

**A Summary of the book**

**Migration from Finland to  
North America in the Years between  
the United States Civil War  
and the First World War**

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Migration Studies C1

Institute of Migration  
Turku, Finland

**1974**

Online version:

Institute of Migration 2009

[www.migrationinstitute.fi](http://www.migrationinstitute.fi)

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**Summary**

Migration from Finland to America, as it did also from other European countries, began as a migration of sailors. The moment that this migration began cannot be precisely defined. It can be said, however, that, while in the first decades of the nineteenth century Finnish sailors now and then deserted ships sailing in American coastal waters and remained in America thus becoming immigrants, an appreciable increase in the number of sailors migrating occurred at the time of the gold discoveries in California.

The emigration of sailors probably continued to be relatively common from the time of the California Gold Rush to the First World War. It is perhaps typical of such emigration that a very great portion of the emigrants left from towns – from such seafaring centers as Oulu, Raahe, Kokkola, and Turku.

After the end of the Civil War in the United States the migration to America received anew tone; in addition to sailors, the normal population of rural districts began to become interested in emigrating. The year 1866 seems to mark rather clearly a turning point; at that time the first fairly large groups of emigrants left from the Tornio River Valley and from the vicinity of Kokkola. By the beginning of the 1870's emigration was already fairly extensive from these two areas and also from the vicinity of Kristiinankaupunki. Emigration from the interior parts of Oulu and Vaasa Provinces also began to occur at the beginning of the 1870's.

At the beginning of the 1880's emigration spread beyond Oulu and Vaasa Provinces to the northern portion of Turku and Pori Province and to the Åland Islands. By the end of the decade, it began to appear in the coastal area between Turku and Pori, although emigration from this region was still comparatively slight in the 1890's.

It can be said that by the beginning of the 1890's migration to America was occurring from all the provinces at Finland. However, with the exception of that from Vaasa and Oulu Provinces, that from the northern portion of Turku and Pori Province, and that from the Åland Islands, this emigration was rather slight, so that there were communes in Häme and Mikkeli Provinces, for example, where migration to America was still an almost unknown phenomenon at the end of the

1890's. Around the turn of the century the phenomenon of emigration spread to all parts of Finland, but it remained rather weak in the areas that it "conquered" last.

Finns received examples in emigration from their relatives living in northern Norway; those living in the Tornio River Valley doubtlessly also, from Finns living on the Swedish side of the river. In Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia trips seeking work in Sweden were undoubtedly also of significance, in addition to which sailors who had emigrated spread to the coastal regions information about the opportunities offered in America. There was also perhaps some significance in the fact that, at the middle of the nineteenth century, America had become in the eyes of the educated classes an ideal land where all things were better than they were in old Europe.

Finnish official emigration statistics begin for Oulu and Vaasa Provinces already at the beginning of the 1880's, but include the entire country only from 1893. For this reason there have been extremely varying concepts of emigration occurring before 1893. Earlier estimates on the number of emigrants have been examined in this study in the light of the passenger lists of shipping companies and of information about emigration preserved in newspapers. The result of this procedure indicates that before 1870, perhaps several hundred persons intending to emigrate took out passports, in addition to which, already at this early stage, a rather large group of Finnish sailors had deserted their ships when they were sailing in American waters, and thus emigrated. In the 1870's there were probably about 3,000 emigrants, in the period 1880–86, about 18,000 and in 1887–92, about 40,000. All in all, perhaps about 61,000 emigrants left before 1893. The number of those leaving during 1893–1914 was about 270,000, so the number of emigrants leaving before the First World War was something over 330,000. However, 7–8% of the persons included in this calculation, that is based on names appearing in the passenger lists, travelled to America more than once. Thus, the number of persons taking part in this emigration was smaller than 330,000: quite likely it was a little over 300,000. If Finnish emigration is compared to emigration from other European countries, we can see that from the end of the 1890's Finland was one of those European countries where emigration had a very great effect on population trends. In the 1870's, the 1880's and the beginning of the 1890's, on the other hand, Finnish emigration was rather meagre according to the European yardstick.

