



Latvian Society and Ziemeļblāzma Anti-alcoholic Society - architecture and activities created through private financial support

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Culture and art activities were of vital importance for developing Latvian nation at the turn of the 19th and 20th century.

Two cases of public buildings following the same goal of culture and creativity support among professionals and general public will be examined in this study. Latvian Society of Riga, the initiator of famous nationwide Song festivals and the nest of several museums and independent state idea itself, was financed by private donations of its members and supporters. The still existing house for the society was built in 1909 (designed by E. Laube and E. Pole) expressing features of both late Art Nouveau and Neo-classical revival.

Construction of one of the largest Art Nouveau buildings in Riga – Ziemeļblāzma society building – together with adjacent house for writers (now housing a music school), kindergarten and several other facilities was a private donation by Augusts Dombrovskis, industrialist, politician and greatest philanthrop in Latvian society at the time. His own involvement in art and culture strongly influenced the architecture of the edifice built in 1913, while the officially the author of the building is unknown.

Both buildings have been used for various purposes during the after-war period. Latvian Society has taken back their building, and careful renovations have been done during the last years, while municipal-owned Ziemeļblāzma still has to wait for a revival.

“Ziemeļblāzma” building

Ziemeļblāzma House of Culture, Ziemeļblāzmas iela 36
1913. Architect unknown.

This important public edifice is one of the largest Art Nouveau buildings in Riga, with a spacious theatre and concert hall inside its premises. Its architect is unknown. It was built to house the anti-alcohol society 'Ziemeļblāzma', and its construction was funded by Latvian public figure, industrialist and philanthropist Augusts Dombrovskis. The activities of the society extended to culture and education. The first building was erected in 1904, but a punitive expedition sent by the Russian government burnt it down in 1906. A new monumentally shaped 'Perpendicular' Art Nouveau building was erected in the same place. It has large windows, elaborated volume composition and well-articulated silhouette. The interior finishes resembling Art Nouveau decorative language were applied during the 1980s.

Augusts Dombrovskis and his work

The 20th Century marks a line of prominent individualities in the culture of Riga, the contribution of which is unconquerable in coming generations. However being in touch with timber industrialist Augusts Dornbrovskis (1845 – 1927) there is some particular democratic fascination, and a specific aspect of devoting his entire life directed for the development of others. Beside it there is another feature – many people have invested their private capital in buildings which shape the face and pride of Riga. The life and success of Augusts Dornbrovskis is not devoted to the city centre. He chose Vecmīlgrāvis, the first biggest inhabited place on the right bank of the river Daugava, to create a strong accent in the impressions of those who went to Riga by crossing Daugava for the first time. In the period until the World War I white castle of “Ziemeļblāzma” was rising high above other buildings, while descending to the riverbank there was an entire island of civilization – a kindergarten, a progymnasium, writers house “Burtnieku nams” and its inhabitants, “Ziemeļblāzma” theatre and social gatherings, and a park. The intensity of developed cultural life with a patron as a central person – a creator, a financier, a leader and a worker who considered any written statements on his own achievement to be worthless, who even had not arranged his private archives, but who was a person to give to the people in comparison with other business people of the time. Augusts Dornbrovskis was born in Kēngarags. His grandfather, a Polish landlord who left neither inheritance nor his nobility to his son, the father of Augusts Dornbrovskis, passed early. Augusts could verify his landlord rank, but what it meant if there was no appropriate financial covering? Therefore there he could not acquire education appropriate for his rank. Moreover, his opinions were formed in time when Latvian society was overwhelmed by the ideas of *jaunlatvieši* or New Latvians. Krišjānis Barons and Atis

Kronvalds were contemporaries of Augusts Dornbrovskis. His uncle Jēkabs Dombrovskis was one of founders of Latvian society. Jekabs' wife Katrina Dombrovska founded the Latvian Charity association of Riga (a kindergarten). There were New Latvians of the new generation besides A.Dombrovskis were – Kristaps Bergs and Kristaps Morbergs, well known promoters of culture and education. Yet, the aspect of Augusts Dornbrovskis work was much wider. Alike as for his peers, the Latvian Society of Riga was the school of social activity also for Augusts Dornbrovskis. He was a member of Theatre commission there, was involved in the commission of Procedure and order, later he became its head. On the turn of the centuries he received votes enough to become a head of Latvian Society of Riga. However since 1887 Vecmīlgrāvis attracted most of his attention where he arranged a sawmill, around which directly supported by him, a workers village developed. It took several years to adjust the experience obtained in Latvian Society of Riga for his own mission of culture and provide the financial covering.

