

Sherman Avenue looking west, early 1890s. On the right side of the photo you can see that the north side of Sherman Avenue at 3rd Street was higher than the south side requiring the sidewalk to be built on posts. The first railroad into Coeur d'Alene in 1886 came down 3rd Street (see railroad crossing sign).

Why is Coeur d'Alene's Main Street Named After a Civil War General?

Editor's note: This article is from research done by Tony and Suzanne Bamonte for a series of books on the history of North Idaho, the first of which, The Mighty Coeur d'Alenes: Fortunes of Gold, Silver, and Timber Up the North Fork, is due out in early 2013.

If not for Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman's trip through northern Idaho, the history of Coeur d'Alene would most likely have been very different.

Following the end of the Civil War, as the Commanding General of the Army (1869–83), Sherman's responsibilities shifted to the oversight of the Indian Wars in the western United States. His duties included inspec-

tions of all army posts. It was in that capacity that he came to the Inland Northwest.

During his inspection of Fort Missoula, Montana Territory, which had been established by the U.S. government in 1877, General Sherman received orders from the War Department to proceed to the northern part of the Idaho Territory to determine if it would be advisable to erect an army post in that region. At the time, Fort Lapwai on the Clearwater River was the only post north of the Salmon River.

For just cause, our nation's politicians were still concerned about the recent Indian encounters. The Nez Perce outbreak in 1877 had aroused fears of a general



Fort Sherman from Blackwell Hill in the winter. Notice the tepees on Blackwell Island, c. 1890.

uprising of all the Northwest Indians who were already in turmoil because of their resentment at being moved from their native habitats to federal reservations. It was time to consider a military post for the Inland Northwest, especially in light of the anticipated boom in population due to the projected 1883 completion date of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Under War Department orders, General Sherman, with a military entourage, rode horseback from Fort Missoula over the Mullan Military Wagon Road to the north shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene where they made camp. When the general's party reached Lake Coeur d'Alene, Sherman was awed with the beauty of the lake and surrounding scenery. During his visit in this area he also spent considerable time visiting the Old Mission at Cataldo and studying the Indian situation.

Upon completion of his assignment General Sherman recommended to Congress that a military fort be established on the shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The majority of Congress agreed with Sherman's recommendation, and for that purpose, officially set aside 999 acres on the lakeshore near the outlet where the lake drains into the Spokane River.

The assignment to establish Fort Coeur d'Alene was given to Colonel Henry Clay Merriam of the Second

United States Infantry. In 1878, Merriam oversaw the construction of the new fort but it was not fully garrisoned and equipped until Merriam moved his troops from Fort Lapwai in March and April of the following year.

Major General Henry C. Merriam, first commander of Fort Sherman, wrote a letter to his friend Harlett Sinclair, of Rathdrum, in which he corrects the popular errors regarding the history of Fort Sherman. As the general took a prominent part in the early establishment of this, as well as the other military posts in this section of the country, a statement of facts from him is of more than ordinary interest to the public. This letter from Major General Merriam was printed in the March 5, 1905, Coeur d'Alene Press, titled "Fort Sherman History, How the Post Was Located, Major General Henry C. Merriam Tells of the Early Days in Northern Idaho – Why General Sherman Located the Fort at the Lake." It stated:

Regarding the breaking up of Fort Sherman and sale of the reservation I feel sorry that the beautiful grounds must be given up to sawmills and all the incidentals of such industry. Spokane ought to buy it and make it a park. I suppose the little town of Coeur d'Alene would do something towards buying it also, as it would

greatly add to its attractiveness and prosperity.

Referring to my connection with the history your newspaper clippings are quite wrong. First, I did not personally escort General Sherman across the mountains in 1877, but I sent a troop of the first cavalry under Captain Winters (now deceased) to meet the general at Fort Ellis, Montana, and escort him over the Mullan trail . . . on to the foot of the lake, where he decided to put a military post. This was in October 1877. I was designated later to select an immediate site and made a trip there from Fort Lapwai in February 1878 for that purpose. Two companies of my regiment had been encamped in Spokane Falls during that winter, under Captains Conrad and Daggett. It was my opinion that the military post should be located there, as a more central and strategic position, but I was turned down. I then selected the site at the lake and moved my troops from Fort Lapwai and Spokane Falls to the lake in March and April 1878, when I planned and built the post substantially as it is now. During that year and the year following, when it became manifest that the post at Coeur d'Alene was inefficient for the region to be protected, accordingly I was ordered to turn over my beautiful station to General Wheaton, and go with another force to Lake Chelan country to locate and build another post. Again my advice was that this new



