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The Pacific Northwest, Race, and the Civil War Events Timeline

This timeline makes connections between events in Oregon and Washington and a nation embroiled in the Civil War.

- 1843-1849**, Oregon's provisional government crafted a political framework for Oregon Country during a period when it was neither clearly British nor American. Today's Washington State was part of Oregon Country.
- 1844**, Oregon's Provisional government excludes African Americans from Oregon Country. A version of this law was adopted into the Oregon State constitution, making Oregon the only state to exclude African Americans in its founding document.
- 1846**, Abraham Lincoln is elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Joint occupation of Oregon Territory ends, with the Oregon Treaty providing land north of the 49th parallel to Great Britain.
- 1849**, the U.S. Army establishes the Army's Fort Vancouver on a hill north of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver. Abraham Lincoln declines a position as secretary of Oregon in August and then declines the governorship the following month.
- 1850s**, the U.S. embraces reservation policy as a strategy for containing Indian nations and embarks upon numerous treaty councils to delineate reservation boundaries. Soldiers from Fort Vancouver engage in a number of regional conflicts with Native people throughout the decade. There are skirmishes from the Puget Sound to the Rogue River. Many who became Civil War heroes served in Vancouver during this period.
- 1850**, the U.S. Congress passes the Donation Land Claim Act, a precursor to the Homestead Act. This act allowed white and "American half-breed Indian" male settlers 320 acres of land if they were single and 640 acres of land if they were married. It prompted the settlement of Indian lands before the federal government treated with them and precluded land claims by African Americans.
- 1853**, In *Holmes v. Ford* territorial Judge George H. Williams declares that slavery could not exist in Oregon without legislation to protect slaveholder property rights. He argues against slavery on economic grounds. Washington became a territory.

- 1856**, Dred Scott Decision determines that the U.S. Congress has no authority to prohibit slavery in U.S. territories, providing for the expansion of slavery into new territories.
- 1859**, Oregon becomes the 33rd state in the Union. Creation of Oregon State was controversial in Congress because every new addition raised questions regarding the expansion of slavery.
- 1858**, Lincoln-Douglas debates. Lincoln loses Senate race to Stephen Douglas.
- 1860**, Abraham Lincoln is elected president of the United States.
- 1861**, Civil War begins April 12. The Army's regular soldiers at Fort Vancouver are soon replaced by volunteers of the First Oregon Cavalry. A pro-Confederacy group, the Knights of the Golden Circle, organizes to promote an independent Pacific Coast Republic.
- 1862**, Oregon adopts a law requiring all blacks, Chinese, Hawaiians, and referring to people of mixed ethnic heritage, many previously connected to the British Fort Vancouver Mulattos, residing in Oregon to pay an annual tax of \$5. Interracial marriages are banned in Oregon; it is against the law for whites to marry anyone 1/4 or more black.
- 1863**, Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1. In November, he gives the Gettysburg Address at Gettysburg Cemetery. In December he issues the proclamation of amnesty and reconstruction.
- 1864**, Lincoln is reelected to presidency.
- March 4, 1865**, Lincoln is inaugurated for his second term.
- April 9, 1865**, Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. Grant, Phil Sheridan, and Rufus Ingalls were also present at the surrender. All served in Vancouver in the 1850s.
- April 14, 1865**, Lincoln is shot by John Wilkes Booth. He dies the following day. Flags are flown at half-mast in Vancouver.
- December 8, 1865**, Oregon passes the 13th Amendment, prohibiting slavery in the United States.
- 1866**, the Oregon legislature makes interracial marriage illegal. Repealed in 1951.
- 1868**, Congress ratifies the 14th Amendment, which secures rights to former slaves including due process and equal protection under the law. Oregon ratified the amendment in September of 1866 but symbolically withdrew its decision two years later.
- 1870**, Congress ratifies the 15th Amendment, which prohibits racial restrictions on voting. 1959, Oregon State legislature symbolically ratifies the 15th Amendment.
- 1887**, A ban on interracial marriages in the Washington Territory is lifted.
- 1889**, Washington becomes a state. The state constitution contains a ban on racial discrimination.
- 1926**, Oregon repeals its exclusion law, amending the state constitution to remove it from the Bill of Rights.
- 1927**, The Oregon State constitution is finally amended to remove a clause denying blacks the right to vote.