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# Finger Lakes Finns

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Volume 11, Number 4

NEWSLETTER

November / marraskuu 2007

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## A Most Enjoyable Concert by Richard Koski



An excellent concert was enjoyed by about 130 people who attended the Finger Lakes Finns fall concert in Newfield in September. First on the program was our own local band, Toivo, which set feet to tapping with their old-time dance rhythms. Next, was the main event, Maria Man-

nisto, the Finlandia Foundation Performer of the Year for 2007. She enchanted us all with her beautiful voice and excellent repertoire of Finnish songs, including many tangos. Her own skillful accompaniment on the piano was expertly complemented by her friend, Scott Teske, on bass. They are now finishing out their 2007 tour, and will soon begin recording a CD for all of us to



enjoy.

Audience response was very positive, and they indicated that they would like to see more of these kinds of concerts. This concert, as well as the one in 2006, was generously funded by a Tompkins County Tourism Grant with support from the Town of Newfield. Hopefully, we can organize another concert next year. We have heard from the Sillanpää family in Finland that they will be here in July, so we are looking forward to a performance by them.

We had our quilt raffle drawing at the concert, and Roy Huhta from Spencer was the lucky winner of the beautiful quilt made by the ladies of the Finger Lakes Finns.

The evening ended in the cafeteria with socializing over coffee, pulla, and other refreshments. Thanks to everyone who worked to make this such an enjoyable evening.

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## Peter Kalm, 18th Century Finn In New York by Lawrence Backlund

Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish naturalist, sent Peter Kalm to the New World in 1748-51 to collect samples of plants and seeds. They were to be classified by Linnaeus to advance science and to be transplanted to relieve Finland's poverty. Kalm succeeded in one of these goals, but met with little success with the other, despite a strenuous effort.

Paula Ivaska Robbins tells Kalm's story in a new book, *The Travels of Peter Kalm, Finnish-Swedish Naturalist, Through Colonial North America, 1748-51* (Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 2007).

Kalm traveled and collected hundreds of samples. In September 1748, he arrived in Philadelphia, visited New York City, made his way up the Hudson River to Albany, crossed Lake Champlain, rode the St Lawrence River downstream, and camped and canoed among Dutch, British, and French settlers. He slept in Indian villages and Québec palaces. He faced the dangers of wartime hostilities between the Indian allies of the British and the French, even though a peace had been signed in Europe. He traveled unarmed, relying on guides and goodwill, lugging heavy wooden sample cases, assisted by his servant Lars Jungström.

He even saw Niagara Falls and wrote a scientific description published by Benjamin Franklin in late 1750.

On his return to Philadelphia, he married Margaretha Sandin, the widow of an Uppsala University friend, Johan. They returned to Finland, where Kalm lived the rest of his life as professor of economics in Turku, making use of the journals he kept to benefit his students.

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## "Peter Kalm" continued from page 1

For his efforts, Linnaeus rewarded Kalm. He named the mountain laurel *Kalmia latifolia* in his honor.

There were few other rewards. Sadly, Kalm's attempts to transplant New World plants to improve standards of living in Finland failed. No one kept up the botanical gardens he established on Hirvensalo, near Turku, and most of his records were destroyed in a fire in 1827.

Robbins has wonderfully brought Kalm's travels to life. This book would be suitable for any reader interested in the history of science (Kalm worried about the extinction of species!), how life was lived in colonial New York (Kalm thought the Dutch housewives of Albany were hardworking, while the women of Canada were frivolous!), and how a single Finn (Kalm thought of himself as a Finn) could use his *sisu* to better his homeland.

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### Finn Fest USA

July 26-28, 2007 - Ashtabula, Ohio

by *Jeanne Pakkala Frandsen*

In 1950, when I was a teenager, I attended Camp Luther in Ashtabula, Ohio, with several others from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Spencer. So, when I heard that the Finn Fest was going to be in Ashtabula, I was very anxious to go and see what it looked like since I was there last. My daughter, Mary, also wanted to go and we decided to make the trip.

We left South Bend, Indiana, Mary's home, early on July 25 and arrived at our motel about 4:30 p.m. The weather was fine except for heavy rain through Cleveland. Our motel was located about eight miles from Ashtabula but we had the car, so it was no problem. On July 26, we traveled to Kent State at Ashtabula, the site of the Finn Fest.

