

## Did you know?

■ Constitution Day is observed Sept. 17. Thirty-nine delegates to the Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787.

■ Nearly 1,000 candidates will take the oath of citizenship during Constitution Day and Citizenship Week celebrations at national parks.



Holding a flag in one hand and her naturalization certificate in the other, Gloria Robayo Trujillo smiles at a family member during a ceremony Friday at the Fort Vancouver National Site. The naturalization event was part of a partnership between the National Park Service and Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Photos by TROY WAYRYNEN/The Columbian

# FORT VANCOUVER AGAIN WELCOMES NEW CITIZENS

## 30 take citizenship oath at historic site that attracted workers from around globe

By TOM VOGT  
Columbian staff writer

Tears fell from her eyes when Gloria Robayo Trujillo heard the "Star Spangled Banner."

It had just become her own national anthem.

Trujillo and 29 other new Americans took the oath of citizenship on the Vancouver Barracks parade grounds Friday morning in

a special ceremony.

"It's very exciting," said Trujillo, who has lived in the Portland area for 10 years. "It's been a very long road."

Trujillo came here from Spain, one of 15 foreign nations that, as the oath of allegiance put it, were absolutely and entirely renounced and abjured by these newly minted Ameri-

cans.

The group featured some families, including a couple of husband-and-wife combinations.

One of the people who welcomed the group went through this herself. Guest speaker Luda Leksunkin was born in Russia. Now an 18-year-old Clark College student, Leksunkin also is a National Park Service seasonal guide.

She offered a history lesson as she discussed the ceremony's location: the

Fort Vancouver National Site.

"You are part of a long tradition," she told the new contingent of Americans.

The Hudson's Bay Company brought workers from around the world to Fort Vancouver, and many of them remained here, choosing to become citizens of this new country, Leksunkin said.

While the historic grounds have long been a



Thirty people from 15 nations became U.S. citizens Friday in a naturalization ceremony at the Vancouver Barracks parade grounds at the Fort Vancouver National Site.



TROY WAYRYNEN/The Columbian

**Zoya Babiy of Vancouver takes a photo of husband Andrey Babiy, left, and their son Ilya Babiy after they became U.S. citizens Friday morning on the parade grounds of Fort Vancouver National Site. The Babiy family came to the U.S. from the European nation of Georgia.**

## Citizens:

From Page C1

portal to this country, the event was the first naturalization ceremony in Southwest Washington, said Evelyn Sahli, a federal official from Portland.

Her agency, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, is partnering with the National Park Service on 24 citizenship ceremonies across the United States.

Naturalization ceremonies typically are done in a courthouse or an agency office, Sahli said. But candidates in this area had an opportunity to participate in a special observance of Citizenship Week.

Another event Friday took place at the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, known more formally as the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

In a few days, other immigrants will take the oath beneath a 3,000 year-old sequoia tree at Sequoia National Park, on the rim of the Grand Canyon and on the Civil War battlefield at Vicksburg.

"These historic and picturesque sites provide an ideal backdrop for citizenship ceremonies, where new citizens can learn about and reflect on American identity and the responsibilities of citizenship," said a park service news release.

Fort Vancouver is the only National Park Service site in the Portland-Vancouver area.

Trujillo said she could have taken the citizenship oath in a routine bureaucratic setting in Portland, but she liked the thought of becoming an American on the historic site.

"I would love to do this again on a regular basis," said Tracy Fortmann, superintendent of the Fort Vancouver National Site.

The new Americans were reminded of some of the benefits and obligations of citizenship. The packets containing their naturalization certificates included voter registration cards.

And Fortmann reminded them: "As Americans, you now are owners of our national parks."

**TOM VOGT:** 360-735-4558 or [tom.vogt@columbian.com](mailto:tom.vogt@columbian.com).