

Iltatahti

The Evening Star



The Finnish Heritage House and
FinnAm Society of Mid-Coast Maine

Newsletter No.75 – Spring / Kevät 2023

Rag Rug Raffle Winner



And the winner is.... Martha Calinda. She is an obviously very happy winner of the raffle last September of the beautiful hand-woven rag rug once again donated by our good friend “Tooty” Wilson of Lovell, Maine. We expect you will have another chance to win later this summer when the annual raffle will repeat. Stay tuned.

Kent Washburn Performance

By Jackie Harjula



FHH and the Finn-Am Society were proud to present Kent Washburn, the Finlandia Foundation National Performer of the Year last September. Several of our members had enjoyed his performance at FinnFunn Weekend in Troy, NH, and wanted to invite him to Thomaston to give others the opportunity to experience this unique event. While the classic 1929 Finnish silent movie “Mastalaishurmaaja” (The Gypsy Charmer) was shown, Kent performed his original soundtrack on the organ. His soundtrack was created from Finnish folk songs and classical music.



Coffee, pulla, and other snacks donated by our members were served downstairs in the Fellowship Hall of the Thomaston Federated Church.

Without the generous donation of meals and lodging in her cottage by Marianne Ahola, hosting these performers and lecturers would not be possible. We also appreciate the use of the church sanctuary with its wonderful acoustics for our performances.



Pride in My Finnish Heritage

by Scott Hodgkins - March, 2023

I was asked to write about why I am proud of my Finnish heritage, but I think that pride is often accompanied by gratitude. Both of these go hand-in-hand with any thoughts of my Finnish background. I could start by saying how proud and grateful I am for Finland's world class education system, or its nearly 100% literacy rate. There's no doubt that Finns are innovative, creative and practical. How can anyone not admire the fact that Finland is the happiest country in the world or that Sisu is the foundation of Finland's national character? I could go on and on about those things, but anyone can read about them with the click of a button. For me, my pride and gratitude are more personal and come from the people of the past and their sacrifices and struggles that helped create endless opportunities for those who came after them.

According to Ancestry DNA testing, my mother is 100% Finnish, which means all of her ancestors are intertwined with Finland and its history. Some family records can be traced back to the 1500s. I take great pride in knowing that her paternal grandparents took immense risks to emigrate to the US when financial times were difficult in Finland. Like for so many others, it took considerable courage to leave everything behind and move to a foreign nation, not knowing the language or what the future held.

My great-grandfather, Matti Pirttinen (later Hill), left Finland in 1903 just before the birth of his son, my grandfather, William. By leaving, Matti avoided conscription into the Russian army. Matti's ship manifest listed Long Cove, (St. George) Maine as his destination. He eventually ended up settling in Milford, NH and in 1909, my great-grandmother, Vilma, and her son, William, joined him there. William met his father for the first time at six years old! They lived in Milford, then New Castle, PA, and finally moved to St. George, Maine in 1924. By then they had two more children, Eino and Lempi.

Signe, my maternal grandmother, also descended from hardy Finns. Her father was born in Finland, as were her mother's parents, Oscar and Ida Jacobson. Oscar and Ida and their backgrounds in Finland are shrouded in mystery as exhaustive research turned up little or nothing. They were both born there, however, even though much of that puzzle remains unsolved. I am sure their journeys were no less courageous than the others, arriving in Boston in the 1890s. They finally

settled in South Thomaston, Maine and died there two years apart, both at 47. One example of determination (Sisu), and no doubt courage, was when Ida, needing money, sold her long, strawberry-blonde hair after her arrival in the US. Clearly her survival instincts overcame any sense of vanity!

So many memorable stories, anecdotes and mysterious snippets have been passed down. Through them all I feel pride, and certainly gratitude, for all the wonderful people and what they had to overcome to make a new life in a new land. As their old doors closed forever, new doors opened for those of us fortunate enough to have descended from such hardy individuals!

Finn Am November Meeting

By Anne Little

The Finn Ams met in November and shared a delicious Thanksgiving meal. Following a brief meeting, attendees were introduced to the Moomins. The Moomins are a family of characters developed in the 50's by Finnish writer, Tove Jansson. They have many wonderful adventures. Aimee Sanfillipo was Papa



Moomin, Anne Little was Mama Moomin and Lynn Snow was Little My. Clips of Moomin stories and character traits were shared.

Moomin houses were crafted by the members.