Finnish emigration has commonly been viewed as a particularly Ostrobothnian phenomenon. This generalization can to a large extent be accepted. However, it should be kept in mind when examining the geographical distribution of Finnish emigration that the boundaries between areas of strong and weak emigration did not go along provincial or regional borders. Thus, beyond the borders of Vaasa Province, emigration was also quite strong from northern Satakunta, from the vicinity of Rauma, from the Åland Islands, and from several communes along the coast and archipelago of Finland Proper.

Emigration from Finnish towns and their neighboring communes was generally stronger than from the surrounding countryside. However, an extremely large portion of the emigrants leaving from towns, perhaps as much as 70–80 %, were people who had moved to these towns from the countryside and for whom the town in the homeland was only a temporary stopover on the trip to America.

Looking at the great migration from the whole of Europe, we may say that an economic situation existed where a labor shortage, caused by America's rapid economic growth, prevailed on the American side of the North Atlantic economic area, while on the European side where economic growth was slower there existed an over-abundant work force. During this migration, labor reserves in Europe moved to the American side. Finnish emigration was a part of this phenomenon.

Several Finnish studies of emigration history discuss the question of why Finnish emigration was concentrated in Ostrobothnia. This study has attempted to answer the question of how the situation arose in which emigration occurred much more frequently from a given area of Finland, broader than just Ostrobothnia, than it did from the rest of the country. Here I have come to stress the following factors, all of which are rather well presented in studies concerned with the problem of Ostrobothnian emigration. First, it must be noted that an extremely rapid growth in population occurred in Emigration Finland at the end of the nineteenth century. Second, not one important industrial center sprang up in Emigration Finland at the end of the nineteenth century. Third, a sort of division of labor seems to have developed between internal migration and emigration: people from Emigration Finland went to America, while those from the rest of Finland went to such industrial centres as Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Viipuri, and St. Petersburg.

An important background factor of emigration, which affected the rest of Finland as well as just Emigration Finland, is that at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the mobility of the Finnish people was clearly increasing. Thus, emigration was the form that the increased mobility of the people from certain areas took, while in other areas this increased mobility appeared as an acceleration of internal migration. Of the motives for emigrating, it can be said that in the main they were economic, but that in less ordinary cases, emigrants might base their leaving on almost any cause whatsoever.

Emigration was not evenly distributed between one month and another, one year and another, or decade and another, but fluctuated greatly in its strength. At least three kinds of regular fluctuations can be distinguished: 1) seasonal changes, 2), changes depending on short-term economic cycles, and 3) changes occurring in longer cycles of about twenty years.

In the 1870's and 1880's, Finnish emigration was generally at its strongest in the early summer, but later the peak of emigration during each year occurred already in April. In very exceptional cases in the twentieth century the peak of emigration

occurred in December. In part conditions of travel determined the monthly distribution of emigration: in the 1870's and 1880's winter navigation was still in its beginning stages, which forced emigrants to time their departures do the early summer. Later, the development of winter navigation made a more balanced distribution of emigration throughout the year possible. To some extent seasonal work in America and Finland probably also had an effect on the distribution of emigration.

The movement of short-term cycles discernible in America shows up very clearly in Finnish emigration: when a period of boom occurred in America, Finnish migration to America increased immediately, while during American periods of bust, the Finnish migration became weaker. The rare exceptions to this pattern might have been due to the results of presidential elections, for example, or to labor strikes occurring in America.

Two long-term cycles can be distinguished in Finnish emigration: one extended from 1874 to 1893 and the other, from 1894 to 1914. Contrary to that of other Nordic countries, Finnish emigration was appreciably more extensive in the latter than in the former of these cycles. This doubtlessly resulted in part from the rather late start of emigration from Finland, but its most important cause was probably the stagnation of population growth in Finland in the 1860's. Because of this, there were comparatively few people in Finland suitable for emigration in the 1880's, the greatest decade of emigration from Scandinavia.

