CONTESTED BOUNDARIES

A New Pacific Northwest History

DAVID J. JEPSEN
AND DAVID J. NORBERG

WILEY Blackwell

Contested Boundaries

Contested Boundaries: A New Pacific Northwest History

Contested Boundaries: A New Pacific Northwest History is an engaging, contemporary look at the themes, events, and people that have shaped the history of the Pacific Northwest over the last two centuries.

Bringing together the best features of a reader and a traditional textbook, this work features12 stand-alone essays that thematically capture the essential narratives of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, with features like timelines, illustrations, and sidebars that provide scholarly context.

Centered on the concept of "exclusion," *Contested Boundaries: A New Pacific Northwest History* introduces the region's many different inhabitants – past and present – from Native Americans and women to Asian Americans and Hispanic peoples, and details the political, economic, and social barriers they encountered. It includes well-balanced, inclusive, up-to-date coverage of a variety of important issues for the region, including the environment, gender, ethnicity, and culture. A companion website for students and instructors includes test banks, PowerPoint presentations, student self-assessment tests, useful primary documents, and resource links.

Written by two professors with over 20 years of teaching experience, this work introduces the history of the Pacific Northwest in a style that is accessible, relevant, and meaningful for anyone wishing to learn more about the region's history.

DAVID JEPSEN is a former journalist and corporate marketing professional who has been writing professionally for 40 years. He holds a BA in Communications and a MA in History from the University of Washington. Since 2007, he has taught at Pierce College, the University of Washington Tacoma, and Tacoma Community College, where he is currently a member of the adjunct faculty, teaching both U.S. and Pacific Northwest history. His many writing awards include Honorable Mention for the 2006 Oregon Historical Society Joe Palmer Award for the article *"Old-Fashioned Revival: Religion, Migration and a New Identity for Pacific Northwest at Mid-Twentieth Century"* (2006).

DAVID NORBERG has taught Pacific Northwest history in Washington for nearly 14 years and currently is a full-time member of the history faculty and chair of the Social Sciences Division at Green River Community College, in Auburn, Washington. He holds a BA in History from the University of Washington and a MA in History from Western Washington University. His article, *"The Ku Klux Klan in the Valley, a 1920s Phenomenon,"* published by the White River Valley Museum, shed new light on the conservative backlash in the region following World War I.

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David J. Jepsen and David J. Norberg

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To Jackie, who taught me how to listen.

To Kristine, Alex, and Niko, whose support and encouragement made this work possible.

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Authors' Biographies

David J. Jepsen, a former journalist and corporate marketing professional, has been writing professionally for 40 years. He holds a BA in Communications and a MA in History from the University of Washington. He teaches Pacific Northwest and United States history at Tacoma Community College. He writes regularly for academic journals and history museums. David and his wife Jackie live in Gig Harbor, Washington. They have two grown daughters, Jillian and Danielle.

David J. Norberg teaches Pacific Northwest and United States history and is currently the social science division chair at Green River College in Auburn, Washington. He holds a BA in History from the University of Washington and a MA in History from Western Washington University. He periodically writes articles and gives public presentations for local history museums and historical societies. David lives in Tacoma with his wife Kristine and their two sons, Alex and Niko.

Carly Cross photo

Preface and acknowledgments

For much of my 40-year writing career, penning a book has long been a sought-after goal. A monograph, the staple of regional historians, or a modest collection of essays seemed achievable. I never dreamed my first book would be a survey of Pacific Northwest History. But a chance encounter at the Organization of American Historians 2013 annual meeting in San Francisco remade that dream.

Typical for such events, dozens of publishers filled an exposition hall to display their latest titles, while sales reps eagerly explained how theirs would enhance the learning experience in our classrooms. Amidst the din of hundreds of teachers and historians strolling through rows of exhibits, I chatted with a small group of Pacific Northwest historians and professors. We agreed that for all the great history on display, the publishers had failed to address our greatest need – an up-to-date text on regional history. After all, the last new one was released the year Ronald Reagan handed the presidential reins over to the first George Bush, and Booth Gardner occupied the governor's mansion in Olympia.

