

Stanisław Rey's "Manor House" and "Palace" in Sieciechowice, Investigations into The Cultural Heritage of Poland

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Abstract. The historic manor house - park complex is located in the centre of a village called Sieciechowice. It lies not far from Cracow, at a distance of approximately 30 km from the Wawel Castle hill. It is one of the most interesting architectural and urban objects found in the krakowski country district and in Małopolska region. The spatial development of the built-up features was closely related to the urban layout of villages. The special arrangement was characterised by a great diversity of historic residences, backup facilities and greenery. The original estate, containing several buildings and engineering structures, constituted a vital part of Sieciechowice. The buildings provided vivid illustrations of manor house and palace architecture. The estate was in the hands of the Rey family. The war events, makeshift repairs, lack of ideas on the management of the estate and permanent lack of funds, however, resulted in the decline of this once splendid estate.

1. Introduction

As a result of war events, the material culture of Poland suffered enormous losses. Majority of palaces and manor houses disappeared, or were ruined. Later, due to the work done by the State Service for Heritage Protection, the deterioration process of built-up features was partially stopped. Some dozens of manor houses and palaces were chosen to house museums and other cultural institutions. In the 1980s and 1990s, many manor houses found new owners, who have often tried to restore the original condition of the monuments. On many occasions, however, unfortunate decisions led to the dismantling of historic buildings.

The paper deals with one of the oldest, and only partially preserved manor houses, located in Sieciechowice, in southern Poland. The village of Sieciechowice lies not far from Cracow, the former capital of Poland, to be more specific: *"about twenty-seven kilometres from the Wawel castle"* [1]. Sieciechowice manor house, together with its historic park, is an example of valuable architectural assets. That, however, did not prevent the monument from being neglected, the situation which lasted for many years. Improper use of the buildings, alterations or extensions damaging the character of the objects, makeshift repair works, inadequate solutions to technical problems all resulted in enhanced deterioration processes. Finally, the most valuable, i.e. the wooden, part of the historic structure had to be dismantled.



2. "Old manor house" and "new palace". Past and future of cultural heritage

2.1. Landscape location

The Sieciechowice manor house-park complex lies a few kilometres from E7 Kraków-Warszawa national road, and also close to the Iwanowice-Wysocice-Gołcza local road. When travelling nearby, you will see a picturesque grove of trees that catches an eye of the visitor. The trees are the remains of former manor house.

In the małopolskie province, especially north of Cracow, manor houses were scattered quite densely. Good quality of arable land is found in the area which led to early settlement. Eventually, the typical distances between manors were only a few kilometres.

In many places located not far from Sieciechowice, namely from a few to several kilometres, many manors were found. However, not all of them have survived, or been preserved until the present. They existed, among others, in Iwanowice, Grzegorzowice, Czaple, Wysocice, Minoga, and other places farther away from Sieciechowice.

The Sieciechowice manor house is located in the centre of the locality, not far from the parish church of St Andrew, the Apostle. In terms of geographical location, it lies in the area of the Dłubniański Landscape Park, in the bifurcation of the rivers: Dłubnia and its distributary called Młynówka. The layout of the whole complex resembles a narrow rectangle which borders, on the south-western side, a tall hill with a chapel (Figure 1).

In the land plan use of the Iwanowice commune, the area in which the manor and park are located is categorised as park complex functional ground, i.e. that of a park lying in the heritage conservation zone. It is primarily intended for: 1) developments related to agriculture, production and processing sites resulting from the modernisation and adaptation of the existing facilities; 2) administration, catering and hotel services, and also for residential purposes, i.e. the existing manor buildings adapted for use [2].



