

Malpils Manor: architecture, cultural and historical developments. Second half of the 18th century – first quarter of the 21st century

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Abstract. The history of construction of the Malpils Manor (Lemburg), which is closely linked to cultural history, has developed over a long period of time – from the second half of the 18th century to the present day. It has seen its heyday and its down times, when it was burnt down and destroyed. However, its fate was not sealed to disappear from the face of the earth, as has happened to many similar buildings in other Latvian manors. The manor house has blossomed again in all its glory, and is awaiting everyone who wants to spend some time in a well-tended historic and truly noble environment. However, the study of the manor in its broad cultural and historical context is still relevant.

Keywords: architectural heritage, monument protection and preservation

Introduction

The oldest known exterior view of the palace, or as it would have been more correctly called at that time – the manor house, is a late 18th century drawing by an unknown artist, preserved at the Herder Institute in Marburg, Germany [3]. It has been published by cultural history researcher Dr.art. Ieva Pauloviča, with explanations of the buildings and plantings depicted [7]. Surrounded by outbuildings and park elements, it shows a single-storey stone building on a high basement floor, covered with a gabled roof, the ends of which are bevelled. There are mezzanines on both sides, roof windows and an attic floor, as the building did not have a usable roof floor at this time. The depiction of the building, of course, does not allow us to judge about the details. This ancient building was built in the 1770s-80s, when the owner of the manor was Gustav Wilhelm von Taube (*Taube von der Issen*, 1715–1775), who bought the property in 1760. From this period, the vaulted hall on the ground floor (basement) has survived with a fireplace made of Allazi limestone in one of the walls.

Materials and Methods

After the death of G.W. von Taube in 1775, Malpils Manor passed into the ownership of his son from the first marriage with Christina Elisabeth von Venediger – Friedrich Wilhelm von Taube (1744–1807), the Landrat of Vidzeme. In 1806, he signed a pledge agreement with a landlord and merchant from Riga – Wilhelm von Blankenhagen (v. *Banckenhagen*, 1761 - 1840), according to which the manor was mortgaged. This decision must have been made due to large debts.

Financial difficulties continued to pursue the next owner of the manor and as a result, in 1820,

the Malpils Manor was auctioned and became the property of [1] Friedrich von Grote (v. *Grote*, 1768–1836), the head of the Vidzeme Credit Society, from 1775 – Land Marshal and Landrat, who had studied law in Göttingen and Leipzig from 1768. His wife was Agneta Friederike von Gernsdorff (1777–1869). Until that time, hardly any major construction work has been carried out. Probably, the manor house had not changed its external appearance significantly over time, as the book by Heinz Pirang contains a picture of the last quarter of the 19th century, where the manor house looks similarly [11].

The building is covered by a grand gabled tiled roof with chamfered ends. The centre of the front facade is accentuated by a three-bay axial mezzanine with a triangular pediment with an oval-shaped window on its rather broad surface and a square window below it, which is an unusual architectural solution for the site. The facades are austere, without any decoration. Four symmetrically arranged chimneys rise above the ridge. You can see the lawn in front of the building, where the family of the owner of the manor is relaxing. The most interesting part of this photo is the main floor and the mezzanine windows, which show a Gothic division with gable spandrels. Is it the neo-style revival that has come into vogue and appealed to the manor's owners of those days, the von Grote family? In any case, for an ancient building, where heavy Baroque style is still present, these windows look rather unusual, yet interesting. It is possible that not only windows were Gothic but also the interior of the rooms, such as those found in other Latvian palaces and manor houses.



