



RESULTS OF RESEARCH ON THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AT 24 TEMPLOM STREET, SOPRON

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Abstract

Our research reveals the technical, historical and urban architectural significance of the residential building at 24 Templom Street, Sopron. The summary of the site's history is based on previous publications. The above historic building was damaged during the bombings in 1945. The presentation of the authorization procedure data concerning the current building raised on the same site was preceded by researching archival documents. The Electronic Information Service of the Library at the University of Sopron provided additional resources regarding the location and the creators (architect Oszkár Füredi and sculptor László Deák). A potential architectural application of the geodetic survey made on the street façade will also be highlighted. We conclude that – in addition to its inherent values – the examined residential building carries urban-scale significance as well.

Keywords: *history of construction, urbanism, public artwork.*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is the historical and technical description of the residential house at 24 Templom Street, Sopron. The research emerged from the recognition that the building is part of the built heritage of Sopron's city center, however, it is not protected as a monument, although it obviously carries a unique architectural value in its historic environment. The initial investigation of the building consisted of on-site visits, geodesic and remote sensing surveys, and archival research. The investigation is partly inspired by the fact that the building previously standing on the site of the current house was destroyed due to a war-time bomb hit. It is vital to emphasize that the rehabilitation of the site has stood the test of time, it was not performed as a mere transient architectural design task. Although opinions are somewhat divided, we ourselves are of the opinion that we are witnessing the realization of a plan of urban architectural importance, one which has not lost its modernity in the midst of

the architectural and historical trends that have changed over time.

2. The location's past

The originally Baroque building received Classicist stylistic characteristics at the beginning of the 19th century. The street-facing façade of the house standing on the sideline at that time ran along the property line. However, the building of the neighbouring István Széchenyi High School was built backwards compared to the façade plane of the residential building, in accordance with the new regulation rules regarding Templom street [1]. In 1856, based on Sopron architect József Handler's plans the residential building was enlarged. This was the time when an extension of arched development line was added. Thus, the house joined the neighboring school building closed-row [2].

Franz Liszt gave concerts in Sopron several times [3]. On 10 February, 1874, he gave a benefit concert in the community center later named

after him. During his stay he was a guest of Manó Csáky in the house at 24 Templom Street.

Since the 1920s, a number of advertisements have been published related to the building in newspapers titled *Soproni Hírlap* and *Sopronvármegye*. Mária (Mici) Lieberman advertised several times between 1923-1926 with the following text: „Skilled woman workers are on hire for permanent employment at dressmaker Mici Liebermann at 24 Templom Street, Sopron. Delivery girl is to be employed at the same place.” From 1929 on, her ads have somewhat changed: „Skilled woman workers and apprentices are on hire at dressmaker Mária Liebermann’s show-room at 10 Színház Street, Sopron.”

In 1927, the advertisements of the Winter family’s (who also supported the Erzsébet Society) general store were published more than 20 times in *Sopronvármegye* with the following wording: ‘General store of Mrs. Vilmos Winter at 24 Templom Street, Sopron. Flour, bread, sugar, coffee, rice, brushwood of the highest quality’.

At the time of the annihilation of the building in 1945, its owner was Mrs. Andor Pollak [4]. The tenants of the house were from among merchants (Jenő Raab, general store) and craftsmen (tailor, dressmaker, electrician, dentist) [5].

The website Sopron Anno displays two photographs taken by an Unknown author (1913) and Viktor Wallon-Hárs (2023) demonstrating interactively the century-long transformation of the ‘City center’s gate’ [6]. Several free-access photographs on FORTEPAN community photo archives website [7] illustrate the building at 24 Templom Street at the beginning of the 20th century (e.g. Unknown author Fig. 1).

3. Years after World War II

During the city planning and infilling process after the bombing there was a vision that the shaping of the façade should follow the plan of Handler being prepared in 1856. A long dispute arose regarding the new house’s development line, since in the opinion of many the arched development line should have been kept.

4. Architectural history

The original documents issued by the building authority concerning the current building may be found in the Hungarian National Archives’ Győr-Moson-Sopron County, Sopron Archives [8]. The three boxes contain the building permit with the clause added to it, the certificate of oc-



Fig. 1. *Templom Street with the Lutheran Church in the background; source: FORTEPAN, Unknown donator.*

cupancy and the preliminary papers of the above procedures (minutes, correspondence, technical description). Based on the study of the above documents, the following architectural history can be reconstructed.

