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Neo-Gothic in the residential architecture of Toruń – a building tradition or a fashion for historicism?

Abstract

The article addresses the problem of sources and patterns for Neo-Gothic in residential architecture of the 19th and early 20th centuries, using the example of Toruń. Was the Gothic building tradition used here and the aesthetics of the façades of bourgeois tenements applied, or did they rather refer to the patterns developed in the 19th-century “centres of Neo-Gothic”?

The subject of this study are examples of tenement houses and villas in Toruń in the spirit of Neo-Gothic. The aim of the considerations was to determine the influence of the local building tradition and 19th century Neo-Gothic patterns on the Toruń realisations of that period. A stylistic comparative analysis of Toruń’s residential buildings of the 19th century with the Gothic town houses of the city and the Neo-Gothic buildings of the Hanoverian school, the most influential in the area, was carried out. An analysis of the historical context was also carried out. The investigations were based on the author’s *in situ* research in Toruń and Hanover.

The research led to the conclusion that external influences predominated. Local housing patterns from the Gothic period were not functionally suitable for transformation into a new language of forms, so motifs were rather taken from monumental buildings by fitting them into the massing of a 19th-century townhouse or villa, using ready-made designs from the Hanoverian school.

Key words: Toruń, Neo-Gothic, residential architecture in the 19th century

Introduction

The tenement houses and villas dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries are valuable witnesses to social transformation. The choice of stylistic form was linked not only to current fashion, but also reflected the building owners’ ideology, attitude towards history and desire for prestige¹. Renaissance or Baroque models were the most common in housing construction. Gothic forms were used less frequently, typically in sacred or official architecture. However,

townhouses and villas built in the Neo-Gothic style were often highly original creations that enriched the housing stock. One question that arises is: In towns with a rich medieval building tradition, were local models of bourgeois tenement houses used, or were models from well-known architectural schools promoting Neo-Gothicism adopted?

The article presents a contextual analysis of this issue using the example of residential buildings in Toruń, a city with strong Gothic architectural traditions, a provincial, medium-sized centre in the 19th century, located far from major artistic hubs. Although examples of Neo-Gothic tenements and villas are relatively few, they clearly enrich the urban fabric with their distinctive forms. This raises questions: To what extent has tradition been used here, and how closely have the aesthetics of Gothic townhouse façades been replicated? Or were they referring to models developed in 19th-century German “centres of Neo-Gothic”, such as the Hanoverian School? This investigation aims to examine the relationship between Toruń’s 19th-century residential buildings in the Neo-Gothic style and the Gothic townhouses

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¹ The author is conducting comparative research into the stylistics of the façades of tenement houses from the 2nd half of the 19th and early 20th centuries in Poland, a project entitled “The façade as the showcase of the tenement house – trends in the design of front elevations of tenement houses in Poland from the mid-19th to the early 20th century”, funded by the Lanckoroński Foundation and Bydgoszcz University of Science and Technology.

es in the city. It also explores the Neo-Gothic trends that emerged from the centres of this historicist movement, as documented in the professional literature and periodicals of the time. Hanover's residential architecture has been chosen as a model for comparison, as it was an influential centre of Neo-Gothicism for more than half a century. Several generations of outstanding architects were associated with the Hanoverian School, influencing not only the architecture of Lower Saxony, but also that of northern Germany and the Prussian partitioned areas.

The different historical and social context of the 19th- and early 20th-century tenement and single-family houses and the 14th- and 15th-century bourgeois tenements, the different functional aspects and the different sizes of the properties and building masses allow us to hypothesise that the main source of inspiration for the architects of the 19th-century realisations was the Neo-Gothic patterns of residential architecture fashionable at the time and their decorative forms.

In an attempt to solve the posed problem, research was carried out on Toruń's Gothic-style buildings and Gothic town houses. In situ research was also conducted in Hanover to identify forms related to Toruń's realisations. Additionally, the historical and social context was analysed by comparing the status of medieval and 19th-century Toruń, as well as the role of medieval townhouses for the city's inhabitants during these periods. Professional literature from the 19th and early 20th centuries was examined from the perspective of pattern penetration. Finally, the distinctive features of Toruń's Gothic-inspired developments were compared with Gothic tenements in Toruń and Hanoverian patterns.

