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THE EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STUDY OF THE FINNISH CANADIAN HERITAGE AT THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

In 1972, the Public Archives of Canada (hereinafter, P.A.C.) established the National Ethnic Archives Programme to ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage of that third of Canada's population which is *neither French, British, nor Native in origin*. Inasmuch as this group of ethno-cultural minorities includes the Finno-Canadians, the Programme has also been concerned with the documentation of the Finnish Canadian heritage. In the discharge of this part of its mandate, the National Ethnic Archives Programme has made and continues to make great strides in expanding the opportunities for research on the Finnish Canadian community.

For example, it is now relatively easy for researchers to pick out sources relating to Finnish Canadians from the public records of the government. As its contribution to the National Ethnic Archives Programme, the Public Records Division has undertaken to identify and list the major sources concerning all the ethno-cultural minorities in the records of the various department and agencies for which it is responsible. (The Record Groups dealing exclusively with immigration matters have been excluded from this listing since they must of necessity be consulted by the researcher.) It is expected that this list will be edited and published in some form in the

near future. To place this important task into its proper perspective, it should be emphasized the public records are one of the most extensive bodies of materials relating to Finnish Canadians in existence and most of these records are open to the public.

The most important Record Groups relating to Finnish Canadians are: Agriculture (charged also with the responsibility for immigration until 1905), Immigration, Citizenship Branch, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, External Affairs, Canadian National Railways, Secretary of State, Labour, Militia and Defence. Naturally, these and the other Record Groups primarily deal with the federal government's relations with the Finnish Canadian community.

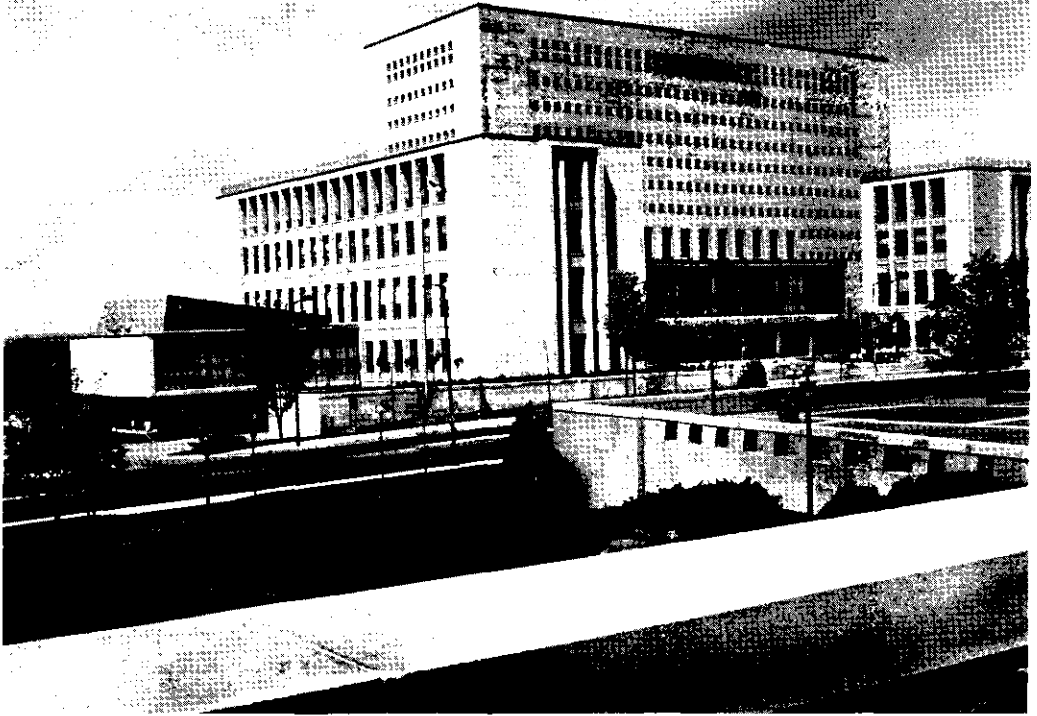
On the other hand, for a view of the Canadian scene from a wholly Finnish Canadian perspective, the researcher would have to examine the holdings of the *Manuscript Division which is responsible for the papers and records of private individuals and organizations*. There he will find documentation created by Finnish Canadian individuals and organizations. For the most part, these holdings of Finnish Canadian archival material have directly resulted from the activities of the National Ethnic Archives in co-operation with the Finnish Canadian community.

