

THE NEW FORT ASTORIA SIGN IS... FANTASTIC!

Thank you to all community members and organizations, past and present, who made this park a reality. In 1948, local community members planned and implemented the creation of the park, including the large wooden sign, and in 1956 built the bastion from leftover logs from the Fort Clatsop replica. In 2002-2003, Astoria Visual Arts (AVA) renovated the park, including landscaping and a new mural. In 2021, a diverse workgroup came together to thoughtfully update the telling of the site's story on the large text board. LCPS and the college's historic preservation department worked to ensure that the construction of the replacement sign was faithful to the 1948 appearance. As a preservation organization, we were determined to keep the original look - we think it suits the space, ties together the other aspects of the park, and preserves a piece of mid-century Astoria streetscape. In addition, it honors the community's efforts all those years ago to set aside a significant downtown historic site for public use. It was important at that time, as it is today, to promote Astoria's unique history, not only for tourists and visitors but also for area residents.



We invite you all to join us on Saturday, May 7th, to celebrate the new sign and learn more about the site's history, the park, and the marker itself. We will begin at the corner of 15th and Exchange for a 1:00 pm ribbon cutting by Mayor Bruce Jones, followed by an afternoon of entertainment, education, and refreshments at Fort George's Lovell Showroom. Table displays will provide information about local historic preservation efforts (May is Preservation Month), a documentary film will be shown, cake will be served, and at 2:30 pm, we will be entertained by the Astoria High School Jazz Band. The event is free and open to the public. Come for part of the event, or stay for it all!!

This issue of Restoria focuses on the fort site, various markers that have been placed at (and in some cases removed from) the site, and tells a bit of the legend of Jane Barnes (whose name appeared on the 1948 sign). We draw your attention to several of the 1940s buildings in Astoria that are currently being adapted for reuse and share a story from Don Larson about a night he spent at Fort Astoria park during his youth!

Special thanks to:

Astoria Parks and Recreation, Astoria Historic Landmarks Commission, Clatsop Community College, Clatsop County Historical Society, Arbor Care, Fort George Brewery + Public House, and KMUN Community Radio

JANE ROBSON (NEE BARNES): FIRST BUT NOT THE MOST VIRTUOUS

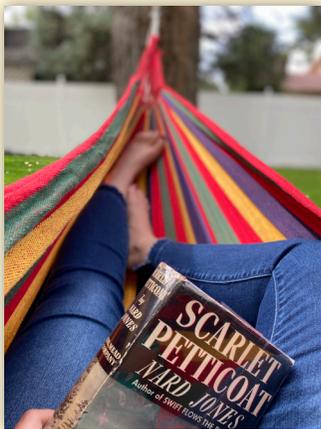
BY RACHEL JENSEN

"Within the annals of Northwest history, the name of Jane Barnes is mentioned rather hesitantly, if not a bit "timidly." - Ellen Foster, *Lady Jane*, 1978

One of the unique things about the 1948 Fort Astoria sign, among other historical markers of its time, is that a woman was listed by her maiden name and vocation and not in relation to her father, husband, or child.

In 1948, the authors of the Fort Astoria sign described English barmaid Jane Barnes as Oregon Country's first white woman - a typical title bestowed upon her. Also characteristic of the time - but which they chose to exclude - was a description of her other physical features and attributes. It was common for her to be described as flaxen-haired and buxom. Perhaps Jane was so well-known in 1948 that the mere mention of her name conjured this specific mental picture.

Northwest author Nard Jones, had his novel published in 1941 titled 'Scarlet Petticoat' in which "pert and adventuresome Jane Barnes..disrupted the placid trading post of Astoria..." Although Jane does not step foot at Fort George until page 119 of the novel, the anticipation of her arrival causes much dismay and foreboding. When she finally does appear, her whiteness is her primary characteristic: "Her face was oval, almost thin in the cheeks, and her throat was a smooth white pillar--I thought I had never seen anything so white, not even the sun at mid-day...A pale goddess. Pale. Pale except where the blood touched her cheeks and lips."



In *Scarlet Petticoat*, Jones's version of Jane includes a backstory that she had been married to a man before the voyage, "but she had long since kicked him out," and her story ends with the drowning of her two male companions. During the 1940s, rumors still stood that Jane had met a wealthy English gentleman in Canton on her journey home and that she spent the rest of her days "enjoying all the luxuries of eastern magnificence." Other authors imagined her back at Portsmouth, tending bar and sharing stories of her Northwest adventures.

