

Archival Resources Relating To Finnish Canadians

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Migration studies have become a *growth industry* of the international academic community. Both *donor* and *host* countries, particularly in the last decade, have belatedly recognized the tremendous significance of the bonding process of the emigration-immigration phenomenon (especially vis-à-vis North America) as well as the impact upon the national life of those countries directly affected by this mass movement of people over the last century. Perhaps a glib description of migration studies could well be “genealogical research on an international scale”, though this might offend the *amour propre* sensitivities of those social scientists who are enamoured with shiny, new computer hardware and reams of statistical data.² Nevertheless, *donor* and *host* have been drawn together by literal blood-ties created from migrations wherein the interests of both have become intertwined and are now being expressed in international migration studies. In this respect, the multicultural origins of the Canadian people have naturally begun to draw attention of scholars from both the *host* and *donor* countries concerned.

The Finnish Canadian community, formed out of the European migrations, has not escaped its share of interest from Finnish, Canadian and, less directly, American researchers. So far, this interest has been expressed primarily in the acquisition of archival documentation on the Finnish Canadians by assorted repositories. Academic study of this group still remains the private concern of a handful of scholars with the formal involvement of universities being the exception rather than the rule, though there is the promise that this too in time will be rectified.³

A major obstacle severely hampering further scholarly development in this

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2 Valuable work is being done by scholars involved in quantitative studies. For example, see Reino Kero, *Migration from Finland to North America in the Years between the United States Civil War and the First World War* (Turku, 1974).

3 In Canada, a symbol of this promise has been the inauguration in 1978 of a full credit course at Laurentian University entitled “A Survey of the Finnish Canadian Cultural Heritage: Selected Themes.” This is the first time that the Finnish Canadian community has been so recognized by any university. See M. Jalava, “Ensimmäinen Kanadan suomalainen Kultuurihistoriaa Koskera Kursii Laurentianian Yliopistolla”, *Canadian Uukiset*, 12 April 1978, p. 7.

field has long been the fact that archival material relating to the Finns in Canada was, for one reason or another, inaccessible to the potentially interested researcher. For example, those records created by the Finnish Canadians themselves were usually collected and retained by individuals and organizations within that community—a community which was bitterly divided on socio-political grounds and whose opposing factions were responsible only unto themselves. This necessary documentation was therefore held in private hands, the most significant portion of which was secretively and reluctantly opened only to those researchers who qualified on the basis of their political reliability and friendliness toward the possessor of the archives rather than scholarly abilities or expertise.⁴ However, as more of this documentation is acquired by publicly funded repositories charged with some obligation to make their holdings known and accessible to the broader publics that they serve, there is every expectation that academic researchers from a variety of disciplines will be encouraged to use it.⁵

This has already happened in Finland, where the first interest in the acquisition of documentation on the Finnish Americans and Canadians was demonstrated at the institutional level.⁶ In the early 1960's, Helsinki University undertook to acquire all newspapers and published materials it could locate relating to the Finns in North America. Consequently, it now boasts the finest collection of North American Finnish language newspapers anywhere in the world.⁷ Helsinki University also possesses a rich assortment of other source materials such as periodical and occasional publications, near-print Collection deals directly with the Finnish experience in Canada.⁸

That one of Finland's most prestigious universities embarked on such an acquisitions programme simply cannot be attributed to the chance motivation of intellectuals single-mindedly in search of obscure truths. Rather, the political and economic realities faced by Finland in the post-war years on the home-front and abroad, compellingly reinforced by the shock of the 1950s exodus of Finns to Canada and the United States, led official circles to espouse enthusiastically the concept of the *ulkosuomalainen* ("outlander Finn" or "Finn living abroad") or *ulkosuomalaisuus* ("Finnishness abroad") as an instrument of national policy.⁹ In other words, it was held that so long as people of

4 The most recent and recognized product of this sort of collaboration between the researcher-author and possessor of a private archival repository is Yrjö Raivio's *Kanadan suomalaisten historia* (Copper Cliff, Ontario, 1975).

