

*Delaware 350 and Australia 200 Anniversaries:
Retrospect and Future in Migration Research*

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at the Institute of Migration, Piispankatu 3, Turku, Finland*

The Proceedings of the Seminar

Olavi Granö

Finnish Migration Celebrations 1988

Opening Remarks



The first beginnings of Finnish overseas migration are considered to have occurred 350 years ago, with the establishment of a relatively small settlement around "New Sweden", the joint Swedish-Dutch trading station which was set up in March 1638 at the mouth of the Delaware River. Among the first settlers there were emigrants both from among the Finnish population in Sweden and from present-day Finland itself.

The arrival of these settlers can be seen both as one element in the Swedish attempt to become a colonial power, and also as a contribution to the early settlement of North America. Here, then, were the first roots of that major wave of Finnish migration which was to follow 250 years later.

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The anniversary of the Delaware settlement was celebrated last year both in the United States and in Finland, and naturally also in Sweden. The main arrangements for the Finnish celebrations were organized by a Delaware Committee chaired by Matti Ahde, Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, including representatives from the major interested cultural and economic organizations in Finland. The aim was both to honor the role of Finnish migrants in the history of the United States, and to take the opportunity of presenting present-day Finland to the American rulers and people; and an excellent beginning was provided by the declaration by President Ronald Reagan of 1988 as a National Year of Friendship between the American and Finnish peoples. During the celebration year, a number of high-level visits were made between the United States and Finland. The most impressive of these was the visit to Finland by President Reagan, in conjunction with

his trip to the Soviet Union in May, accompanied by 250 American journalists. The visit to the United States by the Finnish Prime Minister, Harri Holkeri, also opened up new doors in American Government circles.

The visit in early July by the Speaker, Matti Ahde, stressed Finland's wish to maintain good contacts with the Finnish-origin population in America, while visits by three other Finnish Government ministers, Christoffer Taxell, Pertti Salolainen and Ilkka Kanerva, have extended Finnish contacts in other directions. There were a number of exhibitions mounted during the year, of which the most impressive was the Sea Finland marine exhibition in Philadelphia; the historical exhibition put up by the Institute of Migration also attracted wide attention both in the United States and within Finland, and is continuing on tour even although the anniversary year is now over. Several scholarly seminars were also arranged during the year, such as the conference on migration research held at the University of Delaware in March 1988.

There were also many events arranged in honor of the anniversary by Finnish-American organizations, of which the largest was the gathering of over 5000 people at the three-day Finn Fest in Delaware in July 1988. A delegation from Finland also took part in this festival, led by the Finnish Speaker, Matti Ahde. One of the ideas which he put forward was the establishment of a Register of Migrants, at the Institute of Migration in Turku. I also had the honor of giving an address at the celebrations, which I directed in particular to the Finnish migrants and their descendants.

The most significant results achieved during the year were the agreement with the University of Minnesota on the establishment of a Professorship in Finnish,

and the decision to set up the Register of Migrants at the Institute of Migration. This will be of service both to research scholars and to students of genealogy, especially the descendants of Finnish migrants, who now number over a million and are scattered all over the world. Like the statue by Wäinö Aaltonen in honor of the migrants, unveiled at the tercentenary celebrations in Delaware in 1938, the donation of this Professorship and the creation of the Register of Migrants will be the monuments to this year of celebrations.

1988 also saw the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the first permanent British colony in Australia, on the site of present-day Sydney, and this was the focus of extensive celebrations by the European-origin population in Australia. In Finland, the Institute of Migration celebrated the anniversary with an exhibition on the history of the Finnish migrants to Australia. This exhibition has been on display both in Finland and Australia, and will eventually be placed permanently in the Australian National Museum in Canberra.

The Institute has also taken care that Finnish scholars have been able to attend the Australian conferences on migration research, of which the most important was the III Symposium on Nordic Migration to Australia and New Zealand, at the University of Melbourne. The Finnish-Australian Society also arranged a special event in honor of the Bicentennial, followed up by a seminar on Finnish-Australian trade, at its summer meeting in Tampere. The principal speaker, who also lectured at several universities in Finland, was Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, who is widely regarded as one of the creators of Australia's multicultural policies today.

One consequence of the Australian Bicentennial has been to provide added im-

petus to the proposals to set up a memorial in Turku to Herman Dietrich Spöring, who travelled with Captain James Cook's voyage in 1770, and is thought to have been the first person from Finland to visit Australia. A piece of natural stone has now been obtained for the memorial from Sporing Island, off the eastern coast of New Zealand, named after this early Finnish explorer.

In the wake of these two anniversaries, it is the aim of the Institute of Migration, for instance by arranging this seminar, to assemble an overall picture of the events held during the past year and of their significance for migration and for migration research, and to map out the need for future investigation. It is of prime importance to build up international research collaboration, especially with North

America and with Australia. The process of European integration may well in the future create a somewhat different framework both for migration and for its investigation.

It is my pleasure to welcome the many distinguished people attending this seminar both from Finland and abroad. In particular, may I welcome our opening speaker, Dr. Richard H. Hulan from Virginia, himself a descendant of the old Delaware settlers, and Dr. Kari Tarkiainen from the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm. Another welcome member of this seminar is Rev. Timo Orta, well-known for his investigations into migration in Sydney, Australia. Ladies and gentlemen, I officially declare the seminar open and I would like to wish you every success in your work.