

HABSBURG HUNTING PALACE IN VISTULA – AN ATTEMPT AT ARCHITECTURAL RECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

The Castle of the President of the Republic of Poland in Vistula is a specific architectural continuation of the Habsburg hunting mansions built in this location. Previously, there was a larch Hunter's Castle in this place, the residence of the Cieszyn princes from the Habsburg dynasty. It was erected in 1907. In 1927 it was allocated to the seat of the President of the Republic of Poland, but a few days before handing over to the Head of State, a fire destroyed the residence (December 1927). Few photos and plans have survived to our times. Therefore, this residence is an architectural mystery. We do not know its exact plans or room layout. Therefore, the authors have attempted to recreate the architectural formula and function of this Habsburg residence. This task was all the more difficult, as even the oral accounts of this residence are fragmentary. In their work, the authors relied, among other things, on their knowledge of the log structure in which the residence was erected, and on the documentation made available from the collections of the Museum of Cieszyn Silesia. In the study, the authors also referred to the use of computer techniques to assist in the process of developing the present attempt to reconstruct the Castle. These techniques allow a much deeper analysis of the factual material, which is an important source of this study.

Keywords: Residence, Hunting Castle, Wisła.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of protecting or at least preserving the heritage of material culture in the form of buildings that are carriers of broadly understood local architecture is an increasingly important issue, as it is associated with an increasingly faster process of its degradation and replacement with modern forms [1]. On the other hand, it is important to strive to recreate the forms of ancient buildings and architectural thought in order to fully understand the historical processes and the social background of past times. This pursuit is carried out both in the field of experimental archeology (construction of objects using historical techniques) and supplementing

knowledge in the field of history and theory of architecture (through research of source materials and their critical analysis). In this regard, computer modeling and virtual reality or virtual object modeling have recently come to the rescue [2]. Linking such a virtual model with the context of an existing place allows tracking the formal and emotional relationships of the building with its landscape and even their mutual interactions [3]. This leads to an understanding of their essence as a place that already has a psychophysical bond with its local community. Thus, this bond allows describing the analyzed building (including the residence) in a completely different format on many levels. It also allows for a more precise definition of conservation care [4].

2. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCHES

Due to the specificity of the subject, the appropriate selection of research methods was adopted. First, archival research and field research (in situ) were used. Archival research was based on the methods used in historical research. Particularly used was: searching, identifying, selecting information as well as the inference by analogy. The function of the examined objects was also verified. It should be emphasized that the photographic material was collected thanks to the help of the curator of the photographic collection of the Museum of Cieszyn Silesia, Mr. Mariusz Makowski.

3. HABSBURG HUNTING CASTLE

The Habsburg princes of Cieszyn liked the Wisła area because there was a large population of capercaillies that they loved to hunt [5]. The first hunting residence in this area was a forester's lodge built in the mid-nineteenth century on the Przysłop clearing, which still exists today as the Forest Chamber. Later, a larger facility was built, called the Hunter's Palace, which, after moving to the center of the Wisła, now serves as the seat of PTTK. Finally, in 1907, at the request of Archduke Frederick Habsburg, also being the Prince of Cieszyn, the Hunting Castle was erected. It was located at a distance from the Szarcuła pass, on Zadni Groń hill.

This Castle was designed by archduke's architect Ernest Altmann. Some drawings of the plans for this residence have survived to this day (Fig. 1). In the designer's assumption, it was supposed to be a larch building in the style referred to as Carpathian-Tyrolean [5]. The Castle was built by the company of Eugeniusz Fulda from Cieszyn. It was a one-story building with a functional attic erected on a stone basement (Fig. 2). It was connected by a covered passage with an outbuilding intended for the service and meal preparation. This is typical of noble mansions, as kitchens are often located in separate outbuildings so that the smells do not reach the owners' rooms. For a short period (until the end of the Empire), the Hunting Castle served as the hunting residence of Archduke Frederick for the capercaillies and deer hunting. Among others, the German emperor Wilhelm II with general Hindenburg (in 1915), as well as Charles I, emperor of Austria with general Hötendorf, hosted here. This residence played the role of a specific state hunting residence in Austria-Hungary.

In independent Poland, the Castle was taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture, but it had no idea how to develop this facility. As early as November 1918, the building was plundered by the local Highlanders [5]. Probably in this symbolic way, the Highlanders took revenge for the actions of the princely forest service, whose employees came from Austria. Historical materials show that from the 17th / 18th century the oppression of peasants from this area was very strong. The Habsburg administration even tried to prohibit grazing sheeps in the mountains, treating the area as private. Historical materials also show that the local peasants, trying to improve their fate, fled to the Poland. The situation improved somewhat after 1774, when, as a result of the peasant uprising, some farms were parceled out to the local inhabitants [6].

In 1927, the Parliament (Sejm) of the Silesian Voivodeship passed a resolution to designate the Castle for the residence of the President of the Republic of Poland. The initiator of this idea was the Silesian Voivode, Michał Grażyński. The Silesian Voivodship also undertook to renovate the facility [5]. This residence was to become a symbol of the connection between Silesia and Poland. One can even more broadly say that due to its location (at the source of the Vistula River), it was a symbol of this connection [7]. The renovation was completed on December 23, 1927.

It should be noted that the renovation took about 2 weeks, so it was rather a general cleaning and decoration of the facility. The decision of the Silesian Sejm was made in November 1927 [8] and carried out with the help of local enterprises indicated by the contractor, without conducting a tender. Unfortunately, on the night of December 23-24, the building burned down completely. Until today, it has not been clarified whether it was a deliberate arson or the result of carelessness of the workers carrying out the renovation, although attention is drawn to accidental setting fire by the workers [9]. Due to this fire, which basically broke out shortly after the completion of renovation works, no photographic documentation of the work was done. Hence, we do not have any knowledge of both the layout of the rooms and their decor.