20th Century approached. At 1900 the factory kindergarten was opened at the top of a high dune in Vecmīlgrāvis. Marta Rinka, a prominent teacher and official of culture became the head of it. New educational ideas were introduced in practice there, for the first time in Latvia. Several decades later Marta Rinka became a leading specialist in pedagogy of a primary school. In 1902 the non-alcoholic society “Ziemeļblāzma” was founded. Although the official ratification of the society took a long time, the new society moved into a bustling action immediately. In comparison with other similar societies, the main accent was put on the work of culture, educational activities, theatre and non-alcoholic entertainment there.

In 1904 was the opening of the first “Ziemeļblāzma” building. The Society had premises equal to stages of Riga's center. There was a library, a reading room, a pool hall as well as a today's predecessor of bowling -a ball-playing hall there. Parallel to the building Augusts Dombrovskis laid a park with a considerable dendrological value. In 21st January, 1906 Punitive Expedition, sent to defeat the revolution of 1905, burnt down the too popular “Ziemeļblāzma” building. However, Augusts Dornbrovskis was not sentenced to death thanks to the protest of various social activists. Still, he was forced to spend more than a year abroad. On returning home he was full of energy and new ideas again. In 1907 a temporary pavilion of society was opened to ensure its main activities are carried on. In 1908 the Catering society and its building was founded on condition to sell non-alcoholic beverages.

In 1908 next to the ruins of original “Ziemeļblāzma” building a building for progymnasium was constructed. It provided a further education after a district- or a parish-school, and prepared for studies in gymnasium. In 1908 Burtnieku house was opened in Vecmīlgrāvis. It was the first creativity house for

writers and painters in Latvia. Krišjānis Barons, Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, Kārlis Skalbe, Gustavs Šķilters and Jānis Poruks were the most prominent residents there. Sculptor Teodors Zaļkalns and painter Janis Rozentāls were enjoying the workshop opportunities, too. In the period until the World War I Burtņieku house turned into a real centre of Latvian literature.

In 1910 Augusts Dornbrovskis started construction of a new building. He made use of some remaining elements of original "Ziemeļblāzma" building, too. On the 1st September 1913 was the opening of the new "Ziemeļblāzma" building. The activities of the society reached its highest intensity at that time as it was marked even by the most skeptical observers and evaluators. Performances took place all over the premises as, for example, on traditional Children festivity started on 2nd June, 1908. Achieving so many goals, the 68-year old patron had no intention to calm down. He had found a new sphere of activity – a society of Latvian education "Saules dārzs" in Mežaparks. Taking into account the invested amount of money in 1914 Augusts Dombrovskis had seriously decided to develop the activity of patron in Mežaparks. However, this project was not implemented due to the World War I, Revolution in Russian and Latvia's freedom fights.

In May of 1918 on returning home from Peterburg where he lived during the war as a fugitive, Augusts Dombrovskis found the household in ruins. What remained standing, was Burtņieku house without its surrounding forest. Still there was also the building of progymnasium and the kindergarten that needed some heating and other repairs. The same can be referred to "Ziemeļblāzma" building. Yet the main thing that was missing was his sawmill – it was entirely burnt down. For the first time in his life he had to ask for a credit, and with the loaned money he managed to restore manufacturing, however, the production activity level was not reaching the pre-war turnover.

On the 18th of November 1918 Augusts Dombrovskis was one of participants of state proclamation deed of Latvia. All his former life, energetic temper and his unceasing ability to renovate was an evidence to believe that "Latvia will be existing in spite of everyone who did not wish its independence to last longer life than just a single day". (Anna Brigadere).

First of all, a state consists of people. Writers, actors, painters and musicians have been left without any private support. Dombrovskis was again the one to provide this support, but it would be a long list to mention all the cases to obtain a thorough picture of patron's activity.

Contemporaries were aware of Augusts Dombrovskis another zeal – violinmaking. A book "My violin" was issued in 1923 with a help of Marta Rinka in designing the layout. The only copy that remained from all his written poetry was written down by another person. Unfortunately, there was no original manuscript surviving.

