



ITINERARIO LIBERTY



Marine Station - Customs Hall in Genova

In the last twenty years of the 19th. Century the demographic growth and the economic crisis gave an impulse to the migratory phenomenon, which found Genoa as the most equipped departure harbour from the whole of North Italy. The building on the Federico Guglielmo Bridge soon proved to be unsuitable for the growing needs for space for the passengers, and thus a Marine Station capable of satisfying the new necessities was built, reflecting the prestige of the city. Work began in 1914 and was taken up again, after the interruption due to military events, in 1924. After various modifications made to the original project in the course of building, in October 1930 the Marine Station of Ponte dei Mille was inaugurated, characterized by a building of three main parts following the conformation of the wharf joined by passages linked to the 1st. and 2nd. class passenger halls on the first floor, and to the 3rd. class on the lower floor.

The central halls of the Marine Station of Ponte dei Mille were originally the passenger halls of the 2nd. Class, connected to the wharf, where the passengers could arrive directly by train. For years this hall gave hospitality to the passengers of the most famous and greatest transatlantic liners of the history of the Italian navy, engaged in the shipping lines linking to America. Starting from the sixties, the appearance of planes as a means of passenger transport caused the progressive disappearance of shipping lines linking with America, determining the end of the age of the great transatlantic liners and consequently limiting the use of the halls.

The present aspect of the Halls is due to profound restoration works carried out in 2001 on the occasion of the G8 summit talks in Genoa which, besides redesigning the conformation of the spaces, brought back to view the splendid vault of the ceiling in peach-pine wood, hidden for years in the past, which strongly characterizes the spaces.

The ex "Customs Hall of the First Class", situated on the West side of the complex of the Ponte dei Mille, is sub-divided into five bays, the ceiling of which is characterized by coffers in stucco and skylights with coloured glass: the structural design is reflected again, in correspondence to the pilasters, in the five panels of the floor, realized in Venetian style with mixtures of coloured granolithic. On the walls, twenty-four pictorial panels are particularly important, probably attributable to the artist Galileo Chini (1873-1956).

They are mural paintings in tempera in a rectangular shape in the style of the twentieth-century system and may be considered as real mural publicity addressed to the affluent passengers: the cosmopolitan and elite atmosphere of the great cruise ships of the period was, in fact, the same as that which animated the life of the tourist destinations, of the large hotels and of the thermal resorts represented on the panels. Nowadays, on the South side of the hall, inside the two notice-boards which are part of the original furnishings, reproductions of some of the services used on board the great transatlantic liners of the past are exhibited, supplied by the firm "Radif" from Genoa.

Again on the South side, there is the fascinating statue of "Roma Eterna" (Eternal Rome) realized in marble by the sculptor Angelo Zanelli (1848-1942), author of the statuary of the Altar of the Country, which was positioned in the Central Hall of the first class of the transatlantic liner "Roma", the pride of the Italian navy operating on the passenger lines from 1926 to 1939.