

Giedrė Filipavičienė

Head of the Cultural heritage Division  
Vilnius City Municipal Government City Development Department

## **PRESERVATION OF VILNIUS WOODEN ARCHITECTURE**

*„No other plant species is so dear to humanity as the tree. It was the first and remains the most important of the plants used by human, and its significance in the development of civilization cannot be underestimated*

*(Christoph Affentanger, Naomi Stungo – „The new wood architecture“)*

**il. 1**

Wooden buildings dominated in Lithuania since prehistoric times to the second half of the 20th century. Qualified Lithuanian craftsmanship school was created during centuries.

Unfortunately for majority of Lithuanian people the wooden buildings are received as poor and unvaluable buildings.

Vilnius suburban wooden architecture connected traditions of national and regional residential buildings with traditions of Vilnius professional craftsmanship school. Refined professional forms were combined with the variety of architectural types.

**The Strategy of the Preservation of Vilnius Wooden Architectural Heritage was prepared in 2003-2005 under request of Vilnius City Municipality. The area of Vilnius central part was analyzed because of the most intensive development processes there.**

### **History of wooden architecture development**

During 14<sup>th</sup> c. – middle of 19<sup>th</sup> c. the city occupied the area of a present Old Town and some adjacent areas. Wooden buildings formed the historic suburbs near the main roads from the city and picturesque areas of groups of manor houses.

In 1875 the first City Official Plan was approved, and in 1892 a General Rules of Constructions were approved. According to these documents separate zones for masonry and wooden buildings were defined. Wooden buildings were allowed in the western part of Naujamiestis area, Snipiskes area on the right bank of the river Neris, in Markučiai, the southern part of Naujininkai and Vilkipede - near the railway.

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> c. Zverynas district was developed in rectangular quarters and built with wooden houses and villas.

**il. 2 – house in Zverynas, Vytauto str. 49**

Antakalnis area was the most distinctive, it was the summer residence location of Vilnius noblemen since 17<sup>th</sup> c (slide 3) .

The building density in Antakalnis increased, though single estates and manor houses still dominated.

**il. 3 – house in Antakalnis, Pavasario str. 12**

**Typology and characteristics of wooden architecture**

There are about 2000 wooden buildings of the end of 19th c. – beginning of 20th c. in the central part of Vilnius. Majority of them are residential houses. There are three wooden hospitals and some shops.

Houses are different in urban and architectural types.

**il. 4 – urban types of wooden houses**

There is a lot of examples of typical for the East Lithuania villages vernacular architecture.

**il. 5, 6 – architectural types of wooden houses**

Professional buildings of wooden architecture are perfect examples of the time. They were created by architects of various nationalities and architectural schools. That is why they are so different.

There were types of buildings, influenced by Polish wooden architecture (especially manor houses). Because of intensive cultural links with Poland at the end of 19th c. – beginning of 20th c. we find the same architectural forms and decorations (for example Zakopane style).

There was also influence of Russian architectural schools.

**il. 7 – house in Uzupis, Polocko str. 52**

**Risk factors**

There are three main groups of risk factors – ideological, legal and social-economic.

Main factor of risk is the change of traditional living style and building technologies. Urbanisation, industrialisation and globalisation influenced to the very rapid change of traditions of the society. High price of land and development of the city has a great impact to the historic suburban areas.

Ideological factor is the remain from in the last decades of the XX-th century, when attitude, that wooden house is poor and cheap building was formed. At that time modern new housing was planed in all Vilnius historical suburbs. Till the year 2006, only ten wooden houses were registered on the cultural heritage list.

### **Suggested methods of wooden architecture preservation**

After the situation was analysed, **three** principal methods of wooden architecture preservation were suggested:

#### **I. Preservation of the object in site - *in situ***

The method is applied when the value of the object is high and the possibility to survive (criteria of building use) is high, and the building or group of buildings must be preserved. According to the situation and authentic environment of the object (for example surrounding building structure, materials, relationship with the landscape) should be also protected as much as possible.

