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# THE ADAPTATION OF THE HISTORIC PARK AT THE MANOR HOUSE IN DOLNÁ STREHOVÁ

## ADAPTACJA HISTORYCZNEGO PARKU PRZY DWORZE W MIEJSCOWOŚCI DOLNÁ STREHOVÁ

### ABSTRACT

The goal of this work is to point out principles of the adaptation of the historic park at the manor house in Dolná Strehová for new uses. The historical park is situated in the center of the village Dolná Strehová, district Veľký Krtíš in southern Slovakia, 5 km from the border with Hungary. The manor house is owned by the Museum of Hungarian Culture in Slovakia, is a permanent exhibition of an celebrated writer and poet Imre Madách (1823-1864), author of a dramatic work "The Tragedy of Man." Development of the park near the manor house in Dolná Strehová is closely linked to developments and changes in functional use of the manor house. The manor house in Dolná Strehová was built in the second half of the 18th century in Baroque style, Classicism reconstruction of the manor house was carried out in the years 1809-1811. The first concrete design of the park in its total is illustrated in the historic cadastral map from 1868. A more detailed version is the drawing by Imre Madách from the year 1858. Based on an analysis of historical documents, we can state, that the original basic composition of the park was built in the so-called mixed garden style. The area in close proximity to the manor house was designed by using principles of creating a formal garden in relation to the Baroque and Classical style of the manor house. The more distant areas of the park were designed in a natural-landscape style passing to the park forest. In 1936 a tomb was built in the park, to which the exhumed remains of Imre Madách were transferred. At present, the original design of the park, the communication system, as well as the main axis of the original composition disappeared. The original elements of small architecture were also lost. The composition of vegetation structures is unreadable, and a minimum of the original woody plants were preserved. In 1980, and then in the years 2011-2013 a comprehensive renovation of the manor house was achieved, without significant interventions in the park. In 2015 a project for park adaptations was created to adapt the historic park to the new functional use. The aim of reconstruction of the park is to build an environment for visitors of the museum, also for residents of the village and for activities for the elementary school and kindergarten on site.

**Key words:** adaptation, Dolná Strehová, historic park, Imre Madách

### STRESZCZENIE

Celem pracy jest zaprezentowanie zasad adaptacji zabytkowego parku przy dworze w miejscowości Dolná Strehová do nowych zastosowań. Historyczny park usytuowany jest w centrum wsi Dolná Strehová, w regionie Veľký Krtíš, na południu Słowacji, 5 km. od granicy z Węgrami. Dwór będący własnością Muzeum Kultury Węgierskiej na Słowacji, jest miejscem stałej ekspozycji wybitnego pisarza i poety Imre'a Madácha (1823-1864), autora dramatu „The Tragedy of Man”. Rozwój parku w pobliżu dworu w miejscowości Dolná Strehová jest ściśle związany z rozwojem i zmianą sposobu funkcjonowania dworu. Dwór został wybudowany w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku w stylu barokowym, a latach 1809-1811 dokonano rekonstrukcji w stylu klasycystycznym. Pierwszy konkretny projekt całości parku ilustruje mapa katastralna z 1868 roku.

Bardziej szczegółową wersją jest rysunek Imre'a Madácha, z 1858 r. Na podstawie analizy dokumentów historycznych można stwierdzić, że oryginalna, podstawowa kompozycja parku została urządzona w tzw. mieszanym stylu ogrodowym. Obszar znajdujący się w pobliżu dworu został zaprojektowany z zastosowaniem zasad projektowania ogrodu formalnego, w nawiązaniu do baroku i klasycystycznego stylu dworu. Bardziej odległe obszary parku zostały zaprojektowane w naturalnym stylu krajobrazowym przechodzącym w kierunku parku leśnego. W 1936 r. w parku wybudowano grobowiec, do którego przeniesiono ekshumowane szczątki Imre'a Madácha. Obecnie oryginalny projekt parku, systemu komunikacyjnego, jak również głównej osi dawnej kompozycji zanika. Historyczne elementy małej architektury również zostały utracone. Kompozycja roślinna jest nieczytelna, a zachowane zostało jedynie minimum oryginalnej roślinności. W roku 1980, a następnie w latach 2011-2013, dokonano gruntownej renowacji dworu, bez znaczącej interwencji w park. W 2015 roku powstał projekt adaptacji parku w celu dostosowania historycznego założenia do nowego sposobu funkcjonowania i użytkowania. Celem rekonstrukcji parku jest stworzenie przestrzeni dla zwiedzających muzeum oraz mieszkańców wsi i miejsca aktywności przy szkole podstawowej i przedszkolu, na tym obszarze.

