DIPARTIMENTO DEI VIGILI DEL FUOCO, DEL SOCCORSO PUBBLICO E DELLA DIFESA CIVILE

ISTITUTO SUPERIORE ANTINCENDI

THE ITALIAN FIRE COLLEGE OF NATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

by Direzione Centrale per la Formazione
of Corpo Nazionale dei Vigili del Fuoco

ENGLISH VERSION

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Introduction

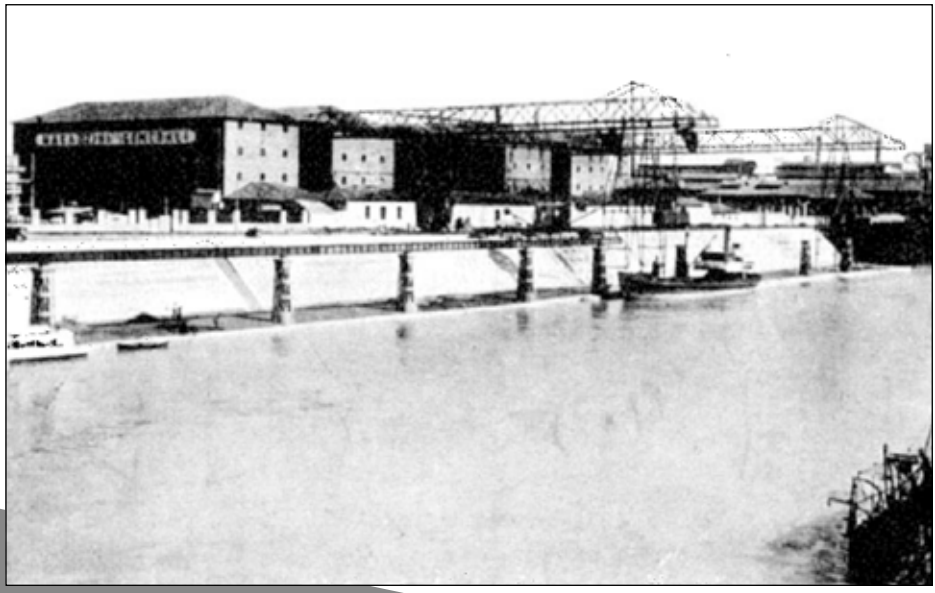
Between 1909 and 1912 the General Warehouses at the River Harbour were built on the left bank of the Tiber river, according to the project of the Roman architect Tullio Passarelli and financed by the Chamber of Commerce and Trades of Rome.
The origin of the Warehouses is strictly connected to the big development in the Ostiense area as the future industrial zone, thus offering Rome, for the first time, the opportunity to become also a productive city, besides keeping the traditional image of the eternal city and centre of religion.
That area was historically connected to the excellent trading waterway, the Tiber, and enjoyed a very good position, siding the river in the east and, in the west, bordering fertile agricultural land for the supply of fresh foodstuffs.
The General Warehouses provided to the commercial activities of Rome the possibility of very large profits since storage costs were determined not only with respect to the effective storage time and for the amount of space occupied or for the weight of goods, but also in respect of pre-determined tariffs, approved by relevant authorities and published annually so as to safeguard the interests of all the parties concerned in

the most impartial way.
The area occupied by the whole complex exceeded 23.000 square metres, including covered and open air deposit, in the shape of a fairly regular rectangle; one front of the establishment faced the left wharf of the new River Harbour of St. Paul, beyond the old iron railway bridge, while the opposite front faced via del Commercio.
On the Tiber wharf which faces buildings situated on the 130 metre long side, there are two extremely large piers, made by bold iron scaffoldings, over which

four aerial carry-bridges, with a capacity of three tons each, used to run during the activity years and through which it was possible to tranship goods from barges to deposits and viceversa. Railway tracks, connecting to the Rome Ostiense railway station, were laid on the same wharf so that railway carriages had access to any point of the complex. By these means goods arriving either by sea or by railway could be easily and economically transported without intermediate passages or transhipments.