It would be difficult to find any other prominent personality who did not care of retaining of his intellectual manifestations. Yet it was not an ostensible attitude, it was some particular feature of his character – a thorough refusal from everything that was connected with his own person. Still, in 1927 Augusts Dombrovskis was awarded with the 3rd rank order of Three Stars, one of highest awards of Latvia at that time.

His lifetime motto was "Work overcomes everything".

Situation at present

Augusts Dombrovskis is buried in the garden of "Ziemeļblāzma". His monument, made by Gustavs Šķilters, was renovated in 2007.

Only few of 1200 violins built by A.Dombrovskis have survived till present. International competition for young violin players is held annually to commemorate his devotion to this musical instrument.

The anti-alcoholic society was restored and took over the "Ziemeļblāzma" building again in 1989 with a purpose to enhance and promote healthy life-style. There are several free-time activity options there: dancing, music, languages, sport etc. both for children and adults. A library is located there, too. Music school is located in Burtnieku nams. Children festival is an annual event.

Latvian Society building: in brief

Building of the Riga Latvian Society, Merķeļa iela 13
1909. Architects Ernests Pole and Eižens Laube

First Riga Latvian Society building was erected in this location in 1869 according to a project by Jānis Fridrihs Baumanis, the first Latvian architect with a university degree. The building was modified in 1886, 1891, 1892 and 1897 and partially enlarged according to designs by architect Konstantīns Pēkšēns, but in the summer of 1908 it was completely destroyed by fire. Ernests Pole and Eižens Laube immediately started work on a new building design, intending to incorporate some of the burnt-out walls of the former edifice, with a typical Latvian National Romanticist façade. However, the fire-ravaged walls had to be completely taken down and the design modified including a new façade, made now in Neoclassic manner. The doors were officially opened on December 18, 1909. The new building has an entrance portico with polished granite Ionic columns and tall triangular

gable adorned in typical Art Nouveau manner with a colourful tableau titled *Spēks* ("Strength"). Similar murals made in mixed fresco and mosaic techniques – *Saules sveiciens* ("Greetings from the Sun") and *Pie avota* ("By the spring") – crown the bay windows. They all depict allegorical figures from ancient legends. Another four thematic tableaux – "The Arts", "Knowledge", "Agriculture" and "Industry" – embellish the sides of the bay windows. All these works of art were designed and executed by Janis Rozentāls.

The large auditorium with a stage appropriate for theatre performances could seat 670 spectators in the orchestra and 260 in the balcony. There was also a big reception hall and a series of other rooms. The interior was designed mostly in the Neo-Classic manner. Sculptors F. Vlassak and M. Lotze are credited for the sculptural decorations on the walls and ceilings of several of the rooms. The stained glass windows in the stairwells were the design of artist Pēteris Krimuldēns. From 1935 to 1938, following the dismantling of the old schoolhouse, an extension designed by Eižens Laube was constructed on the corner of Merķeļa iela and Arhitektu iela. The extension included a restaurant, several club rooms and facilities for parties and receptions.

Latvian Society

The Riga Latvian Society (RLS) is the very oldest registered organisation. It has had an exceptional role in the nation's history and it is at the root of many noteworthy contemporary Latvian educational, cultural and scientific institutions, as well as Latvia's independence itself. The Society was founded in 1868, but its beginnings can be found in the first half of the century.

The abolition of Serfdom, which took place in the Baltic much earlier than in other parts of the Russian Empire (1817 in Kurzeme and 1819 allowed peasants free passage and the opportunity to acquire land. This facilitated the flow of Latvians into cities, especially where trade and industry developed along with other economic activities. The turnover of goods in the port of Riga grew to become, by the beginning of the century, the largest in the Empire. Beginning with the middle of the 19th century, the face of the city began to change rapidly. After the demolition of the fortress' walls (1857-1863) Riga began to expand and grow. The Riga-Daugavpils railway, established in 1861, connected the city with Europe's railway network. New factories, many-storeyed dwellings and public buildings were erected.

Erstwhile peasants became the city's source of cheap labour, but there was no lack of enterprising Latvians who prospered and became proprietors in activities previously dominated by other national groups. One of these areas was construction and real estate development. Latvian-owned construction companies became the strongest, and more

than half of the many-storeyed buildings erected in the centre of Riga at the beginning of the 20th century, belonged to Latvians.