**Słowa kluczowe:** adaptacja, Dolná Strehová, Imre Madách, park historyczny

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Slovakia, after 1945, many mansions with their parks, previously privately owned, transferred in different ways to state ownership. These buildings are now used for various purposes, from museums, offices, schools, to health centers and stores. The parks were often parceled out and used for the building of family houses, football fields or various amenity buildings. The plant maintenance in these parks was insufficient and many parks were therefore completely abolished. The Manor House in Dolná Strehová is a typical example. The historic park was damaged and now new solutions to reconstruct the remaining area of the park are required to adapt to the changed conditions of the manor house.

## 2. THE AIM OF RESEARCH

The aim of the study was to determine the principles of the park restoration at the manor house Dolná Strehová based on the analysis of historical documents and the survey of the current state of the park. The results were applied to the design for the restoration of the historic park.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

The historical development of the park has been analyzed based on the field survey, study of historic literature and based on results of archival research by Straňáková in 2014. The study used historical literature and archival maps and photographs from the collections of the Slovak National Museum – Museum of Hungarian Culture in the Dolná Strehová and freely available historical maps. The most valuable source of knowledge about the history of the park are the description of the park in the literary work of Károly Balogh, who knew the park in his childhood

and also the drawings of Madách Imre, who captured the original state of park. Archival and field research was evaluated to authentic features. In the project we used the results of the inventory of trees in the park developed by Straňáková in 2015. Based on the results of historical research, the inventory of trees and requirements of the museum a project of reconstruction of the park was developed<sup>1</sup>.

## 4. STATE OF RESEARCH

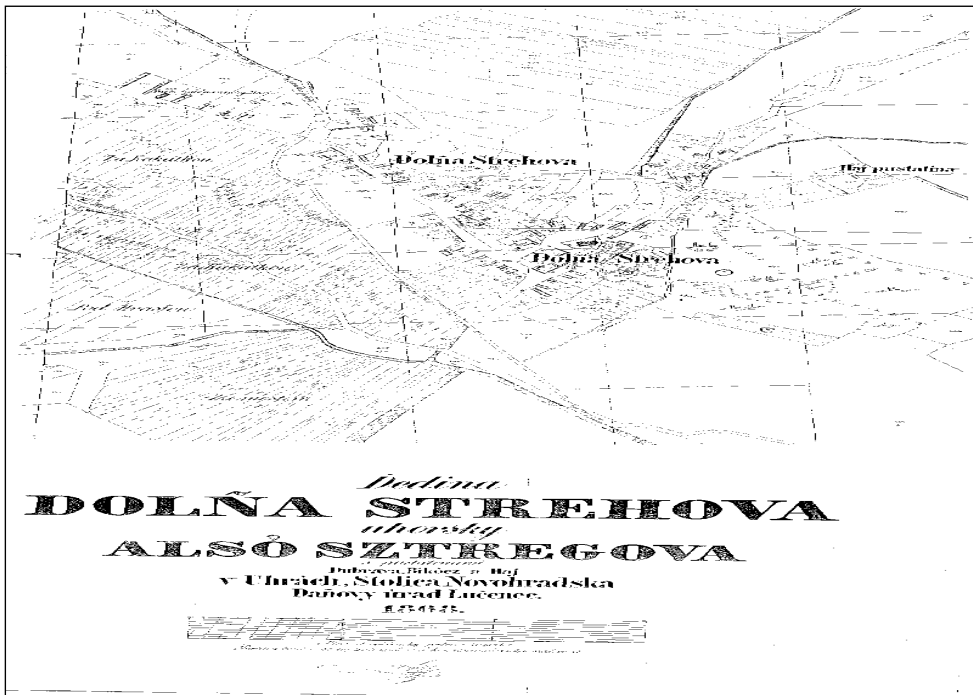
### 4.1. The current state of Park at the Manor House in Dolná Strehová

