



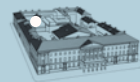
Empire Room

The halls and rooms of the assembly wing built into the Bock House in the 19th century were painted in strong colours and decorated with wall paintings and plaster ornaments. In the renovation begun in 1985, the Empire Room, which is situated in the wing, was restored to its original form as designed by C. L. Engel. Today, it is considered the most beautiful reception hall in the city.

In the early years of the Russian era, the Bock House served as the residence of governor-generals. It was also used for receptions, as during merchant Bock's time. Two Russian tsars, Finland's Grand Dukes Alexander I and Nikolai I, stayed at the Bock House when visiting Helsinki.

Helsinki's first town hall was torn down to make way for the construction of Senate Square and St. Nicholas' Church, and the Bock House was turned into a town hall in 1838. The Magistrates' Court, an auction hall and a prison moved into the house. A police station and a private investigator's office operated on the Katariinankatu side. Town prison facilities were also found there.

*The turquoise
coloured Empire
Room is Helsinki's
most beautiful
reception space*

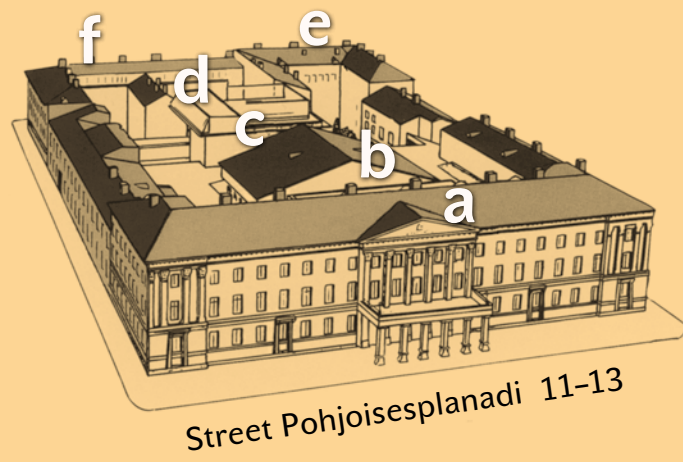


Merchant Bock's house was one of the most handsome buildings in town and, according to lore, when the house was still in Bock's possession and the town was under Swedish rule, the house's hospitality was enjoyed by the Swedish Kings Gustavus III and Gustavus IV Adolf.

Helsinki City Council met in the Bock House's main hall, the current Empire Room, from its first session, held in 1875, until 1912. The Hall features Albert Edelfelt's portrait of the City Council's first chairman, Leo Mechelin, who later also served as a senator.

The Lion Block

- a** Helsinki City Hall – former Hotel Seurahuone (Societetshuset)
- b** Banquet Hall
- c** City Council Chamber
- d** Empire Room
- e** Bock House – the Old Town Hall
- f** Burtz and Hellenius Houses



Street Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13

The Lion Block

Helsinki City Hall is located in the “Lion Block” of the Empire-style city centre. The southern side of the block is dominated by the City Hall’s Neoclassical façade. City offices, meeting rooms and reception halls are situated in former merchant houses on the Senate Square side. Offices and restaurants can be found on the streets encircling the block. Helsinki City Council meets in a new building in the centre of the block.

The oldest buildings of the Lion Block date from the 18th century. The block was given its current layout during the Russian era (1809–1917), following Johan Albrecht Ehrenström’s city plan from 1812. In the same year, Helsinki became the capital of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland. Berlin-born Carl Ludvig Engel (1778–1840) was commissioned to design many of the public buildings of the new capital. These buildings included the Seurahuone Hotel (Hotel Societetshuset), which today houses the City Hall. Until the early 20th century, the Lion Block, together with its neighbouring areas, was the centre of the city’s business and social life.

*The Lion Block
was the centre of
Helsinki’s
business and social
life until the early
20th century*

Throughout the first decades of the 19th century, the capital of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland was little else but a massive construction site. A number of public buildings went up for use by the country’s government and academia. As the city grew, it became necessary to give names to the new blocks and streets. Blocks were often named after flora and fauna. As a result, the Lion Block’s neighbouring blocks became the Elephant, the Rhinoceros and the Dromedary. The streets Aleksanterinkatu, Sofiakatu and Katariinankatu, which encircle

the block, received their names from members of the Russian Royal family.

Pohjoisesplanadi, to which the City Hall opens, forms an attractive esplanade complex together with Eteläesplanadi and the adjoining Esplanade Park.

