

Architectural Evolution of Administrative Buildings for the Lithuanian Municipalities During the Interwar Period

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Abstract

During the period of Lithuanian independence, which lasted from 1918 to 1940, various institutions operating in the country needed modern and suitable buildings. Thus, during the period of more than twenty years, numerous new public buildings were built for schools, hospitals, banks, and cultural institutions. In addition, there was a need to build new administrative buildings for the newly established county, city and township municipalities of the country, as there was a lack of suitable premises for them. Therefore, this article, presenting the most characteristic and typical examples, analyses the architectural evolution of the administrative buildings built for the Lithuanian municipalities during the period of independence.

Introduction

The first municipalities in Lithuania began to be established in 1918, and in October of 1919, the Law on Municipalities stated that the country would be divided into three types of municipalities – counties, cities and townships [1, 1]. During the period of independence, they were the most important institutions that administered public life in Lithuania and initiated most of the country's public constructions [2, 4]. However, at first, there was a lack of suitable premises for these institutions, and they occasionally operated in the older buildings. Often, such buildings did not meet the needs of the municipalities and were unsuitable for administrative functions [3, 6]. Therefore, the lack of suitable buildings was considered one of the many problems faced by the newly established Lithuanian municipalities. Consequently, already in the first years of independence, an initiative was taken to build special administrative buildings for the municipalities. During the 1920s and 1930s, dozens of such buildings were designed in Lithuania, which were constructed not only by the large county and city municipalities but also by the small township municipalities.

However, the architecture of these administrative buildings, until now, has been studied only in a fragmentary way. For example, various administrative buildings, including those built for the municipalities in Kaunas, the temporary capital of Lithuania at the time, were analysed in [4, 181–183]. Additionally, the development of municipal administrative buildings built in the country in 1921–1925 has been researched more in [5, 242–250]. No in-depth research has been carried out to study the development of the architecture of administrative buildings for the Lithuanian municipalities covering the entire period of the country's independence.

Consequently, the article, based on archival documents and periodicals of the time, aims to analyse and present the still little-known architectural development of the municipal administrative buildings from the beginning of Lithuania's independence until 1940, when the country was occupied by the Soviet Union. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set:

1. To determine how the architecture of these buildings changed in Lithuania during the interwar period and what were the stylistic preferences when creating them.

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2. To present the most characteristic and typical examples of such buildings which were designed and built in the country at that time.
3. To reveal the influence of such buildings in modernizing the material condition of the Lithuanian municipalities at that time.

I. The Representative Architecture of the Buildings for the County Municipalities

Between the wars, the territory of Lithuania was divided into the largest administrative units, counties, whose territories had from several tens of thousands to several hundred thousand inhabitants. There were more than twenty such counties. Their centres were established in the largest cities and towns. In the early-1920s, most of the county administrations operated in unsuitable buildings. Despite that, at that time, most of the country's counties were in no hurry to build new administrative buildings. This was mainly due to two reasons. One of them was the difficult economic situation of the county municipalities, and the second was the fact that they were entrusted to expand the network of primary schools, hospitals, roads and bridges under their administrative control. Thus, in the 1920s, the counties "did not consider the design and construction of new buildings a priority task" [5, 247]. As a result, only a few counties built the necessary administrative buildings at that time. For example, the municipality of Rokiškis County built an ornate two-story masonry building that housed its administration in 1925 (now used as a public building) (Fig. 1). The exterior of the building was inspired by historicism and was decorated with rusticated quoins and bold window borders and capped by an ornate pediment,



Fig. 1. Administrative building of Rokiškis County Municipality built in 1925 [photo from LCSA].

and thus was perceived as the most "beautiful" building in town [6, 3].

The efforts of county municipalities to build suitable administrative buildings intensified in the 1930s, when they became financially stronger and operated in conditions of "constant progress". Consequently, they were able to allocate more funds not only for the construction of new primary schools and hospitals but also to equip their administrations with modern buildings [7, 4]. Thus, many county municipalities built their administrative buildings in the early-late 1930s, more than fifteen years after their establishment.

In the early 1930s, the design of such buildings coincided with the transition from historicism to a more modern stylistic approach in the country's architecture. Although the new buildings began to be designed without excessive decoration, "a historically established aesthetic perception" resulted that occasionally, some of the classical principles of symmetry remained, as well as classical forms, like "pilasters, cornices with a more complex profile, etc." [8, 142–143]. Thus, the exteriors were often arranged vertically by the dense rhythm of narrow windows with undecorated wall strips, a modernised variant of columns or pilasters. Such a stylistic notion also influenced the architecture of the newly designed administrative buildings for the county municipalities. Additionally, as the municipal buildings for the county municipalities were perceived as being important and representative objects, the simplified motifs of historicism and classicism in their architecture were probably also influenced by the need to make them look as modern as possible but still retain the monumentality of forms and overall appearance. Most county municipal buildings had large multi-story volumes, which accommodated all the departments of municipalities. There were also rooms for the county doctor, civil engineer, police chief, large halls, etc. However, since not many such buildings were built at that time, their specific morphology was not formed, as they were characterised by more individual volumetric and compositional features.

