

FORT VANCOUVER EXCAVATIONS - VI

Sales Shop and Powder Magazine

by

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I - INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth in a series of interim reports detailing the findings and analyses of the Fort Vancouver Archeological Project. Purposes, scope, and methods of the project were outlined in the initial report of the series.

This report deals with the Sales Shop and Powder Magazine of Fort Vancouver. Both structures were highly important to the commercial operations of the Hudson's Bay Company during its peak activities at the Fort. From historic research, this period of activity is determined to have been about 1845 when Fort Vancouver was the administrative and logistical center of Company operations in western North America. It follows that this is the period selected by the National Park Service for intensive research of Fort activities and structures for purposes of presenting an authentic reconstruction to the American public.

The Sales Shop was a retail "company store" that catered to HBC employees at Fort Vancouver and subsidiary posts. It also served missionaries, government expeditions and other travelers, as well as certain local settlers. Use of the store was determined by an individual's account of credit which was established by service to the Company, exchange of local products, or acceptance of extra-Company bills of credit (Hussey 1972:188-194). Both necessities and luxuries of everyday life were merchandised through the Sales Shop. Goods stored within the building were primarily non-foodstuffs and (probably) non-explosive. However, sales of foodstuffs and even livestock were conducted through the Sales Shop (Ibid.:192-193).

During the 1840's the fur trade declined drastically and the Hudson's Bay Company turned more to general merchandising at Fort Vancouver. Thus, the operations of the Sales Shop assumed greater commercial importance until after mid-century when competition from local American merchants made these operations marginal (Ibid.:195-196).

The Sales Shop excavated during the current project appears to have been one of the newer buildings of the Fort. Historical research suggests that the Shop was built between 1841 and mid-1845; perhaps it was completed about 1843 (Ibid.:187). If so, the building occupied approximately the same position as that of an older and presumably cruder structure of similar functions (Hussey 1957:185). The wooden, 1-1/2 story Sales Shop of the 1845 period stood in one location until at least May of 1860 (Hussey 1972:Pl. XXVIII).

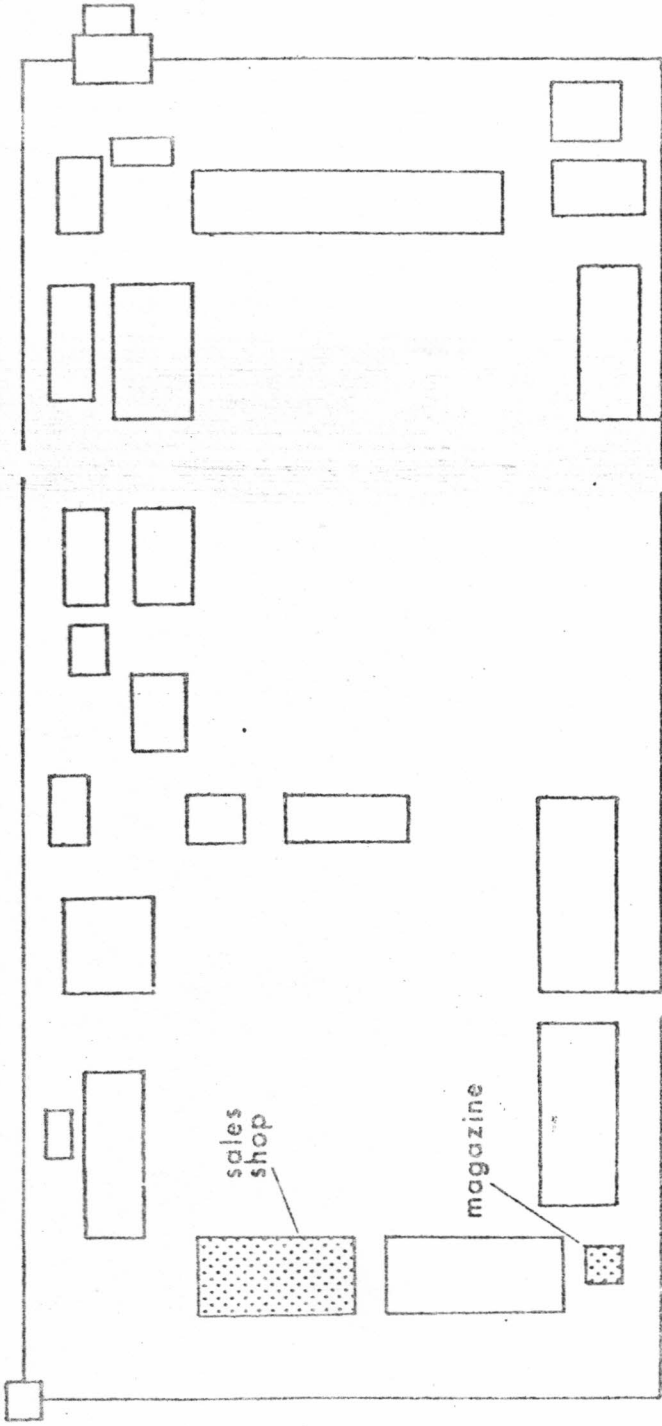


Fig. 1 - Locations of the Sales Shop and Magazine on the Vavasour map of 1845 (after Hussey 1972:Pl. VII).

