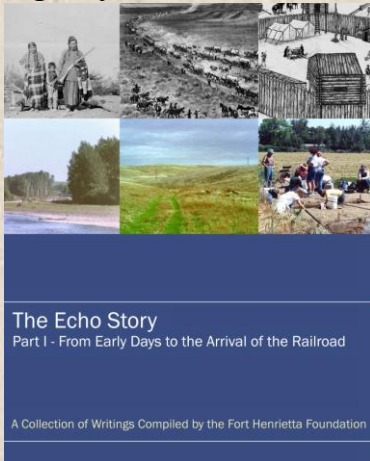


## Excerpts from Echo Story Part I & II & historic photos from the City of Echo's Archive.

The Echo Story Parts 1 provides information on the prehistory of the Echo area and Umatilla County from Native American encampments to the story of Fort Henrietta, the Oregon militia stockade located across the river from the present town of Echo. Archaeology and historic records on the Utilla Indian Agency, the first agency for the Walla Walla, Umatilla and Cayuse tribes, (1851-55) included in the book. An excerpt from the book is printed below:



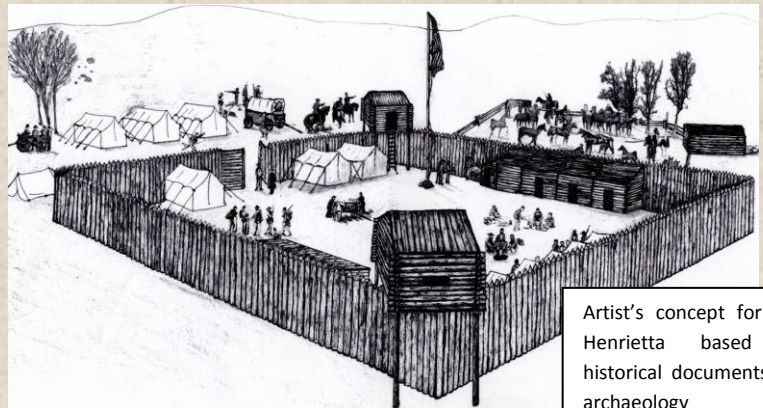
The Echo Story  
Part I - From Early Days to the Arrival of the Railroad

A Collection of Writings Compiled by the Fort Henrietta Foundation

### **The Fort Henrietta Site.**

*The methodology of excavating the Fort Henrietta Site required an unusually patient approach to field archaeology. This was because the site had both artifacts and subsurface features requiring the very careful removal and screening of dirt. During the site's repeated occupation over centuries, thousands of small artifacts- from the stone chipping debris of the Native Americans to nineteenth century square-cut nails- became buried in the fine loess soil.*

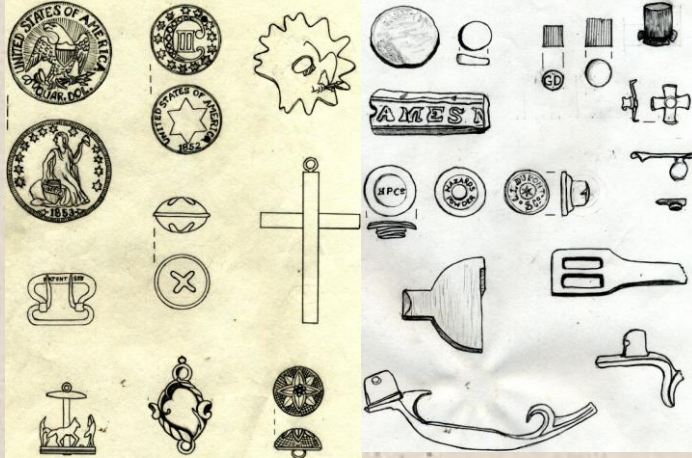
*The small and varied items had been subsequently trampled and mixed together in a sheet of artifacts that covered the entire fort site and beyond. The soil mixing must have been intense when the site was a stopping point for hundreds of Oregon Trail wagons, and later when 300 Oregon Militia troops with their horses crowded into and around the fort's stockade walls. The multitude of lost and discarded small artifacts, many showing the evidence of trampling and breakage, required the archaeology students and volunteers to screen all of the excavated soil with a very close inspection of everything removed from the ground.*



Artist's concept for Fort Henrietta based on historical documents and archaeology

*Another element of the site (remarkable in light of the intensive use of the area), was that traces could still be identified of the construction which occurred during the 1851-1856 Indian Agency and Militia Fort occupation. It was discovered that at some point, the dirt area surrounding the Indian Agency had been covered with planks of split cottonwood. Planked roadways were common at the time the Utilla Agency was active, but no historical accounts mention this feature. The planking, once a widely practiced method of creating a cheap and effective road in the West, from bustling San Francisco city streets to the Barlow Road route of the Oregon Trail, was a means of reducing the wagon wheel rutting caused by mud or sand. Given the heavy traffic the Utilla Agency experienced from wagons and*

A few of the artifacts recovered from the Fort/Agency Site



thousands of stock animals, it is not surprising that the area surrounding the building was completely planked. What is surprising is that it is not mentioned in any known Oregon Trail diary, and what is even more unexpected is that much of the evidence of planking can still be seen in the ground.

