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## **“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> Americans 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, Hristianiia, Kopengagen, Kil' i London* (Sankt Peterburg: I. Fleitmana, 1911); and Severnoe biuro puteshestvii (Sankt Peterburg), *Raspisanie dlia puteshestvii po Finlandii* (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*; NAIr: 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: Schocken 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 overviewing 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 edistämiskesku, 1987).

27. That number was first advanced in A. William Høglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 7. More recently, Høglund’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 definitely *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 Chirnside, *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 “Finnich [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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## **Staging Anna: Public Memory and Pageantry in Russian Alaska**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines *Cry of the Wild Ram*, an outdoor historical pageant drama written by playwright Frank Brink and staged at Kodiak Archipelago's Monashka Bay for decades beginning in 1966. Brink set out to perform Kodiak's colonial history through community participation, recreating the community's identity right after the disastrous 1964 earthquake and at the time of the centennial of the Alaska Purchase. The pageant excludes Russian colonial violence, frames the Kodiak Alutiit as people who only belonged in the past, and supported Cold War ideologies that opposed Russian aristocracy and validated American democracy. It does not reveal the true history of Kodiak or of individuals like Anna, Alexander Baranov's Indigenous wife. Sophie Frets, an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq woman who played Anna in 1992, returns Anna's agency and reveals what her truth might have been.

# Staging Anna: Public Memory and Pageantry in Russian Alaska

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In the Summer of 1967, tourists and locals gathered at an outdoor amphitheater overlooking Monashka Bay to watch the historical pageant drama *The Cry of the Wild Ram*. As the sun set behind the mountains, the performance space came into view: a beach to one side, a forest of Sitka spruces to the other, and at center stage stood three cabins representing an early Russian Alaskan settlement. The audience watched as the story of Alexander Baranov, the first governor of Russian America, unfolded on stage. Halfway through the pageant, Baranov accepts an offer from a Yaghenenht'ana chief to marry his daughter, whom Baranov renames Anna.<sup>1</sup> Their wedding ceremony is followed by a dance performance in which Anna participates. She wears a traditional gut-skinned parka with fur trim and beadwork, and her long hair is braided with a blue ribbon. This staged moment is supposed to be entertaining and consumable. Although it also makes a spectacle of colonial history and invites the audience to participate, as public memory is redefined.

Pageants, like *Cry of the Wild Ram*, are both theater productions and sites of public memory-making. Performance scholars argue that events such as historical outdoor pageant dramas depend just as much on the script as on the performance itself. As Diana Taylor writes, performances “function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity.”<sup>2</sup> Elements such as the pageants’ outdoor setting, costumes, and ceremonial scenes all contribute to the overall performance and how the audience interprets the past. The audience plays a significant role in forming public memory and giving meaning to the historical narrative. Together they watch the performance, react emotionally, and experience the story in an immersive setting.

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1. Yaghenenht'ana, “The Good Land People,” is the self-designator of the Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina. The name derives from Yaghenen (“the good land”), the Dena'ina name for the peninsula. “Kenaitze” is an anglicization of the Russian *kenaitzy*, the term used by Russian colonizers for Dena'ina living along Cook Inlet. The Russians also adopted this word from the Alutiiq word for people of the Kenai River, *kenaiyut*. See Alan S. Boraas and Donita Peter, “The True Believer Among the Kenai Peninsula Dena'ina,” in *Adventures Through Time: Readings in the Anthropology of Cook Inlet, Alaska*, ed. Nancy Yaw Davis and William E. Davis (Anchorage: Cook Inlet Historical Society, 1996).

2. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.

Playwright Frank Brink, a major figure in mid-twentieth-century Alaskan community theater and author of the play, viewed pageant drama as an event that could raise civic engagement and foster a sense of historical belonging. He argued that pageant theater should involve the entire community's participation and help it to understand its own history.<sup>3</sup> He viewed theater as a tool rather than a form of entertainment. His philosophy frames *Cry of the Wild Ram* as a collective history of Kodiak that could create unity on the island. At the same time, his own positionality is as a white American writing about Russian colonialism in a Native Alaskan community, which he is not a part of, during the peak years of the Cold War and the centennial of the Alaska Purchase. His intentions remain ambiguous, but what he stages is not. The story he tells is one of the Russians' adventures on the frontier with Indigenous peoples as background characters, all leading to American democracy. The narrative replicates familiar colonial myths of conquest and progress. The pageant fits into a broader pattern of Cold War cultural dynamics that promoted unity, belonging, and frontier/settlement narratives.<sup>4</sup>

This paper argues that *Cry of the Wild Ram* reconstructs the legacy of Russian colonialism into a civic heritage narrative. It is expressed through the use of the natural landscape, community participation, and the heroic portrayal of Alexander Baranov. Rather than analyzing the Russian Empire as a structure that caused the extraction of natural resources and Indigenous dispossession, the pageant presents Russian colonization as a system that created a harmonious frontier. At the same time, the symbolic role of Anna, a Yaghenenht'ana bride, softens the reality of colonial violence. Later reinterpretations by Alutiiq actress Sophie Frets show how Indigenous interiority can deepen and reclaim a character originally written from a colonial perspective.<sup>5</sup>

Anna's presence in the pageant brings balance to the narrative, which conveys the message that the relationship between the Alutiiq people and the Russians is peaceful and harmonious. Yet Brink's version of Anna is changed by Alutiiq/Sugpiaq actress Sophie Frets, who brought emotional depth and cultural connection to the role, describing it as a way for her to connect with her own

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3. Frank Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram: A Pageant Drama* (master's thesis, Montana State University, 1956), iii.

4. Examples of frontier settlement narratives include other pageant dramas like Paul Green's *The Lost Colony* (1937) and *Texas* (1966). Further examples include Western films like *How the West Was Won*, television's *Gunsmoke* and *Bonanza*, and even Disney's theme park Frontierland and hero Davy Crockett. See Bob Thompson, *Born on a Mountaintop: On the Road with Davy Crockett and the Ghosts of the Wild Frontier* (New York: Crown, 2013).

5. The Indigenous peoples of Kodiak are referred to in historical and contemporary sources in several different ways. *Sugpiaq* — a term meaning 'real people' — was the precolonial self-designation Indigenous people on Kodiak used, while *Alutiiq* is an indigenized version of the term 'Aleut,' which Russian colonizers broadly applied to refer to all Indigenous peoples of Southwest Alaska. Both Alutiiq and Sugpiaq are popular self-designators on Kodiak today; Amy F. Steffian, "Alutiiit Quliyangua'it Patuirluki: Uncovering Alutiiq/Sugpiaq History," in *Imaken Ima'ut—From the Future to the Present: Seventy-Five Hundred Years of Kodiak Alutiiq/Sugpiaq History*, ed. Amy F. Steffian (Kodiak, AK: Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository, 2024), 2.



heritage. Her participation in the pageant drama demonstrates how performance can expand and reshape the author's original intentions for a role beyond its intended purpose.

