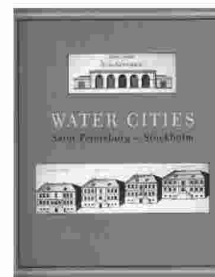


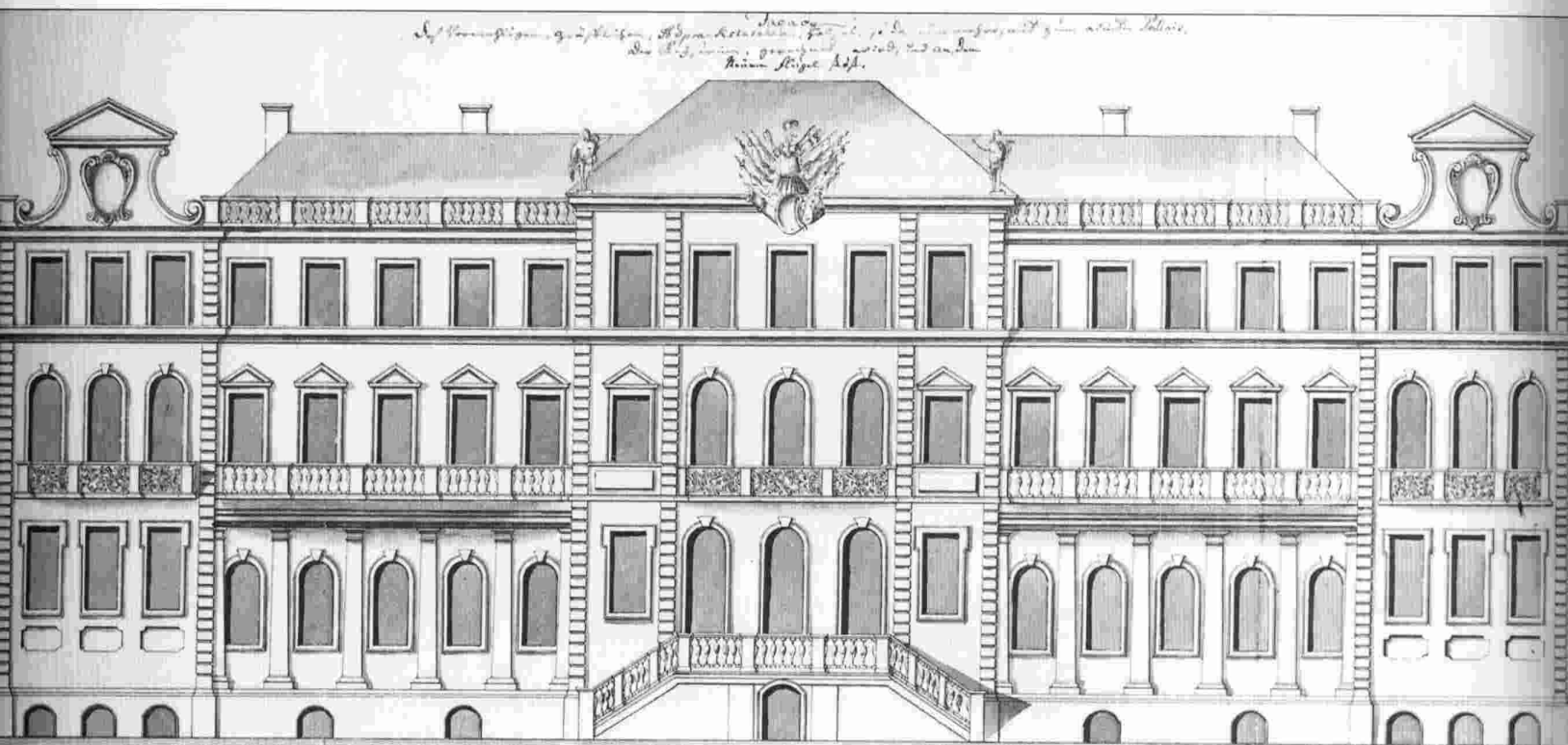
The Baroque City of Empress Elizabeth

Ekaterina Y. Baryshnikova



The year 1753 marks the middle of the reign of Peter I's daughter, Elizabeth. This date is notable in the life of St. Petersburg. Fifty years had passed since the day of its foundation. For a city, half a century is not a long time, especially not for the capital of the huge Russian Empire; but what astonishing changes had taken place on the banks of the Neva in that time! An eye-witness who had climbed up the newly built bell-tower of the Peter and Paul Cathedral in the early days noted that what he saw was not so much a city as "a landscape with many settlements". Fifty years later a sea of roofs was what met one's eyes: a magnificent array of houses and palaces standing close together on the embankments of the Neva, straight boulevards, and a strict network of regular streets. The image of the city at that time is beautifully reflected in the big Makhaev City Plan, which was supplemented by an album of etchings, documenting the city in detailed views. These were mainly panoramas of the Neva and the buildings on its banks. They show clearly the scale of Peter the Great's plans and their further development by generations of talented architects.

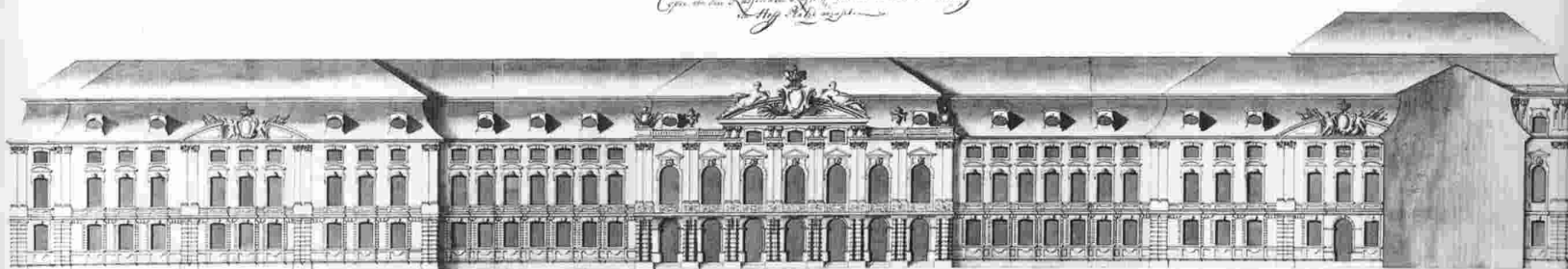
Despite all the documentary detail of Makhaev's engravings and sketches, which may be explained by the fact that the creator used a *camera-obscura*, they nonetheless give an artist's view of the city. Drawings collected by Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholtz and housed in the National Museum in Stockholm show in full detail the architectural decorations of the same houses. There are three main sources from which to draw information about the architecture of the city from the mid-18th century: Makhaev's engravings and sketches, the drawings in the National Museum in Stockholm, and the Axonometric plan of St. Petersburg, created by Saint-Hilaire, Kvasov, and Sokolov, and housed in the Russian State Archives of the Navy in St. Petersburg. Together they make up a documentary portrait of the city in the Baroque era, a city which has long since



85. *Apraksin's Palace by the Neva, façade*
Mid-18th century.

disappeared. Only a few buildings from this period have survived to the present day. The drawings from Bergholtz's collection depict St. Petersburg at the end of the 1730s. The labour-intensive and complicated work of measuring the city's buildings was undoubtedly undertaken by the Commission for the Construction of St. Petersburg, which was established after the devastating fires in 1737. They supplemented the precise geodesic plan of the city compiled under the direction of I. von Sieghelm. This plan shows not only the allocation of land sites, but also the configuration of all buildings, while a supplement gives the surnames of the owners. A small sketch kept in the Manuscripts Section of the Academy of Sciences suggests that there were plans to translate the orthogonal plan of the city into a three-dimensional projection. To create a geometrically precise view of the buildings, it was vital to have the measurements of the façades in full detail, as well as the ground plans.

*Exemplum in Aegypto Regibus, Nihilis Alia in Aegypto
in Aegypto Regibus*



of the city, house after house. But since all these drawings left St. Petersburg in 1746, to create the Jubilee Plan and Album in 1753, work had to start from scratch, this time from the sketches by Makhaev.

Mikhail Makhaev made his sketches in four series. The most important is undoubtedly the engraved album containing the principal panoramas (vedutas) of St. Petersburg, which was attached as a supplement to the 1753 city plan, compiled by an associate of the Geographical Department, I. Truscott. The plan and the panoramas were engraved under the supervision of I. Sokolov by a large group of qualified engravers at the Academy of Fine Arts, among them G. Kachalov, A. Grekov, I. Eliakov, and E. Vinogradov. A significant number of Makhaev's sketches were not engraved but have been partly preserved at the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg and the Museum of Russian Architecture in Moscow. They make up the second series.

The Chancellor, Count Bestuzhev-Riumin, ordered from Makhaev a further series of panoramas of his estate on Stone Island. Lastly, engravings published in 1761, and showing the imperial country residences at Peterhof, Oranienbaum, and Tsarskoye Selo, are a continuation of the 1753 album. In this way, Makhaev portrayed all the splendours of St. Petersburg in the Baroque era. The engravings became very popular and were partly reprinted in Paris. They were also reproduced in oil paintings which decorated the halls of the imperial

86. Third Winter Palace, façade

Mid-18th century.

