



Photo by Matt Love

The Big O Saloon is located on Oregon Highway 202 in Olney.

word nerd

By RYAN HUME

Olney [oʊˈni]

noun

1. *Cyrus Olney*: Born in Geneva, New York on Oct. 11, 1815, Olney was raised in Ohio where he later attended law school in Cincinnati. He relocated to Portland in 1851 and opened his own law practice only to be appointed to the Supreme Court of the Oregon Territory in 1853 by President Franklin Pierce. He served as judge in the third district, overseeing the northern counties of Clatsop, Washington, Yamhill and Clackamas. During his time on the bench, he presided over the trial of the territory's first convicted murderess, Charity Lamb, and served as the Clatsop delegate to the Oregon Constitutional Convention, though he skipped the final vote to ratify. He resigned from the court in 1858, later serving in the state Senate and House of Representatives as a Republican. Following his death in Astoria in December 1870, at age 55, his family revealed that Olney had long suffered an addiction to opium, chloroform and other narcotics while they contested his will

against the city of Astoria

2. An unincorporated community in Clatsop County located eight miles southeast of Astoria out Oregon Highway 202. Formerly a lumber-rich company town, Olney is currently home to a general store and the Big O Saloon.

Origin:

Olney is a location-based surname of Anglo-Saxon origin that arrives by way of *Ollaneg*, first recorded in 979, which means "lonely glade" in Old English. As a surname, it has spread and mutated wildly: besides the original English town in Buckinghamshire, there are 12 cities in 12 different states in the U.S. bearing the same name. The community in Clatsop County was named in honor of the local judge with the establishment of a post office

in the area in 1875. The post office closed in 1950, but the name has stuck.

"Whereas, it is asserted that Cyrus Olney, late of Astoria deceased, left a will under which it is claimed the city has large pecuniary interests, and it is asserted on the other hand that said supposed will is invalid and that no rights accrued to the city thereunder, and it is desirable to have more certain advice on the matter."

—Advertisement, approved by J.D.H Gray, acting mayor, "Ordinance No. 311," *The Daily Astorian*, Feb. 4, 1879, p. 2

"I'd never seen a cookhouse. I'd never driven Oregon Highway 202. I'd never heard of Olney. A groovy painting of a crosscut saw on the sign sealed the deal. I was going — right now. Fifteen minutes later, I walked inside the Big O Saloon and could not believe my eyes."

—Matt Love, "The Big O Saloon," *Coast Weekend*, May 1, 2014



Photo by Edward Stratton

The Paradoxx Bistro is located at 1820 S.E. Front St., overlooking Youngs Bay, Youngs River and Saddle Mountain.

A GLIMPSE INSIDE

An occasional feature by MATT LOVE

The Paradoxx Bistro

It has always mystified me why Astoria doesn't take more commercial and aesthetic advantage of the views of Youngs Bay. Saddle Mountain in the background. Gillnetters floating the tides. An astonishing array of avian life. A confluence of rivers. The vistas from every angle of Youngs Bay are simply breathtaking. But so many people who visit Astoria virtually never see them.

This thought occurred to me the other day when I stopped in the Paradoxx Bistro, which overlooks Youngs Bay out on Oregon Highway 202. It

opened in June but I hadn't taken the opportunity to visit. I wanted a quiet spot to write and this felt like it could be the place. Sometimes, downtown Astoria overheats on the weekends, and it's difficult to find serenity in the cafes.

I walked inside and had the bistro all to myself. I took a booth and ordered lemon cheesecake and black coffee. Then I started looking at the views, the best spectacular southern and eastern views of Youngs Bay from a restaurant in town. In fact, the only ones.

This was a quiet place to write, that's for sure, or break up with someone in hushed tones. Or even read alone.

I made the acquaintance of the co-owners, a brother-and-sister duo named Jeremy and Bethany Emmons. Jeremy gave me a tour and a brief history of the Paradoxx and said the restaurant offers inexpensive comfort food, and indeed it does. He also revealed plans to remodel the back deck overlooking the bay and make it publicly accessible again. I told him I'd hold a literary festival or writing workshop on the deck once it reopened because the ambience out there would certainly fire any creative person's imagination and offer a visitor a whole other appreciation for the natural beauty of Astoria.

After my chat, I dug into the cheesecake, sipped my coffee, watched some herons, and started working on a new piece of writing. It didn't take long for me to realize that the Paradoxx will soon claim the title as my favorite place to write in Astoria.

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Matt Love is the author/editor of 14 books about Oregon. His books are available through coastal bookstores or his web site, nestuccaspitpress.com

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