Figure 1. Manor and park in Sieciechowice, together with the location of the "palace" preserved till the present day [3]

2.2. Manor house history. Results of changes in economy and politics in the 20th cent.

Timber manor house in Sieciechowice, together with 5-hectare park, dated back to the 17th cent. A residence in the early Baroque style was one of the Kęszycki family estates. In 1902, after the death of Helena Kęszycka, née Rey, Sieciechowice estate was inherited by Stanisław Rey, a distant relative to Mikołaj Rey of Nagłowice, a Polish poet. At the time, Stanisław Rey was still a minor and he took the estate only *after the first world war and his marriage to Jadwiga Branicka in 1918* [1].

In the years 1880-1900, the manor house was extended, and the green areas were altered to the landscape park¹ [4]. Two-storey masonry pavilion, was added to the old part of the house built of larch wood (Figure 2). The new part was termed a "palace", which was confirmed by Stanisław Rey's

¹ The park area was originally approx. 5 hectares. After gardens and farmstead were designated, and when the park was further reduced to establish veterinary practice, the park area was 2.5 hectares [4].

daughters. Anna Rey, a wife of Konstanty Potocki, wrote: *the locals called the old part a “house”. The square, two-storey masonry extension with a large terrace from the middle of the 19th cent. was called a place, thus the estate had both a manor house and a palace!* [1], [5]. The building total volume was over 2700 m³, and the floor space more than 340 m² [4], [6].

At the same time, a timber house was constructed for the administrator-land steward-clerk of the estate. It was later converted to the kitchens, stables and a granary (Figure 3).

