

November 2024 Book Club Notes

Thursday, November 21

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire

By Peter Stark

John Jacob Astor envisioned a grand trading empire circling the globe from a base in the Pacific Northwest. Read about the men (and one woman) he sent west by land and sea to face raging waters, hostile Indians, starvation, disease, betrayal and the threat of British invasion in the War of 1812. **The author will appear via Zoom.**

Below you'll find some information I thought would add to your reading experience. I also photographed the cast of characters from the book especially to help those of you who are reading via audio book or ebook. I apologize that the reproduction isn't so great.

See you on the 21st!

Helen

Meet Peter Stark

Peter Stark is an adventurer and historian. Born in Wisconsin, he grew up in an adventurous and outdoorsy family and graduated from Dartmouth College. After taking a master's in journalism at the University of Wisconsin, and working briefly for *The Missoulian* newspaper in Montana, he set out to write adventure-travel articles about Greenland, Tibet and elsewhere for magazines such as *Outside*, *Smithsonian*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and others. His 1997 article for *Outside*, "Frozen Alive," is considered a classic of the adventure genre and formed the basis for his book *Last Breath: Cautionary Tales from the Limits of Human Endurance*, named Amazon's best outdoors book of 2001. With his wife, choreographer and writer Amy Ragsdale, and their two children, Stark and family lived for a year each in Mozambique and a remote region of Brazil. After taking part in the harrowing "first descent" of Mozambique's 750-kilometer-long Lugenda River by kayak in 2002, Stark decided to pull back from edgy adventure himself and pivot toward exploration history. Based in Missoula, Montana, he now specializes in researching and writing historical accounts of early American explorers in wilderness settings and their contact with Indigenous peoples. His book *Astoria*, a New York Times bestseller in 2014, told the epic story of the first American colony on the West Coast (at the Columbia River's mouth) and was named a PEN USA finalist and made into a two-part play by Portland Center Stage. His *Young Washington* (2018) was named a finalist for the George Washington Book Prize. He has recently completed a book about the struggle for the continent's center between the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh and the frontier governor (and later president) William Henry Harrison. Titled *Gallop Toward the Sun: Tecumseh's and William Henry Harrison's Struggle for the Destiny of a Nation*, it was published by Random House last year.

Video and Audio

Stark talks about writing **Astoria** in an excerpt from his appearance at Powell's Book Store in Portland on Book TV

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aq6JukLAik0&ab_channel=BookTV
(10:00)

Kickass Oregon History Podcast

<https://orhistory.com/archives/4506>
(44:24)

On Overlooked American History

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lulDV6KvXbE&ab_channel=UniversityofMontanaCollegeofBusiness
(28:50)

Concerning History Review

<https://concerninghistory.org/reviews/riveting-and-revealing-peter-starks-astoria/>

More about John Day

<https://www.cityofjohnday.com/community/page/who-was-john-day>

Astoria Today

Oregon Coast Visitors Association

<https://traveloregon.com/places-to-go/cities/astoria/>
<https://www.astoriaoregon.com/>

Astoria Historical Column

<https://astoriacolumn.org/>

Coming Up Next

Thursday, December 19
11 a.m.-12:30

James

By Percival Everett

Raft the Mississippi River with Huck Finn and his enslaved companion, James, who uses his intelligence to outwit the cruel whites they encounter. James is constantly at risk of capture or death but ultimately heroic in this reimagining of Mark Twain's American classic.