

## **"The Land of the Midnight Sun": American Tourists in Finland, 1870-1914**

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### **Abstract**

From 1870 to 1914, Finland attracted newfound attention from American tourists eager to explore this western corner of the Russian Empire. Americans ventured through forests, lakes, saunas, and villages, acquiring a deep admiration for Finns. Yet, travelers also harbored hesitations about Finns' "Mongolian" roots and ambiguous racial status. Even so, American tourists fretted about the impacts of Russification, which increased from the 1880s, and largely echoed concerns throughout Europe and the diaspora about Finnish sovereignty and self-determination under the tsars. Tourists' experiences in Finland thus reveal vital tensions and evolutions in American perceptions of Russia and its empire.

# "The Land of the Midnight Sun": American Tourists in Finland, 1870-1914

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## Introduction: American Travelers in Finland

In the late 1880s, American tourists Thomas Mitchell and Carter H. Harrison IV (1825-93) traveled separately to Finland, the "Land of the Midnight Sun." Like many of his compatriots, Mitchell folded Finland into broader explorations of the Russian Empire as it navigated late-nineteenth-century modernity. Harrison, in contrast, was an adventurer engaged in a "race with the sun," an effort to circle the globe while remaining only in summertime conditions.<sup>1</sup> Despite their different aims, Mitchell and Harrison both made the trek far north to the Arctic Circle to witness Finland's "Midnight Sun." Taking trains from Uleaborg to Tornea and then crossing fields and rivers by a combination of foot and carriage, the Americans reached their pilgrimage destination: Aavasaksa. From this raised hill, the sun could be seen continuously for 14 days—including a 72-hour stretch during which it did not set—every summer. The scenes were incredible, according to Harrison, who likened what he saw to a "sunset glow. . . painted upon the sky," whose horizons were colored by rich bands of "gold and yellow and red and purple" before everything dimmed to a gray that became "crystallized and almost as fixed as in a picture on canvas."<sup>2</sup> American like Mitchell and Harrison were thus eager to examine Finland and its rich offerings.

In this article, I examine American tourists' experiences and interpretations of tsarist Finland between 1870 and 1914.<sup>3</sup> While Finland had much to recommend itself in the early- and mid-nineteenth century, it emerged as a more highly favored tourist destination only during and after Tsar Alexander II's (r. 1855-1881) Great

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1. He conducted a "race with the sun, around the world," in which he attempted to remain in summertime conditions for as long as possible after departing Chicago. He "lost" the fifteen-month race, but remained in summertime climates for over a year. Carter H. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun* (New York: Putnam's 1889), 1, 566-569.

2. Thomas Mitchell, *Russian Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil* (New York: Scribner and Welford; The Religious Tract Society, 1889), 219-220. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 474.

3. In 1809, amid the Napoleonic Wars, Russia annexed Finland, which became integrated into the empire as a Grand Duchy nominally headed by the tsar.

Reforms.<sup>4</sup> Some of these changes, namely improvements in Russia's foreign passport system and the gradual expansion of railway systems, were highly "in favor of travelers," as the influential tourist writer John Murray put it. Equally, Murray encouraged his readers to explore Russia as it underwent changes "so highly interesting to those who study the political progress of nations and the consequent increase of their well-being."<sup>5</sup> In short order, then, Finland became a transnational hub for European and Russian travelers yearning for rest, relaxation, and political inquiry.<sup>6</sup> Noteworthy individuals among the scores of middle- and high-brow pleasure seekers visiting Finland during this period include US President Ulysses Grant (1822-1885),<sup>7</sup> Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs N. K. de Girs (1820-1895),<sup>8</sup> and, of course, Tsars Alexander III (r. 1881-1894) and Nicholas II (r. 1894-1917), who conducted royal getaways here in the summer.<sup>9</sup> Americans actively contributed to these global developments occurring in and around Finland over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But this era came to a close in 1914 due to the series of disruptions to travel and monumental geopolitical changes imposed by World War I, the Russian Revolution, and Finland's wars of independence.

Several exceptional travelogues illuminate trends in American travels to Finland seen across accounts published over this period.<sup>10</sup> Works from Mitchell, Harrison, and Wickham Hoffman (1821-1900) showcase Finland's attraction to

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4. The classic overview of the reforms remains W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990).

5. John Murray, ed., *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: John Murray (firm), 1868), v. His prior edition was published in 1849 and he issued updates in 1875, 1888, and 1893.

6. On British tourism in Finland, see Tony Lurcock, *No Particular Hurry: British Travellers in Finland* (London: CB Editions, 2015). For some of the sources indicating Russians' similarly keen interest in Finland, see N. S. Illarionov, *Putevye zametki o Finliandii* (Khar'kov: M. F. Zil'berberga, 1886); N. P. Trebezov, ed., *Iz poezdki v Finliandiiu i za granitsu: Vyborg, Gel'singfors, Sveaborg, Stokgol'm, Hristianiiia, Kopengagen, Kil' i London* (Sankt Peterburg: I. Fleitmana, 1911); and Severnoe biuro putestestvii (Sankt Peterburg), *Raspisanie dlia putestestvii po Finliandii* (Sankt Peterburg: Novo tipo-lit. A. M. Lassman, 1914).

7. Upon retiring from the presidency, Grant toured the world, as outlined and examined in Louis L. Picone, *Ulysses's Odyssey Ulysses S. Grant's World Tour at the Dawn of American Empire* (Havertown: Savas Beatie, 2026). Into the early 1880s locals still referred to the hotel Grant visited as the "White House" for its coloration and connection to Grant. Harriet Cornelia Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe* (New York: John B. Alden, 1892), 6.

8. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 52.

9. Hayward's tour coincided with a planned, and abandoned, Romanov trip to Aavasaksa. In fact, Hayward's hired carriage attracted the attention of locals, who wondered whether its occupants were attached to the royals. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 8, 18.

10. Some of the accounts not discussed here include J. Ross Brown, *The Land of Thor* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1870); Daniel Windsor, *Helsinki Travel Guide: A Comprehensive Guide to Helsinki, Finland* (1900); Paul Belloni Du Chaillu, *The Land of the Midnight Sun: Summer and Winter Journeys through Sweden, Norway, Lapland and Northern Finland* (New York: Harper, 1903).

relatively elite and powerful American men eager to globetrot. Arguably the most preeminent of these was Harrison, who was fourth in a lineage of five Carter H. Harrisons who served as mayors of Chicago from the 1870s through the 1910s.<sup>11</sup> Hoffman also had a high public profile thanks to his service as Union colonel and as a United States Secretary of Legation in St. Petersburg, Russia, from 1877 to 1883.<sup>12</sup> Mitchell may have had a more humble life trajectory, as he likely hailed from Paris, Kentucky, and was most noteworthy for editing or contributing to the fourth edition of John Murray's guide to Russia.<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, Finland welcomed many American women, including a quartet of travel writers eager to tell the public about the country.<sup>14</sup> Generally, these women occupied similar positions in the higher echelons of American society as their male counterparts. For instance, Helen Gray (1865-?), was a New Orleans- and Atlanta-based journalist and the granddaughter of Confederate sympathizer Rev. William T. Leacock (c. 1797-1884), whose politics are echoed in the defenses of Southern racial inequality appearing in her travelogue.<sup>15</sup> Ruth Kedzie Wood (c. 1880-1950), meanwhile, achieved resounding success writing for tourists, beginning with *Honeymooning in Russia* (1911) and continuing with *The Tourist's Spain and Portugal* (1913), *The Tourist's California* (1914), *The Tourist's Maritime Provinces* (1915), and *The Tourist's Northwest* (1916).<sup>16</sup> Finland also attracted Mabel Sarah Emery (M. S. Emery, 1859-1932), a member of the relatively influential northeastern

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11. Each Harrison served five terms in office. Paul Green and Melvin Holli, eds., *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 17. Harrison's trip followed the end of his public career and his wife's 1887 death. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, vi.