In 1951, historian Mary W. Avery wrote: "An Additional Chapter on Jane Barnes" for *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, which proclaimed Jane not only the "first white woman on the Columbia" but also an "honest" woman. This new title was bestowed upon Jane after information was discovered of a later marriage to sea-captain Anthony Robson and her return to the Columbia in 1818, albeit briefly, with two small children in tow.

Knowledge of this marriage somewhat redeemed Jane's reputation but people continued to struggle to reconcile Jane's single status (and several male suitors during her presence here in 1814), with their desire to use her name to stake an early claim of whiteness in Oregon. Her mention was therefore often predicated with an acknowledgement of her perceived moral shortcomings, as when Patrick Steber proclaimed in 1974, "Maybe not the most virtuous she was still the first white woman to set foot in the Northwest."

In 1980, George I. Quimby wrote a more flattering and complex take on the Jane Barnes story, "In terms of gaining upward mobility within the rigid class structure of early 19th-century England, Jane Barnes Robson was a tremendous success. For her day she was certainly a liberated woman who could adapt to long and dangerous sea voyages, frontier life, exotic cultures, and other aspects of what was then a man's world." This view of Jane's role in history is reflected in more recent work by local writer Marianne Monson as well as Knappton Cove director Nancy Anderson.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, an annual Jane Barnes Day was celebrated in Astoria, complete with fashion shows, contests, tavern tours, ice-cream socials, cake auctions, back-street parades, etc., and in 2010, the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association created an annual popular, adults-only fundraiser titled "The Jane Barnes Revue."

Unfortunately, we've been left with no perspective of the events at Fort George from Jane herself. Although there are plenty of stories written about her, I kindly remind you, as Nard Jones does in the epilogue of *Scarlet Petticoat*, historians are often "two-thirds novelist" themselves.

Foster, Ellen. *Lady Jane*. *Statesman Journal*, Salem, Oregon, February 19, 1978, 108.

Jones, Nard. *Scarlet Petticoat*. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1941.

Avery, Mary V. An Additional Chapter on Jane Barnes, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4., (October 1951), 330-332.

Steber, Patrick. *Miss Jane Barnes*, *Greater Oregon*, Albany, Oregon, November 8, 1974.

Quimby, George I. *The Wife of Portsmouth's Tale, 1813-1818: An Apology to Miss Jane Barnes*. *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 771, No. 3. (July 1980), pp. 127-130.

Monson, Marianne. *Fascinating figures in Columbia-Pacific history*. *Our Coast Magazine*, March 20, 2019.

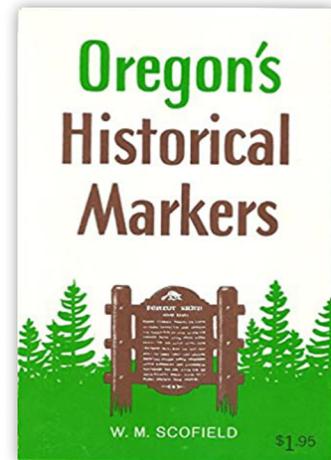
Anderson, Nancy Bell. "First documented history at Knappton Cove" video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsUjwWVDjbs>



HISTORY OF OREGON ROADSIDE HISTORICAL MARKERS

The Oregon State Highway Commission began a program to install historical markers around the state in 1937. According to R. H. Baldock, State Highway Engineer in a letter dated September 15, 1949, “We started a rather extensive program in 1940, but our activities were curtailed during the war years and we have but recently renewed this program.” By 1949, they had installed roughly 30 signs:

“While most of our signs are of the rustic type with log uprights, there are a number of locations where rubble masonry bases might be more appropriate. We have about 30 markers in at the present time and eventually, when sufficient signs have been installed to justify doing so, we contemplate issuing a brochure which will be distributed by our Travel Information Department for parties who might be interested in stopping to visit these historical points on their travels.” Brochures and travel guides were eventually produced.



In 1966, the book Oregon’s Historical Markers by W. M. Scofield was published by Souvenir Publishing Co. of Pleasant Hill, Oregon. The Fort Astoria marker was included in this book of 76 historical markers, the only marker to require two pages, as it included an image of the back of the sign, the fort plan. “Hewn in wood these monuments have been erected in all parts of Oregon, recreating for all time these hallowed points which mark our most recent past.” At the time of its printing, there were eight markers located in Clatsop County: Fort Astoria, U.S. Custom House, Fort Clatsop, Fort Stevens State Park, Sunset Highway, The Tillamook Burn (Sunset Springs), Ecola, and Cannon Beach.

