

Finnish Research 101

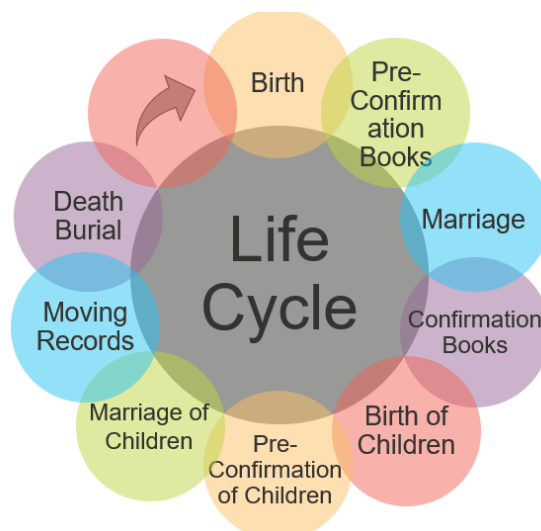
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OBJECTIVE

You will understand Finnish history and how it affects records, know what records are available, and have tools and strategies for using these records.

HISTORY

Date	Event
1686	Church Records Began – Under Swedish Rule
1695-1697	Crop failures and famine killed about 1/3 of the population in a two-year period.
1700-1709	Great Northern War during the war there was a plague outbreak in 1708 that cause deaths over the next 4 years.
1713-1721	Great Wrath – Russian military occupation of Finland. High “taxes,” plundering, theft and destruction devastated the Finnish population and economy.
1734	A new common law was established to instigate estate inventories (probates).
1741-1743	Russo-Swedish War
1753	Switch to the Gregorian calendar
1808-1809	Finland invaded and won by Russia
1830s	Records start to switch from Gothic to Latin script
1863	Finnish was proclaimed equal to Swedish as the official language.
1917-1918	Independence declared and secured – civil war ensues
1920	Law decrees fixed surnames mandatory



RECORD TYPES

Church Record Extracts - *Kirkonkirjojen kopiot OR Avskrifter av kyrkoböcker*

To preserve the original records, the Finnish Genealogical Society has transcribed Finnish church records. The extracts cover births, marriages, deaths, and sometimes church accounts and moving records from the earliest records, some beginning in the 1600s, to at least 1850.

The extracts are written in modern handwriting and are therefore easier to read than the original records.

Birth (Christening) - *Syntyneet/Födda OR Kastetut/Döpta*

Children were generally baptized or christened within a few days of birth. Stillbirths were generally registered in both the baptism and burial records. Earlier registers typically give less information, sometimes including only the names of the child and father and the date of the christening. Until the end of the 1700s many pastors either did not include the mother's name in the birth records or included only her given name.

Engagements and Marriage Records - *Vihityt/Vigda*

Couples were generally married in the bride's home parish. Typically, people were well into their 20s before they married. While engagement and marriage are often listed in the same record book, there may be separate records for both.

Communion – *rippikirja/husförhörlängder*

and

Pre-Confirmation Books – *lastenkirjat*

Communion records are considered a type of living census. They establish individual identity, paternity, age, and residence over an extended period. These records can give you a skeleton picture of your family and point you in the right direction for vital records. While some areas will have the whole family listed in the confirmation books, many areas have children listed in a different book called a Lastenkirjat or Pre-Confirmation book. They will have all children before they were confirmed around the age of 14. These books still have families listed in family groups with the names of the parents listed at the top. Once the child turns 14 and is confirmed they will be moved into the confirmation book and likely be listed with their parents.

Tax Records – *henkikirja/mantalsängder*

These can be a good supplement or replacement to the communion books. Not all individuals were listed, but it can confirm the presence of a family in a specific place and time. Learn more about tax records [here](#).

Moving Certificates and Lists - *sisään- ja ulosmuuttaneet; seurakuntaan ja seurakunnasta muuttaneet/in- och utflyttningslängder*

When moving from one parish to another, a person was required to get a moving certificate from their parish priest and present it to the priest at their new parish. Some priests kept and preserved these certificates and they may be available online for your parish.

In the 1800s parishes began using special arrival and removal records. These records, which are frequently essential to family history research, chronologically list the people who moved into or out of the parish. Wives and children may not be mentioned by name, only as numbers in a separate column.

Death and Burial Records - *Kuolleet/Döda OR Haudatut/Begravna*

More important that the burial was recorded than the death. Burials were recorded in the parish where the person died and was buried. Burials usually took place within a few days of death. For the death of a woman or child, earlier burial records often list only the husband's or father's name and the word for wife or child. They may not give the name of the deceased.

Burial records may exist for individuals who were born before the earliest birth and marriage records and can at times extend your research another generation. Stillbirths were generally recorded in both the christening and burial registers; however, many stillbirths were recorded only in the burial records.

Probates – *Perunkirjoitus/Bouppteckning*

the name of the deceased person, death date, names of heirs and guardians, relationships, residences, an inventory and appraisal of the estate, a list of the deceased's debts, and names of assessors. These records are very helpful for research as they establish relationships that may be hard to prove in other ways because of patronymic names.

STRATEGY

1. Start with what you know
2. Create a research goal
3. Find a vital record to ground the person in a date and place
4. Look for Communion and Pre-Confirmation books for the individual/family. This creates a skeleton for the family over time and will alert you to other vital records you may need to look for.
 - a. Did your family move? Locate any available moving records to help you track their movements. If none are available, try using the HisKi project to search in surrounding parishes for family members.
5. Verify any vital information found in the Communion and Pre-Confirmation books. Follow the life cycle pattern as you do this.
6. Fill out the story with other records when pertinent and available.

READING THE RECORDS

Finnish Genealogical Word List:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Finnish_Genealogical_Word_List

Finnish Language Characteristics:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Finnish_Language_Characteristics

Swedish Genealogical Word List:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Swedish_Genealogical_Word_List

Hans Högman:

http://www.hhogman.se/dictionary_genealogy.htm

FINNISH GAZZETEERS

Finland Background and Understanding:

https://www.kotus.fi/files/2604/Toponymic_guidelines.pdf

FamilySearch wiki:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Finland_Genealogy

Click on the county your person is from, then click on the parish, Farm lists will be found on each parish page.

Finnish Parish List:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Finnish_Parish_List

This list gives the Finnish and Swedish names for each parish in the country, as well as the judicial districts and provinces associated with those parishes.

CHURCH RECORDS COLLECTIONS

Website	Birth/Christening	Marriage	Death/Burial	Moving	Confirmation and Pre-Confirmation
FamilySearch	Index	Index	Index	-	Index
Ancestry	Index	Index	Index	-	Pre-Confirmation Index Communion Index
MyHeritage	Index	Index	Index	-	Index
HisKi	Index				-
FFHA/SSHY	Browsable Images				
Digihakimisto	Browsable Images				
Digitalarkisto	Browsable Images				

For more information on Finnish church records, click [here](#)

OTHER RECORD COLLECTIONS

Website	Tax Records	Probate	Other
FamilySearch	Search the FamilySearch Catalog for the specific county or parish of your research and select the record type you wish to see.		
Ancestry	Population Tax Lists, 1809-1920	-	World War II Military Casualties, 1939-1945
MyHeritage	-	-	Russians Immigrating to the United States
Digihakemisto	HERE - Search for the record type you need using the Finnish Genealogical Word List to search the correct Finnish translation – there are limited archives outside of church records.		
FFHA/SSHY	-	Court Record Databases	Military Records Other

This handout is a brief introduction into Finnish records and research, for a more in-depth background, visit the following page in the FamilySearch Wiki:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Finland_Genealogy