#### **II. Protection of the object displacing it to the new location**

The method is applied when the value of the object is high, but the possibility to survive (criteria of building use) is small. The need for a new urban development is the main reason why valuable wooden buildings may be displaced to the new place. It also happened in the history of buildings that they were displaced or their elements were changed. The new location for the wooden buildings should be similar to their authentic environment, so it is the best to relocate the buildings in the other protected areas of wooden buildings or to create a special reserve – Museum of Wooden Architecture.

#### **III. Preservation of information on the object**

The method is applied when the value of the object is an average, and the possibility to survive is very small. The information on the object is important in any case, because it is valuable for the general knowledge on wooden buildings. The wooden buildings may be destroyed very easy because of a bad maintenance and fires. The preserved information enables to recreate ruined buildings or their parts. Detailed research (photofixation, very detailed measurement, examples of building materials, buildings elements and building methods) are necessary for the preservation of the information. Parts of destroyed buildings may be protected and exposed in the Museum of Wooden Architecture.

It is very important to change the attitude of the society to the heritage of wooden architecture, to help understand its value and the new possibilities of use.

The wooden architecture will remain only if it will be appreciated by the society, and especially by the youth.

It is suggested to introduce the course of ethnic architecture in schools. Practical tasks for the better knowledge on wooden architecture should be included.

In 2006 Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency plans to apply for the funds of the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. Application for the funding is under preparation. According to the application it is intended to restore wooden houses *in situ*, to organise public awareness raising campaign, to issue a special information brochure and to prepare an exhibition. If the financing will be received, the project will be implemented in 2007.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The heritage of Vilnius wooden architecture includes more than 2000 of residential, public and mixed use houses of vernacular and professional architecture built at the second half of 19th c. – first half of 20 th c.  
Such a **variety** was influenced by the type of the city (capital of the country; the centre of Vilnius gubernatorial), location in the region (centre of Eastern Lithuania), influence of various nations and architectural development (deep traditions of craftsmanship). The building structure was influenced by the picturesque natural environment.
2. The heritage of Vilnius wooden architecture **is constantly declining**. It is determined by typical for Vilnius ideological, legal and social-economic **risk factors** which may be overcome by the methods of preservation and means of their implementation; also organisational means.
3. **Main factors for the preservation of wooden architecture are constant implementation of programmes of wooden architecture maintenance, research, fixation and conservation works, organisation of legal, economic and educational means.**

## **REFERENCES**

1. Giedrė Miknevičienė, Dalė Puodžiukienė, Giedrė Pilipavičienė. Vilniaus miesto centrinės dalies medinės architektūros paveldo apsaugos strategijos metmenys - 2004 m. (The Strategy of the Preservation of Vilnius wooden architectural heritage).
2. Drėma V. Dingęs Vilnius. Vilnius:Vaga,1991
3. Lukšionytė Tolvaišienė N. Istorizmas ir modernas Vilniaus architektūroje. Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos darbai, 2000.
4. Medine architektūra Lietuvoje. Vilnius: Vaga, 2002.  
Vilniaus naujamiesčio istoriniai tyrimai. Autoriai: I. Baliulytė, A. Racevičienė, J.Valužyte. Vilniaus miesto valdybos paminklotvarkos skyrius.  
UAB “ Paminklų restauravimo institutas”, 1995.
5. Vilniaus Žvėryno rajono istoriniai tyrimai. Aut. I. Baliulytė, A. Racevičienė, V. 1991.
6. Vilniaus Žvėryno rajono paminkloausugos projektas. Aut. G. Miknevičienė ir autorių kolektyvas; V., 1992.





## Urban types

	Žvėrynas	Naujininkai
Perimetric type – houses built on the red line of the street		
	Paplaujos st.	Gardino st.
Homestead type – houses built in the centre of the plot		

## Architectural types of houses Professional architecture –

	Antakalnio st. 8	Sporto st. 5
„manor“ type		
	P. Skorinos st. 5	Antakalnio st. 16
„cottage“ type		

**Architectural types of houses**  
**villas, reflecting influence of neoromantic style**

Villa Rutu st. 13	Villa Vytauto st. 27
	
Villa Pavasario st. 14	Villa Čiurlionio st. 33
	