The Park at the Manor House in Dolná Strehová is a national monument registered in the Central List of Monuments and therefore is covered by the provisions of Law no. 49/2002 Coll. Heritage Protection. The manor house and park are located in the urban area of a village Dolná Strehová, district Veľký Krtíš in Southern Slovakia, near the borders with Hungary (6 km). The mansion is currently a permanent exhibition of the writer and poet Imre Madách (1823-1864). The manor house and park presently have an area of 3 ha, the original area was closer to 7 ha. South of the castle building The Primary School and Nursery School are currently located. Southwest of the castle is situated a block of apartment flats. All these buildings are situated on the area of the original historic park.

### 4.2. History of the manor house

The history of the village Dolná Strehová and the manor house is closely linked to the aristocratic Madách family. The first member of the family is mentioned in the years 1223-1250 in this village.

<sup>1</sup> J. Straňáková, D. Halajová, *Rehabilitation of The park of Imre Madách in Dolná Strehová – plan of design*, 2015.



II. 1. A copy of the cadastral map from 1868: Archive of The Slovak National.

III. 1 Kopia mapy katastralnej z 1868 r.: Narodowe Archiwum Słowacji.

The first residence of the family Madách in 1430 was the old mansion, situated about 100 m towards the west of the current castle. The old mansion was destroyed by fire at the time of Turkish invasion in 1522. The new baroque mansion was built by Alexander Madách (1756-1814) and rebuilt in the spirit of classicism in 1811<sup>2</sup>. In 1823 the noteworthy poet and writer Imre Madách was born, known for his famous work “Tragedy of Man.” Madách passed away in the mansion in 1864. In 1942 the manor house, with the rest of the park, were acquired by the village Dolná Strehová. Gradually there were various local institutions like the post office, primary school, kindergarten, a teacher’s apartment, a warehouse and medical center incorporated on site. In the 1960s the manor house became a museum. Since 2003 the management of the castle was taken over by the Slovak National Museum – Museum of Hungarian Culture in Slovakia. The last reconstruction of the manor house building was carried out in 2011-2013.

#### 4.3. Analysis of the historical development of park

The first specific form and size of parks is illustrated in the historic cadastral map from 1868. On the historical cadastral map has drawn the mansion with outbuilding and greenhouses. The landscape design in surroundings of the castle was clearly visible. Behind the small river Vol’ava was a landscape designed in the natural landscape style, and in the south-eastern part of the area was a park arranged

forest. The Cadastral map depicts the park in its the most representative form, in time when in the mansion lived and worked writer and poet Imre Madách (1823-1864)<sup>3</sup>. The manor house and park retained its size and shape until the 1930s when it belonged to the Madách family. The integrity of the original park area was disrupted at the time of the last owner Flora Madách, who lost the property at auction between the years 1932-1938<sup>4</sup>. In 1936 in the back part of park area was built a tomb with monument was built containing the exhumed transferred remains of Imre Madách. The manor house with the rest of park became a municipal property in 1943. In 1959 the municipality decided to build a primary school building south of the castle, and the greenhouse was destroyed. In 1964 in the framework of celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the death Madách Imre, the park, the surrounding the manor house, was partially reconstructed. Probably in this period coniferous trees were planted around the castle and along the sidewalks (Thuja, Juniperus).