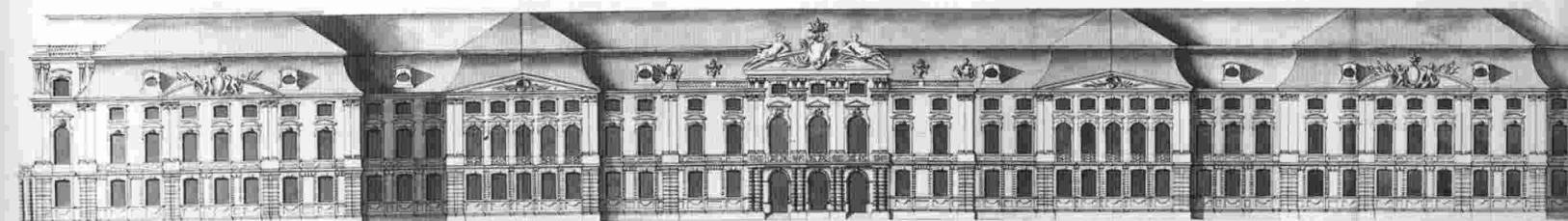
Indian ink and water-colour; 295 × 1430
(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 113)

87. Third Winter Palace, façade

Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 335 × 1400
(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 114)

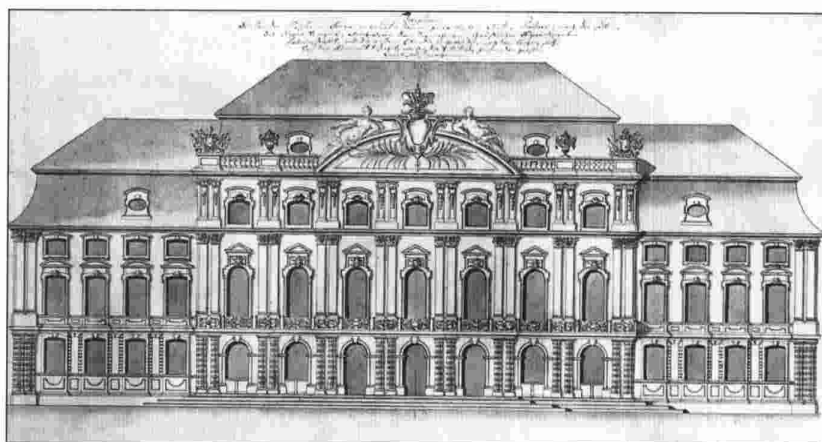
*Exemplum in Aegypto Regibus, Nihilis Alia in Aegypto
in Aegypto Regibus*



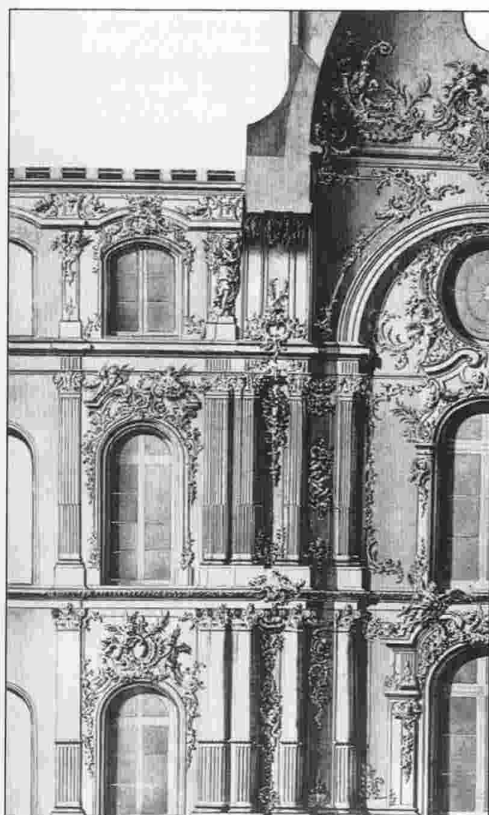
88. *New wing of the third Winter Palace, façade*
Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 250 × 500

(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 9030)



89. *F. Rastrelli's draft for the chapel in the Winter Palace, detail.*



palaces and can now be found in the Hermitage and in the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. Makhaev's plan presents a three-dimensional depiction of the major buildings.

In 1764, at almost the same time as the creation of the new Commission for the Stone Construction of St. Petersburg and Moscow, the French mathematician, Pierre de Saint-Hilaire proposed that an axonometric plan of St. Petersburg should be made, similar to the one he had just completed of The Hague. A working party was formed and equipped with "measuring chains" and other simple instruments. The team was directed by the architectural assistant, Ivan Sokolov, and the architectural fellow, Gorikhvostov. The chief architect of the Commission for Stone Construction, Aleksei Kvasov, was responsible not only for general supervision, but also for detailed administration of the work. However, this grand undertaking came to a sad end. After the premature death of A. Kvasov in 1772, work came to a halt, and the completed parts of the perspectives, which portrayed the city in the most minute detail, down to wells and dog kennels, were placed in the archives, where they remained in oblivion until the 1930s.

As early as the 1750s, the uniform appearance of the city was striking. All the buildings displayed the Baroque order which had developed in the first half of the 18th century. Another fifty to seventy-five years later, the same houses looked completely different, now displaying the image of advanced Neo-Classicism. This situation requires an explanation.

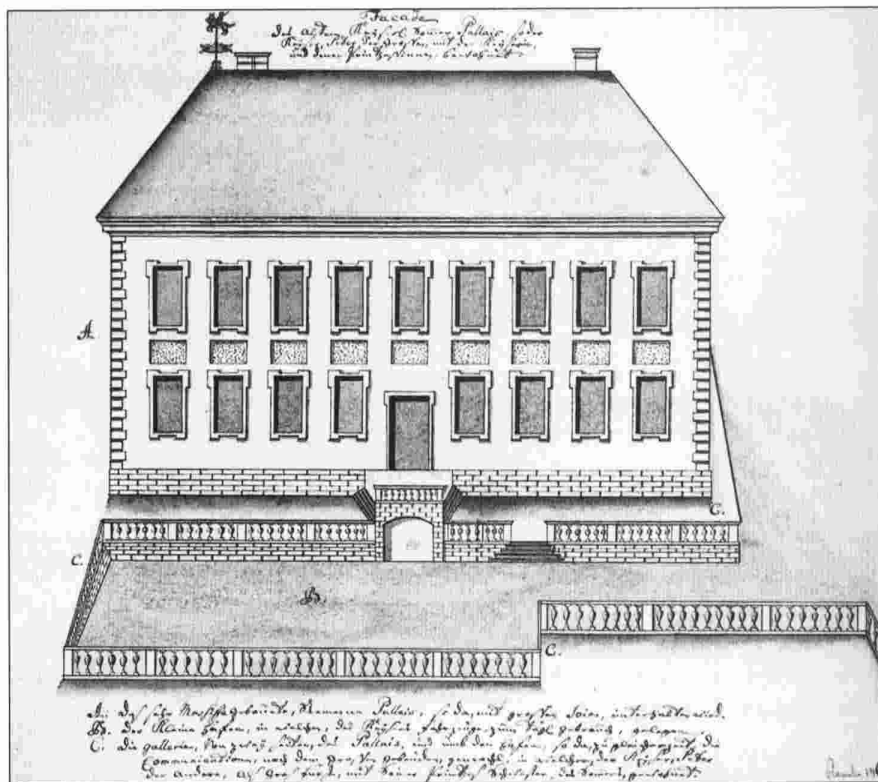
There were no deposits of soft stone, sandstone, or limestone suitable for building near St. Petersburg, while the plentiful supplies of granite discovered in the environs proved unusually hard to work with. Consequently, this was eventually used only for the plinths of houses and the majestic embankments. All the other buildings, including palaces and the Fortress, were built of brick. Unlike Dutch brick, Petersburg brick had to have a covering of stucco plaster, due to the composition of clay. To balance the long, dark winters and the scarcity of sunlight, the stucco mouldings were painted in bright colours. This was made possible by the discovery of deposits of a natural mineral dye (gold ochre), which was used to paint most of the city buildings. The columns, casings, jambs,

90. *First Summer Palace, façade*

Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 260 × 420

(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 146)



lintels, and other architectural details were rendered in whitewash. Occasionally other colours were used, but these were too expensive and rarely encountered. Such bright contrasts in colour delighted the native observer and made a strong impact on visiting foreigners.

The lime stucco mouldings did not survive long in the harsh and rainy climate and soon began to crack and fall off. Consequently, the façades required repairing every year. This enabled the house owners to follow swiftly changing architectural fashions, changing the style of the façades by varying the stucco plaster and the decorative elements. When Baroque seemed outdated and even ridiculous to subsequent generations, at small expense, the house owners could change the façades to Classical.

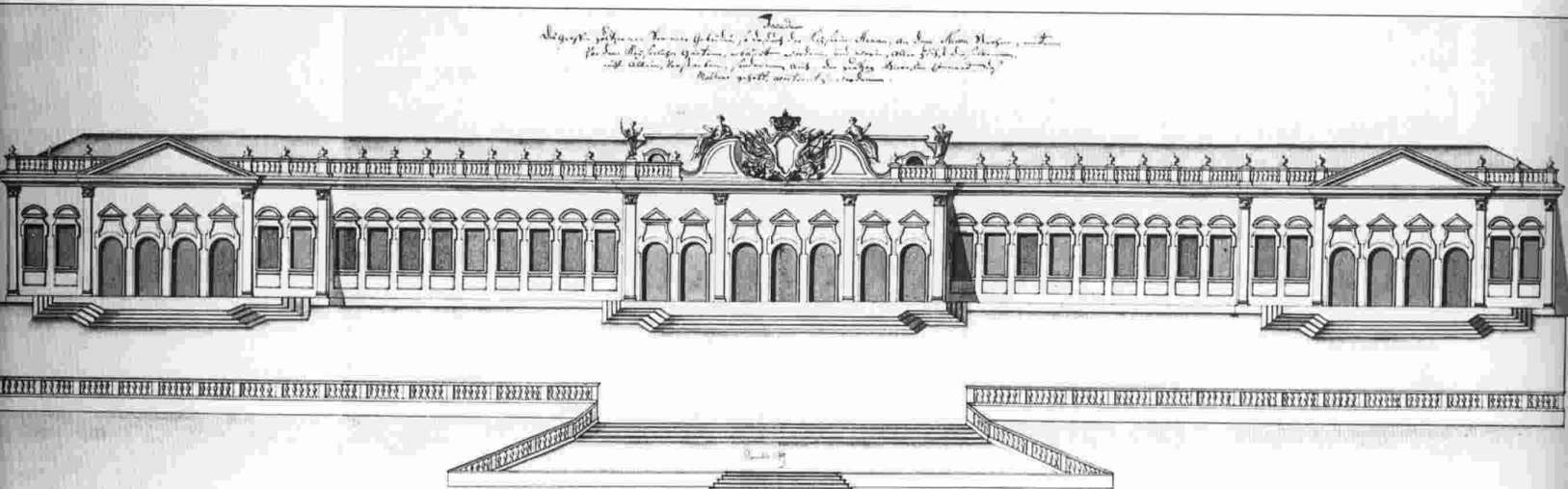
The accession of Peter I's daughter Elizabeth raised hopes in the Russian aristocracy that their time had come at last. The difficult years of German domination under Anna Ioannovna belonged to the past. After long years of humiliation and even poverty, "Blithe Elizaveta" was determined to turn every day into a holiday. A joyful, exultant late Baroque appeared first in the palace chambers and then all over St. Petersburg, featuring a plethora of sculptures and flowery architectural details.

The prominent architects of the 1730s – Peter Eropkin, Ivan Korobov, and Mikhail Zemtsov – heralded the architectural forms of mid-18th century mature Baroque in their later works. Eropkin designed the palace of Prince Cher-

91. *Portrait of Francesco Rastrelli.*

Photo: Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.