Moomins

The Moomins are fantastical creatures who live in Moomin valley, a magical place where adventures are always waiting around the corner. Firmly rooted in Nordic storytelling, the Moomin stories reflect the central values: friendship, courage, respect for nature, and adventure, delighting readers with a sophistication for storytelling, wisdom, and humor.

Moomins were created by the acclaimed Finnish artist, illustrator, and writer [Tove Jansson](#), and will be more widely available to American audiences via Barnes & Noble.

Finnish American Society Scholarship Winning Essay

In 2022, the Finnish American Society Scholarship recipient was Elaine Landry. She is a junior at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA. Her majors include education, English and theater. Each semester she remains on the Dean's list. Her Finnish interests include the education system, society and fashion in Finland. Her winning essay is as follows:

Finnish-American Society Scholarship Essay

By Elaine Landry. - August 22nd, 2022

While I lack any blood relation to Finnish heritage, my blended family exposed me to Finnish culture early in my life. I fondly remember holidays filled with nisu rolls, as my grandmother told stories of her travels while visiting the country her family used to call home. My mother, with a passion for holiday decor, peppers our home with Finnish gnomes made for every occasion. My grandmother also inspired and fostered my passion for sewing.

I remember sneaking off during family gatherings to talk about projects we were working on for the holidays or debating a particular fabric choice. She bought my first sewing machine, which now holds a permanent residence on a designated sewing table in my bedroom. I use my skills at school as well. My work study job is sewing costumes for the theatre and dance department. One of the Finnish brands Anne introduced me to was Marimekko. They make clothing and accessories but also gorgeous printed fabrics. As I looked through their website, I was dazzled by bright colors and bold patterns. My favorite is their highly popular “Unikko” print, which is an abstract floral print that comes in a variety of colors, designed by Maija Isola. Marimekko has several designers, and their website has a feature highlighting which designer created each print. As a lover of bold colors, I was absolutely enamored by the brand, and hope to procure some of their fabric to work with someday.

Fueling my love of sewing is my interest in fashion, something Finland has no shortage of. While Finnish folk dress and traditional garments may be the first to come to mind (and for good reason, they are beautiful), I was equally as inspired by the more modern Finnish street style. An eclectic blend of bold, handmade pieces and vintage second-hand garments make up the bulk of Finnish street style, but every outfit is just as unique as the people who wear them. Each outfit is practical, yet playful, and Finnish society tends to hold

onto their clothing much longer than the average American, making Finnish fashion incredibly sustainable and good for the planet. I have been inspired by this practice to be more mindful and intentional about my clothing purchases, as well as being bolder with my outfit choices.

As a hopeful future educator, I also marvel at the Finnish education system. Smaller class sizes, longer recess, limited homework, and more free time for kids to be kids all while maintaining a 93% (Smithsonian Magazine) graduation rate seems too good to be true, yet Finland boasts one of the best education systems in the world. Teachers there are highly trained, each with a master’s degree, and schools have little interference from the government. They are free to design their own curriculum, and since teachers are so qualified, they have the freedom to work in their classroom however they see fit, using proven methods they learned in training schools and education programs. This is a stark contrast to the American education system, which depends on strict government regulation, state testing, and universal curriculum requirements which limit teachers’ autonomy in the classroom. Teachers here are heavily regulated and evaluated, underpaid, and burnt out from more hours spent in the classroom, creating the perfect storm for a record number of educators leaving the profession. My hope is that the United States will remodel our education system, and hopefully take a few pages from the Finnish book in the process.

Finnish culture has influenced and inspired many aspects of my life, and I hope it can also inspire others to make positive change, whether within their own wardrobes or in the restructuring of entire systems.

March - St. Urho’s Day Celebration



Traditionally, St. Urho’s Day is a Finnish folk-holiday celebrated on March 16th to honor the legend of St. Urho who was fabled to have chased the grasshoppers (or frogs) out of ancient Finland, saving the grape crops and the jobs of the vineyard workers. The day is marked by wearing green and purple and represented with grapes and grasshoppers.

Plan on joining with Finn-Am/FHH at Jura Hall to celebrate St. Urho’s Day at noon on March 18th.

FinnFunn Weekend 2022

By Joanne Nelson

The 30th annual FinnFunn Weekend took place on



October 28-30 and was hosted once again by the Inn at East Hill Farm in Troy, New Hampshire.

What started as a vision

over 30 years ago to bring Finnish Americans together to celebrate Finnish culture and heritage, has turned into an annual event held throughout New England full of activities, presentations, music and more.