12. Hoffman's self-described experiences in the Civil War and the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War are presented in Wickham Hoffman, *Camp, Court and Siege: A Narrative of Personal Adventure and Observation during Two Wars, 1861-1865, 1870-1871* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877). His tour of Finland is included in Wickham Hoffman, *Leisure Hours in Russia* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1883).

13. The National Archives in Washington, DC; Washington, DC, USA; *Passport Applications, 1795-1905*; NAI: *Arc Identifier 566612 / Mlr Number A1 508*; Record Group: *General Records of the Department of State, 1763-2002*; Record Group Number: 59; NARA Series: M1372; Roll #: 297; Series Title: *Passport Applications, 1795-1905*. John Murray, ed., *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London: John Murray (firm), 1888), iii.

14. M. S. Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope; a Journey across the Land of the Czar from Finland to the Black Sea* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1901); Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*; Helen Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself; a Study of Finland under Russia in Comparison with the South of the United State* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1912); Ruth Kedzie Wood, *The Tourist's Russia* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1912).

15. Gray described herself as a journalist who investigated "problematical questions" in the US South and an "enthusiastic believer in traveling for instruction." Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 9. Gray resided in Atlanta in 1910, per "United States Census: 1910," Census; *Atlanta Ward 7, Fulton, Georgia*; Roll: T624\_192; Page: 17b; Enumeration District: 0097; FHL microfilm: 1374205.

16. Nina Baym, *Women Writers of the American West, 1833-1927* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 308.

Emery clan.<sup>17</sup> Harriet Cornelia Hayward, who either wrote under a pseudonym or otherwise left few historical traces, thus serves as the exception to the rule that Finland was the purview of elite American women. It also merits underscoring that these women seized on the fact that Finnish and Russian studies were “not yet institutionalized” and, therefore, “it was not entirely clear who constituted an ‘expert.’” As Ingrid Kleespies has shown, this created space for a few ambitious American women to “assert an authoritative persona.” Below, I extend Kleespies’ findings by illuminating how Gray, Wood, Emery, and Hayward contributed to the “emergence of more prominent roles for women” in the sphere of “American academic interest” in Finland and the Russian Empire.<sup>18</sup>

To examine these sources, I use methodologies well-established among scholars of travel and tourism. First, I foreground common patterns and practices among American tourists. As Barabara Schaff has pointed out, late nineteenth-century tourism often revolved around the recommendations of guides, especially John Murray’s handbooks, which constituted “models for tourist practice[s]” as “a central concern of the handbooks was making tourists read the right thing on the spot,” a behavior considered “culturally valuable and aesthetically edifying.”<sup>19</sup> American tourists, whose commentaries on Finland often echo Murray’s, seem to have been influenced by the many guidebooks circulating at the time.<sup>20</sup> They also participated in touristic reading cultures by invoking the *Kalevala*, which was treated as the skeleton key capable of unlocking Finnish history and culture.<sup>21</sup> I also foreground the many shared experiences and interests among American tourists, who mainly saw and did the same things as their compatriots. Second, I consider authenticity, an ideal often manufactured for tourists and, therefore, an elusive pursuit for leisure travelers, central to American tours of Finland.<sup>22</sup> Wood voiced this American quest for authenticity when she described her mission to locate

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17. She lived in Lynn, Massachusetts, and was the daughter of regional historian George Edwin Emery, who contributed to John R. Eastman and George E. Emery, eds., *History of the Town of Andover, New Hampshire, 1751-1906*, 2 vols. (Concord, NH: Rumford, 1910). She also penned a short hymn for Anon., *Annual Reunion of the Emery Family, in The Meionaon, Tremont Temple, Boston, Mass., Wednesday, September 14, 1887* (Taunton, MA: Davol’s Steam Printing House, 1888), 17.

18. Ingrid Kleespies, “A ‘Knowledge of Russian [...] No American Man Possesses:’ Isabel Hapgood on Russia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *The Slavonic & East European Review* 101, no. 2 (2023): 255, 266.

19. Barbara Schaff, “John Murray’s Handbooks to Italy: Making Tourism Literary,” in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Nicola Watson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 106.

20. Thomas Cook (Firm) and W. and A. K. Johnston Limited, eds., *Cook’s Independent Tours in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Etc., Including the Norwegian Fjords, the North Cape, the Land of the Midnight Sun, and Iceland, with Carriole and Carriage Arrangements for the Posting Routes in Norway* (London: Thomas Cook and Son, 1903); and Karl Baedeker (Firm), *Russia with Tehran, Port Arthur, and Peking: Hand-book for Travellers* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker Publisher, 1914).

21. The *Kalevala* was compiled by Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) and quickly disseminated globally. Gray’s book included a chapter composed of excerpts from the *Kalevala*. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 133-178.

22. Dean MacConnell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schoken Books, 1976), 13.

the “true Russia” that “still exist[s] unspoiled” in spite of “the most pronounced European encroachments” into the farthest-flung corners of the empire.<sup>23</sup> The hunt for the “true” Finland led some Americans to behave rather boorishly, as they barged into private abodes to inspect them and their inhabitants.<sup>24</sup>

