



The admiralty Church & Rosenbom

(Ulrica Pia)



THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH IN 1685

When in 1680, the new town of Karlskrona was established, it was considered important by the Religious Authorities of the time that they should with all possible speed provide a place of worship for the citizens of the town. Two timbered churches were built, the Hedvig Eleonora to serve the town parish, and the Ulrica Pia, consecrated on September 20th 1685, for the new Admiralty parish. Both churches were named after Royal personages, Hedvig Eleonora who was the wife of Karl X (1622-1660), and Ulrica Pia after Ulrica Eleonora, the wife of Karl XI (1655-1697). Ulrica Pia is Latin for "Pious Ulrica".

New churches constructed of stone and which were considered to better embody the spirit of that age were later built. The first of these was the German Church, now the Church of the Holy Trinity, while the Hedvig Eleonora was replaced by the monumental Fredrik Church on the Town Square. In 1760 foundations of what was planned to be the new Adolf Fredrik church for the Admiralty parish, were laid to the immediate south of the Admiralty Clock Tower. Work on this project was discontinued at the end of the 18th century owing to financial difficulties, before finally being demolished. During its lifetime, the half-completed church had been used to accommodate a variety of



somewhat odd ventures, such as the occasion on which a tightrope acrobat had been allowed to perform there. Discussions were still being held at the end of the 19th - and the beginning of the 20th century regarding the possibility of building a new Admiralty Church.

The definite identity of the architect responsible for the Ulrica Pia church is not known, but it is generally acknowledged that the church bears the signature of the Quartermaster-General, Erik Dahlberg. The timber for the building was brought to Karlskrona from the other side of the Baltic, then Swedish provinces. The cruciform design of the church is in accordance to strict Caroline neo-classical principles, and it houses a considerable number of beautiful and interesting objects, many of which are donations from members of the Admiralty parish.

THE INTERIOR

The altarpiece is a copy from the 18th century of the painting "Le Coup de Lance" by the Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) while the carved frame was made, possibly in collaboration with the Sculptor Royal to the Admiralty Johan Törnström, during the 1820 's. The trompe l'oeil painted architectural details are from the beginning of the 20th century. There are a number of coats of arms which were used during funeral ceremonies, and epitaphic tablets hanging in the church. These are in commemoration of the naval architects, master shipwrights, officers and clergymen from the parish many of whom, some 238 in all, still rest in 23 underground chambers in the crypt. In 1846, the frigate H.M.S. Karlskrona went

to the bottom during a hurricane in the Florida Straits and the model of the ship in the church is from 1915. Of her complement, 114 sailors lost their lives with only 17 being saved. A memorial tablet commemorating seamen lost during the two World Wars sits on the southern wall. The small crucifix of cedar with ebony, ivory and mother-of-pearl inlay, was donated to the church in 1744 by Captain Carl Raab and had been given to the Captain by the Patriarch of Constantinople when Raab's ship arrived at that city from Palestine. The crucifix had been made in Jerusalem, where in 1728 it lay on the grave of Christ. The Church's fine collection of silver together with some of its rare books, can be seen in the display cabinet in the northwest of the building.

OLD ROSENBOM

It is the poor box, or rather the figure of "Old Rosenbom", dressed as would have been a sailor from the middle of the 18th century, which first greets the visitor to the Admiralty church. He carries a board with the following inscription:

Although but fragile of voice I be,
Humbly I do to you plea,
to lift up my hat by the brim
And under it put a coin therein.
Blessed is he that considereth the poor
Kon.Dav. 41:2

Rosenbom became more widely known after he had made an appearance in Selma Lagerlöf's book "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils" in which he claims to have been a boatswain on board the ship of the line "Dristigheten" at the end of the 18th century. There have been other sadder tales told about the fate of the old chap before he finally ended up as a poor-box, but the prosaic truth is that he belongs to a tradition of poor-boxes that at one time was not particularly unusual. Several such boxes can still be seen in the Finnish province of Österbotten, and it was from there that many of the carpenters employed at the Navy Yard in Karlskrona were recruited. The earliest known existence of Rosenbom is from 1793, but he was probably made in the Navy Yard in the middle of that century. The original wooden figure, aged by exposure to the elements, has been moved into the church and replaced by a new one, carved by the Admiralty Sculptor Karl Karlsson.



THE ADMIRALTY CLOCK TOWER

The church bells, which also serve as a clock for the Dockyard workers, hang in the Admiralty Clock Tower in the Admiralty Park, a short distance from the church itself. The Tower was probably built at the beginning of the 18th century and was designed with the Pharos of Alexandria lighthouse, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, in mind.

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