This was my first FinnFunn Weekend and I brought



my husband along to share the experience. He had a lot of fun and was made an honorary Finn for the weekend by Stephen Trimble from the Finnish-American Society of Cape Cod.

With so many amazing things to do, we realized fairly quickly that it was going to be a difficult task to plan our activities and we didn't come close to seeing all the great things FinnFunn had to offer.

Over the course of the weekend we made Joulutorttu ornaments and Tonttu wine bottle covers with Laura Henrikson, tried to predict our future for the coming year by Tin Melting with Hilary-Joy Virtanen. This activity was so much fun trying to see shapes that formed (I think my casting looked like a dragon) and I even tried to make a Birch Bark Friendship ring with the help of Elaine Moe. Thankfully Elaine took over and made one for me.



A trip to the Tori at Troy Elementary School was in order on Saturday morning. The Tori was filled with delicious Finnish baked goods, beautiful handcrafts, books, candy and so much more. I used the



opportunity to stock up on some of my favorite sweets (including salmiakki), a few gifts and a jar of cardamom honey.

Bernie Nowak entertained us with music during the Welcome Reception Friday night and again on Saturday evening before dinner. Also on Saturday night we were treated to music by Brent Buswell and a performance by Finnish folk dancers, Revontulet (which means Northern Lights in Finnish), accompanied by Oivan Ilo.

Other activities on Saturday night included a Parade of Masks featuring The Moomins and the winners of the silent auction and raffle were posted.

They had a great "Finnishness through Photographs" exhibit near the office all weekend and a large map of Finland so we could mark our place of origin. I put my pin on Parkano.

The farm itself had a lot to offer and we took time each



day to walk the trails and visit as many animals as we could. We found a Tonttu and a fairy village along one of our walks. They even let us

milk a cow and a goat! The hospitality we received from everyone at the Inn is something I'll never forget.



The weekend ended way too soon. After breakfast and one final walk around the farm, we still had time for a game of Finnish Jeopardy before drawing the weekend to a close with a preview of FinnFunn 2023 and a roast turkey luncheon.

As this was my first FinnFunn experience, I didn't know what to expect. My feelings changed from being a bit overwhelmed and nervous in the beginning to excitement as I got to meet other Finnish Americans and hear their stories and learn much more about our Finnish culture. I can see how important it is to share and remember this heritage that has brought us together and I am already looking forward to my next FinnFunn Weekend.

Mark your calendars! FinnFunn Weekend 2023 will be held October 27-29 in Rockport and Gloucester, Mass. Check out <https://www.finnfunn.org/> for more information.

FHH/Finnish Club Christmas Party

By Kathleen Anderson



On Saturday December 17th we gathered together for our final meeting of the year to share great food and friendships. After the short business meeting, we enjoyed our potluck dinner, sang *Happy Birthday* to our December birthday folks.

At our gift exchange, we hope that everyone getting just what they wished for.



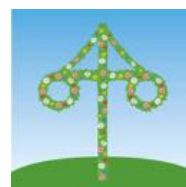
We drew the raffle ticket for the Finnish doll, dressed in an outfit hand made by Kathleen Anderson. The proceeds were donated to the Finn-Am scholarship fund. Marian Martin was the lucky winner... at our last meeting of the year.



Because it was a family's most sterile building, sauna was a place for childbirth, treating the ill and dressing the dead.

In addition to purposes of hygiene, saunas were a prominent part of holidays and life events, as well as a means of socializing. Saunas were so central to their lives, Finnish soldiers in the field would ingeniously construct them under the most challenging circumstances. Immigrants brought their sauna traditions with them, and many Finnish Americans have grown up with sauna as a part of life.

June - Juhannus Celebration



Finland is known for its "white nights" and Midsummer's is the whitest/longest day of the year. It is celebrated each year on the Saturday falling between June 20th and June 26th. This year it will be celebrated on June 24th. The original purpose of Juhannus celebrations were to pay tribute to the pagan god, Ukko, the Finnish god of weather, fertility, and growth. Midsummer was celebrated as a feast of fertility. One of the oldest traditions of Finnish Midsummer is juhannustaika, magic rituals. By performing magical rituals at Midsummer, people believed they could secure a better future for themselves, ensure good fortune for their household, guarantee an abundant crop, protect their livestock from illness, and find true love.

Plan on joining with Finn-Am/FHH at Jura Hall to celebrate Juhannus at noon on June 17th.