## 5. RESULTS

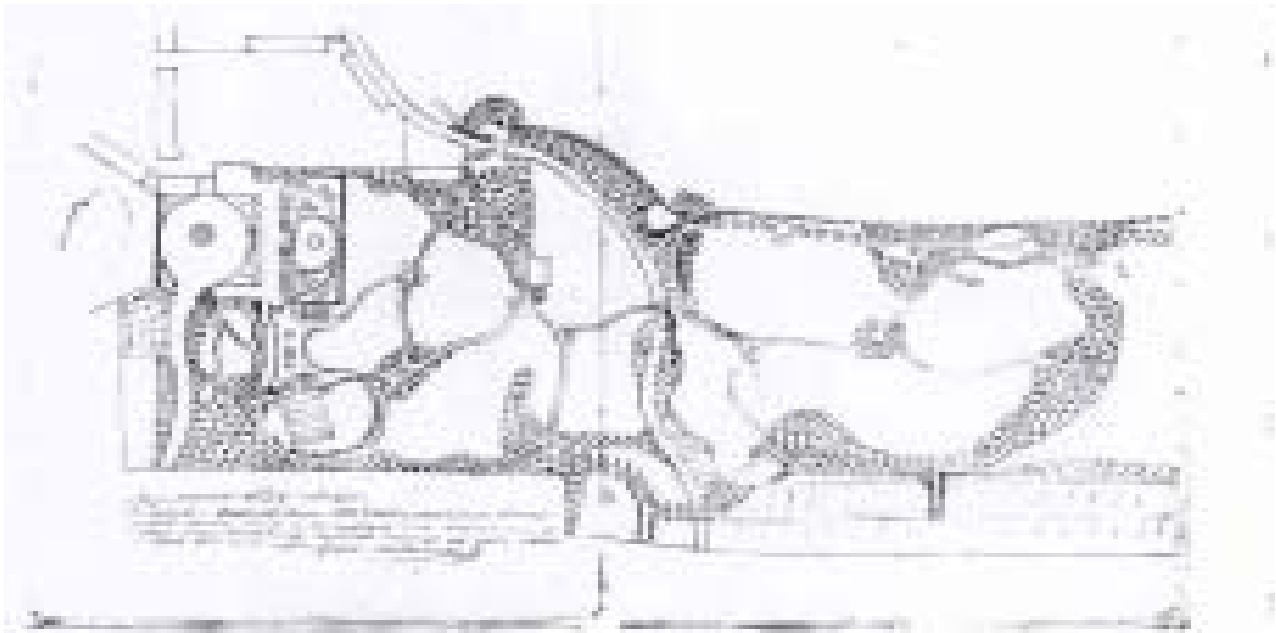
### 5.1. State of the park in the 2nd half of the 19th century

Based on the historical cadastral map from 1868 (Fig. 1), Madách Imre’s drawings from 1858 (Fig. 2), and a description of Károly Balogh it is possible

<sup>2</sup> J. Straňáková, *Rehabilitation of The park of Imre Madách in Dolná Strehová – The historical survey*, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.



Il. 2. A copy of the map of the park from 1858 drawn by Imre Madách: Archive of The Slovak National Museum, Museum of Hungarian Culture.

Ill. 2. Kopia mapy parku z 1858 r. narysowana przez Imre'a Madácha: Archiwum Muzeum Narodowego Słowacji, Muzeum Kultury Węgierskiej.

to specify the basic composition of the park in the 19th century. The main entrance to the complex was situated in the northwestern part of park. From there the road lead directly to the castle and courtyard, lined with tree allées. The access road is retained to this day as well as some of the allée of trees (*Tilia cordata*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*). The area in front of the main facade of the manor house was adjusted in the form of terraces with regular flower beds, where according to the description of Károly Balogh, tea roses were planted and plants in container were placed. Also planted were “high, several decades old agave, datura, cactuses and every second year blossoming Jukka”<sup>5</sup>.

