

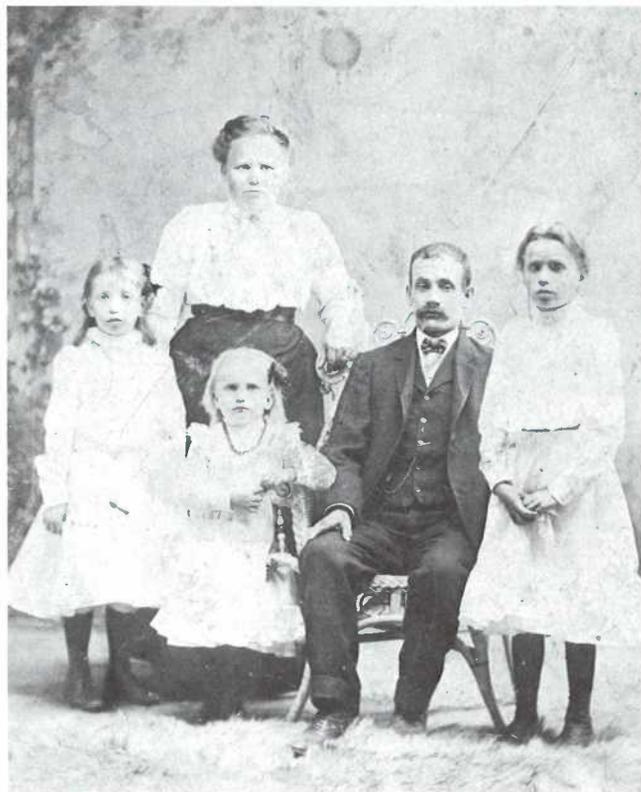
Coming to America from Finland

The immigrants who came to Vermont to live often had to travel great distances across the sea to reach the Green Mountains. The ocean voyage was long and difficult, and for those unable to speak English the challenge did not end when they stepped off the ship onto American soil. Imagine the courage of two children traveling alone from Scandinavia to Vermont by boat, then train, with adventures all along the way.

Mary Kivisto was born in Finland, near the city of Turku, in 1893. Her parents left Europe in 1902 and sailed to America, settling in West Rutland, Vermont. Later that year, Mary, who was nine, and her sister Rose, age seven-and-a-half, followed them. Their ocean journey was very eventful, and not long ago Mary tape-recorded this account of it. Her daughter, Ingrid Page of Plymouth, remembers hearing her mother tell this story of how she found her way to a new home in Vermont:

My father and mother and little sister came in the spring. They didn't take my other sister and me, because if they decided they didn't like America, it would cost too much for us to come over and go right back. They left Rose and me to come later, so we came in the fall.

My father had a friend of his get our tickets and the things we needed to bring, but otherwise we were on our own, two little kids. We left from Hanko, that's a port in the southern part of Finland, to come to America. We hadn't been on the ship very long when

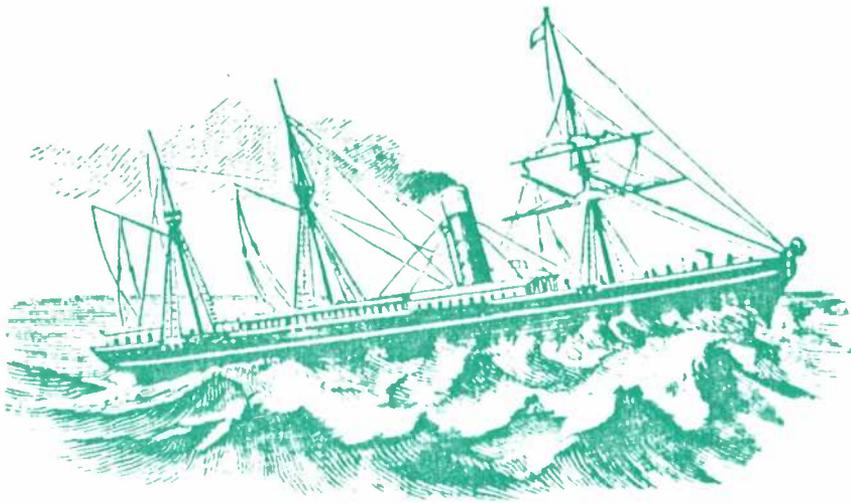


Mary Maki Kivisto (right) with her parents, Maria and Fred Maki, and her sisters, Fanny and Rose (left). Rutland, Vermont, about 1903. Photo courtesy Ingrid Kivisto Page of Plymouth.

a storm came up and the North Sea was very stormy. So everyone was sick, and you know, when people get sick they throw up and everything. Rose and I thought, "we can't stand that," so we went up on the deck and prowled around there.

We were there for a while, and when the storm came up, the boat started to rock so that we could hardly stand up. We were a little bit getting scared, so we decided to go downstairs, but the hatches were all closed and we couldn't go down.

We were up there all by ourselves, and a great big wave came and splashed us right flat on the deck, so we were cold. We crawled to one of the big pipes that



was on the deck of the ship, and we stayed there waiting to see if somebody would come and get us.

Finally the storm eased up again and we got up and someone came up, one of the crew, and started to scold us, "What are *you* doing up here? Why aren't you downstairs?"

So we said we couldn't *get* down because everything was closed. So he brought us down, and he told one of the ladies to have us change our clothes and gave us some hot tea to warm us up. We were all right.

My mother said afterwards, what would have happened if we had been washed overboard? They would never have known what happened to us, because nobody knew we were up there.

Mary and Rose finally reached America and an uncle helped them board a train for Vermont. Their family was waiting for them at the station in West Rutland, but the girls got off in nearby Proctor by mistake.

There they were, two children who could speak no English, and no one waiting to meet them. For three days their mother met every train coming into the station, looking anxiously for her daughters. At last, a Finnish family found the girls and took them by horse-drawn buggy to West Rutland. There they found their mother walking home in tears from the train station. What a pleasure it was for them to at last be together again.