Some informal research demonstrated the need was bigger than I suspected. Nearly half of the roughly 100 colleges and universities in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho offer Pacific Northwest History at least once in a school year, often more. The remainder focus primarily on state history. Clearly a survey of regional history was sorely needed and long overdue, and I began to explore how I might fill this embarrassing gap in our offerings.

Fortunately, the history division at the publisher John Wiley & Sons saw the same need, and had been searching for an author as far back as 2012. So it's the contribution of Wiley and Sons that I must first acknowledge. Andrew Davidson, then Wiley's senior history editor, shared my vision for a new approach to a regional text, and entrusted the work to a relatively untested writer.

Andrew cautioned that such a hefty undertaking required multiple authors. While initially resistant to the idea, I set about finding a regional historian with the requisite writing skills and willingness to take on what amounted to a two-year commitment. That search led me to David Norberg, currently the social science division chair at Green River College in Auburn, Washington. *Contested Boundaries* is the byproduct of a true collaboration between Dave and me. Importantly, we share fundamental beliefs in what it takes to engage students. His chapters on the North American fur trade and early settlement era in the nineteenth century, and the Great Depression and World War II in the twentieth century reveal his exceptional research and writing talents. His work on the twelfth and last chapter, "The Fractured Northwest," creates a telling snapshot of the

region's most recent past, vital if we expect to connect with the rapidly growing number of students born in the twenty-first century.

Even double-teaming the narrative we needed support from many corners. If *Contested Boundaries* finds a long-term home in the classroom, it will be in large part due to fellow historians who willingly shared their time and expertise in reviewing chapters. In addition to adding clarity and balance, they often moved us to rethink what by then had become well-entrenched positions. Our heart-felt thanks go to John Findlay and James Gregory at the University of Washington; Peter Boag and Karen Blair, retired, Washington State University; Patricia Killen, Gonzaga University; Coll Thrush, University of British Columbia; Dan Bush, Green River College; Drew Crooks, independent historian and author; Ed Echtle, independent researcher and historian; David Nicandri, retired director, Washington State Historical Society (WSHS); Ed Nolan, head of special collections at WSHS; and Feliks Banel, producer and historian. A special note of thanks to Stephanie Lile at Bering Street Studios and the University of Washington Tacoma, whose editing skills and well-honed instincts helped put the final touches on an evolving narrative.

The authors and publisher would like to extend special thanks to the Washington State Historical Society for providing us affordable access to their vast collection of photos and images. We share their goal of engaging students, teachers, and the community in bringing to life the colorful histories of Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. To view more WSHS images or visit the Washington State History Museum go to http://www.washingtonhistory.org/.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the mentorship and longtime support of two University of Washington professors. On the Tacoma campus, Mike Allen provided guidance early in my graduate studies, and confirmed that a 50-something student could indeed succeed in a second career. In Seattle, John Findlay's contributions to regional history extend far beyond his many books and essays. A generation of aspiring historians owe their careers to Professor Findlay. He taught me how to think and write like an historian. He urged me to look past the headline stories and see the subtle nuances that give regional history depth and context.

David Norberg wishes to thank his colleagues at Green River College for their numerous suggestions, encouragement and support: Ed Echtle, friend and fellow historian, who shaped his thinking on the region's past; and Alan Gallay, grad school advisor, whose reminder that he should enjoy his work profoundly affected his research and teaching style.

Finally, both David Norberg and I would like to thank our families for patiently tolerating (most of the time) our prolonged absences while we buried ourselves in libraries and museums or flailed away on our keyboards. To borrow from the politicos, publishing a book takes a family.

Introduction

During Captain George Vancouver's two-month exploration of Puget Sound in spring 1792, he dispatched crews in longboats to chart and map the Sound and pursue the "termination of every branch no matter how small it might appear."[1] On the evening of May 22, a crew under the leadership of Lieutenant Peter Puget was camped on the beach near present day Steilacoom when a contingent of 30 or more Natives approached in six dugout canoes.