It should be noted that only a few photos, elevation views and floor plans of this residence from the time of its construction, i.e. from years 1905-1907 (Fig. 1, 2, 3), have survived to this day. Additionally, these materials refer to at least two architectural variants of this hunting residence. Hence, knowledge about this residence, its appearance and the nature of the

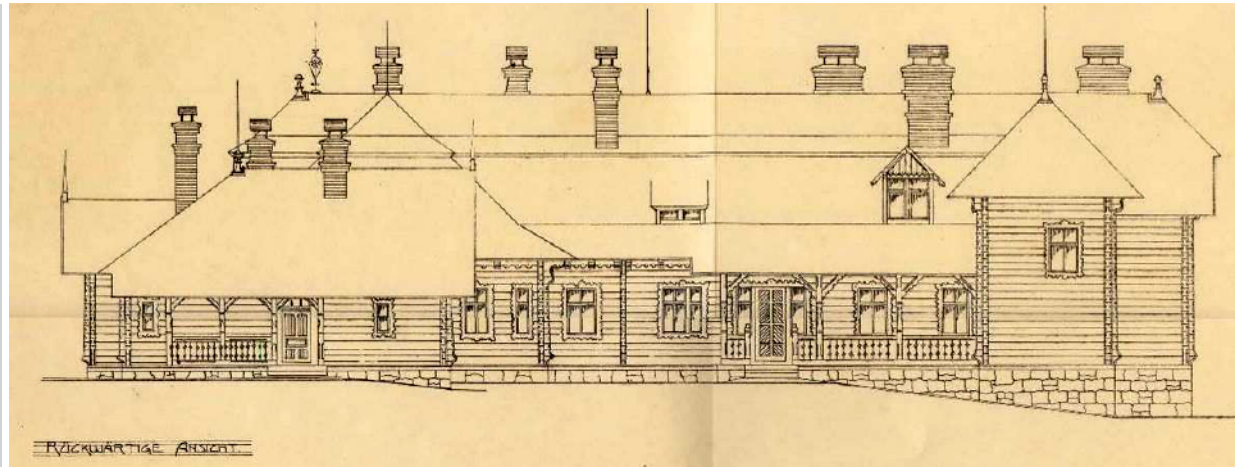


Figure 1.
Plans of elevations of the Hunting Castle. Front elevation (west). Source: from the collection of M. Makowski

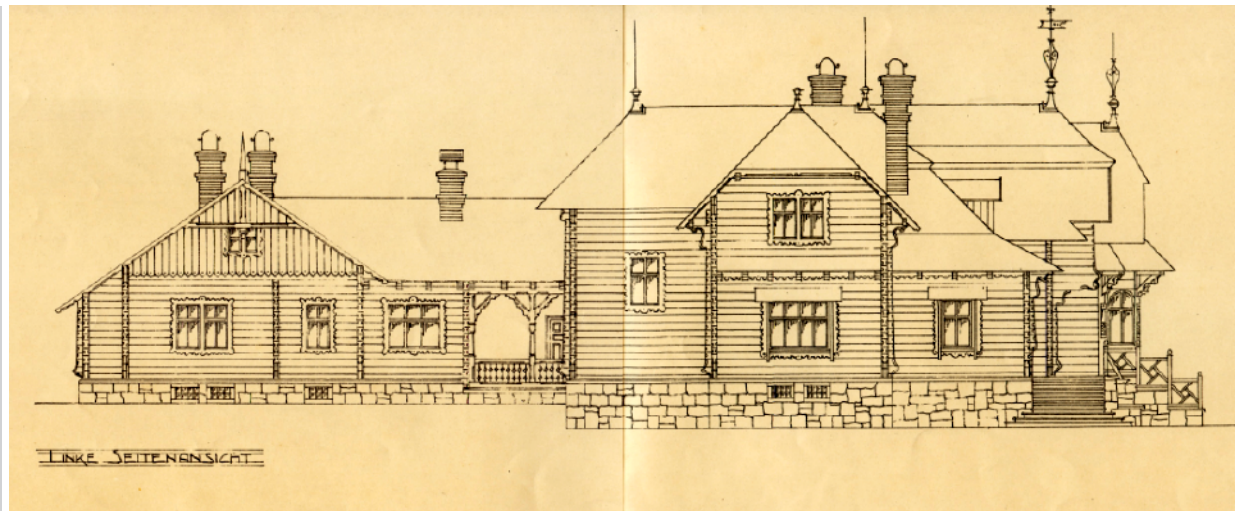


Figure 2.
Plans of elevations of the Hunting Castle. South elevation. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski

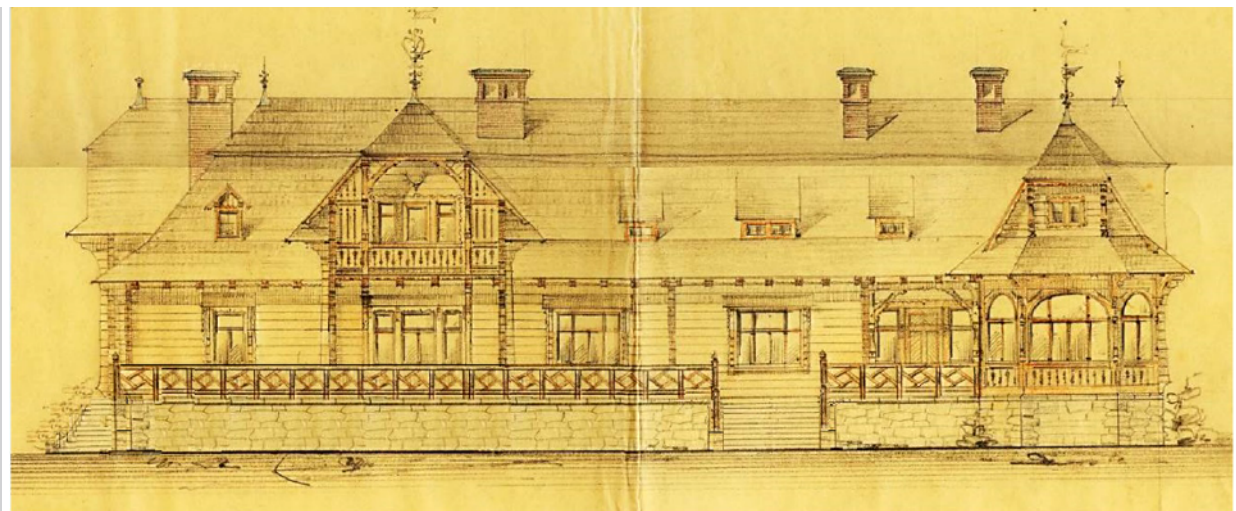


Figure 3.
Plans of elevations of the Hunting Castle. Rear elevation (east). Rear elevation improved by the authors on the basis of photographic documentation. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski



Figure 4.
View of the Hunting Castle. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski



Figure 5.
Rear view of the Hunting Castle. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski

rooms is rather uncertain. Following this premise, it was decided to develop an architectural monograph of this building that would allow, at least to some extent, to restore it to the material heritage of our region. This monograph aims to explain the general character of the building, including its actual dimensions. Secondly, it is an attempt to define the nature of rooms of this residence.

It should be emphasized that the lack of studies and factual sources concerning this residence results in descriptions which raise doubts in terms of credibility. For example, according to one source: the facility consisted of two wings forming L-shape building, each of 37 m long. It had approx. 30 rooms, a large polygonal dining room decorated with highlander equipment, a spacious terrace and veranda at the

front and utility rooms at the rear [10]. Such a description also appears in Polish Wikipedia [11]. According to another: the palace was not small. The Archduke, coming to Zadni Groń, had at his disposal, among others about 30 rooms, a large dining room, a large terrace... [12]. However, even from a cursory analysis of those documents that have survived, one can draw different conclusions about the characteristics of this residence.

The general view of the entire residential complex is shown in the photograph from the “Habsburg” period is presented below (Fig. 4). Other photos (from the 1920s) also show this view of the building, so they add nothing new to the analysis. Even a cursory analysis of the photo shows that the entire complex could have been 37 m long, including the carriage crossing and the building on the left side, which can be described as the gatehouse (hypothetically). The lack of photos showing the dimensions of the residence in the transverse direction (the second wing is suggested) also leads to the conclusion that this information is exaggerated. This aspect will be discussed a little later, as to some extent this information seems to be justified.

The main building of the Castle itself was smaller. It is shown in the illustration above, showing the view from the west side, and in the illustration below, showing the view from the south-east side (Fig. 5). The analysis of the plans shows that the main building was approximately 30–32 m long and 13–16 m wide. The analysis of both photos shows that the main building was erected on a rectangular plan, not the letter L one. The shape of the building was only slightly varied. This observation is confirmed by the analysis of floor plans. However, the role of the side wing was played by the kitchen building separated from the main building (in the center in Fig. 2, to the right of the passage).

Information on the layout of individual rooms of the residence may be provided by the layout plans of the different design version of the Castle (variant II). This version was slightly less expanded than the adopted version of the project (variant I). Unfortunately, the floor plans for the version I have not been preserved. These plans (variant II) are presented below (Fig. 6).

In the presented plan, the main building is referred to as the Jagdhaus and the kitchen building as the Küchengebäude. The analysis of the scale of the plans (scale at the bottom of the plan) shows that the main building in this version was about 24 m long and about 12–14 m wide (this does not apply to the width

of the dining room axis, in which the window bay should also be taken into account). The number of rooms on the ground floor is 13, including toilets and washrooms (the number of rooms on the first floor is 10 including 2 attics, however, the plan of the attic is not included in this study because the layout of the rooms on the first floor / attic was not reconstructed). It is a total of 8 rooms (5 rooms per floor). The height of the storey is about 3.5 m.

The kitchen building has 5 rooms (3 work and living rooms), including 2 open rooms (vestibule and pantry). It is designed on a square plan with a side of about 10 meters. It is connected to the main building by a covered passage (gedeckten Gang). This approach was typical of noble mansions, where kitchens were located in separate buildings so that kitchen smells would not disturb the tenants of the manor. Within the kitchen cabin there are three ovens, including one kitchen stove and probably also a bread stove and an oven.

Unfortunately, no plans of the gatehouse opposite the kitchen building have survived (Fig. 4), but it can be assumed that it was divided into a maximum of 3 rooms. There was one furnace within it.

Therefore, taking into account the indicated analysis of the number of rooms, it should be concluded that the number 30, given in the sources, actually refers to rooms, not living rooms, because the analysis of the facade plans and photos shows that the target building was only slightly larger and the number of rooms was only slightly larger as well.

According to the analysis of the photographic documentation, the walls of the Castle were erected in the log technique on a stone foundation. Unfortunately, the method of waterproofing larch beams is unknown. The role of the foundation was to level the floor and insulate the walls from the ground. There was also a basement, as indicated by the elevation plans (windows in the foundation). The main building has a four-sided gambrel-style mansard roof. The structure of the roof itself is unknown, but it was probably the attic truss structure. However, this is only a guess. The slope of the roof is 45°, so it is suitable for the location. The roof was shingled, which is typical of the area.