A Powder Magazine was a necessary adjunct to the logistical functions of the Fort. Vast amounts of ammunition funneled through Fort Vancouver to supply subsidiary posts and the general trade. In addition to firearms usage, black powder was the standard explosive in pre-dynamite days. Some idea of the volume of powder storage can be gained from a single year's listing. The "Inventory of Sundry Goods... etc...remaining on hand at Fort Vancouver Depot, Spring 1844" includes 158 barrels and kegs of gunpowder weighing over 14,000 pounds (Ibid.: 267). Elementary discretion would indicate separate storage of such amounts under rigid security.

A Magazine built of stone, brick, or both is known to have existed by 1832 at the latest (Hussey 1957:184). Presumably, this was the same Magazine that existed in 1845 and lasted in the same position until at least June of 1860 (Ibid.:Pls. IV, XXIV). It seems improbable that a masonry structure would be moved about or reconstructed during the 31-year span of the Fort. The 1845 Magazine position was the one dug by the current project (Fig. 1). Historically, the Magazine is reported to have been a small, masonry structure with an arched masonry roof, and a copper-sheathed door (Ibid.:184).

The Sales Shop and Magazine were archeologically tested to a limited degree during the late 1940's and early 1950's (Caywood 1955). The exploratory tests served to locate the structures, but were too limited for present reconstruction needs. Excavations described in this report were expanded tests designed to yield more concise information. For instance, at least 2 contemporary illustrations are known for the east wall of the Sales Shop (Hussey 1972:Pls. XI, XXVIII). A comparison of the archeological remains of the east wall with the illustrations would provide usable structural information without comprehensive excavation. No contemporary illustrations are known for the Magazine; any archeological information on the building's foundations and interior would be of benefit. Slightly more than half of the Magazine was dug in order to provide usable information without comprehensive excavation.

Tumbler Fragments

Freeblown Tumblers

Of the 93 tumbler fragments found, only 5 were identified. There were 4 fragments of cut glass tumblers (Variety #2002) and one fragment of a plain tumbler (Variety #2001).

Stemmed Glassware Fragments

Of the 31 stemmed glass fragments found, no complete or partially complete glasses could be reconstructed and no manufacturing types could be identified. Eighteen of the 31 fragments belonged to a transparent green glass, but its shape could not be distinguished.

Window Glass Fragments

There were 9306 fragments of window glass recovered. Glass thickness varied from 0.8-3.9 mm with a mean of 1.59 mm and a standard deviation of .36 mm (Fig. 9). From observations of individual units, at least 2 thickness populations were present. These populations center about the following thicknesses: 1.2 mm and 1.8 mm.

Mirror Glass Fragments

Fifty-eight fragments of mirror glass were recovered, and they varied in thickness from 0.9-2.0 mm (Fig. 10).

Glass Beads

Of the 3999 glass beads recovered, all have been classified on the basis of manufacturing type, color and reflection. These classified beads are listed, together with the identification numbers of Kenneth and Martha Kidd (1970) in Table 7.

Metal Items

Hardware Items

Square Nails

Of the 6961 square nail fragments found, there were 3466 hand forged, 2040 machine cut and 27 cast nail fragments. All complete specimens were measured, and the distribution of such measurements for hand forged and machine cut nails appears in Fig. 11.

Table 7 - Comparison of beads with Kidds' identification numbers.

