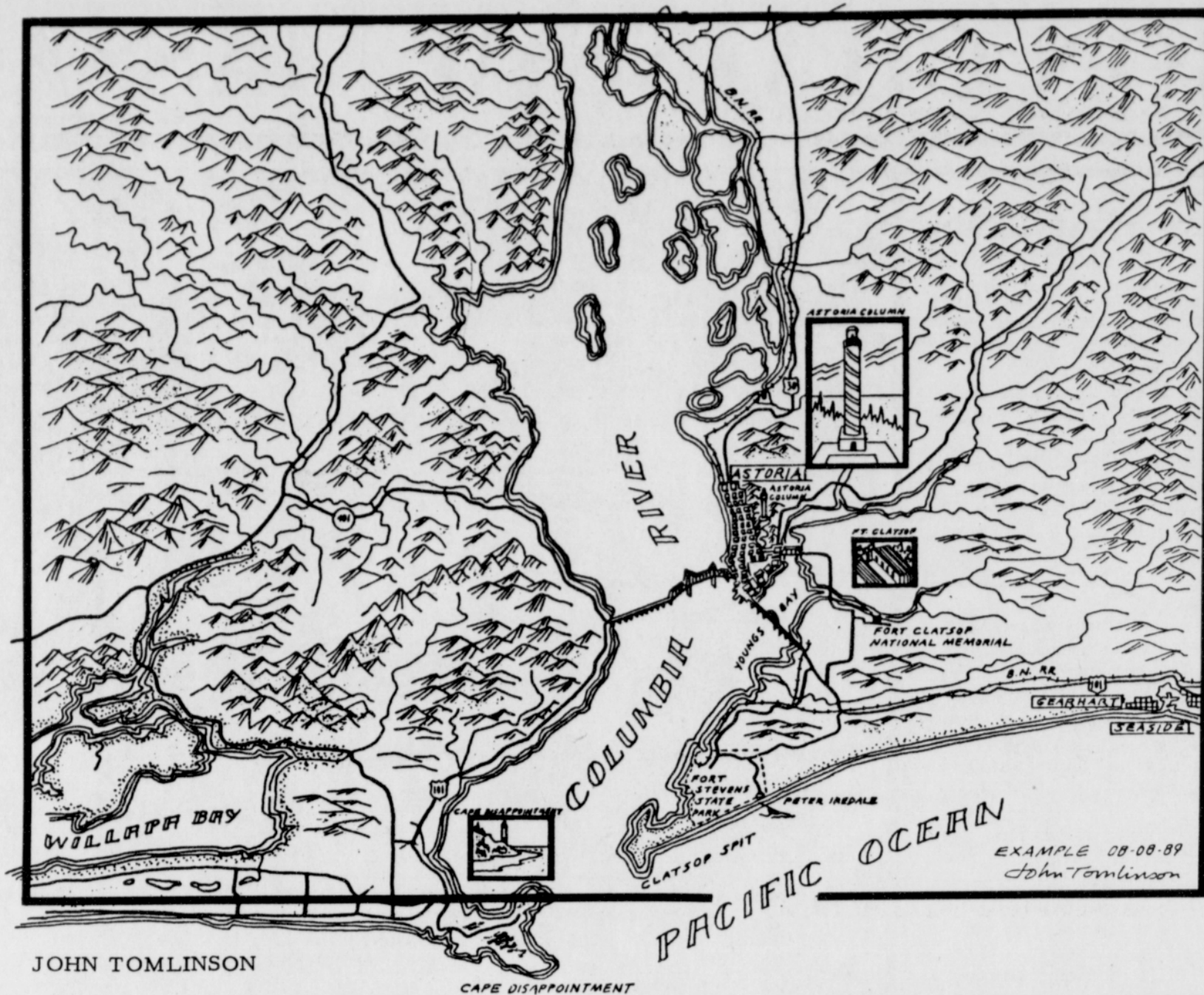




ALL FOR TREES

BY JIM WILKINS

Many current issues have no distinct boundaries and are made up of gray areas, influenced by political expediency and widely varying social and personal perspectives. The question of logging inside the city limits of Astoria should not be allowed to fall into this category. Either trees are cut or they are not cut.

I propose enacting a very simple ordinance outlawing all tree cutting and logging activity within the city limits. If a tree grows to the point where it presents a clear and present danger to human life or property, a review board should determine whether to spare the tree or the human. If a person wants to build a house that will require tree removal, this also should be examined by the board. Check out the scar carved into the forest north of Lexington Avenue, just across the intersection with Sonora. Who allowed that and why?

To paraphrase a recent letter to the editor in the Point Reyes Light, a Pulitzer Prize winning small country weekly from West Marin County, California, Americans tend to allow their elected officials to hire experts to oversee the people's business. Having done so these politicians seem to assume that they have done the job for which they were elected. There are many fine examples of how this approach has not been effective, both nationally and locally. We are now building an expensive water treatment system for Astoria because some expert advised logging the city's watershed, thus destroying nature's own filter. Since our elected leaders appear pretty much asleep at the

switch, the people themselves are finding it wise to keep a close eye on the henhouse. It is in this context that I find organizations like the Tree Musketeers, dedicated to preserving Astoria's city forest, attractive.

Locally, we find our hired experts coming into Astoria from somewhere else, staying for a short time and then moving on to larger cities and larger paychecks. We represent some sort of notch on their bedpost. I suppose the ultimate goal for these people is to be manager of the entire known universe with a correspondingly large salary. Astoria's new city manager was quoted in the Daily Astorian as being very excited about his move from Redmond because he would be moving up to a city with a population over ten thousand and a salary over \$50,000. Do you really think this guy gives a hoot what the city's hillsides are going to look like in 300 years? Maybe, but don't count on it. To a lot of people those trees mean bucks, and bucks can make a city manager look pretty good when it comes time to submit his resume again.

I understand that within the Astoria community there is a faction that is considering logging city timber to pay for waterfront development. This seems rather like selling the cattle to pay for the new barn. I'm sure most people in the city have seen pictures of early Astoria

showing the denuded hillsides spotted with landslides, scars and stumps. Arguments are heard for thinning certain stands, selectively logging timber that might rot, or selectively clearcutting stands that are out of public view. Forget it! Our grandchildren's grandchildren will appreciate our foresight. If the people of Astoria, besides those at city hall, want a trendy and expensive waterfront, it should be financed by other means.

If any Tree Musketeer would like to overfly Clatsop County, please call and we'll hop in my 172 and I'll show you what little timber we have left here. Alongside this wasteland you'll see the little jewel that is Astoria, a gem that needs our protection.

Jim Wilkins lives in Astoria. He owns a construction company and half of an airplane, and is also a member of the music group "Melodity." Howard Bruner is a founding member of the preservationist group "Tree Musketeers," and has long been involved in environmental issues. He lives in Astoria.

The maps on this page were prepared by Curt Schneider of Astoria to show the parcels and ownership of the forest that surrounds the city. The perspective of the lower Columbia River region by John Tomlinson is included as reference to Astoria's position within it.



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