Commander of Ft. Sherman Colonel Merriam, 1898. He was a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient in 1894 and advanced to Major General, US Army retiring in 1903.

post be placed at the mouth of the Spokane, but I was again overruled and required to establish Camp Chelan. However, by 1880 this location was discovered to be unwise and I was ordered to examine the region about the mouth of the Spokane with a view to carrying out my original plan. The result was the building of Fort Spokane, a work also assigned to me.

I need hardly remind you that twenty years proved that my judgment expressed in 1877 was correct and both Fort Sherman

and Spokane are given up and Fort Wright, located at Spokane, where it might have been placed on a better site in 1878 at the great saving of labor and money for the government.

Justice to General Sherman requires that I should say here that the controlling reason which caused his adherence to the lake site, was to have the troops as near as practicable to the Mullan pass over the Bitterroot mountain in order that they might be in position to prevent the combined hostile action of the Flatheads with the tribes in northern Idaho and Washington.

When Merriam was transferred his command of Fort Sherman was turned over to Colonel Frank Wheaton, 2nd Infantry, who served from August 14, 1878, to July 6, 1886. In 1883 General Wheaton received orders to prepare for a visit and inspection by General Sherman. It was an honor for Fort Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai County to host one of our nation's most famous generals. Preparations were carefully laid out for an inspection of the fort surrounding area as well as accommodation of 50 horses and 20 mules.

This time when Sherman returned to the site he chose for the construction of Fort Coeur d'Alene, he traveled on the Northern Pacific Railroad to Rathdrum, and from there by wagon to the new fort. The following are excerpts from a report written by Colonel Brevet Brigadier General John C. Tidball, General Sherman's aide, to Secretary of War G. W. McCreary. This report vividly describes their journey in North Idaho and around Spokane:

. . . Although the road was in good running condition, it was, nevertheless, unfinished and gangs of Chinamen were at work. The woods appeared to swarm with them and the road was lined with their squalid camps. In the evening mosquitoes assumed sway over the land. It was interesting to witness the activity carried on by these Asiatic, in protecting their yellow legs and shaven heads from the ravenous attacks of these insects.

. . . The forests are so dense as to preclude settlement except at great cost of labor and we saw few openings until we reached Lake Pend d'Oreille where we saw some sawmills and a steamer on the lake . . .

For a great part of the way the forests were on fire, requiring a strong force and great vigilance to protect the railroad. A broad swath has to be cut through the forest to protect the road from fire and falling timbers . . .

Some of the scenery along this part of the Columbia is surpassingly picturesque . . . As we passed around the irregular shores of Lake Pend d'Oreille at sunset the views were unspeakably beautiful."

We reached Rathdrum, the station for Fort Coeur d'Alene, about 10 p.m. and were met by General Wheaton with conveyance to take us to the post. The people at the new little town of Rathdrum had gotten wind of



General William T. Sherman

the expected arrival of General Sherman and had a large bonfire ablaze, and, with anvils, were firing a salute in his honor . . .

From Rathdrum to the post, a distance of 10 miles, the road, constructed by the troops, passes out of the forest across Spokane Plains and soon after re-entering the woods, reaches the post. Here we found a comfortable camp pitched for us on the shore of Coeur d'Alene Lake.

July 28 - Daylight this morning affords us an opportunity of seeing what manner of place Fort Coeur d'Alene is - we found it the most delightful site for a military post that the heart can desire. It is situated on the angle of land lying between the shores of the lake and the Spokane River, the outlet of the lake. The lake is picturesque with islands, headlands, and coves - the river is broad, clear and tranquil - all around are splendid forests. The land upon which the post stands is almost level and only a few feet above the water of the lake.