For example, one of the largest administrative buildings of that time, built for the Kaunas County Municipality in 1933 at the corner of Laisvės Boulevard and Vytautas Avenue, was designed with a modernised, albeit classical-looking exterior. The undecorated symmetrical facades of the L-shaped structure were characterised by classical forms and proportions, as they were divided into three parts emphasizing the central axis with large avant-corps. Thus, the dense division of the exterior, in line with the traditions of historicism/classicism with narrow vertical windows and smooth wall planes, resembles the simplified rhythm of columns or pilasters (Fig. 2). Such division was functionally justified, as it was determined by the "light requirements of various rooms" [9, 38]. After the construction was completed, the building (now used by

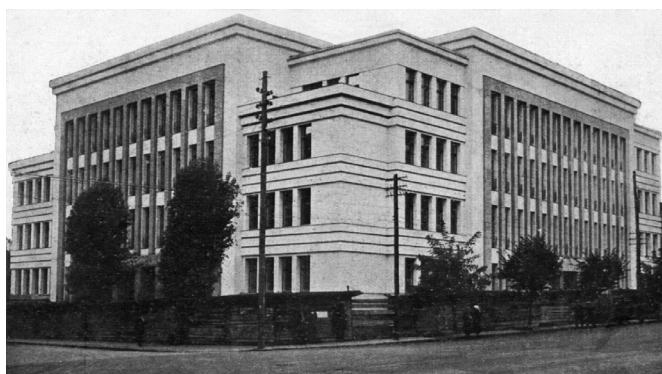


Fig. 2. Administrative building of Kaunas County Municipality (architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, 1932) [photo from *Savivaldybė*, No. 8, 1933, cover page].



Fig. 3. Administrative building of Biržai County Municipality (civ. eng. Povilas Viliūnas, 1933) [photo from *Savivaldybė*, No. 9, 1935, cover page].

the county police) was perceived as “the most beautiful in our capital” and became the symbol of pride, progress and economic strength of the municipality, which was celebrating its 15th anniversary at the time [10, 9–10].

The administrative building of the municipality of Biržai, built on Vytautas Street in 1933–1934, followed a similar stylistic approach. The building, which was constructed mainly using local building materials, was designed by Povilas Viliūnas, a young civil engineer of the county municipality who graduated from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas in 1933. The masonry two-story structure was built on an elongated rectangular plan with central and side avant-corps. External partitioning with vertical windows and unornamented wall planes, a symmetrical façade and a massive, profiled cornice band, displayed a rational yet classically inspired architectural language (Fig. 3). Thus, the greater modernity was inside, where central heating, ventilation, alarm and a small telephone exchange were installed. Also, the building, by its longer part, was built along an east-west axis, and there was “not a single room into which the sunlight did not enter” [11, 31]. Although the building was reconstructed during the Soviet period with the construction of the third floor, it is still used for its original function.

In other cases, it was also thought that the stylistic modernity and the overall simplicity of administrative buildings’ exteriors could also symbolize the image of modernity and progress of the municipalities. Such buildings were mainly designed by civil engineers, who favoured the more modern approach of the Western-inspired modernist aesthetic [12, 6]. For example, the two-story county municipality building built in Šiauliai on Vilniaus Street in 1933 indicated the further evolution of such buildings (Fig. 4). The spatial composition of the two-story brick building consisted of two rectangular volumes connected by a rounded central part, which gave the building both modern and original appearance. The building’s exterior was modern and lacked plastic décor and

was divided by the rhythm of vertical windows connected by horizontal lines, while the central part was accentuated by rhythmically placed pillars between the windows, resembling columns. The modernity of the building was sought not only on the outside but also inside – to make it as convenient as possible for the personnel. Thus, the most important rooms, which accommodated the county’s administration, were placed on the second floor. It was driven by the need to ensure that the personnel “would have better working conditions – calmer, more light and fresh air” [13, 36]. Consequently, the building was a huge improvement for the municipality, as the first buildings that housed it in the early 1920s were completely unsuitable since one of them was even a former stable [14, 2]. However, the proportions of the building were altered in the Soviet period, when new extensions and a third floor were added to it. Nevertheless, it is still used for its original function.

Moreover, Trakai County Municipality built a similar-looking building with a modern appearance in Kaišiadorys

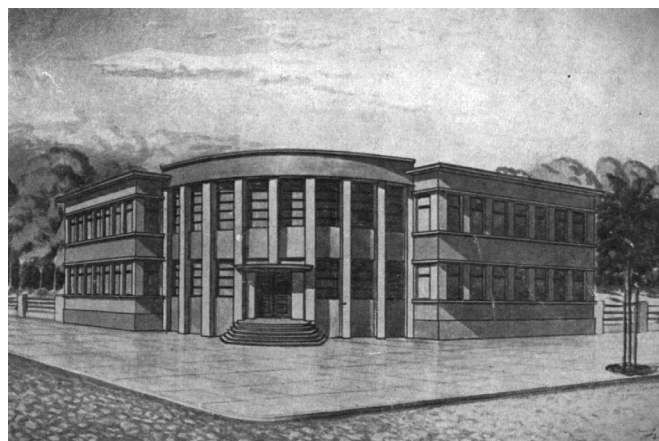


Fig. 4. Design of the administrative building of Šiauliai County Municipality (civ. eng. Vladas Bitė, 1933) [drawing from *Savivaldybė*, No. 2, 1934, cover page].



Fig. 5. Administrative building of Trakai County Municipality in Kaišiadorys (civ. eng. Pranas Rudys, 1933) [photo from *Savivaldybė, No. 2, 1940, cover page*].

in 1933 (Fig. 5). It was designed by Latvian-born civil engineer Pranas Rudys, educated at Vytautas Magnus University, who at the time headed the Construction Department of the county municipality. The spacious building accommodated not only the county municipality but also other institutions for which the rooms were rented [15, 31].