The main façades of the building (west and east) were multi-axis (from 6 to probably 8 axes). The southern elevation had three axes. Based on the ground floor plans of version II, one can try to conclude that there were no openings (door or window) on the northern elevation.

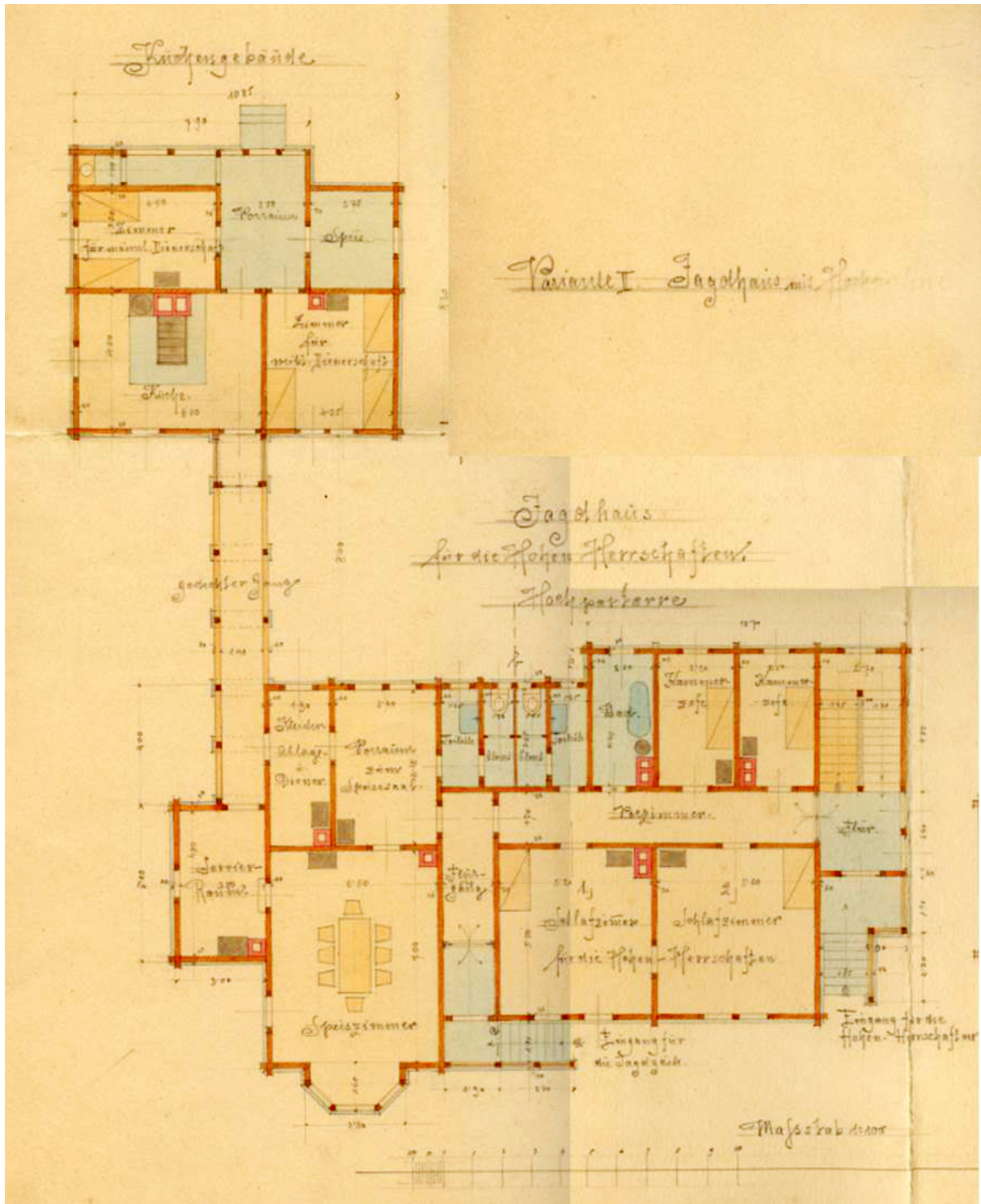


Figure 6. Plan of the first floor of the version II with the kitchen building. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski

The main complex, consisting of the main building, the kitchen building and the gatehouse, was accompanied by a complex of auxiliary buildings, including

stables, located below the main complex. It survived the fire and was later used to service the Hunting Castle of the President of the Republic of Poland.



Figure 7.
View of two wings of the Hunting Castle in Rominty Wielkie from the entrance side. Source: Bildarchiv Ostpreußen

4. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROOM LAYOUT

Taking into account the presented facts, it is possible to undertake an architectural reconstruction of the ground floor of the Habsburg Hunting Castle in Wisła in order to illustrate the layout of the rooms in a real building and to explain the misunderstandings surrounding this topic. These misconceptions concern the size of the complex itself, the number of rooms or the layout of the main building.

For this purpose, information on the layout of rooms in the Wilhelm II Hunting Castle in Rominty Wielkie was also used (Fig. 7). It is most often referred to as the Jagdhaus Rominten (although as Jagdschloss too). It is one of the few hunting lodges with a relatively detailed architectural description and with a cubature similar to the Habsburg Castle (if we only refer to the imperial building). It was built in 1891 as a wooden hunting lodge for the Emperor of Prussia in the Romincka Forest, a traditional hunting ground for kings and emperors of Prussia [13].

