

Washington State Parks

Fort Simcoe

Historical State Park



EMBRACE YOUR NATURE

www.parks.state.wa.us

Fort Simcoe Historical State Park
5150 Fort Simcoe Road
White Swan, WA 98952
(509) 874-2372

State Parks information:
(360) 902-8844

Reservations: Online at www.parks.state.wa.us or call (888) CAMPOUT or (888) 226-7688

Other state parks located in the general area: Goldendale Observatory, Ginkgo Wanapum and Olmstead Place



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If you would like to support Washington State Parks even more, please consider making a donation when renewing your license plate tabs. You also may place a check in a donation box when you visit state parks.

Donations are a significant part of the State Parks budget and are needed to keep your parks open and operating. For more information, visit www.parks.state.wa.us/donations

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

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



Commission members:

Ken Bounds Mark O. Brown
Patricia T. Lantz Steve S. Milner
Douglas Peters Rodger Schmitt
Lucinda S. Whaley
Agency director: Don Hoch

All Washington state parks are developed and maintained for the enjoyment of all people.

To request this brochure in an alternative format, please call (360) 902-8844 or the Washington Telecommunications Relay Service at (800) 833-6388. P&R 45-73500-01 (04/17)



Things to remember

- **Park hours** – Open 8 a.m. to dusk daily, April 1 through the last Sunday in Oct.
- **Winter schedule** – The park is closed the last Sunday in Oct. through April 1. Although most parks are open year round, some parks or portions of parks are closed during the winter. For a winter schedule and information about seasonal closures, visit www.parks.state.wa.us or call the information center at (360) 902-8844.
- **Historical Buildings and Interpretive Center hours** – Open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday, April 1 through the last Sunday in Oct. Open by appointment Oct. 1 through March 31.
- Pets must be on leashes no longer than eight feet and under physical control at all times.
- Alcohol is prohibited.



The Discover Pass is required for day visits to state parks and access to other state-managed recreation lands. The pass provides access to millions of acres of parks, wildlife areas, trails, natural areas and water-access sites. The annual pass is transferable between two vehicles.

- Annual pass: \$30
 - One-day pass: \$10
- (transaction and dealer fees may apply)

The Discover Pass can be purchased online, by phone or in person. For details, visit www.discoverpass.wa.gov or call (866) 320-9933.

Thank you for supporting Washington state recreation lands.



Welcome to Fort Simcoe

The park's name, "Simcoe," is derived from the Yakama word "Sim-ku-ee" or "Sim-Kwee," the name for a dip in the nearby ridge. The term "Sim" refers to the female waist and "ku-ee" or "kwee" means spine or back. Fort Simcoe Historical State Park was established in 1956 with the assistance of the Fort Simcoe at Mool Mool Restoration Society 100 years after the fort's construction in 1856. Under a 99-year lease from the Yakama Nation, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission administers the 200-acre day-use park.

There are restrooms, picnic tables, a picnic shelter and running water. Recreational activities include a horseshoe pit, volleyball, hiking trail and a group camp in a large and open grassy area. The park's interpretive center depicts the site's history through displays, artifacts and photographs.

For information on the Annual Flag Day Celebration in June, contact the park at (509) 874-2372.

Park history

The Washington Territory

The tribes of the Yakama Nation long used the Fort Simcoe site as a camping area. Its cold springs, called "Mool Mool" (bubbling water) by the tribes, offered an abundance of water in the otherwise dry region. Timber was nearby, grassland was abundant and the weather in the valley was normally better than further north.

As conflicts increased between white settlers and tribes in the Washington Territory, the military needed a post further north than Fort Dalles,

Oregon. The camping area of Mool Mool was chosen and Fort Simcoe construction began Aug. 8, 1856, by companies G and F, Ninth Infantry, led by Maj. Robert Seldon Garnett.

The fort served as an advance post of the Ninth Infantry Regiment, one of the two regular army posts established in the territory. The other was Fort Walla Walla.

Building the fort

The soldiers lived in tents until the cold month of December 1856, when they completed the first barracks, made of cut pine logs from the area. Of the military structures that once framed the 420-foot square parade ground, only five remain today: the Commanding Officer's House, three Captain's Quarters and a squared pine log blockhouse on the southwest approach to the fort. The barracks, guardhouse and two blockhouses to the east of the parade ground have been reconstructed.

In the active days of the fort, many other buildings surrounded the parade ground. The Lieutenant's Quarters, storehouse, subsistence warehouse, hospital, quarters for the servants and laundresses and a small mule-powered sawmill have all disappeared through the years.

Lois Scholl, who was employed as a clerk and draftsman at Fort Dalles, drew the working plans for Forts Dalles, Simcoe, Walla Walla and Colville. Scholl's design of the Commanding Officer's House was almost identical to that of Andrew Jackson Downing's Villa Farmhouse, from his published book, "Architecture of Country Houses." Scholl related that "a pack train of nearly 50 mules moved between Fort Dalles and Simcoe" transporting building materials.

The walls of the quarters in Officer's Row, made with wood and bricks between the wall studs, provided insulation for the buildings. Fireplaces built from bricks that were kiln-baked at the post heated the rooms.



From military post to school

A change in military command at Fort Simcoe in 1858 resulted in a proposal to abandon Fort Simcoe. In 1859, the fort was turned over to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and became the Indian agency headquarters for the Yakama Nation.

Facilities at Fort Simcoe were turned into a boarding school by which the BIA attempted to assimilate Yakama children to Euro-American, Christian ways. Children were given English names and encouraged to renounce their original language, religion and traditions. Reading and writing were taught at the post, as well as trade skills like carpentry and blacksmithing.

In addition, they practiced farming at the school, a departure from their traditional methods of hunting and gathering food.

Rev. James Harvey Wilbur, Methodist Episcopal minister, missionary and BIA agent, oversaw a fairly harmonious period between around 1860 and 1883. That harmony deteriorated with his successor, Robert Milroy, who wrote with contempt about the Yakama people and set the stage for a legacy of abuse, neglect and poor conditions at the Fort Simcoe school. Ultimately, the BIA continued its attempts at assimilation of Native peoples by moving children to off-reservation boarding schools away from their parents and homelands. Fort Simcoe was granted to State Parks in 1956 by The Yakama Tribe, as a 99-year lease, for preservation as a historic monument.

