

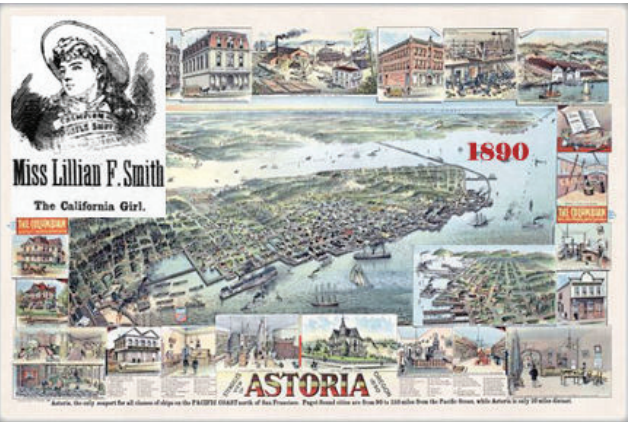
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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

AROUND TOWN



From the Friday, Dec. 12, 1890, edition of The Daily Morning Astorian:

• Yesterday in the store of J.B. Wyatt, a representative of The Astorian saw a **rutabaga turnip** which weighed 47.5 pounds, and measured 4 feet and 3 inches in circumference. It was raised by **William Tagg**, at Clatsop.

Note: In 2011, U.K. gardener **Ian Neale** — who specializes in growing mammoth veggies — grew a rutabaga that was almost double the size of Tagg’s at 85.5 pounds. (bit.ly/hugebaga)

• Many ladies have expressed a desire to see the renowned rifle expert, **Miss Lillian F. Smith**, at her shooting range, No. 75 Main St., this afternoon, when she will show ladies and children how she can shoot.

Note: Lillian joined **Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show** at the age of 15 in 1876, and became sharpshooter **Annie Oakley**’s younger rival and nemesis. To say they didn’t get along would be an understatement.

Annie was the better shot, but Lillian got most of the publicity with the royal family during the show’s 1887 London season. Annie left the show in a huff. The tables turned in 1889, when Lillian left the Wild West Show, and Annie rejoined it.

The pair met up once more, in 1902, to compete in the Grand American Handicap. Oakley won, and her fame has endured to this day.

The almost 30-year-old California Girl’s extended stay in our fair city in 1890 included giving instruction and holding competitions at her shooting range, which was open daily, except Sunday. Astoria was just one of the many stops she made on her long, slow slide into obscurity. (tinyurl.com/riflegirl)

‘EXPEDITION BIGFOOT’



OK, Bigfoot fans, you’re in for a treat. The **Travel Channel** has a new series that just started called “**Expedition Bigfoot**” (tinyurl.com/ExpBig). The title is self-explanatory.

“An elite team of Sasquatch specialists journey into the unforgiving Oregon wilderness in search of Bigfoot,” the Travel Channel website says (and also shows the schedule). “The three-week expedition, based on science and expertise, may finally pull the elusive beast out of the pages of legend and lore and into reality.”

The team consists of **Bryce Johnson** (actor/producer/researcher of the “strange and unexplained”), **Mireya Mayor** (primatologist), **Russell Acord** (Bigfoot researcher), **Ronny LeBlanc** (independent researcher, screenwriter and author), and **Ryan “RPG” Golembeske** (Bigfoot seeker).

Will they find Bigfoot in central Oregon? Stay tuned.

EAR CANDY



“This item is not only for the Ear, it is for all the ears out there listening,” Astorian **Stewart Bell** wrote. “I recently received a link from **Chika Inoue**, the classical saxophonist who appeared with **Ilya Kazantsev** and **Sergey Antonov** in June 2018 at the last **Astoria Music Festival**: bit.ly/ChikaScott.

“These are beautiful videos of Chika and classical guitarist **Scott Morris** performing the music of **Albeniz** and others as they toured around Spain last summer. It’s a treat for eyes as well as ears.” They both are pictured in a screen shot from one of the videos; she is also shown in a photo from her Instagram page (instagram.com/chikasax).

“And,” Stewart added, “Chika says she’d love to come back to Astoria, so maybe we’ll be so lucky.”

‘UNBOUNDED AND INDOMITABLE’



Sunday was the 97th anniversary of the **Friday, Dec. 8, 1922 Astoria fire** that destroyed 24 blocks of the downtown business district, causing an estimated \$12 to \$15 million in damage (about \$184 to \$230 million now) and leaving at least 2,000 homeless. Original damage estimates were higher.

