

Finnish Influences in Michigan: Visuals



Annual Finnish Music Festival, Covington, Michigan



Old Main in Hancock, the first permanent building of the country's only Finnish college, Finlandia University. It was founded in 1896 as Suomi College.

Finnish Influences in Michigan: Text

#1

There are still active Finnish-speaking communities in many areas of the Upper Peninsula today. Some aspects of Finnish culture, such as the sauna and the concept of **sisu**, have been adopted generally by residents of the Upper Peninsula. **Sisu** is a Finnish term meaning strength of will, determination, perseverance, acting rationally in the face of adversity.

The Upper Peninsula has a distinctive local cuisine. The *pasty*, a kind of meat turnover originally brought to the region by Cornish miners, is extremely popular among locals and tourists alike. Finnish immigrants contributed *nisu* (a cardamom-flavored sweet bread) and *korpu* (rock-hard slices of toasted cinnamon-bread, traditionally dipped in coffee).

People of Finnish ancestry make up 16% of the Upper Peninsula's population, the highest concentration of Finns outside Europe. In addition, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan has the only Finnish-language television broadcast outside of Finland.

#2

Heikki Lunta, the Finnish snow god, has used his mystical powers to create abundant snow for our region of Lake Gogebic. Heikki Lunta at times teases us with just sprinkling, but later surprises us with what we've come to expect. Deep snow! In the long run, Heikki rarely disappoints us; the last time we had less than 100 inches of snow was in 1958! "

Heikki Lunta appears in different attire each year depending on his mood. In years past he has appeared in a mixture of animal skins or in a flannel shirt and a pair of swampers, looks a bit like a Northwoods Santa.

There's even a Heikki Lunta dance and a song made to go with the crazy dance. It is believed that the "Heikki Lunta Snow Song" when played always brings snow wherever it is played.