### The Historical Pageant Tradition

The development of the historical pageant began in the early twentieth century. Historian David Glassberg explains that historical pageants expanded during the Progressive Era because of reform educators who linked education and civic duty to public performance.<sup>6</sup> Fear that industrialization and urban life were damaging morality and social life led reformers to organize activities with the purpose of turning people into better citizens. Glassberg notes that Progressive reformers, including figures influenced by John Dewey's philosophy, believed that people learned best through action, which made the pageant an ideal opportunity to teach history through performance rather than through a textbook or lecture.<sup>7</sup>

Historical pageants staged scenes from local or national history, using community members, music, dance, costumes, and sets; it became a blend of theater, spectacle, and ceremony in a single event. The stage was often a natural landscape that visually supported the historical narrative. *Cry of the Wild Ram* is an example of this. The natural environment became the stage; trees cleared during the construction of the stage were even replanted.<sup>8</sup> The 1967 program celebrated the authenticity of the pageant site, observing that the area was "much the same as the site of the play," making it seem more believable that "most of the events portrayed in the play actually happened" there.<sup>9</sup> A log fort was built into the stage, which overlooked the bay, and a cannon was used, which, when fired, caused echoes across the valley.<sup>10</sup> Ten pounds of TNT were used at each show, helping ensure that the natural landscape became part of the story of the Alaskan frontier.

Pageants were also intentionally designed to be emotionally compelling. Both the audience and the performers were encouraged to relate to the historical retelling and their broader community and nation. As a result, pageant productions often focused more on being emotionally impactful than on strict historical accuracy.<sup>11</sup> Glassberg quotes pageant producer William Chauncey Langdon, who described pageants as events which "bring people together and kindle the spirit of enthusiastic unanimity."<sup>12</sup> Pageants were understood to foster a "collective

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6. David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 54-55.

7. Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 57-58.

8. Kodiak Baranoff Productions Incorporated, "Description of *The Cry of the Wild Ram*," audio recording, 1966-1973, East Carolina Manuscript Collection, local identifier 1250-s6-b374-fq, <https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/37106>.

9. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).

10. Kodiak Baranoff Productions, "Description of *The Cry of the Wild Ram*."

11. Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 148.

12. *Ibid.*, 78.

identity” that generated unity and loyalty.<sup>13</sup> *Cry of the Wild Ram* reflected this structure; it depended on volunteers ranging from directors, crew, actors, Navy personnel, high school students, seamstresses working all year on costumes, and a cast that ranged from toddlers to senior citizens.<sup>14</sup> Pageantry here is both entertainment and a tool for shaping history and identity.

Pageants often staged origin stories and pivotal moments of a community’s transition.<sup>15</sup> Tales of the American frontier fit this framework especially well because they supported stories of futurity and expansion. Within this structure, colonial violence was often omitted or minimized, and Indigenous peoples were positioned as belonging to the past.<sup>16</sup> Glassberg notes that pageants portrayed settler colonialism as the natural historical progression, where Indigenous presence was frequently absent, passive, or at best, symbolic.<sup>17</sup> This style of temporality is explicit in *Cry of the Wild Ram*. Before the pageant officially begins and the audience is still finding its seats, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq village life serves as a prologue.<sup>18</sup> The scene depicts a seasonal Alutiiq/Sugpiaq hunting camp with huts, skins hanging to dry, and Alutiiq/Sugpiaq community members participating in everyday activities. The timing of this scene follows this narrative progression: Indigenous life first, then Baranov, then the Russian colony. It positions Indigenous life in the past and as a precursor to the colonization that followed.

Historical pageants align closely with Diana Taylor’s theory of performance and memory. Taylor’s framework helps make the case that *Cry of the Wild Ram*’s script must be studied alongside the performance. She argues that performance is equivalent to written records in how it shares information. Taylor distinguishes between two categories of cultural memory: archive, which consists of documents, texts, and physical objects, and the repertoire, which consists of embodied practices such as performance, ritual, dance, spoken word, and ceremony.<sup>19</sup> Taylor believes that Western knowledge systems have always valued the archive over repertoire, thereby granting it greater authority and power. By contrast, the repertoire operates through repetition, presence, and participation. As Taylor writes, it “both keeps and transforms choreographical meaning.”<sup>20</sup> The script of *The Cry of the Wild Ram* belongs to the archive, and its performance belongs to the repertoire; the messages they share are different.

One of Taylor’s tools to analyze performance is the scenario. She defines this as the repeatable performance which becomes recognizable through similar settings, roles, gestures, narration, and expected dialogue.<sup>21</sup> Scenarios do not occur in a singular way but follow a pattern that can occur across different historical

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13. Ibid, 62.

14. Kodiak Baranoff Productions, “Description of *The Cry of the Wild Ram*.”

15. Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 62.

16. Ibid, 83.

17. Ibid, 83-84.

18. Kodiak Baranoff Productions, “Description of *The Cry of the Wild Ram*.”

19. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.

20. Ibid, 20.

21. Ibid, 27-28.

contexts. This influences how encounters are staged and interpreted before a written text is read. Taylor describes discovery and conquest as the most common and repeated scenarios in the Americas across the centuries. These scenarios rely on familiar character types: the discoverer, the conqueror, the native princess, the “savage,” and the civilizer.<sup>22</sup> These figures and their relationships are already familiar to the audience. The audience has preexisting notions about the dynamics between these characters before the action begins, which normalizes whatever relations they have. These scenarios present colonial domination as a recurring, recognizable pattern rather than an irregular disruption.

Historical pageants are full of colonial scenarios, especially in frontier and settlement narratives. Scenes of encounters, marriages, alliances, and symbolic reconciliation are common in the pageant structure because they depict the harmony and peace that come after colonial conflict.<sup>23</sup> The Baranov-Anna wedding scene in *Cry of the Wild Ram* fits into this colonial reconciliation framework. Reading this moment as a scenario rather than simply another scene reveals how performance can create historical meaning rather than merely reproduce the written archive.

### Brink’s Civic Vision

Frank Brink is often called the “father” of Anchorage theater. He received an undergraduate degree in theater from Maryville College in Tennessee and continued his studies in playwriting as a Rockefeller Fellow at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1942. Brink and his wife arrived in Anchorage in 1945, where he worked in radio and television. In his time in Anchorage, he also founded the Anchorage Community Theatre in 1953 and taught at Alaska Methodist University from 1960 to 1975. Brink was a former naval officer and, during the Korean War, was recommissioned and stationed on Kodiak Island, where he staged a touring production of *South Pacific*. He received a master’s degree in communications from the University of Montana in 1956, where he wrote *Cry of the Wild Ram*. The play premiered in Anchorage in 1960, and thereafter Brink “gave *Cry of the Wild Ram* to the city of Kodiak,” where it was staged for decades every summer.<sup>24</sup>

Even though Frank Brink was active in the Alaskan theater community in the mid-twentieth century, he still followed in the tradition of the earlier twentieth-century historical pageant drama. Brink viewed pageant drama as a civic instrument, not as an art form. He insists in the introduction of *Cry of the Wild Ram* that “every community has a story” and asserts that “participation by as many members of the community as possible is vital to the fulfillment of the pageant-drama’s purpose.”<sup>25</sup> The community is therefore the audience, the subject, and the producer of the pageant. Brink further writes that audience members are not

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22. Ibid, 27-28.

23. Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 83-86, 148-149.

24. Catherine J. Stadem, *The History of Theatre in Anchorage, Alaska 1915–2005: From a Wilderness Tent to a Multi-Million Dollar Stage* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 13-28.

25. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, ii.

spectators but are participants “judging their own history.”<sup>26</sup> In the 1967 program of the pageant, the purpose of the pageant is described similarly; spectators “lose the sense that they are merely members of an audience,” and they feel that they have been “timed-machined...into the past.”<sup>27</sup> The audience is “ennobled by the struggle of the brave men and women who have moved back into the wilderness for civilization.”<sup>28</sup>

For Brink, pageantry is a democratic act in which historical meaning is collectively created rather than privately consumed.

This vision closely aligns with Progressive-era pageant ideology. Historical pageantry in the early twentieth century promoted civic duty, participation, and immersion, believed to make better citizens of everyday people. From the beginning, the community was embedded in the production of *Cry of the Wild Ram*. Planning and organization began with the Anchorage Women’s Civic Club and other civic organizations, including eventually Kodiak Baranov Productions Incorporated, situating the pageant within a network of civic engagement.<sup>29</sup> Brink hoped that “artists, performers, musicians, historians, educators, business promoters, and laborers” would collaborate to ensure the success of the pageant.<sup>30</sup> The production aspired to reach as large an audience as possible, so they distributed flyers for the pageant on the Alaska Marine Highway, a ferry system connecting communities along the coasts of southcentral and southwestern Alaska.<sup>31</sup> This extended the community invited to participate in the pageant beyond Kodiak. Brink imagined the pageant as a site that would travel far and “combine the cultures of Native Alaska, Russia, and America on a common ground of understanding.”<sup>32</sup> Brink argues that a pageant drama professor, known as Professor Hansen, explains that the pageant drama has an “integrating effect upon people of different races and religions” because “as they work together they begin to feel that their common project is more important than their prejudices” and “begin to accept each other for what they are and look upon their differences with interest and tolerance.”<sup>33</sup> Brink, in citing a pageant-drama historian, gives his claim greater authority and situates the pageant within a broader discourse on civic engagement.

In the 1960 premiere of the play, Brink acknowledged having taken “a number of liberties with the technical facts of history” to better dramatize Baranov’s character. He expressed hope that even if “the play is not lost in limbo,” the experience of “community-wide playmaking” and “belief in the dramatic value of Alaska’s history” made the effort put into the pageant worth it.<sup>34</sup> Participation had

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26. Ibid, ii.

27. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).

28. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).

29. Ibid, v.

30. Ibid, v.

31. Kodiak Baranoff Productions, “Description of *The Cry of the Wild Ram*.”

32. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, v.

33. Ibid, iv.

34. Stadem, *The History of Theatre in Anchorage*, 21.



healing value to Brink; he writes, “the participation experienced by both performers and audience demonstrates the therapeutic value of community pageant-drama... influencing the attitudes that preserve our democratic traditions.”<sup>35</sup> In one of his more direct claims, he declares, “The story of the human struggle to build the educational, cultural, social, and historical institutions which we have inherited and by which we direct our lives is the story of American democracy.”<sup>36</sup> Brink understands democracy as more than a system of governance and conceptualizes it as a collective emotional experience derived from a shared narrative. Harmony, in this case associated with democracy, is brought to the community through participation in the historical pageant.

Applying Taylor here, the pageant’s participatory factor fits into the category of memory transmission of the repertoire.<sup>37</sup> The community involvement from the marine highway flyers, to the volunteer cast, and civic club organization indicates that, even before the pageant was staged, its democratic message was being shared. The pageant was not just about the few hours it was performed each night; it was about how the community production of the pageant itself was an important part of Brink’s messaging.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States was struggling to define itself among the fractured legacy of the Civil War, rapid industrialization, and increased immigration. In this moment, America continually turned to the past as a resource to stabilize its identity. Michael Kammen describes this phenomenon as the “land of the past,” in which a culture creates historical memory to help cultivate a communal identity.<sup>38</sup> A pattern emerged where Americans began to construct tradition rather than inherit it. The periods following World War I and World War II intensified this movement, as war created rupture and uncertainty, heightening demands for unity and continuity.

Lisa Yoneyama’s concept of the “dialectics of memory” sheds light on this postwar dynamic. She argues Hiroshima symbolized a level of violence that destabilized national identity, causing a rupture in public memory that could not be ignored.<sup>39</sup> Loss and destruction were acknowledged and made into lessons, which helped the nation move on. In the United States, the years following World War II saw an expansion in the number of museums, monuments, historical reenactments, and preservation movements.<sup>40</sup> Brink’s pageant fits into this broader postwar expansion of public memory efforts.

The 1964 earthquake on Kodiak created a similar rupture at a local level. Homes, businesses, the harbor, and the landscape were devastated, disrupting

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35. Ibid, iv.

36. Ibid, iii.

37. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.

38. Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, Vintage Books), 3-13.

39. Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1-15.

40. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 531-536.

everyday life and community stability.<sup>41</sup> This is an example of how space is important in the creation of public memory. Yoneyama emphasizes that memory is spatial and that landscape serves as the stage for historical memory.<sup>42</sup> In Kodiak, the damaged landscape of Monashka Bay became this stage. The pageant site also was where an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq seasonal hunting camp had been located, emphasized in the 1967 program as having existed “long ago.”<sup>43</sup> Performing the *Cry of the Wild Ram* in this natural landscape, Brink alters the damaged coastline into a site of historical narration. The performance reconceptualized this event as a journey from loss to survival.<sup>44</sup> Confronting colonial history against the damaged landscape shifted the community’s focus toward the future rather than the destruction of the recent past. Participation in the pageant transitioned from a civic duty to a form of communal healing, restoring a sense of shared identity.

*Cry of the Wild Ram* premiered as a pilot production on Kodiak in 1966. The pilot production was “accepted and acclaimed” and brought back for the next year “by the enthusiasm of the entire community in its” support for the centennial year of the Alaska Purchase, when the United States bought Alaska from Russia in 1867.<sup>45</sup> The pageant was not the only post-earthquake commemorative effort. This period also witnessed a broader resurgence in memorializing Russia’s history on Kodiak. The old Russian *magazin*, the building which was Alexander Baranov’s home and warehouse during his time on Kodiak, was renovated, preserved and repurposed into the Baranov Museum.<sup>46</sup> This effort represented a physical ruin of the empire being turned into a tourist attraction. Many streets of downtown Kodiak were also renamed to honor Baranov and other Russian colonial figures.<sup>47</sup> Place-based naming holds deep significance in many Indigenous cultures. The addition of Russian colonial names to the landscape makes this part of the past part of everyday geography and also distances Kodiak from Indigenous understandings of place and relationality. These practices reflect Glassberg’s understanding of the pageant as one that creates tradition rather than inheriting it. The centennial and the earthquake came together as two events that propelled the pageant’s production, while the Cold War influenced the framework in which the pageant belongs.

