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EUROPE'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

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A granite monument in Chester, Pennsylvania, and a memorial plaque on the opposite shore of the Delaware river at Finn's point, New Jersey, commemorate the arrival of the first Finnish pioneers on this continent more than 300 years ago.

As Finland was then a part of Sweden, the colony founded in 1638 was named New Sweden. From 1638 to 1654 the land along both shores of the Delaware was the colony's territory and a succession of ships brought additional settlers of which at least half were Finns. Many settlements developed along the river. One seems to have been on the present site of Philadelphia, called "Sauna", a Finnish word meaning Finnish steam bath or bath house. From earliest times the Finnish settlers have always built saunas first, using them as temporary dwellings until a more spacious house was built. As the Finns are said to have been among the first pioneers to settle where Philadelphia is now, it is not surprising if their place was called Sauna.

Other Finnish-Swedish settlements were called Finland and Upland and were at the site of what is now Chester, Pennsylvania. A sizeable colony of Finns settled in present-day New Jersey around what is still known as Finn's Point. The Finns built their log cabins and saunas like their forefathers in Finland had done for more than a

thousand years. The log cabins became the pride and symbol of pioneer life as the Finnish sauna baths are today, becoming more and more popular in this country.

We learn from a history of this colony, published in 1702, that in the settlement called Finland, the Finns lived without fortifications, at peace with the Indians. Together with the Swedes, they founded the first town, built the first schools and roads, established the first courts and constructed the first churches in the Delaware Valley, and in so doing, made an important and lasting contribution to American civilization.

Although 16 years after its founding, the colony of New Sweden passed under Dutch rule and 8 years later to the British, the settlers remained and were even increased by newcomers. They retained their identity - linguistic, religious and cultural - but ultimately merged with the main stream of American nationality. The historical fact remains, however, that the Finns were one of the nationalities that helped to settle the original thirteen states of the Union, the others being the English, Dutch and Swedes. Even today, some old names in Pennsylvania and Delaware could be traced back to their Finnish origin. Only a few are found in history books, because history in those days was not so much written as it was made by the work and toil

of these early settlers. Some of them, however, are still remembered like Long Finn or John Finn, who was maybe the first true rebel against the Colonial rule. But he lived too early and suffered for it.

John Morton, the man who cast the deciding vote in favor of the Declaration of Independence, was luckier. It seems that his great-grandfather was Martti Marttinen, born in Rautalampi, Finland in 1606. He came with his young son, Martti Marttinen, Junior, through Sweden to Delaware in 1641. Their name, Marttinen, was later changed many times in Swedish and British official records to Martenson, Marten, Martin, and finally Morton. What Morton, with the other "Founding Fathers", accomplished was foreseen many years earlier by another well-known Finn, the naturalist, Peter Kalm. He was son of a Finnish pastor and professor in the University of Turku, then the capital of Finland, traveled widely in America from 1748 to 1751 as the first investigator of plant and animal life here. This famous scientist prophesized: "If the French can be driven from the American continent and the Indians defeated, then the American colonies will fight Great Britain and win their independence".

After the death of the main promoter in Sweden of the Delaware colony, a Finnish nobleman named Klaus Fleming, and the passing of the settlement to the Dutch rule and some years later,

to the British, interest in emigration to America faded in Finland and Sweden for a long time. Occasionally, Finnish sailors arriving at the ports of the North, South and West Coasts, would be found searching for their fortunes in the New World during the following century.

As a consequence of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, Finland was separated from Sweden and passed under the rule of Russian Czars in 1808. Then from 1830 to 1840, a considerable number of Finns immigrated to Alaska, which also belonged to Russia at the time. Alaska even had two Finnish governors; Admiral Etholen in 1840, and Captain Furuhjelm in 1859. A considerable amount of trade developed between Finland and Alaska and numerous Finnish ships transported goods and emigrants around Cape Horn to Alaska. Later, when Alaska was sold in 1867 to the United States, many Finns stayed on and settled, particularly around the Sitka. The descendants of these early Finns and those who came later, played an important part in the development of this territory, which now, a century later, has become the 50th state of the Union. The Finns in Alaska were not only early pioneers, hunters and fur traders, fishermen and gold diggers, but also administrators, mayors and officials who advanced law and order in this (at the time) faraway land.

