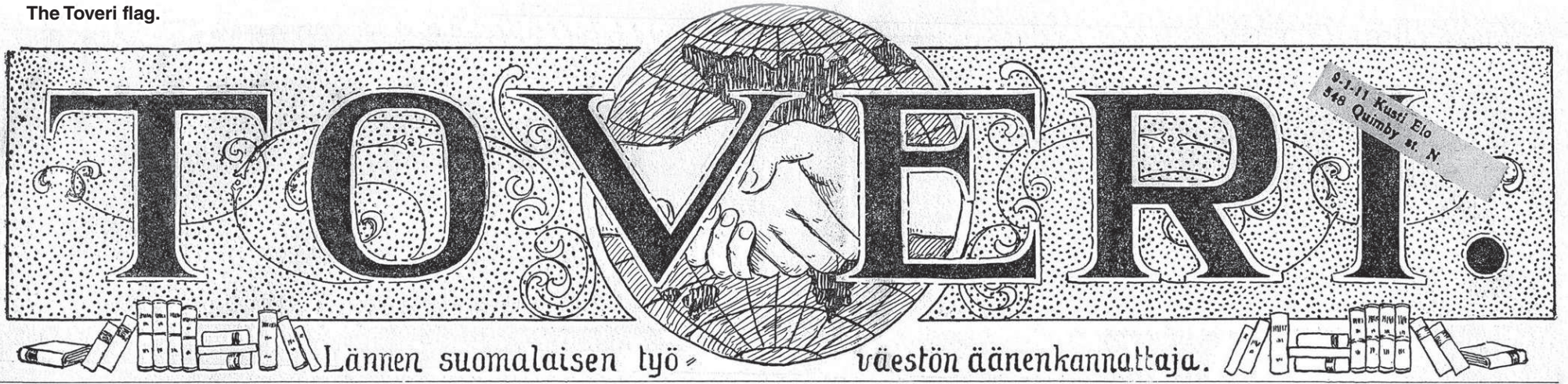


Clatsop County Historical Society  
The Toveri flag.



N:o 64

MAANANTAINA 5 P. KESÄKUU TA — MONDAY JUNE 5th.

1911 — NELJÄS VUOSIK

# ASTORIA WAS A HOTBED OF FINNISH NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING

## Why were there so many?

Astoria is like an archaeological dig. “If you know what you’re looking at, there is history on every street corner of Astoria,” said historian Chet Orloff.

On a wall in our building is a front page of *Toveri*, a Finnish-language newspaper published here (1907-1930). *Toveri*'s first offices were on Duane and 10th streets, close to *The Astorian*'s office, then on Commercial Street.

Imagine my surprise when I realized that *Toveri* was only one of Astoria's Finnish-language papers. Spanning an era from 1891 to 1951, 10 Finnish language newspapers were published in Astoria (see the sidebar on this page).



Steve Forrester

This number is taken from the archive of Finlandia University. Apparently there were more. Clatsop County Historical Society Archivist Liisa Penner says that the Immigration Research Center lists monthly and annual Finnish language periodicals that were published in Astoria.

This proliferation of Finnish papers emerges in Penner's sometimes humorous and fascinating article “A Playground of Spies: The Strange Case of T.T. Pusa/Johnstone,” published in the Spring issue of *Cumtux*, the quarterly of the Clatsop County Historical Society.

Penner describes the run-up to America's entry into World War I, when the Bureau of Investigation — predecessor of the FBI — tracked German spies operating in this country. Astoria and its Finnish culture became a setting for this game.

The spy in this case was editor of the *Astoria Sanomat* in 1915. T.T. Pusa was a man of more than one name and a set of disguises. In 1917 the *Astoria Daily Budget* reported that Norway had charged Pusa with being a German spy and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

Beyond the story of the fascinating Mr. Pusa, I am amazed at the amount of Finnish-language journalism pouring out of Astoria over six decades. Some of these Finnish papers may have been printed on the presses of our company's predecessor newspapers.

The archive from which I have gathered the names of the Astoria newspapers is at Finlandia University (formerly Suomi College) in Hancock, Michigan. That repository contains several Finnish papers published in other states as well. The astonishing number of these papers begs a question. Why so many?