Fig. 1. View of the Malpils Manor. End of the 18th century
[Herder Institute in Marburg, Germany]



Fig. 2. Wilhelm von Blankenhagen [internet sources]

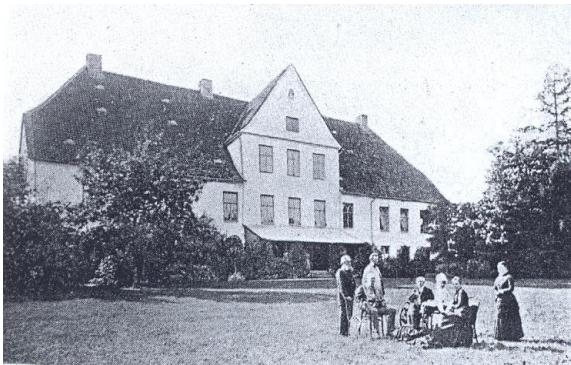


Fig. 3. Malpils Manor and its owners. Photo image of the last
quarter of the 19th century [Pirang H. Das Baltische
Herrenhaus. Riga, 1926]

After the death of F. von Grote, the Malpils Manor was inherited by his son Moritz Friedrich (1799–1884), who was married to Annette Klara Juliane Natalie, maiden name von der Borch (1801–1868). However, already in 1856, he chose his son Alexander Michael Andreas Maria von Grote (1829–1917), who was called Alexander in the everyday life, as the owner of the manor. In 1858, he married Countess Natalie Charlotte von Mellin (v. Mellin, 1831–1880), but their marriage was dissolved and they had no children. In 1875, Alexander von Grote entered into the second marriage with Fanny Armitstead (Armitstead, 1852–1900). Two children were born in this marriage – Else Karin (1883–) and Karin Luzy (1892–), married name von Brügger.

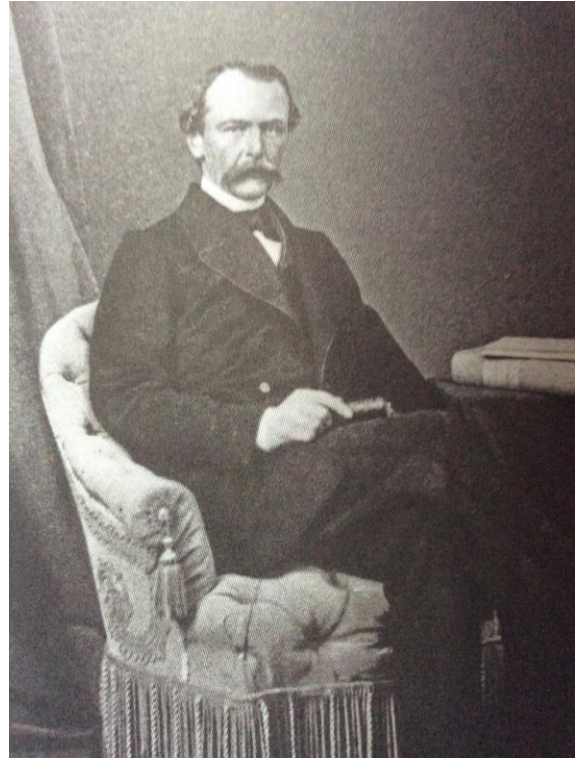


Fig. 4. Alexander von Grote [Verband der Baltischen
Ritterschaften e.V., Krusenstern-Archiv, Bildarchiv Foto
Marburg, id.nr 1.278.425]



Fig. 5. Else Karin von Grote
[The Naukseni People's Museum]

In the 1870s, during the time of Alexander von Grote, the manor house was renovated. The renovation did not result in the loss of the overall historic exterior, but the new roof and roof windows, as well as the alterations to the mezzanine roof introduced significant changes. These innovations use some Gothic elements, such as stepped cornices. The mansard roof was topped with roof structures that were quite massive and awkward in their architectural composition – at the bottom of the stepped gable were three openings echoing a Palladian window. The roof windows on either side of the roof were more unpretentious. The walls of the basement level were decorated with rustication, the windows had decorative borders, the openings of the mezzanine also had sandriks, and the



Fig. 6. Else Karin von Grote with the children of her sister Karin Luzy von Grote – Alexander Philipp, Madeleine Else and Philipp Ernst in the Malpils Manor park [The Naukseni People's Museum]

slopes of the cornice were layered with arcature motifs. Above the central entrance, there was a porch with cellular stone columns and a terrace on the second-floor level. The main floor windows were still with Gothic tracery, elsewhere the division was hexagonal. It is not yet clear why the three openings on the right side of the second floor have been combined and lowered to the floor level. May be this place was intended for a conservatory? This is supported by the memoirs of Pauline Cornet, Elsa Karin von Grote's housemaid, who said that the most flowers in the manor house were in the room before the hall [4]. The palace library is now located in this part of the house.

