

Timothy Laitila Vincent

Finnish Genealogy

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"Where do I begin?"

The hundreds of thousands of Finnish immigrants who came to the shores of North America between the latter part of the 19th Century and World War I are now deceased. The second generation grew up being pre-occupied learning the new language, receiving an education, finding a job and "becoming American." The bonds to their parents were natural, but for those thousands of those young and restless "Finlanders" from Fitchburg, Massachusetts to Fort Bragg, California and from Ironwood, Michigan to Bisbee, Arizona, their needs and desires to fit into American society won out in most families. Reasons were social and political. All of that is part of Finnish-American history and is valid for preservation.

Nearly all of us have now lost the Finnish and Swedish language skills brought by our ancestors brought to this country. Many of us, now as third and fourth generation Finns in the United States and Canada are curious to find out more about our Finnish roots. The question becomes, "Where do I begin my Finnish family history?"

The answer is to start with what is known. Make a few notes, ask living relatives what they may know and if they have any documents. Names, dates and places are all vital, but it is the personal stories that we enjoy and appreciate the most and add vitality to every family history.

Home sources

- Birth, marriage & death certificates
- Family Bible information
- Naturalization Papers a) Petition / Intention for Naturalization b) Final Paper
- Cemetery / sexton's records
- Letters from the "Old Country"
- Grandma & Grandpa's passport
- Parish Membership Transfer Certificate a) Muuttokirja from Finnish-speaking parish b) Utflyttnings betyg from Swedish-speaking parish
- Living relatives / interviews

Vital records

Vital registration in the United States began in New England in the early 1600's. Births, marriages and deaths were recorded on a town basis. Over the years, these have been indexed on a state-wide basis.

In most other areas of the country, vital registration has been maintained by the individual counties. Marriage records have traditionally been kept since the beginning of permanent settlement, while birth and death records generally begin many years later. Several states, especially in the west, did not begin to keep birth and death records until after 1900.

The vital records are generally kept at the county courthouse with copies being on deposit at the State Health Department / State Vital Records Office. Rights of privacy vary from state to state, and county to county, but generally each can supply certificates. Fees generally range from \$6 to \$15 per document, for a five year search.

The Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah has microfilm / microfiche copies of the older vital records from many counties and states. The older vital records from around the country were usually kept in handwritten ledgers rather than on individually typed certificates, as became more common after World War I. When a certificate is requested from a county or state office, the current clerk must first search the handwritten indexes and then type the certificate from the handwritten entry. When dealing with any immigrant group, names were often misspelled. The problem is further compounded by poorly written entries. The advantage of having the records searched at the Family History Library is that copies of the originals can be obtained.

Census records

It is always wise to locate our families in the census records when beginning a family history. We may find unexpected information, including information on additional people in the family which may have been lost in history. Oftentimes there are names of other families on the preceding and following pages which will sound familiar, perhaps even being relatives.

1) US Federal Census records for 1880, 1900, 1910 and 1920 list all individuals in the household. They are all microfilmed and frequently available at local libraries, State Libraries / Archives, university libraries, Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah and LDS branch libraries and even on loan from the National Archives.

Full names are usually given; ages; sexes; relationships; number of children born to mother; state / country of birth for individual & parents; year of immigration; alien, petitioned or naturalized; occupation; language spoken if not English. Partial soundex (phonetic) indexes are available for 1880 and 1910; complete indexes for 1900 and 1920.

2) State Census records exist, to some extent, for several states either in entirety, or in fragments. Most are on microfilm at the Family History Library. Examples are:

1. Minnesota: 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905. Complete.
2. Michigan: 1884 & 1894. Only a few counties' records exist.
3. North Dakota: 1915 & 1925. Complete.
4. South Dakota: 1885 & 1895. Partial census. 1905, 1915, 1925, 1935, 1945. Complete. State Historical Society.

5. Colorado: 1885.
6. Wisconsin: 1875, 1885, 1895, 1905. Complete.

3) Canadian Census records are useful for genealogical research for 1881, 1891 and 1901. More current years are not yet public. The Canadian census is very similar to the US census. However, in Canada, the religious affiliation was included. Few indexes exist. Microfilmed copies of all are available at the Family History Library.