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41. April Isiik Laktonen Counciller, “MiRikaan’saat: Americans,” in *Imaken Ima’ut—From the Future to the Present: Seventy-Five Hundred Years of Kodiak Alutiiq/Sugpiaq History*, ed. Amy F. Steffian (Kodiak, AK: Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository, 2024), 139-145; Tobin Jerel Shorey, *Navigating the “Drunken Republic”: The Juno and the Russian American Frontier, 1799–1811* (PhD diss., University of Florida, 2014), 21.

42. Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces*.

43. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).

44. Stadem, *The History of Theatre in Anchorage*, 22-23.

45. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).x

46. Kaitlin Jade Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus: Sophie Frets on *The Cry of the Wild Ram*,” *The Alaskan Myth*, podcast, December 6, 2023, Spotify.

47. Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus.”

Brink's rhetoric not only fits within a local framework; his ideology also parallels broader mid-century American political discourse. The expansion of this structure situates Kodiak's local pageant within Cold War debates over democracy. Following World War II, the United States increasingly sought to define its democracy in opposition to Soviet authoritarianism. Postwar memory practices in America aimed to create a shared past that would serve as a foundation for national identity after the traumas of war. Museums, monuments, etc., grew during the postwar years, attempting to share American history as continuous and unified. By emphasizing unity and continuity, these practices contributed to a feeling of being part of a nation with a stable past and present.<sup>48</sup> Brink's language aligns directly with this phenomenon. He writes, "In Alaska, the Russian Imperial colony has given way to an American democratic civilization motivated by principles completely counter to the autocracy of Tsarist Russia."<sup>49</sup> In the 1967 program, Brink takes this further, writing that the blood of "these early pioneers flows in the veins of thousands of our people," is "stronger than political or geographical ties," and "is a part of our American heritage."<sup>50</sup> Russian colonists are retrospectively turned into American pioneers.

Brink casts Russian autocracy as part of the historical past and American democracy as its inevitable successor. The pageant narrates Alaska's story as one that naturally progresses toward democracy. The museum, the renamed street, and the flyers on the marine highway all participate in this path towards democracy as everyday markers of Russia's past. The main plot line of the pageant is one of colonial encounters, where empire becomes democracy, conflict becomes harmony, and the wild frontier becomes a settled community. This narrative was conveyed not only through the pageant but also through the museum, the renamed streets, and the flyers. The repertoire is extended beyond the outdoor amphitheater to the entire city of Kodiak.

John Bodnar distinguishes between official memory and vernacular memory and further clarifies the pageant's framework. Official memory advances state-centered perspective narratives, while vernacular memory emerges from local community narratives.<sup>51</sup> *Cry of the Wild Ram* appears to fit only into vernacular memory because of its local landscape setting, community participation, and organization by civic clubs. However, it also reproduces an ideology that fits into Cold War discourse, emphasizing the contrast between Russian autocracy and American freedom. The pageant, the museum, and the renamed streets together form a memory that Bodnar would identify as simultaneously vernacular and official. The community initiated and drove these efforts, but the 1967 program provides evidence that the Centennial Commission of the State of Alaska partially

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48. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 572-573.

49. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, iv.

50. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).

51. John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-15.

funded the production of the pageant.<sup>52</sup> The pageant then is vernacular in origin and participation, but official in funding and message.

Warren Susman enhances this analysis by arguing that “cultures can actually be arguments or debates themselves.”<sup>53</sup> Culture helps construct political meaning; parades, museums, films, and pageants contribute to shaping what democracy looks like and how it should be understood. This is where Brink’s pageant becomes political as it promotes democracy. Cultural authority comes from the success of utilizing “a set of images, symbols, and myths that have the most meaning for the bulk of the American people.”<sup>54</sup> Brink’s pageant employed recognizable democratic symbols and myths for the citizens of Kodiak, including: the myth of the frontier, the path towards progress, community participation, and resolution after conflict. These images carry emotional power and embody democratic values naturally.

Susman also cautions that a shared cultural identity will expand conformity and lower diversity within a community. When a community is organized around balance and unity, conflict is forgotten because it cannot be assimilated into the harmonious narrative. In *Cry of the Wild Ram*, Russian colonial violence becomes just another stage for a society advancing towards its inevitable fate, a pattern which Glassberg observes. Indigenous dispossession fades into the background as democracy arises as the light at the end of the tunnel. The emphasis on unity and harmony changes the pageant from a history of colonial destruction into a story of a community coming together. This also applies to the museum and the renamed streets; they honor the colonial past without acknowledging its downfalls. These become the catalysts that subsume colonial violence into heritage.

Further, Alaska’s geography reinforces this narrative. Formerly a Russian colony and admitted as the forty-ninth state in 1959, Alaska bordered the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. The centennial of the Alaska Purchase also gave the United States an opportunity to narrate Alaska’s Russian origin story as an imperial failure that ended in American democracy. Brink’s framing of Alaska creates a narrative of Alaska as a democratic frontier. Within this narrative, American democracy triumphs over autocracy. Alaska becomes a stage for competing ideologies. One of the figures on this stage is Anna. Through a closer analysis of her character, Brink’s arguments about empire and democracy are seen in a personal, individual context.

### The Figure of Anna

To understand how Anna’s narrative operates within larger frameworks, it is important to situate it within the discussion of Orientalism. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* argues that Western European powers produced representations of

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52. *Cry of the Wild Ram*, souvenir program (Kodiak, AK: Kodiak-Baranof Productions, Inc., 1967).

53. Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 288.

54. Susman, *Culture as History*, 179.



“the East” that cast these cultures as stereotypically uncivilized, timeless, and inferior, and the cultural products, including art, literature, and theater, became political as they reproduced ideas of imperial hierarchy.<sup>55</sup> Russia complicates this model. It was the West and the East; it was “the self and the other” at the same time.<sup>56</sup> Historian David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye describes how Russian Orientalism differs from that of other Western countries because it is impossible to treat all Russians as a “single archetype.”<sup>57</sup> Some Russians, like Dostoevsky, aligned with most Europeans and saw Asia as backward, while others saw Asia in a “more favorable light.”<sup>58</sup> Russian Orientalism did not have a single, coherent message.

When this discussion is extended to Russian Alaska, the ambiguities around it expand. Many Russian colonizers “constructed Alaska Native peoples’ ancestry as, to use the parlance of the time, ‘Asiatic,’ ‘Mongolian,’ or ‘Oriental,’” similar to how they viewed other Indigenous peoples who lived within the Russian Empire.<sup>59</sup> Such interpretations were not neutral and served to further the Russian imperial project. Yet Russian Alaska also diverges from earlier Russian colonial patterns. As Ilya Vinkovetsky argues, Russia’s only overseas colony unexpectedly needed new administrative, labor, and security management. Russian Alaska became a “hybrid form of colonialism,” shaped by Siberian fur trader practices yet also intermixed with other Western European colonial traits and challenges from maritime life.<sup>60</sup> The colonial imagination surrounding Alaska was reflected in this hybridity: it was foreign yet familiar, Asian yet American.

