

The island you stand on is historic ground where history continues to be made.



The Coast Salish were the first to walk this island; Spanish explorers came next, giving San Juan its name. Then, the Hudson's Bay Company ran thousands of sheep from their Belle Vue Farm near the south tip of the island to Friday Harbor and along the island's west side.

From the late 1850s to 1871, during the "Pig War" era, this west side sheep run became a vital military road, helping promote peace as it served as an essential communication hotline between American Camp and English Camp. Thereafter the road became an important conduit through which the island was settled, allowing diverse communities to grow and commerce to thrive. The emerging Old Military Road Trail, honoring the island's unique story, welcomes people of all ages to set foot in history. Join us as we travel along.

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Thank you!

The Old Military Road Trail (OMRT) Committee would like to thank the following for their assistance in creating this display:

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Island entities dedicated to protecting the irreplaceable:

- San Juan County Land Bank sjclandbank.org
- San Juan Preservation Trust sjpt.org
- Town of Friday Harbor Historic Preservation Program fridayharbor.org
- San Juan Island Trails Committee sanjuanislandtrails.org
- Old Military Road Trail Committee oldmilitaryroadtrail.org
- San Juan Island National Historical Park nps.gov/sajh

OMRT Committee Members:

Dave Zeretske	Tim Dustrude
Mike Vouri	Robin Donnelly
Boyd C. Pratt	Jim McNairy
Todd Kaden	Mark Noyes
Jeffrey Gillette	Shaun Hubbard

We stand in history



English Camp 1908



“...humans have navigated this rugged landscape for thousands of years. These lands are a refuge of scientific and historic treasures and a classroom for generations of Americans.”

President Barack Obama, March 2013

THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 1



Present-day preservation efforts on San Juan Island make it possible for islanders and visitors to journey through time immersed in the island's unique history.

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Quote: Obama, Barack (2013). *Proclamation 8947: Establishment of the San Juan Islands National Monument*.

Photos: Frank, L. (1908). English Camp. San Juan Historical Museum; Ballard, Kathleen (2022). English Camp; Teren, Christopher S. (2022). False Bay to Mount Baker.

The First Ones

“The native perspective presents longstanding cultural traditions, deeply rooted in belief systems, and awareness of the world around us.”

Julie Stein, American geoarchaeologist



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 2



Tens of thousands of years ago, two miles of ice retreated from this island. Thereafter, native people thrived here due to the abundant habitat on sea, shore, and land.

The sea was full of salmon and the shores were a banquet of shellfish and seaweed. Fertile prairies and forests abounded in useful plants. Nutritious camas bulbs were cultivated and berries were plentiful. Forests provided building supplies for shelter, canoes, and sails made with woven cattail, rush, and cedar. The Coast Salish tribes moved freely among these rich collecting areas, often spending the winter on the more protected mainland.

These first peoples, still a vital presence today, practiced sustainable living and harvesting from what is now known as the Salish Sea. Named in honor of the First Ones who shared the common Coast Salish language, the Salish Sea extends north through the Strait of Georgia, south to include Puget Sound, and west along the Strait of Juan de Fuca to meet the Pacific Ocean.

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Quote: Stein, Julie (2012). *Exploring Coast Salish Prehistory*. University of Washington Press. (p.7).

Photos: Curtis, Edward S. (1913). "Shores of Shoalwater Bay." San Juan Historical Museum; Curtis, Edward S. (1915). "Hesquiat Root Digger." Seattle Public Library.



The land shapes our story

“...the sheep stations are, from necessity, placed in the natural prairies of the Island; which are distant from each other, and connected by roads, opened with much labour, through the forest...”

James Douglas, Chief Factor of Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Victoria, January 1857

THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 3



In 1882, Lila Hannah married Robert Firth, Jr. – a melding of two of the earliest farming families on San Juan Island.

Early island pioneer, Lila Hannah, tells in her memoirs of seeing her future husband, Robert Firth, wearing “a scotch cap with a plaid strip... and two black ribbon tails...that fluttered back in the wind as he speeded by.” “Bob the shepard boy” would gallop past her farm on his little sorrel horse, herding sheep to the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) Belle Vue Sheep Farm on the south end

of the island where they were shipped to Victoria. She “could hear them coming miles down the mountainside, blating...”