I argue that American tourists leveraged their experiences to contribute to public understandings of Finland, which was sending waves of immigrants to the US and which shed light on developments in the late Russian Empire. I begin by overviews travelers’ journeys, which showed that expanding tourist infrastructure, the country’s intriguing cultural geography, and environmental riches made Finland an exciting new stop on American tourist circuits. This aspect of my discussion adds to literature about the histories of American tourism and of tourism in Finland.<sup>25</sup> While scholars have investigated numerous avenues of inquiry in these fields, my work is the first to focus on American tourism in Finland.<sup>26</sup> Next, I analyze how Americans dealt with Finns’ unknown and ambiguous racial and cultural identities. Reflecting divisions among contemporary scholars, travelers either accepted theories about ancient Finno-Ugric migrations and Finns’ “Mongolian” roots or, instead, likened Finns to “aborigines.” But while such debates often created complications for Finnish immigrants in the highly-racialized US, tourists almost universally admired Finns in Finland, suggesting at least some Americans held more nuanced views of Finns than might be expected. In fact, Harrison was so impressed that he endorsed Finnish immigration, which brought approximately 250,000 individuals to the US between 1880 and 1920.<sup>27</sup> Finally, I examine Americans’ discussions of political life in Finland, particularly in light of Russification efforts over the early 1900s. Americans stressed the differences between a benevolent early-nineteenth-century Russian imperialism under Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801-1825), who granted Finland a fair degree of autonomy, and its more sinister version under Tsar Nicholas II. This portion of my work speaks to scholarship by David Fogelson, who has shown that Americans at this time were becoming interested in attempting to “reform Russia” to induce

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23. Wood, *The Tourist's Russia*, 3. Emery, meanwhile, likened her writings to viewing Russia through a stereoscope because they provided “the very same. . . impressions that we should receive in the presence of the actual things.” Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 22, 26-28.

24. Harrison admitted as much, saying “I have taken advantage of our license as ignorant strangers to pry into much of the home life” of Finns. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 476.

25. On the emergence of American tourism, see Jeffrey Alan Melton, *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism: The Tide of a Great Popular Movement* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

26. There is, however, a general Finnish-language survey of English-language travelogues about Finland that mentions some of my sources. Sven Hirn and Erkki Markkanen, *Tuhansien Järvien Maa: Suomen Matkailun Historia* (Helsinki: Matkailun edistämiskeskus, 1987).

27. That number was first advanced in A. William Hoglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 7. More recently, Hoglund’s data was affirmed in Reino Kero, “Migration from Finland to North America,” in *Finns in the United States: A History of Settlement, Dissent, and Integration*, ed. Auvo Kostiaainen (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 41.

the “eventual emergence of a free Russia.”<sup>28</sup> I also see it as emblematic of the “evocative” and “sedimentary” images of Russia that Choi Chatterjee has located in American novels laden with “imperial romance, the glamorous lifestyle of exotic and privileged nobility, and the possibilities of political adventure in a diverse geographical locale.”<sup>29</sup>

### Traveling to and Touring Finland

Many Americans were motivated to travel to Finland and the Russian Empire because these areas remained a *terra incognita* among their compatriots and merited further investigation. Emery provided one of the most illuminating descriptions of the “vague, hazy idea” of what Finland was according to “many” Americans. Above all, she insisted, Americans considered Finland essentially nothing more than “ice and snow” and Lapland, so that they “almost forget that it has a summer and a prosperous city population.” Beyond that, Emery noted, well-read Americans might recall that “our own Indian poem of Hiawatha was modeled by [H. W.] Longfellow upon the Kalevala or national epic of Finland, its haunting rhythm. . . makes us think of furs and wigwams and pipes.”<sup>30</sup> By the end of her travels, Emery concluded that Finland was far more developed and interesting than the naïve, patronizing views of it held by most Americans. Similar reasoning was applied to the Russian Empire, more generally. Wood, for one, bemoaned the fact that European and American prejudices kept tourism to Russia low even into the 1910s. Russia had “long been considered a nation apart, more to be shunned than visited.” Yet, she found Russia to be a haven for tourists, who would definitively *not* “experience the shower of pebbles which has been known to descend on their kind in the Netherlands; they will not hear the insinuating hiss of the Belgian boulevards; they will never know the insolence of a Paris cabman, or the pompous jostling of a German officer.” Instead, Wood asserted, “Russia is the antithesis of all that is rude or negligent, for the stranger’s visit is counted an honor.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, those in search of welcoming but unfamiliar lands turned to Finland.

Overwhelmingly, Americans elected to acquaint themselves with Finland during the relatively warm months between May and October.<sup>32</sup> With nearly endless sun in June and July and pleasantly cool temperatures, Finland was an ideal summer getaway. As Hayward noted, “there are not many places upon this

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28. He elaborates that “Americans exhibited a belief in a duty to spread their creed, a belief that a benighted foreign people yearned for the enlightenment they could bring, a belief in the possibility of inducing a sudden conversion from an old way of life, a belief that religion is central to the virtue or depravity and the progress or backwardness of societies, a belief in a single ultimate destiny for humanity, a belief that opposition to the dissemination of their gospel is evil.” David Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

29. Choi Chatterjee, “Transnational Romance, Terror, and Heroism: Russia in American Popular Fiction, 1860- 1917,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (July 2008): 755.

30. Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 33.

31. “Russia, the Hospitable, we may say.” Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 8-9.

32. Cross-country skiers were the exception to this general rule. See John Henry Westropp Fulton, *With Ski in Norway and Lapland* (New York: Scribner, 1912).



fair earth more delightful for a summer jaunt than Finland.” This was especially the case because Finland was “so restful and quiet that you. . . can hardly realize you are on the same globe with the busy, noisy cities” in which most American leisure travelers lived.<sup>33</sup> Wood concurred, in a roundabout way, by suggesting that unexpected stops and frequent delays on Russian roads actually were a boon, for they “may present opportunities for learning lessons of repose which are only too rare in these impatient, hurried times.”<sup>34</sup>

Guided by ambitions to explore, rest, or both, Americans began their travels by boarding steamships to cross the Atlantic. Americans heading toward Europe usually departed from New York, where they boarded *White Star Line* ships sailing to Liverpool.<sup>35</sup> Then, Americans selected between the US Shipping Company and the Finland Steamship Company, which sailed from London to St. Petersburg and from Hull to Stockholm, respectively. The Swedish and the Russian capitals were opposed endpoints in steamship lines circulating along the Scandinavian coastline. In the early 1870s, a one-way trip from either Stockholm or St. Petersburg took four days, involving only 50 hours of sailing time, so that steamships were undeniably “the most convenient and agreeable mode of visiting Finland.”<sup>36</sup> The duration of the cruise, the “pleasant” views along the Scandinavia coastline, and the “exceptionally well-ordered, and even luxurious” accommodations on ships hardly changed across the decades.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the routes’ constancies enabled Americans to select the starting point for their tour of Finland from among the major ports at Viborg, Helsingfors, and Abo, though tourists generally disembarked at Helsingfors, the capital.<sup>38</sup>

Upon arriving in Finland, Americans and other tourists had to complete the relatively simple process of checking their documents with tsarist officials. Well-prepared visitors arrived with their US passports and Russian visas, which together cost US citizens only \$2.50. These documents were essential for entering and exiting the tsarist empire as well as for registering at lodges or entering Russian governmental offices. Fearing harassment from local authorities, travel writers strongly recommended that every tourist should keep his or her “passport

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33. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 1-2.