Yet remarkably, only two deaths were left in the disaster’s wake. Bank president **Norris Staples** died of heart failure at 4 a.m. from his exertions during the fire. Coroner Hughes concluded that laborer **John G. Smith**, 50, found hanging by the neck from a pier at the foot of Eighth Street at daybreak, committed suicide from fright.

Rumors abounded. The Seattle Star noted that **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.”

Actually, the fire started because of a furnace explosion in the **Theil Brothers’** pool room at about 2 a.m. The fire’s rapid spread was attributed to the flames eating their way below the streets, then feeding on the creosote covering on the pilings that held up most of commercial downtown.

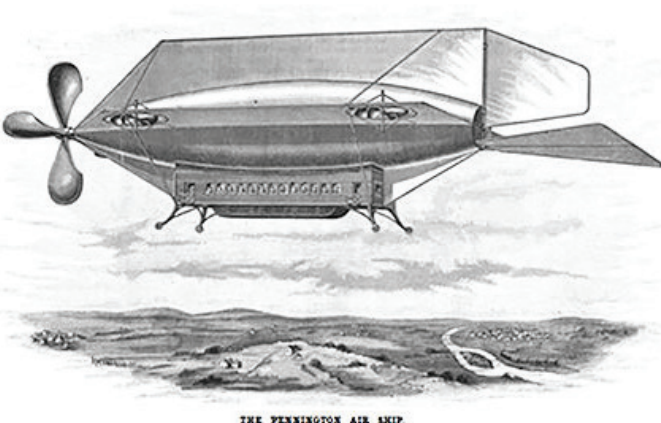
Dynamite was used to stop the fire’s progress, but even so, Astorians as far as 10 blocks away from the conflagration were moving furniture and valuables uphill to safety. When flames threatened city hall, the prisoners were released; coincidentally, the court docket mysteriously disappeared.

The will to rebuild was immediate. “The citizens are showing an unbounded and indomitable courage,” The Seattle Star reported.

“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, but this time on dredge sands, not wooden pilings — with a new layout and wider streets, much as Astoria looks today. (tinyurl.com/ssstar1208, tinyurl.com/ssstar1209, bit.ly/AstFire1922)

‘NO DOUBT’



The **Daily Morning Astorian** had a startling front page headline on **Thursday, Dec. 11, 1890** that read, “**Railroads Are Doomed ... The Flying Machine Will Supercede the Pullman Coach.**” (bit.ly/PennAir)

Edward Joel Pennington, inventor and entrepreneur, and **R. H. Butler**, of Mount Carmel, Illinois, had big plans and high hopes for the aluminum **Pennington Air Ship** (pictured) which would hold 50 passengers and fly 200 mph. Fundraising was ongoing to build a factory in Mount Carmel to manufacture this aeronautical wonder.

“I have no doubt of its success,” Pennington bragged to anyone who would listen. “I am as confident that the full size machine will do all that I claim for it, all that the model indicates, as of my own existence. ... It will supersede railways, ocean vessels, steamers, telegraph and telephones.”

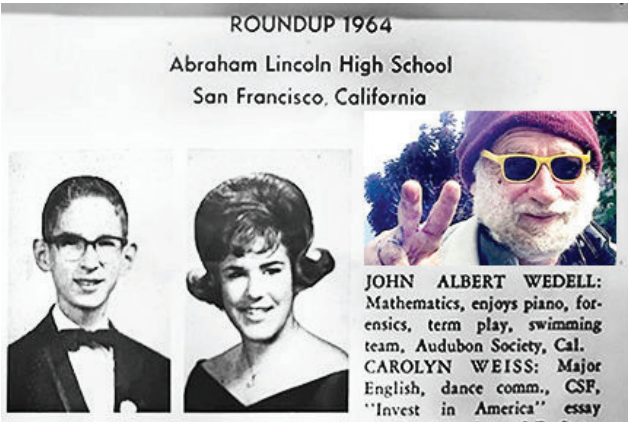
Mr. Pennington was very convincing, and managed to sway “some of the wealthiest men in the Union, who, after a patient examination of the model, are satisfied that the problem of aerial navigation has been solved ...” And the money rolled in ... but the planes never rolled out.

Only one miniature prototype was ever made, which was displayed at the **1891 Chicago Exposition. Scientific American** was not impressed with Pennington’s “stock-jobbing enterprise,” calling the exhibit “a little side show” consisting of a gas-inflated 30-foot cigar-shaped balloon that ran in circles, powered by an electric propeller that was wired to a battery on the ground.