The buildings surround three sides of a large rectangle, the side next to the lake being open, permits a fine view across the water. The post has ample accommodations for its present garrison consisting of Headquarters and five companies of the Second Infantry and a troop of the First Cavalry,

The post is provided with a steam sawmill and on the lake is a steamer of considerable size built by the soldiers. This steamer [Amelia Wheaton built by Capt. Sorenson in 1879-80] is used in towing scows carrying hay and other supplies from the distant points of the lake and its chief affluents, the St. Joseph and Coeur d'Alene rivers. The lake and streams are full of the finest trout and the surrounding forests offer good hunting. Just outside the limits of the post looking upon the lake, is a neat and comfortable hotel; a summer resort for people residing in the malarious regions of the lower Columbia . . .

The General was received with the proper salute, and during our stay made a thorough inspection of the place he had selected as the site for the post when, in 1877, he had passed through on the Mullan Road. It was then in the heart of the wilderness; now it has a railroad near it

and the country around it is rapidly settling . . .

July 29, 30, 31 - Remained in the camp making preparations for the continuation of our journey and enjoying the hospitality of the post. In the mean time, General Nelson A. Miles commanding this Department arrived, accompanied by Surgeon Moore, Medical Director and Mr. Saurin, First Secretary of the British Legation in Washington. These gentlemen are to accompany us until we arrive in Vancouver.

August 1 - This morning; Captain (Brevet Major) Jackson started with our escort, Troop B, First Cavalry, and the pack trains for Old Fort Colville on the Columbia where we are to make the crossing . . .

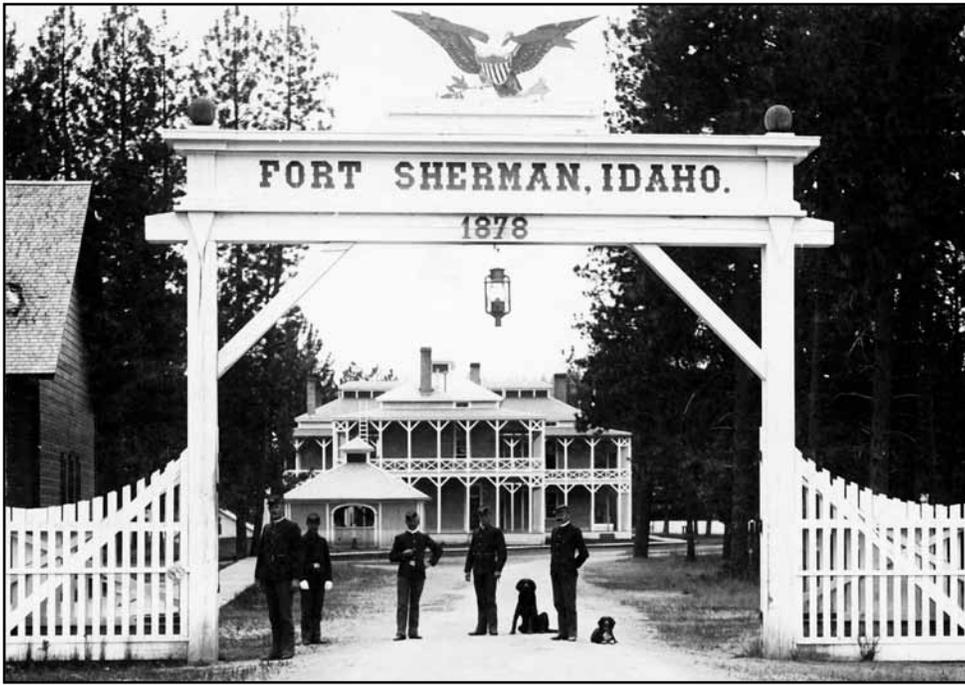
Next morning we left our delightful camp on Lake Coeur d'Alene and followed the general direction of the Spokane River, pitching our tents on the edge of the town of Spokane Falls on a bluff overlooking the magnificent falls . . .

Until we reach the crossing of the Columbia our traveling is done in ambulances and our camp outfit is carried in wagons. Soon after leaving Coeur d'Alene, the road emerges from the forest and crosses Spokane Plains; high, dry, rolling lands with few settlements but well clothed with grass. Eleven miles down the river, the road crosses to the south side upon a good trestle bridge [the small community of Spokane Bridge]. About two miles below the bridge, on a slender neck between the road and the river, we passed the 'Boneyard' so named from the piles of bones; the remains of Indian ponies captured and killed in 1858 by Colonel Wright when at war with the Spokanes . . .

