Ancient Lake Kolpene builds up behind Valajaskoski

The area currently occupied by the centre of Rovaniemi, located around 85–90 m a.s.l., emerged from the Litorina Sea some 7000–6500 years ago, at which time there was already human settlement on the river banks in the area. When the sea level was about 80 m above that prevailing at present, the mouth of a bay of the sea that lay between the hill of Pahtajavaara and the stony till heath opposite it narrowed to the extent that the saline water was replaced by fresh water. The part above the resulting strait turned into a lake some four kilometres wide lying immediately to the north of Pahtajavaara and covering an area of 200 km. The River Ounasjoki flowed into this lake at Sinettä and the River Kemijoki below Vanttauskoski.

There were already human settlements on the banks of the lake, deriving their existence from fishing and seal hunting. As the sea retreated, the seal hunting sites used in winter were moved closer to the present coast, first to below Valajaskoski, then to Muurola and in time to Tervola. The inhabitants tended to move back upstream for the summer, however, to catch freshwater fish and to hunt game.

Since the hardness of the Quaternary deposits prevented any enlargement of the channel at Valajaskoski the water became dammed at this point and the lake level remained fairly constant for several millennia, at 76–77 m a.s.l. for a long time during the Combed Ware Period (3500–2800 B.C.), falling later to below 74 m during the Asbestos Ceramics Period (2800–1300 B.C.)

Once released from the weight of the ice, the land began to rise rapidly. When the water level in the Ancylus Lake dropped to that of the surrounding oceans about 7000 years ago, a long bay of the Litorina Sea extended through a narrow strait at Valajaskoski to reach the present-day town of Rovaniemi, where it branched to the north and east.

Extensive remains of settlements have been found on the shores of this ancient lake, especially at Kolpene, leading archaeologists to refer to the lake as the "Ancient Lake Kolpene". There were human settlements on its shores at least from 4000 B.C. until around 1000 B.C.

By approximately 3000 years ago the head of Valajaskoski had been eroded so much that Ounaskoski emerged below the mouth of the River Ounasjoki. The flow of water in the Kuolasuvanto area also gradually reached such dimensions that the lake turned into a stretch of river. The water level at the head of Valajaskoski was 69 m a.s.l. in summer time prior to the construction of the hydroelectric power station, and the river bed was only a fraction of its current size. Construction of the dam brought the watertable back to the level which had prevailed in the Combed Ware Period, ca. 3000 B.C.

A seven-pronged fork for night fishing, made at a local smithy. Rovaniemi Museum of Local History.

sible for as much as a tenth of the total of 350,000 kg or so of salmon caught in the River Kemijoki in the best years in the 17th century. The majority of the catch was sold and used for paying taxes. There was a bitter struggle between the downstream and upstream farms for fishing rights at the dams from the 1650's up to 1688, and the matter was even taken as far as the king. The old Rovaniemi farms managed to retain their rights to practise pen dam fishing further downstream as well, and it became common in the 18th century in particular to repay debts to the merchants of Oulu by hiring out salmon fishing rights to them.

Grayling, whitefish and pike were the main fish caught in the river apart from salmon, and pike in the lakes. The latter was dried and either sold to pay off taxes or kept for use as winter food, so that people would even undertake fishing expeditions to faraway lakes. In fact pike was even more important than salmon to many of the local farms. The fishing rights were carefully defined and protected, and it was not until the early 18th century that the pike lakes became accessible to everyone.

The salmon dam at Muurola

Large pen dams were first constructed on the downstream parts of the River Kemijoki, where they yielded the best catch, but they were gradually extended upstream as well. There was evidently a dam at Muurola in 1686, although it may well have been constructed a hundred years earlier.

On account of the importance of log floating on the river to the expanding timber companies, the government annulled the old salmon fishing agreements in 1888 and the leases to the dam sites were acquired by either the Kemi Company or the Kemijoki Timber Floating Association from 1893. These organizations would then rent out fishing rights in places where this did not hamper log floating, such as the Korva dam at Kemi, the Kuri dam at Taivalkoski and the Muurola dam. The last mentioned was the only surviving such dam on the River Kemijoki after 1932.