The *Cry of the Wild Ram* follows Alexander Baranov as he becomes the first governor of Russia’s Alaskan colony. Throughout the first acts, we see Baranov struggle with the colony’s inhospitable conditions and efforts to stabilize them by expanding shipbuilding and the fur trade. He also moved the settlement on Kodiak Island from Three Saints Bay to a new settlement called St. Paul Village on Resurrection Bay in 1792, choosing this bay for its greater shelter from tsunamis. Before the establishment of a royally chartered fur trading company, Baranov had to contend with rival traders and was responsible for resolving conflicts with other Indigenous tribes. To address tensions in Cook Inlet between his men and

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55. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

56. Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). Maria Taroutina and Allison Leigh, eds., *Russian Orientalism in a Global Context: Hybridity, Encounter, and Representation, 1740–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023).

57. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism*, 8-9.

58. Ibid.

59. Juliana Hu Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism: Alaska’s Indigenous and Asian Entanglements* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 39-41.

60. Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804–1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 187.

a Yaghenenht'ana community, Baranov met with Chief Raskashilov. He came to Kodiak and offered Baranov an alliance to be solidified through marriage to his daughter. Even though Baranov had a wife and children at home, he decided to accept Chief Raskashilov's offer to bring peace to the colony.

This action is significant from an Indigenous feminist perspective. D. Meme Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson discuss how Indigenous mothers "historically had responsibility for the life they created and, by extension, for the whole family and the entire community."<sup>61</sup> In giving his daughter to Baranov, Raskashilov was not simply offering a bride, but also the possibility of community continuity. His daughter carries matrilineal authority within her community. The alliance with Baranov, however, reduces this to a transaction and her body to a diplomatic object.

Immediately upon Anna's introduction, she appears to exemplify the "long tradition of 'keeping up appearances' as a strategic form of resistance."<sup>62</sup> She approaches Baranov with her "eyes lowered" and stands silently in front of him.<sup>63</sup> The reading is straightforward: she is submissive and obedient. But it can also be read as a strategic decision to perform acceptance to avoid attention. She is only referred to as an Indian princess or Raskashilov's daughter; her Yaghenenht'ana name is never given. This absence immediately cuts Anna off from her community and ancestors. Mary Macdonald notes how Stó:lō mothers believe an Indian name "was more significant than the given name because of the cultural significance that it held."<sup>64</sup> Indigenous names are earned, shared between generations, and hold place-based meaning. When Baranov declares, "I will call you Anna!" he replaces her old Indigenous name, which connected her to her community, family, and land, with a Russian Orthodox one that does not. This aligns with the colonial goal of erasing the Indigenous past, so there is nothing to return to. As Robin Gray argues, rematriation is "an embodied praxis of recovery and return," but recovery and return are impossible when the Indigenous name was never recorded to begin with.<sup>65</sup>

The exchange between Alexander and Anna also reflects the binaries of colonial relationships: he is active and speaking while she is passive and silent. They exchange vows and gifts; he gives her gold and jade earrings, which she accepts with "a faint smile that touches her lips."<sup>66</sup> The image places refined European jewelry on an "uncivilized" body—another colonial binary. A wedding

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61. D. Meme Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson, "Introduction: Indigenous Mothering Perspectives," in *Mothers of the Nations: Indigenous Mothering as Global Resistance, Reclaiming and Recovery*, ed. D. Meme Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2014), 2.

62. Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson, "Introduction: Indigenous Mothering Perspectives," 3.

63. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 100.

64. Margaret MacDonald, "Maternal Identity in Family and Community: Mothers of the Stó:lō First Nation," in *Indigenous Experiences of Pregnancy and Birth*, ed. Hannah Tait Neufeld and Jaime Cidro (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2017), 5.

65. Robin R. Gray, "Rematriation: Ts'msyen Law, Rights of Relationality, and Protocols of Return," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 3.

66. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 100.

celebration follows, during which Anna performs a dance for Baranov. The dance is described as “slow and flowing at first, then it becomes fast and almost savage, building to a sharp, almost violent climax.”<sup>67</sup> Using Taylor’s conceptual repertoire, we can read Anna’s dance as a performance of her culture, in which she communicates through her movement what language cannot. In the pageant, however, her dance is viewed entirely through a colonial lens, marked as a spectacle to consume. The description of her dance as “savage” with a “violent climax” fits the stereotypical representation of the Indigenous other as uncivilized and in need of control.<sup>68</sup>

This parallels the broader colonial treatment of land as feminine. The feminization of the land is not new; it appears consistently across imperial contexts. Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant discusses how Enlightenment-era thinkers made colonization and subjugation contingent on imagining the land as female so that it could be seen as both exploitable and penetrable.<sup>69</sup> Under imperialism, the land and a female’s body became symbolically equivalent. Breanna Theobald, in her work on indigenous reproduction in the American West, discusses how the treatment of the land and women as subjects to be violated and conquered creates gendered violence that is inseparable from colonial discourse.<sup>70</sup> Jodi Byrd’s *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* extends this critique, analyzing how colonial thought is not only applied to objects, for example, women, but is also reproduced culturally to continue justifying colonization.<sup>71</sup>

Years later, Alexander and Anna are living together in St. Paul village. They have one child, Antipatr, who is about ten years old. By this point, the Russian Orthodox Church has arrived in Kodiak as an adversary to the Baranov administration, opposing his men’s gambling, drinking, extramarital relations, and their treatment of the Alutiit. The Church also used baptism as a recruitment tool, offering Alutiit Russian citizenship—and with it a legal protection from enslavement—and in return they converted.

This is the backdrop for a scene in which several priests interrogate Anna about her child and her relationship with Baranov. Three of the Fathers are together discussing Anna, whom they believe to be pregnant again. Their exchange is an example of what Yeğenoğlu describes as discourse that “constitutes not only the object but also the subjects who are investigated.”<sup>72</sup> This means that the priests are

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67. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 99.

68. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 99.