The manor after 1905

The transformed manor house, which already resembled a palace, was not destined to last long – on November 27, 1905 it was burnt down together with other similar buildings in Verene (*Fehren*), Vestiena (*Festen*), Taurupe (*Taurup*), Vibroka (*Sudden*), Riktere (*Siggund*) and elsewhere. Only parts of the masonry remained. As the roof burned, the structures of the buildings and even the chimneys caved in. This view is presented in the publication summarising the devastation of the 1905 unrest in the manors of Vidzeme [6]. Eyewitness records and testimonies about the burning of the manor in Malpils have been preserved and published by Līga Lapa. *Rūdolfš Fukss, the manager of*



Fig. 7. Malpils Manor house after burning in 1905 [Livlands zerstörte Schlösser. T. 1. Rigaer und Wendenscher Kreis. Riga: Ernst Plates, 1905–1906, S. 12, 13.]



Fig. 8. Survey of the neo-Gothic reconstruction of the Malpils Manor house [Riga Technical University, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Training aids department. The materials are deposited in the Malpils Manor Historical Materials Collection]

Malpils Manor...returned to Malpils and met many strange armed people in the manor, where his apartment was also located. The manager found that the utility room where the silverware was stored, and the wine cellar had been broken into. After a short time, a large crowd of half-drunk people arrived at the manor and started destroying the manor house, breaking windows, and then setting fire to the building and burning it to the ground [6].

V.L.N. Bockslaff's collection of works preserves a design of the courtyard and the final facade of the manor house, showing the building modified with Gothic elements [6]. A new division, different from the Gothic windows, has been designed for several windows. New chimneys have also appeared, which were not there before or later. On the park side, a covered terrace in wooden structures is planned, which is disproportionately low for the scale of the manor house. The drawing is not dated or signed.

After the loss of the family home and the cultural treasures accumulated over the centuries, it took more than a year before A. von Grote decided to restore the building. The design was entrusted to the well-known Riga architect Wilhelm Ludwig Nikolai Bockslaff (1858–1945) and the construction works were carried out from 1907 to 1911, the building project was signed in 1907. The works were managed by the Cecis builder Jānis Meņģelis (1829–1903) [13].



Fig. 9. The project of reconstruction of the Malpils Manor. 1907, arch. W.L.N. Bockslaff [RTU Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Training aids department, the materials are deposited in the Malpils Manor Historical Materials Collection]

W.L.N. Bockslaff was a great master in the interpretation of the forms of historical art styles. He preserved the existing volume, more specifically the walls, while introducing late 18th-century classical motifs into the building's architecture, making it more presentable, more luxurious and more individual. Everything authentic that was left was preserved. The mansard roof also made the building more attractive and brought it closer stylistically to late 18th-century prototypes. The central bay was enlarged on both sides by adding another aisle. The architectonic and decorative design of the facades also became more expressive with classical forms dominating. The architect's refined taste, wonderful sense of style and professionalism are also evident here. The rustication of the ground-floor facades, which made the building heavier, was preserved, while the main-floor window apertures were decorated with sandriks, the central one with triangles, and the second-floor window apertures of the risalit were encircled by a decorative band with a keystone motif. The division of the windows follows the spirit of the period, with only a small chamfer at the top. A circular window wrapped by a festoon was placed in the centre of the pediment. The larger roof windows on each side of the risalit were made decoratively more detailed. They were no longer excessively large, as those that perished in the revolutionary events of 1905. Now they fully matched the architectural composition of the building's facades. Special attention was also paid to the two small roof windows. The architect retained the merged window apertures on the right side of the main floor, which break the symmetry and is uncharacteristic of W.L.N. Bockslaff. He paid great attention to every detail, providing personal drawings of the window and door structures, including the terrace on the park side. Both the railing and the configuration of the terrace have been varied and sought after [13].