4.1. Planning

The three-story street-facing façade of the residential building at 24 Templom Street was hit by a bomb in January, 1945. On the vacant lot that had come about due to the bombings the city decided to raise a residential building. According to the plan prepared in 1959, the height of the new four-story building would have fitted staggered between the two neighboring buildings with different heights. The building, situated at an extremely frequented location, constitutes the gate of the city center. According to the original conception, the new building would have joined to the north end of Széchenyi High School by a segmental curve. At the Design Office of Győr a decision was made on the development line’s final shape based on an internal tender, as a result of which a loggia development was proposed instead of the arched façade.

4.2. Authorization process

The plans sent to the National Monument Conservancy (henceforth NMC) for approval at the beginning of 1960 were rejected. The authority agreed with the conception that the planned building was not of archaizing style, furthermore, it approved the building's height and the construction of a high roof. On the contrary, it rejected the idea of shaping the façade with flagstone coat up to the top of the ground floor's level. The NMC judged the loggia development to be unaccustomed to the city centre, therefore it required the elaboration of a new plan by the Design Office.

Since the Building Department of the City of Sopron gave building permission for the execution works of the building at 24 Templom Street without asking for a historic building expert's opinion to be sent in, the execution had already been started here also. The counter opinion of the NMC ended up in the temporary ceasing of the construction process. The stand of architect Oszkár Füredi, colleague of the Design Office was accepted on 20 April, 1960 by head of department dr. László Gerő on behalf of the NMC, thus he gave the specific consent prescribed by the law number 13/1949 without any stipulations, based on Füredi's statement. The building permit was frozen on 12 May, 1960.

4.3. Execution

At the beginning of May, 1961, the execution reached the phase when the console of the statue should have been built in, however, it had not been manufactured yet. The plastering was completed, the colouring was to be started and the ladder scaffold to be removed in the following few days. After all these, the placing of the console and the statue would face difficulties, and additional costs would have arisen. Due to circular mailing and discussions by phone it became clear that sculptor László Deák had sent the plans to Sopron City Council's Executive Committee to be signed and forwarded back to him as soon as possible in order to enable the Fine Arts Building Contractor and Industrial Company (115 Vorošilov Road, XIV, Budapest) to begin manufacturing the console. On 3 May, 1961, Sopron Council's Exe. C. forwarded the sculptor's request to Győr-Sopron County Council's Execution Committee. On the same day, Sopron Council's Exe. C. reported to sculptor László Deák that they had no idea of the plan's whereabouts. They ordered Deák that if he received the plans from Győr-Sopron County

Council's Exe. C., he should arrange the console's manufacturing according to them, otherwise based on the outline.

4.4. Statue 'Girl with a Guitar'

On 9 March, 1960, President of Sopron Council's Exe. C. Sándor Erdélyi submitted a petition to the Ministry of Culture to inquire what kind of statue they would give preliminary permission to erect. In his letter he listed the types of statues that could be found at the surrounding public places. He stated that in the direct neighbourhood the 'Széchenyi High School', nearby the 'Orsolya Square great elementary school' and 'Berzsenyi High School' were located, so the theme of the statue might be of juvenile concern. For its construction 60,000 HUF were allotted.

On 2 May, 1960, Sopron City Council's Industrial and Technical Department contracted sculptor László Deák to prepare the statue and manufacture the console. The approx. 2 m figure-sized composition would have been made of white limestone from Sós-kút. According to the contract, the author would prepare a 1:1 scaled clay model until the middle of June, a 1:1 gypsum model until the end of October and a 1:5 scaled console's technical drawing by the middle of November, as well as present the 1:10 scaled maquette of the console and the statue to the customer.

According to the Minutes dated 24 June, 1960, the 1:5 scaled clay versions were displayed. The jury of the Hungarian People's Republic's Fine Arts Fund approved the figure with the guitar. According to the Minutes dated 3 August, 1960, the 1:1 clay 'building figure' was approved by the jury of the Hungarian People's Republic's Fine Arts Fund (Fig. 2). The Committee requested the artist to 'enhance the motives suggesting static impact' by increasing the mass of both the standing and forward stepping legs. He was also requested to abolish the nude character by emphasizing the drapery more heavily.