The archivist of the Finlandia University Library, Joanna Chopp, offers this response. “There have been so many different groups in Finnish culture — church, political and temperance — that had a means of communications. Combine that with the Finnish emphasis on education and literacy” and that produces this national proliferation of newspapers.

By contrast, the number of German language newspapers that were published in America is much smaller.

Astoria's Finnish newspapers bred several colorful characters. Maria Raunio was an editor of Astoria's *Toveritar*. Describing Raunio's context Penner cites, “Paul George Hummasti in his book *Finnish Radicals in Astoria*,

## FINNISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED IN ASTORIA, 1897-1951

*Astorian Sanomat* 1915-1919

*Ilmoittaja* 1920

*Lännen Kaiku* 1919-1920

*Lännen Suometar* 1922-1946

*Lännen Uutiset* 1905-1951

*Lännetar* 1891

*Lännetar* 1897-1904

*Toveri* 1907-1930

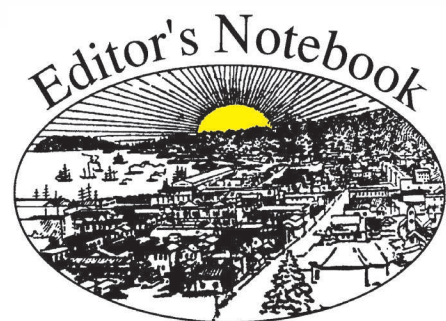
*Toveritar* 1911-1930

*Tyynenmeren Sanomat* 1901-1902

Source: Finlandia University Archives



Maria Raunio is pictured in this photo from “Muisto-albumi” written by Helmi Mattson in 1965 and published by the Northwest Finnish Historical Society, Kelso, Wash.



*Oregon 1904-1940* writes: “There were those within the Finnish-American socialist movement, however, who felt that the education of women, as that of the working class generally, could be achieved most effectively through a newspaper. Among these was a group of women from Astoria who, in April, 1911, were able to persuade (not without opposition) the stockholders of the *Toveri* to authorize the publication of a separate women's newspaper when (and if) they had collected pledges for 3,000 subscriptions. By July this number was reached, to the credit mainly of women in the Western states, and on July 11, the first issue of the new paper, the *Toveritar* (Women Comrade) was published.”

Raunio is buried in Greenwood Cemetery. While she was a Social Democrat in life, Raunio was claimed by Communists in death. “She died in 1911, in mysterious circumstances,” says Penner. “She died prior to the Russian Revolution.” But *Cumtux* in 2007 reported that above Raunio's name on a black marble gravestone is a “barely discernible hammer and sickle within a star.”



Clatsop County Historical Society  
The Toveri building housing the newspaper on the west side of Seventh Street between Bond and Commercial across from the Post Office.



Clatsop County Historical Society  
The Toveri office with the workers out front dates to 1913 and was printed in the “*Toveri Kymmenvuotias 1907-1917*,” and also a 10-year history of the Finnish socialist Toveri in Astoria, published in 1917.

**Beyond the 10 papers listed in Finlandia University's archive, monthly and annual Finnish periodicals also were published in Astoria.**

The socialist strain of Finnish politics has been a sensitive topic in our county. After publishing the 1995 series “The Finnish Socialists of Clatsop County” Penner had a confrontational encounter. “A woman said to me: ‘I had two people (in my family) mentioned (in the series). I don't want the family name listed.’ “This was in 1995,” notes Penner, “and the reference was to her family in 1914.” The Finnish Civil War of 1918 pitted

White Finns (landed people and the church) against Red Finns (socialists). Describing how this influenced culture here, Penner said: “If you were red and your neighbor was white, you didn't talk, and your kids didn't talk to each other.”

And to bolster their political convictions, they had plenty of locally produced Finnish journalism to read.

—S.A.F.



THE  
DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

STEPHEN A. FORRESTER, Editor & Publisher • LAURA SELLERS, Managing Editor  
BETTY SMITH, Advertising Manager • CARL EARL, Systems Manager  
JOHN D. BRUIJN, Production Manager • DEBRA BLOOM, Business Manager  
HEATHER RAMSDELL, Circulation Manager