

NEWS FROM THE MARITIME MUSEUM:

I The Maritime Museum in being: an intermediate report, January 1976

1. The Maritime Museum of the Finnish Capital, planned since 1962 as a national institution, develops continuously but slowly. The converted building, situated in a small island within the ancient " North-Harbour " of 18th cent. Helsinki, was handed to the Govt. Board of Antiquities etc. in 1973. The task of developing a working modern museum with various public activities was trusted to the Bureau of Maritime History (scientific staff 3, assistants 3) responsible for research, practical field-work, lecturing and publications. Funds allocated were negligible, existing collections limited and relevant nautical objects, necessary for the exhibitions, can not be purchased. These are the general conditions. In spite of the best efforts advance is slow.

The originally four-stored tenement house (housing 36 pilot-families) underwent drastic alternations in 1965 - 1973, and was handed to the Board of Antiquities and its Maritime Bureau late in 1973 by the Govt. Board of Navigation. The staff started planning and drafting early in 1974, while still installing collections, libraries, archives and scientific equipment.

As a permanent base for the Bureaus workingboats and heavy diving equipment, the island offers good facilities. A former plant for dissous-gas, once supplying the lighthouses, will be transformed into a much needed Laboratory for marine conservation only.

The now three-stored museum, (housing the Bureaus offices, library, archives and stores) will be disposed as follows:

I Floor: boat- and shipbuilding from prehistoric eras to the end of wooden shipbuilding, with emphasize on N. Scandinavian and Finnish practises. This four-room file is practically ready, pending some minor arrangements.

II Floor: life-on-board in windjammers and steamships, Finnish 19th century seatrading by established shipowners in Sea-ports, resp. by coastal farmers / fishing people, early steamnavigation and finally winter-navigation in the Baltic-area. This 9-room file is in the planning-stage. A replica of a tourist-class cabin

from the Baltic passenger-steamer " Ariadne " (built in 1914, scrapped in 1969) with complete fittings, is practically ready.

III Floor: the " Main-Gallery " (interior height corresp. to two stores) will be used for temporary exhibitions, while an adjoining file of two rooms will house pilotage, hydrographic service, lighthouses and beacons etc.

Annexes planned: a two-stored wooden shed, facing the main-building, will be repaired and transformed into a summer exhibition-hall for local fishing-boats, tools and equipments connected with coastal fishing. The Bureau disposes a small collection of workboats, covering the south-coast of Finland. A fresh acquisition is a two masted clinker-built " drifter " from the parish of Kökar (Åland Isles), purchased by private funds.

The lightvessel " Kemi ", the last of her category removed from her northern station some years ago, is moored in the museums basin waiting for a final berth. This ancient ship, fitted with a fine coalburning steam-engine, holds original interiors from the turn of the century, and will make an interesting museum-piece. Owing to shortage of funds and labour advance is generally slow, and the year 1976 will pass before floor II is completed.

2. " SPECULUM NAUTICUM ", AN EXHIBITION ON SEACHARTS FROM 5 CENTURIES

With the Maritime Museum in being still inaccessible, the staff tries to attract the public by small expos. The underwater-expo " From the Abyss of the Sea " is still in good working order, doing valuable service for the under-water sector. Owing to a sudden need for a summer-exhibition in the Sveaborg fortress-islands, the staff decided to show samples of the valuable collections of sea-charts, brought together in late 19th century. This large collection contains a.o. Dutch 17th century maps, 18th century charts and Swedish surveyors ink-sketches of Swedish and Baltic waters, " Bluebacks " from the London Officines, and finally a considerable stock of Imperial Russian charts from the Crimean war onwards. This vast material was brought out from dusty storage for study and cleaning up.