

**Identification**

<i>Nomination</i>	Verla Groundwood and Board Mill
<i>Location</i>	Province of Kymi, Municipalities of Jaala and Valkeala
<i>State Party</i>	Finland
<i>Date</i>	26 September 1995

**Justification by State Party**

Verla qualifies for inclusion on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria iv and v**. It is a typical example of a wood-processing mill from the latter half of the 19th century by virtue of its location, buildings, technical installations, the factors leading to its establishment, and its history. It provides an excellent picture of the type of wood-processing mill to be found throughout the coniferous zone of the Nordic countries and northern Russia.

However, whilst it was no more than typical at the beginning of the present century, it is now unique. Exploitation of the forest resources, especially at sawmills and wood-processing mills, has long been a focal branch of the export industries of Finland, Sweden, and Norway and will continue to form the backbone of their economic prosperity. This has resulted in frequent replacement and modification of old industrial premises and installations. Most of the mills built in the 19th century have already been demolished, and only a handful, of which Verla is the outstanding surviving example, are still in existence.

Verla conforms with the compact layout of old Nordic factory communities, with a residence surrounded by a park in a dominant position on the banks of a river commanding the factory buildings and with the workers' dwellings in regular rows on the opposite bank of the river. The decorative architecture of the red-brick factory buildings and the wooden residence of the owner is in keeping with international trends, mainly from central Europe, and is characteristic of contemporary industrial architecture in the Nordic countries. The workers' houses are in the traditional vernacular idiom.

The ensemble provides an excellent insight into the lives and environments of industrial workers and their families, both at work and at home, in a small industrial community. The patina and wear resulting from decades of board-making survives untouched in the works, now an industrial museum. Verla also reflects the interaction between the mill and the surrounding countryside in Finland at the turn of the century.

The Verlankoski rapids illustrate an era in the history of hydroelectric power generation and its various manifestations. Before the mill was founded they had for centuries been used to turn the watermills of the local peasants. The three power plants at Verla, the most recent dating from 1995, reflect the development of this form of power generation during the 20th century. The role of the rapids is given further depth by the existence of prehistoric rock paintings close to the mill, no doubt intended to bring good fortune in harvesting the rich fish stocks of the rapids.

The State Party proposes that the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria iv and v**.

**Category of property**

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Verla ensemble is a *group of buildings*.

**History and Description***History*

The "industrial revolution" that reached the Kymi river valley in the first half of the 1870s is one of the most dramatic phenomena in the economic history of Finland. In a very short period dozens of steam sawmills,

groundwood mills, and board mills were established, in many cases by foreign businessmen, especially from Norway and Germany. This process was encouraged by the favourable attitude of its Russian rulers towards the trading activities of the Grand Duchy created in 1809. The Kymi valley benefited in particular from the construction of timber-floating facilities and the introduction of cooperative floating, which enabled logs from the virgin forests of central Finland to be brought to the processing facilities. At the same time a new social class of factory and mill workers emerged here, as elsewhere in Finland.

The first mill on the western bank of the Verlankoski rapids was founded in 1872, but it encountered financial problems and closed down after a fire in 1876. A new, larger groundwood mill with adjoining board mills was built in 1882 by two master papermakers, one Austrian and the other German. One of the major shareholders was a businessman of German descent from Viipuri, Friedrich Wilhelm Dippell, who eventually became the major shareholder in the company. The new mill was again built entirely in wood, but set apart from the other buildings to minimize the fire risk. The main section of the present owner's residence was completed in 1885, and the seventeen-room hostel for the workers in the following year (although most of the workers lived in cottages on either side of the rapids). When the board-drying section was destroyed by fire in 1892 it was replaced by an impressive, ornamental building in red brick on four floors, designed by Carl Eduard Dippell, brother of the owner, who was also responsible for all the other main buildings that survive at Verla.

Although the Verla buildings are in the neo-Gothic style, which was already somewhat outmoded at the time of their construction, they were technically advanced for their time. For example, reinforced concrete floors, using the Hennebique technique only three years after it was patented, were installed in the groundwood mills. The industrial installations, by contrast, were traditional and only slightly modified and updated between 1882 and 1920.