State of research

So far, only a few studies have been conducted on tenement houses in Toruń. Bożena Zimnowoda-Krajewska (2001) conducted a fragmentary study of a block of buildings in the Wilhelmstadt district (erected in 1896–1910). The author emphasised the pursuit of “picturesqueness” and individualism in the design of the façade, but failed to mention the few details referring to Gothic architecture details incorporated into this design. Joanna Kucharzewska's (2004) wide-ranging study of Toruń's architecture from 1871 to 1920 presented a number of buildings constructed in the Neo-Gothic style, but these were intended for public use, not residential use. The first comprehensive account of Toruń's tenement houses is a monograph by Michał Pszczółkowski (2021). In it, the author discusses examples of tenements erected in the spirit of Neo-Gothic, briefly considering the genesis of the style of their elevations. An unrealised project for a Neo-Gothic-inspired tenement house commissioned by Toruń winemaker Johann Schwartz from architect Johannes Otzen, a pupil of Conrad Wilhelm Hase, is also worth mentioning. This project was published in the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (Otzen 1881).

The Gothic tenement house attracted much greater interest from researchers, with a number of studies having been written on the subject. These include works by Bohdan Rymaszewski (1966; 1969; 1984), Jan Tajchman (2013) and Zbigniew Nawrocki (2016). These publications attempt to establish the typologies of Toruń's bourgeois tenement

houses from the 14th and 15th centuries on the basis of conservation research. An interesting paper on the conservation and reconstruction of Gothic tenements was published by Maciej Prarat and Karolina Zimna-Kawecka (2020), who raised, among other things, the question of the study of these buildings in Prussian times and the possibility of preserving them. Joanna Szot (2007) published research on the development of Nowomiejski Square and its transformation.

The most comprehensive publication on the Hanoverian architectural school is Günther Kokkelink and Monika Lemke-Kokkelink's work (1998). Among the more recent studies, Markus Jäger's (2019) contribution to a monograph on Conrad Wilhelm Hase is noteworthy. The study by Wolfgang Neß, Ilse Rüttgerodt-Riechmann, Gerd Weiß and Marianne Zehnpfennig (1983) contains much information on Neo-Gothic architecture in Hanover. Regarding Toruń architecture in the Hanoverian Neo-Gothic style, Joanna Kucharzewska's (2002) article on the new Toruń post office building is relevant. Erected at the beginning of the 1880s in the Neo-Gothic style and designed by Otzen, the building aroused great interest in the Toruń community.

Description of research and methods

The research was divided into three stages. The first stage focused on Neo-Gothic residential buildings in Toruń from the 2nd half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. In situ research, archive documentation queries and literature analysis were conducted. The second stage focused on bourgeois Gothic tenements in Toruń. This stage was based mainly on in situ research and literature analysis. The final stage involved conducting research in Hanover and analysing studies on the Hanoverian school of architecture. The following research methods were employed: stylistic comparative analysis, contextual analysis, archival research, and the historical-interpretative method.

Townhouses and villas in the spirit of Neo-Gothic in Toruń

The successive fashions of styles of past eras used in the development of tenement house facades in Toruń paid little attention to the Neo-Gothic style. Although it was popular in religious, official and other public buildings, it was rarely used in residential construction. Several groups can be distinguished here. The first group, which is the most important for this research², consists of buildings that comprehensively reference Gothic patterns through the use of many architectural elements or details modelled on Gothic or Neo-Gothic styles. The second group comprises houses in which a few Gothic elements were combined with details from other styles, forming “picturesque” architectural features on the façades. The third group comprises modest brick-faced buildings with a brick frieze featuring medieval motifs.

² Research on tenements and villas in Toruń in the spirit of Neo-Gothic was conducted by the author in 2022 during a research internship at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, under the direction of Joanna Kucharzewska, PhD, Professor at UMK.

The first group comprises four buildings: two townhouses (15 Sienkiewicz Street and 36 Szeroka Street) and two villas (84 Krasiński Street and 4 Sienkiewicz Street). All were built in the final decade of the 19th century or the early years of the 20th century³. The tenement on Szeroka Street was built on the city's most prominent street. The other buildings are located in the district of Przedmieście Bydgoskie, which was a rapidly expanding and fashionable area of Toruń in the late 19th century. Interestingly, neither the townhouses nor the villa on Sienkiewicz Street were originally designed in the Neo-Gothic style; this only appeared in subsequent drawings. Only one drawing showing the elevation of the villa on Krasiński Street has survived⁴.

Although the two townhouses were designed by people from different architectural backgrounds⁵, they share common features. Both are clad in red bricks and feature glazed green bricks around the windowsills and as decorative elements. They also have brick openwork cornices and stepped gables. Apart from this, however, the townhouses differ significantly from each other. The house on Szeroka Street is situated on a plot with medieval origins and has a narrow, triaxial façade. Its four storeys give it very slender proportions. The shop window and entrance to the building were located on the ground floor. The first-floor area features a wide balcony that clearly separates the storeys. The second and third storeys have an evenly distributed window arrangement, with an oriel window designed on the central axis that protrudes slightly from the façade. An openwork brick frieze and a band of glazed green brick top off the entire façade. Between the windows on the first and second floors, there are shields surrounded by brick moulding and a plastered field. The topmost storey features a three-storey gable, the central part of which is decorated with closed ogival blends in plaster. The gable is adorned with pinnacles, friezes of set brick and solar motifs (Fig. 1).

