

## The Finnish Nationality Classroom

### *to be built in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh*



Recognized far and wide, the historic Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh give the visitor a profound sense of the diverse ethnic backgrounds of Western Pennsylvania. The Rooms, 30 in number with several more to be realized within the next few years, are a source of pride to each group represented.

The Nationality Rooms are seen by tens of thousands of visitors every year through a vibrant tour program. All but two are used as classrooms.

The Finnish Nationality Classroom will reflect the culture and customs of Finland and will serve as a memorial where the relatives of early Finnish immigrants will learn about their heritage and remember the contributions of their ancestors to the vibrant American culture.

## Student Design Contest



A competition for the best design for the Finnish Nationality Classroom was sponsored by the Finnish Nationality Room Committee at the University of Pittsburgh. In March, 2006, Professor Anna-Maija Ylimaula (lower right: left), of the University of Oulu, came to Pittsburgh with three plans that were selected as



winners of the design competition in Finland. The University of Pittsburgh Finnish Committee members, together with Nationality Rooms Director E. Maxine Bruhns (middle) and the University of Pittsburgh architect Park Rankin (right), selected Gröndahl's design, Big Dipper (upper right), for first prize.



Mika Gröndahl's (left) elegant design, based on a traditional Finnish smoke house will be expanded to include details of Finnish log construction and motifs of the time period will be displayed. It will contain the essential elements for a showpiece of Finnish culture.

The Finnish Nationality Room at the University of Pittsburgh will highlight two important aspects of Finnish culture in 1778: **the high literacy rate and variety of schools** and **the unique construction technique** found in Finnish log houses.

## Finnish Education in Finland and America

A primer to teach reading, The ABC Book, was published in 1543. Reading and writing soon spread widely, through instruction in two-week schools sponsored by the Lutheran church. Two hundred years later, in 1778, reading and writing were common, and additional education was offered in vocational and academic schools. In the American colonies, in 1640, the first Lutheran Church in the New Sweden settlement, near Wilmington, Delaware, had a Finnish pastor, Reorus Torkillus<sup>1</sup>. [1 Engle, Eloise, Finns in North America (Annapolis, MD: Leeward Publications, Inc., 1975).] The Finnish ABC book was used there.

## Finnish Log Construction--Unique in the World

Finnish log construction, displayed in the smoke houses of Finland, is preserved in the Seurasaari Open-Air Museum in Finland and in the Valley County Museum Complex at Roseberry, Idaho in the United States. Finnish log construction is a precise and exact art, utilizing custom-fit logs and dovetailed corners. Only generations of building and living in log houses could have brought it to this state of excellence.



**Mr. Frank Eld**, Idaho, watched with great admiration as a log building was constructed by his father and other Finns, with a systematic technique and detailed handyman's work, using special tools brought from Finland. He has found the structure of Finnish fitted logs to exist in buildings everywhere Finnish immigrants have settled, and also in the oldest log houses built by Finns in colonial times New Sweden This was the work of skillful men following a tradition of generations of Finns. The Finnish Nationality Classroom will be built with Frank Eld's guidance and tools, including the Finnish axeman's "secret" tool, "vara."

## Savu-pirtti

## Smoke House



A smoke house had a massive stone fireplace without a chimney--the smoke exited from this hole and circulated through the upper part of the room to conduct the heat. Nearby, towards the center of the room, was an opening in the roof covered with a flap which was let down to draw the smoke up and out of the house when the fireplace was heating; the flap was then closed by lifting it up again. On the upper part of the wall there were smaller holes from which the smoke also exited. After the fire had burned down, ashes and smoldering embers were cleared from the fireplace, and an even heat

remained in the house. At the back of the fireplace, behind a wall, there were separate bedrooms, often four. The smoke house was a common dwelling in Finland in the 1800s and earlier. The walls were built with fitted logs, with the upper log being carved to fit over the lower log, which was left round. In the corners the logs were interlocked with traditional "salmon tail" joints. The floor consisted of thick planks.