Transport of finished products (principally to Russia, and later to western Europe and the USA) was always an obstacle to development at Verla. At first the bales of groundwood had to be transported to a distant railway station by boat down a route with many rapids or in winter over the frozen river. When the new railway was completed in 1889 the distance was reduced to 7 km, but transport by horse-drawn cart over bad roads remained a major problem.

When Wilhelm Dippell died in 1906, Verla became a limited company, which was purchased by a small wood-processing company on the same waterway, Öy Kissakoski Ab; this was in its turn bought two years later by the present-day Kymmene Corporation. Output gradually diminished in subsequent decades until it was closed down on 18 July 1964, when the last of the old workers retired. The Kymmene Corporation decided to preserve the entire complex intact as an industrial heritage museum, just as it had been when the last worker left.

#### *Description*

The area proposed for inclusion on the World Heritage List, which lies on the Jaala (western) side of the Verlankoski rapids, consists of the following buildings:

- The groundwood and board mill (Carl Eduard Dippell, 1895)
- The board-drying plant (four-storey brick building, with former workers' hall at one end; Carl Eduard Dippell, 1893)
- The groundwood and board storehouse and flour mill (light feldspar brick; Carl Eduard Dippell, 1902)
- The wooden bale and bundle storehouse (early 20th century)
- The mill-owner's residence (Carl Eduard Dippell, 1885-89; tower and offices added in 1898)
- Round wooden pavilion attached to bowling alley (1890s)
- Shed for fire-fighting equipment.

The buffer zone around the proposed World Heritage property contains a number of buildings and other structures intimately associated with the Verla mill:

#### *On the Jaala (western) side*

The sawmill, the plank storehouse, the machine room and rails for log-hauling (partly preserved), power plants built in the 1920s and 1954 respectively, the former mill sauna and washroom, a flour mill, and the village centre (three shops and storehouses).

#### *On the Valkeala (eastern) side*

The mill owned by the Selänpää cooperative, the 1995 power plant, the arched concrete bridge (1920s), the floating hut and boathouse (owned by the mill), the prehistoric rock paintings (see below), the office manager's house (single-storeyed, built in 1886 and transferred here from Jaala in 1931), several workers'

cottages from the 1880s and 1890s, the clubhouse (built in 1919 and still in use), and various outhouses and sheds.

The prehistoric rock painting is sited above the rapids on the Valkeala side. It depicts eight elks, three human figures, and a geometric motif, as well as a number of figures that can no longer be deciphered. The red paint is preserved by a thin layer of silica deposited on top of them. They are considered to be some 6000 years old, from the earliest period of Finnish rock art, and are the work of the Arctic hunting culture.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

The core area, proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List, is the subject of a protection order promulgated by the Council of State on 6 May 1993. The order covers the external appearance of all the buildings, the structures themselves, and the room divisions. For these the only permissible changes are those relating to restoration or other measures essential for their preservation. The fixtures, including the machines and other industrial plant, and those of the mill-owner's residence, including tiled stoves, mouldings, panelling, etc, must be preserved. The buildings and the areas surrounding them must be maintained in such a way as to preserve their cultural-historical value, whilst their use must respect their original character and value.

The buffer zone is not the subject of an official preservation order. The two municipalities within which it is located have undertaken to ensure that the buildings and structures belonging to the mill community are protected by means of planning mechanisms associated with building inspection. Little, if any, development is anticipated, and the views of the National Board of Antiquities will be sought when permits for building work are requested.

In the report produced in 1993 by the Working Group on Landscape Areas appointed by the Ministry of the Environment, the Verla mill and its immediate surroundings was classified as a significant traditional landscape. It is also classified as an historical site of national importance in the inventory prepared by the National Board of Antiquities and the Ministry of the Environment in 1993.

### *Management*

The area that is the subject of this nomination is the property of the Kymmene Corporation, which took the decision in 1964 to preserve the mill complex as an industrial heritage museum. The former workers' houses are available to its employees for recreational use. Kymmene is to be merged with the Repola Corporation and its subsidiary, United Paper Mills Ltd, in May 1996 to become the largest forestry enterprise in Europe.

The company plans to develop the Verla mill area to serve the needs of tourists and researchers. The museum reception area is to be refurbished in 1997 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of its foundation. A new exhibition area is to be created.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

The Verla mill underwent systematic maintenance throughout its decades of industrial use. Since production ceased in 1964 it has been subject to normal maintenance and repair activities, and the Kymmene Corporation is committed to continue to preserve and protect it in this condition.