Almost 90 % of Finnish emigrants left from rural districts. A large portion of those leaving from towns were probably etape emigrants, who had first moved from the countryside to the towns, and then continued their journey to countries overseas. Over half of the emigrants in the 1870's were farmers and their children. As the phenomenon of emigration developed, the proportions especially of farmers, but also clearly of their children, declined. Correspondingly, the proportions of cottagers and of workers increased. This change in structure was probably due in the first place to the fact that in the early stages only farmers had sufficient means to purchase tickets for the trip. In the second place it possibly resulted from the fact that emigration spread from Oulu and Vaasa Provinces to the rest of Finland, which meant that the population base for emigration was different at the beginning of the twentieth century than it was in the 1880's. Perhaps also of influence was the fact that as industrialism occurred the occupational structure of Finland as a whole changed from a purely agricultural system to one which included to a certain degree also industrial trades.

The streams of emigrants originating indifferent parts of Finland differed to some extent from each other. Farmers appeared relatively frequently among emigrants from Oulu, Mikkeli, and Viipuri Provinces; crofters, particularly among emigrants from Turku and Pori Province; cottagers, among those from Kuopio and Vaasa

Provinces; and workers and people in other occupational categories, among emigrants from Uusimaa Province.

Almost 65 % of the emigrants leaving Finland during 1869–1914 were men. Compared to that of other Nordic countries, Finnish emigration was quite male-dominated. Especially in the opening phases of emigration the proportion of men among the emigrants was greater than that of women. The largest proportion of women occurred among emigrants leaving from Oulu Province, the smallest among those emigrating from Mikkeli Province. There were almost as many women as men among emigrants from towns. There were several rural areas, however, the emigration from which was pretty well balanced among the sexes. In particular, the coast and archipelago of Finland Proper should be mentioned as such an area. The sex composition of a given area's emigration was affected by that area's population structure, by its job opportunities, by the attitudes toward emigration, by internal migration, and possibly also by the opportunities for work in the locality toward which the area's migration was directed. On the other hand, the composition of emigration leaving a given area might have determined the locality in America to which these people migrated.

The immigrant population in the area of its settlement was not so male dominated as the immigrant stream was, for it was more common among men than among women to return to the homeland. The structures of the societies formed by Finnish immigrants in different parts of the United States probably varied greatly due to the differences existing in work opportunities. – While, on the one hand, men formed a definite majority of Finnish immigrants in the United States and Canada, on the other hand, the migration from Finland to South Africa and Australia was still much more male-dominated.

Finnish emigrants, as emigrants in general came from relatively young age groups from the beginning of emigration up to the First World War. However, it can be observed that, as the phenomenon of emigration developed, the average age of those leaving became lower. In particular, the proportions of 0–4-year olds and 15–19-year olds among all emigrants grew as emigration became older. Emigration of the very young was typical especially in Vaasa Province, while emigration from Uusimaa and Viipuri Provinces was to a certain extent composed of older age groups. Women who emigrated were on the average younger than men. Urban emigration differed from rural emigration in that those under 16-years and over 25years composed a larger proportion of emigrants from towns than from the countryside. Emigration itself fundamentally affected the distribution of emigrants' ages: in an area where emigration had been occurring for some time, emigrants would in time be composed principally of those just arriving at working age. Changes in the birth and death rates also undoubtedly had same influence. Thus the effect of the famine years of the 1860's was distinctly evident in the age distribution of Finnish emigrants still in 1905.

When researchers have studied how great a proportion of emigration from Nordic countries was at different times composed of the movement of entire families, and how great a proportion was composed of the movement of individuals, they discovered that as the phenomenon of emigration developed a definite shift occurred from family emigration to individual emigration. On the basis of available material, it seems probable that the same shift occurred in Finland.

Looking at the different areas of Finland, we discover that emigration from Oulu and Viipuri Provinces was distinctly an emigration of families, while that from Turku and Pori, Häme, Kuopio and Mikkeli Provinces was definitely an emigration of individuals. Family emigration composed a larger proportion of urban than of rural emigration. Also family emigration was more common from the Finnish-speaking districts of Ostrobothnia than it was from the Swedish-speaking districts.

