



PLATBAND WITH SHUTTERS

Lyachin house, Volovoe Village,
Nizhny Novgorod Governorate,
Russia

About the project

[https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/
events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/](https://tsaritsyno-museum.ru/events/special/p/lyudi-i-fondy-eng/)

1885

Carving on wood





SELECTED BY
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Again vibrant memories flash in my head. The summer of 1990. A crisp, sunny morning. We are sitting on a bench in front of a house decorated with carvings like from a fairy tale: me, a young museum employee, my boss, the head of the Folk Art Department, Yuriy Maksimov, and an old man, the owner of the house, Sergey Lyachin. The documents for buying carved decorations for the museum have already been signed, and I ask with all the naivety of youth, 'Aren't you sad to part with such beauty?'

'Of course, I am sad, very much so. I have kept it all safe, and now my age is getting in the way of that. I am afraid people will break it or burn it, some troublemakers have already tried. I'd rather let it stay in the museum', replies the owner.

Back then, in the harsh 1990s, villages were quickly becoming empty, money was needed, and S.S. Lyachin decided to sell the carved platbands and boards from the house built by his great-grandfather Sergey Lyachin. The book by Y.V. Maksimov 'The House of S.S. Lyachin. Flat carving of Nizhny Novgorod, 19th century. The Art of Modern Khokhloma' includes a story written by him about this Old Believer family. When Sergey decided to build a house, he 'wanted to adorn it with carvings of such beauty that those of any of the neighbours could not compare to them'; the story is about how he found in a tavern at the Nizhny Novgorod fair a skilled craftsman who 'came up with a fine carving'. The unknown craftsman lived with the Lyachin family, worked for food, and the owners were quite pleased with his work. Flat carving (or 'ship carving') was used for the boards of the attic, windows, frontal boards of the facades, eight platbands. They were decorated with lions, sirins, mermaids, forty kinds of carved ornament motifs: interlaced, geometric, and floral patterns. Now we have all these treasures in our museum.

This platband features a fairy-tale bird Sirin — a ‘bird of paradise’ — at the top, the cornice in several tiers features floral motifs made in the technique of ‘dinking’ and ‘clamped’ carving. There is a carved rosette with leaves and pomegranate fruits at the bottom, locals called this motif ‘burdock’ or ‘besogon’ (i.e. ‘exorcist’). Similar themes were previously found in the decoration of the houses of the Old Believers of the neighbouring Volga regions.

I am glad that I was involved in saving this masterpiece. And for me, it is also wonderful memories of Yuriy Maksimov and the unique enthusiasm the staff felt when building the collection of the young museum.