### *Authenticity*

The authenticity of the Verla mill complex is total. It is exactly as it was when the last worker left on 6 July 1964, nothing was changed: the plant could be put into operation again at very short notice.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Verla in February 1995. ICOMOS consulted TICCIH on the cultural significance of the site. An evaluation of the cultural significance was also provided by an expert nominated by Parks Canada.

### *Qualities*

The Verla groundwood and board mill is an outstanding example of this type of traditional industrial establishment, of which very few survive into the closing years of the 20th century.

### *Comparative analysis*

The only comparable European properties of this type, once very common but now reduced to a handful, are the Frövifors paper mill in Sweden and the Klevfos pulp and paper mill in Norway. These are also converted to museums, and represent other facets of this general area of industrial production in northern Europe. Verla is in many ways the most complete and authentic, by virtue of the fact that it remains exactly as it was when operations ceased on 6 July 1964. There is no property in North America that is comparable in terms of completeness or authenticity.

### *ICOMOS observations*

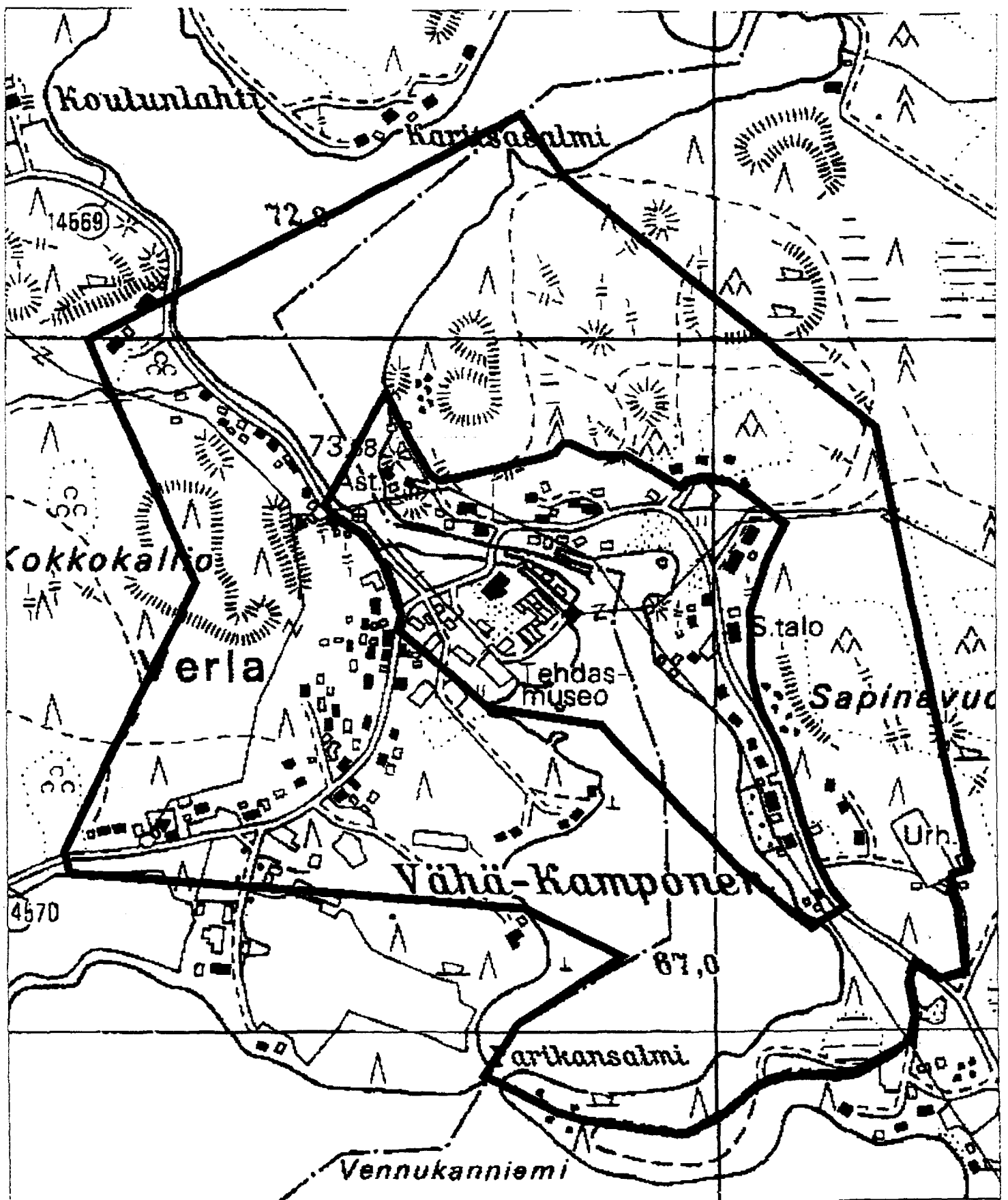
Whilst the area covered by the nomination represents the core of the Verla groundwood and board mill, the entire settlement area contains buildings and other structures of socio-economic significance, such as the power plants, the village centre on the Jaala side and a number of the workers' houses on the Valkeala side. ICOMOS felt that a more complete picture of the complex would be obtained if some at least of these buildings could be brought within the protected and nominated area. The State Party has accepted these recommendations and provided a new proposal, extending over the entire historic area, which meets the ICOMOS recommendations.