69. Carolyn Merchant, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, (New York: Haper Collins, 1980).

70. Brianna Theobald, *Reproduction on the Reservation: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Colonialism in the Long Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

71. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

72. Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6.

not simply observing Anna as the Indigenous other, but attempting to reimagine her as a legible colonial subject redeemable under God. Anna walks past with her son beside her and a water bucket in her hands, “sedate and beautiful with her head bowed, clutching a head shawl at her throat.”<sup>73</sup> The shawl fits into Yeğenoğlu’s concept of the veil in Orientalism: it represents both opacity and desire, the Oriental woman as mystery, the male subject driven to uncover her secrets and define himself through his attempt.<sup>74</sup> The priests grow anxious and press her if she is pregnant—their attempt to uncover the veil. They also emphasize that she is living in sin while Alexander has another wife, and encourage her to leave him. This is an example of what Jaime Cidro and Hannah Tait Neufeld describe as colonial authorities seeing “traditional Indigenous gender roles as an impediment to successful colonization” and seeking to control women’s reproductive bodies in order to “remove women from places of power.”<sup>75</sup> Anna’s response—“I not know!”—is not ignorance.<sup>76</sup> In Audra Simpson’s framework, it is a refusal; she declines to participate in a Christian moral system in which the priests’ questions make sense.<sup>77</sup> Her community holds different values around pregnancy and relationships. Even Alexander later acknowledges in their reconciliation scene, telling Anna that she cannot be held responsible for “our sin” as she does not know “our guilt.”<sup>78</sup> Her own colonial patriarch defends her against the church.

Anna seeks refuge in the woods after the priests call Antipatr “a child of sin” and declare that her new child “will be born in sin.”<sup>79</sup> Antipatr is later recovered at the bottom of a cliff, unconscious and soaked in seawater. One of the fur trade employees also recovered one of Anna’s earrings. The implication is that Anna, under extreme pressure from the Church, committed or nearly committed infanticide. When Brink wrote this pageant in the 1950s, the available ethnographic discourse on the topic was shaped by texts such as Clark Garber’s 1947 article, “Eskimo Infanticide.” Garber calls mothers who commit this “diabolical” “primitive practice” “mentally deficient.”<sup>80</sup> Yet, even within this early discourse existed a counterexample: anthropologist Aleš Hrdlicka noted that there was no documentary evidence recording actual observations of infanticide.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, Garber’s account depends more on assumption rather than on ethnographic record. Brink, in dialogue with this discourse, could not allow Anna to be figure Garber imagines; it would go against the colonial fantasy in which she is integrated into

73. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 105.

74. Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, 26.

75. Jaime Cidro and Hannah Tait Neufeld, “Introduction: Pregnancy and Birthing: The Essence of Indigeneity,” in *Indigenous Experiences of Pregnancy and Birth*, ed. Hannah Tait Neufeld and Jaime Cidro (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2017), 1.

76. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 107.

77. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

78. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 126.

79. *Ibid.*, 105.

80. Clark M. Garber, “Eskimo Infanticide,” *The Scientific Monthly* 64, no. 2 (1947): 98.

81. Aleš Hrdlička, *The Anthropology of Kodiak Island* (Philadelphia: The Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, 1944), 80.



Russian culture. Instead, he blames the Church for imposing a concept on Anna that was not part of her epistemology. This preserves Anna's maternal virtue and Baranov as the good colonizer fighting against Russian autocratic religion. Both of these versions—Garber's unfit mother and Brink's distraught victim of religious harassment—take away Anna's agency. In neither of them is the focus on her decision-making.

An important dimension here is that Anna has been severed from her community. Indigenous pregnancy and birth, as Cidro and Tait Neufeld describe, is grounded in support from the community and the spiritual realm.<sup>82</sup> The setting of this scene at the cliff is intentionally outside of a colonial space, like the village or the church. It is a space where Anna is alone and is not entirely confined. Anna's perspective on what happened and why is not given, leaving the audience to make their own narrative for her. What is clear in this situation is that Anna should not have had to face it alone, but should have had access to the support of her family and community.

Further adopting the "good colonizer" position, Baranov later defends her reproductive body explicitly: "To the Aleut woman, it is not a sin to have a child. It is a fulfillment of the purpose for which she was born. And the child belongs to her."<sup>83</sup> Yet he immediately refuses to allow Anna to leave, which captures the paradoxes of the world in which Anna lives. She has a child and partner, but no kin or community. This situation was the "forced rearrangement of gender roles" that Cidro and Tait Neufeld describe as having "disrupted family structures" and removed women like Anna from their sources of power—her position in her father's community, her kin, her language, and her reproductive autonomy.<sup>84</sup> Her near-infanticide is not an abandonment of maternal responsibility. It is a decision that should have been made with community support, made instead by a woman alone and terrified on the edge of a cliff because of what colonization has taken from her.

When Anna returns to Baranov, she is on her knees, illustrating her vulnerability. She is returning not to freedom but to a colonial system that is less oppressive than the Orthodox one. Baranov pulls out the earring recovered from the cliff and returns it to her; they embrace. He explains the conflict with the Church in a way he believes Anna will understand, framing it as his guilt, not hers. The gesture seems supportive, but it is also an assertion of his colonial, paternalistic authority over her, since he narrates her own actions back to her in a way she can "understand." The lost earring had represented a rupture in their relationship and a moment when Anna did not comply with the colonial expectations placed upon her; its return represents healing and a return to compliance for Anna. Her acceptance is her adaptation to survival in this colony. When Baranov asks, "Are you happy?" Anna responds, "I happy!"<sup>85</sup> This is another act of her quiet performance. She is giving the required response after a traumatic event, while

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82. Jaime Cidro and Hannah Tait Neufeld, "Introduction."

83. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 68.

84. Jaime Cidro and Hannah Tait Neufeld, "Introduction," 1.

85. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 128.

also maintaining access to her children. This again refers to what Lavell-Harvard and Anderson call “the importance of deception.”<sup>86</sup>

After a difficult period during which Baranov struggled to establish Sitka as the new capital of Russian Alaska, we find Baranov and Anna years later in a large western-style home overlooking Sitka, with their son, Antipatr, and their daughter, Irina. Anna comes down the stairs in a head shawl, “wearing a flowered skirt and a solid color buttoned blouse,” appearing perceptibly older, and somewhat stooped.<sup>87</sup> She appears assimilated into colonial domesticity, yet the shawl remains. She insisted on protecting herself with her shawl from the colonial gaze. In this scene, Irina is at the piano receiving lessons from her German governess. Anna interrupts to call her daughter to pick berries, and when Irina ignores her, Anna yells, “You learn to be a lady after you learn work!”<sup>88</sup> This is one of the clearest examples of what Gina Starblanket calls the “everyday” acts of resurgence.<sup>89</sup> Anna asserts her values and passes that knowledge to her daughter, outside of the colonial structure. She is ensuring that her values are shared, whether from her community or not, and that she passes them down to her daughter. At the same time, the scene stages a disconnect between the mother and daughter. Picking berries is a traditional subsistence practice, while piano lessons are a cultural colonial accomplishment. The second generation is fully disconnected from Anna’s heritage. Irina has no Indigenous name and will never have one, being permanently disconnected from her mother’s kinship network.

In the pageant’s final act, this disconnect is complete. Irina is seventeen years old and the product of successful Russian cultural assimilation: she speaks Europeans languages, plays the piano well, curtsies properly, engages with colonial politics, and is about to marry a Christian naval officer. She is everything Anna was supposed to be but could not fully be. The pageant presents this as the natural progression of colonization.