A Latvian intellectual elite soon emerged. Many obtained their education at the Riga Technical Institute, founded in 1862, while others studied at universities in Tartu, St. Petersburg, Moscow, or in Germany. Inspired by Krišjānis Valdemārs, a noted precursor of Latvian national development, Latvian youth flocked to maritime schools to become helmsmen or captains and, later, shipbuilders and shipping company owners. Under these circumstances, it became increasingly necessary to create a centre for social and business contacts and for furthering national consciousness.

The first attempt to meet this need, in 1840, at the Tilo factory in Pārdaugava, under the leadership of the linguist and social activist Kaspars Biezbārdis and the teacher Juris Caunītis, ended in failure. Subsequently, Bernhards Dīriķis, a civil servant, publicist and editor, attempted to establish a Latvian society for science and literature, but was turned down by the imperial government. A new opportunity arose in 1868 when Estonia was struck by a disastrous harvest. Under the initiative of Ivan Himiller and with the support of Riga's *buurgermeister* Eduard Heinrich Gustav von Hollander, Latvian tradesmen, warehouse workers and anchormen became involved in an aid program, which resulted in the establishment of the "Latvian Aid Society for disaster victims in Estonia" on March 2, 1868. To obtain funds for aid, the Society organised open lectures, and performances of a play entitled "Bērtulis, the souse", which were a great success. A Ladies auxiliary also functioned within the Society. The activities of this Society eventually led to the formation of the Riga Latvian Society (RLS) with which it eventually merged.

The founding fathers of the RLS were Bernhards Dīriķis, the architect Jānis Frīdrihs Baumanis and the writer, publicist and economist Rihards Tomsons. The minutes of the first meeting of the RLS were taken at J.F. Baumanis' home on August 16th, 1868. By October 24th, the Interior Ministry of Russia had endorsed the Society's statutes. The general meeting for the founding of the RLS took place on November 22nd. More than 100 new members participated and elected thirty-six spokesmen. They, in turn, elected B. Dīriķis as Chairman of the Society, and R. Tomsons and J.F. Baumanis as his associates. One of the main aims of the Society's statutes was aid "for those in need". The second aim – to "useful information, along with honest order and all of intellectual enlightenment all local Latvians" had a national thrust, and this allowed the Society to become a centre of consolidation. The RLS implemented its activities with the work of various committees and sections, and made a great contribution to the development of Latvian education and culture by organising, other things, the Latvian Song Festivals. The Society's activities became a meaningful political force in the life of the Latvian nation, although there was

no specific of politics in the statutes. The mission of the Society was, and still is, to promote national unity, to and guard the nation's intellectual and cultural wealth.

Until 1914, the Riga Latvian Society was the organiser of every Latvian national initiative. The Society organised Song Festivals, which became a tradition, encouraging the nation's self-assurance and musical cultural growth. The first Latvian theatre began functioning in the Society in 1868, and it was from this foundation that the National Theatre evolved. The Valuable Book Section operated as part of the RLS Scientific Committee. The foundation of the Latvian University and the Music Academy were laid in the Latvian Society; collections gathered here flowed into the Riga History and Ethnographic open-air museums established later: here can be found the beginnings of the Academy of Sciences.

Almost all meaningful achievements at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century are associated with the work of the Riga Latvian Society, so it is safe to say that it was a determining factor in the evolution of the Latvian state.

The RLS had quite a different role during Latvia's years of independence, when museums, theatre and many other branches established within the Society under state jurisdiction. The RLB became an elite organisation, the social upper crust mingled here, there were elegant balls and receptions. Parallel to this external glitter, traditional continued their work, enthusiasts were slowly replaced by academically educated specialists, new activities and interests developed.

In 1940, soviet occupation began and activities of the RLS were interrupted. On 14th January 1989, some old-members and members of various enthusiastic community and professional groups supported by the Latvian Popular Front joined to restore the Riga Latvian Society.

The Riga Latvian Society House

The history of the construction of the Riga Latvian Society's House mirrors the Society's and the nation's fate, as well as the development of Riga's architectural features over the past 130 years. The most important dates in the life of the building are 1869,1892,1897,1908-1909, 1938 and 2000.

