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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

1922 FIRE RAVAGES ASTORIA



Saturday was the 93rd anniversary of the Friday, Dec. 8, 1922 fire that raged under the waterfront pilings and destroyed almost 30 blocks, wiping out most of Astoria's downtown residential and business district. A Frank Woodfield photo of the fire looking east from Bond Street is shown.

Luckily, there were only two fatalities. One was Notores Staples, a bank president who dropped dead of heart failure. C. J. Smith, a transient, was found hanging under the sidewalk on the waterfront, a probable suicide.

The Seattle Star reported that the fire started because of a furnace explosion in the Theil Brothers' pool room at about 2 a.m. By the next day, Mayor James Bremner was convinced it was set by "firebugs," and one woman declared a lumberjack told her, shortly before the alarms went off: "I have set fire to the old town. You will see soon."

"Millions of dollars worth of cash, jewelry and other valuables, lying in the ashes and debris here, were unmo- lested last night and today," The Seattle Star reported. "Soldiers, sailors, national guardsmen and special policemen, all under orders to 'shoot to kill' any looters, have not reported a single case of attempted theft.

"One man, with an automatic pistol in hand, has stood guard over \$1 million in gold and greenbacks ever since the heat abated sufficiently to allow him to approach his vault in the smoldering basement."

Damage from the fire was estimated at \$15 million (about \$226 million now), and 2,000 residents were left homeless. On the bright side, other citizens took them all in, and several stations were set up to serve hot meals.

The will to rebuild was there right from the start. "The citizens are showing an unbounded and indomitable courage," The Seattle Star declared. "We've got no town left, but we've still got the best harbor on the Pacific coast," Mayor Bremner declared. "We will start rebuilding at once on the old site." And so they did. (tinyurl.com/sstar1208, tinyurl.com/sstar1209, bit.ly/AstFire1922)

'PEACE AND RECONCILIATION'



A note arrived saying the "Obon Society has a YouTube video (bit.ly/obonpeace) that is being watched around the world at the rate of about 3,000 people each day, which is not viral, but pretty darn impressive for a local Astoria-based organization."

Founded by **Rex and Keiko Ziak** in 2009, the Obon Society is an international humanitarian organization whose "goal is peace and reconciliation." It helps American World War II veterans or their survivors return war keepsakes — such as **hinomaru yosegaki flags** — to the families of Japanese soldiers.

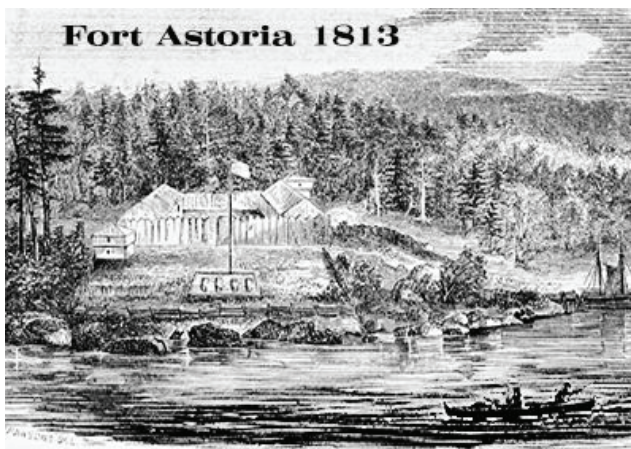
The flags, which were worn under a Japanese soldier's clothes, were signed by family members and friends, sending him good wishes as he went off to war. Many wound up being brought home by American soldiers.

Once a flag is turned in, the Obon Society's scholars try to find surviving family members of the Japanese soldier who owned it. If they are found, the flag is returned to them at no cost. If you have one of these flags, or some other item to return, instructions on how to do so are at obonsociety.org

The YouTube video mentioned above is about World War II veteran Marvin Strobe, of Montana, who, after 73 years, with the Obon Society's help, personally returned a flag to a family in Japan. A screenshot of the touching presentation is shown, courtesy of the Obon Society.

As of Wednesday, the video had 615,163 views. Pretty darn impressive, indeed.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF CAPT. BLACK



Dec. 13, 1813, during the War of 1812 between America and England, is an important date to mark in Astoria's history. Here's why:

In September, **Capt. William Black**, at the helm of the British Royal Navy sloop **HMS Raccoon**, commanded a squadron of ships escorting one of the **North West Co.'s** fur-trading vessels to the Columbia River.

Black charged on ahead up the Columbia to "destroy, and if possible, totally annihilate any settlements which the Americans may have formed." At the time the only settlement around to annihilate was **Fort Astoria**, which Black believed was owned by an American outfit, **John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Co.**

Black's first disappointment came after crossing the Columbia River Bar — practically licking his chops in anticipation of seizing the settlement for the crown — when he first laid eyes on Fort Astoria. Fur trader Gabriel Franchère reported the captain exclaimed, "What, is this the fort I have heard so much of? Great God, I could batter it down with a four-pounder in two hours!"

The second letdown came when Black was informed his prize was no longer owned by an American company. The Pacific Fur Co., knowing the British squadron was on the way, and would probably seize the place, sold the fort to a British Canadian company. There was nothing to conquer.