The second house was located in Bydgoskie Przedmieście on a plot of land typical of subdivisions in the 2nd half of the 19th century. The designer planned the house to have a "picturesque", asymmetrical façade, which was enriched with many original decorative and architectural elements. The northern triaxial risalit is particularly striking, containing a terrace on the ground floor and balconies in the upper storeys. Each axis is topped with a small triangular gable featuring a pinnacle, and the entire structure is capped with a high stepped gable adorned with stylised pinnacles. The second risalit, located on the southern side, features a trian-



Fig. 1. Toruń, tenement house at 36 Szeroka Street, erected around 1896 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 1. Toruń, kamienica przy ul. Szerokiej 36, wzniesiona około 1896 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

³ 15 Sienkiewicz Street – start of construction: 1894 (State Archive in Toruń, Records of the City of Toruń [hereinafter: APT, A.m.T.], ref. G 4541); 36 Szeroka Street – design: 1896, start of construction: 1897 (APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4521); 84 Krasiński Street – start of construction: 1899 (Register of Monuments of Toruń); 4 Sienkiewicz Street – start of construction: 1900 (APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4066).

⁴ Investor: master mason Georg Plehwe, the building was erected around 1899 (Architectural and Construction Monument Registration Card, copy from the collection of the Municipal Conservator's Office in Toruń).

⁵ 36 Szeroka Street – designed by Berlin architect and Regency master builder Max Fraenkel, for the merchant Daniel Strenberg (APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4521); 15 Sienkiewicz Street – investor and contractor: master mason Georg Soppart (APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4078). Soppart was a thriving construction entrepreneur in Toruń.

gular bay and is topped with a stepped gable (Fig. 2). The tenement house at 46 Szeroka Street, which also belonged to Georg Soppart⁶, exhibits similar features. Apart from the brick facing and glazed brick used in a more fanciful way, however, this building features few Neo-Gothic elements, except for the windows in the third and fourth storeys, which are stylised as triforiums.

⁶ APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4541; Pszczółkowski pointed to the building as an example of Neo-Gothic (2021, 275).



Fig. 2. Toruń, tenement house at 15 Sienkiewicz Street, upper part of the northern risalit, erected around 1894 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 2. Toruń, kamienica przy ul. Sienkiewicza 15, górna partia północnego ryzalitu, wzniesiona około 1894 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)



Fig. 3. Toruń, villa at 4 Sienkiewicz Street, built around 1900 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 3. Toruń, willa przy ul. Sienkiewicza 4, wzniesiona około 1900 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)



Fig. 4. Toruń, villa at 84 Krasieński Street, built in 1899 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 4. Toruń, willa przy ul. Krasieńskiego 84, wzniesiona w 1899 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Two villas in the spirit of Neo-Gothic were built in the Bydgoskie Przedmieście district. The villa at 4 Sienkiewicz Street combines stylised Neo-Gothic and Art Nouveau elements in its façade design⁷. Its elevations are faced with light yellow bricks and enriched with contrasting bands of red brick friezes. The southern and western elevations feature risalits with triangular, stepped gables and biforium-type windows. The southern risalit features a large triforium window, which is preceded by an openwork brick belt course and surmounted by a frieze of small blends closed with a trillium. Art Nouveau elements include stained glass windows and a wrought iron canopy over the entrance (Fig. 3).

The last building in this group is the villa at 84 Krasieński Street. Its body is varied by numerous asymmetrically arranged architectural elements, including risalits of different sections and heights, oriels, high roofs, a porch and fancy gables. The red brick façades are embellished with glazed cherry brick and green tiles, which cover the high roof of oriel. Shaped bricks of various forms were used to finish the window openings, risalit's pinnacles, and parts of the corners. Due to its irregular and asymmetrical shape, the villa also fits into the trend of "picturesque" historicist architecture, which often references the Gothic style (Fig. 4).

The second group of tenements comprises buildings with single Neo-Gothic elements, composed with details taken from other historical styles. Examples include the tenement at the junction of 10 Warszawska Street and 8 Kazimierz Jagiellończyk Street in the St. Catherine Suburb (formerly Wilhelmstadt)⁸, and the tenement at 8 St. Cather-

⁷ Designer: Konrad Schwartz, Investor: Town Councillor Emil Dietrich (APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4066).

