

Astoria

People and Place

Location

Astoria is on the northwestern tip of Oregon, bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Columbia River on the north. Situated in Clatsop County, the area encompasses 5.75 square miles of land and 3.95 square miles of water. Portland is the nearest major city, 91 miles to the east. Astoria's geographic coordinates are lat 46°11'17"N, long 123°49'48"W.

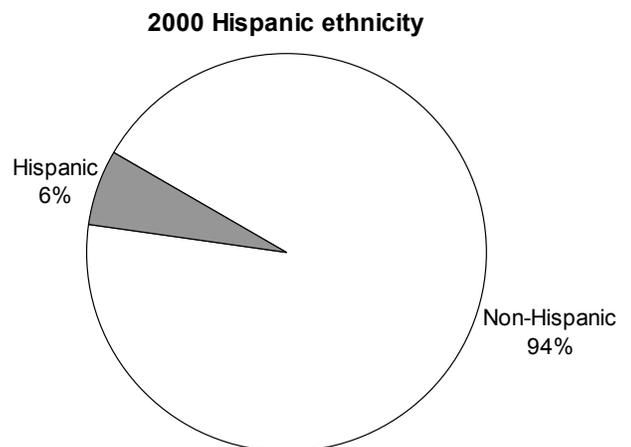
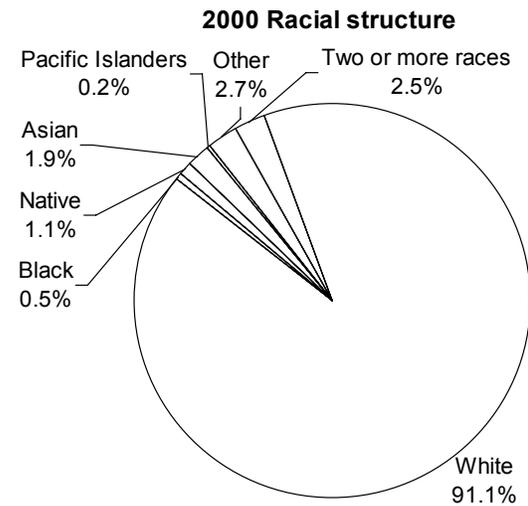
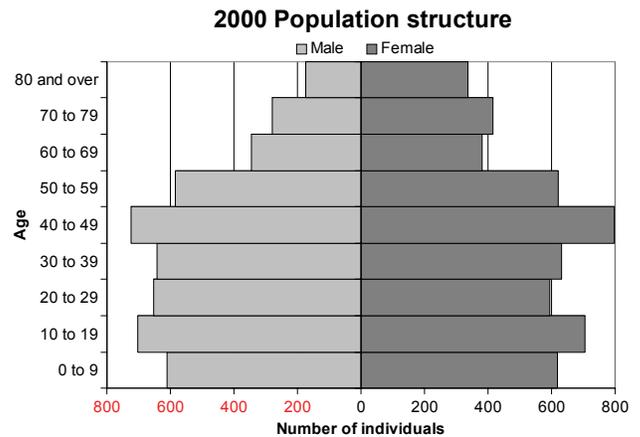
Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Astoria's population was 9,813, a 25.4% decrease from the 1990 count of 10,069. The gender composition was 52% female and 48% male. The median age was 38.3 years, slightly higher than the national average of 35.3. Astoria demonstrates usual population trends for the nation. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 84.1% had a high school education or higher, 19.7% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, and 6.8% had attained a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The majority of the population of Astoria recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (91.1%), followed by people who identified with another race (2.7%), people who identified with two or more races (2.5%), Asian (1.9%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.1%), black or African American (0.5%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (0.2%). Ethnicity data indicate 6% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 4.5% were foreign-born, with the majority from the Americas outside of the United States and from Asia. Astoria is also home to many people of Scandinavian decent, including Icelanders, Finns, Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes.

