NW word nerd

By RYAN HUME

Flavel
[flə•vɛl]

noun

1. Surname of one of the most prominent and wealthy families in early Astoria. Capt. George Flavel arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River in the winter of 1849 and amassed a large fortune by creating a virtual monopoly through his bar piloting enterprise as well as his other business ventures, which included banking and real estate. Remembered for his efforts to develop the canning and shipping industries in the area, he was one of the region's first millionaires. His last descendants, siblings Harry and Mary Louise Flavel, abruptly fled Astoria in 1990 after Harry was found guilty of assault in the stabbing of Alec Josephson. They left in their wake a number of abandoned properties, both residential and commercial, as well as liens and unpaid bills, many of which are still being figured out today.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

The town of Flavel was the site of the Flavel Hotel. Passengers came to stay at the hotel while waiting to board steamships bound for San Francisco.

2. *Flavel House:* Capt. George Flavel built this 11,600-square-foot, Queen Anne-style mansion on the corner of 8th and Duane streets in downtown Astoria as his retirement home in 1886 for a reported $36,000. The home was donated to the city of Astoria by Patricia Jean Flavel in 1934. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1951, the house is owned and operated as a museum by the Clatsop County Historical Society.

3. *Flavel, Oregon (1896-1918):* The Flavel family tried to launch this eponymous port town near Hammond at Tansy Point in an effort to rival other West Coast ports, such as Astoria, Seattle and San Francisco. Sold as "the terminus on the hill," "where river, rail and ocean meet," a number of docks were built as well as the lavish three-story Flavel Hotel, which including a bowling alley, swimming pool and tennis court. Despite the family's connections and a massive ad push, the town floundered and was eventually annexed by Warrenton in 1918.

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HISTORIC OREGON NEWSAPAPERS/UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARIES

This page from The Sunday Oregonian on Oct. 18, 1914 boasted an ad for the town of Flavel near Warrenton and Astoria.

Origin:

Flavel is one of more than 60 known variant spellings of the Latin *Flavian*, which means "yellow hair" and can be traced back to the Roman Empire. It is thought to have arrived in the British Isles alongside or shortly after William the Conqueror landed with the Normans in 1066, when surnames were introduced in Britain to aid in the collection of taxes. The Anglo-Saxon version of the name is considered a locational surname that refers to Flyford Flavell, a village in Worcestershire, England, though the name is now more commonly associated with the Irish.

"Captain Flavel's death, which occurred late Monday night, though expected, was a severe shock to the community in which he has lived for many years. He died in great agony, his strength fighting off the inevitable to the last moment. For the last four years the captain has led a very quiet life.... The Flavel rent roll is the heaviest in the city. He owned 60 lots in the business center and never sold one of them. His Tansey Point tract, consisting of 1760 acres, purchased by him for $40,000, he sold last fall for $360,000.... He is assessed here for $252,000, and altogether his possessions, at a low valuation, total considerably over $1,000,000.... His death will be greatly regretted in every part of the country."

—"The Death of Captain Flavel," *The Dalles Weekly Chronicle*, Friday, July 7, 1893, P. 2

"Life in Astoria was great, unless you were a Flavel."

—Mary Louise Flavel, as interviewed by Chelsea Gorrow, "Mary Louise Flavel Found," *The Daily Astorian*, Wednesday, July 11, 2012

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