⁸ Construction work: Ulmer and Kaun building company from Toruń, building erected around 1898. (APT, A.m.T., ref. G 1525), designed by Berlin architects Hermann Solf and Franz Wichards (Pszczółkowski 2021, 83).

ine Street in the New Town⁹. Both buildings feature “Gothic” stepped gables, albeit in different forms. The corner building on Warszawska Street has a façade decorated with ornaments of various origins. The elevations were enriched with three tall, openwork and plastered, Gothic-style gables (one on the side of Warszawska Street and two on the side of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk Street). In addition, several window openings were closed with kotar arches. The façades were asymmetrically composed, with bay windows and balconies occupying a significant part of the elevation. The whole is maintained in the spirit of “picturesque” historicist architecture (Fig. 5). The façade of the smaller second, building, at 8 St. Catherine Street, was also composed asymmetrically, with stylistic forms referring to the Renaissance, with a visually rusticated ground floor zone. On the extreme axis from the north, there is a slightly protruding risalit with a massive bay window, crowned with a highly stylised stepped gable.

Elements referring to Gothic architecture can be found in some of the townhouses located in the medieval town, built on the site of Gothic houses and rebuilt in subsequent periods. This group includes the buildings at 6 Sukiennicza Street and 14 Szczytna Street, the first of which was rebuilt in 1878, when the façade was rearranged and the building was elevated. The façade was divided by flat lisens into four vertical niches containing windows and topped with an arch in the form of a donkey’s back¹⁰. A similar solution was used during the extension of the tenement house at 14 Szczytna Street in 1863¹¹. The seven-axial front elevation, occupying the width of two or even three original plots, was articulated with vertical recesses covering all residential storeys. They were separated by profiled bands and closed with curtain arches. On the axis, there is a slightly protruding risalit, containing the entrance to the building in the ground floor, over which a wide panel imitating a balcony was introduced.

Examples of the latter group can be found in the modestly decorated tenements of Podgórze, a suburban district of Toruń, from the 19th century. Along the main street, quite a number of dark red, brick-faced tenements were built in a modest style, decorated only with friezes of staggered bricks and rows of brick pseudo-panels under the eaves. Examples of such designs can be seen at 84 and 105 Poznańska Street. The small tenement house at 30 Parkowa Street has an interesting form: the façade is articulated with recesses containing window and entrance openings, closed with sharp arches. The storeys were separated by a frieze of staggered bricks, and the entire building was clad in light-coloured brick.

Townhouses from the 14th and 15th centuries in Toruń

Gothic architecture developed in Toruń in the 14th and 15th centuries when the city became a major commercial



Fig. 5. Toruń, tenement house at the corner of 10 Warszawska Street and 8 Kazimierz Jagiellończyk Street, erected around 1898 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 5. Toruń, kamienica u zbiegu ul. Warszawskiej 10 i ul. Kazimierza Jagiellończyka 8, wzniesiona ok. 1898 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

centre with a population of up to 20,000 (Atlas historyczny 2019, 5, 6). Along the streets of the Old Town, rows of burgher tenements were built to house merchant families. These three- or four-storey houses were positioned gable-first towards the street on narrow, deep plots of land. The façades were elaborately designed to emphasise the owners’ prestige: they featured coloured polychromes, glazed coloured bricks, mouldings, and artificial stone. The high recesses that articulated the façades were framed by profiled bricks and decorated with geometric patterns reminiscent of those found on urban buildings. These compositions were painted in red, white and black (Rymaszewski 1966, 24–30). A significant proportion of houses in the present-day Old Town were made of brick in the late 15th century.

Conservation research has identified groups of buildings with common features, and has even revealed local trends in façade composition in Toruń around 1400 (Tajchman 2013, 134). The developed tenement type had a façade divided into three horizontal zones. The first zone, which corresponded to a high vestibule, was usually two-axis and featured a portal containing the entrance, which was topped with a pointed arch. There was also a window placed in a niche, which was topped with an arch that resembled a full arch, and sometimes a segmental arch. The central zone featured three recesses running through the two storeys and closed with segmental or full arches. Window openings were placed in the lateral recesses, while blends were placed on the axis. The final zone, which crowned the façade, usually took the form of a stepped gable divided by blends (Tajchman 2013, 131, 132). While not all tenements corresponded exactly to this type – some were crowned with blends or gables closed with an arch – the general scheme of façade divisions remained similar (Fig. 6).

⁹ The building was erected around 1898, designed by H. Rosenau (Register Card of Architectural and Construction Monuments, from the collection of the Municipal Conservator in Toruń).