By now, three weeks into their exploration, the British had accepted the constant presence of curious Native Peoples. But this visit felt different. There were no women and children among them, and the men were armed with bows. Alarmed, Puget's men grabbed their muskets and darted for cover behind trees. One of the British, likely Puget, stepped forward, drew a line in the sand, and thrust out his hands, signaling the Natives to stop. They hesitated, and appeared briefly to argue among themselves, before returning to their canoes. A peaceful end to a potentially fatal incident.

On January 2, 2016, two and a quarter centuries after Vancouver's expedition, another incident did not end so amicably. Angered over the way in which the Federal Government controlled Western lands, two dozen armed ranchers and anti-government protesters occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon. The standoff ended 41 days later with 25 arrests and the death of one militant, LaVoy Finicum, a 55-year-old Arizona cattle rancher. Finicum, who had acted as spokesmen for the militants throughout the occupation, was shot by police during a roadside incident outside the wildlife refuge.

So goes the history of the Pacific Northwest. From Puget drawing a simple line in the sand, to more complex lines drawn by federal regulation, the region offers a rich history of people contesting boundaries set down by others. Boundaries came in all sizes and shapes. International, territorial, and state boundaries gave the region shape but with only minimal intrusion on people's daily lives. Others were writ in code and proved more intrusive: Indian reservations, racial exclusion laws, bans on women voting and wartime internment restricted people's freedom and access to society. Others still were abstruse, persistent, and harder to contest: cultural dominance, racism, class conflict and homophobia – all variations on that line in the sand. Not all barriers were drawn in black and white. Competing interests sometimes resulted in erecting obstacles for some that opened doors for others. Grand Coulee Dam and other hydroelectric projects emasculated a mighty river, destroyed a salmon habitat and harmed a native culture. Yet what boosters called the "Eighth Wonder of the World" created

thousands of jobs, opened millions of acres of farmland for irrigation and supplied the region with affordable electricity for generations – a clear case of one group's boundary being another's opportunity.

Contested Boundaries: A New Pacific Northwest History conceptualizes the region's past under the umbrella of Contest. It's a collection of stories about people contesting the political, economic, and social barriers that blocked their path to equality: Native Peoples, African Americans, Asians, women, unskilled workers of all races, and others. We follow them across the centuries as they struggle to hurdle one boundary after another during settlement, industrialization, economic calamity, world war and globalization.

Our coverage is mostly confined to Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. This choice may seem arbitrary but practical reasons dictate we define the region narrowly. The question of where it begins and ends remains open to debate. In addition to the trio of states, some historians include western Montana, southwest British Columbia, Alaska and even Northern California. Others eschew political boundaries altogether, using the geography of the North Pacific Slope to define "Nature's Northwest."[2] More lyrically, the writer Timothy Egan argues the Pacific Northwest is "wherever the salmon can get to."[3] But for our purposes, the debate is mostly academic and irrelevant because wherever one draws the lines, the stories vary only in detail. The legacy of contest and exclusion prevailed throughout the North American West, or as one historian called it, a "contest for property and profit" combined with "a contest for cultural dominance."[4]

A brief note on structure is appropriate here. *Contested Boundaries* is a hybrid that merges an edited collection of essays with elements of a traditional text. Rather than offering a text-like narrative in strict chronological order, *Contested Boundaries* features 12 stand-alone chapters covering the time from when only Native Peoples inhabited the land through the end of the twentieth century. Largely derivative in nature, they provide a synthesis of the superb historical scholarship in regional history published over the last 40 years. We cannot tell every story, and therefore must omit important ones. But we have tried to capture the essential narratives that collectively leave the reader with a vivid picture of the region's past, and importantly, eager to explore further. Historical timelines and brief sidebars highlighting ancillary people and events help to fill potential gaps in our coverage.

Contested Boundaries is divided into three parts. The four chapters in Part I, "Clash of Cultures," opens with an examination of the cultures that indigenous peoples maintained for millennia. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when European and American explorers ventured into the region, signaled a dramatic change in their way of life. Some visitors came away with fortunes, and others made claims to ownership. All left behind deadly disease. Enthralled by the promise of riches, traders soon swept into the region, leading to the first permanent contact with indigenous peoples already wracked by disease but still able to negotiate on the trade grounds as equals. In addition to furs, traders returned east with colorful stories about "savages" ready to receive the word of God and don the work clothes of a "civilized" society. Following the trade routes west, Catholics, Presbyterians, and Methodists established missions in the wilderness and committed themselves to recasting native life. Their well-intended, but largely unsuccessful and sometimes tragic quest to transform Native Peoples into Christian farmers drew others west. Soon a great government-sponsored land giveaway, coupled with the wonders of rail transport, triggered a veritable stampede of settlers, erecting new boundaries in every direction.