The Muurola dam was located between the island of Lehmisaari and the eastern bank of the river, while the logs were floated down the west side of the island. It was 445 m in length and had a hundred nets attached to 72 trestles, which were usually dismantled around 20th July each year, when the salmon ceased to rise up the river, and re-erected the following spring.

When the salmon were rising in their greatest numbers the nets were emptied three times a day, at 6 a.m., noon and 7 p.m. They were lifted into a heavy seine drawn downstream through the pen by two boats. This required the work of five men in each boat at the high water season and four later in the summer. Two men in a smaller boat took care of the central part of the seine.

According to official statistics, the total catch from the Muurola dam in the 1870's was 13–72 barrels, i.e. 2000–10,000 kg/year, though it would obviously have been even greater in reality. The peak yield was reached in 1885, a total of 20 tons of salmon, the figures being 5500–7000 kg/year in the 1890's and 900–5600 kg/year in the 1920's and 1930's. It is recounted that 108 salmon, with a total weight of 1400 kg, were caught in one day in summer 1917.

When salmon fishing in the sea areas was prevented by mine fields during the war, salmon rose into the River Kemijoki in record quantities, the best single haul from the Muurola dam in its latter days being 69 fish, of which five escaped from the nets back into the pen and were apparently included in the next draw. There was one week in which yields averaged 120 salmon a day, with an average weight of 10 kg.

Building of the dam was abandoned entirely after the summer of 1947, however, as the hydroelectric power station at Isohaara in Kemi completely prevented salmon from entering the river.

Drawing the boundaries

The old border with Tervola
Muurola was regarded of old as part of the upper quarter of the parish of Kemi, which in time became the chapel parish of Rovaniemi. Vammavaara presumably marked the southern boundary of the village of Muurola even in medieval times, separating it from Koivukylä.

From a diocesan boundary to a provincial one
Although the area between the rivers Oulujoki and Kemijoki belonged to Novgorod rather than Sweden in the early 14th century, the bishops of Uppsala and Turku must have agreed by that time on the allocation of the Tornionjoki salmon tithes to Uppsala and the Kemijoki tithes to Turku. The resulting diocesan and later provincial boundary which set out from the River Kaakamajoki may already have extended as far as Rovaniemi by the end of the 15th century, though its exact location remained a matter of contention for another 300 years. The border was finally confirmed in 1786.

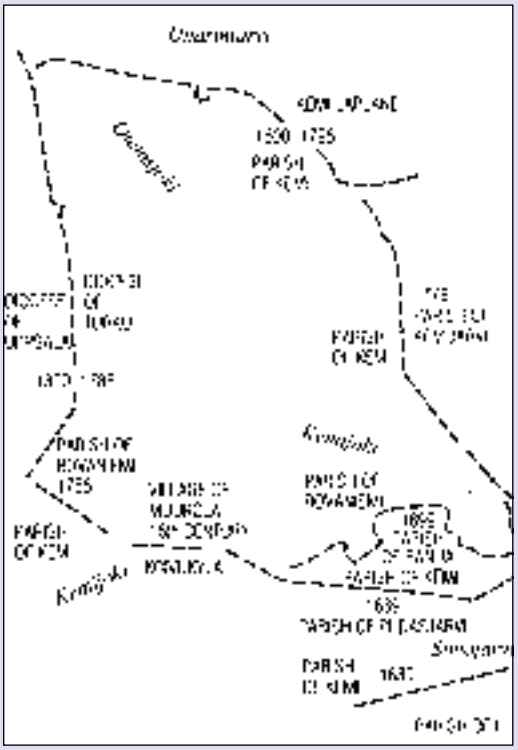
Looking for the boundary with Lapland
The northern boundary was a provincial one, with the parish of Kemi belonging to Ostrobothnia and Kemi Lapland to Länsipohja. A more important issue, however, was that the border at the same time defined the territorial rights of the Lapps and the Finnish settlers. It was for this reason that it aroused serious disagreements in the 17th and 18th centuries in particular, when its location could well vary within a range of 20–30 kilometres depending on the 'authority' responsible for determining it.

The border between Lapland and the area occupied by the Finns was finally established with the help of the governor. It set out from Porkkavaara in the west and ran to Pyhätunturi in the east.

