

"AMERICAN HOUSES" IN THE PROVINCES OF HUNGARY

Today's Hungarian architecture deals a lot with the buildings of the past two centuries. Recent Research work has found not one interesting surprise. Earlier the general view was that architectural novelties in European circles, with few exceptions, reached Hungary by the intermediate of Austria and Germany. Today we know that besides the traditional continental connections the cultures of farther countries has a significant influence on the architecture of Hungary between the nineteenth and twentieth century.

For example the early Classicist architecture was greatly influenced by the representatives of the French Revolutionary Classicism. In the spanning of Gothic Revival, England's architecture had the leading role. This style was favoured by the aristocracy of the country who were immensely interested in England at the time, and by this way too showed sympathy. The first gothic-styled castle built in Hungary in the first part of the 1840's (Oroszvar, 1841-44, F. Beer) shows strong English effect. The aristocratic tendency of Gothic Revival found followers in the United States. We know how far that besides the large-scale, picturesque mass of Gothic Revival styled buildings, in the United States a more popular variation is found - in the "Gothic Cottage" or "Large Country House" being a simpler, more compact adaptation. The "cottage style" of the Gothic Revival castles appear in Hungarian architecture is about the 1850's (Miklóspuszta, Babót). These buildings' main characteristics are the highroofed general mass and the sprandreled crosswings perpendicular to them.



Genese Wheeler: Large Country House USA



Babót Hungary: Gothic Cottage

We put the question, is it possible that these houses of the late Gothic Revival era were built not by English but by American inspiration? Many facts have the probability to underline our theory. Denes Komárik, an expert on Hungarian Romantic Historism states in a study written in 1982, that from the 40s' of the past century Hungarian aristocrats showed strong interest in the United States.

Count Sandor Bölöni Farkas, Farkas Wesselényi, Jozsef Zeyk, Pal Balogh and the adventurous Miklos Szerelmey were those who visited the United States before the Hungarian War of Independence (1848-49) and after the downfall of the independence movement even more Hungarians emigrated and found political asylum in the New World. At present it's not proved by facts, that American specimens turned up in Hungary such as Gervase Wheelers' 1850 publication "The Architecture of Country Houses", but this is traditionally believed to have appeared. Later copies of the American architectural periodical: "American Architects & Building News" appeared in the country. Remarkably, Walter Krause, art historian from Austria, showed lines of American "Gothic Cottage" - precisely Gervase Wheelers' "Large Country Houses" effect on a castle built in Wolfstahl, Austria. The latest research work has made certain that the achievements of U.S. architecture were known in Europe in the middle of the 19th century. The American examples in larger or smaller degrees influenced Hungarian architecture. Therefore, from the 1850s' America is not only taking up, but also inspiring Europe's architecture. Considering influences, here we are put to thinking by another style popular in Middle Europe, the "Italianate". The startingpoint of this style originates from Northern Italy's rural architecture. Alexander Jackson Davis popularized this style in the United States. One of Italianates' most general forms are the smalltown rows of houses, one storied with castiron capitals, front stores on the ground story and apartments on the first story. The "Italianate" movement started out from England in about 1830, its' major adaption by American architecture put around the 1850s'. The "Italianates" popularity is emphasized by it being known as the "American Style". In my home district of Northern Hungary houses of this style can be found too, being built in the 1850s'. The ground floors decorated with capitals, but these facings have been masoned with brick, and even later stone, only houses built in the 1870s' had castiron supportings used (the merchants' houses in the castle district of the town of Sopron). At first Hungarian Italianate houses show strong resemblance to the ones in America. The same doors and windows, the factile ornamentations show identical shadow effects, the high hung, narrow overhangings, bracketed eaves and low pyramidal roof (so unusual in Hungarian architecture). Only the details show some differences. The American houses are somewhat more classic in style, while the Hungarian buildings give a stronger medieval effect. By the end of the 1860s' we find a line of written data to prove how popular American architecture was in Hungary. During the researchwork done on this period we reviewed copies of the periodical "Hungarian Engineers' and Architects' Journal". Much to our surprise we found many articles on American architecture of that time. A whole collection of abstracts can be found written under the title of "Schemes from American Architecture". Within the scope of this theme an account from 1871 can be found about Albanys' Capitolium, illustrated with sketches of the schemeplan and the frontage of the building. On the



pages of this periodical we can also read of the new Hartford School and the construction works of the towers built in East River district of New York. In a 1872 issue we find an account on the activity of the American Architect Society. In the 1880s' the information given on the new architectural technologies used in the United States increased in these publications. A long paper gives account of the factory in Chicago supplying ready-made elements for architectural structures used for building apartmenthouses and schools. These elements can be raised and pulled down to be rebuilt elsewhere if needed. This was the first summary in Hungarian language about the use of ready-made panels in architecture, illustrating the fundamentals of fabricated structures as large panels. The forementioned text is interesting considering Hungarian etymology, for here we find the word "house-factory" used in the Hungarian language for the first time. This expression is used for the factory making reinforced concrete panels used as structural elements in architecture.