The most structurally revealing moment comes when Baranov gives Irina the necklace that Chief Raskashikov originally gave to Anna. Irina places it on her fiancé Yanovsky’s neck, mirroring the gesture of Anna placing the necklace on Baranov’s neck. Except now, this Indigenous diplomatic gesture is being performed by a girl with no Indigenous name, no kin network, and no relationship to her community. Baranov then says, “Your mother danced for me when she gave me that. I think it is only appropriate that you should play a piece for Simeon.”<sup>90</sup> Instead of Anna’s “savage” dance, Irina plays a Wagner piece, demonstrating that she is mature and civilized. This moment is one of the pageant’s most transparent scenes, where the colonial project’s goals have been met.

In their final years, Anna returns to Kodiak to be with her church community and is officially recognized as Baranov’s wife after his Russian wife died. Her

86. Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson, “Introduction,” 3.

87. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 154.

88. Ibid.

89. Gina Starblanket, “Being Indigenous Feminists: Resurgences Against Contemporary Patriarchy,” in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed., ed. Joyce Green (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 24–25.

90. Brink, *Cry of the Wild Ram*, 175.

absence from the pageant finale is partly a product of colonial erasure and partly an example of Audra Simpson's refusal. The play no longer needs her as a symbol once Irina has taken her place. However, with Simpson's concept of refusal, it can be seen as her asserting agency. Anna chooses where she wants to be. Even if the community she came from is not the one she chose, it is a decision she made for herself.

How historically accurate Brink was is worth examining because Anna was a real person. The historical record first encounters her through a letter Baranov writes to Grigorii Shelikhov, the company's owner, in which he states, "For a long time now I have been keeping a girl."<sup>91</sup> The verb choice here is already revealing, framing Anna as a possession rather than a person. He describes her as the daughter of an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq village leader. According to historians Kenneth N. Owens and Alexander Yu. Petrov, local tradition holds that she is from the village of Karluk on Kodiak Island and that she is the daughter of Grigorii Raskashchikov, who worked closely with Baranov on expeditions.<sup>92</sup> This immediately contradicts the pageant, which identifies Anna as Yaghenenht'ana rather than Alutiiq/Sugpiaq—this was not accidental. Brink strategically probably chose to distance Anna from the colonial history of Kodiak, where Alutiiq/Sugpiaq were treated brutally by Russian colonizers. In the same letter, Baranov also notes that Anna has learned to sew, manages household affairs competently, and can handle business matters. The substantial age gap between them was also striking: she was approximately thirty years younger than Baranov; she was likely in her late teens, while he was in his mid-fifties. The couple had two children: Antipatr, born in 1797, and Irina, born in 1804.

Baranov had an ongoing rivalry with the Russian Orthodox Priests on the island, and at different times, newly arrived priests disapproved of his Indigenous wife and his children, who, to them, were illegitimate. To appease Father Herman, Baranov lived separately from Anna at one point. The sources describe the couple maintained what can be interpreted as "domestic harmony," and Baranov's "evident pride" in their children appears to have softened some of the clerics' attitudes over time.<sup>93</sup> However, it is important to mention that these comments are coming from colonial observers who strive to normalize the relationship between Anna and Baranov, not from Anna herself, which exposes the coercive conditions where the relationship began. In 1805 or 1806, Baranov received word that his wife had died, and then he "wed Anna Grigor'evna soon after he received this news."<sup>94</sup> Many official visitors to Kodiak and later Sitka recorded the "settled domesticity of the Baranov home and the tidy arrangements they found there under the management."<sup>95</sup> This scene reflects the pageant's scenes in the Baranov home in Sitka, where Anna plays the role of household manager.

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91. Kenneth N. Owens with Alexander Yu. Petrov, *Empire Maker: Aleksandr Baranov and Russian Colonial Expansion into Alaska and Northern California* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 110.

92. Owens with Petrov, *Empire Maker*, 111.

93. Ibid, 135.

94. Ibid, 172.

95. Ibid, 172.

Antipatr and Irina were educated at the Russian Orthodox mission school and assimilated into Russian colonial life. Antipatr eventually earned “an appointment to the Russian naval cadet corps in Kronstadt.”<sup>96</sup> Irina learned to read and write, a very uncommon accomplishment for any Russian girl of her generation, and married navy lieutenant Simeon Ianovskii. Where she lived for the rest of her life is not recorded. Anna spent her remaining years with Father Herman in a “virtual hermitage that he called New Valaam” on Spruce Island, where she served him as a devout spiritual assistant. She is also buried there.<sup>97</sup>

### **Sophie Frets and Anna’s Interiority**

What the archive gives us is not Anna but Anna as Baranov described her to his employer and Anna as recorded by official visitors to her household. We encounter Anna for the first time as a fictional character, written by a white playwright for a majority-white settler audience. We thus see what the archive has recorded and what it has presented to readers through a settler lens, once again in a book focused on sharing the life of Baranov. The theoretical frameworks introduced throughout the section on Anna illuminate how she navigates the colonial constraints imposed upon her, but they do not restore her interiority. Gayatri Spivak’s question of whether the subaltern can speak vividly exposes this problem for us. Every version of Anna we have analyzed is mediated through a colonial representation of her. Her own voice and self-understanding cannot reach us, as they are circumscribed in the archive. Anna, the character or Anna in the archive, cannot speak for herself. But Sophie Frets, an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq woman who played Anna in the summer 1992 productions of *Cry of the Wild Ram*, creates a sense of interiority in Anna that Brink could never bring to the role.

Frets grew up on Kodiak Island, hearing about the production but never seeing it because it was far out of town. She did not attend the performance until she was nineteen or twenty, when her sister played Anna. By her own account, she had not connected with her Alutiq culture at that point. Growing up, she recalls that it was “not cool to be indigenous” and that “when people found out [that you were indigenous] you carried the shame of it.”<sup>98</sup> Her immediate response to viewing the performance was pride in her sister’s performance, who was “the most beautiful... and so lovely.”<sup>99</sup> But also immediately noticed that when the play ended, everyone from the audience approached Baranov to honor him in some way. Anna was all alone; Frets found herself questioning this moment as well as the whole pageant. She wanted to know how true it was or what the pageant was actually trying to show.

When Frets played the role herself in 1992, the experience was unexpected for her. She describes being “shocked how easy it was to relate to Anna” and how

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96. Ibid, 262.

97. Ibid, 266.

98. Kaitlin Jade Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus: Sophie Frets on *The Cry of the Wild Ram*,” *The Alaskan Myth*, podcast, December 6, 2023, Spotify.

99. Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus.”



easy “it was to jump into that role.”<sup>100</sup> She identifies this as her first experience “seeing that there was something different about her being Indigenous. [She understood that she could] create different things inside her, [and] see things differently because she is Indigenous.”<sup>101</sup> These are not the feelings Brink intended this pageant to evoke. Frets was able to recognize in Anna a role written without the interiority of an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq woman’s mind, a reflection of her own experiences. Taylor’s theory of performance as a transmission of knowledge, identity, and memory can be used here.<sup>102</sup> Brink’s colonial fantasy is not transferred through Frets’s performance of Anna. Instead, what is transferred is the memories and identity of an autonomous Alutiiq/Sugpiaq woman. Frets describes Anna as a “very touching role,” one that allowed her to portray what Anna went through and to “feel the tears of Anna flow down her cheeks.”<sup>103</sup> Frets embodies the repertoire as she is able to expose Anna’s interiority in a way that the archive cannot.

