



A restored common space in the home includes nautical touches that pay homage to its former owner.

Justin Grafton

## House: Johnson rescued several sailors from the rigging of a stranded Columbia River schooner in 1877

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built in 1875: there is no true north. Every step is a negotiation of original history, prior renovations and 2021 livability.

Windows proved a particular sticking point when Windus' restoration received a stop-work order due to the vinyl window he installed in the shower overlooking the river. Astoria has strict regulations about how windows need to be restored in historic homes. He says he wasn't aware of the requirements, and had made the modification in an effort to make the home energy efficient. He presented an argument about environmental responsibility to the Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission last spring.

"When a homeowner starts work without a permit, the city works with the applicant to try to come into compliance with the codes," Megan Leatherman, the city's community development director, said in an email. "In this instance the owner worked with us to bring the request to the (Historic Landmarks Commission) and it was approved by the commission. I believe a significant component of the approval was based on the fact that it was one window that was not highly visible from the public right of way."

Windus noted that Johnson himself hailed from a Victorian era where builders embraced newness and utility whenever possible.

As for the home's expansive history, it's still a gradual discovery process. Last spring, Windus was digging in his backyard dahlia bed when he uncovered a Civil War button, likely from Johnson's own Union uniform.

Records show Johnson sailed on the USS Tennessee battleship after its capture from the Confederacy in 1864. Discoveries like this, as well as the revelation that Johnson rescued several sailors from the rigging of a



Chance Solem-Pfeifer/For The Astorian

Windus discovered an antique button in the dirt outside the home that he believes was given to Capt. Johnson for his service in the Civil War.

stranded Columbia River schooner in 1877, only bring Windus closer to the man whose likeness adorns his mailbox.

"I have an affection for him, from what I know so far," he said.

While mileage varies as to whether Airbnb guests care about the home's history, Windus did receive particular affirmation during a 2019 visit from Heidi Fitzgerald-West, the granddaughter of Victor and Anna Albertsen, who owned the home during the 1960s and 1970s.

"The first thing (Heidi) did when she came upstairs was hug the wall," Windus laughed. "The quirky parts of the house are what I like. Nobody would do this now, because why would you? That's why I'm a proponent of people fixing old houses."



Chance Solem-Pfeifer/For The Astorian

Photos of Capt. Johnson are placed in several areas around his former home.



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A restored bedroom inside the home built in 1875.

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