

GREGORY S. ISOLA
Independent Researcher – Titanic Finns
biography

Background

I was born and raised in rural Duluth, MN, the youngest of five children and only son of the late Eino and Elsie Isola. Three of my four grandparents were born in Finland and immigrated in 1906, 1909, and 1911. My great-grandparents came from Finland in 1879 and 1880.

Early interests

As a teenager, in 1978, I began to research my family history. As a result of our Finnish heritage, in 1979, I also began to study the Finnish language (with the longsuffering of my parents!). Because of this research, I taught a community ed class called *Introductory to Finnish* in the 1990s and currently I am teaching Finnish to a small group that meets twice monthly.

Titanic stories

Even as a teenager, I heard about a Finnish couple who was on the *Titanic* and the husband happened to be one of the old-time Finnish ministers. My initial reaction was, "oh c'mon!" I was supposed to believe that some Finns who people knew about happened to be on the most famous ship, in the most famous shipping disaster of all time...

But as I talked with many older folks, they all told me that they had heard about these people in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. By and large, it all turned out to be true! My own interest in the stories peaked when I discovered that my grandparents Isola in Michigan and my great-grandparents Mattie (original Matti family name) in rural Sebeka all knew this minister and his wife!

Some results of my research

I have researched the stories particularly regarding the Lahtinens since the 1990s but I do not know exactly when I started. In these years of research, I have discovered:

- Important facts about and the timeline of the Lahtinen's lives
- The true identity of the Lahtinens' traveling companions, both to and from Finland
- Three additional Finns – a mother and her two children – who traveled via Sweden and are not listed in other lists of Titanic Finns
- Important details about the famous accident itself
- Many newspaper articles and other specific documentation

Summer 2008

In addition to my FinnFest presentation in Duluth regarding *Titanic's Missing Woman*, I assisted my relatives in detailed planning for a two-week reunion of 17 guests from Finland and our American extended families.

Family

I have lived in Northeast Minneapolis for many years now with my wife of over 20 years, Stephanie, and our children, Katarina, Maria, Abram, and Olivia. Several years ago, both Katarina and Maria went to the Salolampi Finnish Language Village for the one-week summer session. Olivia just won a drawing for the one-week Norwegian Language Village session this summer!