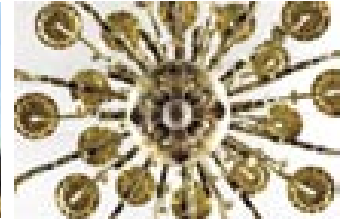




The Fredrik Church



THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH IN 1744

The first church in the Karlskrona town parish was a provincial building constructed of wood, and was situated at the corner of Drottninggatan/Östra Köpmangatan. The church was named after Hedvig Eleonora, the widow of Karl X, and was consecrated in 1685, the same year as the Admiralty parish church, Ulrica Pia. Notwithstanding that both churches had been built as hastily constructed provisional structures, the original Ulrica Pia church still remains. Cold, draughts and water leaking through the roof were but part of the everyday trials endured by the congregation. As early as in 1697 the Crown had decreed that a church of stone should be built in Karlskrona. The cost

of this venture would be financed by the sale of goods confiscated by customs and revenue officers, and from the collection taken during church services. A design for the church was drawn up by Nicodemus Tessin the younger, the leading Swedish architect of his day, but work on the building progressed extremely slowly owing to lack of funds and problems resulting from the war situation. It was not until 1720 that Salomon von Otter, the Lord

Lieutenant of the county, was able to lay the foundation stone, and it was first in 1744 that the church could be consecrated in the presence of the Crown Prince, Adolf Fredrik. The son of the Master Shipwright Gilbert Sheldon was baptised on the same day, and to commemorate the occasion Sheldon donated a font carved in wood to the church. This same font is still in use. However, the church tower was not completed until 14 years after the inauguration, and neither the hood-like roof as envisaged by Tessin nor the later design for a spire was ever added to the tower. The church was named after the King, Fredrik I (1676-1751).

A devastating fire ravaged Karlskrona in 1790. It reduced the greater part of the town to ashes and although the roof of the church was destroyed with the bells and the chandeliers plunging down into the building itself, the sturdily constructed arches held fast. A comprehensive restoration was necessary, and it was then that the church was given a copper roofing. Internal restoration of the church was undertaken both in 1913-15 and, most recently, in 1967-68. Extensive outer restoration work was carried out in 1997-98.

THE BAROQUE CHURCH

The Fredrik church is typical of the Baroque era and is thus influenced by the taste prevalent at the end of the 17th century. Although Nicodemus Tessin's inspiration was to be found in Italy, the source of classical baroque, with this building he succeeded in creating a place of worship which mirrored the particular spirit of the Swedish Great Power Period. The present altarpiece, modernised neo-baroque altar with carvings by J.A. Wetterlund, is from 1915. It would seem that this is the only church in Sweden where the tabernacle in which the Communion chalice is kept, stands on the altar.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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THE PULPIT

The octagonal neo-classical pulpit by J.A. Hawerman and decorated with Christian symbols, is from 1854. A wooden hourglass from 1744 and carved in the form of an angel of death carrying a scythe, stands on the pulpit.

THE ORGAN

The organ in the Fredrik church is a reconstruction of the instrument made by Lars Wahlberg in 1764, and was made by Grönlund Organmakers in Gammelstad, Luleå. With its finely balanced proportion, as an object of beauty alone it must surely rank amongst one of the finest church organs in Europe. It was inaugurated and played for the first time on Easter Day 1897. Both the carvings by Niklas Ekekrantz, and the visible organ pipes, the principals, are from 1764. Six large bellows placed behind the organ case, supply the instrument with air. The organ has 31 stops spread over two manuals and the pedals: the Great organ, the Swell organ and the pedal board. The organ is considered to one of the finest in Scandinavia in regard to tonal quality.

THE HYMN BOARD

The two black hymn boards of wood, gilded with gold and silver, which hang in the choir, belong to the church's proudest possessions. Four coats of arms bearing the devices of noble families, and which were used in funeral services, hang in the aisles. A merchant, Petter Romberg, donated the large chandelier hanging in the nave to the church when it was consecrated. The chandelier was badly damaged when it crashed down from the roof during the fire of 1790 but was repaired and restored to its rightful place in 1792. The two other chandeliers were also gifts from a merchant, C.O. Thörn, in 1878. In the crypt there are 43 burial vaults, in which persons of rank used to be entombed. In 1913 the deceased were removed from the vaults and transferred to a collective grave in the Old Cemetery on Drottninggatan/Östra Köpmangatan.

THE CHURCH SILVER

The church silver is kept in a safe box in the north gallery, and may be viewed on application to the Verger. Seven chalice covers dating from between 1690-1745 are to be seen in the north of the transept.

THE CHURCH BELLS

Of the bells, which crashed down from the roof in the fire of 1790 but one, the largest, survived intact. Cast in Stockholm in 1619, it had been a gift from Karl XI and now hangs in the south tower. One of the smaller bells, which had been destroyed, had originally hung in the old wooden church. There are now two bells in the north tower, while in the south tower there is a carillon of 35 bells which plays three times each day. A lawyer, Povel Grönvall, donated the carillon. The morning and evening chimes are to the tune of traditional Swedish hymns.