The border with Kemijärvi
The village of Kemijärvi was established in the parish of Kemi in the early 17th century by pioneer farmers who began to form permanent settlements in this area that had traditionally been regarded as part of Lapland. At that point the boundary between the villages of Kemihaara and Kemijärvi was drawn at Pirttikoski. When Kemijärvi became a parish in its own right in 1778, its northern boundary with the parish from which it had been divided was set at Poovaara and its southern boundary at Puntarikero, which had been regarded as the border between the old parish of Kemi and Kemi Lapland at a very early stage.

The boundary in the south
The southern border of Rovaniemi originally corresponded to that between the large parishes of Kemi and Ii. On maps from the beginning of the 17th century it runs from Kultamasalmi in Simojärvi directly to the Gulf of Bothnia coast at a point between the rivers Simojoki and Kuivajoki. It was then re-defined in 1630 to run from Lososaari in Kitka south of the Lake Simojärvi river system to the Gulf of Bothnia, but when the parish of Pudasjärvi was established in 1639, its northern boundary extended to Puntarikero, now Palotunturi, and Kultisalmi and passed north of Lake Portimojärvi to Vammavaara.

The Lake Simojärvi area, which was formerly part of the village of Kemihaara in Rovaniemi, was annexed to the parish of Ranua when this was established in 1899.



Irons were introduced for trapping foxes in the 17th century. Rovaniemi Museum of Local History.

than two hectares on the largest farms. Even this was enough to keep people busy, for all the tilling was done by hand.

Barley was soon accompanied by rye. The introduction of slash-and-burn cultivation may have been connected with the arrival of settlers from Savo, but it was not long before rye was being grown in fields as well. The average grain yield would not have been sufficient even for domestic use in the south, but in the north people were content with less bread, replacing some of it with fish. Even so, grain cultivation was more extensive in Rovaniemi than at the river mouth, where the farm owners would concentrate on salmon fishing in summer.

Freeholders in the majority

The largest village at the beginning of the 18th century was Kemihaara, which had 12 farms. Some of these were located at the upper end of Saarenkylä, and the rest were scattered beside the River Kemijoki. There were 11 dwellings in the village of Ounasjoki and 7 in that of Rovaniemi, the current Ylikylä area and parts of Saarenkylä. Eight dwellings were located in Korkalo, between the head of Ounaskoski and Valajaskoski, 5 in Muurola and another 5 in Jaatila.

The estimated population of Rovaniemi was approximately 400–420 persons in 1710, which was still almost a hundred less than 90 years earlier. The majority of the inhabitants were freeholders, as indicated by the 1710 tax register, in which 148 of the people concerned were registered as farmers, 90 as farmers' wives, 14 as sons and daughters of farmers, 20 as brothers and sisters, and 6 as sons-in-law and sisters-in-law. Only three hired farmhands and nine maids were reported, though in reality their number in the population must have been slightly greater. The population also contained independent persons, living on old deserted farms or in crofter's cottages on other people's land. There were 17 families or persons of this kind in 1683.

Hunting remained an important occupation for a long time, providing both game and furs. The original spears and arrows were exchanged for firearms in the course of time.

Debts common

Whatever the people could not obtain from the forests or fields, they would barter for at the market in Kemi or from travelling Karelians. The people of Rovaniemi would exchange fish, particularly pike, whitefish and salmon, and butter and furs for grain, iron and other metals, cloth, and from the late 17th century onwards cigarettes, wine and even books. It was at that time that the local people also learned the skill of distilling their own alcohol.

Since farmers living in the backwoods were essential customers for the merchants of Tornio and Oulu, the latter began in the mid-17th century to lend them large sums of money. They would not charge any interest, but received the necessary compensation by selling commodities produced by the peasants. The main guarantee of repayment was the salmon that could be relied upon to rise into the dams on the River Kemijoki each year.

This trading on credit was by far the predominant form of business in the parish of Kemi in particular even before the time of the Great Wrath, to the extent that of the 55 inhabited farms in Rovaniemi at the end of the 17th century, 31 had been mortgaged. The parsonage had the largest debts of all. The Rovaniemi people can be regarded as having profited from this innovation, as it helped them to cope with the difficult years of the late 17th century much better than they had with previous crises.