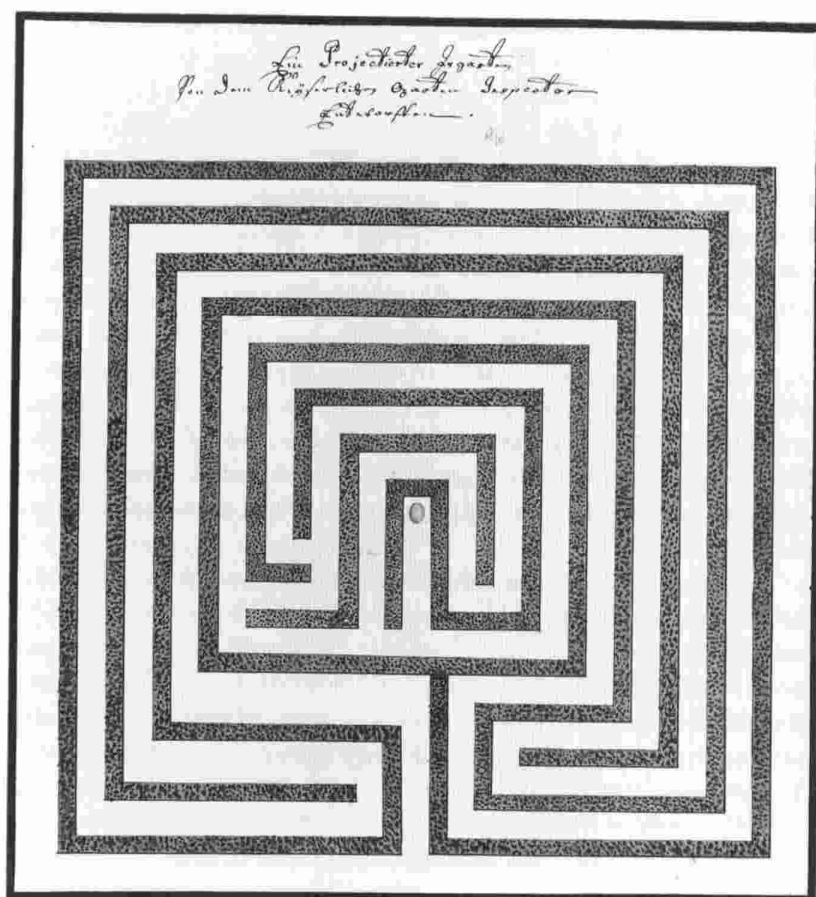


92. Anna Ioannovna's wooden palace in the Summer Gardens, façade

Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 260 × 810

(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 149)

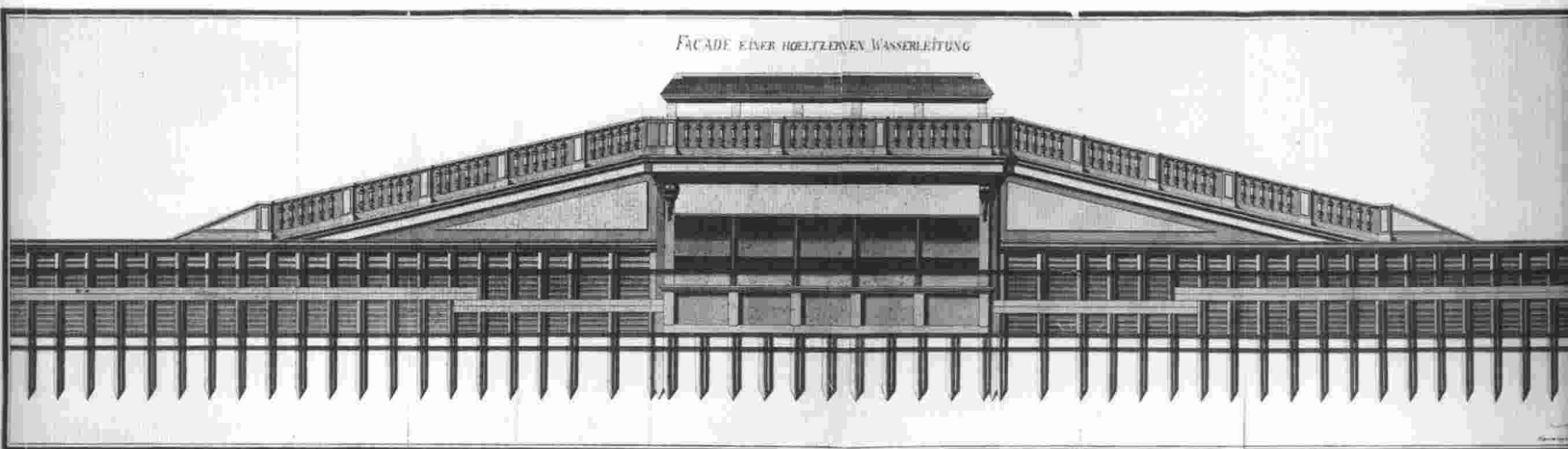


93. Labyrinth in the Summer Gardens, plan

Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 230 × 205

(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 440)



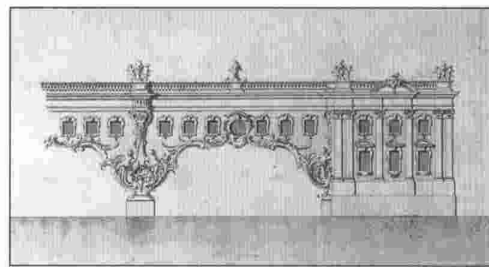
kassky on the Palace Embankment, Korobov the large house of General Balk on Millionnaya Street, and Zemtsov the Anichkov Palace on the Fontanka. Unlike their earlier works, these buildings stand out sharply among older buildings due to their grand scale, the scope of their complex layout, the richness of the architectural adornments, and their magnificent façades. Yet, the Russian patriot Eropkin was executed in 1740, while Korobov hurriedly left for Moscow, following the coup of Cabinet Minister Volynsky, and died there in 1746. Zemtsov died in 1743.

Only one architect in this period succeeded in fully satisfying the tastes of the new Empress: Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, Senior Court Architect from 1738. Rastrelli, who instantly understood his client's wishes and invariably realized them in increasingly magnificent designs and blueprints, was given the honour of receiving his orders from the Empress herself. Catherine II noted in her diary that Elizabeth could not leave a room without ordering something in it to be completely redone. Building came to resemble the labours of Penelope. Catherine II noted, not without malice, that the palace at Tsarskoye Selo was refurbished seven times.

In accordance with her father's will, Elizabeth demanded that the main façades of the residences and palaces should face the Neva or the canals. The example of the Anichkov Palace is especially indicative. The principal façade of the palace is, unexpectedly for the present-day observer, turned towards the Fontanka, while the lesser side of the building looks onto the main artery, Nevsky Prospekt. Such were the rules at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, and even in 1753, Rastrelli followed the same old rules while reconstructing the palace of Baron Stroganov, albeit in a less accentuated form. The columned portico faces the embankment of the Moika under an ornamented pediment, and behind it is the large ballroom, which traditionally marked the main façade. At the same time, the longer façade on Nevsky Prospekt represents the highest achievement of the new dynamic and plastic Russian Baroque; and thus, in different ways, both façades are impressive and elegant.

113. *Aqueduct, probably near St. Petersburg, section*
Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 460 × 1330
(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 750)



114. *Water Tower and Aqueduct*

F. Rastrelli, 1748.

Wash-drawing in Indian ink; 260 × 450
(SHMP, I-A-5023-i)

A tower with machinery for pumping water to the fountains of the Summer Gardens was built on the bank of the Fontanka in the 18th century. The water reached the fountains through an aqueduct.



115. *Panorama of the Neva upstream from the Admiralty and the Academy of Sciences*

E. Vinogradov, after a drawing by M. Makhaev, 1753.

Engraving; 500 × 1445
(SHMP, I-A-1075-g)

On the left, on Vasilyevsky Island, is the building of the Academy of Sciences, and in the distance,

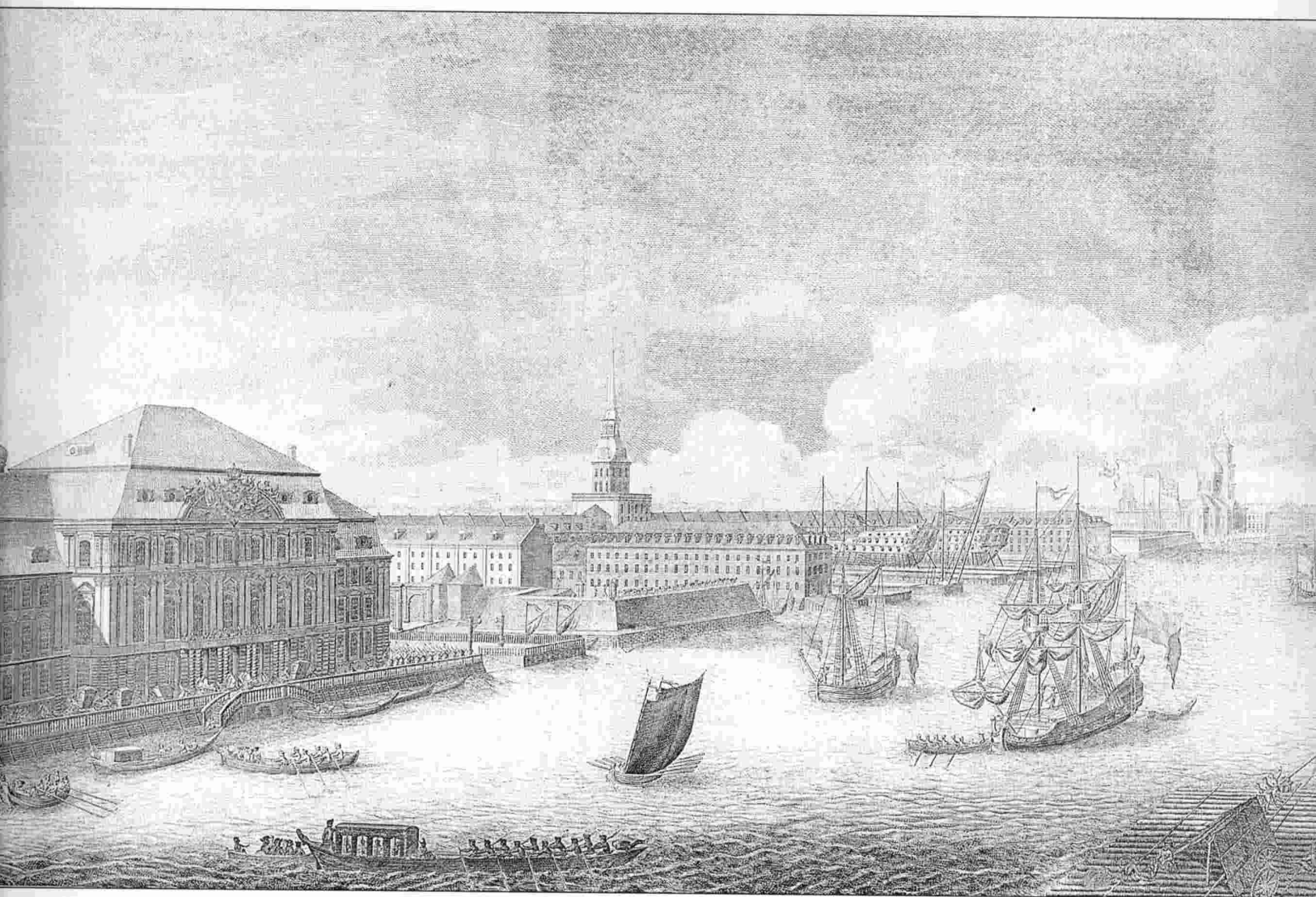
St. Petersburg developed rapidly in the time of Elizabeth, as can be seen by comparing the Sieghelm Plan of 1738 with the Makhaev Plan of 1753. The city layout has acquired finality and symmetry. Whereas the 1738 plan shows extensive land “burned by fire”, marshes located very close to the centre of the city, and individual buildings and whole estates scattered at random, in the Makhaev Plan all this has been replaced by an emphatically strict formality.