According to the description in front of greenhouse, next to the manor house, *Laurus nobilis*, *Citrus sinensis*, *Citrus limon*, *Abutilon*, *Dracena* and *Begonia* were planted. There was also a fountain located, which was supplied with water from the tank located in the loft of greenhouse. In the drawing of Imre Madách it is marked as an unspecified object of rectangular shape southwest of the greenhouse. According to the description of Károly Balogh, it could be a so called “Small Garden” – a flower garden and an arbor – a “nice place” with the bench under a “wild chestnut.” In connection with the main facade and terraces with the parterre, along

the longitudinal axis of the park, (the main compositional axis) the large lawn was located, in the foreground with a group of spruces<sup>6</sup>. The Great Lawn area was supplemented by solitary and groups of tree plantings: *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Platanus*, *Celtis* and *Catalpa*. In the park, by the stream Volava, a small garden building was located, a hermit house, so called “The Hermitage,” where Imre Madách did his writing. It was a wooden building situated on a high stone foundation with a few steps and an entrance hall with a wooden columns. The walls were faced with tree bark plates. The light penetrates into the room through the colored glass windows with Gothic arches. The Hermitage was located near the cage (aviary for birds) and it had a red roof with a stone pedestal. The lower part of park area was created as an english natural-landscape park<sup>7</sup>. Sidewalks in natural lines and circuits organized this whole area; sunny meadows areas with solitary trees and group of trees were alternated with the shadows of the forest park area and dense groups of trees. Sidewalks were probably lined with tree allée plantings. Károly Balogh described this area mentioned in this part of the park as “The Allée of Sighs.” In the description is also mentioned the presence of an orchard, a vegetable garden, and a pond trimmed with Canadian Poplar (*Populus canadensis*). We consider, based on an

<sup>5</sup> K. Balogh, *Gyermekkorom emlékei*, Madách Irodalmi Társaság, Budapest 1996, p. 49-52.

<sup>6</sup> J. Straňáková, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem.*

analysis of historical documents, that the initial basic composition of park areas were composed in the so-called “mixed garden style” and the areas in the immediate vicinity of the mansion were composed by using the principles of a regular garden style, in relation to the Baroque and Classical style of mansion. The more distant parts of park were composed in a natural-landscape style, passing to the park arranged forest<sup>8</sup>.

## 5.2. The current state of the park

### 5.2.1. THE DESIGN OF PARK

The initial area of park, which is noted at historical cadastral map from 1868, at the time of the most representative form of park, is not preserved at present. The area of park was reduced by construction of a residential house, primary and nursery schools in the upper park and split by a vegetable garden in the southwest. The original composition of the parterre, a system of roads, and the main compositional axis of park are now extinct, as well as all the original elements of small architecture (Hermitage, winter garden, bird aviary, gazebo, benches, bridge etc.)<sup>9</sup>.

### 5.2.2. CURRENT STATUS OF TREES

Some the original trees have been preserved at the main entrance of the manor house (*Tilia cordata*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*). The composition of other woody plants is not legible and only a minimum of trees have been maintained. An inventory created in 2014 recorded 473 trees, included 443 deciduous trees, 30 individual conifers and 13 shrubs in the park (Straňáková, 2015). The species composition of plants consists of mostly native species, the rare species of trees are not maintained. Overall, there are 13 species. The most abundant tree species are *Acer campestre* (32.4%), *Thuja occidentalis* (20.6%) and *Fraxinus excelsior* (18.1%)<sup>10</sup>. Coniferous trees (*Thuja occidentalis*) come mainly from adjustments of park in the 70-80 years of the 20th century. The species composition shows a lack of skeletal long-lived species of trees. Based on the age structure of remaining trees it is evident that most of the of trees in the park are not from the original composition. Up to 35.4% of trees are aged 20-40 years, trees older than 100 years are represented as only 2.5% (*Tilia cordata*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Platanus acerifolia*)<sup>11</sup>.



