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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

## ‘ASTORIA BELIEVES’



OK, so it’s Thanksgiving, but Christmas is just around the corner, and **Jeff Daly** is ready.

“What’s Christmas without a tree?” he asks. “In the 1960s, downtown Astoria was decorated by the city with cooperation from Pacific Power, and always with a grand Christmas tree.” Jeff’s photos of a vintage Astoria tree are shown.

But then in 1966, the city Christmas decorations were sold at auction. Astoria got Grinch-ed, and things looked pretty grim, but Jeff remained hopeful. “Astoria believes,” he insisted.

He was right. The decorations “were found 30 years later by **Tim and Melba O’Bryant** at a garage sale,” Jeff recalled.

“They bought and restored them, and have brought back a piece of Astoria Christmas history. The **Astoria Christmas Club** was formed 23 years ago to spread the joy and happiness of the Christmas season, to bring the downtown alive with holiday spirit — and, it’s done with private donations.”

In case you’re wondering who those Christmas Club volunteer elves are who help decorate the town with cheer, they are your friends and neighbors and local business owners. Want to help? You can send a check to The Christmas Club, P.O. Box 62, Astoria, OR., 97103, or to keep up with their activities, friend them on Facebook at fb.me/astoria.christmasclub

“Mr. Christmas, Tim, has done it again,” Jeff added, with the club’s latest news, “and found that Warrenton was discarding their 28-foot artificial tree, which he acquired and has rebuilt, restored and retrofitted with 4,000 7-color LED bulbs.”

Of course, such a magnificent tree must have a grand lighting party and “unveiling,” and it’s being held at 6 p.m. Saturday at Joe’s Mobil, 1701 Marine Drive, across from the Columbia River Maritime Museum. There will be hot cider and music and you can get a selfie with Santa on the Joy Train.

Thanks to the O’Bryants and the Christmas Club, holiday cheer is alive and well in our little town. Astoria still believes.

## A DUBIOUS DISTINCTION



Here’s a little tidbit about **Gearhart’s** curious connection to the impeachment hearings, courtesy of **R.J. Marx** and the **Seaside Signal** (bit.ly/GearSond):

U.S. Diplomat **Gordon Sondland**, who testified at the hearings, owns a house on **South Ocean Avenue** in Gearhart with his wife, **Katherine Durant**. They are part-time residents. He is pictured, courtesy of the U.S. Department of State.

The couple bought the property in 2008 for \$800,000 (worth \$1.1 million now, per realtor.com), tore down the original house, and replaced it with a two-story house.

Some, like neighbor **Margaret Marino**, think the couple “truly love the beach and view it as a place to retreat with their families and dearest friends,” and who “are neighbors that deeply care.”

Others would heartily beg to differ, saying Sondland’s house has “the dubious distinction” of extending past the normally acceptable western development line on Gin Ridge. And that’s the problem: Their house blocks their neighbors’ headland and ocean views. Not a terrific way to make new friends, to be sure.

“All the houses on the west side of Gearhart’s **Gin Ridge** were built on a line that gave each house the maximum view west, including Tillamook Head to North Head, and everything in between, Gearhart’s **Jim Furnish** said,” Marx wrote.

“Sondland disregarded that, and got approval to build west of the line,” Furnish added, “destroying some views their neighbors had for over 100 years.”

It would appear that Sondland’s “views” are more controversial in Gearhart than in Washington, D.C. A dubious distinction, indeed.

## A MOVEABLE FEAST



While the Pilgrims may have made a big deal about that first sit-down **Thanksgiving** dinner with local Native Americans in New England in 1621, nobody took the time to write down the date.

Perhaps the oversight was due to the monumental indigestion that must have followed that three-day gastronomic blowout with all the trimmings, which included lobster, seal and swans on the menu.

And — aside from President **George Washington** declaring Nov. 26, 1789, as a national day of Thanksgiving — for decades the date, or dates, for Thanksgiving events was a rather iffy affair, varying from colony to colony and state to state.

Most people probably don’t know that it was President **Abraham Lincoln**, in 1863, during the Civil War, who declared that the last Thursday in November would be the official date for a national Thanksgiving Day.

The date remained constant for almost 100 years, until President **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** came along. In 1939, he decided Thanksgiving should be on the third Thursday, to stimulate Christmas shopping in what were still difficult economic times, post-Depression.

The change was grimly received, to put it politely — people sneeringly called it **Franksgiving** — so in 1941, Roosevelt relented and moved Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday in November — where it has remained ever since. (bit.ly/TDayhist)

## ‘A WHITE FROST THIS MORNING’



Here’s what Meriwether Lewis and William Clark’s **Corps of Discovery** were up to on **Nov. 24, 1805**:

From **Pvt. Joseph Whitehouse’s** journal (tinyurl.com/L-C-Nov24): “A white frost this morning, and the weather clear and pleasant. Several of our hunters went out a hunting, and we put out our baggage, etc., to dry.

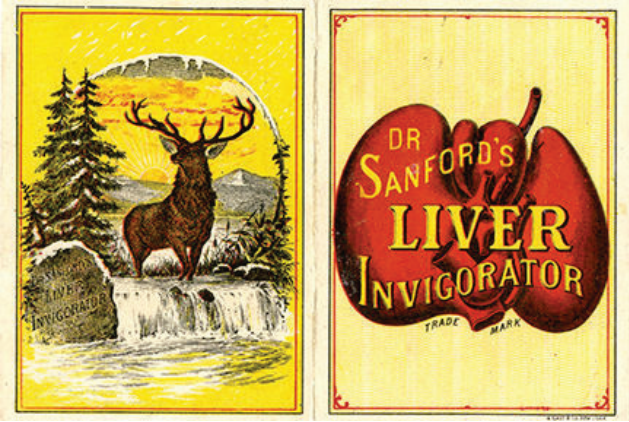
“... We had during this day a number of the Indians that came across the river yesterday, at our camp. These Indians were part of two nations, who resided along the sea coast. They are called the Clattsops and Chinups (Chinook) nations ...