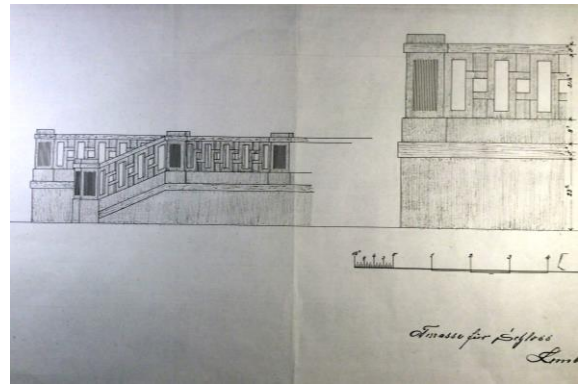


Fig. 10. A variant of the terrace solution. Architect W.L.N. Bockslaff [RTU Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Training aids department, the materials are deposited in the Malpils Manor Historical Materials Collection]



Fig. 11. View of Malpils Manor. Photo of 1930s [NKMP PDC]



Fig. 12. View of the Malpils Manor. Photo of 1911 [Historical heritage collection of the Malpils Municipality]



Fig. 13. View of the Malpils Manor.
Photo of the 1990s [NKMP PDC]



Fig. 14. Malpils Manor house [photo by author, 1976]



Fig. 15. Malpils Manor house, view from the park
[photo by author, 2020]



Fig. 16. The central part of the manor house from the yard
side [photo by author, 2009]

It is interesting that the two-storey extension at the right-hand end of the building, as seen from the parade yard, which is visible today and perceived as belonging to the site from the end of time, is not present in W.L.N. Bockslaff's project. This extension now houses a conservatory and a loggia above it near the Cigar Hall. It was boarded up during the Soviet times, but has been restored in its open nature. The extension is clearly visible in photographs taken around 1911 [4]. The ground-floor openings had segmental lintels. The roof of the second-floor loggia was supported by Doric columns, the sides were glazed with small-paned windows, and the railings of the open part were formed by balusters. This extension may have been made in the process of work with the desire to have a loggia on the second floor with a nice view of the park and the greenhouse.

But today we do not see the building exactly as we see it in the architect's design. Many its parts have changed, whether they have been lost or not built, or have been added. Photographs from the 1920s [4] already show a different division of the windows – fully small-chamfered, as it is now, a so-called blind window on the right side of the ground-floor, which is not in the project, simpler roof windows, decorative vases rising above the parapet behind the pediment (on both longitudinal facades). It is possible that these vases, which are not in W.L.N. Bockslaff's project, are the owner's own wish to make the building more luxurious. The vases are already present in photographs from the 1920s. In Soviet times, the inhabitants did not like the combined windows on the right side, where now the library is located, which are raised to the same height as the others.

The central part of the risalit and the corners are framed by cornices, which end at the top with a semicircular decoration. The intermixing of the eaves above these cornices with the framing of the perch on both ending facades is quite distinctive. It does not form a profile, but rather joins the eaves in a fluid way. The same solution is applied to the ending facades of the manager's house, which allows for suggesting that the two buildings may have been designed by the same architect.

Latvian agrarian reform and the Soviet period

Investigating the cultural history of a palace, it is important to learn about its use over time. After the Latvian agrarian reform, the last owner of the manor, Else Karin von Grote, who had no descendants, acquired in her ownership the manager's house, several outbuildings and 50 ha of land. In 1920, the manor house and the park were given to the Association of Retired Soldiers of the Latvian National Army, but it lacked the means to manage such a large site and, as a result, it was sold

to a private person. In 1940, the property was nationalised. From 1941 to 1949, the manor's building housed the Malpils Technical School of Home Economics, and from 1949 its premises functioned as the Malpils Technical Hydrotechnical Amelioration and Construction School. In 1967, the establishment of the Amelioration Museum started under the care of the Training aids department of the Malpils Technical School. In 1972, the construction of a so-called Malpils model village began, and Latvian Agricultural and Amelioration Museum was set up in the empty manor house [3]. At first it was located in one part of the ground floor, but as of 1984 it occupied the whole building. The aim of the museum was to study, preserve and promote the experience of hydraulic land improvement and to raise the qualification of land amelioration, to collect and preserve amelioration tools, design, construction and other materials [3].