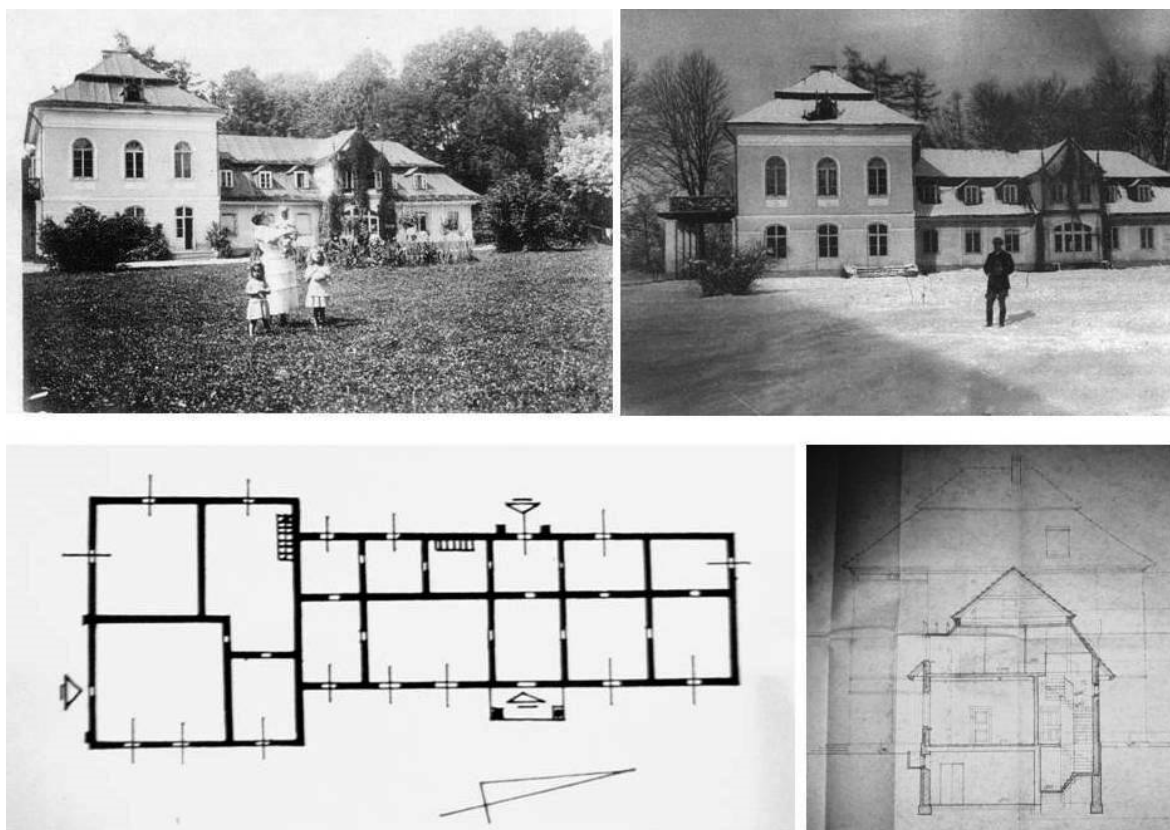


Figure 2. Sieciechowice. Manor house, as of 1924 [7], [1]; Plan and cross-section of the building [6]

Until 1945, the original manor and park complex included a centrally located manor house with the proper park, with a part of it designated for horse riding (hippodrome, *manège*). Additionally, a garden part was assigned to hold a vegetable garden, orchards, cold frames, glasshouses, ground cellars, and also a farmstead part. The latter comprised the following: an old timber building of labourers' living quarters, positioned in front of the mill, a watermill, a turbine, a large granary, cowsheds, two fish ponds, ground cellars, stables, a forge, a carpenter workshop, three barns, a new masonry building of labourers' living quarters. The manor house was accessible over two bridges: the main one and the ancillary one used for business purposes, and also over the road with a driveway that encircled the manor house on the east [4].



Figure 3. Sieciechowice. Manor house, as of 1968, 1973.
House of the *administrator-land steward-clerk* [6]

After 1945, following the country liberation and the estate expropriation, the Rey family went to live in their estates in France. Jadwiga Rey, the eldest daughter of Stanisław Rey, the manor house owner, designated a part of the masonry palace to house an elementary school.

The manor house-park complex was completely partitioned in the years 1945-1950. Stables and the watermill were demolished. Garden and orchards became separated, and the hippodrome with a riding hall were simply cancelled. The farmstead part was taken over by the Commune Cooperative, and it became a storage space for fertilisers and animal feedstuff.

In 1948, the floods and river Dłubnia meandering bed resulted in the park degradation. The water destroyed a number of encircling paths, and also the linden alley. Following the flooding of 1958, poplar trees were planted at the empty spaces of the park, which completely ruined its original layout. The park and manor house connection to the church was erased due to the loss of the alley, and that of the pedestrian bridge connecting the sites. A fragment of the park was assigned to hold a veterinary clinic, which has been preserved until the present day [4], [8].

After 1961, the masonry part of the palace was designated to house a kindergarten and rooms were used for running religion classes for school children. The manor house part built of timber was taken over by different individuals at the beginning of the 1980s, which lead to overall vandalization and the loss of the decorative zone around the building. The former manor house was at the disposal of the authorities of the Iwanowice Commune, which meant that no repair or conservation work was done. Improper use of the facilities of the former estate and the park resulted in a major deterioration of the value of the object. A part of the park was sold or expropriated.

The abuse on the estate and long-term neglect brought about irrevocable changes to the spatial composition. The relations between the built features and foliage were lost.

In the middle of the 1980s, a new owner of the former manor house had the 17th cent timber structure totally dismantled. The cellars situated below the ground level were the only components that were preserved. No other works were taken which meant further deterioration of the masonry part of the house.

In the following decades, the former manor house had different owners, and was finally returned to the Rey family, namely to Jadwiga Rey-Morawska, the landlord's daughter. At the end of the 20th cent., a preventive overhaul was conducted to keep the remains from falling into complete disrepair. No work was started, however, to restore the old part of the house, or to clean up the adjacent area (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Sieciechowice. Current state, March 2017

2.3. The restoration design and new function of the historic monument

The present owner of the historic estate in Sieciechowice, namely Arte Novum Foundation, offered to revitalise the whole manor house complex, which falls within the scope of their statutory activities. The Foundation's intension is *not only to restore the former manor house but also to reinstate the functions it once had. Due to the program we developed, we want to save the valuable historic monument and also to direct creative energy to the site and the area. To this end, manor buildings will be converted to the International Centre for Artistic Exchange* (Polish acronym is MOWA, meaning 'speech') [9]. The centre is intended to support the exchange of ideas, experience and concepts related to various

disciplines of arts and science [9]. It is planned that the project will have been completed by 2018.

