



James FINLAYSON
(1772-1852)



Penicuik's new Parish Kirk,
built 1771



Old Dissenters Meeting House,
Bridgend, Penicuik 1783 to 1867
when its United Presbyterian
congregation moved to the new
North Kirk

THE FINLAYSON BENCH



In the care of Jane & Roger Kelly

James FINLAYSON

-Penicuik founder of Finland's second city

James Finlayson gave his name and reputation to the Finnish city of Tampere and the company he founded there, Finlayson & Co., which went on to become the largest industrial enterprise in the Nordic countries between 1850 and 1920 and is still at work today. James was born in Penicuik on 28th August 1772. His parents Margaret McLairin and James Finlayson, a Penicuik tailor, were believed to be Dissenters.

At that time Penicuik was a small papermaking community with a stake in international trade and industry. The parish church of St Mungo had been grandly rebuilt in a classical style similar to many of the colonial buildings going up across the Atlantic, in those days when the American colonies were still under British government.

Scotland's first cotton mill was built at Penicuik in 1778 at Esk Bridge, north of the hamlet of Kirkhill. By the time James was old enough to work there a dissenters' Meeting House was built nearby at Bridgend for independent-minded weavers and papermakers who chose not to worship at the Parish Kirk.



Richard Arkwright (1732-1792) –a tailor’s son like Finlayson, his revolutionary ideas boosted Scotland’s textile mills



War in Europe from 1793

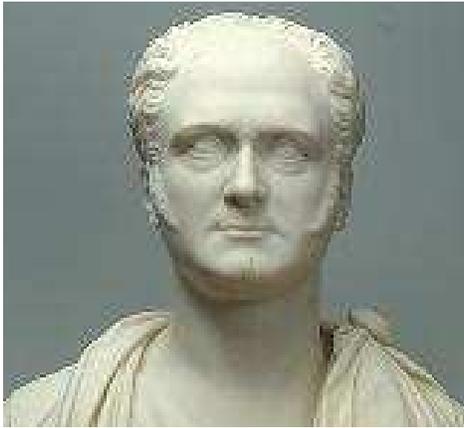


*Alexander Romanoff
Czar Alexander I*

*James Finlayson’s early interests and training can only be guessed, but he became well-versed in the intricacies of textile machinery. Scotland was developing textile mills fast. In 1785 David Dale’s massive works began at New Lanark, boosted by **Richard Arkwright’s** grim determination to help Scottish mills overtake the Lancashire spinners he believed had unfairly disputed and copied his earlier inventions. It is tempting to see the young Finlayson as a protégé of the Arkwright interests.*

The outbreak of war with France in 1793 caused problems for the economy, and the cotton industry was badly affected. Older less efficient cotton mills stopped production, while others cut working hours and prices. Against this background, James Finlayson appears to have plied his trade as a mill engineer and organiser in the west of Scotland. The Penicuik cotton mills on the Esk had closed by 1811 when they were converted to become a Government prison camp –but had probably stopped working a few years earlier.

*Meanwhile in Russia, Alexander Romanoff was five years younger than James Finlayson. As **Czar Alexander I** he had succeeded to the Russian throne on the assassination of his father Paul I in 1801. The new Czar was heartily supported in Scotland as an enlightened ruler who would unshackle the peasantry and promote Russian education and prosperity.*



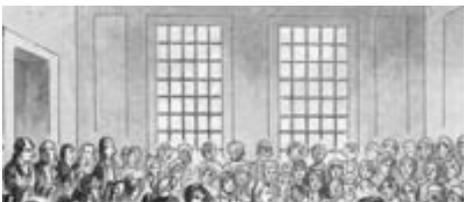
*Alexander Romanoff
-Russian enlightenment*



James Wylie, 1768-1859



Kolpino



Friends' Meeting

Czar Alexander Romanoff made peace with Britain in 1801. A brief realignment with Napoleon in 1808 brought Russia and Britain into conflict again, Russia took Finland from Sweden in 1809. By 1812 she had rejoined Britain and her allies, and made possible Napoleon's final overthrow.

*After Waterloo in 1815 Alexander Romanoff began to take a deep interest in simple religion and good works. He encouraged the British and Foreign Bible Society in Russia, and looked for practical ways to promote Russia's education and industrial development. Alexander, whose personal physician was a Scot, **James Wylie**, turned to the British Isles for engineers, architects and educationalists who could help. Charles Baird was already established in St Petersburg as Russia's major supplier of steam equipment.*

James Finlayson came to St Petersburg to become master machinist in the Kolpino Workshops. He was associated with the Society of Friends (Quakers). Alexander Romanoff wanted help from members of the Society in carrying out various engineering projects and in return they looked to him as a ruler to fulfil his potential as a force for world peace and national reform.

According to Finnish sources, James Finlayson and Alexander Romanoff were friends, and the Czar, like James, attended Quaker meetings.



Tammerfors (Tampere) then & now



Scutching machine, Tampere 1820s



It was in 1820 that James Finlayson and his friend John Paterson, the Bible Society's organiser for Russia, left St Petersburg for a tour of neighbouring Finland. And it was here that James Finlayson saw the fast flowing waters at Tammerfors.

Hydraulic power in abundance: the perfect place to demonstrate the new textile machinery for Russia's expanding empire. Czar Alexander visited the spot and gave his personal support, the water power was harnessed and Tampere, Finland's second city and home of its industrial revolution, was born. As the Czar's master machinist, Finlayson was given an interest-free state loan, considerable customs concessions, free land and most of the Tammerkoski rapids. And from making textile machinery, Finlayson's business progressed to making the textiles themselves.

Daniel Wheeler of the Society of Friends described Finlayson's departure from St Petersburg. "He is a solid man, between forty and fifty years of age. It would have been pleasant for us to have kept him here, but I hope he will be instrumental of much good where he has gone." Finland remembers him as "a demanding and prestige-conscious employer... despite his abrupt ways, a respected man of the town. The person himself was very mysterious...a real industrial man, by spirit and blood - a man of the future."



Finlayson mills 50 years ago



Entrance to the old Friends meeting house in the Pleasance



Finlayson mills in Tampere

In letters, Finlayson told of difficulties he met in running the new factory and of the natural disasters and famines that afflicted the area. With his Glasgow-born wife Margaret, he gave succour to many who had been reduced to begging, by arranging food, jobs at the factory, or work on the land. The pair also began Finland's first provision for orphans.

Czar Alexander's sudden death in 1825 ushered in a period of repression and reducing prosperity. Broken in health and fortune, Finlayson finally gave up the Tammerfors factory to creditors and returned to Scotland in 1837. First at Govan, then at Nicholson Square, Edinburgh, he lived with his wife until his death in 1852, attending the nearby Friends' Meeting House in the Pleasance. They had no children.

In 1970 a headstone was raised by the Finlayson-Forssa company on James Finlayson's unmarked grave in Newington Cemetery, to be maintained by J&P Coats of Paisley as a gesture of Scottish-Finnish friendship. And in 1988 Edinburgh's Lord Provost unveiled a plaque in Nicholson Square to "James Finlayson, industrialist and philanthropist, born Penicuik 1772 died 1852... Around his great textile manufacturing enterprise in Finland grew that country's second city of Tampere. His spiritual qualities and his love of mankind have seen to his name being one deeply respected in Finland's industrial and national history."



Displayed at Bank Mill:
THE FINLAYSON BENCH



In the care of Jane & Roger Kelly

*A Bench from the old
Friends Meeting House
in The Pleasance which
James Finlayson
attended in the mid
nineteenth century*