¹⁰ APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4414.

¹¹ APT, A.m.T., ref. G 4452.



Fig. 6. Toruń, Gothic tenement house at 5 Łazienna Street, erected in the 2nd half of the 15th century (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 6. Toruń, gotycka kamienica przy ul. Łazienniej 5, wzniesiona w 2. połowie XV w. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)



Fig. 7. Hanover, villas at Callinstraße 44 and 46, built in 1890 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 7. Hanower, wille przy Callinstraße 44 i 46, wzniesione w 1890 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

The Neo-Gothic residential architecture of the Hanoverian School

Including the architectural centres influencing the northern regions of the German states, where the Neo-Gothic style was consistently developed (also in residential architecture), Hanover comes to the fore¹². This style emerged in the mid-19th century and had specific characteristics, primarily associated with the work of Conrad Wilhelm Hase. The master trained generations of architects at the Hanover Polytechnic School and the later Royal Technical School. During his long creative period spanning more than half a century, Hase and his pupils designed many buildings in northern Germany. Hanover itself saw a particular popularity of Neo-Gothic residential construction (Jäger 2019).

Among Hase's pupils and followers were architects spanning several generations. They constructed numerous buildings with brick façades adorned with various Gothic-inspired features, including pointed windows, blends, buttresses, vaults, stepped gables, pinnacles, and turrets. They also used coloured glazed bricks, brick mouldings in various shapes and sizes, and decorative terracotta elements. In the spirit of Neo-Gothic, they built many villas, one- or two-family houses, and tenement houses. Depending on the investor's wealth and ambitions, original designs were created featuring complex masses with many stylistic and decorative elements, or simple, modest buildings faced with brick and featuring ascetic medieval-style friezes. This style originated in Hanover but has spread far beyond the city.

Among the numerous surviving residential buildings in the Hanoverian School style, many are fine examples of the genre. Notably, the Hase's project, completed between 1864 and 1865 for the von Strauß family at Georgstraße 5 in Bückeburg, is one of the most important villas (Kokkelink, Lemke-Kokkelink 1998, 532). Built on a corner plot, the house has an asymmetrical design and complex massing, incorporating various architectural features such as a terrace to the west and a prestigious entrance in the northern wing. All façades were decorated with profiled and glazed bricks. Of particular interest is the, slender openwork gable on the Georgstraße side, which is decorated with blind arches, rosettes, and pinnacles.

A complex of similar villas with ornate gables and pointed spires, as well as more intricate massing, was built at Callinstraße 50/48, 46 and 44 in Hanover (Fig. 7), designed by Otto Goetze in 1890 (Kokkelink, Lemke-Kokkelink 1998, 169; Ness et al. 1983, 111).

Many imposing red-brick townhouses were constructed in Hanover in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, filling the street frontages. A number of smaller, multi-apartment houses with similar stylistic features were also built during this period. These buildings, which usually have asymmetrical façades, are adorned with numerous architectural elements and decorations.

The corner house at Bödekerstraße 58, designed by Johannes Franziskus Klomp (Kokkelink, Lemke-Kokkelink 1998, 193), stands out with its many architectural details

¹² The author conducted in-situ research in Hanover in 2023.

and two high stepped gables. The façade is decorated with bay windows and balconies, brick openwork ornaments of specially moulded bricks and glazed brown bricks and mouldings. These decorate and frame the pointed and segmental windows, cornices and parapets, and above all the delicate openwork gables.

Another interesting development is the relatively small, two-storey house at Wilhelm-Busch-Straße 24. Built in 1886 to a design by Ludwig Frühling for Schwarz, the owner of the factory, it occupies a large corner plot (Neß et al. 1983, 112). Openwork brick friezes, glazed brown bricks and green decorative elements with floral motifs were also employed here. A delicate, high, stepped gable towers over the entire building (Fig. 8).

An example of a large corner house is the four-storey building on the corner of Callinstraße and Rehbockstraße. The building is richly decorated with glazed brick ornaments and full-length sculptures representing allegories of art, placed in niches (Fig. 9). The corner is emphasised by a large bay window, which is topped by a tall tower. Construction of the building was completed between 1894 and 1895 and it was designed by Friedrich Wedel (Neß et al. 1983, 108).

Hanover also saw the construction of a number of brick-faced townhouses with simple facades, with evenly spaced windows, varied only by modest brick friezes in forms reminiscent of the Middle Ages and narrow bands of glazed brick.

