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# Sortavala – the town where the Kalevala started

## ■ AMELIE LANIER

Well, it wasn't really made here, as the *Kalevala* – the book of legends of the Finn people – is the result of the collection of popular tales that were told/sung in the villages by the bards, who accompanied it with a kind of cithera, the *kantele*.



Statue in honour of the bards who cultivated and passed on the popular myths of the Finn people.

In his lap he holds the **kantele**. The statue is standing in a park in Sortavala and was created using a real model, or better the photos that remained from him, the narrator Petri Shemeikka (1825 - 1915). It was set up in 1935 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first edition of the Kalevala.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

But though Sortavala generally isn't linked too much with the creation of the Kalevala, its author, Elias Lönnrot

who collected these legends and edited them as the 'Kalevala', started his collection trips into Karelia from Sortavala where a friend of him lived, being the parish priest, who supported and encouraged his research in Finnish popular culture.



The former house of Dr. Winter,

now housing the Museum for the Northern Part of the Area near the shores of Lake Ladoga. It is a specimen for the Scandinavian 'Romantic Style'.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

Sortavala is one of the main towns of Karelia which the Finns consider the true cradle of their popular culture, among other reasons for the fact that Karelia has less than the other parts of Finland been exposed to Swedish dominion and assimilation.

Only a small part of Karelia is in Finland, in the Southeast, with the towns of Joensuu and Lappeenranta. The larger part of Karelia is in Russia.



A building that has to do something with the church behind it,

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the church of St. John the Baptist

which is an orthodox church though it doesn't look orthodox at all. Either it was originally built for some other religion, or the Finnish orthodox churches differ considerably from the Russian ones.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

Sortavala is a fine specimen of Scandinavian art nouveau architecture.



This house was built in 1914 by the architect Leander.

It originally housed an editorial for printing religious literature.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER



Another nice house about which I couldn't find out anything!

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

Sortavala, though, was founded by the Swedes around 1640 on the shores of Lake Ladoga. When Sweden lost this territory to Russia as a result of the Northern War in 1721 the town's name was changed to Serdobol. After Finland became independent it became part of Finland and was renamed to Sortavala.



Lake Ladoga, as I have been told, is a source of good weather

and therefore brings the settlements at its shore in the surroundings a milder climate than the one usual in this northern hemisphere. It seems to repulse the clouds and storms, like an inverse magnet.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

Sortavala belonged to Finland till the 'Winter War' of 1939. The Winter War, aimed at recapturing Finland on the eve of World War II to a certain extent was a disaster for the Soviet Union as it lost far more soldiers than the Finns and was not able to conquer Finland. Still, as a result Finland in spring of 1940 had to cede Eastern Karelia, including Sortavala that had been bombed heavily in the winter of 1939. Most of its inhabitants left then and went to the remaining parts of Finland.



The landing stage for the boats of Sortavala:

The left side is still being used, the right end is completely rotten and partially already has fallen into the water.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

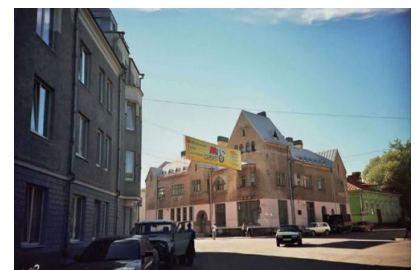
In the 'Continuation War' of 1941 Finland sided with Germany and invaded Soviet Union, allegedly to recuperate the lost territories of Karelia. But then it pressed on and even took Petrozavodsk which had never been Finnish. The Finnish invasion proved a serious threat to Soviet Union, and endangered the anyhow difficult supply of besieged Leningrad.



A tiled stove in a museum in Sortavala

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

In 1944 the Germans were defeated on Soviet territory and Soviet troops conquered Vyborg, threatening to occupy all of Finland. In September 1944 an armistice was signed whose conditions were enforced in a peace treaty in Paris 1947. Finland again had to hand over Eastern Karelia, including Sortavala.



Place in Sortavala showing another famous building

which originally housed a branch of the Finnish National Bank. It was built in 1905.

BILD: AMELIE LANIER

### Art in Sortavala

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Forschungstätigkeit über die Geschichte Osteuropas und des österreichischen Kreditwesens. Publikationen zum Transformationsprozeß nach 1989 und den neueren Entwicklungen im Bankwesen. Wohnort: Zell

am See. Motto: „Wenn die Pforten der Wahrnehmung gereinigt würden, würde alles dem Menschen erscheinen, wie es ist: unendlich.“ (William Blake, Die Hochzeit des Himmels und der Hölle)

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