery.

The State Parks Commission, through the State Highway Department, contracted for construction of cast aluminum signs which will be more permanent than the familiar wooden signs formerly used. In coöperation with the State Highway Commission these signs will be erected at Steptoe Battlefield, Fort Walla Walla, Ainsworth, Old Man House, Fort Columbia, British Camp on San Juan Island, and other points of interest such as Kamiak Butte, Earthquake Point, Point Roberts boundary, grave of Chief Sealth, and the Indian Painted Rocks at Yakima and Spokane.

In addition to the work mentioned, the Commission is concerned with expanding its historical program. A feature with considerable merit is the development of an archeological site in conjunction with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington. A site within the Deception Pass State Park has already been selected by the University for archeological work. This summer the State Parks is financing the work of an archeologist at the site with the purpose of "opening up" the area for study by students and tourists.

Another feature of tremendous tourist value now under consideration is a program of planned tours for visitors interested in historic sites; for example, a trip from Seattle via Mukilteo to Whidbey Island, thence to Coupeville and Deception Pass, back to the mainland and Seattle.

At Mukilteo, in coöperation with the Indians of the area, an Indian potlatch house may be constructed in the state park. This Point Elliott

area has special significance to the Indians, for here, in 1855, Indians in the area signed a treaty giving up their lands to the whites and agreeing to move to reservations. In coöperation with local groups on Whidbey Island, many of the old buildings of this area could be marked, and the history of the area interpreted. This interesting and historic area, with its blockhouses and old buildings, would then have greater significance.

Several excellent collections of Indian arrowheads are housed in the museum at Sacajawea State Park. By the development of some definite program of interpretation this display could be improved.

The story of how arrowheads are made should be told in sketch and type material. Arrangement of the points according to nomenclature and an attempt to explain the relative age of these artifacts also would be interesting to the student of Indian materials. All the materials now on display should be catalogued so that records are available on the collections. Such ideas should be incorporated in any program of development.

Although the aim of the State Parks and Recreation Commission's historical program is primarily for the purpose of education rather than for profit, the question of how funds are acquired for the historical program may be of interest. Approximately 25 per cent of the moneys received from the State Highway Code Laws and \$1.20 of each \$3.00 driver's license fee are allotted to the parks and parkways fund. From this, approximately \$50,000 has been set aside each biennium for the development of historical sites. The expenditure of these funds is money well spent, for more and more tourists are becoming interested in the historical attractions, thus providing an ever-increasing stimulation to trade in the local areas. During the first year's operation at Fort Simcoe, more than 21,000 persons from all parts of the United States visited the site, and it is hoped that with the improved facilities there, the number of visitors will continue to increase.

The ideal state park offers both beauty of surroundings and varied recreational opportunities, much of which must be developed by park personnel. Park people are finding that the park centered around a historic site offers from the start recreational and cultural advantages. To the historian the preservation of these sites does much to enrich the layman's knowledge of the early days in Washington's past.