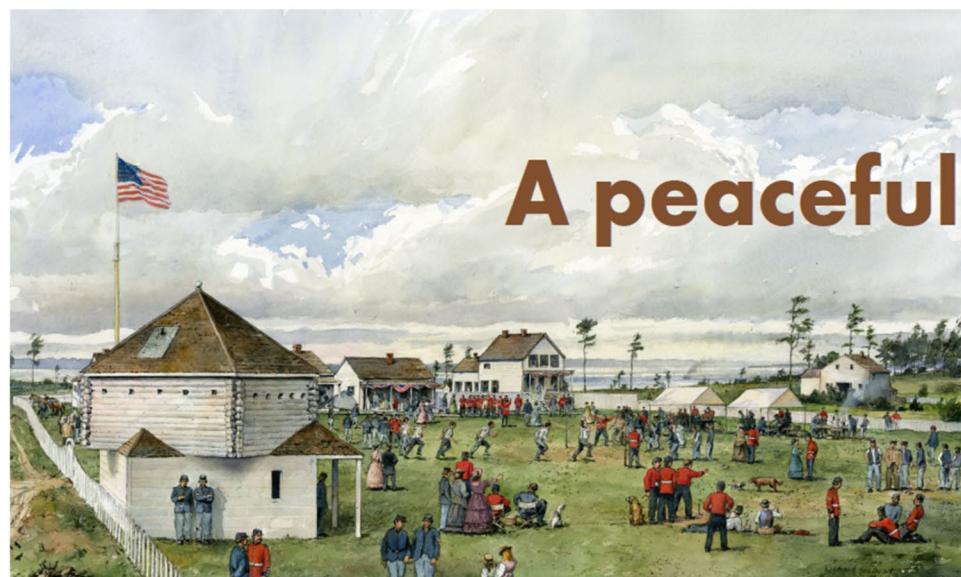
In 1854, HBC's farm manager, Charles Griffin, wished to connect the island's many sheep runs and to establish a claim on San Juan Island to keep the “pesky” Americans at bay. A team of Cowichan natives, Kanakas (Hawaiians), and a potpourri of Europeans carved what became known as the “Cowichan Road” out of the wilderness.

One leg of the road followed part of the ancient 11-mile native trail that had connected the southern tip of the island to Garrison Bay where for centuries native Salish had established a 600-foot long house, calling the place “Pe'pi'ow'elh.”

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Quotes: Douglas, James (1857). As cited in “Belle Vue Sheep Farm.” www.nps.gov/sajh; Firth, Lila Hannah (1865-1881). “Early Life on San Juan Island.” University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections.

Photos: San Juan Valley sheep. San Juan Historical Museum; Lila Hannah and Robert Firth, Jr. San Juan Island National Historical Park.



A peaceful resolution

"A delicate state of affairs, but in good safe hands, on both sides. A perfectly good feeling exists between our military and the British naval officers."

"Letters from San Juan Island," August 19, 1859

THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 4



"I do not for a moment imagine that anything would have happened to disturb the perfect understanding ... but I think it due to each other in the position to communicate at once any changes in orders or instructions from our superior commands." American Captain George Pickett to British Captain George Bazalgette, 1860

In 1859, the Americans officially challenged the Hudson's Bay Company's claim to the island when American settler, Lyman Cutlar, a "squatter" according to the British, killed one of the farm's pigs which had been digging up his potatoes. The situation escalated to the point where both countries established military camps

at opposite ends of the island, American Camp in the south and English Camp in the north.

Through the entire "Pig War" era from 1859 until 1872 when Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany arbitrated the dispute in America's favor, the two camps took great advantage of the HBC-built sheep run, improving it into a connector road. In a time before telegraph and easy communication with Washington D.C. and England, this road allowed quick resolution of disputes between the two countries and facilitated social and collaborative interaction which helped avoid yet another war.

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Quotes: Turco. "Letters from San Juan Island." *Puget Sound Herald*, 19 August 1859. (p.2); Vouri, Michael P. (2004). *Outpost of Empire: The Royal Marines and the Joint Occupation of San Juan Island*. Northwest Interpretive Association. (p.47).

Painting: Schlect, Richard. July Fourth celebration at American Camp. San Juan Island National Historical Park.

Photo: British garrison at English Camp. San Juan Island National Historical Park.

Where cultures cooperate

“Indigenous wives occupied a middle ground between people of alien cultures...White women praised their mothering, homemaking skills, and knowledge of natural medicines. Indigenous midwives delivered settlers’ babies and taught them how to cook local food stuffs...’ and were often mediators when disputes arose.”

Candace Wellman, Author and independent historian



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 5



Anna Pike (far left), a Native Alaskan, and Christopher Rosler (far right), a German immigrant and soldier during the Pig War, met and married on San Juan Island in 1862. They raised seven children on their farm near American Camp and have descendants living on the island today.

Marriages between men of European descent and indigenous women were common in the settlement of the island, creating a rich mix of cultures. Some hardy European brides also made the many months arduous voyage to become a vital part of the island history.

