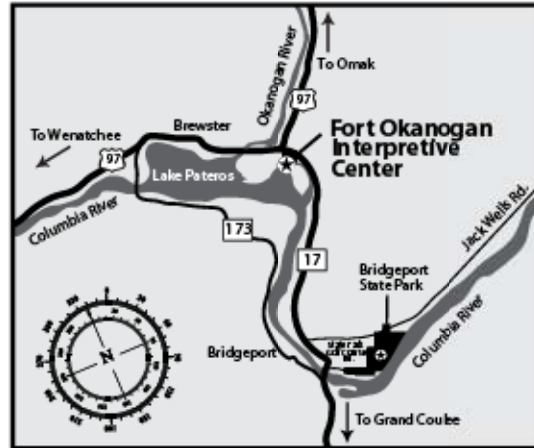


parallel as the international boundary necessitated handing the fort back to the United States. But it was not until June 1860 when the Hudson's Bay Company finally moved their few remaining effects from the now deserted Fort Okanogan site to Keremeos in British Columbia.

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission acquired the two sites of Fort Okanogan in 1951. In order to uncover the hidden story of the forts, three archaeological excavations were conducted. The first was in 1952 with the cooperation of the National Park Service. Work at the location of the first Astor-site unearthed the four stockade walls and a single bastion; remains from all four walls and corner bastions of the Hudson's Bay Company fort were located and buildings that housed the trading store, a residence, the chief factor's house, and a kitchen and its cellar were identified. Idaho State University sponsored the second survey in 1957, and soon thereafter, the planning for the interpretive center began. The center was opened and the park was officially established in September 1960. The last excavation occurred in 1963 and 1964 and concentrated almost exclusively on the Astor-era fort location. The stockade walls, main house, blacksmith shop, various cellars and the original driftwood structure, which Alexander Ross built during his first winter at the fort in 1811, were located at that time.

The initial Astor-site was flooded when Wells Dam was constructed in 1967 and the newer Hudson's Bay site was partially inundated. The approximate areas of both sites can still be seen from the bluff the interpretive center sits on. Fort Okanogan Interpretive Center is a reminder of days long past; days when three countries battled for this portion of the Oregon Territory and when fur traders set in motion a change of lifestyle for the native people.



The park is located four miles from Brewster on U.S. Highway 17.

Fort Okanogan State Park
Junction of Highways 17 and 97
Brewster, WA 98846
(509) 686-7231

Park hours: Open May through October.
School and group tours available by appointment year round.

State parks information: (360) 902-8844
or www.parks.wa.gov

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission



P.O. Box 42650
Olympia, WA 98504-2650
(360) 902-8500 • TDD (360) 664-3133
www.parks.wa.gov

Commission members:

Mickey Fearn	Joe Tallor
Fred Olson	Joan Thomas
Bob Petersen	Cecilia Vogt
Eliot Scull	

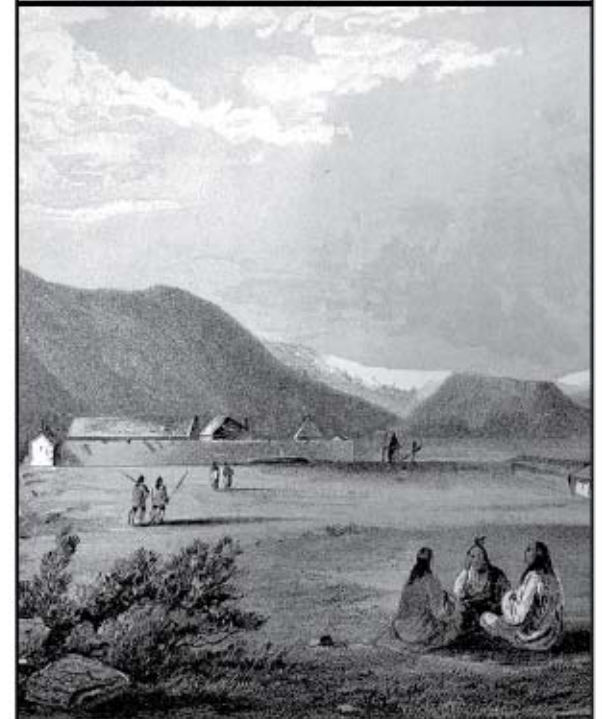
Agency director: Rex Derr

All Washington state parks are developed and maintained for the enjoyment of all people, regardless of age, sex, creed, ethnic origin or physical limitation.

To request this brochure in an alternative format, please call (360) 902-8844 or the Washington Telecommunications Relay Service at (800) 833-6388.

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Your guide to Fort Okanogan Interpretive Center



Fort Okanogan Interpretive Center

Fort Okanogan Interpretive Center tells the story of Native Americans and the fur traders who occupied this location. The center is located in Fort Okanogan State Park, a 45-acre day-use park. The museum sits on a bluff overlooking the original location where the Pacific Fur Company first established a transfer station in 1811 near the confluence of the Okanogan and Columbia rivers. The post was eventually fortified, changed ownership twice and was moved to a site on the Columbia River which is also overlooked by the Interpretive Center.

