

ASTORIA REGATTA HISTORY

Astoria Regatta started in 1894. It is the oldest celebration in Oregon's oldest city, which make it the oldest celebration in the state. This year will mark the 124th anniversary of the start of the Astoria Regatta. What began as a casual remark between two Astorians soon became a way for the community to celebrate the return of Astoria fishermen from Alaska aboard boats filled with salted fish. Rapidly, the annual celebration of the community blossomed into the one of the premier boat contests on the West Coast.

The 1894 Astoria was a cultural hodgepodge comprised of Native Americans, Scandanavian, Chinese and the usual polyglot of American/Europeans. Early pictures of Regatta show elaborate festivities amidst the thriving downtown that was built over the river on wooden planks, with both a Boat Parade as well as a Land Parade. During WWI and following the devastating fire which destroyed downtown Astoria in 1921, Regatta was suspended. It was reborn in 1931 and was suspended again in WWII.

In 1948 it began again, complete with many of the boat races, but now focused on the then Famous Salmon Derby. Thousands of sport fishermen would take to the river, with cash prizes awarded to the largest fish over a three day period. Oregon Fish & Wildlife regulations curtailed the Derby by the late 1960's. Astoria's history has always centered on the Columbia River. From Native Americans to the great navigators and explorers of the 1700 and 1800's, through to our modern era, Astoria has been populated and tied to the endless stream of fishermen, U.S. Navy sailors and Coast Guardmen. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers survey vessels have served at the mouth of the Columbia River since the 1800's, providing vital data to the bar pilots who guide ships safely to and from the Pacific Ocean. Maritime merchants from three masted clipper ships to sleek new freighters, and countless pleasure and sport craft. Not a day goes by, and rarely an hour, that there is not activity on Astoria's waterfront. It truly is one of the great byways of the world.



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