The first RLS House was situated in the same place as it is now. It was built in 1869 in a completely area. in the former fortress' esplanade. Riga's fortress' walls and bastions were levelled in 1857 to 1863, and all the empty territory which extended to Elizabetes street, was transformed according to a general urban project. This plan had already been developed in by the city architect Johann Daniel Felsko together with the architect Otto In the 70s and 80s of the 19th century this area developed as an ensemble of boulevards –

an impressive monument of the 19th century urban culture. In accordance with the stipulation adopted in 1860 "Conditions for the purchase and construction of land in the fortification area between the city and suburbs", only brick buildings were to be erected in this area. About a third of all the buildings in the boulevards were erected according to projects by the first academically qualified Latvian architect, Jānis Fridrihs Baumanis (1834-1891), and the Latvian Society's House was also his project. For the project he charged no fee. The construction work costed 45 589 silver roubles.

J.F.Baumanis, one of the most striking personalities of the first Awakening period, was also the Chairman of the Latvian Society from 1872 until 1875. In 1891, it was precisely from the Latvian Society's House that thousands of Rigans bid farewell on his last journey.

The first RLS House was a rather simple brick building with a large hall seating 1200, a stage and various other rooms. Only an old photograph, where we can see the 1st Latvian Song Festival March leaving the House, gives us an indication of its external appearance. Designed by J.F. Baumanis, the RLS House, along with the Reimers' Eye Clinic (now the USA Embassy at 7 Rainis' boulevard, 1863, architect Heinrich Scheel), the building of Riga Polytechnic (now the University of Latvia, 19 Rainis'boulevard, 1866 architect Gustav Hilbig), several apartment buildings and the Lomonosov Secondary School (now 29 Rainis' boulevard, 1868-1871, architect J.F.Baumanis; rebuilt in 1938 according to Indriķis Blankenburgs' project) were the first buildings erected in the then-developing boulevard ensemble. Another of the oldest boulevard buildings is found just next to the RLS

House, on the corner of Arhitektu and Merķeļa (then Pauluchi) streets. It was already built in 1867 according to the project by the architect Hugo Will. In 1877 it was and rebuilt, according to Viktor de Grabe's project, also forming a Neo-gothic facade. In 1902 and 1906, several transformations took place, using Konstantīns Pēkšēns' projects. In the 1920s and 1930s, the P.Dzenis' High School was located there. In 1935, it was established that the building is in bad condition and unsafe. The Riga Latvian Society acquired the building and soon demolished it, clearing the land for a new structure.

At the end of the 19th century, there was a general economic upturn. Latvians took on an ever more important role in the city's economic and cultural life. The RLS' financial situation improved and in the 90s various architectural and interior design improvements were made. These were executed according to Konstantīns Pēkšēns' (1859-1928) projects and were realized under his supervision. From 1892 to 1893, the naked brick was plastered and grand Renaissance-type external decorations, cornices, pilasters and other architectural details were added, with a balustrade above the main cornice. The building's artistic image was enriched again in 1897, when monumental external stairs were added.

These led directly to the hall on the second floor. A side pocket for the stage was also formed. With it the RLS House stage one of the largest in Riga. At the same time, the company's "Siemens & Halske" electrical lighting system costing 13 000 roubles was installed.

K.Pēkšēns represented a second generation of Latvian architects after J.F.Baumanis. J.F.Baumanis had studied in Berlin and obtained his professional license in St.Petersburg, but K.Pēkšēns obtained his qualifications at the Riga Polytechnical Institute, graduating from the Department of Architecture (established in 1869) in 1885. He began his professional work in J.F. Baumanis' construction office and became one of its most productive architects. In Riga alone, more than 250 multi-storeyed buildings were erected according to his projects and, possibly, even wood structures, many of which have not survived.

In June 1908, the J.F.Baumanis and K.Pēkšēns building was damaged by fire. After that, it was necessary to demolish the street facade wall, because it threatened to collapse. The Society immediately started to reconstruct the building. The new building was designed considerably larger than the old one. The project, approved by the Government's Board of Construction in October 1908, was developed by the architects Eižens Laube (1880-1967) and Ernests Pole (1872-1914). Pole's real surname was probably Polis, but God allotted him too short a time for his particularly productive creative work in this culturally and historically important field, so his surname remains for posterity in the form, foreign to the Latvian tongue, in which so many names were written in documents during the Czar's era. E.Laube is one of the most prominent personalities in Latvian cultural history. In the 20s and the 30s he is undoubtedly to be regarded as the No. 1 Latvian Architect.

