

# Smiltene Rectory: authenticity and the issues of its preservation

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**Abstract.** The rectories of Lutheran congregations, plebaniums of Catholic priests and homes of Orthodox priests are a significant part of the Latvian cultural heritage where peculiarities, traditions and the cultural and historical developments are tightly interwoven. Together with the church and often with the sacristan's and ringer's house, church tavern, cemetery, parish school, etc., the parsonage formed the environment with landscape, road network, household peculiarities and developments of everyday life characteristic only to it. The architecture of rectories is closely linked with the people - the pastor, his family, servants, etc., whose work, love and faith have represented a unique atmosphere in the parsonage, giving the building a special spirit, which today allows to distinguish them from the other ones. Lutheran pastors, who managed their manors, often were bright personalities of their time - writers, folklore gatherers, promoters and catalysts of development of Latvian journalism, poetry and prose. In many places, the environment typical to the personage is completely destroyed, elsewhere threatened to disappear in the near future. One of the most authentic rectories has been preserved in Ziemeļvidzeme - Smiltene, but its existence is problematic and, that's why, this site needs a particular research to show the public that the site must be definitely escaped from going to rack and ruin.

**Keywords:** architectural heritage, manor architecture, protection and restoration of monuments.

## The history of construction of the rectory and the cultural and historical developments

In 1702, the church, school and rectory were burned down by Russian troops [1]. The pastor Svante Gustav Dietz (1670-1723) has written about the devastations of the Great Northern War in Smiltene: *where have been some of the finest buildings, some of the beautiful castles, there are now hares hopping, there's a set-aside and a grove of pines* [2]. The current rectory is located at some distance from the Lutheran Church in the very center of the town of Smiltene (the Lutheran Church has already been mentioned there in 1529), in the rebuilding of which the first widely known Latvian contractor Mārcis Sārums (Podiņš) has participated from 1857 until 1859. The construction of the Smiltene rectory is completed in 1793. This work has been done by the master builder Schultz from Cēsis and the carpenter Dahlberg from Valmiera. The rectory has a steep gable roof with partially tapered ends, a porch at the main entrance and a veranda on the side of the garden, small windows on either side of the main entrance light the hallway.

Below the building, there is a cellar covered by cylinder and cross vaults. The form of the building volume is unwieldy, with a symmetrical facade solution, the perspicuity of the silhouette is primarily determined by the shape of the roof. Many traditional features are found in the plan solution - a hallway with stairs, and the great hall or the living room are located in the center, with the pastor's study, a bedroom on one side, on the other side - a kitchen with a chimney and other rooms. The building is without long corridors, without expressed enfilades. The layout is created by grouping rooms of relevant meaning on either side

of the central part. Essential information on the layout is provided by the survey of 1949 (arch. stud. A. Rozenbergs), who has forgotten to mark the staircase that leads to the attic floor spaces [3]. The second floor layout is typical to the rectories of that time and also to the subsequent period of time - the loft is uninhabited in the middle part, but the dwelling rooms are in their both ends. The rectory is unique by the fact that its architectural and spatial solution, and cultural and historical environment have little changed to the present day. Here, you can see the ornate classical style outer door wings with a Rococo style keyhole cover, box lock and hinges.

The upper paneling is surrounded by a profiled strip. Its central part is highlighted by a cross-type form, the corners of which are adorned with rosettes, but the side protrusions in the bottom part with pairs of elements of the Doric order. The door latch is decorated with a zigzag motif, in its capital there is a palmette. Above the upper paneling, a profiled band with a décor band is visible. The bottom door paneling is grooved and protruded. It is separated from the upper one by bands of rhythmically sorted circular elements. Under the upper door, the casements are decorated with a meander motif ornament and a décor band. The importance of the portal in relation to the artistic composition of the door wings is negligible. It is just framing the aperture, and its decorative solution is quite mixed. In the middle part of the window of the upper space of the door, there is an oval crown-like garland and from its center a festoon-type decor reaches both side windows. Unfortunately, none of it has survived [4].



