

## **THE OULU CASTLE - FROM A FORTRESS INTO A CAFÉ**

As **John III**, the King of Sweden-Finland, was planning a campaign against Russian Karelia in the late 1500s, a base was needed on the Finnish side for the army. The Oulu Castle was built for this purpose. In 1590, the castle was finished on the present island of Linnansaari at the mouth of the Oulujoki river. This construction made of wood and earth was the first stage that was reliably known in the history of the Oulu Castle.



Commander-in-chief **Pietari Bagge** was the governor of East and West Bothnia during the years 1591–92, and he had his quarters in the Oulu Castle. Thus, the trading site of the River Oulujoki became significant in an administrative sense. In 1605, **King Charles IX of Sweden** commanded that the castle should be rebuilt. In addition, a town was to be founded on the mainland, opposite the castle.

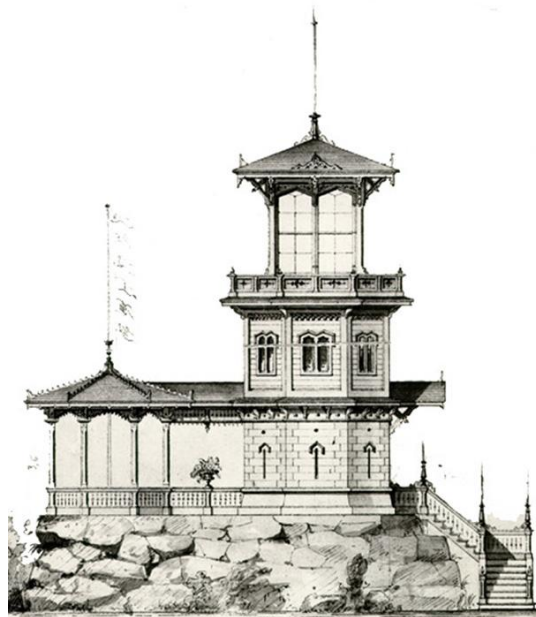
The castle had not yet been finished in 1609 when weapons and equipment for a Kola Peninsula campaign were already gathered in it. Northern expeditions of conquest failed, and the policy of **Gustav II Adolf**, the successor of Charles IX, was directed towards Central Europe. The fortress of Oulu was no longer of great importance, and little by little it started to fall into decay.

The most significant period in the history of the Oulu Castle was the first decades of the 17th century. At that time, the numbers of both the garrison and the weapons were at their largest (the garrison consisted of 50–100 men and the population of the town was 400). The buildings were also in their best repair.

Occasionally, the governors of Ostrobothnia had their quarters in the castle until the early 1640s. Even the King visited the castle a few times. In the late 1600s, the castle was still guarded by a small number of men. During the years of the **Great Northern War** (1700–1721), the armature and garrison of the castle were increased, but as the army retreated from Finland in 1714, the castle remained unoccupied. In 1715, Russian troops burned the military devices of the castle.

The Oulu Castle met its final destruction on July 31, 1793: lightning set the wooden parts of the store cellar on fire. The fire reached the powder magazine, and the black powder that was stored there exploded and destroyed the building almost in whole. Blocks of stones were thrown to the town and as far as the nearby island of Pikisaari.

Around 1830, the **Oulu Trading Company** had the broken part of the stone cellar repaired as their powder store. The observation tower of the **Oulu Maritime School** was built on this foundation in 1873. The Maritime School operated until the year 1910. Café operations were started in the castle in 1912.



Observatory of the Oulu Maritime School

Picture source: The Northern Ostrobothnia Museum  
The portrait of **King Charles IX** by Rauni Palonen, 2006