Houses had already been built on the Neva embankments, while the estates of the aristocracy were spread out along the Moika and particularly the Fontanka. Moreover, the estates on the north bank of the Fontanka were huge and had large parks with many pavilions and other buildings. It is sufficient



to list some of the owners. At the source of the Fontanka stood the Imperial Summer Palace of Peter the Great, with its gardens. Behind it was the Summer Palace of Empress Elizabeth, built by Rastrelli on the site of what is now the Mikhailovsky Castle. Its park stretches to Italian Street, where an extensive labyrinth of trimmed hedges marks the boundary. After this we find the Anichkov Palace, which belonged to the uncrowned husband of Empress Elizabeth, Count A. Razumovsky; the estate of the Imperial Vice-Chancellor Count M. Vorontsov, also built by Rastrelli; the estate of Count Apraksin; and many others, including the property of Prince Yusupov, which has been preserved to the present day.

the Peter and Paul Fortress. In time the fortress was transformed into a political prison, a Russian Bastille. The bell-tower of the Peter and Paul Cathedral, built by D. Trezzini in 1712–33, rises above the walls of the fortress. The Cathedral contains the burial vault of the Russian emperors. On the right is the palace built for Empress Anna Ioannovna by F. Rastrelli in 1732–34.

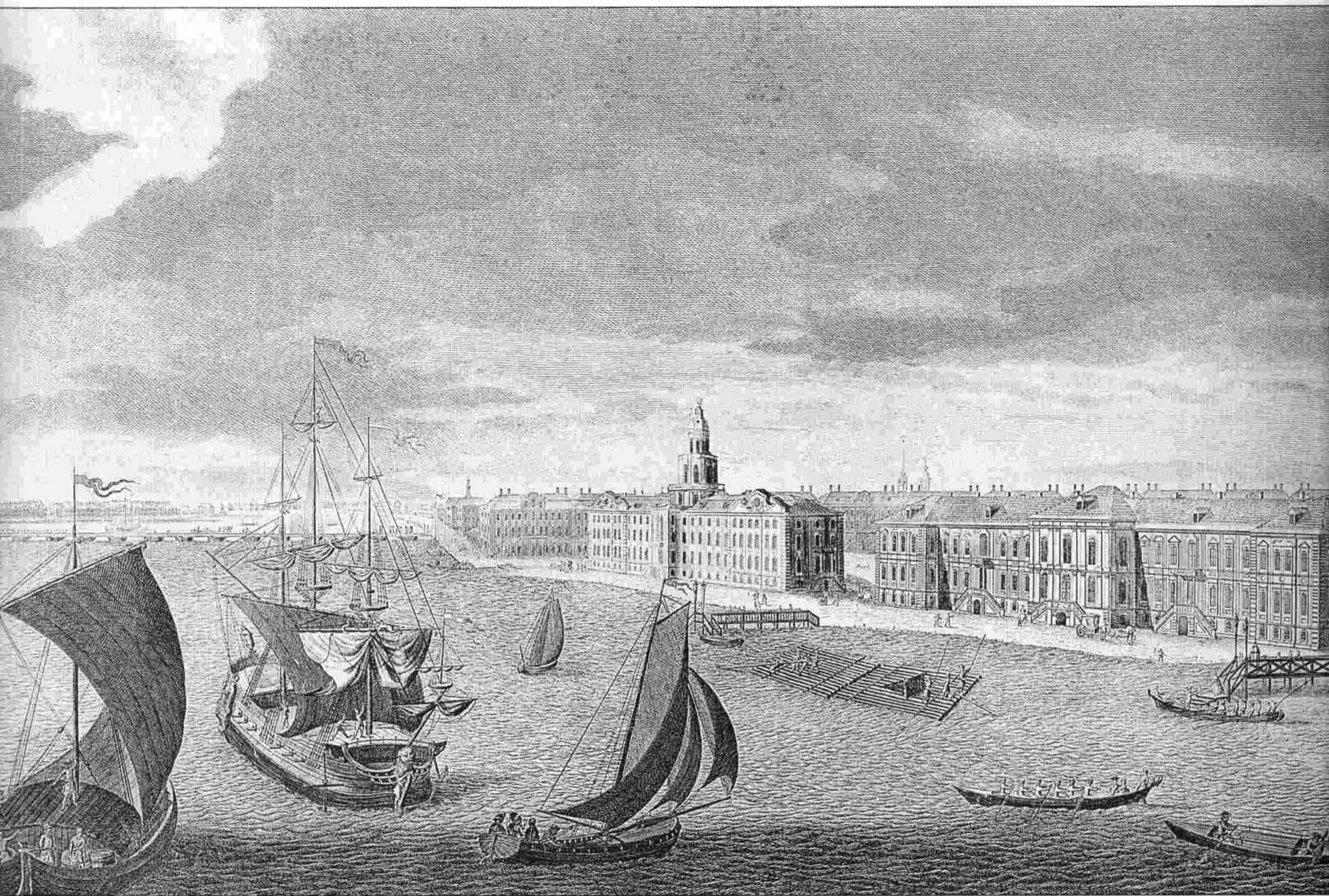


116. *Panorama of the Neva downstream from the Winter Palace and the Academy of Sciences*
G. Kachalov, after a drawing by M. Makhaev, 1753.
Engraving; 500 × 1415
(SHMP, I-A-1079-g)

On the left is the Admiralty, the shipyard and the fortress, begun in 1704 according to a design by Peter I. In the 1730s, the Admiralty was rebuilt in stone by I. Korobov. In the distance is St. Isaac's

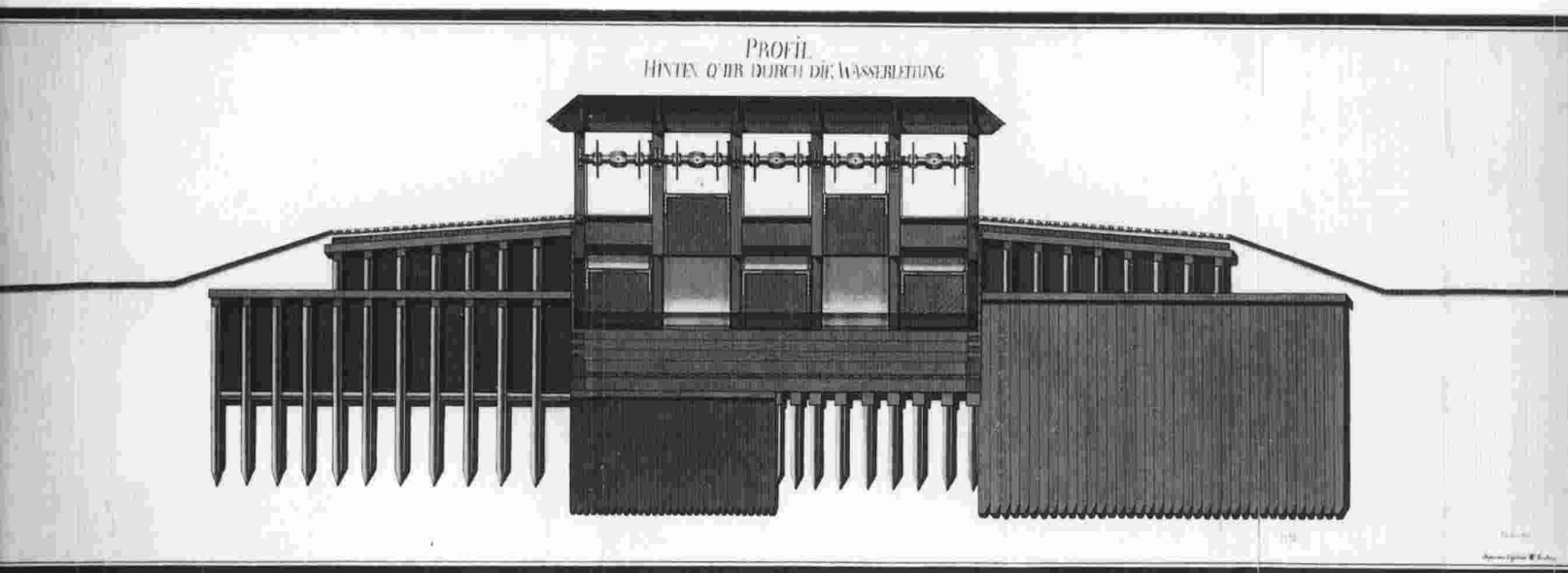
On the south bank of the Fontanka, which formed the city boundary, the estates were less extensive; and although they belonged to grandees, such as Count Sheremetev or the Tsaritsa Catherine I herself (the Italian Palace and Park), the houses were generally simpler, while the gardens surrounding them had an unornamented strict layout. There were many such estates, stretching almost to the coast and ending with Peter the Great's Podzorny (Observation) Palace, which was on a small island at the mouth of the Fontanka.

Mid-18th century city planners, building on the already established network of streets, tried to straighten them out. This can be seen especially on the St. Petersburg side. Special significance was attached to regulating the



regimental quarters. They were founded under Peter the Great when a number of streets were laid out equidistant and emerging from Liteiny Prospekt. It was this layout, distinct from the layout of otherwise identical buildings on Vasilyevsky Island, which served as the model for other regimental quarters. The difference was that the size of the plots on Vasilyevsky Island depended on the prosperity of each given owner. Moreover, as well as a corpus of living quarters, each estate had extensive administration and ancillary buildings. The houses on the “lines” of Vasilyevsky Island either followed the principle of “a single façade” or had small spaces taken up by entrance gates leading into the courtyards.

Church, built in 1717–27 and taken down in the mid-18th century.) On the right, on the shore of Vasilyevsky Island, are the two buildings of the Academy of Sciences. The first was begun for the Tsaritsa Praskovia, the second, with a tower, is the *Kunstammer* (1718–34, G. Mattarnovi and others). This was the first museum of natural sciences in Russia. The observatory and library of the Academy of Sciences were also located here.