Part II, "People and Place," explores the monumental impact and boundaries that came with industrialization. By late nineteenth century, Native Peoples had been largely marginalized and "free land" gobbled up. The railroad fostered industrialization and mechanization, which in turn opened up worldwide markets for natural resources, created tens of thousands of jobs, and established the region as a source of "inexhaustible" resources. Promoted as a land where "money grows on trees," the region soon swelled with workers of all races and social classes, many radicalized by the harsh realities of the industrial era. Radicals were begrudgingly tolerated as long as there were enough jobs to go around. But when prices fell, as they inevitably did, and markets closed, jobs disappeared. Soon tolerance gave way to fear, anger, and class conflict. Women also sought to break the ties that bind, and demanded a place side by side with men on the factory floor, in the office and at the polls.

Part III, "Crisis and Opportunity," examines the transformations brought on by the Great Depression, world war, and the economic growth and globalization that marked the second half of the twentieth century. Once known mostly for resource extraction, the region soon gained a new identity – the Federal Northwest. Government projects to create jobs, military contracts to wage war, and newly established national parks to preserve the environment made the federal government the region's biggest employer and largest landowner. And while Uncle Sam offered wealth and prosperity for many, federal ties created unwanted dependence for others and ate away control over the natural resources on which they relied for support. As the twentieth century drew to a close, a proliferating service economy and globalization morphed the Pacific Northwest identity once again. Arguably, the region today is known as much for its coffee and high technologies as for its salmon and airplanes.

Contested Boundaries allows you to define the Pacific Northwest in your own way. Draw the boundaries where they suit you. Accept or reject its many identities. Ask yourself what boundaries block your path to the life you have chosen. Finally, see this book as a beginning not an end. Use it as a launch pad to take you to places where you can further explore the mighty contests of our past and therefore learn more about yourself and your connection with the region.

Notes

1 Richard W. Blumenthal, ed. *With Vancouver in Inland Washington Waters, Journals of 12 Crewmen, April–June 1792* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2007), 46.
2 For a discussion of how nature shaped the Pacific Northwest, see William G. Robbins and Katrine Barber, *Nature's Northwest: The North Pacific Slope in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2011).
3 Timothy Egan, *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Knopf Publishers, 1990), 22.
4 Patricia Nelson Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 1987), 27.

Part I

Clash of Cultures

Figure I.1 Natives in canoes, probably members of the Kwakwaka'wakw group of peoples, watch with interest as Captain George Vancouver's ship, *The Discovery*, lies grounded at Queen Charlotte Sound north of Vancouver Island in July 1792. The *Discovery*'s consort, the *Chatham*, was unable to free the *Discovery* although it dislodged from the rocks at high tide. Image provided with permission from the University of Washington Libraries Special Collections (NA 3988).

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1

Early Encounters

Three hundred years after Columbus, explorers stake claims, exploit riches and leave disease

Antiquated notions of "discovery" fail to describe the thunderous clash of cultures that occurred when Europeans first ventured into the Pacific Northwest in the late eighteenth century. Whether arriving by sea or by land, explorers encountered Native Peoples whose initial reactions to the newcomers ranged from fear to curiosity to hostility. Even as they encountered new and unknown barriers, most Native Peoples saw the potential of the European possessions, unaware the price included an end to the life they knew.