According to the Minutes dated 26 September, 1960, the 1:1 gypsum sculpture was approved by the jury of the Hungarian People's Republic's Fine Arts Fund. The jury stated that both the shape and content of the gypsum had developed compared to the clay version. It allotted an honorarium of 23,000 HUF 'for the composition of the spirit of portrayal in a slightly idealized way'. With respect to this, in November, 1960, Sopron City Council's Industrial and Technical Department invited the Hungarian People's Republic's Fine Arts Fund to prepare the statue from white limestone from

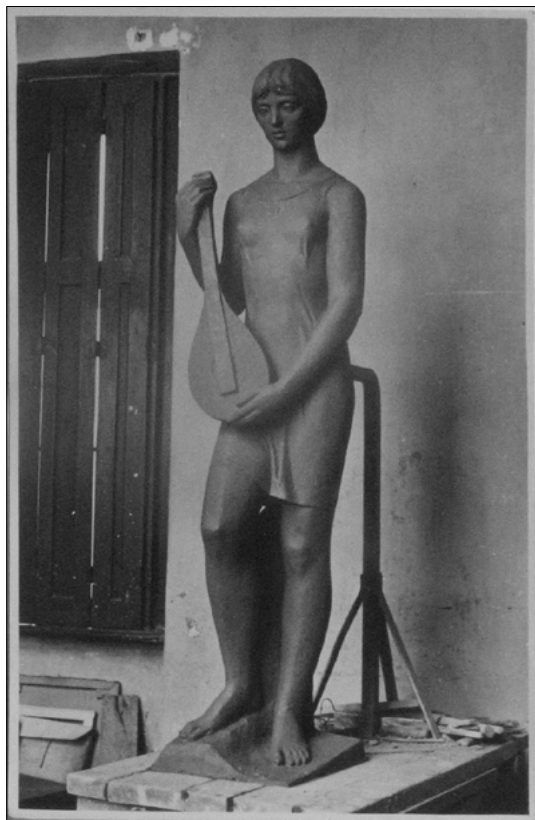


Fig. 2. *Girl with a Guitar – clay model; source: HU-MNL-GYMSVSL XXIII.509.c. 14.944/1960. (95. d.)*



Fig. 3. *The residential house at 24 Templom Street; photo by József Attila Jankó.*

Süttő. From the sessions of the above-mentioned jury the invited representatives of the NMC were absent.

The Minutes dated 17 March, 1961 contain that the carving in stone of the statue 'standing woman' was equally approved by the Committee of the Hungarian People's Republic's Fine Arts Fund and the representative of Sopron City Council's Exe. C.

4.5. Certificate of occupancy

A certificate of occupancy was issued for the building without any stipulations on 31 July, 1961. According to the housing query of 1961, construction works began on 1 March, 1960 and ended on 23 June, 1961.

5. Critiques

Gábor Winkler notes that the shaping of the building at 24 Templom Street does still heavily reminds us of the former 'socialist realistic' style [9]. Mihály Kubinszky highlights that the new building damaged the townscape, since 'its old, fine Baroque composition was unfortunately altered for a more rigid, angled and arched shaping, which cannot be compensated even by the statue appearing in the view from Széchenyi Square' [10].

In his thorough study Tibor Kuslits presented Sopron's architecture of the second half of the 20th century. He mentions first the building at 24 Templom Street among the restoration works carried out after WWII. He highlights László Deák's façade statue placed on a console as well as the covered-open gateway pierced by segmental arched openings that he associates (in accordance with the designer) as the entrance to the City Center. Besides the modern conception of the building's disciplined system of openings, he recognizes historic motives in the shaping of the shoulder and cornice too. According to his judgment, the building is both contemporary and traditional at the same time, 'it means the never been, solemn commencement of Templom Street'. As a conclusion, he considers it a coherent work with a town planning significance.

6. Conclusions

In 1856, the former Baroque building at 24 Templom Street was reconstructed and enlarged in Classicist style, based on plans by József Handler. In 1945, the house was hit by a bomb, therefore the city development of the era decided to demolish it completely. Based on archival documents concerning the building authorization procedure,

we briefly summarized the architectural history of the residential building. During the on-site visits we took photographs and thus recorded its technical conditions. (Fig. 3)

In spite of the dissimilar expert's opinions, the residential building constructed after 1945 at 24 Templom Street bears town planning significance, since it makes the space experience of the city center's historic environment more favorable. All of this is further enhanced by the statue titled 'Girl with a Guitar' erected on the façade console of the house.

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