5 The acquisition activities of the National Ethnic Archives programme has itself created an even greater demand by researchers for ethnic materials. The availability of the archival sources often encourages researchers to make use of the material despite possible original intention to the contrary. For an example of this reaction, see Burf Kay, "Finnish Organization of Canada at the Public Archives", *Ottawa Review*, no. 109, 24-30 August 1978.

6 Witness many publications, occasional papers, academic theses and dissertations which are emanating from Finland, and the University of Turku in particular.

7 For the most recent listing of the University's newspaper holdings on microfilm, see *Suomen sanomalehtien mikrofilmit*, 1-2 (Helsinki, 1971, 1976).

8 Although additional materials have since been acquired, the bulk of Helsinki University's North American Collection is listed in *Amerikansuomalaisen kirjallisuuden yhteisluettelo* (Helsinki, 1970).

9 This concept first emerged in the 1920s according to one authority whose career has been most intimately linked with the *ulkosuomalaiset*. See Tauri Aaltio, "Ulkosuomalaisuuskongressin avaus," in *Ulkosuomalaisuuskongressi 1975: Esitelmat ja puheenvuorot*, Maija-Liisa Kalhama, ed. (Turku, 1975), p. 1.

Finnish extraction living abroad (especially in the United States) could be induced to retain their Finnish identity, they would function as a ready source of active support for Finland and as an anchor against any eastward drift of the Finnish ship of state.¹⁰

Since 1964, the Institute of General History of the University of Turku has increasingly advanced the work begun by its sister university.¹¹ By mutual agreement, it was decided that the Institute of General History would concentrate on collecting manuscript sources while Helsinki University Library would continue with the acquisition of printed materials. The system has worked well so far inasmuch as each university has acquired distinct collections with a minimum of overlap and duplication of materials.¹² Research teams from the University of Turku have visited Canada and the United States, microfilming portions of the records of local and national Finnish societies.¹³ They have also gathered a substantial quantity of manuscript material and records from various individuals and organizations. In addition, the Institute has conducted surveys among Finnish Americans and Canadians, including those who have returned to Finland.¹⁴ Another fascinating source which it has compiled is the America Letter Collection which consists of personal letters sent by hundreds of individuals throughout the United States and Canada to Finland.¹⁵ Respecting documentation on the roots of emigration, the Institute has microfilmed the holdings of the Finland Steamship Company and many official records of various governmental agencies in Finland relating to emigration. Original documents have also been acquired from private and semi-official sources.¹⁶ Moreover, numerous finding aids and indexes have been compiled to enhance the accessibility of documentation concerning Finnish emigration.¹⁷ In sum,

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- 10 The various excellent historical essays on the Finnish Americans, but especially the title itself and President Urho Kekkonen's introduction, in Finland's tribute to the bicentennial of the United States—*Old Friends-Strong Ties*, Vilho Niitemaa, Jussi Saukkonen, Tauri Aaltio and Olavi Koivukangas, eds. (Vaasa, 1976)—represent this attitude in Finnish policy.
- 11 Vilho Niitemaa, "Emigration Research in Finland", in *The Finnish Experience in the Western Great Lakes Region: New Perspectives*, Michael G. Karni, Matti E. Kaups and Douglas J. Ollila, Jr., eds. (Turku, 1975), pp. 13-14.
- 12 Nevertheless, the special research library of the Institute of General History has about four thousand items of published material, including Finnish newspapers and literature from North America according to Niitemaa (p. 15).
- 13 The major concentration on microfilming Finnish Canadian records seems to have taken place in 1976 with the microfilming efforts of Keijo Virtanen and Auvo Kostiainen. Among the most important of their projects was the selective filming of the archives of the Finnish Organization of Canada (Toronto and Sudbury, Ontario) and the Finnish Canadian Historical Society (Copper Cliff, Ontario). Unpublished inventories are available at the Institute.
- 14 Although Niitemaa (p. 14) do not specifically mention Finnish Canadians with respect to these surveys, it has since been verified that they, too, were included in the samples.
- 15 The letters were collected principally from the Finnish provinces of Varsinais-Suomi and Satakunta. They have been arranged according to the addressee in Finland without any attempt to separate letters dispatched from Canada apart from those sent from the United States. This poses some difficulty for researchers interested in the Finnish Canadian items inasmuch as they are usually interspersed sporadically throughout the predominantly American material.
- 16 The Suomi-Seura Collection is one of the most interesting, particularly since the Canadian portion includes valuable Finnish Canadian correspondence. Unfortunately, no finding aids exist for this collection.
- 17 These finding aids and indexes have not been published and therefore have to be consulted at the Institute. Of special interest is an index card file listing all items on emigration to be found in the Finnish newspapers for pre-World War I period.