History

American commercial interest in this area began in 1792 when Captain Robert Gray crossed the Columbia River in his fur-trading ship. Lewis and Clark's 33-member expedition, the Corps of Discovery, arrived near present-day Astoria in the winter of 1805–1806. The expedition is commemorated by the Astoria Column.¹ The Chinook and Clatsop tribal populations each numbered about 400 when the Corps of Discovery visited their villages on the south bank of the Columbia. The tribes lived in wooden plank houses, were proficient seafarers in their large dugout canoes, and lived off the fish, roots, and berries plentiful in the



area. The considerably larger Tillamook population was south in villages between the mouth of the Necanicum River and Tillamook Bay. By the mid-1800s the Tillamook population had declined to about 200 people; today the tribe is no longer officially organized.²

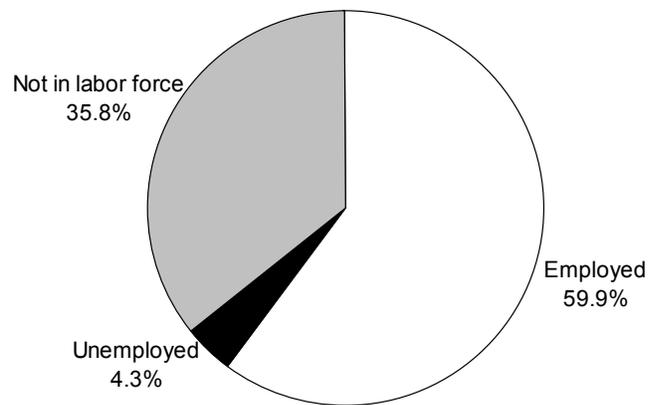
The Corp of Discovery built Fort Clatsop near the mouth of the Columbia and sheltered there through the winter. Members of the Pacific Fur Company arrived subsequently and established Fort Astoria, named for John Jacob Astor, the founder of Pacific Fur Company and a prominent New York merchant. The resulting community, which grew into Astoria, is now the oldest U.S. settlement west of the Rocky Mountains. By 1850 the first post office and U.S. Customs office west of the Rocky Mountains were established. By 1900 salmon canneries, forestry, and shipping industries made the town the most commercially significant hub between Seattle and San Francisco. Until the 1900s emigrants to the area were predominantly of Scandinavian descent, bringing diversity to the area's cultural heritage and economy. The area also has become a popular backdrop to represent the all-American city in numerous movies.³

Downtown Astoria was rebuilt following a devastating fire in 1922. The reconstruction extended the land area with fill material into the Columbia River. The Port of Astoria initiated a project to build a bridge across the Columbia between Oregon and Washington in 1953. With the help of the Oregon Highway Department and \$100,000 in funding from the Oregon and Washington State legislatures, the so-called "Bridge to Nowhere" opened to the public 10 years later.⁴ More than 2,000 major shipwrecks testify to the importance of the mouth of the Columbia River to commerce and fishing, and to its dangerous waters, which has earned it the nickname, "the Graveyard of the Pacific."⁵

Fieldwork indicates there has been an increase in tourism in Astoria, with the opening of two new hotels along the riverfront as well as a number of new gift shops and galleries. These developments have led to an increase in lower paying service jobs. Fieldwork suggests insufficient income levels, coupled with a downturn in logging and fishing, are forcing many to leave the community in search of higher paying jobs elsewhere. There also has been an increase in the construction of weekend or vacation homes for Portland and Seattle residents, resulting in rising property values.

Today the towns of Astoria and Warrenton form a deeply connected community, sharing not only history but also infrastructure. The connection is particularly reflected in their involvement in the fishing industry. While separate profiles have been compiled for each

2000 Employment structure



community, the Astoria-Warrenton area can be considered a cohesive community.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 59.9% of Astoria's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 4.3% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 6.7% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 35.8% were not in the labor force. The top employment sectors were local, state, or federal government (17.1%) and the armed forces (2.5%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, employed 3.1%, but this percentage may be artificially low because many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

While the fishing industry has long formed the economic foundation of Astoria, the largest employers are related to the community's infrastructure. In order of the number of employees, the five leading employers in 2003 were the U.S. Coast Guard, the Astoria School District, the Columbia Memorial Hospital, Clatsop County, and Clatsop Community College.⁶ Other main industries in Astoria in 2000 were educational, health, and social services; retail trade; and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services.

