

ADDRESS TO BE DELIVERED BY GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION OF THE JOHN ERICSSON ROOM AND THE UNVEILING OF THE TERCENTENARY STATE PLAQUES IN THE AMERICAN SWEDISH HISTORICAL MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 24, 1939, AT 2:30.

It is a very great pleasure to me to be here today and to take part in this ceremony. In these troubled times when so much of our attention is given to the preservation from destruction of what man has already achieved, it is pleasant to reflect upon the life of a great personality like John Ericsson who devoted himself to the creation of new gifts to the human race.

John Ericsson belongs to the beginning of the machine age and, in fact, was one of the great spirits who gave birth to this age. His labors extended down almost to our present generation and there are men living today who knew him, yet he began his first job about 1815. Forced by family misfortune to face the stern realities of life at the age of twelve he worked as a surveyor on the construction of one of the great canals of Sweden and we are told that at this time he was so small he had to climb up on a stool which was carried with him in the field, when he looked through the transit. He subsequently entered the Army but his creative genius soon asserted itself and, with the help of friends, he left his native Sweden and went to London where he exhibited his caloric engine. This was one of the first of that amazing series of inventions which we owe to his genius. Others followed

followed in quick succession. He was the first to introduce the principle of artificial draft in boilers and he also invented the condenser and constructed high pressure boilers which foreshadowed the developments of later years. The steam fire engine was another of his inventions. This machine was so far in advance of the age that few believed in its practicability, even after Ericsson had demonstrated its unusual power and performance. It is interesting to note that the greatest objection to the fire engine by the experts was the fact that it would require such an immense amount of water that it would be useless as there was no lake available in the center of the city.

It is unnecessary for me here to relate his well-known experiments with the locomotive and how his great locomotive, built in 1829, competed with that of Stephenson. It would take me too long even to mention the many inventions Ericsson developed during his stay in England. Had his life ended at the time he left that country he would have died a very great man but his work had only begun.

In November 1839, nearly one hundred years ago, Ericsson left England on the steamer "Great Western" to come to this country where he remained until his death fifty years later. His original intention was not to become a permanent resident of this country but he soon became so engrossed in a wide variety of activities here that he not only made this country his permanent home but became

an American citizen and made it his second fatherland.

Ericsson's main purpose in coming here was to introduce his screw-propeller to American waters. This was of course the greatest of all the developments that we associate with his name. Other men have claimed this invention as their own and he was by no means the first to think of such a contrivance for the propelling of vessels, but he was the first to make it a practical reality. He built a steamboat named after himself which plied the Delaware on whose banks we are meeting today. Another of the famous ships which he constructed was the "Princeton", the most remarkable war vessel that had ever been constructed up to that time, but the most famous of all, of course, was the "Monitor". It is unnecessary for me to recount the story of that ship with which you are all familiar. Its revolutionary effect on the Navies of the world was tersely expressed by the "London Times" which, after the battle of Hampton Roads said, "England has no Navy".

John Ericsson died on March 8, 1889. His remains were taken to Sweden on the cruiser "Brooklyn" by orders of the United States Government. The peculiar genius of Ericsson not only to conceive ideas but to put them to practical use is shown by the fact that the Acting Secretary of the Navy in ordering this tribute, was able to write in 1890 that "Of the innumerable applications of mechanical art that are

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the fruit of his genius, many so long ago passed into general use that they have ceased to be popularly associated with his name".

We are proud that many, if not most of Ericsson's great gifts to the progress of the industrial world, were first recognized and used on a large scale in this country and that from here they spread over the world. America has in many and diverse ways paid tribute to his greatness. Some years ago a Statue was erected to his honor in Battery Park, New York. In 1926 a monument was placed in Washington on one of the drives along the Potomac and dedicated by his Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Sweden and the President of the United States, and in 1933 a great fountain was built to his honor in this city. These and the Room that we dedicate today will be a lasting memorial to his achievements and an inspiration to future generations.

We pay tribute to a great American and a great Swede and we are happy that it is with Sweden that we share his memory. I can think of no better way to express my own feelings than to quote the remarks of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Sweden at the dedication of the Washington memorial when he said of Ericsson:

"He is both a promise and a fulfillment. In him are represented the common aims and aspirations of two free peoples; imbued alike with democratic ideals".

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When I had an opportunity to inform the President that I was coming here today to be present at the dedication of this room, he expressed his very real interest and authorized me to say to you that your action was in his opinion another fitting recognition of the great achievements of Ericsson.