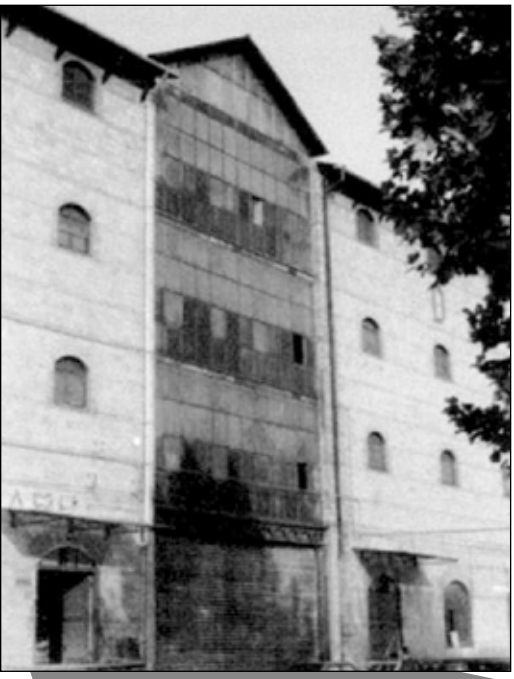
Original architecture of the complex

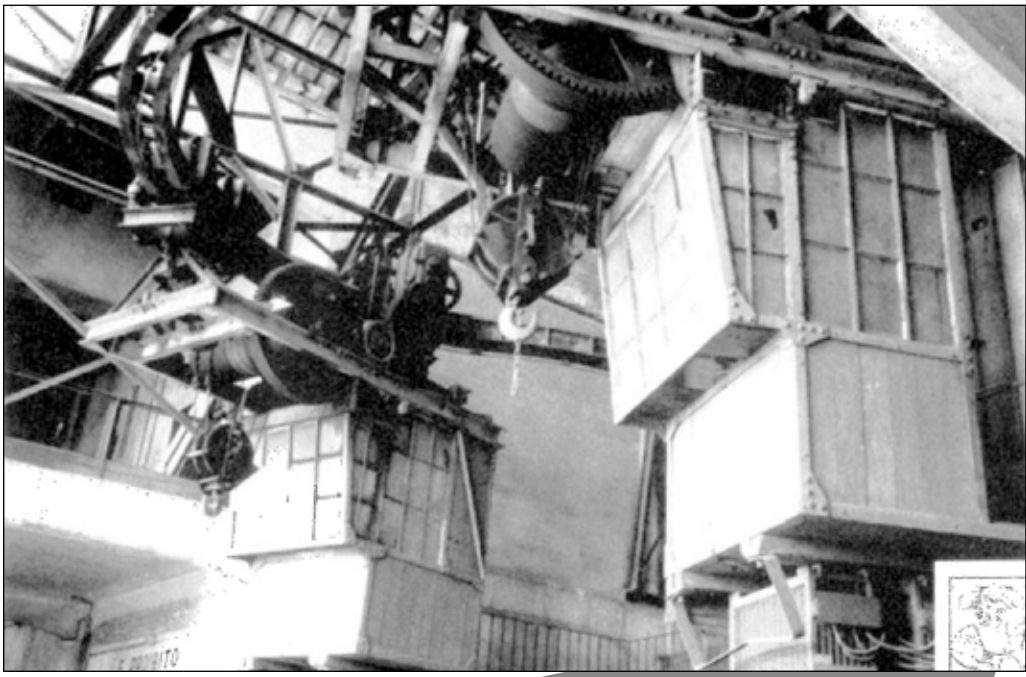
The General Warehouses complex is made of four large five-storey buildings and of two more buildings of two storeys each (to which additional three storeys could be added in case of necessity to make them equal to the four larger buildings) for the deposit of national and foreign goods, of six sheds for goods in transit, of a three-storey building which housed administrative offices. In addition to these, there are other smaller buildings among which two were used as barracks for Custom guards responsible for the daily and nightly surveillance of the complex.
The General Warehouses architecture designed by



Tullio Passarelli was of a severe and rigorous style, with tufa bricks on sight, with special reference to Northern European Romanesque style.
The plan provided spacious offices and warehouses with an excellent airing system to insure the best conservation conditions for the goods. Different goods were kept in different areas according to their specific qualities. Liquids and goods like cheese, which needed a constant temperature all year round, were stored in underground rooms. The ground and first floors, facing north to be dry and cool, were designed for water absorbing goods, like coffee, tea and spices.