The Tori at FHH

The FHH Tori will open for the season on Saturday, May 13th, 2023 and will then be open every Saturday morning through mid-November. Stop by between 9 and 12 to view many of our donated items and to enjoy some coffee and conversation. Pulla/Nisu will also be on sale, along with many varieties of homemade cookies and other delicacies.

FEBRUARY 19 - FEBRUARY 25 WAS NATIONAL SAUNA WEEK



But it's not too late to pay tribute to Sauna, the Finnish bathing method using heat, sweat and steam for cleansing. Sauna is also the name of the building used for this purpose. The Finnish sauna is at least 2,000 years old and remains an important part of life today. Sauna is the most known Finnish word in the U.S., within and outside of the Finnish American community. In Finland, a country of 5.5 million people, there are 3.3 million saunas.

Most often, it was the sauna, not the house, that was the first structure to be built. The first saunas had no chimney and were called *savu* ("smoke") saunas.

THE RECIPE BOX

Vegan pea soup (vegaaninen hernekeitto)



Pea soup traditionally appears on Finnish menus on Thursdays. Dark rye bread, also shown here, is an even more iconic part of Finnish cuisine. Photo: Ossi Lehtonen/Lehtikuva

A tasty soup made from dried split peas is an iconic part of Finnish cuisine. One of the ingredients is typically meat on the bone (usually salted pork), but restaurants may offer a vegan version. In Finland, pea soup is traditionally eaten on Thursdays, with a thick, oven-baked pancake for dessert. (The custom can be traced back centuries, to a time when people ate a heavy meal on Thursdays to prepare for the church-mandated fast on Fridays.)

- 2 cups dried green split peas
- 10 cups of water
- 3 carrots
- 1 or 2 parsnips
- 4.5 oz celeriac (celery root)
- 1 onion
- 1 tbs salt
- marjoram, black pepper

Rinse the peas and soak them overnight in water. Drain them and put them in a large pot with new water. (If you do prefer to add meat, now is the time.) Bring to a boil and skim carefully after ten minutes. Simmer for about an hour. Meanwhile, peel and cut the vegetables into bite-size pieces. Add the vegetables and spices to the pot and continue simmering for about 30 minutes. When serving the soup, provide mustard and diced red onion, which each guest can add according to individual taste.

Finnish Language Classes To Return In June

By Steve Gifford

Marja-Leena Bailey will be offering two days of Finnish language instruction on Saturday, June 24th and Sunday, June 25th. The class on Saturday will be for beginning students and those who wish to review the beginning level, and the Sunday class will be for low to high intermediate students. The schedule for each of the two days will include five hours of language instruction.

The classes will be held in Jura Hall beneath the Finnish Church on Route 131 (River Road) in South Thomaston. The cost for each class is \$65.00 and Marja-Leena will provide students with copies of the materials.

If you have questions regarding the classes, or if you wish to discuss which_level is best suited for you, please contact Marja-Leena Bailey by phone, text or WhatsApp at __978-761-1102, or by email at baileysaarinen@gmail.com.

Finnish Language Class Registration Form

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Email Address _____

Telephone # _____

Please circle your class preference

Beginners Class - Saturday, June 24th.

Intermediate Class - Sunday, June 25th

Please complete a registration form and mail it together with a check (payable to Finnish Heritage House) to Finnish Heritage House, P.O. Box 293, South Thomaston, Maine, 04858.



FINLANDIA FOUNDATION NATIONAL (FFN)

By Jackie Harjula

On the weekend of April 1st, I will be in Boynton Beach, FL, to attend the semi-annual meeting of FFN. As a member of several committees (Grants, Nominating, Communications, and Performer of the Year), I have been meeting with some of them over Zoom to do preliminary work. The Grants Committee has received 43 applications, with requests totaling nearly \$200,000. We must narrow the awards down to our budgeted amount of \$125,000-lots of reading! There are many worthwhile proposals. The maximum award is \$5,000.

There are now term limits placed on Board members, so our Nominating Committee is discussing some potential new members. More exciting news!!! FFN has hired a young man, Thomas Flanagan, as our new Executive Director. As a former member of our Young Leaders Board, he brings a wealth of expertise to FFN. His presence will certainly help our Chapters appeal to youth. This is necessary, as many of our Chapters have an aging membership. We need to promote our Finnish heritage and culture to our younger generation.

National Sauna Week, founded and promoted by FFN, has just concluded. It found many Chapters planning special events related to the Sauna tradition: lectures, mobile saunas, videos, comedy routines, and more. Maybe next year our group can plan something about saunas with Finn-Am.

