



Church of the Holy Trinity



MAGNIFICENT BUILDINGS

There are three churches in Karlskrona, each markedly different from each other, of which the Church of the Holy Trinity is justly considered as being the finest work of architecture in the town. It is also known as the German Church as until 1846, it was the parish church for members of the German community in the town. As early as 1689, the King had granted German citizens living in Karlskrona gracious permission to establish their own congregation and enjoy the same rights and privileges as their compatriots in Stockholm and Göteborg. The congregation was never particularly large, in 1835 numbering to no more than 2,459 persons. The church, modelled on the Pantheon

in Rome was designed by Nicodemus Tessin the younger, the same architect who had been responsible for the Fredrik Church. The King himself had donated 10,000 silver dalers towards the cost of the building, the dowager Queen 2,000 and large contributions were sent from Germany. The church was consecrated in 1709, the year of the disastrous Swedish defeat by the Russians at the battle of Poltava, and by 1750 the copper-roofed church had been more or less completed.



THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH BY FIRE IN 1790

The fire which ravaged the town in 1790, also left the church in ruins and all that remained were the blackened walls. It took 12 years to rebuild, and at its reinauguration was named after Gustav IV Adolf's Queen, Frederica Dorothea Wilhelmina. When the King was deposed in 1809 and he and his family went into exile, the church was given its present name. After reconstruction, the church presented a somewhat different appearance. The new cupola, designed by Professor Olof Tempelman, was of a simpler, purer form, and more in keeping with the style of the Pantheon. The portico at the north end of the building was not completed until 1862, and followed Tessin's original plans.

CHURCH SERVICES IN GERMAN

From the beginning and up to 1774 church services were held in German after which a new procedure was introduced whereby they were held alternatively in German and Swedish. However, by this time, many of the members of the congregation no longer understood German and in 1826 a Royal Decree allowed the officiating Rector to hold all the services in Swedish. In 1846 the German and Swedish congregations were amalgamated into one parish which encompassed the whole town.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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THE CRYPT

A remarkable crypt belonging to the Wachtmeister family lies under a part of the chancel, access being by way of a wooden hatchway in front of the chancel steps. The mortal remains of some 30 persons are interred there and include those of Admiral-General Count Hans Wachtmeister who was one of the founders of the town and who died in 1714.

THE TÖRNSTRÖM ALTARPIECE AND PULPIT

The altarpiece from 1814 is the work of the Admiralty Sculptor Johan Törnström, while the wooden cross was made by the sculptor J.A. Hawerman in the middle of the 19th century. Formally it had been placed on the altar of the Fredrik Church. The pulpit is from 1814 The altar's parapet is decorated with a strikingly beautiful carved and gilded drapery, decorated with various symbols. Under the pulpit, there is a small chamber which since the 1860's has been used as a vestry, and behind the pulpit hangs a tapestry. The tapestry was donated to the church in 1965 by Mrs. Millan Borgström, one of the churchwardens. The organ, installed in 1828, was constructed by the eminent Stockholm organ builder P.Z. Strand and the facade designed by the Stockholm architect C.G. Blom Carlsson, is from the same period.

THE FONT FROM 1685

The font of red limestone from the island of Öland is from 1685, and the copper and brass christening bowl was probably made in the southern German city of Nuremberg. The bottom of the bowl shows a depiction from the Bible of the fall of Man. The two brass chandeliers hanging in the east and west wings of the transept were rescued from the fire of 1790, and the crystal chandelier in the organ loft was a donation from about 1800 by Michaelis, a merchant in the town.

THE COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE

On the west wall of the choir there is a commemorative plaque showing the church prior to the fire of 1790 together with an account of the history of the building up until 1789. In the eastern wing of the choir there is a list of the Rectors of the church from 1691 to 1846 and on the eastern wall a memorial tablet to Salomon von Otter, the Lord Lieutenant of Blekinge, who died in 1732. However there can be little doubt that the most impressive attraction in the sanctum is the masterly executed decorative elements on the ceiling of the building. The trompe l'oeil sunken panels create a magnificent illusion of space and volume and are also the work of Johan Törnström. The Holy Trinity Church of today has one of the most well preserved church interiors from the early 19th century and represent a unique and exquisite synthesis of the Swedish neo-classical architectural tradition.