Both authors of the project represented a third generation of Latvian professional architects. Most of

Them begun their work in K.Pēkšēns' construction office. In this way, the history of the Latvian Society's House is tightly interwoven with the work of the outstanding masters of the Latvian architecture.

The beginning of the 20th century was a Golden Age for Latvian culture and economy. About 300 newspapers and 160 magazines were published in Latvian. Riga grew rapidly, hundreds of multi-storeyed brick buildings were erected. More than 60 percent owned by Latvians. The very Latvians who, only at the end of the 19th century began to make their way to Riga, and, certainly, not carrying bags of money with them.

Art Nouveau flourished in every form of art, particularly in architecture. National Romanticism added its own specific flavour to it in Riga. It was an artistically formal

direction of Art Nouveau, by means of which Latvian architects tried to create as their own national architecture style. It is natural that E.Laube's and E.Pole's Latvian Society's house was designed in a National Romantic form. The facade is unmistakably E.Laube's work. However, the building was not erected after this model.

After all of the magnificent Art Nouveau accomplishments around 1910, a new direction was evolving in all of Europe's architecture – Neo-Classicism. This was a form of reaction to the sometimes too exaggerated decorativeness of Art Nouveau buildings. By utilising a classical form of expression, particularly in developing public buildings, an effort was made to express monumentalism.

Latvian architects, too, sensitively detected innovations of this period. In April 1909, the new project (by E.Laube and E.Pole) for the Latvian Society's House was approved, with the facade reflecting the rigor of Classical forms. On this occasion, it is clear that the drawing is Pole's. The building was erected in this fashion and was put into operation in 1909. The building was consecrated on December 18.

The old walls were partly utilised in the new building, but on the whole, it is a reinforced concrete structure with low vault slabs on metal beams. The large auditorium, found on the upper floors of the building, is covered with wooden trusses of more than 16 m span. The hall seats 680, while the balcony seats another 260. The building can be regarded as the first Neo-Classical monument in Riga, but the composition of the façade is a synthesis of rational Art Nouveau elements. The classical brown polished granite columns with Ionic capitals stand out on the evenly plastered background, as do several Art Nouveau ornamental decorations. The copper-covered cupolas, which surmount the facade's projections, to some extent remind one of the architectural motifs on the well-known European Art Nouveau monument – Vienna's "Secession" Exhibition Building.

The building's facade closely resembles the project's drawing. Only one executed detail is not shown here – possibly on purpose – the decoration on the balcony's railings. The middle part of the balcony, directly above the entrance portico is tightly bounded by a parapet, but on either side there are open-work railings with cruciform patterns, unmistakably reminiscent of the British flag. This is not a coincidence, for there was a fairly evident RLS political orientation towards England, which is accentuated in the Society's ideological leader's Fricis Veinbergs' works. Even in 1884 he wrote: "When we observe in which country social development has progressed the best and in the most ordered fashion, and where all the state stands on the strongest, most unshakeable foundations, then we find such a land – England." F.Veinbergs defended his thoughts throughout his life, in the first years of Latvia's independence emphasising that England is specifically the country from which parliamentary processes should be learned.

An unusual mood to the RLS House is provided by a complex coloured cement and stone

mosaic mural crowning the facade. It was designed and executed by the Latvian painter Janis Rozenāls. In the central composition there are allegorical images of the ancient mythological world – Pērkons (Thunder), Potrimps and Pīkols. These symbolise strength. In turn, the cultural goals – beauty and wisdom are symbolised in the panel "The Sun's Greetings" on the left and "By the Spring" on the right projection. At the sides of the projections, instruments for attaining these goals are depicted. These are the compositions "Art", "Science", "Farming" and "Industry".

The initial plan was to invite the well-known sculptor Gustavs Šķilters, but the final commission was made with Rozentals. The internal areas were also decorated by many well-known artists and craftsmen of Riga. The sculptural reliefs on the walls and ceilings of several were done by the sculptors F.Wlassak and M.Lotze with assistants, the tiled floors and stairs – J.Valters and A.Šmēliņš, but the glass work is by P.Krimuldēns. The granite works in the socle were executed in J.Holck's workshop.