At present, the largest collection of Finnish Canadian material is the records of the Finnish Organization of Canada (hereinafter, F.O.C.), the oldest national organization of Finns in Canada (est. 1911).¹ These records (approximately 30 metres) extensively document the various activities of the F.O.C. and its (approximately 100) locals,² the Vapaus Publishing Company³ and the F.O.C.'s predecessor organizations at the national and local levels. Included are such records as those of Raittius Yhdistys "Taimi", the Finnish Society of Toronto

and the "Yrityt" Athletic Club, all of which were established in Toronto during the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴ Materials relating to Lännen Rusko,⁵ Sointula⁶ and the Vancouver Building Company Limited⁷ probably document the earliest development of the temperance, utopian socialist and co-operative movements within the Finnish Canadian community. Other materials in the collection delineate the significant Finnish Canadian involvement in the radical union movement, particularly in unionism in the mining and lumbering industries.⁸ It also shows much of the general cultural, political, social and economic development of the Finnish Canadian community and its inter-relations with Canadian society as a whole, the United States, Finland and, to a lesser degree, Soviet Karelia.

Another most interesting collection that has been recently acquired is that of St. Michael's Finnish Lutheran Church (est. 1932) of Montreal. Included in this material are the records of the Church's predecessor, the Finnish Immigrant Home, which was established during the mid-1920's and continued to operate through the peak years of the immigration from Finland until the Great Depression closed Canadian ports to Finnish immigrants. This material is equally useful in demonstrating the role of Montreal as a stopover point and gateway to the rest of Canada for the Finnish immigrants as it is in showing how the relatively small, permanently settled Finnish Canadian community fared in a mixed French-English environment.⁹

Other noteworthy collections of Finnish Canadian records include: the Finnish Canadian Amateur Sports Federation and the "Yrityt" Athletic Club of Toronto, part of whose records are also found in the F.O.C. collection;¹⁰ The Finnish War Veterans in Canada, Montreal Branch (est. 1935);¹¹ *Vapaa Sana* (est. 1931);¹²



The Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa is open to researchers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The building is shared by the National Library so that researchers have access to a wealth of archival and published sources at one convenient location.

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the Montreal Suomi Society (est. 1927);¹³ and, as well, records of several Finnish organizations in Vancouver that have yet to be processed.

The private papers of individuals include: Eeva Sora; Vihtor Kangas; William Eklund; Aarne Ritari, Hans Pulkkinen. All of these collections document in one way or another the individual and collective experience of the Finns in Canada.

In addition to these Finnish Canadian sources, the Manuscript Division has other collections which contain incidental references to the Finns in Canada. Most important of these are the papers of the Prime Ministers and other public officials. Finnish

Canadian involvement in Frontier College¹⁴ and the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion¹⁵ suggests that the records of these organization also include material relating to the Finns. However, as these incidental sources have not been indexed for their Finnish Canadian content, it is up to the researcher to search them out.

Since the custodial and reference services of the P.A.C. are divided along media lines, non-manuscript Finnish Canadian documentation is available in the appropriate division or section. For example, numerous photographs from the F.O.C. and "Yrityt" Athletic Club collections are now in the custody of the National Photo-

graphy Collection. Likewise, sound recordings from the F.O.C. and St. Michael's Lutheran Church collections have been given to the care of the Sound Archives.¹⁶ Finnish badges and buttons have been added to the National Medal Collection.¹⁷

Moreover, many of these units have other material of their own relating to Finnish Canadians. The National Photography Collection, for example, has a very extensive collection of photographs, thousands of which focus on immigration, settlements, lumbering, mining and other subjects. Naturally, some of them include evidence of Finnish Canadians and their activities. The same applies to the Sound Archives, Film Archives, and National Map Collection, inasmuch as they too may have material of interest in their holdings.

Of course, the Public Archives Library should also be mentioned. The Library has a large collection of books and pamphlets (including a rare copy of a pamphlet authored by Peter Kalm concerning Swedish interests in North America), many of which reflect upon the life of Finnish Canadians, on the areas in which they settled, and on the industries in which they were employed. Also, several titles on Finnish Canadian subjects have been donated to the library.

In conclusion, it is evident that the P.A.C. has many sources relating to the Finnish Canadian community. Microfilmed copies of some of the material are available to researchers even in Finland through Inter-library loan. Originals may be consulted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year at the Public Archives in Ottawa. The only exceptions to free access to any of the above-mentioned materials are those collections temporarily restricted during the processing procedure, those private collections which have been restricted by their donors and government records of recent date. Therefore, anyone contemplating research at the P.A.C. should first enquire in writing to:

Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N3, Canada.

NOTES

¹Originally incorporated as the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (Canadian Suomalainen Sosialisti Järjestö), the Finnish Organization of Canada (Canadian Suomalainen Järjestö) was re-incorporated in 1923 under its present name.

²These locals were spread all across Canada from Quebec to British Columbia, of which only a handful are in operation today. As such, their records can give a nation-wide sampling of the "Finnish fact" in Canada.

³This company was first organized in 1917 to publish the *Vapaus*, at onetime a daily newspaper, and it still continues to publish a newspaper with the name of *Viikkosanomat* ("Weekly News"). In its heyday, *Vapaus* Publishing Company was a thriving concern which also published a literary weekly, a number of periodicals and books in the Finnish language. It also operated a travel agency, foreign currency exchange and branch stores in several Canadian cities. All aspects of its many activities are represented at the P.A.C.

