

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH OF THE STĀMERIENA PALACE. THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN OF THE PALACE IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN HISTORICAL STYLES

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Abstract

The article *Cultural and Historical Research of Stāmeriena Palace. The Architectural Design of the Palace in the Context of European Historical Styles* aims to study the cultural and historical heritage of Stāmeriena Palace, focusing on the architectural research of the manor house in the context of the influences of European historical styles.

The article is based on the research work, which is based on the documents found in the Latvian State Historical Archive, the Herder Institute Archive in Marburg, Germany, the Estonian National Archive, and the Alūksne Zonal State Archive. The research of Stāmeriena Palace as an architectural and artistic unit is based on unpublished research, as well as on observations made by the authors of the article. Based on the information provided in the documents, photographs, and unpublished studies (architectural research materials), the article reveals the four stages of the construction of the palace. Detailed attention is paid to the first two construction periods of Stāmeriena Palace, from 1835 to 1905 and from 1908 to 1940, when the most significant architectural changes to the façade and the overall ensemble of the building can be identified, which are closely related to the characteristic manifestations of 19th-century historicism architecture.

Keywords: *Stāmeriena Palace, Historicism architecture, von Wolff.*

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Latvia's cultural and historical landscape is unimaginable without its medieval castles and architecturally diverse manor complexes. The manor house without fortifications in the territory of Latvia originated in the 17th century from the model of the country houses of the great landowners of Western Europe [Ivāns 1988: 84]. A significant upswing in manor ensembles can be observed from the mid-18th century till the early 20th century. In 1920 the development of manors was interrupted by the agrarian reform, which abolished the manor as an administrative, territorial, and economic unit. The most important and often architecturally distinctive construction of historic manor buildings is the manor house (*kungu nams, Herrenhaus*), often called the palace (*Schloß*). In order to describe the architectural changes of the Stāmeriena Palace in the context of European historical styles, the term *palace* will be used in the following text.

The architectural form of the manor houses in the territory of Latvia reflects the forms of historic Western European styles. Often, foreign masters were invited to design the manor ensembles. Some of the masters who have contributed to the Latvian architectural landscape are Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli, Giacomo Antonio Domenico Quarenghi, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, etc. Although manor houses in the territory of Latvia have been heavily inspired by Western European architectural models, local architects included distinctive features in the local manor ensembles. The scale, stylistic specificity, and artistic scope of the historic buildings of any manor are related not only to the experience, skills, and taste of particular architects, sculptors, painters, and other masters but also to the aesthetic vision and material means of each landlord. As Dainis Bruģis acknowledges, the architecture of palaces in the territory of Latvia combines the cultural potential of the local aristocracy and its refusal to follow the standards of world architecture and interior [Bruģis 1996: 6].

Nowadays manor houses built in the territory of Latvia are in different conditions. Many of them perished in the First and Second World Wars. The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a particularly inferior time for manors. During this period 184 manor houses were burnt down [Zaļuma 2012: 66]. Nowadays many manor houses and outbuildings have been abandoned by their owners and have been looted and vandalized. At the same time, many properties are being restored and renovated. The beginning of a new era can also be perceived in Stāmeriena Palace. After the property relations have been settled and the legal proceedings have been terminated, the Municipality of Gulbene has regained the property rights of Stāmeriena Palace by the judgment of the Gulbene District Court of the Republic of Latvia on 13 April 2016 in case No C14047410. The long-running legal battle over the ownership of the palace has had a negative impact on its conservation and use.¹

¹ *Stāmerienas pils*. Available: <https://www.pilis.lv/lv/pilis-un-muizas/9367/stameriena-manor> (viewed 10.01.2023.)

Over the last six years, Stāmeriena Palace has been mentioned in a very broad context, which indicates the admirable revival of the palace. The roof and façade restoration of Stāmeriena Palace was awarded the 2nd place in the competition *Gada labākā būve Latvijā 2019* (The Best Building of the Year in Latvia 2019). In 2021, in the Latvian Ministry of Culture's campaign, *Atrastā Latvija* (The Discovered Latvia) Stāmeriena Palace was recognized as the site with the highest number of visitors out of approximately 60 other campaign objects which included other manor houses, castles, churches, cathedrals, museums, nature trails, gardens, towers, bridges, promenades, beaches, etc.