The earliest American reports have been adapted from German periodicals. Later, professional and personal relationships between the two countries flourished. Denes Komarik searched for the traces of those who worked or did their studies in the United States during the second part of the 19th century. Among those whom he found are two members of the famous Kauser dynasty who worked in Budapest, István Kauser (1830-1905) and Janos Nep. (1847-1925). Istvan Kauser went to America around 1860 and after 10 years living and working in the United States returned to Hungary. After his return he planned the "Hundred-House" in a workers colony in Budapest. Later he returned to the States for a second time and lived in Pensacola, Florida. Another architect, Lajos Pelka, who was born in 1831 gained a diploma in New York and after returning to Hungary he issued pamphlets

subjected to his experiences in America, printed in Budapest, in 1870. So it's not surprising that from the 1880s' American lines can be found in the fields of architecture in Hungary. A publication issued on the pages of "Hungarian Architecture" written by Attila Kovacs caused a great sensation. He accounted of a storage-building found in Budapest, which shows the original structure of a framed construction of brick architecture (quite unusual in Hungary), having a steel-framed fireescape-ladder on the frontage. This building has remained in its original, unaltered form. Around 1880 an American company won the call for tenders at the building site of the Chain Bridge in Budapest to develop the Pest side of the town: the blockwood for the paving of roads was bought direct from the United States. In 1893 a call for tenders was made for the building of a bridge stretching 312 meters across the river Danube uniting the two banks, 16 American engineering-teams entered with plans for the bridge.

The workers' colonies popularized by Istvan Kausser were built in great numbers by the turn of the century. The first houses were simple, lonestanding buildings, one story, having high roofs and spandrel walls. In the 1910s' a group of progressive architects calling themselves the "Youths" joined in the movement of building workers' colonies. Their aim was to create a national Hungarian style using elements of folkloristic architecture. Their style was greatly influenced by Philip Webb, William Morris, and Richard Norman Show and the American Henry Hobson Richardson and their followers. The massive but simple masses of buildings were mainly favoured by this style. The use of course natural stone on the surfaces of pedestals and corners of the facings was popular. Windows were planned with divided panes which were framed in deeply-sunk openings. Roofs were built in complicated forms making these buildings very picturesque, roofs being covered with small asbestos shingles of a dark color.



In Győr, an industrial town in the North of Hungary, during 1915-17 in a factory-suburb of the town workers' houses were built in this "Hungarian Shingle Style". The town continued to build workers' colonies after the I. World War, with the help of foreign credit. The commercial stabilizing of Hungarian economics in 1930 was greatly helped by the aid of American bankloans. In common, people call the buildings raised during this period "American Houses".

Not much attention was paid to the architectural qualities of the workers' colonies built after the turn of the century. Today we do everything to preserve the original character of these houses. The significance of these buildings as representing a new era in architecture has been acknowledged by them being put on the list of national historical buildings, under the protection of the acts of the State Laws, and protected by the National Trust. We must see that the protection of a great number of architectural remains of our near past - such as workers' colonies - need a different technique of preservation than that of the traditional methods used in Hungary's preservation program for historical buildings and monuments.

In 1980 I visited the United States, having a scholarship awarded by UNESCO/ICOMOS. Here I learned knowledge of the existing essential methods used in the USA, mainly the "local protection" system which consists of the local councils' and voluntary organizations' taking part in the preservation of buildings and town quarters. This collective responsibility should be used generally for the protection and preservation of our buildings and historical districts. For the preservation of the workers' colony in the town of Győr a local ordinance has been worked out. The houses of the colony are now mainly in private property. We have been able to obtain "preservation-credit" for the people owning the houses, which till this, has only been given to the houses on the state list of historical buildings. The Town-Builders Society's opinion decides professional questions about preservation works, and the Town Council has to accept the Society's standpoint. This new method in preservation has proved efficient and the example of Győr should be followed by others.

Notes: Hungarian "Gothic Revival" by D. Komárik: Gothic Revival in Romantic architecture in Hungary, Bp. 1982. Same author writing about American-Hungarian professional and personal relationships: The way Europe effected the architecture of the Romantic era: The popularity of the "Italianate" in the U.S. Poppeliers, J. Chambers, S.A. Schwartz, N.B.: from "What style is it?" (page 20). About the Merchants' Houses in Sopron: G. Winkler: The Architecture of Sopron in the 19th century. Bp. 1987. Same author Report on the preservation work in the USA. Bp. 1981. Historical Preservation 3.

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Researchwork of the past few years proved that the advance of architecture in Europe, besides the traditional cultures of the continent, have been influenced by the architecture of England, and later the United States. The effect of Gothic Revival in Hungary was related to English origin. Our studies showed that in the later period of Romantic Style it's obvious that American examples have made an impression on the style of Architecture in Hungary.