⁴Raittius Yhdistys "Taimi", the Finnish Society of Toronto (Toronton Suomalainen Seura) and "Yritys" Athletic Club (Urheilu ja Voimistelu Seura "Yritys") illustrate how the immigrant Finn's first desire was to create an environment which would promote moral, cultural and physical soundness within himself and his countrymen — in fact, to provide the social services which were not provided by his adopted land.

⁵Lännen Rusko established in 1890 in North Wellington, B. C. — — was the first Finnish temperance society, to be founded in Canada.

⁶Sointula, the first Finnish Canadian utopian socialist community was established on Malcolm Island just off the coast of Vancouver Island in 1901. One of the ventures of this colony was to publish *Aika*, the first Finnish periodical to be printed in Canada. In the collection of *Aika* at the P.A.C. are included a number of issues which do not appear to have survived elsewhere.

⁷While separate records for "Iso Paja," a Toronto tailors' cooperative (1902-1913) contemporary with the Vancouver Building Society, do not appear to exist in the Finnish Organization of Canada Collection, the connections between "Iso Paja" and the Finnish Society of Toronto

were so close as to suggest there might be an intermingling of records. For information concerning "Iso Paja," see J.W. Ahlqvist (ed.), *Canadian Suomalainen Järjestö 25 Vuotta* (Sudbury: Vapaus Publishing Company, 1936).

⁸ According to Satu Repo, "The Big Shop: Finnish Immigrant Tailors in Toronto," *This Magazine*, IX: 5-6 (Nov. – Dec. 1975), p. 31, the F.O.C.'s involvement with both the radical labour and political movements has included at some time federation with the One Big Union, the Socialist Party of Canada, the Social Democratic Party of Canada and the Communist Party of Canada. The degree of the F.O.C.'s past support of these movements would doubtlessly be of interest to historians who specialize in the study of the "radical" Finns.

⁹ For researchers in "migration history," detailed cards of information relating to arrivals in Montreal at the Finnish Immigrant Home (Suomalainen Siirtolais-koti) should be of particular interest.

¹⁰ The respect for *provenance* dictated that the apparently "misplaced" records of the Finnish Canadian Amateur Sports Federation (Suomalais-Canadalaisten Amatööri Urheilun Liitto) should remain with the F.O.C. collection as found. Likewise, some records of the "Yritys" Athletic Club are to be retained together with the Finnish Society of Toronto material also in the same F.O.C. collection.

¹¹ The Finnish War Veterans in Canada (Suomen Aseveljet Canadassa) was originally founded by ex-members of the "White Guard" of the Finnish Civil War but was later broadened to include the veterans of the Winter War and the Continuation War. Its major ties were with the parent organization in Finland until another branch was recently founded in Toronto.

¹² *Vapaa Sana* ("Free Press") was originally founded by dissident members of the F.O.C. who allied themselves with a moderately socialist party, the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.). The material in this collection relates to that early period. The *Vapaa Sana*, incidentally, still appears today as a twice-weekly newspaper but is now politically independent of all party affiliations.

¹³ The still active Montreal Suomi Society (Montrealin Suomi-Seura) was at one time a leading force behind the attempt to establish the Central Organization of Loyal Finns in Canada (Kanadan Kansallismielisten Suomalaisen Liitto) as a national federation for all politically conser-

vative Finnish Canadians. Indeed, the central office once had even been located in Montreal. Consequently, it is not surprising that some of the office records are also included in the Montreal Suomi Society materials.

¹⁴ Frontier College, which operated in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century, sought to teach the rudiments of the English language and other essential subjects to the newly arrived immigrant. In mining towns and lumber camps, Frontier College teachers toiled alongside their students by day and gave them their lessons by night. Included among the students of Frontier College were many Finns. The College's manuscript and photographic records document some of its activities among the Finns.

¹⁵ The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion was formed as a Canadian volunteer unit in 1937 to fight against the forces of General Franco in the Spanish Civil War. An estimated ten percent of this Canadian contingent was made up of Finnish Canadians and whose ranks were augmented by handfuls of Finnish-Americans and Finnish nationals as well. The records of the Battalion, for example, include the account of Jules Päiviö.

¹⁶ Of particular interest are the recorded sermons of the late Pastor John Yrtimaa of St. Michael's Finnish Lutheran Church (Pyhän Mikaelin suomalainen ev. luterilainen Seurakunta) and various tapes of broadcasts made (principally by Eric Kuutti) for CBC's Overseas Service to Finland. Most of this material dates to the 1950's and 1960's.

¹⁷ This material includes buttons, ribbons and lapel pins which were used for identifying participants of various Finnish Canadian festivals or for displaying an individual's organizational affiliation.

Jatkuu sivulla 9.