Furthermore, Stāmeriena Palace is actively involved in the activities of the Latvian Association of Castles, Palaces, and Manors (LACPM). The activity of the palace shows that the objectives set by the association can be realized in practice – to promote the preservation of Latvia's cultural heritage, the identification, research, restoration, maintenance, adaptation to use, and development of the unique cultural heritage values and environment of castles, palaces, and manors; to promote the development of tourism, cultural and creative industries, and related infrastructure and services in castles, palaces, and manor houses; extend public access to castles, palaces, and manor houses; to promote the preservation of cultural heritage, develop public awareness of cultural heritage and encourage public participation in the protection of the cultural heritage.¹

It should be noted that since 2021 the Latvian Academy of Culture has also established creative and scientific cooperation with Stāmeriena Palace and Gulbene Municipality.

The aim of the article is to study the cultural heritage of Stāmeriena Palace by focusing on the architectural study of the palace in the context of the influences of European historical styles.

Exploration of the Stāmeriena Palace

The research work is based on the study of documents found in the Latvian State Historical Archive, the Herder Institute Archives in Marburg, Germany, the National Archives of Estonia, and the Alūksne Zonal State Archives. The research of Stāmeriena Palace as an architectural and artistic unit is reflected in several fundamental, so far unpublished studies. In 1988, the architects Modris Liepa and Andris Veidemanns of the LSSR Ministry of Culture's Cultural Monuments Restoration Office carried out surveys and photo-fixations of the palace facades and their details. The meticulous work was carried out by Gunārs Ivāns, historian of the

¹ *Latvian Association of Castles, Palaces and Manors webpage section "about us"*. Available: <https://www.pilis.lv/lv/par-mums> (viewed 10.01.2023.)

LSSR Institute of Restoration, by studying documents stored in various archives [Ivāns 1988]. In 1993, the *Arhitektoniskā izpētes grupa* (Architectural Research Group) carried out an architectural and artistic study of the palace. Two other studies – *Stāmerienas parka apraksts* (Description of Stāmeriena Park) [Latvijas Nacionālais botāniskais dārzs 1996] prepared by specialists of the National Botanical Garden of Latvia and the architect Ilmārs Dirveiks *Stāmerienas muižas pils apjoma evolūcijas studijas* (Volume Evolution Studies of Stāmeriena Palace) [Dirveiks 1999] – complement and refine the studies carried out earlier. In 2017, the *Arhitektes Ināras Caunītes birojs* (Architect Ināra Caunīte Office) carried out a detailed architectural and artistic study, after which a construction project for the renovation of the interior of Stāmeriena Palace, reconstruction, and restoration was drawn up in 2021.

In-depth research of the archives and private collections was carried out in preparation for the exhibition of original documents, manuscripts, printed photographs, and objects *Ir Stāmeriena Sicīlijai rada!* (Stāmeriena and Sicily are Kindred Spirits)¹, which opened on 22 May 2002 at the Latvian State Museum of Art. The exhibition was based on materials from the collections of the Latvian State Historical Archive and the National Library of Latvia, supplemented by some private collections [Minde 2002]. The materials on the 19th-century development of Stāmeriena Palace and Park, the wooden and stone church, and the construction and renovation of the historic palace after the 1905 Russian Revolution were collected on the initiative of the Latvian Cultural Heritage Preservation Foundation. The authors of the exhibition are Gunta Minde, Head of the Reading Room Department of the Latvian State Historical Archive, and Ilze Lecinska, Head Librarian of the Public Relations Department of the National Library of Latvia. An insight into the life and people of Stāmeriena Palace can be gained from the research of Gunta Minde, which focuses on the research of materials stored at the Latvian State Historical Archive, recounting the stay of the Italian writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa (*Don Giuseppe Maria Fabrizio Salvatore Stefano Vittorio Tomasi, Principe di Lampedusa, Duca di Palma, Barone di Montechiaro, Barone di Torretta, 1896–1957*) in Latvia [Minde 2022]. Ilze Lecinska, Head Librarian of the Public Relations Department of the National Library of Latvia, has been researching the connection of the palace with world culture and literature [Lecinska 2002, Lecinska 2007].

Stāmeriena Palace is mostly mentioned in passing studies devoted to its architectural specificity. In the previous studies, attention was devoted to the study of the history of the Baron von Wolff family, but the architectural study of the Stāmeriena Palace in the context of European historical styles was given only partial attention.

¹ The exhibition was on display at the Latvian national Art Museum from 22 May to 17 September, 2002.