117. *Aquaduct, probably near St. Petersburg, façade*

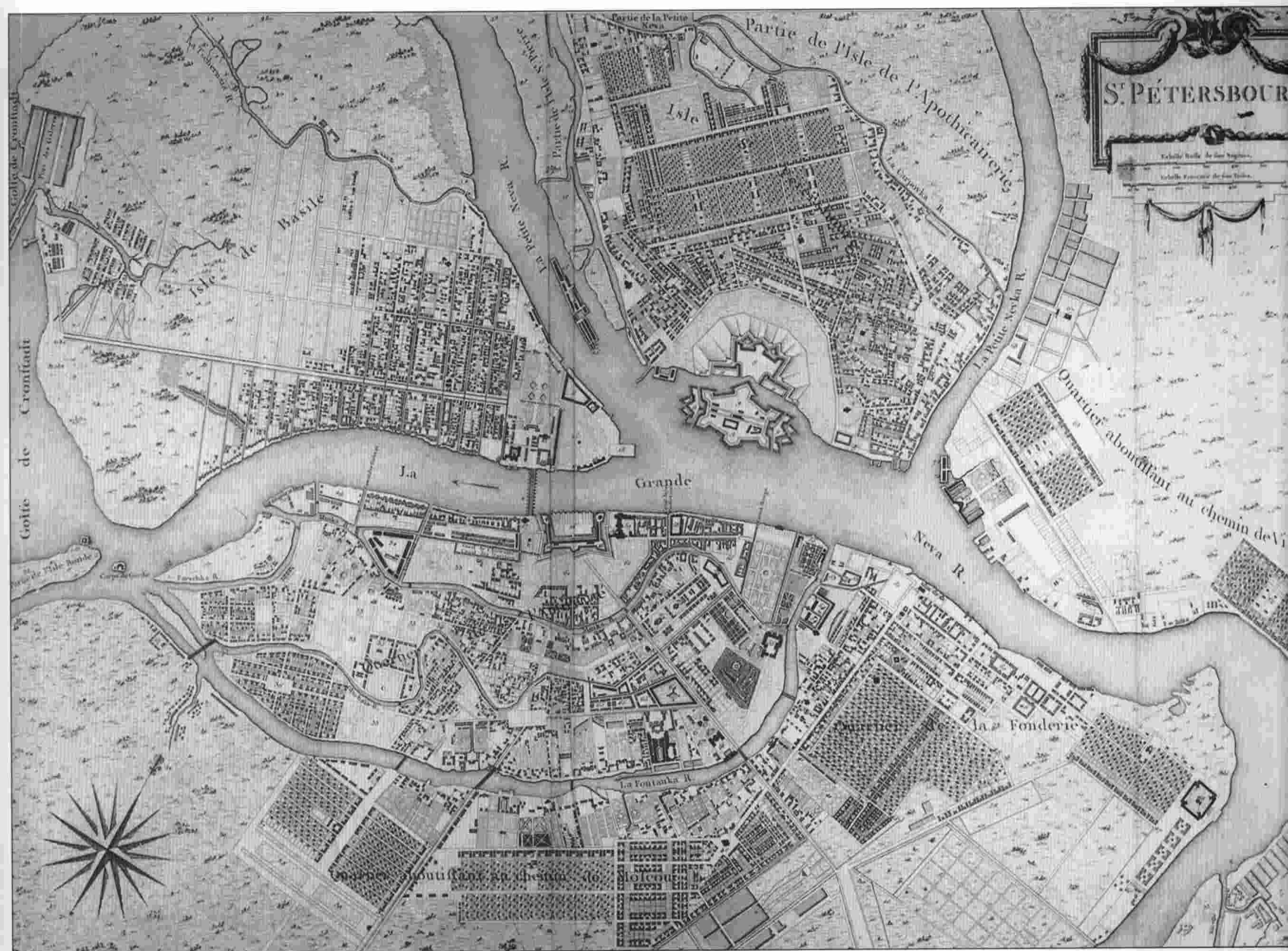
Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 470 × 1690
(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 751)

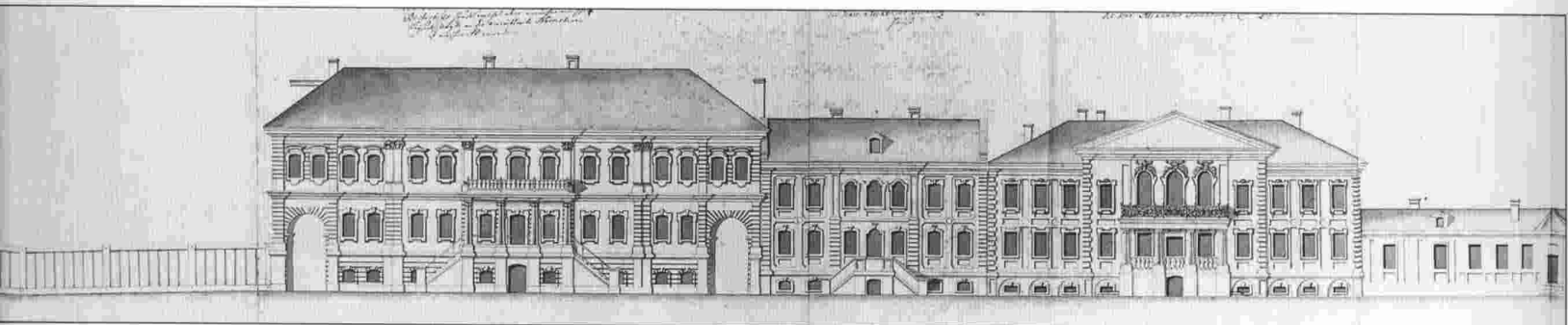
A different approach can be seen in the regimental areas. The soldiers' houses (effectively huts) were small, had plots of land for kitchen gardens, and were laid out in a chequered pattern which enabled the principle of uniform military organization to be maintained. The houses ran in two rows, and therefore the gap between the intersecting streets – that is, the width of the block – was very narrow. This was partly indicated in the 1738 plan, but the final layout was not executed until 1753. There were quite a number of such regimental sites, belonging to the Preobrazhensky, Semenovskiy, Izmailovskiy, Ingermanlandskiy Regiments, the officers of the military hospital, and some others. These “slobodies” encircled the city from the south, east, and north, and in the majority of cases their rational layout has been preserved to this day.

St. Petersburg continued to be a city on water. Many warehouses were situated on the smallest islands, such as the Penkov Wharf or the Mytny Courtyard with their stone granaries surrounded by water. Since Peter's time, the main medical institution, the Navy and Army Hospital, had been located on long narrow dykes piled up in the shallows of the Neva near the Viborg Side. Next to it, also on artificially created islets, were two breweries.

It is worth noting that the 1753 plan of St. Petersburg is the last to show such a number of waterways, canals, and islands. Whereas much energy was devoted to draining low-lying marshland by the digging of a large number of canals in the first half of the 18th century, the process was reversed in the second half of the century. A number of narrow canals, which had silted up, were filled in by transferring great masses of refuse. However, this did not change the perception of a city linked first and foremost with the element of water. The flat banks and sheer width of the Great Neva gave the impression of a boundless expanse, in which the spires of the bell-towers resembled the masts of sailing ships. When the Peter



118. Map of St. Petersburg, published in 1753 and based on drawings by M. Makhaev.



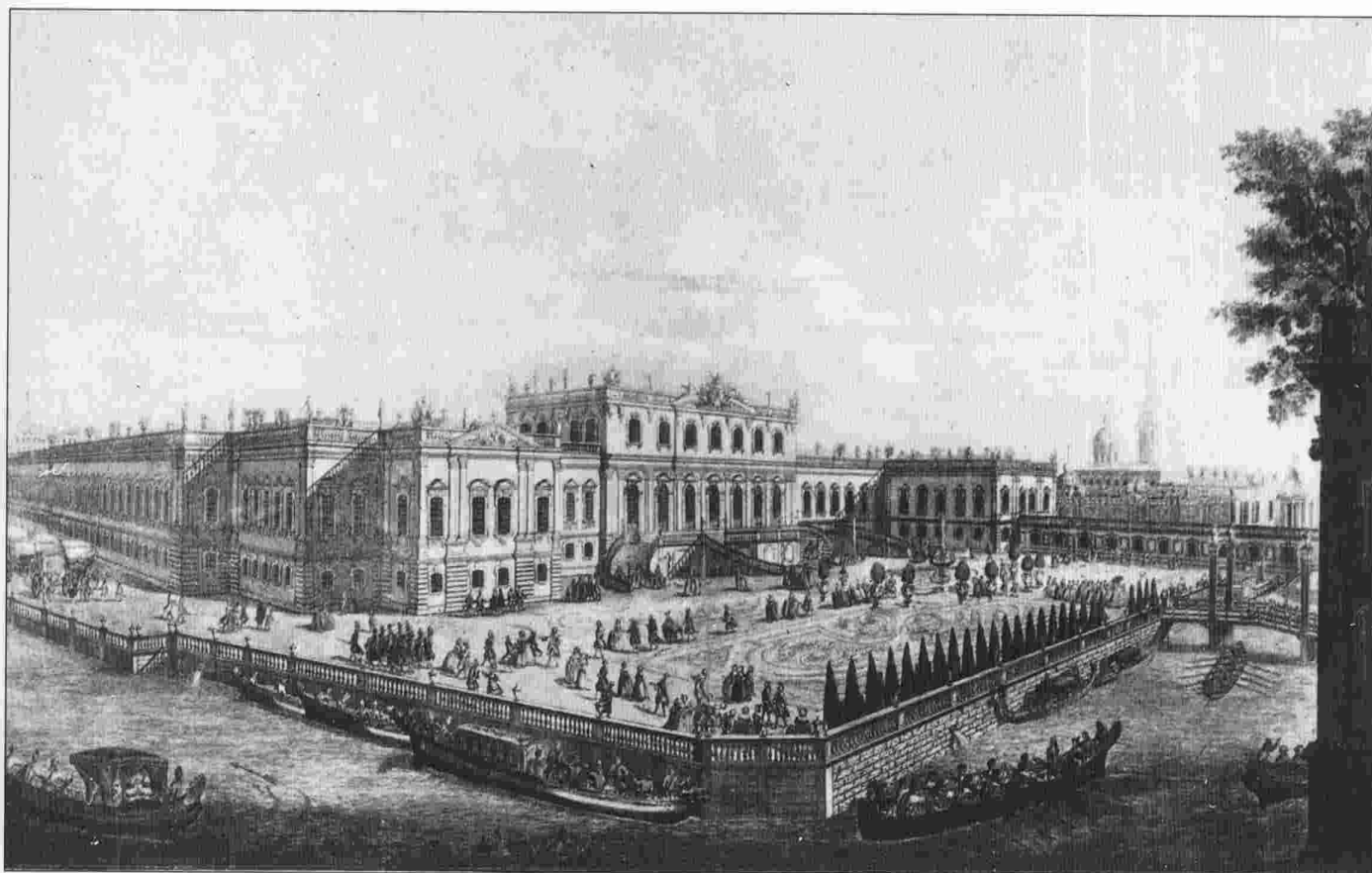
119 a–b. Buildings by the Red Canal,
the Admiralty side