Kidds' Identification Number	Color		Reflection	Total
	Primary	Secondary		
Ia	5 B 5/8		Opaque	1
If	Black		Opaque	1
	7.5 G 4/8		Translucent	1
	5 BG 4/8		"	1
	7.5 PB 2/10		"	1
IIa	White		Opaque	1429
	Black		"	4
	7.5 R 3/6		"	3
	10 GY 5/6		"	23
	2.5 B 4/6		"	2
	10 B 6/4		"	1
	10 B 5/8		"	4
	10 B 3/6		"	1
	2.5-5 PB 3-4/4-8		"	69
	7.5 RP 5-6/8-10		"	2
	White		Translucent	1
	7.5 R 3/12		"	1
	2.5 G 3-4/6-8		"	19
	5 G 3/4		"	75
	10G-5BG 3-4/6-8		"	2
	10 BG 5/6		"	2
	10 BG 4-5/4		"	5
	2.5 B 4/4		"	59
	2.5 B 3/6		"	21
	2.5-5 B 4-5/8		"	18
	5-10 B 3-4/3-6		"	971
	10 B 4/10		"	35
	5 PB 2/6		"	18
	7.5 PB max		"	14
	7.5 PB 2/8		"	11
IIIf	7.5 B 7/4	7.5 B 8/4	Opaque	8
	5 PB 4/8	5 PB 6/8	"	1
	7.5 PB 4/10	7.5 PB 5/10	"	2
	7.5 PB 3/10	7.5 PB 5/10	"	1
	5 PB 3/6	5 PB 6/6	Translucent	1
	7.5 PB max	7.5 PB 7/6	"	1
	7.5 PB 4/10	7.5 PB 7/6	"	5
IVa	10 Y 8/1	10 Y 9/1	Opaque	839
	10 Y 8.5/1	10 YR 3/2	"	2
	7.5 R 4/10	Clear	Opaque&Clear	1
	6.25 R 3/12	White	Trans&Opaque	8

Table 7 (cont'd.)

Kidds' identification Number	Color		Reflection	Total
	Primary	Secondary		
Wla	White		Opaque	1
	10 BG 4/6		"	3
	Clear		Clear	3
Wlb	White		Opaque	1
	7.5-10 B 4-5/6-8		"	9
	5 R 2/8		Translucent	1
	2.5-5 B 3-4/4-8		"	39
	5 B 5/6		"	242
	7.5 B 4/6		"	1
	2.5 PB 3/10		"	2
Wlc	White		Opaque	1
	5 R 2/8		Translucent	1
Wlll	5 G 2/6	White	Trans&Opaque	1
Wlld	7.5 R 2/6	White	Trans&Opaque	1
Mandrel Molded	Black		Opaque	5
	2.5 B 8/4		"	11
	5 PB 6/8		"	2
	5 PB 5/6		"	1
	Clear		Clear	3
	7.5 G 4/8		Translucent	2
	7.5 PB 4/10		"	3
	7.5 PB 3/10		"	1
Molded	White		Opaque	1
GRAND TOTAL				3999

Ceramic Personal Items

Earthenware Items

Kaolin Tobacco Pipe Fragments

Of the 33 pipe fragments found, there was one bowl fragment with a molded "T" and 2 spur fragments with the initials "F, I".

Glass Items

Glass Beads

Of the 8 beads found, all have been classified on the basis of manufacturing type, color and reflection (Table 13).

Metal Items

Hardware Items

Square Nails

Of the 551 square nail fragments found, there were 347 hand forged, 153 machine cut and 10 cast nail fragments. All complete specimens were measured and the distribution of such measurements for hand forged and machine cut nails appears in Fig. 17.

Hand Forged Tacks, Sprigs, Brads, Nails and Spikes. Of the 347 hand forged fragments found, 132 specimens were complete and 7 varieties were identified (Table 14 and Figs. 12, 13). Varieties #1001-1014 have been illustrated previously (Hoffman and Ross 1973:Figs. 24-25), and Variety #1051-1058 are illustrated in Figs. 12[1-13d).

Of the hand forged nails, 79% were Variety #1002 nails consisting primarily of 2 populations (Figs. 12, 17). Of the measurable specimens of #1002 nails, 71.4% were 4d, 18.7% were 9d nails and the remaining 9.9% varied in sizes from 8d - 4 1/2 inches. Because these percentages so closely match those of the Sales Shop, it is presumed that these nails represent items from one of the adjacent warehouses rather than items directly associated with the Powder Magazine.

Machine Cut Sprigs, Brads and Nails. Of the 154 machine cut fragments found, 44 specimens were complete and 6 varieties were identified (Table 15 and Fig. 13). All varieties have been illustrated previously

Table 13 - Comparison of beads with Kidds' identification numbers.

Kidds' Identification Number	Color		Reflection	Total
	Primary	Secondary		
11a	White		Opaque	2
	10 B 5/8		"	1
	5 G 3/4		Translucent	1
	10 BG 5/6		"	1
	2.5 B 4/4		"	1
	7.5 B 4/6		"	1
W1b	7.5 B 4/6		Opaque	1
GRAND TOTAL				8