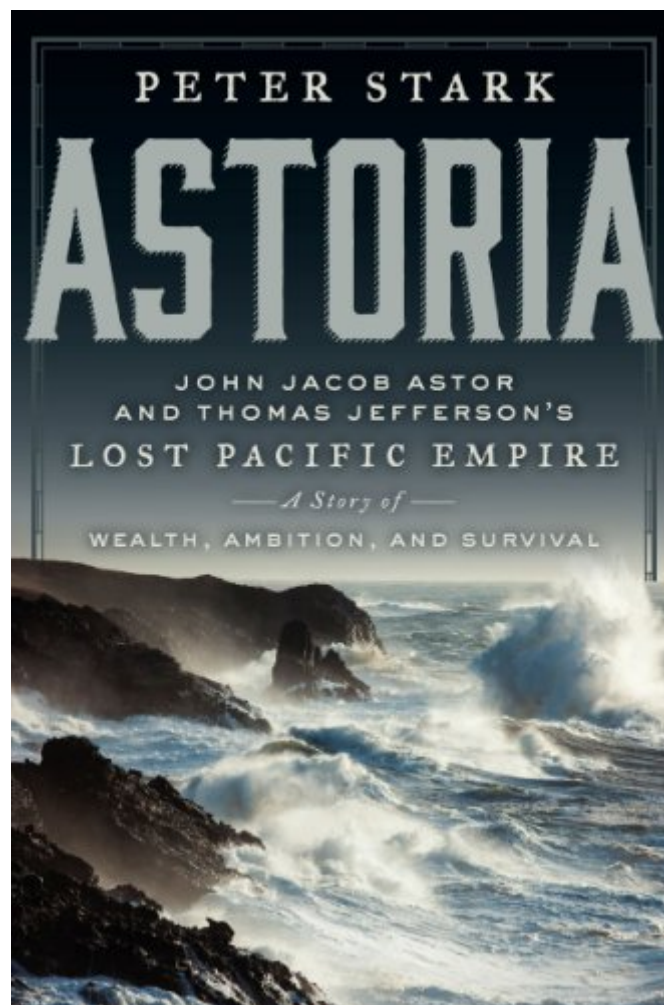


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Astoria: John Jacob Astor And Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire: A Story Of Wealth, Ambition, And Survival



Synopsis

In the tradition of *The Lost City of Z* and *Skeletons in the Zahara*, *Astoria* is the thrilling, true-adventure tale of the 1810 Astor Expedition, an epic, now forgotten, three-year journey to forge an American empire on the Pacific Coast. Peter Stark offers a harrowing saga in which a band of explorers battled nature, starvation, and madness to establish the first American settlement in the Pacific Northwest and opened up what would become the Oregon trail, permanently altering the nation's landscape and its global standing. Six years after Lewis and Clark's began their journey to the Pacific Northwest, two of the Eastern establishment's leading figures, John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson, turned their sights to founding a colony akin to Jamestown on the West Coast and transforming the nation into a Pacific trading power. Author and correspondent for *Outside* magazine Peter Stark recreates this pivotal moment in American history for the first time for modern readers, drawing on original source material to tell the amazing true story of the Astor Expedition. Unfolding over the course of three years, from 1810 to 1813, *Astoria* is a tale of high adventure and incredible hardship in the wilderness and at sea. Of the more than one hundred-forty members of the two advance parties that reached the West Coast— one crossing the Rockies, the other rounding Cape Horn— nearly half perished by violence. Others went mad. Within one year, the expedition successfully established Fort Astoria, a trading post on the Columbia River. Though the colony would be short-lived, it opened provincial American eyes to the potential of the Western coast and its founders helped blaze the Oregon Trail.

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Customer Reviews

I did not just read this book. I devoured it. As review author Lawrence Gonzales states on the rear of the dust cover, "...gave me the sense all readers long for: that nothing exists but the riveting narrative unfolding in your head." This was exactly the way I felt reading this excellent book. I have explored the Columbia and Snake rivers including, the Columbia bar, Astoria, their confluence, Hanford Reach, Hells Canyon and east to South Pass (in astronomically greater comfort) and was exhilarated to realize I had trodden the very path of these explorers. I had never heard of this dual expedition before and I could not put it down. Peter Stark weaves a tale that is smooth yet detailed and covers relevant explanatory side paths. The fore and aft character descriptions flesh out the story wonderfully. Other reviewers have covered the book in detail so no need here, just read it. I don't know what I can read next that will surpass this book, whatever it is, it will anti-climatic..

I was interested in this book as I live in this part of the country, and have spent quite a bit of time in present day Astoria, Oregon. Much here I did not know - however, disappointed that the book ended rather abruptly, and at least on the Kindle edition, indicated that I was only about 60 some percent through the book - the rest was all sources and notes! But, good read up to that point - just thought it could have been wrapped up in a more satisfying way by taking it further into future history of the area and how it impacted the settlement of the Oregon Territory. .

A riveting tale of part of our American history that many people would not know without the introduction of this true story beautifully written by Peter Stark. I've been to Astoria, a town that I always thought was smoldering with some long forgotten history..but at the same time a town that seemed like it never caught on! Now I know why. The history and the way this author wove it thru the book, bringing it alive, as if it happened yesterday, ways amazing. And, tremendous research with regard to the people involved, surprising and balanced tenure, not didactic, insightful observations, what a wonderful early American legacy otherwise largely forgotten.

This is an interesting, compelling read about how the vision and financial investment of one man - John Jacob Astor - drove the ultimate identification and development of trails and locations in what was then an unknown country - the Pacific Northwest. It brings to life a key piece of the drive towards the concept of Manifest Destiny that later drew thousands to the West while providing maps on how to get there. (The Oregon Trail) It's well written and surprisingly, brings the feeling of old growth forests and eternally wet, gray skies. It describes the oppression & depression that can occur when surrounded by threatened and hostile indigenous people. Conversely, it presents the complexity of Native American tribes and society and how the prejudice of leaders can ensure conflicts with other peoples. The book, while kinda small for the vastness of the topics, covers the experiences of multiple parties and politics in both the explorers pursuing the route and the political movements of countries and how that impacted both the expedition plans and the eventual outcome. It is clearly well researched but told as though you were listening to the adventures of your favorite Uncle. I also like the way the author indicates what may have been going on with an individual without making it seem to be a statement of fact. Too often, history writers apply their assumptions of motivation as fact where they cannot possibly know if the individual was depressed or angry or psychotic. The feeling of this book has remained with me even though I've read a few other books since then. Of course, I live in the PNW and that probably makes a difference in my level of interest. However, if you want a good historical read no matter where you live, this is definitely one!

Fascinating history of the settlement of Astoria Oregon. An attempt by John Jacob Astor - with the backing of President Jefferson - to monopolize the fur trading business (Astor's goal) and keep the British and Spanish from adding the west coast to their domains. Although unsuccessful, we did get the west coast back from the British later. The route used by Astor's overland party became the Oregon Trail used by the pioneers a few decades later. Although I've lived in Oregon over 40 years, I never knew this history as the focus has always been on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. A great adventure read even if you don't live here.

The author did a great job researching and writing about this historical adventure. I gave it three stars because the ending to this adventure is boring and a bit of a let down. I know it's history and you can only tell it the way it happened but it was anticlimactic. It's still worth reading. I love reading about early explorers and their lives. You might too.

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