The opening phase of Finnish emigration, from the beginning of the 1870's to the middle of the 1880's, can be called the golden age of Swedish emigration agents. At this time Finnish emigrants travelled almost exclusively by way of Sweden and they bought their tickets in either Stockholm or Gothenburg. Already in the 1870's some Finns travelled with so-called prepaid tickets, which immigrants in America sent to their relatives in Europe. In the beginning the prepaid tickets received by Finns entitled them to a free trip only from Stockholm onward. Finnish-American small businessmen, who acted as agents for shipping companies apparently sold a major portion of the prepaid tickets. Advertisements by them and by the shipping companies appeared primarily in the *Amerikan Suomalainen Lehti*, which each spring published guides for immigrants arriving from Finland. These guides were probably of rather great importance, for the *Amerikan Suomalainen Lehti* had quite a large circle of readers in Finland, particularly in Oulu and Vaasa Provinces.

From 1886 emigrants were able to buy their tickets in Finland, for in that year a Vaasa merchant began to act as representative for the Swedish agent for the Inman Line. Rather shortly thereafter more emigration agencies that were subordinate to agents in Sweden emerged. In 1889, the situation changed fundamentally. In that year The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Co. of New York began a collaboration with Norddeutscher Lloyd of Germany in a conquest of the market in transporting Finnish emigrants. The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Co. was owned by a Finnish Jew named G. A. Grönlund who had moved to America.

In the fall of 1889 and in 1890, The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Co. organized a fierce offensive against its competitors. It made use of newspaper advertising in both Finnish-American and Finnish newspapers. In addition, in the fall of 1889 it sent a man named V. K. Hultin from New York to Vaasa, where he established the main base for The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Company's operations in Finland. The company procured so many agents in other localities in Finland, particularly in Ostrobothnia, that The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Company's network of agents at the beginning of the 1890's was much more dense

than those of its competitors. At the beginning of its operations it also dropped the price of tickets so low that it was able to compete energetically with other companies.

Norddeutscher Lloyd and The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Co. succeeded so well in their conquest of the trade of Finnish emigrants that in 1890 Norddeutscher Lloyd carried more Finnish emigrants than any other company and a year later, perhaps more than all other companies combined. Although its competitors tried to use the same advertising devices as Norddeutscher Lloyd and its associates, they did not at first succeed. Already in 1891, however, The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Company and Norddeutscher Lloyd began to run into difficulties. Grönlund gradually provoked the opposition of the Finnish-American press and with it that of Finnish-Americans. Although he procured his own newspaper as a counterweight to this, he was no longer able to salvage his affairs. Finnish-Americans gradually lost confidence in Grönlund. In the fall of 1891 the Finland Steamship Company started a regular transport of emigrants to England and began to collaborate with the companies that carried emigrants to countries overseas. By the following year, the Finland Steamship Company had already won for itself a very large share of the transport trade. Cholera, for which reason the transport of emigrants going by way of Germany in particular ran into difficulties, apparently fostered the company's breakthrough.

Norddeutscher Lloyd and The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Co. still transported a rather large number of Finnish emigrants in 1893, but they were clearly going downhill and had already lost the lion's share of the trade to the Finland Steamship Company and the shipping lines it represented. In 1894 the story ended when The Scandinavian & Finlanders Emigrant Co. went bankrupt and its Finnish agents were forced to halt their operations. After this the trade of Finnish emigrants was practically speaking completely in the hands of the Finland Steamship Company and the shipping lines it represented. In the latter part of the 1890's competition came primarily from the Scandinavian-American Line, while at the beginning of the twentieth century the Steamship Company Nord that had been established in Finland was for a short time a competitor. During the period of operations of the last-mentioned company, the German lines also again received a brief opportunity to compete for Finnish emigrants.

The most important companies carrying Finnish emigrants during the period of the Finland Steamship Company's monopoly were the Allan, White Star, Cunard, American, Canadian Pacific Railroad, and Scandinavian American lines. The central position of these companies was perhaps due to the fact that they had large numbers of agents selling prepaid tickets in America. In part, however, it could be that the popularity of the Allan Line, for example, resulted from the fact that Finns had been accustomed to trust certain shipping companies that had been continually carrying Finns since the 1870's.