Employees of the town's first steam-powered sawmill, at Pitkäniemi, just after the turn of the century.

in the course of time, so that although there had only been about 20 of these in all at the end of the 18th century, they numbered over 300 by 1860.

Rovaniemi becomes an independent parish in 1785

With a population of some 450 persons, Rovaniemi was still less densely inhabited in 1725 than it had been in the peak year of 1620, but it was now growing at an accelerating pace, as were most settlements in Finland at that time. Thus the figure reached 1000 in the 1770's, 2000 at the beginning of the 1820's and 4000 in the 1860's.

In recognition of this expansion, Rovaniemi was declared an independent religious and administrative parish in 1785. Korkaloniemi began to emerge as the centre of this parish in the late 18th century. The curate and parish clerk had in fact already been living there for several decades. The controller of the border region lived at Korkalo, and the commissionary land surveyor at either Ylikylä or Saarenkylä. Apart from the Clementeoff family of officers, who lived at Muurola, the gentry lived around the mouth of the River Ounasjoki. This class of society comprised some 30 persons in Rovaniemi at the end of the 18th century, quite a high figure in view of its location so far north and in the interior. The craftsmen and skilled workers lived on the shore at Lainas, and altogether there were almost 2000 people living in the Korkalo–Ylikylä–Saarenkylä area in 1860, over half of the total population of the parish.

The sawmills of Rovaniemi

For a quarter of a century, from the 1840's until the 1870's, Rovaniemi possessed the northernmost concentration of sawmills in Finland. They obtained their timber from the nearby forests, sawed it during the winter and floated the resulting rafts of beams, planks and boards down to the mouth of the River Kemijoki on the spring high waters. Most of the timber was then shipped to Britain.

The first application to start a sawmill, at Sinettä, was made by Lieutenant Magnus Fredrick Clementeoff and the curate of the time, Esaias Fellman, in 1780. The sawmill did not start operation until 1786, but it then continued with varying success for over a hundred years. More than 20 families were living close to it in the 1850's, providing a local population of almost a hundred adults if unmarried persons were included. The owner, Jakob Fellman, also lived there in the 1860's, as did its supervisor, the sea captain Anders Jonas Kihlgren.

A permit had been applied for in 1779 to establish a sawmill on the River Raudanjoki, but the project was abandoned. A new attempt 50 years later then led to the erection of a sawmill at Hakoköngäs in 1840, with some 20 families living close to it in 1870. The capacity of the sawmill was almost double that of Sinettä, reaching its peak in the 1880's. It was eventually sold in 1893 to the Kemi Company, which closed it down immediately and moved all production of sawn timber to its large sawmill at the mouth of the River Kemijoki.

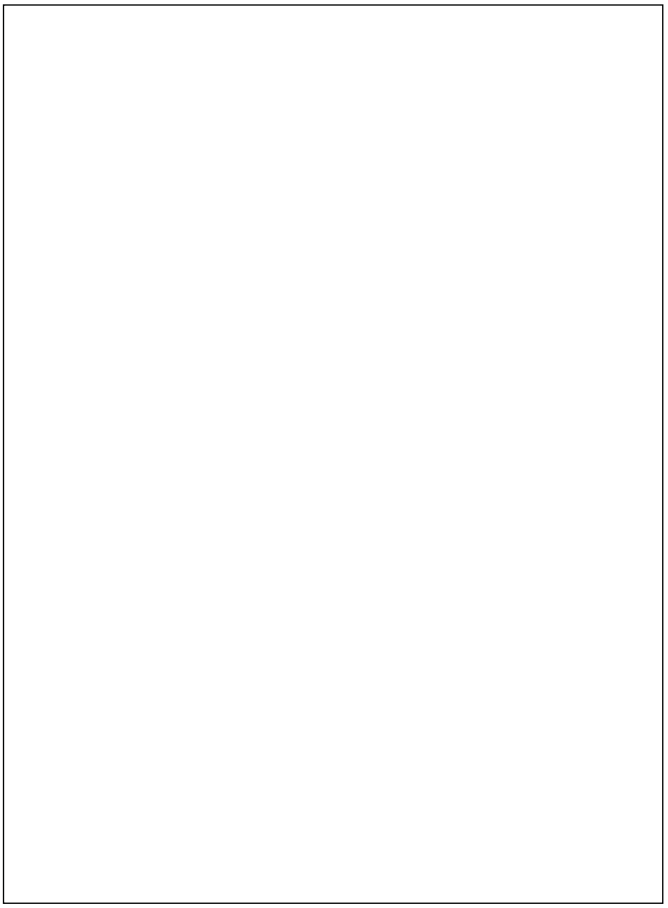
A third sawmill was established at Meltaus in 1848. This was of roughly the same size as that at Hakoköngäs and gathered a population of 18 families around it in the 1850's, comprising some 80 adults. This sawmill, too, was sold to the Kemi Company in 1893, and was closed down five years later.

