Church and Parsonage

The present church of Utsjoki was built alongside Lake Mantojärvi in 1850–1853. It was designed by Ernst B. Lohrmann and the altarpiece was painted by August Koivisto. The stones of the church are probably from a hill behind the church and the tiles are from Sirma, a village in Norway. There is room for 250 people in the church.

The parsonage of Utsjoki was built in 1843 and it was designed by Carl Ludvig Engel. The parsonage is still the official residence of the priest. The red wooden buildings, including cowshed, summer house, granaries and sauna date from 1770s.

The wooden St. Ulrika’s church, the precursor of the stone church, was built near the present parsonage in 1700. A hundred years later the wooden church was in such bad condition that it could no longer be repaired. The vestry of the St. Ulrika’s church still stands next to the parsonage field.

Church Huts – The Tradition

The church huts in Utsjoki were used by local people who came a long way to the church hut area to attend the market, tax collection, trade, court sessions or later holy days at the church. They often arrived in the area a day earlier and needed a place to stay overnight. Additionally, when travelling further, people sometimes rested and spent a night in their huts. There have been church stables, log cabins and sod huts as well as granaries and sheds near the church. Confirmation camps were held in the area before they were familiar elsewhere in Finland.

From the 18th century up to the 1940s the number of huts in the church hut area varied depending on the people’s need for new huts and also on whether they could afford the huts or wanted to move them elsewhere. The wood for the buildings was expensive although durable; that is why it was carefully recycled. If a hut was moved elsewhere, another hut was often built in its place by a different owner. In addition to the habitable huts, many people built also stables and granaries.

Utsjoki Church Huts

Alongside Lake Mantojärvi in Utsjoki there is a historical church hut area where, during the most active period in the 1930s, there were about twenty huts. There are thirteen buildings visible today. There have been church huts by the lake since the end of the eighteenth century, and probably even earlier, as the commune hut and the bailiff’s hut near the present parsonage are mentioned already in documents dating from 1725. Two hundred metres south from the parsonage, between the lake and the church of St. Ulrika, there have also been dwellings. Historical sources and archaeological findings suggest that there has been some activity around the area since the end of the seventeenth century at the latest.

Local families have always built and owned the church huts, except the commune hut and the bailiff’s hut. The church huts were in active use up to the middle of the 1940s. After the Second World War many of the hut owners pulled down their huts and moved them elsewhere.

The National Board of Antiquities restored the church hut area in 1970s and 1980s renovating and bringing back some of the huts that had been moved elsewhere. During summers the area is a museum, and in addition, the congregation of Utsjoki holds a missionary café in the café hut and in the old court hut there is a local craft shop.

At the beginning of the 21st century the Utsjoki Church Hut Association was founded, in which the families who own the huts, the Utsjoki municipality and the Utsjoki congregation cooperate.

The Church Hut Area

1 Fish cellar. The National Board of Antiquities built the traditional fish cellar in the 1970s.

2 Smoke sauna. The building was situated earlier by the river Teno in Nivajoki, from where the The National Board of Antiquities moved it to its present location in 1970s. It has a sauna room and a cabin to which there are separate entrances.

3 Maintenance house. The storehouse with toilets was built from material left behind from an old stable owned by the Utsjoki municipality. A famous carpenter Erkki Kateketta had built the stable and there was room for six horses in it. Earlier the stable was at the place where now stands the hut of the family Länsman. Utsjoki congregation has the right to use the building.

4 Teacher Nils Holmberg’s hut. Nils Holmberg (1858–1937) was from Nuorgam and he worked as a travelling teacher in Utsjoki including a Confirmation class. His hut was built in 1923 and it was repaired in 1958. The Utsjoki congregation has the right of possession of the hut but the family Holmberg also has the right of use.

5 The hut of the family Aikio. Samuli Aikio (1863–1911) built the hut and it has been in the same place since its construction. Some of the timbers are supposedly from a hut which belonged to traders from Tornio in south Lapland. The trees used in the hut are from circa 1520. Today the family Aikio owns the hut.

6 Churchwarden Aslak Lukkari’s hut. Aslak Lukkari was from Vetsikko, a village between Nuorgam and Utsjoki, and he worked as a verger, in the church council and the parish council. The hut belongs to the family Lukkari.

7 Churchwarden Aslak Lukkari’s stable. The stable was built from material left behind from Lukkari’s old hut. For some time, the hut remained in the reindeer round-up place in Čohkavárri but it was later returned to the church hut area in 1970s. The family Lukkari owns the hut.

8 Abraham Helander’s sod hut. Abraham Helander lived in the hut permanently with his family. He sold coffee in their hut during the market time. The last known dweller in the sod hut was Antti Helander and his family, later they moved to the Utsjoki village. The sod hut has been taken down and reconstructed according to old building traditions in the 1970s. The Helander family has the right to use the hut.

9 Hans and Terttu Guttorm’s hut. During his travels the bailiff used to stay in a hut now owned by Hans and Terttu Guttorm. Earlier the congregation held a café in the hut. The Guttorms rebuilt the hut on their own land after it was sold to them as firewood and later the hut was moved to its present place. The owners have a hereditary right to the hut.

10 The café hut. Juhani Kotsaari built the hut in 1959 for the congregation as a replacement for the bailiff’s hut. The Utsjoki congregation has the right to use the hut.

11 Court hut or commune hut. The old court hut has served as a place for court sessions, village and municipality meetings, school and confirmation class and in the winter for religious Mass; It has also been the site for the doctor’s surgery, a library and the place for officials to stay overnight. On the outer wall of the hut there was a municipal notice board. A local craft association has its shop in the hut. Utsjoki municipality owns the hut.

12 The hut of the family Länsman. The building is an old shop of the trader Holmberg, and it was previously located where now runs the main road. The hut was moved to a reindeer round-up place in Čohkavárri and in the 1970s it returned to a spot where the congregation’s old stable used to be. The family Länsman has the right of use to the hut.

13 A reconstruction of Nils Holmberg’s building complex. A reconstruction based on Nils Holmberg’s building complex. There is a cabin, two stables and a toilet in the building.