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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

MERWYN MEMORIES



Here is the fifth installment of **Daymon Garrett Edward's** (pictured, inset) memoir about owning the **Waldorf Hotel** (aka the **Merwyn Hotel**) on Duane Street in Astoria from 1979 to 1980, where he also lived and ran a hair salon.

The story left off with the trials and tribulations of the work entailed to keep the hotel's "glorious" lobby floor shiny, despite the hotel denizens' antics.

"And then there was the maid — Oh my goodness, the maid! I hired a maid to clean the rooms, halls and toilets and showers. At the time I didn't know she had a drinking problem ... oh my, she did.

"When she got drunk she would take off her clothing and run around naked, then go into people's rooms and take money off the dresser. ... I guess she was well known around town for this behavior, and of course, some of our male clientele would slip her a bottle and watch her take off, literally ...

"I didn't know about it because it happened in the upper reaches of the hotel, but one day they chased her to the lobby, and I had a naked woman with nothing on but her maid's hat and a boozey expression and poorly applied lipstick on her face. I got a blanket and captured her, the police came and hauled her off as I yelled, 'Bring that blanket back.'

"The next day the police returned and stood at the lobby door with the blanket and said they didn't want to come in because they had heard about scuffing my floor ... how sweet.

"The guys that supplied the booze buffed the lobby floor for a week, and I had to find a new maid."

SHE'S A FIRST



A little post-election tidbit: Pictured, courtesy of the **Oregon Historical Society** (bit.ly/OHSabigail), Multnomah County Clerk John B. Coffey with suffragette **Abigail Scott Duniway** (1834-1915). She is signing a precinct voter registration book, making her the **first Oregon woman to register to vote**. The photo ran in *The Oregonian* on Feb. 15, 1913.

Incidentally, her first book, "Captain Gray's Company, or, Crossing the plains and living in Oregon," published in 1859, was also the **first novel to be written in the Pacific Northwest** (bit.ly/EBabigail).

PICTORIAL HISTORY



For history buffs, from *The Daily Astorian*, May 21, 1881:

• "The Pictorial History of the Great Civil War, its causes, origin, conduct and results," by **John Laird Wilson**, the well-known historian, is sold by Mrs. Shepherd at \$7, \$7.50 and \$8 (\$201 now). We wish to call attention to this book, particularly as so much has been said of Gettysburg, Hancock, Howard, etc. ... Buy the book and get the authentic account.

Note: Thankfully, this rather remarkable 1881 tome has been preserved digitally, and can be found at bit.ly/PictCW. An illustration is shown.

WILLIAMSPORT



From *The Daily Astorian*, May 21, 1881: "Great bargains are now offered in the city of **Williamsport** for any persons wishing to locate from one lot to five acres. It is well adapted for gardens, dairy ranches or pleasant homes; well elevated, situated one mile south of Astoria on Youngs Bay, with a good graded road to the place. For further information, call at my residence near the cemetery. **John Williamson.**"

Williamsport, named after Williamson, was referred to as a suburb of Astoria in a December 1879 article provided by **Liisa Penner**, archivist at the **Clatsop County Historical Society**, which touted the area as "a new town site for Astorians to think over."

Williamson hoped the 50-acre South Slope tract, adjacent to a much larger one owned by **W.W. Parker** and **J.G. Hustler**, would develop into a city in its own right. He claimed the three streams in Williamsport could support 150,000 inhabitants — quite an extravagant boast. He also touted the harbor on Youngs Bay as being a mile wide, with deep water anchorage available, an important feature in that era.

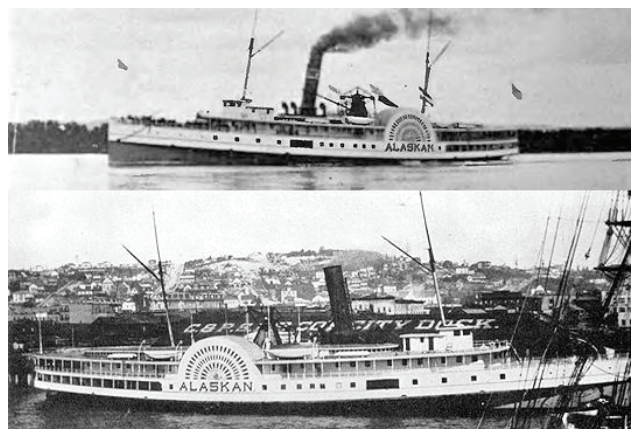
"The main street is the present county road," the article says. "Mr. Williamson will lay out all business streets to a width of 70 feet wide. Lots will be 50 by 100 feet in size, and eight lots to the block."

The proposed city was also in the direct line of the proposed **Astoria and Winnemucca Railroad**, so Williamson also planned to deed some acreage to the railroad company to use for machine shops. And, he offered alternate lots in that parcel for the cost of the paperwork (about \$255 now) to those who would guarantee to build within a certain period of time.

