

# English Camp, San Juan Island National Historical Park

I just got back last Wednesday from a dig in the Pacific Northwest of the United States' Pacific Northwest. As part of on-going rehabilitation work undertaken by the US National Park Service, we conducted limited excavations at the Crook House at English Camp in the San Juan Island National Historic Park. It's very near to Vancouver, BC and Victoria Island. Beautiful surroundings; the Olympic Mountain Range on one side and the Cascade Range on the other. The dig site is interesting because of its importance to Native Americans, the British, and the Americans. All have stayed here, all have left their marks.

The Native Americans used the area regularly. Their use is chronicled by enormous shell middens that underlie most of English Camp and beyond. The British terraformed the site, creating a parade ground and terraces. The Americans, i.e. the Crook Family, homesteaded the land after ownership of San Juan Island was ceded to the United States. It is thanks to the Crook Family that any part of English Camp remains. Instead of removing the British-built buildings, the family adapted them for farm work and, luckily, preserved them. Even more luckily, the family donated the land to the US National Park Service so anyone can visit.

We had a good crew, hard working and wise-cracking. Laughter was no stranger to the work site. There were many visitors, not all of them human. There were several deer who nibbled on the greenery and ignored us with aplomb, and foxes who would crash through the underbrush whenever we got near. One day, a beautiful barred owl hung out for a while.

Part of archaeology is the excitement of trying out new things. This trip tested my mettle by giving me the opportunity to excavate underneath the Crook House. Armed with a fashionable, hot-pink hard hat, a respirator, a trowel, and paperwork, and lead by our experienced principal investigator (and crawlspace buddy) we made our way through an opening in the siding under the porch. Since the house is set on a slope, the luxurious space under the porch rapidly narrowed as we began the survey of the site. Slowly we worked our way towards the back of the house, talking to each other to distract from

how cramped we were getting. Once we got to the center of the house, judged by the joists, it was time to set up a couple of test units.

Digging in cramped quarters is not unusual in archaeology, but it's new to me. My crawlspace buddy worked even farther back than I. While lying on her stomach, she would fill a corrugated box lid with soil that she'd pass down to me, I'd put it into a bucket and wrestle it to the porch opening to be screened by another member of the crew.

Hard work, but a great story to tell. It will be interesting to see what we find out from materials we gathered during this quick look at the site.



NPS Archaeologist, B. Horton, leads the way.



Cramped, but fascinating.

Source: <http://www.dayofarchaeology.com/english-camp-san-juan-island-national-historical-park/>