The sawmills at Meltaus and Hakoköngäs were each sending 20–30 rafts of timber down to the river mouth in spring time during the 1880's, and a further 10–15 rafts were sent from Sinettä.

The competitive position of the inland sawmills was altered drastically by the government decision to allow the construction of large steam-powered sawmills on the coast, for it was easier to transport round logs to the river mouth than sawn timber.

After a pause of about a decade, it was decided to set up steam-powered sawmills at the mouth of the River Ounasjoki, approximately on the site now occupied by the Arcticum building. The Pitkäniemi Sawmill was opened in 1901, while 1908 saw the commencement of the Pöykkö Sawmill, which even pursued an export trade of its own. The venture did not last long, however, and the mill was sold to the rival Kemi Company in 1913 and its equipment removed to that company's Seittenkari Sawmill in Sweden. The Rovaniemi Träförädling Ab sawmill was established by Swedes in 1917 and remained in operation until 1935.

Fearing that the sawmills in Rovaniemi would becoming their major rivals, the Kemi Company and Veitsiluoto Oy established an additional competitor of their own under the name Rovaniemen Saha Oy in 1934 in order to eliminate this danger. This did indeed soon become the only sawmill in Rovaniemi, and was later discontinued as unnecessary after the war.



The lumberjack was such a typical and important figure for the economy of Rovaniemi that there is now a statue, the work of Kallervo Kallio and erected by the Kemi Company, close to the place where the men who had come down the river with the logs used to gather to celebrate Midsummer.

and when the jam finally broke up 3 men were carried away with it and lost their lives. Log floating remained an integral part of the culture of the riverside settlements up until 1991, since when all the timber has been transported by road or rail.

The first trade union

The first trade union in Rovaniemi was founded on 2nd April 1906 for the benefit of those engaged in forestry work, lumbering and log floating, and in particular to act as a counterforce to Sandberg, the Forest Manager of the Kemi Company. The resulting League of Northern Lumbermen began action to safeguard the interests of its members in the very same year by organizing a strike involving almost 3000 men. The number of actual members must have amounted to over a thousand before the League was absorbed into the Finnish Association of Sawmill Workers at the end of 1909. In the meantime it had managed to built its own premises in Rovaniemi, the well-known League House, despite opposition by the Kemi Company and the many efforts made by this powerful organization to prevent its construction.

The life of the lumberjack

The men employed in timber felling and log floating were recruited from the farms of Rovaniemi or further away. The way of life at the lumber camps would have been the same for all the workers, however, regardless of where they came from.

Felling work usually began when the mires froze over in November. The work was done in teams comprising a horseman and two lumbermen. The horseman made an agreement with the forest company for felling trees, transporting the logs to the floating channel, paying the lumbermen their wages and providing them with food.

The men would first built a hut in the forest, which in the early years was usually built partly underground and had a stove made of natural stones beside the entrance and a bunk at the back. In the 1920's the forest companies were required by law to build dwellings for their workers, and they would then normally engage a housekeeper for them.

Felling and the moving of the timber lasted until the beginning of March, at which point there was too much snow to continue the work. They usually tried to finish the work at a site by the time of the winter market in Rovaniemi. In the early days the lumberjacks would not have any work at all in March, so that they would just lounge around on the farms or in the village of Rovaniemi, but later they were employed at this time on cutting the logs to a fixed length at the riverside in preparation for floating.

