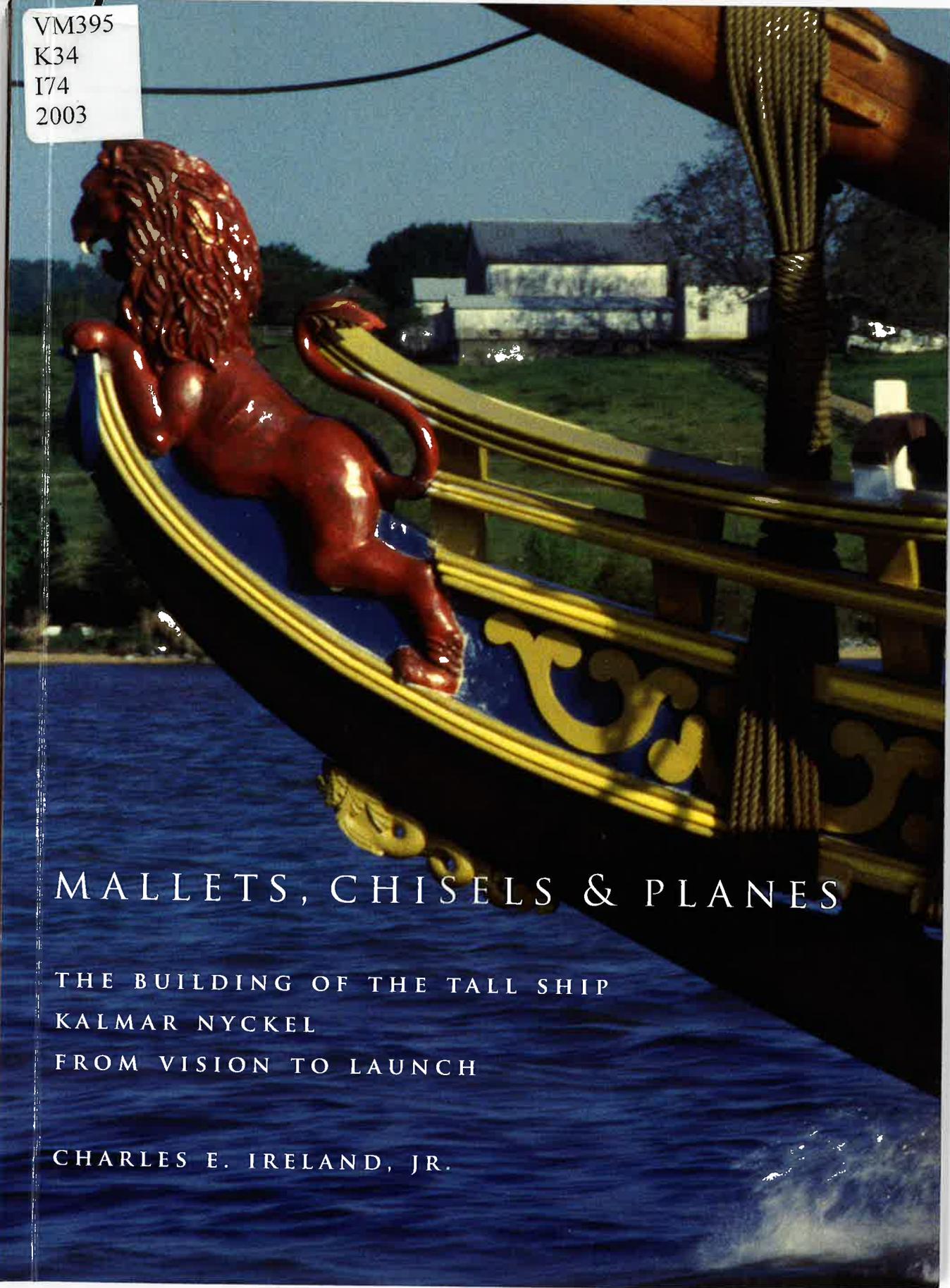


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MALLETS, CHISELS & PLANES

THE BUILDING OF THE TALL SHIP  
KALMAR NYCKEL  
FROM VISION TO LAUNCH

CHARLES E. IRELAND, JR.

First Edition

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CEDAR TREE BOOKS. LTD.



## THE ORIGINAL KALMAR NYCKEL

### A BRIEF HISTORY

**A**lthough no drawings of the original Kalmar Nyckel exist today and her fate is not exactly clear, much is known of her distinguished career as merchant vessel, warship and explorer. She was built in Holland in the late 1620s. She was classified as a Dutch pinnace, meaning she was a medium-size, three-masted, square-rigged, armed merchant ship. The Dutch built many of this class of ship, and their configuration, specifications and appearance are well documented. It was from such documentation and careful review of seventeenth-century marine carving and ship decorations that plans and drawings for the new Kalmar Nyckel were made.