34. Wood, *The Tourist's Russia*, 14.

35. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 21-22. For a history of the *White Star Line* ships traversing the Atlantic during this period, see Mark Chirside, *The 'Big Four' of the White Star Fleet: Celtic, Cedric, Baltic & Adriatic* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2016). For consideration of how *White Star Line* and other British steamships were “floating allegories” representing “national pride, international amity, technological superiority...the march of civilization, or all of the above” see Douglas R. Burgess Jr., *Engines of Empire: Steamships and the Victorian Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 119.

36. Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 380.

37. Wood, *The Tourist's Russia*, 17.

38. By the early 1870s, the four-day journey between Stockholm and Sweden involved only 50 hours of sailing time while providing excellent views of land and sea. This made steamships “the most convenient and agreeable mode of visiting Finland.” Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 380.



bogie” on hand at all times.<sup>39</sup> Yet, anxieties about passport-related problems may have been overblown. Gray, for one, repeatedly “forgot” her passport in her baggage, including once while crossing from Finland into St. Petersburg and again when sailing out of Finland via Sweden to England. In both cases, she presented herself as a meek, ailing woman and enlisted the aid of locals, who successfully pleaded her case to customs agents.<sup>40</sup> She may have gained leniency because she seems to have intended to obey international laws, as she applied for an emergency passport at the US consulate in St. Petersburg.<sup>41</sup> But the fact that Gray escaped without harm, fines, or imprisonment may suggest a surprising degree of flexibility in Russian passport regimes for American travelers.

Another pressing priority for new arrivals was acquiring legal permission to take photographs. Generally, obtaining a photography permit was quite straightforward and affordable. Wood recommended that tourists pay five rubles for membership in the Russian Photographic Society, which was headquartered in Moscow and which evidently dealt with the legal filings for tourists. Alternatively, Americans could complete paperwork at local police stations, though this usually required a translator and could be more cumbersome.<sup>42</sup> The minor costs and time spent on this paperwork was abundantly rewarded as travelers could snap pictures to preserve memories of their time in Finland.

With passports and permissions in hand, Americans usually turned to a tour of Helsingfors, which had a host of attractions. The capital had an abundance of intriguing sites for Americans to visit, including the Finnish Senate, which had a 100,000-volume library, the Imperial Alexander University in Finland, the downtown walking strip known as the “Esplanade,” botanical gardens, bathing houses, numerous churches, and a “magnificent and beautifully decorated theater.”<sup>43</sup> Over the decades, that list expanded to encompass an art gallery, additional parks and gardens, and anything that was recommended by the Finland Tourist Office, which was located downtown at 21 Norra Esplanada.<sup>44</sup>

More importantly, though, Helsingfors afforded unparalleled insights into Finland’s cultural geographies and national character. Looking over the city

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39. Tourists also paid modest fees of 20-40 kopeks for passport stamps at each lodge. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 12-13.

40. Self-awareness was a strong suit for Gray, who exclaimed: “What a disturbance I do make with passports! When Gabriel blows his trumpet, may my passport not be packed away in my trunk, booked through to London!” Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 63-67, 130-132.

41. The National Archives in Washington, DC; Washington, DC, USA; *General Emergency Passport Applications, 1907-1923*; NAIr: Arc Identifier 1244182 / Mlr Number A1 543; Record Group: *General Records of the Department of State, 1763-2002*; Record Group Number: 59; Series Title: *General Emergency Passport Applications, 1907-1923*.

42. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 42.

43. The basic itinerary for the city is listed in Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 388, which also notes that the theater, opened in 1866, offered Swedish-language performances four times per week.

44. Wood particularly enjoyed the “picture gallery,” which displayed the “present attainments and future promise of native artists,” such as Robert Wilhelm Ekman, Berndt Lindholm, and Victor Westerholm, whose work collectively embodied “all that is typical of this imaginative and strongly patriotic country.” Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 71.

from a nearby hillside, Emery was amazed to see “Europe. . . all about us. Norway and Sweden are away on our left. . . Poland and Germany are behind us. . . St. Petersburg is off to the right.” And there, in the center of it all, stood Helsingfors, a “dignified,” “substantial,” “prosperous,” “self-respecting modern town.”<sup>45</sup> Hoffman advanced the praise even further, writing that “it is difficult to find a more highly civilized, cultivated, and agreeable society than exists at Helsingfors.”<sup>46</sup> Wood, too, admired Helsingfors for being “animated” and so “out of the ordinary. . . so unusual that it cannot be duplicated in the East or on the Western Continent.”<sup>47</sup> The city’s preponderance of granite buildings affirmed capital’s distinctive position for Woods, who noted that “Helsingfors may be accused of possessing a scheme of architecture which traduces tradition, laughs at common-placeness, and sometimes violates accepted forms” while remaining eminently “refreshing because it is different,” “it *is* Finnish.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, Americans seeking glimpses of Finnish glory and authenticity found them in the capital.

Quickly, though, most Americans began venturing further into Finland, which required employing the rickety Finnish vehicles whisking across boulevards and countrysides. Murray issued one of the first and strongest advisements against Finnish carriages, which were “patched-up vehicles” bought on the cheap from travelers who had abused them on Russian roads. This meant that the tourist who rented a Finnish carriage would almost inevitably “find himself brought to a standstill on the roadside by a regular break down of his crazy machine.” Unfortunately, alternatives such as *carrioles*, *kibitkas*, and *bondkaras*—all various forms of sleds—were little better. The *bondkara*, the “national carriage of the Finlander,” was particularly notorious for causing riders “indescribable agonies” and untold “dislocations” of their joints along the country’s bumpy roads.<sup>49</sup> Some of the problems may have stemmed from Finnish horses, which were small but “full of life” and rarely proceeded slower than a galloping pace.<sup>50</sup> Tourists’ anxieties evidently did little to alter Finnish driving as Mitchell echoed Murray’s complaints late into the 1880s.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps because of Finns’ unwillingness to change their habits, travelers increasingly either treated carts as a rather unremarkable aspect of Finland or focused on what few redeeming qualities could be found in these

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45. Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 35.

46. Hoffman, *Leisure Hours in Russia*, 109.

47. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 66.

48. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 69–73. The comments about Helsingfors’ granite echo earlier commentaries, such as Murray’s declaration that Helsingfors could be “summed up in three words, sea, granite, firs—yet these are so constantly varied in their position and circumstances that the effect cannot be said to be monotonous.” Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 386.

49. Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 380–381.

50. One boon to travelers of Finland’s carriage and sledding system was the expansive network of posting stations, usually no more than 10 miles apart, where fresh horses and a driver could be acquired for only a few kopeks each. Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 381.

