



Shameful piece of Portland's past 📺

Northwest Backroads

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Buried beneath the hustle and bustle of Portland's city center is a lesser known city – Portland's underground.



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This forgotten web of tunnels holds the answers to a shameful piece of the Portland's past.

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Michael Jones is determined to bring the answers to light.

The underground is the area where the criminal practice of "shanghaiing" played out on a stage of corruption and greed.

"Shanghaiing" is the term used for the drugging and kidnapping of men who were then sold to sea captains and forced to work for free.

For almost a century, shanghaiing flourished under Portland's skid row waterfront and became a booming business.

To move the 3,000 men through the underground, elaborate systems were developed. Once removed from the world above, the men were put in cells and held until they could be sold.

According to Michael, shanghaiers would remove their victims' shoes and carpet the underground with broken glass to prevent escape.

For Michael Jones, the underground is a constant source of fascination and horror. Excavating the underground has unearthed more than just physical evidence.

"You see shadows of people who aren't there. You hear cries, sometimes you will smell a strong smell of tobacco," he said. "They haunt me in a very good way. They remind me, don't romanticize this, make sure when people leave they realize this is human abuse at its worst."

Brick by brick, Jones is exposing the mysteries of the underworld ensuring the world above never forgets this buried bit of history.

Portland isn't the only place guilty of shanghaiing. San Francisco's Barbary Coast also had a booming business along with Washington's Astoria, Aberdeen and Port Townsend.

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