Fig. 1. The Smiltene rectory, 1949  
[Source: State Inspection  
for Heritage Protection of Latvia]

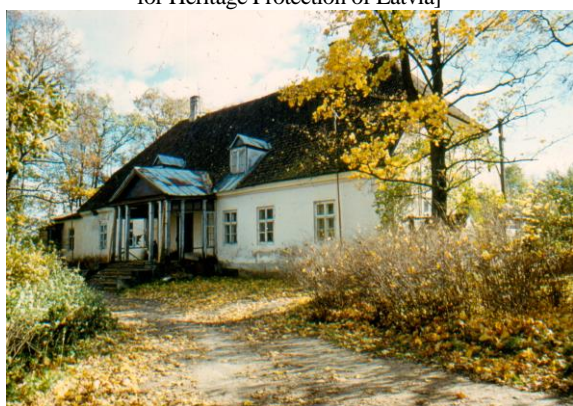


Fig. 2. The Smiltene rectory  
[Source: photo by author, 1980]



Fig. 3. The rectory from the garden side  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 4. The rectory from the backyard side  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]

A double way wall closet has also survived in the lobby of the rectory in Baroque forms with a relief Rococo decor at the bottom and a broken gable at the top. It has served for placing dishes. These wall closet wings in the Latvian architecture are a rarity, especially, from this period of time. But a freely standing wardrobe with this crowning is not uncommon, it may be met in both manor houses and in the building attributed to the popular construction. Paneling has a slightly concaved top, which supposedly follows the graceful concave of the gable. The paneled corners are accentuated by squares characteristic of the Classical time.

There, stairs with a concave slope are visible – recently fixed, but the artistic stylistics and authenticity has largely been maintained, the sides of the slope are decorated with a wavy meander, but the railing – with an arcature motif. The wooden roof structures of the building, the wide plank flooring, the wear of which indicates a long life, the indoor wing paneled design and the mantel chimney are also noteworthy, which, unfortunately, has been lost due to the Soviet-era transformations, fragments of which are visible in the far end living rooms on the second floor. Almost in all rooms, the cornices of the ceiling wall folds are visible. They have survived differently, but their nature is still readable.

The rectory is referred to as being in the state of emergency in 1986, when Smiltene Technical School requests to allow cosmetic repair of the building, which houses flats [5].

At the main entrance, there is a porch, which is made much later, after the construction of the building, supposedly, in the first quarter of the 20th century. It also has its construction history. The triangular gable, the cornice with a silhouette adornment is supported by three pillars on both sides [6]. The porch is in a rather sad condition in 1980s, but the pillars are still in their places. And then, in 2001, the pillars become on two ones less. As a whole, the porch has survived to the present day, its staircase has decreased in width. There is an idea to restore this nice porch. Also, in the second longitudinal facade of the building, there is a small veranda at the asymmetrically placed entrance. The stylistics is similar to the porch above. Even today the veranda is in a good condition.

In 1880, a new pastor Kārlis Kundziņš (1850-1937) arrives in the Smiltene parish, from 1920 he is the dean of the Valka area and serves there up to 1933. His welcoming to the new home is described in detail in the edition *“Sunday morning”, “Late at night, from the second to the third of May, the pastor K. Kundziņš, our good son, arrives in Smiltene, his new home. But his heart is very surprised, when there, hoping in the darkness of night to quietly and unnoticed arrive, he is greeted by thousands of happy, rejoicing parish*



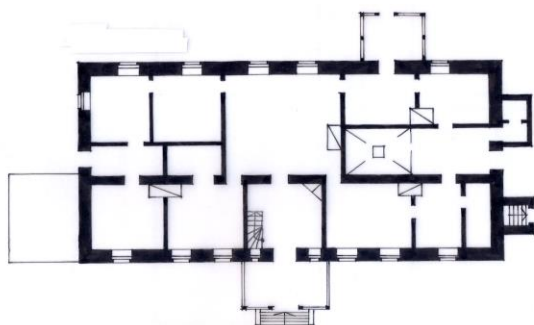


Fig. 5. The Smiltene rectory.  
Layout of the first floor, 1949

[Source: State Inspection for Heritage Protection of Latvia]



Fig. 6. The main entrance door wings of the rectory  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]

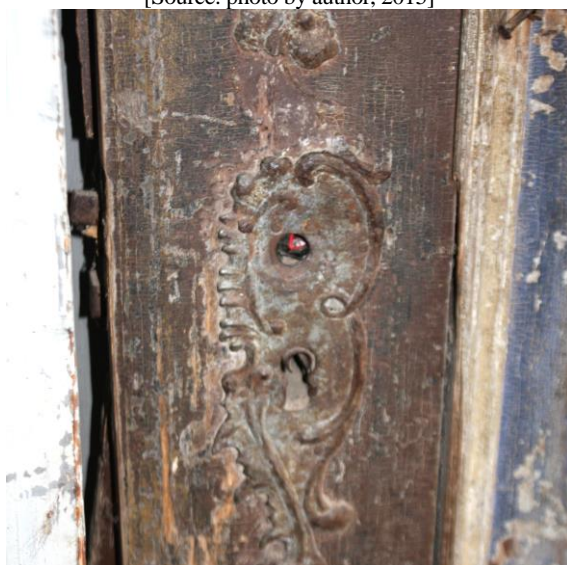


Fig. 7. The keyhole cover of the main entrance  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]