Vitolds Mašnovskis, a manor researcher who has devoted 40 years to the study of Latvia's 1200 manors, has paid special attention to the castle. Part IV of his Encyclopaedia [Mašnovskis 2021: 321] has a separate section devoted to Stāmeriena Palace. The art historian Dainis Bruģis connects Stāmeriena Palace with Historicism architecture in his book *Historisma pilis Latvijā* ("Historicism Palaces in Latvia") [Bruģis 1997]. Similarly, in the publication *Vidzemes muižu arhitektūra* ("Vidzeme Manor Architecture") [Lancmanis 2015: 237] art historian Imants Lancmanis associates the Stāmeriena Palace with Neo-Renaissance impulses.

In the public sphere, the representatives of Stāmeriena Palace promote the idea of the palace as the pearl of European Romanticism,¹ naturally linking the palace to its best-known inhabitants and to Italy. However, in this respect, it is important to look at the 19th-century architecture not only as historicist but also as belonging to the culture of Neo-Romanticism.² The Stāmeriena Palace was built at the beginning of the 19th century when the grounds of the complex came into the possession of the Baron von Wolff family, but it is probably most often recognized by the name of the psychoanalyst Alexandra von Wolff (*Alexandra (Alexandrine) Alice Marie Baronesse von Wolff* (1894–1982)) and her husband Giuseppe Tomazi di Lampedusa from Italy, the author of the novel "The Leopard" (*Il Gattopardo*). Both personalities, who spent part of their lives together in Stāmeriena, have been the subject of several publications, including Ilze Lecinska and Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi's book *Vienā likteņdejā savijušies mūži* ("Lifetimes Tied by the Dance of Fate") [Lecinska, Lanza 2020].

Construction history and the owners of Stāmeriena Palace

Stāmeriena Palace was built in the beautiful area of Stāmeriena, between Stāmeriena and Poga Lake. The manor complex is surrounded by a 20-hectare landscaped park. Several buildings of the manor complex are still preserved: the Stāmeriena Palace, a barn, a servant's house, a blacksmith's house with a forge, a horse stable, a coach house with a coachman's apartment, and a miller's house. Stāmeriena Manor was established in 1809. Its owners belong to the younger branch of von Wolff family – the Jaunlaicene line, whose founder is Johann Gottlieb II von Wolff (1756–1817). Documents mention that Stāmeriena Manor

¹ This information can be found on social media and public websites such as <https://m.travelnews.lv/?pid=119588> <https://www.visitgulbene.lv/objekts/stamerienas-muiza/>, <https://stamerienaspils.eu/lv/>, <https://aluksniesiem.lv/multimedia/foto-eiropas-romantisma-perle-stamerienas-pils/>, <https://neatkariga.nra.lv/regioni/330347-celojam-drosi-gulbenes-no-vads-picdava> etc.

² For more information on Neo-Romanticism in Latvian art, see: [Grosmane 1998].

was originally part of Vecgulbene Manor, but it became independent in the early 19th century. The 1833 list of buildings,¹ dated 17 August 1833, among the 24 buildings on the manor farm lists a stone dwelling house with a tiled roof built in 1822 and a wooden house with a tiled roof built in 1810. The list of the manor buildings, compiled in 1833, was drawn up after the death of the manor's first owner, Heinrich Johann Friedrich von Wolff (1794–1832). The list shows that the manor complex included a stone building (*Wohnherberge*²) with a tiled roof, built in 1822. According to historical sources, the palace was extended and built between 1833 and 1843, when Constance von Wolff (born von Medegen) (1797–1844), the widow of Heinrich Johann Friedrich von Wolff, and her eldest son Johann Gottlieb Eduard von Wolff (1817–1883), the next owner of the palace, were the owners of the manor house. According to Minde's research [Minde 2002: 12, 13], after his mother's death in 1844, the estate was inherited by his son Eduard von Wolff according to the inheritance agreement of 23 April 1845. At the time of the agreement, a manor list was drawn up and listed 20 buildings, most of which were built of stone. The list includes the manor house, which is described as a rubble stone building (*Herberge*) with one grand piano and two separate cellars. The description indicates that the building was rebuilt and extended between 1843 and 1845. The addition of one wing was added to the building [Minde 2002: 13]. The intensive expansion of the manor complex and the reconstruction of the palace continued in later years, as Eduard von Wolff married Sofia Potemkin (*Patjomkin*, 1818–1997), the court lady of the Russian Tsar, in 1838, and gradually the whole family life was moved to Stāmeriena. At his wife's request, Eduard von Wolff had an Orthodox church built on the territory of the palace. In 1849, the Building Commission of the Vidzeme Governorate signed a contract with Eduard von Wolff to transfer the management of the church, the priest's dwelling house, and the school to the owner.³ It is interesting to note that the Latvian State Historical Archive contains extensive information on the construction of the church, the architect, the materials, and the church furnishings, but hardly any information on the reconstruction work.