In May the men would return to the forests to prepare for log floating. Floating from the headwaters commenced immediately the ice on the river had melted, for it was essential to have the site clear by the end of the high water season. Some would follow the logs down to Kemi, whereas the cottagers and the sons of farmers would often return home at that stage to attend to the summer farm work.

Working hours in log floating were as much as 12 hours a day even as late as the 1930's. The day's work began at 6 a.m. and ended at 8 p.m., with two breaks for meals. In the busiest hay-making period the men who were working close to their homes might even slip home at night to attend to this work.

The coat of arms designed originally for the borough of Rovaniemi was later adopted for the town. It alludes to the position of Rovaniemi as the capital of Lapland.

The coat of arms of the rural district of Rovaniemi depicts silver rivers flowing through a landscape of green forests, with an ancient warning fire located at their confluence. This should perhaps nowadays be interpreted as symbolizing the light of knowledge.

all the rural districts in the north of the country.

The rural district, on the other hand, received very little by way of taxes, and the high costs of the elementary schools, public welfare and relief for the poor in particular meant that its economy was in such a poor condition in the depression years of the early 1930's that the local authority was placed under special central government supervision.

Rovaniemi gains its charter

Towns or boroughs in Finland had traditionally received their charter from the ruler of the time, first the King of Sweden and later the Russian Tsar, in his capacity as Grand Duke of Finland. The ruler would grant land to the town and define its trading and other rights, a procedure that had been followed in the case of Kemi, for example, when it was founded by the Tsar in 1869.

The town of Rovaniemi was not created by decree of the ruler, however, but developed gradually to meet the needs of the surrounding areas. The expansion that had been brought about by the forestry work in the area led a public meeting as early as 1886 to decide that the main village should be given the status of a borough, but the project was abandoned before any actual proposal had been submitted. A new attempt was made in May 1901, when a committee was set up by the public meeting to make preparations for having the main village declared a town. A statute had been passed in 1898 allowing for the recognition of densely populated rural centres, and the preceding committee report had made particular reference to Rovaniemi. The local people were not at all enthusiastic about this, however, but insisted instead that Rovaniemi should proceed directly to the status of a town. The project was nevertheless interrupted by the Senate in October 1901, with a decree that the main village should be designated a densely populated rural community and that it should be provided with bylaws and building regulations of its own.

When the local people appeared to be causing intentional delays, the provincial governor assigned the task of drawing up a set of building regulations to the public surveyor, G. A. Gustafsson, who submitted a proposal to the people of Rovaniemi in February 1904 for a planning area slightly over a half a kilometre across located on the western bank of Ounaskoski between Lainas and the church. The total area of this densely populated rural centre would thus be 1, 25 km. This area corresponds to Ward No. I in the current town plan, and many of its streets still follow Gustafsson's scheme.

The resulting rural centre remained part of the local government district of Rovaniemi, but had its own administrative committee for executing the decisions of the local council within its area. The less affluent sector of the population moved outside the planned area, to Kirkonkangas and the current Ward No. III.

The establishment of a rural centre was regarded from the very beginning as no more than a temporary solution, and by April 1908 a new move had been launched to gain recognition as a borough. The application submitted to the Senate in 1910 did not lead to any concrete results, due mainly to the fact that the inhabitants of the other parts of the administrative district were against the project, fearing a loss of tax revenues. In addition, the local landowners were afraid of their land being claimed for compulsory purchase by the new borough.

The idea was never entirely shelved, however, and it emerged again later in the decade as part of the plan for a Province of Lapland, which would need a capital of its own. In June 1923, the authorised representatives of the rural centre made a new proposal to the Council of State that the community should be granted the status of a borough. Although the local council was still against the change, the local government reorganization law of 1925 allowed decisions to be made that went against the opinion of the local council. The Council of State was thus able to make a decision regarding this application which had been pending for such a long time.

