



Jussi Salemaa

The Stauffers

Their Roots and Settling in
Finland in the 1800s

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Stauffer family

Helsinki 2025

Original Finnish Edition: Jussi Salemaa, Stauffer-suvun juuret ja kotoutuminen Suomeen 1800-luvulla, 1985.

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Layout and cover: Jaakko Salemaa

Publisher: BoD · Books on Demand, Mannerheimintie 12 B,

00100 Helsinki, bod@bod.fi

Print: Libri Plureos GmbH, Friedensallee 273, 22763 Hampuri, Saksa

ISBN 978-952-80-9496-8

PREFACE TO THE FINNISH EDITION

In the great hunger years of the 1860s three Stauffer brothers from Simmental in Switzerland arrived in Elimäki to work as cattle breeders and dairymen on the af Forselleses' estates. These young men became attached to the soil of this chilly country and later achieved the position of independent estate owner and cheese trader. Some decades later three of their sisters together with husbands and children followed in their footsteps. The brothers and their brothers-in-law played a significant role in introducing and consolidating cheese dairying in Finland.

This has been a vigorous family. Today when the fifth and sixth generations in Finland are assuming responsibility for the continuity of life, the number of living members of the family is approaching four hundred.

When planning the Stauffers' family get-together that was held in Elimäki on the 6th of July, the undersigned was given the task of drawing up an account of the family's background and early events in Finland. At the request of the family, and with some addenda and photographs, this will be published in booklet form and distributed to members of the family.

I would like to thank the family members for the information and photographs I have received. Seppo Soratie, who has done a great job of clarifying the course of Samuel Stauffer's life and outlining the branches of the family that remained in Switzerland, deserves particular thanks. In this he has been given valuable help by our second cousin, Adolf Zwalen-Nobs.

This booklet has been printed with a subsidy from Sirkka Paatela.

Helsinki, September 1985

Jussi Salemaa

NOTE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

My father Jussi Salemaa translated his historical essay on the Stauffer family into English so that the relatives in Switzerland to whom he sent copies could read it too. One of the immigrant Sttauffer brothers was his grandfather Jakob.

Nearly 40 years after the booklet came out in Finnish, it is now published in English. Mike Vollar kindly checked the language and modernized spelling.

Helsinki, February 2025

Jaakko Salemaa

Leaving Simmental in Switzerland

It is the summer of 1864 at Samuel Stauffer's mountain farm in Ringoldingen, Simmental. The sturdy farmhouse is crowded. Samuel's extensive family is sitting together at table and finishing their "rösti" supper. At one end sits the head of the household thoughtfully scrutinising his wife Katharina, Bütschi's daughter from lower down the Simme, who is sitting opposite him.

Seated on one side of the table are the daughters Katharina (32), Anna (30), Magdalena (27), Elisabeth (22), Verena (19), Susanna (16), and Rosina (13). On the other side are the sons Samuel (29), Johann (26), Christian (25), Peter (21), and Jakob (18). In the background stand daughter-in-law Magdalena, married to Samuel, the eldest daughter's husband Christian Teuscher, and the school-teacher Friedrich Wiedmer, Anna's fiancé.

Samuel the elder is looking at his sons, who are getting ready to leave.

Samuel Don't leave yet, boys. I have something to tell you. This "rösti" of ours was delicious, but talking of potatoes I suppose you have noticed the potato blight in our neighbour's field. That means tomorrow it will be here. Where has that pest come from again?

Samuel Jr. It's carried on the wind from Wallis. The French always suffer from it there. It was the strong wind in March that brought it here.

Samuel It doesn't come with the wind. But I don't want to argue about that matter now, I've got something else on my mind. I was in Erlenbach this morning and saw the vicar. He told me he had received a letter from Finland.