the University of Turku has gathered a substantial amount of Finnish Canadian archival sources; some of it duplicates Canadian holdings but much remains unique.¹⁸

Closely linked to the present emigration research project of the Institute of General History at the University of Turku is the Institute for Migration created in the mid-1970s as a private organization specifically to assume those functions of emigration research which the Institute of General History could no longer support when the status of its parent university reverted from a private to a state institution.¹⁹ However, since the Institute for Migration is itself financed largely by the Finnish government and its Board of Directors is largely composed of civil servants,²⁰ it can also be regarded as a *semi-official* organization for Finnish interests. This Institute acts as a clearing house for information on migration studies in Finland, and more importantly, publishes books, occasional papers and the periodical, *Siirtolaisuus/Migration*.

A number of other Finnish repositories have archival material relating to Finnish Canadians, including the National Archives of Finland, Kansan Arkisto, Tyovaen Arkisto, the Archives of the Finnish Broadcasting Service, the various provincial archives and archives of several of the government ministries (principally Foreign Affairs, Education and Manpower). Since most of these institutions have no particular mandate to serve researchers in migration studies, their holdings are often restricted or the retrieval of relevant documentation proves difficult for lack of appropriate finding aids.

In Canada too, the growing interest in migration studies has been enhanced largely by government intervention. In this instance, however, the *host* country's concern has been with the *immigrant experience* or, as it is more popularly understood, *ethnic studies*. While the work of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism²¹ and Canada's Centennial²² are often cited as the mainsprings in the process of sensitizing the nation to its ethnic minorities, the fact is that the post-war influx of immigrants changed conditions. Once these newcomers—many of whom possessed a high level of education or professional skills—were added to the growing numbers of upwardly-mobile Canadian-born "ethnics", this now influential group of "other" Canadians or the so-called "third force" in Canadian Society could no longer be comfortably ignored by the "founding races".

To encourage ethnic studies, the Department of the Secretary of State has

18 Even the microfilms of some of the Canadian holdings, although actually duplicating material in this country, were not otherwise accessible because the originals have been closely guarded in private hands, for example, the Finnish Canadian Historical Society archives.

19 As noted by Niitemaa et alia, pp. 15-16.

20 Some of the same government officials are also on the governing bodies of the Finnish Tourist Board-Ministry of Foreign Affairs publication. Compare the lists in *Siirtolaisuus/Migration*, no. 4 (1977): 36-37, and *Look at Finland*, no. 1 (1978): 1.

21 See especially Canada, The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *A Preliminary Report* (Ottawa, 1965) and *The Cultural Contributions of other Ethnic Groups* (Ottawa, 1970).

22 For example, the centenary led to the commissioning of Sven Stadius' article, "People of Finnish Origin", in *Encyclopedia Canadiana* 4 (Toronto, 1966): 133-139.

funded research projects and assisted the publication of research results.²³ In 1972, the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) established a National Ethnic Archives programme to ensure the preservation of documentation of the one third of Canada's population which is not French, British or Native in origin.²⁴ As one of the many ethno-cultural groups embraced by the National Ethnic Archives' mandate, the Finnish Canadian community has been encouraged to preserve its nationally significant documents.

