

An Astoria native in the land of the Shogun



COURTESY CLATSOP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A monument to Ranald MacDonald, credited as Japan's first native-speaking English teacher, in Nagasaki, Japan

ASTORIA — The Clatsop County Historical Society's Thursday Night Talks lecture series continues March 15, with "East Meets West: An Astoria Native in the Land of the Shogun," a free event at the Fort George Showroom in the Lovell Building. Doors open at 6 p.m.; the lecture begins at 7 p.m.

Born in Astoria in 1824 to Chinook and Scottish parents, Ranald MacDonald was a young adventurer who sailed across the Pacific and illegally entered the isolationist and feudal kingdom of Japan

in 1848. His arrival as an intentional castaway was successful, and he became the first native-speaking English teacher in Japan as the country prepared to modernize and meet the English-speaking world a few years later when Commodore Matthew Perry negotiated the opening of Japan to foreign trade.

MacDonald is remembered today in a bilingual birthplace monument located at Fort Astoria Square at Exchange and 15th streets behind Fort George. The monument was erected in 1988 concurrent with the formation

of Friends of MacDonald that was established to promote the story of MacDonald and U.S.-Japan friendship and exchange.

The evening's speaker, Jim Mockford, is a maritime historian and author specializing in Asian and Pacific Studies. He attended Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, and graduated from the University of Oregon Honors College. He recently published "Salute to M/V Salvage Chief" in Sea History magazine's spring 2018 issue. Mockford was chairman of Friends of MacDonald from 1998 to 2008,

and he will tell some of his favorite Ranald MacDonald stories and describe some of the highlights of Friends of MacDonald, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

The Thursday Night Talks lecture series takes place the third Thursday of each month. Seasonal beers are on tap; food and other beverages are available for purchase. Minors are welcome with an accompanying adult.

For more information about this event or other Historical Society activities, call 503-325-2203 or email cchs@cumtux.org.

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