The first thing we did was to visit the Tori! It was great. They provided box lunches for us (included in our fees) and then we went to a lecture entitled "Pictorial history of Finns thru postcards of the early 1900s" which was very interesting. As many as 3,000 Finns settled there in the early part of the 20th century and many were employed on the docks, shoveling iron ore and coal. On to the Finnish knife exhibit, the "puukko", where the man showed us all around and told us about all the knives and what they are used for. There was also a display of military artifacts from Finland's Winter War with Russia, including old uniforms and weapons, maps, etc.

We went to the Elks' Club for dinner (There was no dessert!). We had time before the next event, a concert at the high school, so we drove out to see if we could find

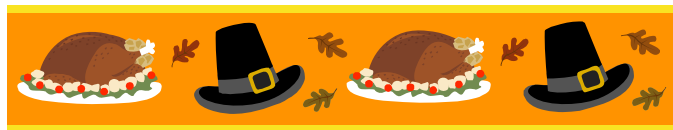
Camp Luther. The original site was gone, purchased by the large power company there, but there was a new one about eight miles further. We drove in and looked around. It looked similar to the old one of many years ago. When the Suomi Synod became part of the ELCA, they sold the camp to the ELCA with the stipulation that one week had to be set aside for the Finns. The concert we attended later at Lakeside High School was performed by the Vox Solenne Chamber Choir from Saarijarvi, Finland, and the Ashtabula County Choral Music Society

The next day we heard Dr. Carl Rahkonen on the kantele and Mrs. Rahkonen spoke on education in Finland. Then we went to a display and talk about Faberge' eggs. Many Finnish men designed these eggs and Faberge' let them use their own mark, contrary to Cartier, who did not. Faberge' also shared profits with them when he made a lot of money on a particular egg. Bill Ahonen talked about how the Finns succeeded in spite of being in a "bad" neighborhood. Richard Impola spoke on "History or Novel", referring to Linna's trilogy "Under the North Star" and "The Egyptian;" and "Dancing on Graves" a translation by Impola but not yet published. In the evening, we attended a wonderful concert conducted by Craig Randal Johnson, bringing his Finn Fest Symphony to Ashtabula. He recruited orchestra members from all around to perform.

Every night at the motel about 9:00 p.m. we would hear a dog barking. We called the desk and it stopped. On Sunday morning, as we were leaving, we ran into Craig Randal Johnson and a white haired, older lady friend of his. He introduced us and said she played in the orchestra. And, can you guess what she had on a leash? A dog! They were staying at the same motel as we were and we didn't say a word about the dog!

On Saturday, the 28th, I went to the Camp Luther reunion but was disappointed because there was no one there who had gone with me. So, I went with Mary to hear Carl Rahkonen's lecture on Finnish fiddling through the ages. After lunch, we went out to Ashtabula Harbor and took pictures and I bought some postcards at the Marine Museum there. We also visited the Finnish Heritage Museum. On Saturday evening, they held a nice picnic and entertainment for us at the Lakefront Park. I fell and fractured my wrist, but I took some pain killer and managed to enjoy myself anyway.

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## "Finn Fest USA" continued from page 2

Bethany Lutheran Church for the service there. It was very nice – the Vox Solenne Choir sang and the organist and pastor were both from Finland. They had a nice meal for us afterward and then we were on our way.

I am very grateful that I was able to go to this gathering at Ashtabula; although Mary and I didn't know anyone we made friends at meal time and got to know some nice people. Next year the Finn Fest will be in Duluth – my wish would be that we could all go!

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### A Word from Our President *Richard Ahola*



This is my last message as President of the Finger Lakes Finns. I thank the membership, officers and members of the Board of Trustees for three years of enjoyable meetings and events.

Over the last three years, the Finger Lakes Finns achieved tax exempt status from both state and federal governments, chartering by the New York State Board of Regents, and approval as a chapter of the Finlandia Foundation.

The Finger Lakes Finns also awarded college scholarships, built an award winning float for the Spencer Picnic parade, sponsored three memorable concerts and traveled to Finland to tour and shop.

Janet and I attended a Finlandia Foundation president's meeting in the state of Washington, a Finn Fest in Florida and Finn Funn weekends in Connecticut, Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts.. The people we met will be part of our memories forever. A special memory will be Juhannus with Hemmo and Patty and family. This Juhannus was also shared with Finlandia Foundation President John Laine.

Thank you for a fulfilling three years. I am looking forward to future participation in an organization which will grow and prosper under excellent new leadership.



## Finns Are About Funn Finger Lakes group promotes culture *by Kayla Baker*

[This article is reprinted with permission. It was first published by the Finger Lakes Community Newspapers, 10/17/2007]

It is well-known that Spencer and the surrounding area is heavily populated with people of Finnish heritage.