The list of the various buildings suggests that the life of Stāmeriena Palace was already quite vivacious at the beginning of the 19th century, but it is still too hasty to date the construction of the castle itself precisely. A stone in the cellar of the castle with the year 1835 carved into it makes it possible to date the construction or reconstruction phase of the palace (Figure 1).

¹ LVVA, 218.f., 1. apr., 1043.l., pp. 24.

² LVVA, 218 f., 1. apr., 1042, 1, pp. 34–35.

³ LVVA, 10 F., 2. apr., 4498. 1, pp. 78–83.



Figure 1. Year number in the foundation stone of the Stāmeriena Palace. Photo by Inga Barinska (2022).

The descriptions in the Latvian State Historical Archive funds do not provide information on the exact time of construction, architects, or craftsmen that worked in the palace during this period.

Considering the construction history of the Stāmeriena Palace more closely, Gunārs Ivāns points out that the real estate descriptions of the buildings contained in the funds of the Latvian State Historical Archives, only the description drawn up in 1871 contains brief data about Stāmeriena Palace. It mentions that the palace is built of stone masonry with a slate roof and is in good technical condition. The construction project, the author, and the time of construction are not mentioned [Ivāns 1988: 86]. The 1887 inventory of manor buildings mentions a massive building with a slate roof. This time it is called a palace (*Schloß*). The architect Caunīte's office also points out in her study that the information in the Latvian State Historical Archive documents is limited to "the name, the material of the walls, roof and a rough estimate of buildings condition". Information on the length and width of the building is also sporadic [Caunīte 2017: 8]. In the 1870s, the palace was modernized and so rebuilt in a Neo-Renaissance style.

In 1905 the castle was burnt down, and in 1908 the restoration works were completed [Ivāns 1988: 44]. As architect Ināra Caunīte concludes in her research, the construction history of Stāmeriena Palace reflects both the historical events of the time and the owners' devotion to the architectural traditions of a nobleman's home. At the same time, the changes in the building also reflect the generational changes of the owners of Stāmeriena Palace and the current trends in European architectural fashion [Caunīte 2017: 18].

After the death of Eduard von Wolff in 1883, Sophie von Wolff was the mistress of the castle until 1887. After her death, the estate was inherited by her sons Boris von Wolff (1850–1917) and Paul von Wolff (1853–1918). The further development and

improvement of the palace are linked to Boris von Wolff, who married Maria Teresa Alice Laura Barbi (1858–1948) on 30 January 1894 in the French resort of Menton. She was an Italian singer born in Modena in 1858 and the last muse of the composer Johannes Brahms (1838–1897). Both brothers had to live through the events of the 1905 Russian Revolution and the burning of the estate. Boris von Wolff also took care of the restoration work. As a result of the agrarian reform of 1920, the centre of the Stāmeriena manor with the palace became the inalienable property of the heirs of Baron Boris von Wolff, his daughter Alexandra and younger sister Olga, but the younger sister renounced the property. According to the deed of gift signed on 8 September 1932, the last owner of the castle was Andrea Pilar von Pilchau (1890–?), the husband of Alexandra von Wolff [Minde 2002: 16]. After her divorce, Alexandra married Tomasi di Lampedusa, author of the novel *The Leopard* (Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, 1896–1957). Unfortunately, the palace could not be restored to its former glory. During the Second World War, Stāmeriena Palace was used for military purposes, but from 1945 the building housed an agricultural technical school, and later the office and executive committee of the collective farm *Stāmeriena* [Dekante 2001: 23]. Since 1998, Stāmeriena Palace, the park, and two farm buildings have been managed by SIA *Zeltaleja1* and since 2016 by the Municipality of Gulbene.

In order to actualize the architectural formation of Stāmeriena Palace in the context of European historical styles, four periods of construction of the palace are put forward for examination:

- 1) the first phase, which symbolically takes as its starting point the year 1835 carved in stone in the basement of the palace, till the burning of the castle in 1905;
- 2) the period of the palace restoration from 1908 to 1940, when the palace was rebuilt;
- 3) the period from 1940 to 1990, when the Stāmeriena Palace was occupied by the Agricultural Technical School, after which the building was also used by the Stāmeriena Village Council and the administration of collective farm *Stāmeriena*;
- 4) the restored Stāmeriena Palace nowadays.

In the architectural characterization of each phase of the palace, particular attention was paid to unpublished sources. The first two construction periods of Stāmeriena Palace, which were distinguished from unpublished materials for the purposes of the study, were described in detail by the historian Gunārs Ivāns in his study *Bijušās Stāmerienas muižas kompleksa vēsture* (“The History of the Former *Stāmeriena Manor Complex*”) [Ivāns 1988]. In 2017, the architectural and artistic research of Stāmeriena Palace was also carried out by the *Arhitektes Ināras Caunītes birojs* [Caunīte 2017]. This study also reveals important information for the development of a more comprehensive phase characterization. Since the most significant differences in the façade and the overall ensemble are to be found in the first two distinct periods of the castle’s construction, the paper has chosen to examine them in more detail. The article focuses only on the exterior of the palace.

From 1835 to 1905

Early examples of historicism can be seen in Europe as early as the second half of the 18th century, gradually marking a mannered end to the previously dominant classicism. Historicism as the dominant architectural style in Europe reached its peak between the 1830s and the 1890s. Although historicist buildings draw inspiration from historical examples, they are interpreted in the monuments rather than being blatantly imitated. 19th-century architects were interested in using the principles of historical styles for creative purposes: borrowed impulses are combined with period-appropriate building layouts, materials, and decorative solutions [Karštrēma 2023].

Historicist architecture emerged at a moment when Romantic ideas were becoming current in Europe, with a consequent interest in the national past, and the search for national styles and the search for uniqueness played an important role in the development of historicism. The change begins with the turn to Gothic. In the first half of the 19th century, Neo-Gothic was primarily associated with church architecture in Europe, but with the restoration of the Kölner Dom in 1842 and the construction of the Palace of Westminster, designed by architects Charles Barry and Augustus Welby Pugin, the style began to appear in other areas of the building. In Germany, France, and England, Neo-Gothic even became the “national style”, in the belief that this type of form would contribute to the future of national architecture. This belief was most strongly expressed in Germany. Neo-Gothic became a conceptual notion that was supposed to personify both a logical constructive system and the creative approach of the master [Brūģis 1996: 33].

The presence of Neo-Renaissance and Neo-Baroque styles is more evident in secular architecture when in the mid-19th century there was a growing tendency in European architecture to create a rich and pretentious impression through decorative solutions inspired by Renaissance models [Karštrēma 2023].

If we describe the features of the architectural ensemble of Stāmeriena Palace in the period from 1835 to the burning of the castle in 1905, then the architectural formation of the palace at that time has features of Neo-Gothic and Neo-Baroque styles, but its form could be described as relatively simple. The manor house is situated in the middle of the park without a parade courtyard and without other buildings in the immediate vicinity of the palace. As a result, the small historicist building lacks symmetry. The relationship of the park to the manor house has been here resolved through the classical tradition – the overall composition uses distant perspectives from the building itself and the terrace. Such a layout can be seen as modern enough for the time in the Baltic Governorate because, in the territory of Latvia, an equivalent overall compositional solution of a manor house without a parade courtyard can be observed only in some manor centres (Pelči, Nogale) [Caunīte 2017: 9–10].

In the research report, architect Ināra Caunīte mentions that the 19th-century

Stāmeriena Palace resembles Neo-Renaissance castles in France. The palace plan is asymmetrical, consisting of several interconnecting quadrangles and rising two storeys in height. Almost the entire ground floor has a cellar. Each of the volumes, which are united in a single building, has a roof of a different pitch and shape. The south side of the castle is covered by a steep tent-like roof, while the other volumes are covered by flatter roofs. Not only the roof shapes are different, but also their coverings. Before the palace was burnt down, the steep parts of the roof were covered with natural slate. In the first phase, the building had only one massive tower, but in the study by architect Ināra Caunīte's office, this is separated from the overall silhouette. Above this massive tower was a flagpole [Caunīte 2017: 11–12].

Late 19th and early 20th-century pictures show that the entrance to the main façade was at one end. The front entrance was an unwallled porch-type extension (arcade) with Neo-Gothic gable arches, built of dolomitic stones (?). Above it was a wide balcony (terrace) (Figure 2).