However, in the late 1930s, there were also administrative buildings whose architectural language was still more directly influenced by the classical styles. Such an example was the county municipality building in Panevėžys, designed by civil engineer Petras Lelis and built on A. Jakšto Street in 1939–1940 (Fig. 6). The L-shaped building's exterior was clad with white granite, while its symmetrical facades were divided by the dense rhythm of classically proportioned vertical windows, massive half-columns and an arcade. These elements were purposefully used to emphasize the representativeness of the building and to make it a “dominant” architectural object in the



Fig. 6. Former administrative building of Panevėžys County Municipality (civ. eng. Petras Lelis, 1939) [photo by author, 2024].

city's locality [16, 35]. The exterior with classic, time-tested architectural motifs could also have been a kind of sign of stability and representativeness of the municipality (the building was built to commemorate the 20th anniversary of its foundation), as it strengthened the modernization of the Panevėžys region by building new roads, dozens of schools and a hospital in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite the conservative appearance, the structure was convenient to use, as its large two-story volume was spacious and housed all the county municipality's departments [17, 3]. The building now houses the municipal polyclinic and is listed as a heritage site.

Although the building's classical motifs distinguish it from other analogues in Lithuania, in general, it was not exceptional. Even in the late 1930s, when designing important administrative buildings for other institutions in Lithuania, classical forms and décor, like “columns that support nothing” and other “embellished motifs” were used in their appearance [18, 4]. Thus, despite the influence of modernism on the country's architecture in the 1930s, the concept of representation occasionally meant the use of classically inspired forms. Such was also the case with the foreign municipal buildings of that time, which had “to strike a difficult balance between projecting a message of stability and one of progress. <...> The symbolic function required an easily understood architectural language, which generally meant recourse to an established style and forms” [19, 33].

II. Efforts to Modernise and Build Buildings for the City Municipalities

In addition to county municipalities, there were smaller city municipalities, as a dozen of the country's largest cities had city rights [20, 7]. Although during the 1920s, these municipalities lacked the necessary facilities, the difficult economic situation prevented them from constructing new administrative buildings. Thus, many of them rented or bought older buildings. Consequently, in the 1920s, the only city municipality in Lithuania which built its own administrative building, the city hall, was the city municipality of Biržai (Fig. 7). The two-story masonry building was built on Kanauninkų Street (now Rotušės Street) near the city centre. The simple-looking yet ornate exterior was inspired by historicism since the symmetrical façade was decorated with columns and pilasters, which gave the building the representativeness that was probably sought after. The building was also given a symbolic meaning, as it was built not only to improve the working conditions of the municipality but also to commemorate “the 5th anniversary of Lithuania's independence” [21, 81]. Functionally, the building was convenient to use. The first floor accommodated the municipal department of the city, and the second floor had a spacious meeting hall

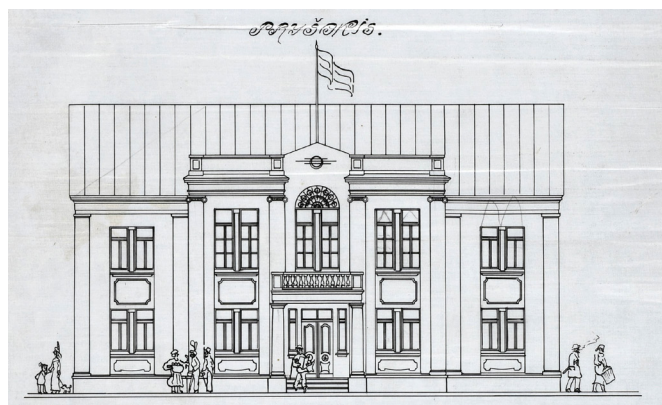


Fig. 7. Design of Biržai City Hall (techn. Česlovas Brudnochas, 1923) [drawing from LCSA].

and apartments for part of the staff. The building, which retained its original appearance, now houses the Biržai Regional Park Visitor Centre.

As in the case of county municipalities, city municipalities began to pay more attention to the modernization and construction of their own administrative buildings when they became financially stronger, i.e. during the 1930s. However, in most cases, these were not ambitious constructions. It was common to modernize and expand the older buildings which housed the city municipalities, as was done in the cities of Alytus, Marijampolė, and Panevėžys (Fig. 8). After modernizing such buildings with the new additions, they were adapted to the needs of the municipalities and became “really practical and modern” [22, 7]. Consequently, in the second half of the 1930s, only a few new buildings for the city municipalities were built in Lithuania. These buildings housed not only the city municipalities but also fire stations, which too lacked suitable premises.

As a result, the kind of morphology of such buildings was established at that time – masonry two-story buildings with elongated volumes and pitched roofs. Fire stations were usually placed on the first floor, while the city municipalities were on the second. Important accents of such buildings became vertical towers, typical elements of municipal buildings in foreign countries, which made the buildings “more visible and more distinctive” [19, 35]. However, in the case of Lithuania, the towers were primarily intended as purely functional elements for monitoring fires and drying water hoses [23, 6]. In terms of style, the administrative buildings for the city municipalities were characterised by more modern exteriors. This was mainly due to the increasing influence of modernism in Lithuania during the mid-late 1930s, which also influenced the smaller buildings built for the township municipalities.

The most sophisticated example of the administrative building constructed for the city municipality was the city

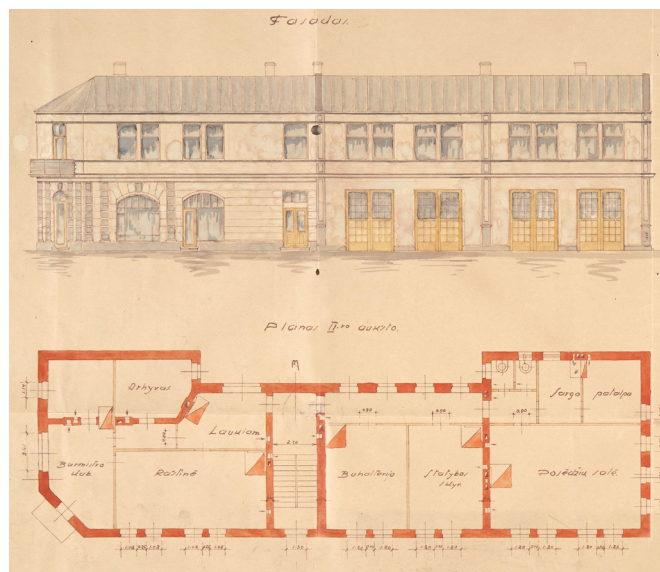


Fig. 8. Reconstruction project (for the construction of the 2nd floor) of the municipal building for Marijampolė City Municipality (civ. eng. Juozas Dragašius, 1933) [drawing from LCSA].