During the Awakening, the fate of the manor house was not simple, the heirs of the former property emerged, whose generosity in restoring the site was questionable. In 2003, after several disputes, a private individual became the new owner of the manor. Restoration and reconstruction of the palace began in 2006 (SIA *Citadeles projekts*). Later, the project was supervised and adjusted by the architectural office SIA *KROKS*. This was followed by reconstruction works carried out by SIA *DJ ģipašumi*. The works were completed in August 2008.

Interior design

The layout is an integral part of the building history of the manor house. Precise information about this in the time of the von Taube's family is lacking. It is likely that the overall layout was close to what we see today, as the load-bearing walls have not changed significantly from the period of the von Taube's family to the present day, with the exception of an extension to the ending facade on the greenhouse side.

The first floor, which can also be called the ground floor, had a hall in the centre with the main staircase adjacent to it. The hall, following tradition, had an access to a large space and a terrace with further exit to the park. The layout of this floor was mainly corridor-based, with only a few key rooms being walkable, but even these were accessible from the corridor. When you reached the second floor by the grand staircase, the central room was then the Panel Hall with the access to the terrace on the courtyard side. From it, you could reach a group of representative rooms – a large hall and two small halls arranged in an enfilade. The rooms for daily life were located to the left of the Panel Hall and were arranged along a corridor. This layout principle was typical of many 18th, 19th and 19th century manor houses. There are interesting small servants'

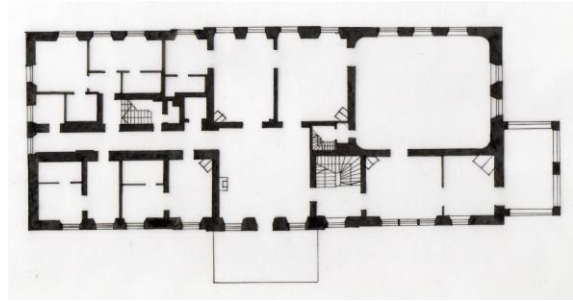


Fig. 17. The layout of the second floor of the manor house
[author's drawing]

stairs next to the large main staircase, which was used to serve the meal to the Great Hall during celebrations. The third floor or attic floor of the building was designed for living only after the reconstruction in the 1870s, but especially after 1905, and could easily accommodate servants and guests.

The cellar of the palace is small and has preserved since the beginning. Today, it houses two small rooms covered with cross vaults. Initially, there could be a single space with a pillar in the middle. The basement can be reached by a small steep staircase from the corridor and is lit by two small windows on the park side. This is the same wine cellar which the rebels of 1905 broke into.

Historic and modern interior

The cultural and historical environment of the manor house is unthinkable without a look at the former and current interior. The interior of the palace has been created over the centuries. Only a few records have survived from the time of the von Taube's family, many of which perished in a fire in 1905, as a result of a change of ownership and the neglectful attitude during the Soviet period. There are only a few known indications of the past interior. For example, the von Blankenhagens, who owned the manor from 1806 to 1820, travelled a lot, and the palace housed art objects acquired during their travels. Ernestine Schoultz – Ascheraden writes about them in her memoirs: *When I was in Rome 35 years later, I saw a bronze train with Romulus and Remus in the Capitol, and then I remembered the small model in the Malpils Manor that was standing in front of me, and special tables that were for sale in Rome with different types of marbles in different colours* (7). The Blankenhagen collection, housed in the manor, also included two landscapes by the German-Baltic artist, writer and poet, Karl Gothard Grass (1767-1814), born in Dserben in the family of a Lutheran pastor, which were acquired in Rome. From these memories, we cannot say exactly what works of the artist adorned the interior of the Malpils Manor house, but it should be noted that K.G. Grass was one of the most prominent personalities in the European cultural environment, whose homeland was Vidzeme [10].



