

“VIKING” TIL VERDENSUDSTILLINGEN

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Captain Magnus Andersen

The Norwegian title means the ship “‘Viking’ to the World’s Fair.” We recently visited the University of Oslo and found, with the help of librarian Tove Johansen, a most intriguing article entitled “*Viking*” in an 1893 magazine called *Folkebladet*. We translated the article and summarize it here. This account is relevant since the “Viking” is one of the few major survivors from the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893; it can be seen in Lincoln Park, Chicago, and is housed under a canope and in need of restoration.

Captain Magnus Andersen (1857–1938) proposed the ship in 1892 and formed a committee to accomplish the design, construction, and trip to the World’s Fair. The design was taken from the restored Norse long ship found in a peat bog near Gokstad. The double-ended Gokstad ship can be seen today in the Bygdøy folk museum in Oslo harbor. The “Viking” was constructed of oak with a length of 23 meters, beam just over 5 meters, and keel depth of 1.75 meters. As the reproduced photo illustration from *Folkebladet* shows, the lines were very graceful indeed. The low island in the right background is Bygdøy in 1893. The overlapping side planks were partly held in place by leather rather than pegs, hence the ship was flexible and well able to handle rough

seas. Each side was arrayed with 16 shields for protection in port as well as from high water during storms. The shields also protected 16 holes a side for oars which ranged in length from 16 to 19 feet. The mast was 16 meters tall and the red and white striped sail was 9½ meters wide and 12½ meters tall. The Viking standard flew atop the mast, the bow was fitted with a US flag, and the stern with a Norwegian flag. The Norwegian flag shows the country’s heritage since the Swedish flag makes up the upper-left corner; Sweden and Norway were united until 1905.

The article continues, describing how the ship was fitted with lanterns and navigational gear. The crew of twelve including skipper Andersen ate and drank typical Viking food on their journey to North America. First mate was Johan Gundersen from Fredrikstad,



The Viking ship in Oslo harbor, 1893. Bygdøy in the right background.

second mate and designer was Christen Christensen from Risør, and also Rasmus Rasmussen, Bent Nygaard, Johannes Møller, Oskar Soelberg, Johan Eriksen, Fredrik Frantsen, Severin Simonsen, Lars Løkke, and Jens Bing—all were descendants of Vikings.

The trip started in April 1893 in Oslo harbor with much festivities, cannon salutes from Akeshus palace, hurrahs, and a flotilla of row boats and steamers leading the “Viking” down the Oslo fjord. The ship hugged the coast and made its way to Bergen where there were speeches, dinners, and grand celebration. Next, a tug towed the “Viking” on the 30th of April to the north tip of Scotland, where it set sail for Newfoundland. After 40 days at sea, the ship reached Newport, Rhode Island, and then New York



The “Viking” in still water

City. New York State and Norwegian representatives and dignitaries met the boat to lead it into the harbor with cannon salutes from every shore battery. At a special dinner, there were many speeches praising Norway, Captain Andersen, and his excellent seamen.

After sailing from New York to Chicago via the Saint Lawrence, the craft was descended upon by every reporter at the World’s Fair eager to get pictures, learn every little detail of the trip to Chicago, and determine the fine qualities of the sailors. The “Viking” was indeed a remarkable and popular attraction at its mooring on the shore of Lake Michigan south of the Battleship Illinois exhibit. Much was written about it. The Dybwad and Bliss *Annotated Bibliography: World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893* lists four items relating to the “Viking”: citations #622, #1542, #2313, and crewman Rasmussen’s account, #2415. Other items will be listed in the forthcoming *Supplement*.

Magnus Andersen also participated in the 1933 Century of Progress World’s Fair in Chicago and wrote a book about his experiences there.

Additional Reference: Holm, Alfred A. *“Viking” Across the Atlantic; and a Short Summary of The Norwegian Vikings and Vikingships*. Chicago: John Anderson Publishing Co., 1893

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