

O CHRISTMAS TREE



In the gargantuan world of Google, the Ear could not find one single image to match the search term “Christmas trees made of propellers,” yet one such image arrived just last week in the Ear’s email, sent in by **Samantha Lundberg**. Her photo of a tree made from brass propellers that were once used on gillnet boats in Bristol Bay, Alaska, and decorated with glass floats and starfish, is shown.

Which got the Ear to thinking (yes, she does, occasionally) about alternative Christmas trees that might be fun, and found several options, such as trees made out of: horseshoes, books, broccoli, newspapers, dyed egg cartons, popsicle sticks, beer bottles, wooden pallets, a ladder, cardboard boxes, neckties, dead bushes, tomato cages, tumbleweed, you name it ... and the list goes on and on.

Even so, it would be hard to beat Samantha’s for nautical flair and panache.

A RIGHT UNJOLLY OLD ELF



“An Interesting Letter,” dated Dec. 12, 1890, from the Wednesday, **Dec. 24, 1890 Daily Morning Astorian** (<http://tinyurl.com/astxmas1890>) is actually a seasonal advertisement, but with a distinctly un-Christmasy tone:

“To the People of Astoria and Surrounding Country: I herein state that I am already here, and I brought you over that English Engineer; also the Russian Grip (epidemic of 1890), and the German Croup, and I threw Scotch Dundee William in the soup. Yours truly, **Santa Claus**.”

Children hearing that would likely hide under the furniture. Then, sounding even less like Santa, if that’s possible, and even more like **Krampus** (the half-man half-beast who is rather like St. Nick’s demonic alter-ego), the unjolly old elf adds a post script:

“While here, my headquarters will be at the corner and Third and West Ninth streets, where I will be glad to welcome you all, and where you will find suitable and useful presents for the holidays without encouraging faking or gambling of any kind whatsoever, which is pernicious in its tendencies at any time or place, let alone in your daily business transactions. You will easily find the place by the sign as below (**L.L. Osgood**, The Exclusive Clothier and Hatter). Signed, S.C.” Yikes.

So much for tidings of comfort and joy.

DEAR SANTA



On the other side of the coin, according to the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program (<http://tinyurl.com/santaltr>), children were writing **Dear Santa letters** to newspapers by at least 1874, certain Santa could not miss a letter that had been published in a newspaper. Apparently, the oldest such letter found in Historic Oregon Newspapers is from 1890, in none other than **The Daily Morning Astorian**, dated Dec. 19:

“**Griffin & Reed** of this city are daily in receipt of a number of letters addressed to Santa Claus. The following is a specimen of one received yesterday from Gray’s River ... ‘Dear Santa Claus; bring my little sister a doll and a doll wagon and some candy and some nuts and some peanuts, and a tin horn. Bring me an air gun and a buck saw and a knife and some candy and some nuts and some peanuts. Frank.’”

At the time, retail stores received most of the Dear Santa letters, some of which were published in the newspaper as part of the stores’ advertising.

As a parting shot, this whopper from The Sunday Oregonian is dated Dec. 21, 1919: “Dear Santa Clause. I’ve been waiting for you a long time. I am nine months old. I want a trunk full of silk dresses and a necklace with my Mothers picture and a ring, with a ruby. I’ve been a awful good girl. **Arvilla**”



CHRISTMAS AT SEA



Blast from the past (Dec. 12, 2012): Astorian and Merchant Marine **Pamela Mattson McDonald**, pictured, right, appeared on Huffington Post’s online channel, **Huffpost Live**, Tuesday in a segment called “Deployed For The Holiday” (<http://tinyurl.com/pm-huffpost>). The show, hosted by **Nancy Redd**, pictured left, was about how military families and their service members stay in touch and cope during the holiday season.

“Shipping doesn’t know any holiday,” Pamela noted. She is a cook on tugboats that often go to remote areas — yes, even on holidays. One way she copes with being away from home is by writing. “I like to write stories about our adventures on the high seas and the remote places that we get to go.”