Naturalization records

In most states until mid-1906, the county courts maintained the naturalization records. The First Papers (Petition for Naturalization and/or Intention for Naturalization) usually exist, but list only name of applicant, country of origin / monarch to whom allegiance was previously owed, and date of application. Across the country, each county was in charge of creating its own form and recording the information. About 1900 many counties added additional information about the applicant.

In mid-1906 district courts were created, by federal law, in each state. The information became more detailed, including exact birth places and dates; physical descriptions; when first entered the US, the date and through which port; occupation, spouse & children; photographs frequently included; misc comments. Most major US cities had created district courts for the purpose of naturalization several years earlier.

Even after the initiation of the new district court system, most county courts continued with their own systems for several decades. Thus, there is much overlapping of jurisdictions. Locating a naturalization document is not always easy.

In New England, the various towns within a county kept records, as well as the district courts. However, locating a naturalization document is generally easy in New England because a master index from 1791 - 1906 exists for the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut & Rhode Island combined.

World War I draft registrations

The US Government required all men, born between 1873 and 1900, to register at one of the three designated registrations dates: 5 June 1917; 12 September 1917, 12 September 1918. This applied to all citizens and aliens.

The draft registrations were first maintained on a county basis. Most of the 3,000 counties had only one or two draft boards, but larger cities had several. Each of the three registration periods had its own separate form and the information varied somewhat. Between them, some or all of the following information was requested: full name, birth date, birth place, citizenship, residence, age, occupation, employer, name of relative & residence, brief physical description, signature, date & registration number(s).

The World War I draft registrations, because of the years covered, encompassed the greatest percentage possible of the Finnish immigrants. The exact birth date given on each registration card is a real benefit when doing genealogical research, and makes identification accurate. In many cases the exact birth place is given as well as citizenship. To many researchers, the next-of-kin is often the best information offered in the registration. This can connect the registrant to his wife who lives in Pecan, Mississippi, or the Finlander to his parents who remained in Finland. Thus, the home parish can be learned. The originals are housed at the National Archives and copies are on file at the Family History Library.

US passport applications

Since 1790 the US Federal Government has issued passports to American citizens. Although often advantageous, passports were not required throughout the world until the beginning of World War I.

About 1900 the information required by the US Government to obtain a passport was greatly increased to include full names, birth dates and places, when entered the US, when naturalized, physical descriptions, reasons for going abroad and destinations, spouses, children, places of employment and even wonderful photographs.

Immediately after World War I, many Finlanders, who were citizens of the US, decided to return temporarily to Finland, perhaps to settle an estate or to visit elderly parents and grandparents who were still alive. Whether for the direct line, or a sibling, these applications are now excellent tools assisting the third and fourth generation in locating the home parish in Finland, as well as possible names of other relatives.

The passport applications are public record through 1925. Indexes for the early years are numerous, although a single index which includes most of the Finlanders covers the years 1906 through 1923/1925. The index is a wonderful tool for locating a lost Finlander in the US, because applicants from the entire country can be found in one massive index, listing people by the first two letters of the surname. This works well for locating people with uncommon names, but not with common names. The index does not list the applicant's state or residence, only a year of application and passport number.

All of the above records which have been released to the Public Domain have been microfilmed and copies are located at the Family History Library.

Finnish records

Once the home parish has been located, the Lutheran Church records in Finland provide the family historian with some of the very best records in the world. Many parishes in Finland have records dating from the late 1600's. They have been microfilmed through the 1860's to 1870's, depending upon the parish. Some are more current.

The Communion Books (rippikirjat), also known as the Main Books, have been the backbone of Lutheran Church records since the 1600's. They are organized by village, and therein by farm. The farm owner appears first with all other residents of the farm listed after him, along with relationships. No one was missed.

Other types of parish records include birth / baptisms, confirmations, banns, marriages, membership transfers, parish minutes, deaths / burials and more. In the event that some parish records have burned, usually the existing records are of high enough quality that research will not come to an end. Military and court records also exist and many have been microfilmed.

In an on-going project for the last several years, due to changing laws of privacy in Finland, Lutheran and Russian Orthodox Church records are being updated on microfiche. The new microfiche provide information to about 1900 and have begun to arrive at the Family History Library. They are all negative copies and all too often, the quality is very poor. Some of the information is very hard to read and some of the remarks made in the far righthand column are impossible. Still, they are better than nothing.

