

A Gift to the University of Pittsburgh

The Finnish Nationality Room will be built as a gift to the University, which will then maintain it as part of the University's Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs. Twenty-nine of the 31 Rooms are used as classrooms where students take their scheduled courses. Through ethnic artifacts and designs they provide a way to introduce the students and visitors to other cultures in an authentic setting.

A Huge Undertaking

This is an undertaking for all Finns and Americans. It is a chance to create a landmark of Finnish culture in a place with similar classrooms representing cultures from all around the world. It will be an accomplishment to be proud of.

How Can You Help?

Get Involved--You can help by sharing this information with your friends, family, local cultural organizations, and educational institutions.

Join the Committee! Become a Member or Contributing Member of the Finnish Nationality Room Committee (fee \$10/year). If you are a University of Pittsburgh alumnus this is a great opportunity for you to contribute to your alma mater and recognize the great Finnish heritage in Pennsylvania and across America.

Please, consider sending a contribution.

Your support is urgently requested for the work to continue.

Please, send tax-deductible donations to support the construction of the **Finnish Nationality Rooms in Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh**. To donate by mail, please, make a check payable to: University of Pittsburgh (in the memo, please write Finnish Nationality Room) and send the check to: **University of Pittsburgh, Nationality Rooms #1209, Att. Maryann Sivak, 4200 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.**

To give online, go to giveto.pitt.edu/finnishroom.

Informational Web Sites: www.nationalityrooms.pitt.edu and www.pittsburghfinns.net



The Finnish Nationality Classroom

*to be built in the
Cathedral of Learning at the
University of Pittsburgh*

Recognized far and wide, the historic Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh give the visitor a profound sense of the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Western Pennsylvania. The Rooms, 31 in number with several more to be realized within the next few years, are a source of pride to each group represented.

The Nationality Rooms are seen by tens of thousands of visitors every year through a vibrant tour program. All but two are used as classrooms. The Finnish Nationality Classroom will reflect the culture and customs of Finland and will serve as a memorial where the relatives of early Finnish immigrants will learn about their heritage and remember the contributions of their ancestors to American culture.

Student Design Contest

A competition for the best design for the Finnish Nationality Classroom was sponsored by the Finnish Nationality Room Committee at the University of Pittsburgh. In March, 2006, Professor Anna-Maija Ylimaula (left), of the University of Oulu, came to Pittsburgh with three plans that were selected as winners of the design competition in Finland. The University of Pittsburgh Finnish Committee members, together with Nationality Rooms Director E. Maxine Bruhns (middle) and the University of Pittsburgh architect Park Rankin (right), selected Gröndahl's design, Big Dipper, for first prize.



Mika Gröndahl's elegant design, based on a traditional Finnish smoke house will be expanded to include details of Finnish log construction and motifs of the time period will be displayed. It will contain the essential elements for a showpiece of Finnish culture.



The Finnish Nationality Room at the University of Pittsburgh will highlight two important aspects of Finnish culture in 1778: first, *the high literacy rate and variety of schools* and, second, *the unique construction technique found in Finnish log houses*

Education in Finland and America

A primer to teach reading, *The ABC Book*, was published in 1543. Reading and writing soon spread widely, through instruction in two-week schools sponsored by the Lutheran church. Two hundred years later, in 1778, reading and writing were common, and additional education was offered in vocational and academic schools. In the American colonies, in 1640, the first Lutheran Church in the New Sweden settlement, near Wilmington, Delaware, had a Finnish pastor, Reorus Torkillus¹. [¹ Engle, Eloise, *Finns in North America* (Annapolis, MD: Leeward Publications, Inc., 1975).] The Finnish ABC book was used there.

Finnish Log Construction--Unique in the World

Finnish log construction, displayed in the smoke houses of Finland, is preserved in the Seurasaari Open-Air Museum in Finland and in the Valley County Museum Complex at Roseberry Idaho in the United States. Finnish log construction is a precise and exact art, utilizing custom-fit logs and dovetailed corners. Only generations of building and living in log houses could have brought it to this state of excellence.



Mr. Frank Eld, Idaho, watched with great admiration as a log building was constructed by his father and other Finns, with a systematic technique and detailed handyman's work, using special tools brought from Finland. He has found the structure of Finnish fitted logs to exist in buildings everywhere Finnish immigrants have settled, and also in the oldest log houses built by Finns in colonial times New Sweden This was the work of skillful men following a tradition of generations of Finns. The Finnish Nationality Classroom will be built with Frank Eld's guidance and tools, including the Finnish axeman's "secret" tool, "vara."

Savu-pirtti Smoke House



A smoke house had a massive stone fireplace without a chimney--the smoke exited from this hole and circulated through the upper part of the room to conduct the heat. Nearby, towards the center of the room, was an opening in the roof covered with a flap which was let down to draw the smoke up and out of the house when the fireplace was heating; the flap was then closed by lifting it up again. On the upper part of the

wall there were smaller holes from which the smoke also exited. After the fire had burned down, ashes and smoldering embers were cleared from the fireplace, and an even heat remained in the house. At the back of the fireplace, behind a wall, there were separate bedrooms, often four. The smoke house was a common dwelling in Finland in the 1800s and earlier. The walls were built with fitted logs, with the upper log being carved to fit over the lower log, which was left round. In the corners the logs were interlocked with traditional "salmon tail" joints. The floor consisted of thick planks.

Sisu does it!

Given the limited number of classrooms still available, funding the Finnish Nationality Room within the allotted time is absolutely essential. The current room design honors our heritage, featuring a sturdy log structure surrounded by nature and decorated with traditional artwork and objects.

It will require the full support of Finns and Americans to meet the cost of construction. When completed, the Finnish Nationality Room will add immeasurably to the University's already impressive group of classrooms with a heritage of people devoted to living in a Nordic land of lakes and forests.

Inside Look at the Finnish Nationality Classroom



Picture 1 Entryway: At the door to the classroom where students enter. Immediately on the right is a column demonstrating dovetailed corner construction. In the ceiling are seven stars of the Big Dipper as symbols of the first novel in Finnish, *Seven Brothers*, by Aleksis Kivi in 1870. On the left wall is a mural of trees in an outdoor scene and at the end of the pathway is a model of a sauna, the icon of Finnish culture. This sauna is a non-functioning structure of logs blackened to appear as a smoke-sauna, containing a fire pit and benches on which students sit. An opening from the sauna to the main room allows the students to join the class from the sauna.



Picture 2: View from back to front



Picture 3: View from front to back

A Landmark and Important Media Attraction

This Room will be in the Cathedral as a historic landmark along with 31 other Nationality Rooms and a permanent memorial to the Finns who, with their skills and dedication, were an important group of people creating opportunities for others to live in areas where only the Finns, who did not fear the cold or the snow, were able to build churches, cities and schools. Through an extensive tour program, the Finnish Room will be seen by tens of thousands of visitors yearly, and even more people will experience the public media's frequent features of these room and of the different ethnic programs which they provide.