hall in Mažeikiai. In 1938, a national design competition was held for the building’s design, which displayed the municipality’s aspiration to have an original-looking structure. The competition was won by the young civil technicians and graduates of the Kaunas Higher Technical School, Jurgis Okunis and Bronius Galinis [24, 4]. However, the final design of the building, based on the winning proposals, was developed by Karolis Žalgevičius, the civil technician of the Mažeikiai County Municipality [25, 3]. The L-shaped building, built on Laisvės Street, consisted of two two-story rectangular volumes, which, as the competition guidelines required, were connected by a tall tower (Fig. 9). The building’s modern-looking exterior was divided by the dense rhythm of vertical windows and smooth, undecorated wall planes. At 18 meters tall, the tower, which was originally intended for the use of firemen, also gave a strong vertical emphasis to the otherwise horizontal structure and distinguished it from the other administrative buildings in the country. Instead, due to the tower, the building reflected more the international city hall typology, as such buildings often were complemented by the towers [26, 176].

The construction of the structure took place in 1939–1940 when Mažeikiai celebrated its 70th anniversary. Thus, the building was given a symbolic meaning, as it emphasised the city’s progress. Upon the completion, it was planned to place the fire station, garages and a meeting hall on the first floor, while the offices for the city administration were to be placed on the second floor. The building’s multifunctionality was considered a positive aspect, which allowed the important institutions to be housed in one place. The building now houses Mažeikiai



Fig. 9. Design of Mažeikiai City Hall (civ. techn. Karolis Žalgevičius, 1938) [drawing from LCSA].

District Municipality, but its exterior was altered during the Soviet period with the construction of the third floor.

The other city halls built in the country in the late 1930s followed a similar stylistic and functional approach. The city hall in Kretinga built in 1938, housed the fire station on the first floor and the city administration on the second floor [23, 6]. The structure, though smaller than the city hall in Mažeikiai, was designed with a similar-looking exterior, complemented by a vertical tower, which was also intended to be used by the firemen. The exterior of the other city hall, which was started to be built on Vytauto Street in Rokiškis in 1938, was designed with a similar but more original appearance, setting it apart from the other analogues. The building's undecorated exterior consists of simple-looking rectangular shapes. The main façade is rhythmically divided by the simple-looking vertical rectangular and arched windows, while the central axis is emphasised by the protruding tower-like volume of the main entrance. In addition, the exterior was left unplastered, and the exposed dark red brickwork gave



Fig. 10. Former city hall in Rokiškis (designed in 1938) [photo by author, 2021].

the building an almost expressionist-inspired appearance, which was more typical to the exteriors of the German city halls built in the 1920s [27, 112–113]. The appearance of the building has changed slightly, and it now houses a youth centre (Fig. 10).

III. The Architectural Variety of Administrative Buildings for the Township Municipalities

The township municipalities were the most numerous administrative units of interwar Lithuania, of which there were several hundred. Since these municipalities were often established in small provincial towns where there were “no suitable buildings at all” for them, several dozen new administrative buildings were needed [28, 25]. Consequently, the township municipalities, in addition to developing a network of new primary schools, bridges and roads in their administered territory, made efforts to build new buildings for their administrations. As these structures were built consistently for almost twenty years, their architecture, more than in the cases of administrative buildings of the county and city municipalities, manifested the variety of stylistic trends and approaches which prevailed in Lithuania at that time.

Early administrative buildings for the township municipalities were designed and built in the early 1920s (Fig. 11). At first, the design of such buildings was centralised since they were developed in the central institution that supervised construction works in Lithuania at that time – the Lithuanian Reconstruction Commissariat [5, 247]. There several projects for the small wooden, one-story administrative buildings capped with mansards and pitched roofs were developed. Their exteriors were inspired by the old Lithuanian wooden folk architecture, an early tendency of the country's architecture to look for inspiration in traditional architecture [29, 11]. The first floor of such buildings often accommodated the administrations of the municipalities, while the living quarters for the personnel were placed in the mansards.

During the late 1920s, the building projects of the township municipalities began to be drawn up locally by the specialists of the construction departments of the county municipalities, most of whom at that time were educated in Tsarist Russia. Thus, the architecture of such buildings had the features of historicism (the central axes of the volumes were emphasised by pediments, and the facades, the walls of which were divided by tall vertical windows, had rusticated quoins) (Fig. 12). This was the most typical of masonry administrative buildings, which gradually began to be built, as they were perceived to be more durable and beautified the towns better than the wooden ones [3, 6].

