

Drains

In Copenhagen, as in all other cities, drains were open systems, i.e. either drainage ditches or paved gutters following the road system and emptying into the harbour.

The connection to this from the property in each case was via a gutter through the gate to the courtyard. Deeper, closed drains from the property were only possible where the street sewer was at a deeper level – and this was rarely the case.

This open drainage system was gradually replaced with a buried network of sewer pipes during the second half of the 1800s. However, this still emptied directly into the harbour, which, due to the rate of growth experienced by the city, was unsatisfactory in the long term.

In the closing decade of the century, therefore, work began on a new sewer network which was connected to the old one. It was sited deeper than the one it replaced and emptied a good distance out into the Øresund.

Kitchens

The Copenhagen Building Act of 1856 required plumbing from the kitchen sink to be made from stone or metal, to be open topped and to reach to the roof. This meant (naturally enough) that drains were simply connected to the downcomer, which was usually made of zinc.

Initially, the drain from the kitchen sink was connected directly to the downpipe, but it later became a requirement (in the Building Act of 1889) for this drain to be fitted with a water trap.

The statutory requirement had a sanitary purpose in that the seal on the water trap prevented sewer gas from entering the home. The simplest water trap was nothing more than a bent lead pipe, though as a rule they were cast iron.

WCs

Flushing toilets first came into use with the establishment of the new underground sewer network.

Effluent was fed away in cast iron pipes located inside the building and the system did not suffer the same seasonal problems as those located externally.

Bathrooms

Right up to the 1930s, very little room was set aside for bathing options in multi-storey residential construction. Thereafter, such options became more commonplace in the form of showers or bath tubs, usually in conjunction with the WC.

Note to Illustration 2. "Plumbing systems" in the Gallery:

The exceedingly simple plumbing from the 1920s onwards is shown in the top left illustration. The often identical layout of bathrooms led to the appearance of standardised plumbing in the 1940s. It consisted of fewer components and was thus quicker to install. It also took up less space and could be partially embedded into the floor. The other illustrations show three of the commonly used types. (Byggebogen, Kjærgaard (Ed.) 1948 et seq.)