### **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *critterion iv*:

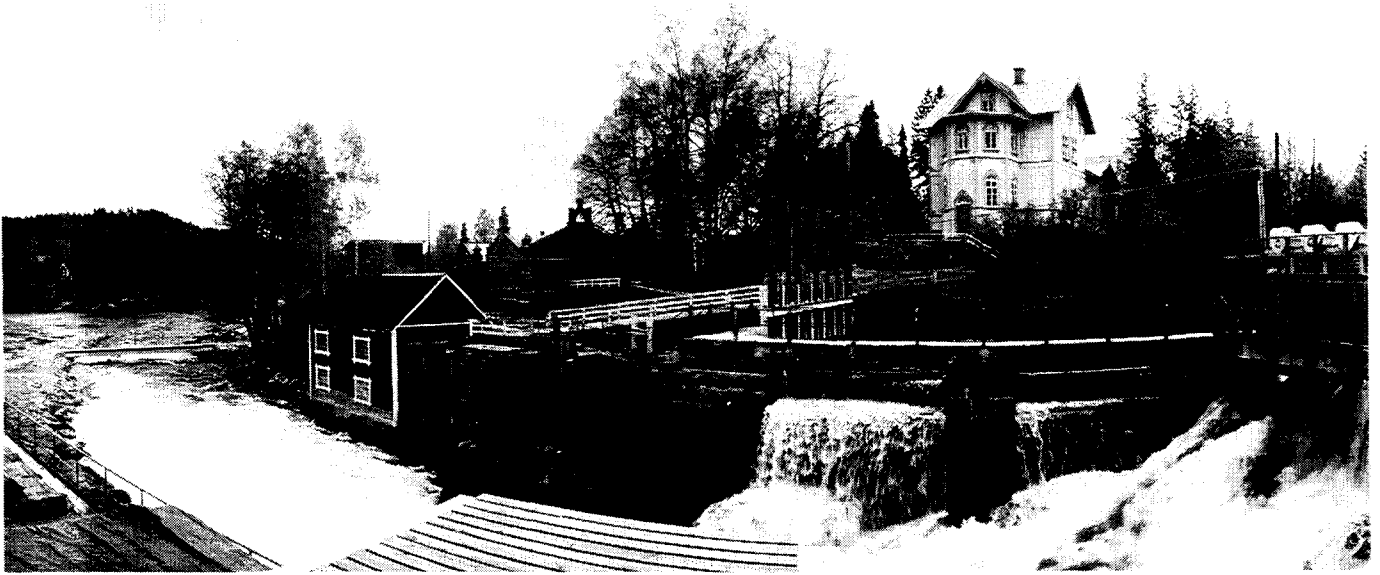
The Verla groundwood and board mill and its associated habitation area is an outstanding and remarkably well preserved example of the small-scale rural industrial settlement associated with pulp, paper, and board production that flourished in northern Europe and North America in the 19th and early 20th centuries, of which only a handful survives to the present day.

ICOMOS, October 1996



Verla : limites du bien proposé pour inscription  
et de la zone-tampon

Verla : limits of the nominated property and buffer zone



Verla : l'usine et ses environs (1995)

Verla : the mill and its surroundings (1995)