The building in Rominty was described in the British magazine “The Builder” from 1894, Issue of October

3 in volume 67 (July-December) on page 305 [14] (according *Przykłady Nordyckiego Renesansu*). Unfortunately, the quality of the illustrations is not the highest, hence the analysis of the subject includes reconstructions of plans. Also the descriptions of the layout of the rooms are not fully precise. However, it should be noted that only the imperial building is visible in the above photo (Fig. 7). It was connected by a covered passage (visible on the left) with the empress's building, built on a rectangular plan and closing a visible courtyard. Currently, the imperial building is located in the Central Park in Kaliningrad, where it was moved in the early 1950s.

The hunting lodge in Rominty was designed in the shape of the letter C. The side wings were two-story and the center was one-story. It was possible to enter both wings from the courtyard. There was an entrance loggia at the right wing. From the rear, on the first floor, both wings had balconies (Fig. 8), made using the woodcarving technique (similar to the guest room in the attic in Wisła, shown in (Fig. 5). The ground floor of the building in Rominty was laid out as follows (Fig. 8).

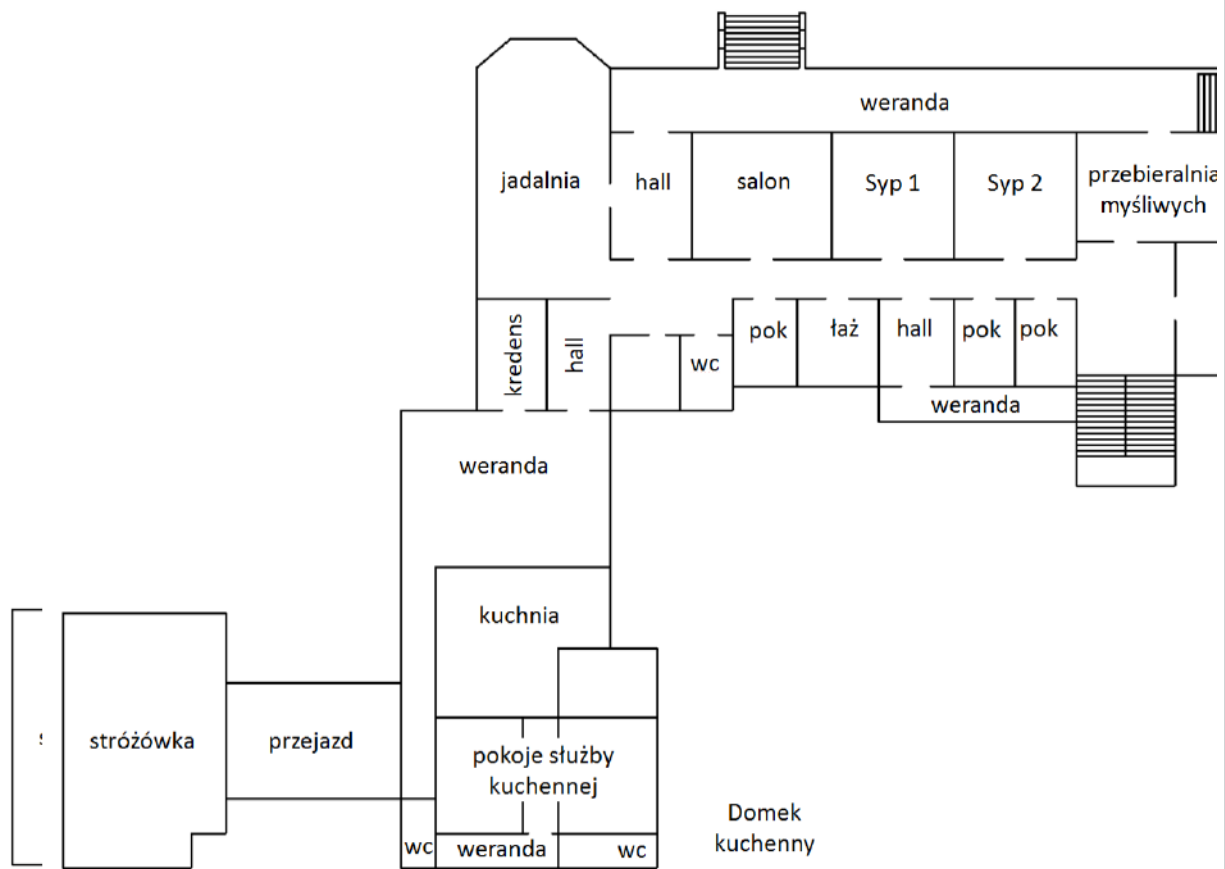


Figure 8.
Reconstruction of the plan of the first floor with the kitchen and guard buildings. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski

The dominant and central room was the dining room connecting the two wings. It was about 12 meters long (40 feet behind The Builder) and about 6.7 meters (22 feet) wide. It also served as a reception room where the emperor received his guests. Next to the dining room, a sideboard was planned for preparing meals to be served (kitchen and farm rooms were located in the basement – differently than in the case of the Vistula River). The left wing was the imperial wing (Wilhelm II) from which, it was said, was a direct passage to the empress's building. It housed a hall and a living room. On the first floor there was the emperor's study, his bedroom and adjutant's bedroom, and a bathroom (from: Examples of the Nordic renaissance The right wing, on the other hand, was the service wing. There were probably guest rooms on his floor also.

Carrying out the reconstruction was based on several assumptions. Firstly, it was assumed that the two draft versions do not differ significantly from each other. Secondly, it is assumed that the location of the

internal walls is determined by the frameworks visible in the elevation drawings and photos. Thirdly, in order to determine the approximate dimensions of the rooms, the proportions of dimensions were used and they were related to the dimensions from the plan of version II. Fourthly, analogies were used with the rooms shown on the floor plan with the rooms layout in the Castle in Rominty. Taking into account all these assumptions, a hypothetical room plan and the layout of the elements of the residential complex of the Hunting Castle in Wisła were developed, which is shown in (Fig. 9).