The response from the community has been very favourable. The National Ethnic Archives has acquired records from several national organizations,²⁵ publishing companies,²⁶ one important Finnish Church²⁷ and the private papers of some individuals.²⁸ These supplement a number of non-Finnish collections relating to Finno-Canadians elsewhere in the Public Archives,²⁹ most notably within the records of the various federal government agencies involved in the immigration process.³⁰ The PAC also houses Finnish Canadian documentation in media other than manuscript, such as sound recordings, photographs, medals and film.³¹ These holdings are open to the public, save for those collections which have been restricted by donors. Fortunately, in the case of donations of documentation from Finnish Canadian organizations and individuals, the tendency has been not to restrict access, except to those files touching upon the privacy of living persons.

Provincial governments have begun recently to place more emphasis upon their ethnic minorities as well, particularly in western Canada where non-official language minorities form a larger proportion of the population than in

23 Funding through the Department of Secretary of State enabled at least one of the Bay Street Projects studying the Finnish Community in Thunder Bay to be published; for this, see *A Chronicle of Rural Settlements in Sudbury* (Thunder Bay, 1976). The department is sponsoring other similar projects as well as a history of the Finns in Canada.

24 See the official brochure, *National Ethnic Archives* (Ottawa, 1977).

25 For example, the Finnish Organization of Canada and the Finnish Canadian Amateur Sports Federation collections extensively document the activities of those national organizations associated with the radical tradition in the Finnish community. Other records received from local societies in Montreal and Vancouver relate to the conservative or nationalist tradition as expressed in the Kansallisseura (National Society), Loyal Finns in Canada, Finnish War Veterans in Canada associations.

26 The Vapaus Publishing Company Limited records are included in the Finnish Organization of Canada Collection as are some of those of its predecessor, the Finnish Publishing Company Limited. There is also the Vapaa Sana Press Limited Collection, documenting the past of the newspaper that originated with the moderate left and now occupies the political centre.

27 St. Michael's Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Montreal donated its own records and those of its predecessor, the Finnish Immigrant Home, to the Public Archives.

28 Papers of individuals which especially relate to the national life of Finnish Canadians include the Eeva Sora, Vihtor Kangas, Sven Stadius and Viktor Kangas Collections.

29 Material relating to Finnish Canadians in activities beyond their community can be found in the records of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), Frontier College and the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion.

30 The most important Record Groups of the various government departments and agencies relating to Finnish Canadians are those dealing with immigration, such as Agriculture (until 1905), Immigration, and Citizenship. Fortunately, some of these and most of the other Record Groups have been indexed for sources relevant to Finnish and other ethnic groups as a part of the National Ethnic Archives programme.

31 See also Edward W. Laine, "The Expanding Opportunities for the Study of the Finnish Canadian Heritage at the Public Archives of Canada", *Siirtolaisuus/Migration* 2 (1977): 1-5, for additional details relating to the holdings of the Public Archives.

eastern Canada or Quebec.³² Ontario, in turn, has established the Multicultural History Society of Ontario,³³ which has been actively soliciting original ethnic material or microfilming it for future transfer to the Archives of Ontario. The Society has very rapidly collected much archival material relating to the Finnish experience in Ontario.³⁴

In addition to official and semi-official governmental organisms, there is a scattering of other institutions, often publicly supported in some measure, which are concerned with collecting ethnic documentation. Perhaps the most important of those relating to Finnish Canadians is Lakehead University Library which holds the Finlandia Club Collection,³⁵ one of the finest regional collections open for public use in Canada. Consequently, this repository has provided the core for numerous research projects centred on the local Finnish Canadian community at Thunder Bay.³⁶

