

Ilmari Wirkkala – A Builder of Kaustinen's Cultural Heritage

For the Church and Local Heritage of Kaustinen

Ilmari Wirkkala (1890–1973) designed the altarpieces for Kaustinen Church and contributed to plans for its restoration. He also played an important role in developing the local heritage museum and participated in numerous regional cultural projects. His writings and drawings remain an important part of the cultural history of Central Ostrobothnia.

A Vision for the Folk Music Festival

When plans were being made to establish the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival in 1967, Wirkkala welcomed the idea while maintaining a realistic outlook. He stressed the importance of careful planning, considered accommodation, performers and finances, and proposed that the event should be allowed to grow gradually. His foresight proved correct, and the festival went on to become an internationally recognised event.

Ilmari Wirkkala's life's work brought together art, history and a deep love for his home region. Thanks to his efforts, many of Kaustinen's cultural traditions remain a visible and valued part of the community's identity today.

Designer of the Kaustinen Coat of Arms

Artist Ilmari Wirkkala (1890–1973) designed the Kaustinen coat of arms in 1950. The design process was long and involved several different proposals. Suggested motifs included a spinning wheel, the Kuorikoski family of church builders, a *kantele* (a traditional Finnish and Karelian plucked string instrument) and a violin. The final design features a golden violin with nail crosses on a blue background, symbolising Kaustinen's strong **traditional folk musician** heritage and the distinguished craftsmanship of the Kuorikoski church builders.

He also designed the Kuorikoski memorial in the churchyard and the war memorial dedicated to the fallen.

Preserving Tradition

Wirkkala devoted his life's work to preserving local history and folklore. He wrote manuscripts, planned historical celebrations and documented Central Ostrobothnian traditions, including

kruunuhääät (West Finnish wedding tradition in which the bride wears a decorated crown),
purpuri (a traditional West Finnish ceremonial wedding dance) and the region's **traditional folk musician** heritage. His goal was to preserve these traditions for future generations.