The Travel Information Council is now the state official administration of the Oregon Historical Marker program.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON... THESE 3 ASTORIA BUILDINGS FROM THE 1940S ARE CURRENTLY BEING ADAPTED FOR REUSE:

The Sebastian-Stuart Fish Co. plant built in 1945 at the foot of 9th Street is part of Buoy Beer and Pilot House Distilling’s expansion plans. The corrugated metal siding now obscures the building’s original architectural details. This building was previously associated with the building across the trolley tracks (Ocean Seafoods) which was recently adapted to create the new Bowline Hotel.



Paragon Packing Company offices (most recently NW Natural) at 176 W. Marine Drive, a Wicks & Wicks design built in 1945 is being renovated to become part of a new waterfront hotel. Plans have been drawn by Stuart Emmons which utilize aspects of the building’s original Modern style while adding a three-story addition to the north.

E.E. Isaacson’s design, at the corner of 6th and Bond Street, was originally the Blitz-Weinhard Brewing Co. distribution warehouse (1947) and then home of Columbia Fruit and Produce Co. (1965). The building is currently being adapted into Obelisk Beer Co., a brewery and taproom.



HISTORICAL MARKERS OF 15TH AND EXCHANGE, PAST AND PRESENT



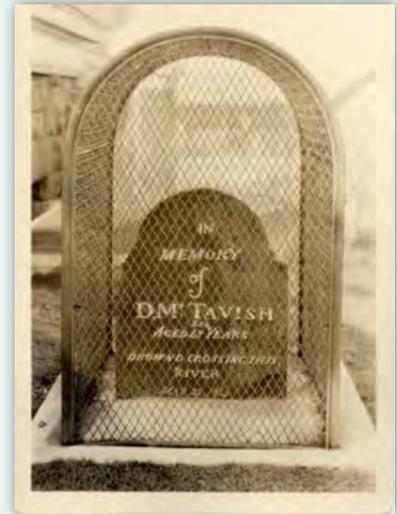
A lot of planning and a considerable amount of community effort went into creating the park built to memorialize the Pacific Fur Company trading post, Astoria, that later became known as Fort George. According to *Astoria Budget* newspaper clippings from a Clatsop County Historical Society scrapbook, one initial design from the society's president, Walter Johnson, proposed a concrete slab covering the entire lot with holes in it for trees and shrubs, another involved leveling and preparing the site at 15th and Exchange as a foundation for the eventual construction of a replica of the fort, which would be occupied by the chamber of commerce tourist service and other agencies.

When the final project was complete in September of 1948, the site was described by the *Astoria Budget* as "beautified, suitably marked, and enriched with the McTavish marker and the DAR marker of the Fort Astoria site, making it a historical shrine in which the community can at last take pride."

Over the decades, the park has evolved with multiple repainting of the mural, markers coming and going, and now the most recent addition of the new Fort Astoria sign. Visitors are typically drawn into the park by the Fort Astoria sign, the 1956 log bastion, the mural, and the green lines painted on the street marking the outline of the fort, but many then take the time to read and ponder the other markers and their significance.

THE MCTAVISH MARKER

Donald McTavish, along with his traveling companion, Jane Barnes, first arrived at Astoria from England aboard the *Isaac Todd*, in April of 1814. He was appointed by the North West Company, a Canadian fur trading business, to seize John Jacob Astor's fur trading post and claim it for the British, yet upon his arrival, discovered that it had already been purchased by the company's overland party. Nevertheless, McTavish took charge of the newly named Fort George and served as governor, but his time was short-lived. It was only a month later that McTavish drowned in the Columbia when his boat capsized during a trip crossing the river. His body was buried in the Fort George cemetery, on the block where the Clatsop County Historical Society's Heritage Museum stands today, then later moved to Hillside Cemetery. Donald McTavish's year of death was carved into a sandstone marker which is said to be the oldest tombstone in the Northwest. While it initially did mark McTavish's grave, the stone eventually went missing from Hillside Cemetery and popped up in 1904 at Portland City Hall. Secretary George W. Himes of the Oregon Historical Society was accused of stealing the stone, but rebuked the claim stating that it was sent to him by a concerned Astorian citizen who felt that the cemetery had long been neglected and that the monument was in danger of getting destroyed by cows that were grazing on the land. The marker was returned and placed on the grounds of Astoria City Hall (present day CCHS Heritage Museum) and encased in an iron netting. In 1948, it was moved by Astoria Granite Works to the corner of 15th and Exchange and installed as part of the Fort Astoria memorial. McTavish's tombstone made its way back to the Heritage Museum in 1981 and can be seen today within the Astor's People gallery.