In the United States of America, an interest in cultural pluralism has also developed, paralleling in some respects the Canadian concern for ethnic studies. Repositories of Finnish American archival material should not be ignored by students of the Finnish Canadian Community. Particularly before the First World War, the Finnish experience in Canada and the United States was so closely interwoven that it is tempting to treat it as a unity.³⁷ However, in the process of acquiring an independent and unique appreciation of the long-neglected Finnish Canadian heritage, it would be disastrous to submerge embryonic Finnish Canadian studies into a continentalist—which is to say American—account of the Finnish immigrant experience.³⁸ Nevertheless, some repositories in the United States do hold material relating specifically to Canadian matters in their Finnish American collections. Such institutions include Suomi College (Hancock, Michigan),³⁹ the Immigration History Research Center of the University of Minnesota (St. Paul, Minnesota),⁴⁰ the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Michi-

32 The holdings of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia include such material. Allied institutions such as Glenbow (Alberta) and the Manitoba Museum of Man should be explored for additional material.

33 This organization, although incorporated as a private society, has been financed by the provincial government from its lottery revenues.

34 The Society has been particularly successful in obtaining Finnish Canadian documentation in Toronto, and the Sudbury and Timmins areas of Ontario. Finding aids for this material await completion.

35 The Finlandia Club Collection is particularly important for its records relating to earlier socialist societies in the Thunder Bay area.

36 For example, Christine Kouhi, "Labour and Finnish Immigration to Thunder Bay", in *The Finnish Experience*, a special issue of the *Lakehead University Review* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 17-40 and *A Chronicle of Rural Settlements in Rural Thunder Bay* (Thunder Bay, 1976).

37 For example, Eloise Engle, *Finns in North America* (Anapolis, Maryland, 1975).

38 For example, see Kero (1974).

39 See John I. Kolehmainen, *The Finns in America: A Bibliographic Guide to their History* (Hancock, Mich., 1947) which outlines the principal collecting activities of Suomi College to the date of the book's publication. The University of Turku has recently microfilmed selections from the College's holdings, a copy of which has been deposited in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan.

40 For further information, see Michael G. Karni, comp., *The Finnish American Collection* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1976).

gan)⁴¹ and the Balch Institute of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania).

Researchers now have a rich array of archival material open to them from the Finnish Canadian community. Certainly there is no lack of research topics. Finnish Canadians, for example, have created a vibrant immigrant literature and theatre both of which have had a considerable impact upon the Canadian national experience. At least fifty plays, for example, have been commissioned by the Finnish Organization of Canada, and all were written by Finnish Canadian playwrights⁴²; local drama societies with full-time paid directors were in operation before 1910⁴³; and a Finnish Canadian press began as early as 1901 with the founding of *Aika* by the utopian Kalavan Kansan Colony at Sointula, British Columbia⁴⁴. The Finnish Organization of Canada Collection at the Public Archives of Canada, in particular, documents the strong radical tradition in Finnish Canadian literature through the records of the Finnish Publishing Company and, especially, the Vapaus Publishing Company which produced a daily issue of *Vapaus* along with a literary weekly, *Liekki*, and a host of periodicals and books during the peak of its popularity in the 1930s. In this and other aspects of ethno-cultural involvement in Canadian life, the Finnish contribution to Canada's multicultural heritage awaits further fruitful investigation.

41 For further information, see Keijo Virtanen, *The Finns in the United States: The Projects on Finnish Immigration of the Michigan Historical Collections*, Bulletin No. 26 (June 1976): Michigan Historical Collections.

42 Finnish Organization of Canada Collection, Public Archives of Canada.

43 See Edward W. Laine, *Selections from the Finnish Organization of Canada Collection* (Ottawa, 1978)—a brochure prepared for an exhibit of the same name at Laurentian University, Sudbury, in June 1978. Also, see Finlandia Club Collection at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay.

44 Laine, *Selections*, pp. 2 and 5.

Résumé

Les fonds d'archives des Canadiens d'origine finlandaise décrits de façon sommaire et leur valeur au niveau de la recherche.