The main element of the ground floor, as in Rominty Wielkie, was a dining room with an area of about 40 m², characterized by a bay window. Next to it, there was a sideboard used to prepare a meal to be served by the servants. In front of the dining room there was probably a lounge where guests could meet before or after the meal. On the ground floor there were also the main bedrooms (Archduke and Archduchess, as indicated in the plans of the version II), each of

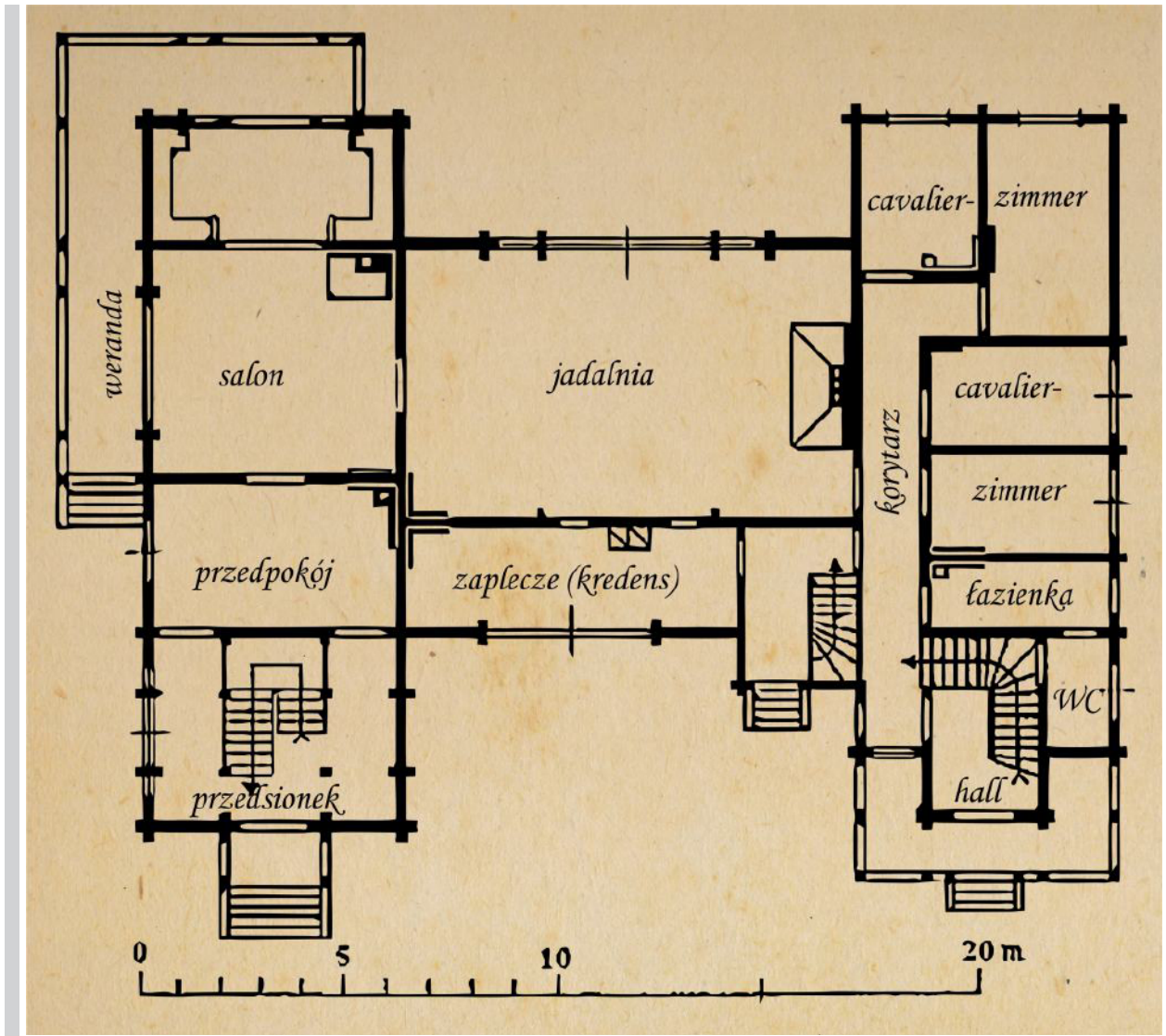


Figure 9.
View of two wings of the Hunting Castle in Rominty Wielkie. Source: Examples of the Nordic renaissance

approximately 25 m². This distinguishes this Castle from the one in Rominty Wielkie. There, the imperial bedroom was upstairs. However, the plans for version II indicate that there were guest and service bedrooms (3 or 4) on the first floor in the Wisła. On the other side of the corridor was a bathroom with a tub, a washroom and butler's rooms. It was similar in Rominty. On the ground floor there were also members of the court rooms (cavalier-zimmer), a bathroom and a toilet. The imperial bathroom, on the other hand, was on the first floor. There was also a hunters' room on the ground floor, where they could change after hunting and leave their weapons.

In terms of architectural details, it can only be stated that the elevation views and partly the photographs

suggest the use of carved elements, such as woodcarving ornaments, porch balustrades or finishing of the balcony of the guest room on the first floor. The woodcarving details in the interiors are completely unknown. Some information about the carved finish of the building can be found in the analysis of the adjacent chapel (St. Jadwiga of Silesia), which is part of the Castle complex (Fig. 11), and which was completed in 1909 as a supplement to the residential complex. The interior design of the Castle in Wisła is also unknown. It is only known that it was "hunting". Some information about the appearance of the interior can be provided by the appearance of the chapel (Fig. 11) and, by analogy, the appearance of some rooms in Rominty (Fig. 12, 13, 14).