Il. 3. A Comparison of the status of park in 1868 and current status of park in Dolná Strehová [2].

A – The Manor House, B – Block of apartment flats, C – The Primary School, D – The Nursery School

Original Property

Curent Property

Ill. 3. Porównanie stanu parku w miejscowości Dolná Strehová z 1868 r. ze stamen obecnym [2].

A – Dwór, B – Blok mieszkalny, C – szkoła podstawowa,

D – przedszkole

Nieruchomość oryginalna

Nieruchomość współczesna

### 5.2.3. THE CURRENT STATE OF ROADS AND SMALL ARCHITECTURE

The current state of the elements of small architecture and paved areas and roads in the park at the manor house in the Dolná Strehová is marked by the long-term deficiency of park maintenance and by the last reconstruction of mansion, between the years 2011 to 2013. During the reconstruction of the castle roads, park furniture and lighting in the courtyard of the mansion, namely a paved courtyard and sidewalks around the castle from a basalt cobble – stones, historicizing metal alloy benches, and three types of park lighting were added. In the remaining areas of the park there were no adjustments to the paved areas, roads, park furniture and or other equipment in recent years (Straňáková – Halajová, 2015). In all areas of the park only one sidewalk connects the mansion with the monument of Imre Madach on the other side of the park. This sidewalk is in bad technical condition just like the concrete panel bridge and stairways that it is passing through. There no other paths, park furniture, or other equipment in the park, despite the fact that there is a primary school and an art school. The lack of sidewalks is reflected by wearing of different paths through the

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup> J. Straňáková, D. Halajová, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

park areas. Fencing in the park exists only on one side of the local road, at the entrance to the castle, and at the entrance to the school building. Elsewhere fences are in poor condition or missing.

### 5.3. The principles of the adaptation of the historic park

From the results of the research it is possible to state that the only elements preserved in the park were the original location of the access road and a few original trees. The larger original area of park and small park objects were not retained. Based on historical documents we know the basic composition of the park, but it is not possible to identify the exact look of the individual elements, nor their exact location. Therefore it is not possible to make a proposal in the pure style of reconstruction. Any form of reconstruction is however completely eliminated by the change of use of the park for the purposes of the primary school in the second half of the 20th century. School buildings directly in the compositional axis of the park permanently made it impossible to restore the original design of park. The park area is divided by the building of elementary school for two separate parts of park. The architecture of school building decreases the value of the park and manor house.

Therefore in design of restoration we used the methods of modern admitted new design, with the adaptation for a new use of the buildings in the park (manor house – museum and building of school), with reference to the original objects in the park. The park surrounding the castle has a function of prestige and an area for relaxation for museum visitors. We designed this area as a formal garden, regular parterre with low hedges supplemented by planting of annuals. This part of the park was designed also as a rest area with the planting of roses, reminiscent of the original the rose garden. On the contrary, the lower part of the park where the elementary school now sits, is proposed to keep as a natural landscape park composition with three functionally defined zones: a recreation zone, with picnic meadow, a game zone, with two children's playgrounds and an education zone, with vegetable gardens. The last part of the park, according to the investor's requirements, is proposed as a zone for cultural and social use, for various events where there may be theater performances, folk festivals or weddings. We propose a natural theater with facilities in a multi-functional "Garden house," reminiscent of the original Hermitage in the park, but in a contemporary design. The sightseeing walkway in this section provides visitors with a view to the monument of Imre Madách.

## 6. SUMMARY

In the case of historical park Dolná Strehová in Slovakia, based on comparison of historical research and the current state of the park, we can state, that it is impossible to reconstruct the park in its original historical form from the 19th century. Therefore in the design for the restoration we used methods of modern admitted new design, with the adaptation for a new use of the buildings in the park with reference to the original objects in the park.

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