Conclusions

A comparative stylistic analysis of the composition of the façades of the first group of Neo-Gothic townhouses and villas, which made comprehensive reference to Gothic patterns, with Toruń's medieval townhouses and with residential buildings in Hanover, has shown that similar forms and motifs to those used by the Hanoverian School were employed in Toruń. The façades of Toruń's Gothic houses were clearly divided into three zones with simpler decorative forms. The composition of the façades of the first group of Neo-Gothic buildings was asymmetrical (with the exception of the tenement in Szeroka Street) and incorporated many architectural elements, such as bays, risalits, balconies and turrets. Common to Gothic and Neo-Gothic townhouses was the finishing of the façade with red bricks (in the case of one villa with yellow bricks), the use of coloured glazed bricks (in Gothic buildings this was done sporadically) and a variety of profiled bricks. In the Gothic façades these were mainly found in the framing of openings and recesses, in the Neo-Gothic façades also to emphasise architectural elements, cornices and decoration. The finials with stepped gables were also solved differently than in Gothic buildings. The Gothic gables were more austere with painted recesses, while the Neo-Gothic ones featured pinnacles, glazed bricks, and were openwork and spacious. In addition, façades from the 19th century featured openwork friezes made of shaped bricks, brick arcade friezes and cube friezes – elements characteristic of architecture influenced by the Hanoverian School.

Nineteenth-century tenement houses were built on wide plots, resulting in a different façade composition to that of



Fig. 8. Hanover, house at Wilhelm-Busch-Straße 24, erected in 1886 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 8. Hanower, dom przy Wilhelm-Busch-Straße 24, wzniesiony w 1886 r. (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)



Fig. 9. Hanover, townhouse at Callinstraße 4/Rehbockstraße, erected in 1894–1895 (photo by D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

Il. 9. Hanower, kamienica przy Callinstraße 4/Rehbockstraße, wzniesiona w latach 1894–1895 (fot. D. Bręczewska-Kulesza)

narrow medieval houses. Of these houses, only the one in Szeroka Street, which was built on a narrow plot corresponding to medieval parcel divisions, retained the general features of Gothic compositions, such as a tripartite division of the façade with a two-storey central part, a predominance of vertical lines, and a symmetrical design. However, the addition of balconies, bay windows and Neo-Gothic styling reflects new trends.

The second group of buildings, featuring elements reminiscent of Gothic architecture, reflected the contemporary fashion for “picturesqueness”. The design of the building at the intersection of Warszawska and Kazimierz Jagiellończyk Streets was created by Berlin architects Hermann Solf and Franz Wichards, who also designed almost the entire western frontage of Kazimierz Jagiellończyk Street. This type of solution can be found in the work of other leading Berlin architects, such as Alfred Messel (Berlin und seine Bauten, 1896, 216–217).

Other forms were used in the tenements on Sukiennicza and Szczytna Streets. The division into vertical panels may have referred to burgher houses in Toruń, where it occurred, but from the second storey onwards. However, the “donkey’s back” or curtain arch finials used here are not known from Toruń. Whether this is a deliberate reference to late Gothic architecture or merely a coincidental stylisation is difficult to determine at present. This is a subject for a separate, detailed study.

The third group comprises buildings with modest and unremarkable designs, which can be found in many cities. Such designs were often recommended to less affluent clients in pattern books and architecture textbooks.

Analysing the historical context has enabled us to study how the importance of Gothic tenements changed in Toruń’s residential development in the 19th century. The city was a large, prosperous centre in the Middle Ages, wealthy enough for independent local housing trends to emerge, as research has shown. Wealthy merchants built residences here to demonstrate their wealth and the reliability of their businesses. Subsequent eras have left their mark on Toruń’s Gothic tenements, with many of them being rebuilt. In the 16th century, the upper storeys were no longer used for storage and the façade decoration was altered. During the Baroque period, Toruń’s tenement façades were enriched with stucco decorations featuring floral motifs and Italian stylistic elements.

In the 19th century, Toruń was a medium-sized provincial town. Although it developed slowly, demographic growth continued to create an increased demand for housing. Furthermore, the city was enclosed by fortifications for a long time, which hindered urban development. Many dilapidated buildings were demolished. New, larger houses were then built on connected plots of land in their place. A lack of legal protection for townhouses, coupled with economic factors, led to the conversion of numerous buildings with Gothic origins. The demand for rental housing and commercial premises led to conversions and alterations. Of the few surviving tenements, some made distant references to their medieval predecessors (Prarat, Zimna-Kawecka 2020, 19–21). According to Rymaszewski (1966, 112), several dozen historic tenements were significantly rebuilt at this time. In terms of functionality, the Gothic tenements were not suitable for conversion into comfortable, modern dwellings that met 19th-century standards. Consequently, the historic bourgeois tenement houses in Toruń were not valued by the city’s residents at the time. They were not particularly suited to modernisation, and most were in poor condition. Unsurprisingly, Neo-Gothic was not popular in the town that is now considered a centre of Gothic archi-

tecture. In the eyes of its 19th-century inhabitants, it can be assumed that the rebuilt and dilapidated townhouses were not attractive models to follow, unlike the works of the Hanoverian school. Today, after years of research and ongoing restoration work, the town presents a very different image.

