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n dian Wars, including actions against the
 Spokane, Yakama, and Nez Perce under Chief Joseph. Casualties of those actions are buried in the Fort Walla Walla Cemetery located next to the Museum in Fort Walla Walla Park, west of the VA grounds.

The regular troops were transferred to other stations in 1861, and the post was occupied at various times by California and Oregon militia, and Washington Territory Volunteers until 1867, when troops were withdrawn and the post placed in the care of a Quartermaster’s Agent. The fort was re-garrisoned in August 1873 by troops returning from the Modoc War, and was continuously in service until permanent ly decommissioned September 28, 1910. The military briefly occupied the fort during WWI, when the 146th and 147th Field Artillery Brigades received part of their early training under the command of General Paul Weyrauch, who had been a Second Lieutenant stationed at the fort when it was decommissioned.

The fort buildings were occupied briefly by the Public Health Service in 1920, and were transferred to the Veterans Bureau in 1921 when that agency was established to coordinate the services provided veterans by a collection of independent government agencies.

The fort was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 16, 1974. In 1996 the VA renamed the facility the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center, in recognition of the birth of that famous WWII general, born at the fort August 23, 1883 during his father’s assignment there.

Begin the Walking Tour

The original fifteen fort-era buildings which remain on the VA grounds are located in two general areas; the upper plateau containing the officers’ quarters and troop barracks, and the lower level with outbuildings associated with maintenance and storage. The fort-era buildings each have a bronze plaque identifying its date of construction; those built by the VA do not. To visit the fort, enter the compound by traveling west on Chestnut Street until it becomes Wainwright Avenue, the VA’s drive. Continue up the drive and crest the low hill, where you will see the parade grounds with a statue of General Wainwright at the flagpole. The officers’ quarters are on the left, and two-story brick bar-

The next historic building in Officers’ Row is Building 3, the first of four duplex officers’ quarters built in 1858, the year the fort was established. This, and Buildings 2, 3, 4, and 7 are probably the oldest build-
ings in Walla Walla. Building 5 is 1 & 1/2 stories, and was modified over the years of occupation by the mili-
tary with box-like, single-story rooms added to both the east and west ends. Continuing past Building 5, the next three buildings, 4, 3, and 2 are all 1858

The remaining fort-era buildings are located to the north of the parade grounds and below the knoll on which the officers’ quarters and barracks sit. The easiest way to see these is to return to your vehicle and drive down the street behind Building 86 and past the Chapel. Beside the Chapel on the north side a small brick Building 40 constructed in 1883 as the fort magazine. Notable is the fact this once stood in the parking lot behind Building 86, and was relocated to its present site without disintegrating!

At the bottom of the hill, adjacent to the Little League baseball fields, Building 65 was built in 1904 and served the fort as the oil house, where 10,000 gallons of mineral oil used for illumination was stored. The building now serves as the VA’s carpenter and paint shops. Building 63, originally the fort’s ordinance storehouse, is now the VA’s plumb-
ing shop. Both Buildings 63 and 65 were relocated to their present sites sometime after 1920, and Building 65 has been added to over the years. Use the adjacent parking lot to turn around.

Backtracking to the intersection and turning right towards the Poplar Street exit (north), the remain-
ing two fort-era buildings can be seen. To the left (west), adjacent to GESA Credit Union, is Building 31, built in 1859 as a Quartermaster’s stable, where animals were taken for care rather than billeted. A wing which contained 12 stalls has been removed, and the building is now used to garage tractors and lawn care equipment. A hand-hewn ceiling beam, joined to its upright support with wooden pegs, is visible within.

The last building is to the right (east) of the drive. This is Building 41, built in 1888 as the fort’s gra-

ner. As a cavalry post, there were numerous mounts and draft animals at the fort, and the gra-

nary was capable of storing 500,000 lbs of grain. The building sits on 168 pilings, and has four cupola-

las on its roof, all to ensure adequate air circulation and prevent spoilage of its contents. The VA uses this for a storage building.

If you wish to see more of Walla Walla on foot, see The Downtown Walk, Up Boyer and to Pioneer Park Walk, and the Historic Homes Walk which are described in separate brochures.

Robert L. Stevenson
Fort Walla Walla Museum
June, 2003

Richard J. Bernave
Walla Walla Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee