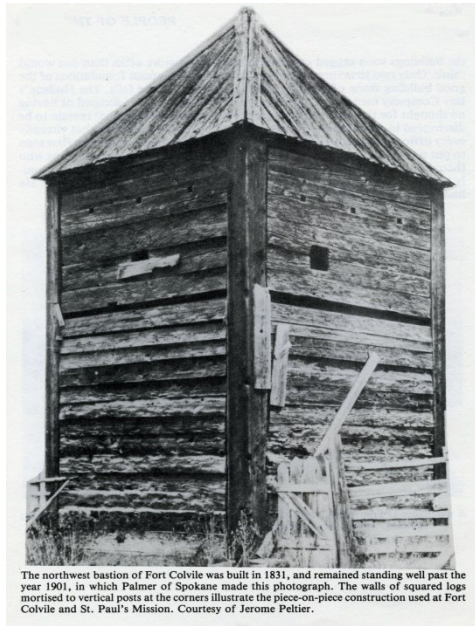


## Time Will Tell

Often when appraising the importance of a current event, people will defer to the future saying, “Time will tell.” We are all living through rapidly changing times and looking back, the time-will-tell test makes some sense. We can say with confidence that “The Beatles were good;” “Computers and cell phones are important;” or “Satellites connected everyone.” But none of these things stand still. They morph into new, usually more complicated versions of their original selves. Stretch that back 200 years to the establishment of Hudson’s Bay Fort Colville and the effects become complicated indeed. We are no longer just talking about new technology or a small number of people. We are looking at a complete change of culture, trying to trace its origins, evaluate their significance and depict them as clearly as possible. After all, if we live here, this is our heritage.



The northwest bastion of Fort Colville was built in 1831, and remained standing well past the year 1901, in which Palmer of Spokane made this photograph. The walls of squared logs mortised to vertical posts at the corners illustrate the piece-on-piece construction used at Fort Colville and St. Paul's Mission. Courtesy of Jerome Peltier.

Over the past couple of years, I have met many people involved in demonstrating this huge cultural change. A group that stands out is the Friends of Spokane House (<https://www.friendsofspokanehouse.com/>). Comprised of people with both White and Native backgrounds, the Friends have a lot to offer. Members have researched the fur trade, created clothes of the era; learned sign languages; forged tools; constructed piece-on-piece buildings; trapped beaver; camped out fur trade style and conducted classes. The bicentennial of the establishment of Spokane House was in 2010. They have experience.

The Columbia Boat was the main transportation of the fur trade west of the Rockies for 40 years. Jack Nisbet ([www.jacknisbet.com](http://www.jacknisbet.com)) and Professor Tom Holloway have researched, written extensively, and helped make available knowledge about the unique origin, production, and function

of the Columbia Boat. Hudson’s Bay Fort Colville was the construction hub for these boats. They joined the Native transportation of sturgeon nose canoes and dugout canoes on the rivers. Spokane Tribal member Shawn Brigman Phd. has revived the art of making sturgeon nose canoes, tule mats and pit houses ([shawn-brigman.squarespace.com](http://shawn-brigman.squarespace.com)). His compatriot John Zinser has built dugout and wooden canoes with Native youth and is eager to build a Columbia Boat for the bicentennial.

Restoring Salmon runs is a major focus of all local tribes. The traditions, ceremonies, and biology of salmon are being revived by Spokan Tribal historian, Warren Seyler, tribal fisheries, and others including the staff of the Inchelium Cultural Research Center ([www.incheliumcrc.org](http://www.incheliumcrc.org)), who recently sponsored a presentation by Bill Layman on the fishery at Kettle Falls. Tribal wildlife efforts to restore not only salmon, but beavers, lynx, elk, and other species to the local ecology add a redemptive chapter to the legacy of resource exploitation during the fur trade era.

In the Native world view, salmon and all other creatures are family. The role of humanity is not domination but participation in environmental health. Historians, especially those with tribal backgrounds and ancestry including Andrew Perkins, Arnie Marchand, Jackie Cook, Guy Mora, Nancy

Margarite Anderson ([nancymargueriteanderson.com](http://nancymargueriteanderson.com)), and many others have helped keep this project based on fact and on family. At its core, history is personal.

In listing the cultural impacts of Fort Colville many topics exist for which I have not found personal contacts. A principal product of the fort was grain and a grist mill to grind it. For better and worse grain flour became a staple in the diets of Natives and Europeans. Food is central to culture and as a farm, Fort Colville's effect bears closer examination. The farm raised cattle, swine, and hundreds of horses. By the time Hudson's Bay traders arrived with boats, horses had been in North America over 300 years. They deserve a place in this bicentennial event. French and Indian Métis free trappers arrived in the Colville



A watercolor of Fort Colville, by Henry Warre, painted in 1845. The view is from the boat landing, toward the southeast. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

Valley before official explorers like David Thompson. The Métis culture transformed elements of art and music from their French origins into traditions that are still alive today. Drums, fiddles, bagpipes, and flutes all contributed to festivities at the fort. Our commemoration should include them too.

Correspondence with a growing list of over 50 informed and interested history buffs has helped develop this project for the past couple of years ([www.theheritagenetwork.org](http://www.theheritagenetwork.org)). Organizations besides those part of the Heritage Network will be key to reserving space, obtaining permissions, and building support for the bicentennial. They include the Park Service, Avista, the Kettle Falls Chamber of Commerce and City Council, the Spokane, Colville, Kalispel, and other surrounding tribes, county officials and a range of venue managers. Contracts, publicity, insurance, transportation, and security all need attention, time, and money.

This look at the scale and significance of Hudson's Bay Fort Colville could also be considered as a job description. Choosing how to tell a family story that now stretches back over 5 generations or more, is a decision that should only be made by very knowledgeable people with vision and personal understanding. Finding the right person willing to make that commitment is a critical step moving forward.

With little more than a year to go, developing the money and the people to make it happen are crucial right now. Small local contributions and volunteer efforts to put pieces of it in place give bigger contributors confidence that the community supports the effort and that it will be successful. The Heritage Network is accepting donations by check or electronically. Checks should be addressed to: The Heritage Network, PO Box 25, Colville, WA 99114. It would be best to note on the check that it is for the bicentennial events. Another option is to go to <https://crossroadsarchive.net> and click on the donate button.

Our area has a great cultural heritage. Time will tell how well we managed to pass it on.