In his study, historian Gunārs Ivāns explains that the stone-built extension with arches at the entrance does not seem to be organically connected to the overall composition of the building. He calls it an attempt by the nobility to romanticize the past [Ivāns 1988: 89]. The part of the wooden façade on the ground floor between the arcade and the large square tower in the middle of the façade was a closed gallery with four Neo-Gothic pointed-arch window openings [Ivāns 1988: 88–89] (Figure 3).



Figure 2. The gates in front of the Stāmeriena Palace, below the gates the wife of the owner of the manor, Boris von Wolff-Stomersee, Alice von Wolff (maiden name Barbi, Italian lutenist, and violinist) with her two daughters Olga and Alexandra (Lissy). (1900 (Decade)–1905).

Available: Estonian National Archive, EAA.2073.1.198.13 (AIS).



Figure 3. Stämeriena Palace before the 1905 fire. (1900 (Decade)–1905)
Available: Estonian National Archive, EAA.2073.1.198.22 (AIS).

The second part of the main façade to the left of the brick tower was different. It had two storeys, as well as a semi-basement and attic roof story without cellars. The dormer windows in the attic are Baroque in style, with a rounded upper part. At the very end of the façade, which can also be considered a separate part of the building (the block), the mansard roof was considerably raised [Ivāns 1988: 89] (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Stämeriena Palace in the winter of 1905. Photo from: Dekante, H. *Stämerienas grāmata: muiža un pils, tagadne un nākotne* (“Stämeriena Book: Manor and Castle, Present and Future”), p. 18.

From 1908 to 1940

After the restoration of Stāmeriena Palace in 1908, it became more splendid and expressive. The architectural design of the façade shows Neoclassical features. Also, the presence of Neo-Gothic in the structure is diminishing. Researchers argue that the restored palace has both a more successful volumetric composition and a more expressive silhouette (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Stāmeriena Palace before 1935. Archives of the Herder Institute in Germany. Available: <https://www.herder-institut.de/bildkatalog/iv/228819>

As Ināra Caunīte writes in her study, “The reconstruction of Stāmeriena Palace after the burning has created an architectural object appropriate to the period, that also demonstrates the taste and the requirements of the owners” [Caunīte 2017: 45].

The architectural design of the façades has also been complimented by some Art Nouveau elements. Some of the Art Nouveau additions are distinctive window openings on the second floor of the main façade, decorative moulding – sculptural masks (lions and women’s heads), and the coat of arms of the Wolff family, the owners of the palace (Figure 6).

The coat of arms is depicted in the moulding as being held by two lions and surmounted by a wreath adorned with three armoured caps. Each of them bears flowers and animals: a lily flower between the wings, a squirrel, and a parrot. In the centre of the coat of arms is a running wolf with three lily flowers above it [Ivāns 1988: 102].

At this stage, the composition of the building plan consists of two squares and three rectangles of approximately equal size. The longest rectangle, stretching west-east and containing the large tower to the east, is flanked on each side by square volumes. The sides of the squares away from the centre of the building are also joined by longer rectangular volumes extending west-eastwards. The individual volumes, combined into a single building block, have different roof forms [Caunīte 2017: 17].



Figure 6. Coat of arms on the main façade of Stāmeriena Palace.
Photo by Edīte Siļķēna (2022).

After rebuilding the main change in the building's layout and volume is in the north end. The location of the main entrance has also changed. The structure in front of the former main entrance, an arched porch over the driveway with a balcony above, has not been restored after the burning. The material of the arched porch raises questions in both Ivans' and Caunīte's research. Its façades had a rougher finish than the other façades of the castle, so it is assumed to have been made of stone. However, nothing of it remained after the burning [Caunīte 2017: 14].

The restoration of the rear façade of the castle removed the first and second-floor windows at the ends of the projection (wings), replacing the openings with blind windows. The existing window in the raised mansard roof of this part of the façade has been given a decorative Neo-Baroque frame. A decorative balustrade has been created above the eaves at the edge of the roof. The Neo-Baroque gable on the rear elevation has been slightly altered, with two freestanding semi-circular openings replacing the three closely spaced small pointed-arched windows [Ivāns 1988: 101].