Unfortunately, Williamsport didn't amount to much, probably because the railroad project stalled at **Goble** (between Deer Island and Rainier) in 1883 — the railroad didn't reach Astoria until 15 years later (bit.ly/AstWinRR).

Perhaps all that's left as a reminder of the not-quite-city is **Williamsport Road** — likely following the route of the late 1800s "wagon road" or "city park road" — which winds from Youngs Bay to the reservoir near Shively Park, where it becomes 16th Street.

A SAD TALE



From *The Daily Morning Astorian*, May 21, 1889: "Capt. Pohlman, of Oregon, reported on his arrival yesterday that when coming up from San Francisco, and about 60 miles south of the bar between Tillamook Bay and Coos Bay, he saw both masts of the lost Alaskan floating. He saw no other vestige of the wreck ..."

The wreck of the 280-foot iron **sidewheeler steamer Alaskan** is a sad tale, indeed. She was not designed as an ocean-going vessel, and the disaster happened while she was heading for dry dock in San Francisco, having left Astoria May 11, 1889. The next day, 18 miles offshore, rough seas and heavy wind slowed the ship almost to a stop. At 4 p.m., she began taking on water — despite the pumps and plugging leaks with bedding — and parts of the vessel were torn away by the turbulent sea.

All of the lifeboats were launched, but one got stove in. The men were ordered to don life jackets and get in the boats, but many were frightened, and stayed on board. Veteran steward **Al Rahles** said, "It's no use, captain; I am too old, and could not make it. I will have to go down with the ship."

Hope blossomed, when they spotted another ship, and sent up rockets, but it was too late. The ship went down stern first, breaking in two, with 12 aboard. The captain jumped into the sea, and managed to grab a piece of deck; three others climbed onto the floating wreck of the pilot house.

The tug **Vigilant** showed up that evening and picked up the three on the pilot house, another from a life raft and **Capt. Howes**, who had been floating for 33 hours, 12 of them on his hands and knees. The survivors were transferred to a steamship and taken to Portland. A second boat from the Alaskan came ashore, empty. Nothing was ever heard of the remaining crew members.

DECORATION DAY



According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, after the Civil War ended, in 1868, it was decided that **Decoration Day** (now Memorial Day), a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers, would be observed on May 30 (tinyurl.com/wasmay30). Here are a few tidbits from the **Wednesday, May 30, 1888** edition of *The Daily Morning Astorian*:

• The Cushing Post G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic, aka the Union Army) and the Woman's Relief Corps took charge of Decoration Day. A **grand procession** would wend its way to the cemetery for a ceremony, led by the Western Amateur Band, followed by the police force, school children and citizens.

• **Corp. James Tanner** (pictured, left) was to appear at the Ross Opera House. After losing both legs in the Civil War in 1862, he received wooden prosthetic legs and became a stenographer for the War Department in Washington, D.C.

It is said that his manuscript was the most comprehensive record of events the night **President Lincoln** was assassinated in 1865 (bit.ly/TannerMS). Tanner's trip to Astoria was to stump for Republican Benjamin Harrison's (pictured, right) presidential candidacy.

SEAL THE DEAL



"We have been tracking this cute **Guadalupe fur seal** as it makes its way up the Oregon Coast," the Seaside Aquarium posted May 14, on its Facebook page with the photo shown. The aquarium is part of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network.

By the time he reached Cannon Beach, "the fur seal was very tired and appeared to be dehydrated," the aquarium's **Tiffany Boothe** told **Oregon Beach Connection** (bit.ly/OBCseal).

"Usually with pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) on the Oregon Coast, the policy is not to pick them up or do rehabilitation. But with Guadalupe fur seals, since their population is estimated to be only around 32,000 individuals, special exceptions are made for this species."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration gave its approval, and the aquarium staff captured the pup, who was transferred to **Casey Mclean** of SR3 Sealife Response in Seattle, then to World Vets in Gig Harbor, Washington.

Eventually he will head to the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California — his last stop until he's ready to be released into the wild.

THE JINX



"I have often wondered in my research if divorce is more prevalent here than other locales," **Lauri Kramer Serafin** wrote. She and her husband, **Pete**, own the historic **Forsstrom House** (theforsstromhouse.com) in Astoria. "Nailed it! Found this (article) while cruising old newspapers for **Dr. Toivo J. Forsstrom.**"

The story in question was published **Sept. 10, 1921**: "Cupid and the marital jinx ran a close race in Clatsop County during the last six years and eight months, according to the records in the county clerk's office. In that period there were 1,449 marriages and 1,428 divorces granted, cupid winning by a narrow margin of 21."

But "... during the last three years the divorces have exceeded the marriages by a considerable number," the article concludes, "while before that time the marriages were in the lead, indicating that the jinx gradually has been getting the better of cupid ..."

By the way, Dr. Forsstrom himself got divorced in 1926, and married a divorcée in 1933.