As the cook for a crew of eight to 10, “it’s my job to make sure that the crew has got a festive holiday,” she explained. “They are away from their friends and family — we can be in the middle of the ocean, and there’s just nothing but us, we’re a little island — and so it’s really my dime, and what I do to make those people feel good. And I just love putting on holidays, so I really do it up.”

A Christmas tree at sea? There are parts and paint in the engine room, to start with. “We get creative, and make our tree. Whether we have to use paper plates, and aluminum foil, and wire, and ball bearings, and washers, and Dixie cups — we make something.”

One Christmas really stood out for Pamela. “I really knocked myself out and made a Bush de Noel, which is a French Christmas cake,” she recalled, “and by the time we were done with the lobster course, and the prime rib, and the au gratin potatoes, and all the other things that I had made, and I brought this cake out — there was a standing ovation for me.”

“I had never gotten that,” she recalled. “I was in tears, because I knew that they really appreciated the way that I had treated them.”

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN



Where’s **Santa**? The North American Air Defense Command (**NORAD**) knows, and you can track him tonight, too, on their website, www.noradsanta.org (which also has music, videos, and other goodies).

Ever wonder how NORAD got involved with Santa tracking? From the website: “... The tradition began in 1955 after a Colorado Springs-based Sears Roebuck & Co. advertisement misprinted the telephone number for children to call Santa.

“Instead of reaching Santa, the phone number put kids through to the CONAD Commander-in-Chief’s operations ‘hotline.’ The director of operations at the time, Col. Harry Shoup, had his staff check the radar for indications of Santa making his way south from the North Pole. Children who called were given updates on his location, and a tradition was born.”

Ever wonder how NORAD actually tracks Santa (and yes, there’s an app for that)? Rudolph’s bright red nose gives off an infrared signature, which allows NORAD satellites to detect the location of Santa’s sleigh. Now you know.

MOVING MOUNTAINS



Courtesy of Astorian **Robert Clark** and the BBC, the Ear has been alerted to some Scandinavian holiday spirit: An online campaign has been launched in **Norway** to **give a mountain peak to Finland** (<http://tinyurl.com/movehalti>).

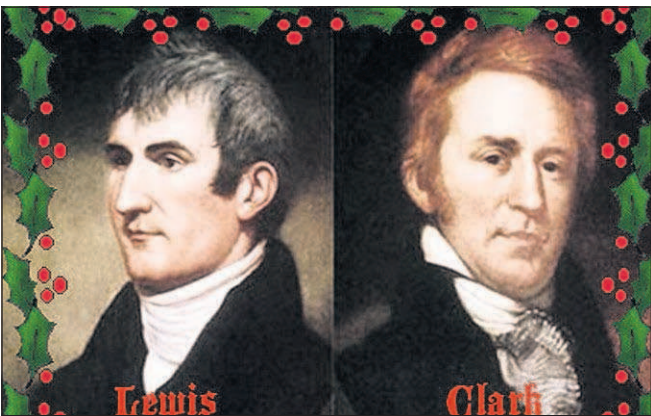
Why? One reason is as a gift to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Finland’s independence in 2017. More importantly, the mountain itself is in Finland, and is Finland’s highest point — but the summit, pictured, is in Norway. The photo is courtesy of **Jarikir** (www.flickr.com/photos/jarikir)

Bjorn Geirr Harsson, retired from the Norwegian Mapping Authority, came up with the idea to move the Norwegian border 66 feet so the summit of **Halti Mountain** can be in Finland decades ago, and suspects his son is behind the current campaign.

“Not only will this be a great gift, but how many countries can brag about having given a mountain as a gift?” the campaign’s Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Haltijubileum) reads, adding: “Let us take Finland to new heights!”

Gledelig Jul!

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1805



The Ear couldn’t help but think about the **Lewis & Clark Expedition**, and how **Christmas Day 1805** on the North Coast must have been for them. So here you have it, firsthand, an excerpt from the journal of **Capt. William Clark**, who is pictured, right (<http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>):

“At daylight this morning, we were awakened by the discharge of the firearms of all our party and a salute, shouts, and a song which the whole party joined in under our windows, after which they retired to their rooms (and) were cheerful all the morning ...

