



SIX YEARS IN THE MAKING
A NATIONAL HISTORIC FIRST
THE UNVEILING OF THE
FORT VANCOUVER
TAPESTRY

THE FORT VANCOUVER
TAPESTRY PROJECT

The dream began in 1999.

The mission: to honor and celebrate the history of Clark County, Washington through the beauty and narrative of a hand-stitched tapestry.

The result is the Fort Vancouver Tapestry, measuring 108 feet long and 28 inches high.

It is believed to be the only textile narrative of this scope ever created in the United States.



Clark College
The Next Step



CLARK COLLEGE
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON



ABOUT THE FORT VANCOUVER TAPESTRY

Southwest Washington is an area with a number of factors that encourage a richness of life: mild climate, waterways and abundant forest and farm lands. This particular area is a great crossroads.

The Columbia River travels its southwestward path from Canada and intersects the

fertile central valley and great coast ranges of Oregon and Washington.

For thousands of years, the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers has been the hub of cultural activity for Native Americans, French voyageurs, English trappers and hunters and American settlers. It was the largest settlement. It was the gathering place for all nationalities and walks of life. Our project serves as a visual interpretation of this “one place across time.” It enhances tangibly the concept that the history and growth of the American West can be embodied in a single unique place.

The intent of the Fort Vancouver Tapestry is to honor and celebrate the significance of this unique place. It consists of a series of joined panels, 28 inches high and of varying widths, which measure 108 feet in length. It is 100% linen embroidered with wool and metallic threads.

It was designed by two fiber artists, Eleanor Van de Water and Sherry Mowatt, and was stitched by 55 stitchers and 12 visiting Japanese stitchers. Twenty-two volunteers also participated in the project.

Languages of some of the ethnic groups who live in Clark County adorn the top border.

THE PANELS OF THE FORT VANCOUVER TAPESTRY

Panels 0-5: The Pacific Northwest has been rich with culture for thousands of years. Native Americans go about their daily lives harvesting camas roots and fishing in the river. You will also have the first sighting of Sasquatch.

Panel 6: The year is 1792. Northern Europeans travel up the Columbia from the newly discovered mouth of the river, taking copious notes and mapping the river.

Panels 7-9: Traveling westward from St. Louis, American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark explore the Columbia River to its mouth. Local natives aid them with preserving foods and mapping the area.

Panels 10-16: Hudson Bay Company establishes a fort, recognizing it as a gathering place for the different native tribes and also for hunters, trappers and French voyageurs. Goods travel overland and also by ships leaving the company docks. The Chief Factor, Dr. John McLoughlin, welcomes and greatly aids the many settlers who traveled the Oregon Trail. Sasquatch watches the settlers from the woods.

Panel 17: Father Blanchet devises the Catholic Ladder as a method of teaching Catholicism to the natives.

Panel 18: Swedes and Norwegians are among the many loggers who provide lumber for the settlers' homesteads.

Panels 19-25: In 1846, the United States and Great Britain finally resolve the ownership of the Northwest Territory by designating the 49th parallel as the boundary line. The United States Army establishes a barracks and begins building officers' quarters near the fort. The Hudson Bay Company gives up its post in 1860, moving to Victoria, B.C. The post becomes Columbia Barracks. The three houses featured are the O.O. Howard House, Grant House and Marshall House. General George C. Marshall, 1953 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, commands the Barracks in the 1930s.

Panels 26-27: Sternwheelers and ferries provide vital transport for the settlers.

Panels 28-30: We turn away from the river now to the burgeoning town. Buchanan's Feed Store provides feed for settlers' stock and seeds for planting. The Fire Department protects townsfolk from the constant threat of fire.

Panel 31: In 1871, Mother Joseph encourages Lowell Hidden to start a brick company and begins designing and building a permanent home for Providence of the Holy Angels. The Sisters of Providence and many orphans move into their new home in 1874.

Panel 32: Paddy Hough is a renowned and very popular teacher in the public schools. Hough Elementary School houses the very chair pictured in this panel.

Panel 33: The year is 1885. St. James Cathedral is the first cathedral in the territory. It is built of 900,000 Hidden bricks!

Panel 34: Washington is admitted to the Union November 11, 1889. This panel features our state bird (the goldfinch), our state flower (the rhododendron), and the state tree (the hemlock).