It comes as no surprise then that the Finger Lakes Finns, according to their web site [fingerlakesfinns.org](http://fingerlakesfinns.org), established themselves, in 1968, as "a social organization for the preservation, promotion and enjoyment of the Finnish culture."

The Finger Lakes Finns are a group of about 140 people in the Finger Lakes region, some Finnish others not, who share an interest in Finnish culture.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about Finland. It's not a third world country," said Richard Ahola, President of the Finger Lakes Finns.

"The countryside is beautiful, the summer is warm, and everyone seems to have a cottage on a lake."

According to public record, Finnish people began settling the Spencer area in the early 20th century. As a culture, Finnish people are known for being hard-working and straightforward, which Ahola mentioned as one of the probable reasons Finnish settlers were such successful farmers.

"Spencer, like a lot of places, has gone away from farming, but that really is the background of a lot of the people in Spencer," Ahola said.

"They're probably the most literate people in the world," Ahola said of the Finns. "They probably read more books than any other nation."

The Finger Lakes Finns is a very social group that enjoys the arts and sharing their interests with others. According to Ahola, the Finger Lakes Finns are bonded not just by their heritage, but also by their similar interests.

"It's basically an educational, cultural, historical society that is trying to promote and continue the Finnish heritage," Ahola said.

The Finger Lakes Finns meet monthly at the Newfield Fire Hall, on the third Sunday at 1 p.m. Many aspects of the organization's operations are discussed at the meetings, but the fun part is the potluck dinner and the entertainment.

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**"Finns About Fun" continued from page 3**

"As usual, when Finns get together, there's music involved, and art," said Ahola.

Programs sometimes include performers, presentations, and guarantee a few delicious dishes for the taste buds to enjoy. Somewhere in the midst of all the art and entertainment, however, progress is made.

Ahola will be leaving his position as president this fall, after serving for three years. "It's been a good run. People have been very helpful. We have good meetings. During that three years we obtained a not-for-profit status, we got the recognition of the Board of Regents, and we joined the Finlandia Foundation," he said.

Membership is a mere \$5 per year and is open to anyone and everyone with an interest in Finnish culture.

Now that the Finger Lakes Finns is part of the national Finlandia Foundation, the organization enjoys the musical and artistic work of nationally recognized Finnish artists.

The Finger Lakes Finns also award annual scholarships locally to graduating high school seniors who may be members or non-members of Finnish descent. Last year two \$500 scholarship was awarded to area students.

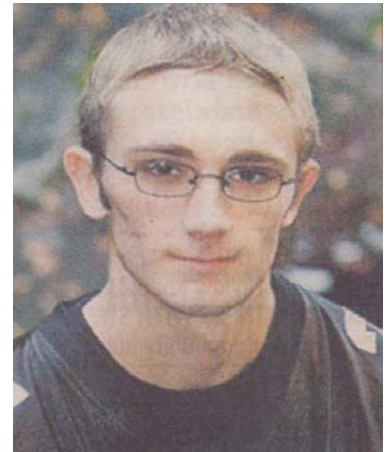
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**2007 Scholarship Award**

*by Virpi Loomis*

This past June, at Juhannus festivities, Matthew Thomason of Montour Falls was awarded the seventh annual \$500 Finger Lakes Finns Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded each year to one or more deserving high school seniors of Finnish heritage in the Finger Lakes region.

Matthew is a 2007 graduate of Odessa-Montour High School. In addition to being class salutatorian, Matthew was named a Mark Twain Scholar, a Schuyler-Chemung-Tioga BOCES district honor for students in the top 5% of their graduating class. In addition to excellence in academics, Matthew



also excelled in several sports, earning "Most Valuable Player" and "Most Outstanding" awards in basketball and track. Throughout high school, Matt has worked at basketball camp, done farm work and yard work, and most recently worked at a disabled children's camp. He is enrolled at Keuka College, majoring in education with plans to teach history. Matthew is the son of Ellen Thomason of Montour Falls and the grandson of Ellen Hill Thomason.

Winners of the Finger Lakes Finns Scholarship Award are selected on the basis of scholarship, participation in activities, and interest in Finnish heritage. The award is given after the successful completion of the first year as a full time student at an accredited institution of higher learning. Last year's two winners, Molly Oates and Kevin Greuber, each received their award in June. Molly and Kevin both made the Dean's List. Molly has successfully completed her first year at Goucher College and was able to take courses offered by the college in Grenada, Spain, at the end of the year. Kevin also had a very successful year at Elmira College, where he is majoring in adolescent education.