CUMTUX 1991 Vol. 12 No. 1 Winter
"Say He Took Monument" *The Capital Journal* 4 May 1904

Native American in the Land of the Shogun: Randal MacDonald and the Opening of Japan By Frederik L. Schodt
CUMTUX 1988 Vol 8 No 4 Fall
Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. 119 No. 3 Fall 2018 "The Friends in "Friends of MacDonald" by Jim Mockford

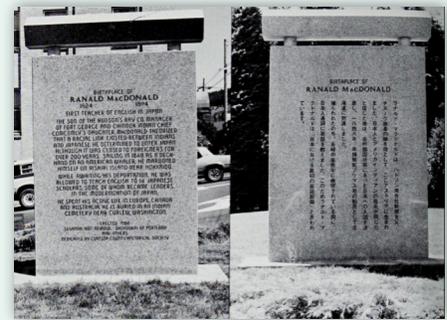
THE DAR MARKER



In August of 1924, the Astoria chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) wanted to commemorate “The Site of the Original Settlement of Astoria,” which had been previously unmarked. At the time, the exact location of Astor’s fur trading post was still a mystery, but an 1883 discovery of timber from the palisade that had surrounded the post revealed its general location. The bronze DAR tablet was mounted on a rough boulder and installed on the lawn of Astoria City Hall on October 6, 1924. They knew it was probable that their chosen site was just outside of where the original palisade wall was built, but as it was reported in the August 14, 1924 *Astoria Budget*: “The ladies of the D.A.R. chapter consider that it is better to place the tablet on public property only a few yards from the site of the original fort than to place it in some obscure private lot.” Once the lot on 15th and Exchange was made into a memorial to the fort, it was no longer deemed obscure and the tablet was placed at the site where it still rests today.

THE RANALD MACDONALD MARKER

The concept of the Ranald MacDonald Birthplace Monument began in 1988 with a fundraiser, started by Astoria Public Library director, Bruce Berney, to build a memorial for the, ‘first teacher of English in Japan.’ Masakatsu ‘Mas’ Tomita, who was president of Epson Portland Inc., was also invested in celebrating the history of MacDonald and wanted to help fund the project. He along with Berney and Stephen Kohl, Professor of East Asian Studies at the University of Oregon, formed Friends of MacDonald (FOM) and worked together to create the Ranald MacDonald Birthplace Monument which was dedicated on May 21, 1988.



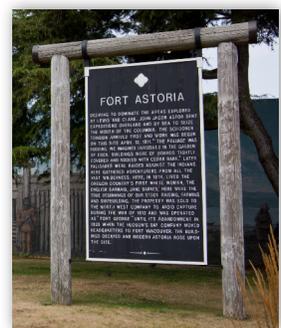
Ranald MacDonald is known as the first teacher of English in Japan. He was born at Fort George, which was occupied by Hudson’s Bay Company, in 1824 to Princess Raven, daughter of Chinook Chief Comcomly and Archibald MacDonald, chief factor of Fort George. Ranald MacDonald theorized a connection in heritage between the native peoples of the Pacific Northwest and the Japanese. Spurred by a determination to explore his theory, the young man formed a plan to reach Japan, a country which had been closed off to any foreign visitors for over two centuries. MacDonald landed on Rishiri Island where he encountered the native Ainu and was able to pick up some of the language. He was taken to Nagasaki where he tutored English to fourteen Japanese interpreters some of whom later worked for the Japanese government during trade negotiations with the United States that helped to eventually open borders between the two nations. The marker at 15th and Exchange was built by Astoria Granite Works with the inscription detailing his life and adventures in Japan, and reads in English on one side and Japanese on the other. It is one of three monuments that have been made in honor of him, the other two are located in Nagasaki (1964) and Rishiri Island (1987).

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE 1948 FORT ASTORIA SIGN?

Look carefully at these two photos of the Fort Astoria sign. You may notice a few key differences. The boards are proportioned in opposite directions and the symbols at the top are inversions of one another. At some point (we believe around 1990), the original 1948 sign was replaced, and we can’t seem to figure out why it was replaced, who replaced it, or where the original sign went.