Figure 10.
Chapel. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski



Figure 11.
Inner of the chapel. Source: from the collection of M. Makowski



Figure 12.
Photograph of room in Rominty Wielkie (probably the 1920s). Source: Bildarchiv Ostpreußen

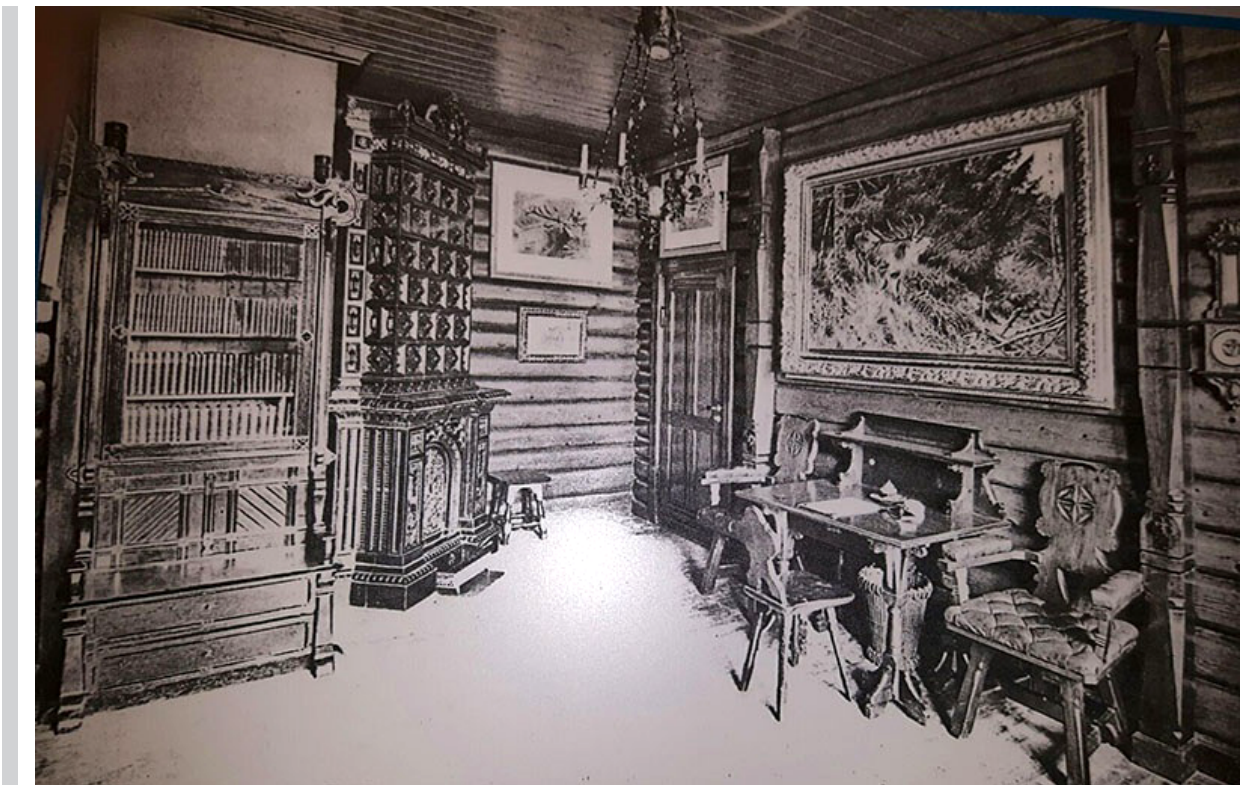


Figure 13.
Photographs of room in Rominty Wielkie (probably the 1920s). Source: Bildarchiv Ostpreußen