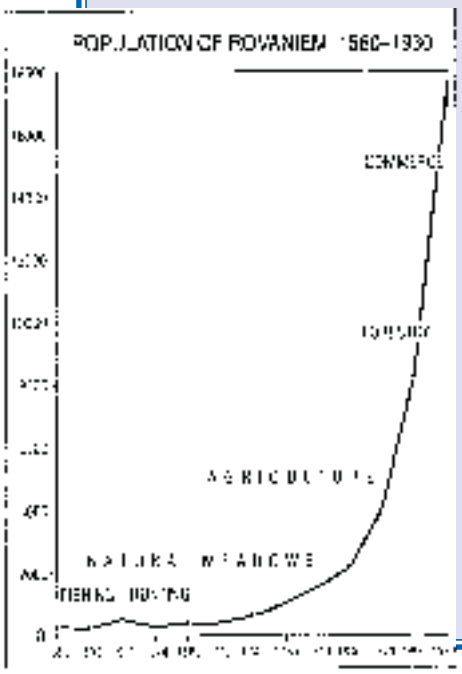
When the borough of Rovaniemi received its charter in January 1929, it had a total area of 14 km, comprising not only the population centre but also Ratantausta in the west, Veitikan - harju in the south and the area east of the river as far as the summit of Ounasvaara. It had 4100 inhabitants, leaving the rural district with 10§900. The borough was enlarged in 1948 by the addition of Viirinkangas and Korvanniemi.

Numerous boroughs were created in Finland in the years following independence, but the number of towns did not increase at all until laws were passed in January 1959 making the granting of a charter easier. After some persuasion from the government, Rovaniemi finally agreed to apply for a charter, making it one of the first new towns to be created at the beginning of 1960.

The idea of reuniting the rural district and borough of Rovaniemi was raised for the first time soon after the Second World War. Although the subject has now been talked about from time to time for a full 50 years, their reunification has proved even more difficult than that of the two Germanies.

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.

Tourism in Rovaniemi

Tourism had already established a firm position for itself in Rovaniemi before the war. The extension of the railway line to that point around 1910 provided people from Southern Finland with an easy opportunity to admire the midnight sun, while the Ounasvaara Winter Games, organised since 1927, were a major highlight of the late winter. Tourism was most of all enhanced by the completion of the Arctic Road from Rovaniemi to Petsamo in 1932, on which the Hotel Pohjanhovi served for a long time as the "last outpost of civilization". As many as twenty thousand tourists would travel to the shores of the Arctic Ocean each year.

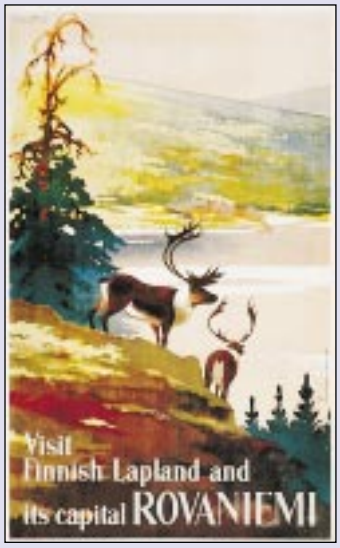
The war destroyed practically all of this, including the whole destination of the Arctic Road. Pohjanhovi was one of the first buildings to be reconstructed, however, for although Petsamo was no longer accessible from Finland, a new road connection with the Arctic Ocean was soon opened up through Karigasniemi and northern Norway. Since then Nordkapp has been the main attraction bringing people to Rovaniemi.

Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, visited Lapland on 11th June 1950 to witness the reconstruction work in person, and in honour of the occasion, the governor, Uuno Hannula, and the mayor, Lauri Kaijalainen, assisted by Jarl Sundqvist, Forest Manager of the Kemi Company, had a log cabin erected at the place where the Arctic Road crossed the Arctic Circle. This can be regarded as having laid the foundation for post-war tourism in Rovaniemi.

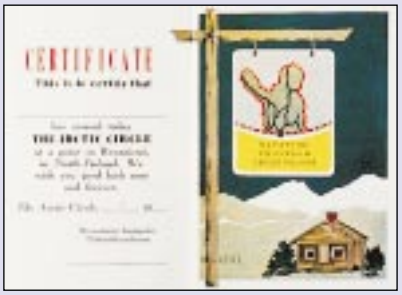
Eleanor Roosevelt marked the beginning of a succession of leading political figures who have made Rovaniemi known to the world, including the Yugoslavian president Josip Broz Tito, the Vice-President of the United States Lyndon B. Johnson, the Shah of Iran Reza Pahlevi, the Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev, the Israeli prime minister Golda Meir and many others.