children, tall and short, old and young, rich and poor, of various nations and layers, The so-called pastor's world has built large ornate gates at the beginning of the alley with bright banners, with a fiery bright crown, palmettes and letters. The balcony of the servants' living house (the porch of the rectory is meant - J.Z.) is decorated with all sorts of greens" [7].

K. Kundziņš is an honorary doctor of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia, a founder and co-worker of many public organizations in Smiltene [8]. The spiritual atmosphere of the rectory is touchingly described by the pastor's son Kārlis Kundziņš (1883-1967). He writes, "In the past even the whistle of the narrow-track train and rattling rake of coaches did not still interfere the glorious rural peace, so that when approaching the post road to Valmiera and turning to the right at the Brīkša home, past the two groves, crossing the highway to Cesis, I dropped in an alley planted with maples and chestnuts and in front of me I saw a red tile roof sleeping in spinneys of green trees. Past the old threshing barn and the little pond we entered the yard and at the next moment, we were already in the shade of a porch - rather high, wide, decorated with white columns [9]. Cultural importance is also given to his extensive and detailed description of the Smiltene rectory, by which we can reconstruct the parsonage's everyday life at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, "From the living room or the Hall, as we call it, the door to the left leads into a room where there are high bookshelves on the walls. Home folks call this room "the reading or school room" ... Another step further and we are in the writing room of the pastor. Here, there are also shelves on the walls with old church books and the required books at hand for the pastor. Between the old books, it seems, the most valuable is the church chronicle dating back to the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century ... It is written by Svante Gustav Dietz" [10]. In the great room, there is a table clock in a black marble frame on the mirror table. A peculiar room in the house is the so-called dark room with a mantel chimney. The room is furnished with two beds and a chest for guests. There is also an iron closed bricked on the wall. It is the early cradle of the credit consortium, later with the building of the Smiltene agricultural society house, it is moved there, but the closet is dug in the ground and buried by the pastor. Land rolls are kept in the writing room with all the parsonage's buildings, including the tenant's house and cowshed, yard, a small river that flows through the pond. Having read the book written by K. Kundziņš, it must be concluded that, in the 1930s the parsonage is ruled by the spirit of sincere hospitality and culture. Information about the





Fig. 8. The wall cabinet  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 9. Staircase of the Smiltene rectory  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 10. Staircase [Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 11. The central room of the Smiltene rectory  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 12. The main entrance of the Smiltene rectory  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 13. The garden entrance of the Smiltene rectory  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 14. Pastor K. Kundziņš  
[Source: Smiltene Ev. Luth. Church Archive,  
photo from 1930]



Fig. 15. The memorial site of the pastor K. Kundziņš in the  
tower room of the Smiltene Lutheran Church  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 16. The Smiltene rectory  
[Source: Sivers J. Smiltēn., Rīga: Kymmēl, 1872]

spiritual climate is available even today – in the room of the Smiltene church tower that houses a memorial room dedicated to him. Here, his writing desk with chairs, originally located in the workspace of the pastor in the church, tells about the pastor's daily work. Separate art items and interior elements can also be seen there.

The Smiltene rectory is depicted in a drawing of the second half of the 19th century, which is published by Jegors Zīvers [11]. The rest of the building is also seen there – the two log houses, a cellar and a house in the garden, from which only the roof is visible. Only the rectory is in its place today as the building has changed over time. One of the log houses could be the old barn with a porch and haylofts in the photo published by K. Kundziņš [12]. Barns - log houses on high masonry foundations, built in 1794, are also seen there. These buildings are closer to the cowsheds, the so-called - stockyard as they are connected with a masonry fence and form the inner yard. The Smiltene rectory is also documented in the 1930s in the materials of the Monument Board. The building is photographed from both sides and provides rich information about the situation of those times [13].

