

Notes from Meeting with Gail Pizarro, Development Office
Suomi College

Kalervo Frieberg, Finnish Consultant
to Suomi College

Dan Maki, History Professor
Suomi College

March 26, 1979
Hancock, Michigan

	x Gail
desk	x Kalervo
	x Matt
	x Marina x Dan

Matt and I drove from Ashland, Wisconsin to Hancock, Michigan today. It was the first trip we took to the Keweenaw Peninsula regarding the ethnic music project. We were both pretty excited and watched many towns as we drove by for signs of history and ethnicity. When we drove into Hancock, we couldn't help but notice the wealth of Finnish names about town (Kaleva Cafe, Finlandia Restaurant, Finnish Mutual Life Insurance Co., and many Finnish doctors and lawyers' signs).

Our first appointment was with Gail Pizarro of the Development Office of Suomi College. We had exchange a few letters about our projects in ethnic music and Finnish culture. We got there around 3 p.m. She had invited Mr. Kalervo Frieberg, a Finnish consultant to the College this year, to meet with us, too.

We asked Gail to give us a brief history of Suomi College to help us orient ourselves and provide us with some background information from which we could gather more information and ask more questions. The College started as a Lutheran Seminary in 1896. Some twenty years later, Suomi College was reorganized in a two-year, liberal arts college. The historical emphasis in education was, of course, the Finnish culture and heritage. While today's emphasis remains with that heritage, some technical courses have been added to the college. Presently, there are 530 full-time students, of which 30-40% are of Finnish descent. Gail indicated that all students, with the exception of one, are on financial aid. She remarked that this is a reflection of the low-income bracket of their families.

We then described/outlined the Ethnic Music project to Kalervo and Gail. We handed out the newspaper article on the project and reviewed its objectives. We stressed the need to survey the area. I said there were three things we wanted to talk about: (1) general history and overview of Suomi College and its archives; (2) ethnic music projects that Suomi had undertaken in the past, or now in the present; (3) the possibility of Suomi College students or faculty collecting for the project.

Shortly after explaining our project to them, Gail called up Dan Maki, a history professor at Suomi, to come meet with us. He

walked into the room and I felt I knew him. His voice (very much of a Finnish accent), stature and knowledge, were so vivid to me. I tried to identify where I might have seen him, but failed. Matt thought it was deja vu, I thought it could have been the Oral History Conference in Savannah.

I reviewed our project objectives with Dan. He began to talk about people and place contacts with such rapidity I had a hard time keeping up with him. He said he himself is learning quite a few folksongs. He seemed quite knowledgeable about U.P. history and ethnic settlement, and quite interested in our project.

He mentioned several names of people we should contact: Keino Johnson in the Sturgeon River Valley who plays country-western and Finnish music (guitar, banjo, ukelele) and the Lappanen's of Toivola who have a dance band. He also spoke of a 96-year old Indian woman from the L'Anse reservation who knows quite a bit of old (he said very old) Chippewa songs. I remarked that Joe Rose was collecting music from Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau and Bad River, and he might be interested in travelling to L'Anse. Dan then thought for a few moments and got a Michigan map and pointed to Amasa on Route 141 as the place to go for Chippewa music. He said that quite a bit of Chippewa songs are still sung in Amasa.

Kalervo and Gail then piped in with a few names of people they felt we should contact. Kalervo mentioned he knew someone in the area who recited the Kalevala with the old rhythm patterns. Gail said we should talk to the college's archivist, Ellen Ryyanen, noted there are some 300 oral history tapes in their archives. She also suggested we meet with Olaf Rankinen, whom I had correspondence with concerning our project. He works in area communities and should have a lot of contacts; Jan Dahlquist, the college librarian; Don Myrvik, the Dean of Faculty at Suomi who is also a musicologist; Melvin Kangas, the present choir director at Suomi; and Arthur Hill, the former choir director at Suomi who is now organist at Hancock Gloria Dei Church. She said he knows quite a bit and knows a lot of people. His wife, the former Martha Mattala, is a good alto singer.

At this point in the conversation, Matt began talking with Gail and Kalervo, which allowed me some time to really delve into Dan Maki's ethnic knowledge of the Upper Peninsula. Using the map as the focus of our conversation, Dan travelled across the map with such speed it was hard to keep up with my notes. He underlined several Finnish towns to visit and circled two major areas in which to concentrate in. The first area runs from Houghton-Hancock to Ontonagon, through Mass City, Nisula and over to Baraga. The other area centers around Marquette-Negaunee-Ishpeming.

Finding out we were concerned with other ethnic groups as well, he

gave me the following list of areas:

Ontonagon - Finns and Slavs

Houghton/Hancock - Cornishmen

*Ishpeming and Marquette - (look for names prefixed tre')

Norway - Italians

Iron Mountain

Crystal Falls

Paynesville - Finns, some French Canadians

Bruce's Crossing

Wakefield - Slavs, Finns

Gwinn - Finns

Marquette - French Canadian

St. Ignace

Sault St. Marie

L'Anse

Lake Linden

Herman - Finnish (maybe socialists)

Iron Mountain - Finns, some Swedes

*Gatesville - Polish

De Tour Village

Baraga Swedish, the Swedish Lutheran Church and other dwellings reflect the Swedish culture there

*Skaneatele

Dan Maki also noted that we should look at remote places (e.g., Fayette on Big Bay) for pockets of culture. When we mentioned our thoughts to travel up to Keweenaw County, he felt it may be a waste of our time, since there are so few people living there. Dan then had to leave to teach a class. He said he'd give the project some more thought and drop us a line if he came up with anything else.

The rest of our meeting was spent with Gail and Kalervo. They suggested we go and see Suomi's archives. Kalervo seems to have quite an interest in the archives and in seeing them organized. The archive is a volunteer operation. Ellen Ryyanen comes in the mornings. Kalervo says that Suomi has perhaps the finest collection in the United States. The archive itself contains oral history and heritage line tapes (from radio broadcasts on the subject of ethnic history and folklore in the area), many

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boxes of minutes and records, newspapers and pamphlets and photographs.

Kalervo stressed that we should talk to Ellen Ryynanen about the materials and information available in the archives. He felt that our best resources would be the oral history and heritage line tapes which are also transcribed. He then showed us 5 or 6 boxes of pamphlets regarding Finnish music and took several books off the shelf which were either Finnish hymnals or song-books. Many of them dated back to the 1890's. He seemed distressed with the condition of the archive (not keeping with the cataloguing) but says that things could eventually be found. Before he left us, we went to another storage room for materials for the archives. Gail noted that people bequethed many books and materials to the Suomi College Archive, but they had little time nor staff to sort through the materials to determine their value. When we left Kalervo, he indicated he was quite interested in the project, and if we needed help to let him know.

We returned to Gail's office where she tried to make a few appointments for us on Tuesday. Matt and I decided to wind up the meeting and walk about town for a while.

MLH/a
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