



Astoria: Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains: Adventure in the Pacific Northwest (Pacific Basin Books)

Washington Irving

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In 1811 a group of American traders built a fort at the mouth of the Columbia River, named Fort Astoria in honor of its financier, John Jacob Astor. Envisioned as the spur of a fur-trading empire, by 1813 the project was a business failure and the fort was surrendered to the British. But in its short life Astoria rendered incalculable benefits to public understanding of the Great Northwest. The exploration of trade routes, the description of various Indian tribes and their customs, and an American claim on the Northwest coast were among many of its legacies.

Astor never relinquished his pride in the enterprise and insisted that the West would one day be a dominating factor in national politics. To drive his point home he asked Washington Irving, the country's most renowned and respected author, to transform the papers of Fort Astoria into a unified and readable history. Irving accepted the offer and published Astoria in 1836.

From its first appearance--when it was hailed by no less a reviewer than Edgar Allan Poe--to the present day, Astoria has been read as a vivid and fascinating history, comparable indeed to the finest of romances, but rooted in the rough and hardy life of trapping, hunting, and exploration.

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