The following questions remain: what were the reasons behind investors choosing Neo-Gothic stylisations and where did these patterns come from? As previously mentioned, original Neo-Gothic designs among Toruń’s residential buildings were few and far between. Both Gothic and 19th-century buildings served a representative function, but other stylistic forms were considered more representative in both periods, hence the Neo-Gothic inspirations. The investor who opted for this style probably wanted to make his house stand out from the surrounding buildings. This was successful, as evidenced by the reaction of the local press (Pszczółkowski 2021, 274, 275).

Who were the investors? The tenement house at 15 Sienkiewicz Street belonged to Georg Soppart, a master mason and construction entrepreneur who was active in Toruń. It undoubtedly served as a showcase for his company. Georg Plehwe, also a master mason, owned the villa at 85 Krasieński Street. The building’s original form showcased the contractor’s skills. The most subdued of the described properties, the villa at 4 Sienkiewicz Street, belonged to Emil Dietrich, a town councillor and owner of a large family trading company. The last property was owned by Daniel Sternberg, a merchant. The building, with its extensive shop and warehouse spanning the entire ground floor, was a striking feature of the Szeroka Street development, attracting customers with its unusual façade. All of the individuals mentioned were active participants in public life, embracing a broad-minded approach, and were likely to have recognised attractive architectural trends. Residents of Toruń maintained close ties with Berlin, which, as the capital at the time and a thriving architectural centre, was a place where emerging trends intersected and competed. They probably travelled there “on business”, viewing buildings and occasionally commissioning projects. Local architects and builders were also members of nationwide associations of engineers, architects, and builders. This allowed them to follow the works of their colleagues in other cities and regions.

In addition, the new Toruń post office building was constructed in the early 1880s, on the market frontage. The building’s design was created by Johannes Otzen, an architect who was already working in Berlin at the time. He was a graduate of the Hanoverian School and a pupil of Hase (Kucharzewska 2002, 90). The post office building aroused great interest and could have inspired Neo-Gothic designs. One such unrealised project was a tenement house commissioned from Otzen by winemaker Johann Schwartz and planned for Chełmińska Street (Pszczółkowski 2021, 275; Kucharzewska 2002, 89). As the architect wrote in the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (Otzen 1881, 580), the tenement’s layout was designed in the Hanoverian style, analogous to the forms of the post office building.

The other most common route of pattern penetration was through the professional press and building hand-

books¹³. One example of the dissemination of brick architecture patterns is Bernhard Liebold's manual *Ziegel-rohbau* (1891), containing examples of both elements and architectural details commonly used in private Neo-Gothic developments. A number of architectural and building magazines also reached Toruń, such as the Berlin-based *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung* and the *Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* published by the Ministry of Public Works. Two Hannover titles were also well known in the building community: the *Zeitschrift des Architekten- und Ingenieur-Vereins zu Hannover* (Fig. 10), published between 1851 and 1921¹⁴, and the *Deutsche Bauhütte*, published between 1897 and 1942, showing various Neo-Gothic realisations.

It is unlikely that patterns from the Hanoverian Neo-Gothic school reached Toruń directly through personal contacts between architects, builders and investors. Instead, the press and publications promoting this style, which was interesting and unique in Toruń and its neighbouring cities, were used. It should also be noted that architects and builders working in the 2nd half of the 19th century were highly educated and familiar with various forms of historic architecture. This meant they could design façades in different styles depending on investors' needs. The Toruń realisations feature a variety of details and architectural forms inspired by the Hanoverian school, which were translated into the architects' own designs thanks to the multiplicity of forms and variety of compositions available.