Spokane Falls is an ambitious town of a few years growth containing an estimated population of 3,000 persons. The ambitions of the place rest upon the Falls . . . a superb waterpower and a superb picture, too. The river divides in three channels and makes three separate falls of about 30 feet, and then united, its transparent green waters plunge down a sheer descent of 60 feet.

Some small milling and wood-sawing industries have grown up here in grinding the product of the new wheat region of Eastern Washington. The place soon hopes to become the Minneapolis of the Pacific Coast. A large flouring mill is in process of construction and the place consists of two banks, two papers, and a number of good hotels. The town is neat and clean; orderly beyond most western places. It is the center of a rich farming and stock country which is rapidly settling with a good class of immigrants . . .

A committee had waited on the General, requesting him to meet the citizens of the place, which he did in the evening at a public hall and was enthusiastically received. After his visit to Fort Coeur d'Alene and Spokane Falls, General Sherman continued his inspection trip to Fort Vancouver via the mighty Columbia River. This was his last visit to the Northwest.



Fort Sherman gate looking toward the hospital, after 1887.

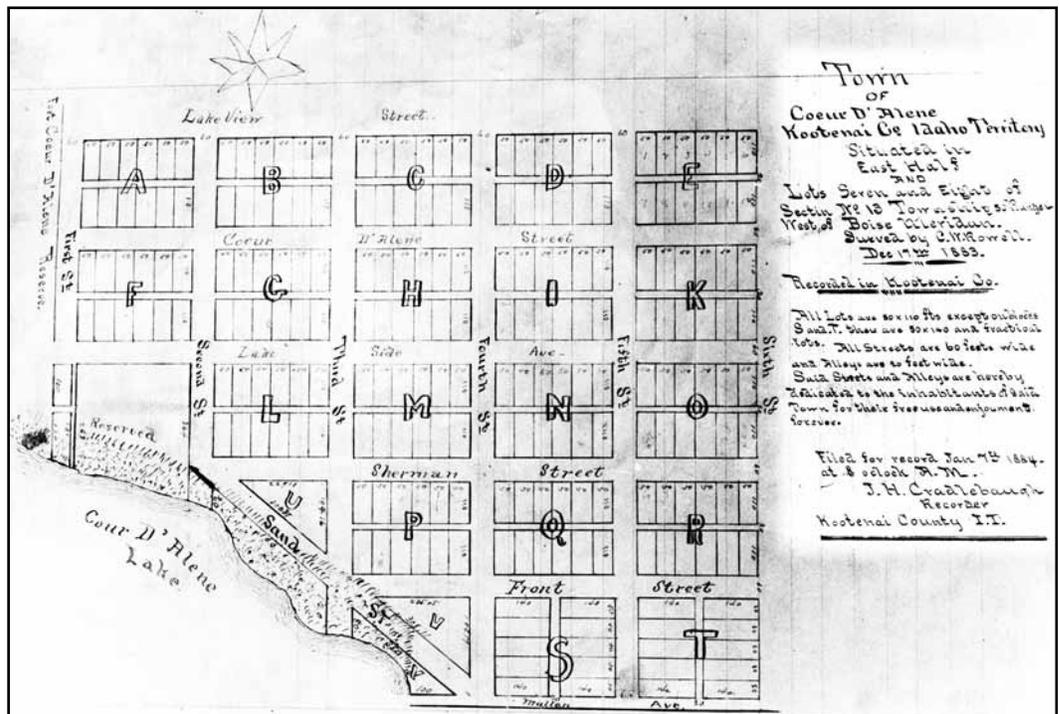
During the initial habitation by Caucasians of the future site for the city of Coeur d'Alene, Fort Sherman played a major role in the establishment of the area. During its early days, the fort provided the nucleus for many social events and along with the advent of the 1883 gold rush, was the driving force behind the formation of Coeur d'Alene City. It is unclear when the new city began calling its main street Sherman Avenue, but an 1883 map shows Coeur d'Alene's main street as Sherman Avenue.

