

# SKJERVØY CHURCH



Tekst/foto Jan R. Olsen

Skjervøy church was built in 1728 and is the oldest preserved wooden church in the Nord-Hålogaland diocese.

The church art shows that there was a church in Skjervøy around the year 1500, but this was probably replaced by a new church building in the 17th century. Hans Michelsen was commissioned by the Sami missionary Thomas von Westen to design the current church, which was built with pine that was floated down the Reisa River.

Attending church was compulsory in former times, and anyone absent was fined. People who travelled a long way to attend spent the night in small church cabins on the shoreline near the church. Consequently, the church site became an important gath-

ering place for people from the villages in North Troms.

The origins of the Kautokeino rebellion started at Skjervøy church in 1851. Nomadic Sami disturbed the confirmation service in the summer of 1851 with loud shouting and scornful remarks and prevented the pastor from giving his sermon. After this unrest, 22 men and women were fined and imprisoned. In November 1852, several of the same Sami revolted and killed the merchant and district sheriff in Kautokeino.

In the 1950s, Skjervøy church was restored back to its original 18th century style with traditional windows and old fittings including an altarpiece, chandeliers and pulpit.