51. “The speed at which Finlanders travel is curiously out of keeping with the general dilatoriness of their character.” Mitchell, *Russian Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil*, 221.

vehicles.<sup>52</sup>

A sort of compensation for discomforts endured on the road was that travel in Finland was “ridiculously cheap.” In the 1880s, Harrison spent only five cents per mile on a horse-drawn carriage hauling two passengers and light baggage. He further noted that overnight lodging at a posting station, replete with a fish dinner and basic breakfast often cost a dollar or slightly less.<sup>53</sup> With most American families annually earning between \$500-1000, such prices would have been affordable to a relatively broad range of individuals.<sup>54</sup> Prices for transportation and hotels remained low, too, as Wood noted in the 1910s.<sup>55</sup>

From the 1880s, though, Finnish railways expanded and became more integral to tourists’ travels about Finland, especially to its far northern regions. Because Finland was included in the Russian empire’s railway tariff system, which inverted rates to increase costs on short-distance travel and decrease costs on long-distance travel, tourists found trains eminently affordable. In particular, Wood noted, this meant that the trains used to travel into northern Finland to see the Midnight Sun were “very inexpensive.” In fact, the combination of low rates and excellent conditions led Wood to set second-class as the baseline—third-class was “out of the question”—and first-class was the preferred option of any discerning traveler.<sup>56</sup> Americans additionally benefitted from the fact that Finnish trains used local times rather than St. Petersburg time, as was the case in Russia. Americans’ only major complaint was that Finnish trains moved rather slowly, averaging only 26 miles per hour in most cases.<sup>57</sup>

While individual itineraries varied and encompassed a diverse smorgasbord of Finnish cities, Americans usually focused on Abo, Viborg, and Tammerfors.<sup>58</sup> Abo, Finland’s ancient capital, was as noted for its historical importance as for

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52. A case of ignoring the discomforts of carts is Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 32, 43. Harrison, in contrast, offered tentative praise for “the sort of dog cart with nice springs” he rode across northern Finland. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 474. By the turn of the century, though, carts took on a more romantic hue for the British travel writer Ethel Brilliana Tweedie, who memorialized them in E. Alec-Tweedie, *Through Finland in Carts, 1897*, 1st ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1897).

53. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 477. Hayward recommended hospices created “to give the tourist the most for the least money,” which were “well managed and reasonable in price.” Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 28.

54. Income estimate noted in US Senate Committee on Finance, “Retail Prices and Wages,” Report 986, Part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), ii.

55. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 3, 27-28.

56. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 18-19, 23.

57. Only occasionally would Finnish trains reach their maximum speed of 40 miles per hour. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 58.

58. Alternative destinations included Tavastehus, Borga, Lovisa, Aborrfor, Broby, Hogfors, Fredrikshamn, and Risalks. Overshadowing those, however, was Hango, “the Finnish Brighton or Atlantic City” and a major hub for Finnish butter exports. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 74.

its apparent decline in the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Having been charmed by coastal landscapes during the boat ride to Abo, Mitchell found the city incredibly “disappointing on landing” for “an air of desolation” prevailed there.<sup>60</sup> But Americans could find solace in Abo’s churches, since it was the “cradle of Christianity in Finland,” and, in a pinch, partake of the town’s “famous” beers.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Viborg acquired a reputation primarily defined by its relationship to the past. Here, Americans saw ruined buildings and other scars from Russian and Sweden’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wars, which had caught “poor, little Viborg. . . between two blades of the scissors!” The “peaceful competitions in potatoes, onions and yarn stockings” taking place in Viborg markets hardly overshadowed the past or made for much excitement about the present.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, most Americans only passed through Viborg on their way to northern lakes and river, as discussed below.<sup>63</sup> Tammerfors, therefore, contrasted strongly with these other urban centers for its economic development and relative vibrancy. Thanks to its strategic situation at the point where Lake Näsijärvi dumps into Lake Pyhäjärvi, Tammerfors developed a robust hydroelectric program in the late nineteenth century. The power fueled the city’s industrialization, making it the “Manchester of Finland.”<sup>64</sup> But, without Manchester’s smog and pollution, Tammerfors struck Americans as an incredibly unique locale. As Wood put it, in Tammerfors, “everything is unadulteratedly Finnish, and consequently, as substantial as it is enterprising and original.”<sup>65</sup>

But Finland’s most enticing sites lay in the great outdoors. Wood summarized Finland’s main attractions as its “Arcadia of forest green, crystal lakes, and ‘white nights’.”<sup>66</sup> For that reason, Wood recommended the “beauties of Finland” for the “nature lover, rather than the sightseer.” This was especially the case during summer, when “the stars go to bed” and “the sun takes up the night watch in their stead.” For those few magical months, “a kind of nature revelry intoxicates the land; the tourist will feel it as he drifts on serpentine streams, and penetrates piney retreats.” Should that not be enough, the “lavish foliage and vivid wild flowers

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59. Again, Murray seems to have helped established the tone and expectations tourists attached to the city. Murray was rather taken aback by Abo’s “almost deserted thoroughfares,” which gave “an air of desolation to the whole place.” Clearly, in other words, “the glory of Abo has indeed departed.” Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 385-386.

60. He rooted the city’s woes in the devastating fire of 1827, from which it apparently did not recover. Mitchell, *Russian Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil*, 218. Wood spun a similar observation in a more optimistic direction when she noted that Abo’s islands were “even more beautiful than those of the capital” and more beautiful than just about anything in Abo itself. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 74.

61. Hoffman, *Leisure Hours in Russia*, 110.

62. Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 46. An underwhelmed Wood called Viborg a “dingy jumble” of Russia and Finland. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 78.

63. Viborg was the “guardian of the way that leads to the north lakes and Imatra.” Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 78.

64. Mitchell, *Russian Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil*, 220.

65. Plus, Tammerfors sat near fantastic fishing grounds and was surrounded by rural areas full of grazing cows, hay piles, saunas, rural workers smoking tobacco, and idyllic mothers tending to their “little berry-pickers.” Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 76-77.

66. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 9.

have their share in the outdoor orgy” accompanying “the Finnish summer,” too.<sup>67</sup> Finland’s environmental wonders could also be described and evoked more succinctly by any of the country’s long list of monikers, noted by Gray as including “The Land of a Thousand Lakes,” “The Land of Wood and Water,” “The Land of Rocks and Rapids,” “The Land of Snow and Ice,” “The Land of the Rowan Tree,” “The Berry Land,” and, of course, “The Land of the Midnight Sun.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, in contrast to some other tourist destinations on the continent, Finland afforded visitors an array of enticing environmental wonders.