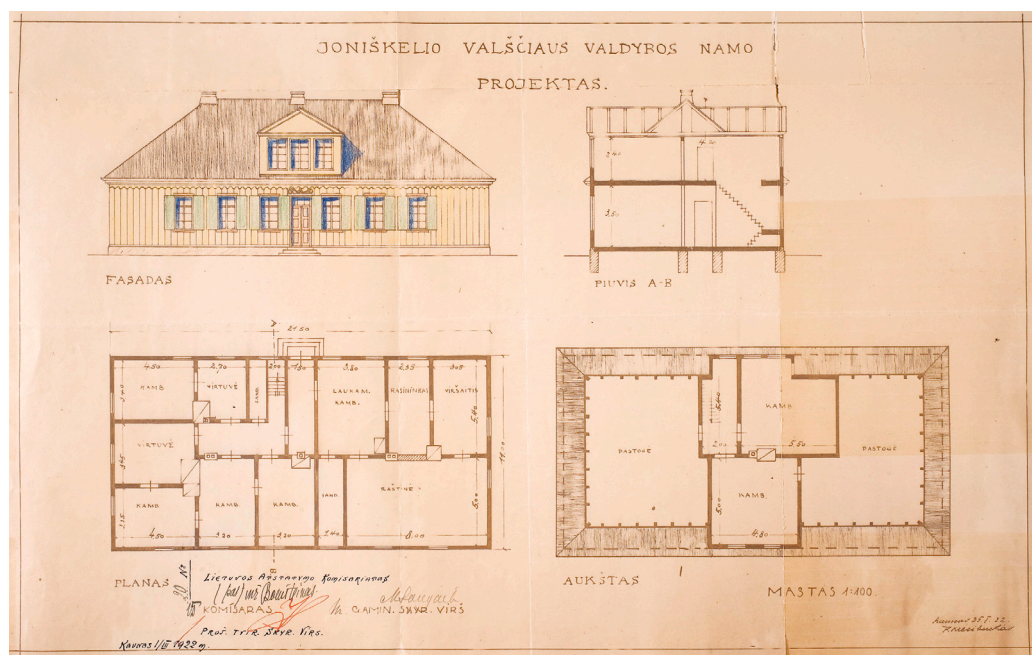


Fig. 11. Design of the administrative building for Joniškėlis Township Municipality (civ. techn. Paul Kresibuch, 1922) [drawing from LCSA].

However, some township municipalities, limited by the finances, until the early 1930s continued to build small wooden and masonry one-story administrative buildings whose appearance of modernised traditional forms was similar to the ones built earlier. Yet the strengthening aesthetic standards of the municipalities resulted in occasionally such buildings being perceived as having “a very bad-looking appearance” [30, 205]. Thus, by the early 1930s, the traditional-looking administrative buildings became less desired by these municipalities, and occasionally, the plans to build them were abandoned. In 1933, for example, a wooden and traditional-looking administrative building was designed for Žygaičiai Township Municipality (Fig. 13). The design, however, was not implemented, as later it was decided to build a masonry building with a modern-looking exterior.

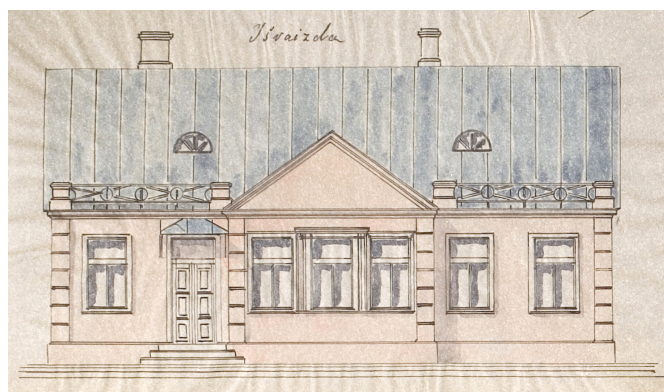


Fig. 12. Design of administrative building for Pagiriai Township Municipality (civ. techn. Maksimiljanas Šredersas, 1928) [drawing from LCSA].



Fig. 13. Unimplemented design of the administrative building for Žygaičiai Township Municipality (civ. eng. Juozas Karuža, 1933) [drawing from LCSA].

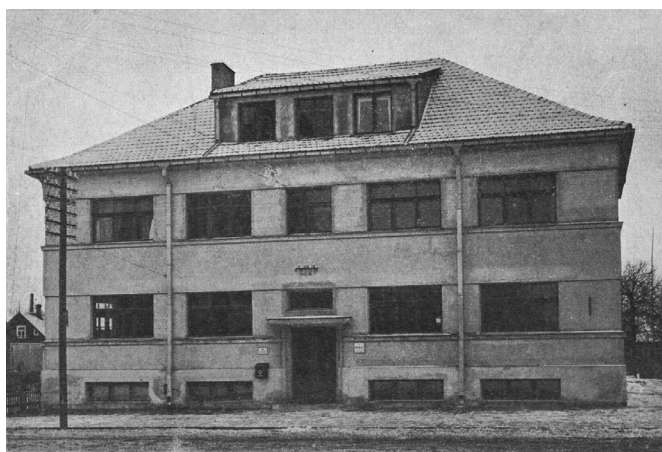


Fig. 14. Administrative building of Panevėžys Township Municipality (civ. eng. Kazys Germanas, 1933) [photo from *Sąvaldybė*, No. 12, 1933, cover page].

One of the earliest administrative buildings, which was characterised by the progressive-looking exterior, was built in 1933 for the township of Panevėžys (Fig. 14). It was designed by Kazys Germanas, a young civil engineer of the county municipality, who graduated from Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas in 1929. The building, which was built on Smėlynės Street, was designed with a symmetrical rectangular two-story volume capped by an attic. The modernist-inspired façade, which lacked plastic décor, was divided by horizontal windows, which, connected by horizontal strips, gave the impression of ribbon windows. The central axis was accentuated by a portal with curved edges and a small canopy over the main entrance, while the traditional Lithuanian character was created by the pitched roof covered