At our last FHH Board meeting, we agreed to sponsor the FFN Performer of the Year (POY) Ida Metsberg, a composer and soloist from NYC. This will be scheduled for late summer/early fall. As a Chapter of the national group (FFN) we have been able to bring many Finnish performers and lecturers to our little area of Maine.

- Concert pianists (Craig Randal Johnson, Ruusamari Teppo (great-great granddaughter of Jean Sibelius)
- Lecturers (Finnish cooks Soile Anderson and Eleanor Ostman)
- Soloists (Eeppi Ursin)
- Duos (Allotar with Sara Pajunen and Teija Niku)
- Kantele Players (Wilho Saari and Ida Elina)

FFN pays for their travel expenses and the host group provides lodging, food, and an honorarium. An additional benefit is the opportunity to share our Finnishness with community members. It has been a privilege for me to represent FHH on our national board.

Finlandia Foundation National is a proud sponsor of Finnding America, a new documentary series by Santi “Fox” Hynönen that explores Finnish entrepreneurship, startups and culture on his epic, 13,000-mile road trip through 31 states.

Santi is a Finnish-born independent art director/designer, producer and photographer based in Helsinki and Los Angeles. Below please find the links to the trailer and episode1.

Trailer: <https://youtu.be/hzsGEgZzxJg>

Episode1: https://youtu.be/j3Rr_-LfazM

Combined Newsletter publication**schedule**

By Fred Webel

Publications of the combined Finnish Heritage House / Finn-Am newsletter will consist of three editions per year: **Spring/March, Summer/June, and Fall/September.**

We will look forward to producing interesting newsletters. Your suggestions and contributions are welcome and appreciated.



CALENDAR**March**

18th Finn-Am/FHH St. Urho's Day
Celebration 12:00 noon

21st FHH Board Meeting 3:00 pm

April

15th Finn-Am Potluck 12:00 pm

18th FHH Board Meeting 3:00 pm

May

16th FHH Board Meeting 3:00 pm

20th Finn-Am Potluck 12:00 noon

June

17th Finn-Am/FHH
Juhannus Celebration 12:00 noon

20th FHH Board Meeting 3:00 pm

July

15th Finn-Am Potluck 12:00 noon

18th FHH Board Meeting 3:00 pm

All Finn Am meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday from March through December at noon at Jura Hall. Meetings include a potluck luncheon, a short meeting and entertainment. Annual dues are \$5.00. All are welcome.

***The Finnish Heritage House***

172 St. George Road / State Route 131, P. O. Box 293, South
Thomaston, Maine 04858

Website: www.finnheritage.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Finnish-Heritage-House-111062928972026/

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Gary Swanson

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Alex Anttila

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Finnish Heritage House to preserve the memory of our Finnish immigrant ancestors who freely chose a new homeland and transplanted the seed of the Finnish people to be assimilated within the American dream.

In their honor, we pledge to help their descendants in tracing their family roots, as well as promoting closer ties between our two nations.

***The FinnAm Society of Mid-Coast Maine
South Thomaston, Maine*****Officers**

President: **Linda Grant**

Vice President: **Anne Little**

Secretary: **Mariann Ahola**

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Gary Swanson

Newsletters will automatically stop 12 months after membership has expired.

If you are an FHH member and have received your newsletter via Postal Mail, please also check your mailing label to see if your membership has or will be expiring. Please renew your membership.

If you are an FHH member and have received your newsletter exclusively via email we thank you. If your membership will be expiring, you will receive an email reminding you to renew.

If you are an FHH member and have received your newsletter via Postal Mail, and would be willing to receive your newsletter exclusively in electronic format as an email attachment, please send us an email at: fhh.sthomasston.me@gmail.com requesting email delivery.

To JOIN as a new member, or to RENEW your membership, please complete this form and return, with a check payable to Finnish Heritage House, to FHH, P.O. Box 293, South Thomaston, ME 04858.

Name _____ Renewal _____ New _____

Address _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

E-mail Address _____

I'd like to receive the FHH newsletter by E-mail _____ U.S. Mail _____

I'd like to get involved in the following activity/activities or committee(s)

Exhibits _____ Fund Raisers/ Luncheons etc. _____ Building Maintenance _____ Docent _____

Newsletter _____ Grants _____ Music/Dance _____ Children's Activities _____ Library _____

Other (Please specify) _____

Annual Membership (\$10) _____ 5 Year Membership (\$45) _____ Gift \$ _____



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