

## THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF LAPLAND

The gaining of independence for Finland meant that the borders in the north had to be patrolled, and for this purpose the headquarters of the Lapland Border Guard detachment was located in Rovaniemi in 1918. In addition, the office of the district engineer for the Southern Lapland Road and Waterways District was established there in 1925, that of the agricultural engineer

*The Lapland headquarters of the Finnish Border Patrol Establishment has been located in Rovaniemi ever since its creation in 1918. The picture shows skiing training in progress on a frosty day in 1923.*



*An eddy in the river has deposited a consignment of round logs and partially barked cordwood on their way to the sawmills and pulp mills of Kemi in summer 1939 in a backwater by the shore of the Ounaskoski rapids. On the opposite bank stands the proud capital of Lapland with its new Functionalist-style buildings.*

for the Southern Lapland district in 1928 and the Lapland Forestry Board in 1929. The northern headquarters of the Civil Guard was stationed in Rovaniemi in 1936.

It was an elementary schools' inspector from Kemi, Vihtori Lähde, who first proposed in 1917 that Lapland should be separated from the Province of Oulu, a view which gained extensive support in Rovaniemi, for people considered it obvious that the capital of the province should be located there despite the fact that they were still only dreaming of becoming a town. The position of Rovaniemi as a rival for capital status strengthened during the years to such an



*The Rovala social centre was set up primarily to improve the status of the lumbermen. It gained a building of its own in 1926 and became the largest employment agency in the country outside Helsinki in the 1930's.*

extent that Kemi and Tornio, sensing that they had lost their opportunity, began to oppose the whole idea of a separate province. A decision was made to establish the Province of Lapland, with Rovaniemi as the capital, in 1936, although the new provincial administration did not become functional until January 1938.

In addition to central government, other administrative





functions and services were also located in Rovaniemi, including Rovala, a branch of the Settlement Movement working among the lumbermen, in 1923. In addition to religious work, its programme included improving living conditions in the lumber camps and educating the lumberjacks. It also informed them of vacant jobs, on an official basis from 1936 onwards, and was in fact the busiest employment agency in Finland apart from that in Helsinki. Rovala also administered the local Free Educational Institute and later started a folk high school.

No extensive vocational training was available until after the war, despite the fact that it had already commenced in 1905, in the form of the school of forestry at Hirvas. A school of handicraft was founded in 1920,

*The Resettlement Law of 1922 allowed many of the cottagers and lumbermen to settle on farms of their own, and in this way assured the forestry companies of a supply of labour in the winter season. The picture shows pioneer settlers in the Pisa area.*

later to become the Institute of Industrial Art and Handicraft, now part of the University of

*The highest ski jump in Finland was opened at Pöyliövaara in February 1937. The top platform provided wonderful views over Rantavitikka, the borough itself and the village of Saarenkylä.*

Lapland. In addition, the Southern Lapland School of Farming was established at Ojanperä in 1937.

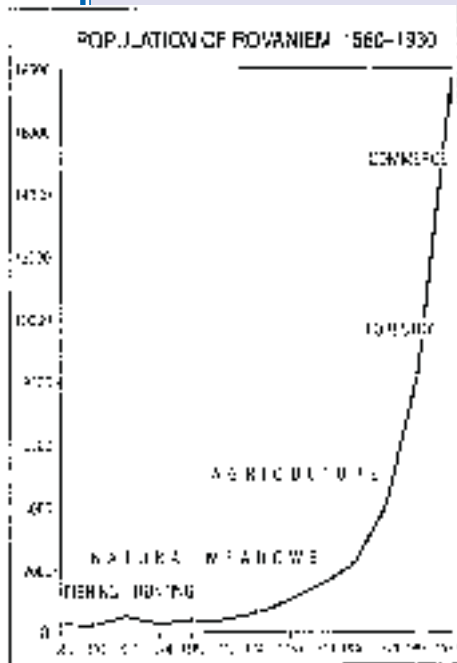
The development that finally led to specialised hospital services in the area was initiated by the establishment of the Northern Finland Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Muurola in 1926.