Summary

Considered the German national style, Neo-Gothic was mainly used in public architecture and was not very popular in residential architecture. There were fewer realisations of this style than of Neo-Renaissance or Neo-Baroque. In Toruń, a city with a tradition of Gothic buildings, there were only a few Neo-Gothic buildings, but they stood out from the more typical architecture. These buildings required more work and were probably more expensive to construct. Local residential buildings from the Gothic period of the 19th century were often in poor condition due to numerous alterations, and many had lost their distinctive Gothic characteristics. Additionally, the dimensions of buildings, the

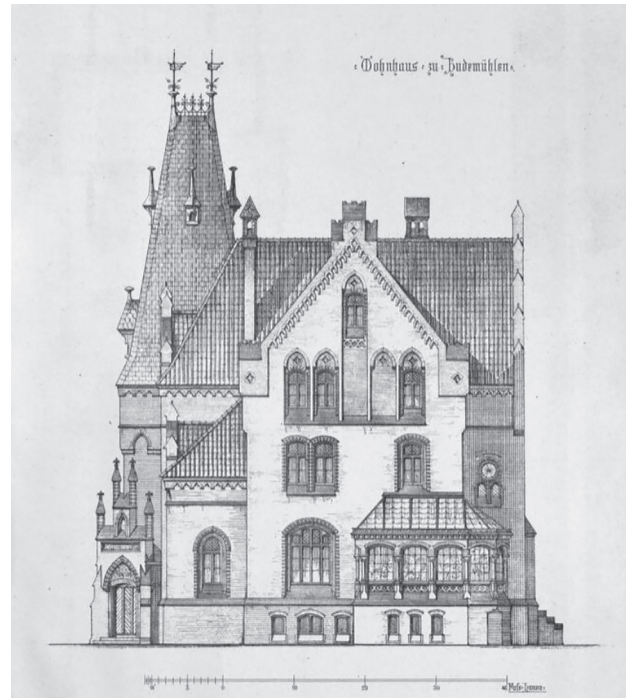


Fig. 10. Conrad Wilhelm Hase. "Wohnhaus zu Hudemülen", building design, façade (source: *Zeitschrift des Architekten- und Ingenieur-Vereins zu Hannover*, t. 17 (1871): 501)

Il. 10. Conrad Wilhelm Hase. "Wohnhaus zu Hudemülen", projekt budynku, fasada (źródło: *Zeitschrift des Architekten- und Ingenieur-Vereins zu Hannover*, t. 17 (1871): 501)

shapes of blocks and the proportions of façades from that time were difficult to translate into a new formal language. Therefore, motifs from monumental buildings were used instead, incorporating them into the massing of 19th-century townhouses or villas and drawing inspiration from the details and architectural elements promoted by the Hanoverian school.

Toruń's examples of tenement houses and villas in the spirit of Neo-Gothic were constructed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and were thus associated with the fashionable "picturesque" historicist style of the time. While they are certainly interesting examples of architectural trends, which were numerous at the turn of the century, they are also important for the history of the city and its society. Perhaps because of the relatively small number of realisations, Neo-Gothic in residential architecture has not received much attention from researchers. It is a shame, as an analysis of this topic carried out in different urban centres would probably yield interesting results.

¹³ E.g., *Handbuch der Architektur*, 1880–1943, Technische Universität Darmstadt; L. Klasen, *Gebäude für Kunst und Wissenschaft: Handbuch für Baubehörden, Bauherren, Architekten, Ingenieure, Baumeister, Bauunternehmer, Bauhandwerker und technische Lehranstalten*, Leipzig 1887.

¹⁴ Since 1896 *Zeitschrift für Architektur und Ingenieurwesen*.

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Streszczenie

Neogotyck w architekturze mieszkalnej Torunia – tradycja budowlana czy moda na historyzm?

W artykule poruszono problem źródeł i wzorców dla neogotyku w architekturze mieszkalnej XIX i początku XX w. na przykładzie Torunia. Przedmiotem badań były nieliczne przykłady kamienic i willi toruńskich w duchu neogotyku. Celem rozważań było ustalenie wpływów lokalnej tradycji budowlanej i XIX-wiecznych wzorów neogotyckich na realizację toruńskie z tego okresu. Przeprowadzono stylistyczną analizę porównawczą toruńskich budynków mieszkalnych z XIX w. z kamienicami mieszczańskimi w tym mieście oraz neogotyckimi budynkami szkoły hanowerskiej, najbardziej wpływowej na tych terenach. Przeanalizowano również kontekst historyczny. Dociekania zostały oparte na przeprowadzonych przez autorkę badaniach *in situ* w Toruniu i Hanowerze.

Badania doprowadziły do wniosku o dominacji zewnętrznych wpływów. Wzorce lokalnego budownictwa mieszkalnego z okresu gotyku nie nadewały się funkcjonalnie do przetworzenia na nowy język form, dlatego raczej wykorzystywano motywy z budowli monumentalnych, wpasowując je w bryły XIX-wiecznych kamienic czy willi przy użyciu gotowych wzorów szkoły hanowerskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Toruń, neogotyck, architektura mieszkalna w XIX w.