- Katharina What's he talking to you about his letters for? And what is this Finland?
- Wiedmer I know. It belongs to Russia, a sort of Grand Duchy. They are ruled by the same prince as the Russians. It is north of the capital, Saint Petersburg.
- Samuel The vicar told me that a noble gentleman by the name of af Forselles and his relatives will begin cheese production on their estates in Elimäki in Finland. There are already a few Swiss there but they need half a dozen more young men who know how to make cheese. They are the owners of large estates, thousands of acres of fields and meadows, as much as in the whole of Simmental. The vicar was asking whether our Christian and Peter could go there since they don't have much work. He has money and instructions for the journey.
- Katharina Bless me, don't talk about things like that, they are just children. You needn't take the blight as seriously as that. We've had it before, haven't we, and we have a lot of cheese in our cellar and some money too. I hear they are beginning to build an artillery barracks in Thun, and there will always be some work at the hotels in Interlaken. Isn't Finland further away than America?
- Samuel You surely know what it will mean for us if we need to buy potatoes. Food grain needs to be bought anyway. Don't you remember ten years ago when frost often caught the crops and potatoes were damaged by blight? One had to give a centner of cheese for one hectolitre of grain. And besides, as a Simmental woman I'm sure you are aware what life is like in this valley. Our sons are not the first who will leave this wretched place. There is talk of a worldwide depression again. I don't know precisely what it means, but for us it will mean a fall in the price of cheese.

- Christian I know that business of the Forselleses. Yesterday I called in at the Klossners', and the aunt had received a letter from her son Rudolf. He has already been in Finland for about ten years, making cheese at the Sip-pola estate for von Daehn. Rudolf says in his letter that he has been talking to these Forselleses, and that they have been keeping an eye on Daehn's undertakings for a long time and decided to follow his lead and intensify their cattle rearing. They have even asked Rudolf to search for competent men to come to Finland. Otherwise Rudolf says that the country is good, although winter is very severe. The country folk are like people here, very industrious in growing food grain, but they don't understand stock breeding. Cows are kept only for manure for the fields, and in winter they are fed straw and twigs. They are closed up indoors for most of the year.
- Samuel Rudolf's written then? I met this Daehn while he was here, it must have been in 1856 when he took Rudolf on. He was driving a two-horse team and we bumped into each other at the bridge when I was carrying a load of cheese to Erlenbach. He was a very inquisitive man, asking all sorts of things about our farming. He asked for a bit of cheese, praised its taste, and said that one could get a high price for it on the St Petersburg market.
- He gave me a silver coin with a double-headed eagle on it, and I got 50 rappens for it at a jeweller's in Thun. Maybe he is a rich man. Anyway the fact is that there are too many of us around this table.
- Anna I won't be sitting at this table long. Friedrich has got a teaching job in Murten and we will be moving there soon.
- Peter The case is as father said. To mother I'd like to say that Thun people have their own unemployed folk to maintain, so they won't employ us. And as for Interlaken,

carrying Englishmen's suitcases and bowing to them with hand outstretched isn't fit work for a man. There would be work in the factories in Zurich, but I don't want to go there. It's miserable to slave in a factory when one is used to a different kind of work.

Jakob What about enrolling in some German prince's army?

Samuel Forget it. Soldiers are no longer needed. There will be no wars any longer. You've read about the Holy Alliance, haven't you? An eternal peace is prevailing now. And on the other hand a soldier's life isn't much good. Remember that in this valley there are still some invalids crippled during Napoleon's Moscow campaign living here on charity.

Jakob Yes, it's no good living here. Peace might be eternal, but even here there is the never-ending spreading of manure on meadows. You'd think that grass would grow even without all that manuring.

Samuel No it wouldn't, son. We wouldn't be able to keep six cows on this patch if the meadows didn't get plenty of manure.

 The vicar told me that the salary Forselles are offering is good. I have calculated that living economically you could have enough saved up in 30 years that you could come back here, buy a house in Spiez, and live there on your savings. Then you could help me keep up my farm sometimes.

Katharina Poor Samuel, you won't be around any more by then. You can be certain that if the boys go away you will never see them again. What did you say to the vicar?

Samuel I said that Christian and Peter will go. It's a bit of luck that you will go to Finland to earn money because I've got something else to tell you. I'm an old man and I of-



ISBN 978-952-80-9496-8



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