

# Benn's Bulletin

## Winter 2020



### ABERDEEN'S FINN HISTORY

By Roy Vataja

Aberdeen was literally no more than a raw clearing when, according to the 1880 census, an unmarried ship's carpenter in his mid-thirties named A. Rowrick became the first Finnish-born resident. Exactly when he arrived and what became of him is unknown, but he was the first of a flood of immigrants that would help form the city.

The Finnish men, highly regarded for their strong backs and that unique stubbornness called "sisu", readily found employment in the woods, lumber mills and docks while the women were held in great esteem for their cleanliness & honesty, and were prized as domestic help. The newcomers applied their old world knowledge to the fishing and logging industries and were instrumental in the development & growth of the cranberry industry.

The greatest Finnish influx was seen at the turn of the 20th century when a profusion of families arrived, settling mostly in East and South Aberdeen. Like most immigrant groups, the

Aberdeen Finns were clannish and after struggling with language barriers through the workday, could speak freely once they were among their own (and preferably in a sauna). Whether driven by wanderlust, deprivation or poverty, they came: and the lodge filled a much-needed role providing charity and familiarity to their newly arrived countrymen.



ABERDEENIN MAJAN TALO

One evening in September of 1903 a committee of Finnish men met at the home of John Autio, a longshoreman who lived in East Aberdeen. They discussed the necessity of health benefits to support their compatriots and the need for a lodge where they could meet and converse in their mother tongue. It was agreed that the group contact the United Finnish Kaleva Brothers of the

World Lodge headquarters in Astoria in order to establish a lodge in Aberdeen.

On October 27, 1903 the Aberdeen contingent was granted its Brotherhood charter and the first 17 members sworn in. This all came at a critical time for the future of their adopted home. Only eleven days earlier a massive fire had carved through seven blocks of wooden storefronts, leaving Aberdeen's central business district a blackened landscape of smoldering ashes and debris. The lodge and a new city would grow together.

In 1909, 22 Finnish women formed "Onnen Ystävyys" (Fortune's Friendship) as a counterpart to the men's lodge. No other charitable organization in the United States gave larger sick (\$5.00 to \$9.00 per week) or death (\$80.00) benefits while charging members only 50 cents per month in dues. Through fund-raising events such as dances,

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**History Videos**

The Friends have plans for a series of videos made to help teachers keep Aberdeen history alive in our schools and assist with their online learning curriculum. We have notified 13 School Districts in Grays Harbor of it's availability along with suggested student activities. Response so far has been great. We hope the video topics will also be interesting to everyone in the community.

The first production in our series of "A Minute in Aberdeen History" is complete and on YouTube. We feature Jim Daly, an Aberdeen Veteran, showing all Aberdeen's Veterans Monuments and Memorials, as well as, giving some history on them.



If

you are interested, you can easily find the video by Googling "Aberdeen Veterans Monuments and Memorials" or go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XawXyW7PZKg>

Our committee is already hard at work on research and design of other videos to add in the near future. We welcome any volunteer interested in helping with our project. Just call our office 360-533-1976 or email us at: [friends98520@gmail.com](mailto:friends98520@gmail.com).

### Major Makarenko

*A Voices of Grays Harbor interviewee*

*mentioned how important taking riding lessons from "The Major" had been in their youth. That prompted some research. Much of what follows is from a Grays Harbor Talks article.*

Diomed Sergeivich Makarenko was a major in the light cavalry under Czar Nicholas II before he fled Russia during the communist takeover. Eventually, the Major made his way to Grays Harbor and in 1931 opened the Cohasset Riding School in Cosmopolis which he operated until his death in 1968. He taught more than 3,000 students from The Harbor area to ride. Some will remember the Major's prodding them to "work hard at school and stay out of trouble." Many credit him with their getting through school and keeping away from drugs. Despite a youth of leisure among the Russian nobility, the Major was not only notably warm-hearted, he was an extremely hard worker. He cleared and fenced the land, hauled fertilizer for the pastures and the polo field, and often would saddle horses for novice riders. Only his noble bearing on his horse disclosed his origins.

The Major followed the Riding School, world famous for the Lipizzaner stallions. Makarenko Park was donated to the city in 1991 by Olivetta

Faulkner who specified that the park be named the Major D.S. Makarenko Memorial Park. Today, the park's most popular feature is the walking trails. The park is also enjoyed by youth soccer for practices and matches. It also hosts local cross-country meets. It includes a community garden. Makarenko Park is in Cosmopolis. From Highway 101, turn onto "G" Street for about 5 blocks to Stop . Turn left at Altenau Road. Go up the hill. You'll pass a cemetery at crest of hill. Two blocks later - Makarenko Park sign at "Paisley Creek" sign. Turn right onto Stanford Drive. It dead-ends into Makarenko Park.

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### National Award

**Kat Bryant, Aberdeen World Reporter, earned a national VFW writing award. At the November 11<sup>th</sup> VFW Veterans Day ceremony, Kat received recognition for her article on the Friends of the Aberdeen Museum Veterans History Suitcase.**

**The Friends are happy to see her hard work, enthusiasm for the project and talents recognized. We also appreciate the publicity she gave our project.**

### Congratulations Kat!

Aberdeen Finns  
Cont'd from Page 1

plays and keno, the industrious Sisterhood built a sizable

treasury and created good will among the people of the city. The Finnish language play-productions were wildly popular in the teens and twenties and added greatly to the coffers.