“In the evening our officers had the whole party assembled in order to consult which place would be the best, for us to take up our winter quarters at.

“The greater part of our men were of opinion that it would be best to cross the river, and if we should find game plenty, that it would be of an advantage to us, for to stay near the sea shore, on account of making salt — which we are nearly out of at this time — and the want of it in preserving our provisions for the winter, would be an object well worth our attention.”

The vote taken this day determined the Corps’ plan to stay on the Oregon side of the river until spring — and incidentally, was why **Fort Clatsop** was built. (*In One Ear*, Nov. 18, 2016)

## JUST DON’T



The likelihood that many would overindulge on Thanksgiving dinner inspired a lot of patent medicine advertising in the 1880s, especially for relief from constipation and “torpid” liver. One such bit of quackery was a purgative called **Dr. Sanford’s Liver Invigorator**.

Dr. Lipscomb, in the Medical and Surgical Reporter, noted that Sanford’s tonic “produced, after moderate purgation, symptoms similar to collapse in cholera” and opined that it was loaded with atropia (a poisonous alkaloid derived from belladonna, aka deadly nightshade) or belladonna itself. Constipation would surely have been preferable. (bit.ly/belladont)

## THANKS, GEORGE



The **Today Show** featured a story noting that a rare original copy of the proclamation that President **George Washington** signed on Oct. 3, 1789, declaring Nov. 26 the **First National Day of Thanksgiving**, went up for auction at Christie’s (tinyurl.com/gwturkey).

The document last sold in 1977 for \$3,800, but was expected to fetch \$8 to \$12 million at the Nov. 14 auction in New York. One of the reasons is its rarity.

Washington did not sign very many documents, for one thing. And, although it is presumed there were originally 13 copies (sent to the original states) only two are known to still exist — and one of them is in the Library of Congress.

Alas, nobody bought it, so you can start saving your pennies for the next auction. (*In One Ear*, Nov. 22, 2013)

**Update:** In January 2015, **Keno Auctions** in New York announced that the proclamation had been sold for \$8.4 million to a private collector who wished to remain anonymous. (bit.ly/KenoGeorge)

## SPECIAL DELIVERY



“My grandson, **Tyler**, is living in Astoria over the holidays, away from family and friends,” **Mary Carson** of La Quinta, California, wrote to the Ear. “The day before Thanksgiving I wanted to send him a **pumpkin pie**, his favorite, just to show him we loved him and make him feel special.

“I looked up all the bakeries in Astoria on the computer, because I live in California. I started calling, and no one would deliver a pumpkin pie, even if I paid to have it delivered. The last bakery I called was **Blue Scorchier Bakery and Cafe** (bluescorcher.coop).

“(Owner) **Joe Garrison** did not have any pumpkin pies left, but he said he would pick one up at another bakery and take it to my grandson. That was amazing in itself.

“Then, when I called to have the pie set aside for me, they would not take my credit card over the phone — so I had to ask Joe to take my credit card so he could pay for the pie.

“He did not hesitate; he said he felt I was trying to do something good, and he wanted to help me ... I can’t wait to meet him and eat in his cafe.” Joe is pictured, courtesy of DiscoverOurCoast.com

Calling him the “man with a beautiful heart on Thanksgiving,” she told the Ear, “what an amazing man to treat a stranger like that, to be able to bless my grandson on Thanksgiving.”

“Thank you, Joe, from the bottom of my heart,” she added, “for showing a stranger such love.” (*In One Ear*, Dec. 12, 2014)

## DEATH BY TURKEY

|                                                                                    |  |                                                                                  |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 12218                                                                              |  | 4112                                                                             |  |
| Oregon State Board of Health                                                       |  | Standard Certificate of Death                                                    |  |
| Division of Vital Statistics                                                       |  | STATE OF OREGON                                                                  |  |
| 1. PLACE OF DEATH: (a) County: Multnomah (b) City or town: Portland                |  | 2. DEATH RESIDENCE OF DECEASED: (a) County: Multnomah (b) City or town: Portland |  |
| 3. NAME OF DECEASED: (a) Name of deceased: Della D. Barker (b) Maiden name: Barker |  | 4. DATE OF DEATH: (a) Month: December (b) Day: 9 (c) Year: 1947                  |  |
| 5. SEX: (a) Sex: Female (b) Age: 62                                                |  | 6. OCCUPATION: (a) Occupation: Housewife                                         |  |
| 7. MARITAL STATUS: (a) Marital status: Married                                     |  | 8. CAUSE OF DEATH: (a) Cause of death: Coronary heart disease                    |  |
| 9. SIGNATURE: (a) Signature: Lewis P. Larson                                       |  | 10. OTHER INFORMATION: (a) Other information: None                               |  |

The Ear cannot resist re-posting this seasonal cautionary tale:

According to a story on the **Oregon State Archives** Facebook page (fb.me/OregonStateArchives), 52-year old housewife **Laura Barker** of Portland met an untimely end the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 30, 1947.

It was rumored amongst family members at the time that the cause of her demise was “too much Thanksgiving.” Her death certificate, part of which is shown, courtesy of Oregon State Archives, backs up the story. The full certificate can be seen at bit.ly/TDayexcess

It seems it was no coincidence that Thanksgiving Day was three days earlier. Her physician, who attended Mrs. Barker during her final 48 hours, listed the immediate cause of death as “coronary heart disease,” which lasted only half an hour. What’s notable is the contributory cause, “acute indigestion,” which lasted two long, miserable days. Yikes.