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IN ONE EAR • ELLEDA WILSON

BUILT ON STILTS



Local history buffs ought to enjoy this one: A “historic inventory” of the **Adair-Uppertown** section of Astoria, by Jill A. Chappel.

It’s actually a rather dry 1994 report to the city’s community development office, designed to be used as a planning tool for Astoria’s historic preservation efforts, but even so, it contains all sorts of interesting historic facts.

Did you know that in 1844 **John Shively’s** original layout for Astoria had an east and west section, separated by a 120-foot wide street, supposed to be named Broadway?

The eastern end of town, now known as Uppertown, had street names like Hemlock, Pine, Wing and Tulip. Fifty by 150 foot lots were selling for about \$200 (about \$7,600 now) by 1849, and by 1850 the population of Astoria was 250.

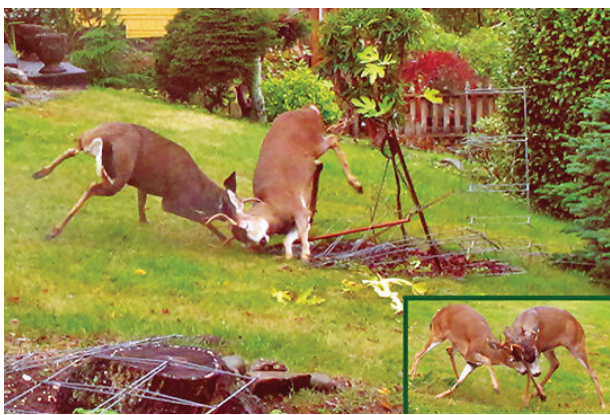
By 1870, although it was growing rapidly, Astoria was still pretty raw around the edges. Vacationers from Portland who came downriver on sternwheelers to dally in Seaside were not impressed.

English professor and writer **Randall V. Mills** noted: “Astoria itself offered little to the excursionist.

“A town built on stilts out over the tide flats ... Astoria remained for many years markedly ugly, so that its strongest partisans talked about its setting, with the forested hills rising behind it, and the broad bay before it, or its quaintness with its wooden streets, and tactfully said nothing about the town itself.

“One did not, it seemed, stop at Astoria, except to change boats and go somewhere else.” My, my, how times have changed.

BUCKIN’ BUCKS



Ruckus rerun: Astorian **Bruce Leggett** saw a young buck and doe come down the hill across the street on Grand Avenue to snack on some leaves in a neighbor’s yard.

As he was standing on the sidewalk watching them, he turned around, and a big buck was suddenly walking alongside him. He gave Bruce a side eye, and headed straight for the other buck.

Likewise, the first buck approached the intruder. “They circled each other in the street, then smacked each other in the head, and **antler-wrestled**,” Bruce said. The female disappeared once the ruckus started.

The two bucks tussled all over the neighbor’s yard, knocking down a small tree, and generally making a mess with their acrobatics. They eventually rolled down a hill and scampered away.

“They have some power, I’ll tell you,” Bruce noted, “in spite of those skinny legs. Neither one of them was giving up.” (In *One Ear*, 11/16/2012)

‘LITTLE KNOWN GEM’



How do you know when your town has truly been “discovered” by the outside world? When it gets a write-up in far-off **India’s** TheBharatExpressNews.com, that’s how. The paper recently noted that **Ilwaco, Washington**, “an under-the-radar riverside town” is “well worth a visit.”

The reviewer mentions several restaurants, the marina, the Lewis and Clark Expedition’s stopover nearby, along with several other historical tidbits, and enjoyed the fresh oysters and clams, the North Head Lighthouse and even the Saturday Market and cranberry bogs.

She was also impressed by a house she spotted: “It is for sale by owner for \$300,000. You can’t buy a storage shed in Seattle for that.” You can almost hear the price rising.

All in all, Ilwaco, a “charming coastal village,” is a “little-known gem.” Until now, that is.

‘IT WAS AWFUL’



On **July 2, 1883**, “The most disastrous fire in the history of Astoria” occurred, as described in **The Daily Astorian** on July 3.

There was a drought, and the weather on July 2 was hot and windy — perfect fire weather for a town with a **business district** built on wooden posts and piers. Add to that some boys smoking on the beach next to the **Clatsop Mill** on 14th Street that afternoon who, when caught, tossed their lit cigarettes into some nearby sawdust and shavings.

The breeze had let up a bit by 6 p.m., but that was when a “dense volume of black smoke and a column of fire” appeared at the Clatsop Mill. The fire department appeared on the scene quickly, but the wind kicked up, and the fire began to spread, setting houses afire, and threatening a nearby barn full of coal oil.

The cases of oil were removed quickly, and tossed into the river, but the fire raged on. Even **Capt. George Flavel’s** new water pump (which didn’t have enough hose) and the old hand water pumps couldn’t stop it. “Every available force was brought into requisition ... Men worked till they dropped and others took their places.” Even so, the fire spread to 17th Street.

“... Amid the roar of the advancing flames swept on by the breeze, could be heard the crash of falling timbers and the sharp detonations of cartridges. The roadway was a solid mass of flame. The houses, the street itself, the sidewalks, everything ... Nothing left but to seize money and valuables and rush out up the hill. It was awful.” Amazingly, there was no loss of life.

