

LILLESAND TOWN- AND MARITIME MUSEUM

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Even without any knowledge of architecture, it is easy to see that Lillesand town- and maritime museum is one of the finest houses to have been built in Lillesand.

The author Gabriel Scott declared that it looked as though a gentle woman's hand had decorated it with lace-work.

The main building was erected in 1827 by the merchant, later consul Johannes Grøgaard (1797-1878). The exterior is typical of the period. Horizontal paneling, English sash windows, half-hipped ceiling, with details borrowed from brick and stone architecture.

In the main building Grøgaard ran a local village shop, that is to say grocery and drapery store, while at the same time he also conducted business as wharfinger and ship-owner in Kokkenes, although his principal business interest was as a timber-merchant.

In 1834 Grøgaard built the out buildings, consisting of a scullery/kitchen with accommodation for servants above, store rooms to house grain, coffee, sugar and salt, and also a room where a man sat stripping tobacco. Elsewhere there were cow sheds, stables and a barn. A private house in Nygårdsgata (New Farm street) was added later.

Johannes Grøgaard died in 1878, and in 1884 the property was sold to ship's captain and ship owner Carl Knudsen. He was also harbor master and later became chairman of the local council. In 1905 Knudsen represented Lillesand at the arrival of King Haakon in Christiania (now Oslo).

His office was on the ground floor in the main building. At one time a tailor had his workshop in the building, he often advertised his first rate cut and style in the local paper under the resounding headline "Tailleur de Paris".

Carl Knudsen died in 1914, and the office buildings were rented out to the steam ship agency Hansen and Narvesen. The building later became the local police station among other things.

Carl Knudsen's last surviving child, Thyra Mercedes Knudsen died in 1963. In 1967 Lillesand town council took over the property in accordance to Mercedes Knudsen's will. It was her wish that Lillesand town council should exercise a right to purchase the house and adjoining property in Lillesand, on condition that there should be a town- and maritime museum established in the building.

From 1967 until 1997 the Lillesand town- and maritime museum-friends society undertook the restoration of the buildings, and started registration of the artifacts in the museum as well as building up exhibitions appropriate to the period of ship-building and everyday life of the old shipping town. Since 1997 the museum has been under the daily leadership of an official museum director.

The collections as they are presented now, should give a practical impression of the lifestyle which formed the foundation for the development of Lillesand from a small coastal settlement to a seafaring town with ships sailing over the seven seas.

Besides the permanent displays, the museum offer a variety of exhibitions of the town history which change annually, presenting fresh perspectives on the history of Lillesand.