

The church of St. Henrik at Nousiainen

The Church of St. Henrik is situated on high ground near the upper course of the Hirvi, which divides the parishes of Lemu and Nousiainen. After the Cathedral of Turku, it is undoubtedly the most important of Finnish medieval churches. The church contains many treasures associated with St. Henrik and the establishment of the first Finnish diocese.



Historical research and national tradition agree in placing the martyrdom of St. Henrik in the year 1156 and it is also known that he was buried in Nousiainen.

The first reliable medieval mention of the Church of Nousiainen is in the year 1232, but this, as well as several subsequent records, refers not to the present church but to a smaller church dedicated to Our Lady which was probably built of wood.

The origins of the style can be traced to the mid -13th Century brick architecture of Lake Mälaren in central Sweden. The style is believed to have been introduced into Finland by Bishop Johannes I, who before becoming bishop of Finland in 1286, had been abbot of the Dominican monastery in Sigtuna. Immediately after his consecration as bishop, he initiated simultaneously the construction of two significant churches, the Cathedral of Turku and the Church of Nousiainen.

The Church of Nousiainen is noted not only for its historical significance, but also for its architectural features. Among the most striking of the latter are the triple windows at the east end and the abundant use of brick, especially in the upper parts of the walls.

With the exception for the sarcophagus and the pulpit, the fabric was completely restored between 1967 and 1969 in connection with necessary repairs to the church. The architects Maija Kairamo and Heikki Havas of the Archaeological Commission were responsible for this work. (Source: The Church of St. Henry at Nousiainen 2006.)