What can be read below the surface are distinct soil profiles of the planks, which, having rotted long ago, left discolored stains covered by later deposits of windblown silt. The ghostlike stains were sometimes barely visible when they were first uncovered, but, as the soil dried, they became more apparent, as the looser soil which had filled in the rotted planks dried faster than the compact soil between the planks. Uncovering the plank roadbed stains required that the soil above the fragile stains be carefully and slowly removed with trowels and brushes.

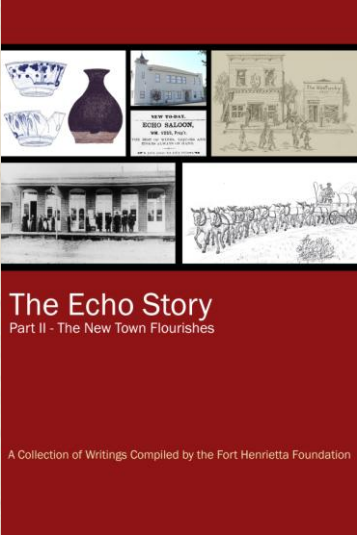
What can be read below the surface are distinct soil profiles of the planks, which, having rotted long ago, left discolored stains covered by later deposits of

A second major archaeological surprise on the site was that the Fort Henrietta stockade trench (which had been excavated and then filled by the Militia in 1856) was still visible by its distinctive soil coloration. In places, the oxidized soil revealed where the stockade posts that stood in the trench had been burned as the Militia intentionally destroyed their fort. When the fill of the stockade trench was excavated and screened, a number of artifacts turned up. An iron wedge (probably used to split the logs for the stockade) was found at the bottom, as were numerous metal and porcelain buttons from the Militiamens' clothing. In one area, what may have been a pouch of unfired large-caliber rifle balls was discovered...

Below is an except from the Echo Story Part II. That Echo and Umatilla County were part of the Wild West less than 100 years ago is recounted in stories handed down between Echo residents and recorded in local histories and newspapers.

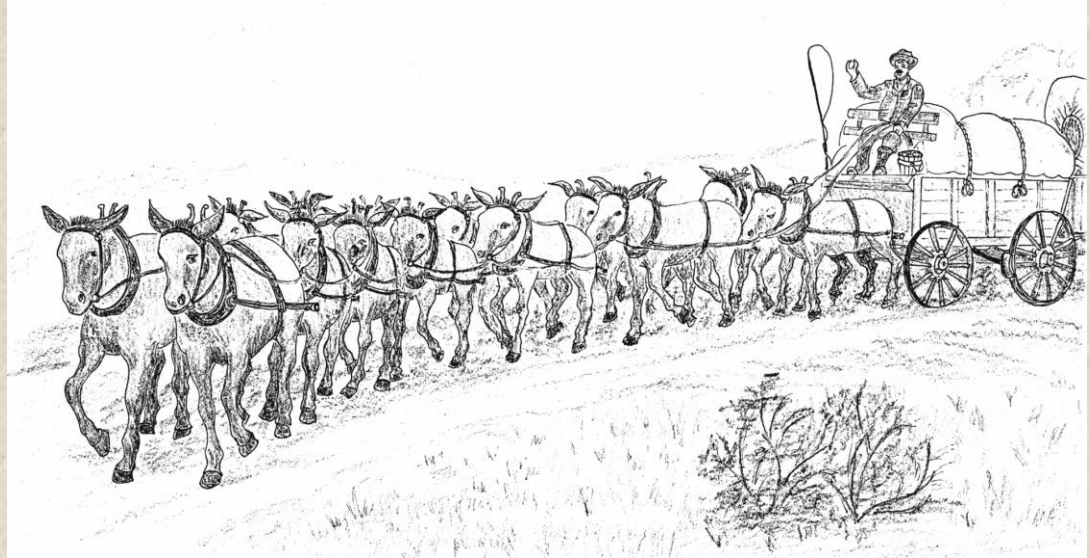
**“Whispering’ Thompson, Old Timer of Echo”**-One of Echo's old time residents was called Whispering Thompson. After retiring from freighting, Thompson lived on a farm north of Echo after. Thompson was born in the East, on the Isle of Nantucket, date unknown. He died in 1890 and is buried at the Echo cemetery.

During the 70s and 80s he distinguished himself as a competent freighter and, as rumor would have it, the best mule skinner west of the Cascades. In spite of his moniker, he was his own loudspeaker. It was said that when Whispering left Meacham, at the top of the Blue Mountains, you could hear his voice clear down in LaGrande and Pendleton.



*Each of his 14 mules reportedly understood every word he addressed to them and responded at once; not only to the jerk line but also to the persuasion of pebbles he carried in a bucket on the seat beside him, and which he threw with unerring aim. His cry of 'Gee-e-e-e Nig!' was recognized as a signal by old timers that Whispering was somewhere within a three mile radius.*

*Thompson  
detested  
railroads,  
and he often  
spouted off  
about them  
as he drove  
his big  
freighters  
along. ...In  
the East*



*Oregonian of 1881 is an item which reads, 'Last Wednesday, the flute-like voice of Whispering Thompson could be heard about two miles away. We went to see what was the matter and found his 14 mules in front of a house which had been moved a fourth of a mile in four hours with Thompson gently encouraging the mules.'*..