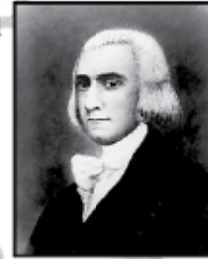
History of Fort Okanogan

The location of the fort was purposefully placed on a long established trail route used by the native people of the area. Prior to the arrival of Canadians and Europeans, the native people were semi-nomadic, following the seasons of nature and their sources of food. Both the Columbia and the Okanogan rivers were important locations to the native inhabitants. Over time, trading furs and other native goods for commodities and services became a way of life for many natives and eventually changed their lives forever.

During the first half of the 1800s, few ventures were more profitable than the fur trade. Otter and beaver furs sold for high prices in the Orient. In Europe and America, beaver hats were at the height of fashion. The search was on for new territories to trap and trade and what better place than the virtually unexplored Northwest wilderness. Since the 1700s, the Hudson's Bay Company of England and the North West Company of Canada had prospered greatly from their fur trading ventures, and the Americans decided they had better lay their claim before it was too late. So began the race to establish the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest.

John Jacob Astor, a New York merchant, wanted to set up a new branch of his American Fur Company in the Northwest; thus began the Pacific Fur

Company. On Sept. 6, 1810, Astor's ship, the Tonquin, set sail – its destination, the mouth of the Columbia River where the Pacific Fur Company established Fort Astoria in March of 1811. Astor's dream was beginning to take shape but it was not until Sept. 1, 1811, that a party of Astor's men, headed by David Stuart, landed on a level spot on the "Oakinacken" River within a half-mile of its junction with the Columbia River. They quickly set out to erect a small driftwood dwelling – Fort Okanogan – the first place in Washington where the United States flag flew.



John Jacob Astor

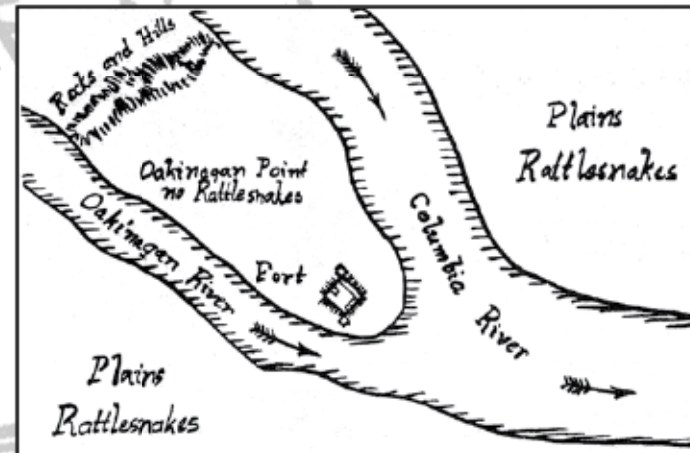
The party dispersed and one man, Alexander Ross, remained. He spent the first winter here and established fur trading with the Sinkaietk, or the southern Okanogan Indians. Trading was good; for merchandise worth about \$160, he received pelts valued at more than \$10,000.

What seemed like a solid enterprise to Astor was actually a situation that was faced with many serious problems. Astor's men were low on supplies, and the Canadian North West Company offered them vigorous competition. During 1812, murmurs came from the East Coast of a war with England as well as a "frigate coming to take and destroy everything that is American in the Northwest coast." Because of these developments, in 1813 the Pacific Fur Company at Fort Astoria agreed to sell "their establishments, furs and stock" including Fort Okanogan to the Canadians.

Life for the Canadians was not much easier. Not only did they now have to worry about Fort Okanogan, but back in Canada, they were involved in cutthroat competition with the Hudson's Bay Company. They were, however, able to enlarge the fort during 1816 by building a new dwelling house with four rooms and dining hall, two houses for traders and trappers, and a storehouse for furs and trading. A palisade with two corner lookout towers also was constructed around the fort.

The rivalry between the Canadian companies continued to mount until 1821 when a decision was made to end the years of violence and bloodshed. The two companies were merged under the Hudson's Bay Company flag. With the merger, Fort Okanogan again changed hands.

The Hudson's Bay Company brought with it 160 years of experience in the fur trade. Sometime



Copy of historic map showing original location of the fort and using historical spelling.

between 1831 and 1837, the site of the fort was moved to a spot along the north bank of the Columbia, two miles from its original location. Surrounding the new fort was a stockade of pine logs without the familiar corner towers. Two bastions were added at a later date, however, since they were on the list of property being

turned over to the Americans in 1860. Inside was a house for company officers and two rows of mud huts for trappers and their families.

The Columbia River grew to be a source of wealth for the Hudson's Bay Company. The enactment of the Oregon Treaty in 1846 establishing the 49th