The design effort is directed towards restoring the original stately residence and providing artists from all over the world with an environment in which they could develop works of art. The building interior will house workshops and exhibition spaces. The latter will be available to visitors, including local people.

The project visualisation clearly indicates quotations from the manor house shape of the 17th cent. However, the project will not involve a full restoration of the original form with the use of building materials characteristic of the period (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Sieciechowice. Manor house restoration design [9]

The first manor house in Sieciechowice was composed of two building forms that differed in style and the materials used. The older part, made of larch wood, dated back to the second half of the 17th cent. It was a single-storey building with usable attic space, covered by a multi-pitched roof and decorated with two front porches. The other, younger, part of the building is a two-storey masonry construction and was built in the 19th cent. for representation purposes (Figure 2).

The new architectural object, which is going to replace the demolished part of the old house, needs to be related to the new functions of the building. The plan is in the shape of a narrow rectangle, with characteristic traditional porches extending from side walls at the middle. The building will be covered with a high roof, “Polish” in style, having a timber structure. The residence distinctive feature will be the use of many glass walls at the ground floor and huge in-plane roof windows that will substitute the

dormer windows of the previous design. The façade design will echo a traditional, triangular porch pediment. The characteristic functional layout of the an old manor house, i.e. enfilade arrangement of a suite rooms with a large, centrally located, through hall will not be recreated.

The existing masonry part of the house will be retained as a whole and adjusted to modern needs. This part of the house shows an orderly layout, harmony and simplicity. The compact form of the “new palace” includes two storeys, i.e. raised ground floor and first floor. The plan view of the building shows almost a square shape 12m x 16m, located transversely to the shorter side of the timber structure [6]. The hipped, multi-pitched roof, in “Polish” style, supported by a timber structure will cover the building as before. The exterior walls (1m in thickness) made of day bricks will also include stone fragment, adding the air of tradition. Windows and doors, large and slender in accordance with the original design, will provide natural lighting to the interior. Frills and decorations will be refurbished or restored as they create an aesthetic impression and show respect to old builders’ craft. The refurbishment will include band courses, column pilasters, window trims and decorations. The scope of works, done under the supervision of the heritage preservation officer, will cover major refurbishment and also structural upgrading of the foundations, walls and the roof.

3. Conclusions

Attention paid to manor house-park complexes is related to the widespread interest in heritage, architectural traditions and culture of Poland’s nobility. This paper provides information on the Sieciechowice manor house, historic site and an element of cultural heritage left to us by the ancestors.

The manor house construction, occurring in two stages separated by a long period of time, was a key factor to account for when making design decisions on the adaptation of the “new palace” and restoration of the “old house” for the investor’s and users’ current needs.

Summing up, in the Sieciechowice manor house, the most important task is to take immediate action in order to save still existing but fast disintegrating historic components, namely the cellars of the old “house” and the “new palace”. Other activities will be related to construction work including maintenance and preservation of the maximum content of the historic fabric. Finally, the new substance with new functionalities will be introduced in the manner that accounts for historic values. All the decisions concerning alterations that results from contemporary requirements, standards and functions must be taken on individual basis. The actions mentioned above are intended to restore the significance to the architectural features and the site.

It should be noted that in Poland, the number of attempts at restoration and renovation of historic sites has been on the rise. They show that regardless of the degree to which a given monument has been preserved, the use of modern technologies to create new substance and give a new function to an object allows the old sites to regain significance² [10].

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² A modern restoration of a palace in Cianowice confirms the statement above. It became a good example of intervention taken with modern means to reinvent an object for modern contexts and usage while, at the same time, preserving valuable historical assets. [10], [11].

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