Fig. 18. The staircase of the Malpils Manor house [photo of 1930s. Collection of the Baltic Central Library]



Fig. 19. The Panel Hall [photo by author, 2009]



Fig. 20. The Great Star Hall [photo by author, 2009]

Things we can see and enjoy today are all historical things that has come to us and that careful restoration and renovation can bring today – the estate owner's understanding of the values to be preserved, his passion for collecting, and the accumulation of outstanding art treasures in an environment appropriate to them. Thus, entering the manor house through the main door, you see a hall (the hotel foyer) with two massive columns supporting the cross vault. The ribs are tonally accentuated, which emphasises the structural system. Fragments of the original staircase were preserved, carefully restored and integrated into the reconstructed staircase. Information about the original appearance of the staircase railings when the

restoration work started was rather scarce – a photo from the 1930s, and that was it.

As already mentioned, a heavy fireplace made of Allazi cellular stone with a cornice supported by printed Doric half-columns survives in the hall from the time of the von Taube's family. The material itself, with its texture and shade, makes the fireplace picturesque. The floor tiles match the tonal solution of the hall, dividing the floor plane into rectangular squares with darker bands according to the arrangement of the columns. The hall displays several groups of historic furniture, such as two sofas with antique value, which provide a comfortable welcome for guests.

At the very centre of the second floor, on the parade courtyard side, there is the Panel Hall, one of the largest rooms in the manor house. It takes its name from the coffered oak ceiling, which survives from the renovation of 1911. The ceiling decoration was carefully restored during the renovation in accordance with correct methodology. It has been stripped of several layers of paint, both whitewash and oil paint, cycled, damaged parts dismantled and refinished with a historically appropriate knife, minor damages and cracks repaired with linseed oil, water leaks disinfected with an antibacterial compound, tinted with mineral pigments. The wood surfaces were then impregnated with cold-pressed linseed oil. It should be noted that all the original wooden parts were restored according to a common concept, using historically traditional materials – linseed oil, linseed oil tinsel, mineral pigments, etc. In this room, the historic windows with oak sills and leathered sashes and sills have been restored, and a green moulded glazed tile stove (second half of the 19th century) has been reinstalled. The floor of the hall is covered with herringbone oak parquet. The room is decorated with paintings by the Skulme family. Of course, a collection of historic furniture is presented here and elsewhere. It is a group of Biedermeier-style furniture in the corner by the window – a round table and four chairs in shapes popular in Central Germany in the 1830s. The other set of this style of furniture is next to the dresser – a sofa, four lounge chairs and a round table. Double doors lead from the hall to a summer terrace with a good view of the whole courtyard.

From the Panel Hall, you enter the Small Star Hall, named after the parquet floor with a star in the centre of an inlaid shield. The parquet is an exact copy of the historical parquet, as the original was unfortunately worn out beyond recognition in Soviet times. The ceiling is outlined by a recessed cornice, and the plafond by an oval frame. The room is furnished with a Biedermeier furniture group – a central table with armchairs. There is a cabinet standing by the outer wall made in the Bula technique in the second half of the 19th century – a

gift from Vladimir Hans Georg Herzberg (V. H. G. Herzberg) to the owner of the manor. On one side of the Small Star Hall, there is the Fireplace Hall, which has a newly installed white glazed tile stove (second half of the 19th century). The room is decorated with an Empire-style, carved mahogany chiffonier (first half of the 19th century), acquired from an antique shop in France. The paintings by artist Anita Arbidāne – copies of portraits of Baron Taube and his wife are above the chiffonier.

On the other side of the Small Star Hall, there is the Great Star Hall, which also takes its name from the parquet pattern. It has been restored from the fragments that still remain. The hall, which corners are rounded, retains restrained ceiling decorations from 1911 – the ceiling plane is framed by an oval cornice and circular decorations at the corners. A simple rosette accentuates the centre of the ceiling plane. The Great Star Hall is the most luxurious and the largest room in the manor house with the area 110 m². Interestingly that in the 1950s, the walls of the Great Star Hall were decorated with national ornaments in stencil technique, complemented by the coats of arms of the USSR. This is shown in a photograph of some celebratory event [4]. The parquet in the hall was well preserved at this time. The folk ornaments were no longer visible around 1985, as shown in another photo of the local mixed choir and spectators [4].