In 1898 the Spanish American War took nearly all the troops from Fort Sherman, leaving only a handful of men behind

In April 6, 1887, Fort Coeur d'Alene was renamed Fort Sherman in General Sherman's honor. He died in Washington, D. C., on February 14, 1891.

Although used very little for military purposes, the fort quickly became the hub around the future city of Coeur d'Alene. By 1881, settlers were coming into the area and George Wonnacott and M. D. Wright organized the 50 signatures needed to petition for the formation of a county. The newly formed Kootenai County took in the present counties of Boundary, Bonner, Shoshone, Benewah, and Kootenai. In 1883, the gold discovery in the Coeur d'Alenes was announced and the Northern Pacific Railroad completed its transcontinental line, crossing diagonally through the northwest corner of Kootenai County. The train stopped at Westwood (Rathdrum) with prospectors requiring supplies. Rathdrum's population exploded to around 1,000. Coeur d'Alene's population in 1880 was about 300 and jumped to about 2,000 in 1884.

to maintain the buildings. The Fort was officially abandoned in 1901. In 1905 the Government granted 40 acres of the Fort's 999 acres to the city of Coeur d'Alene 20 acres for a park and 20 for a cemetery. The remainder, including the buildings, was sold at public auction. Stack-Gibbs purchased forty acres of land on the lakefront for a large lumber mill. F. A. Blackwell and other mill owners bought river lots for industrial purposes. Two Spokane men bought two of the three large lots which became the Fort Grounds neighborhood.



1883 Coeur d'Alene map

Museum News

Fulfilling Our Mission

... Collect

Artifact Donations Since August

Don Shriner: Photos of Bellgrove 1940 class and a rowboat at Rockford Bay 1932.

Tina Johnson: Photos of the remains of the mine at Beauty Bay.

Ruth Pratt: Photos of Bunker Hill, Mrs. Tony Tubbs and mining.

Nella Troy: Ration books.

J.P. Stravens: Maps

Don Dundon: 1967 Ruralite magazine and World Jamboree booklet.

Ron Caines: Lakeside Station Menu.

Karen Appleby: Book *Auntie Enid Remembers: Reminiscing about Harrison, Idaho in the early Years.*

Bonnie McCallum Masteller: Photos of John Robert McCallum at the Coeur d'Alene Mill.

Maxine Martin: Booklet and CD from Coeur d'Alene High School 1957 50th reunion.

Linda Hackbarth: *The Pacific Northwesterner* Oct. 2011.

Gloria Purinton: Souvenir made from a chalk board from the old Coeur d'Alene High School.

Carol Larson: Thermometer calendar from Burk's Shamrock, Coeur d'Alene, 1945.

... Preserve

Throughout the summer volunteers cleaned and organized the Museum storage building to make room for large artifacts displaced from the Fort Sherman Museum on the North Idaho College Campus. NIC stored several artifacts last winter and some were stored outside our storage building under cover over the winter. Mike Halpren, North

Idaho College's director of facilities operations, provided NIC staff and a forklift to help organize the space and move the Miss Spokane smoke stack and life boat, Electric Line Railroad baggage cart/wagon, Magee

Ranger Station grinding wheel, small engines and 4 lumber carts inside. The bateau is too big to fit inside so Dana Dube made a cover for the bateau at the off site storage building.



Dana Dube rebuilt the porch on the Big Hank Cabin located at NIC next to the Powder Magazine. The planks were made to match the full dimension of the old ones by the Whiteman Lumber Co. in Cataldo. Dana cut trees from his property to make the porch posts.

... Interpret

Robert Singletary, in his role as Program and Marketing Director, has greatly enhanced Museum programming, outreach and community awareness of the Museum and local history.

In the spring and fall Mr. Singletary works with



Moving the Miss Spokane smokestack

Lakes Middle School 6th grade teacher Dave Ubanks and presents several living history programs. He has given programs to other groups and classes as well.

The daily historical walking tours received great comments from participants. Here is just one of those reviews.

... we had the opportunity to take a tour with Robert Singletary. We wanted to let you know that he did an absolutely tremendous job! His knowledge of the area is stupendous and he communicated that knowledge in an engaging way. He is a treasure for your city!

Gene Barr, President of PA Chamber of Business and Industry, Harrisburg, PA



Robert Singletary presented Fort Sherman history to some of the 180 people who visited the Museum on free day Oct. 27. Over 4,200 people visited the Museum exhibit hall this season.