The per capita income for Astoria was \$18,759 and the median household income was \$33,011, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. In 1999 15.9% were below the poverty line, higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000 Astoria had 4,858 housing units, of which 87.6% were occupied. Of the occupied units, 51.3% were by owner and 48.7% by renter. Of the vacant housing units, 14.4% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

The City of Astoria incorporated in 1856. Local government is organized under a manager-council format.⁷ The State of Oregon has no general sales tax but levies a 1% tax on overnight lodging that funds the Oregon Tourism Commission. See Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fisherman and processors in Oregon.

A U.S. Coast Guard Station and an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Field Office are based in Astoria. A field station of the NOAA Fisheries Services Northwest Fisheries Science Center is located in nearby Hammond. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are held in Portland, which is also home to the district office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Facilities

Astoria is accessible by land, sea, and air. U.S. Highway 101 connects Astoria to other major transportation routes. Public transportation is provided by a local bus service. The Astoria Regional Airport, operated by the Port of Astoria, is located within 10 minutes of Astoria, Seaside, and Warrenton. The closest major commercial airport is in Portland.

The Port of Astoria provides services to commercial and recreational boaters at two marinas and serves as a cruise ship port-of-call with two piers and a marine terminal. It is the first deep-draft port encountered upon entering the Columbia River, located only 14 miles from the Pacific Ocean. It maintains nearly 7,250 feet of dock space on three piers with a haul-out and a 10-acre boatyard. The port adopted a comprehensive Central Waterfront Master Plan in 2001. The port collects revenue from enforced tariffs.⁸

Astoria has seven schools providing elementary through high school education with one tertiary education provider, Clatsop Community College. The city takes water from the Bear Creek Watershed and maintains wastewater treatment systems. City utilities include natural gas, electrical power, and solid waste management. The Astoria Fire Department operates two stations. The police department has 21 paid and reserve officers. Columbia Memorial Hospital is located in Astoria and three clinics are available.⁹ There are a number of local overnight accommodations.

Several local and regional associations and networks operate in the Astoria-Warrenton area, including the Women's Coalition for Pacific Fisheries, Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union, and Salmon for All, a

lower Columbia River group of fishermen, processors, and gear suppliers. The Oregon Trawl Commission is located in Astoria and consists of eight commissioners appointed by the Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The Pacific Marine Conservation Council also operates from Astoria. The council advocates cooperative research and science-based policy, as well as community-based fisheries management with attention to west coast rockfish.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

There were at least four seafood processors operating in Astoria in 2000. Bornstein Seafoods Inc., Crystal Ocean Seafoods, Fish Hawk Fisheries Inc., and Josephson's Smokehouse and Dock together employed approximately 154. In 2000 approximately 10.1 million pounds of fish were processed at an estimated value of \$16.87 million. In the same year the top three processed products in the community, in terms of pounds and revenue earned, were flounder, Dungeness crab, and shrimp. Bornstein Seafoods, historically a groundfish processing and distribution company, is expanding to process and distribute seafood products. Bornstein began construction in spring 2005 of a \$6.8 million processing facility on Port of Astoria property.

In 2000 334 unique vessels (all commercially classified) delivered landings to Astoria. The landings were in the following fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic 5,907 t/\$794,612/29; crab 1,399 t/\$6,530,137/92; groundfish 45,284 t/\$12,980,569/151; highly migratory species 1,682 t/\$3,273,354/112; salmon 52 t/\$138,537/82; shrimp 3,947 t/\$3,816,430/48; and other species 178 t/\$633,751/84.

