

Penner: Has edited over 100 Cumtux magazine issues

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Penner Research Center and Archives. The society has raised over \$50,000 for new lighting, space for research, computer work stations and digital archiving.

Getting into research

Penner was born in Iisalmi, Finland, to Finnish-American parents who later immigrated to the United States. She grew up in Astoria and graduated from Astoria High School in 1958. She went on to receive a master’s degree in anthropology from the University of Oregon.

After coming back to Astoria, she took an art class at Clatsop Community College from a professor who worked at the historical society. The professor asked her to volunteer at the Flavel House and help transcribe a journal from an Astorian socialite from the 1860s.

At the same time, Penner’s father gave her a partially complete family history, which spurred her to do research at the Astoria Library, where she met director Bruce Berney, who suggested she join the genealogy society that was forming. She joined and led a committee that recorded information about local cemeteries.

“Through the whole process I was learning about all the materials that are available for doing research and I wanted to learn more about how to do research,” Penner said.

She started working with Jim Dennon, a member of the genealogy society and editor of Cumtux.

When Dennon died, Penner and a friend took over the magazine, which focuses on local history. Penner, who writes much of the content, has produced over 100

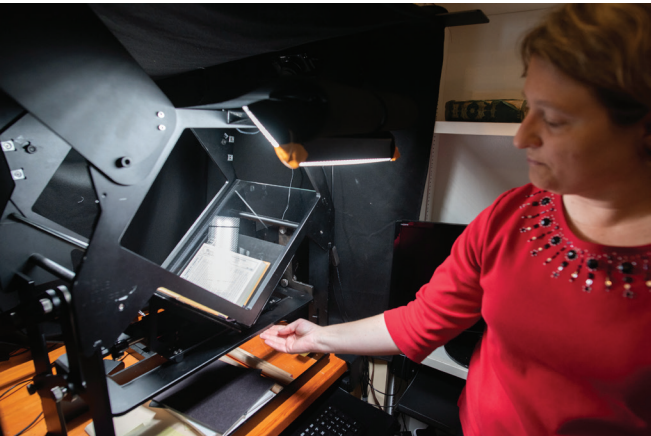


Liisa Penner stands in the archives room where she has worked for over 34 years.

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian



The historical society archives many different types of files, like the Astoria police ledgers from the turn of the 20th century.



Julie Burpee, the digital archivist for the Clatsop County Historical Society, scans a book to digitize at the heritage museum.

issues. The magazine has an upcoming story about the history of different stores that were once in Alderbrook. The word Cumtux is Chinook for “to know or to learn.”

“There are so many different kinds of experiences that people have and I had very little experiences in

my life, so I’d much rather learn about what other people have done,” Penner said. “I think people like to read names that are familiar to them.”

Penner remembers the first issue she worked on.

“I’d be awake for like two nights just trying to get it done,” she said.

She and her friend rewrote every sentence a professional writer had submitted to the magazine when they first started. He was mad, she laughed. They put the story back together as it was submitted.

Projects

Penner has worked on

diverse stories of local lore, from copying out names from police records of people who were arrested repeatedly for gambling to copying judgment rolls to investigating the history of homes. The historical soci-

Dorms: Neighbors want protected view

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Just east of the project is 17th Place, a cul-de-sac rezoned from industrial to residential about 15 years ago. Neighbors there and to the south asked that Pacific Seafood lower a required landscaping buffer to protect their views of the Columbia River. They asked that the company use a gate behind the dorms and build a walkway over a ditch for direct access to the Warrenton Waterfront Trail and discourage workers from using

an access from 17th Place. Michael Robinson, an attorney for Pacific Seafood, said the company is willing to come back for a variance to lower the landscaping buffer. The company could consider direct access to the waterfront trail, but blocking access on a public street like 17th Place is not permissible, he said. “There’s really no evidence that this is going to be a problem for folks,” Robinson said. “If you think about it, this is a place for folks

to eat and sleep after they work, and there’s simply no radical reason to expect that folks are going to to anything other than that.” Randy Stemper, a developer building the 37-unit Skipanon View Apartments near Pacific Seafood’s Warrenton plant, said he reached out to the company about leasing the units but had been rebuffed. Bornstein Seafoods recently purchased a nearby apartment complex, marketing vacant units to employees. Neighbors wondered

why Pacific Seafood had not taken Stemper up on the offer for housing within walking distance of its plant and pointed to the dorms as an example of the company being cheap. Ann Marie Gramson, a neighbor, specifically called out Frank Dulcich, the president and CEO of Pacific Seafood. “He wants to go the ‘el cheapo’ route, the cheapest he can,” she said. “So this is what we’re going to end up with. You’re going to have men who are living in sub-standard housing.”

Spur: Code changes will add to housing costs

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the vote, he took the stand as a public commenter to question City Attorney Spencer Parsons about how the overlay zone would interact with the previous zone change by the City Commission to commercial mixed-use. Parsons said an overlay zone provides more flexibility within the city’s development rules.

Astoria has dealt with several neighborhood overlay zones as part of the Riverfront Vision Plan guiding development along the Columbia River. But the concept is newer to Warrenton, which has overlay zones guiding development in areas like flood plains.

Cronin has struggled to make planning commissioners understand the purpose of an overlay zone. He has argued that they encourage collaboration between property owners and a forward-thinking approach to preventing future traffic issues that is cheaper than costly infrastructure improvements. Planning commissioners have argued Cronin’s proposal does nothing to directly address traffic congestion.

At the same meeting, planning commissioners approved recommending

housing code amendments to further diversify the city’s housing stock, but rejected Cronin’s recommendation to require accessory dwellings in subdivisions of 20 or more houses. Commissioners argued the requirement adds to the cost of housing. Cronin argued that the requirement, similar to one passed in Astoria, has had little impact there and would only require the structural framework for a future dwell-

ing unit, without a requirement to build it out into a dwelling. Commissioners also rejected Cronin’s recommendation to ban T1-11 plywood siding as unsuitable for the local environment. Cronin has argued that builders are already moving away from the siding, which has been a factor in many of the city’s derelict properties. Commissioner Tommy Smith, owner of Main Street Market, argued that banning

a certain siding is like banning plastic bags — the market will eventually decide what’s best. The City Commission will ultimately decide whether to approve or deny the Spur 104 overlay and housing code amendments. Cronin said he already has an application from developer Stan Johnson to build apartments in the Spur 104 area and another from real estate agent Dorrie Caruana for townhouses.

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