

Letter from FFCPC President

In January, the Finlandia Foundation Columbia-Pacific Chapter (FFCPC) absorbed the membership of FAHSW (Finnish American Historical Society of the West), and on behalf of our board, I welcome all former FAHSW members to join our organization. FFCPC's mission is to support and nurture Finnish and Finnish-American culture and tradition. FFCPC is one of 56 Chapters in the United States, and is an affiliate of Finlandia Foundation Nation (FFN) founded in 1953 at the residence of Yrjö Paloheimo and his wife, Leonora, in Pasadena, CA.

Our Chapter, which has been serving all of Oregon and Southwestern Washington since 2001, had its beginnings about the same time as FFN. FFCPC became an inaugural chapter of FFN in 1954. We hold our monthly meetings, our annual meeting, and some of our events in the Finnish Room in Cramer Hall at Portland State University. 2017 was a busy year for FFCPC because we organized many events celebrating Finland's 100th Independence Anniversary. You can see our 2017 year of Finland-100 events by going to our website at www.ffcpc.info. Our next event is Vappu on April 28, a Saturday, from 3pm to 5pm on the Fogelbo grounds at Nordia House located on 8800 SW Oleson Road, Portland.

One of our newly elected board members is Andrea Tolonen, who has served as FAHSW President for many years. We have asked her to serve as the Historical Quarterly's Editor, to be on the committee to chart the best course for the future of the Lindgren Cabin, and to oversee former missions of the FAHSW. I hope you take an interest in FFCPC and consider becoming a member and attending some of our events. Email Pirjo Schulbach, our membership chair, at finlandiafoundationcpc@gmail.com if you wish to receive FFCPC emails and if you wish to volunteer for one of our events. Once again, our website is www.ffcpc.info. Like us on <https://www.facebook.com/finlandia.foundation.ffcpc>. The National Finlandia Foundation's website is <http://finlandiafoundation.org/>.

Sincerely,

Greg Jacob
President, FFCPC

Letters To the Editor

Dear Editor:

As you can well imagine, it was a surprise to learn from the FAHSW *Quarterly* (Jan., 2018) about the dissolution of the organization! As members over the years, both in the Portland, Oregon area and from outside the state, it has been our privilege to have known many of the organization's participants, individuals like yourself, who have endeavored to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Finns in the northwest part of the United States. I send a special "Thank you" to everyone who contributed to the Society since its inception on December 6, 1962.

Looking forward to the efforts of the Finlandia Foundation Columbia-Pacific Chapter of Portland, I trust that this succeeding organization will fulfill the FAHSW's mandate, including safeguarding and disseminating the latter's accumulated store of information.

John, B. Reichlein

Editor's Note: Thank you so much for your kind words, John. It was a pleasure to have you as a participating member for many years. I have faith that FFCPC will work towards the continuation of preserving the missions of the Finnish American Historical Society of the West.

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## Board Members Elected

At the Annual Meeting of the Finlandia Foundation Columbia Pacific Chapter (FFCPC) on Saturday, March 10, 2018 held in the Finnish Classroom at Portland State University, membership elected the 2018 Board of Directors.

Candidates voted into office included Dirk Schulbach, Ray Wikman, Paivi Panttila Vargas, Andrea Tolonen, Jukka Perkiömäki, Pete Lee and Larry Vargas. Continuing on as Board members (their terms were not up) include Pirjo Schulbach, Greg Jacob, Minna Lindholm, Elizabeth Newton, Chris Lazarus and Katariina Lehtonen.

Officers were elected. They are: Greg Jacobsen, President, Katariina Lehtonen, Vice President, Pirjo Schulbach, Secretary and Dirk Schulbach, Treasurer.

At the conclusion on the Annual Meeting, the Board members met to discuss the upcoming year.

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Lindgren Cabin

The FFCPC Board voted to accept ownership of the Lindgren Cabin through a Quit Claim Deed with the Oregon State Forestry Department. FFCPC President, Greg Jacob, to sign the necessary documents to confirm ownership.

FFCPC felt that the question of ownership was important to pursue, considering the "not knowing" an obstacle to future endeavors. The FAHSW had record of a Quit Claim Deed, dated July 14, 1964, that transferred the

ownership to the State of Oregon for the cost of \$1. The cabin sits on Clatsop County property. The FAHSW maintained and insured the cabin for many years. So who owned it became the question.

Original owner of the cabin, Erik Lindgren, came from Finland around 1905, building the five-room cabin as a Homestead on state land in the Soapstone Creek area near Hamlet, OR. There were no roads into the area at the time. As the story goes, Erik Lindgren did not own a horse or any type of pack animal when he was building his dream home, so he carried the glass for the windows as well as a cook stove on his back over mountains and creeks from Seaside thirty miles away.