Her recorded history begins in 1629 when she was purchased by the Swedish cities of Kalmar and Jonkoping. She was named Kalmar Nyckel meaning "Key of Kalmar," and along with land-based forts became part of the cities' coastal defense system.

In June 1637 the Swedish Crown ordered the preparation of two ships for a trade and colonization voyage to the New World. The Kalmar Nyckel and the smaller Fogel Grip were chosen. After a disastrous start in the fall of 1637, when both ships were storm damaged in the North Sea, they limped into Holland for repairs. They resumed their voyage again on December 31, 1637, and arrived at The Rocks on the banks of the Christina River on March 29, 1638. There a small band of settlers established the colony of New Sweden and built a fort called Christina. The Kalmar Nyckel would make three more voyages to help supply and populate the growing colony.

*Seventeenth-century shipbuilding records and review of representative period woodcarvings resulted in development of specifications, plans and drawings from which the new Kalmar Nyckel was built.*





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**I**n November 1637 a ship called Kalmar Nyckel, meaning “Key of Kalmar,” set sail with her sister ship, the Fogel Grip, from Gothenburg, Sweden, bound for the

New World with a cargo of trade goods and a small but courageous band of soldiers, sailors and twenty-four settlers. The ships encountered rough weather in the North Sea, and both were damaged. After repairs and provisioning in Holland, they set out again on December 31, 1637. Three months later, on March 29, 1638, the ships arrived on the banks of the Christina River at a place called The Rocks. Here the settlers built a fort and trading post called Christina in honor of Sweden’s young queen and founded the colony of New Sweden. It was the first successful European settlement in the Delaware Valley, and it took root and prospered on a site that much later would be part

Landing at The Rocks on March 29, 1638 from *Amandus Johnson, The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware: 1638-1664. Volume 1, (Philadelphia: 1911). Courtesy of the Historical Society of Delaware.*

of the city of Wilmington, Delaware. The little colony grew and expanded throughout much of the Delaware Valley until it was taken over by the Dutch in 1655. Between 1638 and 1643 the Kalmar Nyckel was to make four round trips from Sweden to Fort Christina, a record unmatched by any other New World colonial vessel.

In 1986, nearly 350 years later, a few men and women with a vision gathered to share their dream of one day reconstructing the Kalmar Nyckel. But where, how and who would build her? Their dream, like all good dreams, was a very big one indeed—reconstruct the Kalmar Nyckel as close to the original as possible, using as many of the seventeenth-century ship-building skills, tools and methods as they could. That meant research, plans, materials, volunteers, artisans, tools, a building crew, a master shipbuilder and money. In short, mallets, chisels and planes and the knowledge, talent, skills and hearts of dedicated craftsmen, volunteers and financial backers—a tall order for a tall ship!

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When we dream good dreams, almost anything is possible. And so it was with this dream.

Some old shipyard property on the banks of the Christina River, very close to where the original Kalmar Nyckel landed in 1638, was found, and a seventeenth-century-style shipyard was built with the help of volunteers and donated materials. A master shipbuilder and his wife helped attract a building crew made up of volunteers, shipwrights, blacksmiths, wood carvers, sail makers, caulkers and riggers from near and far.

Before long a building crew was at work in the little shipyard. Men with names like Olaf, Uwe, Christer, Joel, Roger, Lytton, John, Jim, Thacker, Patrick, Steve, Dick, Ron, Miklos, Rich and many more. Women with names like Kelly, Liz, Olga, Kisa, Peg and Cindy. Some were known by their given names; others by "shipyard names" such as "Squirrel," "Rainbow," "Deetles," "Woody," "Joe DeCaulka (Joe the Caulker)," "Bopper," "Little Don," "Big Don" and, of course, "Middle Don."

*A bustling little shipyard was built from scratch on the banks of the Christina River very close to where the original Kalmar Nyckel landed in 1638.*



*Dream builders, master shipbuilder Allen Rawl and wife Liz managed the project from start to finish with loving care and meticulous attention to authenticity and detail..*

They came from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Canada, Maryland, Massachusetts, California, Maine, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Texas, West Virginia, New York, Virginia, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Minnesota, New Jersey and Delaware. Each had a needed skill and a desire to be part of something special: a piece of history in the making; history in the shape of a wooden tall ship—the new Kalmar Nyckel!