### Building of the rectory

As a whole, the complex has not survived, but several other houses, though far newer - houses of the second half of the 19th century have not gone. It is a stable from nice masonry rubbles and red brick columns, forming up a porch, built in 1905, as it is evidenced by the year inscribed with stones, a school house - a rather large one-story building with a steep gabled roof and a mezzanine, which during the Soviet times is bricked with silicate bricks, a small masonry dwelling house with an entrance from the end (the second half of the 19th century). It is located close to the rectory, and, presumably, it is a washing house. Its one end is decorated with an aerated concrete block annexe building, and someone, also partly driving into the historic building, has turned it into a garage. In turn, on the edge of the lake, there is a small rubble masonry building with a steep gabled roof hat with the ends partly tapered (the middle of the 19th century). It is possible that this building has been a small cowshed, but it could just be a barn as well. At the beginning of the Soviet time, there is a shop, later a barn. From the side of the entrance, the roof overhang is interestingly shaped with carved rafter ends and beam supports. The fanatical researcher of the cultural history of Latvia Sigurds Rusmanis writes about the economic complex of the personage as follows, *“Instead of the horse stable and coach-house burnt down In the fire*





Fig. 17. Stables [Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 18. The washing house  
[Source: photo by author, 2015]



Fig. 19. Barn [Source: photo by author, 2015]

of 1904, a new stone and brick building is built, where the manor tenants have flats" [14].

Near the stable, there are ruins of a rather large rubble masonry household building - wall fragments, which still have apertures. Information about the parsonage's household buildings is also available in separate publications. K. Kundziņš has published an article about a barn built using an ancient technique of log houses. The barns built in 1794 can also be seen, although they are similar to a stockyard in their appearance [15]. After the agrarian reform, the rectory is divided into 19 units, of which 12 are renting houses.

Unfortunately, the Latvian State Historical Archives have not preserved a land plan with the building situation at the time of the agrarian reform, generally based on earlier plans for the situation. The only thing we can learn is about the pastorate's renting houses and they are as follows: Lielspreģi, Mazspreģi, Žāpuri, Sprosti, Milniņi, Brūkši, Pinnītes, Kaiči, etc. [16].

## Conclusions

The Smiltene rectory has not still lost its scenic attraction. The house on the hill is already visible in the distance, embraced by the rest of the buildings and the foliage of trees. A winding road leads to it, past the pond and the lake. Distant view perspectives open from the porch of the rectory, but the other - the garden side is more serene and more intimate as there is no terrain. The rectory has not lost its authenticity over time, its historic substance has survived and the losses are negligible. Here, we can talk only about the architectural values, as the building is of a cultural and historical significance in a wider sense, as it is associated with the Kundziņi family, whose representatives do not require comments in relation to the growth of the Latvia's culture and history. It is good that the parish desires to preserve the ancient building and to protect it from damage. The building is partly residential, and this fact saves it from vandalism. However, such actions are taking place and the perpetrators are not far to seek, and we have to ask why the municipal police is so inert in its actions?

A continued existence of the building is a current issue, as one end of the ceiling has collapsed, the roof is leaking, the stairs of the porch are half-dilapidated. In order to carry out the restoration work, an advice of a knowledgeable specialist is required. It is to be hoped that the inhabitants of Smiltene and the entire Latvian society will not be indifferent to this building and it itself will tell the next generations about the times gone by, not making study descriptions and photographs. Reinis Kulbergs and the parishioners are more interested in grabbing the chance of saving the ancient building, as it is not only a worthy architectural site – it also contains significant pages of our nation's history of culture.

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#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

In 1979, **Jānis Zilgalvis** graduates from the Faculty of Architecture of the Riga Technical University. In 1990, he defends his doctoral thesis on the theme "The Latvian manor architecture from the second half of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century". Since 1995, he heads the Department of Architecture of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection and from 2001 until 2014 - he is the dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning of Riga Technical University. Since 2012, he is a full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. He has more than 180 scientific and popular scientific publications, and he is the author of 21 books (for some books - a co-author). His main research directions are as follows: manor architecture and history of culture, sacred architecture, protection and utilization of the cultural heritage.