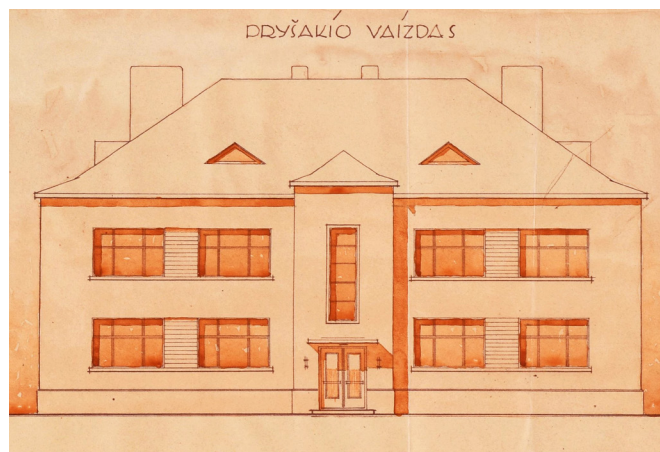


Fig. 15. Design of the administrative building for Marijampolė Township Municipality (civ. eng. Adolfas Lukošaitis, 1934) [drawing from LSCA].

with tiles. Inside, there were rooms for the township administration, as well as for the post office and police station. The aspect of modernity was strengthened by the installed plumbing, heating and electricity systems. After the construction, it was emphasised that the township of Panevėžys, which was financially capable of “constructing bridges and schools”, made progress by building “the most beautiful” administrative building [33, 40]. Consequently, the building became a sign of the institution’s representativeness and progress. Additionally, the building, which was one of the seminal examples of modernism in the architecture of administrative township buildings in Lithuania, probably set the tone for how these new buildings should look. However, during the Soviet period, the building’s exterior

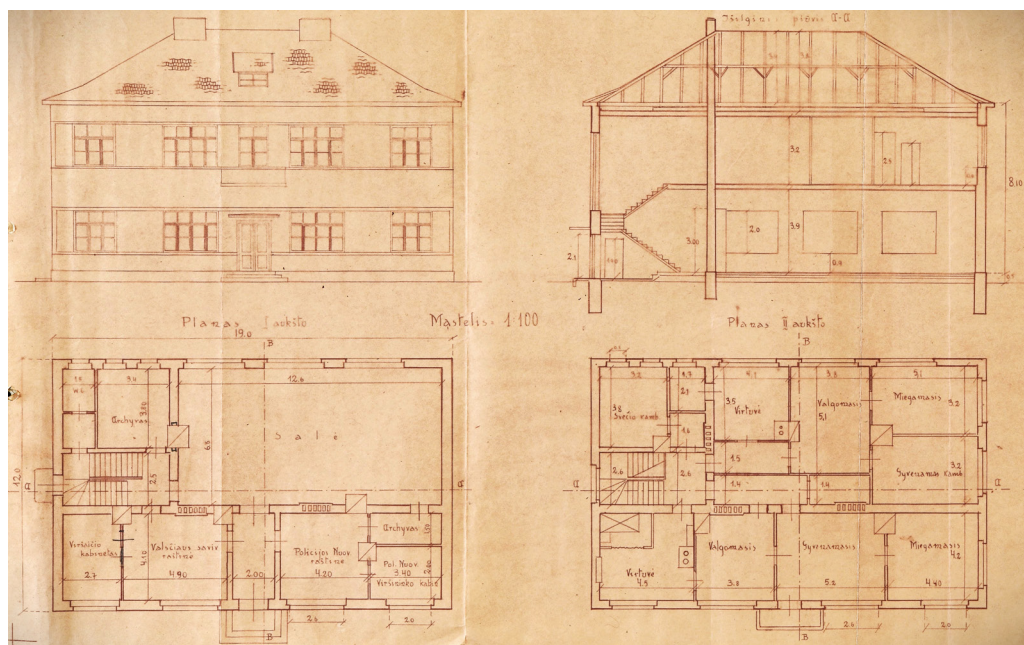


Fig. 16. Design of the administrative building for Dotnuva Township Municipality (civ. eng. Juozas Dačinskas and civ. techn. Adolfas Macevičius, 1934) [drawing from LSCA].

was altered when a third floor was built. Its function also changed, as it now houses apartments.

By the early-mid 1930s, other administrative buildings for the township municipalities, probably following the example of the structure in Panevėžys, began to be designed with similar-looking exteriors. The buildings, like the ones built in Marijampolė and Dotnuva, displayed a modern-looking architectural language in their simple, unornamented, brightly plastered facades, rectangular forms and wide horizontal windows connected by the narrow horizontal lines (Figs. 15 and 16). Such types of buildings, often complemented as being aesthetically pleasing, signalled the acceptance of modernist-inspired aesthetics by the township municipalities. This also corresponded to the state of mind of that time that the new buildings built in small Lithuanian towns needed a modest and simple-looking appearance [34, 72–73]. Additionally, the modern appearance of such buildings could be understood as a kind of statement of optimism in the new architectural forms, which positively expressed the identity of progressiveness of the municipalities. Since they, like the country's county and city municipalities, were seen as progressive institutions, which within their administered boundaries built numerous new schools and roads in the 1930s [7, 4]. Such was also the case in foreign countries at that time, where the ability to build modern-looking municipal buildings contributed to the identity of the municipalities as progressive institutions [35, 49–50].

In terms of volume, the characteristic, albeit monotonous, morphology of the buildings for township municipalities was formed, as by the early-mid 1930s, they often had symmetrical rectangular or asymmetrical L-shaped two-story volumes capped by pitched roofs. Since, at that time, in the country's provinces, there was a lack of apartments for the municipal personnel, the buildings also accommodated the living quarters, which often occupied the entire second floor or the attic. Additionally,

the structures also housed police stations and doctors' offices, while the larger ones even had spacious halls. Such features were common in almost all the new administrative buildings constructed for the township municipalities up until the country's occupation in the summer of 1940.