“The Indians leave us in the evening ... I received a present of **Captain (Meriwether) Lewis** of a fleece hosiery shirt, drawers and socks, a pair of moccasins of (**Pvt. Joseph) Whitehouse**, a small Indian basket of (**Pvt. Silas) Goodrich**, two dozen white weasels’ tails of the Indian woman, and some black root of the Indians before their departure ...

“We would have spent this day, the nativity of Christ, in feasting, had we had anything either to raise our spirits or even gratify our appetites. Our dinner consisted of poor elk, so much spoiled that we ate it through mere necessity, some spoiled pounded fish, and a few roots.”

Sgt. John Ordway, at least, was a bit more upbeat: “We all moved in to our new fort, which our officers name **Fort Clatsop** after the name of the Clatsop nation of Indians who live nearest to us ...

“They divided out the last of their tobacco among the men that used, and the rest they gave each a silk handkerchief, as a Christmas gift, to keep us in remembrance of it as we have no ardent spirits, but are all in good health — which we esteem more than all the ardent spirits in the world.”

SECRET SANTA



Easom Property Management Inc. and **Windermere Pacific Land Company**, partnering with the **Wishing Tree and Food Basket Program**, collected donations of warm coats, blankets, scarves, hats and gloves for Clatsop County families in need during the holiday season. The successful drive ended Dec. 17, but a **Secret Santa** had a surprise for them.

“After we delivered all that we had collected on the 17th, we kept our donation barrel out in case anyone missed the deadline,” **LJ Gunderson**, vice president of Easom, wrote. “A woman came into the office and dropped two huge bags into the barrel, and slipped out before anyone could even thank her ... We were amazed to open the bags and find all brand new coats and blankets (pictured).”

“We don’t know who this lady was,” she added, “but wanted to thank her for her generous donation.”

COMMUNITY NOTES

SATURDAY

Columbia Northwestern Model Railroad Club — 1 p.m., in Hammond. Group runs trains on HO-scale layout. For information, call Don Carter at 503-325-0757.

SUNDAY

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Support Group — 2 to 3:30 p.m., Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway. Family to Family Support Group, for anyone with friend or loved one suffering from a serious brain (mental) illness. For information, contact Myra Kero at 503-738-6165, or k7erowood@q.com, or go to www.nami.org

Line Dancing — 5:30 to 8 p.m., Seaside American Legion, 1315 Broadway. For information, call 503-738-5111. No cost; suggested \$5 tip to the instructor.

MONDAY

Scandinavian Workshop — 10 a.m., First Lutheran Church, 725 33rd St. Needlework, hardanger, knitting, crocheting, embroidery and quilting. All are welcome. For information, call 503-325-1364 or 503-325-7960.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation \$3 for those older than 60;

\$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Michelle Lewis at 503-861-4200.

Columbia Senior Dinners — 11:30 a.m., Peace Lutheran Church (lower level), 565 12th St. Cost is \$5. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Warrenton Senior Lunch Program — noon, Warrenton Community Center, 170 S.W. Third St. Suggested donation of \$5 for seniors and \$7 for those younger than 60. For information, or to volunteer, call 503-861-3502 Monday or Thursday.

Astoria Rotary Club — noon,

Club. For information, call 503-325-3231.

TUESDAY

Do Nothing Club — 10 a.m. to noon, 24002 U St., Ocean Park, Wash. Men’s group. For information, call Jack McBride at 360-665-2721.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation of \$3 for those older than 60; \$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Michelle Lewis at 503-861-4200.

Columbia Senior Dinners —

11:30 a.m., Peace Lutheran Church (lower level), 565 12th St. The cost is \$5. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Astoria Lions Club — noon, Astoria Elks Lodge, 453 11th St. Prospective members welcome. For information, contact Charlene Larsen at 503-325-0590.

Line Dancing for Seniors — 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, temporarily located at 1555 W. Marine Drive in the old Astoria Yacht Club. For information, call 503-325-3231.