The first Fort Astoria sign
1948 - 1990s



The second Fort Astoria sign
1990s - 2020

DON LARSON REMEMBERS SPENDING THE NIGHT AT FORT ASTORIA

In our Winter issue, we asked readers to share their memories the Fort Astoria park. Here is a story from local Astorian, Don Larson.

“Growing up in Astoria during the 50s and 60s was a fun adventure. My friend, Bill Wilson, and I decided we wanted to sneak into Fort Astoria and spend the night. We spent hours planning. Finally, the plan was in place. We would tell Bills’ mom that we were staying at my house and my mom would be told that we were staying at Bills. We would take out sleeping bags and hide them in the car. I had a cocker spaniel dog, Bambi, who would accompany us for protection. Because my grandparents lived close to Fort Astoria we would park the car several blocks away and walk to our destination.

We arrived at Fort Astoria at dusk, threw our sleeping bags over the fence, lifted Bambi over the fence and scrambled over the fence. After all the planning, we thought there would be exciting ventures waiting. However, it was very quiet all night. The Police Station was only a block away but there was no activity. After hours of talking we fell asleep. We had to wake up and leave Fort Astoria by 6 a.m. to avoid the morning traffic. We had not brought any food. The sleeping bags were warm but the ground was not very comfortable. In the morning we climbed the fence and went home. All in all, a very uneventful experience. Perhaps that was a good thing.”



Astoria Police Department on the corner of Duane and 15th Streets. (Sara’s Old Photos)

CONSTRUCTION OF ASTORIA’S FIRST BRICK HOUSE REVEALS SITE OF FORT ASTORIA

Back in the 1880s, before the Lovell garage was built, a row of houses once lined the north side of Exchange St. between 14th and 15th. One house, which was owned by Robert Carruthers, stands out in Astoria history for two remarkable reasons.



638 Exchange St. Church of Nazarene, former Robert Carruthers house, covered in ivy (Clatsop County Historical Society)

On July 2, 1883, a terrible fire broke out at the Ferrell Mill, which stood at the intersection of 13th and Exchange Streets, burning down the mill and taking half of downtown Astoria with it. All that was left standing from the mill was its brick smokestack and burning kiln, which were purchased by one of the area’s early US settlers, Robert Carruthers, who had come to Oregon by an ox-team as a child in the 1850s. After Carruthers dismantled the kiln and smokestack, he used the bricks, originally fabricated at the Bartoldus farm on a tributary of Young’s River, to construct his house. Bricks never became much of a local commodity, however, which is why there are so few brick houses in the area.

During construction of Robert Carruthers’ house, a curious discovery was made. According to a September 1883 *Daily Astorian* article, while digging

for the foundation, workers uncovered rotted remains of a row of stockades, along with some rusted nails, and other articles. This discovery helped identify the exact location of John Jacob Astor’s fur trading post.

The red brick two-story Italianate house was later occupied by the Church of Nazarene and was eventually torn down in the mid 1940s for expansion of the Lovell parking lot. Whether or not the bricks went on to be used for another building remains a mystery. Photos of this home before it was covered in ivy are available in the 1890s Mignon Allen Cellars photo album on archive.org.

CUMTUX 1983 Vol 3 No. 4 Fall

CUMTUX 1998 Vol 18 No 2 Spring

CUMTUX 1999 Vol 19 No. 1 Winter

Daily Astorian August 08, 1883 R Carruthers begins construction on brick house

Daily Astorian September 06, 1882 R Carruthers finds stockade building house

MAY IS NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH!

**31 Activity Ideas
31 Days to Celebrate!**

Don't forget to share your pictures on Facebook and Instagram!

To celebrate historic preservation in the Astoria area, the Columbia-Pacific Preservation Advisory Board put together this list of 31 family friendly activities for each day of preservation month.

National Historic Preservation Month was established in 1973, by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

To find the list of activities in the Astoria area, visit: www.lcpsociety.org/preservationmonth

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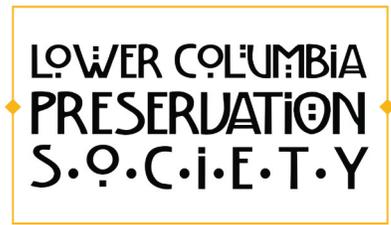
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LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP

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- \$100 SUPPORTER
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