The fire was at its height by 7:30 p.m. The looters came out in droves, and “... the steamers swung out into the stream, their decks filled with silent spectators; every housetop was covered with men who ceased throwing water on roofs and walls to gaze on that sublime spectacle.”

By 1 a.m., the danger was over. “Let us see that it does not happen again,” the newspaper warned. (Photo: Clatsop County Historical Society)

NO CELEBRATION



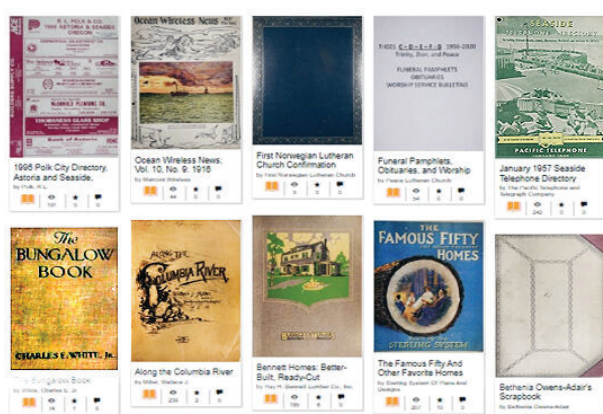
On the **Fourth of July**, two days after the **1883 Astoria fire**, there was not much celebrating going on. For one thing, a vigilante committee, known as the “**committee of safety**” had been formed, and was busy getting organized.

One bone of contention was a new saloon that refused to comply with the new 10 p.m. curfew. “A party of special police made a descent on the place,” the July 6 edition of **The Daily Astorian** says, “and after a lively interchange of pistol shots, in which one man was wounded in the leg, Reilly, Ginder and one other man, together with a woman of belligerent disposition, were captured and placed in jail.”

The committee targeted troublemakers in town who should receive this hand-delivered printed notice: “Astoria, July 4th, 1833, To xxx, You are hereby notified to leave Astoria, within 24 hours, not to return. Signed, Citizen’s Committee.” They also “visited vagrant haunts, warning parties who had not been previously notified that a due regard for their health suggested instant departure.”

“... There was no attempt to celebrate,” the paper noted, and there were, of course, no fireworks or firecrackers. “At the slightest unusual sound there was a general alertness, and ... altogether the Fourth of July 1883 in Astoria does not present a very brilliant painting to hang upon the walls of Memory’s picture gallery.”

LONG-AWAITED REPLY



Back in October 2019, this column ran a letter from **Baila Lavin** of Bolton, England, who was asking if anyone knew if she had any long lost relatives in Astoria related to her great-uncle, **John K. Jackson** (the K stands for his original last name, **Karjalainen**), whose last known address was in 1958, at 369 W. Niagara Ave.

Well, no one responded to her inquiry until **Liisa Penner**, archivist at the **Clatsop County Historical Society**, happened across the original story recently.

“We now have a new website that is attached to Archive.org,” she wrote to Aila, “and we have over 2,000 books and other items scanned on it. I thought I’d try to see if I could find John K. Jackson on it, and almost immediately did ... His second wife was **Olga**, and he had stepsons, but apparently no children of his own. John’s obituary (he died Jan. 1, 1965) is on the website.” So, Aila finally has her answer.

Want to do your own research? Here’s the exact link: bit.ly/CCHistSoc. Put your search words in the “text contents” box, not the “metadata” one.

“This website for the Clatsop County Historical Society,” Liisa added, “with items scanned by **Julie Burpee**, is a real help now.” Indeed!

FOND MEMORIES



A little Fourth of July nostalgia: A story by **Eleanor Barrows Bower**, written for the summer 1968 edition of **The Sou’wester** magazine:

“Growing up in **Chinook (Washington)** ... the most anticipated event of the year was the **Fourth of July Liberty Wagon!** Then **Festus Plumb’s** hay rack wagon was converted into a two-tiered platform. His **gray stallions**, with red, white and blue ribbons braided into their tails, drew the wagon.

“Beginning at lower Frogtown (so called because of the croaking of frogs in the early springtime) the wagon drove slowly through town. The sides of the wagon were draped with red, white and blue bunting. A **Goddess of Liberty** and a costumed **Uncle Sam** stood on the wagon, waving to the onlookers.

“As the wagon stopped at each child’s home (... Chinook had only one street), the children were lifted onto the wagon. As it went the entire length of the town, each child waved and carried a small flag. The wagon trip ended at the grove back of the schoolhouse, where a picnic was held ...

“... This way of life is no more, but it has left a wealth of fond memories.”

WASHED ASHORE



“A **broadnose sevengill shark** washed ashore Sunday at the south end of **Arcadia Beach State Recreation (Site)**,” just south of **Cannon Beach**, **Tiffany Boothe** of the **Seaside Aquarium** wrote. Her photos are shown. The 8.7-foot, 120-pound female had died prior to washing in, and will be frozen for use as an educational tool and research through **Oregon State University**.

It’s one of 17 species of sharks found off the Oregon Coast, and they feed from near shore to depths of 400 feet. “While they are known for their aggressive behavior when feeding,” she explained, “and the fact that they can get quite large — nearly 10 feet and weighing up to 400 pounds — there has not been a documented attack on a human along the Oregon Coast.

“Worldwide, they have only been responsible for five attacks on humans since the 17th century. None of which were fatal. But,” she cautions, “the jury is still out on that one, since human remains have been found in the stomachs of some sevengills.”