

FINLAND

Petäjävesi Old Church

Brief description

Petäjävesi Old Church, in central Finland, was built of logs between 1763 and 1765. This Lutheran country church is a typical example of an architectural tradition that is unique to eastern Scandinavia. It combines the Renaissance conception of a centrally planned church with older forms deriving from Gothic groin vaults.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1994

Agency responsible for site management

- The parish of Petäjävesi
41900 Petäjävesi
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

Petäjävesi Old Church is a building monument of considerable global importance as an example of northern timber church architecture. It fulfils the World Heritage Committee criteria I and IV.

The Petäjävesi Evangelical Lutheran old church is uniquely representative of log construction in the northern coniferous areas and the peasant population's skills in applying it. The European architectural trends, which have influenced the external form and floor plan layout of the church, have been masterfully applied to traditional log construction. The church combines the floor plan of a Renaissance central church conception and older forms descended from the Gothic groined ceiling.

The construction of the interior, with its hand-carved log surfaces and silk-fine patina on the seasoned walls give the hall a unique atmosphere which is enhanced by the slightly irregularly placed floor beams and pews with their mirror-surfaced, soft-profiled side pieces.

The Petäjävesi Church has a strong structural and historical authenticity. It reflects in an impressive way the architectural beauty of a northern rural Protestant church.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

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

Criterion iv: Petäjävesi Old Church is an outstanding example of a wooden church in the architectural tradition of eastern Scandinavia.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1991): the Bureau recommended the inscription of this property, but asked ICOMOS to submit a comparative evaluation of old wooden churches in Northern Europe. In the light of this additional information, the nomination of Petäjävesi would be re-examined by the Bureau at its special session in December 1991.

Committee (1991): the Committee deferred the inscription of this property until ICOMOS is able to provide a more exhaustive study on the universal value of this monument.

Bureau (December 1994): the Bureau recalled that the Committee at its fifteenth session in December 1991 deferred this nomination and requested a more exhaustive study on the universal value of this monument. ICOMOS informed the Bureau that this study had been undertaken and that it concluded that the church is "the best preserved of Finland's churches built in the crucifix tradition and is a worthy representative for the type ... It deserves a place on the World Heritage List where, together with Urnes stave-church [Norway], it will serve to represent the height of wooden church architecture in Scandinavia."

The Bureau recommended that the World Heritage Committee inscribe the property under criterion (iv).

Committee (1994): discussions on whether the qualifications of the property should be considered on the basis of material or regional location ensued following a remark by one of the delegates that the comparative study of wooden churches carried out should have covered areas beyond Northern Europe. A consensus was reached to inscribe this property as representative of the wooden church architectural tradition of the North European region; it was not considered appropriate to compare it with wooden church traditions elsewhere in the world.

- Statement of significance does not adequately define the outstanding universal value of the site
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: a buffer zone has been defined

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- No foreseen changes

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- There is a land-use and conservation plan for the area. The church is protected according to the Church Act (which automatically protects churches built before 1917)
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management**Use of site/property**

- Religious use

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group: plans to set up a group in 2006
- Management by the State Party; management under protective legislation
- Site manager on part-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; local
- The current management system is not sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No management plan
- A management plan will be completed and adopted: 2006
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: the parish of Petäjävesi; the National Board of Antiquities

6. Financial Resources**Financial situation**

- No information on the annual operating budget for the site
- Extra funding has been drawn from World Heritage status
- The state budget (Ministry of Education, Grants for World Heritage Sites). In future budget allocations from the Central Church Administration; EU-funding through Raphael programme
- Funding available for the adequate management of the site: sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 0

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: promotion; interpretation; education
- Average: conservation; management; visitor management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- There are annual meetings for the site managers of the sites

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: – approx. 20.000, tendency slightly increasing
- Visitor facilities: Guided tours, exhibitions, concerts, matinés and church services
- No Tourism/visitor management plan

10. Scientific Studies

- Visitor Management; a study of the visitors to the site; thesis on the relationship between Petäjävesi Old Church and media

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: not provided
- Petäjävesi Old Church participates in the annual Finnish Travel Fair together with other Finnish WH sites
- Web site available

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)**Reactive monitoring reports**

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- The present use of the church causes harm to the church floor. The fire protection must be improved; the southern parts of the church

must be protected against weathering; the present parking plot is too small

- Present state of conservation: needs more resources

Threats and Risks to site

- Visitor/tourism pressure
- Specific issues if mentioned: the wearing of the surfaces (the ground in front of the church, the floor of the church)

Actions taken

- A site manager is appointed in May 2005. The communication between the local authorities and the National Board of Antiquities will be improved

13. Monitoring

- No monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: not provided

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: the public awareness of Petäjävesi Old Church has increased
- Strengths: the network and co-operation between local authorities (community and church) and private companies has been established. As a result is the Foundation of Petäjävesi Old Church; network with other World Heritage sites in Finland and with the Nordic Countries; projects for schools and students
- Weaknesses of management: the church is as a historical monument very demanding and vulnerable. A major problem is the wearing of surfaces. As there is no visitor centre so far some activities (e.g. selling of publications) takes place in the church. This is not a sustainable solution

Future actions

- To build a visitors centre. Meantime the endangered parts of the church are protected by temporary solutions
- Activity does not require funding from World Heritage Fund