The great flow of emigration from Finland over the Atlantic began, however, in the latter part of the last century. In 1865, a group of 35 Finns arrived in upper Michigan. From then on, more and more came to Michigan and Minnesota where they found work in mines and iron furnaces, lumber camps and in agriculture. Some remained on the East Coast in New York and in the New England States where there are today several Finnish communities, particularly here in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine. Between 1871 and 1873 Finns were pushing their way to the furthestmost western points of the country; to Astoria, Oregon (where they have since held an important place as fishermen) and to the State of Washington. The depressions which occurred in the United States in the years 1873 and 1893 temporarily slowed down emigration from Finland. It increased later and reached its peak at the turn of the last century and continued to be high until the outbreak of the First World War and soon thereafter.

Finnish immigration to the United States remained, however, rather modest in comparison to that of many other European nationalities. The number of Finns in the United States - immigrants and second generation (one of the parents being a Finn) - never exceeded 150,000 in any given year according to the official American

statistics. Several unofficial estimates included all people of Finnish origin who still knew Finnish or Swedish or who otherwise could be counted as Finns. These estimates vary between three and four hundred thousand as maximum on any given year. This is understandable if we take into account the fact that the total population of Finland was, at the turn of the century when immigration was at its highest, only about two and a half million, and today, when immigration has slowed down, four and a half million.

During these past decades, the Finns settled mainly in the middle east and northernmost states of the East and West Coasts as already indicated. In these areas, the immigrants toiled mainly in the mines, lumber camps and railway construction works, and later, as pioneers. It has been said that no nationality of comparable size dug more iron and other metals out of the earth of this country than the Finns.

As Finland is still today a country of forests, the Finnish immigrants were used to heavy forest work and carpentry of every kind. In this respect, professor Van Cleef from Ohio University writes about the Finns: "In efficiency in the mines, the Finns rank close to the top. They make good timbermen in the underground mines for they are reputed clever and ingenious with the axe and

the log."

The majority of the Finnish immigrants came originally from agricultural life. It is not surprising, therefore, that they found their steps leading back to farm life in America. It was the aim of most of those who began working in the mines and lumber camps to obtain homesteads or to buy farms as soon as they had the means to do so. They generally obtained 40 to 120 acres, often cut-over land in Michigan, filed for a homestead in Minnesota, or bought a run-down farm in western New York, Connecticut or elsewhere. Then they settled down to work and often cleared the stumpy land, acre after acre, making of these virgin or run-down lands flourishing farms. They were not only handy in tilling the soil, but they built their own homes, shoed their own horses, and showed skill in different kinds of manual work. In the Scientific Monthly, May, 1923, professor Van Cleef writes that "the Finn is thrifty and independent. Both of these qualities are the consequence of his life upon the farm in his native country where isolation and the struggle against the odds of nature challenge the strongest and bravest of men. He has consequently developed a penchant for work, a tenacity of purpose, and a skill in farm management which may



well be the envy of the peer of America's best farmers."

Most of these emigrants came here with little means to search for a better life or to earn money to return home and buy a farm. Therefore, the first generation, except in a few cases, could not start industries or commercial enterprises. From early times, however, the Finnish emigrants have been pioneers in establishing cooperatives in such fields as agriculture, dairy farming, retail stores, and insurance. It has been said that if two Finns meet they are either on their way to their cooperative or their sauna bath! Both these, even today, are most important; one to the economic and the other to their physical well-being! Thanks in part to these institutions in their life, many Finns from later generations have reached the top even in private business and industry. There are many outstanding engineers of Finnish descent and Finland has given this country several outstanding architects of which the Saarinen - father and son - are the most famous. Our best living architect, Alvar Aalto, who last year received the Gold Medal of the Institute of American Architects, has been both lecturing and teaching in this country.