“... As a demonstration of anything new or promising in the way of aerial navigation,” the periodical huffed, “it is without value.”

Pennington was either a con man, a dreamer or a visionary who was way ahead of his time — or all of the above. Aircraft capable of carrying 50 or more passengers, at speeds of 200-plus mph, weren’t a reality until the 1950s. (avjobs.com/history/index.asp)

FRIENDS OF JOHN WEDELL



On June 6, 2018, a public Facebook group, “**Friends of John Wedell**” (bit.ly/FBJohnW) was formed. For those who don’t know, John is a well-known local character, often seen out and about in Astoria, when he’s not in Forest Grove.

An interesting tidbit turned up on John’s page recently, posted by **Porter Venn**. “Today I went to lunch with a co-worker to **Mel’s Diner** (Fourth and Mission streets, **San Francisco**),” he posted. “They sat us at a booth, and on the wall was the typical 1950s/1960s nostalgia stuff they have in there.

“Where I sat, there was a photo that looked to be a snapshot out of a yearbook from Lincoln High School in San Francisco from 1964, showing seniors and their plans after graduation. I wondered if it would be possible to find any of them online, and see what happened to these people.

“Being the Google stalker I am, I knew a common name would be tough to track down, so I went with the first guy in the photo, as he had a pretty unique name with a middle name to boot — makes it easier to find. So I did a Google search on ‘John Albert Wedell.’”

Porter’s photo of the yearbook page is shown; a more current photo of John from his Facebook page is also shown. By John’s name it says: “Mathematics, enjoys piano, forensics, term play, swimming team, Audubon Society, Cal.”

Naturally, the Google search led Porter to Facebook. “And — so now, here I am, on (John’s) page,” he added. He’s in good company.

MAKING NEWS



Want to own your own newspaper? The 116-year old **Davidson Leader**, in Saskatchewan, Canada, with a circulation of 1,200-plus, is for sale for \$1 by its publisher, **Tara De Ryk** (pictured). It’s “turn-key, ready to start and continue from Jan. 1, 2020” (bit.ly/sasnews).

The catch? All you have to do is write a 500-word maximum editorial about why you would be “the perfect fit to take over this well-established newspaper business.”

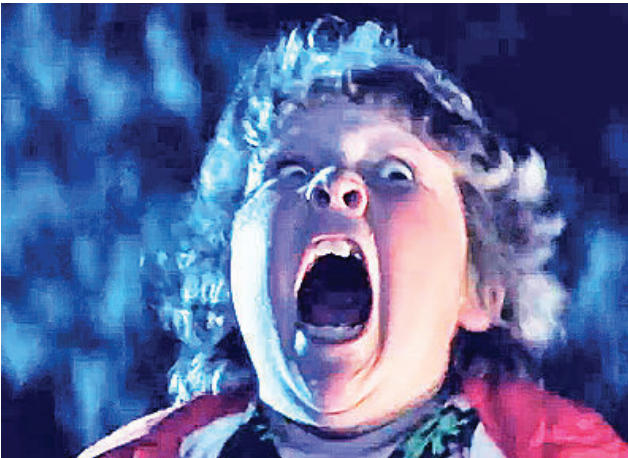
You only get one shot at it, and all entries must be submitted by Friday, Dec. 13, to davidsonleader@sasktel.net, using “Contest” in the subject line.

Then there’s the twice-monthly **Skagway News** (skagwaynews.com) in Alaska, which publisher **Larry Persily** is flat out giving away, according to the Anchorage Daily News (bit.ly/scagnews).

He’d prefer someone from Alaska, but he’s from Chicago, himself. The catch here is that you’d have to move to Skagway, which has a circulation of 500 (population of around 1,000), but has about 1 million cruise ship passengers stopping by every summer.

Interested? You can email him at paper@alaskan.com. He’d like to find someone by January.

DID YOU SEE THAT?



Every movie has some mistakes, of course, but what about the much-beloved filmed-in-Astoria iconic flick, “**The Goonies**”? Aficionados of the movie may want to take a seat and keep the smelling salts handy: The **MovieMistakes.com** website lists 220 goofs in the Goondocks in excruciating detail (moviemistakes.com/film558).

While most are continuity errors (i.e. when something or someone pops up looking different, or in the wrong place), there are also quite a few other problems, such as a corpse who blinks.

If it makes you feel any better, Goonie fans, “**The Wizard of Oz**” (1939) has 431 bloopers.