Plenty of information is available on the prices of tickets from the end of the 1880's. At that time a trip between Finland and New York cost between 120 and 180 marks. During this period the ticket price was at its lowest at the end of 1889 when Norddeutscher Lloyd dropped its prices to 120 marks. At the beginning of the 1890's the prices of tickets seem to have been between 130 and 140 marks, from which they rose for a time, then dropped in 1895 to under a hundred marks. After this, ticket prices gradually rose until 1903–04 when a price war between the Finland Steamship Company and the Steamship Company Nord occurred. During this price war, the price of a ticket from Hanko to New York dropped to 79 marks. Thereafter increases again occurred until on the eve of the First World War, a ticket from Hanko to New York cost 270 marks. The price of the trip between Hanko and Quebec was generally lower than that between Hanko and New York. The trip from Finland to the port of arrival in America was generally only part of the journey. Particularly if the destination was in the western United States, the trip from Hanko to the port of arrival might involve less than half of the travel expenses. The trips to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa cost much more than those to the United States and Canada.

About one-third of Finnish emigrants used the so-called prepaid tickets received from America. Finns received these most frequently in just those years when emigration was at its greatest. Thus the arrival of prepaid tickets was one of the factors fostering a growth in emigration. However it appears that when emigration began to increase after a trough year, the users of prepaid tickets were relatively few. The significance of prepaid tickets became appreciable only after emigration had continued in force for some time.

The poorest segments of the population wanting to emigrate, such as cottagers, relied the most on prepaid tickets. Among the farm-owning class, on the other hand, prepaid tickets played a much smaller role. Emigrants from Oulu Province in particular seem to have relied frequently on prepaid tickets, while those leaving from Häme, Viipuri, Turku and Pori and Vaasa Provinces used prepaid tickets relatively rarely. In relative terms, women received prepaid tickets more than men did, while of the different age groups, those under 16-years and over 50-years relied on prepaid tickets more frequently than the average. In regards to family emigration, the use of prepaid tickets was very common in so far as it was a question of the mother and children going to join the father in America. On the other hand, when the whole family travelled together, they rarely used prepaid tickets. In the Swedish-speaking areas of Ostrobothnia the use of prepaid tickets was much less frequent than in the Finnish-speaking areas. Those going to the eastern United States received prepaid tickets more frequently than those going to the Mid-West or to the western states. It can be argued that the differences appearing in the frequency of the use of prepaid tickets resulted in part from the standard of living of the area of departure, from the wealth of immigrants at the place of destination, and from the amount of work offered to immigrants in various

parts of the United States during a given time. However, it can also be argued that money was sent to some areas in the place of a ticket, in which case the significance of American financing in covering the cost of the journey is not fully apparent in the available sources.

The recruiting of immigrants is discussed in, for example, nineteenth century newspapers as if it played an important role in the migration process. When one examines the attempts that are claimed to be recruiting, however, it appears that the number of those actually recruited was very small. The earliest recruiting attempts were from the 1860's and 1870's. These may have had a significance to the extent that the few emigrants then recruited served as pathfinders for the people from northern Finland who later immigrated to northern Michigan. In addition to the United States, Canada, Australia, and Brazil have also shown interest in Finnish immigrants, but recruiting done on their behalf apparently produced very meagre results.

During the opening phases of emigration, the departure occurred from some Ostrobothnian coastal town, whence the trip proceeded first to Stockholm, then to Gothenburg and Hull. At the beginning of the 1890's however, Hanko became the most common port of departure, from which the trip continued to Stockholm, Copenhagen, Lübeck or Hull. When the Finland Steamship Company gained its monopoly as the transporter of emigrants, the Hanko–Hull course became almost the only route used by Finns. From England and Germany the trip proceeded by ocean liner to New York, Boston, Quebec, or some other port town. From these the journey generally continued by train.

The trip from the home village to America was an overwhelming experience for the emigrant; frequently there may have been persons along on the trip who had never even visited a city before. During the opening phases in particular travelling was anything but pleasant: crowded conditions, poor food, and sea-sickness were the lot of almost everyone. During the trip to America, Finns came into contact with emigrants coming from other countries. But here Finnish emigrants generally separated themselves from emigrants from other countries.

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The book can be ordered from the Institute of Migration:

[http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/netshop\\_e/](http://www.migrationinstitute.fi/netshop_e/)