The Lutheran parishes with updated records available (through 1900) for research at the Family History Library are listed below:		
Bötom / Karijoki	*Kuortane	Lundo / Lieto
Eno	Kurikka	Luoto / Larsmo
Forssa	Kymi	Längelmäki
Ilmajoki	Kälviä	Marttila
Joroinen / Jorois	Kärsämäki	Masku
Jorois / Joroinen	Kärkölä	Merikarvia / Sastmola
Jämsä Kaarlela / Karleby	Köyliö / Kjulo	Merimasku
Kalajoki	Laihia	Metsämaa / Loimaa
Kangasala	Laitila / Letala	Mietoinen
Kangaslampi	Lammi	Mouhijärvi
Kangasniemi	Lapinlahti	Muhos
Kannus / Yli-kannus	Lappajärvi	Multia
Karijoki / Bötom	Lappee	Mynämäki / Karjala
Karjala / Mynämäki	Lappfjärd / Lapväärtti	Mäntsälä
Karjalohja	Lappi (Turku-Pori)	Mäntyharju
Karkkila	Lapväärtti / Lappfjärd	Naantali
Karinainen	Lapua Larsmo / Luoto	Nivala
Karleby / Kaarlela	Lavia	Pirttikylä / Pörtom
Karuna / Sauvo	Lemi	Pörtom / Pirttikylä
Karvia	Lempäälä	Sastmola / Merikarvia
Kauhajoki	Leppävirta	Sauva / Karuna
Kauvatsa	Lestivirta	Solf / Sulva
Kemi (rural)	Letala / Laitila	Sulva / Solf
Kivennapa	Lieto / Lundo	Tohmajärvi
Kivijärvi	Liminka	Vimpeli / Vindala
Kjulo / Köyliö	Lohja	Vindala / Vimpeli
Korsnäs	Lohtaja	Virrat
Kuhmo(oinen)	Loimaa / Metsämaa	Yli-kannus / Kannus
Kuopio	Loppi	

Genealogical Services

Timothy Laitila Vincent, AG and **Maryan Egan-Baker** are professional genealogists who are experienced using the genealogical and historical records of United States, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and England. They can be contacted for either a short search or for in-depth research.

Family Sleuths PO Box 526163 Salt Lake City, Utah 84152-6163

Telephone / fax 1-(801)-467-4201

e-mail: sleuths@sisna.com

Website: <http://www.familysleuths.com/>

Finnish Genealogical Research by **Timothy Laitila Vincent** & **Rick Tapio** is currently out of print. The book is being updated and will be available later in the summer (1998), along with a couple of new chapters.

Finnish Genealogical Research covers all basic types of records in Finland, includes county maps with parishes boundaries in the 1800's, lists parish addresses, includes the year of oldest communion records and year of the earliest vital records, plus some historical background of family and church customs.

Publications for the Finnish and Finnish American Genealogists

by **Timothy Laitila Vincent**

- The History of Finnish Americans, Volume III
- Journal of Pastor Johan Wilhelm Eloheimo from the Evangelical Lutheran Parishes from Calumet, Michigan and Ironwood, Michigan. A Journal of Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Deaths: 1891-1910 in the States of Michigan, Wisconsin, Wyoming and Idaho and Others.
- Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation Employment Records: 1909-1920 in Bingham Canyon, Utah. A Complete Listing of all Finns and Scandinavians.
- Order Form

The History of Finnish Americans, Volume III

Total 270 pages. Size: 8-1/2" x 11." Indexed. Price US \$25 postpaid.

A complete translation from the original Finnish text of Pastor S Ilmonen's 1926 book, entitled *Amerikan Suomalaisten Historia, III*. The original pagination of 336 pages, plus the original list of advanced subscribers and advertisements, has been preserved.

Ilmonen gave a brief history of each state, as pertaining to Finnish settlement after which he compactly listed every known Finn Community and listed early Finnish set-

tlers by community. Generally, the men or heads of household were given because there was not room to list every family member. In some communities, several Finnish domestics were listed. Ilmonen, himself, estimated the total number of names in his publication at about 15,000. At least half of the people have birthplaces listed.

This is an excellent source for locating immigrants in America and to locate their birthplace in the "Old Country" for which many third and fourth generation Finnish-Americans now seek. Surname changes, once in America, are given for many of the immigrants, thus aiding researchers to accurately locate and identify their ancestors.