In the 1930s, there were also plans using modern architectural language to implement quite ambitious building designs (in the context of the country's small towns). In 1935, for example, the township of Smilgiai in Panevėžys County planned to build a new administrative building. The building was planned to be built near the town centre, on Panevėžio Street. According to the design project, the three-story building was to have an asymmetrical L-shaped plan and an unusual terraced cubic-shaped volume with low roof (Fig. 17). The undecorated exterior, based on the influence of modernism, was to be divided by the simple-looking composition of large windows connected by narrow horizontal strips. Thus, the structure was to be characterised by the originality of its design, which would have represented the further evolution of the administrative buildings for the township municipalities. However, due to the limited finances, the original-looking design project was unimplemented. In 1936–1937, the building was built on a previously designated plot based on another, less elegant design project. Accordingly, the structure had a simple-looking box-like volume capped by a pitched roof. In the context of the small town of Smilgiai, which at that time had a few hundred inhabitants, the modest-looking building was still considered to be aesthetically pleasing and necessary, as it accommodated “the county municipality, the health centre, apartments for the doctor and the secretary of the county municipality” [36, 6]. Additionally, the building (now used as a residential structure), along with the recently built dairy and primary school, symbolised the progress of this provincial town of the late 1930s [47, 11].

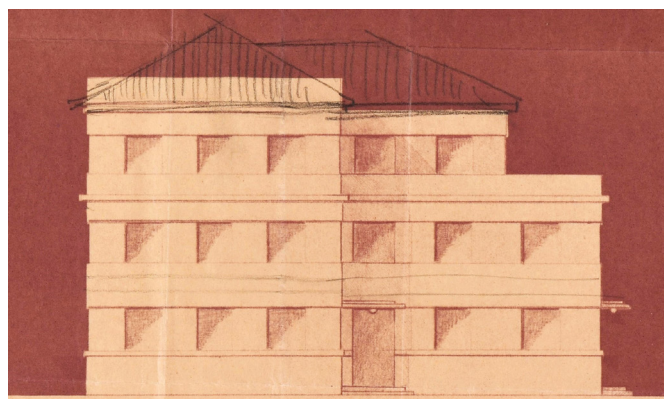


Fig. 17. Unimplemented design of the administrative building for Smilgiai Township Municipality (civ. eng. Kazys Germanas, 1935) [drawing from LSCA].

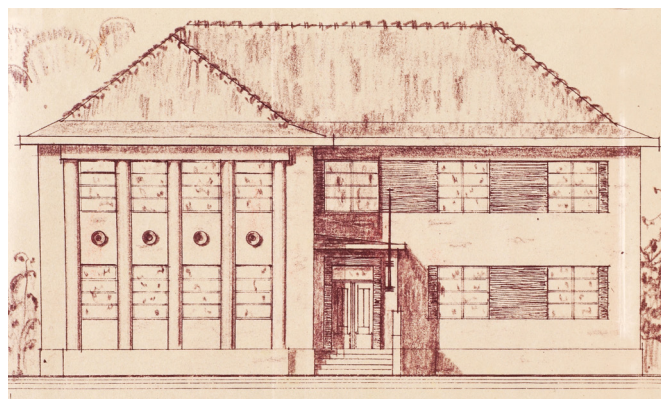


Fig. 18. Design of the administrative building for Sintautai Township Municipality (civ. eng. Stasys Fedoravičius, 1937) [drawing from LSCA].

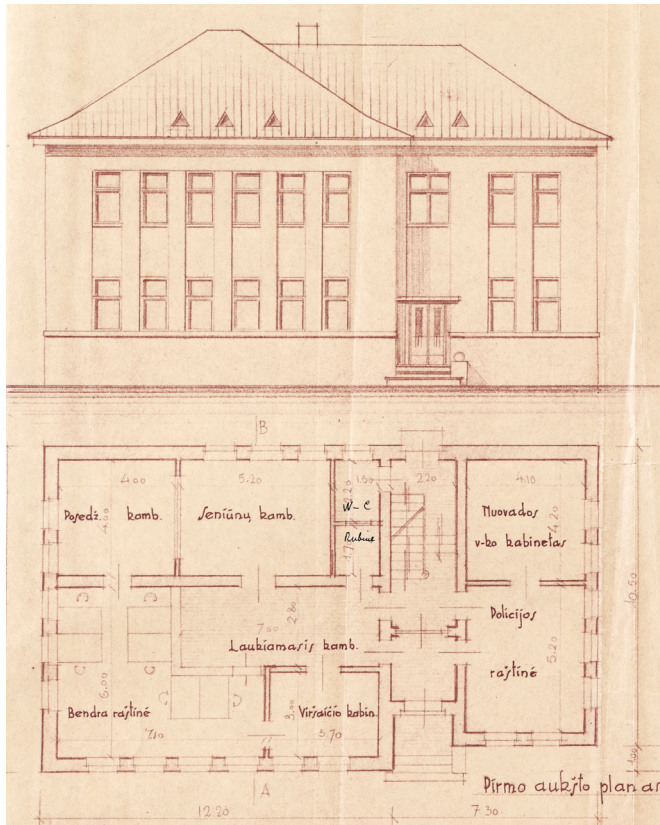


Fig. 19. Design and the 1st floor plan of the administrative building for Naujamiestis Township Municipality (civ. eng. Petras Lelis, 1939) [drawing from LSCA].

It is worth emphasizing that over this decade, the architectural aesthetics of the administrative buildings for the township municipalities changed, albeit slightly. If, at the beginning of the 1930s, in the architecture of these buildings, there was a kind of experimentation with modernist aesthetics, then by the late 1930s, a kind of mixing of forms and features of both modernism and historical styles began to prevail. Consequently, the exteriors of the new municipal township buildings began to be densely ordered by the rows of pilaster or column-like profiled vertical strips and narrow rectangular windows between them, which rhythmically divided the entire lengths of the main facades (in contrast to the emphasised horizontality of the buildings of the early 1930s). Thus, by the late 1930s, the exteriors of administrative buildings for the township municipalities began to resemble the architecture of more monumental-looking analogues built for the county municipalities in the early 1930s. The fact that such buildings often were designed by the same municipal civil engineers could have also influenced such an approach.

