



Continued from Page 8

Liberty Theatre

The historic Liberty Theatre was the first theater reestablished after the destructive Astoria fire of 1922. At its opening in 1925, it was viewed as a symbol of the city's rebirth.

In the 1920s, the theater hosted such luminaries as Duke Ellington, Jack Benny, Guy Lombardo and the infamous Al Capone.

"Handsome Paul" is said to haunt the old theater, dressed in a white tuxedo and a panama hat. He has been known to open, close and slam doors and make other noises. Other reported ghosts include two men wearing top hats and an elderly woman. Witnesses have reported hearing knocking and mysterious voices, and seeing moving objects, including soda fountains and popcorn machines turning on in the middle of the night.

Tunnels

After the 1922 fire destroyed downtown Astoria, the city was rebuilt 15 feet higher. This created underground alleys, streets and rooms and expanded tunnels.

Reports describe disembodied voices, footsteps, strange smells and other unexplained phenomena occurring within the tunnels. Witnesses suggest spirits of shanghaiing victims may linger.

Between 1850 and the 1940s, men were kidnapped to serve unwillingly aboard ships. Many of these kidnappings were perpetrated by Joseph "Bunko" Kelly, who kidnapped men and women throughout the late 19th century.

Jim Turk, credited as bringing the practice of shanghaiing to Oregon, ran a seaman's boarding house on the south side of Commercial Street, between 15th and 16th streets. There, he and his sons also engaged in shanghaiing in the late 1800s.

In 1877, 20-year-old Richard Lewis visited the Astor Saloon, where he spent hours drinking alcohol. While getting ready to head to his boarding house, Lewis heard men talking. Next thing he knew, Lewis was lying in a dark, wet tunnel under the town's buildings and sidewalks. He was unwillingly taken aboard a ship, where he was put to work as a crew member.

Nineteenth century Methodist minister, George Grannis, was almost shanghaiied. After ringing his church's bells on a Sunday, Grannis had an overcoat thrown over his head and his arms pinned to his side. He fought back, kicking and headbutting his assailants, causing them to tumble down the stairs and flee. Lewis and Grannis' tales are just two of many.

Ghost tours are held underneath Gulley's Butcher Shop. Tours are also ran through Astoria Underground Tours, off Marine Drive.



The General Warren

The sidewheeler General Warren struck Clatsop Spit on Jan. 31, 1852. Capt. Charles Thompson quickly launched a small boat with 10 men on board to seek help in Astoria.

The crew received help from Capt. Beard of the steamer, George and Martha. When the combined crew returned, they found no remnants of the wreck, passengers or crew. Forty-two passengers perished — the only survivors were the 10 crewmembers who sought help.

Two victims' bodies washed ashore: a newlywed couple, on their way to San Francisco for their honeymoon. It was reported that the bride had a gold ring, engraved with a heart, on her left ring finger. They reportedly were holding hands when they were found washed ashore.

Two years later, the ship's shattered frame washed ashore 60 miles north of Clatsop Spit.

The J.C. Cousins

The 66-foot schooner J.C. Cousins, built in 1863, was first a luxury private yacht and later operated as one of two Astoria pilot boats.

On Oct. 6, 1883, a crew of four sailed off Clatsop Spit to await ships needing to be guided. The ship was seen sailing through the treacherous breakers at the edge of the river's channel rather than the calm waters a few dozen yards away. It wasn't clear why the ship was traveling, as there were no ships

in need of assistance. The ship cleared the breakers, heading to sea, but then a few miles offshore, it turned around and headed back to the bar again. When the ship got there, it once again turned around and headed back to the ocean. The ship continued this erratic pattern throughout the day.

The next morning, a group of Astorians stood on the shore watching the ship continuing its strange back and forth across the Columbia River. Around 1 p.m., the ship turned back toward land, making no attempt to turn around. The schooner slammed onto the beach. The onlookers ran to help but couldn't get near the wreck until several hours later at low tide.

Both lifeboats were gone and all the paperwork was missing from the wheelhouse. There was no sign of the crew and none of them were ever heard from again. Later, one of the two lifeboats washed ashore.

Locals speculated the cause of the strange event. One theory was that a crewmember had been hired by J.C. Cousins' competitors to wreck the ship.

More fanciful theories included a sea monster, giant squid, whale or shark getting the men; or a mutiny where the crew murdered each other. It was also suggested that it could have been a ghost ship bearing down on the J.C. Cousins, frightening the crew so badly that they looked for a way off the boat.

Whatever the cause, the mystery of the J.C. Cousins has not been solved in over 137 years.



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

CLOCKWISE: An underground section behind the stage of the Liberty Theatre is destined to become a dressing room. Paranormal investigator Nathalie Kellow's K-II Meter lights up while exploring the underground area beneath Gulley's Butcher Shop. The device fully lights up when it encounters changes in the electromagnetic field from either an electronic device or, according to paranormal investigators, a spirit. The Mouth of the Columbia.