

BRIEF HISTORICAL REFERENCE

The landmark territory of the “Strelka” (a spit at the confluence of the Volga and the Oka Rivers) in Nizhny Novgorod is marked by the majestic Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky. Over the centuries, the Strelka spit worked for the city: it was a part of the famous Nizhny Novgorod Fair area and in recent decades it served as a cargo port, where ships from all parts of our country moored.

The investigated site and the Cathedral located on it are historically situated in the eastern part of the former Nizhny Novgorod Fair territory. The Cathedral forms one of its nodes – the former square of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, which now has lost its town-planning significance. The degree of the planning structure preservation in different parts of the area is different. So, within the boundaries of the territory, the red lines of Strelka Street (formerly Aleksandrovskaya Street), Samarkand Street (formerly Nizhegorodskaya Street), Dolzhanskaya Street (formerly the Third Siberian Street) and former Kizlyarskaya Street are quite well read. Around the Cathedral a free undeveloped space is preserved (practically in its historical boundaries, except for the territory occupied by the Port). The intraquarter lay-out of the study area has not been preserved (with the exception of Strelka Street, houses No. 4, 4a, 4b).

The volume-spatial composition of the area is based on a contrasting combination of the dominant volume of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and the nearby historical and modern low-rise building. However, the town-planning role of the Cathedral is not lost. The historical relief of the territory under investigation is quite well preserved, as well as the Strelka Cape itself, which in many ways determines this relief. On the whole, it can be noted that although the planning structure of this territory is rather badly damaged (some of the historic blocks and streets are completely absent), the composition core, which substantially includes Strelka Street and the Cathedral with the clergy house located on its axis, is preserved as a basis for planning structure of this area.

The main transport highway leading from the former pontoon bridge to Cathedral square was Alexander Nevsky Street (now Strelka Street). Just as the square, it was on both sides built up by two- and three-story brick commercial facilities. Strelka Street has retained its planning structure and, in the main, its historical architectural aspect.

The St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was erected in the period from 1867 to 1881. The original draft was compiled by R.J. Kilevein, but later, in process of the design approval, some significant changes were introduced into the project by officials from the Department of Water Communications of the Ministry of Railways. The work on the Cathedral erection was led by R.J. Kilevein and L.V. Dahl. Cathedral Square was formed simultaneously with the construction of the temple itself. The nature of its development in the late XIX - early XX centuries can be judged from the photographs by M.P. Dmitriev. Basically, they were the red brick two- or three-story buildings, of the same type, with shopping facilities located downstairs. Their architecture was eclectic. The building lay-out was perimeterally shaped. The buildings' number of storeys provided for the dominant significance of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and did not overlap its visual perception from the main points of view.

In order to ensure the preservation of this unique building (which is a site of cultural heritage of Federal significance) in its historical environment, the regional Government, by its Decree No. 227 from 17.04.2009, has approved the boundaries of the Cathedral's protection zone, the land using regime and urban regulations within these boundaries. This regime provides for the preservation of historically valuable city-forming facilities with restoration of architectural images of their facades. The list of such facilities includes the following two-storeyed stone trade buildings:

- trade building (Strelka Street, 21, letter B),

- trade building (Strelka Street, 21, letter Э),
- strip mall for the cordage sale (Strelka Street, 21, letter Ш).

These buildings, erected in the second half of the XIX century (even if not being unique from the architectural point of view), are genuine witnesses of the world-famous Nizhny Novgorod Fair located on this site. The field inspection of these buildings definitely confirms their solidity and high degree of their original appearance safety. The facilities' cultural value is substantially determined by their historical authenticity, which is fundamentally important for the formation and upkeep of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral historical environment.

To the east of the temple, on the territory of the square stands the house of the parish clergy. It was built in 1888-1889 in the "brick style" according to R.J. Kilevain's design. This house is located along the axis of the Cathedral and the square itself, and together with the two small service buildings (also red-bricked ones) it forms a single cult complex with the temple. The square had a rectangular regular plan with a clearly symmetrical plot, and the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (height, together with a cross, of about 78 m; dimensions in plan: 67 m x 73 m) was the center of the composition.