On Dec. 13, the Raccoon's officers and the North West Co. men officially claimed the fort and the surrounding area for the British crown. Renamed **Fort George**, the Union Jack flag was raised, and a bottle of wine broken on the flagpole to seal the deal.

Disappointment wasn't done with the good captain, however. On the way out to sea, the Raccoon scraped her bottom twice and lost a chunk of her keel. Not willing to hang around, Capt. Black headed to San Francisco for repairs.

Incidentally, that 12-foot section of keel washed up in 1973, and is displayed at the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria. (bit.ly/frtgeorg)

TSU, TOO



In 2013, some **striped beakfish** (aka barred knifejaw), native to Japan, were found swimming around inside a fishing boat that got torn loose in the **2011 Japanese tsunami** and landed on the Long Beach, Washington, Peninsula.

Branded an invasive species, only one of the beakfish, **Tsu**, was allowed to live, and was sent to the **Seaside Aquarium**. Unfortunately, she died a few years ago.

Then in 2015, another striped beakfish was found in a crab pot in **Port Orford**, and sent to the the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport.

At the time, **Sam Chan**, an invasive species expert, wondered if there were more. The answer is "yes."

Since October, divers **Nicholas Ta** and **Dennis Marshall Lewis** have spotted one several times while diving in the **Monterey Bay**, California, area, The Mercury News reports (tinyurl.com/bkfish). A screen shot from Ta's video is shown. Luckily, the fish are no longer considered an invasive species.

"It's just one guy," Ta said. "He's enjoying his time here ... he's doing good."

GROUNDING GREBES



"If you ever come across one of these silly looking birds on the beach, they are going to need your help," Nellie Hux wrote. She is referring to grebes, and her photo of one is shown. "They were cursed with their feet too far back, and they need a running start to fly."

On the beach, they can easily be snatched by predators, or drown in the rolling surf.

"Western grebes cannot physically walk on land, and can only take off from water," Christina Merten explained. If you find one on land, it's in trouble. Call the Wildlife Center of the North Coast at 503-338-0331 (or message them on Facebook at bit.ly/fb-WCNC) to find out what you can do to help.

GO FOR THE SHOW



Mike and Teale Adelmann have gone all out once again with their **Christmas Light Show** at their home, the **D. K. Warren House**, at 107 N.E. Skipanon Drive in Warrenton. The display runs from 5 to 10 p.m. daily until Jan. 1. When you drive up, tune your radio to 95.7 to get the full impact — Mike has synchronized six different Christmas songs to the lights. A photo from the light show is shown.

Local history buffs will likely know that the house, built for **Daniel Knight Warren** in 1885 for \$8,000 (about \$209,000 now), is on the National Register of Historic Places (bit.ly/dkwarren). The site for the mansion was the only area in the estate above flood tide at the time, so Warren hired 20 Chinese laborers to build the first dikes to hold the water back, according to the NRHP application.

The Ear digresses. Back to the Adelmanns' light show, which is too good to miss. There's a lit donation box close by, and all net proceeds go to the Warrenton-Hammond Healthy Kids Inc. So go for the show, and help kids, too.

MOOSE CABOOSE



An AP story out of Alaska reports that an Anchorage couple was literally rudely awakened in the middle of the night by the **doorbell**.

Kyle Stultz went to the door and looked out, but didn't see anyone. He assumed it was kids playing a prank, but checked his security camera video just to be sure.

What he saw was a huge **moose** who had been wandering around by the front door, then backed up and planted his "caboose" on the doorbell. A screen shot from his video is shown.

Let's just hope the North Coast elk don't get wind of this prank.

COMMUNITY NOTES

SATURDAY

Sit & Stitch — 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Homespun Quilts & Yarn, 108 10th St. Bring knitting, crochet or other needlework projects to this community stitching time. All skill levels welcome.

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.

Spinning Circle — 1 to 3 p.m., Astoria Fiber Arts Academy, 1296 Duane St. Bring a spin-

ning wheel. For information, call 503-325-5598 or go to astoriafiberarts.org

SUNDAY

Seniors Breakfast — 9 a.m. to noon, Astoria Moose Lodge, 420 17th St. Cooked to order from menu, includes coffee. Cost is \$5 for seniors 62 and older, \$7.50 for those younger than 62. Breakfasts are open to the public. Proceeds after expenses help support local and other charities.

Cannon Beach American Legion Women's Auxiliary Breakfast — 9 to 11:30 a.m.,

American Legion, 1216 S. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach.

Military Officers Association of America, Lower Columbia River Chapter — 5 p.m. Christmas dinner, Astoria Golf and Country Club, 33445 Sunset Beach Road, Warrenton. All U.S. military officers and former officers; active duty, reserve, retired or warrant officers are invited, as well as U.S. Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officers. For information, contact Capt. R. Stevens at 503-861-9832.

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

Chair Exercises for Seniors — 9 to 9:45 a.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

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.

Grace and Encouragement for Moms — 10 to 11:30 a.m., Crossroads Community Church, 40618 Old Highway 30, Svensen. GEMS group is a time for moms to relax and enjoy each others' company. Free childcare is provided. For information, call Christina Leonard at 503-298-3936.

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 informa-

tion, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. Cost is \$6. 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 younger than 60. For information, or to volunteer, call 503-861-3502 Monday or Thursday.

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