Finns are an artistic race also, having one of the richest

traditions in folklore and popular music. Since 1880, nearly every Finnish temperance and church society has had a choir, orchestra, or amateur theatre group. The American Journal of Folk-lore wrote in October, 1934: "The Finns in Minnesota have maintained much of the folk-lore of their homeland and have greatly enriched the musical life of the state." Finnish folk-lore had a special influence on Longfellow when he wrote "Hiawatha". He had read with great interest the German translation of the Finnish national epic, "Kalevala". Nathan Haskell Dole wrote in his introduction to "Hiawatha" in February, 1898: "But it is not extravagant to claim that just as Virgil imitated Homer, so Longfellow more or less consciously imitated the Suomi epic (Kalevala), nor does it detract from the value or interest of the poem."

In other artistic fields, as well, there has been a rich exchange between our countries to this day. Both Finnish-American and American choruses, orchestras and conductors have visited Finland as have similar Finnish groups, conductors, singers and actors visited this country. Our distinguished composer and conductor, Oskari Merikanto, visited this country in 1900 and many artists and conductors have followed since. In 1914 our famous composer,

Jean Sibelius, made an extensive visit to this country, and not long afterwards, the conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Oberhof, introduced the traditional presentations of Sibelius' music here.

In recent years, Finnish designers of furniture, glass, ceramics and textiles have had an important influence on contemporary American design and living as part of the recent Scandinavian revival in this country.

Physical education, gymnastics, wrestling and track and field sports were very popular in Finland at the time of the largest immigration to the United States. Therefore, it was only natural that young Finns in this country founded sports clubs which have given a valuable support even to American Olympic Teams. Particularly, Finnish long distance runners, who visited America (some settling here) have been an inspiration to the youth of this country. The most famous of these sportsmen is "the Flying Finn", Paavo Nurmi, who during the 1920's and 1930's held most world records on distances over a mile. Recently, Nurmi visited this country again as a sports veteran and was received by the President of the United States and welcomed by all sportsmen, particularly by those who remembered him from his days of glory.

Today, as American citizens, descendants of Finnish immigrants are university professors, educators, lawyers and others, have achieved success and high positions in business and industry. Although most of them no longer speak our language, they have their roots in Finland and form a firm link between our two countries. This bond, which was established by early settlers from Finland, has widened and strengthened since Finland became an independent country in 1917. The best known and most popular American in Finland from this time on, is President Herbert Hoover. It was mainly thanks to his support and insistence at the Paris Peace Conference that the Allied Government recognized our independence; and it was the relief action led by him after the First World War, that saved Finland from starvation in 1918. We are still paying the war debt which came out of this American action; but, as we are the only nation that paid our war debt from that time, the payments have been made available in the form of scholarships for students and young scholars from both countries. Some Americans have gone to Finland to study but most of the funds have benefited Finnish youth wishing to study here. Thanks to these and other funds, about 100-150 of our young scholars study in American universities or other institutions each year, strengthening the cultural relations

between our countries.

Soon after the First World War, permanent trade relations between Finland and the United States were established which were interrupted only by the last war. We export mainly paper, pulp, plywood, furs, ceramics and glassware and buy from this country machinery, grain, tobacco, chemicals and fruits. Our mutual trade is well balanced - about 50 million dollars annually each way. There is also an increasing tourist trade, which benefits both countries materially as well as culturally.

Political relations between Finland and the United States are traditionally friendly. Finland is a neutral country, like Sweden, maintaining good relations with both West and East. Finland's policy is to remain outside great power conflicts and today; this is understood and accepted in the East as well as in the Western World. This was confirmed by President Kennedy when our President visited the United States in 1962, and again by President Johnson, when he, as Vice President, with Mrs. Johnson, visited Finland last year. Both of these visits were highpoints in the long tradition of friendship between our countries, the development of which I have tried to describe. There is an inscription on one of the many Finnish monuments in this country: "A strong will takes a man through gray

granite stone." It is this will that has helped build both our nations, our civilizations and our freedom, which we shall defend, if necessary, with the same strong resolve.

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