**Kopsavilkums.** Smiltēnes mācītājmuiža atrodas krietnu gabalu no pašā Smiltēnes pilsētiņas centrā esošās luterāņu baznīcas. Mācītājmājas celtniecība pabeigta 1793. gadā. Šo darbu veicis būvmeistars Šulcs (*Schultz*) no Cēsīm un namdaris Dālbergs (*Dahlberg*) no Valmieras. Mācītājmājai ir stāvs divslīpju jumts ar daļēji nošļautiem galiem, lievenis pie galvenās ieejas un veranda dārza pusē. Zem ēkas atrodas cilindra un krusta velvēm segts pagrabs. Ēkas apjoma forma ir smagnēja, fasāžu risinājums simetrisks, silueta izteiksmību galvenokārt nosaka jumta aprises. Daudz tradicionālu iezīmju ir plāna risinājumā – centrā izvietots priekšnams ar kāpnēm un lielā zāle jeb viesistaba, vienā pusē tai mācītāja darbistaba, guļamistabas, otrā – virtuve ar mantelškursteni un citas telpas. Mācītājmāja ir unikāla ar to, ka tās arhitektoniski telpiskais un interjera elementu risinājums maz mainījies līdz mūsu dienām. Objektam redzamas greznas klasicisma stila ārdurvju vērtnes ar rokoko stila atslēgas noslēgvairodziņu, kastes slēdzeni un engēm. Saglabāties arī divviru sienas skapis barokālās formās ar reljefu rokaju dekoru apakšdaļā un laužu frontonu augšdaļā, kā arī kāpnes ar liekto laidu, kas savu māksliniecisko stilistiku un autentiskumu vēl lielā mērā saglabājušas. Uzmanību vērtas ir ēkas jumta koka konstrukcijas, platu dēļu grīdas, kuru nodilums liecina par ilgstošu kalpošanu, iekšdurvju vērtnes pildīņu konstrukcijā un apvalkdūmenis, kurš diemžēl ir zudis padomju laika pārveidojumu rezultātā, no tā vēl fragmenti redzami otrā stāva gala dzīvojamās telpās. Gandrīz visās telpās redzamas griestu sienu ieloces dzegas. Tās ir saglabājušās dažādi, taču to raksturs ir nolasāms joprojām.

Pie galvenās ieejas atrodas lievenis, kas tapis krietni pēc ēkas uzcelšanas, domājams, 20. gs. pirmajā ceturksnī. Ir iecere šo lieveni atjaunot. Arī otrā ēkas garenfasādē pie asimetriski izvietotas ieejas atrodas neliela verandiņa. Tās stilistika ir līdzīga iepriekš minētajam lievenim. 1880. gadā Smiltēnes draudzē ieradās jauns mācītājs – Kārlis Kundziņš (1850–1937), no 1920. gada viņš bija Valkas iecirkņa prāvests un draudzē kalpoja līdz 1933. gadam. K. Kundziņš bija Latvijas Universitātes Teoloģijas fakultātes goda doktors, daudzu Smiltēnes sabiedrisko organizāciju dibinātājs un līdzdarbotājs. Mācītājmuižas garīgo atmosfēru izjusti aprakstījis minētā mācītāja dēls Kārlis Kundziņš (1883–1967). Kultūrvēsturiska nozīme ir arī viņa sniegtajam plašam un detalizētam Smiltēnes mācītājmājas iekštelpu aprakstam, pēc kura varam restaurēt pastorāta sadzīvi 19. gs. beigās un 20. gs. sākumā. Smiltēnes mācītājmāja attēlota kādā 19. gs. otrās puses zīmējumā, kuru publicējis J. Zīvers.

Komplekss kopumā nav saglabāties, taču citas, gan krietni jaunākas – 19. gs. otrās puses ēkas nav zudušas. Tas ir stalls no glīti mūrētiem laukakmeņiem un sarkano ķieģeļu stabiem, kas veido lieveni (1905), mācību māja, kas padomju laikā apmūrēta ar silikātķieģeļiem, kāda neliela mūra dzīvojamā ēka ar ieeju no gala (19. gs. otrā puse). Tā atrodas tuvu pie mācītājmājas, un domājams, bijusi veļas māja. Savukārt ezera malā redzama neliela laukakmeņu mūra ēka ar stāvu divslīpju jumta cepuri, kurai gali daļēji nošļauti (19. gs. vidus). Iespējams, ka šī ēka bijusi kūtiņa, bet tikpat labi tā varēja būt arī klēts. Pie stalla atrodas palielas laukakmeņu mūra saimniecības ēkas drupas – sienu fragmenti, kuros vēl jaušamas aillas.

Aktuāla problēma ir ēkas turpmākā pastāvēšana, jo vienā galā iebrucis pārsegums, tek jumts, pussabrukušas ir lieveņa kāpnes. Lai veiktu restaurācijas darbus, nepieciešams ziņošā speciālista padoms. Jācer, ka smiltēniešiem un visai Latvijas sabiedrībai nebūs vienaldzīga šī ēka un tā stāstīs arī nākošajām paaudzēm par aizgājušiem laikiem, nevis liks vērties aprakstos un fotogrāfijās.