

PRESERVING LOCAL HERITAGE

THE BIGGEST LODGE OF ITS KIND ON THE WEST COAST, ASTORIA'S FINNISH BROTHERHOOD WORKS TO KEEP HISTORY ALIVE

By HEATHER DOUGLAS

2017 marks the 100-year anniversary of Finland's independence. This year, Astoria's own little piece of Finland in Uniontown, Suomi Hall, will be celebrating a heritage that extends back 131 years.

Originally built up the hill from its current location in 1886, part of the original Suomi Hall building was moved to its permanent location at 244 W. Marine Drive in 1910, where a new first floor was quickly constructed at street level and the original building hoisted up to create the second story. The second floor of Suomi Hall has been home to The United Finnish Kaleva Brothers and Sisters Astoria Lodge No. 2 for the past 100 years.

Informally called "The Finnish Brotherhood" by locals, Astoria's Lodge No. 2 is fueled by its mission to promote and preserve Finnish heritage. The organization first served as a sanctuary in difficult times when Finns flocked to Astoria in the late 1800s after their home country experienced horrible famine and economic collapse. They wanted a place to call home in a new and unfamiliar land — at the lodge, Finnish immigrants could speak their native tongue with each other as well as learn English as a second language. In its heyday in the late 1800s, the lodge boasted over 1,000 members and had its own school, wrestling team, track and field team, cemetery in Svensen and even provided burial services for members without family or means.

Since the beginning, The Finnish Brotherhood of Astoria developed a strong enough root base to outlast similar collapsed organizations in notable locales such as Portland and Berkeley, California.

"In fact, the organization — which welcomes sisters as well — is the biggest lodge of its kind on the West Coast with over 200 members ranging in ages from 18 to 100," said Trudy Enke, the lodge's president. "Not necessarily our oldest in age, but one of our longest



PHOTO BY DANNY MILLER

Trudy Enke, President of the Astoria Finnish Brotherhood, left, introduces her sister Terry Arnall, right, as a guest speaker giving a presentation on the art of Carl Larsson on Sunday, Jan. 8 at Suomi Hall in Astoria. Arnall wore an authentic costume used at the museum in the Carl Larsson House.



PHOTO BY DANNY MILLER

Suomi Hall is home of the Astoria Finnish Brotherhood.

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PHOTO BY DANNY MILLER

Finnish Brotherhood members gather for a meal before an afternoon meeting Jan. 8.

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