On June 4, 1792, the British explorer Captain George Vancouver made Puget Sound a birthday present for his King. Nothing could have been more fitting on George III's fifty-fourth birthday than to take possession for Great Britain of "the most lovely country that can be imagined."[1]

On a sunny morning, half way into their two-month stay in Puget Sound, Vancouver and crew rowed ashore near what is now Everett, Washington. Officers with now familiar names like Peter Puget, Joseph Whidbey, and Joseph Baker dined on fish and toasted the King's health with a double allowance of grog for the entire crew. After lunch, with curious natives watching from a safe distance in canoes, Vancouver's ship *Discovery* fired off a twenty-one-gun salute, formally taking possession of the Sound and surrounding territory.[2] It may or may not have troubled Vancouver to know his act of possession would not likely stand up under international law, as Spain had claimed much of the same territory 17 years earlier.[3]

The possession ceremony marks a critical moment in early Pacific Northwest history. It illustrates how European nations engaged in fierce competition to control a region rich in resources and ripe for trade. It also signaled something far more monumental for Native Peoples who may have suspected the cannons sounded the beginning of the end of the life they knew.

Excursions into the North Pacific represent the last chapter in a 300-year story of North American exploration beginning with Christopher Columbus in 1492. Due to its remoteness, nearly three centuries passed before European explorers ventured into the region. The Dutch sailor Vitus Bering, sailing for Russia, explored the Bering Straits in 1728 and the waters off Alaska in 1741, but made no serious stabs south.[4] Spanish

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Figure 1.1 This illustration of Mt. Rainier at Admiralty Inlet on Puget Sound was sketched in 1792 by Midshipman John Sykes, not a trained artist, and likely redrawn by a professional artist for publication in in the 1798 Atlas to George Vancouver's Voyages. Reprinted with permission from the Washington State Historical Society.

explorers could claim the deepest history in the region, when Juan José Pérez Hernández explored the coastline in 1774 and traded with Native Peoples. The following year, Bruno de Heceta and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra explored and claimed it for the King of Spain.[5]

Between 1778 and 1794, Great Britain sent dozens of ships to the North Pacific mostly to trade for furs.[6] The most notable was the third voyage of James Cook from 1776 to 1780. In search of the fabled Northwest Passage, a navigable route across the continent, Cook explored much of the North American coast from what's now Oregon to Alaska and the Bering Straits. At Nootka Sound, the party acquired a supply of sea otter pelts, igniting a global fur trade that Cook would not live to see. After failing to find the Northwest Passage, Cook headed west to explore what are now known as the Hawaiian Islands, where he died in an altercation with natives. Under the command of Captain Charles Clerke, the party first returned to the Bering Strait to continue the search for the Northwest Passage. Failing to find the passage and with northern seas blocked by ice, the expedition sailed south to Canton, China. To everyone's surprise, Chinese merchants paid a fortune for the pelts. Profits were so high, the crew threatened mutiny in order to return to Nootka to acquire more. According to Historian Carlos Schwantes, this rags-to-riches story triggered a steady flow of traders to the region for a generation and "ended the previous pattern of sporadic and haphazard European contact with the Pacific Northwest and its native peoples."[7]

Great Britain and Spain soon butted heads over competing claims at Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island. Fearing a plot to take the island, Spain's Don Esteban José Martínez seized a British fur-trading vessel in 1789, arrested its captain and men and sent them to Mexico City for prosecution.

Spanish actions stirred British passions and almost led to war between the two powerful navies. The countries avoided war, however, after they signed the Nootka Sound Convention in 1790, which limited Spain's territorial possessions, compensated England for damages at Nootka and secured free trade along the Northwest Coast. More important, the convention formalized the possession-taking practice. For centuries explorers seeking possession of territory simply rowed ashore, planted a cross, prayed and buried a bottle containing a written record of the event. Under the Nootka convention, the right of possession now required more documentation, including a published record of the journey, mapping the region and evidence of contact with Native Peoples.[8]

The United States, busy fighting for independence from Great Britain, could only stand by as other countries squabbled over portions of the North American Continent. But with independence achieved, it didn't take long for the fledging country to catch up. Between 1788 and 1814, American vessels repeatedly plowed Northern Pacific waters in search of fur and other goods. Trader Robert Gray sailed into the region twice, first in 1788 and again in 1792. On the second voyage, he netted something far more valuable than otter skins. Gray located and braved the treacherous passage into the Columbia River, the first non-native to do so, helping the United States to lay claim to the waterway and eventually the region itself.