Rovaniemi can thus be said to have become a major administrative centre in the pre-war period, radiating its influence not only out into Lapland but also as far as the coast of the Bothnian Bay.



*The first new inhabitants to be literally "brought by the railway" were those responsible for building the new line. These were followed by yearly influxes of lumbermen, such as this group arriving for the spring log floating season in the early 1920's.*

*Where only a couple of thousand people in Rovaniemi were able to make a living from hunting, fishing and dairy farming based on the natural meadows, intensified agriculture and forestry enabled the area to support a population of over ten thousand. Later increases in population were derived from its status as the commercial, administrative and cultural centre for Lapland and the Peräpohjola region.*



## *Newcomers brought by the railway*

The population of Rovaniemi increased rapidly from the first half of the 18th century onwards, but it was not until the 20th century that migration began to have any major influence on local settlement. Already in 1910, 11 % of the population had been born elsewhere, and the proportion remained unchanged for the following decade. The figure had risen to 24 % by the 1920's, however, and was as high as 31 % in 1940.

The local people began to refer to those who had moved to Rovaniemi from elsewhere as "brought by the railway", as opposed to the "barefoot" native inhabitants, as the railway line to Rovaniemi was completed at about the same time as migration began in earnest. The newcomers themselves tended to look on this as a derogatory expression, however.

Slightly less than 100 persons a year moved to Rovaniemi up until 1906. Although lumbermen were recruited to the area from far away, their families, homes and official places of residence remained elsewhere, at the places where they would go in the summer to cut the hay and harvest the crops. The category of full-time log-floaters and lumberjacks only emerged later.

The annual migration figure then rose to 200–300 persons in 1907–1917, the newcomers having been "brought by the railway" in the true sense of the word, as their arrival was connected with the building of the railway and the resulting expansion in trade.

In-migration slowed down in 1918–1922, the first years of independence, but this was followed in 1923 by a period of 15 years when as many as 400–600 persons a year moved to the area, a peak of 1400 being recorded in 1931. The attraction was the development prospects offered by Lapland and Petsamo. The accompanying rise in the standard of living led to an increase in employment opportunities. At the same time the law allowing for the settlement of forest land brought new colonists to the area and stimulated forestry in Lapland. It is no wonder that the older inhabitants felt that they were caught up in a major social upheaval.

Instead of levelling out, the pace of development continued to accelerate, as indicated by the fact that a total of some 3000 people moved to Rovaniemi in 1938–1940, attracted by the newly established provincial administration and other offices, and the transport connections with Petsamo during the period of peace between the Winter War and the Continuation War. Following the quieter migration years of 1941 and 1942, the population of Rovaniemi again leapt upwards by over a thousand in 1943, providing the labour needed to service the German troops stationed in the area.

The rebuilding period following the total destruction of Rovaniemi by the Germans at the end of the war required a new intake of population, at a rate of 1600–1900 persons a year from 1946 into the early 1950's. Many of these people went on further north in the course of time, however, as the population gains recorded for Rovaniemi itself remained at only a half of these figures.

The last major spurt in the numbers of those "brought by the railway" occurred in the late 1950's, when the work of constructing the power stations on the River Kemijoki reached Rovaniemi, remembering that this work was still being carried out by traditional, labour-intensive methods. The migration gain in 1955–1960 was as high as 5000 or so.

The expression "brought by the railway" is extremely apt, for no substantial migration to Rovaniemi has ever occurred since the introduction of mass air transport. Although the label was a derogatory one at first, the people who have come from outside have had a major impact on life in Rovaniemi and have brought with them expertise that the local people did not previously possess. They have also without doubt contributed greatly to the creation of the atmosphere of equality and openness that is typical of Rovaniemi nowadays.