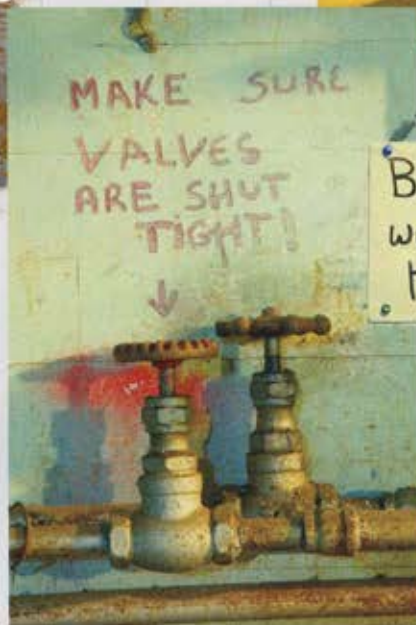


Astoria's Hanthorn Cannery Museum

Displays and collections celebrate 100 years of fish processing history.



ONLY Bumble Bee/CRPA workers can sign the wall →

STORY BY RHONDA OSTERTAG

IN THE LATE 19th century, cracking the secret to canning fish ushered in a boom industry that changed the face of U.S. waterfronts and family cupboards worldwide. With its river-mouth port and access to a teeming Columbia River salmon fishery, Astoria was ready-made to meet demand. Any visit to the oldest city in the Northwest would be incomplete without a peek at its fascinating cannery legacy.

In Astoria's heyday, dozens of canneries extended the city's footprint over the Columbia River, cranking out an annual salmon pack exceeding a half-million 48-pound cases. Operations relied first on Chinese workers. After

1900, canneries brought great numbers of women into the workforce. When Bumble Bee closed its Astoria operation in 1980, it was the end of an era.

Time, decay, fire, and modern growth have almost erased this important past. But the narrative continues thanks to Pier 39 owner Floyd Holcom, who conceived the idea for a cannery museum; maritime enthusiast Peter

Marsh, who guided its growth; and the Hanthorn Cannery Foundation, a nonprofit made up of former cannery workers and their descendants. In 2008, the group opened the unassuming Hanthorn Cannery Museum in



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE OSTERTAG

MPT
MARRIED
HERE

Jay P. D...
1966

**WORKERS
ALWAY**

John M. Lamb
Deck hand 1947
CRPA

IN MEMORY
SAM SARGOLA
BORN NITE OCEAN

Jim REITER
1970-71

1972
HT CREW
Shaun Korhonen

1973-74
SUZY JASPER
69-74

1975
Cheryl Graham
1975-1979

1976-77
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1978-79
ERIC BARROWS
1959-1983

1980-81
CHRIS R. TAYLOR
1970-77

1982-83
DAVE P...
1965-1982

1984-85
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1986-87
SUZY JASPER
69-74

1988-89
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1990-91
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1992-93
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1994-95
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1996-97
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

1998-99
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2000-01
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2002-03
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2004-05
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2006-07
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2008-09
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2010-11
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2012-13
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2014-15
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2016-17
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2018-19
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74

2020-21
TERRY LEWIS
1927-74



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE COSTERTAG



— CANNERY —
BUNK HOUSE



A horse seining crew.

the historic J. O. Hanthorn (Bumble Bee) Cannery, at Pier 39, Building No. 9.

Located in a run of old freezer bays, the dimly lit museum welcomes visitors back in time. Viewing the collection is like a rummage through Astoria's attic, with some items familiar and others that puzzle. Discovery is do-it-yourself.

The Hanthorn Cannery started in 1875, later becoming the consolidated Columbia River Packers Association (CRPA) before ending its century-long run as Bumble Bee Seafoods. The old windows frame black-and-white photographs of cannery line workers, creating the illusion the workers never left.

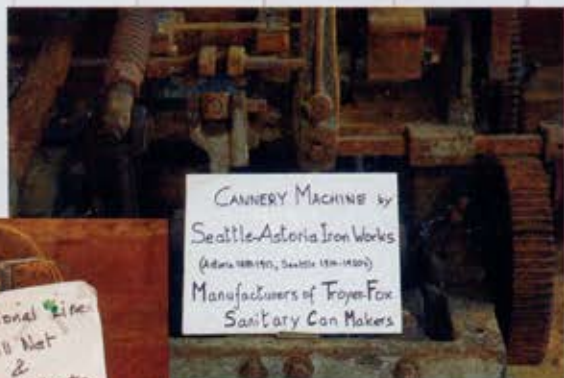
Fishing is the natural start. At the cold storage entrance, view wooden fishing boats: a horse-drawn seine and gillnet versions. With 900-foot-long linen nets, gillnet boats dominated the river fishery's bountiful early years.

Beyond thick freezer doors, old processing and packing equipment, work tables, hand-lettered instructions inked on walls, valves and switches, aprons, a diagram for tying head scarves, tins, and the colorful logos and labels recall cannery operation. Art Chan's photography communicates the tedium and resolve that come from 10-hour days and repetitious work.

Other images depict the never-ending supply of fish—numbers that strain belief. When salmon supplies diminished, albacore tuna, crab, shrimp, and bottomfish broadened the line.



COURTESY OF THE HANTHORN CANNERY FOUNDATION



CANNERY MACHINE by
Seattle Astoria Iron Works
(Astoria 1880-1910, Seattle 1910-1920)
Manufacturers of Froyer-Fox
Sanitary Can Makers

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Traditional Fish
Gill Net
&
Cedar Floats

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Old processing and packing equipment, work tables, hand-lettered instructions inked on walls, valves and switches, tins, and labels recall cannery operation.



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COURTESY OF THE HANTHORN CANNERY FOUNDATION

Gone are the wicked sharp knives, the blur of fast hands, the ice, the smell, the drone of machines, and the danger. Yet it all comes rushing forward as you read the descriptions and study the images and artifacts. A reminiscence by Jennifer Goodenberger, who cleaned tuna for college money, captures a maturing attitude toward cannery work from her first memories of avoiding town in late afternoon because of "that smell" that followed workers getting off shift.

The autographed walls of the Cannery Workers Memorial Hallway slow steps. Most entries include years of service and cannery roles served. Personal notations provide a sense of the workers' humor, pride, and, in some cases, loss.

Line worker Jean Morrison-Pace writes, "Hardest physical work I ever did!!" Elsewhere read: "Long live the Tuna Queens" or "Blackcod slimers (Fastest ever)" or "Best day and a half of my life." One noted a right hand and three fingers amputated; a grinder "kept" all his fingers. Cannery work sent area young people to college, kindled love stories, and sustained families.

You can walk through the Hanthorn Cannery Museum quickly, but it's worth taking the time to study the photos and read the stories, to meet the workers and to wonder at this period in Astoria history.

When you exit the museum and again feel the coastal mist on your face, spy circling gulls and hear the barking of sea lions, imagine that same joy at the end of a long shift. ■



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WHEN YOU GO

Hanthorn Cannery Museum sits at 100 39th St., on Astoria's Pier 39. Look for the sign to turn north off of US 30 onto 39th Street, at the east end of town. There is limited parking on the pier, but you can park on shore, in the parking lot. Pier 39 is at the east-end trolley stop and along Astoria's popular Riverwalk. Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Admission is free, donations welcomed. 503-325-2502; www.canneryworker.org

Nearby attractions: Pier 39 also holds Rogue Ale Public House, a coffee shop, and a SCUBA/kayak rental shop. Astoria's acclaimed Maritime Museum and Clatsop County Historical Society's Heritage Museum offer additional exhibits on this interesting period.