Ships logs tell of a clash of cultures

Excursions via the seas tell only half the story of American intentions. President Thomas Jefferson, after completing the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, wanted to learn more about the interior and western end of North America, as well as establish a foothold there. In 1804, he sent Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and the Corps of Discovery on a two-and-half-year journey across the continent and back to explore, trade and search for the Northwest Passage.

By 1818, America had sufficiently strengthened its claims to the future Oregon Territory to begin to gradually take political control. But putting American ambitions aside, let's focus on a more human story about two cultures – Euro-American and Native American – meeting for the first time. Men hungry for trade and eager to pursue nationalistic goals made assumptions about entitlement to the land, held biases about Native Peoples, and believed unquestionably in the superiority of "civilized" society. Native cultures consisted of a multiplicity of peoples whose geographic isolation insulated them from a rapidly industrializing world of trade and commerce.

We learn about these first encounters from logbooks and the journals explorers and traders kept as part of their jobs. While useful, they should be viewed with a critical eye, because they're the only written record of early encounters. Vancouver made daily entries in his ship's log, recording his observations about the landscape and Native Peoples. So too did several of his officers, especially Lieutenant Peter Puget, ship's surgeon, naturalist Archibald Menzies, and William R. Broughton, commander of the *Chatham*, the *Discovery's* armed consort. Traveling by land from the East, Lewis and

Clark, too recorded their dealings with Native tribes living along the Missouri, Snake, Yellowstone, and Columbia rivers. Collectively they paint a vivid and surprising, yet agonizingly incomplete, picture of the interactions between people from drastically different cultures.

> The skill Native People displayed in trade with Europeans and Americans "was sufficient to tire the patience of any man."[9]

Early encounters on the North Pacific Coast were generally peaceful, because both visitors and many, but not all Native People quickly realized they needed each other. Following the initial shock of the intrusion, events quickly turned to business. The traders needed Native People to trap the prized otter and other animals, a skill-set far beyond most explorers and traders. Conversely, Native People accommodated foreign visitors, often reluctantly, in hopes of accessing a steady flow of their tools, weapons, and other industrialized goods. It was a mutually beneficial relationship.

Later exchanges note that although Native People eagerly engaged in trade, we can forget stereotypical notions about greedy white men taking advantage. Granted, some were initially dazzled by tools like chisels, axes, and knives. Many delighted in and wore colorful European cloth and jewelry, and evidence suggests that others yearned for the power of manufactured weapons for protection against aggressive neighbors. But barter and trade had dominated Native life for centuries. Tribal leaders often drove hard bargains at steep prices. As one crewman aboard the American ship *Columbia* put it, Native People's intransience in trade "was sufficient to tire the patience of any man."[10] (to read more about the fur trade era see Chapter 2, "Trade Among Equals")

Another misconception is that Europeans and Americans entered a pristine land unsoiled by human hands. While no Europeans had previously ventured into Puget Sound, for example, the invisible microbes they carried had. European diseases for which Native Peoples held no immunity devastated large swaths of Native society following the arrival of Spanish and English explorers in the 1770s and 1780s. A smallpox epidemic in 1780–1782 wiped out an estimated 30% of coastal peoples and eventually spread throughout the region. Over 50 years, disease could take up to 90% of a Native population. As Vancouver explored the shores of Puget Sound he met many Native People with pocked faces, walked on beaches littered with skulls, and rowed by large abandoned villages. He strongly suspected smallpox, a disease, which Vancouver wrote, "there is great reason to believe is very fatal to them."[11]

British pursue "every branch" of Puget Sound

The two ships under Vancouver's command, the *Discovery* and *Chatham*, sailed from Falmouth, England, on April 1, 1791, with three tasks: explore the Pacific Coast of South and North America, search for the Northwest Passage, and meet with Spanish officials to implement the recently agreed to Nootka Sound Convention. On April 29, 1792, the *Discovery* and *Chatham* entered the Strait of Juan De Fuca "in very thick rainy weather."[12] A week later, Vancouver set up a base camp in a protected bay just west of present-day Port Townsend. He named it Discovery Bay after his ship.[13] The *Discovery* dropped anchor several times over the next two months, mostly in the North Sound.