The part of the castle to the north from the large tower has been supplemented by a second lower and round tower. Both towers have pointed roofs – the main tower has a pyramidal roof with four small, decorative turrets, each located in its own corner of the large tower. The new round tower has a conical spire [Caunīte 2017: 18].

From 1940 to 1990

After the construction works were completed in 1908, Stāmeriena Palace has not undergone any major reconstructions in the 20th century that would have

significantly changed its architectural appearance [Caunīte 2017: 43]. In 1945, the Stāmeriena Palace was used as an agricultural technical school. In 1959, a training and counseling centre for the Republican Extramural Agricultural Technical School was established in the building. Later, the collective farm *Stāmeriena* and the village executive committee were housed in the castle and existed there until 1992. After that, the palace stood empty for six years [Caunīte 2017: 5].

The restored Stāmeriena Palace nowadays

After the Republic of Latvia regained its independence, Stāmeriena Palace was not used for a long time and was open to visitors only sporadically. After the property ownership was settled and the legal proceedings were terminated, Gulbene Municipality regained the ownership of Stāmeriena Palace by the judgment of Gulbene District Court of the Republic of Latvia on 13 April 2016 in case No C14047410.¹ Since 2018, with funding from Gulbene Municipality and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), renovation works amounting to EUR 1.46 million have been carried out, which can be seen as an important step towards the restoration of the palace to its former glory (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Stāmeriena Palace after the restoration in 2019. Photo: stamerienaspils.eu
(Available: <https://stamerienaspils.eu/lv/>).

¹ *Stāmeriena Castle*. Available: <https://www.pilis.lv/lv/pilis-un-muizas/9367/stameriena-manor> (viewed 26.01.2023.)

The roof, façade, windows, and foundations of the building have been restored in the period since 2018. During this period the building's decorative elements have been renewed and restored, and utilities have been installed [Eniņa 2021]. In 2021, the roof of Stāmeriena Palace and the façade of the building were renovated and restored as part of an ERDF project. During this period, 1249.5 square meters of the total façade volume was renovated [Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija 2022]. During the restoration works, the damaged parts of the foundations and the basement were reinforced and rebuilt. Vertical waterproofing of the foundations was carried out. The wooden roof structures and their covering were restored. During the restoration of the roof structures, the original structures were preserved as much as possible, restoring and replacing damaged areas. The roof was also rebuilt with a pyramidal roof and a historic overlight window. The engineering networks – storm water drainage, lighting, electricity, video, audio, and communication cables – have also been restored and supplemented [Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija 2022: 204]. The work included the rebuilding of the pergola columns, the restoration of 99 historic windows, the palace entrance steps, eight mouldings with women's heads, and the restoration of the building's façade decoration – six sculptural lion heads [Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija 2022: 205].

Nowadays there is a landscape park of about 20 hectares around the castle. Some of the former manor buildings have been preserved – the blacksmith's house with a smithy, a horse stable, a coach house with a coachman's flat, a servant's house, a barn, and a miller's house [Caunīte 2017: 3]. The restored Stāmeriena Palace is now open to the public. Guided tours are offered to visitors. Various festivals, concerts, exhibitions, art open-air workshops, theatre performances, and other events take place here. Couples can also choose the premises of Stāmeriena Palace as the venue for their marriage ceremony.

Conclusion

In the course of the research, it has been established that the architectural design of Stāmeriena Palace can be confidentially linked to the Historicism that was dominant in Western European architecture of the 19th century. It has not been possible to find out the exact date of construction of the Stāmeriena Palace. The beginnings of the construction of the palace date back to the 1820s. The documents provide more accurate evidence about the four stages of the construction and the development of the palace; however, the most significant architectural changes occur in the façade of the building and the overall ensemble can be observed in the first two distinct periods of the palace's construction – from 1835 to 1905 and from 1908 to 1940.

The façade and layout of the Stāmeriena Palace, built in the first period, show direct influences from the French Neo-Renaissance castles and palaces. The plan of

the palace has an asymmetrical shape. The entrance to the main façade was located at the north-eastern end of the palace, built using Neo-Gothic pointed arches. There was a closed gallery on the first-floor level with four Neo-Gothic bays of pointed windows. Baroque-style features can also be found in the skylights built into the attic. After the restoration of the Stāmeriena Palace in 1908, it acquired a more successful volume composition, and also its silhouette became more expressive. Neoclassic features can be identified in the architectural design of the facades, and the presence of Neo-Gothic elements in the building is decreasing. Art Nouveau features can also be found in the façade tabs.

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