Erik and his wife, Karoliina, along with two children lived in the cabin until the early 1940's. Once the house became vacant, vandals and hunters built fires in the living room (evidence of such fires can be seen today) and they tore down the barn that was also on the property, most likely for firewood.

Realizing the historical value of the cabin with its uniquely Finnish architecture, the cabin was saved. With the help of the Finnish Brotherhood and Kaleva Lodges, Clatsop County and the Finnish-American Historical Society of the West the Lindgren Cabin was dismantled, eventually being reassembled at its present day location at Cullaby Lake in 1970.

An intended museum was created by the FAHSW. In recent years the problem of obtaining volunteers to host the cabin on summer weekends became increasingly more difficult for the organization.

The Lindgren Cabin is under the watchdog Lindgren Cabin committee of the FFCPC, spearheaded by Committee Chair Elizabeth Newton.

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Some get wiser as they  
get older. Some just get  
old.

--Finnish Proverb  
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FINN TOWN

By Inez Stafford Hanson

The following article appeared in the Clatsop County Historical Society publication CUMTUX, Vol. 17, No 1, Winter 1997. This article was written about five years previously, and provided by the Seaside Museum on the suggestion of the author, now deceased. We reprint it here with thanks, for permission to make it available for the enjoyment of our members.

Many people are surprised to hear that Seaside, Oregon, once had a small Finnish settlement known as Finn Town. It was in an area south of what is now Avenue F and east of the present Roosevelt Drive. There were some fifteen or twenty families living there.

The settlement seemingly started in the late 1800's or around the turn of the century, and during those years many Finns and Scandinavians came to Clatsop County. Many settled in Astoria and along the Columbia (River), a few out at Hamlet, and a little larger group in Seaside. There was work,

as many people were coming to the beach for summer vacations. There was logging in the woods and a sawmill was operating on the Necanicum just south of avenue G. Across Main street (South Holliday now) and a little to the north there was a box factory which extended from the street back toward the railroad and a spur from the rail line came in that far. The boxes were shipped out by freight. There was commercial clam-digging—the clams not sold in Seaside being shipped to Portland—also by rail. Across the Wahanna, there was some farming.

In what was considered Finn Town proper, there were the following families: Hensala, Alto, Salmeen, Mannila, Salvon, Kari, Helstrom, Niemi, Hendrickson, Wahlman and Honkanen. Across the Wahanna there were the Sundquist, Justin, Ostman, Rautio, Palmrose, Lassila and Lampi families. Earlier, the Silvers and Altos had lived there. The ones living behind the Wahanna were farming, to a large extent, dairying or raising peas and lettuce. Both Mr. Hensala and Mr. Honkanen had small tracts of land behind the river also, and had a few cows. Mr. Honkanen even built his own small foot bridge across one on the sloughs, and Ben Olson, who lived near, had built a bridge for horse and wagon across the main river at Avenue G.

All of the Finns were hard workers, self-reliant and very proud people. They had the reputation of being very reliable and always paying their bills. In fact, many years later, Milton Swenson, agent for the *Astorian* (newspaper), was looking for a paper boy. He approached the Henry Hansons to see if their son, David, would be

allowed to take the job. The Hansons lived near the north end of the Wahanna Road and David, who was only nine, would have to ride his bicycle quite a few miles every night to do it. Milton promised that, if David might take the route, he would be given the best one in town. It was Finn Town, and it proved to be just that—the best.

Eino Niemi remembers his childhood there. His parents had come to America before he was born, settling first in the Midwest. They became homesick and went back to Finland, but soon decided to try again, and this time they would come so far west that they could not easily go back. They came as far as they could and settled in Seaside. Eino's father died when Eino was small. There were six children in the family and their mother was their only means of support. As most women did in those years, she began to do the things she know best. She cooked, washed and ironed, did housework for other families, and the Niemi family got along. Seaside had a dance hall at the time which was bringing in bands of various sizes from various places. For one summer a band from Portland played and one of the musicians hired Mrs. Niemi to launder his shirts. The old flat-irons, in use in those days, had to be heated on the stove, and she got one too hot. She burned one of the shirts. As the musicians always wore white shirts and had to have a clean one every night, there was quite a pile to launder. Mrs. Niemi put the scorched one on the top of the pile, and when the man came, she immediately showed it to him, offering to pay for it. He took a look and refused, saying that he had lots

of shirts and would never miss that one. He paid her for her work.