The two lodges had often united, but met with one major obstacle: the men had heard rumors that the women would ban smoking during meetings. Assured that their fears were groundless, they voted 29 to 5 to allow the unification of the two groups and so on February 3, 1915 United Finnish Kaleva Brothers and Sisters Lodge Number 9 was created. To this union the women brought \$817.07 and a new piano, and several women were promptly elected as officers in the new organization and became influential forces in the united lodge. A later attempt to ban smoking during meetings was voted down.

Following the Soviet invasion of Finland in World War Two, the Aberdeen lodge raised substantial amounts for the Finnish Red Cross and to aid war orphans in the old country. They also rented the hall free of charge to anyone in the community, provided that the proceeds went entirely to Finnish relief.

Beginning in 1904, the lodge met at the Randall Street hall. Originally built by the Temperance Finns in 1902, the Finnish Brotherhood rented the hall before purchasing it outright in 1911. The

U.F.K.B.& S. maintained the building for the next 60 years. When membership began to decline and upkeep became too expensive, the hall was sold to the Sons of Norway in 1972.

U.F.K.B.& S. Lodge #9 is still active and continues to meet on the third Wednesday of every month.

### Thank You's for 2020

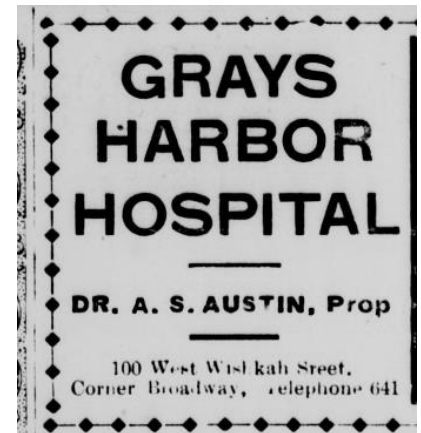
- \* All those who loaned items for First Friday displays!
- \* VFW & Jim Daly
- \* Grays Harbor Community Fund
- \* Jones Photo Collection & Terri Middleton
- \* Grays Harbor Video Productions
- \* Polson Museum & John Larson
- \* Daily World & Kat Bryant
- \* John Barclay

**Trivia**  
**Who was noted local historian, swim coach & Red Cross swim instructor for over 50 years?**

### Grays Harbor Hospital

Once upon a time in the early

1900's, Grays Harbor Hospital was one man. He lived in the hospital!



In 1906 his brother, Dr. O. R. Austin joined him. By 1908 there were three Dr's with new locations.

Dec 12, 1908  
 Aberdeen Herald

#### CLASSIFIED PHYSICIANS.

- DR. C. T. SMITH,**  
 OSTEOPATH, Rooms 7-8,  
 Postoffice block.  
**DR. O. R. AUSTIN,** ROOMS 19-20, Doris 131k., over Dean's Tea Store  
**DR. A. S. AUSTIN,** HAYES & HAYES Bank bldg., over Paine's drug store. Residence Grays Harbor Hospital

Dr. Austin's carriage has now been restored and can be seen at Montesano's Running Anvil Carriage House.

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#### Did You Know?

The large bell now in the Aberdeen Museum collection was first mounted in a the 1<sup>st</sup>



Congregational Church tower at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> & H. Church history said it was installed in December 1890 & first rung on January 1, 1891.



However, that doesn't mesh with this article -

Aberdeen Herald  
October 23, 1890

The ladies of the Congregational church have no notion of resting upon their laurels and although the handsome church **with its sonorous bell** are still unfamiliar in their newness, the ladies are already deep in their plans, for the fair which is to defray the expenses of carpeting and fitting up their church comfortably for use. The fair is to be held a short time before, Christmas, and those in search of pretty gifts will find

here a, double opportunity of proving the blessedness of giving.

Anyone have more information on this history mystery?"

The work of bringing the collection together at the warehouse on the Port Dock continues. Recently this included the wonderful old Spar Cafe neon sign. Additions to the collection continue to be accepted through the City of Aberdeen Parks Dept.



### Trivia

Who was noted local historian, swim coach & Red Cross swim instructor for over 50 years?

John (Bus) Fairbairn

His is recognized in the Aberdeen Bobcat & Washington State Coaches Halls of Fame

### Aberdeen Herald 1890 To Destroy Stumps.

1. Bore a hole 1 inch in diameter, 18 inches deep, into the center of the stump, and put in one ounce of saltpeter, filling up with water and plugging up the hole. This should be done in the fall. In the spring; the plug is to be taken out, a half a gill of kerosene poured, into the hole and set on fire. It will burn out the stump to the farthestest root.
2. In the fall bore a hole 1 inch in diameter, 10 inches deep, into the center of the stump, and put in a half pound of vitriol and plug very tight. In the spring the whole stump and roots through all their ramification will-be so rotted as to be easily removed. —Scientific American

### Lost Contacts

The Friends have lost contact with a few long term members and some new subscribers whose email we just can't decipher. If you have information postal or email addresses, please call the office or reply to this email. Beverly Boyd, Ted Bruener, Mary Conner, Raea Hillebrant, Mike & Arlene O'Conner

Donation Received in Memory of  
Charlene James

Aberdeen Museum of  
History