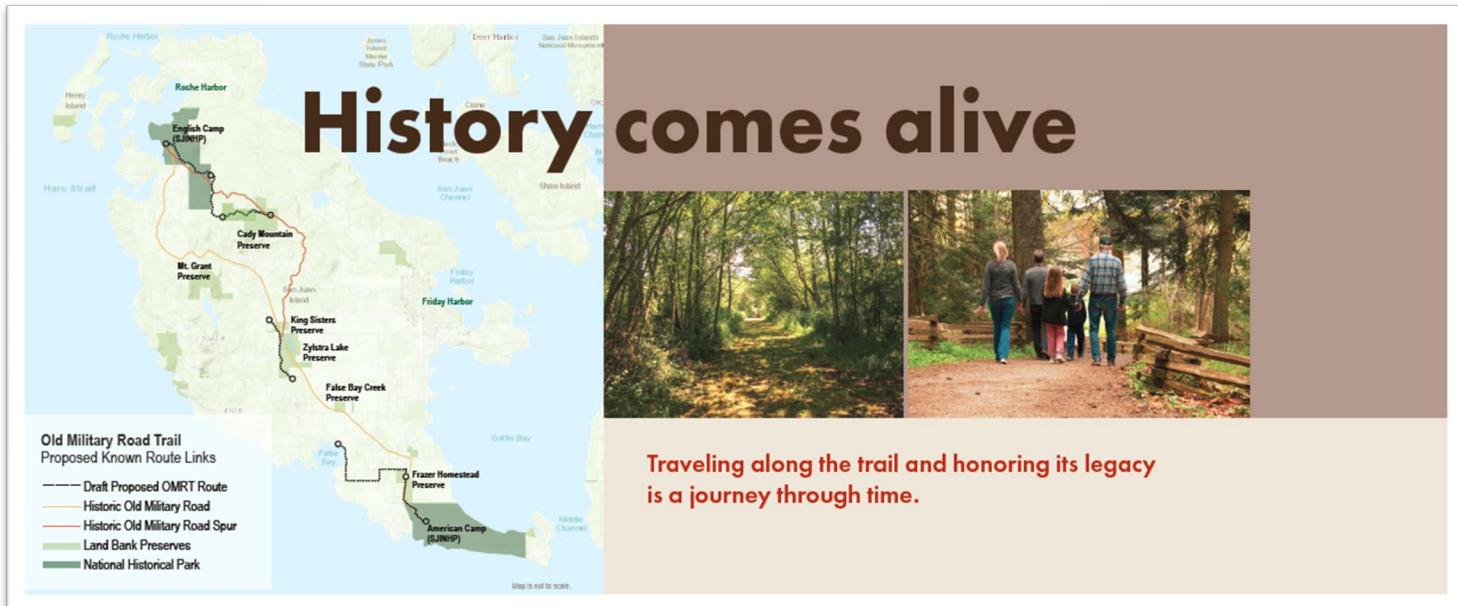
The Military Road and its offshoots became a major lifeline for cultural, social, and community involvement. Barn raising, harvesting, going to market, and socializing knit a diverse community together with bonds which still exist today.

The fact that the islands were in dispute did not dissuade early pioneers from staking claims. From 1860 to 1870, the civilian population on San Juan grew from 73 to 457. Rich lands, easily accessible from the Military Road and its offshoots, appealed to these homesteaders for raising grains, planting orchards, and grazing cattle, hogs, and sheep. The road helped unite a diverse community and provided a means for neighbor to help neighbor and a conduit for commercial enterprise.

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Quote: Wellman, Candace (2018). *Peace Weavers: Uniting the Salish Coast through Cross-Cultural Marriages*. Pacific Coast Branch of the National Historic Association, University of California Press. (p.11). Excerpted from “Zylstra Lake opens to the public.” *Journal of the San Juan Islands*, 6 November 2020.

Photos: Lawsons, Roslers, Lightharts, and Landahls at Throne’s farm (1916). San Juan Historical Museum; Anna Pike Rosler, Christopher Rosler, and children. San Juan Historical Museum.



THE STORY BEHIND PANEL 6



The Old Military Road Trail will be built by a community, echoing the sense of cooperation and peaceful resolution which the road facilitated during the Pig War. The emerging trail honors the island's unique story and welcomes people of all ages to journey through history and to enjoy nature and this unique recreation opportunity.

From American Camp to English Camp, a meandering and often multi-use backbone trail is being created by connecting with already conserved lands, existing trails, lightly traveled roads, and voluntary easements on private land. Highlighting history, nature, and the beauty of the island, it provides a recreational and conservation legacy to enjoy now and for generations to come.

Travel with us through history into the exciting present! An active group of volunteers and supporters has already begun work on this visionary project. To find out more about the available trails and to join us in this legacy effort, go to: www.oldmilitaryroadtrail.org

Map: Courtesy Old Military Road Trail Committee.

Photos: Dustrude, Tim (2019). Zylstra Lake trail; Ballard, Kathleen (2022). Hiking family; Hubbard, Shaun (2021). View from Cady Mountain.

