



The Holiday Friends band will play at the Ruins at 9 p.m. Saturday.

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Attempting to revitalize the building in the 1950s, owners renamed it the John Jacob Astor Hotel and painted the entire structure pink, but these stylistic alterations did little to combat postwar decline. The IRS closed the hotel’s restaurant and the “Fur Trader Lounge” in 1968 for tax delinquency. The same year, city officials condemned the building as a public nuisance and fire hazard and ordered it vacated. Narrowly avoiding demolition in the late 1970s, the County government sold the building at auction before a group of passionate local historians succeeded in adding the structure to the National Register of Historic Places.

“Formerly the pride of Astoria,” the Sunday Oregonian described it in 1983, “the once-elegant inn now houses only frequent trespassers and serves as a haven for minor-in possession juveniles with little to do on an Astoria Saturday night.” Dubbed the “pink elephant” by locals, Astoria’s mayor Bob Chopping told a reporter that, “Citizens must have realized after all these

years, chances of renovation is nil.” But apparently Chopping did not fully understand this city’s persistent spirit nor its affection for lost causes, because in spite of his prediction, the popularity of the Astor Hotel building rose from the ashes once more.

In 2010, Paul Caruana, who is responsible for the restoration of a number of historic commercial properties in town, took charge of full scale renovations that included a return to the original color scheme. Since then, commercial spaces have filled at a steady clip. The original Grand Lobby was reborn as The Ruins, featuring eight Corinthian columns supporting a stunning mezzanine. Many of the original Gothic details have been preserved, and the designers wisely chose to leave the space in a state of decay evocative of the building’s rough history and defiant elegance.

You may or may not remember all this by the time you’ve had a few beers and taken a turn around the dance floor, but the chance to see this building for yourself and mark the end of the tourist season is something we all can celebrate.




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