The countrys' aristocracy, who travelled in America favoured this style and booklets containing patterns were made popular. Proving this influence, the characteristic "Gothic Cottage" appeared in the countryside (Miklóspusztá, Babót). Two-storyed smalltown rows of houses were also very popular in the West of Hungary. The Merchants' Houses in the town of Sopron represent the "Italianate" style of architecture. Gradually, from the 1860s' the technical achievements of American architecture highly influenced the art of building in Hungary. The professional periodicals issued at this time give widescale accounts on the new methods used in the United States. New technique and structures, such as the Chicago system of factory-made panels and structured elements used for building apartment houses. From the 1870s' the personal-professional relationships, flourished between the two countrys. Many significant architects from Hungary received their diploma in the United States. Among them was István Krauser, who studied architecture in the U.S., his Hungarian workmanship is put around 1870, after which he returned to America. He was the first to adapt the American style, building a workers' colony in Budapest consisting of 100 houses. Another Hungarian, Lajos Pelka also received his diploma in the U.S. and published studies on American architecture. The professionals of America were also interested in Hungarian schemes: in 1893, sixteen American engineering teams applied for the work of building the Oath-Square bridge over the Danube River. In the style of workers' colonies built in Hungary at the turn of the century, besides the traditional architectural effects, we can also recognize the "Shingle-Style". After World War I. the loan supplied by US Banks were used to build rows of workers' houses in the industrial districts of Western Hungary. The houses built in the town of Győr are commonly known as the "American-houses". The preservation of such workers' colonies has been regulated by local ordinances, following the pattern familiar in the States, being worked out from studying the American example. In all, our researchwork has proved that American architecture, regarding the 19th century, has not only taken-up style from Europe but also has influenced the art, mainly in Middle-Europe. The preservation and restoration methods of the United States deviates from ours to meet local standards and specifications, differing from the traditional European practice. The technique used in the United States, especially "local ordinance" should prove to be successful used in preservation work on the buildings of the newest age.

Les recherches des dernières années ont apporté des preuves que le développement de l'architecture hongroise des deux derniers centennaires fut influé non seulement par des cultures architecturales traditionnelles du continent européen mais par l'architecture des pays plus lointains que celle de l'Angleterre et des États Unis aussi. La propagation de "Gothical Revival" était expliqué précédemment seulement par l'influence des exemples anglais. Nos études ont démontré que dans la dernière période du romantisme les exemples architecturaux des États Unis ont exercé déjà très probablement leur influence sur le développement du style en Hongrie. A cette époque, au delà des voyages des aristocrates faisant construire des bâtiments, les bouquins de modèles ont aussi vulgarisé l'architecture de l'Amérique du Nord. Le "Gothic Cottage" caractéristique (Miklóspusztá, Babót) et la popularité d'un type de maison de province en bande à deux étages, particulièrement répandu en Hongrie Occidentale (maisons de commerçant du centre de ville de Sopron) en apportent des preuves. Depuis des années 1860 les succès de la technique de construction américaines s'influaient le développement de l'architecture hongroise. Les journaux professionnels parus à cette époque fournissaient des renseignements abondants sur des nouveautés de bâtiment américaines, sur des nouvelles solutions techniques et des systèmes de construction modernes, ainsi sur la construction des bâtiments d'habitation préfabriqués en usine, développée à Chicago. Dans les années 1870, les relations personnelles et professionnelles devenaient plus intensives. Plusieurs des architectes hongrois ont obtenu leurs diplômes aux États Unis. Autour de 1870, un de ces architectes, István Kauszer travaillait en Hongrie, puis il s'est rentré à l'Amérique. C'était lui qui faisait construire à Budapest, suivant un modèle américain, le premier quartier composé de dent maisons de travailleur. Lajos Pelka a obtenu son diplôme à New York, il publiait ces expériences en forme des études. Les spécialistes américains s'intéressaient aussi des tâches en Hongrie. En 1893, 16 groupes américains ont déposé des offres pour la construction du pont de la place de Serment. Dans la forme des maisons de travailleur construites après 1900 on reconnaît, à côté de l'architecture hongroise traditionnelle, entre autres les particularités du "style bardeau". Après la première guerre mondiale on construisait des maisons de travailleur à Győr dont le financement a été assuré par le crédit des banques américaines, même aujourd'hui ces maisons sont nommées par l'homme de la rue "maisons américaines". On a réussi récemment à résoudre la protection des quartiers de travailleur par des "règlements locaux". Cette nouvelle technique de la protection fut élaborée à la base des expériences recueillies aux États Unis.

En récapitulant: nos recherches prouvent que lors du 19^{ème} siècle l'architecture des États Unis n'était pas seulement l'adoptant de l'architecture d'Europe et dedans celle d'Europe Centrale, mais aussi leurs fournisseurs d'idées. Les méthodes de protection des monuments appliquées aux États Unis sont - par suite des particularités du pays - partiellement différentes de la pratique européenne.