



## From Goods to Tourism

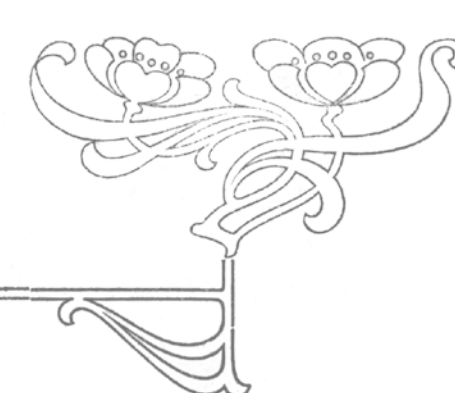
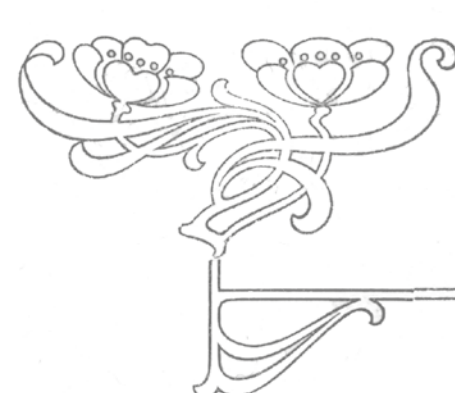
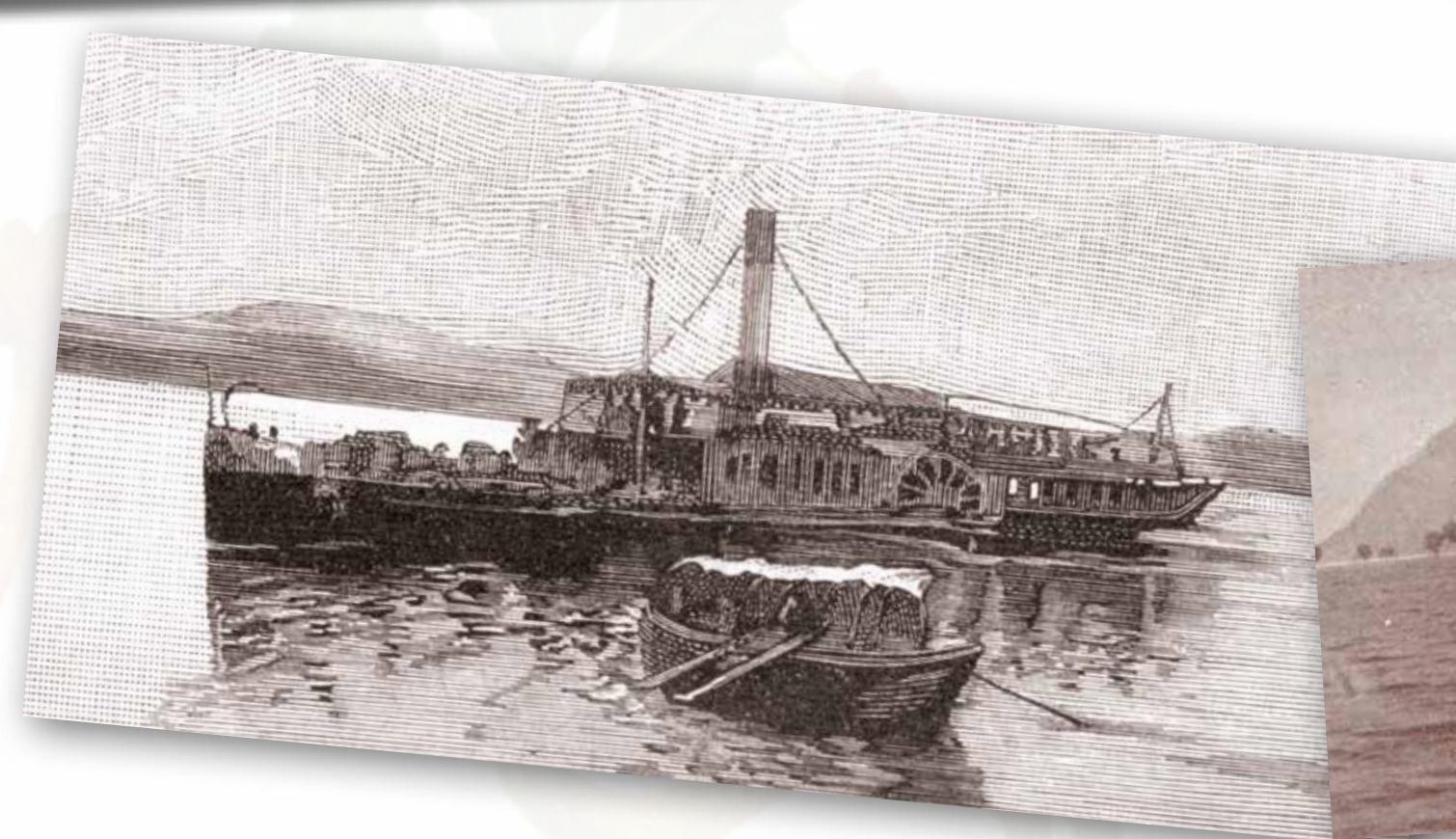
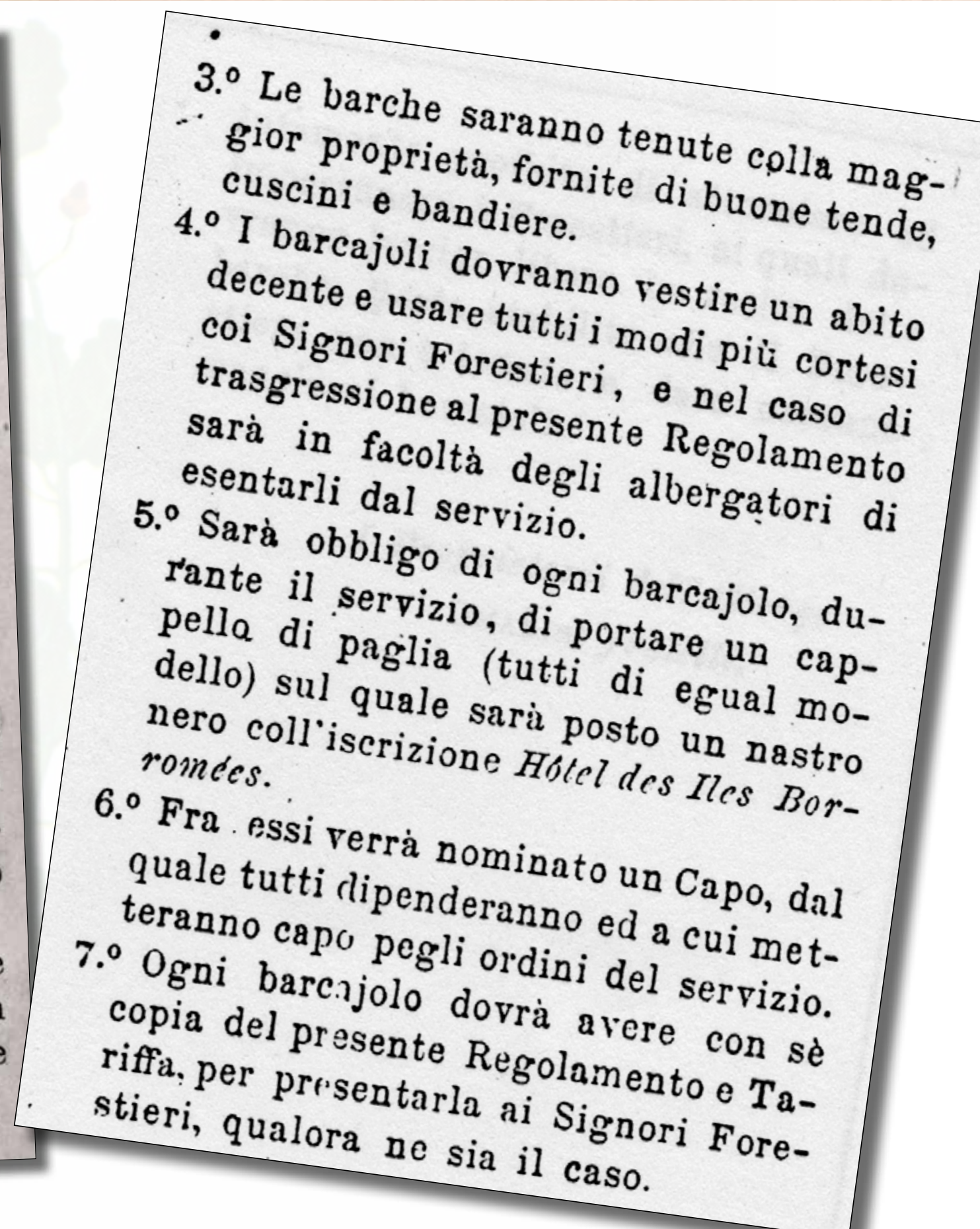
The boatmen have been a constant presence in the history of Lake Maggiore and Stresa, and the development of their activity has been closely linked to the economic events of the territory surrounding Verbanò. For centuries engaged in transporting goods and people, either as experienced rowers – on long routes – or ferrymen – linking neighbouring villages, or the coast and the Borromeo islands – as tourism started to grow in the mid-nineteenth century, they turned to the increasingly larger clientele of travellers and holidaymakers, offering their services first with rowing boats and then, in the new century, with motorboats.