The first thought of extending the building arose in 1934, forming additional areas for social occasions. Very soon the program expanded – rooms for the Rotary Club were also request-ed. In 1935, the RLS House's extension design was developed. The architect was but the working sketches were developed by the architecture student A.Dogadkins. In the same year, the adjacent High School's building was demolished providing the space for the new structure. This was consecrated on February 11, 1938.

On the ground floor of the new extension, there was a restaurant and several offices, on the first -the Rotary Club's offices, but on the upper floors, the Latvian Society's Banquet Hall, smaller halls for meetings and other events, as well as offices. In the basement there were several restaurant areas.

The building's structure is unusual and very modern: there are large rooms, but there is only one internal load bearing wall. The slabs are from large, approximately 20 m long and 30 cm high, double "T" profile metal beams, fitted at 70 cm intervals. The beams were especially imported from Germany.

The construction work was performed by the well-known L.Neiburgs' Latvian company. Thorough ventilation was installed by the Technical Sanitary company "K.Pēkšēns", which still had the highest profile in Latvia, even after the death of its founder.

The architectural style of the facade of the new extension is close to rational Functionalism, but the complete image is well balanced with the "old" building. Particularly interesting is the rich interior decor, mostly in classical style, which, at the time, was the most suitable form for national symbols. It is very characteristic of creative aspirations. Several baroque or ethnographic elements have also been utilised. The master himself, developed all the sketches in complete detail – the staircases' bannisters, doors, portals,

fireplaces, stucco reliefs for the walls and ceilings, light fittings, furniture. In the entrance hall, there was one style of chairs, another in the Banquet Hall, yet another in the Club Rooms, restaurant, etc., but everywhere one could feel traditions deeply rooted in indigenous craftsmanship in synthesis with classical composition. The huge mirror on the second floor Banquet Hall, as well as several other construction materials and details were also brought in from Germany. The crystal decorations for the light fittings were crafted in Czechoslovakia.

In 1940, on the occasion of celebrating Professor E.Laube's 60th birthday, the architect A.Birznieks characterised this building saying: "A whole string of richly fashioned rooms created by the artist's untiring imagination surprise the viewer with more and more original visions of form". In turn, remarking on the same, the architect P.Ārends noted that this building for all time will take a visible place among Latvian architectural monuments.

Several other well-known artists and applied arts masters also participated in furnishing and decorating the building. The author of the sculptural reliefs is Rihards Maurs. These were mainly prepared on-site in cast cement, but the restaurant's fireplace is decorated with the sculptor's own wood carvings. The chandeliers and candelabra were made at Jānis Gulbis' Electrotechnical company and Chandelier workshop, but the furniture by Jānis Prikulis' company. The forged copper exterior door to the restaurant with Riga motifs, E.Laube's idea, is a masterpiece by the locksmith Kārlis Šteinerts. The ceiling paintings on the third floor Banquet Hall were completed by the artistic decorator and painter Ēlerts Treilons. They are painted on canvas and affixed to the decorated ceiling. The largest of Ē.Treilons' paintings of this type was in the room with the fireplace (now the Līgo hall) on the first floor. This covered the whole large, round painted ceiling, but now it has been painted over and a chandelier completely not intact with the whole room has been hung in the centre.

During the period of Russian Occupation, when Soviet military officers resided in the building, much of the furniture was pilfered and many decorative elements destroyed. Most of all, the crystal beads from the light fixtures and other shiny objects. Unnecessary decorative features were added and tastelessly "lit up" with gold-imitation bronze paint. However, thank God, during the half century management by the red-starred "liberators" the building has suffered less than we could have expected.

In 1995, the restaurant area was restored. Major renovation and restoration work was also carried out in 1999 and in the spring of 2000, in preparation for the European Development and Reconstruction Bank's conference, which took place in the RLS House in May 2000. The building received a new copper roof, all the engineering installations and technical equipment and furniture were completely replaced. The renewal took place,

keeping in mind Professor E.Laube's principles that everything magnificent and lustrous must be of real value because the golden colour in a public building may only be brass or real gold. Artificial lustre has nothing in common with the Latvian mentality and Latvian life-style.