A typical example of such changing aesthetics was the administrative building for the township of Sintautai, Šakiai County, designed in 1937 and built in 1940. Though



Fig. 20. Unimplemented design of the administrative building for Pabiržė Township Municipality (civ. eng. Povilas Viliūnas, 1940) [drawing from LSCA].

the building was to have a modern-looking two-story volume of simple forms, a part of its exterior was to be decorated with half columns and circular ornaments (Fig. 18). As in the case of several other municipal buildings of the 1930s, the building in Sintautai was reconstructed during the Soviet period with the new additions, as it was converted into a school.

Another example, which signalled the changing aesthetics of such buildings, was started to be built in 1939 in the small town of Naujamiestis, Panevėžys County. Although the building had a modern-looking asymmetrical L-shaped volume, its exterior was divided by the rhythm of classically proportioned narrow vertical windows and pilaster-like vertical strips (Fig. 19). The building still exists, but after the Second World War, it was converted into a health facility, and its exterior was slightly altered.

By the late 1930s, similar-looking buildings began to be designed for other township municipalities. However, despite the classical proportions and vertical division clearly expressed on the outside, the overall simplicity of the buildings' box-like volumes and the simple plastic décor suggested a still strong influence of modernism. Consequently, the buildings designed with such exteriors retained an aesthetic modernity, which was combined with more monumental and representative-looking forms. However, due to the Soviet occupation, which began in June 1940, not all such building projects were implemented, like the one designed for Pabiržė Township Municipality (Fig. 20). There were also several buildings designed, with the exteriors characterised by the more conservative-looking aesthetics of stripped classicism, which expressed the need for monumentality more. One of the examples was the municipal building built in 1940 in the small town of Obeliai, which now houses a museum (Fig. 21).

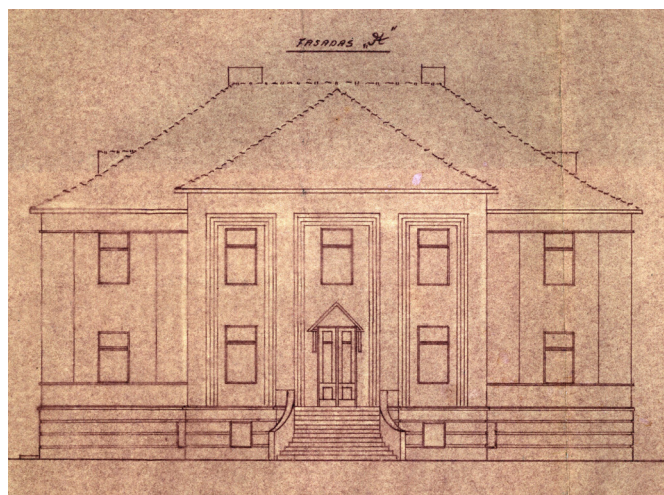


Fig. 21. Design of the administrative building for Obeliai Township Municipality (civ. eng. Kleopas Jovarauskas, 1940) [drawing from LSČA].

Nevertheless, the administrative buildings with a slightly more conservative appearance also remained important signs of modernization of the township municipalities, as some of them nurtured the ideas of their construction since the 1920s [38, 6]. Additionally, despite various stylistic preferences, these buildings, which were mainly built in small provincial Lithuanian towns, comprehensively improved the aesthetics of their mostly wooden townscapes. These buildings also gave the municipalities pride and dignity, as they were much more modern than the often “very old and almost completely rotten” buildings in which such institutions occasionally operated until then [39, 9].

Conclusions

During the period of Lithuania’s independence there was a great need to have comfortable administrative buildings for the municipalities of counties, cities and townships operating in the country. Such a problem led to the construction of new administrative municipal buildings, which took place from the early 1920s to the beginning of 1940, both in the largest cities of the country

and in the small provincial towns. These administrative buildings rarely served one function, as the lack of suitable premises forced them to accommodate not only the municipal administrations but also fire stations, police stations, medical facilities, and occasionally, the apartments for the personnel. Due to that, these buildings became the centres of the administrative and public life of the country’s cities and towns, which symbolised their progress and modernization.

In terms of style and overall appearance, the architecture of such administrative buildings evolved under the influence of various stylistic approaches and trends that prevailed in Lithuania. In the early 1920s, most municipalities built small one or two-story traditional looking, mainly wooden and, rarely, masonry buildings, with the aesthetics of historicism. During the 1930s, when most such buildings were built, their volumes became larger and often had masonry construction. Their style also changed since it began to be influenced by modernism. Thus, the architectural significance of these buildings was perceived optimistically to be able to demonstrate the influence of new, modernist-inspired aesthetics, which also signalled the progress of the municipalities. In other cases, even in the late 1930s, the concept of representativeness in the architecture of such buildings had not stopped being identified with the simplified forms and aesthetics of historicism/classicism, which expressed the need for monumentality more. These stylistic approaches indicate that there was no single aesthetic idea of how these administrative buildings in Lithuania should look, as these were new types of structures, for which a specific identity was sought. Consequently, the concept of their architectural representation was occasionally identified with both modern and classically inspired forms.

Despite the different stylistic approaches, these administrative buildings were perceived as representative and symbolic objects. They reflected the state of mind of that time that the then Lithuanian municipalities needed new, modern and comfortable premises to carry out administrative functions. Additionally, these buildings not only improved the material conditions of the municipalities but also contributed to the general modernization of the locality of the country’s cities and towns.

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