When asked whether the pageant accurately represents Anna’s motivations, she answers without hesitation, “No, [the pageant] did not touch on an ounce of her potential.”<sup>104</sup> The pageant glamorized Anna and omitted most of her truth. The most accurate elements, Frets suggests, were simply that an Indigenous woman could be given away, and that the priests could harass her. What is missing is the enslavement of the Alutiit and the full treatment of what women endured. Her reflection on Anna’s dance is particularly illuminating: “[it’s so] bizarre when I think about it now... I know it played out wrong...it would be really interesting to see it played out today.”<sup>105</sup> The dance in the pageant makes the Indigenous body into a spectacle; it resembles a scenario in which the Native princess is forced to perform her otherness for the settler audience. Frets herself is able to call out the wrongness she felt during the dance. What Frets describes as reducing and giving justice to this scene cannot fit into the colonial scenario because it gives agency to the dance, which revokes it being cast as a spectacle.<sup>106</sup>

Frets does not dismiss the pageant entirely. She believed it brought the community together and acknowledged that even though most people knew the pageant misrepresented history, it still provided a venue for local talent and fostered community collaboration. But the director she worked with in 1992 wanted to rewrite the pageant, only to meet resistance. The community preferred the familiar, inaccurate version; it was harder to acknowledge that the pageant’s history was wrong than to continue performing it.<sup>107</sup> The community’s ambivalence towards this exposes what the pageant set out to do: bring the community together at the cost of historical suppression. The pageant has fostered harmony in the community, and questioning its content would threaten that harmony.

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100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 1-3.

103. Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus.”

104. Ibid.

105. Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus.”

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

Frets discusses this historical period through an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq concept that she explains carefully. There is a word for the colonial period that conveys how that “time is too sad to ever speak of again.”<sup>108</sup> The word illustrates that her people must do the best they can and keep moving forward. She is clear that this does not mean ignoring the past. She emphasizes that you have to hear sad stories, even if it’s uncomfortable, and listen and let it break our hearts and cry with them — that is your job as a human.<sup>109</sup> She believes that the play has the potential to be rewritten to educate people and offer a “fuller spectrum” of what we could be, meaning cohabitation across cultures where no one’s history is ignored.<sup>110</sup>

It was not until the revival of Alutiiq/Sugpiaq culture in the 1980s that she returned to her community, received her tribal card, and “jumped right in.”<sup>111</sup> What she found was not necessarily a thriving culture ready to be claimed, but one that had survived, waiting to be rebuilt. “So much of it was lost,” she reflects, “I had not realized it was missing.”<sup>112</sup> This sentence is a sharp contrast with one of the pageant’s last scenes: the scene with Irina playing Wagner on the piano and accepting her mother’s pendant to give to her betrothed. Taylor calls this a repeated framework that shapes the scene around it. It is a familiar colonial scenario that recurs throughout the pageant. The scene reveals the reconciliation after imperialism and its legacy, done so well that the loss of Alutiiq/Sugpiaq culture is barely recognized. The loss was so intense that the absence went unnoticed. The pageant exposed what colonialism made, and Frets showed what it took.

## Conclusion

In a Facebook group for Kodiak residents, the pageant lives on. When the local Salvation Army recently posted a 1980 program from *Cry of the Wild Ram*, residents gathered in the comments to reminisce. One resident recalled that “it was a great show” and that “people flew over to Kodiak annually to view the production.”<sup>113</sup> They also commented that they had just told a neighbor, “It was sad the *Cry of the Wild Ram* is no more.” Their last comment is the most telling of the pageant’s legacy: “I learned so much... the history of the people coming to the land.”<sup>114</sup> The commenter is fond of Brink’s history of “the people coming to the land,” but not of the people already on it. This invokes Taylor’s framework: the program at the Salvation Army as the archive and the repertoire being it when posted on Facebook. The nostalgia of the pageant serves as a form of historical education, even though it is incorrect. The emotions and affection are genuine

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108. Ibid.

109. Armstrong, “Episode 2 Bonus.”

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid.

113. Comment on Salvation Army Thrift Store Kodiak, “1980s Kodiak cry of the Wild Ram play,” Open Friends of Kodiak Facebook group, January 21, 2026, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsofKodiak/permalink/2777505879258630/>.

114. Comment on Salvation Army Thrift Store Kodiak, “1980s Kodiak cry of the Wild Ram play,” Open Friends of Kodiak Facebook group, January 21, 2026, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsofKodiak/permalink/2777505879258630/>.

for the event and the community, which cannot be separated from what the event suppressed.

The persistence of the nostalgia of the *Cry of the Wild Ram* raises questions that go beyond Kodiak. What happens when a community's beloved collective memory is also its most misrepresentative history? How could a community correct one without affecting the other? Perhaps a rewritten version of the pageant could offer a more comprehensive, authentic narrative. However, the community's resistance shows they would rather defend a false narrative than face the discomfort of a true story. The conflict then becomes who has the authority to change the story: those who were erased from it, or the community that created an identity around it? The answer must be the Alutiit who were erased from this history and also lived it. Sophie Frets shows how this is possible; the very same stage where the colonial fantasy takes place also gives her the tools she needed to unmask it.

Russian Alaska's hybridity further complicates these questions. The pageant built a story on an empire which was itself ambiguous, as both Western and Eastern. Then it proceeded to show how Russian colonialism was a precursor to their own democracy. *Cry of the Wild Ram* is mediated through so many layers: Alutiiq/Sugpiaq history through the Russian colonial archive, retold by an American playwright, performed by a predominantly settler community, and then rehashed in a Facebook comment section under a Salvation Army post. Each layer of mediation tries to shed new light on the subject, but it really just adds another filter that distorts it further. The pageant then leaves us with questions beyond the Baranovs' true history. How can a community share its own history without silencing someone's individual story? Using Frets' words, what would it take for us to hear the sad stories and let them break our hearts, but listen anyway?

### About the Author

Laurel Thorne is a PhD Student in the Slavic Studies Department at Brown University. She holds a bachelor's degree in history from Mississippi State University, where she concentrated on women and gender in the Russian Empire. She received her M.A. in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where her master's thesis examined the role of women in the colonization of Russian Alaska. At Brown, Laurel's research explores Indigeneity, gender, and empire, with a particular focus on the history of Alutiiq/Sugpiaq women of Kodiak, Alaska, from the Russian colonial period to the current day. She draws on Indigenous feminist theory and rematriation methodologies to challenge settler-colonial frameworks and foreground Indigenous perspectives, both historically and contemporarily.

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