The Nizhny Novgorod river port was founded on March 7th of 1932. At the beginning of the XIX century, on the place of the Siberian wharfs (where today the Central Cargo district is located) there were warehouses of shipping companies. Each of them had its own wharf or rented a permanent berthing. In 1817 the Siberian wharfs became a place of particular importance after the Makaryev Fair had been transferred to Nizhny Novgorod. The real boom came to the Siberian wharfs at the beginning of the twentieth century. The growth of the Russian economy had a positive impact on water carriage. In 1905 the first stone warehouses appeared on Strelka spit. Although at the turn of the XXth century, the river-borne freight turnover reached 73 million poods in Nizhny Novgorod, ships moored to the landing stages and barges, and the goods were just dumped directly to the embankment. Only in 1905, the storehouses have appeared on the shores. More than two hundred prominent merchants – ship-owners, representing 11 private steamship companies with vast profits, were their owners. In the Soviet period, the Decree on nationalization of the merchant fleet was issued on February 5th of 1918, followed by forming the centralized management of shipping companies. The "Unified Management of Siberian wharfs" had emerged, headed by the first man in charge (former acceptance/delivery agent) Stepan Mitrofanov.

But only the March 7th of 1932 is considered to be the date of the port formation, when by the Order No. 94 of the People's Commissariat of Water Transport the Nizhny Novgorod River Administration was reorganized into the "Department of the Nizhny Novgorod River Port" with borders: up the Volga river – till Puchezh (exclusively), down the Volga – till Isady (inclusively). So, on the basis of scattered ill-organized berths, located on the natural banks of the Oka and Volga rivers in the areas of Strelka spit, Siberian wharfs, Molitovka and Nizhnevolzhskaya embankment, a single independent manufacturing enterprise was formed. Since the Order of the People's Commissariat for Water Transport (on the formation of the Nizhny Novgorod river port), the life at Strelka spit has changed sharply. In 1932, the first steam floating cranes, floating reloaders and portable conveyors of various systems started to work at the Siberian wharfs. During the First Five-year plan fulfillment, the length of the improved walls made of reinforced concrete reached 440 meters. The freight turnover – in comparison with 1928th – has been more than doubled and amounted to 4.22 million tons. Siberian wharfs have acquired a status of the extra-rate port. At the beginning of 1937, the Gorky port (at that time it was called the "Extra-rate wharf") was divided into three independent piers of the first rate. In the same year, had been basically completed the construction of the wall, where the four "Kirovets" gantry cranes with hoisting

capacity of two tons were installed for the first time. Soon, the piers were again consolidated into a single port with cargo sections. Successful navigations of the first years of the Third Five-Year Plan were interrupted on June 22nd of 1941 (the beginning of the Great Patriotic War) by the order: all cargo ships became warships: patrol ships, minesweepers, gunboats and sanitary fleet ships. For self-sacrificing labor during the Great Patriotic War, the Gorky seaport was presented with a Banner of the Defense Committee of the USSR, which was left there for eternal storage.

In the plan of national economy restoration and development for 1946-1950, a special attention was paid to the Gorky port workers. Suffice it to say that from the 22 million 600 thousand rubles allocated for the restoration of the ports and wharves of the Volga, more than two thirds (15 million rubles) were allocated to the Gorky port. In 1954 for the processing of tare weight and piece cargo in Gorky they began to use containers. Since 1956 the port began to work in winter processing railways. Icebreakers brought a few longboats, which, after being loaded, left – along the free water – for the remote areas of the lateral rivers. All subsequent years, up to the beginning of the 1990s, the Gorky port was invariably increasing the volume of cargo processing and firmly held the title of one of the most powerful river ports of the country. One can see the feature film "Ekaterina Voronina" (USSR, 1957, M. Gorky Film Studio), where the main female character is the head of the river port section.

In the early 1990s, the Gorky river port was in a crisis situation - a catastrophic drop in cargo transportation volumes, a collapse of the harmonious system, a loss of circulating assets, high inflation. The search for an alternative to the once main cargo flows had begun. The dockworkers lured a customs post from the railway to their place and, after having put their warehouses in order, received a license for customs warehousing of goods. They got a huge workload: the Nizhny Novgorod port became the only organization in the Volga Federal District, where customs clearance for automobiles was carried out.

Along the Volga there are two warehouses, where the unique openwork metal structures of the main or central building of the XVI All-Russian Industrial and Art Exhibition of 1896 in Nizhny Novgorod, moved from the XV All-Russian Industrial Exhibition in 1882 in Moscow, were preserved. These load-bearing metal frames were designed by some of the best engineers of the country – G.E. Pauker and I.A. Vyshnegradsky. Along the Oka river there are two warehouses built in the 1930s. Their load-bearing structures are an illustration of the engineering and artistic capabilities of early reinforced concrete. The warehouses have belonged to the River cargo port and now are a vivid reminder of the momentous pages in the city's history, when, thanks to the enthusiasm of the first Five-year plans builders, it turned into a powerful industrial center.