Many Americans chose to admire Finland’s natural beauty at a safe distance, a preference which brought them to Imatra. A small town located on the River Vuoksi, Imatra sat only 40 miles north of Viborg and was the undisputed “show place of Finland.” Visitors flocked to Imatra because it overlooked a cascade of rapids fed by water flowing south out of Lake Saimaa and pressed into narrow channels between sharp rock faces. The picturesque result was a river that would suddenly “burst into a savage rage” and “shriek and thunder and plunge” like “creatures” “trapped” between steep granite cliffs.<sup>69</sup> Nearby hotels capitalized on Imatra’s location by angling private rooms and common areas to overlook both the plunging rapids and the placid downstream river. Even so, most visitors spent quite a deal of time along the embankment, where they would “watch for hours the seething water, taking at last no heed of the deafening noise it produces.”<sup>70</sup>

More adventuresome souls indulged in Finland’s array of sporting and recreational activities. Fishing was a popular and highly-recommended choice among Americans. The country had a nearly boundless series of lakes, rivers, and coastlines for casting, though visitors were commonly directed to the towns of Kajaani and Vaala in the north for salmon, trout, and grayling and to the Gulf of Bothnia for salmon.<sup>71</sup> To boot, local laws generously permitted sportsmen to keep up to 30 pounds of fish per outing in the summer season.<sup>72</sup> Alternatively, tourists could stroll through Finland’s verdant forests. The lush greens were so aesthetically appealing that the inner woodsman almost got the better of Gray, who admitted that during her stay in Uleaborg she had to resist the urge to “shoulder an axe and go out into the woods to look for firs and other green decorations with which

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67. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 65.

68. Additional titles attributed to Finland included “Suomi,” “The Land of Schools,” “A Land where the People are not like other People,” and “The Land of Kindness and Hospitality.” But Gray preferred to call Finland “The Land of Brave Men and Women” because “the precious treasure of patriotism is strong within [Finland], and she dares to do what you and I would not dare to do to preserve our God-given right of liberty.” Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 19-20.

69. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 79-80. On a similar note, Emery described Imatra as the place where “mad waters dance between the rocky shores, tossing its spray high over projecting boulders and ledges, and whiling round and round in dizzying eddies.” Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 42.

70. Mitchell, *Russian Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil*, 222. Harrison was another wooed by Imatra, which he praised as “the largest waterfall in Europe, and in many respects one of the finest in the world.” Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 469.

71. Wood, *The Tourist’s Russia*, 77-78. Mitchell, *Russian Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil*, 219.

72. Murray, *Handbook for Travelers in Russia, Poland, and Finland*, 391.

to beautify” my hotel.<sup>73</sup> But Finland’s most exciting offering was river rafting, a modern tourist attraction cropping up around numerous river towns. Hayward, for one, rode down the rapids near Kajaana. Adrenaline rushed through her veins as there was “no time for acrobatics; you are in for it and can only clutch frantically at the side of the boat with one hand and your nearest neighbor with the other, shut your eyes and hold your breath.”<sup>74</sup> Gray, too, floated in a “tourist boat” down the falls near Vaala, where local outfitters knew to equip each passenger with a “tarpaulin coat” and “a snug rug for warmth.” A lunchtime picnic stop, too, was included in the ride. Gray lauded the trip as a “thrilling” “delight” interspersed with poetic scenes of green fields, peasant women washing clothes, forests, and crashing rapids.<sup>75</sup> Americans thus had abundant reason to embrace and enjoy Finland’s outdoor recreational opportunities.

An even more desired experience was a stint in a Finnish sauna, which occupied a highly Orientalized image in American mindsets. Chancing upon some steam baths in the countryside, Harrison embarked on a spontaneous ethnographic adventure. Inside the sauna, he witnessed a dozen naked men “whipping themselves with birchen branches” in a room “so filled with steam that I could not see until I lit a match.” After some time, those men emerged “as red as boiled lobsters, and reeking with sweat, and sat around to wipe off and cool, as the elite do in a Turkish bath.” As the time for women’s bathing approached, “exceeding diffidence” encouraged Harrison to depart but “like Lot’s wife,” he “could not help looking over my shoulder, and discovered that women as well as men get exceeding red when half-cooked.” His shocking experiences continued as his carriage left the area, only to pass a group of girls “from 10 to 15” standing outside a bath “although their only garment was maiden modesty.” Nude sauna bathing, a remnant of “the Asiatic habits of [Finnish] ancestry,” revealed to Harrison completely different notions of “modesty” that, he implied, contributed to the country’s “rather high rate of illegitimacy.”<sup>76</sup> These commentaries stand out amid tourists’ general experiences for how deeply they otherize Finns and Finland. Part of this may stem from the cultural and moral tensions inherent to bathing, which, Ethan Pollock has shown, even divided Russians accustomed to communal banya rituals.<sup>77</sup> However, it also seems to point to a vital area of discovery for tourists, who located an element of Finnish culture that had little overlap with American habits.

### **Who are the Finns? Americans on Race, Culture, and Immigration**

If venturing around Finland proved rather straightforward, studying the Finns was far more complicated for American tourists. To start, Finns had long been subjects of Sweden, which was definitively part of Europe, but lived under the tsars, whose empire culturally ebbed between East and West. Making matters more challenging, Finns could appear as fair-skinned and European as others on the

73. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 95.

74. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 35-36.

75. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 90, 93.

76. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 475.

77. Ethan Pollock, *Without the Banya We Would Perish: A History of the Russian Bathhouse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).



continent but were purported to have descended from Asian migrants, who settled eastern Scandinavia in earlier ages. So, Americans puzzled over the question of who the Finns were and reached conclusions that had direct implications for the major issues of race, culture, and immigration.

Tourists almost all grappled in some manner with the theory that Finns descended from Central Asian, or “Mongolian,” migrants. For American tourists, Finns’ Asian origins were self-evident. Wood, for one, flatly stated that Finns are members of the “Mongolian race,” whose “intrusive spirit of migration” was as indispensable for bringing “the Horde of Gold to western gates” as for bringing Finns’ forefathers to Scandinavia. Consequently, Wood continued, Finns are “of the East” in “race and language. . . having little in common with Europe except what has been acquired and grafted.”<sup>78</sup> Harrison concurred, observing that Finns “show a very decided resemblance to the Mongolians in type” due to their “rather flat faces and stubby noses, and stems of the ears building as if bee-stung,” though he hastened to interject “they are not a bad-looking people, and evince a great desire to please.”<sup>79</sup> Gray, meanwhile, favored the “theory” that Finns and Hungarians are “of Arian descent” “based upon a study of the shape of the skull.” But she seems to have been hesitant in her classification of “pure Finns,” who were “of Turanean descent, of the Finnish-Ugrian race” and, therefore “related to the Huns, the Magyars, and the Moguls, and somewhere back in the early centuries to the Turk.” She added that Finns’ mixed Asian origins were evident in their “high cheekbones and almond eyes” but masked by the fact that “the Finns are quite white.”<sup>80</sup> Seeking still more decisive data, Gray pondered over the “gruesome element” of Finnish art and architecture said to result from the “traces of Mongolian descent” in Finnish blood.<sup>81</sup>

A competing or, potentially, complimentary school of thought treated Finns as indigenous peoples bearing a strong resemblance to Native Americans. Hayward, who rejected the “theory” that Finns descended from Finno-Ugric tribes, which she dismissed as “an arbitrarily named race inhabiting a small portion of Central Asia.” Instead, Hayward favored the notion that Finns are “aborigines of the whole of northern Europe, Russia included, and that they antedate the Aryans.”<sup>82</sup> Hoffman pushed back on this theory that flattened distinctions among northern peoples and that severely undercut Finns’ sophisticated culture. He took particular umbrage with the “popular opinion of the Finns, entertained by nine-tenths of the people of the United States. . . that they are pretty much like the Lapps, that is to say, that they live in huts, dress in skins, and live principally upon reindeer milk and black bread.” The “facts,” Harrison insisted, disproved this “opinion.”<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, Hoffman’s personal campaign did little to dissuade his compatriots from continuing this line of thinking as Wood, for one, highlighted how the Finnish “country folk” still practiced “witchcraft” into the 1900s and considered forests “tenanted by spirits, recalling the legends of North American Indians.”<sup>84</sup>

78. Wood, *The Tourist's Russia*, 66-68.

79. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 475.

80. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 17.

81. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 108.

82. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 62-63.

83. Hoffman, *Leisure Hours in Russia*, 101.

84. Wood, *The Tourist's Russia*, 66-68.



In spite of strong US prejudices against the Asians and “aborigines” from whom Finns may have descended, American tourists widely praised Finns as an enterprising, hospitable, and unique people. Wood exemplified this pattern, lauding Finns as alternately “imaginative, whimsical, famously hospitable, intelligent, industrious, stubborn, and superstitious” folks who have “the capricious solidity of their eccentric granite boulders.” She further underscored her admiration for the Finns, who had, in recent decades, helped their country emerge “from a hoary chrysalis, scarred by the contentions of Slavs and Scandinavians, into a butterfly of progress and activity.” Finns belonged to the “cult” of “progress,” which drove changes occurring with “stupefying rapidity” and made Finland “glitter” like “a gem on a somber corsage” against a “background of old-world sloth.”<sup>85</sup> Some visitors also admired Finns’ physical prowess, as in the case of Harrison, who observed Finns’ incredibly demanding sporting competitions. Knowing that thousands of Finns were bringing their hearty masculinity to the US each year, Harrison compared the “American rage for professional baseball” to “the effeminate taste of Rome,” in that both involved spectators paying “to see others fight” before soon being “overrun by the hardy sons of the north, who delighted themselves in engaging in all kinds of hard, manly sports.”<sup>86</sup> Even the women showed strength, often pulling boats 8-10 miles for community outings, while preserving their delicate femininity and “picturesque” qualities by donning “varicolored aprons and kerchiefs.”<sup>87</sup> Cumulatively, the images advanced by tourists differ sharply from the visions of Finns circulating among other Americans in the early 1900s, when Finns were often described as “phlegmatic, taciturn, inclined to melancholy, dominated by the emotions, quick to anger, revengeful, unimaginative, and persistent.”<sup>88</sup>

These matters were consequential for Americans as every year tens of thousands of Finns were migrating to the US, where debates about Finnish racial identity raged on.<sup>89</sup> While Finns’ racial identity was “ambiguous,” two things were clear by the early 1900s. First, that Finns “were not conclusively white on arrival.” Second, that most Americans believed “Finns, whatever their origins, had experienced considerable race mixing that had succeeded in bringing them into the races of Europe.” The impact of the tensions among Americans’ stances on Finns were seen in the case of John Svan, a Finnish immigrant who applied for

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85. Wood, *The Tourist's Russia*, 66-68.

86. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 473.

87. Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 38.

88. Peter Kivisto and Johanna Leinonen, “Representing Race: Ongoing Uncertainties about Finnish American Racial Identity,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 1 (2011): 25.

89. Finns overwhelmingly participated in chain migration as friends or relatives, rather than private agents, convinced their loved ones to come to the US. The process had its complications for Finns, too, who sometimes returned to Finland or, in other cases, abandoned families to go to the, creating a misfortunate class of “American widows” in Finland. Hoglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920*, 7-12. Moreover, most Finns relocating to the US were male “stage immigrants,” who first transitioned from rural to urban areas in Finland and, finding few opportunities for themselves in some of the country’s underdeveloped areas, continued their transition to urban, industrial life by crossing the Atlantic. Kero, “Migration from Finland to North America,” 47.

naturalized citizenship status in 1907. Svan's application was initially denied by the St. Paul district attorney on the grounds that Svan was "'Mongolian' and not a 'white person,'" and, therefore, ineligible for this process. While Svan eventually won an appeal at higher courts, immigrants who lacked the means to complete that process probably suffered negative consequences of their "Mongolian" heritage.<sup>90</sup>

To understand the contrasting approaches adopted by American tourists, consider the warm welcome afforded Finns by Harrison. Throughout his travels, Harrison saw dozens of houses decorated with "photos from relatives in America, pictures taken in Minneapolis and Wisconsin." He even once encountered on a train a "young peasant girl on her way to Northern Michigan," where "she will not have to work as hard. . . as her sisterhood do in this land."<sup>91</sup> Then, when it came his turn to weigh in on the issue, Harrison proudly declared that "America will surely be a gainer if the present tide of immigration from Finland keeps on." He explained that Finns, the "hardy sons of northern Europe," would come "with sturdy muscles, iron spades, and picks, conquering and supplanting" "young America," which had become "brilliant," but also "idle, indolent, and luxurious" over the years. In time, then, American decadence would be replaced by "the [Finnish] immigrant" mocked in the turn-of-the-century US.<sup>92</sup> This strong denouncement of US sloth and hedonism may have reflected Harrison's own peculiar views on work ethic, but his decision to so elevate Finns was out of keeping with broader trends in American culture and, therefore, suggests an abiding admiration for Finns perhaps stemming from his travel experiences.

### Free Finland? Americans on Russification and Politics

With their affinities for the Finns, American travelers had keen interests in Finland's political life, especially in relation to the Russian government. Looking back over the nineteenth century, most tourists expressed varying degrees of admiration for the tsars' benevolent treatment of Finland. However, the rise of Russification from the 1880s stoked fears for Finland and its future under the empire.

To begin, Americans achieved a remarkable consensus around Tsar Alexander I and his approach to Finland. Having convoked the Finnish Diet, promised to respect Finnish customs, and granted the Grand Duchy a fair degree of autonomy, Alexander "behaved towards the conquered with his usual generosity."<sup>93</sup> In this formulation, Finland was "fortunate" to come under Russian control, "for never [a] nobler conqueror lived, so far as his attitude toward the Finlanders was

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90. Peter Kivisto and Johanna Leinonen, "Representing Race: Ongoing Uncertainties about Finnish American Racial Identity," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 1 (2011): 12, 14, 20. Svan was probably especially targeted for denial because of his participation in the Finnish labor movement, which is described in Hoglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920*, 44, 56-58, 72-77, 98-99.

91. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 484. Hoffman likewise discussed the outward movement that built up the Finnish "colony" at Hancock Michigan. Hoffman, *Leisure Hours in Russia*, 115.