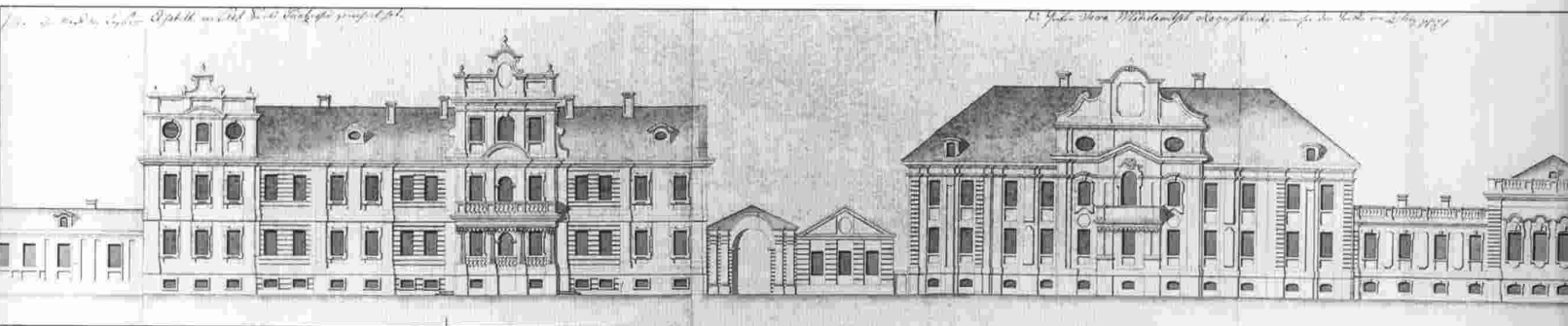
Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 250 × 2760

a.

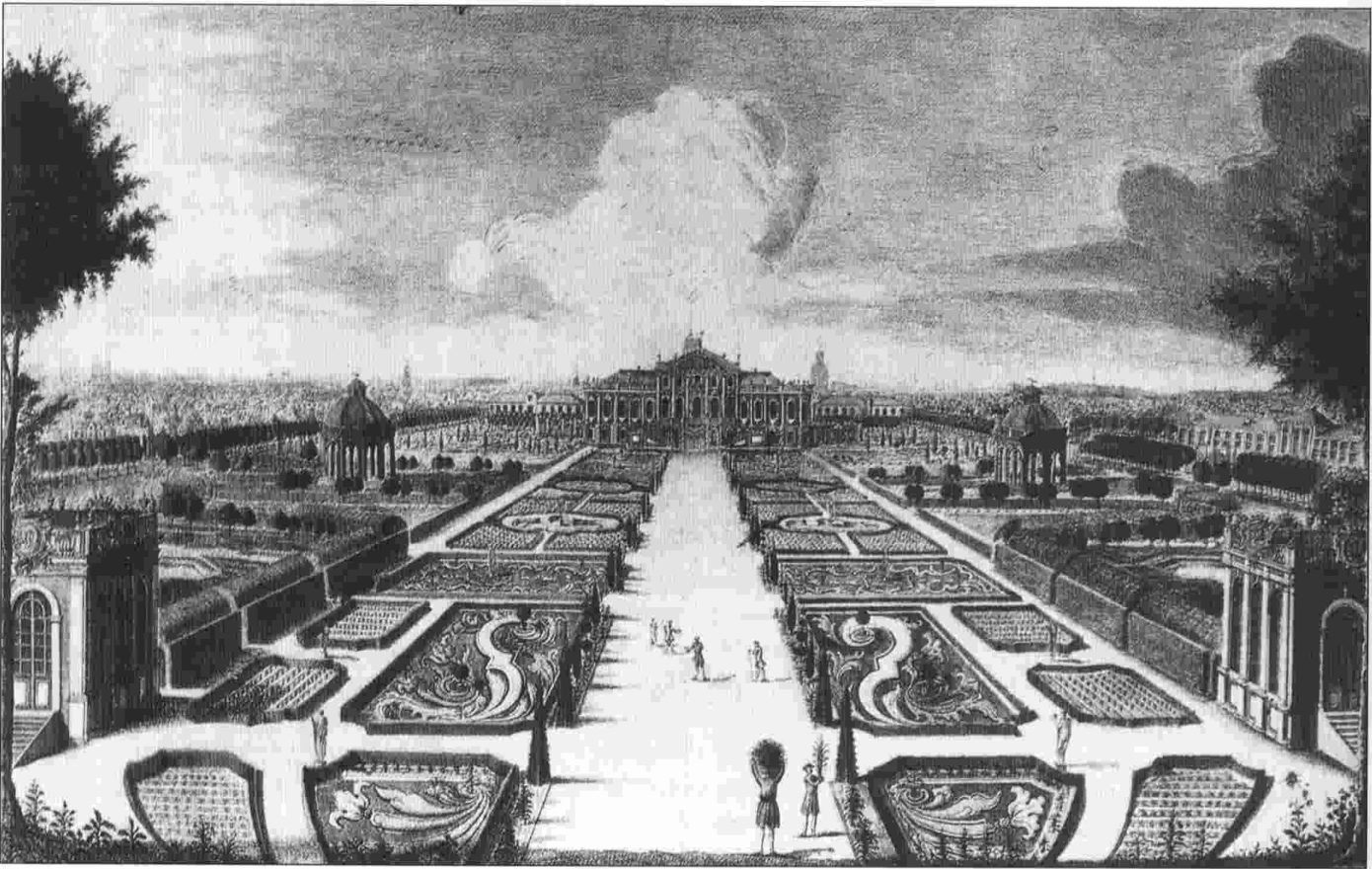
120. Panorama featuring Empress Elisabeth's
Summer Palace. Engraving after Makhaev, 1761.

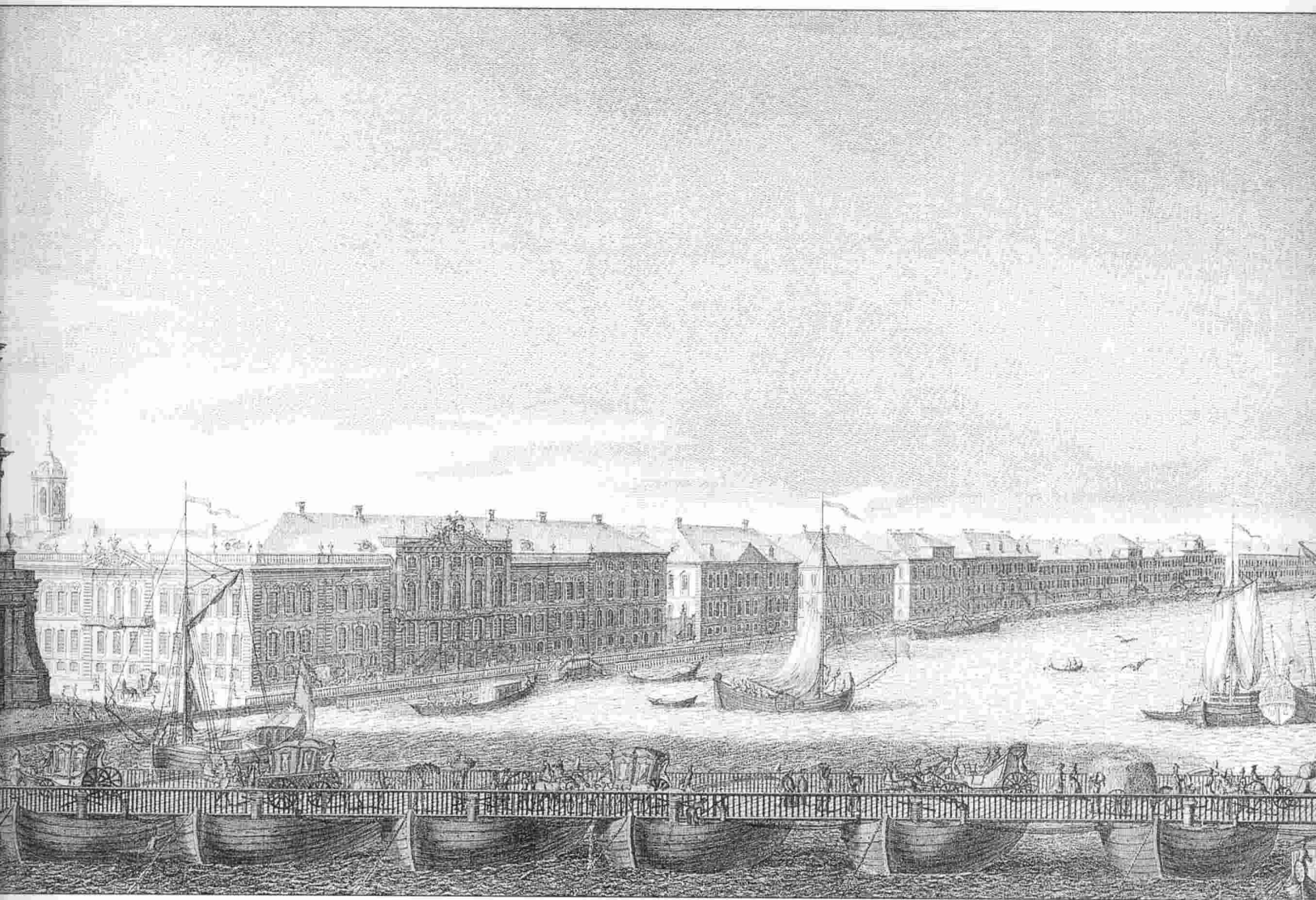




b.