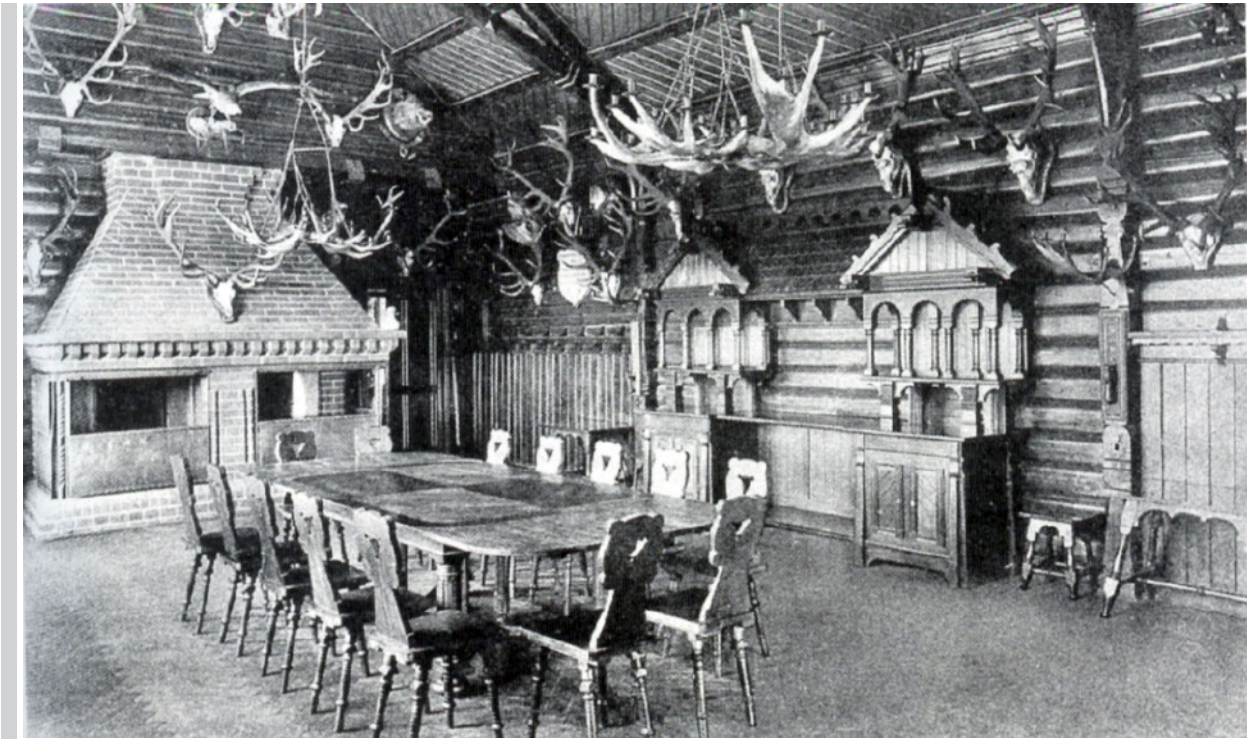


Figure 14.
Dining room in Rominty Wielkie (probably the 1920s). Source: Bildarchiv Ostpreußen

Before analyzing the photos of the interiors in Rominty, it should be clearly stated that the favorite style of decoration of the Prussian aristocracy was the neo-Gothic style, the influence of which is clearly visible on them (Nordic Renaissance – dragon style). Even the piano in the dining room in Rominty was decorated with woodcarvings in this style [15]. Rather, it was not the leitmotif of the interior design of the Hunting Lodge in Wisła. More likely in this case is the Tyrolean style.

Referring to the indicated photographs, it should be stated that the building in Wisła was, like in Rominty, heated with stoves. The plans for version II show that each chimney from the elevation plans and photos corresponded to 1 stove. They were doubled in the attic of the main building. The number of stoves was not too large, as efforts were made to make some of them to heat two rooms (this was the case with the bedrooms on the ground floor). Probably, apart from the kitchen, they were tiled stoves. Unfortunately, no information on this element of the building has survived. Hence, it cannot be judged whether they were specially designed for this residence (as in the case of Rominty) or whether they were standard products of their era. However, a certain difference in terms of heating is the fact that in the Wisła in the dining room

there was probably a stove (according to the plans for version II), while in Rominty there was a fireplace.

The same applies to furniture and decor elements such as chandeliers or wall lamps. It is not known whether in Wisła they were specially designed, maintaining the “hunting” style or standard. Some imagination of the interior design according to “hunting” style could be found in interiors of Rominty (unfortunately, probably only 3 photos presented interiors in Rominty have survived in the archives).

4. SUMMARY

This study contains an architectural reconstruction of the layout of the rooms on the ground floor of this residence, and the layout of the buildings that create the entire residential complex, which allows for drawing rational conclusions about the structure of this complex, the number of rooms and their functionality. According to what has been shown, the total number of rooms in the hunting lodge in Wisła oscillated around the number of 30, however, the rooms having the living function were probably around 10 to 15 (taking into account bedrooms and including those for servants, dining room, cupboard, living room etc.). The main building itself was designed on a rectangular

plan (maximum dimensions of about 32 m by about 14 m) than the letter L plan. Considering the overhang with a staircase and overhang with a cupboard and hall, it was possibly a plan based on the letter C (Fig. 9). Together with the kitchen building, it formed an L-shaped layout. The dimensions of this complex of two buildings are about 35 m by 35 m. It should be noted, however, that the kitchen building was connected to the main building only by a veranda (probably also a basement, which is suggested by the windows under the kitchen building (although it is not certain) and a roof. The gatehouse was a complement to the residential complex (the function of this building is hypothetically determined by analogy in other similar facilities – manor's gatehouses). The gatehouse is located, according to the photo analysis, flush with the kitchen building and is connected to it by a covered passage, in which the oval outline of the entrance has been cut out (Fig. 4). Thus, it can be said that the entire residential complex was designed on the plan of a simplified letter S. The maximum length of this complex is a little over 40 m. It should be noted that the given dimensions are maximum. The downward difference, due to the adopted relations and proportions used to draw the assumption plan, may be up to 25% down. Thus, the length of the complex may vary from approximately 33 to 43 m.

This study shows the possibility of computer techniques to conduct the investigations related to history of architecture in the context of buildings which currently do not exist. In the case of ruins it is possible to use archeological evidences or utilize the photogrammetric analyze of remains. But in the case of same buildings, in which locations new objects were erected, it is possible only to use the factual material. This applies especially to iconographic material, which, after processing with modern graphic tools, allows revealing previously unnoticed details. This study presents such a reconstruction of the floor plan of a hunting residence in Wisła on the basis of a computer analysis of a few photos and knowledge about wooden structures. By presenting this study, the authors hope that they will thus restore the knowledge about this residence and enable the dispelling of some myths that have arisen around it. They also hope to bring this residence back to the science of the history of architecture in Poland, at the same time opening a discussion about this, unfortunately non-existent, architectural pearl of the Silesian Beskids.

Concluding, it should be stated that this study is an original attempt to define the actual structure and architectural concept of the residential complex of

the Habsburg Hunting Castle in Wisła. Due to the scarcity of factual materials, such attempts have not been undertaken so far. The authors of this study used the documentation resources of the Museum of Cieszyn Silesia, courtesy of the late curator of the photographic collections, Mariusz Makowski. Some photos were specially colorized to highlight some details of the structure. Application of computer techniques was one of the possible ways to gather information about this residence, hence on its site was erected a new building, being a part of the presidential complex.

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