

# The Old Jolly Green Giant Canning Facility: Preventative Historical Preservation

## Introduction

In August of 2015 the Dayton Historical Depot Society contracted with the Fort Walla Walla Heritage Resource Services department to map the foundations of the Seneca Canning Plant (formerly the Jolly Green Giant Canning Plant) in Dayton Washington.

The DHDS was concerned the sale could mean the demolition of the once critical piece of the Dayton economy. They organized volunteers to take photos and perform historical research on the facility. They knew that the best way to tie this research together was through survey of the grounds. The Heritage Resource Services department was called upon due to their expertise in historical archaeological documentation. However, they quickly realized that due to time, budget, and GPS signal constraints they would not be able to utilize their typical field methods.

Through the significant generosity of the City of Walla Walla GIS department and with the donation of a field tech from Northwest Anthropology, the archaeologists at the Heritage Resources Services department were able to complete a half day of field survey with relatively high precision documentation of the building foundations.



Facility Location



Fully Mapped Facility

## Results

25 total building were documented.  
15 Barracks (numbered to 16, but skipping 13)  
The remaining 10 buildings were: storage, laundry, restrooms, mess halls, offices, leisure, or medical.

The canning facility itself located on a separate parcel that is not included in the proposed land sale. It is also an active industrial site. There was no need to record that facility.

Archaeologists at the Heritage Resource Services department were able to assemble the a brief history and supporting figures into a report that was delivered to the DHDS.

## Conclusion

In stark contrast with typical historical survey, which rely on post demolition documentation, the collaborative effort of this project facilitated a high accuracy and thorough documentation of a once critical economic resource.

This will allow the DHDS to integrate the facility into their museum collection ensuring accurate context into the life in the community.

## History

Established in 1934, the canning facility and the associated labor camp were a fixture in the Dayton economy. The facility maintained a smaller permanent staff all year, but temporary seasonal employment could number in the hundreds.

The labor camp was finally closed in 2005 and the Seneca Corporation has been using the buildings (including the Barracks) as a storage facility.



Pretending to do field work



Tree Obstructed Barracks Along the North Side of the Facility



Detail View of Main Services Building Showing Division of Building

## Field Methods

For this project the team used a Trimble ProXH with Nomad data logger, a construction laser finder, and a Samsung tablet.

Due to tree coverage and building obstruction it was determined that a two phase approach would be necessary.

- 1) Use survey equipment to establish as many building corners as possible.
- 2) Use a laser range finder to measure the building footprint dimensions.

This method allowed the field crew to quickly establish reference points and reliable dimensions of the building. Along with satellite imagery the GIS analyst was able to digitize accurate locations of the buildings.

## Special thanks to:

The City of Walla Walla GIS (especially Matt who packaged and delivered the field data).  
Northwest Anthropology  
Dayton Historic Depot Society  
Fort Walla Walla Museum



Southwest Corner of Main Services Building