



Explore building's history, celebrate holiday season

The Ruins in the old Hotel Astoria.

By MARIANNE MONSON

If urban decay is up your alley, you'll want to mark the date of the second annual Welcome to the Holiday Season Party at 9 p.m. on Saturday when The Ruins at the old Hotel Astoria, will be open to the public, ages 21 and up. This community appreciation event drew over 400 people last year in celebration of the end of a busy tourist season and the beginning of the holidays. Dance to the sounds of Holiday Friends and enjoy beverages donated by Fort George Brewery and Buoy Beer.

For history lovers like myself, one of the main draws is the rare opportunity to access

If You Go

Welcome to the Holiday Season party

9 p.m. Saturday

The Ruins, 1425 Commercial St., Astoria

Free.

the Ruins at the Astor Hotel, our town's swanky venue usually reserved for private events. The history of this building retraces the economic history of Astoria itself, with all its ups and downs.

Construction on the Hotel Astoria began

in November 1922, but only a month later, of course, the cataclysmic fire destroyed downtown Astoria leaving the construction site in ashes, with many of the building's original investors just as financially ruined. New investors redesigned the plans created by Portland architects Tourtellotte & Hummel, increasing the height to eight stories, which made it a veritable skyscraper at the time, and one of the tallest buildings on the Oregon Coast. Determined to make the now "fireproof" hotel a showpiece, the designers saw the edifice as a symbol of Astoria's pioneer heritage and its ability to rise from the ashes of calamity.

For many years, the white and gray building served as a hub for business and social activities, boasting convention and meeting spaces in addition to guest rooms and residential apartments. However, hit in quick succession by the Great Depression, World War II and prohibition, the Hotel began to struggle as it attempted to ward off prohibition agents, labor troubles and military police. After the completion of the Sunset Highway in 1949, Portlanders could access the coast without driving through Astoria, and patronage continued to decline.

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