## The Future Finnish Room

### Three Views and Two Plans



#### Entryway

At the door to the classroom where students enter. Immediately on the right is a column demonstrating dovetailed corner construction. In the ceiling are seven stars of the Big Dipper as symbols of the first novel in Finnish, *Seven Brothers*, by Aleksis Kivi in 1870. On the left wall is a mural of trees in an outdoor scene and at the end of the pathway is a model of a sauna, the icon of Finnish culture. This sauna is a non-functioning structure of logs blackened to appear as a smoke-sauna, containing a fire pit and benches on which students sit. An opening between the sauna and the main classroom allows the students to participate in the class while sitting in the sauna.



#### View towards the front of the room

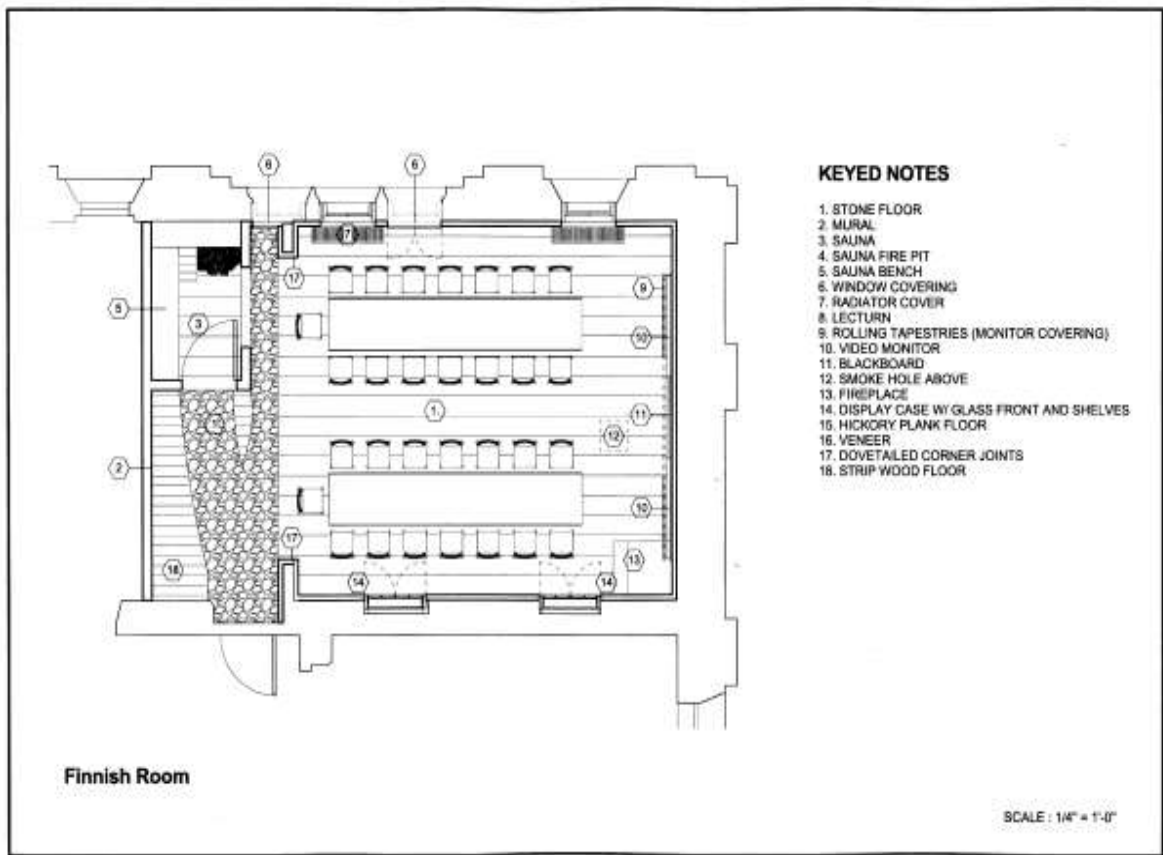
The windows on the right are actually cases for books and artifacts; the windows on the left are functional.



**View towards the back of the room**

The sauna and the mural seen in the entryway are seen here from a different position, the front of the room. The cases are on the left; the functional windows are on the right. There are beams and poles (orsi) on the ceiling.

## The Floor Plan



## The Ceiling Plan

