

Statement on Washington's Prickly History

In the journey we have been on to save the 1866 Haller House and to tell the stories it holds, we are frequently asked why we would want to preserve the home of a man who played an active military and personal role in “Manifest Destiny” – the usurpation of the North American continent from Native peoples in the 19th century. This is an important and perennially relevant question.

We preface our answer with the statement that, as an organization devoted to the preservation of historic structures, Historic Whidbey never intended to erect a monument to Westward Expansion or anyone who took part in it. However, our interest in saving one of the state's oldest houses was intensified by the unparalleled potential it has to explore the era in which it was built – by virtue of the controversial resume of its first occupant.

It is precisely Col. Granville Haller's multi-faceted (and often surprising) role in that era that makes his house such an important theater for revealing the rarely told, complex and painful narrative of American settlement in the Pacific Northwest.

Because so few people in our region were raised and educated here, there is a sad dearth of public understanding about how this controversial and traumatic history unfolded in western Washington. That which we “know” is the legacy of a narrow historical point of view.

In the 21st century, we approach history in a radically different way, exploring multiple perspectives from very diverse men and women. We believe the Haller House has an important role to play in cultivating deeper understanding of a troubled time among Whidbey's residents and the many thousands of visitors who come here every year.

We invite everyone to join us in the hopeful search for a deeper, more just understanding of our history.