The upper storeys were for bulky goods.
The work of storing and retrieving the goods from the upper storeys and from the underground rooms was carried out with a complex system of service elevators, sliding cranes, a pumping system for liquids, inclined planes and other technical equipment that allowed the warehouses to function.
To have an idea of the magnitude of the General Warehouses, both as a building structure and in all its technical aspects, we have to keep in mind that the whole enterprise moved a million hundredweights of goods a year, which was a huge quantity with respect to the possibilities offered by traditional structures.





The Birth Of the Italian Fire College

When in the '70s trading activities stopped, the General Warehouses complex at via del Commercio were purchased by the Italian Government for the Ministry of the Interior, which, from the mid '80s started reconverting the structure as "Fire College" for the National Fire and Rescue Service. The executive project was given to Studio Gigli & Associates of Rome that worked on the restoration from 1985 to 1997.

The work of restructuring the area and the buildings of the General Warehouses has been carried out keeping in mind the "reuse" of the spaces. The complex was changed for the new use destination, but

very special attention was paid to pre-existing parts, so that the original structures were not changed. The Warehouses are one of the first works in reinforced concrete in the Capital and represent an important document of the first experiments with new building materials in XX cent. Industrial architecture.
The Fire College at via del Commercio is the physical location where the National Fire and Rescue Service becomes a reference point for its personnel and external organizations in the field of safety, fire and accident prevention and protection. The Fire College, in particular, focuses on the training of FRS officers and their professional and technical

Conference
"The Code Book Project"

development. It organizes events and seminars on safety matters; provides courses for national Professional Associations of Engineers, Architects and Land Surveyors on fire safety and prevention; engages in study and research activities in partnership with national and international standardization bodies; provides master courses on intervention techniques in natural, industrial and civil emergencies in cooperation with "La Sapienza" University (Faculty of Engineering) and the Civil Protection Department. Since 1994 until now the in-home educational

activity, as well as the cooperation with universities and colleges, has improved the cultural level of Fire Service junior and senior officers, enhancing the image of the Italian National Fire and Rescue Service as a body that besides organising rescue activities and releasing technical standards for fire prevention, it is also able to provide valuable contribution to the R&D sector for the whole community.

Among the many activities worth mentioning in this presentation, the cooperation with the University of Rome "La Sapienza" was the one which opened the

Fire College to the academic world and allowed the institution of the first undergraduate course in safety engineering and civil protection. This cooperation enabled many FRS officers to reach the goal of a bachelor or master degree in engineering, not only improving their technical background, but also giving some of them the opportunity to teach some university courses.

Besides the cooperation with "La Sapienza" University, many other educational agreements were concluded over the years, ensuring high-level technical training for the FRS personnel responsible for rescue organisation and fire prevention activities. Research cooperation also involved the European Union programmes. Since the year 2000, the Fire College has been the venue for events concerning research and development projects financed by the European Commission or receiving EU funding aimed at enhancing emergency cooperation.

The Fire College complex covers a surface of over 23 000 square metres, for over 110000 cubic metres of restructured buildings and it is within easy reach from any area of the city. Its premises include four main buildings intended for students' dorms and classrooms, as well as two smaller buildings designed

to house, respectively, the Occupational Health Service offices and a museum for art and historical exhibitions. After a day of teaching and learning activities students and teaching staff can enjoy several proposals for relaxation in a city full of history and artistic heritage.

Archaeological excavation campaigns

Between 1996 and 1998 the Rome Archaeological Authority carried out excavation campaigns in the area, uncovering a river "villa" of Imperial times (I-II cent. A.D.) deprived of all its furnishings and then abandoned in II cent. A.D. During the 1998 excavation campaign a pagan necropolis (III cent. A.D.) came to the light with "cappuccina" types tomb covers, established in the Roman residential area after one of the river floodings (as revealed by the presence of sandy clay). The presence of these findings is a rare and unique example of coexistence between classical archaeology and industrial archaeology.

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