Among the most important post-war tourist attractions in Rovaniemi were the Midsummer's Eve celebrations at Ounasvaara and the log floating competition at Ounaskoski on Midsummer's Day. The latter had to be discontinued, however, when the current was reduced by the damming of Valajaskoski. Tourists have been transported on the river by motor boat ever since. The attractions favoured by tourists in the 1960's included exhibitions by the textile designer Elsa Montell-Saanio and the photographer Matti Saanio at Oikarainen.

Santa Claus became a natural part of the marketing of tourism in Rovaniemi and Lapland when the



Rovaniemi has made unrestrained and highly successful use of the Lapland image in its tourism marketing, and the provincial library and museum have both focused on recording and displaying the culture of the region.



Tourism in Rovaniemi may be said to have begun with the building of the Arctic Road and the Pohjanhovi Hotel. The most popular spot since the war has been the Arctic Circle, where the first cabin was built in honour of the visit of Eleanor Roosevelt and has now been joined by a whole Santa Claus Village.

The Ounasvaara Winter Games have been a major event in the Finnish sports calendar since 1927, and increasing numbers of winter sports professionals have been coming to Rovaniemi in the 1990's to begin their autumn training on natural snow.

The airport was completed in the time between the Winter War and the Conti - nuation War and handled flights to both Helsinki and Petsamo in 1940–41. Aero Oy (later Finnair) began regular services with its DC-3 aircraft in May 1948. The airport building of that time had its name board fashioned out of reindeer antlers. Nowadays Rovaniemi airport has the sophisticated equipment necessary to ensure that all aircraft can land and take off safely even in the worst possible weather conditions. The supersonic Concorde has been bringing visitors to the land of Santa Claus every Christmas and Midsummer since the 1980's.

Finnish post office began to deliver all the letters sent to him by children around the world to the Arctic Circle Cottage. This meant that he could personally answer all the hundreds of thousands of letters for which return addresses were known.

The work of building a Santa Claus Land was begun in the late 1960's in response to an idea originally voiced by a radio reporter, Niilo Tarvajärvi. The idea caught on quickly, and soon there were so many people wanting to have a share in the project that claims had to be settled in court from time to time. In 1984 Rovaniemi Town Council and the Rural District Council together had a Santa Claus Village built at the Arctic Circle to house various companies marketing products with a Christmas theme.

Local museums have also contributed to the attractions available for tourists. A local heritage museum was opened at Pöykkölä in 1959, a forest museum nearby in 1966, the provincial museum in 1975, the Rovaniemi Art Gallery in 1986 and the Arcticum building to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Finnish independence on 6.12.1992.

Architecture enthusiasts have also found their way to Rovaniemi, attracted by Alvar Aalto's town plan and the buildings designed by him. The new church also attracted much interest immediately after the reconstruction period, not only for its architecture but also on account of its enormous altar fresco by Lennart SegerstrÜle. Attractions that have emerged later include the Arcticum building, designed by the Danish architects Claus Bonderup, Sören Birch, Ellen Waade and Torsten Thorup, the new airport terminal, designed by Markku Komonen and Mikko Heikkinen, and the new Art Gallery, designed by Professor Juhani Pallasmaa.

Although most of the tourists visiting Rovaniemi immediately after the war came by train, it was not to be long before the era of mass air travel dawned. It has been common since 1984 for direct Christmas flights to be arranged from London and elsewhere abroad, some in the supersonic Concorde aircraft.

The popularity of winter tourism has been enhanced by the increase in tourist activities amidst the snow and frost of the cold, dark season of the year, including snowmobile safaris setting out directly from the town centre, and reindeer and dog sleigh rides arranged in the rural district.

The hotel and catering college that has been operating in Rovaniemi since 1971 has ensured sufficient levels of skill among the staff responsible for looking after visitors to the area. Young people studying at the Nivavaara Secondary School and the Ounasvaara Upper Secondary School can even choose subjects connected with the tourist industry and continue their studies at the local polytechnic. The highest official recognition of the status of tourism as an object of study was the creation of a professorship in it at the University of Lapland in 1994. The post is currently held by Dr. Seppo Aho, whose closest international contacts are with colleagues in Germany and England.