Next to the Great Star Hall, there is the Library, and the Cigar Hall is next to it, where a fireplace

preserved from the manor times. Its cornice is supported by Gothic columns. In this room, at the initiative of the owners of the manor, a stone fragment with a segmental arch was uncovered, which is a testimony to the building history of its time. The Cigar Hall is adjoined by a terrace overlooking the orangery and a part of the park. The third floor can be reached by the main staircase or by the small stairs, which, being stripped of its many layers of paint, delights with its pristine colour and almost a hundred-year ageing.

Conclusions

The Malpils Manor house is a remarkable example of the interpretation of late 18th-century classical motifs, restored after the riots of 1911. Over the last decade, the revived manor house has attracted more and more visitors, tourists and public events. The interior of the palace cannot be called a hotel, a guest house or a venue for social events. The palace is more than that. In fact, a truly noble environment has been created here – the home of a wealthy family with ballrooms, salons, a library, etc. The upstairs suites are just an exclusive opportunity for the general public, who can appreciate and enjoy such a cultural environment, to find a night rest after the events and activities in the other parts of the palace. Latvian cultural heritage is complemented by a restored and renovated site that is accessible to the public.

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21. Mālpils novada vēsturisko materiālu krājums

AUTHOR:

In 1979, **Jānis Zilgalvis** graduates from the Faculty of Architecture of the Riga Technical University. In 1990, he defends his doctoral thesis on the theme "The Latvian manor architecture from the second half of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century. Since 1995, he heads the Department of Architecture of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection and from 2001 until 2014 – he is the dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning of Riga Technical University. Since 2012, he is a full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. He has more than 180 scientific and popular scientific publications, and he is the author of 21 books (for some books – a co-author). His main research directions are as follows: manor architecture and history of culture, sacred architecture, protection and utilization of the cultural heritage.

Kopsavilkums. Mālpils muižas pils (*Lemburg*) būvvesture, kas ir cieši saistīta ar kultūrvēsturi, veidojusies ilgākā laika posmā – no 18. gs. otrās puses līdz pat mūsdienām. Tā piedzīvojusi gan uzplaukuma laikus, gan nedienas, kad tikusi nodedzināta un postīta. Tomēr liktenis nebija lēmis pilij nozust no zemes virsas, kā tas noticis ar daudzām līdzīgām ēkām citās Latvijas muižās. Tā atkal uzdziedējusi visā savā krāšņumā, uzposta un iekārtota gaida ikvienu, kas alkst pabūt sakārtotā kultūrvēsturiskā un īsteni muižnieciskā vidē. Taču aizvien aktuāla ir pils izpēte plašā kultūrvēsturiskā kontekstā.

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Mālpils muižas pils ir ievēribas cienīgs 18. gs. beigu klasicisma motīvu interpretējuma paraugs, ēku atjaunojot pēc 1905. gada nemieriem. Pēdējā desmitgadē atdzimusi pils piesaista aizvien lielāku interesentu loku, to apmeklē tūristi, tajā tiek rīkoti dažādi publiski pasākumi. Pils iekštelpas nevar dēvēt ne par viesnīcu, ne viesu namu, ne saviesīgu notikumu rīkošanas vietu. Pils ir kaut kas vairāk. Būtībā ir radīta īsteni muižnieciska vide – bagātas ģimenes mājoklis ar svētku zālēm, saloniem, bibliotēku utt. Augšstāvos esošie apartamenti ir tikai kā ekskluzīva iespēja plašākai publikai, kura spēj novērtēt šādu kultūrvēsturi un to baudīt, rast naktsmieru pēc pils telpās pavadītiem pasākumiem. Savukārt Latvijas kultūras mantojums ir papildināts ar restaurētu un atjaunotu, visai sabiedrībai pieejamu objektu.