Linda Shinn and Robert Singletary at the Fair.

Linda Shinn and Mike Dolan helped Robert hand out Museum information.

Feature Exhibit Ideas?

Planning is underway for the 2013 feature exhibit. If you have ideas or would like to help with exhibits please contact Dorothy at 664-3448 or dd@museumni.org. The office and library are open Tuesday through Saturday. The exhibit hall reopens April 1.

Next spring, through the generous donation of \$500 from Doug & Deidre Chadderdon, we can offer some bus funding. If this fund grows we can expand it to other districts. If you or your business would like to sponsor field trips to the Museum please contact us.

Membership Drive and Community Partners

This fall begins our membership drive and Community Partner Sponsor program. Not only will these efforts aid in meeting our operating budget and expanding our programs but will also increase public awareness about the Museum.

We have about 680 members, but unfortunately only 360 of them have current memberships. If you are a member please check the date on the mailing label to see when your dues expire. If you are not a member please join. Also consider giving a gift membership for a Christmas gift and we will send an acknowledgement card. Or send us names of people you believe would be interested in local history and we will send them a newsletter.

Reception Planned

To honor and show appreciation to the Museum for its many years of preserving the history of the area, Dean Dickmann, the manager of the Garden Plaza of Post Falls, will be inviting Museum members, volunteers and staff to a special wine and cheese reception on December 7. You will be receiving an invitation from him in a few weeks.

Cash Donations

Mike Moen
Jane Robertson
Kootenai Electric
Wayne Sweney
Donna Quane
Mary Lou Baker

... Foster Appreciation Serve on the Board

One of our many activities this summer to increase public awareness about the Museum and to foster an appreciation of our region's history was the Museum booth built by Robert Singletary. The booth won first place in the commercial exhibits at the Kootenai County Fair in August. Several volunteers including Don Pischner,

For personal reasons Deidre Chadderdon resigned from her position on the Museum Board of Trustee. We appreciate her service to the Museum and her continued support of the Museum. The nominating committee is taking applications for the Board position.

Buses for Field Trips

We have been working hard to bring more 4th grade students to the Museum. This is the grade that Idaho history is taught. When we ask the teachers "Why aren't you coming?" The answer is overwhelmingly lack of funds for transportation. Fernan and Winton students often walk to the Museum but the weather this year was poor and they did not come. Total student visitation this year was only 366 from throughout the area.

We have been working with the Coeur d'Alene School District to determine the cost of buses and if teachers would bring their 4th grade students to the Museum. The District asked teachers if they would visit the Museum if they had transportation and many 4th grade teachers said they would love to come. To offer the District's 794 students bus transportation and Museum admission would cost about \$1,400.

Memorials

- For Gene Hyde from Gratia Griffith; Leone Patzer; Mary Alice Hathaway; Larry & Sharon Stobel; David & Diane Loofburrow; Carol, Kathy & Rosemary Reager; Bonita and Norman Anderson; Wendy, Brian & Scout Larson; Julia & Charles Craft; Leo Knudson; Cynthia Samms; Deborah Fuller-White; Yvonne Wilbur; Mike and Jae Jean Achord
- For Emma Weeks from Maryann Babin & Judy Lingle. In memory of Ralph & Emma Weeks from the Weeks Family.
- For Jim McKahan from Edward Johnson
- For Genevieve Wolfe from Marilyn Hewett
- For Roy & Anne Satchwell from Dorothy Satchwell
- For J. Douglas Casey from Carrie & Greg Bergquist

To make a memorial donation use the form on the back of the newsletter.



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Get on Board!

Museum of North Idaho Membership Form

Steamboat names represent levels of support

- Georgie Oakes **\$100+**
- Idaho **\$100**
- Flyer **\$50**
- Amelia Wheaton **\$25**

Additional Donation \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Zip _____

Secondary Addr. _____

email _____

Memorial Donation For: _____

Amount _____ Whom to notify _____

Send your tax deductible contribution to:
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or online at www.museumni.org

Museum of North Idaho Mission Statement

The Museum of North Idaho collects, preserves and interprets the history of the Coeur d'Alene Region to foster appreciation of the area's heritage.

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