

Out of the ashes: A city center, changed
By Jaime Lump For The Astorian Nov 24, 2023



Several streetscapes in Astoria evoke the past. Hold up an old photo or postcard, and one can compare and easily identify similarities. Waiting in traffic at the corner of 9th and Bond streets (present day Marine Drive) might not stir the same sorts of curiosities as more recognizable historical street corners in Astoria, but certain details may bring about questions as to how and why this part of the city looks the way it does - the awkward angle of the highway that pulls traffic west toward the Astoria-Megler bridge and the mixture of buildings constructed over multiple



decades.

One hundred years ago and longer, 9th and Bond would be completely unrecognizable as the corner seen today. Back then, it was the center point of much of the city's activities. To the immediate south, stood the city's post office and county courthouse. East, at 10th and Bond, was the site of Astoria's first bank, owned by Captain George Flavel, which stood on the same block as the chamber of commerce. Extending west toward 6th, Bond St. was lined with several Chinese mercantile and residential structures in an area that Astoria claimed as its own Chinatown. North of 9th and Bond, toward the river, was the city's red light district, which Astorians aptly named 'Swilltown.' At 9th and Bond, comings and goings were constant and frequently reported in the city's newspaper, The Morning Astorian:

Sunday, August 23rd, 1896

"After the races yesterday afternoon, Daggett, the balloonist, made an ascension from the corner of Ninth and Bond streets, in the presence of an immense crowd of people... Just as he took his position on the trapeze bar, it is reported he was warned that one or two of the ropes attached to the parachute were almost worn through... With the rapidity of lightning the unfortunate aeronaut dropped to earth. The crowd rushed to the scene, only to find the man in a crushed condition just to the rear of Mr. Duffy's residence on the hill. His collar bone and left ankle were both broken and he was soon conveyed to St. Mary's hospital... The latest reports from the hospital last night were that he was doing well and would probably recover."

Friday September 25, 1903

"The county officials agree that much of the youthful vice is due primarily to the merry-go-round that is brought here every year. Justice Goodman branded the corner of Ninth and Bond streets, where the merry-go-round holds forth, as a veritable hellhole of vice."

Tuesday, September 3rd, 1907

“Hogs of all kinds, chickens, sheep and horses may be seen at this show which will open at the corner of Ninth and Bond this morning.”

Sunday, March 3rd, 1907

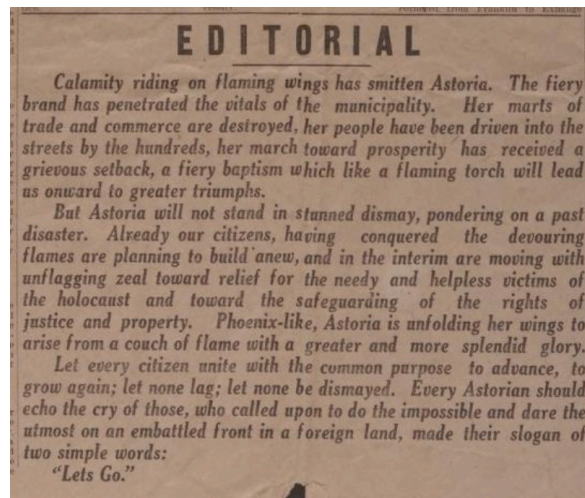
“9th and Bond Streets, Astoria, Oregon: The stock and premises now in possession of the Shafer-Whittier Co., to be sold at such prices as is deemed necessary to close out the entire stock of Men’s, Boys’, Women’s and Girls’ wearing apparel. Fixtures for sale. Nothing reserved from the floor to the ceiling. The great slaughter is now on.”



By the 1920s, the vibrancy within blocks surrounding 9th and Bond was beginning to fade. Shifts in cannery labor needs along with national discriminatory immigration acts dispersed much of Astoria’s Chinese population and Prohibition laws forced booze related businesses in Swilltown to either leave or go underground. When the great 1922 fire destroyed the majority of

Astoria’s business district, the blocks northwest of 9th and Bond had been spared largely due to the Spexarth Building on Commercial and 8th streets acting as a firewall, but also because the streets nearest to the waterfront were closest to the Stutz pump showering water toward the burning city. Desperate merchants and other professionals, suddenly without real estate swarmed the old Swilltown to claim space along 8th and 9th between Bond and Astor streets. Storefronts which once operated as saloons and brothels suddenly filled with department stores like Bee Hive and JC Penney, furniture stores, hardware stores, jewelry stores, barber shops, dentists, photography studios, plumbers, and restaurants. Areas that had historically been avoided by families became bustling with Christmas shoppers, seemingly overnight.

Amid the chaos during and after the fire, The Morning Astorian never stopped reporting the news. Local Finnish newspaper, Toveri, helped out by temporarily printing Morning Astorian issues while equipment that had been swiftly hauled out of the Astorian's previous building during the night of the fire was moved to a temporary space at 8th and Astor streets. Determined by his own rebuild slogan of "Let's Go," Morning Astorian owner John S. Dellinger immediately made plans for a brand new building to be constructed at the corner of 9th and Bond streets. The concrete building became the first new structure built since the fire. Designed by Astorian architect Charles T. Diamond, the project came together fast during the first few months of 1923, and by April reporters were already getting to work setting up their offices.



