

Valokuvia suomalaisten ulkorakennuksista USA:ssa

Wyomingissa asuva Bob Kisken on ollut jo pitkään kiinnostunut Yhdysvaltain pohjoisissa osavaltioissa sijaitsevista varhaisten suomalaissiirtolaisten rakennuksista.

Erityisesti hän on valokuvannut yhä jäljellä olevia suomalaissiirtolaisten rakentamien Homestead-talojen ulkorakennuksia, joista vanhimmat on tehty 1800-luvun lopulla. Suomalainen hirsirakennusperinne tulee esiin näyttelyn iäkkäimmistä kohteista. Samalla voi havaita hieman uudempien rakennusten jo poikkeavan joiltain muodoiltaan suomalaisperinteestä.

Kisken on kuullut monia tarinoita suomalaisten uudisraivaajien saunakulttuurista ja suhtautumisesta alastomuuteen, mikä oli Amerikan mantereella ennenkuulumattoman epäsovinnainen. Esimerkiksi tapa kulkea pihan yli alastomana saunaan, herätti kau-

histusta naapuristossa. Alunperinhän saunarakennuksissa ei ollut erillistä pukeutumistilaa, kuten nykyisin on.

Näyttelyn teksteissä kerrotaan perustiedot rakennusten tekijöistä ja omistajista. Muutamista siirtolaisista on esillä enemmänkin tietoja. Mahdollista on jopa, että joku voi löytää omia sukulaisiaan heidän joukostaan! Bob Kisken sanoo mielyneensä erityisesti kuvaamaansa pyöreään kiviseen makasiiniin Hurleyssä, Wisconsinissa, jonka on rakentanut suomalainen Matthew Annala poikineen.

Bob Kisken itse on syntynyt New Yorkissa, ja hän tietää isänsä olleen suomalaisen. Isä oli orpolapsi, eikä hänen suvustaan tai kotipaikastaan ole tarkempaa tietoa.

Tellervo Lahti

Photo of Finnish barns in the U.S. by Bob Kisken

Retired teacher photographs immigrants' handiwork; display planned in Finland Bob Kisken likes to take photographs of old Finnish homesteads, barns and cabins.

"My father was an orphan but he always claimed he was Finnish," Kiskén said. Born in New York, Kiskén taught school in Ann Arbor, Mich. After retiring from teaching, he moved to South Dakota, then to Glen Rock, Wyo. In March, he visited Montana to take photos of old Finnish homesteads in the foothills of the Highwood Mountains.

Kiskén first shot photos of Finnish handiwork in Minnesota. At about the same time, he read a book about Finnish carpentry skills in the Americas. "It just sort of snowballed," he said in an interview late last week. "One thing led to another." Kiskén uses a Canon camera to shoot photographs as a hobby. He's already photographed sites of Finnish homesteads and barns across the country's northern tier in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Idaho and Washington, and now Montana. "I have probably 125 pictures of barns and stuff," he said.

With help from a Finnish-American friend in New York, Richard Impola, Kiskén arranged to donate his photographs to an Emigrant Museum in Finland. He

sends the photos to Turku, but they are expected to first be displayed in a sister facility in Seinäjoki. "I think they like to keep records on the Finnish emigration to the United States," he said. "People can see some of the things that the Finns built over here." And Kiskén's Montana photographs will soon be Finland-bound. "They're on their way to Finland," week," he said Thursday.

Northcentral Montana has its share of Finnish-Americans, with family names such as Maki, Heikkila and Myllymaki. "I guess they came in for the mines," Kiskén said. "They wanted land that had trees and water." In the Belt area, they settled in a community known as Korpivaara, building the only known group of rural Finnish log homesteads in Montana. An area consisting of seven Finnish immigrant sites was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992, according to Ellen Sievert, a city-county historic preservation officer who helped coordinate Kiskén's trip.

Colorful names were not the only distinguishing characteristics for Finnish immigrants. Many were skilled craftsmen, and their work stood out in homestead cabins they built in the Belt area a century ago. Another tell-tale factor was the presence of saunas in

their houses. Many a Finnish home featured a sauna, considered a luxury these days. Back then, even a modest homestead cabin might have one. One of Kisken's favorite buildings he has photographed is a round stone barn in Hurley, Wis., built by immigrant Finnish craftsman Matthew Annala and his sons. "This is the most amazing barn I've ever seen," he said. Another barn he likes is in the Belt area in Montana — the Mattila Barn on property owned by the Myllymaki family. "That is a neat barn," he said. Kisken shot both the barn's exterior and its carefully built, sophisticated interior.

Kisken said he's no expert on Finnish immigration. "I just go out and take pictures," Kisken said. But he has heard some interesting stories about Finns pursuing their cultural traditions. For example, Finns built a traditional sauna in Cokato, Minn. "It didn't have a dressing room," Kisken explained. "People would just walk down naked to the sauna." When the area started to get more populated, some residents began to complain. Both sides argued over who should pay to move the sauna to a more secluded spot. "The Finns sued and they won their case," Kisken said. "It's now in a little park."

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