Stories, archive materials and images show their activities. An 1802 document reports that "Stresa had 9 boats with 11 boatmen for trade with Intra", which, with its 42 boats and 60 boatmen, managed trade with Ossola and Milan; the main communication station between the lake and the Milan area was Castelletto Ticino, which had 165 small boats, 79 large boats and as many as 247 boatmen.

With the first steamboat appearing on the lake in 1826 and the subsequent increase of the motor fleet and tourism, the boatmen started to transport passengers from the shore to the steamships and the other way round where docking facilities were lacking, or they rowed their boats in the most picturesque places for travellers and hotel customers: for example, in Stresa, the Grand Hôtel des Iles Borromées used to offer its guests a boat and gondola service. At the same time, as work increased, rules of conduct – which the boatmen were to comply with – were established as a matter of public order.

The spirit of the times is captured in a newspaper article that reports the journey from Stresa to Venice of the Irish Goodbody family, on a speed boat with two boatmen and a guide; departing from the "Borromées" on 22 April 1914, the group used the Ticino and the Po as waterways and also stopped in Milan, in the Naviglio Grande, and Mantua, going up the Mincio.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, as the first luxurious motorboats for the tourist service appeared in Stresa, the boatmen managed to grasp the opportunities arising from this novelty and got equipped with increasingly modern and comfortable boats.



English