121. The residence of the British envoy, Wolf, in the Kamennostrovsky prospect.





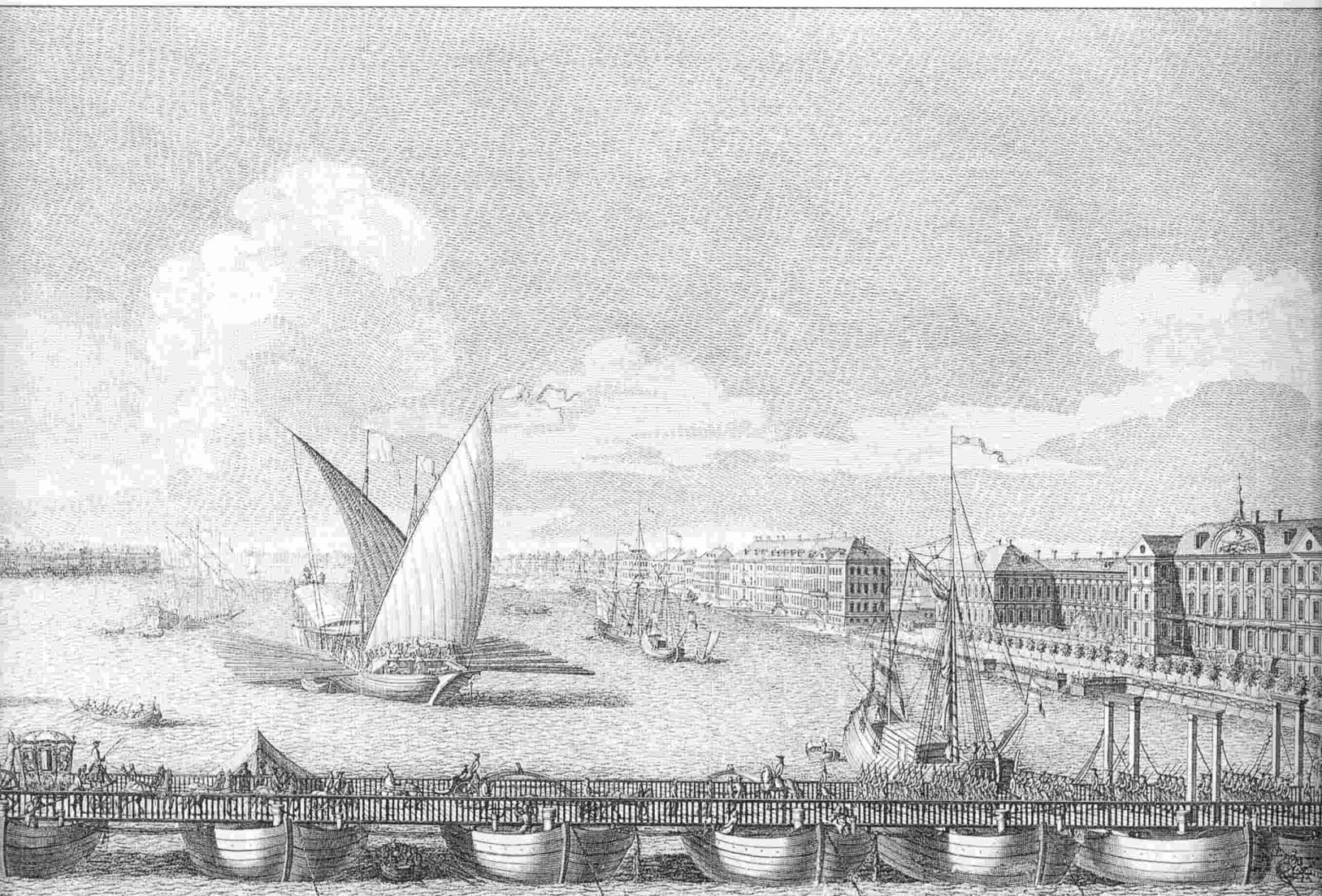
122. *Panorama of the Neva downstream from the Neva Bridge between Saint Isaac's Church and the Cadet Corps*

I. Vasilev, after a drawing by M. Makhaev, 1753.
Engraving; 515 × 1355
(SHMP, I-A-2805-g)

The first ferry bridge across the Neva was laid out in 1727, after the death of Peter I. The buildings closest to the bridge belonged to major noblemen:

and Paul Fortress and the Cathedral suddenly come into view from the east after a sharp bend in the Neva, it is easy to associate them with an Admiral's ship.

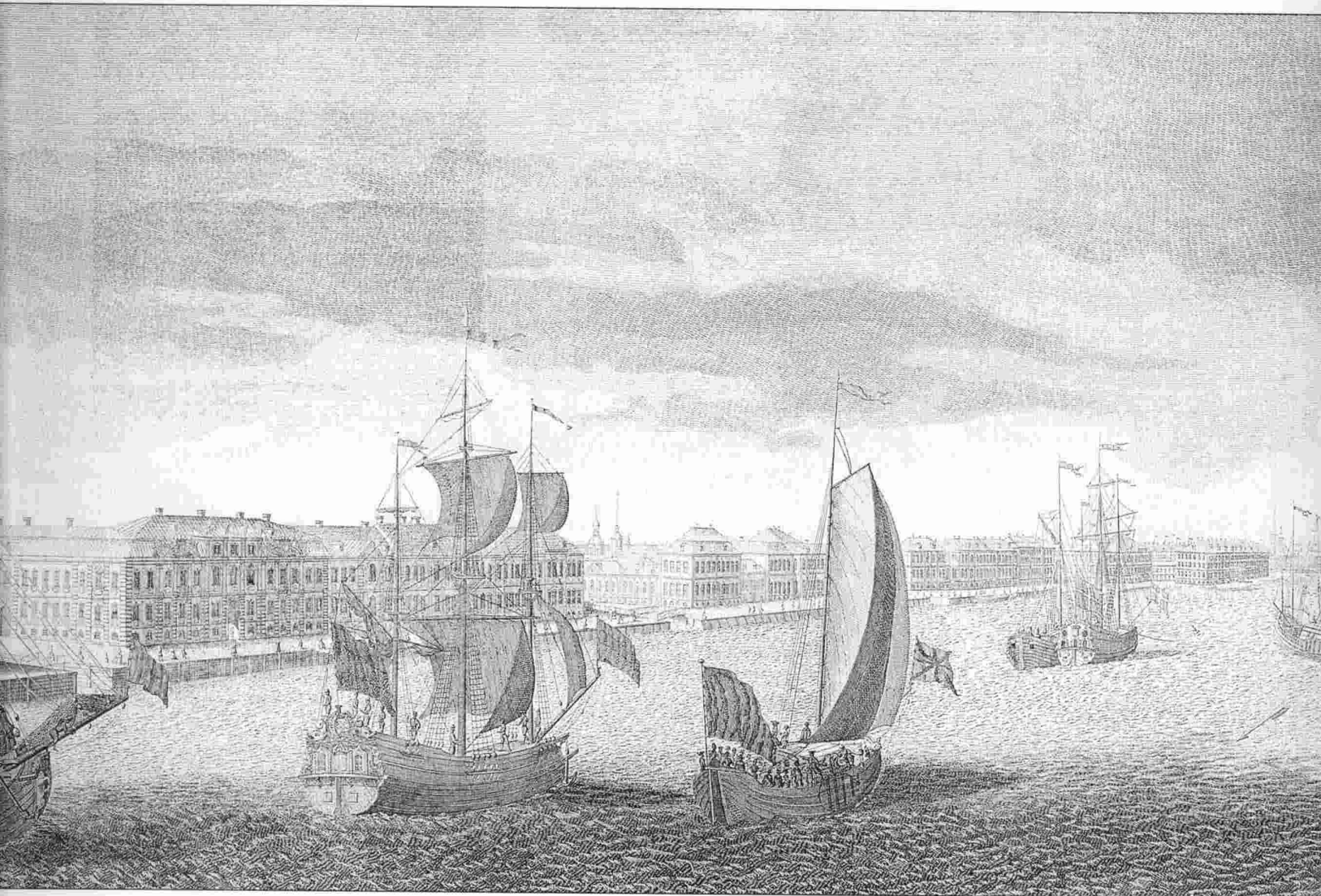
One of the wonderful achievements of the mid-18th century was the creation of the wealthy estate of the Chancellor of the Russian Empire, Count Bestuzhev-Riumin, on Stone Island. One of the three important "green" islands on the Neva delta, Stone Island acquired a coherent architectural layout. A harbour with earthen bastions and cannons for ceremonial salutes was constructed on the extremity facing the centre of the city. The palace, designed by an unknown architect, consisted of two corpuses linked by a splendid colonnade, through which the strictly regulated garden could be seen from the water. The



island was intersected by a great number of canals and all this, augmented by various pavilions, colonnades, and trimmed hedges, completed the charming image of this luxurious residence, which still retained its rural character and was inferior neither to Peterhof nor to Tsarskoye Selo.

Subsequently, a similar idea for a “water garden” of even greater proportions was brilliantly realized by the architect Carlo Rossi and the horticulturalist Bush on the neighbouring Elagin Island. There were dykes, fish ponds, and other artificially created water features in every other baronial estate. The sub-soil waters in Petersburg were so high that one only had to start digging for water to appear.

on Admiralty Island (on the left) the palace of Count A. Bestuzhev-Riumin; on Vasilyevsky Island (on the right) the Menshikov Palace, built in 1710–14 by G. Fontana and G. Schedel. This was the most splendid building in St. Petersburg and was used for “assemblies” and ambassadorial receptions. When Menshikov was exiled, his house was taken over by the renowned Land Shliakhet-sky (Gentry) Corps, also named the Cadet Corps.



123. *Panorama of the Neva upstream between the Galley Shipyard and the thirteenth line on Vasilyevsky Island*

I. Eliakov, after a drawing by M. Makhaev, 1753.
Engraving; 560 × 1410
(SHMP, I-A-1070-g)

A view eastwards onto the upper reaches of the Neva. On Vasilyevsky Island (on the left) are blocks of houses laid out in a stepped arrange-

The splendour of the city in the mid-18th century was associated above all with the work of Rastrelli. Although only four of his Petersburg buildings have survived (the Winter Palace, the Smolny Convent, and the Stroganov and Vorontsov Palaces), his works nevertheless define the image of the city, in general and in detail. Official life centred on the imperial palaces: the Winter Palace, newly completed by Rastrelli between 1753–1762, the Summer Palace, and the country residences of Peterhof and Tsarskoye Selo. Rastrelli began the reconstruction and extension of the Empress's Winter Palace at a time when such an undertaking did not seem particularly necessary. The previous palace, completed in 1737 by Rastrelli together with his father, C. B. Rastrelli, was luxuri-



ous and ceremonial with exquisite interiors and could have served for a long time. But “only for the glory of all Russia” – as Elizabeth wrote in her decree to the Senate – it was decided to carry out a major extension of the imperial residence, which was to dominate in panoramas of the Neva and become the embodiment of the majesty of the unshakeable Russian Empire. Henceforth, no building in the city, excluding churches, was allowed to surpass the height of the cornice of the Winter Palace. Partly by exploiting the old parts, Rastrelli managed to create a new palace in late Baroque order and lay the ground for the subsequent development of the gigantic architectural ensemble on the capital’s central squares: the Palace, Admiralty, and Senate Squares.

ment. In the foreground is a house with sculptural decorations, built in the 1730s for General-Field-Marshal B. Münnich. On Admiralty Island (on the right), is a line of residential housing running evenly along the embankment, later to be called the English Embankment. A canal separates the residential blocks from the Galley Shipyard.

Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholtz

Head Chamberlain Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholtz was born in 1699, and died in Weimar in 1771. His father was a nobleman from Holstein-Gottorp, and a general in the Russian army. Bergholtz spent his childhood and youth in Russia. After the death of his father in 1717, he moved to Mecklenburg and was employed for a short time as a page. He eventually became a courtier at the court of Karl-Fredrik of Holstein-Gottorp, and accompanied his employer on visits to Paris and Stockholm. In June 1721, Bergholtz arrived in St. Petersburg some days before Karl-Fredrik was due. In his capacity as a courtier, he remained in Petersburg until 1727.

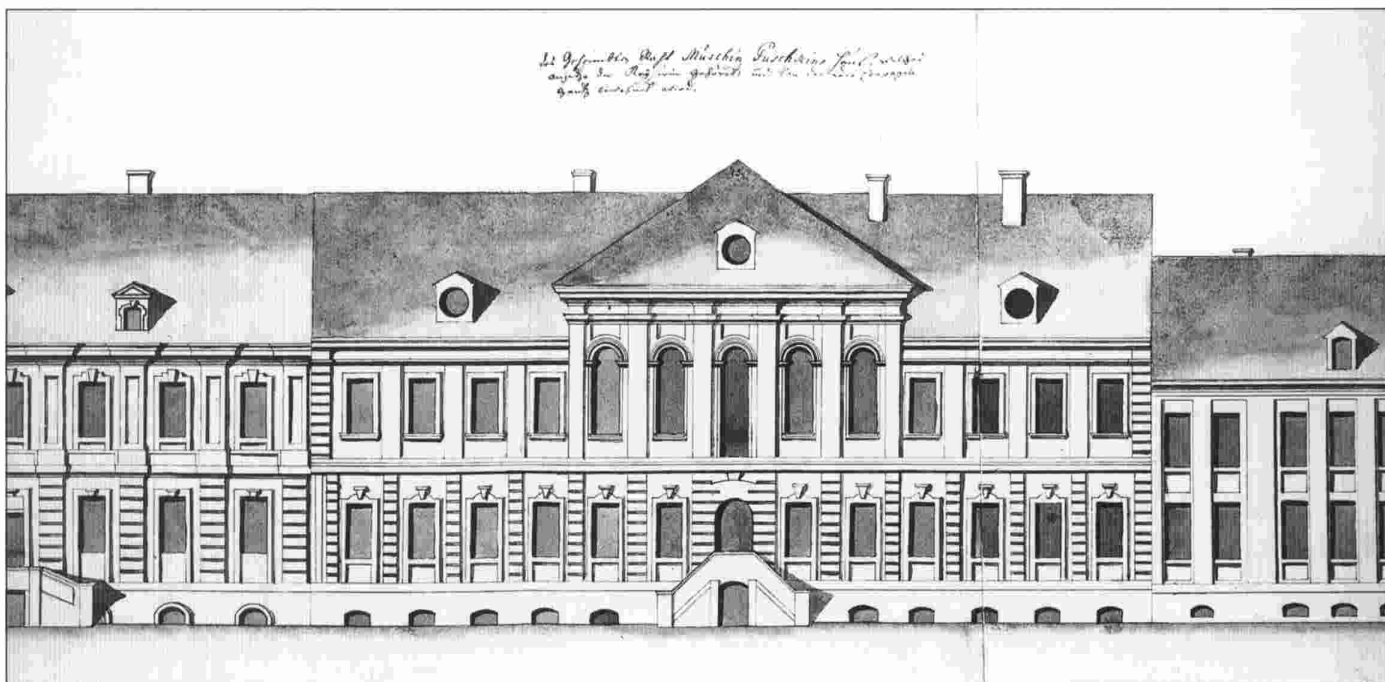
Bergholtz returned to Saint Petersburg fifteen years later, this time as head chamberlain to Karl Peter Ulrik, following the death of Karl-Fredrik. Once Karl Peter Ulrik was named as heir to the Russian throne in November, 1742, Bergholtz returned to Russia. From this time onwards, he was a close companion of Count Brümmer, a friendship which lasted until Brümmer's death in Wismar in 1754. The presence of the two Holstein gentlemen at the Russian court soon became less than desirable. They were mentioned in Catherine the Great's memoirs as Karl Peter Ulrik's two pedagogues. Brümmer and Bergholtz returned to Germany and settled in the town of Wismar, which was Swedish at that time. They received Russian and later also Swedish pensions.

One of Bergholtz' claims to fame is a diary he wrote while in Petersburg from 1721 to 1725. It was printed in Hamburg in 1765. The style is somewhat dry, but it is objective and rich in content. Igor Grabe says it is lively and vivid. Besides being an author, Bergholtz has a reputation as a diligent drawer of pencil sketches in dilettante style. The drawings and a large number of copies and a few originals are kept in the National Museum in Stockholm and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, and a few can be found in the Military Archives in Stockholm. Some letters in his hand are in the National Archives in Stockholm, and also in the former Gosudarstvenny Archives and the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library in St. Petersburg (c. 30 letters). These latter collections of letters contain statements made in connection with requests for pensions, addressed to Empress Elisabeth during the years 1752–1754.

With regard to Bergholtz' collection, which was probably intended as material for an encyclopaedia on Russia, a letter from Bergholtz dated 29 August 1770 has been annotated as follows by the receiver, Jacob Stelin of St. Petersburg ("Hochwohlgeborener Herr Canzelay Rath, Höchst geehrtester Herr Bibliothecair und Director der Keyserlichen Academie der Künsten"):

On the death of Hr. Oberkammerh. v. Bergholtz in 1771, the collection consisting of some 30,000 copper etchings of many types, mainly portraits, came to Mecklenb. to Hofmarschall Gr. Brassewitz, and was sold to Her Imperial Majesty in Russia for 5000:- Rthr. The Empress considered herself to have been seriously deceived.

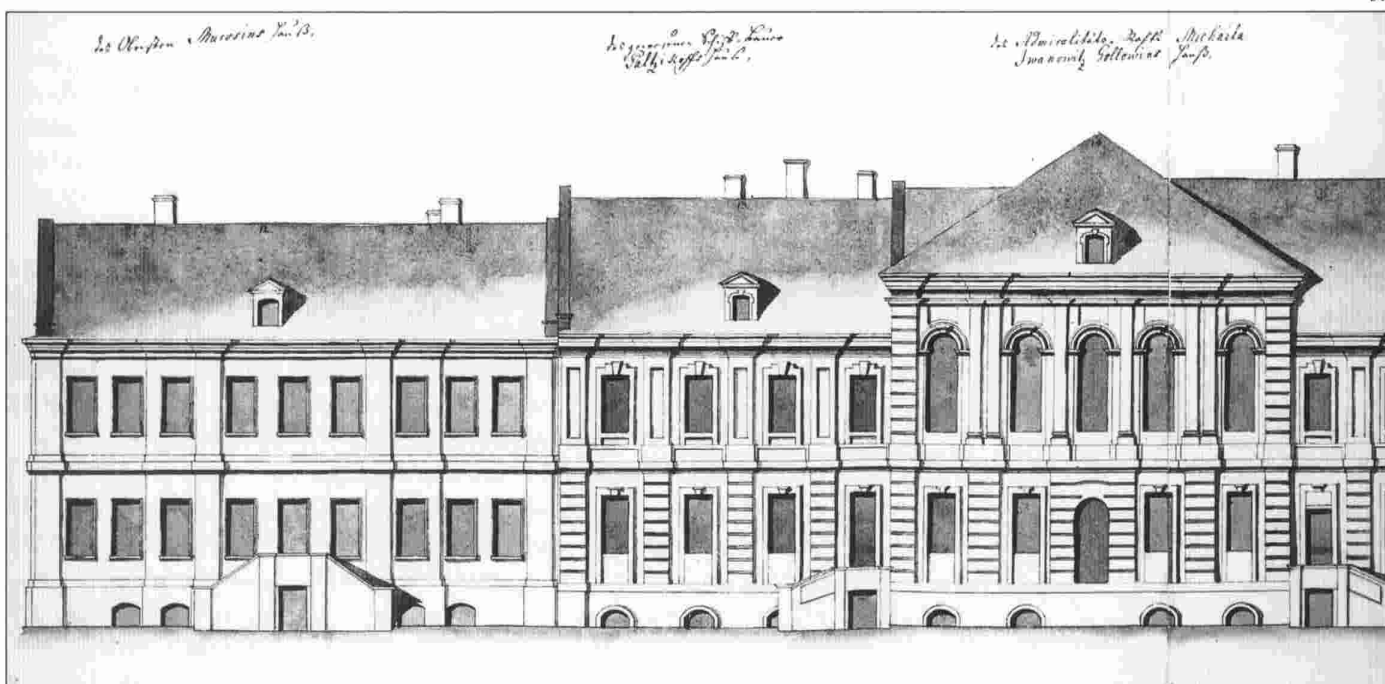
Nor was Bergholtz' collection of architectural drawings particularly appreciated by the National Museum until they were rediscovered in the 1950s. Most of them are amateur drawings or copies with no real artistic value. The value lies in fact in Bergholtz' ability as a pedagogue.



a.

124 a-b. Buildings by the Neva, the Admiralty
Embankment
(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 9033)
See picture No 24.

b.



This architectural drawing shows the main facade of the University of Bonn, a symmetrical building with a central pedimented entrance. The facade features multiple windows, some with arched tops, and a central entrance with a pediment. A scale bar at the bottom indicates measurements in feet (5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30) and meters (100, 200, 300).

125. *Academy of Sciences, façade*

Mid-18th century.

Indian ink and water-colour; 250 X 570

(NM, Bergholtz' collection, THC 9047)

The ensemble of the Smolny Convent, beautifully situated on a curve of the Great Neva, is of no less importance. The cupola of the huge cathedral frames two views of the Neva. The convent was planned as an additional residence for the Empress, who proposed to abdicate in favour of her heir, the Grand Prince Peter Fedorovich, and distance herself from state affairs in the capacity of an abbess. Elizabeth never realized her intention, however. Even so, Rastrelli managed to create a fabulous array of cupolas rising from the numerous churches, crowned with a multi-tiered bell-tower of unimagined height – greater than the Pyramid of Cheops.

The role of two other palaces was more modest, but even now the splendid façade of the Stroganov Palace defines the image of Nevsky Prospekt by the Moika, while the Vorontsov Palace, the garden of which disappeared at the beginning of the 19th century, is a major architectural feature of Sadovaya Street. Although he played the major role in the inception of the late Baroque idiom, Rastrelli was not alone. One should also mention Pietro Antonio Trezzini, an Italian architect, who supervised the construction of the Alexandr Nevsky Lavra and built several houses which have now all disappeared. Another major architect was Savva Ivanovich Chevakinsky, the creator of the Marine Cathedral of St. Nicholas with its well-known bell-tower, standing on the bank of the Kriukov Canal. Each of these architects had a whole staff of assistants and apprentices who created the buildings which formed the Baroque city of St. Petersburg.