The early years were hard ones for the Finns, as well as for everyone else in Seaside. In 1908 the bank failed, the mill on the Necanicum closed and men were out of work. They did what they could. E. T. Stafford, although not Finnish, was in the same situation as they were. He spent all one year digging clams and shipping them to Portland. He brought home wood from the beach which they burned in both their stoves, succeeding in one year to burn out the grates in the cook stove from the salt in the driftwood off the beach. For a time, Otto Owen was hired as a watchman for the mill, but then it burned. The box factory was used as a wood-storage building by a man named Scott who had gone into the fuel business. He also kept the horses and wagons there. A little later that building also burned, making such a hot fire that houses a block or more away had to be hosed down to keep them from being scorched. There had been a dry kiln north of the mill and steam had been piped there from the mill. But, that too was abandoned. It was said later, that even some electricity was produced at that mill and used in town. But that did not last long.

Seaside had started with inland visitors wanting to enjoy the coast, and so it continued through the bad years as well as the good. There was much hard work, but there was social life as well. For fun, various things were happening on Bridge Street (now Broadway). A small theater was built, there was a skating rink, and soon Oates Natatorium went up out by the Board Walk (now the Prom). The

town had two churches, the Catholic and the Methodist. At first, Finnish ministers came from Astoria to conduct services in people's homes. Later the Finnish children went to Sunday School in churches of the community.

Finn Town had three saunas and they were public, but one had to pay to use them. The fire boxes had sheet iron tops upon which large rocks were heated. The fuel was wood. When the stones were hot enough, water was thrown over them to produce the steam, and the bathers switched themselves before they dried and dressed. Such baths were very invigorating. The Finns beat themselves with bundles of small branches of the birch tree to promote circulation and sweating. These were known as *vasta*. The presence of birch trees out on old homesteads often means that the homesteaders were Finnish.

Also in Finn Town they had their own social hall and they used it for various gatherings. There were dances on Saturday nights and Eino especially remembered that his mother could really dance. It was customary in those years for whole families to go to all the social affairs, so the little ones enjoyed watching until they fell asleep, at which time they were "bedded down" in coats or blankets until the older family members were ready to go home. The Finnish hall was about where Avenue F ends now, and Eino remembers going there often.

One occasion was a Christmas Eve party to which everyone went. It was customary then to have a Santa arrive at community parties, bringing oranges, candy and gifts which parents had provided. That could

really cause childhood heartaches, as some parents could not provide, and Mrs. Niemi was one who couldn't. She was supporting her children but didn't have any extra money, and that night Eino sadly wondered why Santa didn't like him when he liked the others. That time there had been no gift for Eino. That custom was practiced for a time in the churches but soon stopped as the parents saw the unhappiness it could cause.

As the years went by, more of the property in the area was purchased by other residents, and Finn Town as a unit began to dissolve. The young grew up, moved out into other sections of the community, or moved away altogether. The older members died. However, there are still families living in the vicinity and all are proud of their Finnish ancestry and of what they still feel is Finn Town.

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### ***Volunteers Needed for the Lindgren Cabin***

Looking for a relaxing weekend amidst the trees, listening to the sounds of Cullaby Lake, while meeting people from all over the (possibly) world? The chance is yours! Just sign up to play host for a Saturday or Sunday or the whole weekend at the Lindgren Cabin at Cullaby Lake in Clatsop County (near Gearhart, OR).

Elizabeth Newton is the person to contact. Simply email Elizabeth at [lizsbreads@gmail.com](mailto:lizsbreads@gmail.com). She'll set you up with a day(s) that will fit perfectly into your summer schedule.

You won't want to miss the chance to host the cabin. It's a chance to go back to a simpler time,

pointing out the amazing work done by a man and his axe, or show visitors the savu (smoke) sauna and smoke house also on the property.

While we can't guarantee who will come visit the cabin on your special day or weekend, one thing that's for certain, it's a wonderful experience and a peaceful way to help the world by volunteering.

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VAPPU & MAY DAY

Finns and Swedes in Scandinavia and in the USA celebrate *Vappu* (Finnish) or *Valborg* (Swedish) on May Day Eve by lighting bonfires, eating, drinking and singing song with friends and family.

The holiday is followed by another holiday, the First of May, when students gather to graduate in their white graduation caps.

The name *Vappu* comes from the feast day of an 8th century catholic saint, named Walburga. Saint Walburga became known as the protector against witchcraft and sorcery. May 1st happens to coincide with *Walpurgisnacht* (German) when it was believed to be a night of witch revelry during the Middle Ages.

The bonfire tradition was perhaps began to scare off witches or predators such as bears and wolves in preparation of the grazing season, a time when farm animals were let out of the barn after a long winter. Whatever the reason, Finns love to celebrate around a bonfire no matter their time in history.

You're invited to FFCPC's **Vappu celebration** on Saturday, **April 28, 2018, from 3pm to 5pm at Fogelbo at Nordia House, 8800 SW Oleson Rd, Portland, Oregon** for complimentary hot dogs, doughnuts, sima, and beverages.