

Story of Oregon's Lindgren Cabin

**By Greg Jacob, President
Finlandia Foundation Columbia-Pacific Chapter**

On April 19, 2018 ownership of the Lindgren Cabin passed into the hands of Finlandia Foundation Columbia-Pacific Chapter. Greg Jacob, President of FFPCPC, signed papers in the presence of Patty Kate, Notary Public for Oregon, and Paul Koreiva, Oregon Department of Forestry, in Salem, Oregon. Paul said, "It is the Agency's good fortune to join up with FFPCPC and Clatsop County Parks Program. Thank you all for your stewardship of a very significant example of Oregon's history." It will be FFPCPC's responsibility to maintain this historic cabin and to open the cabin grounds to visitors during the weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The builder of the 40-foot long, 24-foot wide cabin was Erik Lindgren, a Swedish Finn. He was born in 1861 near Tammela in southwest Finland where he learned the trade of building log houses. At the age of 40 he emigrated from Finland to the United States, and by 1907 he found land on Soapstone Creek in the Hamlet area of Clatsop County, in northwest Oregon. With the help of a neighbor, William Merilä, he finished the construction of the ax-hewn home in the 1920's. Made out of Oregon red cedar, the five-room cabin was put together with scarcely a nail. Erik fishtailed the corner planks, cut each outside wall plank at a cant to keep out the rain, erected 42-foot eave timbers gouged out for rain runoff, and used wooden dowels to hold together the long and wide wall planks. He also built a plank-walled sauna and a barn.

Erik's wife, Johanna Karolina, was born in 1857 in southwest Finland. Their son, Emil, was born in Turku. They also had a daughter, Anna, who was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts in 1902. Leaving his family in Fitchburg, Erik traveled to Astoria, worked in a sawmill in order to have a home ready for his family. Even though the Lindgren family lived in the cedar home beginning in 1928, for whatever reason, Erik didn't obtain title to the cabin until 1934.

People who knew Erik said he was much like a character out of *The Kalevala*. He was a forest singing bard with a full beard. He was also an entertaining host, and friends in the Hamlet area frequently were the Lindgren's house guests. The son, Emil, eventually settled in Deep River as a logger, and the daughter, Anna, moved to New Port Richey, Florida. Both the son and daughter were unaware that their father was not paying property taxes on the Soapstone property, and in 1941 the property was foreclosed by Clatsop County. Perhaps Erik was too caught up in the Kalevala way of life to worry about taxes. It wasn't long before people were attracted to the abandoned Lindgren Cabin. A new logging road made it easier for people to use the property as a picnic area. Furthermore, the area also attracted hunters, anglers, and wanderers. One individual squatted in the home and chopped up the barn's cedar slabs into firewood. In 1955 the property was transferred from Clatsop County to the Board of Forestry.

It is remarkable that the Lindgren cabin survives today, and it does in good part thanks to Professor Charles Gillman Davis, Portland State University, who discovered the well-preserved ax fashioned home in 1966. What impressed Davis was the fact that it was built without a stick of sawmill lumber. He told his students and fellow architects about the cabin, and he wisely spoke of his discovery to The Columbia Press in Astoria. Two years later there was an informal agreement between the Oregon Department of Forestry and Clatsop County to relocate the cabin to Cullaby Lake Park. Hiram Johnson, a Clatsop County Commissioner, organized a crew to save this historic building. The crew took apart the home and numbered all the boards and planks. For a year the parts were stored in a warehouse in Seaside before members of the Astoria Finnish Brotherhood (Lodge #2) reassembled the structure at its current location at Cullaby Lake. By 1973 the historic Lindgren Cabin was open for public viewing. The Finnish-American Historical Society of the West cared for the cabin until Finlandia Foundation Columbia-Pacific Chapter took upon that responsibility beginning in 2018.