Support for the scholarship fund comes from generous donations from our members and friends. All donations are deductible to the full extent of the tax law.



**2007 Quilt Winner  
Mr. Roy Huhta, of Spencer**

The drawing took place in September, at the Finger Lakes Finns Fall Festival and concert.

Several ladies of the Finger Lakes Finns quilting group worked diligently on this year's raffle quilt. Applause to Patti Huttunen, Shirley Barton, Barbara Twombly, Virpi Loomis, Lisa Koski, and Nancy Pakkala for persevering with true Finnish sisu.



The rail fence pattern is probably from the 19th century, done in blue, green, and yellow batik colors, like the summertime colors of the hills and fields in the Finger Lakes.

**Donations to the Finger Lakes Finns**

If you would like to make a monetary donation to the Finger Lakes Finns, please indicate whether you want it to go to the scholarship fund or the general fund. If you want the donation to be made in memory of someone, please indicate who it should be in memory of and to which fund it should go.

We would like to acknowledge your gift in our next newsletter. We will not print the dollar amounts of the gifts. If you wish your donation to be anonymous, let us know and we will not print your name.

Make checks out to Finger Lakes Finns and send to our Treasurer, Barbara Twombly, PO Box 435, Spencer, NY 14883.

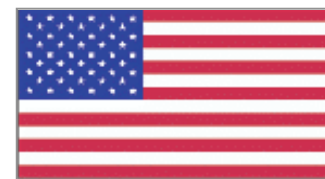
As a non-profit organization, your contribution to the Finger Lakes Finns is deductible to the full extent of the tax law.

Thank you.

**Finger Lakes Finns Officers  
Elected at the November 2007 Meeting**



Richard Ahola, Past President; Lisa Koski, President; Jeanne Frandsen, Secretary; Barbara Twombly, Treasurer; Virpi Loomis, Vice President



**Finger Lakes Finns Officers**

**President:** Lisa Koski

**Vice President:** Virpi Loomis

**Treasurer:** Barbara Twombly

**Secretary:** Jeanne Frandsen

**Membership and Change of Address Coupon**

Join \_\_\_ Change \_\_\_ Renew \_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

To join/renew Finger Lakes Finns membership, please send \$5 per person, payable to **Finger Lakes Finns**, c/o the Membership Chair:

**Jeanne Frandsen**

**502 Donalds Dr.**

**Ithaca, NY 14850**

Please send address changes to the same address.

## Calendar of Coming Events

**November 18 - Sunday 1 p.m. - FLF dish to pass luncheon**, business meeting, and program. A documentary video program will follow. The subject will be the Haapala brothers, Finnish Americans of Upper Michigan. Newfield Fire Hall.

**December 16 - Sunday 1 p.m. - Monthly meeting**, dish to pass luncheon, Pikku Joulu Christmas party, entertainment. Newfield Fire Hall.

**January 15 - Tuesday - Deadline for submission of articles**, poems, photos, and notices for the Feb. 2008 issue of the FLF newsletter. Send to Jim Loomis, editor, Upper Clark Avenue, Van Etten, NY 14889 or email: loomis@htva.net.

**January 20 - Sunday 1 p.m. - FLF dish to pass luncheon**, business meeting, and program. Newfield Fire Hall.



## Mission and Membership

Membership in Finger Lakes Finns is open to anyone of Finnish origin or with an interest in Finnish culture. Dues are \$5 per person per calendar year. Payment may be made at any time during the year, but only covers membership for the remainder of that calendar year.

Help us provide information and activities for Finns and Finn friends to enjoy. Although you do not need to be a member to attend our meetings and activities, your dues entitle you to continue receiving this newsletter and to vote on all FLF business at our meetings.

For membership please use the form in this issue or at **[www.FingerLakesFinns.org](http://www.FingerLakesFinns.org)**. Mail the form with your check or money order, payable to Finger Lakes Finns, c/o **Jeanne Frandsen, 502 Donald's Drive, Ithaca NY 14850**, or you may use a credit card at our web site.

The Newsletter is produced four times each year. We welcome members to contribute content sent to: FLF Newsletter, c/o Jim Loomis, 19 Upper Clark Ave., Van Etten, NY 14889 [Email loomis@htva.net]. The Editorial committee is Jim Loomis, Richard Koski, and Richard Ahola. **Submissions for the newsletter due are due on the 15th of the previous month.**

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c/o Jim Loomis, Editor  
19 Upper Clark Avenue  
Van Etten, NY 14889