92. Harrison, *A Race with the Sun*, 479.

93. Hoffman, *Leisure Hours in Russia*, 106.

concerned, than Alexander I.”<sup>94</sup> Such declarations signal that Alexander’s self-cultivated persona of “the Angel on the Throne,” continued to carry currency among US audiences into the early twentieth century.<sup>95</sup> By contrast, Tsars Nicholas I, Alexander II, and Alexander III went almost unmentioned as Finland enjoyed relative constancy in its modes of governance over the middle portion of the nineteenth century.

Another major aspect of American discussions of Finnish political life was a deep admiration for Finnish democracy and independence. Like issues of race, this seems to be an area in which tourists drew from the popular imagination. For, as scholars of American Finns have pointed out, Finns made marked achievements in convincing their fellow citizens that “the Finnish people merited respect by Americans who valued orderly democratic rule” and that Finland itself was a key site in the battles for self-governance and self-determination being waged over the early twentieth century.<sup>96</sup> The influence of these campaigns and of lived experiences on tourists was best expressed by Gray, who lauded Finland as a progressive model worthy of study and emulation. Gray described the Finns as the “working class,” who had emerged triumphantly from the “blindness” imposed on them by the “conquering” Swedes. In a very short span, Finns had become “the most democratic,” the “most liberty-loving,” the “bravest” people “on the face of the earth.” Gray’s lofty claims were legitimized by the fact that in 1906 “the men” in Finland found “they couldn’t do without” women and, therefore, extended suffrage to women.<sup>97</sup> Obviously enthralled by Finnish women for winning the right to vote before American women, Gray took translators to local political meetings to see her heroes in action. “Nothing interested me more,” Gray confided, “than to watch the keen, penetrating—I may almost say analytical—faces of the peasant women of Finland” who had to be “strong in mind and body” and able to deliver an emphatic “No” to Russia to win an election.<sup>98</sup> In this sense, tourism enabled Americans to see for themselves a sort of truth in the lofty ideals Finns circulated about themselves and Finland in the US.

For this reason, Americans felt deep anxieties about Russification and tsarist authorities’ efforts to more closely control Finland over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For various practical and political reasons, tsarist officials had long excluded Finland from Russification efforts in schools and in

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94. Gray even declared “God bless” Alexander I, before interjecting “little thought I before I went to Finland that I would ever say ‘God bless him’ about a Tsar!” Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 16, 33.

95. On Alexander’s “scenario,” see Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 98-119.

96. Hoglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920*, 135-136.

97. On Finland’s 1906 electoral reforms, see Hoglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920*, 104.

98. Gray even accompanied a Finnish woman to the ballot box to learn how to cast a vote. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 17, 35, 43-44, 46, 49-50, 55-56.

governance.<sup>99</sup> However, Tsar Nicholas II departed from this longstanding practice when he issued an 1899 imperial manifesto that would have severely curtailed Finnish autonomy.<sup>100</sup> Again, it seems that Finnish immigrants probably played a key role in attracting broad attention—including from tourists—to this event and to the Finnish plight.<sup>101</sup> Beyond that, heightened pressures from tsarist authorities to adopt Russian as the language of schools, markets, and daily life threatened to fundamentally change Finns. But Americans rallied for their beloved Finns and expressed deep skepticism about the viability of the project of Russification. Hayward, for instance, worried that “the Finlanders in Russia proper and in the border provinces are fast becoming Russianized morally, mentally, and physically.” Yet, she also underscored that “Finnish [sic] physiognomy, the Finnic temperament, and Finnic language, in all their purity” had been preserved *in situ* in the center of the country, where “no foreign admixture” had been introduced for “more than a thousand years.”<sup>102</sup> Gray affirmed more generally that the Finns “when conquered by Russia, maintained their usual characteristics” and, therefore, were on a different trajectory than most “conquered” peoples who lose their distinctiveness and become “subdued.”<sup>103</sup> Simply put, Finns were too determined, too rooted in self-governance for Russification and efforts to “denationalize” Finns to succeed.<sup>104</sup>

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99. As Edward Thaden has noted, “the same considerations that persuaded many government officials in the late 1850s and early 1860s to question the wisdom of continuing a policy of bureaucratic centralism in Poland, the Baltic Provinces, and elsewhere in the empire made them view sympathetically the special needs and desires of Finland.” Furthermore, “some Russian officials feared that if the Finns were not encouraged by timely concessions, they might soon look in the direction of Sweden for their spiritual—and even political—guidance.” Edward Thaden and Michael Haltzel, eds., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 25.

100. That manifesto “if carried out, will destroy—is destroying—the autonomy of this little nation, and will cause it to be assimilated by the Russian Empire—a thought that is poison to the Finnish mind.” Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 30. Emery was one to look all the way back to 1809 as the point from which “Russian influence has naturally grown stronger” in Finland. Emery, *Russia through the Stereoscope*, 36, 40.

101. After 1899 “world-wide attention to Finland increased” as “[Finnish] immigrants made special efforts to acquaint Americans with their Old Country and its people.” These immigrant activists, “aided in part by political emigres. . . formed action committees, made appeals in the English-language press, and petitioned American officials to capitalize on. . . interest in Finland.” Hoglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920*, 135.

102. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 63.

103. She likened the Finns to the “people of South Africa, where the conquered peoples are given the right of making laws to suit their economic conditions.” I believe she was pleading the case of white Afrikaners “conquered” by British imperialists. Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 72.

104. Gray’s ideas were confirmed by a Finnish boat captain, who told her that “Russia is trying to govern all the nationalities with the same laws. . . and she can’t do it.” She herself later added a toast “To Finland! May Russia vanish from her shores!” Gray, *Finland: A Little Land That Is True to Itself*, 74, 76-77, 129. Hayward echoed Gray’s position, stating that “there is no nation upon the face of the earth more capable of self-government, or one that would make a better use of freedom did she possess it” than Finland. Hayward, *From Finland to Greece: Or, Three Seasons in Eastern Europe*, 59.

**Conclusion**

Seizing on expanding tourism infrastructure and their desires to experience the “Land of the Midnight Sun,” Americans gained significant insights into the people, places, and histories of Finland. Roaming about Finland revealed the country’s eclectic and diverse riches, which included a thriving capital city and beautiful outdoor sceneries that could be accessed at incredibly affordable rates. Travelers affirmed Finland’s rightful place on the expanding global tourist circuit. Just as importantly, Americans used their journeys to inquire into the past, present, and future of Finns, whom they obviously admired. Reflecting contemporaneous debates about Finns’ racial origins, Americans divided over Finns’ connections to “Mongolian” or “aborigine” ancestors. But tourists coalesced around the Finns’ capacities to enmesh Western and Eastern influences, which were plainly displayed in the country’s geographical position and the friendly behavior of its residents. The evident potential for Finns to further cultivate their European side, embodied in their fierce attachments to voting and self-governance, made Americans deeply concerned about Russification and its potential to reshape Finns. Having witnessed Finnish resilience in the face of these challenges, American tourists predicted, correctly, that Finns would reject the retrenchment of Russian imperialism and, ultimately, gain political independence.

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