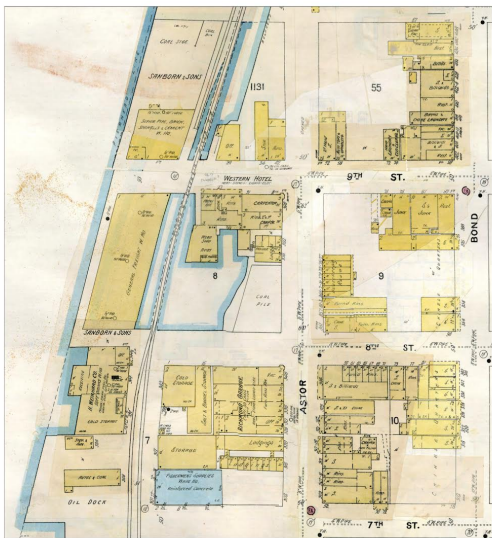
The Morning Astorian's previous building, owned by Werner Fellman on Duane at the center of 15th and 16th streets, was rehabilitated and leased to Nyquist Motor Company. It still stands today, and most recently operated as a furniture store. In 1930, the same year John Dellinger died, The Morning Astorian merged with the Astoria Evening Budget and moved out of its 9th and Bond location. A little over ten years later, a project constructing U.S. Route 30 involved demolition of the last

remaining structures associated with the Chinese quarter of the Astor-Bond Street area:

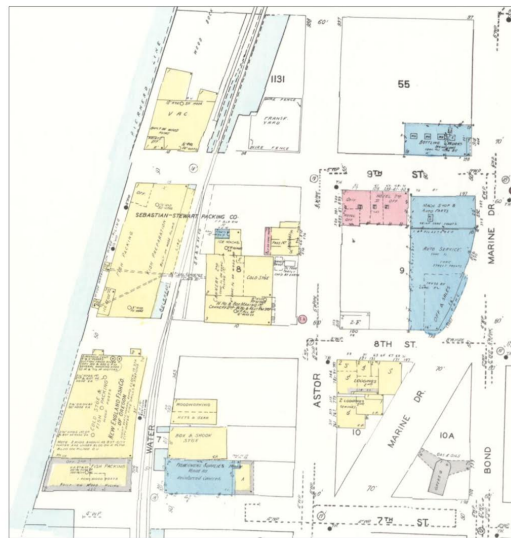
August 9th, 1941 (Evening Astorian Budget)

“Highway Job Destroys Last Remains of Once-Populous Astoria Chinatown

Modern progress in the shape of the Astor-Bond street highway rerouting job is crunching through the last remnants of one of the most colorful portions of the Astoria of an earlier day - old Chinatown.”



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Astoria 1921
9th and Bond streets



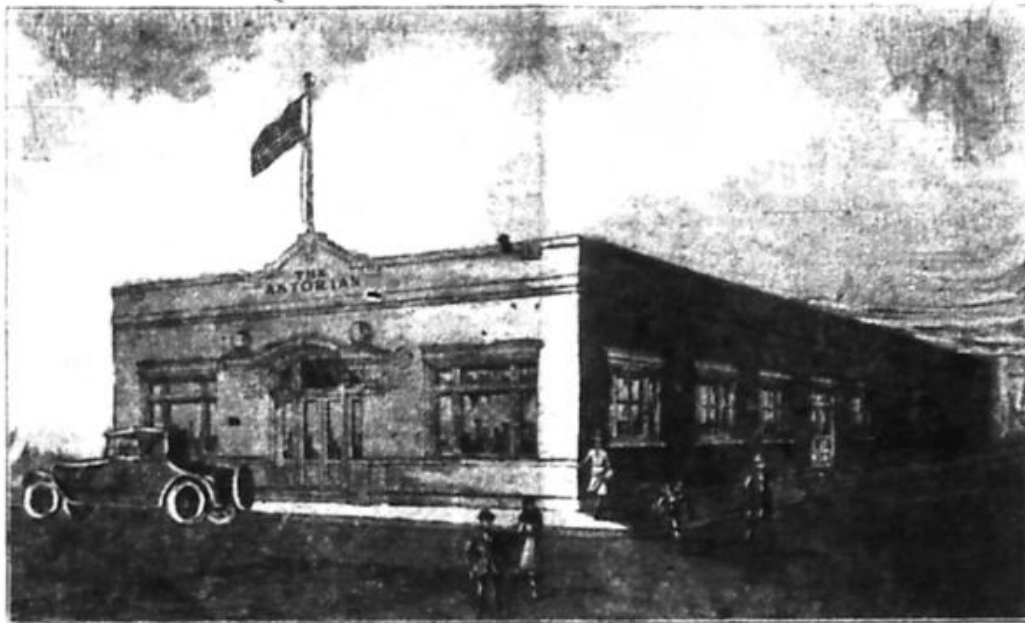
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Astoria 1956
9th and Bond streets

For the last 100 years, the 1923 Morning Astorian building has watched over the 9th and Bond corner. Though the types of comings and goings changed, modern Astoria continued to progress around it. Mid Century Modern buildings erupted out of the ground nearby. Waterfront buildings adapted into hotels and restaurants. Today, Phog Bounders Antique Store, a treasure trove of historic artifacts, calls the Morning Astorian

building home, honoring the city's history and inviting curiosity to ponder the past.

ASTORIA, OREGON, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1923.

PERSPECTIVE OF THE MORNING ASTORIAN'S NEW HOME AT THE CORNER OF NINTH AND BOND STREETS NOW BEING ERECTED BY J. S. DELLINGER



Albertson, Cornell Bros. & Walsh, Builders. F. J. Walsh and C. J. Disler in charge of work.
C. T. Diamond, Architect

Photos and Images:

2023, Jaime Lump

Astor and 9th as well as NW 8th and Bond are Clatsop County Historical Society (the Astor and 9th photo is from 1923 or 1924...by 1925, JC Penney moved to Commercial street. I don't have a date for the NW 8th and Bond photo)

The maps come from Sanborn Fire Insurance maps that were retrieved from the Library of Congress

The 2-18-1923 newspaper clipping came from the microfilm at Astoria Public Library.