Astoria residents owned 184 vessels in 2000 including 12 vessels that took part in the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program. Area residents owned 69 vessels that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Astoria residents participating in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/6, crab 0/30/1, groundfish 0/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 0/138/0, shellfish NA/7/NA, and shrimp NA/16/7.¹⁰

Twenty Astoria residents held 21 federally managed groundfish fishery permits in 2000. The number of Astoria residents holding permits in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/2/6, crab 4/30/1, groundfish 3/1/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 18/162/1, shellfish 0/5/NA, shrimp 12/16/6, and other species 2/0/2.¹¹

The data indicate 187 state and federal permits registered to Astoria residents in 2000. The number of state permits held by community members in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/2/14, crab 7/56/1, groundfish 8/1/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 22/0/2, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 13/27/9, and other species 2/0/2.¹²

Fieldwork indicates many Astoria residents participate in the lower Columbia River gillnet fishery—the oldest commercial fishery in Oregon and Washington—harvesting shad, sturgeon, salmon, and smelt. There has been a significant decrease in the number of Columbia River gillnet licenses issued over the years, primarily due to declining returns and increased regulatory measures. For example, in the 1880s roughly 3,000 gillnetters fished the lower Columbia. In 1997 only 689 Columbia River gillnet licenses were issued.¹³

Sportfishing

Astoria had six outfitter guide businesses in 2003 with six licensed charter vessel businesses located in the community. For the Astoria-Warrenton port group, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 766 Chinook salmon and 13,712 coho salmon. The recreational nonsalmonid catch was 1,533 fish, consisting primarily of black rockfish.

Subsistence

Local community members may engage in subsistence fishing in the area; however, specific information on subsistence fishing in Astoria is not discussed in detail in this profile due a lack of data. Tribal subsistence fishing does not occur in the Columbia in the area but does take place further upstream in the Lower Columbia River dam pools at The Dalles, John Day, and Bonneville dams.¹⁴

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Astoria residents owned 54 vessels in 2000 that were involved in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landings): Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish confidential/confidential/1, Gulf of Alaska groundfish confidential/confidential/3, halibut 77.5 t/\$440,080/4, herring 240.9 t/\$50,930/6, salmon 1,104.5 t/\$1,543,430/48, and shellfish confidential/confidential/1.

In 2000 residents held 74 registered state permits and 27 registered federal permits. In the same year residents of Astoria held six groundfish License Limitation Program permits. Residents also held 1 finfish, 13 BSAI groundfish, 9 halibut, 14 herring, 58 salmon, and 1 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. The halibut and sablefish individual fishing quota shares for people residing in the community were 2,542,582 and 977,046 respectively.

In 2000 108 residents held crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

Astoria community members purchased 112 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

Notes

1. State of Oregon. No date. City of Astoria history. Online at <http://www.stateoforegon.com/cgi-bin/cities/history.pl?&city=astoria&history> [accessed 9 January 2007].

2. National Geographic. No date. Lewis and Clark. Online at http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/journey_leg_14 [accessed July 2004].

3. NW Source: Travel. 2004. Astoria, OR. Online at http://www.nwsourc.com/travel/scr/tf_detail.cfm?id=2825 [accessed 9 January 2007].

4. State of Oregon. No date. City of Astoria history. Online at <http://www.stateoforegon.com/cgi-bin/cities/history.pl?&city=astoria&history> [accessed 9 January 2007].

5. Astoria Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce. 2004. Historical facts. Online at <http://www.olderoregon.com/Pages/Quickfacts.htm> [accessed 9 January 2007].

6. Community and Economic Development Department. 2004. Astoria community profile. Online at <http://info.econ.state.or.us:591/FMPro?-db=Community.fp4&-Format=forms.htm&-lay=webpage&-op=eq&sort=%20name=Astoria&-script=hit%20count&-Find> [accessed 9 January 2007].

7. Oregon Blue Book. 2004. City government. Online at <http://bluebook.state.or.us/local/cities/citiesgen.htm> [accessed 9 January 2007].

8. Port of Astoria. 2004. Port facilities. Online at <http://www.portofastoria.com/portfacilities/cruise/index.html> [accessed 9 January 2007].

9. See note 6.

10. NA refers to data that were not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.

11. See note 10.

12. See note 10.

13. Oregon State University. 1999. Oregon's changing fishing communities. Online at <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/o99001.html> [accessed 9 January 2007].

14. Fishery biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Game, Astoria, OR. Pers. commun., 26 April 2006.