Panels 35-39: Transportation arrives in a big way! The train depot design serves both north-south and east-west tracklines. The owner of the first car in Vancouver carries a large weight in his car, not wanting to break the law that states that horses shall be tied while waiting. The opening of the Interstate Bridge between Washington and Oregon greatly encourages auto travel. Trolley lines extend east as far as Sifton.

Panel 40: The year is 1867. A pack train of over 200 mules leaves to supply Army operations in the west. Training mules plays a vital role in the Vancouver Barracks, reaching its peak during World War I with over a million mules on active duty.

Panel 41: The Spruce Division is made up of both civilian and Army loggers. It is in existence for the last eight months of World War I. Find Sasquatch.

Panel 42: Vancouver is recognized world-wide as the Prune Capital of the World. Of course we need a Prune Queen to rule the Prune Festival! And of course the garb should be barrels that read "Full of Prunes"...

Panel 43: The first county fair was located at Bagley Downs; it then moved to Battleground. Its present location is near Ridgefield.

Panel 44: All of the businesses featured in this panel were started before 1950. Most are still operating today, some in their fifth generation of family ownership.

Panel 45: The Covington House is a log house first used as a boarding school located east of town. It was later moved into Vancouver and has been cared for by the Vancouver Women's Club for over 50 years. Is Sasquatch a member?

Panel 46: Vancouver's first post office.

Panel 47: The old telephone building is a wonderful terra cotta building.

Panel 48: Pearson Airpark is one of the oldest continuously operating air fields in the United States. The field has served as an ammunition storage place, blacksmith shop and garden. During World War I, a spruce mill was set up to supply wood components for military aircraft. It is named for Alexander Pearson, a Vancouver native who won the first cross-country air race in 1919 and later made the first aerial survey of the Grand Canyon. Valeri Chkalov and two co-pilots flew this Russian plane over the North Pole in 1937 and landed in Vancouver when they ran low on fuel.

Panel 49: Kiggins Bowl is named for a former mayor of Vancouver who also built the Kiggins Theater pictured in panel 44.

Panel 50: A Columbian paperboy throws a paper at a house made of Hidden brick. See Riley the Airedale in the bushes.

Panel 51: The pictured Standifer Shipyards produced wood and steel-sided ships for World War I. Kaiser shipyards opens in 1942 and reaches a peak employment of 38,000 in 1944, exploding the population of Vancouver.

Panel 52: Paul Gaiser is the Superintendent of Schools who successfully guides the school system through the sharp increase in population. Classes are large and double-shifting is necessary.

Panel 53: Greyhound buses stop so passengers can see the floral arrangements in the large round window.

Panel 54: Legacy Hospital and Southwest Washington Hospital, along with its predecessor, SW Washington Memorial, continue to serve Clark County. The old St. Joseph Hospital no longer exists.

Panel 55: Gretchen Frazier is the first American to win an Olympic gold medal in skiing...the giant slalom.

Panel 56: Alcoa Aluminum builds dikes during the Vanport Flood, allowing them to continue operations and to also offer dry ground to neighboring dairy herds.

Panel 57: For over forty years, Eva Santee was a well-loved librarian. The first library was a Carnegie Library and is now our Historical Museum.

Panel 58: Labor unions supported the construction in 1965 of this very modern (for its time) design. The sign across the street has always been upside-down.

Panel 59: Spectacular cherry trees, a carillon and fountain adorn Clark College. Washington State University Vancouver, which opened in 1996, also has a fountain, surrounded by a natural stone courtyard.

Panel 60: On Columbus Day, October 12, 1962, one of the biggest storms of the decade devastated this area with winds gusting up to 92 miles per hour.

Panel 61: The Port of Vancouver serves ships from all over the world. The façade of the Seafarers' Center is featured in the top border.

Panel 62: A Tidewater tug, pushing barges, plies the waters under the Glenn Jackson (I-205) Bridge as geese fly over.

Panel 63: Vancouver's Fourth of July fireworks display is billed as one of the largest west of the Mississippi.

Panel 64: Lloyd "Ace" Parsons' brightly painted home with Dodge City in the backyard lives only in our memory now.

Panels 65-68: Shoppers stroll in the market, plays are staged in the Slocum House, the Symphony plays in the bandstand and citizens (and Riley) enjoy the fountain and clocktower in Esther Short Park. Sasquatch watches.

Panels 69-70: Ilchee was the daughter of Chief Concomly, the wife of Chief Casino and a shaman in her own right. She "paddled her own canoe."