A complete name and place index has been created, including all places in the "Old Country." Ilmonen was Finnish-speaking, but sought to include as many Swede-Finns as he could identify through his knowledge and correspondence. Thus, through the index, it is possible to locate many immigrants in America who came from the same parish in Finland.

Many Finnish-speaking immigrants in the 19th century came from northern Sweden and northern Norway. Ilmonen included a number of them, but unfortunately, did not always have their exact birthplaces. Still, this newly translated book makes it possible for the younger generation to read about the inhabitants of the Finn Communities in North America.

Ilmonen devoted 37 pages of his original book to the Finns in Canada. The format is the same as for the United States, with brief provincial and local histories given, followed by lists of Finnish residents.

Journal of Pastor Johan Wilhelm Eloheimo from the Evangelical Lutheran Parishes from Calumet, Michigan and Ironwood, Michigan.

Total 192 pages. Size: 8-1/2" x 11." Indexed. Price: US \$25 postpaid.

A Journal of Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Deaths: 1891-1910 in the States of Michigan, Wisconsin, Wyoming and Idaho and Others.

This is a translation of the original 250 handwritten pages of the journal of Pastor J W Eloheimo. He was an early pioneering pastor who travelled all across America. Beginning in 1891 in Ironwood, Michigan, the pastor and family later lived in Calumet, Michigan before moving to Wyoming and eventually, Idaho. The pastor travelled to neighboring communities, too, as well as visited other states where he officiated at numerous ceremonies.

Speaking numerous languages fluently, Pastor Eloheimo also invented his own language, with Finnish as the base language, which he used for this journal.

When Pastor Eloheimo officiated or taught confirmation classes in Swedish or English, he noted which language was used, leaving no doubt in the researcher's mind which language the family spoke at home.

Many entries have references to one's home parish in the "Old Country" as well as to a wife, children or parents still residing there. The godparents of every baptized child

were accurately recorded. The mention of a godparent in Eloheimo's journal may be the only means to locate a Finn in a particular community at a particular point in time. Many Finnish immigrants often moved frequently and great distances across the United States, making it difficult to track them.

The complete index to Eloheimo's Journal includes nearly 12,000 names, plus all places given in the US, Canada, Finland, Sweden and Norway. In many cases, the surname changes between countries have been accurately included as well.

***Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation Employment Records:
1909-1920 in Bingham Canyon, Utah***

Total 199 pages. Size: 8-1/2" x 11." Indexed. Price: US \$25 postpaid.

A Complete Listing of all Finns and Scandinavians.

The information in this book has been gathered from nearly 40,000 employment cards spanning twelve years. A total of at least 1,500 Finns, Sweden, Norwegians and Danes are individually listed with the Finns comprising at least three-quarters of the total. About two-thirds of the Finns were Swedish-speaking. No Icelanders were found among the collection of employment cards. Some "Americans" with Scandinavian names have also been included.

The employment cards included the employee's name, age, residence in Bingham Canyon or Salt Lake Valley, weight, height, eye color, hair color, how well spoke English, where previously employed, name of a relative and address, when hired, pay rate, date, why and when left employment and employment number. Several men had worked for Utah Copper Company more than once and their cards were kept together. Most cards were completely filled out. There were also notations made of those men involved in the 1912 strike, and of course, injuries, illness and deaths.

This book is unbelievably well indexed. It contains not only a comprehensive name index, but also previous places of employment are included, as are all places, occupations, heights and weights. This index could even be used for demographic purposes. The index includes 49 pages of double columns.

The book includes a brief introduction to Bingham Canyon and the many nationalities who lived and worked there. A complete listing of all mining occupations and pay scale for 1922 (with occupations included in Finnish) had been added, plus an extract of mining companies from a 1906 map with corporation numbers, and a map of the canyon, provided by Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation for their Visitors' Center.

This book is an excellent example of company mining records and how they can aid in family and ethnic research.

ORDER FORM

Timothy Laitila Vincent PO Box 526163 Salt Lake City, Utah 84152-6163

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Books desired @ \$25.00 per book: History of Finns in America: _____ Journal of Pastor Eloheimo: _____ Bingham Canyon Employment Records: _____

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