



Hospitals in Riga around 1900

Jānis Krastiņš, Professor at the Rīga Technical University, Faculty of Architecture

Early 20th century was a period of booming development of the city of Riga. Among hundreds of new constructions, a number of health care institutions appeared as well. Complex of the buildings of the Riga city hospital constructed in the downtown area in 19th century was extended with two new pavilions in 1999 according to the project by architect Wilhelm Bockslaff and once more in 1905 according to the project by the City architect Reinhold Schmaeling (1840 – 1917). Façade of the main building of the hospital is a fine example of the so-called brick style that is one of the formal trends of Eclecticism with a peculiar architectural finish in figural brick masonry and especially elaborated cornices, gables and other architectural details. In this case it is an amalgam of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance motifs. Separate pavilions of the hospital are arranged in two lines and linked with long corridors. This principle of the layout of hospitals is widespread. Two well known examples are Hospital de Sant Pau in Barcelona (1901–1930, architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner) and Hospital Brugmann in Brussels (1906–1923, architect Victor Horta).

R. Schmaeling was responsible also for the construction of the new City Hospital No. 2 located on the left bank area of the river Daugava, at Pilsõņu iela 13. Construction started in 1908 with buildings of outpatient clinic (later incorporated into new Administration building), surgery pavilion and three contagious diseases pavilions, initially having been used for administration, kitchen, laundry and service purposes and later fitted for proposed function. Construction works were executed by Ludvigs Neiburgs Construction Company. Next year, the Director's House was constructed. In 1912–1914, one more Surgery pavilion, Administration building, Economy and services block, connecting corridor, three more detached Contagious diseases pavilions, Isolation pavilion, Pathological department and a building for servant's apartments were constructed. Thus the whole historical part of the complex of the hospital obtained its contemporary shape.

During World War I four wooden barracks with 200 beds in each for contagious diseases patients were constructed. Some minor extensions of the hospital were executed during interwar period. After World War II the hospital was enlarged by constructing multi-storey buildings of the Women's clinic (finished 1957) and Cardiology Centre (1979). Today the hospital is Pauls Stradiņš' University Clinic.

Exteriors of the historical buildings of the Hospital designed by R. Schmaeling are peculiar with the interplay of red brick and white plaster surfaces in the finish of the façades. This stylistic was rather popular in the whole area of Northern Germany and Scandinavia. In a sense, it resembles something

of medieval architecture, but actually is rationalistic, very contemporary and completely corresponds to the creative idiom of Art Nouveau. Similar finish is characteristic for a number of public buildings designed by R. Schmaeling, for example, Children's Shelter Jēkabpils iela 19a (1910–1911) and 13 schools constructed in 1908–1913.

In 1895–1899, the James Armitsted's Children Hospital was constructed also according to the project by R. Schmaeling. It is also located on the left bank area of the river Daugava, at Vienības gatve 45. Three pavilions there are connected with corridors, but two are detached. Architectural style of these buildings is typical 19th century eclecticism in its "brick style" version with features of neo-renaissance. Around 1910, the new administration building with outpatient clinic of the Hospital was constructed reflecting characteristic language of late rationalistic Art Nouveau.

Not far from the Children Hospital, on the same street, at Vienības gatve 87, Dr. Max Schönfeldt's Neurological Hospital was constructed in 1897–1899 according to the project by architect Wilhelm Bockslaff. This hospital is composed of five detached pavilions presenting fine examples of the "brick style" version of eclecticism. Around ten years later, in 1910, W. Bockslaff designed a building for another private health care institution – Dr. O. Busch's Women Clinic at Baznīcas iela 19/23. Architecture of this building presents Neo-classicism – a stylistic trend around 1910 that reflected a striving for representative monumentality by using elements of classical vocabulary usually incorporated into the architectural finish of general Art Nouveau concept.

Among other buildings of private health care institutions constructed in early 20th century in Riga A. & W. Berkholz's Pension at Ezermalas iela 34 (1904, architect Wilhelm Neumann) and Dr. N. Behrens' (1913, architect Heinrich Pirang) should be mentioned. The first one, located in one of the first garden cities in Europe Mežaparks, was an example of local reflection of the German "Heimatstil". In 1930ies, the building was considerably extended and transformed for the purposes of Dr. Kurt Hach's Sanatorium. Nevertheless, several authentic Art Nouveau parts of the building are still recognizable. Clinic at Kapseļu iela 31 now used as children's social care centre retained its authentic shape presenting restrained but elegantly elaborated late rationalistic Art Nouveau architecture.

In 1910, outpatient clinic and hospital of the Red Cross Branch of Riga Nurses located at Jāņa Asara iela 3 was built according to the project by architect Friedrich Scheffel. Massing of the building is complicated but very rational and of convenient functional layout. Its monumental architecture presents characteristic for the period Neo-classicism interpreted into subtly restrained Art Nouveau manner.